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Spanish Women Remembered in Elena Quiroga's Tristura, Escribo Tu Nombre and a Enferma

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THE SILENCED WOMEN IN SPAIN
SPANISH WOMEN REMEMBERED IN
ELENA QUIROGA’S TRISTURA, ESCRIBO TU NOMBRE AND LA ENFERMA

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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BY
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I entered the Spanish graduate program after many decades away from not only the classroom, but exposure to the Spanish language as well. I am very grateful to all of the professors at Loyola University of Chicago for continuing to encourage me to grow and learn. It is hard to express in words the gratitude I felt as I sat down for the first time in Dr. Olympia Gonzalez’s classroom (just hearing the Spanish language again was thrilling for me!) and all of the classroom seats I occupied afterwards for the next few years where I was continually challenged by my professors to read, think, listen, speak, write and even act out on one occasion my thoughts regarding a litany of great works as diverse as *Don Quijote de La Mancha*, to contemporary literature, short stories and plays from Spain and Central and South America to Renaissance poetry. (just to name a few!). It cannot be overstated that I gained more confidence as a woman in all areas of my life as a result of the Spanish graduate program at Loyola University, and in some very personal ways I relate to protagonist Tadea in both Elena Quiroga’s novels *Tristura* and *Escribo Tu Nombre*. Importantly, and quite sincerely, I want to thank Dr. Knight for being my mentor and “sticking with me.” Dr. Knight, I believe you to be not only a tremendously effective teacher, but a tremendously intelligent and *patient* mentor as you continued to question me and mostly continuously make me think through the process of writing this paper.
As one individual changes, the system changes.
–Ram Daas
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ABSTRACT

Through three novels written by Spanish author, Elena Quiroga (1921-1995), this thesis intends to develop a better comprehension of women’s role and identity during the Second Republic in Spain (December, 1931-1936), and under Franco’s almost 40 year reign between 1936 and 1975.

Although the Republic sought to initiate change for women via constitutional and legislative reforms, the forms of mobilization occurred under male tutelage, and the Republic’s lack of strategy combined with organizational fragmentation led, in some ways, to the immobilization of women. Because the society was in flux, these attempts at reform were also met with anxiety by many, including women, who demonstrated a marked hostility to any expressions that challenged the established order Franco hoped to regain including its intent to recover the grandeur of the 15th century imperial Spain and nationalism.

For example, in Sexual Politics, Helen Graham, points out that cultural anxiety and fear of change were common feelings during the political mobilization of middle-class men and women in the inter-war period. As a result, an attraction to fascist or quasi-fascist formats to both genders lay in their nostalgia appeal and promise to ‘turn the clock back’ (p. 105).

Although a motive isn’t cited, in his work, Spanish Civil War. A Cultural and
Historical Reader, Alan Kenwood also confirms that women who aligned with Franco’s Nationalist party attempted to recapture femininity and traditional cultural values that supported the ideology of women as passive wives, sisters, and daughters (p. 33).

Under Franco’s authoritarian dictatorship, the re-imposition and reinforcement of ultra-traditional roles on women was an accepted way by many, including some women, to stabilize Spain, and after 1939 women were completely deprived of a political arena in which they could mobilize and prosper.

My purpose in this thesis is to write about the struggles of two protagonists in three of Quiroga’s novels Tristura, Escribe Tu Nombre and La Enferma, and in the process, illuminate the struggles of Spanish women with regards to their obligatory roles and identities during 20th century Spain. By writing about the protagonists personal experiences, I will attempt to reveal the theoretical and activist traditions in Spain that they both succumbed to and eventually overcame, examine how they came to understand their confinement within the realm of these traditions, and, finally reveal how they both achieved their own sense of liberty.
INTRODUCTION

Saint, virgin, mother, role model, courageous and self-sacrificing: these are admirable human characteristics, aren’t they? They imply impressions of extreme virtue, chastity, origin and nourishment, a particular behavior for another individual to emulate and value for the sake of others. All of these attributes seem praiseworthy. One may even question how one can argue against them.

Although at first glance these attributes may seem illustrious, I believe that as one looks deeper, these qualities may also seem reminiscent of a powerful sadness and loneliness. Shirley Mangini supports this when she expresses that apart from eminence, these qualities might represent true melancholy with the realization of the tragic undertones of a human society in which one is expected to emulate these behaviors as sole representations of their persona. Mangini states that as representations of women, and importantly, not men, within human society, these same attributes may imply psychological and spiritual forms of self-dehumanization, self-degradation, and a systematic manipulation by powerful elite to isolate women in society (p. 40). As regards my thesis, it is striking that Mangini further claims that these same attributes, historically, have characterized the female Hispanic archetype (p. 40).
CHAPTER ONE

THEMES OF ALIENATION

These sole attributes for women certainly were esteemed (and even by many women themselves) by a powerful elite in Spanish society for much of the 20th century. For many thousands of women in Spain the façade of the self-sacrificing and obedient mother sufficed to disguise the tragic social problem that, in reality, most Spanish women were alienated and silenced, having had no real power over their destinies.

Through my own reading about Spain’s history during the first half of the 20th century, I believe that many law makers under Spain’s Second Republic (1931-1936) recognized that these “saintly” attributes for women deemed positive by so many as a way to maintain social order, realistically, served to promote tremendous ideological and physical limitations on women. To address the absences of justice for women in society, the democratically elected Republic made important reforms to promote equal opportunities for women, diminish these violations of women’s rights, and to grant Spanish women equal rights and status under the law (Alted, p. 2).

However, these reforms to diminish the injustices women faced and the separation of men and women in Spanish society seem just to have been ideals at the time. Temma Kaplan writes that in truth, these reforms were proposed from a hierarchal top comprised of males, the majority of whom included male progressives who themselves were
byproducts of an established patriarchal culture due to its origins of Christianity (pp. 402-404).

Kaplan also affirms that the women influenced by these reforms were few. She claims that as the majority of the population was rural and levels of literacy among women low, women’s chances for mobilization and effective organizations were scant (pp. 402-404). She adds that women had little time to organize as they were now beginning to combine outside employment as a result of the reforms with domestic work in the home. Thus, women engaging as participants in the new political process were problematic to say the least (pp. 402-404).

My thesis begins with the portrayal of protagonist, Tadea, as a young girl in Tristura, (1960), the first novel in a trilogy by Spanish writer, Elena Quiroga, and her increasing withdrawal into self during the winter of 1929 through January, 1930 when she is eight and nine years old living in Santander at her grandmother’s house. The fictional present in Tristura arises from Tadea’s memories into the past when she was a young girl. She recalls earlier scenes from Galicia, where she lived happily as a very young child with her brothers and father as well as subsequent scenes as an eight and nine year old girl living in the oppressive environment created by her tía Concha under her grandmother’s roof. In Quiroga’s second novel in the trilogy, Escribo Tu Nombre (1965), I continue to portray Tadea’s emotional development as she grows into an adolescent, still living both under the repressive rule of her obstinate tía when she is not living within the walls of a Catholic girl’s boarding school where she must also submit to
rigid restrictions of the nuns and priests who teach her. I attempt to reveal similarities between themes of alienation of many women in Spain and themes of alienation as revealed in *Tristura and Escribo Tu Nombre* between approximately the years leading up to the rise and fall of the Second Republic in Spain and the first two decades of Franco’s reign.

I also include the portrayal of Liberata in another novel written by Quiroga, *La Enferma* (1955). In *La Enferma*, protagonist, Liberata, leaves her body in the earthly world, but escapes into a spiritual reality beyond the material existence of her Galician village. In *The Quiet Revolution of Elena Quiroga*, Kristen Barney claims that *La Enferma* has received little critical attention because Liberata’s repose as a social protest has gone largely unrecognized as one; thus little has been written about it (p. 103).

Barney alleges that upon the discovery that her lover has betrayed her for another woman, protagonist, Liberata leaves her body in the earthly world, but escapes into a spiritual reality beyond the material existence of her Galician village; thereby diffusing the authority of the intact social system (p. 103).

All three novels may be distinguished by the female protagonists’ identification with conventional attributes of women and hence, an alienation between self and most everyone else; an unawareness between the self and herself; a pervasive obligation to obey and an inability to express authentic voice.

These separations, characteristic of alienation are communicated by Quiroga through use of “stream of consciousness” to narrate the thematic content in both *Tristura*
and *Escribo Tu Nombre*, revealing Spain’s powerful patriarchal influence on the shaping of women’s gendered subjectivity and internalized cultural conditions that reinforced gender inequalities during this era.

Among other applicable sources, my research includes authors Shirley Mangini, Helen Graham, and Martha Ackelsberg, as these sources prove invaluable in helping me understand the strict gender categories and form a more complete picture of Spain’s history and the plight of women in a very complicated time period in Spain in the three Quiroga novels I present in this paper.

For example, by researching works like Mangini’s I was able to recognize and then compare the outer world of Spain to the inner fabric of Tadea’s and Liberata’s lives as the protagonists’ individual stories unfolded. The insight I gained by Mangini enabled me to link the inner lives of the two protagonists with the individual stories of actual Spanish women during the 20th-century. Like Quiroga’s two protagonists, I infer through historical references like Mangini that many individual Spanish women also overcame their own states of dehumanization, and through reflection, critical analogy and action, these women’s shared experiences of emancipation too inspired systematic change in Spain.

Throughout the thesis I support Barney’s assertion that Liberata’s repose was a social protest through my many accounts of Liberata’s subtle, yet, insurgent external actions throughout her childhood up to the point that she lies down to stare at a blank wall. As a result of these accounts, many of which I have not found accounted for
elsewhere, I hope to provide further evidence to Barney’s assessment that even in repose, Liberata is indeed subject with her reality and that her existential withdrawal implies an evolved spiritual life unwilling to participate in the rigid, societal expectations for Spanish women. Like Tadea, Liberata, too, is liberated as a result of her understanding of self; to know herself as being of worth, notwithstanding the dictates of the authoritarian regime that has imposed extreme limitations on her.

Through both Tadea and Liberata, I hope to provide evidence of their alternative ways of expressing themselves and existing while eluding and undermining the persecution of the Spanish patriarchal society. In both Tristura and Escribo Tu Nombre Tadea’s stream of consciousness narrative jumbles chronological time; circling backwards, picking up previous threads, and then re-entering the present to examine the future. According to Barney, this particular narrative style enables Tadea to reflect upon her past and the restraints imposed on her by adult authorities, recognize what is hypocrisy, and finally, understand all of the restrictions in her life that have stagnated and smothered her human potential (p. 104).

I also write about women in Spain during the years shortly before the Republic’s establishment of these reforms up until the early 1960s under the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939-1975) in which ultra-traditional roles were imposed on women, and almost exclusively, women still depended on men. Graham argues that during the time of upheaval and reform by the Second Republic, women were still believed by men, and including by many women themselves, to be easily manipulated. Graham further
contends that although the Second Republic had intended to destroy the notion of women contained in the home, the state still perpetuated the traditional schemas of division between the roles of men and women in society (p. 102).

Graham says, “For example, it is probably the case that a majority of Spanish women in the 1930s were hostile to the new divorce legislation - not because their confessors of parish priests told them to be (though they did), but primarily because it was viewed as eroding their economic security and the only social environment they had experience of” (p. 102).

Further evidence of women’s hesitance to make change is confirmed by Celia Valiente. Citing studies on women as voters in the first democratic elections in Spain, she says, “higher proportions of women than men preferred conservative political options” (p. 774).

For the purpose of this thesis, it is also important to point out that the church hierarchy embraced the Franco regime, and Franco used Catholicism as part of its attempt to recreate an Imperial Spain. In fact, in The Evangelization of Franco’s New Spain William J. Callahan confirms their oneness of mind and spirit, “The Catholic Press repeatedly boasted of the mingling of religion and patriotism in church ceremonies, proclaiming ‘one Caudillo, one faith, and advance in the name of God and eternal Spain’” (p. 499). Callahan reiterates that the Catholic ideals were imposed in the name of tradition and succeeded in regaining the “true Spain” that had been threatened by progressive revolutionaries before the war. Accordingly, the church, with fervent
cooperation of the civil authorities, relied on a strong dose of social compulsion that encompassed education, culture, and public morality (p. 496).

Graham contends that an integral part of these conventional attributes were defined by Catholicism and traditional Spain as the concept of women at home; their natural destiny as wives and mothers (p. 102). Graham maintains that during this era, many women too accepted the division of roles between men and women as the natural order; in other words, being psychologically indoctrinated, they believed they couldn’t and shouldn’t change. Graham asserts that as many women were also still mainly dependent on the church as a social place to gather with other women, the church was able to influence them to lean on these conservative and traditional values of their place in society which the nationalists endeavored to restore, blighting their hopes and or ambitions to a newly found prosperity (p. 102).

As a young girl, Tadea proves to be compliant to the rigid outward social expectations like these for girls and women in both Tristura and Escribo Tu Nombre. However, both she and Liberata in La Enferma (1955) also prove to be both defiant and non-conformist in many ways, and they both exemplify their own quiet revolutions against patriarchal oppression as they each express and alter their existence so that they may survive a monotonous and one-dimensional life as young girls and women.

In addition to the relationship between the protagonists and the outer world in which they each relate, there exists a relationship and interdependence between the past and the present. For example, the theme of alienation also appears in Tristura and
*Escribo Tu Nombre* through Tadea’s memories into her past, as well as through her actions in the present. Phyllis Zatlin points out, for example, that there are numerous times in *Tristura* when Tadea recalls her childhood in her grandmother’s home in Santander where tía Concha, her mother’s sister, is in full charge of the household. Tadea remembers being alienated by her cousins, obediently listening and silently acceding to the rantings of her obstinate and powerful aunt whose characterization, Zatlin asserts, has political implications as she represents a feminine extension of conservative, middle-class Spain, not only antagonistic of the republican reforms of the 1930s but a reactionary ideology that lauds obedience and censors free speech as well (pp. 91-93).

In a wider social context, the characters inhabiting the house also compose a human hierarchy, and according to Blanca Torres Bitter this exertion of power over Tadea amplifies her feelings of alienation and sadness (p. 98). Torres Bitter writes that as a young girl, Tadea recalls internalizing her aunt’s rules of self-abnegation and invisibility. I believe that when she writes, “Tadea, protagonista solitaria y perpleja, es dueña de una experiencia que la impulsa progresivamente hacia su aprendizaje, hasta que súbitamente se encuentra transformada en narrador que mira hacia atrás” (p. 22), she is confirming that unlike many Spanish women living under fascism, Tadea comes to evolve, and in the present, she is able to consciously critique her oppressed state of being.

Tadea’s external actions in these two novels are subdued. Instead, Quiroga concentrates more on Tadea’s internal action, demonstrating her alienated character. As a child Tadea adapts to her surroundings, and like many Spanish women, she is objectified
by everything and most everyone around her meaning she is viewed as a mere object or thing toward which thoughts, feelings and actions are directed. As she grows into womanhood, however, she becomes the subject of her surroundings as she integrates with them by developing the critical capacity to make choices to transform her reality.

