

FROM HUNGERS TO APPETITES:  
WOMEN WRITERS AFTER THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

A Dissertation  
Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Cornell University  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

by  
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May 2013

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My dissertation reveals a feminist discourse in texts written by Spanish women who use hunger and appetite as literary tropes after the post Civil War Hunger Years. I argue that the symbolic employment of hunger and appetite allows women writers to find feminism within traditional feminine identities. Drawing attention to the food women cook for others, particularly in their role as mothers, these authors ask us to question the hungers of women themselves. Once they identify various feminine hungers, they begin to explore the emergence of appetite. The emergence of appetite from a condition of hunger is where, I argue, a feminist impulse is manifest.

I frame my study in the symbolic connotations of hunger and appetite in the writing of two Spanish women grouped with the Generation of '27, Rosa Chacel and María Zambrano. In Chacel's diaries and Zambrano's philosophical essays, they reveal the tensions that form as women struggle to give their bodies the artistic and intellectual nourishment that they need in the first decades of the Franco regime. They also show that when a woman engages with appetite, a natural desire to explore the world or, as Chacel says, to say "yes" to everything, she is more connected to herself, to art, to knowledge and to others. In the third chapter, I turn to texts of Generation of '50 novelist, Mercedes Salisachs, who explores the hungers repressed in women who grow up during the Franco Regime and live into the Spanish Transition to Democracy. I finish my study with contemporary novelist, Adelaida García Morales, who points to the

emergence of appetite from within a chronically repressed feminine hunger as key to re-establishing the health of both the individual and of the community after the Regime.

By revealing the feminist function of hungers and appetites in literature from the 1940s to the 1980s, my dissertation challenges the notion that Spain is a nation that lacks a strong feminist presence during the Franco regime. I highlight that Spanish feminism re-appropriates the female body as a site where an active exploration of life emerges from within lack itself.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Julie Mann Lind is a PhD candidate in the Department of Romance Studies at Cornell University. Her specialization is 20<sup>th</sup> century Spanish peninsular literature with a focus on women writers. In 2005 she completed a Master's of Arts in Hispanic literatures at New York University's graduate program in Madrid. In 2004 she received a Bachelor's of Arts at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

This study is dedicated to Joshua Lind and  
the late Susan and Constance Piccirillo.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the enduring academic support of my co-chairs, Debra Castillo and Patty Keller. Their constant feedback, encouragement and patience have been crucial to the completion of this project. I am also grateful to my third committee member, Gerard Aching, for coming on board late in the project and for being a continual source of support during the year preceding my defense.

This project is also indebted to academic conversations I had with and feedback I received from Walter Cohen of Cornell and José María García Rodríguez of Duke University, Anjouli Janzon and Isabel Pereira of NYU, and Elizabeth Scarlett of SUNY Buffalo.

In addition to the academic support I have received, this project would not have come to fruition without Carolyn Hodges, Randy Patterson and Susan Wiser. They have been the most patient members of my non-academic committee. Thanks to their help, everything has been possible.

Thanks and love will never be enough to speak to the immeasurable support and cheerleading my family and friends have provided. My family – Ava DeLuca, Brian DeLuca, Jack DeLuca, Nicole DeLuca, Donn Lind, Laurie Lind, Seth Lind, Helen Mann, Joelle Mann, Judy Mann, Matt Mann, Mike Mann, the late Constance Piccirillo, Frank Piccirillo and Gabrielle Steinhardt – are my rock. I would like to particularly acknowledge my grandmother, Constance, who passed away the week of my defense. My friends – Alex Derrico, Emily Eaton, and Rose Casey – are always there. My cats – Flannery, Cyrus and Luis – are the best company for which a student and writer could ask.

Finally, my husband, Joshua Lind, has been an endless source of ideas, feedback, Bundy Road walks, bear hugs and dreams. He has fueled my inspiration and my love.

This work is for Joshua, my late grandmother, Constance, and my late aunt, Susan Piccirillo, the women with the strongest appetites I know, especially when facing the end.

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## **Introduction:**

### **From Hungers to Appetites: Spanish Women Writers after the Civil War**

While the Nationalist victory of the 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War brought drastic political, economic and social changes to Spain, one aspect of daily life remained a constant: the physical experience of hunger. Rather than resolve the insidious food shortage with which Spaniards lived during the war, the first years of the Franco regime brought the transformation of that shortage into a full-blown famine. The lack of food became so severe that the early 1940s would later be referred to as “Los años de hambre,” or “The Hunger Years,” in Spain.

Although the hunger of “The Hunger Years” refers to the physiological sensation that occurs when the body lacks food, Spanish women writers have adopted the image to communicate the many emotional, psychological and social lacks from which women suffered during the Franco regime, which lasted from 1939 through 1975. In my dissertation, I argue that the metaphoric function of hunger in their writing characterizes a period in Spanish literature that can be referred to as the literary “Hunger Years,” which span decades longer than the famine. This literary phenomenon can be traced from the postwar novels and philosophical pieces of Generation of '27 artists Rosa Chacel and María Zambrano to the middlebrow novels of Generation of '50's Mercedes Salisachs and the popular novels of the contemporary Adelaida García Morales. By employing hunger, the body's means of communicating its need for nourishment, as a literary trope, these writers point out that women of the Franco regime are hungry not only for food, but also to meet their basic emotional, intellectual and social needs. Because the literary function of hunger facilitates a confusion of the boundaries between mind and body, which correspond with the binary categories masculine and feminine, the metaphor has a poignant, subtle feminist function during

the Regime.

In my dissertation, I define hunger as a language that connects the state of the feminine body to the states of the feminine mind and spirit. Throughout my study, it becomes clear that Chacel, Zambrano, Salisachs and García Morales reveal various stages of physical, emotional and intellectual feminine hunger. The initial stage, which we see first in Chacel's adolescent character, Leticia Valle, is the immediate physical sensation that communicates a lack of vital nourishment. This is the type of hunger that one feels when one wakes up in the morning, senses the physical need to eat breakfast, and responds to that need by going to the kitchen and preparing a meal. Although Leticia continually responds to her gnawing hunger by eating, however, she remains hungry because she has not correctly interpreted her needs, which are not for food but for intellectual stimulation and maternal care. Once she begins to respond to her intellectual and emotional needs through the education and care she receives from Doña Luisa, she is no longer hungry.

Although Leticia is able to nourish her hungers before they become chronic, as she writes she discovers that her teacher, Doña Luisa, lacks the drive to obtain vital nourishment. Because her hunger has persisted for so long, it has entered a second stage, which I refer to as chronic hunger. Chronic hunger is more evasive than the primary hunger Leticia experiences. It produces a numbing of the body that impedes one from responding to physical, emotional and intellectual lacks. As one becomes numb to the sensation of primary hunger, one begins to express an apathetic attitude towards life itself. The apathy of chronic hunger functions to maintain hunger by decreasing the drive that facilitates the nourishment of vital needs. Leticia begins to recognize the formation of that apathy in herself in the beginning of the novel, before she meets Doña Luisa. She then identifies it in Doña Luisa as a symptom of chronic

hunger the first day they meet.

The active drive that Doña Luisa lacks because her hungers have become chronic is what I refer to as appetite. While hunger is the communication of a vital need, appetite is the specific impetus that leads one to obtain not only that which one needs, but also that which one desires. Because appetite brings us from the realm of need to the realm of desire, it has a more active, impulsive nature than hunger. While Leticia's hunger for knowledge is fulfilled when she obtains an education, for instance, her education also leads to the deepening of her drive for knowledge. That drive, which grows more intense when her hungers are satisfied, is appetite.

The movement from hunger into appetite is where, I argue, the feminist potential of the literary Hunger Years is concentrated. By identifying the emergence of an active drive for artistic, intellectual and emotional satisfaction from within states of at times chronic hunger, Chacel, Zambrano, Salisachs and García Morales break down the repressive categories that restrict women to the home and the private sphere during the Franco regime. Their imagery specifically challenges the anti-feminist logic that the regime perpetuated whenever it linked the health of the nation to the control of the female body. We see the construction of that link begin as early as the 1940s, when in spite of the widespread famine the Regime published a plethora of disturbing media images that encouraged women to keep their bodies in order by restricting their diets and obtaining proper exercise. In one of the government sponsored newsreels that appeared in 1941 as part of the series known popularly as *No-Dos (Noticiarios y documentales)*, which played before feature films in cinema throughout the Regime, the government stressed the association between the female body and the nation. Opening onto an athletic field, the first image displayed is of women marching in sync in front of El Caudillo. The camera then quickly changes frames to zero in on a domestic scene of

baby chicks, pots and pans before shifting back to the field, where the same women now perform “una demostración perfecta de los ejercicios de la gimnasia”; [“a perfect demonstration of athletic exercises”]. Seamlessly ordered and in sync, their bodies smile, stretch and jump revealing not a sign of hunger or fatigue. The message of the No-Dos – that a controlled, orderly female body equals a controlled, orderly home and a controlled, orderly Spain – blatantly ignores the daily reality that most Spanish women faced in 1941, when the main worry was not about getting sufficient physical exercise, but about finding enough lentils to feed a growing family. The newsreel makes it clear that the Regime was not interested in resolving the famine, but rather in telling a tale about a nation that was healthy because its women were well-kept.

If the newsreel were not enough, the bogus weight loss ads published in the early 1940s by the magazines of the Feminine Section of the Falange, Y: Revista para la mujer and Medina, drove home the function of the female body in the cunning rhetoric of the regime. Y and Medina frequently published ads for calorie burning waters: if you wanted a “simple means of losing weight,” you should Agua Fita de Santa Fe; if you worried about excess calories, Agua Castromonte would burn them off; and if you sought to prevent extra food from being stored as body fat, Agua Fontenova was your brand (131). In 1941, the editors of Y went as far as to recommend that Spanish women follow a diet in the midst of the famine. To prevent the accumulation of excess body fat, they should eat five small, protein-rich meals a day and restrict their intake of meat to 100 grams per day. If a woman were to follow such a diet, she would need to obtain for herself alone 600 grams of meat over the postwar ration allotted to each family per week (Lafuente 134).

Indeed, due to the dire shortage of food, the government strictly controlled the purchase and consumption of the most essential ingredients of the Spanish diet, not

only meat, but also garbanzos, rice, beans, lentils, pasta, cheese, butter, chocolate, coffee, cookies and fruit. The stress the Regime placed on controlling the female body through exercise and diet constructed the image of a well-fed, body-conscious populace. That image contrasted sharply with the penurious daily reality faced by those Spaniards who struggled to meet their daily needs while following the government-imposed ration. The disparity between the propagandistic image of healthy feminine bodies and the realities faced by most women shows the deception behind the rhetoric of the regime, which was based not on providing the Spanish women with good, wholesome nourishment, but on convincing them to self-restrict their hungers and appetites.

The steady construction of the link between controlled feminine bodies and a controlled, healthy Spanish state was further cemented through the restrictive educational and legislative policies that the Regime implemented. Juxtaposed to following Y's diets, women were taught to restrict their bodies to the social space of the home. They were stripped of any rights that they had gained during the liberal years of the Second Spanish Republic, which included not only the rights to abortion, suffrage and divorce, but also the right to open a bank account or buy a car without a husband's permission. They learned, in essence, that they were second-class citizens, bound completely to the role of mother and housewife:

Francoism cannot be understood without taking into account the fact that until 1975, the year of Franco's death, a married woman in Spain could not open a bank account, buy a car, apply for a passport, or even work without her husband's permission. And if she did work with her husband's approval, he had the right to claim her salary. On top of that, for the whole forty-year period contraception, divorce and abortion were illegal. In addition, adultery was a crime for which a woman could be sent

to prison, while concubinage (male adultery), though a criminal offense, was treated more leniently. (Montero 381-82)

It is clear that women were key figures targeted by the Regime; their cooperation helped Francoism to achieve its goal of creating a self-sustaining, dictatorial society. If women complied with the domestic regime prescribed to them, the Regime implied, Spain would avert spiraling backwards into the chaotic wartime era from which Franco had saved it.

To highlight the Regime's manipulation of the female body, through which they compelled women to enforce the very politics that subordinated them, the writers I study show the malnourished female bodies that the Regime's logic produced. The metaphorical employment of hunger as a language that expresses feminine physical, emotional, intellectual and artistic needs and of appetite as a language that conveys feminine physical, emotional, intellectual and artistic drives challenges the restrictive social categories in which the Regime classified gender roles. Locating appetite from within a space of hunger allows women writers to critique the state of disempowerment in which the Regime placed them. Even a woman who suffered from chronic hunger could move towards health by recognizing and engaging with the subversive voices that impelled her not only to meet her needs, but also to explore her drives.

In conducting my research, my aim has been to interpret feminine hungers and appetites in accordance with the challenge that Roberta Johnson proposed to Hispanists in her article, "Spanish feminist theory: then and now" (2003). Rather than apply French or American literary interpretations of feminist theories to peninsular texts, Johnson impels us to look within Spain itself to comprehend the nuances of a Spanish feminism. Johnson organizes contemporary Western feminist theory into two categories: "pure" theorists, such as Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, Carol

Gilligan, Nancy Chodorow and Judith Butler, work on various aspects of the female condition and the construction of gender in the West; “pragmatic” theorists refer to academics, like Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, who formulate arguments about women as writers and literary characters through the study of specific national literatures, often Anglo-American (12). While both “pragmatic” and “pure” theorists have played an important role in inspiring Hispanists to probe into the position of women and the feminine in Spanish texts, Johnson argues that they have turned Hispanic feminism into a self-imposed, Anglo-American colony. She questions why there has not been a more extensive body of scholarship on Spanish literature parallel to the studies done on Anglo-American texts (15). She urges us to “wean ourselves from these models and declare the thirty-year apprenticeship at an end” (18). My study takes on Johnson’s challenge not only by using a theoretical framework grounded in Spanish literature, but also by contextualizing a branch of Spanish feminism within the social situation of 1940s Spain.

Since Johnson’s proposal, many scholars have also studied Spanish feminism from a Spanish context, including Jo Labanyi, Elizabeth Scarlett and Christine Arkininstall. Since all three scholars have traced the emergence of a feminist literary voice through their distinct readings of corporeal imagery in late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century texts, their analyses have been critical to my interpretation of the counter-cultural significance of the hungers and appetites. In her book-length study, Gender and Modernization in the Spanish Realist Novel, Labanyi unravels the links between the construction of social discourses and representations of the body in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Spanish realist novel. In her chapter on La Regenta, she interprets the bodies of Alas’s protagonists in accordance with late 19<sup>th</sup> century economic discourses, showing that concepts such as “blockage” and “accumulation” are aligned with the feminine physique, and “flow”

and “expenditure” with the masculine. The balance between feminine and masculine, or between blockage and flow and accumulation and expenditure, she argues, determines the health of individual male and female bodies and of the larger social body (227). As Labanyi reveals the link that has been constructed between biological processes and economic and gender discourses, she facilitates the deconstruction of the binaries that have been used to impede women from participating in masculine activities, which include cultural production, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Developing Labanyi’s focus on the social and cultural significances of the body, Scarlett’s Under Construction: The Body in Spanish Novels looks more exclusively at the counter-cultural potential of literary representations of the body in 20<sup>th</sup> century novels. She analyzes works by prominent Spanish women writers including Emilia Pardo Bazán, Rosa Chacel and Mercé Rodoreda in order to argue that the female body is a vehicle for critiquing relationships between gender, sexuality and culture (47). Her specific focus on the female body helped me to form an understanding of how women writers have used the body symbolically to evade censorship during the Franco regime, challenging the Regime’s rhetoric not through words, but through the imagery that moves beneath language.

Finally, my interpretation of the female body through the particular lenses of hungers and appetites is greatly indebted to Arkinstall’s analysis of culinary discourses in the chapter on Rosa Chacel that she published in Histories, Cultures and National Identities: Women Writing Spain. Arkinstall is the first critic I encountered to explicitly link a language of food to the construction of gender in 20<sup>th</sup> century Spanish literature. Focusing on culinary discourses in Chacel’s novelistic trilogy, La escuela de Platón, she finds that while cooking, Chacel’s female characters begin to broach subjects traditionally aligned with the masculine, namely cultural production (156). The result,

Arkininstall argues, is a confusion of patriarchal gender boundaries. As Chacel blends masculine culture into the feminine cooking, she subtly allows for the emergence of an alternative narrative voice that belongs to a feminine artistic subject.

Inspired by Arkininstall, I have nonetheless found that it is not in cooking alone that a feminine artistic voice emerges, but rather in the languages of consumption and production transmitted through literary images of hungry women. While it is accepted that women cook for others, what happens, the authors I study ask, when women nourish themselves? What transpires when a feminine body is shown as hungry not only for food, but also for art and philosophy? What ensues when hungers become appetites, or active desires for physical, emotional and intellectual nourishment? What occurs when appetites manifest an active feminine will to participate not only in cultural consumption, but also in the production of knowledge and art?

As I have implied, the use of feminine hungers and appetites as a literary trope has the direct objective of challenging the anti-feminist discourses of the Regime, which were built on centuries of feminine subordination in Spanish culture. In literature, we can trace the dissemination of a restrictive feminine rhetoric back to the very first Spanish literary texts. Most notably, the well-studied 16<sup>th</sup> century feminine conduct manuals by Catholic humanists such as Juan Luis Vives and Fray Luis de León bluntly associate the social and cultural capacity, or lack thereof, of women with the functions of their reproductive organs. In La perfecta casada [1583], León contends that not only should women not be scientists or artists, but they should not even read about science or art. They have no facilities to help them understand material that has nothing to do with their “natural” domestic role: “Así como a la mujer buena y honesta la naturaleza no la hizo para el estudio de las ciencias ni para los negocios de dificultades, sino para un oficio simple y doméstico, así les limitó al entender, y por consiguiente, les tasó las

palabras y las razones" (176). ["Just as nature did not make good and honest women to study science or to negotiate difficult affairs, but for a simple and domestic occupation, so too did nature limit their understanding and, as a result, restrict their words and reason."] The late nineteenth century re-publication of such manuals reinforced constrictive gender theories just as discourses of biological determinism in the sciences and naturalism in the humanities yielded a renewed focus on feminine physiology. In an 1889 article written for La vanguardia, Catalán writer Pompeyo Gener went as far as to say that in comparison with the male physique, the female was "incomplete," inferior in all respects except for the ability to reproduce: "En sí misma, la mujer, no es como el hombre, un ser completo; es solo el instrumento de la reproducción, la destinada a perpetuar la especie; mientras que el hombre es el encargado de hacerla progresar, el generador de la inteligencia" (Laffite 204). ["By herself, woman is not a complete being, like man. She is only an instrument of reproduction, destined to perpetuate the species. Meanwhile, man is in charge of advancing the species and generating intelligence."] Besides being mothers, the only job women were suited for was to support their husbands in whatever way possible so that men might advance society. Further cementing the association between the female capacity to reproduce and the social role of housewife, in the early 1920s endocrinologist Gregorio Marañón, who in other contexts promoted egalitarian and democratic rights for both sexes, used his scientific understanding of the female and male bodies as evidence that a woman's place was, undoubtedly, at home. The anabolic metabolism of the female physique, he argued, was perfect for storing nutrients and helped women to acquire the rich reserve of energy required to raise children and stay home (82-83). On the other hand, the catabolic metabolism of the male body allowed men to easily break down nutrients, suiting them well for the type of energy expenditure required in the public sphere of society.

Maranon's theory manifests only a small segment of the patriarchal discourse that marginalized female bodies from cultural production in the days leading up to the Generation of '27, when Rosa Chacel and María Zambrano would have felt their first desires for artistic and philosophical nourishment.

Indeed, the traditional association of the feminine with the home and the masculine with social and cultural production was so strong in the beginning of the twentieth century that the few women who dared to associate themselves with the feminist movements that were beginning to burgeon in other Western European countries were labeled radicals. At the end of her career, Emilia Pardo Bazán realized that a feminist message simply did not speak to Spanish women, who identified with the domestic, feminine role. After witnessing the failure of her Biblioteca de la mujer, a group of texts that she had published to bring European feminism to the educated minority of Spanish women, the confrontational writer decided to make manifest the feminine/feminist divide. Since Spanish women apparently were uninterested in reading translated versions of August Bebel's Women and Socialism [1879] and John Stuart Mill's "The Subjection of Women" [1869]. For the final volumes of her Biblioteca she wrote two cookbooks: La cocina española antigua [1913] and La cocina española moderna [1914]. In the prologue to La cocina española antigua, she sardonically explains her shift in tone from feminism to food as a way to attract an audience that was too feminine to be feminist:

Tiempo ha fundé esta Biblioteca de la Mujer, aspirando a reunir en ella lo más saliente de lo que en Europa aparecía, sobre cuestión tan de actualidad como el feminismo. Suponía yo que en España pudiera quizás interesar este problema, cuando menos, a una ilustrada minoría. No tardé en darme cuenta de que no era así [...] puesto que la opinión sigue

relegando a la mujer a las faenas caseras, me propuse a enriquecer la Sección de Economía Doméstica con varias obras que pueden ser útiles, contribuyendo a que la casa esté bien arreglada y regida. (1-2)

[It has been awhile since I founded the Woman's Library with the goal of uniting the most prominent texts that had been published in Europe on a very contemporary subject: feminism. I thought that in Spain this issue would interest at least a minority of educated women. It did not take long for me to realize that I was wrong [...] since popular opinion continues to relegate women to domestic duties, I decided to enrich the Domestic Economy Section with various works that would help the home stay tidy and well kept.]

In writing cookbooks, Pardo Bazán recognized that feminism would not make any progress in Spain if the movement opposed the housewife role with which so many women identified. When her critics responded to her shift towards the domestic with surprise, she mockingly declared that it should have been normal for a non-feminine woman such as herself to take an interest in improving her culinary skills: "Well, what's the matter? Wasn't I an androgynous person, with more andro than gyno? Wasn't it the case that I didn't even know you break an egg before you fry them?" (qtd. in Henseler 5). While Pardo Bazán may not have initiated a feminist movement in Spain, in publishing cookbooks she boldly called attention to the feminine/ feminist disparity that must be deconstructed before Spanish feminism could make any gains.

As the twentieth century progressed, the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic did lead, as mentioned, to unprecedented legal advancements for Spanish women, including the monumental rights to obtain a divorce and cast a vote. Still, social and cultural feminist progress was minimal. The feminine remained a binary opposite

of both the masculine and of feminist, the former associated with domesticity and the latter two with virility. In 1931, the same year as the declaration of the Second Republic, self-proclaimed feminist writer Carmen Burgos, who had previously written El divorcio en España [1904] and La mujer moderna y sus derechos [1927], appeared to follow Pardo Bazán in drawing attention to the feminine/feminist divide with the publication of her nutrition manual, ¿Quiere ud. comer bien? However, her manual failed to ironize the difference between feminine and feminist or to signal that difference as an impediment to women's rights. Rather, she thwarted the progress of feminine collaboration by promoting a hierarchical order between ladies and their cooks. Well aware that upper-class ladies would have constituted her readership, she showed the señora how to exert proper control over her lower class, and most likely illiterate, servants. As the title page declares, it was an "obra indispensable para cocineras y para las señoras que deseen intervenir en la cocina y en la dirección de la casa"; ["an indispensable work for cooks and for ladies who want to intervene in the running of their home."] Calling attention to the importance of the cook in the running of the home, Burgos encouraged upper-class women to supervise their work in the kitchen. If the señora judged that she had a truly noble cook, she should pay her the salary that she deserved:

La cocinera o el cocinero es el cargo más importante de un hogar; y cuando una familia está en condiciones de vivir bien, no debe regatear el sueldo a una cocinera si ésta es verdaderamente notable. Diez o quince pesetas al mes más o menos no influyen en nada en el presupuesto mensual de una casa, y un hogar protegido por una buena cocinera evita algunos viajes a la farmacia y contribuye al bienestar de la familia. (12)

[The cook has the most important job of the home; and if a family has the

means to live well, a truly notable cook should not be cheated of his or her salary. Approximately ten or fifteen pesetas per month does not affect the monthly budget of a household, and a home protected by a good cook avoids some trips to the pharmacy and contributes to the well-being of the family.]

If Burgos advocated for the rights of lower-class women to have a salary, she did so at the expense of encouraging their señoras to watch them and the food they prepared more closely. Reinforcing the hierarchy between the servant and the señora, Burgos ended up underpinning the restriction of the feminine gender to the domestic sphere of society. If women assumed a hierarchical relationship with each other in the kitchen, how would they learn to collaborate and advocate for their collective rights outside of the home? After the Civil War brought the obliteration of the Second Republic and the instauration of the Franco regime, Spanish women writers finally began to grapple with this problematic by appropriating the “feminine” culinary discourse towards “feminist” goals. By transitioning from cooking to cultural consumption and production, which are the products of engaging with hungers and appetites, they questioned the binaries that had prevented feminism from taking root in Spain. They showed the paradox in the role of the housewife, who cared for others but could not nourish herself with a proper artistic or academic education.

In accordance with my intent to situate Spanish feminism inside of a Spanish context, the theoretical framework I employ to demonstrate the feminist function of hungers and appetites stems primarily from the diaries of Rosa Chacel and the philosophical essays of María Zambrano. The frequent philosophical interludes in Chacel’s diaries and personal anecdotes in Zambrano’s essays make both examples of a hybrid philosophical-autobiographical genre in which philosophy is conveyed through

the personal life and body of the Spanish woman writer. In the first pages of my dissertation, I refer to the diaries that Chacel publishes in the beginning of Alcancía Ida and Alcancía Vuelta, her collection of personal writing from the late 1940s to the 1980s, in order to establish a framework of feminine hungers and appetites that will guide the reader through all four subsequent chapters. In the beginning of the second chapter, I put Chacel's notion of hungers and appetites into dialogue with the images of physical vacuity and fullness that María Zambrano uses to convey her philosophical theory, "razón poética," in the essays she publishes in La Cuba Secreta and Hacia un saber sobre el alma. Since both Chacel's diaries and Zambrano's essays were written from exile just as Spain was exiting the Hunger Years, the repeated images of hunger and appetites tie them to the crises that their fellow Spaniards faced in the early Franco years. They make a parallel between the penurious situation of Spaniards in the 1940s and the chronic intellectual, emotional and artistic hungers of Spanish women.

Moreover, the social impediments that prevented Spanish women from nourishing themselves are what led Chacel to gender herself "masculine" so that her novels might be taken as seriously as the works of her male contemporaries of the Generation of '27. In both Las memorias de Leticia Valle [1942] and Barrio de Maravillas [1976], the texts I interpret in my first chapter, I have found that the adolescent protagonists, Leticia, Elena and Isabel, struggle to integrate their non-feminine hungers for art and knowledge with the social roles prescribed to young women. On one hand, they sense that artistic creation and mental stimulation are basic human needs that, when unfulfilled, lead to hunger pangs. On the other, entering adolescence causes them to confront the social belief that artistic and intellectual nourishment is not "feminine." Further complicating matters, as they feed their hungers, they feel the growth of active appetites for knowledge and art, the acceptance of which would be, as Leticia's father

says, “inaudible” for a young girl. While Leticia writes her memoirs in order to understand her appetites, Isabel and Elena’s “inaudible” artistic education leads them to uncover a hidden tradition of Spanish art that links them to their mothers, offering a new perspective on femininity. Through interpreting and reading maternal art, they begin to feel nourished and connected to a collective, feminine agency that teaches them to be artists.

I continue to nuance my account of feminine hungers and appetites in the second chapter, where I interpret Zambrano’s theory of “razón poética” in accordance with her philosophical memoir, Delirio y destino: Los veinte años de una española (1989). Like Chacel’s adolescents, Zambrano’s self-based protagonist remembers having a fervent appetite for knowledge, in particular for philosophy, since she was a child. As a philosophy student in 1920s Madrid, however, she recalls that her understanding of her intellectual appetite entailed the denial of her body’s hungers. To fill herself with “pure” knowledge, or truth, she felt a paradoxical urge to vacate her body of flesh. Nonetheless, as she writes she realizes that in order to communicate the “pure” truth that fills her to a reader, she must resituate herself in her body. The resultant dialectic of physical denial and acceptance, which I term philosophical (dis)embodiment, visualizes the process of “razón poética” that Zambrano had proposed in the essays of Hacia un saber sobre el alma. Engaging in the “razón poética” of her life leads Zambrano to acknowledge that knowledge, for her, emerges from a context of feminine hunger. As she finally embraces her body’s lacks at the end of her memoir, she implies that the malnourished feminine physique can be the starting point for the articulation of a feminine Spanish philosophy.

The skeletal, personal body at the center of Zambrano’s philosophy superficially contrasts with the excessive consumption of food and clothing by characters of two

novels by best-selling Generation of '50 writer, Mercedes Salisachs. Beneath the excessive appetites in La estación de las hojas amarillas [1963] and El volumen de la ausencia [1983], Salisachs reveals that hunger remains at the core of the feminine experience both immediately following the Civil War and in the years after the Transition to democracy. In the third chapter, I argue that corporeal hunger can be read as a manifestation of the loss inscribed into the feminine identities of women who lived through the Franco regime. In particular, I look at the loss that emerges from beneath excessive consumption, manifesting itself as the aftermath of the body that has vomited, cleansed and purged itself during the process that Julia Kristeva refers to as abjection. In framing Salisachs' novels around a discussion of abjection, I begin to show that the feminist imagery I identify in Spain is in relation to other, more canonical European feminist texts written at the same time. Further exploring how Spanish feminism informs and changes our understanding of European texts would make for a groundbreaking future study on Spain's relationship with European feminisms.

I finish my dissertation by analyzing chronic hungers and appetites in the popular novels of Adelaida García Morales, an author best known for the novella El sur, which became an almost immediate classic after the 1983 release of its cinematic adaptation by her ex-husband, Victor Érice. Instead of looking at this frequently anthologized work, I focus on two of García Morales's more understudied novels: El silencio de las sirenas [1985] and El secreto de Elisa [1999]. Set in marginalized, rural villages of Spain, both novels link corporeal hunger with the human need for physical and emotional connection. As her characters acknowledge their hunger for connection, they begin to explore their more active desires for communication. Engaging in their appetites leads them into uncharted territory in which they pursue emotional connections with the dead. The result is the fostering of empathy, which leads them to

nurture a deeper, more embodied relationship with themselves and with those around them. By opening up previously hidden communicative lines, the relationships developed between the living and the dead provide a platform through which to bring out of isolation stories that had been marginalized as a consequence of the Regime.

Through a focus on the female body in Spain, my dissertation traces a genealogy of women writers who initiated a feminist movement in literature through the subtle yet poignant imagery of hungers and appetites. They appropriate the food used when domestic women cook to highlight the hungers women. Once they situate women in a position of hunger, a position that Spain understands too well after the 1940s, they begin to empower the feminine by exploring all of the appetites forbidden to women during the Regime. Since the authors I have included span from the Second Republic to the Transition to Democracy, they show that a feminist movement in Spain, though slow in growing, did develop after Civil War and was sustained throughout the entirety of the Franco regime. The stark differences between the modernist writing of Rosa Chacel and the philosophical essays of María Zambrano, two women who have already been canonized and are regularly considered to be a part of the Generation of '27; the middle-brow novels of Mercedes Salisachs; and the popular novels of Adelaida García Morales show that a feminist impulse has been perpetuated through literature of distinct genre and unites women authors from the penurious years of the 1940s to the modernized Spain of the 1980s and 90s, which saw a drastic integration of women into the public sphere (Montero 382). The similarities in their use of hungers and appetites as literary tropes cause us not to question what changed for women as Spain transitioned into democracy, but to explore how the malnourished situation of women during the Regime affects contemporary society. They imply that we can understand that effect by looking into the inheritance of feminine lack.

Writing from a Spanish feminist position after the Franco regime means embracing the lacks that women embody. It means connecting the silenced, and at times tragic, artistic trajectory of Spain's mothers to all of the daughters and sons who wish to nourish Spain into a new, democratic society after Franco's death.

## Chapter 1:

### **Hungry daughters and their mothers: Rosa Chacel**

In the late 1920s and into the Second Republic, Rosa Chacel steered clear of the slowly burgeoning Spanish feminist movement. Although her novels suggest that she supported social aspirations such as the equal access of women to education and cultural production, throughout her career she maintained that she was no feminist (Bellver 123). Rather than align herself with an unpopular movement that denounced the traditional connotations of the feminine versus the masculine in culture and society, Chacel denied the existence of gender differentiation, particularly in literary production. She asserted that there was no such thing as feminine literature. The notion itself was “una estupidez”; [“a stupidity”] (qtd. in Scarlett 63). At first glance, her refutation of gender differentiation in literature appears to be an act of compliance with the patriarchal cultural discourses that impeded women from participating in Spanish cultural production during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, as Catherine Bellver writes in her study of Spanish women poets of the 1920s and 30s, Chacel always undercut her superficial acquiescence to patriarchy with a subversive, feminist voice (121). From beneath the manly guise that she wore in order to authorize her literature in a society that still overwhelmingly associated artistic production with men, there never ceased to emerge an authoritative and feminine presence.

Chacel’s denial of the feminine/masculine gender divide in literature extended to her relationship with gender in other aspects of her life. Although she did not deny that she was a woman, she associated herself with the masculine gender, often drawing attention to the “manly” whiskey and pipe she imbibed well into her 90s (Kirkpatrick 124; Scarlett 50). In addition, despite the fact that the first literature she produced was

poetry, in literary circles she disavowed that she was a “poet” because of the mawkish connotations of “poetisas” in 1920s Spain<sup>1</sup>. She strove instead to align herself with modernist European writers such as Proust, insisting that her poems were a playful hobby, not an art (Bellver 123; Alcancía Ida 64). While Chacel’s distance between herself and the feminine could mistakenly be taken as a rejection of femininity, as Bellver sustains, her antics were part of a complicated process of gender critique. She clearly did not celebrate feminine women of patriarchal culture. However, in her literary texts she embedded a subtle, more evasive femininity that emerges not in contrast to, but alongside masculinity: “all her self-effacement, self-censorship, deference to patriarchy, and displacement of the personal prove to be a mask concealing an authoritative voice and a commanding female presence” (Bellver 121). The authoritative voice and commanding female presence that Bellver points to constitutes what she terms Chacel’s double-voiced discourse. Repeatedly undercutting a superficial compliance with dominant patriarchal discourses, Chacel’s double-voiced discourse surfaces precisely at those points where she saw a gender binary. It functions to challenge the belittlement of the feminine in culture by gesturing towards a strong but subtle feminine presence that is capable of undoing the restrictive structure sustaining patriarchy.

In Chacel’s novels, which she published from the early 1930s until her death in 1994, we see the emergence of her double-voiced discourse through the integration of images associated with the “feminine” into “masculine” cultural realms. Christine Arkininstall specifically identifies it in the culinary discourse that Chacel wove into the novelistic trilogy she wrote from exile throughout the Franco regime (156). Entitled La

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<sup>1</sup> While many women poets of Chacel’s time, including Ernestina de Champourcin, Josefina de la Torre, Concha Méndez, and Carmen Conde, challenged the sentimental connotations of Spanish feminine verse by writing poems that incorporated the same surrealist techniques as those of their male contemporaries,

escuela de Platón and comprising Barrio de Maravillas [1976], Acrópolis [1984] and Ciencias naturales [1988], the trilogy employs cooking as a metaphor for the full participation of women in elaborating Spanish culture and society (156). In this chapter, I argue that it is not by cooking alone that Chacel's characters assert their ability to function fully in culture and society. If women are to be intellectuals and artists, Chacel shows, they must also eat what they cook. In transitioning from cooking to eating, Chacel's novels elucidate that from within the traditional role that restricts femininity to the domestic sphere, women can find the nourishment to engage in all of their cultural appetites, regardless of their gender.

