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## Postmemory, feminism, and women's writing in contemporary Spanish novels set in the Spanish Civil War and Franco dictatorship

Georgia Elena Reagan  
*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*

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POSTMEMORY, FEMINISM, AND WOMEN'S WRITING  
IN CONTEMPORARY SPANISH NOVELS SET IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR AND  
FRANCO DICTATORSHIP

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
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Master of Arts

in

The Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures

by  
Georgia Elena Reagan  
B.A., The University of Alabama 2010  
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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my mom, who has lived her life defying women's roles.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the people in my life that have supported me throughout this process. First I would like to thank my mom for always being an inspiration for me to be a strong, independent, female. Without her sacrifices, I would not be where I am today. Next, I would like to thank Dr. Elena Castro who encouraged me to write about one of my true passions. Without her constant guidance and endless knowledge of feminism and the Spanish Civil War and Franco dictatorship, this thesis would not be possible. I am truly indebted to her for all of her support. Thank you to Dr. Andrea Morris and Dr. Laura Martins for agreeing to be on my thesis committee. I am so thankful for your immense kindness and support while I have been at LSU.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes postmemory, feminism, and women's writing seen in three contemporary novels written by women about women who lived and defied traditional gender roles during the Spanish Civil War and the Francisco Franco dictatorship. I discuss how these female characters and real-life women were marginalized for defying women's roles, while facing extreme injustices. They refused to adhere to the norms that the patriarchal discourse imposed on them during the era and never gave up in the fight to express their voice.

I discuss the novels, *La voz dormida* by Dulce Chacón, *Donde nadie te encuentre* by Alicia Giménez Bartlett, and *Su cuerpo era su gozo* by Beatriz Gimeno. Each novel is written in the 21st century by female writers who did not experience the same tragedies as the characters in the novels. However, the writers give a voice to these women through the use of postmemory. The novelists rediscover the women's experiences through their writing and give them the voice that the women were denied throughout their lives.

The women I discuss are all marginalized because they are women and do not conform to the established gender roles that their society has imposed. The women in *La voz dormida* were marginalized because they dared to fight as soldiers alongside men against Franco's forces. La Pastora in *Donde nadie te encuentre* was marginalized because she was born an intersexual who is also a member of the Maquis, a group also opposing Franco's forces. Finally, I speak about two lesbians who are marginalized and punished due to their sexuality and independent lifestyle. I use feminist, lesbian, and queer theory by citing philosophers such as Hélène Cixous, Adrienne Rich, Judith Butler, Monique Wittig, and Raquel Platero Méndez among others. I also include theory from Michel Foucault and scholars who write about postmemory such as Sarah Leggott and Marianne Hirsch. Through these concepts of postmemory, feminism, and women's writing,

these novels finally give voice to several women who defied the roles imposed on them during the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship.

## INTRODUCTION

### I.1 The Status of Women in Spain During the Spanish Civil War and the Franco Dictatorship

When Francisco Franco first obtained power during the Spanish Civil War in 1936, he sought to have complete control over the entire country. This control then led to a dictatorship until his death in 1975.<sup>1</sup> Under his dictatorship, many Spaniards lost not only their liberties and identities, but also their lives. People that did not adhere to the conservative ideals of the authoritarian government were often punished by way of abuse or even death. Shortly before the Spanish Civil War officially began, the government was already beginning to obtain complete control over its citizens. In 1933, la Ley de Vagos y Maleantes was enacted during the Second Republic in order to "localizar y clasificar a los agentes <<peligrosos>>" (Urzáiz 110). "Agentes peligrosos" were defined as thieves, crooks, or villains that posed a threat to the Spanish citizens. This law was an attempt to punish any person that was considered subversive, or a threat to the state. In 1954, La Ley de Vagos y Maleantes was revised and manipulated under Francisco Franco to include homosexuals as dangerous. This law was only part of the way the Spanish citizens were oppressed throughout the Spanish Civil War and Franco dictatorship. Of the many groups denied their privileges, this thesis will elaborate specifically on the repression and injustices women faced simply for being female, as well as the harsher punishments they received if they were also lesbians.

One group in particular that suffered greatly from the oppression of the ultra conservative Spanish government was women. Before Franco's dictatorship, Spanish women were considered very liberated for the time and were advancing greatly in society. The Spanish woman before the

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<sup>1</sup> La Segunda República Española (1931-1936) La Guerra Civil Española (1936-1939) La dictadura de Francisco Franco (1939-1975) (Moradiellos)

war had successfully immersed herself into sociopolitical matters at the state level such as holding high ministry positions and claiming the right to control what she does with her body, such as regulating abortion (Castillo 179). Women at this time were very progressive compared to women in other western civilized countries that were still fighting for the right to vote. Once Franco gained control of the country, he and his government greatly oppressed the rights of women. These same women who had accomplished great gains in the women's liberation were suddenly subjected to conservative ideals that diminished their rights and forbade them from holding high positions at the state level, furthering their academic education, or having the power to choose how they lived their lives (Castillo 179). Under Franco, women were supposed to adhere to strict guidelines of what it meant to be a woman: being a wife and mother, devoting herself to her husband, and having virtually no individual freedoms. To enforce these rules, the government enacted Sección Femenina, which was a branch of the Falange led by Pilar Primo de Rivera, the sister of Primo de Rivera who was a founder of the Falange. Sección Femenina listed traits that a proper woman would display. A woman's job, according to Sección Femenina, was to only provide for her husband and family as the ideal housewife. The list of rules states, " Ten preparada una comida deliciosa para cuando él regrese del trabajo; especialmente, su plato favorito. Ofrécete a quitarle los zapatos. Habla en tono bajo, relajado y placentero. Prepárate, retoca tu maquillaje, coloca una cinta en tu cabello" (Sección Femenina). The stifling government caused many women to rise up against the norms and try to win back their freedoms. Many of these women were punished for their defiance of traditional gender roles by fighting alongside men as political activists and militants, or they challenged heteronormativity by living an alternative lifestyle, such as by identifying as homosexual.

In 1954, la Ley de Vagos y Maleantes was modified to specify homosexuals as dangers to the state. The modifications enforced that, "Los homosexuales sometidos a esta medida de seguridad deberán ser internados en instituciones especiales, y en todo caso, con absoluta separación de los demás" (Ley de Vagos y Maleantes 1954). With this addition, lesbian women can be seen as being repressed by more than one factor of their being. Many lesbian women were harshly punished for their lifestyles using techniques such as forced isolation, psychiatric therapy, and even as harsh as electroshock therapy (Platero Méndez 19).

In addition to these treatments, many women, heterosexual and homosexual, were abused or killed for actions that the government believed threatened the state. Women's voices and experienced were completely silenced. The Franco dictatorship took away women's voices and rendered them silent for years. Finally, their rebellious voices are starting to find their way into the modern reinterpretations of the Franco dictatorship through many literary works. Writer José Castillo emphasizes in his article, "La memoria histórica de algunas mujeres antifranquistas," of the importance of texts written by women who expressed their own unique voices that until this point had never been exposed before:

La mayoría de las mujeres modernas, surgidas en los años veinte en España y que constituyeron la avanzadilla en la inserción en la vida social y cultural, se vieron, como consecuencia de la guerra civil, abocadas al exilio, en el que la presencia de la escritura femenina tanto en diferentes órdenes como en lo autobiográfico es muy significativa. Nunca antes, las mujeres plasmaron sus vivencias en tan abundantes textos, donde el recuerdo de lo vivido y perdido- especialmente la guerra civil de 1936, con sus terribles consecuencias con el franquismo imperante- aflorará con recio vigor testimonial (177).

These female-produced texts that he mentions include autobiographies, testimonials, and works of fiction. This thesis will focus on the works of historical fiction that were produced by some of these women in the twenty-first century and how female writing empowered these women, even long after their deaths. These accounts of female experiences during this time are all based on

actual historical events that occurred. In addition, these novels are all written by contemporary women who did not experience the traumatic events of the past directly. These writers did not live through the events but they adapted their stories through real-life accounts and testimonials of the women during the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. This phenomenon where the writer writes about events told to them by someone who did experience the events is called postmemory and is used prominently in each of the novels discussed in this thesis to convey the historic memory with this era and give a voice to these women. Postmemory allows for experiences in the past to be revisited by presenting these ideas to a new audience which is exactly what these three novels accomplish because they reopen the discourse of the oppression Spanish women faced during this time. Postmemory in historical fiction, as is the case in these novels, allows for new audiences to learn and experience about these real-life women in a more engaging way. Furthermore, this idea of postmemory is employed in these novels to finally give a voice to the countless women whose voice had been previously silenced.

## **I.2 Postmemory and Defying Women's Roles**

The theme of postmemory or '*memoria histórica*' in the Spanish context, is prevalent throughout each of the novels.<sup>2</sup> Postmemory can be defined as a type of memory that is told by a generation that did not experience the events firsthand. Postmemory scholar Marianne Hirsch defines postmemory as, "the relationship of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma to the experiences of their parents, experiences that they 'remember' only as the narratives and images with which they grew up, but that are so powerful, so monumental, as to constitute memories in their own right" (9). She investigates the memory of the children whose parents

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<sup>2</sup> Passed in 2007, *La Ley de Memoria Histórica* sought to recover the memory of those who were killed during the war and the dictatorship and granted amnesty to those who committed war crimes (Rehmann).

experienced the trauma of the Holocaust. Hirsch continues that postmemory is the "familial inheritance and transmission of cultural trauma" (9). This transmission of cultural trauma allows for a distance between the person who experienced the events and the person who is retelling the story. In the case of these novels presented in this thesis, the novelists are not family members of the women who lived during this period in Spanish history. However, their collective memory as Spanish women continues this transmission of the cultural trauma that was the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. Each of these novels includes this communication of collective memory by giving a voice to real-life women whose voices had been silenced.

In addition to the postmemory seen in each novel, the women who lived during this period in Spanish history also defy the traditional roles of women. The liberated woman who fights alongside men for the return of her freedoms can first be seen in Dulce Chacón's novel *La voz dormida*. At the center of the novel, written in 2002, is a group of women that is incarcerated for various political reasons in the prison of las Ventas in Madrid. The accounts of the women's experiences in the prison are from real-life interviews, written accounts, and testimonials produced by the women themselves and their families. Chacón weaves the personal stories of the lives of these women and that of their families outside the prison with the history of Spain during this era. In the novel, the women are thrust out of their assumed domestic roles and venture out into the political turmoil of Post-Civil War Spain, only to experience subsequent oppression, incarceration, and for some, death. The rebellious nature of the women does not dissipate once they are incarcerated; it continues throughout the novel with acts of defiance against the wardens, and once some of them get out of the prison-against the state that still remains a dictatorship. In addition, the women also participated in exchanging secret messages with their families that were involved in revolutionary activities that defied "el gobierno". They not only

participated in these revolutionary activities, but they also had to maintain their family lives outside of the prison. One of the central characters in the novel, Hortensia, manages to maintain her family as well as lead a political life as a female soldier. She is a wife and a mother and also a maternal figure to the other young women in the prison. Her ability to sustain her family without sacrificing her political voice gives an example of a woman who can "have it all." This modern debate of whether women can truly have it all can be displayed in the life of Hortensia, a woman who lived in a time when the idea had yet to come into fruition. Each of the women in the novel defies the normative roles that women in the era were prescribed in different ways. Some women rebel through being a soldier, while all of them defy the guards in the prison, and refuse to let their voices go unheard. They do not defer to any one person, especially not the stifling government that wishes to confine them. These simple acts of defiance make the women notable players in the historic memory of a female experience in Spain during that time. Thanks to Chacón, their story has been revived to impact a new generation of women who have grown up in a society where women's liberation was assumed. This female driven text has shown the bravery and courage the women displayed during their heavily repressed and censored society. These women will go down in history for never ceasing in their fight to reclaim the liberties they once held.

The women in *La voz dormida* defy the traditional norms of a woman by never stopping to fight for their freedoms, but they are all described as heterosexual women whose family plays a crucial role in their lives. The same cannot be said for the character of La Pastora in Alicia Giménez Bartlett's novel, *Donde nadie te encuentre*. The novel is centered around two men, a Spanish journalist and a French psychiatrist, who are looking for a rogue intersexual woman who is preceded by her reputation as being a ruthless killer in a group called the Maquis, a group of

revolutionaries who banded together to fight La Guardia Civil, or Franco's forces. La Pastora challenges the norms of society for a multitude of reasons. At first, all that is known is that La Pastora becomes the leader and last living member of the Maquis. However, as we slowly learn more about the character, the layers of her complex life are revealed and we see that she is an intersexual individual with a notorious reputation who has been struggling her entire life to establish her own identity. Because she was born with a mixture of male and female reproductive organs, she spent her life fighting against the prescribed gender role imposed upon her by family and friends. As a child, she was made to embody the characteristics of a female although she did not identify as one. Next, La Pastora did not seem to have any interest in either sex throughout her life, which strongly conflicted with the heteronormative society present at this time. Finally, La Pastora is an enigma because she has a notorious reputation of a ruthless, violent soldier, characteristics usually only given to a male. La Pastora defies the traditional norms of the era in multiple ways through the idea of intersectionality, and truly challenges the roles that were imposed on women at this time.

La Pastora was a real-life individual who existed during the time. Her unique experience was first chronicled by writer José Calvo in his novel, *La Pastora: del monte al mito*, which exposed her life and debunked many of the misconceived notions about her. Inspired by this novel and La Pastora's polarizing reputation, Bartlett wrote her novel while infusing it with her own creative justices. The chapters in the novel that are narrated by La Pastora come from her real biography, which showcases the reality of her situation. Bartlett's ability to adapt an old story in a modern world with more acceptance and knowledge creates a new kind of postmemory not seen in *La voz dormida*. While La Pastora does indeed defy the traditional female roles of her society, her life also coincides with modern ideas of sex, gender, and sexuality. Bartlett uses her

novel and La Pastora's biographical narrations to embrace the power of female writing and the female voice, despite being severely marginalized.

The concept of a woman's alternative sexual identity is further elaborated in the novel *Su cuerpo era su gozo* by Beatriz Gimeno. The novel revolves around a lesbian couple living in Spain during Franco's dictatorship that was punished by the state for their relationship. Their relationship spanned many periods of great civic unrest, from shortly after the Spanish Civil War, to the years after Franco died. They were persecuted throughout the entirety of their relationship. The women, Ali and Luz, struggle with their female and sexual identities against the extremely heteronormative state that condemned homosexual relationships. Ali and Luz were both educated, independent women whose lives together created a friction that the state sought to eliminate. The state, the church, and her family forced Ali to undergo harsh psychiatric therapy and electro-shock treatments in attempts to cure her of her affliction. Due to the modification of la Ley de Vagos y Maleantes in 1954, homosexual individuals were considered to be dangerous and suffering from a "condition" that can be cured by the government through several methods of treatment. Ali's treatments permanently disturb her psyche and she never recovers. She is so unhappy that she wishes to end her life. After many years of suffering, Luz helps aid her in the process of ending her life. Luz is then accused of murder. Many years later, Luz is acquitted after the court reads Ali's journals in which she chronicled her wish to die.

Gimeno's novel is based on the real-life story of Isabella M. Perellá and her partner Carmen. The story appeared in the news during 2001 and inspired several adaptations including Gimeno's novel and a film. Gimeno admits in the preface that she does not know the women personally but only adapted it based on the news article she wrote. Gimeno infuses her own experiences as a lesbian but contrasts her modern lesbian experience to the repressed lesbian

experience the two women in the story had to endure. Her use of postmemory is clear; she is able to write an adaptation with a fresh perspective, revealing more about the inner turmoil of the two women. Throughout the novel, the women struggle with their individual and sexual identities and truly challenge the authoritarian government by actions made in their personal lives. In this novel, female writing plays a crucial part, not only in the acquittal of Luz's life based on Ali's writing, but also on the therapy their writing gave them. They wrote to feel humane in a world that was dehumanizing them, and they wrote about their female experiences and bodies. Once again the female text is emphasized to not only express their unique experience, but to liberate them from their past to a future where they will never be forgotten.

### **I.3 Theoretical Approach**

#### **I.3.a Women's Writing**

All of the female characters I will discuss are marginalized in their society because they do not adhere to the norms of the patriarchal Spanish society during the Spanish Civil War and Franco dictatorship. They refused to comply with the idea of the traditional woman, or the "ángel del hogar". Instead they chose to lead their lives on their own terms, which unfortunately led to severe punishment and death. Their voices continue to be heard by current generations thanks to writers such as Chacón, Bartlett, and Gimeno. These female novelists are able to write and adapt female stories about the many female perspectives that had been silenced. Renowned feminist theorist, essayist, and philosopher, Hélène Cixous explains in her work, "The Laugh of the Medusa," that "woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history-by her own movement" (875). In addition to the female writers that authored these novels, they are adapted by female produced texts and accounts. Cixous continues, "I write this as a woman, toward women. When I say 'woman,' I'm speaking of woman in her inevitable struggle against

conventional man; and of a universal woman subject who must bring women to their sense and to their meaning in history" (875). In essence, the writers of these novels as well as the female perspective of the women living during the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship can all be united in her struggle against "conventional man" (Cixous 876). Cixous believes a way to achieve this is through women's writing. The ideas from "The Laugh of the Medusa" figure prominently in this thesis because the different levels of female texts and empowerment propel all of the women involved into a place in history so as not to repeat the past. As Cixous writes, "The future must no longer be determined by the past" (875) By revealing these female-driven texts, they are making their voices heard so that more atrocious acts are not committed against women and the patriarchal discourse can be eliminated.