**Critical Consciousness as the Mechanism of Gender Emancipation**

In all three novels, the subtle revolutionary stances taken by the protagonists may be unrecognizable to the reader as social protests of the one-dimensional existence required of women. Through this paper, however, I hope to demonstrate examples of self-reflection, hope and action by both of Quiroga’s protagonists who exemplify their own quiet revolutions in their search for liberty under patriarchal oppression and link them to the individual stories of many real Spanish women during the 20th-century. Like Quiroga’s two protagonists, I infer through historical references that many individual Spanish women also overcame their state of dehumanization. Through reflection, critical analogy and action, these women’s shared experiences of emancipation also inspired systematic change in Spain.

Thus critical consciousness is the thread that unifies the mechanism of gender emancipation, and Quiroga explores the dimensions of critical consciousness through both Tadea and Liberata who both struggle mightily within their oppressive environs and other characters who knowingly or otherwise represent and uphold the consciousness of women who are oppressed. Though their consciousness of the social and political oppression that constrains them occurs at different points in their lives, ultimately, Tadea
and Liberata both act against these oppressive elements of society.

Quiroga demonstrates Tadea’s ultimate liberation as a result of her ability to reflect. Distancing herself in her mind from the oppressive realities within her grandmother’s home and the convent, she is able to theorize her situation critically by analyzing these realities, and ultimately, she acts. The Tadea who inhabits the world in *Tristura* comes to know the difference between life and death, truth and lies, authenticity and appearance, and liberty and oppression whereas in *Escribo Tu Nombre*, Tadea is decisively able to surpass the restraints imposed on her by authorities from within. I hope to illuminate Tadea’s developing sense of right and wrong and honesty and hypocrisy which I believe are central to Quiroga’s message.

Liberata, in *La Enferma*, on the other hand, appears to shut down completely, and the villagers refer to her as the sick one because she perpetually faces the same blank wall for twenty years. Although her repose appears to be a physical withdrawal, a sign of weakness and fragile state of being, to me, Liberata’s repose is spiritual in nature and represents her emancipation from a male dominated and unjust society. Throughout the novel the image of her debility is perpetuated by the townspeople who consistently remark that Liberata is, indeed, sick. (I must say, as a reader witness to Liberata’s appearance of inertia, at first, it is difficult to argue against their opinion). What makes it difficult to discern Liberata’s repose as strength is that her fellow villagers dehumanize her, suggesting that she lives solely as a one-dimensional object passive in her relations with the world. As I’ve stated, however, I believe that it is within the confines of the
walls of this room that Liberata actually alters her oppressive reality by leaving her physical body to live in her own spiritual realm unconstrained by the limitations imposed on women in her Galician fishing village.

Unlike the other girls in her village, as a child, Liberata is the subject of her childhood. For example, we are told throughout *La Enferma* by various townspeople that as a young girl she continually challenged her environment, which I believe was her recognition of her plight as a female and an attempt to attain full humanity very early on. I infer that Liberata was a radical child and continues to be so, relative to the place and time period in which she lives and that her present external act is one of a complete rejection of the Spanish society that alienates women.

Thus, I hope to demonstrate in this thesis that her attempts to live freely as a girl in a village where women were accustomed to conform to patriarchal dictates, eventually compels her to choose to lie down as a social protest against the persecutions of a patriarchal society, and that her supposed “infirmity” is really her desire to speak up and fully participate in life.

Whatever evidence I present to demonstrate Liberata’s internal strength as a woman, however, can never truly be known as it is conjecture. Hence the questions remain whether Liberata’s physical absence (consequently, her absence occurs during years under Franco’s tyrannical dictatorship) symbolize a similar condition of confinement and lack of freedom for actual women living in Spain? Or does her physical retreat, as I believe, represent an enlightened spiritual state where she may avoid the
constraints of psychological, emotional and intellectual limitations for women?

Additionally, all three novels’ narration unifies themes of obedience and the silencing of women. Quiroga delves deeply into the inner lives of both protagonists whose complex inner lives, I imagine, mirrored the inner human lives experienced by many other real Spanish women during these years. Like Quiroga’s protagonists, Spanish women too were alienated as they witnessed, experienced, and ultimately suffered from outward injustices and unfair and cruel treatment under Franco’s regime.

Through both Tadea and Liberata, I hope to provide evidence of their alternative ways of expressing themselves and existing while eluding and undermining the persecution of the Spanish patriarchal society.
CHAPTER TWO
SPAIN’S POWERFUL PATRIARCHY

Women’s Alienated Consciousness

I include relevant Spanish history here as a way to further reveal the inner fabric of both Tadea’s and Liberata’s lives into which the outward reality for women in Spain who identified with the alienating belief that their humanness equated object is entwined. For example, Graham professes that even as the Republic sought to initiate social change to empower women through constitutional and legislative reforms, (p. 104), many Spanish women were hostile to these new reforms because they viewed them as eroding their economic security and the only social conditions they had experience of. (p. 104).

Alan Kenwood supports Graham’s claim, affirming that for women who aligned with Franco’s Nationalist party, attempts to recapture femininity and traditional cultural values that supported the ideology of women as passive wives, sisters, and daughters prevailed (p. 33), and that under Franco’s authoritarian dictatorship, the re-imposition and reinforcement of ultra-traditional roles on women was an accepted way by many, including many women, to stabilize Spain.

As previously stated, the democratically elected liberal left regime of the Second Republic attempted to liberate women from this form of alienated consciousness. Graham notes that its goals were to create a secular democratic system based on equal rights for
all citizens, thereby modernizing Spain politically, economically, socially and culturally.

Graham writes that under the Republic, a new Constitution, approved in December, 1931, reflected the ideas of the majority; creating social change to transform women’s roles in society that were unheard of in other parts of Europe (p. 100).

Marie-Claude Rigaudias writes that the principal reforms of the Constitution as regards women of Spain included universal suffrage. After long, complex debates in the courts, like men, Spanish women obtained the right to vote from the age of 23 and testify in court for the first time. Women could now also sign contracts administering land holds and homes (p. 21). Women’s rights to civil liberty under the new Constitution also included the right to gain independence through education. Rigaudias further contends that women were also liberated from the home, as being married was no longer considered an impediment to obtain employment. Furthermore, Rigaudias notes that the right to divorce their spouse was now available to women as a result of mutual disagreement or on the petition of either party; and under the new Constitution, all children born to women, whether legitimate or otherwise, would enjoy equal rights under the law (p. 21).

On paper and during its short five-year life all of these reforms sounded promising. However, according to Mangini, there were great impediments to these reforms preventing clear acts of emulations of them. First, the reforms that the Republic strove for required huge sums of money which Spain did not have at the time, as foreign interests did not show confidence in the new reforms and the wealthy wished for no
change at all (p. 24). Moreover, during this era not all sectors of the feminine population were represented by these reforms as the feminist movement was not strong enough to support all sectors of the feminine population in Spain (p. 24).

Most important in my opinion, and mirrored in Quiroga’s two young protagonists, is Mangini’s contention that in a very real sense, women’s internal lack of awareness and victimized belief system of alienation fulfilled the prophecy of alienation. For example, she cites María Lejárra, a prolific creative writer of works and essays in Spain during the 1930s who championed the rights of women in most of her works (p. 16), and Constancia de la Mora, whom Mangini describes as the most “scandalous” female dissident in contemporary Spanish history as examples (p. 11). Under the pseudo name María Martínez Sierra, Lejárra wrote *Una mujer por caminos de España* where Mangini says, “Lejárra incessantly laments the difficulty of making women aware of the need for education and the right to vote” (p. 17).

I believe the act of reading is paramount in reversing an alienated consciousness because reading heightens one’s awareness and opens one’s mind to new possibilities, thus I feel it worth mentioning that Mangini also claims that one way to maintain injustice of women in Spain during this era was to discourage the reading of books that may enlighten them. Of De la Mora Mancini writes, “She remarks that Spanish literature was virtually untouched, which is not surprising: the church had always considered the country’s literature innately heretical because much of it provoked critical thinking about Spanish institutions” (p. 11).
In *Escribo Tu Nombre*, Quiroga describes an apropos scenario of this mindset when Tadea, who along with her male cousin, Odón, take books from the library in Tadea’s grandmother’s home. Although Odón is not reprimanded for taking books, Tadea must endure these harsh words by her aunt: “No debes coger los libros sin preguntar…En esta casa nunca ha habido que guardar un libro hasta que has venido tú” (p. 462). In this instance, Tadea is resigned to a feeling of alienation when she thinks to herself: “Si tengo que pedir permiso, si tengo que decir a tía Concha todo lo que voy a leer, si tengo que tener a alguien delante mientras leo, prefiero dejarlo” (p. 463).

Moreover, Mangini states that reading was thought to deprive women of either their faith or their innocence, thus their virtue, and that women were also believed to be mentally and biologically inferior. Ultimately, the advances made by the Republic to educate women were thoroughly erased from Spanish society, and in the 1940s Spaniards were dissuaded from sending their female children to school, fueling the age-old attitudes that saw women as inferiors (p. 103).

She adds, “The strong ties between the church and the majority of females in Spain until the civil war had truncated the possibility of feminism or any semblance of independent, critical thinking. For the church advocated not only women’s innocence in pedagogical matters, but also their subservience to males – priests, husbands, fathers, or any other male relative who was responsible for the chastity of his female charges” (p. 25).

An example of this perverse intrusion by the church is relayed by Quiroga in a
shocking exchange between Tadea and priest, Padre Verguer, in *Escribo Tu Nombre*. On Quinquagesima Sunday Tadea and the other girls are instructed on “el pecado de la carne” to prepare themselves for the dangers of the world (p. 214).

On the third day of this ritual, the priest asks Tadea if she has ever committed a mortal sin. Tadea responds that she doesn’t think she has. The priest replies back by asking if she even knows what a mortal sin is and wonders if she knows what is necessary for a sin to be mortal. Tadea responds, “Conocimiento, consentimiento, voluntad” (p. 215).

Padre Verguer then harangues her with these words: “Contéstame ahora: ¿has pecado gravemente? ¿Qué años tienes? Vamos a ver, ¿te has mirado las partes de tu cuerpo cuando estás sola, en el baño, en la cama, al desnudarte? ¿Has mirado a tus compañeras o a tus hermanitos, cuando se desnudan? ¿Has encontrado placer el ello?” (pp. 215-216).

Tadea’s alienation of self is revealed as she responds to the priest’s tirade.

Quiroga writes that Tadea hears only the internal beating of her heart while thinking,

No sabía. No sabía nada. Era como un vapor caliginoso y ardiente que amenazaba ahogarme. … Tenía ganas de llorar. Apoyar la cabeza sobre el brazo y ponerme a llorar. Me sentía inmunda, sucia de cabeza a pies. Eran sus palabras las que me manchaban, las que me perdían: había mal donde antes no había nada. … Por la noche, en la cama, puse las manos bien apartadas de mi cuerpo, de aquel sórdido peligro de mi cuerpo. Y, con la boca sofocada contra la almohada, lloré (p. 216).
Women Under the Ideology of General Francisco Franco’s Regime

Because Quiroga’s novels were written during the years of Franco’s dictatorship, I think it is also important to provide some historical background on his authoritarian leadership as it greatly impacted the evolution of the roles and lives of actual women in Spain. I believe Franco’s impact proved to further divide and destroy the bonds between men and women, and it becomes part of the impact we witness as readers of the inner turmoil and alienation suffered by both of Quiroga’s protagonists Tadea and Liberata.

The conservative ideals of the political Right in Spain: the upper classes, the military, Catholicism and the monarch mentality reigned 20th-century Spain with the exception of the five years (1931-1936) under the Second Republic and the three years (1936-1939) of civil war after which Franco wins and heads the newly implemented Fascist regime on April 1, 1939 until his death in November, 1975. Under Franco’s authoritarian rule, all reforms for women previously instituted by the Republic were repealed and generations of Spanish women are immersed in complex forms of oppression and were completely deprived of a political arena in which they could mobilize and prosper.

Although the repeal of previously granted freedoms such as universal suffrage, the right to education and the right to obtain employment outside of the home may seem obvious as ways to oppress women, Quiroga unearthed more complex forms of oppression in the three novels I explore; they are more complex forms of oppression because they are concealed under the cloak of the esteemed attributes I mention in the introduction, such as good mother, role model and self-sacrifice. Furthermore, as previously stated,
many Spanish women during this era, themselves products of a traditional patriarchal society, simply didn’t recognize them as forms of oppression at all. Without intuiting their ultimate alienation in society as a result of embracing these covert forms of oppression, women learned to embody them in the deepest recesses of their being.

Mangini states that it is difficult to establish the number of people executed, exiled, imprisoned or tortured during the Civil War or as a result of Franco’s dictatorship as there exists no official list, but after three years of fighting their own countrymen and living under the dominion of Franco, it is surmised that hundreds of thousands of people were dead while thousands others “disappeared” from both sides (p. 101). She adds that Franco finally declared his Holy Crusade, the implementation of the Reconquista on April 1, 1939. Under Franco, thousands of other executions and deaths from disease and malnutrition followed the first decades of his regime, and women were obligated to return to the ultra traditional roles of the past (p. 101).

Robina Mohammad notes that the myth of women that Franco had tried to impose on Spain bore fruit; Franco had succeeded in reversing modernity to tradition by enforcing women’s traditional roles of wives and mothers confined to the home. Mohammad further contends that now women’s distinctness and variation from men were reinforced by a dictatorship, ideologically committed to tradition, and that women’s biological capacity to reproduce valorized an ideal model of womanhood, thus women were prohibited from openly questioning concepts of gender equality, freedom, home and work (p. 252).
According to Frances Lannon, Franco’s regime held strict gender categories, and Spain would be Catholic and authoritarian. Franco believed all women could concentrate their energies on emulating Mary, and being good wives and mothers or nuns (p. 213).

Perhaps she is foreshadowing Tadea’s future in Tristura when Quiroga captures such a portrayal of women in her description on page 143 of a somber (depicted by tears and the color marrónoscuro) painting of Mary, María Magdalena, and María Salomé gazing upon Christ in the dining room of Tadea’s grandmother’s house. “En el cuadro de la derecha, estrecho, estaba su Madre con tocas y hábito marrónoscuro, con un vivo blanco en la toca como el pechero de la abuela, las manos unidas sobre el pecho, mirándole a Él, con tantas lágrimas por la cara. Del otro lado, dos mujeres, una con carnes, pelos rubios muy sueltos, derrumbada, levantando un poco la cabeza.”

Many other possibilities were closed to women, and on page 213 Lannon further embellishes on women’s repression, citing the dictatorship’s imposed regulations. To be specific, all of the emancipatory legislation passed from 1931-1933 under the Spanish Republic was repealed. Although women had previously won the right to vote, Franco’s new regime would not honor suffrage and representation. She also states that on March 2, 1938, all separation and divorce petitions were suspended, repealed, and divorces already granted under the law, that involved canonically-married people, were declared void.

In ¿Qué queda del feminismo? Ana Alfarame adds that during Franco’s reign, “El punto nuclear de la relación legal de los cónyuges era el concepto de <<permiso marital>>. Sin autorización del marido, una mujer no podía aceptar un trabajo, abrir un
negocio ni una cuenta bancaria. No podía iniciar procedimientos legales, suscribir contratos o comprar y vender bienes. Ni siquiera podía iniciar un viaje de cierta duración sin que lo aprobara su marido” (pp. 173-174).

