The Dangerous/Endangered Modern Woman in Four Interwar Spanish Novels (1917-1936)

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ABSTRACT

The Modern Woman was a figure perpetually discussed in the early twentieth century, as she embodied the increasingly public role and greater mobility of women in industrialized cities. A century later, historians and literary critics still explore the significance of this female archetype, who was at the center of debates regarding feminism and changing gender dynamics, because the Modern Woman's defiance of social conventions opened the way for the independent lifestyle and freedoms of women today. Yet, still left unexplored is the image of the Modern Woman as both dangerous and in danger and what this contradictory depiction reveals about beliefs regarding the right of women to access spaces and employment traditionally reserved for men, which continue to manifest in prohibitive practices like sexual discrimination and harassment. Through the analysis of four novels—*La rampa* by Carmen de Burgos, *La Venus mecánica* by José Díaz Fernández, *Eva Libertaria* by Rafael López de Haro, and *Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas* by Carmen de Icaza—this study elucidates the dichotomy of the dangerous/endangered Modern Woman in literature of Interwar-era Spain, between the end of World War I and the start of the Spanish Civil War.

Representations of the Modern Woman exposed to danger often served as literary proof of her unsuitability for employment and the need for male protection to usher her back into the domestic realm. Less commonly, these depictions served to raise awareness of the exploitation, unfit work conditions, and insufficient wages that women experienced in the city, in works like *La rampa* and *La Venus mecánica*, which call for social and economic reforms, or revolution, to oppose patriarchal, capitalist institutions. In contrast, the frivolous Modern Woman is an agent of disorder who threatens to dismantle the

traditional family structure in *Eva Libertaria* and *Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas*. Furthermore, male anxieties about androgyny, unrestrained female sexuality, and the women's emancipation movement are evident in *La Venus mecánica* and *Eva Libertaria*, in which female characters manipulate or emasculate men. These conflicting images reflect fears of rapidly changing gender roles and illustrate the difficulties that women faced in Spanish urban centers.

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INTRODUCTION

Spanish novelists of the early 1900s bore witness to a singular transformation in government and gender relations. The sudden change in political systems from monarchy to the military dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera from 1923 to 1930 was met with the progressive ideas of the democratic Republic in 1931. The wave of European modernization also provoked a reconsideration of gender roles and of women's place within the reforms initiated by the new, democratic regime. The Spanish Interwar era—that is, the years between the end of World War I in 1918 and the start of the Spanish Civil War in 1936—was a period of especially intense debates concerning the nature of women and their new, more independent lifestyle in modern, industrialized cities. The figure of the Modern Woman served as a symbol onto which Spanish authors projected their ideas and opinions regarding industrialism, consumerism, androgyny, feminism, and women's condition at work and in other public areas. Pivotal to the discourse regarding the expanded role and mobility of women was the perception of the Modern Woman as either being dangerous or endangered in the workplace and the city streets. The four novels examined in this study—*La rampa* (1917) by Carmen de Burgos, *La Venus mecánica* (1929) by José Díaz Fernández, *Eva Libertaria* (1933) by Rafael López de Haro, and *Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas* (1936) by Carmen de Icaza—confirm this tendency as the protagonists and other female characters in these works represent iterations of the Modern Woman, imbued with all of her threatening qualities or in peril as she navigates employment and public spaces on her own. The analysis of the dichotomy of the endangered/dangerous Modern Woman illuminates beliefs about

women's right to access spaces and employment traditionally reserved for men. Although some authors described the job discrimination, poverty, exploitation, harassment, and physical dangers that women faced, many novelists focused on the perceived threats of materialism, frivolity, selfishness, independence, and unrestrained sexuality of the Modern Woman.

Although in the early twentieth-century Spain was in the midst of modernization, residual[1] Victorian ideals and customs effectively impeded women who attempted to participate in public life. One of these ideals hinged on the imagery of the Angel of the Hearth—or the *ángel del hogar*. The role of women as the *ángel del hogar* was essentially a life of maternal and domestic servitude. The *ángel del hogar* was a symbol of feminine chastity and virtue, a self-sacrificing being whose most significant social responsibility is motherhood (Bender, "Maternity" 80). In Spain, there was a resurgence of this feminine ideal in the nineteenth century, as this figure was eulogized in moralizing manuals of female conduct and in other literature to reinforce the domestic role prescribed for women by traditional, Catholic ideology (80). The discourse of domesticity was still the basis of women's social identity in early-twentieth century Spain, and women's movements were generally compelled to recognize gender difference, rather than emphasize gender equality (Nash, "Experiencia" 161). The feminine model of the *ángel del hogar* had never been completely rejected nor

[1] According to his epochal analysis in *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams explains that within any cultural system, there are dominant, residual, emergent, and archaic features (121). He defines dominant features as the prevailing, hegemonic ideas in an era and residual features as those belonging to the previous era but are still practiced (121-22). Emergent features are new concepts and values that are characteristic of the upcoming era, some decades after the dominant era (123). Finally, the archaic is an era that has lost all cultural influence on the present era, as it is commonly recognized as an element of the past (122).

replaced—even within the feminist movement (Bender, "Maternity" 83). Thus, the *ángel del hogar* reemerged as a popular ideal romanticized by two conflicting groups: patriarchal institutions and maternal feminists (83). Maternal feminists lauded motherhood and the traditionally feminine virtues of abnegation and caregiving as essential for a peaceful society (83). On the other hand, patriarchal institutions referred to these tenets in order to justify restricting women's access to education and the public sphere (83).

In Spain, it was, specifically, the *señorita*—a young, middle-class woman—who was expected to fulfill this chaste, domestic role. The *señorita* lived a life behind closed doors, receiving rudimentary instruction regarding basic domestic management as well as dubious cultural knowledge of music, writing, and French (Establier Pérez 41-42). She was characterized by her isolation from the world around her, and if the *señorita* left the house it was only to join her husband in their conjugal home or to become a nun (41). Yet, small, bourgeois families at the time often lacked male descendants to take on the heavy financial burden of the family, and sometimes, after losing their patriarchal figure, young, bourgeois women were forced to enter the workforce (42). However, her lack of preparation, as well as her reticence to doing any jobs associated with the lower class, impeded the *señorita* from jobs with better wages and social standing (42). Hence, *señoritas* who had fallen on hard times could be seen going door to door begging for work as a music teacher, governess, or salesclerk (42). These *desclasadas*, or economically unstable bourgeois women, now cast into public life and in need of work, were also referred to as *las ingenuas*—"naïve women"—as they were considered easy

prey due to their vulnerability from their lack of job experience or professional connections, and they were unfamiliar with life on the streets (42).

Madrid's population boomed in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, and this population explosion resulted in marked disparities between traditional and modern values, men's and women's gender roles, and social classes (Bender, "Modernity" 131). Due to expectations for greater economic opportunities, "muchas campesinas se trasladaron a las ciudades para trabajar en talleres, industrias y en el servicio doméstico," resulting in transitory women's emigration throughout the early 1900s (Ramos 133). Although, during the first three decades of the twentieth century an increasing number of women were entering the workforce, especially the mercantile industry, female employees earned "salarios muy inferiores a los de la dependencia masculina" (Nielfa Cristóbal 323). One reason that female employees were devalued and poorly compensated is because their jobs were considered to be supplementary or temporary work meant to sustain them until marriage (Larson, "Constructing" 74). The concept of the careerwoman was still unorthodox at this time, as "the vast majority of women between 1900 and 1930 in Spain did not hold regular, full-time employment outside of the home" (Larson, "The Commodification" 279). Paternalist legislation established even more restrictions on women's employment, limiting their shifts, reducing work hours, and prohibiting women from working at night or in industries deemed unhealthy or dangerous (Ramos 135). Policies during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera further deterred access to employment, as they excluded women from occupations like notary work, instituted property registries, and required female

employees to receive permission from their husbands before signing job contracts (135-36).

Social and economic changes of the early-twentieth century provided Spanish women with new opportunities for work and activity outside the home, yet traditional beliefs regarding honor and femininity remained (Bender, "Maternity" 82). At this time, a woman's position in society was still defined in terms of marriage, and "será el estado civil el que proporcionará el rango social de acuerdo, claro está, con la clase de hombre con el que logra casarse" (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 89). As more Spanish women entered the workforce in the early twentieth century, particularly during World War I, the Catholic Church and many men perceived the increased female presence in public life as a threat to the patriarchal ideology underlying the traditional family structure (Bender, "Maternity" 82). Furthermore, female employment obviously "contradicted all of the precepts of ideal womanhood and threatened to topple one of the pillars of masculine legitimacy" (Larson, "The Commodification" 279). The possibility of women competing with men for work was a challenge to the notion of sexual difference, which was central to the social order of the nineteenth century, particularly among the bourgeoise (Rose, "Protective" 199). The subversion of traditional gender roles and women's participation in the public sphere was often perceived as not only disruptive, but detrimental to the very foundations of Spanish society, as women appeared to be abandoning their biological and domestic responsibilities.

These political and social conditions were propitious for "una reflexión sobre la condición de la mujer y su emancipación" (Magnien 20). With the increased presence of women in public life in the last half of the eighteenth century, there were intense debates

regarding the role of women in society. This fixation was spurred by the new, more independent lifestyle available to women through the modernization process and democratic reforms. Most of the debate centered on a new female archetype internationally dubbed the "New Woman" which later became the "Modern Woman," or *Mujer Moderna*. This construct embodied a set of ideas and ideals and a compilation of behaviors that carried across national contexts in a variety of manifestations (Otto and Rocco 1). In all her varied forms, the most consistent characteristic of the New Woman was her disruption of the status quo as she defied social conventions (1). Consequently, she was an internationally recognizable "icon of change" (1). The Modern Woman was a new and transgressive female figure with a greater freedom of movement, engaging in behaviors that were considered appropriate only for men, like smoking, drinking, exercising, and working. She walked through the city streets, unaccompanied by a male chaperone. The 1920s and 1930s was the height of the "New" or "Modern" Woman type (12). Images of the Modern Woman were generally associated with "the flapper," who had shed the restricting Victorian fashion of corsets and large, cumbersome dresses in favor of shorter, lighter clothing that revealed a thinner, more androgynous body, and frequently donning short hairstyles. With her drastic changes in appearance and behavior, the "New" Woman was seen as the embodiment of feminism in action or simply as a fashion statement (1). In addition, she was sometimes viewed as a symptom of decadence and social decay (8). This female type was criticized for what was perceived as the dangerous subversion of gender norms (1). For this reason, women who fit this "type," were accused of being mannish, frivolous, vain, and materialistic.

As a result of this disruption of traditional gender roles, there were numerous articles, studies, novels, essays, anthologies, and speeches produced with the intended purpose of describing the nature of "woman" and her appropriate place in society. There was an obsession with the study of "woman" (Jagoe 23). It was a topic endlessly discussed by a multitude of religious and public figures, including politicians, philosophers, journalists, novelists, sociologists, hygienists, and doctors (23).

In addition to the resurgence and lionization of the *ángel del hogar*, critics of the new female type—the Modern Woman—used pseudoscientific theories to maintain ideas of sexual difference. Scientists, doctors, and philosophers used positivist discourses in attempts to provide indisputable evidence that women are innately inferior and to justify the confinement of girls and women to the private sphere, where they must serve as obedient daughters and wives (Bender, "Maternity" 82). Twentieth-century Spanish physicians built upon the pseudoscience of Ángel Pulido Fernández, a renowned politician and doctor who published his *Bosquejos médico-sociales para la mujer* in 1876. In this study, Pulido Fernández analyzes women's moral and physiological character in order to determine the causes of supposed illnesses that affect women, particularly hysteria, which was a highly-gendered classification of a nervous system disorder that male physicians essentially constructed to explain enigmatic emotional and physical distress in women. Pulido Fernández clarifies that he is not an apologist for the "sexo débil," but that he believes it is important to understand "las grandes diferencias que existen entre la constitución general de la mujer y la del hombre" (*Bosquejos* 4). In his view, men are naturally ambitious, while women are docile and impressionable—best suited for domestic life and maternity, and for serving as the spiritual guide who turns the

home into a harmonious sanctuary (8-13). According to Pulido Fernández motherhood is the essential, sublime role of women,[2] who do not belong in public life because they are morally impressionable and susceptible to temptation (14). In this way, his work reinforced traditional, Victorian beliefs about the need for distinct gender roles by detailing sexual difference in scientific and psychological terms.

The theories of Pulido Fernández influenced the next generation of Spanish physicians, like Gregorio Marañón, an endocrinologist who revitalized pseudoscience in Spain in the early twentieth century. Instead of focusing on the supposedly fragile nervous system of women, like his predecessor Pulido Fernández, Marañón studied the endocrine and the concept of intersexuality as a means of criticizing the Modern Woman and the shift in gender roles. In his *Tres ensayos sobre la vida sexual* (1926), Marañón polarizes sexual, or gender, characteristics and classifies "intersexuality," or androgyny, as an anomaly and an illness. Marañón considered intellectual characteristics to be inherently masculine and viewed women as carnal beings confined to their biological destiny of motherhood. Therefore, all activity that interferes with maternity, in his view, is unnatural. To counter examples of women who were active in the public sphere or otherwise did not fit traditional female characteristics or gender roles, Marañón ascribed their behavior to a hormonal abnormality (Bordons 27-28). The doctor even applied his biological theories to work, which he defined as a sexual characteristic of men (33). In his view, the principal function of women is to bear and raise children, and their

[2] In fact, Pulido Fernández reasons that the link between mother and child is so strong that infertility can cause divorce, unhappiness, madness, and suicide (13). A woman's place is the home, he posits, because "en la familia residen la virtud, el amor puro y la calma del espíritu; en los salones de grande reunión y en los espectáculos públicos están el vicio, el oleaje de las pasiones y el incentivo de los deseos impuros" (30).

sentimental nervous system makes women unsuited for abstract, intellectual work (44-45). For this reason, he believed that the capitalist is just in paying women less than men (44). In this way, Marañón and other influential male authorities continued to justify discrimination against women in the workplace and reinforced the ideology of domesticity in scientific terms. Despite the obvious limitations that his theories placed on women, Marañón was considered a feminist in his time, because he did not explicitly view women as inferior—just different—and he supported women's right to divorce and access to contraception. The work of physicians like Pulido Fernández and Marañón reinforced traditional beliefs about distinct, separate gender roles by detailing sexual difference in scientific and psychological terms in attempts to provide indisputable evidence that women are innately inferior, or distinct, from men, and, therefore, should be limited to domestic life. These doctors were, in effect, pathologizing women. Women who possessed characteristics or exhibited behaviors deemed only appropriate for men were, therefore, treated as medical anomalies. Popular within intellectual and medical groups, arguments like these, which attempted to back gender differences with theories of biological essentialism, were yet another means of affirming beliefs regarding the inferiority of women (30). In a muddling of the fields of science and literature that would seem strange in today's society, Marañón wrote prologues to several works of fiction, endorsing their representation of women and their supposed ailment of intersexuality through female characters who devolve into total destruction as they are overcome by unnatural, masculine traits. Among these authors, Marañón endorsed works of both Carmen de Burgos and Rafael López de Haro.

Media of this era are saturated with observations and criticism of how women were adapting to modernity and embracing new freedoms. At the turn of the century, the Spanish public was keenly aware of the developments for women in other cultures over the preceding decades, and writers often portrayed these phenomena as dangerous excesses or trivialized them humorously as absurd exaggerations (Bieder 242). Male authors studied the New Woman with a mixture of fascination and fear (Paredes Méndez et al. 504). Catherine Jagoe, in her reflections on the literature of the era, explains that many male authors treated women "como bichos raros y fascinantes a los que examinan y catalogan desde una óptica paternalista" (37). The increased focus on women in nineteenth-century texts continued to intensify during the first three decades of the twentieth century, as evidenced by "la abundancia de títulos que consisten en un nombre femenino" with a protagonist who symbolizes a certain female type (Magnien 19). The novels included in this study are evidence of this convention, as they all focus on the condition of women, and three of the four carry titles that allude to female protagonists defined by their employment, commercialized sensuality, or other indicators of the Modern Woman type.

Feminist icons like Burgos were keenly aware of the disadvantageous conditions that women faced, as they were denied adequate education and vocational training, and they received insufficient wages for the few employment opportunities available to them. One of the primary obstacles that Spanish women faced was illiteracy and limited access to education. In 1900, approximately 71.4% of Spanish women and 55.8% of men were illiterate, and in 1930, 47.5% of women and 37% of men were illiterate (Larson, "Imagining" 180). Furthermore, in the first three decades of the twentieth century, the

education of girls and young women was still centered on maternity and homemaking, prioritizing the "cumplimiento de su rol doméstico, que es también un rol moralizador" (Ramos 110). Beyond domesticity, women's education was limited to knowledge of English and French, singing, piano, drawing, and some lessons in history and geography (111).

The first professions open to Spanish women were the least prestigious careers in midwifery, nursing, pharmacy, and teaching in elementary schools (Larson, *Constructing* 72). Middle-class women found increasing employment in lower-paid jobs in the service economy (72). Furthermore, jobs filled by women were considered to be only temporary, because, in Spanish society, it was assumed that all women were married or were awaiting marriage (74). This belief also meant that female employees were undervalued and were poorly compensated by their employers for equal work (74). During the years surrounding World War I (1914-18), inflation resulted in a severe deterioration in the standard of living for Spain's working class (Nash, *Defying* 27). Despite the economic boom in Spain during the first World War, inflation was high and wages were low (Larson, *Constructing* 85). In industrialized, Victorian Britain, men's trade unions demanded a salary sufficient to support their entire family—a "family wage"—which effectively relied on preventing women from access to work and autonomy (Janssen 13-14). Similarly, in Spain the "family wage economy" meant that women had to accept starvation wages as their only means of survival, and they were relegated to domestic work (Nash, *Defying* 27). In fact, in 1930 the salary that women earned was approximately 53% less than that of men (Morcillo Gómez 101).

Madrid experienced "a period of exceptional urban development" from the beginning of the twentieth century through the 1930s, as the city began to be an internationally recognized modern capital and metropolis (Larson, "Constructing" 23). Women were able to travel to and within Madrid more easily, with the construction of the *Gran Vía* and, later, the metro (Folguera 49-51). They could work, shop, and entertain themselves at the new cinemas, theaters, cafés, and shops (51). Spanish women were able to use spaces previously forbidden to them, as they were being integrated into higher education and Madrid's labor force in workshops, factories, and offices (53). They became more involved in politics and the suffrage movement, and working-class women made demands for improved working conditions and for regulation of employment contracts (53). In the 1920s, upper-class women extended their social sphere to include more public spaces like tea salons and modern bars (Ramos 112). Spanish women also socialized in cafés, patios, markets, shops, the theater, the cinema, music-halls, and cabarets (122; 126). In periodicals like *Blanco y Negro*, graphic artists portrayed women as being comfortable in the city streets, with glamorous metropolis scenes in the background (Larson, "The Commodification" 284).

With the increased presence of women in public spaces, one can observe representations and descriptions of what now would be called "sexual harassment." In her study of Victorian literature, Patricia E. Johnson postulates that, although it may appear anachronistic to refer to workplaces and their literary representations in the nineteenth century as sexual harassment, there is extensive evidence that it occurred (*Hidden Hands* 46). Clearly, this postulation can be applied to other historical and literary contexts predating the use of the term when supported by similar data. The issue of sexual

harassment was hidden and distorted by various gender and class interests, and "without an established term to identify this behavior, it was difficult for women to voice concern or describe their experiences with unwanted sexual attention and behavior" (46). Another impediment to the identification of predatory sexual advances was that "sexual harassment can be defined only when women are recognized as having the right of choice and the right to occupy public spaces and workplaces" (49).

In Victorian customs, incidents of harassment were interpreted in different ways, according to class alignments and debates regarding prostitution, the sexual purity of working-class women, and the right for women to work (47). As middle-class women struggled to gain access to public spaces, working-class women were already present in these spaces, unshielded by social claims to respectability that were granted to women of the bourgeoise (46). The lives of working-class women are intrinsically public, so they are exposed to various dangers, because their bodies are viewed as "available for consumption in the form of labor, sex, and a source of visual pleasure" (Larson, *Constructing* 174-75). Additionally, "there is often a blurring of the lines between prostitutes and working-class women involved in nondomestic kinds of labor," which meant that "any woman working outside the home, especially in a mixed-sex workplace, was in danger of being classified as a prostitute" (Johnson, Patricia E. 5). The traditional view of sex workers is that they cannot be sexually harassed because they invite sexual approach and therefore forfeit their freedom of choice (50). The common representation of working-class women as prostitutes, or at the least, as sexually immoral, clouded the issue of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape, and therefore cast blame on women for their own victimization (50). Consequently, in Victorian literary tradition, men in city

streets are privileged with the position of being an observer and a rambler, but women are restricted to the role of temptress, illicit partner, or sexual victim (Nord 137).

Growing awareness of sexual harassment is evidenced by the penalties that Primo de Rivera instituted in 1928 against *piropos*, or catcalls and obscene gestures, in the *Código Penal*. During his rule, the dictator undertook a complete reform of the *Código Penal* to establish stricter sanctions and punishments for most offenses. Primo de Rivera included *piropos* in the expanded list of "faltas contra la moralidad pública," which appeared in article 819, declaring, "El que, aún con propósito de galantería, se dirigiese a una mujer con gestos, ademanes o frases groseras o chabacanas, o la asedié con insistencia molesta de palabra o por escrito, será castigado con la pena de arresto de cinco a veinte días o multa de 50 a 500 pesetas" (Cervera). The Código Penal "castigaba con dureza las conductas indecorosas, la blasfemia, los cantos obscenos y las frases groseras o chabacanas dirigidas a una mujer, lo que se puede entender como piropos agresivos" (Cervera). However, this penal code was overturned three years later with the proclamation of the Second Republic.

All four novels in this study depict the urban experience for modern women in Madrid and other major cities, albeit from different vantage points. Chapter one focuses on *La rampa* and Burgos's role as a journalist, author, and advocate for women's rights. Through her novel, Burgos challenges Victorian beliefs and demystifies marriage, maternity, and the feminine ideal of the Angel of the Hearth. She also brings attention to the sexual discrimination, harassment, and exploitation that women endured in Madrid by depicting the female characters' struggle to survive. Female characters in *La rampa* have limited options for employment, earn meager wages, and they are subjected to constant

harassment on the job and in public spaces. Hungry and exhausted, their health is also endangered by their poverty, childbirth, and unacceptable work and living conditions. *La rampa* makes the case that women's presence at work and in public is not inherently dangerous to them, but rather social and economic reforms are required to grant women equal access and opportunities in these spaces, without being intimidated or harassed by men.

Chapter two analyzes *La Venus mecánica* and Díaz Fernández's portrayal of the Modern Woman as both dangerous and endangered as a result of industrial capitalism. In his novel, Díaz Fernández uses the female figure to symbolize the exploitation of both women and the proletariat. As female characters are objectified and sexually degraded, the dehumanization they experience becomes symbolic of the common oppression of mankind through advancing technology in the hands of business magnates. Objectified and corrupted by materialism, the Modern Woman metaphorically transforms into a synthetic, mechanized commodity whose only resource is her body. The bionic woman is a manifestation of male anxieties regarding the unrestrained force of machinery and female sexuality. Díaz Fernández resolves the issues of bourgeois superficiality and the unrestrained eroticism of the Modern Woman by transforming the fatally attractive protagonist into a nurturing, maternal figure. Through his novel, Díaz Fernández demonstrates the need for socialist revolution and a more humane future.

Chapter three discusses *Eva Libertaria* and López de Haro's aristocratic, monarchist views of shifting power dynamics between the sexes. *Eva Libertaria* is a notable example of the fixation with the supposedly dangerous, misguided ways of the Modern Woman. As the protagonist, Luisa, transforms into an emancipated woman—

Eva Libertaria—she becomes an increasing threat. The novel superficially appears to celebrate the Modern Woman, yet it represents her through an ironic, critical lens that implies that the liberated woman is a destructive force detrimental to Spanish society, and is dangerous to men, in particular. Although the narrator and male characters trivialize and demonize Luisa's emancipation, she is still represented as a more moderate version of the Modern Woman. This is evidenced by her comparison with female characters who the narrator presents as objects of ridicule due to their frivolous lifestyles, feminist beliefs, and androgynous appearance. The narrator and various male characters in the novel express that Luisa is an ideal Spanish woman who simply has been led astray by the false ideas of feminism and women's emancipation movement.

Chapter four examines *Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas* and Carmen de Icaza's position as both a modern, working woman and propagandist for the Spanish fascist party. Throughout her novel, Icaza uses two contrasting models of Modern Woman to prescribe specific behaviors and values to her young female readers. The titular protagonist is a paradigm of the *Mujer Moderna*—the optimistic companion to man—a self-sacrificing woman who faces life's difficulties without complaint, working when necessary, but only in jobs deemed appropriate for women and only until finding a male provider. Cristina's antithetical sister Fifí, on the other hand, serves as an amalgam of the *mujer frívola*, a dangerous type of Modern Woman whose selfish, immoral behavior is destructive to society. However, the ideological message of the novel is sometimes complicated and contradicted by Icaza's attempts to reconcile the new, expanded role of women in public life with fascist tenets that promoted the traditional, domestic figure of the *ángel del hogar*.

In some of the novels in this study, the authors appear to affirm traditional values of domesticity and the role of women by means of illustrating the failures that occur as a result of the new public activity of the emancipated Modern Woman. Other novels in the study appear to demonstrate the need for improved education and job preparation for women by depicting the inevitable problems that result from denying women of these rights. Spanish literature from the Interwar era reveals contradictory perceptions of the Modern Woman and of her presence in the workplace and other public spaces. These conflicting views of modernity are ultimately indicative of the very national divide that led to Francisco Franco's attempt to overthrow the government in 1936, which provoked the Civil War that ended in 1939 with the general's dictatorship. Through this study, I seek to contribute to the universal polemic of feminism and modernity as experienced by women in Madrid and other booming urban centers in Spain and throughout the Western world in the early twentieth century. Literary portrayals of the Modern Woman as either being dangerous or in danger largely depended on the ideological and political positions of the author and what she symbolized.

CHAPTER ONE: "PERSEGUIDAS Y TURBADAS:" THE ENDANGERED MODERN WOMAN IN *LA RAMPA*

> "La mujer en España no era ya *la mujer de su casa*, y no era tampoco la mujer libertada e independiente. No tenían ni la protección pública ni la protección privada, y lo más grave de todo era la indiferencia con que se las humillaba."
> (Burgos, *La rampa* 18)

Within the early twentieth-century dichotomy of Modern Woman[3] as either dangerous or in danger, Carmen de Burgos's *La rampa* (1917) is a novel that describes women's perilous position in a capitalist, patriarchal society. The female characters are denied adequate healthcare, education, jobs, and wages, and are, ultimately, mislead by bourgeois ideals of marriage and maternity, as represented by the *ángel del hogar*. Moreover, women in the novel are continually subject to male harassment while in city streets, at the park, at work, in restaurants, and in other public spaces. Through the inevitable downfall of the protagonist and seemingly every female character in *La rampa*, Burgos illustrates the real dangers of the world for (modern) women, denounces their mistreatment, and demonstrates the need for social and legal reform. This representation in *La rampa* of women in peril is part of a larger dichotomy of depictions of the Modern Woman as either dangerous or endangered in Interwar-era Spain and serves as a

[3] The "Modern Woman," "Mujer Moderna," "New Woman," and "Mujer Nueva" are terms capitalized in this study to reference the internationally-recognized female archetype established at the turn of the twentieth century. This construct of woman embodied a set of modern ideas and ideals and a compilation of newly recognized behaviors, reaching its height in the 1920s and 1930s. In all her varied forms, the most consistent characteristic of the New Woman was her disruption of the status quo as she defied social conventions. (Otto and Rocco 1; 12)

counterpoint to male literary tradition, which portrayed the emancipated, Modern Woman, as a temptress, libertine, and destructive social agent.

CARMEN DE BURGOS

Carmen de Burgos (1867-1932) was a Modern Woman who worked as an educator, journalist, and author. She studied to be a teacher at a time when few women received a formal education or professional training (Bieder 241). Burgos wrote news articles, novels, short stories, essays, translations, and other publications. This prolific author published twelve novels and fifty-seven novellas (Larson, Introducción xi). Through her speeches, news column, essays, and literary works, Burgos was a commentator of Spanish society in the early twentieth century. Yet, Burgos has been overlooked in literary canon, and there is little reference to her in traditional Spanish literary histories published before 2000 (Larson, *Constructing* 80). Because her essays and literature express "anti-clerical sentiments and critique set notions about the roles of women and men in society," Burgos's works were ignored during the Franco dictatorship and still remain largely unknown to this day (81). This social commentary and criticism are perhaps most evident in her novel *La rampa* and in her feminist essay *La mujer moderna y sus derechos*.

As a public figure in the first three decades of the twentieth century, Burgos informed her audience of women's dependent status and the limited options for women (Bieder 243). Her readership largely consisted of middle-class women who had leisure time and disposable incomes (Larson, *Constructing* 79). Burgos was born into a landowning family, and she belonged to the very bourgeoisie she describes and addresses in her novels, and thus, she experienced the same limited education and job preparation

of women at the time (Larson, *Constructing* 81; Establier Pérez 43). Like her protagonists, Burgos moved to Madrid to start anew and to find work (Bieder 245). In 1901 she had separated from her husband for being abusive and unfaithful, and she left for the capital in 1906 with her young daughter in order to pursue a career as both an educator and writer (Larson, Introducción viii). Through her novels, Burgos seems to reflect upon what her life would have been like if she had not rebelled against traditional bourgeois models and apathy toward working women (Establier Pérez 43).

Burgos was a champion of women's social and civil rights. Much of her feminism was based on the need for Spanish women to have access to work outside the home so that they could gain independence (Larson, Introducción ix). Although Burgos initially avoided referring to herself as a feminist in public forums, her advocacy of economic, legal, and political equality for women was one of the more radical feminisms in Spain (Bieder 257). In *La mujer moderna*[4], Burgos succinctly defines feminism as a "partido social que trabaja para lograr una justicia que no esclavice a la mitad del género humano, en perjuicio de todo él" (Burgos 9). Therefore, feminism represents the freedom and vindication of women's rights (10-22). Burgos lamented that feminism has been discredited as a destructive cause that could lead to the breakdown of society or has simply been dismissed as absurd (10). The author contended that Spaniards falsely believed that "el feminismo era enemigo del hombre, que disolvía el hogar y constituía la negación del amor" (15). At a time when being a feminist was considered analogous to being frivolous, masculine, or an object of ridicule, Burgos declared that "ser feminista es

[4] Henceforth, I will abbreviate the title *La mujer moderna y sus derechos* as *La mujer moderna*.

ser mujer respetada, consciente, con personalidad, con responsabilidad, con derechos, que no se oponen al amor, al hogar, y a la maternidad" (21). Burgos described the new type of woman—the Modern Woman—as active and emancipated, and in her expanded role, more useful to society. Modern women are more sincere, as they can express themselves freely, the author contended (257).

However, Burgos only supported women's suffrage later in life, as, like many Spanish feminists at the time, she feared women were still too uneducated to responsibly participate in politics (Bender, "Maternity" 81). Yet, in *La mujer moderna*, Burgos describes herself as a precursor of the movement for women's suffrage, because she advocated for women "en el periódico, en el libro, hasta en la novela y la conferencia" (Burgos 266; 270). She acknowledges in her essay that the notion that "la mujer no está preparada es un engaño para ganar arteramente tiempo" (278). The author asserted that women's right to vote is crucial for achieving the reforms necessary for gender equality and a better future (265). This is because politics are "un derecho y un deber de todos los ciudadanos" (265-66). Patriarchal legislation, Burgos explained, "trata a la mujer como a los incapaces, excluyéndola del derecho de ciudadanía y de emitir su opinion" (279).

Burgos also helped found the women's organizations *Cruzada de Mujeres Españolas* and the *Liga Internacional de Mujeres Ibéricas e Iberoamericanas* (Larson, Introducción xi). The author became politically more liberal over time, and in 1930, she became a member of the Spanish socialist party, the *Partido Radical Socialista*, and was a candidate for representing the party in parliament (xi). Socialism[5] shares a common

[5] Marxist theories regarding women's subordinate position in society largely influenced and redefined historical and feminist ideas. Frederick Engels, in *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*

pursuit of equality with feminism, Burgos believed, and in *La mujer moderna* she asserts that "las vindicaciones de la mujer y el proletariado marchan unidas" (Burgos 107). Within the socialist party, Burgos continued to agitate for women's suffrage and the right to divorce (Larson, *Constructing* 84). Burgos's death, in 1932, became legendary, as her infamous last words were purportedly "¡Viva la República!" (Larson, Introducción xi).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: WOMEN'S SUBORDINATE POSITION IN SPAIN

Cities offered new freedoms and opportunities for Spanish women at the turn of the century. In the changing economic, social, and urban climate of Madrid during the early twentieth century, a growing number of women were employed outside the home as servants, shopkeepers, and factory workers (Bender, "Maternity" 79). When Burgos published *La mujer moderna* in 1927, she reported that more than half of women were employed and that the number of female workers was continually growing (Burgos 104). In the midst of ideological debates regarding the proper place for women in society, the pragmatic Burgos expressed that "cuando la mujer necesita elegir entre el trabajo, el hambre o la indignidad, la elección no es dudosa" (112).

Burgos also remarked on the new liberties of the Modern Woman, who can dress how she wants, attend parties, go to a theater or café, and play sports like polo (*La mujer moderna* 260). According to Burgos, these changes have been so sudden, "la evolución ha sido tan rápida que parece que hay muchos siglos de distancia entre las mujeres de

(1884) demonstrates a connection between political and economic dominance by men and the control they assert over women's sexuality. He equates the subordination of women with slavery and postulates that the origin of this enslavement can be found in the establishment of private property. Consequently, Engels proposes that abolishing private property would result in women's liberation. Furthermore, Engels linked changes in social relations to sexual relations, thereby breaking with the biological determinism of traditionalists. (Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* 21-23)

1899 y las actuales" (260-61). Yet, Spanish women were in a precarious situation in the early twentieth-century due to the social, political, and economic limitations placed upon them through both moral and legal arguments, which restricted their ability to integrate themselves into public life (Establier Pérez 41). Inadequate education, workplace segregation, and "prevailing hostile attitudes towards female wage work" impeded women's independence and hindered possibilities of upward social mobility (Bender, "Modernity" 138). Essentially, women's progressive entrance into public spaces conflicted with Catholic, bourgeois tradition in Spain (Establier Pérez 41).

According to Burgos in *La mujer moderna*, sociologists were scandalized by women leaving their homes for a few hours to work in factories and workshops, yet society readily accepted "la esclavitud que supone para la mujer el servicio doméstico, el cual les hace abandonar *totalmente* su casa" (Burgos 97). Burgos fiercely defended women's right to work and found this sudden compassion for women's supposedly weak disposition and the children she leaves at home to be ingenuine, because "las mujeres han trabajado en todas las épocas," including "las más rudas tareas agrícolas" (97-98). Burgos demonstrated how laws and practices that are ostensibly protective of women are actually patriarchal and discriminatory in nature. Both in her works of fiction and in her expositions, Burgos insisted that women must have equal access to jobs and receive the same wages as men. In *La mujer moderna*, the author proclaims: "A TRABAJO IGUAL, SALARIO IGUAL. Lo indispensable es la igualdad; la llamada protección perjudica a la mujer más que sus mismos enemigos" (108). This is because "los trabajos que se prohíben a las mujeres no suelen ser los más nocivos, sino los que excitan los celos y la competencia" (111). For this reason, Burgos insisted on the need for women to unionize

in order to secure equal pay and access to employment, equitable work conditions, and job security (118). In *La mujer moderna*, Burgos insists that in order to achieve gender equality, sexual segregation can no longer be practiced—whether it be in jobs, public spaces, or in men's and women's clubs—to be able to live "unidos en la sociedad y en el hogar, con igual dignidad e iguales derechos. Sobre todo, nada de separación" (261-62).

When Burgos published *La rampa,* in 1917, Spain was still under the rule of the Bourbon monarchy, but the nation would soon be under the control of dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera, from 1923 to 1930. And it was not until 1931, under the Second Republic, that Spain enacted reforms like women's suffrage and right to divorce (Bieder 243). Through both her essays and her prose, Burgos protested the subordinated civil status of women under the *Código Civil* of 1889. In *La rampa*, Burgos explains that women were not accorded equal rights under the law, and "no las igualaba al hombre más Código que el Código penal, y no eran superiores a él más que en responsabilidades" (Burgos 38-39). According to Burgos in *La mujer moderna*, the *Código Civil* explicitly states that women must obey their husbands, who are the administrators of all financial assets, including the wages earned by their wives (142-46). Legally, women were confined to the status of an "eterna menor," as they were considered dependents who were passed as property from their fathers to their husbands (135). In fact, single women could not move out of their parents' home until they were twenty-five years old, unless their parents granted them permission to do so (192).

Although single women and widows had more legal rights, married women enjoyed greater social standing and freedoms, Burgos explains (136). Widows and single women were legally responsible for their own financial assets, could choose their

residence, and had the right to free expression and social association (192). Yet, they were still prohibited from the capacity to "desempeñar ciertos cargos, ejercer algunas profesiones, realizar determinados trabajos; carecen de derechos militares y políticos en absoluto y de los derechos civiles" (192). Despite the stigma of dishonor that they faced, single mothers possessed rights that were denied to married mothers, who had to submit to the *patria potestad* of the father of their children (197). This meant that only fathers chose how their children were educated, what religion they adopted, what career they would have, how their property was managed, and if they could marry (197-98). Only in his absence—through death, insanity, prison, or abandonment—could the married mother make any of these decisions for her child (197).

Hence, Burgos argued, there is a disparity between the concept and the practice of maternity. Although "en la teoría todo es elevar la maternidad de una manera lírica, llegando a hacer una cosa semidivina de una función meramente animal," women were restricted in "la verdadera maternidad" of raising and educating their children (199). At the same time, a woman's life was to be defined by and limited to motherhood, which is why Burgos describes maternity as "un lauro que resulta otro eslabón de su cadena" (201). In this way, maternity was used as a reason to keep women at home, "como si el papel exclusivo de la mujer fuese el de madre y esposa" (201). Burgos condemns anti-feminists who make pathetic claims that "la naturaleza marca la misión de los dos sexos: el hombre debe trabajar, la mujer no debía ser más que madre, ángel del hogar" (Burgos 13).

Burgo also finds that in literature the representation of mothers is false, because "no había aparecido *la madre* con su normalidad, grande en su sencillez, sin aparato, sino

una madre absurda, de espectáculo unas veces y otras callada y accidental" (203). In contrast, in her texts, Burgos depicts her female characters as fully developed individuals who face the real difficulties of marriage and motherhood. Curiously, Burgos created a fictional adaptation of maternal feminist Gregorio Marañón's theory of intersexuality in her novel *Quiero vivir mi vida*[6], a melodrama published in 1930. The author dedicated the novel to Marañón, who wrote a prologue supporting her literary work as an accurate representation of the tragedy that can result from a woman who is overcome by masculinity in an acute case of intersexuality. However, these theories of intersexuality conflict with Burgos's criticism of male scientists for analyzing the nature of women with the intent of keeping them in a subordinate position. In *La mujer moderna*, Burgos asserts that "la subordinación de la mujer no es obra de la naturaleza," and she criticizes male anthropologists for their "falso análisis de la naturaleza femenina," as they study women "con el deseo de establecer su inferioridad intelectual" (24; 35; 31). Marañón, at least, does not explicitly claim that men are superior to women, but rather insists that there must be a clear differentiation between the sexes, Burgos specified (28). However, the doctor is yet another male authority who claims that "las grandes mujeres"—women like Burgos who have positive traits like intelligence and vigor, which he classifies as inherent to men—are just anomalies with a "feminilidad debilitada, mezclada con elementos varoniles evidentes" (28; Marañón qtd). Given Burgos's feminist position, the tone and intent behind her literary representation of this pseudoscience is certainly open

[6] In *Quiero vivir mi vida* the female protagonist, a restless Modern Woman, is under constant scrutiny for her supposedly masculine characteristics like her exceptional education and her disinterest in having children. In the end, Isabel finally snaps and kills her husband by stabbing him with scissors while exclaiming that she wants to be a man and that she wants to steal his male soul.

to interpretation. Indeed, instead of focusing on the supposed monstrosity of masculine women, the plot of *Quiero vivir mi vida* appears to center on the feelings of frustration and uselessness that women experience when they are denied autonomy and excluded from the workplace, academics, and other active roles in public life. In fact, it is the tedium and limitations of domestic life that seem to cause the protagonist's violent unhinging. Hence, some readers view this novel as a parody of the scientific scrutiny of women and of the absurd female protagonists that male authors presented during Restoration Spain (Bell 271).

Furthermore, in *La mujer moderna*, Burgos refers to marriage as "esclavitud disfrazada" and a "martirio disimulado," because a woman was legally obligated to follow her husband and live in the location and residence of his choice, and a man was permitted "el derecho de vigilar a su mujer y de prohibirle las relaciones" by intercepting his wife's correspondence and forbidding her family and friends to visit their home (141-42). Marriage was legalized servitude in the *Código Civil*, which in Article 57, stated that "el marido debe proteger a la mujer y ésta obedecer al marido" (142). Furthermore, women could not work without the permission of their husbands (150). Hence, Burgos notes that "los dos grandes males del matrimonio son la subordinación de la mujer y la indisolubilidad" (163). Conscious of women's unequal position in marriage, Burgos was naturally a vocal supporter of a wife's right to divorce. She explains that divorce does not truly exist in Spain, because what the *Código Civil* refers to as divorce is "sólo separación de bienes y de cuerpos," the marriage is not dissolved, and the spouses cannot remarry (171). Through women's independence, feminism will resolve the inequality in marriage and divorce, the author concludes (188).

For these reasons, Burgos called for the reform of the *Código Civil*. In 1921 and, again, in 1927, as president of the *Liga Internacional de Mujeres Españolas e Hispanoamericanas* and the *Cruzada de Mujeres Españolas*, Burgos presented to the president of the *Comisión de Códigos* a petition for women's equal civil rights under the law (159). She insisted that "deben ser derogadas las leyes que abusivamente cierran a las mujeres determinadas carreras o empleos" (210). Women should also receive equal treatment under the penal code, Burgos insisted, as women were punished for adultery, while men rarely faced consequences for the same act (210). Furthermore, men should be held accountable for paternity, Burgos stated, as the law allowed men to "burlar la responsabilidad de criar y educar un hijo" (211). As an author and an advocate for women's rights, Burgos dared to defy the hegemonic conviction that women must be confined to the home and relegated to childbearing and domestic duties. She refused to accept the premise that women are inherently inferior to men or so different from men that they must be segregated. Women in more active, public roles are not dangerous to society, nor are they helpless and in need of male protection, Burgos demonstrates in *La rampa*. Women simply require equal opportunities and legal rights in order to be self-sufficient.

A CITY HOSTILE TOWARDS WOMEN IN *LA RAMPA*

In her novel, Burgos tells the stories of a multitude of women in danger, vulnerable and exposed to the harsh economic and social realities of city life in the early twentieth century. This variety of female characters includes women who are orphans, widows, single, married, workers, and unemployed—all abandoned, abused, ill, desperate, and fatigued. *La rampa* gives readers a glimpse of the marginalization that

modern women experienced in Madrid (Bender, "Modernity" 138). Notably, Burgos opens her novel with the dedication: "A toda esa multitud de mujeres desvalidas y desorientadas, que han venido a mí, preguntándome qué camino podría tomar, y me han hecho sentir su tragedia" (*La rampa* 1). The stories of this "multitud de mujeres desvalidas y desorientadas" are told through an impassioned and sympathetic narrator in *La rampa* (1). The third-person omniscient narrator is reliable and extradiegetic but tells the story mostly through the thoughts of Isabel. In *La rampa*, women are vulnerable and exposed both financially and physically. The narrator describes "la situación mísera de la mujer en España," due to the fact that "la mujer en España no era ya *la mujer de su casa*, y no era tampoco la mujer libertada e independiente. No tenían ni la protección pública ni la protección privada" (18). Consequently, the city is "llena de mujeres desamparadas . . . comprometiéndose y rebajándose" (18). In *La rampa*, Burgos recognizes her era as a perilous, transitional period for Spanish women. Through her writing, and in *La rampa*, specifically, Burgos attempted to mobilize the Spanish public, because "faltaba el impulso general que reparara la injusticia en las grandes masas" (18). Thus, Spanish women were in a "situación precaria" and were unable to resist their subordination, because they remained divided (38). The narrator complains that women of the middle and upper classes were "contentas con su vida vegetativa, vana" which kept them in "un letargo que no les dejaba ver que la causa de la mujer era sólo *una*" (38). Only working women "veían la verdad; pero a ellas les faltaba la cultura y los medios de defensa" (38). In addition, most working women in the novel are too consumed with envy and competing with each other for employment, resources, social status, and potential husbands to unite under their common cause.

