

## THE CIVIL WAR IN THE SPANISH NOVEL: FEMALE PERSPECTIVES

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More than fifty years after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, that violent period of national strife remains alive in Spanish literature and culture. Film director Luis García Berlanga, who dealt with the subject in his 1985 movie *La vaquilla*, asserts that «the Spanish Civil War was the last great literary, romantic war in the world...a great source of novels, books, paintings, and films and... an inexhaustible mine of which only the surface has been touched» (qtd. in Besas 227). In turn, the literature of the Civil War has given rise to many critical studies, although Malcolm Alan Compitello, in his 1979 review essay, found the criticism to be «still in its infancy» (135) and Janet Pérez, in her 1986 overview of critical response to Spanish women writers and the war, affirmed that the situation described by Compitello had not changed much in the intervening years (1986: 4). While Compitello's concern is that most studies are «classificatory rather than analytical» (133), Pérez, introducing a special issue of *Letras Femeninas* on the subject, specifically cites the relative lack of research on how the Civil War is treated by women writers.

There is no doubt that the theme of the Civil War runs loud and clear in the contemporary Spanish narrative. As Compitello notes, the transition to democracy gave rise to a new wave of such literary treatments (117). Marysé Bertrand de Muñoz' recent bibliographic study identifies dozens of novels that appeared since Franco's death

in 1975. The reasons for the continuing interest go well beyond the romantic and literary. Throughout the long Franco era, the social and political conflicts that exploded during the war remained always on the surface, and the war could not be forgotten. Moreover, although censorship eased gradually during the four decades of the Franco regime, real freedom of expression came into being only after the dictator's death. That freedom brought with it the new wave of Civil War fiction, theater, and film.

Given the pervasive nature of the Civil War theme, it is not surprising that it occurs in the works of writers, both male and female, of three generations: those who were already established in their careers before the war began, those of the «mid-century generation» who experienced the war as children or young adults, and those born after the war<sup>1</sup>. The first group, which at least initially tended to present the war from partisan perspectives, further subdivides into the Republicans who wrote their accounts from exile and those on the Nationalist side who remained in Spain. The war for both those who were themselves participants and for those who saw it through their own eyes as children was not recreated history but rather creative memory (Ponce de León). Over time the attitude toward the war evolved, even among writers of the first generation. Gradually the militants were replaced by the interpreters, a transition that took place more rapidly from the geographical distance of exile (Sobejano 54). By the end of the 1960s, the distance in time was sufficient so that even in Spain novelists set aside a unilateral view of the conflict and proceeded to demystify the war (Corrales Egea 158).

While overviews of Civil War literature, such as those cited above, do not exclude all women novelists, they do emphasize works by men and generalize without reference to possible gender differences. Antedating, as they do, key critical works on the function of propaganda in literature (Szanto, Foulkes), these overviews

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<sup>1</sup> Sobejano correctly divides the first group into two generations: older writers who were observers and younger ones who were actual participants (54). Because the number of established women writers is so small, I have merged them into one «generation». To the «mid-century generation», usually defined as those born in the 1920s, I have added slightly older women who began publishing only after the war. My third generation, those born after the war who began publishing after Franco's death, does not appear in overview studies that antedate the current wave of fiction.

neither note nor explain the fact that women writers moved more quickly than writers in general from agitation and integration propaganda to a dialectical propaganda that, by making visible or defamiliarizing the dominant ideology, effectively demystified the war. Sobejano correctly affirms that geographical distance facilitated a transition in attitude for writers in exile. A similar distancing effect asserted itself with dissident writers within Spain, that is those who experienced inner exile: «the isolation endured by distinct groups vis-a-vis each other with respect to an entire culture» (Illie 47). Illie also does not consider gender difference in his discussion of inner exile, but women, particularly nonconformist women, are always in isolation from dominant ideology and hence able to perceive, question, and subvert the prevailing propaganda.

