

**WRITING IN FRANCO'S SPAIN: CENSORSHIP, GENDER  
AND SOCIAL CRITICISM IN THE POSTWAR NOVEL**

**BY**

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## Abstract

Following the Nationalist victory in the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), General Francisco Franco's authoritarian regime ruled Spain in a dictatorship that lasted almost forty years. In order to preserve the dominance of the regime and its ideology in Spain, all cultural activity was strictly censored, with censorship being particularly severe in the immediate postwar years. The regime's censorship board, often with the involvement of Catholic clergy, had to approve all types of public communication, from poetry to television, before it could be published or broadcast. The censor was to ensure that the material in question was not critical of the regime or its ideology and that it did not challenge Catholic morals and traditional Spanish family values. Despite the regime's efforts, however, writers who wished to convey their opposition to the dictatorship turned to a realist, objective narrative style that would allow them to denounce Francoist society without causing concern for the censors.

In this thesis, I examine five Spanish postwar novels, published between 1945 and 1961, that provide a critique of Francoism and its associated values: Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945), Luis Romero's *La noria* (1952), Ignacio Aldecoa's *El fulgor y la sangre* (1954), Juan García Hortelano's *Nuevas amistades* (1959) and Dolores Medio's *Diario de una maestra* (1961). This particular combination of novels has been selected in order to examine social and political criticism in the postwar novel from a wider perspective than that which is traditionally assigned to the Spanish *novela social*. In each case study, I identify which aspects of the Franco regime and postwar society the author sought to denounce and discuss how the author manages to convey these critical views despite the constraints of censorship. Themes include the misery and hunger that plagued Spain in the 1940s, the harsh repression suffered by the losers of the war, class and wealth inequality, the subversion of the regime's 'official' historiography and the adoption of the Catholic Church's ultra-conservative moral values. There is a particular focus on the critique of social themes that most affected women, such as the strict moral code assigned to women by the regime and the

double moral standards with regard to issues such as premarital sex, prostitution and abortion; these themes are prominent in all of the selected novels, regardless of the gender of the author.

In the first chapter, I outline the historical background that led to the Civil War and the establishment of the dictatorship and describe the literary context of the early Franco era. The following five chapters consist of my case studies which are examined in chronological order: each novel is examined separately in the context of social and political history, although I will draw parallels where suitable. The analyses are framed by theories of political and social commitment in literature; I draw also on gender and memory studies, and critics who discuss the relationship between literature and censorship. I have consulted the official censor's report for each novel and discuss how each novel was received and altered, if at all, by the censor, as well as speculating as to how each author may have tailored his or her work in order to avoid such censorial intervention.

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## Introduction

After almost three years of intense violence which had killed approximately 500,000 people and displaced thousands more, the Spanish Civil War ended in April 1939.<sup>1</sup> Officially, the conflict was over, but the painful aftermath of the war would affect Spain and its people for decades to come as General Francisco Franco's authoritarian regime ruled Spain until 1975. The regime's need to cement its position in the early postwar years resulted in violent reprisals against those who had supported the Republic or other leftist groups during the war. In the longer term, the regime ensured its continued power and the dominance of its ideology in Spain by eliminating the possibility of political opposition and by strictly censoring all cultural activity. The official censorship board, with the involvement of Catholic clergy, had to approve all forms of public communication, from poetry to television, before it could be published or broadcast. The censor was to ensure that the material in question was not critical of the regime or its ideology and that it did not challenge Catholic morals and traditional Spanish family values. In terms of literature, the early postwar years were, therefore, very much dominated by works, usually of scarce literary value, that exalted the recent Nationalist victory and propagated Francoist values. Despite the regime's efforts, however, from the mid-1940s, a small number of writers began to use the novel as an instrument of protest and resistance, conveying their opposition to Francoism by turning to a realist narrative style which allowed them to describe the difficulties of life under Franco and the conservatism of postwar society, aspects that could not be reported on in the strictly controlled media. The key aspect of their work, however, was that they related their vision of postwar Spain in an objective, impartial narrative style, withholding any explicit commentary and thus avoided censorial intervention. In this thesis, I analyse five such novels,

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<sup>1</sup> Estimates of the number killed during the war range from 250,000 (Payne, *The Franco Regime* 220) to one million, as suggested in the title of José María Gironella's *Un millón de muertos*.

published between 1945 and 1961, which provide a critique of Francoism and its associated values; these works are: Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945), Luis Romero's *La noria* (1952), Ignacio Aldecoa's *El fulgor y la sangre* (1954), Juan García Hortelano's *Nuevas amistades* (1959) and Dolores Medio's *Diario de una maestra* (1961). The critical literature of this period is most commonly associated with the movement known as the *novela social*; however, as will become apparent, the definition of what constitutes a socially- or politically-committed novel used in this thesis is broader, in terms of chronology, literary style, and the types of themes addressed, than that which is usually applied to the genre known as the *novela social*.<sup>2</sup>

With the possible exception of the postwar novels that are now considered Spanish classics and are taught in most Spanish high schools, such as Camilo José Cela's *La familia de Pascual Duarte* and Laforet's *Nada*, the literature of the postwar period has been somewhat neglected by scholars in recent years. Following the transition to democracy in Spain, literature written under Franco's rule lost favour amongst the reading public and also as an academic subject of study. This applied not only to the literature that was considered pro-Franco, but also to the critical social realist novel which became unfashionable from the 1960s as the economic and political circumstances in Spain slowly improved, censorship restrictions began to open up, and the Latin American novel became dominant in the Spanish literary market. Above all, however, a general perception had emerged that, having favoured social content over aesthetics, social realist novels lacked literary merit; there was, as Barry Jordan claims, "a growing critical disillusionment with the repetitiveness and artistic mediocrity of the *novela social*" (*Writing and Politics* 177).<sup>3</sup> In 1975, Gonzalo Sobejano wrote of the contemporary attitude to the socially-committed

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<sup>2</sup> The characteristics and generally-accepted definition of the *novela social* will be discussed in Chapter One. With regard to terminology, the terms *novela social* and 'social realism' will be used interchangeably in this thesis. *La generación del medio siglo* is also sometimes used to describe this generation of writers by scholars; however, as noted by Sobejano, this label applies mostly to the age of the writers, rather than to their literary style (*Novela española de nuestro tiempo* 204). In other words, not all of the writers of the *generación del medio siglo* were associated with the *novela social*, and some *novelistas sociales* were too young, or too old, to be classed as *generación del medio siglo*.

<sup>3</sup> For details on the decline of the *novela social* in Spain, see Jordan, *Writing and Politics* 176–81.

literature of the early postwar period: “[E]s ya lugar común de viejos y jóvenes reprochar a la novela social el anacronismo de la actitud, el corto radio imaginativo de la materia plasmada, el «desfase» de los procedimientos y la grisura o vulgaridad del lenguaje” (*Novela española de nuestro tiempo* 208).

This unfavourable perception of the realist literature of the postwar period is also reflected in the work of other scholars, including John Butt, Raymond Carr and Santos Sanz Villanueva, who have focused on the negative effect that social or political commitment, and the insistence on objective realism, had on literary style. Butt, for example, writes that the move away from modernism towards social realism was “extremely unfortunate” for the Spanish novel and that this accounts for the shift in focus to Latin American literature during the twentieth century (*Writers and Politics* 4). Carr criticises the lack of imagination in Franco-era literature: “The strains of war produced a distrust of the imagination which persisted in a generation of poets labouring under and against Francoism” (154). Sanz Villanueva claims that the false belief that objective realism was the only way to express opposition to the dictatorship, and the fact that literary style was therefore dictated by politics and not by personal artistic choice, resulted in what he describes as a period of literary ‘abnormality’ (*La novela española* 11–14). He even argues that the political objectives in the committed leftist writing of the 1950s and 1960s were just as degrading to literature as the overtly fascist novels of the immediate postwar period: “Son dos caras de la misma moneda, una condicionada por la otra” (*La novela española* 12).<sup>4</sup> Such negative perspectives on postwar Spanish literature have, of course, done little to generate interest in the postwar novel among modern readers.

Further explanations for the dearth of scholarship on postwar literature in recent years are, firstly, the wave of interest in the work of the Spanish writers who had been in exile and whose work had been prohibited in Spain during the dictatorship (among them Ramón Sender, Francisco Ayala and Max

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<sup>4</sup> Sanz Villanueva does concede, however, that social realism also had some positive qualities, such as “la lengua sencilla y clara” and “el decidido y consciente propósito de superar el convencionalismo literario de sus padres” (*La novela española* 13).

Aub); and secondly, the post-Transition drive to tell the stories of those who had lost the Civil War. While a few postwar writers tentatively alluded to the experiences of Republicans during the war and under Franco, as will be demonstrated in a number of my case studies, the more explicit testimonies had been silenced by the regime. This need to recuperate the voice that had been lost during the Franco years is understandable and has led to many interesting developments in contemporary Spanish literature and criticism; however, this trend has generally been accompanied by a tendency to undervalue works that were published during the dictatorship.

The value of Spanish postwar novels as objects for academic study should not, however, be dismissed solely because they were written under restrictive circumstances. On the contrary, the political situation and the limitations imposed by Francoist censorship makes these novels especially interesting because, as Hans-Jörg Neuschäfer has argued, “[s]ólo cuando se ha comprendido en qué medida estaba condicionada la literatura por los tabúes de la censura se puede también apreciar el valor de no dejarse vencer por ellos” (9–10). Juan Goytisolo, while he also laments the damaging effect of censorship on Spanish literature, recognises that it stimulated Spanish writers to find inventive ways to trick the censor and argues that the interaction between literature and censorship gives postwar Spanish literature a ‘secret tension’ that is the key to its dynamism and interest (*El furgón* 56–57). Postwar novelists may not have been allowed to express themselves completely freely, but this interaction between literature and politics adds another dimension of analysis, which is of sociopolitical and historical, as well as literary, interest.

Given the ubiquity of Francoist propaganda and the lack of impartial information in the postwar press and in official historiography, one of the general aims of social realism was to expose, through realist depictions of contemporary society, the discrepancy between the reality of postwar Spain and the idealised image that the regime sought to project in the media. In retrospect, therefore, such novels are now valuable for the insight they give a

modern reader into postwar life. In fact, the future historical value of postwar realist literature was predicted as early as 1969 by Alberto Míguez:

Los sociólogos dicen: durante estos años, por las especialísimas condiciones históricas en que hemos vivido no se ha llevado a cabo ningún estudio histórico-social serio, y quien quiera saber en el futuro qué fue la sociedad española deberá echar mano de la producción novelística, como quien desee saber qué ocurrió en tiempo de la Restauración debe leer a Galdós y dejarse de manuales de historia. (2)

Shirley Mangini is also of the opinion that if we want to recreate a sociopolitical portrait of Francoism, we have to look towards fiction because the work of the *novelistas sociales* can be considered a “crónica moderna” and a contribution to history (*Rojos y rebeldes* 25, 118).

As a result of the shift in interest away from literature written under Franco, as detailed above, the major studies relating to the postwar novel date mostly from the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s. Overviews of Spanish postwar literature by Eugenio de Nora, Pablo Gil Casado and Sobejano are examples from those decades; however, these consist largely of a summary of literary trends and a bibliography.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the focus of the earlier overviews of postwar literature is very much on the *novela social* movement, the classification of which is very stringent, and these studies therefore exclude, or gloss over, lesser-known writers and those on the margins of the movement, such as Luis Romero and Dolores Medio. Earlier writers who appeared on the literary scene during the 1940s, such as Cela, Laforet and Miguel Delibes, usually appear in these studies but, in general, the social and political elements in their novels are overlooked and, instead, their work is considered a ‘stepping stone’ for the genuine social realist work which appears in the later 1950s.

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<sup>5</sup> See de Nora, Gil Casado and Sobejano, *Novela española de nuestro tiempo* (first published 1975; I cite from the 2005 edition).

More recently, there have been only a handful of studies that specifically look at postwar literature, such as the book-length studies by Ignacio Soldevila Durante and Sanz Villanueva.<sup>6</sup> While both studies will be drawn on throughout this thesis for their useful insight into the postwar literary scene, both are very broad in scope and analysis of individual novels is therefore minimal. Soldevila Durante's study contains some valuable observations, but does not involve in-depth analysis of individual novels or writers and, in fact, virtually excludes both Aldecoa and García Hortelano from the history of postwar literature. While Sanz Villanueva's study is comprehensive, his viewpoint is very much a literary one, emphasising style and technique; my focus, however, prioritises the social and political intent and content of the novels.

In this sense, my approach is closer to that of works such as Mangini's *Rojos y rebeldes* and Jordan's *Writing and Politics in Franco's Spain* which give priority to the social and historical context which gave rise to the social realist novel.<sup>7</sup> As Sanz Villanueva does, Mangini and Jordan posit that the postwar realist novel was a product of the particular political and historical circumstances; however, their analyses takes into account more than simply literary style and explore the development of literature alongside its political and historical context. Jordan discounts the traditional Spanish theories regarding the progression of realism and politically-committed literature and focuses instead on external aspects such as the changing nature of censorship, the growing influence of Marxism, the politicisation of universities, the diffusion of Jean-Paul Sartre's ideas and the publication of Juan Goytisolo and José María Castellet's theoretical writings. Mangini provides a thorough investigation of the 'culture of dissent' amongst intellectuals in postwar Spain

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<sup>6</sup> See Soldevila Durante and Sanz Villanueva, *La novela española*. Soldevila Durante's study is, however, an expanded version of a study that dates back to 1980 and most of the new material naturally relates to Spanish literature published between 1980 and 2000. In addition to these book-length studies, there are shorter overviews (see Ugarte "The Literature of Franco Spain"), as well as chapters on postwar literature in more general studies of the twentieth-century Spanish novel (see García Viñó, *La novela española*). There are also a number of more recent studies on specific authors from that period; interestingly, however, of my five selected novelists, only the two female authors have received significant critical attention in the last few decades.

<sup>7</sup> Again, however, these studies date back more than twenty years to 1990 (Jordan) and 1987 (Mangini).

by examining literary texts, as well as art and journalism, similarly stressing the political and social developments in Francoist Spain as the key factor in the analysis. Jordan and Mangini's studies do not, however, involve comprehensive analyses of any individual novels or novelists; they therefore tend to generalise about the overall aims of postwar critical literature without making in-depth references to specific literary content.

In this thesis, I contribute to the study of the postwar novel by taking the five novels listed earlier, published between 1945 and 1961, as case studies in order to conduct a detailed analysis of each novel's relationship with its sociopolitical context, and particularly, its relationship with censorship. All five novels were published in Spain during the dictatorship, with the majority of the action in the novels set during this same timeframe; some of the narratives, however, also include elements of the recent past—the Second Republic and the Civil War—the depiction of which will form an important part of my study. In each case study, I identify which aspects of the Franco regime and postwar society the author sought to denounce and discuss how the author manages to convey these critical views despite the constraints of censorship. There will be a particular focus on the critique of the social issues that most affected women, such as the strict moral code assigned to women by the regime and the Church, and the double moral standards with regard to issues such as premarital sex, prostitution and abortion. In the context of Francoism, which lacked a clear political ideology but based its philosophy firmly around Catholicism and traditional family values, I argue that these issues were highly politicised, and that drawing attention to such gender themes in literature therefore also inherently constituted a political critique.

In taking this sociopolitical approach to the study of the five novels in this thesis, it is not my intention to deny the ultimately fictional nature of these works. They are creative works of fiction that, as a result of the political circumstances in Spain at the time and the influence of theories on political commitment in literature, had the sociopolitical function of portraying, in a realist and objective manner, the difficulties of life in Spain under Franco. The

novels are never, of course, entirely objective because they are the author's vision or perspective of postwar society; however, given the lack of genuine and impartial information available elsewhere under Franco, as well as the fact that many of these authors publicly stated their intention to reflect the reality of life in Spain, I propose that the sociopolitical approach taken in this thesis is a valid one and distinguishes my study from those critics of postwar literature who focus heavily on questions of literary style and technique.<sup>8</sup>

The combination of Laforet's *Nada*, Romero's *La noria*, Aldecoa's *El fulgor y la sangre*, García Hortelano's *Nuevas amistades* and Medio's *Diario de una maestra* was selected in order to examine social and political commitment in the postwar novel from a broad perspective. I chose a set of novels that more or less evenly covered the early Franco period chronologically and included both male and female writers. Taking into account the aims of my project, it was important that a significant part of the action in each novel was set in postwar Spain (this excluded works such as Cela's *La familia de Pascual Duarte* and Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria*). Given my intended focus on themes of gender, I also discounted works in which discussion of such issues was minimal. The novels that I eventually chose to form the basis of my study portray both urban and provincial settings, a wide variety of professions and social classes, and postwar life is depicted from the angle of both the losers and winners of the Civil War. The selection of novels also presents variation in terms of popular acclaim, both with the general reading public and in terms of scholarship, from the very well-known *Nada* to Romero's *La noria*, which has received very little attention.

The five novels allow for a broader understanding of sociopolitical commitment in the postwar novel than that which is usually assigned to the Spanish *novela social*: of the five selected novelists, only García Hortelano is habitually included in this category. The novels chronologically challenge the traditional conception of the *novela social*, with three of the titles published

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<sup>8</sup> In any case, I will support the sociopolitical discussions of the five novels with additional historical sources throughout this thesis.



before 1955 (the year in which it is generally agreed that the *novela social* emerged). It is not my intention, however, to argue that all of my selected works should be considered *novelas sociales*; rather, I propose a move away from the literary categorisation so favoured by Spanish literary critics and argue for an expansion of the understanding of political commitment in the Spanish novel from a more-or-less explicit 'socialist' content to a broader range of social issues.

With regard to the focus on themes of gender, it must be acknowledged that, as a result of the severe repression of the feminist movement during the dictatorship, there was a surge of interest in postwar female writers and the feminist issues in their work after the transition to democracy. This is now quite a well-established area in academic scholarship and there are a significant number of studies detailing the difficulties of life under the Franco regime for women; however, the way in which these issues are portrayed in literature has really only been studied in relation to female writers.<sup>9</sup> In this thesis, I intend to broaden this line of enquiry by studying questions of gender in postwar Spain in novels written not only by the two selected female novelists, but also the three male authors, where these themes have, thus far, been overlooked.

In my first chapter, I summarise the historical background that led to the Civil War and the establishment of the dictatorship, describe the literary context of the early Franco era and outline the different theoretical approaches that I will be drawing on in the analyses of the novels. The following five chapters consist of the case studies, with the five novels examined in chronological order. Each case study follows a similar structure: the novel in question is discussed separately in the context of social and political history, although I will draw parallels between the novels where suitable. I have consulted the official censor's report for each novel and will discuss how each novel was received and altered, if at all, by the censor, as well as speculating as to how each author may have tailored his or her work in order to avoid such

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example: Davies; Conde Peñalosa; de la Fuente; Nichols, *Descifrar la diferencia*; and F. López.

censorial intervention. By putting together these five novels, which have not been explicitly studied in conjunction before, this study aims to shed light, not only on many facets of life under the Franco dictatorship, but also on our understanding of the relationship between literature and politics in postwar Spain.

## Chapter One

### **Franco's Spain: History, Gender and Postwar Literature**

The social, historical and political context of postwar Spain is key to my analysis of the novels selected for study in this thesis. In this chapter, I will begin with a brief discussion of the historical origins of the Spanish Civil War and the resulting political regime, and will discuss some of the central social and political characteristics of the early Franco years, such as the political repression which followed the Civil War and the difficult economic climate of the 1940s, which are important themes in all of my selected novels. I will then outline the key issues that affected women in Francoist Spain, when gender and sexual expectations were heavily influenced by the Catholic Church's severe moral doctrine. Finally, I will give a brief overview of the literary situation in postwar Spain, discuss the practicalities of the literary censorship that affected all of the novels and outline the theoretical framework for my analyses. Literary and censorship studies comprise an important element of the theoretical framework for my study, and I draw also on scholarship from the fields of gender and memory studies.

Given that the origins of many of the central aspects of Francoist Spain lie in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Spanish history, a brief glance back at the recent Spanish past is appropriate here. Much of Spain's nineteenth-century history can be summarised as a power struggle between conservative and liberal factions; Carr, for instance, has argued that "[m]uch of modern Spanish history is explained by the tensions caused by the imposition of 'advanced' liberal institutions on an economically and socially 'backward' and conservative society" (1). Some historians have characterised this opposition using the metaphor of the *dos Españas*; however, while the concept is sometimes useful in the illustration of the absolute incompatibility between the two main ideological strands, it will become clear that this is an oversimplification of a complex situation. Ultimately, in the early twentieth century, the impossibility

of finding a middle-ground in Spanish politics culminated in the Spanish Civil War and the forty-year Franco dictatorship.

Conservative social elements, whose power was based largely on the monarchy, the long-standing political control of the Catholic Church, and on the economic hegemony of the aristocracy and wealthy landowners, had dominated Spain since the time of the Catholic Monarchs in the fifteenth century. The first real confrontation between the conservative ‘half’ and the more progressive factions in Spain can be said to begin around the time of the war with Napoleonic France, known in Spain as the War of Independence (Esdaile 21). In 1808, Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Spain, forced the Spanish monarchs to abdicate and planned to put his own brother, Joseph, on the throne. The Spanish people rose up to oppose the French and established a patriot government, the Cádiz Cortes, which had a liberal agenda, as is evident in the 1812 constitution. Despite receiving reasonable popular support, the new government encountered fierce opposition from the *absolutistas*—largely made up of the Church, conservatives and landowners—who advocated the restoration of the *antiguo régimen* and the Spanish king. On Napoleon’s abdication and the subsequent end of the war with France, Fernando VII returned to the Spanish throne and the majority-*absolutista* army overthrew the Cortes and invalidated the liberal constitution.<sup>10</sup>

The mid-nineteenth-century political scene was dominated by the *moderados* (conservatives in the liberal camp) who heavily depended on the support of the monarchy and the military. Nevertheless, their liberal, and supposedly democratic, institutions incorporated only rural landowners and the urban upper-middle classes, thus the more progressive liberals, excluded from any real power in the system, were forced to seize power via a *pronunciamiento* (officers’ revolt) (Carr 1–2). The 1868 rebellion—often referred to as *La gloriosa*—heralded the beginning of the tumultuous *Sexenio Revolucionario* (1868–1874) which began with the ousting of Isabel II, included

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<sup>10</sup> For a full account of the events and consequences of the War of Independence in Spain, see Esdaile 21–41.

another liberal constitution, an imported Italian monarch (Amadeo de Saboya) and the declaration of the First Spanish Republic (1873–74) but ended with the reinstatement of the Bourbon monarchy under Alfonso XII in 1874.<sup>11</sup>

Following the *restauración borbónica*, Spain was a relatively stable constitutional monarchy. The political scene was controlled via a two-party system, known as the *turno pacífico*, in which liberals and conservatives, both of whom supported the monarchy, alternated in power. Democratic only in theory, the system was almost entirely managed by the king and his ministers who manipulated elections to produce the desired result by negotiating with powerful *caciques* who could control the voting in their community (Carr 8–11). Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the system was weakened considerably as a result of the mobilisation of the working classes, the growth of radical left-wing politics and the political turmoil caused by the gradual loss of Spain's colonies.

Spain entered the twentieth century in the wake of the loss of its last remaining colonies in 1898: Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. It is possible that this event—referred to at the time as *el desastre*—was, in practical terms, not very consequential for Spain; the colonies had, after all, been impeding development for many years. It was, however, extremely significant from a political point of view because it provoked agitation and criticism from both ends of the political spectrum. The religious right saw the disaster of 1898 as a moral crisis, believing that the oligarchic politics and *caciquil* system had caused Spain to fall into secular decay “a su punto más bajo, el de la muerte” (Valdeón et al. 462). On the other hand, Republicans, Carlists, anarchists, socialists and regionalists blamed the corrupt monarchical system for the country's failures (Carr 47–48). It was in the aftermath of 1898, thus, that tensions came to a head and the increasingly fragile *turno pacífico* definitively began to disintegrate.

The political deadlock that characterised Spain at the beginning of the twentieth century was accompanied by a surge in radical political activity, resulting in a number of violent confrontations between the state and workers'

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<sup>11</sup> For a full account of the *Sexenio Revolucionario*, see Esdaile 123–43.

movements, most notably the *Semana Trágica* of 1909 in Barcelona.<sup>12</sup> Several years later, the First World War served to further deepen the abyss between the left and right in Spain: “Conservatives, army officers, and the right in general supported Germany and ‘authority’ against ‘decadence’; the left, particularly intellectuals, supported ‘civilization’ against German ‘barbarism’” (Carr 81–82). By the early 1920s, following several military disasters in North Africa and in the face of growing unrest amongst workers and increasing regionalist sentiments (particularly in Catalonia), the ruling elite decided that the constitutional government could no longer maintain the *status quo* in Spain and that decisive action had to be taken (Esdaile 258).<sup>13</sup>

In 1923, the liberal government was overthrown in a coup by General Miguel Primo de Rivera, who declared a military dictatorship with the support of King Alfonso XIII. The dictatorship, which lasted until 1930, is described by Charles Esdaile as “a period of the sharpest repression” (262): thousands of left-wing radicals were arrested and their parties banned, regional languages and nationalisms were suppressed, and strike action was severely restricted. Primo de Rivera’s regime had close ties with the Catholic Church and conservative moral standards were enforced. Serious political opposition to the dictatorship was reasonably slow to appear; however, in 1930, following further political and economic instability, Alfonso feared a coup directed at the monarchy and demanded that Primo de Rivera resign immediately.<sup>14</sup> While the Primo de Rivera dictatorship is often dismissed by historians as an “irrelevant interlude” in Spanish history, Carr points out that its significance lies largely in the fact that it was, in an economic and ideological sense, “both a model and a warning to General Franco” (110). The dictatorship also contributed directly to the establishment of the Second Republic in 1931 because the king’s ties to the failed dictatorship had stimulated a surge in support for the Republican party,

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<sup>12</sup> The *Semana Trágica* was a violent uprising of anarchists, socialists and Republicans in Barcelona, provoked by a call for military reserves for a futile attempt to occupy more land in Morocco. The uprising was violently suppressed by the Spanish military. See Esdaile 216–18.

<sup>13</sup> Carr gives a concise account of the political and economic situation in Spain in the period directly before the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (81–97).

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed account of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, see Esdaile 256–81 or Carr 98–116.

which became a serious political force, encompassing liberal and moderate, as well as more conservative and Catholic bases.<sup>15</sup> When general elections were held in April 1931, 45 out of 52 provincial capitals were won by Republicans and socialists and on 14 April, Alfonso XIII went into exile (Esdaile 287–88).

The social and political developments of the Second Spanish Republic are of particular relevance to this thesis, given that the progressive social attitudes of Republican pre-war Spain serve as a stark contrast to the conservative and reactionary postwar philosophy which forms the background for the five case studies. Culturally and socially, the Republic's achievements constituted a leap forward for Spain. The Constitution of December 1931 introduced freedom of speech, restricted the role of the Church in public life and eliminated state financing of the clergy; furthermore, provincial autonomy bills were passed, divorce was legalised and women were granted the vote. The first Republican government under Manuel Azaña Díaz also made moderate progress towards the improvement of public education and the redistribution of agricultural property (Casanova and Gil Andrés 118–19). A number of these reforms were undone only a few years later by the right-wing coalition (CEDA) which won the elections in 1934. While the Popular Front returned to power after the February 1936 elections, war broke out only five months later and gradually, as Franco's forces occupied more and more Spanish territory during the war, the Republican reforms that had been introduced in the early 1930s were all abolished and replaced with the new regime's policies.<sup>16</sup> In any case, the Popular Front encountered opposition not only from the conservative right, but also from the more radical left who were frustrated by the lack of change for the rural poor and working classes. According to Carr, the Second Republic failed politically because it "raised expectations among the underprivileged which were not satisfied, while the mere existence of these expectations and of

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<sup>15</sup> For details on the rise of the Republican movement in 1930–31, see Casanova and Gil Andrés 109–14.

<sup>16</sup> For a comprehensive summary of the political and historical developments of the Second Republic, see Casanova and Gil Andrés 115–60.

parties to promote them was regarded by the privileged as the prelude to social revolution" (118).

The Spanish Civil War started as an attempted military coup and rebellion led by General Francisco Franco on July 18, 1936 in reaction to the Popular Front government, a leftist coalition of Republicans and socialists, which had won the elections in 1936, and in response to increasing radical activity on the far left, such as strikes and occupations of large estates by workers in the south.<sup>17</sup> The coup reflected the fear held by many on the right that 'normal' politics were not effective enough to prevent the revolution of the masses (Esenwein and Shubert 30).<sup>18</sup> This coup, however, was not completely successful, leaving most major cities in Republican hands, and causing the official outbreak of war.<sup>19</sup>

The state of war forced the very varied groups on either side of the political spectrum to join forces despite their differing agendas. The military rebels were supported by the Falangists, the monarchists, the Carlists and other conservatives, who were collectively known as the 'Nationalists.' This side identified themselves with traditional Catholic ideology and supported the Spanish clergy. Fighting against the Nationalists were the Republicans—those who were loyal to the legal Republican government, as well as other liberals, socialists, communists and anarchists. Although each side was by no means homogenous—with the fragmentation of the Republicans, socialists and communists often cited as a reason for the eventual Republican defeat—the Civil War represented the culmination of the 'two Spains' in opposition. Moreover, by this stage, the bitter conflict was reinforced by the fact that both sides identified with current European ideological trends; all those siding with Franco were fighting against communism, while everyone fighting for the Republic was defending democracy against fascism (Carr 153). The two

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<sup>17</sup> For details on the 1936 elections, see Xavier Tusell Gómez, "The Popular Front Elections in Spain, 1936."

<sup>18</sup> Thus echoing the sentiments of 1923 prior to the Primo de Rivera coup.

<sup>19</sup> The military coup, its immediate effects and the beginning of the war are discussed in Casanova and Gil Andrés 170–85. See also Esenwein and Shubert for a detailed analysis of the Second Republic and the build-up to the Spanish Civil War.



opposing ideologies, and the victory of one over the other, was the basis for many of postwar Spain's political and social policies and will therefore be a recurring theme throughout this thesis, as it is relevant to my readings of the selected novels.

When Franco declared the Nationalist victory on 1 April 1939, five days after the Nationalists had finally entered Madrid, a new regime was established: a one-party system under Franco's personal leadership. The regime's first priority in the immediate postwar period was to stifle the opposition and punish those who had opposed them in the war. By prohibiting the freedom of association and banning strikes and industrial action, the regime effectively eliminated the communist, anarchist and socialist parties, and outlawed all workers' movements and collectives. Many of the surviving Republican soldiers and supporters had fled Spain as the Nationalists advanced, most over the Pyrenees to France, but those who remained faced severe and often violent reprisals from the Francoists, who acted quickly to consolidate their victory and ensure compliance with the new order.<sup>20</sup> As George Esenwein and Adrian Shubert describe it: "Franco's war of attrition was transformed into a war of revenge" (268).

There were virtually no restrictions on Franco's power to take revenge because, as Javier Tusell explains, the regime was creating a completely new political and judicial system and there was no existing independent structure to check its authority. Political crimes, the official definition of which was extended to unprecedented areas, were tried by military courts until military jurisdiction ended in 1948 and crimes could be tried retrospectively back to 1934. The trials were also rushed and carried out unfairly: the accused were often defended by soldiers instead of lawyers with no witnesses present and executions occurred swiftly following sentencing. Records of executions and sentences are incomplete and, as a result, there is much debate as to exactly how many were sentenced to death by the regime; however, it is estimated that

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<sup>20</sup> For an overview of Francoist violence in the early years of the dictatorship, see Casanova et al., *Morir, matar, sobrevivir*.

up to 50,000 Spaniards were executed for political crimes in the period following the war, and it has been reported that there were 270,000 political prisoners in Spain in 1939 (Tusell 20–24).<sup>21</sup> Offences that did not warrant prison or execution, such as having served the Second Republic as a bureaucrat or teacher, or having a more distant link to a leftist political party, were punished via administrative purges, carried out by the Comisiones de Depuración (Political Purification Commissions). In the education sector, for example, 33% of university teachers and 25% of primary school teachers who had held their positions during the Republic lost their jobs following the war (Tusell 25). The policy of *depuración* will be discussed in the chapters on *El fulgor y la sangre*, where I discuss the *depuraciones* of the postwar Guardia Civil, and *Diario de una maestra*, where Irene is directly affected, having worked as a teacher under the Second Republic.

The process of political retribution and the *depuraciones* required popular participation from informants. The entire population was subject to police surveillance and the denunciation of neighbours and colleagues who did not conform or were suspected of leftist political affiliation was encouraged. Powerful citizens who were closely aligned with the regime used the opportunity to rid themselves of the undesirables in their community by denouncing them as *rojos* (Casanova and Gil Andrés 236). The process of denunciation was legalised and systemised in the *Causa General*, set up by the regime in 1940 in order to investigate crimes that had occurred in the Republican zones during the war, to compensate families of the victims of Republican crimes, and to facilitate the process for informants who wished to denounce others in their community. The atmosphere of fear and mistrust was such that many people rushed to denounce others in order to protect themselves from the danger of suspicion (Casanova et al. 30–31). On a more extreme level, throughout the early postwar years it was not uncommon for autonomous groups of Falangist militants to carry out their own revenge on

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<sup>21</sup> For more information on executions and imprisonments in the early postwar period, see Tusell 20–24 and Casanova and Gil Andrés 232–40.

those who had opposed the Nationalist cause, particularly in zones which had withstood Nationalist occupation until the end of the war, and in rural areas, where the divide between the two sides was the most distinct (Casanova et al. x, 20).

The Church, whose significance in postwar Spanish society will be returned to shortly, also played a key role in political retribution after the war. While it is indisputable that the Church and clergy suffered gravely at the hands of Republican and other leftist militias during the war—with an estimated 8,000 priests and nuns assassinated between 1936 and 1939—Antonio Cazorla Sánchez argues that “the Church failed to preach or to practice forgiveness” in the long postwar period (29). As local clergy were often intimately acquainted with most members of their community, the regime asked the Church to provide political information on parishioners. Some clergy did not feel comfortable investigating the ideological and political past of citizens, but many cooperated enthusiastically in the hunt for *rojos* (Casanova et al. 34–35). The Church’s complicity in the regime’s quest for revenge after the war was a key factor in the absence of any kind of postwar reconciliation in Spain.

In addition to relying heavily on the fear of reprisals to control the population, the dictatorship also consolidated its position and reinforced its messages through the use of censorship, propaganda and references to Spanish history. Censorship, which will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter, was rigorous and applied to all types of communication including the press, radio, television, literature and theatre. Franco and his government wanted to project, both within Spain and internationally, an image of a “morally uncontaminated” society with Catholic values, “little affected by the permissiveness of western democracies” (Butt, *Writers and Politics* 64). The regime imparted its ultra-conservative ideology to all Spanish children through a strictly-controlled curriculum imparted, in the majority of schools, by members of the Catholic clergy.

While children received a one-sided pro-Franco education at school, they were not likely to be exposed to any contrasting ideas at home either. During the severe initial years of the dictatorship, many Spaniards realised that it was in their best interest to accept the new regime and put aside the painful memories of the war. This act of ‘forgetting’ was both “enforced by authority and employed as personal and collective strategies of survival” (Richards 9). While most families were too busy struggling to make a living in the meagre postwar years to pay close attention to the affairs of the state, politics were also thought to bring trouble and many families, therefore, preferred to avoid discussing the war or politics in the house.<sup>22</sup> The official policy of silence about the past played a role in ensuring that the new generation would not question Franco’s leadership. The fact that Spain finally began to recover economically in the late 1950s and 1960s—although it still lagged significantly behind the rest of Europe—also helped to suppress major opposition against the regime because, as people became gradually more involved in consumerism, many overlooked their lack of freedom. That is not to say, however, that social and ideological opposition to the Francoist system did not exist within Spain, particularly in intellectual and literary circles, as will be returned to later in this chapter.

Before the economic progress of the 1960s and 1970s, however, the regime relied on propaganda and censorship to persuade the population that Franco and his allies had brought peace and progress to Spain. Eugenio de los Monteros (leader of the *Primer Cuerpo del Ejército*), for example, told the citizens of Madrid shortly after the war that from that day on, “los madrileños podrían gozar de la paz, del orden, del perdón y del cariño requeridos por la fraternidad en que debían vivir todos los españoles de la España nueva. Libres ya del enemigo marxista, no faltarían en los hogares madrileños ni la paz, ni el pan, ni el trabajo, ni del bienestar [...]” (cited in Box 50); however, the reality of postwar life was far removed from the image that the regime wanted to project. Only for the wealthy and conservatively-aligned was life under Franco an

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<sup>22</sup> The question of the memory of the war in Franco’s Spain will be explored in a number of case studies in this thesis, particularly in relation to *El fulgor y la sangre* and *Diario de una maestra*.

improvement on the pre-war situation; for these classes (who figure as Andrea's university friends in *Nada*, in a number of chapters of *La noria* and particularly, as the central characters in *Nuevas amistades*) the fear of revolution from the working classes had been allayed and there was a "docile workforce" to work for their businesses and guarantee continuing profits (Cazorla Sánchez 57). The rest of the population faced great difficulties until at least the early 1950s; in addition to the political repression suffered by many, poverty and hunger were widespread.

The "quiet famine" of the 1940s,<sup>23</sup> which killed thousands of Spaniards struggling to survive in the difficult postwar years, can be attributed to a number of factors: Franco's programme of autarky (economic self-sufficiency), the mismanaged rationing system, the disruption to agriculture and industry caused by the Civil War and the general scarcity of products as a result of the Second World War in Europe. With regard to autarky, the regime appeared to prioritise its desire to be economically self-sufficient over the adequate nutrition of its people: "The state strategy of import substitution [...] implied that the regime was prepared to risk food production in the interests of making Spain independent" (Richards 144). The rationing of food, managed by the *Comisaría General de Abastecimientos y Transportes*, was intended to provide for everyone fairly, but failed as a result of corruption: suppliers of basic staple foods realised larger profits could be made on the booming black market, where the wealthy could purchase basic foodstuffs, as well as luxury items, for hugely inflated prices, leaving the shelves of official grocery stores virtually empty. The black market, which figures in the chapters on *Nada*, *La noria* and *El fulgor y la sangre*, was usually managed by wealthy businessmen; despite the fact that it had to operate illegally, many of these black marketeers had close ties to the regime. These men profited the most from the illicit trading, while the poorer people who worked for them, bringing rationed goods over the

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<sup>23</sup> The term "quiet famine" is used by Cazorla Sánchez 57.

border from France and Portugal, suffered the consequences when caught (Cazorla Sánchez 67).<sup>24</sup>

As a result of postwar economic policy, the corruption inherent in the rationing system and the blind-eye turned towards the operation of the black market, there was a massive divide between those who could afford to eat and those who could not, an issue which was, unsurprisingly, ignored by the regime and glossed over by the media: “Much of the country was in a state of famine, which the press would not mention and to which the possessing classes closed their eyes” (Richards 143). Michael Richards also quotes an Englishman in Spain at the time as saying that Spain seemed like a “country of cannibals, in which one half of the population eats the other half [...] As I am an eater, [...] I belong to the Right” (143–44).<sup>25</sup> As will be returned to in further depth in my discussion of Romero’s *La noria*, the social divide in Spanish society had been exacerbated by the Civil War and the establishment of the dictatorship, which left both wealth and power in the hands of Franco and his ruling elite.

Besides the political elite, the other major power in postwar Spain was the Catholic Church. The Church had been dominant in Spanish life since the Christian reconquest of the Iberian peninsula, but its degree of influence in society had become a divisive political issue in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; as Carr has stated: “Every tension in Spanish society was refracted through the prism of the religious issue” (40).<sup>26</sup> As mentioned earlier, the Church overwhelmingly supported the rebels’ uprising of 18 July 1936, and Franco quickly realised the huge importance of the Church’s support for his cause. Catholic imagery and references were abundant in Franco’s victorious postwar discourse: religious leaders referred to Franco as if he had been sent by

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<sup>24</sup> See Cazorla Sánchez 57–71 for further information on food and famine in early postwar Spain.

<sup>25</sup> Richards cites a comment made by Gerald Brenan’s chauffeur from Brenan 174–75.

<sup>26</sup> During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Church became strongly associated with bourgeois and upper-class interests, thus alienating the poor and working classes, particularly in Andalucía and in urban areas. The majority of those politically on the left became vehemently anti-clerical, and the liberal governments which governed intermittently from the beginning of the nineteenth century constantly attempted to curtail the clergy’s power in Spain; this, in turn, provoked militant Catholicism from the conservative right. See Carr 40–44, for a detailed analysis of the Catholic Church’s role in Spain between 1875–1914.

God to bring order to Spain, and Franco appeared to happily accept the belief that his power was a result of divine providence (Casanova et al. 9). The regime solidified its relationship with the Church by reversing the Republican separation of church and state, abolishing the freedom of religious worship and allowing the Church to regain control of the Spanish education system. In the early 1950s, at a time when Franco was eager to win back international support after the post-Second World War boycotts of his regime, the Concordat with the Vatican in 1953 played a significant role in Spain's reintegration into the global community; within Spain, the Concordat signified a further cementing of the Church's privileged position of power (Cooper 6–12). The Church's power lay largely in its role as the regime's moral compass and authority, enforcing its strictly traditional values in all aspects of postwar life. As a result of the Church's belief that sexuality was the origin of all sins, women, who were regarded as sexual temptation for Spanish males, bore the brunt of the rules that accompanied the Francoist moral code. Oppressive gender policies were pervasive in postwar Spain and were central to Francoist ideology; I thus consider these to clearly constitute political issues.

Traditional Spanish thought on a woman's place and duty in society ranged from the Catholic Counter-Reformation concept of the *perfecta casada* in the sixteenth century to the more spiritual idea of the *ángel del hogar* of the nineteenth-century Enlightenment.<sup>27</sup> The central and constant idea was that of separate spheres for men and women: the public sphere was reserved for men, while the private sphere, the home and family, where her movements and her education were always controlled by her father or husband, was the domain of women. These ideas were, of course, not unique to Spain; however, while in the rest of Europe, attitudes towards women began to change around the turn of the twentieth century, accompanied by developments in the legal status of women in society, in Spain, the belief in the separate spheres and legal gender

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<sup>27</sup> For an overview of Spanish gender philosophy up to the nineteenth century, see Aldaraca 33–87.

inequality lasted until the 1970s.<sup>28</sup> As discussed briefly earlier in this chapter, the only time that significant improvements were made to the Spanish legal code with regard to women was during the Second Republic. Despite the fact that the Republic was not in place for long enough to genuinely change attitudes and culture, the 1931 constitution introduced major reforms: divorce was legalised, illegitimate children were legally recognised, labour laws for women were introduced, and shortly afterwards, women were granted the vote. All of these reforms were, however, revoked by Franco's regime in 1939. In a practical sense, the sudden reversal of the Republican laws signified, among other things, that couples who had been married in a civil ceremony between 1931 and 1936 were no longer legally married and their children declared illegitimate, and couples who had been granted a divorce found themselves married again (Torres, *El amor* 14). Ideologically, Spain had reverted to the conservative philosophy of previous centuries; as Geraldine Scanlon has insightfully said, a Republican victory in 1939 would not have immediately granted women complete equality in Spain, but would at least have granted them the right to continue fighting for it (320).

Just as the images of the Christian crusades and the Spanish Golden Age were recycled as an integral part of Francoist ideology,<sup>29</sup> the concept of the woman as the *ángel del hogar* from the nineteenth century was reintroduced from 1939 as a symbolic return to Spanish origins (Grothe 515). On the other hand, the idea of the 'modern,' educated woman was associated with liberals and consequently linked to national decadence and anti-Spanishness (Enders and Radcliff 20). The family was considered the basic unit of Spanish society under Franco and its preservation, to be achieved by keeping women at home, was imperative. The regime used propaganda to glorify the role of the housewife and mother (Scanlon 337) and laws were introduced to dissuade

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<sup>28</sup> Even in other Catholic countries such as France and Italy, legal equality was achieved from the Second World War onwards, although change progressed more slowly than in Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries. France and Italy's progress on gender equality in comparison to Spain can be attributed to greater secularisation. See Enders and Radcliff 20–22.

<sup>29</sup> Franco's use of the 'golden age' of Spanish history in state propaganda will be returned to later in this chapter.



women from entering the workforce.<sup>30</sup> Working women, for example, were not eligible for the *plus familiar* (a family subsidy) (Alonso Tejada 31) and some workplaces required women to resign as soon as they married. As many professions were closed to women, the options for those who, for economic reasons had no choice but to work, were very limited: working-class women worked in factories and workshops, while more educated women could work as teachers or nurses, although these careers were also badly paid (Scanlon 321). Due to the fact that Franco's economic plans actually required women to go to work, the regime's idealisation of the perfect housewife can be considered somewhat hypocritical: the regime's desire to project a traditional image meant that women were forced to go out and work without gaining any real freedom (Scanlon 344).

By encouraging women to stay at home, Franco also hoped to increase the birth rate in Spain; his goal was a population of forty million, needed for the reconstruction of the Spanish empire (Alonso Tejada 41 and Scanlon 337). Large families were financially rewarded by the state and *premios de natalidad* were introduced to publicly recognise the largest families.<sup>31</sup> Franco also created institutions that would support the increased birth rate, such as maternity insurance, nurseries and health centres.<sup>32</sup> Spain's pronatalist policies were supported by the condemnation of all forms of birth control and abortion by the Catholic Church, an issue that I discuss in my analysis of García Hortelano's *Nuevas amistades*.

Given that women were intended to be mothers and housewives, their education was planned according to Francoist gender ideology. The Church dictated the curriculum for girls and young women, basing their philosophy on Catholic writings from the sixteenth century, such as Juan Luis Vives' *La*

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<sup>30</sup> In this aspect, Francoist Spain followed the example of both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany which also emphasised the important obligations of women in the home and as mothers, see Morcillo Gómez, "Shaping True Catholic Womanhood" 51.

<sup>31</sup> Families were placed in different categories according to the number of children they had. The largest families, with twelve or more children, were invited to a personal audience with Franco. A family allowance of 30 pesetas per child was also set up (Ryan 246).

<sup>32</sup> Cazorla Sánchez describes this development of care for mothers and young children as one of the few positive achievements of early Francoism (66–67).

*instrucción de la mujer cristiana* (1523) and Fray Luis de León's *La perfecta casada* (1583), which were republished and distributed widely in the 1940s and 1950s (Morcillo Gómez, "Shaping True Catholic Womanhood" 56). Co-education was banned from 1936 because the Church considered it immoral to have boys and girls in the same classroom; moreover, male teachers were not permitted to teach in girls' schools, with the exception of a priest who would teach religion (Scanlon 321).

The Church was assisted in the education of Spanish women by the Sección Femenina (the women's branch of the Falange party), an organisation that Meriwynn Grothe describes as an institutionalised version of the domestic *ángel del hogar* (517).<sup>33</sup> All Spanish women had to complete a period of *servicio social* with the Sección Femenina: proof that it had been completed was required to apply for a job, a passport, a driver's licence and other official documents. The Sección Femenina gave practical lessons for their students' future roles as housewives and mothers, primarily teaching religion and domestic training (including cooking, sewing, childcare and music), but was also to provide a moral education and instil the values of service and duty, and above all, "la sumisión al hombre" in young Spanish women (Scanlon 324).<sup>34</sup>

For the regime, women were, on the one hand, the sacred mothers and wives acting as moral guardians of their families (Enders and Radcliff 22), while, on the other hand, they were blamed for most of the nation's moral ills and considered the personification of sin itself, as a result of the potential sexual temptation they posed for Spanish men (Roura, *Mujeres* 44). This conflicting view of the female sex is difficult to reconcile but has its roots in the Catholic dichotomy of women as either 'virgin' or 'whore,' as will be further

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<sup>33</sup> The Sección Femenina was headed by Pilar Primo de Rivera (the sister of José Antonio, the founder of the Falange party). It was considered by some as the only truly Falangist institution in postwar Spain (Alcalde 54).

<sup>34</sup> The *servicio social* usually consisted of three months of theoretical work and three months of practical work. The requirements for the completion of the *servicio social* were more flexible for women from wealthier families: university students, for example, could have the time of social service reduced providing they had passed the *Hogar* subject at school. Rural and working-class women, on the other hand, were given special attention by the Sección Femenina (Scanlon 326–28).

explored in my case studies, particularly *La noria*.<sup>35</sup> L. Alonso Tejada argues that the idea of sex as sin was emphasised so much by the Church that Christianity for many was reduced to sexual abstention and observation of the guidelines of decency, which, naturally, applied mostly to women (19–20). The clergy advocated avoiding all situations that could potentially lead to sin, such as dancing, walking arm-in-arm, kissing, and bathing at non-segregated beaches and swimming pools (Alonso Tejada 20). The Church's obsession with sexuality was also reflected in its censorship of films and literature, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

As a result of the above-outlined beliefs, Spanish moral standards were different for men and women, in what was known as the “doble moralidad” (Alonso Tejada 29).<sup>36</sup> Sexual expectations for males were somewhat contradictory: men were told to seek a ‘pure’ woman for marriage, but were themselves sent to a brothel to lose their virginity. Rafael Torres has described how there were two ‘types’ of women according to postwar gender stereotypes: ‘decent’ women (your mother, your sisters, your fiancée) and ‘other’ women who could be seduced or bought (*El amor* 59–60). An engagement would usually be broken if a woman gave in to her fiancé's pressure for sexual relations, but no such expectation was held for men. Even within marriage, the Church condoned sex only for the purpose of procreation, and it remained a very uneasy subject: women were expected to be sexual only when required by their husband, and at other times be the asexual and chaste mother of the family (Cazorla Sánchez 147).<sup>37</sup> Torres argues that the unnatural sexual attitudes disseminated by the postwar clergy contributed to many unhappy marriages in Francoist society, which in turn led to an increased search for

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<sup>35</sup> For a history of the traditional Catholic dichotomy of women as saints or sinners, see Gallego Méndez 139–40.

<sup>36</sup> See also Torres 95.

<sup>37</sup> Married couples were advised not to enter churches within a few days of having sexual relations, and couples were taught that it was a sin to be sexually active on religious holidays or during Lent (Alonso Tejada 24).

sexual satisfaction outside of marriage, either through prostitution or a mistress (*El amor* 130).<sup>38</sup>

The gender inequality ingrained in postwar culture was also codified in Francoist law. According to the Código Civil of 1889—which remained virtually unchanged throughout the Franco years—a wife had a legal obligation to obey her husband (Scanlon 334). Women needed their husbands' permission to do any official business, could not own or inherit property (Torres, *El amor* 73–74), and suffered more severe consequences if accused of adultery (Alonso Tejada 30). Women also suffered disproportionately from the laws prohibiting prostitution, abortion and divorce, as will be discussed in my case studies on *La noria* (with regard to prostitution) and *Nuevas amistades* (in relation to the issue of abortion).

Women who had supported the Republican side in the Civil War (or had husbands, fathers or brothers who had done so), suffered twofold: firstly, as members of the 'vanquished' side after the war, and secondly, as women. Mangini describes the predicament of Republican women thus: "If being a leftist meant that you were a disgraced 'Red,' being a female leftist meant that you were a 'Red whore'" (*Memories of Resistance* 106). Many women were jailed after the war for crimes which included associating with male Republican relatives, helping friends to escape—some were even charged with doing laundry for the Republican militias (Mangini, *Memories of Resistance* 100). Despite the gender inequality inherent in Francoist culture, it should be noted that women were considered equal to men when it came to imprisonment, torture and executions.<sup>39</sup> As the Republican dead were not formally recognised by the new regime, their widows had no official standing and were not eligible for the benefit to which the families of fallen Nationalist soldiers were entitled (Cazorla Sánchez 19–20). With no income and needing to provide for any

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<sup>38</sup> For the wealthier classes, the mistress (known as the *querida* or *mantenida*) was an important part of postwar life and essentially became socially acceptable (Alonso Tejada 36). Carmen Martín Gaité provides a detailed chronicle of the social customs around love, relationships and marriage in the Spanish postwar period in *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*, which I will refer to throughout this thesis.

<sup>39</sup> For more information about the treatment of women in postwar prisons, see Alcalde 14–47 and Mangini, *Memories of Resistance* 99–150.

children, as well as any male relatives in prison, life was extremely difficult and many women were forced into prostitution and illegal activities (Cazorla Sánchez 64).

As has become evident from the context discussed thus far, Franco's moral propaganda, which proclaimed Spain to be the "Reserva Espiritual del Occidente" (Roura, *Mujeres* 17), little resembled what was really occurring on the streets of postwar Spain where poverty, hunger, crime and prostitution were flourishing. The gap between the image that the Franco regime sought to project and the truth about postwar Spain is one of the major recurring themes in this thesis, as it was the exposure of this discrepancy that was key in socially-committed literature within the limited possibilities under Francoist censorship.

Before discussing the postwar literary scene and its relationship with the regime and censorship, I will provide a brief overview of literature in early twentieth-century Spain in order to contextualise the development of social realism after the Civil War. The turn of the twentieth century heralded the beginning of a rich cultural era for Spain, often referred to as the *Edad de Plata* of Spanish literature, which would last until the outbreak of the Civil War.<sup>40</sup> The literature of this period is notable for its innovative vanguardist qualities and demonstrated that Spanish writers were capable of participating in the modernist trend that was dominant in the rest of Europe.<sup>41</sup> Overall, Spanish literature of the first third of the twentieth century is characterised by its opposition to the romantic and humanistic realism of nineteenth-century writers such as Benito Pérez Galdós and Clarín (Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes* 13–14).

The Spanish writers of the early twentieth century are generally

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<sup>40</sup> According to some scholars, such as Hernán Urrutia Cárdenas, the *Edad de Plata* of Spanish literature begins as far back as 1868, although most critics agree on the turn of the century as the most important time in the development of this era of Spanish letters. See Urrutia Cárdenas 581–95.

<sup>41</sup> Spain is often excluded from accounts of European modernism (see Bradbury and MacFarlane; Eysteinnsson). This omission has been criticised, however, by Anthony Geist and José B. Monleón, Germán Gullón and Butt ("The 'Generation of 1898'") who call for a broadening of definitions. For a more in-depth discussion of literary modernism in Spain, see Santiáñez 479–99 and Cardwell 500–512.

classified into three 'generations': the *generación del '98* (also referred to as the *generación del fin de siglo*), the *generación del '14* and the *generación del '27*.<sup>42</sup> The *generación del '98* came to prominence in the aftermath of the loss of Spain's last colonies in 1898, employing the latest modernist styles and literary techniques to confront existential and national themes in the wake of the colonial crisis (Urrutia Cárdenas 589–90). Despite the vast stylistic and thematic variation within the so-called 'generation,' its members were unanimous in their condemnation of the corruption and decay they saw in contemporary Spanish society: "They protested against the legacy of the nineteenth century and sought the restoration of some eternal values, a change from Spain's insularity, and educational reform" (Chandler and Schwartz 149). The next 'generation,' that of 1914 (sometimes referred to as the *novecentistas*), was a slightly younger group of writers whose cultural rise corresponded with the First World War in Europe and whose work was strongly associated with the intellectual philosophy of José Ortega y Gasset. This generation includes writers such as Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Gabriel Miró and Ricardo León. Their work is often considered an extension of that of the Generation of 1898; however, their style is described as more "elitist, intellectual and lyrical" (Chandler and Schwartz 150). The *generación del '27*, the last pre-war 'generation' recognised by literary critics, began to adopt the European avant-garde literary style, with a dehumanised aesthetic and surrealist influences. While most strongly associated with poetry, this 'generation' also includes some novelists such as Benjamín Jarnés, Max Aub, Francisco Ayala and Ramón Sender (Chandler and Schwartz 150, 164–170).<sup>43</sup> Some women writers, such as María Teresa León, Concha Méndez and Carmen Conde, among others, were also active on the literary and cultural scene in early twentieth-century Spain, although their

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<sup>42</sup> This 'generational' model has been criticised by scholars such as Michael Ugarte ("The Generational Fallacy"), Christopher Soufas and Javier Blasco (who labels the *generación del '98* as an 'artificial construction' (121)).

<sup>43</sup> Although they were prominent members of the *generación del '27*, Aub, Ayala and Sender are now better known for their novels written in exile after 1939, which have little to do with the aesthetic style of the *generación del '27*.

contribution has traditionally been overlooked.<sup>44</sup>

The literary and cultural landscape changed dramatically with the outbreak of war in July 1936 and the subsequent establishment of the Franco dictatorship, putting an end to the *Edad de Plata* in Spain. During and directly after the Civil War, Spain lost an overwhelming number of its notable writers and intellectuals. The vast majority of intellectuals in 1930s Spain had been supporters of the Republic or other leftist political groups and many had, therefore, been imprisoned or executed by Nationalist forces during the war, or alternatively, had left Spain for the safety of exile. It has been estimated that up to 90% of Spain's intellectuals were either forced into exile, imprisoned or killed during the war (Torrente Ballester cited in Carrasquer 95).<sup>45</sup> As the most prominent members of Republican society, intellectuals and writers were particularly viciously targeted by the Nationalist forces. The best-known literary figure executed by Franco's forces was, without a doubt, the poet Federico García Lorca and among the most renowned writers forced into exile were Juan Ramón Jiménez, Mercè Rodoreda, Gabriel Miró, Max Aub, Ramón Sender, Rafael Alberti, María Teresa León and Luis Cernuda. Many of the exiled writers continued their careers outside of Spain, with particularly important hubs of Spanish exile writing in France, Mexico and Argentina.<sup>46</sup>

In Spain, the literary scene of the immediate postwar years was bleak; the country had lost its cultural and intellectual leaders and the new regime was determined to make a clean break from the liberal Republican culture—“una ruptura total con el nefasto ayer” (Sanz Villanueva, *La novela española* 26). This was to be achieved by severing ties with recent Spanish literary movements and with the most important foreign trends. Books by writers considered to be ‘dissidents’ (which included most of the Spanish writers in exile) were, therefore, banned from bookshops and libraries (Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes* 15); works by foreign writers who were deemed to be subversive in any

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<sup>44</sup> For information on early twentieth-century Spanish women's writing, see Bellver, Bieder, Cole, Wilcox and Leggott.

