

GENRE, REPRESENTATION, AND MEMORY IN SPANISH CIVIL WAR TEXTS BY WOMEN FROM  
SPAIN AND THE UNITED STATES

by

JENNIFER PRINCE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Latin American, Iberian and Latino Cultures  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City  
University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Latin American, Iberian  
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## ABSTRACT

Genre, Representation, and Memory in Spanish Civil War Texts by Women from Spain and the United States

by

Jennifer Prince

Advisor: Paul Julian Smith

This dissertation seeks to address a lacuna in the androcentric Spanish Civil War literary canon by recovering women's voices writing about the war from the 1930s to the present. It also examines the war stories women tell and how they represent themselves and others when writing about the Spanish Civil War. All of the seven authors examined here write through the lens of some distance—either as American citizens observing the war or as the descendants of the war's survivors—but each with an intimate connection rooted in biology or ideology. The foundation of this dissertation is close reading and textual analysis of the works of these authors, and it also dialogues with feminist theories as well as critical studies of women and marginalized populations in war.

Chapter 1 examines the memoir *Death's Other Kingdom* (1939), by Gamel Woolsey, and *Savage Coast* (2013), the posthumously published novel by the poet Muriel Rukeyser. This chapter argues that Woolsey and Rukeyser (the latter through her autobiographical protagonist, Helen) utilize feminist narrative techniques highlighting their unique visual and tactile experiences in the Spanish Civil War as a means of establishing their authority as feminine seeing subjects of war. The second chapter of this dissertation is an analysis of Virginia Cowles' memoir *Looking for Trouble* (1941) and three overlapping pieces by Lillian Hellman about her time in Spain: "Day in Spain" (1938), "The Little War" (1942), and a chapter of her memoir, *An*

*Unfinished Woman* (1969). Chapter 2 continues the analysis of Chapter 1, examining the work of Cowles and Hellman as both participants and observers of war. The chapter also argues that the texts' narrative embellishments and the writers' post-facto fashioning of these memoirs reveal a concern for the audience's affective connection with the suffering in Spain. Chapter 3 is an analysis of three 21<sup>st</sup> century Spanish novels by women: Ángeles López's *Martina, la rosa número trece* (2006); Almudena Grandes' popular novel, *El corazón helado* (2007); and the Basque epic, *Hijos del árbol milenario*, by María Jesús Orbegozo (2010). This chapter is in dialogue with Sebastiaan Faber's "La literatura como acto afiliativo" and asserts that the literary trend toward intergenerational connectedness in contemporary Spanish Civil War literature is based both in affiliative and filiative relationships. The connectedness created by intergenerational affiliative and filiative bonds also engenders a tendency towards social and collective narratives in all three texts, which highlight genealogies and networks of women. This sense of a social and collective protagonism in the three novels is strengthened through the use of paratexts, which also contribute to a sense of hybridity in the genres of these texts.

This dissertation demonstrates the ways in which the women writers studied here are very present in their texts about the Spanish Civil War. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century narratives, these writers are visible in the texts as witnesses and participants in the action of the war. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century texts, the writers make themselves visible especially through their paratextual elements that highlight the processes of investigation and writing and underscore the facticity of the novel's events. These techniques align with feminist textual practices, and the narrative strategies also strengthen the positions of the writers as affective and effective authorities on their chosen topics within the Spanish Civil War literary corpus.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work of this dissertation could not have been completed without the support and encouragement of so many others, both within academia and without. My first graduate advisor, Professor María Hernández Ojeda at Hunter College, inspired me to pursue 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Spanish literature and expertly guided me through the completion of my Master's essay on women in the Spanish Civil War. At the Graduate Center, I have benefitted from the steady presence and leadership of Professor José del Valle, who served as Executive Officer of the program through nearly all of my years as a student in it. My professors and committee members, Drs. Magdalena Perkowska and Nuria Morgado, have generously committed their expertise over the course of my graduate career. My work has benefitted both from being a student in their classes and from their insightful and gracious suggestions throughout the process of my second exam, dissertation proposal, and this dissertation.

I consider myself very fortunate to have been the student of the late Distinguished Professor in English, Jane Marcus, in her final two semesters teaching in CUNY. Her contributions to the field of women writing about war are foundational in this dissertation. Many of the former students she inspired and mentored are cited herein and many others have supported and assisted me in this project. As I am sure she wanted, her legacy is a true community of feminist scholars.

Of course, my advisor, Professor Paul Julian Smith, is due all my gratitude. I am certain that I could have found no better mentor. His kind encouragement, patience, concern for me as a scholar and as a person, and generosity of intellect are the reasons this dissertation is now

written out in the following pages. The work herein has been made eminently richer because of his guidance, and all the faults are my own.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Tales of Women

In “Tales of War and Tears of Women,” Nancy Huston writes: “Wars do not end with the ‘cessation of hostilities’; they are not over until the right to describe them has been appropriated by one side over and above the other” (274). In this way, the Spanish Civil War did not end in 1939. The “right to describe” the war has yet to be determined. Although Spain has experienced a boom in fiction and non-fiction texts about the Spanish Civil War and post-war in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, unearthing previously silenced voices of the defeated Republicans, this has been met with a counter surge of pro-Franco publications crying out “revisionism!” (Stradling 445). Huston also questions if women even have the right to describe wars, whether they are on the winning side or otherwise. Women, she claims, “will make a choice—not to say captive—audience for war narratives” (274), and only men are the composers of these narratives (280). Although, of course, in the midst of a discussion over which side has the right to describe the Spanish Civil War, since 1936 there have been many fiction and non-fiction texts on the subject written by women from many countries throughout the world, and some with popular success. Where Huston’s claim needs to be considered, then, is in relationship to whether or not the Spanish Civil War narratives written by women in the last eight decades have had the right to be taken seriously and studied in critical, academic discussions.

In this dissertation, I propose a transatlantic and longitudinal study of Spanish Civil War narratives written by American and Spanish women based in a close reading of each text and accompanying theories of feminism, genre, and memory, especially as these relate to war and the post-war experiences. Some of the texts I study here have received little-to-no attention by the public and scholars alike, and although a few have found popular success and readership,

none has more than a scant bibliography of critical academic work<sup>1</sup>. The primary texts are of varied genres and span a period of nearly 80 years, from the eyewitness reportage, memoir, and novels dating to the beginning of the war to the varieties of novels of the past decade. All are written either by women from the United States who were eyewitnesses to the war or by Spanish women who felt its effects in the decades following Franco's victory. In studying these texts, I pay proper attention to not just what stories women tell about war, but also how they tell these stories: how the writers see themselves or their protagonists as actors and observers of the war, how the writers or protagonists relate to the other people around them, and what shapes their narratives take. I will demonstrate that these writers are very present and visible in their own texts about the Spanish Civil War, not just because they may be writing about themselves, but also because frequently these writers make use of paratextual elements both within and without the narrative that remind the readers of the author's presence and her compositional processes. As I will also show, making themselves visible as actors, observers, and writers, through the addition of paratexts and through the composition of multi-genre texts, the writers align themselves—inadvertently or otherwise—with feminist textual practices. The narrative strategies they employ also strengthen their positions as eyewitness or factual authorities on their chosen topic and often further this with techniques that add an affective authority to their writing.

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Cowles' *Looking for Trouble* received multiple reprints in the early 1940s and has been translated into French and Spanish since its 1941 original publication. Lillian Hellman won the National Book Award for her memoir containing a chapter on her experiences in Spain, *An Unfinished Woman* (1969). More recently, Spanish novelist Almudena Grandes' *El corazón helado* (2007) has been a wide-read popular success in Spain and its translations elsewhere and winner of the 2008 Premio José Manuel Lara.

As already mentioned, this dissertation is based in a transatlantic and longitudinal approach to the Spanish Civil War texts written by women. From the United States of America, I study Gamel Woolsey's memoir, *Death's Other Kingdom* (1939) together with Muriel Rukeyser's autobiographical novel *Savage Coast* (written in 1936 but unpublished until 2013) in Chapter 1. In Chapter 2, I turn my attention to sections of Virginia Cowles' memoir/reportage *Looking for Trouble* and to three different yet overlapping texts by Lillian Hellman: "Day in Spain" (1938) "The Little War" (1942), and *An Unfinished Woman* (1969). In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women war correspondents were a rather new phenomenon (Usandizaga 15, 30) and the American writers studied in this dissertation compose texts that respond to this. The writers clearly and frequently highlight their presence and individual roles as observers and actors within the bellic context. This technique sometimes seemingly comes at the expense of recognizing the suffering and individuality of the the Spanish people around them, although, as I argue, the work of these authors to feature their own independence, competence, and observations is necessary for the consideration of their texts as a whole. As Cowles reveals through the treatment she is afforded by the men around her, if women writers did not assert their presence and actions, their contributions could be assumed to be composed in a garden or directed by certain men who consider themselves the only authorities on war and how to write about it. Nevertheless, I will demonstrate how the visibility of each writer's individualism is integral to the narratives about the war and their dedication to raising awareness about the realities of the suffering of the Spanish people.

Clearly, women writing about the Spanish Civil War is not a phenomenon of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In fact, women's contributions on the war have been substantive, but greatly

overlooked or dismissed, since 1936. This dissertation will bring these women out of the masculine-shaped shadows of an androcentric 20<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Civil War canon and examine their narratives for their own significant contributions to the field of Spanish Civil War writing and their fights to be recognized as creating significant contributions, independent of the men around them. It also, of course, posits not only that these writers and their texts have new relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but that the eyewitness texts published in the 30s and 40s and studied here merited inclusion in the Spanish Civil War canon in the first place.

From Spain, in Chapter 3 I study the testimonial and metafictional novel, *Martina, la rosa número trece* (2006) by Ángeles López, Almudena Grandes' epic and multigenerational novel *El corazón helado* (2007), and María Jesús Orbegozo's 2010 novel about the Basque war and post-war experiences, *Hijos del árbol milenario*. Although these three novels are distanced from the texts written by the Americans studied in both time and space, there are noticeable connections, not just in the underlying context of the Spanish Civil War, but also points of comparison, such as the approaches to representation and narrative techniques to support these. While the American women writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century employ textual strategies that highlight the individuality and independence of the protagonist of each text, the Spanish writers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, on the other hand, employ textual strategies that underscore collectivity. This approach not only highlights networks and genealogies of women, but also implicitly directs attention to the unheard, unwritten, or unread stories of so many other Spanish people who died or continue to live in silence. Furthermore, although all of the novels studied in Chapter 3 were published in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, each author also makes use of paratextual elements—epigraphs, photographs, notes from the author, among many others—to show how their texts

are firmly rooted not just in the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but in actual stories of Spanish Civil War victims and survivors whose voices and stories were suppressed by Francoism.

The foundation of the work of this dissertation is my own close reading of each of the texts studied and identification and analyses of salient themes and narrative strategies. Where applicable, I look to reviews, introductions, and critical analyses written about each of the texts, but these are minimal, especially due to the fact that the works studied here have been largely ignored by scholars. In fact, only one of the texts included in this dissertation has been approached with a long-form study: Muriel Rukeyser's *Savage Coast*. Of course, the work of Rowena Kennedy-Epstein in discovering this text, preparing it for publication, and her simultaneous dissertation on the novel is of key importance here; without it, my analysis of *Savage Coast* would not be possible. Another substantive piece is war correspondent Martha Gellhorn's "On Apocryphism," included in a 1981 edition of the *Paris Review*. Gellhorn's piece is a sharp, scathing attack of Lillian Hellman's *An Unfinished Woman*, and Gellhorn's claim that Hellman invented much of her 1969 chapter on Spain informs my approach to the memoir, but also possibly has had a negative impact on the willingness of other scholars to examine Hellman's writing on her time in Spain. Finally, while Almudena Grandes' *El corazón helado* is frequently mentioned in the past decade in critical studies of the recent boom in Spanish Civil War literature in Spain, nonetheless, little focus has been given to the nearly 1,000-page novel. Sebastiaan Faber addresses *El corazón helado* as part of a short, cursory analytical piece, "La literatura como acto afiliativo: La nueva novela de la Guerra Civil (2000-2007)," published in 2011. Faber's uses a distinction between *filiative* and *affiliative* relationships—founded in biology and ideology, respectively—to explain the motivations behind the new wave of Spanish

literary creation with a tendency towards recovering and writing stories of the Republican side of the conflict. Throughout Chapter 3, and especially within the section on *El corazón helado*, I dialogue with Faber's position that the Spanish Civil War novels of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are mostly founded in affiliative relationships.

The theoretical methodology of this dissertation is founded firstly in writings of many scholars who take a feminist approach to the study of war and gender. Already mentioned is Nancy Huston's "Tales of War and Tears of Women," (1982) in which the author argues that "men's wars are made of stories" (271) and "it has always been men (and not Man) who have made war narratives; secondly, it has always been men (and not Man) who have made the casting decisions" (280). Women, besides being the audience for these stories, have played very few roles, most of them being "reactive" (275). However, certainly the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw women not only participating in wars as combatants, but also as observers of the action and emerging writers of war narratives. In the introduction to their edited collection on gender and war, *Gendering War Talk* (1993), Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott assert that the modern "war is beginning to undo the binary structures that it originally put in place: peace and war; home (female space) and front (male space); combatant and civilian [...]. War has become a terrain in which gender is negotiated" (xi). As the contributors to *Gendering War Talk* examine individually in separate contexts, the 20<sup>th</sup> century complicated gender and war by shifting the possibilities of women, although definitively not shifting the mindsets of all male combatants and war correspondents who were observing women becoming part of their traditionally male spaces and questioning or rejecting their presence there.



With women becoming eyewitnesses of war in ways they had not before, it is not surprising that women's war texts in the 20<sup>th</sup> century not only feature women establishing visual authority, but also new ways of seeing war and its effects. Although specifically examining global conflicts before and immediately after the Spanish Civil War, Jean Gallagher's *The World Wars through the Female Gaze* (1998) is useful in approaching the subject of feminine visual authority. Similar to the position of Huston, Gallagher explains that there has been a "clear and gendered distinction between the masculine 'authoritative eyewitness' and the feminine 'passive spectator'" (3) because male combatants have traditionally been able to "see action," thus their war narratives are considered more authentic and authoritative (3). According to Gallagher, women eyewitness writers have both attempted to establish visual authority through techniques that heighten the visibility of their experiences and texts, such as the use of indexing language (19), but also have "disrupted" a masculine totalizing gaze by failing to translate into writing the "unpicturable act of war itself, the unnamed wounding and destruction of bodies" (50). Building upon this idea of disruption of a masculine gaze, Carol Acton's article, "Diverting the Gaze: The Unseen Text in Women's War Writing" (2004), addresses women's strategies for paradoxically representing violence and its effects while finding these unspeakable or unrepresentable. Acton posits that women writers "are compelled to divert the gaze while at the same time revealing or partially revealing the trauma from which the gaze is diverted" (55), including narrative strategies such as the objectification of victims (59, 68) and also the introduction of "an alternate set of images that establishes a new diversionary narrative" (55). Acton's and Gallagher's work is especially useful in considering the artful narrative strategies in the texts of the four American eyewitnesses studied in Chapters 1 and 2. The work of French

second-wave feminist Luce Irigaray is also essential in my analysis of the establishing of authority. I turn to Irigaray's critique of the gendered privileging of senses in "The Language of Man" (1989) and *The Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974) to temper the masculine privileging of sight and argue for other methods of authority based in the non-privileged, feminine senses: touch and taste.

Also of great importance to the third chapter of this dissertation are theoretical approaches to literature written by people who are or have been marginalized, or whose families have been marginalized, violently or otherwise. While critical studies of the Spanish Civil War in literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are emerging, the corpus is still limited. Many scholars, myself included, turn to other sources of critical analysis on another marginalized group of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Jewish Europeans, including Holocaust studies. I have found Marianne Hirsch's *Family Frames* (1997) and *The Generation of Postmemory* (2012), which offer theoretical frameworks based in the study of Holocaust survivors and their children and grandchildren, applicable and useful in this dissertation. Her studies are valuable for addressing both paratextual elements included in the novels studied as well as memory studies more generally. Additionally, the 20<sup>th</sup> century Jewish experience as a linguistic and ethnic minority in Europe also is applied in my dissertation with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's study of Kafka: *Towards a Minor Literature* (1975).

While academics and other scholars have undertaken myriad studies on the Spanish Civil War—its causes, its events, its aftermath, and the literature surrounding all of these—I am interested in the lacunae left by the androcentrism of these studies. Women participants in the war had been overlooked for decades, and while they have become more visible recently,

women writers have yet to receive the same level of attention. As this dissertation and its bibliography will show, there are very few analyses of narratives written by women writers on the Spanish Civil War, and even fewer of these are undertaken with very much depth. María Jesús Orbegozo's *Hijos del árbol milenario*, for example, has not had the attention of a single scholar in an academic publication. Gamel Woolsey's *Death's Other Kingdom*, has fared almost as poorly, despite the 75 years since its publication and a handful of new editions. This dissertation seeks to reverse this trend.

Studies on the Spanish Civil War also tend towards insularity: while American women writers or American participants may be grouped in one publication, Spanish women writers or Spanish participants are grouped in another. This phenomenon may be due to the fact of differing languages, or simply due to the academic and political borders drawn around land masses. In this dissertation, I approach literary contributions in English as well as Spanish, by Americans as well as by Spaniards. With this approach to the subject, I seek to shed light on the way the literary production by women on each side of the Atlantic complements the other, revealing new ways of reading the texts, identifying and analyzing points of similarities and contrasts. Finally, I hope this dissertation will begin to fill the lacunae in the academic discipline, adding to the composite picture of the Spanish Civil War's impacts on the world, especially on women, civilians, and families.

The first chapter of this dissertation, titled "Accidental American Eyewitnesses: Gamel Woolsey, Muriel Rukeyser, and the First Days of the Spanish Civil War," centers on two American poets who were both present in Spain—albeit in opposite ends of the Mediterranean coast—on the day the Spanish Civil War began in July, 1936. As such, they became accidental participants

and eyewitnesses to the tumultuous action of the first days of the war. Gamel Woolsey, living in an area outside Málaga with her husband, Gerald Brenan, wrote and published her memoir, *Death's Other Kingdom*, in 1939 from England. Muriel Rukeyser, who was arriving in Spain to cover Barcelona's People's Olympiad—the anti-fascist alternative athletic competition to the Olympic Games held in Nazi Berlin, Germany—departed the country within days of the outbreak of war but with a profound mark left on her by what she witnessed. Her autobiographical novel, *Savage Coast*, was written within months of setting sail to France from Barcelona in 1936 but, despite the author's repeated efforts, remained unpublished until 2013, after it was rediscovered in the author's archives by Rowena Kennedy-Epstein, a doctoral student in English at the Graduate Center, City University of New York.

Chapter 1 studies *Death's Other Kingdom* and *Savage Coast* as written eyewitness testimonies of the Spanish Civil War. Through narrative techniques highlighting their unique visual experiences, Woolsey and Rukeyser (the latter through her autobiographical protagonist Helen) establish their authority as feminine seeing subjects of war, not just as audience but also as participants in the unfolding events. The visual authority the two writers seek in their writing certainly may mirror at times the authority that is afforded to male combatants, but this chapter also examines Woolsey's and Helen's unique ways of seeing and physically experiencing the war around them. Both Woolsey and Rukeyser craft narratives with a powerful affective authority as a result of these experiences.

The year 1937 saw an influx of foreign war correspondents in Spain, including many American writers. In Chapter 2, titled "And Now (Re)Presenting...: Virginia Cowles and Lillian Hellman Star as War Correspondents in Spain," I examine the writings of two such writers.

Virginia Cowles was beginning her career as a war reporter when she visited Spain. She later published *Looking for Trouble* (1941), documenting her observations about the Spanish Civil War and other subsequent conflicts. Lillian Hellman, already famed for her playwriting and screenplays, published her memoir, *An Unfinished Woman*, with a chapter on her time in Spain in 1969, but a significant portion of the material about the war had appeared before: “Day in Spain,” published in *The New Republic* in 1938, and “The Little War” for the contemporary writers’ anthology *This Is My Best* in 1942.

This chapter seeks to continue the analysis of Chapter 1 of the two reporters as both participants and observers of war. It also examines the link between their post-facto fashioning of memoirs and the narrative embellishments or choices in their texts. Both authors star as protagonists in their own texts about the Spanish Civil War, occasionally seeming as if it is at the expense of an understanding of and compassion for the Spaniards around them, many of whom remain nameless. In this chapter, I argue that the textual self-fashioning in both Hellman’s *An Unfinished Woman* and Cowles’ *Looking for Trouble*, far from being the ideations of self-absorbed divas, are useful strategies in relaying poignant, affective stories about the realities of war for the authors as well as for the war’s victims.

Finally, Chapter 3 of this dissertation shifts the focus of my study across the Atlantic and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, from the American writers who were eyewitnesses in the Spanish Civil War to the Spanish novelists and *nietas de la guerra*. As writers generationally removed from the action of the war, it is no surprise that intergenerational connectedness and memory are important aspects of Ángeles López’s *Martina, la rosa número trece*, *El corazón helado*, by Almudena Grandes, and *Hijos del árbol milenario*, by María Jesús Orbegozo. Sebastiaan Faber

questions whether the literary trend toward intergenerational connectedness in Spanish Civil War literature is actually rooted more in affiliative, rather than filiative, bonds, and in Chapter 3 I seek to answer this question with a thorough analysis of the texts studied. I will also relate the connectedness of affiliative and filiative bonds to a tendency towards social and collective narratives in recent literature about the war written by women in Spain. Indeed, 21<sup>st</sup> century Spanish Civil War literature highlights genealogies and networks, frequently of women, a fact which sharply contrasts with the American texts studied in this dissertation with a single independent, capable protagonist.

Throughout Chapter 3, I also assert that the blurring of genres and the use of paratextual documents are central in each of the texts and serve many functions. One such function is a strengthening of the sense of a social and collective protagonism. Paratextual elements such as the family trees in *Hijos del árbol milenario* and some of the photographs in *Martina, la rosa número trece* remind readers of the connectedness of families and women featured within the narrative. Others, such as notes from the authors, direct the readers' attention outside of the text itself, to entire real groups of Spaniards whose stories have yet to be told. Relatedly, a second function of paratexts is creating a heightened affective impact in the texts; bibliographies and authors' notes remind readers that the shocking and saddening tragedies suffered by each novel's characters, while fictitious, are often based in real events which were related to the authors in scholarly investigations and through personal testimony. Finally, I argue that these sorts of paratextual inclusions in the novels, beyond contributing affective impact, also add to the legitimacy of the narrative and the author. The author claims allegiance to History and the truth through her blurring of genres and paratexts, transforming the reading of the novel into

the reading of a narrative that can also be non-fiction, such as a scrapbook, a testimony, or even a history book.

We will now see how the seven women authors presented here responded to their concerns for the effects of the Spanish Civil War by writing, whether the conflict was occurring around them at the time or whether its lingering consequences are still being felt for some decades later. All of the seven writers use textual strategies to ensure the effective and affective transmission of their narratives; the American eyewitnesses present themselves as central figures in their own texts while the Spanish writers compose novels with accompanying assertions to the true and well-researched nature of the fiction. Additionally, we will see how many of the authors studied here use intertexts, paratexts, and multiple genres that broaden their possibilities for storytelling and establish the affective and scholarly authority of women writing about war.

## CHAPTER 1

## Accidental American Eyewitnesses: Gamel Woolsey, Muriel Rukeyser, and the First Days of the Spanish Civil War

When the Spanish Civil War began in July, 1936, it took by surprise two American women who soon thereafter began to write about their very different experiences in the first days of the conflict. American poet and novelist Gamel Woolsey was an expatriate living in Churriana, a small village outside of Málaga<sup>2</sup>, with her partner, a British writer named Gerald Brenan. Much farther up the Mediterranean coast, a very young American poet, Muriel Rukeyser, had just crossed into Spain by train from France on her way to cover the People's Olympiad in Barcelona. Finding themselves in the middle of two distinct hotbeds of action, Rukeyser and Woolsey became accidental participants and eyewitnesses in the war. Unlike the many American writers who arrived in Spain in the following months and years, they had no expectation of seeing or participating in a war, and therefore had no preconceived notions of what the war might be like nor plans to write about it from the moment they were first present in the fighting. Nonetheless, their experiences affected them so greatly that they both began feverishly writing soon after leaving Spain (*Anglo-American* 155, Kennedy-Epstein ix).

Rukeyser spent barely five days in Barcelona before reluctantly leaving on a ship bound for France. According to Rowena Kennedy-Epstein, who found Rukeyser's manuscript for an

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<sup>2</sup> Characteristic of the English-language texts on the Spanish Civil War of the time, Woolsey's and Rukeyser's orthography and punctuation used anglicized orthography and punctuation when recording toponyms and snippets of Spanish language. When quoting their texts, I, of course, remain faithful to the orthography and punctuation as published. In my own textual analysis, however, I use punctuation and spelling as it would appear in Spanish. Additionally, in *Death's Other Kingdom* Woolsey favors British English orthography, as the memoir was intended for a British audience. Her spelling is preserved in all applicable citations, but my comments will use American English orthography.



unpublished Spanish Civil War autobiographic novel, *Savage Coast*, and edited and published it in 2013, the text was completed in the fall of 1936 (ix). Finding no interest from her publisher, however, Rukeyser continued to heavily edit the manuscript, but it is unclear at what point, if ever, she stopped working on it or if she ever tried to pursue publishing it again (x). Woolsey and Brennan left Spain in October of 1936 and Woolsey's memoir, *Death's Other Kingdom*, was published in August, 1939, just months after the conclusion of the war. This chapter examines both of these texts in their published forms. It will center on the concept of the theater of war and of Woolsey and Rukeyser presenting themselves as actors and spectators in that war, a dual role that seeks to legitimize their literal and figurative points of view.

In the chapter's title, "Accidental American Eyewitnesses," the term "eyewitnesses" is key to my argument. Within the traditionally gendered wartime roles, there has always been a difference in the perception of the types of seeing done by men and women, as Jean Gallagher explains in her book *World Wars through the Female Gaze*. Drawing on the scholarship of many theorists of gender and war, Gallagher explains that there has been a "clear and gendered distinction between the masculine 'authoritative eyewitness' and the feminine 'passive spectator'" (3). This distinction is highlighted by the common English expression "seeing action." If this term were used in reference to a man, most likely it would refer to him participating in the fighting at the front rather than an act of viewing the conflict. The same is not true when referring to a woman. As a war's principal actors on the front lines, men's voices have been privileged in narratives of war. Their "seeing" involves fighting, something women traditionally were not permitted to do, therefore their insights have been deemed more worthwhile and

authentic. As Gallagher states, “[v]ision has functioned, then, not only as a mark of and basis for authenticity and authority in writing about war but has played an important role in the development and gendering of cultural discourses about war” (3).

This privileging of male voices is certainly and troublingly evident with Spanish Civil War narratives. George Orwell’s *Homage to Catalonia*, for example is read widely and his work is praised as masterful and an essential read on the Spanish Civil War. Woolsey, on the other hand, is barely read, although at different times a scant handful of editors have recognized the value in her work enough to put out new editions. It is also possible to attribute the lack of initial readership for *Death’s Other Kingdom* to greater political and historical circumstances. Her reviewer in the December 9, 1939, *Times Literary Supplement*, the historian Maurice Percy Ashley, ultimately had a favorable opinion of the book, calling it “beautiful and moving” but also adding that “the lesson that it teaches of how the ordinary men and women of the world have to pay for war is less necessary now [that Britain has entered World War II]” (720). The review is also problematic in a way that highlights the difficulties in reception for women’s narratives about war. It begins: “This is a story of Spain during the recent civil war so realistic that it must be based on reality. It tells of an Englishman and his wife who settled down to live in a house in a village outside Malaga...” (720). Before the second sentence has ended, the reviewer has trivialized Woolsey’s eyewitness account by implicitly casting doubt on its overall authenticity with the use of the phrase “based on reality.” The reviewer also obscures Woolsey as the writer of her own experiences and places her experiences as subsumed under those of the “Englishman” of whom she is simply the wife (and apparently without her own individual nationality).

John Cowper Powys, an author of the Bloomsbury Group with a certain amount of fame and reputation, composed the preface for the original edition of *Death's Other Kingdom*. Instead of celebrating the work and its author, however, the short introduction is replete with misogynistic backhanded compliments that effectively dismiss both the impact of the memoir and the legitimacy of its woman author's points of view on war. Opening the preface with the labeling of the book as "the instinctive feminine reaction to the tragic occurrences of the War in Spain" (viii) is only the first of the substantial list of mentions made to Woolsey's gender in the scant five pages of the review. The references implicitly juxtapose the sentimental, emotional, and childish "feminine reaction" with what it sure to be a rational, mature, and modern masculine perspective, even suggesting that a woman has no place in war. Several of Powys's comments seem to simultaneously praise the memoir while very thinly veiling contempt for women writers and for Woolsey's creation. "Perhaps it is permitted only to women—that is to women when they're not maddened by the hysteria of sex—to retain such normal human sympathies in a crisis that is crying for blood," states Powys (viii). Indeed, Powys also undermines her authority to make observations and to publish them when he seemingly equates her work with a silly childhood diary, claiming that Woolsey "reacts as an impulsive and romantic girl rather than as a grown-up woman of the world" (x). The attacks of Powys on Woolsey in his preface to her work betray not only Powys's anxiety about woman venturing into the traditionally male domain of authority and authorship in general, but also Woolsey's authority on the traditionally masculine domain of war. It is tempting to completely dismiss Powys's misogynistic preface, calling it and its creator a product of the times. Yet the impact of his words on *Death's Other Kingdom* was probably great considering Woolsey's status as an

unknown writer, with little-to-no reputation to rely on. The dismantling of Woolsey's authority in this earliest review of her work may have had a profound and lasting effect on its reception in the following seven decades as *Death's Other Kingdom* is repeatedly overlooked in the Spanish Civil War canon in favor of other first-hand account and works by men such as Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell, and Woolsey's partner Gerald Brenan.

Similarly, Rukeyser's work suffered the effects of negative reviews, although much less is known about them due to the nearly 80-year delay in publishing the novel. According to Kennedy-Epstein, Rukeyser's male editor called her work "BAD" and "a waste of time" (qtd. in Kennedy-Epstein x) and the anonymous reader report was also wholly unfavorable (x). Her editor encouraged her to abandon her highly experimental manuscript in favor of her poetry, hoping for a return to the lyrical style of her first published work, *Theory of Flight* (1935). The ultimate result of Rukeyser's discouraging feedback was, as Kennedy-Epstein reports, the manuscript "was eventually misfiled in an unmarked and undated folder in the Library of Congress" (x) and not rescued from this oblivion until Kennedy-Epstein found it nearly 30 years after the author's death.

The reception that Rukeyser's and Woolsey's texts received as war narratives written by women is not uncommon. To combat this, women "writers attempted to establish the often troubled legitimacy of their texts and to address and construct their readers through an appeal to the authority of vision" (Gallagher 12). The challenge was to move the author from category of passive spectator to an onlooker with access and who can act within some limitations. It is uncertain or even doubtful that Rukeyser and Woolsey had conscious intentions to achieve this in their writing, but both of their texts highlight their visual experiences as well as their actions,

particularly their access to transportation and the opportunities that access opens for them. As women who are afforded unprecedented freedom of movement, Rukeyser and Woolsey negotiate the spaces between being actors and spectators and are therefore uniquely positioned for transmitting to their readers, as spectators themselves another step removed from the action, the realities of the Spanish Civil War.

#### Gamel Woolsey: An Outsider Within

Woolsey's experience of the Spanish Civil War is very much related to the phenomenon of her being an outsider within. As an American married to a British citizen, both living as permanent residents in Spain, her foreignness coupled with familiarity and friendships with her Spanish neighbors affords her a unique perspective and physical access that few others could achieve in the tumultuous months at the beginning of the war in Malaga. Woolsey establishes an authoritative voice on the way the Spanish Civil War is experienced based on this positionality.

In the afterword for his 2004 edition of *Death's Other Kingdom*, Michael Jacobs calls the memoir "one of the few records of the war that is fuelled more by a love of Spain and its people than by any firm ideological standpoint" (145). According to Jacobs, upon arriving in Spain for the first time with Brennan, "Gamel was instantly overwhelmed by the beauty of Andalucia," which reminded her of her childhood on a South Carolina plantation (151). The connection to the landscape and the people was so great, that in 1935 when Woolsey took up what she thought would be a permanent residence with Brennan in Churriana, "she had somehow discovered in Spain her spiritual home" (151).

Woolsey's relationships with her neighbors and servants are salient aspects of the narrative. From her point of view, the small, multi-generational family that formed the serving staff for their tiny estate was like her family, family that had followed Woolsey and Brennan from another estate in Granada to Málaga. According to Woolsey, that connection was mutual: "In their eyes we were all practically Granadinos together, a great bond between us in this foreign country of Malaga. For a village in Spain is a unity" (10). Her neighbors in Churriana and Málaga are anarchists, monarchists, Falangists, and communists, yet she and Brennan feel "a profound attraction towards them, towards the Spanish people—not the Left nor the Right, but the people of Spain" (49).

