# The Quest for Wholeness: Twentieth-Century Spanish and Italian Women's Life Narratives

by

Solveig Rose Hubbard Class of 2011

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Departmental Honors in Romance Languages and Literatures

### **Table of Contents**

Acknowledgements	3
Introduction Female Narratives Written by Female Authors	4
Chapter One Hybrid Genealogical Identities.	21
Chapter Two Woman as Witness and Reinterpreter of History	59
Chapter Three Finding and Establishing Voice.	89
Conclusion Common Processes, Unique Perspectives	114
Works Cited	119

### Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my two advisors, Ellen Nerenberg and Bernardo Antonio González for the support and guidance you both have given me throughout this project, as well as over the course of my four years at Wesleyan. I have learned so much from your classes and even more from our thesis meetings. Because of your enthusiasm and attention to detail, I have completed a project I never imagined was possible.

I would also like to thank and formally recognize the help I received from my thesis tutor, Emma Paine, and the Thesis Mentor Program. Emma, your editing abilities have improved my writing tenfold and I cannot imagine having to do this project without you. I also cannot emphasize enough how much I appreciate your warm personality and quirky sense of humor. They made our thesis meetings at 9:30 in the morning something to look forward to.

I would like to thank Emma Sherr-Ziarko, my thesis-partner-in-crime. You have been one of my closest friends for four years now and I am so glad that we went through this process together. As I have told you many times before, I would have no thesis without you.

Finally, I would like to thank Alec Gramann. You have experienced all the ups and downs of this journey as if it were your own. I thank you for being so patient with me and always finding it within you to cheer me on.

## Introduction Female Life Narratives Written by Female Authors

Christine Arkinstall observes in her book *Histories, Cultures, and National Identities: Women Writing Spain, 1877-1984* that 'woman' in Western European literature has traditionally served as "ideal and monument, but rarely as...protagonist." Men typically dominate the Western European literary discourse both as subject and as author. In my own studies of Spanish and Italian literature, I have noticed this trend as far back as the epic male heroes of chivalric narratives by Baldassare Castiglione to the contemporary male protagonists of Pablo Neruda's poetry. Female characters, on the other hand, usually occupy the role of muse to the male protagonists and have little to no voice. Not only have literary female characters been limited to predetermined roles, but female authors have also been discouraged from writing about certain issues. Arkinstall notes that "publishing on cultural and political matters has traditionally been considered the province of men." Western European society for centuries has expected women to silence their cultural and political voices.

The four primary texts that I have chosen to study for this thesis, however, challenge the observations above. *Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger* by Fausta Cialente, *Ritratto in piedi* by Gianna Manzini, *Primera memoria* by Ana María Matute, and *El cuarto de atrás* by Carmen Martín Gaite are written by women and about women. The authors use their own lives as templates, projecting 'woman' onto

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Christine Arkinstall, *Histories, Cultures, and National Identities: Women Writing Spain, 1877-1984* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2009), 13. <sup>2</sup>Ibid.

the role of protagonist and therefore escaping traditional literary constraints. As the female protagonists take center stage, they are unrestrained by male-dominated perspective and free to communicate their experiences and thoughts about social, cultural, and political practices relevant to Italy beginning in the late nineteenth century through World War II and to Spain beginning at the start of the Spanish Civil War through the end of Francisco Franco's dictatorship. In this thesis, I am not attempting to equate these vastly different temporal and spatial divides. I am instead seeking to formally and thematically draw these authors and their texts together, despite these differences, to demonstrate the similar processes these authors use to deal with these historical periods, as well as highlight the unique perspectives each author can provide the reader.

Formally categorizing these texts into one literary genre is difficult due to the varying content and writing styles of the four authors. However, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson's analysis of autobiographical acts provides a useful way to look at all the texts in light of these complications. Smith and Watson explain that *life writing* is "writing of diverse kinds that takes a life as its subject. Such writing can be biographical, novelistic, historical, or an explicit self-reference to the writer." The co-authors narrow this term down further to *life narrative*, which "includes many kinds of self-referential writing, including autobiography." Furthermore, life narrators "inevitably refer to the world beyond the text, the world that is the ground of the narrator's lived experience, even if that ground is comprised in part of cultural

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 3.
<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

myths, dreams, fantasies, and subjective memories." <sup>5</sup> In this thesis, I am considering the texts by Cialente, Manzini, Matute and Martín Gaite life narratives. This umbrella term is useful because it includes all of the texts, while at the same time acknowledging the stylistic differences between them. Below I will provide the unifying characteristics that demonstrate why the four authors' texts will be considered life narratives.

One of the key characteristics these narratives share is a mixture of autobiography/self-referential writing with fictional elements. Although the levels of each vary from one text to the next, the combination of the two provides greater freedom for each author to communicate her experiences. The autobiographical and self-referential elements of each text ground them in the lived experiences of each author. However, the inclusion of fictional elements gives these authors freedom to explore their past experiences imaginatively and creatively, which provides the reader with each author's subjective human experience. This blend allows us to read them as literary texts as opposed to documentary histories. Whereas analyzing the texts as the latter implies that what is said is fact, exploring them as the former creates the understanding that the experiences are filtered through the author's unique perspective. By combining the two elements, Cialente, Manzini, Matute, and Martín Gaite provide the reader with public history, as well as personal experience.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, "Introduction: Situating Subjectivity in Women's Autobiographical Practices," in *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 7.

Another unifying characteristic of all the texts is a first-person perspective. Each author allows the reader to enter into the consciousness of the protagonist by allowing him or her complete access to the character's personal thoughts and opinions. This creates a more intimate connection between reader and protagonist, which is a unique presentation of *life writing* and *life narrative*. The narrative, La storia, by an Italian narrativeist of the same period, Elsa Morante, demonstrates why because it is filtered through a third person perspective. La storia can be considered life writing because the narrative takes the life of an Italian woman, Ida, as its subject, detailing her experiences with her two sons during World War II. Because of the third-person perspective, a distance is created between the reader and the protagonist, which prevents him or her from fully penetrating Ida's life and experiences. The intimate connection between reader and female protagonist in the texts of Cialente, Manzini, Martín Gaite, and Matute encourages a complete entry into their experiences, thus providing the reader with "a characteristic way of perceiving, of organizing, and of understanding, an individual way of feeling and expressing that one can somehow relate to oneself." The reader is more easily able to identity with the protagonist and link themselves to her personal experiences, as well as the events of public history they choose to address.

Memory is another unifying characteristic of all the life narratives. It inspires the authors to create a dialogue between the past and present selves of their protagonists in order to synthesize them. The narratives become "more than a history

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> James Olney, *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 37.

of the past and more than a book currently circulating in the world; it is also, intentionally or not, a monument of the self as it is becoming, a metaphor of the self at the summary moment of composition." Through the process of memory, each protagonist is able to extract past pexeriences that are necessary for them to process and come to terms with the present. The particular memories that each author chooses to highlight or obscure also add to the unique perspective that each protagonist provides to the reader. Therefore, memory can be seen as both "source and authenticator" of the four women's texts.9

In addition to their formal unification, my principal objective in this thesis is to demonstrate the thematic similarities between all the life narratives. The universal theme that unites all the texts is the protagonists' processual quest for wholeness and individuation as a way to overcome the alienation of silence. Through my analyses of the texts, I have identified and divided my thesis chapters according to the three processes through which the protagonists embark on and try to fulfill this quest: identity formation, contesting public history, and finding and establishing voice. Through these processes, each protagonist desires to find the ways in which she can establish herself as a unique, separate human entity and ensure her life experiences are not lost with history and time. In my first chapter, I will explore the first component of each protagonist's quest for wholeness: identity formation. As a child and adolescent, each protagonist is expected to silently adhere to the demands of the patriarch and uphold the ideal image of woman as wife and mother. Through the

Olney, Metaphors of Self, 35.
 Smith and Watson, Reading Autogbiography, 16.

reexamination and interrogation of a hybrid genealogical identity, each protagonist rejects and seeks to transcend predetermined social roles. If she is able to do so, she establishes an identity and individuates herself as woman and individual. Chapter two analyses the second component of the quest for wholeness: contesting public history. Growing up in repressive environments that discouraged women from participating in cultural and political matters, each protagonist was deprived of the opportunity as a younger individual to express her thoughts and opinions. As adults, each protagonist utilizes her personal history as an allegorical representation of public history, in order to contest what she believes has been misinterpreted, misrepresented, or forgotten. The concluding chapter of this thesis examines the final element of each protagonist's journey to individuation and wholeness: finding voice. Each protagonist strives to discover the way in which she can express her experiences through her own words. If she succeeds in her journey, finding and establishing her voice is accomplished through the act of writing. In all of the chapters, I am studying the life narratives in chronological order of the historical events that each narrative discusses. As a result, the Italian narratives of Fausta Cialente and Gianna Manzini will appear first, as they address issues related to Italian history from the late nineteenth century up through World War II. The Spanish narratives of Ana María Matute and Carmen Martein Gaite will appear second, as they focus on the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and Francisco Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975). By examining the life narratives in this order, I am acknowledging the historical and cultural specificity of the narratives and therefore, not equating the time periods of which they speak.

With a formal understanding of the life narratives and the thematic direction in which I am orienting them, it is as equally important to highlight each author's biography and the specific details of their life narratives, which will become of use in the in-depth textual analyses of each chapter. In addition, because I am reading these life narratives as literary texts, rather than documentary histories, I will be considering the author and the protagonist of the narrative two separate entities. I will refer to the author of each text when commenting on her stylistic and structural choices. When I reference the protagonist by name, I am referring to the character within the life narrative. For example, I will use the name 'Cialente' to refer to the author of Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger and 'Fausta' to refer to the character within the narrative. 'Manzini' will be referred to when I wish to speak of the author of Ritratto in piedi and 'Gianna' will refer to the protagonist of the text. In El cuarto de atrás, 'Martín Gaite' will be referenced as the author and 'C' as the protagonist. 'Matute' will be referred to as the author of *Primera memoria* and Matia as the protagonist. I will be doing this to create consistency between the textual narrative analyses and avoid confusion. The order of the following biographies and textual summaries will be the same as the order in which each text will be analyzed in the thesis chapters.

#### 1. Fausta Cialente

Fausta Cialente is the first Italian writer I examine in this thesis. Cialente was born in Cagliari, Italy in 1889. She was the daughter of an army officer, Alredo and an opera singer, Elsa. Because of her father's position in the army, the family spent the majority of Cialente's life moving. She lived in Cagliari, Osoppo, Jesi, Milan,

Rome, Florence, and Genoa. In 1921, she married Enrico Terni, a composer, and the two went into voluntary exile in Alexandria, Egypt to escape the rise of Italian fascism. Cialente then "took an active part in the social and intellectual life of the expatriate community" by founding and writing for an anti-Fascist journal for Italian prisoners called *Fronte unito* and taking part in the Resistance through her daily broadcasts on Radio Cairo. <sup>10</sup> Cialente died at the age of 96 in London in 1994. Her career as an author was extensive and she is considered an important female writer within Italian literature. Some of her more popular works include *Natalia* (1927), *Cortile a Cleopatra* (1931), *Ballata levantina* (1962) and *Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger* (1976), for which she was awarded the Premio Strega, the most prestigious literary award in Italy.

In *Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger*, the author and protagonist are one in the same, as indicated by their shared name, Fausta Cialente. Cialente's text is the most autobiographical of the life narratives I study in this thesis, both in content and form. The narrative details the protagonist's family history, as well as her own life through adulthood and is divided into two sections. The first section (narrated in third-person) is the biography of Fausta's mother, Elsa, and the history of her maternal family from the mid to late nineteenth century in Trieste, Italy. The maternal family consists of Gustavo Wieselberger, the father, the mother of Elsa, and her three sisters, Alice, Adele, and Alba. The second section of the text signifies a transition from biography to autobiography and is narrated in first person. Fausta's immediate family consists of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Bruce Merry, "Fausta Cialente" in *Italian Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*, ed. Rinaldina Russel (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994), 76.

her mother, Elsa, her father, Alfredo, and her brother Renato. Because of the complexity of the familial relationships in Cialente's text, I have provided below a family tree, consisting of all the generations that are represented in the narrative.

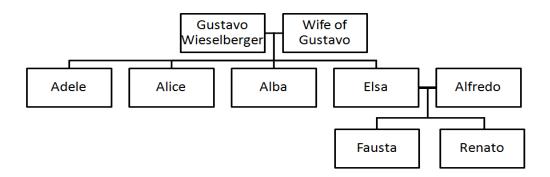


Fig. 1. Maternal family tree of Fausta

The biography of Elsa explores the daily life of the Wieselbergers during the late nineteenth century. Adult Fausta examines the familial dynamics between the parents, as well as their relationships with their daughters. A significant portion of this section also speaks of the maternal family's involvement in irredentism. Italian irredentists sought to annex Trieste and Istria to Italy. This issue will be explored in detail in the second chapter of this thesis. Fausta's autobiography begins at the dawn of the twentieth century and continues to examine familial relationships but with a focus on her own parents. The issue of irredentism is further explored in its relationship to World War I and World War II.

#### 2. Gianna Manzini

Like Fausta Cialente, Gianna Manzini was born at the end of the nineteenth

century in 1896 in Pistoia, Italy. Her mother belonged to the bourgeoisie and her father, Giuseppe Manzini, was actively involved with anarchist politics, which eventually led to his exile by a fascist functionary. As an adolescent, Manzini moved to Florence with her mother and later graduated from the University of Florence with a degree in literature. She also became active in the Florentine literary scene and was an active contributor to Solaria, an important Italian literary journal, which had a great influence on her work. The Solariani "were interested in renewing the genre of the narrative and reviving narrative in an era dominated by lyrical fragments written in a precious prosa d'arte (lyric prose) style. They also wished to extend the parameters of contemporary Italian literature beyond the provincial strictures imposed by the Fascist regime in order to enable Italian writers to become part of the global literary scene." The Solariani also encouraged technical, linguistic, and structural experimentation. In 1925, Manzini's father died from a heart attack after being stalked and stoned by a group of fascist thugs. 12 This event would heavily mark the pages of her writing, as we will see in *Ritratto in piedi*. In 1933, Manzini moved to Rome, where she met and a started a relationship with Enrico Falqui, a literary critic. She continued to write until her death in 1974 at the age of 78. Although she is critically renowned in Italy, Manzini's work has often been labeled as elitist due to its complex linguistic style. Her texts have rarely been translated into English. Some of her most popular works include Tempo innamorato (1928), Lettera

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Beverly Ballaro, "Gianna Manzini" in *Italian Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*, ed. Rinaldina Russel (Wesport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994), 208.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Ballaro. "Gianna Manzini." 207.

all'editore (1945), Ritratto in piedi (1971), and Sulla soglia (1973). For Ritratto in piedi, she won the Premio Campiello, a prestigious Italian literary prize awarded annually.

In *Ritratto in piedi*, Gianna Manzini the author is the same as her character, also named Gianna Manzini. The narrative mainly details Gianna's experiences and relationship with her father, Giuseppe Manzini, although her mother, who remains nameless for the entire narrative, plays an important role within her life. The text is also divided into two sections. In the first, Gianna confesses her difficulty in writing about her father. In the second, Gianna records memories of her father and the relationship between her parents. Yet Manzini's narrative style is markedly different from Cialente's because she incorporates many more fictional elements into her text. For example, Manzini provides her reader with a detailed description of her father's death, including his thoughts. She also has fictional conversations with him after his death, which are clearly fabrications. These fictional elements, however, allow Manzini to achieve her objective of conveying her experiences with her father, as well as recover a part of history she feels has been lost.

#### 3. Ana María Matute

Ana María Matute is the first of the two Spanish writers studied in this thesis.

Matute was born in Barcelona, Spain in 1926 and is the only author still alive today.

Her father was a Catalan industrialist who was stationed in Madrid and she became familiar with both cities. She also visited her grandparents who lived in Mansilla de la Sierra, a municipality in the autonomous community of La Rioja in northern Spain.

This region of Spain introduced her to a more rural sector of Spanish life. At the age of nine, Matute became ill and experienced a childhood of confinement. During this time, she began to read, as well as write and perform plays with her marionette theater. The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) was the historical event that affected her life most significantly because she "witnessed the physical destruction of cities and individuals, and perceived the psychological damage inflicted by war." After the Civil War and under Francisco Franco's regime (1939-1975), she was educated in Catholic schools but was dissatisfied with her education. Upon leaving school, she befriended writers opposed to Franco's regime such as Carlos Barral and Juan Goytisolo. She wrote actively in the 1940s and 1950s and contributed to the "gradual regeneration of the devastated intellectual world" under Franco's regime. <sup>14</sup> She also became recognized as a part of the Spanish Generation of Midcentury, which consisted of Spanish authors who were children during the Spanish Civil War and grew up in the silent era of Francisco Franco's regime. In 1954, she gave birth to her

son, Juan Pablo, and shortly after, dedicated herself to writing children's literature.

Her most critically acclaimed fictional works include *Pequeño teatro* (1954), *Los* 

hijos muertos (1959), and Primera memoria (1960), which won the Premio Nadal, a

prestigious literary award given annually by the publisher Ediciones Destino, known

for publishing some of the most important writers of postwar Spain.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> María Carmen Riddel, "Ana María Matute" in *Spanish Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*, ed. Linda Gould Levine, Ellen Engelson Marson, and Gloria Feiman Waldman (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993), 310.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

*Primera memoria* is distinct from the other narratives because it is the only one that is purely fiction. However, Janet Díaz notes that, "while none of Matute's narratives are autobiographical in the strictest sense, she has written almost nothing which is not directly based upon personal experience and set in environments thoroughly familiar to her." 15 Matute details the childhood and adolescence of a young girl, Matia, who lives on an unnamed island with her grandmother at the onset of the Civil War. The plot is minimal and consists of Matia's memories of her childhood. Both of her parents are absent from her life, since her mother is dead, and her father is fighting for the Republicans. The first half of the narrative explores the conflict Matia feels between herself and her maternal side of the family, consisting of her grandmother, doña Práxedes; Borja, her cousin; and Emilia, her aunt. She befriends a boy named Manuel in the second half of the book, who shows her the life of rural peasants. Borja grows jealous of Matia's relationship with Manuel and tells doña Práxedes that Manuel stole money from her. He is then sent away because Matia remains silent and does not try to protect her friend. Matute's text is filled with selfreferential elements, including the experience of the Civil War as a child, her rebellious relationship with the church and education, her marionette theater and black doll, and a familiarity with rural Spain. Matute utilizes these self-referential elements in a symbolic way to convey her thoughts and opinions about the Civil War and life under Franco's regime.

Another aspect of *Primera memoria* that distinguishes it from the rest is that it is the only text written during the oppressive period of time to which it refers. The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Janet Díaz, *Ana María Matute* (New York: Twayne Rublishers, Inc., 1971), 146.

Manzini wrote Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger and Ritratto in piedi decades after the events in which they write about and Carmen Martín Gaite wrote El cuarto de atrás after the death of Francisco Franco. In other words, there is distance between the events they are reflecting in their texts. Primera memoria accounts for this difference because memory is fundamental aspect of the text. Just as Cialente's, Manzini's, and Martín Gaite's texts reflect on events from their pasts, Primera memoria is written through an adolescent's and adult narrator's memories of her experiences of war and conflict. The narrative itself reflects the way Matute experienced the Spanish Civil War. Despite the technical differences, Primera memoria overall adheres to the thematic direction I am trying to elucidate in this thesis because Matute's protagonist, Matia, constantly seeks to fulfill the quest for wholeness and individuation.

#### 4. Carmen Martín Gaite

Like Ana María Matute, Carmen Martín Gaite is also a part of the Spanish Generation of Midcentury. Martín Gaite was born in Salamanca, Spain in 1925, the daughter of a successful attorney and his wife, who created a "cultured and liberal home." Her parents intended to send their daughter to a liberal secondary school in Madrid but the Spanish Civil War destroyed this dream and she was forced to attend the Feminine Institute of Salamanca. She later attended the University of Salamanca

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Joan Lipman Brown, "Carmen Martín Gaite" in *Spanish Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*, ed. Linda Gould Levine, Ellen Engelson Marson, and Glori Feiman Waldman (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press), 286.

where she earned a degree in Romance Philology in 1948. She then moved to Madrid where she befriended many young authors who would later become the major writers of the Spanish postwar era, including Ignacio Aldecio, Medardo Fraile, Alfonso Sastre and Jesús Fernández Santos. 17 Martín Gaite soon became known for her fiction writing but she was also recognized as a social historian of eighteenth and twentieth century Spain. Her fiction "is renowned for its accessible narrative style, which seems almost spoken rather than written," as well as "for the new techniques she introduced into the Spanish narrative, beginning with those of fantastic literature." Her works of fiction include El balneario (1955), Ritmo lento (1962), Retahilas (1974), and El cuarto de atrás (1978). Her nonfiction includes Usos amorosos del siglo XVIII en España (1972) and Usos amorosos de la postguerra española (1987). For El cuarto de atrás Martín Gaite was awarded the Premio Nacional de Narrative, a prize awarded annually to the narrative by a Spanish author considered the most successful.