There is a systematic denial of women's access to education, work, and financial independence in *La rampa*. Inadequate education leaves the female characters unprepared to live independently and unable to find work. Joaquín, the revolutionary in *La rampa*, insists that "el error era el educarlas para mantenerlas en la esclavitud" (40). In her novel, Burgos criticizes the lack of educational institutions for Spanish women, noting that schools for girls were scarce and signaling this difference as a primary reason for women's state of financial dependence and vulnerability. In *La mujer moderna*, Burgos asserts that, because Spanish bourgeois women are only educated in "el lujo, la molicie, y la ostentación," they are always unprepared when their head of family dies (Burgos 16). Burgos illustrates this unpreparedness in *La rampa* when describing the actions of Isabel and her mother, who, despite their dwindling funds, initially continued their bourgeois lifestyle, because "no están habituadas a manejar capitales ni a conocer el valor del dinero" (*La rampa* 15). Their failure to consolidate and manage their assets is what ultimately leaves Isabel in a desperate financial situation. Through Joaquín, Burgos protests the disparity between Spanish men and women in their education and in their job preparation, as he insists on the need to end gender inequality and to "dar a los dos sexos los mismos derechos y la misma libertad" (40). In contrast, Isabel's beau, Fernando, represents a passive acceptance of the status quo through his "resignación fatalista" and the belief that "es tonto ocuparse de lo que no se puede remediar" (57).

Financially, the women of *La rampa* are in a precarious position because they are expected to rely on men to support them, and women have few or no alternatives to provide for themselves if they are unable or unwilling to depend on a man. Working-class women in *La rampa* are defined by their desire for economic independence (Bieder 252).

In their conversations, the women admitted to the *Casa de Maternidad* in the novel reveal the city to be chaotic, hostile, and violent toward women and children who do not have family stability (Larson, Introducción xx). Burgos describes the difficult lives of women of the Madrilenian working-class and of *desclasadas*, young, formerly-bourgeois women who are suddenly obligated to work. The author places special emphasis on the precarious situation of the *desclasada* in her novel, as embodied by the protagonist, Isabel. The common cause of their *desclasamiento*—or loss of social position—is the loss of their "male protectors." This includes wives whose husbands have left them, as well as bourgeois widows and orphans who are suddenly obligated to work in order to survive. Burgos discusses the plight of such women in *La mujer moderna* and refers to *desclasadas* as "obreras-señoritas," or "obreras vergonzantes" who try to hide their employment and economic situation, so as to avoid dishonor and the prejudice of their peers (Burgos 100). In *La rampa,* Burgos illustrates how these middle-class women must "bajarse" step by step in order to survive. Thus, *La rampa* outlines Burgos's position "ante la problemática del acceso de la mujer de clase media al panorama laboral español" (Establier Pérez 44). Readers of *La rampa* vicariously experience the struggles of Isabel and the many other female characters in the novel, and in the process, they are able to understand and empathize with the descent of these characters into servitude, and even prostitution, as the inevitable outcome in a world set against them.

Isabel, as representative of *la desclasada*, is not accustomed to a life of labor, and thus, does not have the solidarity and networking shared among working-class women. The narrator expresses Isabel's frustrations that "nadie se preocuparía de lo que necesitaba hacer para vivir; pero todos le exigirían que viviese bien" (Burgos, *La rampa*

18). Isabel reflects on her privileged past and her previous indifference to "el dolor de las mujeres que trabajan" and "la miseria de las mujeres solas" (16-17). Isabel finds herself thrust among "las mujeres que luchan"—the many working women who must fight against social and economic inequalities in order to survive—yet, she is even more defenseless, as she "había entrado en aquel mundo sin protección de las mujeres solas" (16-17). Isolated, financially ruined, and initially without any means of supporting herself, Isabel feels as if she has been "empujada de prisa por la rampa de la necesidad" (18).

Exploitative, patriarchal employment practices are evident in *La rampa* as women are permitted few job opportunities, and the jobs that they are able to acquire offer poor conditions, inadequate wages, and no job stability. When she begins her job search, Isabel cannot find a decorous position appropriate for her bourgeois upbringing, so she resigns herself to being a laborer, "una obrera que hubiese empezado paso a paso su aprendizaje, a fin de estar apta para ser admitida a gastar la flor de su juventud en una fábrica, un taller, o una tienda, y ser desechada después por inútil" (21). When she finally finds work at the *Bazar*, Isabel discovers that she, her friend Agueda, and the other employees lack job stability, because their employment is at the will of Prudencio, their despotic boss. Everything "estaba a merced de la suerte o de la voluntad de don Prudencio" (30). One day, Prudencio theatens to fire Isabel for tardiness and demands that she stop wasting time putting on makeup and doing her hair before work. These "coqueterías," he insists, "no son propias de las mujeres que trabajan" (52). He wants his female employees to be more like English workingwomen, who "parecen hombres, con toda su seriedad" (52). Spanish women, he says, "no pueden vivir sin el tocador, sin los

polvos, sin los pelitos rizados. . .El público se propasa, no las toma por personas decentes…todas parecen cupletistas…" (52). In essence, their boss claims that when women come to work looking preened and feminine, they are inviting men to take liberties with them.

Agueda complains that women cannot survive on the salaries they are offered: "No suponen que las mujeres tenemos que sostener una casa; que hay a veces una familia entera que depende de nosotras. Se nos hasta paga menos que a los hombres en todo caso, hasta en el Bazar" (160). This is a criticism of gender discrimination and the family wage economy, which pays men more than women, with the assumption that men are always the breadwinners, while a woman's income is considered to be simply supplemental or temporary and the quality of her work inferior. In *La mujer moderna*, Burgos posits an important question: "¿Por qué, pues, si no es para ellas la vida más barata ni su trabajo inferior, ganan menos las mujeres?" (105). Yet, as measly as their wages are, Isabel and Agueda still enjoy "una especie de rango, de opulencia, comparativamente con lo que una mujer puede ganar trabajando" (Burgos, *La rampa* 30).

Women's health is also at risk in the modern city. Isabel and Agueda work long hours standing, and their health suffers. They are afraid that they will get sick and then be unable to afford medicine and will subsequently lose their jobs. Only young women work in the shops, as female employees are gradually worn down by poverty and difficult work conditions, and employers likely prefer young, attractive women who would be appealing to male customers. The narrator observes that "las viejas pasaban como heridas por el fondo de la ciudad," or "quizá es que no había viejas porque las mataba la miseria" (30). All working women in the text—from shop girls to piano teachers to maids—are

exhausted and sickly due to the stress of their jobs, financial instability, and male abuses. Throughout the novel, women are described as hungry, "cojas," "impedidas," "cansadas," "sufrientes," "agobiadas," "agotada," "desfallecida," "marchitas," "macilentas," "engañadas," "abandonadas," "vejadas," "atropelladas," "arrojadas," "despreciadas," "atormentadas," "indignificadas," "vencidas," "desposeídas," and "inválidas" (46; 57; 61; 101; 108; 109; 186; 196). The city is like a vast machine that chews them up and spits them out, because once these working women age, "serían desechadas a su vejez en el mayor desamparo" (54).

La rampa depicts the urban world, cynically and realistically, from the vantage point of modern, working women. For any urban area, "there is no one city but multiple perspectives and views of what is seemingly the same geographic location" (Larson, *Constructing* 31). Burgos, through the narrative voice and her female characters, reveals another side of the city—one not portrayed by her contemporaries, who generally presented modern, emancipated women as dangerous social pollutants. The parallel, yet contrasting, perceptions of the lives of men and women in the city is explained by Fran Tonkiss's assertion that public spaces and streets appear and feel differently according to which bodies are using them (112). Hence, for any urban area, "geographies of danger map out another city from the one inhabited by" men, who are less constrained, and can live more carelessly, more boldly in public spaces (112). While men move confidently and freely as active, vocal agents in *La rampa*, the female characters are described as being nervous, hesitant, disadvantaged, disabled, and dehumanized (Bender, "Modernity" 133). In essence, the story tracks what Tonkiss refers to as the "geography of women's fear," mapping out gendered spaces and practices (103). Thus, *La rampa* constructs urban

space from the view of women who are fighting for personal and financial independence in a society that does not allow them access to the same modern institutions as men (Capel Martínez, "La apertura" 123).

Women are exposed physically in the novel, as they are leered at, harassed, followed, and groped by men. This male intimidation and aggression limits women and infringes on their right to self-determination in a city that promises opportunity and freedom. Burgos, in *La rampa*, illustrates and describes women's experience of sexual harassment and assault before there was a term for it. In fact, sexual harassment is a central aspect of their lives. Almost every chapter of the novel focuses on the hostility and violence that single women experience in Madrid (Larson, Introducción xviii). These female characters face what would now be called sexual harassment in the streets, on trolleys, and seemingly in any public space in which they travel without a male companion. In Burgos's novel, the female characters are objectified by auxiliary male characters and the faceless, menacing crowd of men who seem to be an omnipresent threat. Yet, the narrative voice and the discourse of the female characters themselves simultaneously provide women with a subjectivity and agency uncommon in early twentieth-century Spanish literature. Through the observations of both the omniscient narrator and the female characters, Burgos is able to put a mirror before the male gaze to reveal the culpability of the male spectator and hunter of unaccompanied women.

Throughout *La rampa*, Burgos employs a variety of terms and expressions to describe women's experience of sexual harassment and assault. The narrator and female characters refer to sexual harassment as "impertinencias," "audacias," "vejación," "grosería," "insinuaciones," "pullas," "alusiones," "galantería," "galanteos,"

"dicharachos," "piropos," "atrevimientos," and "desconsideración" (*La rampa* 33; 4; 53; 32; 7; 8; 57; 185). The narrator describes the disquieting effect of the lustful or hostile male gaze and sexual badgering, as women feel "heridas de miradas y de pretensiones" (37). The dominion of men is conspicuous in every public space of *La rampa*. The narrator laments that it is "como si el mundo todo no fuese más que un feudo de los hombres, que solo ellos le llenasen y tuviesen derecho a todo" (8). In the male-dominated world of *La rampa,* women are nothing more than fearful, nervous shadows that must be accompanied by a male chaperone in order to be protected (9). In these public spaces, single, unaccompanied women are surrounded by lascivious, aggressive men who view them as commodities prone to moral corruption and prostitution (Bender, "Modernity" 133). The female characters experience constant devaluation and objectification. This is because in Victorian customs, "a woman's occupation of public space does more than unsettle her domestic and private identity; it threatens her respectability, her chastity, her very femininity" (Nord 117).

Agueda and Isabel are grateful that their friend Joaquín is not "un galanteador como todos los hombres que se les acercaban, como lo habían sido allí los otros huéspedes, los vecinos y todos los otros que las molestaban siguiéndolas en la calle, deslizando frases en su oído, mirándolas descaradamente" (Burgos, *La rampa* 37). Crowded streets are as dangerous for women as dark, empty ones, because they are subjected to "las audacias de los hombres que buscaban el roce de una desconocida entre la multitud" (47). Readers of *La rampa* may observe the strategies that the female characters adopt in an effort to defend themselves in public spaces. For example, Isabel and Agueda "iban apoyándose la una en la otra, como si se protegieran y se diesen

mutuamente valor" (12). The two friends learn to stay close to one another in the dangerous city streets in order to protect each other and to endure together verbal harassment from nearby men (Bender, "Modernity" 133). In this way, Isabel and Agueda are united by "el lazo de su pobreza y sus temores" (Burgos, *La rampa* 30). The fear that these women experience is palpable in Burgos's descriptions:

> Solas hubieran tenido mayor timidez, las hubieran molestado más todos los dicharachos que les dirigían los hombres que esperaban en las aceras el paso de las mujeres para hostigarlas, molestarlas, y dedicarse a seguirlas y perseguirlas con galanteos que decían bien a las claras el poco respeto que inspiraba la mujer. Era como si aquellos hombres estuvieran desligados de todo cariño familiar con mujeres y de todo lazo femenino, según todos las empujaban por la rampa, sin pensar en que así hacían ésta más pendiente y resbaladiza para sus hijas, sus esposas, y sus madres. Las pobres mujeres tenían igual miedo a una calle solitaria que a verse entre la multitude. (Burgos, *La rampa* 32)

In this fragment, Burgos has concisely gotten to the root of the problem, which is man's disrespect and subordination of woman. Here, the author has made it clear that work and public spaces are not intrinsically dangerous for women, but rather, social reform is necessary to change men's attitudes toward women and to allow women equal access to public life. In effect, the Modern Woman requires a new kind of man, a "tipo superior de hombre, el compañero de la mujer liberada" (33).

Even spaces designed for public leisure, like Madrid's Retiro Park, are not relaxing for women in *La rampa*, as they experience "a disquieting sense of objectification" (Bender, "Modernity" 133). Furthermore, male harassment not only

restricts women's movement in city streets and parks, but also limits their access to public transportation. For example, Isabel and Agueda "no se atrevían a tomar un tranvía, donde todas las miradas se fijarían en ellas con tanta insistencia como si no hubiese otras mujeres" (Burgos, *La rampa* 32-33). This confined, public space creates a forced intimacy in which men not only harass women verbally, but also use the occasion to impose on them physically, with unwanted touching:

> En las plataformas tenían que aguantar las audacias de todos aquellos desconocidos, que contaban con su debilidad para quedar impunes. Hasta los cobradores buscaban la manera de rozar sus manos, tocar sus brazos, y hasta en ocasiones oprimir sus piernas, con excusa de dejar paso a un viajero. Era indigna aquella vejación a la que se sometía a todas las mujeres. (Burgos, *La rampa* 33)

In addition to city streets and transportation, public establishments such as restaurants are imposing and dangerous for women in *La rampa*. This is evident in "el comedor de todos," the cheap canteen near the *Bazar*. Women who take their breaks at the canteen must brave the jeers and harassment of the male patrons. Although it is called "everyone's diner," women infrequently enter, and of those who do, "no iban allí las mujeres felices, sino las pobres mujeres que trabajan y no tenían el refugio del hogar" (7). When Isabel tells her old bourgeois relations that she must "comer en un restaurante donde sólo van hombres, pareció tal monstruosidad" that she dared not share this information with anyone else (20). In the perceived promiscuity of this restaurant, female characters are exposed to the "grosería disfrazada de galante" of strange men, an imprudent "galantería de mal gusto" that the narrator deems characteristically Spanish (4). The nearby male diners lewdly stare at the frightened women, who try to keep

themselves hidden in corners. Clearly, in this public—yet intimate—space women become a "blanco de grosería," as men "sistemáticamente se habían hecho un deber de galantearlas" (8; 4). For this reason, the narrator insists that it is "preferible para una mujer comerse un pedazo de pan y queso en medio de la calle que sufrir todas las impertinencias que habían de aguantar en esa promiscuidad forzosa" (7). Therefore, the canteen encapsulates the tensions that resulted from the entrance of the working woman into public spaces that were traditionally reserved for men (Establier Pérez 49).

In these interactions, Isabel feels exposed and isolated, with "una impresión de penosa desnudez, de soledad," and the male aggression leaves the women of the novel feeling "perseguidas y turbadas" (Burgos, *La rampa* 12). The experiences of Isabel and Agueda are amplified by those of secondary female characters, who represent the multitude of struggling, Spanish women, "como si al mirarlas a ellas le devolvieran su propia imagen" (12). These female characters are exhausted by "the constant threat of gender-based violence on the street and other public spaces" (Larson, *Constructing* 87). The most striking scenes of male harassment and male dominion of public spaces occur in the chapter entitled "La caza," in which Isabel is detained for being in the city streets at night. As she is walking that cold evening, Isabel would have happily entered one of the warm, jovial taverns[7] or shops she passes, "pero no se atrevía, conociendo el mal papel que una mujer sola hacía en todas partes" (Burgos, *La rampa* 184). If she were to enter, the male patrons would look at Isabel "con una curiosidad molesta, como si no hubieran

[7] In the early 1900s, the tavern was still considered "un lugar vedado a las mujeres, el espacio de sociabilidad donde se dirigían los obreros cuando salían de las fábricas o abandonaban el trabajo en los campos para jugar una partida de naipes y beber una jarra de vino" (Ramos 122).

visto mujeres jamás y no tardarían en atreverse a faltarle el respeto sin que protestase nadie" (184). Consequently, Isabel must continue her walk alone down the dark, deserted streets of Madrid.

Isabel fears the men who start to follow her, "deslizando en su oído frases que se esforzaba por no entender" (184). The narrator illustrates how single women are sexualized and harassed in the street, asserting that: "La mujer está como en un andén de la vida; parece que pasa entre piropos, y pasa entre asechanzas y desconsideración. Por eso sentía una especie de odio por aquellos hombres que venían hostigándola y siguiéndola tenazmente" (185). As Isabel continues to walk through the dark streets, she observes prostitutes "marchitas y degradadas" along the sidewalks and at every street corner (185). When she sees them suddenly start to flee, Isabel fearfully begins to run with the women from whomever is chasing them. Isabel did not realize that their pursuers were police officers rounding up prostitutes, and she is now mistaken for one. The police officers laugh cruelly as they surround the women and enjoy "aquella caza de mujeres" (186). This choice of language clearly classifies men as predators and female streetwalkers—in both meanings of the word—as prey. The male police officers, like predators, track down and capture the women, whose treatment the narrator compares to that of domestic animals: "las empujaron en tropel, como al ganado" (186). In this way, rounding up women to remove them from the streets becomes an aggressive sport, just as, traditionally, hunting is a violent, male pastime (Bender, "Modernity" 137). This "caza de mujeres" is indicative of the prevailing belief that unaccompanied women do not belong on the street, especially at night (Burgos, *La rampa* 186). This is because in Victorian society "all women who wander beyond the bounds of domestic or sanctioned public

space bear the mark of sexual taint and suspect economic independence" (Epstein Nord 135).

Isabel is aware that these round ups are a means of limiting women's mobility and their use of public spaces, as she acknowledges that women are detained and fined simply for "el delito de estar en la calle" (Burgos, *La rampa* 186). This incident further reinforces the narrator's previous assertion that the world is under the dominion of men and that only they are permitted access to it. The narrator also observes that authorities detain these poor, desperate women to regulate their "oficio" and to take a part of their earnings as "una contribución al Estado" (186). Some of the detained women are only able to escape by using male passerbys as shields, because men are free to roam the streets without question: "se habían amparado de hombres que pasaban cerca y cogidas a sus brazos querían hacer valer su derecho, puesto que no iban solas" (186). Humilliated, Isabel protests that she was not with the other women walking the streets and that she is "una mujer decente" (187). However, the police laugh and disregard her, and the other women are offended by her insinuation that they are indecent. The crowd of women is then led through the streets in a walk of shame to the government building, as passers-by insult them.

Although Isabel had previously held on to traditional views of female honor and "los prejuicios de aquel otro mundo que había sido el suyo, como señorita burguesa y casadera," through their shared experience of poverty and objectification, she now understands the situation of these downcast women (84). One of the prostitutes converses with Isabel about the difficulties of her life and explains that she has no other option for work. Now, Isabel sees that these women are simply using "sus únicas armas" to survive

(185). Consequently, Isabel "conocía tanto la miseria de la mujer que hallaba disculpa para todo. No se las había dejado producirse en la vida con nobleza, se las había inferiorizado" (185). The prostitute's voice resonates with Isabel, "como un eco de su conciencia" (188). Isabel then recognizes that these same difficulties "la empujaban por la rampa de ese modo cruel con que se sentía empujada ella misma" (188). Thus, Isabel has a culminating moment of enlightenment in which she realizes that her life is not so different from that of these women, and she identifies with the prostitutes. This crowd of women is united by the police sweep, which reveals that "no woman, regardless of class, is safe on the city streets" (Larson, *Constructing* 87).

Consequently, Isabel begins to view all women as "seres prostituidos y empequeñecidos por el solo hecho de ser mujeres, seres sin personalidad, rendidos, disminuídos" (Burgos, *La rampa* 191). She realizes that in this patriarchal society, "todo se lo tenían que pedir a los hombres, a sus enemigos, a sus vejadores, y solo por concesión especial y condescendencia de ellos lo podían obtener" (191). As she faces her degraded double, the prostitute, Isabel can no longer ignore her conflation with these streetwalkers. Isabel, then, sees herself as part of "la procesión de la miseria," of women "empujadas por la necesidad apremiante de vivir y comer" (192). Through her novel, Burgos reveals that women can never become fully realized individuals when they are denied autonomy and stability. The narrator asserts that "era imposible formarse esa personalidad donde todo aplasta a la mujer, la rebaja, la llena de abyección y la abandona" (192). It seems that Isabel, in her struggle to survive, must denigrate herself more and more until, one day, she will have no other option than to prostitute herself.

Like the "comedor de todos," the streets, and the park, the workplace is yet another dangerous public space for women in *La rampa*. At work, Isabel and Agueda are subjected to "las incidencias que la vida laboral ofrece a la mujer española de las primeras décadas del siglo: la tiranía del jefe y las vejaciones constantes de compañeros y clientes" (Establier Peréz 48-49). On the job, Agueda, Isabel, and their female coworkers must demonstrate "paciencia inagotable para sufrir todas las impertinencias y a veces las insinuaciones molestas de los compradores," the narrator explains (Burgos, *La rampa* 31). As shop girls at the *Bazar*, they become products on display and easy to buy, in the view of surrounding men. They are objectified by the male patrons who look at them "como si ellas también fuesen objetos expuestos a la venta en el *Bazar* y fáciles de comprar" (31). In this way, their own workplace becomes a promiscuous space for the female characters in the text. Worse still, the shop girls cannot turn down these men because "estaban obligadas a ser, en cierto modo, las amantes del público, al que era preciso sonreír y agradar" (31).

Still, Isabel and Agueda find a way to support each other nonverbally while at work and "refugiarse la una en la otra" (31). As the men use their eyes to ogle and objectify the shop girls, Isabel and Agueda use theirs to communicate with one another. At the *Bazar*, "cuando la impertinencia era demasiado molesta, las dos amigas se miraban y se daban fuerza con sus ojos; de modo que sin hablar se lo decían todo" (31). In these meaningful glances, Isabel and Agueda are able to express solidarity and "una muda queja o una protesta que aliviaba su pesar" (31). Despite the terrified appearance of their "ojos de condenadas a un sino triste," the men still find the shop girls to be attractive, and "las hacían victimas" of their constant harassment (31). In this way, the eyes of the two

shop girls represent “esos millares de ojos despavoridos de las mujeres esclavizadas” (31).

In addition to being a melodrama and a social novel, *La rampa* is a didactic text that exposes the dangers of motherhood and the misleading ideal of the *ángel del hogar*. Through her novel, Burgos demystifies and rejects this traditional female paradigm by revealing “the harsh realities of pregnancy and motherhood for working-class women in urban Madrid” (Bender, “Maternity” 80-81). Burgos places special emphasis on the marginalized position of single, working mothers. When Isabel discovers that she is pregnant, she is initially “satisfecha de haber cumplido su misión en la Tierra” of finding love, but she is soon disillusioned when her boyfriend Fernando accuses her of scheming to “cazar al marido,” to trap him in a marriage with her (Burgos, *La rampa* 97; 98). Fernando leaves Isabel, indignantly telling her that he does not want “esa carga en la vida” (98). For the impoverished protagonist now “su problema era el hijo,” which the narrator refers to as “el eterno problema de la mujer” (99).

Isabel’s unplanned pregnancy and her tragic experience of motherhood reveal the economic instability, the psychological and physical trauma of maternity, and the institutionalization of poor, single mothers, which made any attempt of finding happiness in the traditional role of mother and wife futile (Bender, “Maternity” 81). When Isabel attempts to fulfill the role of doting mother and homemaker after Fernando returns to her, she finds herself even more isolated and unhappy. She reflects, “Ahora que he llegado a conseguir casi toda la felicidad que puede tener una mujer, cuando he logrado lo que me parecía un imposible, es cuando me encuentro más desgraciada, más sola” (Burgos, *La rampa* 147). Contrary to popular images of blissful domestic life, Isabel feels “el vacío de

su falta de independencia, de su servidumbre, de su desigualdad respecto a Fernando" (147). Denied autonomy and confined to a position of perpetual servitude and abnegation, Isabel begins to equate motherhood and marriage to slavery. For Isabel her child comes to symbolize "una marca de esclavitud que él había puesto sobre su cuerpo," and she believes that a marriage to Fernando would be a "contrato de una esclavitud" that would make her inferior to him (148; 151). Isabel feels that she is, "como lo es casi siempre la mujer en los matrimonios de la clase media. . .una criada distinguida, una ama de gobierno para servir al señor" (149). Agueda, ever the *Mujer Moderna*, tells Isabel that she never wants to get married, but she would like to have a child "sin necesidad de que tuviera padre" (147).

Isabel is miserable under the "despotismo" of Fernando, but she wants to put her child first, and she does not know how to get by on her own, as a single mother (149). He is controlling and no longer permits visits from Agueda or any of her other friends, which further isolates Isabel from the outside world. In this way, Isabel has found herself in a similar situation to that of Agueda's sister, who has resigned herself to an abusive relationship with her lover, because he provides for her and their son, and she could never recover from her "desliz" of living with a man out of wedlock (15). Yet, the financial support Fernando offers is not enough to sustain their family, and Isabel accumulates debts as she attempts to meet their basic needs and to provide her daughter with medicine and healthcare. Isabel eventually resigns herself to a "vida de domesticidad mecánica, casi irracional" until she begins to "perder hasta la noción de la libertad" (150). After the death of their daughter, Fernando blames Isabel for the debts she acquired while trying to maintain their household. He becomes more abusive when "de las recriminaciones

pasaron a los insultos, a la injusticia, a los escándalos y los malos tratos" (182). Ultimately, the protagonist's attempts to live up to the ideal role of the Angel of the Hearth come to an end when Fernando abandons her once again, leaving her indebted, without any means of supporting herself, and pushing her further down the ramp of necessity.

When she becomes a single mother, the unfortunate protagonist definitively descends from the category of *la ingenua* to that of *la vencida*—the defeated, fallen woman—as she is dishonored, and Spanish society of the early twentieth century was antagonistic toward single mothers (Establier Pérez 53). In *La mujer moderna*, Burgos criticizes the sexual double standard and "el concepto de deshonor que acompaña a la madre soltera y a la joven seducida, aunque hayan sido impulsadas por el amor," while the honor of the men who seduce them remains untarnished (Burgos 45). As stated in *La rampa*, it is women who are burdened with the obligation to "defender el honor, atacado constantemente por los más fuertes, y se las culpaba de su vencimiento" (39). In her essay, the author condemned "el desprecio a la madre soltera," as single mothers were excluded from the popular exaltation of maternity (Burgos, *La mujer moderna* 45). Similarly, in *La rampa*, Burgos defends "la madre soltera, que había de ocultar la maternidad como una vergüenza" (*La rampa* 142). The reader is witness to the injustice of a society that severely punishes the maternity of poor women, when it is this very society that is responsible for their "vencimiento," having denied them adequate professional training, the capacity to achieve personal development, or any alternative to street life (Establier Pérez 56-57). Motherhood is a burden on poor, working women, and

when Isabel loses her job due to the constraints of her pregnancy, she is, once more, pushed even further down the dangerous ramp of necessity.

In *La rampa,* Burgos addresses how Spanish culture idealized maternity in order to exploit women. This sentiment is reiterated in the author's essay *La mujer moderna*, when she criticizes the tendency to "invocar la maternidad para mantener la esclavitud" (Burgos 13). The author reveals how, in the crowded *Casa de Maternidad*, "la *Madre* tan líricamente cantada, aparecía envuelta en toda la realidad de su miseria física y repugnante" (*La rampa* 108). In Burgos's representation of maternity, women are victims of the brutality and "deseos innobles" of men who cast their lovers away "después de la saciedad" (108-09). After giving birth, women "salían deshechas de su maternidad; con hernias, con varices, con toda clase de enfermedades en la matriz" (60). For the female characters in *La rampa,* motherhood is misery, suffering, deformity, exhaustion, illness, and tragedy. Some of the women who give birth at the *Casa de Maternidad* are frequent patients and "veían solo en su maternidad un accidente físico desagradable, puramente mecánico. . . sin sentimentalismos de ningún género" (108). This includes disease-ridden prostitutes who come to give birth to "aquella criatura que iban a poner en el mundo con la calificación de *mancer*, como un hijo de mancilla" (108).

In stark contrast to the blissful maternity of the *ángel del hogar*, the narrator describes pregnancy and maternity as a painful burden. Instead of painting a beaming portrait of motherhood, the narrator presents a grotesque image: "Era un espectáculo doloroso y repugnante al mismo tiempo el contemplar toda la suciedad y todo el agobio de la maternidad" (141). In this maternity house, Isabel witnesses "toda la miseria de las hembras" (126). Some of the mothers give birth to sickly babies, deformed by sexually-

transmitted illnesses contracted after "un intercambio entre los dos sexos, que aparentaba almacenar toda la basura en el vientre de las pobres mujeres" (126). The narrator explains that newborns at the maternity hospital are prone to contract "ese catarro de los niños de la Casa de Maternidad, en cuya limpieza no se andan con mimos," and "casi todos los pequeñuelos se veían atacados de oftalmía purulenta" (139; 141). Consequently, here is a high infant-mortality rate as "morían los niños recién nacidos con una proporción alarmante" (136). Some of the pregnant patients at the *Casa de Maternidad* give birth to stillborns or they do not survive the painful, dangerous ordeal themselves.

Burgos appears to use her novel to educate her female readers on the real, debilitating consequences of pregnancy for women in the city (Bender, "Maternity" 86). Indeed, the ignorance of the female characters in *La rampa* concerning "los misterios de la reproducción" suggests that Spanish women were dangerously lacking in sexual education (Burgos, *La rampa* 136). In *La mujer moderna*, Burgos criticizes this inadequate sexual education by asserting that "la ignorancia no es la inocencia" (Burgos 59). Similarly, in *La rampa*, the revolutionary Joaquín indicates that it is a mistake for society to "ocultarles la verdad de la vida por un falso pudor y confundir la ignorancia con la inocencia" (Burgos, *La rampa* 40). Joaquín believes that women should be frightened to have children, because so few people can support them, and "las mujeres se arruinaban siempre, o las arruinaban sus esposos y sus administradores" (40). Burgos's novel indicates that in the early twentieth-century, pregnancy isolated women living in Madrid from engagement in modern society due to physical impediments and financial strain (Bender, "Maternity" 88).

One of the pregnant women at the maternity hospital in the novel had previously taken home two babies, but they later died of hunger. Most of the pregnant women in *La rampa* are financially or socially obligated to leave their babies at the *Inclusa* orphanage, in the building next to the maternity ward. The impoverished or dishonored mothers who abandon their children at the orphanage do so because the babies are "una carga demasiado pesada" and represent "un símbolo de dolor o de vergüenza" (Burgos, *La rampa* 103). In fact, the mysterious aristocrat who secretly gives birth in the *Casa de Maternidad* had attempted to abort the fetus, but "el maldito estaba agarrado a sus riñones, nutriéndose" like "un monstruoso engendro" (123). Some of the new mothers deposit their children at the *Inclusa* as if they were simply "un tumor que le hubiesen extirpado" (117). The narrator refers to these abandoned children as "un fruto más de la pobreza" in a seemingly endless cycle of misery (103). When she is informed that her newborn is a girl, Isabel "se afligía de poner en el mundo una hija, una mujer más; otra que reproduciría su tragedia y la tragedia de todas las hembras malogradas siempre" (134).

Daughters abandoned at the *Inclusa—las incluseras*—seemed to be "presas, condenadas a cadena perpetua desde su nacimiento," as they are rarely able to escape a life confined to the dark, rundown building (131). Seemingly, their only way to leave the *Inclusa* is to become a nun at a convent or to choose the "vocación de casadas" by making themselves available to men who come to the orphanage to "buscarlas como van a buscar las bestias a las ferias cuando las necesitan" (131). In fact, the narrator asks: "¿No sería mejor abortar que tener esos hijos destinados a la miseria, a la enfermedad y al sufrimiento desde que nacen?" (140). As readers witness the struggles of the female

characters, the image of the idealized *ángel del hogar* proves itself to be misleading, false, and unobtainable. In fact, in *La mujer moderna*, Burgos compares the evocation of the *ángel del hogar* paradigm to a siren call that "engañó a muchas pobres mujeres, que aceptaron la idea de su inferioridad como un dogma" (Burgos 13). Female readers who hope to emulate the glorified maternal and marital bliss of the *ángel del hogar* may learn from the cautionary experiences of Isabel (Bender, "Maternity" 93). Through the trials of Isabel and the other women interned in the *Casa de Maternidad*, the readers vicariously experience "el dolor y la miseria de la maternidad física" as well as "el dolor y el desencanto de su maternidad moral" (Burgos, *La rampa* 135).

In the foreboding and dramatic conclusion of *La rampa*, readers witness the protagonist, "definitivamente vencida," lose all hope as she decides that now "soportaría el trabajo que había huido de aceptar antes en los hogares burgueses" (206-07). In her privileged past, Isabel viewed the maids in her house as an "especie de animalillos domésticos" who, because of their poverty, moved to the city to serve, "aceptando voluntarias su esclavitud" (17). Isabel must rescind the last vestiges of her bourgeois dignity to enter the *Colegio de Criadas*—a poorhouse where maids are trained and hired by middle-class families—to live "subjugated," thereby surrendering to her complete devolution (Larson, *Constructing* 87). As maids, it is necessary to "renunciar a toda idea de personalidad para salvar la vida a costa de la humillación" (Burgos, *La rampa* 205). The narrator compares the *Colegio de Criadas* to "una prisión disimulada, un purgatorio" (205). By entering this dreaded place, Isabel is renouncing her identity, her past, her freedom, and her dreams of a better life. For this reason, the narrator declares that a resigned Isabel "había llegado al final de la rampa" (207).

By the end of the novel, it is evident that in order to survive in this grim economic and social environment working women must "someterse y empezar su descenso: primero sirviente; después mendiga…; luego…" (193). The ellipsis at the end of this statement is suggestive, as it implies that these women are subjected to continual exploitation and find increasingly limited options to support themselves until they have no other choice than to degrade themselves to the point that they eventually resort to prostitution. In the Madrid that Burgos describes in her novel, servitude inevitably leads to beggary, which then ends in prostitution for the female characters. The ramp is an effective metaphor, for it slopes upward or downward, allowing for a binary interpretation of success and failure (Bender, "Modernity" 138). In this way, Burgos depicts the dual, gendered experience of Madrid as men are on a path of upward social mobility, occupying positions of power, while simultaneously pushing women downward (138). On this ramp, men exhibit control over the failures and successes of women, yet they remain blind to their own privileged positions and are complicit in women's marginalization (138). In the protagonist's case, Isabel specifically blames Fernando for making her "perder su colocación en el Bazar y había deshecho su vida, privándola hasta de la esperanza de hallar a su paso un amor honrado" (Burgos, *La rampa* 196).

In this way, Burgos describes the discrimination, sexual objectification, and lack of professional development and vocational opportunities that would lead an honorable, bourgeois woman to eventually become a prostitute out of desperation. This pessimistic ending suggests that the social and economic conditions of early twentieth-century Spain placed single women in peril, so that, despite their best efforts to support themselves honorably, they had few alternatives to servitude and street life. The repeated harassment

and degradation of Isabel and the multitude of women in the story thereby serve as literary proofs of the pernicious conditions that women faced in public spaces and in the workplace. Isabel, who is representative of all women fighting for economic independence, is devalued and exploited in patriarchal, capitalistic Spanish society to the extent that she must eventually prostitute herself in order to survive.

In her novel, Burgos systematically debunks and devalues the principal pillars of the Angel of the Hearth ideology: marriage and maternity. Through the extensive demystification of marriage and motherhood, Burgos exposes the need for adequate sexual education and professional opportunities for women, and she proves the ideology of the *ángel del hogar* to be inauthentic, ineffectual, and unrealistic. More than that, Burgos insists on the need to alter men's perceptions and treatment of women so that they respect women as their equals and grant them access to public life without intimidation. Despite the pessimistic ending of *La rampa*, Burgos herself looked to a bright future for women, as she concluded the first chapter of *La mujer moderna* with the assertion that "la marcha de la civilización, en el transcurso del tiempo, colabora con el feminismo" (Burgos 23).

HOW BURGOS DIFFERS

Burgos's depictions of Madrid at the beginning of the twentieth century were different from her contemporaries, because her ideas about cultural production, industrialization, and progress are generally focused on women's limiting experience of the city (Larson, *Constructing* 105). Rather than illustrate a city of wonderous opportunities for the Modern Woman, Burgos portrays the dark underbelly of urban life—a place that promises women independence and freedom but actually undermines

and exploits them. The author's representation of modernity, feminism and working women differs greatly from what is found in other publications of the early twentieth century in that her female characters are not feeble or in need of salvation from a man, nor are emancipated women presented as mannish and worthy of ridicule. To demonstrate, in *La mujer moderna*, Burgos observes that the majority of books regarding the subject of feminism are written by men, almost all of whom prove themselves to be "enemigos de la mujer emancipada" (Burgos 22). Instead of depicting a bustling city full of promise and opportunity, Burgos illustrates Madrid as a place of despair and danger for women. The city that Burgos personifies in her novel, through the perspective of working-class women, is a debilitating, aggressive force (Bender, "Modernity" 132-33). In *La rampa*, Burgos warns her readers that "la gran ciudad mataba" (Burgos 60). She describes situations and spaces that male authors overlooked in their works about life in the capital (Bender, "Modernity" 130). For example, *La rampa* includes many scenes in spaces occupied almost entirely by women, such as the maternity ward, the orphanage, the welfare center for infants, and the shelter for maids (130). *La rampa* is an unusual literary work for its time, because of its "documentation of ways that female urban citizens found to survive on their own in the city" (Larson, *Constructing* 89-90).

Also unlike many of her literary contemporaries, Burgos denounced the mistreatment of women—both in fictional works like *La rampa* and later in her essay *La mujer moderna*. Through her writing, Burgos questioned the prevailing conceptions of gender at the time and called attention to legal inequalities between the sexes (Cibreiro 90). The vulnerability and endangerment of women at work, on the streets, and in other public spaces in the city in the early twentieth century provided Burgos with a specific

rhetorical and social context into which she could insert her narrative and raise awareness of the subordination of women. In her novels, Burgos confronted readers with the difficult reality of Spanish women and attempted to interest readers in a social issue that "no ocupaba ni por asomo un lugar prioritario en la política social del momento" (Establier Pérez 68). *La rampa* illuminated the dangers and inequalities that women faced and advocated social reform. In the process, Burgos informed women of the realities of marriage and maternity that were hidden by anti-feminist rhetoric, which sought to quell women's emancipation by exalting traditional marriage and motherhood through the glorification of the mythical *ángel del hogar* (Bender, "Maternity" 87). Thus, Burgos rejected the exaltation of motherhood, viewing it as "a form of slavery that denies any value or function to women without children" (Bieder 255-56). At the same time, the novel also served to inform men of women's subordinated position, in order to elicit compassion and respect.

Male authors and authorities contemporary to Burgos had the tendency to either expound upon the dangers of the Modern Woman and her expanded role outside of the home or to ridicule the perceived masculinization of emancipated women. In *La mujer moderna,* Burgos alludes to those who are fearful of the emancipated woman, observing "hay quien teme por la familia, creyendo que si la mujer sale de sus muros, se derrumba el hogar," which would then result in anarchy (Burgos 154). Rather than criticize the supposedly inherent vanity and frivolity of women, as was common among her literary peers, Burgos insists in *La rampa* that women occupy themselves with their appearance and with parties, dances, and theater because their realm of action was so limited that their lives outside of the home were reduced to superficialities and petty social events.

Radical for her time, Burgos explained gender as a cultural construction, noting in *La rampa* that the root of the problem "era la idea de la importancia del hombre que se les inculcaba desde niños," as children witnessed the inferior, secondary position of their mothers, and girls were taught to serve their brothers, who were held in higher esteem than their sisters (Burgos 198). Consequently, "las pobres mujeres estaban acostumbradas a obedecer sin discutir" (198). Rather than present the societal threats posed by the supposedly dangerous Modern Woman—the emancipated, working woman who purportedly provokes the breakdown of families—Burgos demonstrates the inevitable consequences that result from women's lack of professional development and vocational options, as well as from the predatory behavior of men.

Street harassment was generally acknowledged as a problem to be discussed in popular debate, due to women's increasing presence in Victorian public life (Janssen 16). However, this social problem was rarely considered in the context of its impact on the women who experience it, but rather as indicative of social anxieties related to changing gender and class roles (16). *La rampa* is unique in that it presents the problem of harassment from the perspective of the women who are subjected to it. In her works, Burgos criticizes the false gallantry that impedes a more egalitarian relationship between men and women and that designates working women as foreign beings in a hostile atmosphere, because the image of women as sexual objects conflicts with that of the new, emancipated woman (Establier Pérez 50). Although Burgos's writing was created for the marketplace and sold exceptionally well at the time of publication, it was also imbued with dissent, exposing the difficult situation of Spanish women in the city (Larson, *Constructing* 104).

Critical Reception

To understand the impact and interpretation of Burgos's novel, it is important to consider its critical reception at the time of publication. An unnamed critic writing for the liberal newspaper *El Imparcial* in 1918 found *La rampa* to be "una obra aleccionadora," written with emotion, as it tells "la historia de una mujer arrojada fatalmente en el torbellino de la lucha, y que va rodando, rodando rampa abajo hasta llegar a lo más hondo de la caída y allá experimentar un sentimiento dulce de reposo ante la consideración de que no es posible bajar más" ("Lecturas" 3). The critic for *El Imparcial* observed that "ciertos hechos recientes" made *La rampa* an extremely pertinent work, with its convincing, accurate depictions of the miserable conditions of the *Inclusa* (3). This critic clarifies that Burgos presents these social conditions with a sensitivity to human injustice and pain, and with such conviction that she appears to "ejercer una misión cauterizadora" as she makes the reader "avivar dolores" (3). In other words, this critic acknowledged the didactic function of *La rampa* in addition to its emotional appeals to the compassion of its readers. Thus, it would seem that the cauterizing mission of Burgos's novel is to raise awareness of how hostile and difficult the city is for modern women and to incite change by eliciting an emotional response from the reader.

Also in 1918, journalist Antonio de Hoyos y Vinent of the newspaper *El Día* stated that although Burgos is a "mujer y sola," she has a fighting spirit—unlike other female authors, he contends, whose work he characterizes as weak, fickle and exhibitionist ("La energía" 4). In his view, Burgos is an admirable, dignified woman with a rare nerve and fervor, whose work is full of life and "algo infinitamente real," as readers experience the pleasures, but mostly the pains, of life (4). This critic views

Burgos as an exceptional woman: “Mujer y sola, no ha tenido ni cobardías ni estridencias, ni abdicaciones, ni afán inmoderado de frases sensacionales” (4). Hoyos y Vinent believes that Burgos exhibits a passion for work and identifies with her characters, which consequently elicits profound emotions from the reader (4). Hoyos y Vinent also recognized the novel’s pedagogical mission—“un alto fin didáctico”—which is sometimes delivered with “una frase cruel, contundente,” and other times through tearful scenes that make the reader feel deeply (4). The critic finds the narration to be clear, simple, and written with a tone of angst and desperation. He summarizes the novel as the story of “una mujer inteligente y buena, y sin embargo, la sociedad la vence y hace de ella un pingajo humano” (4). The heroine of the novel continually falls and gets back up again, as she is motivated by a sense of dignity and the will to overcome the vicious obstacles that society puts in her way (4). Yet, Hoyos y Vinent fails to acknowledge the pessimistic ending of the novel, which suggests that, with the world set against them, women are eventually defeated by these insurmountable obstacles.