Generalizations that make no allowance for gender difference are not unreasonable with respect to the first generation of writers, among whom women are, in fact, a very small minority. It was not until 1931 and the liberal reforms of the Second Republic, followed by the social upheaval of the war and the postwar period, that Spanish women were given even a modicum of opportunity to pursue an education or enter the literary world. Because of this sociological circumstance, the partisan view of the war with its concomitant exaltation of heroism—that is to say, the stage of agitation propaganda with its clear message that those on the «right» side had to defeat those on the «wrong» side—is predominantly a male phenomenon.

There are, however, notable exceptions. Doubtless the most eloquent woman writer on the Republican side—and perhaps the most eloquent orator of either sex on either side—was not a novelist but a political leader in the Spanish Communist Party. Dolores Ibarruri, *la Pasionaria* (b. 1895), exhorted the people to take up arms against the Fascists: «It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees! *No pasarán!*» (qtd. in Giffin 209). It was a message internalized by novelist Teresa Pàmies (b. 1919) in her youthful ardor: «Las muchachas catalanas preferirán morir como Lina Odena que entregarse al fascismo» (qtd. in Möller Soller 37). On the other side, Concha Espina (1869-1955), Spain's best known woman novelist in the pre-war period, allied herself with traditional Spanish values and took an overtly pro-Falangist stance. Her novel *Retaguardia* 1937, written while under house arrest behind the lines, and the

short stories of *Luna roja*, 1938, are characterized by «her categorical identification of the left with evil and the right with good» (Bretz 110). She portrays Franco's forces as being heroic and the Communists as being depraved. Although, unlike Ibarruri, Espina was at a safe distance from the fighting, she is one of the few Spanish authors to write of the war while it was in progress. Möller Soller observes that there were no novelists among the *milicianas* and hence no female narrative voice to give direct witness to front line battle (43).

Agitation propaganda, with its dualistic division into right and wrong, good and bad, is, of course, perceived for what it is only if one disagrees and therefore considers it falsehood. When the message strikes a responsive chord, then it is seen as truth (Szanto 45). As Foulkes notes, «the recognition of propaganda can be seen as a function of the ideological distance which separates the observer from the act of communication observed» (6). When a war is in progress, it is understandable that agitation propaganda will prevail on both sides. In the postwar period, overt agitation propaganda gradually yields to covert integration propaganda, which is intended to maintain the status quo.

Among the Republican writers who went into exile, there were only two major women novelists: Rosa Chacel (b. 1898) and Mercè Rodoreda (1909-1983). The first cluster of women writers to deal with the war in their fiction therefore were those who experienced the conflict themselves as children or young adults. The group includes such authors as Dolores Medio (b. 1914), Mercedes Salisachs (b. 1918), Carmen Laforet (b. 1921), Elena Quiroga (b. 1921), Carmen Martín Gaité (b. 1925), and Ana María Matute (b. 1926). There is in their works a certain autobiographical element and a recurring tendency to present the perspective of a young girl who is behind the lines, sometimes at a considerable distance from the battlefield: the Canary Islands in Laforet's *La isla y los demonios*, 1952; the Balearic Islands in Matute's *Primera memoria*, 1960. Nevertheless, the young girl is conscious of the hardships and atrocities of the war. In the mid-century generation, Matute has written most extensively of the war itself, most notably in her *Los hijos muertos*, 1958, and in the trilogy composed of *Primera memoria*, *Los soldados lloran de noche*, 1964, and *La trampa*, 1969.

Sobejano has noted that the presence of the Civil War in the

Spanish novel may be primary or only secondary, serving «como fondo, como reminiscencia, como motivo» (53). In the case of the women novelists, the presence is always secondary. As Carolyn Galerstein observes with respect to selected novels of Espina, Matute, Medio, Concha Castroviejo (b. 1915), and María Teresa León (b. 1904), «the military and political results of wartime incidents are overshadowed by the influence these events have on the characters' personal lives» (18). The women write not of the political figures, the battles, and the dates that constitute «history», but rather of the common people and daily lives that form what Unamuno called «intrahistory». For example, Rodoreda focuses in *La Plaça del Diamant*, 1962, on the hunger and despair of a young working-class wife with small children. When her husband comes home to Barcelona on leave from the front, he speaks not of heroic action but of the boredom of the trenches. The news of his death in battle or of the execution of his friend is merely part of a total picture, barely distracting the woman from her daily struggle for survival. Even Matute's more extended treatment of the Civil War must also be considered secondary and cannot be compared with the efforts of certain male authors who attempted to give a sweeping, historical account of the war per se.