<sup>45</sup> See Virumbrales, “La producción novelesca” 321, for further discussion of the decimation of Spain's intellectual and cultural figures after the war.

<sup>46</sup> For information on Spanish writing in exile, see Ugarte, *Shifting Ground* and Soldevilla Oria.

way (Hemingway or Faulkner, for example) were also very difficult to obtain in postwar Spain (Sanz Villanueva, *La novela española* 27–28). It should be noted, however, that for many Spaniards, literature and culture had become somewhat irrelevant and redundant due to the harsh conditions of the 1940s. Those who did read generally preferred escapist literature, such as exotic foreign novels in translation which helped the reader to escape from the reality of Spanish life, referred to by Mangini as the “novela evasiva” (*Rojos y rebeldes* 16).<sup>47</sup>

The regime also encouraged the development of a ‘new’ Francoist literature, because, as Sanz Villanueva writes, the regime’s official literary culture was “un ideario global que incluye tantos modelos como prohibiciones” (*La novela española* 26–27). In the immediate postwar years, only novels which reflected the National-Catholic values of the winning side could be published in Spain. These works were written by authors who were generally Francoist sympathisers and often consisted of heroic war tales describing Nationalist soldiers saving Spain from atheism and communism and included a clear “satanización de la República” (Soldevila Durante 247). Commonly labelled *triumfalista*, Sanz Villanueva argues that this type of literature can be considered little more than propaganda for the Franco regime and had scarce literary value: “[S]on novelas para los correligionarios, concebidas para la comunión de autor y lector en el ideario compartido” (*La novela española* 12).<sup>48</sup> This initial wave of Falangist literature lasted until about 1945, its decline more or less coinciding with the end of the Second World War and the defeat of Franco’s fascist allies, Germany and Italy (Sanz Villanueva, *La novela española* 32).<sup>49</sup> Literature that eschewed, or even challenged, the regime’s values was slow to emerge after the war, as I will return to later in this chapter.

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<sup>47</sup> Popular authors included Charlotte Bronte and Daphne du Maurier (Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes* 16).

<sup>48</sup> The principal novelists of this ‘triumphalist’ movement were: José María Alfaro, José Antonio Giménez Arnau, Concha Espina, Agustín de Foxá and Rafael García Serrano. See Virumbrales, “La producción novelesca” 322–23.

<sup>49</sup> Literature overtly presenting Falangist or fascist values became less appropriate in post-1945 Spain as Franco had to forge a national identity that would be more acceptable to the new world powers.



It is quite clear, as a result of the circumstances described above, why Spanish literary critics and historians refer to the 1940s and early 1950s as a period of 'literary silence' (Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes* 16). It is, however, impossible to understand or make judgements about postwar Spanish literature without considering it within the context of the rigid censorship through which all texts had to pass before publication during the Franco years; as Juan Goytisolo wrote in 1967: "Quien pretenda estudiar el día de mañana la forma empleada por los novelistas y poetas españoles, deberá tener en cuenta, como «índice situacional», la existencia de la censura que la originó" (*El furgón* 56). Mangini points out that the alleged artistic poverty of 1940s Spain should be attributed to the limitations imposed by censorship and the threat of persecution, because the same 'deculturalisation' did not exist elsewhere in Europe or North America after the Second World War, despite a similar feeling of demoralisation; to the contrary, art and literature flourished in postwar France, Italy and North America (*Rojos y rebeldes* 23–24).

Censorship is used to some extent in all modern societies (to protect children from harmful material, for example). In the case of authoritarian Spain, however, it was particularly severe and was used to maintain ideological control over the population. This type of censorship is certainly not unique to postwar Spain, but has been used by weak governments throughout history to "depersonalise the population, creating uniform masses and producing political, cultural and social paralysis" (Beneyto 11).<sup>50</sup> Francoist censorship was officially established in April 1938 when the Nationalist government in Burgos decreed its *Ley de Prensa*, seeking to achieve total control of all communications and intellectual activity in Spain. The regime was careful to emphasise that, in contrast to the Republican freedom of press, which they claimed had caused great damage and had 'poisoned' the Spanish population (Beneyto 13–14), censorship existed to promote the movement's doctrine and ensure "la primacía de la verdad" (Curry 20). It was explained that the strict censorship

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<sup>50</sup> Spain itself has a strong history of severe censorship: during the Spanish Inquisition, censorship was used to impose the ideology of the Church and the ruling classes on the general population (Beneyto 11–12).

measures were provisional due to the grave situation (they were then still at war with the Republic); nevertheless, these harsh ‘provisional’ measures remained in effect until 1966 when a new *Ley de Prensa* was introduced (Beneyto 15).<sup>51</sup> Francoist censorship changed and developed over time, opening up slightly from the 1950s as a result of Spain’s increased international contact, but its fundamental restrictions remained in place until Franco’s death in 1975.

The Church, as the regime’s most important ally in the ideological control of the nation, was also given an important role in the management of censorship. Catherine O’Leary suggests that the government censorship boards were lent “a certain degree of legitimacy” by having clergy on them (13); however, the Church and the state did not always see eye to eye on the question of objectionable material. As censors, state officials judged texts from a largely political point of view—they were officially charged with preventing the spread of the toxic ideas of international Marxism (Beneyto 15)—while the Church took a predominantly moral position—believing that descriptions of immoral behaviour would provide a bad example for the public. The process of censorship itself was therefore not immune to politics. Many seemingly arbitrary decisions were made because different sectors of the official culture were fighting for power over the written word: for example, authors who were affiliated with the regime, and therefore presented no political difficulties, sometimes had their work suppressed by the Church due to moral transgressions (O’Leary 14). As will be discussed in greater detail in the studies of the individual novels in this thesis, some scholars have argued that the Church’s priorities in censorship often prevailed over political prohibitions: Neuschäfer, for example, writes that the hierarchy of prohibited topics was first love and sexuality (especially feminine sexuality), and then religious and political constraints (10). Janet Pérez disagrees, stating that “the most important and potentially most dangerous was the political censorship” (“Fascist Models” 73–74). While it may be true that the consequences were more severe for

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<sup>51</sup> Soldevila Durante explains that the regime also exerted control over literary production in the early postwar years through its power over publishers, particularly as paper was very expensive and difficult to import into Spain during the Second World War (246–47).

political infringements, the censors generally tended to prioritise moral issues, as will be demonstrated in the chapters on *Nuevas amistades* and *Diario de una maestra*. I will also discuss the censor's approach to works by women writers, particularly with regard to themes of sexual morality, in my analyses of Laforet and Medio's works.

The severity of censorship varied for different media, roughly corresponding to the amount of publicity that the regime believed that each type of material would receive. Books, for example, were considered to be for private consumption and intended for a minority, elitist audience, whereas television and cinema were classified as 'public,' and would reach a much larger percentage of the population. Important items that had the potential for a wide audience had to be checked by many people and could take a long time to be approved, while novels were usually only read by one or two censors (Neuschäfer 49).

Censorship of the press under Franco was a special case, because, as affirmed by Mangini, the media and its power to spread propaganda was considered "un soldado más del franquismo" and was used to convince readers and listeners of the "feliz 'normalización'" of the nation in the immediate postwar years (*Rojos y rebeldes* 24), when the growing slums on the outskirts of the cities clearly proved otherwise. Radio and print news in the 1940s and 1950s consisted of a rigidly controlled presentation of an 'ideal,' unified and harmonious Spain—(¡España, una!)—with many pieces written or 'proposed' by regime officials.<sup>52</sup> Journalists were not permitted to write about issues that would reflect negatively on the regime, such as

las muertes por inanición, o las alteraciones del orden, o los robos y violencias que empañasen la imagen pacífica y segura de la nueva España. [...] Tampoco la prensa había de ser mucho más explícita sobre los accidentes laborales, las acciones de los maquis,

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<sup>52</sup> According to Soldevila Durante, government offices often sent 'opinion pieces' to be published and signed by the editor of the newspaper (245).

las resoluciones judiciales comprometidas o la información extranjera indeseable. (Gracia García and Ruiz Carnicer 21)<sup>53</sup>

In a practical sense, censorship in postwar Spain consisted of two stages: a compulsory *consulta previa* (which was supposed to influence the creation of the work), as well as the censorship of the final product. The designated censor would read the manuscript and complete the standard censorship form which included the following questions:

¿Ataca al dogma?

¿A la moral?

¿A la Iglesia o a sus Ministros?

¿Al Régimen y sus Instituciones?

¿A las personas que colaboran o han colaborado con el Régimen?

Los pasajes censurables ¿califican el contenido total de la obra?<sup>54</sup>

For each question, the censor was to list the pages on which he had indicated words, sentences or entire sections that would need to be removed or altered before publication, and then give a short summary and observation, deeming it apt for publication, apt after amendments or alternatively, rejecting the manuscript outright. The consequences of offending the censors were, however, not limited to the denial of permission to publish: major infringements could also lead to arrest and, as Richard Curry argues, self-exile, as many artists chose to go into exile rather than face creative barriers (12–14).<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Jo Labanyi writes that the list of ‘off-limits’ topics included increasing crime and corruption, arrests, trials, executions, guerrilla activity, strike action, crimes, suicides, bankruptcies, and food and housing shortages (“Censorship” 209).

<sup>54</sup> Censorship reports consulted in the Archivo General de la Administración in Alcalá de Henares in April 2012.

<sup>55</sup> It should be noted, however, that the more severe consequences for censorial infringements were generally reserved for works of a more public nature, such as film and theatre. After all, a novel could only reach the stage of censorship if a publisher had agreed to take it on; publishers would not accept extremely controversial works because they too risked being branded as political dissidents, and commercial failure as a result (Martínez-Michel 40).

Despite the endless laws and decrees relating to censorship, Curry stresses the unpredictability and incoherency of the process in postwar Spain, saying that the lack of guidance and criteria for the censors themselves was significant. While the questions on the standard censorship form were very specific, they permitted differing interpretations and where texts were submitted to more than one censor, they often received contradictory answers (54–56). Mangini writes that the severity of censorship also depended on the connections that the writer had: “Quien conociese a un alto funcionario o a un clero-censor podía negociar sus problemas censoriales” because “[l]os mismos que hacían reglas las deshacían si les convenía.” She also quotes anecdotes about manuscripts receiving differing judgements depending on the time of year that they were submitted and on the censor’s level of experience (*Rojos y rebeldes* 46). Moreover, being a censor was usually someone’s secondary job and was not well paid (Neuschäfer 51–52); it is therefore understandable that some texts were browsed only superficially and that the decisions can seem arbitrary as a result.

Even though the frequently arbitrary nature of censorship made it difficult for writers to guess exactly what would be considered objectionable, another important aspect of censorship which will be taken into account in my case studies is that of self-censorship (*autocensura*). Writers were mindful of what Neuschäfer describes as the ‘coercive omnipresence’ of censorship, or the “tijera mental” (45), and whether consciously or not, prepared their texts in such a way so as to avoid delays in having it officially approved. Writing critical novels under censorship was, as posited by Fernando Álvarez Palacios, a balancing act, like walking a tightrope; a writer had to “danzar en la cuerda floja durante su proceso creacional si no quiere verse expuesto a curiosas y hasta desagradables consecuencias” (15). In many cases, instead of simply removing material they knew to be potentially objectionable to the censor, writers developed techniques to disguise subversive themes and commentary and to sidestep censorial disapproval, such as irony, banalisation, distraction

and distance (Neuschäfer 77).<sup>56</sup> Juan Goytisolo also discusses the self-censorship practiced by Spanish writers, arguing that they found creative ways to “burlarla [a la censura] e introducir de contrabando en su obra la ideología o temática «prohibidas». Bregados con la experiencia de nuestros fracasos, los escritores hemos aprendido el manejo de la astucia” (*El furgón* 56).

In spite of censorship, the mid 1940s thus saw the publication for the first time since the war of a handful of novels that can be considered independent from the regime’s ideology. Mangini describes the emergence of these novels as the ‘reawakening’ of literature based on reality (*Rojos y rebeldes* 20). The best known of these are Cela’s *La familia de Pascual Duarte* (1942) and Laforet’s *Nada* (1945), both of which are generally labelled as *tremendista*, a genre described by Jordan as re-emerging realism which focuses on the individual while expressing a profound disillusion and pessimistic outlook (*Writing and Politics* 9).<sup>57</sup> While *tremendismo* is thus notable because it challenges the ‘triumphalist’ and optimistic vision of official Spain, scholars are divided as to whether these early novels really constitute a conscious opposition to the regime and its values. While Butt believes that *tremendismo* is essentially non-political, he does concede that it “can be understood as a political attack on official mythology: the tragic sense of life becomes subversive in situations where official ideology is optimistic” (*Writers and Politics* 54, 64). Jordan argues that the *tremendista* trend was part of the ‘official’ postwar culture and was produced by writers of the winning side in the Civil War, though he also admits that *tremendismo* seems to “run counter to official triumphalism” (*Writing and Politics* 9–10). However, I argue in my chapter on *Nada*, and throughout this thesis, that a subversion of the values of official culture is, within the context of Francoist Spain, inherently also a political critique, and I contend, therefore, that the emergence of social and political commitment in the postwar Spanish novel dates back to the 1940s.

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<sup>56</sup> For more information on techniques that writers used to evade censorship, see Neuschäfer 56–57, 77.

<sup>57</sup> Other noteworthy novels of the 1940s and early 1950s that are often classified as *tremendista* are Delibes’ *La sombra del ciprés es alargada* (1948) and *El camino* (1950), Cela’s *La colmena* (1951), Romero’s *La noria* (1952) and José Suárez Carreño’s *Las últimas horas* (1950).

The move away from regime-endorsed, orthodox National-Catholic literature coincided with the growth of internal political and social opposition in Spain. During the 1940s and especially before the end of the Second World War, the opposition in Spain had lived in hope that when Hitler and his allies were defeated, the democratic Western European powers' next move would be to strike against the totalitarian regime in Spain (Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes* 19). Following the Allied victory, however, the international focus quickly turned from anti-fascism to anti-communism, and Franco quickly shook off his image as a censured totalitarian dictator in order to become a valuable ally in the Cold War. With the hopes of outside intervention dashed, internal opposition to the regime slowly began to grow.

The emerging opposition formed around a new generation that was coming of age in the postwar period; often referred to as "los niños de la guerra," they were too young to have taken sides in the war, but had experienced the traumatic events of the conflict as children.<sup>58</sup> Given that they were, for the most part, university students from wealthier backgrounds, many were the children of Franco supporters. As they became conscious of the often unjust and hypocritical society in which they lived, Mangini argues that a 'generation gap' emerged. She suggests that the new generation felt a sense of guilt and an overwhelming sense of responsibility to make amends for the actions of the previous generation, and claims that this 'gap' is vital in an understanding of the growing political opposition and cultural dissidence in Spain (*Rojos y rebeldes* 100, 58). Jordan also emphasises the importance of the 'generation gap' in understanding postwar literary production, explaining that the writers of the 1940s and 1950s experienced the Civil War as innocent children, and generally held the older generation responsible for the horrific events of the conflict and its aftermath (*Writing and Politics* 30). The 'generation gap' arises briefly in my study of Laforet's *Nada* and will be an important aspect of my analysis of García Hortelano's *Nuevas amistades*.

Ironically, much of this oppositional activity, both political and cultural,

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<sup>58</sup> "Los niños de la guerra" was a phrase coined by Josefina Aldecoa in *Los niños de la guerra*.

developed within and around the Falangist organisations, such as the SEU (Sindicato Español Universitario). Membership of the SEU was compulsory for all university students. Many of the writers who would later be the key proponents of the politically-committed literature of the 1950s and 1960s (among them Castellet, Carlos Barral, Jaime Gil de Biedma, José Agustín Goytisolo and Juan Goytisolo) started their careers writing articles in one of SEU's publications, *Laye* (1950–1954). *Laye* was based in Barcelona, but a similar publication, *Revista Española*, was developed by students in Madrid.<sup>59</sup> Under the auspices of Francoism, young writers had the opportunity to write critical essays inspired by the liberal tradition, discussing the work of thinkers such as Sartre, Hegel, Heidegger, and Ortega y Gasset. Gradually, however, the focus moved from theory of literature and philosophy to social criticism of literature, an interest in social realism, and then to Marxist philosophy and committed literature. When *Laye* was finally banned in 1954 as a result of the controversial nature of its content, the prohibition of their sole intellectual outlet only added to the social and political frustration felt by its contributors, many of whom joined the Communist Party and became notable cultural dissidents (Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes* 71–72).

The *novela social* emerged directly out of these intellectual associations: the “Angry Young Men” of postwar literature, as Jo Labanyi describes them (*Spanish Literature* 70), wrote with a definite intent to denounce the regime and Francoist society from a largely Marxist/socialist framework. They were heavily influenced by Sartre's theory about the writer's responsibility and the novel as a political vehicle. Sartre's notion of *littérature engagée* involved revealing a situation to the reader who would then, with his or her newly acquired ‘conscious awareness,’ take action towards the transformation of society.<sup>60</sup> While Sartre's ideas on literature and responsibility were not widely adopted in his native France, they were extremely influential in postwar Spain (Jordan, *Writing and Politics* viii), where similar ideas on political commitment

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<sup>59</sup> For more information on *Laye* and *Revista Española*, see Jordan, *Writing and Politics* 55–83.

<sup>60</sup> Sartre's discussion of the writer's responsibility and commitment in writing can be found in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* (1947).



in literature were promoted in independent intellectual circles by Castellet in his book *La hora del lector* (1957) and Juan Goytisolo in *Problemas de la novela* (1959).<sup>61</sup> In addition to Sartre's work, Hungarian Marxist philosopher György Lukács' writing on the commitment of the artist through realism was also influential on the Spanish *novela social*, particularly on Juan Goytisolo.<sup>62</sup> It should again be noted, nevertheless, that not all of the critical realists were directly involved with the intellectual circles led by Castellet and Goytisolo, nor did they all explicitly state their political aims in the same way as did the main proponents of the *novela social*. The general theory behind the *novela social* is, however, evident in some novels several years before Castellet's theoretical work was published, as will be discussed in my case studies. Sanz Villanueva accounts for this by arguing that Castellet's treatise was just as much about codifying the literary theory that many Spanish writers were already familiar with, as it was about proposing groundbreaking new ideas: "supone menos la imposición de cierta doctrina que el ofrecimiento de alternativas que ellos deseaban, compartían o habían interiorizado sin el sustento teórico que Castellet brindaba" (*La novela española* 176).

The objective, realist style favoured by the Spanish social realists, which can be contrasted with the marked move away from realism in post-Second World War literature elsewhere in the world—the experimental *nouveau roman* in France being a prime example—was the result of a number of factors. Stylistically, the writers of the postwar generation turned to what Sanz Villanueva describes as "un realismo muy convencional" because they were "huérfanos [...] de un magisterio enriquecedor" (*La novela española* 27); that is, they were denied access to the modernist pre-war literary heritage. Another element that possibly contributed to the adoption of the neo-realist style after the war was the fact that literary modernism in Spain had been politicised by

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<sup>61</sup> Many critics have dismissed Castellet's theoretical work as little more than a translation of Sartre's earlier treatise (Blanco Aguinaga et al. 515). However, as an official translation of Sartre's work had, like the original French edition, been prohibited in Spain (Jordan, "Sartre, Engagement" 303), Castellet's adaptation was thus the only way that Sartre's ideas on social commitment in literature could be accessed in Spain.

<sup>62</sup> See Black 21 for a discussion of the influence of Lukács' philosophy on Goytisolo and on the Spanish social realist movement.

Ortega y Gasset, whose thinking was by then generally viewed as quasi-fascist, and leftist writers were therefore eager to move away from such associations (Butt, *Writers and Politics* 5).<sup>63</sup> More importantly, however, realism suited the political motives of the *novela social*, as proposed by Sartre and Castellet, by allowing the writer to reveal social problems and injustices to the reader, who would then make their own judgement as to the cause and solution of the issues in question.<sup>64</sup> While for some critics, including Butt, the absence of an explicit connection between “human problems” and “political circumstances” negated the possibility of political commitment (19), others, such as Pérez, posit that the criticism is implicit and that this ‘silence,’ “the abstinence from evaluation, interpretation, moralizing and other interventions or expressions of opinion,” was necessary in order to pass censorship:

The reformist and dissenting impact of the “Critical Realists” using pseudo-Objectivist techniques resided in their selection of topics and detail, rather than any overt critique or sermonizing. Subjects were drawn almost exclusively from society’s ills, so that however noncommittal the presentation, the portrayal was of socio-political problems, problems implicitly the result of the ideology underlying the conservative uprising which halted the Republic’s reforms and brought Franco to power. Explicit dissent or opposition propaganda, which would have been easily spotted by censors and deleted or prohibited, was deliberately silenced in favor of implicit messages conveyed via selectivity of subject, accumulation of descriptive elements and a seemingly scientific

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<sup>63</sup> Butt explains that Ortega y Gasset was often denounced as a fascist by postwar intellectuals as he had defended modernism from an anti-democratic point of view (*Writers and Politics* 20).

<sup>64</sup> In order to engage with their reader, spurring them to take social action, the writers wanted to reach as large an audience as possible and the realist style was considered more accessible to a mass audience; as Butt notes: “On the whole it was accepted that producing work which demanded too much from its readers, e.g. complex modernist forms, was too detached from immediate political and social problems” (*Writers and Politics* 7).

accuracy of measurement-precision and exhaustiveness in the presentation of ambient and events. ("Functions" 124–25)

In other words, by describing potentially controversial social and political issues in a detached, straightforward style without passing judgement, or, as Jordan puts it, "avoid[ing] editorial comment in favour of direct, objective reporting" (*Writing and Politics* ix), the reader could make the critical connection, but the censor was less likely to pick up on the critique.<sup>65</sup> As will be demonstrated in my individual case studies, this strategy was, in many cases, successful: see, for example, my discussion of *El fulgor y la sangre*, which was described by the censor simply as a "novela de costumbres."<sup>66</sup> Sanz Villanueva also mentions that in several official censorship reports, social realist novels were classified simply as *costumbrismo* and that, as a result, no objections were made to their publication (*La novela española* 14).<sup>67</sup>

Significantly, both in terms of what social realist writers sought to achieve and in relation to the value of such works from a modern perspective, the social realist focus on contemporary Spanish life partly filled the void that harsh censorship of the news media had left in its wake, because it allowed writers to address important social questions that were hidden away from public view behind the regime's façade of propaganda. As mentioned earlier, the press was far more rigorously censored than were literary works because it was taken for granted that it would reach a much larger audience; social realist novels could, therefore, be seen as a valuable and reliable source of information on contemporary Spain. Juan Goytisolo claims that Spanish novelists turned to realism in the postwar period precisely because "su público no dispone de medios de información veraces respecto a los problemas con que se enfrenta el

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<sup>65</sup> Even the name of the genre *novela social* was specifically tailored to avoid censorship; many critics believe it would otherwise have been called the *novela socialista* or *novela comprometida* (Butt, *Writers and Politics* 54 and Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes* 36).

<sup>66</sup> *Costumbrismo* as a literary term refers to the trend in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Spanish literature of the depiction of everyday life without commentary or judgement.

<sup>67</sup> Mangini notes, however, that the most gritty literary realism was not approved for publication in Spain. Cela's *La colmena*, for example, had to be first published in Buenos Aires (*Rojos y rebeldes* 25).

país,” as opposed to French writers who wrote works “independientemente de la panorámica social en que les ha tocado vivir” (*El furgón* 60). García Hortelano has also explicitly emphasised the importance of realist literature in a society where the official ‘reality’ was only an illusion, saying: “no conozco qué otro camino diferente del realismo pueda emprender la joven literatura de un país, en el que la superficie de su sociedad es, cuando no una losa de granito, un vidrio opaco, de cegadores y engañosos reflejos” (García Hortelano cited in Olmos García 228). Moreover, as argued already in the Introduction, these realist accounts of life under Franco can, of course, continue to be useful to modern scholars studying postwar Spanish society.

Finally, although social realist writers generally concentrated on the representation of social issues in the postwar present, their work also reflected important aspects of recent Spanish history. The turmoil of the Second Republic and the Civil War were fundamental aspects of the regime’s philosophy, which was based on a highly-idealised version of Spanish history: the Nationalists’ victory in the Civil War, for example, was constantly compared to the Christian crusades; just as the Christians had defeated Islam and expelled the Jews from Spain in the fifteenth century, Franco and his army had now saved Spain from the evils of communism, atheism and freemasonry (Richards 7–10).<sup>68</sup> The regime exercised strict control over this history by putting forward an official historiography that “affirm[ed] the regime’s morally correct role within Spanish history,” (Herzberger, “Narrating the Past” 35) and silencing testimony from those who had lost the war. The manipulation of the past for the purposes of propaganda not only consisted of glorifying Spain’s Catholic and traditional characteristics but also of tainting and negating the memory of the ‘other’ Spain (Cazorla Sánchez 19). The general lack of reference to the past in the literature of the early postwar era can therefore largely be attributed to the fact that the

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<sup>68</sup> For further discussion of the official representation of the Civil War as a ‘crusade,’ see Aguilar Fernández, *Memoria y olvido* 195–98. She describes how the regime eventually moved away from such an image, noting that by the 1960s it was referred to as the “Guerra de España” or “nuestra guerra” (197).

past was a highly politically-charged subject that had to be treated discreetly in order to pass censorship.

David Herzberger argues that critical social realism set in the present subverts official Francoist historiography without referring directly to the past by providing counter-myths, because “the causal arguments in these novels imply a past necessarily divergent from the one trumpeted by the historiography of the state.” The social realists thus create “a mythic discourse in reverse: their novels portray a specific present that suggests a specific past (“Narrating the Past” 36). However, a number of novelists take this a step further and make frequent allusions to the recent past, and a small number even contain substantial representations of that past, whether in direct narrative or presented in the form of memories.

It was difficult for those writers who included representations of the past in their work to include straightforward accounts of the Republican experience of the war, because, as Pérez has stated, a “[s]ympathetic portrayal of the Republic and its supporters was out of the question, as was depicting the losers’ view of the Civil War” (“Fascist Models” 74).<sup>69</sup> Despite these restrictions, however, the depiction of the past in literature written under Franco, irrespective of its ideological stance, can in itself be considered subversive because, as Herzberger argues, “a diversity of discourses on the past would compel the dehiscence of all that was held noble and authentic” (“Narrating the Past” 35).<sup>70</sup> The references to the past in postwar works thus inherently challenge the regime’s own, highly-controlled “discourse of myth,” as I will argue particularly in my studies of *El fulgor y la sangre* and *Diario de una maestra*.

In the following chapters, I will examine the five selected novels individually, discussing the sociopolitical themes that arise in each within the historical and literary context described in this chapter, and drawing on further historical studies, gender theory and literary criticism, as well as the authors’

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<sup>69</sup> Outside of Spain, writers in exile such as Ramón Sender and Max Aub were dealing with the Republican experience of the Civil War in their novels. In exile, they were, firstly, not subject to the Franco regime’s censorship, and secondly, not immersed in the postwar society where silence about the past had become a cultural norm. See Richards 147–56.

<sup>70</sup> See also Herzberger, “History as Power” and *Narrating the Past*.

biographies where appropriate. I will begin by discussing the earliest and best-known of the five works, Laforet's *Nada*, which is considered a significant work in the postwar literary scene as one of the first non-'triumphalist' works to be published in Spain after the war.

## Chapter Two

### Sociopolitical Commentary in a Postwar Classic: Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945)

*Nada* was the first novel by the young writer Carmen Laforet, who was born in Barcelona in 1921, but was raised and educated in Gran Canaria in the Canary Islands. As a child, she was encouraged in all cultural and academic pursuits and was content with family life until the death of her mother in 1934 and the subsequent remarriage of her father.<sup>71</sup> Laforet was in Gran Canaria during the Spanish Civil War but in 1939, at the age of eighteen, moved to Barcelona to begin her university studies. There, in the war-torn Catalan city, she lived for one year with relatives (an experience that would later be the inspiration for her first novel), before moving to Madrid to begin a law degree which she would never complete. In 1944, Laforet finished writing *Nada*,<sup>72</sup> a novel for which she would become so well-known that it would eventually “become almost synonymous with the writer herself” (Jordan, *Laforet, Nada* 9). Manuel Cerezales, a friend who was involved in a small publishing company and would later become her husband, encouraged the author to present her manuscript to a new literary competition held by Barcelona’s Editorial Destino and it was thus that *Nada* became the first recipient of the now annual Premio Nadal (Johnson, *Carmen Laforet* 25).<sup>73</sup> In addition to being critically-acclaimed, *Nada* also proved to be immensely popular with the Spanish public, with three editions printed in 1945 alone (Sanz Villanueva, *La novela española* 120).<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Laforet and her brothers never got on with their stepmother who is described as hysterical and jealous of her new husband’s children (“Carmen Laforet, el silencio de una escritora”). A number of critics have made links between the figure of the stepmother and various characters in Laforet’s fictional works. Teresa Rosenvinge and Benjamín Prado, for example, speculate that Gloria may be a representation of Laforet’s stepmother (35).

<sup>72</sup> Laforet has herself often said that *Nada* was written in the space of seven months in 1944; however, her biographers believe that large parts of the novel had already been drafted in previous years. See Caballé and Rolón Barada 140.

<sup>73</sup> The Premio Nadal was established by Barcelona’s Editorial Destino in 1944 in memory of one of Destino’s former directors, Eugenio Nadal, who had died at the age of twenty-seven that year. It is still awarded annually and is now the longest-running literary competition in Spain. Since its inception, it has been awarded to a number of prominent twentieth-century Spanish novelists including Delibes, Medio, Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, Ana María Matute, Martín Gaité and Jesús Fernández Santos.

<sup>74</sup> The year of the publication of *Nada* is given as 1944 in many sources, perhaps because Laforet submitted the manuscript to the panel for the Premio Nadal in late 1944. However, the prize was announced in January 1945 and the first edition was published later that year.

The basic plot of *Nada* is as follows: Andrea, an eighteen-year old orphan, arrives in Barcelona soon after the end of the Civil War to live with relatives and study humanities at the city's university. The atmosphere at the family home on the Calle Aribau is turbulent and bizarre: Andrea's uncles, Juan and Román, are constantly fighting; Román is manipulative and sinister, although charming towards Andrea at times, while Juan has good intentions but a violent temper; Juan's cheerful but simple wife Gloria has a history with both brothers; Angustias, Andrea's unmarried aunt, is controlling and strictly conservative; while the long-suffering grandmother is kind-hearted but powerless to protect her family members from each other. Andrea finds some relief from the hardships of her home life in her friends at university, particularly Ena, a beautiful girl from a wealthy family. It is through Ena's family that Andrea manages to leave Barcelona a year later for a new life in Madrid, but not before the family turmoil culminates in Román's suicide. The question of the level of autobiography in the novel, as Andrea's story is thus remarkably similar to Laforet's own experiences in the immediate postwar period, will be returned to later in this chapter.

Due to the fact that *Nada* is now considered a twentieth-century Spanish classic, it is no surprise that the novel has been the subject of a wide-ranging number of critical studies. Among these are studies of the narrative form and technique used in Laforet's novel<sup>75</sup> and studies which focus on the classification of *Nada* within a particular genre,<sup>76</sup> but the majority of critics have tended to focus on the psychological and existential aspects of the novel. These readings emphasise Andrea's personal development during her year in Barcelona; that is to say, her "psychological and emotional passage from late adolescence to adulthood" (Dolgin n.p.).<sup>77</sup> Many of the scholars who have taken this approach have also highlighted the importance of the postwar setting in providing the nihilistic background for the psychological novel; Robert Spires, for example, argues that the sociopolitical

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<sup>75</sup> See, for example, El Saffar.

<sup>76</sup> See Dever (who discusses *Nada* as a gothic novel) and Foster (who attempts to classify the novel as a romance).

<sup>77</sup> Examples of these approaches are Johnson, *Carmen Laforet*; Jordan, *Laforet, Nada*; Petrea; and Eoff. Among the most prominent psychological readings of *Nada* are those who see the novel as a female *bildungsroman*. See M. Thomas and Collins.



circumstances are not documented directly, but serve as a backdrop to “la experiencia de una psique que choca con la nueva realidad española de posguerra” (73).<sup>78</sup> Few, however, consider the possibility that Laforet’s depiction of the scarred, divided and hypocritical society of postwar Spain is in itself worth closer examination; it is such an approach that I adopt in this chapter.

A small number of studies, however, do highlight the significance of the sociopolitical context in Andrea’s story and would describe the novel as socially or politically-committed. Among these are a number that consider the novel to be critical of the regime and its values from a predominantly feminist perspective, arguing that the novel discredits the Francoist patriarchy, such as Irene Mizrahi and Roberta Johnson’s studies which will be drawn on later in this chapter.<sup>79</sup> Other scholars have explored how *Nada* denounces Francoism through the theme of food or hidden anti-Francoist symbolism.<sup>80</sup> Interestingly, a small number of other critics have interpreted the political message in *Nada* entirely differently, positing that *Nada* fails to be critical of, and perhaps even endorses, Francoist ideology. In 1950, Jorge Semprún, the exiled Spanish writer and politician with strong ties to the Spanish Communist Party, severely criticised the novel because it merely showed the decay of the *pequeña burguesía* and provided no hope for the working classes (Semprún cited in Aznar Soler 48–53). In the area of feminist criticism, Geraldine Nichols proposes that the reason *Nada* passed Francoist censorship is because it demonstrates a view of women that was very much in line with the regime’s ideology (*Descifrar la diferencia* 30). These views will be returned to later in this chapter, but I will argue here that the author is unlikely to have intended to transmit this type of ideological message in her novel.

For the most part, however, the social and political value of *Nada* has been overlooked by scholars or, in any case, overshadowed by psychological or existential interpretations. The principal explanation for the dismissal of *Nada*’s social value lies

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<sup>78</sup> Spires refers to both *Nada* and Cela’s *La familia de Pascual Duarte*.

<sup>79</sup> It should be noted, however, that Mizrahi’s study is not a purely social interpretation, relying heavily on a psychoanalytical approach.

<sup>80</sup> See Ortiz and Ebels. Ebels’ exploration of anti-Francoist symbols in Laforet’s novel relies largely on often obscure references to traditional Catalan placenames and figures to demonstrate that Laforet’s novel can be understood as politically subversive under Franco.

in the way in which postwar Spanish literature developed and in how it is usually categorised. It was not until the emergence of the *novela social* genre in the 1950s that Spanish novelists began to explicitly present their work within a political framework; as a result, the social and political value of any earlier literature is generally ignored. Laforet's novel both predates Sartre's essay on political commitment in literature and its adoption and distribution in Spanish artistic circles. Furthermore, *Nada*'s personal and subjective style bears little resemblance to the objective voice and collective protagonist favoured by the *novelistas sociales*, and it is therefore rarely discussed alongside the work of the later social realists. *Nada* is sometimes classified as *tremendismo*, and sometimes as *realismo existencial* (Sobejano, "Direcciones de la novela española" 51–52 and Sanz Villanueva, *La novela española* 120), a label that attempts to bridge the gap between pre-war and European existentialism and the social realism of the 1950s. For Sobejano, the genre *realismo existencial* includes writers who experienced the Civil War as adults, who have few personal or intellectual ties between them as a group, and who are not "completamente conformista ante la actualidad española, pero tampoco inconforme en grado suficiente para romper" (*Novela española de nuestro tiempo* 188–89); that is, writers whose work does not correspond with the regime's own publicity and values, but who have not yet developed the expression of their opposition to the extent that it would be by the later social realists.

There is a widely-held belief that there was a "progressively evolving realism" in Spanish literature from the end of the Civil War until the social realist movement peaked in the early 1960s (Jordan, *Writing and Politics* 5). Such an understanding of the evolution of the postwar novel implies that *Nada* (written in 1944) is less 'realist' than the social realist novels of the subsequent decades and is, as a result, of lesser sociopolitical value. *Nada*'s place in postwar literature is most commonly described as a 'stepping stone' towards 'genuine' social realism.<sup>81</sup> Jordan opposes this idea of "evolving realism," stating that this perspective is misleading because any assumption of a linear "progression" towards an "apex" (in this case the

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<sup>81</sup> Mangini, for example, describes the novel as containing a "realismo evolucionante" (*Rojos y rebeldes* 27).

fully-fledged social realism of the late 1950s), is only possible in hindsight (*Writing and Politics* 4). For this reason, instead of placing too much emphasis on *Nada*'s place in the "evolution" of postwar Spanish literature, I argue that the novel should be evaluated in its own right and within its own particular historical and cultural context. The harsh government censorship during the immediate postwar period is another factor to bear in mind when comparing *Nada*—as well as *La noria* and, to a certain extent, *El fulgor y la sangre*—to the social realist novels of the following decade, as censorship became slightly more flexible when the regime began to open up in the 1950s.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to Laforet's chronological position in the postwar literary canon, her gender has also affected the evaluation of her work by scholars. As indicated by Francisca López, there is a general tendency in traditional literary criticism to discount the social and political value of works by female writers because the scope of their work was mostly limited to the personal and domestic sphere, rather than the workplace, which was the quintessential 'social' theme of the *novela social* (17). This was especially true in Spain where the women's movement was much slower to emerge than in other European countries and where women had been virtually absent from public life (with the exception of the short duration of the Second Republic). This situation was reflected in the sentimental novels popular with most women writers before the Civil War. In relation to *Nada*, Marsha Collins perpetuates the notion of the inherent 'difference' between male and female writers of the postwar saying that the "intimate, bittersweet, lyrical qualities of *Nada* bear no apparent relation to subsequent Spanish fiction other than their affinity with the works of such contemporary female novelists as Elena Quiroga and Ana María Matute" (298). The issues that arise in the lives of women—be they in the home, the workplace or the street—are, however, equally as important as the traditionally 'masculine' issues of public life, particularly in the context of Francoist Spain where

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<sup>82</sup> Paula Martínez-Michel describes the different "stages" of Francoist censorship originally identified by Román Gubern, the first being 1938–1939 (during the Civil War), and the second being 1939–1945, during which time censorship was particularly severe because the regime was still attempting to establish itself. After 1945, censorship opened up slightly; Martínez-Michel claims that this was because Franco was required to make Spain appear more democratic, outwardly at least, after the Allied victory in World War II (18). It is important to take into account that *Nada* is the only novel in this thesis to be published within this more severe stage of censorship.

women were disproportionately targeted by the regime's strict religious and moral norms. Laforet's *Nada* touches on a number of important gender issues, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Finally, a further explanation for the general lack of interest in *Nada*'s sociopolitical framework is that socially-committed literature, as outlined in the Introduction to this thesis, quickly became unfashionable from the 1960s. For many critics, the idea of documenting the reality of postwar Spanish life was considered an inferior literary pursuit; it was thought that instead, writers should have been striving for more universal literary themes, an attitude which affects the critical reception of all of the novels studied in this thesis. David Foster, for example, describes the reading of Andrea's family environment as a portrait of postwar moral degeneration in Spain as "poco satisfactorio [...] para el crítico que estima la literatura más por su mensaje universal que por su pequeño valor de documento social" (90).

In this chapter, a broader sociopolitical reading of *Nada* will be proposed based on a close analysis of the novel's relationship with its postwar sociopolitical context and with Laforet's own experiences around the time of writing her first novel. I will argue that *Nada* contains a wide-ranging testimony and criticism of postwar values that must be evaluated in the context of the constraints of censorship and in light of the totalitarian culture of the time, given that any mention of the difficulties of Spanish life under Franco were silenced in the public sphere. My analysis will also consider issues specific to women's lives in Francoist Spain, and will therefore draw on some existing feminist criticism on the novel; however, it will be argued that this aspect forms only one part of the overall critical portrait that Laforet painted of postwar Spain in *Nada*.

With its frank illustration of postwar hunger and poverty and its suggestions of Barcelona's booming criminal underbelly, *Nada*'s depiction of life in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War reflected the reality of life for the vast majority of Spaniards and provided a stark contrast to the 'official' version of Franco's Spain. Mangini uses the paradigm of the 'two Spains' to describe the difference between 'official' Spain and the real state of affairs: "por un lado, había la España folklórica y

optimista propagada por el régimen a través de los medios de comunicación social, y por otro, la España de la miseria, el miedo y la desolación, que duró hasta mediados de los años cuarenta” (*Rojos y rebeldes* 16).<sup>83</sup> Laforet’s novel depicts the latter ‘Spain’: Andrea’s formerly upper middle-class family now have to resort to black market dealings, gambling and selling off their furniture piece by piece to put food on the table. Furthermore, the novel insinuates the extent to which crime and prostitution has flourished in the difficult postwar conditions. Angustias describes the city as being full of danger and temptation, saying to Andrea: “La ciudad, hija mía, es un infierno. Y en toda España no hay una ciudad que se parezca más al infierno que Barcelona...” (26).<sup>84</sup> Behind Angustias’ back, Gloria escapes to the *barrio chino* (Barcelona’s red-light district) most nights to gamble at her sister’s ‘establishment’; meanwhile, the family, as well as most readers, assume she is working as a prostitute—although this assumption is never vocalised—until the situation is clarified in Chapter XV.<sup>85</sup> One night, Andrea follows Juan into the *barrio chino*, running through streets teeming with streetwalkers and criminals; Andrea describes the *barrio chino* as “empobrecido y chillón. [...] Todo el mundo me parecía disfrazado con mal gusto y me rozaba el ruido y el olor a vino” (163).

In addition to Gloria’s gambling, the family is further linked to the criminal underworld through Andrea’s uncle, Román, and his “negocios sucios” (229) or illegal black market dealings. This element in the novel reflects the impact of the regime’s policy of autarky and the corruption that arose in the system of food rationing. Román makes a living off the black market, disappearing on mysterious business trips for days on end; one time he admits to having crossed the Pyrenees into France and always has a generous supply of coffee, alcohol and cigarettes in his attic room (62).

As Román does not share his profits with his family, they are forced to rely on the state rations which are clearly shown to be insufficient; we see an example of this with the daily bread rations in the novel. Food and hunger constitute a major theme

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<sup>83</sup> See Chapter One for a full discussion of censorship and propaganda in the Francoist media.

<sup>84</sup> All in-text page references to the novel refer to Laforet, *Nada* (2004).

<sup>85</sup> It emerges that Gloria’s sister had suggested that she could earn money by selling her body but Gloria had refused because she loves Juan (230).

in *Nada*, reflecting, as previously discussed, the fact that hunger was part of the reality of postwar life for a large majority in Spain.<sup>86</sup> The maid, Antonia, maintains her position of control over the household through her power over the distribution of food, and will not allow the family members to enter the kitchen. The grandmother, for example, is forced to sneak into the kitchen which is off-limits to her (“los dominios de la terrible mujer”) on Christmas Day to look for a treat, and has to stand on a chair to reach the food hidden away in a high cupboard (74).<sup>87</sup> The way the scarce food supply is controlled in the Aribau household replicates the political hierarchy involved in the distribution of food in Francoist Spain, as noted by María Inés Ortiz: “Que Antonia estuviese en control representa a esa dictadura que limita los recursos para un grupo privilegiado, mientras deja morir de hambre a los demás, sin razón aparente o por el puro placer de verlos sufrir” (n.p). Ortiz then relates this critique more generally to “una crítica al poder dictatorial ejercido sobre la mujer en la sociedad española de Post-guerra” (n.p), making a more specific allusion to the particular gendered repression of the period.

When Angustias leaves for the convent, Andrea decides to arrange her own meals with her small *pensión*, rather than eat with the rest of the family.<sup>88</sup> She continues to suffer from malnutrition, although it is now largely a result of her own poor discipline: she spends her monthly allowance on luxuries such as sweets, soap, and gifts for Ena and her mother (113) and then struggles to survive for the rest of the month on almonds and what little else she can manage to buy. Andrea finds a cheap restaurant where she eats occasionally when she can afford it; the description of the establishment and the people who eat there paints a picture of a time when food was a limited resource for which Spaniards felt they had to compete: “Oscuro, con unas mesas tristes. [...] La gente comía de prisa, mirándose unos a otros, y no hablaban ni una palabra” (118). On the last days of the month, when her monthly

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<sup>86</sup> The author herself has alluded to feeling weak and bloated due to a lack of food and poor diet during her time in Barcelona in a later letter to her son (Caballé and Rolón Barada 106).

<sup>87</sup> Interestingly, the author’s biographers mention that Laforet’s stepmother in Gran Canaria used to lock the food away from Carmen and her brothers (“Carmen Laforet, el silencio de una escritora”).

<sup>88</sup> Ortiz discusses the way in which Andrea breaks with the discourse of power by putting up a “barrera gastronómica” when she decides not to eat with the rest of the family (n.p.).

allowance has run out, Andrea eats only her daily ration of bread.<sup>89</sup> Hunger begins to take over her life; in hindsight, the narrator realises that the headaches that would not let her sleep and her hysterical behaviour were caused by intense hunger (132). The all-consuming hunger suffered by the characters in *Nada* can be regarded as a political statement in the context of postwar Spain because any public reference to food shortages, or the existence of the illegal black market, was prohibited; furthermore, Francoist propaganda claimed that quality of life had improved under the new regime and that rationing provided enough food for everyone.

The sharpness of Andrea's hunger and the family's poverty is heightened by the contrast with the household's former prosperity. Andrea arrives in Barcelona with pleasant memories of time spent in her relatives' grand apartment as a child (21), but is confronted by the evidence of the decay of their wealth as soon as she enters the building on the Calle Aribau. Everything is decrepit and in complete disrepair: their expensive furniture (that which has not yet been sold to the dustman) is stacked up and dusty because they have had to rent out half of their apartment, and a chandelier hangs covered in cobwebs with only one remaining light bulb (15). Andrea describes the living room as "la buhardilla de un palacio abandonado, y era, según supe, el salón de la casa" (19)—a reference that again conjures up an image of a prosperous past now in ruins. Later, Angustias' friends, when they come to farewell her, remark on the changes evident in the family home: "[L]o que ha cambiado tu casa. ¡Lo que han cambiado los tiempos!" (99). Indeed, it is not only their economic status that has diminished, but the mood in the house and the city has also changed, which amounts to a subtle literary representation of a real change in the social and political situation. The bright, optimistic past is expressly juxtaposed with the lack of opportunities in the grim present when Andrea reflects on the portrait of her grandparents and the story of how they came to live in Barcelona: "Pero en aquel tiempo el mundo era optimista y ellos se querían mucho" (22).

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<sup>89</sup>Laforet describes in a letter that the rationed bread of the 1940s was so brittle that it shattered when dropped (Caballé and Rolón Barada 106).

Laforet, however, never expressly names the cause of the family's economic misfortune and the city's social decay, presumably because she is aware that the censor would object to such an overtly negative reflection of the Francoist state. For some scholars, as discussed in Chapter One, the absence of an explicit connection between 'cause' and 'effect' negates the possibility of political commitment because it is considered purely testimonial. Several critics have, indeed, raised this specific issue in relation to *Nada*: Eugenio de Nora has argued, for example, that *Nada* cannot be classified as a work of social significance because no cause-effect relationship is established between the current state of affairs and what has caused it (de Nora cited in Gil Casado 259); Cyrus DeCoster, while acknowledging the significance of Laforet's nihilistic and sordid portrayal of postwar Spanish society, also believes that *Nada* falls short of political commitment because Laforet does not directly examine the causes for this "spiritual decadence" (187). Stacey L. Dolgin contends, nevertheless, that the absence of an explicit connection only serves to highlight the question of the origins of the misery described: "[the] causes and culprits of such human misery haunt us because of their conspicuous absence" (n.p.).<sup>90</sup> While the family's fall from grace could be related to the death of the patriarch and Juan and Román's inability to earn a living for the extended family, it is clear to the informed reader that the war is predominantly to blame for the blatant contrast between the happy past and the grim present, and that there is little hope of immediate improvement under the new regime.

In the novel, the war is used to explain sudden changes in behaviour and circumstances. Angustias, for example, blames the strange behaviour of her brothers Juan and Román on the war: "[D]espués de la guerra han quedado un poco mal de los nervios..." (27). The grandmother considers Andrea's having witnessed the horrors of the war to have resulted in a loss of innocence because, when she tells Andrea that she thinks Gloria may be pregnant again, she adds: "En otros tiempos

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<sup>90</sup> Dolgin argues, however, that *Nada*'s critical nature lies solely in the "ambiguities" in the novel, going as far as saying that "[i]n *Nada*, there is nothing offensive to the established order, nothing which contradicts the 'official' truth, nothing which accuses or blames anyone or anything for the misery, hunger, decay, etc. that form the backdrop of the protagonist's experiences, nor can there be discerned anything which even remotely would distinguish perpetrators from victims" (n.p.). While the "ambiguities" are undoubtedly significant in *Nada*, and probably necessary due to censorship, I argue in this chapter that many aspects of Laforet's novel contradict the 'official' truth.



no te lo hubiera dicho... porque tú eres una niña. Pero ahora, después de la guerra..." (140). Delibes agrees that the trauma of the war is the principal explanation for the family's unhinged behaviour in Laforet's novel: "Existe [...] una base bélica en la novela que la escritora no oculta. Los habitantes de la calle Aribau son seres atormentados, desquiciados por la guerra" (89–90). There are also less direct allusions to a change in the family circumstances brought about by the overwhelming emotional consequences of recent Spanish history: Laforet hints in Chapter VI that the dysfunctional family life is really a symptom of a much deeper trauma: "Con frecuencia me encontré sorprendida, entre aquellas gentes de la calle de Aribau, por el aspecto de tragedia que tomaban los sucesos más nimios, a pesar de que aquellos seres llevaban cada uno un peso, una obsesión real dentro de sí, a la que pocas veces aludían directamente" (65).

It may seem natural to the modern reader that Spaniards were suffering, both materially and psychologically, in the immediate aftermath of the devastating Civil War; however, Laforet's depiction of the psychological effects of the war must be understood in the context of the way in which the conflict was officially represented by the regime at the time of the novel's publication. As discussed in Chapter One, the establishment regarded the war not as a painful tragedy, but as a glorious crusade that had banished the social and economic problems of pre-war Spain. Suggesting that the war and the outcome of the conflict was responsible for the despair and misery in the Aribau household and beyond, as Laforet does in *Nada*, was therefore at odds with official discourse.

Not only does Laforet bring up the painful after-effects of the war in a culture where it could only be discussed in terms of Francoist triumph or was otherwise condemned to silence, it could also be argued that her references to the war demonstrate a fairly pro-Republican stance. Both Juan and Román initially fought for the Republican side and we are told that Román even had an important position with the *rojos* (46); however, we also learn that Román changed allegiances and started working as a spy for the Nationalists. He tried to convince Juan to do the same (47) and although Juan resisted we can assume by the fact that he returned to Barcelona as soon as Franco's forces had taken the city (and that he arrived bearing

rationed items), that Román was successful (51).<sup>91</sup> In this quite direct way, Laforet identifies the unlikeable and malicious Román with the Nationalist side, and his unstable allegiances and his work as a spy are seen as cowardly and disloyal.<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, Juan, who unfortunately had no willpower to stand up to his manipulative and controlling brother, but is ultimately portrayed as a good man, is identified more strongly with the Republican cause. Although unpredictable and sometimes violent, Juan's genuine love for his child ("Juan tenía para la criatura ternuras insospechadas, íntimas y casi feroces" (91)) demonstrates his humanity, in contrast to Román, who has regard only for money and objects.<sup>93</sup>

Another anecdote from the novel that suggests the author's sympathy for the Republican cause is the grandmother's account of what happened when Republican soldiers come to search their house during the war. The Republican soldier questions her religious beliefs and when she in return asks whether he 'believes,' he answers: "No, ni permito que lo crea nadie." The grandmother then declares that she must, therefore, be more 'Republican' than he is, because she believes in the freedom of ideas. Despite her impertinence, he admires her courage and the next time, he brings her a rosary as a gift. This is surely quite a sympathetic portrayal of the Republican side, and the grandmother, though she disagrees with the soldier on the question of religion, evidently equates Republican ideology with positive qualities, such as tolerance and the freedom of ideas (50). The conservative and disagreeable Angustias, on the other hand, identifies with the Nationalist side and equates the Republicans with depravity and chaos; when criticising Andrea for her ill-discipline she declares: "Parece que hayas vivido suelta en zona roja y no en un convento de monjas durante la guerra" (96).

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<sup>91</sup> The details on Juan and Román's wartime activity are vague, with several anecdotes left open-ended; for example, Gloria tells Andrea that when Juan first introduced her to Román, the two brothers were very secretive, talking at night and looking over maps (47). It is likely that the author is deliberately ambiguous with such details in order to avoid problems with censorship.

<sup>92</sup> In Chapter IV, Gloria describes Román's behaviour during the war: "¿Tú sabes que Román tenía un cargo importante con los rojos? Pero era un espía, una persona baja y ruin que vendía a los que le favorecieron. Sea por lo que sea, el espionaje es de cobardes..." (46).

<sup>93</sup> Such an interpretation is, of course, subjective and the censor could have understood these same characteristics in a different way. It is possible, for example, that the censor saw Juan's unpredictable and violent temperament as typical of a Republican, and assumed the reference to the *rojos* was a pejorative one. While I argue that *Nada* subtly exhibits Laforet's sympathy for the Republican cause, the multitude of possible interpretations probably helped a number of postwar novels pass censorship, as will be discussed in further detail in the chapter on Aldecoa's *El fulgor y la sangre*.

The effects of the recent conflict on Barcelona are also evident in Laforet's novel: it had held out against the Nationalists until 1939, enduring aerial bombing attacks from Franco's forces and his Italian allies during the conflict and had thus suffered gravely, both physically and psychologically. Soldevila Durante notes that, being set in Barcelona, *Nada* portrays one of the cities that was most heavily affected by the war and postwar repression, "no sólo como antiguo baluarte republicano, sino por su nacionalismo autonomista" (251). Precise details in the novel are limited: the only mention of the air attacks in the novel is by Gloria, who recounts the terrible bombing of the night the Nationalists entered the city while she was alone in a clinic giving birth (51). The damage to buildings is also referred to only briefly; there is, for example, an allusion to the damaged Santa María del Mar church which Andrea visits with Pons, which has broken stained-glass windows and blackened stones as a result of being burnt during the war (143–44).<sup>94</sup> Mostly, however, the traces of the war are more abstract: Andrea had high expectations of the exciting big city when she first arrived ("la maravilla de haber llegado por fin a una ciudad grande, adorada en mis ensueños por desconocida" (13)), and although the city continues to have flashes of beauty for her (particularly in contrast to the eerie and suffocating atmosphere inside the family home), it soon becomes clear that Barcelona has lost its spirit in the war. This can be perceived, for example, in Andrea's nocturnal impressions of the ambience of the streets: "Había una soledad impresionante, como si todos los habitantes de la ciudad hubiesen muerto" (109); elsewhere, a square is again described as having "un aspecto muerto" (162), and Barcelona as having a sad beauty (186).

However, not all sectors of Spanish society had been disadvantaged by the war and the establishment of the totalitarian regime: the striking disparity between the poverty of Andrea's immediate environment and suffering of the majority, versus the apparent affluence and success of a small minority is also a major feature of the novel. Life for Andrea's family, who are by no means representative of the true poverty of the postwar city because they are still holding on to the vestiges of

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<sup>94</sup> Although it is not specified in the novel, the church was probably burnt by anti-clerical Republican forces.

their upper-middle-class existence (although unable to put enough food on the table), is contrasted with the wealth of the young people Andrea meets at university. When Pons invites Andrea to join his 'bohemian' friends one afternoon, Andrea is astounded by their flippant attitude towards money, as Iturdiaga tells the group how he squandered 2000 pesetas in a short time (147). Andrea, as a young woman, feels self-conscious about her impoverished clothes and appearance, comparing her own dowdy clothes and smell of bleach to the soft perfume of Ena's hair (60). She feels particularly embarrassed about her appearance because her classmates all come from wealthy backgrounds, but the reality of postwar Spain was that, outside of the wealthier suburbs of the large cities, almost no houses had their own bathroom and in 1945, half of all Spanish villages were still without running water (Lafuente 67–68). The ways in which the Civil War and subsequent Francoist economic policy exacerbated the divide between the rich and the poor will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter on Romero's *La noria*.

Laforet's depiction of the wealth disparity in postwar Spain anticipates one of the major themes of the 'social realist' novels of the 1950s. She, however, limits herself to comparing the circumstances of the impoverished bourgeoisie to the affluence of the wealthy industrialist families of Barcelona, many of whom had close ties to the regime, without touching on the plight of the working classes. Writing about the dire conditions of the life of Spanish *obreros* was typical of the *novela social* of the 1950s and 1960s, and the fact that Laforet does not broach this subject would negate the possibility of social commitment in *Nada* for radical critics such as Semprún and for many of the social realist writers themselves.<sup>95</sup> Regardless, Laforet's decision to limit herself to a critique of the postwar world with which she was familiar was probably wise, as many of the later *novelistas sociales* who, being from the upper-middle classes themselves, found they were unsuccessful in writing about a sector of society (rural and urban labourers) of which they had no personal experience (Jordan, *Writing and Politics* 23).

