THE REPUBLICAN MOTHER IN POST-TRANSITION NOVELS OF HISTORICAL MEMORY: A RE-INSCRIPTION INTO SPANISH CULTURAL MEMORY?

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After the Spanish civil war (1936–39), those who found themselves on the losing Republican side were subjected to severe repression, and public memory was manipulated in order to marginalize them even further and exclude them from the nation-building project. However, Falangist ideology also attempted to regulate the Republican private sphere through the targeting of the Republican mother. The reasons for this are twofold. First, the state realized the importance of the mother as the transmitter of cultural values. Second, the state believed that by indoctrinating women in the ideologies of the dictatorship its power could be sustained as women would transmit Francoist values and beliefs to their children. Therefore, to prevent the transmission of the values of the Republic, the Republican mother had to be targeted and punished. The objective of this chapter is to consider the place of this silenced Republican mother in Spanish cultural memory of the civil war and Francoist dictatorship today.

Beginning with a brief historical background of the visions and discourses of motherhood in civil war and postwar Spain, this chapter will examine the representation of Republican mothers in postwar Spain as recorded in testimony and fictional representations about the recovery of historical memory. Post-transition literature of the recovery of Spanish historical memory of the civil war and repression foreground the domestic sphere and the mother-child relationship, highlighting the paradox that Republican motherhood represented in the postwar period. Testimonial narratives of resistance suggest that, rather than accepting the Francoist maternal ideal, some Republican mothers continued to be influenced by the Republican ideal of motherhood.1 By comparing fiction to testimonial

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1 For the purposes of this chapter, my definition of a Republican mother is any mother who opposed the Franco regime, or who was involved in a social or family circle contrary to the regime and suffered for it. A Republican mother is a mother with left-wing ideals, be they socialist, communist, or anarchist, or a woman immersed in a left-wing environment. There are many differences between communism, socialism, anarchism, and even Marxism, but due to the extent of the Francoist repression, the lines between the various dissenting
texts, this chapter will explore whether the representation of the Republican maternal figure in a selection of post-transition historical novels makes a valuable contribution to the recovery of their experience and historical agency.

**Motherhood in Civil War and Postwar Spain**

Motherhood was a powerful symbol with which Spanish women identified, and women’s maternal role was exalted in Spanish society in the first part of the twentieth century. Both right- and left-wing political groups traditionally addressed this extended into the political arena even before the war, women as mothers. During the war, both sides appealed to women’s traditional role as wife and mothers to encourage female participation. Francoist groups seized the opportunity to integrate women in the rear guard with *Auxilio Social* (Social Aid), under the supervision of the *Sección Femenina de Falange* (Women’s Section of the Falange) being the main outlet for women’s mobilization on the insurgent side. In 1937, a six-month term of *Servicio Social* (Social Service) became compulsory for Spanish women in the nationalist zone to aid the war effort. Women’s main role was to provide food, make uniforms, and care for wounded soldiers. A conservative discourse, strongly influenced by Catholicism, was central to the Francoist vision of women’s role in the war effort and appealed to women’s sense of abnegation and sacrifice, as is illustrated in this example.

**Notes**

4. *Auxilio Social*, originally called *Auxilio de Invierno*, was an aid organization largely based on the German *Winterhilfe* in Nazi Germany. Set up in 1936, *Auxilio Social* offered assistance to those most affected by the war in the Nationalist zone and after 1939, to the whole of Spain. It was influenced by a conservative Catholic ideology and led by Mercedes Sanz Bachiller, wife of Onésimo Redondo, founder of the Falange Española. Ángela Cenarro-Lagunas, *La sonrisa de Falange: Auxilio Social en la guerra civil y en la posguerra* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2006), xi–2. *Auxilio Social* became an official branch of the Sección Femenina de Falange in 1936. Founded in 1934 by Pilar Primo de Rivera, sister of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the Women’s Section of the Falange existed for more than forty-three years and exerted considerable power over Spanish women. The organization is credited with playing a major role in the postwar construction of Spanish femininity. See: María Teresa Gallego-Méndez, *Mujer, Falange y Franquismo* (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1983).