In the beginning of Tristura tía Concha cuts off Tadea’s long hair. I cannot help but wonder if this act is symbolic of cutting off her freedom too? Later, more than once, when Quiroga refers to Tadea’s grandmother as the “Laabuelalabutaca” (p. 101), I wonder that she is implying that women too are immobile, as her grandmother is, and simply a part of the surrounding fixtures.

Writes Giles Tremlett, “Para Franco la Guerra era una cruzada. Franco consideraba uno de los momentos más gloriosos de la historia de España: la Reconquista” (p. 33). Tremlett contends that Franco’s idea of women under la Reconquista was the total silence and subservience of women. According to Tremlett, Franco held the deeply conservative view that Spain had lost the empire because it had abandoned virtues of hierarchy and militant Catholicism (p. 33).

Reading Franco’s shocking description of women as told through Tremlett, it seems obvious how this alienating mindset influenced the social context in which women suffered. Quiroga reflects their suffering throughout all three novels as she describes Tadea’s internal resignation to a life of repetition and tedium and her descriptions of Liberata as a child who also strives to transcend the indifference demonstrated by the village women who surround her. I wonder how women could not be negatively affected by and within the larger society when the mindset of Franco described here by Tremlett
was so cruel and limiting: “las mujeres nunca han descubierto nada. Carecen de talento creativo, que Dios ha reservado a los hombres y una mujer no tiene derechos sobre su propio cuerpo. Con el matrimonio cede estos derechos a su marido. Él es el único que puede hacer uso de estos derechos y solo para la reproducción” (p. 59).

Mohammad states that Franco’s belief about women materialized and that under his reign Spanish women were victimized by both the Catholic Church and the family. A militant and national Catholicism provided an ideological structure to recreate the nation. “It put the Catholic family, characterized by gender division and hierarchy, at the base of Franquista society, as the vehicle for a conservative national regeneration” (p. 252), and on page 21 Mangini says that De la Mora indicted the church for shaping and maintaining the scrupulously strict mores of women over the centuries in Spain by either condoning or ignoring injustices toward women.

With regards to women in Spain, this crusade resulted primarily in a thorough lack of liberty for women. Although there were associations such as Mujeres Libres committed to the emancipation of women in which women could join, under Franco’s state and the church countless women were systematically silenced, compelled to obey, thus, alienated from society. As previously stated, for the most part, the church and family provided many women with a sense of stability and protection and a degree of security and the experience of cooperative activity (Bridenthal/Koonz, p. 402).

For example, quoting Margarita Nelken, known for her devotion to political action during the Second Republic and the Civil War, Mangini writes,
Doubtless…if women were to intervene in our political life, they would be inclined very sensitively toward the reactionary spirit, since women here – the majority of them, even before they are Christians, even before they are religious beings – are meek disciples of their confessors, who are, we must not forget, their mentors (p. 25).

Likewise in *Free Women of Spain*, Martha Ackelsberg, argues that even some women who were affiliated with the anarchist movement in Spain during the early 20th-century reasoned that women’s emancipation was incompatible with her role as mother. She cites an article written in 1935, for example, that laments the lack of interest by women in their own emancipation, yet, in the same article the author asserts that, “women…will always be the beautiful side of life, and that is what…she ought to be: the lovable compañera, who fortifies and soothes us in the struggle of life, and a loving mother to our children” (p. 90).

In *Escribo Tu Nombre*, Tadea validates her own meek state of being. As a young girl alternately living with tía Concha and within the walls of the convent, she’s been well taught her place in the world. As an adult she recollects, “Yo era menos que nada, qué cansancio, menos que una arenilla en la inmensa llanura de un desierto, menos que una aguja perdida en un pajar colmado, que los camellos pisan, que levanta el viento” (p. 296).
CHAPTER THREE
WOMEN AND OBEDIENCE

Tadea Learns Self-Abnegation

It is within the confines of this confusing time in Spanish history that Quiroga employs metaphors and character voice so the reader may witness both protagonists exemplify and alter alienating restrictions of obedience and silence within themselves throughout her novels.

As I analyze the roles of both Tadea and Liberata in the three novels, I continue to ponder Quiroga’s definition of freedom as explained through one of her characters, Alida, in *La Enferma*. I believe she is saying that freedom truly exists only from within self; if one realizes that within the realms of any outward society there already exist preconceived notions and ideas about individuals and their roles, although difficult to do, with critical thought and action one can transcend these prescribed notions. She says,

Se empieza a ser libre cuando se renuncia a serlo. Más o menos todos buscamos lo mismo. Unos por el dinero, otros sacudiéndose las leyes divinas y humanas, otros, avaros de su pensamiento. Es como si todos naciésemos con ese ansia, lo mismo que con el pecado original. Se sacude uno las obligaciones, se sacude uno los vínculos, bueno, pues voy a repetirle a usted una verdad sabida: se sacude uno la libertad. No empieza uno a ser libre hasta que acepta no serlo (p. 77).

In the opening passages of *La Enferma*, Quiroga, through use of an apt metaphor, in my opinion describes both Tadea and Liberata’s plight as Spanish women during the
tumult of a gull under the hands of some young boys. According to Barney, the bird, often a symbol of women in many works of fiction; becomes a toy, an object to be used carelessly or indifferently by the boys who may likely emulate this behavior, this pattern, in their future relationships with women (p. 106). Quiroga writes, “La cogimos, gritaron. Estaban delante de mí con la gaviota, y cada uno la tomó de una ala, así parecía más grande, y se volvía a un lado y otro con su duro pico desgarrando el vacío, y se reían de ella” (p. 12).

A later passage written by Quiroga completes this vivid image of the boys’ domination over the gull: “Los chicos se dividieron; Jaime dijo que no la quería para comerla, que quería para matarla, y Mateo dijo que prefería guardarla. ¿Guardar dónde? Guardarla así, con una cuerda, y ver cómo intentaba volar y no podía, y que pujara para escapar, sujeta por la cuerda” (p. 15).

La cuerda in this passage accurately symbolizes a state of submission Tadea is destined to live out in the opening of La Tristura. Tadea’s mother dies while giving birth to her, and at the tender age of eight, Tadea obediently leaves her home in Galicia to live in her deaf, frail and immobile maternal grandmother’s house, whose presence is virtually invisible. The house is controlled by her tyrannical tía Concha and her three children, Tadea’s cousins. Now separated from her father, brothers and freedoms of the rural Galicia which had been her home, Tadea’s world becomes one of obedience where language is prohibited, and thoughts are suppressed.
As noted by Inmaculada De La Fuente, *Mujeres de la Posguerra*, the absence of a mother is, overall, a social representation of women in Spain, “la figura de la madre está ausente en buena parte de las novelas de posguerra, como si su falta de relieve social provocara un vacío y borrara su rostro. Como si ser madre fuera una función, un hecho social, una costumbre, y en ese papel no hubiera matices, ni individualidad, ni personaje” (p. 127).

Throughout *Tristura* tía Concha behaves as authoritatively and oppressively as Spain’s future caudillo. On page 255, Quiroga conveys an image of her dominance over Tadea when she describes a powerful skirmish between the two. Tadea: “Me cogió por la nuca” (p. 255). Tía Concha: “—…no contestar cuando se te pregunta. Falta de respeto. ¡Descastada! Repite. Repite…” (p. 255).

Of course, this malicious sort of dominion begins shortly after Tadea steps into her grandmother’s house for the very first time and does not let up. For example: Tadea’s first bits of advice from tía Concha? Shortly after Tadea’s arrival at the house, tía Concha snaps at her,


 Quiroga further illustrates tía Concha’s political antagonism in chapter XXV in *Tristura* when tío Juan, the only member of Tadea’s extended family to lean toward
liberal political views, is present to witness Tadea receive her first communion. After the ceremony he asks a seemingly simple question aloud: “¿Has visto el periódico hoy? (p. 230). At first, tía Concha ignores the question, but upon hearing him say the words,”…la república” (p. 232) she vehemently commands, “No quiero oir esa palabra en esta casa” (p. 232).

A heavy silence then ensues. Tadea’s dress, tailored for her first communion, “seda blancooscura” (p. 227) represents “un elemento de ironía que sirve para oponer a la realidad física una moral falsa y abstracta (Torres Bitter, p. 110). Silently, Tadea, still wearing her communion dress and her cousins cross the dining room where tía Concho militantly stands and go onto the terrace. Once there Tadea’s cousins who identify strongly (or pretend to) with their mother’s political stance begin to torment Tadea. Mirroring those in Spain of opposing political parties, and the church and the Republic vying for power before Franco’s victorious reign, the cousins engage in a very physical battle. “Se defendía mordiendo, aránando, había caído debajo. La sacudí, la golpeé con furia, explotaba, como si me saliese de mí, como si pegar me aliviase. Pegar, destrozar, herir, devolver la herida, cegar la herida” (p. 233).

Her cousin Clota begins the battle by interrogating Tadea about the gift Julia, her grandmother’s cousin, had given her for her communion. Tadea replies, “un lapiz de oro” (p. 232). Odón then ferociously grabs the pencil from her, lifting it victoriously over his head as though it is a weapon as Tadea’s third cousin, Ana steps in, retrieving the pencil and pretending to twist it into her stomach and then into her neck. Tadea, beside herself,
as she loses more power reacts by throwing herself against Ana, hitting her over and over with all of her force again and again as they roll around the terrace.

Here the communion dress’s opposing colors “blancooscuro” represent an antithesis of Tadea’s opposing worlds of innocence and hostility and her place in it. Her succeeding rhetoric further illuminates her perplexed state as she has just received Christ in a hostile world.


It is interesting that it is only Tadea who is reprehended by her grandmother after the physical conflict among her cousins. Her grandmother’s eyes, described by Quiroga as “azules, transparentes, lo negro agrandándosele” (p. 236) also symbolize an element of irony between Tadea’s essence and one of false morals when without looking directly at her, nor waiting for an answer, grandmother pleads her to behave. “¿No volverás a hacerlo más? ¿Serás buena, Tadea?” (p. 236).

Though outwardly more civil than the physical conflict among the cousins, a guarded political conversation takes places among adult members of Tadea’s family in *Escribo Tu Nombre* more than a year later when Tadea is visiting for a reprieve from the convent. Before leaving the house, tía Concha is referring to the Republicans when Tadea
hears her lament, “alarmada de cómo estaban los ánimos. Cómo está la gente…Hay que ver qué tiempos. ¿Qué se han creído?...” (p. 466).

Tadea recalls that it is either her tío Andrés or tío Juan, whose body, terse as though perpetually braced for great physical danger, nervously responds, “Tened cuidado. Andad con cuidado” (466).

Chiming in, another uncle, don Luciano says of the Republicans, “las reivindicaciones obreras,” “el sector obrero,” les han envenenado,” “les hacen creer que los perros se atan con longanizas,” y “Esos intelectuales…” Though he is careful not to voice these opinions until tío Juan leaves the room, and Tadea, having grown more insightful than in her earlier days under this roof calmly observes, “tío Juan admitía aquellos ánimos, aquella gente, aquellas reivindicaciones. No los defendía: simplemente, los razonaba, los encontraba lógicos. Y no creo que fuera por intelectualismo, sino por humanidad” (p. 466).

I believe Quiroga is demonstrating here not only tío Juan’s confusion and diffidence regarding the political climate in Spain, but also the internal struggle of many Spaniards during this era of political upheaval.

Just before this discourse in *Escribo Tu Nombre*, I return to the incident in the family library where Tadea is strictly forbidden by tía Concha to borrow books while her son, Odón, is not. The succeeding conversation between Tadea and tío Juan, notable for its confusing message, further unveils internal political struggle regarding women’s place:
Tío Juan: “¿Quieres que yo te diga lo que debes leer?” Tadea: “Los leeré todos. Tío Juan squeezes her neck when she responds, and he replies, Eso no me parece bien. Debes ser razonable. Y tú, ¿eres razonable? Tadea asks him, ¿Por qué no? He retorts, Porque una chica, vamos… ¿no comprendes? Una muchacha, una señorita, hay cosas que…Más adelante…dosificar… (p. 463).

Without hesitating, Tadea’s heart cries out as she reproves, “¿Dosificar qué? ¿Habéis dosificado algo, o habéis sido una avalancha sobre mí? ¿Qué es lo que hay que dosificar?... ¿Os creéis que todavía no comprendo, que todavía estoy una etapa de desarrollo, que no tengo conocimiento?” (p. 463).

Although tío Juan warns Tadea to be careful as she is being censored by tía Concha, he does pat her cheek and consent: “Puedes leer” (p. 464).

Through the years up until the Second Republic (1931), the archconservative sector of the church and state supported by the upper classes and the military echoed sentiments of limitations on women. Where the state, nation, and church were considered inseparable, female independence was deemed as unusual and was attacked by this sector of patriarchy. A poignant testimony written by a woman who lived in Spain during this period of influx in Memories of Resistance summarizes the limitations of women in this way, “My life would be secure, settled, begun and ended at the same time” (Mangini, p. 12).

In Tristura the church’s message of guilt is equivocal; although it was largely accepted by the population in Spain that Christ died for them, Quiroga makes it apparent that the emotion of guilt as it relates to the idea of maternal obedience is unequivocal.
Although unperceived by Tadea as a young girl, tía Concha’s incessant ranting captures the church’s message of obedient subservience when she continues scolding Tadea,

No te mires al espejo, un día te va a salir el demonio. No existen brujas, existe Dios. Ignorancia. Ignorancia. No cruces las piernas, que la Virgen llora. A nadie le importa lo que tú piensas. Pudor. A nadie le importa. Cristo ha muerto por ti. Mírale bien la sangre, las llagas, la herida del costado, la corona, tú se lo estás haciendo, a cada instante (p. 28).

On page 29 in *Tristura* tía Concha then continues to warn Tadea that in the name of Christ, the verb “to want” doesn’t exist, and that a girl doesn’t think, doesn’t raise her voice, and does not give opinions nor explanations, and later tía Concha’s manipulation of Tadea’s conduct further reveals a world of contrasts regarding the opposition between reality and appearance (Torres-Bitter, p. 111). “La que importa es ser buena. No basta ser; hay que parecer. Lo que importa es ser buena. No basta ser. Parecer. Importa. Parecer” (p. 94).

Here, tía Concha acts as an agent of the Catholic culture and faith; whether directly through its own schools, or indirectly (through the voices like those of tía Concha), the Catholic Church exerted the controlling ideological influence on Spanish children (Lannon, pp. 213-228).

On page 110 in *Tristura* tía Concha’s answer to Tadea’s question depicts another example of the Catholic Church’s influence: “Por qué unos trabajan y otros no?” Tía Concha replies, “Dios lo ha dispuesto.” “Por qué lo ha dispuesto?” “Callate. Las cosas de Dios no se pregunta” (p. 110).
In fact, foreshadowing her future, Quiroga otherwise lays out Tadea’s destiny to work inside the home. Her cousin proclaims to Tadea, “Dijo mamá que no veía para qué te hacían estudiar, que debían de tenerte con el servicio. Dijo que para la vida que tendría que hacer Tadea el día de mañana, le serviría mejor saber faenas caseras” (pp. 253-254).

In Other Scenarios: Women and Spanish Anarchism, author Temma Kaplan further illustrates the equivocal messages deemed by the church and family during the late 19th and 20th centuries in Spain (p. 402). She explains that although women were the most exploited by these institutions, their oppressiveness was masked by providing women propitious hope (p. 402). She confirms that however exploitative the family and church may have been, the women derived a sense of stability and some degree of security from them (p. 402).