*Nada* can, therefore, be classified as a 'bourgeois' novel, written by a young writer of bourgeois origin, and also, as argued by Míguez, written for a bourgeois

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<sup>95</sup> See Aznar Soler n.p.

audience (2). Laforet is, however, somewhat critical of the importance placed on class boundaries in society, particularly in relation to Andrea's family, who hold on to their social status despite their current poverty. Laforet comments ironically, for example, on Angustias' preoccupation with keeping up appearances: instead of showing genuine concern for Andrea's well-being, Angustias mostly worries about her reputation, telling Andrea that if she was alone in the world, she could do what she liked, but now she has a good Christian family, and a name, and she must behave decently (56). Andrea is frustrated that poorer people on the street ask her for the little money and food she has, because she is, despite her poverty, still considered to be of a higher social status, and she therefore feels obliged to offer them her charity (174). The family maintain their disdain for the lower classes, as illustrated by Juan's reluctance to let Gloria visit her own sister: "Todo porque es de condición humilde y no tiene tantas pamplinas... Pero en su casa se come bien. Hay pan blanco [...]"; Gloria thus wishes that she had married an "obrero," because they live better than "los señores" (123–24).<sup>96</sup>

Much is made in the Calle Aribau of Gloria's social origins, and Angustias directly blames Gloria, the rural working-class girl, for the deterioration of the household—"con la mujer de tu tío Juan ha entrado la serpiente maligna." Angustias also blames her for the grandmother's 'madness': "Con los sufrimientos de la guerra, que, aparentemente soportaba tan bien, ha enloquecido. Y luego esa mujer, con sus halagos, le ha acabado de trastornar la conciencia" (96).<sup>97</sup> It is assumed, as a result of

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<sup>96</sup> Mizrahi comments, however, that Gloria's perception of how *obreros* live is somewhat naive, as the working classes had suffered gravely during and after the war; many were unemployed and their families went hungry (86). Additionally, while Gloria's sister always has good food at home, she makes her living from underground criminal activities in the *barrio chino* and Gloria's ideas of how the working class live are therefore misguided.

<sup>97</sup> Nichols uses this aspect of the novel to explain why *Nada* was not objected to by the censors, despite the fact that it contains a rather acerbic portrait of postwar life. Nichols argues that there are two aspects of Laforet's novel that censors would have identified with the regime's ideology: firstly, that the novel supports the biblical idea of woman as the cause for the downfall of mankind (Gloria as "la mujer serpiente"), and secondly, that by letting Gloria, the lower-class girl, into their middle-class house (typical of Republican ideals) they have doomed the household because, according to Francoist ideology, everyone had to "vivir jerárquica y tradicionalmente, cada cual en su lugar, todo elemento foráneo eliminado o subyugado" (*Descifrar la diferencia* 29–31). However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, Laforet was not raised within this conservative culture and the evidence of her liberal disposition makes it extremely unlikely that she held such opinions herself. Despite some of the adults' attitudes towards Gloria, Andrea admires her uncle's wife and it could easily be argued that Gloria is the only reason the family survives this difficult period. It is also unlikely, regardless of Laforet's intentions, that the censors approved of this otherwise critical novel because of the perceived presence of such an ideology, given that the evidence from the censors' files demonstrates

Gloria's more humble social background, that she is not a 'respectable' woman, in contrast to the allegedly impeccable Angustias. Gloria tells Andrea that when Román first brought her home to Barcelona during the war, don Jerónimo, who was in hiding in their apartment, found Gloria's presence in the house intolerable, accusing her of being Juan's "querida" (45).<sup>98</sup> The accusation turns out to be somewhat hypocritical however, because Angustias, as we are to learn later in the novel, had been don Jerónimo's "querida" for many years. Don Jerónimo's wife is similarly scandalised when she hears there is a "mujerzuela" in the house where her husband is hiding (49); nevertheless, it is actually Angustias who poses the threat to her marriage. Martín Gaité discusses at length how working-class girls were brought up differently to middle and upper-class girls in traditional Spanish society, writing that, in the poor shantytowns that surrounded postwar cities: "Generalmente se reconoce que la libertad de trato entre muchachos y muchachas era absoluta, así como la indiferencia de los padres ante el hecho de que sus hijos, desde la primera edad, camparan tranquilamente por sus respetos" (94). Whereas girls from higher social strata were zealously protected from unrelated males and "la calle «anárquica y variopinta»" (*Usos amorosos* 97). 'Decent' families therefore regarded young women of the lower classes as 'ill-bred' and presumed them to be sexually promiscuous.

In contrast to Angustias' eagerness to cling onto the remnants of her formal social position, Andrea's wealthy 'bohemian' friends express a desire to distance themselves from their wealthy and conservative backgrounds; however, the author's somewhat satirical portrait proves their attitudes to be superficial. The young men outwardly disparage their family wealth ("A mí, mi padre no me comprende [...] ¿Cómo me va a comprender si solo sabe almacenar millones?" (146)) and emphasise their alternative lifestyles and artistic sensibilities in an attempt to dissociate

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that they paid very little attention to the novel, regarding it as having scarce literary value but being inoffensive to the regime's values. As discussed in Chapter One, the process of censorship in postwar Spain was somewhat arbitrary: most censors carried out this work in addition to a full-time government job and novels, especially one by a previously unknown young woman, were not always closely scrutinised.

<sup>98</sup> As Barcelona was in the Republican zone until almost the end of the war, we can assume that don Jerónimo was wanted by the *rojos*; as a wealthy man whose business has flourished since the war, it is likely he was a Francoist sympathiser.

themselves from the privileged political and industrial elite; yet none is prepared to renounce the benefits of the way that Francoism allows their families to live. Iturdiaga, for example, gets by through his connections: he has been appointed as the art critic for a well-known paper, because “se necesita solamente sensibilidad, y ya la tengo. Y además, amigos... Yo los tengo también” (187). Ironically, Iturdiaga then derides Jaime, Ena’s boyfriend, as a “niño mimado [...] una persona sin iniciativas a la que en la vida se le ha ocurrido hacer nada”; Andrea, however, notes the hypocrisy immediately (178). In addition to ridiculing the superficial open-mindedness of the young upper classes, Laforet intimates the extent to which artistic circles of 1940s Spain were tied up to the regime’s elite and their values. Mizrahi, for example, describes Laforet’s portrayal of this ‘bohemian’ world as “una enorme sátira contra el medio artístico y crítico del franquismo, presentándolo como un ambiente de niños mimados sin educación ni talento que se auto-promocionan [...] mediante el amiguismo y la degradación de los ‘consagrados’” (115).

Although never explicitly alluded to in *Nada*, the university which Andrea attends alongside these wealthy friends was similarly entrenched in Francoist principles. Following the Nationalist victory, academic staff with any liberal connections had been removed (executed, imprisoned, exiled or simply discharged depending on their degree of involvement with the Republic), and many had been replaced by, often incompetent, Francoist sympathisers.<sup>99</sup> Mangini describes the postwar university environment as ‘military’: “La universidad tendría a partir de entonces una semblanza no intelectual, sino militar” (*Rojos y rebeldes* 17).<sup>100</sup> In the novel, the deplorable state of the postwar university is reflected in Andrea’s complete lack of enthusiasm for her studies. We know nothing about what she is studying except that it is humanities (it includes Latin and Greek) and there are no references to her professors, her subjects, or if she is doing well in her exams. Interestingly, Andrea’s lack of interest in the university mirrors Laforet’s own experience: after starting a degree in humanities in Barcelona, she changed the

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<sup>99</sup> Many of the Francoist sympathisers who were admitted to academic positions after the war had previously been secondary school teachers (Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes* 17). The *depuraciones* that affected Spanish universities and schools in the 1940s will be discussed in detail in the last chapter of this thesis, on Medio’s *Diario de una maestra*.

<sup>100</sup> See also Rosenvinge and Prado 37 for a discussion on the effects of the war on Spanish universities.

direction of her studies and began a Law degree in Madrid (which she would never complete either).<sup>101</sup>

Crucially, however, the university provides Andrea with the companions of her own generation that she craves. There is a definite sense of a 'generation gap' in the postwar society depicted in *Nada*, as Andrea describes her anxiety to make friends of her own age; only they could understand her and help her confront the "mundo un poco fantasmal de las personas maduras" (57). Andrea mentions the 'generation gap' again in relation to Angustias in particular: "Es difícil entenderse con las gentes de otra generación, aun cuando no quieran imponernos su modo de ver las cosas" (93). The idea of the 'generation gap,' introduced in Chapter One of this thesis, recurs throughout Spanish postwar literature and manifests itself as a deliberate distancing between the younger generation who came of age in the postwar years, and the older generation whom they held responsible for the Civil War and its consequences. This attitude was mostly associated with the writers of the *generación de medio siglo* in which Laforet is usually not included; however, because she published *Nada* at such a young age (she is actually only a few years older than most prominent writers of the 1950s), she is in the same position in relation to the generation that fought the Civil War. The concept of the 'generation gap' and its significance in terms of social and political commitment in literature will be returned to in my discussion of García Hortelano's *Nuevas amistades*.

The distance that Andrea perceives between her own generation and the conservative older generation reinforces the novel's critical view of the very traditional social values that the Franco regime so vigorously promoted. The aspect of Francoist ideology that most affects Andrea is the inflexible gender-based moral code. *Nada* raises a number of significant issues in relation to a young woman's experiences in postwar Spain and demonstrates a rather critical view of the conservative attitude to gender. The author herself was raised in a liberal environment and has said that her father "never made her feel that some activities were reserved for men only" and "grew up with a sense that she could do anything

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<sup>101</sup> The most important role that the university played in Laforet's life in Barcelona is that it gave her some freedom from her aunt's control. In fact, she never even attended the examinations (Caballé and Rolón Barada 114, 123–24).



that desire and opportunity might present" (Johnson, *Carmen Laforet* 23). Laforet thus, in all likelihood, resented the rigid gender boundaries with which she was confronted when she arrived in Barcelona: the new regime had increased the *mayoría de edad* for females to twenty-four, so Laforet was unable to become legally independent, and had to be careful not to displease her *tutora* (her aunt Encarnación), who could send her back to her father in Gran Canaria (Caballé and Rolón Barada 103). I argue here that this sense of frustration is evident in *Nada*, which sheds light on many of the prohibitive gender norms of Francoist Spain.

Angustias tells Andrea that there are only two honourable paths for a woman: to get married or to become a nun (as Angustias is planning to do, thus replicating Francoist ideology) (94); Andrea, however, finds this idea difficult to accept. Andrea's character diverges from the 'official' version of Spanish femininity: she is an independent university student, who appears to be uninterested in marriage. Given that, according to official ideology, a woman's only ambition should be to find a husband, there was no need for an education, and Sección Femenina publications even warned young women about the dangers of being more educated than men. Despite her lack of interest in romance, Andrea has a number of male friends at a time when society deemed women seen in the company of male friends who were not relatives "frescas" or "locas" (López 22–23). Andrea even likes to wander the streets of Barcelona alone at night, despite warnings that her reputation will be ruined by doing so (56). In fact, Angustias' warning about the dangers of the *barrio chino*—"Hija mía, hay unas calles en las que si una señorita se metiera alguna vez, perdería para siempre su reputación"—only serves to increase Andrea's desire to go there: "Y yo, en aquel momento, me imaginé el barrio chino iluminado por una chispa de belleza" (56).

The singularity of Andrea as a literary character is discussed by Martín Gaité in *Desde la ventana*, in which she contrasts her to the heroines of the *novela rosa* genre popular in Spain at the time. It is to describe Andrea that Martín Gaité coins the term *chica rara*, one which she also applies to characters in novels by Ana María Matute, Medio, as well as her own work (89–99). Inmaculada de la Fuente adds that this 'type' of young woman was more closely aligned with Republican values: "tampoco

una jovencita soñadora y algo excéntrica como Carmen Laforet hubiera desentonado en la universidad republicana" (84). Rosa Galdona Pérez argues that nonconformist characters in literature, such as Andrea in *Nada*, are not just 'coincidental' or 'ornamental,' but are the result of a feeling of dissatisfaction expressed by the female writer:

La conducta femenina desviada no es fruto de la casualidad ni de la fatalidad, ni mucho menos, un elemento narrativo ornamental. Es la punta de lanza de un sentimiento de insatisfacción que la mujer escritora, aun inconscientemente, descarge en sus ficciones y un componente textual relevante que denota y connota actitudes personales suscitadas por la intolerancia colectiva. (195)

In other words, the nature of Andrea's character, rebellious and unconventional, can in itself be considered subversive in terms of official ideology on the author's part.

In Andrea's family, the oppressive moral standards that apply to women are actually almost exclusively transmitted by female characters: namely, Angustias and the grandmother. Angustias believes that it is her mission to educate Andrea and force her into obedience; she tells her niece that she must be like a 'fortress' and, as the city is a dangerous place for a young woman, she will not allow her to leave the house without her permission (26). While Angustias is thus an agent of Francoist ideology, she is also a victim of it; she hesitates, for example, when Andrea asks whether, in her opinion, a woman has no choice but to enter a convent if she cannot marry, answering uneasily: "No es ésa mi idea" (94). Mariana Petrea claims, however, that whenever Angustias is faced with an emotional choice, she recurs to the patriarchal norms of her society (75). Andrea eventually begins to understand that even her aunt has suffered from society's conservatism; therefore, when Angustias pulls Andrea aside on Christmas Day to make sure she will not believe Juan's accusations about her affair with don Jerónimo, Andrea exhibits a deliberate open and understanding attitude towards her aunt to counter Angustias' close-minded and disciplinary stance: "No quiero que me expliques nada. No creo que

tengas que darme cuenta de tus actos, tía. Y si te sirve de algo, te diré que creo imposible cualquier cosa poco moral que me dijeran de ti" (72–73).

The grandmother also viciously defends the patriarchal hierarchy in the family: as per the *doble moralidad* inherent in the Francoist moral system, she has blind faith in her two sons (despite their obvious flaws), but is extremely strict with her daughters, forcing all but Angustias from home (39).<sup>102</sup> It could be argued that this extremely conservative upbringing is at the root of many of the family's problems; indeed, Román, Juan and their sisters all blame the way they were brought up by their mother for the household troubles. Gloria says to her mother-in-law: "Pues Román no la quiere a usted, mamá; dice que los ha hecho desgraciados a todos con su procedimiento" (44). Later, after Román's suicide, Angustias' sisters blame their mother for his death: "Le malcriaste. Recuerda que le malcriabas, mamá. Así ha terminado..." (264). Angustias has a mixed attitude towards her mother: at one point she accuses her of lying to cover up Gloria's nocturnal escapades (89–90), but then later says to Andrea: "Tu abuela ha sido una santa, Andrea. En mi juventud, gracias a ella he vivido en el más puro de los sueños [...]" (96). This apparently contradictory point of view echoes the general paradoxical attitude towards women, and particularly mothers, that was prevalent in postwar Spain, as discussed in Chapter One.

Interestingly, the same patriarchal principles that are advocated by members of Andrea's family are actually subverted in the Aribau household, as posited by scholars such as Mizrahi and Johnson.<sup>103</sup> In contrast to the traditional patriarchal model where the male provides for his family, it is Angustias and Gloria who earn money for the family (with the exception of Román's black market dealings, the profits of which he keeps for himself). Angustias earns a wage working in an office for her lover, don Jerónimo, while Gloria tells Juan that she is selling his paintings, but in reality, she earns money through gambling and selling pieces of the family's furniture to the dustman.<sup>104</sup> Gloria, therefore, maintains the illusion of traditional

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<sup>102</sup> Also discussed by Mizrahi 77–78.

<sup>103</sup> See Mizrahi and Johnson, *Carmen Laforet* and "Issues and Arguments."

<sup>104</sup> Johnson adds, however, that Angustias does not see work as a "long-term solution" and chooses the traditional route, the convent, as soon as she is able ("Issues and Arguments" 259).

patriarchy by allowing Juan to believe that he is still the provider for the family, but simultaneously demonstrates the invalidity of the system (Mizrahi 83–84). The truth was that, during the postwar period, many women were forced to go out and work to feed their families, regardless of how this was officially viewed by the establishment. Ortiz attests that by displaying this inversion of the official gender roles in *Nada*, Laforet “indirectamente critica la posición de la mujer dentro de la dictadura española, mientras comunica esa necesidad de soberanía para la mujer” (n.p.).

The argument that *Nada* discredits the patriarchal nature of Francoist society goes beyond a purely feminist framework and can be considered to form a part of a more general, political statement against the postwar regime. Mizrahi, for example, has linked her anti-patriarchal interpretation of the novel directly with political denunciation of the postwar totalitarian dictatorship:

Opina Laforet que el resultado de la educación patriarcal autoritaria es la inseguridad (o impotencia) que motiva a dejarse guiar por principios del régimen totalitario, los cuales oprimen los deseos del individuo que al querer expresarse producen la “culpa trágica,” cuya exoneración toma las formas de la explotación, la competencia y la violencia, especialmente hacia la mujer, quien así se convierte en héroe trágico o chivo expiatorio del resentimiento que se ventila en casa, en el espacio doméstico de la familia. (147)

Mizrahi thus relates patriarchy directly to authoritarianism, and explains the family’s behaviour within this framework. Angustias, despite being female, is an extremely authoritarian figure and Mizrahi suggests that there are clear political overtones in her lectures to Andrea: “[el] agresivo formato de preguntas y respuestas obligadas evoca un interrogatorio político cuyo fin es alienar, demoralizar y someter. Sin duda podría compararse este lenguaje autoritario con el de un comandante de un campo de concentración [...]” (98). Angustias also knew exactly who came in at what time because, following her departure to the convent, Andrea remarks that her

aunt's bedroom is like "una gran oreja en la casa" (81). Mizrahi further argues that Román's compulsion to scrutinise his family's belongings and relationships is also evocative of the authoritarian state: he reads Angustias' diary and her correspondence without her permission and notices when the handkerchief goes missing from Andrea's suitcase (39–40). I would add that Román not only strives to be informed of every aspect of his family's lives, but he also believes that he controls everyone in the household, saying to Andrea: "¿Tú no te has dado cuenta de que yo los manejo a todos, de que dispongo de sus vidas, de que dispongo de sus nervios, de sus pensamientos...?" (84–85). Andrea is not certain if Román is trying to scare her or if he is genuinely crazy, but his ravings sound remarkably like those of a deluded totalitarian dictator.

The patriarchal society that Laforet thus denounces in the novel is undoubtedly a fundamental facet of the Francoist regime; however, such conservative norms were ingrained in traditional Spanish life and were, therefore, not unique to the postwar period, nor were they unique to Spain. The grandmother, for example, is seen as one of the most significant proponents of the rigid patriarchal system in the novel, which must be the result of the way she was educated and raised in the nineteenth century, and cannot be attributed to the influence of Francoist ideology. The conservative patriarchal values critiqued in *Nada* must therefore be understood as a more general condemnation of traditional masculine values in Spain, which had been rejected by the pre-war Republican government but enthusiastically adopted by the Franco regime.<sup>105</sup>

The novel's stance on traditional Spanish patriarchy is interpreted quite differently by some scholars, particularly with regard to the novel's ambiguous ending. Andrea is offered an escape from her family in Barcelona by Ena's wealthy father who offers to take her with them to Madrid where Andrea can work as his assistant while she studies. Andrea is full of hope at the opportunity to start anew with Ena's apparently 'idyllic' family, who, under the wings of Ena's wealthy, successful and good-looking father, could be argued to have a strong patriarchal

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<sup>105</sup> Torres believes that not all of the moral and sexual norms in the postwar period were due to the nature of the dictatorship, but that Spaniards have some innate characteristics and tendencies which National-Catholicism took advantage of (*El amor* 17).

foundation. Furthermore, due to their wealth and the opportunities available to them, Ena's family, or at least her father, is certainly "a member of the Francoist oligarchy" (Dolgin n.p.). Jordan supports this assumption: Ena's family "represents the model family of the new Francoist order, drawn from Spain's entrepreneurial elite" (Laforet, *Nada* 10–11). If Andrea's optimism at the end of the novel is read as the beginning of a brighter future, critics believe it could indicate that Andrea ends up accepting the bourgeois patriarchal values of Francoism by welcoming Ena's father's generosity and finding relief in her new life. This view is held, for example, by Elizabeth Ordóñez ("*Nada*: Initiation into Bourgeois Patriarchy" 62–63) and by Juan Goytisolo, who lists Laforet among authors whose relationship with Francoist, and particularly religious, values, he describes as follows: "[...] si algún desvío inicial, si alguna rebeldía les alejan momentáneamente del redil y el calor de la adocenada grey española, regresan, al cabo, como el hijo pródigo e imploran el generoso perdón del padre [...]" (*El furgón* 81).

Alternatively, others consider the fact that we know nothing about Andrea's time in Madrid, and that she chooses to recount this sombre story in hindsight, to be an indication that life in Madrid proved to be no better than life on the Calle Aribau, as posited by Ruth El Saffar and Jordan.<sup>106</sup> This pessimistic and disenchanted note lends weight to an interpretation of the novel as more critical of the regime, for how could Laforet see hope for Andrea in the repressive and conservative Francoist society? I argue, however, that an assessment of whether *Nada* embodies Francoist values, or conversely, is critical of the regime, is not dependent on whether Andrea's 'escape' to Madrid was a positive or negative experience. Andrea's optimism at the end of the novel, for example, is not incompatible with Laforet's criticism of postwar Francoist society because, as mentioned in Chapter One, many who opposed the regime in the early 1940s lived in hope that once victory was established in the Second World War, the Allied powers' next move would be to remove Franco from power. In 1944, when Laforet wrote *Nada*, this hope would have still been very much

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<sup>106</sup> El Saffar argues thus: "The author Andrea, on the other hand, presents the novel from a perspective that reveals an absence of hope for renewal and rejuvenation. What, for the character Andrea, is but a year's episode in Barcelona is transformed by the author into a totality which captures the essence of her condition" (119). A similar view is held by Jordan (Laforet, *Nada* 107).

alive. Negative readings of the outcome of the novel that emphasise Andrea's continued unhappiness in Madrid, such as those of El Saffar and Jordan, can be attributed to a retrospective historical reading: contemporary readers know that the 1940s were just the beginning of an almost four-decade dictatorship in Spain and it is natural that they would expect the novel to end with a sense of deep disillusionment and despair. Nevertheless, in 1944, while Laforet may have been expressing her criticism of the Franco regime and its values, for her, liberation from oppression was still a possibility. Ultimately, however, I agree with Anne Walsh's contention that any attempt by the reader to 'fill in' what happens between Andrea's departure from Barcelona and her writing of the narrative is futile because that time was never created by Laforet (29–42).

While scholars thus disagree on the possible social interpretations of Laforet's novel, the censors charged with evaluating *Nada* appear to have had few qualms in approving the novel for publication, although they describe it as being of little interest and having no moral purpose. The first censor's report on *Nada* stated: "¿Ataca al dogma o a la moral? No. ¿Al régimen? No... Se reduce a describir cómo pasó un año en Barcelona en casa de sus tíos una chica universitaria sin peripecias de relieve. Creo que no hay inconveniente en su autorización."<sup>107</sup> The second censor responded to the 'moral' question with only an exclamation mark "!" and comments: "Novela morbosa de tipos bajos sin fin moral alguno," but provides no objections to its publication.

The first censor thus deemed the experiences of a "chica universitaria" to be of little significance, an attitude which possibly reflected the way in which women writers were viewed by the establishment in general. The censors' stance towards women writers was somewhat contradictory: on the one hand, censors were often more strict with the moral control of a text written by a female because they considered morally 'questionable' material to be 'unwomanly' and the regime was hostile towards "cualquier tipo de intento de liberación por parte de la mujer" (F.

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<sup>107</sup> The censors' reports for *Nada* were consulted in the Archivo General de Administración in Alcalá de Henares in April 2012.

López 11).<sup>108</sup> On the other hand, female writers were taken less seriously and the censors therefore tended to disregard any political implications in their work. From the evidence in the censorship archives, it appears that, in Laforet's case, the latter attitude dominated in the evaluation of her work. Her gender and age, in conjunction with the gender and age of her protagonist, therefore worked in her favour because the censors easily dismissed her novel as the insignificant story of a young woman's personal experiences and saw no harm in its publication.<sup>109</sup>

As demonstrated in this chapter so far, however, there are a number of themes in *Nada* which, theoretically, should have troubled the censors, but apparently did not. Furthermore, Neuschäfer has written, for example, that the censors were instructed not to permit any attack on the dogma of the Church in literature (9–10). The representation of the Catholic Church and religion in the novel, nevertheless, is not exactly orthodox: Andrea displays no evidence of religious faith and agrees to go to church only to please Angustias. It is also implied that Angustias' inflexible religious practices have more to do with keeping an eye on the indiscretions of others than with piety, as Gloria tells Andrea: "A Angustias no le da Dios ninguna calidad de comprensión, y cuando reza en la iglesia no oye música del cielo, sino que mira a los lados para ver quién ha entrado en el templo con mangas cortas y sin medias" (100). Angustias' questionable attitude of religious superiority echoes that trumpeted by the regime itself, which as previously discussed, was so obsessed with ensuring sexual abstinence and adherence to the boundaries of 'decency' that other aspects of Christianity were very often neglected.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Conde Peñalosa cites Manuel Linares' review of *Nada* in 1946 to illustrate this same point, as it reveals a lot about the contemporary attitudes to female writers: on the one hand, he sees in the novel "la suavidad de una mano femenina" (in the description of the grandmother) but on the other hand, he criticises the harshness of the novel (which he considers improper for a feminine soul), the violence of the text and its lack of spirituality which could be misinterpreted by readers of "escasa formación moral"; all this he considers inappropriate for a woman, particularly a young woman, writer (Linares, "Reseña de *Nada*." *Razón y Fe* 133.581 (June 1946): 579–80; cited in Conde Peñalosa 81).

<sup>109</sup> Interestingly, it could be argued that these same factors, Laforet's gender and age at the time of the publication of *Nada*, stimulated interest in the novel and led to its popular success.

<sup>110</sup> It is interesting to note here that Laforet, according to her biographers, became intensely religious later in her life and *La mujer nueva* (1957) is often described as a 'Catholic' novel (Sobejano, *Novela española de nuestro tiempo* 190); however, she had not been particularly religious in her youth (Soldevila Durante 440).



An additional issue pertaining to the subject of religious dogma is the treatment of Román's suicide in the novel. A suicide in the family was a scandal in postwar Spain, as illustrated by one of the aunts who exclaims: "Y para colmo, un suicidio en la familia..." (264). The grandmother prays incessantly and attempts to convince herself that Román had repented before his death, an obsession which Andrea derides and refers to as a "trastorno mental" (262). Suicide, or at least the justification of suicide, was among the prohibited topics listed on the "normas de censura" (Goytisolo, *El furgón* 55). Nichols also claims that the postwar censors would only have allowed the mention of suicide in a work of literature if it was accompanied by a condemnation of the act ("Sex, The Single Girl" 128). Nichols adds that in *Nada* "the narrator has no qualms about damning Román and his suicide"; however, the condemnation comes from the grandmother and the aunts, not from Andrea, who, although shocked at first, never questions Román's action.<sup>111</sup> While the novel cannot, therefore, be considered to sit comfortably within the Church's official ideology, the censors, in answer to the question: "Does the work attack/offend the Church and the Catholic faith?," could not assert that *Nada* expressly criticised the Church in any way. The censor's inability, or unwillingness, to spot these critical nuances in works of literature confirms the arbitrariness of Spanish censorship.

In any case, Laforet had already exercised self-censorship on the version submitted to the censorship board. The original manuscript of *Nada* allegedly contained some direct references to issues that would in all probability have triggered censorial problems: the first of these is the appearance of a member of the anti-Nazi resistance, working to rescue those fleeing from Germany. Fanny Ebels mentions the existence of this character in Laforet's first draft: "A character working for the resistance, for instance, helping fugitives from Nazi Germany, was removed from the original plot and the underground network of which he was a member was seemingly transformed into the circle of Andrea's artist friends" (621).<sup>112</sup> The second is the appearance of a group of students who support Catalan independence in a

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<sup>111</sup> After Román's suicide, Andrea at first does not know what to think (261); later, she feels a nostalgia for Román's artistic talents and then even starts contemplating her own death: "me vino una impresión de belleza casi mística. Como un deseo de morirme allí" (268).

<sup>112</sup> This particular character is also mentioned by Laforet in her correspondence with Emilio Sanz de Soto (Rosenvinge and Prado 31).

fragment of the original manuscript (Rosenvinge and Prado 32).<sup>113</sup> It is not known exactly when or why Laforet removed these and possibly other references to ideology and activities that were taboo under Franco, but it is probable that they were removed to appease the censors and that she did so before submitting her manuscript, as there is no mention of these passages in the censor's report.<sup>114</sup>

Some critics have argued that Laforet employs another form of self-censorship by turning to a tactic which was commonly employed by dissident writers to disguise critical sociopolitical commentary and sidestep the censor's red pen: that is, the use of Andrea's extended family as a "paradigm to depict the ills of modern Spain" (Johnson, *Carmen Laforet* 44).<sup>115</sup> The use of the family unit or household as a stage for conflict and degeneration, instead of demonstrating the existence of these in the wider world, was a common recourse for writers attempting to avoid censorship (Ortiz, n.p.). Sobejano agrees that choosing to base the novel around an individual and their family reflects "the coercions of an oppressive historical climate" ("The testimonial novel" 176).<sup>116</sup> Laforet may have consciously decided to focus on the family, because the novel would then appear more personal, and less 'social' in scope to the censors.

In particular, the intense conflict between the two brothers, Juan and Román, is often seen as symbolic of the Spanish Civil War. Delibes writes: "¿Qué es la calle de Aribau sino la España de 1936? ¿No es un verdadero campo de Agramante? ¿No son hermanos los que se enfrentan? ¿No constituye un símbolo dramático ese

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<sup>113</sup> While the Republican constitution of 1931 had provided the right for the Spanish regions to be autonomous and make their own languages official, all regionalist movements were banned under the Franco dictatorship (Cazorla Sánchez 7). In addition to the fact that Franco's aim was a unified Spanish state that could identify with the glorious history of Castille, the Catalan and Basque separatist movements were strongly linked to the Republican side during the war, and the regional languages and cultures therefore inevitably became victims of Francoist repression (Laínz 295–96).

<sup>114</sup> Ana Caballé and Israel Rolón Barada speculate that Manuel Cerezales may have offered suggestions for changes to the original text, including the elimination of potentially politically compromising passages (150); however, Laforet's daughter, Cristina Cerezales, has denied this possibility ("Carmen Laforet, el silencio de una escritora").

<sup>115</sup> This technique where, for example, a family is used to represent or symbolise the whole nation is discussed by Neuschäfer, who labels it as *pars pro toto* [a part taken for the whole], or as "condensación" (57). Muñoz-Basols, Johnson, Ortiz, Mizrahi and Delibes all suggest ideas in this vein in relation to *Nada*. Sobejano also finds that Laforet portrays her view of the problems of postwar Spain only at the family level: "(*Nada*) refleja un ambiente real, descubre un mundo humano problemático y toma el pulso a una sociedad. Sólo que aquí esta sociedad no es la ciudad sino la familia" (*Novela española de nuestro tiempo* 100).

<sup>116</sup> Sobejano does not refer explicitly to Laforet's novel here, but more generally to early postwar novels such as those of Laforet, Cela and Delibes.

desenlace en el que un hermano muere, otro huye de casa y otro permanece en ella a solas con sus remordimientos?" (90–91). If Andrea's uncles' relationship is understood in these terms it certainly paints a grim picture of contemporary Spain. The family members employ warlike tactics to get the better of one another, engaging in a complex strategy of hateful politics and blackmail.<sup>117</sup> Mizrahi describes the atmosphere in the Aribau apartment itself as a 'battleground': "[...] un campo de guerra con conocidas manifestaciones: órdenes, amenazas, insultos, gritos, humillaciones, muecas, manipulaciones, espionaje, traición, encubrimiento, castigo, venganza, culpa, rezos, muerte" (36).

While the assumptions above are all correct and accurately describe the household atmosphere, it is also possible that this supposed 'symbolism' or allegory of modern Spain was not deliberate. Reading the family in the Calle Aribau as a symbol of the degradation of Spanish society implies that the family is portrayed in an exaggerated way, as Foster argues when he writes that Andrea "comprende que la vida es la vida, y la de la casa en la calle de Aribau es *solamente una exageración de la decadencia y degeneración generales que nos rodean en todas partes*" (97; italics added). Autobiographical data and information about her later novels, however, indicate that the author writes from her own life experience and that the relatives she lived with in Barcelona were very similar to Andrea's relatives as portrayed in the novel (Caballé and Rolón Barada 101).<sup>118</sup> Laforet's first impression of her relatives in Barcelona was apparently "que todos estaban enfadados unos con otros" (Caballé and Rolón Barada 101), and the author's biographers have indeed mentioned that those relatives were offended when *Nada* was published because they saw themselves portrayed in Andrea's dysfunctional family ("Carmen Laforet, el silencio de una escritora"). In *Nada*, Ena has a romantic conception of Andrea's family; she is

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<sup>117</sup> Angustias, for example, threatens that if Andrea were to befriend Gloria (28), she would be very displeased, and Juan's violence against Gloria is enthusiastically encouraged by Román. Román and Angustias threaten one another with blackmail; Angustias claims she knows all about his illegal dealings ("[...] tu sentido moral deja bastante que desear") while Román threatens her with his knowledge of her relationship with don Jerónimo (62).

<sup>118</sup> In Caballé and Rolón Barada's description of Laforet's paternal relatives in Barcelona, only two significant differences to the family in the novel can be noted: in *Nada*, the grandfather is dead, while in reality he was a bedridden 90-year old man; and the baby is a male in the novel, but Laforet's young cousin was actually female. The other characters appear to have simply been renamed by Laforet before becoming part of her novel (101).

attracted to them because she thinks they are different and exciting, but Andrea is quick to dispel her notions: “Román y los demás de allí no tienen ningún mérito más que el de ser peores que las otras personas que tú conoces y vivir entre cosas torpes y sucias” (154). I propose, therefore, that the depiction of the dysfunctional and unstable family is more realist than symbolic, and Laforet’s decision to focus on family life cannot therefore be attributed entirely to the process of self-censorship.

The degree of autobiography in Laforet’s novel is a question that arises in almost every study of *Nada*, whether that be to dismiss its significance or to glean a deeper understanding of the novel. In this chapter, I have drawn on Laforet’s own life on a number of occasions, and although I do not want to attribute too much significance to the autobiographical aspects of her work, a short exploration of the subject is perhaps valuable in a broader understanding of the relevance of the novel. While the author has often denied that the novel is autobiographical (Johnson, *Carmen Laforet* 13 and Rosenvinge and Prado 36), the correlations between her own life in the immediate postwar years and that of Andrea are undeniable. Besides the general biographical similarities (they both arrive in Barcelona in 1939 at the age of eighteen to study and live with relatives), there are also more specific clues that link Laforet’s background to the world portrayed in *Nada*: for example, Laforet was actually born on the Calle Aribau (Rosenvinge and Prado 18), which was the home of her paternal grandparents (“Carmen Laforet, el silencio de una escritora”). In a radio interview with one of Laforet’s daughters, the novelist Cristina Cerezales, Cerezales mentions that her own daughter (Laforet’s granddaughter) is named Andrea, saying that it was “casi como si le pusiera el nombre de mi madre” (“‘Música blanca’ para Carmen Laforet”), suggesting that the author’s family themselves clearly see Andrea as a reflection of the young Laforet. Furthermore, there are autobiographical reflections of people from the author’s life in the characters of *Nada*. Ena, for example, is most probably based on Laforet’s friend Linka Babecka (to whom the novel is dedicated).<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> The likeness between Linka’s personality and that of Ena is discussed in Caballé and Rolón Barada 115. Also, in Chapter XVI, Iturdiaga refers to Ena as “la princesa esclava” (181), which could be a reference to Linka’s Polish origins.

Another quality of Andrea's character that ties her to the author is her literary vocation. Primarily, the narrator is obviously *writing* her memories of Barcelona in hindsight, but, in addition to this, even in the text itself there are allusions to Andrea's literary inclination, such as when Román tells Andrea: "Ya sé que estás siempre soñando cuentos con nuestros caracteres" (38). Andrea also mentions that she feels like an observer in the family home, watching the strange 'stories' in the house; that she herself existed only "en un segundo plano de la realidad," her senses open only for the strange goings-on in the Calle Aribau (42–43). Later, she mentions that Angustias' story seems like "una *novela* del siglo pasado" (101; italics added). Despite the ample evidence that Laforet drew heavily on her own life experiences when writing *Nada*, however, I do not concur with the purely autobiographical reading of the novel proposed by Sanz Villanueva, who states that "(*Nada*) reflejaba la corta trayectoria biográfica de la propia autora" (*La novela española* 118). I believe that such an approach is reductive and disregards not only the relevance of the wide-ranging social themes touched on in Laforet's novel but also the importance of the author's ideological perspective.

The question of Laforet's own political views is one that has been largely ignored by critics, with the majority readily accepting her description of herself as "sin ideas políticas" (Laforet, *Paralelo* 35 15); I argue, however, that this statement belies evidence from both her life experiences and the social and political critique in her novel. It is possible that Laforet initially had a more neutral opinion towards the dictatorship than those who had experienced the war firsthand on the peninsula, as she had been relatively isolated from the Civil War in the Canary Islands and it is known that her own immediate family was apolitical (Johnson, *Carmen Laforet* 20). During her time in Barcelona, however, Laforet had connections with people who did not support the regime's ideology, and it is probable that her political views came to coincide with those of her new friends. Laforet's close friend Linka was a Polish refugee fleeing from the German invasion of Poland. Linka worked in clandestine resistance activities helping other refugees, for which she was jailed for a time, activities in which Laforet sometimes participated. Linka's family closely followed the developments of the Second World War and both Linka and Laforet

“continually asserted their faith in an Allied victory” (Johnson, *Carmen Laforet* 22–23). Through her friend, Concha Ferrer, Laforet also became friendly with students who supported Catalanian independence, at a time when any regionalist activity was strictly prohibited (Rosenvinge and Prado 31–32). Additionally, it is important to note that *Nada* was not written until a few years after Laforet’s time in Barcelona, and the naive eighteen-year old girl who arrived in the big city in 1939 had therefore had time to mature and develop a more critical view of life in Spain under Franco.

Laforet’s husband, Manuel Cerezales, later said that she defined her political leanings as “vagamente socialista, en un sentido humanista” (de La Fuente 90),<sup>120</sup> although, in contrast to Martín Gaité and Matute, who were more actively associated with leftist groups, Laforet avoided speaking about her ideology. It must be taken into account that any public declarations of political beliefs differing from those of the regime would have caused serious problems for the publication of her work, particularly in the severe political environment of the 1940s (Martín Gaité and Matute were not active until the 1950s). While Laforet did not identify with a specific political group or ideology, I have argued that the critical perspective evident in *Nada* stems largely from a personal frustration with the Franco regime and the circumstances in which the author found herself as a result of the political situation in the 1940s, rather than being based on a more formal political framework such as that adopted by the *novelistas sociales* of the 1950s and 1960s.

Thus, while the sociopolitical value of *Nada* has generally been overlooked by critics due to the novel’s place in the chronology of postwar literature and its personal, emotive literary style, I have argued in this chapter that Laforet’s portrayal of postwar Barcelona presents a negative vision of life in 1940s Spain. While Laforet could not make explicit the link between the misery and dysfunctionality that Andrea experiences and Francoism, I contend that the novel offers an implicit sociopolitical critique of the regime that has engendered such circumstances. The hunger and hardship described by Andrea, which barely even includes the severe poverty on the streets and in the slums of the city, but is patent enough in the

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<sup>120</sup>An aspect of Laforet’s later life that highlights the author’s liberal disposition was her correspondence and friendships with Spanish writers in exile such as Ramón Sender and Juan Ramón Jiménez (Ebels 621).

depiction of the impoverished bourgeois family of the Calle Aribau, is clearly incongruent with Franco's claim that the Nationalist victory was the beginning of a bright future for Spain. At the other end of the spectrum, Andrea is shocked at the excessive wealth and flippant attitudes of her university companions who belong to the classes who have profited from the political circumstances; Laforet, through Andrea's impressions, satirically highlights the *alta burguesía's* self-absorption, hypocrisy and reliance on the regime to get ahead. The novel also belies the regime's official stance on how the Civil War was perceived in the public sphere because Andrea's family's emotional fragility is explicitly described as having been caused by the war. Furthermore, I have suggested that the author presents a sympathetic view of the Republican cause in her description of Juan and Román's involvement in the war, among other anecdotes. Andrea, as a *chica rara*, is subversive in herself in terms of the regime's gender values, but I have argued that there is further denunciation of postwar conservative gender norms in the depiction of Angustias' predicament, the grandmother's unthinking defence of the *doble moralidad* and the fact that the household simultaneously defends and subverts the traditional patriarchy. Laforet's critique of the rigid gender boundaries that caused so many difficulties for herself and her character, Andrea, do not belong exclusively to a feminist framework; rather, they form a part of the general sociopolitical critique; women's issues were, after all, very significant in the regime's overall agenda. Despite the argument put forward by a number of critics that Andrea's eagerness to depart for Madrid constitutes a capitulation to the regime's traditional values, I contend that such readings apply contemporary knowledge retrospectively, given that in 1944 Laforet did not know that the dictatorship would last another thirty years and on the contrary, probably hoped that Franco would be ousted within a few years. My interpretation of the novel is thus clearly at odds with that of the censor who dismisses it as the uninteresting story of the year a young girl spends in Barcelona, as I argue that *Nada* challenges Francoist principles and condemns the conservative values that were so destructive in postwar society. It is again postwar Barcelona that is the setting for Luis Romero's *La noria*, the subject of my next chapter, which picks up approximately eight or nine years after *Nada*.





## Chapter Three

### Postwar Barcelona as Collective Protagonist in Luis Romero's *La noria* (1952)

*La noria*, Luis Romero's first novel, is the least well-known of the works discussed in this thesis, despite being awarded the Premio Nadal in 1951.<sup>121</sup> While Romero's historical accounts of the Civil War, published in the 1970s, have generated interest in Spain in more recent years, his literary works are barely mentioned in overviews of postwar Spanish literature and *La noria* was never popularly-acclaimed, is now out of print and has been largely forgotten in Spain. Notwithstanding its lack of popularity, Romero's 'day in the life' of late-1940s Barcelona is not only an entertaining read, but, with its vast array of characters, it also provides a sociopolitical critique of many of the key issues of the postwar period; including many related to class and gender relations of that era in Spain. In turn, Romero's critical portrait implies a condemnation of the regime that nurtured such a "schizophrenic" society.<sup>122</sup> Romero's unique way of depicting postwar life and his ideas on political commitment in literature will prove to be a valuable addition to this study of the postwar novel, despite the fact that Romero is very much considered an outsider in relation to the *novela social* in Spain, and the fact that, just like Laforet's novel, the publication of *La noria* predates many of the theoretical developments associated with that movement.

Given the relative obscurity of Romero's work, biographical details on the author are difficult to come by, particularly as the only book-length study dedicated to Romero contains very little information about the writer. The best biographical material available is actually provided by the author himself in a postface to a 1971 edition of *La noria*, in which he reflects on his own life, his literary influences and the twenty years since the publication of the novel in question. Romero was born in Barcelona in 1916 and had a generally happy childhood in which his love of

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<sup>121</sup> Romero was awarded the Premio Nadal in 1951 for *La noria*; however, it was not published until the following year.

<sup>122</sup> The term 'schizophrenic' is used to describe postwar society by Mangini in *Rojos y rebeldes* (25).

literature was encouraged. Aged twenty when the Civil War broke out in 1936, Romero joined the Nationalist *quinta del 37* and later also fought in Russia as part of the Falangist División Azul in the Second World War.<sup>123</sup> After returning from the war, Romero worked in insurance, then moved to Buenos Aires in 1948 with his wife, Gloria. He wrote *La noria* while living in Argentina, and submitted it for the Premio Nadal literary prize in Spain at the end of 1951. Following the critical success of this first novel, he decided to write full-time and moved his family to Cadaqués (on the Costa Brava). He went on to publish a number of novels, collections of short stories, travel guides and historical books, as well as essays and newspaper articles. Romero died in 2009 in Barcelona.

The action in *La noria* takes place over twenty-four hours on a summer's day in Barcelona in the late 1940s.<sup>124</sup> There are thirty-seven chapters in total, each with a new protagonist, linked together by taking a secondary character from each chapter to become the focus of the following chapter. Joaquín Marco calls this style “encadenamiento” (“Dimensiones críticas” 16), and Juan Luis Alborg refers to it as a “una carrera de relevos” (*Hora actual II* 312). The novel lacks an overarching plot because the characters are never returned to later in the narrative;<sup>125</sup> however, each chapter, although lasting for less than an hour of ‘real’ time, also includes background information on the main character and describes how they have come to live the way they do. Alborg maintains, in any case, that any human portrait, regardless of its brevity “encierra siempre un cogollo de humanidad lo bastante rico para ser interesante por sí misma,” and actually argues that one of *La noria*’s major faults is that the reader is disappointed at the end of each chapter when “se le decapita sin misericordia la recién anudada intimidad,” knowing, from the structure of the novel, that the character will never reappear again (*Hora actual II* 312–13). Each

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<sup>123</sup> As will be discussed later in this chapter, this aspect of Romero’s past was somewhat at odds with the political and social ideology he adopted later in life and he subsequently attempted to distance himself from his association with Nationalist Spain.

<sup>124</sup> The exact year is not specified, but various clues in the histories of the characters indicate that it is approximately ten years since the Civil War ended: for instance, it is mentioned that it is ten years since Clara’s husband died just after the war (142–43). This time frame also coincides with the writing present, as Romero wrote the novel during the time he lived in Argentina (1948–1951). All in-text page references to the novel refer to Romero, *La noria* (1971).

<sup>125</sup> The lack of overarching plot has led to the question of whether *La noria* can really be classified as a novel or whether it is instead a collection of short stories. See Alborg (*Hora actual II* 311). It could be argued that the absence of a larger plot explains the general lack of interest in Romero’s novel.

small portrait is thus interesting in itself and, moreover, forms a part of Romero's larger depiction of 1940s Barcelona and, by extension, of 1940s Spain.<sup>126</sup> The characters range from the homeless and unemployed, factory workers, prostitutes, and civil servants, to the industrial elite and the wealthy upper classes; consequently, the novel provides varying perspectives on the key issues of postwar life. The blatant disparity between the frivolous luxuries enjoyed by the upper echelons and the despair and hopelessness experienced by society's poorest members—evidently one of the novel's major themes—is noted by the small number of critics who discuss this novel, and will be discussed further in this chapter. In particular, I will focus on how the specific policies applied by, and attitudes maintained within, the Francoist system exacerbated this wealth gap and permitted a privileged few to amass fortunes through the astute exploitation of the impoverished nation. I will also examine the role of gender in the novel, an issue which has thus far not been touched on by any critics in relation to *La noria*. Despite the fact that only thirteen of the thirty-seven protagonists are female, many of the men's stories also reflect their relationships with the women in their lives and the novel, as a result, provides significant insight into issues of gender and sexuality of postwar society. Unsurprisingly, it was the references to female sexuality and morality that most concerned the censors tasked with reading *La noria*, and I will analyse the comments made by the censors in this chapter. Finally, I will briefly discuss the lasting effects of the war visible in the novel and the significance of political affiliation, which is of particular relevance in this case study given Romero's own military history.

Romero is mentioned briefly in most overviews of postwar Spanish literature; however, only one book-length study of his work exists: *La ficción de Luis Romero*, by Luis and Antolín González del Valle, which dates back to 1976. The González del Valles describe *La noria* as “el gran triunfo de Luis Romero” and as his

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<sup>126</sup> I agree with Alborg when he says that, although the novel is set in Barcelona, “la novela puede reconocer modelos vivos en cualquiera de nuestras grandes urbes” (*Hora actual II* 314); however, it would also be interesting to examine the novel's relationship to Barcelona specifically and Catalan national identity (there are a few pieces of secondary dialogue quoted in Catalan throughout the novel and also Catalan song lyrics), particularly as Romero strongly identified as Catalan, and published several books in his native language later in his life. Such a focus is, however, beyond the scope of my analysis.

best-known work. Their book was, however, published at a time when Spanish literary critics had grown increasingly critical of those writers who had eschewed a more aesthetic or 'literary' prose for the more utilitarian socially-committed style, although this is not explicitly stated in their study. *La ficción de Luis Romero* focuses, therefore, on the more traditional 'literary' aspects of Romero's work such as style, structure and existentialist themes, and dismisses the significance of its relationship to its social and historical context. Elsewhere, Luis González del Valle affirms again his disregard for the social elements in Romero's work by stating that *La noria* 'transcends' social criticism ("Dos obras maestras" 38), a perspective which, as will become clear in this chapter, I do not share.

With regard to the themes of *La noria*, the González del Valles consider the underlying idea of the novel to be the effects of an oppressive society on the individual, which lead the characters to experience feelings of "soledad, vacío en la vida y la consiguiente evasión del ser humano ante sus muchas dificultades" (*La ficción* 27). The critics argue, however, that this oppressive society does not make reference to specific institutions, nor to political philosophies, nor to the oppression of one section of the population by another (the wealthy, for example) (*La ficción* 15); instead, they posit that the feelings described are universal in character. While they remark, in a footnote, that social injustice is another theme that appears in the novel, they argue that the author "se preocupa de los efectos que la sociedad ejerce en el individuo y no tanto en las malas circunstancias sociales"; they acknowledge, however, that other critics disagree with this stance (and that they are also partly going against statements that Romero himself made, as will be discussed later in this chapter). The existentialist interpretation proposed by the González del Valles is no doubt a valid one; however, I will argue that, while some of the themes which arise in the novel are indeed universal, the troubled society depicted is very specific to postwar Spain and should be understood within that context.

In contrast to the González del Valles, critics Manuel García Viñó, Alborg and Gil Casado do recognise the value of Romero as a socially-committed novelist; however, their discussions of *La noria* are very brief and they do not discuss the particular sociopolitical issues depicted in the novel in any depth. García Viñó, who,

in *La novela española del siglo XX*, dedicates less than a page to the author, describes Romero as a “novelista social no comprometido,” because, while he acknowledges that Romero denounces social injustices “desde una actitud personal, independiente, de solidaridad con sus semejantes,” he does not perceive any political intention (80–81).<sup>127</sup> Alborg is more convinced of Romero’s credentials as a *novelista social*, arguing that he is one of the contemporary writers who has most intensely denounced the many “corruptelas” of Spanish society. Although he goes on to discuss some of these issues more specifically in relation to the author’s later novels, his analysis of social and political themes in *La noria* is limited to the statement that the novel confronts “el desafuero social con amargo y acerado humorismo” (*Hora actual* II 314). Lastly, Gil Casado writes that in *La noria* “se hace hincapié, con intención testimonial y social, en los aspectos sórdidos que muestran la quiebra de una sociedad,” but then limits his analysis to a very brief criticism of Romero’s use of interior monologues in the novel (263–64).

Sanz Villanueva, in *Historia de la novela social española*, is the only scholar who has delved any further into the sociopolitical significance of Romero’s first novel. Like the González del Valles, Sanz Villanueva begins by discussing some of the more existential themes in Romero’s novel; for example, he describes the “solitaria andadura” of the characters in the same way that the González del Valles had talked about their isolation within society.<sup>128</sup> Sanz Villanueva, in contrast, does not dismiss the ‘social’ aspect of Romero’s work, including him in his section on “Primeras formas de novela crítica.” The critic writes that Romero’s early work is already closer in tone to the “nueva ola” than are works by Laforet and other 1940s writers such as Juan Antonio Zunzunegui: “Hay en Luis Romero un mayor deseo de denuncia, una

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<sup>127</sup> I contend, however, as I have in Chapter One and will throughout this thesis, that Francoist society was so closely entwined with the regime’s political philosophy that criticism of postwar society and life necessarily entails political commentary.

<sup>128</sup> The González del Valles and Sanz Villanueva have also discussed the unusual structure of *La noria* in relation to its purported existentialist themes: for example, according to the González del Valles, the compartmentalised chapters reflect the themes of the novel, in that each character is solitary and cannot escape the bounds of the position assigned to them in society. Sanz Villanueva similarly sees the separation of the thirty-seven stories as corresponding to the “aislamiento en que se encontrarían ellos mismos en la vida real. Si *La noria* refleja una realidad exterior, objetivada en situaciones típicas, la consecuencia última que de ella se extrae es la carencia de relaciones humanas, la vida aislada de cada ser en su propia célula, ignorado de los demás, consumiendo su frivolidad o su miseria” (*Historia* 314).

más clara conciencia de la injusticia social y un neto propósito de reflejar la chata situación de la sociedad española.”<sup>129</sup> Regarding *La noria* specifically, Sanz Villanueva describes it as a “novela crítica de la ciudad,” while noting that the portrait of the city leads to a wider reality, that of national life (*Historia* 312–13).

The presence of an omniscient narrator who commentates and reveals his or her opinions on the situation leads Sanz Villanueva to further question whether the novel’s narrative style can be regarded as ‘social realist’: “Tal técnica narrativa sorprende, en los que posee de subjetivismo, si se compara con la aspiración de imagen objetiva de la realidad que posee el conjunto del libro” (*Historia* 316–17). Despite these hesitations in categorising Romero’s novel as a true *novela social*, Sanz Villanueva acknowledges the importance of the wide range of characters and above all, the implied denunciation of the disparity between the rich and the poor: “Del conjunto de gentes, una nota se destaca: lo bien que viven los ricos y las muchas miserias no solo de los más pobres, sino de las gentes modestas” (*Historia* 315). Also key, according to Sanz Villanueva, is the historical context:

la España de los cuarenta, la de las fáciles ganancias y grandes negocios para gentes sin escrúpulos; la de las consecuencias de una guerra que se cobra su tributo (avales, persecuciones, un clima de miedo, *todo ello insinuado e incluso valientemente manifiesto si se tiene en cuenta la fecha del libro*); la del hambre, las cartillas de racionamiento y el estraperlo, que hacen aún más dura la vida de los pobres. (*Historia* 316; italics added)

In addition to pointing out the key social issues which are illustrated in *La noria*, Sanz Villanueva, as illustrated in the italicised section above, thus also recognises one of the fundamental reasons that Romero’s work should be considered political in nature: while the representation of a day in the life of Barcelona may not appear to be ‘denunciatory’ or ‘critical’ at first glance, *La noria*, like all novels from this period,

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<sup>129</sup> Sanz Villanueva adds, however, that the good start he made in *La noria* was abandoned in the following two novels and not returned to until his fourth novel, *Los otros* (1956) (*Historia* 312).

must be understood within the context of censorship; that is, of course, not only the censorship of the novel itself, but of all public sources of information, particularly of the media, at the time of writing.<sup>130</sup> Stories in the novel, such as those of the homeless beggar, the prostitute, the homosexual man and the gambler were absolutely off-limits in the media and the act of bringing these issues into the public sphere in the form of a novel can thus be considered politically subversive.

As noted by Sanz Villanueva and others, one of the key issues in *La noria* is that of the wealth disparity that is so manifest throughout the novel. Romero largely concentrates on portraying Spaniards from the two extremes of society: the very wealthy (take, for example, the rich playboy and industrial heir Ignacio, the business-minded widow Clara Seré and young business man Jaime Turull), as well as the very poor (for example, the unnamed man who performs armed robberies out of desperation and the homeless beggar El “Sardineta”), although there are also a smaller number of working and middle-class characters. Sanz Villanueva, in a footnote, attempts to summarise the list of characters, classifying them by profession, and notes that there is an abundance of characters at either end of the economic spectrum, with the greatest absence being that of industrial workers (*Historia* 315, fn 191). By focusing on those at either end of the wealth continuum, and the relationship and contrast between them, the author can best depict the exploitation of the lower classes by the elite in Francoist Spain. Admittedly, wealth disparity is a universal issue; however, Alborg argues that many aspects of the particular reality that Romero portrays are unique to Spain “y aún se agravan especialmente por nuestra peculiar desigualdad de clases y de derechos” (*Hora actual II* 323–24).

In postwar Spain, the wealth gap had indeed been exacerbated by the economic policies of the Franco regime and by the profiteers who were allowed to take advantage of the scarcity of basic necessities during the darkest years of postwar life. Franco’s early economic policy was in line with Italian fascist theory, with the creation of the ‘vertical’ syndicates and the prohibition of all other unions.

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<sup>130</sup> Alborg also points out Romero’s courage in writing a novel such as *La noria*, because it is easy to forget about the dangers of writing a critical novel “en esta etapa de cómodas posturas” (*Hora actual II* 314). Interestingly, Alborg writes this in 1962; he obviously feels that censorship requirements had been significantly more severe only ten years earlier.