### **I.3.b The Female Body**

Another theoretical text that figures prominently in this thesis is *Discipline and Punish* by theorist and philosopher Michel Foucault. In Foucault's work, he focuses on how the body is manipulated by institutions through means such as punishment and torture to obtain control over its subjects. He expresses this idea of biopolitics by using examples of punishment and torture as a way to control the human body. Foucault believes that the body is an individual's greatest form of capital, which explains why the state attempts to control and own it. Foucault writes, "But the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (25). I employ Foucault's theory of the human body as a central focus in this thesis because women's bodies were clearly used as tools to manipulate females and restrict their freedoms. Cixous furthers this idea when she states that, "Women are body" (886). The women write through their bodies in order to reclaim their bodies from the state that controls it. In

addition to these texts, I include theoretical texts from modern feminist and queer theorists such as Adrienne Rich, Judith Butler, Luce Irigaray, and Monique Wittig. I also include Spanish scholars whose work centers on lesbian theory such as Pura Sánchez, Raquel Plateros Méndez, Dolores Juliano, and Beatriz Preciado. Simultaneously with these feminist and lesbian theories, I include scholars whose work focuses on memory and postmemory such as José María Izquierdo, Kyra Kietrys, Marianne Hirsch, Sarah Leggott, and José Romera Castillo. When reading this thesis, we must read it with these theoretic texts in mind in order to truly understand the repression that women faced and how to preserve their experiences by restoring their voice.

#### **I.4 Thesis Structure**

In this thesis I will use these interdisciplinary theoretical texts to create a wide spectrum in order to critically think of each unique female experience during this time. I will begin the discussion with the women imprisoned in *La voz dormida* by Dulce Chacón and how they defied their prescribed gender roles and continued fighting for their freedoms under the dehumanizing treatments in the prison. This chapter will analyze how each of these women challenged their roles in various ways by determining to fight as men's equals for their rights. In addition to examining their roles as females, I discuss postmemory and how this can be seen in Chacón's text by finally giving the women of las Ventas their voice after they risked their lives to be heard and respected by their society.

The second novel I analyze is *Donde nadie te encuentre* by Alicia Gimenez Bartlett. The discussion focuses not on multiple women, but instead on one particular intersexual individual named La Pastora. Once again, I will discuss how she defied the gender roles of her time and how women's writing is used to reclaim her independence. I will address postmemory based on how Bartlett was able to adapt this real-life story through a secondary source, most notably José

Calvo's novel that first exposed her existence and remarkable life. Through her use of postmemory, Bartlett is able to restore La Pastora's voice and experience to a contemporary audience who otherwise might never have learned of her.

The third and final novel I discuss is *Su cuerpo era su gozo* by Beatriz Gimeno. The novel analyzes a lesbian couple and how the negative stigma against homosexuals during this time greatly impacts their relationship. Like the other women discussed in this thesis, the two women in *Su cuerpo era su gozo* face inhumane treatments simply because they defy the roles of what the society deemed a traditional woman. I discuss how being lesbians in the society made their lives nearly unbearable as everyone tried to cure them of their affliction. Finally, I discuss how postmemory is seen in this adaptation of a real-life event. Gimeno adapted an entire novel based on a short newspaper article while infusing her own unique female experiences in the text. Through Gimeno's use of postmemory, she is exposing the harsh treatments homosexual individuals faced during this time and exactly how oppressed they were. By adapting the story of the real-life lesbian couple, Gimeno is using postmemory to give these women a voice and a venue to express their ideas that they were denied, even long after their deaths.

Finally in the conclusion, I summarize the points I explained in detail throughout the thesis regarding the repression of women and especially lesbians during the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. I reiterate my point that these women each defied the traditional norms their society imposed on them by refusing to stop fighting for their liberties. I then explain that they made these strides in their individual empowerment through writing. This emphasizes Cixous's point that women's writing is nothing but subversive, because these women were truly subversive and this rebelliousness can be witnessed in their unique writings revealed in this thesis. Finally, in relation to each of the novels I tie the idea of postmemory back in to show that

each of these writers were able to rediscover and give a voice to these women whose experiences and perspectives had been silenced and censored. In fact, it can be said that the women who lived during these moments in Spanish history were "desubalternized" because they finally reclaimed their voices.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The subalterns are marginalized people without a voice who suffer from the oppressive dominant class and hegemonic structure (Spivak 286).

## CHAPTER 1 WOMEN AND POSTMEMORY IN DULCE CHACÓN'S *LA VOZ DORMIDA*

### 1.1 Postmemory in *La voz dormida*

*La voz dormida* by Dulce Chacón is an account of a group of unsung heroes of the Spanish dictatorship. The heroes are imprisoned in las Ventas for crimes committed against the authoritative government. These women are imprisoned because they fought alongside men as soldiers with the Republican forces. Their presence in the resistance as rebels and as women put a much larger target on their backs since they were not only defying Franco's forces, but also the traditional roles imposed on Spanish Women at the time. Government actions such as la Sección Femenina put strict rules on how women should behave and live their life. La Sección Femenina outlined a woman's true purpose in life in their official government mandates such as the following excerpt from their document of 1958, "Ten preparada una comida deliciosa para cuando él regrese del trabajo...Ten preparada una bebida fría o caliente para él. No le pidas explicaciones acerca de sus acciones o cuestiones su juicio o integridad. Recuerda que es el amo de la casa" (Sección Femenina). The women imprisoned at las Ventas did not spend their time slaving over domestic duties; instead they were engaging in battle serving as equals to men. For this supposedly incendiary behavior they were imprisoned and subjected to many forms of torture and even death by firing squad. The novel is not only a work of historical fiction in that it is a fictional account based on actual events that took place at this time in history, but also a work that contains what appears to be government-issued documents, such as execution notices. Spanish literature scholar Kathryn Everly writes, "History, in the novel, is constructed from private letters and journals, traditionally considered female forms of expression, juxtaposed with the government's official documents" (77). Most of the chapters are composed of private letters

and information taken from the personal interviews that Chacón had with some characters that appeared in the novel. At the end, the epilogue shows that much of the information described is from Pepita and Jaime, both of whom are central characters in the novel. These testimonials from Pepita and Jaime, based on facts, have been slightly embellished for dramatic effect. However, the fact that the story is based on these actual accounts give a much deeper meaning to the genre of historical fiction because the readers feel even more engaged in what they feel to be a completely true story.

Chacón also employs this technique with a famous picture. The picture functions as the cover of the novel and features a female militia member holding a smiling baby. (See Fig. 1) Although it is a picture not created for the novel, it represents the struggle of women in war during the era because it showed the difficulty of leaving behind their families to fight for the Republic. Chacón uses the photo alongside the story of Hortensia, one of the women in the prison who spent her time in the jail pregnant and who was subsequently sentenced to death after the birth of her child. She even describes a picture identical to that of Fig. 1 by saying the photo is Hortensia, "Tensi, con su uniforme de miliciana, con su fusil en bandolera y la estrella roja de cinco puntas cosida en el costado, sonr e para  el, con un ni o que no es suyo en los brazos" (Chac on 81). Every small detail of the photograph is explained in the novel as being Hortensia, right down to the earrings she is wearing. The earrings are significant not only because they do not belong with the uniform of a militia member, but because they also tie into her story in the novel. The earrings are described as a gift from her husband that she would never take off. She later passes these earrings on to her daughter along with her notebook of writings. The earrings also demonstrate the subject of femininity. Why is a woman's femininity important? How do

these women embrace or repress their femininity? These questions will be answered later in this chapter.



**Fig. 1:** *Miliciana de la columna Uribarri con un niño en brazos.* Richard Aguado (Foro por la memoria en La Rioja) [02.11.2005]

These minute details in the picture create a very personal story that is also important in the political world, expressing the feminist idea that the personal is the political. By using this photo, readers feel as if the woman in the picture is in fact, Hortensia. With this technique, the lines between fact and fiction are further blurred. These aspects in the novel of personal letters, testimonies, and possible photographs create the personal aspect of the "personal is the political" theory present in feminism because they illustrate the intimate lives of each woman portrayed in the novel (Shaw and Lee). Chacón combines these two aspects in the lives of the women to show their multidimensionality. Hortensia's roles as a wife and mother represent the personal, and her life as a miliciana represents the political. The writing in the novel also represents this

duality with the personal narratives such as letters and diaries representing the female and personal expression of memory, and the historical documents representing the more political and male expression of memory. It is this mixture of the expression of memory that makes the novel stand out even more in its treatment of memory.

With the description of the personal and subsequently the female expression in the novel, it is necessary to include the political or male aspect of expression. The use of the real photograph of the miliciana with her child is not the only use of actual historical documents. Chacón also includes historical documents that are clearly separate from the personal narratives. These documents are interspersed in the novel written in unemotional, harsh, Courier font to illustrate what occurred outside of the walls of las Ventas. It gives an additional account of an event that was previously described in a more intimate expression (Colmeiro 195). One example of this is the treatment of Hortensia's death sentence. In the omniscient narrator's account, her death is full of heartbreak and described in a very dramatic way. "Hortensia miró de frente al piquete, como todos. -¡Viva la República! Y dicen, y es cierto, que una mujer se acercó a los caídos y se arrodilló junto a Hortensia" (Chacón 244). The historical document is completely unemotional in its declaration of her death sentence. It reads like an official government document:

RESULTANDO.-Probando y así lo declara el Consejo, que la procesada, Hortensia Rodríguez García, de malos antecedentes morales y perteneciente a las J.S.U., ingresa voluntaria en el Ejército rojo prestando servicio en las Milicias del Pueblo de Córdoba...de ADHESIÓN A LA REBELIÓN, con los agravantes de trascendencia y peligrosidad, a la pena de MUERTE. (Chacón 244-245)

These different descriptions are on consecutive pages so that the difference between the two types of expression of memory is clear. The magnitude of the injustice is further evident with the inclusion of the historical document following immediately after the emotional description of her

death. The narrator's account of her death is clearly intended to be the more female expression because it does deal with emotions and intimate depictions of how the event affected those around her, whereas the death certificate is a true representation of a callous, machista treatment of a death of a subversive woman who was not of enough importance to include any more information than is what is absolutely required: date, convictions, and reasons for death. In her use of personal narratives and historical documents to paint a picture of the many women who fought for and died to express their voice, Chacón is also mixing two very different types of expression that are stereotypically based on prescribed gender roles. In this way, her novel creates a new subgenre of postmemory that includes many more layers than an account based on actual events in history.

The different kinds of texts used in the novel play an important part in defining its identity. Chacón uses real life testimonials and accounts to adapt a modern revision. She uses postmemory because she was born in 1954 and did not experience any of the same injustices that her characters suffered. In order to write her novel, she had to rely on the memories of those who were directly involved in the events and relate them accordingly. This phenomenon known as postmemory has been seen more recently with other newer works of historical fiction (Leggott 28). Some scholars believe that in order to fully comprehend the trauma suffered during certain historic eras, a writer must have a level of detachment. Postmemory scholar Marianne Hirsch agrees that a distance from the past is important for the writer to articulate the magnitude of how it affected his or her life. She writes, "Perhaps it is *only* in subsequent generations that trauma can be witnessed and worked through, by those who were not there to live it but who received its effects, belatedly, through the narratives, actions and symptoms of the previous generation" [emphasis author's] (Hirsch 2001). Hirsch is referring to her studies on the Holocaust, but the

same can be said in relation to the Franco dictatorship. Many of the people who experienced the atrocities directly have the desire not to revisit the past and instead to move forward in their lives. Therefore as memory and postmemory scholar Sarah Leggott affirms, "It is the children or, in many cases, the grandchildren of the victims or survivors of the Civil War, who are less encumbered by the past than are their parents, who are now interested in the silenced stories of violence and repression" (28). In *La voz dormida*, Chacón does not have direct experience from these situations, nor does she have indirect experience from her parents or relatives. Chacón is solely basing her novel on the testimonials of others who were directly involved. The novelist takes it a step further by writing from the female perspective because she seeks to help define the female identity and how these women represented their place in the Spanish society at the time. Chacón has enough of a detachment to be able to write objectively about the experiences. She is desperate to unearth the silenced stories and uses these sources that directly experienced the trauma to create this connection between history, memory and fiction. The same can be said for the inclusion of the photo that is seen on the title page. Although she did not experience the events firsthand, with these techniques she creates a work of postmemory that still reads like a very personal account of the dictatorship. Using postmemory in this way, Chacón is able to finally give a voice to these women who were silenced for years. These women continued fighting for their voices to be heard and years after their deaths, a modern audience has the opportunity to learn about their extraordinary strength and courage.

## **1.2. Defying the Woman's Role**

"I shall speak about women's writing: about *what it will do*. Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies- for the same reasons by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text--as into the world and into history--by her own movement."

-Hélène Cixous "The Laugh of the Medusa"

Chacón not only creates a work of postmemory, but she creates a feminist work about the silenced female perspective. A female writer writing about the female experience is incredibly significant because she is helping to persuade other women, who have previously been too afraid, to express their voice in their own writings. In the aforementioned quote, Cixous is arguing that not enough women are writing because they are worried that their voices have been censored. She believes that only women can truly bring more women to the art of writing because reading about the unique female experience of other women will influence them to write their own. It is especially important for women writers to write about their own experiences in times like the dictatorship in Spain because it will propel other women to do the same and create a much more broad spectrum of the many unique female experiences. The content in her novel helps readers to answer certain questions asked by many who approach these historical events: How was the female experience? What roles did women have? What was the female identity? She answers these questions with the experiences of the women prisoners at las Ventas and how they are significant for their time.

Because the central characters of the novels are women dealing with their lives and choices under traumatic conditions, it is easy to study it alongside feminist theory because feminist theory analyzes women's roles in their society while attempting to achieve equality. The women's complex roles in the novel are described, as well as their unfaltering attempts at freedom and equality. Therefore it is necessary to discuss how these feminist ideas are seen. The novel describes how a group of very different women with very different personalities come together under dehumanizing conditions. The women struggle to fight the conservative restraints held against them as well as determine their own unique identity and where they fit in society.

They attempt to continue their lives as wives, mothers, sisters, and friends while in the prison and we see this importance in relationships at the beginning of the novel with the visits of the families. The novel is essentially based around the family visits with descriptions of the terrible conditions mixed in between visits. The women at first are not described as individuals but instead based upon the family that comes to visit them:

Y Hortensia lo compartirá con su <<familia>>, como llama en sus cartas a las presas que están con ella; las que se reparten el hambre y la comida. Tomasa, la extremeña que nunca tiene visitas, Reme, la mujer que tiene tres hijas y un niño tontito, y Elvira, la chiquilla pelirroja a la que visita su abuelo (Chacón 134).

Hortensia herself has visitors and family: a husband, her sister and the child she is carrying. The importance on these familial relationships shows that these women play a vital role in the family unit. Each of them belongs to what would be considered a traditional family unit of immediate or extended family members. In their family units, several of these women can be characterized as having traditional female roles, being a wife and a mother. These roles can limit women because it means that they cannot develop their lives to be anything more than a wife and a mother. I argue that these initial descriptions based on traditional gender roles limit the character development of these women.

However, I believe that Chacón begins the novels with these descriptions, albeit limiting, only to create a contrast of just how unique and complex they were once the readers learn more about them. Slowly we begin to learn more about their characters based on the events in the prison such as the rebellions, and how resistant they were to letting voice be stifled. They rebel against the guards by loudly singing when they are ordered to be silent, and by committing sacrilegious acts such as biting off a piece of a religious statue. It is clear that they are desperate

not to let the guards gain complete control over them. Their defiance is severely punished by the guards because not only are they supposed to be docile prisoners, but they are also supposed to be docile women who do not fight back. José F. Colmeiro affirms that the theme of rebellion in the novel shows "the concrete reality of survival, and the daily acts of resistance" (196).