In a post-revolutionary period, the dominant ideology imposes censorship and creates «exemplary myths» (Foulkes 13) as part of the effort to resist opposition or change. In the case of Franco Spain, integration propaganda had a double impact on women. While everyone was to believe that the Nationalist heroes had saved the country from Communism and atheism, women were also to believe that they had been saved from the perils of emancipation. The Republican government had, indeed, promoted women's rights. The victorious Falangists, through their Sección Femenina, established a mandatory social service for young women to train them to be good wives and mothers. The supportive national myth for this enterprise was that of Queen Isabel, who was promoted as the role model of an ideal mother. To what extent this form of integration propaganda alienated young women intellectuals is revealed in *El cuarto de atrás*, 1978, Martín Gaité's multifaceted metanovel that includes both her quasi-autobiographical memoirs and her sociological analysis of growing up female in the Civil War-postwar period.

That Rodoreda was able to demystify the Civil War from the distance of geographical exile is understandable. That young women writers within Spain were able to do so as early as the 1950s may initially be more surprising but is also understandable. Toril Moi, basing herself on the theories of Julia Kristeva, states: «Only a concept of ideology as a *contradictory* construct, marked by gaps, slides and inconsistencies, would enable feminism to explain how even the severest ideological pressures will generate their own lacuna» (26). The «contradictory, fragmentary nature of patriarchal ideology» (Moi 64) is readily visible in the Falangist idealization of Queen Isabel as ideal mother, for the integration myth had to obscure the historical role of Isabel as political and military leader, as well as the part she played in the betrayal and subsequent fifty-year imprisonment of her daughter Juana, *la Loca*.

Unamuno preferred *intrahistoria* to *historia* because he felt that Spain's essence lay in the people and their enduring traditions rather than in the surface level of dates of battles and names of those who had achieved their moment of power. The emphasis feminist writing has placed on intrahistory serves a more subversive function. History, like patriotism, is equated with patriarchal ideology; it is integration propaganda, not truth. Those who are marginal to the dominant ideology therefore seek to deconstruct *Historia* (official history) in order to discover their own *historia* (story).

The two younger generations of women writers seldom reflect either the partisan stance of the exaltation of heroism expressed by Ibarra of Espina. They are much more in tune with the contemporaneous view of Virginia Woolf in her *Three Guineas*, 1938, who «elaborated a highly original theory of the relations between sexism and fascism» and attempted «to link feminism to pacifism» (Moi 6). To varying degrees, the younger Spanish authors assume a pacifist attitude, showing a senseless war in which there were no winners, only victims on both sides. This assessment of Matute's work might be equally applied to the group as a whole: «The military conflict is relegated to a plane of importance secondary to the war's effects upon individuals, what war means, the pain, hurt, and absurdity» (Pérez 1971: 124). The women writer's anti-militarism culminates in a position that, in equating patriotism with patriarchy, stands diametrically opposed to the oratory of *la Pasionaria*. The mother of the title character in *Otras mujeres*

y *Fabia*, 1982, by Carmen Gómez Ojea (b. 1945) recalls for her daughter her own experiences as a volunteer during the war:

Pero yo odiaba el hospital y me producían asco las heridas y no podía sentir piedad por aquellos soldados, que se habían marchado al frente cantando, a hacer su papel de machos. La guerra es algo masculino, cien por cien masculino, y me decía que las mujeres que no eran estúpidas o que no estaban intoxicadas por la palabrería de los hombres debían odiarla igual que yo. Y me sentía conmovida hasta las entrañas por aquellas madres enlutadas que perdían a sus hijos y aquellas viudas, algunas casi unas niñas, que ya no volverían a reír gozosamente, porque era demasiado horrible lo que habían sufrido (84-85).