Quite possibly because of this affective bond with Spain and its citizenry, *Death's Other Kingdom* is a politically subtle text, focusing much more on the lived experience of war for her and all her neighbors rather than on ideology and politically-aligned propaganda.<sup>3</sup> The *Authors Take Sides* project that came out of the Second International Writers Congress in Defence of Culture in 1937 in Paris asked "the Writers and Poets of England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales": "Are you for, or against, the legal Government and the People of Republican Spain? Are you for, or against, Franco and Fascism? For it is impossible any longer to take no side" (Auden et al.). Here, the war in Spain is seen as a black-and-white conflict in two leading questions. In sharp contrast with these broad strokes, Woolsey's memoir underscores the nuances and significance

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<sup>3</sup> Gamel Woolsey clearly is writing with the intent to influence her audience in *Death's Other Kingdom*, but particularly unique to her is that this tendency is not aligned with either of the two sides that took shape in Spain during the war, although she herself was not politically neutral. Instead, Woolsey writes to defend all the Spanish people to her audience, trying to correct the mistakes reported by the atrocity-driven media and create more sympathetic European and global neighbors, perhaps with an overall humanitarian aim.

of the conflict. Furthermore, unlike the two Spanish writers who were among the co-creators of *Authors Take Sides*—José Bergamín and Ramón Sender—Woolsey's fairly comfortable lifestyle in Spain is probably not contingent upon the outcome of the war, due to her status as an expatriate. This luxury allows for Woolsey to remind her readers that suffering occurred throughout Spain, "that this has been a Civil War of the bitterest kind, with the opposing ideologies struggling, inextricably mixed together in every town and village" (52), and "of the nightmare life which thousands and thousands of people on both sides have led" (107).

That expatriate status also serves as somewhat of an umbrella of safety for Woolsey and Brenan, protecting not only their lives and their property, but also the lives of their neighbors and servants who seek shelter in their home. The first time they flew the English flag over their home, Woolsey reports that "it was a great comfort to the servants and to all our poor neighbours, who said 'Now the house is sacred. No one can touch it'" and came to the house "for protection and consolation" (22). These neighbors also emphatically state that Woolsey and Brenan's home would be spared from the burning of houses by a group of extremists as if "[t]he idea of anyone however fanatical burning the houses of the innocent and slightly ridiculous English had never entered their heads" (19). This attitude of clemency existed, according to Woolsey, because the Spaniards thought of the English as friends of Spain (17). While Woolsey vaguely hints that the relative safety they enjoy can be disrupted by changing attitudes, mistaken identity, or an accident, she also becomes empowered by this feeling of invincibility. It inspires her towards charity for her less fortunate Spanish neighbors, most of whom remain nameless in her narrative, who come to spend time under her roof. Again, Woolsey is intimately connected to the suffering around her, but she also remains mostly outside of it.

Also central to Woolsey's authority as an eyewitness is her ability to move about the province nearly unrestricted, an ability not available to many Spanish neighbors. As she reports, "[t]he distrust of Spaniards for other Spaniards is bottomless and blinds them often to reality" (18). Her neighbors' homes are searched, businesses razed on suspicion, checkpoints established on the roads which also are roamed by patrols. Yet Woolsey and Brennan are exempt from the scrutiny. "It was remarkable how freely we ourselves moved about all the time during the Civil War. We went everywhere we wanted to" (95), she tells her readers. In one such example of this phenomenon, Woolsey and Brennan are traveling to see for themselves what has happened, and "[t]wo patrols stopped us, but when they realised that we were English they only saluted and laughed. 'They aren't Fascists,' they said grinning" (24). The author's natural curiosity for seeing war coupled with a free pass to move about the countryside means that Woolsey is not restricted to a wartime experience exclusively on the home front. Although she spends time fantasizing about turning her home into a hospital, or escaping into the mountains with her neighbors and a fattened pig for future slaughter, being an outsider within Spain also creates an opportunity for Woolsey to go beyond traditional gender roles and beyond physical barriers in Málaga to position herself as a unique authority on the Spanish Civil War.

#### The (Fe)Male Gaze? Visuality and authority

In her book *The World Wars through the Female Gaze*, Jean Gallagher uses the term *gaze* "to convey a number of visual acts within specific historic contexts that help to construct the wartime female subject" (7):



It refers both to a female observer's physical act of looking—or refusing to look—at wartime visual objects [...] and to the visual or verbal representation of that act for a reading or viewing audience. This gaze is continually subject to the various forces that constitute wartime visibility and subjectivity and that attempt to direct or constrain the act of looking and the interpretation of visual experience.

(7-8)

In more general terms, the gaze is problematic, as it is part of what intellectual historian Martin Jay calls the “male specular economy,” and, as a part of this construct, women “are always devalued as inferior versions of the male subject” (533). Women traditionally have been the audience of war narratives composed by men. Yet in *Death's Other Kingdom*, we find an authoritative eyewitness account written by a woman. As Gallagher states, a “seeing female subject as an eyewitness-writer” can both disrupt the male specular economy by being gendered and creates authority by being visual, the privileged medium (18). Woolsey's memoir is an incredibly complex coordination of compositional techniques, including the use of oscillating perspectives which center around issues of the gaze and distance. Yet she is not limited to establishing authority solely around an eyewitness account of war that attempts to approximate a male combatant's perspective, although this perspective does appear and deserves study in this chapter. At other points in the memoir, Woolsey's perspective is even more distanced and her writing takes on the feel of an ethnography. Alternately, the direct eyewitness perspective can be diverted in a technique employed when violence becomes unspeakable. Finally, Woolsey also evokes a different sensorial experience in her writing, that of touch, as her translation of the

way people consume violent images takes on connotations of sexual pleasure, while the atrocities themselves are framed in language of sexual assault.

### Witnessing and War Tourism

Woolsey's impulse from the moment the first fighting starts is to be an eyewitness. Throughout the memoir, Woolsey is seeking vantage points for her visual activity: the window, the balcony, the roof of her home, various locations in Málaga and the surrounding countryside. As Málaga goes up in flames on the first night of the war, she rushes to the window to observe (16). At this moment, Woolsey describes the chaotic scene making use of a modernist style—an anomaly in *Death's Other Kingdom*, but very frequent in Rukeyser's *Savage Coast*, as I will discuss later.

Lorries dashed by, lights glared in the windows, cries, shouts, grinding of brakes.

*Salud! – Salud! – the Revolution.*

‘*Salud!*’, roaring engines, grinding brakes, a distant rifle shot. Daylight again. Has anyone slept? (17, emphasis in original)

These lines reveal a heightened visibility and sensorial input for Woolsey in the confusion of the first moments of war. It is striking that as the family begins to eat breakfast, the narrative returns to Woolsey's more realist style. Thus, different kinds of textuality serve to create distinct modes of perception or subjectivity.

The same factors that facilitate Woolsey's outsider within status also create a tension throughout her memoir between proximity and distance. The distance is marked by visibility, although Woolsey's gaze at times seems more distant and at others much more immediate. For

example, Woolsey's reactions from her privileged vantage points reveal her honest concern for Spain as well as show her connection as a participant and observer:

[S]o we went up on the roof to look at Malaga—the smoke still streamed out from the town like a long woeful banner trailing out on the air to tell of disaster.

We were looking towards the distant sea when suddenly from a big white house not far away sprang up a thin white column of smoke—'oh, Lord, it's come,' I thought with that sickening feeling of the worst arriving. (19)

Here, the tumult has a physical effect on Woolsey. As the distance between her and danger shrinks, the "sickening feeling" arises in her. The war is arriving to the author's own village and to the daily life there that she and her Spanish neighbors participate in together. Though the impact on the reader is minimal, this passage resists a distancing effect and succeeds in establishing Woolsey as an authoritative eyewitness.

It is obvious in the example above that Woolsey has an affective response during this moment of being an eyewitness, even while her readers still feel distance. During other moments, the freedom of movement that she and Brenan enjoy as expatriates means that sometimes war seems like a diversion in their daily lives as they experience Spain as war tourists. For the reader, these moments are the most troubling in Woolsey's narrative because not only does she miss opportunities to recognize or critique the privilege she has to be able to safely distance herself from the war at will, but also the distance she creates here could be construed, especially when taken out of the context of the entire memoir, as a lack of concern for the Spanish people who are her friends, servants, and neighbors.

The most notable instance of this occupies an entire chapter towards the beginning of the book. The day after the aforementioned events involving the burning of nearby houses, Woolsey and Brenan decide to visit another expatriate friend, Gray, who they believe will be able to inform them on the political aspects of the fighting. Their housekeeper, María, disapproves of them leaving the relative safety of their home. Woolsey even remarks that after their return, safe and sound, María “felt that something *ought* to have happened” to the couple (26, emphasis in original). These two short passages contrast the inescapable reality of violence for the Spanish housekeeper with Woolsey’s and Brenan’s excitement and amusement at leaving their home. Woolsey’s tone in relating this short day trip betrays no sense of the danger she felt the night before, even though smoke and gunshots are noted in the distance. The couple even enjoys a picnic lunch, begrudgingly packed by María that morning, along the way to their friend’s home. What comes to the forefront here is an expectation of leisure, while the rumbling of the war fades into the distance.

The sensation of war tourism is reinforced by Gray, who has definite plans to travel although the ideal destination has yet to be decided: “To Morocco to see what’s happening, or to Madrid if I can get there by plane, or to Seville. [...] I want to see some of this fuss before it’s over” (25). That the war can be a diversion or an escapable inconvenience for the expatriate group is highlighted in a later exchange between Gray and Brenan:

‘I shall go to America when I’ve had a look around. Spain’s going to be a hell of a place to write books in for the next year or so.’

‘I shouldn’t try, too exciting just watching it.’ (26)

This last line, although not explicitly mentioned, is presumably spoken by Brenan. It highlights a masculine gaze that distances the viewing subject from the object of its gaze, in this case, the suffering Spanish people. We comprehend in this statement the implicit assumption that war is a spectacle to Brenan. He is removed from involvement, becomes a spectator, and the victims of the war are mere dehumanized objects. This is very unsettling to the reader. What is also unsettling is the obvious absence of Woolsey's opinion on Brenan's statement or on the entire situation. While in following pages Woolsey critiques the flight of expatriates and British citizens whose placid diversions on the coast are so inopportunistically interrupted by war, here she offers no such thoughts about Brenan's statement or about Gray who, moments later, walks out his door for good, typewriter in hand and leaving behind his own Spanish servant standing in the doorway and "dolefully shaking her head" (26). In failing to recognize and critique her own complicity in war tourism here, as well as Brenan's masculine, objectifying gaze, in this brief chapter Woolsey creates a distance between herself and the action of the war, as well as between herself and her readers. Therefore, we begin to lose the affective bond connecting us to the narrative, its author, and the Spanish people.

Yet in this chapter and elsewhere in the memoir, during the passages when Woolsey seems most distanced from the action of war and the Spanish people, the narrative style and focus approximate a sort of casual ethnography. In stepping away from the war's action, Woolsey approaches the points of view of her foreign audience, and makes use of the occasion to also instruct them on useful background information before pulling them back with her into the up-close violence. Thus, in this chapter, readers learn how the failed coup d'état began the war and on what sides groups of soldiers and mercenaries are fighting. In passing, Woolsey also

introduces readers to aspects of Spanish culture and the application among Spaniards of certain key terms such as “Fascist,” for example. This narrative technique serves as yet another manner to achieve legitimacy in the memoir as it demonstrates the author’s knowledge of Spanish politics, people, history, and the language. Not only is Woolsey an eyewitness observer to the action of the war, she also makes it clear that she has the appropriate context on the fighting to add authority to her eyewitness role.

### The (Un)Mediated Gaze

In Woolsey’s first experience with war’s destruction up close, occurring within a few days of the outbreak of the fighting, her perspective shifts again to a new narrative technique that highlights a different visual experience and different technique of establishing authority. Returning to Gallagher’s assertion that there has been a “clear and gendered distinction between the masculine ‘authoritative eyewitness’ and the feminine ‘passive spectator’” (3) in war writing based on a general idea of men as combatants who “see action,” in the passages that I will discuss here, Woolsey writes as an authoritative eyewitness whose gaze approximates that of a soldier’s. Gallagher indicates that civilian women can “potentially share the visual experience and authority of the soldiers” and act “as a mediator between civilian and military sight” (23), which would afford them some visual authority in a male specular economy. In circumstances of women as spectators at the front, it is possible that a woman’s gaze could be directed by a male combatant, who indicates for her where to look and what she could expect to see there (23-24). But in *Death’s Other Kingdom*, as exemplified in the passages below, Woolsey adopts a visual authority typically reserved for men in war without having her gaze focused or

directed by anyone else. Woolsey is the seeing subject, her sight unmediated by any male direction.

In the first of these passages, Woolsey and at least one travel companion travel to Málaga to see what has happened in the first days of unrest after the failed coup attempt. The observations of the gaze in this chapter are almost exclusively Woolsey's as the narrative employs the singular "I" in sentences referring to sight; in this chapter, the images of a destroyed city are introduced as seen through Woolsey's eyes. These passages utilize verbs such as "see," "find," "look," and "examine" as key parts of the narrative, indicating that it is Woolsey directing the gaze. When "we" appears in these passages, it usually does so in the context of movement from one scene of destruction to the next, and then Woolsey reasserts her experiencing subject as a visual authority as the "I" reappears for her observation on the scene in almost every circumstance.

I was somehow surprised to find that [the stalls of the fruit vendors] were as full and rich as ever. [...]

I did not see a single woman in the streets near the market. [...] The streets were empty, and as we went along them we noticed that the cafés and shops we passed were all shut and barred. [...]

We had stopped to examine the ruins of the Casa Larios, and found ourselves surrounded by the groups of people who were hanging about it. Furtively I examined them, and saw with a shock that they all looked quite mad. [...]

I looked at the other faces around us and all looked queer and wild. [...]

[Up the Calle Larios] we found that only about half the houses had been burnt. (33-34)

This use of verbs that indicate seeing continues until Woolsey and her travel companion move away from the destruction and indoors to an expatriate English Club in Málaga. In this chapter, instead of distancing the readers from the objects of her gaze by adding the author as a point of mediation, Woolsey's literary technique of visual direction draws readers closer to the violence and destruction and positions her as an up-close, individual eyewitness whose observations are undeniably her own—unmediated by a male combatant or companion—and who speaks with authority on what she observes.

Yet in this chapter there is an undeniable "we," which includes Woolsey and the aforementioned travel companion or companions. In fact, the chapter's first sentence is: "We wanted very much to go into Malaga to *see with our own eyes* what had happened there" (32, emphasis is mine). The "we" used in this entire chapter deserves special notice. Although the readers can infer that the subject pronoun refers to both Woolsey and Brenan, the author's partner's name is never mentioned once in any of these pages. Nor is there any instance of any singular pronoun to refer to Woolsey's travel companion alone. In fact, the other—or others, as it remains unconfirmed—that make up the "we" is just that: a travel companion. Nearly every use of the subject pronoun "we" is followed by a verb that indicates travel: "we got in [the bus]" (32), "we went along [the streets]" (33), "[w]e got away" (34), "we got to the market" (37), etc.



## The Universal Feminine Seeing Subject

For the French post-structuralist feminist Luce Irigaray, the collective subject was automatically assimilated to the masculine gender (“Language” 191). This androcentric norm has been denounced by feminisms, as “la perspectiva que convierte en universales el cuerpo, la mirada, la experiencia y la denominación de los hombres y los construye como sujeto universal del discurso” (Bengoechea 5). In her article, “Cuerpos hablados, cuerpos negados y el fascinante devenir del género gramatical,” Mercedes Bengoechea studies the case for a “femenino universal absoluto” (6) in the self-presentation of the “I” in writings on the internet. This universal feminine subject flips the androcentric and patriarchal masculine universal subject and in its place we find that the “posición absoluta es aquella en la que se hace de la experiencia y denominación de las mujeres la regla de la experiencia y denominación humanas” (6). Of course, Woolsey is writing in English in a print publication in 1939, but the case can be made that in this chapter the “we” is a universal and absolute feminine subject.

This idea is supported textually as there is no reference made to another referent. The text uses “I” or “we,” but whoever else may be included in the “we” never appears in the text in this chapter as a singular referent, neither mentioned by name nor by singular subject pronoun. Therefore, Woolsey escapes the use of a universal masculine in part simply by not including any grammar that alludes to a male presence. Furthermore, Bengoechea explains the universal and absolute feminine subject as also including “casos en que [...] mujeres se atreven a colocarse en el centro de la enunciación y el discurso y van discurriendo, reflexionando sobre la vida o la condición humana en femenino, dejando que su Yo se proyecte en la humanidad” (9). This idea is most clearly represented textually in the quote above when Woolsey is traveling through

Málaga's market, which is noted as being empty wherein the concept of "empty," it seems, means devoid of even a "single woman." Ironically, the *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer who subsumed Woolsey's identity under Brennan's with his comment on how the memoir was a story of an "Englishman and his wife" has the situation completely backward. If Brennan was involved in the events that led to the writing of this chapter, his identity has been subsumed into the universal feminine.

These techniques of establishing visual authority and a universal collective feminine gaze are repeated again during what Woolsey calls "our most startling war experience" (132). A gray airplane drops 70 bombs within 200 yards of the house and appears to the panicked inhabitants of the home "to be actually trying to hit the house," although it is discovered later, according to Woolsey, that the plane may have been aiming for a munitions stockpile which had formerly been kept in a neighboring garden (133). In this section, the subject pronouns used for both action and observation are almost all "we," and, just like in the previous circumstance, there is no mention made of who the other subjects included in the pronoun are throughout the entire passage.

Woolsey, after describing a collective experience and gaze as if she were one of a group of women combatants under fire, again returns to individual observations about her own experience. She explains she suffered from "shell-shock" (134)—a term coined to describe the experiences of male combatants in World War I—after the incident of the bombing. She also goes on to refer to what we would now call Post Traumatic Stress Disorder that she suffers when seeing airplanes overhead after returning to England (134). Thus, her narrative in these passages contains elements that we might also observe in a male combatant's memoir. Woolsey

establishes eyewitness authority through her proximity to action, through “seeing action” in a way that approximates that of a soldier, indicating that this phrase can no longer be solely ascribed to the male gaze during war.

#### Pornography of Violence: From Visual Authority to Affective Authority

Among those critical of the gaze is Irigaray, who problematizes the intimate connection between ocularcentrism and phallocentrism. For Irigaray, the gaze is held to be masculine and, consequently, sight has been the privileged medium. According to Martin Jay, Irigaray, like other French feminists who are her contemporaries, insisted “on a language of proximity rather than distance, a language closer to the senses of touch and taste than sight” (529). About 35 years before Irigaray published *The Speculum of the Other Woman*—which begins to explore visuality as related to the masculine gaze and feminine bodies and rewrites Western philosophical tradition from Freud to Plato—Gamel Woolsey seems to approximate this idea of a “language closer to the [sense] of touch” in part in her writing.

What sets *Death's Other Kingdom* apart from many other narratives about the Spanish Civil War is this translation or transition between the visual and the physical. The most provoking passages in the memoir progress from a narration of the visual to a combined visual-physical experience involving the consumption of violence in two different respects. On the one hand, we have Woolsey's own up-close experiences with death and the worst of the destruction in Málaga. On the other hand, we have the more distanced consumption of atrocity stories, mostly by the British. Woolsey frames the public's desire for atrocity stories as a sexual desire and describes acts of violence and destruction with the language of sexual assault. The result is

several passages scattered throughout the memoir that have a very disturbing effect on the reader, but it is an effect that is constructive.

In *Death's Other Kingdom*, Woolsey coins the now commonplace phrase “pornography of violence” for the first time. She does so while relating how her neighbors reveled in the “enjoyment of horror” of atrocity stories:

I was struck then by what I can only call a look of dreamy blood-lust upon their faces as they told such stories. I realised then, what I realised even more clearly later at Gibraltar, listening to the English talk of atrocities, what atrocity stories really are: they are the pornography of violence. The dreamy lustful look that accompanies them, the full enjoyment of horror (especially noticeable in respectable elderly Englishmen speaking of the rape or torture of naked nuns: it is significant that they are always *naked* in such stories) show only too plainly their erotic source. (92, emphasis in original)

The consumption of atrocity stories is perhaps the most common theme in the memoir, and the author strongly condemns this practice, sometimes outright but frequently with ironic language that pairs an often sexual pleasure with these scenes of horror. Listeners “hopefully” ask, “Was no one killed?” at the story of Anarchists who burned images from a local church (47). A story of a crucified baby was told “with equal enjoyment” by proponents on both political sides about their foes (138). The “embarrassingly erotic lust for atrocities” poisoned the atmosphere in Gibraltar (140). Whether or not pornography had a very visual connotation for Woolsey’s contemporary audience, Woolsey herself confirms the post-facto visuality of atrocity stories as

part of their verbal transmission when she is also swept away by one being told to her and is “sickened by the picture [she] imagined” (91).

In *Death's Other Kingdom*, the hunger for these stories seems to know no class, no nationality, nor gender in Spain. It even affects Woolsey, as seen in the quote above, even though the text indicates no self-awareness on this. There is a desire to “see” these atrocities, as we take into consideration Woolsey’s visual experience when being told an atrocity story as well as the respectable Englishmen’s “naked nuns,” an adjective particularly useful for a visual experience. The desire to see in *Death's Other Kingdom* is quite universal. Sigmund Freud claims that this scopophilia is universal and also induces sexual pleasure in *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*. Woolsey, textually, also draws the same conclusion. In her memoir we read of an erotic lust for a visual experience of atrocity stories that translates to a physical sensation in the form of sexual pleasure. Just like pornography, scopophilia has also been associated with an objectifying male gaze.

In *Death's Other Kingdom*, associating atrocity stories with pornography is a highly successful technique for condemning and shaming those who take pleasure in them. For one, just as pornography is a depersonalized medium—its consumer is detached from the feelings of the subjects represented—atrocity stories, too, are depersonalized: nameless, faceless victims are subjected to inhumane horrors. For Woolsey, the subjects of atrocity stories are equated with pornography’s subjects: objectified, turned into masturbatory instruments to provide sexual pleasure and satiation for the consumers. The feelings of sexual satisfaction and scopophilia are likely quite universal, therefore translatable for all Woolsey’s readers. So by using this metaphor, Woolsey is able to take a simple observation about the enjoyment of

atrocities stories and give it much greater impact for her audience, turning something we may feel distanced from into something visceral and intimate instead. This shaming technique is not quite aimed at the people who are written about as enjoying atrocities stories in the memoir, who very often are British people enjoying Spain's coast. According to the text, Woolsey never calls them out for their behavior at the time. It appears that the main goal of the metaphor is to affect her contemporary foreign audience, who may also have been enjoying the atrocities stories in the press or relayed orally as the previously-vacationing British subjects flee Spain by boat and return to their country to relay the stories to eager hearers. Indeed, Woolsey wryly comments that many of the "well-fed, well-dressed" refugees leaving the country "had seen absolutely nothing except the smoke of some burning building and suffered not the slightest hardship except I believe missing their lunch and tea on the destroyer which was very crowded, arrived in Gibraltar with the most amazing atrocities stories" (46).

Furthermore, Woolsey claims that the atrocities stories are fabrications. She repeatedly debunks them and continues to target her audience as willing participants in the debauchery. In so doing, she positions herself as a visual authority by asserting that her eyewitness accounts have much more value and validity than anything her contemporary foreign readers would have heard or read in the press. In one such circumstance, Woolsey and Brennan have an encounter with a young "War Correspondent" (Woolsey repeatedly uses this term capitalized and in quotes, revealing her disdain for their work) for whom seeing atrocities "was what was chiefly expected of him" (98). The night when they meet that "War Correspondent" there is a Nationalist air raid and a Republican "fear-maddened mob" response, an execution of supposed-Fascist prisoners (100). The next day the correspondent showed the story he wrote to Woolsey

and Brennan, on which she wryly comments: “He had also been to the cemetery that morning to see the bodies of the prisoners who had been shot at dawn. The bodies were piled in a trench, forty of them, he said. But we noticed that by an ingenious system known to atrocity collectors he seemed to have multiplied the number by four in his story” (101). These atrocity stories become more satisfying as they become more horrific, but this is a depersonalizing phenomenon as well, especially because the atrocities become more and more fabricated, and therefore the resulting narrative is something far removed from an already brutal reality. Woolsey uses her eyewitness authority to set the record straight about the actual violence in Spain, delegitimizing the stories of the media that her contemporary foreign audience is familiar with already. And by associating all the desire for and satisfaction with atrocity stories with sexual pleasure, Woolsey moves towards evoking pleasure as a physical sensation in her readers. At the same time, this alignment of scopophilia, sexual pleasure, and the dehumanizing atrocity stories of destruction, torture, and death in bellic Spain, Woolsey also implicitly signals that this pleasure is sadistic. Thus, Woolsey translates the aural and visual (imagined) to the physical and also emotional, when her audience feels shame at the recognition of sadism. This gains impact for her narrative about the destruction she has seen and the shameful behavior of others that she critiques, therefore succeeding in establishing an affective authority far more moving than the visual authority in other passages.

#### Limits of the Gaze? Knowing “When to Blink”

On more than one occasion in *Death's Other Kingdom*, Woolsey's experiences of witnessing the results of violent deaths appear in her narrative with the once-living bodies she

sees replaced by toys. At first, this dehumanizing technique might be interpreted at best as a limitation of Woolsey's gaze and authority as an eyewitness, and at worst as evidence of her disconnection from the victims and lack of sympathy for their traumatic, and senseless final moments. Upon closer reading, however, we can observe in Woolsey's choices of how she depicts the results of violence a sort of authority that is not asserted through mimetic visual representation, but rather rests on refusing to see directly and to translate realistically into words those images she half sees for her readers.

What Jay calls knowing "when to blink" (515) is an idea renewed in the textual analyses of Carol Acton and Jean Gallagher on women's war writing. Acton describes this strategy as "diverting the gaze," a technique she finds in war texts, especially those written by nurses. According to Acton, "writers are compelled to divert the gaze while at the same time revealing or partially revealing the trauma from which the gaze is diverted" (55) in order to represent "the paradoxical presence of what cannot be told" (54). In the first chapter of *The World Wars Through the Female Gaze*, titled "The Great War and the Female Observer: Eyewitness Texts and the Subject of Propaganda," Jean Gallagher refers to a woman's "disruption" of a totalizing wartime gaze in her writing. In these circumstances, a writer will fail to directly translate into an image the "unpicturable act of war itself, the unnamed wounding and destruction of bodies" (50). For both of these authors, the "failure" of women writing war to faithfully represent unspeakable acts of violence is not a failure but rather a legitimate part of a specifically female wartime gaze which undermines or unsettles a dominant spectatorial regime.

In *Death's Other Kingdom*, the first of these experiences occurs when Woolsey and Brennan are headed to Málaga. After their bus breaks down, they and another couple hitch a ride



in a truck with Woolsey and the other woman riding in the front seat with the driver. The section deserves to be quoted at length.

I sat next to the driver, and was much annoyed because he began to press against me and stroke my leg. I have often been pressed and stroked in crowded busses and trains by strangers in Spain [...]

But his attention was suddenly called away from me and he began to grin with simple pleasure and cry 'Look! Look!' pointing to the side of the road and almost stopping the lorry in his eagerness to see something better.

I looked and saw the body of a dead man lying beside the road. It was the body of a large old man dressed in trousers and a white shirt, and it lay on its back with one hand thrown over the head and the other still clasping the torn stomach. The face was glazed with blood and the shirt was almost crimson with it. The thing that was lying there seemed too large and stiff to have been a man. It looked like a large dirty doll someone had thrown away. We only saw the body for a minute, but in that minute I had a very intense and curious impression—I not only knew that what I saw was not alive, I knew that it *never had been alive*. That thing I saw lying beside the road was a castaway mechanical doll, a broken automaton, nothing more. It never had been anything more. (88-89, emphasis in original)

The section begins with a sexual assault on Woolsey, which ends only when the attention of the driver switches from tactile to visual as he lifts his hand from Woolsey's thigh to direct attention

to the body on the side of the road. As if confirming Woolsey's analysis before, this visual consumption of an atrocity is just as attractive to the driver as the sexual touch, if not more so.

In Woolsey's description of the body, she denies it was a man and denies it any feeling. Her description reads as completely dehumanizing, using the depersonalized subject and possessive pronouns "it" or "its" rather than "he" and "his." Yet the description of the body is quite thorough for a person who is seated in a truck that "almost" stops in order to see things better. We can only assume that this image, as fleeting as it might have been, had a profound impact on Woolsey for her to be able to describe it so completely. In relating this experience, Woolsey moves from realism to the metaphor of the automaton, from a direct gaze to a diverted one.

In a somewhat parallel experience, Woolsey visits a gypsy camp that had been accidentally bombed by the Nationalists, killing all men, women, children, and their animals, save for one young girl. In this circumstance, Woolsey first reports what Brennan had seen when he passed by the day after the bombing, then goes on to comment on her own experience:

Gerald had arrived at the encampment before what was left of the gypsies had been cleared away. The ground was sodden with blood and covered with mangled, blackened bodies, and arms and legs and heads, torn off by the explosion and horribly littering the earth. Even when I passed the place a day or two later the earth was still dark with blood and the bodies of the poor dead mules still lay with their legs sticking straight up in the air and would have seemed absurdly like abandoned toys except for the odour of corruption beginning to taint the air. (113)

Again, Woolsey moves from relaying a direct gaze (in this case, however, it is that of Brennan, although presented as an unmediated account) to a diverted one. The bodies that Woolsey sees, those of the dead mules, are compared with toys, denying their previous existence as living things. In this second example, the comparison that diverts the gaze is a simile, rather than the metaphor of the automaton. Therefore, the impact of the comparison and of the destruction reads as lessened slightly.

In both of the above examples, Woolsey's narrative avoids complete mimetic representation of what she viewed. In "Diverting the Gaze," Acton points to several ways in which women's war writing would avoid such direct representation, which she writes is often a result of the need for psychological survival (66). Objectification of victims of violence in such texts is a coping mechanism for screening oneself from trauma observed in women writers (59, 68). Another coping mechanism is "erasing trauma with an alternate set of images that establishes a new diversionary narrative" (55). In both of the above quoted examples, Woolsey has objectified the victims of wartime violence. If we interpret the second passage through the lens of Acton, Woolsey presents the worst of the destruction with something of a screen, distancing the readers from the tragedy by first reporting not what she had seen, but what Brennan had: the bodies are presented mostly as dismembered parts, still gruesome but easier to represent than shattered victims that were once alive and thriving. Woolsey follows this scene with her own—the pathetic dead mules whose bodies looked like toys and the ground still dark with blood—which is significantly less terrifying than what she would have witnessed firsthand should she have traveled with Brennan immediately after the bombing, but indicates a trace of that destruction. She also displaces attention from shattered human bodies to those of animals.

The paragraph recounting the death of the gypsies is wrapped in a larger story about the Nationalist-sympathizing neighbor that the couple is harboring until he and his family can be safely removed from the country. But the chapter closes with Woolsey reflecting back onto the deaths. Here, Woolsey's narrative reflects that which Acton observes in a war nurse: "When affect threatens to break through, she shifts her narrative position and removes her first person involvement, no longer seeing from the position of participant, but as a detached observer" (67). Distanced from the horrors, from her balcony Woolsey observes the arrival of "gypsies from the mountain" who were coming to Málaga to find out what relatives had been killed. "They came by with long strides and wild, strained faces, and with their torn dresses and long black hair loose and streaming in the wind they looked like frenzied Maenads; and at first I could hardly tell that the wild exalted look they wore was not an expression of religious ecstasy, but of an extremity of horror and fear" (114). This distancing allows for Woolsey to offer the gypsy-Maenads as a rhetorical proxy for her own horror and fear.

Reading these passages solely through the lens of Woolsey's psychological inability to represent these horrors, however, falls short of a complete grasp on the significance of the way these two experiences are related to the readers. Both of these passages have three striking features that cannot be addressed by the trauma of the writer in narrativizing these events. First, it is important to note that in both of these passages there is not a completely diverted gaze. Each one begins with a more mimetic representation and then diverts to the metaphor or simile. Second, both cases lack explicit commentary from Woolsey on violence, war, or the loss of the lives for which the only visible trace now appears to be blood and toys. Finally, in both of

these circumstances, the readers are left with a very pregnant pause, created either by a page break or by the end of the chapter.

These three elements interact in a way that has a very profound impact on the reader, and this revolves around the idea of the unspeakability of violence. In utilizing simile and metaphor, Woolsey's text diverts from a mimetic textual representation that may feel lacking in its ability to truly convey the horrors Woolsey observes. Woolsey's foreign readers who have not experienced war may find it difficult to fully comprehend via mimetic representation the terrible nature of the violence because they lack a referent to be able to establish such an affecting image for themselves. The violence is unspeakable; it evades true representation. But Woolsey must find a way to, as Acton says, "the paradoxical presence of what cannot be told" (54), and in this case the image that we are left with after the gaze is diverted sticks with readers. It is an image easier to access. Woolsey's lack of commentary on these events, coupled with the blank space following the passages that relate them, highlight the image established by the metaphor and simile. These narrativistic choices let those final images, the ones that divert from realism, "speak" for themselves, as it were. Thus, the diversionary technique bridges the gap created by the unspeakability of violence between the image as seen by Woolsey and the image the audience needs to imagine upon reading these passages. The result is that these two passages are quite successful in terms of impact on the readers. We can feel at least some of the weight of these two atrocities both on the author and on ourselves as we imagine a bloody giant doll and shattered donkey toys, free from the (maybe welcome) distraction of more inadequate words.

