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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Other Mothers: Matrilineal Genealogies and Maternal Memory in Contemporary Spanish Fiction

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Spanish

by

McKenna Rose Middleton

Dissertation Committee:
Distinguished Professor Gonzalo Navajas, Chair
Associate Professor Santiago Morales-Rivera
Assistant Professor Rocío Pichon-Rivière

2024

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DEDICATION

To my mother, Denise

In the consensual reality, we all have access to little wild mothers in the flesh. These are women who, as soon as you see them, something in you leaps, and something in you thinks, "MaMa." You take one look and think, "I am her progeny, I am her child, she is my mother, my grandmother."

Clarissa Pinkola Estés
Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Other Mothers: Matrilineal Genealogies and Maternal Memory in Contemporary Spanish Fiction

by

McKenna Rose Middleton

Doctor of Philosophy in Spanish

University of California, Irvine, 2024

Distinguished Professor Gonzalo Navajas, Chair

This dissertation project explores the idea of matrilineal genealogies and analyzes how 20th and 21st century Spanish films and texts expand the notion of motherhood to encompass unexpected figures and formulate unique kinship formations. Contemporary Spanish fiction serves as a particularly rich area of analysis for these research questions since the texts and films I evaluate in my project reject any type of universalizing prescription of maternal experience by offering alternative forms of knowledge production through nuanced interpretations of maternal practice. This stands in stark contrast to the prototypical figure of the Spanish mother which evokes imagery of the Catholic woman who, taking inspiration from the Virgin Mary, gladly and selflessly engages in domestic work and childcare at the service of her family and country. I consider the process of memory retrieval through writing and narration as integral to this sharing of maternal memory along matrilineal lines. This process manifests as a complication of the Demeter-Persephone myth in which the daughter and mother both speak, searching for each other, either through her memories or in substitute figures. The idea of intergenerational inheritance between women establishes the role of language of the mother and recognizes the ways that feminine subjectivity is formed and challenged by maternal practices. In this project, I also ask what factors can hinder the flow of matrilineal wisdom, creating gaps in the generational

archive of maternal knowledge such as the influence of institutional motherhood, the absence of the mother, and patriarchal hegemony. All these topics are central elements for my research project which identifies how fictional representations of maternal practice can serve to fill in archival gaps as well as how reconfigurations of matrilineal genealogies constitute an alternative form of knowledge production. I first explore the idea of institutional motherhood and patriarchal motherhood before turning to the figure of the substitute mother, the concept of ghostly mother, and the potential for intergenerational narratives. My aim is to articulate a contribution to modern and contemporary Peninsular literary and film studies as well as motherhood studies.

Introduction

Miguel de Unamuno's enigmatic protagonist Tía Tula synthesizes the contradictory nature of maternal identity when she asserts, "toda mujer nace madre" (Unamuno, *Tula* 27). As a character, Tula embodies the complexity of maternal experience and practice. Her status as an aunt who performs maternal care serves as a starting point to challenge the boundaries of the category of "mother" while also questioning the essentialization of motherhood. Her role as a nonbiological mother to her sister's children demonstrates how mother work extends out as a web to other "mothers," some with biological connections and others who have performed maternal care to strengthen spiritual bonds.

The title of this dissertation, *Other Mothers: Matrilineal Genealogies and Maternal Memory in Contemporary Spanish Fiction*, encapsulates the principle theoretical underpinnings of my analysis. My goal is to articulate how dynamic and complicated representations of mothers challenge patriarchal definitions of motherhood. The term "other mothers" seeks to identify representations of maternal practice that stand in contrast to the prototypical figure of the Spanish mother which evokes imagery of the Catholic woman who, taking inspiration from the Virgin Mary, gladly and selflessly engages in domestic work and childcare at the service of her family and country. The strategy of this dissertation consists of a comparative analysis of "other mothers" present in contemporary Spanish fiction – substitute mothers, ghostly mothers, and daughtermothers – that challenge the idea of institutional motherhood, or expectations surrounding mothers that are defined and endorsed by patriarchal culture. Sometimes these figures and their connections to mother work are obvious, while others possess more subtle, dynamic links to matrilineal genealogies. My research considers how contemporary Peninsular literature and film challenge the concept of institutional motherhood through depictions of

alternative maternal experience and intergenerational, matrilineal narratives. If, as Nancy Chodorow asserts, women's performance of mothering as the primary caregiver for children "is a product of a social and cultural *translation* of their childbearing and lactation capacities" (emphasis mine), representations of maternal practice that operates outside of patriarchal norms can serve to undo the hegemonic power of institutional motherhood (30). The literary and cinematic figures I analyze in this dissertation exemplify instead the concept of matrilineal wisdom, or embodied knowledge passed down between generations of women, which constitutes an alternative form of knowledge production through maternal practice. The figures performing mother work who appear in this dissertation are biological mothers, nonreproducing mothers, queer mothers, childless mothers, grandmothers, aunts, friends, sisters, and even ghosts. They comprise matrilineal genealogies that are anything but linear, dismissing a strict reliance on biological ties or patriarchal legitimacy. Luce Irigaray defines matrilineal genealogies as a "female family tree" that opposes the patriarchal one while Naomi Lowinsky's related concept of the Motherline is "not a straight line" but a textured cloth woven together by the threads of generational connections (Irigaray 19, Lowinsky in O'Reilly and Abbey 231). Therefore, to interpret the narratives included in this dissertation as characterizing relationships between mothers and daughters fails to acknowledge the web of intergenerational identification of shared feminine experience and performance of mother work depicted across these texts and films.

These other mothers are situated in Spanish fiction, both literature and film, produced in 20th and 21st century due to its rich diversity of maternal representation. The post-war and transition period texts and films I analyze reject any type of universalizing prescription of maternal experience by offering alternative forms of knowledge production through nuanced interpretations of maternal practice and nonheteronormative kinship formations. The fictional

representation of maternal memory intervenes as a contribution to historical memory. Therefore, I read these texts through Avery Gordon's theoretical framework of the "sociological text" in which Gordon proposes a new kind of knowledge production that looks beyond the existing material archive (150). The concept of "official history" sustains a particular relevance for Spanish authors and creators of the periods following the Spanish Civil War and Francisco Franco's dictatorship because of the regime's tactic of leveraging coherent metanarratives to legitimize his regime and control the behavior of Spain's citizens. In particular, William Viestenz suggests that cultural production "can function as an innately political act by challenging the truth-content embedded in the perceptible framework of the social" (179-180). Franco's regime aimed to maintain political, historical, and ideological purity. Consequently, the end of Francoist Spain by way of Franco's death in 1975 ushered in a period of literary reflection on the Spanish Civil War and post-war years in Spain. This is exemplified in works such as Martín Gaite's *El cuarto de atrás* which simultaneously recounts the author's memories of this period and identifies a kind of memory fatigue since, "desde la muerte de Franco habrá notado cómo proliferan los libros de memorias, ya es una peste" (201). Martín Gaite goes on to ask, "Si a mí me aburren las memorias de los demás, por qué no le van a aburrir a los demás las mías?" (*El cuarto* 201-202). Just as Franco's formulation of an official national historical account of the Spanish Civil War and implementation of shared ideological symbols complemented the law establishing his authority, these personal literary accounts of war and post-war memories supplement the post-Franco legal framework of forgetting established by the *Pacto del Olvido.* Fictional representations of the past can be used to provide alternate versions of the official (or ostensibly objective) history and modify significantly the shared historical archive. Maternal memory presents a unique "countermemory" through its narration since maternal subjects are

doubly silenced as women and as mothers (Gordon 22). Elizabeth Jelin similarly submits a complementary view of memory and history. Jelin sees memory as "a crucial source of history" and "a stimulus for the development of the agenda for historical research" while history "allows us to probe and critically question the contents of memory" (56). Therefore, memory and history can inform one another by leveraging the processes of remembering and forgetting. Memory work performs this function of declaring memory to be a crucial component of history while also problematizing the ideological missions of history and its oft-proposed objectivity. Sara Ahmed, in *Living a Feminist Life* (2017) sees memory work not as recollection, but rather "you can gather memories like things, so they become more than half glimpsed, so that we can see a fuller picture; so you can make sense of how different experiences connect" (22). Therefore, one route toward justice through memory work consists of not just esteeming memories that have been forgotten but putting them into context to understand why and how certain memories went through a process of oblivion in order to prevent similar injustices in the future. Therefore, maternal memory through testimony and fiction aims at the goal of asserting memory's relationship to history while also providing an alternative to cultural matricide and silence through the presentation of subaltern, feminine, and maternal experiences.

While the primary subject of this dissertation remains the "other mothers" of Spanish fiction, I take a transnational comparative approach to my research. Lowinsky's understanding of the Motherline supports this approach since, "Our personal Motherlines connect us to universal myths" (Lowinsky in O'Reilly and Abbey 231). Furthermore, Sharon Abbey and Charlotte Harris carried out a comparison of personal Motherline stories and concluded that, "there is more diversity between generations of women in our Motherlines than there is between our cultures" (Abbey and Harris in O'Reilly and Abbey 263). The exchange of maternal memory both

intergenerationally and transnationally reveals the patterns of maternal experience while also honoring individual subjectivity. In this way, cross-cultural motherhood works to expand the diversity of maternal experience rather than universalize it. For this reason, I have included cultural works from England, France, Puerto Rico, among others, to support my analysis of Spanish fiction. Furthermore, the inclusion of non-Spanish authors and filmmakers like Virginia Woolf, Dodie Smith, and Céline Sciamma aim to engage in an international conversation about redefinitions of motherhood through personal narratives in the 20th and 21st centuries. They appeal to questions about how the mediums of writing and film approach the intersection of memory and motherhood as well as what kinds of tactics these directors and authors use to establish an alternative form of knowledge production. I also consider what consistencies and discrepancies are found across international narratives on motherhood and how they complicate the concepts of matrilineal genealogies and maternal memory.

Most of the works referenced were written by women about women, with the exception of Unamuno's *La Tía Tula* and Pedro Almodóvar's films *Volver* and *Todo sobre mi madre*. The focus on fiction produced by women aims to highlight the ways maternal memory transmission operates outside the confines of patriarchal culture. The outliers of mother stories produced by men that I assess complement the other fictions by revealing the ongoing, contextualized conversations between institutional, patriarchal motherhood and maternal experience. Likewise, I incorporate both Spanish and Catalan cultural production in my discussion of motherhood to further privilege the diversity of maternal experience by integrating subaltern perspectives and minority languages of the Spanish state into my interpretative framework. Nevertheless, all of the Spanish and international figures embody dynamic, complicated, and often contradictory maternal practice. For this reason, my dissertation is organized by concept rather than author,

text, medium, or time period. However, these subjects resist taxonomy as all of the subjects of this dissertation exemplify more than one category of maternal experience. This trait stands in support of my argument since it honors the multiplicity of maternal experience and demonstrates how these figures cannot be reduced to singular classifications.

The first chapter of this dissertation positions the idea of institutional motherhood in contrast to maternal experience, drawing on the definitions of each as proposed by Adrienne Rich in *Of Woman Born* alongside other prominent contemporary motherhood studies scholars. While the institution of motherhood supports a binary and reductionist dichotomy of "good" mother and "bad" mother, maternal experience honors the diverse reality of maternal practice, embracing disparate encounters with mother work as the norm rather than an outlier. This chapter develops the foundation for the rest of the dissertation by defining key terms from the field of motherhood studies and contextualizing them in the religious, political, medical, and literary context of 20th and 21st century Spain. I trace the changes and consistencies in cultural assumptions about motherhood across centuries, starting with the image of the wife and mother as illustrated in Fray Luis de Leon's *La perfecta casada* (1584) and moving through to feminist and conservative contemporary understandings of motherhood in the 20th and 21st centuries. In an application of Irigaray's work *Sexes and Genealogies* (1989), I propose the narration of matrilineal genealogies and alternative kinship formations as a solution to cultural matricide and patriarchal silencing of maternal memory. I also suggest that fictional texts can operate as solutions to fill archival gaps and silences. I identify the process of memory retrieval through writing as essential to the exchange of matrilineal wisdom and the destabilization of institutional motherhood. Reading maternal experience as distinct from yet in constant conversation with

institutional motherhood, I conclude this chapter by constructing an understanding of writing matrilineal genealogies as a path towards recovering a feminine cultural inheritance.

Chapter 2 of my dissertation turns to the figure of the substitute mother as a way to rethink matrilineal genealogies through fiction. The term "substitute mother" comes from Nancy Chodorow's work *Reproduction of Mothering* (16). The concept affirms the intergenerational nature of mother work while also problematizing the figure of the "patriarchal mother." The substitute mother figure makes up one thread of the web of matrilineal genealogies, demonstrating the potential of anti-heteronormative kinship formations to facilitate authentic maternal experience and sever mother work from institutional motherhood. My analysis begins with Unamuno's figure of Tía Tula who establishes a generational continuity of maternal practice and matrilineal wisdom, yet consistently confirms her status as devoid of the influence of the patriarchal institution of motherhood. Nevertheless, Tula reveals the potentially complicated relationship between nonreproducing women who perform maternal care since her status hinges on her insistence that others, most notably her sister, participates in patriarchal institutions of marriage and motherhood. Tula becomes the first example of a figure who performs queer motherhood, underlining the gap between expectations and lived reality. I then use this analysis to inform my interpretation of other substitute mother figures in later works of Spanish literature and film including Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945), Rosa Montero's *Te trataré como a una reina* (1984), and Pedro Almodóvar's *Todo sobre mi madre* (1999). These works blur the boundaries of relational categories and kinship terminologies to further expand the definition of "mother."

In Chapter 3, I present the concept of the ghostly mother as a nuance of the absent mother, a figure that pervades interpretations of post-war Spanish fiction. I look at the ways

daughters maintain their connections to the Motherline and matrilineal wisdom despite the physical absence of the biological mother. Through intergenerational repetition often of the mother's performance of care work as the daughter transitions to the identity of daughtermother, or a mother who experiences herself simultaneously as mother and daughter, the intergenerational lines of communication reemerge through haunting. The haunting of the ghostly mother corresponds to an encounter with the absent mother who is not really absent at all, but mutual recognition of the traces left behind. Through her own transition to motherhood and wifehood, Rodoreda's Natalia in *La plaça del Diamant* (1962) embodies two kinds of ghostly motherhood: Natalia's ghostly status as a result of wartime conditions as well as her desire to receive matrilineal wisdom from her deceased mother. I then explore the themes of the ghostly mother in Carmen Martín Gaite's novel *Lo raro es vivir* (1996) and Pedro Almodóvar's film *Volver* (2006) which both expose the association between maternal memory and phenomenological memory. Finally, I read Isabel Coixet's film *My Life without Me* (2003) as an example of the establishment of legacy through written testimony of maternal memory by a ghostly mother as she comes to terms with her impending ghostly status. The ghostly mother figure considers the two-way transmission of maternal memory as it refers to the mother's memory of her own maternal experience as well as the dependence of the daughter's memory of the mother on that intergenerational exchange.

Finally, Chapter 4 assesses how understanding cultural matricide as an extreme consequence of matrophobia necessitates the narration of matrilineal genealogies through the writing of maternal subjectivity in intergenerational narratives. Testimony of maternal memory and alternative kinship formations highlights rather than hides the gaps between expectations around motherhood and the actual diversity of maternal experiences. Motherline stories,

according to Lowinsky "link generations of women" (Lowinsky in O'Reilly and Abbey 227). Therefore, they recognize the role intergenerational memory exchanges play in honoring mutual subjectivity of all members of the grandmother-mother-daughter intergenerational triad. Again, this triad nor the term Motherline or matrilineal indicates a linear quality of matrilineal genealogies. On the contrary, the texts analyzed in Chapter 4 reveal how secrets and resentments can hinder the flow of intergenerational wisdom and maternal memory. Instead of idealizing motherhood, the texts within this chapter challenge motherhood as normative and essential by positing the concept of maternal regret. These texts point to the pitfalls of intergenerational miscommunications and herald intergenerational narratives and testimonies of maternal memory as an alternative to the hegemony of institutional motherhood and the silence it encourages. While these characters sometimes repeat mistakes and perpetuate generational cycles of trauma, they also provide concrete examples of breaking free of these repetitions by facilitating the exchange of Motherline stories. I begin with an examination of the grandmother-mother-daughter triad, looking to Montserrat Roig's *Ramona, adéu* (1972) and Mercè Rodoreda's *Mirall trencat* (1974) for their employment of this intergenerational trio. I ask what kinds of inheritance the characters in these texts exemplify and how they complicate the concept of matrilineal genealogies. I then conclude with an evaluation of Josefina Aldecoa's *Mujeres de negro* (1994) and Lucía Etxebarría's *Un milagro en equilibrio* (2004), which both explicitly explore the links between memory work and writing. These texts employ the intergenerational triad to expose distinctions between generations of women while also shedding light on the generational continuity between members of the triad. Reading them as sociological texts means seeing them as countermemories that attempt to speak over the silence of cultural matricide and pave the way for matrifocal feminist futures.

Many of these representations of maternal memory contain multifaceted depictions. That is to say, many of them offer examples and interpretations of multiple maternal figures I analyze such as the ghostly mother, the substitute mother, and the grandmother-mother-daughter triad simultaneously. The aim of this dissertation, therefore, is to articulate a contribution to contemporary Peninsular literary studies as well as motherhood studies. It explores the intersections of memory studies, literary studies, film studies, and Iberian studies through the lens of motherhood studies. I consider how overbearing, substitute, and ghostly mothers allow or prevent the protagonists' access to matrilineal wisdom. Overall, this dissertation attends to the ways relationships with those performing maternal practice affect the subjectivity of the daughter figure. I consider these themes in tandem with the resurgent emphasis placed on the role memory plays in making sense of an uncertain future.

Chapter 1: Establishing Matrilineal Genealogies as a Solution to Cultural Matricide

"What had our mothers been doing then that they had no wealth to leave us? Powdering their noses? Looking in at the shop windows? Flaunting in the sun at Monte Carlo?"

– Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

What is a Mother?

Despite the personal and creative diversity of images that come to mind at the mention of the term "mother," the maternal figure is typically subject to prescriptive binary characteristics: Is she a "good" mother or a "bad" mother? Contemporary motherhood theorists expose the limitations of these designations, problematizing the very foundation of traditional understandings of maternal practice. Most notably, Adrienne Rich, in her seminal 1976 text on motherhood, *Of Woman Born*, assesses the discrepancies between our cultural assumptions of motherhood and her own lived maternal practice. While what Rich calls the "institution of motherhood" imposes oppressive and male-dominated values and practices, maternal experience can be empowering and female-defined (*Of Woman Born* 13). Maternal experience not only differs greatly from institutional motherhood but also shows how rejection of patriarchally imposed definitions of motherhood offers alternative forms of knowledge production that can affect the subjectivity of women. I also refer to maternal experience as maternal practice, mother work, or mothering. I use these terms and see them as wholly distinct and not interchangeable with the terms "fathering" or "parenting". As Rich points out, the terms to "mother" a child and to "father" a child present disparate denotations and connotations. To "father" a child, according to Rich, means "to beget, to provide the sperm which fertilizes the ovum" while the verb to "mother" suggests a long-term, care-based, nurturing relationship with a child (*Of Woman Born*

12). Furthermore, the term "to mother" in this sense reveals possibilities for expanding the spectrum of individuals who can perform mothering beyond the biological mother who begets a child. As Andrea O'Reilly, the contemporary motherhood studies scholar widely recognized as the founder of this field within academia, posits, "Repositioning mother from a noun to a verb degenders mothering and divests care of biology" in a way that centers mother work itself rather than the structure of normative motherhood (O'Reilly, "Matricentric Feminism" 427). Rich goes so far to claim that because of the connection between women and mothering, "Most women have been mothers in the sense of tenders and carers for the young, whether as sisters, aunts, nurses, teachers, foster-mothers, stepmothers" (12). These kinds of informal maternal networks were a way to integrate non-biological mothers or women who engage in maternal care such as "the very young, very old, unmarried, and infertile women in the process of 'mothering'" (12). Nevertheless, the institution of motherhood limits the definition of mothering to biological, full-time mothers while also sustaining the reduction of "fathering" to fertilization and (as I will discuss later) legal recognition of the child. Furthermore, Rich, in her 1980 essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," argues that increased male participation in childcare alone without problematizing motherhood as a political and ideological institution would not "radically [alter] the balance of male power in a male-identified society" (638). These efforts by individuals to counteract gender inequality in regards to childcare simply address the symptoms of patriarchy without acknowledging the underlying disease of institutional motherhood.

For Rich, the experience of motherhood emphasizes the potential relationship between women, their reproductive capacities, and their children while institutional motherhood seeks to reinforce patriarchal structures. The institution of motherhood promotes binary imagery about motherhood which deems some women "good" mothers and others "bad" mothers. O'Reilly

correlates institutional motherhood with "sacrificial motherhood" which recognizes a natural or essential maternal trait in women and classifies women as the primary, full-time caregiver for her biological children, regardless of her individual subjectivity or economic situation ("Normative Motherhood" 440). Patrice DiQuinzio's text, *The Impossibility of Motherhood* (1999), ideologically defines institutional motherhood as "essential motherhood" that proposes motherhood as an inherent and inevitable consequence of femininity. DiQuinzio further posits that essential motherhood "requires women's exclusive and selfless attention to and care of children based on women's psychological and emotional capacities for empathy, awareness of the needs of others, and self-sacrifice" (xiii). Institutional motherhood applies patriarchal values and standards to the reality of maternal experience in a way that simultaneously defines motherhood as innate while also offering narrow criteria for the kind of maternal practice that can fit the mold of the "good mother". In other words, institutional motherhood claims essential motherhood while also holding women to the standard of sacrificial motherhood. As Rich describes it, women must "be natural and play the part" (*Of Woman Born* 41). Susan Maushart refers to this as a "cultural schizophrenia about motherhood" in which women might don the "mask of motherhood" which refuses to acknowledge the disconnect between what women are culturally taught about motherhood and how they experience maternity (251). In this way, the mother becomes, as DiQuinzio's title suggests, an impossible subject. She explains that motherhood prescribes an "essential identity or state of being" in a way that rejects individuality or the reality of maternal experience (xv). In other words, as Rosalind Mayo and Christina Moutsou posit, the mother figure under the gaze of institutional motherhood becomes "caught in an ever-increasing split between her idealization and her denigration" (7). According to Barbara Katz Rothman, "motherhood in a patriarchal society is what mothers and babies signify to men"

(184). In this way, maternal experience as evidence is disregarded as irrelevant against the patriarchal case for idealization and degradation of mothers perpetuated by male culture. But what sustains the institution of motherhood? What entities impose these impossible contradictions on women? Rothman considers the ideology of motherhood to be composed of the ideology of patriarchy, capitalism, and technology. Here, the analogy of Judith Warner which compares the "mother image" problem to the "body image" problem identifies patriarchy as the driving force behind the symptom of impossible standards perpetuated by other cultural institutions (J. Warner 362). In cultural terms, vehicles for ideological control such as political and legal reforms, educational resources, religious teachings, and the medicalization of pregnancy and childcare contribute to the lasting prevalence of institutional motherhood.

The authority of institutional motherhood hinges on its consistent deference to patriarchal authority. As Rich explains, "Motherhood is 'sacred' so long as its offspring are 'legitimate' – that is, as long as the child bears the name of a father who legally controls the mother" (*Of Woman Born* 42). The name of the father reiterates its symbolic power through legal and religious institutions. Condemnation usually meets maternal practices that deviate from this form of "legitimacy" – mothers without husbands or mothers who challenge the authority of the father might be left without legal protection or religious acceptance. Therefore, as Sara Ruddick posits, "A 'good' mother may well be praised for colluding in her own subordination, with destructive consequences to herself and her children" (68). She may wear the "mask of motherhood" and remain silent about the discrepancies between what she experiences and what she tells others. The good mother under institutional motherhood must not only pose no threat to patriarchy by way of deference to patriarchal authority, she must also instill those patriarchal values in her children. Both bell hooks and Rich identify the patriarchal exploitation of the mother-child

relationship as a vessel for perpetuating patriarchal culture (hooks 24, Rich, *Of Woman Born* 61). While this potential consequence of institutional motherhood on maternal practice can influence any child to adopt patriarchal values through their mother's explicit or implicit conservative influence, maternal practice has a particular effect on daughters, especially since they have potential to become mothers themselves. As Rich explains, "Women have been both mothers and daughters, but have written little on the subject; the vast majority of literary and visual images of motherhood comes to us filtered through a collective or individual male consciousness" (*Of Woman Born* 61). Therefore, the institution of motherhood remains a convention sustained by the male gaze upon motherhood.

A prioritization of maternal experience rather than institutional motherhood denies the existence of essential motherhood, instead underscoring the social reproduction of mothers. Nancy Chodorow, in *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1978), proposes that women prepare for mothering because they have been mothered by women, perpetuating the primacy of the maternal role for women (39). Similarly, Rich understands motherhood as a critical tool for tracing identity formation and the development of female subjectivity. Rich further suggests that a woman might compare her situation to her mother, who she views in the context of "a society which insists that she is destined primarily for reproduction" (*Of Woman Born* 160). That is to say, a woman might reject motherhood because she views her mother's maternal experience through the "mask of motherhood" rather than through an authentic description of maternal experience. As a daughter approaches the time to decide her own level of participation in maternal practices, she might begin to negotiate her mother's relationship to institutional motherhood. On one hand, a woman might reject participating in maternal experience because she resents her mother's role as a member of the institution of motherhood because of her

denigration. On the other hand, a woman might gladly accept participating in maternal experience because she feels nostalgia for her mother's role which she idealizes in mimicry of the institution of motherhood. Donna Bassin discusses the relationship between the nostalgic mother or the too good mother and childhood memories. One way to confront this infantilization or reductionism of the maternal figure is through a reinstating of the mother's subjectivity. Maternal subjectivity becomes visible when narration of maternal experience challenges patriarchal fantasies or childhood memories (This idea will be discussed in detail in a subsequent section of this chapter). Bassin suggests that, if motherhood is taken up for nostalgic reasons, the daughter-become-mother must mourn "a longing for the all-giving, ever-present maternal figure where memories are static and sentimental as opposed to dynamic and generative" (16). The daughter's maternal image of the mother can no longer adhere to the institution of motherhood in the face of her own maternal experience. The daughter must mourn her mother as an impossible subject before facing the reality of her own maternal experience and subjectivity.

While traditional ideological institutions like religion and the law have dressed up the proverbial wolf of patriarchal values in slightly different iterations of the sheep's clothing of institutional motherhood, feminist perspectives on motherhood have varied drastically over time. First-wave feminism, usually identified for its connection to women's suffrage at the beginning of the 20th century, proposed alternative possibilities for women outside the limitations of essential motherhood. Ideas about national motherhood, or motherhood as not only a patriarchal function but also a service of the nation state, have also resurfaced in accordance with historical contexts. In the 1920s, Spanish figures like Margarita Nelken (*La trampa del arenal*, 1923) and Carmen de Burgos (*La mujer moderna y sus derechos*,1927) demonstrated the clash of the "new woman" of the Second Republic with the traditional patriarchal figures of the *ángel del hogar* or

the *perfecta casada*. Rebecca Ingram explains that, "The *nueva mujer moderna* (new modern woman) offered women a framework for adapting to new social, economic, and demographic contexts and facilitated access to education and the labor market" (7). Petra Bueskens similarly contrasts these figures as "mother who stays" and "mother who leaves," or respectively one whose individuality remains integrated with the domestic space and childcare and another who leaves home in search of and in declaration of her own subjectivity (5). It is important to note that most of these feminists were referencing white, middle or upper class mothers as the only group of women to whom the standards of institutional motherhood might apply. For example, Buesken's "mother who stays" and "mother who leaves" dichotomy was only relevant to this group of women in the 1920s because of feminist social and political reforms while women of color and lower class women had identified as the "mother who leaves" for generations. With the second-wave feminism of the 1950s and 1960s, Betty Friedan (*The Feminine Mystique,* 1963), Selma James ("A Woman's Place," 1952), and other feminists condemned women's maternal role and her allocation to the private, domestic sphere as oppressive. However, later feminist scholars in the 1970s such as Rich and Chodorow as well as feminist psychoanalysts like Luce Irigaray ("Body against Body: In Relation to the Mother, Montreal May 31, 1980") and Hélène Cixous ("The Laugh of the Medusa," 1976) redefined the mother as a potentially powerful and liberating figure. This recontextualization of maternity relied on the distinction between maternal experience and institutional motherhood. This period also popularized the possibilities of the Wages for Housework movement which problematized the patriarchal view and consequent economic reality of women's labor in the home including child care. Contemporary motherhood studies scholars like O'Reilly further problematize the connection between motherhood and feminism by offering critiques and negotiations as well as applications, extensions, and defenses

of the work of foremother feminists. In fact, O'Reilly has also developed the idea of matricentric feminism, a feminism that brings mothers to the center of feminist thought and action rather than treating motherhood as an issue tangential to the women's movement. After all, mothers are subject to oppression from both institutional patriarchy and institutional motherhood. Following in the wake of these contributors to motherhood studies, I focus on how alternative maternal figures, experiences, and practices challenge the institution of motherhood and its allegiance to patriarchy by rejecting any simple answers to the question: What is a mother?

The concept of maternal experience, especially as it relates to maternal practice, which can be performed by figures other than biological mothers, forms the foundation of my inquiries into the question of what is a mother? Taking this question out of its traditional association with patriarchal institutional motherhood opens up possibilities for alternative and even sometimes contradictory answers to this question while also raising additional nuanced inquiries. What is the diverse reality of maternal practice or maternal experience and how is it depicted creatively? How does the representation of substitute mothers or absent mothers confront patriarchal ideologies about motherhood? In particular, how can a redefinition of "mother," especially through personal, existential accounts of subaltern perspectives that reinstate the individual subjectivity of the maternal figure, point to the practical wisdom of motherhood and the potential power of maternal practice?

Mothers in the Spanish Context

While the institution of motherhood imposes certain traits as universal and indisputable, variations in values arise as a result of differing cultural contexts. In Spain, the established norms and expectations of institutional motherhood express religious and patriarchal concerns. The idea of the *ángel del hogar* as the epitomic figure of domestic motherhood in Spain has been

formulated and reiterated by religious, political, and cultural enterprises. The term "*ángel del hogar*" itself elicits religious connotations while also reinforcing the allocation of women to the private, domestic sphere. Although the term gained popularity in the 19th century such as in Maria del Pilar Sinués de Marco's 1881 text, "El ángel del hogar", its association between women and domestic space can be traced further back. One of the earliest recorded examples of this can be found in Fray Luis de León's *La perfecta casada* (1584) which details his thoughts on the duties and responsibilities of married women as a religious celibate for whom marriage is necessary but a more profane option than nun or virgin for women. According to Fray Luis de León, "su casa es su cuerpo, y que ella es el alma dél." Here, the formula connecting women to domestic space confirms the duality of masculine/feminine experiences in which, "Como son los hombres para lo público, así las mujeres para el encerramiento; y como es de los hombres el hablar y el salir a luz, así dellas el encerrarse y encubrirse." Fray Luis de León also subscribed and prescribed a kind of essential, sacrificial motherhood in which the biological mother must take singular responsibility for childcare. Specifically, Fray Luis de León denounces the relegation of breastfeeding or other maternal labor to servants or wetnurses. The woman as wife and mother is, as Fray Luis de León puts it, an extension of the home itself and essential motherhood reinforces the biological connection between mother and child as the foundation for mothering. This emphasis on reserving the private sphere for women and attaching maternal practice to the expectations for women found resurgence in Francisco Franco's appeals to medieval religious gender roles during his dictatorship as a counter to the feminist reforms of the Republic and an avenue of reaffirming his regime's symbiotic relationship with the Catholic Church. Aurora Morcillo explains that Franco leveraged motherhood and Catholic discourses around gender by priming women to see their primary role in Spanish society as inextricably

linked to their reproductive capacities while also repressing female sexuality. Morcillo explains that, “The ultimate role model prescribed for women was the Virgin Mary, in whom both virginity and motherhood coincided” (40). These ideas were put into more systematic practice during Franco’s regime which utilized the Women’s Section of the Falange (SF) to disseminate ideological and medical information about motherhood to Spanish women. In fact, Pilar Primo de Rivera, sister to Falange’s founder José Antonio Primo de Rivera, authored a guide for the Sección Femenina titled, “Guía de la buena esposa,” which repeats many of Luis de León’s ideas about spousal and maternal duty. For example, the guide specifies that women are responsible for caring for the children, refraining from complaining (after all, “cualquier problema tuyo es un pequeño detalle comparado con lo que él tuvo que pasar”), maintaining the home, and generally “knowing her place,” all while keeping on a smile for the benefit of her husband. Significantly, Kathleen Richmond clarifies that Franco’s adherence to and support of regressive gender roles in which women remain in the private, domestic sphere were ideologically rather than economically or scientifically justified (14). The institution of motherhood in Spain during the 20th century, with remnants of its impact in the present, supports the idea of essential motherhood as well as verifies the mother as the primary and full-time care-giver for not only her children, but also her husband.

Since biological motherhood plays a key role in institutional motherhood, maternity also serves as an intersection between the private and public domain, especially in national motherhood. Michel Foucault identifies the phenomenon of biopolitics as particularly evident in public hygiene efforts to “coordinate medical care, centralize power and normalize knowledge” as well as “medicalize the population” (244). In this way, medicine intervenes in private lives in order to influence the general population of society. In the case of maternity, this manifests as an

interest in regularizing maternal practices of individual women to maintain a low infant mortality rate for the entire population. Throughout the 1930s and 40s, this dedication to medicalizing maternity stemmed from the scientific correlation between cleanliness and public health (Richmond 16). Not only were infants implicated in this after birth, but the pregnancy process was also monitored and regularized by medical professionals and SF literature. Richmond summarizes this view in the following way: “We must ensure that the harvest is not only plentiful but healthy, and for the fruit not to be contaminated we must start with the tree” (25). The scientific community, in an effort to address maternity from a medical perspective, has contrasted the intimacy of motherhood with pathologized, data-driven interventions with pregnancy and childcare. Early 20th century Spanish physician Gregorio Marañón, for example, advocated for “conscious maternity” in which women are educated on maternal practices by the government and medical professionals rather than her own mother or older female community members (Richmond 18). Throughout Franco’s dictatorship, these scientific perspectives on maternity were often infused with Catholic values and disseminated politically through the community by way of the SF which built on Marañón’s ideas.

The SF collaborated with political, religious and scientific officials to create instructional resources for Spanish women, especially those of lower economic status. These resources worked to indoctrinate the public with “objective” and “medicalized” understandings of maternity. Any kind of direct and unregulated sharing of information regarding pregnancy and mothering was at times directly repudiated by the SF and its associated institutional structures. Morcillo writes that SF was instrumental in the nation’s dissemination of medical knowledge to individual Spanish women. She describes SF as “the mediator between the state and Spanish women” with the purpose of teaching and indoctrinating Falangist values (Morcillo 32). The SF

sponsored programs that "were a mixture of reactionary ideas based on the premise of returning women to the home and policies deriving from the 'medicalization' of maternity and childcare" (Richmond 20-21). These lessons on "domestic expertise" were often carried out in schools, such as the one Esther Tusquets describes in her memoir *Habíamos ganado la guerra*: "'Enseñanzas de hogar' no respondía a ningún objetivo determinado, ni nos preparaba, en realidad para nada… Estas asignaturas, impartidas por dos señoritas solteras y sin hijos" (Richmond 16, Tusquets 107-108). Morcillo's research points to the service of education to reinforce ideals about conscientious motherhood as well as establish "the nationalization of motherhood" or the idea that motherhood constitutes a woman's national responsibility (69). The influence of the SF went beyond children in the classroom to encompass pregnant women as well. Richmond states that the SF worked to warn Spanish women against abortions and to encourage them to seek pregnancy advice from medical professionals rather than "the local herbalist or wise woman" (20). In this way, regulation of private motherhood served as a point of intersection for religion, politics and science.

Historically situating this view in post-war Spain further necessitates a consideration of class and politics. After the Civil War, Franco's regime worked to reaffirm traditional gender norms, primarily by encouraging women to see the home as their exclusive domain (Richmond 14). This was accomplished through law and SF propaganda despite "the reality that paid female employment was helpful for the national economy and a financial necessity for many women" (Richmond 14). Morcillo ties this image of the domestic woman to the regime's commitment to endorsing Catholic values. Even working women were responsible first and foremost to be mothers, which was viewed as their inherent singular destiny as Catholic women since reproduction was "the only purpose of Christian marriage" (Morcillo 34). In Spain, the Second

Republic ushered in reforms for women's rights including the right to vote in 1931 and increased legal equality for families such as those Ann Taylor Allen outlines in *Feminism and Motherhood in Western Europe* which include, "permit secular marriage and divorce, give equal rights to husband and wife, and equalize the status of children born in and outside of marriage" (148). Nevertheless, Franco's overthrow of the Second Republic following the Spanish Civil War resulted in the repeal of these progressive laws as well as a doubling-down on the legal manifestation of conservative misogyny including "condemned women who lived in nonmarital unions to fines and imprisonment, forbade daughters to leave their fathers' homes except for marriage or a covenant, and prohibited the employment of all married women whose husbands' income was sufficient to support a family" (Allen 149). Allen points out that this return to conservative views of women, wives and mothers was not limited to Spain. In fact, anxieties about the instability of economic and political institutions during this time period were reflected in the doubling down of more stable institutions such as marriage, patriarchy, and motherhood (Allen 149). In Spain and abroad, cultural, historical, and economic realities can revise the way institutional motherhood expresses itself and therefore affect maternal experience as well.

Cultural Matricide: Mothers in Literary Context

The irreconcilable gap between maternal experience and motherhood as an institution corresponds to the dominance of patriarchal culture in contemporary Western societies. Patriarchal culture takes the masculine as universal and the feminine as particular. The very structure of language, as is the case in English and Spanish, reflects this tendency. For example, in Spanish, erasure of women takes place through gendered speech categories. The principal effort among Spanish speakers to facilitate gender inclusivity has been what is termed the "masculine inclusive" form. This is the most accepted standard Spanish language form. The

Royal Spanish Academy (RAE) published a report in 2020 on inclusive language in which it reaffirmed a preference for this form. This report from the Royal Spanish Academy was solicited to reconsider the gender-inclusivity text of the Spanish constitution of 1978. The report maintains that the "masculine inclusive" remains the principal and accepted form of inclusive language in Spanish. According to the RAE, the masculine inclusive relies on context to refer to both men and women through the masculine-inclusive form such as this phrase in the constitution: "Todos los españoles son iguales ante la ley" (6). The view of the RAE suggests that the masculine "los españoles" clearly refers to both male and female citizens even though the masculine plural is used in this case. It claims that the constitution's wording does not pose any potential issues for literal interpretation (6). The use of "las españolas" however would be particular to a group of female Spaniards while "los españoles" is interpreted not as uniquely masculine but rather the presumptuous default terminology inclusive of all genders. We see this tendency in English as well, especially in legal documentation like the U.S. Constitution in which use of the pronoun "he" has been interpreted as a masculine inclusive form. The RAE report explains that "las denominaciones en masculino están justificadas lingüísticamente, ya que corresponden estrictamente a las convenciones gramaticales y léxicas que el español comparte con otros muchos idiomas" (16). According to the RAE, sexism and misogyny are not inherent in a grammatical system but rather the use of language acquires certain values based on the intentionality of the speakers' ideological prejudices. Essentially, the report makes the argument that language isn't sexist, individuals are sexist and use language to communicate their sexism. Some implications that arise as a result of the prevalence of the masculine-inclusive form in Spanish include the invisibility of women and variations across different domains. Linguist Adokarley Lomotey offers a definition of linguistic sexism as that which "renders women

'invisible'" (383). The masculine inclusive form interprets the collective experience as masculine and the particular as feminine in a way that erases the presence of women from language and reinforces gendered patriarchal hierarchies.

In a similar vein, the English-speaking custom of adopting a husband's last name at marriage in substitution for the name of the father further renders not only women but more specifically mothers linguistically as well as genealogically invisible. Until recently, a woman traditionally adopted the last name of her husband legally and socially and was sometimes referred to by his name entirely. Virginia Woolf's well-known protagonist Mrs. Dalloway embodies this cultural practice while also musing on the effects of linguistic erasure. Woolf writes, "she had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway" (*Mrs. Dalloway* 10-11). Clarissa sees herself in relation to her husband since her public identity, that of "Mrs. Richard Dalloway," has replaced her girlhood identity of "Clarissa". She finds her identity wrapped up in another person that exists outside of herself -- that of her husband. The nominal shift for this character merely constitutes a symptom of a larger experience of existing for and through a man. She directly correlates her identity as "Mrs. Richard Dalloway" with feelings of being "invisible, unseen, unknown." Furthermore, Clarissa's daughter is not Elizabeth Parry (Clarissa's maiden last name) but rather Elizabeth Dalloway. Clarissa's maiden last name and the history of her lineage becomes linguistically erased in the next generation. Elizabeth is not linguistically recognizable as Clarissa's progeny. Only physical, bodily characteristics tie mother to daughter (ie. looking alike and belly button where an umbilical cord was). Clarissa's past ends at her adoption of the

name “Mrs. Richard Dalloway.” The linguistic invisibility of women, wives and mothers has consequences for the exclusion of women from patriarchal culture in the present and in the future.