The focus in the women's novels is on the women and children left behind, on the bombing raids that killed innocent citizen, on the absence created by the meaningless death of young men seduced—of forced—into going off to war.

In American literature, it was World War I that led writers to equate patriarchy with fathers' sacrificing their sons (A. G. Jones 136). In Spain the theme appears later. For example, it refers to the Civil War in the novels of Carlos Rojas (b. 1928), where Goya's painting of Saturno devouring his children becomes a leitmotiv, or to voluntary Spanish participation on the German side in World War II in «Los primos» in *Siete miradas en un mismo paisaje*, 1981, by Esther Tusquets (b. 1936).

Among the more recent generation of women writers, those who established their reputations in democratic Spain, Gómez Ojea, Marina Mayoral (b. 1942), and Montserrat Roig (b. 1946) have continued to introduce the war as a secondary presence. Roig, a journalist whose publications include a booklength documentary on Catalans in Nazi concentration camps, deals with the Civil War extensively in her trilogy, written in Catalan: *Ramona, adieu*, 1972; *El temps de les cireres*, 1977; and *L'hora violeta*, 1980. The younger writers, unlike the mid-century generation, never place an entire novel against the backdrop of the war. More typically their narrator-protagonist, in the context of a search for matrilineal roots within various generations of a family, explore the war from the perspective of their mothers' generation as only one among several foci of their novels. Significantly, however, the attitude expressed about

the Civil War is invariably at odds with Franco-era integration propaganda. Fabia's mother, in the passage cited above, rejects both male and female sex-role stereotypes: the heroism of the soldiers and the nurturing role of the women behind the lines. When the younger writers create occasional female characters who learned to be fighter pilots —Georgina behind the Nationalist lines in Mayoral's *La única libertad*, 1982, or Kati behind the Republican lines in Roig's *L'hora violeta*, 1980— this desire of women to take part in the military action likewise contradicts that dominant ideology.

According to Francoist propaganda, the Civil War was to be viewed as a noble crusade in which brave Nationalist soldiers defended Spain and her cherished traditional values from the attack of Soviet Communists. It is characteristic, however, both of novels written in exile and of novels written by the mid-century generation, to see the war as fratricide. Arturo Barea (b. 1897), from his vantage point in exile, called it «una guerra de dos Caínes» (qtd. in Sobejano 63). Writers of the mid-century generation frequently used the symbolism of Cain and Abel. Betrayal becomes the rite of passage for male and female protagonists alike. Matute's first novel was titled *Los Abel*, 1948. Juan Gaytisoló (b. 1931) in his *Duelo en el Paraiso*, 1955, carried the motif to the extreme in depicting refugee children who kill a boy named Abel because they have internalized and misunderstood the adult messages of hate. According to Galerstein, «hermanos contra hermanos» is an almost obsessive thought in Medio's *Diario de una maestra*, 1961 (17).

The lasting horror of war for those behind the lines —including children— is a repeated motif in the literary treatment of the Civil War from the female perspective. Matute makes the point clearly in her *Los hijos muertos*: «A civil war is a war that nobody wins, but the special losers are the children, as is shown through the recollections of Miguel, too young to participate other than as a spectator of the terror» (Pérez 1971: 127). In that same novel, as Eunice D. Myers observes, the innocent victims also include the unborn (90). But in the chaos and violence of war, the role of children is not limited to that of victim. While Goytisoló's *Duelo en el Paraiso* ends with Abel's murder and the defeat of the Republicans, women novelists have explored in depth the lingering aftermath of guilt. Medio indeed considered using the title «Todos somos culpables de algo» for her *Diario de una maestra* (Galerstein 16). The theme of guilt



becomes particularly powerful when innocent children become not only the witnesses to but also the perpetrators of atrocities. Such is the case in Quiroga's *La careta*, 1955, and Matute's *La trampa*.