Finally, in the last chapter of the memoir, preceding the epilogue, Woolsey reluctantly relates the story of her friend, Juan the baker, further illustrating a technique of aversion such as those mentioned by Acton. “I have spoken of our friend the baker Juan. And at this point I should tell what happened to Juan. But I do not want to write about it, for my mind still avoids thinking of it even now as one might avoid touching an old but still sensitive scar. Perhaps I will come to it gradually by just talking about Juan” (115). Again, Woolsey evokes a sense of touch when speaking of violence. Here, of course, the fact that it is “an old but still sensitive scar” clearly evokes the trace of trauma still felt by Woolsey even with time and distance separating her from loss. What follows in this chapter is a vignette about the village baker, village and regional politics, and how the “civil” part of the civil war was carried out in Woolsey’s region before Málaga was on the front lines. The real agony for Woolsey is clearly the long, drawn-out psychological alienation from the village that Juan suffered, so much so that when she hears of him being shot, she remarks, “I hope he was killed instantly. [...] At least his long agony was over and Juan was safely dead” (125).

Interestingly, although Woolsey begins this chapter saying she avoids thinking about Juan’s death, she closes the chapter with these words:

I torment myself by going over and over the memories of that time—thinking that we might have saved Juan—that he might have saved himself—if he had acted differently.

Juan—Juan—my mind repeats, and the darkness answers *Nada—Nada—*  
(125, emphasis in original)

Clearly, although Woolsey attempts aversion, the experience is haunting, like the voice that comes from the darkness. The sentence marks the end of the chapter. Both the sentence and the chapter conclude without a period and without Woolsey responding to the voice or commenting on its response to her. Just like in the chapters with the dead man's body and the gypsy camp bombing, this absence feels heavy, and is magnified by the circumstances of the text: the absence because of Woolsey's lack of response, the absence represented by the darkness, and the absence implied in the untranslated "*Nada—*" repeated twice. Woolsey's native language, English, is unsuitable for coping with her unspeakable grief, and the Spanish word which intrudes emphatically into her text also offers no comfort nor answers.

In utilizing the diversionary techniques in the passages about the dead man and gypsies and in her aversion to and struggles with writing about Juan in the passages about the dead body, Woolsey actually highlights these accounts. Knowing when to blink, Woolsey takes the lacunae that could be caused in the moment of blinking and fills them with lasting, affecting, poignant images. Her eyewitness authority is not undermined by the diversion of the gaze. In fact, it is strengthened because not only does Woolsey know where and when to look, or not look, but she also acts as a mediator and a translator when the violent image she needs to convey is beyond the capabilities of mimetic language. This sort of eyewitness authority also relies on an understanding of the general intended audience. The diversion of the gaze means that Woolsey's narrative has an effect on her readers, conscripting them as a sympathetic audience for the memoir.

### Reconciliation of the Fourth Murderer

“My mind was full of horrors, and I saw the mild faces around me as murderers—First Murderer: Second Murderer: Third Murderer:—like the cast in some Shakespearian Tragedy—and I myself as Fourth Murderer: a small but necessary part in the world’s crime” (142). These words, written from Woolsey’s point of view when on Gibraltar after leaving Spain in the autumn of 1939, mark one of two collective experiences the author recounts in her epilogue. Above, she references her troubling thoughts after seeing munitions advertised for the first time in various journals. This first collective experience is one of masculine visuality: first provoked by the print media and then played out theatrically as a Shakespearian Tragedy. This collective experience is both shocking and troubling, and an obvious parallel with her shocking and troubling visual experiences during war. The antidote to this collective experience is yet another collective experience. Interestingly, this experience combines the visual and the tactile again in a very feminine context of women’s work: Woolsey observing fisherwomen handle and pick out a handkerchief to buy and then going to “turn over the soft handkerchiefs” herself to choose one for purchasing (144). Whereas previously the connection between visual and tactile was a technique employed by the author to connect her readers to the horrific action of the war, in the end, it is this same technique that, in the final analysis, connects Woolsey to humanity and reconciles her to mankind.



## Muriel Rukeyser: From Montcada to Barcelona along the Savage Coast

Muriel Rukeyser's *Savage Coast*—written in 1936, but unpublished during the author's lifetime—begins with a paratextual note from the author to the reader that explains that “[t]his tale of foreigners” is an autobiographical novel where “[n]one of the persons are imaginary, but none are represented at all photographically” (5). Rowena Kennedy-Epstein, who discovered the unpublished manuscript in the author's archives, edited it, and published it in 2013, affirms that “[t]he events that unfold in *Savage Coast* reflect the biographical narrative of Rukeyser's trip to Spain” (xiv) to cover the People's Olympiad in Barcelona, Republican Spain's alternative to the 1936 Olympic Games to be held in Germany. So biographical is it, in fact, that the novel's protagonist, Helen, claims Rukeyser's middle name. Beyond simply being autobiographical, the novel is a bildungsroman, as Helen experiences a sexual and political awakening while stuck on a train in Montcada i Reixac, a small town less than 15 miles northeast of Barcelona, while a civil war breaks out around her.

The novel is clearly divided into two distinct sections: the time spent in Montcada (which Rukeyser writes as Moncada) where Helen arrives feeling like a tourist and tries to maintain a certain neutrality as a foreign national, and the few days in Barcelona as Helen witnesses with the formation of the International Brigades and feels politically aligned with the Republican Catalans defending the city and country. The central, pivotal moments in the text which precipitate Helen's transformation occur over the course of a few hours: Helen meets a German athlete, Hans, and they have sex, then a striking visual experience compels Helen to become part of the action just before she and others associated with the Games travel in a perilous journey on the back of a truck from Montcada down into Barcelona. The two sections of the

novel each involve a verbal creation of a map. The first map, created by Helen's passive observations and thoughts while on the train from France into Spain, is a tourist's map, marked by what sights can be seen and what leisurely pleasures the country can offer. The second map is visualized from a Barcelona rooftop. This map redefines the city by the moments of triumph and tragedy in the current conflict, and redefines Spain and Helen's relationship with it. Like the two maps, Helen's visual experiences in the conflict change markedly in the two distinct sections of the novel. This chapter will explore how representations of visuality in *Savage Coast* parallel Helen's level of agency.

Similar to Gamel Woolsey, Rukeyser is not limited to visuality in her establishment of authority. Surrounded by excellent athletes who will later put their bodies on the line to fight for the Spanish Republic, a theme throughout *Savage Coast* is the recurring and contrasting leg pain Helen experiences that accompanies her into Spain and nearly throughout the novel, until it is quelled in a collective act of marching. Rukeyser includes two other physical experiences as transformational for Helen: the appearance of an after-image of a bullet hole on Helen's fist and a sexual encounter with a German athlete. This chapter will also examine how, like Woolsey, Rukeyser expands authority to add elements of tactility to the visual.

Muriel Rukeyser was encouraged by her critics to abandon pursuit of the publication of *Savage Coast* and instead continue writing poetry in a lyrical style (x) which was, presumably, more befitting of a woman than the highly experimental, complex, and hybrid novel about war that requires the attention and effort of the readers. According to Kennedy-Epstein, however, Rukeyser remained dedicated to the manuscript during the entire war and for several years after (x). Rukeyser is most known as a modernist poet, and *Savage Coast* is definitively a modernist

text that Kennedy-Epstein describes as “an epic poem inside the realist novel” (xix). As I will demonstrate, this novel is at once feminist in its use of and blurring of genres, and navigates the genres in an attempt to legitimize a war text written by a woman.

Rukeyser innovates within the genre of novel and blurs its lines first and foremost by directly including her own autobiography, but also by the inclusion of documentary elements and verse. The novel is replete with intertexts, most notably the epigraphs at the beginning of each chapter and the repeated references to D. H. Lawrence’s *Aaron’s Rod*, which Helen reads while on the train. Furthermore, large portions of the novel actually resemble poetry; Rukeyser often relies on verb-less sentence fragments with highly visual as well as synesthetic elements. In *Savage Coast*, the visuality in the text is further heightened by the text’s multi-generic form.

#### A Tourist Train

*Savage Coast* opens with the beginning and the ending of the Spanish Civil War captured in the first two sentences: Chapter One’s epigraph, a Reuters dispatch referencing the calm in Barcelona on Saturday, July 18<sup>th</sup>, as well as the very first line of Rukeyser’s own text, “Everybody knows how that war ended” (7). The words “Everybody knows” are repeated in the second paragraph, yet immediately contrasted with the scene of the novel’s protagonist, Helen, who does not know any of this as the war has not yet begun. She is on a train, traveling to the People’s Olympiad in Barcelona. Michel de Certeau, in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, describes train travel as “A travelling incarceration” (111):

The windowpane is what allows us to *see*, and the rail, what allows us to *move through*. These are two complementary modes of separation. The first creates the

spectator's distance: You shall not touch; the more you see, the less you hold—a dispossession of the hand in favor of a greater trajectory for the eye. The second inscribes, indefinitely, the injunction to pass on; it is its order written in a single but endless line: go, leave, this is not your country, and neither is that—an imperative of separation which obliges one to pay for an abstract ocular domination of space by leaving behind any proper place, by losing one's footing.

(112)

Helen is arriving in Spain via train from France as the Civil War begins, and the train passenger's combined condition, as described by Certeau, of being a passive and distanced spectator and foreigner is exactly her unconscious and then later conscious position in Spain and in the war.

*Savage Coast* is a novel in which the creation of maps done through the text is emblematic of the transformation of the protagonist. And the first map's creation begins with Helen's "travelling incarceration." It is a tourists' map, one of distance, separation, and also spectacle and leisure. Throughout the first section of the novel, we find other examples outside of map creation that highlight these aspects as part of Helen's expectations and experience as a war begins around her.

At the moment we are introduced to her, then, Helen is a passive spectator, a tourist, lying in a sleeper car and watching the landscape flash by. During the first scenes of *Savage Coast*, the topography of its first map is filled in by Helen's observations of the landscape through the train's window: "green valleys... enormous sweeps of green forests and bone-white rock...[f]iery dark cypresses [on]... the slopes... [t]he spread of the mountains" (9) and the Mediterranean that "lay there... [g]ray and trembling with sun" (10). Since she is not of the

country and does not belong there, Helen's interaction with Spain is limited to its landscape and summed up by verb "look" —Certeau's "ocular domination of space" and the most common verb in the first few pages. This verb implies some minimal intention on the part of Helen, but also illustrates the separateness and one-sidedness that characterizes the beginning of Helen's days in Spain. As a tourist, the relationship with the country Helen has entered begins in this completely superficial way, with the distanced sweeping gaze from the train and a passivity evoked by cities and towns mentioned in the narrative that only exist as names on a map as the train passes through.

One of the salient characteristics of *Savage Coast* is the use of demonyms, and other "place-tags," as one character in the novel refers to them (92), to name most of the passengers that Helen encounters on the train: Peapack (a woman from New Jersey), the lady from South America, the Swiss [man], the Belgian [woman]. The use of demonyms combined with the use of toponyms especially at the novel's beginning to trace Helen's trajectory from London to her arrival in Montcada highlight the political lines that shape many maps. The place-tagged characters seem to fill in the spaces mostly on Europe's political map and stress the divisions amongst the characters, but especially the division between all of them and Spain. These characters are "foreign nationals," as they are constantly reminded by the Swiss, and as such they must remain outside of the conflict, just as their demonyms show their apartness.

For Helen especially, a political boundary appears to be considered a very real barrier capable of separating the political strife and concerns of her past from the leisure of the warm and beautiful Spanish coast that she is intent on enjoying:

Let it all pass, American strikes and civil cases [...] nightmares of coming struggle,

the concentration camp, the gas-mask face, night voices, German pain, threat of all forms of war.

Let it pass in bursts like bursts of music, until there is some quiet after, quiet and heat and speed to wave over one, tide that waves over a woman lying on sand under a cliff, a cliff like the one here of white and green and cypress, heat like this heat that one can put the hand into, speed like this speed, a train flying south, quiet like this quiet, now that this train has come to final rest.

Port Bou. [sic]

The frontier. (13)

This short passage illustrates Helen's tourist mindset and her unwillingness at first to become politically engaged while in Spain, despite being sent to Spain with a job to complete—reporting on the intensely political People's Olympiad. The disengagement inherent in Helen's "Let it pass" when crossing a border contrasts so sharply with the political realities she approaches and with La Pasionaria's nearly concurrent proclamation— "¡No pasarán!" —in her July 19th speech urging unity in the defense of Madrid against Franco. Helen, on the other hand, arrives in Spain on a "tourist train" (8) that travels over a literal and figurative border where disturbing political images are willfully, if not also naively, left behind.

Beyond Helen's tourist map created in *Savage Coast's* first section, the novel includes many other instances that highlight a distanced spectator perspective. Helen, of course, comes to Spain to be an observer and report on the People's Olympiad. Beyond the actual sporting events, the Games involve a certain level of spectacle in the ceremonies and parades that also form part of the whole. Rukeyser even highlights the pomp that occurs just at the mention of

the Games in Helen's observation of a young Hungarian water polo player who is also a passenger on Helen's train. "'¡Olimpiada!'" repeated the boy, like a signature. He put his hand up, with the gesture of an acrobat who calls his audience to attention for the next turn" (18). Yet it is important to note that even though Helen does not question or reflect on the feeling, this same new friend elicits self-consciousness in Helen when he asks her, "You in the Olympics?" (19). "She felt self-conscious because she was not athletic, she was not to be in the Games, and it was stupid to be watching, always" (19). Helen is preoccupied with being a spectator, but she does not imagine or take action here to change that fact.

In his chapter of *The Practice of Everyday Life* on train travel, Certeau asks: "Is the terminal an end of an illusion?" (114) Certeau goes on to imply that once the train has stopped, the spectator's distance has ended (114). But *Savage Coast's* second chapter—when the train stops in Montcada because of the general strike—begins with the epigraph, "Junction or terminus—here we alight" (15), a line from C. Day Lewis's epic poem *The Magnetic Mountain*<sup>4</sup>. Even though Helen disembarks from the train in Montcada's station, her journey, both literal and figurative, is far from over. Furthermore, as implied in the chapter's text, Helen's spectator's distance is still quite real. The train station is on the outskirts of Montcada and, for Helen it is neither a junction nor a terminus, although she frequently alights. The train remains a sort of in-

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<sup>4</sup> *The Magic Mountain*, allegorically alluding to a coming ideal world, was published in 1933 and dedicated to W.H. Auden. With this epigraph selection, Rukeyser demonstrates to readers of *Savage Coast* her vast literary and political knowledge and the care with which she selects epigraphs. During the Spanish Civil War, C. Day Lewis included the subject in his poetry and also was a contributor to the *Left Review's* *Authors Take Sides on the Spanish Civil War*, stating "I look upon it [the war] quite simply as a battle between light and darkness [...] Both as a writer and as a member of the Communist Party I am bound to help in the fight against Fascism." For his part, W.H. Auden spent nearly two months in Spain working on propaganda for the Republicans and published his poem "Spain" as a pamphlet in response to the war.

between space; it is indefinitely stopped at the station, but still has passengers. Helen and the other passengers are engaged in a sort of mutual spectacle with the townspeople. Montcada's citizens pass by, "staring in through the large windows, as if the train were some tremendous sideshow" (33) while "[t]ourists were leaning from all the windows, even up in first class" (35).

Gradually, however, Rukeyser reveals Helen's growing anxiety about her tourist status. She tells Olive—a radical American woman traveling with her husband, Peter—that "We're to be quiet, and stay in the train. Tourists! To look out the window" (51). This exclamation is not an earnest expression but rather stated "with a certain sarcasm" (51) about how the foreign nationals are expected to behave. She does not say this as her own expectation, but rather as what is expected of her. Later, before sleeping, Peter and Helen decide to write a letter from the train to the town. The Swiss suggests adding a collection of money to accompany the letter.

"The passengers of the train standing in the Moncada—"

Olive looked out of the window for the spelling. [...]

"—wish to thank the citizens of the town for the courteous treatment they have received—"

"No. Treatment received during their stay at the station.' You can't tell how long we'll be here."

Helen and Olive looked at each other, startled.

"—and to express our sympathy—"

"We can't," said the Swiss.

"We're foreign nations," explained Peter. "It was like that in Paris on July fourteenth. The government asked all foreigners who wanted to march to mingle



with the demonstration, and not to go as foreign nationals. Can't, in a revolutionary situation... Incorrect" (64-65)

When the group delivers the money and letter to the town's secretary, Helen urges at the very least telling him about their sympathies, but her intention is silenced by the Swiss who reminds her of being a "foreign national" (76). She resorts to a handshake "with a smiling curious intensity, trying to find language in that touch" (76). While the beginning of the war, the general strike, and the time spent in Montcada gradually remove Helen from the spectatorial passivity of the train ride into Spain that opens the novel, the influence of political boundaries continues to hold for her.

### The Upraised Fists

Helen's political engagement in Spain changes over the course of just a few climactic—both sexually and literarily—hours beginning her second night in Montcada. She meets German athlete who she later finds out is a runner and political exile named Hans<sup>5</sup>. At dinner the second night, Helen and her friends are captivated by the German's talk of Barcelona. "He was describing Barcelona, its waterfront, its green wide promenades, workers' centers, a gay and tortured history of brilliance and wars for freedom. He outlined the city for them with the impersonal accurate strokes of a stranger who has listened to stories and studied maps" (111). "[H]e went on speaking, centering the attention of the entire group, making them see the immense city on its coast" (112). It is not this map that exemplifies Helen's change, however, but

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<sup>5</sup> *Savage Coast's* Hans is a representation of the actual Otto Boch, a German athlete for the Games who joined the International Brigades and was killed fighting for Republican Spain.

rather only a glimpse of a newly-drawn Atlantic Ocean. Just hours after they first met on the way to dinner, and without yet knowing each others' names, Hans and Helen have sex in an empty car of the train. At the moment of their first kiss, the narrative style changes, becoming impressionistic and modernist, nearly like verse. Their lovemaking is imagined as the clash and defiant joining of two (formerly) separate continents:

And Europe and America swung, swung, an active sea, marked with convulsive waves, as if supernatural horses stamped through the night; a scarred country, that lies waiting for the armies to meet again. The upraised fists, the broadcasting station, shake in the air, complaining, bragging, threatening, raised from the surface like final signs of those who drown and, instead of the grasping granting gesture, raise their fists in the last assertion.

Here is your sea, sailor! Floundering with life, prophetic with rising land, peopled.

We are all swallowed in it.

Only, when we are cast up, it must be on firm land, we must not have lost ourselves. Because then we are going to be asked to rise and walk away. (118)

In these powerful images of violence and tumult, Rukeyser also depicts a unity that is both physical and political, erasing the distances and boundaries of the former map as the two bodies crash into one another and creating "rising land, peopled." In this short prose poem there is a commitment not just of the two lovers to each other, but also to a cause.

Helen's transformation is not fully completed in the above scene, but rather needs another visual experience. The image of the "upraised fist" visualized in the sexual encounter

reoccurs the next morning as Helen and Peter observe a bus being repainted with the word “GOBIERNO” on its side. The bus had been involved in belligerent action.

There was a spick round hold in the windshield. The heavy glass caught sunlight in the hold-rim; bright stripes of light ran outward in a sunburst.

Peter followed her startle, calculating. ‘That couldn’t have missed the driver,’ he remarked. (149)

As if she is finally aware of the implications of the nascent struggle, this violent image quickly becomes an afterimage on Helen herself that inspires her own action.

Helen looked at her hand. On it was printed, in a violent afterimage, the bullet hole and glassy light.

But the crowd was backing up to clear the street. A car cruised down and guns stood out from every window.

The man in the road raised his clenched fist.

[...]

In a wonder, as if the car had come to save them, as if this were her dream that she was dreaming now, Helen raised her arm and shut her fist. (150)

While at the beginning of *Savage Coast* Helen thinks that “her symbol was civil war” (12), this afterimage of a bullet hole with radiating sunlight becomes her real symbol. The afterimage is proof that violence happened in Spain and proof that that violence marks Helen and her body, both literally and figuratively. The marking on her changes her outlook on her position in the war, something that had previously caused anxiety. “Helen turned to Peter. ‘How beautiful it is now!’ she said. She looked as if she had just slept” (150). She sees clearly not only the shrill self-

absorbedness of a “sick, pathetic woman” who had been a friend on the train, but also she recalls “her own impatience, a tourist spasm” (151) that she felt as the train stopped in Montcada and the passengers begin to realize they are uncomfortably stuck, plans derailed. The recollection of her very recent past causes a “counter-shock” as Helen recognizes that she has moved beyond her own self-absorbedness and, fist raised, became part of a collective action.

In the introduction to the book *Gendering War Talk*, Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott write that “war is beginning to undo the binary structures that it originally put in place: peace and war; home (female space) and front (male space); combatant and civilian [...] War has become a terrain in which gender is negotiated” (xi). An undoing of a binary structure in wartime is especially true in Helen’s because she is neither combatant nor civilian in Spain. She has a liminality reinforced by the afterimage—violence that was not enacted on her, but definitively marks her; she is neither civilian nor combatant, neither Spanish nor detached foreign national. Helen has a resoluteness about her moving forward into a turbulent, bellic city to move beyond the liminality. “‘Now I’d like to get to Barcelona,’ Helen pushed out. ‘This is what it [the afterimage and raised fist] meant. I’d like to see a city like that’” (151). She springs into action to get to the place “where she would be named—as an individual, and an anonymous member, as a job assigned” (154). Her liminality thus allows her to move beyond a gendered, binary structure of war and later achieve a role that authorizes the resulting observations on war.

This breaking through the barriers that Helen’s transformation allows is exemplified in the chapter that follows the afterimage. Helen, Peter and Olive, and athletes destined for the Games are piled in the back of a truck and headed into the city, literally and figuratively

traversing barricades. In this chapter there are no names nor individual pronouns to refer to the truck's passengers until the last few lines of the chapter, when they have arrived in Barcelona, where Helen can become. Until that point, in the truck, Helen is an anonymous member of a collective group sharing a collective experience. Here, instead of a war narrative, Rukeyser uses direct images seen through the eyes of the truck's passengers.

The chapter begins with a close up on their eyes that "seemed wider set, like the abstract wide eyes of dancers," (158) and then follows with the racing images of a pastoral and bellic landscape giving way to an urban and bellic landscape, presented in a direct and poetic manner, almost like photographs flashing by:

At the right, the blue-and-white Ford sign was a grotesque. And here, along the farmwalls, bales of hay, stacked solid for protection.

The overturned wagon at the door, its front near wheel still spinning.

The black bush on the hill.

Barricades

[...]

And another clear run, the road straight, the country-side changing, farm giving way to smaller gardens, large estates replaced by factories, closed and empty, but well-kept and waiting, as on holidays.

So many windows.

Watched the walls as they had watched the bushes. Each thought: guns!

[...] Instinct, the pure ruler quality, wipes away remembrance, the countryside of the mind replaced from a moving car. In a shock of speed.

They watched; waited for city.

A nightmare gun-bore stood black and round in the brain.

They had expected city.

They saw nothing but street [...] broken by barricades at which the truck stopped and the fringes could not be noticed, the faces, the piled chairs, corpses of horses. (159-161)

The images flash in front of Helen's "wide eyes" and are presented to the reader more fragmented than narrativized. In fact, Rukeyser had studied film editing a year prior to traveling to Spain and thought of movies as a series of photographs, to which the "imaging methods" of her poetic style has been attributed (Gander 8, 10). The chapter is composed to give the impression that the images come directly to the reader through the seers' eyes, nearly unmediated by text. Woolsey uses a literary form that highlights the visual through the verbal.

Gallagher explains that the wartime texts of men have traditionally been valued over those of women because "[t]he soldier's story is posited as free from narrative conventions, making male military experience the source of immediate, 'real' narratives that women may only mimic" (14). Regardless of the value judgment implicit in that traditional preference about the validity of women's experiences in war and how they choose to relate those experiences, clearly Rukeyser's text fits the supposed reasoning behind the preference. This chapter includes rather immediate images and appears to not mimic any narrative conventions nor soldier's narratives, especially not narratives from the Spanish Civil War, since *Savage Coast* was written within months of the war's beginning. Yet even with the immediacy and lack of narrativistic conventions—two reasons that could move *Savage Coast* into the category of being more "real"

like soldiers' texts—Rukeyser's editor silences her voice, as discussed previously, and tells her to return to a gender-appropriate lyric form. So while protagonist Helen's liminality allows her to break through barriers and have an authoritative eyewitness perspective of the war, author Rukeyser's literary gender- and genre non-conformity, best exemplified in this chapter of *Savage Coast*, leads to her text's eyewitness perspective being silenced.

Although Helen's truck experience into Barcelona might appear to parallel her initial train ride into Spain, the protagonist herself has evolved enough that the two experiences seem completely distinct. The implications and stakes are much greater on the ride into Barcelona. The group runs the risk of danger, even death. While the first leg of Helen's trip was traveled as a disengaged tourist, the second comes not only right after a great ideological commitment to Spain, but also involves yet another change. Helen arrives marked with another afterimage, one that she created herself with her raised fist: the half-moon imprints of her fingernails on her palm (163). With this journey via truck into Barcelona, Helen goes from being an "anonymous member" of the collectivity of the passengers to being "named" again as she steps off the truck bed, to showing a symbolic readiness for physical commitment, a "job assigned" in the Spanish Civil War.

### A New City

Helen's journey into Barcelona places her much more in touch with the people of Cataluña, and highlights for her the feeling of being "outside," as she explains to a Spanish guide. The guide responds to Helen: "'Not so far outside, because you care so much,' he said. 'But you still talk like an outsider, if you say [your first impression of war is] brilliant—we have had the

waste and the blood and the fighting. We hang on; it will take time for us to see the brilliance, what there is'" (171). Kennedy-Epstein points to this scene as one that exemplifies "the actual difficulty in documenting the war as an outsider, thereby subverting any possibility of a singular hegemonic narrative of its history" (xxiii). Here, Rukeyser is recognizing the importance of a space for the other stories, although this is accomplished in a rather surprising way, as the guide takes Helen to the hotel rooftop to see the brilliance of Barcelona at night. Through this experience, the third and final map of *Savage Coast* is created.

The creation of the map and the space for stories is surprising particularly because it takes place far above the city. In the iconic chapter of *The Practice of Everyday Life* where he views New York City from a World Trade Center observation deck, Certeau explains that the scopic and distancing power of "seeing the whole" (92) from far above transforms the viewer into a voyeur whose distance enables "an oblivion and a misunderstanding of practices" (93). In short, gaining the sight of the whole, the viewer/voyeur loses sight of the stories that occur at street level. Yet this is not the case in the third map creation in *Savage Coast*. Instead, Helen's Spanish guide subverts their positioning, and thus flipping what might be a hegemonic street map into a map redrawn by and for the masses based on the lived experiences of the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. Some of the places that would appear on a previously-hegemonic map get new contexts, like the statue of Christopher Columbus where "The Fascists set up a machine gun beneath the feet" (172-173). Mostly, however, the map identifies new, revolutionary landmarks:

"New city!" he said, his night-pale face turned down. "Here is the new city. There are our monuments: do you see the car overturned there, that has been burned?



Five fascists tried to fire on our guards from it this afternoon. And over there, the subway station, where citizens were killed as they came up to the ground—and in the streets where they burn the dead horses, and there, that broken statue, under whose arm died ten civilians, two of them women; and in the burial office, where tonight they are filling out the records.”

They turned back, facing the roof, noticing the mattresses thrown down even here.

“And this building!” he said. “We have a city that has been alive since Sunday; and we know its landmarks already, they are scars on our bodies so soon!” (174)

In this moment, the stories of Certeau’s “ordinary practitioners” (93), here the citizens of Barcelona, become part of the map’s legend. They are made visible, legible even to Helen and her guide on the roof.

Heightening this visibility is the “indexing” language of the passage—words like “here,” “there,” “this,” and “that,”—which Jean Gallagher points to as helping to establish a “truce between the visual and verbal” (19) in war texts and which can also “construct and control the narratives that readers will use to tell themselves about the war” (20). Though the map creation ends without a reflection from Helen, the scene is coupled with Helen’s immediately preceding comment that even surprises herself: “This is a good time to be partisan” (172) and it is clear for the remainder of the novel that Helen understands the battle lines drawn into this map of Barcelona’s new city; if you are not for the Spanish Republic’s creation of this new city, then you

are against it. The subtext of the following chapters underscores the partisan affiliations in the burgeoning war taken by the international community.

The scene on the roof is not just key to creating a visual-verbal narrative and construction of war for the readers to follow through indexing, but also for Helen herself to follow. Making war stories legible from a distance is fundamental in the creation of *Savage Coast*. At the end of the novel, Helen feels the ethical responsibility to bear witness to a war that is already being misrepresented outside Spain's borders in the press. Leading up to the novel's final passages, Helen wavers on whether to leave Spain or to stay and participate in the struggle in some way, as she feels called to do. But Helen's intimate thoughts, indeed the process of her entire transformation, are revealed through a very public speech of the Games' chairman in the closing lines:

*"You have come to this country as foreigners in the moment of our war, and you have felt the unreal constraint of acting as aliens when you are our brothers, when this war belongs to all of us. [...]"*

*"You have felt the inaction of strangers, but you are not strangers to us."*

[...]

*"Now you are about to return to your own countries. The boats are ready; the English will leave on their own boat, the Belgians will take all others on a ship they have chartered. If you have felt inactivity, that is over now. Your work begins. It is your work now to go back, to tell your countries what you have seen in Spain"*

(269, italics are original)

Helen's prior uncertainties and journey to overcome them are acknowledged and validated in this speech. She is accepted as a part of half of Spain's collective struggle against Fascism, even while the speech recognizes her status as an outsider, having her "own country." The final line of *Savage Coast* is, in effect, Helen's marching orders, enlisting her in the war as a witness and a reporter, giving her the purpose that she sought all along. The exhortation is also a perfect meta moment; as Helen's story concludes, Rukeyser's pen begins the documentation of the Spanish Civil War nearly at the exact moment that the reader would shut the book. The piece on the Spanish Civil War for which Rukeyser is most known, her modernist poem *Mediterranean*, is composed while on the Belgians' chartered boat bound for France on July 25, 1936, looking back across the sea to a Barcelona at war. The initial work on *Savage Coast* began shortly thereafter.

### You Are My Legs

Helen is marked by the two very physical moments that catalyze a change in her: the joining of her body with Hans' when they have sex on the train, and the resulting "half-moon imprints" that her fingernails, clutched into a fisted salute, leave on the soft flesh of her palms. The map of Barcelona is likewise marked with the "scars" of the newly-created landmarks that indicate the transformation of the city in a bellic context. But besides these moments, the trope that reoccurs most often in the entire novel is also a physical one, although it does not represent Helen's emotional development, but rather what may be holding her back: leg pain.

In fact, Helen arrives in Spain as a body in pain, and that is chiefly what is known about her. She travels alone, unanchored, not beholden to any traveling partner. There are no references to family or friends from before her time in Spain. Readers are not told how old she is

or her class background, although there is a passing reference to having gone to college. She comes to Spain to write about the Games, but beyond that vagueness, the circumstances are unknown. Helen is a person without much of a past, but the novel constantly reminds the readers that she has leg pain. It is her only anchor, it seems, to anything that came before Spain, although the underlying cause of the pain is also unknown.

In her introduction to *Savage Coast*, Kennedy-Epstein posits that, “[t]he leg symbolizes the barrier to action that Helen must overcome [...] the internal mimicking the external, the personal and political intertwined” (xxiv). The “barrier to action” symbolism seems like a tricky oversimplification, but only because the leg pain as depicted in the novel has incredibly complex, complicated, and varied circumstances. The pain first appears on the pages when Helen is arriving in Spain by train as a “twinge of excitement” that “pulled the nerve in her leg” (10). In a paragraph that follows shortly thereafter about Helen’s “painful” self-consciousness, Rukeyser states: “The nerve in her leg, which had been so disturbing all year, was almost the only reminder” (12). But a reminder of what, exactly, is never mentioned. The reader is frequently told that the leg pain should be connected to the past with phrases such as “The bad leg was all that stood of the past now” (152), but in actuality, the pain reoccurs seemingly incited by present events. The leg throbs as Helen glances at a headline in a French newspaper— “On Saturday, according to all the latest reports, Barcelona was calm, and as yet not a shot had been fired” (132)—and as she reflects on Olive’s and Peter’s intention to leave Spain but come back in October for the Games when everything is over (219).