In order to analyze the connection between eating and cultural and social participation in Chacel's novels, I focus on two forms of consumption: consumption as a response to hunger and consumption as an engagement with appetite. In Alcancía Ida/Vuelta [1982], the only compilation of diary entries published by a Spanish woman in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Chacel reveals the nuanced symbolic meanings of hunger versus appetite (Freixas 161). On January 25, 1952, she establishes physical hunger as a symbol for her unmet emotional needs. Because she has spent years neglecting her emotional health, she lives with a chronic lack of feeling, an insatiable and numbed hunger that has produced in her a deadened appetite for life itself:

Llevo años en esta muerte de los sentidos, en esta atrofia de la personalidad – conciencia de inutilidad del deseo, desánimo de la voluntad ante el intento indefectiblemente fallido –, buscando algún alimento, por ligero que sea, para sostenerme en la vida. Tengo muchas cosas para vivir por ellas, pero esas cosas no me nutren con la mínima

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the continued alignment of avant-garde poetry with the masculine gender is evidenced in the predominately male poets that have been canonized as members of the Generation of '27.

emoción. (20)

[I have spent years in this death of the senses, this atrophy of personality – conscious of the futility of desire, my will discouraged before the inevitability of failed attempt – looking for some nourishment, little though it may be, to sustain me in life. I have many things to live for, but these things do not nourish me with minimal emotion.]

Since hunger refers to a human need – here emotional – Chacel knows that being hungry is a state that, with time, will lead to death. The numbed senses and personality that she describes imply that her hunger is indeed chronic. Even though she wants to live, she is unable to fuel the specific drive, the appetite, that would sustain her in life.

The union of the mind/body duality, which is the result of employing hunger as a literary trope, manifests Chacel's double-voiced discourse. On one hand, the physical sensation that hunger evokes, too familiar to the many Spaniards who lived through the 1940s Hunger Years, grounds her imagery in the matter of the body, which is traditionally aligned with the feminine. As soon as Chacel roots her reader in feminine matter, however, she carries him or her into the more ineffable realm of emotion. Moreover, the emotion for which she hungers is not superficially feminine. She does not want mawkishness or sentimentality. Rather, she craves an emotion associated with the intellect. Nourishing herself emotionally through intellect is essential to the quality of being she seeks: "Pero esa violencia de la emoción integral - ¿convendría decir óptica? ... –, en la que toda la sangre alfuye hacia una idea – esto no es una frase de sentido figurado –, quiero decir exactamente ese clima interior que llega hasta los confines del ser..." (20). ["But that violence of integral emotion – shall we say ontic? ... –, in which all blood flows towards an idea – this is not a phrase with figurative meaning – I mean exactly that interior climate that reaches the confines of being... ."] Through the word

“ontic” Chacel points her reader towards a philosophy of being that integrates emotional and physical and intellectual nourishment. She knows that to be healthy she must tend to all of her hungers no matter their gender. She implies that because her philosophy of being conflicts with the dominant binary permutations of masculine/feminine as mind/body, intellect/emotion, artistic production/reproduction, she is unable to live by it. Since as a woman she is not supposed to nourish her mind at the same time that she nourishes her body, she cannot conceive of being both a woman and well-nourished.

Chacel returns to the violence of the integral emotion for which she hungers later in that same paragraph, where she elucidates her definition of appetite. Even though Chacel knows that her emotional and physical well-being depend on the proper nourishment of her mind and body, she continues to reflect on the paradoxical relationship between hunger and appetite. The more she hungers, she realizes, the less she actively desires nourishment: “Siento el empobrecimiento progresivo, la falta del apetito: aquel motor que era en mí tan poderoso como pueda serlo en un tigre” (20). [“I feel progressive impoverishment, a lack of appetite: that motor that used to be as strong in me as it is in a tiger.”] Unlike hunger, Chacel knows that appetite is active. As she explains the following day, January 26, it is a drive that leads her to say “yes” to everything that has to do with life: “No, yo hablo de un apetito que no es más que aceptación de la vida, disposición natural para decir sí a todo, en fin, no es más que porosidad, antenas exentas de desgana y de cansancio. Una permanente comunión erótica con el universo, lo más ajeno a la lujuria, lo más próximo a la comunión” (22). [“No, I am talking about an appetite that is no more than the acceptance of life, the natural disposition to say yes to everything. Yes, it isn’t more than porosity, antennae free of indifference and fatigue. A permanent, erotic communion with the universe, the

furthest thing from lust, the closest to communion.”] While an appetite is natural and should serve to help the body to feed its hungers, if the body’s hungers become chronic, appetite is weakened. In contrast to the appetite that says “yes,” a weakened appetite maintains deadened, numbed individual bodies that are disconnected both from each other and from the universe.

In spite of her knowledge that appetite is natural and healthy, in her memoir of her first ten years, Desde el amanecer [1972], Chacel explains that as a child she learned to control her appetite from her mother. Again reflecting upon the tiger-like vigor of her appetite as a child, before she had been taught the rules that controlled artistic and intellectual drives in women, she deduces that her disposition to eat everything made it difficult for her mother to raise her according to properly feminine social norms:

Mi madre me criaba con dificultad y yo procuraba hacerle fácil la situación: yo estaba dispuesta a comer todo lo que pusieron a mi alcance. Sobre todo, estaba siempre dispuesta a hacer todo lo que hiciesen porque nunca, ni un momento entre el légamo de mi puerilidad, admití que mis facultades no les igualaran. (17-18)

[My mother had a difficult time raising me, and I tried to make it easy for her: I was willing to eat anything put within my reach. Most importantly, I was always willing to do whatever they did because never, not even for one moment in the messiness of my childhood, did I admit that my abilities were not equal to theirs.]

Chacel’s appetite clearly manifests itself in her young drive to do everything that anyone else – no matter his or her age or gender – could do. Later on in her memoirs, she reiterates that her appetite exceeded social constraints when she remembers blithely ordering a beer, a drink she gendered masculine, one day in a bar with her Uncle

Mariano (252). After the beer, the two engaged in a “manly” conversation on culture and art (252). Though encouraged to be indiscriminate in drinking beer and discussing art with her uncle, she maintains that her behavior made it difficult for her mother to raise her. She subtly points the reader to the irony undergirding her childhood: the more she consumed, the more her mother struggled to nurture her into a feminine young woman.

### **Leticia Valle: A daughter’s hunger**

At the same time that the young Chacel struggled with her non-feminine hungers and appetites, in the United Kingdom Virginia Woolf used food to reflect on the lack of access of English women to literary production. Since feminism was largely regarded as a defunct movement that ended when women were granted suffrage rights when Woolf first delivered her famous essay, *A Room of One’s Own*, as a speech to highly educated university women, Woolf, like Chacel, did not identify herself or her purpose as feminist (Gordon vii). Nonetheless, her speech subtly features the very feminist issue of women and literary production through the symbolic connection she draws between food and art.

In the first section of the essay, Woolf paints a scene in which her fictional narrator, the tri-named Mary Seton/Beton/Charmichael, is an unlikely female guest at a luncheon at Oxbridge, a fictional version of Oxford. After showing that she stands out as a woman at the university, Mary enters the luncheon scene and focuses not on the intellectual topic of conversation, but on the food served. She sustains that her observations highlight an aspect of the luncheon ignored by conventional representations of luncheons in fiction and therefore pose a challenge to standard narrative technique:

It is a curious fact that novelists have a way of making us believe that

luncheon parties are invariably memorable for something very witty that was said, or for something very wise that was done. But they seldom spare a word for what was eaten. It is part of the novelist's convention not to mention soup and salmon and ducklings, as if soup and salmon and ducklings were of no importance whatsoever, as if nobody ever smoked a cigar or drank a glass of wine. Here, however, I shall take the liberty to defy that convention and to tell you that the lunch on this occasion began with soles, sunk in a deep dish, over which the college cook had spread a counterpane of the whitest cream, save that it was branded here and there with brown spots like the spots of the flanks of a doe. After that came the partridges, but if this suggests a couple of bald, brown birds on a plate you are mistaken. The partridges, many and various, came with all their retinue of sauces and salads, the sharp and the sweet, each in its order; their potatoes thin as coins but not so hard; their sprouts, foliated as rosebuds but more succulent. (11)

In illustrating the food that luncheon guests consume, Woolf exemplifies feminine artistic production as art that is overlooked by convention, art that feeds and nourishes not just the mind, but also the body. Since her description of food evokes a work of art, she insinuates that non-conventional art combines masculine and feminine, mind and body, and intellect and matter. It is the product of an engagement with a counter-cultural appetite that acknowledges but does not obey convention.

Still, as soon as the narrator implies that food is art, she makes it clear that the Oxbridge cook is no artist because a cook must cook to make a living. In order to be an artist, Mary Seton/Beton/Charmichael deduces, one must have freedom to explore without financial constraints. Being an artist requires both ample money – money not

earned in a job, but given in the form of an inheritance – and a room of one’s own:

For genius like Shakespeare’s is not born among laboring, uneducated, servile people. It is not born in England among the Saxons and the Britons. It is not born today among the working classes. How, then, could it have been born among women whose work began, according to Professor Trevelyan, almost before they were out of the nursery, who were forced to it by their parents and held to it by all the power of law and custom? (48)

No matter their social class, the difficulties faced by women artists, Woolf laments, are “infinitely more formidable,” than those faced by men (52). The innumerable tasks that society assigns to women, who from childhood are reared for marriage and motherhood, constrain artistic creation more than working class life. Not only do women have little time and space to develop a work of art; they are actively questioned by society as soon as they show an inclination to pick up a pen: “The world did not say to her as it said to [prospective male artists], Write if you choose; it makes no difference to me. The world said with a guffaw, Write? What’s the good of your writing?” (52). In her diaries, Chacel frequently laments that the time she spends completing feminine activities such as ironing or sewing leaves her with little time for writing. On one afternoon in 1954, she complains that she spent all of the time she had planned to dedicate to working on Barrio to mending her skirt: “...tuve que ponerme a zurcirlo, sacando hilos de las costuras porque la tela es muy fina, casi transparente, y no se puede hacer con hilos comunes. Total, tres cuartos de hora cosiendo: ya no me quedaba tiempo para ponerme a escribir” (Alcancía (Ida) 61). [“...I had to begin mending it, undoing threads at the seams because the fabric was very fine, almost transparent, and could not be fixed with ordinary threads. In the end, three fourths of an hour spent sewing: no time left to begin to write.”] Months later, after Chacel has had a fervent

writing spell including about 20 days of working on Barrio “torrencialmente” (63) [“torrentially,”] Chacel herself is the critic who questions the value of her work. She contends that her writing is filled with erratum that she calls “*gaffes*,” in reference to French philosopher André Gide. She laments that she will never write with the grace of Gide or Proust because her desire to write exceeds her ability to write well: “Parecería que mis *gaffes* fueran originadas por esa falta de interés, pero no; son originadas por un exceso de interés, un exceso tan gigantesco que resulta anulador anestésico” (64). [“It would seem that my *gaffes* originated in that lack of interest, but no; they originate from an excess of interest, an excess so gigantic that it turns into an anesthetized void.”] While earlier Chacel associated a lack of appetite with chronic hunger, now she implies that an excessive appetite also leads to a numbed void that circles back to the chronically empty stomach. When appetite is restrained, she implies, it is difficult to engage in the natural drive that leads to health. The healthy body is replaced by a numb, disconnected vacancy.

At the end of Woolf’s essay, after Mary Seton/Beton/Charmichael has listed the many impediments that prevent English women from being artists, Woolf finally calls for a direct upheaval of the social norms that keep those impediments in place. She introduces another, authorial narrative voice into the text that anticipates the possible objections her audience may have to Mary Seton/ Beton/ Charmichael’s reflection on women and fiction. The first objection her narrator takes on is that Mary Seton/ Beton/ Charmichael has not discussed the comparative artistic merit of men and women. In favor of Mary, she contends that such comparisons would be unproductive, as the norms that they would be based on would emerge from the same cultural discourse that elevated the masculine and denigrated the feminine in art (106). Rather than compare masculine to feminine, the narrator urges women to write in spite of any

adversity they face from representatives of patriarchal order. Encouraging defiance, Woolf weaves her conclusion back into her first chapter, when her narrator boldly defied patriarchal narrative convention to write about food. Her circumlocutory approach promotes the upheaval of patriarchal social and cultural norms by pointing to alternative norms that emerge from within the same institution that perpetuates patriarchy.

Meanwhile, in Spain Chacel struggled to accept her artistic appetites not only during the late 1920s and throughout the Second Spanish Republic, but also, as shown in the previously cited diary entries, during the forty years she spent as an exile from the Franco government in Brazil and Argentina. In 1944, five years after the end of the Spanish Civil War, she published The Memoirs of Leticia Valle, the first novel in which she uses hungers and appetites as literary tropes to manifest the struggle of the female artist. The novel begins as the narrator, the almost twelve-year-old Leticia, sits down to write her memoirs as a therapeutic exercise to help her to comprehend the inaudible “things” that happened to her the previous year, when she moved from the small Castilian city, Valladolid, Chacel’s place of birth, to the neighboring town of Simancas, famous for its historical archives. Insisting that her memories of the past year are imprecise, Leticia nonetheless takes on the challenge of writing them, warning the reader on the first page that whatever it is that she is about to write her father refers to as “inaudible” (7). She makes no promises to reveal the truth. In fact, she insinuates that she will take the reader into territory that defies the social convention that constructs the truth in 1940s Spain. The result of her therapy is a work of unconventional art.

In addition to not remembering the past year, in the first pages of the novel Leticia explains that neither does she remember her mother, who died when she was an

infant. Even without knowing her mother's personality or appearance, she maintains that her mother was her primary source of physical intimacy and nourishment: "La verdad es que nunca pude recordar cómo era mi madre, pero recuerdo que yo estaba con ella en la cama, debía de ser el verano, y yo me despertaba y sentía que la piel de mi cara estaba enteramente pegada a su brazo, y la palma de mi mano pegada a su pecho" (10). ["The truth is I could never remember what my mother was like, but I remember being in bed with her, it must have been summer, and I would wake up and I could feel the skin of my face all stuck to her arm and the palm of my hand stuck to her breast" (Maier 4).] In contrast to Leticia's contented infant self, as an adolescent who lacks her mother, both in real and remembered forms, Leticia is malnourished. When she moved from Valladolid to Simancas with her father and Aunt Aurelia the previous year, Leticia's lack of maternal nourishment reached a peak; the only maternal figure in her life, her Aunt Aurelia, was too concerned with caring for Leticia's father, an injured war veteran, to tend to the girl as she used to in Valladolid. Left alone to nourish herself, Leticia ate incessantly, her hungers more and more intense:

O ya no me acuerdo o en aquellos días no pensaba más que en comer. Me tiraba de la cama temprano y me ponía a la puerta a esperar al panadero. Mi desayuno solía durar una hora. Mi padre desayunaba en la cama y mi tía no tomaba más que un sorbo de café; yo me quedaba sola en el comedor mojando pan en la leche hasta que se me acababan las fuerzas. Después me iba a la huerta, echaba un poco de agua a los cuatro tiestos que había por allí y me ponía a mirar los conejos. Me pasaba las horas muertas oyendo el ruidito que hacen al roer los troncos de col; éste era mi entretenimiento. (23)

[Either I cannot remember what they were or all I thought about in those

days was eating. I would jump out of bed early and station myself at the door to wait for the baker. My breakfast lasted an hour. My father had breakfast in bed and my aunt took only a sip of coffee; I would sit alone in the dining room dunking bread in my milk until I ran out of energy. Then I would go to the garden, throw a little water on the four flowerpots there and start watching the rabbits. I spent hour after dead hour listening to the faint noise rabbits make when they gnaw on cabbage stalks; that was my entertainment. (Maier 17)]

Alone and bored in a world in which she had no mother, Leticia turned to food as a way to fulfill her unmet emotional needs. Because she had not identified the cause of her hungers as boredom or loneliness, she continued to eat and to be both lonely and bored. Meanwhile, her apathetic attitude, which emerges when she describes watching the rabbits eat the cabbage she had just watered, signals the weakening of her appetite. Leticia sees the extremity of a weakened feminine appetite in Aunt Aurelia, who never ate with her and reinforced her body's nutritional deficiencies by having "sips" of coffee for breakfast. While Leticia's hunger was only beginning to numb her in Simancas, Aunt Aurelia's had, Chacel implies, already become chronic.

As Leticia writes, she draws attention to the force of her hungers in spite of her formidable breakfast. The more she ate, the hungrier she became: "A eso de las diez y media volvía a pedir por la ventana de la cocina pan con chorizo, y me ponía a comerlo sentada en el columpio. Cuando al mediodía empezaban a cantar los gallos ya tenía yo otra vez una hambre loca" (23). ["At half past ten I would go back to the kitchen window to ask for bread and sausage, and I would eat it sitting on the swing. When the roosters started to crow at noon, I was already wild with hunger again" (Maier 17).] While Leticia describes her morning food routine, she continues to place special

emphasis on her boredom. She explains that the boredom she tried to counter by eating extended to her attitude towards school. It was that boredom, she deduces, not her wild hungers, that gave credence to Aunt Aurelia's assertion that she was turning into a "brute" (24). By writing, however, she comes to see that her brutishness was not rooted in the fact that she spent her days doing "nothing" but eating; rather, it emerged from the lethargic attitude she had towards doing nothing, a signal of her weakening appetite. Whereas in Valladolid she actively tried to "do nothing," in those first days in Simancas she did nothing out of apathy:

Sólo que yo sabía que lo que me embrutecía no era la falta de libros, no era que antes estudiase y ahora no hiciese nada, sino precisamente que ahora el no hacer nada lo hacía de otro modo. Antes ponía más atención en ese no hacer nada que en cualquier otra cosa. Para levantarme de la cama había una lucha que duraba media mañana todos los días; para arrancarme del balcón o del patio, o del rincón donde me metía a jugar, para hacerme acostar a una hora razonable, la misma historia. Porque precisamente cuando no hacía nada me ponía furiosa que me interrumpiesen, que me hiciesen cambiar de postura inesperadamente. En cambio, desde que caí en el pueblo, todo me dio igual: me levantaba sin llamarme nadie y en cuanto oscurecía ya estaba deseando irme a la cama. (24)

[Except I knew it was not the absence of books that was making me brutish, it was not that I studied before and now I did nothing but, quite clearly, that now I did nothing in a different way. Before, I worked harder at doing nothing than at anything else. To get up there was a struggle every day, which lasted half the morning; to get me to bed at a reasonable

hour, it would be the same story when they tried to tear me away from the balcony or the patio or the corner where I was playing. Because I would get furious if they interrupted me just when I was doing nothing, if they even made me shift my position without warning. This had changed, for since I had come to the village, nothing mattered to me. I got up without being called and as soon as it was dark I was ready to go to bed. (Maier 18)]

In associating her brutishness with apathy and distinguishing apathy from doing nothing, Leticia implies that her numbed emotional state is what made her brutish, an adjective that lends itself towards the inaudibility her father saw in her at the end of that year.

What finally nourished Leticia's vigor for life, she soon realizes, was understanding that she needed intellectual stimulation, which she got from seeing mastery at its finest. Her interest in school was renewed when she discovered that the teacher who her father and aunt had hired to give her lessons was, although not a master in the subjects she taught Leticia, a master at sewing. Unable to resist learning from a master, no matter his or her expertise, Leticia began to feel a renewed appetite to learn:

Fuese lo que fuse, aunque yo no hubiese de hacerlo jamás: ver cepillar una tabla al carpintero, ver al carnicero separar con el cuchillo el hueso de la carne; cuando lo hacían con verdadera maestría me producía una admiración y un bienestar que yo no podía expresar más que diciendo: <<Eso es hacer las cosas como Dios manda>>. Cuando descubrí que la maestra era capaz de hacer aquellos primores ya tuve de qué hablar con ella. (27)

[What they did made no difference to me, even if I would never have to do it myself. I might watch the carpenter plane a board, or watch the butcher wield his knife as he severed the meat from the bone: when they worked with true mastery it gave me a feeling of admiration and well-being that I could only express by saying, “That’s how God meant things to be done.” When I found out that my teacher could do such beautiful work, I finally had something to talk with her about. (Maier 21)]

Only in the beginning pages of her memoirs, Leticia has already figured out the antidote to her insatiable hungers. The sense of well-being she imagines feeling when she sees a carpenter plane a board, a butcher wield his knife or her teacher handle her embroidery echoes the well-being she remembers feeling as an infant, satiated in her mothers arms. Indeed, as soon as Leticia met her need for mastery, physical hunger was no longer the central concern around which she structured her days. Her emotional and intellectual needs were being fulfilled.

Soon after showing Leticia her embroidery, her teacher picked up on Leticia’s need to be surrounded by mastery and introduced her to Doña Luisa, an expert musician and wife of the town archivist, Don Daniel. When Leticia met Doña Luisa, Leticia immediately recognized in her the familiar signs of hunger:

Esa fue mi impresión cuando la miré al marcharme, a la puerta de su casa. Había un cerco oscuro, entre azul y verde, alrededor de sus ojos grises muy grandes. Sólo por tener aquellos ojos ya se podía decir que era muy guapa, y en realidad lo era. Estaba mal peinada, de un modo gracioso, y tan delgada que parecía que en vez de estar criando a un hijo estuviese criando diez a un tiempo. (32)

[That was my first impression when I looked at her at the door of her

house as I was leaving. Around her large gray eyes there were dark rings, between blue and green. Just because of those eyes you could say she was very pretty, and in truth she was. She looked disheveled, in an appealing sort of way, and she was so thin it seemed that instead of nursing one baby she must have been nursing ten all at the same time. (Maier 26)]

The militaristic image of the “cerco,” or “siege,” Leticia uses to render the circles around Luisa’s eyes, lost in Maier’s translated version of the novel, liken Luisa’s body to that of a victim of war. Depleted from the physical and emotional demands of being a mother and wife, she personifies the tragic consequences of motherhood during 1940s Spain. Instead of feeding her passion for music and knowledge, she restrained herself to properly maternal responsibilities like cooking and cleaning. Those responsibilities left her malnourished. Her only connection to music, Leticia recalls, was through her piano, which she played from time to time, and through the lessons she gave to the all girl’s choir that Leticia joined. She only began the lessons after she had already completed her wifely duties. On the occasions that she let herself get lost in her passion for music before she cooked dinner or set the table, she became palpably nervous: “Otras [veces] se entretenía tanto con ellas que llegaba la hora de la cena y no había preparado nada. Entonces se azoraba mucho y daba vueltas buscando con los ojos a quién echar la culpa” (36). [“Other times she would spend so long with them there was nothing ready when it was time for dinner. Then she would be upset and go round in circles looking for someone to blame” (Maier 30).] The circular path of Luisa’s eyes echoes the bruised circles that Leticia had noticed when she first looked at Luisa’s face. Chacel suggests that Luisa was stuck in an abusive circle of hunger and weakened appetite that prevented her from consuming and producing music. Although she was a victim of the siege, she also actively reinforced it through her compliance with maternal norms and

active denial of her passion for music.

Leticia's memory of Luisa's cooks and maids reiterates Luisa's responsibility in reinforcing the circle that restricted her. When Leticia remembers the manner in which Luisa's cook would scold her for snacking too much between meals, she highlights that Luisa consciously concealed her hungers. Even though Luisa let the maid believe she snacked, she seldom nibbled between meals. Rather, she often encouraged Leticia and her son, Luisito, to taste bits of the Catalonian meals she prepared each afternoon, barely eating herself:

Fuese lo que fuese, todo lo probábamos, hasta las cosas que no se le ocurriría a uno nunca comer entre horas. Cuando hacía aquellos alubias blancas con lomo y perejil, preparaba siempre más de las que cabían en el molde y las que quedaban los comíamos entre las dos con dos cucharitas de postre. Ella escogía los pedacitos de lomo y me los daba todos, y cuando ponía el relleno en las empanadillas, al meter en cada una un piñón, una aceituna, una pasa, me iba dando a mí y a su chico, que se acercaba a la mesa y abría la boca como un gorrioncillo. Después, cuando calentaba el aceite, freía cuscurros de pan para las muchachas. (36)

[No matter what it was, we tried it, even things that one would never think of eating between meals. When she made those white beans with pork and parsley, she always made a little more than could fit in the pan and we would eat it between the two of us with two teaspoons. She picked out the pieces of meat and gave them all to me; and when she stuffed the turnovers, as she put a piece of pine nut, an olive, and a raisin in each one, she fed bits to me and her little boy, who would stand by the table with his mouth open like a baby sparrow. Afterward, when she was

heating the oil, she fried crusts of bread for the maids. (Maier 30)]

Noticing that Luisa barely ate snacks, Leticia insinuates that a lack of physical hunger must not have been the reason that Luisa did not eat meals. Through Luisa's response to the cook, opening her eyes into another resonant circle, she seemed to admit to the paradox that Leticia gestures towards while she writes: "La cocinera a veces la reñía, porque decía que gulusmeaba tanto en la cocina que luego no comía en la mesa y que por eso estaba tan delgada. Ella la miraba con los ojos muy abiertos, sin reírse ni ponerse seria, y le decía: <<Pues es verdad, tienes razón>>; pero seguía haciendo lo mismo" (36). ["Sometimes the cook scolded her, because she said she nibbled so much in the kitchen she could not eat at the table, and that's why she was so thin. She would look at the cook, opening her eyes wide without either laughing or looking serious. 'Well, that's true, you're right,' she would say, but she kept on doing the same thing" (30).] The circles that form around Luisa's eyes again acknowledge that she was caught in a cycle of chronic hunger exacerbated by a weakened appetite. Deadened of emotion, her facial expression communicates an apathy like that which Leticia noticed in connection with her own inability to properly nourish her hungers in the beginning of the memoir. In the circle of deadened hungers and weakened appetites, she was depleted of the life force that led one to say "yes," disconnected to both herself and to the universe.

In recalling the scene in which the maid scolded Luisa for not eating, Leticia identifies Luisa not as a mother, but as a child who herself is in need of a mother's care. The role reversal implicitly calls into question the image of the nurturing Spanish woman who appears to conform to the "good mother" ideal that the Feminine Section of the Falange promoted in the 1940s. Even though Luisa devoted herself to taking care of others, Leticia intuits that she could not provide a child with a healthy upbringing if

she were incapable of feeding herself. Emphasizing Luisa's ineptness as a mother, Leticia recalls the moment of maternal paralysis that struck Luisa during the Christmas shopping trip that she took with Luisa, Daniel and Luisito to Valladolid. While taking a break from shopping to feed Luisito, Luisa could not react when her child began to choke in her arms. Leticia, witnessing the scene from nearby, rushed over to save the baby, emerging from the scene as more of a maternal figure than Luisa (63). Since unlike Luisa she was nourishing herself, Leticia was more capable than Luisa of caring for a baby.

While Leticia was mature and maternal during the shopping trip, in the following scene she reminds the reader that she was still a child in need of a mother's affection. Shortly after the afternoon she saved Luisito, she recalls, she was traumatized while witnessing a stranger drown puppies in a river that ran through Simancas. In need of the consolation of a mother, she ran to Luisa, back in the role of the child, but was again confronted by Luisa's inability to provide maternal care. Instead of comforting Leticia, Luisa allowed her husband, Daniel, to direct the scene; she mechanically followed his instructions to give Leticia a glass of rum and send her home to "sleep off" the puppies' death. The following day, when Leticia returned to Luisa, still searching for consolation, she found Luisa too absorbed in plucking her eyebrows to pay any attention to her concerns. Turning the conversation towards herself, Luisa scolded the girl for innocently calling her "doña," sustaining that she was not old enough for the title. Then, she quickly undid her assertion, adding that she was actually old enough to be Luisa's mother. Leticia, who had noticed Luisa's maternal ineptness, blithely clarified that she herself was more suited to be Luisa's mother than Luisa was to be hers: "Pues, a veces, me parece que por dentro podría yo ser la suya" (78). [" 'Well, sometimes,' I answered, 'inside it seems to me that I could be yours'" (Maier 71).]

Leticia's keen perception momentarily shook Luisa out of her passivity. Although her face remained still, without a sign of affect, her hands began to tremble, disrupting her skill with the tweezers and confirming that she had been emotionally stirred by

Leticia's comment:

Su cara siguió inalterable, pero sus manos titubearon. No fue temblor, sino desconcierto lo que las alteró; se cambiaron el espejo y las pinzas de una a otra varias veces. ¿Tenía miedo de seguir aquella conversación? ¿Le faltaban fuerzas? Maquinalmente, se miró un rato en el espejo como para reconfortarse con la serenidad de su propia imagen; después, hizo como que escuchaba algo y dijo:

-¿No te parece que llora Luisito?

Echó a correr escaleras arriba; yo sabía bien que el niño no lloraba. (78)

[Her face was still unchanged, but her hands shook. What changed them was not a tremor but her uneasiness; several times the mirror and the tweezers passed from one to the other. Was she afraid to keep on with that conversation? Was she not strong enough? Automatically, she gazed into the mirror for a while as if to comfort herself with the serenity of her own image; then she acted as if she heard something.

'Don't you think that's Luisito crying?' she asked.

She began to run upstairs; I knew very well the child was not crying.]

In the moment when Luisa looked at her face in the mirror, Leticia suggests, she acknowledged the profundity of her repressed hungers and her role in passively perpetuating her malnourishment. Nonetheless, the disconcertion provoked by her realization was quickly interrupted when she attended to the imperceptible calls of the child who did not need her. The role of the mother, Leticia implies, had become an act

that prevented Luisa from steadily facing the unnamable emotional truths for which she hungered as a middle-aged, motherless mother.

While Luisa found momentary relief in the Spanish maternal prototype, a role that permitted her to ignore her hungers, as an adolescent Leticia began to experience anxiety for not conforming to traditional feminine norms. Although she had begun to identify her hungers, at the end of her year in Simancas she started to realize that having a broad curiosity for knowledge and an appetite for mastery was not feminine. Her anxiety that she was challenging the norms that had established feminine education in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Spain was heightened, she remembers, when she began to study mythology and history with Daniel. In writing about those days, she focuses not on the material she learned but on the alienation she experienced in Daniel's office, especially during the frequent conversations he had with his friend, the doctor, while she read. As she listened to the two of them talk about history or art, she questioned her ability to ever participate in their conversation as a fellow master of knowledge: "Cuando yo bajaba del salón y oía la famosa conversación ya empezada, me sentía ahogar como un naufrago en mi propia cólera y me decía: <<¿Para qué vengo? ¿Cómo he podido creer a veces que yo llegaría a significar algo aquí?>> Pero entraba y abría un libro, o decía que ya había estudiado en casa" (100). ["When I would go down from the drawing room and hear that the famous conversation was already under way, I would feel myself drowning as if I were shipwrecked in my own anger. 'Why do I come?' I would say to myself. 'How could I have ever believed sometimes that I would eventually count for something here?' But I would go in and open a book, or say I had already studied at home" (Maier 93).] Leticia's question – ¿Para qué vengo? – reverberates through her writing as she recounts the hours she spent reading without understanding in Don Daniel's study. Although she believes that she was born with an appetite to learn

everything, she began to fear that as a woman she could never know the material like Daniel and the doctor. Her self-doubt prevented her from nourishing herself with the knowledge that she needed, increasing the likelihood that her fears would be realized.

Discouraged by her growing awareness that reading about history or aesthetics was wrong for an 11-year-old girl, Leticia grew so palpably anxious that she “devoured” words without understanding (100). If achieving mastery were her natural fate, she tragically reflects, then her fate was barred to her by the cultural and social restrictions placed on feminine females in Spain, restrictions that women themselves, as Luisa had demonstrated, perpetuated. Remembering the critical tone of voice her grandmother used in Valladolid whenever she admonished Leticia for speaking “like a book” or for being “nothing but brains,” Leticia realizes that even in her own family, her maternal elders actively discouraged her from being an intellectual. Her newfound understanding leads her to grow more and more anxious:

Cualquier reflexión que tendiese a calmar mi angustia me parecía necia; sólo se me ocurría buscar una especie de tranquilidad en el recuerdo de frases ajenas que en otro tiempo había juzgado llenas de mala intención. Frases de mi abuela que disimulaban mal su deseo de crítica: <<Esta niña habla como un libro.>> <<Esta niña no es más que cabeza.>>

Pues bien, me decía yo en aquel momento, si ése es mi destino, ¿por qué no puedo entrar en él? (102)

[Any thoughts that tended to lessen my anxiety seemed stupid; the only thing I could think of was to find a sort of tranquility by remembering comments that had sounded nasty to me when I heard other people make them. Comments my grandmother made that barely hid her desire to criticize: ‘This girl talks like a book.’ ‘This girl is nothing but brains.’

Well, then, I said to myself at that moment, if such is my fate, why is it barred to me?

I did not know why, but the fact is I could not enter. (95)]

As Leticia juxtaposes the denotative meaning of the comments that her grandmother made with the critical tone with which they were delivered, she becomes increasingly puzzled. Why, she implicitly questions, would it have been wrong to “talk like a book” and “be nothing but brains”? Why the critical tone to acknowledge a natural inclination to learn? Facing that women, even in her family, reinforced the distance between her and knowledge is an essential moment to Leticia’s coming of age. It is this tragic realization that she learns from writing her memoirs.

In spite of the anxiety that Leticia felt while facing the profundity of the obstacles that separated women from becoming masters of knowledge, she did end up nourishing her inaudible vigor for life by writing. To calm herself while reading in Daniel’s office, she turned from reading her book, which she was too anxious to understand, to nibbling on her pen, foreshadowing her future production of her memoirs (102). Still, Leticia only began to write after she left Simancas behind to live in Germany with her uncle’s family. It was not until she was outside of Spain, distanced from the restricted feminine education imposed by the Feminine Section of the Falange and reinforced by women and men around her, that she could put pen to paper and write herself into the world.

### **Barrio de Maravillas: daughters with appetites**

In the first scene of Chacel’s first post-Franco novel, Barrio de Maravillas [1976], which is set in Madrid during the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Chacel reiterates the function of hunger and appetite as literary tropes. Connecting the health of the female body and mind, they facilitate a counter-cultural exploration of the intellectual

and artistic needs and drives of Spanish women. Like Leticia Valle, the main characters of the novel, Elena and Isabel, are precocious adolescents who need physical, artistic and intellectual nourishment. They find that nourishment in the maternal tradition of Spanish art that they discover around them. Though in responding to a maternal hunger, Elena and Isabel pick up the discussion of feminine nourishment and education where Leticia left it off, their dual-status as narrators and protagonists adds to the matter the question of social class. While Elena, an upper class, privileged child, gets physical and artistic nourishment through her family's social status, Isabel, who is the lower-class daughter of a seamstress, depends entirely on Elena for access to high art and culture. In order for both girls to become artists, Chacel implies, they need to develop a collective artistic agency that breaks down the barriers that exist not only between genders, but also between social classes in Spain.

From the first page of Barrio, it is clear that Isabel relies on the friendship she has developed with Elena to access art and to develop an artistic agency. The novel begins when Isabel, unaware that it is socially unacceptable for her and Elena to be friends, innocently knocks on Elena's door to see if Elena could play. Eulalia, Elena's grandmother, curtly turns Isabel away, informing her that Elena is already playing with her friends, a group of children in which she does not include Isabel (53). As she leaves, the eleven-year-old is perplexed by the distinction Eulalia made between her and Elena's friends. She begins to ponder what separates her from them: "Entonces, ¿quién soy yo? ... Si ellas, las otras – ¿qué otras? – son sus amiguitas, yo ¿qué soy?" (53). ["Well then who am I? Those, the other girls what other girls? Her friends. What am I, then? Who am I?" (démers 2).] Eulalia abruptly interrupts her thoughts, remembering that she needs to unstitch a piece of fabric and summoning Isabel to complete the chore. Showing Isabel the fabric, Eulalia indicates that what separates Isabel from Elena is that

Isabel belongs in a servile position. However, the chore she assigns to Isabel is the same activity that had occupied Chacel while she worked on the trilogy in 1954 (Alcancía 61). The connection subtly insinuates that an artistic future previously possible for few privileged Spanish women like Chacel, Elena and Leticia, could also be in store for Isabel.