When Tadea says of God in Escribo Tu Nombre, “le amaba con tanta violencia” (p. 66), all the while decreeing a belief that truth, justice and security are obtained through Him, I believe she is just beginning to feel subject to the church and God as her oppressor, hence, violence, yet hope too for her salvation from what she hasn’t clearly defined internally for herself yet. It is indeed a fine line. Perhaps Kaplan is correct when she surmises that in women’s minds the emotional relationship provided by both the family and church justified their plight of obedience and invisibility.

**Obedience and Redemption in Escribo Tu Nombre**

In Escribo Tu Nombre, the reader begins to understand that Tadea’s interior monologues expand to include a subjective analysis of those who surround her. For
example, in the beginning of the novel, she muses over the number forty, which she has been assigned in the Catholic convent she arrived at during October of 1930, only to visit her aunt and cousins occasionally throughout the year. She is aware that her assigned number at the convent acts as a vivid metaphor for her life of endless repetitions, an obscured self and the incessant order she must live by within the walls of the convent, not as an individual, rather, as an entity of obedience.

She laments, “yo era un número, apenas me llamaban mi nombre. Llegó un momento en que oír: <Tadea>, me hacía estremecer, como si me cogieran el corazón con la mano (p. 17). “Una, dos, una, dos. Number forty. Number sixteen. El rumor de los pies sobre el linóleo del corridor, en filas” (p. 25).

In a “stream of consciousness” Tadea later recounts to her readers that, for her, the words life, world and man are prohibited words; her world is now defined by the sound of a bell or a clap, the murmur of silent rows, a square world without escape and without reflection about possibilities. Her consciousness then streams into thoughts about religion being a formula of questions and answers, a formula coupling her days with predictable prayers that have been pre-taught as though from a textbook (p. 65), and when she looks back upon the October day she first arrived to the town where the convent was located, Tadea compares her likeness to the brown, dirty façade of the convent walls that surround her, “las fachadas pardosucias, que luego pasaron a ser nuestras fachadas” (p. 77). Although she adheres to this bland spirit of obedience in the convent, she does begin to manifest her unique individuality within her mind.
For example, on one occasion her superior, Madre Prefecta, dons a superior smile at her while boring her eyes into Tadea’s own as she explains that the spirit of obedience is when to obey is a pleasure. On page 159, she explains to Tadea, “No hay nada que decir de usted, solo que hace las cosas de una manera automatica, como sin alma.” Tadea wonders whether Madre Prefecta had talked with her tía Concha who espouses the same theory. Despite the fact that she still feels shame upon hearing these words, there is a beginning of a shift in her consciousness and identity when she thinks to herself, “Me parecía absurdo” (p. 159).

Nevertheless, like the women in Spain under Franco’s dominion, Tadea is destined to live a life of mortification, containment and domination by the sisters of the order where any outward individual impulse and desire to live authentically is bridled. Within the walls of the convent, and her mind, Tadea emotionally suffers. No one asks her about her family or her past, nor does anyone delve into her very real feelings regarding her mother who died while giving birth to her. In her forlornness, she feels alone and abandoned and can only try to imagine her mother consoling her from within in her vast feelings of inquietude.

This disquietude is compounded by physical suffering the girls must also endure as a way to govern their behavior in the convent. During Lent, the older girls are advised to wear a girdle of iron bristles around their thigh as a sign of surrendering their freewill. The blood yielded as a result of the sharp bristles is deemed as their exchange of blood
with Jesus who offered his blood for them and reminds them that punishment is a way to reach perfection (pp. 378-379).

After putting on the girdle, Tadea walks to the seat of her classroom desk and struggles, finally lifting her leg in the air as she sits. Tadea not only physically suffers, but is momentarily emotionally confused when she says: “No sabía lo que pensaba, si me parecía bien o si me parecía mal. Pero sí de una manera rotunda que me lo iba a quitar y que no lo usaría jamás” (p. 380). As the iron girdle represents an acceptance of character weakness and thought, unlike her classmate, Elvira who accepts the girdle with gratitude, I believe Quiroga is foreshadowing Tadea’s growth and ultimate independence as a woman when she rejects this barbarous form of suffering.

In *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco’s Spain* Sánchez maintains that this form of 16th-century suffering was viewed by the Church as necessary for salvation and placed in political context during Franco’s reign (p. 651). In his article Sánchez maintains that the destruction of the Spanish economy by the war and the resultant hardships on the nation, led Franco, with the approval of some clergy, to claim that this suffering was a “spiritual punishment, the punishment which God imposes upon a distorted life, upon an unclean history” (p. 651).

Thus, Tadea lives in a world in which free-will is consistently violated, and she likens this type of suffering and the compulsory repetition of her words to the plaster of a brick-maker whose completed edifice depletes the air (p. 209). Comparing it to an absence of freedom she observes, “Obediencia. Orden. Hay que dominarse. El propio
dominio” sin ninguna estridencia, amable y controlada sin usar la fuerza, usando el método, el sistema, el engranaje que te pillaba, del que formabas parte, las propias niñas que te arrastraban en su uniformidad” (p. 209).

Her physical confinement and suffering within the walls of the convent is destined to be the confinement of her being in which absolute dominion and order are like the borders of a river bed that have dried up. Day after day she and the other girls do exactly the same thing; they employ the same words, they move in the same manner and they are disposed to repetitive activity generating a complete emptiness from the mind.

Un tiempo sin figuras, un tiempo morado, el tiempo de oficios. Un túnel que se comenzaba a andar. Monótono. Pensé si toda la vida iba a sucederse así, en ciclos repetidos, para siempre jamás. Me pareció que había sido atrapada, que nada habría capaz de romper la rutina, de aportar algo nuevo, algo vivo, ningún cambio en los días (p. 376).

Like the many women in Spain who came to depend on the church for sustenance, Tadea’s relationship with the church is very complicated. On the one hand, Tadea feels relief from the monotony of living out her boring existence of obedience within the dark shadows of the confessional, and throughout her girlhood, she comes to accept religion as a kind of solace from her dreary, repetitive existence even though she is bound by its rules to continually exam her conscious, pray fervently to God, and be grateful for His existence. On the other hand, however, her interior monologues on pages 421-422 reveal a budding awareness of her true feelings regarding her state of hopelessness.

¿Cómo podría explicarle a un Padre aquellas confusas, lentas y turbadoras sensaciones del sueño, aquella inquietude, aquella inconformidad con todo? ¿Cómo sabría decirle que las monjas me parecían tontas o exasperantes, que no se daban cuenta de nada, que no nos comprendían y pretendían comprendernos? No
perdonaba que se nos dijeran las cosas a medias, que se nos presentase siempre una cara, la misma, ordenada, tranquila, correcta, cuando ya presentía el otro perfil; que se abusase de mi credulidad. Pero ahora esperaba: oía y esperaba para saber la verdad. ¿Cómo iba yo a decirle que encontraba injusto todo y a todos, menos a las chicas de mi edad? ¿Y decirle, sin riesgo de que me negara el perdón, que me había atrevido a pensar en la injusticia de Dios?) (pp. 421-422).

And later she is able to profess aloud, “no puede ser en modo alguno un haz de individualidades sino un bloque compacto” (p. 638).

Tadea’s act of refusing to perfunctorily kiss the crucifix held by Madre Prefecta as was customary before she falls asleep at night proceeds from her growing awareness of her confinement. She expresses, “Sentí la garganta seca, tanta ansiedad y rebeldía que deseé ferozmente enfrentarme con Madre Prefecta.” “No lo besé” (p. 392). And later, she fully appreciates her peer, Carola, when she questions Madre Prefecta during religion class regarding God’s paradise. What? Carola wonders, is a snake, which she has been previously taught is the devil incarnate, doing in God’s paradise? (p. 412).

In these instances, Tadea is able to think critically about the norms she has been made to accept without question, and finally, as she stands in yet another endless line without hope of an escape from this repetitious cycle of being, Tadea realizes that she and her peers may find freedom by looking within themselves.

Que habíamos descubierto en las largas filas, en el studio lento, en la oración sin fin, una ocupación fascinante: mirar hacia dentro. (Al menos yo miraba hacia dentro.) Y porque la sonrisa nos brotaba a un tiempo, o porque nos mirábamos en medio de una explicación en señal de inteligencia, comprendíamos que pensábamos lo mismo, y aquello nos fortalecía (p. 361).
Liberata’s Repose and Patriarchal Obedience

Although it is the townspeople who label Liberata as “La Enferma,” according to Barney, protagonist, Liberata’s perpetual repose makes a revolutionary stance against the persecution of an obedient patriarchal society and can be recognized as a social protest as Liberata’s years-long silence is self-reflexive in her decision to live out her eternity in a strictly spiritual realm, “renouncing her life of social, economic and physical activity” (p. 103).

Written in 1955, La Enferma hints at societal misogyny. Because of its themes of dominance and submission, it is therefore “draped in diplomacy during the Franco dictatorship, and publicity was awarded only to societal criticisms that were couched in acceptable terms” (Barney, p. 103).

Barney suggests that La Enferma demonstrates a societal structure which denies women a self and prescribes a world where women may only experience completeness by obediently binding themselves to men in an emotional and physical slavery (p. 107).

This bondage is fully evident in the opening pages of La Enferma. After binding the sea gull in a cord, with the help of a carpenter, the boys pressed down each of the bird’s extended wings as the gull continues to cackle and croak in desperation. The gull is still alive as they slice through the tendons and bones of its wings and the tongue from its mouth (p. 16).

Perhaps this bleak description of the captive sea gull’s clipped wings represents the denial of Liberata and of all women of 20th century Spain. Fittingly, it is the
narrator’s, an anonymous woman’s discourse throughout *La Enferma* which allows readers to construct the story according to her descriptions and testimonies of a multitude of characters on the truth of Liberata who portrays her through dialogue with the townspeople in the village and in her own first-person monologues.

Through the eyes of the narrator, this unnamed observer, early on in the novel Quiroga provides tenacious metaphors for a strong patriarchy; hence the oppression of women. For example, in the opening passage of *La Enferma*, the image of a man’s hand waving goodbye on a dock immediately leads the reader to witness not only the mutilation and destruction of the sea gull through man’s hands, but to ponder the woman’s observation of the meaning of its physicality: “La mano del hombre me la recordaba. Quizá no fuera un recuerdo físico, sino uno íntimo y propio de crueldad” (p. 16).

And upon embarking the boat she will travel on to reach the Galician village in which Liberata lives to survey the land to be sold by her husband, she observes her own husband’s hand: “Me dió su mano para apoyarme en ella al bajar a la barcaza, y, pronta, acudió al relevo la mano desconocida del patron” (p. 26).

Finally, she observes the physicality of the mariner of the boat she embarks, “Pude ver su pie, ancho, libre, renegrido, sin tono de carnosidad – los dedos como tentáculos – una voz poderosa y patética que daba escalofríos y zumbaba” (p. 27, 33).
These opening images of men in *La Enferma* demonstrate the existence of a powerful patriarchy as having a potent influence on the shaping of women’s gendered subjectivity; their active or passive resistance in the face of their oppression.

*In Gender in Spanish Society,* Valiente affirms that in the decades leading up to and during the Francoist period, anthropologists described one of the traits of Spanish masculinity as centered on social practices markedly hostile toward women as a way to actively maintain the honor of their families (p. 77-80), and a passive resistance in the behavior of the village women in *La Enferma* is apparent to the narrator when she arrives in the home of her husband’s aunt. She says, “Hallé después en ella y en otras mujeres aquella misma voz de rencor” (p. 37).

In the early days of her visit the narrator notices that the men do not think about their women, nor do they think about anything but fishing. Ironically, a man must catch something, and if not, he must not admit this aloud (p. 62). Additionally, as observed through the narrator’s eyes, all of the women in this tiny Galician fishing village are barefoot. I believe their bare feet symbolize their state of immobility, and like a school of fish that has been caught downstream, the forever barefoot women in this village seem to convey a collective, corroded dominion; a symbol of physical and spiritual impoverishment in their daily routine.

For example, every morning and evening the nameless, subdued women, accustomed to obey and serve as vassals, walk back and forth barefoot from the enclosed walls of their homes to the riverbank to clean and sell the fish the men have caught.
Observe the narrator: “La barca y la mujer son uno” (p. 49). Every morning, obediently, the barefoot women come to the entrance of the small fleet of boats and with anguish watch the fishermen, cold and morbid dead fish between their fingers, drain the boat (p. 49).

This tiny Galician fishing village is one of routine and self-abnegation for women. The men return home to sleep early morning, while the women, having already dressed for the new day before retiring the night before, in unison, rise from their beds to work for their husbands from early morning until late afternoon, every day.

These women, minimized as potential widows of the fishermen the sea may take on any given day, are uniformly dressed in black, all wearing a kerchief with their hair pulled back in braids. The narrator notes that when they do speak, they shout out in the air as though to no one, but otherwise wait calmly, passively, as a few of the women are charged with disemboweling the spilling black entrails of the fish before they are auctioned off; prices lowering as the day’s heat wanes (p. 49).

Quiroga describes the setting as “un ambiente acre, en el pueblo sin hombres…Se adivina su contenida fuerza, su existencia. No se les ve, y están” (p. 50).

Lying in bed before daybreak, the narrator goes on to describe the women’s barefoot steps down to the riverbank where rocks and shells pierce the soles of their feet; “pasos a la carrera, furtivos, blandos, con el sonido carnal y sigiloso de los pies desnudos sobre la piedra” (p. 58). Upon hearing their footsteps she also senses something sinister, yet vulnerable, behind their dutiful steps as she observes, “Un ratero. Un malhechor.”
Guárdate de su pecado”…Eran varios pasos, como si se persiguiesen. Había algo salvaje y amenazador en aquél correr acompasado, en aquel rudo y desnudo contacto contra la piedra” (p. 58).

In a letter to her husband the narrator later writes about her impressions of the daily routine of the village women and her conversation with a woman named Lucia:

Viendo a esta gente que hace todos los días lo mismo, que no se queja, que vive sin más afán que el momento en que la flotilla pesquera atraca, porque les trae a sus hombres y la vida con ella – la vida material, la pesca-. No se dan ni cuenta de que envejecen, que pierden los dientes, y el cabello les blanquea, escaso, y la piel se arruga, aunque antes de llegar a eso ellas están deformadas. Hablan con resignación desde jóvenes (pp. 89-90).

To Lucia, a woman who also lives with the narrator’s husband’s aunt, the narrator asks, “¿Viviréis siempre aquí?” (p. 90). As though she’s heard a joke, Lucia speaks for all the village women when she retorts, “¿A dónde quiere que vayamos?” (p. 90). The bemused Lucia then explains to her that a woman must obey; not resist her fate as a wife. She further explains that she and all the women must accept their subservient role in the village from the time of youth; to otherwise indulge in the vanities of youth would exempt them from their only option: marrying a fisherman (p. 90). She finishes by saying, “Debe ser bueno morirse así, sin haber esperado demasiado de la vida” (p. 90).