Utilizing stream of consciousness and existential time, Quiroga only gradually reveals in *La careta* the cause of the protagonist's alienation and degeneracy. Even the intervening twenty years have not removed Moisés from the terrible period at the outbreak of the Civil War when his father, a Nationalist soldier, was forced into hiding in Republican Madrid. When enemy soldiers burst into the apartment of Moisés' family, the frightened boy runs and hides. His father is killed outright, and his mother is left bleeding to death. She tries to call for help —pounding on the floor for the neighbors. The boy, terrified that the soldiers will return and kill him too, covers his mother's mouth and effectively suffocates her. With the help of a neighbor, the boy physically escapes to the safety of the Nationalist zone, but he is never able to escape from himself. The war, seen from this perspective, is far removed from any semblance of heroism.

In Matute's *La trampa*, there occurs a very similar war episode. The novel, Faulknerian in technique like *La careta*, is composed of four narrative strands, each representing a different character. One of these, Mario, has spent his life plotting revenge against the man who led Mario's father away to his death. Again the childhood experience is only revealed near the end of the novel. Mario was a little boy at the time his father went into hiding. He was tricked into revealing his father's hiding place, and is marked ever after by the look of horror on his father's face when he opens the concealed door for the man who claims to be his father's friend but is, in fact, his executioner.

The father of Quiroga's protagonist was killed by the Republicans while Matute's character fell victim to the Nationalists. But their common point, consistent with the antimilitarism that marks the women's novels, is, not only that there were no winners in the war, but also that the war's negative effects continue for generations. Indeed, in Matute's novel even after Mario finally realizes the futility of the revenge he has been planning for years, his young disciple Bear, fully aware that he will be caught and punished, proceeds to kill Mario's nemesis on his own. The cycle of senseless violence continues.

By the late 1960s, when Matute published *La trampa*, censorship in Spain had eased and it was no longer necessary to present a partisan, Francoist view of the war. Women novelists, however, including Matute herself, had already dared to present a balanced view or even the Republican perspective, a full decade before the demystification period identified by Corrales Ejea. Quiroga believes that her *La careta* was the first book published in Spain to suggest that atrocities were committed by both sides in the war. Doubtless her daring statement —however minor a part it may be in the context of the whole novel— only passed the censor because of the difficulties presented by her use of stream of consciousness. A number of critics either misinterpreted or found it dangerous to write about the content of this and other novels by women that reflected negatively on the war or the immediate postwar period. Matute has affirmed that it was her intent in the 1950s to demystify the Civil War (Pérez 1971: 127). Women writers in Spain, approaching war from an antimilitarist stance and veiling their criticism under a stream-of-consciousness style, were clearly in the vanguard of the more general novelistic current.

Some Anglo-American critics, like Ellen Moers, have suggested that women's writing represents an undercurrent outside the male tradition (Moi 53). As Moi explains in detail, French feminist theory, in the varying approaches of Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Kristeva, affirms that the unitarian point of view, one that «banishes from itself all conflict, contradiction and ambiguity» (8), is the phallogocentrism that informs social realism as well as patriarchal ideology. With these theories in mind, it becomes possible to relate the novelistic structure of the women writers to their demystification of the war and Francoist ideology. Quiroga's *Algo pasa en la calle*, 1954, for example, is a multiperspective novel with a shifting narrative point of view. There is no discernible authoritarian voice to tell the reader what to think, but there are new insights that may make the reader reevaluate previous judgments. In this sense Quiroga's novel fulfills the function of dialectical propaganda, «which attempts to demystify, by depicting separately, interactively, and always clearly, the basic elements which comprise a confused social or historical situation» (Szanto 75). In the 1950s women writers like Quiroga and Matute were experimenting with open-ended textuality and the deconstruction of binary oppositions while

the dominant male novelistic current, even of those writers who clearly opposed the Franco regime, remained within the authoritarian mode of social realism.