Hélène Cixous describes this connection between patriarchy and language as “the discourse of man” and “speech which has been governed by the phallus” (887, 881). Cixous codifies male-generated discourse as paternalistic, universalizing written language. I will alternatively use the terms “phallic language” or “masculine discourse” as they synthesize my understanding of Cixous’s thesis. According to Cixous, this kind of language offers two alternative identities for women: Medusa or the Abyss. In other words, women through the discourse of man can only be silent or monstrous. Just as the institution of motherhood silences the diverse reality of maternal experience in favor of reductionist labels “good mother” and “bad mother,” the universalizing discourse of man as outlined by Cixous silences the female experience since she is erased by phallic language or interprets her speech as monstrous anger. Therefore, mothers experience a doubling effect of this silencing – first as women and then as mothers. The institutions of patriarchy and motherhood not only impose unrealistic expectations but also present those expectations as universal and unable to be contradicted so that any alternative experience becomes ineffable. In this way, attempts to escape the limitations of these institutions can result in internalized matrophobia. Rich sustains that matrophobia is “the desire to become purged once and for all of our mothers’ bondage, to become individuated and free. The mother stands for the victim in ourselves, the unfree woman, the martyr” (*Of Woman Born* 236). Rich identifies this as not a fear of the mother but a fear of becoming one’s mother. In other words, matrophobia connotes the fear that a woman will go through a second level of

objectification and erasure as her mother did before her. She sees and fears her mother as a representation of the institution of motherhood rather than a subject in her own right.

Cixous interprets this figure as the "false woman," stating that, "We must kill the false woman who is preventing the live one from breathing" (880). Matrophobia progresses into a murder of the figure of the patriarchally aligned mother who represents the institution of motherhood and consequently women's oppression under patriarchy. Killing the "false woman" sets us free of "our mothers' bondage" so women can be individuated and liberated from the constraints of patriarchal culture and phallic language. Similarly, Woolf laments the power of the "false woman" or the mother figure who imposes the limitations of patriarchy and institutional motherhood on women, especially on women artists. In her speech, "Professions for Women," Woolf calls her adversary "The Angel in the House" after the figure in the 1854 Coventry Patmore poem which also alludes to the Spanish *ángel del hogar*. Woolf explains that "The Angel in the House" was "intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. [...] Above all – I need not say it – she was pure" ("Professions for Women" 237). Woolf goes so far as to claim that, "Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of the woman writer" ("Professions for Women" 238). The murder of institutional motherhood is not optional for women artists. Cixous and Woolf both condemn the "false woman" or the idea of woman created by phallic language and the patriarchal imagination to death in order to allow room for the voices of women.

This strategy for breaking free of the silence prescribed for women hinges on a recognition of cultural matricide. While phallic language and patriarchal culture has silenced women, mothers have experienced this twofold. Maternal experience is silenced in favor of

institutional motherhood. Cultural matricide, as outlined by Luce Irigaray does not correspond to the death of "false" mother (or a view of the mother as representing institutional motherhood) but rather "the symbolic silencing and obliteration of the mother's discourse" (Mayo and Moutsou 12). Irigaray contrasts matricide with Freud's preoccupation with Oedipus's act of patricide against his father Laius[1]. She highlights "an even more ancient murder, that of the woman-mother, which was necessary to the foundation of a specific order in the city" in reference to Clytemnestra's[2] murder in Aeschylus's *Oresteia* (Irigaray 11). In this case, the mother is literally murdered by her son without consequence since he is exonerated by "the virgin goddess [Athena], born of the Father, obedient to his laws at the expense of the mother" (Irigaray 13). Athena absolves Orestes, accused of matricide, in a foundational myth that paves the way for civil trial in place of kinship revenge. In this way, "the mother must remain silent, outlawed" to make way for patriarchal social order (Irigaray 14).

Other psychoanalytic feminists have pointed to even earlier examples of cultural matricide within the Western mythological tradition. Amber Jacobs identifies Metis, Athena's mother[3], as an earlier example of cultural matricide in Greek myth. In fact, Athena does not recognize Metis as her mother and identifies only with Zeus, the Father, in her verdict in Orestes's trial. In this example, the Father (Zeus) consumes Metis to engage in male

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[1] This myth usually references Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* in which King Laius leaves his son to die after hearing a prophecy that his son will kill his father and marry his mother. Oedipus, once grown, kills Laius, who he believes to be a stranger on the highway and marries Jocasta, who he believes to be an unknown queen of Thebes.

[2]The *Oresteia* is a trilogy of Greek tragedies that traces the Queen Clytemnestra's murder of her husband Agamemnon following the Trojan war as justice for his murder of their daughter Iphigenia during the war, Orestes's murder of his mother Clytemnestra in retribution for his father's death, and Orestes's trial in Athens over which Athena presides and in which the goddess absolves Orestes.

[3]The story of Metis, titan goddess of wise counsel, and her connection to Athena and Zeus, is mentioned in Hesiod's *Theogony*. Zeus laid with Metis and then, fearing the consequences of prophesied powerful children, Zeus swallowed Metis. Metis gave birth to Athena inside of Zeus, where Athena stayed until Zeus birthed her from his head, fully grown and in full battle armor.

"parthenogenetic fantasy [which] underlies the Oresteian logic" (Jacobs in Mayo and Moutsou 31). The name of the father, or surname, becomes a metaphorical replacement for the belly button, affirming the invisible connection between father and child. The evidence of the relationship between mother and child is uncontested by the corporeal and physical, visible markings of their relationship. The name of the father, with its legal authority that legitimizes the child in the eyes of patriarchal culture, emphasizes this parthenogenetic fantasy or Oresteian logic in which the duty to the father outweighs any obligation to the mother. Marianne Hirsh furthermore establishes the matricide of Jocasta[4], mother of Oedipus, since through her, "we find a silenced mother who remains the object of the child's process of subject formation and the ground on which the conflict between father and son is played out" (3). Jocasta's suicide reveals certain qualities of this kind of cultural matricide in which the mother does not have to be actually murdered to be psychoanalytically and socially silenced or abandoned. In order for patriarchal social order and masculine language or plot to proceed, cultural matricide is not only accepted, but deemed necessary. In this way, cultural matricide renders the mother invisible, erasing her subjectivity and histories from larger patriarchal, universalizing language and history. Cixous suggests that all women are subject to the effects of cultural matricide since "there is always within her at least a little of that good mother's milk. She writes in white ink" (881). Stephen Hart took up this phrasing as the title for his book *White Ink: Essays on twentieth-century feminine fiction in Spain and Latin America* in which he clarifies that white ink alludes to maternal breast milk but also invisibility since markings made by white ink on white paper would be imperceptible. Therefore, the silence of the mother corresponds to her location outside

[4]After discovering the truth that her husband Oedipus is her son, Jocasta kills herself offstage in Sophocles's play.

of phallic discourse since her language will always be necessarily tied to the body and the consequences of cultural matricide.

An understanding of history and language as neutral, objective, and universal, ignores the influence of the institutions of patriarchy and motherhood. Just as cultural matricide manifests the silence of maternal experience through language, it also constitutes archival gaps within written history. When writing on women and literature in *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf suggests that, "[woman] pervades poetry from cover to cover; she is all but absent from history" (43). Written history records dominant, patriarchal narratives and interpretations of world events through the lens of phallic language. Even the literary representations of women that Woolf alludes to depict a distorted vision of women from the perspective of participants in patriarchal culture and practitioners of masculine discourse. An emphasis on dominant culture erases the reality of subaltern perspectives to varying degrees. Historian Judith P. Zinsser reiterates Woolf's perspective, positing that most men and almost all women were omitted from the narratives of traditional histories. In fact, "In the few instances when [the writers of traditional histories] did describe women's experiences, their analyses became distorted. Their narratives reflected more of contemporary prejudices about the female than the historical evidence of women's past" (Zinsser 6). Women's history aligns more with Miguel de Unamuno's concept of *intrahistoria* which contrasts the "presente momento histórico" (the surface level of history, the kind of events and figures reported in the daily news) with "la vida intrahistórica" (the quotidian existence of daily labor performed by "hombres sin historia") (*En torno*). The kind of history that Unamuno prizes sees memory as alive and relevant to the present, represented by the anonymous masses rather than traditional historical figures – the ones who are affected by the decisions of the leaders rather than the leaders themselves. Some feminist and postmodernist writers have

attempted to counteract the reductive tendency of traditional history by publishing alternative versions of historical and mythological events which locate women at the center rather than the periphery. They tend to be introspective and existential rather than textbook-style descriptions of traditionally significant historical or mythical events. In these rewritings, authors question hegemonic, dominant narratives in ways that complicate female characters and often offer motives for their actions, revealing the ways they have been mis-read by historians and male writers of the past. Examples include Rosa Montero's *Historia Del Rey Transparente* (2005), Lourdes Ortiz's *Urraca* (1991) and *Los Motivos de Circe* (1988), and Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005).

Avery Gordon offers the theoretical framework of the "sociological text" to propose a new kind of knowledge production that looks beyond the existing material archive and investigates archival silences such as those produced by cultural matricide. For Gordon, reading fiction as sociological texts means accessing "the life world of those with no names we remember, with no visible reason for being in the archive" as well as beginning memory work "where the official documents can go no further" (150, 81). The rewritings mentioned above could be read as "sociological texts" to fill in the archival gaps left by the existence of women who were simplistically categorized by traditional historians and/or their contemporary record-keepers. Gordon also uses the metaphor of ghosts and haunting to indicate an absence in the traditional archive. Instead of thinking of ghosts as dead people, Gordon describes this term as encompassing the intersection between history and subjectivity. Through the concept of ghosts, Gordon looks at strategies for accessing social or collective memory by inquiring into archival gaps, barely-there traces, and silences. Haunting as a theoretical strategy examines the "seething presence" of an absence (8). The archival gaps of cultural matricide, or the lack of evidence of

maternal experience in the face of the overwhelming presence of the institution of motherhood, consist of the feminine silence produced by phallic discourse. This "silent feminine," according to Araceli Colín Cabrera, "cannot be located but on the edge of what each language leaves out" (3). The traces of maternal experience can be identified by the archival gaps left by cultural matricide.

When Virginia Woolf posits the fateful question with which I began this chapter, "What had our mothers been doing then that they had no wealth to leave us?" she alludes not only to material wealth but also to a cultural, historical, intellectual, and narrative wealth originating with the maternal (*A Room of One's Own* 20-21). She references an imaginary and metaphorical "sister of Shakespeare" who may have been silenced due to her status as a woman despite being just as intellectually and creatively rich as her brother William. Woolf later suggests that the current generation of women should "allow the sister of Shakespeare to live through us" (*A Room of One's Own* 113-114). The appeal to a kind of matrilineal genealogy begins to take shape through Woolf's suggestion. However, for Gordon, it is not enough to acknowledge an archival gap. One must also "strive to understand the conditions under which a memory was produced in the first place, toward a countermemory, for the future" (Gordon 22). We must really find out what our mothers had been doing and why rather than just acknowledge the absence of an answer. Woolf's appeal to the "sister of Shakespeare" provides an alternative in which a future daughter will no longer have to wonder what her mother had been doing. She will no longer have to follow the barely-there traces of her mother's subjectivity and maternal experience. She will no longer have to rely on the phallic word to articulate her mother's identity under the institution of motherhood. Instead, her mother will speak and decide she will no longer be spoken for. The question "What had our mothers been doing?" will have a definitive answer if

the mother represents her own maternal experience and refuses to accept the silence of cultural matricide through the institution of motherhood. Through exchange between mother and daughter, archival gaps can give way to understanding and mutual subjectivity.

In regard to archival gaps and silences resulting from cultural matricide, what solutions lie beyond the silencing of maternal experience? Cixous and even Woolf might point to the need for the new generation of women to write their own histories and eliminate the possibility of archival gaps in the future. Cixous's *écriture féminine* sees this alternative to phallic language as corporeal. She posits that, "By writing herself, 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). In this way, maternal experience can replace dichotomous categories prescribed by institutional motherhood through writing, especially self-writing. Cixous further proposes that this kind of writing not only eliminates individual feminine silence but also counteracts larger historical silence evidenced by archival gaps. Cixous explains that,

> "If woman has always functioned 'within' the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sounds, it is time for her to dislocate this 'within,' to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of" (887).

Therefore, the name of the father or the language of the phallus can be replaced by the word of the mother which embraces the bodily nature of motherhood and womanhood instead of feminine silence. This might even correspond to anger which is uninterpretable by the masculine

listener. Therefore, alternatives to phallic discourse can be misread as the Medusa[5] or, to invoke a maternal example, the Medea[6] by patriarchal culture. Irigaray even links creativity with maternity, suggesting that women's nature is to create and calling it "our birthright as women" (18). Representations of maternal memory as an antidote to cultural matricide must not romanticize or nostalgize motherhood through the lens of institutional motherhood. Rather, it must insist on the diversity of maternal experience. In this way, representations of maternal memory reject the privatization of maternal experience by initiating a feminine discourse surrounding mothers that does not adhere to the expectations of institutional motherhood and phallic language.

However, Irigaray cautions that we cannot "be accomplices in the murder of the mother" but must instead "give life back to that mother, to the mother who lives within us and among us. We must refuse to allow her desire to be swallowed up in the law of the father. We must give her the right to pleasure, to sexual experience, to passion, give her back the right to speak, or even to shriek and rage aloud" (19, 18). In other words, to remove maternal experience from the conundrum of speak or be spoken for, we must allow her to speak for herself and gain her own subjectivity. Maternal experience cannot only be communicated from the point of view of the daughter of the new generation but must constitute an exchange from both the mother's and daughter's perspectives while remaining matrifocal. Here, the Western mythological tradition of

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[5]Cixous uses the myth of Medusa as a symbol for the way language falls short of expressing feminine experience since it misinterprets women's speech as violent or deadly when in her interpretation, "You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing" (885).

[6] The myth of Medea is expanded upon in the Euripides play by the same name. The play traces the events following Medea's husband Jason's decision to leave her for another woman. Medea murders Jason's new wife and her own children before escaping to Athens.

Demeter and Persephone[7] stands as an alternative to matricidal myths (ie. Metis, Jocasta, and Clytemnestra). This myth, primarily associated with the Homeric "Hymn to Demeter" presents the subjectivity of mother and daughter simultaneously. Marianne Hirsh, for example, interprets this poem as presenting not an example of the necessity for detachment from the mother in favor of compulsory heterosexuality, but rather proposes a resolution of "continued opposition, interruption, and contradiction" (102). The presentation of mother and daughter subjectivity rather than a subjectivity of the daughter in which the mother remains an object of her "sustained quest" problematizes oedipal frameworks while offering nuanced alternatives rather than universalizing or reductionist prescriptions (Hirsh 138, 8). Hirsh clarifies that daughters speaking for their mothers narratively "is at once to give voice to her discourse and to silence and marginalize her" (16). Cultural matricide in a different form appears in this instance since "The woman who is a mother was a subject as a daughter. But as a mother, her subjectivity is under erasure; during the process of her daughter's accession to subjectivity, she is told to recede into the background, to be replaced" (Hirsh 170). One solution to feminine silence produced by cultural matricide lies "in finding a double voice that would yield a multiple female consciousness" beginning with a representation of the mother's subjectivity and the daughter's subjectivity in conversation with one another (Hirsh 161).

Expanding Inheritance: Matrilineal Genealogies

Woolf outlines the potential power of a matrilineal genealogy, especially a literary or intellectual one in *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf finds the evidence of maternal inheritance

[7]The Homeric Hymn to Demeter recounts the events in which Hades, god of the underworld, kidnaps Peresphone, daughter of Demeter, goddess of the harvest. Demeter searches for Persephone. Famine ensues as a result of Demeter's grief until Zeus intervenes and Persephone and Demeter are reunited for part of the year annually.

lacking. The material and intellectual poverty of women through maternal inheritance stands in stark contrast to the lasting, self-legitimizing force of patriarchal culture. The idea of intergenerational inheritance between women establishes the role of the language of the mother and recognizes the ways that feminine subjectivity is formed and challenged by maternal practices. Irigary poses an alternative to the patriarchal structure in which women refuse to be accomplices in cultural matricide by declaring matrilineal genealogies as opposed to "the name of the father." While writing and *écriture feminine* constitutes one avenue for expression of maternal experience and the exchange of knowledge between mothers and daughters, Irigaray proposes the creation of matrilineal genealogies as an alternative method for counteracting cultural matricide and refusing to "be accomplices in the murder of the mother" (19). Irigaray explains the importance of matrilineal genealogies as follows:

> "Each of us has a female family tree: we have another, a maternal grandmother and great-grandmothers, we have daughters. Because we have been exiled into the house of our husbands, it is easy to forget the special quality of the female genealogy; we might even come to deny it. Let us try to situate ourselves within that female genealogy so that we can win and hold onto our identity. Let us not forget, moreover, that we already have a story, that certain women, despite all the cultural obstacles, have made their mark upon history and all too often have been forgotten by us" (19).

Psychoanalyst Clarissa Pinkola Estés also asserts the significance of matrilineal genealogies for female subject formation and growth. She calls these "matrilineal lines of initiation – older women teaching younger women certain psychic facts and procedures of the wild feminine" and ties this idea to a primordial, wild feminine subject, expanding the notion of matrilineal

genealogies to include more than just biological mothers and daughters (263). In this way, matrilineal genealogies can and should include not only biologically connected female family members but also what I call substitute mothers as well as ghostly mothers. Rich refers to substitute mothers figures as “nonbiological mothers” or even “spirit sisters” (*Of Woman Born* 252). Nevertheless, Hirsh cautions against the use of “sororial” metaphors as they are inherently non-matrifocal and appeal to intragenerational rather than intergenerational relations between women (164). The formation of these kinds of intergenerational matrilineal genealogies necessarily expand to include substitute mothers, spirit sisters, and anyone in touch with Pinkola Estés’s “wild feminine”.

Matrilineal genealogies are not subject to the limitations of patriarchal lineages. The isolation of the home that feminists of the 1950s and 60s identified through consciousness raising groups was made bearable in part by the unofficial, improvised networks of local women established to share the burden of care, communicate knowledge about the community (a practice referred to by phallic language as gossip), and impart practical wisdom about household, personal, medical, and childcare duties. One such feminist, Selma James, champion of the Wages for Housework movement, noted, “The only people you can turn to in those situations are your neighbors. Very often, they are the only people who understand, since they are women too and have the same problems” (19). Substitute mothers can take the form of these kinds of neighbor women, sisters, aunts, grandmothers, or friends. They reveal the agenerational quality of maternal practice. They might perform maternal practice for the entire lifetime of their “substitute daughter” or they might perform only one act of maternal practice (I will discuss this concept of the substitute mother in detail in Chapter 2). They might step in when a daughter is faced with the figure of the patriarchal mother or the ghostly mother. At the same time,

matrilineal genealogies should also honor the presence of ghostly mothers, leaving space for encounters with maternal practice even from an absent mother (I will discuss the concept of the absent or ghostly mother in detail in Chapter 3).

Sandra Schumm identifies this trope of the absent (or dead) mother as characteristic of post-war novels written by Spanish women. Similarly, she sees this inability to access the maternal model as a roadblock to the understanding of self. However, Schumm classifies this archetype of the ghostly mother by suggesting that the mother is “unessential” as the young woman protagonist finds her way in the world on her own, liberated from “the sanitized mother image offered to them by the fascist regime” (11). This aligns the mother of the post-war Spanish novel with the “false woman” or “Angel in the House” to which Cixous and Woolf refer. Nevertheless, I find that establishing matrilineal genealogies through maternal memory and practice actively seeks to fill in archival gaps left by absent or ghostly mothers by searching through for maternal knowledge despite her inability to communicate directly with her own mother. Death of the mother does not necessarily correlate to cultural matricide or even matrophobia. As I will demonstrate in Chapter 3, mothers can still carry out maternal practice and share maternal wisdom despite their physical absence from a daughter’s life. The mother can maintain her subjectivity while her daughter develops that of her own. Each woman’s matrilineal genealogy will differ depending on the quantity and quality of maternal figures in her life. Counteracting cultural matricide through the establishment of matrilineal genealogies must reject the limitations of patriarchal lineages which not only linguistically erase the evidence of the mother, but also appeal to legally and genetically “legitimate” connections between the individuals included in such paternal genealogies. In the words of Elizabeth Ordóñez, “The maternal would then be the beginning, not the end of our imaginings of something beyond the

confines of the patriarchal, paternal or phallocentric known" (29). In this way, expanding the idea of genealogies beyond biological or legal boundaries opens the possibility for also broadening the definitions of maternal practice, maternal figures, and maternal experience.

Furthermore, I suggest that the way biological or substitute mothers pass down knowledge about motherhood and womanhood directly to their daughters transmits values and practices through embodied action. Maternal practice itself communicates maternal experience and maternal memory outside of the confines of masculine discourse. In this way, I posit that maternal practice constitutes what Diana Taylor calls the repertoire, or a "nonarchival system of transfer" that "enacts embodied memory […], all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge" (Taylor xvii, 20). Taylor contrasts the concepts of archive and repertoire, suggesting that embodied culture —especially through action and performance— transmits knowledge that goes beyond the traditional archive's emphasis on written culture[8]. Matrilineal wisdom, or embodied knowledge passed down between generations of women, constitutes an alternative form of knowledge production through maternal practice. The archive remains relatively static while the repertoire consists of "ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge" (20). Since Taylor focuses on the non-written forms of the archive (ie. repertoire) such as protest and performance, I find her methodology essential to my understanding of maternal experience. According to Taylor, the repertoire indicates "vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity (2). In this way, maternal practice certainly constitutes a type of repertoire. Understanding and communicating maternal experience certainly affects the subjectivity of both mother and daughter intergenerationally. As

[8] Taylor challenges the colonial dominion writing has over the production of cultural knowledge and the idea that writing has come to stand in for meaning itself in traditional understandings of the archive.

Rich explains, “Mothers and daughters have always exchanged with each other –beyond the verbally transmitted lore of female survival – a knowledge that is subliminal, subversive, preverbal” (220). Cultural matricide has distorted the transmission of this “subliminal, subversive, preverbal” knowledge. Establishing alternative matrilineal genealogies reveals the complicated nature of maternal practice. Intergenerational representations of maternal memory expose the insufficiency of institutional motherhood to explain the relationships between mothers and their daughters (I will discuss the concept of intergenerational narratives and maternal subjectivity in detail in Chapter 4).

Motherhood as depicted in the literature and film throughout this dissertation demonstrates how women negotiate and navigate knowledge production among themselves. I ask how knowledge is transmitted among women differently depending on the register of life (girlhood, womanhood, and old age). I also consider how the writers of these fictions expand the notion of maternal practice to encompass unexpected figures such as aunts, stepmothers, ghosts, lovers, and friends to formulate unique matrilineal genealogies. In some of these texts, mothers are absent from the narrative altogether, but the authors find ways to make maternal practice present through their protagonists’ encounters with unconventional manifestations of motherhood. Rather than hear the exclusive voice of the daughter on a “sustained quest” for the object of her mother, I read indications of maternal subjectivity even in the case of absent mothers. Lastly, I ask what factors can hinder the flow of matrilineal wisdom, creating gaps in the generational archive of maternal knowledge such as attempts to impose patriarchal values on the daughter and adherence to institutional motherhood at the expense of recognizing authentic maternal experience. These texts and films consider the process of memory retrieval through written and cinematic narration as integral to this sharing of wisdom along matrilineal lines. This

process manifests as a complication of the Demeter-Persephone myth[9] in which the daughter and mother both speak, searching for each other, either through her memories or in substitute figures. The idea of intergenerational inheritance between women establishes the role of language of the mother and recognizes the ways that feminine subjectivity is formed and challenged by maternal practices.

The next chapters of this dissertation seek to identify how fictional representations of maternal practice can serve to fill in archival gaps as well as how reconfigurations of matrilineal genealogies constitute an alternative form of knowledge production. Intergenerational communication between mothers and daughters, among substitute mother figures, and even through encounters with ghostly mothers, prioritize maternal experience rather than institutional motherhood. These intergenerational interactions highlight the social reproduction of motherhood while also recognizing and making visible maternal subjectivity by challenging patriarchal fantasies and childhood nostalgia for the "good mother." Instead, my analysis of the texts and films in this dissertation seek nuanced, complex, and even unsatisfying answers to the question "what is a mother" by looking at how women embody responses and exchange knowledge among themselves, on their own terms and in their own language. In this way, we can begin to discover what our mothers had been doing then and how their maternal subjectivity shapes future generations.

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[9] The myth of Demeter and Persephone, which depicts the mother's search for the lost daughter in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, is referenced often among motherhood studies scholars as a feminine alternative for the Phallocentric Oedipus myth in psychoanalysis. In fact, Demeter Press, an independent academic feminist press which publishes texts about motherhood studies is named after the goddess of the harvest, "herstory's most celebrated empowered and outraged mother," according to the press's website.

Chapter 2: Rethinking Genealogies through Substitute Motherhood in Fiction

"Estoy tan obligada a esos niños como estaría su madre de carne y sangre si viviese…"

– Miguel de Unamuno, *Tía Tula*

Maternal Practice and Nonbiological Mothers

Articulating a separation between institutional motherhood and maternal experience corresponds to an expansion of the definition of maternal figure. As outlined in the previous chapter, Clarissa Pinkola Estés' understanding of "matrilineal lines of initiation" adds nuance to the idea of matrilineal genealogies to include all individuals who perform maternal practice rather than just biological mothers (263). I refer to these individuals as substitute mothers, a figure who performs maternal practice despite not giving birth to the child. This term is borrowed from Nancy Chodorow's work *Reproduction of Mothering* (16). The substitute mother often appears in the wake of the biological mother's absence, though this is not always the case. This figure may be substituting the presence of an absent biological mother or may be supplementing the maternal practice of the biological mother by offering a substitution for the daughter, especially in the face of a patriarchal mother figure. The substitute mother might perform maternal practice consistently for a child until her death or she might offer one significant act of maternal care that affects the identity formation of the child. As Chodorow explains, "Women mother. In our society, as in most societies, women not only bear children. They also take primary responsibility for infant care, spend more time with infants and children than do men, and sustain primary emotional ties with infants. When biological mothers do not parent, other women, rather than men, virtually always take their place" (3).

Alternatively, Adriane Rich identifies these alternative maternal figures as "nonbiological mothers" or even "spirit sisters" (252). Chodorow also refers to them as "a small but stable number of mother-surrogates" (75). Matrilineal genealogies are not subject to the limitations of patriarchal lineages. They do not necessarily rely only on biological connections between family members nor do they reproduce traditional Oedipal or nuclear family structures. They instead expand to include even substitute mothers. Substitute mothers can take the form of neighbor women, sisters, aunts, grandmothers, or friends. They reveal the agenerational quality of maternal practice. The fact that women rather than men often adopt substitute mother roles points to the social reproduction of mothering rather than an inherent essential feminine maternal instinct. Chodorow's work aims in part to provide this answer to her question "whether it is biologically more natural for a woman who has not borne the child in need of care than for a man to provide this care" (16). Chodorow further emphasizes "that women have the extensive and nearly exclusive mothering role they have is a product of a social and cultural translation of their childbearing and lactation capacities. It is not guaranteed or entailed by these capacities themselves" (30). Rich sees potential criticism for substitute motherhood as a way to include non-reproducing women (elderly women, unmarried or celibate women, and infertile women) in the process of mothering because "the woman who is not tied to the family" is a "great threat to male hegemony" (12, 252). O'Reilly similarly asserts that, "as the normative script positions motherhood as a woman's purpose and fulfillment, it simultaneously and unsurprisingly delineates non-motherhood as absence and meaninglessness" ("Maternal Regret" 517). In other words, "To be a non-mother is, thus, to go off script with no story to be told" ("Maternal Regret" 517). Rich also identifies the substitute mother figure as a possible "counter-mother" who could serve as an alternative to the patriarchal mother (247). Therefore, the substitute mother has the

potential to serve as an enlightening figure in the identity formation of the younger generation of women. The substitute mother figure must establish this identity through consent of the daughter, based on authentic, relational exchange of maternal wisdom and mother work. Pinkola Estés refers to these figures as "little wild mothers" who function to "guide the restoration of the intuitive life" (109). Herein lies the most obvious significance of the substitute mother as a literary figure. Nevertheless, reframing readings of maternal practice to be matrifocal rather than centered on the identity formation of and effects on the daughter figure, prioritizes an examination of the motivations, experiences and subjectivity of substitute mothers. The inclusion of the substitute mother figure in matrilineal genealogies reveals the anti-heteronormative potential of alternative kinships formed through formal or improvised networks of women.

This chapter assesses the figure of the substitute mother in 20th century Spanish narrative, beginning with Miguel de Unamuno's *La Tía Tula* (1921), which depicts a maiden aunt who assumes care of her sister's children. I will also make some references to other literature and film works to offer a more complete and diversified view of the substitute mother figure. The work of Unamuno, widely recognized as a key part of the Generation of '98 who wrote modernist and experimental novels which reflected on the existential conditions of modern life, often problematizes the connection between society and the individual. I will consider the qualities of Unamuno's character that complicate the term mother by questioning biological motherhood as well as traditional gender roles and patriarchal institutions. Specifically, I highlight Tula's attempts to establish a generational continuity of maternal practice and wisdom. I also apply a framework of queer theory (supported by Sara Ahmed, Margaret F. Gibson, and Michael Warner) to discern the potential queer effect of Tula's maternal practice and subjectivity. Finally, I will turn the discussion to additional substitute mother figures in twentieth

century Spanish literature and film including those within Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945), Rosa Montero's *Te trataré como a una reina* (1984), and Pedro Almodóvar's *Todo sobre mi madre* (1999). The substitute mother figures that appear in these latter works of fiction expand the notion of maternal practice, offering additional constructions of alternative kinship configurations at different periods in Spain's history including the postwar period (depicted in *Nada*) and the transition period (depicted in *Te trataré como a una reina* and *Todo sobre mi madre*). Through these additional substitute mother figures, common concerns about maternal practice and the nature of kinship arise while also each posing new questions for consideration.

Miguel de Unamuno's *La Tía Tula*: Becoming the Substitute Mother

Unamuno's Tula stands out as a substitute mother figure whose characterization unites a concern for including non-reproducing women into maternal practice and an attempt to fill a gap left by the absent mother. She serves as a kind of prototype, or at least starting point, for understanding the validity as well as the limitations of substitute mother figures. Despite her status as an unmarried woman and a virgin, Tula performs maternal practice both before and after the death of her sister Rosa. She even interprets her own maternal practice as exceptional to the law, the institution of marriage, biological motherhood, and even religion (I will illuminate these points in more detail shortly). Tula takes on the role of substitute mother, eventually comparing her experience to biological motherhood by claiming, "Estoy tan obligada a esos niños como estaría su madre de carne y sangre si viviese" (Unamuno, *Tula* 53). In fact, Tula often defines her connection to maternal work in terms of obligations or duties, telling her sister Rosa, "Descuida, Rosa; conozco mis deberes… A tus hijos no les faltará madre mientras yo viva" (Unamuno, *Tula* 33). She holds this obligation to assume responsibility for maternal care irrespective of her position as a non-biological mother. She refers to her role as substitute mother

as “mis deberes” as well as “mis obligaciones sagradas” – instilling a spiritual quality to her maternal practice as well as a factor of inevitability (Unamuno, *Tula* 42). After attending to the birth of her first nephew, Tula claims, “toda mujer nace madre” (Unamuno, *Tula* 27). In this way, Tula’s definition of mother proposes an extreme and absolute essential motherhood which goes beyond the biological functions of motherhood. For Tula, rather than become a mother through the process of giving birth, all women are born with the necessary elements to perform maternal care[10].

The prologue of the novel, which cheekily claims “el lector de novelas” can skip, offers a look not at the conception of the novel itself but rather a reflection written after the novel which illuminates the author’s interpretation of his own work (Unamuno, *Tula* 9). In fact, within the context of the prologue, the author does not compare Tula to the Virgin Mary (although the character herself does draw this comparison at times), but rather to Santa Teresa and Don Quijote. In this way, the prologue signposts the themes of madness that appear within the narrative. As the prologue poses, “¿Es acaso un libro de caballerías? Como el lector quiera tomarlo… Tal vez a alguno pueda parecerle una novela hagiográfica, de vida de santos. Es, de todos modos, una novela, podemos asegurarlo” (Unamuno, *Tula* 11). Using these two figures as a point of comparison for Tula in tandem with an emphasis on the fictional quality or inevitable false reality of the novel as a genre, Unamuno suggests a focus on the inconsistency between visible, physical reality and adopted, emotional or spiritual reality. As the author points out, “No hemos visto sino después, al hacer sobre él examen de conciencia de autor, sus raíces teresianas

[10] In this way, it is important to note that Tula’s embodiment of substitute motherhood does not instill a non-gendered characteristic into maternal practice. Rather, she emphasizes the essentialization of motherhood in a way that mirrors institutional motherhood while at the same time rejecting other values of institutional motherhood and patriarchal normative kinship formations.

y quijotescas. Que son una misma raíz" (Unamuno, *Tula* 10). The mystic Saint Teresa of Ávila prized an emphasis on the spiritual reality over the physical reality. Rather than offering a substitution or alternative to physical reality, the spiritual reality surpasses the validity of the former. Similarly, Tula reinforces her role as the true mother of the children in the novel in a way that often displaces and even disqualifies Rosa as the other mother within the narrative. On the surface, the visible quixotic elements of Tula's character correlate to a kind of feminine chivalry that mirrors medieval obligational claims to patriarchal honor codes. In Tula's case, chivalric duty comes in the form of maternal duty. Much like Don Quijote fails to conform to the ideals or even time period of the knights he emulates and whose behavior and identity he adopts for himself, Tula lacks the institutionally defined ingredients for "good" maternal practice since she is not a biological mother yet nevertheless performs mother work. Tula attempts to live a life that does not conform with social or physical reality. She ignores the reality of the sexual impulses of her brother-in-law, the lack of viable breast milk within her body, and even the physical dangers of childbirth for her sister, all in pursuit of her claim to substitute motherhood.

Nevertheless, Unamuno, in his prologue to the text, does not highlight motherhood, but rather sisterhood. The author muses on the linguistic discrepancy between the universalism of *fraternidad* and the scarcity of *sororidad* as a term in Spanish. His interest in the concept of *intrahistoria* (as outlined in Chapter 1 of this dissertation) corresponds to a recognition of the domestic, female sphere of his time as contributing the most to social realities rather than the more esteemed, masculine public sphere. The prologue of *La Tía Tula* points to the intergenerational cycle of matrilineal wisdom while also identifying non-biological mothers as a crucial element of that cycle. Unamuno writes, "Va, pues, el fundamento de la civilidad, la domesticidad, de mano en mano de hermanas, de tías. O de esposas de espíritu, castísimas" (*Tula*

13). Marianne Hirsh suggests that sororal relationships between women are also unique for their disconnection from patriarchal figures and structures. Hirsh explains that, “Sisters can be ‘maternal’ to one another without allowing their bodies to be invaded by men [...]. In functioning as mutual surrogate mothers, sisters can replace mothers” (164). In other words, sisters can perform mutual maternal care without experiencing biological motherhood which requires intervention from a male body to fertilize the egg and create a child. The author describes the sororial relationship between Tula and Rosa as “siempre juntas” (Unamuno, *Tula* 15). Notably, the sisters in *La Tía Tula* lacked continuous maternal care from their own biological mother since they were orphaned at a young age and subsequently raised by their maternal uncle, a priest who gave them good counsel not rooted in practical knowledge, but rather advice garnered from books (Unamuno, *Tula* 17). From the beginning of the text, Tula assumes a maternal role toward Rosa, offering her advice about her relationship to Ramiro in a stern but understanding tone. Tula takes this sororal relationship and further applies it to her role as an aunt, functioning as a substitute mother figure without allowing her body to be “invaded” by Ramiro as Rosa has.

Because the term substitute mother suggests a replacement or substitution of the biological mother figure, it is important to note that especially in the case of Tula, the substitute mother figure holds the power for symbolic matricide. Tula’s status as a maternal figure results in the erasure of the biological mother both metaphorically and literally. On a literal level, Tula’s desire to perform maternal care both encouraged and benefitted from Rosa’s marriage and childbirth, eventually leading to Rosa’s death at the birth of her third child. Tula suggests an almost premonitory understanding of her sister’s relationship to motherhood, explaining, “Parézcanos bien, o mal, nuestra carrera es el matrimonio o el convento; tú no tienes vocación de monja; Dios te hizo para el mundo y el hogar… vamos, para madre de familia” (Unamuno, *Tula*

17). In the same conversation, Tula dismissively alludes to an identification of herself that lands outside this binary of the convent or marriage. Her answer to Rosa's inquiry into Tula's election of nun or mother/wife with "a mí déjame" imparts a sense of a secret plan in motion, not quite realized (Unamuno, *Tula* 17). On the other hand, Tula similarly anticipates Rosa's eventual death by convincing Ramiro to marry Rosa promptly, warning, "Es que hay que ir de prisa, porque la vida es corta" (Unamuno, *Tula* 22). Ramiro laughs off his soon-to-be sister-in-law's warning, crying, "¡Y lo dice a los veintidós años!" (Unamuno, *Tula* 22). The prophetic element of Tula's character absorbs an almost sinister quality as she simultaneously pushes her sister to get married and reproduce while also recognizing the darker possible outcomes that await Rosa. Tula functions as a puppeteer of her sister and brother-in-law, imposing dogmatic ethical maxims on others while simultaneously preaching altruism and devotion to others as she avoids participating in the same ideological institutions, like marriage, that she encourages others to embrace. Just as Athena, the virgin goddess, upheld the law of the father while herself abstaining from sexual relationships with men, Tula maintains patriarchal structures while refusing to participate in them. Her symbolic matricide of Rosa recalls Athena's symbolic matricide of Metis and her subsequent absolution of Orestes from the literal matricide of Clytemnestra. The term and concept of "aunt" requires the existence of a "mother" whether that mother is sister or sister-in-law. The inception of the aunt figure relies on the transition of a sister becoming a mother. However, the terms mother and aunt are not defined in opposition to each other since the mother does not need an aunt. Tula's insistence on the necessity and fundamental role of the aunt rearranges traditional kinship in which the aunt is not seen as essential as the mother. In Tula's new formation of kinship, the aunt becomes a more primal figure than the mother in the upbringing of the next generation.

This uneasy sense of prophetic dread is exacerbated by Tula's dedicated performance of maternal care while her sister still lives. For example, Tula is described as "serena y valerosa" and "una veterana en asistir a trances tales" during her sister's difficult first pregnancy, suggesting an act of maternal care towards Rosa (Unamuno, *Tula* 26). And yet, sentences later within the text, Tula urges the doctor to save the life of her unborn nephew rather than that of her sister despite the doctor's counsel that, "Aunque se muera el crío queda la madre para hacer otros, mientras que si se muere ella no es lo mismo?" (Unamuno, *Tula* 26). She even thinks to herself, "quedaban otras madres" in response to the doctor's logic (Unamuno, *Tula* 26). Nevertheless, Rosa survives her first experience of giving birth. While Rosa still lies in the hospital bed, Tula urges her, "¡Ahora, ánimo y a otra!" (Unamuno, *Tula* 27). Tula pushes Rosa not only into marriage for the sake of her ability to perform maternal care towards Rosa's children, but also pushes the biological mother to the brink of death, suggesting a desire to take over all maternal duties from her sister. This raises the question of what kind of moral or ethical ramifications her abstinence from participation in ideological institutions has on others and whether her insistence on reinforcing traditional Catholic values on her sister even in the face of Rosa's untimely death constitute an actual religiously ethical position or an intimidating use of dogmatic principles. Tula affirms the Catholic purpose of marriage, reproduction, even in the face of her sister's near-death experience during the birth of her firstborn child. She declares her role as a non-biological mother figure to Rosa's children in a way that echoes her sororial maternal practice towards Rosa as interpreted by Hirsh. By rejecting marriage for herself, Tula seems to suggest that her maternal practice constitutes a purer form of maternal experience in which children are the only recipients of maternal care without intervention from a masculine force. As Tula tells Rosa, "Sí tú tienes que atender a los dos y yo sólo a éste," establishing her

role as substitute mother figure even before Rosa's death by centering her maternal practice around the care for a child and detaching maternal duties from marital ones (Unamuno, *Tula* 28). She conceives of herself as a spiritual mother just as a priest is a spiritual father, suggesting a limitlessness to her maternal practice in terms of how many children she considers falling under her jurisdiction (Unamuno, *Tula* 76).