As Isabel enters Elena's house, she indeed enters a world of artistic possibility. In spite of Eulalia's distinction between her and Elena's other friends, she realizes that she too is Elena's friend. Their friendship began, she reflects, the moment when Elena saw Isabel as a companion in art. Before they became friends and artistic companions, they had treated each other as they had been taught proper for upper and lower class children: Elena ignored Isabel, while Isabel passively let herself be ignored. Elena only took notice of her neighbor's existence one afternoon, when she went up to their apartment to ask Antonia, Isabel's mother, to come downstairs to meet her aunt (55). As Elena went up the stairs to speak to the lower class family, she physically penetrated the border between the upper and lower classes:

A mi [Elena] ni me miró; le dijo a mi madre que si quería bajar un momento a su casa... Mi madre estaba sin aliento y ella la tranquilizó como si creyera que fuese por miedo a perder tiempo. Un momento nada más, le dijo, para hablar con mi tía. Echó a correr escaleras abajo, sabiendo que mi madre iría detrás. Y claro que fue, como un cordero, quitándose el delantal, recogiendo los pelillos que se le escapaban del moño... (56)

[She didn't even look at me. She asked my mother if she would come down a minute to her apartment. My mother was terrified, and the girl calmed her down as if she thought my mother was just afraid of wasting time. It would only be a minute, to talk to her aunt. She went running

down the stairs, knowing that my mother would be following right behind. And of course she went like a docile lamb, taking off her apron and arranging the hair that had come loose from her bun. (démers 4)]

Antonia's docile acquiescence to Elena's request reinforces their subservient position in relation to Elena's family at the same time that the location of her apartment, above Elena's, associates them with an upper realm. Through the movement up and down the apartment stairs, Chacel implies that the class separation that prevented Elena from noticing Isabel and kept them from being companions in art could be transgressed.

The transgression of social boundaries between the girls occurs subtly. It began, Isabel recalls, after she followed an order to "play" with Elena in Elena's downstairs apartment. By giving Isabel the voice of the scene in the narrative present, Chacel implies that she has since acquired the agency that she lacked in the scene that she recalls: "Unas veces me decía, baja a casa ..., y yo bajaba. O me decía, entra un rato a mi estudio – como ella le llama al cuartito – y, yo entraba a ver lo que estaba haciendo. Hasta que decidió que yo bajase todas las tardes..." (57). ["Sometimes she would invite me to go downstairs to her apartment, and I would go. Or she would ask me to come into her studio – that's what she called her little room – and I would go in to see what she was doing... and suddenly it was decided I would go down to her apartment every afternoon" (démers 5).] Although Isabel had little voice in arranging the play dates, they facilitated the emergence of her artistic agency, which Elena noticed on the afternoon she took Isabel to see her garden. As Isabel observed the plants Elena pointed out near the dormer pane, her eyes meandered around the garden, pursuing a path created by her own aesthetic sensibility. Elena followed Isabel's path and was fascinated by the ordinary mustard plant and greenfinch to which Isabel led her. Together, they watched as the greenfinch nibbled on the plant. Everything they saw suddenly became

imbued with green, the color of hope. For the first time in Isabel's memory, Elena treated her not as her subordinate neighbor, but as an artistic companion. They became friends:

Yo no pasaba de la puerta, pero señaló a la ventana de la tronera y me decidí a mirar cómo daba el sol en la plantita de jaramago nacida entre las tejas... Las dos nos quedamos embobadas, mirando, cuando vino el pájaro a picotearla y salió volando en seguida... !Era un verderón!... Cuando lo dijo, yo entonces la miré a ella... Su cara se había transfigurado como... qué sé yo, como si echase luz, como si el pájaro verde... No, como si el verde del pájaro hubiera llenado el cuarto. Entonces pensé, nunca habrá nadie en el mundo a quien yo pueda querer más... (57)

[I never went beyond the door, but she pointed to the pane of the dormer and I decided to look at how the sun shone on a little hedge mustard plant which had sprouted between some roof tiles. We stood there, fascinated, looking, when suddenly a bird came to peck at it and then went flying off at once. 'It was a greenfinch!' When she said that, I finally looked at her. Her face had changed completely like... I don't know, as if it were all alight, as if that green bird... No: as though the green color of the bird had filled the room. And I thought that there would never be anyone in the world I could love more... (démers 5)]

As Isabel signaled to Elena the beauty of the garden's most humble plant, they began to explore an aesthetics rooted in the cracks of the garden. Their artistic sensibility grows collectively and, like Woolf's narrator's, focuses on the aesthetics of everyday, previously un-narrated objects of art. Elena led Isabel into the garden, and Isabel led Elena to become fascinated with a plant she had not before noticed. The hope that

resulted corresponds with the beginning of their friendship.

Through Isabel's reflections, Chacel proves that Isabel is not restrained to the servile role to which she appears to conform when she steps into Eulalia's house. As if confirming Isabel's potential to cross the boundaries between the lower and upper classes, Eulalia interrupts her recollection of the garden scene to tell Isabel that she is a master at sewing (57). She follows her compliment, an allusion to Leticia Valle's admiration of mastery in all forms, by asking Isabel if she is hungry for a snack, treating Isabel not as a servant, but as if she were Elena's friend. Although Isabel politely refuses, explaining that she has just eaten a clementine, Eulalia insists that she accept the coffee and pastry that she places on the "musiquero"<sup>2</sup> in the room where Isabel sews. As Isabel snacks, she contemplates the "musiquero," positing a link between good nourishment and the exploration of art. While pondering the variety of music that the musiquero contains, however, she recalls the condescension in Elena's tone of voice when Elena first explained to her the complexity of the different musical pieces and scores. Elena's derogatory tone continued as she told Isabel the story of the mythological Ariadna, her mother's namesake, whose miniature alabaster statue resides on the piano (58). Elena hindered the development of their friendship when she told Isabel that she was an "idiota" and admonished her ignorance of the art in her house (58). Isabel's recollection of Elena's mocking tone underscores that Isabel is dependent on Elena to access art; if Elena diminished the artistic sensibility that Isabel developed, she would reinsert them in a hierarchical relationship that impeded collaboration.

Similar to Elena, Eulalia also ambiguously moves between reinforcing and

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<sup>2</sup> Chacel genders music as a traditionally "masculine" art form both in Leticia Valle and in Barrio. Like Luisa, Elena's mother, Ariadna, was unable to pursue a career in music because of the social expectation that she be a good mother and wife. Her access to music is through teaching, an occupation that Elena qualifies as "boring" and with which Ariadna indeed appears to be unhappy (150).

challenging the class boundaries that impede Elena and Isabel from being friends. On one hand, inside of the apartment, when they are alone, she cares for Isabel as if she were one of Elena's friends. As soon as the doorbell rings, however, she is quick to reinsert Isabel into a servile position. Not knowing who is at the door, she orders Isabel to open it, and the two fall back into the roles that would be proper for an upper class lady and lower class child. Isabel politely obeys Eulalia's order and greets two of Eulalia's friends, Ernestina and Paulita. Once Isabel settles back into the other room, where she retakes her stitching, she listens to the conversation between Ernestina, Paulita and Eulalia. She notices that Ernestina and Paulita both employ masculine tones of voice when they learn that Isabel is the lower-class girl from upstairs. Through a series of rapid questions, they ask why she would be in Eulalia's apartment, seeking to affirm that she is there as a servant: "Una filiación rápida, tan terminante que hace innecesaria toda respuesta" (62) ["A rapid putting together of things, so conclusive that no response is necessary" (démers 10).] In contrast to the curious tone Isabel used to probe into her identity in the first scene, their manly questions sharply continue until Paulita and Ernestina have an understanding of Isabel's lower-class identity that restores the hierarchical order between social classes. Once satisfied that Isabel is a lower class girl helping Eulalia with a sewing chore, however, Paulita's tone of voice shifts into the feminine: "La voz femenina sigue preguntando... – Y ¿qué es lo que borda, tú la enseñas?" (62). ["Then, the feminine voice once again... 'And what is she embroidering? Are you teaching her?'" (démers 10).] From beneath her initial masculine tone, Paulita's more curious, feminine voice probes into the very social order that she had just reaffirmed. Her rapid shift to the feminine exemplifies the ambiguous double-voiced discourse that Bellver had identified in Chacel's poetry (121). As Paulita wonders if Isabel could be Eulalia's student, Chacel draws a second parallel between

Isabel and Leticia Valle. Although Ernestina, Paulita, Eulalia and Elena are capable of playing an authoritative role that disempowers Isabel and restores patriarchal order, the manifestation of their “feminine” voices and the parallels drawn between Isabel and Leticia Valle imply that the characters are in the process of developing a collective, feminine artistic agency that undoes the hierarchy between them.

The feminine, however, is ephemeral in Chacel’s novel. It is quickly undercut by another shift towards the masculine when Ernestina likens Isabel’s appearance to that of a “Carreño” princess. Although Isabel doesn’t understand the reference, which compares her to a Habsburg princess in a portrait by seventeenth century painter, Juan Carreño de Miranda, she intuits from Ernestina’s tone that the comparison is an insult, sensing that to be a work of art, even if she were depicted as a princess, would place her in a subordinate position that would hinder her artistic development (62). If she were a Carreño princess, she would not have the freedom to explore her artistic sensibility; rather, she would be objectified in a painting, a work of art herself. Still, because Isabel does not know what a Carreño is, she depends on Elena to confirm the insult in Ernestina’s comment. As soon as Elena comes home, she gives her a quick summary of the conversation she overheard, exclaiming: “La otra, con esa voz, dijo, como quien pone los puntos sobre las íes, que yo era de cabo a rabo... así como suena, de cabo a rabo un Carreño... ¿Qué es un Carreño, Elena? ...” (64). [“The other one, the one with that voice, said, like someone dotting all the i’s and crossing all the t’s, that I was from head to toe a ‘Carreño.’ What’s a ‘Carreño,’ Elena?” (démers 12).] Though Elena is unable to confirm what a “Carreño” is on her own, she has access to someone who does know: her father. Taking advantage of the authority that her access gives her, after she consults with her father she tells Isabel that she will only share the knowledge on the condition that Isabel agree to a shabby bargain: if Isabel dresses like a Carreño on

Sunday, she can accompany Elena and her father on an excursion to a place synonymous with “church,” where she will see the Carreños (68). Though perplexed by the order, Isabel agrees to wear black and wash her hair with an egg to enhance its shine. On Sunday, she unknowingly heads to the Prado with Elena and her father, entering the museum as the imitation of an objectified Habsburg princess whose portrait was painted over two centuries earlier.

Once inside of the Prado, however, Isabel’s unrestrained contemplations again challenge the social boundaries that had prevented her from entering the museum or seeing the Carreños in the past. As in the garden scene, Elena sees Isabel’s emergent artistic sensibility and begins to treat Isabel as more of an artistic companion, a friend. She encourages Isabel to decide for herself which paintings she likes and she notices that even wearing black Isabel is not as much like a Carreño as she had thought: “Te parecerías más si tuvieras que pasar dos meses en el hospital porque estas gentes se caían de anemia” (82). [“You’d look more like one of them if you had to spend two months in the hospital, because these people were falling over from anemia” (démers 28).] Although Isabel clarifies that she is, actually, pale and weak, she agrees that she is neither pale nor weak enough to resemble a Carreño; as the doctor told her a few months ago, her adolescent body is naturally thin, not sick (82). The negation of the sickliness of Isabel’s body coincides with the strengthening of her artistic agency and of Elena and Isabel’s friendship. Elena affirms her important role in encouraging that agency when she catches herself about to give Isabel an order about which paintings to like. Instead of an order, she confirms that Isabel does not have to change, but can interpret art from where she is: “Los cuadros que yo quiero son otros y tú tienes que..., no es que tengas que cambiar, no, tú siempre serás así, como eres” (82). [“The paintings I like are different, and you have to... It’s not that you have to change, no, you’ll always

be like this, just like you are" (29).] As Elena pauses to reframe her comment, her tone shifts from the authoritative voice she used when she invited Isabel to the Prado to a more accepting and curious feminine tone that acknowledges their companionship in a collective discovery of art.

As it turns out, Isabel and Elena concur on which art is the most attractive when they exit the exhibits of monarchical paintings and head into the classical and mythological sculpture rooms on the museum's ground floor. There, they find a marble statue of Ariadna. In awe of the statue, Elena begins to perform a ritualistic dance around it; Isabel watches and interprets Elena's dance as "Ariadna's lamentation":

Elena sigue una especie de rito. No es necesario saber si lo hizo cien veces antes: se ve que es una cosa que hace, que siempre hizo, que hará siempre... Elena canturrea, la melodía apenas se oye, pero las palabras son un bisbiseo como en los rezos: son claras, musitadas muy bajo, pero netas, destacadas sílaba por sílaba. Es el aria o la romance... es la lamentación de Ariadna. (83-84)

[This is a sort of special rite for Elena. You don't need to know if she's done it one hundred times before: it's something she does, that she's always done and will always do. Elena croons. You hardly hear the tune, but the words are not a muttering like in prayers. They're clear, whispered very low, but enunciated syllable by syllable. It's an aria or a romanza, it's the lament of Ariadne. (démers 30)]

The ritualistic tone of Elena's dance conveys why the Prado is, for her, a synonym for church. Among the most canonical works of Spanish art, the two girls reveal a holy artistic tradition that connects them to their maternal roots on the museum's bottom floor. What Elena pays homage to, Isabel suggests and Elena's father soon confirms, is

their mothers' silenced artistic tradition, a tradition that has gone unrecognized in Spain. On an idiosyncratic level, she laments the silenced music that was produced after her own mother, Ariadna, was forced to leave her passion for music behind to fulfill her duties as mother and wife. On a collective level, she laments innumerable artistic pieces that lie dormant, waiting, like the mustard plant and Woolf's luncheon, to be interpreted alongside canonical art.

Since the maternal artistic tradition Elena and Isabel reveal has grown inside of patriarchal culture, not in opposition to it, Chacel stresses that it includes Elena's father. As Elena dances around the sculpture, her father watches curiously from the next room over, where he had been looking at a royal portrait of a nondescript "horse" or "king" (84). Without words, he communicates to his daughter that he recognizes the connection she is making to a silenced tradition of Spanish art:

Elena sigue cantando y rodeando a Ariadna, su padre deja de mirar al retrato del rey o del caballo y lanza a Elena una mirada indefinible... Una mirada burlona y al mismo tiempo enternecida, una mirada de connivencia, de secretos, de afirmaciones de cosas repetidas... Elena responde con otra igual, pero evasiva: - Déjame seguir, ya hablaremos de esto. (84)

[Elena goes on singing and walking around Ariadne. Her father stops looking at the portrait of a king or a horse or whatever and gives Elena a glance hard to define... A mocking glance, but tender. A look of connivance, full of secrets, like an affirmation of things repeated. She responds with the same sort of glance, but more evasive. 'Let me go on, we'll talk about it later.' (démers 31)]

Even as Elena's father's physical separation from the girls and the sculpture exhibit

suggests that he is allied with Spain's patriarchal artistic tradition, his fascination with Elena's dance implies that he does not oppose the maternal tradition that his daughter reveals. While the girls depended on him in order to access the Prado, he now depends on them in order to interpret art that he had not before seen in the museum. If he listens to Elena and does not stop her dance, he can be incorporated into the collective agency that Elena and Isabel nourish.

Through Isabel and Elena's initial discoveries of art, Chacel posits that a collective artistic agency develops when the girls collaborate to interpret the maternal tradition of art that implies both their mothers and their fathers. Their tradition does not oppose masculine to feminine, or patriarchal to matriarchal, but rather enriches Spanish culture by facilitating an intimate, corporeal connection between individuals of different genders, ages and social classes. When Elena, Isabel and Elena's father leave the Prado, they use the same language of bodily gestures and gazes they had employed in the Prado to continue to evoke maternal art on the streets of Madrid. As they pass Madrid's iconic "Plaza de Cibeles," a neo-classical sculpture of the Phrygian goddess of fertility a block away from the Prado, Elena and her father exchange another ineffable look that speaks of "cosas pasadas" ["things bygone"] and "cosas ajenas" ["unfamiliar things"] (84, *démers* 31). In front of the sculpture, Elena pauses to explain to Isabel that the synonym for church she had been thinking of when she first mentioned the Prado excursion was temple: "Ah, ¿recuerdas lo que te dije? Un sinónimo de iglesia es templo. El museo es un templo, para mí" (84). ["Ah, remember what I said: a synonym for *church* is *temple*. For me, a museum is a temple" (*démers* 31).] Comparing the Prado to a temple, Chacel suggests that Spain's maternal tradition of art is like the Jewish religion: both have a strong matrilineal foundation that has been disregarded and misinterpreted by patriarchal, monotheistic discourses. Furthermore, both have a long history of

oppression in Spain<sup>3</sup>. Their Sunday morning outing has been as sacred an experience to Elena as going to a religious service on the Sabbath.

Once Isabel returns to her apartment, she again faces the lack of access that women of her class have to obtaining the nourishment necessary for the development of an artistic agency. As she attempts to describe the Prado and the sculpture of Ariadna to her mother, Antonia exclaims that she doesn't understand anything that her daughter says: "Francamente, no entiendo nada de lo que dices. ¿Quién está allí dormida?" (89). ["Frankly I don't understand anything you're saying. Who is there sleeping?" (35).] Antonia does not have the proper resources to consciously interpret the art that her daughter has seen. Nonetheless, the headache that Antonia suddenly feels insinuates that on a corporeal level, she does comprehend that tradition. While Isabel goes to the pharmacy to get her medicine, the reader sees Antonia's narrative voice emerge in the form of a non-linear flashback to her past, and we begin to comprehend her as part of the lamentable artistic tradition of Spanish mothers. She recalls Isabel's birth, when the nurses and doctors who cared for her scorned her for being a lower class, single mother (89). She remembers that she was prematurely discharged a day after her labor, forced to carry her newborn to Atocha with an injured leg and no home. Her flashback is momentarily interrupted when she hears Isabel drop a pair of scissors upon reentering the apartment. Confusing the sound with the shrill noise that was made when she accidentally broke a "marquesito" figurine that she associates with Isabel's father, she is drawn further into her past, to her pre-pregnancy days. She shares bits of her memory with her daughter, explaining that she was a maid when she broke the statue, which

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<sup>3</sup> In *Sarah The Priestess*, Savina Teubal reinterprets the narratives of Genesis from a feminist perspective, highlighting the matrilineal roots of the first prophets and challenging the reader to rethink the monotheistic, patriarchal interpretation of the Hebrew Testament. For a further discussion of the connection between women and minority religions in Spain, see chapter four page 152.

belonged to the family for whom she worked. Without revealing that Isabel's father was the son of that family, she remembers that he defended her when it broke and clarifies that she brought it with her as a memory of him when she left the job. Although Antonia does not disclose to her daughter that the reason she left the job was that Isabel's father found out she was pregnant and forced her to leave, she sets before Isabel a parallel between her conception and the broken pieces of the figurine's body. The associations between her headache, her flashback and the broken "marquesito" connect Antonia's story to the maternal language of the body that Isabel had seen emerge in the lamentation Elena danced around Ariadna in the Prado. Although Antonia's tragedy is less accessible to Isabel than Ariadna's is to Elena, the pieces are there for her to put together.

As Isabel and Elena continue to learn about and interpret art, they do put together the broken artistic heritage that their mothers have left them. The lessons they have with their teacher, Doña Laura, encourage them to take an active role in interpreting the art around them, not only in institutions like the Prado but also in Madrid's landscape. Evoking the Krausist philosophies of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*<sup>4</sup>, Doña Laura's lessons often consist of guiding the girls on excursions into parks or analyzing a painting or poem. During one of their outdoor excursions, Doña Laura leads them to a lake, where they eat a snack and observe everything around them. As Isabel eats, her growing artistic agency emanates through her observant narrative voice, which echoes Virginia Woolf's description of the luncheon at Oxbridge:

Y los bocadillos eran exquisitos. Estaban hechos con rajadas de ternera a la

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<sup>4</sup> The philosophy of the *Institución* was key to developing educational reforms during the Second Republic and required children to be active participants in their education. Instead of passively sitting in a classroom and listening to their teacher recite multiplication tables, children were encouraged to explore knowledge on their own by interacting with art, science, math and nature (Herr 221).

cacerola y algo de salsa había empapado el pan. Tenían un sabor muy casero; allí, al aire libre, recordaban la cena, el rebañar del plato... Había que beber agua – la fuente allí mismo – para experimentar las medianoches, tostadas y traspasadas por el chocolate... Y el barquito emprendía un segundo giro, y la quietud y el silencio eran tan grandes que se podía escuchar el absoluto silencio que le conducía... Y las mandarinas se desnudaban fácilmente, se desprendía la cascara y sonaban al romperse las venillas que la sujetaban a los gajos. Y el olor, casi floral, perfume que barría los sabores grasos, densos, remataba el acto de comer, lo recubría con su limpieza – aquí no ha pasado nada –, todo se difundía en la estela de una sensación depurada... (137)

[And the veal sandwiches were exquisite. They were made with slices of veal from the pot, and some of the juice had colored the bread. They tasted like real home cooking. There outdoors they reminded you of dinner and sopping up your plate. You had to drink water – from the fountain right there – to fully experience the black and whites, toasted and filled with chocolate. And the little boat began its second turn around the pond. The silence was so great that you could hear the absolute silence that powered it. The tangerines relinquished their skins easily. As their skins came off you could hear the breaking of the veins connecting them to the segments. And the vegetable aroma, the almost floral smell, made a perfume that erased the greasy and dense tastes of eating, a bath of cleanliness – there's nothing out of the ordinary here – spreading out in the wake of purified sensation. (démers 80)]

Isabel describes the snack and her surroundings with the attention that Elena had

admonished her for not giving to the musical pieces and scores when she first saw the “*musiquero*.” The repetitive use of the conjunction, “*y,*” and ellipses (eliminated in the English translation), transmit her effort to share with her reader the aesthetics she sees in the veal’s juice, the pastries’ chocolate and the clementine’s peel. As she uses all of her five senses – taste, sight, smell, touch and sound – to interpret the art of the world around her, she manifests an artistic agency that is stronger than it was in the beginning of the novel. Shortly after the outing, Elena notices that Isabel has indeed grown artistically. Observing one of her drawings, she exclaims that she is an “*artist*” (155). Moments later, she is astounded as she also realizes that Isabel, though two years her younger, has grown taller than her. As Elena marks Isabel’s height on the wall to chart her growth, she demonstrates an ambiguous stance towards Isabel’s growth, at once encouraging Isabel, telling her to draw every day in her studio, and monitoring her to be sure that she does not exceed her in artistic and physical height.

Isabel notes Elena’s contemptible behavior, but continues to explore art through the access that Elena gave her to high culture. Now taller and a blossoming artist herself, she understands that upper class art does include her (150). She claims the *Carreños* as her family inheritance. Demonstrating her burgeoning agency, she braids her hair to imitate a portrait of Margarita de Austria that she has decided she likes:

Había sido un hallazgo, había sido como un regalo, como una herencia de sus antepasados, los *Carreños*. El deseo de volver a verlos, que había tenido durante tanto tiempo era porque sabía que iban a darle algo... es que se lee en algunos cuentos, los niños van a casa del abuelo y siempre vuelven cargados con cosas, trastos familiares... Los trastos, los armarios, los desvanes que nunca tuvo, que nunca podrá ver... Pero sí los *Carreños*. (181)

[The new way of braiding her hair had been a discovery, like a gift, like an inheritance from her ancestors, the Carreños. The desire to see them again, which she had felt for some time, was because she knew they were going to offer her something. It's like those stories you read when you're little: children go off to their grandparents' house and always come back loaded down with things; they always find old family junk in the closet or the loft... the junk and the closets and the lofts which she never had and would never be able to have. But it would be different with the Carreños. (démers 120)]

Isabel's discovery that she can braid her hair as she desires, according to the art that she finds beautiful, manifests the strength of her developing artistic agency. Even though Elena continues to subordinate her, she is no longer marginalized as she had been in the past. Although she does not yet know how her personal maternal history fits into the tradition that she and Elena have uncovered, she perceives that if she continues to interpret and create art she will learn not just about the Carreños, Cybele and Ariadna, but about her own lower class origins. Claiming the Carreños as her family inheritance, she reveals her active desire to find, through art, the answers to the questions she posed in the beginning of the novel: what am I? who am I?

In contrast to Isabel's growing body, Elena and Isabel begin to observe that all of their elder females, not just Antonia, are sick and in constant need of medication: "Todas las viejas de la casa – madres, abuela, maestro – todas con reuma, todas con dolores en todas partes, echando en el agua los litínes y Elena negándose a bajar por ellos" (181). ["All the old ladies in the house – mothers, grandmother, teacher – all of them with flu, with pains everywhere, mixing lithium salts with water and Elena refusing to go down to buy them"(démers 120).] Physical pain, they begin to perceive, is

a mode of communication for their mothers, one that they need to learn in order to better comprehend what they are lamenting in their mothers' lost art. In her pivotal study of physical pain and language, The Body in Pain, Elaine Scarry argues that physical pain is impossible to render through words and causes the active destruction of language itself: "Physical pain does not simply resist language, but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned" (4). According to Scarry's theory, the pain Antonia suffered during her headache would have helped her to face the psychological trauma that her past contained. It facilitated her disjointed flashback into the past by making bearable the traumatic feelings that the past evoked: "Physical pain is able to obliterate psychological pain because it obliterates all psychological content, painful, pleasurable, and neutral" (34). The numbing of psychological and emotional trauma that occurs while one experiences a physical ailment made it possible for Antonia to render the moment when Isabel's father left her and she became a single mother without a home or job. Even if Isabel did not understand the indirect, corporeal form that Antonia used to remember her father, Antonia demonstrates that physical pain, in reverting her to the feelings that precede language, facilitated her communication of the traumatic experience that she had not been able to tell her daughter in a linear narrative. While physical pain destroys language, it also allows for the communication of emotions that are actively repressed by language and memory.

Later on in the novel, Elena observes that her teacher's friend, Araceli, also suffers from a physical condition that serves to numb her negative feelings, repressed desires and lack of self-confidence. Elena realizes that in spite of the lotions and unguents she and Isabel constantly deliver to Araceli, no pharmaceutical medication will cure her; if she wants to medicate herself, she must face the emotional and

psychological pain that her infirmities repress:

Se desprende de ella el olor de su angustia. No se atreve a quitarse la camiseta, como si no se la hubiera quitado nunca. El olor está en toda ella, hasta en su cuarto, hasta en las ropas que se quita... Se las quita con un gesto vergonzoso, pero no es pudor, es angustia, es desconfianza de su cuerpo, aunque diga que su cinturita con el corsé... el corsé se lo desabrocha, lo tira sobre una silla y despide un olor que no es sólo el olor al perfume que se echa, es como si le quedase el olor de algún medicamento, de algún unguento o linimento para algún dolor: es el olor de un dolor. Con el miedo que le tiene al frío no sé cómo va a arreglarse para lavarse ese pelazo en el palanganero. Cuando se lo suelta, el olor de la brillantina se difunde como el vapor al destapar un puchero. Bueno, pues en esa nube de angustia – porque lo que huele es su angustia, su descontento, su desconfianza – en medio de todo eso hay más..., más calor, más pasión... (177-178)

[She gives off the smell of her anxiety. She doesn't dare to take off her camisole, as through she had never taken it off. The smell is in everything about her – even in her room, even in the clothes she takes off. She takes them off with an air of shame; but it's not modesty, it's anxiety, it's distrust of her body, even though she talks about her waist being tiny in her corset... When she undoes the corset and throws it on the chair, it gives off an odor that's not just the perfume she wears. It's like a lingering smell of some medicine, of some ointment or liniment you use for pain: it's the smell of pain. With her fear of the cold I can't imagine how she'll ever manage to wash that head of hair in a basin. When she undoes it

there's a smell of brilliantine escaping the way steam does when you uncover a pot. At any rate, in this cloud of anxiety – because what she smells of is her anxiety, her unhappiness, her lack of confidence – amid all this there's more... more heat, more passion... (démers 117)]

Associating repressed desire with the pungent odor that lingers in the room when Araceli takes off her corset, whose circular shape recalls the circles around Luisa's eyes, Elena diagnoses Araceli with a "desconfianza de cuerpo" (178). Instead of describing in words the fear that she might experience if she faced her mistrust of her body's sexuality or the anxiety of unleashing the sexual desire reigned in by her corset, she focuses on the elusive condition that manifests itself in an odor. As Elena knows, that condition will never be medicated through pharmaceutical drugs. While learning to read the psychological content displaced by Araceli's physical infirmity brings Elena closer to comprehending the language of maternal pain, her immediate reaction – to refuse to get medication for Araceli, her teacher, her mother or her grandmother – disrupts the development of a collective artistic agency by again reinforcing her authority, not only over Isabel, but also over the other women around her. When she asserts that she will no longer go to the pharmacy, ordering Isabel to get the medication instead, she bolsters the type of competitive hierarchy that weakens feminine art.

In contrast to Araceli's mistrust of her body, Chacel identifies the maturation of Isabel's physical and artistic agency as her "consciente feminidad" (192). Her newfound knowledge of art becomes a source of inspiration for her as she makes everyday decisions about her hair and clothes. Her "consciente feminidad" particularly attracts the attention of the boy who works in the neighborhood pharmacy, Luis, who is both interested in and afraid of the new strength Isabel displays. While drawn toward the authority she demonstrates over herself and her body, he also sees Isabel as "un rival"

and treats her violently (192). One afternoon, he aggressively asks her for whom she does her hair; his tone scares her, causing her to run away, and he describes her as a girl whose appetite is, though natural, socially anomalous: “Todo eso, la visión de todo eso tan breve, tan huidiza, pero tan permanente como una planta que echa raíces, como raíces que fuesen tentáculos, que a propósito o con un propósito de adentramiento se van enseñoreando del ser, en total inflamándolo, convirtiéndolo en un único ente de deseo...” (193). [“All this, the vision of all this so brief, so fleeting, but as permanent as a plant that takes root with roots like tentacles that dig in on purpose or with the purpose of taking over one’s being, inflaming it, transforming it into a single entity of desire” (démers 131).] Recalling the antennae Chacel used to imagine her young “appetite” in Desde, Isabel’s tentacle-like roots make her appear more firmly connected to the universe, but are monstrous in an 11-year-old, lower class girl. Their ambiguity reiterates the many obstacles that Isabel will face as she becomes an artist. She will have to persevere through the negative reactions that her appetite incites in people like Elena and Luis and hang on to the moments when there develops between her and others a collective artistic agency.

In the final scenes of the novel, which occur as Europe heads into WWI, Chacel emphasizes that Elena and Isabel will only survive as artists if they nourish the collective agency on which their friendship was founded. Collaboration helps them to interpret the psychological and emotional meaning behind bodies-in-pain in art. One afternoon while reading an illustrated version of Dante’s Divine Comedy with Isabel and Felisa, an old student of Dona Laura’s, Elena reads the bodies on the page as aestheticized representations of psychological pain:

Cuerpos, cuerpos, formas... El cuerpo humano en el dolor tiene su forma, o más bien, la forma sublime de la belleza, el cuerpo en su ser, el modo de

ser, el modo en que se ha inscrito, esa palabra que es el cuerpo, esa armonía, esa plenitud de mundo que el alma, el yo, el sujeto, el quien, el cada uno lleva como un Atlante glorioso, doloroso... esa forma, en el dolor, es la forma del dolor, sin dejar de ser la forma de la belleza. (234)

[Bodies, bodies, forms... The human body in pain has its form, or rather, the sublime form of beauty, the body in its being, in its way of being, the way in which it is inscribed, that word which is the body: that harmony, that plenitude of world which the soul, the self, the subject, the who, the individual carries like a glorious and painful Atlas. That form, in pain, is the form of pain, without ceasing to be the form of beauty. (démers 170)]

Instead of disdaining the bodies-in-pain on the page, as she does when she refuses to get her elders medicine, Elena now interprets the aesthetic meaning of the poetic bodies with Isabel. She understands that through the body in pain, Dante's characters achieve narrative subjectivity and tell a story that is considered a work of art. Their physical form articulates for them an "I" in the same manner that Antonia and Ariadna speak through the bodies of the sculpted Ariadna and the broken pieces of the marquesito.

It is when Elena comprehends the body in pain as a mode of communication, as an aesthetic part of a work of art, that she finally begins to develop an empathetic relationship with her own mother and to see her mother as she sometimes sees Isabel: as a friend and companion in art. As WWI progresses, she and her mother begin to take regular trips to the cinema to watch film, a form of art that Chacel had identified earlier as "la realidad en imágenes sin cuerpo" (155). As they interpret the disembodied images next to each other, they exchange, for the first time in the novel, their emotional reactions, facilitating the beginning of their artistic friendship: "...las frecuentes escapadas creaban entre madre e hija cierta camaradería, cierta complicidad que

sobrepasaba la habitual benevolencia" (328). [...these frequent escapades created between mother and daughter a certain camaraderie, a certain complicity which went beyond habitual benevolence" (démers 257).] Chacel's choice of the word "camaraderie" to describe the connection between Ariadna and Elena circles the reader back to the Prado scene, when Isabel used the same word to describe her relationship to Elena and Elena's father: "Llegábamos los tres riendo como camaradas... Es absurdo, pero era la verdad" (85). ["The three of us came in laughing like old friends. It's absurd, or it seemed absurd, but it was the truth" (démers 32).] Ariadna too is now interpolated into the collective agency that Elena and Isabel use to interpret their mothers' art.

Interpreting art with her mother, Elena begins to see Ariadna not as dormant, but as a "particpe activo del nuevo universo" (328) "an active participant in the new universe" (démers 257). Chacel's description recalls her 1952 diary definition of appetite as "una permanente comunión erótica con el universo, lo más ajeno a la lujuria, lo más próximo a la comunión" (Alcancía Ida 22); "a permanent, erotic communion with the universe, the furthest thing from lust, the closest to communion." Elena sees the revival of her mother's appetite and shares with her a new universe where they can discover art together. The "new universe" that they share is connected to the liberal Spain – the Spain of camaraderie – that was strengthened after the Russian Revolution of 1917. Chacel indeed sets the next novel of the trilogy, Acrópolis, in the Second Spanish Republic.

In spite of the hope that the new universe might accept women in art and society, the closing image of the novel reiterates the pain that the process will entail. While strolling one autumn afternoon in Madrid's Retiro Park, which is just behind the Prado, Isabel and Elena pause to contemplate a nameless statue. They don't know who it represents, but they recognize the pain that emanates from every crevice of the statue's

body. Now versed in the body in pain, they begin to interpret the statue as another maternal lamentation: “Está llorando con todo el cuerpo, parece que se le van a caer las tetas con las lágrimas” (355). “She’s weeping with her whole body. It looks as though her titties will fall off from all that weeping” (282). They aptly name her Tragedy.

Tragedy’s falling breasts are the last image that Elena and Isabel see before they leave the park and head home. Their bleak tears underscore the enormity of the task that lies before them. If they truly want to become artists, they have to continually work to interpret the art that was left to them by all of the mothers who went chronically hungry in the years prior to the 1976 publication of Barrio. Only then, when girls of all social classes unite to interpret their mothers’ painful stories in art, will the Spanish Hunger Years come to an end and will Spain transition into a new “new universe”: its democracy.