Membership of the official syndicates was compulsory but workers had absolutely no power to negotiate wages, which were set by the state until 1958 (Esteban 87). The political philosophy behind the vertical syndicates is described by Richards as “authoritarian corporativism,” in which both employers and workers were “forcibly united in the national effort” in a directed economy with a “disciplined” workforce (84–85). While the slow postwar recovery and international isolation hindered Spain’s economic progress during the 1940s, Richards argues that the authoritarian structure of the syndicates ensured that “the main burden of the economic crisis fell squarely upon the shoulders of the economically most humble in society” (85). This statement is supported by figures provided by Joan Esteban: real wages in urban areas from 1945 to 1953 were only around 50 percent of pre-war wages (89–91). Esteban also mentions that the postwar tax system was very “regressive,” with the majority of collected taxes coming from the “forced” savings of the working class, but with very low rates of personal income tax for business owners (92).

Industrialists thrived as a result of these policies, as illustrated in the novel by Alicia, the young socialite: she cannot understand why her father is always complaining about the regime, the taxes and the syndicates when “desde que hay este Gobierno, esta Fiscalía de Tasas y estos sindicatos ha ganado tanto dinero que no sabe qué hacer con él” (56). In Jaime Turull’s story, the narrator similarly indicates that “esta época, para los hombres como él, es semejante a un viento que soplara de popa” (221). In contrast, the preceding Republican years are referred to in Luis Camps’ story as “años poco favorables para el comercio, lo que se llama una época de crisis” (98). Presumably, this is inserted somewhat ironically by the narrator because, as a result of increased workers’ rights during the years of the Second Republic, the elite were less easily able to exploit their labour for profit. It should be noted that the regime was not ashamed of the increased social divide that followed the war; Franco himself declared that his crusade was the only struggle in which the wealthy who became involved in the war came out of it even wealthier (Rodríguez-Puértolas 332).

Many fortunes were, of course, made through illegal means, often by taking advantage of the black market that dominated the Spanish economy during this



period. It is evident in *La noria*, as discussed also in relation to Román's clandestine occupation in *Nada*, that it was not only the producers of raw goods (farmers and particularly, large landowners) who profited massively from the existence of the black market, but that many "Falangists and bureaucrats also took their cut" (Cazorla Sánchez 61). An example of the pervasiveness of illegal trading in the novel is that of Paco (Hortensia's husband), who reflects on the fact that the company that he works for made a lot of money during "los años del estraperlo" and are very generous with their workers, who it is implied receive some sort of payoff because they are "enterados de muchos secretos" (195). Later, in Jaime Turull's story, the narrator suggests that Jaime's success lies in the astute manipulation of the black market when he explains that "[en] la economía del país, si se analizara la cuestión rígidamente, no podría averiguarse cuál era su función, o sea, dónde radica la justificación de sus enormes ganancias" (221).

Wealthy, and presumably *adicto al régimen*, a man like Jaime did not need to concern himself too much about the legality of his business dealings; on the other hand, a smaller black market dealer such as Felipe, who is both working-class and has a leftist past, is eager to avoid answering too many questions when faced with a possible police interrogation (138). As confirmed by Richards, "small-time black marketeers were often sanctioned but the authorities repeatedly failed to act on reports of major illegal dealings"; Richards adds that the severity of punishment also often depended on the political past of the dealer (140). The unscrupulous and often unethical fortunes made during this period were apparent to everybody and caused a lot of bitterness amongst the poorer classes because, among other things, the black market was driving prices up and basic food stuffs were unaffordable or unavailable for the majority; the novel reveals, for example, that this was the case for meat and olive oil (124). For this reason, Paquito Gallardo's mother disdainfully speculates that Paquito's much wealthier classmates must be the sons of "estraperlistas" (38–39).

The resentment felt by those struggling to make a living is palpable as they feel they will be forever trapped in the cycle of poverty. The most extreme example in the novel is the homeless man El "Sardineta" who was imprisoned during the

war, subsequently lost his identity papers and, despite being willing to work, finds himself unable to get ahead at all: “Sucio, roto, sin casa, sin documentos y con la Policía siempre detrás de él, encarcelándole por cualquier cosa, no hay modo de levantar la cabeza” (209). Manuel, the taxi driver, also expresses his frustration: “La revolución social esa... ¡Bah!, cuentos. Los pobres, pobres” (15). Manuel is dissatisfied because the majority of the fares he is paid goes straight to the “patrón” and he survives mostly on tips.<sup>131</sup> While Manuel and his shop assistant daughter, Lola, both dream of the luxuries of wealth, the poorer classes are, in general, resigned to the misery of their lives. A poignant example of such a pessimistic outlook is Mercedes, formerly a domestic servant, who is happy that her children are able to go out and enjoy the cinema and their friends while they are young: “[Q]ue disfruten; luego ya les llegará la hora de sufrir” (125). She is, however, unaware that her son is already so tired of the “lucha mezquina para mal vivir” that he commits armed robberies around the city (129). Meanwhile, young industrialist Ignacio plans his summer holidays in Mallorca with “una norteamericana que está estupenda” (52) and Raimundo spends his, presumably inherited, fortune on fine food, wine and attractive women. As noted by Alborg in relation to Romero’s work, the pain of poverty is sharpened by the poorer classes’ exposure to these possibilities afforded to the wealthy: “Aterra el pensar cuán pavorosa provocación sobre la miseria de los más supone la constante y desaforada, petulante y agresiva exhibición de lujo y de riqueza, de placeres y de derroche, en los que uno cualquiera de los afortunados gasta en minutos lo que un trabajador no conseguiría reunir en toda una vida de trabajo” (Alborg, *Hora actual II* 321).<sup>132</sup>

While most critics who mention *La noria* have, however briefly, discussed the theme of wealth and class disparity, no scholars have thus far considered the other great divide present in the novel, that of gender. Only a third of the characters in *La noria* are women, a ratio that is not surprising given that the author is male;<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Most of the drivers, however, perform minor “estraperlillos” to cheat a few more pesetas from the boss (15).

<sup>132</sup> Alborg’s comment is actually in relation to Romero’s later novel, *Los otros*, but it applies equally to *La noria*.

<sup>133</sup> In this thesis, I have specifically chosen novels by male authors in which gender themes are significant; however, in general, male writers of this era tended to focus on male characters and to

however, the female characters form an integral part of his portrait of 1940s Barcelona, and are essential witnesses to postwar life whose testimony is all the more valuable given the particular position assigned to women within that society. The female characters in Romero's novel range from street vendors and prostitutes to secretaries, nurses and wealthy socialites. The women sit on a spectrum between the dichotomy of the two 'types' of women that existed according to postwar moral norms, as identified by Torres and discussed in Chapter One: decent women and 'other' women (*El amor* 59–60), or more simply: 'saint' or 'sinner.' The concept of the Francoist 'ideal' woman who, in body and in spirit, exhibits "virtue, piety and domesticity" was first put forward as the "True Catholic Womanhood" in medieval times, and the ideology was enthusiastically revived by the Franco regime (Morcillo Gómez, "Shaping True Catholic Womanhood" 61). The prime examples of such women in the novel are Berta (the nurse who works the night shift at an exclusive hospital) and Elvira (the office worker, colleague and prospective fiancée of González).

Berta exhibits the characteristics of the "true Catholic woman" to such an extent that she can almost be considered a slightly satirical caricature. Even the chapter title—"Berta la Buena"—could remind the reader of a story from the *santorales* so familiar to school children during the Franco years. She is highly religious, concerned about her atheist father's eternal salvation, will only go to see films that are 'authorised' by the regime, and helps the poor who cannot afford medical care in her spare time (180). She is prudish in the extreme and it is described how Berta, unlike the flirtatious Hortensia, is not harassed by the male patients, not because she is not attractive, but because "su comedimiento, su aire, su paciencia, harían que todos la respetaran aunque fuera la más hermosa de las mujeres" (179). While the exaggerated way in which Berta is described points to a ridiculing of the regime's 'ideal' woman, it is light-hearted in nature, and unlike the negative stereotypes of zealously religious characters in other novels, such as *Angustias* in

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create female characters who were often stereotyped, "incorporando creencias equivocadas y valores patriarcales" (Pérez, "Los personajes femeninos" 273).

Laforet's *Nada*, Berta is not hypocritical and is ultimately portrayed as a good person.

Elvira is similar, but is a slightly more realistic character who more accurately reflects the paradoxical expectations placed on women during the postwar era. She works as a secretary to support herself and her widowed mother and is so 'honourable' that her idea of fun is taking her mother out to the cinema. She is a 'decent' Catholic girl, apart from the fact that she is thirty years old and not yet married. She confesses, however, that she sometimes feels an emptiness that is difficult to explain: "[C]omo si no estuviera completa, como si su misión, su destino, se estuviera frustrando [...]. Si piensa demasiado, teme llegar a la conclusión de que el camino que ha tomado no es el debido, no es, como si dijéramos, el dirigido a su felicidad, a la constitución de una familia, a la perpetuación de la especie" (87). As discussed in Chapter One of this thesis, and as will prove to be a recurring issue in all of my case studies, motherhood was regarded as the "national purpose" of women according to Francoist ideology. The slightly odd and unnatural language that Elvira uses ("la perpetuación de la especie") suggests that she has been exposed to the sort of pronatalist propaganda that I discuss in further detail in relation to *Nuevas amistades*, and has come to feel guilty that her chosen path in life could be considered improper or unnatural. Despite her prudish alarm at what would be involved in starting a family—"¿Besos? Y lo demás... ¡Claro! Los hijos... ¡Qué raro, con un hombre! ¡Qué vergüenza!" (85)—she is happy that she is very likely to become engaged soon to her colleague, González.

More towards the centre of the spectrum between the Catholic notions of 'virgin' and 'whore' are characters such as Clara Seré and Raquel. Neither of these women conform to Francoist gender expectations, yet both are portrayed in such a way as to provoke both the reader's admiration and sympathy. Clara Seré is, as indicated in the title of her chapter, "una mujer fuerte." She has taken over her late husband's factory and worked incredibly hard to make a success of it (144). Nevertheless, Clara's dedication to business would have been considered 'unwomanly' by the establishment because, as discussed at length elsewhere in this thesis, the regime disapproved of married women who continued to work outside

the home, let alone a career woman with a powerful position in industry such as Clara. Notwithstanding Clara's confidence as a businesswoman, she is also vulnerable to the expectations that society has of her as a widow and is reluctant to remarry despite the persistent interest shown by Raimundo (145). Raquel, from a similarly wealthy background, is involved in an extramarital affair with the doctor, Luis Camps; this behaviour would obviously be considered completely unacceptable within the bounds of National-Catholicism.<sup>134</sup> Nonetheless, Romero portrays Raquel in such a way that she can only really be understood as a victim of her unhappy marriage and of the conservative society that will not allow her to escape it. Raquel's husband has behaved inappropriately in the past and they are now described as indifferent to one another, sleeping in separate beds. Raquel's relationship with the cultured Dr. Camps, on the other hand, is genuine, but society seems contrived to keep them apart: "Muchas cosas les separan; todas las que se refieren a la Ley, desde luego, y además esas barreras tan difíciles de saltar y que están formadas por lo que convencionalmente pudiéramos llamar monstruo social" (101).

Interestingly, given the social conservatism of the early Franco years, *La noria* also includes two chapters in which the protagonists, Dorita and Trini, are prostitutes and a third in which an unnamed older woman reflects on her past which she avoids describing in detail, but which also presumably involved prostitution.<sup>135</sup> *La noria* is not completely unique in featuring characters who work as prostitutes (see, for example, Cela's *La familia de Pascual Duarte* and *La colmena* and, most obviously, Darío Fernández Flórez's *Lola, espejo oscuro* (1950)); however, it remains noteworthy that Dorita and Trini speak openly about their work in Romero's novel. Until 1956, when it was made illegal in Spain, prostitution could be divided into two different categories: legal and clandestine. The justification for maintaining some form of legal prostitution before 1956 is cited by Mirta Núñez Díaz-Balart as the

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<sup>134</sup> I have already discussed how a man's extramarital sexual exploits were socially acceptable, while such liberties were unthinkable for women. Even in Francoist law, a husband could cheat on his wife as many times as he liked; it was only considered adultery when it caused a public scandal or took place in his own home. Any extramarital sexual activity engaged in by the wife, however, was considered adultery (Alonso Tejada 30).

<sup>135</sup> She says that she inherited some money and that she spent it in just a few years "muy malamente; en vez de servirla para dignificarse, para construir una vida honesta, lo utilizó para degradarse, para dejar de ser una mujer honrada, cosa que hasta entonces, más o menos, al fin y al cabo, lo había sido, que hay muchas maneras de ser honrada, aun llevando mala vida" (252-53).

need to perform health and police checks on registered sex workers in order to avoid “males mayores” (72). The practice was permitted only in registered brothels—often known as “casas de tolerancia” (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 104)—which had to pay taxes and submit to regular inspections. The workers were all required to carry an identity card which among other things would prove that they were not underage (under the age of twenty-three). Núñez Díaz-Balart explains, however, that it was widely known that the “casas de lenocinio” used fake names and ages on the identity cards so that the business would not be shut down nor the young workers reclaimed by their parents (98). All prostitution that took place outside of these licensed premises was considered clandestine or illegal and those women who were apprehended by the authorities faced fines and prison terms. Under the auspices of the Patronato de la Protección de la Mujer, and in the name of pity, charity and the rehabilitation of the ‘fallen’ women, the public issue of street prostitution was returned to the hands of the Church who, as Torres argues, “arrojaba sobre las más inermes víctimas de la inmensa regresión social sobrevenida con la Victoria un extra de humillación y adoctrinamiento” (“Prólogo” 15).<sup>136</sup>

One of the major aims of both the ‘tolerance’ of registered brothels and the persecution of clandestine sex work was the containment of venereal disease, which had seen a massive increase during and after the war (Cazorla Sánchez 64). Of course, disease was spread by both females and males, however, as Núñez Díaz-Balart has pointed out, it was much easier to “[a]tacar estos males en pacientes de obligada reclusión [...] que perseguir al cliente, lo cual podía dar lugar a más de un apuro político” (57). In *La noria*, the successful lawyer Carlos Pi is informed by his doctor that he has syphilis (94), which he could have contracted from any number of women (92).<sup>137</sup> The doctor, an old school friend, tells Carlos to refrain from sexual activity for a few days, but he is essentially dismissed with a smile and a pat on the back, despite the fact that this is not the first time he has been treated for a sexually-transmitted illness. Interestingly, Aurora Morcillo Gómez, in her discussion of

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<sup>136</sup> The work of the Patronato de Protección de la Mujer and the conditions of the prisons in which the ‘redemption’ of the clandestine prostitutes took place is discussed in detail in Núñez Díaz-Balart and Roura (*Mujeres para después de una guerra* and *Un inmenso prostíbulo*).

<sup>137</sup> His reaction to the news is oddly conservative, wondering whether it could be a “castigo de Dios” (93), although he has no intention of changing his lifestyle.

prostitution in postwar Spain, quotes a doctor who had worked for the state fighting the spread of venereal disease, who admitted that he was disturbed by the fact that “while [the women] had to have medical clearance, they are humiliated with their health report, the file in the official clinics and the police record, the men don’t have to give explanations to anyone” (*Seduction* 114). The regime’s attitude to the control of sexually-transmitted diseases serves, therefore, as yet another example of the double moral standards that affected women during this period.

The Francoist authorities took the opportunity to blame the massive increase in street prostitution during and after the war on the influence of the ‘reds’ and on the ills of modern society:

El discurso propagandístico oficial situaba el nacimiento de éste y otros males en periodos cronológicos de «dos tiempos». El más cercano, cómo no, se remitía al periodo republicano y su supuesta relajación de costumbres: «triste relato de la creciente corrupción de España en los últimos cincuenta años, y del desenfreno rojo».<sup>138</sup> En su tiempo más remoto, lo situaba en el mundo contemporáneo y sus males: liberalismo, marxismo, secularización, incorporación de la mujer al trabajo asalariado, todo ello como parte de la denostada modernidad. (Núñez Díaz-Balart 63)

A more likely explanation, however, was that, in addition to the increase in prostitution that traditionally accompanies war, the regime’s harsh tactics of repression following Franco’s victory meant that the families of the men who had lost the war (and many of whom were subsequently imprisoned, forced into exile or executed) were forced to find a way to survive on the margins of society (Núñez Díaz-Balart 25). Torres argues, furthermore, that the prohibition on sensuality in public life, accompanied by fear and hunger, drove people to obsession and frustration, which led to an increase in prostitution and sexual deviancy (*El amor* 40).

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<sup>138</sup> Núñez Díaz-Balart cites *La obra de la redención de penas. La doctrina. La práctica. La legislación*, 1 de enero de 1942. Madrid: Ministerio de Justicia, 1943 (XII).

It is estimated that in 1940, some 200,000 women (or one in every 40 Spanish women between the ages of fifteen and forty-five) were working as prostitutes (Torres, *El amor* 139). Indeed, in the opening chapter of *La noria*, Dorita reflects, without being too explicit, that her occupation was in no way unusual in the postwar period: “Eso sería ya otra historia y no de las más edificantes ciertamente; pero no hay que escandalizarse, pues al fin y al cabo es bastante corriente, casi normal, *en este clima*” (10; italics added).

It is not necessarily out of postwar economic desperation that Dorita and Trini have turned to this type of work (in fact, Trini began working as a prostitute long before the Civil War); both, however, are considered in their home towns to have been ‘disgraced’ due to pre-marital sexual affairs.<sup>139</sup> Dorita fell in love with a soldier and followed him to Barcelona because, by that stage, “había ocurrido algo que le dificultaba mucho, por no decir que le hacía imposible ya, casarse en el pueblo” (10); Trini has a teenage daughter born out of wedlock who lives with her own parents in a rural village. Besides purely financial reasons, many young women turned to prostitution after having been ‘seduced’ and left pregnant. Núñez Díaz-Balart describes how “una vez deshonradas,” they were abandoned and became isolated from their families and from society, and claims that this was the most direct and common route into “[e]l mercado de la carne humana” (66).

Neither Dorita nor Trini work for a ‘sanctioned’ brothel,<sup>140</sup> nor would they, however, have been prosecuted as illegal street workers due to the “class bias in [the law which] targeted only the poor prostitute while the rich courtesan remained unpunished” (Morcillo Gómez, *Seduction* 113). Dorita works alone, but appears to target expensive clients who wine and dine her (the client depicted in the novel even buys her a bunch of flowers from the Rambla) and then pay her discreetly: “[M]ientras la besa en los labios [...] deja algo entre sus manos” (8). Trini operates from an upmarket bar and relies mostly on her regulars; although she admits to

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<sup>139</sup> It should be noted that there is one brief reference in the novel to a situation in which a woman was forced to turn to prostitution during the war due to the absence of her husband: that of Gallardo’s wife. When Gallardo returns to Barcelona from the front line “[s]u compañera tenía... tenían otro hijo (había que luchar, comer todos los días ella y Paquito, aunque fuera poco; había que buscar avales, ir y venir entre una gente despiadada quemada en la campaña)” (46).

<sup>140</sup> Although Trini says that she has done so in the past (157).



experiencing difficulties now that her looks are fading and her clients have less money to spend (155–56). This sort of prostitution, aimed at the Francoist elite, was unofficially tolerated by the regime, not least because many powerful men frequented the types of establishments where Dorita and Trini go to find clients. Many of the legal brothels were run by “madames” who had close ties to the regime and “gozaba[n] de todas las bendiciones, que no en vano iban a esas casas de lenocinio los amos de todo a gozar de su poder sobre los cuerpos y las almas de las infortunadas pupilas, y sus hijos adolescentes a iniciarse con ellas” (Núñez Díaz-Balart 14). Indeed, Trini has met many important people in her line of work and confesses that she knows “lo ridículo que está un señor ministro en calzoncillos” (158):

Podría contar muchas historias de esta ciudad, casi siempre historias poco edificantes, y le son familiares los apellidos más conocidos. Ella es bastante discreta, afortunadamente, pero conoce de primera o de segunda mano a lo sumo, anécdotas de muchos de los personajes que en estos años han aparecido incluso en la primera plana de los periódicos. (156)

The paradox of the simultaneous acceptance and ostracism of the sex trade originates again from the virgin/whore dichotomy, and is illustrated often in the attitudes of the male characters in *La noria*. Manuel, the taxi driver, exhibits this hypocritical moral standard by first referring to girls like Dorita as “unas zorras,” but later daydreaming about being able to afford her services (14, 18). Raimundo claims to be in love with Clara and works hard to win her over; however, he continues to frequent bars where expensive prostitutes ply their trade. The younger men behave in exactly the same way: both Pepe, the medical student, and Jaime Turull plan to marry their ‘decent’ girlfriends, but Pepe approaches Trini for sex on the street (167) and Jaime tells Montse that he has a late business meeting but instead goes to see one of his regular girls at a bar (222).

The official tolerance of prostitution in Spain until 1956 was, however, somewhat at odds with the ultra-Catholic image that the regime was attempting to project during that period and was therefore concealed as much as possible from the public eye (Núñez Díaz-Balart 193). The prostitutes themselves were ‘demonised’ in the media: Morcillo Gómez describes how the figure of the prostitute was presented as the “nemesis of the honest woman; a relationship that symbolized in the larger context the fraudulent, fallen Second Republic versus the virtuous and victorious dictatorship of Franco—pagan versus Catholic Spain” (*Seduction* 90). Romero’s inclusion of Dorita and Trini in *La noria* can therefore be considered to challenge both the establishment’s failure to acknowledge the prevalence of prostitution, as well as challenging the regime’s ‘demonised’ image of the prostitute. Not only does Romero intimate the extent to which the upper echelons of Francoist society were involved with these so-called ‘fallen women,’ but the novel also portrays these women as complex characters who, in some ways, are victims of their circumstances, but, in other ways, make few apologies about the type of life they lead. Dorita, for example, cheerfully thanks God for sending her a wealthy client (12) and Trini looks forward to being able to buy a house in her village with her life savings and retire, but expresses no regrets (159–60).

While it may seem artificial to impose any further feminist reading onto a 1940s novel by a male author, Romero’s interest in the problematic issue of prostitution and the tragic stories that led women into the trade was confirmed again in his third novel, *Las viejas voces*, as discussed by Alborg. In the prologue to that novel, Romero declares his intention to “poner el dedo en una ‘llaga’ social,” by which he refers to that of “las mujeres de vida equívoca que tienen su lonja de contratación en el escenario de un bar barcelonés” (Alborg, *Hora actual* II 317). Romero goes on to say that, although *Las viejas voces* is fictional, the events he describes in it “[s]on cosas que pasan en nuestras ciudades, y pensar en silenciarlas es pensar en lo excusado. La llaga existe, y atreverse a poner en ella el dedo es peligroso” (*Las viejas voces* 5–6). It appears, therefore, that Spain’s fundamentalist sexual norms and public policy on prostitution, which resulted in so many young women being led down a path of exploitation, was an issue that Romero considered

to be of great social importance; by writing about it, he could raise public awareness of the hypocrisy and double standards inherent in the way prostitution was handled by the regime.

The prostitutes are not the only characters in *La noria* who would have been considered sexual ‘deviants’ in the postwar years, however, because there is also a character who admits, through the narrator, to being homosexual.<sup>141</sup> The character in question is the French art critic, Cazeaux, whom we meet when the wealthy young Quique invites him to evaluate his paintings. Cazeaux is the only homosexual character in the novel, and indeed, in any of the novels studied in this thesis.<sup>142</sup> Homosexuality remained a difficult subject in much of the world at this point in history; however, in Francoist Spain it can certainly be regarded as a particularly risky literary subject.<sup>143</sup> There was strong social stigmatism around homosexuality—anyone who was suspected of homosexual behaviour was told to wake up and act like a Spanish man (Torres, *El amor* 165)—and homosexual practices were also considered a criminal offence. A man like Cazeaux would have had every reason to be afraid; he mentions, for example, that he was once beaten up on a tram (69). In postwar medical discourse, homosexuality was described as a “psychopathology” and non-heterosexual practices were seen by the regime as “transgressing gender roles and posing a threat to the heterosexual family, the foundation of Franco’s regime” (Pérez-Sánchez, *Queer Transitions* 23). Homosexuals arrested and charged were fined and sometimes even incarcerated in concentration camps for “rehabilitation” (Morcillo Gómez, *Seduction* 136–37).<sup>144</sup> Cazeaux confesses to feeling incredibly isolated and lonely due to this ‘secret’ that has embittered him: “No le ha permitido madurarse, crear, desarrollarse íntegramente. Le causa una sensación de

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<sup>141</sup> Cazeaux is, however, not open about his sexuality with the people around him (although some suspect).

<sup>142</sup> There is a homosexual character in Cela’s *La colmena*; however, it should be noted that *La colmena* was initially prohibited in Spain and had to be published in Buenos Aires.

<sup>143</sup> Juan Goytisolo writes that authors who describe “escenas eróticas o evoca, *sin condenarlo*, un amor ilícito” (*El furgón* 43; italics added) were certain to encounter problems with censorship.

<sup>144</sup> It was not until the 1954 *Ley de vagos y maleantes* that homosexuality was specifically mentioned in the law under Franco; however, prior to that, homosexual activity was punished under the categories of “escándalo público, abusos deshonestos y contra la honestidad,” as per the 1944 Código Penal (Terrasa Mateu 89). Ugarte Pérez points out that not all homosexuals were treated equally, with wealthier, married men often able to avoid jail terms, while working-class homosexuals bore the full brunt of the law (14).

fracaso, de clandestinidad, como si llevara la ropa interior terriblemente sucia y siempre existiera el peligro de tenerse que desnudar delante de numeroso público” (68–69). While official sources described homosexuals as “peligros sociales,”<sup>145</sup> Romero invalidates this perception by portraying Cazeaux as a lonely, misunderstood man who evokes the reader’s sympathy, rather than their disgust. The presence of these characters—prostitutes and a homosexual—who do not adhere to the Francoist standards of moral decency, but are nevertheless depicted as sympathetic human characters, implicitly critiques a society where these polemical issues were not spoken of in the public sphere except to condemn them as dangerous and unnatural.

While Romero’s inclusion of a homosexual character in the novel can be considered quite bold in the context of the period in which it was published; it could also be argued that he depicts the character in quite a cautious manner, with no direct references to any sexual activity, presumably writing with the censor in mind. The fact that Cazeaux is French is potentially also of relevance here: the inclusion of a homosexual Spanish man in the novel would almost certainly have been seen by the censors as an affront to the Francoist ideal of the “aggressively heterosexist” and *macho*, Spanish male (Pérez-Sánchez, “Franco’s Spain, Queer Nation?” 954). By having Cazeaux be French (a nationality labelled in Francoist propaganda as a “degenerate democracy” (Carr 160) and associated with excessive liberalism), Romero potentially limits the possibility of problems with censorship. In relation to the theme of prostitution, Romero similarly restricts his description to the more glamorous side of sex work in postwar Barcelona. There is no mention at all of the miserable conditions of working on street corners or “descampados,” of the men who preyed on young vulnerable women for profit, nor of the subsequent possibility of imprisonment under the pretence of ‘redemption.’ It is unclear why the author omitted the less savoury aspects of the, already very controversial, topic of prostitution, but given his willingness to tackle the subject of criminality (armed robbery, gambling, black market dealings) and homelessness in other chapters of *La*

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<sup>145</sup> Pérez-Sánchez (*Queer Transitions* 25) cites Franco’s *Ley de Peligrosidad y Rehabilitación Social*, *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 1970.

*noria*, it could be argued that Romero deliberately presented the aspects of prostitution that would likely be more palatable for the censor.

In any case, the censor to whom *La noria* was assigned was shocked by the novel's frank depiction of sexual themes: "Abundan los tipos de gente de mal vivir: invertidos, prostitutas, etc. y en toda la obra hay la preocupación constante del problema sexual, expuesto con toda crudeza y desenfado" (censor's report cited in Abellán, *Censura y literaturas peninsulares* 179).<sup>146</sup> It appears that two different censors read the novel; one decides it is unsuitable for publication: "Creo que su lectura puede resultar francamente perniciosa para una gran mayoría de lectores." The other agrees, but says that "por las circunstancias que en ella concurren es conveniente que la vea el *censor eclesiástico*." Francisco Álamo Felices also cites the comments written in the margin of the report, presumably those of the above-mentioned "censor eclesiástico" who writes: "La obra es fuerte y desenfadada, aunque sin llegar a gravemente inmoral. Es original y con cierto mérito literario. Aunque la creo perjudicial para lectores jóvenes o de escasa formación, juzgo que dadas las circunstancias que en esta obra concurren, podrá tolerarse" (censor's report cited in Álamo Felices 104–05). In response to the question "¿A la moral?," the censor lists about ten pages on which deletions were to be carried out. Unfortunately, as the original manuscript and censor's report are unavailable, it is not possible to ascertain whether these changes were ever implemented or whether the third censor's final authorisation overrode those requirements. There are, however, no references to any changes made in the studies by Abellán or Álamo Felices, nor does Romero ever mention that he was required to make alterations to his first novel in later essays or interviews. In any case, Romero, despite writing from Buenos Aires, would have been aware of the types of themes that would cause concern for the official readers in Spain and, although he pushed the boundaries in many ways, he may have decided that including a chapter on the sordid existence of

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<sup>146</sup> The original censor's report for *La noria* is no longer available at the Archivo General de la Administración where I have consulted the reports for the other novels for this thesis. It seems, however, that it has been available in the past: it has a *número de expediente* and has been cited by Abellán (*Censura y literaturas peninsulares*) and Álamo Felices. In this chapter, I refer to the reports cited by Abellán and Álamo Felices, although there are discrepancies between the way they are cited, probably due to the poor legibility of the censor's handwriting.

a clandestine prostitute or overt homosexual activity would be a step too far. It could thus be argued that there is a degree of self-censorship in Romero's representation of these themes, which may also have impacted on the author's decision to feature a disproportionate number of wealthy and upper-class characters, as noted earlier; it was perhaps safer to portray the 'tasteful' lives of the wealthier classes than to deal with the more controversial themes associated with poverty and crime.<sup>147</sup>

Irrespective of Romero's cautious approach, the extremely traditional and conservative mindset exhibited by some members of the Francoist censorship body is illustrated by one of the censor's comments in particular: "Únicamente tres capítulos exponen vidas de personas honorables." Given that there are thirty-seven varied characters, this is unquestionably excessive: if we assume that three 'honourable' characters are Berta, Elvira and González, it becomes clear that this censor's judgement can be considered particularly harsh (although he is overruled by the third reader). In the case of Clara Seré, he presumably considers her unladylike business acumen unacceptable;<sup>148</sup> meanwhile, Lola's life is largely innocent, but perhaps it is her love of dancing which provokes the censor's disapproval, as even dancing was frowned upon by ecclesiastical authorities: "[E]l baile quedaba proscrito, al tratarse de un entretenimiento «intrínsecamente perverso»" (Vizcaíno Casas 216); finally, in a story such as that of Mercedes, who cannot be faulted in her daily struggle to provide for her family, it seems that the simple misfortune of living in poverty is enough for the censor to consider her less than 'honourable.'

It is possible that even the priest, Mosén Bruguera, the protagonist of the final chapter of the novel, was considered objectionable in the eyes of this censor. At first glance, the chapter provides a very sympathetic portrait of the clergy and the Church because the priest is described as a humble man, who rejects claims that he is

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<sup>147</sup> Romero is one of the writers interviewed about self-censorship by Abellán: Romero describes the process of self-censorship as "agobiante como cualquier imposición que sabemos procede de fuera de nosotros mismos." He says that it largely becomes subconscious and automatic—"ese freno de la autocensura obra con cierto automatismo incorporado"—but that he sometimes has to physically change what he has already written ("Censura y autocensura" n.p.).

<sup>148</sup> Indeed, Pérez lists a number of topics that writers under Franco should not attempt to "favor," among those is that of "career women" or "females as satisfied in roles other than wife or mother" ("Fascist Models" 74).

a saint, happily lives a simple life and seems to genuinely care for every member of his congregation, regardless of their pasts.<sup>149</sup> The depiction appears particularly positive when contrasted with the typical allegations levelled at the Catholic Church by critics of the regime, such as its material greediness and hypocritical moral standards.<sup>150</sup> It is, however, hinted by Romero in this final chapter that the Church as a whole does not necessarily share this priest's values, with other churches relying on donations from "señoras ricas" (258) and perhaps not being as accepting as he is of people with 'difficult' pasts (an implication that was possibly picked up by the censor). In any case, the censor in question was almost certainly displeased with the priest's professed commitment to the workers' cause: Mosén Bruguera refers to the rich's exploitation of the poor as "pecado mortal," and he is saddened by the fact that fewer and fewer "obreros" are attending mass (259).

The question of political affiliation, whether current or dating back to the war, was thus in all likelihood taken into consideration by the censor in his assessment of the characters' 'honour,' despite the fact that political themes are not mentioned explicitly by any of the censors. As discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this thesis, particularly in my chapters on *El fulgor y la sangre* and *Diario de una maestra*, making reference to the Republican experience of the Civil War and the associated leftist beliefs was not explicitly forbidden; however, authors had to be careful not to portray these in an overly sympathetic way nor to depict the Nationalist side in a perceptibly negative light. Despite the fact that *La noria* is set ten years after 1939, the war continues to be present for the characters and for wider Spanish society; in fact, Marco expressly described Romero's novel as "el resultado de una tragedia histórica, la Guerra Civil española" ("Dimensiones críticas" 15). The vestiges of the war remain evident in the faltering economy of 1940s Spain, and there are also a few references to how the city has physically changed since the conflict; most importantly, however, each individual character's experience of the war (which is sometimes, but not always, detailed by the narrator as a part of the character's

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<sup>149</sup> William Grupp wrote in 1956 that Romero "is a Catholic, as he says, 'by birth, education and belief'" (201); however, the extent of Romero's religious beliefs is not discussed elsewhere.

<sup>150</sup> Criticism of the Catholic Church and its position in postwar society is discussed in several case studies in this thesis.

background story) continues to influence the way they live and relate to the rest of society in postwar Spain.

The case of Paquito Gallardo's father, known simply as 'Gallardo' in the novel, is the first that comes to mind in relation to wartime politics; the censors may have found his story objectionable for this reason. Gallardo, a working-class man, fought on the Republican side in the war and had also been involved in class violence in Barcelona during the Republican years. Since the war, he has suffered political persecution, being imprisoned briefly, accused of "cosas horribles; de bombas, y descarrilamientos, y atracos, y muertes" (41), after an old comrade came to visit. Fortunately, his wife had a connection (she had worked as a servant in the house of a military man when she was young) and he was released, but the family lived in fear for many years and they never spoke of the incident again. Now, Gallardo, who is well-regarded by his employers despite his political background, works extremely hard to get his family ahead and, most significantly, so that he can forget the past (46).<sup>151</sup> Gallardo could, from the regime's perspective, be viewed as a reformed man who has renounced his misguided beliefs, as a result of being treated so kindly by his employers and the possibility of sending his son to a good school with the children of the regime's elite; however, Romero quickly negates this possibility by mentioning that Gallardo does not intend for his son to make the family wealthy, but instead, dreams that he will become a lawyer who can defend the poor from the injustices of postwar life (39). It can be assumed, therefore, that both Gallardo's political past and the evidence that his beliefs remain essentially unchanged preclude the censor from considering the character as a "persona honorable," despite the fact that he is otherwise a respectable and hard-working citizen.

The narrator informs the reader that Felipe Asensio, Paco (Hortensia's husband), Berta's father and El "Sardineta" also all fought on the losing side of the war. Of these characters, Felipe, Paco and El "Sardineta" appear to have had little, if any, ideological commitment to the Republican cause. Felipe was a "legionario"

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<sup>151</sup> The question of memory and the need to silence and forget the past in postwar Spain will be discussed in-depth in my chapter on Ignacio Aldecoa's *El fulgor y la sangre*.



during the war but has no qualms about remaining in Spain and playing the postwar circumstances to his advantage by participating in the black market. Paco was forced to join the Republican side, then deserted and was imprisoned. El “Sardineta,” the now-homeless beggar, also joined because he was in prison when war broke out in 1936 and had befriended a group of anarchists. He had a difficult time during the war, spending some time in a concentration camp, although he also engaged in some ethically questionable behaviour in Barcelona (appropriating valuable objects after *registros*, for example). El “Sardineta”’s current situation could therefore be viewed, on the one hand, as a result of political persecution of the Republican losers of the war, but, on the other hand, it could also be a consequence of his own past behaviour, as other former Republican soldiers in the novel have managed to reintegrate into society.<sup>152</sup>

There is, interestingly, little to differentiate the more average men who fought for the Republican side (such as Felipe and Paco) from the similar men who were on the winning side, such as González and Jorge Mas (Roberto is the exception as he professes to holding strong Falangist ideals (75)). The others appear to have joined whichever side presented itself to them, usually dictated by geography or family associations, as was often the case.<sup>153</sup> Jorge Mas even says expressly that, for him, “lo mismo daba un bando que otro” (120). Although life has evidently been easier for the victors since the war, Romero steers clear of the exaltation of the Nationalist soldiers and the vilification of those who had supported the Republic that was so prevalent in regime-endorsed literature and propaganda in the early postwar years.<sup>154</sup> Romero’s more malleable view of Spanish politics belies the myth of fixed ideologies with clear-cut boundaries (Nationalist or Republican) and points towards his belief in the significance of a neutral territory in Spanish society. This belief is

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<sup>152</sup> Just as the possibility of multiple political interpretations was noted in relation to Juan and Román in *Nada*, El “Sardineta” is another an example of a character who can be read from different viewpoints: while a critic of the regime might see him as a victim of political repression, a Francoist censor would read him as an example of a criminal *rojo*.

<sup>153</sup> The arbitrariness of wartime political affiliation was introduced in Chapter One and will be discussed further in Chapter Four on Ignacio Aldecoa’s *El fulgor y la sangre*.

<sup>154</sup> A prime example of such material was the film *Raza*, released in 1942, which turned out to be based on a semi-autobiographical script written by Franco himself. For more information on the sort of political stereotypes presented in that film, see Afinoguénova.

further confirmed by a quotation cited in Hilari Ragner's obituary of the author, where Romero describes how the Civil War had been:

como el filo de una navaja, sobre el que uno no puede sentarse sino que ha de inclinarse por uno u otro lado, y así—dijo—personas o grupos que el día antes del alzamiento eran ideológicamente muy cercanos, el día después se encontraron enfrentados a muerte. Por eso siempre he admirado a los personajes de la *tercera España*, los que no cabían ni en la azul ni en la roja. (Ragner, n.p.)

Luis Romero's eagerness to dismiss the importance of wartime affiliation in his novel is understandable when his own past is taken into consideration. As mentioned briefly at the beginning of this chapter, Romero had fought for the Francoist side as a young man and even went to Russia as part of the División Azul.<sup>155</sup> After the war, however, he adopted more left-wing political views, and therefore has, understandably, been unforthcoming about his wartime experiences.<sup>156</sup> When Romero has alluded to his political past, it has been to downplay the significance of his political choices during the war, saying: "Yo no he sido nunca de derechas. Desde los diecisiete años vivo de mi trabajo, y así no se puede ser de derechas... Siempre he sido pobre. Tampoco tengo una mentalidad conservadora. Pero hice la guerra, y ahora que se ve lo espantoso que fue, tengo que decir que no me arrepiento de nada..." (Valls, "Luis Romero ha muerto" n.p.). He has also emphasised his youth and inexperience at the time that war broke out: "[F]ue aquella la época en que no me preguntaban cuántos años tenía, y tenía pocos, sino de qué quinta era: y era, que ya no lo soy, de la quinta del 37" (Romero, *La noria*,

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<sup>155</sup> The División Azul was a unit of Spanish soldiers who served alongside the German army on the Eastern front against the Soviet Union in 1941–43. Officially, the unit was made up solely of volunteers so that Spain could maintain its 'neutral' status in World War II. Whether the unit was made up only of volunteers is a fact disputed by a number of scholars, who argue that soldiers from the Spanish army were forced to enlist. See, for example, Rodríguez Jiménez. Luis Romero has never spoken in detail of his enlistment in the *División Azul*, so it is not known whether he was a volunteer or if he was conscripted.

<sup>156</sup> Sanz Villanueva is of the opinion that *La noria*, with its "testimonio urbano nada complaciente," demonstrates that Romero had distanced himself from his initial "vinculación con el franquismo" (*La novela española* 156).

postface). The mixed political backgrounds of the characters in *La noria* and their varied ideologies thus reflect Romero's awareness of the complex nature of political affiliations and a desire to undermine divisions.

Naturally, Romero's past did not sit too easily with the openly left-wing writers and theorists of the *novela social* which would come to prominence only a few years after the publication of *La noria*, and perhaps explains why Romero was never closely affiliated with his contemporaries. He was also a little older than those of the 'mid-century generation,' and was actually in Argentina while he wrote his first novel and did not, therefore, move in the Spanish literary circles of the 1940s. He did, however, profess similar aims in writing testimonial literature and made his intentions in writing literature clear, saying that by portraying the sometimes harsh reality of life in postwar Spain he wanted to "despertar la inquietud entre quienes en nuestro país y también en otros duermen beatíficamente. Esa inquietud les hará primero sentirse incómodos, y luego les forzará a aceptar el dinamismo de lo social y de lo puramente humano," and explains that his work is therefore testimonial or "más bien de denuncia o de protesta" (Romero cited in Olmos García 215). Romero's approach clearly reflects the fundamental idea behind the theory of *engagement*: that of revealing a situation to the reader who would then, with his or her newly acquired 'conscious awareness,' take action towards the transformation of society.<sup>157</sup>

While most critics have categorised Romero's first novel as an early form of the *novela social*, this is a novel that has nevertheless received very little critical attention, despite the fact that it provides an array of perspectives on Francoist Spain. The combination of these perspectives serves to bring to light aspects of postwar life that were never discussed in the media and thereby undermines the regime's propaganda and ideals. Firstly and most evidently, I argue, there is the blatant wealth disparity visible in the novel, which the informed reader knows has been exacerbated by postwar economic policies: the wealthier characters largely owe their fortunes to the war and to their privileged relationship with the regime. The

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<sup>157</sup> Olmos García's interview was published in 1963 so it is impossible to know whether Romero had already coherently formed this argument before writing *La noria*. It is, of course, possible that he became aware of Sartre's work in the late 1940s before Sartre's ideas became more widespread in Spain.

frustration felt by the poorer classes, desperate to earn a living, is exacerbated by the fact that they are exposed every day to the excesses and possibilities of wealth that are far out of their reach on the streets of Barcelona. Romero also counters the postwar ideological binary by depicting characters with a variety of political backgrounds and downplaying the ideological differences between them; this aspect of the novel also reflects, I suggest, the author's own mixed political background. The gender divide is, in my opinion, also significant in the novel and I have argued that Romero's female characters transcend the narrow-minded classification of women according to their conformation to the National-Catholic standard of sexual 'decency.' In particular, Romero's inclusion of Dorita and Trini, as well as the homosexual Cazeaux, in *La noria* may be considered to challenge the regime's 'demonised' image of those who were considered sexual 'deviants' by the authorities. With regard to prostitution, Romero also intimates the extent to which the upper echelons of Francoist society were involved with these so-called "fallen women," and confronts the establishment's failure to acknowledge the prevalence of prostitution and the many social issues that contributed to it in the postwar years. Despite the fact that Romero, probably consciously, limits his portrait to the more savoury aspects of Barcelona's 'underbelly' and does not include any overtly sexual scenes, the censors found the novel to be morally reprehensible, although it was eventually approved for publication. Published only three years after *La noria*, but taking a very different approach to narrative and style and with a rural setting which could not be further removed from the bustling Barcelona described in Romero's novel is Ignacio Aldecoa's first novel *El fulgor y la sangre* (1954), the subject of my next chapter.

## Chapter Four

### The Women of the Guardia Civil: Memory in Ignacio Aldecoa's

#### *El fulgor y la sangre* (1954)

*El fulgor y la sangre* is a little-studied novel which depicts the lives of five families living at a Guardia Civil barracks in rural 1950s Spain and provides a unique perspective on postwar life. Although better known than Luis Romero, Ignacio Aldecoa has received considerably less critical attention than the 'classic' social realists, such as Juan Goytisolo and Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, and certainly very little in the last few decades. Despite the fact that Aldecoa's date of birth and the time he started publishing correspond with those of the other writers of the *generación de medio siglo*, his classification within this group has always been uneasy. In overviews of postwar Spanish literature, Aldecoa is often described as 'marginal,' 'independent' and 'traditional' (Lasagabáster 15–16).<sup>158</sup> Sanz Villanueva attributes Aldecoa's marginalisation in relation to the *novela social* largely to the fact that he was not directly involved with the writers grouped around Carlos Barral (and who were published by Seix Barral), nor did he have a relationship with the other major publisher involved in the social realist movement, Destino (*La novela española* 175). Another explanation for Aldecoa's 'separateness' is that he combines a strong element of social testimony with artistic innovation (a descriptive literary style and innovative use of literary devices), in contrast to the purely objective realism and more explicit social denunciation endorsed by Castellet and Goytisolo. Furthermore, the lack of scholarly work dedicated to Aldecoa can be attributed to the difficulty in categorising his literary style and perhaps also to his early death at the age of forty-four in 1969, which left his three planned trilogies incomplete. A number of critical

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<sup>158</sup> Sobejano is one of the only critics who expressly includes Aldecoa in the category of *novela social*, labelling him as a *novelista social* who writes with "la actitud de defensa del pueblo" (*Novela española de nuestro tiempo* 211).

studies dedicated solely to Aldecoa were published about a decade after his death; however, interest has declined again since the mid-1980s.<sup>159</sup>

Ignacio Aldecoa, born in Vitoria in 1925 to a middle-class artisan family with strong connections to the cultural world, was eleven years old when the Spanish Civil War broke out.<sup>160</sup> After the war, Aldecoa studied humanities in Salamanca and later in Madrid; however, according to classmates at the time, he was never very interested in academic discussions, instead preferring to spend his time on the streets of the city speaking to “seres reales, gentes de la calle, no culturizados, personas que hacían del riesgo una profesión para vivir” (Navales 107). These interactions with ‘real’ people would later provide the inspiration for the characters in his short stories and novels. At university, he befriended a number of aspiring young writers, who together eventually constituted the major literary circle of 1950s Madrid, including Jesús Fernández Santos, Sánchez Ferlosio, Martín Gaité and Alfonso Sastre (Andres-Suárez 14). As a student, a number of Aldecoa’s first short stories were published in SEU reviews;<sup>161</sup> he was later involved in the independent *Revista Española*, and published his first novel in 1954.

*El fulgor y la sangre* was to be the first novel of a trilogy entitled *La España inmóvil*, the first of three planned trilogies based around what Aldecoa called “los grandes oficios” (Alborg, *Hora actual* I 264). Two of the three planned novels for this trilogy were completed: *El fulgor y la sangre* (with the Guardia Civil as its central theme) and its ‘sequel,’ *Con el viento solano* (focusing on gypsy life); the third, never finished, was to be about Spanish bullfighters. His second trilogy would portray the lives of those who worked at sea, but only one of these, *Gran Sol* (winner of the Premio de la Crítica in 1958), was ever written. The third planned trilogy, of which no novels were completed, was to depict “los obreros de hierro” (Durán 64–65).

*El fulgor y la sangre* revolves around a Guardia Civil barracks in a small Castilian village, where five *guardias* live with their families and the corporal. The

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<sup>159</sup> Pérez wrote in 1984 that at least seven books dedicated exclusively to Aldecoa had been published since 1972 (“Recursos artísticos” 48).

<sup>160</sup> Aldecoa’s parents were involved with a group of local artists, including his uncle, Adrián Aldecoa, who used to gather at their home in Vitoria (Fiddian 14). The author’s personal experience of the war and how this is reflected in his work will be returned to later in this chapter.

<sup>161</sup> See Chapter One for a discussion of the SEU reviews and the role they played in the development of a critical stance in postwar literature.

action in the present spans only seven or eight hours on a July day in the early 1950s: three *guardias* and the corporal have gone out on patrol, while the other two remain with the women and children in the barracks which have been built inside the walls of an abandoned castle. News arrives that one of the men on patrol has been killed, but it is not known who the victim is until the final chapter. The *guardias* on duty at the castle tell their wives, who are then asked to prepare the other women for the news. *El fulgor y la sangre* particularly sets itself apart from other novels of the same period because it goes beyond depicting the ‘reality’ of Spanish life in the present: the narrative jumps backwards and forwards between the present and the recent past, dealing quite directly with significant historical events. From the second to the sixth chapter, the slow and suspenseful action in the present is alternated with flashbacks that depict the past experiences of the five women one at a time.<sup>162</sup>

In this chapter, I will first look at Aldecoa’s stated social intentions in writing about contemporary Spanish life and I will explore the way in which postwar Spain under Franco is depicted through the eyes of the protagonists in *El fulgor y la sangre*. In analysing Aldecoa’s portrait of 1950s Spain, I will consider the fact that Aldecoa chose to focus on the Guardia Civil in his first novel and discuss some of the social and political issues associated with this profession in the postwar period. While the central theme of the novel is purportedly the Guardia Civil, the story is told from the point of view of the women who live in the castle; the narrative, therefore, and particularly the women’s flashbacks, address a number of significant gender issues that merit further discussion, given that gender constructs were so central to Francoist society. The second part of this chapter will consist of an analysis of the flashbacks in terms of the depiction of historical events; namely, the Second Republic and the Civil War, both of which were critical in the justification and legitimisation of Franco’s postwar regime, and will look at the significance of remembering the past in the Francoist context, drawing on the work of a number of scholars of contemporary memory studies. Finally, all of this must, of course, be considered in the context of the cultural and literary censorship in place at the time of writing, and

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<sup>162</sup> The sections that depict the past cannot always strictly be classed as ‘flashbacks’ (as will be discussed later in this chapter), however, for the purpose of simplicity, I will refer to these sections as ‘flashbacks’ in this chapter.

the chapter will conclude with a discussion of some of the stylistic techniques Aldecoa employed in order to avoid problems with censorship.

While *El fulgor y la sangre*, just like *Nada* and *La noria*, predates the explicit political commitment outlined by Castellet and Goytisolo in their theoretical work, and although the author was not directly involved in the group that formed around these ideas, Aldecoa independently confirmed his social intentions in writing fiction.<sup>163</sup> From a young age, Aldecoa had been interested in life beyond the limited bourgeois society in Vitoria, as his wife, Josefina Aldecoa, confirmed: “Solía afirmar que su vocación de escritor, tempranísima, nació en él como una rebeldía frente al medio burgués, limitadísimo, de su ciudad en aquellos tiempos” (cited in Andres-Suárez 12). Through writing fiction, the author wanted to uncover the difficult reality of Spanish life as he saw it both in Madrid, where he lived, and on his frequent trips around Spain: “[H]ay una realidad española, cruda y tierna a la vez, que está casi inédita en nuestra novela” (Aldecoa cited in Alborg, *Hora actual* I 263), adding that, in depicting this reality, he was not adopting a sentimental or tendentious attitude (Borau 18).<sup>164</sup>

In *El fulgor y la sangre*, Aldecoa presents a section of this Spanish reality, with the narrative present in the novel corresponding more or less to the writing present (the novel was first published in 1954). The principal action in the novel takes place on a single summer’s day in the early 1950s; the reader is not given the precise date, but from various clues in the text we can calculate that it is approximately 1952.<sup>165</sup> As outlined in Chapter One, by 1952, Spain had just begun to emerge from the dark *años de hambre* of the 1940s. In 1953, Franco made a military alliance with the Eisenhower administration (who in return for allowing a US military presence in Spain, facilitated Spain’s membership of the United Nations in 1955 (Francis 258)) and the

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<sup>163</sup> As argued in Chapter One, however, Castellet’s treatise simply codified the trends and theories that already existed in Spain and the exact dates are, therefore, not really significant.

<sup>164</sup> Besides writing and reading, Aldecoa’s preferred pastime was travelling; he was constantly planning trips around both the Iberian peninsula as well as abroad. He considered his trips around Spain to be necessary to his profession, “porque en esos viajes recogía experiencias que después habrían de convertirse en narraciones” (Martín Nogales 22–23). In 1957, Aldecoa recounted in a newspaper article that he got the idea for *El fulgor y la sangre* while travelling in Castilla when he saw a castle which contained a *Guardia Civil* “cuartel” (Trenas).

<sup>165</sup> We know, for example, that Pedro and Sonsoles have lived in the castle for ten years (47) and that they arrived there a few years after the end of the war. All in-text page references to the novel refer to Aldecoa, *El fulgor y la sangre* (1954).



regime signed the Concordat with the Vatican in the same year. Spain was, therefore, gradually emerging from international isolation and the economy was slowly beginning to recover from postwar stagnation; however, life for many was still difficult, both economically and socially, as they faced a future living under a dictatorship which had now firmly cemented its position both domestically and internationally.<sup>166</sup>

At first glance, *El fulgor y la sangre* does not appear to deal with the theme of economic difficulties to any great extent because life in the castle is simple but sufficiently comfortable. However, there are a number of references to the hardship suffered in the earlier postwar period and, particularly, to the devastating effects of the regime's autarky policies of the 1940s. In discussing the depiction of postwar Spain in the novel, I will not only refer to the day on which the action takes place, but also to the latter parts of the flashbacks that deal with the couples' arrival at the castle and the years that lead up to the narrative present. Just as in the previous two case studies, the allusions to the extreme poverty, hunger and oppression suffered by a large part of the Spanish population directly contradicted the public image of prosperity and modernity that the Franco regime was attempting to project through the use of propaganda and censorship.

The references to the food shortages of the 1940s are explicit in *El fulgor y la sangre*: in the flashback to Felisa and Ruipérez's first posting shortly after the war ends, the narrator states simply: "Empezaban los tiempos malos" (111). Ruipérez and Felisa witness official trucks taking away desperately needed wheat and vegetables from their village—"Camiones de dueños desconocidos, con rutas desconocidas"—and Ruipérez predicts that there will be a lot of hunger and need in the future (111). Sonsoles makes reference to the suppliers who were tempted to hide their produce from the authorities and route it through the black market, a decision which often proved to have severe consequences for the nation's food supply: "He oído contar que mucha gente guardaba el trigo hasta de tres cosechas. A muchos les

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<sup>166</sup> In 1950, Spain was the "only Western country that had yet to recover its 1929 production levels" (Cazorla Sánchez 12).

salió mal, otros hicieron así el dinero” (21).<sup>167</sup> Although the most difficult years had passed by 1950, there are indications in the novel that the black market continued to thrive even in the 1950s, as the women refer to the rising price of olive oil, among other things: “¡Menudas fortunas que se deben de estar haciendo a cuenta del aceite! Cada día hay más estraperlo; no sé dónde vamos a ir a parar” (119).<sup>168</sup> By highlighting the food shortages of the official rationing system and contrasting them with the relative abundance of goods on the black market, which were hugely unaffordable for the majority, Aldecoa is not just including realist detail in his novel, but is making a political statement, given that much of the misery can be attributed directly to the isolation of the Spanish economy, state intervention and official corruption (Cazorla Sánchez 11). Furthermore, despite the fact that the general quality of life in Spain had improved somewhat by this time, it is clear that the protagonists are aware that conditions are better elsewhere: Felisa, for example, says outright that she thinks her brother made the right choice to leave Spain for France after the war: “Ése ha sido listo” (181).<sup>169</sup>

The *guardias* are fortunate not to be strongly affected by the economic hardship in Spain as they have stable jobs and can provide for their families; however, their occupation, the first in Aldecoa’s proposed series on “los grandes oficios,” carries a number of social and political implications and causes them to experience social difficulties of another kind. As *guardias civiles*, the protagonists of Aldecoa’s novel occupy a unique and conflicted position in Francoist society: on the one hand, their profession places them within the sphere of Franco’s ruling elite; but on the other hand, they are lowly *guardias*, predominantly from working-class backgrounds, whose lives are dictated by the requirements of their chosen career and who face significant danger on their daily patrols in the countryside. This unusual position in Spanish society is something that has been acknowledged by only a small number of critics looking at *El fulgor y la sangre*. Jack Jelinski mentions it

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<sup>167</sup> Julián Delgado Aguado discusses the way in which suppliers had to hide their products from the authorities in order to channel them through the black market; this often meant that, by the time the products arrived on the shelves, they were in “malas condiciones higiénico-sanitarias” (85–86).

<sup>168</sup> Rationing was not abolished in Spain until 1952 and the dominance of the black market in the purchasing of certain essential products continued well into the 1950s (Delgado Aguado 85).