According to De La Fuente, Mujeres De La Posguerra, unmarried women in both the early decades of 20th-century Spain and the post war years were considered a stigma. She writes, “Orientada toda la educación de la mujer al matrimonio, ser soltera en la sociedad franquista era un stigma, una carencia, un vacío que la afectada vivía hacia dentro sintiéndose incompleta y hacia el exterior como una disculpa” (p. 245).
As Mohommad points out, “The home was the place of married women and through their roles as housewives and mothers, it also prepared the ground to contain women, not yet married, to the space of the home and reinforce the worlds beyond it as essentially masculine” (p. 252).

What did marriage really mean for Spanish women? In *Memories of Resistance*, Mancini cites Dolores Ibárruri, known as La Pasionaria during the Republic and the Spanish civil war. This extract from her memory text, *They Shall Not Pass* describes the life of married women in Spain during the first half of the 20th century. Mancini describes this extract as “brutally realistic”:

Mother, what is marriage? Daughter, marriage is weaving, giving birth, weeping. Weeping over our hurts and our impotence; weeping for our innocent children, to whom we could offer nothing but tear-stained caresses, weeping for our dismal lives, without horizon, without hope; bitter weeping, with a curse in our hearts and on our lips. A woman’s curse? A mother’s curse? What is so surprising about that, since our lives were worse than that of the most accursed? (p. 39).

Although the name Liberata suggests freedom, the question remains whether Liberata is free from the constraints of womanhood defined by her village. Of Liberata, a character, Alida, opines, “A aquella mujer le había tocado aguantar siempre. En vida del marido, y después, de viuda. Me extraño que pusiera a la niña el nombre de Liberata: era pósthuma, y nadie en la familia se llamaba así” (p. 121).

Regarding Liberata she adds, “Era cuestión de humildad” (p. 122). “No parecía una niña como las otras porque le faltaba humildad” (p. 122). One thing is certain then in
La Enferma: Liberata was different. From an early age and on she defied the customary routines of the other fisherwomen.

One of the more profound metaphors of her independence was her refusal to go barefoot. Liberata always wore sandals. Although criticized by others that she wore them –“por hacer todo distinto que las demás” (p. 119). Alida confides: “Ella, desde entonces, usó siempre sandalias, en cuanto dejaba de llover. No era moda, en aquel tiempo, y se nos hacía raro: parecían más desnudos sus pies así que si fueran descalzos. Tengo entendido que no se descalzaba en la arena, y que entraba con ellas al agua, sin desceñírselas, lo mismo que una reina” (p. 119).

Shortly after, her uncle comments further on Liberata’s character as he confesses, “No hay nadie que pueda descalzarla. No se descalza nunca, porque no hay manos que sirvan para desatar sus sandalias” (p. 128).

Although Liberata seems to be able to articulate her desires, another character, Angustias, describes her as a shy girl who suffered anguish at the hands of the other girls her age. She says, “parecía no saber de qué se podría hablar, y ellas decían tontadas, y se reían y ella estaba como de palo, porque ella jamás diría aquellas cosas, y estaba anjustiada” (p. 167).

Throughout the novel the reader learns through gossip, tales told and confessions by these various villagers that Liberata did not conform to the behaviors of the other
girls. Was she simply incapable of conforming, or was she arrogant as some villagers suggest? (p. 167).

Says Barney, “Quiroga’s discourse asks the reader to construct the story, and do so out of snatches of information from a multitude of sources and perspectives” (p. 104). Therefore, the reader can only surmise Liberata’s internal world. One thing is for certain, however: upon discovering that her lover has betrayed her for another, Liberata leaves her living and breathing body on earth, but escapes into the spirituality of one far beyond the physical realm of her Galician village (Barney, p. 105).

She chooses to become silent. “En silencio, despacio, se desnudó: estaba haciéndolo por vez última. Dejó caer sus ropas al suelo. No las recogió. Se metió en la cama. Volvió su pobre cuerpo atorentado hacia la pared. No ha vuelto a levantarse” (p. 137).
CHAPTER FOUR
WOMEN AND SILENCE

Silence Used to Oppress and Free Oneself from Oppression

In all three novels, silence is symbolic; not only as a part of discourse, but as an absence of it. In both novels, Tristura and Escribo Tu Nombre, Tadea is silenced which Quiroga invokes to express women’s oppression in Spain during the years before the Second Republic and after the Civil War.

The reader has no knowledge of what intentions Quiroga may have had by silencing Liberata, and speculation concerning her silence may be interpreted differently as I will relay in specific relation to Spanish women. Did she become mute by choice as a revolutionary stance against her limitations of freedom in Spain’s patriarchal society? For example, on page 81 the narrator observes of Liberata in repose,

Aunque el cabello fuese blanco, liso, suavísimo, y la piel amarillenta y cálida. Las cejas my rectas le daban un aire alto, o quizá fuesen los labios, severos, que ya no procuraban sonreír, desdeñaban el gesto. Había en ella una gran dignidad. No producía la sensación de estar vencida, no era una mujer vencida, Liberata…

Barney speculates that Liberata’s silence is deliberate and constitutes a protest of declaration; a form of insurgency against the oppression of Spanish women (p. 106). She writes,

One way in which Liberata becomes a text (object) rather than a person (subject) surfaces when the narrator first visits ‘the sick woman.’ By inviting the narrator to
touch the young woman, ‘¿Quiere tocarla? Le gusta tanto que la acaricien’ (p. 81), Liberata’s aunt betrays her assumption that Liberata would want to experience the material realm normally if she could. Never considering the possibility that Liberata’s silence is deliberate and constitutes a protest or a declaration, this scene highlights how western society fails to grant women agency and how it fails to recognize insurgency that does not, ironically, follow a prescribed format (p. 106).

In Theory of Madness, B.H. Rigney opines that by calling Liberata “la enferma”, the townspeople illustrate how the Spanish society under Franco reduces Liberata’s silent scream to madness (p. 111).

Rigney surmises, however, that Liberata’s madness creates a world in which she cannot be victimized; by rejecting the norms for women in society, she succeeds in creating her own environment, thereby diffusing the authority of the social system (p. 111). She sees merit in Liberata’s existential silence as a way to free herself. She says, “Liberata’s silence declares that time is only wasted when we mistake monotonous and one-dimensional existence for life” (p. 111).

In the beginning of Tristura, recalling her past, Tadea remembers the moment shortly after arriving at her grandmother’s house when time stops for her. This moment marks the beginning of the endless repetitions of virtual motionlessness which make up the life of Tadea. She is no longer the carefree little girl living harmoniously in a Galician village with her father and brothers. “No era el camino de todos los días con las hojas a su caer y la tierra alisada, ni el pasadizo de ramas entrelazadas bajo las cuales jugábamos…era viscoso, hueco, amenazante (p. 16).
Rather, like the women of Spain living under the dominion of Franco where the
passage of time is less relevant than their designated roles of mother, wife or nun, she
now lives under the authoritarian hand of tía Concha and hostile cousins. Recalling her
feelings of being consumed by a refulgent, yet, yellow and black leaden sky (p. 16).
Tadea flashbacks to meeting her cousins beneath it, “habíamos peleado quedaba la tierra
mazada, removida, el silencio brutal” (p. 18).

Segregated now and silent, although her awareness of her new surroundings
complements the luminous sky, her reality equates with its dreary cast that envelops her,
“No oímos la compana, no había horas. Horas era recto, esquinado, con paredes en lo
ancho, tropezabas, no te podias librar, pero entonces no había horas porque había sur,
había nosotros mismos desatados” (p. 18).

Although she is told the wild horses she hears outside of her grandmother’s home
symbolize freedom (p. 19), in a stream of consciousness Tadea continues to heed images
of nature as tempestuous and menacing: “Las hojas eran grandes, verdes, se doblaban con
el viento, las hojas…(El viento me temblaba en los labios. Era el vi
ento.) La hoja
temblaba. Las hojas de los árboles. Árboles, la Deitada, vivían caballos salvajes…-repetir
salvajes para una sola, para dentro – ” (pp. 18-19).

In Tristura “lo natural significa el ruido, la algarabía, dentro del marco de las
sensaciones auditivas: el ruido define a los hermanos de Tadea y se alía con el
movimiento. El silencio impide la evocación convocada por las sensaciones, e introduce
un significado de separación” (Torres Bitter, p. 49).
Paralleling her perceptions of wind and wild horses as savage symbols is a concurrent order she hears tía Concha command her, “hazte a un lado, quieta” (p. 19). The similarities among her auditory perception of nature in Santander and her newly stifled reality are unmistakable as she recalls perceiving “…unos relinchos que ponían el corazón de pie como si la tierra gritara; una niña podía sentirse llena de silencio, viendo las grupas juntas como una fuerza brillante irremediable, en la región del silencio…” (p. 19).

Although, “la connotación de libertad encierra una naturaleza libre, continuamente traducida en anhelo del que contempla – protagonista o narrador – desde la prisión de su presente. Tadea llegará a imprimir su mirada solo sobre las cosas que la devuelvan – evocativamente – a la naturaleza” (Torres Bitter, pp. 47-48).

Within the harsh environs of her grandmother’s home Tadea’s voice, too, becomes her own limited experience of nothingness. Shortly after learning that she is expected to be quiet, Tadea is quite literally scolded into silence when tía Concha chastises her. “A nadie le importa. Métete en la cabeza: a nadie le importan las cosas de los demás. El verbo querer no existe. Una niña no piensa. No levantes la voz. Nadie te pide explicaciones. No quiero explicaciones. La letra con sangre entra” (p. 29).

Subsequently, she recollects, “Ahora, sí había silencio. Un silencio de arena sin fin” (p. 44). “Podía estar quieta tiempo y tiempo, podía pararme y estarme así la vida” (p. 53).
The potential speakers, her cousins, who could otherwise speak for her, having had no affection for her, did not acknowledge her, “No reconocía mi voz jamás” (p. 34); behaving as serfs under the authority of their mother, they too, if they spoke to Tadea, only criticized, ridiculed, and tyrannized her. Thus, she lives in an absent world, one of repetition and silence.

In the article: *Elena Quiroga’s Yo Voice and the Schism between Reality and Illusion*, Martha Alford Marks observes of Tadea, “who remains in Galicia – never comes to see her, absence of Tina the family servant in Galicia who had been her surrogate mother, absence of her brothers, her dogs, the mountains and the freedom of rural Galicia; eventually the absence of Suzanne (her French governess), absence of Julia, whose death is implied by the arrival of an empty chest of drawers closes the novel” (p. 46).

Other than Suzanne, who lovingly cared for Tadea after her mother died, it is Julia whose biannual visits to her sister’s house every winter, give respite the eternal silence Tadea endures; the passage of time is marked only by her coming and going (Torres Bitter, p. 105).

Early on in one of Julia’s visits, Tadea questions her about girls who are orphans. Who are they? Julia tells her that they are the daughters that their mothers don’t want. Tadea then asks her what the orphanages are like; do they have railings? Are the orphans confined? Stung by the ranting of an adherence to silence rigidly imposed on her by her aunt and the hostility of her three cousins, Tadea differentiates the railing’s meaning, a
symbol commonly associated with confinement, and her definition combines a mosaic of hope and isolation.

Rejas podia ser un muro, un jardín, una avenida de plátanos, otra niña, voces frías de los mayores, voces burlonas o compasivas, risas de otros niños, voces untuosas, pegadizas como el aceite. Rejas podia ser aquello que te contenía aunque tuvieras ganas, venía no se sabía de dónde. A lo mejor en aquella casa las muchachas se burlaban o me miraban con compassion porque sabían que un padre también puede echar a su niña (p. 84).

Her internal confusion is instantaneously revealed aloud when Tadea confides to Julia that tía Concha had told her that her father didn’t want to busy himself with her.

Julia then lowers her head and proceeds to relay, repetitiously, the names of numerous sons of sons from the Bible concluding that, “Y de aquella nada formó un cuerpo perfectísimo” (p. 85).

As she listens to the endless litany of biblical names, Tadea compares them to “agujas en los sesos que se clavaban” (p. 86), and she reflects on her own quiescent state.

“No se pensaba ya en nada, no había nada, ni bueno ni malo. No había suelo de madera con cera, ni cristales en la ventana, ni cómoda, ni Julia. Nada de nada, más que aquello, como la lluvia sobre la hierba. Las cosas estaban en su sitio, pero habían dejado de importarme; nada importaba nada, ni siquiera Julia, ni que muriese, ni yo, ni que me muriese” (p. 85).

Like the women during much of the 20th-century in Spain, Tadea is unable to communicate her human anguish to others and withdraws behind a mask of silence.
Quiroga metaphorically expresses Tadea’s impending seclusion on page 39 when she writes, “La puerta cerrada. No había luz. No había llave por fuera.”

Although it is Julia whom Tadea can confide in, it is ironic that it is Julia, who, albeit innocently, silences Tadea several months later in Tristura when Tadea, suffering internally, expresses to her that she’d like to sleep throughout each day.

Quiroga describes Julia’s words to her as though they emerge, mutely, from under water, below light, in a quiet world, floating (p. 222). Quiroga employs a blanket as a metaphor for a mantle of silence describing Tadea’s further reticence. As Tadea hides her face underneath the blanket, Julia’s hand, not touching Tadea, pushes the blanket down into a gentle furrow above her mouth, just below her cheek. She asks Tadea, “¿es que tienes miedo?” (p. 223), then, without waiting for a response she quickly assures her that God is always with her. Tadea perceives her assurance of God’s presence as, “palabras como olas alcanzándome, rompiéndose dentro” (p. 223).

When she confides to Julia that she is afraid of God, Julia, in this moment representing many women in Spain incapable of responding differently, stands erect and repeats again and again: “¿Qué dices?” “Qué estás diciendo?” (p. 224). Without further discussion, Tadea takes a short nap, and upon waking, Julia is gone (p. 224).

Nearing the end of Tristura Quiroga employs haunting descriptive realism to emphasize women’s inability to speak. With her back to Tadea and facing the mirror, Clota takes out her teeth from her mouth. Tadea jumps over a rug in shock as she
observes her cousin, “se sacó los dientes, los enjuagó debajo del grifo, volvió a
encajárselos, acercando mucho la cara al espejo. Hizo un gesto a derecha e izquierda.
Sonrió, delante del espejo, con aquellos dientes que había tenido en la mano” (p. 248).

Again, silence reigns as Julia’s death is marked by an empty set of drawers at the
the end of Tristura. “Uno, dos, tres cajones grandes” (p. 281), and although Tadea is
speechless: “Nunca la hablé de Julia” (p. 282), her death marks Tadea’s new
understanding of life and death, truth and lies, reality and appearance, and freedom and
oppression (Torres Bitter, p. 115).

Wordless; Quiroga uses elements of smell, and in this instance of an apple, that
wakes Tadea’s memory of emptiness and actualization of truth in her internal monologue
in one of the final passages of the novel.

Subía el olor de los cajones cerrados. Tiré del de arriba, agarrándole por las dos
asad, cedió inmediatamente, se volcó un poco, estaba vacío. Asperiega,
olor me llenaba la cabeza. Ancho campo del mundo – me latían las sienes a
romperse, el olor daba vueltas – a través de una mujer humilde, del regazo
El olor dentro, ahora, pujando por caminos, por árboles, correr. Eran olor y amor
de una persona, perdidos, corazón apretado por la muerte – sabía qué era muerte -
, con las sienes ardientes, oprimidas, feroz deseo de taponarme los oídos, de
romper desde el pecho todos los límites del mundo de mi casa, desgarrarme de
aquello que me ataba, altos árboles, correr, correr (p. 282).