The text consistently blurs the line between spiritual mother and biological mother by comparing Rosa and Tula. Even Rosa entreats her sister while on her deathbed, "¿Quién, si no, es la verdadera madre de mis hijos?" and calls Tula's nieces and nephews "tus hijos casi" (Unamuno, *Tula* 29, 30). Tula promises Rosa that her children will not have a stepmother. While Tula assumes maternal responsibility for Rosa's children, she does not accept the matrimonial responsibilities for Ramiro in the same way. Her vow that the children will not have a stepmother does not alter her perceived maternal obligations toward them but rather heightens it. Instead of a *madrastra*, Rosa and Ramiro's children call Tula *mamita* and refer to Rosa as "la de papá," insinuating a deeper connection between Rosa and her role as wife rather than mother (Unamuno, *Tula* 48). The children do not view Rosa as some ideal version of the "too good mother" figure nor do they reflect on her short presence in their life with nostalgia. Rosa also does not occupy the role of the patriarchal mother, reinforcing patriarchal norms upon her children against which they eventually rebel. In fact, the children rarely think about Rosa, seemingly content with the maternal care of their aunt. Tula comes to signify their only memories of maternal presence. The children eventually state that their biological parents exist for them only within Tula's stories.

Even so, while Tula's spiritual or substitute motherhood at times overshadows Rosa's biological maternal experience, it also lacks some practical elements of biological motherhood.

Most notably, Tula tries to nurse her newborn nephew after the death of Rosa with “sus pechos secos” by asking the Virgin Mary for a miracle which would allow her to breastfeed the child despite her paralleled virginal status to the saint (Unamuno, *Tula* 34). Tula’s commitment to maternal practice stands up against biological as well as legal realities. For example, she twice claims that if Ramiro ever did remarry, “los niños se irán conmigo” y “diga lo que dijere la ley” (Unamuno, *Tula* 42, 57). Despite Ramiro’s status as the legal and biological father to his children, Tula claims a proprietary over them that extends to her understanding of the law itself. However, Ramiro initially holds onto a more traditional perspective of motherhood, telling his children that Tula is not their mother, but rather “todavía no eres más que nuestra tía” (Unamuno, *Tula* 48). For Ramiro, Tula’s legitimacy as mother hinges on her legal connection to the father. Therefore, he proposes a limiting conception of her as aunt unless they wed. For Ramiro, the status of aunt is below that of mother since it lacks the legal protection and legitimacy of matrimony. Nevertheless, Tula stands firm in her resolution to remain virginal and unwed, “como una huérfana cargada de hijos” (52). Finally, on his deathbed, Ramiro admits that he considers Tula to be the true mother of his children rather than Rosa (Unamuno, *Tula* 64).

Tula’s identity as a substitute mother extends beyond her nieces and nephews, further removing the need for blood relationships to cement the obligation for maternal care. On one hand, she refers to Ramiro as “como otro hijo mío” (Unamuno, *Tula* 54). She even adopts the child of Ramiro and Manuela, conceived out of wedlock in a likely case of rape. Here arises another case of Tula’s adherence to patriarchal structures and institutions for others while she abstains from and rejects them for herself, especially the institution of marriage. Tula forces her brother-in-law to marry Manuela to bring both mother and child into the officially sanctioned family structure while also planning to remain outside of it herself. In other words, Tula finds a

way to adopt two new children into her fold, Manuela and her unborn child that “nos llega” without breaking Rosa’s plea that her children will not have a stepmother (Unamuno, *Tula* 61). Manuela is to remain mother to her child only while Tula takes on the role of substitute mother for Ramiro’s other children from Rosa. She remains “una santa” performing “pure” maternal care outside the intervention of masculine interference while forcefully encouraging others, the “pecadores” she has made to adhere to patriarchally prescribed ideas about marriage so she can have more children under her care (Unamuno, *Tula* 61).

Tula cares for each child individually, but her maternal practice does not discriminate between children. She cares for all of Rosa’s children as well as Ramiro’s other child birthed by Manuela. The author eventually alludes to Manuela and Ramiro’s last child as Tula’s successor and Tula seems to harbor a particular affinity and pride for Manuelita. When Tula lies on her deathbed, she calls for Manuelita to be brought to her to say goodbye along with her first doll. Tula explains,

> Hay otra muñeca…. La mía… la que yo tenía siendo niña… mi primer cariño… ¿el primero?... ¡bueno! Tráemela también…. Pero que no se entere ninguna de ésas, no digan que son tonterías nuestras, porque las tontas somos nosotras… ¡Tráeme las dos muñecas, que me despida de ellas, y luego nos pondremos serias para despedirnos de los otros… muñecos todos! (Unamuno, *Tula* 84-85).

This analogy between children and dolls reiterates Chodorow’s analysis of the cyclical reproduction of mothering which asserts “Women are prepared psychologically for mothering through the developmental situation in which they grow up, and in which women have mothered them” (39). Rather than Tula’s assertion that all women are born mothers, Chodorow suggests

that maternal care maintains an intergenerational quality rather than claiming a natural, essential motherhood[11]. Tula calls her doll her first love but then refers to all the children adopted into her care as dolls. This perspective on maternal practice, in which mothering directs itself toward inanimate objects, points to the possibility of mothering without a biological component as well as the transferred reproduction of mothering in young girls. Puerto Rican writer Rosario Ferré draws a similar connection in her short story "La muñeca menor" (1980). Ferré's story not only includes dolls but also an aunt figure, referred to as "la tía." This use of "la tía" as a primary signifier infuses a fable-like quality to the story, a characteristic heightened by the uncanny ending to the tale. The aunt in Ferré's story is beloved and takes care of her sister's daughters, "Ellas las peinaba, las bañaba, y les daba de comer" (Ferré 2). However, in contrast to Tula, this aunt takes on the role of substitute mother figure without the absence of the biological mother. The biological mother is rarely mentioned within the story, but her death is also never stated. For the aunt in "La muñeca menor," the desire for female parthenogenesis on the part of the disabled aunt becomes visible in her creation of life-like dolls. The creation of each doll assumes a religious and incarnated attribute since, "el nacimiento de una muñeca era siempre motivo de regocijo sagrado" (Ferré 2). The supernatural ending to the story reaches its culmination in which the youngest daughter's husband discovers she has been replaced by the doll when, "Colocó delicadamente el estetoscopio sobre su corazón y oyó un lejano rumor de agua. Entonces la muñeca levantó los párpados y por las cuencas vacías de los ojos comenzaron a salir las antenas furibundas de las chágaras" (Ferré 8). The aunt's desire for parthenogenesis and

[11] For Chodorow, rather than affirming the idea that universal motherhood correlates to instinctual motherhood which confirms inevitable motherhood, the reproduction of mothering occurs cyclically. through the "social structurally induced psychological processes" of the mother-daughter relationship rather than as "a product of biology nor of intentional role training" (7).

performance of maternal practice outside of biological motherhood overshadows her experience of caring for her nieces. Similarly, Tula claims the children as her own, comparing them to dolls she animates through her maternal practice in a type of spiritual parthenogenesis made material by her sister's sacrifice of biological motherhood through the institution of patriarchal, heterosexual marriage.

Through the children, especially Manolita, Tula establishes a generational continuity of maternal practice. More than a continuity, she embodies the cyclical nature of maternal experience by taking part in the cycles of life and death. That is to say, Tula buries almost as many people (Don Primitivo, Rosa, Ramiro, and Manuela) as she raises (Ramirín, Elvira, Rosita, Enrique, and Manolita). On one hand, Tula exhibits signs of generational continuity from maternal influences in her own life despite becoming an orphan at a very young age. Her primary caregiver, Don Primitivo, suggests that, "la sabiduría iba en su linaje por vía femenina, que su madre había sido la providencia inteligente de la casa en que se crió, que su hermana lo había sido en la suya, tan breve. Y en cuanto a su otra sobrina, a Rosa, le bastaba para protección y guía con su hermana" (Unamuno, *Tula* 18). Although Rosa is the biological mother of her children, Don Primitivo does not identify her as inheriting the maternal wisdom of her mother or grandmother. He reserves this inheritance for Tula and sees this arrangement as sufficient. She performs maternal work and establishes generational continuity through her maternal practice rather than her bloodlines. For example, Tula claims that she inherited her seriousness and severity from her mother and maternal grandmother (Unamuno, *Tula* 22). Unamuno describes one of the children, Manolita, as "su más hija y la más heredera de su espíritu, la depositaria de su tradición" and "atenta a mantener el culto de la Tía y la tradición del hogar" (*Tula* 87). To explain this phenomenon, Unamuno evokes the analogy of the beehive, since bees learn how to

perform their duties from substitute mother figures rather than the drone bees or the queens. The author never documents an explicit conversation between generations of women in which they exchange knowledge about motherhood or maternal practice. Instead, the women in the text, especially Tula, draw from the repertoire of motherhood which transmits "social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity" through performance of maternal care and the reproduction of mothering as defined by Chodorow (Taylor 2). It is also important to note that the idea of the "wild feminine" as proposed by Pinkola Estés, which also emphasizes the intuitive nature of women could reiterate women's connection to nature as anti-logical or presocietal. Nevertheless, Tula's establishment of a continued generation of women who recognize and adopt matrilineal kinship signals the potential for matrilineal society to be not just ancient and opposed to the objective and the technical but also futuristic.

Unamuno instills an almost supernatural trait to the relationship between Tula and Manolita. On one hand, Manolita seems to have Tula's eyes despite their lack of any biological connection. Tula sees this potential as entirely within the realm of possibility, stating, "Puede ser…. Puede ser… No me los he mirado nunca de cerca ni puedo verlos desde dentro, pero puede ser… puede ser… Al menos le he enseñado a mirar" (Unamuno, *Tula* 78). In this way, Tula attaches her spiritual maternal practice of teaching Manolita to see with elements of Manolita that should be associated exclusively with biological parenthood, the physical characteristic of her eyes. Tula also performs a miraculous act of sacrifice to save Manolita's life. When Manolita falls ill and nears death, Tula prays again to the Virgin Mary to ask for a miracle: "mi vida por la suya, Madre, mi vida por la suya!" (Unamuno, *Tula* 81). In this case, her entreatment to the virginal mother saint grants her wish and Tula falls ill and dies as Manolita

miraculously heals. Here, Unamuno's appeal to the hagiographical[12] nature of his novel comes into play. Tula's death ushers in a new life in which her disciple Manolita takes up the mantle that Tula established in her lifetime. Tula shares a spiritual inheritance with Manolita in which, "ella heredó el alma de ésta, espiritualizada en la Tía" (Unamuno, *Tula* 88). The author writes of Tula as if the loss of her physical body allowed her spirit to permeate the children more purely:

> ¿Murió la tía Tula? No, sino que empezó a vivir en la familia, e irradiando de ella, con una nueva vida más entrañada y más vivífica, con la vida eterna de la familiaridad inmortal. Ahora era ya para sus hijos, sus sobrinos, la Tía, no más que la Tía, ni *madre* ya ni *mamá*, ni aun la tía Tula, sino sólo la Tía. Fue este nombre de invocación, de verdadera invocación religiosa, como el canonizamiento doméstico de una santidad de hogar. La misma Manolita, su más hija y la más heredera de su espíritu, la depositaria de su tradición, no le llamaba sino la Tía (Unamuno, *Tula* 87).

Looking at *La Tía Tula* as the story of the life of a saint culminates in the posthumous establishment of her name of invocation as "la Tía" rather than "la Madre" despite her many efforts in life to ensure that all of Ramiro's children identified her as their mother. She even tells the children that they are all siblings of one father (Ramiro) and one mother (Tula) rather than half siblings with Rosa and Manuela as their mothers. Of their past mothers, she emphasizes her role as substitute mother, telling them of their other mother, "la tuvisteis, pero ahora la madre soy yo" (Unamuno, *Tula* 71). Manolita, the recipient of Tula's final and most extreme act of

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[12] Unamuno later uses this same rhetorical strategy in *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* (1931) to investigate the gap between religious dogma and existential spirituality. Unamuno defines this idea further in his essay "Mi religión" (1908) in which he states, "Mi religión es buscar la verdad en la vida y la vida en la verdad, aun a sabiendas de que no he de encontrarlas mientras viva; mi religión es luchar incesante e incansablemente con el misterio; mi religión es luchar con Dios desde el romper del alba hasta el caer de la noche, como dicen que con Él luchó Jacob."

spiritual substitute motherhood, takes on the role of her successor, “atenta a mantener el culto de la Tía y la tradición del hogar” as “otra tía” to her siblings’ children (Unamuno, *Tula* 87). By setting the next stage of alternative substitute motherhood through Manolita’s observation of “el culto de la Tía,” Unamuno demonstrates how Tula successfully transmits intergenerational knowledge about motherhood and maternal practice to Manolita as the next substitute mother figure.

Rethinking *La Tía Tula*: Reception and Feminist Applications

Tula’s apparent adherence to patriarchally prescribed roles for women and men, which she wholeheartedly imposes on others, even in the face of dire consequences (such as Rosa’s death), stands in stark contrast to her own commitment to remaining outside those social institutions. She preaches a belief in natural, essential, religiously informed motherhood, but performs alternative maternal practice as an aunt rather than biological mother. Tula gained renewed recognition and consideration in 1964 when Miguel Picazo directed a film adaptation of *La Tía Tula* starring Aurora Bautista as the titular character. This version of the story accentuates Tula’s severe nature and depicts her as overly principled to the detriment of those around her while also contrasting these moments with her genuine care and maternal practice towards her adopted children. The film also shifts the context of the story from Unamuno’s contemporary setting of 1921 to postwar Spain, alluding critically to the temporality of the postwar as well as Franco’s sexual and cultural environment of repression. Bosley Crowther in a 1965 *New York Times* review of the film, describes the cinematic character of Tula as “an old maid” with “a morbid fear of men” as well as “the disconcerting character of a pretty but pinch-lipped maiden aunt” who is “plainly a creature of repressions and sexual antipathies, bred into her by her religion and the traditions of her caste.” Crowther interprets the film as an anachronistic

depiction of women (especially for American audiences), representative of the Spanish context in 1921 (the year that Unamuno's novel was published rather than the period of the film itself). Crowther as well as Picazo seem most concerned with Tula's repression rather than the ways she uses her position to liberate herself from particular social structures and institutions. In fact, Crowther sees Tula's resolve as merely "the tragic barrier against which the widower beats." This interpretation dims Tula's nuance and misreads her manipulative, premonitory nature as merely the protective "quills on a porcupine" which act as an "anti-male defense." While Unamuno's version of Tula does explicitly admit to a fear of men, confessing to her uncle, "Yo siempre temo de los hombres, tío," and later to Ramiro, "He huido del hombre," the motivations that drive her decisions in the narrative appear more complex and dynamic than simple androphobia and sexual repression (Unamuno, *Tula* 19, 64).

In her autobiography *Habíamos ganado la guerra* (2007), Esther Tusquets examines the effects of the limitations and extremes of substitutional motherhood on her identity formation. In particular, Tusquets muses that,

> "Solo tía Tula aceptaba aquel exilio con resignación y optimismo y la buena voluntad con que lo aceptaba todo, pero es que tía Tula era una santa. Lo sabía yo de niña y lo he seguido sabiendo siempre, incluso mucho después de dejar de creer en los santos. Para mujeres como tía Tula debería existir un cielo, un cielo pequeño, pues no se lo merecerían muchos más. ¡Son tan raras la bondad genuina, la generosidad sin límites, la limpieza de corazón! Tía Tula no se aburría nunca porque siempre había algo que hacer en favor de otros, alguien a quien socorrer o a quien consolar, y, en Pedralbes, la tenía muy ocupada intentar que la situación fuera menos dura para todos" (22).

At the same time, Tusquets depicts within her own life a stark alternative to “la tradición del hogar” that Tula passes on to Manolita. A substitute mother figure from her own life, her maid Gregoria, never achieved the saint-like status of Tula. Tusquets writes almost remorsefully, “Claro que, por mucho que dijeran que Gregoria era como de la familia, no dejaba de ser más que una criada” (14). Moreover, Tusquets gains her knowledge about the home and domestic duties not from her mother, aunt, or Gregoria, but rather in school. Championed by the Falangist Sección Femenina,

> “‘Enseñanzas de hogar’ no respondía a ningún objetivo determinado, ni nos preparaba, en realidad para nada. Se habían limitado a suprimir las asignaturas más teóricas, o difíciles, o ‘masculinas’ (las matemáticas, el griego, el latín) y a sustituirlas caprichosamente por otras. Dábamos a los diez, once o doce años, clases de puericultura, donde nos explicaban cómo alimentar al bebé, cambiar los pañales, conseguir que durmiera, o lo que debía hacerse si presentaba síntomas de estar enfermo. También nos impartían absolutamente teóricas, porque nunca vimos un fogón ni preparamos una ensalada, clases de cocina. Y unas clases de manejo de la casa -- ventilarla, decorar el cuarto de los niños, disponer los armarios, y del marido, al que había que contener a toda costa y utilizando siempre la mano izquierda, porque lo nuestro era reinar desde las sombras, que se hiciera lo que queríamos aparentado hacer lo que se hiciera lo que queríamos aparentado hacer lo que quería él. Evitar las discusiones, nunca oponersele de frente. Se insistía muchísimo en que había que ganárselo por el estómago, dándole bien de comer (del sexo no se hablaba), y en que, cuando llegaba cansado a casa debíamos llevarle las zapatillas. El detalle de las zapatillas era una auténtica obsesión. Estas asignaturas, impartidas por dos señoritas solteras y sin hijos” (Tusquets 107-108).

Although Tusquets seemingly praises Tula's saint-like commitment to establishing a continuity of maternal knowledge and care despite her virginal status, the kind of wifehood and motherhood purported by the "enseñanzas de hogar" centered around the man of the home. These classes and their single, childless instructors attempted in a way to accomplish the same goals as Tula: They champion conventional patriarchal institutions for others so that they may remain outside of them.

While Tula rejects patriarchal structures and the limitations of biological motherhood, to achieve her aims she must force others into the institutions of marriage and motherhood that she herself does not want to participate in. Tula is most often interpreted as traditional, attached to rigid gender roles including essential motherhood for women. However, her creation of and participation in an alternative family framework outside of the one prescribed by patriarchy gives way to the question: Can Tula be read as a queer figure? Or at least a figure who performs queer maternal practice?

Laura Hynes offers a reading of Tula as a "forerunner of radical feminism" in her 1996 article on the figure, evidencing this attribution to a few key traits of Tula's character including her belief that women are oppressed, her desire to control her own life, her radical critique of biological motherhood, among others (48, 49, 50). According to Hynes, Tula believes that spinsterhood affords women a freedom that marriage does not (49). Hynes defines radical feminism as an ideology that rejects sexist institutions such as marriage, biological motherhood and patriarchal religions (48). While I identify many of the same traits within Tula, the label of radical feminist fails to fit a figure which only adopts these beliefs for herself while imposing traditional values on others. Hynes even recognizes the "contradictions" of Tula's project as a form of radical feminism but still emphasizes the alignment between the goals of Unamuno's

character and those of radical feminists (53). It is also important to note that Unamuno published *La Tía Tula* in 1921, the same decade in which first wave feminist works such as Carmen de Burgos's *La mujer moderna y sus derechos* (1927) and Margarita Nelken, *La trampa del arenal* (1923) which critiqued the institution of marriage in particular were produced. Unamuno's works correspond to these feminist projects mostly in his insistence on producing a written female character that reaffirms the existential subjectivity of women. His portrait of Tula recognizes her dynamic personality and the complexity of her moral inclinations, her conflicting desires, and her execution of ethics. In this way, I read Tula as a figure with queer potential rather than a radical feminist[13].

The framework by which I analyze Tula in this sense comes from the idea of queering. Specifically, Margaret F. Gibson in her introduction to *Queering Motherhood: Narrative and Theoretical Perspectives*, explains, "Queering makes the things we otherwise take for granted suddenly unpredictable, uncooperative, and unexpected" (1). For Gibson, "Queering motherhood can therefore start where any of the central gendered, sexual, relational, political, and/or symbolic components of 'expected' motherhood are challenged" (6). Michael Warner similarly posits that,

> Because the logic of the sexual order is so deeply embedded in the most standard accounts of the world, queer struggles aim not just at toleration or equal status but at challenging those institutions and accounts. The dawning realization that themes of homophobia and heterosexism may be read in almost any document of our culture means

[13] It is also significant to note here before my discussion of latter representations of substitute mothers in twentieth century Spanish fiction that many contemporary Spanish female writers whose work has been interpreted through feminist theoretical frameworks as presenting feminist themes do not consider themselves feminists or use that label including, most notably, Rosa Montero, who sees herself as a champion of women's rights rather than a feminist.

> that we are only beginning to have an idea of how widespread those institutions and accounts are (M. Warner xiii).

Likewise, theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick proposes an understanding of queer as "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically" (quoted in Gutiérrez-Albilla 77-78). Tula's maternal practice certainly constitutes an attempt at queering motherhood since she subverts and problematizes "expected motherhood" in this way. Tula challenges the notion of biological motherhood as well as the connection between motherhood and marriage. She refuses to exist for men, even manipulating Ramiro to serve her needs rather than the reverse. Sara Ahmed examines this link between the status of wife and the history of woman since she writes,

> The history of woman is impossible to disentangle from the history as wife: the female human not only as in relation to man but as for man (woman as there for, and therefore, being for). We can make sense of Monique Wittig's (1992) audacious statement, 'Lesbians are not women.' She argues that lesbians are not women because 'women ' is a being in relation to men: For Wittig, 'women' is a heterosexual category, or a heterosexual injunction. To become a lesbian is to queer woman by wrestling her away from him. To create a world for women is to cease to be women for […]. We deviate from the category 'women' when we move toward women (*Living a Feminist Life* 224).

Through this lens, Tula's radical rejection of men takes on new meaning. Tula not only queers the category of woman by repudiating heterosexual relationships for herself, but also by establishing a new deviation towards women through her beehive analogy. Furthermore, Tula tells Rosa, "Vivimos solas, te he dicho. Las mujeres vivimos siempre solas. El pobre tío es un

santo, pero un santo de libro, y aunque cura, al fin y al cabo hombre" (Unamuno, *Tula* 21). In this way, Tula identifies an inability for men to satisfy her needs for companionship or care. Susan Fraiman applies this idea to domesticity in her work *Extreme Domesticity: A View from the Margins* in which she states,

> Domestic zeal and expertise are linked to women who resist compulsory
>
> heterosexuality; who are childless, child averse, or single mothers; whose domesticity does not preclude and may actually foster professionalism; whose sexuality veers toward the autoerotic if not fetishistic. In this 'bad girl' tradition, domesticity is reconfigured as a language of female self-sufficiency, ambition, and pleasure (22).

Fraiman suggests that removing traditionally feminine acts from their patriarchal constraints, such as domestic work without a husband (to which Fraiman gives the example of Martha Stewart's domestic expertise work after her divorce), unbinds this work so that "domesticity is liberated from protocols of service to others and, more wickedly still, reinvented as service to the self" (98). This applies to the case of Tula, for whom maternal work separates from biological or institutional motherhood. On one hand, Tula read as a queer figure, or one who occupies the space created by alternative maternal practice, demonstrates a potential for maternal care work performed not for the benefit of a husband but rather "as a language of female pleasure, self-expression and autonomy" just as extreme domesticity accomplishes this for Fraiman (Fraiman 100). On the other hand, Tula also remains solely devoted to the children she cares for, outwardly rejecting any kind of self-pleasure from her maternal care work and staking claim to an extreme altruism.

To queer something, especially the category of woman or mother, is to explore the gap left between traditional social prescriptions and the deviation from those norms. Warner, for example, points specifically to the potential of familial language to either "be a language of exile for queers or a resource for irony" (M. Warner xviii). Ahmed crafts the concept of queer phenomenology which highlights the queer framework as a matter of consciousness relating to its surroundings. She uses the term "queer" to oppose "straight." Straight as a phenomenological term for Ahmed presents a double meaning: that which does not deviate from the path as well as that which orients heterosexually. Her understanding of orientation stresses the two-way approach of phenomenology in which the perception of a consciousness and the way that consciousness is perceived inform one another. She uses a path as a metaphor for social institutions and structures, proposing that the lines formed on the path "depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition" (Ahmed, "Orientations" 555). Heteronormative conventions not only affect the straightness of the path laid out for Tula to walk on as a woman in the early 20th century (ie. the convent or marriage), but also influence the way readers interpret her character, motivations, and outcomes. As Ahmed cautions, "We could describe heteronormativity as a straightening device, which rereads the 'slant' of queer desire" ("Orientations" 562). Ahmed describes queering as that which can "disturb the order of things" as well as provoking a "disorientation; it makes things oblique, which in turn opens up another way to inhabit those forms" ("Orientations" 565, 569). An example of this arises at Tula's claim that, "Yo seré su madre y su padre," positing the performance of a kind of androgynous maternal care which disrupts the heterosexual, binary nuclear family structure (Unamuno, *Tula* 66). Adrienne Rich similarly reflects on the potential to "disturb the order of things" in which the established "order of things" comprises what she terms

compulsive heterosexuality. Ahmed concludes that queer iterations of the established order can be read from "deviant to abhorrent, or simply rendered invisible" ("Orientations" 632). In other words, the queer effect of Tula's alternative maternal practice becomes visible when the "assumption of female heterosexuality" is replaced by a more dynamic reading of social realities that make room for investigations to take place in the gaps between the straight and the deviant (Ahmed, "Orientations" 637). Nevertheless, Rich also cautions against two lies of lesbian existence: that women turn to each other because of misandry or androphobia (Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality" 658). Therefore, I am not claiming Tula as a lesbian figure, but rather propose an interpretation of her character that investigates the gap between conventional motherhood and alternative maternal experience as well as her aversion to traditional heterosexual arrangements both sexual and institutional.

Wrestling the category of "woman" from the idea of being "for man" calls for a look at the religious connections to this idea. As Hynes notes, Tula proposes a more female-centered religion, praying primarily to female saints and questioning the authority of male church leaders in her life (49). In Genesis 2:18, the Bible states, "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" God brings Adam every living creature as a potential helper to fulfill this role and bestows upon the first man the responsibility for naming each of the animals. When God takes one of Adam's ribs to form Eve, in Genesis 2:23, Adam announces, "'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man.'" In this way, the Bible solidifies and attempts to justify not only women's role as a helper and being for man, but also her connection to the natural world, her lower status, as well as the sacred power of the name of the father or the right to naming reserved for man. After the fall of man in Genesis 3:16, God blames Eve for eating the fruit from the

forbidden tree and condemns her to painful childbirth as well as to being ruled over by her husband. Merlin Stone, in her investigation into the ancient Goddess religions in her book *When God was a Woman*, advocates for an understanding of the ways that male-oriented religions like Christianity used oppressive stereotypes about women to define women's history as "a broken and buried fragment of male culture" (xxv). She posits that, "with this understanding we may be able to regard ourselves not as permanent helpers but as doers, not as decorative and convenient assistants to men but as responsible and competent individuals in our own right. The image of Eve is not *our* image of women" (Stone xxvi). Understanding matrilineal societies points not just to the past, but also towards a matrifocal future. Tula similarly rethinks the male-centered qualities of religion by offering a matrifocal analysis of the main female characters of Christianity. For example, Tula laments, "Eva no conoció madre… ¡Así se explica el pecado original! Eva murió huérfana de humanidad!" (Unamuno, *Tula* 67). Stone echoes this lament in her identification of matrilineal ancestry as a central component to female-centered religions in ancient societies. These religions for Stone were matrilineal as well as matrifocal as they likely highlighted the creative power of women and consequently deified "their primal ancestor" as a divine Creatoress (13). For Stone, the creation myth of Christianity instead denounces and moralize the creative, reproductive potential of women so that this power reserved for women through childbirth becomes the source of original sin in that, "eating of the tree that gave her the understanding of what 'only the gods knew – the secret of sex – *how* to create life" (217). Furthermore, Tula states explicitly that "'El cristianismo, al fin, y a pesar de la Magdalena, es religión de hombres – se decía Gertrudis –; masculinos el Padre, el Hijo y el Espíritu Santo…!' ¿Pero y la Madre?" (Unamuno, *Tula* 69). Tula's interpretation of Christianity as a religion of men which unfairly condemns Eve and forgets about the spiritual value of motherhood, starkly

contrasts the idea of the Cult of the Tía established posthumously by Manolita. Tula's contemplation of "and what about the Mother?" points to the erasure of the mother and the replacement of matrilineal ancestry with the patriarchal emphasis on the name of the father.

The 2003 Icíar Bollaín film *Te doy mis ojos* sheds light on the disparate Christian imagery and mythmaking of men and women. The film follows the story of Pilar, a contemporary Spanish woman in an abusive relationship with her husband. Pilar's search for freedom and self-expression apart from the domestic violence of her husband clashes with the possessive and manipulative hold he has over her. Linda Gould Levine examines the art in the film which "historizes male power, privileges sixteenth and seventeenth-century painting as a mirror for the female protagonist's self-reflection, recontextualizes classical mythology in the light of contemporary gender relations, and juxtaposes the invisibility of battered women in Spanish society with the visibility of female bodies in the paintings of Titian and Rubens" (217) . In particular, the main character, Pilar walks through the Cathedral of Toledo past "the portraits of the stern men that surround her" until her attention is caught and held by "the only painting that features a woman," *The Virgin Dolorosa* by Luis de Morales (1560-1570), which depicts the Virgin Mary mourning after the death of Christ (Gould Levine 220). Male-centered religion offers a limited depiction of motherhood that looks at the mother only in relation to the child and the child in relation to the father. Her subjectivity falls away, erased, and replaced. Tula's appeal to a female-centered religion recognizes a possibility for women to be more than just beings for men and for mothers to incorporate more complexity into their subjectivity. Her matrifocal religion expands the definition of motherhood and womanhood by testing and rejecting the constraints of patriarchal institutional motherhood to include alternative maternal figures of which Tula is a paradigmatic realization.

El culto de la Tía: Other Substitute Mother Figures in Fiction

The repertoire of maternal practice established by Tula offers an alternative avenue for mothering outside the confines of patriarchal institutions and heterosexual marriage. The kind of extreme mothering exhibited by Tula displaces maternal experience from institutional motherhood and takes on a queer effect. The substitute mother figure as an alternative mother takes shape not only as a replacement for the absent mother, but also as a potential contrast to a present mother. Rich delineates the idea of the substitute mother as counter-mother as follows, “Many women have been caught – have split themselves– between two mothers: one, usually the biological one, who represents the culture of domesticity, of male–centeredness, of conventional expectations, and another, perhaps a woman artist or teacher, who becomes the countervailing figure” (*Of Woman Born* 247). In this way, the substitute mother figure functions as an alternative to the patriarchal mother figure who upholds the patriarchal institution of motherhood. The figure of the patriarchal mother adheres to some mainstays of institutional motherhood, especially reinforcing paternal authority and instilling patriarchal values in her children. Her maternal practices serve as a method of controlling and correcting the behavior of her children, chiefly her daughters, to be in line with patriarchal expectations. O’Reilly uses the term patriarchal motherhood to refer to maternal practice that “is predicated upon such abdication of maternal authority and inauthentic mothering” (O’Reilly in *From Motherhood* 6). In other words, the patriarchal mother wears the mask of motherhood and serves to defend paternal authority either in her own home (by supporting the desires and impulses of the father figure) or more globally (by upholding patriarchal principles and systems that operate outside the home as well). A child, therefore, might be unable to see beyond the mask of motherhood to glimpse the person behind the social and cultural factors affecting her maternal practice, only

able to discern "a harsh voice, a dulled pair of eyes, a mother who does not hold her, does not tell her how wonderful she is" (Rich, *Of Woman Born* 245). Instead, the patriarchal mother instills her children, especially her daughters, with patriarchal values by acting as a straightening device (to borrow Ahmed's term), keeping them straight in line with heteronormative, patriarchal expectations to "avoid the costs of not being in line" (Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* 51). In fact, bell hooks claims the role of patriarchal influence is usually adopted by the mother and then later confirmed in social institutions like politics, education, and religion (23). hooks sees the patriarchal mother as a participant in "maternal sadism" in which women exercise power over the groups they outrank in patriarchal hierarchy: children and some other women (especially of a different class or race) (63). Maternal sadism can take the form of emotional abuse in which the patriarchal mother takes out her frustration with her low rank in the patriarchal hierarchy on those who rank even lower than she does. Even though mothers are relatively powerless in patriarchal culture, this figure's alliances or "collusion" with patriarchal figures and institutions, including the institution of motherhood and heteronormativity, seem to bolster her authority since it is legitimized as an extension of the father's authority (hooks 56).

The very fact of the substitute mother figure's status as a woman performing maternal care outside the limitations of institutional motherhood and its connection to heterosexual marriage signifies a "counter" quality to this counter-mother figure. She may stand in direct contrast to a literal patriarchal mother figure or she may stand in opposition to a more general ideal concept of patriarchal motherhood. As Rich posits,

> They have been seen as embodiments of the great threat to male hegemony: the woman who is not tied to the family, who is disloyal to the law of heterosexual pairing and bearing. These women have nonetheless been expected to serve their term for society as

> missionaries, nuns, teachers, nurses, maiden aunts; to give, rather than sell their labor if they were middle-class; to speak softly, if at all, of women's condition (*Of Woman Born* 252).

The maternal care of women who operate on the periphery of patriarchal expectations may be interpreted not as a contribution to their rebellious subjectivity but rather a way of serving the needs of patriarchal culture from the outside. Here, Rich reads feminine care work as oppressive rather than liberatory.

Virginia Woolf chronicles such an experience in *To the Lighthouse* (1927). Woolf describes a kind of compulsive maternity in which Mrs. Ramsay revels in the fantasy of motherhood, relying on the weakness of others who "need her and send for her and admire her" to demonstrate self-sacrificial devotion "for her own self-satisfaction" (*Lighthouse* 41-42). Woolf stages her novel at the Ramsay's vacation home which houses a variety of visitors including the artistic and young Lily Briscoe and the didactically philosophical Mr. Tansley. Throughout the text, Mrs. Ramsay plays into the institution of motherhood, claiming a kind of essential maternal instinct and describing herself as "nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions" (Woolf, *Lighthouse* 32). Consequently, Mr. Tansley does not humanize Mrs. Ramsay, but sees her as the personification of an ideal maternity. He deciphers Lily's painting of Mrs. Ramsay and her son as "objects of universal veneration" (Woolf , *Lighthouse* 52).

However, Lily, to whom Mrs. Ramsay serves as a substitute mother, later reflects on the unsustainability of Mrs. Ramsay's maternal practices and her obsession with adhering to the self-sacrificial values of institutional motherhood. Lily's understanding of motherhood first mistakes the "mask of motherhood" as authentic, recollecting that "giving, giving, giving, [Mrs. Ramsay] had died" (Woolf, *Lighthouse* 149-150). In contrast, Lily claims Mr. Ramsay "never gave; that

man took" (Woolf, *Lighthouse* 149-150). She finds herself angry with Mrs. Ramsay for upholding this domestic order through her adherence to the institution of motherhood. Because of Mrs. Ramsay's self-identification with the "good mother" figure through her implementation of the mask of motherhood, Lily supposes that Mr. Ramsay interprets Lily as the opposite of Mrs. Ramsay, the opposite of maternity, the opposite of womanhood, as "not a woman, but a peevish, ill tempered, dried-up old maid, presumably" (Woolf, *Lighthouse* 151). Lily demonstrates the falsehoods of institutional motherhood, particularly the notion of essential or natural maternal instinct since she finds herself unwilling to mother Mr. Ramsay after his wife's death. Woolf writes that "his demand for sympathy poured and spread itself in pools at her feet, and all she did, miserable sinner that she was, was to draw her skirts a little closer round her ankles, lest she should get wet" (Woolf, *Lighthouse* 152). Mrs. Ramsay, on the other hand, emblematic of institutional motherhood, must fulfill every demand for sympathy to maintain her saintly status as on of the "objects of universal veneration" (Woolf, *Lighthouse* 52) Lily rejects feminine care work altogether rather than continue the cycle of substitute motherhood which may offer her the same kind of oppressed fate as Mrs. Ramsay rather than a liberated alternative to institutional motherhood.

In the case of Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945), two substitute mother figures appear in the absence of the protagonist, Andrea's, birth mother. This novel fast-forwards to the postwar context, presenting a Bildungsroman of Andrea, an orphan who moves to Barcelona to stay with her maternal grandmother and relatives while carrying out her academic studies. The first attempted substitute mother figure in the novel, Andrea's maiden aunt Tía Angustias, opts for substitute motherhood rather than submit to the traditional binary of the convent or marriage. Nevertheless, Angustias adopts an authoritarian maternal role, acting simultaneously as

patriarchal mother and substitute mother. She arises as a substitute mother figure in *Nada* out of a circumstance of maternal absence since Andrea is an orphan and goes to live with her relatives in Barcelona. Therefore, the initial substitute mother figures in Andrea's life consist of her grandmother, her aunt, and her uncle's wife. Andrea's grandmother colludes with patriarchal figures in the household, always preferring "a sus hijos varones" eventually leading to Angustias's decision to leave the house (Laforet 205). Similarly, Andrea's uncle's wife Gloria represents the dead-end oppression of marriage and institutional motherhood, physically communicated through the fact that Andrea observes, "Algo en sus ojos no lucía nunca" (Laforet 30).

Above all, Tía Angustias attempts to fill the gaps left by Andrea's mother's absence. From the moment Andrea, already in her teenage years, enters her grandmother's house, Tía Angustias adopts an authoritarian stance towards her niece, offering her unsolicited maternal advice that serves to keep Andrea in line with patriarchal expectations. Andrea refers to her aunt as "autoritaria" and hears her words as "su monólogo de órdenes y consejos" (Laforet 17, 24). She also sees her aunt as one who "le gustaba vigilar y criticar mi devoción religiosa (Laforet 54). She tells Andrea, "Te lo diré de otra forma: eres mi sobrina; por lo tanto, una niña de buena familia, modesta, cristiana e inocente. Si yo no me ocupara de ti para todo, tú en Barcelona encontrarías multitud de peligros. Por lo tanto, quiero decirte que no te dejaré dar un paso sin mi permiso" (Laforet 23). Despite her adoption of the status of substitute mother, Angustias attempts to assert her maternal authority by advising Andrea to stay in line with patriarchal values. Angustias experiences herself as mother and daughter in her substitute role, and she incorporates into her maternal practice a comparison of her behavior as a young woman with Andrea's tendencies. Angustias shares traditional and conventional ideas about women's role in

society, explaining to Andrea that, "es verdad que solo hay dos caminos para la mujer" so that "si no puede casarse, no tiene más remedio que entrar en el convento" (Laforet 75, 74). Angustias's story closely reflects that of Tula, but with drastically different results. Just as Tula seems to harken back to a matriarchal past while also adhering to traditional religious patriarchal values, a simultaneous allegory for Quijote and Santa Teresa, Andrea says, "Toda la historia de Angustias resultaba como una novela del siglo pasado" (Laforet 80). The modern sensibilities of Andrea, a college student, reject the patriarchal allegiances and limited view of her aunt.

After failing to live up to Tía Tula's loophole for the convent/marriage binary for women, Angustias later explains her decision to become a nun to Andrea:

> Hubo un tiempo (cuando llegaste) en que me pareció que mi obligación era hacerte de madre. Quedarme a tu lado, protegerte. Tú me has fallado, me has decepcionado. Creí encontrar una huerfanita ansiosa de cariño y he visto un demonio de rebeldía, un ser que se ponía rígido si yo lo acariciaba. Tú has sido mi última ilusión y mi último desengaño, hija (Laforet 75).

Just as Andrea finds Angustias lacking the qualities of her ideal maternal figure, Angustias perceives her niece as failing her as a substitute daughter. Andrea, for Carmen Martín Gaite exemplifies the figure of "la chica rara," a term coined in her essay by the same name[14] in which Martín Gaite defines this figure as one who refuses to conform to socially acceptable behavior. This figure later pervades Spanish post-war and transition literature written by women. Because Angustias is not Andrea's biological mother, this failed connection between them can simply

[14] Published within *Desde la ventana* (1987)

absolve the maternal obligation felt by the aunt. A biological mother who rejected her daughter in this way would be read as a "bad mother," but Angustias as an aunt and substitute mother figure operates on the periphery of these ideals, able to adopt and reject the role of substitute mother as she sees fit. Instead of embracing generational continuity through Angustias as a substitute mother, Andrea rejects her patriarchal mothering and chooses a different substitute mother figure: her friend Ena's mother.