Similarly, Alejandro Ber, reporting for the liberal *Heraldo de Madrid* in 1918, finds some of the novel’s realist scenes to be harsh, yet written artfully, poetically, and for a narrative end (“La mejor defensa” 1). Beyond a work of fiction, Ber views the novel as “el mejor ejemplo para la defensa del feminismo, de ese feminismo humano y justo que con tanto arte y ardimiento defiende la insigne escritora” (1). The critic recognizes the text as a feminist work because it tells “la historia eterna, el caso endémico de la mujer española” (1). Ber believes that in *La rampa,* Burgos proposes to show the reader how a good, middle-class woman “desciende por la rampa de la vida, gracias a la maldad y la incomprensión de los hombres” (1). Despite the heroic attempts of the protagonist,

orphaned and abandoned, she sinks lower and lower into a life of despair (1). In Ber's assessment, Burgos's novel is unique in that she effectively combines the social topic with literary artistry in its descriptions, atmosphere, and interesting narrative (1). According to this critic, Burgos captivates readers and engulfs them in the dismal lives of its protagonists with extremely realistic scenes and characters (1). Ber considers Burgos's descriptions of the *Casa de Maternidad* and city life to be accurate and impactful because they seem to be taken from "la misma realidad" as the readers (1). Additionally, Ber recognizes the novel's didactic function, as he believes the text serves as a cautionary tale for female readers so that they may learn how to best conduct their lives and to avoid disgrace (1). Furthermore, male readers may develop for women "un concepto más puro y también una exaltación más de amor por ellas" (1). Thus, Ber considers the novel to be instructional and cautionary for women and enlightening for men.

An unnamed critic writing for *El País* newspaper in 1918 considered the novel to be an accurate and realistic representation of city life. According to this critic, beyond being a work of fiction, *La rampa* provides important "información sociológica, que deben leer y estudiar médicos, higienistas, autoridades matritenses, y amantes de la mujer desgraciada" ("La última novela" 1). A critic writing for the more conservative newspaper *La Época* in 1918 deemed *La rampa* to be an important study of "el problema feminista" ("Libros nuevos" 5). This critic also describes the novel as incredibly realistic: "personajes están tomados de la realidad: el ambiente da la impresión de cosa vivida; la tesis no puede ser más simpática" (5). Artfully written and rich with psychological observations, Burgos makes a persuasive argument for feminism by exposing "los dolores, los acosos de todo género, la tragedia" of women who must work for a living (5).

The reviewer states that the novel reveals "los peligros a que se ve expuesta la mujer desvalida," particularly "la mujer que ha de ganar su sustento con sus propias manos, en medio de una sociedad hostil" (5). Thus, the reviewer confirms the perception of the world as dangerous and hostile to working women. In this way, Burgos utilized detailed, verisimilar descriptions to simultaneously engage and enlighten readers of women's condition in order to convince them of the need for social and legal reform and for changes in gender relations and prevailing power structures.

This critic for *La Época* found *La rampa* to be an exploration of "el sagrado recinto del alma de la mujer, a quien las circunstancias condenaron al desamparo" (5). Thus, the critic employs traditional, religious terms to refer to women and considers single, working women to be victims of society. Having classified *La rampa* as a feminist novel, the critic clarifies that the author's feminism is not excessive, as Burgos "no llega, en su feminismo, a las exageraciones en que no pocos incurren" (5). In the critic's view, Burgos "comprenda bien cuál es el límite de las aspiraciones femeninas, qué es lo que puede y debe hacerse, y lo que no ha de realizarse" (5). Thus, in the reviewer's estimation, Burgos knows how to toe the line and to not go too far with her feminism—to not be too radical in her ideas of what women can achieve. This condescending tone is reminiscent of the critical reception that Burgos later describes in *La mujer moderna*. In her essay, she indicates that "los críticos, hombres generalmente, la tratan, salvo honrosas excepciones, con desdén o con una galantería más perjudicial aún" (Burgos 73). From these contemporary assessments, it is evident that Burgos made use of the sordid details of naturalism and the captivating descriptions of realism in order to expose readers to the true injustices of women's endangered condition in the city, while also employing

didactic, persuasive characteristics of the ideological novel to convince readers of her feminist thesis by empathizing with the female characters. In the process, Burgos effectively discredits the misleading ideology of the Angel of the Hearth.

HOW DANGEROUS WAS IT?

Through her literature, news articles, speeches, and essays, Burgos provides insight into the real difficulties and dangers that women experienced in Madrid in the early twentieth century. The modern city presented new opportunities, but also new threats, which women suffered disproportionately. As illustrated in *La rampa*, the health of women and their babies was at risk in the city. The infant mortality rate was very high in Madrid at the beginning of the twentieth century (Larson, Introducción xix-xx). In addition, epidemics of tuberculosis, dysentery, typhus, scarlet fever, and diphtheria were also common (xx).

In *La mujer moderna*, Burgos notes that, despite their subordinated position, women were equally burdened by social obligations, as they still had to pay the same taxes as men and were expected to feed all relatives, including their husbands (Burgos 192). Women also had less protection under the law, as offenses committed against them were generally punished with minimal sentences. For instance, if a husband injured his wife, which impeded her from working between one and seven days or required her to have medical assistance, he only faced one month in jail (194). Femicides were often excused by labelling them as "crímenes pasionales," and "se apela a las palabras solemnes de honor ultrajado, felicidad deshecha, etc., etc., para encontrar excusa legal a un acto de soberbia y barbarie" (194). In cases of rape or kidnapping the *Código Civil* stated that the offender need only provide for the victim if she were single or a widow

and acknowledge resulting offspring "si la calidad de su origen no lo impidiere" (193). Furthermore, these offenses were only pursued at the request of the victim, her parents, grandparents, or other guardians (193). Thus, Burgos concludes that "la lenidad de las penas es causa del abuso y la falta de respeto a las mujeres" and "en las costumbres el respeto a la mujer es escaso" (193). This misogyny and violence against women is the underlying problem Burgos emphasizes in her didactic texts and in literary works like *La rampa*.

Burgos observes in her essay that, for women, one of "sus más grandes conquistas ha sido el derecho *a andar*, a salir de la casa…y a salir sola, rompiendo la ancestral máxima de que la mujer debía estar en la casa e hilar la lana" (256). In the modern city "hay modas y costumbres que permiten a la mujer salir a pie o guiando ella misma su coche, sin tener que llevar la indispensable dueña u obligar a la madre a acompañarla" (260). Yet, the author also acknowledged the intimidation and harassment that women experienced in public. In her book, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City*, Deborah Epstein Nord explains that male concerns for female employment and women's unaccompanied presence in city streets were rooted in anxieties about women's chastity as well as in the subversion of what were considered to be inherent sexual differences (140). In late-Victorian discourses, a woman's presence "in public space without the protection and the legitimation of a man could be a basis for suspicion, or at least uncertainty, raising as it did the issue of what right (never mind what business) she had to be there" (Tonkiss 100). Victorian fears of unrestrained female sexuality were exacerbated by growing industrial cities, with the intermingling of women and men in factories, which was perceived as a chaotic, social problem (Rose 199).

Burgos notes in her essay that male harassment of women in public spaces was recognized as a problem in Spain in the early twentieth century, as there were laws in the *Novísima Recopilación* "disponiendo que el silbar o insultar a una mujer en las calles de la Corte se penase con seis meses de trabajo en el Prado o destierro de los sitios reales durante cuatro meses 'si el ofensor fuese persona notable'" (Burgos, *La mujer moderna* 193). The presiding laws also fined men who "dirigen piropos (que son casi siempre groserías)," which is evidence that, in social customs, "desde el tiempo en que se perseguía a *las tapadas* por las calles hasta nuestros días, no se ha cambiado mucho," Burgos explains (193-94). The mere necessity of these laws indicates that, despite all the progresses of modernity, women still were not regarded with respect, as equal participants in public life.

Harassment serves to subordinate women, socially and economically (Johnson, Patricia E. 46). Sexual harassment was a means of ensuring male dominance when working-class men feared they were losing control of the family and felt that their jobs were threatened by women's entrance into the workforce (46). In this way, sexual harassment served as a means of hassling working women into staying home or to exclude them from the higher-paying positions occupied by men (47). Newspapers from early twentieth-century Spain reveal the popular "idea de las mujeres como usurpadoras de unos puestos pertenecientes a los hombres" (Nielfa Cristobal 171). This male hostility and the social and economic subordination of women are thoroughly illustrated in *La rampa*.

In *La condición social de la mujer en España* (1922), Margarita Nelken confirms that women working as salesclerks, cashiers, typists, or bookkeepers were paid abysmally

low wages (Nelken 38-39). In the 1920s, there was a significant growth in the number of Spanish women working in commercial establishments—the vast majority of whom were single or widows (Nielfa Cristobal 164-66). These female employees worked long shifts and received salaries much lower than that of their male coworkers, which was a common practice for all working women at the time (170; 166). Yet, female store clerks lacked the "conciencia de lucha para transformar sus condiciones de trabajo" (170). This lack of consciousness or union was partially due to the transitory nature of their employment, as most female employees, upon marriage, were expected to leave their jobs (170-71). Many unskilled, young women felt compelled to prostitute themselves, because they simply could not support themselves as employees at an office or a store (Larson, *Constructing* 74). The insufficient wages of female store clerks, the discriminatory practices of their employers, and the unacceptable work conditions they faced are illustrated in *La rampa*.

Burgos, in *La mujer moderna*, criticizes the state's regulation of prostitution, as it is an offense committed by two people, and yet only women were penalized and imprisoned for it (Burgos 59). She also explains that in 1661, Felipe IV established a law that sanctioned "la recogida de mujeres que andan por calles y plazas, para conducirlas a la Casa Galera," which was a women's prison in Madrid (54). This practice of rounding up women presumed to be prostitutes due to their presence in public places is consistent with "la caza de mujeres" in *La rampa*. In her discussion of Victorian society, Judith R. Walkowitz explains that state regulation of prostitution institutionalized social prejudices, because they further stigmatized and violated prostitutes "by treating registered women as denatured social outcasts and by allowing male clients, doctors, magistrates, and police

access to and control of the female body" (*Prostitution* 128). Rather than depicting sex workers as criminal miscreants, Burgos defends them as individuals victimized by gender inequality and social injustice. Ultimately, prostitution "served as a paradigm for the female condition; it established the archetypal relationship between men and women" (125-28). In her novel, Burgos uses this paradigm to raise awareness of the exploitation of all women in patriarchal societies.

As illustrated by the inevitable downfall of the protagonist and seemingly every woman in *La rampa*, Burgos found public, urban spaces to be dangerous for women in her lifetime, due to social and economic inequalities and the patriarchal, misogynistic attitudes of men. Using elements of melodrama and the thesis novel, Burgos presents female characters who are constantly in jeopardy as a means of warning her female audience of the discrimination, exploitation, and harassment that women faced while also enlightening her readers on the traps of the deceptive ideology of the *ángel del hogar*. This perspective served to counterbalance the usual disparagement of working women and the Modern Woman as dangerous to men and to the traditional family structure in the early twentieth century. Unlike literary contemporaries who presented the public sphere as inherently dangerous for women because they saw women as fragile and unfit for employment and public life, Burgos describes misogynistic men as the perpetrators who make these spaces unnecessarily hostile and difficult for women. Through her novel, Burgos demonstrates the need for social reform to improve conditions and treatment of women—through better education and vocational preparation, greater access to jobs with sufficient wages, and a respectful, egalitarian attitude of men toward women. In Burgos's view, women should not have to rely on men to support them, nor should they be

restricted to domestic life; rather, the author advocated for shared, equitable use of public space and responsibilities.

Thus, the objective of this important literary work appears to be to raise awareness of women's limited opportunities in the modern world and how men contribute to women's plight through their exploitation. In a sense, *La rampa* formed part of a campaign of consciousness-raising for women, as Burgos insists in her novel that women, themselves, are not aware of the injustice of their having to rely on men to survive, which leads women on a downward slope, or ramp, in which they must resort to degrading themselves through begging, prostitution, and other abasements. As a consequence, the text encourages unity among women so that they are no longer divided, especially among class lines. Through this solidarity, the author posits, women could expand their opportunities and improve their lives by working together. Despite increased awareness and acknowledgement of these issues today, modern societies still require a shift in men's perceptions of women, because unfortunately, women can still relate to the female characters' experiences of being intimidated, leered at, followed, touched, and sexually harassed by men on the streets and at work.

CHAPTER TWO: MODERN WOMAN AS *FEMBOT FATALE* AND VICTIM OF CAPITALISTIC-SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN *LA VENUS MECÁNICA*

La Venus mecánica (1929), by José Díaz Fernández, presents modern women as both dangerous and endangered. The figure of the Modern Woman in *La Venus mecánica* is enigmatic—both vulnerable and powerful, seductive but deadly. She is, in effect, a composite of the extradiegetic polemic regarding the character and role of women in the twentieth century. In the novel, Díaz Fernández illustrates perils that women faced in the modern, urban world as well as the threat that the Modern Woman appeared to pose to society. The dehumanizing and exploitative quality of machinery, industrialism, capitalism, and authoritarianism is the principal theme underlying *La Venus mecánica*. As modernity is projected onto the female figure throughout the novel, it is evident that capitalism is the common enemy, as it leads to the economic and sexual exploitation of both women and the working class. Through the dehumanizing experiences of the titulary "Venus mecánica," Díaz Fernández demonstrates the need for social, political, and economic revolution. The novel dramatizes the disastrous effects of capitalism and modernity through its titulary "Venus mecánica" and other impoverished female characters—desperate, working-class women and former aristocrats—who are subjected to sexual and economic exploitation from men, particularly industrial magnates.

Yet, as women in the novel are corrupted by the evils of capitalist consumerism, they also become morally corrupting with their seductive decadence and dangerous eroticism. Despite his sympathetic depiction of poor, working-class women as victims of modern society, Díaz Fernández describes the typical Modern Woman as a ridiculously

superficial and frivolous personality who impedes social progress with her bourgeois values and indulgences. Furthermore, modern women in the novel use their bodies to exercise the only control that they have—the ability to manipulate men with their sexuality. The Modern Woman, as she becomes more androgynous, artificial, and mechanical, ceases to be a woman and ultimately becomes a ridiculed, deformed, and dangerous being. In other words, the more "modern" a woman becomes, the more she loses her natural femininity and her humanity—effectively becoming a synthetic sexual weapon that can be mechanized to facilitate the downfall of the tyrannical, patriarchal industrialist. In this way, the figure of *La Venus mecánica* serves as an early example of the "vamp"/*femme fatale* combined with the deadly female robot—or fembot— as depicted in the contemporary film *Metropolis* (1925) and in recent movies and television programs like *Ex Machina* (2014), and *Westworld* (2016-present). However, this power is paltry in *La Venus mecánica*, as the women are, essentially, vacuous objects for the sexual gratification of men, and Díaz Fernández transforms the dangerous "mechanical Venus" into a self-sacrificing mother figure. This view of femininity and the female body as either maternal or as seductive and dangerous is evident in the female protagonist's moral and physical development throughout *La Venus mecánica*.

The novel's ambivalence is emblematic of discourse regarding the changing, more public role of women in the rapidly industrialized, urban Spain of the Interwar era. The dual characterization of women in *La Venus mecánica* as dangerous/endangered is representative of a larger literary trend in the early twentieth century of depicting modern women either as victims of the city streets or as agents of disorder. Through his novel, Díaz Fernández appears to employ both sides of this dichotomy in order to criticize

industrial capitalism as well as condemn the perceived frivolity and androgyny of modern women.

JOSÉ DÍAZ FERNÁNDEZ

A writer and journalist from a young age, José Díaz Fernández became one of the most influential Spanish avant-garde authors and socialist leaders of the early twentieth century. He founded and edited several newspapers while publishing his own poetry, short stories, and political articles. Díaz Fernández also studied law before enlisting in the Spanish army, for which he was deployed to Morocco from 1921 to 1922 (Vicente Hernando viii). Upon his return, he received various awards for his chronicles of the Moroccan War, and he began working as a literary journalist for *El Sol* newspaper (viii). In 1925, Díaz Fernández moved to Madrid to serve as editor of *El Sol* and as literary critic for *La Voz* (viii). There he collaborated with *Acción Republicana*, a progressive political party established in the same year, and he cofounded a leftist magazine called *Post-guerra* (viii).

Although he had worked as a war correspondent, the true dangers of his career as a journalist proved to be domestic. As a critic of the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, Díaz Fernández was incarcerated for several months under suspicion of clandestine meetings and conspiracy (viii; xviii). In fact, Díaz Fernández indicates at the end of the first edition of *La Venus mecánica* that he wrote the novel in 1929 while he was in jail and subsequently in exile. After the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera came to an end in January 1930, Díaz Fernández was chosen as representative for the *Partido Radical Socialista* in the new *Cortes Republicanas* in 1931 (viii). Then, in the 1936 elections, the author was elected representative for the *Frente Popular*, an electoral coalition of

Spanish liberal parties (viii). Additionally, after Franco's uprising, Díaz Fernández served as *Secretario de Instrucción Pública* for the Second Republic during the civil war (viii). In 1939, Díaz Fernández went into exile again with his family, residing in France until his death in 1941.

VIEWS OF WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION IN "EL NUEVO ROMANTICISMO"

In 1930, Díaz Fernández published his essay "El nuevo romanticismo" in which he reflects upon literary, artistic, and social trends of his time. As a representative of the *Partido Radical-Socialista,* what most concerned Díaz Fernández was the need for political and social revolution lead by the proletariat against dictatorship and bourgeois, capitalist institutions. Hence, he viewed women's rights as a secondary issue, which was only to be achieved as a result of socialist revolution. In "El nuevo romanticismo," Díaz Fernández observes that "la emancipación de la mujer no es tanto obra del liberalismo político del siglo diecinueve como del progreso mecánico del mundo" ("El nuevo" 342). He explains that, because machines free humanity of physical exertion, they provide women with new "acceso a toda suerte de actividades productoras" (342). Therefore, Díaz Fernández associates women's liberation with machinery.

The author observed that, in his time, "la mujer está preparada única y exclusivamente para el matrimonio" (357). Díaz Fernández argued that Spanish men had reduced women to a role of domesticity, enslaving them, impeding their emancipation, and permitting them only "el camino de la fe religiosa" (391). Although Díaz Fernández expresses concern about "the limited opportunities for women in Spanish society," he proposes no real solutions for women in his essay (Larson, "The Commodification" 294). In the same text, Díaz Fernández refers to women as the "sexo sedentario" ("El nuevo"

343). Conceding the role of women as "colaboradoras en la vida social," Díaz Fernández accepted women's participation in society, as long as they do not attempt to direct public affairs, because he believed that Spanish women did not yet possess a great enough understanding of politics (391).

Although the author expressed that "el voto femenino basta por sí solo para modificar el mapa político de España y dar al país, no solo una estructura distinta, sino un pensamiento diferente, una naturaleza nueva," Díaz Fernández opposed the suffragist movement, as he believed that Spanish women "no sabrían hacer uso de ello, porque constituyen esa última capa popular donde no ha penetrado la conciencia política europea" (389; 391). This is due to what the author viewed as Spain's political and cultural backwardness, poor education, and the influence of the Catholic church—"fue la mujer quien más duramente ha sufrido esta tenaz influencia," he wrote (391). Regardless of the cause, it is clear that Díaz Fernández considered women to be easily influenced or persuaded and incapable of making rational decisions.

In "El nuevo romanticismo," Díaz Fernández further dismisses suffragism and feminism by claiming that they are bourgeois movements based on the imitation or hatred of men (343). He believed that the failure of the "ruidoso feminismo político" was due to attempts to substitute men and to copy men's attire and hairstyles (343). Ultimately, Díaz Fernández dismissed any pressing need for women's emancipation, concluding, "me parece que no es la hora de la galantería" (391). However, this was a common sentiment among Spaniards at the time, even among feminists and representatives of liberal political parties, as many felt it best to wait before making further progress in gender

equality. The opinions that the author expresses regarding women and feminism in his essay were already personified and narrated in his novel *La Venus mecánica*.

LA VENUS MECÁNICA IN LITERARY, SOCIOPOLITICAL, AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Díaz Fernández published *La Venus mecánica* "just as the playful, iconoclastic, and dehumanized aesthetics of the Spanish avant-garde approached their eventual denouement in the early 1930s" (Bender, "The Body" 210). The author's representation of the various experiences of a diverse set of individuals in a bustling political and cultural capital like Madrid account for the disjointed and chaotic quality of the novel (Larson, "The Commodification" 276). By piecing together both historical and fictional events in vanguardist style while commenting on popular culture and art and the Spanish bourgeoisie, Díaz Fernández offers a critique of the avant-garde culture of 1920s Madrid in *La Venus mecánica* (275-76).

In contrast with the great success of his earlier work *El blocao*, his second novel seems to have had an icy reception, receiving very few reviews upon publication (Vicente Hernando x). A critic for *La Gaceta Literaria*, Gil Benumeya, referred to *La Venus mecánica* as "nuestro primer libro de reportismo—de super-reportismo—auténtico" (15). *La Venus mecánica* conforms with the realist novel in that much of the narration is "in a first or-third-person objective manner" that maintains "the linear progression of the plot" while describing the political situation and life in Madrid in the 1920s (Larson, "The Commodification" 286). Yet, *La Venus mecánica* differs from the realist novel in that it is also deeply subjective, and in the more introspective chapters, Díaz Fernández makes greater use of avant-garde literary devices (286). In addition, *La Venus mecánica* is

considered a social novel, because of its "attack on the social construction of gender, economic inequality, and political corruption in the specific context of Madrid in the 1920s" (286). In this way, the author's "fiction lies somewhere between the traditionally demarcated realms of the social and the avant-garde novel[8]" (286). The author himself described his novel as "una obra sintética, veloz, super-realista como nuestro tiempo, cuyo escenario es el Madrid de los *cabarets* y los hoteles" (Díaz Fernández, "Autocrítica" 44).

As a work of fiction, *La Venus mecánica* is an indirect, expressionist representation of its era (Vicente Hernando xxi-xxii). In his "Autocrítica," Díaz Fernández explains that he wrote *La Venus mecánica* as "una novela moderna, una novela de nuestro tiempo," in which he organized "los elementos actuales que diesen una imagen aproximada de la contemporánea vida" (Díaz Fernández 44). This modern, political novel overlaps a melodramatic plot with a "civil" plot in order to describe "la presión angustiosa de la Historia sobre los protagonistas" (Vicente Hernando xxix-xxx). *La Venus mecánica* can be viewed as a "novela de un tiempo," as the plot's action spans across the major political and social occurrences of 1928 and 1929, which include national strikes, the League of Nations session in Madrid, and Mussolini's control of Italy (xxi-xxii). In this way, Díaz Fernández recreates "el ambiente intelectual del Madrid de la Dictadura, con referencias incluso a personajes reales, tales como, bajo seudónimos, el propio Dictador, caricaturizado, o el Doctor Marañón" (Magnien 31-32). Many critics believe that the character General Villagomil is modeled after Primo de Rivera, while

[8] For more, see also "De la Mujer Moderna a la Mujer Nueva: *La Venus mecánica* de José Díaz Fernández," by Teresa Bordons, pp 19.

Víctor Murias, the male protagonist, represents the author himself (Vicente Hernando xxxi). However, some critics, like Vicente Hernando, view *La Venus mecánica* as a conceptual story of alienation that should not be interpreted too literally (xxxi).

La Venus mecánica is emblematic of the latter, more pessimistic phase of literary vanguardism, which demonstrates "abierto desengaño nihilista" toward the dehumanizing nature of the modern world with all of its technological progress (Buckley and Crispin 12-13). With the advancement of industrialism throughout Western Europe, women became a more integral and visible part of economic and public life. Legislators and reformers in England were troubled by what they perceived to be a rise in sexual immorality, which they attributed to women working alongside men in factories and the failure of female workers to learn domestic skills (Rose 199-200). These social and political activists "portrayed women's unregulated sexuality as a concern in its own right, constructing it as the cause of the social disorder sweeping the country" (200). Sonya O. Rose observes that, "whereas women as sexual beings were perceived as threatening and represented disorder, women as mothers, defined by their domesticated bodies, conveyed safety and moral order" (206). Pronatalist discourses were fueled by the great loss of male lives in WWI, and "the specter of demasculinized men and virile but amaternal women seemed the essential expression of a world gone awry, a world of chaos and social disorder that included strikes, revolution, national disgrace, and, not least, gender confusion" (Weitz 314). This concept of modern women as either seductive and dangerous or as maternal and sacred is evident in the moral and physical development of Obdulia, the female protagonist of *La Venus mecánica*.

The threats posed by the Modern Woman lie in her appearance and in her provocative demeanor, but the greatest perceived danger was "la tendencia a una indiferenciación sexual" (Bordons 31). This is what provoked discourse that dismissed and ridiculed women's new freedoms as capricious imitation of men, while some physicians, psychologists, sociologists, and intellectuals emphasized and expanded upon biological differences between the sexes to include all manner of behaviors, thereby legitimizing the limited, subordinate role of women. Among these doctors was the famous endocrinologist Gregorio Marañón, who was close friends with Díaz Fernández (20). According to Marañón, a woman's purpose in life is to fulfill her biological imperative of birthing and raising children. In "Sexo, trabajo, y deporte," Marañón categorizes activities by sex, according to which activities he believes best suit men or women. Marañón viewed work as an extension of the secondary sexual characteristics of men and women, and he employed scientific terms to justify the traditional division of labor into two spheres: public and private, physical, and domestic work, male and female. Marañón's theories also helped to discredit feminism "como fenómeno marginal propio de unas cuantas mujeres histéricas" (34).

Some critics believe that, in *La Venus mecánica*, the fictional doctor Augusto Sureda is modeled after Marañón and his theories. Sureda is known as the "médico de las locas," and his patients consist of "aristócratas y burguesas de nervios descompuestos, muchachas de sexualidad pervertida, matronas menopáusicas" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 3). In his novel, Díaz Fernández upholds the erotic/maternal dichotomy of the female body and promotes motherhood as foremost to a woman's identity by rejecting traditional, Catholic ideology and promoting scientific and medical postulations, like the

theories of Marañón, which were based on biological differences between the sexes (Bender, "The Body" 215). The threat that patriarchal discourse warns against women having access to higher education and certain types of employment is truly "el peligro de la independencia económica y, por tanto, la liberación de la sujeción masculina" (Bordons 26). Thus, it appeared that women's emancipation posed a threat to bourgeois society and institutions like marriage and the traditional family structure (26-27). Therefore, political liberals like Marañón promoted providing women with a basic education to help form better mothers but felt that professional development should remain outside of women's purview (27).

WHAT IS A "MECHANICAL VENUS?"

In his "Autocrítica," published in 1930, Díaz Fernández explains that all of the female characters in his novel are "Venus mecánicas," in some form (Díaz Fernández 44). He abstractly defines this type as "mujeres que abrazan las cosas más graves y profundas con gesto alegre y superficial" (44). In *La Venus mecánica,* the author presents "una serie de tipos femeninos inspirados en la realidad del momento, cuya presencia confiere a la protagonista, por comparación o contraste, más relieve y humanidad" (Magnien 31). Hence, Díaz Fernández considered his novel to be "una suma de mujeres, cuyo total es la mujer de hoy" ("Autocrítica" 44). Like Carmen de Burgos with her novel *La rampa,* Díaz Fernández presents his readers with a collection of modern women whose shared experience is the financial and sexual exploitation that they face in modern, industrialized Madrid.

Among this "suma de mujeres," is the young countess Edith, who is described as an androgynous woman with "una de esas bellezas preparadas por la química

cosmopolita" (Díaz Fernandez, *La Venus* 6). The narrator equates this type of modern woman to figures of "pura geometría," cubist forms that are, "más que mujeres, esquemas de mujeres, como las pinturas de Picasso" (6). This geometrical woman is the "Venus mecánica" that Díaz Fernández defines through various iterations in his novel. According to the narrator's Darwinian conjectures, the "Venus mecánica" is the result of the evolution of the female "species" as it merges with the industrialism and modernity of the early twentieth century. The narrator describes the Mechanical Venus as "el tope de la especie, la etapa última del sexo. En realidad, aquella figura no era ya un producto natural, sino artificial. Pero un producto encantador. Aquel ser no podría cuajar por sí solo en el misterioso laboratorio del útero. Era una sutil colaboración de la máquina y la industria, de la técnica y el arte" (6). The Modern Woman, then, has become a synthetic object, a mechanized commodity bereft of humanity. The protagonist compares the "Venus mecánica" to concentrated foods, electric fans, air-conditioning, and artificial lighting. More than "la hija de su madre," this new type of woman is "hija de los ingenieros, de los modistos, de los perfumistas, de los operadores, de los mecánicos" (6). Víctor also muses that soon women will be mass-produced in different brands, or different models: "la mujer 'standard,' la mujer 'Ford' o la mujer 'Citroen'" (6). This analogy encapsulates both the objectification of women and the fixation with cars that was popular in the works of vanguardist authors, like Rafael López de Haro.

In this modern atmosphere, "women have become interchangeable mannequins, artificial, homogenized commodities that, to the male spectator, have more in common with mass-produced machines than with self-sufficient others" (Bender, "The Body" 213). External factors like advertising also "cultivate and perpetuate this façade of

femininity, thus effectively erasing the individual woman's personal identity" (213). In the process, women are not only sources of visual and erotic pleasure for men but have become "commodities of exchange" (213). Therefore, most women in *La Venus mecánica* qualify as currency in that they are interchangeable, dehumanized, and could be either invaluable or disposable at any given moment (213).

In addition to being objectified, modern women in the novel are themselves covetous of objects. This association of femininity with materialism is common, because "the new woman of the fin de siècle" was viewed as "a symbol of modernity and cultivated as a consumer" (Coffin 135). Indeed, "ese afán de loco consumo de bienes materiales denominado *el lujo*" was always attributed to women (Jagoe 32-33). Middle-class people enjoyed commenting on "working girls," their spending habits, and their love of fine clothing, and often associated them with prostitution (Rose 206). In general, the polemic regarding *el lujo* indicates that "todas las ansias suscitadas por el cambio a una economía capitalista de crédito se centraron en torno a la mujer" (Jagoe 33). For communists, "fashion constituted another site of the class struggle," because they considered luxurious, impractical clothing to be a sign of the wasteful decadence of the bourgeoise, which only serves to make "the woman an object of masculine desire" (Weitz 336). For instance, most of the criticism that Díaz Fernández launches against modern women in *La Venus mecánica* is aimed at aristocratic or bourgeois characters. In this way, the novel forms part of what Catherine Jagoe describes as the rhetoric that classified certain women as "desnaturalizadas," particularly "la mujer despilfarradora y frívola de las clases altas" ("La misión" 28).

Indeed, female characters in *La Venus mecánica* are mocked as selfish for desiring and receiving luxury items like fine clothing and jewelry, and for purchasing beauty products like makeup and perfume. It is through repeated comparisons of women to mass-produced, modern commodities and through frequent allusions to the female characters' insatiable desire for material items that Díaz Fernández associates women with consumerism. In fact, when women in the novel are not attending a social function, they are often shopping. For example, Edith is initially characterized as a frivolous woman whose life is centered on shopping, parties, vacations, sports, and attending the theater—"movida por inclinaciones pueriles, por golpes de teléfono, por bocinazos de automóvil y músicas de baile" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 125). Once again, the narrative voice associates the Modern Woman with social trivialities, materialism, and machinery. Elvira also solidifies her role as a materialistic Modern Woman when she admits that she left her husband to be with a rich, older ambassador for "las perlas, las pieles, las carreras de caballos," and "todo lo que veía en los almacenes y en los bazares" (9-10). She is yet another iteration of "la Venus mecánica." While less androgynous than the countess, Elvira's obsession with luxury and merchandise qualifies her as a superficial woman of the twentieth century.

In her 1927 essay, *La mujer moderna y sus derechos*, Carmen de Burgos addresses the criticism that women receive for their interest in apparel and beauty products. Burgos observes that "la afición a la moda se ha reputado como frivolidad femenina" (*La mujer moderna* 253). However, Burgos believes that feminism includes "el derecho de la mujer a cuidar su belleza," to dress and present herself as she pleases (258-59). Burgos also identifies the contradictory nature of this criticism, because one of

the arguments made against the feminist movement is that it would detract from a woman's beauty, and "el hombre teme que la mujer deje su coquetería" (253). In other words, men dismiss women as trivial, pretty objects, yet when women attempt to be active and useful in society, they are impeded and mocked for being mannish and unattractive.

WOMEN IN DANGER OF ECONOMIC AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Obdulia's life story—"la historia de una tanguista,"—is representative of the strife of "los corazones huérfanos, las muchachas hambrientas, los desgraciados de toda la tierra" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 30-31). As a "señorita déclassée," Obdulia suddenly and unexpectedly must find employment—a task that proves to be difficult, despite her exceptional education (Bordons 20-21). It is never made explicit precisely why Obdulia never considers working in a factory, but it appears that she is held back by "una cierta conciencia de clase," as a formerly middle-class woman (24). Obdulia's experiences exemplify the great injustices that the downtrodden face in Spain's capitalistic society. Specifically, Obdulia serves as an example of a woman in an environment in which "her body is the only thing she has to offer in exchange for the money she needs to survive" (Larson, "The Commodification" 289). In terms of class struggle, the image of Obdulia as the "Venus mecánica" serves as a metaphor for "la explotación obrera en el mundo industrializado materializada en el cuerpo de la mujer" (Bordons 20).

Obdulia's decency and moral superiority are continuously contrasted with other modern women in the novel. The frivolous bourgeois women that Víctor surrounds himself with form "una clara oposición con el modelo de 'la mujer nueva' que ha de representar Obdulia" (30). For example, the narrator notes that, among other women,

"tanto su figura como su 'toilette' le daban un aire de mujer tan distinta, producto de tan diferente clima moral, que su sola presencia entre aquellas españolas representaba ya un poco de escándalo" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 54). Considering Obdulia's middle-class background and her exploitative work at the cabaret, Víctor refers to Obdulia in conflicting terms as vulgar, yet "una mujer de excepción" (24). From the descriptions of various women in the novel, it is evident that "Obdulia is not alone in her lifestyle of prostitution" (Larson, "The Commodification" 295). Throughout the novel, Obdulia distinguishes herself from other cabaret dancers and from other iterations of the Modern Woman due to her candor and her strong sense of morality. In fact, Víctor feels dwarfed by Obdulia's moral superiority, as she offers him such selfless, altruistic love (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 35).

However, as Díaz Fernández notes in his "Autocrítica," even though Obdulia is "una neo-romántica, una apasionada," she, too, becomes "una mujer mecanizada cuando se mueve por impulsos ajenos, por exigencias del medio" (44). This is because Obdulia is depicted as a woman confined within the economic and social barriers of the time (Larson, "The Commodification" 288). These barriers are what force women into degrading, exploitative work or arrangements that strip them of their humanity and effectively relegate them to mechanical, superficial objects for male consumption.

The female characters of *La Venus mecánica* are continually subjected to economic and sexual exploitation. The "Venus mecánica" is the victim and product of a corrupt society who faces the novelesque difficulties that "la ficción suele imaginar para la vida de una mujer abandonada a su propia suerte" (Magnien 29). The paternalistic tone of the narrative voice depicts women as vulnerable and defenseless (Bordons 23). The

narrator sympathizes with the single, working woman, victimized by capitalism, as it is nearly impossible for the female characters to find decent work that pays a living wage. This sympathy is most evident in chapter thirteen, entitled, "Capítulo para muchachas solas." In this chapter, the narrative voice laments the condition of "esas muchachas perdidas" –poor, hungry women who linger outside of taverns but who dare not enter because they do not have enough money to purchase the food there (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 45). To the narrator, these women are the embodiment of "la desolación de una urbe" (45).

Indeed, at this time, struggling women did flock to the city for the exciting opportunities promised by new images of femininity as seen in the press, film, and in store windows (Larson, "The Commodification" 288). These opportunities prove to be illusory for women in the novel, and because of their desperate situation, "buscan un empleo y terminan por encontrar un amante" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 45). It seems that the only reliable means for single women to survive is by finding men who will support them financially. For the women in the text, there are few options for employment, aside from some form of sexual exploitation. In fact, most of the female characters seek rich lovers for financial support. These women speak without romantic pretenses, as they are fully aware that they are exchanging sexual access to their bodies in return for financial support and modern luxuries. For example, Víctor has a one-night stand with a woman named Lucila who casually alludes to her wealthy benefactor, a businessman who she refers to as "mi propietario" (97). Lucila complains that this man only pays her "dos mil pesetas mensuales nada más. Estos comerciales liquidan siempre

con saldo a favor" (97). She also reminisces about her first lover, a shipowner who used to bring her to Genova every winter.

As Díaz Fernández later reiterates in his criticism of feminism in "El nuevo romanticismo," the narrator of *La Venus mecánica* laments the lack of political consciousness required for an effective movement that would improve the conditions of "muchachas solas:" "no se sabe quién ha de redimirlas, porque no han formado todavía sociedad de resistencia contra el dolor ni tienen otros líderes que algunos bohemios socializantes" (45). However, in the novel Díaz Fernández anticipates a more humane, less materialistic society–hopes for the future that the author also repeats in "El nuevo romanticismo." The narrative voice of *La Venus mecánica* looks to a future in which "la vida tendrá un sentido más puro y un gesto más humano" (45). Indeed, when this day comes, some novelists may miss "este precioso material de emoción suburbana," the narrator observes ironically (45). Thus, Díaz Fernández acknowledges the ways in which novelists have benefitted from the inspiration, symbolism, and sentimentalism they found in the suffering of these "muchachas perdidas." Specifically, Díaz Fernández uses the degrading experiences of downtrodden women in *La Venus mecánica* to represent the exploitation of the working class in modern, industrialized cities like Madrid as a result of capitalism and authoritarianism.

In this more humane future, the narrator posits, old industrialists will also miss the easy exploitation of "pajaritas ateridas de las nieves urbanas," the desperate women who are "capaces de dejarse proteger por tan honestos varones" (45). This ironic reference to the supposed protection offered by patriarchal heads of industry illustrates the predatory nature of capitalism. Thus, the narrator argues, the real danger to single women—i.e., the

Spanish people—is not the common man that pursues them in the streets, but rather that posed by business magnates who exploit them under the guise of help and the military forces who assault and kill them under the guise of national protection.

Although most women in *La Venus mecánica* are financially supported by men in some form, female characters are also represented in a variety of employments—including actresses, waiters, factory workers, miners, piano teachers, dressmakers, fashion models, painters, poets, singers, and *tanguistas*[9]. However, these characters endure economic and even sexual exploitation in their work. This is especially true in the case of *tanguistas*, as their income "depende del deseo de los hombres" (Magnien 29). For example, Laura left her career as a singer and actress in order to work as a *tanguista* in a cabaret, because she needs more money to support her household, which she says consists of "mi padre, que no trabaja; mi hermana, que no trabaja, y mi madre…" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 20). However, Laura's family warns her to be careful not to let the men at the cabaret lead her astray or give her a "desavío" –"una barriga, por ejemplo"—a euphemism for pregnancy out of wedlock (20). Laura insists on clarifying, "Pero yo soy muy decente, ¿sabes? Una lleva esta vida, pero no hace porquerías" (20). This conversation indicates that *tanguistas* are at risk of pregnancy because there is an expectation of sexual intercourse with the male patrons after hours. In fact, the narrator later observes that, as Víctor and Obdulia converse, "salían las tanguistas, con sus amigos de una noche" (24).

[9] *tanguistas*, or tango-dancers, are women employed by cabarets to dance with male clients (Vicente Hernando 19).

Furthermore, *tanguistas* at the cabaret are expected to tolerate all manner of physical abuse in *La Venus mecánica*. Mary Sol, another *tanguista*, struggles with three intoxicated young men at the cabaret who tied their scarves around her neck (21). One man makes the women drink by force and burns their dresses. Mary Sol reveals "una constelación de quemadura" from where the men have burned her neck with a cigar (21). Evidently, not only are the *tanguistas* expected to be sexually accessible to male patrons, but they also endure physical assault at work. In her work at the cabaret, Obdulia is terrified of the male clients, "porque todos tenían el mismo arranque brutal y la misma instintiva violencia" (130). From these interactions, it is evident that men who pay to have access to a woman's body endanger the lives of these poor women.

However, Mary Sol excuses their behavior by insisting that they are good guys who simply enjoy pranks. Mary Sol, as "el tipo acabado de *flapper*[10], de jovencita pervertida," is a character disfigured not only by abusive patrons but also through her own androgyny and moral degeneration. Her body is described as "recto, sin curvas apenas" (21). Perverted by cabaret and materialism, Mary Sol is impressed by the wealth and status of her patrons, and after a handsome pilot offers to take her on a flight, she specifies, "yo prefiero el automóvil. Uno tiene un 'Citroën' estupendo" (21). Once again, the narrator classifies the Modern Woman as linear, androgynous, and morally deficient as she is enticed by the promise of mechanical luxuries.

[10] A "flapper" refers to a type of Modern Woman of the 1920s who was young, wore plenty of makeup, donned provocative clothing without corsets, and had a short, symmetrical hairstyle. The flapper was also known for driving, drinking, smoking, dancing to modern music, and "el petting"—sexual contact without intercourse (Vicente Hernando 21). In the 1920s and 1930s, the vast majority of women did not wear flapper type clothing, but they did own clothing that was more close-fitting and included designs that were influenced by men's fashion (Larson, "The Commodification" 282).

After Obdulia leaves her job at the cabaret, she is eager to work in an office, a workshop, or as a language teacher, in order to support herself and to maintain her independence. Obdulia longs to be "fuerte, poderosa, eficaz; modelar su destino con las mismas manos" (44). However, she cannot find work because she is unskilled and has no job experience or professional references. When Obdulia confesses how desperate she is for work, Esperanza flippantly recommends that she find a rich lover, as pretty girls can always find men to pay their bills. Initially, Obdulia is horrified by this proposition, particularly because she does not want to ruin her relationship with Víctor. For Obdulia, this would mean surrendering her autonomy, which would be "el vencimiento, el fracaso absoluto de sus sueños" (48). Yet, she also understands that, due to her urgent situation, "era el momento de las resoluciones" (48).

Ultimately, Obdulia determines that Esperanza was right, that "era necesario encontrar un amante que no tuviese nada que ver con el amor" (49). Significantly, as Obdulia decides to give up her dreams in order to follow Esperanza's path, she stands before a store window and fixates "en cosas pueriles: en un estirado maniquí" (49). This mannequin becomes a projection of herself—an objectified woman on the path to becoming the ultimate "Venus mecánica." At this moment, Obdulia becomes "inadaptada, disconforme, enemiga del heroísmo y de la humildad" (49). Esperanza arranges for Obdulia to meet a 50-year-old magistrate, but when he attempts to sleep with her, he makes misogynistic remarks and she demands that he be quiet, exclaiming that she hates him. She cannot yet go through with this degradation and physical violation.

Momentarily, it appears that Obdulia finds financial independence and opportunity as a model for *Casa Dupont*[11]. She considers winning the modeling contest to be "el mejor triunfo de su cuerpo" (54). It would seem that women, in this society, cannot find financial support without objectifying or selling themselves in one form or another. Most of the novel centers on "the commodification of the body of Obdulia in an increasingly urban mass market" (Larson, "The Commodification" 293). Obdulia, as the Modern Woman, becomes a living mannequin, objectified like the products that she acquires and displays on her body. In fact, in chapter seventeen, entitled "Imprecación del maniquí," Obdulia refers to herself as "Yo, Venus mecánica, maniquí humano" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 57). Obdulia again identifies with the mannequin that she had once gazed upon through a store window. In her work as a model, the protagonist is not only objectified by men sexually, but also dehumanized and objectified by women, as she must stand motionless and silent as clients move and arrange her to their liking. Obdulia now feels like a living doll to be abused by insolent, young bourgeois women. This chapter reveals that, behind the glamorous façade of the Modern Woman there is a demand to perform the demeaning role imposed upon her as "the object of desire and her body used as merchandise, given over for the pleasure of others" (Larson, "The Commodification" 291). Throughout the tour, Doña Blanca, the company's seamstress, monitors Obdulia's behavior, and under her watchful eye, Obdulia must not smoke, wear too much make up, or be left alone with men. Her promising, new modeling career only

[11] Founded in 1872, *Casa Dupont* was a luxurious fashion, jewelry, and perfume empire popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Bender, "The Body" 226).

deprives Obdulia of agency once again, so she refuses to continue the trip and leaves her position.