If the leg pain symbolizes, as Kennedy-Epstein claims, a barrier to action, we might be able to observe a change in the pain’s circumstances after Helen’s transformative (also physical)

moments at the crux of *Savage Coast*. In fact, Kennedy-Epstein also claims that “[u]ltimately, Helen’s damaged body is intimately and erotically restored through sex with a German athlete, Hans” (xxiv). It is not without a certain poignancy that the first thing Helen notices about Hans is that he “walks well” (106), and her self-consciousness at her own lameness is heightened by his athletic frame. But the leg pain recurs after sex with Hans, and during times that Helen is with him. It also recurs after the half-moon imprints on her palms.

Helen is not made well when she commits to the action of the war, nor through her contact with Hans. Instead, I posit, Helen requires a much larger sense of collectivity to quell the pain that twinges “with a memory of past games, past sidelines” (19). Helen arrives in Spain solely accompanied by the leg pain that has, in keeping with the sports metaphors, sidelined her, kept her from feeling a part of a team. This desire for collectivity manifests itself in a dream her first night on the train, even before meeting Hans:

She dreamed the sea: a green streaked sea, with black tremendous currents. And headlong, plunging through the stream, a force rushing, which carried her along; until she ceded her will to it in a huge gesture. In that moment she revived, she drew will from the enormous source [...]

And passed, during the voyage, faces.

Of all these, two came clear; husband and wife, the poets [...] She felt a hammering of love, faith in them, [...] she called to them loudly: You are my legs; and swept by in the immense currents. (78)

In this dream, Helen is surrounded by flowing water—where it is not necessary to use or even have legs to maintain movement—and by faces without defined bodies, two of which she

chooses to become her legs. This dream is paralleled in Helen's waking moments, after her leg goes quiet for the final time in the novel, as she marches through the streets of Barcelona four abreast with athletes and other supporters of the Spanish Republic. Their line meets with a line of soldiers in an echo of the flowing currents from the dream: "Now, they touched, the two streams, at different speeds, with different meanings, changing each other subtly, strengthening each other, and changing each other's speed, according to laws of hydraulics, streams of armies passing friends, leaving their cities, saluting each other" (256). This act of marching, wholly reliant on legs, does not incite Helen's pain. In marching, Helen's legs become indistinguishable from those of others by the uniformity of motion and the collective action of those who join in the stream. In effect, the Spanish Republic supporters are Helen's legs. Helen's dream is manifest: she is part of a current that carries her along with the many others, finding an additional strength in that collectivity.

Finally, in the last pages of the novel, as the groups that compose the streams convene in a plaza for a speech by the chairman of the games, Rukeyser writes that in the mass of people "only the heads were seen, the arms below the shoulder were lost and invisible. The crowd became single minded, uniform, Catalans and foreigners welded finally" (262). Helen herself notes, returning to the aquatic metaphor, that "[t]he long sea of faces was all one face, repeated always [...] one face always, set in vigor and effort" (268). This image is reminiscent of one of the Games' posters, with three athletes, right arms extended at the shoulder, grasping the pole of the flag announcing the Olimpiada Popular and their faces in profile intently focused in one direction (see fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Poster for the Olimpiada Popular, the anti-fascist alternative to the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, Germany, from *Carteles de la guerra civil española*, Urbión, 1981, n.p.

In effect, Helen finds herself part of a group—mostly of skilled, able-bodied athletes whose legs are likely integral to their identification as athletes—where leg pain and even legs cease to be a part of her identity. Unlike the body in pain entering the country via rail, Helen’s new identifying factor is not the twinge in her leg, but rather her face. And Helen’s face, as Hans tells her in the plaza, changed the moment she heard there was a General Strike (266), yet it takes her until *Savage Coast*’s culminating scene to come to the realization of the transformation herself.

## Genre Subversion

Upon reading *Savage Coast* for the first time and learning of the critiques that kept it hidden for nearly 80 years, I wondered: if the same story had been written as a memoir or even in an epistolary novel form, would it have seen the light of day? While this hypothetical is an intriguing foray into the consideration of if and how women in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century could tell war stories, the fact remains that *Savage Coast*'s feminist and revolutionary impact are directly tied to its trans-generic form. At the foundation of this form is the text's autobiographical nature. Although the novel's other multi-generic features may be more salient or striking, that *Savage Coast* places a woman at the center of a war novel is part of a subversive but barely noticed literary tradition. As Jane Marcus states in her afterword to *Not So Quiet...*—incidentally a World War I novel written by an author using the pseudonym Helen Zenna Smith and about a woman ambulance driving also named Helen<sup>6</sup>—“‘Helen’ is the figure man has created to name the cause of war as female. Male war novelists are always finding ‘another Troy for her to burn,’ and women are always revising, contending with, repudiating, or exonerating their own versions of the classical Helen” (288-289). Rukeyser's Helen neither looks nor acts the part of her mythological namesake. Instead she is a self-conscious “big angry woman” (Rukeyser 12) with a lame leg who is the central figure in her own bellic context, further upending the norms and tropes surrounding women in canonized or mythologized war narratives. As Kennedy-Epstein claims in her introduction, the use of the name Helen—especially autobiographical as it is

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<sup>6</sup> In a striking parallel between the Helen in *Not So Quiet* and the Helen in *Savage Coast*, Smith's Helen sleeps with the first man she meets while on leave from the scene of battle. For Marcus, this exemplifies what she calls “the new subject position of the woman at war [that] undoes her ordinary sexual role. Heightened sexuality is part of her active role” (270).



Rukeyser's actual middle name—situates the author as “a worldly authorial voice, a maker and subject of history” (xix). Furthermore, as previously mentioned, Kennedy-Epstein describes *Savage Coast* as “an epic poem inside the realist novel” and she additionally points to the protagonist's name being Helen as speaking “to the innovation of a traditionally male genre” (xix).

Yet *Savage Coast*'s trans-generic form is not limited to a realist, autobiographical novel with interpolated elements of epic and modern poetry—many samples of which were included previously. Kennedy-Epstein enumerates why Rukeyser insists that the novel also be read as documentary, chiefly because of the inclusion of intertextual elements of historical value (xv-xvi). As she further indicates, “the documentary form was not only de rigueur but was being used particularly by radicals and feminists to challenge and expose patriarchal and hegemonic narratives” (xvi). And, although writing specifically about Rukeyser's poetry, possibly because the existence of *Savage Coast* was unknown to her, Gander “argue[s] for a distinct and direct correlation between Rukeyser's writing and the modes, techniques and ideologies of the documentary movement as it flourished during the 1930s” (2).

Because of all this, I propose another genre—the scrapbook—as a fitting synthesis of the *Savage Coast*'s multi-generic form and use of intertexts. The scrapbook has long been thought of as a feminine and feminist documentary form, notably used by suffragettes in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. As Gander notes, the documentary is a hybrid of “of creative and realist methods,” a blend which Rukeyser sought in her own poetry (14). But this hybridization further lends itself to Rukeyser's style in *Savage Coast*. Not only is the novel a deeply personal and real story, as part of Rukeyser's own biography, but it is also an experiment in poetry and prose.

While never actually displaying a single photograph nor any other facsimile of items that might be thought of as typical of a scrapbook, Rukeyser achieves a sort of a verbal or textual representation of one because of her multi-generic style and elements of visuality.

#### Rukeyser's Illustrative Intertextuality

In *Savage Coast*, the use of intertexts is an extremely salient feature. Intertexts appear in the epigraphs of each chapter, although they are also interspersed throughout the text. The epigraphs themselves are multi-generic, originating in newspaper headlines, poetry, manifestos, novels, autobiography, song, posters, and documents from the Games. The quotes from the literary sources clearly illustrate the breadth and depth of Rukeyser's knowledge of the writing of her (mostly male) contemporaries, and especially as their work and their lives relate to the conflict in Spain. For example, in the epigraph to chapter six, Rukeyser quotes the poem "Homage to Karl Marx" written in March, 1933, by Edwin Rolfe. Rolfe, who had once been a student at City College, went on to become a volunteer in the Abraham Lincoln Brigades from 1937 to 1939 and later wrote *The Lincoln Battalion*, the first history of Americans in the Spanish Civil War. (It does not seem likely that the inclusion of a quote from a man who went on to be a war volunteer is simply a happy accident. It is more probable that the epigraphs were completed after at the bulk of the narrative was written). In another poetic epigraph, Rukeyser quotes a line from the 1926 Hart Crane poem "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen." At first glance, the quote is inconspicuous, albeit clearly modern:

*Accept a lone eye riveted to your plane,  
Bent axle of devotion along companion ways  
That beat, continuous, to hourless days—*

*One inconspicuous, glowing orb of praise.* (111)

As the novel neglects to include the title of the poem, the epigraph could be easily overlooked, but it is deeply meaningful to this chapter wherein the novel's Helen meets the German Hans and they have sex, a parallel to the character of German legend, Faust, marrying the mythological Helen who has been transported to an early 20<sup>th</sup> century context. Of course, epigraphs by nature are offset from the rest of the text, lending themselves to the visual fragmentation of a scrapbook. Furthermore, when thinking of *Savage Coast* as a scrapbook, these literary epigraphs become illustrative quotes in Helen's own narrative. This idea is further supported by Kennedy-Epstein's introduction to the novel wherein she indicates that Helen's story "ultimately internalizes her male cohorts, so that they become references or footnotes to her history" (xix).

Other epigraphs provide documentary value, appearing almost as if they were preserved documents pasted onto the pages of the novel. Among these are the newspaper headlines, taken from periodicals all contemporary to the first week of the war and all tracing the path that Rukeyser took in and out of Spain—a Reuters dispatch proclaiming all was quiet in Madrid that Helen notices on the train into Montcada; a July 22 headline from the Barcelona Republican paper *El Diluvio* wondering about the fate of Zaragoza; and a headline from July 24 from the French newspaper, *Vendredi*, implying that Spain's conflict with Fascism would soon be France's. Other epigraphs preserve snippets of the program of events from the People's Olympiad. Again, none of these documents are facsimiles of the originals, yet the intertextual and documentary value of each is stressed in the attribution of their sources as well as the somewhat ephemeral quality of what would have been the originals.

One particular epigraph, the final one, evokes the visuality of the concluding scene of *Savage Coast* where Helen joins the sea of heads and shoulders of other Republican supporters and soldiers. The lines “*MES HOMES! / MES ARMES!*” (258) appear without attribution to the source. Informed readers might recognize the slogan appearing on one of two Republican propaganda posters (see figs. 2 and 3), along with a third line (and possible fourth) not in the epigraph: “*MES MUNICIONS (!) / PER AL FRONT.*”



Fig. 2 (left). Catalan Spanish Civil War propaganda poster produced by the Unión General de Trabajadores, by Jaume Solá Valleys, *Mes Homes! Mes Armes! Mes Municions!*, 1936, Museum of Modern Art, New York City, *MoMA*, [www.moma.org/collection/works/5708](http://www.moma.org/collection/works/5708).

Fig. 3 (right). Catalan Spanish Civil War propaganda poster produced by the Unió General de Treballadors and Partit Socialista Unificat by Lorenzo Goñi, *Mes Homes, Mes Armes, Mes Municions Per Al Front*, Museum of Modern Art, New York City, MOMA, [www.moma.org/collection/works/5688](http://www.moma.org/collection/works/5688).

The epigraph is so clearly a reference to something visual, although a propaganda poster could not fit into a normal-sized scrapbook. Like the quote from “The Marriage of Faustus and Helen,” the complete meaning of this epigraph is not immediately available to the reader. Instead, it is revealed later as a secret available to those who are already in the know or inquisitive enough to do research. And, like the poem, the epigraph parallels the transformational narrative laid out in that section of the novel.

Other intertexts abound in the pages of each chapter. The chapters set in Barcelona include the text of an entire speech, the writing on flyers and advertisements posted around the city, a list of names of Barcelona’s Republican victims of the fighting thus far. Each of these documents inserted into the text are either offset or presented using only capital letters or in italics, visually highlighting their distinction from Rukeyser’s interrupting or interposed prose and poetry. The cumulative effect of all of these intertexts, both epigraphs and otherwise, is one where the narrative is furthered by Rukeyser’s prose, poetry, and poetic prose, and the documentary elements of the novel collaborate to provide a sort of remarkable verbal illustration, always made evident by the visual style and format of the text itself.

Throughout its entirety, *Savage Coast* is a fragmented text. There is fragmentation implicit in the above documentary snippets, some of which could be thought of as cut from the

whole original source and pasted into the novel. Because of the intertexts introducing and interjecting voices other than Rukeyser's or Helen's, *Savage Coast* can be considered a multi-vocal text, which also lends itself to a sort of fragmentation. There is also inherent fragmentation in the constantly-changing genres of the text with the author skipping from prose to poetry and frequently utilizing asyndeton and sentence fragments, both augmenting a sensation of the absence of something. Finally, if we think of *Savage Coast* as a scrapbook, the various elements on each page are fragmented by the blank spaces surrounding them, offsetting them from each separate element. In the afterword to *Not So Quiet...* Marcus describes how fragmentation is typical of women's writings about war (246-49), explaining that "[t]he fragmented bodies of men are reproduced in the fragmented parts of women's war texts, the texts themselves a 'forbidden zone' long ignored by historians and literary critics. Writers of war produce pieces of texts, like part of a body that will never be whole" (248). Marcus goes on to proclaim that a war text is "not whole"; instead it is "a war casualty" that causes "disorientation" (273-74) in its readers.

Yet instead of pointing to textual incompleteness or disordered thinking, this fragmentation can be highlighted as a positive feature of *Savage Coast* and of its author. As Kennedy-Epstein writes, Rukeyser consistently "resisted totalizing systems that flattened subjectivity and that could inherently lead to totalitarianism" (xxix). *Savage Coast* is a novel that eludes simple categorization due to this fragmentation and the resulting "disorientation" of its readers. It is not difficult to imagine that the multiple forms Rukeyser's writing takes in just under 300 pages made the resulting text difficult to classify and easy to discard by editors. But it

is also this fragmentation and these blank spaces that allow points of entry for a destabilizing dialogue with readers about what has been said and what has been silenced in war.

Neither Gamel Woolsey nor Muriel Rukeyser expected to be eyewitnesses to a civil war in July, 1936. At opposite ends of Spain's Mediterranean coastline and with different circumstances that led to their being in the country at the time, both Americans nonetheless were deeply affected and were compelled to write about their experience in the tumultuous and uncertain first days of the war in Republican territories. Both were also afforded relative freedom of movement due to their status as non-Spaniards, a great privilege which contributed to their abilities to be effective eyewitnesses.

Naturally, as eyewitnesses, Woolsey and Rukeyser's texts transmit verbally to readers much of the most striking moments that the authors witnessed, and both writers establish effective verbal-visual relationships in their texts, each with her own unique, innovative particularities with feminist tendencies. Woolsey seemingly creates a universal feminine seeing subject within *Death's Other Kingdom*, which also contributes to her authority as an eyewitness observer of wartime events. In *Savage Coast*, Rukeyser builds a sort of verbal scrapbook, drawing upon myriad intertexts and verbal representations of visual element such as propaganda posters and maps. But Woolsey and Rukeyser go beyond visual elements to generate a sense of a verbal-physical relationship in their writing. Whereas in *Savage Coast*, this characteristic is focused on Helen being marked by disability (the leg pain), sex (her encounter with Hans), and violence (the after-image of the bullet hole on her fist), in *Death's Other*

*Kingdom*, it is the readers who are marked by a frighteningly powerful combination of sex and violence in the consumption of atrocity stories, what Woolsey calls “the pornography of violence.” Finally, privileging feminine tactility over masculine visuality serves to strengthen the affective connection between the authors and their audience and, thus, between the audience and the people of Spain.



## CHAPTER 2

## And Now (Re)Presenting...: Virginia Cowles and Lillian Hellman Star as War Correspondents in Spain

The months following the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War saw the arrival of an American and international literary crowd in Spain, mostly supporters of the Republicans writing as war correspondents as their contribution to the cause. In 1937, among these writers were the famed dramatist and screenwriter Lillian Hellman and a little-known fashion and gossip columnist named Virginia Cowles. Both traveled to Spain with the purpose of being war correspondents for a short time, but, unlike Hellman who was wholly sympathetic to and interested in covering the Republican cause, Cowles arrived as a self-professed neutral party and objective observer with “no ‘line’ to take on Spain as it had not yet become a political story” for her (Cowles 55). Cowles’ intention was to observe from both sides of the front and write and publish after leaving the war zone. In 1941, Virginia Cowles published *Looking for Trouble*, a memoir drawing on her Spanish Civil War reportage and about the subsequent years as a war correspondent leading up to American involvement in World War II. Lillian Hellman published her own memoir, *An Unfinished Woman*, in 1969. Like Cowles, Hellman also drew upon her own previously-written material about the Spanish Civil War in the creation of this text. Although Hellman claims that the source of the material used for the section is from her diary, the reality is more complex, as I will show.

Although Virginia Cowles had a long and fairly distinguished career as a war correspondent beginning during the Spanish Civil War, her work reporting the war has received little critical attention, and none of it in depth. Lillian Hellman’s work on Spain has been surrounded by a black cloud since *An Unfinished Woman*’s chapter dedicated to Spain was

ruthlessly attacked by Martha Gellhorn and Mary McCarthy. Perhaps because of Hellman's disparaged credibility at the hands or tongues of her colleagues, while her trip to Spain is given much space in biographies about the writer, her publications about the trip have not been examined academically.

It is not just their work after publication that has not been given its deserved credit. As professional women writers in a war zone, both Hellman and Cowles experienced misogyny from many of those around them while in Spain. In this second chapter, I will argue that their particular methods of self-representation in their texts are strategies to push back against the rigid gender roles that would seek to keep women distanced from the fighting and discount their observations. Hellman and Cowles both represent themselves as independent, capable, mobile, and courageous women in war. While at times, the textual self-centering of each of the writers could be interpreted as self-centeredness that disregards much of the suffering of the Spanish people and International Brigades volunteers around them, I propose that each memoir is able to contain powerful representations of the suffering of others precisely because the authors are also so present in their texts. The genre—or genres, rather—of each of their works is a vital factor in this ability. Although I will continue to refer to both *Looking for Trouble* and *An Unfinished Woman* as memoirs, both draw upon source material of other genres. For Cowles, her own politically-unaffiliated war reportage influences the stories she relates and how she relates them, covering both the Republicans and the Nationalists with both skepticism and humanity. And Hellman's *An Unfinished Woman*, which, as I have previously mentioned, claims to include a diary excerpt as the chapter on Spain, also possibly has a foundation in journalism.

As I will demonstrate, Hellman recycles and breathes new life into previously published material to influence her audience years after the war concluded.

#### Virginia Cowles: Looking for Trouble in Spain

In a March 2016 interview with Terry Gross for the nationally-syndicated NPR radio program *Fresh Air*, historian Adam Hochschild pronounced that little-known American Virginia Cowles was the “best journalist in Spain” during the Spanish Civil War, stating that her resulting memoir, *Looking for Trouble*, is “still a fine read today, whereas most of the other memoirs of journalists who were there have a very musty feel. What makes her reporting so good, I think, is that she's one of the very few people who reported from both sides in the war”(Interview). Gross interviewed Hochschild on the occasion of the publication of the historian’s newest book, *Spain in Our Hearts: Americans in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939*. In *Spain in Our Hearts*, Hochschild’s praise for Cowles’ writing appears in almost identical terminology: *Looking for Trouble* “still seems crisp and subtly observed today, while the many memoirs of the war by other American reporters mostly have a musty feel” (*Spain* 157). The foundation of this accolade—Cowles’ observational and compositional skills—while not necessarily undeserving of the praise, is not explored in *Spain in Our Hearts*, as Hochschild’s few pages dedicated to his chosen best journalist in Spain surprisingly focus most on the impression that her appearance, dress, and manner made on the men and women around her. Introducing Cowles in contrast to another of the “rare” women who were foreign correspondents, Milly Bennett, Hochschild states:

If Milly Bennett's brassy, one-of-the-boys manner was one path to a tenuous foothold in the profession, Virginia Cowles took another. [...] Ginny, as her friends called her, grew up in Boston and had been a debutante in the 1928-29 'season' [...] By temperament she was no rebel, but, ambitious to see the world and to write, she quickly grasped that as a woman it that would not be easy. (156)

Here two choices are implied: women who are foreign correspondents can write about Spain while trying to be one of the boys, or they can write about Spain "as a woman." Cowles takes the latter path, and it presents certain opportunities, challenges, and perspectives for her and her experience in Spain. As Hochschild goes on to say:

Once in Spain, she showed no shyness in asking other reporters—nearly all of them men—for advice, and they competed to help her. It didn't hurt that she bore a resemblance to the actress Lauren Bacall, dressed elegantly, and had a slender figure and long, dark hair topped with a fetching beret. Her large brown eyes, set far apart, 'held one's own steadily,' remembered one smitten man. (157)

Although this is anachronistic comparison to a star of stage and screen—Bacall was 12 years old at the time Cowles went to Spain—the quote touches upon a key point in *Looking for Trouble*. In the memoir, Cowles' self-representation highlights how her gender and profession are perceived by those around her and also engages language that presents her as a star in the theater of the Spanish Civil War. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, Cowles self-representation is key to presenting a "crisp and subtly observed" account of the war that is also grounded in the experiences of a legitimate woman war correspondent.

## The Spectacle of War

In the first chapter of *Gender in the Theater of War: Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida,"* Barbara Bowen states that “war is a spectacle in the same way a play is a spectacle—in some essential sense, it must be *viewed* in order to take place” (8, emphasis in original). In the enacting of this spectacle, the roles of viewer and actor are gendered. In war, like in a Shakespearean play, men are the actors. In fact, as Bowen suggests, the front lines of war constitute “a world which is in many ways defined by the absence of women” (4). Nancy Huston, in her article “Tales of War and Tears of Women,” makes the radical proposal that war exists only because it has a gendered audience: women (279). Indeed, men cannot be the intended spectators of war, as able-bodied men who do not participate in war as soldiers are often vilified (Bowen 9). In the context of the Spanish Civil War, this ideology is clearly present and often made visible in propaganda posters.

In *Gender in the Theater of War*, Bowen highlights not only how war is a performance, but also how gender is a performance, relying on Judith Butler’s well known *Gender Trouble*. Cowles’ performance of her gender in wartime, especially in costuming herself, as I will show, is not always subversive. Yet wars are sustained by “maintaining gender identities” (Cooke 177) and those who do not perform their gendered role well—such as the men who do not participate as soldiers—may be shunned (Bowen 9). Cowles’ time in Spain, as presented in *Looking for Trouble*, has the author walking a line between what is permissible for a woman in war and what is not. Huston claims that “the story of each war is ordered and patterned [...] in such a way as to provide the greatest moral and aesthetic pleasure to the audience from whom the narrative is intended” (272). In this scenario, the composition of a war’s story probably is

generated by a man, and the intended audience should most certainly be women. According to Bowen, “[w]ar could not continue if women did not assent to our role as audience” (6). War correspondents such as Cowles, regardless of gender, are certainly an audience for war. In *Looking for Trouble*, however, Cowles repeatedly uses her personal connections and wits to reach the world “defined by the absence of women”—the front—and then composes a war story based on all her experiences in Spain, from the front lines to the home front. In the theater of the Spanish Civil War, Cowles performs her gender in a way that conforms to gender norms, but at the same time she also appears in scenes traditionally reserved for men, so that she performs a very active role in the bellic context that has potential to destabilize the “moral and aesthetic pleasure” of war stories.

### Making an Entrance

Cowles’ sets the scene of the theater of war in the first two chapters of *Looking for Trouble* in which she arrives first in Valencia by airplane, and then in Madrid by car. The language of these two chapters clearly present the two Republican cities as stages—either in a theater or as a soundstage. After the Valencian home front is described in detail, from port to city center, including music and art, Cowles makes her entrance into this “scene” which she “regard[s] [...] with bewilderment” (5). In Madrid, an in-depth picture of the city is painted, followed by Cowles’ remark: “For a city subjected to daily bombardments Madrid seemed as unreal as a huge movie set swarming with extras ready to play a part” (12). The association of war with theater continues as Cowles follows a description of the scarring effects of bombardments on buildings and monuments, with a statement about the incongruity of routine

life in a bellic context. “And yet the atmosphere of the city was not one of war. Although it had become transformed into a village behind the front, bombs and shells had been unable to erase the daily routine of life. It was this that lent the city its curious air of theatre”<sup>7</sup> (13-14). Not only is bellic Madrid a scene set for war, but the implements and effects of war also are described in language of the theater: “The shell-holes, the camouflaged trucks and the stone barricades seemed as unreal as stage props” (14).

It is into this theater of war that Cowles makes an entrance, immediately drawing attention after her arrival in Valencia because her suitcase inadvertently displays Franco’s colors (6). Although *Looking for Trouble* is based on Cowles’ war reporting, the memoir obviously stars its own author. Cowles’ writing, however, highlights her starring role in this scene by contrasting her presence with that of others. In Madrid, for example, the citizens are “extras ready to play a part” while she receives a tour of the sights. During this tour, she and her guide, a friend and writer named Tom Delmer, “had to step over an old peddler woman who was selling red and black anarchist ties and small tin ornaments made in the shapes of tanks and aeroplanes which she had carefully spread over the pavement” (14). In Valencia and Madrid, Cowles attends a bullfight—which she refuses to watch—, visits the most fashionable bars and cafés, and takes refuge in a perfume shop during a lunchtime bombardment. Meanwhile, the Spaniards whose lives and livelihoods are destroyed around her remain entirely nameless extras, uttering very few lines.

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<sup>7</sup> Although an American, Virginia Cowles published *Looking for Trouble* in London, where she also took up residence, and uses British English spelling throughout her memoir.

The first two chapters of *Looking for Trouble* leave plenty of room for critique of its author, as Cowles appears as a starlet debuting in a play or film set in a war-ravaged city. But this self-representation also can be read as the necessary establishing of her role as a self-confident, independent woman, capable of the mobility and observations expected of a war correspondent, especially because, as Cowles admits, she “had no qualifications as a war correspondent except curiosity” (4). As I will elaborate more completely later, Cowles repeatedly is the subject of comments from men aimed at belittling or demeaning her, her capabilities, and her role as a war correspondent. Interestingly, Cowles includes many such comments in *Looking for Trouble*. As Hochschild reveals in an above citation, Cowles relies on the willing advice of other reporters, mostly men, while starting her career in Spain, but this information is not included in the text of *Looking for Trouble*. Hochschild also relates another similar story that in one circumstance, when Cowles was left without transportation in Spain, a man offered to carry her suitcase for a mile, and she later wrote about the experience: “I thought what a fine thing it was to be a female of the species” (qtd. in *Spain* 157). This account does not appear in the pages of her memoir, however. Similarly, in *Looking for Trouble* Cowles rarely indicates the presence of a translator for her to communicate with the Spaniards, although she lacks fluency in the language. *Looking for Trouble* depends on its protagonist’s image as a capable, independent woman and war reporter. Even the book’s title, written using the gerund, implies the ongoing, audacious, and individual protagonism of its writer.



## A Disarming Costume

In *Spain in Our Hearts*, Hochschild uncritically focuses on Cowles' appearance and attire. Besides the aforementioned comparison to Lauren Bacall, Hochschild also remarks that "[v]irtually everyone who wrote about meeting Cowles in Spain, man or woman, referred to her dazzling good looks, her high heels, and her past as a debutante" (157). This includes, as Hochschild reminds readers, Josephine Herbst, another war correspondent in Spain who dined with Cowles and Hemingway one evening in Madrid. In her memoir, *The Starched Blue Skies of Spain*, Herbst writes that Cowles "is young and pretty; dressed in black, with heavy gold bracelets on her slender wrists and wearing tiny black shoes with incredibly high heels. I often wondered how she navigated over the rubble" (170-71). Cowles herself offers less revealing information about her appearance, quickly describing her wardrobe in one discussion about clothes before leaving for Spain. "Friends in Paris were not encouraging. They warned me if I didn't dress shabbily I would be 'bumped off' in the streets; some suggested men's clothes; others rags and tatters. I finally took three wool dresses and a fur jacket" (4). By disclosing this selected information to her audience, Cowles reveals a choice she made about self-representation in Spain. The assumption of her friends is that presenting herself as masculine or as poor would be appropriate and safe, yet Cowles chooses the role of feminine and of a higher economic status. In a style very typical of Cowles' narrative, she does not divulge an explanation as to her thoughts or feelings behind this decision. Cowles offers a few other hints as to her wardrobe as parts of other larger narratives, such as in a conversation with a Russian general from the International Brigades:

General Gal (whether or not this was a pseudonym I don't know) didn't address me till lunch was nearly over, then he instructed David to translate the following remark: 'I may take you to the front this afternoon, but first you will have to remove those gold bracelets you are wearing. The enemy would be sure to spot them.'

Everyone laughed and I seized the opportunity to press home the point about the front. 'You are too soft,' he replied. Then he looked disapprovingly at my black suede shoes. 'You would get tired and want someone to carry you.'

He was deliberately provocative, but I managed to keep a civil tongue, and an hour later, much to my surprise, my request was granted. (42)

Again, Cowles refrains from recording her thoughts about this exchange for her audience, even though the General was "deliberately provocative." It appears as though Cowles herself is also deliberately provocative, wearing to the front lines in the Spanish countryside, to a space defined by the absence of women, the costume of a woman perhaps at leisure in the city. This presentation, whether deliberately or not, is disarming to the men surrounding her, which allows Cowles to "seize [an] opportunity" to get what she needs as a war correspondent that she possibly might not have found otherwise.

### A Woman at the Front

Opportunities for writing from Spain during the Spanish Civil War were rare for the rare women war correspondents. Cowles remarked after the war that the best way for a woman to get to Spain was "to tell the paper of her choice that she is going anyway and would they like

some articles” (qtd. in *Spain* 156), which is how Cowles approached the Hearst chain of newspapers. Once in Spain, Cowles is faced with plenty of adversity or disparaging remarks from the men who do not think that a woman belongs anywhere near war. The mildest account of this is the first one that Cowles includes in *Looking for Trouble*. Cowles finds herself at the front in Madrid with a British chemist consulting on the use of poison gases in war. “The Professor called out to me cheerfully and asked how I liked it. I said, not much, and he seemed to resent this, for he yelled back that in the last war women were not allowed within six miles of the front lines. ‘You ought to be grateful for the privilege,’ he shouted” (23). The professor later demonstrates himself to be completely careless at the front, subjecting an entire group, including Cowles, to be targets for Nationalist fire. Yet for the professor, being at the front although he is not a soldier is not a privilege but rather is commonplace or at least acceptable.

In a later experience, Cowles finds herself accidentally at a front where the International Brigades are fighting and enters into a heated exchange in her first encounter with General Gal. General Gal tells Cowles that she is not permitted to be at the front, nor to interview the International Brigades soldiers and officers:

As we were leaving he [General Gal] walked over to one of the rose-bushes, snapped off a spray of flowers and handed them to me, saying, with a studied sarcasm apparent even through the mouth of the interpreter, “You can write your story from the garden. No one will know the difference; and here is a souvenir to remind you of your adventure at the front.” (40-41)

The exchange highlights the misogynistic regard with which the general holds Cowles. The sarcastic gesture of offering flowers and General Gal’s subsequent comments reveal much.

General Gal rejects Cowles as an undesired object of his potential affections. He then takes a jab at both Cowles' class and gender by implying that the labor of a woman of her position should be ornamental, such as gardening. The statement also suggests that General Gal believes a woman war correspondent cannot appropriately represent the stories of men at war at the front, even if she is present to witness what happens there. Finally, General Gal undermines Cowles' labor as a war correspondent by implying that she is simply a tourist looking for a bit of adventure.

Subsequent to this is one of the very few times that Cowles reports a reaction to misogynistic treatment she receives. "I replied by passing the flowers to a surprised sentry and walking angrily out to the car" (41). When General Gal does invite Cowles to return for a lunch, and then detains her for three days until he believes she has been appropriately educated in Marxism, a reminder of General Gal's negative feelings towards Cowles is part of the scene she finds upon arrival, although she does not explicitly make the connection: "I had a feeling everything had been carefully arranged, even to the large bowl of flowers in the middle of the table" (42). It is after this lunch that Cowles does "seize the opportunity" of a disarming conversation that results in General Gal agreeing to let her visit the trenches at the front.

At the end three days at the International Brigades' front, General Gal permits Cowles to leave, repeating the gesture of giving her flowers, but this time the offering is accompanied with what he would probably deem as charm and respect:

The General evidently thought his instructions in Marxism had been effective, for when at last the three days were up and I went to say good-bye to him, he gave me final advice: "Read the works of Lenin, all thirty-seven volumes. When you are

well instructed, join the Party, but conceal your views from your family. You will be useful as an under-cover agent.” He walked over to the bowl of flowers, picked out a red rose and handed it to me: “This flower was stained in the blood of the Revolution. Be faithful to it.” (47)

This goodbye still contains a certain lack of respect for Cowles, to whom General Gal believes he has now provided an appropriate education. Although he recognizes her potential to turn the feminine disarming quality he had witnessed into undercover labor as a spy useful for his cause, this recognition still assumes that it is not appropriate for Cowles to be at the front as a correspondent or otherwise. It also assumes that any thought Cowles might have herself is not valid; instead of carrying out her chosen role as a war correspondent, she must be directed by a commanding officer to whom, of course, she does not actually answer. Cowles does not tell the readers of *Looking for Trouble* how she feels about General Gal’s final actions and comments towards her, although at the front she pushes through her fear of danger while running exposed up a hill only because the “fear of the General’s contempt” (43) outweighed it. Even if she does not have a response to belittling actions and comments, in revealing her “fear of the General’s contempt” Cowles demonstrates her need to push back against any men who do not think her capable of the job she has chosen.