Ena's mother represents for Andrea an authentic substitute mother since she prioritizes honest communication about maternal experience and womanhood. In Ena's mother, Andrea finds a model outside the confines of patriarchal values. The two found their connection not on blood relations, like Angustias attempts, but on honest communication about feminine experience. And yet, Ena and Andrea establish a symbolic kinship, referring to each other as "hermana" (Laforet 103). Ena's mother also seeks actively to protect her daughter from making her same mistakes, intervening so that Ena will follow her own path outside the confines of patriarchal views of women. Ena's mother has the ability to see things from a distance, retrospectively rejecting the institution of motherhood and adopting a second, substitute daughter to whom she can communicate the experience of motherhood and protect from oppressive forces not by controlling the daughter but by choosing honesty rather than silence. Although Ena's mother worries that "Ena solo me conoce como un símbolo de serenidad, de claridad," her role as a substitute mother to Andrea allows her to expand her sense of self to reject a static, sentimental assessment of her maternal experience in exchange for a dynamic, authentic picture of womanhood (Laforet 172). Substitute motherhood gives Ena's mother the opportunity to break out of the confines of institutional motherhood and provides Andrea a path towards freedom for her own identity formation outside the limitations of her own bloodlines. Elizabeth

Ordóñez notes that Ena's mother "comes to represent the maternal side of a Demeter-Kore relationship, first to her daughter, then, from the moment of their conversation onward, with Andrea" since she works to break oppressive generational continuity through her interferences (49). Ena's mother's presence in Andrea's life establishes substitute motherhood as an alternative to patriarchal motherhood which offers more potential for maternal practice that contrasts patriarchal expectations and institutions. Ena's act of maternal care toward Andrea breaks with traditional kinship structures and the patriarchal institution of motherhood since she has no biological or legal tie to Andrea. She instead cares for her in a more genuine form of care rooted not in purported altruism but rather in an active, conscious attempt to break oppressive generational cycles rather than use those same cycles to her advantage, as Tula does.

Rosa Montero's *Te trataré como a una reina* (1984) presents a similar contrast which reconceptualizes a radical female solidarity through the depiction of an unlikely substitute maternal figure, going further outside the trope of Tía Tula. Instead of the selfless, altruistic, and saintlike motherhood of Tía Tula, Montero's novel explores an unconventional maternal practice rooted not in familial duty but rather in solidarity. Montero's novel presents two alternative female figures: the protagonist Bella, who represents a grown-up version of the *chica rara* trope since she lives independently in the urban context of Madrid where she works as a Bolero singer at a nightclub, and the character Antonia, who complicates the notion of the "traditional" Spanish woman since she lives alone at 44 years old yet fails to claim true independence for herself, instead relying on the counsel of her mother, who she visits in her hometown once a month and writes to regularly and her brother, who controls her with a paternalistic authority. Antonia and Bella were childhood friends who reunite in Madrid and rekindle their friendship when Antonia visits Bella's nightclub despite the stark contrast between these two women.

Through Antonia's brother Antonia attempts to establish his superiority over her, coming to her house to be served by her, taking care of her financially, and eventually intervening in her sexual relationships (which I will touch on in detail shortly), he also relies on her to take care of him in domestic ways. As Antonia reflects on one of his visits, "Con su hermano en casa, Antonia se sentía necesaria" (Montero 15). Rich explains that women may use the "mothering of others" to prove their own strength by "mothering men, whose weakness makes her feel strong, or mothering in the role of teacher, doctor, political activist, psychotherapist. In a sense she is giving to others what she herself has lacked; but this will always mean that she needs the neediness of others in order to go on feeling her own strength" (*Of Woman Born* 243). However, the pity between the siblings is mutual since Antonio in turn feels anger at the reality of needing his sister to care for him. Montero writes that Antonio "estaba de muy mal humor, taciturno y virulento, como cada vez que visitaba a su hermana" (67). He finally moves from anger to pity, deciding that, "aunque fuera gorda, estúpida e irritante, era su única familia […]. Antonia, como toda mujer sola, necesitaba del cuidado del varón" (Montero 68). This reaction against powerlessness in the face of a woman resonates with Rich's musings at the beginning of *Of Woman Born*: "There is much to suggest that the male mind has always been haunted by the force of the idea of *dependence on a woman for life itself*, the son's constant effort to assimilate, compensate for, or deny the fact that he is "of woman born" (11).

Antonia writes letters to her mother in which she recounts her daily activities and makes excuses for her brother's lack of communication with their mother. Antonia writes to her mother, "Ya sabe como es Antonio y además está muy ocupado con su trabajo y sus olores. Me dice que la mande besos y que la diga que la quiere aunque no la escriba y que si usted quiere algo no tiene más que decirlo" (Montero 63). That is, Antonia simultaneously accepts traditional outside

influence over her life from her brother and mother, yet she also protects each of them from the reality of their imperfect familial way of relating. She does not write that Antonio never asks about their mother, protecting both him from the potential anger and disappointment of their mother as well as her from the disappointment and hurt of not hearing from her son. Furthermore, though Antonia lives in Madrid, she travels to her hometown once a month to visit her mother. As the author explains about Antonia, “Llevaba más de veinte años haciendo una vez al mes el mismo viaje hasta el pueblo natal, traqueteo de ida y vuelta aburridísimo y, en medio, la oscura casa de su infancia, en la que su madre cada vez parecía más perdida, más pequeña” (Montero 105). Her reliance on antiquated forms of transportation and communication – the train and the letter – reiterate her passive nature as well as her allegiance to tradition during Spain’s transition period. Despite the relative presence of her biological mother, Montero’s characterization of Antonia reveals her to be grossly unprepared for the reality of the modern world, naive[15] and victim to the repetitions of her fixed schedule as well as the replication of traditional values in modern Spain.

Antonia also enters a complicated relationship with a much younger man to which her brother, acting as a paternal figure by reinforcing patriarchal norms and keeping Antonia in line, puts an end. Montero’s novel highlights the double standards of patriarchy which permits certain behavior for men and condemns that same behavior for women (exemplified by Antonio’s constant pursuit of younger, married women). Antonia complicates maternal categorization not only through her relationship to her brother, but also her relationship with Damián, her younger lover. As they make love, she is described as receiving him “con un brazo quieto y maternal”

[15] Nevertheless, Bella reveals her own naivety when she misinterprets the intentions and empty promises of a man she works with.

(Montero 121). Rather than using seductive or even transgressive imagery to describe the sexual intercourse between these two characters, the author instead emphasizes Antonia's maternal nature, suggesting a connection between sexual intimacy and maternal intimacy. This becomes further complicated when Antonia goes to visit Damián at his military training. He tells his superior that she is his mother, modifying the terms of connection to call attention to their age gap and intimacy while simultaneously erasing the sexual element of their association. Interestingly, Damián's superior reiterates this sexual aspect by commenting, "Pues tienes una madre de buen ver todavía, soldado, de buen ver" (Montero 168). Additionally, Antonio criticizes their age difference by ironically asserting, "Si de verdad dices que quieres a Antonia es que eres un enfermo. Podría ser tu madre, chico. Tú estás mal" (Montero 226). This kind of confusion of familial terminology remains a common thread throughout the fictions analyzed in this chapter. For example, Tula is an aunt mistaken for a mother, Andrea and Ena are friends who refer to each other as sister, and Antonia is a lover masquerading as a mother[16]. Disorienting familial terminology in these contexts distorts the boundaries of familial categorization, queering the possibilities for kinship configurations to include found family and nonbiological relationships.

When readers encounter Bella, on the other hand, the protagonist remains committed to city life with little to no longings to return to the hometown she shares with Antonia. Most notably, however, the two characters profess starkly contrasting views of the relationships between men and women. Antonia sees women as better off alone, telling her mother in a letter, "Antonio ya va para los cincuenta y no es bueno que el hombre esté solo, las mujeres somos otra

[16] We also see this in *Todo sobre mi madre* in which Rosa and Manuela are friends who masquerade as sisters but act as mother and daughter.

cosa, somos más apañadas, pero un hombre solo es un desastre, ya lo sabe usted" (54). Antonia and her mother, the two most traditional female characters in the novel, nevertheless independent in their own way, live alone without the constant presence of a man. Bella, who is more sexually, financially, and ideologically liberated posits, "El mundo no estaba hecha para mujeres solas, reflexionó Bella, a pesar de todo lo que dijeran las feministas esas… Porque, sí, tu hombre puede esperarte a la salida del trabajo y defenderte de los peligros callejeros, pero, quien te defiende luego de tu hombre?" (Montero 31). Her views align more with Antonio in this regard, since they both maintain the need for male protection over women, at least in the beginning of the novel. The course of the novel, in which Bella eventually attacks Antonio at his home in retribution for his actions against Antonia, proves both Antonia's point that women are more *apañadas* but also Bella's caution that the world is not made for *mujeres solas*. Montero's novel crafts an alternative in which women can collaborate in solidarity, walking together rather than alone.

When Antonia relays the news of the breakup caused by her brother to her friend, Bella transforms into a substitute mother figure for Antonia. Bella carries out a maternal practice of revenge, throwing Antonia's brother from his apartment window as retribution for his abuses of Antonia. In this way, substitute motherhood serves as a kind of radical female solidarity in which women can mother one another by seeing themselves simultaneously as mother and child, anticipating and enacting the desires of each. As aforementioned, the hopeful ending presented in Montero's novel hinges on solidarity and radical mothering between women. Montero explains that Bella has always been afraid of men, a sentiment shared between this substitute mother figure and Unamuno's Tula. Although the opening newspaper article, written by the character Paco Mancebo, labels Bella "La asesina" and claims she is a woman "sin principios morales y capaz de todo tipo de ensañamiento," painting her as the fearless violent perpetrator rather than a

woman with a history being repeatedly patriarchally victimized and oppressed (Montero 9, 10). In fact, her fear of men is described as "Un miedo muy hondo, que no sabía explicar. Un miedo que se había ido acrecentando con la vida. Eran tan brutos, tan incomprensibles. Tan crueles. Eran como niños, pero como niños capaces de matar. No todos, pero nunca se podía estar segura de por donde saldría la bicha, la locura" (Montero 78-79). The article stresses elements of madness in her attack such as "parecía estar fuera de sí, y su boca soez sólo salían maldiciones llenas de rabia" and "como un rapto de locura" (Montero 10). In an interview with *El País*, Montero criticizes the way patriarchal society interprets masculine social values as neutral (Fernández-Santos). In other words, the particular is misread as the universal. Mancebo determines Bella's violence towards Antonio to be an act driven by madness, jealousy and a general disposition for troublemaking rather than a reaction to the mounting pressure of patriarchy and a radical act of solidarity with Antonia. Like Tula, Bella expresses a fear of men, yet she overcomes this fear, realizing her own power in the face of a substitute daughter figure (Antonia) in need of a substitute mother (herself). She performs an act of maternal care, protecting the substitute daughter against the abusive patriarchal figure. She reenacts the Demeter/Kore relationship in which, "Each daughter, even in the millennia before Christ, must have longed for a mother whose love for her and whose power were so great as to undo rape and bring her back from death. And every mother must have longed for the power of Demeter, the efficacy of her anger, the reconciliation with her lost self" (Rich, *Of Woman Born* 240). However, this kind of female solidarity must recognize the mutually harmful reality of patriarchy. Montero herself noted in an interview with *El País* that "No identifico masculinidad con maldad, en absoluto. Creo que, en todo caso, en nuestras relaciones entre sexos hay una situación de injusticia social que padecemos las mujeres, pero que también padecen los hombres.

Lo que ocurre es que muchos hombres no se dan cuenta de que sufren" (Fernández-Santos). Nevertheless, Bella's maternal practice of revenge does not translate to a change in Antonia's perceived subjectivity. Her identity formation remains static although, "A veces a Antonia se le ocurría que ella había sido la causante de las heridas de su hermano. La verdad era que no entendía la reacción de Bella, pero estaba segura de que si ella no hubiera ido al Desiré a quejarse, a la Isabel no le habría entrado esa ventolera y no se habría ensañado de ese modo con Antonio" (Montero 241). Again, the fulfillment of authentic maternal practice, even for unlikely substitute maternal figures, is contingent on communication and a denial of the silence about feminine experience that patriarchy tries to enforce.

Pedro Almodóvar's film *Todo sobre mi madre* (1999) hinges on similar concerns for alternative kinship configurations involving mutual maternal care from nonbiological substitute mother figures. To borrow Julián Daniel Gutiérrez-Albilla's terminology in regard to *Todo sobre mi madre*, the film represents "queer motherhood" (66). Almodóvar achieves a depiction of queer motherhood by bringing characters who occupy the border spaces of feminine and maternal practice to the foreground, problematizing the taxonomy of what it means to be a woman and a mother. The transgender characters in the film, especially Lola and Agrado, highlight the ambiguous and nuanced nature of womanhood in postmodern society. However, Lola in particular also underscores the complicated category of mother through her identity as a feminine-presenting father to two children. Furthermore, the loss of Manuela's son early in the narrative coupled with her relationship to Sister Rosa questions the idea of the mother without child as well as the figure of the nonbiological substitute mother.

Elaine Tuttle Hansen investigates the figure of the mother without child in detail, noting that the terms mother and child are "relational words, marking partial, quasi-temporary

identities" that rely on one another for definition (Hansen 225). Bearing this in mind, Hansen posits that a unique maternal subjectivity arises when one element of the mother/child equation is eliminated. Hansen observes the potential of this figure to explore maternal subjectivity since, "The story of the mother without child frees us, experimentally and provisionally, to focus on the mother, and in doing so to see her as a multifaceted and changeful subject" (238). *Todo sobre mi madre* achieves this through the character of Manuela. Nevertheless, though Manuela obtains protagonist status throughout the narrative, she does not serve as the author of her own story. This narrative condition is reiterated by the film's title – *Todo sobre mi madre* – which positions Esteban, a self-proclaimed writer and demonstrated observer of life, as the author of this account. Emma Wilson goes further to propose that, "Such narrative framing suggests that it is possible that the story of Manuela's life we watch is her son's fantasy, his writing. If this is the case, he can be seen to erase himself, and so the threat of incest, only to imagine his beloved mother more closely devoting herself to his memory." Therefore, it is important to note that the film's creator has stated that he sees himself most represented in the character of Esteban (Strauss and Almodóvar 189). Additionally, the director's mother died a few months after the film's release, and in his interview with Frédéric Strauss, taken before the passing of his mother, also expresses a certain level of psychological preparation on Almodóvar's part to ready himself for the role of child without mother. Specifically, Almodóvar stresses the significance of the scene in which Manuela reads to her son Esteban in bed from a Truman Capote book. In the same interview with Strauss, the director in passing professes that he would like to take time to record videos of his mother reading from his favorite books (184-85). The film's commitment to the figure of the mother without child reveals a preoccupation with the seemingly inevitable reality of the alternative side of this equation: the child without mother.

Paul Julian Smith, in a revised and expanded version of an essay published at the time of the film's release in *Sight and Sound*, the monthly magazine of the British Film institute, calls attention to the film's depiction of what he calls "cohabitation without limits" (P. Smith 167). Smith cites the successful transplant of Esteban's heart after his death, the transmission of HIV from Lola to Rosa, the circulation of letters, and photos and children between characters as evidence that "Creation and procreation (cinema and motherhood) are thus impeccable masters, God-given gifts that become self-inflicted scourges" (P. Smith 167). Rosa, a nun who works with transgender sex workers like Lola and Agrado, sets another kind of cohabitation without limits in motion when she asks Manuela for help after discovering she is pregnant with Lola's child. Despite the initial hesitation from Manuela to help Rosa, both due to her own traumatic connection to Lola as the father of deceased Esteban and her efforts to convince Rosa to seek aid from her biological mother instead, the two women begin a relationship of "cohabitation without limits" undeterred by their status as strangers. At first, Manuela resists the role of substitute mother, telling Rosa, "Rosa, tú estás pidiendo que yo sea tu madre y no tienes derecho. Tú tienes una madre aunque no te guste. A los padres no se los elige! Son los que son!" (Almodóvar, *Todo*). Additionally, Manuela exemplifies a layer of confusion between familial terms that blurs the boundaries of relational categorization, introducing Rosa to others as her sister though they are strangers who eventually act like mother and daughter. She also describes Rosa as "como una niña pequeña," further confusing their link to one another by infantilizing a pregnant woman under her care. Manuela, the figure of the mother without child, now adopts a new identity as the substitute mother figure to Rosa. She tells Rosa one evening as they lay in bed together, displaying a deep level of intimacy that defies the few short months they have spent living together, "Ojalá estuviéramos solas en el mundo. Sin ningún compromiso. Tú y tu hijo para mi

sola. Pero tienes familia, Rosa. Voy a peinarte y maquillarte un poco" (Almodóvar, *Todo*). This interaction discloses key features of Manuela's substitute maternal practice that demonstrate its unavoidable connection to the mother without child figure in this case. On one hand, Manuela expresses a strong, intimate connection with Rosa. Her desire to be alone in the world with Rosa and her child reflect a longing to experience a maternal bond with Rosa. On the other hand, she facilitates the reconciliation with Rosa's real mother, pushing aside her own desires for maternal bonds by recognizing the significance of a pre-existing maternal relationship between Rosa and her birth mother. Manuela understands the experience of the mother without child and works to eliminate this experience for Rosa's mother by reconciling the two women. Nevertheless, she maintains that even the significance of this bond between Rosa and her biological mother should not come at the expense of Rosa's maternal care. Because of this, she tells Rosa's mother, "Usted es su madre. Pero creo que Rosa está mejor aquí" (Almodóvar, *Todo*).

Because of this experience of cohabitation without limits between Manuela as substitute mother and Rosa as substitute daughter, Manuela eventually takes on the role of substitute mother figure to Rosa's child Esteban after Rosa dies from HIV-related complications during childbirth. In this way, a new figure emerges – the child without mother who becomes a substitute child to a substitute mother – and an old one returns – Rosa's mother becomes yet another the mother without child[17]. However, Manuela's ties to Rosa's son indicate an inheritance beyond the connection between the child's biological (Rosa) and substitute

[17] Manuela is distinct from Tía Tula in this way since she is not a nonreproducing woman but rather one who has participated in biological motherhood as well as substitute motherhood. In both roles, however, she has pertained to alternative kinship formations as a single mother.

(Manuela) mothers[18]. Rosa tells Manuela, "Este niño va a ser de las dos" and also names her child Esteban after Manuela's dead son Esteban (Almodóvar, *Todo*). That is, the mother without child figure of Manuela gains a synchronous identity of substitute mother with child made more complicated by the interchangeability of the children's names (Esteban) and fathers[19] (Lola). The nature of inheritance between Manuela and Rosa's child echoes Tula's attachment to Manolita, a child with whom she shared no biological connection yet certain unexplained biological similarities persisted. In Tula's case, Manolita's eyes seemed identical to Tula's. In Manuela's case, Rosa's Esteban displays a miraculous lack of inheritance of both his parents' HIV. Esteban's status as HIV negative suggests the influence of inheritance from his substitute mother figure, the similarly HIV negative Manuela.

Rosa's Esteban remains the source of ambiguity not only in this regard, but also in his relationship to his maternal grandparents. Rosa's mother tells her husband (who suffers from dementia) that the son is Manuela's to eliminate confusion or jealousy that the child is a bastard of his wife since he has forgotten Rosa entirely. This kind of confusion likewise surrounds Lola who occupies the role of father in the sense of giving sperm to fertilize the eggs that would become both Estebans, but Lola never meets the first Esteban and only briefly encounters the second one when Manuela introduces them. Lola longingly tells Manuela as she holds the child, "Ojalá fuera mío" (Almodóvar, *Todo*). However, female-presenting Lola does not occupy the role of mother in the same way. In fact, upon learning that the child is Lola and Rosa's, Lola lovingly tells Esteban, "Estás con papá" (Almodóvar, *Todo*). When Rosa's mother later tells

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[18] Almodóvar's Rosa shares a name and experience with Unamuno's Rosa, both biological mothers who die in childbirth and delegate the task of maternal care to a substitute mother figure.

[19] Interestingly, the name Esteban comes from the children's father Lola whose dead name was Esteban.

Manuela she doesn't like strange women kissing Esteban, Manuela informs her, "Esa mujer es su padre" (Almodóvar, *Todo*). This paradoxical phrasing both recognizes Lola's gender identity while also defining the relationship between Esteban and Lola as father/son rather than mother/son, reserving the latter distinction for herself as a substitute mother figure. Neither Esteban has a present, traditional father figure and both share Manuela as a mother figure. If Athena's assertion in the *Eumenides* established a new patriarchal order that erased the mother through symbolic matricide, Almodóvar's film establishes a new order that resists patriarchal limitations and challenges traditional, oedipal nuclear family configurations.

Baby Esteban's family, which includes biologically Lola and Manuela and Agrado by extension, unravels the term mother from the term woman. The scene in which Agrado outlines what it cost her literally to assume her place as a woman through the adoption of feminine physical characteristics emphasizes this point when she states, "Cuesta mucho ser auténtica, Señora. Y en estas cosas, no hay que ser rácana. Porque una es más auténtica cuánto más se lo parece a lo que ha soñado ser" (Almodóvar, *Todo*). Here, Almodóvar's characters echo Judith Butler's understanding of gender as "an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts" rather than "a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow" (178). Agrado and Lola's feminine identity complicates the category of women and by extension that of mother as "strategies of subversive repetition enabled by those constructions, to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them" (Butler 187-188). Lola in particular obscures the gender binary since the character both exhibits a commitment to machismo ideologies, demonstrated above all by "Lola's embodiment of patriarchal violence and

domination that Manuela denounces in a conversation with Rosa," while also identifying as a transgender woman (Gutiérrez-Albilla 75). According to Almodóvar, this impossibly contradictory character was based on reality[20]:

> The character Lola is inspired directly by a transvestite who had a bar by the beach in La Barceloneta. He lived with his wife and would never allow her to wear a miniskirt, although he himself went around in a bikini. When I heard this story, it struck me as a perfect illustration of the utterly irrational nature of machismo (Strauss and Almodóvar 183).

Perhaps the most patriarchally aligned quality of Lola's remains her duality as transgender mother/father since she embodies the definition of fatherhood that assigns paternity based on conception of the child alone rather than any commitment to parental care or cohabitation without limits, endearingly referring to herself as "papa" and expressing desire for a childlike Esteban despite her lack of interference in the child's life or performance of maternal care.

Almodóvar summarizes the central thesis of his film in the dedication that precedes the end credits: "A Bette Davis, Gena Rowlands, Romy Schneider… A todas las actrices que han hecho de actrices, a todas las mujeres que actúan, a los hombres que actúan y se convierten en mujeres, a todas las personas que quieren ser madres. A mi madre." This dedication stresses the performative nature of maternal practice. Just like the film itself, this dedication also recognizes the nongendered character of maternal experience for "las personas" that wish to be mothers[21]. The analogy between maternal figures and actors points to the ways that maternal practice does

[20] Notably, this "reality" consists of a voyeuristic fascination with paradox rather than a feminist ethics of care toward transgender communities and individuals.

[21] Nevertheless, it simultaneously imposes limitations on transgender identity as analogous to acting.

not require biological connections nor the presence of a cisgender female. Almodóvar expands on this idea, stating in an interview:

> For me this very atypical family evokes the whole range of families that are possible at the end of the twentieth century. If anything is a feature of our end of century, it is precisely the break-up of the traditional family. It's now possible to create a family with different members, based on different types of biological, or other, relationships. A family should be respected whatever its make-up. What matters is that the members of the family love one another (Strauss and Almodóvar 186).

Gutiérrez-Albilla frames this kind of kinship formation as "an ethics of motherhood and 'embodied care', beyond patriarchal, phallic and heteronormative conceptions of maternal relationality" (67-68). Like the idea of cohabitation without limits, Gutiérrez-Albilla defines this kinship configuration as "com-passionate hospitality" which "is articulated beyond heteronormative and patriarchal conceptions of the family, not in opposition to them or within them, so com-passionate hospitality, associated with the feminine matrixial sphere, can take place beyond the mother and child relationship within and outside the immediate family" (96). However, this distance from the traditional oedipal family structure stands in stark contrast to the Francoist understandings of institutional motherhood which preach against outside influence that is neither political nor religious. The mother is no longer confined to the home nor the restrictions of gender binary or biological connections but rather glorifies the line from the intertextual work *A Streetcar Named Desire* which is repeatedly referenced and acted out within the film, "I have always depended on the kindness of strangers." As Almodóvar explains, "It's also a film about the solidarity that exists between women, but one that arises spontaneously in the course of life's trials" (Strauss and Almodóvar 193). The characters depicted in *Todo sobre*

mi madre illustrate the ways that matrifocal thinking can shatter patriarchal ethical modes and open up the possibilities for other mothers – queer mothers, substitute mothers, transgender mothers/fathers, mothers without children – to become folded into matrilineal genealogies.

Substitute mother figures complicate the idea of institutional motherhood, offering an expansion of matrilineal genealogies to include all those who perform maternal practice. From Tula to Angustias, Bella to Manuela, these characters queer the limitations of the category mother, questioning the boundaries of the term by operating both within and outside of patriarchal notions of motherhood. These fictional accounts of alternative maternal practice craft a kind of fictional matrilineal genealogy, beginning with *La Tía Tula* and continuing through contemporary figures, that challenges the notion of institutional motherhood by depicting maternal experiences that remain inconsistent and unexplained by patriarchal ideologies about mothers. They demonstrate how through diverse social and temporal contexts, the category of mother presents itself as fluid, unfixed. The characters exercising maternal care demonstrate a cohabitation without limits that does not predicate maternal practice on biological maternity or paternity. The matrilineal genealogies of these fictions obtain a spontaneous and improvised quality rather than reflecting an Oedipal nuclear family structure, instead enveloping friends, lovers, extended family, and strangers. The matrifocal solidarity of these narratives reveals the subversive power of walking together.

Chapter 3: Maternal Memory and the Ghostly Mother

"La meva mare morta feia anys i sense poder-me aconsellar i el meu pare casat amb una altra. El meu pare casat amb una altra i jo sense la meva mare que només vivia per tenir-me atencions. I el meu pare casat i jo joveneta i sola a la plaça del Diamant, esperant que rifessin cafeteras…"

– Mercè Rodoreda, *La plaça del Diamant*

The Presence of Absent Mothers in Spanish Fiction

In the epigraph of this chapter, Mercè Rodoreda's character Natalia expresses the state of loneliness she experiences due to the absence of her mother and her inability to seek maternal counsel at the start of the narrative. This passage leads to a few important conclusions about the absent mother figure in *La plaça del Diamant* (1962). On one hand, we never learn the name of Natalia's mother, meaning her entire identity for Natalia and the reader hinges on her connection to maternity. Similarly, Natalia declares that her mother "només vivia per tenir-me atencions (*whose only joy in life had been to fuss over [her]*)," suggesting an identification of her mother as a too-good mother figure (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 16, Rosenthal 16). Natalia's nostalgia for her mother has led to a static, sentimental interpretation of her mother's maternal experience that imposes ideals from the institution of motherhood onto her absent mother. Since Natalia was so young when her mother died (though Rodoreda never clarifies exactly how old she was), she sees her mother's embodiment of motherhood in a romanticized way that emphasizes a loving and doting nature. In fact, Sandra Schumm links the figure of the absent (usually dead) mother with an archetype of post-war Spanish novels written by Spanish women. Catherine Bourland Ross also refers to this archetype as "the absent mother" (12). When readers first encounter a

female Spanish protagonist of post-war fiction, they will often find that she is orphaned at least maternally. As Schumm points out, "Thus in Spain during Franco's rule, literary maternal figures were also concealed— like Metis within Zeus's entrails before Athena's birth— and the motherless daughter was born in Spanish fiction beginning with *Nada*" (19). Marianne Hirsh sees the identities of mother and daughter as inextricably linked since, "The woman who is a mother was a subject as a daughter. But as a mother, her subjectivity is under erasure; during the process of her daughter's accession to subjectivity, she is told to recede into the background, to be replaced" (170).

The patriarchal mother who oppresses her daughters to fit heteronormative and patriarchal constraints of society finds an unlikely counterpart on the other side of the figurative coin of institutional motherhood: the too-good mother. Because of the hegemonic influence of institutional motherhood, the too-good mother absorbs the values and practices of patriarchal definitions of motherhood by appealing to the nostalgia of the mother as a primary, self-sacrificial, eternally nurturing, and unrealistically devotional provider of maternal care. In other words, the too-good mother does not reflect authentic maternal experience. Rather, she is often a nostalgic manifestation of a child who has lost their mother to death or disappearance in their youth, when they lacked the intellectual and emotional capacity to separate the ideals of motherhood from their mother as an individual. Therefore, the figures of the too-good mother and the absent mother intersect as the child (even if she is grown) reflects on the maternal practices of her dead mother with nostalgia and converges the images and ideals from the institution of motherhood with limited memories of received maternal care and the subjectivity of the mother. In the case of Spanish post-war novels of development in particular, authors erase the figure of the too good mother, rendering her seemingly absent because of her collusion with

patriarchal institutions and consequent hindering of the protagonist daughter's identity formation. As Clarissa Pinkola Estés clarifies, "It is not intuition which is broken, but rather the matrilineal blessing on intuition, the handing down of intuitive reliance between a woman and all females of her lines who have gone before her –it is that long river of women that has been dammed" (87).

Therefore, Donna Bassin proposes a process of mourning to "recover and revitalize an active, generative maternal image within the self" (16). That is to say, Bassin's mourning process can regenerate connections with maternal figures despite her absent status. Understanding the figure of the absent mother as a ghostly mother centers this liberatory potential of mourning. It opens up the possibility for interactions between mother and daughter after the death of the former through haunting in which the daughter might encounter traces of maternal wisdom as she struggles to reconcile her own burgeoning subjectivity with the untimely termination of her mother's authorship. Instead of recognizing the daughter as subject and the mother as object, matrifocal feminist theory reframes this narrative relationship to honor both subjectivities. Pinkola Estés similarly theorizes the presence of an "internal mother" of the psyche modeled on the legacy from the actual "external mother," substitute mother figures, and cultural ideas about motherhood through which the daughter has access to maternal wisdom despite the absent status of her maternal figure (172). Pinkola Estés sees these connections as a form of ephemeral knowledge passed on intergenerationally: intuition (85). The "internal mother" then consists of experienced maternal practice as well as the nostalgic and static imagery of the culturally too-good mother. The internal mother functions as a kind of ghostly mother who guides the female protagonist despite her corporeal absence. In this way, the absent mother provides opportunity for an elaboration of the Demeter-Persephone myth in which the daughter and mother now

search for one another, either through ghostly encounters about maternal experience or her substitution. Adriane Rich identifies this myth as "the essential female tragedy" since the separation of a daughter and an absent mother through death exemplified by the case of Demeter and Persephone is "an unwilling one" (*Of Woman Born* 237, 240). Dodie Smith represents this unwilling separation of mother and daughter in *I Capture the Castle* (1948) in which the mother dies during the childhood of the daughter. In adolescence, Cassandra[22], the daughter, realizes she has a "vague" memory of her mother and says she is unsure whether she actually remembers her mother as a person or just visualizes a photograph of her (D. Smith 38). She even prays to her ghostly mother as a kind of guardian angel figure, complete with "a vision of poor mother scurrying down from Heaven to do the best she could" (D. Smith 111). As Cassandra moves toward womanhood and challenges her naive preconceptions about the world, she experiences a ghostly encounter with her mother's wisdom, later reminiscing about the experience: "Do I really believe I was in touch with Mother – or was it something deep in myself choosing that way to advise me? I don't know. I only know that it happened" (D. Smith 350).

In particular, the mourning process outlined by Bassin finds resilience for daughters who are transitioning to the role of mother. Mothers and daughters share a bond in which, as Nancy Chodorow explains, they "maintain elements of their primary relationship" in which they are not encouraged by patriarchy to give up mother-daughter intimacy to the same degree as mother-son relationships (110). Chodorow identifies this as "generational continuity" between mothers and daughters since maternal practice "involves a double identification for women, both as mother

[22] Cassandra, like many daughters of the ghostly mother figure explored in this chapter, also has additional substitute mother figures in her life as well as an emotionally and often physically absent father. She finds maternal wisdom by way of her young stepmother Topaz as well as Miss Blossom, the mannequin in her room that she anthropomorphizes through pretend until she decides she is too old for maternal fantasies.

and as child” (175, 204). As a mother, a woman might reflect on her own experiences as a daughter, combining the feelings of nurturing and being nurtured since “she reexperiences herself as cared-for-child, thus sharing with her child the possession of a good mother” (Chodorow 90). Daughters as mothers might experience a corporeal connection to their own mothers as they perform maternal practice, but might confuse these ideas with institutional motherhood if their mother figure is absent. The absence of the absent mother figure removes possibility for interaction with authentic maternal practice, leaving the daughter with access to understandings of motherhood through alternative methods, often through institutional interpretations of motherhood like religion, popular culture, and politics. Chodorow further intensifies the consequences of the absent mother through her reading of the ways new mothers might recontextualize the experiences they had with their own mothers. Though Natalia finds herself unable to live up to the nostalgic vision of her too-good mother in her own maternal practice, Chodorow affirms that some “women have an investment in mothering in order to make reparation to their own mother (or to get back at her)” (204). Just as the substitute mother problematizes the mutually contingent terminological relationship between mother and child since she is a mother without a child, the absent mother figure challenges this in reverse since the maternal practice of the absent mother can only be experienced through memory reflection or a ghostly encounter, marking the key figure as child without mother. The idea of the ghostly mother as opposed to the absent mother rethinks the figure of the mother through a matrifocal feminist lens. The ghostly mother is not absent at all, but her presence is instead felt in the unseeable, unsayable, and sometimes unnatural interventions of the internal mother. As Joan Garvan posits that, “for maternal subjectivity to be possible the mother must be able to assume a subject position distinct from that of the daughter. Mothering is a variation on being a daughter,

in so far as the mother replays with her child her own maternal past" (5). An analysis of the ghostly mother figure rereads narratives of daughters by centering the mother and recognizing the intergenerational dialogue between women.

While Schumm categorizes post-war literature as a kind of foremother feminism which eliminates the too-good mother to allow room for the liberated "chica rara" daughter to form her own understanding of the self. Conversely, Schumm analyzes post-2000s novels as those in which the story of the female protagonist highlights how the process of reflection and mourning with an absent mother can lead to identity formation. For Schumm, "These works echo the identity-formation of the younger, motherless protagonists in fiction by female Spanish authors beginning with *Nada*[23], but they focus on older characters who look back at the relationship with their mothers in their continuing maturation" (11). In other words, the 21st century protagonists "rewrite the role of the mother" as an alternative to the too-good mother represented by the Virgin Mary and promoted ideologically by Franco's regime (Schumm 12). Nevertheless, I find that the absent mothers in post-war and more contemporary works of fiction tend to operate through haunting, in which their daughters interact with their absent mothers through encounters with traces of maternal wisdom and feminine knowledge left behind. These traces can arise for female protagonists when they become mothers themselves, trading in the labels of girlhood and daughterhood for maternal experience, thereby encountering the ghostly presence of their mother through corporeal repetition of her maternal practice. Such is the case in Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*, the first narrative I will analyze in this chapter for the ways the absent mother becomes the ghostly mother for Natalia as she enters the state of what Pinkola Estés refers to as "child-

[23] I also chose to include *Nada* in the chapter about substitute mothers rather than ghostly mothers because, as Schumm identifies, Andrea rarely reflects on her deceased biological mother's subjectivity or maternal practice.

mother." Jameka Hartley uses the terms daughtermother and daughter + mother to encapsulate this experience since "Each identity informs the other. My daughter-self was strengthened by the added relationship of mother. Through the communication exchanges I had with my own daughters, I constituted deeper understanding of my mother's love, adoration, devotion, and sacrifice for me" (Hartley in Garvan 104). I will then turn to the ways daughters navigate generational continuity with their mothers through sometimes supernatural or uncanny interactions with their ghostly mothers in Pedro Almodóvar's film *Volver* (2006) and Carmen Martín Gaite's novel *Lo raro es vivir* (1996). Finally, I will explore the ways ghostly mothers can establish a documentation of their maternal memory by authoring their subjectivity for the expressed purpose of sharing maternal wisdom with their daughters even after their death. This idea of establishing a legacy through written testimony emerges in my analysis of Isabel Coixet's *film My Life without Me* (2003) and sets the foundation for Chapter 4. Each of the narratives analyzed in this chapter confront the limitations of kinship bonds, demonstrating the liminal quality of matrilineal genealogies. In fact, Hartley points to the liminal nature of the "oscillating" spaces of motherhood and daughterhood: "I am always both daughter and mother" (Hartley in Garvan 103). Even when a death or absence points to a gap in the repertoire of maternal practice, the ghostly mother figure facilitates a haunting to assert her own subjectivity and act as a co-author of her daughter's identity formation. In this way, maternal memory refers both to the daughter's memory of her mother as well as the mother's memory of her own maternal experience and her success at transmitting this intergenerationally.

Finding the Traces of Ghostly Mothers: Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*

As mentioned above, from the very beginning of Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*, Natalia addresses the effect that her mother's death during her childhood has on her present

experience as a young woman. The narrative follows Natalia, a working class woman living before, during, and after the Spanish Civil War. Natalia expands on the effects of her mother's absence in her life, lamenting, "La meva mare no m'havia parlat dels homes. Ella i el meu pare van passar molts anys barallant-se i molts anys sense dir-se res. Passaven les tardes dels diumenges asseguts al menjador sense dir-se res. Quan la meva mare va morir, aquest viure sense paraules encara es va eixamplar (*My mother had never told me about men. She and my father spent many years quarreling and many more not even speaking to each other. They'd spend Sunday afternoons sitting in the dining room, not saying a word. When my mother died, the silence got even bigger.*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 31, Rosenthal 28). Natalia, even from the beginning of her narrative, consistently communicates a desire to connect with her absent mother. She laments her lack of access to maternal advice about womanhood and later motherhood. Furthermore, Natalia's depiction of her father as completely unable to fulfill her desires for maternal practice highlights the unsustainability of a patriarchal institution of motherhood that designates women as the primary and full-time parent. The absent mother for Natalia underlines the inadequacy of her father to perform maternal practice upon his wife's death.

Over the course of the novel, Natalia also faces attempts from her husband Quimet to erase her identity, particularly by reconstructing it as a second manifestation of himself. This is primarily evidenced by his nickname for her, which he gives her the moment they meet: "Colometa. Me'l vaig mirar molt amoïnada i li vaig dir que em deia Natàlia i quan li vaig dir que em dei Natàlia encara riu i va dir que jo només em podia dir un nom: Colometa (*He called me Colometa, his little dove. I looked at him very annoyed and said my name was Natalia and when I said my name was Natalia he kept laughing and said I could only have one name: Colometa*)"

(Rodoreda, *Diamant* 19, Rosenthal 18). After they spend an evening dancing together in the Plaza del Diamante, Natalia runs away from Quimet, a scene she narrates as "Vinga córrer com si m'empaitessin tots els dimonis de l'infern (*I started running like all the devils in hell were after me*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 19, Rosenthal 19). However, that description is immediately amended by Quimet's poetically revised version of the story in which he tells their friends, "Corria com el vent… (*she ran like the wind…*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 20, Rosenthal 19). These interactions highlight the ways Quimet represents a dominant source of knowledge production which seeks to perpetrate an erasure of her identity and a silencing of her story.