Because the women writers of the mid-century generation concentrate on intrahistory, they tend to show war destroys the family, both through separation and death and through the destruction of social structures and values. As Sara Schyfter has noted, the fragmented family is characteristic of the novels written by the women of the mid-century generation. The female protagonist in their works typically is motherless, alienated, and eager to break away from whatever family ties may remain. It is this latter aspect that comes initially as a surprise. Paradoxically, even while Spanish women authors reject nationalism and militarism, their characters often find liberation in the war and its aftermath. Thus these works simultaneously lament the senseless loss of lives and applaud women's new freedom. Laforet's orphaned protagonist in *Nada*, 1945, is eager to pursue her education and her own life, freed from family restraints. The related protagonist of the same author's *La isla y los demonios* takes advantage of the chaos at the end of the war to flee to the Peninsula in search of her own identity. Medio's Lena, protagonist of *Nosotros, los Rivero*, 1953, discovers in the total disintegration of her family the possibility for going to Madrid and studying at the university.

Sandra Gilbert has pointed out precisely this positive effect of the Great War on British women. As a result, men writing of the world conflict tended to see themselves as victims while women emphasized their new found freedom. In a similar vein, Anne Goodwyn Jones points out that «war has meant a chance for women to act with unwonted independence and authority and thus to reshape traditional womanhood» although «traditional roles and structures are resilient, and egalitarian reform is fragile» (135). In the case of Spain, which did not participate in World War I, it was the social upheaval caused by the Civil War that allowed women to free themselves from family control and strike out on their own. The experience of the teenage Teresa Pàmies is itself «el típico ejemplo de la aportación de la guerra a la liberación de la mujer» (Möller Soller 38). While adolescent heroines responded with a quest for adventure or education, the impact, as reflected in the novel, extends to older women as well. Medio makes the point clearly

in her *Diario de una maestra* that precipitates social evolution when she describes «the avalanche of women who set out to conquer the jobs abandoned by men going to the front» (M. E. K. Jones 99). Men writers were not unaware of the social upheaval and its impact on the traditional role of women in society, but their attitude toward the liberating change tends to be negative. Even liberal thinkers of the mid-century generation, who progressively criticized the repressive Franco regime, frequently include the disintegration of the family with its concomitant undermining of traditional moral values as one more sign of general decay.

Doris Lessing, in her *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, 1971, gives another dimension to war's liberating impact on women: «It is only in love and in war that we escape from the sleep of necessity, the cage of ordinary life, to a state where every day is high adventure, every moment falls sharp and clear» (qtd. in Pratt 84). As several critics have already observed, this liberation theme, too, appears in Spanish literature. León in her memoirs recalls an «exhilarating sense of comradeship» (qtd. Bellver 71). As a result of the war, Medio's female hero in *Diario de una maestra* is forced to act independently (Ordóñez 54). The protagonist of Martín Gaité's *El cuarto de atrás* experiences a moment of self-reliance and joyous rebellion during a wartime trip to Burgos (Bellver 74). The theme finds its most radical development in Roig's *Ramona, adeu*. No doubt because of her strong identification with the Catalan struggle for autonomy, a movement that formed part of the Republican cause in the 1930s, Roig is the woman writer in the postwar generation who has dealt most extensively with the war. Her view of the conflict is not monolithic and involves a number of different characters whose own perspectives vary considerably. The one that concerns us here, however, is that of a very traditional, unassertive woman.

*Ramona, adeu* juxtaposes the lives of three generations of Ramonas, a name, along with its nickname Mundeta, that is repeatedly identified as an old-fashioned one that makes people laugh. The title of the novel thus implies the rejection of the image created by the name and of old-fashioned notions of women's role in society. The desire for self-liberation is explicit for the grandmother, whose diary covers the period 1894-1919, and for the youngest Mundeta, whose experiences over a several-day period in the late 1960s are

narrated in third person. In contrast to these two women and her own non-conformist friend Kati is the middle Ramona, who admits to being weak and not very intelligent. In the central portions of the text, in which a third person narration focuses on her life from 1931-38, she is portrayed as insignificant, and her daughter describes her as self-effacing and timid, totally submissive to her husband's authority. Nevertheless, it is the middle Ramona's first person account of an episode from the Civil War that serves as prologue and epilogue to the novel.