El cuarto de atrás contains more fictional elements than either Cialente's or Manzini's texts but is not purely fiction like Matute's narrative. Martín Gaite uses a fictional plot in which she intersperses autobiographical references. The protagonist of the narrative also differs from the previous two because the protagonist and author are not the same. The protagonist refers to herself as 'C' and although it is tempting to assume that the protagonist is the author herself, Martín Gaite's deliberate choice of name for her protagonist prevents the reader from doing so. In addition to the unique way Martín Gaite presents her lived experiences through a mixture of fiction

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Ibid., 287. <sup>18</sup> Ibid.

and reality, the shortening of her name is another way in which the author can distinguish her text and her protagonist from a more traditional autobiographical act in which the character and author are understood without question to be the same person. The plot of *El cuarto de atrás* is slim. The narrative begins with 'C' who suffers from insomnia. She is summoned from her bed by a telephone call at midnight. The call is from a stranger in black who announces he has arrived for an interview that 'C' cannot recall scheduling. Neither the protagonist nor the reader is sure whether he is real or if 'C' is dreaming. She nevertheless invites him in and spends the rest of the night answering his probing questions about her past under Franco's regime. Her family, though their names are never mentioned, play an important role in 'C's' memories recollections. The story ends when 'C' falls asleep and is later awakened by her daughter. The stranger in black has disappeared and she still does not know if he is real. She finds the transcript of El cuarto de atrás and begins to read it. On the last page of the book, 'C' also finds a small, golden box the stranger in black gave her during the night, which leaves the man's existence an open ended question.

Ultimately, I have chosen these books because, although they are well known in Italy and Spain, I believe Fausta Cialente, Gianna Manzini, Ana María Matute, and Carmen Martín Gaite have not received the appropriate attention outside of their native homelands. In addition, although their texts might be translated into English, there are very few works actually published about these authors and their literary efforts, especially Manzini and Matute. My goal in writing about these texts is similar

to each author's goal in writing their life narrative, which is to ensure that these women's stories and voices are heard. In addition, through the unique perspective that a first-person life narrative can offer, I believe these texts can provide unique ways for us as readers to examine a broad span of history and encourage us to reevaluate our own personal and public histories to find wholeness.

## Chapter 1 Hybrid Genealogical Identities

In each of the four life narratives under examination, Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger by Fausta Cialente, Ritratto in piedi by Gianna Manzini, El cuarto de atrás by Carmen Martín Gaite, and Primera memoria by Ana María Matute, the protagonist's processual quest for wholeness begins with her identity formation. In her book, *The Mother/Daughter Plot*, Marianne Hirsch draws upon Freud's theory of the 'family romance' to explain the process of female self-identification via familial relationships. She explains that "in Freud's terms, the family romance is an imaginary interrogation of origins, an interrogation which embeds the engenderment of narrative within the experience of family." This idea is useful for this chapter because each protagonist's family plays a fundamental role in her identity formation. Taking this idea further, Hirsch proposes that the *female* family romance is "based on the heroines' refusal of conventional heterosexual romance and marriage plots and, furthermore, on their disidentification from conventional constructions of femininity." The composition of such a text is based around "the process of memory, and the desire to come to terms with the past by integrating it with the protagonists' present self-representation, by attempting to find in the past an alternative to a present sense of...alienation."<sup>21</sup> The establishment of the female protagonist's identity is therefore based on her initial rejection of her past and an exploration of alternative social roles.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Ibid., 139.

Through memories of her parents, each protagonist confronts the conventional social roles of mother and wife, as a means to individuate herself from such roles. The division of social roles between men and women in each text is reminiscent of Sherry Ortner's feminist theory article "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" In her text, Ortner explains that because of the female body's "procreative functions," women in most cultures are predisposed to certain social roles such as mother and wife, which are commonly associated with the concept of nature. Since men lack these "natural creative functions... [they must] assert [their] creativity externally," through culture. Although this social divide is not always explicitly discussed in the life narratives, it clearly determines men's involvement in creative and intellectual acts of expression and women's position within the home.

If the protagonist is able to achieve an identity outside that of her parents and reject conventional social roles based on the nature/culture social divide, she takes a step beyond Hirsch's theories. After her initial rejection her past, she is able to then re-incorporate both maternal and paternal inheritances into her present self. For Cialente's and Martín Gaite's protagonists, the process of identity formation signifies satisfaction and fulfillment. Manzini's character, however, feels isolated. Matute's protagonist does not achieve individuation because she commits an act of betrayal that aligns her with the grandmother, who serves as the substitute patriarch of her family. Her character's lack of identity reflects Matute's own inability to create a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?," *Feminist Studies* 1, no. 2 (1972): 14.

sense of self due to the repressive environment in which she was living and writing under the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939- 1975).

# 1. Hybrid genealogies as an effort to escape social restraint: Fausta Cialente and Gianna Manzini

Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger by Fausta Cialente, published in 1976, illustrates the family history and life of the protagonist, Fausta. The events of the narrative begin in the late 1800s and end shortly after World War II, the setting shifting between Trieste and various other cities in Italy. The book is divided into two sections; the first narrated in third person by adult Fausta and the second narrated in the first person perspective of the protagonist. Fausta explores her family history as well as the dynamics between her parents to create a hybrid genealogical past that she then incorporates into her present identity.

The "interrogation of origins" in Cialente's life narrative begins with the biography of Fausta's mother and her sisters, through a "fictive elaboration" from adult Fausta. <sup>23</sup> The protagonist presents the reader with the father, Gustavo Wieselberger, his wife, and their four daughters, Adele, Alba, Alice, and Elsa, Fausta's mother. The father figure surrounded by a female plurality (consisting of daughters and servants) defines the familial atmosphere for the majority of the first part of Cialente's text. Starting with the title of the book, the sisters are referred to as a collective group, "le quattro ragazze" [the four girls], <sup>24</sup> defined by the surname of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Graziella Parati, "From Genealogy to Gynealogy and Beyond: Fausta Cialente's *Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger*," in *Private History, Private Stories: Italian Women's Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 82.

the father, Wieselberger. The female presence maintains a secondary position to the male figure of Gustavo, pater familias. Further, Cialente notes how the father "non mancava quindi di brontolare contro le manie delle donne- delle *babe*, anzi – consorte, serve o figlie che fossero" [he never failed to grumble about the craziness of the women- of the *babe*- spouses, servants or children, whoever they were]. The term *babe* is in Triestine dialect and is the generic way for the father to collectively refer to the women of the house. By using such a word, the father strips them of their identity, which allows him to maintain an authoritative power.

Gustavo Wieselberger's career as a musician and orchestra director highlights the ways in which he dominates the female plurality artistically as well as socially. Fausta begins the first chapter with an explanation of the typical happenings in the Wieselberger house on an orchestra rehearsal night. The narrator explains that:

La famiglia doveva cenare assai più presto del solito perché la signora e le ragazze, aiutate dalle due domestiche, avessero il tempo sufficiente per sbarazzare la tavola della sala da pranzo e riporre ogni cosa, la grande porta a vetri che la separava dall'entrata dovendo rimanere aperta. Bisognava tenere ben chiusi, invece, tutti gli usci verso la cucina e i "servizi" giacché il padre non voleva sentire durante l'esecuzione – ch'era più che altro una "prova" – gli strepiti delle rigovernature e le chiacchiere, le *ciàcole*, anzi, delle serve. Queste prove si facevano dunque nell'entrata dell'appartamento, ch'era molto ampia e comunicava s'un lato con la sala da pranzo e sull'altro col salotto 'buono.' (Cialente 1976, 9)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> This as well as all subsequent translations are my own.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Fausta Cialente, *Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger* (Milan: Mondadori, 1976), 11. All references hereafter will be to this edition and will appear parenthetically in the text.

The family had to often eat early so that the wife and the children. helped by the maids, could have enough time to clean the table and put everything away. The French doors that separated the dining room from the entrance to the house had to remain open. In contrast, the doors to the kitchen and the "servants" had to be closed because the father did not want to hear during his performance- that was nothing more than a "rehearsal"- the shouts and chatter, le ciàcole, of the maids. These rehearsals took place in the entrance of the apartment, which was wide and was met by the dining room on one side and the decent living room on the other.]

Ortner's theories first enter Cialente's text here because a clear distinction is made between the creativity and culture of Gustavo and his orchestra in direct opposition to the domestic endeavors of his wife, daughters, and servants. The physical separation of the father from the babe during these rehearsals further stresses this distinction and imposes limitations on the women that prevent them from participating in his creativity. By keeping one door open and the other closed, he creates a more public arena where only he can participate and another, domestic sphere, where the women attend to domestic tasks. In addition, the use of the word ciàcole, another word in Triestine dialect, is another generic term that the father uses to treat dismissively -and thereby distance himself from- the 'pettiness' of the womens' domestic activities versus the importance of his music, thus further emphasizing his power over them.

Although she rarely speaks, the wife of Gustavo Wieselberger (Elsa's mother), who remains nameless for the entirety of the text, plays a crucial role in supporting her husband's authoritative position within the family, as well as her expected social role as woman and wife. Just as her husband refers to the chattering of the babe as ciàcole, the wife refers to the daughters' talk as sempieze (another term in Triestine dialect) or nonsense (Cialente 1976, 13). Through this term, she sustains the superiority of the father over his daughters. Her behavior also reflects a complete

submission to Gustavo's expectations and her compliance with defined social roles. Even though "la madre era sempre contraria a che si uccidessero gli animali del pollaio... straordinariamente, invece, sapeva cucinarli per in vari modi e tutti squisiti" [the mother was always against killing animals from the henhouse...she knew how to cook them in various, exquisite ways] (Cialente 1976, 42). Because of her expected household responsibilities, the mother knows how to prepare meat even though she strongly opposes the killing of animals. Through her language and "absolute compliance with the demands of the patriarch," the wife "has no independent voice" and "makes no demands beyond the limits established for a middle-class wife." 26

The portraits of the father and the mother that remain with the sisters and future generations reflect perhaps most accurately the nature of the relationship between the two. The portrait of the father, featured on the cover of the book, presents a young man at a piano before a sheet of composition paper and eternally marks his creativity. The last picture of the mother that each daughter keeps by her bed shows a woman with "i capelli lisci, tirati indietro, sembrano dire che ha già rinunciato a tutto…che sia l'immagine d'una donna vicina alla morte è evidente" [flat hair thrown behind her that seems to say that she has already renounced everything…an image of a woman close to death] (Cialente 1976, 60). The daughters remember the mother through an image of renunciation and defeat. Yet even though Gustavo Wieselberger and his wife represent the most stringent form of patriarchy, adult Fausta shows Elsa and her sisters attempting to break from the social roles their mother showed them. Even though each fails, their attempts will later fuel Fausta's refusal of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Parati, "From Genealogy to Gynealogy and Beyond," 76.

conventional model of femininity and patriarchy that is embodied within her mother's biography.

All of the daughters except Alice take strides to break from the model their parents and society enforce. As Graziella Parati has observed, they "become characters who represent the transition between their mother's total acceptance of her role and the granddaughter's, Fausta's, pioneering role in the public sphere."<sup>27</sup> Both Adele and Alba refuse to marry, although Adele, referred to continuously as la Bella [the Beautiful], has many suitors. Elsa makes the most progressive attempt to escape the private realm of wife and mother and defy the patriarchic structure of her family by thrusting herself into the realm of male-dominated culture. At an early age, she moves to Bologna to study and perform as an opera singer. Elsa's singing career allows her, like her father, to enter a public sphere through creative expression, which her father has prevented her from for a significant part of her life. However, all the daughters are eventually silenced and brought back to the domestic sphere where they are destined to remain. Adele is crippled by disease and dies at the age of 27. Alba is forced to live with and care for the dying father. Alice marries a man who cheats on her and although everyone knows, she is shamed into silence about the matter. Despite her success as an opera singer, Elsa marries a man who prohibits her from singing because of the ways it limits her abilities to discharge her domestic responsibilities. The narrator explains:

Il fidanzamento e un matrimonio, repentinamente decisi e conclusi, sembrano invece aver cancellato dalla sua memoria e da quella dei familiari gli avvenimenti e le speranze di quei pochi anni di studio e

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Ibid

di carriera che presto, incredibilmente presto annegano e scompaiono nella misteriosa nebbia d'una strana indifferenza. (Cialente 1976, 57)

[The engagement and a marriage, quickly decided and executed, seem to have destroyed from Elsa and her family's memory the events and hopes of those few years of study and career that quickly drowned and disappeared in the mysterious snow of a strange indifference.]

Fausta's interpretation of engagement and marriage as a destructive power that results in indifference anticipates her future negative sentiments towards these conventional societal expectations. Although each sister fails in her attempt to progress past the social realities of mother and wife, they instill in Fausta a curiosity and determination to achieve independence from the patriarchic forces that stifled her mother, her aunts, and her grandmother.

The transformation from biography to autobiography occurs in the second section of Cialente's text when the perspective shifts to the first person and Fausta's life becomes the main focus. While the reader was first introduced to Fausta's mother, Elsa, through the third person perspective, she, as well as her husband, Alfredo, are now filtered through Fausta's first person account. The reader gains a clear vision of how Fausta views her parents, their relationship, and her transcendence of the familial model under which she lives as a part of her quest for identity formation. The first time the reader is introduced to Fausta's father, Alfredo, he is portrayed as towering over ("giganteggiare") her and her brother, Renato, and although she is upset, she professes to her reader, "Ma chi osa dir niente? Abbiamo già imparato a tacere, Renato ed io" [But who dared say anything? Renato and I had learned to stay quiet] (Cialente 1976, 74). From an early age, she has learned the

ritual of being silent. Immediately, the father is understood as holding an authoritative position within her life and within the life of the family.

Her mother, Elsa, like her grandmother, the nameless wife of Gustavo, also succumbs to this authoritative familial structure. The mother is mostly a presence felt and not a voice heard for the majority of Fausta's childhood and adolescence. Fausta explains that "la vita che conducevamo era evidentemente quella d'una famiglia borghese con abitudini che, in casa soprattutto, venivano imposte da nostra madre" [the life that we lived was clearly that of a bourgeoisie family with habits that came from our mother] (Cialente 1976, 79). The mother has control only over domestic responsibilities relating to bourgeois life, such as determining when the children should eat and making sure they are "ravviati e puliti" [tidied up and clean] when they go to school (Cialente 80). When she tries to exert some self-determination by resuscitating her singing talent, even just for friends, the applause "la facevano impallidire piuttosto che arrossire e la sentivamo allora turbata" [made her go pale more than blush and we knew she was upset] (Cialente 1976, 84). During the moments of her mother's creative expression, Fausta also sees her father frown in disapproval. Fausta characterizes her relationship with her parents as one marked by a "non confessato terrore di nostro padre" [unconfessed terror of our father] and "l'ancor meno confessata pietà di nostra madre" [less-confessed pity for our mother] (Cialente 1976, 89).

The linguistic difference between the paternal and maternal sides of her family further complicates Fausta's relationship with her parents. Fausta's Triestine maternal family serves as a constant focus of her admiration; however, she is unable

to identify with them because she cannot communicate with them. Because it is her father's native tongue, she speaks standard Italian and therefore can understand but not speak Triestine dialect. She remains linguistically alienated from her mother, which further establishes the father's authoritative power over the two women. The fragmented familial identity Fausta has inherited up to this point encourages her to seek another means by which she can create a cohesive identity.

In order to escape the familial tension that inhibits her creation of a definitive self, Fausta goes into a voluntary exile in Egypt to enter the public realm by writing for antifascist newspapers and participating in a radio telecast called Radio Cairo. By participating in cultural and intellectual endeavors that she had been previously denied, Fausta rejects the conventional association of woman and nature. Through these activities, she also establishes herself as a separate entity from her parents. which then allows her to reincorporate them into her present identity. While in exile, she is able to examine her life, as well as her parents, as an outsider. After quitting the army, despite his wife's complaints, Gustavo seeks to become a "uomo d'affari [business man]" but fails miserably (Cialente 1976, 139). In order to prevent the family from going into bankruptcy, the mother returns to her career as a singer and offers voice lessons to adolescents. Her mother and father experience a role reversal in which the mother becomes aligned with culture and her father with nature. Her father's retreat into the private sphere of home and family, and her mother's reentrance into the public allow Fausta to reexamine the dynamic of her parents' relationship and the concept of traditional patriarchy. He becomes feminized and trapped within the domestic sphere otherwise reserved for women. The father "is seen as transgressing the rules established by patriarchy" and thus a link is created "between the female characters and the father." Fausta begins to sympathize with her father and include him in her present identity because she understands his new social position. The father "whom she has previously rejected, now becomes an important component in Cialente's construction of a discourse on her public identity."<sup>29</sup> This link then permits Fausta to open up a connection with her mother that had never been attainable until now.

With the changed dynamic of her father, Fausta develops an even more critical view of matrimony and patriarchy. She explains that "i matrimoni mi sembravano nella maggioranza dei casi combinazioni ben poco felici, da evitare se possibile, nonostante mi fossi anch'io maritata" [marriages seem in most part unhappy, something to avoid if possible, even though I myself was married] (Cialente 1976, 210). These comments are reminiscent of her earlier portrayal of marriage as a destructive force. This realization encourages Fausta to urge her mother to separate from her husband. Because of his weakened authoritative power due to his new domestic social role, Elsa is finally able to do so. The freedom Fausta pushed her mother to seek creates an unprecedented bond between the two women. Fausta is then able to incorporate her mother into her present identity as well. Through the incorporation of both her mother and her father, "Fausta's past is... structured within

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Ibid., 89. <sup>29</sup> Ibid., 88.

a form of textual *métissage* in which maternal and paternal images are closely interwoven to create the braided genealogy of the protagonist."<sup>30</sup>

With the new identity that is created from this braided genealogy, Fausta can transcend her parents' past and transmit what she has learned to her children and grandchildren. The final pages of her text are located in Kuwait shortly after World War II, where she lives with her daughter. To Fausta, this location "becomes a female Garden of Eden from which woman cannot be expelled."31 She imagines "un nuovo mondo, appena sorto dall'oceano" [a new world, just risen from the ocean], a world that seems almost limitless in its potential to provide a positive future for her legacy (Cialente 1976, 254). The protagonist emphasizes this point with the final image of the narrative. Her daughter and granddaughters walk in front of her in a line along the beach, as Fausta walks into their footsteps and leaves behind a set of her own. She imagines her mother walking behind her, who tells her to "lasciatemi in pace, adesso, e pensate a vivere sbagliando il meno possibile" [leave me in peace now and live making as little mistakes as possible] (Cialente 1976, 275). Her mother's footsteps absorbing into her own and her footsteps absorbing into those of the girls walking in front of her reflect the inheritance of the past but the ability to keep moving forward beyond the social restraints of society.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Ibid., 90. See also Françoise Lionnet, "*Métissage*, Emancipation and Female Textuality in Two Françophone Writers," in *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography*, ed. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 260-81 for further detail on *métissage* in relation to female autobiography.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Ibid., 95.

Through the examination of Cialente's narrative, we saw how challenging the conventional association of woman/nature and man/culture fueled the social evolution of the protagonist, Fausta. By re-examining her past, she rejects the social roles of mother and wife to enter into a more public arena, where she is free to explore and establish her identity apart from her parents. As the final step in her identity formation, Fausta then incorporates paternal and maternal 'images' into her present sense of self. Gianna Manzini's Ritratto in piedi (1971), like Fausta Cialente's text, explores the protagonist's, Gianna's, familial relationships in order to create identity. The dynamic between the protagonist's, Gianna's, parents is similar to that of Fausta's in the sense that the father, Giuseppe Manzini, maintains an authoritative position, while the mother is a mute presence in the home. In Cialente's text, however, the father is clearly portrayed through Fausta's eyes as the pater familias who controls those around him, whereas the authoritative position Gianna's father holds is less obvious because of her complete idolization of him. Nevertheless, Gianna's father, like Gustavo and Alfredo, also prevents the women in his life from actively engaging in creative and intellectual activities, thus establishing Ortner's social divide. The two narratives diverge, however, most drastically in two respects. Whereas Fausta challenges the nature/culture divide by writing, Gianna's natural instincts allow her to embrace culture and intellect. The second difference is the overall sentiments each protagonist possesses regarding her newfound sense of self. While Fausta is content with her identity and wants to transfer her new understandings to her daughters and granddaughters, Gianna's identity signifies isolation.