Resistance plays a central role in the lives of all the characters in the story. Each woman resists in her own way. Tomasa, the woman that is perhaps the most rebellious of them all and who bites off a piece of the statue is punished intensely with isolation. While in isolation, she is determined to defy the traditional role of the submissive role by fighting back, yet she struggles with her femininity and her emotions because she equates being feminine and vulnerable as being weak. Chacón writes, "Llorar es perder el control. Y a Tomasa no le gusta perderlo. Pero ahora, en la soledad de la celda de aislamiento donde Mercedes la ha castigado, se le escapa una lagrimilla pensando en Reme" (14). Tomasa is also the one woman who is said to have no visitors so perhaps she has the most to lose. Therefore, she truly risks everything in order to appear dominant and in control. She assumes these typically masculine traits in order to gain the upper hand over the guards. She is not only rebelling against the guards but also against the typical ideas of femininity, such as crying and becoming vulnerable. She refuses to cry because she believes it causes her to lose control, yet ultimately she cannot control her emotions. This idea of exhibiting character traits that are usually associated with men is a common theme in modern feminism as the goals shifted to equality in all avenues, even equality in mannerisms. Some women feel the need to act masculine, while some have always felt more masculine than feminine. Feminist writer Judith Halberstam devotes an entire book to this topic of feminine masculinity. Halberstam writes that:

Masculinity...conjures up notions of power and legitimacy and privilege; it often symbolically refers to the power of state and to uneven distributions of

wealth...and the promise of social privilege. 'Dominant masculinity' appears to be a naturalized relation between maleness and power (2).

The recurring word in the above citation is 'power.' Therefore it is clear that in order to obtain power, one must be a man, or be masculine. There is this idea present among some women who feel that in order to appear strong and obtain power, a woman must display masculine traits matching those of her male competitors. Tomasa resists not only against the government and the prison guards, but also against her femininity and her own voice. Her defiance to accept her vulnerability lead her to suffer a nervous breakdown due to her repressed memories and emotions after she learns that Hortensia has been killed while Tomasa was in solitary confinement. It is only after this breakdown when she realizes she must not deny her feelings nor repress her voice. She previously had refused to admit that her story could possibly end in prison, "Se niega a coser uniformes para el enemigo. Tomasa sostiene que la guerra no ha terminado...Ella no va a dar treinta años de su vida para la Historia" (Chacón 32). Yet after the death of Hortensia she comes to embrace and accept her vulnerability and her life previous to incarceration:

Llora. Y cuenta a gritos su historia, para no morir. Camina y cuenta: - Yo tenía cuatro hijos, y una nieta...y que la niña se les murió de hambre...Es hora de que Tomasa cuente su historia. Como un vómito saldrán las palabras que ha callado hasta este momento...Tiempo silenciado y sórdido que escapa de sus labios desgarrando el aire, y desgarrándola por dentro (Chacón 236-237).

This is the first time the readers learn of her children and her life prior to her time spent at las Ventas. The majority of her character description was the role of the overtly rebellious girl. However, we learn in her process of self-revelation that she is a complex women who rebels, fights for her rights, yet also can show herself as vulnerable and express her feelings without losing her control. She is finally free when she resists her traditional view of being feminine and creates her own definition of feminine. By breaking down her preconceived notions of

femininity, she redefines it and begins to become less inhibited and more emancipated, although she may not be physically free since she is still in prison.

While Tomasa struggles through the novel with being feminine, some of the other women tend to embrace their femininity and motherly instinct while still rebelling. One example of this is with Hortensia, who is at the center of the novel because she is the woman who Chacón writes is sentenced to death and is often referred to as, "La mujer que iba a morir" (11). Hortensia contrasts with Tomasa because she seems to embrace her femininity and becomes the maternal figure to many of the women. She is first described as a very gentle and perhaps compliant woman, "Tenía los ojos oscuros y no hablaba nunca en voz alta...Y había aprendido a no hacerse preguntas, a aceptar que la derrota se cuele en lo hondo, en lo más hondo, sin pedir permiso y sin dar explicaciones" (Chacón 11). However like the other women, we soon learn more about Hortensia and how she has a very headstrong character. Chacón writes that Hortensia was a member of the militia and is still involved with the group while incarcerated. Since the picture on the front of the novel is supposed to be Hortensia, we can see that she was an active member of a rebel group who fought against the dictatorship. In the picture she is holding a baby with a gun draped over her shoulder while wearing fancy earrings. With this depiction of her we see two different views of a woman: the first being the traditionally feminine role of being beautiful, soft, and domestic while wearing jewelry and carrying a child. The opposite role is that of a strong warrior who is fighting alongside men for her individual rights. These opposing views of Hortensia make her into one of the most complex characters in the novel. Her inner strength can be seen throughout the novel as she waits in the prison to die, yet still manages to be the anchor for many in the story. She appears in the other women's lives as the maternal figure. This is first seen in an early chapter when two of the girls think of their mother when they think of Hortensia,

"Reme y Tomasa se miran, y miran a Hortensia. Reme recuerda a su madre" (Chacón 22). This early reference of the strong motherly figure sets the tone for her role in the other women's lives.

What makes the character of Hortensia even stronger is the knowledge that she will be sentenced to death. The death sentence does not stop her from fighting to take back her rights. While she awaits her sentence, she exchanges messages with her sister Pepita about the events going on outside of the prison, especially regarding the rebel group to which she belonged. Pepita, her sister is a timid, docile woman who is transformed into an important means of communication between Hortensia and her revolutionary group. Pepita is an unlikely candidate for the involvement as the intermediary between the revolutionaries and at first she doubts her own strength while revealing the true inner strength of her sister Hortensia. Near the beginning of Pepita's role as serving as an intermediary for her sister, her inner dialogue reveals an insecurity of her own strength compared to that of Hortensia, "Tiembla. Ha de tener cuidado. Porque ella no es valiente, como lo es su hermana, que no dudó en incorporarse a las milicias. Porque Hortensia fue miliciana. Y guerrillera también, se fue a la guerrilla poco después de la muerte de su padre, aun estando embarazada de cinco meses" (Chacón 27). This inner dialogue reveals an incredible amount about Hortensia's character. First it solidifies the immense strength that she embodies: joining the militia and fighting in violent battles while risking her life and that of her child's for her beliefs. Yet despite all of the awful treatments she is exposed to after being imprisoned, she remains a calm and wise influence to all with whom she associates.

Hortensia challenges the limitations set on women during this time. Women were only allowed to be one-dimensional stereotypes that did not rebel nor threaten the status quo. They were not supposed to live their lives outside of the norms of the society. A woman had to be compliant and selfless, but most of all she had to be feminine. Hortensia's character is so

important in this novel because she represents the struggle women have had to face throughout history. Her multi-faceted life makes her the perfect definition of a woman who tried to "have it all." This is still an important topic in modern feminism because women are severely limited in their options to have a career and have a family. Many feminists argue that women can have it all, yet there are also many feminist thinkers who believe that women can't because they are unable to find a healthy medium in the family and workplace balance. Ann-Marie Slaughter, a former policy analyst under then U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, writes an entire article about whether women can have it all from her own personal experiences working with the government in Washington, D.C. If women try to climb the ladder of success and have equal the amount of workplace power as men, many feel as if they must sacrifice having children and a family. While this idea is a modern idea stemming from the current gender hierarchy experienced in the United States, this issue was still prevalent in Spain at this time. In the novel, Hortensia has both. She has a family, albeit separated; yet her primary focus is in her involvement with the resistance. Cixous emphasizes the importance of women like Hortensia because they challenge what has been historically accepted by defying the norms. Cixous writes of the importance of women expressing their personal histories and never ceasing to fight for their individual liberation:

Woman un-thinks the unifying, regulating history that homogenizes and channels forces, herding contradictions into a single battlefield. In woman, personal history blends together with the history of all women, as well as national and world history. As a militant, she is an integral part of all liberations (882).

Hortensia is not only an example of a woman who had it all in her era, but she is an important representation of a feminist woman even today. Her individual history under Franco's dictatorship may not be directly similar to the lives of many women today, but her incongruity to fit into the same mold represents women on a larger scale and shows them they are not limited to

a certain role in their lives. Her struggle is our struggle and her history becomes our history. This is another example when we can see with her that the personal is the political. Although she is later sentenced to death, her influence on the other women in the prisons and especially through her sister and daughter will live on forever.

### **1.3 The Importance and Value of Femininity**

The obsession with femininity is a recurring theme because it refers to that "unrepresentable" thing along with death in that it is something for men to be afraid of because it threatens their status in society (Cixous). The notion of femininity is defined differently in the novel. Each of the women try to define their femininity in several ways, the style of dress, their long hair, their roles as wives and mothers to name a few ways. Femininity is manipulated, stripped away, expressed, a thing to be feared, embraced, and rediscovered all by these women. The guards of the prison realize that the women are fighting against inner struggles to retain the roles they held prior to being incarcerated. One of the many dehumanizing ways the guards attempt to control the women is to control their bodies, especially their femininity. As Michel Foucault mentions in his work, *Discipline and Punish*, the body becomes a very crucial part in exhibiting power and control over a subject, "if one intervenes upon it [the body] to imprison it, or to make it work, it is in order to deprive the individual of a liberty that is regarded both as a right and as property" (11). One of these ways to control their body is by removing any traces of the women's femininity, in which the guards believe lies their power. The guards rob them of this power by cutting off their hair. One woman remarks that she has been robbed after they cut off her hair, "-Me lo han robado, Y dice que se lo han robado porque muchas presas venden su cabello a las monjas, para comprar en el economato de la prisión. Y las monjas lo venden a su vez a los traperos, para hacer caridad" (Chacón 165). Their hair is the last part of their bodies

that they could call their own. It was their last shred of humanity and femininity only to be taken away by the people controlling them in order to sell to other people. They truly have been robbed; robbed of their femininity. In the same way the conservative government controls a woman's life by putting limitations on her feminine expression, such as by requiring her to remain chaste and pure, the guards of the prison controls their femininity and bodies on smaller scale. As Cixous writes, "We've been turned away from our bodies, shamefully taught to ignore them, to strike them with that stupid sexual modesty" (885). Chacón makes it clear in the novel that femininity and the female body is a weapon. Challenging its one-dimensional perspective disturbs the status quo.

In sharp contrast to Hortensia and her representation of a fearless, modern, and liberated woman, is her sister Pepita. As previously quoted, Pepita realizes the differences in courage between she and her sister. She believes that Hortensia is stronger than her in almost every way. Pepita is much more timid and hesitant to rebel; she is panic stricken when she is given her first task to relay messages for the resistance group in which Hortensia and her husband are involved. The narrative implies that Pepita began relaying messages almost against her own will. She later grows to appreciate the resistance and fight for her own freedoms but she begins the process with much hesitation. It is with her accounts around which the novel is centered. Therefore, she plays an integral secondary role in the development of this work. Since she is not in prison, her character represents the families that are trying to survive in the dangerous society. However, the differences between Pepita and Hortensia are not only in their amount of strength but also in the ways they represent their complex femininity. While they both take part in the involvements of the resistance, Pepita's experience is much different in that many of her engagements with the group center around her future husband Paulino or of his pseudonym after returning, Jaime. The

two meet while she is relaying messages to Hortensia's husband. Paulino is an active, and central, member in the resistance group that spends the majority of the novel fighting with this group. He begins to pursue Pepita once their paths cross and they soon enter into a relationship. Paulino is the complete opposite of Pepita because although he is young, he is a hardened fighter who stops at nothing to express his beliefs. She allows that her idea of femininity is defined by patriarchal ideas.

21st century feminist and sociology writer Dawn Currie focuses her research on the way that women, especially teenage girls, relate to images exposed to them by the media. She studies questions of what it means, "to be a woman." She researches how these ideas are being expressed through magazines and finds that many of these ideas of femininity are defined not by the women who inhabit femininity but instead by men. Currie writes, "these readers valorize not only the patriarchal meanings of womanhood but also naturalize associations between femininity and the commodities through which this femininity is expressed as the everyday doing of gender" (2). The ideas expressed in the magazines tell women what they should do, how they should act, and most importantly how they should look. With her research, we can see that many of the ideas of what it means to be a woman are instilled in us by patriarchal ideas. When comparing her research to the situation of women during this time, we can see great similarities between her findings and the views of la Sección Femenina. Although a female was at the forefront of la Sección Femenina, its ideas were greatly influenced by the patriarchal discourse present at the time. Pepita's ideas of feminism are not in alignment with Hortensia's ideas. While Hortensia redefines her femininity as a mixture of roles as wife and mother along with her insatiable desire to fight for her rights as a woman. Pepita on the contrary, is associated with beauty, purity, and innocence. One recurring theme during the novel is of her appearance.

According to Pepita, her femininity has to do with being beautiful, dainty, and not involving herself in political matters. Her idea of femininity is not her own idea; it is the patriarchal idea of femininity. Many times, the descriptions of her are centered on her appearance. She is often referred to as "ojos azulísimos" because her eyes are a brilliant blue and she is very involved in the making and wearing of feminine dresses. She makes Hortensia a dress and longs for the days when she wasn't wearing soldier's uniforms, "al principio de aquel verano, cuando Hortensia aún no se había vestido de miliciana" (Chacón 109). The readers soon learn that being feminine and beautiful are both important aspects in her life. Later when she thinks about her first task of relaying information between her sister and the group she reflects on her dress, "Ella se pondrá su mejor vestido, el mismo que usó para ir a la calle Ave María la primera vez que deseó ser hermosa...Porque de nuevo desea ser hermosa "(Chacón 354). Although she helps her sister with the resistance group, she seems not to approve of many of the politically inspired choices Hortensia has chosen to make. She associates Hortensia's rebellious actions with things that are ill befitting to a woman. Later in the novel she even says that she does not like politics and prefers to live in peace because she, "no le gustan las cosas que no entiende y asiste a las reuniones [between the other women in the prisons once they are released] pero no habla de política" (Chacón 375). She likely associates the resistance to all things negative because it led to her sister's death and Paulino's exile. Her anger toward the resistance reaches its peak when Hortensia's daughter Tensi expresses interest in joining the resistance. Pepita quickly gets angry and accuses others of planting this idea in the young girl's head. Yet, she knows that the influence of Hortensia to always fight for her rights lays heavy on Tensi's upbringing, "Pepita sabe que no podrá convencer a Tensi. Sabe que no podrá ir en contra de las palabras que escribió su madre. Lucha, hija mía, lucha siempre, como lucha tu madre, como lucha tu padre, que es

nuestro deber, aunque nos cueste la vida," (Chacón 398). As much as Pepita may try, Hortensia's restless soul lives in her daughter and in Hortensia's writing and Pepita must accept the path Tensi chooses to take.

Pepita places much stock in her appearance but even more in her love, Paulino. The novel changes from gritty accounts by the women of the conditions in the prisons, or their continued fight outside of the prison, to a saccharine love story between Paulino and Pepita. This love story helps to create a balance between the different lives of the women but it harshly compares Pepita's decisions against the other women. While the other women are fighting for their individual rights, many of Pepita's decisions are based on Paulino. In fact, after Hortensia dies, Pepita's life centers completely around Paulino. She spends her days waiting anxiously for a love letter from him while keeping up with the domestic tasks at home. It is in her representation that we can see the sharp divisions of the private and public spheres. She accepts that Paulino is deeply involved in fighting with his group, and she also accepts her role of kin keeping by tending to the house and caring for Tensi. Although Pepita does participate in several rebellious acts, she is present in the novel as a contrast to the other women who center their own life on their ideals and beliefs. For Pepita, she is content with her traditional roles and she only wants to live a calm life as far enough outside of the trauma of the dictatorship as possible. While her idea of femininity as defined by the patriarchal system differs from her sister's, the importance of femininity and "what it means to be a woman" is a central theme in the novel.

Another example of defying the feminine roles is the account of Elvira who participated in rebellions where they physically fought alongside men and felt that they had to constantly prove their worth. The imprisonment of the women connects many of their family and friends together and through that experience, they are all connected in their efforts with the resistance.

When Elvira gets released from the prison, she begins fighting with the same resistance group that has been so vital in the plot. Elvira, it turns out, is the sister of Paulino, also known as La Chaqueta Negra, and she participates in the guerilla activities of the group, making them very similar to the activities of the Spanish Maquis<sup>4</sup>. While living in the mountains, Elvira is constantly fighting to prove her weight among the other men. Because she is partaking in a traditionally masculine setting of warfare and violence, the others believe that as a woman she is not capable of being of any use. Mateo especially believes that she should not be living with them in the mountain because she is not as strong or intelligent as the others, "Era fuerte...pero era mujer, y las mujeres no deben vivir como alimañas en el monte" (Chacón 290-291). This is a surprising sentiment coming from Mateo, who is Hortensia's husband, since his own wife had displayed such a strong character that proved her worth among other men. The idea presented by him furthers the idea that Pepita believes: that women should not be involved in political revolts because it is dangerous. It is implied that women need to stay at home caring for the family while their husband participates in the dangerous political acts. Therefore, Elvira must fight to convince the group that men and women can be equal. She tries to argue this with Mateo but he only reinforces the traditional stereotypes of women's roles:

ELVIRA: No has aprendido nada de la República, Mateo, los tiempos de los señoritos se acabaron...los hombres y las mujeres somos iguales, a ver si te enteras.

MATEO: ¿Iguales para qué, para lavar la ropa?

ELVIRA: Y para votar, por ejemplo, que para algo nos dieron el sufragio (Chacón 293).