## Chapter 2:

### (Dis) embodied: María Zambrano Writes Philosophy

While the modernization of Spain during the Transition era focused on rebuilding the nation from the present, as Rosa Chacel shows in Barrio de Maravillas, [1976], the Tragedy of the past could not be forgotten. In addition to Chacel, many members of the Generation of '27, older but still very active after Franco's death, came out of the woodworks in the late 1970s, both within Spain and in exile. Rosa Chacel published prolifically in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Vicente Aleixandre received the Nobel prize for literature in 1977, and Rafael Alberti was a senator in the first post-Franco courts (Juliá 112). Those who had lived through the Second Republic and war years tried to make sense of the recent Spanish past "in an exercise of memory that encompassed the cinema, literature, and personal memory" (112). In spite of the so-called "pacto del olvido," an official government policy to suppress the memories of the last fifty years and focus on building a new democratic nation, it is false to say that the Transition era involved a forgetting of the Civil War and Franco dictatorship. Rather, the artists of '27 helped those who had not lived through the late 1920s, 1930s and early 1940s to remember this tumultuous time and understand the lasting mark it left on the identity of the nation. As part of the push to remember, María Zambrano also returned to Spain from exile during the Transition. In Delirio y destino: Los veinte años de una española [1989], a text that Zambrano began from exile in Cuba in 1952, the Spanish philosopher stresses that in order to fully transition into a new and democratic era, Spain must recognize the suffering endured by so many who had been silenced, repressed and killed as a result of the Civil War and ensuing Franco dictatorship.

Although the events narrated in Delirio parallel those of Zambrano's life, in the

prologue to the text Zambrano makes it clear that she has not written an autobiography. Rather, she proposes that she has written a philosophy of Spain told through her life experience, an experience through which the essence of her fellow Spaniards can be gleaned. If she has to classify Delirio in terms of literary genre, she asserts that it would be akin to a biography, stressing that it is not a novel or an autobiography even though it is framed through her subjective experience: “No he cultivado el género de la novela aunque sí algo la biografía, tratándose de otros, nunca de la mía. Mas tenía que ser la por mí vivida realmente, incluidos los delirios...” (20). [“The novel is a genre I have never cultivated, although I have written biographically from time to time, never about myself. This biography, however, had to be the one I truly lived, including my delirium, which form a certain whole with the biography” (Maier 2).] Zambrano insists that her text cannot be considered her autobiography, which she reiterates through the namelessness of the “española” of the subtitle, while maintaining that she has written a story that she has lived. The apparent paradox she raises causes the reader to ponder how a text can at once tell the individual experience of the author while also being a collective representation of a community. If it is a story she has experienced, why is it not also *her* biography? If it is a biography, how can it contain her delirium?

To answer these questions, we might look no further than the philosophical essays that Zambrano published before Delirio came out in 1989, at the end of her prolific career as a Spanish philosopher. If we consider Delirio to be an example of Zambrano’s “razón poética,” the concept at the center of her philosophical oeuvre, we can understand the work as philosophy revealed through personal experience. According to “razón poética,” the production of philosophical knowledge can be visualized through a process that I call (dis)embodiment because of the corresponding images of disembodiment and embodiment that Zambrano emphatically uses to

describe it. (Dis)embodiment entails first the separation of philosophical concepts from the philosopher's life, allowing for the manifestation of the most "pure" meaning to the philosopher. Once the philosopher understands the "pure" meaning of the concept he or she ponders, however, he or she faces the impossible task of communicating meaning through writing. Acknowledging that words will never convey pure meaning, Zambrano does not encourage philosophers to try to write meaning in a pure form. Rather, she theorizes that meaning is communicated when it is re-embodied in the philosopher's experience.

Unlike the "impersonal" philosophy that Zambrano derides in essays such as "Las ruinas: Una metáfora de la esperanza," "razón poética," the production of philosophical meaning through personal experience, embraces the diverse connotations of truth that manifest themselves in the subjective lives of individual philosophers. It is a "reason" centered not purely in the mind, but in the connection between the mind and the heart:

¡Cuántos saberes resultado de una vida en brega con las pasiones habrán quedado en el silencio por falta de horizontes racionales en qué encajarse, por falta de coordenadas adecuadas a referirse! Sin este horizonte de un saber radical, el saber acerca de las pasiones: del amor, del odio, quedaba sin apoyo, flotando en un terrible aire de confesión o, lo que es peor, de confidencia. Se necesitaba un marcado impudor y una especial delectación en hablar de sí mismo para recoger la experiencia propia, la amorosa, por ejemplo. ("Las ruinas" 30)

[So much knowledge rooted in life's interaction with passion has been kept silent because of the lack of rational horizons and adequate coordinates! Without the horizon of a radical knowledge, a knowledge of

the passions – of love, of hate – will remain without support, floating in a terrible air of confession or, even worse, of confidence. One must be shamelessly adept at talking about the self in order to reclaim individual experience, like the experience of love, for example.]

By contextualizing philosophical truth in personal experience, a philosopher converts pure knowledge into knowledge that is active, meaningful, and open to interpretation (Hacia 74). The relationship between pure truth and active meaning that manifests in personal experience is, according to Zambrano, the poetics of producing reason. In order to write “razón poética,” Zambrano therefore needs to contextualize the truths that she has contemplated as a philosopher in the personal experience that she has lived. In *Delirio*, she chooses to frame the truths she has seen in the tumultuous twenty-year time period surrounding the Spanish Civil War, from the early 1920s until the 1940s.

The literary tropes that Zambrano uses to convey “razón poética” as a philosophical process of (dis)embodiment stress the ambiguous relationship that she had with her body as a woman who endeavored to be a philosopher at a time when women were marginalized from academic circles. The first phase of (dis)embodiment, the emptying of the body of “vanity,” which I will look at in the following section, corresponds with literary images of hunger (Hacia 41). Bodily hunger is experienced, Zambrano suggests, so that the body can be filled with truth (Hacia 41). Once the body becomes a vessel of truth, however, Zambrano realizes that the truth will remain inaccessible to a reader if it is not embodied in personal experience in the form of active knowledge. The second phase of (dis)embodiment impels her to recognize and inhabit the hungry body that she has honed. As Zambrano moves between the two, fluid phases of (dis)embodiment in *Delirio*, which correspond with the denial and

recognition of bodily hunger, she reveals a philosophy that recognizes the role of each individual, nameless Spaniard, in the production of meaning. She encourages the reader to interpret the truth as manifest through each anonymous, hungry body that the Franco regime and the Civil War cast aside so that Spain can finally transition into an era of healing.

### **Razón Poética: The Truth in Experience**

As Zambrano insinuates by calling her protagonist “una española,” she continually negates the link that connects Delirio to her life. The detached tone with which she posits the obvious parallels between her third-person protagonist and herself, both women from educated families who study philosophy in 1920s Madrid with Ortega y Gasset and immigrate to Cuba in the early 1940s, stresses her attempt to disembody philosophical truth from her life story. As she explains in Hacia un saber sobre el alma [1951], the collection of essays in which she first delineates “razón poética,” truth is made visible when the philosopher empties his or herself of what Zambrano identifies as “vanity”: “La verdad necesita de un gran vacío, de un silencio donde pueda aposentarse, sin que ninguna otra presencia se entremezcle con la suya, desfigurándola. El que escribe, mientras lo hace, necesita acallar sus pasiones y, sobre todo, su vanidad. La vanidad es un hinchazón de algo que no ha logrado ser y se hincha para recubrir su interior vacío” (41). [“The truth needs a large vacancy, a silence where it can settle and where no other presence can mix into and disfigure it. When the writer writes, he or she needs to quiet the passions and, most importantly, vanity. Vanity is the swelling of something that hasn’t achieved “being” and seeks to cover up its vacant interior.”] Although the philosopher may never fully empty the self of vanity, in seeking to minimize the influence of life experience on the interpretation of a concept, the meaning of that concept becomes available to him or her in the most pure form

possible. Quieting the passions and tempering vanity define the first step of (dis)embodiment. Before the philosopher can communicate a reason based on experience, he or she must comprehend the truth of the reason being contemplated. The vacancy created when the philosopher tries to empty the self of vanity can be filled, in theory, with that truth.

The vacancy of the body leads Zambrano's philosopher to enter into a negative realm that in other areas of her philosophy she accesses through a language of "silence." Both vacancy and silence are negative spaces with the potential to be filled by a truth whose purity can only be insinuated by human language. As Zambrano writes in "Apuntes sobre el lenguaje sagrado y las artes," in silence, like vacancy, there is always room for a more pure, more sound truth: "Y está el silencio, el silencio que se hace como un vaso, apto para recibir la palabra definitiva y guardarla sin que se desvanezca ni se derrame, para que permanezca sin que se pase" (224). ["And there is silence, silence that turns itself into a vessel, capable of receiving and protecting the definitive word before it dissipates or overflows, so that it remains without exceeding itself."] While human languages can never translate the absolute meaning of a "definitive word," the language of silence can. Only a language without words, according to Zambrano, is capable of expressing a "pure" truth. Because silence conveys truth, Zambrano postulates that a language of silence exists at the roots of all word-based languages. While the connotative meanings of words constantly evolve, the meaning of the silence from which words emerge is stable: "Pues que existe la muchedumbre de las palabras que han perdido cualidad y el silencio mínimo que las sostiene" (224). ["Well, there is the mass of words that have lost their quality and the minimal silence that sustains them."] Like a priest or religious mystic who transmits a divine truth to a congregation, the philosopher reveals to the reader the silent meaning

beneath the words used to write philosophy.

In *Hacia*, the parallel between the religious mystic and the philosopher serves to elucidate the process by which philosophical truth is disembodied before it is written: “Y es que la filosofía y la mística tienen un anhelo en común: salvarse de ser individuo...” (83). [“And it is because philosophy and mysticism have a common desire: to save the self from being an individual.”] Zambrano cites St. Catharine of Siena as an example of a mystic who starved her body in order to empty herself of vanity and become a vessel of divine truth. Because Siena’s endeavor was impossible to fulfill – she would never fully empty her body and fill herself with divinity – she suffered from what Zambrano terms an “infinite” thirst for divinity (63). Similarly, Zambrano’s philosopher is a chronically “thirsty” being; the object of his thirst is not God, but God’s philosophical equivalent: “pure” knowledge or the philosophical “secret”: “Un ser sediento y solitario, necesita el secreto para posarse sobre él, pidiéndole, al darle su presencia progresivamente, que la vayan fijando en trazos permanentes” (42). [“A thirsty, solitary being, he needs the secret to settle over him and, progressively revealing its presence, to ask him to set it into permanent signs.”] Even as the writer’s thirst is quenched by pure truth, his or her subsequent effort to transcribe that truth into permanent signs, or words, and make it accessible to others, remains permanently unfulfilled. He or she will never reproduce pure meaning through words.

What the writer’s words do produce is active knowledge. Active knowledge, the meaning interpreted through the words a philosopher writes, is transmitted through a sacred human language, a language inspired from the language of silence, whose form changes based on the individual life circumstances of the philosopher who writes it. Active knowledge, the result of “razón poética,” is the type of knowledge that is conveyed through experience (74). If the philosopher needs to be vacant to be filled

with “pure” truth, the truth must be re-embodied in his or her experience in order to be shared with others. Once re-embodied and active, the truth becomes accessible: “Y entendemos por activas las que nacen en el anhelo de penetrar en el corazón humano, las que se encargan de difundir las ideas fundamentales para hacerlas servir como motivos de conducta en la vida diaria del hombre que no es, ni pretende ser, filósofo ni sabio” (74). [“By active knowledge, we mean the knowledge that is born from the desire to penetrate into the human heart, the knowledge that diffuses fundamental ideas and turns them into a form that guides the everyday lives of vulgar men, men who neither are nor strive to be philosophers nor sages.”] The process by which pure truth is converted into active knowledge is what Zambrano calls the “embodiment” of ideas (74).

As ideas are embodied, the heart works with the mind, diffusing “pure” truth through the body in the form of an active life-pulse that sustains life (LaRubia). Although we cannot see the material that blood pulses through the body, as we cannot see pure truth, we can feel it. Like the pulse of the heart enlivens the human body, active knowledge is nourishing. Like blood, it must be constantly renewed and re-circulated to support life:

La vida humana reclama siempre ser transformada, estar continuamente convirtiéndose en contacto con ciertas verdades. Verdades que no pueden ser ofrecidas sin persuasión, pues su esencia no es ser conocidas, sino ser aceptadas. Y cuando la vida humana no acepta dentro de sí cierto grado de verdad operante y transformadora queda sola y en rebeldía, y cualquier conocimiento que adquiera no le bastará. (77)

[Human always life needs to be transformed; it is continually in a process of coming into contact with certain truths. Truths that cannot be offered

without persuasion, since, after all, their essence is not to be understood, but accepted. And when human life does not accept a certain amount of operative, transformative truth, it remains isolated and in rebellion, and any other knowledge it acquires will not be sufficient.]

As Zambrano acknowledges the essential role of active knowledge in sustaining human life, she emphasizes that philosophers must be writers of active knowledge. Once they see truth, they must write it into the knowledge that consistently nourishes and transforms human life by renewing life's contact with truth.

The transmission of active knowledge through writing leads Zambrano to theorize that in Spain, a country that lacks a strong presence in the Western European philosophical canon, poets are philosophers. In "Apuntes sobre el lenguaje sagrado y las artes," Zambrano explains that the poet continually gestures towards the "white" philosophical secret, or "pure" truth, through the language of metaphor. Metaphoric language, which transmits active knowledge, is "colorful"; it veils the "white" truth and makes it visible to a reader:

Mas sucede que la blancura de la palabra que se busca, y que el lenguaje poético ofrece en color, viene a suceder algo así como si en algunos parajes se derramara. Que la blancura – inocencia – solo se dé cuando se derrama ella misma. El color aparece inevitable en la poesía, imaginación desvelada. Y el color nace del fuego que hay en la luz, del agua que hay en el aire, de la tierra que absorbe fuego y agua y los guarda – vela – en su oscuridad, dándolos luego la luz en su forma visible. (231)

[But it follows that the whiteness of the word that they look for, and that poetic language offers in color, comes to do something, as if in some spots it overflows. The whiteness – innocence – is only manifest when it

overflows. Color appears to be inevitable to poetry, imagination unveiled. And color is born from the fire that there is in light, from the water there is in air, from the earth that absorbs fire and water and protects them – veils them – in its darkness, later giving them to light in their visible form.]

In poetry, colored language, or “corporeidad aun sutil” [“a subtle body,”] is the veil surrounding the white word (231). It effectuates the embodiment of truth that Zambrano locates in silence and vacancy, turning truth into knowledge that is visibly open to the process of poetic interpretation. In *Delirio*, Zambrano sustains that Juan Ramón Jiménez and his successors of the Generation of '27 constitute the philosophical circle of pre-Civil War Spain. Jiménez's “pure poetry,” in particular, strives to bring the reader as close as possible to truth by using the most transparent language: “El idioma castellano adelgazaba, se convertía en cristal y dejaba ver sus entrañas” (60). [“The Spanish language was paring down, turning into crystal and exposing its pure core” (Maier 37).] Coloring the truth with the fewest words conceivable, pure poets point towards truth through metaphor, insinuation, and symbols that allow a reader to interpret meaning.

Zambrano's association of “pure” poetic truth with the vacant space at the center of the poem anticipates the reclamation of feminine lack that French feminist Luce Irigaray proposes in “The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine.” Similar to the French feminist, whose influence rose just as Zambrano published *Delirio* at the end of her career, Zambrano focuses not on translating truth as is, but on perpetually renewing the meaning of truth through a writing grounded in the personal experience of the body. Zambrano's active knowledge, the knowledge acquired through the interpretation of literature, indeed resembles the fluid, feminine “style” of writing that Irigaray encourages women to compose from within patriarchy. Irigaray suggests

that women begin to write by consciously “mimicking” the roles that patriarchal discourses bestow upon them (76). Through imitation, a writer shows that she is aware of the manner in which patriarchal discourse works to subordinate the feminine in culture; she speaks from the point of view of the woman who “lacks” access to subjectivity: “If women are such good mimics, it is because they are not simply absorbed in this function. *They also remain elsewhere: another case of the persistence of ‘matter’*” (76). When a woman writer mimics dominant discourses, conforming to the subordinate role she is identified with, she speaks. Calling attention to the position in which she lacks a voice, she reveals that she does not identify with patriarchy, but rather remains grounded in her experience as a woman in a culture that subordinates the feminine.

The many manifestations of Zambrano’s active knowledge, which vary based on the personal experience each writer composes, also resemble the “disruptive excess” of meanings evoked through Irigaray’s feminine style. On the elsewhere of patriarchal discourse, where a woman writer mimics the definitions that define her as lack, she reveals a congeries of feminine meanings. Because she does not attempt to pin the feminine down to any single denotation, but allows for the existence of excess, the woman writer does not offer a definition of the feminine that opposes patriarchal notions of womanhood. Rather, she subverts the patriarchal feminine by showing that the meaning of woman exceeds definition from within patriarchal discourse itself:

[Women] do not claim to be rivaling men in constructing a logic of the feminine that would still take onto-theo-logic as its model, but that they are rather attempting to wrest this question away from the economy of logos. They should not put it, then, in the form “What is woman?” but rather, repeating/interpreting the way in which, within discourse, the

feminine finds itself defined as lack, deficiency, or as imitation and negative image of the subject, they should signify that with respect to this logic a *disruptive excess* is possible on the feminine side. (78)

Locating the “matter” that persists in the negative realm where the feminine is marginalized through patriarchal philosophical and artistic discourses allows Irigaray to subvert the binary associations that separate masculine and feminine as mind and matter. The woman writer who actively reiterates feminine lack proves that the feminine exceeds any definition or fixed form. Rather than confine woman to a concept, Irigaray allows for the manifestation of infinite feminine iterations that form from each woman’s situation inside of the discourse that defines her as lack. Like the active knowledge that Zambrano proposed essential to philosophy decades before Irigaray wrote her theory of “elsewhere,” Irigaray calls for the rest of France and Europe to interpret the feminine according to the unique iteration of lack that each woman offers.

Meaning, for Irigaray and for Zambrano, exceeds language and can only be fully evoked as the infinite filling of negative matter. Placing Zambrano into dialogue with Irigaray allows us to understand her “razón poética” as a theory that elucidates a feminine tradition of Spanish philosophy much earlier than French feminism became influential in the West. If philosophical meaning in Spain is insinuated through poetic language, which produces not a definition of truth but active knowledge, then we can understand Spanish philosophy as the production of meaning from within silence, a unique manifestation of lack. While Spain has been stereotyped as a country that does not possess a strong philosophical or feminist heritage, Zambrano helps us to conceive of Spanish philosophy on the “elsewhere” of the Western European tradition and calls us to re-think our current understanding of both Spanish and European feminism. Instead of defining a concept, the Spanish philosopher points to it, allowing for the

disruptive excess of meaning that can only be adequately defined through silence or within vacancy.

Because active knowledge circles around truth from the point of view of personal experience, writing active knowledge does not mean that a writer is writing his or her autobiography, as Zambrano insists in the beginning of Delirio. Rather, Zambrano's text is the culmination of a philosophical endeavor through which she insinuates the collective truths that bind together her community during a time of turmoil. In writing active knowledge, she gives the reader a context through which to perceive Spain's truth after the Franco years.

### **Disembodiment: Seeing truth**

In 1949, three years before beginning the composition of Delirio and two years before publishing Hacia, Zambrano posits the essential role of personal experience in creating philosophical meaning in her essay, "Una metáfora de la esperanza: Las ruinas." The essay opens with a lamentation on the loss of the personal tone of the question at the heart of canonical Western philosophy: ¿Qué son las cosas? What are things? Zambrano asserts that the personal has long been eschewed by the scientific and philosophical discourses that have come to dominate the exploration of "things" in the West: "Mas con el tiempo, la actitud de dónde nace permanentemente la pregunta ha ido quedando oculta, y la pregunta misma y sus respuestas han ido adquiriendo impersonalidad, como si el hacer Filosofía y aun más Ciencia, llevara consigo la renuncia a toda 'cuestión personal'" (136). ["But, over the course of time, the stance from which the philosophical question was born has been concealed. The question itself and its answers have acquired impersonality, as if producing Philosophy and, even more, Science, means renouncing all 'personal questions.'"] As Zambrano will reiterate in Hacia un saber sobre el alma [1950], she sees the lack of active knowledge as the most

lamentable aspect of modern culture (74). To challenge the impervious, impersonal tone of philosophy, she aligns herself with a trend to resuscitate the personal that emerged in the writing of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century European thinkers such as Wilhelm Dilthey and José Ortega y Gasset. Dilthey, she explains in “Una metáfora,” encouraged philosophers to be “personal” in his theory of the Sciences of the Spirit, while Ortega y Gasset’s “razón vital” proposed that human circumstances influenced the production of meaning. In “Una metáfora,” she goes on to argue that their efforts, though helpful, have not been enough and must be followed by a much more emphatic exploration of the personal side of knowledge, an exploration that uncovers the role of individual corporeal and emotional experience in the interpretation of philosophy.

To show the centrality of the personal to elucidating a philosophical truth, at the beginning of the essay Zambrano declares that she will turn first to her memory. However, before doing so she continues to meander through a series of somewhat elusive, rhetorical questions on the lost personal tone of philosophy. It is not until the middle of the essay that she changes tone to recall that her first philosophical teacher was her childhood nursemaid, Alhama. She explains that Alhama, though illiterate, taught her to look for the meaning of “things” through techniques such as pointing, insinuating, telling parables, reiterating sayings, creating metaphors and revealing silences. She shows that Alhama taught her to interpret the active manifestations of truth, especially in those childhood moments when she found herself perplexed or confused by life’s circumstances:

Y cuando yo andaba acongojada o perpleja, enfurecida quizá o más frecuentemente sin saber qué me pasaba, ya de mayor en los linderos de la adolescencia, ella nada me decía, nada directamente, pues no recuerdo haberla oído hablar nunca sino en forma indirecta; por modestas

parábolas, pero parábolas, al fin, por agudas metáforas, por insinuaciones, por versos que sólo ella se sabía y también por silencios. Y sus decires comenzaban siempre de la misma manera: cuando me mandaba mirar algo, recurso usado en los momentos más difíciles: 'Mira niña'... Y no añadía nada más. Al pronto yo nada sacaba de mirar aquello. Pero más tarde, lentamente y a veces súbitamente como por una iluminación, comprendía: y sí, allí estaba una indicación a lo menos, de lo que a mí me estaba pasando. (138)

[And when I was distressed or perplexed, infuriated, perhaps, or, more frequently, ignorant of what was happening to me, now that I was on the brink of adolescence, she did not say anything to me, not directly. I do not remember ever hearing her speak but indirectly: through modest parables, but parables, still; acute metaphors; insinuations; verses that only she knew; and silences. Her sayings always began the same way: especially in the most difficult moments, she would order me to look at something: "Look child" ... And she would point to something: a cloud or a conjunction of clouds in the sky, a butterfly going around a light, some even smaller insect. She always said: "Look child" ... and nothing more. At that time, I did not get anything out of looking at whatever it was she pointed to. But later, slowly, and at times suddenly, as if through an illumination, I would understand. And yes, there lied an indication, at least, of what was happening to me.]

In order to understand the "things" that philosophy questions, Zambrano shows the reader to look at the manifestation of "things" in life. Her anecdote of Alhama connects seamlessly with the description of active knowledge that she makes in Hacia: "No son

absolutos en lo que dicen; y siempre es más lo que insinúan. Porque pretenden solamente que el que escucha encuentra dentro de sí, en *status nascens*, la verdad que necesita” (85). [“They are not absolute in what they say; there is always more in what they insinuate. Because they only serve to make the listener find within the self, in *status nascens*, the truth he or she needs.”] The goal of “razón poética” is to perpetually recirculate meaning, or truth, through life experience, as Alhama did when she pointed Zambrano towards meaning, encouraging the child to interpret the things she saw on her own terms. Active knowledge brings a reader back to the most basic truths of life. Similarly, three decades later Irigaray declares that her feminine “style” provides a way for writers to connect to their origins: “it comes back in touch with itself in that origin without ever constituting itself in it, as some form of unity” (79). Truth may elude being fixed in language or having a single definition, but the effort a writer makes to circulate it through the perpetual interpretation of life and experience makes it accessible and brings a writer and a reader to the truths at the heart of humanity.

Just after remembering Alhama, it dawns on Zambrano that Alhama’s indirect usage of language pointed her to the same truth that she had seen on a recent visit to the Roman ruins at Palantine. As she juxtaposes her personal, childhood memories to the ancient histories that she saw circulating through the Roman ruins, she demonstrates the function of ruins as a site that allows for the integration of individual and collective histories. Her metaphor of the ruins as representations of hope builds on the interpretations of George Simmel and Walter Benjamin, who, in other contexts, visualize ruins as sites where dominant historiographies could be dismantled and reconfigured. Benjamin writes that Baroque art in particular emphasizes the ruins as a site of tension between culture and nature; in a landscape in ruins, we see culture fall and return to nature: “In the process of decay, and in it alone, the events of history

shrivel up and become absorbed in the setting” (179). Similarly, in “The Ruins,” which was published in Spanish by the Revista de Occidente in 1934, Simmel sees the fall of culture into ruins as a process that opens up new possibilities for nature and mankind. When a man-made construction turns into a site in ruins, it presents a reconfiguration of the relationships between man and nature and the past and the present that facilitates a rethinking of the relationships between mankind and history (212). In “Una metáfora,” Zambrano builds on Simmel’s description of the ruins as a site where the past and present meet and are reconfigured, stressing that the process of reconfiguration implicates the individual. Integrating her personal history into a ruined collective history, she concludes that the ruins are a “lugar de perfecta contemplación” [“a site of perfect contemplation,”] where truth is manifest, but never fully defined (140). They are where relationships between people and time can be rethought to renew our understanding of the most basic truths that sustain mankind.

In Delirio, the image of the emptying female body evokes a human ruin. It is a “site of perfect contemplation,” where the pure truth emerges and is interpreted by the protagonist. In particular, the text acquires a personal tone when the protagonist enters into her first memory of waking up as a child and facing that she would have to do such mundane things as eat, tie her shoes, and pass by a hungry girl on her way to school. An incarnation of the “pure” truth, the hungry girl she passed resided on the outskirts of life. The protagonist could not play with her, though as a future philosopher she could see her truth. Gesturing towards the difficult task that would face her as she converted truth into active knowledge, the protagonist laments that unlike the hungry girl, she would be forced to nourish her body with food, putting words to truth:

La noche: siempre la había esperado; desde niña le pasaba así. Se despertaba lenta, trabajosamente, siempre sentía que no podía con el día

que llegaba y violentamente como cuchilladas se le iban entrando en el cerebro algunos esfuerzos de los que la esperaban; tendría que comer, a mediodía un plato de sopa y lo más peor un trozo de carne, tendría que hacerse mil veces la lazada de las cintas de los zapatos, y pasar delante de aquella niña hambrienta a la que no podía traer a su casa y a la tarde jugar con <<ellas>>.... (26)

[Night: she had always waited for it, from the time she was a little girl. She would wake up slowly, laboriously, always with the feeling that she could not cope with the coming day, and some of the efforts awaiting her would enter her brain violently, like knife wounds: she would have to eat, a bowl of soup at noon, and, worst of all, a piece of meat; she would have to tie her shoelaces a thousand times and walk by that hungry girl she could not invite to her house, and during the afternoon she would have to play with "them" ... (Maier 8)]

Closer to disembodiment than the protagonist, the hungry girl nearly transcended the body, ready to incarnate truth and enter into a divine realm that would separate her from "them," the other children with whom Zambrano's protagonist played. She had more space to receive the pure truth of philosophy than the protagonist, for whom the dawning of the day symbolized the waking of her body from the dream state in which she momentarily was able to leave behind her physical self. Zambrano's protagonist was aware that unlike the hungry girl, she would have to embrace her body in order to make the truth she contemplated meaningful to others. If she caught glimpses of a truth in the hungry girl, she would need to translate that truth to others by composing active knowledge that would nourish humans and embody ideas.

Zambrano underscores the idiosyncratic tone of her anecdote through the

protagonist's particular dread of eating meat, a delicacy in the first half of 20th century Spain, especially during the post-war Hunger Years. Juxtaposed to the positive connotations of meat at the time, the protagonist's disdain for its nourishment implies the personal side to her text. She insinuates that if her text is a biography of Spain, as she stated in the prologue, it does not tell the definitive history of Spaniards, as most would have salivated over a piece of ham or chicken in the pre and post Civil War years. She thereby points towards a definition of biography that is centered not in revealing a true history, but rather in disclosing the truth within an individual story. Supporting the idiosyncratic tone of the anecdote, in Esencia y hermosura, a recent anthology of Zambrano's writing compiled by José Miguel Ullán, Zambrano is quoted remembering a childhood disdain towards her growing body that parallels the protagonist: "De niña, yo no quería crecer, yo quería ser más niña, yo no quería ocupar lugar" (70). ["As a child, I did not want to grow. I wanted to be more childlike, I didn't want to occupy space."] The personal parallels that Zambrano draws between herself and her protagonist function to remind the reader of the effort required to transmit truth into knowledge. The value of Delirio lies not in the historical congruence of the story Zambrano tells, but in the truth towards which it gestures.

The ambiguity of the philosopher's task is that after he or she disembodies the truth, seeing its impersonal meaning, he or she must embody that truth into his or her experience so that it can be communicated. Zambrano continues to illustrate the ambiguity of (dis)embodiment in the next section when she refers to further examples of hungry human bodies in Spanish literature. Developing the parallel between the hungry body and a site in ruins, she offers an interpretation of the hungry "pícaro" as a symbol of hope in the subsection, "El hambre y la esperanza." She falsely posits that the "pícaro," who goes hungry not by choice but by necessity, resembles a religious mystic

who actively abstains from food in order to acquire spiritual and intellectual strength:

Se ve desde el siglo XVI, es el tema obsesivo de la novela picaresca; el hambre que roe las tripas y agusana la sangre y aguza también el entendimiento. Es verdad, el hambre ha afilado el perfil de los españoles, madrileños, andaluces, castellanos, haciéndoles de medalla. Ello quizá sea cosa del hambre, en parte. El hambre de no tener y del abstenerse una vez que se tiene, del no poder acostumbrarse o aceptar que se puede vivir sin tener hambre. (76)

[Hunger... in literature it has clearly been the obsessive theme of the picaresque novel since the sixteenth century – a hunger that gnaws at the gut and leaves the blood ridden with worms, but one that also sharpens the intelligence. It's true that whether Spaniards are from Madrid, Andalusia, or Castile, hunger has led to the kind of honed profile found on medallions. This may have resulted, at least in part, from hunger caused by not having and from abstaining once one does have, from not being able to get used to or accept that it's possible to live without feeling hungry. (Maier 45)]

Asserting that hunger has made “pícaros,” characters such as Lazarrillo de Tormes who tend to live by their wits and eat when food is available, “de medalla,” Zambrano stages an unlikely association between “pícaros” and the religious mystics who would adorn the medallions often worn by elderly Spanish women. The obvious falseness of her claim highlights again that she is not trying to offer a translation of truth, but rather to reveal the disembodied truth that needs to be interpreted according to the circumstances of each individual reader. She calls the reader to question the endeavor of literary interpretation, highlighting the evasiveness of truth and the necessity of

contextualizing truth in experience.

While Zambrano never cites a “pícaro” who could prove her false claim, in the literary texts that she does refer to, she emphasizes not the strength, but the weakness of the emptying female body. Just before her description of the picaresque, she cites characters from the realist novels of Benito Pérez Galdós as examples of personified pure truth and active knowledge. For instance, although Fortunata, the lower-class protagonist of *Fortunata y Jacinta*, reaches a state of purity when her body is emptying itself of blood at the end of the novel, at this point she is also on her death bed. If she incarnates pure truth, she does so at the expense of her life. She dies “<<yéndose en sangre>>; inocente, primaria, <<magna mater>>, especie de encarnación de la Diosa Cibeles que preside la Villa desde su carro triunfal” (75) [“ ‘bleeding away’: an innocent, primitive, ‘Magna Mater’ who in some ways is an embodiment of Cybele, who presides over the Villa from her triumphal chariot at the Plaza de Cibeles” (Maier 44)].

Juxtaposing death and innocence, Fortunata makes clear the unsettling condition to which the pursuit of a pure truth can lead if it is not followed by the interpretation of “truth” into active knowledge. Once emptied, Fortunata’s body may be a pure vessel of truth, but, like the statue of Cybele, her body would no longer sustain life. As she dies, she becomes a figure who is closer to divinity, but marginal to humanity. In contrast to Fortunata, Zambrano cites Benigna, the lower class protagonist of *Misericordia*, as a protagonist who actively interprets truth into knowledge (78). Because Benigna is free from the middle class “pudor” [pride] that prevents the hungry señora she works for from obtaining food, she is able to beg for enough food for both herself and her señora (78). She is able to sustain both lives and keep them embodied. Zambrano laments that middle class pride prevents many Spaniards, like Benigna’s señora, from begging or accepting jobs that they judge to be beneath their social status. When life is clouded by

pride, truth is incommunicable, people are isolated, and bodies go hungry:

El hambre y la vergüenza; sí, no todos tenían la libertad de Benigna, la protagonista de Misericordia, de echarse a pedir por los caminos un pedazo de pan. [...] <<En mi 'jambre' mando yo>>... ese pensamiento había ayudado, sin duda, a soportar la vida, a no hacer un disparate el día menos pensado; ese sentido de que al fin no importa, de que todo hay que saberlo soportar y vencer, que solo así sea; ser un hombre, eso es lo que cuenta." (78)

[Hunger and shame. No, not everyone was free like Benigna, the protagonist of Compassion, to take to the streets and beg for a bit of bread. [...] 'I'm the boss of my 'unger' ... The thought had undoubtedly helped make it easier for him to endure hunger, made it possible to keep from doing something crazy and totally unexpected – the feeling that in the end none of this is what matters, that a man can endure and conquer anything, that this is the only way he's a man, which is what really counts. (46)]

The notion that to be a “man,” you must demonstrate control over bodily needs, including hunger, highlights the irony of middle class “pudor.” The social pull to be innocent, like Fortunata, or to maintain a sense of pride, like Benigna’s señora, is what sustains the misleading notion that Zambrano highlights in her misinterpretation of the picaresque. As a philosopher, she knows that she cannot go hungry and live. Still, she fights against a culture that associates emptiness with divinity and a philosophical tradition that strives not to embody truth, but to translate it into a pure state that is, ultimately, impossible to achieve.

Still contemplating the associations between emptiness and innocence and hunger and death, the protagonist brings the narrative back into the personal. She

remembers a servant who lived with her family and had told her stories of her hungry childhood. After struggling to obtain sufficient food when young, her servant became addicted to the feeling of emptiness that came with not eating. Later in her life, when she worked for the protagonist's family and food was plentiful, she actively denied her appetite, especially for meat:

Y recordaba, recordó, a aquella muchacha venida de un pueblo segoviana para servir a su casa a quien había sorprendido llorando delante de un trozo de carne porque no podía comérselo, ella que tanto lo había soñado y esperado. Confesó que se había <<alimentado>> de niña de cebollas: su madre salía al campo y les dejaba un cuarto de arroba para todo el día, de donde iban comiendo según tenían hambre, acompañándola con algo de pan, ella y sus hermanitos; algunas patatas guisadas, no todas las noches, los tomates en verano y las sandías, pero la carne... ella sabía que se comía, pero nunca la había comido y su rojez la repugnaba... (77)

[She was remembering, she remembered, the girl who came from the rugged mountains near Segovia to work as a servant in her house and how she had discovered the girl sitting in front of a piece of meat and wished for it so much. The girl confessed that as a child he had been "nourished" by onions. Her mother would go out to the fields and leave them about six pounds for the whole day, and she and her little brothers and sisters would eat them with a bit of bread as they got hungry. Some nights, but not always, they had stewed potatoes; in the summer there were tomatoes and watermelons, but meat... she knew people ate meat, but she had never eaten it and its redness revolted her... (Maier 45)]

In avoiding food when it is plentiful, the servant personifies Zambrano's mystical

“pícaro.” The translucent and white colors of the foods that she ate – onions, bread, potatoes, tomatoes and watermelon – contrast with the opaque redness of the meat that revolted her, recalling the difference between white truth and colored language (Apuntes” 231). Like Spain’s pure poets, the servant ate only the most transparent red foods available to her, making visible to Zambrano the whiteness at her center. Her body translated philosophy like a pure poem reveals a truth.