Ritratto in piedi tells the story of Gianna's life as a child and adolescent growing up in Pistoia and Florence, Italy in the early twentieth century. Adult Gianna narrates the events of the text retrospectively. The life narrative mainly focuses on the protagonist's relationship with her parents, particularly with her father, Giuseppe Manzini. Within the text, Maria Marotti notes that Gianna is the "diaphragm that links them (her parents) and their opposite worlds- that of the anarchist movement and that of the bourgeoisie. She partakes of both environments." However, "her sympathies are with the marginalized and rebellious world of the father."<sup>32</sup> Gianna's father is an outspoken anarchist unafraid to voice his political sentiments. As a child, the female protagonist idolizes her father and his beliefs, making his authoritative position less apparent than that of Gustavo Wieselberger or Fausta's father, Alfredo. However, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have observed that there is not just "one universal 'patriarchy'" and that there are "various positions of men to patriarchy, not just an equivalence among men."<sup>33</sup> Despite Gianna's overwhelmingly positive portrayal of her father, an analysis of his actions and his immediate familial relationships demonstrate Giuseppe Manzini's authoritative position within the family.

Throughout the narrative, the father figure is associated with light and purity.

Gianna uses the metaphor of a diamond to describe him, which is significant because

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Maria Marotti, "Filial Discourses: Feminism and Femininity in Italian Women's Autobiography" in *Feminine Feminists: Cultural Practices in Italia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 67.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, "Introduction: De/Colonization and the Politics of Discourse in Women's Autobiographical Practices," in *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), xv.

it "suggests not only purity and light, but more specifically matter turned into light, as well as radiance and transparency."<sup>34</sup> Gianna demonstrates his ability to turn matter into light in an episode in which she and her father sit in a darkened café. As he uses phrases such as "dignità umana" [human dignity] and "unicità dell'individuo" [uniqueness of the individual], his words "irradiavano tale calore e bellezza che anche un caffè così squallido diventava un gran tempio" [radiate heat and beauty that transforms a desolate café into a temple]. The contrast that Manzini's imagery creates between light and dark bestows the father with almost supernatural abilities which fuel young Gianna's idolization of him.

The authoritative power that Giuseppe Manzini holds within the family is revealed through his didactic approach towards his daughter. He constantly tries to indoctrinate her into his ideological perspective by bombarding her with information and insight into life. Her father's involvement in her life in such an intense way profoundly affects her and she constantly strives to live by his ideals and beliefs, even if she does not fully understand them. Whether it is an attack on religious figures ("La morte non è l'istante della verità. Sciocchezze...Lasciamolo dire ai preti, che trovano sempre spauracchi per minacciarci" [death is not the instance of truth. That's nonsense...Let the priests say such a thing, they always find bogeymen to threaten us] (Manzini 45)) or a simple lesson on how to treat others ("mai umiliare" [never humiliate] (Manzini 1971, 69)), Gianna accepts her father's words as complete truth.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Daria Valentini, "Father-Daughter Reflections in Gianna Manzini's *Ritratto in Piedi." Romance Languages Annual* 9 (1997): 369.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Gianna Manzini, *Ritratto in piedi* (Milan: Mondadori, 1971), 27. All references hereafter will be to this edition and will appear parenthetically in the text.

According to Gianna, the most significant lesson her father imparts is about the transcendence of reality and the ability to think of reality and all its objects as a metaphor for some greater meaning. This lesson reveals itself through their different interpretations of a blue strip of sky between two houses that they see as they are walking together. While Gianna interprets the strip of blue as "un rivolo di cielo sopra le case. La corsa verso una foce" [a trickle of the sky above the houses. The flow towards the mouth of a river], she knows her father will interpret it as a concept or metaphor, "forse liberazione, o riscatto, o giustizia, o libertà, o avvenire" [maybe liberation, redemption, justice, liberty or the future (Manzini 1971, 24). At this point, she can only predict what her father will say based on his previous teachings; she still does not understand why or what it means. As a receptacle and non-participant in her father's knowledge, she remains alienated from his ideals, which prevents her from truly identifying with him.

The appearance of the mother in the text solidifies the father's authoritative power within the family, even though as an anarchist, this seems to be the very thing he tries to avoid. Like Elsa through Fausta's perspective, Gianna's mother (who remains nameless for the entirety of the text), is mostly seen but not heard. Her voice is thrust in the background so as to make room for the father's voice. Gianna's relationship with her mother is characterized by anger and contempt for this submission to the patriarchal bourgeois lifestyle. During dinner conversations, her mother's brother attacks Gianna's father for his anarchist beliefs. Expecting her mother to come to her husband's defense, she is angered that "avrebbe potuto insorgere, lei; e invece: zitta. La odiai" [she could have rebelled but instead, she was

quiet. I hated her] (Manzini 1971, 37). Gianna also notes her mother's "calma ubbidienza" [calm obedience] to inner family attacks on her husband, which further deteriorates her relationship with her mother. Furthermore, the father's belittlement of the mother's obsession with appearances and material objects leads Gianna to perceive these as another social constraint that should be avoided. Her disgust of the mother's actions and "the mother's silence allows the daughter to detach herself from her, and cross over to the world of the father."<sup>36</sup>

The desire to disassociate herself with her mother continuously fails, however, because she is subjected to the same "constraints of femininity," even if she may not realize it at first. 37 Just as Elsa and Fausta in Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger were not allowed to participate in creative and intellectual endeavors reserved for men, Gianna is kept at a distance from her father's political activism and ideals. She serves as a repository for the information her father bestows on her, but she is not actually permitted to participate in his anarchist/antifascist ideas and actions; at times, she is actively discouraged from it. At one point, he tries to explain to her that people from higher social classes should be ashamed when they receive preferential treatment over people from lower classes. He declares at the end of his speech, though, that "le donne, naturalmente, non possono rendersene conto" [Naturally women cannot understand (shame)] (Manzini 1971, 85). He implies that women cannot understand class struggle and inequality like men. With this comment, her father establishes his superior alignment with culture and creates a barrier between his beliefs and

Marotti, "Filial Discourses," 73.
 Valentini, "Father-Daughter Reflections," 369.

teachings that prevents Gianna from fully engaging herself with him. Like her mother, she falls victim to a patriarchal society where women and daughters can only hold a marginal role in the social and political lives of male figures.

Gianna's father's exile in the early years of Benito Mussolini's regime (1922-1943) and her subsequent move to Florence with her mother signify a dramatic change in the relationship between mother and daughter and the way in which Gianna constructs her identity. Florence becomes a new beginning for Gianna, where her senses are stimulated; sight, taste, smell, and touch. The sight of the Duomo keeps her in "un momento a cuor sospeso" [a suspended moment] and she is amazed by the abundance of the city's flowers (Manzini 1971, 192). She exclaims that "non avevo mai avuto appetito" [she had never had an appetite before] but in Florence "invece, ebbi addirittura fame" [she was hungry] and enjoyed the taste of food (Manzini 1971, 193). Gianna details smells she had never experienced and describes herself as a dog "moving along a trail of scents and fragrances" which "underlines the rejection of the rationality represented by Giuseppe."38 She also discusses the immense joy she received from having access to the *Biblioteca nazionale*, where "puoi prendere quello che vuoi, anche averne in prestito: tuoi, dunque, tutti" [you can take whatever you want, you can borrow; everything is yours] (Manzini 1971, 193). As her instincts take hold, she penetrates the culture and intellect that were kept outside her grasp when she was solely her father's daughter. Gianna's entrance into the cultural realm of men is markedly different from Cialente's protagonist because she blends nature and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Ibid., 371.

culture together, whereas Fausta clearly abandons nature to allow her entry into culture.

The reawakening Gianna experiences in Florence also allows her mother to enter into the formation of her identity. She begins to accept her mother's bourgeois lifestyle and receives joy from "le prime calze di seta" [the first silk socks], "il primo reggipetto" [the first brassiere], "occhiali scuri da sole" [sunglasses], and "una grande croce di topazi da portare appesa al collo con una catenella che scendeva fino alla vita" [a big topaz cross to wear at the neck with a small chain that hung to the waist] (Manzini 1971, 197). The exploration of her mother's femininity paves the way for the first moment in which Gianna is truly happy ("ero felice") (Manzini 1971, 195). She now interprets a love of material objects and appearances as a language that allows women to express themselves within a patriarchal society. She is attracted to such a language because of her inability to express herself as a child.

As the girl moves from adolescence to adulthood, however, a wave of guilt crashes down on Gianna's newfound reality. Although Giuseppe is not actually there, Gianna imagines seeing him one day, which causes her to reexamine her bourgeois lifestyle and reflect on her father's lessons, including the teaching about transcending reality. Her guilt stems from the realization that she has strayed from her father's idealism and aligned herself with the bourgeois lifestyle that promotes the patriarchal structure she vowed to escape. While sitting in a café, she sees herself in the reflection of a coffeemaker and observes:

E così mi specchiavo nella macchina del caffè espresso con la pretesa di stornare la mia inquietudine nel vedermi il viso ridicolmente allungato. Bastava che mi piegassi in un certo modo, perché mi diventasse più stretto di un coltello. Un coltello, un coltello, un coltello. (Manzini 1971, 209)

[And like that, I saw myself in the reflection of the espresso machine and wanted to avert my anxiety in seeing my ridiculously elongated face. I bent myself in such a way that I became as narrow as a knife. A knife, a knife, a knife.]

The espresso machine serves as a mirror through which Gianna finally observes and reflects on the person she has become in Florence. Instead of seeing the happy person she has been describing, she perceives her elongated face as a knife. As the knife, she is cutting her father from her own identity despite her love and idolization of him. It becomes clear that Gianna views herself as a traitor to herself, as well as to her father. The sense of guilt is so overwhelming that she must reconfigure her identity.

Gianna's final progression in her identity formation can be seen as a regression to the father, as she embraces his beliefs because she now understands them. As a child, her father's view of reality and the need to transcend it was a beautiful idea but signified for Gianna little outside of its linguistic elegance. As an older individual, Gianna now accepts her father's "view of reality as a metaphor, as revelation, and transcendence, realizing that it is the essence of what they share." With a more complete understanding of her mother *and* her father, Gianna is able to transcend both in order to finally establish a "solid identity as a women and daughter." She refuses the conventional constructions of femininity and escapes the patriarchal bourgeois life. This transcendence, however, does not signify the happy ending that Cialente describes in her text. In the final lines of the book, she announces

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Ibid., 372.

that she is alone ("sola") in writing her experiences in *Ritratto in piedi* and that she is cold ("ho freddo"). Whereas Fausta's transcendence of her parents' legacy creates a sense of harmony within her life, Gianni is left with a sense of isolation. Perhaps the difference between the protagonists' final sentiments is a result of the level of difficulty in each process of identity formation. Fausta's creation of an identity through the rejection of social restraints is relatively easy because her parents also undergo a significant change in their identities that compliments Fausta's journey. In contrast, Gianna's parents experience no such change, which forces Gianna to undertake the entire process by herself. This could be attributed to Gianna's feelings of solitude.

### 2. Inability to transcend male dominated reality- Ana María Matute

Unlike Cialente or Manzini's characters, Matute's protagonist in *Primera memoria* (1960), Matia, fails to escape or transcend the identity of the family, as well as her entrapment in a male-dominated society. The narrative takes place at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and is narrated retrospectively by the adolescent Matia, with interjections from adult Matia. Because her mother is dead and her father is fighting for the Republicans in the war, Matia lives with her maternal grandmother, doña Práxedes, her aunt, Emilia, and her cousin, Borja, on an unnamed island, which many speculate to be one of the Baleares, specifically Mallorca. <sup>41</sup>
Whereas the parents' presence within the other three narratives is constant and an important contributor to identity formation, Matia's parental identity inheritance is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Díaz. *Ana Maria Matute*. 132.

fragmented and reconstructed exclusively through her memory and what her maternal family says about her parents. Feelings of hate, abandonment, shame, and guilt, caused by their absence, characterize her relationship with both her mother and her father and prevent her from using them as a source of identity. Matia still manages to initiate her journey to identity formation through the rejection of her grandmother's values, however, she is cut short by her betrayal of her friend, Manuel. At the end of the narrative, Matia is left with a sense of alienation and isolation, similar to the feelings of Gianna in *Ritratto in piedi*. Matute uses Matia's failure to form an identity as a way to represent the effects the Civil War had on her as a child.

In the narratives of Cialente and Manzini, Fausta and Gianna's journey to form identity begins with the rejection of the conventional social roles their parents provide them. Matia cannot initiate her journey in the same way because she does not have these examples. Her mother's death prevents the maternal 'image' of her identity from ever developing. The mother's presence only sporadically finds its way into Matia's life, where it is met with opposition and resistance. When her mother is mentioned, Matia often lashes out against the person who mentions her. When her aunt innocently implies that Matia looks like her mother when she is sleeping, Matia responds by screaming, "Mi madre, siempre ese cuento. ¡Mi madre era una desconocida! ¿A quién vienen siempre a hablarme de ella?" [My mother, always the same story, I didn't know my mother! Why do they always talk to me about her?]. 42

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Ana María Matute, *Primera memoria* (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1960), 71. All references hereafter will be to this edition and will appear parenthetically in the text.

connection with her mother and cannot remember her. She confesses "pero la verdad es que me remordía la conciencia, porque no me acordé de ella para nada" [but the truth is that I had a guilty conscience, because I didn't remember anything about her] (Matute 1960, 227). The memory of her mother is so limited that the woman's voice never enters the story. The complexity of the feelings Matia possesses towards her mother is accentuated by her father's absent role in her upbringing.

Matia's memory of her father is blurred and fragmented as well because he is away fighting in the war. His voice only enters into the story in the form of a memory but she explains that "el recuerdo solo llegaba, acaso, en el eco de su voz: "Matia, Matia, ¿no me dices nada? Soy papá..."...¿Con quién estaba hablando, con quién?" [the memory only comes in the eco of his voice: "Matia, Matia, you won't say anything to me? It's your dad..."... With whom was I talking to, with whom?] (Matute 1960, 153). Her father's italicized words in conjunction with Matia's unitalicized responses reveal the disconnect the protagonist feels between herself and her father. The alienation she feels eventually provokes her to "[inventarse] un padre" [invent a father] (Matute 1960, 57) so that she could have at least one parent with which to identify. However, she never successfully completes this invention, which foreshadows her inability to form an identity at the end of the text.

The father's absence due to his support of the Republicans during the war also creates internal conflict within her family that only intensifies his absence from her life. Because her maternal side of the family, especially the grandmother, supports Francisco Franco and the Nationalists, Matia is confused as to how to feel about her father. She confesses "era un tema que siempre me llenaba de zozobra, porque mi

padre, al parecer, estaba con ellos, *en el otro lado*" [it was a matter that always gave me anxiety, because my dad, it seems, was with them, *on the other side*] (Matute 1960, 52). Her grandmother's outward contempt for him, shown through her descriptions of him as an "descastado" [outcast], a "hombre sin principios, obsessionado por ideas torcidas" [man without principles], and "corrompido" [corrupted], confuses Matia and increases the distance between her and her father (Matute 1960, 13, 120). Her lack of parental identification leaves Matia with nothing substantial to begin her journey to form identity.

Matia's relationship with her grandmother, doña Práxedes, however, provides Matia with the necessary element to begin her journey. Doña Práxedes is the substitute parental figure, and Matia is expected to identity with her religiously, politically, and socially upon her arrival at the island. Matute presents doña Práxedes as an authoritative figure who fights to maintain the male-dominated bourgeois lifestyle. She assumes the role of *pater familias* and "enacts the role of the patriarch, enforcing the tradition into which the family must be reintegrated perhaps more ruthlessly than a man." After being widowed, she inherited all of her husband's land, which is a significant portion of the island. This gives her notable power over many of the inhabitants on the island which is symbolized in the description of her daily activities after meals: "Después de las comidas arrastraba su mecedora hasta la ventana de su gabinete… Y desde allí, con sus viejos prismáticos de teatro incrustados de zafiros falsos, escudriñaba las casas blancas del declive, donde habitaban los

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Catherine Davies, "Spain under Franco: Women and the Authoritarian State," in *Spanish Women's Writing: 1849-1996* (London: The Athlone Press, 1998), 189.

colonos" [After meals, she dragged her rocking chair to the window of her study...And from there, with her old theater binoculars incrusted with fake sapphires, she scrutinized the white houses on the slope, where the colonists lived] (Matute 10). Not only does she hold authoritative power on the island, but she is presented as almost dictator-like within the family as well. When the family members are together, "la única que hablaba, con tono monocorde, era la abuela" [the only one to talk, with a monotonous tone, was the grandmother] (Matute 1960, 11).

Matia's relationship with her grandmother is characterized by anger and contempt from the moment she comes to live with her. Matia also often describes doña Práxedes as a "bestia" [beast] (Matute 1960, 119), and "porcina" [pig] (Matute 1960, 19) to suggest her disgust of her. Matia's hate and disgust originates from the grandmother's self-serving behavior. Within all of her relationships, she only looks out for her own self-interests, which are to maintain money and status. For example, she insists that Matia and her cousin, Borja, attend school, not to receive a good education, but to ensure that they do not "[exponerse] a un nuevo fracaso" [expose a new failure] (Matute 1960, 153). "Con sus rígidas costumes" [with her rigid customs], doña Práxedes aims to control those around her, especially Matia, who proves to be the most rebellious. For example, Matia associates the church, which she describes as a whale, with her grandmother, who she also describes as a whale (Matute 81, 75). This association leads her to rebel against the church and the religious school she attends where she is expelled "por haber dado una patada a la subdirectora" [for kicking the assistant director] (Matute 1960, 13).

The source of deepest conflict between the grandmother and Matia, however,

is the grandmother's insistence on women's submission to marriage. For her, marriage is necessary to maintain status and wealth for women. Matia remembers:

Tía Emilia- decía ella- no fue hermosa, pero sí rica, y se casó con el tío Álvaro (hombre, al parecer, importante y adinerado). Mi madre fue muy guapa, y rica, pero se dejó llevar por sus estúpidos setimientos de muchacha romántica, y pagó cara su elección. Mi padre- decía- era un hombre sin principios, obsesionado por ideas torcidas, que le hicieron gastar en ellas el dinero de mi madre y que arruinaron su vida familiar. (Matute 1960, 120)

[Aunt Emilia, [the grandmother] said, wasn't pretty but she was rich and she married uncle Álvaro (man who seemed important and wealthy). My mother was very pretty and rich, but she lost herself in the stupid romantic feelings of a little girl and paid highly for her choice. My father, she said, was a man without principles, obsessed with twisted ideas that make him waste the money of my mother and ruined her family life.]

The emphasis on the words 'rich' and 'money' implies the grandmother's true feelings about the purpose of marriage: to maintain wealth. Since her father wasted Matia's mother's money, he ruined her and destroyed the whole purpose of their marriage. In the eyes of the grandmother, because Matia "dejaba bastante que desear" [left a lot to be desired], she must marry a rich man (Matute 1960, 120). Like Fausta and Gianna, Matia develops a hatred for marriage and dedicates herself to rejecting it. She responds with the same rebellious nature towards beauty and marriage as she does the church and religious figures. She rarely wears clean clothes and plays outside to make herself as dirty as possible and declares her complete aversion to marriage.

Matia's lack of paternal identification and her refusal of the grandmother leave Matia lost, confused, and rebellious. It is not until she befriends an outsider to the family, Manuel, that Matia gains a more solid understanding of reality and begins

to piece together an identity. Matia's transformation as a result of Manuel's introduction into her life is similar to that of Gianna's move to Florence. Both characters are introduced to a part of life that they had never known. Instead of the cultural and intellectual discoveries Gianna makes, however, Manuel helps Matia understand certain social realities and injustices that open her eyes beyond what her family has imposed upon her. Manuel and his father are immediately portrayed in direct opposition to the grandmother. They are not a part of the grandmother's monopoly on the island and therefore are not under her authoritative control. Matia describes them as a separate entity, "Ellos eran como otra isla, sí, en la tierra de mi abuela; una isla con su casa, su pozo, la verdura con que alimentarse y las flores moradas, amarillas, negras, donde zumbraban los mosquitos y las abejas y la luz parecía de miel" [They were like another island in the land of my grandmother; an island with their house, their well, the vegetables with which they fed themselves and the purple, yellow, and black flowers, where the mosquitoes and the bees buzzed and the light seemed like honey (Matute 1960, 39). The light that emits from Manuel's dwelling also translates to his physical attributes. Manuel's eyes shine ("brillar") in contrast to her grandmother's, which are constantly scrutinizing others ("escrudiñar," cited above). Furthermore, Manuel is always described as "tan bueno" [so good] in contrast to doña Práxedes who is associated with cruelty and evil.