Mateo still has the antiquated belief that women do not belong in political actions. He even reinforces this belief at the end of the chapter when he says, "Definitivamente, con las mujeres no se puede hablar de política" (Chacón 294). This is the belief that is prevalent in Spain

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<sup>4</sup> The Maquis were bands of guerrilla fighters or "combatientes" who often lived and carried out their attacks deep in the mountains. They had a reputation of being ruthless and violent (Izquierdo).

during the time, and still seen in civilized countries today. Although Mateo fights with the Republic forces against Franco's conservative regime, his ideology still reflects the patriarchal discourse present during the era. Mateo's attitude towards women shows how deeply ingrained into the society these beliefs have become. While there are women like Hortensia and Elvira who fight to overturn this belief, the idea still persists. Mateo represents what Cixous would call a conventional man who is only holding women down, "I'm speaking of woman in her inevitable struggle against conventional man; and of a universal woman subject who must bring women to their senses and to their meaning in history" (875-76). Women do have an important place in history and the women in this novel are trying to define their own space in it. Men are not the only ones who are perpetuating these stereotypes that limit women, women such as Pepita continue to perpetuate them also. However Cixous explains that men are at the root of the problem, "Men have committed the greatest crime against women. Insidiously, violently, they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies, to mobilize their immense strength against themselves" (878). The problem therefore, is something that both sexes need to make an effort to change. For every woman like those in las Ventas that are truly fighting under every circumstance to gain back their freedoms, there is a person like Mateo that believes women should not even be associated with politics. Chacón displays this conundrum perfectly in alignment with modern feminism because it is a recurring issue that has yet to be figured out.

*La voz dormida* serves as an important novel in the history of the Franco dictatorship for many reasons. First, the novel imagines new female perspectives that show the resilience of female identities during this time. Chacón's story weaves fact with fiction to create a work that reads not only like a personal diary because it is full of emotion, but also as a formal text from history because it provides extensive detailed accounts of the events. The women at the core of

the story are multi-faceted characters that adapt to the harsh conditions and transform into female voices of such an important part of Spanish history that will never be forgotten. The testimonials and accounts used in the novel to convey their unique voices function as a form of writing that is imperative to the Franco dictatorship. Chacón did not experience these traumas directly, but through their accounts she sets the scene for the events. In addition to the historical aspect of the accounts, she writes about the female experience and what each woman thought it meant to be a woman. Each woman defined it differently and Chacón reveals this with each account. This perspective by a woman about women is vital in defining the women's voice in history. Cixous emphasizes that women, "must write about women and bring women to writing" (875). She believes that only in this way will the female voice be fully expressed. She continues that, "The future must no longer be determined by the past," meaning that if women write about their own place in the world, then the same harsh injustices are less likely to be repeated in the future (Cixous 875). By calling attention to the dehumanizing practices these women suffered at the hands of their own government, Chacón creates a movement of informed, contemporary readers who will take a stand against the unfair treatments occurring against women in their own society.

Although sharing the trauma of these events is surely difficult, the Spanish community cannot repress the history; instead they should talk about it, as much and as often as possible. I agree with Chacón and Cixous that in order to avoid history repeating itself, the history of previously silenced voices should be revealed. Chacón plays a large role in the idea of postmemory because she is exposing modern readers to events in history of which they might not have been aware. Not only does she employ postmemory by creating a modern work about a historical subject, but she also includes universal themes such as, unique female experiences, that we as modern readers can analyze alongside current feminist theories. Chacón writes an in-depth

novel that every woman or marginalized person can relate to by truly giving life to her characters. The women in the novel are true examples of how a person should never give up in the fight to express his or her own voice. The struggle for a personal identity and space within one's country is a constant battle that must never be abandoned. These women may not have been aware of what it means to be a feminist, but based on their pursuit for equal treatment among all regardless of gender truly defines what it means to be a feminist in today's world.

**CHAPTER 2**  
**POSTMEMORY AND THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE SEEN IN *DONDE NADIE TE***  
***ENCUENTRE***

**2.1 Postmemory in *Donde nadie te encuentre***

"Me gustaría que el lector sintiera a los personajes como a gente que ha conocido y también se planteara los problemas que ellos se plantean. La intención última es una cierta reivindicación de un sentimiento como la pasión, sobre la que tanto nos han advertido a las mujeres."

-Alicia Giménez Bartlett<sup>5</sup>

*Donde nadie te encuentre* is a recent novel published in 2011 by Alicia Giménez Bartlett.

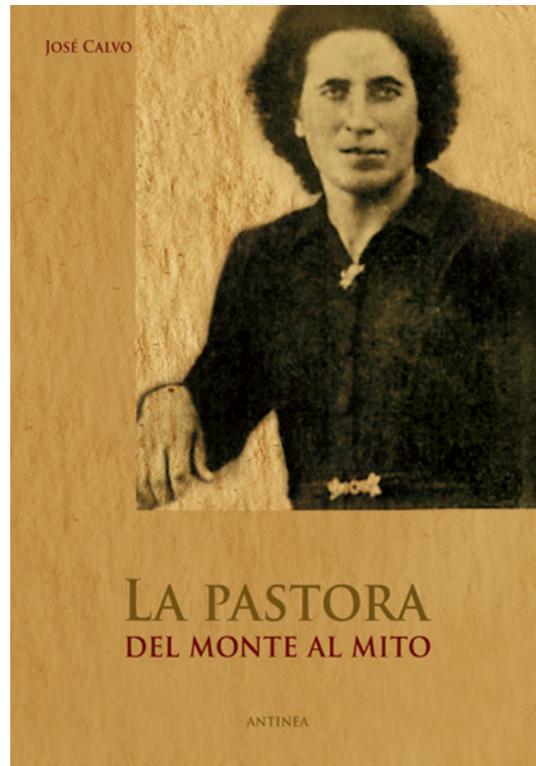
The novel centers around two males, a French psychiatrist named Lucien Nourissier and a Spanish writer named Carlos Infante as they try to find the whereabouts of a rogue woman who is accused of killing 29 members of La Guardia Civil, also known as members of Franco's army. The rogue woman, known as La Pastora, travels in the mountains with the rebel group the Maquis, whose individual exploits have created a notorious legend passed on from soldier to soldier. Although many of the events in the novel focus around the two men and their journey, La Pastora is the real protagonist because the readers learn that her character is not at all how her legend describes her. With the character of La Pastora, Bartlett reveals a truly unique female voice that represents not only the female experience but also the intersexual experience. Throughout the novel Bartlett examines many different facets of La Pastora as a man, a woman, and an intersexual. Similar to *La voz dormida*, the events in the novel are interpreted by different accounts, biographies, and testimonials.

Like Dulce Chacón and *La voz dormida*, Bartlett did not live through the same events that her characters experienced. Born in 1951, she was but a baby when the events of La Pastora's life were occurring. Chacón acknowledges at the very beginning that she takes much information in

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.aliciagimenezbartlett.es/es/Alicia\\_Gimenez\\_Bartlett/](http://www.aliciagimenezbartlett.es/es/Alicia_Gimenez_Bartlett/)

*Donde nadie te encuentre* from the novel, *La Pastora: Del monte al mito*, a book by José Calvo about La Pastora and her life experiences and time spent with the Maquis. Similar to Bartlett's novel, Calvo researched the life of La Pastora and debunked all of the theories about her. In his novel he also published the only photo that exists of La Pastora. (See Fig. 2)



(**Fig. 2** *La Pastora*. The only picture of La Pastora on the cover of José Calvo's novel.)  
<http://www.editorialantinea.com/antineawp/la-pastora-del-monte-al-mito/>

Because Bartlett did not experience the events and is adapting much of the plot in her novel from a different source to give voice to La Pastora, she is writing a piece of historical fiction with a heavy theme of postmemory. She uses the concept of postmemory to write the true history of La Pastora and to finally shed some light on her mysterious exploits. The novel is composed mostly of chapters written in the third person with the perspective of each of the two men. While the events of La Pastora are based on real experiences, the events of Nourissier and Infante are fictional. Nourissier is a true idealist whose naive perspective, based on textbook scientific ideas,

is juxtaposed against Infante's cynical and resigned point of view. In the beginning of the novel, La Pastora is considered a sort of scientific experiment. However, Bartlett uses his impersonal scientific perspective to plant the seed in readers' minds so that La Pastora will seem more human with each experience. Intimate accounts of La Pastora are included scattered amidst these third person narrative chapters from the perspectives of the men. In these true accounts she slowly reveals the complex details of her childhood as well as how she came to be known as La Pastora. Bartlett distinguishes the difference between these two writing styles not only with different perspectives but also with different font. While Nourissier and Infante's chapters are written in a standard Times New Roman font, La Pastora's is written in a more personal Arial font which implies that this is not just a story told from the eyes of others, but from her mouth directly. Bartlett writes at the end of the novel that the chapters in La Pastora's voice come directly from her biography that appeared in José Calvo's novel. The different kinds of writing styles, fictional and non-fictional, and especially women's writing, help to humanize La Pastora and express her stifled voice.

## **2.2 Gender in Postmemory**

"...writing is precisely the very possibility of change, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures."

-Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa"

According to her society, the most fascinating aspect about La Pastora is that she is no ordinary woman; she is biologically an intersexual individual who has struggled with sex and gender constraints imposed upon her by others for her entire life. She suffers from genital hypospadias, a common form of intersexuality, where "the urethra does not run to the tip of the penis" (*Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* 52). Due to her

intersexuality, she has struggled to identify herself based on sex and gender because she cannot be easily defined as either male or female. According to feminist writer Anne-Fausto Sterling, intersex is when an individual's sex cannot be clearly determined because of aberrations in their genitalia or chromosomes ("The Five Sexes, Revisited" 121-122). In her intimate biographical chapters, she speaks frankly about her struggle for her identity and does not hesitate to reveal her unusual life. Many times throughout the novel she refers to herself as a male. The frequency of these statements leads one to believe that it is almost an affirmation of her identity. She writes of her struggle:

Entonces era una niña, pero ahora soy un hombre, ustedes ya lo ven, un hombre de verdad. Cuándo era pequeño no sabía cómo era el mundo, y ahora lo sé un poco más, aunque tampoco era el mundo, pero sé qué hay que hacer para seguir vivo. He pasado dos años escondido en un sitio que aún no les voy a decir dónde está porque me quedaré ahí un poco más y no me fío de nadie (Bartlett 48).

La Pastora's chapters in the novel are not very long, usually containing roughly five pages. They are separated in chronological order between the two men's different perspectives on their journey to find her. Yet La Pastora's words are the most revealing aspects of her true character in the novel. Her dialogue is incredibly self aware, discussing without hesitation the complexity of her identity. Since these sections are adapted from La Pastora's biography, they allow the reader to fully relate to the tragedy of her life. However, a large part of the novel describes the journey of Nourisser and Infante in their attempts to locate her in order to interview her. At the end of the novel they finally find her, and Bartlett compiles the novel in this way so that the reader can then assume that the intimate chapters of La Pastora's life are the product of the interview the men had with her. The mix between the male perspectives of Nourisser and Infante, and the sometimes female and sometimes male perspectives of La Pastora create a new perspective that hints at a completely gender neutral style of writing.

Unlike Chacón, the forms of writing used in the novel cannot be considered male or female expressions. The writing does not contain obvious official government documents that imply a cold harsh tone, nor does it contain personal and emotional letters written between lovers and family. Bartlett does include an epilogue at the end of the novel that describes the events of La Pastora's life once La Guardia Civil has captured her. The tone is reminiscent of an official medical document but it is more so an account in the Bartlett's voice describing the events after the novel ends. La Pastora reveals intimate details of her life but it is mostly in an informative manner with some outbursts of anger, "Pero yo no soy un lobo ni una bestia y nunca he matado a nadie. ¡Soy una persona y soy un hombre!" or sadness, "Acabas por no ser ni una mujer ni un hombre: no eres nada, nadie te espera, nadie se preocupa por ti" (Bartlett 48). Through this style of an informal interview between the two men and La Pastora, Bartlett creates a hardened character that displays immense strength and composure under her tragic circumstances. With the few exceptions where she expresses small outbursts of emotion, her speech is conveyed as calm and slightly resigned. However, Bartlett includes these outbursts of emotion interspersed in her composed speech to show that she is in fact a human with many feelings. These outbursts help the readers to understand the human emotions involved in La Pastora's life, a person who has been treated like an outcast for most of her life.

From the beginning of La Pastora's chapters, the readers see that she was teased and bullied at an early age due to her unclear sex. She writes that while growing up, children would make schoolyard rhymes teasing her about her atypical reproductive organs, "Teresot, Teresot, ¿qué tienes entre las piernas, Teresot?" and that many kids were afraid to play with her (Bartlett 80). Because her sex was unclear, she was treated as an oddity; some kind of strange being that should be kept at a distance. Bartlett reinforces this idea of how La Pastora was treated as

everything but a human being with her Nota Final at the end of the novel. The Nota Final functions as an epilogue that explains the events in her life that occurred after the plot of the novel ends. The writing style starts off as if a historian is recounting La Pastora's life by including specific dates to make readers feel the reality of the story. Bartlett begins, "El 19 de septiembre de 1956, La Pastora abandona su refugio del Forat de l'Àliga, en la sierra de l'Espadella, que se encuentra junto al camino que une las poblaciones," to show to the readers that she was, in fact a real person that existed during the era (Bartlett 499). The tone shifts dramatically throughout the Nota Final by taking the very official tone of a doctor examining this unusual being, La Pastora. The vocabulary is terse and absolute as if the doctor was examining a machine, not a human being. La Pastora is treated as if she is an experiment and Bartlett seems to include in the Nota Final, the exact words of the doctor's examination:

1. El individuo reconocido pertenece al sexo masculino.
2. La constitución de sus órganos genitales es defectuosa, presentando un hipospadias perineal y un escroto bífido que, junto a las reducidas dimensiones del pene, hacen que sea clasificable entre los casos de pseudohermafroditismo masculino.
3. Dado su sexo gonadal, no debe ser recluido en la cárcel de mujeres por ser peligrosa su convivencia con individuos de sexo contrario al suyo (502).

Bartlett purposely includes this section with medical vocabulary such as the use of 'this individual' and medical jargon such as 'hipospadias perineal' to show that even when La Pastora was examined by doctors for her condition, she was still not treated as a human being.

At first, Nourissier also refers to her as an experiment and not a human being. He speculates in his investigative writings, "¿Cómo era su sexualidad?, ¿afectaron todas estas circunstancias a su equilibrio mental?, ¿sintió pulsiones homicidas como venganza?" even going as far to call her "el sujeto" (Bartlett 118). These are both instances of what feminist essayist Adrienne Rich would call "male power" because Nourissier, although with no ill intentions, is

dehumanizing La Pastora by treating her like an experiment, not a human being (18). Bartlett includes these sections so that readers can better envision the complicated life of La Pastora. Treated like an oddity her entire life, her genuine human interactions in the novel are few and far between. By including the Nota Final, Bartlett uses her last dramatic attempt to solidify the injustices La Pastora faced her entire life. This use of the medical examinations shows another facet of the history involved in her life. It is the final way that readers can connect with La Pastora and understand how severely she was dehumanized.

In addition to being intersexual and experiencing discrimination for it, she is also considered an outcast because she is the last surviving member of the Maquis. As previously mentioned in the introduction, the Maquis was a rebel group that inhabited the mountains that led guerrilla style attacks on the government. The Maquis were simply citizens that were fighting for their freedom but they received a very negative and infamous reputation for attempting to defy the government. They were thought as, "bandas de bandidos o terroristas" often "criminalizando la figura del guerrillero" (Izquierdo 105-106). La Pastora received the same treatment. She was believed to be a violent terrorist who would kill anyone in sight. The perception of the Maquis was that they were extremely violent and inhumane. Izquierdo writes of their barbaric reputation, "y se manifiesta también un proceso de animalización de la conducta humana reduciéndola una mera reacción del instinto de supervivencia marcada por el miedo" (111). Coupled with her ambivalent sex, La Pastora became an even more marginalized figure because she belonged to this supposedly barbaric group. As the last living member of the Maquis, she inhabits an even more unique and significant role in the telling of these historical events. Her leadership in the Maquis is a telling paradox since Franco's regime believed the Maquis to be ruthless and uncivilized, this group was actually the most liberal and accepting

since they openly accepted La Pastora despite her intersexuality. The Maquis disregarded her sex and sexuality and instead revered her leadership in their group. Their ability to look past one's uniqueness proves that they were not the uncivilized, ruthless killers Franco's forces believed they were.

In order to tell these historical events Bartlett had to rely on postmemory from secondary sources, primarily José Calvo's novel. The concept of postmemory in the novel is being expressed in three different kinds of writing styles. The first and most prevalent style is the third person narrative describing the events with Nourisser and Lucien. Interspersed in the men's events is the first person narrative with the voice of La Pastora talking about her life and her struggles. These sections can be assumed to be the product of their final interview with La Pastora once they finally meet. Finally there is the official medical examination and historical background. This official document gives authenticity to all the events and solidifies the fact that these events of her life did actually exist. By using these different styles of writing, Bartlett creates a novel of historical fiction that is based on many real-life events that make it difficult to tell fiction from reality. The postmemory Bartlett creates in the novel sets the reader up to try to understand many of the individual themes present, most importantly the marginalization of La Pastora due to her sex and her involvement with the Maquis. With several different perspectives, the readers are able to see all sides of her life, from her own point of view, to those of Nourisser and Infante and the doctors that evaluated her at the end. These perspectives help to create a slight description of this complex figure while making her precarious position in society relatable to any reader who has ever felt like an outcast.