In likening a poem to a human body, however, Zambrano again raises the question of whether a transparent body, a pure poem, can sustain human life. To address the question, she offers a further example that again associates the hungry body with truth. She reflects that the typical diet of Andalusian women consists of mere “fruslerías,” which should, in theory, make them more transparent, more like a pure poem. However, the truth is not transparent in them; like Benigna’s señora, it is obscured by the shame, pride, which prevents them from eating. Because they do not eat out of shame, they manifest that most “lamentable” aspect of modern culture (Hacia 74), the failure to translate a truth into embodied knowledge:

En Andalucía es casi una vergüenza, especialmente para las mujeres que se alimentan de fruslerías, tacitas de café, ensaladillas, algún dulcecito.

Una mujer comiendo carne es un espectáculo poco digno de la feminidad y que envuelve cierto reto al hombre, que es quien, si acaso, debe de comerla, porque era así. (77)

[In Andalusia this need almost makes people feel ashamed, especially the women who live on mere nothings – little cups of coffee, small salads, tiny sweets. The sight of a woman eating meat hardly creates a proper image of femininity, and it implies a certain threat to the man; he’s the one who should eat meat, if anyone should, because that’s how things are. (Maier

46)]

What is lamentable about an Andalusian woman who eats mere “fruslerías” is that in perpetuating the pursuit of disembodied truth without translating truth for others, she does not succeed in creating active knowledge. She is not a pure poem because her body, almost emptied of food, is full of shame. Zambrano implies that a human needs to find a balance between emptiness and nourishment in the body; Andalusian women need to eat enough to maintain a truth that is healthy and alive. By pointing out that women are the ones who tend to go hungry in Andalusia, while men eat red meat when it is available, Zambrano further suggests that the pursuit of pure truth in and of itself maintains the subordination of women in Spain, perpetuating a separation of mind and body, man and woman. Calling attention to the insidious pull of disembodiment, Zambrano opens up the possibility of writing philosophy healthily, as *razón poética*. From inside of Spain’s current condition of philosophical lack, she shares with the reader philosophy that is embodied, philosophy that emerges from the individual state of disembodiment that she has been taught to grow into as a Spanish woman philosopher.

### **Embodiment: Writing philosophy**

Although Zambrano’s protagonist is able to perceive truth in its pure, disembodied form, she continually reminds the reader that her goal in *Delirio* is to communicate truth by embodying it in her experience. As a young philosophy student reared in the conventions of impersonal philosophy, her experience was the experience of a body that lacked. She had to overcome the stereotype that as a woman, she was not capable of learning Philosophy, a tradition she refers to with a capital P. Aware that the tradition she inherited subordinated the feminine, in her writing she mimics the image of the lacking woman by describing her body as small and incapable of learning: “Era

pequeña y no podía; cuando al fin, pudiese leer ya no leería más aquellos libros, ni los apuntes mal tomados. No se lo decía a su padre por no hacerle sufrir, ya que todavía no había llegado el momento [...]” (41). [“She was small and she was incapable; when she could finally read, she would not read those books or her inadequate notes. So that he would not suffer, she did not tell her father. It was not the right moment” (Maier 18).] While it is clear that the protagonist knew the philosophical canon well, as she disparaged her “small,” “incapable” body she imitated the Philosophical discourse that marginalizes women in Spain. Remembering her vow that she would not tell her “father” that she rejected his tradition as she mimicked it, Zambrano implies that the alternative philosophy she proposes, *razón poética*, does not cast Philosophy aside. It embodies it.

Underscoring her knowledge of the tradition that deemed her small body incapable, Zambrano’s protagonist explains that it was from Philosophy that she learned to reject life. Being small and incapable, she inhabited the position of the feminine inside of her father’s tradition. She recalls the scorn that she received from friends and family who believed that by studying philosophy, she was rejecting the traditional feminine responsibilities that came with marriage and motherhood:

La Filosofía le había dado muchas cosas; pero la principal, la que nunca podría pagar, era todo lo que le había enseñado a rechazar, a mantener en suspenso, como si no fuera, y hasta a destruir todas las posibilidades de su vida; eso era lo que algunos de los que la querían más lamentaban; había podido, hubiera podido hacer varias cosas, a qué enumerarlas, si al fin ya ilusorias y formaban parte de aquella imagen que como todas las que las gentes se forman de sí mismas está formada por los <<habría>>, los <<hubiese>>, los si <<no fuera por>>... Si no fuera por la Filosofía, por

aquella tonta ambición, ella – pensaban algunos que la querían – hubiera sido o hecho esto, aquello, lo otro, estaría casada por lo menos y en eso, podía ser verdad... (31)

[Philosophy had given her many things; but the principal thing, the one she could never repay, was everything philosophy had taught her to reject, to hold in suspense as if it had no being – even to destroy – all the possibilities in her life. That was what some of the people who loved her the most lamented – she had been able, she would have been able to do any number of things, but why list them, if in the end they were illusory and they formed part of the image, which, like all images people form of themselves, is formed by the “could have,” the “would have,” the “if it weren’t for”... If it weren’t for philosophy, for that foolish ambition – thought some of the people who loved her – she would have been or done this, that, or the other thing, she would at least be married, and that might have been true... (Maier 11)]

The evasiveness of the images that those who love the protagonist formed of her – that if not a philosopher she could have had or would have been “this,” “that,” or “the other thing” – emphasizes the ambiguity of the identity of women in a tradition that equated femininity with lack. Because Zambrano’s protagonist chose to study philosophy, she lived on the other side of the “this,” “that” and “other thing”; she was the negative image of what she could have been, of what might have been true if she hadn’t pursued a “foolish” ambition in which her body, instead of getting pregnant and reproducing, grew small and incapable. To be a philosopher, she accepted that she must render her experience on that other side, from the position of the small and the incapable.

Echoing her marginal existence as a woman who studied Philosophy, the

philosophy department at the University of Madrid was isolated from the University. Students of philosophy did not dialogue with other students in Madrid. Neither did they dialogue amongst themselves. The disconnectedness of the group emphasizes that studying Philosophy and being a Western philosopher was not customary for a Spaniard of the early 1930s: “Los <<filósofos>> apenas formaban parte de la vida estudiantil; eran muy pocos y no formaban grupo entre sí no ligaban con nadie...” (45). [“The ‘philosophers’ hardly took part in student life; there were very few of them and they neither formed any groups among themselves nor allied themselves with anyone...” (21)]. The notion that Spain, and thereby Spaniards, lacked a philosophical tradition underpinned the marginalization of the department. Studying philosophy in Spain, especially as a woman, placed one on the borders of dominant culture. In accordance with the culture of the University, the protagonist recognized her small, lacking body. It was from there that she began to write meaning: “Porque lo que andaba buscando, lo que se atrevía a querer si pudiera, era fundar la vida, en una adecuación a su falta de entidad: ser pequeña y transparente” (40-41). [“Because what she would have dared to want if it had been possible for her, what she was trying to do, was to base her life on an adaptation to her lack of being, of entity: a way to be small and transparent” (Maier 18).] By basing her life on an adaptation to her lack of being, Zambrano claimed her body as the origin of meaning. She appropriated it as a small, transparent embodiment of a truth.

Transforming truth into active knowledge proved difficult for Zambrano’s protagonist as long as she remained small and transparent. While in of the first phase of disembodiment, she tried to incarnate truth as pure but did not yet embody it into meaning. The result was that she came to inhabit a starving body that did not make the truth accessible to those around her. One day, while she was waiting at the train station

in Madrid, about to give a talk in a nearby town, she recalls bumping into a doctor she knew who scorned her for not “taking care.” He did not see inside of her the philosophical truth in which she believed to live:

La vida en la verdad; vivir en la verdad. En una verdad viviente que nos invade y está en nosotros. La había dejado a un lado, fascinada por lo inaccesible, o quizás nunca la había aceptado sin reservas, y ahora sabía que basta descreerse, desinventarse, para que la vida nos invada sin tumulto. El médico con su voz de hermano la reprochaba severamente haber despreciado su cuerpo, y eso no se puede: <<todo lo has dado a la inteligencia y a no sé qué>>. (45)

[Life in the truth; to live in the truth – in a living truth that invades us and is found within us. She had never left it aside, fascinated by things that were inaccessible, or perhaps she had never accepted it unreservedly, and now she knew that all we have to do is disbelieve ourselves, disinvent ourselves, and life will invade us without causing any commotion. The doctor scolded her severely with his brotherly voice for having spurned her body, because a person can't do that: 'You've given everything to your intellect and to who knows what else.' (Maier 20)]

The doctor did not see her behavior as part of a philosophical practice because the truth that filled the protagonist was inaccessible. She did not yet embody it. Moments after the doctor scolded her, the protagonist gave an incomprehensible talk on philosophy at the Ateneo. Although she had made herself thin, her voice was not a portal to the truth. She was opaque, not a pure poem: “En la charla habida en el Ateneo de aquella ciudad provincial donde fue delegada por el grupo de Madrid había hablado con voz opaca y no había podido comer en todo el día... como casi todos los días” (45). [“In the ‘talk’ at

the provincial city's Ateneo, where she had been sent to represent the Madrid group, she had spoken in a dull voice and had not been able to eat the whole day... like almost every other day" (Maier 20).] The protagonist points out that her small body was incapable not because she could not see the truth that she studied, but because she could not communicate it. As her body was emptied of nourishment, she lost her voice.

Even as the protagonist starved, she continues to insist that her behavior was not self-neglect, but part of a philosophical process to know Spain's truth. She recalls that it was after she left her body aside that she became most connected to the life-pulse of Spain's truth. Politically, she aligns Spain's truth with the Second Republic, which she ardently supported before and during the Civil War and whose defeat she mourned as she headed into life as an exile. In the last days of the Republic, her pulse was at one with Spain's: "Y fue este pulso, este latir sereno y apasionado de una vida transcendente a la suya, la que la tomó, la envolvió y la condujo hasta el umbral de su propia vida" (62). ["And it was this pulse, the serene, impassioned, throbbing of a life that transcended hers, took her, seized her, and led her toward the threshold of her own life" (Maier 32).] On the threshold of her life but connected to the heart of the nation, Zambrano implies that neglecting her body was integral to her formation as a woman philosopher who desired to understand Spain's truth: "No; <<no había despreciado su cuerpo>>, según le habían dicho, no le había tenido horror; era que había amado demasiado, que había <<andado enamorada y se hizo perdidiza>>; se perdió empujada por el amor, llevada por el pulso cada vez más frenéticamente acelerado que ella no podía aminorar" (62). ["No; 'she had not spurned her body,' as they had told her, she had not felt horrified by it; it was because she had loved too much, she had fallen in love and gone head over heels; she had fallen, but she had been driven by love, swept along by a rapid, increasingly frenetic pulse she could not control" (Maier 33).] Rather

than a manifestation of self-neglect, not eating was a consequence of her passionate desire to be a Spanish philosopher. Experiencing her body as marginal was essential to comprehending the philosophy of a nation from the negative side of European Philosophy, the side the protagonist gestures towards through the emphatic “no”s of the previous citation.

If not eating were a philosophical behavior, philosophy would remain incomplete if Zambrano’s protagonist did not follow not eating with eating, making the negated truth she saw nourishing and comprehensible. Zambrano reflects that the problem of her Generation was that she and her fellow philosophers and artists were always disconnected, isolated in their respective contemplations of Spain’s truth. Like heads without bodies, they never fully came together. Imagining Spain as the body to which their heads must reattach, Zambrano suggests that the Civil War could have been prevented had her fellow countrymen and women united themselves to Spain:

Y había que lograr que este rostro, estas cabezas no siguieran en este modo sueltas, desprendidas del tronco del cuerpo, paradójicamente invisible aún de España: pues España no era todavía visible, la sentíamos más que la veíamos y teníamos ansia de verla, era necesario que se hiciese de nuevo visible al mundo, recobrada, entera, dueña de sí... .(47)

[And it was necessary to prevent this face, these heads from continuing to remain unattached, separated from the trunk, paradoxically invisible even in Spain; for Spain was still not visible, we felt Spain more than we saw her, and we were yearning to see her, and it was necessary, absolutely necessary, that she become visible to the world once more, healed, whole, and self-possessed... . (22)]

As philosophers render truth into active knowledge during the second phase of razón

poética, they recognize the way that the body and the senses interpret the knowledge that they contemplate, restoring health to both the individual and the nation.

Embodying ideas is essential not only to the individual philosopher's body, but also to the national community.

Once Spain becomes a united, healthy nation, Zambrano goes on to explain that it must also integrate its experience into the experience of the rest of Europe. Zambrano visualizes the relationship between Spain and Europe as another relationship between a body and its head. To recover from the tragedies of Civil War, the Spanish body must maintain contact with the European recovery of WWII. In spite of the severance with Europe that Franco instilled through his isolationist economic policy, autarky, and the neutrality of Spain during WWII, Zambrano declares that Spain remained connected to Europe in the early 1940s: "Su agitación [de Europa] era como un latido cada vez más intenso de un corazón lleno de vida que pedía entrar en posición del cuerpo que le pertenecía. Y si España era este cuerpo, el aire donde iba a respirar, el lugar donde iba a moverse era Europa" (112). ["[Europe's] agitation was like an increasingly intense beating of a heart full of life, one asking to take possession of the body that belonged to it. And if Spain was that body, the air where Spain was going to breathe, the place where it was going to maneuver was Europe" (71).] As Europe's body and the body of the Generation of '27, Spain inhabits the corporeal identity that would have been given to a woman marginalized from Philosophy. By uniting the Spanish body and the European mind, Zambrano again defies the binaries that separate mind and body, intellect and spirit, masculine and feminine, and Europe and Spain. She unravels the social implications that her *razón poética* has as a thought process through which the marginal – not only women and Spanish philosophers, but also the victims of racial and political cleansing during the Civil War, Franco regime and WWII – can narrate the pain

they have endured because they have lived in a philosophical tradition that has excluded their interpretations of truth.

Bridging her individual health back to the health of the nation and of the continent, Zambrano asserts that sharing personal experience is at the center of “humane” living. In transmitting different permutations of a truth, we come to understand each other on an emotional level that can heal the horrors of war: “Pues vivir humanamente debe de ser ir sacando a la luz el sentir, el principio oscuro y confuso, ir llevando el sentir a la inteligencia” (100-101). [“Living humanely must mean gradually bringing feeling into the light, leading it toward understanding from its dark, confused beginning” (Maier 62).] Stressing the role of feeling to the production of philosophy, which she confirms has traditionally been rendered by images of enlightenment, Zambrano again grounds razón poética in the body. Her philosophy would have offered individual women, like Chacel’s characters, a means of finding that emotional intelligence as young girls. In addition, it offers a way for a community to heal from the inhumane practices of 1930s and 1940s Europe. To further exemplify “humane” living, Zambrano’s protagonist shares a personal memory of Madrid in the months before the Nationalist coup that led to the outbreak of the Civil War. She recalls walking through Madrid on a spring day, surrounded by warmth and images of rebirth that would soon be overshadowed by the War: “El aire era ligero, el sol era claro y estimulante, brotaban las hojas, como si una inteligencia circulara entre todo, había insectos, se oían de nuevo los pájaros” (104). [“The air was light, the sun was clear and energizing, and the leaves were budding as if there were a particular communication moving among all things; the insects had appeared, and you could hear the birds again” (Maier 65).] The “particular communication” circulated in the spring connects intelligence with the knowledge acquired through the senses about the air, the sun, the

leaves and the birds. From feeling, Zambrano suggests, there emerges an intelligence that connects all living beings and leads us to live humanely.

Zambrano goes on to reflect that the chirps articulated by the birds are a pure poem. They transmit “truth” in as transparent a body as possible: “... esas pocas palabras que con un poco de cuerpo transmiten un inmenso sentido: como los pájaros. ¿No se comunicarán así? Unas cuantas notas dichas con ligereza y ya basta. ¿No es esto lo que se llama estar en inteligencia?” (105). [“...their weightless words, the few words that, like birds, convey enormous meaning with small bodies. Isn’t that the way birds converse? All that’s needed are a few swiftly spoken words. Isn’t this what’s called understanding each other?” (Maier 65).] Reiterating that *razón poética* could be an antidote that helps us to heal from inhumane practices by fomenting emotional understanding, Zambrano takes the reader to France in the early 1940s, where her protagonist saw the truth of postwar Spain and Europe through her sister, Araceli. The close relationship between the protagonist and her sister, who shares the same name and physical infirmities as Zambrano’s sister, undercut the distance that separated her from the wars’ truth. Because Araceli personally experienced both the Civil War and WWII, her weak body communicated the human devastation wrought by both wars: “Esperaba de ella la revelación de todo aquel dolor, el suyo propio y el de todos, la revelación entrañable de la noche oscura de Europa que ella había tenido que vivir, sin tregua en la vigilia” (261). “What she expected from her sister was the revelation of all the grief, her own and everyone’s, an intimate revelation of Europe’s dark night which her sister had been forced to live without any respite in her vigil” (177). The affective response that Araceli elicited in the protagonist implies that the protagonist comprehended her sister’s embodiment of both wars’ truth. It was a truth, she suggests, encircled by human suffering.

After feeling the painful truth through Araceli, Zambrano's protagonist goes on to show that sharing experience foments humane living. On the final page of the first part of the text, she again stresses that a razón poética can help people who do not know each other, complete strangers, to live humanely through her memory of her encounter with a Jewish boy on the streets of postwar Paris. She does not attempt to identify the boy or to relay his story. Rather, she recalls embracing him, the most humane response that she could have had to his pain:

¿Cómo voy a explicarme la suerte de aquel muchachito de siete años, judío, a quien recogí mientras le encontraba mejor lugar?, y la de tantos y aún... No, no; para que algo sea verdad tiene que tener su razón. Estas cosas no pueden ser verdad y, sin embargo, me han pasado, nos han pasado a todos... (263)

[How am I going to explain to myself the fate of the little seven-year old boy, a Jew, whom I took in until they found him a better place? And the fate of so many others and even... No; no, for something to be true there has to be some reason for it. These things cannot be true; nevertheless, they have happened to me, they have happened to all of us here in this Europe that was not able to love itself enough. (179)]

Zambrano's protagonist points to the truth of the Jewish boy's story by stressing the emotions he provoked in her. The humane truth behind his inhumane pain, which led her to take him in, emerges in the negative spaces represented inside of Zambrano's ellipses. It transitions from the negative "no"s to the "nos," the Spanish pronoun for "us," of the last sentence. The shift suggests that an empathetic response to individual pain is capable of uncovering love, which is strong enough to heal the inhumanity of the most horrific wars and powerful enough to rebuild a devastated community.

The protagonist carries the truth the Jewish boy renders into the fictional short pieces that she tells in the second part of the text, entitled "Delirios." In the beginning of the brief "Delirios" section, the protagonist situates the reader in a dream she had of returning to her home in Madrid while she was walking on the streets of Paris. She envisioned re-entering the country through the Pyrenees, trekking through Basque country and traversing the Castilian plains before reaching the Spanish capital. There, the springtime air before the war had been replaced by a summertime vacancy:

"...Madrid, vacío en el verano, sin funcionarios, sin agua, seco, quemado de sol cayendo vertical, y horizontal tendido. Madrid está engañosamente acostado, porque de repente se levanta, sí, se pone de pie y dice: NO, ya no más" (267). ["...Madrid, empty in the summer without the civil servants, without water, dry, scorched by sun falling vertically – in Madrid everything is vertical and horizontal, spread out. Madrid is deceptively recumbent because suddenly it rises, yes, it rises, it stands up and says: NO, no more..." (Maier 183).] The bold "NO" that the city articulated as it woke up from the war reverberates with the "no"s and "nos" in Zambrano's description of the Jewish boy. Again, Zambrano points the reader to a truth repressed to the negative side of history, the truth of the experience of inhuman pain. She felt Madrid's postwar pain rise from the shadow spaces in-between the sun's vertical rays and Madrid's vertical and horizontal infrastructure. She saw it inside of the vacancy of Madrid's collective "no." Returning home, to Madrid, Zambrano implies, meant looking into the shadowed truths of the Civil War and Francoism. As she approached her old apartment building on Conde de Barajas, Zambrano's protagonist envisioned the new inhabitants of her home filling up their bodies with glasses of thick, refreshing horchata. Although she did not know their names or the content of their stories, her imagination of them chatting, nourishing their bodies prefigures what it might be like to live in a well-

nourished community, where truth is shared as active knowledge.

In-flux between contemplating the “pure” truth that she sees and embodying truth in her life experience and imagination, the protagonist continues to engage in the ambiguous process of (dis)embodiment as Delirio draws to a close. After dreaming of her return to Spain, she became so absorbed in Spain’s truth that her sister did not recognize her when she returned to their Paris apartment. As if picking up from the opening scene, she skipped dinner, went to her room hungry and fell asleep: “Llegó a casa tan envuelta en desvarío que su hermana ni la conoció al verla; apenas cenó y se acostó en seguida para no tener que hacer nada” (268). [“When she got home she was so wrapped up in her rambling, her sister did not even recognize her; she ate hardly any dinner and went to bed immediately so she would not have to do anything” (Maier 184).] The effortlessness of not doing anything contrasts with the effort she put into the series of activities – eating, tying her shoes and playing – that awaited her when she woke up as a child. Nonetheless, the personal tone of Zambrano’s writing still emphasizes that in order to communicate the truth she saw in her dreams to the reader, she must put in the effort of translating it into an embodied story. Taking the narrative back into her dreaming body in Spain, she begins to do something: she tells the reader what else she experienced. From Conde de Barajas in Madrid, she moved to a graveyard, where an old woman awaited her. The woman recognized her, implying that she was moving towards embodiment. Indeed, the old woman had been waiting for the protagonist for eight years, the combined duration of the Spanish Civil War and WWII (268). Walking towards the old woman, the protagonist saw dead bodies rise up from the graves, more embodiments of Spain’s truth. She recognized the quality of their pain from her experience with Araceli, the Jewish boy and in Madrid: “Aquellos muertos, los había sin enterrar, ¿quiénes eran? Los conocía a todos y tantos niños, tanta

miseria" (268). ["Those dead people, the ones who had not been buried, who were they? She knew them all, and there were so many children, so much misery" (184).]

To convey who they were, Zambrano continues to embody their pain in the final pages of the book. Outside of her dreams and heading towards exile, this time away from Europe, she reencountered the dilemma of not wanting to "wake up" to translate the truth into experience. In the Cuban harbor, she felt her body as invisible, "sin peso, número ni medida" (308) ["one with no weight, number or measure" (214).] As she stepped off of the boat, however, she began to feel her weight. Pale and sickly, she implies that she incarnated the suffering that she has contemplated throughout the text. Accepting her life in exile as the embodiment of her version of truth, she began to care for her physical needs with less effort. Stepping off the boat, she headed to the bathroom, where she relieved and clothed herself. In contrast to the effort it took her to stay embodied as a child, philosophy student and young philosopher, the effortlessness of her actions in exile reveals that she understood personal experience as an integral and necessary part of being a Spanish philosopher.

In spite of the suffering and sickness that Zambrano's protagonist felt in the last scene, she recalls that when she arrived to Cuba she smiled, finally hearing her voice in her body: "sonreía porque desde lo más adentro de su ser, en ésta su condición carnal, una voz suya y ajena contestaba a una llamada, alguien que la había llamado desde muy lejos, insensible, más imperativamente, y le contestó, desde adentro: <<sí, estoy aquí, sí, estoy aquí... todavía en este mundo" (308). ["She realized that she was smiling as she disembarked, although no one was waiting for her; she was smiling because from the deepest part of her being, a voice both hers and another's was answering a call, answering someone who had called her from very far away, imperceptibly but imperatively; and she answered, from within: 'Yes, I am here, yes, I am here... here

still'' (Maier 214).] Reasserting her protagonist's embodied presence, Zambrano reiterates that it is the personal that gives voice to philosophical truth. By recognizing the personal in the collective, Zambrano demonstrates that Spanish philosophy has developed through the production of a razón poética, a reason that is central to meaning but marginal to the European canon she challenges. Understanding the nation after Franco's death, Zambrano suggests, depends upon not only seeing, but also feeling the truths repressed in decades of death and pain.

### Chapter 3:

#### Chronic hungers: Mercedes Salisachs

In El cuarto de atrás, Generation of the '50 novelist Carmen Martín Gaité reflects upon the anti-feminist ideology at the center of the Feminine Section of the Falange's educational policies, which trained young girls to become the future mothers and housewives of Franco's Spain: "La retórica de la posguerra se aplicaba a desprestigiar los conatos de feminismo que tomaron auge en los años de la República y volvía a poner el acento en el heroísmo abnegado de madres y esposas en la importancia de su silenciosa y oscura labor como pilares del hogar cristiano" (87). ["The rhetoric of the postwar focused on discrediting the feminist initiatives that had been taken during the Republican years and went back to stressing the abnegated heroism of mothers and wives and the importance of their silent, dark labor as pillars of the Christian home."] The ironic tone Martín Gaité's narrator employs suggests that the silent, dark labor of women did more than sustain the pillars of the Christian home. It also contained the repressed substance that could be used to dismantle the antifeminist rhetoric of the postwar. While the works of Mercedes Salisachs, also of the Generation of '50, have not been recognized for the subversive, feminist tone that has been associated with Martín Gaité, a close reading of two novels that she published during the late Franco era and the beginning of the Transition to Democracy reveals a correspondingly critical attitude towards the norms that the Feminine Section imposed upon women. Similar to Martín Gaité, Salisachs also associates femininity with images of repression. Repression emerges in her novels in the particular form of a feminine corporeal vacancy. Instead of educating healthy young women, in La estación de las hojas amarillas [1963] and El

volumen de la ausencia [1983] she shows that the Feminine Section produced women whose bodies were malnourished and lacking.

Emphasizing malnourishment as a perverse yet crucial part of her own childhood during the Franco regime, Salisachs frames her memoir, Derribos [1981], around an aversion to food that she developed before she was old enough to sit outside of her highchair. Mealtime, she recalls, was fraught with tension when she was a child. Everyday she threw a tantrum as her mother lifted her to the table. Although her mother threatened to abandon her and her siblings if she did not stop crying and eat, she still refused to comply:

- Si no comes me iré – decía mi madre.

Y se cubría la cara fingiendo sollozos.

Ni siquiera ante aquella perspectiva claudicaba. Por eso, cuando contra toda previsión un día se fue de verdad, tuve la impresión de que la culpa era mía. (49)

[ - If you don't eat, I'm leaving – said my mother.

And she would cover her face, pretending to cry.

Not even before that threat did I give in. So, when against all foresight one day she really left, I had the impression that it was all my fault.]

Even after her mother left, Salisachs writes, allowing Salisachs to infer that she had caused her abandonment, Salisachs still refused to eat. Although she loved her mother and longed for her to return, she repeated the behavior that she believed had caused her mother's absence. The anecdote highlights the paradox at the center of her childhood: Her identity as a young girl in Franco's Spain began to form when she rejected the primary nourishment that her mother offered her.

A year after Salisachs published Derribos, in The Powers of Horror (1982) Julia

Kristeva theorizes that an aversion to food is one of the first steps through which a child is integrated into the symbolic order. That process, Kristeva argues, depends precisely upon the type of maternal separation that Salisachs describes in her memoir, a process that Kristeva terms abjection:

Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and archaic form of abjection. When the eyes see or the lips touch the skin on the surface of milk – harmless, thin as a sheet of cigarette paper, pitiful as a nail pairing – I experience a gagging sensation and, still farther down, spasms in the stomach, the belly; and all the organs shrivel up the body, provoke tears and bile, increase heartbeat, cause forehead and hands to perspire. Along with sight-clouding dizziness, *nausea* makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it. “I” want none of that element, sign of their desire; “I” do not want to listen, “I” do not assimilate it, “I” expel it. (231)

As the body’s organs come together to reject the milk, symbolizing the abjection of the mother, which Kristeva also refers to as “matricide,” the child’s voice emerges (Black Sun 27). He or she acquires an “I.” Speaking, in this manner, depends on expelling the originary maternal connection underlying the symbolic order. By focusing on the corporeal vacancies within the Spanish characters of her novels, Salisachs reveals the nourishment that is missing in women who have been interpolated into the symbolic order of the Franco regime. Far from embodied depictions of health, the images of femininity that emerge from her novels are malnourished bodies and isolated body parts rooted in a lack of maternal care. If women are to be healthy, she insinuates, they need to embrace their maternal origins and reject the repressed femininity that sustained the antifeminist rhetoric of the regime. Doing so, however, would leave them

outside of the symbolic order and without an identity.

**Maternal abjection and malnourishment: La estación de las hojas amarillas**

In expulsing milk from the body, Kristeva's subject reveals that purging the body of nourishment is essential to being interpolated into the symbolic order. In La estación de las hojas amarillas, Salisachs's narrator, Cecilia, describes herself not as a purged body, but as a placenta, the nourishing organ expelled from the mother along with the infant during birth. Because she never abjected her mother as a child, but embodies her mother's most nourishing reproductive organ, she never acquired subjectivity until seven days ago, when she was admitted to an insane asylum and began to write the text in the form of letters to her twin sister, Fela: "Aseguraban que tú y yo éramos hermanas, pero no era cierto. Yo, en realidad, era únicamente tu placenta. Ser persona es otra cosa. Ser persona equivale a tener derecho a apostar, y yo no supe lo que era apostar hasta que me trajeron aquí, hace exactamente siete días" (10). ["They assured that we were sisters, but that wasn't true. In reality, I was only your placenta. Being a person is different. Being a person means having the right to have an opinion, and I never knew what having an opinion was until they brought me here, exactly seven days ago."] As we read Cecilia's story, we learn that she writes in order to convince her twin that she is a person even though she has been cast aside as insane and has spent the majority of her life linked to her mother. Beneath her words, however, there lie traces of her sustained primal connection to her mother and twin, both of whom are named Fela. The emergence of that connection challenges the idea that Cecilia is a person at the same time that it points to the repressed vacancies, envisioned as hollowed body parts, on which being a "woman" in the Franco regime is centered. When she finally feels like a woman is not when she represses her connection to her mother, but when she reintegrates the abject into the body and recognizes the parts of her that are ambiguous.

Her dilemma is that she has to make the impossible case that she is a woman in this state in which she feels like a woman but has been marginalized as insane because she does not fit into social norms of femininity.

To try to emphasize that she is now a person, Cecilia first superficially aligns herself and her sister with two dominant feminine prototypes constructed by the Feminine Section of the Falange: the self-abnegating mother, described in Martín Gaité's citation, and the self-interested whore. After associating herself with the former and both Felas with the latter, Cecilia subtly reveals the semiotic underpinnings that undo the dichotomy she lays out. According to Mary Jacobus, the semiotic, the pre-symbolic realm where abjection occurs is at the roots of all words; it is "a site of meaning counter to, though inscribed within, the symbolic" (149). By offering the reader glimpses of the semiotic "in prosody, intonation, puns, verbal slips, even silences," the rhetoric sustaining dominant feminine identities in the symbolic order is disclosed as a construction that can be undone. Even in novels that according to Debra Castillo have stumped the academy for their middlebrow qualities (101), Salisachs undercuts dominant feminine prototypes of the Franco regime, specifically through the evocation of vomit, a primary image that Kristeva uses in describing the abjection of the milk, and the foregrounding of the placenta. The question Salisachs' writing raises is whether Cecilia can convince her sister that she is a person while simultaneously gesturing towards the semiotic underpinnings that connect her to her twin and her mother. Those underpinnings, which are as disgusting as vomit but as nourishing as a placenta, challenge the dominant construction of femininity in Franco's Spain, but do not leave Cecilia with a clear identity.

In employing the image of vomit, Salisachs not only anticipates Kristeva's use of vomit as a symbol of abjection two decades before the publication of Powers; she also

reiterates the recurrent vomit that Rosa Chacel describes in her diaries, Alcancía ida and Alcanciavuelta. On her sixty-first birthday, Chacel laments that her will to vomit has become so strong that it impedes her from writing well. After spending a few days working on her next novel, her desire to vomit is “infinite”: “Bueno, hoy, sesenta y un años. Infinitas ganas de vomitar” (Alcancía Ida 166). [“Well, today, sixty-one-years-old. An infinite desire to vomit.”] Implying that her literary production is akin to vomit, Chacel suggests that her work, or lack thereof, cannot be assimilated into the society in which she lives. Since she desires not to produce art, but vomit, she anticipates any negative critiques of her work that could arise because of her ambiguous identity as a woman writer. In “Economesis,” Jacques Derrida’s response to Kant’s Critique of Judgement, Derrida affirms that metaphorically, vomit represents that which is excluded by the aesthetic value system of the West (21). It is whatever is left unassimilated and undigested by the epistemological template through which we interpret a work of art: “It is an irreducible heterogeneity which cannot be eaten either sensibly or ideally and which – this is the tautology – by never letting itself be swallowed must therefore *cause itself to be vomited*” (21). Even though vomit cannot be swallowed or consumed, it continues to be expelled by the body, a byproduct of the ongoing piecing together of nutrients that exceed the social guidelines for aesthetics when new art is created.

If the process of identity formation, like the production of a work of art, necessarily requires one to vomit, what is left after one vomits is a hollowed body, a skeleton with clearer borders. As she offers the readers glimpses into the structure that upholds identity and draws our attention to the vomit that structure is connected to – the material it has abjected – Salisachs calls for a reintegration of “vomit” into both the structures that contain identity and the norms that define aesthetics. Re-integrating

“vomit” into the body, or the non-aesthetic into the work of art, however, creates a structure that does not yet fit into the world. In order to subtly integrate that which has been vomited from her body back into her identity, Cecilia first summons the two skeletal structures of femininity in Franco’s Spain to which she aligns herself and Fela: the virginal mother and the sexual whore. Once these two feminine prototypes are established, and the body has been purged, she shows that the body is refilled not with nutrients, but with decorative objects that uphold an artificial semblance of beauty. For example, to identify her sister as a hypersexual woman, Cecilia stresses that Fela consumed men excessively, using them as if they were articles of clothing: “En realidad, los usabas como usabas tus prendas de vestir; accidentalmente. A modo de complemento. Dispuesta a satisfacer íntegramente tus caprichos de mujer desaprensiva” (12). [“The truth is you used men like you used articles of clothing: accidentally. As complements. Ready to fully satisfy the whims of an unscrupulous woman.”] Cecilia’s exaggerated tone emphasizes that her sister’s consumption of men functioned to cover an inner, more authentic, more emptied, body and self. Her exaggeration reaches an apex when she describes Fela’s relationship to Nicolás, the Jewish musician she married. Although Cecilia never dated Nicolás, she dramatically accuses her sister of stealing him from her; the first moment that Fela laid eyes on him, she “devoured” him with her eyes alone (14). Again, Fela selfishly consumed Nicolás to fill an inner vacancy: “Pero tu mirada lo estaba ya devorando. Cada fragmento de su perfil y cada movimiento de sus manos iba pasando sin remedio a las tuyas” (14). [“But your look was already devouring him. Each fragment of his profile and each movement of his hands was inevitably transferred to yours.”] Further underscoring the superficiality of Fela’s identity as a hypersexual Spanish woman, Cecilia adds that Fela did not make a good mother for Nicolás’s son from a previous marriage, Pablo. When

the outbreak of the Civil War approached and Nicolás and Fela fled Spain for Germany, not foreseeing that Nazis would persecute Nicolás, Fela was left as Pablo's sole caretaker. Unable to be both hypersexual and a good mother, Fela relied on Cecilia, the "good" sister, to care for Pablo. However, Salisachs shows that it was not Cecilia's compliance with the image of the good, virginal mother that allowed her to care for Pablo. Rather, it was her abject, "placenta" qualities (277). She insinuates that to care for a child who witnessed the atrocities of war, there must be a certain acceptance of the abject, an acknowledgement that identities are not healthy if they deny those aspects that make people ambiguous.

