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10. SUMMARY

The end of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) meant the end of the Second Republic and the beginning of the Franco regime: a totalitarian, semi-fascist regime in which all democratic liberties came to an end. For a long time Franco would be the sole reigning power, supported by a fascist organization of the 1930's called the Falange, monarchists and other groups from the pre-Civil War right wing.

The Spanish Second Republic (1931-1939) had been a sparkling period of an enormous scientific and cultural élan. The Instituto Libre de Enseñanza, founded in 1878 by the Krausist Francisco Giner de los Ríos (1839-1915), had contributed splendidly to this effort by educating numerous intellectuals, artists, scientists, educators, and philosophers. These people shared high moral standards, open minds, and a deep scientific interest in the nature and culture of Spain and in the world outside of Spain. After the relatively mild dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera, Spain became a republic, a period of great liberalization started, and the country quickly developed into one of the most modern and impressive states of Europe.

The 1930's, however, in Spain as in the rest of Europe, was a period of sharp ideological contrasts that exploded in brutal violence and aggression, and culminated in the Civil War.

After the Civil War, those who won behaved like triumphators, and those who lost the war fell into oblivion. A great many of the losers, including most prominent scientists, intellectuals and artists, left the country in voluntary or forced exile. A number of them ended up in concentration camps, where a few died, and the others were just set aside, marginalized. The reality of the early 1940's was, on one hand, a people immersed in mourning and poverty, and on the other hand, the victorious: the large landowners, the generals and Falangist leaders, and last, but not least the Catholic Church, which welcomed the victory as a godsend. As a consequence of the total isolation in which Spain found itself until 1948, its economy barely recovered, and black markets flourished openly.

The Second Republic's ongoing educational and cultural developments were abruptly broken off and diverted to dovetail with the Regime's official policy. Once again, Catholicism became the religion of the State and education came back under the control of the Church.

Franco liked to compare his crusade against everything "that Marxism has left us" with the age-old crusade of the Spanish against the Moors. The imperialist past of Spain was idealized: the unification of Spain under the Catholic Monarchs, and the era of Charles V and Philip II, when Spain ruled half of the world. An omnipresent censorship, reinforced by severe punishments, kept a stringent watch, making rebellion and evasion almost impossible.

Among the democratic liberties that were withdrawn were the recently acquired rights of the woman: she immediately lost her economic, juridical and sexual independence, and was thrown back to the submissive, serving role of matrimony. The status of the married woman rose sharply, as creating large families was of the utmost importance due to population loss caused by the bloody war. During the Civil War the women's section of the Falange, the Sección Femenina, had already seized control of women's education. No girl or young woman escaped the Servicio Social, the compulsory six-month course, which instructed women in all sorts of domestic subjects, as well as in religion and politics.

Although certainly not all women suffered under the new circumstances - the Spanish woman could be called predominantly conservative - Ana María Matute undoubtedly spoke for a great many when she referred to the post-war era as the "horrors of the peace".

The novel had not flourished during the first three decades of the 20th Century. After the Generation of 1898, the novel experienced a crisis, barely existing during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. Under the influence of Ortega y Gasset's ideas, an intellectualist novel did indeed exist, but it was of little importance in Spain and only a small audience had read and understood it. After the Crash of 1929 and probably also as a consequence of a new awareness, counterbalancing Europe's raising fascism and inspired by Russian Marxism, works that could be labelled social-realist novels were published between 1930 and 1936. Such authors were Sender, Arderius, Díaz Fernández, Arconada and a few others. This generation, called the "promoción truncada", was never able to develop fully, having been cut off by the Civil War and its aftermath. Their names were quickly erased by Franco's regime and sank completely into oblivion: the new generation had no knowledge of them.

Apart from a few qualified novelists like Azorín and Baroja, the post-war cultural scene, which the essayist José Luis Abellán characterized as an intellectual desert, was dominated by nationalists like Tomás Borrás, José María Pemán, Rafael García Serrano, Juan Antonio Zunzunegui and Concha Espina, in other words, mediocre authors, who took advantage of the situation.