Readers can relate to her negligible treatment because La Pastora represents a figure who continuously fought for her freedoms, even if readers have never dealt with these particular

struggles in their own lives. With the multiple perspectives present in the novel, Bartlett succeeds in creating a character that "el lector sintiera a los personajes como a gente que ha conocido" ("Aliciagimenezbartlett.es") The character, an intersexual member of the rebel group the Maquis may seem like a difficult subject for readers to relate to, but Bartlett writes her with such human traits that near the end it is not hard to see her simply as a character that is seeking in the universal search; to find her true identity in the world. The second part of the quote relates to expression of passion that Bartlett says women have been warned about. Like in *La voz dormida*, it is significant that a woman writes this novel about another woman's experiences and struggles. As Cixous writes, "When I say 'woman,' I'm speaking of woman in her inevitable struggle against conventional man; and of a universal woman subject who must bring women to their senses and to their meaning in history" (875-876). La Pastora has certainly led a unique life different than many women.

Although she is classified as an intersexual individual at her birth, her masculine gender affiliation as an adult does not take away from the fact that like the women in *La voz dormida*, La Pastora also struggles against "conventional man" to fight for her freedoms regardless of her gender (Cixous 875). Just because she may not inhabit the characteristics of an ideal woman, according to the Spanish government at the time, does not mean that she is not a member of the marginalized class of women. Queer theorist Monique Wittig further explores the heteronormative terminology attached to the idea of woman. She writes, "Furthermore, we have to destroy the myth inside and outside ourselves. "'Woman' is not each one of us, but the political and ideological formation which negates 'women' (the product of a relation of exploitation)" ("One is Not Born a Woman" 106). By referring to her as a 'woman' La Pastora is being categorized into an idea of the submissive and delicate woman whose primary duty is to

become a housewife and mother. Like many women of the era, La Pastora defies this path. Therefore, I will argue that she can indeed identify with the class of women who are fighting for their right to their own identities and bodies. La Pastora's life proves to be an example of intersectionality, a combination of different forms of oppression being imposed upon her. Women's and gender studies philosopher Judith Butler writes that the intersectionality of "transgender, transsexuality, intersex, and their complex relations to feminist and queer theory...continuing to happen...in part, through the complex ways they are taken up by each of these movements and theoretical practices" (*Undoing Gender* 4). All of these marginalized aspects of La Pastora's life combine to create in her a female perspective that is simply attempting to solidify her identity in the conservative Spanish society at this time. Like other women in the era, she fights against man's attempts to decide her gender and sexual orientation, as well as the activities in which she participates. Although she identifies as a male, La Pastora is still not considered one under the eye of her society. Because of this, she faces the same rejection that many women do when trying to determine their identity and express their voice.

### **2.3 Gender Struggles and Sexuality**

"But the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it...it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination"  
-Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

"So woman does not have a sex organ? She has at least two of them, but they are not identifiable as ones. Indeed she has many more. Her sexuality, always at least double, goes even further: it is *plural* [emphasis author's]."  
-Luce Irigaray, *The Sex Which is Not One*

In the novel, La Pastora has defective reproductive organs. Like the medical examination says, the genitalia had perineal hyposadias, a defect of the urethra and the penis, as well as a very small penis. Because of these unconventionalities, La Pastora was officially classified as a

masculine hermaphrodite at the end of the novel after she has undergone the medical observations performed by the government, or La Guardia Civil. However, at birth she was classified as a female. Because of this initial classification, she was forced to wear female clothing and adhere to a female gender performance. Judith Butler believes that gender is performed, that it is an act that an individual must follow based on the norms of society. Butler writes in *Gender Trouble*:

In what senses, then, is gender an act? As in other ritual social dramas, the action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated*. This repetition is at once a reenactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established...Although there are individual bodies that enact these significations by becoming stylized into gendered modes, this 'action' is a public action (191).

Because La Pastora has defective reproductive organs, her sex is not easily determined throughout her life. She writes that at birth she was classified as a female although the doctors still did not know for sure whether she was a male or female. They did not understand how to classify her sex. Therefore, her gender-which Butler believes to be a performance-is not easily determined because La Pastora's prescribed female gender does not feel natural to her. Using today's definition, she would be classified as an intersexual.

La Pastora mentions in her reflections of her childhood that her behavior and looks were based on those of a woman. Since she was classified as a female at birth, the gender prescriptions were already decided for her. Witting writes "women will have to abstract themselves from the definition 'woman' which is imposed upon them" ("One is Not Born a Woman" 3). The people in her life pushed her into performing female gender roles such as by wearing women's clothing and being expected to someday find a husband and be a housewife. This ideal of femininity proves difficult for La Pastora because she does not feel as if she can genuinely embrace it. Once she reaches an age where she can understand what is going on inside her, she begins to identify

as a male. With this mindset, she is able to look back on her "female days" as if they were lived by someone else. She writes of her years of femininity, "(yo) Era muy buena mujer. Era alta, estaba delgada y con la carne prieta. Si hubiera tenido vestidos me hubieran sentado bien, pero sólo tenía faldas negras y largas y blusas negras también" (Bartlett 123). Despite later identifying as a male, she still relishes in her former beauty as a female. Dressing her in skirts and blouses is simply another extension of gender performance that society uses to place people in certain categories. Despite her parents dressing her in skirts and blouses, her peers still teased her for her ambiguous gender; often demanding that they show her what is between her legs. It is not until she joins together with the Maquis that she is truly accepted for her unique existence.

Because of her unclear sex and gender, people throughout her life feel as though they are entitled to her body. This entitlement makes people, especially men, feel like they have power and control over her body. As Foucault notes in *Discipline and Punish*, the societal body attempts to control the bodies of its subjects in order to obtain control. He writes that societies enforce, "the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility" (Foucault 137). The aggressive men who attempt to control La Pastora's body represent the influence of the controlling society.

As an adult, La Pastora recounts one instance when someone told her "<<Tereseta, me oído decir en el pueblo que hay un grupo de graciosos que han hecho el plan de emborracharte mañana y entre todos acogotarte y subirte las faldas para ver si eres un hombre o una mujer>>" (Bartlett 171). These plans to determine her sex by forcing her to reveal her genitals represent what Adrienne Rich calls male power. She writes that some characteristics of male power include denying "women [their own] sexuality" or forcing "[male sexuality] upon them" (Rich

18). This male power and entitlement is a reflection of the mistreatment she suffered at the hands of men. Her rights are not only being infringed upon as a woman, but also as a human. Because she represents a human being that is different, she is not treated as a human being with her own rights. Therefore her body, the only thing she truly owns, is being infringed upon. The entitlement of others over her body shows how the human body is directly related to political ideas of power. In addition, the incessant teasing by her peers shows that the common belief of gender is based on a specific ideal of how a male or female should act. The gender prescriptions imposed on La Pastora do not only apply to women, but men as well. While La Pastora struggles with femininity and being what the patriarchal discourse at the time would define as a woman, she also struggles with being a man.

The true interest behind La Pastora is not her sex, gender, or sexuality, but instead her notorious reputation for being a rogue killer. The uncertainty of her sex and gender only added to the fact that she was considered a dangerous individual feared by men all over the country. She is to blame for the death of many members of La Guardia Civil and even innocent civilians. Although it is revealed through her intimate accounts that she has never killed a single person, she still feels the need to exhibit masculine characteristics-such as being strong and unemotional-that people are attributing to her. The difference in voice and tone between her intimate chapters in the novel and the medical evaluation contrasts to represent the complex dual nature of her existence. The glimpse into her emotions reveals that she is neither a senseless killer nor a scientific oddity. When Infante and Nourissier finally meet her, they are rendered speechless by the authority of her presence:

Tenía los ojos más tristes que Nourissier había visto jamás. No sonrió, no hizo ningún gesto, simplemente esperó a que llegaran... Tanto Nourissier como Infante estaban mudos, paralizados, expectantes, casi mareados por la emoción que

sentían y que se mezclaba con otras muchas sensaciones: duda, curiosidad, repulsión y atracción al mismo tiempo, incredulidad y fascinación (Bartlett 486).

La Pastora has spent her entire life trying to attain this authority and respect. She realized at an early age that because of her unconventional sexual organs, she had to make up for it in strength and stoicism in order to gain people's respect. She knows that she must inhabit every fiber of what it means to be masculine while living in a supposed female's body. She struggles with this throughout her life. In her accounts she notes that she does not cry, "porque un hombre no puede llorar" (Bartlett 267). While seeking refuge in a trusted home of a man living in the mountains, the man betrays them and shoots Francisco, her only friend. La Pastora escapes and has to watch Francisco die in her arms. When this happens she reverts back to how she was as a woman, even referring to her old female name, "¡Qué sola te has quedado, Tereseta, qué sola vas a estar! Entonces me dejé caer de rodillas, me tapé la cara con las manos y me eché a llorar. Era la primera vez que lloraba desde que dejé de ser mujer" (Bartlett 479). This is a telling episode in her life because it reveals the true struggle of her identity that she will never fully understand. In her later years she can convince everyone that she is a man, even to the point where Francisco easily refers to her as one, "¿Tú has visto cómo vivimos, Pastora? ¿Crees que esto que llevamos es una vida digna para un par de hombres como nosotros?" yet she still struggles with her upbringing as a woman (Bartlett 467). She can never fully identify with either gender, according to the heteronormative ideals dictated to her. She never completely transforms into a male or female, thus exposing the vicious paradox of her identity.

At the moment when Francisco dies, she naturally embraces her femininity and expresses her sadness in tears because she knows a man does not behave like this. She draws from her experience as a woman to fully cope with this situation. However, she refuses to exploit this femininity for her own benefit. When Francisco suggests that she dress as a woman again in

order to travel incognito, she furiously denies the suggestion saying, "-Quítate eso de la cabeza porque yo de mujer no me voy a vestir nunca más...Pues no, yo moriré como hombre que soy" (Bartlett 434). She realizes that she can channel her femininity through emotions but she refuses to disguise herself as a woman because she feels it is a threat to her identity. Her ability to draw aspects from both being a male and a female defies the concept that sex and gender are binary. She cannot easily identify with one; therefore, the essence of her being involves both sexes. However, why does La Pastora feel the need to comply with prescribed gender norms? Why can she not freely cry as a man and not appear vulnerable? These gender prescriptions, as Butler has stated, are conditioned into society and quietly placed into every aspect of daily life. The society has ideas for how a man and woman should be, and La Pastora fit into neither category.

Like the women in *La voz dormida*, people had a specific idea of how women should look and behave. Because La Pastora did not behave like a woman should, she was punished for it. This is what Butler would argue is a, "regulatory ideal...exposed as a norm and a fiction that disguises itself as a developmental law" (*Gender Trouble* 185). The developmental law refers to the social norms and expectations that each gender is supposed to have. This ideal turns into a mindset, which makes people such as La Pastora's peers, feel they are entitled to her body and infringing upon her rights so that they can determine her "true" gender and identity. These detrimental ideas that are imposed on her create a complex within her own mind about how she is not adhering to social norms. She admits frankly that she did not live the traditional life of a woman, "No tenía lo que todas las mujeres querían tener: un marido, hijos, una casa...A aquellas alturas ya sabía que nunca los tendría. Estaba muy sola. Mi familia no había querido saber más de mí" (Bartlett 212). La Pastora has been conditioned into thinking that a happy life means a woman must hope to obtain a husband and have a family. These norms present in the mind of the

patriarchal discourse of the time had permeated into her own mind, making her feel lost and alone. The isolation from her family only reinforces her feelings of being different, or considered the 'Other' because she does not fit into the norms of her society. The ease for people to condemn La Pastora for not fitting into these norms creates a sense of entitlement among them. This sense of entitlement over La Pastora's body resonates from the strict limitations the conservative society imposed on women and the political body feels they must determine her sex once and for all. They believed that sex and gender was a binary concept with only two options: male and female. With this idea of sex and gender as binary concepts, the ability to try and understand La Pastora proved to be even more complicated.

The concept that sex and gender are binary is difficult to use in reference to La Pastora. Her sex, as in the organs she has between her legs, cannot be easily determined because her reproductive organs are atypical. Her gender cannot also be easily determined because she was made to dress as a woman for years, while still identifying as a male. Her sexuality cannot be easily determined either as she never seems to act on it by showing an interest in either sex. It is not until the medical observation at the end of the novel where her sexuality is clarified. These differences in her life prove that her perspective is one that has most certainly been silenced for fear of threatening the status quo.

First we will begin to discuss her sex. Her uncommon sexual organs are perhaps the most obvious abnormality. Finally being classified a hermaphrodite upon her capture, her sex proved to be a difficult concept for people to understand. In today's world of advanced science and technology, doctors have seen situations similar to La Pastora's. However, during this era it was still severely misunderstood. Anne Fausto-Sterling argues in her article, "The Five Sexes, Revisited," that "the two-sex system embedded in our society is not adequate to encompass the

full spectrum of human sexuality" (121). She proposes that there are five sexes: in addition to male and female, there are people "born with both a testis and an ovary...people born with testes and some aspect of female genitalia...and people who have ovaries combined with some aspect of male genitalia" ("The Five Sexes, Revisited" 121).

Some of these terms can be seen at the end of the novel in the medical report completed by La Guardia Civil. The document says that she can be classified as, "seudohermafroditismo masculino" (Bartlett 502). Fausto-Sterling's research can shed some insight to the desire to understand the medical aspect of La Pastora's intersexual status. Her conclusions reveal that sex and gender cannot always be divided into specific categories yet this medical discourse cannot attempt to explain the complexities of her sex. This medical discourse seen in Fausto-Sterling's research and at the end of the novel creates a foil to La Pastora's humanity, which serves as the ultimate character.

Although La Pastora is declared at birth a female, she certainly feels at odds with her supposed sex and her emotional gender. She can never fully identify with either sex or gender, according to the heteronormative ideals imposed on her by the conservative society. However, why must one only classify with male or female? Despite her medical research Fausto-Sterling mentions that sex and gender are not binary. Butler writes that this binary system of sex and gender is related to being a male and having power, which is detrimental to those without power (i.e. women or other marginalized individuals). If power is regarded as being a male, perhaps this is part of the reason La Pastora wishes to identify as a male so that she can finally have respect and power among others in her life. Butler writes, "power appeared to operate in the production of that very binary frame for thinking about gender... Are those terms untroubling only to the extent that they conform to a heterosexual matrix for conceptualizing gender and

desire?" [sic] (*Undoing Gender* xxxi). The need to institutionalize sex and gender also leads into the equal desire to institutionalize sexual identity. Not only is La Pastora being marginalized because her sex and gender do not fit into the norms of society, but also because her sexual identity has yet to be determined. This process of institutionalizing sexuality can be referred to as compulsory heterosexuality (Rich).

## 2.4 Compulsory Heterosexuality and La Pastora

**compulsory** (kuh m-puhl-suh-ree) *adjective*<sup>6</sup>  
-required; mandatory; obligatory

**heterosexuality** (het-er-uh-sek-shoo-al-i-tee) *noun*  
-sexual feeling or behavior directed toward a person or persons of the opposite sex

In her article, essayist Adrienne Rich elaborates on the concept of compulsory heterosexuality. First she suggests that, "heterosexuality like motherhood, needs to be recognized and studied as *political institution* [emphasis author's]" because it is an institution that denies women the same kind of power that men are allowed to have (Rich 17). She believes that heterosexuality limits women because it blindly leads them into heterosexual relationships and marriages that create only a handful of identities (i.e. wife, mother, homemaker) while the men can "command or exploit their labor to control their produce" or "deny women [their own] sexuality" among other reasons she listed that contribute to what she calls the power of men (Rich 18-19). She suggests that heterosexuality is a compulsory enforcement put upon women. She writes that:

Women have married because it was necessary, in order to survive economically, in order to have children who would not suffer economic deprivation or social ostracism, in order to remain respectable, in order to do what was expected of

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<sup>6</sup> www.dictionary.com

women, because...heterosexual romance has been represented as the great female adventure, duty and fulfillment (Rich 31).