When Tadea is destined to leave her grandmother’s home to live “interna en un
colegio” (p. 256), somberly, she descends the staircase, and, once more, the ambiance is
en el bochorno” (p. 265).
The Silent World of the Convent in *Escribo Tu Nombre*

Months later, as a student in the convent in *Escribo Tu Nombre*, Tadea recalls understanding the significance of her departure, herself, on the staircase in this way: “No parecía exigir nada de mí, ni siquiera el recuerdo. Había quedado reducido a algo lejano, que existía casi solamente por las alusiones de tía Concha, servía a tía Concha para herirme, o para pretenderlo. ¿Tienes sangre de chufas? Me había preguntado Odón con desesperación aquel día, en la escalera. No; simplemente había aprendido la inmensa fuerza del silencio” (p. 384).

In *Escribo Tu Nombre*, the rhetoric of silence exists and is characterized by setting, metaphors of nature and bridled objects. For example, shortly after arriving to school away from tía Concha and her cousins, Tadea and the other girls are compelled to kneel in the school chapel for hours in silent meditation after hearing the rules set by their superior, Madre Prefecta. She describes the ambience in the chapel as one of silence. “Silencio. Absoluto silencio. No había clases. No cambiábamos palabra con nadie; la que lo deseara, con Made Prefecta o con el Padre. El infierno. Llamas. Chirriar de dientes. Cuerpos abrasados” (p. 114).

Among other rules for the girls dictated by Madre Prefecta in the chapel she demands, “Actos de humildad, sobre todo” (p. 113). “No pensar en una misma, ahí, como el pelícano que se mete el pico en el pecho. Aceptar las humillaciones. No tener preferencias…” (p. 113).
Later that night, while in bed in a room shared by other girls, the only sounds Tadea hears are those of two of her classmates silently weeping and the passing of “Madre Vergara cerrándolas en silencio” (p. 115).

Lying in bed, she feels completely alone as though surrounded by abysses (p. 115). She muses, “Todo era peligro de morir, de muerte eterna” (p. 115). Quiroga shows Tadea’s interior life at this moment as one of an ultimate silence.

Is it a show of remorse or social protest when, Tadea, reflecting upon her empty notebook where she was told by Madre Prefecta earlier in the chapel to communicate her resolutions of sacrifice, humility and self-abnegation, reflects, “Mi cuaderno de hule sin ningún apunte. Tenía que poner algo. ¿Qué pondría? Algo que se pudiera ver. Entonces, nada” (p. 115).

Because she previously behaved as an innocent girl under the roof of her grandmother’s home, the reader may infer the absence of written words in her notebook on her first day in the convent as one of remorse. The reader will never know. However, because Quiroga continually demonstrates Tadea’s increasing capability to critically observe the silence that surrounds her near the end of Tristura and throughout Escribo Tu Nombre, perhaps the empty notebook, indeed, represents her internal protest of the society in which she lives.

For example, after several months spent in the convent, Tadea is able to critique the concept of sound, or as she observes: the absence of meaningful sound. On page 298 Tadea compares sound to a transient gust of wind; the feeling one gets upon just waking
up, seeing imperfectly, or upon walking in dreams during sleep. She laments that the meaningless and boring repetition of words that surround her are heard before they are even said and generate a complete emptiness of the mind. She compares them to confining plaster walls constructed by a mason when she affirms, “Las palabras eran como el yeso del albañil, construían la obra, te aislaban de contorno, te edificaban por dentro en el aire enrarecido. Las palabras, casi siempre las mismas, un mundo enormemente ceñido, simple y concreto, de palabras repetidas, repetidas, repetidas, en tono suave, medio tono bajo, siempre a ti, a ti, a ti” (p. 299).

Here she likens the existence of words as the makeup of a predisposed world where everything has already been destined. She concludes, “Parecías moverte in la penumbra. Todo había sido hecho para ti: el colegio, las otras, el reglamento, el estudio y hasta el monte” (p. 299).

In a classroom designated for some of the older girls, Quiroga uses a notebook again as a metaphor for silence. Studying in class under the tutelage of Madre Hornedo, Tadea describes her manner of teaching “con una falsa libertad mayor” (p. 366). Her succeeding comment regarding Madre Hornedo’s authoritarian teaching style reveals her frustration of being silenced. She balks, “que no nos preguntaba nuestra opinión cuando sabía que no era posible darla o podría no resistirlo” (p. 367).

Tadea’s ability to critique the imposed silence by Madre Hornedo is inspired here by her classmate, Carola, who had previously questioned why God’s paradise included the devil, and who Tadea describes as one frequently shunned outside the confines of the
classroom because she speaks her mind. On page 373 Carola says, “Pregunten todo lo que no entiendan,” and on page 362 Tadea describes Carola’s restless being: “Todo lo que fuera vago le convenía a Carola…sin azararse lo más mínimo.”

One afternoon during recreation Carola asks Madre Hornedo if she has ever studied philosophy. Madre Hornedo promptly attempts to silence Carola; she responds brusquely, “¿Cuántas veces he de decir que a las Madres no se les pregunta?” (p. 362).

Although Carola complies with a dutiful smile and apology, without raising her voice she quotes José Ortega, Spanish liberal philosopher during the first half of the 20th century as Spain oscillated between monarchy, republicanism and dictatorship. She quotes, “Hay dos mujeres que van con dos cabezas cada una: la suya y la cortada.” (p. 362).

Ironically, it is Madre Hornedo who is presently silenced. Although the reader never learns why, two days later Carola is summoned to the Prefecta’s office. Upon her return to class there is complete silence among the girls as Madre Hornedo assigns them to write a composition about the contents of their sleeping quarter. The composition assignment requires no external inquiry as she explains, “Alrededor de su cuarto ¿ven? No necesitaba salir de él. Bastaba, simplemente, ir buscando el espíritu de las cosas” (p. 363).

Although Tadea is profoundly bored by the theme of the assignment, “Nada me interesaba que no tuviera conexión conmigo” (p. 363), she dutifully completes her written
inventory of her sleeping quarters. In class Madre Hornedo reads aloud the girls’ notebook entries with details of the few pieces of furniture, the numbered door with a peephole and the narrow window.

Carola, though, is silenced; Madre Hornedo simply hands her back the notebook without reading it aloud. Though secretly exchanging notebooks with Carola after class, Tadea is able to read her written entry.

Influenced by Pedro Calderon De La Barca’s *La vida es sueño*, in which he exposes man as either one who somnambulates through life or considers its meaning, Carola’s subject: the window in her room, takes on a life of its own. Instead of detailing the physicality of its proportions like her classmates, she is instead able to analyze this object as a metaphor for her personal confinement in the convent. She writes,

> La ventana estrecha, blanca, con un cristal lechoso, esmerilado. Es lo ultimo que veo al acostarme, es lo primero que veo al abrir los ojos. La ventana. No una ventana como otra cualquiera, con su cristal, sino la ventana de mi colegio que no da a ninguna parte. Todas las camaratos tienen los mismos muebles, pero yo sabría cuál es la mía aunque me vendasen los ojos. No por el sitio donde está. Son muchas mañanas abriendo los ojos frente a ese rectángulo de cristal. Es mi cristal. No el de ninguna otra (p. 364).

Madre Hornedo is disturbed by her entry, and shortly after reading it, she hands it back and accuses her (wrongly) of talking during class. Once again, Carola is condemned to silently stand outside of the classroom where this time superior Madre Prefecta’s shadow can be seen casting over Carola from inside the class. Inside the class, Madre
Hornedo dismisses Carolola’s composition as a way to silence her further by characterizing its content in this way: “Es una cargante. Será por lo de frenesí” (p. 365).

Like some groups of women in Spain who founded organizations dedicated to the liberation of women from their enslavement to ignorance before and under the dictatorship, Carola is undeterred in her effort to be heard; she writes yet another passage on a separate page from her notebook, this time quoting a passage from José Asunción Silva’s, *Nocturno*.

Like these women who reached out to other women to strengthen and build a sense of community and solidarity, Carola attempts to connect with Tadea by writing the passage for her. Tadea, still wrestling for her voice, covertly, puts the passage in her pocket. Reading it inside of a closed closet, Tadea is secretive; afraid of what it says.

Because she has been indoctrinated earlier by tía Concha and at the convent to think uncritically: impulsively, just after reading it, she rips the copy of *Nocturno* into small pieces before submerging it under water.

She is astonished though that what Carola has given her is written by a man and she ponders its presentiment; its references to indigenous nature. Though still astonished she experiences a moment of clarity and wonders if she can commit Silva’s juxtaposition of passionate nature with freedom to memory: “*Una noche. Una noche toda llena de amargura, de murmullos y de música de alas en que ardían en la sombra nupcial y húmeda las luciernagas fantásticas contra mí ceñida toda, muda y pálida*” (p. 366).
There was no such presentiment apparent, later, however, as Tadea’s classmate, Elvira, who previously had gushed to Tadea that she liked to be bound by the pricking iron girdle around her leg during Lent, “Yo lo llevo siempre, toda la cuaresema. Me gusta llevarlo. ¿Y a ti?” (p. 380).

Quiroga begins to reveal Elvira’s true nature on a day her father comes to visit her. Elvira, among other girls receiving family members in the vestibule which is dominated by Madre Prefecta who walks among the groups “con sus aires condescendientes…una sonrisa fingida, tirante, y los ojos llenos de melancolía” (pp. 381-382), greets her father. “Sonreía maquinalmente a su padre, que se inclinaba para hablarla con aquella sonrisa presurosa, que cogía las manos a su chica delante de ella, y a Elvira le brillaban los ojos de seguridad y orgullo porque la acariciase así en presencia de todas, como si aquel cariño desbordante la fortaleciese, la creciese” (p. 381).

In her state of insecurity within the vestibule Elvira then witnesses a very young student, Geni, who with great emotion encloses her arms around the neck of her mother who Quiroga describes as “elegante, distante, esbelta” (p. 381). Though she is gentle, Geni’s mother firmly pushes her away even upon hearing Geni repeatedly cry out, “Mamá, mama…” (p. 382). Is it when Madre Prefecta promptly corrects her aloud, “No hay que hacer exhibición de los propios sentimientos” (p. 382), when Elvira recognizes her deceptive surroundings and refuses to participate?
Quiroga demonstrates that indeed it is Madre Prefecta’s continuous admonishments and her confinement within the convent that create Elvira’s inner turmoil; sometimes it is what is not said, rather than what is.

Described by Quiroga as sitting upright and appearing haughty, almost stubborn, Elvira sits isolated from the other girls on a lone bench. Feigning aphonia, “Elvira se negó a cantar” (383). Quiroga then discloses Elvira’s present nature, “Era la manera de crear aquella zona de separación. No decía nada…Poco a poco la vida diaria te prendía, te envolvía, te arrastraba, aquello quedaba del otro lado, de un lado clausurado con la puerta del colegio al entrar” (p. 383).

In the final pages of Part I in *Escribo Tu Nombre* Quiroga introduce a new twist on silence when a convent nun, Madre Gaytán, is silenced within its walls. It is important though to comment first on the outward war-torn environ, as it is the reason Tadea and the other girls must return to their homes temporarily, and its outward cast both reflects their internal turmoil and correlates to the Madre Gaytán’s eventual repression in the convent.

On page 467 Quiroga compares Tadea’s internal state to that of the political strife of her outside environ. Referring to word on the street, Tadea notes, “hablaba de bombas y de quema de conventos, y los curas se escondían.” In the midst of the violence she expresses her desire to see the Republic prevail as its cause ministers to her own feelings for justice. Relating to all who are oppressed, she says, “cualquier cosa era sobre todo
estar al lado de los oprimidos, de los menos fuertes, quizá porque oppressión y debilidad
les nivelaron con nosotros, también débiles y en cierta forma oprimidos” (p. 467).

On October 6, 1934, temporarily back in her grandmother’s home, Tadea views
remnants of war from inside the wall of her grandmother’s garden. She compares her
visual images of war to those individuals who either conquer or are annihilated in its
aftermath.

Veía subir el humo grisáceo de las chimeneas como un aliento ceniciento amargo
de tantas vidas, como el vaho gris de tantas almas. Estaban los hogares
encendidos, y con ellos, personas invisibles. Había muchos amarillos en el aire,
un gris amarillento y agrio, y si volvía los ojos a la huerta veía al pie de los
manzanos los frutos espachurrados, mazados, y otros madurando en el árbol. Se
levantaba con frecuencia viento del sur y todos se quejaban del viento (p. 474).

When it is deemed safe to do so, Tadea is obliged to return to the convent. This
time, however, she immediately recognizes a change upon her arrival: Madre Prefecta has
been replaced by a new Prefecta. Unlike the girls’ previous superior, the new Prefecta is
unconstrained, loving and non-authoritarian. On page 495 Tadea describes her
disposition: “La nueva Prefecta se reía de una manera espontánea…La nueva Prefecta se
reía echando un poco atrás la cabeza, diré que con toda su alma, con las manos cruzadas
bajo las amplias mangas, levantaba y encogía aún más los hombros cuando se reía, y todo
podía hacerla reír.”

Upon greeting the girls for the first time the new Prefecta approaches them in an
intimate manner and requests, “No me llamen Madre Prefecta. Llámennme Madre Gaytán,
como a las otras Madres.” “Ser Prefecta del colegio es un cargo, no es un nombre” (p. 496).

Though Tadea is immediately captivated by her, she initially feels somewhat uncomfortable because Madre Gaytán speaks about herself in the girls’ presence in a tone she notes as obsolete with the nuns she has previously known. She muses, “parecía ignorar las consignas tácitas de reserva e indiferencia, y sin extremismos ni grandes gestos” (p. 496).

As surprising to Tadea is Madre Gaytán’s comparison of herself to the girls. Equating her own susceptibility to the frailties of human nature she informs them that she, too, is “una criatura humana como ustedes que se ha entregado a Dios…” (p. 496).

Madre Gaytáns welcome of the girls as they arrive at the convent contrasts with Tadea’s previous arrivals, where, under the stern eye of Madre Prefecta and the other nuns, she is compelled to silently line up with the others in allegiance, rather like the compulsory Fascist salute pledging loyalty to the Caudillo the Spainards later become all too familiar with during Franco’s reign. Contrarily, Madre Gaytán’s presence in Part II of Escribo Tu Nombre can be likened to the Second Republic as both bodies attempt to represent reforms for liberty, equality and independence for women.

For example, on the first night back as the girls fall into their routine at the convent they learn that they no longer are required to perfunctorily, obediently, kiss the cross upon retiring while enduring Madre Prefecta’s harsh assessment of their personal insignificance and what they owe Christ to make up for it.
Rather, with growing familiarity and acknowledgement of each girl, Madre Gaytán holds the crucifix over each girl’s head and and asks God to grant each girl peace. Tadea perceives this gesture as a tender gift; “Y me lo dijo siempre desde aquella noche primera, y supongo que a las demás también y decía solo entonces ‘contigo’, y no ‘con usted’” (p. 497). Moreover, she shows a newly acquired reverence in her heart when she describes Madre Gaytán on her nightly round, “cuando venía a nuestras camaretas solo nos traía Su paz.” “Las cosas que decía eran siempre primordiales y hondas, nos alegraban” (p. 497).