If the 1950's can clearly be considered the episode of the social novel, no literary label can be affixed to the 1940's. The 1940's merely embroidered on a sort of conservative realism, which breathed pessimism and disillusion. Those years also saw an abundance of *literatura amable o luminosa*, light entertainment literature by Spanish authors, especially women, as well as large quantities of literature imported from abroad. Though Cela's *La familia de Pascual Duarte* (1942) cannot really be considered a realist novel, it emphatically shows the more unpleasant and scabrous side of life. This rough novel was a raving success with a public that was not accustomed to much, and it would be classified in most literary manuals under the banner of *Tremendismo*. *Nada* (1945) by Carmen Laforet, the second great success in those years, is also categorized under the *Tremendismo* or under the *Realismo existencial*.

Small cracks in the steel armour of the censorship began to show in 1945, caused by the downfall of fascist states in Europe and by the rising realisation of some within Franco's regime that some connection with ideas and movements abroad should be pursued. This *apertura* (opening-up) continued in such a way that in the 1950's a real *novela social* could thrive and strive to be a documentation of the terrible abuses in the Spanish society, rather than be a *novela*.

Most literary manuals classify the female authors who published in the 1940's under different movements and generations, or as authors unaffiliated with any movement, but more often they do not even mention these women. The author Carmen Laforet stands out with her successful and award winning novel *Nada*, and she is often noted as the only author of some importance. Ana María Matute is mostly considered as belonging to the generation of the 1950's, probably because of her youth (she was born in 1926). A deep and detailed research of female novels of the 1940's in Spain, to my knowledge, has never been undertaken, though historiography slowly shows more interest in the *alta posguerra* in all its facets, and, due to the development of feminist

literary criticism, novels by female authors that had been ignored for years are being re-appreciated.

Circumstances were not very favourable for those female authors of the 1940's. Censorship was an important factor, a watching eye that ensured, so that the official norms were not violated with regard to the guidelines for sexual morality, political opinion, use of language and religion. For the authors this frequently resulted in self-censorship. Those authors who did not opt for the *novela rosa*, the light novel with the inevitable happy ending, in which the heroine after some resistance finally ends up in the arms of her hero (these novels posed no danger in the eyes of the authorities), were in trouble. However, it stands to reason that the more serious authors did rebel against their fate, that means concretely against the subjection and the domestication of the women in Franco's regime. The question was, however, how to evade censorship. Was rebellion possible at all?

My hypothesis is that, in spite of political vetoes and dreadful circumstances, elements of rebellion, of protest most certainly can be found in the works of women in Spain of the 1940's. For my analysis, I selected three specific novels by women based on their literary merit: all three were awarded or nominated for the most important literary distinction of that time, the Premio Nadal. The novels are *Nada* (1945) by Carmen Laforet, *Cinco sombras* (1947) by Eulalia Galvarriato, and *Los Abel* (1948) by Ana María Matute.

For the interpretation of the novels I primarily used theories of the American feminist literary criticism. The last decades gave rise to the notion that the female reader experiences a literary work differently from a male reader. Therefore, it is important to see gender as a crucial factor in the process of interpretation of the literary text. Reading as a woman, as has often been proved, results in different and often wider meanings than the way of reading often presented as general and supposedly gender neutral. The current way of describing literature is likewise designed according to the work of male authors and has frequently proved unsuited to describing the work of women.

Encouraged by the women's movement of the 20th Century, gender studies proposed a new interpretation of women's literature prompting, since the 1970s, extensive research in the area. Not only did a reinterpretation of individual work of female authors take place, but various themes and subjects were viewed in a different light, such as

female characters in the Bible, mythological women, or the woman in Romanticism. Gender studies has also engaged in re-describing and re-defining literary genres, a project of which I made use in this dissertation.