With this idea of heterosexuality in mind, it can be understood why La Pastora was further ostracized. In addition to her unconventional reproductive organs, she did not crave a domestic, heterosexual life. She chose the more dangerous life. Therefore, she felt the pressures of the institution of heterosexuality imposed on her by her society. When a heterosexual identity is considered the norm and imposed on everyone by a powerful societal institution it can be described as heteronormativity because it only furthers the patriarchal point of view during this time. Although she is eventually classified as a male pseudohermaphrodite according to the Spanish government that captures her, she is determined a female at birth. This decision has immense importance in the formation of her identity. The decision based solely on the appearance of her reproductive organs severely limits her capabilities to define her own identity later in life. Butler remarks in her book *Undoing Gender* that this practice of determining or changing an individual's sex based on the binary idea of sex attempts to 'fix' their 'problem': "Consider the intersex opposition to the widespread practice of performing coercive surgery on infants and children with sexually indeterminate or hermaphroditic anatomy in the name of normalizing these bodies" (4). Many of the people that interact with La Pastora attempt to try and fix her. The decision that she is a female at birth is the first attempt to fix her problem of being intersexual. Instead, Butler feels as though the unique intersexual individuals should be embraced for their differences rather than treated as a problem to be fixed. While La Pastora never received surgery to correct her genitalia, these surgeries have become another way that society attempts to categorize intersexuals. Butler continues:

The intersex community's resistance to coercive surgery moreover calls for the understanding that infants with intersexed conditions are part of the continuum of a human morphology and ought to be treated with the presumption that their lives

are and will be not only livable, but also occasions for flourishing (*Undoing Gender* 5).

Only when La Pastora is treated like an equal among the other Maquis is she given the opportunity to flourish. Rather than try to understand her sex, they accepted her as a human being regardless of the other ambiguous aspects of her life. Although she was treated like an equal among the Maquis, she still continued to be questioned for not only her sex and gender, but also for her sexuality. Due to the medical classification at birth as a female, she was expected to adhere to the heterosexual life of a woman. In addition to not looking like a typical woman, she seemed to have zero romantic interest in men. Her defiance of gender roles and lack of interest in men makes her even more of a conundrum to her society.

Sexuality is another concept that is often thought of in binary terms of heterosexuality and homosexuality. However, the Spanish society at this time did not accept homosexuality because they felt it threatened the status quo. La Pastora's sexuality was not endangering anyone yet she was forced into both heterosexuality and even homosexuality. With the idea of compulsory heterosexuality, she was forced to be a heterosexual woman who was supposed to eventually become a wife and a mother. When La Pastora decided that she identified as a male despite her female classification at birth, she was then assumed by others to be a homosexual since she was supposedly a female who desired other females. This rationality attempts to understand her yet further limits her. Even the medical document at the end of the novel mentions her supposed sexual interest in females while continuing the idea of her being dangerous to others, "3. Dado su sexo gonadal, no debe ser recluido en la cárcel de mujeres por ser peligrosa su convivencia con individuos de sexo contrario al suyo" (Bartlett 502). Here it is evident that her unclear sex and subsequent sexuality are considered dangerous and a threat to others, especially one as helpless and innocent as a woman. The document suggests that because

she is an intersexual that she will not be able to control herself as if she were some sort of monster.

Another aspect of La Pastora's life that remains an enigma is her sexuality. When she is determined a female at birth and subsequently raised as one, she is assumed to be heterosexual, as her society believes all women naturally should be. However, her sexuality is not clear until the end of the novel when the medical document writes that, "el individuo dice tener apetencias por el sexo femenino" (Bartlett 505). During the novel, it appears that La Pastora is equally confused with her own sexuality. In a rare, intimate conversation with Carlos the leader of the Maquis, he asks her frankly if she is a homosexual. She answers no, "No. No me gustan los hombres y a las mujeres nunca me he acercado en ese plan. Y ahora ya me da igual, no sé cómo explicarte, es como si me lo hubiera sacado tanto de la cabeza que ya no lo quisiera meter más" (Bartlett 248). Her sexuality is a facet of her life that she has not yet explored. Her own survival has been the primary focus in her life; not determining her sexuality. Although she admits in the conversation with Carlos that she has not yet determined her sexuality and even seems to be asexual, the readers see the beginnings of her sexuality in some instances with female interactions. These female interactions play a deeper role in the formation of her sexuality. One interaction in particular is with Carlos's sister Cinta. Cinta is the first person in the novel to show La Pastora kindness and compassion. In the scene with Cinta, she helps transform La Pastora into the man she has always felt she was. She cuts her hair and gives her male clothing to wear. La Pastora is not sure how to react to the situation and suggests a sexual tension with her description of the situation yet she does not understand it. She writes at first that, "Dormí con ella esa noche, como aún era una mujer" (Bartlett 250). This sentence suggests that sleeping in the same bed with her is not of particular importance since it was something that female friends do.

However, when Cinta begins cutting her hair, La Pastora feels a sense of fear and uncertainty, "Yo, que había dormido en el monte sola desde chica, que me hubiera enfrentado a cualquiera sin que me temblara la mano jamás, aquel día tenía un miedo que me dejaba quieta como un pájaro caído de un nido" (Bartlett 250). It is in this affectionate moment when we first see a sexual attraction in La Pastora, albeit a small glimpse. Her fear and discomfort around Cinta reveals an attraction that she has never felt before. This interaction with Cinta peels another layer from the complex life of La Pastora. This intersectionality between her sex, gender, and sexuality shows that society's attempts to categorize her into its predetermined heteronormative categories are all in vain.

La Pastora's entire existence defies the heteronormativity that her society imposes. Therefore, she is a defining member of the marginalized group of 'women' that continued fighting for their freedoms. Because of her sex, gender, sexuality and also her revered position as the last Maqui she shows a unique perspective because she represents so many things that could be thought to threaten the status quo of the government. First she has an ambiguous sex, then she refuses to conform to traditional gender prescriptions, next her sexuality is constantly questioned, and finally because she is the last living member of the Maquis. The fact that she still received an incredible amount of respect especially among the Maquis despite all of these factors that marginalized her in the society reveals her true inner strength. When looking at La Pastora from a feminist standpoint, it becomes clear that she played a vital role in the representation of women during this age. Despite the limitations imposed on women, La Pastora continued fighting against these constraints by refusing to conform to a specific ideal. She defied gender roles by inhabiting both male and female characteristics and proved to be a significant character in the Spanish Civil War history and the post-war period. La Pastora lived her life considered by many

of her peers to be a monster or scientific oddity due to her unconventional sexual organs. Then when she joins the Maquis, she is even further viewed as a threat to society for daring to fight against Franco's regime. However, the Maquis, a group thought to be a barbaric and uncivilized group during the time; in reality were a more tolerant group since they openly accepted La Pastora. Through Bartlett's use of postmemory, she is able to finally unearth the many misconceptions surround La Pastora's existence and finally give her the voice she was denied her entire life.

## CHAPTER 3

### POSTMEMORY AND THE LESBIAN EXPERIENCE IN *SU CUERPO ERA SU GOZO*

#### 3.1 Postmemory in *Su cuerpo era su gozo*

*Su cuerpo era su gozo*, written by Beatriz Gimeno in 2005 is a fictional novel loosely based on the true-life events of Isabel M. Perellá and her lover and companion Carmen. The novel tells of the intimate relationship between two girls during and after the Franco dictatorship. Their relationship blossomed from young girls unsure of their attraction, to a deeply intimate and sexual relationship as adults. Throughout their relationship, they faced cruel treatment and discrimination by their family members and peers. During the Franco dictatorships, lesbianism was highly punishable because it did not adhere to the heteronormative society. Women that were believed to be lesbians were often exposed to psychiatric treatment to cure them since the belief was that "Lesbians are labeled as mentally sick because of their assumed hostility to men" (Gonda 2). Other times they were subjected to harsh psychological treatments. Philosopher Beatriz Preciado writes in her work *Testo yonqui* that homosexuals and intersexuals were subjected to "las instituciones médicas durante el franquismo, la lobotomía, las terapias de modificación de conducta, el tratamiento mediante electroconvulsiones y la castración terapéutica" (29). In addition, Dolores Juliano writes that, "El lesbianismo ha sido poco visible porque era poco imaginable" (39). All of these factors led to a severely homophobic society that sought to eradicate lesbianism at its start. Lesbianism was believed to be dangerous and harmful to its citizens during this era. Juliano writes, "Así interpretar el lesbianismo como una conducta negativa, relacionada con cualquier tipo de infracción social, estaba muy generalizado en la época, pero de una manera ambigua, más relacionado con los roles de género que con la sexualidad" (39). Therefore, lesbianism was not considered so dangerous due to the women's

attraction to other women, but rather due to the women's lack of adherence to the stereotype for not suppressing their desires. They were doubly marginalized because not only did they express their desire for each other, but also because their sexuality was not controlled by men. The novel continues describing each phase of their relationship, including one woman's descent into madness after spending months in mental hospitals where she experienced mind-altering drugs as well as electro-shock therapy. At the end of the novel, one of the women aids in the death of her partner and is subsequently tried for murder. She is later released due to written evidence that the woman wanted to die.

The novel is based on the true-life relationship of Isabel M. Perellá and her partner Carmen. In 2001, more than two decades after the Franco dictatorship, Isabel received an acquittal in the case of murdering her partner, Carmen (Bilbo). This event appeared in newspapers with a tragic backstory of two women who suffered extreme injustices due to their homosexual relationship. They were young teachers who entered into a lesbian relationship as very young girls shortly before the Franco dictatorship. As their relationship changed as adults and became sexually intimate and public, the height of the homophobic Franco dictatorship had reached its peak. As previously mentioned in Chapter 2, homosexuality was not tolerated during the Spanish Civil War and post-war era because it was threatening the heteronormative discourse (Bilbo).

Shortly before the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, a law called "la Ley de Vagos y Maleantes nació con la pretensión de localizar y clasificar a los agentes <<peligrosos>> de la sociedad así como para establecer diversas medidas de control, seguridad y prevención dirigidas contra aquellos sectores sociales marginales" (Urzáiz 110). This law greatly controlled the marginalized class who engaged in any activities deemed illegal or immoral by the society at

large. This law was made further specific when it was amended in 1954 during the Franco dictatorship to include "la categoría de homosexual como elemento peligroso para el orden social y la <<paz pública>>" (Urzáiz 120). In this excerpt of the modifications, the further marginalization of homosexuals is brought to an extreme level of discrimination and dehumanization (modifications in bold):

Artículo sexto.-Número segundo.- A los **homosexuales**, rufianes y proxenetas...se les aplicarán para que las cumplan todas sucesivamente, las medidas siguientes:  
a) Internado en un establecimiento de trabajo o colonia agrícola. **Los homosexuales sometidos a esta medida de seguridad deberán ser internados en instituciones especiales y, en todo caso, con absoluta separación de los demás** (Ley de Vagos y Maleantes, 1954).

With the modification of la Ley de Vagos y Maleantes in 1954, the already precarious position of homosexuals in the society became more dangerous. Rather than just experience segregation from their peers for being different, laws such as this threatened their freedoms to live their lives however they wanted.

In an attempt to cure and punish these people who were demonstrating homosexual tendencies, under la Ley de Vagos y Maleantes, the state took it upon themselves to subject homosexuals to harsh psychological treatments including mind-altering pills or even electroshock therapy (Juliano 39). In addition to these treatments, many homosexual individuals were often sent to concentration camps. Journalist Frenando Olmeda writes in his book, *El látigo y la pluma*, of many real-life testimonials of individuals detained in concentration camps in Spain for "actos de inversión sexual" (124). Both of these dangerous methods were used against Carmen, leaving permanent scars in her psyche. Her partner Isabel worked to try and create a healthy living environment but the societal pressures to live a certain way proved to be too much for Carmen. After a lifetime of depression stemming from the psychological treatments, she eventually requested that Isabel ease her pain and end her life. After her death, Isabel was

accused of murdering her until Carmen's private journals revealing her wish to die freed Isabel. Gimeno notes in the beginning of her novel that she read about the news of Isabel's judgment, which inspired her to write the novel. The most interesting aspect of this story is not the court case of Carmen's death but instead the lesbian relationship between the two women during these extremely homophobic era under the dictatorship as well as the inhumane psychological treatments Carmen had to endure in attempts by her friends and family to "cure" her lesbian tendencies.

Gimeno has focused the novel around the true-life events that have occurred but takes creative liberties with the other details included. Gimeno includes a disclaimer that she does not know the individuals and that not all of the events in the novel are true. She includes further that her intention in writing the novel is that it can serve as an outlet for others whose voices might have also been suppressed, "Sólo espero que si alguien que las conoció y las quiso, o la misma superviviente de esta tragedia, o de otras similares, leen este libro, no lo consideren una ofensa sino un homenaje a las víctimas silenciosas" (Gimeno 1). The postmemory in this novel is slightly different than *La voz dormida* and *Donde nadie te encuentre* because it is not based on a large amount of intense research. In *La voz dormida*, the story was taken from actual testimonials and accounts of the women and their families. In *Donde nadie te encuentre* the characters of Nourissier and Infante were fictional but the events in La Pastora's story were certainly influenced by José Calvo's novel. The events in *Su cuerpo era su gozo* were taken from newspapers from which Gimeno wrote her entire novel. The events began during the Franco dictatorship and the final judgment was in 2001. Gimeno also admits to not having met either woman. All of these factors lead to a heavy aspect of postmemory because Gimeno received the

details through a secondary source that did experience the harsh injustices during the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship.

In the novel, Isabel's name was changed to Luz and Carmen's name was changed to Ali. The novel is written in the perspective of Luz but in a third person omniscient narration. The style of writing reads like a stream of consciousness, with very little dialogue interspersed between acute observations of the characters thoughts and feelings. The majority of the novel is from Luz's perspective; however, it jumps to the perspective of Ali, her family, and Luz's student, Fatima, throughout each chapter. The hyper aware stream-of-consciousness writing provides an in-depth look into the complexities of the human mind and body. Gimeno used the small piece of information found in the news of this couple and fused it with her own life experiences to create a novel that transcends its time and feels relevant to any person that has ever felt marginalized in their society for their innate desires. Gimeno herself no doubt experienced some of the same inner conflicts when she fell in love with a woman after living the perfect example of a woman in the heteronormative society. She married a man, had a child, and served the daily functions of a housewife (Lesbianlips.es). However, she became dissatisfied with her monotonous life and craved more. After nearly 5 years of marriage, she fell in love with a female friend she knew from her association with different feminist groups. According to the Spanish website Lesbian Lips, this is when Gimeno began her attempts to merge feminism and lesbian movements together as one. In 1995, nearly 10 years after her marriage to a man, Gimeno married a lesbian activist and they both continued together in their fight for lesbian activism (LesbianLips.es).

Although Gimeno and Ali and Luz lived in different eras, the comparisons between Gimeno's own struggle for her identity and the struggle Ali faced are extremely similar. Ali

struggled during most of her adult life with her attraction to Luz. She always felt guilty for not living the life of a normal, straight, Catholic, woman that her family and society wanted for her. The psychotherapy sessions she received as punishment for her actions only reinforced her brainwashed thinking. Despite these sessions she continued with her relationship with Luz until the very end of her life. Gimeno can relate to the struggle of Ali because she was fighting against her own desires. While she was living the life of a typical woman, she was not happy. Like both Ali and Luz, Gimeno acted on her desires and eventually began relationships with other women despite the danger involved. This connection between a real-life story resonated with Gimeno and inspired her to infuse some of her own experiences into the novel. Although there is a clear connection of similar experiences between Gimeno's sexuality and Luz and Ali, there consists also a very sharp contrast in the age in which they lived. Clearly Gimeno can relate to the struggle of embracing one's sexuality- especially when it falls outside the norms of a heteronormative society- but she cannot relate to the level of outright discrimination and persecution that Ali and Luz experienced. The Spain in which Gimeno grew up was one that existed largely after the stifling Franco dictatorship. The Spain she knew was one of transition, hope, and acceptance. Through Gimeno's personal experiences as well as the age in which she lives, she is able to create a novel of postmemory to which she has a very personal connection as well as a contemporary voice. Although Gimeno did not experience many of the events that Ali and Luz did, she did live through many of the same struggles. Therefore, her close relation to the story gives her novel an extremely personal feeling. The stream-of-consciousness writing enables all of her readers to get inside the mind of these two women and begin to understand the struggles that they-and also Gimeno-faced when confronted with the duties of their daily lives and the type of woman society demanded they be, and their innermost desires. Gimeno makes

the mind and body the means through which the readers can empathize and truly feel their struggles. Her use of postmemory in the novel allows Gimeno to give a voice not only to Ali and Luz but also to give light to the harsh and dehumanizing treatments given to lesbian women. By writing this novel Gimeno has inspired many contemporary readers to learn more about the treatment of lesbians during this time, similar to the way Gimeno herself was inspired by their real-life story.