Additionally, unlike the other nuns within the convent who rule the girls with a metaphorical iron fist as though they are soldiers bolstering the future rise of the Caudillo and the Catholic faith to advance in the name of Him and an eternal Spain, Madre Gaytán embodies what Tadea connotes as actual love. To Tadea, she resembles an “enjuta de carnes y de corazón” (p. 497), and likens the tunic she wears as the skin of her soul, an authentic tunic for Him (p. 496).

On page 498 Tadea rejoices the erasure of the girls’ requisite conformity and internal suffering in the convent as a direct result of Madre Gaytán’s demeanor. Although Tadea still suffers from the usual chides and reprehension from the other nuns in the convent, under the guardianship of Madre Gaytán, “nos dejaba libres de manifestarnos. No ‘nuestras colegialas’, sino Geni y Paz y Elvira y Silvia e Iciar e Ina y Teresa y Margarita, Begoña, Blanca, Carola, Tadea. Y hallábamos esto al embocar la edad en que comenzábamos a diferenciarnos…” (p. 498).
Madre Gaytán’s relationship with Tadea impacts her relationship with God. The vocal validation she receives from the new Prefecta, “diferenciándonos…conocernos mejor y saber cómo actuábamos para deducir cómo pensábamos…” (p. 499), gives Tadea a fresh confidence and strength in self.

For example, on page 521 Madre Gaytán asks the girls in religion class whether they think they need religion as a way to justify their lives. She informs them that their prior teachings of Christ have taught them that only through Christ may they find truth. Astoundingly, she negates this pedagogy. Instead, she informs them that what they have previously learned, rather, is to negate their true role as young women. She says to them, “andan negándose a las preguntas salteadoras, pero me parece que en conjunto prevalece en ustedes la indiferencia, la rutina, la abulia, el conformismo: prefiero la duda, que ya es algo positive” (p. 521).

Madre Gaytán adds, “No conocen ustedes a Cristo. Lo primero es el conocimiento. Antes de saber qué, saber Quién” (p. 522). “No es que no vayamos a leer sus milagros y a extraer de ellos lección de vida. Pero no como milagros, sino como hechos ciertos que realizó, no mayores ni menores que otros cotidianos, y de unos y otros extraer una moral, una norma” (p. 522).

Madre Gaytán then encourages each girl to look for her own unique understanding of Him. Madre Gaytán teaches them that though Christ is the same entity,
He is different for each individual depending on one’s needs and individual capacity to adopt and love Him (p. 523).

Emboldened now to think, question, and entertain her doubts aloud, Tadea feels restored in what she now thinks of as her own individuality and bilateral relationship with God. “Sentí en la iglesia una mayor confianza. Si Él buscaba mi amor, pero un amor elegido en libertad, no constreñido por el temor, si me quería, que Le quisiese, que no intentara retenerme, sino, al contrario, que me expresase” (p. 505).

Under the guidance of Madre Gaytán, Tadea’s new sense of individuality, freedom and justice also extends to the school. On page 524 Tadea describes the new norms in school: “No habrá bandas de conducta, no habrá premios, ni puestos en la clase. Habrá notas, naturalmente, calificaciones, pero no del cero al diez: se pondrá aprobado o suspenso; se calificará de sobresaliente solo a efectos de examenes finales. Me parece más justo.”

Unfortunately, though, as miraculously as was Quiroga’s illumination of Madre Gaytán’s voice of liberty in the convent when Tadea returned to school, the voice that Tadea came to love, “Decía cuanto pensaba, sin retraerse, no se nos oía respirar; como cuerdas tirantes de un arco la escuchábamos. Y su manera de hablar diré que era su manera de respirar, consustancial con ella…” (p. 526) was its consummate annihilation.

Her silent departure was expeditious. As was normal, the girls returned to the study after one of their religion classes with Madre Gaytán. This time, however, Tadea
describes feeling a fraction of a second of doubt (p. 527) before lining up with the other girls. Quiroga then describes Madre Gaytán’s quiet expulsion from the convent from Tadea’s perspective in line: “Al fondo, en donde los lavabos, no estaba la Hermana, ni estuvo nunca más” (p. 528). Madre Gaytán, redeemer of young women, is silenced.

Here Madre Gaytán’s disappearance can be compared to the numerous women in Spain who disappeared, their only crime often being ideological deviation. Although the reader never learns what happens to Madre Gaytán, her disappearance signifies a profound silence. Perhaps, like the untold numbers of other women who rebelled against the fanaticism that reigned in Spain at the time, obedience to the Nationalists’ ideal of church and state, she too was either imprisoned or executed.

Her disappearance was not remarkable as Mangini points out that thousands of other women in Spain similarly disappeared for their alleged infractions against the regime:

For example, María Castanera was accused of aiding her brothers; she was detained, then released, and later found in a ditch near the highway with a bullet through her neck and her hands cut off. Some women who were charged were pathetically innocent; their crimes were as heinous as having sewn a Republican flag. Teachers, almost invariably sympathetic to the Republic, were imprisoned for actions such as removing the crucifix from their classrooms (as they had been instructed to do when the Republic took over). Many women were imprisoned for activities that were deemed for men only, such as carrying a gun or wearing overalls. Others went to jail for having participated in a leftist organization, working in the rear guard to win the war and to achieve the revolution they saw as necessary to create social justice in Spain (p. 100).
**Cultural Silencing of Women in *La Enferma***

In *La Enferma* “the rhetoric of silence wields immense influence in the text that Liberata becomes” (Barney, p. 106); with the exception of the narrator’s interior monologue, Quiroga communicates Liberata’s needs, desires and priorities only through the words of her fellow characters in conversation with the narrator.

With few exceptions, the characters who speak for Liberata are portrayed by Quiroga as patriarchal and unconscious of other alternatives for living, so Liberata’s silence, then, may be interpreted as her rebuttal of the patriarchal status quo. Or it may not be; again, according to Barney, *La Enferma* has received little critical attention as a work of social protest against patriarchy because Liberata’s silence was largely unrecognized as one (p. 103).

The problem is that without further critiquing the dialogues of the characters, the reader, like the community that speaks for Liberata, may not recognize her silence as a protest or rebellion of any sort, rather view her withdrawal into her own silent and spiritual sphere simply as an illness.

Because Quiroga never informs the reader of her motive for silencing Liberata, the reader must read into the circumstances of her life as described by these characters in order to come to a conclusion. The process is problematic to say the least as the characters are themselves products of the patriarchal culture, representing a lack of discernment.
On page 39 the reader is first introduced to Liberata when the narrator goes to Liberata’s house to settle into the Galician village. Once there, she meets Alida, who has lived in the fishing village her entire life and is Liberata’s caregiver. The reader learns through a conversation between her and the narrator that through the eyes of Alida, Liberata doesn’t humanly exist; Alida perceives Liberata as a thing that dictates her work dominion in the house. Without grudge or protest, Alida merely accepts her caregiver position.

Alida then shows the narrator to her bedroom, closes the window (which I interpret as a symbol that according to Alida, Liberata’s malady has been sealed), and the narrator gives the reader her first impression of the townspeople, “Había sentido la tristeza en el momento en que me asomé sobre aquella noche desconocida. Estuvo en mí todo el tiempo. Me hallaba en una casa extraña, en un pueblo ignorado, entre personas que acababa de conocer” (p. 40).

A few days later when she and Alida are together in Liberata’s bedroom, the narrator asks about Liberata; “¿Qué hizo ella? Like Quiroga, Alida doesn’t give her any real answers as she simply describes her symptom: Liberata is the sick one. She replies, “¿Ella? Ella no se mueve nunca, no mira a nadie, no hace nada. ¿No sabe que está enferma del sentido? Pero ahí la tiene, vuelta hacia la pared, una pared desnuda lo mismo que la palma -…sin despegar los labios, sin pedir nada (p. 55).

Yet, upon observing Liberata’s physicality on another such day when she and Alida are in her bedroom she observes Liberata’s implacable beauty, as though it reveals
life’s mask. In other words, she compares Liberata’s face to what is beautiful; not individual beauty per se, rather, what is generic beauty in all humanity. “La cabeza bellísima de aquella mujer parécia un espejo que me tendieran, y viese en ella, más allá de mi rostro, el dolor sin medida de una pobre mujer, o mío, o del género humano. Pero el dolor altera, huella. Ni una sola arruga la surcaba. Era peor que el dolor: era la nada” (p. 81).

As the narrator spends more time in the village, her observations of its inhabitants increasingly shed light on what may truly be ailing Liberata. For example, on page 59 the reader infers that women’s words are meaningless as the narrator observes, “Y el viento chasquea contra sus palabras, se las lleva a la mar,” and on page 61 the narrator compares a sleeping fisherman at the waterfront to all men in the village, who, though dominant over women, are also ignorant and impervious to both their own plight as well as that of women.

Perhaps Liberata’s quiet insurgency is in response to man’s incapability to see. Quiroga demonstrates his incapability through the narrator who views this sleeping man through phosphorecent light and compares him to dead weight. His arms are draped over his eyes, symbolizing his handicap. She observes, “Huele a carnes sucias, a mugre. El hombre sueña con el aliento poderoso de la mar, fresco y amargo, que parecía librarle de suciedad y de impurezas” (p. 61).

Although the reader is unsure why, I believe Quiroga also includes a songless bird as a metaphor for Liberata and her silence when the narrator, accompanied by Alida
another time at the waterfront observes, “Había un canario también que no cantaba nunca” (p. 57).

Like the bird that never sings, Quiroga seems to confirm that Liberata’s silence is elected when the narrator says that whenever she enters her bedroom, she feels she is interrupting a woman who has elected to confine herself (p. 81). She also feels disgust. Her disgust is not aimed at Liberata though, rather at the accepted standards of the village that she believes have confined her (p. 81).

As though murmuring the consciousness of the townspeople while gazing at Liberata in her bedroom one day, she seems to be conscious of their circumscribed ideology when she says, regretfully, “Solo de este árbol no comerás” (p. 81).

In the same instance when the narrator observes that Liberata’s eyes seem to look beyond her surroundings, Quiroga seems to confirm that Liberata’s silence is indeed an act of insurgency. “Resbalaba su mirada sobre mí, mirando algo que no era yo, ciertamente; parecía que pudiese ver a través de mí, detrás de mí, como si yo tampoco existiese…” (p. 81).

She resumes, “Supe lo que era doblarse de verdad por otro ser humano, lo que era sangrar por los demás y por uno mismo” (p. 81). Liberata’s volition to silence herself is made even more apparent to the reader when the narrator asserts that Liberata feels desire. “Ella no quería verme, no deseaba verme. Yo le había impuesto mi presencia. Había entrado allí con mi pequeña angustia y mis prejuicios, y ella ni tan siquiera me
Worth emphasizing again here is Quiroga’s inclusion of the narrator’s observation that Liberata did not produce the sensation of a defeated woman, “no era una mujer vencida, Liberata…” (p. 81), and using metaphors of light, darkness and air for freedom through the pleas of the narrator, Quiroga appeals to the townspeople’s sense of restricted reality to acknowledge Liberata as an individual. She exclaims, “¿Por qué tenían el cuarto así en penumbra? Ella no pedía nada, me habían dicho. Pues entonces, ¡abrid al sol! ¡Dejad entrar la brisa de la ría y que agite la sábana y el cabello blanquísimo de esta mujer!” (p. 82).

Sadly, Quiroga’s plea comes to no avail as Eugenio, Liberata’s brother, later expresses the opinion of all the townspeople when he explains to the narrator that Liberata’s infirmity is simply an extension of her innate inability to conform. Of her past he relates, “No tenía amigas. Se cerraba a la amistad, a todo, parecía sentirse forzada entre las otras. Lo notaban y se ofendían. Si se hubiese tratado de una pescadora era más fácil, pero a ella a su propia condición la aislaba” (p. 86).

Moreover, Dámaso, another villager relates, “Liberata era tiesa: era tímida, una criatura. Se cerraba, porque no sabía cuánto valía…” (p. 167). When the other girls spoke nonsense and laughed at themselves, he opines, “ella estaba como de palo, porque ella jamás diría aquellas cosas, y estaba angustiada. E iba con la cabeza muy alta, por el
pueblo, y yo sabía que le daba vergüenza pasar por delante del café, de la tienda grande, hasta del muelle” (p. 167).

Lastly, Justa, a friend of Telmo’s mother observes of Liberata’s illness, “Es un caso claro de cobardía, miedo a la vida, negarse. Locura, nada más” (p. 195). To the narrator she then inquires, “Simplemente: se esconde, pero ¿usted cree que sea un refugio la locura, o un escape? ¿Está loca? Eso es lo malo, si se supiera de una vez con certeza quizá lo olvidáramos, pero nos queda esa duda…¿Quién sabe la verdad si ella no lo dice?” (p. 196). “No se volvió loca el día en que llegó Telmo. Mentira. Si es locura lo estaba de tiempo atrás” (p. 203).

It is interesting that Telmo, the man Liberata fell in love with and, according to the townspeople, shut down for, is also described as different; he is a nonconformist. In other words, Telmo did not fit the expectant mold of a man deemed fit for this remote Galician fishing village.

On page 96 Telmo is described by one character as “fantastico” meaning from the time of his boyhood he never understood the humility of being the son of a fisherman. (p. 98). As don Simon Pedro, the village priest puts it, “Telmo era ególatra, egoísta” (p. 126). He relates to the narrator that unlike the fishermen in the village Telmo was the master of no one. He says that Telmo was all “yo” and Liberata was all “Telmo” (p. 126).

On page 131 don Simon Pedro then describes Liberata’s laughter, witnessed only once by him as she and Telmo dallied on the beach, “Sólo allí, al aire libre y con Telmo,
puedo recordarla riendo. Y caminaba gloriosa, sin detenerse, con la risa mordiendo al
viento.”

Quiroga uses an image of sea gulls once again as a metaphor, but this time she
compares Liberata’s dalliance on the beach with true freedom and happiness. On page
108 the seagulls foreshadow Liberata’s withdrawal as a representation of her sound mind.

“La playa es de ellas, la soledad es de ellas. Sirven de medida para apreciar aquel silencio
purísimo, absoluto” (p. 108).

Strolling alone on the water’s edge on the beach, the narrator marvels at the peace
and happiness one may sense if it weren’t for the constraint of one’s own body. She
confirms that this pause in time, this divine sensation would not be possible if a man,
symbol of power and patriarchy, was to appear at her side. She says, “si el hombre
estuviese allí tendería la acción” (p. 108). Like Liberata, she believes that she too would
try to escape her destiny under the social expectations of the village.

Unlike Liberata, however, her attempt to escape would come to no avail as she
acknowledges the influence of patriarchal power in her own life. Perhaps she is
considering her eventual return to her own husband when she says, “Se quitaría la ropa y
entraría en el agua. Oiría el chapoteo de su cuerpo. Y luego recorrería la playa, dejando
bien hundidas las huellas de sus pies. ‘No te estés ahí. Vamos a andar.’ Y encendería un
cigarillo” (p. 108).
Depending on from whose perspective, then, it is certain that Liberata’s silence must be interpreted subjectively as the truth in *La enferma* is elusive. Whereas Quiroga paints the townspeople as limited in thought while the narrator’s perception of the truth of Liberata is portrayed by Quiroga as more objective from an outsider’s viewpoint, like Barney, I believe Liberata’s silence is an act of insurgency against a stagnant and repressive reality she would otherwise live as a woman in her village.
CHAPTER FIVE

ALIENATION: ANALOGY OF COVERT OPPRESSIONS

Deprivation of Awareness

In Tristura, a description of an unceasing, winding staircase leading downward symbolizes the overriding element of the repressive reality in which the two protagonists live: alienation. “Una escalera enorme, hacia abajo, no se acababa nunca. La espiral, el hueco, borroso, un agujero tan pequeño al fondo” (p. 63).