MODERN WOMAN AS *FEMME FATALE*

Alluring women, it would seem, serve as both the conduit and embodiment of death in the novel. After Obdulia leaves him, Víctor wallows in his heartache and depression. Her absence could prove deadly to Víctor, as he puts a pistol to his temple and contemplates suicide. In his angst, he envisions a woman dressed in black and standing in his doorway. The focus is, once again, on the fatal appeal of an attractive woman when Víctor admires this deathly figure in his mind's eye and remarks, "No es tan fea la Muerte" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 76). He feels the urge to take her by the arm and to walk the streets by her side in order to show off his latest conquest as they window shop. Víctor relishes in the envy that this conquest would evoke in his friends, who would marvel: "Qué mujercita extraña ha encontrado Murias" (76). It is significant that the protagonist wishes to exhibit *la Muerte* while standing before a display window. This image further illustrates how all women in public are on display and subject to the male gaze—a concept evidently so universal that even the powerful, allegorical figure of death is reduced to an object of peculiar beauty to be paraded through the city streets by a man. Death is diminished to a being subordinate to men, as they refer to her as "mujercita" and evaluate her physical appearance and sexual desirability. At the same time, the window shop reinforces the idea of modern women as frivolous, materialistic beings, eager to spend a man's wealth. Seemingly even death enjoys shopping, simply because it is personified by a woman.

The window shop also illuminates dynamics of power related to gender and consumerism. Hence, as women admire the objects on display, the men, in turn, ogle and objectify these women, whom they consider to be on display when in public. In fact, there are various allusions to Víctor as "a consumer of women" (Larson, "The Commodification" 276). The "new woman" in *La Venus mecánica* is not made "of flesh and blood, but of geometry, film, aura, and clothing—all combined to produce an image of the modern woman as product—in the most literal sense of the word" (277). Víctor pursues and charms "so many women that he can no longer differentiate between them," their features confused and fragmented like the female figures in Cubist paintings that he references (295). The protagonist regularly watches unaccompanied women coming and going as they shop along the Gran Vía and Calle de Alcalá (295). In effect, Víctor is consuming these women, selecting them based on their shape, style, etc., in the same way that these women select beauty and fashion products (295). Therefore, Díaz Fernández constructs "an ongoing cycle of consumption and production based solely on desire" (295).

Despite repeated references to male voyeurism and the exploitation of women in the novel, sexual harassment and assault are never deemed a threat. Because female characters in *La Venus mecánica* appear to have the ultimate control over men through their enigmatic allure, descriptions of sexual harassment in the novel center on the wounded male ego rather than on any intimidation or danger to the women who experience it. Throughout the novel, it is a woman's sexuality that is the threat, to the extent that the female form becomes a mechanized weapon. In an inversion of a woman's fear of being seduced by a smooth-talking womanizer, Víctor reproaches himself for

being drawn to Obdulia, because "me dirá todas las mentiras que se le ocurran, y después se acostará con cualquiera" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 24). In the perception of the world as seen through *La Venus mecánica*, men pursue women, who are at no real risk, as the female characters, even when exploited, seem to possess the ultimate control of sexuality and sexual encounters.

Indeed, sexual harassment is trivialized and even welcomed by female characters in *La Venus mecánica*. For example, when Obdulia is crossing the *Puerta del Sol*, she spots Esperanza, who complains that when she walks through the plaza "me devoran a piropos," and for this reason she usually travels by taxi when she is in the city (47). Because Esperanza is characterized as vain and prone to exaggeration, her calling attention to the catcalls that she receives appears to be an indirect means for her to boast of her beauty and desirability. Through feigned disdain, sexual harassment of women is again dismissed as harmless flattery that simply feeds the conceited female ego.

Similarly, the novel opens with Víctor Murias speaking to a woman unknown to him, and he threatens to throw himself in front of the taxi if she leaves without speaking to him. Rather than being fearful or feeling sorry for him, Elvira laughs in his face as she shuts the taxi door. As the car drives away, Víctor thinks that he should have taken another taxi to follow her in order to find out where she lives. Yet he hesitates, "porque en estas efímeras aventuras de la calle, lo que le daba más terror era pensar que la mujer acosada fuese la que días antes le había sido presentada precipitadamente por alguna persona de su intimidad" (2). Thus, it seems that it is the fear of encroaching on another man that keeps him from stalking this unknown woman, as she could be the wife or sister of one of his male friends or acquaintances. It is noteworthy that the narrator uses the

term “acosada”—that is, “harassed,” “hounded,” or “pestered”—to refer to the woman who Víctor pursues in the streets. Yet, the narrator describes the protagonist’s habitual harassment of women from a comical male perspective, depicting Víctor as a sympathetic and rather pathetic figure in these encounters:

> Porque habían sido cinco minutos nada más los transcurridos en la persecución. La vio bajar del ‘taxi’ para entrar en una perfumería, y entonces se miraron. Víctor fue, de nuevo, un instante, ese hombre de guardia a las puertas de una tienda, ese mendigo de palabras y sonrisas fugaces, ese misógino devorador de citas falsas y respuestas equívocas que desgasta su alma en todos los quicios y todas las esquinas. Por eso, para desquitarse, cuando la desconocida salió con sus paquetes, la afrontó decidido, hasta incurrir en la burla del ‘chauffeur’ (2).

Clearly, the protagonist views women in public spaces as sexually accessible and up for grabs. He does not experience any sense of impropriety, which further suggests that this would have been regarded as relatively normal courtship—persistent harassment and pursuit of women in the street—with the only perceived risk being to the male ego, as the chauffeur and Elvira laugh at Víctor. As Margaret Atwood infamously demonstrated, men are afraid that women will laugh at them, but women are afraid that men will kill them (*Second Words* 413). However, because *La Venus mecánica* was written from a male perspective, through the eyes of both the male author and the male protagonist, the focus remains on the man’s experience of “street courtship,” without acknowledging the fear and danger that women experience. Víctor considers his street behavior to be reasonable and contrasts it with that of his fellow Spanish men, whom he

perceives as either being too formal and traditional—maintaining an arm's length distance from even their fiancés—or being too aggressive, behaving like they "quieren morder a las mujeres que pasan" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 132). In contrast with what women experience in public spaces, the male protagonist casually strolls the city streets, enjoying his "libre albedrío" (2).

Víctor's continued pursuit later in the novel seems to indicate that this persistent harassment is not only socially acceptable, but effective, as women in the novel ultimately respond positively to this shameless pestering and become his friends and lovers. When Víctor returns to his pension-hotel that same night, he again indulges in his voyeurism—"el ejercicio eterno de mirar a las mujeres, delicioso ejercicio que se practica en todos los comedores de la tierra" (6). This scene in the pension-hotel is similar to the opening of *La rampa*, in which women in the dining hall are ogled and harassed by their fellow diners. But, in this case, the dining hall scene is written from a man's perspective, through the male gaze, and women are fairly receptive to—not fearful of—Víctor's advances. There is also a difference in the demographics of this dining hall. Víctor is not in a common lunch hall among poor workers, but rather, among tourists, middle-class Spaniards, and prostitutes. This is only further indication of the universality of this type of objectification and pursuit of women.

When Víctor spots Elvira in the dining hall, he recalls how she had "burlado de él" and observes her whispering and laughing with Edith when they notice him (7). He feels diminished, and his ego is wounded. Unlike the *comedor* in *La rampa*, in this dining hall it appears that women are in control. Elvira even introduces Víctor as "el señor Murias, que todavía persigue a las mujeres en la calle" (7). She playfully describes him as

"un galanteador temible" and explains how "me ha bloqueado esta tarde, y tuvo que salvarme un 'chauffeur'" (8). In this way, Víctor's previous harassment of Elvira is light-heartedly dismissed, and the two women continue to smoke and chat with Víctor. Eventually, Víctor and Elvira do have a sexual relationship. Thus, the aggressive pursuit of women in the street proves to be a successful approach, not only for Víctor, but for other men in the novel. In fact, Elvira states that she met her wealthy lover when he followed her in his car and offered to give her a ride (9-10). In the perception of the world as seen through *La Venus mecánica*, women are not in danger of men, whose aggressive advances and trailing are considered flattering, or at worst, an amusing nuisance. Ultimately, women in the novel possess the power of sexuality and sexual encounters. The idea that these female characters are simply playing hard to get, perpetuates the myth that women secretly relish dogged harassment but feel that they must maintain the pretense of appearing offended in order to preserve their honor.

Even though Obdulia initially refuses the advances of the wealthy mine-owner, Sebastián, when she meets him on the train and again when she sees him in Oviedo, he follows her to Gijón. Undeterred, Sebastián waits in his car outside of her hotel to offer her a ride. This stalking behavior could be perceived as threatening, but in *La Venus mecánica*, it is all part of a game of seduction in which the man aggressively pursues his ideal mate and displays his wealth and status until the woman finally grants him sexual access to her body. Obdulia admires Sebastián's car, and he offers to give it to her. When Obdulia starts to walk away, Sebastián accompanies her, and as they pass a jewelry store, he wants to buy her a gift, but she refuses. However, when Sebastián sends her a diamond

bracelet the next day, she keeps it as she considers his proposals. Once again, persistence and wealth guarantee the success of male suitors in *La Venus mecánica*.

Because her bourgeois background impedes Obdulia from truly belonging to the working class, "she feels her only recourse is to prostitution, to become a plaything for the very rich, to become the 'Venus mecánica'" (Larson, "The Commodification" 290-91). Ever practical, Obdulia decides that if she must sell herself in some form she might as well go for the highest bidder—Sebastián. Before she meets with Sebastián at the hotel, she resolves, "Voy a venderme. ¿Qué más da? Todos los ricos del mundo no bastarían para comprar mi desprecio. Eso sí que es mío" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 60). As Sebastián waits for her, Obdulia takes time dressing herself, "transformada de maniquí en mujer por la más sencilla de las metamorfosis" (67). This is Obdulia's transformation from a display mannequin to a more sensual, carnal being. When Obdulia finally meets with Sebastián, she continues to play "hard-to-get" until he desperately declares that he will do and buy anything to keep from losing her. Obdulia gives him just enough encouragement to fan the flames of his passion, but she warns him that she is a "mujer carísima" (67). In this way, the protagonist uses her erotic desirability to secure economic stability, as relying on wealthy men appears to be the only feasible option for most women in the novel.

The dreamy depiction of the wealthy, independent Modern Woman appealed to men, because the women in these images are frequently sensual and scantily dressed (Larson, "The Commodification" 284). Public discourse regarding women's emancipation, particularly in literature and art created by men, resulted in a fetishized and overtly sexual caricature of women (Bender, "The Body" 212). In the 1920s and 1930s,

images of the "new woman" were prevalent in movies and often appeared "in the form of the art-deco-inspired *femme fatale* or urban vamp" (Larson, "The Commodification" 283). The origins of the *femme fatale* are pictorial and literary, but she has significant representation in film (Doane 1). The *femme fatale* first emerged in the nineteenth century, in the works of authors like Charles Baudelaire and Théophile Gautier and painters like Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Gustave Moreau (1). This feminine figure is associated with the styles of symbolism, decadence, art nouveau, and popular orientalism (1). The appearance of the *femme fatale* "marks the confluence of modernity, urbanization, Freudian psychoanalysis, and new technologies of production and reproduction" that were the result of the industrial revolution (1).

The *femme fatale* is a duplicitous female character with "a concealed and mysterious identity" (Erensoy 201). The term is associated with femininity, sexuality, danger, deceit, and violence (Farrimond 2). Some characteristics of the *femme fatale* include "a sexuality that is aggressive or threatening; ambition to improve her circumstances; uncertain morality or amorality," persuasiveness, duplicity, "normative and highly constructed physical beauty," and a danger of downfall or death by association (5). Because the *femme fatale* is a figure who is never really who she appears to be, the threat of a woman is transformed into a secret, "something which must be aggressively revealed, unmasked, discovered" (Doane 1). The appearance of the *femme fatale* "is a clear indication of the extent of the fears and anxieties prompted by shifts in the understanding of sexual difference in the late nineteenth century" (1-2). Thus, the *femme fatale* could not be considered a "heroine of modernity" or a feminist figure, because she is merely "a symptom of male fears about feminism" (2-3).

Chapter twenty, "Nueva representación de la igualdad," is a cautionary message directed at Sebastián—and by extension, all industrial magnates—as it opens with the exclamation: "¡Ah, tú no sabes a quién albergas, minero opulento, traficante de tierras valiosas, fletador temerario de barcos y mujeres!" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 69). In the view of these powerful moguls, laborers and women are nothing more than property to use and exchange with other powerful men. Although these wealthy men attempt to purchase a woman's love, the narrator contends, they will never wholly possess a human being—as one's spirit, mind, and passions can never be bought. Thus, Obdulia's rebellion doesn't consist of defending feminist principles or making bombs, but rather, "la reivindicación de valores que son suyos y que la colocan muy por encima de sus explotadores, a pesar de su condición de objeto manipulado: esos valores son su juventud y su belleza erótica" (Magnien 29-30). Unbeknownst to Sebastián, Obdulia's presence in his home is insidious, as she uses her feminine sensuality to manipulate him, silently undermining him—and symbolically, capitalism—thereby signifying the redemption of humanity:

> Es, sin embargo, tu amante la que restablece el equilibrio humano. Para los hombres de antes, la Igualdad era una matrona con el pecho cruzado por una banda roja. Actualmente, la Igualdad es esa mujer llena de pereza en el cuarto de un millonario, rodeada de esencias y de joyas. Porque ella simboliza el lujo, ácido corruptor de la riqueza, venganza de todos los desheredados de la tierra. (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 69)

Thus, the Modern Woman drapes herself in femininity, sensuality, and luxury to lure and destroy those who exploit and pose a threat not only to herself but to all the

downtrodden victims of capitalism and authoritarianism. The narrative voice evokes the classic portrayal of women as sirens who lure men to their deaths: "Tiráis al mar vuestros tesoros. Ellas son, como el mar, hondas e inseguras, y cantan, como el mar, la melodía de la muerte" (69). These descriptions are characteristic of images of femininity in Belle Epoque art. In such images, the "siren/prostitute with her drinks and soaps, bodily luxuries, material comforts, and labor-saving devices projected a euphoric vision of abundance, eroticism, and freedom that the Belle Epoque defined as 'modernity'" (Coffin 130). Images of the "New Woman," which were often associated with machinery and "the exhilaration of speed," often produced anxiety (132).

This sense of anxiety regarding the Modern Woman underlies *La Venus mecánica* and is embodied by the patriarchal character Sebastián. Although seductive, Obdulia makes Sebastián feel uneasy in his own lavishly furnished home, and her disdain and inaccessibility drive him to despair. He lavishes Obdulia with jewels, clothing, flowers, sweets, and cigarettes—anything he believes might buy her favor. The narrative voice mocks bourgeois men who try to tame women with gifts, "como hacían los conquistadores con los aborígenes de una tierra nueva" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 117). However, the narrator reminds the reader that "Obdulia no era así," because she is a Modern Woman of exceptional character and morality (117). Despite his efforts to fully conquer her, Sebastián continues to suffer from "aquella mirada dura y diamantina de Obdulia" (99). Here, looks can literally kill, as Obdulia's mere gaze, like that of Medusa, threatens to harm men. In this text, women are the inscrutable enigma whose beauty and sensuality are the weakness and downfall of men.

> Sebastián temblaba todas las tardes delante de ella, como un acusado, y todas las tardes parecía que ella le perdonaba la vida. Y se la perdonaba realmente, porque si ella huyese, si ella un día se lanzase de nuevo, sola y libre, por los caminos del mundo, el minero se encontraría peor que muerto. (99)

Modern women, depicted as secretive, conniving, and synthetic beings, are a potentially destructive force against powerful men in the novel. Indeed, the narrator insists that "Obdulia era el único ser capaz de despreciar al millonario, capaz de retarle y vencerle con la sola arma de su corazón insobornable" (99). Thus, despite Sebastián's superior social and economic position, Obdulia holds emotional and physical power over the industrialist by enticing, intimidating, dismissing, and leaving him distraught and apprehensive in his own home. Yet, like a moth to a flame, Sebastián is drawn to his own demise, for he longs to possess what he simply cannot buy.

When Sebastián takes Obdulia to see the mines that he owns, she discovers the extent of her lover's cruelty. Obdulia empathizes with the mineworkers and relates to their struggle with poverty. She observes the corrosive effects of industrialism on the river, the trees, and the landscape. She witnesses the "esclavitud asalariada" of half-naked children and fatigued women carrying loads of coal (72). Within this hellish mine, the engineer, in order to increase profits, forbids the workers from taking any breaks. Obdulia realizes that Sebastián, a militant Catholic, earns his riches from the misery and suffering of others. Outraged by these injustices, Obdulia does not understand why the impoverished laborers must subject themselves to this dangerous, grueling work to provide riches for someone else. Sebastián's air of superiority and his terse response,

"Porque soy el amo," reveals that, to the villainous industrialist, this is simply the natural order of society—slaves and slavemasters (73). The poor miners must sell their bodies in the form of manual labor to their master, Sebastián, in a manner analogous to how Obdulia sells her body to him sexually in order to survive. Thus, Obdulia feels a sense of solidarity with "otros grupos oprimidos por el mismo dueño," and in the process, capitalism and patriarchy fuse into one common enemy because of their shared experiences of exploitation (Bordons 25). Sebastián is representative of the injustices of the modern world. Through Sebastián and his relationship with Obdulia and the working class, Díaz Fernández makes a parallel between the exploitation of women in patriarchal society and the unethical treatment that the proletariat receives from capitalistic businessmen (Bender, "The Body" 226).

Isolated in her ivory tower, Obdulia secretly yearns for Sebastián's demise, for social justice. After Sebastián fires the laborers who participated in a strike, Obdulia looks down from the balcony of her hotel and wishes the workers would burn everything to the ground. She wants to let out "un grito enorme de protesta, una imprecación rencorosa contra la despótica voluntad de los fuertes" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 100). In this way, Obdulia's empathy and sense of justice are in complete opposition to Mary's god of the strong and powerful that "consiente tanta miseria aquí abajo" (100). Although Obdulia contemplates leaving him many times, she decides that "era preciso seguir al lado de Sebastián para hacerle víctima de su odio todos los días, ya que él era implacable delincuente de todos los días" (100). The public, class struggle is introduced to the private, domestic sphere, as "Obdulia sería cadena de su cárcel, hierro de su tormento, venganza permanente de los obreros sin pan" (101). Sacrificing her own freedom and

happiness, Obdulia consciously elects to use herself as "la Venus mecánica," a sensual, modern weapon, to act as the vengeful arm of justice for the downtrodden—for it would seem that the most effective attack is an attack from within the very homes of their oppressors. In this way, the narrator establishes an image of the Modern Woman as the perfect *femme fatal*, an erotic, corrupting agent that undermines powerful men by preying on their sexual weaknesses. While labor unions, protests, strikes, and other public demonstrations remain the means of male resistance in the novel, female characters have the capacity to infiltrate the patriarchal magnate's residence, private life, body, and mind.

Patrocinio is another character who uses her sexuality to exploit men's weaknesses. In chapter thirty, entitled "Amante de negros," we learn of Patrocinio's life in South Africa, where she spent ten years prostituting herself to colonists, military men, and sailors. Even though she arrived penniless and barefoot, Patrocinio amassed a fortune as the only white prostitute in Luanda, because "los negros llegaban arrastrándose, con su oro en los bolsillos, para estar conmigo, porque yo era la única blanca que los soportaba" (103). Patrocinio's sexuality is devastating to men, as it leads them to ruin their lives and even to suicide. For example, she explains how "alguno desertó por mi culpa, y alguno acabó por pegarse un tiro después de malbaratar la hacienda" (103). With her savings, Patrocinio then went to the copper mines in Congo where "los hombres se gastan muy bien el dinero," she quips (103). The former prostitute triumphantly remarks that now she has the money and power, and "puedo reírme de todos" (104). Patrocinio uses her sex work as a position of power, and ultimately, she is the one who comes out on top, laughing to the bank.

The image of the insidious sensuality of the Modern Woman is further reinforced in chapter forty-two, which is entitled, "Fábula del boxeador y la paloma." This fable centers on the defeat of Eusebio García, a Spanish boxing champion, to his German opponent, Schemelling. Jaime Ortiz, a flashy and patriotic boxing fan, returns from Germany with Elsa, "una alemanita delgada y blanca" (146). Dedicated to his sport, Eusebio carefully rations his foods and has grown "acostumbrado a la castidad" (147). Despite his strength and confidence, Eusebio "parecía desfallecer" in Elsa's presence, and her laugh "le intimidaba mucho más que el puñetazo enemigo" (147). For this reason, the boxer distances himself from the perfumed German girl, "como de un peligro semidivino" (147).

Behind her innocent appearance, Elsa "calculaba bien su corruptora influencia," as she uses her sensuality as a national weapon (147). When she comes to his house early one morning and gives him a kiss, Eusebio "se derrumbó estrepitosamente, como un coloso herido" (147). This kiss has such a dramatic effect on the boxer that, three days later, his manager complains that Eusebio is losing weight as well as his fighting skills. Elsa's final blow occurs during the match, during which she sits in the front row and places a bet in favor of the German boxer. Poor Eusebio observes Elsa, and he takes a resounding loss, not even making it to the fifth round. In this way, Elsa serves as the perfect *femme fatale*, infiltrating and capitalizing upon the carnal desires of men. Modern women, then, have the ability to debilitate men with just a look, a caress, or a kiss. Therefore, one could interpret this fable as a cautionary tale about the seductive power of women—that even a slight, feminine enemy like Elsa or Obdulia can surreptitiously use her allure to sabotage powerful men for both personal (financial) and national interests.

MODERN WOMAN AS FEMBOT

The "New Woman" was associated with "utopian images of the modern metropolis in graphic design, film, and fashion trends" (Larson, "The Commodification" 281). With advancing industrialization, "la euforia por los inventos modernos llevará a la exaltación de la máquina y de la mujer moderna hasta fundirlos en uno" in vanguardist discourse (Bordons 32). However, the "otherness" of both woman and machine posed a threat to male authority (Huyssen 226). In "El nuevo romanticismo," Díaz Fernández declares that his generation has witnessed "el triunfo de la máquina" (Díaz Fernández 387). *La Venus mecánica* is a novel with an expressionist attitude toward technology. The expressionist view of modern technology "emphasizes technology's oppressive and destructive potential and is clearly rooted in the experiences and irrepressible memories of the mechanized battlefields of World War I" (Huyssen 223). Throughout *La Venus mecánica*, machines are personified as destructive beasts, ravenous monsters that unceasingly demand the labor of the poor in order to "alimentar las panzas insatisfechas de las máquinas" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 71). Víctor laments the increased power that advancing technology provides capitalist regimes and dictators, as he insists, "se ha inventado el teléfono, la telegrafía sin hilos, el motor de explosión, el aeroplano, para que ellos puedan dominar mejor el universo" (93). Rather than serving to benefit humanity, science and technology are instruments of oppression and dehumanization in *La Venus mecánica*. Modern women in the novel serve as the living component of this technology, so that, as industrialists use manmade machines to dominate laborers, the synthetic, mechanized woman uses her body to seduce and destroy the capitalist.

Although in his novel Díaz Fernández presents a critique of the exploitation of women, ironically, the work itself contributes to their objectification (Larson, "The Commodification" 294-96). The illustration on the cover of the novel's first edition features "the provocative and titillating Cubist image of the nude mechanical Venus, in an obvious reference to the evil, seductive robot Eva" from the film *Metropolis* (1927), by Fritz Lang (296). Therefore, the very cover of the novel participates in "the cycle of objectification," as it capitalizes on "the marketability of the avant-garde" and the "dehumanizing nature of modern society" (296).

Even though the inventors of androids in the eighteenth century did not seem to have a gender preference for their machines, writers began to prefer female androids "as soon as the machine came to be perceived as a demonic, inexplicable threat and as harbinger of chaos and destruction" (Huyssen 226). One could consider this "a complex process of projection and displacement," in which the anxieties of "ever more powerful machines are recast and reconstructed in terms of the male fear of female sexuality" (226). Representations of mechanized women suggest that they are a manifestation of anxieties about women and the female body (Erensoy 195). Şirin Fulya Erensoy explains that "the act of creating artificial women is a mode of subordination and control, of patriarchal oppression" (203). By creating the female android, the male creator is able to dominate and control an object in the form of a woman who serves him and fulfills his desires, and in the process, he attempts to deprive both woman and machine of their otherness (Huyssen 226-28). This is because "in the machine-woman, technology and woman appear as creations and/or cult objects of the male imagination" (229). The technology, which presents itself "as either neutral and obedient or as inherently

threatening and out-of-control," is the projection of "the myth of the dualistic nature of woman as either asexual virgin-mother or prostitute-vamp" (229). In this way, the threat that the vamp's destructive sexuality poses to male control and rule corresponds to the threat of ungovernable technology, which could unleash destruction on humanity (229-30).

The science fiction novel *Metropolis* (1925) by Thea von Harbou and the popular film adaptation *Metropolis* (1927) by Fritz Lang were in the collective conscience and were likely influential for Díaz Fernández when he authored *La Venus mecánica.* Like the mineworkers in *La Venus mecánica*, the laborers, or slaves, of Metropolis are relegated to the catacombs, while the privileged live in a beautiful utopian city of skyscrapers. In particular, the scene in which Obdulia looks out from her balcony, empathizes with the workers, and wishes that they would burn everything to the ground evokes the fiery imagery of *Metropolis*. In Lang's *Metropolis*, "technology is embodied in a female robot, a machine-vamp who leads the workers on a rampage and is subsequently burned at the stake" (223). The film is a prime example of "male mystifications of female sexuality as technology-out-of-control' (233). After purging the sexual, destructive elements from woman and machine in *Metropolis,* the film transitions from the expressionist view of technology to "the serene view of technology as a harbinger of social progress" (236). In *Metropolis*, the class struggle, the conflict of capital and labor, is settled through the advancement of technology (236). In contrast, *La Venus mecánica* maintains an expressionist view of technology as destructive and signals the need to return to a more humane, less artificial society by resisting tyrannical machinery and capitalism and by celebrating more nurturing women—without a "matriz

futurista"—who sacrifice themselves for their loved ones, children, and the proletariat (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 133). The conflict of capital and labor is ultimately left unresolved in the novel, which closes with a call for revolution.

These works are precursors to the fembot science fiction of contemporary films like *Ex Machina* (2014), and television programs like *Westworld* (2016-present). In these films, the "vamp" or *femme fatale* also merge with technology. For example, the fembot Ava in *Ex Machina* becomes "aware of the power of her appearance" and exposes "its artificial nature by playing on its masquerade" (Erensoy 200). She uses her femininity and sensuality like a *femme fatale* in order to manipulate the male protagonist to act in accordance with her wishes (200). Like a mannequin, Ava is trapped in a glass enclosure. However, she takes advantage of the male gaze to outwit the protagonist and ultimately gain her freedom (200). This performative aspect of femininity and the strategic use of manufactured beauty is similar to Obdulia's machinations to get the material items she desires and to destroy her domestic male oppressor in the process. It is in this way that "the very tools of the patriarchy used to objectify women in turn become the means by which resistance to patriarchy is demonstrated" (201).

In contrast with the seductive "Mechanical Venus," when a male character is mechanized in the novel, he is an automaton—deemed powerless and completing tasks without agency. The narrator uses the male personification of machinery to illustrate the drudgery and servitude of industrialized, urban life. The narrative voice condemns these "hombres rutinarios, hombres-máquina, burócratas, burgueses, comerciantes, felices inquilinos" who have lost their autonomy (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 85). Unlike the captivating "Venus mecánica," the male android, lacking sensuality and machinations, is

impotent, incapable of subversion, and serves as just another bureaucratic tool at the disposal of industrialists.

Another threat that women pose to men in the novel is ideological in nature and manifests itself in the form of a class struggle between Víctor and Countess Edith. Like Obdulia, Edith is a woman of exceptional character yet whose appeal is dangerous to men, particularly from Víctor's socialist perspective. This ambivalent characterization is demonstrative of the conflicting views regarding the Modern Woman as simultaneously dangerous and in danger in the harsh conditions of a great industrial city like Madrid. Outdated aristocratic conventions leave Edith vulnerable and incapable of supporting herself after her family is financially ruined by World War I and exiled from Austria. The countess would not be able to find work, Elvira and Víctor determine, because when it comes to dedicating herself to a trade, "un aristócrata no sirve para nada" (12). Edith continues to live in poverty because, unlike other women in the novel, she refuses to seek out a lover who will support her.

Due to her aristocratic background and beliefs, Edith symbolizes all that Víctor condemns. Edith herself acknowledges this conflict when she tells Víctor, "Para usted, yo soy una enemiga. Pertenezco a una clase nefanda que hay que extinguir a toda costa" (106). Unlike Obdulia, "su moral es una moral de casta" (106). In Víctor's view, Edith represents the opposition to his convictions for class revolution. For instance, Edith insists, "Dios no puede consentir el triunfo de la plebeyez, de la barbarie" (106). The narrative voice even associates Edith with fascism, as she makes the trolley stop "con ese saludo fascista que tanto irrita a los conductores, quizá porque todos figuran en las filas socialistas" (106).

At the same time, Víctor finds himself hopelessly, perilously drawn to Edith. The narrator explains that "aquella belleza contenida y soberbia le atraía desordenadamente" (105). Víctor considers Edith a "mujer impávida y peligrosa como un desfiladero" because of her beauty and elitist views (105). In this way, Obdulia's detrimental effect on Sebastián is similar to the seductive threat that Edith poses to Víctor, as both relationships are rooted in class conflict and male vulnerability to female sexuality. Víctor both desires and fears the countess, because he is afraid that she "llegaría a corromperle el pensamiento y moverle a su antojo como un muñeco" (106). Yet again, the narrative focuses on the perniciousness of women's sexuality and their ability to manipulate and corrupt men. Víctor fears that at Edith's whim, he will abandon his political beliefs (Bordons 36). Yet, like an addict, he keeps coming back to visit Edith every day, and "cuanto más se alejaban sus opiniones, más cerca estaban uno del otro" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 106). The countess, who represents European decadence, is placed in opposition to Obdulia, who grows stronger and stronger in her revolutionary convictions (Bordons 36).

However, this conflict is resolved in Víctor's favor, because Edith begins to lose her sense of superiority and develops a greater sense of humanity as she gains her independence and awareness of social injustice. Consequently, Víctor believes that Edith has become "verdaderamente una mujer; es decir, una fuerza, una conciencia" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 125). In her transformation, Víctor compares Edith to mercury, because "su alma es de metal, pero se dilata a la menor presión," and his love, like rust, serves as "un corrosivo de su orgullo" (126). Once more, the novel associates the Modern Woman with machinery and industrialism. Edith's personal development indicates that

the Modern Woman, as the "Venus mecánica," is not yet a fully mechanized entity, as, beyond her sensuality, there remains a trace of humanity that can be redeemed by the insight and passions of a revolutionary man like Víctor.

Although the narrator presents both Obdulia and Edith as morally superior to other female characters, even they remain vain, jealous women who compete for attention and arm themselves with beauty products. For instance, when Obdulia abruptly visits her love rival Edith, "estuvo en el tocador más de un cuarto de hora manipulando con cremas y lápices, porque la entrevista de dos mujeres tiene siempre algo de duelo de belleza, de competencia de toilettes" (127). This is because, inescapably, "the 'new woman' is a superficial creation" in *La Venus mecánica,* an object to be admired or ridiculed, a playful yet dangerous image of beauty (Larson, "The Commodification 291).

AN ANDROID ABORTION

Obdulia's conspiracy to take down the immoral mine owner is thwarted when she discovers that she is pregnant with Sebastián's child. Rather than basking in maternal bliss, Obdulia is horrified, and she considers her pregnancy "una enfermedad vergonzosa" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 110). Obdulia views the fetus as a parasite, and she opts for an abortion because "ella no quería un hijo de la esclavitud, un hijo del odio" (110). Abortion was still extremely taboo in Spanish society in 1929, and when it was briefly legalized in certain areas of Spain in 1936 under the Second Republic, it remained socially unacceptable, eliciting extreme condemnation (Bender, "The Body" 216; Nash, "Maternidad" 707). However, any potential advocacy for reproductive rights in the novel is undermined as Obdulia's morality and character are again shown in opposition to the average Modern Woman. Obdulia contrasts her experience of abortion with that of other

women, because, while she feels a great sense of regret, "la mayor parte de estas mujeres obran así por razones de orden material, por vivir una juventud bella y tranquila" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 115). Obdulia is careful to differentiate herself from "las falsas enfermas," patients at the clinic whom she judges harshly for their decision to abort (115; Bender, "The Body" 220). The chapter is laden with criticism of young, frivolous women who have abortions supposedly just so they can enjoy their easy, carefree lives and "para continuar en el usufructo de una herencia" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 115).

In contrast, for Obdulia, the abortion is what allows her "to take back possession of her own body" (Larson, "The Commodification" 293). Thus, Obdulia's abortion is not a liberating act, but rather "un acto para librar al mundo de un enemigo más" (Bordons 26). Furthermore, Obdulia never questions why only upper-class women are able to have abortions or why she has to leave the country just to get access to this medical procedure (26). The impediments to women's autonomy in having to travel abroad for this operation are never addressed or presented as abnormal (Bender, "The Body" 220). The doctor reassures Obdulia that she should not feel any remorse, because, after all, "usted es una mujer moderna" and her body is the only thing that truly belongs to her (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 116). However, Obdulia rejects the doctor's view that her decision is an individual liberty, and she casts his words "under a veil of derisive irony, or even hostile sarcasm" (Bender, "The Body" 219). Obdulia's confessions of regret and guilt and her refusal to accept this validation of her choice imply that her actions are, indeed, abhorrent and unacceptable for any respectable Spanish woman (219).

"Chloroform Dream," the chapter in which Obdulia has the abortion, marks a shift in her depiction as a sexual, erotic object to a maternal, selfless woman who embodies the

ideal lover and companion (217). The language that Díaz Fernández employs in this chapter fosters a tone of melancholia and condemnation (219). Never does the author use the word "aborto" to refer to the procedure, but rather uses either benign medical terms like "la cirugía" or violent expressions like "destruir un hijo" and refers to her body as "el lugar del crimen" (219; Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 115). The use of these negative terms is indicative of resistance to women's reproductive freedom and self-determination (Bender, "The Body" 219). Rather than a feminist endorsement of reproductive rights, Obdulia's abortion is a means for the author to articulate "modern male anxieties regarding women's increased bodily autonomy" (220-21). The abortion is symbolic of Obdulia's decision to extract herself from bourgeois society and to stamp out the capitalist enemy, once again using the only weapon she has ever had—her corporeality. Obdulia's decision to leave Sebastián and to terminate her pregnancy is an expression of her free will and is the initial step to restoring her humanity.

"LA VENUS ROJA"

A key component of Obdulia's development is her growing strength to oppose the burden of having to be the "Venus mecánica" (Larson, "The Commodification 289). Obdulia struggles to escape the "synthetic, superficial, dehumanized quality" of images of the Modern Woman (277). Ultimately, Obdulia's morality—superior to that of other female characters in the novel—prevents the presumably deadly and industrial nature of the Modern Woman from fully overtaking her humanity. Thus, her evolution into the "Venus mecánica" is reversed when she abandons her plan to use her synthetic beauty against her capitalist enemy in order to live a humble but free life alongside Víctor, the revolutionary.

As Obdulia regains her humanity, the narrator still occasionally describes Obdulia as having mechanical parts. When Obdulia is reunited with Víctor she sobs, and as he holds her, Víctor "aguantaba difícilmente la eléctrica sacudida" pulsing through her body (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 111). The narrator compares Obdulia to an antenna with an "alma finísima y eléctrica," which is impacted by the slightest commotion (137). Standing next to Obdulia, Víctor hears "el latido de aquel corazón, fiel y puntual como un reloj, que seguiría palpitando para él y para la irremediable miseria de las cosas" (139). Ironically, Obdulia's mechanical parts now seem to have heightened her sensitivity, compassion, and humanity.

After their son dies, Obdulia feels that she has lost her purpose in life. Their infant's death symbolizes the injustice and uncertainty of life (Larson, "The Commodification" 293). Having endured a life of indignations and misfortune, and with seemingly nothing left to lose, Obdulia redefines her existence in public, revolutionary terms. When she visits Víctor in jail to inform him of the loss of their child, Obdulia, outraged, declares that when Víctor is released, "te ayudaré a preparar nuestra venganza" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 158). In doing so, Obdulia resolves to insert herself into the intellectual and political sphere of Víctor and his male friends. And so, with the close of the novel, Obdulia is once again prepared to weaponize herself against the powerful men who oppress her, Víctor, and all victims of dictatorship and capitalist, bourgeois institutions.

Now that she has restored her humanity, Obdulia is to join Víctor in active, political resistance, thereby completing her evolution and her moral development. In this way, Obdulia's "liberation comes from an evolution from her comfortable but solitary

existence to solidarity with Víctor and the revolutionary ideals they share" (Larson, "The Commodification" 290). Thus, *La Venus mecánica* is a *Bildungsroman* that depicts a woman's transformation from alienation and social unawareness to the discovery of her own force and character, as she is propelled "de la pasividad a la acción" (Magnien 30). When Obdulia reclaims her body for herself and casts aside middle-class values, she is able to articulate her experience of injustice and free herself (Larson, "The Commodification" 291).

In the process, Obdulia "va de la 'Venus mecánica' a 'la Venus roja'" (Magnien 30). This transformation is perhaps best expressed during the strike, in which she witnesses and resists police brutality. Naïve to the dangers of the strike, Obdulia goes out in the streets and attempts to visit Víctor, but she is caught between the protesters and the guards. The squadrons fire shots and "cayeron sobre los manifestantes con los sables desnudos, como un huracán de metal" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 138). Obdulia is bloodied and injured when "la avalancha policíaca pasó por encima de ella" (138). In this revolutionary scene, the narrator describes Obdulia as "frenética, erguida como una virgen roja" (138). Ultimately, her "rebelión de objeto mecánico deshumanizado cederá el paso a una consciencia social, a un humano sentimiento de solidaridad que la impulsa a la lucha a favor de las masas oprimidas" (Magnien 30). Obdulia's difficult journey results in her becoming a woman who is not only aware of her rights and civic duties, but who is also determined to fight for social justice (31). By moving from private, individual action to public, revolutionary involvement, Obdulia fulfills the role that Díaz Fernández proposes for women outside of the home in his essay, in which he insists that "la sociedad actual es manca, porque la falta el brazo activo de la mujer" ("El nuevo" 357).

In this way, Víctor has saved Obdulia from her mechanical nature, restoring her humanity and engendering in her a maternal desire to raise a son who will become "un hombre puro[12]," a "señor de un pensamiento nuevo" who she would teach "a aborrecer la injusticia y amar la libertad" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 113; 130; 110). Consequently, motherhood is no longer a form of imprisonment for Obdulia, but rather an expression of hope. However, it is not just Victor's love that helps Obdulia to free herself from "su alienación de maniquí o máquina de amor, pero también su capacidad crítica, su inteligencia y su atención, su sensibilidad frente a la explotación del trabajador" (Magnien 31).

Yet, it does not suffice to say that Obdulia casts off her role as a sexual object in order to take a more empowering and active position (Bender, "The Body" 221-22). The problem with the depiction of Obdulia's individualization and maturation is that "the only way out of her desperate situation is tied to the prospects and professional stability of a man, namely Víctor" (Larson, "The Commodification" 294). Furthermore, Obdulia's identity becomes dependent on her maternity, and her belief that a child would "justificar de algún modo mi paso por la tierra" is reminiscent of Marañón's views of motherhood as the fundamental, defining characteristic of womanhood (Bender, "The Body" 222; Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 130). Essentially, there would be no need for Obdulia to exist if she were not fulfilling her biological and patriotic duty as a mother. In her view, having

[12] In contrast with Obdulia's longing to produce a more organic and humane man, Aurora Nitti, the Haitian, vanguardist sculptor, aspires to create the ideal communist man who no longer feels love, nor honor, but constitutes "un mecanismo perfecto, al servicio del Estado" (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 131). This "hombre integral" would essentially serve as the companion piece to the "Venus mecánica." Thus, Víctor considers writing an article about Nitti's exhibition, which he would entitle "La matriz futurista," thereby fusing the female body with machinery and the resulting loss of humanity (133).

a child would "indemnizarse a sí misma del entrañable error"—that is, absolve Obdulia of the sins of her abortion (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 121). Rather than a female protagonist who defies the traditional maternal role to define an original, modern identity, Obdulia becomes yet another woman who learns to embrace the same restrictive role that has been assigned to women for centuries (Bender, "The Body" 222).

Often, in *femme fatale* narratives, the *femme fatale* is pitted against a woman who represents "the opposite female stereotype: loving, nurturing, understanding, and asking very little in return" (Erensoy 201-202). Sometimes, the conflict of these two types—the vamp/femme fatale and the virgin/mother—occurs between a female character and her doppelgänger. For example, in *Metropolis*, María clashes with her android double. The real María "prophesies the reign of the heart, i.e., of affection, emotion, and nurturing," but the mechanical recreation of María serves as "the prostitute-vamp, the harbinger of chaos" who embodies "threatening female sexuality" (Huyssen 228-29). In *La Venus mecánica*, this conflict occurs within one female body that fluctuates between mechanical vamp and nurturing mother. Obdulia embodies both stereotypes in her evolution from a synthetic seductress to a self-sacrificing partner, mother, and activist. In the process, Obdulia becomes what the author may have considered the ideal modern woman—one who embraces liberty but whose natural, conventional femininity is restored, as she lives to serve her family, the revolution, and the downtrodden.

The identity of Obdulia and other women in the novel is defined by their sexuality, through both intradiegetic devices—the commentary and actions of the characters—and extradiegetic means, through the narrator's terms. Díaz Fernández employs the metaphor of virginity as a symbol for Obdulia's reawakening to a

revolutionary awareness (Bordons 37). Although the adjective "roja" suggests a radical shift, Díaz Fernández promotes dominant, bourgeois ideology regarding the characteristics of the ideal woman—virginity and maternity—by returning to the veneration of the virgin-mother (37). Certainly, Obdulia attains a greater social consciousness by the novel's conclusion, but the narrative has merely guided her towards the role of motherhood, thereby replacing the eroticism of her body with its "maternality" and reproductive function (Bender, "The Body" 211-12). The indomitable Víctor witnesses Obdulia's change of character and fears "su metamorfosis," as she is now a woman who seeks "el reposo, la serenidad, y la firmeza" instead of disorder (Díaz Fernández, *La Venus* 130). The objectification and the fragmentation of Obdulia's body only intensify as even this maternity is stripped away with the death of her son (Bender, "The Body" 211). Because Obdulia's body and maternity are essential to her transformation, Díaz Fernández "reaffirms motherhood as a marker of modern feminine identity and communicates profound anxieties regarding women's participation and place within a rapidly modernizing sociocultural landscape" (212).

Because the *femme fatale* is characterized as evil, she is often punished or killed in narratives (Doane 2). The "textual eradication" of the *femme fatale* is "a desperate reassertion of control on the part of the threatened male subject" (2). Similarly, films that feature female robots conventionally conclude with the violent destruction of the fembot (Erensoy 203). However, fembots "are allowed to survive past the end of the film if they are domesticated and behave in acceptably feminine ways" (203). These narrative conventions can be applied to Díaz Fernández's fiction, for it is Obdulia's restored femininity and development of a social consciousness that redeem her and spare her from

annihilation. Any possible feminist critique or commentary within the novel's plot presenting a woman's heroic political and personal evolution are ultimately undermined as Obdulia is never able to entirely break free from her subordination, objectification, or mechanization (Bender, "The Body" 211). Furthermore, Obdulia's identity at the end of the novel is relegated to "a tragic, 'maternal' victim" of the modern and unjust society that Díaz Fernández criticizes (223). Using the transformation of Obdulia's body from an erotic mannequin to a grief-stricken mother, "Díaz Fernández simply continues the male-dominated, avant-garde captivation with the female form as a mode of expression" (224).