<sup>169</sup> In reality, as a former Republican soldier, Felisa’s brother would have little choice but to leave Spain after Franco’s victory.

only to lament Aldecoa's neglect of the subject in his novel: "Fuera de muy escasas referencias hechas para ambientar el marco del libro, el texto no revela la novelación ni de las determinaciones que el ambiente y el sistema socio-político imponen a los protagonistas, ni de los miembros de la Guardia Civil como grupo social marginado" (107); however, he does not address the subject in further depth. The significance of the Guardia Civil's social isolation is, however, noted by Drosoula Lytra:

La gente abriga sentimientos hostiles hacia la Guardia Civil. Estos sentimientos se inspiran en la fama que dicha Guardia tiene y se extienden a sus representantes los guardias y tienen como consecuencia el apartamiento de la sociedad tanto en el sentido físico como en lo social. Las reglas que rigen la vida de los guardias tampoco animan a que ellos cultiven relaciones con la gente. Se apartan voluntariamente por un sentimiento que cultivan, el de la 'fraternidad en armas' y en el honor. (33)

The social opposition between the Guardia Civil and the gypsies is analysed by Charles Carlisle who examines *El fulgor y la sangre* in conjunction with *Con el viento solano*; Carlisle contends that both the *guardias* and the gypsies experience a distance and isolation from the rest of society as a result of fear and suspicion, but for Carlisle, the key difference is that the *guardias* choose this lifestyle, while the gypsies are born into it.<sup>170</sup> Carlisle includes an important citation from Hugh Thomas about the historical reasons for the Guardia Civil's social segregation:

With their green uniforms, three-cornered hats, their Mauser rifles, and gaunt barracks, this police force was regarded as an army of occupation. Members of the Civil Guard never served in the part of Spain from whence they came. They were not encouraged to speak to

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<sup>170</sup> The *guardia's* vocation, however, is not always of their own choosing, as will be discussed later on in this chapter.

anyone in the village in which they were quartered. They had a deserved reputation for ruthlessness. (H. Thomas 75)<sup>171</sup>

As a military police force, the Guardia Civil had long been associated with the conservative right in Spain, and there had traditionally been tension between the Guardia Civil and the leftist working classes. This tension is illustrated in the novel by Felisa's brother and father who, as members of a socialist union, disapprove when a young *guardia* (Ruipérez) accompanies Felisa home one day. They classify him as an "enemigo de los obreros" and her brother insists that by going out with a *guardia*, she is renouncing her class (68–69). In one of the politically motivated scuffles in the village where María teaches in 1936, the *guardias* turn up to break up the fight but are greeted by calls of "Muera la Guardia Civil" (170–71), because the *guardias* continue to be seen as symbolic of reactionary and conservative forces, even under a Republican government.

The strong political connotations associated with the Guardia Civil continued in postwar society where the *guardias* were seen as representative of the new authoritarian regime. The villagers who live near the barracks consider the *guardias* to form a part of the "fuerzas vivas" in the village, along with the priest and the mayor (120). As a result of their relative position of power, they are treated with great respect by the villagers, who, at the annual fair, present the men on patrol with gifts of food and drink (10); however, they are also deeply feared and, as a result, experience social isolation. On Sundays, the families go to church in the village, but barely interact with the villagers,<sup>172</sup> and although the children attend the village school, they do not mix with the other children: "[T]enían formada una banda contra los del pueblo. Los niños aldeanos respetaban a los del puesto, los temían" (51–52). The *guardias* are not oblivious to the mixture of reverence and trepidation with which they are viewed by the rest of the population and are aware of the

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<sup>171</sup> Carlisle also lists several historic events in Spain in which the *Guardia Civil* were considered to have been especially brutal (Castilnuevo, 1931 and Yeste, 1936) and reminds the reader of Federico García Lorca's "Romance de la Guardia Civil española" in which the (pre-war) *guardias* are portrayed as brutal and sadistic men (17).

<sup>172</sup> The women feel pressure to look respectable and on the rare occasions that they go to the village "se vestían de domingo y se arreglaban cuidadosamente" (10).

responsibilities attached to their position. Ruipérez, for example, describes his career as “otra guerra que él había escogido desde niño” (102); interestingly, this echoes a similar comment made by Ramón Sender who likened joining the Civil Guard to declaring Civil War (Sender cited in H. Thomas 75). There is also a telling description of Pedro’s relationship with his *tricornio*, probably the most recognised and feared symbol of the Spanish Guardia Civil, where he describes it as ‘oppressive’ and likens it to a black cat digging its claws into his head (218).

It is clear, even before the incident recounted in the novel, that there had been friction between certain elements of the rural society and the *guardias*, as Pedro is not surprised to hear the news that one of his colleagues has been injured (14). Following Franco’s victory, animosity between the authorities and rural labourers was a particular problem in the countryside. The political situation had allowed landowners who were loyal to the regime not only to expropriate the land of ‘reds,’ but also gave them the freedom to break or alter contracts with sharecroppers and renters (Cazorla Sánchez 37). Many sharecroppers were therefore forced to become “drifting labourers,” who were often unemployed and caused a number of social problems. In addition to the large number of disaffected agricultural workers, Cazorla Sánchez writes that “[r]ural Spain lived in terror well into the early 1950s” because anti-Francoist guerrillas remained active in certain rural areas of Spain for some time after the war (30). Further evidence of this tension in the novel is the fact that only a few years earlier, a *guardia*—the one that Ruipérez replaced—had been killed just outside the village, run over by a truck that refused to stop for him.

With the exception of Guillermo (who was too young), the *guardias* in the novel all actively participated in the Civil War. Although it is never explicitly stated, the reader can infer from various details throughout the narrative that they all fought for the Nationalist side. The participation of the Guardia Civil, as a unit, in the war is somewhat complex: following the military uprising on 18 July 1936, the leaders of the Guardia Civil in most major cities remained loyal to the Republican government,<sup>173</sup> although many officials did not and were replaced. In Castilla la

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<sup>173</sup> This may explain why the rebellion was not initially successful in Madrid and Barcelona (Delgado Aguado 35).

Vieja, however—where Ruipérez is stationed when war breaks out—the Guardia Civil joined the rebellion immediately, along with smaller groups of *guardias* throughout Spain. The men who were *guardias* before the war could therefore have participated on either side of the conflict; however, on his victory, Franco was careful to ensure that all of those who had opposed him were expelled from the service.<sup>174</sup> Through the regime's process of *depuración*, those who had supported the losing side were punished by having their jobs and livelihoods taken away, while those who had served the Nationalist cause were rewarded with positions in the civil service and other official posts (Casanova et al. 30). Former Republican soldiers would have been fortunate not to have been imprisoned or executed, let alone be permitted to join, or to continue to serve, the Guardia Civil.

Despite the political implications discussed above, however, the *guardias* in *El fulgor y la sangre* are portrayed not as committed Francoists, but as men who are simply trying to do the best for their families in the circumstances. Ruipérez and Guillermo are the sons of *guardias*, and they were therefore expected to join the service themselves (118, 299).<sup>175</sup> Similarly, it is likely that the others joined the Nationalist cause due to geography and wartime circumstances, rather than any particular ideological commitment, later joining the Guardia Civil as a natural progression.<sup>176</sup> This circumstantial affiliation was common during the war, as Cazorla Sánchez affirms: “[C]ommitment to either side was in great measure accidental and/or imposed (by both sides) [...]. This included combatants” (34). Carr also mentions that, in many cases, “loyalty was often a matter of locality”: as Spain was geographically divided into ‘liberated’ and ‘loyal’ zones, people were forced to escape or conform at risk of execution or imprisonment (135). It should also be taken into account that in the difficult postwar years, a stable job and income was so valuable that many would have overlooked any previous ideological commitments (had they existed). Ernesta's father, Paulino, for example, a very poor agricultural

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<sup>174</sup> He had been, in fact, on the verge of dissolving the *Guardia Civil* but decided against it at the last minute, because he believed in a centralised military authority, which the *Guardia Civil* had traditionally provided in Spain (Delgado Aguado 34).

<sup>175</sup> Guillermo is “huérfano de Guardia Civil,” implying that his father was killed in the line of duty (299).

<sup>176</sup> See Matthews 28–32 for details of military conscription in Nationalist-held territory during the war.

worker who had suffered greatly at the hands of the local landowner before the war, is happy that his daughter will marry a *guardia*, thinking to himself: “Es un buen partido; un guardia no tiene que estar sometido al trabajo a jornal, tiene un sueldo y de él puede vivir muy bien. Nuestra hija ha tenido suerte” (314–15).

Notwithstanding the advantages of the stability of the job and the small, but consistent salary, the work of the Guardia Civil is difficult, physically strenuous and potentially dangerous. Their lives are dictated by the *Comandancia* who treat the lowly *guardias* with little sympathy; the corporal, for example, is conceded a transfer before any of the others, despite having arrived most recently. By including the *guardias* in his series on “los grandes oficios,” Aldecoa downplays the political connotations and portrays them as ordinary men carrying out their professional responsibilities. As the author once stated: “Yo intenté resaltar los valores humanos de una determinada zona de la sociedad cartelescamente deshumanizada” (Aldecoa cited in Lytra 31).<sup>177</sup>

While *El fulgor y la sangre* is designated by its author as ‘a novel about the Guardia Civil,’ the real protagonists of the novel are the women, the wives of the *guardias* (as rightly pointed out by García Viñó (Ignacio Aldecoa 86)). The majority of the narrative in the present is narrated from the perspective of the five women, and the flashbacks focus on the past experiences of one woman at a time. Besides the women, the reader is only briefly given access, through the third-person narrator, to the private thoughts of the two men who are on guard duty at the castle on the day of the incident, Pedro and Ruipérez, as well as the corporal in the last chapter as he relates his life story to Guillermo. Alborg says of the characters in Aldecoa’s novel: “Cinco hombres han ido vistiendo el uniforme de guardia civil y alineando sus vidas en un reducto de renunciamentos y vulgaridad; y cinco mujeres que fueron jóvenes e ilusionadas, comparten con unos hombres que escogió la vida por ellas, una misma ruta—sin retorno—hacia la desesperanza” (*Hora actual* I 266). Indeed, while it could be said that the women live the Guardia Civil lifestyle to the same extent as the men,

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<sup>177</sup> In considering the ideological implications of Aldecoa’s sympathetic portrayal of a group of rural *guardias*, it must also be taken into account that *El fulgor y la sangre* is just one half of the story: the ‘other’ perspective, that of the gypsies, including the one that shoots the corporal, is told in the second novel of the trilogy, *Con el viento solano*.

the women of *El fulgor y la sangre* do not simply represent their husbands in the narrative. In addition to suffering the consequences of their husbands' profession, having the women as protagonists brings to the fore the theme of gender.

As discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis, women were deeply affected by the Franco regime's ideology and policies because they were predominantly based around Catholicism and family values. Despite the prominent position of the women in the novel, however, issues of gender have been almost completely ignored by critics of Aldecoa's first novel, with the exception of the work of Phyllis Zatlin (whose contribution will be discussed below). The fact that the women are all in the castle as a result of their husbands' profession illustrates one of the most fundamental gender norms of the time: that a woman should follow her husband, regardless of her own career or family circumstances. María, for example, is a teacher, Carmen was a hairdresser (although she always intended to give this up on getting married), and Felisa had to leave her younger siblings in the care of her widower father, who dies not long after she leaves the family home.

Marriage was of central importance in a woman's life in postwar Spain, with the only other viable or respectable option for a woman being to commit one's life to the Church and become a nun; this is a commitment that Sonsoles seriously considers making, until she is raped and that option becomes unavailable to her (36). So important was it for a woman to marry, particularly if the woman was older and in danger of being classed as a 'spinster,' that she would be encouraged to marry regardless of a man's suitability, as illustrated in the case of María in the novel. María is left by her first fiancé with no explanation, but soon becomes engaged to Baldomero, despite admitting to herself that she does not like him very much: "Mamá, tengo novio y se quiere casar conmigo. Es, como quien dice, un cualquiera, pero es bueno y parece quererme mucho." To which her mother, who was already beginning to fear that María would never marry, replies: "Hay que agarrarse a lo que salga. Una mujer como mejor está es casada, [...]. Debes casarte. Con que sea bueno y te quiera, está todo hecho" (188–89). María's later unhappiness supports the idea that, with this exchange, the author is ridiculing the excessive importance placed on marriage in Spanish society. Carmen's reflections in the present about the



futility of her married life also challenge the official glorification of marriage and family to some extent: she compares her life to that of her sister—who had ‘had fun’ instead of marrying—and thinks that although many consider her sister to have made a bad choice, at least she had made the most of life: “Los que han sacado algo eso llevan ganado y total ella ¿qué había sacado?” (317).<sup>178</sup>

Continuing the novel’s resistance to the official idealisation of matrimony, marriage is sometimes portrayed as a difficult and painful duty for the other women in *El fulgor y la sangre*. Sonsoles’ grandmother, for example, sends her to the convent to prepare for marriage, warning her to “ve preparándote para el dolor” (26). It is also significant that, in their village, women wear black from the day they are married (22). For Felisa, the duties of marriage began long before she met Ruipérez and marriage has consisted, above all, of hard work: as the eldest daughter in a large family when her mother died, she became a surrogate mother to her younger siblings and held the family together through her father’s unemployment and the difficult years of the war. On the day of the incident in the present, she tells Sonsoles: “Para mí, siempre ha sido igual. Primero mis hermanos, después mis hijos. He hecho de criada toda mi vida. He trabajado más que un buey” (180).

Once married, the next expectation for a woman was to bear children—as many as possible. Franco’s pronatalist policy was partly informed by Catholic doctrine which considered procreation to be the sole purpose of marriage, but also by the regime’s desire to increase Spain’s population.<sup>179</sup> The theme of childbearing and its significance in a postwar Spanish woman’s life is prominent in *El fulgor y la sangre* and is frequently discussed among the protagonists; however, the descriptions of family life from the women who have borne children are far removed from the celebrated ideas of motherhood and large families endorsed by the establishment. Felisa, for example, has been physically and mentally ravaged by

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<sup>178</sup> Interestingly, the novel also contains some references to the Republic’s very differing position on marriage and women’s rights: a young man from the mountain village where María teaches, for example, tells her about an uncle whom he did not think was married “pero un día le oí a mi padre que era como si lo fuese, lo que pasa es que no se casó por la Iglesia” (140); Carmen’s mother later expresses her strong disapproval for the civil marriages allowed during the Second Republic (234). As already discussed, under the Second Republic, both civil marriage and divorce were legalised.

<sup>179</sup> For more information about pronatalism in Spain, see Nash “Pronatalism,” Scanlon (321–23) and my discussions in Chapters One and Five of this thesis.

having children: “Felisa se había aviejado, desgastado. Cuatro hijos y una mujer gastada en los partos” (111).<sup>180</sup> She later tells Sonsoles that she is thankful that her fifth child “vino mal” because it has left her unable to have more children; she does not know how she could have physically or economically supported more children (181). Felisa’s plight reflects the unavailability of contraception, an issue which will be discussed in further detail in the chapter on *Nuevas amistades*; this did not only affect unmarried women such as Julia in García Hortelano’s novel, but also put a huge strain on families who were struggling economically such as Felisa’s.

María and Ernesta, as the only childless women in the barracks, provide further interesting perspectives. María in particular, because she is older, feels that she has to justify her childlessness, saying openly several times that she is glad she has not had children of her own because she does not like children, and because the castle would, in any case, be no place for them to grow up (148). As the reader is granted access to her past and her private thoughts, however, it emerges that she had previously suffered a miscarriage four months into a pregnancy, leaving her “desconsolada,” and had subsequently visited a number of doctors who had told her it would be difficult for her to have a child (189). When alone, she thinks to herself that “el hijo propio era algo necesario para toda mujer” (145), and that it would have been nice to have a child to worry about to help pass the time in the castle and to ease the loneliness. It is clear, therefore, that María has conflicting feelings about motherhood, and is probably confused by the enormous social expectations for women to bear children, in addition to the distress caused by her own inability to conceive and carry a child.

Ernesta is a young newlywed, but is already anxious to start a family. As a sexually inexperienced new bride, she expresses her concern to Sonsoles that she is having difficulties getting pregnant: “Lo que creo es que no lo hacemos como hay que hacerlo. Guillermo...” The question is, however, immediately dismissed by the strictly traditional Sonsoles: “Calla, chica, calla. Eso lo sabe hacer todo el mundo. No me cuentas esas cosas. En todos los matrimonios ocurre lo mismo, pero eso no se

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<sup>180</sup> Felisa’s comments here reflect the description of her own mother in a flashback earlier in the novel: “La madre, con su último parto, había perdido todas las energías” (63).

cuenta" (50). This particular exchange illustrates a somewhat paradoxical situation: while the family and the mother figure were exalted in Spanish culture, it was considered inappropriate to discuss the finer details of reproduction and, it goes without saying, anything relating to female sexuality in general. A study of the depiction of motherhood in Spanish school textbooks from this period finds that, for the children, the glorified ideas of 'maternity' and 'family' exclude the role of the father, and the process of the pregnancy and delivery, but include frequent references to "children being sent from God, coming down from Heaven, or being brought by a stork" (Mahamud 176). María takes advantage of the prudishness of the other women and takes pleasure in shocking them with her salacious stories, which includes teasing Ernesta that the corporal is in love with her (75–76).

The women's differing economic, political and geographical backgrounds affect the notion of 'ideal' womanhood held by their families and immediate communities. Sonsoles and Ernesta, for example, come from poor, rural areas where attitudes towards marriage and family are very traditional and women are not expected to be educated or have a career.<sup>181</sup> Felisa, though also from a working-class background, is from a larger provincial town. Due to her family circumstances, she has not had the opportunity to be educated or work outside the home; her father, however, has liberal ideas and would most likely have respected her choices had she chosen not to marry and to pursue paid employment.<sup>182</sup> María is the only one who comes from a middle-class or upper middle-class family and her father, although clearly politically on the right,<sup>183</sup> recognises the need for his daughters to be educated, foreseeing the future political turmoil in Spain: "De aquí en adelante es necesario que tenga todo el mundo una carrera; la vida se va a poner muy difícil. [...] Ya veréis como os sirve de algo lo que estudiéis ahora" (129). Despite her mother's conservative views on the importance of marriage as we saw earlier, María

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<sup>181</sup> Ernesta is sent to a nearby village to work as a maid in her late teens; however, this is only due to her family's financial necessities and she is not expected to continue working after her marriage.

<sup>182</sup> Juan Martín has a liberal outlook, as demonstrated by his preference for a secular burial for his wife, although he later changes his mind, saying to a friend: "Hay que respetar la libertad" (66).

<sup>183</sup> María's father was an official before the declaration of the Second Republic—probably under Primo de Rivera. María's mother also later expresses her opinion that Spain was much better under the monarchy: "[C]reo que antes, en tiempo de Don Alfonso, los españoles vivíamos mejor. Cada uno se contentaba con lo que tenía y no andaba a la greña con los otros para quedarse con la mejor tajada" (156).

is given the opportunity to study and enjoyed her career as a teacher before Baldomero's posting to the village made it impossible for her to continue working. Lastly, Carmen, the big-city girl, leaves school at a young age and begins an apprenticeship at the local hair salon, until it is closed when war breaks out. While Carmen is encouraged to find work—her family, after all, is not wealthy—it is made clear by her mother that only a small number of professions were suitable for 'respectable' girls:

La madre de Carmen tenía sus ideas sobre los oficios de las mujeres. Los dividía en oficios para mujeres propiamente dichas, oficios para perdidas y oficios para marimachos. Las fábricas, a pesar de que tenía la hija mayor en una de ellas, no eran sitios adecuados para mujeres; allí sólo debían trabajar las marimachos. Las mujeres debían trabajar, si lo necesitaban, en el taller de una modista, en una peluquería, en una perfumería, o algo así. Después, lo que quedaba era para las que habían perdido todo lo que tenían que perder. Por ejemplo: ¿qué más daba ser tanguista que ser señorita masajista a domicilio? (201)

Carmen's mother also believes that a woman must give up her job once she marries (208); however, as noted by Zatlin, she changes her mind when the wartime circumstances require her to go out and work herself (110–11).<sup>184</sup>

The differing attitudes illustrated above are in large part due to the disparity between rural and urban women in Spain. Kathleen Richmond describes how this divide had been growing since the 1920s:

With the growth of towns and cities came new opportunities for leisure. Women had increasingly taken advantage of opportunities to emerge from their homes into more public social spheres such as the tea salon, the club or the big hotel, where they would drink, smoke and

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<sup>184</sup> The legislation in place under Franco to deter women from entering the workplace and keep them in the home was discussed in Chapter One.

dress fashionably. [...] Whereas in rural areas, work patterns were slow to change, in the towns there were opportunities for secretaries, telephonists and receptionists as well as more exotic occupations in the theatres and nightclubs. (9)

Not only is the rural/urban divide clear among the women of *El fulgor y la sangre* in the sense that both María and Carmen worked outside the home before their marriage, but it is also evident in their more liberal demeanour and self-expression. As mentioned already, María prides herself on her ability to shock the other, less-educated, women with her stories, and Carmen also laments the other women's inability to gossip: "Nadie sabía hablar deleitosa, embarulladamente, quitándose los conversantes la palabra, de las cosas importantes del mundo, de Madrid; bodas, divorcios, hijos naturales, líos con presuntos millonarios de las artistas de cine, de teatro, de variedades" (78).

The only existing 'feminist' perspective on Aldecoa's novel is provided by Zatlin in her essay "*El fulgor y la sangre: Retrato de cinco mujeres.*" Zatlin briefly addresses some of the themes that I have explored so far, such as the issues surrounding women working outside the home and the importance of motherhood; however, she comes to the conclusion that the novel, while presenting "un retrato complejo de cinco mujeres y su vida diaria en la España de la época," is based on an underlying pattern of female stereotypes which Aldecoa presents with a somewhat "machista" attitude (114–17). While Zatlin then acknowledges that these traditional ideas about a woman's place in society are so deeply rooted in Spanish culture that the author reflects them subconsciously, I would argue that Aldecoa's depiction of the female characters and the social barriers that most affect them is actually remarkably sensitive and perceptive. There is, in fact, evidence that the author, during his travels around rural Spain in the early 1950s, developed a special admiration for the strength and courage of poorer, working-class women: "Convivió con ellos y compartió su pobreza; admiró su hospitalidad generosa y el valor de esas mujeres sombrías de nuestro pueblo, que sufren en silencio y, llegado el momento,

manifiestan una fortaleza de ánimo inconmensurable” (Andres-Suárez 17).<sup>185</sup> Through his interactions with these women, the author gained an awareness of the key issues that women in wartime and postwar Spain were forced to confront, which, as demonstrated, are clearly reflected in his novel. By illustrating the gender constructs of postwar Spain and highlighting how they have affected the lives of these five women, there is an implied critique of these norms as part of Aldecoa’s social commentary on Francoist society.

The centrality of the women to the narrative of *El fulgor y la sangre* is denoted again in the fact that the flashbacks deal almost exclusively with their stories prior to arriving at the castle. The flashbacks are significant because, in addition to telling the women’s personal stories, they also tell the broader story of 1930s and 1940s Spain. The novel’s candid depiction of the past constitutes an unusual characteristic in the context of the testimonial or social realist literature of this period, because while Aldecoa’s contemporaries writing from within Spain generally chose to enact their sociopolitical commitment in literature by focusing exclusively on the present, Aldecoa, in *El fulgor y la sangre*, directly tackles the past within the social realist framework (as does Medio in *Diario de una maestra*). As discussed in Chapter One, Herzberger argues that social realist novels “portray a specific present that suggests a specific past” through the scheme of ‘cause’ and ‘effect,’ without actually referring directly to the past (“Narrating the Past” 36). By confronting Spain’s past directly in conjunction with the postwar present, Aldecoa makes the connection between the past (the ‘cause’) and the present (the ‘effect’) explicit in his text, instead of leaving the reader to deduce the troubles of the past by working backwards from the present situation. Indeed, Jesús María Lasagabáster writes that, in Aldecoa’s novel, the present appears as a result of “un pasado verificable históricamente”; he adds, however: “Pero no es, como luego se verá, la verificabilidad lo que dará sentido a las prehistorias, sino su integración, como devenir histórico y social, en ese tiempo muerto—privado de movilidad y de futuro—que es la vida en el castillo” (79).<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Aldecoa’s recognition of the crucial role played by women in Spanish family life reflects the ‘invisible matriarchy’ that Torres also discusses in his work—“[un] matriarcado invisible de mujeres invisibles, siendo ellas, terrible paradoja, lo más concreto de la sociedad” (*El amor* 127–28).

<sup>186</sup> Gustavo Pérez Firmat agrees, but sees the cause and effect pattern not only in a historical sense but also in a personal, emotional sense for the women (8–9).

As will be demonstrated in the following section of this chapter, the novel manages to refer to a number of highly contentious events and issues in Spain's past without inciting the censor's disapproval. The censor, in fact, does not even mention the issue of the past in the novel in his brief report, summarising *El fulgor y la sangre* as follows: "Novela de costumbres en la que se describe el ambiente común y familiar de un cuartel de la Guardia Civil. Se nos va narrando la historia y la vida de cada familia a propósito del asesinato del Cabo Comandante realizado por un gitano. A juicio del Lector puede publicarse."<sup>187</sup>

Four of the women's accounts of the past go back as far as the Second Republic (1931–1936),<sup>188</sup> so I will first address the way in which Aldecoa depicts this particular period through the women's eyes. The negation and suppression of all values supported by the Republic formed a central element of the Franco regime's public discourse (Labanyi, "Censorship" 207), and Aldecoa thus had to be careful in how he portrayed this polemic period of Spanish history. On the one hand, the author had to be careful not to idealise the Republic in contrast to postwar Spain, and not to contradict the regime's official view of the pre-war period as one in which anarchy and atheism ruled, but which was fortunately ended by Franco's 'heroic' uprising.<sup>189</sup> On the other hand, it was a period that was often idealised, by opponents of the regime, as a time of unprecedented political and cultural progress. Through the women's memories of life before the war, the author provides an enlightening and remarkably neutral portrait of the Republican years, depicting it not as the 'anarchic' and 'depraved' society as it was labelled by Francoist propaganda but as a world in which political change had not yet been able to tackle the class and wealth inequalities that had long been plaguing Spain.

Ernesta's story (the last flashback presented in the novel) displays the clearest critique of the injustices suffered by many underprivileged Spaniards. The situation

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<sup>187</sup> The censor's report for *El fulgor y la sangre*, dated October 1954, was consulted at the Archivo General de la Administración in Alcalá de Henares in April 2012.

<sup>188</sup> Sonsoles' 'flashback' is the exception as it starts the day that her father is killed in 1937.

<sup>189</sup> José Manuel Marrero Henríquez (126–27) notes that Francoist discourse about the past, and particularly the Republic, appears to have influenced Ernesta, the youngest and most naive of the women in the castle, who takes a morbid delight in listening to María's stories about pre-war Spain because she believes that "hace cuarenta años el mundo era un lugar sombrío, plagado de monstruos, de casas cerradas a piedra y lodo [...]" (105).

in Ernesta's village can, in fact, almost be considered a microcosm of traditional Spain: the wealthy landowner and moneylender, don Alfonso—"me llamo don Alfonso, como el mismísimo rey" (275)—has made a fortune lending small amounts of money to the poor villagers, including Ernesta's father, and expropriating their land when they could not return the loan in the, always unreasonably short, stipulated period. Don Alfonso embodies conservative, right-wing Spain in many ways: he wants his beautiful daughters to marry into nobility and his son to become archbishop, he plays cards with the village priest, and is protected by the Guardia Civil when the villagers turn against him. On the other side of the ideological and economic divide are the impoverished agricultural workers and the Communist village schoolteacher (283–84). Ernesta's family are examples of the extremely poor and vulnerable agricultural workers in "la alta Castilla" who are exploited by the wealthy landowners, and for whom the political changes of the Republic have, unfortunately, made little difference. Ernesta's father works "a jornal"<sup>190</sup> for a number of wealthier families in the village, struggles to feed his family, and resigns himself to poverty: "En el mal tiempo el pez grande se alimenta de los peces chicos, pero los peces chicos no se alimentan de nada. Es eso que llaman una ley de la vida" (274).

Aldecoa's sympathies certainly appear to lie with those suffering from the unjust distribution of wealth; nevertheless, the divide between conservative and liberal Spain in the novel is not always as distinct as suggested in Ernesta's story. In the village where María teaches, for example, the mayor and the priest (figures usually associated with the traditional authorities and conservative forces) are in this case presented as sympathetic characters who support the workers' cause: the priest does not allow posters to be posted on the walls of the church and chooses not to vote himself (in 1936), but he tells the villagers that he is behind them (155). This same priest is then shot dead by a left-wing revolutionary group at the beginning of the war (174).<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> A *jornalero* was a day labourer who was employed casually to work on the land.

<sup>191</sup> This was the type of incident that Franco used to legitimise the Nationalist rebellion (particularly when acts of violence were perpetrated against the Church).



It could not be said, therefore, that Aldecoa's depiction of the Republican period is idealised or romanticised; however, the representation of pre-war life in the novel does suggest an admiration for the Republican policies that sought to minimise inequalities in Spain through agricultural, educational and economic reform. Nevertheless, these are not portrayed as perfect solutions and the difficulties the nation faced in implementing major social changes are clear. The novel reflects, for example, the Republic's emphasis on a secular, compulsory, and free education for all Spanish children, which included bringing education and culture to isolated rural areas, a policy described by Mary Vincent as "bringing enlightenment to Black Spain" (123), a subject that will also arise in Medio's *Diario de una maestra*.<sup>192</sup> María is posted as a young teacher to a mountain village and Ernesta's village also has a teacher come in from another province; however, both teachers are shocked by the extreme poverty that they encounter and find it hard to be idealistic about education in the face of children who are too cold and hungry to learn: "María no se acostumbraba a la escuela. Le molestaban los chiquillos de miradas tristes, de cuerpos desnutridos, de resistencia heroica al aprendizaje de las primeras letras" (132). The novel also refers to the opportunities for political involvement and industrial action under the Second Republic: Felisa's father and brother, for example, belong to a syndicate and participate in a strike in February 1936 (67) and Carmen's father, a gilder, also belongs to a union (207). The effectiveness of these political outlets is, nevertheless, questionable: when Juan Martín loses his job, the union's allowance for the "obrero parado" is rarely paid out and Juan begins to doubt his political convictions. The Republic is therefore portrayed as an exciting but politically complex time, but most significantly, it is depicted as a time when, in contrast to the oppressive stagnation of the present, there was still hope for a better future. This sentiment is articulated clearly in one of Felisa's flashbacks when, after the war, the narrator says that the past for Ruipérez "se nublaba tras la

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<sup>192</sup> 13,570 new schools were built during the early Republican years (1931–1933) and 15,000 new teachers were trained (Vincent 122–23).

desesperanza, porque entonces había esperanza de mejorar y ahora no había más que deseo de seguir” (111).<sup>193</sup>

More delicate a subject than the Republic, as far as the censors were concerned, was the Civil War itself, as this was the event through which the dictatorship was established and essentially also defined itself; the Francoist version of events had to be widely accepted in order to provide legitimacy for the regime and so the war was publicly presented as a necessary and inevitable ending to a critical situation (Aguilar Fernández, *Políticas de la memoria* 99–100). In *El fulgor y la sangre*, Felisa’s brother and Asunción, the hairdresser from Madrid, are the only characters who fight for the Republican side. His story ends, however, when he leaves his family for the front in 1936,<sup>194</sup> and Asun leaves Madrid “vestida con un mono, con un gran pistolón en la cintura, colgada del brazo de un miliciano joven” (227), but the next thing Carmen’s family hears is that she has been killed on the front line (240). By excluding the Republican voice in direct accounts of the war in his novel, Aldecoa limits the potential danger that a censor could find his depiction too sympathetic and incompatible with the way Republican supporters were portrayed in Francoist propaganda as socially and biologically degenerate criminals (Cazorla Sánchez 22).

The absence of the Republican wartime voice does not, however, signify a celebration of the opposing side: the Nationalist perspective of the war that is recounted through the *guardias* has little in common with the way that the war was officially depicted as the victory of the *patria* in a heroic crusade against the depraved and ‘anti-Spanish’ Republicans.<sup>195</sup> Zira Box describes the regime’s glorious mythicisation of the war as follows:

la victoria en la guerra civil a través de la cual el nuevo régimen  
accedía al poder no era un hecho militar fortuito; era la redención de la

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<sup>193</sup> This particular contrast between the postwar present and the pre-war past is also noted by García Viñó: “Esta aproximación de los tiempos hace resaltar la divergencia que se ha producido entre las ilusiones de la juventud y un presente marcado por la desesperanza” (*Ignacio Aldecoa* 87).

<sup>194</sup> It is later revealed that he left Spain for France after the war.

<sup>195</sup> During the Franco era, the war was officially known as “Nuestra Gloriosa Cruzada Nacional” (Pérez, “Functions” 130 n17).

patria que, tras tantos años de decadencia y peligro mortal, resurgía de nuevo gracias al sistema político franquista. En última instancia, se trataba del proceso de mitificación de su propio acto fundacional, una mitificación por la que aquel acto excluyente y doloroso que dividía al país en vencedores y vencidos quedaría convertido en la salvación e instauración de una exclusiva idea de patria. La lucha que lo respaldaba, los tres años de guerra civil que tanta muerte y dolor habían causado, se trasmutaba en una lucha definitiva y final; en una guerra inevitable y necesaria que, indefectiblemente y en tanto corolario de un largo ciclo histórico, culminaba en la salvación de España. (53–54)

This ‘official’ vision of events left no room for authentic personal accounts of the difficult reality of war, even for the winning side, who had also suffered immense losses, and all personal memories were therefore restricted to the private sphere, irrespective of political ideology.

The *guardias*’ memories, and the descriptions from the perspectives of the women, present the war as a painful and futile experience, and it is in this sense that the novel provides an interesting counterpoint to official historiography. From the Nationalist viewpoint, we see, for example, that when war breaks out in Felisa’s town, the rebel troops are described as leaving “cantando a veces, como si fueran de romería. Parecían decir a las mujeres, a las gentes que los despedían: «Esperadnos, que volvemos en seguida, mañana, o tal vez pasado».” However, the happiness gives way to astonishment and then to sadness when trucks full of injured men begin to return from the front and the schools have to be used as hospitals (88). In the present, Pedro remembers a friend who died at his side and whose body they were forced to abandon (36–37), and Ruipérez describes how the memory of his fallen comrades comes to him suddenly “como una ráfaga de dolor y de melancolía” (102).

Of the five female protagonists, María is the only one to have been actively involved in the war: she was a nurse, although she says she would have liked to

fight had she been permitted to: “Fue enfermera, lo afirmaba siempre, como podía haber sido conductora de un tanque. Le hubiera gustado asistir a las batallas, estar en las trincheras. No había posibilidad para una mujer. Se hizo enfermera. Algo ayudaba” (186). It is not explicitly stated that she is working for the Nationalists; however, we can assume so from the context of her family background, from the fact that she is allowed to return to her work as a teacher without facing the Comisiones Depuradoras.<sup>196</sup> María also says she was not permitted to participate in active combat, which again implies that she is with the Nationalists: Republican policy on women’s active role in combat changed a number of times during the war, but female *milicianas* were not an unusual sight on the Republican front line.<sup>197</sup> The Nationalists, on the other hand, had a more conservative view of the role of women in the war: female participation on the rebels’ side was limited to traditional caregiving roles, such as nursing.<sup>198</sup> While María is eager to take a more active role, she does not demonstrate, or Aldecoa does not reveal, any profound ideological commitment to the Francoist cause. Moreover, María’s descriptions of the injured men she treats in hospital are less than glamorous and serve to subvert a ‘glorious’ or ‘heroic’ view of war: “Se acostumbró a llevar en los paseos a un soldado, a un sargento o a un oficial colgado del brazo, arrastrando lastimosamente una pierna escayolada o tendido el brazo como un ala petrificada” (187).

While the memories of these active participants of the war are therefore limited to the Nationalist side, the experiences of the four other women provide a broader perspective. These memories encompass a range of geographical locations and wartime circumstances that reveal further aspects of Spain’s recent past that were not present in the public domain at the time of writing. Carmen and her family, for example, live in Republican-occupied Madrid for the duration of the war, suffering bombardment by the Francoist forces, including a mortar bomb that hits a neighbouring house (232). Sonsoles’ experience, however, deserves to be singled out: the vivid account of how she witnesses the ransacking of her village followed by the

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<sup>196</sup> This issue will be returned to in more detail in my study of Medio’s *Diario de una maestra*.

<sup>197</sup> For further details on women in combat during the Spanish Civil War, see Lines.

<sup>198</sup> The Nationalists “ridiculed” the Republican use of women as soldiers, arguing that their side had enough “real men” to allow women to stay at home (Seidman 159–61).

brutal death of her father at the hands of his own brothers, relatives and neighbours in 1937 opens the second chapter and is the first scene of the flashbacks. At only four paragraphs, it is one of the shortest sections, but is certainly the most confronting and arguably, one of the most significant passages in the novel. The description of the killing is savage: “Se oyó un grito terrible. Sacaron a un hombre con los pantalones chorreando sangre. Alguien se acercó con la navaja abierta y le dio un tajo en la boca. El labio inferior le quedó colgando. El hombre escupió un borbotón de sangre. Dijo algo que no se le entendió. Lo remataron a puñaladas y se alejaron” (19). It is implied that the dead man (we learn on the next page that he was Sonsoles’ father) has betrayed the villagers to the soldiers and, despite his wife’s silent plea for mercy, they, “los campesinos,” take their revenge. The fact that they slit his mouth open before killing him suggests that he has betrayed them by revealing information to the enemy. Sonsoles’ mother accepts that “[e]ra malo. Así tenía que acabar” (20); however, both she and her daughter have to leave the village, and we learn later that Sonsoles is not well-received by her father’s family when she must return there some time after the war.

One of the most significant features of this passage, one could argue, is that the reader has no idea whether Sonsoles’ father has betrayed the villagers to the Nationalists or to the Republicans; the soldiers are referred to simply as “soldados” and then later as “otros soldados y otras banderas” (19). But it is not only in Sonsoles’ traumatic experience that the lack of political identification is so conspicuous: there is an absence of explicit references to politics and ideology throughout the novel. Indeed, at no point does Aldecoa explicitly refer to either the *nacionalistas* or the *republicanos*; in all the examples I have cited so far, the reader has had to infer which side the characters are associated with. While this relatively non-partisan account of the conflict reflects the attitude of the majority of ‘ordinary’ Spaniards during the war—who, as Cazorla Sánchez writes, felt “neither [...] revolutionary nor counter-revolutionary fervor; but rather [...] horror” (34)—it raises the question of whether the author deliberately avoided identifying the wartime

affiliations of the characters in order to evade the censor's potential objection to the representation of the past.<sup>199</sup>

Representing the war "obliquely" with few specific details was a common technique, according to Pérez, used by writers to avoid the pitfalls of the taboos surrounding the depiction of the war as anything but a heroic crusade won by the Nationalists. She notes that the writer might do this by writing "without specific reference to either of the opposing sides, even though readers might deduce the political affiliations of combatants from clues such as social class, ideologies, or associations, as well as historical details such as the location of the action, deployment prior to or following battles, and the like" ("The Game of the Possible" 24).<sup>200</sup> In *El fulgor y la sangre*, it is indeed possible in many cases to infer with which side the characters identified during the war using clues such as social class and geographical locations, as already demonstrated in the discussion of the conflict above. As an additional example, the reader can be almost certain that Baldomero fought for the Nationalists because of the way he discusses his experience at Brunete,<sup>201</sup> as well as his statements about religion and his conviction that those who do not 'believe' should be punished (117). In Sonsoles' case, however, there is actually very little information to guide the reader in making such an assumption. References to the war that are seemingly neutral, and even accounts of brutal violence such as the killing of Sonsoles' father where no political affiliations are indicated, passed official censorship because, as noted by Paul Ilie, such descriptions were "construable by the Right as either self-vindicating or inculcating the Republican leaders for having futilely prolonged the bloodshed," whereas those

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<sup>199</sup> In 1950, Aldecoa supposedly stated that "he had no memories concerning politics," a statement that Robin Fiddian has attributed to self-censorship (16); this idea of self-censorship can equally be applied to the depiction of the past in his first novel.

<sup>200</sup> In another article, Pérez notes that the war could not be referred to as the "civil war" but as "our glorious Nationalist uprising" or "our glorious national Crusade" ("Fascist Models" 74); the war is certainly not referred to in these terms by the characters of *El fulgor y la sangre*, but nor is it ever called the "guerra civil," just the "guerra" or the "guerra de España." José Andrés-Gallego also discusses the specific terminology used by the Franco regime to refer to the war, writing that the preferred terms were "cruzada," "movimiento," or "alzamiento" (15–18).

<sup>201</sup> Baldomero tells Ruipérez that his officer had been shouting "que resistáis, que resistáis," confirming that he was with the rebels: the battle of Brunete was a "diversionary offensive" launched by the Republican forces to the west of Madrid, and although successful at first, the "battle of Brunete should be regarded as a defeat for [the Republicans]" because they lost so much equipment and so many soldiers (H. Thomas 689–94).

who opposed the regime read these passages as “condemning the state of affairs imposed by the Right” (246).<sup>202</sup>

Alternatively, the lack of definitive ideological references suggests that the author believed that political affiliation was simply no longer important or relevant after the war, or denotes, as José Marrero Henríquez describes it, a ‘desire for reconciliation’ (128–29). As the women do not demonstrate any specific political convictions, their recollections can be considered essentially ‘neutral’: Felisa, for example, is equally worried about her fiancé, Ruipérez, who is fighting for the rebels, as she is about her younger brother, who left to join the Republican cause and has not been heard from since. Even her father, Juan, previously of socialist convictions, takes up a job in a factory making “material de guerra” for use by the rebels because he has to provide for his family somehow (although he is soon dismissed as a result of these same convictions due to the fear of sabotage). Juan and Felisa discuss the war and instead of championing the cause of either side, it is clear that they just want it to be over (97). Ernesta, the youngest of the group, is just a child when war breaks out and, as her father is firmly sceptical of all things political (“Donde hay política no puede pasar nada bueno” (281)) and refuses to fight, she experiences the war at some emotional distance. I contend that Aldecoa’s balanced representation of the past in *El fulgor y la sangre* stems from a combination of careful self-censorship and a desire to move past the fierce ideological divisions that led to war.

Aldecoa’s portrayal of the past cannot, therefore, be said to be particularly subversive; however, it is the fact that he presents multiple and varying perspectives on this past, as opposed to the unified Francoist historical myth, that is significant, as Marrero Henríquez confirms:

No importa que los personajes no tengan una visión marxista de la Historia, ni que el tiempo en el que viven esté paralizado, porque el presente detenido de las narraciones de Ignacio Aldecoa no es el marco

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<sup>202</sup> The idea that a novel could pass censorship as a result of the possibility of multiple political interpretations, particularly in relation to the war, was also raised in my chapters on *Nada* and *La noria*.

de una representación teleológica que privilegia con causas y consecuencias una finalidad previamente establecida. El sentido histórico de la obra de Ignacio Aldecoa ha de buscarse en la multiplicación de perspectivas sobre un mismo hecho o una misma situación [...]. (Marrero Henríquez 106)

García Viñó similarly emphasises that the story goes far beyond that of the five women, labelling Aldecoa's depiction of the past as an "intrahistoria"<sup>203</sup> that includes an "infinitud de personajes típicos de la realidad nacional de ese período, desde el obrero socialista al cacique de derechas, desde el cura mártir a la miliciana heroica—cinco vidas, digo, o cincuenta, que simbolizan a muchas más" (*Ignacio Aldecoa* 90).

Aldecoa's relatively non-partisan and pluralistic depiction of the Spanish Civil War is probably made possible by his own experience of the war as a child. The author was a schoolboy in Vitoria when war broke out in 1936: Vitoria was almost immediately in the hands of the rebels after the uprising in July, and, although Aldecoa's father belonged to a pro-Basque independence group (a cause strongly opposed by Franco's Nationalists) and narrowly escaped detention on two occasions early in the war, in general, the author's family was relatively unaffected by the conflict. Fiddian has argued that because Aldecoa and his family did not suffer directly as a result of the war, "it is probably correct to assume that the historical circumstances of his early youth served as a source of artistic inspiration, without giving rise to emotional trauma or personal resentment" (16). Irrespective of the degree of his family's direct involvement in the war, however, Vitoria was occupied by German troops in 1936 and the Republican front was only fifteen kilometres to the north; it is, therefore, almost certain that the young Aldecoa witnessed some violence and was well aware of the devastating effect of the war in Spain. Indeed, the author's wife, Josefina Aldecoa, later argued, in her study *Los niños de la guerra*, that the traumatic psychological consequences of experiencing such a war as a child

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<sup>203</sup> *Intrahistoria* is a term coined by Miguel de Unamuno to denote the history made up of everyday stories of the masses, as opposed to the 'great' events of history, such as wars and political events.



or young adolescent, during “la infancia consciente” (9), were inevitable and that this shared experience ultimately unites their generation of writers.

In addition to the historical content of the flashbacks, the significance of the act of ‘remembering’ or looking towards the past in the context of postwar Spain should also be considered. In a recently published essay, I have discussed the insertion of the women’s flashbacks in the novel and the purpose they serve in relation to personal memory and trauma (van Luijk).<sup>204</sup> I will focus here on the way in which the act of ‘remembering,’ or conversely, choosing to forget the past, was a socially contentious and, on a personal level, often painful issue in postwar Spain.

The concept of ‘remembering’ in the novel may first require some clarification: the past appears primarily in the flashbacks that are alternated with the action in the present and are clearly denoted by paragraph breaks and asterisks. Critics have disagreed on how to classify these flashbacks, as they are not strictly recollections: the description of scenery and situations are too detailed to be realistic memories, and the histories are not generated by the characters themselves but are ‘inserted’ by a third-person narrator.<sup>205</sup> There is also information contained in several stories that goes beyond the perspective of the woman in question: for example, Felisa’s story includes many of her father’s private thoughts, and in Ernesta’s story, Guillermo is introduced before the two even meet in the narrative. On the other hand, the lack of precise dates and historical references in Ernesta’s story (who was too young at the time that her story begins to take notice of these), in contrast to the precise date given in Sonsoles’ story (5 May 1937),<sup>206</sup> points towards a more subjective interpretation of the flashbacks; ultimately, they can be described as ‘memories’ because they are recounted from the perspective of one woman at a time. However, there is also a second level of memory, within both the flashbacks and the narrative present as characters reflect on the past; these memories are generated

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<sup>204</sup> There, I discuss the interaction of ‘personal,’ ‘social’ and ‘official’ memory in the novel. I look at how the accident (the death of one of the *guardias* in the present) triggers the women’s traumatic memories from the past, and consider how sharing those memories, as opposed to ‘forgetting’ and being silent about the past, can allow people to ‘work through’ a traumatic past.

<sup>205</sup> See Lasagabáster 107–108, for his discussion on the nature of the ‘flashbacks.’

<sup>206</sup> As noted by Lasagabáster 112.

directly by the character, either through internal monologue or through conversation with others.

In a culture such as that of postwar Spain, the very act of ‘remembering’ can itself be considered subversive: one was not supposed to remember but to unquestioningly accept official historiography. Herzberger adds that by presenting the past through ‘personal’ memories—in precisely the way that, I argue, Aldecoa does in *El fulgor y la sangre*—the ‘myth’ of the past is undermined altogether since “the external referent of the narrative, the history of Spain, is now an internal component of the self and thus open to re-formation as the individual claims authority not over truth but against myth” (“Narrating the Past” 38).

‘Remembering’ the past is thus a significant way to challenge the regime’s authority over history, but it is also an important way for the Spanish people and nation as a whole to overcome their traumatic past. Scholars of psychological and cultural trauma consider talking or ‘working through’ one’s past essential in overcoming trauma: Dori Laub, for example, states that “survivors did not only need to survive so that they could tell their stories; they also needed to tell their stories in order to survive” (63). Aldecoa’s novel acknowledges the importance of ‘working through’ the past through the recurring theme of storytelling and the sharing of memories. In fact, the healing qualities of sharing past trauma are referred to explicitly several times: “Dímelo y así se te irá pasando,” Sonsoles says to Pedro (37), and Juan Martín (Felisa’s father) thinks to himself after his time in prison during the war that “[h]ablar del miedo pasado reconforta tanto, envalentona tanto, que se puede contar la historia [...]” (91). It is also significant that the women who share the most about their past, such as María, who is constantly telling stories to pass the time, seem to be emotionally the strongest. Felisa and Sonsoles consider María to be the most “resistente a las emociones grandes” and they decide to tell her the tragic news first (182).

On the other hand, the idea of silence and choosing to forget the past is also prominent. It is probably natural that Sonsoles, the character who, of the women, has had the most traumatic experience during the war, is the one who refers most often to forgetting the past. When her husband, Pedro, remembers a friend who was killed

in the war, Sonsoles tells him to stop remembering sad things: “Lo pasado, pasado está” (37). She later reflects on the therapeutic effects of forgetting: “El olvido, que es el elixir del tiempo, ese milagro para el corazón” (83). Sonsoles’ inability, or unwillingness, to remember can be understood in terms of Lawrence Langer’s distinction between “common memory” and “deep memory”: he distinguishes between traumatic memories that individuals have been able to place within a chronological narrative and those tormenting fragmented memories that have not been able to be integrated into one’s personal history (5–6). Sonsoles’ case is thus an illustration of “deep memory,” because, while the women’s common experience of the war (going hungry, watching family members go off to fight) is discussed relatively often, Sonsoles is the only one who has witnessed the violent death of a loved one, an experience that she is unable to fully grasp herself, let alone share with others around her. It should, however, be recognised that forgetting is also a coping mechanism and, as in Aldecoa’s novel, many postwar Spanish families chose to be silent about the past in order to ease their pain. This is seen in the novel in the case of Felisa and Ruipérez, who have learned to “callar” (112).

This debate between remembering and forgetting, or being allowed to forget, a traumatic past is at the heart of contemporary memory and trauma studies.<sup>207</sup> The key issue here, however, is that in postwar Spain, the choice between remembering and forgetting (in public, in any case) was not a free one and in this sense, the act of ‘forgetting’ can be construed as a negative one: the authoritarian regime sought to silence the memory of loved ones who had been killed and denied many the chance to tell their side of the story. Moreover, there is the danger that by silencing the past, new generations cannot learn the lessons of history. In the novel, for example, we see that while the *guardias* discuss the war amongst themselves, the children are specifically excluded from this dialogue. In fact, Ruipérez, who teaches his four sons geography and history in the evenings, tells them all about the Spanish War of Independence against Napoleonic France, but does not include the very recent Civil

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<sup>207</sup> Theorists such as Dominick LaCapra, Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Laub have all addressed the issue of overcoming a traumatic history, particularly in relation to the Holocaust. In relation to Spain’s twentieth-century history, these issues have been examined by scholars such as Aguilar Fernández, Paul Preston and Labanyi.

War in his lessons: “Ruipérez era muy cuidadoso con la Historia” (115). It is significant, of course, that the War of Independence could be framed as the Spanish people unified against the foreign invader—as Ruipérez explains to his sons: “Los buenos españoles estaban contra la francesada, que quería que todos los españoles fueran esclavos del emperador Napoleón y que dejaran de creer en sus reyes y en su religión” (115)—in contrast to the hugely divisive nature of the Civil War. As a result of being protected from the stories of the horrors of war, however, the children are unable to comprehend the seriousness and tragedy of war: later, for example, the children ‘play war,’ pretending to kill each other with ash-tree branches (195), a sight that is surely upsetting for their parents for whom war had been a very recent reality.

In this last section, I will consider the narrative techniques that Aldecoa uses in *El fulgor y la sangre* to avoid problems with censorship with regard to the themes and issues discussed thus far.<sup>208</sup> Due to the strict censorship that Aldecoa knew his novel would be subjected to before publication, he, like other social realist writers of this period, disguised his criticism of contemporary social and political issues behind a realist style that, in theory, would not arouse the suspicions of the authorities, but would expose the reality of life concealed from the public in official media. While this pure realism or *costumbrismo* is undoubtedly a significant element in *El fulgor y la sangre*,<sup>209</sup> the author also uses a number of additional techniques to subversively critique life under Franco.

Aldecoa’s strategy in the face of censorship has been labelled by Marrero Henríquez as “posibilismo.” The critic notes that this term has been used in a negative sense by Sastre to denote the “posibilista” theatre under Franco which he saw as ‘conformism’; however, Marrero Henríquez says of Aldecoa’s “posibilismo” that he explores and finds “en [los intersticios de la censura] un nuevo modo de novelar” (45–46). The critic adds that he would classify Aldecoa’s style as “realismo social posibilista” because he finds a way to be original not only within the limited

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<sup>208</sup> I have already mentioned some of these strategies as they have arisen throughout my discussion; for example, excluding direct Republican accounts of the war and being deliberately vague about historical details.

<sup>209</sup> As mentioned earlier, the censor indeed describes the novel as a “novela de costumbres.”

spaces left by censorship, but also within the restrictive framework of 'social realism' (46–47). In contrast to the more purely social realist novels of his contemporaries, *El fulgor y la sangre* is more personal in nature (the focus of the novel being the anxious wait experienced by the five female protagonists) and was therefore unlikely to be considered problematic by the censor. As noted by Lasagabáster, however, it is only the narrative in the present (which he refers to as the "tiempo vivido") that is "fuertemente interiorizado"; the flashbacks (the "tiempo evocado") are more socio-historical in nature—"un tiempo de acontecimientos" (135). It could be said, therefore, that the author disguises the more 'social' aspects of his work in the second plane of his novel, in the 'memories' evoked from the more personal, psychological narrative of the present.

Furthermore, by telling the stories not only from a personal, but also from a female perspective, Aldecoa neutralises the possibly jarring political implications of a novel about the Guardia Civil for certain readers, while at the same time softening the critical voice that the censor could perceive in his work. The use of the female perspective in the novel may have facilitated its approval by the censor because, as the women's world is generally equated with the private sphere, limited mostly to the home and family, their opinions on, and experiences of, historical events and the social and economical situation in Spain could therefore be considered relatively harmless. *El fulgor y la sangre* provides an interesting case with regard to the use of the female perspective because, while it is largely narrated by women, the author is male, thereby removing the danger that the censor would consider certain subjects 'unwomanly' and unsuitable for a female writer.<sup>210</sup>

The author also makes use of more abstract literary devices such as the use of metaphors and symbolism, particularly in his evocative descriptions of the present narrative. Aldecoa demonstrates the difficulties of life under dictatorship by evoking the sense of stagnation that the characters experience and their lack of hope for the future. I argue that through the constant references to time standing still in the castle and the fear that there is no possibility of relief in the near future, Aldecoa conveys

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<sup>210</sup> As discussed by F. López (11). This contrasts with Laforet's *Nada*, which has a female voice and author, and García Hortelano's *Nuevas amistades*, which has female themes, but no real female perspective and a male author.

the trauma of living under dictatorship with no hope of political change. As illustrated in the names of the chapters (“Mediodía,” “Dos de la tarde,” “Tres de la tarde” and so on), the passing of time is a very important theme in the novel, and with the entire narrative in the present taking place over the course of approximately seven hours, time appears to pass very slowly. The stagnation of time in the present is also referred to explicitly several times: while Ruipérez is on guard duty, for example, time is described as passing agonisingly slowly as the *guardia*, “con las manos sobre el fusil, sentía pasar el tiempo en sus pulsos. Una pulsación era un granito caído en el reloj” (74). Later, as Sonsoles’ story is interrupted by María, she imagines that years could have passed in the ensuing silence: “El golpe en la piedra y la continuación de la historia, y separándolos un gran silencio, que daba lugar a pensar, es decir, a que transcurrieran años, verdaderos años, en un solo momento” (86). The ‘timelessness’ of life in the barracks is reinforced by the fact that the castle itself is centuries-old, dating back to Moorish Spain, where castles such as these (on the “línea fronteriza con la morería”) had been built on elevated points that overlooked the flat expanses of countryside (11). It is as if history has come to a halt with the end of the war, an impression that has also been noted by Lasagabáster: “Una vez en el castillo, la historia se destruye; la vida es un movimiento circular, un ciclo que se repite” (114).

Ironically, this description of time remarkably resembles the official Francoist vision of time as “a static entity anchored in all that is permanent and eternal” (Herzberger, *Narrating the Past* 33). Box describes how Franco’s rhetoric stressed the ‘atemporality’ of Spanish history:

En sus afirmaciones, el Generalísimo disolvía la contingencia histórica y la temporalidad como un acontecer diacrónico en función de causas y efectos que se enlazan en el tiempo para convertir el devenir histórico de España en una historia míticamente narrada en la que el pasado, el presente y el futuro quedaban engarzados en una dimensión atemporal. (54)

Herzberger cites Francoist historian Antonio Almagro's work *El pueblo español y su destino* to further illustrate the Francoist notion of time: "España es eterna porque es inmóvil. [...] La historia de España es la historia de su eternidad" ("History as Power" 5); this quote is particularly relevant here because the trilogy of which *El fulgor y la sangre* was to form a part was to be titled "La España inmóvil."

Instead of sharing the regime's exalted perception of this glorious eternity, however, the characters perceive the 'timelessness' as stagnation and constantly make reference to feeling trapped or imprisoned, describing their time in the castle as "destierro" (79) and "purgatorio" (11). Pedro, for example, thinks to himself: "Un servicio en un puesto que se sabe cuando ha comenzado y no se cree que se va a terminar alguna vez es un extraño purgatorio hecho de hastío, desesperanza y uso" (11). Labanyi describes how this "sense of a paralysis of time," often employed by postwar writers (although she does not specifically mention Aldecoa), is essentially an inversion of Nationalist mythology: "[I]f the 'myth of the Crusade' claimed to have restored Spain to the Paradise Lost of her 'eternal values', the younger generation of opposition writers would regard Nationalist victory as a 'fall' into 'eternal values'." While Falangist ideology supported the idea that the 'decadence' of Spanish history could be "undone" (for which they fought their 'Crusade'), postwar novels tended to portray the 'paralysed' present as ahistorical and cyclical with no "possibility of redemption" (Labanyi, *Myth and History* 45).