Quimet also works to convert Natalia into the too good mother, attempting to align her maternal practice with ideological manifestations of institutional motherhood such as the Virgin Mary. Quimet's advice, for example, is always rooted in self-interest and a desire to erase Natalia's identity by replacing it with that of Colometa, who reiterates his own identity. The identity of Colometa erases Natalia's girlhood identity and paves the way for a new identity that Quimet can shape into his ideal wife. Quimet imposes a name shift for Natalia that carries with it patriarchal understandings of womanhood, motherhood, and marriage. Natalia recounts that Quimet told her early on, "Si volia ser la seva dona havia de començar per trobar bé tot el que ell trobava bé (*If I wanted to be his wife, I had to start by liking everything he liked*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 24, Rosenthal 22). Quimet also exalts the Virgin Mary as the epitome of good motherhood, associating the ideal embodiment of motherly practice as angelic, saintly and pure. He even goes so far as to consider his role as a father in this religious context: "I que em faria uns mobles que així que els veuria cauria d'esquena perquè per alguna cosa era ebenista i que ell era com si fos Sant Josep i que jo era com si fos la Mare de Déu (*And he'd make some furniture that would floor me because he wasn't a carpenter for nothing and he was like Saint Joseph and*

I was like the Virgin Mary)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 24, Rosenthal 22). Additionally, religious sentiments of the time, particularly the importance of the Virgin Mary as the exemplary mother figure after which all women should model their behavior affect Natalia's understanding of her role as a mother and wife. This is evidenced by Natalia's fear of having sex with her husband:

> "Sempre havia tingut por d'aquell moment. M'havien dit que s'hi arriba per un camí de flors i se'n surt per un camí de llàgrimes. I que et duen a l'engany amb alegria…. Perquè de petita havia sentit a dir que et parteixen. I jo sempre havia tingut molta por de morir partida. Les dones, deien, moren partides…. La feina ja comença quan es casen (*I'd always been afraid of that moment. They'd told me the path leading to it was strewn with flowers and the one going away was strewn with tears. And that joy leads to disillusionment. Because when I was little I'd heard people say they rip you open. And I'd always been scared it would kill me. They said women die ripped open. It begins when they get married*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 59-60, Rosenthal 50).

Since she lacks access to a primary maternal figure, Natalia only refers to the "official" knowledge of how women should perceive sex. She expresses obvious fear of sex, citing vague references to "they" and "people" who indoctrinate her with a perspective on sex as damaging.

Quimet not only makes direct comparisons to the Virgin Mary, but also constructs an imaginary "Maria" by which Natalia is expected to compare herself. He frequently mentions "Maria" as though she were a woman he had considered marrying before choosing Natalia instead. Although it is later revealed that Maria never existed but was a fantasy of resentment and an imaginary standard by which to control Natalia, this inferiority complex has direct consequences on Natalia's perspective on motherhood and marriage. She explains, "I jo no em

podia treure la Maria del cap. Si fregava, pensava: la Maria els deu deixar més nets (*I couldn't get Maria out of my head. If I was washing the dishes, I'd think, 'Maria probably gets them cleaner'*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 54, Rosenthal 46). This imposition of maternal and passive feminine identity on Natalia by Quimet is further illustrated by his nickname for her – Colometa meaning Dove – suggesting a dehumanization as well as an erasure of Natalia's connection to her past.

While Quimet projects visions of motherhood on Natalia that reaffirm his own superiority and cause her to question her own worth as a caretaker and provider, he also acts as a paternal figure in the household by which Natalia can compare her maternal actions. Particularly, Natalia explains that Quimet often scolds their son but that she finds it hard to do this, instead she tends to "Jo el renyava alguna vegada, però només quan me'n feia alguna de molt grossa; si no, li ho quan em deixava passar tot (*I scolded him once in a while, but only when he'd done something really naughty. Otherwise, I'd let him get away with anything*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 99, Rosenthal 79). In this way, Natalia alludes to her memory of her own mother's embodied action. As mentioned in the beginning of the novel, Natalia remembers her mother "només vivia per tenir-me atencions (*whose only joy in life had been to fuss over [her]*)," and Natalia finds herself reiterating that performance with her own son, suggesting an interaction with the ghost of her mother through her limited connection to the maternal repertoire (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 16, Rosenthal 16).

Understanding how her husband's efforts to use her as a projection of himself attempted to erase Natalia from the archive alludes to the exclusion of the women Natalia represents in a reading of the novel as a subjective history. *La plaça del Diamant* fills in a gap of the existing archive, but also reveals a haunting as a result. As Avery Gordon explains:

> "It is about putting life back in where only a vague memory or a bare trace was visible to those who bothered to look. It is sometimes about writing ghost stories, stories that not only repair representational mistakes, but also strive to understand the conditions under which a memory was produced in the first place, toward a countermemory, for the future" (Gordon 22).

In other words, *La plaça del Diamant* provides an alternative reading of history that includes the experience of working-class Catalan women, but also offers an explanation for why those stories are lacking in the first place. Quimet's attempts to reshape Natalia into Colometa renders her old girlhood self of Natalia apparitional. Natalia herself becomes a ghostly mother figure, operating in the liminal space between life and death in two ways: on one hand, Natalia is ghostly because she has been superseded by the patriarchally crafted identity of Colometa and on the other hand, she also functions in a suspended state of existence due to wartime conditions. Natalia's stream-of-consciousness narration style highlights her detached, ghostly state of existence, underscoring her starvation due to insufficient rations as well as her experience of disconnection from worldly goods to pay for basic necessities.

Another critical component of *La plaça del Diamant* lies not just in the erasure of Natalia's identity but also in her silences. In considering the protagonist's presentation of and analysis of her own life story, Kathleen M. Glenn concludes that Natalia's silences, misunderstandings and misinterpretations of events provide "the other side of the story" which readers must access to fully comprehend Natalia's situation and its significance in the larger historical context. This idea illuminates the presence of a dual narrative and the importance of silence as a character trait for an "anonymous" character and as emblematic of her inability to access the maternal repertoire due to her mother's death. Glenn's analysis of Natalia's silences

lends itself to Gordon's concept of haunting since "it is the gaps and blanks of Natalia's narrative that stimulate our interaction with the text. They lead us to establish the connections she does not make and to listen to the implications of what she does not say" (Glenn 61). Natalia does not simply accept Quimet's appeals to institutional motherhood. Instead, her stream-of-consciousness narration consistently exposes the gap between her prescribed identity and her lived reality.

I make this link between Natalia's silences and the concept of haunting particularly through her (lack of) interactions with her mother. Since Natalia's mother died when she was young, she lacks access to the maternal repertoire and often laments this fact. However, she does engage with her mother in a ghostly way through the situations in which she expresses a desire to have her mother's advice and when she interacts with other figures (including some substitute mothers) in an attempt to access the maternal repertoire that has been closed off to her because of her biological mother's absence in the narrative. Natalia often unquestionably accepts the advice others give her regarding motherhood and womanhood. She rarely passes judgment on the counsel of others, a characteristic that contributes to the silences Glenn notices within the text. Each of the figures Natalia turns to for maternal knowledge falls short of offering her dynamic, comprehensive access to the repertoire of motherhood including Natalia's husband Quimet, Natalia's mother-in-law, and Natalia's widowed, childless neighbor Senyora Enriqueta.

As Natalia begins to engage in mother work for herself, transitioning from daughter to mother, she finds herself unable to live up to the self-imposed expectations of the too-good mother. Natalia's lack of access to maternal knowledge because of her mother's death means she must navigate alone the incompatibility of maternal experience and the institution of motherhood. During her pregnancy, she does not recognize her own body, describing her

stomach as "un ventre que no era meu (*A belly that wasn't mine*)" and checking her hands "per veure si eren meves i si jo era jo (*to see if they were still mine and if I was still me*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 69, 58, Rosenthal 70, 60). She regrets her situation since she has no one to complain to about the difficulties of maternal experience, adopting a policy of solitary suffering to maintain the mask of motherhood that her husband and others around her indirectly pressure her to don[24]. She defines her experience as follows: "el meu mal era un mal per mí sola (*it was my own private sickness*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 128, Rosenthal 101). Gabrielle Miller explains thet Quimet "not only undermines the discomfort and pain of pregnancy and childbirth but also exemplifies the trivialization of maternal work—and suffering—that motherhood as patriarchal institution often entails" (Miller 867). For example, When Quimet has a tapeworm, he likens his experience to that of Natalia's maternal performance in labor: "I en Quimet deia que ell i jo érem igual perquè jo havia fet els nens i ell havia fet un cuc de quinze metres de llargada (*And Quimet said now we were even because I'd had the kids and he'd had a worm fifteen yards long*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 97, Rosenthal 78). Jessica Benjamin echos Rich's identification of male dominance sourced from a resentment of being "of woman born." Benjamin posits that men experience jealousy towards their mothers because of their ability to give birth. Similarly, for Benjamin, "The original threat is not castration by the father but narcissistic injury in relation to the mother" (287). Quimet's control over Natalia as well as his trivialization of her reproductive experience reveals an attempt to minimize the threat of a severed connection to the mother in the name of alliance with patriarchal influence. Through Natalia, Rodoreda presents the image of

[24]As mentioned in Chapter 1, the "mask of motherhood" constitutes Susan Maushart's understanding of the refusal to reconcile institutional motherhood and maternal experience.

motherhood as complex, intimate and private while also acknowledging the outside sources that threaten to trivialize and regularize the maternal experience.

Miller addresses criticism that Natalia "rejects motherhood" throughout the novel, dismissing the binary labeling of Natalia as either a "good mother" or a "bad mother." Instead, Miller suggests that Natalia represents the figure of the "hidden mother" who "consistently engages in the maternal work that mothering entails and endeavors to act in the best interests of her children" (857). Although that domesticity is impressed upon Natalia by her own upbringing (and lack of maternal figures) and her relationship to her first husband and mother-in-law, Miller proposes that her acceptance of motherly duties helps solidify the protagonist as an authentic representation of Spanish women at the time. In highlighting the guilt and desire Natalia feels as a driving force in her motherhood, Miller alludes to her experience as a mother not as innate, but rather as part of what I identify as an untranslatable repertoire as outlined by Diana Taylor. That is to say, maternal experience exemplifies the ephemeral epistemology of the repertoire, or "vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity" (Taylor 2). In her analysis on Toni Morrison's work, Veena Deo looks at the idea of mothering as a process. Mothering cannot be isolated into single acts nor ideological definitions but rather embraces the ongoing nature of the repertoire's transmission to future generations. Natalia's motherhood in action echoes some of the characteristics of Morrison's conceptions of the maternal such as being forced "to react in the only way she knows how to — individual action and self support" through "protective othering of her children" (Baxter and Satz 73).

Natalia's maternal practice is one in which "moments of tender affection and maternal pride exist alongside frequent episodes of frustration and anger" (Miller 856). Natalia's account offers an alternative to those presented by the aforementioned figures in her life that attempt to

offer her motherly advice. Rodoreda addresses "the inherent complexity of maternal experience" through Natalia (Miller 857). This is evidenced initially by Natalia's description of her first pregnancy, in which she first demonstrates that her maternal practice will be marked by a "protective othering" particularly through the othering of her own body. Natalia creates distance between her subjectivity and her body as well as between her maternal love and her children's bodies to protect herself and her family from harsh wartime and postwar conditions, especially hunger. Even once her children are born, Natalia maintains a nuanced portrait of motherhood that recognizes both the pain and pleasure of maternal practice:

> "Estava tan casada que no tenia ni esma, quan calia, de dir no. No li podia explicar que no em podia queixar a ningú, que el meu mal era un mal per mi sola i que, si alguna vegada em queixava a casa, en Quimet em deia que li feia mal la cama. No li podia dir que els meus fills eren com flors mal cuidades i que la meva casa que havia estat un cel se m'havia tornat un desori i que a la nit, quan portava els nens a dormir i els alçava la camisa i els feia ring-ring al melic per fer-los riure, sentia el parrupeig dels coloms i tenia el nas ple de pudor de febre de colomí (*I was so tired, I didn't have the sense to say no when I needed to. I couldn't tell her I had no one to complain to, that it was my own private sickness and if I ever complained at home Quimet would start telling me his leg hurt. I couldn't tell her my children were like wildflowers no one took care of and my apartment, which used to be a heaven, had turned into a hell, and when I put the kids to bed at night and went 'ring, ring' on their belly buttons to make them laugh, I heard doves cooing and my nose was full of the stench of feverishly hatched doves*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 128, Rosenthal 101).

Despite the dynamic nature of her descriptions, Natalia nonetheless feels deep guilt for the way she mothers since it is largely characterized by that protective othering as a result of her condition as a single mother in wartime.

This forced protective othering and consequent maternal guilt culminates in two key events. The first is when Natalia sends her son to live at a boys camp during the war because she has "dues boques obertes a casa i no tenia res per omplir-les (*two mouths to feed and nothing to put in them*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 173, Rosenthal 134). When she drops Antoni off at the camp, she says "I jo em vaig haver de fer un cor de fusta i el vaig apartar i vaig dir-li que no des més exageracions, perquè no en treia res (*And I had to harden my heart and push him away and I told him not to put on such an act because it wouldn't do him any good*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 176, Rosenthal 136). At first glance, Natalia could be placed into the side of the binary that Miller describes as a "bad mother," but this would be a reductive view of Natalia's maternal experience. Instead, I see this act as an expression of the protective othering Natalia is forced to practice because of her inability to access the maternal repertoire. In fact, as she drives away from the camp, she says she feels like she committed a crime, alluding to the guilt she experiences from society because of her inability to fit the Virgin Mary mold of angelic motherhood.

The second episode that illustrates Natalia's protective othering occurs when she makes the decision to commit double filicide and suicide because she still cannot find food for her children after her son returns from the camp. She plans to buy hydrochloric acid to kill the children in their sleep and then herself "així hauríem acabat i tothom estaria content, que no fèiem cap mal a ningú i ningú no ens estimava (*that way we'd put an end to it all and everyone would be happy since we wouldn't have done anybody any harm and no one loved us*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 189, Rosenthal 146). Again, Natalia acts out of love and a commitment to

the well-being of her children rather than malice and neglect. She is forced to detach herself from her own children to be able to complete this act, but she also only does this out of a concern to end their suffering. When she is offered a job by the grocer at the last moment (while she is buying the poison), she reinforces that silence left by her mother's death, recounting that she put the acid on the counter and left the store "sense dir res (*without a word*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 201, Rosenthal 155). As a result of this moment in which Natalia's protective othering reached its peak in premeditated filicide, Natalia occupies a space between the dead and the living. As Gordon puts it, "To remain haunted is to remain partial to the dead or the deadly and not to the living" (Gordon 182).

In this way, Natalia's story is not only ghostly because of her interactions with her absent mother through her own maternal experience, but also because Natalia herself becomes ghostly over the course of the book. I compare my analysis of Natalia's attempted filicide to Gordon's analysis of Sethe's filicide in *Beloved*. Years after murdering her child, Sethe "cannot move forward and she is holding fast to her steely determination to keep the past at bay, hoping against hope that repressing it will bring the peaceful comfort she longs for" (Gordon 173). Natalia echoes this sentiment, explaining that, "Em va costar d'aixecar el cap, però de mica en mica tornava a la vida després d'haver viscut en el forat de la mort. Els nens havien perdut la figura de ser nens només fets d'ossos (*It was hard for me to get back on my feet again, but slowly I returned to life after living in the pit of death. The children stopped looking like skeletons*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 207, Rosenthal 158). In Natalia's case, she is literally immobilized by her experience and the ghost of her past, not even venturing out the door of her new home with her new husband (the grocer) because of fear that her past, particularly the ghost of Quimet who had died in war, would return to haunt her.

Finally, Natalia returns to her old apartment years later and "em vaig tornar a girar de cara a la porta i amb la punta del ganivet i amb lletres de diari vaig escriure Colometa, ben ratllat endintre (*So I turned back to the door and took my knife and carved 'Colometa' on it in big, deep letters*)" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 260, Rosenthal 197). Natalia leaves her old identity, the one imposed upon her by Quimet and society, that of Colometa, the mother unrealistically modeled after the Virgin Mary, behind in the past and moves forward. She does this by screaming that which "havia viscut tant de temps tancada a dintre, era la meva joventut que fugia amb un crit que no sabia ben bé què era… ¿abandonament? (had lived so long trapped inside me was my youth and it flew off with a scream of I don't know what… Letting go?" (Rodoreda, *Diamant* 261, Rosenthal 197). Rich points to the dualism of the concept "letting go" since women are charged to "let go" of their children and send them off into patriarchal society at a certain age yet the label of mother remains. In this way, "it is not enough to let our children go; we need selves of our own to return to" (*Of Woman Born* 37). That is to say, the haunting is over, Natalia is free from her past. As Gordon explains, "Haunting, unlike trauma, is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done" (xvi). Although Natalia is forced to find her own way in motherhood because her mother died before being able to transfer maternal knowledge to her through embodied action, Natalia nonetheless concludes this haunting by recognizing the "something-to-be-done." She takes ownership of her own identity and rejects the erasure of herself from history through the symbolism of leaving Colometa behind at her old apartment and moving forward as Senyora Natalia. As Senyora Natalia, the protagonist takes on a role beyond that of the

subjectivity of her mother[25], moving past girlhood, wifehood, and motherhood as an older woman with subjectivity that is self-defining and self-reinforcing.

Generational Continuity and the Ghostly Mother: Pedro Almodóvar's *Volver* and Carmen Martin Gaite's *Lo raro es vivir*

The intergenerational communication between the ghostly mother and the daughter take on a more explicit and sometimes supernatural character in Martín Gaite's *Lo raro es vivir* and Almodóvar's *Volver*. The hauntings within this novel and film emphasize the difference between understanding the maternal figures in these works as ghostly rather than absent. Gordon writes that the notion of haunting constitutes "the principal form by which something lost or invisible seemingly not there makes itself known or apparent to us" (63). The ghostly mother brings the daughter into a site of haunting. In other words, the daughter senses the presence of the ghostly mother through an instance of "recognition" (Gordon 63). The repetitive nature of haunting hinges on a kind of phenomenological memory which ties memories of the past to sensory experiences in the present. For memory theorists like Richard Terdiman, memory "complicates the rationalist segmentation of chronology into 'then' and 'now'" (Terdiman 8). Astrid Erll also expounds on this idea, highlighting the way the act of remembering relies on the present situation of recall to amend the past perception itself (8). Afterall, "Memories are small islands in a sea of forgetting" for Erll, meaning an apparitional encounter that facilitates a memory may need to rely on sensory experiences to function as a catalyst for the act of remembering (Erll 9). Sara Ahmed's framework of queer phenomenology serves as a starting point for understanding this relationship between physical space and consciousness. That is to say, "phenomenology makes

[25] Naming here takes on a particularly significant role in identity formation since Natalia is the only mother within Rodoreda's text that gets named – neither Natalia's mother nor Quimet's mother is mentioned by name in the novel.

orientation central in the very argument that consciousness is always directed toward objects and hence is always worldly, situated, and embodied" (Ahmed, "Orientations" 544). The phenomenological relationship between bodies and objects suggests the possibility for a two-way encounter (Ahmed, "Orientations" 551-52). Memory is not only affected by the location of recall, but the body that carries out the act of remembering similarly affects the outcome of that memory since recognition relies on repetition. In order to recognize an apparition – to sense something familiar in a particular situation – the body making this recollection is "shaped by histories" (Ahmed, "Orientations" 552). However, repetition can conversely result in the inability to recognize an apparition. In particular, Ahmed uses the metaphor of desire lines to clarify this: "So we walk on the path as it is before us, but it is only before us as an effect of being walked upon. A paradox of the footprint emerges. Lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created" (Ahmed, "Orientations" 555). This paradox emerges in much of the post-war literature that renders the mother "absent" since her attempts to reveal an apparition or facilitate an encounter of haunting go unrecognized by the daughter.

The last line of Almodóvar's *Volver* – "los fantasmas no lloran" – encapsulates the paradoxical nature of the afterlife. In an interview following the film's premiere at Cannes, Almodóvar affirmed, "It's not a door. It's a curtain. A curtain between life and the afterlife" (Badt). Afterall, while *Volver* is a film about ghosts, it is also a film about the return of the past toward a liberatory, matrifocal future. I consider the ways daughters navigate generational continuity with their mothers through sometimes supernatural or uncanny interactions with their ghostly mothers and radical confrontations with their matrilineal transgressions. *Volver* centers around the supposed ghost of Raimunda and Soledad's estranged mother, Irene, guilty of the unthinkable: turning a blind eye to her husband's incestuous abuse of their daughter. The film's

employment of supernatural themes serves to problematize the effects of the receding subjectivity of the mother and explores the liberatory potential of memory work to break generational cycles of patriarchal abuse. As Raimunda confronts and attempts to reverse her past experiences with incestual rape after her husband attempts to rape her own daughter Paula, she faces the reality of her mother's shortcomings. The mirroring of these two maternal figures: the ghostly mother (Irene) and the daughter-mother (Raimunda), complicates the limitations of the category of mother as well as her relationship to the patriarchal abuses of the father. I propose Raimunda and Irene as radical and contradictory maternal figures whose revenge against the father and eventual reconciliation with one another underscores the effectiveness of memory work, provides an alternative to the patriarchal order, and reveals the possibility for dual subjectivity of the mother and daughter. Through reclaiming a connection with her daughters and rejecting patriarchy's call to "let go" of her children, Irene revolts against patriarchal culture and reaffirms her maternal subjectivity. Her radical potential manifests as matricentric feminism that rejects the silence that bell hooks capital says "represents our collective cultural collusion with patriarchy" and recognizes the dual narrative erasure experienced by the mother through cultural matricide – first as a woman and then as a mother (56). Almodóvar's film confronts the limitations of kinship bonds as much as it does the separation between life and death, demonstrating the liminal quality of matrilineal genealogies and blurring the boundaries between life/death, real/imagined, natural/supernatural, and mother/daughter.

Almodóvar explores the theme of generational continuity between mothers and daughters through the figure of the ghostly mother in his film *Volver*[26]. Almodóvar immediately establishes

[26] Almodóvar has said in interviews that *Volver* serves almost as a sequel to *Todo sobre mi madre* and a continuation of the narration of his observations as a child in La Mancha. As he says in an interview with GQ

a connection between the absent mother and generational continuity with the opening scene in which the daughters of Irene, Soledad and Raimunda, as well as Raimunda's daughter Paula clean Irene's grave. The attendance of the daughters to the ghostly mother in this way emphasizes the cyclical nature of life and the role of women within this structure since women are responsible for life through birth and death through their participation in death rituals. Women were historically responsible for performing funeral rites and thus secured the duality of their creative potential as givers of life. Pinkola Estés writes, "The one who recreates from that which has died is always a double-sided archetype. The Creation Mother is always also the Death Mother and vice versa" (29). This opening scene of *Volver* takes this notion one step further, since the characters reveal that it is a local custom for women to buy a burial plot and look after it all their lives like a second home. Women in this town embrace the duality of life and the afterlife, existing in the liminal space between birth and death since part of their life activity includes preparing for death by cleaning their graves[27]. In this case, the daughters and granddaughter of Irene perform the act of cleaning Irene's grave, practicing a continuation of Irene's life through a repetition of her own embodied action.

The film blurs the boundaries between reality and fantasy, calling into question the absent, dead status of the mother. Almodóvar rewrites the archetype of the absent mother by depicting an encounter with the ghostly mother who is not really absent at all. Members of the town start gossiping about seeing Irene's ghost around town, even claiming that Irene came back from the dead to take care of her sister in her old age. Irene appears to Soledad and in her

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España, "Volver hablar de mis orígenes. Todo está contado desde el niño que está presente en la vida de aquellas mujeres."

[27] In an interview with GQ España, the filmmaker affirms that this scene was inspired by the real-life women in La Mancha that, as a child, he watched clean loved one's graves in La Mancha.

"ghostly" form, having accomplished the impossible of returning from the realm of the absent mother (we later discover that she was never dead to begin with but had faked her own death). The supernatural element of the story finds grounding in the medium of film, in which the spectator's past experiences with the genre of ghost films paves the way for the suspension of belief to support a sense of ambiguity surrounding Irene's ghostly presence. The cinematographic allusions to horror films plays on the way that familiar objects can gain alternative meanings. For example, Raimunda's kitchen becomes a murder site[28], the meat refrigerator at the restaurant becomes a storage place for her husband's dead body, and Tía Paula's house becomes an empty, haunted house when Soledad returns there for Paula's funeral. Ahmed ties this recontextualization of the everyday to feminism since she sees feminism "as a sensory intrusion" "in which domestic objects become strange, almost menacing" (*Living a Feminist Life* 62, 63). Over the course of the film, the supernatural reveals itself to be completely natural. As Paul Julian Smith observes, "Almodóvar presents supernatural situations in a naturalistic way, aiming for a kind of uncanny realism" (189). When Raimunda tells her mother at the end of the film that the women in the village think she is a ghost, Irene replies that she took advantage of the superstitious tendencies of her town, choosing to operate in the liminal space of the ghostly mother rather than speak the truth. Almodóvar, in an interview with GQ España titled "Pedro Almodóvar: Mis mejores películas," says: "En la cultura manchega existen mucho la figura del 'revenant,' la persona que envuelve el fantasma de las personas que se presentan después de haber muerto y normalmente vienen porque tienen cuestiones que solucionar.

[28] Almodóvar makes a similar connection between murder and the kitchen in *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto!* (1985), redefining traditionally oppressive domestic space as liberatory. Both films also share vegetarian feminist themes (outlined by Carol J. Adams) which ties meat to masculinity, demonstrated by Paco's confinement to the meat refrigerator and Antonio's death by hambone.

Entonces este tipo de historias son historias que yo he oído desde mi infancia. El título hace alusión a la vuelta del más allá." Julián Daniel Gutiérrez-Albilla points out that the main characters occupy an in-betweenness since they are neither rural nor urban but oscillate between the two spaces (39). Similarly, "*Volver* emphasizes superstition as a way of complicating the dominant historical archive and the uniform model of bourgeois culture, by interrupting it with heterogeneous and heterochronic ghost stories of the anachronistic rural past and survivors in the late modern city" (Gutiérrez-Albilla 56). Even Soledad, who accepts her mother's return, seems ambiguous about her stance on whether her mother is a supernatural ghost or a natural corporeal form. Therefore, memory and haunting obtain a connection to phenomenological and sensory memory.

At first, the phenomenological memory of the mother takes place only within the village. Irene's daughters experience their mother's haunting through sensory experiences. They reorient themselves from the city to the rural space of their hometown. They spend time in their aunt's home and eat food that reminds them of their mother. While these physical manifestations of their maternal memory – tactile and gustatory – facilitate repetitions of their encounters with Irene, the film prizes the sense of smell as the primary mode by which the sisters remember their mother. When visiting Aunt Paula, Soledad tells Raimunda that the house still smells like their mother. Later on, when Soledad tries to hide Irene from Raimunda in her apartment, Raimunda identifies her mother by the smell of her farts, connecting repetition and maternal memory to humor and olfactory experience. Similarly, music operates within the film as another source of repetition. Raimunda sings the song "Volver" which she says was taught to her by her mother. She directs the song to her own mother, who sits in the car hidden away from view, and her daughter, suggesting another mode of maternal memory through "audiophonic" communication

(Flinn in Gutiérrez-Albilla 35). Gutiérrez-Albilla posits, "The song's lyrics relate both literally and symbolically to the actions and themes of the film: the painful return of the traumatic past to the present; the traumatic return from the present to the painful past and how our existence is shaped by remembering traumas, by incompatible memories, by forgetting traumas, acting them out, enacting them, or (im-possibly) working through them" (35). The role of repetition in an experience of haunting links this film to Almodóvar's other films. In fact, his work has been criticized for its repetitive nature (ie. employing the same actors, themes, camera angles, settings, etc.). This very quality of Almodóvar's work facilitates a haunting for the audience, producing repetitions in an effort to prompt a "something-to-be done" or posing "the formulation of questions instead of finding solutions; the virtual instead of the possible; the Real instead of the actual" (Gordon xvi, Gutiérrez-Albilla 12).

Irene establishes an authentic line of communication with her daughters, free for the first time as a consequence of her absence and dead husband to be honest about her maternal experience and patriarchal trauma instead of adhering to the expectations of institutional motherhood. For example, when Soledad tells her mother that she thinks her marriage was perfect (in fact, Soledad's parents supposedly died together, burned alive in each other's arms), Irene tells her that she was blind about her husband, saying she never wanted her daughters to know the truth of his infidelity. Irene later reveals that the bodies in the fire actually belonged to her husband and his lover, dead by her own vengeful act of arson[29]. If ghosts are dead figures with unfinished business in life, the ghostly mother in *Volver* gets a second chance at carrying out authentic maternal practice, choosing an alternative to traumatic repression and collusive

[29] Irene burns down the house, symbolically and literally destroying her ties to the domestic sphere and identity as a wife.

silence and revealing the possibilities for breaking generational cycles of trauma through haunting and articulation of maternal memory. This iteration of the ghostly mother is defined by unfinished business that leaves the daughter to discern maternal wisdom without the guidance of the mother. Irene subverts the traditional understanding of ghosts in which the living person identifies and interprets traces of the dead through haunting by instead taking control of her ghostly status and choosing to reveal herself to her daughters. The film reveals the possibilities for breaking generational cycles of trauma through unexpected encounters with the ghostly mother's past. An analysis of the ghostly mother figure radically rereads narratives of daughters by centering the mother and recognizing the intergenerational dialogue between women.

However, it is the character of Raimunda who makes retribution to her own mother by breaking generational continuity through her maternal experience with her own daughter. As a girl, Raimunda experienced incestual rape at the hand of her father. She blamed her mother for not noticing, for not protecting her as a self-sacrificial mother should. Raimunda eventually leaves her mother to live instead with her aunt. Irene looks back on that time regretfully, telling her granddaughter, "Es muy doloroso que una hija no quiera a su madre" (Almodóvar, *Volver*). Irene initially rejects a reflection on her maternal memory, explaining to Paula that she doesn't like to talk about this period of time. She tells Paula that she lost Raimunda and instructs her granddaughter to always love her mother. At first, Irene opts to continue the cycle of intergenerational pain, putting the pressure on the daughter to maintain and heal the relationship with the mother and not testifying to the situation of incestuous rape that Raimunda experienced. Raimunda and Irene, however, get an opportunity to break the cycle of generational continuity and to make amends with one another. When Raimunda's husband attempts to rape her daughter who then kills him in self-defense, Raimunda takes full responsibility for the murder and gives

her daughter an alibi. Raimunda absorbs the weight of her daughter's pain as a reversal of her past and to make amends for her mother's inability to do the same. As he lies dead on the kitchen floor, Raimunda quickly closes the zipper of his pants, neutralizing the phallic threat and reinstating her daughter's agency against him. Here we see an example of a mother experiencing herself through Chodorow's framing: simultaneous mother and child. However, in the case of Raimunda and Irene, Raimunda's experience with Paula's attempted rape served in many ways to foreground the shortcomings of her own mother's response to an almost identical situation. The mirroring of the ghostly mother (Irene) and the daughtermother (Raimunda) problematizes Rich's concept of matrophobia as fear of becoming one's mother. Raimunda completely removes herself from her mother following her incestuous rape by her father. She goes instead to live with her aunt, performing a radical manifestation of matrophobia "as a womanly splitting out of the self, in the desire to become purged once and for all of our mothers' bondage, to become individuated and free. The mother stands for the victim in ourselves, the unfree woman, the martyr" (Rich, *Of Woman Born* 236). Not only does Raimunda's matrophobia stem from seeing her mother as a victim, one unable to stand up against patriarchal abuses and protect her daughter, but she also blames her mother as one of "the agents of patriarchy" (King 41). Similarly, Smith notes that the film only paves the way for the ghostly mother figure while rejecting the possibility of the ghostly father: "Absent fathers may not take on the form of ghosts, but their repressed memories return to haunt traumatized daughters" (P. Smith 190).

Raimunda successfully fulfills the fantasy of the Demeter-Kore relationship in which: "Each daughter, even in the millennia before Christ, must have longed for a mother whose love for her and whose power were so great as to undo rape and bring her back from death. And every mother must have longed for the power of Demeter, the efficacy of her anger, the reconciliation

with her lost self" (Rich, *Of Woman Born* 240). Raimunda undoes the attempted rape of her daughter, closing the zipper on his pants and brings her daughter back from death by relieving her from the responsibility of murder. Raimunda takes full responsibility for disposing of the body and alleviates some of Paula's anxieties by finally revealing to her that the man who attempted to rape her was not her biological father since she was instead the product of incest of Raimunda's own incestuous rape by her father[30]. When Irene, the absent mother returns, she reveals that her act of murderous arson against her husband was a reaction to her discovery of his incestuous act against Raimunda. Irene asks forgiveness for her blindness towards her husband and for her inability to perform the maternal practice Raimunda needed in the past. Irene therefore demonstrates a second iteration of the Demeter-Kore fantasy by bringing herself back from the dead and attempting to undo the power of rape by eliminating the threat and killing her husband. When Raimunda forgives her mother, telling her "te necesito" and renouncing her mother's absent status, Irene, close to tears, tells her "los fantasmas no lloran" (Almodóvar, *Volver*). The reconciliation between the ghostly mother and the daughtermother underscores the effectiveness of memory work to facilitate authentic maternal practice. Though Raimunda attempted to forget her past, moving away from her parents, rejecting connection with her mother, and neglecting to reveal the truth of her own daughter's conception, her encounter with generational continuity forced her to confront her past to make a change for the future. In other words, "Feminism is often memory work. We need to remember what sometimes we wish would or could just recede" in order to "make sense of how different experiences connect" (Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* 22). The ghostly mother figure can make retributions for the daughter just

[30] Paula further complicates kinship terminology since she is simultaneously Raimunda's daughter and sister yet shares a name with her great aunt.

as the daughter can amend the mistakes of the mother by refusing to perform the maternal practice which protects the patriarchal institution of motherhood.

Irene as a ghostly mother also takes on the role of substitute mother for a few key figures. At the start of the film, she serves as a substitute mother to Tía Paula, caring for her in her old age. At the end of the narrative, Irene adopts Augustina as a substitute daughter, especially since her mother was killed in the fire Irene started to murder her husband. Augustina becomes an innocent casualty in Irene's act of retribution and justice against her husband, left without a mother of her own. Augustina's mother becomes the figure of the absent mother or disappeared mother. Like the ghostly mother, she operates between the dead and the living, defined by the uncertainty of her status as alive or dead. Since Augustina does not know her mother died in the fire, she believes her to have disappeared. She seeks to place her into the categories of alive or dead while crediting Irene's own spectral state. Augustina accepts Irene as the film articulates a kind of feminist utopia similar to the one outlined in *Todo sobre mi madre* founded on female solidarity and intergenerational inheritance. Augustina and Irene, despite the pain from their biological mother-daughter kinship bonds, share a "cohabitation without limits" made possible by the figure of the substitute mother (P. Smith 167). Gutiérrez-Albilla sees this embrace of the matrifocal feminine community which embraces "the dead, the living, and the soon to die" as "an alternative to the patriarchal, heteronormative order based on violence, non-reciprocal sexual and antagonistic social relations between the masculine self and the feminine other" (64-65). The film represents this utopic dynamic in the rural village, where women gather to mourn the loss of their community members and clean their own graves alongside their neighbors, as well as in the city, where Raimunda calls upon her female neighbors to help her dispose of Paco's body in the freezer.

The revelation that *Volver*'s supernatural figure of the ghostly mother is not supernatural at all, but entirely natural, displays the liberatory potential of maternal haunting. Irene's ghostly presence opens the possibility for reciprocal subjectivity and forgiveness of past maternal sins. Nothing within the film is as it seems – Irene is not a ghost, Paula's attempted rape was not technically incest, Raimunda's parents did not die lovingly in each other's arms, and Angustias will not suffer her cancer without maternal care. None of the relationships between women are simple just as their subjectivities reveal their complex, dynamic feminine identities. Raimunda and Irene in particular experience themselves as mother and daughter simultaneously, resulting in a deeper level of understanding and forgiveness between the two characters.

Martín Gaite explores the ambiguous relationship of the ghostly mother and the daughtermother figures in *Lo raro es vivir*. The novel follows the protagonist Águeda who is asked by the retirement home where her grandfather lives, suffering from memory loss, to impersonate her deceased mother who shares her name and many of her physical attributes rather than break the news to him of his daughter's death. Over the course of the novel, Águeda works up the courage to confront her past, present, and future as the day of impersonating her mother to her grandfather draws near. Martín Gaite highlights the ways the physical parallels between mother and daughter solidify and complicate the intergenerational continuity between mother and daughter. Águeda's matrophobia takes on an extreme iteration in which the daughter's fear of becoming the mother must be overcome in a literal sense. The director of the retirement home tells Águeda "estoy asombrado de cómo se parece usted a su madre" (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 16). In this first interaction, Águeda reveals she has "un trato distante" with her mother and expresses uncertainty about the extent of her mother's maternal love (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 16). Perhaps unsurprisingly, Águeda also initially objects to the idea of being pregnant, telling the director,

"No quiero tener hijos nunca, nunca. ¡Jamás en mi vida!" (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 20). Later on, Águeda is also mistaken for her mother due to her appearance and her voice. Águeda's descriptions of her mother oscillate between harboring criticism for the failures of a woman she once knew and demonstrating a childlike dependence on an omnipotent maternal figure. On one hand, she calls her mother her "eslabón con el mundo" yet on the other hand, she acknowledges that despite her belief in the liminality of life/death and awake/asleep, Águeda lacks access to her mother on any level other than spectral or apparitional (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 31. The protagonist laments "la sólida muralla alzada desde entonces [la muerte de la madre] para siempre entre su viaje y el mío" (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 57). Though she spends the narrative following the traces left behind by her mother to attempt to impersonate her mother for her grandfather, she recognizes that something will always be missing since:

> "Ya no oye – me decía –, ya no puede explicar nada aunque se lo pregunte, ya no puede mentir ni defenderse, se ha ido de puntillas con sus cosas, con su mirada indescifrable, ya no pasa calor, la parte de mi infancia enredada en su ovillo se la llevó con ella. No pensaba 'se la llevará', como otras veces al imaginar con sobresalto su ausencia, sino 'se la llevó', lo pensaba como algo inexorable. Y el cordón umbilical de las historias pendientes se cubría de herrumbre" (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 55).

Therefore, Águeda admits to holding her mother up to the standard of – if not the too good mother – the omnipotent mother. She says, "nunca me había atrevido a derribarla de su pedestal " despite all the evidence of the shortcomings of her mother's maternal practice (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 59). She analogizes her longing for her mother with that of an infant who longs for its mother. Nevertheless, Águeda does encounter her mother at a level of haunting since she experiences memory as "small islands in a sea of forgetting" (Erll 9). Águeda's memory as

suddenly arriving "el primer dato secreto, desenterrar una piedrecita perdida" echo Martín Gaite's perception of memory in *El cuarto de atrás* (1978) which focuses on "las miguitas, no las piedrecitas blancas" of history (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 88, Martín Gaite, *El cuarto* 211).

Not only does this novel foster confusion between mother and daughter, asking the latter to stand in for the former, but the dreamlike narration style also disrupts the boundaries of dreams and reality. Annette Kuhn refers to this phenomenon as the "phantasmagoria of memory" in which dreams and reality conflate within a memory (125). From the beginning of the novel, Águeda demonstrates her tendency to experience the phantasmagoria of memory when she recounts a dream in which her father refers to her partner Tomás as her husband even though he knows they are not married. When she awakens, she claims the source of her interruption from rest was her father waking her up "con una jiguera de las suyas" that put her in a bad mood (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 26). Her dreams maintain the patriarchal order imposed by her father while her state of being awake criticizes that imposition. Nevertheless, as Chodorow points out, "A girl's father provides a last ditch escape from maternal omnipotence, so a girl cannot risk driving him away" (195). Águeda similarly expresses a preference for fairy tales since "son los que más me convencen" because of her perceived connection between spells in fairy tales and the identity transformations that take place in her dreams (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 50). Águeda formats her understanding of the world of dreams and reality as a kind of Möbius strip of existence in which the absolute status of the dead and the living can be called into question. Águeda explains: "Yo el más allá me lo figuro como una especie de inmenso almacén aglomerado y escabroso, por algunos tramos al aire libre, por otros bajo techado. A veces he entrado allí en sueños, sueños donde, naturalmente, estaba muerta yo también" (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 61). Águeda expresses deep respect for the dead as a group that has witnessed the extent of

the continuum of life/death, awake/asleep yet cannot testify to "lo raro que era vivir" (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 78-79). Águeda understands dreams and death, but adopts the stance of the book's title: "Lo raro es vivir."

Martín Gaite similarly engages in memory work towards these ends by exposing the process of memory recollection and blurring the boundaries between real and fictional in *El cuarto de atrás* (1978) in which she accesses and relays her own memories of the war and postwar periods in Spain. Martín Gaite, born in 1925, lived through the Spanish Civil War as a child. Martín Gaite's strategies for engaging in memory work include the use of an interlocutor and the privileging of the quotidian. She rejects the novelistic convention that considers quotidian tasks such as getting a guest a glass of iced tea irrelevant to the narration, the process of memory retrieval, and consequently the historical archive. She instead prizes interruptions, diversions, and tangents in memory recall as central to her understanding of her own past and its interpretation in her present. In *El cuarto de atrás*, Martín Gaite stages a communication between reality (represented by the figure Carmen who serves as a doubling of the author) and fantasy (represented by the dark stranger who comes to interview her in her home after midnight and to whom she recounts formative episodes from her youth). The author establishes a connection between memory and dreaming since both states confuse reality and fantasy, further exacerbated by her use of the present-tense narration which confuses the temporal element of her memories, much like a dream.