In the early twentieth century, "the increasingly public role of women and the increased commodification of images of women by mass culture and the avant-garde became an important topic for European intellectuals" (Larson, "The Commodification" 277). Although in *La Venus mecánica* Díaz Fernández articulates anxiety over women's role in society and increasingly overlapping public and private spheres, this anxiety is ultimately left unresolved (275). If anything, the distinct activities and characteristics assigned to Víctor and Obdulia appear to delineate traditional, separate gender roles (Bordons 37). Víctor works in his public role as a journalist informing the world of workers' movements and revolution, while Obdulia returns to the domestic sphere once she becomes Sebastián's mistress and again as Víctor's lover. In contrast with Víctor's rational, philosophical character, Obdulia is more carnal, sentimental, and impulsive (38). Thus, Obdulia's final promise to help Víctor prepare for the revolution is actually consistent with her characterization, because "la protagonista femenina no ha hecho otra cosa que ayudar al desarrollo del carácter de Víctor" (38). In this way, the narrative of the novel is not centered on the transformation of the titulary character so much as it

describes “la Venus roja,” the ideal female companion to serve as auxiliary to the modern, revolutionary man. Thus, even in fiction, women remained “objeto de los discursos masculinos” and were still marginalized from history and politics (39).

The socialist author’s sympathetic portrayal of oppressed and exploited women is in line with his political leanings. In the 1920s, most Communist representations of women entailed depictions of depression and oppression, women who are “objects of sympathy and pathos,” but rarely presented as activists (Weitz 328-29). This is because women’s emancipation presumably would arise from the actions of male comrades and male relations (329). In these depictions, women work long hours for low wages in filthy factories or are oppressed by “the authoritarian relations of the office and department store” and “by barely concealed sexual exploitation” (329). Indeed, Obdulia remains a victim and does not appear to dedicate herself to revolutionary action until her child has died at the end of the novel, and even then, she is led by her man.

Díaz Fernández published his novels of political and social critique with the purpose of enlightening readers and motivating them to take political action (Larson, “The Commodification” 285-86). By speaking to the experience of those living in a modern and increasingly industrialized Madrid, the author created art with the intention of politically motivating and inspiring the masses (288). In *La Venus mecánica,* Díaz Fernández criticizes the exploitation of women in Madrid during the 1920s, chronicling gender relations “in an increasingly market-driven, image-conscious urban setting” (294). Yet, this same work contributes to images of women that are extremely unrealistic and perpetuates their objectification (294-96). Although Díaz Fernández was progressive for

his time, as a middle-class intellectual he represents the contradictory views that influenced Spanish men of his generation (Bordons 40).

Simultaneously dangerous and in danger, the Modern Woman in *La Venus mecánica* reflects popular discourse surrounding the conditions and roles of women in urban life. Increasingly mechanized, the female figure in Díaz Fernández's novel embodies the dehumanization of both women and the proletariat as a result of industrialization and capitalism. The objectified body of the "Venus mecánica" can be used clandestinely as a sexual weapon against those who oppress her, as the Modern Woman is also portrayed as superficial, frivolous, and dangerously erotic. Consequently, modern women in *La Venus mecánica* alternate between their victimization by industrial magnates and their role as *femme fatale*. Symbolic of the common struggle of the downtrodden in urban centers, the image of the degraded Venus mecánica, a living mannequin and sexualized machine, served to raise awareness of the exploitation of the working class through the use of technology. Although Díaz Fernández signals the need for social progress and revolution, his novel also promotes the revival of a more traditional femininity that prioritizes woman's nurturing, maternal qualities.

CHAPTER THREE: *EVA LIBERTARIA*: THE EMANCIPATED WOMAN AS EMASCULATING LIBERTINE

In *Eva Libertaria*, the Modern Woman is represented as an agent of disorder whose dangerous sensuality and independence threaten to dismantle the very foundations of Spanish society. The evolution of Luisa from an innocent, bourgeois orphan in pursuit of a suitable marriage into "Eva Libertaria," an emancipated Modern Woman, forebodes the establishment of a dystopian matriarchy. Although the author criticizes the frivolity and androgyny of the Modern Woman, most of his criticism is launched against modern men whose perceived lack of manliness requires women to cast aside their domestic and maternal duties in order to earn a living and become more independent individuals who no longer require men. When abandoned by members of her social class and left to fend for herself among the working class, even the most perfect Spanish woman, i.e., Luisa, is susceptible to the pernicious influences of communism and feminism. Consequently, "Eva Libertaria," serving as a symbol for the emancipated woman, poses an imminent threat to capitalism, tradition, and the institutions of marriage and family in Spain.

RAFAEL LÓPEZ DE HARO

Rafael López de Haro (1876-1967) was a prolific Spanish novelist, journalist, essayist, and playwright, as well as a public notary and politician. In total, López de Haro published 118 short novels, 29 lengthy novels, and various theatrical works (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 35). The author was born in San Clemente and lived in Asturias and Galicia in his early childhood (Armiñan 10). He was the youngest of nine children in a family with limited resources (10). López de Haro's father was a judge, and the author seemed to follow in his footsteps when he became a public notary and lawyer (Muñoz

Olivares, *Rafael* 53-55). While he wrote poetry and stories for a small newspaper in Cuenca, the author studied law at the *Facultad de Derecho de Madrid* (Muñoz Olivares, "Rafael"). In Ciudad Real, López de Haro worked as a journalist for the daily newspapers *La Tribuna* and *El Labriego* ("Rafael"). The author then moved to Madrid, where he published his work in various periodicals, such as *Blanco y Negro*, *Madrid Cómico*, and *El Gato Blanco* ("Rafael").

López de Haro demonstrated a keen interest in politics, which he also expressed in his literary works (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 55). He was present at the first public meeting of the Reformist party, established in Madrid in 1912 and popular among intellectuals, civil servants, and the bourgeoise (54-55). In 1914, the author moved to Pontevedra, where he worked as a public notary and befriended Antonio Maura, an influential political figure who held López de Haro in high esteem (57; Armiñan 10). The author "militó en las filas de don Antonio Maura" and eventually became a representative of the Maurist youth (Armiñan 10; Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 57). In addition, during the seven years in which the author resided in Pontevedra, he authored a great number of works (57). López de Haro's political objective was to oppose "el caciquismo que manejaba incluso el Parlamento," but he was initially impeded from office by electoral fraud (57-58). However, the author later found political success when Maura, "para consolar a su candidato, le hace Gobernador Civil" of Segovia, from approximately 1919 to 1920 (Armiñan 11; Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 58). López de Haro then became governor of Albacete for several months and subsequently served as governor of Sevilla (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 58). After his term in Sevilla, López de Haro no longer sought political

office (58). In 1929, the author and his family moved to Barcelona, where he served as public notary and resided there until 1940, shortly after the end of the Civil War (60).

During the Spanish Civil War, López de Haro supported Francisco Franco and his insurgents. In the course of the war, López de Haro was sentenced to death, but he was freed when a member of the execution squad recognized him as "uno de los nuestros" for having written *¡Muera el señorito!*, which was perceived as a work defending the insurgents (60). Many of the author's relatives died during the war, but López de Haro remained under the protection of journalist Eduardo Barriobero, who was the head of the Legal Office of Barcelona (60-61). López de Haro also credited his freedom to his public opinion against Gil Robles (62). When the author's home was destroyed in the bombings of Barcelona in March 1938, he and his family moved to Alella, where they lived in the house of the head of the CNT until the "liberación" of Barcelona in January 1939 (63). López de Haro and his family were then safely transported back to Barcelona in a car sent by one of Franco's generals, who was a friend of the author (63). There, López de Haro wrote articles for newspapers like *La Vanguardia,* in which he published what would become his most notorious articles in 1939 while writing in the newly defeated Barcelona (Rodríguez Puértolas 173). In 1939, he published *Adán, Eva y yo*, his most celebrated and best-selling novel, which was biographical in nature (Armiñan 10-11; Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 63-64). The esteemed endocrinologist and influential philosopher Gregorio Marañón wrote a prologue in the 1945 sequel to this work (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 63-64). After the war, López de Haro continued publishing novels (Rodríguez Puértolas 173). In 1940, the author obtained a lucrative position as a public notary in Madrid, where he remained until his death in 1967 (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 64).

LITERARY STYLE, THEMES, AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

According to Luis de Armiñan, a journalist writing for the newspaper *ABC* in 1966, López de Haro was notoriously successful in diverse literary genres, as thousands of Spaniards, young and old, were avid readers of López de Haro's texts ("Rafael" 10). He was an extremely successful author whose work was hugely popular, as he sold "enormes tiradas de gran número de sus títulos que además se publican en distintas colecciones" (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 34). Clearly, his perspective resonated with a great sector of Spanish society at the time. López de Haro was well-known for his erotic novels, which were considered *naturalistas* (Rodríguez Puértolas 173). Although in some of his writing López de Haro followed the nineteenth-century literary style of naturalism, many of his later works reflect "el impresionismo psicológico" of the early twentieth century (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 71). His works generally focus on descriptions of urban life, particularly in Madrid, including its inhabitants, topography, and middle-class neighborhoods (83). This is certainly true of *Eva Libertaria*, which is replete with descriptions of the bustle and modernity of city life in Madrid, Barcelona, and Paris—the masses of people, vehicles, lights, window displays, signs, advertisements, luxury hotels, casinos, cafés, theaters, cabarets, bars, jazz bands, museums, and cinemas. Additionally, the author often makes detailed observations of people and their physical characteristics, clothing, and behaviors throughout the novel. Indeed, a major activity for Luisa, Clemencia, and other characters is people-watching.

In an interview with a journalist reporting for *Estampa* in 1930, López de Haro explained that all of his writing must contain "un reflejo de la vida," and "una novela puede ser la reflexión de un escritor ante un hecho" (Madrid 30). The author himself

classified *Eva Libertaria* in the category of works that he referred to as "novelas de la vida." In the specific case of *Eva Libertaria*, the author reflects on the emancipated Modern Woman's new public and professional role in Spain. López de Haro wrote *Eva Libertaria* when he was working as a public notary in Barcelona (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 60). This was shortly after the election of 1931, in which the Second Republic was installed and the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera had come to an end. Although the political situation in Spain is integrated into the novel's setting, the plot is centered on the female protagonist's relationships and interactions with particular male characters. Consequently, *Eva Libertaria* can be classified as a psychological novel, as it is written from an analytical position, outside of the reality that the author presents (205). For example, the abdication of King Alfonso XIII and the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic on April 14, 1931, merely serve as the background for the development of the relationship between the protagonist and Merino, as the two witness the crowd's reactions to the news from their spot at a restaurant overlooking downtown Barcelona. Luisa and Merino observe the shocked response and confusion after the fall of the Spanish monarchy, "una institución con tan hondas raíces en los siglos" (López de Haro, *Eva* 58). Yet, this significant political event remains peripheral to the flirtatious ideological conflict between the bourgeois Luisa and the revolutionary Merino. The novel also references the failed uprising against the Second Republic, which was led by General Sanjurjo on August 10, 1932. However, the insurrection is only significant to the plot because the characters Pencho and Polito flee as a result of their participation in the conspiracy against the government. This is yet another political event in the novel that is framed around Luisa's relationships with men. On one occasion, Polito summarizes the

constant changes of government that he has witnessed in his lifetime: "Nací reinando don Alfonso XII. He conocido dos Reyes, una Reina y una República" (84). These rapid developments certainly appeared to be disarming to López de Haro, who portrays shifting power dynamics between the sexes, as well as anarchism, communism, and even democracy, as threats to the very foundation of Spanish society.

ARISTOCRATISM AND ELITISM

All of López de Haro's literary works have a social and didactic purpose (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 71). Although his publications analyze the faults that he found in all social strata, López de Haro was particularly critical of his own social class, the bourgeoise, which he denounced for its hypocritical morality and behavior (71; 77; 42-43). His depictions of middle-class life give "la impresión de artificiosidad," and the author "ataca la maldad y el vicio" (83). Specifically, consumerism and mass production are significant aspects of the modern culture of the aristocracy and bourgeoise in *Eva Libertaria,* to the extent that they occasionally extend to the characters themselves. For instance, in Luisa's initial observation of Pencho, she inspects him for his suitability as if she were shopping for a vehicle: "Los maridos hoy son de serie, lo mismo que los coches. Ahora bien: éste es de una primera marca. Vale la pena" (López de Haro, *Eva* 37). Then, when Luisa rides in Pencho's sports car the author describes "el calor de la máquina formidable," charging ahead with the prideful "zumbido de la riqueza, del lujo, del poder" (42). In this way, the car becomes an extension of the male body, "el moderno centauro de fuego, de fuerza y de luz" (43). Later in the novel, Nelia makes another analogy between cars and men, advising Luisa to treat men "como a los automóviles: prefiriendo los más caros, cambiando uno por otro con facilidad, haciéndoles dar todo el

rendimiento posible, que te lleven adonde quieras ir y bien. . . por último, cuidando de que no les falle la dirección y te estrellen" (160-61). Thus, women can learn to control, use, and dispose of men, however it is still men who ultimately yield the power to take women places. Furthermore, through his novel, López de Haro criticizes the emptiness and triviality of aristocratic life (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 201). Indeed, *Eva Libertaria* largely consists of descriptions of Luisa's glamorous social life, and the narrator occasionally expresses disdain for the frivolity and superficiality of her bourgeois and aristocratic peers. For example, the narrator observes that Pencho mindlessly follows social trends and "seguía la regla general como en el vestir, como en el peinado, como en los ademanes que todos copiaban del cine" in "este ambiente de insubstancialidad" (López de Haro, *Eva* 44-45).

At the same time, López de Haro's writing represents an ideology of "un global tradicionalismo aristocrático" (Magnien 22). With the start of the civil war in 1936, the author's work exhibits a decidedly aristocratic position, revealing his "desprecio por el pueblo" (Rodríguez Puértolas 173). The author's elitism and aristocratism are already evident in *Eva Libertaria*. With his aristocratic background, López de Haro wrote *Eva Libertaria* with "todo el esnobismo de un 'clubman' acostumbrado al lujo de la alta sociedad" (Magnien 25). This author of erotic novels used his familiarity with high society and cosmopolitan settings to dazzle and entice his readers (25). However, this elitist perspective also entails derogatory portrayals of laborers and the proletariat.

Throughout the novel, López de Haro depicts anarchists and communists as unruly, violent, and savage people. On one occasion, Luisa attends "un mitín libertario" in order to hear Merino speak (López de Haro, *Eva* 16). Tula and Fanny also want to go

to the meeting, but they are afraid, insisting that those meetings "no acaban nunca bien," and they do not want to subject themselves to being "arrolladas y pisoteadas" (16). Overcome by curiosity, Luisa determines to attend, because "era cosa de conocerles a los comunistas y de verles las caras" (16). The three bourgeois women go to the meeting dressed in simple clothing, without make up, "para no despertar recelos," and they enter through the stage door to remain hidden from the audience in the wings (17). The narrator describes the speeches as coarse, hackneyed, and nonsensical, with "los calificativos de ladrones, chupasangres, explotadores, verdugos, aplicados a los burgueses empedraban párrafos furibundos sin sentido apreciable" (19). These unreasonable communists curse "los capitalistas antropófagos" and disparage "las señoritas perfumadas que no olían a mujer" (19). In essence, the meeting consists of the rantings and ravings of one "energúmeno" after another, invoking "el hierro justiciero y el fuego purificador," as "la muchedumbre enardecida iría a lanzarse a la matanza de burgueses" (19). When the delegate abruptly interrupts Merino's speech and ends the meeting, the audience violently erupts, destroying chairs and railings. The guards appear and the enraged and panicked crowd try to leave all at once. Shots are fired in the streets, and people are left trampled. Luisa is left hiding under the stage from these belligerent, blood-thirsty communists and the guards who might mistake her for one of them.

The story of Merino's childhood is so exaggerated in its misery and its depictions of laborers are so caricaturesque that López de Haro inadvertently parodies his own aristocratic views. Merino grew up in a neighborhood of dirt and cave houses where everyone is coarse, hateful, and greedy, marred by grotesque physical impairments—yellowed and missing teeth, bow-legged, or otherwise disfigured. In fact, Alberto's uncle

and the bookstore owner warn him that "la gente de los pueblos es solapada y maulera" (237). The most odious characters are Merino's brothers who are envious brutes only suited for physical labor. When Merino's father dies, his two brothers and his sister-in-law swindle him out of his inheritance. After they take the inheritance, Merino's brothers and sister-in-law have a feast during which "soltaron una carcajada primitiva" (243). Later, the sister-in-law provokes a fight between these two violent brothers, and one stabs and kills the other. The animalistic behavior and appearance of these townsfolk are intended to support the concepts of eugenics that the narrator and various characters contend, expounding the belief that impoverished people are inferior, uncivilized, and dangerous. In the same way, the narrator describes the students attending Jacqueline's language school as "de condición modesta y no todos con hábitos de aseo" (256). The wallpaper is riddled with obscene drawings and writing, and "lo más desagradable de todo: olor a gente" (256). The classism of these descriptions is reinforced by the contrast between the common areas and Jacqueline's office, which is luxurious and pristine.

CRITICISM OF COMMUNISM, ANARCHISM, AND DEMOCRACY

In favor of maintaining the status quo, López de Haro held reactionary views toward the social reforms proposed by socialism, and he was skeptical of democracy, as he did not believe in the absence of hereditary class distinctions or that power should be vested in the common people. Naturally, López de Haro was highly critical of communism and anarchism, as well. The author's conservative, monarchist views are readily apparent throughout *Eva Libertaria*. For example, the character Brander, a fictional painter, believes that artists would have to flee from a communist society, because "la desigualdad en el talento es para ellos mucho más odiosa que la desigualdad

en la fortuna" (78). He claims that "fusilan a los intelectuales con más saña que a los ricos" (78). The painter makes a case for elitism and hierarchy by alleging that talent is inherently aristocratic in nature—not democratic, and especially not communist. These elitist principles apply to all manner of prestige, Brander says, because there will always be superior people, meaning that "en cuanto derribamos un amo erigimos otro. Prim, Serrano, Cánovas, Maura, Primo de Rivera, amos, ídolos, de boga efímera, pero excluyente" (92). Polito later makes a similar argument critical of democracy and communism, indicating that humanity is naturally "monócrata" (92). In his view, "el dominio estará siempre en pocas manos" because, regardless of the form, humanity "quiere ser gobernada por uno, llámese César o Stalin" (92). Underlying the condemnation of these more progressive forms of government is not only the fear that the bourgeoise and aristocracy will lose their power, but also apprehension regarding political reforms that grant more rights to women and other underprivileged groups. These changes then affect gender roles and therefore threaten to dismantle ideas of sexual difference. Specifically, the communist parties' "call for equal pay for equal work, social reforms, and the full participation of women in all realms of life challenged most directly the prevailing gender codes of European societies—a challenge that became increasingly important in the 1930s, when the demand that women return to the domestic sphere found a newly shrill and powerful voice in the fascist parties" (Weitz 350). With the instability of Spanish government in this era, along with the devastation of the First World War, sudden social changes appeared to introduce even more uncertainty and chaos.

MATERNAL FEMINISM

In all of Lopez de Haro's work, Carmen Muñoz Olivares observes a feminist stance that was ahead of its time as the author appeared to criticize a patriarchal, *machista* society that devalues and oppresses women (*Rafael* 87-89; 93). Yet, Muñoz Olivares also acknowledges the limitations of this statement, as the author's advocacy for women's liberation is based on "unas pautas absolutamente tradicionales: la mujer exclusivamente como madre. Es esta la última, básica y primordial función femenina y en ella concentra todo su esfuerzo" (88). In this sense, Lopez de Haro's views align with those of Marañón and other influential men who defined and valued women primarily in reproductive terms but who were considered feminists, nonetheless, for their advocacy of greater support for women as mothers. Like Marañón, López de Haro promoted educating women to better prepare them for marriage and maternity (88). *Eva Libertaria* is not a feminist novel, but it does reflect on the feminist movement in order to warn his audience of an uncertain future (205). The purpose of this novel is to call attention to "un hecho que se produce en ese momento y que pone en grave peligro a la familia tradicional" (205).

According to López de Haro in his interview with Francisco Madrid, when writing "lo importante es que el lector o la lectora se halle comprendida por el escritor, que en todo el libro o en una página las lectoras encuentren que el personaje obra como ellas lo harían ante el caso expuesto por el novelista…" (Madrid 30). The author's repetition of the feminine "lectora" indicates that his audience consisted mostly of women. As an example, López de Haro explains that he could find inspiration in observing a childless French woman kiss a child in a train station, which would awaken "el calor maternal que llevan en si todas las mujeres normales" (30). Thus, through his

work, López de Haro appeals to the nurturing role of women as mothers and caregivers, which he assumes to be normative. Anything outside of this motherly role would then be considered abnormal and unnatural.

PSEUDOSCIENCE AND ECONOMICS: EUGENICS AND FEMININE VIRTUE

Throughout the novel, López de Haro integrates dialogue regarding various pseudoscientific theories that include biological determinism and eugenics. These theories are presented in terms of identifying superior and inferior peoples as well as perceived threats to the Spanish race. For instance, in a conversation with Jacqueline, Luisa declares, "yo le prohibiría el matrimonio a mucha gente. En cambio para los más aptos lo declararía obligatorio" (López de Haro, *Eva* 330-31). The protagonist expressly supports "Eugenesia. El hombre ha aprendido a mejorar, seleccionar y depurar todas las razas menos la suya" (331). By this logic, there are definitively inferior races and classes of people who should not reproduce, wherein supposedly superior groups must increase their birth rates. Jacqueline then incorporates her friend's support of eugenics into an argument for maternal feminism, claiming that, because natural law dictates that the perpetuation of the species depends on women, "cuando a la mujer recupere sus derechos, el de ser madre conscientemente, entre otros, los principios científicos serán aplicados" (331). In this way, the author ties in his advocacy of maternal feminism with his elitism.

Similarly, when Luisa assumes that she will marry Heriberto, Mimo cautions that "el amor está más en crisis que el capitalismo" (134). Specifically, Mimo claims that "en la clase media las estadísticas acusan una baja en los matrimonios considerable; en la natalidad es algo elocuente lo que se observa: no tienen hijo más que los pobres. Y esto

en todo el mundo" (135). Mimo then references "un libro importante," which alleges that "la Humanidad civilizada, prolifera en sus capas inferiores en tanto las selectas acentúan su esterilidad" (135). The repeated allusions to eugenics and the presumed cultural and biological superiority of the upper classes are further evidence of López de Haro's elitism. Yet, Mimo herself has decided not to have children, explaining that she and her husband "viviremos como antes, con las comodidades y el lujo de antes; pero no les daremos a los comunistas el gustazo de ver a nuestros hijos en la miseria. Que tengan hijos ellos, ya que están tan seguros de un porvenir dichoso" (133). Therefore, because she and her spouse prioritize their wealth, Mimo chooses not to fulfill her biological imperative of bearing and raising children.

In contrast, Luisa, as the ideal Spanish woman, declares, "Yo todavía abrigo la esperanza de lanzar al mundo una docena de muchachos robustos" (133). She views motherhood as a goal, as a job in its own right: "Siento esa vocación" (133). To Luisa, reproducing and raising children is the natural duty of every woman, and to defy this responsibility is unnatural and even irresponsible: "os veo a vosotras, las desertoras, y no os comprendo. Ya no pensáis en ser madres y lógicamente dejáis de pensar en ser mujeres. Yo todavía pienso en ser mujer" (133). To this end, being attractive and pleasing to men is important to Luisa, who concludes, "Entre tanto sigo procurando gustar a los hombres" (134-35). Through the words of his protagonist, who represents the perfect woman, López de Haro equates womanhood with both maternity and the sexual appeal they offer men.

Heriberto's parents serve as another example of dwindling upper-class families who unknowingly precipitate their own decline by jealously guarding their wealth and

hindering the development and proliferation of their offspring. Envisioning her future as Heriberto's wife, Luisa feels that she could "ayudarle a triunfar, ser su mecanógrafa, su secretaria, su madrecita y su mujer; formarle, templarle, defenderle" (165). Thus, Luisa desires to serve Heriberto in the traditional, feminine role of woman as a nurturing figure who supports a man and his career by managing the home and tending to his needs as a modern version of the *ángel del hogar*. Therefore, when Leoncio and Fuensanta regard Luisa and "su natural aspiración a un hogar. . . como se recibe a quien se sospecha que puede ser un ladrón" they also deny their son the opportunity to mature and have a family of his own (157). From this second failed attempt at marriage, Luisa discovers that:

> La soltera pobre, en la clase media, ya puede ser la Venus de Milo. Soltera se quedará. A la Venus le hacen falta unos robustos brazos para ganarse el pan de cada día. Muy bien. Entre tanto en las clases inferiores casarse y tener hijos, bajo la protección de los avances marxistas, va siendo un buen negocio. En este punto las clases superiores proceden del modo más idiota: son disgenésicas. Y pierden el tiempo pensando en derecha o en izquierda; defienden el dinero y no se cuidan de crear hombres. Adelante. Merino y los suyos se frotan las manos de gusto. (192)

According to this argument for eugenics, the stunted growth of middle and upper-class families will result in a social and biological crisis, as the prolific families of Marxists and the proletariat continue to reproduce and supposedly dilute the gene pool. Consequently, Luisa understands why Merino views the bourgeoise or the aristocracy as "destinada a sucumbir fatalmente una casta que, para perpetuarse, en lugar de sangre sana siembra dinero podrido" (157). Similarly, Pencho ends up ruining his life by prioritizing

his wealth and social status over starting in a family with Luisa, the superior Spanish woman. A central component of this crisis is rooted in gender dynamics, because ultimately aristocratic and bourgeois families are not raising men who are strong enough to fulfill the traditional role of patriarch. In their absence, communists, the proletariat, and feminist women are taking their place in society.

The novel is laden with anecdotes that support pseudoscientific theories regarding social class, race, gender, and maternity. For example, chapter four tells the story of Marta, who is raped by "el Ceja," resulting in a case of "herencia por influencia, mesalianza inicial, impregnación de la madre, telegonía" (146). All of these terms encompass the idea that a woman is essentially a vessel that is genetically altered by her first sexual partner. Marta gives birth to the child of her rapist, and the infant dies a few months later. When Marta's true love returns from war, she informs him of what she endured in his absence, but he views her just as virginal as before, and he believes that the traumatic incident is resolved: "¿Expulsaste el veneno? Pues tan pura como antes" (144). However, after Marta and her husband conceive a child of their own, they discover that their child has inherited the same physical characteristics and savage nature as "el Ceja," who is long deceased. In her narrative, Clemencia elaborates on the theory of *telegonía*, referencing studies, which indicate that:

> Los criadores de caballos de sangre y de perros de razas finas desechan toda hembra cuya primera alianza con individuo de peor progenie la dejó contaminada para toda su vida. En la especie humana se recuerda viudas que, vueltas a casar, tuvieron hijos que se parecían a su primer marido.

> Acaso el primogénito, al vivir tanto tiempo en su madre deja en ella mucho de su ser. (146-47)

The didactic message of this allegory is meant to reinforce the importance of a woman's virginity and chastity, as her honor and physical purity are defined by the quality or class of man who deflowers her. Therefore, in this analogy, the danger lies in the genetic corruption of the womb by criminals, communists, and working-class men—the violation of a woman's body and honor—whether that be non-consensual, like in Marta's case, or consensual, like Luisa, who is deceived by Merino, a violent revolutionary masquerading as a member of the bourgeoise. The protagonist herself believes that "si la ciencia lo demostrara de un modo evidente, la moral humana volvería a sus rigores" (147). Clemencia is certain that science will inevitably prove the value of a woman's virginity, posing the question, "¿Por qué desde tiempos tan remotos y en razas tan distintas se ha atribuido capital importancia a la doncellez?" (147). In her view, the preference and estimation of female chastity constitutes "un inconsciente deseo de selección" because "al primero, sea quien fuere, no lo olvida nunca ninguna mujer" (147). Why this would not also be the case for men, Clemencia fails to explain. Thus, through Clemencia's anecdote about Marta, the author suggests that safeguarding women's virginity is crucial not only to preserve the morality of a society, but also to preserve its genetic constitution. This narrative essentially consists of pseudoscience backing the sexual double standard.

In the same vein, Luisa overhears three authors conversing at a bookstore about their theories regarding women and honor, which, conventionally is synonymous with female chastity. One argues that because women had to depend on men, the loss of their honor once had grave consequences, but now "millares de mujeres trabajan en todas las

profesiones, ganan el sustento, logran el bienestar que antaño solo les ofrecía el matrimonio. Sencillamente no necesitan casarse, que era para lo que les servía el honor" (211). On a professional level, "a nadie le preocupa la vida privada de su abogada o su dentista," as has been the case for working men (211). The authors consider the loss of moral standards from a financial perspective: "El honor va dejando de representar una ventaja económica, y ya se sabe: lo que no vale dinero acaba por no valer nada" (211). Therefore, because women are more independent and no longer have to marry a man to survive, female honor has become a depreciating asset, a currency facing deflation as the emancipated Modern Woman has no practical use for it. As López de Haro indicates in his play, "En qué consiste el honor," the loss of female honor is detrimental to the very foundations of society (López de Haro, "En que" 36). A character in this play claims, "Todos los indicios atribuyen la invención del honor a la mujer. Cuando la mujer recabó su derecho a ser honrada, creó la familia y puso el cimiento a la civilización" (36).

The fictional authors within *Eva Libertaria* also reflect on the repercussions of recent social changes and the loss of feminine honor, asserting: "a nuevas normas, nuevo honor" (López de Haro, *Eva* 210). Yet, these three men do not conceive these changing standards of feminine honor as aligning with what has defined masculine honor for centuries: the value of their character, actions, status, strength, and quality of work. They still define a woman's honor as being tied to her relationship, or lack of a sexual relationship, with men. This is because "honor is a sexist and socially constructed method of sexual control" (Kaiura 20). One of these fictional authors attributes these changes of the honor code to "la decadencia del sexo masculino" (López de Haro, *Eva* 211). He explains, "yo no he creído nunca en la inferioridad mental de la mujer, entre otras razones

porque de ella salen los hombres de talento," and now that women are finally allowed to study and use their talents, "en unos veinte años ya está casi a nuestro nivel; en cincuenta más se pondrá muy por encima," (211). Furthermore, because "la supremacía del varón era combativa: caza, guerra," the development of modern weapons and technology will enable women to rule over men in a matriarchal society (211). Once again, the novel warns of the impending dominion of women.

MODERN WOMAN ACCORDING TO LÓPEZ DE HARO

In his writing, López de Haro demonstrates "diferentes y contrapuestas actitudes femeninas que darán lugar a una amplia gama de posibilidades," which run the gamut from nurturing mothers to prostitutes (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 84). Throughout *Eva Libertaria,* there are a multitude of female characters, many of whom are caricatures representative of the follies or vices of modern women. The criticism that the author levels against the Modern Woman is multifold. For example, the narrator and Clemencia exhibit clear disdain for the appearance and lifestyle of modern women, who "sorbían cocktails, fumaban, y lucían las piernas hasta la rodilla. Casi todas traían el pelo teñido de rubio platino que no trataba de parecer natural" (López de Haro, *Eva* 167).

Throughout the novel, López de Haro alludes to the repulsiveness of the extremely thin, angular body type idealized by young Spanish women as a result of French culture, Hollywood actresses in films, and other depictions of women in the media. The more linear and androgynous build of women, combined with the perceived feminization of men is described as ridiculous and unnatural:

> Actualmente existe una clase de mujeres, sin personalidad, que se obstinan en ser tipos de serie: porque las francesas perdieron carnes durante la

> guerra y porque la falta de relieve en la pantalla exige a las estrellas de cine una delgadez de héticas, estas pobres monas imitadores se extenúan y depauperan voluntariamente. Es una estupidez. Además se visten para gustarse unas a otras y como instintivamente las preferencias de su gusto van al varón, acaban por acercarse a la indumentaria masculina. Lo mismo ellos, los pollos de este medio aberrante, se afeminan. (134)

According to Merino, films exalt "la estulticia de unas chicas esqueléticas a quienes enamoran galanes afeminados" (222). In what amounts to an early commentary on unrealistic and unhealthy body types idealized in the media, Luisa also contends that "la pantalla exige una delgadez enfermiza" (330). Luisa's friend Mimo, "la enjuta, la traviesa, la dicaz, el diablillo aquel con faldas, con pocas faldas, casi sin faldas" embodies these evidently repugnant attributes of the thin, androgynous Modern Woman (34-35). The narrator compares Mimo to "un chico de doce años" because her slight frame and "el exiguo contorno de sus caderas continuaba siendo la admiración de sus amigas" (132). In a discussion with this very friend, Luisa speaks disparagingly of gaunt female bodies, which lack womanly curves, and she asserts that "la hora de las andróginas pasó. Otra es la mujer del porvenir" (134).

Evidently, the Modern Woman's more active lifestyle also threatens to make women more masculine, both mentally and physically. Representing more traditional views, Clemencia disapproves of exercise, because "tanto vigor físico" turns women into "viragos" (168). A caricature of the sportswoman is presented within the first few pages of the novel, when the protagonist is approached by a "vigorosa nadadora," a German woman with bowed shoulders, robust legs, and the face of "un muchacho poco

respetuoso" (8-9). Due to "el deporte exagerado," this woman has a sinewy, hardened, and compact body (9). The narrator derides the appearance and coarseness of this "nadadora deportista," who represents "este tipo moderno de mujer estriada por el relieve de los ligamentos musculares" (9;11).

LUISA'S SUPERIORITY

Through the narrator's many descriptions of Luisa and the opinions expressed by other characters in the novel, López de Haro establishes his protagonist as the ideal Spanish woman. Luisa represents the apex of Spanish womanhood, an "arquetipo humano," which the author bolsters with elitist, pseudoscientific terms (345). For example, the protagonist is extolled as "un precioso ejemplar de nuestra raza castellana," and even Merino acknowledges Luisa's natural superiority, indicating that "por la ley de la especie, eres una elegida," and a "tesoro biológico" (149; 13).

In contrast to the many derogatory comments regarding the body type of the stereotypical Modern Woman, the narrator and the novel's characters repeatedly emphasize the voluptuous, natural beauty of the protagonist. In an obvious contrast with the muscular, androgynous physique of the *deportista,* the narrator meticulously describes the protagonist's body, specifying that "las temibles grasas no pasaban en ella de cumplir la estética función de esfumar las prominencias musculares, tan poco femeninas" (10). Therefore, the narrator leaves no doubt that, unlike the popular image of the Modern Woman, Luisa is a real woman with "ningún matiz artificial en su rostro. Toda ella es verdad" (310). There is never a question of Luisa's womanliness, and frequently her femininity is emphasized through descriptions like "mucha mujer" and "toda una mujer" (170; 157). And of course, her favorite color is rose.

In his descriptions of women, López de Haro relies upon images and models already familiar to audiences at the time (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 95-97). The author meticulously describes women's statuesque bodies suggestively draped in exquisite clothing (101). The erotic descriptions of the female form, along with the alluring illustration of Luisa on the cover of the 1933 edition also suggest that López de Haro exploited the eroticized image of the Modern Woman in order to increase sells of his novel. In a letter to critic Julio Cejador, the author himself admitted to making "concesiones al bolsillo" in writing his "novelas de la carne" because "se escriben para ganar dinero" (Cejador 213).

The protagonist is frequently compared to Grecian goddesses and other classic portrayals of conventional, womanly beauty, which is immediately apparent from the novel's title and the titles of certain subsections of its chapters, which include: "El nacimiento de Venus," "Eva" and "Afrodita." The narrator equates Luisa's immaculate skin and smooth curves to those of Eve, as portrayed in the paintings of Albrecht Dürer and Tiziano Vecelli and to "The Sleeping Venus" by Giorgione. The protagonist's breasts are "altas y divergentes las henchidas pomas, signo de selección," and her long legs are like those of a statue (López de Haro, *Eva* 10). The narrator describes Luisa as having "ojos de diosa," "de ídolo," (83;6). Men ogle at her "como a una Venus codiciable," and the Italian novelist describes Luisa as "una Venus perfecta, portentosa" (119; 340). The narrator compares Luisa to Aphrodite in Pencho's presence and thoughts: "Afrodita a contraluz se adentraría en la sensibilidad del hombre para ejercer su imperio desde lo subconsciente" (345). This allusion also portends the power of suggestibility that women have over men through their sensuality. Luisa epitomizes feminine beauty. For instance,

Clemencia admires Luisa in her corset, and "contempló aquel hermoso cuerpo merecedor de todas las loas del Cantar de los Cantares" (149). On another occasion, Nelia, tells Luisa, "Es Ud. una criatura divina…es Ud. perfecta" (152).

The protagonist's exceptionalism and superiority are further illustrated by public perceptions of Luisa and the reactions that she elicits when she is among crowds of people. For example, when Luisa joins Alice in the dancehall, "fue suspendiendo la conversación en todas las mesas al pasar; algunas parejas, para verla mejor, se apartaban," and "la impresión de tanta mirada convergente era de campo magnético" (81). On another occasion, Luisa is dining at a fine hotel, and as the other guests stare at her, Clemencia remarks, "has causado efecto en el comedor. En este momento todos hablan de ti" (119). In sum, Luisa, with her "extraordinario parecido," is an exquisite specimen of classic beauty—"una mujer absolutamente hermosa" (11). As "dueña de tal riqueza humana," the protagonist "comprendía su enorme responsabilidad" (11). In an incredible display of vanity, Luisa longs to be worthy of "la otra Luisa del espejo," the gorgeous woman she sees in her reflection (11-12). This protagonist's *desdoblamiento* allows her to admire herself through another's eyes, and as she talks to herself, "Luisa y la Luisa que copiaba el espejo se miraron" (33).

Mimo feels that if she were in Luisa's position and could not find a suitable husband, "me sentiría víctima de una gran injusticia social" (135). In effect, this injustice becomes an overriding theme of the novel. Similarly, Clemencia, while admiring the protagonist, is baffled by the fact that, Luisa, the paradigm of Spanish womanhood, is still unmarried: "no se explica que esté soltera una mujer como tú, completa, hermosa de cuerpo y de alma" (149). Hence, the author intends to prove that if a woman as perfect as

Luisa is not given the opportunity to fulfill the traditional role of wife and mother, then there is an aberration in the gender relations of modern society. Therefore, the text implies that the real danger of this injustice is that it forces supposedly superior women to become self-reliant, emancipated feminists who do not marry or start a family, while working-class women continue to reproduce.

"EL MAL HOMBRE:" THE URBAN UNDERWORLD AND PROSTITUTION

A danger that women in the novel face as a result of associating with the wrong type of man is prostitution. For example, Montserrat explains that, because of their beauty, she lost two of her three daughters to "el mal hombre" (279). The eldest daughter recovered and now has her own luxury clothing store, the second daughter married "un buen hombre que ganaba su buen jornal y no tenía vicios," but the fate of the third daughter, "la perdida," remains unknown to Montserrat (279-80). The scene in which Fulgencio takes Polito to this third daughter is disturbing and grotesque. She is now a prostitute known as "la señorita" in a cabaret in a tunnel underneath the streets of Barcelona—a literal underworld. Polito describes the prostitutes as "ruinas de mujer, muertas vivas" (294). When Polito asks for "la señorita" he is taken to "un calabozo," a tiny room with a mattress where he finds her on the brink of death (294). Polito likens "la señorita" to a cadaver that "la habían desenterrado y maquillado groseramente para traérmela allí. La sífilis se la estaba comiendo" (294). When he gives her money, Polito explains that he is not there for sex, but she immediately insists that "si vas a pegarme, empieza ya," exposing "su pecho escurrido, sus espaldas, en que se marcaban las vértebras" (295). This reaction indicates that "la señorita" is frequently beaten, and it is merely one of the many abuses and indignities that she is accustomed to enduring.

However, she is resigned to her fate and refuses to leave, because "mi madre sabe que soy una perdida; pero cree que vivo divirtiéndome: para ella mi perdición es bailar, beber, pecar…No entiende de esto. Si me viera se la haría pedazos el corazón. Esto va a durar poco. Casi todos los días echo sangre por la boca" (295). Knowing that she will die soon, "la señorita" would rather her mother believe that she is an irresponsible *frívola* than that she learn the cruel reality of her situation. "La señorita" is just another nameless woman who trusted the wrong man and was lost to the city streets.

FREEDOM OF MOBILITY AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT AS HARMLESS FLATTERY

In López de Haro's novel, women experience great freedom of movement without fear of sexual harassment or assault. The protagonist and her female friends frequently navigate the city alone, without a male chaperone, even late at night. In fact, Luisa occasionally roams the streets without direction simply to enjoy the liberating sensation of exploring and observing. For example, there is a sense of joy and autonomy when Luisa "se lanzó a la calle. ¿A qué? A nada; a andar por Madrid, a sentirse en Madrid . . . Luisa deambulaba sin rumbo" (184). Written from a male perspective, Luisa experiences the streets as men do, unencumbered and without fear of being followed, harassed, or assaulted by predatory men. Instead, Luisa finds the city to be full of "gente simpática, porque en Madrid, el que es antipático se amustia y muere" (113). Therefore, the protagonist is not limited by any "geographies of danger" as there are no perceived threats (Tonkiss 112).

During one of her solitary strolls through the city, the protagonist runs into Nelia, the derisible manhater, who the narrator compares to the devil: "como el diablo en los

cuentos, Nelia apareció sin que saberse pudiera por dónde vino" (López de Haro, *Eva* 212). The two women take a seat at a busy café, and the tables are so close together that they are almost touching. When a pair of wealthy men sit next to them, Nelia transitions from playing "el papel de frívola" to being the "mujer furiosa que reanuda una gresca" (214). Outraged, she claims that "nos están desnudando con la imaginación, nos están ofendiendo con la intención" (214). Luisa feels that this behavior is normal and harmless, but Nelia insists that "me insultan, me enfurecen" (214). The protagonist dismisses any sign of their objectification as flattery: "¡Mujer! Saber una que gusta siempre es agradable" (215). As further proof of Nelia's unreasonable hatred for all men, she tells Luisa, "yo estoy separada de mi marido porque no le pude soportar" (215). She clarifies that her husband is not abusive, simply that "es como todos: un animal voraz" (215). Because she does not want to please even her own husband, the narrative clearly portrays Nelia as an irrationally angry women who is resentful toward men. The cause of this resentment evidently lies in her desire to be a man. In contrast, Nelia views Luisa, who is "muy contenta de ser mujer" as "algo anacrónico, un tipo de antes de la guerra, un hermoso tipo" (215). Thus, Nelia is a caricature of the Modern Woman who lacks feminine grace and searches for reasons to condemn men.

In a different occasion, the protagonist and Jacqueline are being followed by a man, but this is perceived as a mere nuisance. When the two women are at the beach, they see a man who has followed them for the past three days despite their having gone to a different beach each day. The narrator explains, "Las perseguía. Al notarse observado se chapuzó, desapareciendo, y nadó buceando para reaparecer cerca, entre las dos mujeres, casi tocándolas. Ellas, sirenas fugitivas, se hundieron" (97). The man, "guiñando

maliciosamente, sin malicia, sus ojos de azogue," then inspects their bodies, their skin, as they sunbathe: "En esto y en más se fijaba con empeño el desconocido al pasar una y dos veces. Lo que no podría registrar su osadía" (98). As object of the male gaze, Luisa begins to feel "molesta por la fisgonería del nadador," and remarks to Jacqueline, "Es un descarado" (99). However, Jacqueline, who has no illusions or fear of men, appears to be amused by the man's fixation and is curious as to whether he is more attracted to Luisa or herself. Jacqueline is aware of Luisa's deadly beauty, telling her, "el momento es peligroso. Estás en flor," so, pitying him, Jacqueline resolves to get rid of "el pretendiente" in order to spare him from falling in love with Luisa (99). While eating at the dining hall, the strange man sits near them, and Jacqueline announces loudly that she will be going out alone tonight to Miramar, knowing that he will likely go there looking for her. Jacqueline does, in fact, intend to go to Miramar that night, frivolously remarking to Luisa, "Iré. El champán es una bebida deliciosa. Pero no veo la necesidad de enamorarse de la botella" (106). In essence, Jacqueline takes whatever pleasures she desires from men and then throws them away afterwards. Therefore, although sexual attention or harassment from men can be bothersome, it is really men who are in danger, as women possess the power of seduction.