This 'cyclical' aspect of *El fulgor y la sangre* is important and has been noted by critics.<sup>211</sup> Despite the tragic accident, at the end of the day, nothing in the lives of the five women and their families has changed at all: they will still be waiting for a transfer and await the arrival of the corporal's replacement.<sup>212</sup> However, it is not only the narrative in the present that is cyclical, the representation of Spanish history can be perceived in the same way. In pre-war Spain, the reader sees the desperation and resentment of poor rural and urban workers and the seemingly permanent social constructs that upheld the unjust situation. The frustration on one side of the social divide, and the reaction of the other, causes the breakout of war; however, the same

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<sup>211</sup> See Lasagabáster 114 and Jelinski 96.

<sup>212</sup> Pérez Firmat argues that, because the circular nature of the plot is so essential to the novel, it is necessary that it is the corporal who is killed and not one of the other *guardias* (6).

situation is repeated after the war, as noted by Marrero Henríquez: “Las fortunas vuelven a las mismas manos y, tal y como se ha visto en estas páginas, la miseria de los personajes continúa sin transformaciones” (131).

The isolation and oppression of life under the authoritarian regime is also illustrated through the physical attributes of the castle and the countryside which surrounds it. For example, the characters describe feelings of imprisonment and suffocation as a result of the thick castle walls, particularly with reference to the searing heat in summer and the biting cold in winter: “Estas piedras, no sé... a cualquiera volverían loco. Estas piedras, este calor, este no estar sobre el mundo...” (42). Indeed, Paula Martínez-Michel, in her study of the effects of Francoist censorship on the work of playwright Alfonso Sastre, mentions that walls or prisons were sometimes used to symbolise the dictatorship: “Ciertos campos semánticos como el de la noche, el invierno, los muros, las cárceles evocan una imagen de la dictadura y de la represión mientras que otros, como el del amanecer, la primavera, el viento o el mar se convierten en símbolos de libertad” (44); Ilie also alludes to the “poetic references to enclosures” in some postwar literature (245). The fact that the castle is positioned on a hill beside the village highlights its physical isolation, as noted by Lytra (34). Despite the vast open plains surrounding the hill on which the castle is built, this open expanse is perceived as a further barrier that both imprisons and isolates the protagonists who yearn for the less harsh landscapes in which they felt more at ease. Sonsoles, for example, directly contrasts the green valley where she spent the happiest year of her life in a convent to the oppressive “meseta” where she must live now:

Pensó en el año pasado allí, pensó que aquel valle de un año en su vida había sido de alegría y serenidad. Ahora otra vez, acaso para siempre, la meseta y otros años. Le vino a la memoria la Salve. No hay valle de lágrimas. Hay meseta de lágrimas, porque los valles deben ser alegres y serenos. En la meseta es donde está la levadura de la tormenta, y la vida no es más que una meseta dilatada. (31)



Similarly, María found the mountain landscape in the village where she taught before the war to be peaceful and remembers it as a ‘refuge’ from the city (144–45), while Carmen longs for the busy streets of Madrid (78).<sup>213</sup>

Life in the castle is described as monotonous, boring and melancholic (121, 224), but the frustration stems, above all, from their powerlessness to change their own circumstances. The inhabitants of the barracks can do nothing but wait for an escape from the insipid and futureless reality of their lives, as the author himself highlighted in an interview: “La verdadera espera no es sólo por saber quien [sic] ha muerto, sino también, y sobre todo, por salir de un mundo cerrado para siempre, un mundo sin horizonte, de este estar sentado a la solana a ver pasar, a ver quien [sic] le redime” (Aldecoa cited in Lytra 52–53). This frustration and helplessness can also be translated into an analogy of the wider historical context: as noted in my discussion of Laforet’s *Nada*, until shortly after the Second World War, many in Spain still hoped that the Allied powers would assist in removing Franco from power in Spain. As the international priority turned towards stemming the spread of communism, however, Francoist Spain was gradually accepted by the major world powers. *Nada*, written before the end of World War II hence ends on an optimistic note, but by the time Aldecoa wrote *El fulgor y la sangre* in the 1950s, any hope for a swift end to the dictatorship had all but faded.

*El fulgor y la sangre* is a multi-faceted novel that challenges many of the Franco regime’s principles, both in relation to the 1950s present and as far back as the Second Republic. By focusing on the lives of five *guardias* and their families, Aldecoa depicts postwar Spain from the unique point of view of a group that, as I have argued, suffers a double isolation from society: for the regime, they are lowly *guardias* and for the general population they represent the authorities and are a force to be feared. Aldecoa, nevertheless, downplays any political connotations that the Guardia Civil may have and underlines the *guardias*’ humanity: they are just ordinary men with families, who have suffered the same struggles in the postwar

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<sup>213</sup> The vast, open plains of the Castilian *meseta* also made an impression on the author himself when he went to study in Salamanca at the age of seventeen; just like his characters, he was struck by the contrast between “la inmensa llanura castellana” and the green valleys of the Basque country (Andres-Suárez 13).

years as everybody else. The real protagonists of the novel, however, are the five women; I argue that Aldecoa's depiction of their experiences demonstrates a deep understanding of the effects of the ultra-conservative gender norms in Spain. Instead of the glorified ideas of marriage and motherhood found in official propaganda, the novel illustrates the women's often difficult relationship with the fact that they must follow their husbands and bear children as society expects them to. The women's flashbacks, along with other character-generated memories throughout the novel, provide memories of the recent past which counter the monolithic voice of official history by presenting a multiplicity of perspectives. While the Second Republic is not romanticised in *El fulgor y la sangre*, as it often was by opponents of the regime, it is depicted as a time when there was still hope for an escape from traditional wealth inequality in Spain. The Civil War is presented in a relatively neutral way and is ultimately depicted as painful and futile; moreover, details of political affiliations are often left ambiguous, possibly to avoid inciting the censor's disapproval. I have argued, furthermore, that the act of remembering is in itself subversive in the Francoist context because it implies the existence of a memory that is independent from the regime's official version of history. *El fulgor y la sangre* is not a typical social realist novel, in terms of style or content, but it portrays a slice of what Aldecoa himself referred to as "[la] realidad española, cruda y tierna" which reveals much about life under the surface of official Spain. In the following case study, the focus returns to an urban environment, Madrid, and to a group of young people who are the polar opposite of the *guardias* and their wives portrayed in Aldecoa's novel. For the wealthy young socialites of García Hortelano's *Nuevas amistades*, the Civil War is distant and mostly irrelevant because they are engrossed in their world of love affairs, holidays and the Madrilenian nightlife.

## Chapter Five

### **Francoist Spain's *Alta Burguesía*: Wealth and Gender in Juan García Hortelano's *Nuevas amistades* (1959)**

In contrast to the three novelists studied so far, who are all considered 'outsiders' in relation to the Spanish social realist movement, Juan García Hortelano is regarded as one of the 'quintessential' Spanish *novelistas sociales* of the 1950s and 60s, and is best known for his first two novels: *Nuevas amistades* (1959) and *Tormenta de verano* (1961). Born in Madrid in 1928 to a professional middle-class family, García Hortelano experienced the Spanish Civil War as a child. After the war, he completed a law degree and started working as a civil servant, a job that he would combine with his writing career until his retirement. During his time at university, he was involved in the establishment of the student Communist Party, later joined the Spanish Communist party and was a prominent figure in intellectual and literary *tertulias* in Madrid. His first novel, *Nuevas amistades*, was published in 1959, and subsequently won the Biblioteca Breve prize which was specifically aimed at rewarding novelists who were responding to the latest developments in literary theory and was considered one of the most prestigious literary awards at the time in Spain (Virumbrales, "Hacia una teoría dialéctica" 110).<sup>214</sup>

*Nuevas amistades* depicts twelve days in the lives of a group of young wealthy Madrilenian friends in the mid- to late-1950s, who typically spend their lives in a never-ending cycle of drinking, smoking and socialising, but are suddenly forced to deal with the unplanned pregnancy of one of the women in the group. Pedro and Julia, engaged to be married, discover that Julia is pregnant and turn to their friends for help; a child out of wedlock or a rushed marriage is out of the question on account of the scandal it would cause for their families. Through contacts, they clandestinely organise for an abortion to be performed, a procedure which was

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<sup>214</sup> The prize was established to "distinguir aquellas obras que por su contenido, técnica y estilo respondan mejor a la literatura de nuestro tiempo" (Troncoso, "Evolución novelística" 21).

strictly illegal in Francoist Spain and carried heavy legal penalties for both the doctor and the patient. The operation is performed and the group take Julia to a chalet in the mountains near Madrid to avoid arousing the suspicions of their families while she recovers. When her condition deteriorates, friction develops within the group as some want to get medical help and others fear that they will be discovered if more people become involved. It finally emerges that Julia was never pregnant at all and that the doctor had performed a fake operation; although angry at first, there is a general feeling of relief among the group as they realise they can resume life as normal.

Critics are in agreement that *Nuevas amistades* paints a critical portrait of the postwar wealthy bourgeoisie which highlights their superficial values and political and social apathy. Sobejano, for example, describes García Hortelano's first novel as "[una] visión social que trasmite de los modos de sentir y hablar de ciertos jóvenes burgueses intoxicados de hastío: alcohólicos, vagos, resentidos, desganados, cínicos, amorales" (*Novela española de nuestro tiempo* 295). While I agree with this statement, in this chapter I will demonstrate how García Hortelano's critical portrait of the upper classes must be understood in the wider social and political context of Francoist Spain, as a direct product of postwar Spain's apolitical society and also as one of the regime's fundamental sources of support. Furthermore, although the central plot revolves around the group of young people, the broader narrative incorporates other elements of Spanish society. I will, therefore, take a closer look at the wealthy bourgeoisie's relationship with the regime itself, as well as the way it interacts with the other social groups in the novel, with a particular focus on the little-studied character of Juan. Previous studies of *Nuevas amistades* have focused largely on questions of class; however, despite the fact that the plot is centred on a pregnancy and subsequent abortion, gender issues have barely been touched on in relation to the work. In the second part of the chapter, I will argue that gender concerns and social issues that disproportionately affect women are in the foreground of García Hortelano's first novel. *Nuevas amistades* provides an interesting model for analysis, because, in contrast to the other novels examined in

this thesis, it includes an illustration of the particular gender issues that affected upper-class women.<sup>215</sup>

García Hortelano has openly discussed his social intentions in writing fiction in a number of interviews and articles.<sup>216</sup> He was heavily involved in the group of social realist writers who formed in Madrid around the Catalan publisher Carlos Barral (of the publishing house Seix Barral), who had been instrumental in bringing the critical philosophy behind the *novela social* to Madrid in the mid-1950s.<sup>217</sup> In Barral's memoirs, *Los años sin excusa*, he wrote that García Hortelano was a key member of the group whose incorporation into the movement "[Sirvió] de arranque de la poética social-realista y de su rápida difusión" (187). García Hortelano put the theory of objective realism into practice in his early novels; indeed, Sanz Villanueva describes the author's first novels as the two best examples of 'behaviourist' techniques in Spanish fiction, as a result of their "estricto objetivismo." He notes that this is particularly due to the dominance of dialogue: "[S]uprime al máximo la mediación del narrador y viene a proclamar la victoria de la hora del lector, dicho con la fórmula ideada por Castellet, se materializa en el predominio absoluto del diálogo" (*La novela española* 267).<sup>218</sup> While his work can thus be considered to embody the social realist style, García Hortelano's novels differ from those of his contemporaries, who generally chose to illustrate the difficulties of working-class life and related poverty,<sup>219</sup> by instead focusing on Madrid's *alta burguesía*, the wealthy upper-middle classes of Spain's capital.

García Hortelano explained that he chose to depict the wealthy bourgeoisie because they were the people about whom he felt most comfortable writing (S.E. Sylvester cited in Troncoso, "Evolución novelística" 24), and that the language of the bourgeoisie was the only language he spoke: "su lengua es la que transcribo, la única

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<sup>215</sup> The lives of upper-class women in Franco's Spain were discussed briefly in relation to a number of characters in *La noria*; in general, however, my study has focused on working-class women or those from the *pequeña burguesía*.

<sup>216</sup> See, for example, Pereda, Rico, Olmos García, and García Hortelano, *Inventiones urbanas*.

<sup>217</sup> As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, the philosophy of socially and politically committed literature filtered through to Spain from France via the writing of Sartre and Lukács and was picked up in the 1950s in Barcelona by Juan Goytisolo and Castellet.

<sup>218</sup> Dolores Troncoso provides a detailed analysis of the extent of the 'objectivism' in *Nuevas amistades* (*La narrativa* 19–37); however, the focus of this chapter is on content rather than questions of literary style.

<sup>219</sup> See, for example, Fernández Santos' *Los bravos* and Sánchez Ferlosio's *El Jarama*.

en la que sé expresarme” (García Hortelano, *Inventiones urbanas* 181). This preference was, of course, largely a result of his own social background; the majority of the intellectuals involved with the *novela social* during this period were themselves of bourgeois extraction, and García Hortelano was no exception. In many ways, García Hortelano’s decision to limit himself to a world with which he was very familiar was sensible, as was Laforet’s choice to restrict her social scope in *Nada* to her bourgeois family and their immediate surroundings, because a number of García Hortelano’s contemporaries who tackled working-class themes were criticised for their lack of first-hand knowledge of their subjects. Mangini, for example, has argued that the *novela social* which depicts the lower classes “peca de cierta artificiosidad, puesto que a sus autores en la mayoría de los casos, les faltaba la experiencia de ese mundo. Es en la novelística que trata de la burguesía ociosa donde se capta mejor el ambiente en el sentido sociológico” (*Rojos y rebeldes* 115).<sup>220</sup>

In order to comprehend the actions and attitudes of the *alta burguesía* portrayed in *Nuevas amistades*, it is necessary to stress again the intimate connection between the wealthy bourgeoisie and the Franco regime itself, which has been outlined in Chapter One and discussed extensively in reference to *La noria*. The young protagonists of *Nuevas amistades* are the sons and daughters of successful businessmen who have prospered since the establishment of the dictatorship. The origins of this wealthy postwar class are explicitly referred to in the novel when Leopoldo describes a classmate whom he encounters at the bowling alley: “Buen chico” [. . .] “Su familia tiene un fortunón. El padre dejó el ejército y se dedicó a los negocios. Hicieron el dinero en unos cuantos años” (218–19).<sup>221</sup> According to Pablo Virumbrales, this quote from the novel describes the origins of much of the “burguesía franquista” who were “miembros del ejército vencedor, que hicieron una fortuna en los años del estraperlo, la corrupción y los privilegios, que siguieron a la guerra civil” (“Hacia una teoría dialéctica” 134). García Hortelano’s novel also illustrates some of the “privilegios” to which Virumbrales refers: the licence to

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<sup>220</sup> Troncoso notes, as Míguez does in relation to Laforet’s *Nada*, that not only is García Hortelano writing about his ‘own’ class, he is also depicting the class to which the majority of his potential readers belong (*La narrativa* 17).

<sup>221</sup> All in-text page references to the novel refer to García Hortelano, *Nuevas amistades* (1982).

import an Alfa Romeo that Leopoldo and his mother obtain through a contact at a Ministry (172), for example, is explained by Dolores Troncoso in terms of a question of “tráfico de influencias” (“Madrid” 230). Wealthy Francoists were able to advance their business and personal interests through their close connections to the regime in this way, obtaining special favours and dispensations.

The remarkable financial success of their parents’ generation is reflected in the fixation with money and material possessions exhibited by the young *burgueses*; Barbara Zinn, for example, describes their values as “a distorted corpus of superficial aspirations” (68). The protagonists clearly equate wealth with success and happiness: Juan tells Gregorio that he abandoned his friends “porque me enseñaron que sin dinero un hombre de sesenta años ha vivido sólo veinte. Y viceversa,” and Gregorio replies “Naturalmente” (127). It follows that they automatically equate poverty with misery, as Gregorio does when sitting in Juan’s shack and imagining what it would be like to live there: “A media tarde la habitación se enturbiaría de una luz melancólica y, cuando lloviese y el mundo afuera se inundase de barro, exclusivamente cabría llorar con el rostro aplastado al colchón. Para criar amargura y rencor” (99). Furthermore, the group believe that virtually all of their problems can be solved with money: “El noventa por ciento de las tristezas se arreglan con un billete de mil” (53).

Interestingly, however, the novel also indicates that this materialism was by no means limited to the upper classes. García Hortelano himself has said that his depiction of the wealthy bourgeoisie was not intended to be a straightforward criticism of that class: he finds the typical social realist portrayal of the “burgués” as a terrible person, and the “obrero” as good, to be “una de las tesis más reaccionarias que se pueden sustentar. Falsa, pero sobre todo muy reaccionaria” (García Hortelano cited in Campbell 262–63). Although the children of the *alta burguesía* have more financial resources available to them, we see that the characters from other social backgrounds are equally preoccupied with material desires and improving their economic status. For example, the barmaid, Lupe, whom Gregorio pursues temporarily, constantly requests expensive gifts from him; Jovita later refers to her as “alguna de tus camareras sacadineros” (132). Even the poor people of the

settlement where Juan lives are said to have a weakness for things they do not really need: when Gregorio expresses his disbelief that Juan's neighbours could ever possess an automobile, the priest explains that "a veces, le sorprenden a uno. Son capaces de sacrificar lo muy necesario, por algo totalmente superfluo" (103). Finally, Emilia, the midwife, ends up accepting Gregorio's extra tip for coming out to see Julia in the mountains, despite her initial reluctance.<sup>222</sup>

The obsession with money and material goods illustrated in *Nuevas amistades* can be contrasted with the struggle to obtain basic necessities depicted in the previous case studies (that are set in the 1940s and early 1950s), and is indicative of the fact that Spain was definitely beginning to make economic progress, with increasing international trade and a construction boom.<sup>223</sup> This economic change was, however, not accompanied by major political change; to the contrary, it is often argued that the hope of any real political change was frustrated by the nation's increasing economic prosperity (Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes* 95–96).<sup>224</sup> Cazorla Sánchez also maintains that the improved quality of life and the growing consumer culture effectively diverted the Spanish population's attention away from their lack of social and political freedom:

Ordinary Spaniards were tasting "prosperity" in the 1960s. Intellectuals, however, were asking themselves where Spanish society was going. In particular, they wondered how much of a consumer-driven, classically developed Western capitalist nation Spain had become. At the root of this question was not only a moral, left-wing

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<sup>222</sup> Virumbrales sees the fact that Emilia ends up accepting the extra money that Gregorio offers her as "una humillación última de la burguesía profesional vencida ante la burguesía franquista triunfadora" ("Hacia una teoría dialéctica" 132). I will return to Virumbrales' distinction between the "burguesía profesional vencida" and the "burguesía franquista," in terms of framing the novel, later in this chapter.

<sup>223</sup> Carr notes, however, that the main sources of income for the Spanish state were foreign loans, the tourist trade and the remittances of Spaniards working in other parts of Europe, and that "the 'triumphalist' propaganda of the regime, pouring out statistics of growth, was not proof of a prosperity based on 'Franco's peace', but merely reflected the inevitable spurt that industrialization brings to any backward country" (157). It should also be noted that, while the Spanish economy as a whole was making significant advances in the late-1950s, this prosperity came partly at the cost of the workers, whose salaries were frozen and who suffered the effects of unemployment (Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes* 93).

<sup>224</sup> Nevertheless, as will be discussed below, opposition to the regime did begin to increase within certain sectors of society around the mid-1950s.



concern about people's materialistic values, but also the depressing perspective that consumerism was buying people's consciousness and rendering the dictatorship unassailable and, even worse, popular. (150)<sup>225</sup>

In addition to the focus on economic improvement, the political 'neutralisation' of the Spanish people was further aided by the continued deliberately apolitical educational and cultural environment. The children of the bourgeoisie were educated in Catholic schools where, according to Jordan, "as well as the imposition of cultural censorship and strong religious pressures, a political education was likely to be minimal" (*Writing and Politics* 48). Moreover, their generation had grown up surrounded by the postwar popular culture, described by Mangini as a deliberately apolitical "cultura de pandereta," which either consisted of Francoist propaganda in the form of comics, radio or cinema or purely escapist culture, particularly North American cinema (*Rojos y rebeldes* 24–25).<sup>226</sup>

Postwar Spain's depoliticised culture and growing consumerism account for the social and political apathy evident in *Nuevas amistades*, which has been noted by a number of critics. Luis López-Portilla, for example, includes García Hortelano's first novel in his study on "la novela de la abulia"; he writes that the young people portrayed have lost touch with reality and that they do not know themselves, their place in society, nor the historical moment of Spain that they are experiencing (184). The protagonists are indeed completely self-absorbed: they show no awareness or interest in the world beyond their immediate social circle,<sup>227</sup> and make no reference to the current social or political situation in which they live. Jacinto, the eldest, and perhaps the worldliest, is the only member of the group who occasionally refers to economic matters, such as trade with England and inflation, for example (28), but even he never mentions politics or the broader situation in Spain.<sup>228</sup> Most damning

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<sup>225</sup> Here, Cazorla Sánchez refers to the 1960s, however, the essence of this situation was already appearing by the late-1950s.

<sup>226</sup> See Vázquez Montalbán for further discussion of the fundamental role played by popular culture in the "despolitización" of the Spanish population.

<sup>227</sup> Leopoldo's desire to travel to Italy could be considered an exception; however, this is simply an expression of boredom rather than a genuine interest in travelling.

<sup>228</sup> Juan's social awareness is the exception, and will be returned to below,

about García Hortelano's depiction of their apathy and materialism is the fact that they are highly educated and have ample resources available to them. José Francisco Cirre makes this point by contrasting them to the lower-middle class, uneducated young people of Sánchez Ferlosio's 1956 novel, *El Jarama*: "La diferencia externa con los pobres tipos que pinta Sánchez Ferlosio resulta obvia. Cabría, por consiguiente, esperar de ellos actitudes más serias, preocupaciones genuinas, problemas intelectuales o espirituales de envergadura" (165).<sup>229</sup>

The central group's lack of political and social consciousness should be contrasted with García Hortelano's own lively interest in politics; as outlined at the beginning of this chapter, he was involved in the Communist Party around the time of writing his first novel and actively participated in oppositional *tertulias* throughout the 1950s (Pereda 43–55).<sup>230</sup> The absence of social commentary in the novel could be attributed to self-censorship, as García Hortelano knew that the censor would flag any direct political critique; I argue, however, that the author deliberately highlights the characters' ignorance of important contemporary issues in order to illustrate the 'dumbing down' effect that postwar governance and education had on a large part of the Spanish population, including the *alta burguesía*.

The contrast between García Hortelano's own social awareness and commitment to political change in Spain, and the apathetic attitudes and inertia demonstrated by the protagonists of his novel is symbolised in the juxtaposition of Juan with his former friends. Juan, a one-time member of their group who has since given up his wealthy lifestyle and moved to one of Madrid's *suburbios* to work as a mechanic, is the only character in the novel who appears to have any political convictions at all: the priest in the settlement where Juan lives refers to him as a "socialista" and jokes about his anti-religious sentiments (95). On the other hand, Juan asks Gregorio if he has any "ideas políticas," but quickly dismisses the question

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<sup>229</sup> Cirre is actually referring to *Tormenta de verano* in this quote; however his idea applies just as well to the characters of *Nuevas amistades*.

<sup>230</sup> García Hortelano's commitment to the Communist Party should, however, be qualified: Ricardo Rodríguez says of García Hortelano that despite his activism in the Communist Party, he never considered himself a real Marxist but did feel "un profundo compromiso ético, un sentido insobornable de la justicia y un inquebrantable amor por la libertad" (6); and Mangini has said of the Spanish Communist Party in general: "Fue característica en aquellos años la adhesión al PC sin un conocimiento teórico del marxismo o sin creer demasiado en sus preceptos" (*Rojos y rebeldes* 102).

when Gregorio does not hear him (99), realising that the question is redundant. Juan's character is one that has not been widely discussed by critics as he is not part of the central group; socially-speaking, however, he is interesting in the sense that he comes from the same background as the others, but has turned away from his family and upbringing as a result of his "resentimiento social" (according to Pedro) (88). The idea that Juan represents the position of the author himself is supported by Troncoso, who suggests that: "Quizás, en [un] pequeño rasgo de orgullo, el autor dio su propio nombre al único personaje que escapa de esa vaciedad general: Juan" (*La narrativa* 34).<sup>231</sup>

Another suggestion of the author's identification with Juan is that, for Leopoldo, Juan epitomises the idea of the liberal intellectual who opposes the values of the *alta burguesía*: "Hay muchos así. Tipos que se dedican a la cultura, pero que rabian por vivir como nosotros, por ir de un sitio a otro, por conocer mujeres y manejar billetes" (88). López-Portilla argues that Leopoldo sees culture as something belonging to the lower classes and not useful in their society (207), a point of view obviously not shared by García Hortelano as a writer and active intellectual. Leopoldo's attitude thus reflects the general disdain with which intellectuals and artistic culture were treated by the postwar regime; an attitude epitomised by Millán Astray's famous cry of "¡Muera la inteligencia!" (in a heated argument with Miguel de Unamuno during the war) (Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes* 10).<sup>232</sup> During the early postwar years, the Franco regime set out to demonise the liberal intellectual elite that had been associated with the Second Republic (many of whom had been imprisoned, executed or forced into exile, as discussed in Chapter One), by banning their work, labelling them 'anti-Spanish,' and adopting a general attitude which Elías Díaz describes as "indiscriminadamente anti-intelectual" (23). The protagonists of the novel indeed appear to have little interest in culture: they mention that they sometimes go to the cinema or the theatre to pass the time, but are generally not

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<sup>231</sup> Troncoso also says that although we cannot say for certain that Juan represents the author, his judgements about the group of friends are influential on the reader and therefore, in a sense, he replaces the role of the traditional narrator (*La narrativa* 34).

<sup>232</sup> While Astray's words are often dismissed as an "exabrupto de un militar temperamental," Josep Fontana believes that they represent "la expresión sincera de un punto fundamental del programa de los sublevados de 1936" (ix).

interested in art or literature (although there is a short reference to a detective novel (199) and Leopoldo makes a brief allusion to Raskolnikov, the protagonist of Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, but demonstrates that he has not actually read the novel because he thinks Raskolnikov killed his own mother (115).

The contrast between Juan and his former friends is framed by Virumbrales in terms of a subtle class distinction: he distinguishes between the "pequeña burguesía profesional y urbana" (to which García Hortelano belongs) and the "alta burguesía" (to which the characters in the novel belong), arguing that the novel is a criticism from the point of view of the former of the latter. The "alta burguesía" are distinguishable from the former not only by their superior economic status, but also by their political affiliation: the "pequeña burguesía profesional y urbana," whom Virumbrales also describes as "progresiva" and "de tendencias reformistas" (96), had been on the losing side of the war, whereas the "alta burguesía" had won the war and was closely linked to the Franco regime. For Virumbrales, García Hortelano's depiction of the "alta burguesía" as "un grupo social estúpido, inútil y aislado" reflects the "burguesía progresiva"'s rejection of the regime's values ("Hacia una teoría dialéctica" 100–101). While García Hortelano himself was a member of the "burguesía progresiva" whose family had a Republican background, the rigid separation along class lines in Virumbrales' framework is somewhat artificial. It does not take into account the fact that young members of the *alta burguesía*, including Juan in the novel, and members of the social realist movement, such as Juan Goytisolo, Barral and Castellet, rebelled against the authoritarianism and traditionalism of the regime, despite their wealthy and conservative family backgrounds.<sup>233</sup>

The oppositional attitudes that began to emerge in the 1950s developed largely amongst students, after attempts to liberalise the universities earlier that decade had been frustrated by the continuing dominance of the traditionalist forces in the system: "el catolicismo oficial, la derecha de siempre, el Opus Dei e incluso, al

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<sup>233</sup> Jordan discusses the way in which many of García Hortelano's contemporaries in the social realist movement (including Barral and Juan Goytisolo) experienced, like Juan, a 'break' with their conservative families and the authorities in the early 1950s, due to their overly repressive and religious upbringing (*Writing and Politics* 48–51).

fin, ciertas facciones de la Falange [...]” (Laín Entralgo 406). Student dissatisfaction with the lack of progress resulted in large-scale protests against the regime in 1956, the significance of which García Hortelano himself has alluded to in an interview, saying: “El 56 fue nuestro mayo del 68” (*Invenciones* 200).<sup>234</sup> It is, therefore, notable that, despite the fact that most of the characters are students, these significant events of 1956 are never mentioned at all in *Nuevas amistades* (an omission which is noted by Troncoso who dates the action of the novel to 1956). Troncoso argues that the story is set in 1956 because reference is made to the recent marriage of Grace Kelly and Prince Rainier of Monaco and the Suez Canal crisis (“Madrid” 230); however, it is again significant that these historical markers are not mentioned by the characters themselves, but are heard on a radio in the background and to which the characters are not even actively listening (193).<sup>235</sup>

As discussed in Chapter One, Mangini frames the emerging political opposition amongst young people in Spain in terms of a ‘generation gap’ in which the sons and daughters of “franquistas acérrimos” rebelled against the values of their parents (*Rojos y rebeldes* 58): “Fue una ruptura ya radical la que se vio entonces entre padres e hijos; era el primer paso en un *generation gap* que iba a ser irreversible a partir de 1956” (*Rojos y rebeldes* 85). If we identify Juan’s character with the generation that rebels against their parents’ values, he has more in common with characters from novels such as Juan Goytisolo’s *Juegos de manos* (1954) or Juan Marsé’s *Encerrados con un solo juguete* (1960), than with Leopoldo and the other protagonists of *Nuevas amistades*. Goytisolo and Marsé’s characters, although they do not give up their comfortable life in the same way that Juan does, feel their families are responsible for the injustices of Spanish society and reject their parents’ conservative values.<sup>236</sup> Mangini argues that the ‘generation gap’ is largely a result of an awareness of what happened during the Civil War, as the new generation assumes the “ansia de responsabilidad” for their parents’ errors (*Rojos y rebeldes* 99–

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<sup>234</sup> For further information on the student protests and their importance within the dissident movement in Spain, see Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes* 55–58.

<sup>235</sup> Virumbrales, however, believes the novel is set in 1958 because the radio announcer alludes to the recent Colombian elections (“Hacia una teoría dialéctica” 111).

<sup>236</sup> In the case of Goytisolo’s novel, for example, this rejection is manifest in their planned assassination of a political leader.

100). She refers to the guilt, the “mala conciencia,” that many of the winners of the war began to feel in the 1950s: “Como ha dicho con ironía Luis Berlanga: ‘Los españoles tenemos todos mucho complejo de culpa. España es un país de culpables’. [...] Un pesado aire de culpabilidad permeó la sociedad después de la guerra civil [...]” (*Rojos y rebeldes* 58).

It is significant, therefore, that the political apathy demonstrated by the characters of the central group in *Nuevas amistades* extends to an obliviousness towards the past. The war is mentioned only three times in passing in the novel, and the only reference to its consequences is when Juan tells Gregorio that Emilia has not been allowed to practice medicine after the war for political reasons (129). This ignorance of the relevance of the recent past in Spain differs sharply from the importance that García Hortelano himself places on the effect of the war and the difficult postwar years on his generation.<sup>237</sup> In the prologue to an anthology of poems he compiled in 1978, García Hortelano imagined the poets of his generation posing for a photo together as children in 1936, the beginning of what he believed to be the most decisive event in their lives and which he considered to have had a particularly strong effect on those who experienced it as children: “La fecha en que se han fijado fotográficamente las imágenes de aquellos diez niños es tan decisiva como las edades que entonces contaban los poetas de hoy” (*El grupo poético* 8). García Hortelano’s characters, on the other hand, are so self-absorbed that they consider the past to be irrelevant and are simply not interested in politics, despite the fact that they belong to the same generation as García Hortelano and have experienced more or less the same historical events that the author describes as so influential in his childhood.<sup>238</sup>

One can assume, judging from their wealthy backgrounds, that the families portrayed in *Nuevas amistades* have flourished in postwar Spain because they

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<sup>237</sup> For further information on García Hortelano’s experience during the Civil War, see Pereda 10–14.

<sup>238</sup> García Hortelano was 31 years old when *Nuevas amistades* was published, and we know that Jacinto is 37, Isabel is 33, Leopoldo is 21 and Gregorio is 19, while all the others are somewhere in between. The argument that García Hortelano is writing about his “own” generation in *Nuevas amistades* is supported by the fact that the characters in his other novels age as he does: “Esa honestidad profesional, explica que sus novelas atestigüen los cambios de edad de sus personajes, acordes a los del autor (muy jóvenes en *Nuevas amistades*, algo mayores en *Gente de Madrid*, y adultos aunque resistan a serlo en *Mary Tribune*) [...]” (Troncoso, “Madrid” 228).

supported Franco during the war, but this assumption is also confirmed by statements throughout the novel. Isabel, for example, says that she has always lived in Rosales, except during the war (49); this statement seems trivial, but it confirms that Isabel's family had to leave the city while it was in Republican hands during the war, only to return on Franco's victory. As the winners of the war, the protagonists of *Nuevas amistades* have no need to feel bitterness or resentment about the outcome of the war and perhaps have little cause to reflect on the ideological background or the consequences of the conflict. Their indifference to a recent history which had such far-reaching consequences for their society, however, attests to an egotistical outlook and a lack of social conscience, as suggested by Mangini who notes a similar obliviousness towards the past, and the war in particular, among the young people in Sánchez Ferlosio's *El Jarama*:

la juventud es inconsciente de su propia historia reciente—la guerra civil—, y esto que podría ser positivo en la medida en que no hay grandes sentimientos de amargura, no lo es. Su inocuidad como seres humanos, su falta de espíritu —delatada exclusivamente a través de sus conversaciones—dejan entrever el vacío moral de los españoles jóvenes de posguerra. (*Rojos y rebeldes* 115)

The group's indifference towards the past suggests that the relationship with their parents' generation is quite different to that of those who rebel against their parents' values out of a sense of guilt. The 'generation gap' is not as pronounced in the case of the young people depicted in the novel, given that they unquestioningly accept the *status quo* in Spain and are content to be the heirs of their parents' wealth and businesses. There is still, however, a noticeable rift between the protagonists and their parents, but it is based on the morally conservative older generation's disapproval of their children's frivolous lifestyle, rather than a moral stand taken by the younger generation (as it could be argued that the young *burgueses* have no morals to speak of). The older generation is barely present in *Nuevas amistades*, but we get an idea of the distance between the two generations in conversations such as

those that Gregorio has with Adela, Leopoldo's mother, who confesses that she would give anything to be able to understand her son.<sup>239</sup> Isabel also hints at an ongoing friction with her father: "Me ha puesto nerviosa mi padre" [...] "Has discutido con tu padre," "Apenas unos minutos. Pero me ha puesto encendida de rencor y de tristeza" (71). The details of the argument are not disclosed, but we can assume that Isabel's father is troubled by the kind of lifestyle she is living and is possibly concerned that she remains unmarried (a topic which will be returned to later in this chapter).

The young people certainly do not want the older generation to learn of Julia's pregnancy and abortion, and they go to great lengths to avoid arousing the suspicions of Julia's family while she recovers at home. This is firstly because their conservative parents would be outraged and they are concerned that the financial support they receive will be affected. Pedro, for example, becomes paranoid that Leopoldo's mother knows what is going on ("Tu madre nos miró de una manera rara" (79)). Secondly, they are concerned that the authorities will become involved: when Pedro suggests contacting his older cousin, Darío, who is a doctor, to arrange the abortion, Leopoldo refuses because he is concerned that Darío would not sympathise with their situation and would immediately contact the police (83).

As law students, Leopoldo and Gregorio are aware of the heavy legal penalties that this crime carries, which Leopoldo reads to Pedro from a textbook: "Primero. Con la pena de prisión mayor si obrare sin consentimiento de la mujer. Segundo. Con la de prisión menor si la mujer lo consintiera" (82). They decide to go ahead with the abortion anyway, at first swearing to involve as few people as possible to avoid being exposed (a resolution which the group, to Gregorio's frustration, is unable to adhere to), but become increasingly paranoid that they are being monitored by the authorities. When Gregorio gives the priest a ride into Madrid after his first meeting with Juan, for example, he panics remembering that the priest could have read Isabel's name and address on the registration card of her

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<sup>239</sup> Gregorio, like the other characters, is untruthful with the older generation about his and Leopoldo's whereabouts; he tells Adela that they had not arrived home late last night and that they were at the cinema, and then worries if "la pregunta de Adela tenía una motivación moral" (20). Later, Adela confides in Gregorio that she is worried about Leopoldo: "Daría cualquier cosa por comprenderle" and fears that she has spoiled him (66–67).



car (108); later, as Gregorio waits in the car for Julia to emerge after her operation he spots two armed policemen and momentarily imagines that they are walking towards his car (155); they even mention the possibility of the telephone being tapped (158). As Julia's condition deteriorates later in the novel, they think they may have to decide between saving her life (they do not yet know that Julia is in no real danger) and the risk of being discovered by the authorities, and it is clear that Pedro and Gregorio fear the latter more, going as far as discussing the staging of a fake car accident should Julia die of complications (200).

The group's anxiety about being discovered to be complicit in the abortion can largely be attributed to paranoia; however, it does reflect a state of mind that had been carried over from the earlier postwar period when police vigilance and a network of informants maintained rigid control over illegal activity and any signs of political dissent in Spain. Throughout the 1940s, Franco increased the number and powers of the police and Civil Guard, and relied on loyal citizens to denounce their neighbours in the effort to eliminate all opposition to the regime. By the 1950s, however, although the regime still used repressive tactics in certain situations (with the student protests, for example), the "pace of repression slackened" as the regime consolidated its power (Vincent 160–62). In the novel, Pedro's fear that the police will immediately discover them organising the abortion probably stems from the memory of the seemingly omnipresent authorities of the earlier postwar period: "La policía debe ejercer una vigilancia total sobre estas cosas." Leopoldo, however, ridicules him for exaggerating the powers of the police: "No tan total. Hazme el favor de no mantener esas vulgares creencias en la infalibilidad de la policía" (83). Interestingly, Ilie includes a "manifest fear of arrest," such as that demonstrated by the characters in *Nuevas amistades*, as one of the characteristics common to "literary analogues of [the] police state" (245).

The characters of lower social standing are similarly wary of the authorities: in the opening chapter, Ventura needs to close his bar, but Isabel is unconscious inside and he fears he will have problems with the police if someone discovers her there: "Tengo que cerrar. Y, además, que no me gusta tenerla ahí. Puede entrar alguien." He adds, "Bastantes complicaciones he tenido ya" (10). Ventura perhaps

has more reason to be worried than Pedro and Leopoldo because the lower classes were more vulnerable to the power of the authorities: firstly, public moral standards were applied more vigorously to the working classes because “[Francoist] morality was tainted by class prejudice in which workers were damned for being poor, while moral concerns for the elite were specific, and very different” (Cazorla Sánchez 139–40); secondly, they could not afford to ‘buy’ themselves out of trouble. The importance of class and money when dealing with the authorities is discussed explicitly in the novel when Ventura and Joaquín wonder what they would do if Isabel were dead: “Debe de ser difícil desprenderse de un cadáver,” “Con dinero, no creas. El dinero lo puede todo” (12). Indeed, in the first chapter, Leopoldo casually tells Joaquín: “Maté a una vieja,” and that he has temporarily lost his driver’s licence as a result, but that he will get it back after the court case (16). Later, Jacinto suggests that if the police find out about the abortion, “puede tener arreglo,” but implies that they will not be able to buy their way out of trouble so easily if Julia dies (241). Juan and Emilia have a different attitude again: they live outside society’s accepted norms and have little to lose by breaking the rules; in fact, Emilia makes her living this way.

The presence of these other social classes in *Nuevas amistades* and their relationship to the wealthy bourgeoisie is a key aspect of García Hortelano’s critical portrait of postwar Spain. The author gives us two glimpses of the other ‘worlds’ in Madrid: the *pequeña burguesía* of shopkeepers and bar owners, represented by Joaquín and Ventura, and the poor people who live in the shanty town where Juan resides.<sup>240</sup> The different spaces of the city that the various social classes inhabit are clearly defined: Gregorio and his friends reside in the well-to-do residential areas of central Madrid (Salamanca, Argüelles, Rosales); Joaquín and Ventura are associated with the newer suburbs of southern Madrid which are inhabited by the lower-middle classes (Ventura’s bar looks out to the south from Puente de Vallecas); and finally, there are the very poor people who live in the shanty towns on the outskirts

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<sup>240</sup> The growing shanty towns on the outskirts of Spanish cities were the result of the massive trend towards urbanisation in 1950s Spain. Between 1951 and 1960, one million Spaniards migrated from rural areas to Madrid, northern Spain (predominantly the Basque country), and Catalonia (Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes* 93). For more information on migration from the countryside to the cities in postwar Spain, see Cazorla Sánchez 95–107.

of the city.<sup>241</sup> As seen in Romero's *La noria*, albeit on a reduced scale in *Nuevas amistades*, the contrast of the different social groups and the separate spaces they inhabit raises the reader's awareness of wealth inequality and social injustice in Francoist Spain; Troncoso argues that these contrasts: "exige[n] del lector una coparticipación activa no para reconstruir una ciudad, sino para interpretarla como símbolo de una sociedad estratificada, cuya compartimentación social es denuncia obvia de una situación injusta" ("Madrid" 238).

The novel presents the relationship between the *alta burguesía* and the lower classes in two scenarios: in Isabel and Leopoldo's interaction with Joaquín and Ventura in the first chapter (Isabel later meets Joaquín again), and Gregorio's visit to the settlement where Juan lives. The *burgueses* do not show any concern at the evident wealth disparity: in fact, they ridicule those who have to work for a living and seem to be repulsed by poverty. Virumbrales notes that Isabel and Leopoldo laugh when Joaquín tells them he must get up early the next morning to open his shop (19) as they have no such responsibilities themselves ("Hacia una teoría dialéctica" 116).<sup>242</sup> Later, Isabel describes Joaquín's unrefined clothes with disdain to Leopoldo: "Un hombre que sujeta el nudo de la corbata con un alfiler de fantasía, usa camisas de tela a rayas y ropa interior de felpa durante los inviernos"; they laugh together at the thought of being married to such a man (124). Gregorio is disgusted at the state of the houses and people he finds in the "poblado" where Juan lives and bothered by the "constante olor a suciedad" (95); however, he feels no empathy for the people who live there. The priest asks him what he makes of it and Gregorio replies "Espantoso," "Nunca lo hubiese imaginado" (94). Yet, back in Madrid that evening, listening to jazz music at Jacinto and Neca's luxurious house, he briefly thinks that Juan and the priest would now be eating dinner in their "chabolas," but then continues drinking and promptly forgets all about what he has seen that day (108). While it was precisely the contact with *suburbios* such as the one described that triggered the political awakening of García Hortelano's

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<sup>241</sup> See Troncoso, "Madrid" 237–38, for details on the sudden growth of *chabolismo* to the south of Madrid around the 1950s.

<sup>242</sup> Some of the members of the group, Jacinto and Pedro, do work for a living, but their hours are leisurely: Pedro finishes work before lunchtime and usually leaves early.

contemporary, Juan Goytisolo (Jordan 51), Gregorio, in contrast, is not affected at all by witnessing the extreme hardship endured by some sectors of society.

As is the case with Romero's *La noria*, while some studies of *Nuevas amistades* have recognised the significance of the wealth and class divide in the novel, the gender divide has essentially been overlooked, despite the fact that the central story is a perfect example of the *doble moralidad* that dictated different standards of sexual morality for men and women. While premarital sex was officially deemed immoral for all, in practice, such norms applied only to women. This was not only for practical reasons (women would suffer the consequences of an unwanted pregnancy), but also due to hypocritical moral standards: while 'decent' women were, of course, expected to 'save themselves' for marriage, sexual experience was valued in a man, with women often advised to marry a man who was "corrido" or "vivido" (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 101). In the novel, it is implied, for example, that Pedro has had other sexual relationships before Julia, while it is taken for granted that she has not; he describes as follows Julia's feelings towards the new step in their relationship: "Para ella supuso un choque extraordinario. Una nueva vida, llamémoslo así," but for himself: "Para mí también. En otro sentido claro" (60). Although Pedro and Julia have been together for many years and are intending to marry, social norms do not allow them to have a sexual relationship. In order to preserve Julia's reputation as a 'decent' girl, therefore, the relationship between them has to be conducted in secret and they visit places that rent rooms out to couples by the hour, but have to pay extra to ensure discretion: "Hablé con la dueña. Dinero. Usábamos hasta otra puerta" (60).

Leopoldo is furious when Pedro reveals that Julia is pregnant, suggesting that Pedro should have looked elsewhere for this type of relationship, not to a respectable girl like Julia: "Julia, una muchacha como Julia... Eres un animal descompuesto y salvaje" (56). His reaction reflects the expectation that the sons of the bourgeoisie would maintain their fiancée's most important asset, her virginity, because they had access to women of the lower classes and prostitutes (Torres, *El amor* 95). As discussed in Chapter One, sexual morality was perceived very differently when it came to women of the lower social classes, and in *Nuevas*

*amistades* we see that, although the group are generally dismissive of people outside of their social circle, the men are happy to have sexual relationships with women from more humble backgrounds or with prostitutes.<sup>243</sup> Gregorio, for example, actively pursues both Lupe (a girl who works in a bar on Gran Vía) and Carmen (a new maid in Leopoldo's house), whom he kisses and pulls onto his lap despite her protestations (165). Furthermore, it emerges that Leopoldo had previously had to arrange an abortion for a girl named Encarna, but he considers it to have been a completely different situation because "Julia no es una chica como Encarna. La pobre Encarna era casi una criada" (84).

However, while the men care a great deal about protecting the social reputations of their wealthy female friends, they appear to have little regard for them personally and intellectually. Leopoldo, for example, insults Jovita constantly, considering her attractiveness to be her only redeeming feature: "Suele ignorarlo casi todo. Puede disculpársele su absoluta falta de cultura, dada su, en principio, agradable anatomía" (34). The men do not trust the women to be discreet about the abortion and have no confidence in their ability to care for Julia after her operation, as they are considered to be nervous and prone to panic. As they discuss the preparations for the operation, Leopoldo, for example, shouts at Jovita and Julia: "Bastante nos la estamos jugando, para que vengáis con histerias propias de vuestro sexo" (131), and later Leopoldo says to Gregorio: "No se puede confiar en mujeres. Nervios" (161).<sup>244</sup>

Despite the low esteem in which they are held by their male friends, however, García Hortelano's female characters, although by no means perfect, are certainly depicted as more genuine and sympathetic than their male counterparts: Isabel, for example, is genuinely concerned for Julia's well-being and asks Gregorio if a scandal would not have been preferable to endangering Julia's health (177). Moreover, Julia herself is possibly the most sympathetic character in the novel, not only because she

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<sup>243</sup> This double standard is also noted by Virumbrales in his analysis of *Nuevas amistades*: "La moral católica y reaccionaria, prevaleciente en la España franquista, requiere que se mantengan relaciones sexuales con gente de las clases inferiores, pero no con las señoritas de la misma extracción burguesa" ("Hacia una teoría dialéctica" 119).

<sup>244</sup> Longstanding cultural stereotypes about female emotion and hysteria, in contrast to the supposed rationality and logic of males will be returned to in the following chapter on *Diario de una maestra*.

is the victim of the circumstances but also because (at least after her ordeal) she demonstrates briefly that she understands that there is more to life than the superficial concerns of the group, saying to Pedro that they need to talk about their future:

Hay un lado de las cosas, del que nunca hablamos, ¿verdad? O no sabemos o no creemos necesario hacerlo. Pero esta noche es preciso que tú y yo hablemos desde el otro punto de vista. ¿Me entiendes? Luego, será de día y estarán los otros. Nos pondremos a contar las cosas en el tono de siempre y ya será tarde para comprender. (247–48)

Pedro, nevertheless, dismisses her comments as feverish ramblings. Even Juan, who despises the group as a whole, asks Gregorio to tell Julia that he is sorry about the situation in which she finds herself: “Puede que sea la única de todas ellas que no se lo mereciese” (129). While Zinn notes that the females in *Nuevas amistades* are portrayed in a very negative light as “stereotypical, hysterical, incompetent, and untrustworthy” (83), I would argue that this derogatory attitude emanates only from the male characters, such as Leopoldo and Gregorio, and not from the author himself, and this can be considered a further aspect of García Hortelano’s implied criticism of these individuals.<sup>245</sup>

In contrast to the Francoist emphasis on the woman’s role as wife and mother, the women in García Hortelano’s novel appear to lead relatively independent and liberal lives. While the Church’s moral guidelines considered smoking improper for women, deemed dancing a ‘dangerous’ activity and discouraged any social situation in which men and women could interact (Alonso Tejada 20, 52), the female characters in *Nuevas amistades* spend most of their time doing precisely these things in the company of their male friends. Their somewhat unorthodox behaviour can be partly explained by the greater flexibility afforded to them by their privileged social

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<sup>245</sup> With regard to his personal life, in fact, García Hortelano expressed admiration for the strong, liberal women in his family in interviews: “Yo siempre me he criado entre mujeres y supongo que se me notará en muchas cosas.” He also admitted that he was much closer to his mother and grandmother than to his father, saying of his father: “Era alguien a quien yo quería, pero no mucho, en comparación con cómo quería a mi madre o a mi abuela” (Pereda 18).

position; they have, for example, money to go to restaurants and bars with their friends and the possibility to travel around by car and can, therefore, more easily escape the watchful eyes of their families than could women from less wealthy backgrounds. Additionally, it should be taken into account that, by the late 1950s, there had been a slight relaxation of the fanatical standards of 'decency' in Spain due to increased international contact through tourism and emigration (Scanlon 343).

With regard to their relatively liberal and independent social behaviour, the wealthy women in García Hortelano's novel (Isabel, Jovita, Julia, Meyes and to a certain extent Neca, although she is married) seem to embody the postwar stereotype of the *niña topolino*. According to Martín Gaité, the *niña topolino* was the antithesis of the demure and austere female ideal put forward by the Falange's Sección Femenina. The *niña topolino* was anything but reticent: usually from a wealthy background, she wore attention-grabbing outfits, laughed loudly, smoked and spoke with masculine slang (*Usos amorosos* 80). The unique jargon employed by the *niñas topolino*, as described by Martín Gaité, indeed echoes many conversations held in *Nuevas amistades*: "Decían mucho «formidable», «sensacional», «bárbaro», «es un poema», «¡qué burrada!», «¡cómo me apetece!» [...]" (*Usos amorosos* 86). Despite the spectacle these girls presented, however, they were just as eager to "pescar marido" as their more conservative counterparts and were therefore sexually unavailable:

De los planes atopolinados, según era fama, se sacaba poco en limpio; mucho alarde de inconsciencia y frivolidad, pero nada entre dos platos. Ahí estaba el quid de su contradicción. En que las niñas topolino, aunque aparentemente «dieran mucho pie», a la hora de la verdad se solían echar para atrás igual que las que no fumaban ni llevaban gafas ahumadas, sólo que frenando con menos delicadeza, y más expuestas a la bofetada. (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 89)

As we have seen in *Nuevas amistades*, notwithstanding the women's purported worldliness as they drink and smoke along with their male companions, the

unmarried women are all sexually inexperienced (with the exception of Julia, this 'exception' being the key to the novel's plot). Even Isabel, who is significantly older and who engages in behaviour that would be considered shocking for a 'decent' Spanish girl (she drinks alone in bars, for example, leading Joaquín and Ventura to believe that she may be a prostitute (8)), is not sexually active.

The female characters all attend or have attended university; however, their plans after university are no different to those of other Spanish women: they will not work, but get married and have a family. Indeed, Morcillo Gómez writes that "though college women who belonged to the SEU were the intellectual elite of the Falangist women, their future roles as wives and prolific mothers remained uncontested ("Shaping True Catholic Womanhood," 62). Returning to the idea of the *niña topolino*, Martín Gaité claims that for many wealthy girls, attending university was only "como pretexto para salir más y exhibir toilettes más caras que las de sus compañeras" (*Usos amorosos* 84–85). Despite their relatively liberal behaviour, therefore, the women of *Nuevas amistades* will ultimately conform to the regime's gender constructs.

The expectation to marry affects all of the female characters: Neca is already married, Julia will eventually marry Pedro, while Meyes and Jovita both express a desire to marry as soon as possible (46). Isabel, however, because she is older than the other women, is the one who is distinguished by her unmarried status. She is referred to by her friends as a "soltera" or "la condenada" (14) and describes herself as "casi una solterona" (46), yet hopes to marry soon: "De todas maneras, ya sé que debo casarme y, para este invierno, verás cómo me espabilo" (46). We learn that Isabel was once engaged to be married but called it off because of an "incompatibilidad invencible" (52), a decision which her friends cannot comprehend, not only because she should be married by now, but also because she gave up her fiancé's significant wealth (163). As discussed briefly in relation to Andrea's aunt, Angustias, in *Nada*, women who chose not to marry were regarded with both pity and disdain in postwar society and no one believed that a woman would choose to be single: "Vocación de soltera no se concebía que la pudiera tener nadie" (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 38, 42).



Men did not experience the same pressure to marry: “El hombre que no se casaba es porque no quería y la mujer que no se casaba, en cambio, es porque no podía” (Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 45). However, there were separate gender expectations for males: just as women were expected to be sweet and submissive wives and mothers, men were given a model of masculinity “modelled on the Catholic, aggressively heterosexist *macho*, a stereotype reinforced through institutions such as the military service and upheld by compliant, conservative women” (Pérez-Sánchez, “Franco’s Spain, Queer Nation?” 954). Spanish men were thus expected to be strong, masculine, and, it goes without saying, heterosexual. In the novel, Leopoldo swears to Pedro that he will never marry, but Pedro tells him that his grandfather had advised him to marry because “es lo que debe hacer un hombre, aunque sólo sea para que no se dude de él, porque la gente se calla, pero, cuando se encuentra con un soltero, piensa que no ha podido casarse por marica o por impotente, o, en el mejor de los casos, por estéril” (60). There was significant stigma surrounding homosexuality in postwar Spain, as discussed in relation to Romero’s character, Cazeaux. Yannick Ripa describes how the suspicion of homosexuality had become an obsession in the early Franco years: an item of clothing, an effeminate gesture or holding a cigarette in the right hand could all spark rumours; the safest way to guarantee one’s masculinity was to drink, smoke and play football (125). The women in the novel also validate the idea of the superiority of the strong, aggressive male, flattering Gregorio by calling him “un hombre de acción” (236). Gregorio is later congratulated by the others for lashing out violently at Darío, when Darío tells them the truth about the fraud and reproaches Gregorio for the way he has handled the abortion and ensuing complications (260).

García Hortelano’s decision to use the supposed pregnancy and abortion as the ‘crisis’ faced by the group in *Nuevas amistades*, in lieu of any other problematic situation (a murder, for example) brings to the fore further examples of gendered moral hypocrisy in postwar Spain. In general, critics have dismissed the significance of the abortion in the novel: Virumbrales describes it as “[e]l objeto actancial superficialmente” (“Hacia una teoría dialéctica” 139); Sanz Villanueva refers to it as the “historia externa” (“El ‘conductismo’” 600), and Troncoso calls it the “argumento

superficial que sirve a Hortelano como pretexto para analizar el modo de vida de este pequeño grupo representativo de toda una clase social" (*La narrativa* 45). Ramón Buckley writes that García Hortelano rejects 90% of the dramatic possibilities that the abortion, which he refers to as the "anecdote," afford in the narrative, avoiding the moral and religious considerations in favour of a more sociological portrait (57). I argue, however, that the implications of the pregnancy and abortion, and the way they are dealt with by Julia and her friends, are central to García Hortelano's sociological portrait of Francoist Spain, particularly in the illustration of gender inequality. This is irrespective of the extent to which the implications of the abortion are actually discussed by the characters in the novel (which can partly be attributed to the requirements of censorship as will be discussed below).

Abortion was strictly illegal under the Franco dictatorship: in 1941, a law was declared that introduced severe punishment for those who had received or performed abortions (Scanlon 322). The practice not only went against Catholic doctrine but was also considered a crime against the state because the regime was encouraging population growth with pronatalist policies in order to recover its position as an imperial world power (Nash, "Pronatalism" 160).<sup>246</sup> Mary Nash's study of these policies, concludes, however, that despite the laws and the pronatalist ideology propagated by the regime, women did not unquestioningly accept their duty to have a large family and the practice of birth control and abortion continued unofficially in the postwar period.<sup>247</sup> Nash attributes this to a strategy for survival in the harsh postwar years, in which many could not afford to have large families, rather than to any conscious political choices ("Pronatalism" 174–75). The prevalence of the practice of abortion in postwar Spain is confirmed by Emilia in *Nuevas amistades* when she assures Gregorio that: "No sucederá nada desagradable. A los muchachos de su edad les enseñan en la Facultad de Medicina que, al año, se

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<sup>246</sup> Pronatalist policies included the prohibition of contraception and any propaganda in favour of contraception, "premios de natalidad," and special allowances and concessions for large families, such as tax credits and school and housing assistance, all of which was paid directly to the father of the family (Nash, "Towards a new moral order" 299). Families were placed in different categories according to the number of children they had. The largest families, with 12 or more children, were invited to a personal audience with Franco (Ryan 246).