Manuel is the first person in the narrative to listen to Matia. His companionship fills that void which opened as a result of her mother's death, her father's abandonment, and her grandmother's harsh, authoritative position within her life. Through her interactions with him, she is able to gain a better understanding of

the reality of others. Over the course of their relationship, Fascists kill Manuel's father and he must consequently leave school to take care of his mother and his siblings. As she sees the injustices inflicted on Manuel, Matia, for the first time in her life, feels sympathy for another. She professes to him, "me parece mal- dije. Y noté que mis labios temblaban y que decía algo que no pensé hasta aquel momento...- Me parece una cosa horrible lo que os han hecho" [it seems wrong, I said. And I noticed that my lips were trembling and that I was saying something that I hadn't thought about before that moment...- What they have done to you seems horrible] (Matute 1960, 135). Her sympathy eventually leads to what she recognizes as a development of her conscience, a key element of becoming an adult and to creating one's identity.44 Manuel seems to be the force that Matia needed to separate herself from her broken familial identity and start to grow and mature. Unfortunately, just as she seems to be coming to a definitive place in her identity, her cousin, Borja, intervenes, causing her betrayal of Manuel.

Borja's jealously and anger towards Manuel, created by political and personal differences, provokes him to lie to doña Práxedes, accusing Manuel of a theft he did not commit. Borja threatens Matia by telling her she will be sent away if she protects him. Matia remains silent in order to protect her self-interests and Manuel is sent away. The act of betrayal signifies the permanent loss of innocence for Matia and she realizes that she has entered adulthood, not as a compassionate, loving person, but as a traitor. Her adult voice writes that at that moment, "me hirió el saberlo todo. El

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Diane Yvonne Collins, "The Expression of Social Criticism in Ana María Matute's Primera Memoria: A Study of Themes, Characters, and Images" (Masters thesis, University of British Columbia, 1970), 43.

saber la oscura vida de las personas mayores, a las que, sin duda alguna, pertenecía ya. Me hirió y sentí un dolor físico" [It wounded me to know everything. To know the dark world of older people, to the world that, without a doubt, still pertains to them. It wounded me and I felt a physical pain] (Matute 1960, 239). After spending so much time and energy trying to escape her grandmother and her values, she ends up acting exactly the way her family would. In her desire to preserve her own self-interest, she caused the suffering of an individual, a direct echo of all of her grandmother's behavior throughout the text. The narrative ends with the young protagonist's fragmented identity and unresolved alienation. The feelings of isolation that Matia feels at the end of the narrative are similar to those of Gianna, despite the differing results of their identity formation.

In this structural sense, *Primera memoria* is truly representative of the context in which it was written, for it reflects Matute's inability to transcend the harsh reality of the Spanish Civil War and Franco's subsequent dictatorship. Matute's presentation of Matia's childhood experiences reflects the way in which she experienced the Civil War as a child. Matute demonstrates with *Primera memoria* an understanding of the negative effects the war had on her growth and development as a person. Because Matute's text was written decades after the Civil War, her character's lack of identity also suggests her continued inability to form an identity under Franco's regime.

# 3. Private and public influences to resist male dominance- Carmen Martín Gaite

Carmen Martín Gaite's *El cuarto de atrás*, published in 1978, takes place in

the protagonist's (referred to as 'C') apartment in Spain and revolves around her conversations with a mysterious man in black, who arrives at her house unannounced at midnight for an interview. Over the course of the evening, the man in black encourages 'C' to explore her past experiences of the Spanish Civil War and Francisco Franco's regime. At the end of her exploration, she falls asleep. When she wakes up, she discovers that the man in black is gone and her only proof of his existence is a small, gold box he gave to her.

Martín Gaite's text differs from the other narratives studied because her mother and father hold the same political beliefs. Martín Gaite clarifies early in the narrative that the protagonist's (referred to as 'C') parents are attempting to function under a regime, Francisco Franco's, for which they feel nothing but antipathy. Under Franco's dictatorship, men and women were expected to adhere to strict predetermined social roles. Men were soldiers and scholars, whereas women were wives and mothers of the "fatherland." This strict dichotomy recalls the Sherry B. Ortner's social division between men and women and culture and nature. By way of the life narrative's fictional plot, Martín Gaite resuscitates memories of the 1940s and 1950s in an attempt to appropriate a past that had been inaccessible to her before the completion of this book. 'C's' penetration of the past allows her to reexamine the patriarchal and male-dominated society that promoted and demanded women to succumb to their natural position within the home. Like Matia who encounters an outside influence, Manuel, that supports her process of identity formation, 'C' draws

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Victoria Lorée Enders and Pamela Beth Radcliff, introduction to *Constructing Spanish Womanhood: Female Identity in Modern Spain* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1999).

upon an extra familial source, Conchita Piquer, a famous Spanish singer and actress, to assist in her formation of identity. This along with the act of remembering her parents' untraditional approach to familial life completes her quest for self-identification.

The difficulty that 'C' experiences as she undertakes the task of writing about life under Franco is evident within the first pages of the narrative. The story opens with a woman suffering from insomnia. As she tosses and turns in her bed, her mind wanders to the process of writing and she explains that "las palabras bailan y se me alejan" [the words dance and move away from me]. 46 The reason for such difficulty in self-expression is clear: the inability to process the most influential years of her life is a consequence of the years under Franco. 'C' recalls "las dos sensaciones más envolventes de aquellos años" [the two most enveloping feelings of those years] as "frío" [cold] and "miedo" [fear] (Martín Gaite 1978, 57). Other "cold" terms that she associates, through recollection, with the 1940s and 1950s, and with the sense of alienation that she lived then, include "amortizar, requisar, racionar, acaparar, camuflar" [repay, seize, ration, hoard, camouflage] (Martín Gaite 1978, 184). Although she heard these words from her parents and those around her at all times, as a young girl, her sense of alienation is inherent in her inability to grasp their true meaning. In the end, it becomes apparent that 'C' is subjected to the same kind of isolation from the history and reality that surrounds her, as are Fausta and Gianna.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Carmen Martín Gaite, *El cuarto de atrás* (Zaragoza: Ediciones Destino, 1978), 11. All references hereafter will be to this edition and will appear parenthetically in the text.

While the negative impact that the regime had on 'C's' life as an adolescent is so prominent within her text, the most troubling part of the regime is the fact that it freezes time. Her memories from this time period "[se] lo enfriaron" [froze her] (Martín Gaite 1978, 128). She confesses that she cannot distinguish between the Civil War and after because "Franco había paralizado el tiempo" [Franco had paralyzed time] (Martín Gaite 1978, 133). It is only after his death that she realizes this and can begin to recapture and reawaken the past.

With the aid of the stranger in black who probes 'C' about her past, she is able to uncover the oppresive actions and ideals of Franco's regime as well as the ways in which she learned to combat them. For 'C', the regime and its quest for modernity signified order and sterility, as portrayed in her reflection on modern kitchens that became popular at the time. She tells the man in black,

Me horrorizan las cocinas de ahora, asépticas, lujosas e impersonales, donde nadie se sentaría a conversar, esos ámbitos presididos por el culto a los quita-humos, a los tritura-basuras, a los lavaplatos, por la sonrisa estereotipada del ama de casa, elaborada con esfuerzo y pericia sobre modelos televisivos, esa mujer a quien la propaganda obliga a hacer una meta y un triunfo del mero <<organizarse bien>>. (Martín Gaite 1978, 74)

[Modern kitchens horrify me, aseptic, luxurious and impersonal, where no one would sit to talk, these spaces dominated by the worship of smoke removers, trash crushers, dishwashers, by the stereotypical smile of the housewife, manufactured with effort and skill from the television models, the woman that was obligated by propaganda to make a goal and triumph from merely 'organizing herself well.']

The contrast she establishes between past human interaction and modern kitchens emphasizes the notion of stasis that 'C' attributes to life under Franco. 'C's' insistence on the fact that 'no one would sit to talk' suggests her nostalgia for active human interaction and conversation, actions that require exchange and some sort of

progress. With the creation of modern kitches, this interaction has been overridden by an 'aseptic,' and 'impersonal' environment, where woman is alone and appears to be just another object.

'C' not only assails the impersonal environment created by all the new appliances that are meant to systemize the home, but also the projected image of the perfect Spanish woman, with her 'stereotypical smile.' The protagonist comes to hate the regime's emphasis on the ideal mother and wife and is able to resist such images through her relationship with her mother and her idolization of Conchita Piquer, a Spanish singer and actress of the 40s and 50s. 'C' explains that "la retórica de la postguerra se aplicaba a desprestigiar los conatos de feminismo que tomaron auge en los años de la República y volvía a poner el acento en el heroísmo abnegado de madres y esposas, en la importancia de su silenciosa y oscura labor como pilares del hogar cristiano" [the rhetoric of the postwar applied itself to discrediting the attempts of feminism that peaked in the years of the Republic, and returned to putting the emphasis on the self-sacrificing heroism of mothers and wives, and in the importance of their silent and obscure work as pillars of the Christian home] (Martín Gaite 1978, 93). To do this, the Sección Feminina, a Falangist<sup>47</sup> organization created in the 1930s and organized by Pilar Primo de Rivera. 48 bombarded Spanish female youth with images of Isabel la Católica and "se nos hablaba de su voluntad férrea y de su espíritu de sacrificio" [talked about her iron will and spirit of sacrifice] (Martín Gaite 1978,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> The Falange was an extreme nationalst political group founded by José Antonio Primo de Rivera. Francisco Franco later took control of the party in the late 1930s and was the sole political party during his dictactorship. See Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism in Spain: 1923-1977* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999).

<sup>48</sup> Enders and Radcliff, introduction to *Constructing Spanish Womanhood.* 376.

Because of the example that Isabel la Católica provided, 'C' explains that according to the regime, "quedarse, conformarse y aguantar era lo bueno" [stay, conform, and endure was good] and "salir, escapar y fugarse era lo malo" [leave, escape, and flee was bad] (Martín Gaite 1978, 125). Again appears the notion of frozenness and stasis, which is now in direct opposition to verbs of movement. The latter list contains the three words that are constantly used to describe 'C' throughout the narrative, thus disassociating her character from the regime.

'C's' mother is the family member who plays the most important role in shaping 'C's' identity and giving her the necessary support to resist a male-dominated society. Although her mother is married with a child and seems to superficially embody a mother and wife of the time, she makes great strides to ensure that her daughter does not follow in her footsteps. 'C' explains that her mother "le encantaba, desde pequeña, leer y jugar a juegos de chicos, y hubiera querido estudiar una carrera, como sus dos hermanos varones, pero entonces no era costumbre, ni siquiera se le pasó por la cabeza pedirlo" [loved to read and play games for boys ever since she was little, and had wanted to study for a degree, like her two brothers, but this was not the custom and neither was the thought of asking for it] (Martín Gaite 1978, 92). Her mother is characterized by images of growth, movement, creativity, and imagination, which are in stark contrast to the static images of the regime. As an adult, 'C's' mother makes sure her daughter does not fall into the same trap as her by promoting the importance of school and reading.

When 'C' is younger, her mother also gives her a book about a young girl who intends to get a job after graduating but falls in love with a man, gets married, and forgets her dreams. It almost seems that her mother is trying to tell her daughter that she views herself as a victim and hopes her own daughter will not suffer the same fate. As 'C' reflects on the book and its meaning, she realizes as an adult that her mother was a victim of societal norms. The book also provokes 'C' to wonder why all narratives end in marriage, which she confesses "me daba mala espina" [make her feel uneasy] (Martín Gaite 1978, 93). Similar to Fausta, Gianna, and Matia, 'C' develops an aversion to marriage based on the consequences it has on her mother. A more subtle significance of the book is the mother's active encouragement of her daughter's participatation in culture. By ensuring that her daughter reads, 'C's' mother motivates her daughter to enter the cultural realm normally dominated by men. In addition, her mother "no era casamentera, ni me enseñó tampoco nunca a coser ni a guisar" [wasn't a matchmaker and didn't teach her to sew or to cook] (Martín Gaite 1978, 93). By not teaching her daughter how to perform traditional domestic tasks expected of women at the time, her mother encourages 'C' to resist nature and embrace culture, thus rejecting the regime's conventional social roles.

'C' associates Conchita Piquer with her mother because both are nontraditional women that encourage nonconformity to the regime's rules and standards. Conchita Piquer was a singer and actress during the regime and her coplas were highly influential to the adolescent 'C.' She explains that her songs told "historias de chicas que no se parecían en nada a las que conocíamos, que nunca iban a gustar las dulzuras del hogar apacible con que nos hacían soñar a las señoritas,

gente marginada, a la deriva, desprotegida por la ley" [stories of girls that weren't anything like what we knew, that never enjoyed the sweetness of the quiet home that women make us envision. Marginalized people, adrift, unprotected by the law]. In addition she "tuvo una misión de revulsivo, de zapa a los cimientos de felicidad que pretendían reforzar los propagandistas" [had a mission of change, of secret work to the foundations of happiness that the propagandists tried to reinforce] (Martín Gaite 152). The singer is important because she was a public, counterculture icon. She served as a model the protagonist could embrace, who represented resistance to the female public figures of the regime and the *Sección Feminina*.



Fig. 2. Conchita Piquer
Reprinted from http://cuple-copla.blogspot.com/2011/01/
cuatro-exitos-de-concha-piquer.html

In *El cuarto de atrás*, 'C' penetrates the official history of Spain under Franco in order to explore the elements of her personal history. The cohort of female figures that she details in her text counteracts Franco's regime and its ideals and expectations of women. She conjures a strong female presence in a historically male dominated

time period, which she then incorporates into her present identity as a woman. Like Fausta in Cialente's text, 'C's' newly found identity signifies fulfillment and satisfaction and she is able to pass on a part of her new identity to her daughter. At the end of the narrative, the daughter enters for the first time and is frightened by the sight of a cockroach that 'C' had been frightened by earlier, but she now tells her "las cucarachas son inofensivas" [cockroaches are harmless] (Martín Gaite 1978, 208). This episode signifies Carmen's transcendence of her fears, of her past, and of the regime. By soothing her daughter's fear, she is symbolically paving the way for a better future.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined the first process in the quest for wholeness: identity formation. Through an exploration of the familial experience, or the female family romance, each protagonist rejects the conventional social roles of mother and wife promoted by a patriarchal society and establishes her identity as woman and individual. Although the protagonists undergo similar processes to create identity, there are two distinct ways the protagonists feel about the final result. For Fausta and 'C,' this process of identity formation ends with a sense of contentment and satisfaction. Despite the fact that Gianna establishes an identity for herself and Matia does not, both protagonists are characterized by solitude and alienation at the end of their narratives. The thematic similarities in conjunction with the differing conclusions highlight the benefit of life narrative in studying the personal life process of identity formation. While the reader gains a broad understanding of the process of self-identification as a whole, he or she more importantly gains four specific and

intimate ways in which the individual protagonists and therefore authors perceive their identities, or lack thereof. Because there is such diversity in each experience, the authors signal to the reader that individual interpretation of self is inevitable and fundamental to the process of identity formation.

## Chapter 2 Woman as Witness and Reinterpreter of History

In the previous chapter, I explored the first component in each protagonist's processual quest for wholeness: identity formation. Through memories of their immediate families, each protagonist confronts their lives under a repressive phase of Spanish or Italian patriarchal society. In doing so, she is able to reject conventional social roles and transcend restrictive social barriers to create identity. Matute's protagonist, Matia, however, is unable to achieve such identity formation and is left with a fragmented sense of self and unresolved alienation. In this chapter, I move away from social issues to examine the political and cultural barriers each protagonist undertakes as a part of the second element of her quest for wholeness and individuation: contesting publish history. The protagonists inscribe themselves into their respective nations' history as a means to reevaluate the major historical events in twentieth century Spain and Italy that played a significant role in their individual lives. In Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger, Fausta analyzes the politics of Italian irredentism and its contributions to World War I, the rise of fascism, and World War II. Gianna, in *Ritratto in piedi*, explores the role of fascism in her father's, Giuseppe Manzini's, death. Through her characters in *Primera memoria*, Ana María Matute explores the affects of war on children and adolescents, as a reflection of her experiences of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) as a young girl. 'C' in Carmen Martín Gaite's text, El cuarto de atrás, considers the political, social, and religious strategies Francisco Franco's regime (1939-1975) employed to indoctrinate the

Spanish public. Despite the temporal and geographical differences here, my goal in this chapters is to highlight the similar themes that arise from the life narratives.

As the reader recognizes within each life narrative, the protagonists are each prevented from vocalizing their opinions on these historical events even though they were just as much witness to them. Their texts are a way to break this silence and change the traditional dynamic between the 'observer' and the 'observed' by reevaluating historical phenomena, events, and episodes they see as misrepresented in contemporary history or bringing to light parts of public history that have been forgotten with time. Each protagonist exchanges her passive role as 'observer' to actively contest what she witnessed, thus acquiring historical agency within her writing. While each author chooses to focus on a different aspect of major Spanish and Italian history, their common objective is to re-create personal and familial history to serve as an allegorical representation of the official history of the nations in which they live. Fiction becomes an important weapon in this endeavor, as it allows greater freedom for each author to explore the past and illustrate their experiences in ways that might not be possible with a more formal autobiographical work.

#### 1. House/Country Divided

A common theme that unites the majority of the narratives is a politically divided household. The politics on the paternal side of the family almost always differ from those on the maternal, causing familial tensions that inevitably affect the life of each protagonist. In addition, the familial political tension functions as an allegory of

the political situations of Spain and Italy. Each author utilizes her narrative to demonstrate the personal and national effects of such political division.

The politics of Fausta's family in Cialente's text reflect the political tensions that existed within Italy up through World War II. The protagonist explores her personal and familial history in order to contest and reject the official history of Trieste in relation to Italy, thus completing the second process in the quest for wholeness. By re-creating her experiences as daughter between the conflicting factions of her family, Fausta lays bare the conflicting situation of Trieste as a daughter of Slovene and Italian cultures, highlighting the hypocrisy and delusional aspirations of Italian irredentists (explained in further detail below). The protagonist rejects the "concept of liberation from the Austrians, still portrayed in today's history books as the 'natural' desire of all the *Triestini* to join their blood brothers" and marks it as "historical fallacy."

Trieste is a city located in the region of Venezia Giulia in the northeastern zone of Italy. The city is a part of the Adriatic boundary, which divides Western and Eastern Europe. For centuries, Trieste was an important seaport for the region and especially for landlocked Vienna. Trieste was also a site of considerable commercial growth and urbanization. However, because of its location and commercial appeal, the city has seen varied cultural and political conflicts. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the city was a part of the Austrian Habsburg Empire and was a place of cultural convergence. The Empire strived to establish "a political

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Parati, "From Genealogy to Gynealogy and Beyond," 77.

system that in principle recognized and reproduced diversity."<sup>50</sup> Despite the Empire's efforts, however, Trieste suffered conflicting nationality disputes and questions of national sovereignty because of tensions particularly between the competing Italian, Slovenian, and German cultures.

The Italians intent on officially claiming Trieste and Istria, a peninsula south of Trieste, as a part of Italy became known as irredentists ("irredentisti"). In their view, Trieste was the unredeemed land ("terra irredenta") that rightfully belonged to the Italians. A sense of 'Italianness' ("italianità") became an important aspect of irredentist rhetoric, which was only fueled by the growing sense of nationalism in twentieth century Europe, itself carried over from nineteenth century imperial and colonial expansion. With the onset of World War I, irredentists saw a perfect opportunity to annex the city back into Italy, which was achieved through peace treaties. However, the variety of nationalities in Trieste continued pose problems after the end of World War I. With the rise of Fascism, Trieste became an important site for Mussolini's nationalist project to fascitize the nation. For Mussolini, the city exemplified the need to create Italianness and stamp out cultural diversity. For example, because the Slovenian culture was seen as culturally and racially inferior to Italian culture, Mussolini demanded that Slovene primary schools be converted into

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Glenda Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste and the Italo-Yugoslav Border: Difference, Identity, and Sovereignty in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2001), 18. <sup>51</sup> Ibid., 22.