#### The Nationalists’ Narrative

On the Nationalist side, Cowles’ treatment from men does not improve. The Nationalists assigned official guides for reporters, and Cowles had the misfortune of being assigned the English-speaking Captain Aguilera, among others, who exclaims that there is just “one thing [he]

hate[s] worse than a Red,” who he would “like to impale [...] and see them wriggling on poles like butterflies” (84). This one thing is a “sob-sister” (84).<sup>8</sup> Like General Gal’s comments about Cowles’ clothes, Aguilera’s slur is also deliberately provocative, especially because it is only implicitly directed at Cowles. Of course, Aguilera is aware that Cowles is in Spain as a war correspondent, and he attempts to exert control over her narrative:

“*Bueno*,” said Aguilera, “it’s good to see them [the Republican prisoners] building up what they’ve destroyed. The only thing the Reds like to do is destroy. You must emphasize that in one of your articles. The joy of destruction.”

“Yes,” I said, “but the army was in retreat. If they blow up the bridges it holds up the advance, doesn’t it?”

Aguilera gave me a hostile look. “You talk like a Red.” (83)

In Aguilera’s “hostile” response to Cowles’ well-reasoned and informed question, he also tries to influence her critical thinking about the war by drawing a negative comparison between Cowles and his enemies, the “Reds.” Aguilera’s treatment of Cowles also seems to betray a resentfulness towards the strong-willed character of a woman daring to have a wartime presence beyond serving the activities of men.

Being told what to write is commonplace on the Nationalist side. After Cowles achieves a real coup when getting Nationalist officials to admit that Guernica was bombed by the Germans rather than burned by the Republicans, her Nationalist guide, Rosalles, then tells her: “I don’t think I would write about that if I were you” (69). This suggestion is echoed shortly thereafter

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<sup>8</sup> “Sob sister” is a term applied to women journalists who write human interest articles or articles with sentimental subject matter.

when they witness Nationalists pushing a stalled truck over a cliff because it was delaying the Italian ambassador. "I think it is better not to write about that," Rosalles tells Cowles (70). As already mentioned, Huston writes in "Tales of War" that "the story of each war is ordered and patterned [...] in such a way as to provide the greatest moral and aesthetic pleasure to the audience from whom the narrative is intended" (272). Cowles is living in a world in bellic Spain where men hope to shape the narratives of war that she will create, obviously with a certain amount of fear of what Cowles could intentionally or unintentionally accomplish should she disrupt the appropriate "moral and aesthetic pleasure" the intended audience might feel. Although her text makes no mention of a response to any of these narrative-crafting directives from Rosalles or Aguilera, Cowles does indeed respond, exerting her own will and control over the situation. She writes exactly what she was told not to write and also reveals the attempts to regulate her writing.

#### On Her Guard

It is interesting and quite revealing that Cowles remains guarded in her responses to blatant hatred, misogyny, or sexism even in her own memoir. This guarded nature is a recurring element in *Looking for Trouble* and reveals the crafting of a narrative that may not need or require her response for several possible reasons, mostly based in ideals of self-representation:

- 1) As in the case of Aguilera's hateful outburst against the Republicans, a lack of a response from Cowles could prompt more revealing responses from her interlocutors.
- 2) Women must constantly deal with the idea that they are too emotional for certain work, and as a war reporter already deemed out of place by many by virtue of being a woman,

Cowles' silence as a response can serve as protection from the critique of being "hysterical" which could undermine any other observation she makes about the Spanish Civil War.

- 3) Cowles clearly demonstrates respect for the intelligence of her audience and their capabilities to understand what is left implicit. Similarly, she also does not explain the many instances of wry humor found throughout *Looking for Trouble*. Readers are left to reflect on the circumstances, draw on our own experiences and knowledge, think critically about the narrative she presents, and come to our own conclusions.
- 4) *Looking for Trouble* is based on Cowles' war reporting, and Cowles safeguards a certain amount of objectivity that she purports to want to have while visiting both sides of the Spanish front lines. But readers have no need to be objective, so, in the case of Aguilera's destructive hatred, we are left to feel disgust—should that be our reaction—without Cowles having to resort to subjective comments.

The one shortcoming of Cowles' personally guarded approach to commentary in her memoir is that a passage that presents an opportunity for great impact or reflection potentially can slip by, leaving the reader either not noticing the weight of the words or feeling as if the author missed a moment to highlight them or engage in further investigation. One such moment occurs as Cowles casually interviews a young Italian aviator on why he came to fight in Spain:

"Well," he smiled, "the two things coincide. You see Italy is a very poor country. If we can kill Reds and get raw materials at the same time, it is a very fine combination. This is the age of expansion."



I asked him if Italy couldn't manage any other way but war, and he said:

"War is not so bad; sometimes it is fun to drop bombs. The trouble with you Americans is you're too sentimental; and you're sentimental because you're too smug. You've got everything you want. Perhaps we Italians wouldn't go to war if there were any new lands to discover. Now, of course, if Christopho Colombo had hung on to America..."

Just then my friend arrived, and I never had a chance to hear the theme developed. (79)

This passage ends the chapter about Cowles' two weeks in Salamanca where she "talked with everyone [she] could find, piecing scraps of information together and trying to make a composite picture out of the whole crazy pattern" (78). The above quote does give the impression of a scrap; in a sense it is fragmented or incomplete. When a reader does examine it closely instead of turning the page and continuing reading, the words of the aviator cause confusion: Is the statement funny, tragic, or absurd? Does Cowles find the aviator's comments too ludicrous to merit a response? Ending the chapter in this way, rather than with a previous, emotional, and completed story of a Russian prisoner in the hospital of a jail, calls attention to the importance of the story of the aviator but also its fragmented or unfinished status. Cowles' propensity for letting her subjects comment without an editorializing reaction or summary from her—during the occurrence or at the time of writing—can occasionally leave the story lacking in impact.

## Looking for Truth

Virginia Cowles entered Republican and Nationalist Spain not just looking for trouble, but also looking for truth about the Spanish Civil War and the human experience of it throughout the country and on both sides of the conflict. As we have seen in her professed “no line” on Spain, her self-reliant representation, and her rejection of attempts by men on both sides to influence her activities and writing, Cowles’ writing positions itself as faithful to her observations and objectivity. As Adam Hochschild notes, many war correspondents, such as Herbert Matthews writing for *The New York Times*, tended to present idealized versions of Spanish Civil War soldiers and the conditions in which they lived, but Cowles “was far more realistic” (181). Cowles demonstrates herself to be very willing to question the official narratives or common knowledge she hears from each side of the conflict, as in previously mentioned instances including the Republican optimistic projection that victory is imminent in 1937, the Nationalist official story that Guernica was set on fire by the Republicans, and the Nationalist fabrication that the “Reds” blew up the roads and bridges upon retreat simply because they love destruction so much.

One event in particular is a fine representation of the results of Cowles’ endeavor to be regard what she is shown and told with a certain independent skepticism. Nearing the end of her visit to the Nationalist side of the lines, she and other correspondents and interested parties are escorted to an active military operation where the Nationalists are firing on a position where Republican soldiers have run out of supplies and ammunition. This excursion is treated almost like dinner theater by the Nationalist minders, as Cowles and the others are provided with picnic boxed lunches, wine, and the view and told to enjoy themselves. Cowles describes the trip as “a mad tea-party from the pages of a bellicose Alice in Wonderland” where her companions were

“in holiday spirits” (84). There is a nonchalance and disregard for the lives of others inherent in this excursion that deeply disturbs Cowles as she imagines the Republican soldiers being attacked on the other side.

The scene was incongruous. While the press officers were opening their potato omelettes and gulping down their wine, the guns shuddered and split the air, coughing out blue fire as the shells went moaning across the countryside. It took the explosives twenty-five seconds to reach the Republican stronghold, a mountain-top about two miles away; then there was a muffled crash and shrapnel rained down upon the hill like black soot. [...]

As I sat there in the sunshine I had a feeling of revulsion; when the gunner pulled the lanyard I automatically counted twenty-five and wondered for whom the sands were running out. (85)

Although the others around her are feeling festive and enjoying the afternoon, because of her fairly unique bilateral experience in the Spanish Civil War Cowles imagines with sickening dread the Republicans not just as the opposing side but as actual humans being killed 25 seconds after the artillery fires a shell. In this experience, Cowles is able to pull back the curtain on her curated wartime experience and imagine realities that she is not meant to consider and that are not part of the carefully crafted narrative of war on display for her pleasure.

In “Tales of War and Tears of Women,” Nancy Huston asserts: “firstly, it has always been men (and not Man) who have made war narratives; secondly, it has always been men (and not Man) who have made the casting decisions, both in fact and in fantasy” (280). Returning to another of her assertions that, “the story of each war is ordered and patterned by different

cultural media [...] in such a way to provide the greatest moral and aesthetic pleasure to the audience for whom the narrative is intended" (272), it is necessary to reevaluate war narratives when women are becoming those who compose them, even while men still are the ones who make most of the casting decisions. In *Looking for Trouble*, Virginia Cowles manages to compose a keen narrative about war with her own experiences as a wholly capable, self-confident, independent woman writer at the center. In so doing, she begins to shift the paradigm. The "moral and aesthetic pleasure" Cowles attains in *Looking for Trouble* is not that which is typical of the men. In fact, as I have shown, not only does Cowles not repeat many of the tropes and tendencies of other correspondents, she also makes many of these men uncomfortable with her presence, questions, reasoning, and observations. Cowles upsets their balance of war by tending towards a realistic and honest presentation of the death and destruction she witnesses in Spain.

#### Lillian Hellman: Representation and Re-Presentation of the Spanish Civil War

Lillian Hellman, one of the most important playwrights of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, traveled to Spain in October and November of 1937, during the height of the Spanish Civil War. The stay in Spain constituted several weeks during a longer trip to multiple countries in Europe. According to Hellman's diary in the 1969 memoir *An Unfinished Woman*, she was convinced to detour to Spain by a German communist friend named Otto, but admits that "[i]t didn't take much persuasion: I had strong convictions about the Spanish war, about Fascism-Nazism, strong enough to push just below the surface my fear of the danger of war" (*Unfinished* 82). This introductory quote to the Spanish conflict also reveals a salient, recurring theme in Hellman's

writing about Spain: the tension between the strength and courage to complete what she feels is a moral obligation to bear witness and the negative, prohibitive sensations caused by being in a country at war—sensations that ranged from unsettled or uncomfortable to completely paralyzed by fear.

According to Hellman's 1969 memoir, *An Unfinished Woman*, which is the principal source of her published writings on Spain, the trip to Spain lasted from a few days before October 13 until November 11, 1937, and she spent most of her time in Spain based in the key Republican cities Valencia and Madrid. Hellman's biographer, Alice Kessler-Harris, stressed Hellman's time in Spain during the Civil War as a formative life experience for the writer (117), ushering in an era of dedication to the Spanish Republican cause and those who fought and suffered for it that would last for the remainder of Hellman's life. This commitment manifested itself in Hellman's decades-long fundraising for the soldiers and civilians affected by Franco's uprising and regime as well as her support of and involvement in organizations such as the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, the Motion Picture Artists Committee to Aid Republican Spain, and Spanish Refugee Aid (119-20). Despite the recognition of the war's impact on Hellman's life, few lines—paragraphs at best—have been dedicated by biographers and literary scholars to Hellman's own textual productions on the subject. The one exception to this is Martha Gellhorn's scathing attack on Hellman's truthfulness in the accounts of Spain included in *An Unfinished Woman*. Gellhorn's piece appeared in *The Paris Review* in 1981, lambasting the Spanish Civil War "apocryphar"—a neologism she invents for this piece—Stephen Spender, but slipping into a much more thorough and derisive dismantling of Hellman's Spanish Civil War credibility. While a response from Spender was published immediately following Gellhorn's

article, Hellman, who was very ill by this point in her life, was afforded no such courtesy or defense. Thus, the hyper-negative “Guerre de Plume: Martha Gellhorn: *On Apocryphism*,” remains the only substantial critical response to Hellman’s work on Spain.

### An Untruthful Woman?

That Gellhorn’s *Paris Review* article is the salient critical piece on Hellman’s Spanish Civil War writing is unfortunate, given the article’s context. Gellhorn wrote it at the request of writer Mary McCarthy (Kessler-Harris 329, 333), who was the subject of a libel lawsuit from Hellman after stating on *The Dick Cavett Show* in 1979, “Lillian Hellman, I think, is tremendously overrated, a bad writer, a dishonest writer. Every word she says is a lie, including ‘and’ and ‘the.’” The response to the lawsuit, as agreed upon by McCarthy and Gellhorn, was to dissect Hellman’s writing to disprove its factual truth (Kessler-Harris 333), although Gellhorn herself claims to “have not the slightest personal interest” (“Guerre” 281). The piece is alternately snide with sarcastic praise and directly biting. As Gellhorn shifts her attention from Spender to Hellman, she introduces the new apocryphar: “We move on [...] to that famous personage of American letters, Miss Lillian Hellman, whose memoir *An Unfinished Woman* I read with unfathomed amazement. Goodness to Betsey, I said to myself, what an *important* lady. How marvelous for Miss Hellman to be Miss Hellman” (286, emphasis in original). Later, Gellhorn calls Hellman’s time in Spain as an “ego trip” (291) and states that her “incomprehension of that war is near idiocy” (296) or “ludicrous” (300). Calling into question the dates of the events as stated by Hellman in *An Unfinished Woman*, Gellhorn cross-checks them with newspaper articles and her own notes and memory from the time period and concludes that Hellman must have used

her imagination to insert herself into events she had only heard about because they had occurred at times other than the dates in the diary (294). Gellhorn's derisive attack on credibility neglects her reflection on a key issue: unlike Gellhorn, Hellman was not a war reporter and *An Unfinished Woman* is not war reporting. The journalistic practices and standards that may guide Gellhorn in writing do not necessarily apply to the form under which Hellman publishes her writing on the Spanish Civil War. While Gellhorn's main line of attack is on the chronology of Hellman's trip to Spain, Hellman herself demonstrates a lack of concern for basic chronology as part of "truth" and throughout her lifetime made no secret of her bad memory for dates (52; Kessler-Harris 304). In a serious study on *An Unfinished Woman* it is essential to consider genre, memory, and Hellman's relationship with the truth. Certainly, these will be in focus in the following pages.

In response to attacks on Hellman's credibility, Griffin and Thorsten wrote in their 1999 Hellman biography, "Those who, like Martha Gellhorn in 1981, suggest Hellman fabricated her Spanish civil war experiences, and could do with impunity because all the other witnesses to the war were dead, overlook the fact that the memoir material appeared in *The New Republic* in 1938 as well as in *This Is My Best* in 1942" (104). Griffin and Thorsten imply that a nearly contemporaneous publishing of material that later would be included in a memoir is proof of facticity of such material. Their statement that defends Hellman also ignores the actual question that should be examined: what obligation does Hellman, or any other writer, have to record the factual truth in her memoir? As noted American memoirist Mary Karr says of her genre: "It's not objective history; it's memory, which is a faulty form in terms of reportage." Kessler-Harris, in explaining the characteristics of the genre of memoir, also offers an implicit defense of Hellman

against the allegation of lying: “Hellman differs little from most memoirists who practice an art that relies exclusively on their unchallengeable memories and distances itself from anything called objective truth” (304).

For her part, Hellman often reflected on the roles of memory and truth in her life and writing, not solely after McCarthy’s allegations of untrue words. In a 1977 interview for *Rolling Stone* she claimed, “Everybody’s memory is tricky and mine’s a little trickier than most, I guess,” (52) which was a frequent and typical comment from Hellman on the subject (Kessler-Harris 3). As for the meaning of truth, during a 1961 lecture at Harvard University Hellman stated, “I don’t know what the hell the truth is, maybe just not lying” (qtd. in Kessler-Harris 302). This implies that the truth is present when there is no willful intent to deceive, which, for a person with a poor memory, opens the door for a truth that differs greatly from objective facts. Hellman’s preoccupation with the meaning of truth is even considered in the final paragraph of *An Unfinished Woman*. “I do regret that I have spent too much of my life trying to find what I called ‘truth,’ trying to find what I called ‘sense.’ I never knew what I meant by truth, never made the sense I hoped for” (280).

Without attacking Hellman’s truthfulness, the unusual elements of the form, or forms, of Hellman’s texts on Spain should be considered. First of all, *An Unfinished Woman* is a memoir, which, as already stated, is not objective history. In her 1977 *Rolling Stone* interview, Hellman did state that essential to the composition of her memoirs was “a feeling for fiction, some belief that what I was writing about was interesting or dramatic” but this also meant “[t]he structure was difficult because I didn’t want to alter facts” (52). What is truly consequential about the section from *An Unfinished Woman* on Spain as well as the selections included in the 1942



anthology *This Is My Best* is that they are both presented as pages from Hellman's diary written concurrent with the Spanish Civil War while she is in Spain.

The writers included in *This Is My Best* were also to include a short paragraph about the pieces they selected for inclusion and why they selected those texts. Hellman's pages are titled "The Little War" and begin thusly: "These are pieces from a diary written on a long trip to Europe in 1937. This part is about Spain during the Civil War. I don't know whether they are my favorites. I don't even know whether I have favorite pieces of writing. I do know that I hope these people are alive, that they will live to see a better day" (989). The chapter of *An Unfinished Woman* which deals with Spain is introduced solely with the words "From a diary, 1937" followed by a colon, then the first diary entry begins with the heading, "Valencia, October 13" (83). That the Spanish Civil War texts included in *This Is My Best* and *An Unfinished Woman* are presented as a diary suggest a more immediate and fact-filled original content—as it is assumed that events and perceptions are recorded within hours or, at most, days of their occurrence—than a memoir composed over thirty years after the events occurred. Furthermore, *An Unfinished Woman* contains several sentences within brackets and noting that they were written in 1968<sup>9</sup> as an addendum or to clarify the diary pages. These additions have the effect of highlighting a temporal distance between the composition (1968) and publication (1969) of *An Unfinished Woman* and the dates referenced in the diary pages.

The remainder of this chapter will be dedicated to the exploration of Hellman's work on Spain and what I argue is a strategic decision to publish in *An Unfinished Woman* the "diary"

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<sup>9</sup> Although *An Unfinished Woman* was published in 1969, throughout this chapter I continually reference the date of 1968 for the Spanish Civil War material included in the memoir because Hellman's addenda notes also reference that year.

pages that very probably were not composed on their stated dates. In fact, I propose the diary in *An Unfinished Woman* is a combination of rewritten earlier texts intermixed with material composed specifically for the memoir on the assumption that they are based on Hellman's real memories of her time in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. I also will show that Hellman's Spanish Civil War chapter of *An Unfinished Woman* is a re-presentation of original diary entries from thirty years earlier. This re-presentation is also an intelligent and key decision made to create an affective and effective literary piece. Critics and scholars have failed to juxtapose the Hellman's multiple versions of the same events on her trip to Spain. Such close comparisons enable us to draw subtler conclusions about truth and facticity as well as gain an understanding as to why multiple accounts may exist.

As previously mentioned, Hellman maintained a lifelong commitment to the cause of the Spanish Republic and in assistance to its soldiers and refugees. Despite this, memories of the Spanish Civil War were fading from the minds of many. The presentation of a diary lends credibility to Hellman's accounts of war, as it assumes an immediate, faithful eye-witness, although this is of course what later becomes part of the attack on Hellman's truthfulness. But more important than credibility, the re-presentation of a diary is an opportunity for the audience to relive with Hellman the several weeks she spent in Spain. This brings back a measure of immediacy to a situation dismissed from relevance in the lives of the American public, yet still relevant to Hellman, but also to millions of Spaniards who survived the war and were still living with its aftermath thirty years later.

### Three Texts, Three Stories

Upon examination, the diary from Spain included in *An Unfinished Woman* reveals many temporal discrepancies that would lead a reader to believe that the pages are not a diary or are not entirely a diary from 1937. As an example, the entry from October 20 begins with the sentence, "I went up to Benicasim this morning" (89). Midway through the diary entry, Hellman states, "I could not read by the candle, so I smoked until the candle went out," followed shortly thereafter by the phrases, "I didn't sleep much that night..." and "The next morning..." (91). In the entry for October 20, therefore, at least two days' events are included, but the diary also has entries for October 19 and October 21, as well as October 22 and 23, none of which signals an overlap with the two days of events that seemingly occur on October 20. In another clear example, the entry for November 11 includes the events that occur on the day Hellman leaves Spain, plus those that occur the next day, two days later, and a week later. According to Kessler-Harris, in other chapters of *An Unfinished Woman* Hellman engages in "deliberate fudging of detail" (7) especially of time. Specifically, Kessler-Harris mentions shortening the time spent in Finland to "make it appear that she had time for another (probably fictional) excursion that she wanted to relate" and adding time to a trip to Moscow "to make a point about her familiarity with the scene" (7). This would suggest, therefore, that if the diary dates contain discrepancies it is only to allow Hellman to convey to her readers something they must know.

As was previously mentioned, Griffin and Thorsten dismissed critiques of facticity by asserting that the memoir material used in *An Unfinished Woman* had previously been published in two separate locations. Instead of focusing on facticity, however, I propose examining these three texts, and especially the differences between the three texts, as a way of determining

what Hellman wanted the readers of *An Unfinished Woman* to understand. It should first be mentioned that the three texts are not simply versions of the others. The earliest text, the piece in the April 13, 1938, edition of *New Republic* is titled “Day in Spain.” Instead of appearing as diary entries, the three vignettes are introduced with a note from the editors stating that the article “was written by Miss Lillian Hellman at the request of Walter Winchell, to be published in Mr. Winchell’s widely syndicated column. After it was prepared, however, the King Features Syndicate, owned by W. R. Hearst, refused to permit it to be distributed to the newspapers taking Mr. Winchell’s column” (207). “Day in Spain” occupies only a page and a half of the periodical, and only two of its three stories appear in the later texts.

“The Little War,” the selection for the anthology *This Is My Best*, was published four years after the *New Republic* article and contains just three diary entries: October 13, October 17, and October 22. The first two entries are nearly identical reprints of the first two vignettes from “Day in Spain,” containing only minimal editing. All events that comprise the three diary entries from *This Is My Best* also are included in *An Unfinished Woman*, although the dates of the first two entries have changed to October 14 and October 20, respectively. Furthermore, the corresponding entries in *An Unfinished Woman* contain significant changes to the narrative of the events without changing the general happenings. The re-presentation of these three stories of Hellman in the Spanish Civil War provides the basis of my study of *An Unfinished Woman* in which I will examine how the diary content has changed between 1942 and 1968, how Hellman re-presents the war and herself as a person in war, and what effects the re-presentation of the diary has on a reader of *An Unfinished Woman* that might have differed had they read “Day in Spain” or “The Little War” instead.

## The Air Raid

The events of October 13 (in “The Little War”) or October 14 (in *An Unfinished Woman*) in Valencia comprise Hellman’s first real brush with war in Spain. While out for a walk in the city, Hellman buys flowers, then she finds herself in an air raid, and on the way back to the hotel she speaks briefly with two soldiers and they share grapes as they watch the planes above. In “The Little War,” Hellman narrates the beginning of the air raid on October 13 in a straightforward, matter-of-fact manner: “Ahead of me was a cat and I don’t think I paid any attention to what had happened until I saw the cat suddenly sit down in the middle of the street. While I stood there, looking at him, I began to hear the sirens. A woman with a pushcart suddenly picked up a little girl, threw the girl in the cart, and wheeled it swiftly away” (989). Realizing what is happening, Hellman reacts: “I turned, too, and began to walk. [...] I went through a square, towards my hotel” (989).

The same walk appears in the entry for October 14 in Hellman’s memoir, with significant changes to the context and circumstances. First of all, the purpose for the walk is explained as a response to a difficult question Hellman asks herself in a passage not included in 1942. “But then why have I come here, what will I see, or do, what good will I be to these people as I eat their food or use their cars or lie on a bed reading Julian [sic] Green? I settle it by going for a walk” (85). This question, and the events on the subsequent walk, highlight a shift from a passive visitor in Spain to an active, involved, and in-danger eyewitness. The ever-lurking danger is present in Hellman’s 1968 narration of the beginning of the air raid. In passages such as the one that follows that duplicate many words from “The Little War,” I have chosen to underline words

and phrases from *An Unfinished Woman* that are new to the 1968 version or significantly changed from the 1942 anthology selection:

By now I have lost my way and can't get to the Press Office and feel better walking in the hot sunshine watching a cat that is about a half a block ahead of me. I didn't hear anything until I saw the cat sit down in the street, its head raised at a queer angle. Then suddenly the cat took off under the grating of a store as a woman with a market push-cart picked up a little girl, threw the girl in the cart, and began to run down an alley. Maybe the child's screams kept me from hearing the sirens. (85-86)

In this version, when Hellman realizes what is happening, she cannot simply return to her hotel because she is lost, and the square that she walks through to get back to the hotel in "The Little War" is now unfamiliar and not clearly a path towards safety: "Two women ran past me and called out something I couldn't understand, and then I began to run toward a square I had never seen before" (86). After this, an entire new scene, which deserves to be quoted at length, is added to the diary entry:

In the middle of the square I saw a policeman gesturing toward people I couldn't see. I slowed down hoping to figure out what he meant, but I couldn't, and so I ran on toward an open treeless stretch. The policeman was shouting at me now, but I didn't know enough Spanish to understand him. He was angry as I waited for him. I said, "*No sé donde lugar voy.*" He pointed under a bench, shoved me, and ran on. As I crawled under the bench, the sirens had stopped. I was lying face down into the heavy smell of my flowers. In the distance I heard a great, swelling

sound, as if a storm wave had finished its move into shore. And then another, this time further away, or so I thought. I don't know how many minutes I stayed under the bench, but I knew that being alone there frightened me more than it was worth. I stuck my head out, tried to figure what streets I had crossed, and made a dash across the square. All streets were empty now and I knew that I was acting as I had been warned not to act in an air raid. (86)

The diary entry from *An Unfinished Woman* is written as a sort of nightmare with vivid descriptions, even of small details, and much more heightened senses of sight, sound, and even smell. The grammatically-incorrect but intelligible utterance in Spanish—interestingly, the only complete phrase in Spanish throughout the entire Spanish Civil War section in *An Unfinished Woman*—adds to the authenticity of the account. In this scene, Hellman is lost and, although surrounded by people, she appears very much alone and abandoned. The memoir's entry is much more of an assault on Hellman's ears than the experience as related in "The Little War." She hears the screams of a little girl first, then sirens and the frantic, unintelligible shouting of the Valencians around her, and, finally, Hellman experiences the thunder of bombs crashing in the distance. Even the cat, with its quick dash to safety, adds an element of increased panic in response to the situation. In short, the memoir diary conveys the chaos of an air raid with an expanded, more detailed, terrifying narrative that reproduces and provokes terror.

The final passage of this day in both diary entries has Hellman making her way back to the hotel where she is staying and finding two soldiers in the doorway. The three share grapes as they observe Republican planes flying off to chase away the Italian bombers. To close the entry, Hellman notes that the bombers had killed 63 people in the port that day. However, in the

middle of this short addendum to her air raid experience in the *Unfinished Woman* diary entry, Hellman adds three short sentences: “He [the soldier] nodded to me, pointed with his grapes, and said in English, ‘Italian bastards.’ As he spoke, one plane dropped down and from it slowly floated what looked like a round gift-package. The soldier with the grapes stepped into the street, shook his fist and screamed into the air as the bomb, and another, exploded” (87). Here again Hellman employs a thorough, yet concise, description of events, although in this instance the tumult is in the distance. This short addition is pivotal, carrying the reader from Hellman’s previous air raid experience to what certainly must be the terror experienced by the 63 people about to die in the port, and the countless others injured and affected nearby. From her vantage point, there is a striking incongruity between the sight of slowly floating gift package and the auditory assault of the explosion of Italian bombs she witnessed while stuffed under a bench in the square and now echoed from the direction of the port.

In her changes to the October 13/October 14 entry of her diary, updated for *An Unfinished Woman*, Hellman succeeds in creating a riveting, chaotic scene with life-or-death consequences. For Hellman, of course, the result is life, whereas for 63 others it is death. Reading “The Little War,” with its scant description, the death of the people in the port is simply a fact. In *An Unfinished Woman*, the preceding description of Hellman’s air raid experience provides a transferrable context for the later gift-package bombing that killed those 63 people. I propose that this is a strategic decision that assists readers in transferring affect from the personal to the collective. An understanding of Hellman’s terror transforms the fact of the death of 63 people into a reality that can be much more readily imagined and felt by the memoir’s readers.



## The Trip to Benicasim

The previously mentioned memoir diary entry of October 20<sup>th</sup>, which contains multiple temporal discrepancies, narrates a trip to Benicasim that Hellman took with the German novelist Gustav Regler. In “The Little War,” the events of this trip are included under an entry for October 17, and Gustav Regler’s name goes unmentioned. Instead, Hellman describes the author as “a German Catholic who was a fairly well known novelist until Hitler came in” (990). Given that *This Is My Best* was published during the height of World War II, it is likely Regler’s name was omitted as a protective measure. In both texts, the Benicasim trip begins with a long drive to the town, followed by a dinner with foreign officers fighting for the Republic and some of their wives, then Hellman shares a room with the wife of one of the officers, and the next morning she visits the International Brigades soldiers wounded in the war.

The Benicasim entry in *An Unfinished Woman* contains relatively minor edits that differentiate it from the entry in “The Little War,” but not substantially. The one noticeable and significant change is from a passage narrating Hellman’s thoughts as she lies in bed. The earlier version of the passage has a silent roommate, and Hellman alone with her thoughts about the convictions of the International Brigade officers and soldiers.

Later that night, lying on a straw bed next to the wife of a Czech officer, I thought that these foreigners from everywhere were noble people. I had never used the word noble before, and it came hard, even to say it to myself. When the Spanish war was over, if they came out alive, or with enough arms and legs to seem alive, there would be no glory and no reward. They had come because they thought that if a man believed in democracy he ought to do something about it. That’s all

they would go home with,—wherever home would be. I prayed they would get what they wanted. Lying there, in bed, in the dark, praying, was like being a child again. (990)

In the memoir, the corresponding passage is similar in length and slightly rearranged, but a few other changes substantively darken the tone. In the memoir, the officer's wife, who is from Prague, converses with Hellman about the threat of Hitler in Czechoslovakia. Before sleeping, she returns to the threat at hand and concludes, "There isn't a man in this hospital, if he lives, who will ever be all well again. Those dirty pigs. Goodnight" (91). It is the words of the Czech woman that lead to Hellman's insomniac thoughts:

*I didn't sleep much that night thinking about what she said and how this war was like no other. Men had come great distances to fight here and when the war was over, if they came out alive, or with enough arms or legs or eyes to seem alive, there would be no world for them and no reward. They seemed to me noble people. Because I had never used that word before, it came hard to say it to myself even in the dark, and, as if I had had a vision of what I had missed in the world, I began to cry.* (91)

The changes to the diary for the memoir are subtle but significant. The thoughts on convictions and actions present in "The Little War" are transformed to ones of despair and alienation in *An Unfinished Woman*. In the memoir, the Spanish Civil War has become an event that will have a lasting negative impact on those who fought it and, being that "this war was like no other," its soldiers will not even have the comfort of camaraderie with veterans of other wars, either before or since. There is a sense of displacement, with soldiers "com[ing] great distances,"

leaving behind their homes, and when the war ends there will be “no world for them.” Hellman also adds “eyes” to the list of soldiers’ potential physical losses, adding another dimension of horror that modifies the picture of what a human body needs to have to “seem alive.” The change in the final line—from being like a child and praying that the soldiers find a home in the end to crying in the dark after realizing what she had missed in the world—is pivotal. In the first, there is a sense of nostalgia for a simpler time and a hope for a return to that and to peace. But in the memoir, Hellman has already told us that these soldiers will not ever have a home again, and so there can be no hope. Instead, Hellman also feels a sort of alienation while being the only one awake in the darkness. Her tears come at the realization of the divide between her sacrifices, or the perceived lack thereof, and the sacrifices of the people around her and how she could not be described with the desired adjective: noble. In this one sentence Hellman reveals both a humble self-estimation and a description of the woman she aspires to become. Through her affective response, Hellman also trivializes any of her own suffering and again orients her readers towards the self-sacrificial suffering of her heroes, the soldiers of the Spanish Civil War. This direction of attention is especially poignant in considering the context of the publication of *An Unfinished Woman* in the late 1960s with the war thirty years in the past. Noble Spanish Civil War veterans were forgotten, persecuted in their own countries for political beliefs, and left without the lasting glory such as the World War II veterans received. Unsurprisingly, given her lifelong commitment to the Republican cause, its soldiers, and its refugees, Hellman here tries to return to visibility the displaced, dismembered, still-alive bodies of those who fought in the International Brigades.