This key episode takes place in Barcelona on a particular day in 1938 when the 29-year-old pregnant woman sets out in search of her missing husband. She believes that he has been injured or killed when German and Italian planes bombed the city. For Ramona, like Moisés in *La careta*, the experience is one that remains always present for her. Her daughter fails to understand why her timid mother speaks repeatedly and animatedly of her «extraordinary adventure» during the war. The reader, of course, can only begin to understand in the concluding pages of the novel.

Ramona's «extraordinary adventure» follows the structure for the mythic hero. Because of the war, at the time of the bombing Ramona finds herself without the direction of those who normally guide her: her husband, her mother, her friend Kati. She is forced to set out alone on her travels. Through the afternoon and into the night, she ventures into the devastated section of the city, learns to talk to strangers, and ultimately finds herself descending into the inferno of the hospital/morgue. When she emerges from the morgue itself—where she has confronted the grotesque image of death—she engages in a long conversation with an elderly anarchist. It is the first such dialogue of her life. As dawn approaches and she goes out once again into the city streets, the shadows that usually haunt her have dissipated. She is exhilarated. Barcelona in the early morning seems beautiful to her, and even the memory of her missing husband is gone. In the closing scene she goes to the aid of an old woman, who is defending her bread from a hungry dog.

Roig has, of course, both followed and subverted the mythic structure. When the 1938 episode is viewed by itself, the character emerges from her journey not only self-sufficient but also capable of helping others. In the absence of her husband, Ramona, like her friend Kati, finds that «la guerra le ha despejado el cerebro», making

her realize that «las mujeres sirven para algo y que no sólo han de servir de adorno» (12). But, as Annis Pratt has pointed out, the female hero is seldom able to maintain the pattern of the male quest. After her period of metamorphosis, almost invariably she is forcibly reintegrated into patriarchal society. It is because Ramona's old life takes hold again —her husband and mother return— that her shining momento of wartime liberation fills her with the nostalgia that is so inexplicable to the youngest Mundeta.

Roig's women characters who were initially more independent than the middle Ramona, do not recover from the war. As Kati tells Judit in *La hora violenta*: «Verás, en una guerra todo el mundo pierde algo» (148). Kati herself loses the man she loves —an Irishman who came to fight on the Republican side in the international brigades— but, perhaps more importantly, in the Francoist triumph she knows that all freedom will be abolished. When Judit rejects the idea of fleeing with her to France, Kati commits suicide. Judit retreats to a passive existence, first dedicating her life to the care of a mongoloid child and then becoming totally immobile in a paralysis that may be as much psychosomatic as physiological.

The reaction of Kati and Judit to the fall of the Spanish Republic is not unlike that of Manuel and Marta in Matute's *Los soldados lloran de noche*. The young man and woman in effect commit suicide by trying to hold off the arriving Nationalist troops by themselves. More openly political in their viewpoints than other women writers of the two younger generations, Matute and Roig join in condemning war as senseless but show that for the idealists, life after the defeat of their cause would be meaningless.

Although women writers of the mid-century and post Franco generation do not take firm partisan positions on the war per se, as Espina and Ibarri did, in general they lean to the Republican cause. Certainly there are no Franco apologists among them; they do not join the dominant ideology in applauding the victory of the Nationalist «crusade» and proclaiming the «years of peace» brought by the Franco regime. Martín Gaité in the quasi autobiographical segments of her *El cuarto de atrás* makes clear that her own family was on the Republican side even though they lived in a Nationalist zone. Matute, in *Los soldados lloran de noche*, and Salisachs, in her *Una mujer llega al pueblo*, 1957, go so far as to give sympathetic

portrayals to Communists in Republican-held Catalonia and to identify the triumphant Francoists with hypocrisy and materialism.