### **3.2 Women as Body**

"We've been turned away from our bodies, shamefully taught to ignore them, to strike them with that stupid sexual modesty; we've been made victims of the old fool's game: each one will love the other."  
- *Hélène Cixous* "Laugh of the Medusa"

When Cixous writes in "Laugh of the Medusa" that women must write about their bodies because women are body, she is stemming from Michel Foucault's idea that true power lies in the ownership of one's body. If an individual does not own his or her body, in essence they have no power in their life. This is why authoritative societies attempt to control the bodies of their subjects because, "if one intervenes upon it to imprison it, or to make it work, it is in order to deprive the individual of a liberty that is regarded both as a right and as property" (Foucault 11). This theme of obtaining control of a woman's body can be seen in the novels *La voz dormida* and *Donde nadie te encuentre*. However, perhaps this theme can be most exemplified in *Su cuerpo era su gozo* because the entire novel centers on the female bodies of its protagonists and how they each struggle to take back their bodies from the heteronormative society in which they live. Their society dictates how they should use their body and for whom; and when these women fail to adhere to these norms, they receive a consequent punishment to the very body they have been fighting to own. The horrific episodes of Ali's psychiatric sessions prove this idea because the

misguided doctors try to manipulate her mind and body with conditioning through torture to give her unending guilt about her innate desires to be attracted to women. Gimeno plays with this theme of the body by putting the word in her title. Instead of referring to the body as a method of punishment and power, she refers it as 'su gozo'. 'Gozo' is defined as joy or pleasure. The title represents the fight between pleasure and pain associated with the body.

The female body is represented in many different ways. For instance, at the beginning of the novel the first sentence begins with Luz's old body, "<<Soy demasiado vieja para ti, niña.>> Y se mira al decirlo el cuerpo vencido, desnudo sobra las sábanas, pero no se ve vieja, ni se siente vieja" (Gimeno 1). This first sentence sets the tone for the entire novel and lets the reader know that the female body, in all its forms and conditions, is the dominant theme. In the present day narrative Luz's body is no longer a source of enjoyment because it stands as a constant reminder of her life with Ali. Perhaps because it was Ali with whom she shared her whole body, it brings back painful memories. Luz's self-reflection of her body continues:

El cuerpo no la engaña porque el cuerpo desnudo se muestra como es y no existe posibilidad de esconder nada; y el cuerpo le dice que es demasiado viejo para una niña de diecisiete años, pero que, sin embargo, es un cuerpo vivo y palpitante por más que a veces haya parecido que estaba muerto (Gimeno 2).

Her body is the source that defines her life. When she speaks of it, especially in the above quote, she does not only mean the physical appearance of her body she sees in the mirror but also the interior of her body which maintains and sustains her. While the appearance of her body shows that she has aged, the interior of her body allows her to feel alive. It is not her mind that has left her feeling dead and gone, but instead her body. This idea that it is instead the body, not the mind that controls can be seen throughout the novel.

Similar to how others felt entitled over La Pastora's body, the bodies of Ali and Luz were also severely controlled, manipulated, and punished by the Franco dictatorship. The connection between the body as an important part of a society's political power can also be seen in the era in which *Su cuerpo era su gozo* takes place. The events in the novel take place after the Spanish Civil War, during the Franco dictatorship that lasted until the 1970's. As Spanish writer Pura Sánchez remarks in her book *Individuas de dudosa moral* the "régimen franquista, se trató de aplicar un sistema punitivo, para castigar la trasgresión y la disidencia, que trataba de conseguir la docilidad de los pensamientos y los espíritus a través de la docilidad de los cuerpos" (105). Sánchez continues, "El poder, que pretendía una sociedad homogeneizada, no toleraba lo diverso y lo diferente; en relación con el cuerpo, en una sociedad machista y patriarcal, el cuerpo de los hombres era el cuerpo por excelencia, el cuerpo del poder" (105). Ali and Luz represent everything that is diverse, or also known as 'the Other' because their sexual identity does not fit in with the heteronormative ideals of the society. For this reason, they are prime examples for the kinds of people that the society did not tolerate. When Sánchez continues, she mentions that the body of the male was the body of excellence and power. This is why many men in the novel feel entitled to the bodies of Ali and Luz. From Ali's father, to her brother Lucio, to the police officer that violated the women at the moment of their arrest, each man has believed that his body is superior and that the bodies of the women around them exist for their pleasure. While the women struggle to keep 'su cuerpo su gozo', the men already assume that the women's bodies serve to pleasure them. This attitude is what Sánchez called a machista attitude because it fosters a belief in the minds of men, starting out with young boys, that their bodies are more useful and make them more powerful than the bodies of women. The female body on the other hand, "representa una radical diversidad, tanto más insultante cuanto innegable. Para su control, se le considera

sexualizado y se marca como símbolo de la transgresión" (Sánchez 106). Gimeno furthers this throughout her novel by writing many times that the women felt like "una mujer invisible" that was looked over by virtually everyone because their presences held no real power in their society. Sánchez brings up a familiar point when she writes that the woman's body serves as a symbol of transgression. This idea can also be seen when Cixous says that by writing the female body it becomes an incendiary and rebellious work. Cixous writes, "A feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive. It is volcanic; as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust; carrier of masculine investments; there's no other way" (888). Gimeno's text proves to be nothing but subversive because it centers on the female body and tells the story of two lesbians during Franco's dictatorship.

These women were not treated as human beings but rather as threats to the state. Sánchez writes that women like Ali and Luz were considered transgressors that threatened their conservative society because, "se sumaba el de la transgresión social: salir a la calle, expresar sus ideas, no realizar prácticas religiosas, incitar a los hombres a cometer desmanes. Quienes así actuaban eran nombradas *individuas y sujetas*" (109). In addition to being lesbians, Ali and Luz were guilty of all of these transgressions. They both enjoyed walking through the city, spent much of their lives educating themselves, did not hesitate to express their opinions, struggled with their religious identities under the Catholic church, and their existence propelled men to commit atrocities. Because of all of these serious transgressions, the women were both stripped of their humanity and their bodies and instead treated as subjects that require punishment from others. Ali's brother Lucio feels it is his duty to enforce punishment upon his sister for her transgressions. Along with their parents, he plays a vital role in getting Ali admitted into the mental hospital. Later when Ali and Luz have left the city, he feels that it is his duty to call Ali

and verbally assault her, "con aquella voz fría, diciendo palabras que ella no había escuchado antes y que no podían ni repetirse, entonces el alma se le congelaba y hubiera preferido estar muerta" (Gimeno 162). These threatening phone calls are detrimental to Ali's volatile mental state. Once Lucio decides that his sister is no longer following the correct path of a woman, he no longer sees her as his beloved younger sister but instead as a dangerous subject that needs to be contained.

Another instance of this entitlement is when the police officer arrives at the apartment of Luz and Ali to arrest them for their improper behavior. After being turned in by a scorned lover who was horrified at the women's intimate lives together, the issue becomes a political matter and an agent is sent to collect them. When he quietly enters he sees that they have pushed their beds together and are both wearing nightgowns. He is suddenly afflicted with an overwhelming feeling of excitement, "Y por darse cuenta de lo que allí había pasado y porque ese pensamiento le excitó de una manera que no podía contar a nadie" (Gimeno 84). Although he is ashamed of his sexual stimulation, he views the women as two bodies that are frightening yet also a pleasing spectacle. His shame fuels his sense of entitlement over their bodies and he can barely control himself. When he orders them to dress themselves he violates Luz by grabbing her breast:

No obstante, al agente se le fue la mano, no pudo evitarlo, a uno de los pechos de Luz Ortega, porque era una tentación ver cómo se movía, medio descubierto debajo de la bata, al compás de una respiración agitada. Al contacto con la mano, Luz se apartó con una náusea, lo que confirmó al agente que aquella mujer era el diablo (Gimeno 85).

This violation of Luz's body is a very telling episode in the formation of patriarchal ideas that have been ingrained into the heads of men under the machista society. They believe that the bodies of women are theirs to take. They believe that these women and their behavior exist for their own pleasure. However when a woman stands up for herself, in the way that Luz moved

herself from his grasp, the man instantly becomes hostile and aggressive to the woman because she does not appreciate and reciprocate the actions of the man. This male entitlement still exists today and further proves that even in supposedly modern civilizations the woman is still confined to the limits of her body; which exist solely for the pleasure of men.

Throughout their lives, Ali and Luz's bodies fall through the hands of others from their families, to Lucio, to the police agent that arrested them, and finally to the doctors at the mental hospital. Their bodies are their greatest assets yet they are constantly fighting against others to reclaim them. This male entitlement over the female body makes these actions of Lucio, the officer, and the doctors at the hospital seem justified. This is why Cixous emphasizes in her article that women must write because, "By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display" (880). She believes through writing, women can take back their bodies and essentially reclaim their place in this world. Although Ali finds little peace in many of the things in her life, she does turn to writing journals of her experiences as a form of catharsis. Originally intended to be private journals, these forms of expression end up releasing her partner Luz from criminal charges following Ali's death. This small expression of female writing is exactly what Cixous would agree is what women need to do in order to reclaim their own bodies.

### **3.3 The Lesbian Body**

"The mouth the lips the jaws the ears the ridges of the eyebrows the temples the nose the cheeks the chin the forehead the eyelids the complexion the ankle...the tongue the occiput the spine the flanks the navel the pubis the lesbian body." - Monique Wittig, *The Lesbian Body*

Gimeno emphasizes the female body, and how the two protagonists spend the entirety of the novel trying to reclaim their bodies from others who have attempted to control them. In addition to being marginalized as educated women, they were also marginalized as lesbians. The

two women are primarily described based upon their bodies and their minds. However, their minds are closely tied to their bodies. The body is considered not only a fascinating apparatus that lives and breathes, but also one that thinks. Rather than be described by their minds, the women are simply referred to as 'su cuerpo.' El cuerpo is often described as something that can think for itself but also function as a body in all its conditions. This mind/body dualism can be seen when Gimeno writes in one of Luz's stream of consciousness monologues, "...a pensar que estaba enferma aunque algo le decía que su enfermedad no era de las que se curaban...porque el cuerpo se aprende poco a poco, sin necesidad de explicación...El cuerpo menstrúa, el cuerpo expulsa líquidos que ni siquiera pueden nombrarse" (34-35). Here we can see several different aspects of how the body is referred in the text. First the body is described as ill, something that is innate and cannot be cured. With this kind of description, Luz herself is not sick. It is instead her body that is sick. Next, Gimeno writes that "el cuerpo se aprende poco a poco" which implies that the body, not the mind, can be taught and learn new things such as habits and lessons (34). This starkly contrasts the idea of body commonly seen in religious works where the body is simply a vessel in which the ultimate power lies the mind and soul. However, in this novel the soul is often described in terms of pain, loneliness, and isolation. Gimeno writes of, "su alma perdida" or "el alma sentía puro dolor" (37, 42, 46). Here, the soul is represented as a true burden that cannot find its own freedom. Perhaps the reason why Gimeno associates the soul with negative terminology is because the two women are struggling to live in a society where its central religion, Catholicism, is telling them that they are lost souls in need of a cure. While Luz is an atheist, Ali continues to go to church to try to find solace and peace. Instead, she leaves the church feeling like she needs to be punished with guilt over her relationship with Luz. After one particular church service she tells Luz, "<<Lo que hacemos no está bien y es lo que tiene la culpa

de tu ya no creas en Dios>>" (Gimeno 67). Ali is guilt-ridden after the mass, feeling like she deserves to be punished for living a lifestyle that is not in accordance to that of the church's beliefs. The soul is commonly related to religion because they believe that it is one's soul that continues after death. Sánchez writes, "podríamos decir que, en primer lugar, la homosexualidad viene a sumarse, junto con la prostitución femenina...a la lista de hechos transgresores de la moral católica que dicha homosexualidad...era judicialmente más punible" (112). Based on Sánchez's research, homosexuality was a very serious sin in the church at the time. Therefore, Ali constantly feels immense guilt. Although Luz is an atheist and does not agree with the sentiments of the church, she still feels the affects of its homophobic point of view because she must always suffer from someone who feels it is their right to punish her for her lifestyle. Because of this homophobic point of view, Ali and Luz are constantly told that their souls are condemned due to their relationships. Therefore, the soul always has negative connotations in the novel. Perhaps the reason why they focus so much on their bodies is because that is the only thing they feel they can control.

Finally, returning back to the aforementioned quote, Gimeno writes that "El cuerpo menstrúa, el cuerpo expulsa líquidos que ni siquiera pueden nombrarse" (35). Here, the body is referred to not as an object that thinks and learns, but instead as an object in the physical sense that is at its core an imperfect human body. It is instead a human body that cannot always control its functions. It is a human body that represents the human capital and worth in a society. As Foucault writes in his chapter, "The Body of the Condemned," both Ali and Luz's bodies are, in a sense condemned. He writes, "The body now serves as an instrument or intermediary...that is regarded both as a right and as property" (Foucault 11). Because Luz and Ali represented women who did not live the life of the heteronormative woman, or as Dolores Juliano calls them, "la

mujer caída", they must be punished through their most profitable asset (41). This idea of punishing a subject by inflicting pain upon their body is not an idea that began with Foucault. In the concentration camps during World War II, many women were subjected to sterilization, rape, and forced birth by doctors who worked at the concentration camps (Juliano 41). These conditions not only occurred against Jews, but also Spanish women who were considered 'maleantes.' Juliano writes that many times these treatments were applied to lesbians or other "mujeres caídas" such as prostitutes or even other women who didn't have children. She writes, "La represión incluía castigos físicos pero también la ocultación y el silencio" (Juliano 41). These physical punishments proved several key points to this real-life story of Ali and Luz: one being that women were considered subjects of the lowest class and that it was necessary to punish them accordingly for not using their bodies correctly by either not having children or for being too sexual; the second point being that the best way to treat them was through a physical punishment with their bodies. Their bodies, condemned by their conservative government along with the Catholic Church, are their only property of value. Their education, independent lifestyle, and self-confidence all pale in comparison to the danger their subversive bodies can yield to a heteronormative society. The women try throughout the novel to find their own space in their society through education and exposure to bigger and newer cities, but as marginalized lesbian women, their bodies are their greatest assets and their worst intermediary through punishment. This explains why the body is so ingrained upon their lives as well as in Gimeno's writing. At the core of this story is the lesbian body and how others try to fix it of a disease. The disease in question is homosexuality and this proves to be a second key theme in the novel since it is essentially at the forefront of the entire real-life headline.

### 3.4 Lesbianism and the Threat to Heteronormativity

"[*Compulsory Heterosexuality*] was not written to widen divisions but to encourage heterosexual feminists to examine heterosexuality as a political institution which disempowers women..."  
-Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and The Lesbian Experience"

In addition to being educated, freethinking, independent women, Ali and Luz were also lesbians. Their attraction to other women further marginalized them to an even lower social status. Raquel Platero Méndez affirms that women's sexuality itself was frowned upon unless it was used to please their husbands and ultimately produce more children. Platero Méndez writes that, "La sexualidad de las mujeres se comprendía como receptora de los deseos y necesidades de los varones, que sólo tiene sentido dentro la reproducción y la organización familiar" (18). Embracing one's sexuality meant one embraced their body and all of its capabilities. Female sexuality is considered dangerous to a heteronormative society because it gives power to the female and is thought to disempower the male. Since the male is at the center of a patriarchal and heteronormative society, female sexuality must be restrained. She continues with an excerpt of rules for a woman from la Sección Femenina, the women's branch of the Falange:

En cuanto respecta a la posibilidad de relaciones íntimas con tu marido, es importante recordar tus obligaciones matrimoniales: si él siente la necesidad de dormir, que sea así no le presiones o estimes la intimidad. Si tu marido sugiera la unión, entonces accede humildemente, teniendo siempre en cuenta que su satisfacción es siempre más importante que la de una mujer...Si tu marido te pidiera prácticas sexuales inusuales, sé obediente y no te quejes (Sección Femenina, 1958).

La Sección Femenina was a government-sanctioned branch of the Falange, which meant that its sexist propaganda was considered the law during its time. Similar to la Ley de Vagos y Maleantes, the dictatorship employed these laws in order to enact the most control over its subjects. Shocking to modern readers is the knowledge that la Sección Femenina was led by a woman, Pilar Primo de Rivera, the sister of José Antonio Primo de Rivera who was a founder

and leader of the Falange. Therefore, the subjugation of all women was deeply institutionalized in the Spanish government during this time. According to groups such as la Sección Femenina, women had no clear power over their own sexuality. Instead, their bodies were at the whim of their husband. Once again the female body can be seen as a vital tool in controlling women. They were not to act on their own sexual desires, only those of their husband. The above quote from la Sección Femenina not only promotes male superiority to the point of proposing instances of nonconsensual sex, "si tu marido te pidiera prácticas sexuales inusuales, sé obediente y no te quejes" it also condemns any woman who embraces her sexuality in any other way, especially when used in relation with other women (Sección Femenina). Many factors played a part in enforcing these rules upon women, but Platero Méndez mentions three very important influences that also appear in Gimeno's novel: the state, the Catholic Church, and the institution of psychiatric medicine (20).