As Salisachs reveals that Cecilia was a good mother thanks to her abject qualities as a placenta, not to her virginal goodness, Salisachs also implies that trying to conform to the "good" woman prototype of the Regime made Cecilia feel like less of a woman. It was not until seven days ago, after all, that she became a person. Meanwhile, Fela, who more easily moved through the process of abjection, became a woman the day she announced her engagement to Nicolás. In particular, Cecilia writes, her sister's declaration of the news reaffirmed her abjection of the ambiguity in her identity; she told Cecilia of her engagement as if she were vomiting "alegría," a synonym of her name: "Llevábamos varios días separadas y lo único que te apremiaba era vomitar tu alegría. La sorpresa de tu aspecto apenas me daba margen a aceptar tu declaración" (28). ["We had been separated for a few days and the only thing you were concerned with was vomiting your happiness."] In vomiting "alegría," a type of happiness akin to joy or delight, Fela reclaimed her identity as Felicidad, a woman who would get married and be interpolated into the Spanish symbolic order. The "alegría" that she purged rid her body of those aspects of herself that impeded her from denoting the more lasting happiness of Felicidad.

In vomiting towards her sister, Fela emptied herself of that ambiguous connection that her sister brought to their relationship through her qualities as a “placenta.” Further distancing herself from her core identity, after she vomited she covered up her malnourished body with false embellishments that prevented Cecilia from recognizing her: “La sorpresa de tu aspecto apenas me daban margen a aceptar tu declaración. Los rizos de la permanente te caían por las sienes como si fueran naturales, como si tu pelo no fuera tan liso como el mío, y las cejas, depiladas a la moda de entonces, agrandaban tus ojos, dándoles el brillo de borracho” (28). [“The surprise of your appearance hardly let me accept your declaration. The curls of your perm caressed your temples as if they were natural, as if your hair weren’t as straight as mine, and your eyebrows, plucked in accordance with the fashion of the times, highlighted your eyes, giving them the sheen of a drunkard.”] In not describing Fela’s vacancy, but her false hair, plucked eyebrows and drunken eyes, Cecilia signals the hollowed body that her sister repressed, the product of abjection, in order to conform to the beauty standards of the era. Similarly decorative norms, she suggests, structure her narrative. Both enclose the void created in the process of becoming a Spanish woman.

Cecilia roots the vacancies beneath both her own and her twin’s superficial identities in the time period when her parents, who represent the extreme conservative and liberal factions of Spain, were divorced. Although the union of her parents enhanced the ambiguity at the twins’ core, they were encouraged to repress their memory of their father, a liberal journalist named Octavio González, after the tumultuous political environment of the mid-1930s caused their parents to separate. Because of her father’s leftist political stance, Cecilia’s wealthy maternal grandfather, the conservative Count Vandraite, would not recognize his daughter’s marriage or help her family when their financial situation became precarious in the late 1920s and early

1930s. Knowing that the Vandraites would take in his children and wife if he were no longer associated with them, Octavio decided to leave. As soon as he did, Cecilia's mother, also Fela, changed her children's name from González to Vandraite. She never mentioned Octavio, "ni siquiera para censurarlo. Para ella era como si no hubiera existido, como si nosotros hubiéramos venido al mundo exclusivamente gracias a su propia intervención" (48); ["not even to censure him. For her it was as if he had never existed; as if we had come into the world exclusively thanks to her sole intervention."] The sardonic tone Cecilia uses to align the older Fela to the Virgin Mary and the dogma of the immaculate conception of Christ undermines the superficial image that her mother upheld. As Cecilia affirms, the presence of her father remained in her in spite of her mother's efforts, repressed into an inner vacancy. She associates his memory with an anecdote of childhood hunger that she continues to feel in the narrative present:

Nada en torno a nosotros era realmente estable. (Aun ahora me siento con frecuencia bajo el influjo de aquella inseguridad.) La comida, la vivienda, los vestidos... todo era problemático, todo podía desaparecer de la noche a la mañana. A veces, sin más, nadábamos en la abundancia, pero aquella situación duraba poco. De igual modo que <<sobraba todo>>, podía suceder que <<faltase todo>>. Seguramente no has olvidado aquel largo desfile de noches en que nos acostábamos sin probar bocado: <<Mañana será otro día>>, decía papá y nos mandaba a la cama. Eran noches inolvidables, imposibles de borrar. Todavía suelo despertarme de vez en cuando con la pesadilla de imaginar que <<seguimos allí,>> el estómago vacío y la mente inmersa en terror." (19)

[Nothing around us was really stable. (Even now I feel that I am frequently under the influence of that instability). Food, shelter, clothing...

everything was problematic; everything could disappear from night until morning. At times, we swam in abundance, but that situation would only last a short while. Just as easily as everything could be left over, everything could be lacking. Surely you haven't forgotten that long parade of nights when we would go to bed without having a bite to eat: "Tomorrow will be a new day," Papa would say as he sent us off to bed. Those were unforgettable nights, impossible to erase. From time to time I still wake up with the nightmare of imagining that we continue there, our stomachs empty and our minds immersed in terror.]

As Cecilia narrates, she moves the feelings that she repressed into the vacancy – instability and hunger – from parenthesis to the main clause of the last sentence. The grammatical shift reiterates that her narration serves to reveal the feelings and experiences that she and Fela repressed in order to sustain their superficial identities during the Franco regime. By impelling Fela to recall that "parade of nights when we would go to bed without having a bite to eat," she subtly urges her sister to recognize the vacancy at the foundation of their identities. Although growing up in pre-Civil War Spain entailed that they abject their liberal father, his repressed presence did not go away. For Cecilia, it made itself manifest at night, the period of time that María Zambrano associates with seeing the pure philosophical truth<sup>5</sup>.

Cecilia points out that her mother too was left with an inner vacancy after she censured her husband's name and memory. Immediately after describing her mother's attempt to transform them into purebred Vandraités, Cecilia refers to her mother's face as a concealed vacancy. Her daily makeup routine served, like color painted onto cardboard, to cover the hollows within her:

Todavía era bonita. Tenía la belleza de entonces. Una belleza de cartón coloreado. Todo en su rostro era postizo: el colorete de su mentón, las cejas depiladas, los labios en forma de corazón, el flequillo pegado a la frente, los interrogantes de sus patillas aplastados contra las mejillas... Una belleza muy acorde con la época: sensiblera y estridente. (48)

[She was still pretty. She had the beauty of that time. A beauty of colored cardboard. Everything on her face was fake: rouged chin, plucked eyebrows, heart-shaped lips, plastered bangs on her forehead, question mark sideburns stuck to her cheek... A beauty very in line with the era: mawkish and shrill.]

Similar to her twin, Cecilia stresses that her mother covered the emptiness inside of her in order to conform to the era's superficial standards of beauty and definitions of womanhood. In the ellipses that follow Cecilia's description of her mother's fake chin, eyebrows, lips, bangs and sideburns, she points to the vacancy beneath her makeup. Fela's beauty was sustained on the hollowed spaces of cardboard from which the memory of Octavio González was repressed.

The split of the Gonzálezes and the Vandraités along Republican and Nationalist political lines likens the two families to the "two Spains" imagined by Antonio Machado and Miguel de Unamuno to describe the divisive conditions that led to the outbreak of the 1936-39 Civil War. More than twenty years before the War, Machado foresaw the conflict that the internal division between conservative and liberal parties of Spain would cause in his short poem, "Las dos Españas" (1913). Machado imagined the start of the Civil War as a battle over repressed ambiguity. The young Spaniard of the beginning of the poem would struggle to live in a country where the borders

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<sup>5</sup> See page 82.

between the “New” and the “Old” had to be clearly defined. Spain’s borders, Machado implies, would not allow the Spaniard to understand that he comes not from the New or the Old, but from both:

Ya hay un español que quiere  
vivir y a vivir empieza,  
entre una España que muere  
y otra España que bosteza.  
Españolito que vienes  
al mundo, te guarde Dios.  
Una de las dos Españas  
ha de helarte el corazón. (246)  
[Now there’s a Spaniard who wants  
to live and is beginning to live,  
between one Spain that is dying  
and another Spain that’s yawning.  
Little Spain coming  
to the world, may God keep you.  
One of those Spains  
Will surely freeze your heart.]

In between the New Spain and the Old, the young Spaniard’s ambiguous heart will freeze as he is pulled towards one of the Spains at the price of the other. Frozen, his borders become clear, but his body lifeless.

In the essay, “Rebeca,” written by Unamuno and published in the periodical *Las lunas del imparcial* in Madrid in 1914, just a year after Machados’s poem, Unamuno too stresses the tragedy caused by the divide between one Spain and the other by alluding

to them as the biblical twins, Jacob and Esau. The tragedy of the biblical twins, he sustains, manifested not in the fight that developed between them, but in the woman who gave them life: their mother, Rebecca. When Rebecca heard that Esau, the blond twin preferred by Isaac who had come out of her womb first, wanted to kill Jacob, she faced the horrible knowledge that if she did not intervene, one of her sons would die at the hands of the other:

¡Pobre Rebeca! ¡Pobre Rebeca, que tiembla ante la visión de fratricidio de uno cualquiera de sus hijos! ¡Tendrá un hijo muerto y el otro asesino! El alma maternal, la que concibe ideas gemelas y contradictorias, quiere que vivan sus hijas todas, las quiere vivas, y no muertas las unas y fraticidas las otras. ¡Que luchen, que luchen como antes de nacer luchaban en su seno; pero que no se maten! ¡Que vivan todas! (1421)

[Poor Rebecca! Poor Rebecca, who trembles when faced with the fratricidal vision of either of her sons! One of her sons will be dead and the other an assassin! The maternal soul, that which conceives twin, contradictory ideas, wants all of her daughters to live, she wants them to live, not for some to die and others to be fratricidal. Let them fight, let them fight as they fought in her womb before they were born; but do not let them kill each other! Let them all live!]

By emphasizing Rebecca's tragedy, Unamuno insinuates that the division between the two Spains would only become catastrophic if one of the Spains tried to kill the other, as would occur in the Civil War. Tragedy could be avoided, he implies, if the two Spains could maintain a connection to that ordinary maternal soul that allowed for them to be different and contradictory without being fratricidal. The maternal soul that permits ambiguity but watches the twin Spains attempt to kill each other will be, he suggests,

the tragedy of Spain.

The subtle stress that Cecilia places on the ambiguity repressed beneath her and Fela's identities makes them, as Encarnación Laguna Conde argues, feminine versions of the two, twin Spains. In spite of their mother's attempt to erase their González heritage (Fela does not accept ambiguity, like Rebecca, but is in line with the norms of patriarchy) the twins, like the young Spaniard, remain ambiguous at their core. Their ambiguity undermined their superficial identity as Vandraite twins during the late 1920s and early 1930s as the ambiguity of Spain undermined the borders that separated one Spain from the other. They themselves perpetuated the repression of ambiguity as they became older. Just before Fela became engaged to Nicolás, Cecilia reminds her sister, which occurred just after the declaration of the Second Republic, Fela declared that she and her twin needed to rid themselves of anything linking them to the old Spain. She quotes Fela insisting that the old Spain was being replaced by a new Era and any vestiges of it, including the Vandraite name, must be purged: "La verdad es que estamos entrando en una Era nueva y debemos purgarlo. La anterior está ya muriéndose con los estertores del tango, la mazurka, la prensa inofensiva... ¿No te das cuenta, Cecilia, de que el mundo que viene no puede avenirse con nuestra forma de vivir?" (30). ["The truth is that we're entering into a new Era and we should purge it. The old is dying with the rattles of the tango, the mazurka, the inoffensive press... Don't you see, Cecilia, that the new world cannot fit in with our way of living?"] Without their link to her mother's family, Fela implied, they would be able to clearly identify themselves as supporters of the Republic. But, Cecilia reminds Fela through her choice of the word "purge," such clarity killed the part of them that made them ambiguous. It resulted in an emptier, less lively body, a body that negated Cecilia's unique quality as a placenta.

While Fela's decision to hide her Vandraite roots corresponded with the declaration of the Second Republic, as soon as she married Nicolás and moved outside of Spain she, Nicolás and Pablo, faced danger for the roots that they could not hide: Nicolás's Jewish heritage. When Nicolás was captured and killed by Nazis, Fela and Pablo managed to find safety in England before returning to Spain after the Civil War. Meanwhile, during their absence the political climate of Barcelona became more tumultuous. Cecilia's mother, fearing that the Vandraite name endangered them, ordered Cecilia and her younger brother, Octavio, to burn anything that linked them to the Catholic church, the monarchy or Primo de Rivera: "Cruces, rosarios, libros, estampas... todo fue desapareciendo aquella tarde" (88). "Crosses rosaries, books, stamps... everything disappeared that evening." Since being Vandraiters signaled them as conservatives among the increased presence of liberals in pre-War Barcelona, the older Fela urged Cecilia to re-embrace the González name. She prayed that one of her ex-husband's old Republican acquaintances might help them to flee the country for England, where she hoped they could join the younger Fela and Pablo in safety. Cecilia was able to enlist the support of one of her father's old colleagues, Roque Ríos, but since Roque could only take two of them, she stayed behind while her mother and brother left. Although the selflessness of her actions again aligns her with the prototype of the self-abnegating woman, Cecilia stresses that her approximation to that image is only possible because she repressed the ambiguity of her origins, now calling herself a González but not a Vandraite.

With her family gone, Cecilia continued to juggle her Vandraite-González names in order to survive in Spain. As the war escalated and communists, led by two comrades, Lola and Juan, took over the old Vandraite estate, her estranged González cousin, Ota, entered into the scene to save her. Motivated by apparent romantic

interests, Ota appeared just in time to prevent Lola and Juan from associating Cecilia, who did not yet know he was her cousin, with the Vandraités. He temporarily took her to a Republican prison until he deemed it safe to reintroduce her to Lola and Juan as their new maid, María Pérez. Although Cecilia's new name disguised her aristocratic heritage, her physical location still connected her to the Vandraités. At the same time, the developing intimacy between her and Ota aligned her with her father's clan. Both sides remained very present in her situation.

As Cecilia writes, now knowing that Ota is her cousin, she reflects on her relationship with him as the first time she felt like a real woman. The image of femininity she presents is based not on repressing the ambiguity in her origins, but on embracing it. With Ota, she was both connected to her father and to her qualities as a placenta: "Sin embargo, ahora, al repasar mi vida, comprendo que, sin aquella página, mi calidad de placenta hubiera sido todavía más difícil de sobrellevar. En cierto modo, fue aquel <<desconocido>> quien dio un sentido a mi femineidad" (108). ["However, as I remember my life, I understand that without that page, my placenta qualities would have been still more difficult to bear. In a sense, it was that 'stranger' who gave meaning to my femininity."] Cecilia's vague admittance that Ota made her "femininity" meaningful implies that sexual desire was essential for her to feel like a woman while stressing that in feeling womanly she remained connected to her mother and father. After reaffirming that she was a placenta, she associates Ota with the nourishment of the hunger that she had earlier attributed to her father's abandonment: "Tal vez mi cariño por Ota tuviera sus comienzos en aquel parecido. De hecho era su voz el único elemento que podría rellenar un poco el vacío que nuestro padre había dejado" (111). ["Maybe the care I felt for Ota had its beginnings in that similarity. In fact, his voice was the only element that could begin to fill the vacancy that our father had left."]

Proposing that her true femininity connects to both her maternal and paternal origins and to her sexuality, Cecilia underscores that ambiguity is an essential part of her being. She felt a sense of femininity after reversing the process of abjection that Kristeva asserted to be integral for acceptance into the symbolic order, reincorporating the abject into her body. In showing the connection between the abject and her femininity, she slowly begins to challenge the hollow prototypes that sustained the image of women promoted by the Regime.

As the War progressed and Cecilia realized that ambiguity made her feel like a “woman,” she became physically ill. The breakdown of her body symbolizes her inability to maintain her front as María Pérez. While sick, she felt an intense desire to reveal the ambiguity at her core: “Nunca, desde que aquella comedia había empezado, había tenido tantos deseos de terminar de una vez con aquella mentira, dejar de ser <<alguien postizo>> para ser <<yo misma>> (130). [“Never, since that comedy had begun, had I had so many desires to end that lie, to stop being an imposter so that I could be ‘myself.’”] However, before Cecilia was able to assert herself as Cecilia González Vandraite, Lola came across an old photograph that disclosed her links to the Vandraites. Although Lola insisted that her conservative ties would not endanger her, Cecilia and Ota no longer felt that Cecilia was safe in the house. They fled to an isolated fishing village. When Nationalist troops attacked the village, Ota again saved Cecilia, now bringing her to a convent, where she hid until the end of the war. Her movement away from the Vandraite estate just after she connected to her “yo misma” foreshadows her relegation to an insane asylum at the end of the novel. It implies that embracing her ambiguity, being herself, left her outside of society and without a home.

When the war ended and Cecilia returned to Barcelona and the Vandraite estate and Ota went into exile, she again repressed both her femininity and her “yo misma.”

Her repression of herself corresponds with her desire to “forget” Ota and everything associated with the war: “También, al terminar la guerra, me entraron unas ganas furiosas de <<olvidar>>” (189). [“Also, as the war ended I experienced a furious desire to ‘forget.’”] The skeletal state of the Vandraite house, however, incessantly reminded her of the war, making it impossible to forget: “La casa parecía un esqueleto. Julia decía que las familias que se habían instalado allí, lo habían arruinado todo: [...]. Cada chimenea tenía aún las huellas de los guisos allí condimentados, cada mueble su abolladura particular, su quemadura, su mancha de aceite...” (184). [“The house resembled a skeleton. Julia said that the families that had settled there had ruined everything: [...]. Each chimney still had traces of the stews that had been seasoned there, each piece of furniture its particular dent, burn mark, oil stain.”] In spite of her desire to forget, the ruined home stood as proof to Cecilia that no side won the war. It was a war of utter loss: “Eso es lo malo de las guerras civiles: aunque se pierda o se gane, al principio todo es derrota” (190). [“That is the bad thing about civil wars: whether you lose or win, at first everything is defeat.”] As the Felas covered their purged bodies with makeup, when the Vandraités returned to the estate they covered the ruined home with material goods that would facilitate a forgetting of what was lost. Still, Cecilia implies, loss emerged from the skeleton of the estate. It manifests in her narrative through the ellipses that interrupt her description of the postwar house:

Una a una fueron surgiendo, más apremiantes que nunca, más vitales que nunca, pequeñas exigencias que, hasta finalizar la guerra, nos habían parecido innecesarias. Sin ellas la paz (aquella paz bélica, dorada y hermosa como un sueño de las mil y una noches) era una paz insípida, una paz que no tenía razón de ser. No bastaba, para lavarse, tener agua y jabón; era preferible que el jabón fuera perfumado y el agua purificada...

Después que el jabón perfumado fuese de marca buena y el agua tuviera sales, y que al salir del baño cupiera la posibilidad de frotarse el cuerpo con loción... Loción primero corriente, luego francesa, luego de tal etiqueta... Y que las sábanas estuvieran almidonadas, y que, a poder ser, fueran de hilo, y que las mantas de lana se pareciesen a las de antes... aquellas que el abuelo mandó traer de Inglaterra... Y que la cristalería fuera perfecta... Y que el café tuviera sabor a café... Y que se usaran manteles de lujo y manteles de diario, y vajilla de lujo y vajilla de diario... (191)

[One by one there emerged, more pressing than ever, more vital than ever, small demands that, until the end of the war, had seemed unnecessary. Without them peace (that wartime peace, golden and beautiful like a dream of the thousand and one nights) was insipid, a peace that had no reason of being. If you wanted to wash up, it wasn't enough to have soap and water; it was preferred that the soap be perfumed and the water purified... Moreover, that the perfumed soap be of a good brand and the water have salts, and that upon leaving the bath you could rub the body with lotion... At first common lotion, then French, then of this particular mark... And that the sheets were pressed and, if possible, made of thread, and that the wool blankets resembled those we used to have... those that grandfather had brought from England... And that the glassware was perfect... And that the coffee tasted like coffee... And that we had tablecloths for special occasions and tablecloths for daily use, and dishes for special occasions and dishes for daily use... .]

The illusion of peace gilding the house recalls the rhetoric of the Franco regime's

circular rendition of historical time, through which the dictator claimed to return Spain to the Golden Age, bringing the country out of the decadence that it had lived through since the 1800s saw the breakdown of the Spanish empire. Collapsing an imperial past onto the present, Franco's circular time denied the meaning of specific, nuanced historical events. As Arkininstall argues, it justified the atrocities of war as part of a coherent, fated plan: "By portraying events as reiterations of past glories, history as change was denied and reduced to an endless, seamless cycle of the same" ("Remembering Spain" 115). Attributing everything to destiny, circular time facilitated both an acceptance and a forgetting of those aspects of the War that were inexplicable and inhumane. Although the product of circular time was peace, Salisachs emphasizes that the postwar peace was merely a golden illusion. By referring to peace in parenthesis, Cecilia stresses that in spite of her attempt to forget, the main story that she saw in the home was not golden, beautiful peace, but was the loss that peace pretended to conceal.

The artificial peace covering the Vandraitte home, Cecilia shows, also manifested itself in the lifestyles of her friends and family. As the home excessively consumed luxurious materials, people excessively consumed rich food, cigarettes and alcohol. In particular, Cecilia condemns her brother, Octavio, and his friends for spending their days smoking, drinking and complaining; she recalls their careless attitude as part of a "negativism" rampant in postwar Barcelona: "el negativismo se estaba poniendo de moda y había que adoptarlo con sus derivas inmediatos: <<la angustia vital>>, <<la náusea>>, <<la desilusión...>>" (202). ["Negativism was in vogue and with it one must adopt its immediate derivatives: 'vital anguish,' 'nausea,' 'disillusionment.'"] The negativism associated with the excessive consumption of alcohol and cigarettes reasserts the amorphous loss repressed into the Spanish body during the postwar era.

As the nation reaffirmed its identity as a Golden Age empirical Spain, it reiterated the process of abjection, evoked through the image of nausea. After abjection, it hid the skeleton that revealed what had been lost, repressing what was repressed in the war.

Parallel to her brother's cigarettes and alcohol, Cecilia recalls, food was also consumed in excess by the upper class during the early 1940s. Especially at the ritzy parties given by her friends, Los Mar-Mar, people ate so much that their bodies transformed into insatiable stomachs (238). While the availability of food put them in a realm very distinct from the war and immediate postwar years, the broad scope of their hunger was a sign that they were attempting to medicate a need that could not be nourished through food, a need that Cecilia alludes to in the parenthesis at the end of the citation. In spite of excessive consumption, whether of food or alcohol, clothing or jewelry, the hollowed vacancy of the war insidiously remained at the center of their existence:

Había demasiado pollo, demasiada ensaladilla, demasiado jamón y demasiado pan blanco (sobre todo pan blanco) para que aquella presentación <<increíble>> pudiese durar mucho tiempo. [...] Por unos instantes todo en aquel comedor se volvía estómago. Sonrisas, peinados, maquillajes, plumas, sedas y corbatas. Todo se transformaba en estómago. Unos estómagos que se empujaban, se pisaban, se quemaban con cigarrillos para tener derecho a conseguir un poco de fiambre, un vaso de vio tinto (tinto, eso sí. El blanco marea) o un bollo de pan. La cuestión era comer, beber, tragar... (Las guerras suelen dejar esas lacras). (238)

[There was too much chicken, too much cole slaw, too much ham and too much white bread (particularly white bread) to make that "incredible" presentation last long. [...] For a few moments, everything in that dining

room turned into a stomach. Smiles, hairdos, makeup, feathers, silks and ties. Everything was transformed into a stomach. Stomachs that pushed each other, slid across the floor and burned themselves with cigarettes in order to claim their right to a bit of fillet, a glass of red wine (red, yes; white causes nausea) or a roll. The idea was to eat, to drink, to devour... (Wars often leave such marks).]

Parallel to the permanence of Cecilia's childhood hungers, which she also mentioned in parenthesis, the marks left by the war subtly undermine the excessive consumption that she highlights. As stomachs ate more and more food, their expansion across the room revealed an unsatisfied postwar hunger that rekindled a warlike spirit in the guests. At the same time, their enlargement obscured the skeleton that identified the losses of war. The more people tried to forget and repress the skeleton of war by consuming goods in excess, the more they hungered for something that would assuage an inner sense of malnourishment and lack. They were caught in a vicious circle, trying to medicate a chronic hunger with overconsumption.

In contrast to the expanding stomachs covering the losses of war, Cecilia urged Pablo, Nicolás's son, to situate himself inside of the vacancy the war left in him. Her placenta qualities served to nourish his loss, in particular the loss of Nicolás, whose memory was barely recalled in the Vandraite house. When Pablo did speak of his father, encouraged by Cecilia, his memories emerged from his body like verbal vomit (282). Instead of obscuring the purged body, Cecilia focuses her narrative on describing Pablo's contracted post-vomit state: "Suspiró hondo. Su tórax quedó hinchado, detenido en la dilatación de aquel suspiro, sin latidos: <<En medio de todo fue una época feliz>> - dijo, y el pecho se le deshinchaba" (282). ["He breathed deeply. His thorax remained swollen, detailed in the dilation of that steady breath: 'In spite of

everything, it was a happy time,' he said, and his chest went back down."] Cecilia's emphasis on Pablo's body does not let him gild loss with a happier story, but redirects the reader to the disgusting quality of the memory that he vomited. After he pieced together his happier rendition of the war, she forced him to face his feelings on his father's death. He again articulated his reaction not through words, but through the body: "Mi pregunta debió de herirle, porque cerró los ojos y sólo contestó con la cabeza" (282-83). ["My question probably hurt him because he closed his eyes and only answered with his head."] If vomit is a sign of abjection, Cecilia urged Pablo to face the consequences that abjection had in him by encouraging him to settle into his purged body. As she hones in on the way his closing eyes and nodding head momentarily contained him in a body that lost, she demonstrates that nurturing a child of war means teaching that child to be with loss and face the abject. It is Cecilia's ability to bring the abject before others that makes her a good mother.

Cecilia's quality of abject nourishment as a placenta is what Spain needed after the war. Spanish mothers, Salisachs shows, must help their children live in bodies with voids. At the end of the novel, she reiterates that the moments when Cecilia let herself be a placenta to fill the vacancies inside of her through her relationship with Ota were the closest she came to feeling like a "feminine" woman (469). To reclaim that feeling as a middle-aged virgin would mean dismantling the identity to which she seemed to conform during postwar Spain, the identity that Martín Gaité refers to in a different context as a self-abnegating pillar of strength (87). Her dilemma was that she understood that feeling like a feminine woman would entail falling into the vacancies that formed inside of her during the process of abjection, when she repressed the ambiguous aspects of herself. Doing so would marginalize her in the society in which she lived: "Necesitaba caer al fin en aquello que toda mujer normal caía, aunque luego

debiera escuchar injurias, aunque me llamasen vieja libidinosa y puerca. ¿Qué iba a importarme ya todo si podía sentirme mujer?" (469). ["In the end, I needed to fall where all normal women fall, even if it meant listening to insults, even if they called me an old, lustful hog. What would it matter if I could feel like a woman?"] Instead of being vacant and feminine, she turned to the numbing qualities of alcohol: "Por eso bebía, Fela. Porque al beber era como si todo lo que no tenía, ni podía ya tener, se me fuera metiendo en la sangre, para durar exactamente lo que me duraba la modorra del alcohol. Era mi forma de soñar, ¿comprendes?, mi forma de sentirme viva, de saberme mujer, de tener un cuerpo" (469). ["And so I drank, Fela. Because when I drank it was as if everything that I didn't have and could no longer get went into my blood and lasted exactly as long as my drunkenness. It was my way of dreaming. Don't you understand? It was my way of feeling alive, of knowing that I was a woman, of having a body."]

Drunk, she explains to her sister, was the only state in which she could imagine feeling fulfilled and being embodied. But drinking is only another form of excessive consumption that would conceal an inner vacancy; it is no different from the excessive consumption she condemned in her mother, brother, sister, house and friends.

It was finally deciding to reclaim her femininity, Cecilia shows, that motivated her to commit the act that led to her admittance to the insane asylum: appearing naked at a party. When the guests saw her body, instead of filling their bodies with food, they paused and released a repressed "orgy" of screams: "Se oían gritos, muchos gritos: una orgía de gritos. Pero nadie se acercaba, nadie se atrevía a tocarme. Únicamente me miraban con los ojos desorbitados, las bocas paralizadas en el espasmo de la gritería, abiertas, infinitamente más abiertas que cuando sonreían" (474). ["One heard screams, many screams: an orgy of screams. But no one approached me, no one dared touch me. They just looked at me, their eyes exorbitant, their mouths paralyzed in the spasm of

their screams, open, infinitely more open than when they smiled.”] The sexual connotations of orgy suggest that the guests joined Cecilia in revealing a repressed femininity at the same time that they scorned her. The final image of the void in their circular mouths indicates that they too began to bare the vacancy within. In a reversal of the process of abjection, they ceased to talk. Their bodies released not words, but screams.

Although Cecilia reclaimed her femininity at the party, she was unable to do so and be included in postwar Spanish society. The day that she showed what it meant to be a woman and began to truly feel like a person, she reminds the reader, she ceased to be a person in the eyes of her sister and friends. The irony of her story is the implication that a Spanish woman could not feel like a “woman” or be a good mother until she dismantled the rhetoric that defined her and was, like vomit itself, cast outside of society.

### **Finding an appetite in hunger: El volumen de la ausencia**

Twenty years after the publication of La estación de las hojas amarillas, Salisachs continues to explore the relationship between femininity, vacancy and embodiment in El volumen de la ausencia (1983). Like Cecilia, Ida Sierra, the protagonist, struggles to identify herself as a woman who has been repressed by the social norms that define Spanish femininity. Her repressed self is embodied in a corporeal vacancy that hollows the identity she has conformed to as a traditional housewife living on Barcelona’s Calle de Aribau. Rather than look into the content of her vacancy, Ida superficially conceals it with a melodramatic love story that constitutes the central theme of the text. The love story, which unfolds in an interior monologue she directs to her ex-lover, Juan, pervades the textual body like the fatal cyst that the doctor diagnosed in Ida in the novel’s opening scene. While is too late for Ida to remove or drain the contents of the

cyst – she was only given four months to live – she can move towards healing her body if she uncovers the vacancy that her cyst conceals. To do so, Ida has to find a desire to continue living in spite of the knowledge that she will die, or to explore her answer to the question posed by José María Cabodevilla in the novel’s epigraph: “¿Qué queda ya de aquel deseo de vivir, aquel deseo indefectible de seguir viviendo a toda costa?” [“What is left now of that desire to live, that invariable desire to continue living at all costs?”] The answer, Ida realizes as she ambles around Barcelona, directing her thoughts and her body towards Juan, is found inside of the vacant corporeal space that she has spent her adult life repressing.

As Ida sorts through her thoughts, she implies that her vacancy began to form when she moved into the house on Calle de Aribau in the 1940s as a recently married sixteen-year-old. Her beginnings on Calle de Aribau establish a clear parallel to Carmen Laforet’s Nada, whose protagonist, Andrea, also moved to Calle de Aribau as a young university student in the 1940s. Both women had to figure out what they needed both physically and emotionally to grow in the repressive, penurious environment of the early Franco years. Once they identified their hungers, they were faced with the additional challenge of finding the food and the desire to nourish them. In this manner, hunger functions in both novels as a literary trope to convey the malnourished physical, emotional and spiritual situation of postwar Spanish women.

As Fernanda Eberstadt recognizes, Andrea’s hunger in Nada particularly expresses her need for independence; having spent the War in a small village and witnessed the death of her mother, she hoped to find independence by moving to Barcelona. There she planned to receive a university education while living with her late mother’s family:

Laforet makes us feel the force of this young woman’s pent-up hunger to

escape the oppressiveness of village life and her convent education. For years, Andrea has feasted on childhood memories of her maternal grandparents' apartment in Barcelona, a haven of sophistication and ease from which she, because of her parents' death and the war, has long been cut off.

As becomes clear by the end of *Nada*, Andrea was not able to cultivate her independence or her intellect while living in the home of her late mother's family on Calle de Aribau. The oppressive presence of her Aunt Angustias, in particular, impeded her from nourishing herself. The first morning she spent in Barcelona, Angustias stopped her from consuming the only edible thing she found in the house, the still life paintings on her wall: "No había nada comestible que no estuviera pintado en los abundantes bodegones que llenaban las paredes, y los estaba mirando cuando me llamó tía Angustias" (25). ["There was nothing edible except for what was painted in the many still lives that covered the walls, and I was looking at them when Aunt Angustias called to me" (Grossman 13).] Instead of continuing to nourish her body with reflections on art, when Andrea tended to Angustias's call she was forced to swallow the incomprehensible rules that Angustias designed to mold Andrea into the Feminine Section's prototype of the good, modest Christian woman (26). Furthermore, while listening to Angustias's rules, Andrea was unable to voice her opinion or her wishes for independence: "No me dejaba decir nada y yo tragaba sus palabras por sorpresa, sin comprenderlas bien" (26). ["She didn't allow me to say anything, and I swallowed her words in surprise without understanding them well" (Grossman 14).] If Andrea were to continue to consume Angustias's rules, their indigestible particles would congeal into the type of foreign cyst that eventually will kill Ida.

Fortunately for Andrea, Angustias left Calle de Aribau a few months after her

arrival, providing her with an opportunity to explore her hungers on her own. Nourishing herself after living with Angustias, however, proved difficult in the beginning. Suddenly in charge of her own budget, the first month Andrea binged on all of the things that Angustias would have prevented her from having. Since she spent all of her money on candies, movies, fancy restaurants and chocolates, after a few days she was unable to afford even a daily ration of bread. As a result, her body starved. However, the taste of independence that she received left her more emotionally well-nourished than she was when she had taken her meals with the family: “La verdad es que me sentía más feliz desde que estaba desligada de aquel nudo de las comidas en casa. No importaba que aquel mes hubiera gastado demasiado y apenas me alcanzara el presupuesto de una peseta diaria para comer” (118). [“The truth is I felt happier since I’d disentangled myself from the knot of meals at home. It didn’t matter that I spent too much that month and barely had the daily peseta I budgeted for food” (Grossman 100).] Although her body was more vacant, she was able to accurately identify one of her hungers as a hunger for independence. Her struggle was to learn to nourish that need while maintaining her physical health in Franco’s Spain.