Furthermore, the perception of male sexual attention among women is problematic, because, as men ogle Luisa, the surrounding women look at her "como una rival" and "como a un enigma terrible" (118; 119). The narrator explains that Luisa, who once had many female friends, "desde que el desarrollo la hizo una mujer y empezó, por hermosa, a escuchar piropos, las invitaciones cesaron" (28). In this context, catcalls or flirtatious remarks are not a form of harassment, but rather a flattering sign of Luisa's

great beauty, which isolates her from female friends, who then view her as competition and no longer wish to spend time with her. Therefore, from the author's perspective, the social life of young women hinges on rivalry among each other for who is the most attractive and who receives the most sexual attention from men.

LUISA'S EVOLUTION FROM *LA BURGUESA* TO EVA LIBERTARIA

Eva Libertaria can be interpreted as "una alegoría de la mujer del momento," one who faces social problems as a result of the contradiction between new ideas regarding gender equality and the traditional, domestic role of women as wives and mothers (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 198). This conflict is illustrated through Luisa, who, despite being physically, mentally, and morally superior to other women, is met with deceptions and difficulties (198). Of utmost concern to López de Haro was the bourgeois woman, whom he perceived as the weakest and therefore most defenseless against the corrupting influence of an industrialized society of excess, luxuries, falsehoods, and greed (84). The influence of feminism and communism play a significant role in the protagonist's steady transformation from *la burguesa* to Eva Libertaria. Luisa's evolution is defined in terms of her relationship with three men: Count Pencho, Alberto Merino, and Heriberto (199). Through her journey, Luisa feels conflicted by the contradictions between the traditional, conservative beliefs of her bourgeois past—represented by characters like her father, Clemencia, and Polito—and the more liberal ideas introduced to her by feminists like Alice and Jacqueline and the communist Merino.

Luisa's status as a working woman is an essential part of her identity, as indicated by the fact that the narrator refers to her as "la empleada de la Metro-Film" in the first paragraph of the text, which is followed by repeated allusions to her work (López de

Haro, *Eva* 7). The role of careerwoman was clearly still a novel concept, especially within the Spanish bourgeoise and aristocracy. The first thoughts that the omniscient narrator shares with the reader are those of the protagonist, shortly after waking, when she laments, "A pesar de lo que he soñado, he de ganarme la vida y estoy sola en el mundo" (7). To further reinforce the perception of the misery of the working woman, the narrator describes Luisa as "un preso en trance de evadirse" (7). In this way, López de Haro represents his protagonist as a single woman who feels resentful and disillusioned because, as a *desclasada*, "extrañada de su medio aristocrático por el delito de no ser rica," she has no recourse other than to enter the workforce (327). There was a sense of shame and dishonor associated with female employment, because "la idea difundida de que el trabajo de la mujer era degradante (creencia que estaba muy arraigada entre la clase media) suponía una formidable barrera psicológica" (Scanlon 9).

Being a career woman clearly was not Luisa's intended path, as indicated by her father before he died: "Trabajarás en último término. Te pueden salvar tu belleza, tu talento, tu linaje" (López de Haro, *Eva* 33). Luisa understands that she should "hacer lo contrario de lo que hizo mi madre"—that is, she should marry above her station (33). He reduces her to the biological role of wife and mother, insisting, "Debes probar, ante todo, a seguir tu natural destino de mujer" (33). Thus, women—or at least bourgeois and aristocratic women—were expected to depend on their male relatives and their beauty until securing a wealthy husband. However, when Luisa is spurned by the wealthy count Pencho, "se derrumba el plan de vida al que ella aspiraba, un matrimonio bien que le garantizaba una vida acomodada y libre, y una identidad social entre los privilegiados" (Magnien 25).

When she accepts a position working at the Metro-Film, Luisa is aware that her status as a working woman definitively ostracizes her from her friends in high-society and that "al saberla una empleada, le negarían hasta el saludo" (López de Haro, *Eva* 54). Consequently, Luisa only works because it is necessary for her survival—a shameful task that she must endure because she has not found a husband to support her. Therefore, it would seemingly be impossible for a (normal) woman to be content being single and dedicating herself to her career. Until the last chapter of the novel, Luisa is explicit in her aspiration to marry, leave the workplace, and raise children. For example, when Mimo asks Luisa if she hopes to get married, Luisa responds, "¿Debo esperar otra cosa?" (134). Young and aware of her extraordinary beauty, the protagonist assumes that the most obvious and natural path for her is matrimony: "Soy, en efecto, hermosa. ¿Por qué no he de esperar casarme?" (134).

Despite being obligated to work, Luisa adapts to her situation with an incredible sense of modernity, adopting a new, liberated attitude (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 198). Starting as an entry-level employee, the protagonist quickly becomes an indispensable part of the company, and after three years, she is promoted to management due to her hard work, intuition, and intelligence (199). Advancing rapidly, Luisa is undoubtedly a very successful careerwoman by the end of the novel. Her business acuity and financial independence grant her more confidence and options than most women. However, López de Haro presents this independence as dangerous to men and potentially catastrophic to the very foundations of Spanish society.

With her increased salary and independence, Luisa rents a flat in a new, modern building. Again, the narrator emphasizes Luisa's persistent femininity, describing the

color of the walls as “un tono verde de ova” and “la alcoba, como un nido” (López de Haro, *Eva* 223-24). The symbolism of this imagery suggests that Luisa is building a nest, making a home, but she cannot find a suitable man who would allow her to fulfill her need to start a family. The protagonist seems to confirm this idea when she declares, “el hogar es mi aspiración, el recinto sagrado, el arca de la felicidad, la fuente de toda energía humana” (224). Because she was not able to acquire a home by marrying the count or Heriberto, Luisa had to enter the workforce and attain that home on her own. Ever the contrarian, Merino argues that the household “es el primer paso para romper la fraternidad entre los hombres” because “el hogar clasifica al prójimo en pariente y extraño” (224-25). Luisa counters that her father’s book demonstrates that “el hombre salió de la barbarie gracias a la familia” (225). Their conflicting views are again indicative of how communism supposedly undermines the very foundations of civilization: the family unit and the home.

As Luisa spends more time with Jacqueline, Alice, and Merino, she feels that “los tres han atacado violentamente mis convicciones,” and she finds it difficult to withstand “el bombardeo de ideas perforadoras y explosivas” (106). The protagonist views her summer vacation with Polito and his aunt Clemencia as an opportunity to distance herself from the dangerous, liberal influences of her peers in Barcelona. Luisa resolves, “voy a buscar compañía y ejemplo de personas normales, entre las que deseo rescatar mi patrimonio moral en trance de ruina” (106). For example, contrary to popular views of marriage as an essential step in a woman’s life, Jacqueline, the feminist, believes that men are often a burden for women and “lo peor es casarse para no seguir soltera” (132). Jacqueline sees no need for women to rely on men to support them. The feminist ideas

presented in the novel serve as "los cantos de sirena" that challenge the protagonist's previous conceptions as men continue to disappoint her again and again (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 201). After her three failed romances, Luisa eventually adopts her friend's views on love and marriage. By the end of the novel, the protagonist is sexually liberated, like Jacqueline, losing her qualms regarding the impropriety of having lovers and ephemeral romances. Luisa appears to follow Jacqueline's suggestions regarding men and those of her Italian lover, who tells her "Siga mi consejo: enamórese muchas veces con locura y sin constancia" (López de Haro, *Eva* 340).

At the beginning of the last subsection of the novel, the narrator does not refer to the protagonist by her name, but by her job title—"la gerente de la Metro-Film—which has evidently become the most essential aspect of her identity. Dictating letters and telegrams and giving orders, Luisa prepares for another trip. No longer depending on Pencho or any other man to drive her around in a luxury vehicle, the protagonist leaves in her own roadster, which the narrator describes as "espejeante, magnífico" (363). The narrator envisions Luisa and Jacqueline in this automobile as a "soberbia estampa moderna: dos mujeres hermosas, dos prodigios de la raza, en un prodigio de la civilización" (364). The expense and speed of the roadster symbolizes power, prestige, and freedom as "el robusto mecanismo zumbaba bajo su pie ligero. ¡A noventa!" (364). Thus, for Luisa, her job no longer carries the weight of a stigmatizing burden but has become the means for her to exercise power and enjoy a life of luxury and independence. In the end, Luisa emerges from her difficulties "una nueva mujer, emancipada económica y sentimentalmente, autosuficiente, conocedora de sus cualidades, de sus posibilidades y de sus capacidades" (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 200).

THE DANGERS OF THE EMANCIPATED MODERN WOMAN

Often, the narrator, the protagonist, and other characters in the novel use bellicose language when referring to love and marriage. For example, when Pencho tells Luisa that he loves her, she feels that she has secured herself a comfortable life as his wife. Contemplating her future in a successful marriage, the narrator declares that "era necesario vencer, ser feliz, ser rica, ser condesa, aplastar con su triunfo a las envidiosas" (López de Haro, *Eva* 50). In this moment, Luisa is convinced that "la batalla se había ganado" (50). However, she loses this battle of love when the count leaves her in a cruel, coarse manner because of her inferior social standing (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 199). The analogy of love and war further reinforces the concept of marriage as a financial arrangement and the goal for which all women fight and compete among each other.

At times, the narrator refers to Luisa's seductive powers in bellicose terms, as well. Throughout the novel, the narrator emphasizes Luisa's beauty regimen and "aseo minucioso" (López de Haro, *Eva* 346). For example, when Luisa is visiting Mimo and she discovers that Pencho is coming over for dinner she prepares to face the man who had rebuffed her years ago. As she gussies up, the narrator compares Luisa to a warrior getting equipped for battle: "Ni caballero se ciñó la espada, ni jaque ensayó en la yema del dedo la punta de su cuchillo, ni gladiador salió a la arena con tan sañuda intención de herir como Luisa probó ante el espejo el poder de sus armas" (138). Thus, it seems that women are able to counter a man's strength with their dangerous allure, and with clothing, perfume and make-up—analogous to warpaint—serving as weaponry. Dressed to kill, "Luisa se vengaba gentilmente," leaving the count stunned by her beauty and dignity, despite being a mere "empleada" (139).

With her overwhelming sensuality, Luisa has a powerful, even dangerous effect on men, which is what invites her comparison to Eve, as indicated by the title of the novel. For example, when Luisa stands near him, Heriberto fears that he "caería desvanecido de un modo semejante al de esas personas a quienes produce vértigo el perfume de un jazmín en florescencia" (130). Heriberto's parents, Leoncio and Fuensanta, recognize the power that Luisa has over their son and "temblaron de miedo. Se trataba de toda una mujer" (157). Leoncio and Fuensanta look at Luisa "angustiados, como si Heriberto cruzase andando por un alambre sobre un abismo" (161). The parents fear that Luisa's immense womanliness will overwhelm Heriberto, distract him from his career, and worsen his already fragile health. When Heriberto's health wanes in Luisa's absence, his parents perceive this as evidence of Luisa's pernicious effect on their son. Leoncio concludes that "la culpa la tiene esa mujer. ¡Es mucha mujer!" (171). The mother agrees, and expressing "su juicio de perfecta burguesa," she accuses Luisa of being "una refinadísima coqueta" and "una lagarta" (170).

Because Luisa realizes that she is "la primera mujer que le hace sentir," she experiences "el presentimiento de una gran responsabilidad: la de Eva" (130). In this context, Luisa likens herself to Eve, because she could be his first experience with a woman, but she could also have a pernicious effect on the frail academic through her eroticism, possibly resulting in the fall of man, i.e., Heriberto, and his loss of reason. After weighing her options, Luisa consciously chooses to use "estratagemas" in order to make Heriberto fall in love with her: "Luisa estaba segura de su poder: ilusionaría, enamoraría a Heriberto, fácilmente, empleando la coquetería en mínima dosis, con sonreírle no más" (131-32). The protagonist knows that with Heriberto she is in control,

that she “dominaba la situación; podía hechizar, esclavizar a aquel infeliz, encender en él toda una pasión” (136). Perceiving him as easy prey, Luisa is so confident in her seductive influence that she questions whether she even has the right to “‘pescar el novio’” (132). Luisa pities Heriberto, as she is aware that “el pobre no sabrá defenderse de mí, de mis atractivos, de mi coquetería” (137). Mimo also views the dominance that women have over men as romantic and sexual in nature, because “el derecho a dominar al hombre por el amor es el primer derecho de la mujer” (137). Luisa acknowledges that, in large part, she has chosen Heriberto as a potential husband due to the “aspecto económico” (136). However, Luisa concludes, “tengo derecho a un hogar” (132). Therefore, the protagonist believes that a woman, particularly an exceptional, superior one as herself, is entitled to finding a suitable husband who can provide for her and allow her to fulfill her duty as homemaker and mother.

The protagonist also feels that she must fight to conquer Merino’s heart and his communist beliefs. Luisa is confident that she will triumph and that Merino will ultimately abandon his revolutionary ideas and marry her, because “lucharé tenazmente con mis armas de amor. ¡Sería tan hermoso ganar esta partida!” (267). Again, the author uses bellicose language, portraying beauty, flirtation, and love as feminine weapons. In the portion of the novel entitled “Eva,” the protagonist begins her sexual relationship with Merino. The communist admits that they have fallen into “la trampa del amor” and feels that their relationship is “como Adán y Eva” (281). The author again evokes the image of the biblical Eve, as Luisa tempts Merino’s heart and threatens to dismantle his convictions through her love and sexuality. In this moment, the protagonist is convinced

that Merino is now her "prisionero, esclavo era el amante, que sin sus caricias no podría vivir" (282).

The revolution that Merino and his comrades start on January 8, 1933, corresponds historically with an uprising led by members of the anarcho-syndicalist movement in Barcelona on that day. The heading "La batalla" appears to refer to Luisa's battle for love, however, because once more the focus is on Luisa's relationship with a man, Merino, rather than on political events. In her office, Luisa, dressed in a robe, awaits Merino. She attempts to kiss and seduce him, but he refuses, because he knows that he would lose his will to leave for the uprising. Merino remains firm, telling Luisa, "no torcerá mi ruta la tentación" (313). When he heads for the door, Luisa blocks his way and disrobes, standing before him with "su resolución de vencer" and glares at him with "la avaricia de una araña, el hambre de una loba y la fijeza de una esfinge" (313-14). However, Merino violently tosses her aside and leaves. In so doing, he resists Luisa's seduction, the symbolic temptation of Eve. Luisa's feminine weapons of sensuality and love prove to be ineffective against Merino's revolutionary fervor. Furthermore, the bruises that he leaves on her arm during this battle of love are symbolic of the dangers of communist men.

In addition, the author uses bellicose terminology to refer to women at work. In the same way that Luisa intends to wage war to secure herself a suitable husband, she must "luchar" in the workplace to survive (33). After her rejection from the count, Luisa devotes herself to her job at the Metro-Film in Barcelona, as she has resolved that if she is defeated in her pursuit of marriage, then she will excel in the workplace: "¿Empleada? Bueno: pues vencería como empleada" (56). Feeling that she has failed at the more

socially acceptable and preferred means of succeeding in life through marriage, she will triumph in life the alternative way, as an independent, working woman.

Luisa proves to be an extremely successful businesswoman, becoming "una capitana de industria" and "un gerente insustituible" by reorganizing the company and stimulating its growth. Yet, she still maintains her femininity, always keeping a bouquet of fresh flowers in her office and remaining "amable, encantadora para todos; pero no permitía ni una palabra de más ni fuera del asunto" (221). As an independent and powerful female figure, the careerwoman is a threat in her capacity to emasculate men. In an inversion of traditional gender roles, when Luisa is offered a management position at the Metro-Film, the protagonist, insists that Merino work for her at the Metro-Film. Merino accepts, subserviently responding, "estoy a tus órdenes" (220). Luisa occasionally calls Merino to her office, and, as her employee, "entraba respetuosamente, recibía las órdenes y con un 'desea Ud. algo más' de perfecta subordinación, salía como otro empleado cualquiera" (221). On one occasion, Merino asks Luisa for permission to go on a trip by submissively addressing her, "señorita gerente, tengo que pedirte un favor" (305). In addition, Merino acknowledges Luisa's business acumen and that he could never succeed at her job, as she is superior in "tu golpe de visita, a tus dotes de organizadora, a tu talento" (221). By earning and administering money, working women have more control, not only professionally, but socially, as well. For instance, because Merino is poor and earns less money than Luisa, she is generally the one who initiates and leads their outings. Luisa invites Merino to dinner, she orders their cocktails and food, and she pays. These interactions are also indicative of the modern man's failure to

dominate and provide for women. This holds true for communist men in the novel, as they are portrayed as lowlifes who wish to make women their equals.

In another example of the inversion of gender roles, Jacqueline, as the director of a language school, orders all of her male teachers to line up so that Luisa can inspect them. Jacqueline remarks to Luisa that the Norwegian teacher is "sencillamente hermoso," and she insinuates that at times it is very tempting to have intimate relations with the instructors, but she never does because "echaría por tierra mi autoridad. El lobo, donde duerme, no hace daño" (257). Finally, Jacqueline reveals to Luisa that the real reason that she wants Luisa to examine the men is to determine if any of them resemble Polito so that he can use their passport to flee to France. The symbolism of the female boss as an apex predator who can objectify and dominate her male employees is striking.

EDAD DE LA MUJER

In addition to serving as a figure of modernity, the new woman that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century "was feared as a sign of gender disorder" (Coffin 135). Moreover, the First World War "profoundly destabilized and politicized gender roles" in Europe as women "assumed many jobs previously reserved for men and took on more public and emancipated personas" (Weitz 313). Even though, with demobilization, most women were pushed out of occupations traditionally reserved for men, "the rapid emergence of the 'new woman' of the 1920s—active, slender, athletic, sexual, and amaternal—provoked widespread unease that, in some quarters, took on near-hysterical, apocalyptic hues bound up with fears of national decline" (313-14). *Eva Libertaria* is a clear example of these fears, as the Modern Woman serves as an agent of disorder, provoking the denigration of society throughout the novel. In essence, the plot of *Eva*

Libertaria revolves around "las inquietudes y los nuevos derroteros que la existencia femenina iba adoptando en España" (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 200).

Luisa's father, professor Rodríguez is a researcher whose studies regarding matriarchal societies become renowned in the scientific community. According to the professor, early man was once inferior to women, and "la mujer gobernaba y el hombre era su criado" (López de Haro, *Eva* 103). Jacqueline holds Luisa's father in high esteem, and she explains that his studies demonstrate that "en la vida orgánica…el elemento precursor y permanente es la hembra: la función del macho es accidental y variable" (102). For example, "en la mayor parte de las especies de insectos el macho tiene una misión momentánea, cuya oportunidad pasada, muere" (102-103). Professor Rodríguez's studies prove that "el trabajo, la organización, la perpetuidad de esas admirables sociedades subhumanas están asegurados por las hembras, de cuyo vientre salen obreras asexuales, machos y hembras fecundas. Esta es la ley universal, aunque en las aves y en los mamíferos aparezca desvirtuada" (103). Jacqueline indicates that this natural law is not yet in effect in humans, because this evolutionary phase is still incomplete, and eventually, "cederemos el lugar a otra especie más perfecta, como el antropopiteco nos lo cedió a nosotros. Y la superhumanidad, sucesora nuestra, habrá suprimido al hombre" (103).

Therefore, we are currently living in "la edad del hombre," but "la ciencia remediará el desacuerdo de la especie humana con las leyes naturales" (104). Jacqueline believes that the matriarchy is inevitable, and "como el pasado, el porvenir es nuestro. Todo estribará en la guerra química que suprimirá el soldado, el combatiente, y en la eliminación biológica del hombre" (105). Then, reading from a German journal,

Jacqueline shares a study that argues that, through scientific advances "la existencia del sexo masculino dejará de ser necesario cuando la mujer alcance la capacidad de reproducirse por sí misma. El hombre desaparecerá y la mujer se desenvolverá hasta ser la síntesis de los dos sexos: el superser humano. El hombre es un tipo transitorio. La mujer es eterna" (105). Following this rationale, androgyny is a step towards the synthesis of the two sexes. These fictional arguments are clearly manifestations of the author's fears of women's emancipation and the blurring of gender roles. Male insecurities of being deemed useless and no longer necessary for the survival of the species result in wild conjectures and inductive leaps that equate feminism and gender equality with the subordination of men.

The feminist Jacqueline has her own theories regarding men and women, and the future of power dynamics between the two sexes. Expanding upon Professor Rodríguez's studies, Jacqueline believes that "la ciencia, que también es femenina, como la verdad," has given women the biological advantage, because they are "más ágiles, más finas de inteligencia, más sagaces" (308-09). Jacqueline postulates that "todo lo que asegura el porvenir de la especie está encomendado a la perseverancia, a la abnegación de la mujer," but that it is the woman who "transmite las facultades intelectuales, el talento que tanto enorgullece al varón" (308). Jacqueline believes that women are the superior sex but that they have been held back by men. In her view, "el hombre sabe que es secundario, y prevalido de su misma inferioridad, horro de los deberes maternales, de la carga de la maternidad, mientras la mujer cría y educa a sus hijos, se ha adueñado del poder" (308). According to Jacqueline, men reinforce their position of power by denying women access to education, keeping them illiterate, oppressed by fanaticism, and enslaved by "un honor

ideado para eso precisamente" (308). Consequently, all moral principles, philosophies, and laws created by men are based on "el temor de que la mujer se emancipe" (308). Jacqueline observes that a multitude of women are attending universities, working in offices and factories, and going into politics, because "nuestro destino no era solamente ser madres," and many women do not want to be mothers (309). In her "arenga feminista" Jacqueline appears to validate the author's apprehensions that women are no longer fulfilling their biological imperative (309). In this way, the pronatalist policies and discourses that ensued as a response to the appearance of the "new woman" were intended primarily to control female bodies to ensure social order (Weitz 314).

In Jacqueline's view, "El hombre no es más ni menos que un egoísmo" (López de Haro, *Eva* 308). She describes man as a "mamífero vanidoso y egoísta que ni sabe vivir ni se resigna a morir" because "el ansia de quedar en la memoria de los otros, el deseo de inmortalidad por la fama, es masculino" (331). Women, on the other hand, do not feel the need to seek glory because they are aware that they are "un eslabón de la vida perdurable" (331). Furthermore, Jacqueline feels that the shift in power dynamics is enabled by men, who are evidently becoming weaker. Jacqueline asserts that "el sexo fuerte va dejando de serlo. Apenas quedan ejemplares de aquellos hombres que nos podían dominar" (319). The author appears to back this statement through the weak dispositions and inadequacies of Luisa's male suitors. Because of these weaknesses, Jacqueline believes that "el hombre es un ser inferior al que debemos despreciar" (105). The story of Renaudet presents readers with a caricature of the domineering modern women who are expected to subjugate men in the upcoming "Edad de la Mujer." After surviving combat in the trenches during World War I, Renaudet married Fabiana, a cruel

woman who made him walk on all fours while naked, and she whipped him until he had a nervous attack (300). He hid this abuse from his parents, divorced Fabiana after their death, and left her with his store. Through divine justice, his former wife then married a brutal man who "la tunde a vergajazos" (300). Because Fabiana was his first love, he does not know how to "amar de otra manera" (301). Now, as Jacqueline's subordinate at the language school, it seems that Renaudet continues these "escenas de circo ecuestre" with Jacqueline, because when relating his story to Polito, he suddenly exclaims, "¡Qué mujer! ¡Ninguna sabe flagelar como ella! ¡Oh, Jacqueline!" (301). Another example of the domineering, independent woman is Nelia, the manhater. Nelia is separated from her wealthy husband, "quien, con tal de no soportarla, le pasa una pensión" (119). Although she likes to flirt, Nelia has a reputation as "una mula falsa que muerde, cocea y aborrece al hombre" (119-120).

Professor Rodríguez had told Luisa: "Mis obras son tus hermanos. Yo quisiera que se portasen contigo bien" (113). The professor's statement indicates that he had his daughter in mind when writing his studies, which Polito confirms by telling her, "él escribía pensando en ti" (113). This fraternal relationship appears to foreshadow Luisa's role as a representative of the new matriarchy. In his novels, López de Haro presents the New Woman as a social failure for her inability to find a decent husband and start a family (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 105). In *Eva Libertaria*, what the protagonist desires most is to be a wife and to have a family, but her work evidently makes this aspiration unacceptable or impossible (105). The novel indicates that Luisa's employment, rather than a financial solution, is a part of the problem, as it grants her enough autonomy to reject men and turn down their marriage proposals (105). When Pencho attempts to

intercede on behalf of the count, he is surprised that Luisa is unwilling to accept Pencho's offer to marry her after he divorces his wife. Polito advises her to accept, "Condesa y rica. . . Es la solución de tu problema" (López de Haro, *Eva* 361). However, she responds, "¡Si yo no tengo ya ningún problema que resolver! El del dinero, que era pavoroso, no me preocupa: gano cada día más; el del amor, que me parecía el principal, en cuanto he tenido dinero perdió casi toda su importancia" (361). Luisa explains that she has evolved, that she loved Pencho, "cuando no era más que una pobrecita mujer; cuando no veía ante mí más camino que el matrimonio. Mi vida consistía en eso y, naturalmente, clamaba por eso mi vida. Ahora es distinto" (361). By this logic, granting women financial independence takes away their incentive and desire to find love, get married, and have children. Polito finds Luisa's new perspective to be unnatural and invokes arguments that she must fulfill her biological imperative, claiming that "eso es una deserción, Luisa; eso es negarte a tus fines de mujer" (361). However, Luisa defends her decisions, telling him that when she was a helpless orphan, no one helped her, despite her beauty and being "un tipo selecto de la raza, y la raza me negó mis fines de mujer" (361-62).

The protagonist explains her lifestyle as a working woman from a stance that would be considered completely normal today: "Trabajé. He vencido. Eso es todo. No soy un bicho raro. Hay ya legiones de mujeres emancipadas como yo" (362). However, Polito does not view her position as acceptable and accuses women like her of being "más peligrosas que todos los comunistas juntos. Atacáis a la sociedad sin violencia, gentilmente, con perfumada frivolidad; la atacáis en su cimiento, socavando su cimiento: el hogar, la familia" (362). In this way, Polito articulates the fear that many men had of

what they perceived as the insidious threat of the emancipated woman who will bring about the downfall of society.

However, from Luisa's perspective, it is men who are responsible for the dissolution of marriage and the family. Luisa insists that she, "la perfecta," was "dispuesta a fundar una familia," but she is not so desperate as to "aceptar las sobras como un perro" and marry "un depravado que me repugna" (362). All of her love interests and suitors were inadequate, Luisa explains, describing the count as a coward, Alberto as egotistical, and Heriberto as a wimp (362). In her impassioned rebuttal to Polito's admonishments, Luisa argues that men base the concept of the family on women's submission, but she emphatically advocates gender equality—not just in theory, but in practice—especially financially and professionally:

> "¿Hemos de ser iguales? pues en todo. ¿O es que sólo no queríais iguales en el trabajo? Yo voy creyendo, como Jacqueline, que la Edad del Hombre se acaba y que alborea la Edad de la Mujer. Estamos en mayoría sobre la tierra. En cuanto el sobrante de mujeres vaya al trabajo, a la producción, la derrota del sexo masculino será inevitable." (362)

Thus, the protagonist's arguments for equality escalate to female superiority and women's subordination of men.

After her impassioned argument, Polito declares that Luisa's theories are diluted, and he accuses her of being "una terrible libertaria[13]" (363). The protagonist does not

[13] According to the *Diccionario de la lengua española*, a *libertario*, or *libertaria* is someone "en el ideario anarquista, que defiende la libertad absoluta y, por lo tanto, la supresión de todo gobierno y de toda ley," which also includes *comunismo libertario* ("Libertario, ria"). In the context of the novel, "libertaria" appears to be used as a code for an emancipated, feminist woman.

reject this epithet, and in a metaliterary nod to the author and his 1914 novel *Dominadoras*[14], Luisa proclaims, "hace ya veinte años un novelista escribió DOMINADORAS. Las dominadoras de entonces son las libertarias de hoy" (363). In essence, "la 'Eva libertaria' es la que puede, ¡horror! prescindir de los hombres . . . la que tiene otro fin y otro ideal que el hogar y la familia, la que dispone, en fin, de su cuerpo para su placer" (Magnien 25). Keeping in mind the ideological meaning of the term "libertario," López de Haro appears to use it "como reclamo, valiéndose de su amplia repercusión en aquel entonces, pero trivializándola, desvirtuándola" (25). Accordingly, in *La mujer moderna*, Carmen de Burgos alludes to the fear of the emancipated woman, observing "hay quien teme por la familia, creyendo que si la mujer sale de sus muros, se derrumba el hogar," which would then result in anarchy (Burgos 154). For this very reason, the protagonist of *Eva Libertaria* is deemed a libertarian, a woman whose independence and disregard for traditional gender roles threaten to sow chaos. This catastrophizing is indicative of male anxieties when grappling with women's emancipation.

One could consider *Eva Libertaria* a negative apprenticeship novel, because the protagonist repeatedly fails to find love. López de Haro describes women's emancipation as a misguided, detrimental lifestyle. One version of the negative exemplary subject is "a protagonist who affirms as true a doctrine that the given context rejects as false, but that

[14] According to a reviewer for *La Libertad*, in *Dominadoras* three men fall in love with three women—"la mujer de lujo, la mujer de carne, la mujer de nervios"— and "poco a poco, las voluntades de los tres hombres van perdiéndose, diluyéndose en el maleficio femenino y sutilísimo de las tres mujeres" (Montero Alonso 6). These three women "son carne y alma de triunfadoras, de 'dominadoras,' en sus lujos, en sus brazos, en sus nervios, las tres vidas varoniles se hunden en el fracaso y en la muerte. Y cuando ya el definitivo dolor se ha hecho, las tres mujeres, de nuevo unidas, parecen sonreír, seguras, dominadoras" (6). Clearly, both novels warn against dangerous women who conspire to bring about the downfall of man.

in a different context (a different novel) might well have a positive value" (Suleiman 87-88). This appears to be true for *Eva Libertaria*. The protagonist appears to affirm her success as a Modern Woman, but the narrative tone and the plot of the novel suggest otherwise, for Luisa fails in her goal of finding her ideal husband and starting a family, which is considered the marker of true female success.

THE IMPOTENCE OF MODERN MAN

In an interview, López de Haro explains that, after creating a protagonist who he feels women would identify with, he develops a plot that "sugiere la vida con sus lecciones" (Madrid 31). That is to say that the author recognized the didactic intention of his writing. In *Eva Libertaria*, it appears that the author wished to deliver a lesson to his female audience regarding the importance of choosing a man who is truly suitable for marriage—one with traditional masculine traits who will provide the financial stability necessary to support a woman so that she can stay at home and start a family. For any male readers, the novel would then serve as a warning of the consequences that await them if they fail to fulfill the role of patriarch. Specifically, Jacqueline observes how the middle-class man brings about his own demise: "el burgués al abandonar a su suerte a la señorita y lanzarla al estudio no ha visto que prepara su derrota con la destrucción de aquello que era el fundamento de la burguesía: 'la mujer de su casa'" (López de Haro, *Eva* 226).

The shortcomings of Count Pencho and Heriberto symbolize the failures of men of the aristocracy and of the bourgeoise, respectively. Luisa finds that, despite his physical strength, Pencho is not a real man. For example, when the count tells Luisa that he will not divorce his wife for fear of scandal, but suggests that Luisa should be his

lover, she mocks him, saying, “En vez de un bicho, soy una mujer. ¡Espantoso, monstruoso! ¡Te causa pánico una mujer! ¡Pobre Pencho! ¡Qué cobarde eres!” (204). Although Luisa later tries to save Pencho from his addiction to cocaine through her love, she realizes that she no longer loves him because of his cowardice and weakness. The protagonist returns to her businesswoman persona as “una Luisa nueva, inopinada; era la gerente de la Metro-Film,” she coldly dismisses him, telling him that she pities him because he has dedicated his efforts to having physical strength, but he lacks mental fortitude and intelligence (356). When Pencho falls to her feet, crying, begging for her forgiveness, Luisa finds him to be “humillado y mimoso” (348). With the power now in her hands, Luisa rebuffs the count with “el ademán con que se rechaza a un perro sarnoso” (358). She is disgusted by his cowardice and his inadequacies as a man, telling him that “ni conmigo te comportas como un hombre” (359). Pencho declares that he has never loved anyone more than her and to have compassion, because, he says prophetically, “si no te tengo me envileceré más, me destruiré” (358). Women, it seems, have the capacity to uplift a man with their love, but they are also dangerous, as they can cut him down with their words, leaving him “como un cadáver que anda por milagro” (359).

In contrast, Heriberto’s ambition for knowledge has left him physically weak, “chupado, escurrido por la Universidad” (126). Although he is twenty-five years old, he is not yet a real man, according to his mother, who describes him as “un chiquillo inocente, un niño” and she insists, “quiero que mi hijo sea algo más que un sabio, un hombre” (156; 126). The protagonist echoes this sentiment, acknowledging that Heriberto “tiene talento para la ciencia y una formidable voluntad para el trabajo. Fuera de eso, es

débil como un niño" (136). After observing the dynamic between Heriberto and his parents, Clemencia believes that "la madre lo afeminará. Las madres así malogran estúpidamente a sus hijos, los inutilizan" (164). In contrast to Pencho's physical prowess and athleticism, Heriberto is abysmal at sports. When Luisa plays tennis against Heriberto, she lets him win and does her best not to humiliate him, because he is "notoriamente inferior" (129). In this way, Luisa initially feels that she must protect Heriberto's pride and diminish her own strength in order to avoid humiliating or emasculating him. Luisa recognizes her power over Heriberto, whom she finds to be "tan sumiso" (165). Luisa infantilizes Heriberto, and when he disobeys her orders she demands, "sé obediente" (155). Furthermore, when Luisa informs Heriberto that she is going to Madrid for a few days, he is on the verge of tears, like "un niño mimado y caprichoso," so she orders him, "¡Sé hombre!" (179). After receiving the letter from Heriberto informing her that he cannot marry her because his parents would disapprove, Luisa is disgusted with his lack of masculinity and thinks of him as "el mandilón" (191). Heriberto's failure to stand up to his parents and claim Luisa as his wife is definitive proof of his want of manliness, in the protagonist's estimation.

In essence, Pencho and Heriberto, despite their differences, are both cowardly and wanting in manliness. Heriberto, with his academic ego, is weak both physically and in character. Pencho, consumed by sports and superficial status symbols, is physically strong, but is weak in his resolve. Inadequate men like Pencho and Heriberto are responsible for women's new, independent attitude, López de Haro argues, because these men neglect their social duties and do not appreciate "las naturales tendencias femeninas al hogar y sobre todo a la maternidad" (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 200). The author

punishes these male characters in an exemplary manner for their failure to "dar ocasión a Luisa de cumplir su principal misión: matrimonio, hogar, maternidad, amor, fidelidad" (200). Pencho's fate or punishment for treating Luisa poorly is prolonged and exhaustive. He loses two-thirds of his fortune, his marriage to an English tomboy fails, and his wife decides to divorce him. No longer athletic and healthy, the count becomes addicted to cocaine. Finally, when he seeks comfort in Luisa, she has her "victoria," her "venganza," by ultimately rejecting him and leaving him heartbroken and hopeless (López de Haro, *Eva* 348).

Ironically, Heriberto's parents, who had assumed that Luisa was an opportunist, now have to pay women to give their son affection. As divine punishment for their having played with Luisa's heart, both Heriberto and Pencho suffer from life-threatening, or fatal heart ailments Pencho dies of heart failure as a result of a cocaine overdose. Heriberto, contracts "enfermedades difíciles de superar" from prostitutes and discovers that he has "una caverna en el pulmón izquierdo, el más cercano al corazón" (Muñoz Olivares, *Rafael* 200; López de Haro, *Eva* 164). In the end, Luisa remains unaffected by their unfortunate fates, and she sleeps soundly knowing that "ella no tenía la culpa" (López de Haro, *Eva* 364).

Because the bourgeoise and aristocracy only seem to offer cowardly, indulgent, ineffectual, or effeminate men, superior women like Luisa resort to taking communist, working-class lovers like Merino. The novel is laden with cautionary tales advising its (mostly female) readers of the dangers that communist men present and the repercussions that their actions have on women. One such example can be found in the story of the widow Montserrat and her son Fulgencio, who have lived off of the charity of one of her

daughters because “no fue posible hacer carrera de él” because he refuses to work (280). After Fulgencio was caught stealing, Montserrat and her son were put on the street (280). Now, the two finally have a home, because Fulgencio obtained some form of illegal or otherwise shameful employment that Montserrat refuses to disclose. While Polito hides out at their home, Fulgencio takes advantage of his desperate situation and steals from him. Furthermore, Polito discovers that in the underworld, “Fulgencio es conocido y respetado en aquel mundo canalla” among drug dealers and prostitutes (293).

Another example of the dangers that communist men apparently pose to women is the story of Enchufes, the electrician’s wife. Enchufes shares details of her life to young women, who learn of the devastating consequences of her husband’s revolutionary fervor. Initially, Enchufes worked at an ironing workshop while her husband was advancing in his career, but when he began participating in communist rallies, she was fired from her job. Her husband was repeatedly arrested and taken to jail, but he continued his subversive activities. Like Merino, her husband read Marxist texts to the extent that “era ya un vicio” (173). He was consumed with communist ideals, doing nothing but “o leer o trabajar por ‘la idea’” (173). Also like Merino, Enchufes’s husband became renowned for his revolutionary speeches and was featured in newspapers. Enchufes was content working as a maid at various houses, as the women she worked for gave her clothing for her four children. To her dismay, these households no longer trusted Enchufes when they discovered that she is the wife “del laico, del socialista,” and she lost that job as well (173). Consequently, Enchufes had to leave her children at poorhouses because the family could no longer afford food. The revolutionary evidently fails in his manly role as husband and father as he does not provide for his family and he is

submissive to his wife, lowering his head in shame when she derides him. Enchufes hopes that the young women avoid a similar fate, willing, "Que Dios las libre a Uds. de un hombre embrujado por una idea. Por la idea dejan a su padre, a su madre, a su mujer, a sus hijos; por la idea lo dejan todo. . . esas ideas fijas… son los peores enemigos de la familia" (174). Thus, the allegory of Enchufes and her good-for-nothing husband serve as literary proof that socialism, communism, anarchism, and any other revolutionary ideas are detrimental to families, and by extension, they threaten the very foundation of Spanish society. The life of Enchufes's husband parallels that of Merino and foreshadows the inevitable tragedy that Luisa will endure as a result of her revolutionary lover, because she fails to heed Marta's words of warning.

In Merino, Luisa believes that she has finally found a real man:

> Merino era un maniático, un paranoico; pero sin duda un hombre. Merino no hubiese salido camino de Francia huyendo de un amor y de un ideal; Merino no se dejaría matar una ilusión llorando como el niño a quien le quitan un juguete; Pencho y Heriberto no tenían de hombres más que la apariencia; eran almas secas de aquella burguesía tan aborrecida por Merino. (209)

A dangerous conman, a pleasant conversationalist, educated, refined, and attractive, Merino possesses an "irresistible salacidad" (328). Although he is courageous and tenacious, Merino is ultimately a dangerous revolutionary who uses Luisa to hide the fact that he is a conspirator by playing the part of a reformed communist who has abandoned his beliefs to become a member of the bourgeoise. Luisa hopes that this "farsa desconcertante" reveals his "verdadera condición," and that he has become the traditional

type of man that she needs him to be (260). Like Enchufes, the protagonist feels that "mi rival es esa idea, esa doctrina, esa obsesión" (267). As Merino masquerades as the "perfecto burgués," disguised in his "uniforme de burgués," Luisa falls in love with an illusion, a charade (262; 269). According to a fictional journalist in the novel, Merino, "dotado de todas las seducciones físicas y morales" took advantage of "la imaginación siempre un poco infantil, de la mujer" (328-29). This communist Cassanova has seduced women in Paris and elsewhere while pretending to be a millionaire. Once Luisa discovers that he is deceiving her and planning the communist revolution, she realizes that "Merino no la quería, no estaba enamorado . . . tonta, ciega, irracional ella, la que se creyó emancipada, era sencillamente la querida de un criminal" (307). Merino, in effect, is a conman consumed by his desire for notoriety and power. For this villainous communist, "su sueño es implantar la dictadura del proletariado siendo él, naturalmente, el dictador" (322). According to Jacqueline, Merino "se cree un Lenin, aspira locamente a ser en España un Lenin. ¡Megalómano! Y en su egoísmo, feroz" (268). Merino serves as anathema, because he is a distorted representation of all anarchist or communist men, who are portrayed as violent delinquents. The fictional journalist compares Merino to Rasputin, because, with his captivating presence, he was able to draw women to him, and "se le rendían todas" (329). According to the journalist, Merino's ideas are absurd and "ante todo, enemigas del hogar que ella quiere construir" (329).

Moments before his death, Merino eagerly poses for the newspaper reporters, and seizing upon his moment of fame, he declares that his photograph is "para la historia del comunismo. A sus instauradores dedico este retrato" (325). In the corner of her room, Luisa witnesses "con rubor la escena en el recinto de su intimidad, que mañana

divulgarían los periódicos" (324). With her understanding of the inflated male ego and his aspiration for notoriety, Jacqueline realizes that "Merino había esperado que lo retratasen para morir" (325). Because of Merino, Luisa is subjected to a total invasion of privacy—strangers have entered her home, and consequently, her portrait, photographs of her bedroom, stories about her personal life, and her love letter to Merino are all published and exposed to the public in every newspaper. However, the resilient protagonist cunningly uses the publicity to promote her career.

These failed suitors are representative of the impotence of modern men—their inability to fulfill the traditional role of strong husband and breadwinner. Their shortcomings then require women to abandon the biological and social imperative to marry, reproduce, and raise children. This is what allows for the dangerous, emancipated woman whose existence independent of men threatens to dismantle traditional gender relations and the family structure. In an article about Luisa, a fictional journalist in *Eva Libertaria* reiterates the ideas regarding changing gender dynamics and the failures of men that López de Haro presents throughout the novel. The journalist believes that, because she was isolated from her aristocratic peers for lack of money and subsequently rejected by a cretinous count, Luisa "se había refugiado en el trabajo negándoles toda concesión a su belleza y a su sensibilidad realmente extraordinarias" (327-28). This exceptional woman has faced the injustices of "una sociedad compuesta de hombres cobardes y metalizados, impasibles ante la hermosura, incapaces de un sentimiento generoso" (328). The journalist praises Luisa's hard work and intelligence, which have enabled her to become the manager of a company after "tres años de esclavitud, de renunciación, tres largos años durante los cuales esta brava mujer ha tenido que pensar en

todo menos en que es mujer" (328). Again, work is evidently unnatural for women, especially for such a beautiful, aristocratic specimen as Luisa.

In essence, because of their inadequacies and deceptions, men have wasted the protagonist's womanly beauty and aspirations to be a good wife and mother, thereby leaving her with no other option but to work and put her life in the hands of a dangerous communist. As is the case in Benjamin Disraeli's industrial novel *Sybil*, *Eva Libertaria* implies that "a restructuring of the family and increased sexual freedom will not profit women," but rather, bourgeois and aristocratic women are in need of "an upper-class protector" to save them from "the threat of working-class men and working-class politics" (Johnson, Patricia E. 61; 58). Otherwise, Spanish society would be undermined by communist and feminist ideals. Hence, in this narrative, women must be controlled and guided by capable male hands so that they may remain in their socially designated place in the domestic sphere. Otherwise, the breakdown of gender roles would evidently result in the dissolution of the family and of society itself—bringing about the "Edad de la Mujer." Of course, in the imaginings of an aristocratic man of the early twentieth century, gender equality was conceived as androgyny—the feminization of men and the masculinization of women—which would result in the dominance of women over men.