As themes of obedience and silence are analogous to the theme of alienation, the isolated staircase in Part I of Tristura serve to foreshadow the alienated existence determined by the social repression of Spanish women in which both protagonists Tadea and Liberata must survive.

In Alienation Studies, author Melvin Seeman cites 20th-century French intellect, Alain Touraine in what I believe to be an apropos definition of alienation as regards these three novels: “alienation is an integral aspect of social class relations, whereby the dominated actor adopts orientations and social practices determined by and in the interests of the dominating class, presenting then a contradiction between behavior that corresponds to his true situation and behavior imposed by the going institutions in the service of the dominant order” (pp. 92-93).
In *Tristura* and *Escribo Tu Nombre*, Tadea delves into the past to recount her experiences where she has adopted practices determined by a feudal climate in Spain. However, toward the end of *Tristura*, and throughout *Escribo Tu Nombre*, she also demonstrates an awareness of the imposed alienation between herself and the other characters.

For example, early in *Tristura*, Tadea experiences emotional chaos and hypocrisy because of the conflicting words and behavior of those who surround her. Her youth and limited experience make it impossible to analyze her feelings of alienation. In the beginning of the novel, feeling excluded by her cousins whom she has recently met, and having no other recourse in her short life, she cries aloud when they estrange her. Through tears and without looking into their faces, Quiroga relates the foreign surroundings to Tadea’s sense of alienation, “El cuarto se llenó de olor a estiércol, un olor denso, fresco, animal, sofocante. El monte en el centro, carretilla abandonada, escalera (p. 46).

Her feelings of separation are exemplified further when tía Concha then scolds her for crying. It is here that Quiroga subtly relates that Tadea is an unwelcome outsider in her grandmother’s home. Upon being scolded, Tadea sits alone in a chair in the dining room. Described as always in shadow (p. 52) the dining room reflects a wider social context where her tears continue to be her only company. She recalls, “Tenía una echarpe morada, una echarpe morada de una lana finísima” (p. 47).
In addition to the ominous setting and Tadea’s tears, Quiroga’s images of dark and interminable time also foreshadow Tadea’s extended alienation here when she conveys the child’s internal void, “¿Cuánto tiempo hacía? ¿Había sucedido aquella tarde? Debía de ser noche oscura. Noche oscura fuera. Cuánto tiempo. Cuánto tiempo. Un agujero blanco en el tiempo” (p. 47).

In all three novels, the image of women wearing kerchiefs is prevalent, and on page 65 of Tristura their symbolism also seems to denote a badge of alienation; a loss of identity. Although as a young girl Tadea doesn’t yet don one, on page 65 Quiroga seems to compare the kerchief women wear to a horse harness as though, unbeknownst to them, they are somehow being led by an external force.

In a flashback Tadea recalls her impressions of women wearing kerchiefs as symbols of vulnerability rather than adornment: “…mujeres que parecían no tener pelo, sino pañuelo sobre el cuero cabelludo, solo se lo aflojaban para ajustárselo mejor, lo llevaban como la corona el eccehomo, solo que sin severidad, sin tristeza” (p. 65).

Moreover, like the women in Spain who were enclosed within their homes to live out their lives as good wives and mothers, Tadea’s world in Tristura is also characterized by an isolation that censors any possibility of growth in the outer world. Her praxis of alienation is illuminated by Quiroga with metaphors of closure that contrast freedom.


One may parallel her reference here to “cerradas las voces” and all that it implies to Quiroga’s use of interior monologue. It seems apparent that Tadea’s inability to express herself aloud throughout *Tristura* and *Escribo Tu Nombre* is an intrinsic form of her alienation within the Spanish society and may be compared to that of women’s voices in Spain during much of the 20th-century.

**Awareness of Deprivation**

Toward the end of *Tristura*, though, a flicker of Tadea’s budding awareness of her alienation is apparent when Quiroga uses light pouring through the cracks in a closed window as a metaphor to portray Tadea’s heightening awareness of her isolation. “Luz dulce viva en la penumbra, luz del día filtrándose por las rendijas de las ventanas. Luz entrando por todas las rendijas de los ventanales-, rayos como dedos atravesando el aire, polvillo de colores, bailarín” (p. 219).

In *Alienation Studies* Touraine also points out that alienation not only means the awareness of deprivation, but also the deprivation of awareness. As noted throughout this paper, Tadea’s oft adherence to silence, obedience and routine as a young girl living at her grandmother’s house and convent signifies an absence of awareness of the huge division between genders, and her resultant behaviors parallel similar behaviors of self-abnegation unknowingly exhibited by many Spanish women during the pre and post war years in Spain.
Over years, though, Tadea gradually awakens to recognize the many deprivations imposed on her as well as the deceptions that surround her. For example, on page 393 in *Escribo Tu Nombre*, while waiting for a visit from her father in the shadow of the convent’s living area, she laments her estrangement when he never arrives, “todas aquellas horas interminables de espera, aquellas imperdonables horas aguardando lo que no iba a llegar. Todos los besos que habría esperado, que yo no le di. Todos los besos encogidos, sofocados entre los muros de un colegio” (pp. 393-394).

Moreover, in a passage in *Escribo Tu Nombre*, Quiroga describes a powerful event that enables Tadea to recognize and acknowledge that like other Spanish women, she, too, is an alienated victim in society.

When Tadea returns to the convent another time from her grandmother’s house, she learns that Elvira’s mother has commit suicide. In a voice Quiroga describes as mysterious and prohibited, another classmate informs Tadea, “Su madre se mató. Se pegó un tiro en la boca, dentro de baño” (p. 178).

Although suicide is a gesture in literature that causes problems for interpretation, I believe her suicide is a response to her knowledge of her bondage as a woman living in an unjust society. In other words, her suicide represents a radical rupture in the widely accepted societal expectations of ethics and social demands of women at the time in Spain.
Quiroga never explains the reason for her suicide, but Tadea, clearly upset by the news, equates her death as an achievement of freedom when she recalls, “fue una liberación” (p. 178).

On page 178 she then likens the darkened environs outside her bedroom window to her own deprivation of justice, “Cuándo llegué a la casa y levanté los ojos hacia la vidriera del cuarto de estar a oscuras, me pareció que yo era objeto de una monstruosa injusticia.”

The principles of quiet and order imposed on Tadea suffice as forms of injustice, as they are meant to vilify her human potential in Spanish society. Nevertheless, Tadea comes to see that these same principles enable her to analyze life in more profound detail that she would otherwise not appreciate (p. 318).

For example, her isolation enables her to develop a discerning eye that catches the nuances of nature’s rhythm. On page 318 she equates her isolation with the dark anonymous world surrounding her, “Sólo que era el nuestro un hemisferio boreal, largo invierno, verano breve. El sol no era frecuente, ni en el colegio ni en la ciudad. Eran más los días de lluvia, y se presentaban de improviso, ululantes, rastreadores, los días de viento sur.”

She notices, “los tejados a nuestras plantas, las calles de la ciudad – vericuetos entre aquellos tejados -” (p. 318), yet, her quiescent confinement also enables her to develop an understanding that there exists more than meets the eye in her roadless
surroundings. “La tierra no está toda iluminada, sino que presenta solo media cara al sol” (p. 318).

Recollecting the wall that isolates the convent from the city, in her grandmother’s house, Tadea remembers looking beyond the bay’s somber, black ocean from inside the wall that had contained her. Beyond these ominous symbols, she perceives a new dawning for her own existence in the form of lustrous houses of the towns in the southern horizon.

Her musings are concurrently interrupted by tío Juan who responds to tía Concha’s righteous ravings defending women’s limited roles. “No son máquinas. Son seres humanos, tienen sus derechos, como es lógico. Tienen derecho a tener opiniones, como todo el mundo” (p. 320).

Witness to their argument, Tadea is prompted to compare these luminous towns in her mind’s eye with a vision of her own luminous future of self-direction as a woman, “desde allá arriba eran tan claras, tan dibujadas, tan allimismo que siempre era una experiencia, el sur” (p. 319).

Away from the convent, Tadea later spends two weeks alone with her grandmother, allowing much time to contemplate her lone existence. She contemplates the concept of appearances and deceptions in a world that has cut her off, and then equates the façades of houses in her mind with these deceptions. At the same time, she recognizes that it is the interior illumination within these houses that represent authentic life. She equates authentic life with internal knowledge; she has the right to transform
behaviors imposed on her by a dominant society and live out her true situation. “Sabía que no solo las casas tienen fachada, y que la vida transcurre detrás de la fachada, en el interior; quería sacar a la luz ese interior: saber” (p. 427).

One of the first things Tadea does to transform her interior life from one of alienation is to read, an activity she admits to feeling previously overwhelmed by, and an activity, if not prohibited, deemed unsuitable for women by the dominant order at the time in Spain. Now perceiving herself as an individual, she hopes to grow as her new habit of reading fortifies her internal light, “siguió leyendo como si atravesase un túnel presintiendo que por algún lado saldría la luz” (p. 445).

Previously viewed as an obstacle that contains her, an enlightened Tadea now views the ocean as a metaphor for an enriched existence. “La mar de nuevo. Aquella mar que se deshacía en Las Quebrantes, que cubría de conchillas blancas y de caparazones vacíos de cangrejos la arena, una arena áspera, salvaje, que según iba calentándola el sol se hacía fina y templada y daba gusto llenar la mano de arena” (p. 439).

Tadea presently understands that the way of life she has been obligated to live out is nothing more than a violation of her freewill. Recollecting the behaviors of her tía Concha and cousin Clota as accepted models of womenhood, she reminisces, “No sabíamos nunca las motivaciones de las cosas,” and recalling her life as one of the young girls in the convent she laments the virtues of the constricted life imposed on her, “Nadie nos preguntaba si estábamos bien así, o si aquel tipo de vida nos violentaba: creo que se trataba precisamente de violentarnos, de contrariar nuestra voluntad (p. 455).
She now rejects the imposed barriers on her life. She recognizes these barriers as negative life plans that suffocate the whole spirit of initiative or eagerness to excel (p. 456) as she questions,

¿Levantarme a las siete? ¿Por qué, si el resto de mi vida no había de levantarme a esa hora? ¿En dónde residía la virtud por hacer lo contrario de lo que me pedía el cuerpo? Caminar en filas y en silencio… ¿Cuándo íbamos a ir en filas y en silencio, al salir de allí? Inútil ejercicio. Comer sin hablar, no discutir jamás la pertinencia de una orden – me parecía humillante, de seres inferiores – aceptar el que nuestra vida estuviese programada de antemano (p. 455).

Toward the end of *Escribo Tu Nombre*, Quiroga speeds time up to symbolize Tadea’s process of reclaiming her life. “El tiempo se había agudizado, se había tornado puntiagudo y ligero como una flecha; nos disparábamos en él. Quizá porque estábamos empezando vivir con intensidad, con sentido y, hasta cierto punto, con iniciativa, y todo ello no dejaba reposo” (p. 539).

Ironically, according to Marks, time also quickens as the political rumblings shaking the Spanish Republic grow stronger and more ominous (p. 377). Referring to the years immediately preceding the Spanish Civil War “the years start to click by with increasing speed” (Marks, p. 377), and in a feeling of foreboding, Quiroga reveals her belief that women have been, and will continue to be victimized when Tadea acknowledges that society has taught women to close their eyes to their lives of injustice.

In a final conversation with a convent priest just as the civil war commences, confronting him, Tadea pleads for the rights of all women (to no avail), “¡Os veo! Queréis tenernos ciegos y mudos, sin opinión propia, y que de allí pasemos a ser un remedo vuestro, iguales que vosotras: a eso llamáis portarse bien. Vuestras costumbres,
vuertos modales, vuestras ideas, hasta vuestra manera de hablar. ¿Por qué? Nada de eso es una herencia. Ya está bien. Son otros tiempos; estamos en 1936, no en vuestra época” (p. 641).

Despite her inner growth as an individual and her insights regarding a society that has limited her movement within it, like those of other Spanish women, outwardly, Tadea’s alienation in society will manifest for many decades to come as she attempts to maneuver within the conflicts, tensions and contradictions of a patriarchal society.

In *La Enferma*, on the other hand, Liberata’s outward withdrawal from a town that believes she lives an empty and meaningless existence allows her complete release from its constraints, and her self-imposed alienation transgresses the limits of convention (Rigney, p. 111). In a metaphysical way, I believe Liberata’s life begins when she elects to go to bed for a final time; on a spiritual plane she becomes a witness to the imposed restraints she otherwise must be a participant of.

Referring to Liberata, Quiroga writes, “La muchacha no existía. Era una cosa que se movía al mando, que había aceptado su posición y no protestaba” (p. 39). When Quiroga writes this in the beginning of *La Enferma*, I believe she is informing the reader early on that the struggling girl Liberata was does not exist anymore. Rather, Liberata’s spirit moves her present dominion and her departure is only physical; a method she uses to delegitimize the cultural conventions of both male and female roles within her fishing village. Her self-imposed alienation, or madness, as the townspeople refer to her spiritual
withdrawal, then, is recognition of her unwillingness to live within the stagnant societal structure that is unconscious of liberty.

Rigney reinforces this possibility when she says, “what is commonly called ‘madness’ can be for women an essential tactic for psychological survival – a crucial means of averting the crushing threats posed to personal integrity by a male-dominated society” (p. 111).

In light of Rigney’s definition, I believe that Quiroga employs a twist of irony when she calls her novel *La Enferma*; it is not Liberata who is the sick one, rather, she demonstrates that it is “una sociedad enferma” that incites her to transform her physical being to one of spirituality where she can live freely without worldly constraints.
To conclude, I paraphrase Tadea’s observation of a sweet light that lives within the shadows, filtering through the railings of the windows. Tadea compares these rays of light to fingers, as though they are reaching through air that is dusted with colors. In my mind, Tadea’s observation of light parting shadow to illuminate a variety of color demonstrates variant possibilities for her life and newly-found freedom for all women.

Although both Tadea and Liberata have struggled mightily; as a child and adolescent Tadea at first succumbed to and Liberata challenged their binding roles and identities under both theoretical and activist traditions in a Fascist society, through reflection, analysis and action, I can only assume that they both did, in fact, achieve their own particular sense of freedom. In other words, I am hopeful that both Tadea and Liberata do attain their own personal sense of true being.

I believe that their struggles closely reveal the struggles of many other actual Spanish women regarding their compulsory roles and identities during 20th century Spain and that both their personal experiences, too, disclose both the idealized and activist traditions in Spain that both succumbed to and eventually overcame.
Saint, virgin, mother, role model, courageous and self-sacrificing? Although these traits may have at first glance seemed illustrious, I believe that in Tadea’s mind, the sweet light dusted with color has no relation at all with traits of self-sacrifice, rather hope for a divergent life filled with innumerable possibilities to live an authentic and unconstrained life.
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VITA

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