The main goal in these three factors is to cure the lesbian tendencies from people who are believed to be homosexual. Regarding psychiatric medicine, Platero Méndez writes that it attempted to eradicate lesbianism through harsh treatments, "Se entendía la homosexualidad como una enfermedad contagiante sobre la que había que actuar específicamente como medidas de electroshock y terapias aversivas," (22). In Gimeno's novel, the families and people around both Ali and Luz infantilize them and believe that they must be cured of their afflictions because they don't know any better. These ideas of curing can be seen through their families, the state, and Ali's visits to church, but are expressed most harshly in Ali's psychiatric treatments. Her treatments first begin when Ali's father writes a letter to a well-known doctor of medicine and psychiatry describing his daughter's illicit activities. First his advice for Ali's affliction are related to her attending University and that what she needs is a father with a strong will who will

guide her to a cure. He writes to Ali's father, "<<Ahora debes ocuparte de ella. Ahora debes enseñarle a ser una mujer, a vestirse y peinarse, a ocuparse de cosas de mujeres y no de las cosas en las que piensan los chicos>>" (Gimeno 43). This is perhaps the first instance of when these ideas are quietly being conditioned into Ali's mind. However when her behavior does not change, these measures are taken to the extreme when she is sent to a psychiatric clinic and subjected to electro-shock treatments and "terapias aversivas" (Platero Méndez 22).

When Ali is first sent to the psychiatric hospital, she has no idea the extent of the "treatments" she will be receiving. Her mother simply packs her a bag and tells her that, "<<Van a ayudarnos a todos en realidad>>" (Gimeno 100). Here we can see just how much her family feels affected by Ali's lifestyle. They tell her that they have her best interests at heart, saying things such as, "<<Vas a curarte, hija, no te preocupes>>" but in reality they only care about her lifestyle because it is not in accordance to their own belief systems so they feel threatened (Gimeno 101). They feel threatened because she is beginning to gain control of her own body. By delighting in her sexual desires and joining in an intimate relationship with another woman, she is embracing and owning her body. By curing her of her lesbian tendencies, her family is attempting to regain control over her body. When Ali begins to take control of her own body, she is taking the place of a man who could, and supposedly should be controlling it. Before she leaves for her treatment, her mother remarks that this treatment is actually a good thing and it is only made possible through the kindness of her brother. Her mother says, "<<Agradéceselo a tu hermano y a sus contactos, que el lugar al que vas jamás habiéramos podido pagarlo>>" (Gimeno 101). Here we can see how central the male figure plays in the life of a woman during this era. When a woman is sick or "una mujer caída," it is the responsibility of a male (husband, father, brother, e.g.) to fix her and give her a better social standing. Without a man the woman is

seen as erratic and hysteric which is where the psychiatric treatments come into play. In her first round of treatments at the facility she is exposed to many techniques seen in psychotherapy, such as negative word association, and conditioning. These techniques coupled with many mind-altering pills, created an instable mental frame. She describes her life as a constant state in between the conscious and the subconscious, "no puede saber si aquello fue la verdad o fue parte de un sueño, no sabía tampoco si estaba despierta o dormida y podía incluso haber dudado si estaba todavía viva, como estaba cuando entró allí, o ya muerta" (Gimeno 105). The pills the hospital makes the women take keep them in a submissive state where they cannot control even the smallest human bodily function. They cannot think for themselves and are under complete control of the doctors. Ali goes through many stages of a treatment facility, denial, shock, and finally submission, "Pero llegó un momento en el que Ali dejó de luchar porque se perdió en aquella oscuridad perpetua, llegó un momento en el que se dejó ir porque pensó que no volvería a despertar ni volvería su conciencia a pisar el mundo de los vivos y dejó de importarle" (Gimeno 106). The moment when Ali stops fighting and succumbs to the harsh treatments, she becomes one step closer to being the ideal woman in a heteronormative society: a submissive woman that accepts the conditions that one imposes on her without question.

Ali spends months in the facility and completely loses her sense of self. When she returns and is reunited with Luz, she is finally able to tell the horrific experiences while in the facility. She appears "muy pálida" and "era ella aunque parecía otra" (Gimeno 126). She reveals her experience to Luz:

Ali le contó todo, que la habían internado en un hospital y que en esos meses había estado durmiendo, que no la había podido llamar...que en medio de aquel sueño largo había tenido muchas pesadillas...que a veces tenía por la mañana cuando no sabía si era un sueño o era la vida real...que con las pastillas que tomaba no podía tener la mente clara, que sus propios pensamientos a veces eran extraños, como si vinieran de muy lejos (Gimeno 126).

The purpose of places like the hospital where Ali lived for months is to completely brainwash these women through methods of negative word association, conditioning, and forcing them to constantly consume mind-altering drugs. The purpose is to alienate the women from their thoughts, their beliefs, their partners, their desires, and to transform them into better examples of women. They made the women feel immense guilt for their actions. "Estaban a menudo sumidas en una situación que carecía de inteligibilidad, sin saber si eran las únicas quienes tenían estas vivencias, carentes de redes, términos y referencias" (Platero Méndez 24). This form of physical and mental alienation attempts to create inside each woman, a distance between their desires toward women and back toward men where they should be. Ali returns to live with her family after her first round of treatment until Luz hires a private investigator to find Ali's whereabouts. The investigator finds Ali but he reports to Luz that he should leave her alone, "Pero ustedes no podrán estar nunca tranquilas porque se han situado al margen de la sociedad, la sociedad tiene sus leyes, es normal. Su amiga está enferma, no hay más que verla. Yo que usted la dejaría en paz" (Gimeno 178). In this excerpt, we can see again see the intrusion of the law in these women's lives. We can also see that despite her treatments to cure Ali, she still remains mentally unstable. In addition to this, we can see the male entitlement when he tells Luz to leave Ali alone. His attitude is another example of how some people during this era feel as though they are superior to people that live on the margins of society, such as lesbians.

Eventually Ali and Luz are reunited and try to return to a quiet life. Gimeno writes that, "pasò mucho tiempo--ese que Luz pensaba que serviría para sanar las heridas--" but her wounds did not heal and Ali returned for a second treatment (185). The second time Ali goes to the mental hospital, she receives a different kind of traumatic experience in order to cure these women. This time she receives electro-shock therapy to further cure her of her afflictions.

Gimeno treats the electro-shock with less attention than she does Ali's first round of treatments. The electro-shock treatments are not described in in-depth narratives similar to her first visit in the hospital. They are instead only mentioned a handful times in the novel and they are spoken about in a very casual tone. I believe that Gimeno writes of these treatments in a casual way to represent how frequently this occurred to women during this time. By writing about it in an offhand, casual tone, the readers begin to understand that electro-shock therapy was in fact a casual technique that many people thought was required to cure these individuals. When readers try to accept this fact, the horrors of the treatments become that much more real. Ali writes of the electro-shock treatments, "recordaba los electrochoques como si fueran fogonazos, contó que lo peor de todo era el sonido del corazón, la sensación de que el corazón se paraba de repente" (Gimeno 187). This description illustrates the danger of these treatments to the body. Ali writes that the electro-shock treatments suddenly stopped her heart and created an explosion in her body. It is evident that these treatments were intended to create the maximum amount of pain in an individual to make them reach a point in their brain where they will never act subversive again because they will never forget the amount of pain they felt with these treatments. The electro-shock therapy was perhaps the last step in destroying Ali's already instable mental frame. These treatments render her a completely different person. The Ali that remains is simply a shell of the person she used to be.

After the treatments Ali and Luz begin to live together again but things are not the same. Soon Ali attempts suicide but fails and becomes hospitalized again. The bureaucratic system of the hospital will not allow Luz to take Ali home or even visit her in the hospital because she is not a family member and she cannot easily admit to their relationship. Therefore, Ali's brother is called to once again take control of Ali once she leaves the hospital. Ali fears her life trapped

under the dangerous confines of Lucio again and works with Luz to help her escape her situation. Luz realizes that no matter where they go, Ali will always be haunted by the harsh treatments she has received in her life not only from the hospitals but also from her disapproving family. This is when Luz decides to end Ali's suffering and bring her to her death:

Entonces se dirigió al baño, llenó un vaso de agua y allí disolvió todos los analgésicos que llevaba en el bolsillo... <<Duerme>>, susurró Luz, y al poco rato, o quizá fue mucho, ya notó que Ali había dejado de respirar, y entonces le colocó la mano en el regazo, le acarició la mejilla y salió por la puerta (Gimeno 222).

When Luz brings Ali to her death, she is not murdering her. Instead, she is simply following Ali's wishes. Ali had written of all her experiences in her notebooks, including her complete unhappiness in life and her desire to die and escape from all of her pain. When Luz is put on trial for murder, these notebooks clearly expressing Ali's will to die are what ends up liberating Luz from her sentence. Ali's writing not only liberates Luz from her sentence but it also liberates Ali because it finally helps her to leave the painful world behind. As Cixous says, women must write, "An act which will not only 'realize' the decensored relation of woman to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal" (880). Ali frees herself in her writing and through it she is able to express her unique perspective that will forever live on among the silenced female and lesbian voices during the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. By Gimeno continuing with this tradition of women's writing, she is ensuring that their voices will never be silenced again. These two women truly defied the traditional gender roles during their time and they suffered severe injustices for their defiance. Through Gimeno's use of postmemory, their experiences are rediscovered by a modern audience and their voices cease to be silenced.

## CONCLUSION

The Spain that existed during the Spanish Civil War and throughout the Franco dictatorship is not the Spain that exists today. Spain during this era was a very censored and controlled society. The state worked as a powerful institution that constantly infringed its beliefs upon its subjects. In order to achieve the utmost power and control, the state attempted to eradicate all the voices that opposed their vision. The majority of those whose voices were suppressed were citizens who lived on the margins of society. They were people who did not adhere to the state's established norms. In order to silence these voices, the state subjected its subjects to harsh prejudice, discrimination, alienation, violent acts, electro-shock therapies, and even death. Because of these treatments, many of the individuals that lived throughout this time felt it necessary to keep their voice silent even after the dictatorship ended. Many individuals want to forget about the past, "arguing that the recovery of historical memory is causing unnecessary conflict and diverting attention away from important social and economic problems" (Leggott 26). However, in the last decade or so, there have been persistent novelists who have re-exposed these silenced voices through works of historical fiction. Many of these novelists use a technique called postmemory in their works of historical fiction because although they may not have lived through the trauma directly, they are adapting their writing from real-life accounts of people who did experience it directly. These second-hand accounts have the advantage of being written by contemporary female writers as well as infusing modern themes into the stories that originated years and years in the past. As a contemporary audience, we are able to read these novels alongside works of modern feminist theory, lesbian theory, and queer theory as well as through works of Spanish history and postmemory in reference to these women to reveal a completely new perspective and a new voice that had never before been read.

Although many groups of people were marginalized during this time in Spanish history, this thesis focuses on the precarious roles of women during the time. As previously mentioned, the Spanish government attempted to regulate the activities of subversive individuals, such as women, who they felt threatened their status quo. The state mandated the activities that a proper woman should follow with the addition of la Sección Femenina. La Sección Femenina played a crucial role in enforcing the role of the traditional woman onto all female individuals. Some of these prescribed roles set forth by the state were expressed in literatures of la Sección Femenina. The rules read as follows:

Porque la única misión que tienen asignada las mujeres en la tarea de la Patria es el Hogar: Por eso, ahora, con la paz, ampliaremos la labor iniciada en nuestras escuelas de formación, para hacerles a los hombres tan agradable la vida de familia que dentro de la casa encuentren todo aquello que antes les faltaba, y así no tendrán que ir a buscar en la taberna o en el casino los ratos de expansión (La Sección Femenina 48).

The model of a proper woman was to be a subservient individual who constantly served her husband and her God. She was not to be educated in universities, nor was she to live an independent life cultivating her own interests. All women who defied this rule were immediately considered threats to the state. With many of the contemporary historical fiction published in the 21st century, a multitude of the silenced voices of females were revealed. Each of the women mentioned in the three novels discussed in this thesis, represent women who defied the traditional role of being a woman and continuously fought for their own voices. With these new novels of postmemory, the female writers who write them begin to embody the women in their writings and most importantly express their perspective that had previously been silenced.

In the first novel, *La voz dormida* by Dulcé Chacón, all of the central female characters defy the traditional gender roles in one way or another. The women, on whom the novel focuses, are all imprisoned due to their incendiary behavior. They were considered subversive not only

because they fought in the Republican forces that opposed Franco's dictatorship, but also because they did not adhere to the norms of being a woman that were required of all women. They are all female soldiers who are fighting against the stifling, conservative, government that wishes to silence their voices and repress their freedoms. They are imprisoned for their beliefs yet they do not let that keep them from fighting for their freedoms. They continue to defy the guards once in the prison, and when some of them are released, they return to being soldiers fighting for their freedoms. Unfortunately one of the women, Hortensia is ultimately sentenced to death. However, Hortensia's character represents an image of a woman who seemingly has it all. She has a husband and children and acts as the maternal figure for many women in the prison, yet she never ceases to fight for her voice as a *miliciana*. These women each challenge the patriarchal norms of their society because they did not fit into the established gender roles. Chacón pieces this novel together with testimonials, interviews, and written accounts of the women who were in the prison. This technique of postmemory helps to create a distance between the trauma of the events and Chacón, and she is able to represent the women with deep and meaningful descriptions while unveiling their forgotten experiences.

The next example of a woman who defied the traditional gender roles of the era was in Alicia Giménez Bartlett's novel, *Donde nadie te encuentre*. The central figure is La Pastora, who is an intersexual individual that also plays a vital role in the rebel group the Maquis. La Pastora is notorious for being a cold-blooded killer who must be stopped. Throughout the novel, we learn the truth about her life and that she is not dangerous but simply an individual who has struggled her entire life trying to establish her identity. At birth she was classified a female although she was born with atypical sexual organs. However, she never identified as a female and instead identified with being a male. Her defiance of the prescribed gender roles created a hostile

childhood where she had to fend for herself, thus transforming her into the intimidating leader and last living member of the Maquis. Because she did not fit into the conventional norms of a woman, she was considered a threat that needed to be eliminated which explains why her capture was so important to the fascist government. Not only did she defy the gender roles by identifying as a male but she also held a powerful and well-respected position in a male-dominated group. The novel, *La Pastora: del monte al mito*, about La Pastora by José Calvo served as an inspiration for Bartlett when writing her novel. She never knew La Pastora but she was able to use postmemory as a basis for the story, but infusing it with her own creative backstory regarding the two journalists who attempt to find La Pastora. La Pastora represents a subversive woman for the simple reason that she challenged almost every established gender role for women. Therefore, it is imperative that her story never be forgotten so that all women, lesbians, intersexuals, and marginalized individuals are inspired by her tireless struggle to establish her identity.

The final example of women who defied their roles is in the novel *Su cuerpo era su gozo* by Beatriz Gimeno. The novel tells the true-lie story of two young lesbians trying to survive during the period of the Spanish Civil War and Franco dictatorship. As seen in the excerpt of la Sección Femenina, women were supposed to be subservient wives and mothers. How then were lesbians to be treated? In a modification to la Ley de Vagos y Maleantes in 1954, the act of homosexuality was to be severely punished through methods of isolation, psychotherapy, and even electro-shock therapy. This occurred in the case of Ali and Luz, the two women in the novel who are based upon the real-life women. Throughout their relationship, the women were pressured by the Catholic Church, the state, and the institution of psychiatric medicine in order to be cured of their affliction (Platero Méndez 20). The women were endlessly persecuted and

punished by each entity for the nature of their relationship. Ali and Luz truly defied the gender roles of the era because they refused to acquiesce to the demands to become straight, submissive, housewives. However, they were routinely punished in life altering ways. Ali was subjected to multiple visits to a mental hospital where she received mind-altering drugs, isolation, and electro-shock therapy in order to cure her. These wounds never healed and she began to yearn for death. Her partner, Luz aided her in her death and was ultimately put on trial for murder. In 2001 a headline appeared in Spanish newspapers that Isabel was proven innocent in the murder case. This moment is when Gimeno first learned of the story and decided to write her own version of the events. Gimeno lives in a new and reformed Spain of the 21st century, therefore she did not directly experience the trauma that Ali and Luz did. However, she is able to use postmemory to convey this story to a modern audience. Ali and Luz defied the heteronormative society and refused to adhere to the traditional views of being a woman.

Although the era of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship was a period of stifled liberties and silenced voices, these perspectives are beginning to receive attention through these contemporary female writers such as Chacón, Bartlett, and Gimeno. Each female writer is able to infuse their own experiences living as women in Spain, albeit in a different era, with the repressed voices of these women from the past. Through their writing, Spanish women are finally having their voice heard. As Hélène Cixous emphasizes in her text, "The Laugh of the Medusa," women must write. She affirms, "Woman must put herself into the text--as into the world and into history--by her own movement. The future must no longer be determined by the past" (Cixous 875). In these works of historical fiction, these novelists are putting themselves in the text, as well as the unique female experiences of the women from the past in order to create their own empowerment and refuse to allow these injustices against women to ever occur again.

Through their use of postmemory, these female writers are able to finally give a voice to the silenced views of the oppressed women during this age.

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## **VITA**

Georgia Reagan was born in Arlington, Texas and moved around with her family to Slidell, Louisiana, then Birmingham, Alabama, and finally to Madison, Alabama. She graduated from The University of Alabama in May 2010 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish. She graduates from Louisiana State University in May 2013 with a Master of Arts in Hispanic Studies where she has worked as a teaching assistant for the last two years.