In her mourning process as she prepares to adopt the persona of her mother for her grandfather, Águeda confronts her mother's friend and implied lover Rosario to try to find out more about her mother as an individual rather than the omnipotent mother figure of her own limited memory. This interaction highlights the ways Águeda converges fiction and reality into

her memories when she realizes that she has subconsciously conflated everything she believed about her mother and Rosario with the film *All About Eve* (1950). She also substitutes her mother's portrait as a personification of her mother, explaining "empecé a sentirme desprotegida, como tantas veces frente a la mirada impasible de mi madre" (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 164). Águeda and Rosario work together to piece together the memories of Águeda's mother, describing the experience as "era vivir de nuevo, enhebrar los sueños enterrados" and acting as "hortelanos de ese recuerdo" (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 139, 160). Águeda promises Rosario that they can navigate the haunting memories of their beloved maternal figure together, telling her "Estamos saliendo. Y ella nos guía. Agárrate a mí" (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 212). Here, Águeda comes to terms with the power of substitute motherhood since her mother had performed maternal practice for Rosario. In this way, Águeda's jealousy of Rosario as the chosen recipient of maternal practice rather than the obligatory one gives way to mutual grief in which Águeda understands, "Teníamos sed atrasada de Águeda Luengo, de verla reflejada en otros ojos. Y fui entendiendo casi enseguida que su muerte había dejado a Rosario más desconcretada y excluida que a mía… Que en mi madre no había una persona sino varias[31], lo sabía hacía mucho" (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 215-216). She sees these encounters with those who also suffered a loss at the death of her mother – her father, Rosario, and eventually her grandfather – as a haunting confrontation with the "aportaciones tan vacilantes" and limited testimonies of the several people that her mother was – an ex-wife, a substitute mother and friend, and a daughter (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 218).

[31] This theme of the multifaceted nature of the mother as not one person but many arises in many of the works explored in this dissertation, most notably within *Un milagro en equilibrio* which is analyzed in detail in chapter 4.

Through Águeda's culminating interaction with her grandfather at the climax of the novel, Águeda begins to see her mother as daughtermother, eventually leading to her desire to have children herself and become a daughtermother since the novel closes with her becoming pregnant. The significance of this exchange is heightened by the initial ambiguity surrounding Águeda's success at tricking her grandfather into believing that she is his daughter rather than his granddaughter. The director of the retirement home tells Águeda that the grandfather asked to see her but doesn't specify if he meant his daughter Águeda or his granddaughter Águeda. The continuity of their names further complicates the younger Águeda's ability to break out of the intergenerational cycle of maternal practice set forth by her mother. Águeda's grandfather facilitates the most extreme encounter with the ghostly mother figure by prompting her to use her own voice to perform mother work on herself. In other words, Águeda impersonates her mother to herself as well as her grandfather, providing her with the closure she needs to mourn the deceased Águeda. Her grandfather baits her:

> "--Dices que es despegada, que no le dan tus cosas ni frío ni calor, pero puedes equivocarte, seguramente te necesita más de lo que pensamos, que no se cruce nada entre ella y tú…, eso es lo único que te digo, lo primero es lo primero. Y si no, no haberla parido."
>
> –¿No haberla parido? ¿Estás loco? – me brotó del alma – ¡Para mí es lo primero! Entre ella y yo no se cruza nada, ¡nada ni nadie, para que te enteres!, mi hija es lo que más quiero en este mundo…
>
> Tenía la voz casi velada por las lágrimas.

– Pues díselo – me interrumpió él – dile también eso, ella es la que se tiene que enterar, no yo, díselo así, como a mí me lo dices…

– ¡¡Ya se lo estoy diciendo!! – exclamé en un tono enloquecido que escapaba totalmente a mi control" (Martín Gaite, *Lo raro* 228-229).

The older Águeda as the ghostly mother speaks to her daughter through her daughter, using their identical appearances and voices to intervene from death into life. Even though neither Águeda nor her grandfather are fooled by her appearance into believing she is her mother, Elizabeth Grosz offers insight into the power of voice as a particularly potent sensory tool: "As sight holds together and unifies various disparate objects, cotemporal sounds are unified into a single sound no longer resembling its components" (98). Águeda's voice becomes unrecognizable to her as she allows the ghostly mother to possess her and liberate her from the intergenerational cycle of inauthentic maternal practice in which the daughter and mother are mutually insecure about their relationship. This frees up Águeda to finally take on motherhood for herself as she disconnects her future maternal experience from her childhood perceptions of the omnipotent mother as well as the expectations of institutional motherhood since she has encountered an oral testimony of her mother's authentic maternal experience.

The themes of the ghostly mother continue to be explored in narrative form through film and literature in Spanish and international contexts. Recently, the film *Petite Maman* (2021) by French filmmaker Céline Sciamma further entangles the figures of the absent mother and the ghostly mother. In the film, Nelly, an eight year old girl, visits her mother's childhood home

after the death of her grandmother as her parents[32] pack up the house. When her mother leaves unexpectedly the first night there, leaving Nelly behind without saying goodbye or offering any reason for her departure, Nelly encounters a girl her age in the woods who she soon realizes is her mother as a child – her *petite maman*. Benjamin identifies this separation between the mother and child leaves a space "that allows differentiation of self and other, fantasy and reality" so that the mother and child no longer mutually obstruct each other's subjectivity (Benjamin 294, 298). In the film, Nelly's mother's childhood home takes on two manifestations: one in the present, empty and being packed up, and one in the past, full of life. Yet both contain memories of her mother's past, exposing the power of phenomenological memory. When Nelly visits the version of the house in which Marion (her young mother) lives, the space has changed. The two-way orientation of phenomenology between consciousness and space has been altered so that the space changes its relationship to Nelly and Nelly in turn changes her relationship to the space. For example, adult Marion tells Nelly she remembers the wallpaper in their home which now only fills a tiny spot of the kitchen, hidden behind a cupboard that the family had decorated around. The film presents the duality of maternal memory as simultaneously the memory of the mother as well as the mother's memory.

The film also complicates kinship terminology since Marion and Nelly are mother and daughter in the present but in the absence of her mother leaves space for Nelly to encounter her mother in the past in which they take on the role of friends or sisters. Since Gordon posits, "Death exists in the past tense, disappearance in the present," older Marion's disappearance creates an opportunity for a specter of her girlhood self to temporarily surrogate her place in

[32] Nelly's realized fear of Benjamin's "narcissistic injury in relation to the mother" through her abandonment in a time of grief rather than "castration by the father" becomes clear through the characterization of her father whose biggest sin seems to be his inability to engage in memory work with his wife and daughter (Benjamin 287).

Nelly's life (113). Nevertheless, Marion still performs some maternal care for Nelly, showing her how to tie sticks to make a fort, taking her inside when it rains, preparing warm chocolate milk for her, and offering her maternal comfort through words of affirmation. Nelly's encounter with her mother as a child instills a new understanding of her mother's subjectivity since she is able to relate to her identity as it corresponds with her own at eight years old as well as access her mother's maternal memory in a tangible way. Physically and nominally the two characters become confused[33]. In fact, the characters of young Marion and Nelly are played by twin actresses (Gabrielle Sanz and Joséphine Sanz respectively), further suggesting the sisterly connection between the mother and daughter. They perform sisterly activities together, playing board games, building their hut, sharing meals, acting out a play, and baking crepes. The characters reveal to one another that they are both only children who long for siblings, eventually using their bond to satisfy their desire for sisterhood while also healing their relationship with temporality. When Nelly reveals their mother-daughter relationship to Marion, Marion asks if Nelly comes from the future to which she replies that she comes from the path behind her, demonstrating the reorientation her phenomenological memory has taken and illustrating the idea that an encounter with the past is the way forward.

The ghostly mother is not dead at all – only absent – and instead of a ghost from the afterlife, she takes the form of a young girl from the past. The film concludes with the ghostly mother figure returning – giving up her absent status to return to the daughter. Nelly calls her Marion instead of mom, imbuing her relationship to her mother with a sense of recognition for her as an individual rather than the too-good mother or the omnipotent mother. Marion looks at

[33] We find out that Nelly is named after her great-grandmother, demonstrating a further connection to an intergenerational matrilineal genealogy.

her with joy in her eyes, though it is ambiguous as to whether her facial expression draws from recognition of her encounters with Nelly in her youth or just relief that Nelly perceives her as an imperfect individual with her own subjectivity and complicated emotions. Marion calls her daughter by her name in turn, and they embrace one another with that gesture of mutual recognition. The ghostly mother figure in fiction reveals the nuanced possibilities for mutual narrative subjectivity of the mother and daughter.

Documenting Maternal Memory: Isabel Coixet's *My Life Without Me*

The liminal space occupied by the ghostly mother in many ways mirrors another borderspace: the position of the daughtermother between girlhood and womanhood. Coixet's film *My Life Without Me*[34] (2003) addresses the connection between these two liminal states as well as their relationship to maternal memory and feminine subjectivity. The protagonist, Ann, becomes the ghostly mother who remains, as Gordon puts it, "partial to the dead or the deadly and not to the living" when she is diagnosed with terminal cancer at the age of twenty three (182). On one hand, the film establishes the link between life and death in Ann's diagnosis since her symptoms are initially misinterpreted by herself and her loved ones as pregnancy. Instead of bringing new life into the world through the birth of a child, Ann will be taking life out of the world through her own death. Ann's diagnosis further emphasizes this association between birth and death since the tumor is located in her ovaries. The film relies on a second person audio narration in which Ann addresses "you" when reflecting on her new situation. This tendency to refer to her own life by addressing herself directly as "you" could reflect a kind of protective

[34] The original script written by Coixet was titled *Mi vida sin mí* and was later published alongside the English script by Colección Espiral in 2003. The film was based on the short story "Pretending the Bed is a Raft" (1997) by American writer Nanci Kincaid.

othering through which Ann distances herself from her own life, becoming more accustomed to thinking of "my life without me" as the film's title suggests. In fact, the opening sequence of the movie includes Ann's voiceover narration in which she seems to be convincing herself that the woman on the screen who has been diagnosed with terminal cancer is herself. She says, "This is you – eyes closed out in the rain. You never thought you'd be doing something like this…. This is you. Who would have guessed it? You" (Coixet). The narrative structure of the film in which Ann speaks for herself (albeit in second person) and tells her own story demonstrates a reversal of the generational continuum in which the child tells the mother's story, as seen most poignantly in *Todo sobre mi madre*. *My Life without Me* flips the script so that Ann becomes both protagonist and narrator despite her ghostly status. The end of the film evidences this since Ann's narration plays over clips of the people in her life experiencing life after her death. Her testimony lives on in ghostly form through the tapes she records despite her physical absence through death. The concept of testimony becomes salient since the film's content relies on first person testimony of maternal memory in addition to the oral testimony left behind in Ann's tapes to her loved ones. Kuhn sees the act of recounting the past and identity formation as inextricably linked since, "Telling stories about the past, our past, is a key moment in the making of our selves. To the extent that memory provides their raw material, such narratives of identity are shaped as much by what is left out of the account – whether forgotten or repressed – as by what is actually told" (2). Instead of becoming weighed down by the secret of her diagnosis, Ann's commitment to oral testimony reinforces a sense of control over the present and the future since she now determines the narrative of both temporalities for herself and her loved ones.

Ann's "things to do before she dies" accomplish two main goals: to cement her daughters' access to maternal wisdom and to acquaint herself with her subjectivity in

womanhood. As soon as she receives her diagnosis, she begins writing a list of "Things to do before I die" in a journal. The first four points relate directly to her maternal responsibility to her daughters. The next six points denote a commitment to understanding the self. On one hand, Ann addresses the first goal through a commitment to alternative (and feminine) forms of knowledge production including private literature such as diaries and oral tradition such as recordings and spoken storytelling. She records birthday messages for her daughters for every year until they turn 18, filling her messages with general advice, memories, and words of affirmation. She also redirects her daughters to other figures for wisdom and then records tapes for those figures (namely her husband and mother) to give even more counsel. Despite her husband's willingness to assist with domestic chores and child rearing, Ann still finds herself the primary caregiver to her children, responsible for the unseen labor of carrying the mental load of the family such as schedules and knowing where her daughters' sweaters are stored. Therefore, Ann works simultaneously to secure a substitute mother figure for her children and second wife for her husband Don. She chooses her new neighbor – also named Ann –, a kind, young, and beautiful single nurse who enjoys spending time with Ann's children. This plotline correlates to *La Tía Tula* in which Rosa actively plans for someone else to take her place as a maternal figure for her children. The proposed substitute mother figures in Unamuno's novel and Coixet's film both share a fear of some stage of childbirth (for Tula it is conception, for Ann it is the fragile mortality of newborns). The stark difference in Coixet's film, of course, are the facts that Ann and her proposed choice of stepmother for her children are basically strangers and that Ann never reveals her plans to her neighbor or husband. Nevertheless, their similarities in style of play with the two daughters as well as their shared name create a kind of uncanny twist of fate, culminating in the penultimate scene in the movie in which Ann watches her life without her,

sick in bed while the new Ann makes dinner for her husband and children. She looks on this scene with hope:

> "You pray that this will be your life without you. You pray that the girls will love this woman who has the same name as you and that your husband will end up loving her too, and that they can live in the house next door, and the girls can play doll's houses in the trailer, and barely remember their mother who used to sleep during the day, and take them on raft rides in bed... You pray that they will have moments of happiness so intense that all their problems will seem insignificant in comparison. You don't know who or what you're praying to, but you pray. You don't even regret the life that you're not going to have, because by then you'll be dead, and the dead don't feel anything, not even regret" (Coixet).

Ann's second goal, to discover and assert her own subjectivity apart from her familial obligations, comprises more than half her list of "Things to do before I die." Ann's objectives for her last days on Earth demonstrate a dynamic feminine subjectivity which places value on the superficial, physical aspects of being (such as getting false nails and smoking/drinking as much as she wants) as well as the unseen, emotional elements of her sense of self (such as speaking her mind, making love with another man, and visiting her father in jail). Each of Ann's aims attempt to undo the personal erasure she has experienced as a young wife and mother. Her deepest desires, revealed by her list of things to do before she dies, pursue a rejection of, as Virginia Woolf describes in *Mrs. Dalloway*, "being herself invisible, unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them" (10-11). In Ann's case, her diagnosis extinguishes any possibility of participating in that "rather solemn progress" through life. Ann reflects on her encounter with

death through her diagnosis by pointing out the absurdity of her efforts to maintain the quotidian tasks of daily life since, "No one ever thinks about death in a supermarket" (Coixet). Ann's post-diagnosis ambitions reflect her efforts to investigate a more dynamic subjectivity that refuses to see self-care and care for others as mutually exclusive. She breaks up with the version of herself that "never [has] time to think" to the point of being "so out of practice you've forgotten how," replacing it instead with an Ann that contemplates her life and makes choices based on those reflections (Coixet).

Ann's maternal practice embodies the figures of the ghostly mother as well as the daughtermother. The film presents her ghostly status through her disembodied narration in which her voice carries over the images of the film and extends beyond Ann's disappearance from those images, complicating the temporality of Ann's existence and testimony. The film's title "My Life without Me" further emphasizes Ann's ghostly nature since she imagines a life in which she is there but not there. The film depicts this visually in the sequence in which Ann stands at a bus stop. When the bus pulls up and drives away, Ann is no longer standing in the same spot with a suddenness that imbues a sense of ambiguity about whether Ann got on the bus or was merely an apparition. The relationship between Ann and her own mother, who unknowingly approaches the status of mother without child throughout the film, also establishes Ann as the daughtermother who uses her experience as a daughter to inform her maternal practice. When Ann is stuck at the hospital despite her responsibility to pick her daughters up from school, she sits in the waiting room, concerned not with her diagnosis but rather that her mother did not get the message from the nurse to go in Ann's place to retrieve her daughters from school. Ann becomes desperate and stern with a nurse who brushes off her request to determine for certain whether her mother received the information on the change in plans,

exclaiming, "Do you know what it's like to be waiting at the school gate all on your own with your nose freezing to death while all the other kids get picked up by their moms?" (Coixet). Ann's concerns as a mother derive from her own experience as a daughter in this way. Her memories of being left behind at school and recollections of her feelings of abandonment inform her commitment to performing maternal care that does not subject her daughters to those same experiences. She even goes so far as to carry the secret of her diagnosis as a "present" to her daughters and husband (Coixet).

Ann, Don, and their daughters live in a trailer behind Ann's mother's house. Their physical proximity suggests closeness yet their interactions on screen reveal a tension between them. In fact, Ann explicitly states that being just like her mother is "not something I like" and later recoils at her own young daughter's claim that "it's true, you're just like Grandma" (Coixet). Ann often relies on her mother to babysit her daughters, exposing her children to her mother's maternal practice while also criticizing it, making it clear that her use of her mother's maternal care derives from a sense of necessity rather than approval. They begin to argue when Ann finds her mother telling her daughters the plot of a Joan Crawford movie to entertain them. She tells her mother that though she asked her to care for her children in her absence, "I didn't ask you to fill their heads with stupid stories about mothers making dumb ass sacrifices" (Coixet). To this her mother retorts, "Well, what kinds of stories do you want me tell them? Cinderella? About murderous step mothers? Is that what you want?" (Coixet). Here we see Ann directly oppose the idea of the too-good mother figure and inauthentic representation of maternal subjectivity. Nevertheless, her mother's perspective demonstrates that stories often deemed appropriate for children also disseminate damaging stereotypes about mothers. The film challenges the binary of the too-good ghostly mother and bad stepmother by presenting Ann the

protagonist and Ann the neighbor as alternatives who instead embody a complicated, sometimes selfish ghostly mother and a good, selfless stepmother respectively. Nevertheless, Ann's final words to her mother through recorded tape reveal her true feelings towards her that, "I love you and I know you love me and I know you adore the girls, so please tell them that. Try and show them you love them just a little bit every day. And try to enjoy life a little, just a little bit…. Please help don, and you can tell the girls any stories you like. Even Joan Crawford movies" (Coixet). Ann reconciles with her mother posthumously, leaving behind a ghostly daughter who loves her mother and erases their past tensions.

My Life without Me challenges the boundaries often drawn between the female protagonist and the mother in fiction. Instead of allowing others to write her story or dictate how her final days will play out, Ann exchanges the burden of secret keeping for the benefits of living out the end of her life in a way that reaffirms her subjectivity as a woman and fulfills her desires for her maternal practice. Well-known American film reviewer Roger Ebert criticized the film upon its release in 2003, providing a less sympathetic view on Ann, writing that the protagonist "engineers her death as a soap opera that would be mushy if it were about her, but is shameless because it is by her." In other words, the heroine's audacity to share her own testimony and treat her own subjectivity independent of her family classifies her attempts to seek her sense of self as selfish rather than liberatory. While I interpret Ann's decision to make tape recordings for her daughters as an attempt to provide them with lasting access to maternal wisdom and their mother as a ghostly figure, Ebert wrote that, "If I were one of those daughters and had grown old enough to have a vote on the matter, I would burn the goddamn tapes and weep and pound the pillow and ask my dead mother why she was so wrapped up in her stupid, selfish fantasies that she never gave me the chance to say goodbye." These receptions of the film reveal the cultural limitations

placed on mothers to reject their own subjectivity for the benefit of their children. Coixet's film instead illustrates the potential for women to use testimony to narrate their own life in a way that encapsulates the boarderspaces of motherhood.

Maternal memory through testimony or haunting encounters with the ghostly mother figure pave the way for authentic intergenerational communication between mother and daughter. Furthermore, the dual nature of the mother emerges through the ghostly mother figure. Just as she transcends the rigid boundaries of life and death as ontological and epistemological categories, she also emphasizes the complexity of the term "mother". Rather than a binary of the controlling "phallic mother" or the passive "abject mother," the subjective duality of the mother through her own narration manifests as a distinction between the internal and external self (Mayo in Mayo and Moutsou 200). Woolf reflects on this concept in *Mrs. Dalloway*, explaining that, "Since our apparitions, the part of us which appears, are so momentary compared with the other, the unseen part of us, which spreads wide, the unseen might survive" (153). Similarly, maternal memory through the testimony of the ghostly mother reflects her momentary apparitions as well as the unseen part of her with a focus on testimony to secure the survival of the latter. The ghostly mother does not equate the absent mother. Her commitment to testimony and her ability to prompt a process of mourning for the daughter strengthens intergenerational connections while also promoting a reflection on the harmful tendencies of intergenerational cycles. Reading the ghostly mother in fiction reaffirms the maternal voice's ability to tell a matrifocal narrative while also exploring the developing subjectivity of the daughter. The cycle of life and death becomes redefined as an endless loop in which mother and daughter search for one another, echoing the tradition set by Demeter and Persephone. The ghostly mother challenges the nature of memory as well as the potential outcomes of women's relationship to corporality. As Pinkola

Estés writes, “The things that have been lost to women for centuries can be found again by following the shadows they cast” (458). The figure of the ghostly mother acts as a shadow that begins to reveal a countermemory and the possibilities for intergenerational and matrifocal feminism.

Chapter 4: Writing Matrilineal Genealogies: Maternal Subjectivity in Intergenerational Narratives

"*No puedes entender tu historia si no entiendes primero la mía, aunque en principio no parezca que tengan mucha relación estas líneas que escribo con tu vida.*"

– Lucía Etxebarría, *Un milagro en equilibrio* (2004)

Maternal Memory and Motherlines

Sharing maternal memory through intergenerational narratives provides an alternative to the hegemonic power of phallic language and the reductionist consequences of institutional motherhood. As outlined in Chapter 1, matrophobia can manifest as the daughter's fear of becoming her mother and experiencing the same kind of silencing and process of objectification. In other words, matrophobia describes the daughter's fear of losing her already precarious protagonistic status through cultural matricide. As Rich explains, the 20th century woman might have "felt that the choice was an inescapable either/or: motherhood or individuation, motherhood or creativity, motherhood or freedom" (*Of Woman Born* 160). That is to say, protagonization, narration, and writing stand antithetical to the cultural understandings of institutional motherhood. Narratives that honor and transcribe maternal memory in dialogue with that of the daughter and even in some cases the grandmother serves to counteract the erasure of maternal subjectivity since Luce Irigary describes matricide as the erasure of the mother's discourse. As Cixous posits, a woman "writes in white ink," implying the ways maternity's association with the body connects the category of woman to the category of mother as well as indicating the often invisible but always vital function of maternal memory (881). The concept of the Motherline, as developed by Naomi Lowinsky, reaffirms this connection between the process of

maternal practice and intergenerational narrative. The Motherline comprises forgotten stories of female experience and wisdom. As Lowinsky posits, “They are stories of the life cycles that link generations of women: mothers who are also daughters; daughters who have become mothers; grandmothers who always remain granddaughters” (Lowinsky in O’Reilly and Abbey 227). The Motherline emphasizes the role of multifaceted identification in intergenerational relationships. For Lowinsky, life cycles, specifically those tied to reproduction and maternal practice, serve as the points of transition between these relational identities as mother becomes grandmother and daughter becomes mother. Therefore, the daughter-centric narrative which pervades feminist literature signifies the simplest identification since she experiences herself as daughter only. Reconnecting with the Motherline opens a path for nonmothers to understand their positionality within matrilineal genealogies and to understand how they participate in alternative kinship formations. Motherline stories perform citational memory work, inscribing our maternal heritage on our own subjectivity rather than erasing the subjectivity of our foremothers. Sara Ahmed defines feminism in her text *Living a Feminist Life in a variety* of ways, commenting on the diverse implications of the term. One of her definitions sees feminism as a process in which “We begin to identify how what happens to me, happens to others. We begin to identify patterns and regularities” (Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* 27). This idea proposes that feminism, especially matrifocal feminism, demands the exchange of Motherline stories across matrilineal genealogies.

Since they span the lifetimes of three generations of women, the intergenerational narratives discussed in this chapter accordingly allude to the larger historical contexts of the 20th century. In the case of Spain, the 20th century encompassed the Second Republic, the Civil War, the Francoist dictatorship, and the transition to democracy. Each generation of women holds a unique association with these major historical events. The intergenerational narratives I analyze

adopt the concept of "la vida intrahistórica" as proposed by Miguel de Unamuno in *En torno al casticismo*. Therefore, these fictions address the archival gaps left behind by cultural matricide, inscribing maternal subjectivity through chronicles of matrilineal genealogies. Rather than just acknowledging the archival gap, these stories aim to supply a "countermemory" which will set the groundwork for shifting the course of the reproduction of mothering in which daughters no longer fear the loss of subjectivity through adoption of a maternal identity and reject matrophobia (Gordon 22). Nevertheless, maternal memory communicated in recognition of mutual subjectivity of the mother and daughter must address the potential for continued cultural matricide by the daughter. In other words, the daughter's attempt to tell her mother's story could result in further objectification, nostalgic representation, or vilification of the mother. As Hirsh explains, narratives that protagonize the daughter who speaks on behalf of her mother "is at once to give voice to her discourse and to silence and marginalize her" (16). Depictions of maternal memory, aimed at counteracting cultural matricide, should avoid idealizing or sentimentalizing motherhood within the framework of institutionalized motherhood. Instead, they should emphasize the diversity of maternal experience and oppose the tendency to privatize maternal experience, fostering a feminine discourse that diverges from the norms set by institutional motherhood and masculine discourse. Intergenerational narratives offer an effective strategy since they represent "a double voice that would yield a multiple female consciousness" (Hirsh 161).

Irigaray points to the link between matrilineal genealogies and identity. The creative works included in this chapter explore the ways that writing and narration serve to share maternal memory and wisdom while recognizing complicated subjectivities. The intergenerational protagonists perform a new version of the Demeter-Persephone myth in which

the daughter and mother share the page as they simultaneously tell their stories, searching for one another while maintaining their own subjectivity and confirming their individual histories as part of a larger tradition of Motherline stories. Intergenerational inheritance between women in these works affirms communication of maternal memory as integral to challenging cultural matricide and the silencing of women. In this chapter, I will begin with an examination of texts that present the intergenerational triad including Montserrat Roig's *Ramona, adéu* (1972) and Mercé Rodoreda's *Mirall trencat* (1974). I will then shift to an exploration of Josefina Aldecoa's *Mujeres de negro* (1994) and the 2004 novel *Un milagro en equilibrio* by Lucía Etxebarría which both prepare countermemories toward a matricentric feminist future. These works tell Motherline stories, or "matrifocal narratives" which start with the mother from her perspective and "attends to and accentuates maternal thematic in any given text" (O'Reilly, "Matricentric Feminism" 423-424). The introspective narrations of these texts and film facilitate intergenerational dialogue that rejects the limitations of institutional motherhood and establishes maternal subjectivity as integral to feminine identity formation across matrilineal genealogies.

Narrating the Intergenerational Triad: Roig's *Ramona, adéu* and Rodoreda's *Mirall trencat*

Intergenerational narrations rely on what Tess Cosslett et al. identify as intersubjectivity, the idea that "the narration of a life or a self can never be confined to a single, isolated subjecthood" (4). The subjectivity of the mother is inextricably linked to that of her matrilineal genealogy. Cosslett et al. goes on to explain, "To posit the mother-daughter relationship so centrally to women's life-stories as 'dialogic' is not to deny that it is also power-inscribed, with the two parties struggling for control and self-actualization" (4). Though the female characters in the narratives analyzed within this chapter rely on intersubjectivity and reconstruct their matrilineal genealogies in the process of identity formation, they also struggle against one

another's journeys through a loop of repression and resentment. These matrilineal genealogies must sometimes be reconstructed because of family secrets or silenced maternal memories from the past. In this way, Cosslett et al. points to the autobiographical/biographical status of these kinds of fictional texts that engage with intersubjectivity and intergenerational storytelling (142). As I will demonstrate through Rodoreda and Roig's texts, strategies for illustrating the interconnected nature of these womens' lives and stories often include the importance of names. The name of the mother, often silenced linguistically and culturally in favor of the name of the father in patriarchal tradition, becomes integral to understanding the identity and subjectivity of the characters. In many of these texts, names replace relational terms like mother/daughter to reinscribe an autonomous identity rather than a codependent one. Intergenerational narratives also question the assumption that any narrative that tells the story of the mother restores her subjectivity. The mask of motherhood or the impositions of institutional motherhood are not the only liabilities to maternal subjectivity. Daughter-centric narratives that hold the mother in nostalgically idealized or simplistically vilified relation to the daughter similarly threaten cultural matricide of maternal memory. According to Hirsh, only a "double voice" narration will "cease mystifying maternal stories" (161). Hirsh explains the potential of intergenerational narratives as the last stage of matrifocal narration due to their commitment to intersubjectivity. In other words, intergenerational narratives honor the subjectivity of the mother and daughter while also recognizing their points of intersection. Hirsh writes,"Through the voices of daughters, speaking for their mothers, through the voices of mothers speaking for themselves and their daughters, and eventually perhaps, through the voices of mothers and daughters speaking to each other, oedipal frameworks are modified by other psychological and narrative economies. Thus the plots of mothers and daughters do not remain unspeakable" (8).

Maintaining relationships with other mothers or alternative maternal figures like grandmothers, aunts, friends, and neighbors, also helps with "resolving and recreating the mother-daughter bond" as an alternative to the Electra complex and to resist the cultural temptation to collude in symbolic matricide[35] (Chodorow 200). Irigaray takes this idea one step further, suggesting that daughters do not need to turn away from the mother at all to achieve this. In fact, she states that entering into normative heterosexuality and swapping love for the mother for desire for the father "is to sever women from the roots of their identity and their subjectivity" (20). In other words, for Irigaray, the loss of subjectivity begins not at the transition from daughter to mother but from mother-loving daughter to matrophobic daughter. By choosing to align herself with patriarchal values and contribute to the cultural matricide of her own mother, the daughter both closes off access to her Motherline and begins the process of seeing herself as an object rather than a subject as a woman in patriarchal culture. When the daughter resists colluding with patriarchy, she also rejects her own silencing and establishes a subjectivity that remains even after adopting the identity of mother for herself, a point I will discuss in detail in the second half of this chapter. In short, this step towards matricentric feminism sets cultural patriarchy up as the enemy in place of the potential contention of the mother/daughter dynamic (O'Reilly and Abbey 3). Rejecting the pull of the oedipal family structure correlates to a kind of radical kinship that makes possible intersubjectivity through intergenerational narratives. Yi-Lin Yu cites Audre Lorde's term "triad of grandmother mother daughter," which the poet opposes with the nuclear family triad of father-mother-child, as essential to understanding matrilineal narratives and the ways female ancestry affects identity (215). For Yu, the writing of a "mother

[35] The Electra complex corresponds to an inverse of the Oedipal complex since it refers to the Greek mythological figure of Electra who colluded in the matricide of Clytemnestra out of inferred sexual desire for the father and jealousy of the mother.

biography" works toward understanding the mother as an individual rather than a relational, nostalgic, and culturally signified entity. This triad becomes particularly relevant in post-war Spain in which many of the men who would have completed the nuclear triad as the "father" were killed in service of the fatherland during the Civil War. Therefore, the triad of grandmother-mother-daughter can take its place. The role of this triad in female identification is particularly effective since, as Rich points out, "Woman has always known herself both as daughter and as potential mother, while in his dissociation from the process of conception, man first experiences himself as son, and only much later as father" (*Of Woman Born* 118). As the fictional texts included in this section reveal, this triad uncovers the negotiation of identity and difference in matrilineal narratives. The positioning of the life stories of three generations of women exposes the ways the characters in *Ramona, adéu* and *Mirall trencat* identify with their matrilineal genealogies and reflect repeating patterns as well as how their stories make sense of contradictory differences.

The title of Roig's Catalan novel *Ramona, adéu* sets the stage for representing intersubjectivity through intergenerational narrative since Ramona refers to three women from distinct generations in her text. Roig's story comprises a century's worth of generations by presenting the grandmother-mother-daughter triad of three women all named Ramona and called Mundeta. To eliminate confusion throughout this chapter, I will refer to the women as they relate to the triad grandmother-mother-daughter as Ramona Jover-Ramona Ventura-Ramona Claret[36]. The title itself, *Ramona, adéu*, hints at a replacement of the name of the father with the name of the mother while also pointing to the termination of generational cycles of trauma. Rather than

[36] Referring to the characters in this way further emphasizes their contributions to matrilineal genealogies since I make use of each character's maiden name. Therefore, the latter two members of the intergenerational triad bear the linguistic mark of their foremother's patriarchal alliances through heterosexual marriage.

following patrilineal naming conventions that erase evidence of matrilineal histories, the inheritance of the name "Ramona" highlights the shared identity between the three generations of women presented in the novel. As Catherine Bellver expounds, "Roig alters the peripheral role of women within the story of male achievements by making women the central focus of her narrative and the determinants of genealogy" (Bellver in Brown 221). Their mutual possession of the name Ramona further underscores the generational cycles present in the novel, including the ways matrilineal wisdom is shared and how that intergenerational communication is enhanced or hindered. As Katheryn A. Everly asserts, "the familial quarrels and unavoidable differences between all the Ramonas only accentuate their sameness: the common struggle of all women within a patriarchal system" (118). In other words, the stories of the three Ramonas operate as Motherline stories, demonstrating shared female experience. The testimonial style of the text also reveals how life writing by women can counteract cultural matricide and sharing intergenerational narratives can eliminate the cycle of matrophobia. The text functions as, to borrow Everly's term, a generational mirror through which the reader encounters points of transition in the grandmother-mother-triad. That is to say, *Ramona, adéu* exemplifies the implications of multifaceted identification in which grandmother is also mother, daughter, and granddaughter; mother is also daughter and granddaughter, and daughter is also granddaughter.

While Roig's novel disseminates interwoven Motherline stories to its readers, the Ramonas themselves do not benefit from intergenerational communication across matrilineal genealogical lines. Though their stories expose elements of the feminine experience through writing, the characters themselves never exchange Motherline stories with one another, resulting in a distorted, simplistic interpretation of one another. As Everly posits, "The silence surrounding the relationships between the women creates a tension engendered by the ignorance of pivotal

moments in each of their lives" (128). In other words, the mothers serve as a kind of straightening device for their daughters, even, as I will analyze in more detail later in this section, to the point of providing self-straightening devices. In the latter case, the daughters carry out imagined conversations in which their "Angel of the House" perceptions of their mothers react as internal straightening devices. I interpret *Ramona, adéu* as a kind of sociological text which aims to fill archival gaps since it takes an *intrahistoria* approach that addresses the ways large historical events and cultural practices, attitudes, and beliefs affected women across the 20th century in Catalonia. In fact, the Catalan setting and choice to write and publish the work in Catalan reiterates the notion that this text confronts archival gaps since it disavows the silence of women, mothers, and Catalonians[37]. Bellver cites Roig's multidisciplinary approach to novels in which she operates as "journalist," "archeologist," "genealogist," or even "subversive historiographer" in a way that "undermines history" and rejects phallic language and official archives (197). Roig's work instead follows the seemingly banal paths of women's lives since, as Bellver characterizes,

> "Not only does she decentralize the masculine position in her novels, she also increases the sense of female history by incorporating into her works a variety of female texts – diaries, notes, monologues, and third person accounts. Because female texts, like female history itself, have been ignored, submerged, and excluded from the canon, they are different from sanctioned literature, fragmentary, and inaccessible. These nonofficial, nonliterary texts become archeological finds that bring to light a neglected culture" (221).

[37] Catalan is largely considered a minority language and, as Paul Preston points out in *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution and Revenge* (2006), "Franco made a systematic attempt during and after the war to eradicate all vestiges of local nationalisms, political and linguistic" (8). In this way, subaltern memories of historical events can take on the crucial role of challenging hegemonic control over language and monolithic historical narratives.

Furthermore, the text aligns itself as uniquely matrifocal since it begins and ends with the first-person testimony of Ramona Ventura. *Ramona, adéu* focuses on the present and thus emphasizes the testimonial nature of the women's stories in which the past, present, and future fold in one another despite the fragmented but chronological flow of the first and third person narratives.

The novel employs first person narration in two cases. In the first instance, a pregnant Ramona Ventura's first-hand testimony of navigating the streets of Barcelona in search of her husband (or his body) following bombings on March 17, 1938 bookends the novel. This structure likely indicates an internal monologue, denoted by the use of italics for this part of the narrative. In the other instance, the author shares Ramona Jover's story through her diary from December 6, 1894 to January 2, 1919, spanning her engagement to Francisco Ventura to his death. Her engagement with private literature (ie. diary writing) suggests that her account was not written with a particular audience in mind. Though her diary constitutes a documentation of maternal memory and contains fruitful examples of Motherline storytelling, Ramona Jover does not demonstrate that she writes her diary with the intention of sharing it with her future children or grandchildren. Instead, Ramona Jover's diary serves as a site of self-reflection and maintenance of identity and subjectivity through writing. In this way, Roig's dissemination of the grandmother's story within her triad of Mundetas through private literature reiterates the potential for fiction to serve as a sociological text to fill in archival gaps. Private literature of bourgeois women may not meet the criteria of the traditional, official archive which prizes the phallic word and the perspectives of the powerful. On the contrary, Ramona Jover's diary consistently communicates her feelings of powerlessness, weariness about conforming to societal expectations, and proclivity for fantasy. As Ramona Jover reflects in her diary following her 23rd birthday, "Vull dir que tinc poca vida per explicar. Quan repasso aquest dietari, em fa

vergonya veure-hi la mediocritat que exhala (*There's little in my life worth talking about. As I leaf through my diary, I'm embarrassed by the mediocrity it exudes*)" (Roig 150, Berkobien and Hall 106). Nevertheless, she persists writing, indicating the purpose of her diary to be therapeutic self-reflection rather than archival posterity. At the same time, she expresses self-consciousness about how her story might be perceived by some faceless, judgmental reader, perhaps prompted in part by her expressed interest in reading novels. Because of its very nature in this regard, Ramona Jover's account successfully problematizes the idea of the "Angel of the House" by declaring her private self as an alternative to this paradigm. For example, Mundeta Jover writes about marrying Francisco Ventura: "No sé per què em caso. Trobo que és molt difícil preveure el que ens té reservat el destí. Una dona necessita un home al seu costat, per por de trobar-te sola, de ser la riota de la gent (*I'm not sure why I'm getting married. It's so hard to understand what fate has in store. A woman needs a man by her side for fear of ending up alone or of becoming a laughingstock*)" (Roig 73, Berkobien and Hall 39). Ramona Jover on one hand conveys at best disinterest in getting married but immediately follows her judgment with a recitation of the prevailing societal expectations surrounding marriage. Despite the uncensored quality of some of her observations, Ramona Jover simultaneously acts as a self-straightening device, attesting to the existence of her own subjectivity while also recognizing the social power of the "Angel of the House."

Ramona Jover directly pushes against the "Angel of the House" through various avenues. However, it is important to note first the way the "Angel of the House" had a very tangible presence in her life through the figure of her own mother, who remains unnamed and is referred

to by Ramona Jover as "la mamà (*Mother*)[38]" (Roig 73, Berkobien and Hall 40). Ramona Jover's mother acted as a patriarchal mother figure in her daughter's life. Mundeta Jover's interpretation of her mother points to a lack of mutual subjectivity between mother and daughter. She writes, "La mamà y jo no ens entenem. Entestada a convertir-me en una senyoreta, m'ha privat tota la vida de llegir, que és l'única cosa que m'agrada una mica. Havia de fer puntes de coixí, sempre amb els boixets entre mans. Mentre, somiava en les meves heroïnes dels llibres, les santes i les reines, que em feien companyia cada nit, amagada a les golfes i amb una espelma al costat (*Mother and I don't understand each other. She's set on having me become a lady and my whole life she's kept me from reading, which is the only thing I like even a little bit. She'd have me make lace pillows, bobbins always in hand. Meanwhile, I'd dream of the heroines in books, the saints and queens who'd keep me company every night as I hid in the attic with a candle by my side*)" (Roig 73, Berkobien and Hall 40). Her mother stands as the obstacle between her fantasy life, which rejects and erases the presence of the Angel of the House, and a life sanctioned by Catalan bourgeois society. Her mother contributes to and encourages Ramona Jover's loss of subjectivity through marriage and maternity. This dynamic, though criticized by Ramona Jover, becomes reenacted throughout the generational cycles of future Ramonas, as I will analyze later in this chapter. Not only does Ramona Jover's mother try to control and limit her daughter's inclination to fantasize, she acts as a straightening device who corrects her daughter away from romance and towards respectability and modesty. This is most notable when, "La primera vegada que en Francisco va posar la mà damunt la meva em va venir un calfred a l'espinada. Però la va retirar de seguida perquè la mamà estossegava. No hi ha manera de conèixer el que ha d'ésser el

[38] We learn from Ramona Ventura's account that her grandmother is also named Ramona and that Mundeta is a family name that goes back at least to her great-grandmother (Roig 86).

meu home. A la meva filla, la deixaré ben sola (*The first time Francisco put his hand on mine, I felt a shiver run down my spine. But he took his hand right back because Mother started clearing her throat. There's no way I'll get to know my future husband. When I have a daughter, I'll leave her alone*)" (Roig 75, Berkobien and Hall 41). Her mother teaches her daughter to resist the ideals of passion and romance afforded characters in novels with subjectivity in favor of blind adoption of social indicators of status and morality. The disjointed style of the novel, which places Ramona Jover's diary entries before and after limited third person narration of Ramona Ventura and Ramona Claret, renders her promise to "leave her daughter alone" and break out of the intergenerational communication style of her and her mother unfulfilled. Likewise, the chronological order of her diary within the text demonstrates the ways her mother's attempts to serve as a straightening device successfully transitioned into an internal straightening device that eventually keeps Ramona Jover from pursuing an extramarital affair despite her propensity for romance and fantasy. Though her mother does not physically intervene in the text, inscribing patriarchal values on her daughter's words, Mundeta Jover has internalized conversations with an imagined form of her mother in which she recalls or anticipates her mother's opinions and uses these to inform her actions and reactions. She keeps herself in line, reflecting socially acceptable behavior and citing her mother as her instructor in these values.