Throughout *Eva Libertaria*, the dissolution of traditional ideologies and conservative institutions is rooted in communism and feminism, embodied by various revolutionary, feminist, or androgynous characters. Women in the novel enjoy freedom of movement in a variety of public spaces and generally are not subject to sexual aggression or harassment. Male sexual attention is perceived as flattering. Although women like Luisa are initially reticent to join the workforce, they excel and exercise great power over

male employees, who they emasculate. Due to pernicious communist and feminist influences and the inadequacies of her male suitors, the protagonist dedicates her life to her career and to frivolous social encounters. Underlying the disingenuous praise for the emancipated Modern Woman in the novel is a call to strengthen traditional masculinity among bourgeois and aristocratic men in order to create patriarchs who can prevent superior women like the protagonist from leaving the domestic realm and protect them from the perils of working-class politics. Certainly, the novel criticizes the frivolity and androgyny of the Modern Woman, but the primary focus of the author's condemnation is on the weaknesses and vices of men whose inadequacies require women to take over their positions in society and at work. Rather than a celebration of the Modern Woman's emancipation, the novel condemns the social conditions and male behaviors that have allowed women to leave their designated place at home, abandon their biological destiny, and attempt to become their equals in society. In the imaginings of some male authors like López de Haro women's emancipation does not simply entail gender equality but the subjugation of men by domineering women.

CHAPTER FOUR: "MODERNIDAD MODERADA:" CRISTINA GUZMÁN AS THE PARADIGM OF MODERN WOMAN AND FIFÍ AS AN AMALGAM OF THE DANGEROUS *MUJER FRÍVOLA*

In her novel *Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas*, Carmen de Icaza presents two contrasting types of *Mujer Moderna*. The titular protagonist serves as a model of the "good" Modern Woman—a helpful companion to men who humbly adapts to new demands on women—while Cristina's half-sister and foil, Fifí, represents a model of the dangerous, overindulgent Modern Woman. Cristina conforms to a modern lifestyle by necessity yet does not pose a threat to traditional views of a woman's place in society. In contrast, her half-sister is a frivolous, morally corrupt libertine who proves to be a destructive social agent. Icaza's representation of Fifí, the perilous *Mujer Moderna*, forms part of the larger dichotomy of depictions of the Modern Woman as either dangerous or endangered in Interwar-era Spain. Through the portrayal of two opposing archetypes of Modern Woman, Icaza delineated what she considered to be acceptable gender roles in a rapidly changing era.

CARMEN DE ICAZA, THE *SECCIÓN FEMENINA DE LA FALANGE*, AND *CRISTINA GUZMÁN*[15]

Carmen de Icaza, Baroness of Claret, was born to a wealthy, aristocratic family, but when her father died, she chose to work as a journalist, playwright, and novelist. In this way, the author could be classified as a Modern Woman in the sense that she was

[15] Henceforth, I will abbreviate the title *Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas* as *Cristina Guzmán* (in italics).

financially independent and worked in the public sphere. Furthermore, Icaza was exceptionally well-educated for a woman of her time. Icaza was educated in Berlin, she spoke four languages, and she regularly attended the literary discussions of her father, a renowned poet and diplomat (Retamal 5; Montojo 11). According to her daughter, Paloma Montojo, Icaza's decision to transform from a "señorita de la buena sociedad" into a journalist for *El Sol*, "un diario progresista e intelectual de izquierdas," was a revolutionary act, considering the classism of Madrid in the 1920s (Montojo 12). Because female labor was discouraged and looked down upon in almost all sectors of society, women had been compelled to marry in exchange for economic stability (Morcillo Gómez 102). Around the 1930s, however, young women began to change their views on marriage, which produced fissures in the sexual division of labor and gender roles (102). Furthermore, the capital's rapid commercial growth offered working-class women and aspiring writers like Icaza more autonomy and new opportunities to work in the public sphere (Bender, "Modernity" 130).

Written in 1936, at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, *Cristina Guzmán* was an immensely popular romance novel. The novel was received warmly by the Spanish public as an entertaining distraction for a nation in the throes of civil war. Carmen Primo de Rivera famously reported that a copy of Icaza's novel was eagerly passed amongst prisoners in the Alicante jail ("Carmen de Icaza" 38). In fact, Icaza explained in 1939 that she wrote *Cristina Guzmán* because, in a time of war and hate, Spaniards wanted to read stories of love and fantasy, "relatos llenos de optimismo fácil, en las que la virtud triunfa siempre y es castigada la maldad" (*Cristina Guzmán* iii [1939]). *Cristina Guzmán* was the

first *novela rosa*[16] written in Spain, and previously, Spanish girls read translated romance novels of French or English authors (Benson 6). Due to its incredible success, *Cristina Guzmán* revived the interest of young Spanish women in the pastime of reading novels (6). It is important to note that in the 1930s, still few Spanish women were literate, and romance novels were one of their limited options for reading material (Bourland Ross 101). Consequently, this type of writing was a popular means of expressing women's concerns and was influential on its female audience (101). Although *Cristina Guzmán* is widely identified as a *novela rosa*, Icaza, herself, referred to her works as "novelas blancas" instead (Trenas 7). Icaza made this distinction because she saw her texts as more modern than traditional romance novels written by male authors like Rafael Pérez y Pérez (Servén 95). Even though *Cristina Guzmán* follows "the basic format of a romance novel, it also instills a sense of an upcoming change for women and their possibilities for economic independence" (Bourland Ross 106). However, this emancipation and financial independence had not yet replaced traditional notions of honor and female identity, which was still based on the familial, private sphere (Bender, "Maternity" 82).

Certainly, Icaza's identity as a Modern Woman had its limitations. In fact, Icaza was an active member of the *Sección Femenina de la Falange*—the women's division of Spain's fascist party—from the beginning of the Civil War until her death (Andreu, "La obra" 65). The ultimate objective of the *Falange* was to save the fatherland and Catholicism, both of which fascists perceived to be under attack as a result of the

[16]The *novela rosa* is a sentimental novel, relatively short and inexpensive, intended for a female audience (Amorós 11-12). Andreu asserts that "the construction of the protagonists in the *novelas rosa* was apparently centered on the reformulation of values for the women of the middle classes related to the institutions of marriage and reproduction, as wives and mothers" ("Sección Femenina" 90).

progressive, secular reforms of the Second Republic (Prada Rodríguez 6). Founded in 1934 by José Antonio Primo de Rivera's sister, Pilar, the *Sección Femenina* had a great deal of influence on Spanish women for decades (Caamaño Alegre 423). This organization exercised "control casi absoluto sobre las mujeres españolas" through its institutions, schools, camps, etc., at least until the 1950s (Gahete Muñoz 21). The *Sección Femenina* was organized for the purpose of teaching women the *Falange* tenets of submissiveness and self-sacrifice (Bourland Ross 100). In effect, it was an indoctrinating agency that ensured the fascist party with access to masses of submissive, female recipients faithful to the values of the future regime (Prada Rodríguez 9).

Icaza was also in charge of the *Oficina de Propaganda* for *Auxilio Social*, a humanitarian aid organization within the *Sección Femenina* (Fernández Jiménez 199). Women of the *Sección Femenina—las falangistas*—acted as propagandists and fundraisers for the *Falange* and served as auxiliary to male leaders of the party, particularly when these leaders were imprisoned (Prada Rodríguez 7). As public female figures, the *falangistas* were in charge of transmitting fascist ideology, which bolstered the role of women as homemakers, wives, and mothers (Gahete Muñoz 21). *Las falangistas* promoted the mysticism of femininity, imparting a particular ideal in Spanish girls and women (19). Propaganda of the *Sección Femenina* encouraged women to be submissive and pleasing to men.

Part of this fascist inculcation of Spanish women later included a mandatory year dedicated to the *Servicio Social*, during which they would learn and perform tasks considered traditionally appropriate for their sex (Caamaño Alegre 423). The primary objective of the *Sección Femenina* was to teach women to carry out household chores and

to raise children (424). In fact, in 1938 Icaza referred to these feminine chores as "tareas anónimas y disciplinadas que exigen exaltación de Fe y voluntad de servir" that women should perform without anticipating any greater reward than the peace and satisfaction of having fulfilled their duty ("En la España Nueva" 11). Although most of the rhetoric of the *Sección Femenina* was meant to instill these domestic values into women, it seems that the organization also offered *las falangistas* a sense of public identity that differed greatly from the traditional, wifely domesticity of the bourgeoise (Labanyi 81). The *falangistas* accomplished this by transforming family life into a form of patriotic service that required austere discipline and training (81).

Ironically, by promulgating the fascist propaganda of the *Falange*, some leading members of the *Sección Femenina*, like Icaza, were able to escape the traditional role of women (Caamaño Alegre 424). In many cases, the conduct of these female leaders transgressed parameters that *machista* Spanish society had set for women at the time (Fernández Jiménez 207). Although female activists of the *Sección Femenina* insisted that women should restrict themselves to domestic life, the activists themselves exercised considerable power in public life (Labanyi 76). Their leadership among women granted them a commanding position in Spanish society and afforded them greater independence. In fact, Icaza continued writing and working even after getting married, thereby maintaining her active public and economic role (Caamaño Alegre 444). Also, as co-founder of the *Auxilio Social*, Icaza remained its National Secretary for eighteen years (Labanyi 81).

Icaza became "una de las autoras más populares del franquismo" (Caamaño Alegre 424). As such, she played an influential role on both contemporary and

subsequent generations of Spanish women, like Carmen Martín Gaite, who read, emulated, and reflected upon Icaza's ideological, romance novels decades later. In 1939, editors of *Y*—the newspaper of the *Sección Femenina*—praised Icaza for "su sensibilidad femenina puesta al servicio de la Patria a través del Auxilio Social" ("Carmen de Icaza" 38). While simultaneously promoting fascist values, female leaders like Icaza and Pilar Primo de Rivera were able to defend women's right to work and their entry into the public sphere as "a heroic sacrifice" of their natural femininity and domesticity on behalf of the family and *la Patria* (Labanyi 79). In this way, these powerful women framed their public service as an act of feminine abnegation (79). Because Spanish society viewed women's emancipation and the figure of the "New Woman" that emerged after World War I as a threat to natural and social order, women used the guise of the mother role to carry out their political and public activity (Llona 236). In the 1930s, women who participated in political and social issues combated social unease by emphasizing sexual difference and motherhood (236). Eliciting the motherhood role afforded women a means of breaking through the gender and sexual order (236). Consequently, Icaza was able to use her influential position to voice women's concerns, like their right to work, while under the rule of a fascist government (Bourland Ross 106). The conflict between Icaza's personal lifestyle and the fascist ideas she promoted as part of the *Sección Femenina* is evident in *Cristina Guzmán*.

In Spain, "the traditional role of wife and mother represented by the *ángel del hogar* was never *entirely* replaced or rejected, even within certain sectors of the feminist

movement[17]" (Bender, "Maternity" 83). For this reason, Icaza and other *falangistas* who joined *Falange* organizations from the outset represent a conservative form of feminism (Labanyi 88). Maternal feminists focused on women's differences from men, glorified female virtue and motherhood, and argued that maternal instincts, caregiving, and abnegation constitute contributions essential to society and would ensure a peaceful future (Bender, "Maternity" 83). However, patriarchal institutions appropriated maternal feminist tenets that glorified the value of the *ángel del hogar* in order to restrict women's access to education and the public sphere (83).

Coinciding with tenets of maternal feminism are those of Catholic feminism, which predicates that women are not inferior, just different, from men, yet they also need to be accompanied, protected, and subjugated by them (Morcillo Gómez 97). The *Sección Femenina* adopted Catholic feminism, as it was conveniently compatible with the ideals of obedience and selflessness that founder José Antonio Primo de Rivera promoted (97). In fact, the tenth tenet of the Falangist woman is "obedece y, con tu ejemplo, enseña a obedecer" (121). Fascist ideology and the Franco regime considered the purpose of women's education to be to form exemplary wives and mothers who would, in turn, teach their children the ideologies of the Falange and the Catholic Church (Caamaño Alegre 422; Gahete Muñoz 22).

Abnegation, obedience, and service to the patriarchal family and nation are the duties of the Catholic, fascist woman. In 1938, Icaza reported Pilar Primo de Rivera's assertion that the National-Syndicalist (Falangist) party required the type of woman who

[17] In this context, it is important to consider that feminism is a category contingent upon its historical and social framework (Bourland Ross 99).

is “austera y alegre, formada con la doctrina cristiana y nuestro estilo, útil en la familia, en el Municipio y en el Sindicato” (“En la España Nueva” 11). Later, Francoism exhorted “un pasado idealizado en el que las mujeres se limitaran a ser madres y esposas” (Caamaño Alegre 422). In the introduction to the 1939 edition of *Cristina Guzmán*, Icaza appears to draw from Falangist propaganda when she professes that Spanish women, in this difficult time of war, “han sabido dar a la Patria lo mejor que tenían: ¡sus hijos!” (*Cristina Guzmán* iv [1939]). Similarly, the eighteenth tenet for the ideal Falangist woman proclaims that “ninguna gloria es comparable a la gloria de haberlo dado todo por la Patria” (Morcillo Gómez 121). This image evokes the glorified abnegation of the Virgin, who wholly submitted herself to the Holy Father, ultimately sacrificing her son.

In addition to being a *novela rosa*, *Cristina Guzmán* can also be considered a thesis, or ideological, novel, as Icaza appears to use the positive exemplary apprenticeship of her protagonist to promote the fascist ideals of the *Falange*. Yet, at times, the novel contradicts its own ideological message in an attempt to reconcile, justify, and place conditions on the new role of women outside the home in the early twentieth century. Due to its discordant mixture of both feminist and fascist ideology, *Cristina Guzmán* is laden with discrepancies. Consequently, it is difficult to determine whether Icaza’s novel is a feminist work with an underlying fascist doctrine that subverts its superficial praise of the Modern Woman, or if it is a fascist novel that subverts its thesis by aligning itself with the Modern Woman. As a result, Icaza’s text presents conflicting attitudes regarding women’s presence at work and in the streets of Madrid.

This ambivalence is also characteristic of the social problem novel. Popular writing, and specifically, the social problem novel, was used in attempts to work through

the changes and anxieties resulting from women's increasing presence in the Victorian public sphere (Janssen 1;16). These popular authors depicted women on urban streets and in public as a means of illustrating their own opinions in a broader debate about women's role and behavior (15-16). Similarly, in *Cristina Guzmán,* Icaza attempts to reconcile the new liberties of the Modern Woman and the increasing presence of women in public with the rhetoric of the *Falange,* while simultaneously entertaining readers with a romantic story.

Although the novel never explicitly aligns itself with fascism, Icaza's texts can be viewed as historical documents and models of "feminidad falangista" (Caamaño Alegre 425). By reconstructing the traditional, conservative values that were to define the new Spanish nation, Icaza's popular novels were an effective and powerful means of disseminating Nationalist propaganda (Andreu, "La obra" 64). Through her novels, Icaza was able to inculcate her young, female audience with values and behaviors that she deemed appropriate for modern women. Martín Gaite argued that literature and film were the primary vehicles that put into circulation "modelos de conducta" for women (*Usos amorosos* XV). Particularly in romance novels, the conservative ideology concerning the nature of womanhood is "inadvertently 'learned' during the reading process" (Radway 186).

THE MODERN WOMAN IN THE STREETS OF MADRID

In the idealistic world of the *novela rosa*, Icaza is able to paint a more utopian vision of Madrid. *Cristina Guzmán* begins with a description of the protagonist as she confidently competes for a place on the trolley. Thus, the narrator immediately establishes Cristina as an active Modern Woman who asserts her place in the streets of

Madrid. The author depicts her heroine fearlessly walking the city streets without facing harassment or stigma. Yet, in reality, Icaza herself did not dare walk the city streets alone—not even to carry out her job. Montojo explains that "para 'mantener las apariencias' y el estatus. . . la incipiente literata, la joven emancipada, con su primer sueldo contrata a una respetable matrona—'carabina'—para que la acompañe, no ya a dar románticos paseos con el novio por el Retiro, sino a entregar sus artículos a la redacción del periódico" (Introduction 12). This insight into Icaza's personal life illuminates residual Victorian customs in Madrid during the 1930s. In these customs, *señoritas* were taught to maintain their decorum at all costs, thereby refusing to do chores designated for women of the lower classes (Establier Pérez 42). In spite of the new image of the Modern Woman, it was still considered improper and dangerous for women, at least of a certain social position, to traverse the city streets without a chaperone.

Yet, in *Cristina Guzmán*, the protagonist walks unaccompanied, radiating confidence as she crosses the city streets with the "paso largo y seguro de mujer moderna" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 40). In another instance, the narrator again refers to the protagonist by her epithet and remarks, "Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas, avanza por la carrera de San Jerónimo con paso largo y seguro de Diana Cazadora. Con paso elástico, rítmico, marcial casi. Y en el alma de Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas, tocan a gloria las campanas de su optimismo" (59).

Thus, Icaza's protagonist is an almost militant woman whose status as an independent Modern Woman is evident even in the way that she walks, determined and fearlessly, the streets of Madrid. Cristina is never frightened as she navigates public spaces; nor does she fear men in her path. For example, when she is walking alone through a passenger car

at night, a male silhouette blocks her way, and Cristina shows no sign of concern. Instead, she accepts a cigarette from the man—who later introduces himself as Jorge Vial—a gesture that elicits a deprecatory glance from Prynce, who then assumes that Cristina is a *frívola*, "igual que la otra [Fifí]" (70).

STREET AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND WOMEN'S RESPONSE

Unlike in Carmen de Burgos's *La rampa*, sexual and street harassment is not a driving theme in *Cristina Guzmán*. In fact, this aspect of city life seems to be overlooked almost entirely and is quickly dismissed. The female characters in Icaza's novel enjoy freedom of movement in the public sphere, without fear of danger or condemnation. The closest thing to street harassment that Cristina experiences is in the words of encouragement from fellow travelers—elegant men who turn their heads as she passes while dressed in the fine clothes of the countess. As she walks confidently through the train station, they exclaim, "¡Te felicito! ¡Vaya compañera de viaje!" (67). Indeed, sexual harassment and assault do not appear to be real or imminent threats for women in Icaza's novel.

In the romance novel, female readers are looking for a book that will assuage their fears while providing them with emotional sustenance (Radway 16). Thus, readers can indulge in "the safe realm of the imaginary" and "enjoy the reassurance it provides that, in fact, men do not threaten women or function as obstacles to their fulfillment" (141). As evidenced by the great success of Icaza's novel, female readers may have needed an optimistic mantra and an escape from a world of male aggression and discrimination in order to retreat to a modern, utopian world where unaccompanied women do not live in fear of men. Through the romantic tale, the female reader is able to experience "a kind of

mastery over her fear of rape because the fantasy evokes her fear and subsequently convinces her that rape is either an illusion or something that she can control easily" (214). This is the tendency of the romance novel to minimize serious problems due to a need to believe that they can be controlled (142).

Icaza's novel presents residual Victorian ideas regarding women's experience of harassment. In mid-Victorian social commentary, representations of street harassment were generally more focused on the behavior of women than on the male harasser's misconduct (Janssen 3). For example, women's press in late-Victorian London offered tips for dealing with male pests, and "early in her adolescence, a girl had to learn to free herself of unwanted admirers. In her gestures, movements, and pace (always dignified and purposeful), she had to show that she was not available prey" (Walkowitz, "Going Public" 7). This is the same dignified and martial pace that Cristina exhibits throughout the novel. However, Fran Tonkiss finds that "there is something troubling in the standard advice that women should not walk 'like a victim,' as if ready-made victims somehow gave themselves away—set themselves up, even—through their spatial demeanor" (104). The truth is that "people are victimized in these cases because their assailants are violent or misogynist or racist or homophobic—not because they themselves are victims" (104).

Hence, mid-Victorian authors often prescribed a greater degree of social responsibility to the female victims of harassment than to the perpetrators (Janssen 17). Icaza appears to share the same sentiments as Elizabeth Gaskell, an author included in Flore Janssen's study, who "considers the impact of harassment to be defined by the woman's response to it" (17). Responsibility is similarly ascribed to women in *Cristina Guzmán*, as sexual harassment is minimized by the protagonist's dismissive discourse.

For example, when Jorge is flirting with Cristina, he exclaims that men must go crazy for her and that she surely hears such "menudas cosas" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 83). Cristina responds, "¿Amabilidades? ¿Galanterías? ¿Impertinencias? . . . De la mujer depende el saberlas parar a tiempo. Yo hasta ahora he tenido suerte. Sólo he tropezado con consideración y respeto" (83). Thus, in Cristina's perspective, it is a woman's responsibility to correct improper remarks and prevent male sexual aggression. This logic, thus, casts the blame on female victims of sexual harassment and aggression. In this way, Cristina implies that women have control of the situation and that sexual harassment and assault are not true threats to them as long as they are presenting themselves as "decent" women. Therefore, a proper, moderately Modern Woman like Cristina is not truly in danger, as she knows how to navigate any improprieties of men, who are unlikely to mistake her as the "wrong" kind of woman. As befits Victorian social commentary, Cristina is more concerned with women's response to harassment than with the transgressions of the offender. The protagonist is guided by her superior morality and optimism, which seem to make her impervious to any danger. In this novel, the real danger comes from immoral, socially irresponsible women like the protagonist's antithetical sister Fifí.

IN MODERATION: CRISTINA GUZMÁN AS THE IDEAL MODERN WOMAN

Cristina is a Modern Woman, in the sense that she is strong and independent, and she works to support herself and her son. Yet, she stays within the limits of what was considered to be appropriate female behavior by maintaining her honor and chastity as a widow and, subsequently, by withdrawing from the workforce upon securing a marriage with a wealthy man. In folk and popular genres, the qualities and actions of the characters

are stereotyped, usually by emphasizing physical characteristics and "culturally recognized moral attributes" (Suleiman 188). Characters may also be defined by their profession, social class, nationality, religion, and philosophical and political ideas (189). This is fundamental to the depiction of Cristina as a language teacher, Modern Woman, and homemaker. Redundancies in positive and negative qualities of characters reinforce their meaning and function as stereotypes (189). Therefore, some characters are villainized as ugly, weak, cowardly, dishonest, etc., while others are praised as handsome, strong, courageous, honest, etc. (189).

In this way, Cristina's many positive characteristics embody the ideal, moderately Modern Woman, as the negative characteristics of her half-sister Fifí amass to form a stereotype of the censurable, dangerous Modern Woman. Cristina is presented as the "right" type of Modern Woman—in contrast to her half-sister, who demonstrates the traits and behaviors to be avoided. Cristina's strength and independence are not to be feared, as they do not threaten to undermine traditional gender relations. Her strength is that of maternal fortitude and adaptation. Cristina begrudgingly works until she may eagerly abandon her job in order to stay at home with her son once she is finally rewarded with a wealthy husband. In contrast, Fifí is a destructive force, ruining her life and the lives of others. This dualistic characterization is an effective means of illustrating exactly how women should use their new freedoms in such a way as to maintain existing gender parameters. Although Cristina is introduced as the *Mujer Moderna*, she still conforms to the traditional role of the self-sacrificing woman.

Cristina Guzmán is a modern romance novel, with a millionaire Prince Charming and an aristocratic working woman, rather than the traditional princess who is helpless

and waiting for salvation at the hands of her virile hero (Caamaño Alegre 425). The protagonist represents the "tipo de mujer capaz de encararse a su destino y luchar con valor y dignidad contra las adversidades" (Montojo 18). In Martín Gaite's novel *El cuarto de atrás* the narrator describes Icaza as "el ídolo de la postguerra" who introduced a sense of "modernidad moderada" to the *novela rosa* (*El cuarto* 141). This is because the protagonists of Icaza's novels are not as young as most, and they are brave, hard-working women who have liberated themselves economically (141). There are various characteristics that differentiate Cristina from "la mujer tradicional" and the stereotypical protagonist of romance novels and fairytales: Cristina's exceptional education, her age (being slightly older than the usual, virginal youth), her athleticism, her strength, her independence, and her status as a widow and single mother (Caamaño Alegre 427-28). Physically, Cristina is described as having the athletic, slim physique typical of the prototypical Modern Woman. She is agile, slender, and flexible—a woman who has "practicado, en un tiempo, lejano ahora, tenis, golf, y hockey" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 39). However, the narrator does not generally emphasize Cristina's beauty, but rather, describes attractive aspects of her personality, like her confidence (Caamaño Alegre 427). Instead of her physical appearance, the narrator focuses on Cristina's moral virtues and vitality (Andreu, "La obra" 68). For example, the narrator states that when Cristina walks by, heads turn—not due to her beauty, but rather, due to her liveliness and self-assurance.

Yet, the narrator also provides an abundance of justifications for why Cristina is working or walking the city streets alone, rather than staying at home to take care of her son. It is clear that Cristina must work to feed her son and to keep a roof over their heads. The narrator describes her as a woman who fights to make a living and to survive. Their

maid, Balbina, frets over Cristina because she sees her go out every day searching for employment so that they can eat. Beyond the literal, physical act of walking alone, the figure of the modern, working woman as a solitary pedestrian can serve as a symbol of strength and autonomy.

As indicated by the novel's title, Cristina's position as a language teacher becomes her distinguishing characteristic and an oft-repeated topic of conversation for the wealthy and aristocratic people with whom she associates herself. Although her profession belongs to the category of positions that were traditionally considered acceptable for women, the mere fact that Cristina works for a living is evidently notable (Bourland Ross 102). Throughout the novel, the narrator, other characters, and Cristina, herself, call attention to her employment and to her status as a working woman. Indeed, the narrator repeats variations of the epithet[18], "language teacher" unnecessarily, in moments that have nothing to do with her profession. While referring to her career, Cristina's professional authority is simultaneously undermined by the frequent use of diminutives that all connote "little, lady teacher:" "maestrita," "petite institutrice," and "una pequeña institutriz" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 54; 63; 67). Her position as a working woman is such a significant part of her identity that by the end of the novel, her future husband still refers to her as "Cristina, profesora de idiomas," despite their intimate relationship (270). It is remarkable that Cristina is repeatedly defined by her career as a language teacher, yet we never actually observe her in this occupation, nor does she discuss it. In this way, the very title of the novel is deceptive, for one would logically

[18] Epithets are another form of redundancy in characterization (Suleiman 165).

expect the plot to revolve around the protagonist's work as a teacher (Caamaño Alegre 426).

Notably, in the few occasions in which Cristina does refer to her work, it is in a deprecating tone. Cristina alludes to her past experiences of teaching languages in negative, even pejorative, terms (Andreu, "La obra" 66). Therefore, it is evident that the protagonist not only does not enjoy her job but finds it to be humiliating (Caamaño Alegre 428-29). Cristina is prideful in "la altivez de su sonrisa, debido al menosprecio que padece por verse obligada a trabajar para vivir" (438). In fact, after Cristina accepts Prynce's offer to pose as the countess, she happily reflects, "¡Y no tener que enseñar a conjugar *to ring rang rung* a los mocosos del barrio!" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 63). Thus, the protagonist escapes the seemingly intolerable fastidiousness of her life as a language teacher and is swept into the voyages, wealth, and cosmopolitan lifestyle of her millionaire boss (and future husband) Prynce.

Furthermore, in Cristina's view, there are some professions that women should not even consider. When, at the beginning of the novel, Balbina suggests that she work as a seamstress, Cristina immediately dismisses this idea, because sewing is harmful to one's eyes, the pay is too little, and she wants nothing to do with jobs "que envejezcan, que afeen. La estética ante todo" (42). Thus, for Cristina, beauty is the most important quality of a woman, to the extent that it is the primary factor to consider when looking for work. In this way, Cristina places impractical limitations on her already scant employment opportunities, while remaining blindly—even obstinately—optimistic about her financial situation.

It is also interesting to note the explicit contempt for the Modern Woman and working women that certain characters demonstrate in the novel. Although the gallant marquis and playboy Jorge Vial "Atalanta" is initially charmed by Cristina's presence, he feels "profundamente defraudado" when she leads him to believe that she is a mere secretary (81). Jorge then makes a sweeping criticism of feminism and of working women by insisting that Cristina "habría permanecido tranquilamente en casita, en espera de poder hacer por las buenas la felicidad de cualquier individuo," if it were not for the influence of feminism and "la moda de 'ganarse la vida'" (81). Thus, in his view, Cristina "se lanza a una vida de luchas, obstáculos, y tentaciones, que, desde luego, no es la que le corresponde" (81). In the past, Jorge argues, there was financial need as well, but women knew how to handle it with dignity, "permaneciendo en su sitio: en el hogar. Ignoradas y respetables" (82). To Jorge and the anti-feminists that he represents, female employment and feminism are just temporary rebellions, a fad. Thus, in the perspective of a privileged man like the marquis, women, even when faced with poverty and hunger, should never leave the house to make a living, and instead, should wait patiently for a suitable marriage, which would presumably fulfill their every desire and sustain them financially. Hence, Jorge's discourse is a strong endorsement of the traditional role of women as self-sacrificing, passive, and ultimately, excluded from public life. Cristina's conversation with Jorge is evidence of women's need to conceal their worker status in the early 1900s in order to avoid contempt.

In Montojo's view, Icaza's protagonist is a "defensora—ya en aquellos tiempos—de la mujer que puede valerse a sí misma sin tener que esperar a depender de un marido" (Introduction 29). In fact, when Cristina first meets Prynce, she declares, "Soy mi propia

señora y dueña, libre de hacer y deshacer lo que me plazca. A nadie tengo que rendir cuentas de mis actos" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 56). Indeed, Cristina is evidently shocked by Jorge's sexist comments, and she appears to advocate for the Modern Woman. The protagonist insists that "las mujeres modernas, créame usted, no han abandonado sus casas por seguir una moda" (82). In fact, Cristina criticizes women of the past who "cantaban romances a la luna, mientras su padre se mataba a trabajar para poder sostenerlas" (82). Cristina also looks down upon "aquellas muchachas cuyo único fin en la vida era 'atrapar un marido' que les brindase el pan y la sal" (82). In this way, Cristina defends working women and declares that she has more respect for them than for women who wait to be maintained by men. Women of today, Cristina explains, "no quieren ver en el matrimonio una solución material," and they no longer want to be a burden on others, but rather a source of support (82). Thus, in Cristina's opinion, Spaniards have overlooked other potential roles for women, because they fail to see "la ayudante útil en algunos casos, la camarada en otros, la compañera de trabajo, de esfuerzo" (83). This impassioned defense, from the mouth of Cristina—a character already identified as semi-autobiographical—would indicate that Icaza was a supporter of the Modern Woman, of female workers, and of a more active role for women. The narrator insists that by the end of their conversation, "Jorge Vial empieza a creer que, en efecto, existen mujeres que saben andar solas por el mundo" (85). It is curious to note, once again, this repeated reference to the woman that walks alone, without male protection, as a metaphor for the independent, Modern Woman.

The protagonist's contradictory argument with Jorge skirts between feminism and conservatism. Cristina vacillates between her belief in women's right to work and her

desire to stay home with her son (Bourland Ross 103). The disdain that the protagonist and other characters exhibit toward women's employment, especially in certain careers, is indicative of the circumstantial, illusory freedoms of Spanish women—liberties to be exercised only until finding a male breadwinner. In this narrative, the ideal Modern Woman steps up to the plate when necessary but then happily steps back into a more subordinate, secondary position once she has the opportunity. In this way, the modernity of the protagonist, like that of the author, has its limitations.

There are various moments in the novel in which Cristina and the narrator lament the condition of single women. On one occasion, the narrator exclaims, "¡Dios mío, haber nacido mujer…delicada, sensible…frágil…y tener que hacerse la fuerte…la valiente…la resuelta…Tener que defenderse, y que luchar, y que sufrir con una sonrisa a flor de labios. . .!" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 165). Yet, this defense of women simultaneously classifies them as inherently weaker than men and not suited for the "fight" for employment and economic independence. Hence, Cristina's support of women's emancipation is conditional. The narrator relays Cristina's thoughts concerning the matter: "¡Feminismo! ¡No; ella no era feminista! Naturalmente que había que poner a la mujer en condiciones de que supiera ganarse el pan nuestro de cada día; pero de ahí a poetizar el asunto, ¡no, y mil veces no!" (89). This statement is immediately followed with the reminder that, "No era fácil la vida para una mujer sola" (89). Thus, while the protagonist believes that women should have more work opportunities and should free themselves from the tradition of waiting to find a husband to support them, Cristina explicitly refuses to identify herself with the feminist movement. The message of this discourse is similar to that of the *Sección Femenina*, which promoted women's

professional preparation only to ensure that women who could not find a husband or who were widowed, like Cristina, were able to support themselves (Caamaño Alegre 428).

Cristina represents the Modern Woman, yet she defends and adheres to a more traditional, deterministic ideology. Truly, the protagonist is an emblematic figure for Catholic maternal feminism in its modern form. In Icaza's novel, we observe the fusion of Catholic feminism with the fascist ideology of the *Sección Femenina*. In fact, the narrator of *Cristina Guzmán* makes copious mention of the protagonist's devotion to the Virgin Mary (436). Cristina is "tierna y abnegada, profundamente creyente sin beaterías ni ñoñeces (Montojo 29). As Cristina embodies the ideal Modern Woman, she may also represent "el prototipo de la mujer fascista," including her contradictions between tradition and modernity (Caamaño Alegre 426). There are both fascist and feminist perspectives in this contradictory text as "Icaza works within the constraints of her fascist beliefs to create a work that espouses early feminist thought while still following the structure of the Spanish romance novel" (Bourland Ross 99). The novel seems to move back and forth between these two perspectives, because a woman happily supporting herself and her child could serve both the regime—as mothers—and early feminist stances that supported women's right to work (103). The principal contradiction of Icaza's novel is that the protagonist expresses the need for women to support themselves if needed—a feminist view—while simultaneously dreaming that she will be supported by a man, which is a non-feminist position (105).

This conflicting message seems appropriate considering fascism's contradictory nature, as "fascists disagreed amongst themselves about the very essence of their movement" (Passmore 30). In fact, a minority of fascists viewed fascism as an

opportunity to advance the women's movement (30). Fascist radicalism attempts to appease workers' and women's movements by accepting specific demands, as long as they correspond with national priorities (31). In this way, Icaza's more traditional model of femininity applied to the *Mujer Moderna* was attractive to the Francoist regime, as it was less threatening to its patriarchal structure (Caamaño Alegre 444). Ultimately, however, fascist nationalism requires unyielding hostility to feminism and socialism, as they appear to prioritize gender or class rather than the nation[19] (Passmore 31). Cristina's resolve and fortitude are characteristic of the self-assurance that fascist ideology promotes, as the protagonist is confident in her moral superiority (Andreu, "La obra" 67). Similarly, Prynce has a strict sense of right and wrong "ante un rígido sistema de valores en el que 'lo bueno' y 'lo malo' están claramente definidos" (69). The ideological rigidity of the protagonist and the romantic hero is consistent with the "unambiguous, dualistic system of values" that Suleiman signals as essential to the thesis novel (Suleiman 56).

When Cristina faces unemployment at the beginning of the story, she proclaims, "Yo buscaré, yo lucharé, ¡yo venceré!" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 42). These words assert female autonomy and strength, yet this determined attitude conforms with the seventeenth tenet of the Falangist woman, which states: "Tu entereza animará para vencer" (Morcillo Gómez 121). In Martín Gaite's *El cuarto de atrás*, the narrator muses that Icaza's heroines are practical and active, confronting all obstacles without complaining, and look optimistically to the future. However, the narrator of Martín

[19] This is because "fascism is a set of ideologies and practices that seeks to place the nation, defined in exclusive biological, cultural, and/or historical terms, above all other sources of loyalty, and to create a mobilized national community" (Passmore 31). Fascists "endeavour to bring to power a new elite at the head of a mass party, the latter being the embodiment of the people and the true source of national identity" (28).

Gaite's novel criticizes Cristina's motto, "la vida sonríe a quien le sonríe, no a quien le hace muecas," because it encourages women to "sonreír por precepto, no porque se tuvieran ganas" (Martín Gaite 94). In fact, Martín Gaite's narrator associates this smile with that of the joyful nurse praised in Falangist hymns (94). The glorification of Cristina's curative powers as a woman and as a nurse carries even more significance when one considers that encouraging women to be nurses met pragmatic moral and national considerations for Spaniards during the war (Andreu, "Sección Femenina" 91).

Thus, in their texts, Falangist writers constructed heroic women who serve God and the nation as teachers and nurses due to supposedly innate female characteristics of nurturance, sensitivity, and compassion for the suffering of others (91). Correspondingly, in romance novels, if a protagonist initially desires to present herself as a man's equal, she is still depicted as unusually understanding, kind, and compassionate (Radway 127). For example, the narrator of *Cristina Guzmán* characterizes the protagonist as a woman who "solo siente su anhelo de siempre: dar, dar. Por encima de todo. Y a pesar de todo" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 181). In their review of Icaza's novel, editors of *Y* insisted that Cristina reminds readers to dream, as "su optimismo es contagioso" ("Carmen de Icaza" 38). They conclude that after reading *Cristina Guzmán,* every girl will have a hope of encountering "un millonario guapo y comprensivo" (38).

Icaza again insists on this feminine model of abnegation and undying optimism in an article she published in *Y* in 1938, in which she asserts that women must know how to transform a life of difficulties into "una vida llena de belleza y de alegría" ("En la España Nueva" 11). According to Icaza, the *Sección Femenina* teaches women to put this joy and beauty into even "los gestos más nimios y las cosas más pequeñas de la existencia

cotidiana" in order to be useful to the family and the nation (11). In essence, *falangistas* were supposed to be respectful, happy, obedient, and highly capable women, superior to those who are not members of the *Falange* (Gahete Muñoz 22). Although Cristina confidently asserts her opinion on some occasions, the narrator insists that she has mastered "el arte de saber escuchar," because "Cris no es de esas mujeres que se creen en la obligación de sembrar de exclamaciones más o menos oportunas las discusiones masculinas" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 115). Cristina, the moderately Modern Woman, does not meddle in men's affairs, because she knows "her place" as a woman.

Both Icaza and her protagonist were from aristocratic families and received an exceptional education for Spanish women of their time. Because she is not the daughter of workers or peasants, Cristina does not belong to the typical category of working women (Bourland Ross 103). It is evident that Cristina is expertly trained and prepared for her profession as a language teacher, because she has studied in Oxford and is fluent in five languages. Despite being a *desclasada*, Cristina still (humbly) holds the title of duchess, wears fine clothing, and has a maid who serves her and her son. With her aristocratic Spanish origin, Cristina embodies the discourse of the *Falange* (Caamaño Alegre 430). Icaza's novel promotes "el mito de la superioridad moral de la raza y civilización españolas" through Cristina, who serves as a symbol and model of morality and virtue (Andreu, "La obra" 66). Consequently, the narrator juxtaposes Cristina's supposed superiority over characters who represent other races, classes, and nationalities. Notions of race were less restrictive, or certainly more complex, in Spain, due to its characteristically diverse cultural heritage (Caamaño Alegre 436). Consequently, Icaza's

take on racial purity includes notions of nationality, social class, biology, religion, and moral superiority (431).

Thus, social hierarchies are established from the beginning of the novel, when, despite Cristina's inability to pay her, the Galician maid, Balbina, continues to serve Cristina and her son—evidently accepting as natural her own subordinated position to her childhood friend (433). In fact, in the first few pages of the novel, Balbina subserviently kneels and takes off Cristina's shoes and socks in order to dry her feet with "reverencioso cuidado" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 41). When she is frustrated with Cristina, Balbina feels like hitting her "como cuando eran niñas y no existían barreras sociales" (42). In one instance, Cristina declares that those who are lucky enough to be born into the upper crust or who have acquired class privileges commit an unspeakable social offense when they treat "los que están abajo" with discourtesy and inconsideration (160-61). Yet, Cristina's social demeanor reveals a completely different mindset. For example, there are moments in the novel when Cristina treats the maids derogatorily, as she considers them to be inferior to herself. On one occasion, the protagonist feels that Fifí's French maid Georgette has stepped out of line and is not exhibiting enough formality and respect, so Cristina resolves to put Georgette in her place. This is further evidence of the protagonist's desire to maintain a certain social hierarchy (Caamaño Alegre 430).

Despite being a *desclasada*, Cristina maintains the aristocratic airs of a *señora*. In fact, the narrator praises Cristina for possessing "esa difícil facilidad de saber colocar a las gentes en el sitio del que no debieron moverse," a quality inherent to all "grandes señoras" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 85). In this way, the protagonist's classism is touted as a virtue. Furthermore, the revelation of Cristina's aristocratic origins towards the end of

the novel is characteristic of the elitist attitudes of the *Falange* (Andreu, "La obra" 66). This revelation comes after various characters observe that Cristina is "demasiado bonita, y fina, y elegante, para ser simplemente una profesora de idiomas" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 142). Indeed, social class is observed in the physical appearance of every individual in the novel, thereby, conforming to the hierarchical system advanced by fascism (Caamaño Alegre 429). Primarily, the narrator describes the robust health of Cristina and her lively son (435). Cristina believes that her son is going to be "lo que su madre hubiera sido de haber nacido hombre! Un ser fuerte y sano de cuerpo y de alma, útil, emprendedor, alegre, tomando la vida tal y como es, y no pidiéndole lo que no da" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 105). The narrator also emphasizes Cristina's Anglo-Saxon features, like her skin, which is as pale as magnolias, her fine bone structure, her golden-gray eyes, and her chestnut hair. As Jorge admires Cristina, he reflects, "Qué manos tan bonitas tiene. Y qué muñecas tan finas. ¡Raza!" (78). In contrast, Balbina is described as having rough hair and hands, as befit those of the lowly working class. To coincide with Cristina, Prynce also has aristocratic, Anglo-Saxon features, with his light-blue eyes, his Irish descent, and his "aspecto de *lord* inglés" (56).

At the beginning of the story, Cristina, staring at her reflection, describes herself as "pobre, pero honrada" (51). Later, Prynce admits to Cristina that when he first met her, he took her for a "*declassée*," but now he understands that "a pesar de todas las vicisitudes que haya usted podido sufrir, ha sabido seguir siendo una señora" (162). When alone, Cristina then reflects upon the "aristocracia espiritual" to which she belongs (166). This dialogue indicates that women who have lost their economic and social position usually lose their honor and dignity as well, but, because Cristina is a superior

type of Spanish woman who exhibits a perfect model of optimism and femininity, she never falls into abject poverty nor disgrace like Fifí. The portrayal of the protagonist as inherently superior not only fits the criteria of fascist rhetoric, but also of romance and thesis novels. The heroine of a romance novel is perfect—both beautiful and innocent (Amorós 48). Correspondingly, in the structure of confrontation within a thesis novel, the hero or heroine must represent the "triumph of Good" (Suleiman 111). Thus, the triumph of the seemingly perfect Cristina Guzmán reinforces her superiority over Fifí.

AN EXCESS OF MODERNITY: FIFÍ AS AN AMALGAM OF *LA FRÍVOLA*

In *Cristina Guzmán*, the juxtaposition of the actions and characteristics of the protagonist with those of Fifí emphasizes the differences between the two types of women they represent. By juxtaposing apprenticeship stories, the narrative of thesis novels contrasts these stories and reinforces their opposing positive or negative values (84). One basic scheme of an apprenticeship story is that of the *antithetical brothers*, in which similar characters start out in the same situation, but eventually evolve in opposing directions (85). In this scheme, both characters change over time, but, as the hero succeeds and begins a "new life 'in accordance with truth,'" the negative exemplary subject fails (86). Thus, the hero becomes someone to be imitated, while the negative subject serves as a cautionary figure (86). As both literal and antithetical sisters, Cristina and Fifí appear to fit this scheme. The contrast between the protagonist and her half-sister further delineates the differences between the "good," decent Modern Woman and the "bad" Modern Woman—an object of ridicule and pity. Fifí serves as an exemplum of the dangerous type of "Modern Woman" that the novel's ideology warns against, as Cristina exemplifies the modern—yet fascist—woman its doctrine promotes. This apprenticeship

scheme also coincides with the romance genre, in which the distinct personalities of the heroine and hero, as "ideal feminine and masculine types," are underscored by secondary characters who act as abstract foils (Radway 131).