Italian language schools and required individuals with Slavic surnames to transform into more Italian names. <sup>52</sup>



Fig. 3. Trieste and Italy's shifting border, before and after World War I

The cultural and political situation in Trieste heavily marks the pages of Cialente's text. She writes the biography of her mother to set the historical background of Trieste, as well as the family's involvement in irredentism, which dates back to Fausta's grandparents. Cialente displays the political views of Gustavo Wieselberger and his actions to demonstrate the delusions under which the irredentists lived in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, through her protagonist,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Ibid., 48.

Cialente imposes her judgments throughout the first section of the book to highlight such delusions and hypocrisies.

The detailed account of Gustavo Wieselberger's irredentist views demonstrates on a more microscopic level what early irredentism looked like and how it manifested itself within peninsular Italian culture. Since music plays such a prominent role in Gustavo's life and his relationships with others, adult Fausta uses his musical passion to illustrate his underlying irredentist fervor. She imagines a scene in which Gustavo discusses the origins of Triestine music societies and he explains that the music scene only began to flourish in Trieste when musicians emigrated from Italy. Adult Fausta notes that instances like these exemplified the "primi bagliori d'un irredentismo che effettivamente non s'era ancora manifestato...era solo un'allusione a qualcosa di molto romantico" [first flashes of an irredentism that had not yet manifested itself...it was solely an allusion to something very romantic] (Cialente 1976, 21).

Adult Fausta also highlights the racial prejudice within Fausta's family towards the Slovene population that was escalated by the surge of irredentism. She devotes special attention to the Wieselberger's intimate relationship with Ursula and Giacomo, two Slovenians who serve as the farmers and gardeners of the family's estate. She admits that "i rapporti con i due sloveni erano sempre stati buoni e cordiali" [the relationship with the Slovenians was always good and cordial] but that never prevented the family from calling them "sti maledeti s'ciavi" [damn slaves!] in Triestine dialect behind their backs (Cialente 1976, 42). The use of the word 'slave' to refer to Ursula and Giacomo because of their nationality is indicative of the

family's irredentist perspective, which condemned the Slovene population as an inferior race.

Another source of conflict seen by the irredentists is the fact that the Slovenians in Trieste held important public offices and commercial jobs within the community, jobs that Gustavo openly believes should be held by Italian Triestines. The protagonist rejects this notion and reminds her audience that these jobs required the knowledge of German, which Italian Triestine's had a "dichiarata e ostentata avversione... che favoriva la penetrazione degli sloveni nei servizi statali...per merito appunto della loro facilità ad apprendere e parlare varie lingue" [declared and boasted aversion.... which favored the penetration of the Slovenians in state services...due to the easiness with which they learned and spoke various languages] (Cialente 1976, 43). With this observation, adult Fausta begins her criticism of the hypocritical tenets of the irredentists.

Adult Fausta then broadens her discussion of irredentism to comment on the hypocritical economic aspirations of its proponents. They shared the delusion that Trieste would serve as Italy's principal international seaport over Venice, which had served as one of Italy's major seaports for centuries. Over time, this became one of the principal economic reasons for the irredentists' desire to annex Trieste into Italy. The narrator interjects and reminds her audience that such Triestines refused to learn other languages and only operated in dialect, which made it impossible for them to work with an international clientele. However, she explains that the Triestine irredentists who witnessed the flourishing of Venice and the diminishing importance of Trieste chose to ignore this historical reality and imagine "il pittoresco"

cosmopolitismo della città, passato e recente" [the picturesque cosmopolitanism of the city, past and recent] (Cialente 1976, 44). She condemns this group for their inability to face their reality, which causes them to live in delusions.

To end her discussion on early irredentism, adult Fausta highlights the ways in which irredentist rhetoric and ideas were passed from one generation to the other. She explains that the National League ("Lega Nazionale") "raggiava nella famiglia come una stella di sempre crescente splendore" [shone in the family like a star of ever increasing splendor] (Cialente 1976, 45). The National League in Italy, founded in 1891, was created to "promote Italian education" and "furnished a 'patriotic liturgy' and rallying point for pro-Italian elements." The protagonist observes that this institution opened schools in areas where "italianità [era] minacciata" [Italianness was threatened] (Cialente 1976, 45). Since Gustavo and his wife support this endeavor, they enroll their daughters in these schools. In turn these daughters will send their daughters to the same schools. Through education, the entire family is inducted into irredentism and what adult Fausta sees as a complete disconnect from reality.

In addition to the personal legacy of irredentism within the Wieselberger family, Fausta also contextualizes this legacy within Italian and European history through the end of World War II. She notes that the essential elements of irredentism (Trieste as the rightful possession of Italy and the racial prejudice against the Slovenians as a result), contributed to the major disasters of the twentieth century. She states that "il peso di questi enormi sbagli commessi dall'Ottocento…avrebbe

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Maura Hametz, *Making Trieste Italian, 1918-1954* (New York: The Boydell Press, 2005), 107.

finito, dopo una disastrosa prima guerra mondiale, per trascinare l'Italia nel fascismo, e Trieste con essa" [the weight of these enormous mistakes committed during the nineteenth century...would finish, after the disastrous World War I, in the dragging of Italy into fascism, and Trieste with it] (Cialente 1976, 132). The protagonist seeks to demonstrate how irredentism was not just an isolated occurrence within Italy's history. By foreshadowing the contribution irredentism made to the major wars and political movements of the twentieth century, Fausta anticipates her involvement with such history and her need to express her opinions about it.

When Fausta's life becomes the focus of the narrative and the perspective switches to first person, her familial experiences become an allegory for her political sentiments regarding the desired union of the irredentists between Trieste and Italy. She concentrates on the superiority of her mother over her father in her parent's marriage to express Trieste's supremacy over Italy. By paralleling the marriage between her parents to that of Trieste and Italy, Fausta further stresses her beliefs that Italy should not annex Trieste.

Throughout her childhood and adolescence, Fausta identifies with and admires Trieste over Italy. As she grows up, her family spends every summer in the maternal grandparent's villa in Trieste. To Fausta, the city is magical and "il solo pezzo di terra che avesse una specie di solidità e continuità sotto i [suoi] piedi" [the only piece of land that had any type of solidity and continuity under her feet] (Cialente 1976, 76). The city is also a place of culture and civility that is unmatched by any other place she has known in Italy. Fausta demonstrates this through her experiences with her Triestine cousins. She characterizes her relationship to them with a constant feeling of

inferiority because she admires their ability to speak several languages and play a variety of instruments. She also points out that their linguistic abilities also reflect the impossibility of Trieste to remain solely Italian because of the convergence of cultures that live there. Fausta's experiences with her maternal family show "Trieste as a culturally and ethnically autonomous and prosperous community under Austrian rule," which the irredentists of the time ignore. <sup>54</sup>

In stark contrast, the father and his side of the family are associated with Italy. The paternal family lives in the south of Italy and Fausta's relationship with her paternal grandparents and cousins is characterized by feelings of superiority and distance. Fausta rarely sees them and the few memories she has of them illustrate their inability to read and write. While the maternal family is intelligent and cultured, the paternal side is ignorant. The polar opposition of the two sides of the family leads Fausta to the following conclusion:

Intanto non era del tutto incosciente la sensazione che nostra madre doveva alla famiglia triestina quel suo livello di civiltà e educazione (le parole "sapere" e "cultura" esulavano tuttora dal nostro linguaggio). Non solo, ma avevamo purtroppo la sensazione- che per molto tempo rimase silenzio fra Renato e me- che nostro padre le era, in queste cose almeno, nettamente inferiore. (Cialente 1976, 86)

[Meanwhile the feeling that our mother owed to her Triestine family her level of civility and education wasn't completely unconscious (the words "know" and "culture" were outside of our language). But we also had the feeling, Renato and I, even though we remained silent, that our father, in this matter at least, was clearly inferior to our mother.]

By declaring her mother's superiority to her father, she is insinuating the same about Trieste and Italy. This proposed cultural superiority justifies Fausta's rejection of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Marotti, "Filial Discourses," 76.

irredentist's notion that Trieste should belong to Italy.

Cialente also uses public voices from official Italian history to justify Fausta's personal judgments about irredentists that originated from her family history. As a precursor to each section of the book, excerpts from various literary and political figures are included. Fragments of Angelo Vivante's works are presented to the reader, including a paragraph from Irredentismo Adriatico. This text was a history of the development of Italian nationalist aspirations in the Adriatic region. Vivante criticizes "the supposition that Italian irredentism was a natural and spontaneous symptom of the individual aspirations of Italians for national liberation, and argued that Italian irredentists had an impractical and unrealistic view of Trieste's future with an Italian state."<sup>55</sup> Excerpts also appear from *Il Mio Carso* by Scipio Slataper, a text which represented Trieste as a "cultural crossroads and [Slataper] as culturally polygenous" to reject the idea of a "singular Italian national patriotism." <sup>56</sup> By using her own private voice in concordance with the public voices of literary and political figures to infiltrate public history, Fausta is able to expose an "alternative rereading of Trieste's history."57

In addition to correcting a historical phenomenon she sees as misunderstood,

Fausta demonstrate the horrible effects of irredentism on her personal history.

Recalling the foreshadowing of such effects from the biography of Fausta's mother,

Fausta describes her experiences of World War I, the rise of fascism, and World War

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste*, 21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Marotti, "Filial Discourses," 78.

II. As a result of these events, she suffers the loss of her cousin, Fabio, and her brother, Renato, who were both enlisted in the Italian army. As a result of these experiences, adult Fausta declares,

s'ero da tempo vaccinata contro il fatale "irredentismo adriatico" (e Fabio [e Renato avevano] pagato di persona l'errore in cui l'avevano crescere e maturare) la guerra alla quale assistevo mi aveva non solamente stomacata, ma suscitava in me un odio che sentivo inguaribile: l'odio contro qualsiasi forma di nazionalismo o razzismo ("'sti maledeti s'ciavi, 'sti maledeti austriacanti, 'sti maledeti ebrei"). (Cialente 202)

[I had vaccinated myself against the fatal "Adriatic irredentism" (the error that they had grown and matured, for which Fabio [and Renato] had paid with his life) and the war that I witnessed not only disgusted me but had resuscitated in me a hate that I felt was incurable: a hate against any form of nationalism or racism ("those damn Slaves, those damn Austrians!"]

With this affirmation, Fausta clearly blames irredentism and its contribution to both world wars and for her family's tragic losses. In addition, by recalling the words of Gustavo Wieselberger, whom she associates with the origins of irredentism, she hints at an internal familial responsibility for her cousin's and brother's death. By exposing what she views as the public and private mistakes of history, she demonstrates the interconnectedness of both. She is also able to highlight the forgotten consequences of irredentism and war.

Through the allegorical representation of familial conflict, Fausta reinterprets the history of irredentism to provide an alternate reading of a portion of Italian history. Within Gianna Manzini's text, Ritratto in piedi, the protagonist, Gianna, also creates an allegory between the political division of her parents and the political atmosphere of early twentieth century Italy. Like Fausta, she uses this allegorical representation to suggest the superiority of anarchist beliefs over nationalist and

fascist ones. The source of Gianna's desire to contest public history and her ultimate goal in using an allegorical representation, however, is very different from Fausta's. Whereas Fausta wanted to correct misinterpretations of Italian irredentism due to her dissatisfaction in the way Triestines were publicly represented, Gianna's discussion of politics and Italian history stems from guilt and her ultimate goal is to ensure the memory of her father is not lost with time. The guilt she retains towards her father is a direct result of her family's political fragmentation, which is solidified by her father's death at the hands of fascists. Gianna's re-creation of her father's, Giuseppe Manzini's, life and death serves a dual purpose. She re-appropriates them into her personal memory after confessing to having resisted, pushed away, and withdrawn from them even though they have marked her life so significantly. At the same time, she puts a neglected aspect of fascism's history into public history and succeeds in completing the second process of the quest for wholeness.

Gianna initiates her narrative with the image of a horse in Florence that refuses to traverse the Santa Trinità bridge. No one is able to explain the horse's reluctance to cross the bridge and Manzini asks her reader, "Che avrà visto, a metà dell'arcata del ponte? Quale ricordo, quale spettro sarà insorto a bloccarlo?" [What had [the horse] seen in the middle of the arch of the bridge? What memory or ghost had arisen to block him from proceeding?] (Manzini 1971, 13). Gianna then confesses that she often finds herself like this horse when attempting to write about her father. At every attempt, things she does not understand or have the ability to grasp undermine the task. She admits that she wants more than anything to understand what obstable prevents her from relaying his life as well as hers, which are intimately

intertwined. Through the episodes Gianna offers the reader, it becomes clear that the obstacle is the death of her father at the hands of fascists after years of persecution from community members and, more significantly, family members.

Giuseppe Manzini is an active anarchist and antifascist during the beginnings of fascism, and both traits are illustrated through dialogue between him and Gianna. The constant, positive descriptions that Gianna uses to portray her father, suggest his superiority over her mother's family and their beliefs. As discussed in my first chapter, he often speaks of human dignity and the importance of individual liberty. Although these concepts seem to be more humanist than anything else, Gianna equates them with anarchist rhetoric. His political affiliations are also seen in his relationships with influential anarchist figures, such as Errico Malatesta. A leader in anarchist movements in Europe as well as North and South America, Malatesta proposed that "revolutionary ideas could best be spread by armed insurrection." 58 Within the text, Malatesta himself makes an appearance in one of Gianna's happiest childhood memories. Like her father, who is associated with light and described as a mythical hero, Gianna notes that Malatesta "emanava da lui una sorta di eccezionale prestigio: una dignità" [emanated a sort of prestigious excellence: a dignity] (Manzini 1971, 95). By associating her father with such an influential figure of the anarchist movement in Italy, especially one who was also persecuted by Mussolini and the fascists, Manzini establishes her father's involvement and commitment to the anarchist movement and its ideals.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, 15th ed., s.v. "Errico Malatesta."

In direct contrast with the father and the positive imagery that Gianna surrounds him with are the maternal relatives' nationalistic political and social views. Her mother belongs to the bourgeoisie and although she is not politically vocal, her family's, particularly her brother's, outward objection to anarchy and Giuseppe Manzini produce a toxic familial atmosphere that young Gianna is left to deal with. In one section, Gianna details the familial rupture in action. Her uncle accuses the father that "non ha un filo di coscienza, né un minimo di responsabilità. È facile essere più leggeri d'un funambolo quando nulla ci trattiene...La mia patria è il mondo...Tu sei senza patria, né dimora. La patria comincia dalla famiglia, perdio!" [he doesn't have a bit of conscience, nor a minimum of responsibility. It's easy to be lighter than a tightrope walker when nothing restrains you...My country is the world...You are without a country or a home. The homeland comes from the family, by God!] (Manzini 1971, 106). The words of the uncle are reminiscent of Benito Mussolini's attitudes towards the country and family. One of the slogans of the fascist movement was "Dio, Patria, Famiglia," representing a perfect trinity. By associating the father with Errico Malatesta and the uncle with Mussolini, Gianna creates a dramatic contrast between the two and ensures the reader understands the political situation of her family, as well as that of Italy. Furthermore, just as Fausta implied the superiority of Trieste to Italy through the comparison of her mother and father, Gianna suggests her father's anarchist political beliefs are superior to those of her maternal family's nationalist and fascist ones by juxtaposing the positive imagery of her father and Errico Malatesta in opposition to the harsh actions and words of her uncle.

The effects of the tension in Gianna's family are evident in the reflections of the adult Gianna's voice. As she remembers her past, guilt infiltrates Gianna's narrative for many reasons. First, she abhors her mother's family's persecution of her father and that neither she nor her mother defended him. At this point, the reader sees a thematic connection with the content of previous chapter because Gianna and her mother's social positions collide with their political ones. Because women at this time had no authority to voice their opinions, especially regarding politics, the mother and daughter were forced to remain silent as a loved one suffered.

Another source of Gianna's guilt is her father's exile during her adolescence to a small village outside of Pistoia. Because of this, she and her mother are forced to move to Florence where her mother's sister lives. This creates a physical and mental separation between Gianna and her father as the protagonist explores the lifestyle of her mother. As I discussed in my previous chapter, Gianna experiences a conflict between being happy and feeling overwhelming guilt for abandoning her father. This guilt finally comes to a climax when the news of her father's death at the hands of fascists arrives.

The violent death of Giuseppe Manzini at the hands of fascists occupies the entire last chapter of the narrative, as Gianna exorcises it from official history. The protagonist fills almost ten complete pages with every detail she can imagine about his death, including fascists stalking him, how they stoned him, the adverse effects it had on his health, and his eventual death from a heart attack shortly after. The violent nature of Giuseppe's attack is similar to the assassination of Giacomo Matteotti. In 1924, Matteotti was stalked, kidnapped, and bludgeoned to death by fascists in Rome.

His murder became known as the "Matteotti Affair" and caused a huge scandal within Mussolini's regime for several months.<sup>59</sup> Although he is not discussed explicitly, the famous death of Matteotti and his permanent mark on fascism in constrast to her father's similar death, which has been completely forgotten with history and time, prompts Gianna's desire to place her father's death back into public history. She does not accept that the deaths of some overshadow the deaths of others, especially her own father's.

The style in this section of the narrative changes as the adult Gianna's voice takes control of the narration, interjecting her thoughts based on what she has been told and what she believes her father may have been thinking at the time. As he tries to escape from the fascists to his house, she imagines that he thinks, "Appena a casa, scrivo tutto. Non aspetto più. Gianna lo deve sapere. Lo deve sapere; deve, deve, deve, "[When I get home, I'll write everything. I won't wait any longer. Gianna should know it. She should know it; she should, she should, she should] (Manzini 1971, 216). As she describes the fascists stoning her father, she voices her criticism of the anonymous fascist men; "tiri intimidatori; avvisaglie. Che facile bersaglio un uomo tutto solo su un ponte deserto" [lucky intimidators; signs. What an easy target, a man who is all by himself on a deserted bridge] (Manzini 1971, 216).

As a conclusion to the narrative, Gianna imagines herself speaking to her father right before his death. He tells her "bisgona che ti dica tutto. Non ho più tempo. Ciò che sto per evitare adesso, può accadere domain" [you will have to say

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Stanley G. Payne, "Italian Fascism, 1919-1929" in *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 114.

everything. I don't have anymore time. What I'm avoiding now (death) could happen tomorrow] (Manzini 1971, 222). Right after the death, she has a conversation with him in which she promises to write about his life through the very book that she has just completed, *Ritratto in piedi*. By confronting his death, Manzini determines and overcomes the obstacle from the beginning of the narrative, as thus is able to reappropriate it into her personal memory. More, by completing the narrative, she is able to put her father's forgotten death back into the public history of Italy.

In the analysis of Cialente's and Manzini's narratives, we see how the protagonist's recover personal and public history to bring new insight to these events and vocalize their opinions about them. They also seem to be unrestricted commentary and delivery. Ana María Matute's approach to representing her experiences and expressing her opinions on the Spanish Civil War and life under Franco's regime in *Primera memoria* is markedly different. Because of government censorship, she symbolically describes her experiences through a child's perspective as a way to reflect how she lived them. Although the approach to contesting public history takes a different form, Matia is nevertheness able to successfully complete the second component of the quest for wholeness.

Explicitly writing about the horrors of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the political and social atmosphere of 1930s, 40s, and 50s in Spain would have been dangerous and nearly impossible. The regime's regulations made it difficult for writers to achieve a sense of artistic fulfillment because Spanish authors were "forced to exercise a self-censorship....to mislead the censors" and readership was so low

during these years that there was little to no financial incentive to publish. 60 Since Ana María Matute's text, *Primera memoria*, was written under Francisco Franco's regime, she was conscious of the censorship that literature faced. However, Matute and "those of her generation who continued to write in the face of these obstacles did so because their need to speak out was independent of both the dangers and the rewards."61 To surpass the censor, fiction was an effective medium of literature because it was treated with more leniency. 62 By mixing fiction with self-referential elements into her narrative, Matute is able to reflect on her experiences of the Civil War and the political and social atmosphere of Spain around this time period. Matute parallels the situations between children and adolescent protagonists with the country's political situation, which allows her to use *Primera memoria* as a national allegory of the Spanish Civil War. Unlike Fausta's and Gianna's utilization of allegorical representations of family to imply the superiority of one political faction over the other, the allegory in Matute's text serves as Matia's way to condemn both political sides for creating a war that has such detrimental effects on the individual and the nation.