<sup>247</sup> Nash cites oral testimony from midwives who were often asked to perform the procedure, while other women resorted to home remedies ("Pronatalism" 173–74).

efectúan en el país unas cincuenta mil operaciones de esta clase. Y reconocen que sus estadísticas se quedan cortas” (151–52). She tells him to forget what he has read about the dangers associated with the operation because “[n]i las Facultades de Medicina ni los periódicos son partidarios” (152). This last quote is, in fact, an explicit reference to the fact that, as a result of the regime’s moral opposition to the practice, the media exaggerated the dangers and denied the reality of how many abortions were performed.

In addition to the economic factors outlined by Nash, the prevalence of abortion in postwar Spain can be attributed to the paradoxical discourse that glorified motherhood, but only within the bounds of marriage. Before marriage, the quality most emphasised in Francoist doctrine was a woman’s virginity; after marriage, this was motherhood: “[F]emale identity emanated from the objectification of women’s bodies. First they emphasized the preservation of virginity, and then sacralized the female body as the receptacle of human life through motherhood after marriage” (Morcillo Gómez, “Shaping True Catholic Womanhood” 57).<sup>248</sup> As there was no legal access to contraception or abortion for women, and no legal penalty for the man for what Morcillo Gómez describes as “acceptable seduction” (if a woman was over twenty-three), unmarried pregnant women were often abandoned by their partners and left to deal with the shame and hardship of single motherhood (*Seduction* 124). Furthermore, their children were not recognised by the regime: family subsidies, for example, did not apply for illegitimate children and were paid out to the father of the family, thus rewarding fathers instead of mothers (Nash, “Pronatalism” 172). Even within marriage, moreover, women had no control over the bearing of children; in fact, abortions for married women were punished more severely (Nash, “Pronatalism” 168–69).

Women were thus left with no voice over questions of reproductive rights and no power over their own bodies, as Gallego Méndez affirms: “Ni la mujer era dueña de su maternidad, ni el hijo le pertenecía” (167). Nash also reminds us that official policy was “an exclusively male business even when its chief concern was

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<sup>248</sup> These beliefs were propagated in treatises such as Juan Luis Vives’ *La instrucción de la mujer cristiana* (1523) and Fray Luis de Leon’s *La perfecta casada* (1584), which were enthusiastically adopted by Catholic propagandists under Franco.

women's reproductive capacities" ("Pronatalism" 163). *Nuevas amistades* illustrates exactly how the gendered power imbalance left women like Julia vulnerable: while Pedro does not abandon Julia when she falls pregnant, she has little choice with respect to her pregnancy, as Pedro decides what will be best for his own future. He is worried not only about the scandal that would be caused by a rushed marriage, but is also concerned that his material well-being will be affected: "Una boda repentina en los dos o tres próximos meses echaría muchas cosas a rodar. Sobre todo, cuestiones de dinero" (81). Julia's powerlessness is stressed by Isabel and Neca: "Aunque Julia no es tonta, desde luego, todas sabemos cómo son los hombres. Yo no me hubiera fiado. Ahora Pedro la deja sin chico y sin boda y ¿qué? Ella no puede hacer nada" (185).

Nevertheless, Julia would be even more vulnerable had she, or Pedro, in any case, not been able to pay for Emilia's services. While it was illegal for everyone, it was much easier to arrange a reasonably safe, clandestine abortion for those with money. In the novel, Emilia tells Gregorio what the poor women who live in the settlement do with unwanted pregnancies: "allí, [...] cuando una queda encinta, maldice, blasfema y termina por parirlo. Hay otras que no hacen así. Acuden a mí o ellas mismas se lo provocan," but that in Julia's case, because she has money, "se arreglan las dificultades" (206). In Clive Beadman's study, "Abortion in 1940s Spain: the social context," he examines a sample of abortion cases that were brought before the Spanish Supreme Court between 1940 and 1949, and notes that the vast majority of these cases were working-class women, often "those with little access to the world beyond their own homes or those of their parents or masters" (60). This, of course, does not imply that middle-class or wealthier women never resorted to abortion, but supports my earlier statement that money could guarantee a discreet and safe abortion that would not end up before the courts; many of the cases that Beadman cites became public because the woman had to seek medical attention for an infection, or in a number of cases, had died of complications.

On the one hand, therefore, the wealthy bourgeoisie could more discreetly deal with moral infringements such as unwanted pregnancies, but, on the other hand, being so closely associated with the regime, and often owing their financial

success to the establishment of the dictatorship, it was vital for this social class to conform, outwardly at least, to the official moral code. The manner in which the group deals with Julia's pregnancy, however, suggests that this conformity is superficial: whatever values or morals the characters do appear to have turn out to be largely based on keeping up appearances and protecting their material interests. Despite the fact that the members of the group are officially practicing Catholics—they attend Mass in the village in the *sierra*, for example, and Gregorio politely addresses the priest as “padre” (95) and gives him a donation for the chapel (104)—they demonstrate no genuine religious faith, nor do they abide by Catholic morals in their private lives. They do, however, take advantage of the opportunity to confess and be absolved of their errors: in her post-operation delirium, for example, Julia says to Pedro that Meyes has told her that they have to confess the abortion to a special kind of priest, because a normal priest cannot absolve this sin (245). With the exception of a brief conversation between Gregorio and Emilia (205–06), there is no discussion at all about the religious implications of the abortion. The hypocrisy of their failure to question the ethics of the abortion, while they are scandalised by Julia and Pedro's sexual relationship, is noted by Troncoso:

A pesar de que en varias ocasiones se nos ofrecen escenas en que distintos personajes comentan lo sucedido a Julia, en ningún momento hay una crítica, o siquiera una duda, sobre la ética del aborto [...]. En cambio, con una moral muy característica de la España de los cincuenta, que predicaba el “respeto a la novia,” se escandalizan de las relaciones sexuales de Julia y Pedro. (*La narrativa* 46)

Virumbrales claims that their economic motivation, and the need to preserve the values of their class, overrides any commitment to Francoist values that they may have (“Hacia una teoría dialéctica” 132). García Hortelano thus implies, as Laforet does in relation to Andrea's aunt Angustias, that the devoutly religious image projected by the Francoist upper classes is mostly superficial and that the regime's elite do not always practice what they preach.

In choosing the abortion as the pivotal event in his novel, García Hortelano must have known that he was broaching a subject that would immediately worry the censor; as Pérez notes, it was unthinkable in Francoist Spain to “attempt to publish writings favoring divorce, abortion, birth control [...]” (“Fascist Models” 74). The 1959 censor’s report for *Nuevas amistades* indeed states that the author is required to remove two short phrases from the novel “por aparecer como justificación del aborto.”<sup>249</sup> The first phrase pertains to a conversation in which Gregorio asks Emilia for her moral opinion on performing abortions: “¿Cree que las mujeres deben tener el hijo que llevan dentro?” Emilia’s original response was: “Sí. O quizá, no. No pienso mucho en ello. Si pueden mantenerle” (206); however, the censor requested the removal of “Si pueden mantenerle.” The other sentence that was to be removed was: “Actuáis en legítima defensa. No tenéis derecho a perder vuestra libertad, vuestras familias y vuestra reputación. No olvido que tienes una hija, Jacinto.”<sup>250</sup>

While the censor thus did not consider the novel to endorse abortion (with the exception of the two deleted sentences), nor can it be said that there is any clear censure of the practice in *Nuevas amistades*, because it is never implied that Pedro and Julia have made an immoral decision. Pérez writes that the religious censors, in addition to making sure that there was no criticism of the Church or the Catholic faith, were also instructed to ensure that “any sins portrayed were punished by fulminating retribution before the text’s conclusion” (“Fascist Models” 74). Nevertheless, it is not clear that there is any kind of “retribution” in *Nuevas amistades* for the sins committed. According to Catholic dogma, these sins include the abortion, as well as the illicit sexual relationship between Pedro and Julia; however, Julia recovers from her ordeal and her relationship with Pedro remains exactly as it was. The sexual activity is, however, only alluded to and never described in the

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<sup>249</sup> The 1959 censor’s report for *Nuevas amistades* was consulted at the Archivo General de la Administración, in Alcalá de Henares in April 2012.

<sup>250</sup> As this phrase has been removed from the published version, and the page numbers differ from those in the censor’s report, it is difficult to tell exactly what the context of this statement was; however, I estimate that it was taken from the argument between Jacinto, Leopoldo and Gregorio on pages 241–42, when Jacinto and Leopoldo insist on calling a doctor for Julia, but Gregorio dismisses the danger she is in and says that if a doctor is called the police will turn up. It is likely that the phrase in question is uttered by Gregorio who is trying to convince Jacinto that the protection of his reputation justifies not only his complicity in the abortion, but also their failure to seek help.

novel, as García Hortelano would have known that such themes were more straightforward for the censor to spot in a text and could cause major problems with publication.<sup>251</sup>

It is significant that García Hortelano's social commentary in the novel—that is, the critique of the apathy and injustice in Franco's Spain—was not identified as such by the censors, because, with the exception of those references to the abortion, the rest of the text is approved despite its controversial themes. The censor summarises his report saying that it is “un relato en el sentido irónico de la vida de esos jovencitos” and thus notes the ‘irony’ in García Hortelano's novel; however, he probably believes it to be directed simply at the flippant bourgeois ‘kids’ depicted, without recognising how the group and the story reflect on the regime itself. The fact that the protagonists are referred to as “jovencitos,” or ‘kids’ is perhaps meaningful, as it suggests that the subject matter is not deemed important or noteworthy, with little or no potential to be considered subversive. As is the case for all of the novels studied in this thesis, the censor's oversight can also be explained by the fact that the critical message is implicit in the objective realist narrative, but is never expressly spelled out. It is also possible that the censor was distracted from the underlying subversive portrait of Spain by the novel's focus on the blatantly controversial issue of abortion, because, as has become evident in all the case studies so far, in practice, sexual and moral themes attracted the censor's attention more easily than social or political critique. The essentially arbitrary nature of censorship in the postwar period should also be stressed yet again: much depended on who the censor was (one with a political or religious focus, for example), and whether the author had any connections that could be utilised to avoid problems with censorship (Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes* 46).<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> It is also worth noting that when *Nuevas amistades* was adapted for the cinema in 1963, the film had an official moral rating of 4 points, considered “gravemente peligrosa” (“Juan García Hortelano: Obra. Adaptaciones”).

<sup>252</sup> Although there is no evidence that this was the case, García Hortelano worked for a government department himself, and it is, of course, possible that he had a contact on the censorship board. There is evidence, for example, that García Hortelano used his privileged position as a public servant to meet with other members of the Communist party and to share Communist publications such as *Mundo Obrero* and *Revolución y cultura* (López Salinas 46).

Finally, in the case of *Nuevas amistades*, it could also be argued that the topic of the abortion and the related events were not more closely scrutinised by the censor because the reader learns in the last chapter, at the same time as the characters, that the procedure was a sham and that Julia was never actually pregnant. It is possible that this ending allowed the novel to be inconclusive enough around the controversial issue of abortion, although the illicit sexual relationship between Julia and Pedro remained unchanged. The censor mentions this final twist in the plot only in passing (“Resuelta luego que no hay tal”) and this argument is thus impossible to substantiate; however, the fact that García Hortelano chooses to make the central premise of the novel turn out to be false is intriguing, and deserves a brief discussion. The fraud was made possible because it was Emilia who both confirmed the pregnancy after examining a urine sample from Julia and then performs the ‘operation’—in reality doing no more than creating a superficial wound that would cause the patient sufficient discomfort to believe that an abortion had been performed. Perhaps the author intended the revelation of the fraud to highlight the senselessness of the whole situation and the ignorance of the young people who, as a result of a conservative Catholic education, have little idea of how an abortion is performed and unquestioningly accept Emilia’s explanation for the external wound, which she describes as “un descuido” (209). Despite the fact that the procedure performed on Julia was not a real abortion, she, in addition to being psychologically-scarred by her experience, will also be left with a scar on her body that she will not be able to hide, leaving her, in a sense, a stigmatised ‘marked woman.’

For the rest of the group, however, everything returns to ‘normal’ when it is confirmed that Julia is not in danger and, crucially, when the novel ends, nothing has changed at all. Instead of feeling anger about the scam performed by Emilia, they are relieved that everything remains exactly as it was before Julia’s supposed pregnancy and celebrate their lucky escape, having learned absolutely nothing from the ordeal. Gregorio’s internal monologue illustrates that they will continue to live the same pointless life: “Volvería a buscar a Lupe, a jugar al ‘poker,’ a acumular desconcierto, a besar a Meyes, a charlar con Neca, a acechar a Carmen en el recodo del pasillo” (262). In an interview, García Hortelano explained that this return to



'normal' at the end of the novel was deliberate in order to illustrate the impossibility of change under the Franco regime: "[...] tienen que quedar en lo que son, porque en este país todo queda en lo que es, o sea, que no pasa nada. De alguna manera hay que contar que no pasa nada" (Campbell 262). As demonstrated in other chapters in this thesis, this idea of the impossibility of change and a sense of social stagnation and cyclical time is a recurring theme in social realist literature. In my chapter on Aldecoa's *El fulgor y la sangre*, I highlighted the irony of the depiction of stagnation in contrast to the Francoist concept of permanence and atemporality; just as Aldecoa subverted these ideas, García Hortelano's 'static' time is no glorious eternity either, but an endless cycle of cigarettes, *gin-fizzes* and meaningless conversations.

The young *burgueses* at the centre of *Nuevas amistades* embody the political and social apathy on which the Franco regime depended in order to maintain its authoritarian control in Spain; however, they prove themselves to be equally vulnerable to the social and political limitations of traditional society as the other social groups analysed in this thesis. Gregorio, Leopoldo and their friends are a direct product of Franco's economic and social policies, as well as the increasing economic prosperity and consumer culture of late-1950s Spain, which, I have argued, distracted the population from their lack of social and political freedom; García Hortelano's critical portrait of the group thus necessarily also entails a political critique of the regime. In contrast to the central group's social indifference and ignorance of the past, I suggest that Juan represents the author's own social commitment, and that of the other mid-century intellectuals who turned against their conservative backgrounds, a break which I have framed in terms of Mangini's 'generation gap.' Social issues related to gender, oddly previously overlooked in a novel in which the central premise is a pregnancy and abortion, are key in *Nuevas amistades*. I argue that the use of the abortion in the plot is meaningful because the issue is one that has significant implications for women in postwar Spain, given that it was so closely linked to key values of the regime, such as motherhood and pronatalism, which had become political issues under Franco. The way Julia's 'pregnancy' is handled in the novel highlights the moral hypocrisy of society and the *doble moralidad* in relation to premarital sex. As illustrated in the novel, abortion was

illegal but was very prevalent, partly due to economic difficulties, but also as a result of the state's paradoxical values in which motherhood was glorified, but unmarried mothers shunned by society; even Julia, despite her wealth and social position, is powerless when it comes to her unplanned pregnancy. While the upper-class women appear to lead liberal and independent lives, embodying the postwar stereotype of the *niña topolino*, they continue to be bound by society's expectations of them as women—to remain chaste before marriage, to look for a husband—perhaps even more so than those of the lower classes, because they must uphold their 'decent' reputations. The censor requested several deletions to ensure there was no 'justification' of abortion in the novel, but otherwise, missed the social critique of the regime, its ruling classes and the harmful gender power imbalance in the novel that I have discussed in this chapter. For the last chapter of this thesis, we leave the Madrid of the late 1950s and return to provincial pre-war Spain because Dolores Medio's *Diario de una maestra*, chronologically the latest of the five selected novels, initially takes the reader back to Oviedo in 1935.

## Chapter Six

### **“Escaping” the Censor: The Second Republic, the Civil War and Francoism in Dolores Medio’s *Diario de una maestra* (1961)**

Dolores Medio’s *Diario de una maestra* tells the story of Irene Gal, a young schoolteacher in rural Asturias, recounting her experiences from the last year of the Second Republic, through the Civil War and then during the first decade of the Franco dictatorship. *Diario de una maestra* is not particularly well-known in Spain today; however, it makes a valuable addition to this study of the postwar Spanish novel because it broaches a number of significant topics that have not yet been discussed in this thesis, such as the teaching profession in both Republican and Francoist Spain, and the postwar professional *depuraciones*. Issues that have arisen in my analysis of the other novels, such as the experiences of women in wartime and female sexuality in the context of conservative postwar norms, are also significant in Medio’s text. *Diario de una maestra* is also of particular interest because it had a relatively difficult experience with censorship, giving insight into the peculiarities of the way the censorship process worked in postwar Spain.

Despite the fact that Medio was at least ten years older than the writers who are commonly included in the *generación de medio siglo*, having been born in Oviedo in 1911, she can unequivocally be included in the postwar literary generation as she did not publish her first novel, *Nosotros, los Rivero*, until 1952. In contrast to her contemporaries, who had been very young in the 1930s, Medio therefore experienced the war and the turbulent years of the Second Republic as a young woman, a subject that will be returned to later in this chapter. Her childhood in Oviedo was somewhat unsettled: Medio’s father, who had made his fortune in America before she was born, first suffered some major economic setbacks and then died in 1924 leaving his wife and three daughters dependent on relatives. Later, Medio worked as a tutor to fund her own training as a teacher and, from 1930, worked as a schoolteacher in rural Asturias until war broke out in 1936. The rest of

Medio's biography will be commented on in conjunction with Irene's story in the novel, as it is at this point that the author's biography appears to generally coincide with the plot of *Diario de una maestra*.<sup>253</sup>

The novel opens in Oviedo in 1935 with a scene narrated from the perspective of Máximo Sáenz, an academic teaching a class on modern education theory at the university. While Max lectures, he notices an attractive young woman (Irene) in the front row; she approaches Max after the class to ask a question and the two start a relationship (at this point the narrative voice begins to adopt Irene's perspective). Irene is studying to become a schoolteacher and, later that same year, she receives her first posting to a small village school in La Estrada. Although apprehensive at first, she soon finds herself enjoying the challenge of the rural school and chooses to stay, despite Max's wish for her to join him in Madrid. In the summer of the following year, the breakout of the Civil War catches Irene in Oviedo, which was under siege for the first part of the war. She learns that Max has been jailed by the Nationalists for his political affiliations and eventually manages to locate him in a prison in a distant village in western Asturias; however, a family friend, now a Nationalist soldier, intervenes and ensures that Irene is escorted back to Oviedo. She returns briefly to work in La Estrada, which has recently been 'liberated' by the rebels, but is dismissed by the new authorities as a result of her alleged political connections. For the remainder of the war, Irene works wherever she can to survive and to be able to send essentials to Max in prison. It is not until 1943 that she is finally reinstated at the school, where she must help the children, and the community as a whole, to overcome the painful consequences of the war. Throughout the years, Irene remains faithful to Max, sending him packages and letters—and even rejecting a proposal from a wealthy man for whom she feels a strong attraction—but when Max is released from prison in 1949, he has lost his political idealism and tells Irene that he plans to marry a wealthy woman who can support him financially. Irene is heartbroken and is on the verge of committing

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<sup>253</sup> For detailed biographical information on the author, see Ruiz Arias, López Alonso and Jones, *Dolores Medio*.

suicide, but is called back by one of her young pupils, Bibiana, and returns with her to the village.

Medio is often glossed over in accounts of postwar Spanish literature,<sup>254</sup> and is usually described as a marginal social realist writer who employs a realist style but whose work is generally classified as ‘testimonial’ rather than socially-committed.<sup>255</sup> The ‘personal’ nature of *Diario de una maestra* is considered to prevent the novel from having any sociopolitical significance. Alborg, for example, argues that “[e]l predominio de la anécdota amorosa, si por un lado robustece las condiciones novelescas del libro, limita por otro la trascendencia y amplitud que pudo haber alcanzado [...]” (*Hora actual* II 347–48). Medio’s work has, nevertheless, been reasonably popular with critics, particularly female scholars, in recent decades.<sup>256</sup> These studies focus primarily on the relationship between Irene and Max and the development of Irene’s character; many also discuss the evidently autobiographical elements present in the text. The sociopolitical context of the novel has, however, generally been neglected by scholars. Margaret Jones, for example, who has written a number of articles, as well as a 1974 book dedicated exclusively to Dolores Medio, believes that the historical context of *Diario de una maestra* “take[s] second place to the examination of Irene Gal, woman and teacher” (97). Carmen Ruiz Arias classifies the novel as “[una] historia de amor, o mejor, de desamor” (113), although she later also acknowledges the denunciatory character of the novel. Lucía Montejo Gurruchaga, on the other hand, describes *Diario de una maestra* as an example of a purely ‘social realist’ novel: “Es una novela social en el más estricto sentido del

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<sup>254</sup> Jordan (*Writing and Politics* 26) and Mangini (*Rojos y rebeldes* 73) both refer to Medio only once and very briefly. Antonio Vilanova dedicates three pages to Medio, but refers only to her first novel, *Nosotros, los Rivero*. Sanz Villanueva briefly discusses only *Funcionario público* in his 1980 overview (*Historia* 686–73), while in his more recent work, he dedicates only a short paragraph to the author (*La novela española* 161). García Viñó lists only two of Medio’s novels and describes her as a “novelista sobrevalorada en su momento” (*La novela española* 89).

<sup>255</sup> Jordan, for example, includes Medio in a group of writers “whose work reflects the impact of the *novela social* [but] none the less remain ideologically at the margins of the trend, if not opposed to it” (*Writing and Politics* 26). Sanz Villanueva writes that her work “*se aproxima al realismo de corte social*” (*La novela española* 161; italics added). Juan Ignacio Ferreras classifies Medio’s work as ‘traditional realism’ (158), while Sobejano includes Medio in his chapter on the “*novela existencial*” of the immediate postwar years, despite the fact that she did not start publishing until the 1950s (*Novela española contemporánea* 13). Medio is discussed briefly in Gil Casado’s study of the *novela social*, but he alludes only to her 1956 novel, *Funcionario público* (129–30).

<sup>256</sup> In the Introduction, I referred to a wave of interest in postwar female writers and the feminist themes in their work; much of the scholarship on Medio’s work can be attributed to that trend.

término. En ella, [...] la narradora adopta una postura política e ideológica y, con actitud crítica y de denuncia, relata la situación política y social que un amplio sector de la población padece en la España de preguerra y posguerra” (*Discurso de autora* 138–39). However, this statement does not really reflect the content of her study, as she details this “postura política e ideológica” only very briefly, citing a few general examples in a footnote where she explains what the censor has ‘missed’ in the novel:

Resulta sorprendente que no llamaran la atención del censor la ruptura y transgresión de mitos fundamentales de la España de posguerra. No sufrieron mutilaciones párrafos en los que se abogaba por el trabajo de la mujer fuera del hogar, se defendía una enseñanza laica, liberal e igualitaria, se denunciaba la penosa situación de los presos políticos tras la victoria del régimen franquista, y se apoyaba la orientación ideológica de la España de la República.” (“Dolores Medio” 221, fn 16)

While I agree with Montejo Gurruchaga’s summary, I will discuss with evidence and examples the ways in which *Diario de una maestra* provides such criticism and I will argue that it is difficult to label *Diario de una maestra* as typically ‘social realist.’ Analysis of this novel requires a broader approach which includes not only the more overtly ideological elements of the narrative, but also incorporates the love story and Irene’s working life as integral elements of the overall critical portrait.

Given that the narrative initially takes the reader back to 1935, I will begin by examining Medio’s portrayal of the pre-Francoist past: this includes, firstly, the last year of the Second Republic, in relation to which I discuss Irene and Max’s ideology and theories on education and their reactions to the key political events of that year; and secondly, the three years of the Spanish Civil War, the depiction of which will be explored in terms of Irene’s supposed ‘neutrality’ throughout the conflict, as well as her experience of the war as a woman. With reference to the postwar period, I will discuss the historical context of the political *depuraciones* and the significance of Irene’s philosophy of tolerance and forgiveness in the Spanish postwar context. Throughout the novel, Irene’s life is affected by the conservative gender norms of

Spanish society and I will examine the ways in which she negotiates these as an unmarried professional woman who is involved in an extramarital sexual relationship. Finally, although I speculate throughout the chapter as to the possible methods of self-censorship Medio may have employed, I will also analyse how the novel was received by the censor in 1960 and discuss the implications of the censor's comments.

About a third of *Diario de una maestra* is set during the Second Republic before the outbreak of war in July 1936. As Herzberger has argued, the depiction of the past in literature written under Franco can always be considered subversive, irrespective of its ideological stance, because it inherently challenges the regime's attempt to control the "discourse of myth" in relation to Spain's history, as I have shown in my discussion of *La noria* and *El fulgor y la sangre*.<sup>257</sup> In particular, the depiction of the Republic was an undertaking that required some delicacy, as I discussed in my chapter on Aldecoa. Under Franco, school children learned that "[l]a República supone la «concentración de todos los enemigos de nuestra Patria. Comunismo y separatismos. Incendios de Iglesias y de conventos. Desgobierno. Frente Popular. Anarquía. Crimen. Asesinato. En una palabra: triunfo de la Anti-España». El país «no puede respirar, España se asfixia, España va a morir...»" (Valls, *La enseñanza* 63),<sup>258</sup> and any contradiction of such an outlook could be objected to by the censor. Medio's previous experience with censorship, particularly that of her first novel, *Nosotros, los Rivero*, had taught her that there were many aspects of the Republican era that could not be discussed freely in a postwar novel.<sup>259</sup> However, despite being conscious of the dangers surrounding the representation of this period, she openly alludes to Republican ideals and a number of key political issues in *Diario de una maestra*.

Much of the narrative set in 1935 is dedicated to the development of Irene and Max's relationship and Irene's work in the village school, thus appearing at first to be largely personal in nature; however, both of these focal stories are actually

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<sup>257</sup> See Herzberger "History as Power" and *Narrating the Past*.

<sup>258</sup> Fernando Valls (*La enseñanza*) cites G. Ginés Grao's 1942 study, *España: Una, Grande, Libre*.

<sup>259</sup> A comparison between the experiences of censorship of *Nosotros, los Rivero* and *Diario de una maestra* will be made later in this chapter.

intimately linked to the values of the Republic. Irene and Max's relationship, for example, is initiated because Max is lecturing at the University of Oviedo about the progressive education techniques employed in the United States and elsewhere in Europe. The move away from traditional, religious education in Spain was central to the Republican philosophy and Irene, although she initially uses her interest in applying these theories to Spanish village schools as an excuse to speak to Max, is genuinely passionate about liberal and progressive educational practices.<sup>260</sup>

Education was central to Republican ideology because, as confirmed by Stanley Payne, "a progressive Republic depended on enlightenment as imparted and guaranteed by secular public schools" (*Spain's First Democracy* 86). The Republican period was sometimes known as "la República de los profesores," not only because of the central role that intellectuals and university professors played in the government, but also on account of the prioritisation of education and the belief that "sólo un pueblo sólidamente formado era garantía del progreso social y de la consolidación política del nuevo régimen" (Morente Valero, "La muerte" 187). In order to be able to provide a free and secular education for all Spanish children, thousands of new schools were built, many new teachers were trained and educated Spaniards were encouraged to join the teaching profession by a rise in the minimum salary. The secularisation of education was to be achieved by closing all Catholic schools and banning members of the clergy from regular educational instruction (Payne, *Spain's First Democracy* 84).<sup>261</sup>

As discussed briefly in relation to *El fulgor y la sangre*, Republican educational policy was particularly aimed at spreading education and 'cultural enlightenment' to rural and remote areas; the Patronato de Misiones Pedagógicas therefore sent the best young teachers to isolated villages; indeed, Irene recalls Max saying that: "los mejores maestros deben ir a las peores escuelas" (24). However, as illustrated in Medio's novel, the reality of applying the new policies in these villages was far removed from Republican theory: most of the young teachers sent out were women,

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<sup>260</sup> See, for example, Max and Irene's discussion in Medio, *Diario de una maestra* (1976), 52–57—all in-text page references to the novel will refer to this edition.

<sup>261</sup> For more information on Republican education reforms, see Payne, *Spain's First Democracy* 86–90 and Morente Valero, *La escuela* 57–68.



and many (such as Irene) were not yet twenty years old; yet they were not only charged with the education of children who had traditionally barely attended school,<sup>262</sup> but also had to ‘take on’ the traditional forces in the rural areas who were loath to accept the new, revolutionary Republican education methods. The clash between old and new in the arena of the classroom was very much political:

Por aquellos días las nuevas corrientes pedagógicas, inspiradas en ideales de renovación y libertad, trataban de hendir rutinas seculares; y cualquier innovación de esta índole [...] adquiriría en aquel momento el carácter de un proceder rebelde, inconformista y heterodoxo, frente a las normas petrificadas que se estimaban intangibles. Por lo que toda reforma llevaba, generalmente, aparejada en sus defensores una posición ideológica de tendencia radical. Cualquier avance o pretensión de cambio, crítica o mejora—fuera acertada o no—soplaba siempre [...] desde posiciones de la izquierda. (Alborg, *Hora actual II* 345)

The young teachers thus found themselves at the centre of a highly political confrontation. In the novel, the ideological conflict is embodied in the contrast between Irene and señora Obaya, the very traditional royalist teacher who, having taught the children of the village for three generations, has become a central figure in the community and, along with the priest and the wealthy señora Campa, is considered to comprise the *fuerzas vivas* of the village. Señora Obaya’s teaching style epitomised the antiquated school system that the Republic intended to abolish: she used corporal punishment liberally—“la letra con sangre entra” (26)—and the crucifix and illustrations of Spain’s *Historia Sagrada* had taken pride of place in her classroom until the Republic forced her to remove them.

Given that the goal of Republican education was ultimately to “formar ciudadanos y no súbditos” (Morente Valero, *La escuela* 56), Irene rejects señora

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<sup>262</sup> In the novel, the mayor of La Estrada is charged with ensuring school attendance and he has declared that there will be fines and sanctions for parents who do not send their children to school (22).

Obaya's outmoded methods, shunning traditional rote learning in her classroom and instead making the learning environment more practical, conducting lessons outside and setting up a "Reforma Agraria" (a garden and small farm to which the children tend) (79). Irene discards the fifty-year-old textbooks and orders new books from the Patronato, including classics by writers such as Lope de Vega, Calderón and Cervantes, and also works by modern writers such as Juan Ramón Jiménez, the Machado brothers, García Lorca and Rafael Alberti. This list of writers is, in fact, hugely significant from the Francoist perspective because all of the modern group were strongly associated with Republican Spain (all but Manuel Machado either died during the war or were forced into exile). Their work was banned in postwar Spain and, in the early years of the regime, their names could not even be mentioned in newspapers, magazines and books (Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes* 15).<sup>263</sup> Interestingly, Lorca was also associated with the "Barraca" theatre company that Irene wants to bring to the village (34), a company established in the Republican years with the aim of bringing classical Spanish theatre to rural Spain (Vincent 123).

During their time together, Irene and Max debate the triumphs and struggles of the Republican years, especially during Christmas 1935, just prior to the 1936 election.<sup>264</sup> Despite the fact that the Second Republic was, and still is, often idealised by opponents of the Franco regime, it was a politically unstable and complex period, as outlined in Chapter One. *Diario de una maestra* opens on 22 May 1935, the fourth year of the Republic in Spain. In 1934, the elections had been won by CEDA, a right-wing coalition, and the Asturian miners' strike had been brutally suppressed by the military with help from North African troops.<sup>265</sup> The working classes were frustrated that conditions had not improved sufficiently, the liberals were unhappy with the CEDA government, and the traditional conservatives, including the Catholic Church

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<sup>263</sup> Perhaps, by the time that *Diario de una maestra* was presented to the censors in 1961, this fanaticism had subsided somewhat, as the censor does not object to the reference to these authors. However, it is also possible, of course, that due to the prohibition of these writers in the postwar period, those censors who had been educated after the war were simply not aware of the significance of the names listed. García Hortelano, for example, said in an interview with Rosa María Pereda that he had not even heard of Federico García Lorca until 1945 when a university friend introduced him to Lorca's poetry (Pereda 38) although *Diario de una maestra* was submitted to the censor fifteen years later.

<sup>264</sup> Irene is, however, more interested in such discussions than Max, who does not really see Irene as an intellectual companion. The implications of Max's attitude towards Irene will be discussed in the section on gender later in this chapter.

<sup>265</sup> For more information on the Asturias Revolution of 1934, see H. Thomas 130–36.

and some sectors of the military, amongst others, were firmly opposed to the idea of the democratic Republic in principle.

In the novel, the political complexity of the Second Republic is clear, and Max demonstrates a realistic perspective on both its shortcomings and achievements. Although he supports the Frente Popular and is politically liberal (he has even considered standing for election (53)), Max is also pragmatic, wondering what has happened to the 'freedom' that was supposed to be at the core of Republican values (54), and criticising the uprisings against the CEDA government. He suggests that if the Frente Popular wins the next elections, the right-wing will also be entitled to rebel: "De este modo, si el Frente Popular gana las elecciones y deshace la labor de este bienio, si castiga a los que reprimieron la sublevación, ellos estarán también en su derecho tirándose a la calle como protesta" (53). Of course, Max's pre-war political commentary demonstrates great foresight if the reader considers it with the knowledge of what occurred in Spain after 1936. He criticises the left for their lack of respect for the democratic process, thereby endangering the existence of the Republic; ultimately, the forces on the right did just as Max predicted, using violence to oppose the elected government when they disagreed on ideology and, in that particular case, provoking a three-year civil war.

Despite this political wariness, Max is optimistic about progress in areas such as women's working rights and education, declaring that one day, not so far in the future, the existence of separate schools for the rich and poor will seem absurd: "Tan absurdo y tan inmoral como nos parece hoy la esclavitud" (56).<sup>266</sup> Ironically, just a few years later under the dictatorship, this type of segregated education again became the norm.<sup>267</sup> Max's belief in convincing people of the importance of equality in education, rather than imposing the idea on society—"Vencer, imponerse, es fácil. Convencer, no es tan sencillo. Nuestra verdad triunfará, pero a costa de tiempo, de sacrificio..." (56)—can also be construed as a wry remark on the way in which the Franco regime operated when it assumed power, as "vencer" and "imponer" were

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<sup>266</sup> This belief is later echoed by Irene (72–73).

<sup>267</sup> During the Franco dictatorship, due to the insufficient funds dedicated to public education, quality education was reserved for the wealthier classes who could afford to send their children to private, religious schools (Cazorla Sánchez 91). The subject of the decline in the quality of education in the postwar era will be returned to later in this chapter.

central to Franco's methodology. Additionally, the juxtaposition of the words "vencer" and "convencer" would have immediately reminded the reader of Unamuno's famous anti-Nationalist statement: "Venceréis, pero no convenceréis."<sup>268</sup>

As for Irene's ideological beliefs, given her training and professed devotion to educational reform, it can be presumed that she is a Republican.<sup>269</sup> It is, however, difficult to separate Irene's commitment to the ideals of the Republic from that of Max, as she often appears to look up to him as an ideological leader, describing him at one point as "uno de esos hombres extraordinarios que surgen de vez en cuando en los pueblos para conducirlos a su destino"(18).<sup>270</sup> Ordóñez argues that Irene's ideological commitment is dependent on Max, writing that Irene "hopes to become Max's 'helper,' to be auxiliary to him in his role as hero crusading to infuse liberal ideology into the stodgy educational system of pre-Civil War Spain. She does not view her mission as independent from his" ("*Diario de una maestra*" 54). I disagree with Ordóñez on this point, because Irene challenges Max's ideals on a number of occasions, particularly at Christmas 1935 when she reproaches him for losing his idealism and warns him that the 'conservatives' may win the 'battle' (52–57); however, her views are at times contradictory and she appears to be uncertain when it comes to categorising or defining her own beliefs.

While, in the classroom, Irene is determined to "hacer la revolución" (29), her lack of interest in politics is emphasised in the novel: she wonders if she has a specific political ideology, thinking that her beliefs "tal vez no se ajuste[n] a ningún patrón político determinado" (68). Furthermore, Irene's liberal attitude towards her

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<sup>268</sup> The full quotation is: "Venceréis, pero no convenceréis. Venceréis porque tenéis sobrada fuerza bruta, pero no convenceréis porque convencer significa persuadir." This phrase was used by Unamuno in a confrontation with Millán Astray, the commander of the Spanish Foreign Legion, at the University of Salamanca in October 1936. Despite having initially supported the rebellion in July of that year, Unamuno had turned against the rebels, and following this public speech was kept under house arrest in Salamanca, where he died a few months later ("Venceréis, pero no convenceréis").

<sup>269</sup> It should be noted that, although the common assumption that *all* schoolteachers during this period supported the Republican government and its reforms is false, it is safe to assume that the vast majority of the young teachers trained under the auspices of the Plan Profesional were enthusiastic about the reforms, and were committed both to the idea of education as the key element in social change and to the Republic (Morente Valero, "La muerte" 189–90). For more information on the Plan Profesional and the new teacher training schemes implemented during the Republican years, see Morente Valero, *La escuela* 64–66.

<sup>270</sup> Ironically, the idea of one man leading the people to their destiny was familiar rhetoric from the Francoist era.

premarital relationship, and her enthusiasm for equality in education, are contrasted with the conservatism she demonstrates when Timoteo confronts her with the mating cattle: “En este momento, Irene Gal piensa que los pueblos deberían estar gobernados por un dictador, con un garrote de hierro en la mano. Que las cárceles deberían multiplicarse, que debería haber policías por todas partes [...]” (32–33). The critics, accordingly, disagree on how to classify Irene’s political convictions: Montejo Gurruchaga refers to Irene’s “ideología republicana, su enseñanza innovadora, sus ideales de renovación y libertad [...]” (“Dolores Medio” 220), while Carolyn Galerstein argues that Max has only indoctrinated her with his progressive teaching methods, not his politics (although she does briefly mention that this may be a form of self-censorship) (47). The possibility that Medio is deliberately vague about her protagonist’s political orientation for reasons of censorship will be returned to later in this chapter.

Despite Irene’s own doubts as to her political orientation, the conservatives in the village have no qualms in labelling the teacher as “revolucionaria, como inmoral, como ultramodernista...” (50) and as a ‘communist’ because she has brought modern education to the village (69–70). Frustratingly for Irene, she is regarded with just as much suspicion by the leftist workers in La Estrada who feel that, with her “Reforma Agraria” at the school, “la señorita de la ciudad les obligue a trabajar para que no olviden que son los parias, que han de ser siempre los parias...” (84) and that, because she works for the Republic, she should be on their side: “¿O no le paga un sueldo la República para que se ponga al lado del pueblo?” (71).<sup>271</sup> Within the village, it is to Irene’s advantage to deliberately adopt a ‘neutral’ political stance in order to avoid upsetting either the left or the right, difficult as this may be. When the villagers ask her to help with the elections in early 1936, for example, she politely refuses, saying that she cannot be involved because she cannot vote (72).<sup>272</sup> Irene’s

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<sup>271</sup> Galerstein points out that the divides between Irene and the villagers are not only political, or perceived as political, in any case, but that the friction also pertains to the rural/urban divide: “The townspeople see Irene as an alien intruder, a representative of a political and social system they view as primarily urban, inappropriate and inimical to their traditional, rural, Catholic ways” (47).

<sup>272</sup> Although women were granted the vote for the first time ever in Spain by the Second Republican government, it applied only to those twenty-three years and older (Keene 325).

'neutrality' will continue to be stressed during the section of the novel relating to the Civil War.

From the last pre-war 'diary entry'<sup>273</sup> on 6 June 1936, the narrative jumps to 5 October 1936, almost three months into the Civil War. We find Irene wandering the streets of Oviedo, amidst flying bullets and dropping bombs, trying to discover what has happened to Max. While *El fulgor y la sangre* contained brief snippets describing the war, the other novels in this thesis refer only in passing to the war and always from the perspective of the present; in *Diario de una maestra*, on the other hand, Medio dedicates at least 58 pages to Irene's experience of the war. It is likely that Medio's inclination to include a direct account of the Civil War in her work was greater than that of other mid-century writers because, as mentioned briefly already, she had experienced the events as an adult, and the conflict had a profound impact on her life. Indeed, de la Fuente compares Medio to other female postwar novelists and writes that: "En Martín Gaité, Matute e incluso [Josefina] Aldecoa el peso biográfico de la guerra no es tan determinante como en Medio, tal vez porque ninguna de ellas fue alcanzada por la lucha fratricida de forma tan directa" (256); similarly, Covadonga López Alonso believes that Medio's rather pessimistic view of the world, and the meaning of all of Medio's work, has its roots in her experience of the Civil War (14). In this section, I will argue that the author manages to write about the war in such great detail, without causing concern for the censor, by presenting it from the 'neutral' perspective of Irene, despite the fact that the situation did not often allow for neutrality.

The apolitical views that Irene professed before the war continue to characterise her position during the conflict, when she starts describing herself as naive, politically ignorant and puzzled by what is going on around her: "Ocurría algo extraño, indudablemente. Algo que nadie sabía determinar. Se hablaba de un Alzamiento militar. ¿Otro levantamiento? ¿Algo parecido a los sucesos revolucionarios del 34?..." (87). The narrator repeatedly emphasises Irene's neutral position, describing her as an outsider looking in, as if she is completely removed

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<sup>273</sup> The effect of presenting the novel as a diary, and the question of whether the term 'diary' accurately describes the narrative, is beyond the scope of this chapter; for a discussion of these issues, see de la Fuente 241, and Caamano Alegre 305–306.

from the siege of Oviedo, despite the bombing and the ruins all around her: “Parece como si lo que sucede no sucediese en torno suyo, en un mundo real, con hombres vivos, con dolores vivos, sino en un tablado de marionetas y ella contemplara el espectáculo desde fuera” (87). Although the implication is that Irene is only concerned for Max’s well-being, and therefore not fully aware of everything that is occurring around her, it is also possible that this was a technique employed by the author in order to avoid some complex and potentially contentious historical explanations.<sup>274</sup> By January 1937, Irene appears to have mentally processed the situation and lists the political compositions of both sides, the “ROJOS” and the “FASCISTAS,” but again, the narrator reiterates that Irene has no political opinion, that she is guided only by her emotions (111).<sup>275</sup>

Irene is able to present herself as a ‘neutral’ outsider, who can avoid stating an ideological preference for either side, largely because she is a woman. Even in the midst of the violence, such as the bombing and gunfire that Irene witnesses in Oviedo and on her travels around Asturias searching for Max, the woman’s perspective of war is the passive one of the victim. During wartime, Spanish women, like Irene, are, according to Pérez, “observadores de la vida (y de la muerte), [...], relegados a un segundo plano en tal ‘asunto de hombres’” (“A manera de introducción” 8).<sup>276</sup> Most importantly, it is difficult for the woman’s perspective on war, since she is essentially a victim, and not a soldier, to be glorious, or to be portrayed as a crusade; instead, “[tiene] mucho de sinsentido o contrasentido existencial, angustioso” (Pérez, “A manera de introducción” 11). Indeed, Irene is

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<sup>274</sup> In any case, it is difficult to determine an ideological position on the siege of Oviedo: on the one hand, it was the rebels who had taken over the city against the legitimate government and, by refusing to give in to the Republican forces surrounding the city, were causing misery and hunger for the civilian population trapped there. On the other hand, however, it was the Republicans who were dropping bombs and attacking Oviedo. For more information on the Siege of Oviedo, see H. Thomas 25 and 371–72.

<sup>275</sup> The fact that the female is, somewhat stereotypically, motivated by her emotions, will be explored further in the gender section of this chapter.

<sup>276</sup> The ‘women’s perspective’ of the war is, however, just as valuable an account as that of the participants themselves: while we think of war narratives as being those accounts from the front line of the great battles, Pérez describes the women’s viewpoint as the “perspectiva de la mayoría” because it is also that of children, the elderly and others on the rearguard (“A manera de introducción” 8). Galerstein argues that the perspective from the rearguard, such as Irene’s, was actually much clearer and more revealing: “[B]eing behind the lines, in besieged cities, traveling dangerous roads in an effort to locate family and loved ones, gave women such as Medio a distinctive view of the war” (50).

more dismayed at the senseless waste of young lives than she is devoted to any cause: “[E]s cosa triste que estos muchachos jóvenes y optimistas, llenos de vida, tengan que enfrentarse con otros hombres, también jóvenes y ansiosos de vivir, que militan en el Ejército de la República” (110). Despite Irene’s strength of character and the fact that she was, in María Elena Soliño’s words, a “strong intelligent woman who had revolutionized a town,” she finds herself “now helpless in a man’s war” (32). For Galerstein, the powerlessness of women during war is most clearly illustrated in the passage where Irene’s old family friend, José Vallés, now a Nationalist soldier, informs her that she is going to be escorted back to Oviedo to be with her family, “since that is the logical place for any unmarried woman” (49).

While Irene cannot avoid her return to Oviedo, her behaviour during the war is far from passive; in fact, she has no choice but to be proactive, not only because of her love for Max, but also because she has to ensure her own survival. When Irene learns that Max is being held as a political prisoner, she determines to find him, requiring her to travel across Asturias in military convoys with soldiers in often dangerous situations. Once she has found him, she resolves to stay in the village where he is imprisoned, bringing him food, clean clothes and tobacco when visits are permitted, and continues to send him supplies after she is forced to return to Oviedo. It is at this point, in early 1937, that Irene finds herself completely alone, hungry and penniless in the besieged city and must take action to protect herself. She takes on work as a nurse in a Nationalist hospital in Oviedo, but it is emphasised that this was not an ideological decision because when Irene thinks about how she ended up there, she reflects: “Ni ella lo sabe. Empujada, como siempre, por los acontecimientos” (118–19).<sup>277</sup> She works at the hospital until wartime conditions, that is, the fall of the Frente Norte in October 1937, permit her return to the school in La Estrada. After just a few months, however, Irene is suspended from teaching by the

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<sup>277</sup> If Irene’s work at the hospital were to be read as a commitment to the Nationalist side, the effect is softened by the fact that she cares for the North African soldiers to whom the other girls do not want to attend: “La Sala 10 no tiene servicio. Los moros son sucios... ¡Ah claro... y carecen de atractivo para las muchachas!... Otra cosa son las salas de los oficiales y de los falangistas” (119). For details of the involvement of the North African soldiers, estimated to have numbered between 60,000 to 70,000, in the Spanish Civil War, see de Madariaga. While the Moroccans were infamous for their brutal violence during the war, they can in many ways also be seen as victims because of the way they were coerced into joining the Nationalist army, in addition to the history of their own violent subjugation at the hands of the Spanish occupiers of the Rif (de Madariaga 80–89).



new Nationalist authorities, despite continuing to insist that she is apolitical. She subsequently finds herself homeless and unemployed and resolves to turn to domestic work in order to survive because, most importantly, in order to work as a domestic servant “nadie pide avales. Ni filiación política” (143–44).

Regardless of how we read Irene’s ideological convictions, and whether we consider these to have been misrepresented for reasons of censorship, the real issue for Irene in *Diario de una maestra* is how she is classified politically by those around her. Beatriz Caamano Alegre rightly points out that “[a] pesar de que Gal nunca se haya adherido a ningún partido concreto, la polarización política que sufre el país no entiende de neutralidades” (313). In the extremist state of mind that characterised wartime Spain, even ‘indifference’ was considered “motivo de sospecha” (Ramos Zamora 170). José Vallés, for example, despite Irene’s claims that she is not “enlace de nadie,” tells her firmly: “No eres de los nuestros” (106). Later, Irene has difficulties finding even menial work, because all potential employers ask where she last worked and for references, or a guarantor, because they fear that the enemy “puede infiltrarse por cualquier resquicio y malograr la empresa.” Irene, however, is left severely confused: “Sí, eso es, soy un enemigo... No sé de qué, ni de quién, pero soy un enemigo... Soy una roja...” (140). Fear and suspicion permeate wartime Spain: in Medio’s autobiographical work, *Atrapados en la ratonera*, she reveals that the fear of how her ideology or affiliation could be perceived or misconstrued by others, and thereby lead to a denunciation and arrest, was much greater than the fear of the bombardments that she and her family suffered in Oviedo: “Más temíamos la miseria de un resentimiento o de una envidia, que un bombardeo. Y temíamos bastante a los bombardeos” (73).

Given that other scholars have already thoroughly explored the similarities between Medio’s own life and the story of Irene,<sup>278</sup> it is not necessary to repeat those assertions here; however, in some instances, the author’s autobiography can shed light on aspects of the novel that were perhaps glossed over, or left ambiguous, in anticipation of censorship. As *Atrapados en la ratonera* was published after Franco’s death in 1980, it was not subject to the censorship that Medio’s novel was in 1961,

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<sup>278</sup> See, for example: Jones, *Dolores Medio* 22–33, Olazagasti-Segovia and de Laire Mulgrew.

and the author could therefore freely discuss a number of controversial wartime events that were essentially off-limits to writers during the Francoist era.<sup>279</sup> Firstly, in *Atrapados en la ratonera*, Medio is more open about her political allegiances than is Irene in the novel. The memoirs contain plenty of references to the author's support for the government (Republican) forces during the war: from a project she had completed at university which concluded with the Communist Party's slogan (62), to a map on which she had marked with crosses the provinces that had not fallen to the "sublevados" (hoping to add more crosses to the map eventually (67)), clandestinely meeting with other Republican supporters in besieged Oviedo (56), and often using terms such as "nuestra victoria" (208) and "los nuestros" (56) in reference to the Republican side.<sup>280</sup>

Secondly, the memoirs and other biographical information can shed light on some of the conspicuous gaps in the wartime narrative in *Diario de una maestra*. The most notable of these is the time between the March 1938 entry and that of 1 April 1939 when Franco's victory is declared. In the former entry, Irene is cold, hungry, and desperate in Gijón, but the reader never knows how she survives the rest of the war, only that by April 1939 she has already managed to get a little private tutoring work (147). During the year that is missing from the novel (1938–39), Jones writes that the author "worked at whatever she could find: in a bottling factory, as a maid, or filling out official documents." The author may have felt that these things were of no interest to the reader; however, during this time, Jones indicates that she was also "detained several times for questioning by the authorities" for suspected political affiliations (*Dolores Medio* 25), suggesting that, to the contrary, this period of her life was far from uninteresting, and was perhaps omitted deliberately. Additionally, after April 1939, there is a four-year gap before the next entry in January 1943. The last year of the war and the early 1940s were, of course, the period in which political

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<sup>279</sup> Caamano Alegre also looks at *Atrapados en la ratonera* alongside the novel in her discussion of *Diario de una maestra* because she believes that the "escritos autobiográficos y literarios se complementan entre sí" (303); however, she does not acknowledge that one of the key differences between the texts is that the memoirs were not subject to censorship.

<sup>280</sup> Nevertheless, Medio also demonstrates the same spirit of compassion towards the other side as we will see in Irene in the novel, saying, for example, that she would have felt the same sympathy for the losing side had the Republican forces won the war (*Atrapados* 208). Despite her convictions, after the war, "[h]orrorizada ante una locura colectiva que no comparte, la maestra [Medio] renunciará en adelante a defender sus ideas con un enfoque partidista" (de la Fuente 242).

persecution and postwar poverty and food shortages were at their most severe, and therefore the most controversial period to depict in terms of censorship.

On a wider historical level, one major event that is omitted in Irene's story is the bombing of Guernica in 1937. In *Atrapados en la ratonera*, Medio describes how the aerial bombing of Guernica marked a new chapter in the war and how it sent shockwaves around the world at the time (195).<sup>281</sup> In the novel, however, the events at Guernica are not mentioned at all, despite the significance that the bombing had for those in the north of Spain, near the Frente Norte, during the war. In her memoirs, Medio goes on to describe how Franco, becoming aware of the outrage that the 'criminal' bombing of Guernica had caused around the world, shifted the blame for the incident entirely onto the Basque people "como incendiarios de sus propias tradiciones," and, at the same time, furtively destroyed witness accounts of the bombing and fire in Guernica that had been archived (*Atrapados* 194–95). According to Payne, the bombing of Guernica and the way it was covered up until the 1970s is "an excellent example of the way in which fundamental facts of the Civil War were obscured by the propaganda inventions of both sides" (*The Franco Regime* 141).<sup>282</sup> The controversy and suspicions surrounding the incident likely account for Medio's decision to omit this event from her novel in 1961 as a method of self-censorship, as she similarly omits other Civil War-related events which are described in her later memoirs.

It is not only the Spanish Civil War that serves as a backdrop for *Diario de una maestra*, however, but also the Second World War, the initial events of which begin to escalate shortly after Franco declared his victory in Spain. With continuing political persecutions and a stagnant economy that left many struggling for survival, most Spaniards had other things on their mind in the immediate postwar period; nevertheless, the World War presented yet another ideological issue to divide postwar society. As briefly mentioned in the chapter on Laforet's *Nada*, opponents of the Franco regime hoped for an Allied victory in the Second World War, and anticipated that the victory would be followed by international aid in removing

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<sup>281</sup> For more information on the bombing of Guernica, see H. Thomas 606–11.

<sup>282</sup> As we are referring to a novel in the postwar period, it is, of course, only the Francoist propaganda which is still of relevance.

Franco from power. On the other hand, Franco initially stood firmly behind the Fascist powers who had aided him during the Spanish Civil War, despite being officially 'neutral' and having no resources to contribute, a position which Payne describes as Spain's "tilted neutrality" (*Franco and Hitler* 44–50). However, when towards 1943 it became evident that the Axis powers would eventually lose the war, the regime quickly attempted to distance itself from Hitler and Mussolini, particularly when the terrible truth about what had been occurring in Nazi Germany emerged. Once the details of the Holocaust became known in Europe, and the Third Reich's impending demise became clear, Franco's Spain realised the importance of the opinion of the Allies, particularly the United States, and began to emphasise their—somewhat exaggerated—efforts to repatriate Sephardic Jews during the war (Payne, *Franco and Hitler* 221–35).

In the novel, when Irene is allowed to return to work in La Estrada in 1943, she finds a classroom filled with flags in support of the Axis powers (50). She immediately devises a plan to remove the paraphernalia because she, firstly, believes that a school should not be a political arena and, secondly, foresees that the Spanish people, and particularly the older children at her school, who have maps of the German fronts in their schoolbooks, will soon be ashamed of their support for the fascist powers. She diplomatically asks the children to clear the walls for repainting, sparing them a humiliating capitulation "que en su día pueda perjudicar a la formación moral de los muchachos" (157). For a censor reading the novel in 1961, then, the fact that Irene firmly supported the Allies was not a cause for concern; to the contrary, Medio's inclusion of this particular episode can be considered a wry reminder of an aspect of its past that the regime probably preferred to forget.

Irene's absence from the school until four years after Franco's victory was a result of the professional *depuraciones* carried out during and after the war.<sup>283</sup> The Nationalist Comisiones Depuradoras were set up as early as 1936, and the new government set to work immediately in the provinces where it had successfully taken control to ensure that teachers and other civil servants were loyal to their

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<sup>283</sup> *Depuraciones* were carried out predominantly by the Nationalists, although the Republican side carried out its own process of *depuración* during the Civil War, see Morente Valero, "La muerte" 189–93.

cause and beliefs, discharging those who were suspected of harbouring opposing views.<sup>284</sup> The motivation behind the *depuraciones* was, as Jaume Claret Miranda confirms, three-fold: “[A]demás de castigar al enemigo, repercutía en el sometimiento de los indecisos y en la cohesión de los vencedores” (26).

The process is explained in detail by Morente Valero in his study, *La escuela y el estado nuevo*: the Comisión Depuradora began by asking all teachers to re-apply for their positions, requiring them to give details of their past political and ideological associations, their conduct during the war and the names of referees who could testify to their commitment to the new regime. Those who were deemed to be ideologically infallible were reinstated; others received a *pliego de cargos* outlining their alleged offences. These offences ranged from “*militancia en organizaciones afectas a la República*,” “*ideología de izquierdas*,” “*actitudes contrarias a la causa nacional*” and supporting regional nationalism, to “*irreligiosidad/ateísmo*,” “*planteamientos pedagógicos inaceptables*” and “*conducta privada inmoral*” (279).<sup>285</sup> Teachers were then given another opportunity to respond with evidence and references to disprove the charges made against them, after which the final decision on the teacher’s professional future was made. The most common resolutions were: reinstatement (“*confirmación*”), suspension from the service, temporary suspension of salary, transfer to another province and disqualification from the teaching profession.<sup>286</sup> While Morente Valero notes how remarkably coherent the work of the Comisiones were nationwide, the process itself, relying heavily on personal statements, was often fuelled by fanaticism and personal grievances. Many of the charges brought against teachers “*no se referían a hechos concretos, sino que se limitaban al plano de las ideas, las simpatías y los sentimientos*,” making the accusations almost impossible to disprove and confirming that it was “*un proceso en el que el verdadero sentido de la justicia estaba viciado desde el origen*” (*La escuela* 268–71).

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<sup>284</sup> Irene’s dismissal comes before the official end of the war as the village is in an area that fell to the rebels in 1937.

<sup>285</sup> See Morente Valero, *La escuela* 271–88 for a detailed discussion of the most common charges made against teachers during the process.

<sup>286</sup> See Morente Valero, *La escuela* 331–67 for details of what the sanctions entailed.

Medio's inclusion of Irene's *depuración* in the novel illustrates the pettiness of the process and condemns the excessive measures undertaken by the regime in the name of ideological purity. The charges brought against Irene in 1938 are not specified, although she suspects that someone, probably the ultra-conservative Mrs. Campa who so strongly disapproved of Irene's teaching methods, has informed the authorities of her visits to an imprisoned Republican (130).<sup>287</sup> While the news of her *depuración* is distressing for Irene, it does not come as a surprise: following the village's occupation by the Nationalists and her return to the school, Irene was allowed to continue working while several other teachers in the area were dismissed, including the teacher in nearby Nozales "que había desempeñado un cargo importante durante la etapa republicana" (129). She speculates that the delay in her case was due to having spent the initial part of the war in a Nationalist area, Oviedo, and having worked as a nurse in the hospital there (129).