In romance novels, the positive, feminine traits of the heroine are contrasted with her foil's "self-interested pursuit of a comfortable social position" (131). Hence, Cristina's counterfigure, Fifí, represents "una de esas niñas frívolas y egoístas" that Cristina criticizes for perceiving marriage as a career and the only means of saving herself from poverty (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 47). In fact, Fifí admits to Cristina, "yo tenía desde los quince años una única monomanía: casarme. Casarme bien, claro. Con dinero, con mucho dinero" (255). Prynce reveals that, in his attempts to keep Fifí at the bedside of his ailing son, Prynce "la rodeó de un lujo de película. La cubrió de joyas. Su menor capricho era ley en el palacio del millonario. Pero todo fue inútil. La condesita se aburría" (47). Icaza demonstrates through the self-serving character of Fifí the inferiority of materialistic, frivolous women who abuse their new freedoms by taking advantage of men in order to increase their own social position. In this way, Fifí's failure and subsequent *desclasamiento*—or loss of social position—serve as a cautionary tale that both reveals the instability of this economic arrangement and illustrates the pernicious social consequences of the foil's negative values.

After the various references to her cruelty and frivolity throughout the novel, the readers are finally privy to Fifí's side of the story in a conversation that she has with Cristina. At the end of the novel, Fifí has fallen on hard times and Cristina finds her living in a disorderly and "casi miserable" pension (252). Fifí reveals the disadvantages of her privileged social position as a dependent of the aristocratic Prynce-Valmore

family. Fifí left Joe because she did not want to be controlled, and she missed her freedom. In Fifí's view, her marriage to Joe made her the property of the Prynce-Valmores: "me habían comprado y se consideraban con derecho a exigir" (257). Fifí refused to be used as the "enfermera del niño," and she acknowledges that she is not "un modelo de paciencia ni de abnegación" (257). Thus, Fifí presents the perspective of a woman who feels cosified and obligated to serve because of her marriage, yet her stance and her struggle are belied by her negative characterization as inferior and immoral.

In effect, Fifí is a negative exemplary subject whose failures result from her shortcomings as a woman, as she does not have the traditional feminine attributes and values characteristic of Cristina, who is a "dechado de virtudes" (256). Joe's doctor explicitly states that Cristina possesses the virtues that her sister lacks: "equilibrio, serenidad, tacto" (103). In fact, Prynce's secretary describes Fifí as having "una completa ausencia de sentimientos,"–completely devoid of compassion (47). After using Joe for his social position and wealth, Fifí abandoned him, leaving her sickly husband bedridden and "al borde de la locura" (48). In contrast to Cristina's maternal abnegation, Fifí cruelly mocks her ailing husband. As Cristina nurtures Joe, she blames Fifí for his grave illness: "todo ello es obra de una frivolidad, de un egoísmo, de una inconsciencia de mujer" (105). Ultimately, through her cruel words, Fifí drives her husband to insanity, and finally, to his grave. As confirmation of her selfishness and greed, Fifí's immediate response when learning of her husband's death is to ask about his will and testament.

Furthermore, Fifí herself acknowledges and admires Cristina's superior character. In a moment *of desdoblamiento,* Fifí contemplates the face of her sister, "mi doble," and "ve su propio rostro. Más perfecto. Más puro. Más limpio" (238). Yet, Fifí reveals that,

although they are sisters, she did not have the same opportunities as Cristina. In fact, Cristina is only able to have a career because she received an exceptional Catholic education in Spain and in England (Caamaño Alegre 426). Fifí admits that she is envious of her sister's superior education, job preparation, and independence, expressing, "A mí también me habría gustado criarme como tú…, y ser culta…, y ser…como tú eres…, y saber ganarme la vida" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 257). In this way, Fifí insinuates that, under better conditions and with a proper education, she would have been a better person (Caamaño Alegre 431). Despite her negative characteristics and the disparaging words that the narrator and other characters use to describe Fifí throughout the novel, it is easy to empathize with her situation and to understand why she perceives an advantageous marriage as the only feasible economic solution. In a thesis novel, when characters "whose value in the ideological supersystem of the work is strongly negative" suddenly develop an authentic tone, their words can "counteract the condemnation they are supposed to provoke" (Suleiman 206-07). Consequently, this moral ambiguity has the potential to "subvert, or at least put into question, the very doctrine whose validity the work seeks to demonstrate" (207). By eliciting sympathy while simultaneously providing logical explanations for her actions, Fifí momentarily adopts a depth of characterization that could make her sympathetic to readers as she exposes the limited options for education and work that were available to most women.

However, this moment of authenticity is fleeting, and immediately, readers are reminded of Fifí's inferior nature. When Cristina offers to teach her how to be a language instructor, Fifí rejects this opportunity, claiming that she is too old to learn new things and that it is too late now because "debieron enseñármelas a tiempo, como a ti" (Icaza,

Cristina Guzmán 260). Thus, the "pathetic type" in a negative exemplary apprenticeship is only negatively valorized by the context and lacks ideological awareness (Suleiman 100). When this pathetic type does recognize his or her own negativity, it is too late to make a difference (100). Consequently, the negatively valorized character, as well as the doctrine he or she represents is then deemed degraded and inauthentic (86). These negative characters are denied dignity and authenticity, as their actions, behavior, words, and interpretations are deemed erroneous and false (206). As the hero ascends to authenticity and a "'new life' in accordance with truth," the negative exemplary subject fails and descends into degradation as a cautionary tale (86). Coinciding with the *antithetical brothers* model, Fifí descends in social and financial standing while her sister ascends socially and financially to a life of domestic bliss as a consequence of her superior morality and character. The thesis novel attributes a character's success or failure to an ideological meaning by postulating a cause-and-effect relationship between particular beliefs (or the absence of these beliefs) and the character's destiny (98). The success of the protagonist, contrasted with her sister's failure, is essential to demonstrating the authenticity or correctness of Cristina's values and actions. Certainly, Fifí is not strong, selfless, and optimistic like Cristina, who serves as the fascist ideal of the Modern Woman.

As is characteristic of fascist literature, there are elements of nationalism in Icaza's novel, because Cristina's superiority seems to exemplify the superiority of the Spanish people. For example, the French maid's failure to know her social place is significant, particularly because France represents the revolutionary values of freedom, equality, and fraternity (Caamaño Alegre 430-31). It is also significant that Fifí is the

product of the relationship between Cristina's noble, Spanish father and a French nurse. As a consequence of this "fusión de razas," Fifí, the French flirt, proves herself to be abject, dishonorable, and morally inferior (431).

While Cristina is elevated as a paradigm of the perfect Modern Woman, her half-sister is reduced to an amalgam. The negative qualities of amalgams become redundant with specifically ideological qualities that are comprehended in reference to a certain doctrine (Suleiman 190). In this way, "the culturally negative traits and the ideologically negative traits reinforce each other" (190). Naturally, the amalgam is a device commonly used in propaganda literature (190). Fifí is an amalgam of the *mujer frívola*—the materialistic, vain Modern Woman who abuses her new liberties with extravagances. In fact, one character describes Fifí as "la personificación de la frivolidad. De la ligereza. Del modernismo" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 153). In essence, Fifí represents the "wrong" kind of Modern Woman. The structure of confrontation in the thesis novel "polarizes reality, reducing its complexities to simple dichotomies" (Suleiman 117). Hence, in Icaza's novel, the moderately Modern Woman—helpful companion to her fellow man—is "good," while the frivolous Modern Woman—deadly to men— is "bad."

"LA VIDA SONRÍE A QUIEN LE SONRÍE"

The predominant trait of thesis novels is an evident intention "to communicate an unambiguous, virtually exhortative message" (243). In *Cristina Guzmán,* that didactic message is the protagonist's oft-repeated motto: "La vida sonríe a quien le sonríe, no a quien le hace muecas" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 43). With this motto, Cristina implies that pessimistic people—those who cry and complain when confronted with difficulties—cause their own disgrace. In other words, a person is either an optimist who invites life's

blessings or is a pessimist who invites misfortune. In this polarization of reality, your perspective determines your fate. In fact, Cristina accuses those who cry in self-pity of "cobardía espiritual" (42). Martín Gaite found Cristina's smile and maxim to be a hypocritical endorsement of women's conformity and complacency (Caamaño Alegre 437; 444). Indeed, Cristina declares that "la clave de la felicidad" is "conformidad alegre, optimista" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 105). In this way, the protagonist demonstrates how the moderately Modern Woman should adapt and conform to social demands. Conformity, after all, often assures one's safety.

With the protagonist's successes in the apprenticeship model, the rhetoric of the text serves more as confirmation than as persuasion (Suleiman 142). Accordingly, Cristina's behavior is "basado en el ejercicio de los valores tradicionales españoles, los cuales la llevan a vencer las dificultades que se le van presentando" (Andreu, "La obra" 65). Thus, at the end of the story, we find the protagonist enjoying "las recompensas recibidas por su buena conducta" (65). Hence, Cristina succeeds and has a happy ending due to her adherence to values promoted by the *Sección Femenina*. Montojo believes that Cristina "representa el triunfo de la bondad, del optimismo y la alegría de vivir," and for this reason, women identified with the protagonist and viewed her as an ideal to follow (Introduction 33). In this way, Cristina serves as the paradigm of good behavior for women (Andreu, "La obra" 70). Similar to the apprenticeship or exemplary model, the romance's repetitive narrative structure provides "a set of very usable instructions" (Radway 149-50). In the face of poverty and unemployment, smile and remain optimistic. Sacrifice. Avoid the frivolity and excesses of the Modern Woman, as demonstrated by Fifí's downfall. Follow the lead of a strong, wealthy man. Nurture him and his son until

you become his blissful, stay-at-home wife. This is the model provided by Cristina with her perpetual optimism, a model that promises patriarchal protection in return for conformity and servitude.

In romance novels, the heroine is given the opportunity "to display her extraordinary capacity for empathetic nurturance and tender care" (127). Cristina displays her empathy and tenderness as she cares for Joe during his illness and emotionally supports Prynce after the death of his son. Cristina, who is a certified nurse, demonstrates sublime maternity and feminine compassion as she submits herself completely to the care of Joe (Caamaño Alegre 436). In this way, Cristina proves herself worthy of the millionaire, who watches her at Joe's bedside and admires her patience and tenderness. In fact, romance fiction can be "as much about recovering motherly nurturance and affection as it is about the need to be found desirable by men" (Radway 151). Even with Prynce, Cristina's interactions appear to be largely maternal (Caamaño Alegre 440). When Prynce finally learns that Cristina is a mother, the narrator observes, "Ahora se lo explica todo. Su paciencia. Su abnegación. Su maravillosa ternura" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 242).

Yet, Balbina, the maid, appears to be the principal caretaker of Cristina's son (Caamaño Alegre 427). Cristina is presumed to suffer because she is not at home taking care of her own son (439). Consequently, Cristina's nurturance of Joe becomes an extension of her affection for her son, as she reflects, "Si le salvo, he salvado también a Bubi de algún peligro desconocido" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 101). In fact, Cristina tells Joe that while he is sick, "Soy tu madrecita" (124). These repeated allusions to Cristina's maternal instincts conform to the model of the Angel of the Hearth, in which the entirely

domestic and self-sacrificing role of women "is lionized not only as the epitome of feminine virtue, but also as her most meaningful and significant social responsibility" (Bender, "Maternity" 80). In this way, Cristina represents a modernized version of the traditional Angel of the Hearth, a woman who nurtures and aids men, as opposed to the frivolous type of Modern Woman whose selfishness devastates them.

Despite her noble spirit and aristocratic title, Cristina still requires a man to ascend in social class once more. It is, in fact, her perfection as a fascist and romantic model that ensures such a fortunate marriage. Prynce, the rich American, is the modern equivalent of Prince Charming (Caamaño Alegre 425). Prynce also serves as the "típico héroe fascista" because of his strong moral and physical characteristics (434). Austere, masculine, and wealthy, the "rey de acero" is Cristina's recompense for her nurturing nature (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 54). Finally, the protagonist is "rewarded for her years of self-sacrifice and poverty by her advantageous connection" (Bourland Ross 102). Therefore, the conventional, happy ending of Icaza's novel "reproduce la imagen de la familia tradicional" (Caamaño Alegre 443). When Prynce proposes marriage, Cristina gleefully accepts and immediately decides to abandon her work in order to stay at home and fulfill her role as the *ángel del hogar*. To reinforce this fact, Cristina's young son, Bubi, tells the millionaire that, because he did not have a father "mamá hacía de los dos. Pero ahora, si tú trabajas para mí, ella ya no tendrá que salir tanto" (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 271). Thus, Bubi's words "dejan claro que el trabajo femenino se ve como un mal menor que hay que tolerar cuando las circunstancias lo requieran y no como un derecho de la mujer" (Caamaño Alegre 443). As the moderately Modern Woman, Cristina works if necessary but eagerly returns to domestic life once she finds a husband.

Thus, Prynce, the modern prince, "salva a la heroína de una vida de fatigas y empeños" (443). Having found her new, dreamy, breadwinner, Cristina has received her salvation from the pernicious public sphere, and she can now stay at home to take care of her son and her future husband. Cristina's independence is temporary and conditional; born out of necessity, it merely allows her to transition from one marriage into another.

In the introduction to Icaza's novel, Montojo asserts that the protagonist's "triunfo final" is the result of Cristina's fighting spirit (Introduction 29). Icaza's protagonist must overcome her struggles in order to illustrate her moral superiority, and by extension, that of the Spanish nation (Andreu, "La obra" 70). The heroine's advantageous marriage is a conventional romantic ending of bourgeois, Catholic conjugal joy, which serves as literary proof of the superior path and ideology of the moderately Modern Woman. However, this traditional ending does not live up to expectations, because it does not fulfill "la promesa de modernidad que la presentación de Cristina como mujer trabajadora e independiente ofrecía" (Caamaño Alegre 443). Consequently, there is a discord between the beginning and the ending of the novel, because in the first few pages of the text, Cristina considers her difficult situation and the need to find a job to get out of her precarious financial situation, but in the last few pages Cristina is making wedding plans with the attractive magnate (Andreu, "La obra" 65-66).

In the narrative structure of the romance novel, "all women inevitably end up associating their female identity with the social roles of lover, wife, and mother" (Radway 207). Thus, despite the repeated use of the epithet "language teacher," Cristina's true identity and destiny are relational, based upon her relationships with her son and her future husband. In essence, because the main events in romance novels are

the same structurally, every romance is "a mythic account of how women *must* achieve fulfillment in patriarchal society" (17). As both realistic and mythical, romantic narratives help to maintain the status quo ideologically (17). By retelling the same myth, romance novels reaffirm "fundamental cultural beliefs and collective aspirations" (198). In this way, Cristina is a figure that reinforced the ideological status quo regarding gender roles in Spain. In the same narrative, Fifí, as *la frívola*, is punished as a threat to Spanish values.

The myth perpetuated in romance novels is that love always results in the woman's economic wellbeing (Amorós 22). Through her protagonists, Icaza presents the myth that love leads to a life of luxury (Andreu, "La obra" 68-69). In *Cristina Guzmán*, Icaza retells this romantic myth, but with a modern twist, and in doing so, she reaffirms the beliefs and values of the *ángel del hogar* and of the *Sección Femenina.* Thus, Cristina becomes wealthy because she is a pure, superior type of Modern Woman, wherein Fifí loses her fortune because she is morally bankrupt and destructive to society.

Icaza's text is emblematic of the novelty of the emancipated, working woman in Spain still in the 1930s. Despite the superficial praise of the Modern Woman in the text, the underlying ideology of *Cristina Guzmán,* is that of traditional, feminine domesticity. Although the novel appears to present a defense of the modern, working woman, as implied by its title, Icaza's support of women's emancipation clearly had its limits within the constraints of conservative and fascist ideology of the era. *Cristina Guzmán* muddles its ideological message by complicating feminism with fascism. Icaza uses her romance novel as a tool of fascist propaganda by juxtaposing Cristina's positive exemplary story with the negative exemplary story of her antithetical sister in order to demonstrate the

evident superiority of Cristina's traditional Spanish values and character. The thesis novel attempts to persuade by providing literary "proofs" of the accuracy of its doctrine, while the romance novel also confirms its traditional ideology by retelling a mythic account of woman's conventional role as wife and mother. Cristina transitions from Modern Woman to housewife as Icaza retells the romantic myth that love (and optimism) will bring women economic stability, thereby saving them from a life of labor outside the home. Thus, as Cristina goes from being "una modesta maestrita—pero que tiene sus costumbres adquiridas a fuerza de independencia" to a wealthy housewife, she seemingly demonstrates the authenticity of modern, yet fascist, principles with her idealistic ending (Icaza, *Cristina Guzmán* 87). Cristina is a capable, hardworking Modern Woman like the author, except Icaza never recused herself from her employment and her public role upon marrying. The conflict of values inherent in *Cristina Guzmán* is ultimately settled as its superficial endorsement of the modern, working woman ends with the sublimation of the conventional family structure. In essence, its feminism gives way to fascism. Icaza's novel appears to celebrate the newfound independence of women like Cristina in the modern era, yet it also indicates that women must carefully toe the line so as not to abuse their new liberties and thus become immoral, destructive social agents like Fifí, the dangerous type of Modern Woman.

CONCLUSION

Although all four novels in this study describe Madrid and other urban centers, they vary in the authors' perceptions of the geography and experiences of life in the city. This is because "there is no one city but multiple perspectives and views of what is seemingly the same geographic location" (Larson, "Constructing" 31). Thus, it is important to consider the disparate ideologies underlying the authors' representations of these spaces. Certainly, Madrid, in its rapid development, offered modern transportation and new, cosmopolitan zones with elegant architecture like luxury hotels, cinemas, tea salons, and dancehalls. *Eva Libertaria* and *Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas* generally focus on glamorous locations in the city and the leisure activities of its bourgeois and upper-class inhabitants. While Burgos and Díaz Fernández portray Madrid as a capitalist stronghold that exploits its workers, López de Haro and Icaza depict a more inviting city, full of excitement and opportunities. However, as the center of industrialization, cities in Europe became "a place of decay, poverty, social malaise and civil unrest" (40). Specifically, in Madrid, especially during Primo de Rivera's dictatorship and the Second Republic, urban planning was increasingly organized around the prestigious image of capital, regardless of political regime (46-47). By 1929, Primo de Rivera's regime had no control over the deteriorating conditions and political unrest in Madrid as population growth continued to soar and unsanitary, dangerous impromptu housing was constructed all over the city (51). For this reason, *La rampa* and *La Venus mecánica* illustrate the destitute aspect of working-class Madrid and the experiences of impoverished city-dwellers, particularly women, who often resort to prostitution in order to support themselves.

All of the novels in this study feature female protagonists who are *desclasadas* suddenly in the position of having to find employment to survive. Although both *Eva Libertaria* and *Cristina Guzman, profesora de idiomas* focus on the novelty of the careerwoman, Icaza's novel scarcely features the protagonist in her occupation. Cristina's work is merely symbolic and temporary, as the relationship she has with the American magnate is the focal point of the novel, and the successful cultivation of this relationship allows her to leave the workforce. The various scenes in *Eva Libertaria* that describe Luisa and Jacqueline in their respective work environments emphasize the emasculating power that careerwomen wield—a power that distances them from men and makes them unsuitable for marriage. In contrast, the working women in *La rampa* and *La Venus mecánica* are victims of industrialized, capitalist cities that exploit them and violate their bodies. Leadership positions are unattainable for these female characters, as finding decent employment proves to be extremely difficult, if not impossible. The narrators of both novels express empathy for the female protagonists, who have to prostitute themselves in order to survive. In *Eva Libertaria* and *Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas*, on the other hand, prostitution is relegated to the underbelly of society, inhabited by women who choose to sell their bodies because they are lacking in virtue or dignity. *La rampa* and *La Venus mecánica* are the only works in this study that address the reality of the difficulties that women faced due to sexual discrimination and exploitation, while the other two novels focus more on the glamorous, cosmopolitan image of the Modern Woman and the ideological dangers that she poses to society with her frivolity, superficiality, feminism, and insistence on being independent, even when she is able to rely on men.

In *La Venus mecánica,* Díaz Fernández appears to employ the structure of a typical romance novel in which a beautiful, young, hardworking heroine finds herself "abandoned to a cruel world until she cleverly manages to redeem her situation by hooking a rich man who will save her from certain doom and launch her into a safe, bourgeois existence" (Larson, "The Commodification" 289). In this way, *La Venus mecánica* begins with a premise similar to *Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas*. However, Díaz Fernández "paints a different picture" from romance novels in that the wealthy man is not the woman's salvation, but rather, a cross to bear (289). Thus, Díaz Fernández plays on conventions of the types of romance novels and serials published in newspapers at the time, but he gives his story a socialist twist. The love between Obdulia and Víctor also fails to conform to romantic conventions. Their love story is more of "una exaltación de lo humano y no una historia sentimental al uso de la época" (Vicente Hernando xxxii). This celebration of humanity restored through revolution stands in stark contrast to the exaltation of authority, conformity, modernity, and capitalism found in *Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas*.

Although on different sides of the political spectrum, López de Haro and Díaz Fernández present some overlapping ideas regarding the Modern Woman in their novels. Like Díaz Fernández, López de Haro often refers to his protagonist as "Venus." The evocation of this powerful, erotic female figure is emblematic of the dangerous sensuality that their protagonists use to debilitate men. Furthermore, with their detailed descriptions of women's bodies and the alluring illustrations of the protagonists on their book covers, both Díaz Fernández and López de Haro exploited the eroticism of the Modern Woman in order to increase sells of their novels. The protagonists of both novels are superior to

other women, but their emancipated, modern lifestyles can also be pernicious. In essence, the protagonists serve as instruments of destruction of Spain's patriarchal, capitalist society. However, the two authors demonstrate differing attitudes regarding the connotation of this destruction. From the vantage point of Díaz Fernández, the obliteration of traditional Spanish institutions and ideologies would facilitate the socialist revolution, resulting in a more equitable, utopian society. For López de Haro, on the other hand, socialism, communism, and anarchism threaten to dismantle the very foundations of Spanish society, including its biological constitution and the family unit. The monarchist author envisioned feminism and the emancipated Modern Woman, with her feminist beliefs, as an agent of chaos and a harbinger of a dystopian matriarchal society.

Analysis of these novels also reveals underlying Victorian beliefs regarding the street harassment of women. These encounters were seemingly more revelatory of the female protagonist's reputation or moral fiber than that of the men encroaching on the woman. Consequently, it is her response that proves her degree of innocence and respectability. All of the novels in this study, with the exception of *La rampa*, ascribe responsibility to the victim of harassment, rather than to the perpetrator. In *Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas*, women rarely, if ever, experience sexual harassment, and when they are the objects of unwanted sexual attention, the protagonist is quick to identify the woman as the culprit for failing to defend her virtue and for not putting a man in his place. In *Eva Libertaria*, there is a sense of joy and great freedom of movement as the protagonist explores Madrid, Barcelona, and Paris. In contrast with *La rampa*, Luisa enjoys autonomy without fear of predatory men at work or in the many public spaces she frequents, even when unaccompanied at night. Women in *Eva Libertaria* appear to be in

control, as they hold sexual power over men, and any perceived harassment is dismissed as flattery or a mere nuisance. In *La Venus mecánica*, representations of sexual harassment focus on injury to the male ego rather than on women's experience of intimidation, fear, or danger. Harassment and pursuit of women in the streets is viewed as courtship in the novel, and the only threat is to the man's pride when he is rejected. Even when exploited, women appear to possess the ultimate control of sexuality and sexual encounters.

In contrast, women in *La rampa* are besieged by predatory men who follow them in the streets, the workplace, and elsewhere, leering and directing obscene comments and gestures at them. Burgos differs from her contemporaries who wrote modern novels with a Victorian sentiment of feminine honor. Rather than depict women as dangerous temptresses or fragile victims without agency, in *La rampa* Burgos illustrates city life from a female perspective, portraying women's agency through the struggle of her female characters to survive in a hostile, patriarchal society. *La rampa* steps away from the zeitgeist of the Modern Woman as an agent of disorder. Burgos doesn't present the Modern Woman as a threat, but rather demonstrates the inevitable consequences of the lack of job preparation and opportunities for women, as well as the threat of male predatory behavior. In *La rampa*, Burgos presents a celebratory image of the Modern Woman, and it is the hostile social and economic conditions in Madrid that represent the true danger. Through her novel, Burgos raises awareness of the perils that women faced on the streets and in the workplace as a result of their tenuous economic position in a patriarchal, industrialized center that exploits and discriminates against them.

All of these texts are indicative of anxieties concerning the subversion of traditional gender roles and the perceived masculinization of women in the early 1900s. Although gender dynamics transformed dramatically in the ideological and political context of the Spanish Second Republic, this period was too short to have made a lasting impact on social standards and life practices regarding conceptions of masculinity and femininity (Aguado 221). Furthermore, the Franco dictatorship, which lasted from the end of the Civil War in 1939 until his death in 1975, hailed the revivification of traditional gender roles and lead to significant setbacks in terms of the women's emancipation movement. This is because "el franquismo se propuso una vuelta a un pasado idealizado en el que las mujeres se limitaran a ser madres y esposas" (Caamaño Alegre 422).

With the understanding that literature is a means and forum in which a society defines itself and conceives the world, one can consider works of fiction as historical documents that, through their common themes, reflect the debates and global shifts of an era. The various manifestations of the Modern Woman illustrated in these four novels are representative of the varied and conflicting views regarding her role in society, depending on the ideological stance of the author. Consequently, this controversial female figure was simultaneously depicted as both in danger and dangerous to modern society. When reflecting on representations of her more active participation in the workplace and in public affairs, it is clear that the image of the Modern Woman was a turning point in gender relations and the initiation of the women's emancipation movement. Most of the activities and occupations previously heralded as inappropriate for women are still popular today but are now widely accepted as gender neutral. Although in the twenty-first

century women now have more opportunities for work and education and there are a number of laws meant to protect women from discrimination, harassment and assault, public spaces and the workplace can still be hostile and dangerous for women—as evidenced by the number of women who have recently shared their experiences of sexual harassment, assault, and rape through the #metoo movement. Because the objectification of women remains common practice in popular culture and many men still view women in public spaces as sexually accessible, there is still room for progress. After all, a woman should never be in danger of sexual harassment or assault, nor should women's authority or sexuality be considered dangerous or emasculating, as continues to be the case in reiterations of the *femme fatale* and in the misperceptions of feminism in popular culture.

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APPENDIX

La rampa (1917) by Carmen de Burgos

La rampa tells the story of Isabel and Agueda, two young, single women, among many, living and working in modern Madrid. Both are orphans struggling to find and keep work in a city seemingly hostile toward women. Agueda hails from a working-class family—her father was a cobbler and her mother a laundress—that migrated from the countryside to the capital. Isabel is a *desclasada*, having lost her bourgeois social standing after the recent death of her father, who was a commission agent. After his death, Isabel initially considers finding work deemed more respectable for a *señorita*, like providing services for a wealthy family as a teacher, governess, or chaperone. Yet, her limited, middle-class education impedes Isabel as she competes with other, more qualified candidates who have work experience and training. As her financial situation becomes dire, she resigns herself to working in a workshop, factory, or store. Finally, Isabel is able to get a job working at the *Bazar*—a precursor to the modern department store—in the commercial center of Madrid, where she meets Agueda. The two friends work long hours as salesclerks at the *Bazar*, where they must tolerate the incessant harassment of male customers. Isabel, Agueda, and all other female characters who are at work, in restaurants, traversing city streets alone, or riding trollies, are constantly harassed by men with their prolonged stares, lewd remarks and unwanted touch.

Isabel falls in love with a young, professional man named Fernando. After their initial courtship, he becomes controlling and frequently berates Isabel. Eventually, Fernando begins to distance himself from her. Isabel realizes that she is pregnant, and he reacts angrily, accusing her of scheming to trap him. Fernando abandons Isabel, leaving

her with no support for her or the child. Isabel loses her job due to the physical constraints of her pregnancy, and she moves in with Agueda and Agueda's aunt. Having lost her only source of income, Isabel must give birth at a charitable maternity hospital, the *Casa de Maternidad*, among other desperate, abandoned women. Malnourished, Isabel gives birth to a sickly daughter whom she names Fernandita. After Isabel leaves the *Casa de Maternidad* with Fernandita, Agueda reunites Isabel and Fernando, and Isabel attempts to live the confined, domestic life of the *ángel del hogar.* She is unable to breastfeed, so she has to regularly go to the charitable institution the *Gota de Leche* to get milk and to see a doctor. Agueda continues working at the *Bazar*, and Isabel feels isolated and unhappy in the home that she shares with Fernando. Fernandita's health suffers, becoming weaker as she continues to lose weight. Fernandita eventually dies, and Fernando leaves Isabel once again. Isabel is now abandoned, indebted, and without any means of supporting herself. In contrast, Agueda's relationship with their friend Joaquín, a young revolutionary, has grown into a happy and stable romance. Agueda and Joaquín both continue to work in order to equitably maintain their peaceful household.

Isabel attempts to rent out rooms from her house to support herself, but she cannot find any potential tenants who would want to stay in such a modest home. She then sells the few pieces of furniture she possesses, including her bed and mattress. One evening, policemen patrolling the streets mistake Isabel for a prostitute and chase and corral her among a throng of frightened women. Despite her protests, she is detained and lead to the government building with the prostitutes. Having convinced the inspector of her innocence and decency, Isabel is released. She subsequently becomes ill and hides at home for several days to recover from her fever and the fear and shame she experienced.

Once again, Isabel cannot find employment, so she turns to a job agency, which leads her to work as a nursemaid in a bourgeois household, where she is mistreated by spoiled, disrespectful children who believe themselves to be superior to her. The protagonist loses all connections with her friends, including Agueda, who is now the mother of a beautiful, healthy son. By the end of the novel, Isabel has resigned herself to a life of misery and servitude. She is fired from her job as governess after she smacks the children under her care for mocking a drunk woman outside of their house. With no home, no job, and no other recourse, Isabel must take refuge at the *Colegio de Criadas*, a poorhouse where maids are trained and hired. At this point, Isabel feels that her descent from being a servant, to a beggar, then eventually, to a prostitute is inevitable.

***La Venus mecánica* (1929) by José Díaz Fernández**

The male protagonist is Víctor Murias, a middle-class journalist and socialist conspirator in Madrid who sympathizes with the proletariat. At the beginning of the novel, Víctor meets Elvira and Edith after he pursues Elvira in the street. Víctor visits a cabaret, where he meets a dancer named Obdulia. Víctor repeatedly comes to the cabaret and becomes close to Obdulia, learning about her background. Although she comes from a middle-class family, Obdulia is obligated to work because her bankrupt father abandoned her. Despite her occupation, Obdulia is a cosmopolitan woman who received a fine education and lived in various metropolitan centers like Córdoba, London, and Barcelona. However, her bourgeois lifestyle quickly came to an end at the age of seventeen, when her father left for America. To support her mother and herself Obdulia then worked as a *señorita de compañía*. When Obdulia quit because she was being tormented by her clients, she was only met with further injury, as she had to endure her

mother's physical and verbal abuse. Her mother tried to force Obdulia to marry a policeman who she discovered is actually her mother's lover. Eventually, Obdulia fled Barcelona to fend for herself in Madrid.

Víctor continues to visit the cabaret every day in order to see Obdulia. He hates seeing Obdulia in the arms of other men, so Víctor tells her to leave the cabaret. Obdulia asks him how she is supposed to support herself, and he offers to help her. She refuses, however, because she does not want to feel like he is buying her affection. Obdulia will only accept his financial support if Víctor agrees to cohabitate, but he hesitates because he does not want to tie himself down. A few days later, Obdulia leaves the cabaret in order to be an actress in a film that an acquaintance, Esperanza, plans to make. However, days, weeks, then months pass, and Obdulia still has not gotten word of when the filming will begin. Ultimately, the film turns out to be a pipedream sold by a frivolous woman who fishes for money just to spend it all on a luxurious lifestyle until moving on to the next opportunity. Now in a financial bind, Obdulia is desperate for employment. When Obdulia confesses how desperate she is for work, Esperanza recommends that she find a rich lover, because pretty girls can always find men to pay the bills, she flippantly remarks. Obdulia is horrified by this proposition, particularly because she does not want to ruin her relationship with Víctor. However, Obdulia loses her moral qualms when she sees him accompanying another woman. Obdulia agrees to meet with a fifty-year-old magistrate, but when he tries to have sex with her, she refuses. Obdulia then becomes a fashion model for *Casa Dupont*, traveling by train to northern Spain with doña Blanca, a tailor for the company.

After Obdulia leaves Víctor, he contemplates suicide, but he recovers by reading the biography of Lenin, written by Trotski. He becomes a militant revolutionary, writing articles critical of the government and promoting socialist revolution. When he publishes an article in several American and European publications criticizing censorship, he is warned by the police to write with more discretion. Meanwhile, Obdulia eventually becomes the mistress of Sebastián, an Asturian mining millionaire who she met on the train. Obdulia comes to empathize with Sebastián's mineworkers, who he exploits, and she relates to their struggle with poverty. Obdulia eventually returns to Madrid to live in a flat lavishly furnished by Sebastián. There, she consciously makes him uneasy and miserable with her disdain and inaccessibility as punishment for exploiting both her and the workers. Obdulia finally leaves Sebastián when she discovers that she is carrying his child. She is reunited with Víctor, and he helps her to get an abortion in Paris.

Obdulia returns to Madrid and recovers from her procedure. One day, she attempts to traverse the city streets during a worker's strike in order to see Víctor. Obdulia witnesses the injustice of the police brutality towards the protesters, and she is injured when she is caught between the protesters and the guards. When a doctor is tending to her wounds, he informs Obdulia that she is pregnant. This time she is excited about her maternity, however, because the father is Víctor. Obdulia gives birth to a child with failing health. One day, Police come to their home with a search warrant to look for communist propaganda, and they take Víctor to jail. While he is in jail, their infant dies from typhoid fever. Obdulia then visits Víctor in jail and vows to join him in his revolutionary plans to get vengeance for the injustices that she has endured.

***Eva Libertaria* (1933) by Rafael López de Haro**

The protagonist and titulary "Eva Libertaria" of the novel is Luisa. The novel begins media res on April 14, 1931, when Luisa is awakened by Nuria, the housekeeper at Luisa's modest pension. Luisa goes swimming before heading to work at the Metro-Film, where she translates articles, advertisements, and movie dialogues. She runs into Alberto Merino, another resident at the pension, who talks to her about communism and accompanies her as she walks to work. Later, the protagonist and two sisters who also live in the pension attend a communist meeting in order to hear Merino speak. When the delegate interrupts him and ends the meeting, the audience protests and begins to panic. Luisa is dragged into the crowd, but she is saved, and she hides under the floorboards of the theater alongside Merino. The calvary appear and arrest Merino, and Luisa visits him in jail. After he is released, the revolutionary briefly disappears, and he returns to the pension suffering from a gunshot to his leg and a fever as a result of an infection. Conveniently, Luisa studied nursing in her past, and she is able to cure him. At this juncture, the narrative returns to the conversation between Luisa and Merino as he escorts her to work.

In their discussion, Luisa reveals that her aristocratic mother died when she was young. Shortly after that, when Luisa was fourteen years old, her father sent her away to a convent school, where she studied until she was eighteen years old, alongside aristocratic young women and the daughters of the *nouveau riche*. During summers, Luisa traveled abroad with her father, who is a professor, as he gave conferences on ancient history. After one of her summers abroad, Luisa refused to return to the convent school, because she wanted to keep her father company. One day, he informed Luisa that

she will not inherit the wealth of her maternal family, who disapprove of the marriage between Luisa's mother and her father, a commoner. In addition, her father spent what little wealth he had on the medical expenses of Luisa's dying mother and on Luisa's fine education. Luisa then understood that she will either have to marry a wealthy man or work for a living. At the wedding of her friend Mimo Gandarias, Luisa met Count Pencho, a sportsman. Pencho dedicated much of his time to Luisa in the following months, and she fell in love with him. During a ski trip with her friends, Luisa resolved to determine the nature of their relationship. Pencho said that he loved her, but the next morning, Luisa received a brief letter from the count informing her that he is leaving for Switzerland. Heartbroken and humiliated, Luisa became ill and did not leave the house for two months. After her father passed away, she then moved to Barcelona to work at the Metro-Film. In the two years that followed, Luisa studied and acquired a prestigious position at the company. The narration then returns to April 14, 1931, when Luisa leaves work that day and learns of the proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic and the abdication of King Alfonso XIII.

At the Metro-Film, Luisa's manager asks her to entertain Alice, a German businesswoman, on behalf of the company. While accompanying Alice at a dancehall, Luisa sees her old friend Polito, who has recently come to Barcelona, and they reconnect. She introduces Polito to Merino, and they argue about politics, but they form a friendship based on their mutual estimation of Luisa. Before leaving Spain, Alice introduces Luisa to Jacqueline, a feminist who becomes her close friend and guide. Luisa decides to spend the summer in a hotel in the mountains with Polito's aunt, Clemencia. There, she meets Heriberto Revilla, a young, sickly academic taking respite at the hotel with his parents, as

ordered by his physicians. Luisa observes the effect that she has on Heriberto and resolves to make him fall in love and marry her. Luisa visits Mimo at her villa in Guadarrama and discusses her desire to marry and have children. Mimo's husband then returns home with an unexpected dinner guest: Pencho. Luisa behaves in a cold, condescending manner towards Pencho, who is left impressed by her beauty. The next day, Luisa returns to the hotel and attends a party, during which she meets Heriberto's parents, who are protective of their son and wary of Luisa. Clemencia must go to Madrid for a few days, and Luisa decides to accompany her. Before leaving, Luisa insists that Heriberto inform his parents of his intention to marry her and to let her know of their decision.

While Luisa is in Madrid, Pencho approaches her in the street, and he tells her that leaving her was a mistake and that he is miserable in his loveless marriage. Luisa is dismissive of him, but they arrange to meet for dinner that night. In her hotel room, Luisa finds a letter from Heriberto explaining that his parents are forcing him to leave and that he cannot disobey them. After her dinner with Pencho, he confesses that he has always loved her, but he was afraid that she just wanted him for his money and his aristocratic title. Luisa insists that the only solution is for him to divorce his wife, but Pencho worries that this would cause too much of a scandal, so he insinuates that Luisa could be his lover instead. In response, Luisa laughs at Pencho, calls him a coward, and makes him drive her back to Madrid. Later that morning, Polito and Clemencia come to Luisa's room frantic because Polito was a conspirator in a failed coup against the Second Republic. Pencho was also one of the conspirators, and no one has heard from him since the night before. Luisa then returns to Barcelona earlier than expected because she received a letter

informing her that the manager of the Metro-Film is leaving, and they have offered her his position. Luisa will not accept the position unless Merino agrees to work for her, because she needs someone trustworthy by her side. Merino accepts. In order to evade police suspicion that he is a conspirator, Merino begins to play the part of a bourgeois man who has abandoned his communist ideals. Eventually, Merino and Luisa become lovers.

Meanwhile, Polito is hiding out in Barcelona with a group of communists that Merino knows as he waits for an opportunity to take refuge in France. Polito stays in the home of the widow Montserrat and her son Fulgencio, who soon reveals that he knows that Polito is a monarchist. Polito accidentally gets caught up in a scheme to build bombs in order to incite an anarchist revolution. Polito resolves to disappear immediately, but first he attempts to help Montserrat by bringing one of her daughters back to live with her. Fulgencio takes Polito to his sister, who is in a seedy cabaret in a literal underworld beneath the city. Polito discovers that the sister is a prostitute dying of syphilis, but she refuses to come back to Montserrat's home, because she does not want to upset her mother. The next day, Merino insists that Polito has to continue his farse of being a communist until he leaves Barcelona, because otherwise they will think that he is an informant. Jacqueline gives Polito the passport of Renaudet, a teacher who works for her at the language school. Jacqueline gives Polito the French man's clothing and luggage, and Polito goes to dinner with him in order to study his life, his accent, and his signature in order to pass an interrogation. The next morning, Polito goes to Luisa's home and warns her that the communists are planning to start a national revolution that Sunday, and the repression is going to be severe. Polito then takes the train to France.

At work, Merino asks Luisa for permission to go on a trip for four days, and during that time he helps organize the revolution. On January 8, 1933, Merino meets with Luisa, and she tries to keep him from participating in the uprising. She blocks the door, but he throws her to the ground and leaves. That night, Jacqueline and Luisa decide to eat at a restaurant in the city center to witness and hear news of the uprising, which proved to be ineffectual because few revolutionaries participated. When the two women return to Luisa's house, they find her home filled with guards, police officers, doctors, journalists, and photographers because Merino was shot by the police and his comrades left him at her home. The guards had arrived as these revolutionaries were leaving Luisa's home and shot them. One of them—Fulgencio—died as a result. Merino dies in her bed, and Luisa becomes a local celebrity when a letter that she had written to Merino is published in the press, along with various articles and portraits of her.

Luisa goes to Paris on behalf of the Metro-Film in order to broker a lucrative deal with *Casa Monti*, and Jacqueline joins her. While she is in Paris, Luisa takes a lover named Giovanni Stella, a famous Italian novelist. Polito, who is living well in Paris, meets with Luisa and informs her that Pencho is also in Paris and wishes to see her. Luisa spends eight days with Pencho, but she ultimately sends him away, because she no longer loves him. Before Luisa returns to Barcelona, Polito attempts to intercede for Pencho, who is determined to do anything to avoid losing Luisa. However, she refuses his proposition to marry her. The novel concludes with Luisa taking a vacation in Niza to celebrate with Jacqueline, Emmanuel Monti, and her Italian lover. At the French hotel, she reads a letter from Polito that informs her of Pencho's death and of Heriberto's grave condition.

***Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas* (1936) by Carmen de Icaza**

The protagonist, Cristina Guzmán, is a twenty-eight-year-old widow who teaches private language classes in Madrid in order to support herself and her four-year-old son Bubi after her husband's death. One of her clients has fired her, and Cristina must consider another way to make a living. A man comes to her door and informs her that he is the secretary of Prynce-Valmore, an American multimillionaire who is offering to pay her to come to Paris and temporarily assume the identity of Countess Fifí Monterreal, the millionaire's absent daughter-in-law, who she strongly resembles. While she is there, Cristina must stay at the bedside of his son Joe, who suffers from a heart ailment and is deeply depressed after Fifí abandoned him, in order to lift his spirits and assist in his recovery. Cristina accepts this offer, stays in their mansion in Paris, wears the refined clothing of a countess, and nurtures Joe. His health begins to improve, but Joe experiences a great setback when Fifí suddenly comes to the mansion and demands more money from Joe and his father. She complains about her new life of poverty and the mistake she made by marrying Joe in the first place. Fifí tells Joe that Cristina is just a woman that his father pays to take care of him, and when Joe sees the two women in the same room, he is driven to madness. When Fifí looks Cristina in the face, she realizes that Cristina is her half-sister who she has not seen since they were separated as children. Fifí then leaves Joe, once again, in poor health. Later, when a group of wealthy women attempts to mock Cristina's lowly origins, she finally reveals that her father is Count Monterreal, and thus, she is actually a countess. Despite Cristina's attempts to save Joe, he dies, and she visits Fifí to inform her of his death. The sisters then discuss the two different paths they took in their lives. Cristina returns to her home in Madrid, and Prynce

appears at her door and proposes marriage. She happily accepts and looks forward to staying at home to take care of her son.

VITA

Holly Villines grew up in Little Rock, Arkansas where she was yearbook editor of Little Rock Central High School, historic site of the "Little Rock Nine." After graduating, she attended the University of Missouri-Columbia, where she received her Bachelor of Arts in Print Journalism, also minoring in Spanish. She then pursued a career in Spanish-English translation and interpretation and teaching Spanish. Before moving to Illinois, she was also a literacy tutor and instructor of English as a Second Language with AmeriCorps in Little Rock. She attended Southern Illinois University and received a Master of Arts in Spanish. Subsequently, she pursued a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Spanish, specializing in early twentieth-century Peninsular literature.