Ramona Jover uses her diary entries to push back against societal attempts to silence her experience at the expense of upholding institutions of patriarchy, marriage, and motherhood. On one hand, she rejects the premise that the "Angel of the House" belongs in the house by openly expressing disinterest in housework, stating, "No m'agraden les feines de la casa, no m'hi entenc (*I don't like housework. I can't take care of it*)" (Roig 88, Berkobien and Hall 52). She also articulates distaste for her existence of being someone "que no surto mai de casa (*who never*

leaves home)” and who is responsible for the banal and repetitive daily and weekly chores delegated to her such as “rebre visites i escriure cartes (*hosting and letter-writing*)” and “neteja a fons (*deep cleaning*)” (Roig 88, Berkobien and Hall 53). Significantly, she does not use her diary to express self-consciousness about this nor to indicate a desire to conform more easily to the expectations of society. Rather than cite her aversion to competing household chores as a problem, Ramona Jover notes her disinterest in becoming a perfect housewife as an unchangeable fact. On the other hand, she also challenges institutional motherhood by exploring her maternal experience or unmasked motherhood through her writing. For example, she writes about her miscarriage and specifies this experience as the reason “ningú no em veurà plorar mai més (*no one would ever see me cry again*)” (Roig 111, Berkobien and Hall 72). In fact, other characters in the text, most notably the other Ramonas, comment on Ramona Jover’s disinclination to cry, even after her husband Francisco’s death. Once Ramona Jover does have a successful pregnancy, she still criticizes the unfulfilled promises of institutional motherhood by questioning the gap between idealized motherhood and her own maternal experience. She writes of her daughter,

> “La nena és lletja i trista. Té uns solcs a la cara que la fan escarransida i els ulls sortints, com si fossin de vidre. No serà feliç. Part de culpa la té en Francisco, posar-li Ramona! Ell deia que era un nom preciós, un nom per a una noia sense fums ni pretensions. A mi em sempla un nom de poble, per a dones desgraciades. Si haguéssim tingut un nen… Un home és lliure, pot triar el seu camí. Una dona no hi té res a fer, al món (*She's ugly and sad and she has furrows on her face that make her look gaunt. Her bulging eyes seem made of glass. She won't be happy. Francisco's partly to blame, naming her Ramona! He called it a lovely name, a name for a girl with no airs or affectations. It sounds like a*

> *rustic name to me, a name for an unlucky woman. If only we had a boy… a man is born free, he can choose his path. There's nothing a woman can do in this world*)" (Roig 218, Berkobien and Hall 165).

She goes on to add, "Es com si ella m'hagués robat un bon doll de la meva sang, m'hagués deixat buida per dintre. No sé si me l'estimo, la nena (*It's as if she made off with a good dose of my blood, leaving me empty inside. I don't know if I love her, the baby*[39])" (Roig 218, Berkobien and Hall 165). At the age of 35, Ramona Jover not only feels "massa gran per tenir una filla (*too old to have a child*)," but also retains no illusions about the role of women in society. She mourns her own loss of subjectivity while seeing her daughter as "un mirall (*a mirror*)" that reflects only her loss of identity (Roig 218, Berkobien and Hall 165, Roig 219, Berkobien and Hall 166). Ahmed identifies a similar tendency in which mothers might act as patriarchal straightening devices for their children as part of that shared experience, recognition of which can kick start the process of becoming feminist. She suggests, "Wanting happiness can mean wanting the child to be in line to avoid the costs of not being in line" (Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* 51). Mundeta Jover recalls her own difficulties accepting her place as a girl and woman in society. At the same time, Mundeta Jover anticipates the same process for her daughter, compounded by their shared name, which though it indicates a matrilineal inheritance was actually a choice prompted by the patriarch, Francisco. Ramona Jover wishes for a son so that her child can "avoid the costs of not being in line." Mundeta Jover does not even recognize her own reflection and mourns the loss of her childhood in a way that echoes Virginia Woolf's *Mrs.*

[39] This feeling of lacking love for a biological child is explored in detail in the later half of this chapter which looks at post-dictatorship and even post-transition examples of matrifocal Motherline stories in Spanish literature and film.

Dalloway's depiction of becoming Mrs. Richard Dalloway rather than Clarissa[40]. Ramona Jover says her happy childhood, "s'allunya dins el record i es converteix en la cara desgraciada de la nova Mundeta (*fades into my memory only to transform into the unfortunate face of this new Mundeta*)" (Roig 219, Berkobien and Hall 166). Ramona Jover's diary serves as a Motherline story which reveals certain truths about the feminine experience. Nevertheless, because these are not shared through matrilineal intergenerational communication, they are unable to be used to prepare the next generations of women.

Both the first and third person narrations of Ramona Ventura's story illustrate the ways her Motherline story connects to her matrilineal genealogy. In particular, her views on marriage resemble those of her mother, Ramona Jover. Though it is eventually revealed that both women had romantic passion with men besides their husbands at some point, they both decide to marry other men, motivated by external societal expectations. For Ramona Ventura, the feeling of patriarchal pressure manifests as fear and anxiety. In her initial internal monologue from the start of the novel, she maintains, "Vaig pensar en el dia en què vaig conèixer en Joan i en el dia en què em va dir que jo li agradava molt i molt perquè veia que era una dona neta i polida, com la seva mare, i si em volia casar amb ell. Jo li vaig dir que sí, i n'estava, de contenta, perquè tenia por de quedar-me per vestir sants (*I thought about the day I met Joan and the day he told me he liked me a whole lot because he could tell I was a clean woman, a neat woman like his mother, and he asked if I wanted to marry him. I said yes and was happy, truly, because I feared I'd end up an old maid*)" (Roig 51, Berkobien and Hall 21). Marriage for Ramona Ventura addresses and

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[40] As expanded on in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, Mrs. Dalloway reflects on her identity as "Mr. Richard Dalloway" as one that has replaced her girlhood identity of Clarissa. She feels alienated from her life and questions her feelings of unhappiness despite possessing everything society has deemed acceptable and has promised will lead to happiness. Similarly, Mundeta Jover expresses these feelings of alienation from her girlhood self through marriage.

resolves her fear of being a social outsider, even though she respects her unmarried friend Kati for not choosing the most evident path. The difference for Ramona Ventura between her situation and that of Kati is that, as she explains,

> "A mi em sembla quan veuen que es queden per vestir sants. A mi em sembla que la Kati es molt llesta i que no necessita els homes. La Kati diu que la guerra li ha desvetllat el cervell, que s'ha adonat que les dones serveixen per a alguna cosa, i que no sols han de fer bonic. En Juan diu que la Kati viu amargada perquè no s'ha casat i que no s'ha casat perquè cap home no la vol, que és massa lliure i això, als homes, no els agrada. En Joan no vol que em faci amb la Kati, diu que si l'escolto acabaré com ella (*I think that Kati is very smart and doesn't need men. Kati says the war was an awakening, since she realized women can actually be useful and don't just have to sit around and look pretty. And Joan says Kati is bitter because she never married and that she hasn't gotten married because no man would want her, that she's too free-spirited and men don't like that. Joan doesn't want me to keep company with her. He says that if I listen to Kati, I'll end up like her, too*)" (Roig 39, Berkobien and Hall 11).

In this way, fear operates as a motivating force to keep Ramona Ventura in line with societal expectations. Her husband points to Kati as a cautionary tale and interprets her failure to conform to the institution of marriage and motherhood as flaws. However, Ramona Ventura's admiration for her friend's choices exposes Kati's status as an "old maid" as a fear of Joan Claret rather than Mundeta Ventura. Kati constitutes a kind of "feminist killjoy," to borrow Ahmed's term (*Living a Feminist Life* 37). As Ahmed posits, "When you expose a problem you pose a problem. [...] It is as if the point of making her point is to cause trouble, to get in the way of the happiness of others, because of her own unhappiness" (*Living a Feminist Life* 37). Joan's interpretation of

Kati's character and motivations confirm his perception of her in this way while also projecting his own insecurities about his wife catching the contagion of the "problem" Kati poses: the possibility for feminine existence apart from dependence on a man. Joan exercises control over his wife, not only by acting as a patriarchal straightening device, but also by infantilizing his wife and encouraging her to see the outside world as unnavigable without him. He tells her she is "una bleda i una beneita i que sort en tinc d'ell, que m'acomboia per la vida (*a silly girl, a nitwit, and that I'm lucky to have him since he guides me through life*)" (Roig 37, Berkobien and Hall 9). Furthermore, Joan holds his mother as the too good mother or nostalgic mother, setting her as a standard by which to compare other women without acknowledging her own subjectivity and potential to deviate from the ideals of "Angel of the House." In contrast to Ramona Jover's criticism of and disinterest in housework, Joan perceives his mother as "neta (*neat*)" and "polida (*clean*)" (Roig 51, Berkobien and Hall 21). In this instance, Roig notes one of the few instances of intergenerational communication and imparting of matrilineal wisdom when Ramona Jover tells her daughter that "la mare d'en Joan s'inventava la feina perquè es devia avorrir (*Joan's mother made up housework out of boredom*)" (Roig 52, Berkobien and Hall 21). In this way, Ramona Jover attempts, however fleetingly or feebly, to detach her daughter from the unattainable figure of the "Angel of the House." She exposes the gap between patriarchal expectations of housewives and her own lived experience. Nevertheless, there is no indication that Ramona Jover discloses to her daughter the reason for her assessment of Joan's mother, namely her own feelings about household chores. In general, Ramona Ventura (like Ramona Claret after her) carries out imaginary conversations with her mother as opposed to authentic intergenerational communication. For example, while waiting for her mother, Ramona Ventura imagines a discussion with Ramona Jover in which she tells her about her insecurities and fears.

When the real Ramona Jover appears, however, she is too preoccupied to attend to her daughter's needs in a way that matches Ramona Ventura's fantasies. Mundeta Ventura internalizes her own perception of her mother.

Ramona Ventura also engages with alternative sources of maternal wisdom that shape her understanding of feminine subjectivity throughout the text. In the third person narrative of Ramona Ventura, she attends a lunch with her mother and other local women including her aunt and friend Kati. These women serve as alternative maternal figures, imparting their own perspectives on feminine issues (in this case, marriage) to a young Ramona Ventura. The women, along with Ramona Jover offer unsolicited and often conflicting marriage advice to Ramona Ventura. Specifically, Ramona Ventura considers that,

> "Per a la Patrícia o la tieta Sixta, els amors apassionats no porten més que desgràcies, maldecaps, l'una repetia que més valia quedar-se per vestir sants i no haver de fer un mal casament, l'altra que no n'hi havia prou d'haver ballat un dia per saber el número que l'home calça. Recitaven passatges sencers de *La perfecta casada*, el recuerdo para la novia, la atención para la esposa (*According to Patricia and Aunt Sixta, passionate relationships brought nothing but disgrace, headaches. One harped on about how it was better to be an old maid and dress up the saints at church than to be in a bad marriage. The other said you can only trust a man as far as you can throw him. They'd recite entire passages of that Spanish-language book* La perfecta casada*, a keepsake for the bride, a wife's attentions*)" (Roig 107, Berkobien and Hall 69).

Just as Ramona Jover's mother acted as a straightening device, keeping her daughter away from romantic and passionate fantasies, Ramona Ventura's substitute and biological mothers make

similar appeals. Nevertheless, though they in some way act as patriarchal maternal figures by reciting *La perfecta casada* and pushing Mundeta Ventura towards the socially acceptable position of bourgeois housewife and mother, their advice also suggests a concern for caution based on lived experience rather than just upholding institutions of patriarchy. Their seemingly contradictory advice reflects the tension between a desire to use legitimate husbands to support their financial and social wellbeing and an understanding of the loss of subjectivity and dignity that come with that sense of patriarchal security. Because of this perceived inconsistency of advice, Mundeta Ventura determines their advice incompatible with her fantasies about love and decides arrogantly that "ella ho faria millor (*she'd do better*)" (Roig 107, Berkobien and Hall 69). Again, as with the future-facing claims of Ramona Jover, the placement of this statement within Ramona Claret's narrative renders her promise fruitless.

Ramona Ventura's opening and closing narration constitutes a Motherline story in which Mundeta Ventura, as an expectant mother, leaves the safety and constraints of the home in which she serves as a reiteration of Joan's nostalgic "Angel of the House". In fact, she explicitly disobeys Joan's caution to stay inside, instead deciding to venture into the rubble of the city after a bombing. Like her mother before her who contrasted her own banal, home-bound experience with those of heroines and protagonists in stories she read, Ramona Ventura encounters an old man in the street who inadvertently exposes to her the ways her societally endorsed female existence has kept her from participating in and understanding her role in history. The old man, in fact, works actively against her making this interpretation, telling her, "Mira, tu a casa, que això no són coses de dones (*Stay at home, such things aren't women's matters*)" (Roig 60, Berkobien and Hall 28). She realizes that she lacks any understanding of historical events that occurred during her lifetime except the day the Republic was declared, which is the event that

serves as a backdrop for the third person narrative of Ramona Ventura. Nevertheless, both Ramona Ventura's connection to the declaration of the Republic and her memories surrounding events the old man recounts to her constitute a kind of *intrahistoria.* Mundeta Ventura regards her version of events as unimportant and trivial, citing in this case her recollection that "Que estudiava a les Salesianes i que anava tot el dia amb la mamà del col·legi a casa i de casa al col·legi. I que em feien molta ràbia les nenes del col·legi de la Presentació perquè duien dos unformes, un d'hivern i un d'estiu, i un barret negre tan bonic com una pamela, i que les que esctudiàvem a les Salesianes no dúiem barret i que solament teníem un uniforme (*I had been studying at the Salesianes school for girls and that I went to and from school with Mother. And that I had been furious that the girls from Col•legi de la Presentació had two uniforms, one in winter and another in the summer, and a beautiful black hat, while those of us at the Salesianes had no cap to speak of and only one uniform*)" (Roig 62, Berkobien and Hall 30). Similarly, she sees the declaration of the Republic as a way to make lunch with her mother and her mother's friends "portat diversió (*more amusing*)" (Roig 106, Berkobien and Hall 68). And yet, her version of events serves to fill in the archival gaps of women's history. She recounts a conversation with her lover Ignasi in which, "I ell vinga a riure i li preguntava, però què feu les dones; doncs, ira deia ella, juguem al bridge, anem a esperar els homes a l'estació, ens passem els models de ganxet, anem a fer visita (*he'd let out a laugh and ask, What do you women even do? Well, see, she'd say, we play bridge, we wait for our husbands at the station, we swap crochet patterns, we pay visits*)" (Roig 175, Berkobien and Hall 128). This exchange signals at once the setting of women's history within the home and also the devaluation of women's activities. Though her encounter with the old man after the Barcelona bombings suggests a delayed coming-of-age turning point for Ramona Ventura, the intervention of Ramona Claret's

narratives between those of her mother construe this personal growth as misinterpreted by her daughter.

Ramona Claret's narrative completes the grandmother-mother-daughter triad of the text. As Bellver points out, "Unlike her grandmother and mother, however, she frees herself from patriarchal domination; she leaves both him and her family. With this dual gesture of abandonment, she breaks the silence in the face of dissatisfaction maintained by her female predecessors and symbolically pronounces the farewell of the book's title" (Bellver in Brown 225). If her mother and grandmother felt the "Angel of the House" pulling them into the oppressive domestic sphere, Mundeta Claret experiences even the late-stage dictatorship city of Barcelona as patriarchally oppressive. She recognizes her lover Jordi in addition to her family as patriarchal influences restricting the development of her subjectivity. As Roig puts it, "Era una ciutat, la seva, tancada per totes bandes amb un invisible filferrat. Calia fugir-ne (*Hers was a city enclosed by invisible barbed wire on all sides. She had to flee*)" (Roig 82, Berkobien and Hall 47). While parts of Ramona Claret's story operate within the generational mirror of her mother and grandmother, she also breaks out of their oppressive cycle by facilitating the only true intergenerational dialogue between herself and the other women in her matrilineal genealogy. Like her mother and grandmother, Ramona Claret mourns her loss of childhood and with it her nostalgia for Barcelona. She also experiences the incompatibility between patriarchal womanhood and her own lived experiences. Jordi chastises her for this, telling her, "Mundeta, tu canvies cada dia (*Mundeta, you're someone different every day*)" (Roig 83, Berkobien and Hall 48). Jordi also pokes fun at her name, calling the name Mundeta "de l'any de la picor (*old-fashioned*)" (Roig 69, Berkobien and Hall 36). This further insinuates the necessity for a rupture

in the generational cycles of the Ramona women which culminates in the intergenerational conversation at the end of the novel.

Though Ramona Claret has frequent contact with her family members, her descriptions of them reveal a lack of meaningful interactions between them. She describes her father, for example, as "l'homefort de la família (*the family's backbone*)" but Roig's third person narrator also tells readers that "D'ell, la Mundeta gairebé no en sabia res (*Mundeta hardly knew anything about him*)" (Roig 81, Berkobien and Hall 46). Ramona Claret only recalls one story of her father as noteworthy in which he lamented his existence as "l'home potent, inflexible, distanciat en una família formada gairebé per dones (*the strong, unyielding, distant man among a family of women*)" (Roig 81, Berkobien and Hall 46). Similarly, with regard to Ramona Jover, "No l'havia entesa mai: si es tractava d'una dona cínica i comediant o, si per contra, era una dona que, de la sensibilitat, n'havia fet un art (*Mundeta had never understood her: was she a cynical ingenue or on the contrary, was she the kind of woman who made an art out of her sensitivity?*)" (Roig 131, Berkobien and Hall 90). She finds her grandmother's storytelling unreliable and subject to confusing reality and imagination. Lowinsky posits that, "For many the grandmother is an easier link to the Motherline than is the mother. Less familiar, less everyday, a grandmother is a woman of another time, telling stories out of long ago; standing closer to death she remembers the dead. She is often the first to tell us the stories of our origins" (Lowinsky in O'Reilly and Abbey 233). Ramona Claret reiterates this distinction, seeing her mother as fearful and implicit in her father's patriarchal violence while preserving her grandmother as less restricted by her father's influence. For instance, she explains that her grandmother kept her company when her father punished her, but her mother "no l'anava a veure mai (*never came to check on her*)" (Roig 189, Berkobien and Hall 140). Ramona Claret's interpretation of her mother, Ramona Ventura, exposes the potential

motivation behind the latter's opening and closing first person narration. Ramona Claret describes her mother as "ara només era una dona atuïda davant l'autoritat del pare, una autoritat guanyada a base d'una llegenda d'home fort i d'una sòlida posició econòmica de la qual ningú de la família no coneixia els principis (*nothing more than a submissive woman before her father's firm hand his authority enshrined in the myth of the strong male and secured through a solid financial backing that no one in the family knew the origins of*)" (Roig 133, Berkobien and Hall 91). As Everly posits, "The daughter cannot see herself in her mother; she only sees a weak woman that she despises, thus the mirror becomes curved showing a distorted image" (122). The generational mirror, without intergenerational communication, leads to misinterpretations and further entrenchment into silence.

Despite Ramona Claret's analysis of her mother, which renders her weak and devoid of subjectivity, she notes an "enigma" within Ramona Ventura. Roig writes,

> "Però hi havia un aspecte en el caràcter de la seva mare que la mundeta no acabava d'entendre del tot. Per què una dona eclipsada i temorenca es reviscolava quan es parlava de la querra? No solament quan recordava el dia en què hagué de buscar el seu marit entre els morts d'un bombardeig, sinó quan amania la passejada per la ciutat destruïda amb una infinitat d'anècdotes que augmentaven de to i de color cada vegada que es disposava a explicar-les (*But there was still one thing about her mother that she hadn't quite managed to understand. Why did this overshadowed, fearful woman come to life when she spoke about the war? Not only when she recalled the day she had to look for her husband among the victims of a bombing. But also when she embellished her walk through the devastated city with an infinite number of anecdotes that varied in tone and*

> *color each and every time she felt inclined to share them*)" (Roig 132, Berkobien and Hall 90).

While this account implies the sharing of Motherline stories between Ramona Ventura and Ramona Claret, the current state of lost subjectivity at the hands of her patriarchal husband manifests into rebellion of daughter against mother. Ramona Claret's matrophobia contributes to further cultural matricide since her fear of similarly losing her sense of identity results in a rejection of her mother. While Mundeta Claret expresses a desire "saber d'on li provenia l'obscura força que la transformava en una altra personalitat (*to know the source of that obscure force transforming her mother into someone else*)," she is unable to reconcile this Motherline story with her own vision of Ramona Ventura (Roig 132, Berkobien and Hall 90-91). One of the guiding questions of the text – how did Ramona Ventura lose her spark for life after the bombings – gains a clear and disappointing answer: she found her husband alive among the wreckage of the city.

Like Ramona Ventura, Ramona Claret carries out various imagined conversations with her mother, anticipating her mother's response to her experiences and opinions. Of course, it is only in Ramona Claret's narrative that all three women appear simultaneously and initiate the only intergenerational interaction in the text. As the last piece of the grandmother-mother-daughter triad, Ramona Claret has concurrent access to two members of her matrilineal genealogy. The conversation is initiated by Ramona Claret revealing her decision to go into hiding due to her connection to anti-Franco political activity. Though each of the women speak in this scene, they at times appear to be having three synchronized monologues, struggling to listen to each other and even proving true the imagined versions of themselves that their daughters hold. In other words, it becomes clear that this intergenerational argument constitutes a

rehashing of disagreements the women have had in the past. For Everly, this scene “exposes the esperpentic notion of the generational mirror” (122). The grandmother serves as a mediator between mother and daughter, demonstrating her vital role in the triad. She tells Ramona Claret, “Tu no has viscut la meva època, allò sí que era terrible. Tot el dia amb la mamà, fent comèdia. Nosaltres, les dones, a callar. Però ara! Si feu el que voleu! (*You don't know what it was like when I was growing up. Now that was horrible all day with Mother, playing the part. Us women having to keep quiet. But now you young women do just as you please!*)” (Roig 207, Berkobien and Hall 155). Ramona Jover sees her granddaughter as an opportunity to live vicariously through Ramona Claret. Since she has the most distance from her granddaughter in the triad, she can make Motherline connections between them. In other words, she remembers her own desire to break away from family and society and consequently understands her granddaughter’s desire to do the same. Nevertheless, she maintains some generational resentment. Ramona Ventura further exacerbates this feeling of resentment, declaring, “No saps què vol dir, tot això. Si haguessis viscut una guerra, sabries què significa passar fam, com la teva mare. Tot un dia escorcollant els morts, olts d’ells cadàvers, completament cremats, per trobar el teu pare (*You don't know what you're saying. If you had lived through war you would know what it meant to go hungry like your mother. An entire day spent searching for your father among the dead bodies*)” (Roig 207-208, Berkobien and Hall 156). Instead of using this opportunity to explore intergenerational disconnect and learning more about her mother’s enigma, Ramona Claret states, “Se me’n fot de la guerra i dels vostres embolics! Això d’ara és diferente, comprens? (*I couldn't care less about the war and all of your messes. What's happening now is different, don't you understand?*)” (Roig 208, Berkobien and Hall 156). The Motherline stories of these women, and the ways they connect therefore never come to light for the characters themselves. Their

inability to disclose their true subjectivity with one another contributes to their further silencing. However, their value as a elements of a sociological text fills in the gaps of the larger Motherline archive and points to the potential for connection between matrilineal genealogies when maternal wisdom is given and received.

Published only two years after *Ramona, adéu*, Rodoreda's *Mirall trencat* clearly resonates with Roig's text through its employment of the grandmother-mother-daughter triad. *Mirall trencat*, also originally published in Catalan, similarly honors matrifocal commitments by presenting the mutual subjectivity of its characters rather than narrating from the perspective of just the daughter. However, Rodoreda's novel finds a point of departure in its representation of fragmented yet entangled matrilineal genealogies. The line connecting the members of Rodoreda's grandmother-mother-daughter triad is by no means straight. Rodoreda's novel shatters expectations about generational continuity, exploring the kaleidoscopic quality of kinship formations as a broken mirror rather than one that cleanly and directly reflects subjectivity intergenerationally. Nevertheless, family secrets built on the grounds of staying in line with patriarchal societal expectations as well as economic necessities reveal the possibilities for imperfect maternal practice to foster intergenerational connections despite "false" or imagined bloodlines. As one of Rodoreda's characters puts it, family secrets are "sagrats (*sacred*)" (Rodoreda 124, Sobrer 79). That is to say, the dashes that connect the grandmother-mother-daughter trio obtain a level of ambiguity that further underscores the nonbiological connections between Rodoreda's characters. The story begins in 1870s Barcelona with Teresa, a young and poor woman, who marries the wealthy Salvador Valldaura and consequently must hide her illegitimate son Masdéu. Later, Teresa and Salvador's daughter Sofia benefits from the legitimacy of her connection to the patriarchal line yet fails to connect with her mother. Sofia

marries Eladi who also fathers an illegitimate child, Maria, who is welcomed into the family's villa and serves to complete the intergenerational triad alongside Sofia and Teresa. Concluding at the end of the Spanish Civil War, the novel touches on personal and public history, conflating the two to offer a composite yet contradictory Motherline story set against the backdrop of a century of Spanish history.

Teresa constitutes the first fragment of the intergenerational triad in Rodoreda's novel. She also sets in motion the first family secret that contributes to the fragmentation of generational continuity in the text. As Annette Kuhn explains, "Secrets haunt our memory-stories, giving them pattern and shape. Family secrets are the other side of the family's public face, of the stories families tell themselves, and the world, about themselves" (2). Teresa's solution to her illegitimate child is to imbue him with legitimacy, giving Masdéu over to his father to raise as his "adopted" son[41]. She relinquishes the title of mother, instead taking on the role of godmother "perquè quan sigui grandet em pugui venir a veure i jo pugui adjar-lo: no vull tenir un fill perdut pel món (*so that when I'm an old lady he can come visit me and I can help him out: I don't want a son of mine lost in this world*)" (Rodoreda 42, Sobrer 7). Teresa becomes a substitute mother to her own biological son, clearly identifying her motivations as a desire to provide him with aid by way of her financial situation made possible by her very surrender of her son. She gives up her biological connection to her son as an act of protective (m)othering in which she distances herself from Masdéu so that he may gain patriarchal legitimacy and eventually secure a financial inheritance through his link to Teresa as his self-proclaimed godmother. Through her marriage to Salvador, Teresa gains a second chance at establishing a

[41] The father's wife does not know the true identity of the child she agrees to adopt and therefore does not have to confront her husband's infidelity through Masdéu whereas Sofia must confront her husband's infidelity through María.

patriarchally-sanctioned biological kinship configuration through the birth of Sofia, the second fragment of the intergenerational triad present in *Mirall trencat*. Teresa's experience giving birth alludes to her place within the continuum of the Motherline. On one hand, she experiences herself as daughtermother, watching her daughter cry at the sounds of a thunderstorm and empathizing with her that she also "li vingueren ganes de plorar (*felt like crying*)" and remembering that her own mother was also scared of lightning (Rodoreda 67, Sobrer 30). She thinks to herself that if her mother were alive "la faria viure com una reina (*I would have her living like a queen*)," demonstrating a yearning to make retribution to her mother now that she has taken on the role of mother herself (Rodoreda 68, Sobrer 30). As Adrienne Rich writes, "the mother of the laboring woman is, in any case, for better or worse, living or dead, a powerful ghost in the birth chamber" (*Of Woman Born* 161-62). On the other hand, Teresa also displays a level of respect for Motherline advice, heeding the warnings of her midwife to spend a whole week in bed to keep her stomach flat after giving birth. Though the doctor brushes off the idea, telling her, "Aquestes dones fan cada descobriment (*These women, they are always discovering something*)," Teresa evidences the truth of this feminine-produced form of knowledge production (Rodoreda 64, Sobrer 26). In her old age, Teresa appeals to this matrilineal wisdom again, telling the doctor, "'Doctor Flaguera, el que jo tinc és la mort a dintre i amb aquesta senyora tan fina no hi pot res ningú: ni les herbes, ni els minerals, ni el bisturí. Ni tots els seus estudis' (*Doctor Falguera, what I have is death inside me, and against such a fine personage nothing will work: not herbs, not minerals, not the scalpel. And not all your science*)" (Rodoreda 246, Sobrer 178). Teresa equates "old wives' tales" to scientific medicalization rather than valuing the primacy of latter as patriarchal society would. Just as she did in her experience of bringing life into the

world, her encounter with taking life (her own) out of the world, promotes the valuation of alternative, feminine knowledge production.

As a newly minted member of the upper class, Teresa delegates some of her maternal responsibilities to a nurse. She finds herself estranged from her second child as well as her first since, in the case of Sofia, "si la Teresa alguna vegada li volia fer una moixaina, es girava d'esquena, s'arrapava al col de la dida i arrencava a plorar (*if for some reason, Teresa tried to caress her, the girl turned around, clutched the nurse's neck, and started to cry*)" (Rodoreda 64, Sobrer 26). This kind of maternal regret challenges institutional motherhood since "if motherhood was truly natural, chosen, and supposed to happen, there could not be regret" (O'Reilly, "Maternal Regret" 518). With regard to Masdéu, who comes to visit his "padrina (*godmother*)" years later, "El tenia al seu davant, estrany, lluny de la seva vida de dona rica, més aviat com un retret (*He sat in front of her, strange, far removed from her life as a rich woman, rather like a reproach*)" (Rodoreda 78, Sobrer 40). Teresa's maternal experience is characterized by "letting go" of her children in their respective infancies, turning them over on the expectations of her newly acquired socioeconomic status – abandoning Masdéu so he can acquire patriarchal legitimacy and transferring maternal care of Sofia to the nurse so she can have an upbringing deemed "proper" by the bourgeois sensibilities of her status.

Teresa's contributions to the family secrets of her matrilineal genealogy serve to complicate maternal memory. Rather than reinforcing the generational continuity between herself and her children, Teresa's narrative underscores the intergenerational distinctions and disconnects between herself and the other members of the grandmother-mother-daughter triad. For example, upon meeting, Sofia's husband Eladi expresses surprise that "la senyora Valldaura pogués tenir una filla prima, adusta, amb aires de superioritat (*Senyora Valldaura could have a*

daughter who was so skinny, unfriendly, and with such airs of superiority)" (Rodoreda 91, Sobrer 52). Just as Teresa finds herself distanced from her daughter as a result of her protective (m)othering, Sofia expresses not just a disinterest in but a hatred for her mother. Rodoreda writes of Sofia, "Mai no havia estimat gaire la seva mare. Quan la veia amb els xals brodats de pedretes i amb les mitges d'espiga tenia ganes que se n'anés de casa i que no tornés mai més (*She had never loved her mother much. Seeing her with shawls embroidered with rhinestones and her herringbone stockings, the girl wished her mother would go away and never return*)" (Rodoreda 97, Sobrer 57). As a child, Sofia naively buys into cultural matricide and matrophobia, prescribing a limited, flattened identity to her maternal figure. Even as a mother herself, Sofia blames her son Ramon's "vulgaritat (*ordinariness*)" on his genealogical connection to Teresa "d'aquella bona dona que havia fet de peixatera (*that woman, who had been a fishmonger*)" (Rodoreda 178, Sobrer 125).

Nevertheless, once Teresa dies (following Maria's own death), leaving Sofia the lone survivor of the intergenerational triad, she finally accepts her connection to her matrilineal genealogy, reflecting on her motherline. In this passage, Sofia attests to the connections between herself and Teresa:

> Trobava curiós el bon record que li havia deixat la seva mare. La veia amb la cara preciosa, amb aquell aire de sentir-se feliç al mig de la vida encarna que la vida no hagués estat sempre d'or. Al capdavall, pensava, si sóc poderosa, ho dec a Teresa Godau. La mort li féu adonar-se que la seva mare havia estat una persona excepcional i ella, davant d'aquella esplendor desapareguda, se sentia disminuïda. El respecte que inspirava el devia a aquella ombra que no podia oblidar ningú. Havia deixat de ser la Sofia. Li hauria agradat de dir-se Teresa (*She had not expected the good memories her mother left*

her. Sofia could see her mother's beautiful face, with that air of hers of feeling happy in life even if her life had not always been golden. After all, she reflected, I owe my power to Teresa Goday. Death made her realize that her mother had been an exceptional woman, and she, faced with that departed splendor, felt diminished. The respect she inspired she owed to that shadow, which nobody could forget. She had stopped being Sofia. She would have liked to be called Teresa) (Rodoreda 252, Sobrer 182-183).

Sofia expresses a desire for further connection with her mother, including taking her name and wearing her jewels. The absence of Teresa facilitates an encounter with the daughter in a ghostly form. Sofia, in the absence of Teresa, comes to understand that some level of generational continuity exists between them, most notably their power. Sofia also confirms their identities as inextricably linked since she has "stopped being Sofia" due to the departure of her mother through death. Furthermore, Sofia affirms Teresa's subjectivity outside of her role as mother since she calls her by her full, maiden name "Teresa Goday." Faced with the weakened physical connection to her mother, their spiritual, Motherline link becomes increasingly clear to Sofia. As Lowinsky writes, "Motherlines are haunted by ghosts. The unredeemed grief and suffering of generations of women haunt us" (234). Now that her childhood, childish wish for her mother to "go away and never return" has been fulfilled to some degree, Sofia reaches to hold onto the impossibility of the finality of death, instead seeing her mother as a shadow that remains through memory and generational continuity.

The link Teresa and Sofia share with Maria is less traditional. Maria, the product of Eladi's extramarital affair, completes the grandmother-mother-daughter triad despite her lack of blood connection to either woman. Additionally, her relocation to her father's villa parallels Teresa's abandonment of Masdéu since Maria maintains the legitimacy of the patriarchal father

in this way. She also adopts a substitute mother figure through Sofia and a substitute grandmother figure through Teresa. Both women fully embrace Sofia as daughter and granddaughter not only in spite of their unshared bloodline but in some instances because of it. For Sofia, Maria's lack of Valldaura blood corresponds to an absence of Teresa in the child. Sofia's love for Maria does not take on the same resentful tone as her feelings toward Ramon. On one hand, Sofia realizes, "La Maria vivia a la casa perquè la Sofia la necessitava, excitava el seu sentiment malèvol de dominació (*Maria lived in the house because Sofia needed her; the girl stimulated her spiteful sense of domination*)" (Rodoreda 177, Sobrer 124). On the other hand, "La Maria, pensava, m'estima com si jo fos la seva mare de debò. [...] La Maria, així que l'havia vista, se li havia tirat a sobre i l'havia abraçada: 'Mama, Maria…' I la Sofia havia sentit una gran joia per dintre: la Maria era seva (*Maria, she reflected, loves me as if I were truly her mother. […] Maria, no sooner did she see her, threw herself on her and hugged her: 'Mama, Mama.' And Sofia felt a great inner joy. Maria was hers*)" (Rodoreda 178, Sobrer 125). Sofia's acceptance of Maria suggests a kind of protogenetic fantasy in which her child is not free from her husband's influence but rather from her mother's. Nevertheless, Teresa similarly expresses interest in Maria as a substitute daughter figure. Though Maria displays apprehension towards Teresa, who she primarily characterizes by her old age, Teresa amends her will to leave everything to Maria. Her lawyer questions her, asking why she wouldn't leave her inheritance to her biological son Masdéu who shares her blood. Teresa scoffs at the limitations of institutional motherhood, replying, "¿Què se me'n dóna de la meva sang i de la sang de tothom? (*What do I care for my blood or anybody's blood?*)" (Rodoreda 154, Sobrer 108). Teresa's claim reiterates her rejection of science as an objective form of knowledge production, instead esteeming more intuitive forms of knowledge production, namely her feelings toward the child in question. She

feels closer to Maria than Masdéu despite the discrepancy of their status as blood relatives. By welcoming Maria into the fold of their intergenerational triad, Teresa and Sofia demonstrate the role alternative kinship formations have in complicating and challenging hegemonic, institutional motherhood. Maria's haunting of the Valldaura villa as a ghost after its original inhabitants have gone both physically and spiritually, further emphasizes the association between memory and generational continuity. Now just a ghostly fragment, Maria's memory becomes incorporated into the motherline of her matrilineal genealogy alongside the fragments of Teresa and Sofia. The vignette style of narration finds its culminating manifesto in the title of the novel and the metaphor of the broken mirror: "Els anava agafant i els anava encabint en els buits on li semblava que encaixaven. Les miques de mirall, desnivellades ¿reflectien les coses tal com eren? I de cop a cada mica de mirall veié anys de la seva vida viscuda en aquella casa (*She picked [the pieces] up and tried to put them back in the spaces she thought they would fit. Did the pieces of the mirror, having lost their level, reflect things as they were? Suddenly, in each piece of the mirror, she saw years of her life spent in that house*)" (Rodoreda 259, Sobrer 188). In other words, the maternal memory represented by the Motherline does not offer a linear narration just as the connections of matrilineal genealogies are anything but linear. Generational continuity does not denote a straight perpetuation of the intergenerational triad but rather honors the mutual and independent subjectivity of each generation represented by the triad. Lowinsky proposes that understanding the stories of the Motherline simultaneously connects us to ourselves and universality since,

> "The Motherline is not a straight line, for it is not about abstract genealogical diagrams; it is about bodies being born out of bodies. Envision the word line as a cord, a thread spelling, as the yarn emerging from the fingers of a woman at the spinning wheel.

> Imagine cords of connection tied over generations. Like weaving or knitting, each thread is tied to others to create a complex, richly textured cloth connecting the past to the future" (Lowinsky in O'Reilly and Abbey 231).

Rodoreda presents these memories as fragments, appealing to the nature of memory as it both relies on and rejects chronological temporality.

In the introduction to *Mothers and Daughters: Connection, Empowerment, and Transformation*, Andrea O'Reilly and Sharon Abbey write about the power of narration to "name, claim, and transform their lived realities" (5). Narration serves as a matrilineal inheritance that affirms the subjectivity of the daughter without sacrificing the subjectivity of the mother. The grandmother-mother-daughter triad identifies alternative kinship formations that foster this memory transmission intergenerationally to varying degrees of success. O'Reilly and Abbey explain that memory work does not need to convey success, but rather a struggle or "an everyday lived resistance to the world that seeks to claim and control mothers and their daughters" (10). Intergenerational communication through memory transmission, both affirms matrilineal genealogical connections while also problematizing generational continuity

Maternal Subjectivity and Matrifocal Feminism: Josefina Aldecoa's *Mujeres de negro* and Lucía Etxebarría's *Un milagro en equilibrio*

While *Mirall trencat* explores memory production and recollection through its fragmented narrative style, it does not adopt a testimonial style nor does it overtly revere written accounts as the principal form of intergenerational memory dissemination. *Ramona, adéu* does address testimonial forms of memory work both in its use of Ramona Jover's diary and Ramona Ventura's testimonial-style reflection on her search for her husband after a bombing during the

Civil War. That is to say, Ramona Jover directs her testimony at herself in a kind of self-reflection. Ramona Ventura's testimony has a less defined listener, although we can assume she speaks to her daughter Ramona Claret since the youngest Mundeta reflects on her mother's war stories yet is unable to interpret them and recognize the subjectivity her mother narrates. Elizabeth Jelin points out the ways testimony becomes informed by its recipient since, "Testimony includes the listener, and the listener becomes a participant, although a differentiated one, with his or her own reactions" (64). Both *Mirall trencat* and *Ramona, adéu* depict intergenerational miscommunications in which the significance of matrilineal connections is highlighted by absences rather than presences. In contrast, Josefina Aldecoa's trilogy beginning with *Historia de una maestra* (1990), continuing with *Mujeres de negro* (1994), and concluding with *La fuerza del destino* (1997) consists of an autobiographical format in which the protagonist recounts events of her life with the expressed purpose of memory preservation. In this way, Motherline stories that point toward a matricentric future insist upon maternal subjectivity through narration and authorship since, as Donna Bassin posits, "The mother's subjectivity, her ability to reflect on and speak of her experience, has become an important ingredient in altering myths and changing social reality" (Bassin 3). The assertion of maternal subjectivity through the authorship of Motherline stories directly challenges institutional motherhood, affirming the pluralistic diversity of maternal experience by sharing a countermemory through an intimate, situated portrait of their own mother work.