## The Blonde Lady

The story most significantly changed from the earlier to later versions is the diary entry from October 22, 1937, in both “The Little War” and *An Unfinished Woman*. On this day, Hellman travels from Valencia to Madrid in a car driven by an incredibly poor chauffeur, Luis. Along the road, Hellman and Luis stop in a small town to find food and are served a meal in the home of a woman with bleached blond hair. In her memoir, Hellman has completely transformed the descriptions of the elements of this journey, making many details much more negative until she meets the blonde lady and is served lunch in a completely reimagined scene.

While many of the elements of the road trip are described at first in the same language as the corresponding sections from “The Little War,” in the memoir, Hellman’s suffering throughout the day is much greater. Consider the following passages, with the selection from “The Little War” written first:

1a) “We had been over this many times in the last eight hours and my voice was sharp now” (992).

1b) “We had been over this several times during the day and my voice was angry now because my head hurt and I told myself I hadn’t come to Spain to die in a car with Luis” (95).

2a) “I guess the bad part of hunger was setting in and I felt weak and irritable now” (992).

2b) “I guess the bad part of hunger is setting in because the last four or five days I have felt weak and irritable” (96).

3a) “I must have put my head in my hand—I felt weak and dizzy—because a man came towards me from a basement hut across the square. His trousers were rolled and his feet were red with wine. He had a glass of wine in his hand and he pushed it at me and smiled. I was afraid that it would make me dizzier, but I didn’t know how to say that, so I drank it. It was raw and fresh and tasted good” (993).

3b) “I fell off the running board and a man came towards me from a basement near the car. He had a glass of wine in his hand and he pushed it at me and smiled. I was afraid that it would make me even dizzier, but I drank it. It was raw and bitter and hard to manage” (97).

The third passage especially is interesting because, uncharacteristically, Hellman has eliminated rather than added most description. The elements that made charming and picturesque the short exchange with the man in “The Little War” have disappeared in Hellman’s memoir, and instead she is left with a literal bad taste in her mouth.

This much more negatively narrativized initial experience in the town gives way to an expanded and affective description of lunch at the blonde lady’s home. When Hellman, in “The Little War,” first greets and thanks the blonde lady for sharing lunch, the lady responds, “We have enough for a stranger” (994). In the memoir, however, this initial interaction is depicted with an already sympathetic connection between the two women: “It is an honor to share with a friend of the Republic of Spain” (98). Furthermore, Hellman’s hunger, irritability, and dizziness, all heightened in the memoir’s description of the road trip, disappear when eating the fried potatoes and egg offered to her by the woman in an addition for the memoir: “It was the first thing I had eaten with pleasure in many weeks, and when I told her that she kissed me” (98).

Hellman crafts a humorous and sympathetic description with the woman's "hospitable monologue," as described by Hellman (98) in an extended paragraph absent from "The Little War":

[S]he was from Madrid, she therefore knew about American ladies; she did not like this country village, but she had brought her children here for safety, which had been a foolish decision because they were bombed almost every day; her aunt was one of the women at the table and was a bastard Fascist because of the bastards [sic] priests; she liked American shoes, how much had mine cost, someday she would have such a pair; her husband had left her when she was nineteen, but who cares; did I have information about Chile where she had a cousin with whom she had been in love; it was for him she had first dyed her hair, but no good had come of that except a pregnancy which she had fixed herself, and now all she had for the passion were two postal cards from Chile. (98-99)

Given Hellman's demonstrated lack of proficiency in Spanish, one must wonder at the plausibility of this monologue. While Hellman's chauffeur could have also served as a translator, the inclusion of such intimate details suggests such a conversation occurred only between the two women. The blonde lady—whose name is never revealed—is an interesting interlocutor for Hellman. Independent, liberated, seemingly fearless, Hellman possibly found in her a kindred spirit. These characteristics, however, would also have made the blonde lady vulnerable to General Francisco Franco's regime after the end of the war. Despite a potential language barrier, Hellman and the blonde lady form a rather instantaneous, intimate connection, mostly predicated on trivial things in a time of war; besides shoes, the two women also discuss

bleaching their hair and whether Lillian Hellman's cousin was Charlie Chaplin. (He was not.)

When Hellman departs and the women say goodbye with a kiss, Hellman also includes an unexpected gesture. "I had left my shoes for the blonde lady under the chair. She found them as Luis was making a wild swing around the square, and the last I saw of her was from a window as she shouted for me to come back for my shoes and then, as I waved no from the car, she clapped her hands in applause" (100). Besides a discussion on hair bleaching, none of this memoir material appears in "The Little War."

As I have shown, Hellman made varied and pervasive changes to the memoir's diary entry about the blonde lady on a scale much greater than the changes in the previously discussed entries. At a glance, it appears that the changes may be in service to setting the scene for a self-sacrificial story wherein Hellman gives her admired American shoes to the blonde lady. I would argue, however, that that assumption would be a discredit to what Hellman believes is a sacrifice, as evidenced by her thoughts on the trip to Benicasim. Instead, I propose Hellman is addressing a lacuna in her writing on the Spanish Civil War: an extended narrative of a connection with a Spanish person. While the description of the interaction of the two women in "The Little War" is rather forgettable, the re-presented uplifting experience of their encounter is a light-hearted highlight of the memoir's Spanish Civil War diary. The charming description of the woman applauding after receiving Hellman's shoes becomes a punctuation point on the story and is easily recalled, evoking the brief but intimate relationship between Hellman and the blonde lady. I also propose that this portrait of the blonde lady is also central to the emotional impact of one of Hellman's final entries from the Spanish Civil War, an entry that is not included in "The Little War" or in *The New Republic*.

## The China Bottles and a Daguerreotype

According to the diary in *An Unfinished Woman*, on her final day in Madrid, November 4, Hellman walks past “a whole block [...] almost entirely destroyed since I had been past it a week before” (105). From a woman in the area, Hellman learns that the bombing had killed 27 people and wounded nine more. Hellman asks the woman for permission to enter one of the destroyed apartment buildings, but the woman simply shrugs because she has nothing to do with the house. Hellman does enter the building, and the resulting experience, as reported in the diary in *An Unfinished Woman*, is both disturbing and emotional.

Hellman reports that this is her first time in a bombed home and offers a vivid description of the apartment she enters on the second floor. The first sensory impact of the bombed building is olfactory: “the smell of scorched material was fruity and sour” (105). Hellman follows this statement with a vivid, nearly photographic recollection of the detritus of the destroyed home:

I stood there thinking that the thrown-about objects made their own formal design: a woman’s hat was lying next to three daguerreotypes in a triple frame; an unbroken blue tile was on the edge of a table; a couch cover was burned and wet; a bowl of limp lettuce was sitting in a chair. On the burned couch were two small china bottles, with roses painted on one side; a book, printed in French, *La Vie de Mireille*, was open on the floor and on top of it was an overturned kitchen colander with a few grains of cooked rice at the bottom; the skirt of a print dress was on a fallen ironing board; next to it were a white table napkin and a large key.



All around my feet were pictures of people in the clothes of other times, other places. (105-06)

Hellman offers no reflection on the state of the apartment; the rich description of the objects juxtaposes with the stark absence of their owners and compels the diary's readers to infer a tragedy. Lacking overt signals of violence beyond burnt upholstery, the upheaval of a rather mundane scene void of human life has a haunting effect, especially highlighted by the images of possibly long-deceased people immortalized in the photographs and daguerreotypes that bookend the passage. This juxtaposition of living and dead is further presented in the traces of a meal. What was meant to give life now reflects the decay of death: wilted lettuce, desiccated rice.

In an act that is disturbing but with traces of sentimentality, Hellman leaves the apartment, taking with her a few souvenirs: the two china bottles and a daguerreotype of a young girl. That she is unreflective in recording this show of lack of respect for the property of others causes Hellman's actions to appear extremely callous. At worst, it is a display of theft and war tourism. When Hellman crashes through the stairs on her retreat from the apartment and is discovered by two boys and their father, she tells them, "I would like to have something to take back to America" (106). While a modern reader may rightly be uncomfortable or horrified by this, Hellman reports no response from the family except to tell her that the two ladies who lived in the apartment had died.

But there is an epilogue to this event, recorded in brackets as a final paragraph composed in 1968: "Transcribing these notes from the diary of that day in Spain, I cross to the fireplace mantel and look at the china bottles and the picture of the young girl. I have carried

them with me to many houses for many years” (106). Thirty years after the theft, the cherished objects have been given a place of honor in Hellman’s home: a fireplace mantel, so often used for displaying family photographs. While Hellman herself never had any children, it is almost as if she has adopted the girl from the daguerreotype as a daughter. In this case, however, Hellman can never know who the girl is, if she grew up to become one of the women in the bombed apartment who died in 1937. Her history has been erased and all that is left is a haunting trace, a spectral image floating over a cold sheet of metal on an American woman’s mantle.

It is in contrast with the vibrant portrait of the blonde lady and the intimate, immediate connection between her and Hellman that the story of the daguerreotype gains greater affective power. The diary entry about the blonde lady provides readers with the most robust and lively description in *An Unfinished Woman* of a Spaniard affected by the Spanish Civil War. Yet while the blonde lady has a story that is told and preserved, the story of the girl in the daguerreotype can only be imagined. But for her image developed onto the metal, the person could be all but disappeared from modern consciousness and quite possibly due to the destruction caused by the war. Just as the vivid description of the bombed apartment highlighted the absence of its owners, the vibrancy of the blonde lady puts into sharp relief a merely spectral presence of the girl.

### The Ghost of the Spanish Civil War

The story of the war souvenirs is an apt summation, I propose, of the lasting impact of the Spanish Civil War on Lillian Hellman, as well as an indication of why she would re-present previously published stories on the war in a revised form in *An Unfinished Woman*. Hellman has

been haunted by the Spanish Civil War for thirty years. The reminder of the war has been ever-present for her, manifested visually in the daguerreotype and china bottles on the mantle and manifested in her actions to aid Spanish refugees in the decades following the surrender of the final Republican forces. Yet in Spain, still under the dictatorship of Franco at the time Hellman wrote *An Unfinished Woman*, there is imposed silence on the defeated Republicans. And in the United States, the Spanish Civil War has faded from memory, especially overshadowed by World War II. The Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives, dedicated to preserving the memory of those Americans who fought in Spain, would not be founded for another decade after the publishing of Hellman's memoir.

The revised, re-presented stories in *An Unfinished Woman* achieve an affective connection with their audience that their appearance in "The Little War" could not. In re-presenting the Spanish Civil War with more vivid, more sensorial narrative, Hellman invites her contemporary readers to experience or re-experience the war through her writing. As she heightens the negative sensations of her own ordeals, Hellman creates a bridge for affective transfer towards the much greater suffering of the Spanish people. Hellman's revisions also serve to bring back into the consciousness of her audience the sacrifices of the International Brigades soldiers who, if they survived, likely were not welcomed back into their countries as heroes, if at all. Finally, *An Unfinished Woman* reveals and addresses the haunting lacunae of the Spanish Civil War. Just as the stories of many victims are forgotten or never known, the war itself suffers a similar fate in the United States. The strategic re-presentation of Hellman's Spanish Civil War texts in *An Unfinished Woman* is the strategic legacy to right this wrong.

Both Virginia Cowles and Lillian Hellman arrived in Spain as two of the few women to cover the Spanish Civil War. Both writers demonstrate in their texts a desire to prove themselves as capable and independent, possibly in anticipation of the desire to ensure their writing is taken seriously and not dismissed because women are considered out of place in a bellic context dominated by men. This desire to prove themselves is apparent in *Looking for Trouble* and *An Unfinished Woman* in the manner in which Cowles and Hellman represent themselves not only as the center of their own narratives, but also as managing their time in Spain without the support and direction of others, especially when facing danger or as witnesses to the front lines. The two writers also have left textual traces of the crafting of their narratives of the Spanish Civil War. Cowles herself informs her readers that she is a writer of war from a distance, both in time and space, having only written for publication about Spain after leaving the country. Cowles also explicitly presents her work as free from attempted censorship and control of men, allowing her to reveal information that others deem damaging to their cause. On the other hand, Hellman's textual traces are only visible when comparing *An Unfinished Woman* to her previous publications of the material, in "Day in Spain" and "The Little War." In the 1969 memoir, Hellman has edited her narrative, mostly with additional adjectives and other details, in a way that heightens her own suffering and the bleakness and violence around her. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, both of the strategies used by Cowles and Hellman are useful tools in highlighting not only their own personal strength to overcome obstacles, but also the suffering and strength of the Spanish people and international soldiers involved in the Spanish Civil War.

## CHAPTER 3

Gender, Genre, Memory: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Spanish Women Writers' Multifaceted Narratives on the Civil War

On the 75th anniversary of the Second Republic in Spain, Almudena Grandes published in *El País* an opinion piece about the grandchildren of that government, stating: “Los nietos, biológicos o adoptivos, de los republicanos del 31 nos hemos hecho mayores. Somos la primera generación de españoles, en mucho tiempo, que no tiene miedo, y por eso hemos sido también los primeros que se han atrevido a mirar hacia atrás sin sentir el pánico de convertirse en estatuas de sal.” The popularized term “nietos de la guerra” appears in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Spain often used by artists or in titles of artistic projects that look back without fear at the Spanish Civil War and delve into its history, its lasting effects, and the memories of the Spaniards of their grandparents' generation. As Catalan-Mexican novelist, Jordi Soler, states in his 2005 interview with *El País*, “Los nietos de la guerra también somos mutilados.” Nearly a decade later, the phrase is used in an article on the Instituto Cervantes website, applied to Isaac Rosa and the context of his work *El vano ayer*.

In 2006, journalist Ángeles López published her novel, *Martina, la rosa número trece*. Although lauded in the forward by Antonio Muñoz Molina, the novel has not attracted wide readership and has received scant critical attention. A year later, Almudena Grandes published *El corazón helado*, and in the decade since that time it has become a popular success. Prior to the publication of *El corazón helado*, its author was already a well-known novelist and journalist and on the occasion of its release, the novel was celebrated with reviews and interviews with Grandes published in newspapers and some journals. Critical scholarly attention, however, is much rarer. Although the novel is frequently cited in academic articles and chapters on the new

novel of the Spanish Civil War, in-depth textual and thematic analysis is lacking. Basque writer María Jesús Orbegozo's novel *Hijos del árbol milenario* appeared on shelves in 2010 and remains little read today. With a focus on the Basque experience of war and post-war, only the regional press published interviews with Orbegozo upon the release of her novel. Unlike Grandes, Orbegozo, a career professor, lacked broad name recognition in the literary world and had previously published one novel, *Sueño sin trenzas*, which likewise garnered little notice. *Hijos del árbol milenario* has not been the subject of, or even mentioned in, any critical scholarly work. In spite of the lack of academic study of *Martina, la rosa número trece*, *Hijos del árbol milenario* and *El corazón helado*, I will argue that they are texts worthy of examination for an understanding of the retelling of the Spanish Civil War and its effects in the new millennium.

The fictional worlds that each of these novels create include multiple generations of a family or families existing alongside well-researched historical events, allowing for a consideration of the lasting effects of the Spanish Civil War and post-war periods on the characters. Both Almudena Grandes and María Jesús Orbegozo have created novels of epic proportions with a great number of characters in a few interconnected families, while Ángeles López's novel is shorter, more intimate, and deceptively hermetic. In their creation of novels with a focus on the war's effects on families, especially in the creation and destruction of families, all three authors rely on intergenerational connections. As Sebastiaan Faber states, intergenerational connections in contemporary Spanish Civil War novels are often thought to be based on shared biology. Instead, according to Faber, these novels actually base the intergenerational connectedness of their characters more in shared ideology (*"Literatura"* 102-03). Faber describes this generational family relationship spectrum as *filiativo*, a relationship

based in biology, and *afiliativo*, a relationship based in ideology. Yet, as we shall see, at crucial points it remains impossible to distinguish between or disentangle the two kinds of connections.

Although all three of these novels have superficial similarities, each takes its own approach to treatment of the intergenerational effects of war and memory. I will treat critically in turn the texts of the novels, the explicit commentaries of the authors on their texts both in acknowledgements and in interviews, and the paratexts including epigraphs and photographs which ambiguously frame them. By expanding my object of analysis beyond the simple text of the novels, I hope to elucidate the narrative trends and unique hybrid constructions that Spanish women writers are using to create Civil War novels with a foundation in their own filiative and affiliative, non-fictional connections.

Ángeles López: *Martina, la rosa número trece*

Author Ángeles López affirms on the title page of *Martina, la rosa número trece* that it is a “Novela.” The reality is, however, that *Martina* is a text that blurs the lines of the genre. Firstly, it is based on actual testimony, specifically an intergenerational transmission between women in the family of Martina Barroso, one of the so-called *Trece Rosas* executed on August 5, 1939. The novel’s chapters jump between centuries and between first-person and third-person accounts of the women in the Barroso family. Several chapters take place in 2004 and read as a memoir of Martina’s grand-niece, Paloma, the actual sister-in-law of author Ángeles López. These relate the investigation into the final months of Martina’s life leading up to her detention, incarceration, trial, and eventual death for a crime committed after she was detained. For other chapters set in

1939, López utilizes a third-person narration, presumably the writing of Paloma, in recounting Martina and other women in her family living those events, along with the occasional additions of Paloma's 2004 anachronistic and parenthetical interjections.

Secondly, López's novel makes use of multiple, differing, real paratextual elements, including family photographs and official historical documents related to Martina's imprisonment and death. These are presented throughout the novel's text, rather than at the beginning or end, unlike the paratextual elements in the other two novels I will discuss in this chapter. The inclusion of these items alongside the stories of Martina's final months and Paloma's investigation requires that readers confront the images and the fact that Martina is both a character and a person who actually lived and died. They serve to remove the reader from the fiction temporarily and place them into history and family history. The effect created by the paratexts is one that alludes to a family scrapbook or photo album, yet doesn't fully realize either of those because of the interruption of the novel. *Martina, la rosa número trece* is fiction that is founded on facts that lie between history and memory, a powerful position that makes visible a marginalized subject meant to be erased by History, and which also creates space for other marginalized stories. To analyze the paratextual documents included in *Martina*, I look to Anne Blue Wills' study "Mourning Becomes Hers: Women, Traditions, and Memory Albums" as well as Marianne Hirsch's *Family Frames*, which examines memory projects including photographs of Holocaust victims.



## Resistance Is a Ghostly Image

*Martina* is a novel based on an actual project of recovery and memory. As recounted in the novel, on the night of her second and last detention, the police that arrest Martina break open a picture frame and tear into pieces a photo of her and her brother Luis, who died fighting for the Republicans, telling the family: “De esta zorra no os va a quedar ni un puto recuerdo. ¿Me oyes? [...] Repito: ni un recuerdo, ni una foto. Nada. Este pedazo de zorrón no ha existido nunca” (137). In fact, readers are informed through a paratextual caption on one of the many photographs included within the novel that this actual project to relegate Martina to oblivion by the destruction of photos was nearly successful; the one surviving photograph of Martina as an adult, included within the novel’s pages, was rediscovered in a home of an ex-boyfriend.

As Marianne Hirsch addresses in *Family Frames*,<sup>10</sup> in her study of Art Spiegelman’s Holocaust graphic novel *Maus*, family photographs of victims of violence, such as Martina’s portrait, become poignant representations of the violence their subjects suffered, even while the images are wholly quotidian. Although there are no references in the photographs to their suffering, the reading of the image is changed because of the incongruity of the portrait with the knowledge of the horrible violence inflicted upon its subject (19).

[I]t is precisely the utter conventionality of the domestic family picture that makes it impossible for us to comprehend how the person in the picture was, or could have been, annihilated. [...] [T]he viewer fills in what the picture leaves out: the horror of looking is not necessarily *in* the image but in the story the viewer provides to fill in what has been omitted. (21)

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<sup>10</sup> In this study of *Maus*, Hirsch relies upon the work of Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida* (1980).

In *Martina*, the horror of looking is doubled. Readers-viewers of *Martina* must confront the portrait of a serene, beautiful, young woman and the recounting of her optimism, courage, and selflessness along with the stories of her brutal torture, rape, and death. The second horror of looking is in the realization that Martina nearly suffered a second form of erasure in the destruction of all but one of the photographs of her as an adult. The reproduced photograph and its caption in the pages of the novel are thus made more striking in the realization of the solemn singleness of the image.

In *Family Frames*, Hirsch refers to the “simultaneous presence of death and life in [a] photograph” depicting a victim of violence (19), wherein “[l]ife is the presence of the object before the camera” and “death is the ‘having-been-there’ of the object—the radical break, the finality introduced by the past tense” (20). Along with the sole surviving photograph of Martina as an adult, the structure of *Martina, la rosa número trece* plays a part in replicating a nearly simultaneous presence of life and death. The novel jumps forward and backward in time, pre- and post-August 5, 1939. With the distance of the past tenses used to narrate the events, Martina’s life marches forward towards her death, while Paloma’s investigation uncovers more and more information about the circumstances of Martina’s life and death until the two timelines seemingly converge in the novel’s climax: the execution of the Trece Rosas. Yet a few passages of the novel, including the denouement, bring both Martina and Paloma into the present tense as Paloma addresses Martina and her photograph during the novel’s composition:

Aquí me tienes, Martina, con este legado por historia sumado a las zapatillas de esparto con una mariposa bordada en el centro que acaricio aturdida. Y una foto—timbrada en calle Tetuán, número 20—que me mira.

Me mira. Y no cesa de mirarme.

Sé que custodias mis pasos, bien sea con sus zapatillas o sin ellas. (235)

Although silent, Martina exerts a force, an intentional gaze, from her photograph. Like a ghost, the photograph of Martina is an indication of a person who once was alive, but instead of simply remaining as a figure of the past, she continues to be visible and seeing, an active and interactive presence in the present.

An unattributed phrase from Juan Negrín, “Resistir es vencer,” recurs throughout the first part of the novel, but it is apparent throughout *Martina* that the real resistance is against the destruction caused by the attempted silencing and disappearing of Martina’s life. It is the simultaneous presence of life and death within the photograph and the novel that makes this resistance possible and bestows upon Martina some agency in the telling of her own story. Just as Martina appears in a photograph interacting with Paloma and with the novel’s readers, she also appears within the novel as a mute ghost, but compelling others to speak of her. The first chapter opens with a teenage Lolita Barroso—Martina’s niece who was nearly two when Martina was executed—posing questions to Martina’s ghost and getting only smiles for responses. Until that day, Lolita had been unaware of her aunt’s existence because, as readers are informed, Martina’s name is not mentioned by her parents after her death, out of a terror instilled in them, “[c]omo si pronunciar [su] nombre invocara desastres, cataclismos y demás inclemencias impensables” (188). The generation of silence does not end with Lolita, however. Paloma only learns of her great-aunt’s existence when she is 15 years old, but unlike Lolita’s passing interaction with Martina, Paloma “inherits” the ghost of her ancestor, who impels her to be a guardian for her memory and provides Paloma clarity and vision in telling the story:

Además de estas páginas, querida tía, me dedicaré al incienso de las catedrales, a prender velas ante tu única foto, a custodiar tu memoria. Porque has llegado y te has instalado sin pedir permiso. Aunque yo lo he permitido.

Los fantasmas sois así...

Lo decía mi abuela, tu cuñada: <<hay un fantasma para cada persona>>

[...]. Yo te heredé, querida Martina, [...] por eso soy capaz de verte instalada en el ángulo de aquella oscura sala de Jorge Juan. Número cinco. Y sé de tu hambre, tu miedo, tu frío. Tu militancia por pura fe en un mundo mejor. (189)

Martina is even a physical presence, by photo or otherwise, for Ángeles López, who writes in the dedication that opens the novel: “A Martina Barroso, quien cada mañana, desde el fondo del escritorio de mi ordenador, me ha alentado a escribir su historia.” As a ghost or as a physical presence greater than the sole surviving photograph, Martina reasserts a level of agency in resisting oblivion and thus defeats the Francoist project to erase her existence.

### A Close-Knit Community

The resistance against oblivion does not solely hinge on the testimony that Paloma collects from women in her family as part of her memory project. Francoism has a strategy to erase Martina from existence, yet the bureaucracy that enables that action also provides the tools that enable subversion: historical documents such as those from Martina’s coerced confession, trial sentencing, and death. The creation of family albums or scrapbooks has typically been a task associated with women as the keepers of family history, as Anne Blue Wills states in “Mourning Becomes Hers: Women, Tradition, and Memory Albums” (97). Because Martina’s

family history has been systematically destroyed by Francoism, the documents that record her death at the hands of the new regime become the tangible, historical proof that she had lived. Ángeles López arranges these along with family photographs throughout the novel, creating a scrapbook-like effect.

Adding to this effect, other intertexts pepper the narrative: the final verse of Antonio Machado, discovered upon his death in exile; an excerpt from the final letter of another Rosa, Julia Conesa; lyrics from the song “Gracias a la vida” for which Paloma has improvised an additional verse; press clippings referring to the Trece Rosas; a poem written by a Ventas prison survivor on the day that the Trece Rosas died. All of these could easily be imagined as scraps collected for a scrapbook, and all are written in italics, giving the words special typographic distinction against the novel’s narrative crafted by López.

As Wills states, “album-makers themselves often exhibit a spirit of innovation—toward ‘networks’ and away from ‘hierarchies,’ in a word—that reflects their overwhelmingly female populations” (101). Clearly, *Martina* is a book that emphasizes networks in its novelistic and album forms, especially highlighting networks of women and feminine genealogies. Among these networks are those of the Trece Rosas and other young socialist women who are Martina’s friends and neighbors, as well as the generations of women in the Barroso family. These social and collective ties are emphasized in myriad ways. Family photographs are contextualized in their captions, explaining the interconnectedness of the women in the family, such as a photo of Lolita “a la edad en que vio el *fantasma* de su tía Martina en el comedor de su casa” (29, emphasis in original). The photograph of Lolita, just like the sole surviving photograph of Martina as an adult, is a typical family portrait, displaying no qualities that the viewer would associate

with seeing a ghost. The significance of the photograph, reinforcing not just a link between Martina and Lolita, but also the veracity of the claim of Martina's appearance as a ghost, is transmitted through its caption.

Also included in *Martina* are supplementary archival photos showing groups of women participating in activities in which Martina is also involved: the *comedor social*, where she serves food to war-orphaned children, the Socorro Rojo, a workshop where she sews clothes for Republican soldiers at the front, and the minor's school at Ventas prison. The actual Martina does not appear in these photographs, although they allow for the opportunity to imagine her within each of these groups of women. Again, the viewers are guided by captions below each photograph, explaining the generous, self-sacrificing actions of the women depicted there. The photographs and captions are an implicit reminder of the many more possible Martinas there could be with stories deserving of being uncovered.

The latter images also highlight the importance of women's interconnectedness through labor. It is through the typically-feminine labor of knitting that Martina chooses to leave her legacy for future Barroso women. While the other Rosas are writing letters and confessing to priests the night before their execution, Martina knits tiny shoes for her niece—since she would never have a daughter of her own—and for any future Barroso women:

Las he bordado con el hilo que he podido arañar del taller de labor. Son unas zapatillas de esparto con una mariposa bordada. Dáselas a mi sobrina Lolita, dentro de pocos días cumplirá dos años. Son para ella y para la hija que tendrá. Para que caminen por el dilatado mundo que no conoceré. Que vivan la vida que no podré vivir. (41)

Here, thread is introduced as a recurring theme in the novel: the “invisible hilo de irrompible apellido—Barroso—, que se había tejido lentamente a lo largo de los años” (46). The knitted ties between the women also create a sort of clairvoyant connection that allows Paloma to sense a deeper intimacy with Martina and intuit the events of the last days of her life. “No tengo evidencias, pero el invisible hilo de seda tejido entre mi Martina y yo me conduce a imaginar lo que pudo ser y posiblemente fue” (181). This connection through invisible thread lends legitimacy to Paloma’s narrative within *Martina*. The bond between the great-aunt and grand-niece is Paloma’s claim to filling in the spaces between the oral testimony of her family and the recovered historical documents.

Finally, Ángeles López stresses the social and oral creation of this novel founded in networks mostly of women—the Barroso family and various survivors of the postwar Francoist repression who contributed testimony—in various paratextual elements of the book. Already mentioned is the dedication to Martina, who watches the author as she writes from the other side of the computer desk. There is a second section, different from the “agradecimientos” pages at the conclusion of the novel, containing a long explanation of all the contributors to Martina’s story, all women from her family, of which López is “sólo... una escribiente. Simplemente sus manos; sus teclas, sólo” (19). Of course, the most notable “author” of the text is Paloma, of whom López states “esta historia anidaba en su cabeza desde hacía mucho, mucho tiempo” (6). But other Barroso women are fundamental in the eventual composition of the novel: Martina’s mother, María Antonia; her sister Oliva; and Manola and Encarna, her sisters-in-law. López informs her readers that, “[e]llas han preservado a través de la oralidad, como en las antiguas tradiciones orientales, esta historia de dolor, furia y memoria” (6), reinforcing Anne Blue Wills’ statement

that women typically assume the labor of family chroniclers. Here, this labor becomes a collective and social task that manifests itself in the creation of a multi-generic novel.

### Thousands of Martinas

The San Juan de la Cruz quote, “A la tarde nos examinarán en el amor,” appears in a paratextual list of various quotes sandwiched between a dedication page and the family acknowledgements page mentioned above. Interestingly, serious references to the quote as written by San Juan can only be found when it includes the direct object pronoun “te” instead of “nos.” San Juan’s actual quote concludes with the clause: “aprende a amar como Dios quiere ser amado y deja tu condición.” The first clause of the quote, with “nos,” appears without attribution to its author as a subheading to the novel’s second chapter, when Martina is imprisoned in Ventas and facing execution with the other Rosas. The barely noticeable switch from the second person singular direct object pronoun to the first person plural exemplifies the many subtle ways López constructs the novel to strengthen its possibilities for collectivity. Beyond subverting the imposed silence and oblivion of Francoism, *Martina* is a novel that also resists totalitarianism by allowing a space for the stories of other repressed victims of the regime.

This work begins with the title. Why is Martina “*la rosa número trece*”? She is neither the oldest nor the youngest. Neither the first nor the last alphabetically. Nor is she the last Rosa to be detained. It is unknown and probably impossible to know if she is the last in the line of the march of the Rosas to the cemetery wall to be executed. Simply, she must be number thirteen to remind readers that there are twelve others, equally deserving, and their families deserving, of their own stories.



López explicitly reminds her readers of the other twelve throughout the book: first in the dedication, lastly in an alphabetical and numbered list of their names like a death knell—with Martina being the only one out of place at number 13—after their execution. In between the first evocation and the last, readers are reminded throughout the novel that even the Trece are not unique; there are so many other untold stories of repressed women from the end of the Spanish Civil War and in the post-war period. As Martina fills out bureaucratic admittance paperwork to the overcrowded Ventas prison, Paloma imagines that Martina is thinking about being, “[u]na de las muchas, de tantas, Martinas que logran que todos los semáforos se pongan en verde. Decenas de Martinas. Miles de miles de Martinas que sois la sal de la tierra. Como las Carmen, Blanca, Pilar, Julia, Adelina, Elena, Virtudes, Joaquina, Ana, Dionisia, Victoria, Luisa...” (198). Whether or not the invisible thread binding Paloma and Martina can lend veracity to this imagined scene, the fact remains that López herself includes a tragic collective spirit within the novel, expanding its pages to embrace a multitude of silenced women.

Among many other possible examples of a phenomenon of collectivity and the recovery of memory, in the chapters where she writes of Paloma’s research, López includes direct mentions of authors of other testimony projects, a feminine genealogy of writers, such as Dulce Chacón and Tomasa Cuevas, indicating that some of Martina’s fiction could have been inspired elsewhere, but also pointing readers towards other stories of women for whom the war didn’t end in the spring of 1939. In effect, *Martina* is used not just as a recovery project for one woman’s story, but also as a reminder that there are many others, and even as a bit of intertextual publicity for the work that other women have done to combat the silence. López states in the novel’s *Coda*, before a list of the names the 43 men also executed for the same

crime on the day the Trece Rosas died: “Cada uno de ellos merece una historia propia, llena de aspiraciones truncadas. Una vida por descifrar. Recito sus nombres con la única intención de que no queden en el olvido” (239)

Almudena Grandes: *El corazón helado*

In a short chapter titled “La literatura como acto afiliativo: La nueva novela de la Guerra Civil (2000-2007)” written for the book *Contornos de la narrativa española actual, 2000-2010*, Sebastiaan Faber explains that the arrival of the new millennium in Spain also saw a “transformación en el modo en que los españoles piensan, hablan y escriben sobre su pasado nacional violento” (101) and that an apt name for this phenomenon is the *nueva novela de la Guerra Civil*. According to Faber, these texts demonstrate “una relación con el legado del pasado violento español que es más activamente indagadora, más abiertamente personal y más conscientemente ética que en ningún momento anterior desde el final de la dictadura” (102) and center “una obligación moral—además de una necesidad psicológica—de investigar el pasado y asumir su legado” (102, emphasis in original) coupled with an examination of ethical issues when this obligation is undertaken by the younger generations. In this chapter, Faber briefly examines five novels, including *El corazón helado*, and determines that the intergenerational relationships in the texts “se postulan no sólo como *filiativas* —constituidas por la sangre, el parentesco, el destino—, sino sobre todo como *afiliativas*, esto es, sujetas a un acto de asociación consciente, basadas menos en la genética que en la solidaridad, la compasión y la identificación” (102-03). Faber argues, then, that the driving force behind these *nuevas novelas*

is principally because of an affiliative connection, Almudena Grandes' "nietos adoptivos," rather than a filiative one, the "nietos biológicos." Faber's postulation merits further examination and dialogue, as the brevity of his chapter leaves much analysis of *El corazón helado* to be done.