As Andrea’s story continues, Laforet paradoxically shows that nourishing independence was impossible for Andrea to do on her own. Growing into an independent woman required developing social relationships outside of the repressive environment from which she came. The moments when Andrea managed to get physical and emotional nourishment coincide with the moments when she studied art and made friends with a group of bohemian young artists at the University of Barcelona. In particular, the friendship she developed with Ena, a girl who lived a street over and often invited Andrea to her home for dinner, helped Andrea to withstand the bitterness of day-to-day postwar life: “Estos chorros de luz que recibía mi vida gracias a

Ena, estaban amargados por el sombrío tinte con que se teñía mi espíritu otros días de la semana” (131). [“These torrents of light pouring into my life because of Ena were embittered by the dismal hues that colored my spirit on the other days of the week” (Grossman 113).] When their friendship became marred by petty arguments in the middle of the novel, Andrea felt the intense side effects of malnourishment. Her hungers became chronic, and she lost any ability she had previously had to identify them:

No me refiero a los sucesos de la calle de Aribau, que apenas influían ya en mi vida, sino a la visión desenfocada de mis nervios demasiado afilados por un hambre que a fuerza de ser crónica llegué casi a no sentirla. A veces me enfadaba con Ena por una nadería. Salía de su casa desesperada. Luego regresaba sin decirle una palabra y me ponía a estudiar junto a ella. El recuerdo de estas escenas me hacía llorar de terror algunas veces cuando las razonaba en mis paseos por las calles de los arrabales, o por la noche, cuando el dolor de cabeza no me dejaba dormir y tenía que quitar la almohada para que se disipara. Pensaba en Juan y me encontraba semejante a él en muchas cosas. Ni siquiera se me ocurría pensar que estaba histérica por la falta de alimento. (131-132)

[I’m not referring to events on Calle de Aribau, which hardly influenced my life anymore, but to the unfocused vision caused by my nerves, put too much on edge by a hunger I almost didn’t feel because it was chronic. Sometimes I’d become angry with Ena over a trifle. I’d leave her house in despair. Then I’d come back without saying a word and begin studying with her again. Ena pretended not to notice and we’d go on as if nothing had happened. Remembering these scenes sometimes made me weep with

terror when I thought about them on my walks along the streets in poor districts, or at night when the ache in my head wouldn't let me sleep and I had to remove the pillow for it to go away. I'd think about Juan and how I was like him in many ways. It didn't even occur to me that I was hysterical from lack of food. (Grossman 113)]

Although Andrea contextualizes her arguments with Ena outside of Aribau Street, their fights were entangled in her mother's family. When she later reveals that her uncle, a struggling musician, had seduced Ena, causing the two girls to drift apart, she discloses her mother's family's role in tarnishing her friendship. Continuing to live on Aribau Street, Laforet implies, would make it difficult for Andrea to nourish herself. If she stayed there, her hunger could remain in the chronic state that isolated her from others and depressed both her body and her spirit.

In order to nourish herself, Andrea needed to rekindle her friendship with Ena outside of Calle de Aribau. Ena's family provided her with that opportunity after they caught wind of Ena's relationship with Ramón, who had also seduced Ena's mother when she was young, and decided to move to Madrid. Just after they left, they presented Andrea with the opportunity to join them, offering her a job through an acquaintance of Ena's father. As Andrea prepared to leave Calle de Aribau to pursue an independent life in Madrid, Ena's father assured her that she would finally be well-fed: " – Comeremos en Zaragoza, pero antes tendremos un buen desayuno – se sonrió ampliamente –; le gustará el viaje, Andrea. Ya verá usted..." (275). [" 'We'll eat lunch in Zaragoza, but first we'll have a good breakfast.' He smiled broadly. 'You'll enjoy the trip, Andrea. You'll see... .'"] The text of *Nada*, composed in the first person by Andrea after she arrived to Madrid, is confirmation that she found nourishment both for her individual body and for the textual body that her story upholds.

Instead of leaving Calle de Aribau, Ida Sierra remained in the state of chronic, repressed hunger that Andrea managed to feed. As she does not perceive the vacancy beneath her cyst, she did not notice the absence of her children or mother, important secondary characters in her story, when she returned home to Calle de Aribau the day of her diagnosis. Their absences, which we later learn are at the root of her hungers, were supplanted by the absences of her husband, Daniel, her maid, Sra. Márquez, and her mother-in-law, Soledad: “El piso de la calle de Aribau estaba en silencio. Daniel aún no había llegado, la señora Márquez había salido y Soledad probablemente dormitaba en el cuarto de Andrea entre nebulosas de confusiones” (El volumen 14). [“The apartment on Aribau Street was silent. Daniel still hadn’t arrived, Señora Márquez had left and Soledad was probably dozing off in a confused haze in Andrea’s room.”] As Ida later confirms, the unmentioned absences of her mother and children suggest that her relationship with them is one of the aspects of her life that remains malnourished. As she asserts in the middle of the novel, they witnessed the formation of the vacancy beneath her cyst: “Sólo mi madre y mis hijos iban a ser testigos de mi vacío” (226). [“Only my mother and children would be witnesses to my vacancy.”] Before she can look further into her vacancy, Salisachs implies, Ida has to uncover the role that Soledad and Daniel played in its repression.

As Ida walks around Barcelona, trying to decide whether she wants to return to Calle de Aribau or to spend the next four months with Juan, a third person narrator continually interrupts her monologues, helping reveal the vacancy that her story with Juan covers. The narrator’s repeated employment of negative grammatical structures stresses the negative layer of meaning undermining Ida’s story and the pieces of her repressed self that it portrays:

Nada, salvo recobrar a Juan, es ya importante para Ida Sierra. Nada puede

herirla. Ni siquiera la barbarie que invade a los humanos. Ni siquiera el desprecio que suele despertar en los poderosos la dignidad humana de los que no piensan como ellos.

Saberse libre, inmensamente libre. Capacitada para transformar en nada lo que, en algún tiempo, pudo resultar angustioso. Olvidar el dolor, las mentiras, las crisis, los pasos en falso y los que no fueron. Ser ella misma. Nada más que ella misma. (182-83)

[Nothing except for regaining Juan is now important to Ida Sierra.

Nothing can hurt her. Not even the barbarity that invades humans. Not even the disdain often woken up in the powerful by the human dignity of those who don't think like them.

To know herself free, immensely free. Capable of transforming into trifles what, long ago, could have caused anguish. To forget the hurt, the lies, the crisis, the false moves and those that never were. To be herself. Nothing more than herself.]

In order to know herself "free" Ida must look beneath the image of herself she constructed with Juan, who left Spain twelve years ago and has not seen her since. That means resuscitating her "nada," the space into which she forgot "the hurt, the lies, the crisis, the false moves and those that never were"; it means reopening what it was that caused her to anguish before she and Juan met.

In the middle of the novel Ida recalls that Juan aptly identified the apartment as her second skin, insinuating the vacancy that originated there: "<<La casa propia es una segunda piel>> me dijiste tú más tarde. <<Por eso debemos mimarla>> (103). [“ ‘One's home is like a second skin' you told me later. 'So we should pamper it.'”] Juan's presence served to metaphorically pamper the skin concealing Ida's vacancy. Like the

lotions, soaps and blankets of the postwar Vandraite estate, the world that she imagined with him alleviated the losses she suffered. In that world, she used to feel safe, revitalized by the new meaning that her name seemed to acquire whenever Juan pronounced it: “Un mundo incapacitado para los acosos y las amenazas. Y yo creí en aquel mundo. Lo fui asimilando día tras día en nuestros encuentros posteriores, en cada instante que estábamos juntos. Hasta mi nombre parecía cambiar cuando tú lo pronunciabas” (150). [“A world incapable of harassment and threats. And I believed in that world. I assimilated it day after day in each of our subsequent encounters, each time we were together. Even my name seemed to change when you pronounced it.”] The new tone Juan gave her name, however, did not erase the vacancy to which its denotative meaning, “gone,” points. In order to begin to heal during the remainder of her life, she has to go back to the vacancy in her name and figure out what is already gone from her life and when it left.

To find what has gone, Ida directs herself, through Juan, to her second skin on Aribau Street. When she first moved to Aribau Street as Daniel’s sixteen-year-old wife, Ida recalls, she had no agency. Daniel, a Nationalist war veteran and writer of low-quality novels, and his mother, Soledad, negated Ida’s role even inside of the domestic sphere, making all decisions regarding how to decorate and furnish their new home. The furniture they chose, which has not changed in forty years, is a continual reminder that even in her role as housewife, Ida has been rendered null. Especially in the beginning of their marriage, before she got a job at an art gallery outside of the home, she attended only to menial tasks like making the beds and assuring Daniel that he would be well fed:

Asistido por su madre (yo no tenía por qué meter las narices en temas tan fundamentales como acondicionar una casa), adquirió muebles y objetos

en un establecimiento barato especializado en instalar viviendas para familias poco exigentes. En los albores de los años cuarenta, había poco que escoger. Por otro lado, lo único importante para Daniel era que las camas sirvieran para dormir y la mesa del comedor, para celebrar rituales gastronómicos. (20)

[Assisted by his mother (I didn't have any reason to stick my nose in questions as fundamental as decorating the house), he got furniture and knickknacks in a cheap establishment that specialized in making a home for modest families. In the beginning of the forties, there was little to choose from. On the other hand, the only important thing for Daniel was to make sure that the beds could be slept in and the dining room table was fit for celebrating gastronomic rituals.]

As the pervasive absences of Daniel and Soledad that Ida noticed in the first scene implied, their presence dominated the environment of the home, emphasizing that Ida's role was to feed others, but not herself. As Ida saw to it that gastronomic rituals were prepared and her husband's stomach was full, she became chronically malnourished, a condition that led her to be gone.

Parallel to the vacancy belying Ida's life on Calle de Aribau, Ida also identifies a vacancy inside of her mother, who incarnated the rhetoric of the Feminine Section of the Falange. In her monologue, she describes her mother to Juan as a pillar of silent strength, a personification of Martín Gaité's description of the self-abnegating woman: "Me hubiera gustado parecerme a ella, Juan. Tener su fortaleza, su espíritu de sacrificio" (123). "I would have liked to be like her, Juan. To have her fortitude, her sacrificial spirit." Like Martín Gaité's woman, Ida's mother's strength was undermined by the vacancy that sustained her: "Era como un recipiente sin fondo donde lo que

entraba para herirla, se perdía en olvidos. Lo único que el recipiente mantenía a flote era la parte grata y positiva: sonrisas, palabras amables, miradas comprensivas” (58). [“She was like a bottomless recipient; whatever entered to hurt her would be lost, forgotten. The only things that maintained the recipient afloat were the kind and the positive: smiles, nice words, comprehensive looks.”] As a bottomless recipient, Ida’s mother remained hollow in spite of how much she consumed. From beneath her contented appearance, the forgotten aspects of her mother’s life later manifested themselves, as they would in Ida, in the form of sickness. Similar to the illnesses of the mothers of Barrio de Maravillas, the chronic cough Ida’s mother had the summer she vacationed with Ida and Jacobo in Montforz was the language of her repression. At night, it rattled the structure of the house, penetrating through the walls like a threat: “Persistente, ampliándose en la noche como una amenaza” (122). [“Persistent, amplifying at night as if it were a threat.”] Reflecting upon Ida’s mother’s cough, Salisachs reiterates that the repression of an unnourished vacancy does not eliminate the vacancy. The pain of a story that has been repressed inevitably emerges if it is not tended to and medicated.

As Ida’s mother’s smiles and kind words filled the vacancy whose repressed contents eventually expressed themselves through a cough, Juan filled the vacancy inside of Ida that eventually emerged in the growing volume of her cyst. When he unexpectedly visited her in Montforz that summer, Ida remembers that his presence indeed filled large and vague vacancies: “Son muchos los recuerdos que conservo de aquel día; evocaciones insignificantes, pero que llenan grandes vacíos” (124). [“There are many memories I have of that day; insignificant evocations, but they fill great vacancies.”] Ida goes on not to nuance the “great vacancies” Juan filled, but to describe the “insignificant evocations,” or the details of the romance that developed between

them during Juan's visit. Nonetheless, as the narrator insists in the following scene, that vacancy is the only "real" aspect of Ida's narration (136). Taking the reader outside of Ida's memory and onto the street where she walks, the narrator draws a parallel between Ida's repressed vacancy and the repressed historical memory of Barcelona. The narrator implies that the reader must look beneath Ida's love story with Juan, as Barcelona must look beneath its commercial billboards, in order to understand what lacks:

Sobre todo, hay que desligarse de cualquier convencionalismo. Por ejemplo: esos espacios publicitarios ostentando carteles enormes, falsamente optimistas, anunciando productos de belleza o bebidas sin alcohol. Nada en esos letreros es real. Lo real es lo que no se explica. Lo que jamás se anuncia: esa boca vacía de alimentos, ese corazón vacío de amor, esos ojos vacíos de compasión... (136)

[In particular, one must disassociate oneself from any conventionalism. For instance: those publicity spaces that boast enormous billboards, falsely optimistic, announcing beauty products or non-alcoholic drinks. Nothing in those signs is real. The real is what is not explained. What is never announced: that mouth vacant of food, that heart vacant of love, those eyes vacant of compassion... ]

Reiterating that Ida's real story lies in what she has repressed and emerges beneath the words that she articulates, the narrator redirects the reader to what Jacobus referred to as the semiotic underpinnings of language. While Ida's words gloss over that semiotic space, concealing it like her mother's smiles and kind words, the narrator reminds us that that space sustains her story.

The narrator's image of the mouth vacant of food reconnects the reader to the

mouths at the end of La estación de las hojas amarillas, reiterating the quality of emptiness that Kristeva associates with maternal abjection. As Ida describes her relationship with her three children, it grows clearer that the story she repressed has to do with her identity as a mother. Her first daughter, Andrea, rejected Ida and her authority from the moment that she could speak. As a teenager, she became so ashamed of the middle-class life that Ida represented, in particular as a woman who worked outside of the home, that she went from disobeying her mother to ignoring her. She repeatedly told Ida that she would never be like her, but planned to leave home and marry a rich man: “Recuerdo su actitud: distante, displicente. Andrea había crecido. Era ya una mujer. Una mujer alta, decididamente inmersa en belleza. <<No te preocupes, mamá; no voy a seguir tus pasos>>” (75). [“I remember her attitude, distant, disciplined. Andrea had grown. She was already a woman. A tall woman, decidedly immersed in beauty: ‘Don’t worry, mamá; I’m not going to follow your footsteps.’] Andrea realized her plan to separate herself from her mother, the act that would define her womanhood, when she became romantically involved with her friend’s rich father, Ernesto Carihuela. Their relationship, a parody of the relationship between Ena and Ramón in Nada, gave Andrea the upper-class appearance that she sought while further relegating Ida to an abject, anti-feminist vacancy on Calle de Aribau.

While Andrea negated her connection to Ida during her childhood, she emulated Soledad. In dreaming of marrying rich, she mimicked the image of wealth that Soledad, who named Andrea when she was born, had fabricated over her life: “Todo en la vida de esa mujer ha ido apoyándose en pedestales de cartón. ‘Nuestros antepasados, nuestra fortuna, nuestro apellido...’ La boca se llenaba fácilmente de relatos grandilocuentes cada vez que daba un repaso a sus grandezas y a sus infortunios” (55). [“Everything in the life of that woman has been upheld by cardboard pedestals. ‘Our

ancestors, our fortune, our name...’ Her mouth was easily filled with stories that always repeated their achievements and their unfortunate decline.”] Like the hollowed cardboard beneath Fela’s makeup, Soledad’s identity was artificially constructed on top of a cardboard pedestal. Each time she repeated the story of her family’s false achievements, she further separated Andrea from her maternal origins, pulling her into the patriarchal symbolic order fortified by the distance between the self and the vacancy left when the self denied its maternal origins.

In contrast to Andrea, Rodolfo, Ida’s second child, was a quiet boy whose inclination to daydream when he was young offered Ida a glimpse into what it might look like to explore a space defined as “nada”: “A menudo lo descubría yo ensimismado, mirando hacia un punto lejano que solo él parecía divisar: <<¿En qué piensas, Rodolfo?>> Me contestaba que <<en nada>>, que él era así y que no debía preocuparme” (27). [“Often I would find him in a daze, staring into a faraway place that only he could see: ‘What are you thinking about, Rodolfo?’ ‘Nothing,’ he would respond, adding that he was like that and I shouldn’t worry.”] Unlike Ida, as a child Rodolfo was able to feel “nothing” as an integral part of himself; he had not yet repressed it. As Rodolfo’s sexuality developed and it is revealed that his nada was linked to being a homosexual in a society that privileged heterosexuality, however, Ida herself encouraged him to repress his sexuality and the sense of vacancy that he had felt since he was a child. In particular, after he was wrongly arrested, accused of being involved in a pedophilia scandal with Luis Robledo, she urged Rodolfo to deny his sexuality, which she euphemistically referred to in a conversation with Ernesto Carihuela as “aquello”: <<¿Qué va a ser de él si no logramos salvarlo?>>, le preguntaba yo atemorizada. Para mí, <<aquello>> era peor que saberlo enfermo. Las enfermedades podían medicarse, pero la pérdida del prestigio...” (238). [“What will become of him if

we don't save him?' I asked him, terrified. For me, 'that' was worse than knowing that he was sick. Sickesses can be medicated, but a loss of prestige..." Although Ida remembers preferring that Rodolfo be socially accepted and ill, like she and her mother, over exposing himself as homosexual, Rodolfo would not repress his sexuality. Instead, he further embraced the vacancy inside of him, tragically attempting suicide. He preferred, Ida sees, the loss of his life to the loss of self that he would have experienced if he pretended to be heterosexual.

As Ida walks, she remembers that Rodolfo's suicide attempt ironically coincided with the day that she had planned to leave her family and join Juan abroad for a vacation. Instead of leaving, she chose to stay and take care of her son, who reminded her of what she lost in herself in conforming to a restrictive image of maternity. When Rodolfo woke up in the hospital, Ida reaffirmed that she was his mother. Accepting her son brought her a step closer to accepting herself:

Le juré entonces que me quedaría a su lado. Que por nada del mundo me separaría de él.

No hacía aún veinticuatro horas que te habías marchado; sin embargo, para mí era como si hubieran transcurrido siglos.

Aquella misma noche te escribí la carta: *Querido Juan: Ha ocurrido algo irreversible y no puedo reunirme contigo. Procura olvidarme. Es preferable que nos separemos definitivamente. No pienso volver a verte. Te suplico que no trates de reunirte conmigo. Nada podrá hacerme cambiar de idea. Más aún, estoy empezando a creer que no te quiero, que no te he querido nunca...* (255)

[I assured him then that I would stay by his side. That I would not separate from him for anything in the world.

It hadn't even been twenty-four hours since you had gone; still, for me it

was as if centuries had gone by.

That same night I wrote you a letter: *Dear Juan, Something irreversible has happened and I can't meet you. Try to forget me. It would be best for us to separate definitively. I don't plan on seeing you again. I beg you to try not to reunite with me. Nothing can make me change my mind. Moreover, I am beginning to think that I don't love you, that I have never loved you...*]

With Juan gone, Ida recalls, she looked to her children to begin to medicate the emptiness inside of her. In addition to Rodolfo, she relied on her youngest son, Jacobo, to nourish the vacancy that manifested itself powerfully in Juan's absence. As she recalls having told her friend, Mónica, she realized that Juan only existed to cover what it was that she repressed: “<<Debo hacerme a la idea de que Juan no ha existido nunca. Eso bastará para que Jacobo pueda rellenar el vacío que Juan me ha dejado dentro” (191). “ ‘I need to grow accustomed to the idea that Juan has never existed. That will be enough for Jacobo to fill the vacancy that Juan left inside of me.’ ” She even grew closer to Andrea, whose life with Ernesto Carihuella she now accepted (262). By turning to her relationship to her children, Ida began to reconnect to the semiotic identity where the story she repressed on Aribau Street would unravel.

While the novel ends before we know the answer Ida found to Cabdovella's question, we do know that she finally situated herself in the hungers that she needed to nourish. After walking all the way to Juan's apartment, reflecting on her life, she decides to redirect her narrative to herself. Instead of joining Juan, she catches a taxi and heads back to Calle de Aribau, accepting that she has only four months to live. The bittersweet ending of Ida's story implies that by the year the novel is published, in 1983, it may have been too late to save the women whose lives were repressed by the Feminine Section of the Falange during the Franco regime. Nonetheless, Salisachs

insists that we look inside of feminine vacancy in order to understand the type of abject nourishment that Spain still requires after Franco's death. Exploring vacancy, in particular in hungry feminine bodies and body parts, will lead to an understanding of what was lost, what was abject, due to the anti-feminist rhetoric of the Franco regime and the continued repercussions that rhetoric has on definitions of Spanish femininity.

## Chapter 4:

### The emergence of appetite: Adelaida García Morales

The presence of hungry Spanish women is a defining feature of the Spanish landscape in the post-Franco novels of Adelaida García Morales. Rising up from the shadows of Francoism, skeletal bodies reveal their longing to be included in the new, democratic nation. What transforms that longing into an active drive with a specific goal – the goal of giving presence to an absence, of seeing a vacancy, of listening to a silence – is appetite. In *El silencio de las sirenas* [1985] and *El secreto de Elisa* [1999], feminine appetites emerge from feminine hungers, nourishing the voices of women who were repressed by the Regime and showing that they form an integral part of contemporary Spain.

In order to fully integrate hungry women into post-Franco Spain, García Morales first exposes the logic that prevented women from growing healthy bodies during the Franco regime. In her study on twentieth century Spanish women poets, Catherine Bellver evokes the lack embedded in the hungry body in an analysis of the interplay between poetic images of absence and presence. She describes absence and presence not as distinct, binary realms, but as “complex, variable and interrelated conditions of being” for women poets (11). The integration of absence into presence can also be seen in the hungers of the female characters of García Morales’s novels. What is lacking in the hungry female body is articulated beneath layers of silence that García Morales’s characters must penetrate before they can identify and nourish the vacancy that keeps them hungry and silenced in Spain.<sup>6</sup>

Through the isolated settings of both novels, García Morales brings the reader far

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<sup>6</sup> To read about Zambrano’s language of silence, see page 70.

from the cultural center of Madrid to the hungriest, most marginalized parts of the nation. In the beginning of both El silencio de las sirenas and El secreto de Elisa, the main characters, María and Elisa, reflect upon the journeys they undertook the previous year, when they relocated from Madrid to two remote Spanish regions, the first in Las Alpujarras, a constellation of farming villages in the Sierra Nevada, and the second in the hills surrounding Segovia. Though outsiders in Las Alpujarras and Segovia, they were both compelled to stay in the regions, attracted by the silences of the landscape, which seemed to echo the silences within them. Uncovering silences would bring them into touch with all of the feelings, sensations and experiences that they had repressed under the norms that structured their dominant realities in Franco's Spain.

The title of El silencio de las sirenas, a clear reference to Homer's The Odyssey, stresses that listening to the stories beneath silence involves revising our interpretations of the epic tales of the Western European canon. Instead interpreting the epic according to what Joseph Campbell refers to as "The Heroic Cycle," where the hero is a masculine figure that represents the patriarchal desires of a nation, García Morales leads us to examine the feminine silences that "The Heroic Cycle" conceals. As Sara Poor and Jana Schulman argue, "The world of epic is a martial world, a community of warriors defined by its distance from a world of women and promoting an ideology of masculinity that shores up the heroes' relationship to power and authority" (1). By focusing on female characters who have been displaced by the epic discourses of Spain, García Morales reveals the world of women and minorities on the other side of patriarchy. That world is accessed by redefining the epic hero not as a warrior who defends the nation from outsiders, but as a maker of peace who listens to that which the warrior silenced.

The protagonist of El silencio de las sirenas, María, is, indeed, the feminine

counterpart of Odysseus. Instead of plugging her ears to the song of the sirens, she listens to the silences produced when a siren's song is repressed. She comes to see that the silences of the sirens, in accordance with the short story by Kafka from which García Morales takes the novel's name, are more deadly to Spain than their song: "Now the Sirens have still a more fatal weapon than their song, namely their silence. And though admittedly such a thing has never happened, still it is inconceivable that someone might possibly have escaped from their singing; but from their silence certainly never" (Kafka 431). In Kafka's tale, the absence of the sirens' song creates a powerful and silent presence during Odysseus's epic journey to Ithaca. Uncovering what has been silenced would challenge his status as epic hero and put into question the patriarchal national values that he solidifies. Similarly, García Morales suggests, listening to the silences of the sirens in Spain would dismantle the image of the patriarchal nation that maintains the hungry condition of Spanish women.

In the beginning of both novels, we see that the protagonists' epic goal of uncovering the stories of silence emerged precisely because life in post-Franco Madrid did not sustain them. María left behind her job as a schoolteacher and commenced her journey to the Alpujarras because she found her reality in the Spanish capital unfulfilling and, as she later came to see, less alive than the realities she later uncovered beneath the silences of the Alpujarras (115). Having set out without a plan, when she found Las Alpujarras she was immediately intrigued by the thick, silent border that encircled its villages, separating it from her and the rest of Spain: "Tuve la impresión de cruzar una frontera precisa y de penetrar en un mundo extraño que se volvía hacia sí mismo, encerrado en una quietud intemporal" (14) ["I felt I was crossing a precise frontier and entering a strange world, turned in upon itself, enclosed in timeless tranquility" (Hayter 10).] Although María was an outsider, she was able to walk across

the first border and penetrate into the “silenciosas cordilleras, indiferentes a ese otro mundo que quedaba fuera, lejano y confuso” (14). [“silent mountains, indifferent to that other world that remained outside, distant and confused” (Hayter 10).] When María entered the village, the Spain that she came from became an alterity, outside, distant and confused. However, she was not yet included in the culture that she perceived beneath the silences. There were still many borders between her and the story of the people who had lived in the region. She noticed those borders beneath the fog, in the hardened faces of the townswomen she encountered as she ambled down the street: “De la densa niebla surgían algunos rostros de piel endurecida y arrugada, como mascarás hurañas. Surgían enmarcados en las ventanas, en las puertas, o errabundos por aquel dédalo que ya, desde el principio, me sentí atrapada” (14). [“Faces emerged from the thick mist, faces with hardened, wrinkled skin, like uncouth masks” (Hayter 11).] The borders that María perceived reveal that she had a lot of work to do before uncovering the many layers of repressed culture and vitality in the region.

The silence of the Alpujarras landscape communicates what Generation of '98 philosopher, Miguel de Unamuno, would identify as the “intrahistoria” of Spain. In En torno al casticismo, Unamuno defines Spain's “intrahistoria” as the history that binds the Spanish people to each other and to the land. Unlike the history written into books or inscribed on monuments, it evokes the “tradición eterna” of the nation. In spite of cultural repression, a “tradición eterna” is a tradition that can never be erased. Furthermore, it must be present in order for progress to occur: “Esa vida intra-histórica, silenciosa y continua como el fondo vivo del mar, es la sustancia del progreso, la verdadera tradición, la tradición eterna, no la tradición mentira que se suele ir a buscar al pasado enterrado en libros y papeles, y monumentos y piedras” (145). [“That intra-historic life, silent and continual like the live bottom of the sea, is the substance of

progress, the true tradition, the eternal tradition, not the false tradition that one often looks for when reading the past buried in books and papers, monuments and rocks.”] The power of an “intrahistoria,” according to Unamuno, lies in the affect that it provokes among the citizens of a community. For example, in Unamuno’s novel, San Manuel Bueno, mártir [1930], his protagonist, an atheist priest, was able to unite his congregation not because he transmitted to them the doctrines of the Catholic Church, but because he revived the “intrahistoria” of the small Castilian town, Valverde de Lucerna. Don Manuel connected to the “intrahistoria” of the town not during mass, but while visiting the ruined landscape of an old, isolated Cistercian abbey: “Más aun así, de cuando en cuando se iba solo, orilla del lago, a las ruinas de aquella abadía donde aún parece reposar las almas de los piadosos cistercienses a quienes ha sepultado en el olvido de la historia” (128). [“But, even so, from time to time he went alone to the shore of the lake, where in the ruins of that abbey the souls of the pious cistercians, buried beneath the oblivion of history, seemed to still repose.”] The silence that circulated between the ruins of the abbey linked Don Manuel to the Spanish “tradición eterna,” allowing for the reconnection between the individual and community that María Zambrano describes as a metaphor for hope in her theory of ruins.<sup>7</sup> Don Manuel became a saint not because he transmitted to his congregation the truths of Catholicism, but because he shared with them the “intrahistoria” he perceived in the silence of the ruins, leading them too to connect to the “tradición eterna” of Spain.

It is precisely the ability of Don Manuel to revive the “tradición eterna” of Valverde de Lucerna that attracted him to Zambrano. In Pensamiento y poesía, Zambrano cites Don Manuel in order to argue that a community is not founded on religious doctrine or “impersonal” philosophy, but on the eternal tradition that binds

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<sup>7</sup> See chapter 2, page 80.

people on an emotional level (313). Don Manuel shows her that the root of community is emotional charity, or a willingness to listen to the silences of others and, through listening, to experience empathy: “Antes que fe, caridad, así como la filosofía de Séneca, antes que conocimiento, es consolación. Pero, ¿le será posible a un pueblo existir con solo esto, aunque sea mucho?” (313). [“Before faith, charity, just like the philosophy of Seneca, before knowledge, consolation. But, is it possible for a town to exist with only this, though it be a lot?”] The charity and consolation that are exchanged as a result of an empathetic connection to another human demonstrate what Sarah Ahmed describes as an affective economy (119). An affective economy is based on the sharing of emotions between individuals and places and lies at the basis of Ahmed’s definition of community:

In affective economies, emotions *do things*, and they align individuals with communities – or bodily space with social space – through the very intensity of their attachments. Rather than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions, we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective.  
(119)

Because an emotional connection adheres individuals to one another, inspiring affect in a person who has been marginalized can bring an individual out of isolation and integrate them into a community. If, as Unamuno implies, the emotional connection that sustains communities is embedded into the landscape as a “tradición eterna,” it can be re-circulated even after a time of repression.

The silences that María heard in Las Alpujarras were the silences not only of the townswomen, but also of the rich Moorish and Muslim cultural heritage buried in the

ruined farming villages. As John Wright and Carol Campbell write, the tragic history of the Spanish Muslims, who were severely repressed by Christians during the Reconquest era, is imprinted into the Alpujarras mountainside: “The inlays and overlays of Muslim conquest and Christian Reconquest are etched in the land like the whirls of an arabesque mosaic – intricate, beautiful and lavishly complex” (25). Although the region was given to the last Muslim king of Spain, Boabdil, as a peace offering after the Catholic Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabel, conquered the Alhambra in 1492, Christians continued to persecute Muslims in the Sierra Nevada well into the sixteenth century, leading to a violent Muslim rebellion in 1568 (Tremlett 225). The rebellion culminated in the official eviction of all Moors from Spain (Tremlett 225). Although García Morales does not write about Moorish history, she strongly alludes to it in the silences that separate the Alpujarras from the rest of Spain. The same logic that marginalized women, she implies, marginalized minority cultures from the monolithic, Christian discourse in Spain that preceded the Franco dictatorship. Like the Alpujarras, Segovia is also known for exhibiting Spain’s multi-cultural heritage; since the Transition, it has been known as a city where the three main Spanish religions – Islam, Christianity and Judaism – are manifest. In order to break down the barrier between the region and dominant Spain, María would have to open herself to the sentiment in all of the silences in the Alpujarras and identify in them the quality that attracted her when she approached the town.

While the Alpujarras region is sequestered from the rest of Spain, the townswomen witnessed the historical events and artistic movements that define canonical Spanish history in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to allusions to the Moors, García Morales also establishes allusions to the literary and philosophical production of the Generation of '98, as noted through the philosophy of Unamuno. The perpetual

state of mourning of the townswomen, who were born at the turn of the twentieth century, evokes the mournful tone of the Generation of '98, a group of male artists known for contemplating the Spanish identity after the loss of the nation's last colonies, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines, in the Spanish-American War. Unlike the men associated with '98, most notably Unamuno, Pío Baroja, Ramón del Valle Inclán and Azorín, the women of the town mourned a culture that remained invisible to dominant Spain:

Eran seres extraños que parecían habitar en la linde misma entre la muerte y la vida. Eran mujeres nacidas con el siglo, lentas y enlutadas, que se entregaban a sus tareas cotidianas con una rutina que parecía ser otra cosa. Pues sus miradas, absortas siempre en algo invisible para mí, no parecía que tuvieran nada que ver con las palabras o acciones que, al mismo tiempo, mostraban. (18)

[They were strange beings who seemed to live on the very boundary between life and death. They were women born with the century, slow-moving and dressed in mourning, who went about their daily tasks with a routine that seemed to hide something else – for their looks, always intent on something that was invisible to me, did not seem in any way connected with the words or actions that accompanied them. (Hayter 14)]

The townswomen's mourning, which fits the definition of melancholia Freud gives in "Mourning and Melancholy," implies that the women were the feminine artists of '98. Their tradition, invisible, was excluded from the virile, dense art that tends to be associated with the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Leggott 28). According to Freud, mourning is a reaction to the loss of a loved person or specific ideal such as liberty, the fatherland or a national identity. It gives way to melancholia when one continues to grieve but can

no longer identify the object that he or she has lost: “As an effect of the same influences, melancholia instead of grief develops in some people, whom we consequently suspect of a morbid pathological disposition” (201). While in mourning the world becomes empty and sullen, in melancholia it is the ego itself, which has identified with the amorphous object being grieved, that is lost (203). In her initial encounter with the townswomen, María recognized the characteristics Freud associates with melancholia – dejection and loss of interest in the outside world. She sensed, however, that their melancholia was based on something quite distinct and more inarticulate than the losses of '98: the loss of a feminine Spain.

As María's description of the women continues, she connects them to further canonical artistic production of male artists of the twentieth century, in particular Camilo José Cela's 1951 novel, *La colmena*, and the popular 1973 movie by García Morales's ex-husband, Victor Érice, *El espíritu de la colmena*. In his novel, Cela used the image of a beehive to depict the monotonous lives of over 300 characters who lived in Madrid in 1942. Érice famously reintegrated the same image in his depiction of a Castilian family who lived in the Hunger Years in the film he produced towards the end of the Franco dictatorship. Comparing the women to the bees of a hive, García Morales sustains that the women of the Alpujarras manifest an artistic tradition that developed on the negative side of masculine Spanish art: “A veces las veía como si fueran seres geométricos, casi vegetales, cuyos movimientos eran tan mecánicos como los de las abejas de una colmena. Otras veces creía ver en sus rostros algo que podría ser el residuo terco de otra cultura, algo que yo ya no podría conocer más que en sus aspectos más triviales” (18). [“Sometimes I saw them as geometrical beings, nearly vegetable, whose movements were as mechanical as those of bees in a hive. At other times I thought I saw in their faces something that might be the stubborn remains of another

culture, something that I could never know save in its most trivial aspects" (Hayter 14).] The mechanical, geometrical quality of the women particularly recalls the somber movements of Ana, the young protagonist of Érice's film whose blithe curiosity was hampered when she discovered the murder of her only friend, an ex-Republican soldier she confused with Frankenstein. The connection that Ana was unable to sustain with Frankenstein was repressed into the beehive monotony of the postwar house where her family lived. Though silenced, the emotional connection that she made became part of the "tradición eterna" of Spain. It resurfaces from beneath the silent masks of the Alpujarras townswomen.

As María settled into Las Alpujarras, however, she deduced that the hierarchical relationship between dominant and minority Spain continued on a microcosmic level in the region through the relationship between Matilde, the town matriarch and orator of the town history, and the other, silenced townswomen. She inferred that Matilde articulated the history of the village without recognizing the infinite other histories that her story silenced: "A veces escuchar a Matilde era ir aprendiendo la historia de la aldea, la de sus antepasados, la que ellos habían creído vivir. Era una historia manejada, en parte, por seres imaginarios y crueles que parecían divertirse jugando con las desgracias de los aldeanos" (34). ["At times, listening to Matilde was to learn the history of the village, of its ancestors, of whatever they had believed they were living. It was a history in part manipulated by imaginary and cruel beings who seemed to amuse themselves playing with the misfortunes of the villagers" (Hayter 31).] Matilde personified the cruel beings of her imagination, a quality she inherited from her father, who visited her each night in her dreams in the form of a half-moon, a moon slightly larger than the crescent that symbolizes the Virgin Mary (35). As her father crossed into the symbolism of the Christian mother-of-God, who herself barely speaks in the

Christian Testament, Matilde presented an ambiguous mixture of patriarchy and matriarchy, reality and imagination, voice and silence, and presence and absence. At the same time, María writes, she also imposed the specific story that she inherited onto others as the dominant town history. María reveals her ambiguous but dominant history through Matilde's body:

Era una mujer menuda, de estatura mediana y muy delgada. Aunque, como tantas otras, había nacido con el siglo, la tez de su rostro, surcada por profundas hendiduras, se iluminaba y rejuvenecía con la extraordinaria concentración de su mirada. Su silueta, recortada a lo lejos, gracias al brío y a la agilidad de sus movimientos, era siempre la de una mujer joven. (85)

[She was a slight woman of medium height and very thin. Like so many other women here, she was born at the turn of the century, but her skin, furrowed by deep wrinkles, was illuminated and rejuvenated by the extraordinary intensity of her eyes. Her figure seemed afar, thanks to the energy and agility of her movements, was that of a young woman.