Similar to Cialente and Manzini's political family disputes, the family within Matute's text is divided according to the political atmosphere of Spain at the start of the Civil War. The familial division can be seen as a "microcosmic, symbolic

<sup>60</sup> Díaz, Ana María Matute, 40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Linda Gould Levine, "The Censored Sex: Woman as Author and Character in Franco's Spain," in Women in Hispanic Literature: Idols and Fallen Icons, ed. Beth Miller (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 293.

representation of the national situation."63 The Spanish Civil War broke out in the summer of 1936 and ended in the spring of 1939, with the defeat of the Republicans by Francisco Franco's Nationalists. Although neither Matia's mother nor her father is present in her life, their political affiliations nevertheless haunt her. Matia's father is fighting for the Republican cause while her maternal family supports the Nationalists. In fact, her cousin Borja's father is fighting alongside Franco against his brother-inlaw. This results in extreme tension between the two adolescents. Borja often boasts of his father's loyalty to the Nationalists and his ability to "mandar fusilar a quien le parezca" [order to be shot anyone he wants] (Matute 1960, 65). He also accuses Matia of siding with ellos (the others, the Republicans), which leaves Matia infuriated. At one point, she lashes back and tells Borja that her "padre se juega la vida por culpa vuestra" [father is risking his life because of the Nationalists], indicating her selfalliance with the Republicans (Matute 1960, 56).

The familial dispute between Matia and Borja, who are raised as siblings, summons the allusion of Cain and Abel. This Biblical account of archetypal fratricide comes from the book of Genesis and tells the story of Cain, who kills his brother Abel, because he believes God favors his brother more. Because, in Matute's text, Matia and Borja "each identify with the cause espoused by their respective progenitors," they reflect the rivaling siblings in Cain and Abel. 64 This theme also applies to the Civil War, which was "often symbolized by the violence between brothers." <sup>65</sup> By paralleling the two situations through the use of the Cain and Abel

<sup>63</sup> Díaz, Ana María Matute, 133.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Díaz, *Ana María Matute*, 133.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> Ibid., 147.

paradigm, Matute reflects the harsh reality of brother fighting brother of the Civil War. Perhaps her use of this religious allusion also reflects her internal conflict between political ideologies. In her work on Matute, Janet Díaz notes that "even though by family, background, upbringing, and class contacts she should belong to the Nationalist (or Franco) faction, her implicit sympathies are with the vanquished, with the poor and suffering of all creeds." <sup>66</sup> Therefore, not only does the allusion parallel the text with national events, it also serves as a self-referential marker.

In addition to the inner familial fragmentation, Matute also uses a war between the children and adolescents of the island where Matia lives as a symbolic representation of the Civil War. The fact that this adolescent war takes place within the confines of the island reflects how the Civil War took place within Spanish boundaries. Matia sees the island divided between *nosotros* (herself, Borja, Juan Antonio, the son of a doctor, and the two sons of the grandmother's estate manager) and *ellos* (Giuem, the son of the blacksmith, Toni, the son of carter, Antonio, son of a tenant farmer, and Ramón, son of the carpenter). Although young Matia does not realize it, the two groups are segregated along socio-economic lines. *Nosotros* is composed of the upper-class bourgeoisie children and *ellos* is composed of the lower-class proletariat. The class separation also reflects a key characteristic of the dividing lines between political ideologies during the Civil War.

Matute's descriptions of the actual 'war' and physical fighting between the two adolescent groups are also symbolic of the Civil War that Matute lived through as

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

a child. During what Matia refers to as 'los días enemigos' [the enemy days], the children partake in physical violence that often leads to bloodshed (Matute 1960, 111). The fighting takes place in a plaza outside of a butcher's market so those involved are able to obtain knifes and hooks. The two groups also throw stones at each other and Borja even brandishes a gun he found on the street. Matia remembers when "una vez hirieron a Juan Antonio con el gancho. Recuerdo la sangre corriéndole pierna abajo, entre el vello negro, y sus labios apretados para no llorar" [one time they wounded Juan Antonio with a hook. I remember the blood running down his leg between his black hair and his tightened lips so that he wouldn't cry] (Matute 1960, 112). The physical violence in which the two groups participate further strengthens the link between the adolescent war and the Spanish Civil War.

Matia's assessment of the adolescent war on the island reveals Matute's own sentiments towards the real political conflict. The female protagonist confesses that the war between *nosotros* and *ellos* "era una guerra sorda y ensañada, cuyo sentido no estaba a [su] alcance" [was a blind and angry war, whose reason wasn't within [her] reach] (Matute 1960, 111). She is unable to explain the reasons for this war. The adult Matia, indicated within the text by parenthesis, adds to this assessment by asking, "(Será verdad que de niños vivimos la vida entera, de un sorbo, para repetirnos después estúpidamente, ciegamente, sin sentido alguno?)" [(Is it true that as children, we live our entire lives in one gulp, only to repeat ourselves stupidly, blindly, and without any sort of feeling?)] (Matute 1960, 20). The intrusion of adult Matia's voice in this moment creates a fundamental distinction between Matute's protagonist and those of Cialente and Manzini. Whereas the adult voices of Fausta and Gianna

interject within the narrative to provide the reader with their new realizations of history, Matute foregrounds the distance between the child's and the adult's perspectives to underscore the protagonist's unchanged feelings over time. Just like the adolescent war, she implores her reader to look at the Civil War as a foolish, childish mistake made by adults who do not even understand their own reasoning for such a war. Another critical distinction is also made between Matia, Fausta, and Gianna. The allegorical representations of Fausta and Gianna's families serve as templates for the protagonist's to show the reader who they sympathize with politically and whom they believe is superior. In Matia's case, she is not so much emphasizing the superiority of the Republicans over the Nationalists, as she is condemning the long-term negative effects war as on the individual and nation.

During a time when censorship characterized any sort of publication, Matute had to find other means with which to express the trauma she experienced as a result of the Civil War. Although she never explicitly condemns the war, Matute is able to voice her opinion by depicting Matia's politically torn family and an adolescent war on an isolated island. While Cialente, Manzini and have more freedom to openly criticize and reinterpret their selected portions of history, Matute achieves the same results despite the censorial limitations.

## 2. United family versus the Regime

As I noted in the preceding chapter, *El cuatro de atrás* stands apart from the other narratives because the parents within Martín Gaite's text are politically united, instead of divided. In this chapter, her text demonstrates how the family, as a unified

entity, operates against another entity, Francisco Franco's regime. Throughout her text, the author illustrates how the regime's political, social and religious discourse tried to control and guide the Spanish public, particularly regarding specified polarized gender roles. Martín Gaite's ultimate goal, however, is to show how the regime failed in its attempt to indoctrinate 'C' and her family through its pervasive rhetorical strategies. As she exposes the true nature of the regime's discourse, she contests the popular cultural beliefs that repressed the Spanish people, thus completing the second element of 'C's' quest for wholeness.

Martín Gaite's text also differs from those of Cialente, Manzini, and Matute because her protagonist's ultimate goal is to reconcile public historical figures of Spanish culture with the Spanish people. By establishing a bond with Franco's daughter, Carmencita, 'C' creates an internal genealogy and unity based on common experience and national identity, which allows her to overcome the regime's rigid polarization of society. This internal cohesion and unity is absent in the other life narratives because contesting public history seems to be the goal in and of itself for Fausta, Gianna, and Matia. They only highlight the rifts and schisms that exist as a result of their family's political tension to bring them to the reader's attention and provide an alternative way to interpret historical events. Martín Gaite takes her text one step further by bridging these political and cultural schisms of the society in which she grew up.

'C' presents the discourse of the regime as composed of a multitude of societal elements, including political, social, and religious ones. The images and rhetoric deployed by Franco and the Falange were meant to determine the ways in which Spanish citizens discussed themselves and those around them. The aspect most important to 'C's' examination of this discourse is its fanatic emphasis on "institutionalized polarization." With regards to gender roles, the regime created separate measurements for men and women establishing a distinctly sexist system of moral codes. As discussed in the previous chapter, women were expected to be wives, mothers, and the keepers of order and cleanliness for the sake of the husband. The rhetoric regarding women and their place within society was a constant presence within her life as a child and adolescent, as 'C' remembers the images of Isabel la Católica that bombarded her textbooks and the popular magazines of the time. The death of Franscisco Franco is the confessed trigger that prompts 'C' to vocalize the flaws she saw within the regime's discourse on gender roles and the ideal Spanish woman. While reflecting on the regime's obsession with Isabel la Católica, she remembers the constant emphasis on the queen's happiness (la alegría). As she considers the portraits of Isabel that were embedded within Spanish culture under Franco's regime, 'C' states,

Yo miraba aquel rostro severo, aprisionado por el casquete que venía en los libros de texto, y lo único que no entendía era lo de la alegría, tal vez es que hubiera salido mal en aquel retrato, pero, desde luego, no daban muchas ganas de tener aquella imagen como espejo, claro que algunas de las monitoras que nos instaban a imitarla también tenían aquel rictus seco en la boca y aquella luz fría en los ojos, aunque hablaran continuamente de la alegría. (Martín Gaite 1978, 95-96)

[I looked at her severe face, imprisoned by the skullcap that was in all my textbooks and the only thing that I didn't understand was her 'happiness.' Maybe it's that she looked bad in some of her

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Robert C. Spires, *Post-Totalitarian Spanish Fiction* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996), 67.

portraits but they didn't make me want to have them as my mirror. Even some of the instructors that told us to imitate Isabel had that dry sneer on their mouths and that cold light in their eyes, even though they constantly were talking about 'happiness.' 1<sup>55</sup>

With the image of Isabel, she illustrates how the regime imposed an attitude onto the queen that was not actually valid. While society emphasizes the happiness that characterizes Isabel's portraits, 'C' notices the opposite. With these observations, she reveals the inability of the regime and its rhetoric to fully convince her of the ideals it was trying to impose on women. Her understanding of the regime's incorrect assumptions and rigid societal standards ignites feelings of rebellion.

It is a distinctive feature of *El cuarto de atrás* that, as models of dissent, the narrator's parents actually foster her rebellious spirit and inclination to resist the regime. As discussed in the first chapter, the mother is a nontraditional wife and mother. She does not force her daughter to become the ideal Spanish woman, and instead encourages her daughter to study and to question authority. The mother, forced to give up her studies for marriage and a child, works from within the regime's standards as a way to show the young female protagonist what she should avoid as an adult. She also defends her daughter's intelligence and passion for learning from women who insult her. When a woman patronizes 'C' as she studies for her exams by quoting a popular adage, "Mujer que sabe latín no puede tener buen fin" [a woman that knows Latin will come to a bad end], the mother retorts, "Hasta a coser un botón aprende mejor una persona lista que una tonta" [A person who is smart rather than dumb learns to sew better] (Martín Gaite 1978, 93). As indicated in her response, the mother assails the women who support the idea of the mindless housewife from within their own claimed territory, attacking domestic activities such as sewing.

The father also maintains an important significance with regards to 'C's' resistance of the regime and its Catholic affiliations. As discussed in the previous chapter, Franço's regime was allied with the Catholic Church. 'C' remembers her father reading a text by Erasmus, a humanist and scholar from the northern Renaissance, entitled El elogio de la locura (The Praise of Folly). She is confused because she only hears her father say *locura* ("insanity") with "un matiz claramente peyorativo" [with a pejorative connotation] (Martín Gaite 1978, 149). When she questions him about the book, he then explains the importance of Erasmus and his unique ability to see clearly enough to judge the insanity of others. More importantly, Erasmus spoke out against the flaws of the Catholic Church. The texts of Erasmus would have been looked down upon because of the regime's profound association with the Church. By alluding to Erasmus and her father's involvement in her discovery of the philosopher, 'C' demonstrates how her father contributed to her rebellion of the regime. By introducing her to important literature and involving her in intellectual thought, he also assists her in escaping the confinement of her censored education that promotes the ideals of the regime.

With her own observations of the hypocrisies of the Francoist regime, as well as her parental encouragement to resist, 'C' commits herself to complete opposition of the regime and its polarized institutionalization of gender roles. The project of the regime completely failed to assimilate her as she confirms that the regime's propaganda made "se perfiló [su] desconfianza hacia los seres decididos y seguros, crecieron [sus] ansias de libertad y se afianzó la alianza con el desorden...También [se puso] en guardia contra la idea del noviazgo como premio a [sus] posibles

virtudes prácticas" [her distrust towards decided and sure people take shape, her yearnings for freedom grow and established her alliance with disorder...Also she was on the alert against the idea of engagements as a prize to her possible practical virtues] (Martín Gaite 1978, 96-97). Her ultimate resistance to the regime, however, does not take place until after Franco's death.

'C's' final attack on the regime is her emphasis on the interconnectedness between historical figures and herself and other Spaniards who suffered under Franco and his political party, the Falange. The regime attempted to separate society based on strict criteria of what was 'good' and 'bad,' and isolate or attack the unwanted aspects. However, 'C's' identification with Francisco Franco's daughter, Carmencita, allows her to realize the "bond of human commonality between observer and observed."68 This bond allows her to reconcile the political differences between her family and Franco's regime. 'C' remembers the first time she saw Franco and Carmencita. She notes that "fue la primera vez que yo pensé cuánto se deben aburrir los hijos de los reyes y de los ministros, porque Carmencita Franco miraba alrededor con unos ojos absolutamente tediosos y tristes...era más o menos de mi edad, decían que se parecía algo a mí" [it was the first time that I realized how bored the children of kings and ministers must be because Carmencita Franco looked outside with bored and sad eyes...she was more or less my age and they said she looked like me] (Martín Gaite 1978, 63). She later realizes, after the death of Franco in 1975, that Carmencita and herself "[han] sido víctimas de las mismas modas y costumbres, [han] leído las mismas revistas y visto el mismo cine" [had been victims of the same fashions and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> Spires, *Post-Totalitarian Spanish Fiction*, 68.

customs and had read the same magazines and seen the same movies] (Martín Gaite 1978, 136). By identifying herself with Carmencita and realizing the bond that links them, 'C' is then able to humanize Franco himself, after decades of mythification in Spain. 'C' explains that "para ella era simplemente su padre" [for her [Carmencita], he [Franco] was simply her father] and emphasizes the fact that like the rest of humankind, Franco ended up buried in a "hoyo vacío" [empty hole] (Martín Gaite 1978, 136, 134). By making such an assertion, 'C' defies the polarization of Franco's regime and thus confirms its failure to impose its values upon her as a woman, a Spaniard, and as a human being.

Her identification with Carmencita also creates an internal genealogy within the text that originates from their common experiences and national identity. Unlike the other narratives, where the political divisions are emphasized and maintained, 'C's internal genealogy creates unity and cohesion within her life that supplements the political unity of her family. 'C's' realization of this unity allows her to reconcile the political rift between her family and Franco's regime that had existed for decades. With her unified home and her reconciliation of past and present, 'C' completes the second step of the quest for wholeness and takes this step one step further by transcending the polical divisions that marked her earlier life.

### 3. Conclusion

In each of these four texts, Cialente, Manzini, Matute, and Martín Gaite use their personal histories as allegories of the public histories of Italy and Spain to embark on the second component of the quest for wholeness: contesting public history. The politically divided families of Fausta, Gianna, and Matia are a source of tension that prompts the reader to reexamine their personal history and by doing so, they provide the reader with alternative readings of public history or revive a portion of history that has been lost with time. 'C's' family is different because they are politically unified. Through the political unity of the family, 'C' contests Franco's regime's social, political, and religious discourse. Whereas only three of the four protagonists were able to achieve the formation of an identity in my previous chapter, here, all of them are successful in their endeavors. Perhaps this difference is due to the fact that all of the protagonists in this chapter have something concrete to discuss and expose while Matia, the only character unable to achieve a sense of self in the previous section, was lacking several necessary elements to complete this step.

In a more general sense, the life narratives in this chapter demonstrate how public history works on the individual and vice versa. A first-person life narrative is an optimal way of illustrating this relationship because instead of receiving an impersonal, over-generalized story, the life narratives provide us with an intimate and detailed account of personal and public experience. Although the details of the experiences may not apply to every reader, the reader can appreciate and more easily relate to the realistic way in which the four authors present their experiences because we all live history through a first-person perspective.

# **Solution** Chapter 3 Finding and Establishing Voice

In chapter one and chapter two of my thesis, I identified and explored the first two components of the quest for wholeness: identity formation and contesting public history. For Fausta, Gianna, and 'C,' rejecting the social roles determined by a patriarchal society allowed them to create an identity as woman and individual. Matia was unable to complete her identity formation because of her betryal of Manuel, which trapped her within the patriarchic world from which she had been trying to escape. All of the protagonists are successful, however, in contesting portions of history they saw as misrepresented or forgotten.

For my third and final chapter, I will examine the third component of the quest for wholeness: finding and establishing voice. For each protagonist, except Matia, writing is the creative endeavor through which she is able to find and express her own voice to overcome the alienation of silence. In Cialente's and Manzini's texts, Fausta and Gianna experience a progressional evolution in their quest to find voice. Silence marks their childhoods but their desire to engage their creativity through writing ultimately allows them to voice their opinions and thoughts. Matute's narrative once again deviates from the rest because the protagonist, Matia's, creative endeavors are impeded by her betrayal of Manuel, which results in the loss of her ability to express herself. Matia's loss of voice reflects Matute's own sense of stunted growth and inability to self-express, as a result of the stale literary environment of a static world in which she found herself. 'C's' journey in Martín Gaite's text is similar to Matia's because she also experiences the loss of her voice as a child. Her journey is

therefore a quest to recover her voice. With the aid of a stranger in black, 'C' utilizes writing and creativity as a means to eliminate the schism between her silent past and present self.

#### 1. Progressional journey to find voice- Fausta Cialente and Gianna Manzini

In *Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger*, Cialente's protagonist, Fausta, begins her journey to finding voice by exploring her family history and her childhood, all characterized by silent females and their alienation from creativity. As the protagonist grows and matures, she refuses to lead her life in silence and through her voluntary exile to Alexandria, Egypt after World War I, thrusts herself into the public literary arena by writing for anti-Fascist newspapers and a radio broadcast. After the end of World War II, her writing shifts focus and she begins to document her life experiences as her final creative endeavor and the solidification of her voice.

Just as Fausta uses her maternal family as the springboard for her identity formation and the template for contesting Trieste's history, she also locates the origins of her difficulty in finding voice in the biography of her mother. In the world of Wieselbergers, creativity is reserved for men. Gustavo Wieselberger is the only family member who is allowed to actually act upon his creative desires through music, while the women of the house watch and listen. Elsa seems to be the exception to this rule as she embarks on what seems to be a promising singing career but is forced by her husband to give it up before it really begins. The same story seems to follow through to Fausta's childhood. Her brother, Renato, is afforded all of the opportunities in which he can exercise his creative talents, particularly through the art

of acting, while Fausta is "una muta presenza ch'egli derideva, insultava o supplicava...[era] soltanto un oggetto, e pugnalata o soffocata" [a mute presence that he mocked, insulted or begged... she was only an object, stabbed and suffocated] (Cialente 1976, 116). While her brother was encouraged to explore artistic expression, societal and familial norms directed Fausta to the traditional life of a woman, where she would be a wife and mother.

Even though Renato was publicly allowed to demonstrate his creative talent, their private life reveals who really dominates in terms of creativity. Fausta recalls the "gioco 'delle parole'" [game of words] that the two used to play (Cialente 1976, 102). The two would start with an original phrase and each would have to produce, without repeating, as many words as they could associate with said phrase. Fausta explains that it "dava la stura a un frenetico esercizio della nostra fantasia" [it opened the floodgate to a manic exercise of our fantasy] (Cialente 1976, 102). Through this game, "the brother's tongue is... a language that can be defeated by the sister's ability at 'the game of words'; Fausta's consciousness of her creative ability is born and is accepted by her brother." While Renato is gifted in his ability to interpret texts, Fausta is the one who is truly creative in the original use of language. Fausta's natural ability with words anticipates her future career as a writer.

The creativity born from the word game is then transformed into Fausta's love of literature and writing. Adult Fausta remembers how reading was her "svago preferito" [preferred entertainment] because the world of literature was "quasi sempre irreale, a cui nulla doveva mescolarsi" [almost always unreal, to which nothing

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> Parati. "From Genealogy to Gynealogy and Beyond." 85.

should be mixed with] (Cialente 1976, 117). Fausta connects with and finds comfort in the fact that the line between literature and reality is well defined. This distinction becomes vital when Fausta is faced with the harsh realities of war and politics.

With the emergence of World War I, Fausta suddenly finds herself in a hostile environment that she does not fully understand. She confesses to her reader that, "La sola cosa che mi restava da fare, lo sentivo, era di mettermi a scrivere, anche per dimenticare la Guerra e tutti i nostri guai" [The only thing that I could do, I felt, was to start writing, so that I could forget the war and all of our problems] (Cialente 1976, 171). The distinction Fausta made as a young girl between reality and literature benefits her during the horrors of war because writing provides Fausta with an escape from what is happening around her; writing becomes a refuge. It is also the first time in which Fausta discovers the ability to use her own voice for her own objective. Her love for such creative outlets must be kept concealed from her family, however, because she understands that if her mother and father knew, they would try to convince her to attend to more domestic tasks or insult her. This ultimately prevents her from truly engaging her creative talents. However, the rise of fascism, her voluntary exile from Italy, and the onset of World War II provide her with motivation to use her creativity within a more public arena.