According to Faber, "la tensión entre filiación y afiliación ocupa un lugar central" (105) in *El corazón helado*. Were the novel's over 900 pages distilled to a single argument, this tension would certainly be the salient aspect. In Grandes' novel, Álvaro Carrión Otero, a forty-year-old physicist and son of a wealthy real estate and construction magnate, is drawn into his father's hidden past after his death with the revelation of a young woman, Raquel Fernández Perea, claiming to be the late Julio Carrión's lover. What Álvaro uncovers, however, is the socialist history of his grandmother, Teresa González Puerto, whose life and death differed from the few facts that Julio had told his own children. As Álvaro and Raquel begin a romantic relationship and fall in love, Álvaro also learns that his father's wealth was founded upon the deceit and betrayal of Raquel's exiled family, causing a crisis of identity for the physicist that seems to seek resolution through a commitment to Raquel and a connection to his grandmother. In his analysis of the novel, Faber summarizes the tension thusly: "Al mismo tiempo que se distancia de su padre fallecido, Álvaro se *afilia*—amorosa y políticamente—con la familia expoliada, y con la República en términos más generales, afiliación sellada por su relación amorosa con una descendiente de las víctimas. [...] [E]l descubrimiento de su abuela republicana le resuelve, hasta cierto punto, la crisis de identidad, porque le permite hacer un salto generacional y armonizar sus relaciones filiativas con sus instintos afiliativos" (106). This analysis, while aptly observed, is an oversimplification of a novel of epic proportions whose characters, structure, composition,

and overall diegetic world deserve extended analysis, revealing many more pervasive and complex filiative relationships as the foundation of the story.

### Families Fighting Fascism

Family, especially intergenerational relationships in families, forms the base of *El corazón helado*. Over half of the novel's 25 chapters begin with a sentence mentioning a family member. The novel is divided into three parts, these with five, ten, and five chapters apiece. All odd chapters of each part are Álvaro's first-person narration, recounting the death of his father, meeting and falling in love with Raquel, and discovering the truth about his grandmother and his father. Even chapters of each part utilize limited third-person narration, each following a single character: either Raquel, her grandfather Ignacio Fernández Muñoz, her father Ignacio Fernández Salgado, or Julio Carrión. The chapters focusing on the generations of the Fernández family are always introduced with a familial relationship first sentence. These document—although not chronologically—the Fernández family's experiences during the war, escaping Spain, in French concentration camps, living in exile in France, then returning to Spain and living in the post-dictatorship transition which becomes the atmosphere of Raquel's childhood in Spain. Faber's distilled analysis of *El corazón helado* overlooks the deep importance of these chapters in establishing filiative relationships and the transmission of memory through them. The stories of the Fernández family also form the large majority of the stories recounting tragedies that befall the Republicans during and after the Spanish Civil War, and, as such, establish an affective connection with readers.

In the Fernández family, there is an importance placed on the repetition of names across generations, and there is also a recurrence of appearances and personalities across generations. There are four generations of Mateo in the Fernández family, including Ignacio Fernández Muñoz's father, his brother, his nephew (although this Mateo cannot bear the Fernández last name because Mateo Fernández Muñoz's civil marriage to Casilda was not recognized by Franco's government), and his grandson, Raquel's younger brother. The two generations of Ignacios in the Fernández family bear physical resemblance. These repetitions of names and faces strengthen biological connections within the Fernández family, maintaining links with, and as tight as, those shared among the four Fernández Muñoz siblings during the time of the Spanish Civil War. This is exemplified in an emotional scene when Ignacio Fernández Salgado meets his aunt Casilda and his cousin Mateo for the first time. Here, the brothers Ignacio and Mateo are echoed intergenerationally in their sons, the cousins Ignacio and Mateo.

—¡Ignacio! Ay, Dios mío, Ignacio, ay... [...] hijo mío, a ver... Si es que me parece que estoy viendo a tu padre. ¿Cuántos años tienes?

—Veintiuno.

—Pues, ésos tendría él la última vez que lo vi, que todavía me acuerdo, todos los días me acuerdo. (628)

In this brief exchange, Casilda manages to bring the past relationship between the brothers Fernández into her present. First, she connects Ignacio Fernández Salgado as a brother to her son Mateo, through the common expression "hijo mío," here charged with extra significance. For Casilda, the Ignacio she sees before her also serves as a visual trigger, through his strong resemblance to his father, for her memories of the Fernández Muñoz sons during the war.

The intergenerational connection also skips generations, most significantly seen in the subtle as well as explicit ways the novel's text indicates that Ignacio and Paloma Fernández Muñoz are echoed in Raquel. While Raquel's connection to her grandfather is affirmed verbally—"Tú eres igual que tu abuelo" (793), Raquel's grandmother Anita tells her—the connection between Raquel and her great-aunt Paloma is lightly insinuated to astute readers in the earlier pages of *El corazón helado*. Paloma, who had been not only Ignacio Fernández Muñoz's sister but also Julio Carrión's erstwhile lover, is introduced to the novel's readers as a beautiful woman who, "estaba todavía más guapa cuando se reía" (250). Nearly the exact same phrase is Álvaro's spontaneous observation about Raquel when they are on a date: "estaba mucho más guapa cuando se reía" (319).

Raquel's explicit connection with her grandfather and with the wartime and postwar suffering of his generation guides many of her conscious decisions, shaping her interactions with those around her to foment and shape a certain amount of restitution. The link between Raquel and Paloma, however, is an inherited, biological connection not readily apparent to Raquel, which has implications and complications not only for her behavior, but also for her relationship to the Carrión family, as I will discuss later.

### Gut Feelings

In *The Generation of Postmemory*, Marianne Hirsch elaborates her theory of postmemory: the deep connection that descendants of survivors of massive traumatic events feel in relationship to those events. In a previous book, *Family Frames*, Hirsch states that although the theory of postmemory is developed in the context of the Holocaust, she "believe[s]

it may usefully describe other second-generation memories of cultural or collective traumatic events and experiences” (22). According to Hirsch:

‘Postmemory’ describes the relationship that the ‘generation after’ bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—to experiences they ‘remember’ only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory’s connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. [...] [The experience of postmemory] is to be shaped, however indirectly, by traumatic fragments of events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present.

(*Generation 5*)

Like Faber, Hirsch theorizes the relationship of the current generation with the preceding generation or generations of survivors of traumatic experiences. Although whereas Faber distinguishes between deep connections based on ideology or biology, in Hirsch’s theory of postmemory, the deeply affective transmission of memories from one generation to the next within families makes Faber’s distinction nearly impossible.

In *El corazón helado*, the descendants of the Fernández Muñoz family, specifically Ignacio Fernández Salgado and to some extent Raquel Fernández Perea, have a greater bond with their biological predecessors than just physically resembling them. They exist in the generation of postmemory, and thus in *El corazón helado* are written as having an incredibly deep connection

to the memories from the survivors of the Spanish Civil War that it affects their bodies biologically and chemically, as we shall see.

For Ignacio Fernández Muñoz and his wife Anita Salgado Pérez, the strong, traumatic memories of the Spanish Civil War maintain the past as ever-present. Anita continually relives the day of her father's death, which she explains to her son Ignacio when he insists there is nothing to fear about him taking a school trip to Spain with his French classmates: "Porque eso mismo fue lo que dijo mi padre, que todavía lo estoy oyendo, no me va a pasar nada porque no he hecho nada. Y lo fusilaron [...] Y yo soy la única que queda, la única, de todos, yo, y ahora, te vas tú, allí" (606). The re-living of that day surpasses the aural and reaches Anita in taste and touch:

Ella seguía sintiendo el mismo espeluzno helado y seco que la paralizó mientras su padre le ponía en la mano el albaricoque recién lavado que se iba a comer cuando aquellos hombres llamaron a la puerta. [...]

Habían pasado veintiocho años desde que Anita Salgado se comió aquel albaricoque, pero todavía no lo había digerido, no lograría digerirlo jamás. No había vuelto a probar los albaricoques y aún conservaba el sabor de aquél. (607)

Anita experiences the memory of her father's death as trauma with multiple sensory fronts: the sound of her father's voice, the shiver as he places the apricot in her hand, and the lingering taste of the sweet fruit. Yet the distinguishing, salient feature of Anita's trauma is the lasting gustatory memory. The consumption of the apricot is linked in the text to a permanent location of the trauma, like an undigested fruit, in Anita's intestines, close to her womb.



Having been born in a safe France without the tumult of the war, for Ignacio Fernández Salgado, stories like the one of his grandfather's death are well-known but also baffling. "Él conocía de sobra la historia de aquel hueso [...] pero sabía también que habían pasado casi treinta años desde aquel día. Habían pasado casi treinta años para los relojes, para los historiadores, para las hemerotecas, para su madre no. Para su madre no, eso era lo insoportable, lo angustioso, lo aburrido, lo grotesco de su situación" (607). And while not long thereafter Ignacio begins to have his own experiences that change his perception of the realness of the Spanish Civil War, throughout much of his adult life, he, his wife, and his kids sing a made up song after visiting Anita and Ignacio for Sunday paella and hearing their stories of the past. "Estoy hasta los cojones de la guerra civil [...] y de la valentía de los rojos españoles, chimpún, estoy hasta los cojones del cerco de Madrid [...] y de la batalla de Guadalajara, chimpún [...] estoy hasta los cojones del Quinto Regimiento, y de la foto de mi padre en aquel tanque alemán, chimpún, chimpún, chimpún" (38). For Ignacio Fernández Salgado it is possible to make light of the memory fatigue he experiences because of his parents' telling and retelling of their traumatic stories and the viewing of their old photographs. At the same time, however, the younger Ignacio has been shaped by these stories his entire life. It is the apricot, figuratively undigested and stuck in his mother's abdomen, that is internalized in Ignacio and becomes the most salient aspect of his changing relationship with his parents' trauma of the war and post-war periods.

When Ignacio Fernández Salgado travels to Spain for the first time with his French classmates and the daughter of a family friend—Raquel Perea, who has had similar experiences of exile—landing at the airport and being on Spanish soil is a turning point for him in

understanding his parents' stories and himself. In the moment of the touchdown, "Ignacio sólo podía pensar en que le sabía la boca a albaricoque" (614), and when he and Raquel Perea experience a nearly instinctual jolt of fear at seeing the Guardia Civil while passing through passport control, "todos los albaricoques que había comido en su vida se pudrían un poco más en su boca, el agujero de su estómago se agrandaba y sus vísceras se atoraban en el centro de su garganta como el hueso imposible de un fruto seco" (614-15). In Spain, Ignacio's postmemory is activated and the memories of his parents become physical experiences for him through, as Hirsch asserts in the above quote, "imaginative investment" and "projection." There is an immediate echo of Anita's recurring physical traumatic response to the experience of losing her father to the Guardia Civil and eating the final apricot her father gave her before he was taken away. In Ignacio, his first glimpse of the Guardia Civil while in passport control awakens both a gut feeling of terror and a gustatory postmemory, turning rotten the summer sweetness of all the stone fruits he had ever consumed.

Once activated, the deep connection to his family's memories continues to have physical effects on Ignacio throughout his visit to Spain. One of the most poignant experiences of postmemory for Ignacio is also an emotionally moving story for the readers of *El corazón helado*. When he meets his aunt Casilda, accompanied by Raquel Perea, Casilda implores them to tell the Fernández family about how she constantly strives to remember each of the 56 days the couple was together so that the memory of her husband Mateo lasts although she was not allowed to wear black to mourn him, nor does she know where he was buried, nor can her son bear the last name Fernández.

Diles que yo me acuerdo de Mateo todos los días, todos, sin faltar uno, antes de dormirme y justo después de despertarme. [...] Todas las mañanas me acuerdo de esa noche [de la boda], y de la segunda, y de la tercera, las voy repasando para que no se me olviden, y puedo verle, veo su cara, y escucho su voz, y me acuerdo de las cosas que me decía, y de cómo me las decía. (634-35)

Ignacio, of course, already is aware of the story of Mateo and the significance it has within his family, but hearing it told in Spain by Casilda inspires in him projected sensations of sight, touch, and taste: “no pudo evitar un escalofrío espontáneo, sincero. [...] [L]o estaba viendo, lo estaba viviendo, y la boca le sabía a albaricoque, y tenía frío, mucho frío de repente” (635). Here, the affective experience of postmemory for Ignacio simultaneously incorporates the filiative, generational transmission from both sides of his family: the Fernández side, which includes Mateo’s experience, and the Salgado side, which includes the lingering taste of apricot.

Finally, being in Spain transforms Ignacio so that he has, “la certeza de haber vivido ya momentos que nunca se han vivido” (617). His experience of family stories is no longer one of simple recall, but rather, as if he had learned a new language, the words of the stories he grew up with begin to resonate, transforming into something he comprehends and connects with personally for the first time:

Ignacio Fernández Salgado no sabía si acababa de volverse loco o había recobrado la cordura de milagro y de repente, pero las palabras de Casilda sonaban dentro de sus oídos y llamaban a otras palabras que había escuchado muchas veces sin entenderlas nunca hasta aquella tarde, no, Gloria, no, con la chusma no, con el

pueblo de Madrid [...] Aquella tarde, tantos años después, la voz de su abuelo parecía hablarle a él, y no a su padre, yo no me arrepiento de nada, hijo. (638-39)

The words that Ignacio begins to hear and understand are fragments of dialogues which should be familiar to the astute reader of *El corazón helado* as they have previously been presented as the words of various characters within Ignacio's family. These phantasmal words, rewritten in this instance without their original attributions and contexts, lend the sense that all are spoken by various interlocutors, directly to Ignacio, placing him at the center of many wartime memories of his parents' and grandparents' generation.

#### Through the Eyes of Another

Unlike her father, Raquel Fernández Perea grows up loving to hear the stories about living in Spain before exile from her grandfather Ignacio, her favorite person. She also grows up among family photographs, so when she attends the private burial of Julio Carrión without being invited, Raquel is startled to see, "un desconocido al que ya conocía, al que había visto muchas veces en unas pocas fotos antiguas. [...] Porque aquel hombre, que no podía ser Julio Carrión, era Julio Carrión, una copia casi exacta de la cara, del cuerpo que estaba a punto de fundirse con la tierra, de desaparecer para siempre y quedarse al mismo tiempo aquí, en los ojos que la estaban mirando" (865-66). Raquel's response to seeing Álvaro Carrión at his father's grave is described as the result of an intergenerational transmission of attraction, a postmemory of the lust of Raquel's great aunt Paloma.

Aquel hombre no era Julio Carrión, aunque lo pareciera no podía serlo, y había pasado el tiempo, mucho tiempo. Ella no era Paloma y sin embargo no podía

dejar de mirarle. Aquello no era razonable, no era lógico ni natural, no era normal, no era bueno, pero Raquel Fernández Perea, su razón y sus propósitos, sucumbieron a una atracción súbita por un hombre que ni siquiera era él, sino la sombra de otro, y que la sumió en una confusión semejante a la que sentiría una novicia cándida, inexperta, la primera vez que se ve tentada, luego cercada por el demonio. (866-67)

By the time Raquel first observes Álvaro at the burial, she has only recently learned of her family's betrayal by their close friend Julio, and also the sexual relationship between Julio and Paloma preceding the betrayal, but she is still unaware of the uncanny similarity of appearance between Julio and his youngest son, Álvaro. For Raquel then, the moment of attraction to Julio/Álvaro is simultaneously conflicting with anger and hatred towards the person who was the cause of one of her family's greatest tragedies. Julio/Álvaro is the devil: attractive, forbidden, and dangerous, affecting Raquel physically and emotionally.

Later, when she and Álvaro visit the science museum and he good-naturedly explains a scientific phenomenon to a young museum patron, the postmemory of Paloma's attraction and rage subsides and is replaced by the transmissions of the familiar stories of family and friends in Spain that her beloved grandfather told her. "Aquella noche, Álvaro Carrión ya era él, no la sombra de su padre, y Raquel Fernández Perea no podía seguir recurriendo a la debilidad de su tía Paloma para enmascarar su propia debilidad" (890). Raquel tells Álvaro later that "de repente te parecías tanto a ellos, a la gente de la que me habían hablado siempre, a mi familia, a sus amigos... Fue como si aquella escena la hubiera visto ya, como si la hubiera vivido antes, o no, como si no la hubiera vivido yo pero me la hubieran contado muchas veces" (712). Raquel's

explanation of the event is later expanded: “te vi con los ojos de mi abuelo, Álvaro, me encontré mirándote con los ojos de mi abuelo y comprendí que le habrías gustado mucho, mucho” (725). In this experience, Raquel struggles to sort through her individual feelings and reactions and those of her family which she experiences as postmemory. As Hirsch explains in *Family Frames*, “[p]ostmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation” (22). Feeling attraction for Álvaro with Paloma’s weakness for Julio and seeing a charming companion with the eyes of her grandfather proves the affective basis of postmemory but at the same time it is impossible to extract those affective experiences of postmemory from Raquel’s own feelings. Just as Ignacio’s own gustatory memory of an apricot is flavored by his mother’s, Raquel’s experiences of sexual and non-sexual attraction are tinted by those of her grandfather and great-aunt.

Sebastiaan Faber’s assertion that intergenerational relationships in the new novel of the Spanish Civil War are founded more on political affiliation than on family overlooks the experiences of the generations of the Fernández family as represented in the novel and the great importance of these experiences in *El corazón helado*. The story of the defeated, of the exiled, of the Republicans is depicted as being one of family before it is one of choosing ideological sides in the conflict. A conscious, reflective association with previous generations by choice is the privilege of the victors, as is the choice to ignore the political ideologies of biological predecessors.

## Repetitions and Interruptions

While Raquel's family history is characterized by the repetition of familial appearance, names, and personalities as well as the repetition of family stories, Álvaro's family is similarly characterized by repetition in names and appearances, but also by the silence surrounding the memories and experiences of past generations.

Álvaro is the only Carrión Otero child who resembles his father; all other siblings are fair-haired and fair-skinned with light colored eyes, like their mother Angélica. That Álvaro carries on his father's physical appearance pleases Julio Carrión from the day his fourth of five children was born:

Es clavado a ti, Julio, pero escupido, en serio, nunca he visto a un bebé que se parezca tanto a su padre...

Él se limitaba a sonreír, pero sentía una satisfacción especial al coger en brazos a aquel niño, que se llamaba Álvaro Carrión Otero y con el tiempo se convertiría en su hijo predilecto. (707)

Yet only in appearance are Álvaro and his father alike. Álvaro is the one son who did not go into the family business. Rafa and Julio each manage a division of their father's company, but Álvaro, by his own estimation, "era también el que más se había alejado de él, el único que no se había esforzado en parecerse" (57). Instead, he becomes a physicist and university professor. Yet father and son are so similar physically that Álvaro's appearance repeatedly causes momentary confusion about his identity for several characters, even for Álvaro himself, as we shall see.

Álvaro grows up in a world characterized by its silence with regards to the past, but with the assumption that he knows most, if not all, of what there is to know about his family's

history. The official history of his family includes such facts as: Julio's mother had been a good wife who loved her husband and died of tuberculosis in 1937; Julio had been an only child; he had fought in the División Azul in Russia and Poland, but never had been in Paris; and Julio had been an exceptional man who did what he had to do to get during difficult times and should not be judged for his actions taken under circumstances others would not understand. This carefully crafted official family history hides so many real truths about Julio Carrion's familial past, but is comfortable for his five children, including Álvaro, until the veneer of the father on the pedestal begins to crack when another lie that Álvaro accepts as a truth—Raquel Fernández Perea's revelation that she had been Julio's young lover in the final months of his life—leads him to uncover what is buried underneath the silence and the lies of the official family story.

Throughout *El corazón helado*, Álvaro experiences several momentary crises of identity, mostly in the circumstances when secrets escape the silence. As already mentioned, the first crisis is provoked by a secret that was actually a lie: that Julio Carrión had a lover and that lover had been Raquel. In this instance, Álvaro contemplates an intentional forgetting to help him ease back into the comfort of not knowing. "En aquel momento, también se me ocurrió que podría no hacer nada, olvidarlo todo y olvidar deprisa, dejar cada cosa como estaba y a merced del tiempo que ya había empezado a pasar, a enterrar mi propia conmoción, mis viejas y mis nuevas emociones" (203). "También podría no hacer nada" becomes a mantra for Álvaro in these moments of revelation and crisis. In each of these crises, confronting the truth is not an imperative, and Álvaro can just as easily stifle the secret and return to his family's official history.

At each moment when a family secret that destabilizes Álvaro's self-identity is revealed to him—either through his conversations with others or his independent investigations—he



never decides to do nothing, although it remains an option. As if what had been previously silent about the Carrión family needs to be repeated verbally many times in order for it to become real, Álvaro's response to the destabilizing of his familial past includes the repetition of familial connections until the new information becomes assimilated. After seemingly confirming the relationship between Raquel and his father through evidence staged in a luxury penthouse apartment, Álvaro is reeling, and to put himself back together he recites out loud the 'facts' of his relationships.

Me llamo Álvaro Carrión Otero, en noviembre cumpliré cuarenta y un años, soy hijo de Julio Carrión González [...], la mujer que tengo delante se llama Raquel Fernández Perea, tiene unos treinta y cinco años, una edad razonable para ser la hija, hasta la nieta de mi padre, pero era su amante [...], mi mujer se llama Mai, tiene treinta y siete años. (219-20)

Álvaro repeats these facts of his relationships throughout the day until they have soothing effect.

[M]ientras contaba mi historia en voz alta, cada episodio, cada escena, cada detalle difícil de creer había ido cobrando un sentido nuevo y sólido, como si lo que había sucedido de verdad no pudiera adquirir la definitiva categoría de certeza hasta que yo fuera capaz de contarlo, de ordenarlo y relacionarlo entre sí para construir un relato verosímil cuya principal virtud fuera convencerme a mí antes que a nadie. (230)

In a clear metaphor for Spain's confrontation between the official history and the buried but gradually-uncovered histories of oppressed people, telling and re-telling the previously-hidden

story is the only way Álvaro can begin to understand and accept it as true. What was once a crisis is resolved through taking action instead of taking the easy path of doing nothing.

### Misidentifications and Identifications

Raquel's lie is the impetus for Álvaro's first crisis of identity and investigation into his father's past. It is what leads him to discover a hidden leather folder in his father's office containing "una hoja de papel escrita a mano que alguien había roto para volver a pegarla después con cinta adhesiva, y una fotografía en la que estaba yo con la mujer más guapa que había visto en mi vida, en una calle desconocida y ante una terraza llena de gente que me pareció extraña sin saber por qué" (300). This, Álvaro's second identity crisis, is caused by a sudden feeling of recognition coupled with displacement: he recognizes himself uncannily in a photo in which everything else is unrecognizable.

Las razones de mi doble extrañeza estaban escritas al dorso, con una letra femenina y elegante, de rasgos largos, picudos. <<Para que no me olvides, Paloma>>, y debajo, <<París, mayo, 1947>>. Cuando lo leí, comprendí que aquel hombre no era yo, y que lo que me había parecido raro era la forma redonda de los veladores, tan distintos de las mesas cuadradas de las terrazas de mi ciudad. Eso comprendí, y nada más. (300)

The initial misidentification with the figure of his father in the photo is so strong that the only way to break it is through the reading of facts impossible for Álvaro to assimilate into his own identity, despite any repetition: the name of a beautiful woman he never met, the name of a city he had never visited, and a date at which point he was not alive. Yet it takes Álvaro even longer

for him to identify and accept the identification of the man in the photo as his father, even pondering the existence and searching for proof of an identical twin (302). For Álvaro, the information written on the back of the photo is as incongruous with himself as it is with his father, whose official history never included a beautiful love interest named Paloma nor time spent in Paris: “Paloma, me dije, París, y lo repetí en voz alta, Paloma, París. Tendrías que haber estado en Rusia, en Polonia, decía mi padre cuando éramos pequeños y nos quejábamos del frío que hacía en su pueblo. Él había estado en Rusia, en Polonia, y también en Letonia, dos veces, contaba, [...] y el camino de vuelta no pasaba por París, ni había durado tres años” (301). Even though Álvaro attempts the technique of repetition— “Paloma,” “París” —there is a sustained and firm negation of this new information because of the years of the official family history; Julio had not been in Paris, much less for three years. Again, Álvaro must make a choice to act against the easy route of doing nothing. Doing nothing would reaffirm his filiative bond to the father he so closely resembles, accepting his father’s word—or words, as it were—as the truth, or choosing to ignore the truth so that he can an unblemished father/son connection.

Choosing, again, to not do nothing, Álvaro’s seeks to elucidate the odd information with which he is presented in the photograph, prompting him to search for more information in the folder and leading him to the letter that had been destroyed and taped together. Within the first few words, he realizes that the letter is from his grandmother, Teresa, but shortly thereafter he also realizes that the Teresa presented in the letter differs radically from the few descriptions of her he had received from his father. Again, Álvaro is presented with an incredible crisis of identity. The confrontation in Álvaro’s mind between the official history of his father and grandmother and the truth as presented in the letter is presented as a single stream-of-

consciousness sentence lasting over five pages of text in which the written words of Teresa (in italics) are juxtaposed with Álvaro's recall of the official history and with his processing of the new information. Below, I present fragments of these five pages at length to illustrate the internal conflict this new information causes Álvaro, and the ensuing results: distancing himself even more from his dead father while simultaneously beginning a relationship with the dead grandmother he never knew.

*Queridísimo hijo de mi corazón, [...] perdóname si puedes, perdona a esta pobre mujer que se equivocó al escoger marido, pero si tú te moriste de una tuberculosis ósea, pero no al tener dos hijos a los que siempre querré más que a nada en el mundo, pero si tú no tuviste más hijos que mi padre, [...] tú no puedes ser como ellos [los hombres sin ideas], tú tienes que ser un hombre digno, bueno, valiente, mi abuela no era una mujer vulgar y mi padre me la había robado, [...] era mi abuela y me estaba hablando a mí, [...] por lo que seguiré queriéndote hasta que me muera, yo te habría querido, abuela, [...] perdóname si puedes, perdona a esta pobre mujer que se equivocó al escoger marido, pero abandonaste al marido equivocado porque debiste encontrar uno mejor y tu hijo te condenó a muerte, te enterró en vida, te fabricó una vida como la que tú no quisiste vivir, pero no al tener dos hijos a los que siempre querré más que a nada en el mundo, [...] pero la guerra terminará algún día, y vencerá la razón, vencerán la justicia y la libertad, la luz por la que luchamos, pero nosotros no tuvimos suerte, este país no tuvo suerte, no la tuviste tú, no la tuvo la razón, ni la justicia, ni la libertad, ni la luz, sólo Dios, el orden, la oscuridad, los uniformes, y cuando todo esto haya*

*pasado, volveré a buscarte, y hablaremos, ¿pudiste volver, abuela, lograste escapar de su victoria, de la cárcel, de la paz de las fosas comunes y las cunetas de las carreteras, [...] a lo mejor estoy equivocada pero siento que estoy haciendo lo que tengo que hacer, y lo hago por amor, tú no puedes saber lo que representa tu amor para mí, no puedes calcular el orgullo que siento de ser tu nieto, el hijo de tu hijo, te he querido tanto antes de conocerte, Teresa, he admirado tanto a la gente como tú, [...] ya sé que esta victoria póstuma, simbólica y tardía nunca te consolará de aquella derrota pero tú, hoy, has ganado la guerra, abuela. (302-05)*

With this interpolation of Álvaro's words in roman font and Teresa's words in italics, the letter transforms into an intergenerational dialogue between Álvaro and his grandmother. The letter's original intended recipient, Julio Carrión, is cast aside, allowing Álvaro access to a relationship with Teresa for the first time. Yet while reading as a dialogue between the two, distinguished by different font types, the five pages also read as one long sentences with thoughts only separated by commas. The entire dialogue occurs within Álvaro's mind as he reads and re-reads the letter and responds to its contents. Teresa's words are internalized in Álvaro; they are memorized and, as he faces challenges later, the words she wrote nearly 70 years earlier become Álvaro's own thoughts—significantly presented in roman font—that guide him in making difficult decisions.

In Álvaro's repeated readings of his grandmother's letter, the silence about the past that had, in part, sustained his relationship with his father begins to break as Teresa's words reach him directly across several decades. As Álvaro's relationship with his father's memory crumbles under the weight of a lifetime of deceit, he is also able to form a relationship with his grandmother. In effect, Álvaro buries the official story with his father's body in a cemetery in his

hometown and unearths the truth of his grandmother's existence, committing to making Teresa alive once more within him. The connection with Teresa is necessarily both a filiative one ("el orgullo que siento de ser tu nieto, el hijo de tu hijo") and affiliative ("he admirado tanto a la gente como tú").

### Affiliative and Filiative Reflections

The photo and the letter that Álvaro discovers in his father's office are just the proverbial tip of the iceberg, however, and ongoing revelations of his family's hidden past leave Álvaro in a continued state of tension between filiative and affiliative ties, between his family's present and past, illustrated by a repeated disconnect between his physical presence and his emotional one. Álvaro struggles with recognizing himself in the mirror—"aquel rostro imprevisto, que era mío, atrajo mi atención como si perteneciera a alguien distinto, un hombre diferente al que yo me sentía por dentro" (659)—and he and his mother observe each other as if they do not even know each other, much less as if they were related—"La miré, y me miró, nos miramos como si no nos conociéramos" (908). It is as if, in breaking a filiative bond with his father, Álvaro is also transformed in a way that distances him from the physical resemblance to his father that gave Julio such great pleasure.

The tension between knowing and ignoring or forgetting, between the politics of Álvaro's grandmother and those of his father, between affiliation and filiation, between memory and oblivion thus does indeed form the crux of *El corazón helado*. Álvaro's family also serves as a microcosm of Spain in the differing ways of responding to learning the truth about the past, as Grandes herself confirms in a 2008 interview for the journal *Olivar* (131). Ultimately, it is Álvaro's

own decision to act on the moral obligation to unearth and know the past, impelled by his grandmother's words to be "un hombre digno, bueno, valiente" that are repeated throughout the novel whenever he must make the difficult choice to continue making known his family's past through all the pain it causes him and others. Yet for the exiled and defeated Republicans represented by the Fernández family, there is no choice to know or ignore the past because their relationship to the memories of their biological predecessors creates an imperative filial connection to their history.

As previously mentioned, Sebastiaan Faber's analysis of *El corazón helado* suggests a resolution of the filiative/affiliative tension in the novel, through Álvaro's identification with his grandmother, having the effect of "armonizar sus relaciones filiativas con sus instintos afiliativos" (106). In reality, however, Álvaro's process of investigation into his family's past and its confluence with Raquel's family's tragedies leads him to what Raquel already knows: "Siempre habrá demasiada gente alrededor, vivos o muertos, contigo y conmigo, acostándose con nosotros, levantándose con nosotros, comiendo, bebiendo, andando con nosotros, y jodiendo todo, siempre" (738-39). The couple will never be able to live without the weight of the past. I would argue, then, that Álvaro's real resolution is, paradoxically enough, to leave unresolved the tension inherent in their families' pasts existing alongside their present. In Álvaro's estimation, Julio Carrión had treated innocent people horribly and profited off of betrayal and deceit along with the silence of a complicit country. Also in Álvaro's estimation, Julio Carrión had been a good, loving father who he loved very much. It is not necessary or possible to reconcile these. They both must exist.

Similarly, for the reader of *El corazón helado*, the inherent tension in the novel is left not fully resolved, or is resolved with a certain ambivalence. With Álvaro's own "historia española que lo echa todo a perder" being a metaphor for the much larger *historia española* of the post-Transition period, Grandes sends a message to her readers that the only brave and just way to proceed as a country is to accept that it is messy, that it seems ruined, and that there are ghosts of both the victors and the repressed who cannot be shut out of the story. Spain itself cannot make a leap to solely embracing an affiliative connection to its Republican past because it will never be able nor should completely uncouple itself from the filiative one.

### Family Photos

While the story within *El corazón helado* places heavy importance on photographs for the preservation and transmission of family history, only one reproduced photo appears as part of the book: the cover photograph, additionally repeated in cropped form on the novel's back cover. The back cover also includes the note: "**Ilustración de la cubierta:** fotografía de Pepita Ayra tomada por Santiago Sans en 1943. ©Sylvia Sans." Throughout the novel, the descriptions of all photographs never include one that coincides with the photograph on the book's cover. The image—black and white except for an orange-brown tint to the sky—is of a young, smiling woman with short, dark, wavy hair pulled away from her face. We see her from the waist up, wearing what appears to be a skirt and a short-sleeved, solid-colored shirt with a high neckline. The woman stands in the photo's foreground, and in the background over her right shoulder we see the corner and two sides of a building with what appears to be a large clock tower rising above it. The orange sky contains wispy, nonthreatening clouds. The image has sustained



damage; it appears that there are scratches and water spots on and around the area of the woman's face.