Just as it is not specified why Irene is dismissed in the first place, nor is it explained why she is finally allowed back into the classroom. Ramos Zamora writes that, until recently, little was known about the *depuraciones* carried out during the early Franco era, as a result of the "mutismo oficial que las autoridades han manifestado al respecto" and the impossibility of consulting information (171). The Franco regime, in its attempt to present a harmonious public image after the war, was most likely eager to silence the extent of its political persecution of certain professions throughout Spain, and it is possible that Medio withholds more detailed explanations in the novel because she is wary of portraying the process in too negative a light. In the case of Irene's *depuración*, Medio's autobiographical records again shed further light on an issue that was probably minimised in the novel in anticipation of censorship.

Medio was relieved of her position in 1938 because the Inspección Provincial de la Enseñanza accused her of "haber orientado la enseñanza en sentido

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<sup>287</sup> Señora Campa is implicated in Irene's train of thought on the day she learns of her suspension: "Pero la tía esa... ¿por qué se mete donde no la llaman? ¿Por qué ha de hablarme de...? ¿Cómo se habrá enterado?... ¡Farisea!... Ella es la única perfecta, los demás..." (130). Later, Irene reflects on señora Campa's behaviour after the war: "[T]odos saben que llegó al pueblo, después de la guerra, denunciando a todos los que se aprovecharon del producto de sus tierras y pidiendo a voces la muerte del maestro de Nozales" (167).

izquierdista, haber atacado en público las ideas de religión, patria y moral, hacer alarde de ultramodernismo, no practicar la religión católica, simpatizar con los marxistas y, finalmente, haber hecho propaganda a favor de las izquierdas y de la Asociación de Trabajadores de la Enseñanza” (López Alonso 20).<sup>288</sup> Despite the seriousness of these charges, however, Medio was aware that, had she not been in Nationalist-occupied Oviedo, as Irene was, when war broke out, the sanctions imposed would have been greater. She even goes as far as saying that her mother’s decision to remain in Oviedo may ultimately have saved her life (although the same decision led to her mother’s death of malnourishment in besieged Oviedo in 1937) (*Atrapados* 26, 32).<sup>289</sup> Unlike Irene, however, Medio was reinstated in 1940 because of an apparent “insufficient cause for the dismissal” (Jones, “Dolores Medio” 59–60) and the support of the local priest and a close friend with Nationalist political credentials (Ruiz Arias 33).<sup>290</sup> In confirmation of her own account, Medio’s name appears on the list of *expedientes* for Asturias: she is listed as the teacher in Piloñeta, and her case was resolved on 18 December 1940 when she was reinstated, although her employment and salary were suspended retroactively (Morente Valero, *La escuela* 506).

In *Diario de una maestra*, when Irene first returns to the school after the war, the only change explicitly mentioned in the novel is the decoration of the classroom with military memorabilia (150);<sup>291</sup> however, the Francoist school system was diametrically opposed to the Republican philosophy of education so there would inevitably have been other changes at the school. Much of Francoist educational policy consisted of reversing the liberal education reforms of the pre-war period, thereby ensuring, according to Cazorla Sánchez, that “Spain went backwards in

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<sup>288</sup> Medio herself showed the *pliego de cargos* document to López Alonso in an interview.

<sup>289</sup> Medio adds that she suspects that she was at first spared by the Comisión Depuradora because one of her referees had a personal agenda: “[Q]uien aquellos días le informaba, tenía ciertas razones sentimentales para no hacerlo negativamente, y pospuso su venganza personal al posible logro de su deseo” (*Atrapados* 175).

<sup>290</sup> On being reinstated, Medio was, however, subject to a number of restrictions: “[S]he was not allowed to take the public examinations necessary for promotion, to hold any supervisory position, or to continue with her studies” (Jones, *Dolores Medio* 25). These restrictions are also mentioned very briefly by Irene later on in the novel: “[S]e ha sometido a todas las normas dictadas por el Ministerio de Educación y por el Partido” (186).

<sup>291</sup> Postwar classrooms were presided over by the crucifix and portraits of Franco and José Antonio Primo de Rivera (Cazorla Sánchez 92).

educational policy precisely when European societies were expanding their education systems.” He attributes the low quality of Spanish education under Franco to the fact that, instead of the “social pact” that had been agreed on in the rest of Europe, Spain was following a programme of “social revenge” (88). Cazorla Sánchez also notes that rates of school attendance were low as many children were forced to work, beg or forage for food, and that teacher’s salaries were amongst the lowest in Europe, accounting for the popular saying: “to go hungrier than a schoolteacher” (90).<sup>292</sup>

The limitations on how and what Irene can teach after the war are not referred to explicitly in the novel; however, one can assume that she no longer has access to many of the books she used before the war and that her subject matter was under strict surveillance, particularly given her experience with the Comisión Depuradora. Francoist schools were to teach the “ultra-conservative social values of Catholicism, chauvinist nationalism, sexism, and class prejudice” (Cazorla Sánchez 91), and convert their schools into “una realidad ‘netamente española,’ basada en nuestros valores tradicionales, y que todo ello se fundamentaba en la educación cristiana, base de la paz futura” (Cámara Villar 107). Despite the imposition of this dogma, however, Irene remains passionate about education and particularly about teaching the children the personal and social skills that she knows are vital in order for the community to survive in postwar Spain.

Irene finds herself working in a village that has been left severely scarred by the war: many have died, disappeared, or gone into exile, and families have been divided. Claudio, a young boy at Irene’s school, for example, is the illegitimate son of a “miliciiana” and is hated by his own grandparents (152–53). The recent conflict continues to dominate conversation: in Irene’s conversations with Tim, Timoteo’s conservative grandfather whom Irene befriends after the war, the topic of discussion is “[s]iempre de la guerra. Tan reciente, tan encima de sus vidas”; they also discuss the *guerrillas* who are still active in the mountains, the black market and other postwar troubles (159). Irene finds that she is accepted more easily into the

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<sup>292</sup> Despite her low salary, however, Irene continues to send food, clothes and cigarettes to Max in prison.



community on her return, particularly by the poorer agricultural workers because “[q]uien más o quien menos, había colaborado con la República y hubo de pagar sus multas, ir a un campo de concentración, a la cárcel, si no sufrir más grandes penas” (168). Anne de Laire Mulgrew explains that “[w]hen Irene returns in 1943, she does so on the villagers’ level because she too struggled to survive. She did not have an easier life because of her position. On the contrary, the loss of her job takes her down from the teacher’s pedestal; she is one of the villagers” (107–08). Significantly, Irene does not resent the villagers who backed the military uprising, some of whom may have played a part in the adversity she experienced during the war. Irene’s growing friendship with “el viejo” Tim illustrates her desire for reconciliation in the community and her emphasis on tolerance and empathy.

Irene’s philosophy of human love, forgiveness and understanding, and her application of these ideals to the devastated village of La Estrada in postwar Spain is, as argued by Caamano Alegre, a challenge to the “revanchismo” practiced by the Franco regime in the early postwar years (315). Irene believes in understanding a situation from all possible perspectives, as seen in her recurring references to the story about drawing the chair from different angles, then learning that all of the perspectives were correct (47–48); even when she first learns that she is to lose her job, she makes an effort to understand the situation from the point of view of the authorities (129); Irene is a very idealistic protagonist in this regard. When she returns to the school during the war, where the children of the Nationalists and Republicans sit together on the same benches, she sees that she is going to have to work hard to achieve a reconciliation: “Convencer, sin vencer, sin lastimar los sentimientos de nadie. De los niños y de sus familias...” (124). After the war, Irene’s principles reflect “the doctrine of forgiveness, which is no more than an extension of human understanding and sympathy” (Jones, *Dolores Medio* 106–07), as illustrated in her favourite motto: “Donde no hallas amor, pon amor y encontrarás amor” (a quotation from John of the Cross). Irene puts her formula into practice with the other villagers too: not only with Tim “[el] viejo cascarrabias que gritaba y maldecía contra su nieto” (158), but most significantly with a local woman, Juana, nicknamed *La Loba*, who was involved when the young Timoteo met his death defending the

village priest during the war, and has therefore had to go into hiding to avoid persecution (165). Irene also attempts to impart the spirit of forgiveness to her evening class for adults by reading them a tale called “Los gallos del amanecer” by the Russian writer, Ivan Bunin, in which Santo Tomás del Mar intervenes to save a group of bandits who have pillaged his home town. She is disappointed, however, when her students appear unconvinced by the message contained in the tale: “¡Ésa es una historia muy aburrida, señorita Irene!... Y ese santo es tonto... Yo colgaría del palo mayor a todos los piratas” (174–78).

While the older students thus seem unable to understand the concepts of sympathy and forgiveness, Irene demonstrates in her classroom how easily children, particularly young children, can let go of their prejudices. This is illustrated in the case of Claudio, “el hijo de la miliciana,” who is bullied by the other children at school because they have been inculcated with certain political ideas; however, when Irene turns the insults around, telling Claudio how brave his mother must have been, and that he is probably just as brave as she was, the other children quickly reconsider and forget their earlier bigotry (155). As a teacher, Irene is the link to the next generation: for the future of Spanish society it is vital that these children overcome the narrow-mindedness and intolerance which characterised their parents’ generation and culminated in the Civil War.<sup>293</sup>

Despite the absence of any religious commitment in other aspects of Irene’s life, Caamano Alegre notes that Irene’s philosophy and behaviour in the community ironically reflect the ‘true spirit of Christianity’ which was claimed so ostentatiously by the victorious Franco regime, but which, in reality, showed no mercy to its enemies (316–17).<sup>294</sup> In Francoist society, however, it seemed that traditional ‘Christian’ values, such as compassion and forgiveness, were worth nothing in a woman if she did not fulfil the less spiritual requirements of the ‘ideal,’ respectable

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<sup>293</sup> The importance of the role of the teacher as the link to the next generation was noted by Medio and her colleagues during the war. They decided to sign the *Adhesión al Levantamiento* document despite their ideological objections to the Nationalist cause, because they knew that if Franco was to win the war, they would still be in a position to educate the next generation according to their own ideals: “[N]o se habrá perdido todo, si aún contamos con un plantel de educadores con ideas jóvenes, con ideas nuevas, formando a la generación que va a sucedernos” (*Atrapados* 60).

<sup>294</sup> Caamano Alegre argues that by portraying Irene in this way, Medio is also destroying the myth of the Nationalist crusade, according to which all Republicans were atheists and their annihilation was justified in order to preserve the Catholic identity of Spain (316–19).

Catholic female: namely, the preservation of her “physical and spiritual virginity” (Morcillo Gómez 56–57), and the achievement of the two ultimate feminine goals of marriage and motherhood. Thus Irene is, in many ways, far from the regime’s ‘ideal’ woman; however, Irene demonstrates that she continues to be bound by traditional gender norms in both her personal and professional life.

As a working, single woman who maintains a sexual relationship outside of marriage, Irene Gal is atypical in the Francoist context, and is for this reason included in Pérez’s discussion of the *femme seule* or the “liberated” woman in postwar Spanish fiction. For Pérez, a “liberated” woman is defined as “the independently wealthy, the professional, the working woman or peasant, women, who are self-sufficient,” who, in stark contrast to contemporary social expectations, is “neither seeking matrimony nor frustrated with their not having achieved it” (“Portraits of the *Femme Seule*” 54). While it is likely that Irene, being an orphan with only distant relatives to depend on, was initially forced into financial independence out of necessity, she is very committed to her career as a teacher, feeling so responsible for the children of La Estrada that she postpones an opportunity to join Max in Madrid (59–61).<sup>295</sup>

Despite being an independent working woman, however, it must be acknowledged that teaching was traditionally regarded as one of the few professions suitable for women; the subversion of the gender paradigm in the professional sense is thus minimised. The nineteenth century saw the “feminización de la enseñanza” at primary school level in Spain (as well as in the rest of Europe and the United States) (Cortada Andreu 35). A number of different factors account for the sudden increase in the number of female teachers, such as women’s increasing desire to be involved in public life and the fact that they were more affordable for local authorities, because their salaries were lower than those of male teachers. Additionally, new educational philosophies which posited that women were ideal teachers, because of the similarity between the educational role of the mother and of

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<sup>295</sup> The metaphor of the ‘oars’ and the inability to let them go until her job in the village is complete recurs throughout the novel (82–83).

the schoolteacher, were hugely influential.<sup>296</sup> Teaching was seen as a natural extension of the role of the mother, the only difference being that this role would be carried out 'halfway' between the public and the private sphere, and that women would receive a (small) salary in return (Cortada Andreu 35). By the 1930s, female teachers outnumbered male teachers in almost every single province in Spain (Morente Valero, *La escuela* 234).

One finds, nevertheless, that, despite the fact that the majority of teachers were female during the Second Republic, the role of the teacher began to be cast in much more traditionally 'masculine' terms. The Republican project of making education available to all young Spaniards was referred to as a "social revolution," and the teachers sent out to carry out this "revolution," many of them young women, were regarded as "soldiers" (Soliño 29).<sup>297</sup> The military and masculine overtones in descriptions of the Republican teachers' task is illustrated in the Spanish educational theorist Lorenzo Luzuriaga's call for the collaboration of all Spanish teachers in the Republican project:

El Magisterio hispánico ha de responder con todo su entusiasmo a la llamada de la República. El gran *ejército* de cerca de 40.000 *hombres* que lo constituyen ha de ponerse lealmente a su servicio [...]. La República se salvará por fin por la escuela. Tenemos ante nosotros una obra espléndida, magnífica. Manos, pues, a la obra. ¡Arriba el magisterio republicano! (cited in Morente Valero, "La muerte" 188; italics added)

Indeed, Irene's work during her time in La Estrada shows evidence of this almost military conception of the teacher's task: she describes her goal at the village school

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<sup>296</sup> See, for example, Friedrich Froebel's theories on the involvement of women in kindergarten education, where he describes their role as "spiritual motherhood" (Read 19). In the United States, school reformers in the nineteenth century argued that "[t]he schoolteacher of choice, female of course, manifested the uniquely womanly attributes of purity, moral superiority, submissiveness and nurturance" (Preston 537).

<sup>297</sup> Soliño has argued, using Medio's Irene and Josefina Aldecoa's protagonist Gabriela, in her novel *Historia de una maestra*, as examples, that although the "majority of Spanish females did not fight in the war in the usual violent manner does not mean that they were not active participants in the conflicts"; she thus argues that, as Republican schoolteachers, Irene Gal and Gabriela López can be read as war heroines (28).

as “hacer la revolución” (29), and Soliño affirms that Irene tackles her ‘soldier’s’ task head-on, burning the old books, removing the monarchist flag and secularising the classroom and the curriculum despite the protests of some members of the community (31).

The traditional maternal role of women in education was also called upon by the Second Republic, which often justified the education of women by arguing that those women would then inculcate their children with the new democratic, secular Republican values (Graham 103–04). Although Irene embodies the Republican ideal of the teacher as ‘soldier’ or ‘warrior,’ her attitude towards her students in many ways also reflects the traditional maternal role of the female teacher. This is evident not only in her mission as a ‘peacemaker’ and her determination to bring love and understanding to the classroom, but also in her physically maternal gestures towards the children: she comforts Ana after the death of Timoteo, “la retiene entre los brazos, acariciándole la cara, limpiándole las lágrimas con sus dedos” (124), and apologises to Tiana after hitting her in a bout of frustration by kissing her cheek (202–04).

The second part of Pérez’s definition of the *femme seule*, that of not seeking marriage, also applies to Irene to a certain extent. Despite her commitment to Max, the relationship is atypical: firstly, because despite planning a future together, marriage or motherhood is never mentioned by Irene; and secondly, in that their relationship is a sexual one from the very beginning.<sup>298</sup> Unlike the more common female character in postwar fiction who engages in extramarital sexual relations, the mistress or the prostitute,<sup>299</sup> Irene is an idealistic young woman who genuinely admires and commits to one man only. Pérez sees this romantic attitude as either “a vestige of the values (fidelity, chastity) imposed on women by their male-oriented upbringing, or a reflection of their own idealism, which has to some extent been formed by the same upbringing” (“Portraits of the *Femme Seule*” 75). Irene’s unusual mixture of sexual liberalism and romantic idealism causes Max to be initially unsure

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<sup>298</sup> Irene’s unusual attitude towards her relationship, in the sense that she never expresses a desire to marry Max, scandalised critic Carlos Murciano, who wrote in *La Estafeta Literaria* in 1968: “[...] su amor por Máximo (o lo que sea, ya que ella esquivo la palabra, y cuando piensa en unirse a él lo hace siempre como compañera, amiga o colaboradora, nunca como esposa) [...]” (cited in Ruiz Arias 112).

<sup>299</sup> See my discussion on Luis Romero’s Dorita and Trini in Chapter Three.

what to make of his young lover: her boldness in approaching him and agreeing to take a walk with him outside the city lead him to believe that Irene is a sexually experienced young woman: “¿Eh? ¿Qué significa esta proposición? ¿Hasta dónde será capaz de llegar esta muchacha en su audacia?” (16). Following their first encounter, Max realises that he had been wrong in his assumption, and feels he has been tricked into taking responsibility for her; he soon learns, however, that Irene’s innocence was genuine.

Despite Irene’s liberal approach to the sexual aspect of her relationship, because at no point does she question the morality of her situation, she does, at times, demonstrate a surprisingly traditional sense of dependence on Max. During her daydreams, Irene occasionally lets slip a longing to be cared for and looked after, imagining “la mano fuerte del hombre, conduciéndola por la vida” (83); later, during Bernardo’s proposal, she again considers the temptation to “dejarme conducir, sentirme otra vez niña” (180); and eagerly anticipating Max’s return, she thinks: “podré quitarme la máscara de mujer fuerte y volveré a ser a su lado Tortuguita” (215). Somewhat paradoxically, Irene is also aware that she thinks more clearly and is more capable and effective in her work when she is away from Max:

Es curioso lo que le ocurre a Irene. Cuando está sola y tiene que actuar, cobra energía y resuelve rápidamente. Cuando está con Máximo Sáenz—¿una jugada del subconsciente?—se le entrega de tal modo, que hasta le da pereza pensar. La invade como una especie de laxitud, de dejarse ir... No le hace sólo una entrega material, sino intelectual. Como si le dijera: “Piensa tú por mí.” (85)

Irene seems to be ashamed of what de la Fuente describes as “esa fragilidad que le lleva a comportarse como una novia tradicional, siendo como es una maestra innovadora” (241). Perhaps it is this sense of shame that allows her to resist the urge to be led, emotionally and intellectually, postponing her return to Madrid because of her professional satisfaction in La Estrada, rejecting Bernardo’s proposal, and last of all, overcoming Max’s rejection following his release from prison because, after the

initial distress, she realises that she is still valuable and necessary to the children and people of the village. While Caamano Alegre interprets Irene's absolute dedication to her students as an inability to focus on herself and her own needs—"un clásico ejemplo de abnegación" (328)—I prefer Perez's understanding of Irene's attitude: "[H]er decision to continue living, living for her work and for others, is based upon a recognition of a certain self-worth, the knowledge that the villagers need her and that she can help them" ("Portraits of the *Femme Seule*" 74–75).

The way that Max conducts himself throughout their relationship only serves to reinforce Irene's insecurities in terms of what is expected of her as a woman. Max, a liberal Republican and supporter of women's rights, speculates optimistically that although Spain lags behind its European counterparts in its attitude towards working women, advances are being made (55). Despite these progressive views, however, his behaviour towards Irene from the very beginning is indicative of a somewhat 'machista,' traditionally sexist attitude.<sup>300</sup> His belief in gender equality appears to be largely theoretical,<sup>301</sup> as is illustrated very clearly when, while Irene is engrossed in his lecture on progressive education theory, Max is more interested in Irene's legs, petticoat and imagining her breasts under her blouse. He treats her very much like a child (it should be noted that she is half his age), calling her "pequeña" and "chica valiente," initiating their lovemaking by turning it into a game while she sits on his lap, and pretending to be jealous when she talks about Timoteo, because "los celos agradan a las mujeres y las convencen" (61). Max also believes that any intellectual or ideological ideas that she may have belong to him, because they were inspired by him (64).

This conflicting situation in which Irene finds herself is recognised by de la Fuente, who suggests that Irene is influenced by centuries of female education which have taught her to be "disminuida, insegura, casi una niña" when in the company of her male intellectual superior, even though at other times she is a confident, resourceful woman (255). De la Fuente argues that Irene was educated in early

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<sup>300</sup> Caamano Alegre suggests that Max's sometimes contradictory attitude with regard to women and women's rights is due to the fact that he is slightly older: "[S]e sitúa a medio camino entre el pasado y el futuro" (324).

<sup>301</sup> According to Soliño, "for characters such as Max, the great theorizers, women are treated seriously only for social climbing or, in Irene's case, as an object for pleasure" (34).

twentieth-century Spain “en las filigranas del bordado y la sumisión”<sup>302</sup> and that despite her independence, she carries with her the traditional idea of submission in which she was educated (246). The critic goes on to say that this is a “desdoblamiento en la mujer que se ha mantenido hasta nuestros días y que en el caso de Dolores Medio apreciamos de manera reveladora” (255). Indeed, by presenting the reader with the paradox of an independent, self-sufficient woman who, nevertheless, subconsciously yearns for a traditional relationship in which she will be taken care of, the author draws attention to the difficulty in escaping values that are so deeply rooted in society.

While some gender stereotypes thus cause difficulties and frustrations in Irene’s life, as discussed above, in other cases, doors are opened for her precisely because she is a woman, providing her with an escape from several potentially dangerous situations. Irene’s treatment by the “máquina de depuración” was possibly less severe than that of others: male teachers were, in general, treated more harshly than female teachers because traditionally, “los modelos sociales concebían mayor implicación política de los hombres en la esfera pública que de las mujeres” (Ramos Zamora 179).<sup>303</sup> Irene also uses her gender to her advantage when she decides to tackle “el caso-Timoteo” (38), pretending that she needs Timoteo’s help and playing the typical ‘damsel in distress’ (Caamano Alegre 310). The same principle is illustrated in the episode with Irene’s old family friend, José Vallés. Vallés could have reported Irene to the Nationalist authorities, but feels that, as a woman, her ideology is influenced only by her lover—“las mujeres suelen ser lo que los hombres quieren que sean” (103)—and feels that she needs to be looked after: “He de evitar que la chica se comprometa y pueda sucederle algo desagradable... Por su familia, claro... Y también por ella. ¡La tonta ésta!” (102). He therefore sends her back to be with distant family in Oviedo, instead of reporting her to the authorities.

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<sup>302</sup> This period is illustrated in Medio’s first novel *Nosotros, los Rivero*.

<sup>303</sup> Ramos Zamora does also point out, however, that due to the postwar regime’s view of female teachers as examples for young girls whom they were to turn into “mujeres profundamente católicas capaces de desempeñar el modelo decimonónico de mujer,” female teachers were more often than not accused of moral, rather than political, shortcomings, “como mantener un matrimonio civil, por estar separadas del marido, profesor [sic] el amor libre, etc.” (180).



Irene's gender also allows her to be a more effective teacher and community leader. She assumes a position as mediator and peacemaker both in the classroom and in the wider community, where, as a woman, she is not seen as threatening, but as a neutral caregiver; as Galerstein argues: "[...] women are more capable of forgiveness; [...] their presence is what enables the wounds caused by internecine conflict to finally heal. Women are the peace-givers, if not the official peacemakers" (48). For Ordóñez, Irene's conciliatory practice after the war fits into her model of "female heroism": "By revealing the conflicts in patriarchal culture, she points to an alternative cultural synthesis, toward the restructuring of human society on the values of cooperation and the serving of human needs" ("*Diario*" 53).

The reasoning behind the situations described above stems, in part at least, from the long-standing idea that women were motivated by emotions, while men were driven by reason and logic: "[R]eason, logic, reflection, analytical and intellectual capacity, and creativity were said to be the prerogatives of men, while sentimentality, affectivity, sensitivity, sweetness, intuition, passivity, and abnegation were exclusive characteristics of women" (Nash, *Defying Male Civilization* 13). These traditional 'gender prototypes' were widespread in Spanish society, supported by the 'medical' gender differentiation theories of intellectuals such as Gregorio Marañón.<sup>304</sup> The same view is, perhaps subconsciously, put forward by Irene who states: "Max es la cabeza y ella el corazón" (68).<sup>305</sup> However, she says this at a weak moment when she is overwhelmed by the task that faces her in the village, and clearly disproves such a notion by the end of the novel.

Gender themes are thus central to *Diario de una maestra*; however, critics disagree on whether Dolores Medio can be classified as a feminist writer. If we define a feminist writer, in the social realist context, as one who reveals and condemns everyday gender issues in Spain by depicting them in a realistic style, Jean Smoot asks: "If Medio were truly a social realist, if she were truly interested in depicting contemporary Spanish society, then how effective is it to select as her focal

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<sup>304</sup> For more information on Gregorio Marañón's theories on gender and sexuality, see Glick 77–81.

<sup>305</sup> Irene's assimilation of the traditional sexual binarism is also noted by Caamano Alegre 320–21. The same gender binary can be detected in the way that Medio's work is perceived, as a woman writer, by male critics. For example, Marco considers Medio's work to be too romanticised and idealised, emotional rather than rational, to be considered critically realist (*Ejercicios literarios* 270).

characters women who so clearly deviate from the norm in order to depict that very society and change it?" (259). Medio's accounts of women in her novels, including Irene, are indeed not typical, but nor are they exaggerated or distorted, because they are, after all, based in large part on real life, making the stories all the more powerful and "poignant" (Jones, "Dolores Medio" 69–70). Pérez argues that Medio does not "portray the independent, successful woman as something other than an exception in Spain during the Franco years, nor does she present extremes of 'liberated' behaviour. [...] [The protagonists] are unconventional only to a mild degree" ("Portraits of the *Femme Seule*" 75–76). Smoot again questions Medio's feminist stance by arguing that "[h]er independence, indicative of the so-called feminist, or independent or liberated woman, was as much a necessity thrust upon her as it was a conscious choice" (262).<sup>306</sup> While it is true that the protagonist was in many ways obligated by circumstances to be a financially independent, professional, unmarried woman, the novel illustrates that Irene makes deliberate decisions to maintain her independent status, even when alternatives are offered to her. Medio's Irene is a strong, intelligent woman who, while she cannot really be described as typical, she is not entirely exceptional either, as she negotiates, with varying success, the same gender norms that affected all Spanish women during this period.

Francoist Spain's severely restrictive moral code for women not only affects the character in the novel, but also influences the text itself in the form of censorship. I have already discussed some ways in which the author may have taken evasive action against possible cuts or even total prohibition of the work by the censor, by deliberately excluding a number of politically-loaded incidents and toning down Irene's ideological convictions, for example. When examining the censor's report from 1961, however, it becomes clear that, either the author had so successfully 'self-censored' the political or ideological aspects of the work that no further 'objectionable' content was discovered, or that the censor's objection to the moral or sexual content of the novel overrides his political concerns, which I believe to be more likely, as will be illustrated below.

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<sup>306</sup> Smoot refers here to the author herself, but the comment is equally applicable to Irene.

*Diario de una maestra* was first submitted to the Ministerio de Información y Turismo in October 1960 and the censor's report was issued in December of that year. The censor does not answer any of the standard questions, but writes a brief summary of the plot, his only criticism being that Irene is "entre ingenua y desvergonzada en sus relaciones con un Profesor de Universidad" and that "[l]a novela está demasiado atendida a la dimensión humana, terrenal de las cosas. La falta proyección [sic] hacia lo alto, sentido e intención de trascendencia, precisamente en la vida y en la obra de una Maestra, española y cristiana, que debe conocer y servir al fin supremo de toda educación cristianamente entendida."<sup>307</sup> After this paragraph, however, he lists a number of pages (28 in total) which contain marked passages to be removed before approval could be given for publication. On examination of the original manuscript, which is included in the file, and also on comparison of the first edition of the published novel with the uncensored version published from 1985 onwards, one can see that the passages marked for deletion are almost all related to the physical relationship between Irene and Máximo, in addition to a kiss between Irene and Bernardo, and a passage which depicts Irene examining her own naked body in the mirror.

In her introduction to the 1993 edition of *Diario de una maestra*, López Alonso lists the five sections of the original novel that suffered cuts. In López Alonso's opinion, these deletions modify the meaning of the novel, and make it incomprehensible at times: "Todas estas alteraciones modifican las relaciones y la fuerte atracción sexual entre los dos protagonistas: presentan a Irene como una insulsa soñadora que casi parece inventarse sus relaciones con Máximo, y a éste lo reducen a un mero papel de profesor y de incitador de las ideas izquierdistas de la protagonista" (50). Medio also felt that her novel had been 'mutilated' by censorship and in 1963 wrote a letter to the Director General de Información y Turismo requesting a revision of the report, despite the fact that the censored version had already been published.<sup>308</sup> She argued that the deleted passages were not offensive to the Church or the State, and had been removed only for supposedly moral reasons.

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<sup>307</sup> The original censor's report was consulted at the Archivo General de Administración in Alcalá de Henares in April 2012.

<sup>308</sup> Medio's letter is stored alongside the *expediente de censura* in the archive.

She added that the kind of situations that were removed from her novel had appeared in other recently published literature in Spain, that the deleted passages were vital to the overall meaning of the work, and most importantly, that if the revisions were not made, she would have to publish the second part of the novel (non-existent to the best of my knowledge) outside of Spain, threatening that “una novela publicada en el extranjero por incompatibilidad con la censura española, es perjudicial para el buen nombre de España y obliga a la autora a cometer un acto antipatriótico.”<sup>309</sup> Judging from the revised *expediente* that is issued one month later, Medio’s letter, and particularly her last comments about Spain’s reputation, which appealed to the regime’s sense of national pride, seem to have made an impact. In the revised report, the censor is eager to emphasise how much Spain has progressed and modernised in recent years: “Hay escenas escabrosas muy subidas pero se trata de una obra para personas ya mayores por su extensión y argumento, esta obra no pasaría hace años pero yo creo que según el criterio actual de esta censura se puede permitir su publicación.”<sup>310</sup> Despite the authorisation to publish the novel in its entirety in 1963, however, the passages that had been removed in 1961 were not included in a new edition until 1985 (López Alonso 50).<sup>311</sup>

In her letter to the Ministry, Medio also appeals to the popularly held belief that female writers were inherently less offensive, and handled controversial subjects in a more delicate manner, than their male counterparts: “[T]odo lo suprimido en la mencionada novela está expresado con la delicadeza de una pluma femenina, de la manera más suave posible.” As we saw in relation to Laforet’s *Nada*, the censors’ attitudes towards female writers were complex because their work was often regarded as harmless and feminine, but was simultaneously policed more

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<sup>309</sup> Daniel Linder writes that this type of argument was used against the censors by a number of Spanish writers, and especially publishers, in Spain at the time: “They argued that Spain would be seen as an international laughingstock if it censored the translations of works by well-known international authors, and they also threatened to expose Spain’s unfair administrative procedures for censorship, such as ‘administrative silence’ and sequestering, on an international level” (161).

<sup>310</sup> It had, however, been first submitted for publication only two years earlier; the censor’s allusion to the modernisation that had occurred in Spain since then is thus somewhat exaggerated.

<sup>311</sup> It appears, however, that not all of the deleted text was reintroduced in the latest editions of the novel: Abellán, for example, cites a line (from the original manuscript) with obvious political significance—“[...] se les quita del medio con un tiro en la nuca. Un bicho menos... [...]”—that was removed but is not present in either the 1976 nor the 1985 edition. The line is spoken by the Nationalist soldier Pablo Moure in reference to Max in a conversation that takes place on page 101 (1976) and page 103 (1985). See Abellán, *Censura y creación literaria* 79.

stringently for moral and sexual content.<sup>312</sup> Indeed, Montejo Gurruchaga argues that the author's difficult experiences with the censorship committees throughout her career contradict the argument that women's writing was considered less dangerous ("Dolores Medio" 213). Despite the fact that Medio attempts to emphasise her gentle 'feminine' touch in order to procure a revision of the censorship report, Montejo Gurruchaga suggests that Medio was aware of the double standards that applied to men and women's work and knew that her male social realist contemporaries—Alfonso Grosso, Juan Goytisolo, Caballero Bonald, Cela, García Hortelano, among others—included themes, language and characters that made Medio seem like a "monja de la caridad" in comparison. The critic concludes that there was a lot of male chauvinism and prudishness involved in the censorship of the work of female writers (*Discurso de autora* 141).

Of all the novelists examined in this thesis, Medio had the largest number of difficulties with the censors and by the time she wrote *Diario de una maestra*, it was likely that she was well aware of the dangers in approaching the topic of female sexuality. A number of critics have argued that she may well have developed techniques to avoid problems with the censor as far as possible, or as de la Fuente puts it, "apur[ar] las posibilidades de la censura" (242). Pérez, in her 1988 article "Alusión, evasión, infantilismo," for example, suggests that Medio manages to portray female characters, Irene Gal among others, whose lives are not exactly in line with Francoist values because they are unmarried and have ideologically progressive ideals, by 'infantilising' the characters. By portraying Irene as naive and innocent,<sup>313</sup> Medio reduces the possibility that the censor would find her lifestyle and ideals contrary to official norms because "Irene se aleja tanto del estereotipo, de la mujer seductora, pecadora, que parece ser que el censor no fue capaz de ver su pecado." Pérez's theory applies not only to sexuality, however, but also to Irene's ideology which is deemed less offensive because of her intellectual immaturity and dependence on Max's ideas ("Alusión" 38).<sup>314</sup> De Laire Mulgrew adds that Medio

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<sup>312</sup> See also de la Fuente 261.

<sup>313</sup> Pérez cites the descriptions of Irene as "muchacha. Muy joven. Casi una niña" and "su modo de mirar infantil y audaz" as examples of her 'infantilisation' (37).

<sup>314</sup> In support of Pérez's argument is the fact that Medio's character, Irene, is at least five years younger when war breaks out than the author herself had been (Irene is about nineteen in July 1936,

also uses some obscure references in relation to Irene's sexuality that the majority of the censors would never have recognised. Max's use of the nickname "Astarté" for Irene, for example, alludes to Astarté the Semitic goddess of nature, life and fertility and also the goddess of love and carnal pleasures (116).

The censor's report demonstrates that, despite Medio's efforts in terms of self-censorship, the relationship between Irene and Max was the principal focus of the required deletions. Nevertheless, the censor's puritanical attempts to rid the novel of all sexual, or even vaguely sensual, references ultimately fails, because the fact of Irene and Max's sexual relationship remains and cannot be missed by the reader. While their first kiss and details of how Max unbuttons her blouse were removed, the whole situation and other snippets of conversation can leave no doubt as to what has occurred between them. Even Max's promise on their return to Oviedo has been altered from "procuraré que no te arrepientas nunca de lo que ha sucedido" to simply "procuraré que no te arrepientas nunca," as if "lo que ha sucedido" makes it too explicit.<sup>315</sup> When Max's state of mind after their first sexual encounter is described by the narrator as one of "plenitud, de animal satisfecho y agradecido," for example, Pérez is correct in saying that the scene "deja más bien poco a la imaginación" ("Alusión" 37). Even in his prudishness, the censor is inconsistent because he focuses excessively on the passages in which Irene and Max are physically together, paying less attention to sexual references in Irene's thoughts, such as the following: "Creo que cuando vuelva a reunirme con Max no seré ya una chiquilla inexperta de la que pueda burlarse... También en eso..." (151); this passage is allowed to remain, despite the fairly obvious insinuation. Later, there is an even more explicit description of Irene's frustrated sexual desire:

En sus largas noches de soledad, en el continuo devanar la madeja de sus deseos, de sus ansias incontenibles, de sus angustias... la cara, las manos, hasta el aliento de Max, que algunas veces sentía sobre su carne

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while Medio, born in 1911, was already twenty-five). It could be argued that this choice is made deliberately in order to provide a more naive and innocent perspective of the events.

<sup>315</sup> The quotations are from page 21 in the 1976 Destino edition and page 22 in the 1985 Destino edition.

como algo real, empieza a sustituirse, en una confusión inexplicable, con el contacto vivo de Bernardo Vega. Con frecuencia es Bernardo y no Máximo, quien la obliga a despertarse sobresaltada, a morder la almohada, a deshacer su deseo violento en una crisis de llanto. (187)

The fact that this expression of female sexuality, the presence of which Caamano Alegre describes as “novedosa” (330), is not removed, while simple physical caresses are deleted, serves to underline the censor’s superficial understanding of the novel’s content.

Medio’s experience with censorship had probably taught her, above all, that the censors often acted “unfairly, arbitrarily, and in bad faith,” as Daniel Linder has said of Spanish censorship. Linder notes that “[w]hile the system remained apparently constant while the dictatorship lasted, changing social conditions within and outside the country did in fact produce some changes to the system in the very long term. However, in the short term these changes often produced arbitrary overreactions by the censors” (161). The censor’s reaction was indeed quite difficult to predict: Medio’s 1954 novel, *Nosotros, los Rivero*, for example, had been criticised for almost exclusively political reasons.<sup>316</sup> In 1961, however, the ideological elements of *Diario de una maestra* are ignored by the censor who focuses completely on the amorous and sexually suggestive scenes. One can even do a direct comparison of similar scenes in the two novels: Montejo Gurruchaga’s analysis of the censorship report for *Nosotros, los Rivero* shows that a list of Ger’s socialist, communist and Republican books (which includes one by Ortega y Gasset) is to be deleted (*Discurso de autora* 135); Ortega y Gasset, however, is mentioned, along with other Republican writers, a number of times in *Diario de una maestra* without causing concern.<sup>317</sup> Can the seven years between the submission of *Nosotros, los Rivero* and *Diario de una*

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<sup>316</sup> The censor’s comments on *Nosotros, los Rivero* include: “La autora de esta novela demuestra su simpatía por la República española del 14 de abril y su antipatía por las tropas españolas que pacificaron Asturias en 1934” (censor’s report cited in Montejo Gurruchaga, *Discurso de autora* 131).

<sup>317</sup> Valls lists Ortega y Gasset as one of the authors who were “condenados por su «influencia nefasta»” under Franco—also citing a 1945 study by P. L. Suárez entitled *La filosofía de Ortega y Gasset ante el peligro del desequilibrio mental de las juventudes universitarias*, in which Suárez writes that “la filosofía de José Ortega y Gasset, no sólo no entraña el pensamiento católico, sino que parece excluirlo positivamente y tratar de agostarlo en los corazones de sus lectores...” (Valls, *La enseñanza* 104–05 fn199).

*maestra* account for the change in attitude?<sup>318</sup> Was it simply examined by a different censor with different priorities?<sup>319</sup> Or were the Francoist censors especially trained, as Montejo Gurruchaga argues, to focus on ‘immoral’ amorous behaviour and would therefore only comment on political and ideological criticism if there was no morally objectionable content in a novel? (“Dolores Medio” 221, fn 16).<sup>320</sup> Montejo Gurruchaga even suggests that Medio deliberately put the love story at the centre of *Diario de una maestra* because “la autora [...] sabía bien que la censura digería mejor una obra en la que resaltarán—al menos a primera vista—las grandes pasiones y los conflictos dramáticos” (*Discurso de autora* 139); I have argued, however, that Irene and Max’s relationship forms a key part of the narrative, one that is linked to the sociopolitical commentary in the novel and was not simply used as a decoy to distract the censor.

*Diario de una maestra* is at first glance an intensely personal story, but one that, at the same time, provides a critical testimony of Spain between 1935 and 1950. The novel’s depiction of the recent past, including the Second Republic, the Civil War and even the Second World War, counters the regime’s monolithic official historiography, not only by virtue of being an independent account, but also because it directly challenges many of the myths of Francoist history. The Second Republic, for example, in contrast to the way it was vilified by the postwar regime, is portrayed as a time of possibility and exciting social change. The Civil War is, however, treated slightly more delicately from the ‘neutral’ perspective of Irene and with many of the most polemical events omitted (as becomes evident when we compare *Diario de una maestra* with Medio’s autobiography pertaining to the same period). Irene, despite declaring herself to be apolitical, is definitively classed as a *roja* during the war and this labelling continues after 1939 as Irene has to wait four years before she can return to the school as a result of the harsh professional *depuraciones*; the novel thus denounces the regime’s merciless stance towards its

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<sup>318</sup> This is suggested by Caamano Alegre (298–99).

<sup>319</sup> According to Montejo Gurruchaga, the censor who read *Nosotros, los Rivero* in 1952 was “M. Batanero” (censor number 13) (*Discurso de autora* 131), and although the signature on the report for *Diario de una maestra* is not entirely legible, it is clear that it is not Batanero.

<sup>320</sup> *Nosotros, los Rivero* did not have a central love story with a physical relationship to which the censors could object.



alleged political enemies. The regime's one-sided quest for revenge is directly challenged by Irene when she is finally allowed to return to the school, in her attempts to understand the event from all perspectives and to encourage reconciliation, and in her determination to teach the students and villagers about the importance of forgiveness. Besides politics, Irene's life is also heavily affected by the conservative gender constructs of postwar Spain. I have argued that Irene is atypical in many ways, as an unmarried, working woman in a sexual relationship, but she nevertheless has to negotiate the same gender norms as other Spanish women; in order to move forward as an independent woman after the war and Max's departure, she has to overcome not only the expectations imposed by others, but also the values that have been instilled in her by society. *Diario de una maestra* is the novel most affected by censorship studied in this thesis, but proves, yet again, that the censor's focus was almost exclusively on moral and sexual themes, perhaps even more so because the novelist is female. In any case, the fact that Medio stated, many years later, that *Diario de una maestra* was published "porque se le escapó a la censura" (Ruiz Arias 116), supports the argument that I have put forward in this chapter. The novel's subversiveness goes beyond the sensual scenes detected by the censor and contains a clear critique of many aspects of Francoist ideology and the way in which the events of the 1930s and early 1940s were handled by the newly established regime.



## Conclusion

The five novels examined in this thesis demonstrate that the Spanish postwar novel is a valuable and fascinating subject of study. This is true, not in spite of having been written under dictatorship, but precisely because they were written under restrictive circumstances and illustrate a unique historical period. This thesis has focused on the novels' relationship with their sociopolitical context and, concomitantly, with the use of literature as an instrument of political protest and resistance, arguing that each of the five novels contains sociopolitical criticism of the Franco regime and a subversion of its core values. While I have approached the novels from this sociopolitical perspective, and questions of literary style and quality have therefore been outside the scope of my study, as an aside I would add that, in contrast to the general perception of postwar novels as dry and utilitarian, the novels also hold sufficient narrative interest to be enjoyed without in-depth knowledge of the Spanish historical context.

As outlined in the Introduction, the novels selected for this thesis broaden the traditional understanding of social and political commitment in the Spanish postwar novel which is generally limited to the "Angry Young Men" grouped around Juan Goytisolo and Castellet. By including female authors and other male novelists usually considered 'marginal' to the *novela social* movement, the selection has also brought in a wider range of social themes: while my analysis includes themes that fit into the largely socialist/Marxist framework employed by the 'typical' social realist writers (for example, poverty, hunger and class inequality), my definition of social commitment also includes themes such as political affiliation and persecution, the representation of the past, and social issues that disproportionately affect women (such as prostitution, the glorification of marriage and motherhood, and the *doble moralidad*). Moreover, these issues are presented from a variety of social perspectives: not just those who would be considered 'victims' of the regime (the working classes, the Republicans, women), but also those who would be regarded as belonging to the establishment (the wealthy upper classes, the Guardia Civil and the Church—for

example, the priest in *La noria*). While other critics would consider, for example, that the sociopolitical commitment in García Hortelano's work is more significant than in that of Laforet, due to varying degrees of narrative objectivism and the fact that Laforet did not frame her political intention in writing literature explicitly, my case studies suggest that sociopolitical critique is fundamental in all of the novels studied, despite the authors' very different literary styles and political positioning. The five novels are evidently all very different; nevertheless, they address many similar themes and share the spirit of resistance against totalitarian culture.

The poverty and hunger suffered by many sectors of society in the 1940s is revealed in *Nada*, *La noria* and *El fulgor y la sangre*; furthermore, *Nada* illustrates that it was not only the traditionally poorer classes who suffered, with Andrea's bourgeois family struggling to make ends meet. Of course, poverty and food shortages were problems that were not unique to Spain, nor to the postwar period; however, the highlighting of such issues in literature under Franco was subversive for two reasons: firstly, because the extent of poverty and suffering during the *años de hambre* was publicly denied by the regime, which prohibited reporting on the hunger and food shortages that plagued 1940s Spain; moreover, regime propaganda directly contradicted the reality of the situation proclaiming that no Spanish families would be wanting for work, food or general well-being. Secondly, the misery described was largely the result of Franco's determination to be economically self-sufficient—the regime's notorious 'autarky'—and the badly managed rationing system, which in turn bred the thriving black market, allowing a few to reap the benefits while the majority could barely afford to feed their families. While the link between postwar poverty and the regime's policies is implicit because the censor would never permit such a direct denunciation of the regime, there are allusions to the black market and the insufficiency of the rationing system in all three novels named above: *Nada* and *La noria* depict the inadequacy of the state rations and both also contain characters who make a living from the black market (Román, Felipe Asensio, Jaime Turull); and *El fulgor y la sangre* overtly describes how large quantities of basic agricultural products were siphoned off for sale on the black market at hugely inflated prices. Officially, the illegal black market did not exist, and

to acknowledge its prominence and the fortunes amassed as a result in a published novel, was in itself subversive.

The stark contrast between the lives of the poor and those who prospered in the postwar years is a major theme in *Nada*, *La noria* and *Nuevas amistades*: García Hortelano's novel is narrated from the perspective of the regime's wealthy elite, as are some chapters in *La noria*, and *Nada* contains descriptions of Andrea's wealthy friends from university. The inclusion of these upper-class characters forms a part of the sociopolitical criticism in the novels because it is made clear that they, and their families, have profited either directly from the outcome of the war, or from the circumstances that resulted from it, and they receive and rely on privileges and connections to the regime to get ahead. While their close relationship to the regime makes it important for them to represent the state's strict National-Catholic values, their adherence to official moral standards is demonstrated to be only superficial: *La noria*, for example, intimates the extent to which high-ranking officials were involved with prostitution, despite the regime's official attitude of moral and religious superiority, and *Nuevas amistades* depicts a young socialite who has to procure an abortion as the result of a premarital sexual relationship in order to uphold her social position and reputation. The wealthy characters are depicted almost satirically, as self-absorbed, selfish and apathetic; even when they claim to be ashamed of their privileges, as Andrea's 'bohemian' friends do in *Nada*, they are shown to be insincere and hypocritical. Most significantly, however, the contrast between the affluence of the *alta burguesía* and the poorer classes serves to underline the sharp wealth divide in postwar Spain, which had been exacerbated by Francoist economic policy which allowed a privileged few to prosper while the poorer working classes bore the brunt of Spain's economic struggles in the 1940s and early 1950s.

In addition to presenting a critique of Spanish society in the writing present, the novelists also portray, to varying degrees, aspects of Spain's recent past, thereby challenging the mythicised account of Spanish history that was put forward by Francoist historiographers and propagandists as the 'truth' that justified and validated the Nationalist version of events. Alternative or independent accounts of

the recent past were simply not present in the public sphere because they challenged the regime's absolute power over history. Nevertheless, four out of the five novels studied present memories of, and allusions to, these critical historical events. In García Hortelano's *Nuevas amistades*, the only novel in which the characters make very little reference to Spain's past, the lack of awareness of history and of the origins of the current political regime demonstrated by Gregorio, Leopoldo and friends is deliberately emphasised by the author to underline their social apathy.

The narratives of *El fulgor y la sangre* and *Diario de una maestra* both go back to the time of the Second Republic which, in contrast to the official view that the period before the Civil War was characterised by anarchy and social chaos, is depicted in both novels as a politically complex time, but it is also a time in which social and economic reforms provided hope for a better future. In Aldecoa's novel, and also in *Nada* when Andrea compares the family in the present to the family she remembers visiting in Barcelona as a child, the hope of the Republican years is contrasted quite directly with the postwar present which the characters describe as bleak and stagnant. The Civil War was an even more sensitive subject; nevertheless, the experience of war is again depicted directly in both Aldecoa and Medio's novels and is alluded to frequently in *Nada* and *La noria*. Unsurprisingly, for reasons of censorship, the war is presented largely from a Nationalist perspective, although there are accounts of Republican experiences during the war from the more 'neutral' female viewpoint, and in other instances, political affiliation is left ambiguous. Even then, however, the most controversial incidents and aspects of the war are omitted, as I demonstrated, for example, in the case of *Diario de una maestra*. *Nada* and *La noria* are narrated exclusively from the present, but frequently make references to the characters' experiences of the war: in *Nada*, Andrea's family's experiences during the conflict suggest a subtly related sympathy for the Republican side, while Romero's characters have a wide range of political histories, but he downplays their differences, thereby resisting the official postwar ideological binary: one was either with the victorious Nationalists or one was classed as a *rojo*, the enemy. Most significant, however, is the way that war is never glorified as it was in Francoist public rhetoric, but is instead portrayed as painful and futile.

The political persecution that continued into the Franco years, another polemical subject, is referred to only obliquely. While some characters have been imprisoned for political reasons, both during and after the war (Román in *Nada*, El “Sardineta” and Gallardo in *La noria*, Juan Martín in *El fulgor y la sangre*, Max in *Diario de una maestra*), details are vague and there are no descriptions of executions or concentration camps in any of the novels. *Diario de una maestra* does, however, portray a milder form of political persecution in Irene’s *depuración*, which, although not violent, illustrates the regime’s often arbitrary and unnecessarily harsh desire to exact revenge on its enemy after the war. Despite the restrictions and the evident self-censorship practiced in the novelists’ depiction of the past, ultimately, the accounts presented resist and undermine the official idea of one, ‘true’ history by presenting alternatives and a multiplicity of perspectives on the past.

The novels studied in this thesis were specifically selected due to the prominence of the social issues that most affected women in the narrative, irrespective of the gender of the author. The Franco dictatorship may have lacked a comprehensive political ideology, but one thing was clear: Spain was a patriarchal, Catholic state in which the traditional family unit reigned supreme; women, therefore, were disproportionately affected by the regime’s social policies and norms, particularly as one of those policies was to increase the birth rate. All five novels draw attention to and critique the ultra-conservative social guidelines which women had to negotiate in the postwar period, such as the rigid standards of ‘decency,’ the importance of marriage and motherhood, and the limited professional options available to women. Firstly, the regime’s notion of “true Catholic womanhood” is challenged by the recognition of a more complex notion of femininity: in all of the novels, the authors depict female characters who diverge from the ‘ideal’ for any number of reasons: showing no interest in marriage or children, focusing on an education and career, maintaining a sexual relationship outside of marriage, or working as a prostitute, for example. Nonetheless, these female characters are sympathetic, admirable and not demonised in any way. The novels also illustrate the harmful effects of the conservative notion that women had no real options other than marriage and family life, and of the *doble moralidad* with

regard to standards of sexual morality and behaviour: characters who suffer as a result include Angustias in *Nada*, Raquel in *La noria*, María in *El fulgor y la sangre* and Julia in *Nuevas amistades*. The pressure felt by the women to conform to traditional gender boundaries is not only social, however, but also internal, because they have been instilled with conservative patriarchal values: Angustias in *Nada*, for example, feels she must enter a convent because she remains unmarried, despite feeling no particular religious calling, and Medio's Irene struggles to overcome her sense of dependence on Max.

By highlighting the significance of gender themes in these novels, I am not suggesting that all five novelists wrote with a consciously 'feminist' intention, but that gender issues were highly politicised in postwar Spain and were so closely entwined with Francoism that this critique of the regime's gender politics is a further element of political criticism. While the tradition of conservative patriarchy was not unique to the postwar period, the Franco regime was largely responsible for the continuing pervasiveness of the ultra-conservative mindset, having enthusiastically re-claimed the traditional Catholic gender framework, taking a step backwards from the liberal advances made during the time of the Second Republic. The subversion of the regime's notion of the 'ideal' woman and the condemnation of policies that disproportionately affected women therefore form an important part of the overall sociopolitical critique in all five novels.

The regime's prioritisation of the control of female morality, and particularly sexuality, is confirmed by the fact that *La noria*, *Nuevas amistades* and *Diario de una maestra* were flagged by the censor for reasons of questionable morality, but not one of the five novels examined was regarded by the censors as socially or politically subversive, despite the fact that many aspects of these works do not conform to Francoist ideology. As I have stressed throughout this thesis, censorship under Franco was unpredictable and inconsistent; it is impossible to really compare the way each novel was received because: the censors had diverging priorities and different levels of education; they put varying levels of effort and time into understanding the content of the novel; and, as mentioned briefly in the chapter on *Diario de una maestra*, the publication dates of the selected novels also span a period



of sixteen years during which political and social circumstances in Spain changed substantially. Even when the censor did signal areas of concern that were to be amended or deleted, as occurred for both *Nuevas amistades* and *Diario de una maestra*, the changes requested were superficial and did not affect the critical ideas present in the novels (despite the fact that Dolores Medio claimed her novel had been ‘mutilated’ by censorship). Moreover, there is the possibility that authors were treated differently by the censors depending on their connections to the regime, and also depending on their gender. It has been suggested by other critics that female writers were treated either more leniently by the censor, who saw their work as insignificant and harmless (a possibility supported by the reception of Laforet’s *Nada*) or alternatively, were scrutinised more carefully, particularly in relation to the ‘moral’ aspects of their work (an argument supported by the case of Medio’s *Diario de una maestra*). These contradictory findings lend further weight to the argument that censorship under Franco was arbitrary and incompetent.

That is not to say, however, that censorship was not a major consideration with regard to the postwar novel; on the contrary, self-censorship was a fundamental factor in the shaping of all five novels analysed here. The novelists wrote with the knowledge that their work would not be published—or more seriously, that they could be suspected of being involved with anti-government organisations—if their novel was found to attack the values of the regime, the regime’s ‘dogma,’ its institutions, the Church or prescribed standards of morality. The writers, therefore, tailored the content of their novels and employed a variety of strategies to put forward their social and political commitment without running into trouble at the stage of censorship, as discussed in all of the case studies. The awareness of censorship and the subsequent self-censorship undertaken by the authors was thus far more influential in the shaping of the novels than was the actual process of official government censorship. Unfortunately, however, information in the censorship archives only reveals the comments made by the censors; barring the instances where information about the author’s own previous drafts is available (as in the case of *Nada*), scholars can only speculate as to how each work may have been influenced by self-censorship.

Having demonstrated that the novels examined in this thesis undermine Francoist principles and draw attention to issues that were never publicly acknowledged by the establishment, the question follows whether this type of subtle social opposition to the dictatorship actually had any influence on the situation in Spain. The reality was, of course, that literary works such as these had a very limited readership and that those likely to read these novels at the time were probably well-educated and like-minded. The idea of 'revealing' a hidden reality was, therefore, somewhat redundant, as the readers were already aware of the difficulties of life in Francoist Spain and, in any case, there were no political outlets through which to take any real action against the regime, had the reader been inspired to take a stand. Despite this somewhat disenchanted conclusion, the critical depiction of Spanish reality in these novels, was, in other ways, truly significant because it presented an alternative message and perspective to that of the regime which was otherwise the only view present in the public sphere. While these novels may not have directly contributed to a social revolution in Spain, as the theory behind the social realist novel expounded, the critical views put forward and published, albeit in novels with a limited distribution, contributed to the emergence of the general "culture of dissidence" in Spain, which really began to be influential in Spanish culture from the 1960s.<sup>321</sup>

Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly from a modern perspective, as I outlined in the Introduction, the novels can now be considered a valuable primary source of information on everyday life under Franco: these accounts, while fictional, are independent from the version of Spain provided in propagandist media and official history books. Significantly, they also offer a very different perspective from more recent novels by contemporary writers that deal with the Civil War and its aftermath, the works of the so-called 'memory boom' that privilege Republican stories, many of which also present partisan accounts of the past.

The approach to reading the postwar novel used in this thesis highlights the potential for future case studies of other novels from this period, particularly those by authors who are regarded as 'marginal' to the *novela social* movement, in whose

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<sup>321</sup> See Mangini, *Rojos y rebeldes* for a discussion of the 'culture of dissidence' in Spain.

work the social and political commentary has largely been overlooked; it would also be interesting to examine the theme of gender in some of the more 'typical' social realist works of the 1950s. Another theme that was outside the scope of this study that would be relevant for future investigation is the representation of regional identity in postwar literature. In terms of the relationship between literature and repressive political regimes, it would be profitable to compare the postwar Spanish novel to that written under similar circumstances, such as under the Portuguese and Greek dictatorships in Europe and in Latin America during the second half of the twentieth century.

The analysis of the five novels in this thesis challenges traditional notions of social and political commitment in postwar Spanish literature in terms of subject matter, style and literary chronology. Despite censorship, the novels highlight problematic social issues which were hidden behind the veneer of National-Catholic propaganda under Francoism, and illustrate the negative effects of many of the regime's ultra-conservative policies and social norms, particularly with regard to women in postwar Spain. While novels such as these had a limited readership, literature was virtually the only outlet that intellectuals had to express their dissent under Franco, and the critical realist novel was thus vital in the development of a culture of resistance against the dictatorship that would, eventually, lead to the establishment of democracy in Spain.



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