Fausta's transition from childhood to adulthood and her greater understanding of history and societal problems, completely changes her perspective on writing and creativity. After going into voluntary exile in Alexandria, Egypt shortly before Benito Mussolini's rise to power in Italy in 1922, Fausta "[reterritorializes] her creative

realms of authority." The reveals that, "Non ero più la "scrittice", avevo perfino dimenticato d'esserlo stata, mi sembrava che non avrei più potuto perder tempo a "inventare storielle", la crudeltà della Guerra mi faceva vedere questo come la cosa più inutile del mondo. Avevo torto, ma così è stato" [I was no longer "the writer." I had for now forgotten about ever being one. It seemed to me that I hadn't been able to waste time "inventing stories." The cruelty of the war made me see that this was the most useless thing in the world. I had turned but that was how it was (Cialente 1976, 223). Fantasy and literature no longer become the center of Fausta's efforts, which seem useless to her now. She seeks to project her voice through a creative medium whose purpose is to expose the horrors she witnesses and experiences in reality.

The mediums she utilizes to accomplish her goal are anti-Fascist newspapers and a radio transmission called Radio Cairo. She exchanges literature and fantasy for creative efforts that are grounded in historical events and political information. Fausta explains that this type of writing was "un'arma che la sorte mi poneva in mano e con quell'arma, astuzia aiutando, sul fascismo avrei finalmente sparato anch'io" [was an arm that destiny put in my hand and with that arm, craftiness helping, I had also finally shot at fascism] (Cialente 1976, 223). The protagonist becomes a verbal soldier in the fight against fascism and "displaces language from its patriarchal cradle into a new social and narrative context. She writes in Italian from Egypt and uses her literary and oratorical skills against the fascist motherland."<sup>71</sup> This form of attack is particularly harmful to the regime because it destroys the cohesiveness Mussolini

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Ibid., 94. <sup>71</sup> Ibid., 88.

sought to create through *italianità*. Through her career as a journalist, she also progresses further in her search to find voice by establishing herself within a public context.

The final stage in Fausta's processual journey begins after World War II. She determines that her career as a journalist is no longer essential to the establishment of her public voice but still feels that she has an obligation to write. She explains that "quell che mi rimaneva era affidato soltanto alla memoria, nulla poteva più alterarlo o distruggerlo, ma allo stesso tempo, frantumata com'ero sentivo di dover tornare al lavoro, ricomporre un ordine di cui ero responsabile ed era necessario seguire" [what remained was entrusted only to memory, nothing could alter or destroy it anymore, but at the same time, destroyed as I was, I felt the obligation to return to work, to rewrite an order of which I was responsible and of which it was necessary to follow] (Cialente 1976, 237). She decides to return to the world of literature but instead of using her literary skills as a refuge from reality, she takes the only thing that remained, her memory, and begins to document her life experiences, thus merging the two. She notes the publication of her book *Ballata levantina* (1961), a narrative based on her life in Egypt. This trend continues through her writing of *Le quattro ragazze* Wieselberger, in which she makes her voice heard regarding the most critical issues in her life. These personal experiences, as told in her own words, fulfill Fausta's journey to finding and establishing voice.

Through the textual analysis of Cialente's *Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger*, we saw Fausta's processual journey to finding voice. This journey develops through an evolution in Fausta's relationship with creativity and writing. Beginning with her

maternal family's history, creative efforts are reserved for men, a tradition that is carried into Fausta's childhood. Her discovery of writing, the trauma of both world wars, and the rise of fascism in Italy, however, encourage her to project her voice into a public domain, where she can more actively participate in war and politics. The concluding stage of Fausta's journey to finding voice is a return to literature and the completion of her life story, which includes the book the reader has just completed, Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger. In Ritratto in piedi, Manzini's protagonist, Gianna, undergoes a similar progression from silence to finding voice. Gianna's childhood is similar to that of Fausta's because it is characterized by silent, compliant behavior, which she has learned from her mother. The protagonist's transition from childhood to adulthood, signified by her move to Florence, is accompanied by a progression from silence to creative exploration through various art forms. It is her father's gift of a journal in her adult life, however, that ultimately leads Gianna to the creative act of writing and provides her with the tools to overcome silence and find her voice. Just as the reader recognizes that the result of Fausta's journey to finding voice is Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger, the product of Gianna's achievement is Ritratto in piedi.

Young Gianna's life is defined by silence and the inability to use her own voice. As reflected in my second chapter, because Gianna and her mother are women, they are not allowed to actively participate in political discussion and are expected to withhold their thoughts and opinions. Although she despises her mother's compliant behavior, she is forced to follow suit. This prevents Gianna from defending her anarchist father against verbal attacks by locals and his wife's family. Gianna remembers that her silent behavior during these times caused her to feel "impotente."

Sola. Del tutto sola; piccolissima. Il silenzio [era] una belva. [Stava] per divorarmi. Mi [annietava]" [powerless. Alone. Of everything, alone; tiny. Silence was a wild beast. It was going to devour me. It destroyed me] (Manzini 1971, 127). Silence even carries over into her relationship with her father, Giuseppe Manzini. Gianna admits that in his company, she was "soltanto in grado di ascoltare" [only in a position to listen] (Manzini 1971, 58). Her father dominates their conversations, which further prevents Gianna from actively engaging her voice and expressing her opinions. In all the situations in which she finds herself, Gianna's voice is obscured by the voices of others.

Because Gianna is unable to speak for herself and is forced to succumb to silence, she admires the fact that her father is able to actively utilize his voice. She notes that when her father became angry, he "protestò. Dardeggiò" [protested. He aimed.] (Manzini 1971, 33). These verbs connote aggressive action, which serves in direct opposition to Gianna's static behavior. Her father's active usage of his voice is further illustrated by a story told by Gianna's uncle. When her father was a teenager, he wrote a letter to the King of Italy and when the police arrived at his house, "non credevano che quell ragazzo fosse stato capace di tanto. Avrà avuto il vestito alla marinara. Ma lui calmo, intrepido, disse: L'ho scritta io, l'ho proprio scritta io" [they couldn't believe that he was capable of doing such a thing. He would have been wearing a sailor suit but he was calm, intrepid, and he said: I wrote the letter, it was me] (Manzini 1971, 119). Although the content of the letter is never revealed, it clearly was controversial enough to involve the police. This episode endures in her memory because it demonstrates Giuseppe's proud and fearless attitude towards using

his voice. She respects his commitment to making his voice and opinions heard, regardless to whom they are directed.

Gianna also admires her father's ability to write poetry based on his own experiences as an outspoken anarchist during the rise of fascism. Her father tells her that "il suo valore puro la poesia lo ritrova nell'azione" [the true value of poetry is found in action] and Gianna responds, "l'azione! Che promessa. Significherà viaggiare, seguire, partecipare" [action! What a promise. It will mean travel, follow, and participate] (Manzini 1971, 175). Once again, Gianna creates a contrast between her inability to act, signified in the use of the future tense of "significare" which shows that she does not possess the ability to "travel" or "participate" at the present moment, versus words that connote movement and progress, such as "action." As a child, the protagonist understands theoretically what these terms mean based on her father's example, but has yet to accomplish such a thing herself because she has not found a creative outlet.

Gianna's transformation from childhood to adulthood, which follows her move to Florence and subsequent separation from her father, allows her the freedom to explore her creativity and find her voice. This transformation is accompanied by an understanding of material objects and appearance as a way for women to express themselves. This serves as Gianna's first step towards finding her voice, yet she lacks the usage of her own words and thoughts that poetry offered her father.

As she continues to search for the most fruitful way to express herself, she takes advantage of the cultural and intellectual stimulation of Florence. As a result, she declares "capire, rendermi conto, che entusiasmo!" [To understand, to realize,

what enthusiasm!] (Manzini 1971, 192). By actively engaging herself in what surrounds her, she leaves the theoretical understandings of her childhood, and replaces them with real understandings. This new access to the world around her prepares her for her exploration of creative endeavors. She finally dives into various art forms, such as music, dance, and acting. Out of the aforementioned three, she declares:

Invece avrei voluto studiare recitazione: non tanto per amore del teatro, quanto per amore della parola della voce; saperla sostenere, legare, modulare nella voce. Rispettarla anche nella voce. Intuivo nella parola un mistero sempre rinnovabile, cui non soltanto il contesto della frase poteva dare risalto, ma anche la voce, risattandola come entità limpida e provocante a un tempo. (Manzini 1971, 201-202)

[Instead, I had only wanted to study acting: not so much for the love of theater, but for the love of the word of the voice; to know how to sustain, tie, and to modulate the word in the voice. Also to respect the word in the voice. I sensed in the word an always renewable mystery, which not only the context of the phrase could give emphasis, but also the voice, emphasizing it as a clean and provocative entity at the same time.]

In this quote, Gianna highlights the fact that the voice has the ability to continuously create new meaning (a "renewable mystery") for words. Acting therefore provides Gianna with a sense of control over her voice that she has never had before. The art becomes fundamental to establishing her voice as an independent entity, separate from those around her. The critical distinction between Fausta and Renato in *Le quattro ragazze* Wieselberger is also applicable in this moment in *Ritratto in piedi*. In Cialente's text, Renato's acting talent is juxtaposed with Fausta's original use of language in the game of words. This childhood game anticipates Fausta's ability to utilize her voice with her own words in her writing career, which is what ultimately allows her to find and establish her voice. Although acting is an indispensable step in

Gianna's journey, she still has not found her voice through her own original treatment of language and experience like Fausta.

The final stage of Gianna's journey to finding her voice occurs after her father's death. Upon sorting through his personal belongings, she finds a "bel quaderno nuovo... sopra la sua scrivania. Sulla prima pagina si leggeva: "Perché tu sappia" [a pretty, new journal... on his desk. On the first page was written, "So that you know"] (Manzini 1971, 224). These words, along with the journal, urge Gianna to tell her and her father's story through writing and she is finally able to actively engage her voice and her own words. She indicates this by resummoning the scene of the horse on the Santa Trinità bridge in Florence that was discussed in chapter two. At the beginning of the narrative, Gianna compares herself to a horse that refuses to cross this bridge, although no one understands the reason for balking. Once she realizes that writing is the way to accomplish her goal, the horse moves forward and Gianna "[riprende] così, tremante, la penna in mano" [like that, takes the pen in her hand, trembling (Manzini 1971, 212). Whereas the act of writing in Cialente's text sparks confidence and determination in her protagonist, Gianna is scared. Both protagonists realize, however, that employing their voices and writing about their personal experiences is a necessary and final step to establishing their voices. The reader, at this moment in the text, realizes that Gianna is taking the pen in her hand to write the very book that he or she has just finished reading. Both Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger and Ritratto in piedi become the products and testaments to each protagonist's completion of her journey to find voice.

## 2. Inability to overcome silence and the loss of voice- Ana María Matute

As discussed, Cialente and Manzini's protagonists find and establish their voices through a journey that leads them to the act of writing. Fausta and Gianna progress from silent childhoods to creative adulthoods where they use their voices to convey their own life stories. In Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria*, however, the protagonist, Matia, experiences the complete opposite. As Matia adjusts to her life on the island where her grandmother lives, she uses her imagination to resist the world of adults. However, she is unable to prevent the loss of her creativity, indicated by the gradual loss of her childhood toys and the abandonment of her favorite fairytales, because of her betrayal of Manuel. In contrast to Fausta and Gianna whose lives as adults are illuminated by creativity and writing, Matia's transformation into adulthood is characterized by silence. Matia's deprivation of voice and the circumstances that surround her entrance into a silent adulthood reflects a sense of stunted growth in which Matute found herself as a writer under Franco's regime. Through her protagonist, Matute communicates her inability to achieve another component of the quest for wholeness.

From the start of *Primera memoria*, Matia associates silence with adulthood and creativity with childhood. As a child, she wants to resist the world of adults and all the negative connotations she associates with it. She explains that "no [quiere] saber nada del mundo que no [entiende]" [she doesn't want to know anything about the world that she doesn't understand] (Matute 1960, 143). This world is that of adults, which she sees as lacking love and characterized by silence. Her grandmother and the island in which she lives embody these two qualities. In my first chapter, I

illustrated how the grandmother, serving as the substitute patriarch, is a stifling presence whose goal is to control and dominate those around her, especially Matia. Furthermore, she attempts to prevent her granddaughter from utilizing her imagination by prohibiting Matia from speaking against her. She forces Matia into a life of silent obedience. The silent atmosphere of the island also prohibits Matia from expressing herself because it lacks vibrance and stimulation. She highlights the "silencio rojo del sol" [red silence of the sun], the "silencio podrido" [rotten silence], and "La calma, el silencio y una espera larga y exasperante, en la que, de pronto, nos veíamos todos sumergidos, operaba también sobre nosotros" [the calm, the silence, and the long and exasperating wait in which, all of a sudden, we saw ourselves submerged. It was operating above us as well] (Matute 1960, 35, 152, 18). The loveless, silent atmosphere in which Matia finds herself ultimately threatens her childhood and creativity.

As a child, Matia uses her creative outlets of self-expression in an attempt to combat adulthood. As she reflects on her childhood before the move to doña Práxedes' estate, she reminisces about a puppet theater she created which had "las decoraciones de papeles transparentes, con cielos y ventanas azules, amarillos, rosados, y aquellas letras negras en el dorso; *El Teatro de los Niños*" [decorations made of transparent paper with blue, yellow, and pink skies and windows, with black letters on the back; *The Theater of Children*] (Matute 1960, 16). With the puppet theater, she used to write and perform plays. Here the role of theater and acting differs from the texts of Cialente and Manzini. Whereas acting in *Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger* and *Ritratto in piedi* is solely a reinterpretation of others words, Matia

is the creator and performer of the words she acts. Upon her arrival at the island, however, she realizes that the puppet theater was accidentally left behind, and that same night, she does not sleep for the first time in her life. The loss of the theater and sleep foreshadows her entrance into adulthood that will occur as a result of her betrayal of Manuel.

Despite losing her puppet theater, Matia still attempts to use her imagination as a way to escape from her reality and resist adulthood. When she feels particularly lonely and upset, she tries to "trasladar [su] pensamiento, hacer correr [su] imaginación como un pequeño tren por bosques y lugares desconocidos, llevarla hasta Mauricia y [aferarse] a imágenes cotidianas" [transfer her thought, to make her imagination run like a small train that goes through forests and unknown places, to take her imagination to Mauricia<sup>72</sup> and to clutch herself to everyday images] (Matute 1960, 15). She later offers the reader such 'everyday images' through the descriptions of flowers and fruit that she used to smell and pick with Mauricia. She also associates these images with light, which emphasizes the lightness and freedom she felt as a child. By figuratively transporting herself to familiar settings, Matia demonstrates her desire for the creative freedom and comfort her past offered.

Another way in which Matia exercises her creative impulses is through a "pequeño muñeco negro" [small, black doll] named Gorogó (Matute 1960, 115). She often keeps him under her blouse, next to her heart. Perhaps this is an unconscious effort to protect herself against the world of adults, as well as preserve her childhood

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Mauricia was Matia's nurse as a young girl. Matia was forced to move to the island with her grandmother because Mauricia became ill and died.

creativity and imagination. He is like a friend to her and she secretly spends much of her time drawing cities for him and showing him places on her Atlas. Just as she transports herself to her past, she imagines traveling with Gorogó to the places she highlights on her map.

Matia has what she refers to as her 'isla' [island], where she is able to unleash her imagination. The island within her grandmother's home is actually her dresser where she keeps Gorogó, her Atlas, and her books. Matia's 'isla' is the last remaining area where she can exercise her creativity without being restricted by others. In addition, by describing this area as an island, Matia separates her creative imagination from the world of the adults and it becomes another way in which she resists adulthood.

Matia's final way of impeding her entry into adulthood is through her identification with and constant references to *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie and *The Snow Queen* by Hans Christian Andersen. Both of these fairytales speak of children who maintain the essence of their childhoods. *Peter Pan* is a play that details the adventures of three children (Michael, John, and Wendy) with Peter Pan in Never Land. Just as Matia does not want to grow up and become an adult, Peter Pan declares "I want always to be a little boy and to have fun." In *The Snow Queen*, Kay and Gerda are two children who spend all their time together. One day, Kay disappears with a woman known as the Snow Queen. When Gerda finally discovers where the Snow Queen has taken him, she helps him to escape. Upon their arrival at home, the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> J.M. Barrie, *Peter Pan and Other Plays*, ed. Michael Cordner, Peter Hollindate, and Martin Wiggins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), I.I.

author writes "there they both sat, grown up, and yet children – children at heart – and it was summer, warm, delightful." Matia's identification with these popular fairytales illustrates her desire to remain a child and preserve her creativity. The characters of Peter Pan and Kay and Gerda provide Matia with the inspiration to stay young and creative.

Despite the many ways in which she attempts to protect her childhood,

Matia's betrayal of Manuel forces her into adulthood and a life of silence. When

Borja becomes jealous of Matia's relationship with Manuel, he accuses him of

stealing money from doña Práxedes and threatens Matia if she tells the truth. Because

Matia does not intervene in the interest of protecting herself, Manuel is sent away.

Matia then realizes that she is no longer a child because she has acted in the same

way her grandmother would. She explains,

Y de pronto estaba allí el amanecer, como una realidad terrible, abominable. Y yo con los ojos abiertos, como un testigo. (No existió la Isla de Nunca Jamás y la Joven Sirena no consiquió un alma inmortal, porque los hombres y las mujeres no aman, y se quedó con un par de inútiles piernas, y se convirtió en espuma.) Eran horribles los cuentos. Además, había perdido a Gorogó – no sabía dónde estaba. (Matute 1960, 243)

[And all of a sudden, there was the sunrise, like a terrible, abominable reality. And me, with my eyes open, like a witness. (Neverland didn't exist and the Little Mermaid didn't obtain an immortal soul, because men and women don't love, and she stayed there with a pair of useless legs and was converted into foam.) These stories were horrible. In addition, I had lost Gorogó- I didn't know where he was.]

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Hans Christian Andersen, "The Snow Queen," in *Fairy Tales and Other Stories by Hans Christian Andersen*, trans. W.A. and J.K. Craigie (London: Oxford University Press, 1914), 262.

The betrayal of Manuel coincides with the physical loss of Gorogó as well as the abandonment of Matia's childhood fairytales, signifying the permanent loss of her childhood and creativity. In addition, Matia does not sleep for the second time in her life, further emphasizing her loss.

Matia's loss of voice and creativity can be seen as a direct reflection of the circumstances Matute found herself in as a writer after the Spanish Civil War and under the static literary climate under Franco's regime. Her protagonist's stunted creative growth reflects the self-censorship Matute had to exercise to avoid being censored by the government. Silence's defeat over creativity and self-expression also symbolizes Franco's regime's repressive hold over the Spanish literary climate.

## 3. Loss and recovery of voice- Carmen Martín Gaite

In the previous section, Fausta in *Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger* and Gianna in *Ritratto in piedi* begin their lives in silence and undergo a processual journey to overcome such silence and find their voices. By using their own voices and personal experiences, they are then able to create the very texts that the reader has just completed. Matia in *Primera memoria* begins her life by exercising her creativity, but her self-expression and voice are lost due to her betrayal of Manuel and her entrance into a silent adulthood. In Carmen Martín Gaite's life narrative, *El cuarto de atrás*, the protagonist, 'C', also seeks to find and establish her voice, after a long period of silence under Francisco Franco's regime. 'C's' childhood differs from Fausta's and Gianna's because her parents encouraged creative freedom and expression. The onset of the Civil War and Franco's subsequent dictatorship, however, rob the protagonist of her creativity and also of her voice, creating a parallel between Matia and 'C's'

experiences. Upon Franco's death, her journey becomes an effort to recover her lost voice and establish it through writing. The similar losses Matia and 'C' suffer as children in light of 'C's' recuperation of her creativity reveal how Martín Gaite's text contains the resolution that is desired but not present in Matute's text because of the differing historical contexts in which each author found herself at the time of writing the life narratives.