The pervasive element in works by the two younger generations of women writers, however, is not identification with ideology but rather a demystification of the war. As early as the late 1940s and certainly by the 1950s, the women authors showed a country divided between losers and losers. In the absurdity of a civil war, there are no winners. Eschewing a dichotomy between good and evil, as defined by political allegiances, they showed that atrocities were committed on both sides and also that on both sides there were people—usually women—capable of helping others even in the midst of war. For example, the neighbor woman who helps little Moisés escape from the Republican zone in Quiroga's *La careta* is herself a Republican; her concern is for the child, not for the fact that his father was a Nationalist soldier.

In developing their antimilitarist stance, the women writers focus on the negative impact of war on daily existence during the years of battle and on into the postwar period. In the mid-century generation, there is a repeated theme of women's emancipation as the one positive side effect of the war. Although other writers do not express this theme as openly as Medio, none of them suggests that the clock should be turned back after the war's end. Indeed, they generally portray the women defenders of «old Spain» in a negative light. In Quiroga's *Tristura*, 1960, and *Escribo tu nombre*, 1965, the traditional aunt, with her rigid ideas of morality and sex-roles, incarnates the Francoist mentality that led to the downfall of the Second Republic and the repression of the postwar.

In the mid-century generation, Matute does portray a woman willing to take up arms herself in her dead husband's cause, but generally the women writers in this group do not exalt female heroism. Their characters may not be cowards, but they show their bravery in fighting for survival, in rising to the challenge of daily life in extremely difficult times. It is in the works by the youngest generation that we find women characters who wish to take active part in the war. There may be two explanations for the difference in attitude. The writers who experienced the war themselves as children or adolescents, even from their relative safety behind the lines, remember the terror of bombings and the deaths of family and friends too well to idealize battle. Moreover, the younger writers

have been more influenced by contemporary feminist ideology and therefore feel more compelled to create women characters who can emulate the stirring example of Ibarruri. Typically the narrator-protagonist of the younger writers' works seems to be interviewing members of her mother's generation to find out what they did in the war as a way of subverting the male-dominated official history.

Roig in particular is overtly feminist, albeit an even-handed one who likes to show both sides of an issue and consistently reveals in her fiction the gap between theory and practice. Thus in *L' hora violeta* when Kati affirms that men create political parties and really want war, while women can only wait, Judit responds that some men are pacifist and some women go into battle (147). In the mid-century generation, women authors intentionally debunked the fixed images of Nationalists and Republicans. In the post Franco generation, Gómez Ojea's character may identify the war with the male-dominated patriarchy, but Roig at least is attempting to destroy stereotypical images of both sexes.

In the prologue to Roig's *Ramona, adieu*, the elderly anarchist prophetically says that the Spanish Civil War will not soon be forgotten: «la guerra, cuyo recuerdo nos va a durar toda la vida, toda la vida nos roerá por dentro, a nosotros y a nuestros hijos, y quién sabe si a nuestros nietos» (30). More than a half century after the outbreak of the war, it is still gnawing, causing at least three generations of writers to return again and again to those three years of violent conflict. In so doing, they have shifted from the overt binary oppositions of agitation propaganda to the covert reinforcement of the status quo found in integration propaganda to the demystification of the war linked with the more complex, open-ended dialectical propaganda. Doubtless because of their alienation from the dominant Francoist ideology with its insistence upon a return to traditional sex-roles, women writing within Spain, like their counterparts in exile, were at the forefront of that shifting perspective. The novels and critical studies reviewed here suggest that there is indeed a gender-based difference in the view of the Civil War. That difference reveals itself in two aspects: the speed with which women writers subverted the division into right and wrong, good and bad, of the dominant ideology and the determination to look beyond patriarchal History to uncover the intrahistory of what the war really meant in the lives of the people.



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