Mujeres de negro confirms this relationship between writing and memory when Juana recalls her mother instructing her, "Escribe para recordar [...] y para conjurar los fantasmas" (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 20). While *Mujeres de negro* adopts the perspective of the daughter, Juana, the other books in the trilogy bookend her point of view with the testimony of the mother,

Gabriela[42]. Therefore, maternal subjectivity through written testimony paves the way for the subjectivity of the daughter. However, the subjectivity of the daughter does not erase that of her mother nor force her to recede into the background to make room for Juana's narrative. Rather, Juana's narrative sets the stage for Gabriela to continue her story in *La fuerza del destino*. Gabriela verifies this motive in the last lines of *Historia de una maestra* in which she writes, "Contar mi vida… Estoy cansada, Juana. Aquí termino. Lo que sigue lo conoces tan bien como yo, y lo recuerdas mejor que yo. Porque es tu propia vida" (Aldecoa, *Historia* 233). Gabriela confirms the connections between her contribution to Motherline stories and that of her daughter, handing Juana the metaphorical microphone to tell not only her own story but also that of her mother and grandmother. *La fuerza del destino* picks up Gabriela's narrative again since Juana's "abandonment" of her mother when she returns to Spain for school, leaving her mother behind in Mexico until Franco's death, left the daughter unable to tell the mother's story since Gabriela's life story no longer coincides with Juana's "propia vida." I focus my analysis on *Mujeres de negro* because, although the members of the grandmother-mother-daughter triad in the text do not always understand one another, this part of the trilogy presents the most interactions between all three characters. However, it is important to note that while *Mujeres de negro* does exemplify the intergenerational triad, its first-person narration style privileges the perspective of the daughter. Furthermore, the death of the grandmother in the text erases possibilities for her to tell her own story. That being said, Juana and Gabriela directly express their reliance on one another to carry out the act of remembering, directing their testimony to one another to reconstruct the

[42] Nevertheless, the trilogy can be read chronologically or as stand-alone books meaning the reader's impression of Gabriela or Juana is always situated and depends on the order of the fictional memoirs. For example, I came across *Mujeres de negro* first and then read *Historia de una maestra* followed by *La fuerza del destino*. My understanding of Gabriela's identity was influenced by the fact that I knew first how Juana interpreted her mother's subjectivity.

past into memory. Juana explains that her desire to exchange memories with Gabriela stems from a fear of forgetting since, "A veces tenía miedo de perder el pasado. Por eso le pedía a mi madre que me hablara de las cosas que yo recordaba y temía olvidar y de las que nunca había sabido" (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 80). For Richard Terdiman, loss is essential to memory because, "Reduction is the essential precondition for representation. Loss is what makes our memory of the past possible at all" (22). Though fear of forgetting motivates the representation of memory, reduction into narrative format makes the practice of memory retrieval purposeful and possible. Andreas Huyssen reiterates this, suggesting that, "After all, the act of remembering is always in and of the present, while its referent is of the past and thus absent. Inevitably, every act of memory carries with it a dimension of betrayal, forgetting, and absence" (4). The absence of the grandmother's own testimony from the trilogy does not negate her participation in the intergenerational triad[43].

In fact, the grandmother plays a crucial role in navigating the relationship between Gabriela and Juana. Her distance from Juana as grandmother rather than mother sets her up as a figure who provides insight into the dynamics of her daughter and granddaughter. She serves to ease the intergenerational communication between Juana and Gabriela, telling her daughter, "Juana no es como tú" and identifying changes in Juana since she feels that Gabriela "me miraba sin verme en los últimos tiempos" (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 24, 48). Because of her grandmother's positionality in the triad as mediator, Juana pushes back when her grandmother refuses to accompany them to Mexico and suggests their triad become a duo. When Juana tells her grandmother she won't leave Spain either and instead "Me quedaré contigo y nos iremos las dos

[43] Nevertheless, it is important to note that in contrast to the character of Gabriela as mother, the grandmother is never named in *Mujeres de negro* but rather is referred to by Juana as "la abuela" throughout the text.

a vivir a tu pueblo," she anticipates her grandmother's relief and joy but instead is met with tears. This time, Gabriela mediates the intergenerational miscommunication, sharing part of Juana's matrilineal inheritance with her by way of memory transmission in which she alludes to the contents of *Historia de una maestra* and tells her daughter about her decision to leave her mother and go to Guinea to teach. This exchange foreshadows another instance of a daughter abandoning her mother in which Juana leaves Gabriela behind in Mexico to return to Spain. When the grandmother gets sick, the mother and daughter prepare themselves to welcome her ghostly form instead since "ya no era más que una sombra inquietante" (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 50). They prepare themselves to be alone, redividing up the domestic tasks that pertained to the grandmother. When the grandmother dies, Juana endeavors to document her Motherline story, expressing a desire to remember her as she was before her ghostly, ill state. She writes,

> Yo pensaba en la abuela y quería recordarla como era antes de su enfermedad, tan cariñosa, fuerte y energética. Quería recordar los platos que cocinaba y los cuentos que me contaba. Y los refranes que utilizaba y que me explicaba con todo detalle. Pero solo me vino a la memoria una frase que repetía con frecuencia y que nunca me quiso explicar: 'Tanto penar para morirse luego…' 'Es un verso', decía, 'y no tiene explicación' (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 50-51).

Juana aims to document the memory of her grandmother who was unable to do so for herself. She uses her effective inheritance from Gabriela, who taught her the value of memory transmission, to serve as witness and archivist of her grandmother's memory.

Like the other texts discussed previously in this chapter (*Mirall trencat* and *Ramona, adéu*), Aldecoa's trilogy spans an entire lifetime (in this case, Gabriela's) and consequently a period of tumultuous history in Spain, demonstrating the ways that personal history converges

with public history[44]. Lowinsky identifies a strong connection between Motherline stories and the interconnected nature of "beings and times" (Lowinsky in O'Reilly and Abbey 235). For Lowinsky, Motherline stories "are as common as the repetitive loops made in weaving, crocheting, and knitting" (Lowinsky in O'Reilly and Abbey 235). The repertoire of Motherline stories, though often outside the traditional archive, reveal the interconnectedness of life and consequently support an association between personal and public history. This kind of *intrahistoria* is punctuated by the fact that Juana's birth aligns with the birth of the Second Republic, the grandmother's death aligns with the fall of Madrid at the end of the Civil War, and Gabriela returns to Spain from exile in Mexico only after Franco's death. Furthermore, Juana connects her memory to history, writing that, "Fue la guerra la que cambió el curso de nuestras biografías" (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 123). As Jelin points out, women's stories "are the 'other' faces of history and memory, the untold beginning to be voiced and listened to" (85). Likewise, a central thematic question in *Mujeres de negro* entreats an examination of the meaning of *patria*. In other words, Aldecoa presents yet another family of women to problematize the concept of the fatherland by tracing Juana's early youth in a war-ridden Spain, adolescence in exile in Mexico, and young adult life returned to Spain under Franco. While Juana expresses a desire to return to Spain to recover "esa primera sustancia, ese alimento primero para completar el ciclo de mi crecimiento," Gabriela rejects her daughter's assertion that the fatherland constitutes a necessary component of identity formation (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 81). Gabriela tells her daughter, "El mundo es patria… no te aferres a las patrias pequeñas" (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 80). Here, Gabriela appeals to

[44] Sarah J. Leggott points out that this trilogy holds an autobiographical significance due to similarities between Aldecoa's mother and character Juana who were both teachers during the Second Republic, adding an additional layer to the connections between personal memory and history by blurring distinctions between fiction and lived experience (114). Juana compounds this sentiment when her character says, "En realidad me resulta difícil separar lo recordado de lo imaginado. Confundo las fechas en la nebulosa de la infancia" (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 15)

the universalizing nature of the Motherline, which connects all women rather than the patriarchal idea of *patria* which limits connections similar to the limiting nature of traditional, biological motherhood. She attempts to impart matrilineal wisdom on her daughter in a way that honors her memory and identity formation. David K. Herzberger explains that, "her refusal to endorse violence is not only a consequence of her education but also the template for her moral identity. It has allowed her to develop a more unified sense of self, has defined how she has lived, and has given balance to her understanding of the world when war devastated all that surrounded her" (165). Gabriela's alternative citizenship practice underscores her alternative maternal practice, demonstrating the core of her values in regard to identity formation. In contrast, Herzberger sees Juana's desire to return to Spain as an attempt to "exorcize" the ghosts of the past (167). Juana identifies a nostalgia for her country of origin, motivated primarily by audiophonic connections since her studies at a Spanish center in Mexico expose her to the variety of Peninsular dialects and "Al regresar al lenguaje, regresé al país y al deseo de conocerlo algún día" since she claims Castellano as "mi única, mi verdadera patria" (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 115, 117). Upon her return to Spain, Juana begins to question the authenticity and extent of her Spanish identity due to her time in Mexico during her formative years. Gabriela and Juana's diverging feelings toward their fatherland serve to highlight their mutual yet individuated subjectivities.

As the narrator, Juana often refers to her life, home, and circumstances as those of "nosotras" – corresponding to her shared experiences and identity with her mother and grandmother. The three members of Aldecoa's intergenerational triad explicitly perform memory transmission with one another. Nevertheless, Juana still expresses a longing for a paternal figure ("un hombre, un padre, un protector") in her youth, a desire that later becomes replicated by her wish to return to the fatherland (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 14). Though she aims to engage in memory

transmission about her father with the other two members of the intergenerational triad, she finds that her mother prefers not to discuss him, identifies her own memory as hazy, and claims her grandmother tends to lionize her father for his martyr-like death in the war. For Juana, "la muerte de mi padre era la causa de una congoja que yo percibía flotando entre nosotras permanentemente" (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 14). The death of the father and its subsequent impossibility of being brought into memory recollection constitutes a gap in the transmission of intergenerational matrilineal wisdom. However, the death of the traditional father figure opens the possibility for alternative kinship formations. First, the family of la abuela, Gabriela, and Juana gains legitimacy after the death of Juana's father. The grandmother-mother duo embrace their new kinship configuration by dividing up the domestic work in an alternative to the traditional husband-wife dynamic in which Gabriela cares for the big picture elements of their life and the grandmother makes small daily decisions like what they will eat (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 30). Then, when Gabriela marries a Mexican widower with whom she enters voluntary exile from Spain: "Eran Gabriela y Octavio para nosotras. Octavio no era mi padre y mi madre no era la mamá de Merceditas. La ausencia de los muertos era irremediable. Al casarse nuestros padres se había creado una nueva estructura familiar, pero los antiguos núcleos seguían existiendo" (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 87). Both of these alternative family structures succeed in reminding Juana that Gabriela is not just her mother, but a person with her own subjectivity apart from her maternal identity. In the first kinship formation, Juana identifies Gabriela and the grandmother as "Madre e hija" rather than "my mother and grandmother," affirming their alternate link to one another and providing an understanding that Gabriela is not just a mother, but also a daughter (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 26). Juana's discernment of her mother as daughtermother suggests that even from a young age, she understood the Motherline not as a straight line, but a web. This

understanding is compounded by her naming of her mother and stepfather as "Gabriela y Octavio" in the context of her second kinship formation in Mexico. The nature of her blended family yields the necessity of discerning the alternative connections between family members. Furthermore, Gabriela's occupation as an educator reiterates this reality since Juana observes "la transformación que se producía en ella cuando se enfrentaba con un grupo de alumnos" (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 73). In other words, Juana has witnessed first-hand the multiplicity of her mother's subjectivity. She does not paint a flattened portrait of Gabriela, but rather aims to depict the dynamic and contradictory nature of her mother. She acknowledges that when it comes to Gabriela, "había que conocerla mucho, observarla mucho para descubrir su belleza" and takes on this challenge throughout her narration (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 24). Nevertheless, the young narrator is at times subject to indulging in fantasies of the "too good" or nostalgic mother, expressing a desire to have a mother like the women she sees in movies, "la madre que siempre había soñado, guapa, joven y elegante" (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 72). Therefore, while Gabriela's facilitation of alternative kinship formations and her commitment to education succeed in reaffirming her subjectivity before her daughter, the sway of cultural, institutional motherhood still displays an effect on Juana's narration.

Although Juana affirms her contributions to the intergenerational triad through her engagement with memory transmission and documentation, she, like Ramona Claret in Roig's novel, still yearns for individuation and independence from her matrilineal influences. As Juana puts it, "La adolescencia marcó el principio de mi deseo de separación. Mi madre seguía siendo la persona más importante para mí, pero yo necesitaba respirar por mi cuenta, vivir, experimentar" (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 100). Therefore, Juana simultaneously asserts her appreciation for her identity within her matrilineal genealogy and her inheritance of Motherline stories, yet

she also considers part of the responsibility of her inheritance to "dejar atrás la pesadumbre de mi madre" (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 176). Rather than an act of rebellion, Juana uses her interpretations of the past to start a path toward a future that doesn't sever her connection with the Motherline, but rather honors it. She sees memory work as "la medicina" and "mi terapia" (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 194). Since the terms mother and daughter rely on one another for definition, making it difficult to affirm maternal subjectivity apart from the identity of mother, the daughter, too, must separate from the mother "para ser yo misma[45]" (Aldecoa, *Mujeres* 177).

The protagonist of Lucía Etxebarría's *Un milagro en equilibrio* (2004) shares a similar commitment to testimony. Eva is a new mother who narrates her own life and experiences of pregnancy and infant care through a diary. Though the diary takes the form of a letter directed to the future self of her now infant daughter Amanda, Eva recognizes the wider appeal of her story and her text combines existential reflections with raw descriptions of life as a young mother. She subverts the diary as a personal genre by giving it an audience (as opposed to the diary of Ramona Jover, for example). Eva explicitly delineates the purposes and possibilities of her diary including serving as a the transcription of Amanda's earliest years for her daughter's future self, offering a realistic depiction of early maternity for other women like Nuria, as well as a mode of self-reflection (Etxebarría 43). Interestingly, Etxebarría's novel is dedicated "a mi madre," a decision that becomes reiterated thematically through the inextricable connections the author draws between mother and daughter, particularly as Eva narrates the birth of her daughter in tandem with the death of her mother. Therefore, the grandmother-mother-daughter triad remains central to the novel, while centering and prioritizing the perspective and maternal subjectivity of

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[45] This form of contrastive self-assertion finds resonance in many of the texts and films analyzed in this dissertation. Most notably, Almodóvar's Manuela as the mother without child and Raimunda as the child without mother embody the complexity of the interrelationality of kinship terminology.

Eva, the mother. Rich identifies the connection between the daughtermother and the mother since, "The experience of giving birth stirs deep reverberations of her mother in a daughter" (*Of Woman Born* 220). At various times throughout the narrative, Eva declares her status as daughter in relationship to that of her own daughter, highlighting rather than shying away from her status as daughtermother. Furthermore, Eva acknowledges a more general relationship between birth and death, since her mother's comatose existence starkly resembles that of baby Amanda because both are "incapaz de moverse o incluso de sobrevivir sola[s]" (Etxebarría 297). Furthermore, Eva laments the fact that of "los dos acontecimientos límite en la vida del ser humano" – birth and death – only the latter is discussed in literary detail while the former has been archivally omitted because of its relationship to women and corporeality (Etxebarría 39). Therefore, the motive behind Eva's authorship of the self lies in a commitment to documenting maternal subjectivity for the members of her immediate matrilineal genealogy, starting with Amanda, as well as for the larger population of women who draw wisdom from Motherline stories. Eva's stream-of-consciousness style (demonstrated by her run-on sentences and topic shifts that mimic real-time memory recall) as well as her candor about the writing process support these goals. Eva answers Gloria Anzaldúa's call to "forget the room of one's own – write in the kitchen, lock yourself up in the bathroom. Write on the bus or the welfare line, on the job or during meals, between sleeping or waking. I write while sitting on the john. No long stretches at the typewriter unless you're wealthy or have a patron - you may not even own a typewriter[46]" (Anzaldúa 31-32). In fact, Eva even documents her inability to write, demonstrating a dedication to the act of narration even when she only writes a few lines protesting the short hours of the day. She rhetorically poses a question in answer to the lack of maternity narratives: "¿Cómo pretende

[46] Though Gloria Anzaldúa's call finds resonance with Eva's writing practice, it is important to note that Anzaldúa addresses her call to "Third World Women Writers" – a category to which Eva does not pertain.

alguien que escriba si te tengo que tener en brazos todo el rato?" (Etxebarría 72). In this way, Etxebarría's text honors maternal subjectivity while also denouncing institutional motherhood through its narrative style.

Therefore, I interpret Etxebarría's text as alluding to Gordon's ghostly archive in which a fictional manuscript serves to fill in the gaps in the archive as a sociological text. As Jelin concludes, "The past is gone, it is already de-termin(at)ed; it cannot be changed. The future, by contrast, is open, uncertain, and indeterminate. What can change about the past is its meaning, which is subject to re-interpretations, anchored in intentions and expectations toward the future" (26). Etxebarría's novel addresses these concerns by changing the meaning of the past through reinterpretations for her daughter in the present. Eva reflects on the process and purpose of memory recall, asking "¿es verdad que lo recordamos?" and asserting her adherence to depicting the act of remembering rather than reconstructing a traditional narrative since she says, "Por eso mismo esto que escribo, que seguiré escribiendo, no va a ser más que una retahíla desordenada de notas" (Etxebarría 22, 23). Furthermore, Eva makes use of an interlocutor to make an account of her life: her daughter. Rather than a diary directed at a future version of herself, Eva demonstrates a concern for her future daughter throughout the text. Jelin classifies testimony in this way, as including the listener as a "participant" whose reactions to the recalled memory might affect the way it is recalled (64). Eva's account asserts the mother/daughter relationship as a doubling of the self, and dedicates most of her textualized reflections to an analysis of the concept of subjectivity. For Eva, pregnancy complicated her notion of selfhood because:

> " Y durante nueve meses fui dos, pero por una vez no dos rivales, sino dos organismos perfectos, simbióticos, aliados, como aquellos soldados espartanos que entraban en batalla más fuerte pese a que nunca fui más torpe, pese a que al final me cedieron los

asientos en el metro conmovidas ante mi aparente desvalimiento. Tuve que convertirme en dos para dejar de ser dos, porque una de ellas iba a matarme, pero en lugar de matar creé vida, y así sobreviví" (Etxebarría 20).

Eva applies this multiplicity of the self not just to the act of procreation, but also to creation through writing. For Etxebarría's protagonist and narrator, the diary medium encapsulates her understanding of writing for one's self but also for "el Otro o la Otra que uno lleva dentro" (29). Despite the prevalence of the topic of motherhood and maternity throughout the narrative, Eva's primary subject remains the concept of the self.

Eva only attends to the concept of institutional motherhood to critique it, outlining her faults rather than aiming at a manifestation of the "good mother" according to the expectations of institutional motherhood. In her letter/diary to Amanda, Eva writes, "Nunca tienes que esperar el tener una madre perfecta, porque yo no lo soy, ni de lejos" (Etxebarría 39). In this way, Eva rejects donning the "mask of motherhood" that Susan Maushart defines as "what keeps women silent about what they feel and suspicious of what they know" (251). Eva does not adopt the mask of motherhood as a "coping mechanism" by pretending to embody institutional motherhood (Maushart 253). Instead, she depicts the true face of authentic maternal experience. By offering a uniquely personal and intimate telling of her maternity, Eva successfully writes a Motherline story with some universal applications. In service of this, Eva directly critiques Carme Riera's *Tiempo de espera* (1998) due to "la sensación de que un abismo se abría entre la percepción del embarazo según la Riera y la realidad que yo estaba viviendo" (Etxebarría 37). Riera's text for Eva reaffirms institutional motherhood due to its romanticization of pregnancy. In fact, Eva even emails Riera to see if she had any physical discomfort during her pregnancy. The fictional(?) Riera clarifies that, "como el libro estaba destinado a su hija, quiso insistir en la

parte más amable del proceso para que la niña pensara que ella había nacido como resultado de un acto de amor y no de una simple crisis de vómitos[47]" (Etxebarría 38). For Eva, this omission constitutes an affirmation of the mask of motherhood which relies on silences around Motherline stories and the inauthentic exchange of maternal experiences. Sharon Abbey and Charlotte Harris identify the deconstruction of "dominant ideologies and hegemonic discourses" of institutional motherhood as essential for the intergenerational transmission of Motherline stories (Abbey and Harris in O'Reilly and Abbey 264).

Moreover, Eva poses a challenge to institutional motherhood by discrediting the concept of compulsory motherhood. According to O'Reilly, "The repudiation of compulsory motherhood permits and affords women the right to create lives and identities not defined by or limited to motherhood" (524). While Eva does not reject compulsory motherhood by refusing to perform motherwork, she does so by maintaining that she chose to be Amanda's mother rather than claiming she chose motherhood or was forced into it. In the very beginning of her narrative, Eva writes, "Así que sin elegirte te elegí porque, repito, son las elecciones inconscientes las únicas sinceras y yo, conscientemente, nunca pensé en tenerte, pero ¿no es curioso que en todos aquellos años que pasé borracha nunca se me olvidó enfundar en condones los aparatos de mis amantes esporádicos" (Etxebarría 2). Nevertheless, she also attests to the maternal regret she experiences. From telling her daughter, "te odio" to considering giving her up for adoption or feeding her marijuana to end her screaming, Eva does not shy away from documenting her instances of maternal regret as they constitute an essential component of her maternal memory (Etxebarría 260, 56). Eva's insistence on choosing Amanda resonates with her choice of name

[47] This instance, among others, poses the question of the boundaries between the author and the character or between the self and self-fiction.

for her daughter. She names her after a song by Victor Jara since its lyrics allude to "la conexión entre la madre y la hija" (Etxebarría 147). With this decision, Eva preemptively determines her maternal practice at 17 years old by moving away from the naming practice sanctioned by family tradition and institutional motherhood. In contrast to her own name, which serves as a ghostly reminder of her own mother who shares the same name, Eva gives Amanda a name that affirms her independent subjectivity while revealing a simultaneous yet contradictory link to her mother. As Eva writes, "Y elegí Amanda porque al nombrarte quería crearte, y crearte distinta a mí. Mi Otra. Una Otra que machacara por fin a aquella primera Otra que me consumía. Una Otra luminosa, invencible. Tenías que ser distinta, no podías ser como yo, y por eso, aunque a punto estuviste de ser Eva, te quedaste con Amanda, porque así había de ser" (Etxebarría 149). Eva defines her maternal practice as that which strengthens the connection between mother and daughter by dissociating that link from the values of institutional motherhood. In fact, Eva explains that she sees her own name as "un préstamo" (Etxebarría 299). Naming for Eva constitutes a rebirth, imbued with the same creative potential as physical birth. Consequently, it holds the potential to establish connections to the Motherline and matrilineal genealogies without sacrificing maternal subjectivity. Eva does not have to loan her identity nor her name to her daughter to support Amanda's burgeoning subjectivity. On the contrary, her Motherline story serves to abolish the recession of the mother in the face of the daughter.

Besides memory transcription with her silent, filial interlocutor, Eva's diary promotes the dissemination of authentic matrilineal wisdom. On one hand, she frequently denotes life lessons for her daughter as morals drawn from episodes in her own life. Eva leverages her maternal memory through life writing to prepare Amanda to not make her same mistakes. Eva firmly rejects the notion that she is the "too good mother" or even the "nostalgic mother." She

facilitates intergenerational communication with her daughter by removing any ambiguity around her maternal memory. Her comments after one story in particular – "Espero enseñarte esto desde muy pequeña, porque a mí me ha costado lágrimas aprender a aplicarme el cuento" – reveal the didactic purpose behind her narrative (Etxebarría 49). She explains things she had to learn through life's trials such as self-esteem and how to identify psychological abuse. She also shares subliminal messages through her embodied practice such as the value of female friendship and the power of testimony. Likewise, Eva demonstrates an estimation of her own mother's matrilineal wisdom both in spite of and because of her mother's virtual absence from the narrative due to her comatose state and eventual death. In fact, she directly criticizes the medicalization of maternity for rejecting and ignoring alternative, feminine knowledge production. For Eva, "si bien es cierto que la opinión de mi madre cuenta para mí más que la de un galeno que ni siquiera ha cuidado de sus hijos" (Etxebarría 57-58). That is to say, embodied matrilineal wisdom shared through the maternal repertoire rather than objective scientific accounts carry more value for Eva. In that respect, she connects with the current emphasis on emotive and affective readings of the past, which is typical of a current trend of historical studies[48]. She also criticizes the omission of alternative knowledge production in the form of Motherline stories or matrilineal wisdom from medical consideration as well as the prevalence of "official" sources on maternity like doctors and parenting magazines that adhere to heteronormative family structures, effectively silencing the possibility of alternative kinship formations (even including families with working mothers). Eva also problematizes a strictly

[48] For example, Jo Labanyi et al.'s 2016 text *Engaging the Emotions in Spanish Culture and History* "aims to contribute to the history and critical interpretation of the emotions in relation to modern Spain, considering their evolution and their social and cultural significance" precisely because "the deconstruction of the reason/passion dichotomy undertaken by emotion and affect studies has resulted in an important critical reconsideration of the emotional dimensions of collective actions and of politics" (1, 13).

biological genealogical composition, reiterating the inclusion of nonbiological, substitute mother figures in her daughter's life.

Despite Eva's commitment to alternative, matrilineal knowledge production and her contribution to her matrilineal genealogy through the documentation of her Motherline story, she nevertheless laments and aims to correct her mother's maternal practice for her tendency to don the mask of motherhood. Eva outlines the patriarchally collusive stances of her mother, especially highlighting the traditional relationship between her parents. As Eva narrates, "Mi padre, tu abuelo, ha sido el rey de su casa, y sus deseos eran órdenes para todos los demás, muy en particular para mi madre, que nunca jamás le ha discutido ninguna de sus decisiones, expresadas en una voz masculina, tajante, posesiva, palpante como una mano y envolvente como una bofetada de calor" (Etxebarría 236). Catherine Bourland Ross points out that these contrasts between generations "illuminates the ways in which social constructions of motherhood and womanhood both constitute and limit women's identities in contemporary Spain" (9-10). Therefore, Eva's Motherline story works in part to make reparations to her mother and rectify the intergenerational divide by making explicit the effects of her mother's silence about her maternal experience. Instead of instilling a false subjectivity into her mother's memory since Eva cannot access them due to her mother's vegetative state and eventual death, Eva calls attention to these intergenerational silences to highlight them instead of hiding them, thus taking away some of their power. She laments the fact that she only knows information about her mother second hand, culminating in her realization that her mother's present state is the result of several previous similar issues of which she was never made aware. For Eva, her mother connotes "un misterio" (Etxebarría 313). While Eva recognizes her mother's culpability through her silence about maternal experience, she also understands her part in their inauthentic intergenerational

communication since, “Peor aún, de que nunca me he parado a escucharla” (Etxebarría 160). Therefore, the older Eva will only live on in the memory of her daughter. The narrator explains this new relationship to her mother as memory and the relationship of her mother’s identity to memory as follows: “a partir de ese momento ya sólo me quedaría recordar cómo era el tono de su voz, de qué manera sus gestos, sus palabras, o sus silencios se grababan en las retinas de la interpretación ajena y dejaban algo escrito en la involuntaria memoria de los otros, memoria a la que tendríamos que recurrir desde entonces para revivir a quien ya no estaba” (Etxebarría 340-41). Just as Eva deconstructs institutional motherhood by presenting an unfiltered depiction of her own maternal experience, she similarly offers an unadulterated confrontation of the other side of the mother/daughter relationship. Therefore, she represents a narrative of her experience as daughter devoid of nostalgia. Etxebarría’s novel confronts cultural matricide by naming its connection to matrophobia. The novel identifies the dual nature of intergenerational communication, which like memory work involves a speaker and a listener. The transmission of authentic matrilineal wisdom was hindered by “una impenetrable barrera de silencio” (Etxebarría 310). Eva both takes and assigns blame for this situation. However, Eva’s diary operates as an antidote to both cultural matricide and matrophobia by deconstructing the power of institutional motherhood and establishing an avenue for intergenerational dialogue between Eva and Amanda. To accomplish this, Eva maintains her identity as daughtermother, expressing for example a desire to write an alternative version of her diary in which “tu abuela esté en su casa, en su sillón, hojeando una revista y refunfuñando como de costumbre” rather than sick and comatose in the hospital (Etxebarría 145).

For Eva, the alignment of the death of the other Eva with the birth of Amanda complicates the intergenerational triad by facilitating an encounter with maternal memory

through the recognition of generational continuity. Eva explicitly engages in memory work through narration to not continue the generational cycle of silence established by her mother. Lowinsky similarly identifies storytelling as a way of honoring her connection to the Motherline while also breaking away from the pattern of silence that marked the stories of previous generations. Lowinsky writes, "I didn't know that my struggle was the beginning of the thread that would tie me into the pattern of the Motherline, and tug at me until I began to understand it, until I wrote my own book. I did not know I was a part of a generation of women that would be finding our own voices, telling our own stories" (Lowinsky in O'Reilly and Abbey 229). Eva attributes her misunderstandings of her own identity to her misunderstandings of her mother. In fact, when Eva cries at her mother's funeral, she says she cries for herself rather than the woman she always considered to be a mystery. Therefore, her diary/letter to Amanda offers a countermemory towards a matricentric feminist future in which the daughter can reconcile her connection to the Motherline in order to understand herself. As Eva puts it, "No puedes entender tu historia si no entiendes primero la mía" (Etxebarría 78). Eva clarifies that she does not want to raise Amanda to be exactly like her, but rather intends to break the generational cycle of silence and misunderstanding by modeling for her daughter the value of testimony and sharing matrilineal wisdom. The transmission of Eva's matrilineal wisdom to Amanda does not rely on corporeality or embodiment alone. Instead, Eva finds a voice outside phallic discourse, one that honors and affirms its link to the Motherline. Rather than holding on to Amanda or donning the mask of motherhood, Eva rejects the generational cycle established by previous generations in which the mother remains an unsolvable puzzle. Eva explains that her daughter's identity formation requires both an understanding of matrilineal inheritance but also an independence: "Me gustaría que comprendieras que sólo cuando una decide dejar de ser hija de alguien,

hermana de alguien, mujer de alguien sólo cuando se atreve a mencionar su nombre a solas sin tener que definirlo siempre a partir de una preposición, sólo en ese momento empieza a ser persona por sí misma" (Etxebarría 413). The connection to and understanding of the Motherline verifies the idea that "la vida es eterna" since our narrations of maternal memory solidify our link to a long, intergenerational history of women and people who perform motherwork (Etxebarría 416).

Motherline stories like the ones explored in this chapter share maternal memories that problematize the hegemony of institutional motherhood. They expose the dangers of intergenerational silence and offer an alternative to this dynamic. They honor maternal memory, transcribing dialogues of the intergenerational triad and countering the erasure of maternal subjectivity through cultural matricide. Reconnecting with the Motherline reveals an approach for understanding the nonlinear nature of matrilineal genealogies. Motherline stories challenge institutional motherhood and affirm the potential for representing maternal subjectivity as a key component of feminine identity formation across matrilineal genealogies. These stories document matrilineal inheritances and promote the continued intergenerational exchange of Motherline stories, filling archival gaps with countermemories that point toward the possibility of matrifocal feminist futures.

Conclusion

I began this dissertation by posing Tía Tula's claim "toda mujer nace madre" as a question to guide my inquiries into the term "mother" as an identity category (Unamuno, *Tula* 27). Through an examination of alternative kinship formations and representations of matrilineal genealogies, I have demonstrated that fictional depiction of "other mothers" serves to counteract cultural matricide and challenges the hegemony of institutional motherhood.

I have detailed the distinctions between institutional motherhood, which prescribes patriarchal values, and maternal experience, which describes the intimate and dynamic nature of lived reality. The institution of motherhood proposes an impossible paradox of motherhood as innate while setting narrow and often contradictory constraints on the category of "good mother." The "good mother" strongly resembles the patriarchal mother who poses no threat to patriarchy and also actively instills patriarchal values in the next generation by keeping her children "in line" with patriarchal hegemony as well as the "too good mother" who is bound by the nostalgia for a primary, endlessly self-sacrificial provider of maternal care. Institutional motherhood encourages mothers to don the "mask of motherhood" over their maternal experience, influencing women to "fake it till you make it" and to aspire to the impossible classification of the "good mother." Therefore, narration of maternal experience renders maternal subjectivity visible and counteracts cultural matricide by providing an alternative to patriarchal fantasies about motherhood. Alternative maternal figures, experiences, and practices confront the institution of motherhood by rejecting any limitations on the category of mother. For this reason, I join many contemporary motherhood studies scholars in referring to maternal experience as a verb to emphasize the processional and active qualities of mothering. I submit that an exploration of other mothers in personal, existential accounts reinstates and reasserts maternal subjectivity

while also pointing to the practical wisdom of matrilineal genealogies. Fictions of mothering highlight the link between *intrahistoria* and historical archival gaps, shifting mothering from the periphery and oblivion of culture to the center. In this way, maternal memory work rejects the silencing of the mother's discourse by killing the "false" mother, renouncing the "mask of motherhood," and refusing to "make way for patriarchal social order" (Irigaray 14). The representation of the web of matrilineal genealogies opens up possibilities for receiving an inheritance of the answer to Virgina Woolf's question, "What had our mothers been doing?" (*A Room of One's Own* 20-21). I have posited that feminine subjectivity is challenged and informed by maternal practices. Consequently, maternal memory work must yield "a double voice" that underscores the diversity of maternal experiences while also recognizing the conversations between the mother's subjectivity and that of her daughter (Hirsh 161).

I have presented an analysis of the "other mothers" of Spanish fiction, including substitute mother figures, ghostly mothers, and daughtermothers. Substitute mothers perform mother work despite and sometimes because of their nonbiological connections to their substitute daughters. They reveal the nonlinear quality of matrilineal genealogies by demonstrating how maternal care is not contingent on biological functions of maternity. They also illustrate alternatives to Oedipal family structures and highlight the agenerational potential of mothering. Substitute mothers embody queer motherhood by practicing cohabitation without limits and exposing the category of mother as fluid and improvisational (P. Smith 167). The ghostly mother provides nuance to the absent mother by facilitating haunting encounters with the traces of her matrilineal wisdom. Motherhood therefore constitutes a kind of ephemeral repertoire as outlined by Diana Taylor. I argue that the ghostly mother is felt in generational continuity with the daughter by analyzing examples of how phenomenological memory work intersects with

maternal memory work. Haunting by way of repetition and recognition signals the heterogeneous quality of matrilineal genealogies since inheritance can constitute both further entrenchment in the continuity of intergenerational trauma as well as a catalyst for using Motherline stories to more deeply understand the nature of identity formation. The ghostly mother challenges the boundaries of life and death while also complicating the category of "mother." I propose maternal memory work by authoring maternal subjectivity as an alternative to the hegemony of institutional motherhood. I have presented examples of the grandmother-mother-daughter triad that transcribe mutual subjectivity through Motherline stories. These intergenerational narratives demonstrate the association between historical metanarratives and *intrahistoria* by using fiction to fill archival gaps created by the silence of cultural matricide. They offer a countermemory towards a matrifocal feminist future in which maternal subjectivity does not recede to make room for the subjectivity of the daughter, but rather centers the exchange of Motherline stories as an alternative to cultural matricide and matrophobia. They reveal matrilineal genealogies as nonlinear, connecting us to ourselves, the "other mothers" in our lives, and the larger web of feminine experience. Transcribing maternal memory through narration honors the diversity of maternal experience and acts as a matrilineal inheritance.

Matrifocal feminism centers the mother as the starting point for alternatives to the patriarchal order. It expands the definitions of maternal practice, maternal identity, and maternal experience. I have applied the ideas of matrifocal feminism to representations of the Spanish mother in contemporary literature and film, producing an interpretation of multifaceted "other mothers" as opposed to the impossibility proposed by institutional motherhood. I aim to make a contribution to both the field of Peninsular studies by offering alternative readings of the Spanish mother in fiction as well as motherhood studies by bringing the Spanish mother into a larger

conversation around depictions of motherhood as liberatory rather than oppressive. I join scholars like Catherine Bourland Ross and Sandra Schumm by articulating an analysis of Spanish motherhood in contemporary fiction. My point of diversion lies in my insistence on starting with the maternal figure rather than the daughter, thereby examining the subjectivity of the daughter and mother as a complication of the Demeter-Kore myth in which the mother and daughter search for one another to make sense of their own identity as well as its connection to the Motherline. I have made clear the ways that alternative kinship formations, centered around alternative maternal practice, oppose reductionist understandings of feminine subjectivity. I have chosen to highlight fictional mothers that span the 20th and 21s centuries to demonstrate the intergenerational component of matrilineal genealogies.

My analysis of the "other mothers" of Spanish fiction offers a timely contribution to both the fields of motherhood studies and Iberian studies. Demeter Press, the independent press dedicated almost exclusively to publication of work related to mothering and the foremost source for motherhood studies resources, advertises calls for papers that encompass many of the themes tackled in this dissertation, including but not limited to the connections between maternal subjectivity, queer motherhood and motherloss, indicating the relevance of my dissertation's contribution to these ongoing conversations. Future research could expand on the maternal figures discussed in this dissertation such as the deadly mother (who Pilar Pedraza refers to as "la madre siniestra" and María Asunción Gómez calls "la madre muerta"), the evil stepmother (as is depicted for example in Cristina Fernández Cuba's story "El final de Barbro"), the daughterless mother (by detailing the relationships between mothers and sons as opposed to mothers and daughters), and the "hombre con pechos" (or the nurturing man as defined by Clarissa Pinkola Estés) (Pedraza 252, Gómez 13, Pinkola Estés 109). Furthermore, while I have included a wide

variety of culturally situated works by Spanish creators in my dissertation, further research could explore additional maternal figures in texts like Federico García Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (1945), Esther Tusquets's *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* (1978), and Nuria Labari's *La mujer madre del mundo* (2019). Additional consideration could be given to autobiographical accounts of maternal memory in life writing like Esther Tusquets's *Habíamos ganado la guerra* (2007). Trends in Spanish film also signal the timely intervention of my dissertation. Specifically, Pedro Almodóvar has continued producing films that complicate the concept of motherhood, evidenced by his most recent feature-length film *Madres paralelas* (2019) and his recently announced current project, his English-language debut *The Room Next Door* which will look at the intersection of writing and motherhood (Ntim). Likewise, Spanish female filmmakers Pilar Palomero's *La maternal* (2022) and Alauda Ruiz de Azua's *Cinco lobitos* (2022) build on the framework established by Lucía Extebarría's unfiltered portrait of motherhood by presenting raw and nuanced depictions of maternal experience in the 21st century. Future extensions of this project could further identify and consider the plurality of national identities within Spain including but not limited to the ways Galician, Basque, and Andalusian regional identities inform maternal experience. Additional future scholarship could draw parallels between feminist movements like 8M, legal and social gains for matricentric feminist goals, and Spanish fictional representations of motherhood. Lastly, expansions on this dissertation could explore the domestic sphere as a site of female subjugation and creative expression due to its persistent connection to gendered domestic work and labor of childcare. In this way, mother work as a commodity further complicates the boundaries of maternal identity.

By centering maternal experience, matrifocal feminism positions the destabilization of institutional motherhood as an integral starting point for subverting the hegemonic power of

patriarchal institutions. The “other mothers” of contemporary Spanish fiction expose the unsustainability of institutional motherhood in the face of maternal memory work through narration. Understanding the tension between lived experience and cultural ideals around motherhood heralds the liberatory and feminist utopian potential of countermemories. By engaging in and celebrating cohabitation without limits and giving visibility to alternative kinship formations, Motherline stories and matrilineal genealogies amplify and give new dimensions to the category of mother while also determining the interconnected nature of feminine identity formation. Narrations of maternal memory always foster the creation and assertion of “other mothers,” providing an intergenerational inheritance of matrilineal wisdom.

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