The principal problem 'C' faces in Martín Gaite's *El cuarto de atrás* is how to write about life under Franco after being censored and silenced for so long. It first occurred to her that she needed to write about her experiences on the morning of Franco's burial, but she confesses that she had a difficult time determining the style of writing that best suited her efforts. She explains that in 1975, when Francisco Franco died and the almost 40 year dictatorship ended, the Spanish editorial market was flooded with memoirs. She considers this an option because of the "copious documentation she [had] collected" over the years about life under Franco, consisting of dates and facts. However, she is never able to complete such a memoir because it seemed too trivial, believing that the reality she was dealing with deserved a far more nuanced, original treatment. She fears that if she follows the trend of memoirs, "las cosas a que se refiere el texto se convierten en mariposas disecadas que antes estaban volando al sol" [the things that are referred to in the text will convert themselves into dissected butterflies that before, were flying towards the sun] (Martín Gaite 1978,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Robert C. Spires, "Intertextuality in *El cuarto de atrás*," in *From Fiction to Metafiction: Essays in Honor of Carmen Martín Gaite*, ed. Mirella Servodidio and Marcia L. Welles (Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies, 1983), 141.

122). She has no desire to create a static, lifeless text that lacks the "subjective essence of personal experience."<sup>76</sup>

Her solution to this problem is to produce a discursive text by creating a dialogue between fiction and autobiography, as well as past and present, which accommodates both the official history and her subjective experiences. The mixture of fantastical fiction, autobiography, and history allows 'C' to break away and move past the silent era under a regime that promoted rationality, order, and a national identity over personal experience. This hybrid of literary genres also creates a dynamic and live text that allows 'C' to permanently project her voice and prevent her text from becoming static and lifeless.

The discursive element of the text first originates from a literal discourse between the female protagonist and the stranger in black, who appears at midnight for an interview that 'C' cannot seem to recall scheduling. Although the entire narrative revolves around 'C's' conversations with this stranger, she, as well as the reader, never know if he is real or created by the protagonist in a dream. After he disappears and she wakes up, the only indication of his presence is a "cajita dorada" [small golden box] that he had given her the night before. Thus the narrative begins and ends in an aura of mystery.

Although his existence remains ambiguous, the stranger in black plays a very real role in the protagonist's efforts to break her silence about life under Franco and find her voice. He serves as a critic of 'C's' literary efforts and seems to have an

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> Ibid., 142.

"uncannily familiar knowledge of her work and the writing process." Throughout the night, he creates a dynamic discourse between the two by constantly probing her with questions ("¿A usted no le gusta la literatura de misterio?" [Don't you like mysterious literature?], "¿Envidiaba usted a Carmencita Franco?" [Did you envy Carmencita Franco?], "¿Cree usted en el diablo?" [Do you believe in the devil?]) that prompt her to recover her past (Martín Gaite 1978, 35, 65, 99). By having the discourse between the two spoken, instead of written, 'C's' ideas and thoughts seem to be an unedited transcription. Because her reflections of the past and present are unfiltered to the reader, she establishes the subjective perspective on reality that she believes is a fundamental aspect to history.

The stranger in black makes his ultimate contribution to 'C's' creativity, however, when he encourages her to "shift from reality of social realism to reality of imagination and fantasy." Besides being a fantastical element of the narrative himself, he inspires her to move away from simple memoir to articulate her past and seek reason and meaning through fantastical fiction. 'C' then achieves this by creating a figurative dialogue between past and present that parallel the literal discourse between herself and the stranger in black.

The most important dialogue that 'C' creates is between her child and adult selves. She revives the memories of her childhood creativity to parallel the fantastical circumstances in which she presently finds herself. As a young girl, *el cuarto de atrás* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>77</sup> Linda Gould Levine, "Carmen Martín Gaite's *El cuarto de atrás*: A Portrait of the Artist as Woman," in *From Fiction to Metafiction: Essays in Honor of Carmen Martín Gaite*, ed. Mirella Servodidio and Marcia L. Welles (Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies, 1983), 162.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Davies, *Spanish Women's Writing, 1849-1996*, 238.

(the back room in 'C's' house) played a fundamental role in her relationship with creativity. She explains that the room,

Era muy grande y en él reinaban el desorden y la libertad, se permitía cantar a voz en cuello, cambiar de sitio los muebles, saltar encima de un sofa desvencijado y con los muelles rotos al que llamábamos el pobre sofá, tumbarse en la alfombra, mancharla de tinta, era un reino donde nada estaba prohibido. Hasta la Guerra, habíamos estudiadio y jugado allí totalmente a nuestras anchas, había holgura de sobra. Pero aquella holgura no nos la había discutido nadie, ni estaba sometida a unas leyes determinadas de aprovechamiento: el cuarto era nuestro y se acabó. (Martín Gaite 1978, 187)

[was very big and in it, reigned disorder and freedom. You could burst into song, change the placement of the furniture, jump on top of the rickety sofa with the broken springs that we used to call the poor sofa, lie down on the carpet, stain it. It was a kingdom where nothing was prohibited. Until the war, we studied and played there comfortably, there was always a surplus of fullness. But no one ever talked to us about that fullness, nor was it subjugated to determined laws of use: the room was ours and that was it.]

Unlike Fausta and Gianna, who are isolated from creativity as children, 'C' possessed her own space in which she was allowed complete freedom to explore her creative impulses. Her back room is similar to that of Matia's dresser where she keeps her childhood toys and maps. Furthermore, 'C's' back room serves as an interesting counterpoint to the Wieselberger household set-up during Gustavo's orchestra rehearsals, discussed in chapter one. Gustavo demanded that his wife, daughters, and the servants enclose themselves in the back of the house while he exercised his musical creativity in the front. In *El cuarto de atrás*, the back of the house becomes a place of creative liberty. This room is her own personal 'kingdom' in which she can learn official things from school but also exercise her childhood creativity. It provides her with freedom and spontaneity to enjoy life.

As a child, 'C' also exercises her creativity through the invention of an island called Bergai. As she remembers Bergai, 'C' tells the stranger in black "A Bergai se llegaba por el aire. Bastaba con mirar a la ventana, invocar el lugar con los ojos cerrados y se producía la levitación" [one arrived at Bergai through the air. It was enough to look at the window, invoke the place with closed eyes and the levitation produced itself] (Martín Gaite 1978, 180). Bergai only exists through actively engaging the imagination, thus further emphasizing the connection between 'C's' childhood and creativity. The literal and figurative places of the back room and Bergai provide 'C' with unfettered imagination.

The onset of the Civil War and the subsequent dictatorship of Francisco

Franco, however, strip 'C' of her creativity and her voice. Adult 'C' reenacts this loss
first by remembering the bombings during the Civil War and juxtaposing these
memories with an image of a castle constructed of her writings falling to the ground
(Martín Gaite 1978, 59). She then explains to the stranger in black that "La
amortización del cuarto de atrás y su progresiva transformación en despensa fue uno
de los primeros cambios que se produjeron en la parte de acá de aquella raya." [The
amortization of the back room and its progressive transformation into a pantry was
one of the first changes that happened in the part of time] (Martín Gaite 1978, 188).
The room was slowly emptied and became characterized by the smell of stewed
partridge. The image of her fallen writings along with that of the amortization of the
back room symbolizes 'C's' complete loss of her childhood, her creativity, and her
voice.

The current fantastical circumstances in which 'C' finds herself, however, connect her childhood-self to her adult-self, thus allowing the protagonist to recuperate her creativity and her voice. With the help of the fantastical stranger in black, 'C' reaches into what she sees as the back room of her mind, where the past is a mixture personal memories and official history. It is characterized by disorder and uncertainty, just as her literal back room was, but provides her with the information and inspiration she has been seeking about her past and present. Adult 'C' reconnects with the unrestrained imagination from her childhood as the necessary tool she needs in order to complete her life narrative. The experience "lived by the girl is directly transfused into the woman's literary world and that feeling of flight and lightness first experienced in the 'cuarto de atrás' and the island of Bergai is relived in the author's nightlong odyssey with her critic/muse." The transfusion of childhood experiences into 'C's' adult circumstances completes her quest for recovering her voice and finding the means to document her experiences in an original way.

After stimulating a dialogue between her childhood and adulthood that assists 'C' in finding her voice, 'C's' remaining task is to prevent her new and original treatment of personal experience and history from becoming a static and lifeless 'dissected butterfly.' To do this, the protagonist creates a text within a text. When 'C' wakes up to her daughter in the final chapter, the manuscript for El cuarto de atrás is laying out and becomes an 'artifact' of her discourse with the stranger in black. 80 It seems that the text has just become dead words on a page but 'C' then begins to read

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> Levine, "Carmen Martín Gaite's *El cuarto de atrás*," 169.
 <sup>80</sup> Spires, "Intertexuality in *El cuarto de atrás*," 145.

the barely created text within the very text that the reader is reading, creating a *mise-en-abîme* effect. This action keeps the text alive and animated, just as 'C' wanted. This also permanently establishes 'C's' voice and experiences among the flood of memoirs from which she wanted to distinguish herself, thus completing the third component in the quest for wholeness.

The observations made in this chapter regarding 'C's' and Matia's childhood relationship with creativity create a strong link between Martín Gaite and Matute's texts. Both protagonists associate their childhoods with creative freedom, which is lost in correlation with the onset of war. 'C' is able to recover her creativity and recuperate her voice after the static environment that characterized Francisco Franco's regime was gone due to his death in 1975. Matia's inability to achieve the same recovery reflects the reality in which Matute found herself around the time of *Primera memoria*'s publication in 1960. Matute was still repressed by the static literary climate of Spain under Franco and therefore her protagonist remains in a state of stasis at the end of the narrative. Matia and Matute seem to be stuck in the period of time that 'C' and Martín Gaite so desperately seek to unfreeze. With the analysis and information provided about the Civil War and Franco's regime in Martín Gaite's text, the author illuminates Matute's protagonist's loss and her lack of recovery in *Primera memoria*.

## 4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the final component to each protagonist's quest for wholeness: finding and establishing voice. In Cialente's, Manzini's, and Martín Gaite's texts, the protagonists' journeys to finding (or recovering in the case

of 'C') their voices leads to the creative act of writing and allows them to overcome the silence that characterized a portion of their lives. They are able to articulate their experiences in their own words, which is the ultimate goal of their literary efforts. Matia, in Matute's text, is unable to achieve this final component because of her betrayal of her childhood friend, Manuel. Because of this, she suffers the loss of her childhood, creativity, and voice. Despite the specific details of each life narrative, it is clear that finding voice and making it heard are something to which each protagonist aspires. This third component of the quest for wholeness and individuation meshes well with the previous components because it is another way in which each protagonist is able to distinguish themselves and their individual experiences from those of others.

## **Conclusion Common Processes, Unique Perspectives**

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine the life narratives of *Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger* (1976) by Fausta Cialente, *Ritratto in piedi* (1971) by Gianna Manzini, *Primera memoria* (1960) by Ana María Matute, and *El cuarto de atrás* (1978) by Carmen Martín Gaite. Sparked by a discontinuity between past and present selves and the desire to overcome the alienation of silence, each author uses her protagonist to explore private and public history as a means to embark on a processual quest for wholeness and individuation. This sense of wholeness is achieved through three processes: identity formation, contesting public history, and finding and establishing voice.

In my first chapter, I studied each protagonist's process of identity formation in a patriarchal society. As a child and adolescent, each protagonist is expected to adhere to the demands of the patriarch and uphold the image of woman as wife and mother. Through the reexamination and interrogation of a hybrid genealogical identity, each protagonist rejects and transcends predetermined social roles. She is then able to establish an identity as woman and individual. Matia is the exception to the other three protagonists because she is unable to achieve the formation of self. The broken familial atmosphere, as well as her own betrayal of her friend Manuel, prevents her from establishing herself apart from the identity of her family, which she detests, and results in a fragmented identity.

Chapter two analyzed each protagonist's experience as witness of public history and politics. Using their private history and families as allegorical representations, the female characters contest the events of public history they see as

misinterpreted or forgotten. Fausta examines the role of Italian irredentism beginning in the late nineteenth century up through World War II. Through her maternal family's history, as well as her own personal experiences, Fausta rejects the assumption that all Triestines wanted Italy to annex Trieste and highlights irredentism's role in the onset of both world wars. Gianna recreates her father's death to prevent his memory from being forgotten with history and time. The adolescent war in which Matia partakes is used to symbolize the Spanish Civil War Matute lived through as a child. Through her protagonist, the author condemns the war and the negative effects it had on the Spanish people. 'C' demonstrates the failure of Francisco Franco's regime to indoctrinate her and her family into its official discourse. This is the only component of the quest for wholeness in which all of the protagonists are successful.

The last component of the journey for wholeness, examined in chapter three, is finding and establishing voice to overcome the alienation of silence. In the cases of Fausta, Gianna, and 'C', writing is the creative endeavor through which they achieve this final step. Although women are discouraged from creative expression, starting in the biography of Fausta's mother, Fausta's talent with words and her growing love of literature leads her to a career in writing. As a journalist, she becomes a verbal soldier in World War II and uses her voice to attack Benito Mussolini's regime. Gianna was also discouraged from actively engaging her creativity but her move to Florence inspired her to explore various art forms, which eventually led to her discovery of writing. Both Fausta and Gianna experience a gradual increase in their abilities to express themselves, which culminates in the writing of the life narratives *Le quattro* 

ragazze Wieselberger and Ritratto in piedi. Once again, Matia deviates from the other protagonists because she is unable to find her voice and experiences the complete loss of her creativity, as signified by the loss of her childhood toys. 'C's' journey is also markedly different because her parents encourage her as a child to creatively express herself. This creative freedom is then lost due to the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent dictatorship of Francisco Franco. As a result of her conversation with the strange in black, she recuperates her voice and creativity through writing. This recuperation results in the creation of the text, *El cuarto de atrás*.

Although all of the protagonists undergo the same processes to embark on the quest for wholeness and individuation, the final results of their attempts vary. For example, Fausta, Gianna, and 'C' are successfully able to complete all three components but their final sentiments towards their completion differ. For Fausta and 'C', the establishment of identity, contesting public history, and finding and establishing voice signifies comfort, satisfaction, and a sense of closure with which to conclude their life narratives. Having completed the same processes, however, Gianna is often left with a sense of isolation and hesitation. The difference in the way Gianna interprets the completion of her quest for wholeness challenges the positive connotation the word 'wholeness' usually carries. Perhaps there is something unique to Gianna's experience that requires another component to be completed before Gianna can achieve the happiness and satisfaction of Fausta and 'C'.

Matia differs most drastically from the other three protagonists. Out of the three processes, she is only able to successfully complete one, contesting public history. The reason for this difference can be attributed to the time periods in which

the authors were writing. Because Cialente, Manzini, and Martín Gaite were all writing with some distance to the repressive periods to which they refer, they had more freedom to explore and openly express their opinions and frustrations and therefore, their protagonists are better able to achieve the quest for wholeness. Matute did not have this freedom because she was writing during the repressive dictatorship of Franco. Matia's inability to form an identity and find voice reflects Matute's confinement in repression. This suggests the necessity of living outside of repression in order to complete the processes through which one can come to terms with and synthesize the past. The fact that Matute dared to address all of the same issues as the other three authors despite the conditions in which she found herself, however, suggests the quest for wholeness's importance and the overall necessity to individuate oneself and one's opinions from those of others.

By using the same processes and mechanisms to complete the quest for wholeness but arriving at different results, the four authors demonstrate the ultimate purpose of their life narratives: to create and establish a unique perspective through which the reader can understand a variety of social, historical, and personal events. As a result of the first-person perspecive, the reader goes on a journey with each protagonist, involving themselves in the failures and accomplishments of each narrative. By having unrestricted access to the protagonist and her thoughts, the reader gets to intimately know her and a significant portion of her life. The bond that is created between reader and protagonist allows the authors to guide their reader through the events, both personal and public that are of importance to them. With the

perspectives the four texts can offer, the authors encourage the reader to think critically about such events.

This heightened critical approach to history also inspires the reader to engage his or her own private and public past and resolve any pressing tensions. Although not all of us are writers and can publicly publish a book, these authors' explorations of the past to create wholeness in the present can serve as an example for all of us. Perhaps it is useful to look at the authors' protagonists as avatars, or projections of the self. These avatars have the ability to navigate through memories to reach the core issues that the authors wish to address. In this light, each one of us could create our own avatar, capable of exploring our pasts and allowing us the opportunity to relive and reevaluate those experiences that we wish to resolve. The examples of the four authors show that this process could or could not be successful, but they all reveal to us that the processual quest for wholeness is worth undertaking.

## **Works Cited**

- Andersen, Hans Christian. "The Snow Queen." In Fairy Tales and Other Stories by

  Hans Christian Andersen. Translated by W.A. and J.K. Craigie. London:

  Oxford University Press, 1914.
- Arkinstall, Christine. *Histories, Cultures, and National Identities: Women Writing Spain, 1877-1984.* Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2009.
- Ballaro, Beverly. "Gianna Manzini." In *Italian Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*. Edited by Rinaldina Russel. Wesport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994.
- Barrie, J.M. *Peter Pan and Other Plays*. Edited by Michael Cordner, Peter Hollindate, and Martin Wiggins. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Brown, Joan Lipman. "Carmen Martín Gaite." In *Spanish Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*. Edited by Linda Gould Levine, Ellen Engelson Marson, and Glori Feiman Waldman. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Cialente, Fausta. Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger. Milan: Mondadori, 1976.
- Collins, Diane Yvonne. "The Expression of Social Criticism in Ana María Matute's *Primera Memoria*: A Study of Themes, Characters, and Images." Masters thesis, University of British Columbia, 1970.
- Davies, Catherine. "Spain under Franco: Women and the Authoritarian State." In *Spanish Women's Writing: 1849-1996.* London: The Athlone Press, 1998.
- Díaz, Janet. Ana María Matute. New York: Twayne Rublishers, Inc., 1971.
- Enders, Victoria Lorée, and Pamela Beth Radcliff. Introduction to Constructing

- Spanish Womanhood: Female Identity in Modern Spain. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1999.
- Gaite, Carmen Martín. El cuarto de atrás. Zaragoza: Ediciones Destino, 1978.
- Hametz, Maura. *Making Trieste Italian, 1918-1954*. New York: The Boydell Press, 2005.
- Hirsch, Marianne. *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism.*Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989.
- Levine, Linda Gould. "Carmen Martín Gaite's *El cuarto de atrás*: A Portrait of the Artist as Woman." In *From Fiction to Metafiction: Essays in Honor of Carmen Martín Gaite*. Edited by Mirella Servodidio and Marcia L. Welles. Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies, 1983.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Censored Sex: Woman as Author and Character in

  Franco's Spain." In *Women in Hispanic Literature: Idols and Fallen Icons*.

  Edited by Beth Miller. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983.
- Manzini, Gianna. Ritratto in piedi. Milan: Mondadori, 1971.
- Marotti, Maria. "Filial Discourses: Feminism and Femininity in Italian Women's Autobiography." In *Feminine Feminists: Cultural Practices in Italia*.

  Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994.
- Matute, Ana María. Primera memoria. Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1960.
- Merry, Bruce. "Fausta Cialente." In *Italian Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*. Edited by Rinaldina Russel. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994.
- Olney, James. *Metaphors of Self: The Meaning of Autobiography*. Princeton:

Princeton University Press, 1972. Ortner, Sherry B. "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" Feminist Studies 1, no. 2 (1972): 5-31. Parati, Graziella. "From Genealogy to Gynealogy and Beyond: Fausta Cialente's Le quattro ragazze Wieselberger." In Private History, Private Stories: Italian Women's Autobiography. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. Payne, Stanley G. Fascism in Spain: 1923-1977. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999. . "Italian Fascism, 1919-1929." In A History of Fascism, 1914-1945. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995. Riddel, María Carmen. "Ana María Matute." In Spanish Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook. Edited by Linda Gould Levine, Ellen Engelson Marson, and Gloria Feiman Waldman. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993. Sluga, Glenda. The Problem of Trieste and the Italo-Yugoslav Border: Difference, *Identity, and Sovereignty in Twentieth-Century Europe.* Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2001. Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001. . "Introduction: Situating Subjectivity in Women's Autobiographical Practices." In Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.

. "Introduction: De/Colonization and the

Politics of Discourse in Women's Autobiographical Practices." In

De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's

Autobiography. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992.

Spires, Robert C. Post-Totalitarian Spanish Fiction. Columbia: University of

Missouri Press, 1996.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. "Intertextuality in El cuarto de atrás." In From Fiction to

Metafiction: Essays in Honor of Carmen Martín Gaite. Edited by Mirella

Servodidio and Marcia L. Welles. Society of Spanish and Spanish-American

Studies, 1983.

Valentini, Daria. "Father-Daughter Reflections in Gianna Manzini's Ritratto in

Piedi." Romance Languages Annual 9 (1997): 368-72.