(Hayter 86)]

The contradictory characteristics of Matilde's body –wrinkled and thin but young and exuberant – showed María her contradictory nature as a figure who disclosed her personal history but silenced the histories of others. While the deep grooves in her face insinuated the context of repression from which her story emerged, the blank facial expressions of the other women sustained that she repressed the stories of others (30). Rather than facilitate the emergence of a collective "tradición eterna," the authority she exerted kept the silenced traditions of the village silent.

Matilde's role in silencing the voices of the townswomen manifested with

particular intensity in her relationship to Elsa, who, like María, was an outsider; she moved to the village just before María, after abandoning a career in music in Seville (41). María first met Elsa when Matilde asked María to participate in an evil eye ceremony at Matilde's house in order to cure Elsa of a mysterious illness. As soon as María laid eyes on Elsa, she recognized the symptoms of her illness as the same hollow, melancholic features that she had recognized in the other townswomen:

Su delicada belleza me abstraía de todo lo que me rodeaba, absorbiéndome en ella por completo. Y, ante tan inhumana inmovilidad, pensé que quizás no estuviera allí, entre nosotros, sino que, de alguna manera, se habría ausentado y se movería, en aquellos momentos, en otro espacio, entre figuras de una realidad imaginaria. (30-31)

[Her delicate beauty held me unaware of my surroundings and totally absorbed. Faced with this inhuman immobility, I thought that perhaps she was not present here, amongst us, that in some way she had absented herself to another space, surrounded by figures of an imaginary reality.

(Hayter 26-27)]

In order to cure Elsa from her ailment, María would have to uncover the quality that attracted her to Elsa's imagined reality, a quality similar to that which attracted her to the realities silenced in the town. She would have to break down the border that isolated and immobilized Elsa, enter into her story, and bridge that story with the stories of the townswomen that compose the "tradición eterna" of Spain.

As María came to understand that her role in the village was to listen to Elsa's silence, she came to see that the stories beneath silence were more real than the reality she had lived in Madrid (115). In particular, María began to penetrate further into Elsa's reality during the hypnosis sessions that the two conducted when the evil eye ceremony

at Matilde's house failed. María had given Elsa the false impression that she knew hypnosis in order to get her attention after the ceremony, since she heard that Elsa was looking for someone who could perform the technique:

En seguida comprobé que mi invención había logrado lo que pretendía: tender un puente hacia Elsa. A partir de aquel momento advertí en ella cierta simpatía hacia mi persona. Al menos eso creí yo entonces, ingenuamente, pues la verdad era que Elsa solo veía en mí el instrumento necesario para hurgar desesperadamente en algo misterioso que crecía en su interior, y que ella alimentaba cuanto podía. (37)

[I immediately realized that my invention had had the desired result: built a bridge to Elsa. From that moment on I discerned in her a certain liking for me. At least that was what I thought at the time; naively, for in actual fact all that Elsa saw in me was the necessary instrument to delve desperately into something that was mysteriously growing inside of her, and which she fed as intensely as she could. (Hayter 35)]

María's feigned knowledge of hypnosis indeed led Elsa to invite her to her house for dinner. Confirming that Elsa was looking not to nourish her body with food, but to nourish the mysterious realm within her, as soon as they arrived to the house Elsa forgot completely about the meal. Instead of eating, she began to listen to a sonata by Handel, entering through the music into the realm that immobilized her. As she listened, she ironically left María with a hunger for food that María too seemed to forget as soon as Elsa welcomed her into her inner realm:

Además, muy a pesar mío, sentía hambre y tenía presente su invitación a cenar, cosa que a ella parecía habersele olvidado por completo.

Finalmente, al terminar la sonata, abandonó su majestuosa inmovilidad. Y

yo, poco a poco, me fui entregando a la atmósfera lánguida que ella iba creando con los movimientos de su cuerpo, sus miradas y sus palabras, que giraban siempre en torno a sí misma. (41)

[Furthermore, much to my dismay, I was hungry and wondering about her invitation to dinner, which she seemed to have completely forgotten. Finally, when the sonata was through, she abandoned her majestic immobility. And I, bit by bit, entered into that languid atmosphere that she was creating with the movements of her body, her looks and her words, all of which encircled her. (Hayter 37)]

The realm that Elsa opened to María was associated with her repressed desire to be a musician, a desire that she no longer actively pursued, but whose loss she lamented (41). When María commented that it must be difficult to live in such isolation, Elsa remarked that being there, alone and immobile, she was at peace. She wanted to be separated from the rest of the world: “Su deseo de separación se definía con claridad en la imagen que parecía tener del mundo: a un lado, la humanidad entera, y a otro, muy lejos, sólo ella” (42). [“Her desire of separation was defined clearly in the image that she seemed to have of the world: on one side, all of humanity, and on the other, far away, only her” (Hayter 37).] In spite of her said desire to be separated, Elsa’s interest in María and in her ability to provide her with hypnosis sessions implies that she was lonely on her side of the world. She looked not to feed her inner realm alone, but for someone to help her nourish it. Hypnosis provided her with a context in which she could open up that sensation to María and thereby receive the type of nourishment that she sought.

As María reflects back to the sessions from the narrative present, after Elsa has died, she realizes that they were important not because they were authentic

demonstrations of hypnosis, but because they allowed Elsa and María to approximate Elsa's alternative reality:

Ni siquiera ahora estoy convencida de que aquel rito, al que ambas nos entregábamos y el que nos abría la puerta desde la que contemplábamos aquella otra vida en la que Elsa aseguraba participar, fuera realmente una sesión de hipnosis. Pero sí era evidente que para asomarnos a ella necesitábamos primero realizar aquella ceremonia. (106)

[Even now I am not convinced that the ritual to which we were both devoting ourselves, and which opened the door into that other life in which Elsa assured me she was participating, was really a hypnotic session. But it was quite evident that to reach it we were obliged to go through with this ceremony. (Hayter 107)]

The ritual of the sessions facilitated the penetration of the border that separated the outer world from Elsa's imagination. In contrast to the listlessness of Elsa's body during the evil eye ceremony controlled by Matilde, hypnosis led to her embodiment. During the sessions, she had a voice. In one session in particular, María noticed that once hypnotized, Elsa even seemed to guide the direction that their conversation took, telling María which questions to ask her (106). She acquired a sense of agency that she lacked in other contexts.

The previously silenced story that Elsa revealed to María in the sessions was, like Ida Sierra's, a melodramatic love affair on the other side of which there emerged a vacancy. She recalled to María that in her dreams, she had a passionate relationship with Agustín, a man who in reality she met only once. Their relationship was interrupted one afternoon by a giant eagle that separated them while they were embracing in the sea. As the eagle swooped down from the sky, it snatched Elsa, pulled

her out of the sea and revealed to Agustín that her body was the monstrous body of a siren. Once Agustín saw her body, their love was prohibited; the eagle carried her off to the realm that separated her from the rest of humanity:

Tú y yo nos abrazábamos inmersos en un mar que no tenía más límites que el vacío del cielo. Supe que te amaba con una intensidad desconocida. Pero, de repente, descubrí un águila gigante que se cernía sobre nosotros. Aún recuerdo sus negras alas agrandándose a medida que se me acercaba, pues venía hacia mí. Lo supe al verla. Me aprisionó entre sus garras, separándome de tus brazos que se esforzaban en retenerme. Al dolor de perderte se unió entonces el miedo a que descubrieras mi monstruosidad: yo no era en realidad una mujer, sino una sirena. Cuánto tiempo duró aquel angustioso vuelo hacia el vacío de lo alto, exhibiendo ante tus ojos mi cuerpo monstruoso, signo, quizás, de una fatal prohibición de nuestra unión. (81)

[We embraced, you and I, immersed in a sea that had no other limits but the emptiness of the sky. I knew that I loved you with an unknown intensity. But suddenly I saw an enormous eagle circling above us. I can still remember its black wings getting bigger as it approached me. It was coming for me; I knew as soon as I saw it. It held me prisoner in its claws, pulling me from your arms as you tried to hold me back. To the sorrow of losing you added my fear that you would discover my monstrosity: for I was not really a woman, but a siren. How long did that anguished flight to the heavens last, revealing to your eyes my monstrous body, the sign of a fatal interdiction to our union? (Hayter 82)]

Pulling the two lovers apart, revealing that Elsa was a siren, the eagle brought Elsa to an

isolated but limitless space: a vacancy inaccessible to others. Her embodiment corresponded with the marginalization of her body and her story onto the negative side of her mythological dream, the side that remains unrevealed to Agustín, María and the reader.

Although Agustín had seen Elsa's body as monstrous, after her sessions with María Elsa decided that she wanted to be reunited with him not in a vacancy, but on earth. Wary that he would reject her, she took a photograph of her face, trying to recapture in it the image that she associated with herself before the eagle interrupted her dream. Although the photograph did not disclose her body, her face, in spite of makeup, bore the deep marks of the pain and fear that she had felt after the eagle separated her from the earth and located her in a vacancy:

Quería que él la reconociera, ser otra vez aquella imagen, recuperar aquel momento ya cristalizado, lejano, inalcanzable. Se desesperaba ante las profundas ojeras que en la actualidad marcaban su rostro, ante su piel deslucida, extremadamente pálida. Apenas comía y no sólo por falta de apetito sino por desidia unas veces y otras por no encontrar el momento apropiado para subir a la tienda, comprar alimentos y cocinarlos. (134-35)  
[She wanted him to recognize her, to be once again that image, recover that long-since crystallized moment, distant and irretrievable. She was in despair at the deep circles around her eyes, at her skin now dull and desperately pale. She hardly ate, not only from lack of appetite but sometimes through indolence, sometimes because she hadn't found time to go to the shop, buy food and cook it. (Hayter 140)]

The blackness encircling Elsa's eyes, the pallor washing out her complexion and the indolence hollowing her spirit, all evocations of an inner vacancy, made it impossible

for her to reincarnate the face she had before she was marginalized. The symptoms that she displayed were not monstrous, but melancholic. Her thick self-reproach and refusal of nourishment, signs of Freud's melancholia, imply that the loss she experienced was not a loss of Agustín, but a deeper, more insidious loss of the self that paradoxically made her fit more aptly into the silenced air that dominated the villages.

The increasingly weakened state of Elsa's body demonstrates the impossibility of sustaining a chronically melancholic life. The more Elsa entered into the vacancy to which her story brought her, living in the world where she lost herself, the closer she became to being as isolated as the other Alpujarras townswomen. Indeed, the more she dreamt, the more pervasive Matilde's presence in her house. Towards the end of her life, when Elsa was bedridden, Matilde took complete charge of her care. One of the last times María visited Elsa, after she had returned to the Alpujarras from a visit to Madrid, she was unable to penetrate into Elsa's reality as she had in the past. Elsa was now isolated almost completely in silence: "Cuando entré me recibió con muestras de alegría, pero en seguida se hundió en un silencio taciturno, jalonado por alguna que otra pregunta convencional sobre mi viaje" (119-120). ["As I went in, Elsa greeted me with seeming cheerfulness, but immediately sank into a taciturn silence, punctuated by occasional questions about my journey" Hayter 124.] Hardening her body like the masks covering the townswomen's faces, Elsa's silence made her vacant reality more impenetrable. Although her silence was similar to that of the other townswomen, like them, she was isolated from the connection that could bring them together.

Tragically, Elsa's isolation caused her to never share her melancholic silence with the other townswomen. Nor did they share theirs with her. As a result, she never lived in a healthy body and was never connected to other bodies in a community. Only in death did she integrate her silenced reality into the landscape of Spain, making it part of

the eternal Spanish tradition that would be left to potentially found future Spanish communities. Before she died, she headed alone, to the mountains, leaving a note at her house for María to find her body. When María found the note, she dutifully went to the mountains and discovered Elsa's corpse. Her final gesture, which paid homage to the emotional connection that they had procured through hypnosis, implies the possibility of interpolating Elsa's story into a future Spain: she settled the ground, next to Elsa's corpse, and joined Elsa's hand in a brief moment of shared silence:

Nada podía hacer ni pensar. Al fin me dejé caer junto a Elsa, sobrecogida por el poderoso silencio de las montañas y de la muerte. Y me pareció que ella vibraba ahora con la misma pulsación de la tierra. Deseé dejarla allí para siempre, en aquel espacio, tan ajeno al mundo de los hombres, que ella misma había elegido para confundirse con él, para pertenecerle como si hubiera encontrado su sitio. (165)

[I could do nothing. I could not think. At last, I let myself fall next to Elsa, overcome by the mighty silence of the mountains and of death. It seemed to me that she vibrated now with the pulse of the earth, I wanted to leave her there forever, in that element which she herself had chosen, so distant from the world of men, leave her to fuse with it, to be owned by it, as though she had at last found the place where she belonged. (Hayter 171-72)]

The brief moment of communion that María shared with Elsa's body implies that María was, in the end, able to pass through the border of her silence. Although that moment was brief, interrupted when Matilde removed Elsa's body from the land and brought it to the mausoleum that she had reserved for her own corpse, the connection between the two women remains in the mountains and is foregrounded in María's text, which she

wrote in her silent friend's memory. By narrating Elsa's story, María offers the reader a glimpse into the space that her body hollowed into the Spanish landscape, a space that will always be lacking her presence.

In El secreto de Elisa, García Morales revisits the story of Elsa through Elsa's alter ego, Elisa, who, like María, was drawn from Madrid to the silence outside of the city, now in the Segovian countryside. The similarity of Elsa and Elisa's names, which differ only by the letter "i," implies the intimate connection between the two women. As "i" is homonymous with the Spanish "y," or "and," the difference in their names evokes the difference between the connections that they created with other silenced Spaniards. While Elsa was able to disclose her story to María, she never acquired a narrative voice outside of her diary entries and dreams, which were always filtered to the reader through María's perspective. Elisa's voice, on the other hand, though also chronically repressed beneath the border that separated her from reality, is more accessible to the reader. Although we still approximate her through the filter of a narrator (her story is told in the third person), her voice emerges at the end of the novel. The emergence of Elisa's voice is the result of the emotional connection that she has established between herself and the other silenced stories of the Segovian landscape. That connection, García Morales implies, forms the rudiments of a community that begins inside of Elisa and is based on the sharing of silence.

In the beginning of the novel, the narrator offers a precise vision of the detrimental effects that repressing her inner feelings and desires had on Elisa before she moved to Segovia. In Madrid, Elisa suffered from a chronic state of depression: "un estado de angustia que no sabía cómo superar" (6) ["a state of anguish that she had no idea how to overcome."] Not only was she emotionally depressed; her physical growth had been stunted since she married her husband, Gabriel, at age 25. Her efforts to

conceal her weakened state beneath makeup and hair dye proved, as they did for Salisachs's characters, futile. Her youthful outer glow was continually undermined by the emergence of an aged, tired skeleton (9). What sustained her numbed physical and emotional states was the isolation that enveloped her in Madrid. The noise of urban life kept her and other Madrileños disconnected, each individual in his or her own bubble of repressed silence:

La ciudad le abrumaba con sus ruidos y aglomeraciones, y le producía una tenaz angustia con esa suerte de silencio que se expandía entre todas las personas que deambulaban por sus calles; era un silencio que parecía esconderse por detrás de todo el bullicio, un silencio pétreo que aislaba a todos aquellos seres humanos con los que se cruzaba, un silencio que para ella era asimismo un signo de una soledad bulliciosa y aturdida, sometida a un trajín permanente, a una constante prisa, a un orden rígido e implacable en el que Elisa adivinaba formas de trabajos absorbentes que se tragaban vidas enteras, imposibilitando un tiempo de gozo y placidez.

(7)

[The city weighed her down with its noises and masses, producing in her a tenacious anxiety with that type of silence that expanded between all of the people walking on the streets; it was a silence that seemed to hide behind all of the bustle, a rock-hard silence that isolated every one of the humans that she encountered, a silence that for her was a sign of a very crowded, dazed loneliness, put down by a constant hustle, a constant hurry, a rigid, implacable order in which Elisa imagined the type of absorbent jobs that swallowed lives whole, impeding pleasure and tranquility.]

Not only did the clamor of the city have a detrimental effect on the health of Elisa, weighing her down physically and emotionally, it also had a detrimental effect on the Spanish community. Instead of an inter-connected web of citizens, it produced bodies isolated by petrified silences repressed beneath the hustle and bustle of post-Franco urban life.

Similar to Elsa, Elisa was able to find respite from depression through her dreams, though her dreams were separated from her reality. Before relocating to Segovia, she was known to get lost in her thoughts: “Se abstraía fácilmente. Era una soñadora y se entregaba a fantasear con realidades imposibles por un tiempo indefinido, implicando siempre sus emociones en estas fantasías” (10). [“She was easily withdrawn. She was a great dreamer and she gave herself to fantasizing about impossible realities for an undefined length of time, always implicating her emotions in these fantasies.”] In her dream world, Elisa felt an emotional vitality that contrasted with her deadened state on the streets of Madrid. However, the borders between the dream world and the reality that she woke up to impeded her from bridging the two realms. Like Elsa, she was most alive while in an illusory state that isolated her.

The absence of verbs of emotion such as “intuir” and “percibir” in the narrator’s former description of Elisa in the city, which abound in descriptions of Segovia later in the novel, further testify to the weakened emotional state of Elisa in Madrid. When she first began to take trips to the Segovian countryside, where silence was not repressed beneath city life, she more easily felt that something existed beneath the silences of the land. There, she began to reassert her relationships to the land and to herself:

Estas tímidas incursiones por un mundo muy diferente al que ella había habitado hasta entonces le sugerían una forma de existencia placentera y serena y una soledad en la que sería posible adentrarse para renacer con

una plenitud que intuía como una suerte de felicidad aún desconocida para ella. La belleza de los paisajes, su silencio real y su quietud la exaltaban. La esperanza de vivir algún día en el campo o en un pequeño pueblo se iba acrecentando en ella hasta llegar a adquirir el carácter de una auténtica necesidad. (11)

[These timid incursions through a world very different from the one she had inhabited until then inspired in her a pleasant, serene form of existence and a solitude in which it would be possible to enter into herself and be reborn with a plenitude that felt like a type of happiness unknown to her. The beauty of the countryside, its real silence and its quietude exalted her. The hope of one day living in the country or in a small town grew in her until it had the quality of an authentic necessity.]

In Segovia, Elisa intuited that what her body needed was to enter into Spanish silences. The serenity that she experienced was not the serenity of isolation, which Elsa described, but rather the serenity of connection. She was enlivened, not immobilized, as she felt a desire to recover a sense of corporeal and emotional health that would help her to connect to a community that emerged from silence.

Although Elisa perceived that moving to Segovia was, for her, a necessity, in the beginning of the novel she lacked the agency to assert her needs. She waited until four months after she discovered that her husband was having an affair with a younger woman, Aurora, giving her a premise that she could take advantage of in order to go to the country, before she announced her plans to leave. When she finally confronted her husband, she still did not put her needs in the forefront. Rather, parodying the voice of the selfless woman, she explained that she must leave in order to preserve their friendship, if not their love, and for the sake of their two children, who, she sustained,

would be better off if her husband and Aurora had an open relationship (14). Within her selfless tone, however, Elisa subtly communicated her desire to explore the reality that she had before confined to her dreams: “Afirmó además que ella necesitaba realizar una esperanza que había mantenido durante años. Se trataba de transformar su vida de una manera con la que había fantaseado desde hacía mucho tiempo como si le estuviera vedada. Necesitaba vivir sola por primera vez en su vida” (14). [“She also affirmed that she needed to realize a hope that she had maintained for years. It was about transforming her life in a way that she had fantasized for along time, as if it were prohibited to her.”] In finally asserting her needs, Elisa revealed the voice that would lead her to break down the border between the imagined reality that enlivened her and the reality that kept her emotionally and physically depressed.

After announcing her intention to relocate to Segovia, Elisa left her family for the countryside. There, she was immediately drawn to a house that resembled her; it too seemed stuck in time, enveloped in silence. As she stepped into the doorframe with the current landlady, Eulalia, she indeed sensed that she crossed a border into a repressed reality. Like the silence covering the Alpujarras and Segovian landscapes, she perceived around her a previously unknown, yet somewhat resonant realm that challenged the line between life and death: “Se hallaba impresionada por la atmósfera de la sala, una atmósfera que ella atribuía a una extraña quietud que impregnaba todo cuanto contenía, incluso sus propias paredes, al aire denso que respiraba en su interior y el tiempo detenido junto a aquellos restos de unas vidas desaparecidas y a la vez presentes” (21). [“She was moved by the atmosphere of the living room, an atmosphere that she attributed to a strange quietude that impregnated everything it contained, even the walls, to the dense air that she breathed within them, and to the time detained next to those remainders of life at once absent and present.”] She later learned that all of the

furniture and decorations in the house remained in the exact position that they had occupied the night that the former owners, Eulalia's sister, Encarna, and her son, Daniel, died in Daniel's former bedroom. The strange quietude she sensed in the walls was linked to the connection she felt to their continued presence.

Through the slight shifts in Elisa's body, García Morales suggests that she began to move towards Daniel and Encarna in a manner that at once enlivened and deadened her. Although she frequently struggled to breathe, for example, in her struggle she noticed that her breath was synchronized with the sounds emanating from Daniel's room at night (40, 81, 144). The connection that she sensed between her and the spirits sensitized her to death; she noticed that her bones became rigid because she barely ate (32). In addition, she constantly felt cold: "Seguía con el abrigo puesto y, aun así, el frío intenso que hacía en el interior de la vivienda dejaba su cuerpo entumecido y sus mejillas y mandíbulas con una desagradable rigidez" (32). ["She kept her coat on, but even so, the intense cold of the inside of the house left her body entombed and her cheeks and mandibles with an unkind rigidity."] Though she struggled to live in the house, her body became more alive in its capacity to feel. While she feared the fatal pull that Encarna and Daniel seemed to exert on her, she also developed a sexual attraction towards Daniel, in particular when she found a photograph of him. She began to sleep next to the photograph every night:

A Elisa le pareció Daniel un hombre muy atractivo, de una gran belleza y virilidad. Tenía el cabello oscuro y se lo peinaba con una raya a un lado de la cabeza. Su nariz era recta y proporcionada, bajo la que se dibujaban unos labios con un trazo delicado que sugería el inicio de una sonrisa. Sin embargo, lo que más destacaba en su rostro, además de sus ojos y de su mirada, eran unas cejas, ni espesas ni finas, pero que seguían una línea

recta para curvarse ligeramente en los extremos exteriores. Se vestía con una chaqueta algo desgastada y con un camisa blanca, sin corbata. La foto era de medio cuerpo y tenía unos diez centímetros de longitud. (31)

[To Elisa, Daniel seemed to be a very attractive man, of great beauty and virility. He had dark hair and he combed it with a part on one side of his head. His nose was straight and proportioned, and underneath it his lips drew a delicate line that suggested the beginning of a smile. However, what most stood out on his face, besides his eyes and his gaze, were his eyebrows, neither thick nor fine, but following a straight line that curved lightly in its most extreme points. He was dressed in a slightly worn jacket and a white shirt, no tie. The photograph was of medium body and about ten centimeters long.]

At the same time that Elisa experienced the reawakening of her body to emotion and sexual attraction, the border between the body of the photograph and the embodied Daniel reiterates the boundary between her realm and theirs. If she were to remain alive, she would have to undo that border, bridging her capacity to feel from death into life itself.

While Elisa approached death, Encarna and Daniel approximated life, implying that they were, indeed, moving towards establishing an emotional connection to Elisa. Each night, Elisa lit candles in Daniel's room to try to channel their presence; along with the increased sounds of their breaths, their silence acquired a corporeal density, both signs of their embodiment: "Ahora, de pronto, creía haber captado algo vivo, amorfo e invisible, algo que, inexplicablemente, había percibido a través de ese aire cargado y envejecido que se aunaba con el denso silencio que parecía pesar como un cuerpo por toda la alcoba" (34). ["Now, suddenly, she thought she had captured something live,

amorphous and invisible, something that, inexplicably, she had perceived through this heavy, aged air that united with the dense silence that seemed to weigh like a body throughout the entire room.”] As the spirits became embodied around Elisa, Elisa’s presentiment that Daniel and Encarna were drawing her into their territory reiterates her awareness of their pull on her towards death. Her physical ailments indicate that she resisted their pull at the same time that she continued to communicate with them. The closer Elisa got to death, the more she empathized with the spirits, sensing that they were trapped by the borders of the house as her fantasies were trapped by the borders of her body. Their communication reached a climax the night when Daniel appeared, embodied, before her, his cold hand touching her pillow as he asked Elisa to help liberate he and his mother from their liminal state (82). The sharpness of Elisa’s senses sustains that bridging her realm with theirs enlivened her, healing the numb depression that she suffered in Madrid. By feeling a connection to the dead through silence, she grew exposed to another realm of life where what had died in her could be reborn, as she had sensed possible when she first crossed into the Segovian landscape.

Elisa’s ability to communicate with Daniel and Encarna indeed helped her to build relationships with other silenced women living in the Segovian town. In particular, she attracted the attention of another middle-aged, solitary female character, Rosario, who had noticed the candlelit rooms and heard strange noises emanating from Elisa’s house at night. When Elisa first met Rosario, she immediately observed that her corpulent, aged body was also enclosed by a silence: “Rosario se mostraba discreta y demasiado silenciosa. Era algo gruesa y corpulenta, de estatura alta y de hombros anchos y redondeados” (55). [“Rosario was discrete and too silent. She was sort of thick and corpulent, of a tall stature with wide, round shoulders.”] As the women grew closer, Rosario revealed to Elisa that the story beneath her silence was, in fact, centered

on Daniel's death. The night before Daniel and Encarna died, Rosario told Elisa, she had lost her virginity to Daniel; when she woke up before sunrise the next morning to put her clothes on, Encarna entered the room with a knife and Rosario stood witness as she murdered her son and killed herself. Since that night, Rosario repressed the memory of their death along with her sexuality; she lived alone with her elderly mother, Manuela, clinging to the memory of the perfect love and union she had with Daniel, but unable to bring the vitality that she associated with that memory into life. In contrast to Elisa's thin body, which represents the silenced story that she never lived, Rosario's corpulence conceals the memory of the night that left her traumatized but to which she continued to cling.

As Elisa listened to the story Rosario silenced, she still had yet to cross the border of her own silences and bridge her inner realm with that of the spirits before she could cultivate a type of connection that sustained community. After purchasing a book on spirits and reading about a technique through which a spirit could enter the body of a person and compose a written message, she found the medium that would facilitate the disclosure of her voice: writing. She wrote first as a way to communicate more effectively with Daniel and Encarna, and later as a way to communicate with herself. To realize the technique with Encarna and Daniel, she first welcomed them into her body. The heightened sense of awareness that she brought to herself before the ceremony again evidences that she was active in the process. They were not invading her. The sense of weight loss she experienced before they entered her further indicates that she was shedding herself of the outer border that had impeded her from uncovering what was beneath her silence in the past:

Había logrado relajar todo su cuerpo, sintiéndolo como si hubiera perdido gran parte de su peso, y su mente reposaba en una quietud atenta solo al

sereno sonido de su respiración. Y, por vez primera, al escuchar los desgarrados suspiros y la respiración casi asfixiada, Elisa no se vio alterada por el menor estremecimiento, no existían temblores en su cuerpo ni el pánico que la agitaba siempre en un principio. Ella misma se encontraba sorprendida de haber alcanzado una serenidad tan profunda, y permaneció con su mirada concentrada en la oscuridad que se adhería a sus ojos por detrás de sus párpados cerrados. De pronto, unas palabras inauditas cruzaron con rapidez por su mente, captando toda su atención.

(155)

[She had managed to relax all of her body, feeling it as if she had lost a large part of her weight, and her mind reposed in quietude, attentive only to the serene sound of her respiration. And, for the first time, as she listened to the unnerved sighs and asphyxiated respiration, Elisa was not altered by the slightest tremor, there were no temblors in her body and she did not have the panic that always agitated her. She herself was surprised that she reached such a profound serenity, and she remained with her eyes focused on the darkness that adhered to her eyes behind their closed lids. Suddenly, inaudible words rapidly went across her mind, captivating all of her attention.]

The words that appeared on Elisa's eyelids symbolize her union to Encarna and Daniel; the three communicated in an enclosed space where there were no longer borders. The serenity Elisa experienced as they wrote furthers the contrast between her body and those without "placidez" in Madrid, reiterating that the breakdown of borders between life and death was essential to her emotional vitality.

As Elisa continued to write with Encarna and Daniel, she realized that they felt

trapped in the house and desired to leave it for a “higher” realm (235). Elisa could help them access that realm if she sought the help of Gloria, a medium from Madrid to whom Daniel led her. When Elisa met Gloria and brought her to Segovia, Elisa saw that their “higher” realm was, like the realm to which the eagle carried Elsa, a vacancy: “Elisa intentaba representarse esos plazos superiores de existencia de los que hablaba Gloria con tanta convicción y naturalidad, pero sus fantasías sólo lograban mostrarle inmensos espacios vacíos donde nada visible tenía cabida” (235). [“Elisa tried to imagine those superior realms of existence that Gloria spoke of with such natural conviction, but her fantasies only showed her immense, vacant spaces where nothing visible would fit.”] She imagined Daniel and Encarna’s vacancy as if it echoed the vacancy inside of her, which she had to look into in order to understand the emotional connection that lured her towards them.

Before she could look into herself, however, Elisa faced one last pull towards joining Daniel and Encarna in death. Although Gloria managed to set Encarna and Daniel free, due to the connection that had formed between Daniel and Elisa, Daniel decided to remain with Elisa in the house, drawing her further and further towards him. Like Elsa, Elisa was on the verge of ceding to that pull. No longer struggling to breathe, her body grew immobilized; she barely fed herself and had trouble distinguishing between night and day. Nearly the only thing she perceived was Daniel:

Con los ojos abiertos a la oscuridad, percibía la mirada de Daniel con un peso que inmovilizaba su cuerpo y le creaba una ansiedad que le impidió conciliar el sueño durante más de dos largas horas. Y al día siguiente no pudo despertarse hasta pasadas las dos de la tarde. Se encerró en el cuarto de baño sabiendo que ni siquiera allí disponía de intimidad. (244)

With her eyes open to darkness, she perceived Daniel’s gaze with a weight

that immobilized her body and created in her an anxiety that impeded her from conciliating sleep for more than two long hours. And the next day she could not wake up until after two in the afternoon. She enclosed herself in the bathroom knowing that not even there would she have intimacy.

To recover her life, Elisa had to again struggle against the border between life and death and assert her presence. She would only resist death if she affirmed inside of herself the emotional connection between death and life, the connection she felt when united to Daniel and Encarna beneath silence.

What led Elisa to finally break down her internal borders and to cultivate an emotional connection with herself was, again, writing. As writing helped her to listen to the silenced voices of Daniel and Encarna, writing finally facilitated the full revival of her silenced voice. At the end of the novel, she turned Daniel's room into a writing studio, a healing space where she could finally express herself unrestrained:

En ese estudio pasaba gran parte de su tiempo libre, dedicándose a escribir de manera espontánea y desordenada todo cuanto necesitaba comunicar. No tardó en terminar dos cuadernos, cuyo destino fue el de alimentar las llamas de la chimenea. Descubrió que escribir le producía alivio y que le resultaba una actividad placentera. Anotaba sin reservas sus experiencias, sentimientos, sensaciones, etcétera. (259)

[In that study she spent a large amount of her free time, dedicating herself to writing everything she needed to communicate in a spontaneous, unorganized fashion. It didn't take long for her to finish two notebooks, whose destiny it was to feed the flames of the chimney. She discovered that writing relieved her and was a peaceful activity. Without reserve, she

recorded her experiences, feelings, sensations, etcetera.]

Through writing, Elisa's feelings, sensations and experiences acquired a textual body parallel to the body that Daniel and Encarna's desires acquired through her presence in their home. Although she was still weak and thin, her drive to write proved healing, giving her fantasies a form that could be read, even if only by Elisa herself.

As Elisa broke down the borders that kept her voice silent in the past, she communicated to Daniel that she did not want to leave the world of the living for the world of the dead, but rather desired to link the two worlds in a place that bred healing. As she said goodbye to Daniel, telling him she would not join him in death, she decided to write the story that he would live after he left the house, the story of the higher realm of vacancy: "Ella supo, finalmente, que lo que ella deseaba escribir era la vida en la que ese Daniel desencarnado estaría adentrándose ahora, en aquellos precisos momentos, la que ya habría comenzado a descubrir después de su prodigiosa despedida" (266). ["She finally realized that what she wanted to write was the life into which that disembodied Daniel would be now entering, in those precise moments, that which he would had already begun to discover after his prodigious goodbye."] Daniel, though absent, would continue to be embodied for Elisa not only in her imagination, but also in her writing. Her appetite to write would transform a realm that had existed in silence into something tangible and structured, something that could be interpreted by those outside of her body who read her text.

Although Elisa's appetite to write does not guarantee that she would be integrated into the new, democratic nation, it demonstrates her active willingness to try to find a place where she fit in and to share that place with both herself and others. To feel her desire to fit in, she had to awaken from the state of numbness she had maintained for over twenty-five years, which she did by learning to listen to the silences

around her. When she finally made an attempt to communicate with others the emotions that she had repressed, giving life to what had almost died, she began to heal. If the text she created in her home, like the text that began in her body, grew outside of the borders of her house, into the Segovian countryside and throughout the rest of Spain, it would extend to others the eternal tradition that could sustain a Spanish community on its most healthy, emotionally vital level.

## Conclusion

As this project comes to a close, I am left with a clearer understanding of the symbolism that helped sustain a feminist discourse in Spain from the Hunger Years until the Transition to Democracy. That discourse, I have seen, manifests in the works of women writers as different as María Zambrano and Adelaida García Morales and crosses time periods as distinct as the 1940s and the 1980s. As women writers of diverse contexts unite to express feminine lack through corporeal hunger, they demonstrate that there was a feminist impulse in Spain that was not backwards in its relationship to European feminism, but that developed in tandem with canonical 20<sup>th</sup> century European feminist texts.

In line with my aims to frame my analysis in a context that emerged from within Spain, the main theorists I have been in dialogue with have been María Zambrano and Rosa Chacel. However, the more I read Chacel, Zambrano, Salisachs and García Morales, the more I realized that my discussion of their texts would be enriched by incorporating other European feminist texts, namely of Virginia Woolf in chapter one, Luce Irigaray in chapter two and Julia Kristeva in chapter three. The dialogue I established between Chacel and Woolf's mutual focus on food and art; Zambrano's *razón poética* and Irigaray's elsewhere; and Kristeva's abjection and Salisachs's vacancies has led me to the following question: what is the relationship between Spanish feminism and more canonical European feminist texts? How can understanding feminism from within a Spanish context enrich our interpretations of Woolf, Irigaray, Kristeva and other canonical theorists who wrote at the same time as the writers I have studied?

These questions are large and have not been within the scope of my study. But,

that my study has led me to plant them is, I believe, indicative that exploring the vacancies and desires that emerge from imagery of hunger in Spanish literature is important not only to facilitate an understanding of Spanish feminism, but also to facilitate an understanding of the relationship between Spanish feminisms and other feminisms and between Spain and Europe.

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