As a paratextual image without any direct textual reference in the novel, the use of a damaged photograph on the cover is an interesting choice, and seems an acknowledgement of the significance of its subject to what is between the covers. In this case, given the apparent age at the date of the photo as well as her appearance, the image insinuates that the subject may be Paloma, Raquel's great-aunt. To a reader progressing through the novel with this assumption, Paloma's enigmatic appearance alone on the cover of the novel suggests that she is actually a key figure in the text and there may be more to her story than what is revealed near the beginning of the book. It is rather significant in a novel so deeply rooted in connections through biological descendancy and ancestry, as Paloma has no children. Yet, as we have seen, Paloma is intimately connected to her grand-niece, Raquel. Besides foreshadowing, then, the pivotal role that a photo of Paloma in Paris plays within the novel, greatly affecting the course of Álvaro's life, the cover art also signals just how deep the filiative bonds are within the generation of postmemory. As if the traumatic disruptions to family life knits the survivors together more closely, the great-aunt/grand-niece connection, not typically considered intimate, may be the novel's most significant.

Nietos biológicos. Nietos adoptivos.

The epic, multigenerational story of *El corazón helado* concludes with two lines, in the first-person expression of Álvaro, that are simultaneously revealing in considering the composition of the novel:

Y sin embargo, la mía no era más que una historia, una de muchas, tantas y tan parecidas, historias grandes o pequeñas, historias tristes, feas, sucias, que de entrada siempre parecen mentira y al final siempre han sido verdad.

Sólo una historia española, de esas que lo echan todo a perder. (919)

The book, however, does not end at this point. The final 11 pages of the text are dedicated to a section of comments and acknowledgements titled “Al otro lado del hielo. Nota de la autora.” It is the interplay of this note and the final lines of the story that deserve analysis. In the novel’s final two sentences, Grandes invites a closer look at two points. Firstly, these sentences open the door to a greater spirit of collectivity, and secondly, they posit the veracity of the novel itself.

As if a 900-page epic novel spanning three generations, seven decades, and writing stories of dozens of characters were insufficient, Grandes insinuates in the penultimate sentence of her novel and affirms in the following note that what she has written is a single drop in a bucket and there is more work to be done. In her note, Grandes acknowledges a multitude of friends, family, and acquaintances who relayed to her moments of their family history that later helped inspire and shape the novel. Those acknowledged in the note form part of the generation of postmemory in Spain, and their family stories are transmitted intergenerationally and then to the author of *El corazón helado*. In composing her novel including these memories as the experiences and memories of her characters and their families, Grandes honors filiative bonds. Ultimately, the stories—both within the note and within the novel’s diegetic world—have affiliative importance; through their condensation into a united but broad-reaching epic novel, the real memories connect with an audience sympathetic to the array of characters within *El corazón helado*. There is an implication that that affiliative connection could also inspire

investigations, like that of Álvaro, into the story fragments Grandes collects in her note and to the much broader ocean of stories there is yet to elucidate.

In the second clause of *El corazón helado*'s penultimate sentence is a fairly common trope wherein the first-person narrator affirms their story, recounted within the novel's pages, is true. Álvaro acknowledges how implausible it might seem, but ultimately reassures readers that it is to be believed. Grandes, however, expands upon this trope in her note when she echoes that claim in what is assumed to be a non-fiction inclusion outside the novel's diegetic world:

*El corazón helado* es una novela en el sentido más clásico del término. Es, de principio a fin, una obra de ficción, y sin embargo no quiero no puedo advertir a sus lectores que cualquier semejanza de su argumento o sus personajes con la realidad sea una mera coincidencia. Lo que ocurre es más bien lo contrario. Los episodios más novelescos, más dramáticos e inverosímiles de cuantos he narrado aquí, están inspirados en hechos reales. (924)

This affirmation of the truthfulness within the novel, coupled, ironically, with an inversion of the typical disclaimer about fiction resembling real life, is not unsupported. Grandes includes a bibliography of sorts, listing in various paragraphs her sources—as mentioned above, mostly friends and family—and recounting their stories that directly connect with action in the novel such as the tragic, moving account of the wells in Arucas, Gran Canaria, where over 60 Republicans were left to die. On two occasions, Grandes even acknowledges her sources as co-authors of sorts to her novel (928-29).

In making visible, at least partially, the investigation that took place in order to compose *El corazón helado*—the author also includes in the note acknowledgement of seven authors

whose studies she utilized in writing—Grandes not only claims the truthfulness within her novel, but also subtly transforms the text. Through the repetition of stories in novel form and in the acknowledgements, Grandes's work documents postmemory and then harnesses its affiliative and creative power. In effect, *El corazón helado* as an open book is also a door opened to a space for many more documentaries and creative endeavors tangential to the one Almudena Grandes undertakes here.

María Jesús Orbegozo: *Hijos del árbol milenario*

As previously mentioned, María Jesús Orbegozo's epic novel, *Hijos del árbol milenario*, was published in 2010 with little fanfare and scant critical reception. In the several years since its publication, it likewise has not attracted much of a popular or critical following. To my knowledge, not a single scholarly article has been published analyzing Orbegozo's work. This lack of attention could partially be due, as I will argue, to the novel's structure and subject matter occupying marginal spaces. Indeed, *Hijos del árbol milenario* could be read as a work of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call minor literature. Although Deleuze and Guattari are studying the case of Kafka, a German speaker in Czechoslovakia, their model as established in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* transfers well to a Spanish-speaking novelist from the Basque Country. The novel is written by a member of the Basque minority about the Basque experience, but in the major language of Spanish; politics tinge nearly all the action and conversations among characters; and individuality recedes in favor of collectivity (16-17).

As a part of the third characteristic of minor literature, that “everything takes on a collective value” (17), Deleuze and Guattari elaborate that “talent isn’t abundant in a minor literature,” and that this fact is beneficial to the form because “what each author says individually already constitutes a common action, and what he or she says or does is necessarily political, even if others aren’t in agreement” (17). Indeed, the composition of *Hijos del árbol milenario* is a political project as much as, or even more than, it is an artistic one. The aesthetic impoverishment of the text is a response to the demands of the task at hand, developing an epic document with its foundations in the history of marginalized subjects. As we shall see, artistic license cedes space to fealty to the historical record and the responsibility to represent various collectivities of Basque people.

*Hijos del árbol milenario* has no one salient unifying conflict or storyline. The novel has no single protagonist, narrating rather the experiences of over 50 major and minor characters spanning three generations of Basque experiences from the first day of the Spanish Civil War until the enactment of laws and occurrence of events of the late 70s in Spain affecting Basque governance and people. The effect is one described in its few reviews as a “un caleidoscopio de una sociedad compleja” (Vega) or “una bella sinfonía” (Aguilera). Although one of these artistic forms implies fragmentation and the other implies harmonization, in either circumstance, the product requires a collectivity of components without which the work would lack sense. In order to manage the abundant number of characters for the reader, the novel begins with two paratextual sections: nine family trees, and a descriptive list of other characters, sorted alphabetically.

About her novel, Orbegozo has said in an interview: “Quería que fuera un cuadro histórico auténtico y objetivo, sin juzgar a los personajes” in which:

los personajes mostraran sus emociones más íntimas, todas ellas consecuencia de la dictadura franquista y la muerte de Franco, la industrialización y el auge de la nueva burguesía, los alentadores años de la Transición, la posterior liberación de los presos políticos vascos, el nacimiento y la organización de la lucha armada de ETA, la esperada proclamación de la Constitución de 1978 y la firma del Estatuto de Gernika un año después. (Iparraguirre)

The result of this attempt at creating an objective, historical but fictionalized account of such a large scope of Basque and Spanish history is that the reader experiences a novel where the intimate emotions are relegated to a secondary position where those emotions, and the characters themselves, become vehicles for the primary exposition of Basque history and politics. As such, *Hijos del árbol milenario* reads as a thoroughly didactic novel.

While many novels focusing on the Spanish Civil War and the post-war period portray two possible sides—Republican vs. Nationalist, victors vs. conquered—with a focus on the Basque state, Orbegozo narrativizes the nuances and deep understanding of the ideologies of Basque people that cannot necessarily fit into the above narrative structure. In *Hijos del árbol milenario*, Orbegozo writes to capture the myriad consequences of the involvement in the war across various strata in Basque society that are unlikely to be represented well in other Spanish Civil War novels. Therefore, the novel serves as an introduction of the Basque experiences, capitalizing on a mainstreaming of war and post-war literature that has become abundant in Spain and the Republican diaspora over the past two decades. In my analysis of *Hijos del árbol*

*milenario*, I will demonstrate and analyze the four distinct methods that Orbegozo employs to instruct readers on Basque history and politics via the narrative, and I will argue that the abundance of characters is in service to the didactic function of the novel.

Orbegozo's four narrative strategies are, as I have termed them, 'the chronicle,' 'the tangent,' 'the discussion,' and 'the historical-realist event.' Of the four, the chronicle and the tangent are closely related and are didactic in a direct sense, with a concern for fealty to and the relating of the Basque historical record. The discussion and the historical-realist event are didactic in a much more traditionally novelesque manner, with characters incorporated more into their historical and cultural landscape.

Before making a complete analysis of the four didactic narrative strategies that Orbegozo employs in her novel, it must be noted that the first chapter of *Hijos del árbol milenario* is unique within the novel's structure in that the narrative leaps forward and backwards in time from the day the Spanish Civil War began until the late 1970s, principally via the memories and experiences of Pedro Aranzadi and Mariví Landaburu who fall in love and are married in the first days of the war. With the novel's initial epigraphs quoting from Greek mythology and the first pages littered with words such as "destino," "predeterminado," "oráculo," "imperativo," and "inevitable," an implicit line is drawn in the first chapter connecting the Spanish Civil War to the actions of the Basque Nationalist militant group ETA as part of a tragic Basque destiny. The narrative strategy of moving forward and backward through time in the first chapter following the story of one family creates the sole, somewhat vague tension in the novel: how does the Basque Country get from one armed conflict to the other? After these pages, the novel proceeds

chronologically through the postwar period of Franco's dictatorship to explain the intermediate years between the war and the Transition, with Orbegozo employing the historical present tense to narrate the life events of the novel's characters as well as the historical events that contextualize the environment in which those characters act. The historical present tense also serves to place all events on the same plane of Orbegozo's "cuadro histórico," eliminating the distance between each event and between the events and the contemporary audience who are not reading as if removed from the action by 40 or more years.

### The Chronicle

The most straightforward presentation of Basque history in the novel is via the chronicle. In nearly all of the cases of this strategy, characters' life events introduce or are interpolated with historical ones. In the following example, the chronicle introduces a new section of the chapter, following the major character Pedro:

Se cura Pedro de su enfermedad. Pasa el invierno y llega la primavera. Las noticias de la guerra son malas. Los fascistas van ganando terreno y el ejército republicano se ve obligado a replegarse al llamado <<cinturón de hierro>> para la defensa de Bilbao. Gernika es salvajemente bombardeada. [...] José Antonio Aguirre, como presidente del gobierno vasco, hace un llamamiento a la población para la defensa total. En grandes titulares proclama el periódico *Euzkadi*, órgano del Partido Nacionalista Vasco, el día 16 de junio de 1937: <<¡Todos en nuestros puestos! ¡Por nuestros hermanos muertos, por nuestras víctimas, por nuestra vida!>> (106)



Here, the focus turns quickly from Pedro's personal experience of illness in war to the more general progression of the war. History is presented as news and headlines, in brief, depersonalized sentences, and Pedro is removed from explicitly experiencing the events that would otherwise contextualize his life; the news and headlines neither arrive to his ears nor his eyes. Instead, Orbegozo provides an account of the historical record with Pedro's recovery from illness granted equal or even lesser importance as the events of the war, given the extended length of the section devoted to chronicling the war's events in a way that does not make explicit the direct relevance to the novel's diegetic world.

In another example, the final section of the novel, any reference to the novel's many characters has disappeared, leaving a general "Hay quien" to stand in the place of any specific individual who might be represented in that political position:

La Constitución, la Ley de Amnistía y el Estatuto de Gernika, proclamado el 18 de diciembre de 1979, son el fundamento de la democracia en Euskadi; democracia por la que han sufrido persecución, cárcel e incluso muerte, tantos y tantos vascos y españoles. Hay quien niega su valor histórico y político, proclamando que para Euskadi nada ha cambiado. [...]

Exactamente tres días después de la proclamación de la Constitución, y antes de ser sancionada por el Rey, el día 9 de diciembre, ETA comete su primer atentado tras la amnistía y asesina a un militar retirado en Salamanca y a tres policías en San Sebastián. Hasta final de mes, las víctimas ascienden a ocho más.

Es el fin, simultáneamente feliz y triste, del año 1978. (509-10)

The above section exhibits a narrative detachment from the rest of the novel's diegetic world.

That the novel closes on this historical chronicle with a conspicuous absence of its fictional characters underscores the didactic function of *Hijos del árbol milenario*. The diegetic world supports the instruction of history, rather than the other way around. The lingering notes of this “bella sinfonía” are far from any intimate emotions of individual novel characters specifically nor barely even the Basque people generally; instead they reflect historical events and political reactions divorced from the individual experience. The characters of the novel disappear, as they often do throughout the work, in order to provide ample space for a history that encompasses so much more than their collective experiences can represent.

### The Tangent

Similar to, but more common than, the chronicle is Orbegozo’s use of a semi-incorporated political or historical tangent. The tangent generally appears towards the beginning of a section wherein the focus has shifted to a different character than in the previous section. These tangents provide context, but the context is greatly amplified beyond the necessary information solely for the advancement of the action. The below quote is taken from a section focused on seminary student Iker and includes the short selections related to priesthood in the Basque country, part of a much more extensive historical and political tangent:

El silencio impuesto a los anhelos nacionales empieza a ser rechazado. Se habla en grupos, no con total libertad pero sí sin excesivas trabas, de Euskadi [...] y se va forjando una conciencia de pueblo oprimido por España y por el fascismo que debe liberarse. Y los frailes y sacerdotes se sienten la vanguardia en el despertar de esa conciencia nacional reivindicativa. [...]

Se empieza a soñar con una Euskadi libre, sin influencia española [...] En los conventos hay focos, todavía no mayoritarios, de frailes embebidos en llevar a cabo una lucha política nacionalista. (334-35)

The page and a half tangent from which the above quote is an extract includes details ranging from the instruction of Basque music and language, to Basque modes of dress, to global Communist movements. Unlike Pedro's illness in the chronicle, Iker's religious formation is not entered into the historical record through the structure of the passage. Yet similar to the use of chronicle in Orbegozo's work, the historical tangent is narratively detached from the novel's characters. The contextual information is not written as Iker's lived experience; nor is it something he is explicitly observing or commenting. This separation from Iker's own storyline is clearly demonstrated with the repeated impersonal "se" verbal construction, and the refocusing of the section on the seminary student appears abruptly at the end, with little narrative flow from the tangent back to the action of the story.

The question should be posed as to why the author deemed necessary such a great extension of the tangent that far exceeds what is relevant to Iker's storyline. One possible answer to this can be found, in part, in a previous line of the novel: "Callamos. Para sobrevivir, todos callamos, y tuvimos que camuflarnos hasta cambiar de piel en apariencia" (125). These sentences are not uttered by any character in the novel; therefore, they seemingly insert the novel's author herself into the painful Basque history of silence and oppression that Orbegozo presents throughout *Hijos del árbol milenario*. With the use of the first-person plural verb forms, Orbegozo is unified with her compatriots in their collective suffering and silence. The silence supposes a disappearance of Euskera and its songs from the lips of Basque people. Camouflage

suggests a loss of traditional Basque dress as well as an absence from visible political activity.

Orbegozo's efforts to include Basque history and politics in her novel—especially in the chronicle and tangent forms not wholly integrated into the diegetic world—can be best interpreted from the perspective of a world where “callamos” and “tuvimos que camuflarnos” are verbs that have a present perfect extension to the time of the composition of *Hijos del árbol milenario*. In effect, the novel plays a game of catch-up, inscribing into the Spanish Civil War literary tradition, and instructing as comprehensively as possible on, that which had been missing before.

Orbegozo's use of the tangent also demonstrates the tenet of minor literature as defined by Deleuze and Guattari that, “everything in [minor literatures] is political” (17). According to Deleuze and Guattari, in minor literature the “cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics. The individual concern thus becomes all the more necessary, indispensable, magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating within it” (17). Because of this “cramped space,” Iker's storyline about his experience as a seminary student thus must be connected to other more general storylines about how priests and prospective priests are navigating Basque nationalist politics as well as the ongoing conversations among Basque people about appropriate education for Basque children.

## The Discussion

In the third of Orbegozo's narrative strategies, two or more of the novel's characters discuss current events or politics, each defending a position. The discussion displays more novelesque characteristics than the chronicle or tangent, as the characters are incorporated into their Basque and Spanish environments. In the following excerpt, Cristina, the daughter of a

wealthy factory owner who discovers her activist and feminist consciousness while studying in Madrid, speaks with her Trotskyist friend, Esperanza, about a bombing at Cafetería Rolando<sup>11</sup> that killed nearly a dozen civilians. Esperanza speaks first.

—¿Crees que están debilitando al fascismo con estas acciones terroristas?

—No lo sé. Puede que sí, que les haga sentirse débiles, pero seguirá una fuerte represión. Y créeme si te digo que, si son detenidos los terroristas, me alegraré.

—¿Cómo te puedes alegrar de que los detengan los fascistas? Son luchadores en el bloque antifascista.

—Sí, pero con métodos criminales que no desaparecerán con el fin del franquismo. La violencia necesita violencia para sobrevivir y justificarse.

—No estoy de acuerdo contigo, Cristina, lo siento.

—Hoy es un día de luto para los demócratas. (438)

This scene is presented without judgment from the author, nor with accounts of the intimate thoughts of one character to elucidate and add sympathy to their argument. Neither Cristina nor Esperanza are injured in the bombing nor are they eyewitnesses to it. This unwillingness to insert one or more of her characters into a well-documented historical event shows a concern for the historical record. At the same time, it also leaves the characters free to discuss the event with distance, as was the case for the majority of people in Spain when the bombing occurred. As a result of the discussion, readers are left knowing about the real

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<sup>11</sup> The Cafetería Rolando bombing occurred in September of 1974 in Madrid and is attributed to ETA, although denied by ETA's leadership. While it is believed that the targets of the bomb were the police who frequented the locale, only two of the 13 fatalities were police personnel.

historical event (the bombing), knowing some of the contemporary debate surrounding the event among anti-Franco Spanish citizens (whether or not terror is a valid tactic for fighting fascism and should civilian casualties be something expected?), and then are free to engage or not engage in their own internal evaluation of the historical situation should they choose to. Although the lack of great affective connection with the novel's characters may cause readers to gloss over discussions, should the reader find themselves thinking about the nuances of the debate, the novel provides a small set of tools to begin a greater exploration.

As stated by Deleuze and Guattari: "The third characteristic of minor literature is that in it everything takes on a collective value" (17). In *Hijos del árbol milenario*, this assertion is readily apparent in the discussion, including in the one cited above, because of the schematic nature of the characters indeed. The novel is lacking in adjectival descriptions of its characters. There is no sense of the physical appearance of the characters, the sounds of their voices, their mannerisms, nor of many emotional and mental characteristics. Instead, the defining features are socio-economic status, gender, age, and education. Additionally, in deciding to create a "cuadro histórico sin juzgar a los personajes," Orbegozo also creates a barrier to great affective connection to any characters. The result is that instead of characters standing out as individuals, they serve as a representative of an intersectional but general positionality. Through the discussions, readers witness a working-class brother and sister debate over feminist concerns in political movements (366-67), an upper-middle-class socialist Civil War survivor and his communist son argue about whether ETA members are heroes or a danger to civilians (402), a working-class mother and son discuss whether the ends justify the violent means to overthrow fascism and if a violent system can be overthrown otherwise (415-16), among many other

contemporary concerns. The benefit of the Orbegozo's use of a long list of characters, then, is that discussions can happen on a wide range of topics with different points of view voiced by characters representing collective group of people and demonstrating a broader, general outlook on how different Basque Spaniards understand their worlds.

### The Historical-Realist Event

All the above strategies represent the insertion of, or even dominance of, history in fiction. While the chronicle, the tangent, and the discussion comprise the majority of the didactic scenes in *Hijos del árbol milenario*, at some moments the novel's characters also participate in historical-realistic events—imprisonments for being Republican officers, antifascist sit-ins on university campuses, kidnappings for ransom, etc.—although these never interfere with any actual events on record.

One such event occurs in an extended section narrating the experiences of Julen, Pedro's younger brother who is imprisoned with other Republican soldiers in the post-war period. Julen, having repeatedly seen his friends and comrades being led away to be executed, proposes that prisoners share their life experiences nightly as a way to survive incarceration and carry on the memory of those who do not. This account of men struggling with the fear of death is highly affectively charged, as are the few other historical-realist events in the novel. The affective connections with characters achieved in the novel are in passages such as these, which are uncoupled from a strict faithfulness and strong attention to the historical record. Orbegozo appears to allow herself greater license in developing and exploring the psyche of her characters when not writing with a strategy of direct didacticism.

That the novel lacks many of these realist narrative sequences with historical context signals that the primary function of the text is neither to be highly affective nor highly fictitious. Rather, *Hijos del árbol milenario* maintains throughout its epic length a dedication to facticity in exposing a marginalized Basque history. This is demonstrated through the primacy of the chronicle and tangent over the historical-realist event in the text, as well as through the inclusion, as we shall see, of several paratextual documents written by the author in the novel's final pages.

#### Paratextual Didacticism

Finally, an examination and analysis of the book's concluding paratextual documents is essential to understanding the didactic function of *Hijos del árbol milenario*. The novel includes a short bibliography in its closing pages, introducing it with the following statement: "Para mantener fidelidad a los hechos históricos, la autora ha utilizado la prensa (*Euzkadi*, *El Diario Vasco*, *El País*) y las obras de los siguientes autores: [...]" (517). Bibliographies are not uncommon in contemporary novels of the Spanish Civil War, adding a demonstration of historical accuracy to the novel. The introductory note for this bibliography, as well as the fact that it is included at all, clearly exemplifies Orbegozo's concern for the facticity of *Hijos del árbol milenario*, a concern, which, as I have shown, is also transmitted through her narrative strategies within the novel's text. Yet Orbegozo also complicates this relationship with the historical record in two other paratexts in pages following the conclusion of the novel's action.

In the "Nota de la autora," the paratext immediately preceding the bibliography, Orbegozo writes:



Este libro es una novela. Por tanto, la mayor parte de su argumento y de sus personajes son ficticios. [...] [L]os personajes que han desempeñado una función histórica aparecen con su nombre y apellidos reales, de los cuales se ofrece un índice onomástico al final. El tiempo abarca un largo período: del 18 de julio de 1936 a finales de noviembre de 1979, así que hay hechos completamente novelescos insertados en los históricos. Y lo mismo cabe decirse de los espacios: Ohando, Belahúnde, Ibara son imaginarios; Bilbao, San Sebastián, Madrid..., reales. (513)

In this note, Orbegozo transmits the fundamentals of the novel's construction. The "hechos históricos" are central to the text, and the "hechos novelescos" are created to fill in the spaces between and within them. This construction is especially on display in the narrative strategies of the chronicle and the tangent, with the historical record and fiction interpolated but not intermingled.

Oddly, Orbegozo in this note specifies the geographical fact that Madrid, San Sebastián and Bilbao are real places. Of course, this is in contrast with the mention of creating for the purpose of the novel several small Basque towns, which could be assumed by the reader to actually exist. This explicit separation between geographical fact and fiction complicates the facticity of the novel when read in conjunction with previous lines of the note. When Orbegozo states that, "los personajes que han desempeñado una función histórica aparecen con su nombre y apellidos reales, de los cuales se ofrece un índice onomástico al final," there is no indication that these historical figures would appear alongside her literary creations, leading readers to assume that the onomastic index includes only those people who really existed.

Unlike the geographical distinction made in the note, in actuality the index intermingles the historical and fictitious characters with no indication of which ones are historical and which ones are fictitious. Antonio Machado's entry is located facing the entry for "Landaburu, *Mariví* (María Victoria)," and folk singer Joan Baez sits just a few lines above Cristina Barandiarán. An onomastic index is common in pedagogical historical texts, but is a rather unique feature in a novel. Its inclusion as a paratext in *Hijos del árbol milenario* demonstrates the function, if not the intention, of the novel as a reference tool for Basque and Spanish history. Giving the literary creations equivalence to the historical figures in the index, however, while blurring fact and fiction, also signals that the novel's characters also can serve a didactic function in their roles as schematic representatives for various positionalities. Thus, the characters become focuses of reference for potential investigators. The inclusion of the onomastic index also adds greater weight to the chronicle, the tangent, and even the discussion as didactic narrative strategies. The historical and political information that the strategies contain becomes accessible to readers not just internally, as the readers progress through the pages in order, but also externally, as the reader becomes an investigator and returns to the book as a source of information. The index also allows for a mode of reading that is outside of the chronological sequence that structures the novel.

The cover of *Hijos del árbol milenario* displays a partially colorized photograph of over 20 women and men, seemingly in the process of preparing to pose for the camera. They are standing and sitting on a lawn, in front of a building with a terra cotta tile roof, wearing fashions from a decade many years previous to our own. According to the book jacket, the copyright for

the photograph is from Fototeca Kutxa, a collection boasting over a half a million images—some available online—which “reflect the development of the social, political and cultural life of Gipuzkoa from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century up until today: the landscape, festivals and customs, sports [...] social events, the monarchy, the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, the war in Africa, the Republic, the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), [...] etc.” (Kutxateka). The photograph’s composition and contemporary provenance is a poignant reflection of María Jesús Orbegozo’s novel. Both the cover image and the novel offer a glimpse into the recent Basque past, showing a collectivity of ordinary Basque people of the last century. Both Fototeca Kutxa and Orbegozo demonstrate a commitment to making visible or legible to contemporary audiences the 20<sup>th</sup> century everyday lives of Basque people. In *Hijos del árbol milenario*, Orbegozo has added to the Spanish Civil War literary corpus an incredibly comprehensive view of Basque experiences during and after the war with a dedication to historicity and didacticism shown throughout the narrative strategies and paratextual documents.

The three contemporary novels written by women authors studied in this chapter are unified in two manners. Firstly, the three novels make use of large, collective casts of characters stretching across generations and showing the reverberating effects of the Spanish Civil War. Secondly, the novels incorporate various paratextual documents, demonstrating attention to investigation and historicity in each and blurring fiction with other genres. The theoretical frameworks I use to address each—Marianne Hirsch’s *Family Frames* for *Martina, la rosa número trece*; Sebastiaan Faber’s affiliative/filiative debate for *El corazón helado*; and Deleuze

and Guattari's study on minor literature for *Hijos del árbol milenario*—are aligned with these two unifying points. The novels of López and Grandes are similar in their treatment of the collective cast, with family relationships and family histories truly at the foundation of each. Orbegozo's novel is the outlier in that the ensemble of characters, while nearly as connected in terms of family bonds and ideological affiliation as the characters in the first two novels studied here, are not presented as such. Instead, their existence highlights their historical and political contexts and the reverberations of the war within a much bigger Basque picture, and testifying to the work that a minor literature text needs to accomplish to represent a picture of a marginalized society.

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined nine texts by seven authors from two countries, spanning roughly 75 years in their composition or publication. Undoubtedly the scope of this study has been wide, but insights into Spanish Civil War literature more generally are unbounded by time, geography, and language. Through my analysis of these authors and their contributions to the corpus of literature about the Spanish Civil War, I have shown that despite differing approaches, the seven transmit via their narratives their deep concerns for the effects of the realities of war on all Spaniards, especially on non-combatants. Through their narratives, the writers consistently direct the attention of their readers or highlight the long-lasting tragedies across a wide spectrum of the Spanish population and in a variety of spaces. The American women writers studied here, operating within a bellic context where women are just emerging as writers of war in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, also demonstrate a concern for establishing their presence and the legitimacy of their observations. As a result, I have argued, Woolsey, Rukeyser, Cowles, and Hellman center themselves (or her autobiographical protagonist, in the case of Rukeyser) in their own texts, and also write to gain visual and affective authority on the subject of the war in Spain and its particular events. On the other hand, Spanish women writers, operating in a context removed from the war by two generations, approach their narratives as vehicles for addressing multiple stories through a more open, social protagonism of interconnected individuals. López, Grandes, and Orbegozo also signal—both textually and paratextually—that the narratives they compose are only drops in the ocean. They direct their readers' attention to the contributions of other scholars and women writers, and even implicitly suggest that readers

begin to undertake their own investigations into the histories of their families or of other forgotten victims and survivors of the Spanish Civil War.

In this dissertation I have also analyzed the use of genre and genres by the authors, who have written their texts unconstrained by imposed parameters of certain forms. The authors studied here frequently blur the lines of genre and blend genres, allowing for the expansion of their techniques for storytelling to encompass their objectives in writing. Woolsey and Cowles flirt with the lines of memoir, their writing reflecting, at times, reportage, cultural anthropology, and persuasive personal narrative. Rukeyser and Hellman also manipulate previously available material. As I have shown, in *An Unfinished Woman*, Hellman transforms her own old stories or reportage and publishes them as diary pages within a memoir. Among the pages of her autobiographical novel, Rukeyser creates, I argue, a verbal scrapbook of the protagonist's brief but transformative experience in Spain. While all the texts written by Spanish writers studied here are classified as novels, these also reflect testimony and well-researched history. Similar to Rukeyser's *Savage Coast*, López's *Martina, la rosa número trece* has elements of a scrapbook, as I have shown, but with the reproductions of photographs and documents related to the actual Martina Barroso. And, finally, I have discussed how Orbegozo's novel, *Hijos del árbol milenario*, is a necessary Basque historical narrative that also can serve as a sort of reference for 20<sup>th</sup> century Basque history.

This dissertation includes the first, or among the first, in-depth analyses of the nine texts above. There remains much work to be done, however—not solely further analyses of these rich and dense texts, but also, for example, an examination of the other contributions of Gamel Woolsey, Muriel Rukeyser, Virginia Cowles, and Lillian Hellman to Spanish Civil War literature.

Rowena Kennedy-Epstein began archival work for Rukeyser, resulting in the publication of *Savage Coast*, but, to my knowledge, no scholar has undertaken Spanish Civil War archival investigations for Woolsey nor Cowles. The written and spoken war reportage of Cowles and Hellman should also be studied, although in writing this dissertation I tried, and failed, to find a recording or a transcription of Hellman's radio report from Madrid.

Also unstudied here and elsewhere are so many other contributions to the corpus of Spanish Civil War literature from both American and Spanish writers over the past eight decades. A surging interest in contemporary literary production on the Spanish Civil War continues to be observed in Spain though the publication and sales of fiction and nonfiction. Meanwhile, the debate alluded to in the introduction over the “right to describe” the Spanish Civil War also continues. Because of these, the potential field of study remains wide and open, and it is important that women are represented within it, both as scholars and as literary contributors.

Throughout my eight years pursuing the study of women in the Spanish Civil War, a large group of well-intentioned people inquiring about my studies, after hearing the topic, have responded by asking whether I have read the works of Ernest Hemingway or George Orwell. Those who have similar academic interests to mine have heard of Gerald Brennan, but never of Gamel Wolsey. And not once has anyone asked if I study the work of Martha Gellhorn or *La voz dormida* by Dulce Chacón. Of course, I can not fault people much less versed in Spanish Civil War narratives than I am for their attempts to engage me in a conversation to which they can contribute, but the course and persistence of these conversations suggest a troubling fact about

the state of the discipline of Spanish Civil War literary studies. Civil war affects all citizens of the country. Why, then, have we, generally as a society and also as academics, privileged the war-related narratives of men, thereby excluding the observations and reactions of half the population?

Nancy Huston concludes “Tales of War and Tears of Women” with a lament for the shifting roles of women in war, who were becoming more involved in combat operations. She writes: “I know there are increasing numbers of women who, having had enough of being backstage or in the audience, say they want to get up on the stage of History where they can now play the same unglorious roles as men” (280). This lament is actually one for the continuance of war, rather than for the assumption of “unglorious roles” by women. As more women become combatants on the front lines of battle—in December, 2015, the Pentagon announced this change in the United States’ Armed Forces (Rosenberg 1), and the Navy announced in the summer of 2017 the first women candidates for its elite SEALs unit (Wamsley 1)—and as military technologies evolve, especially with the adoption of remotely-controlled drones, how will these developments spark additional changes in the acceptance and study of literature written by women about war? What new ways of seeing, of feeling, and of writing will become central to the texts about war written by women in the remaining decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Will the voices of future women writing about war stand for battlefield gender equality, rise up to protect and represent the vulnerable civilians impacted by war, or unite against war altogether?



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