Central to my analysis of the three novels is the concept of framing from the American literary theorist Jonathan Culler. In his book *Framing the Sign* (1988) Culler states that literary criticism increasingly becomes political in nature, frequently engaged with subjects that are not strictly literary, nor viewing literary texts, as previously done, as literature set apart from reality. If there is a unity to contemporary studies, Culler states, it comes from an attention to mechanisms of signification. As we know, texts (signs) are forms with socially defined meanings, and as such, they are read, recognized and studied. To give meaning to the texts we study them in a certain context. We can think of studies, for example, in which the focus is racism, imperialism, or sexism. Culler proposes the use of the term "frame" instead of the notion of "context", as, in his opinion, "context" is rather determinist. "Framing" is something we do: we can decide to research a topic and choose the frame we think most appropriate.

As stated previously, the authors needed to disguise the protest, if any, in the novels as much as possible to evade censorship. The genres appeared as a tool in this process. A literary work always belongs to a certain genre, whether or not consciously chosen by the author. The literary genres should be regarded as institutions with age-old traditions of qualities and characteristics. At the same time censorship also is a powerful institution with its own cadre of views and guidelines. The different literary genres function as weapons, protecting the literary works against the institution of censorship. In view of the somewhat political nature of my dissertation, namely making visible feminine rebellion in an environment hostile to women, Culler's concept of framing has been extremely useful.

This analysis embeds the novels in three genres, all of which are classified as typically feminine. I analyse *Nada* as a gothic novel, *Cinco sombras* as a Spanish 15th-Century *novela sentimental* and *Los Abel* by Ana María Matute as a feminine *Bildungsroman*.

Though the gothic novel is a genre used by many male authors – we can think of the great works of Walpole, Lewis, Godwin, Hawthorne, Poe and Stoker – it can be considered as a type of novel in which the

woman plays a dominating role, namely as a heroine, as a reader, and as an author. The gothic novel rose in England in the latter half of the 18th Century and it was a great success with the public. For a long time the genre was put on a level with the sentimental novel, with which it certainly shared points of similarity. As it was not considered as literature, the genre of the sentimental novel met with disdain. It concerned itself with trivial matters and with the everyday life of women, and, of course, it was too emotional. But in the meantime, feminist scholarship became very interested in the gothic novel.

The world of the gothic novel is the world upside down: charming villains, heroines accosted and fleeing from threatening situations, spooky castles with long, narrow corridors, vampires, creatures half-human and half-animal, ghosts, in short everything we know from ghost stories and horror films. In the meantime, research has established that the gothic novel is a rebellious representation of the patriarchal world, which is not a safe haven for women. By analysing *Nada* as a gothic novel it becomes apparent to what degree the society of the Franco regime was not only an unsafe world for women, but also for men who could not adapt to the heroic image of the strong man offering protection to the weaker woman. The hilarious world of grotesque characters and situations depicted by Laforet in *Nada*, reveals the overly organised society of Franco as one big farce in which hypocrisy reigned. The "gothic" framing of the novel proves to be effective to such an extent that *Nada's* criticism of this society in the gothic chaos of the story was not recognized as such.

The so-called *novela sentimental* has served as cadre for the novel *Cinco sombras* by Eulalia Galvarriato. While the novel is a leap back in time, the similarities between the 15th-Century genre and the 20th-Century novel are conspicuous. As a matter of fact, neither the *novela sentimental* nor *Cinco sombras* is a novel in the strict sense of the word. They are better understood as belonging to a sub-genre of the novel, the "romance", a narrative, often fairytale-like genre, in which frequently an internal narrator speaks. The characters are stylised, just as in fairytales, in contrast to the realist novel, which purposefully places the characters in a social context and which explains human behaviour in terms of that environment. In *Cinco sombras* the narrator does indeed exist, telling the story of the five shadows in the past, while in the *novela sentimental* the story is told in epistolary form.

The relationship between love and death, one that is so obvious in the sentimental genre, has been essential to my research. The *novela sentimental* finds its inspiration in the courtly love, where love is depicted as the homage of the feudal knight to a lady elevated above him and thus idealized. Not being able to obtain the adored drives the knight to despair: the story often ends in death or with self-imposed eternal exile. Invariably, the noble lady is presented as virtuous, radiantly beautiful and but for a few exceptions, relentless. Feminist research now brings a more nuanced approach to this image of heartless beauty. In this perspective, women in the *novela sentimental* try to oppose their role, with little success, however. They do not want to be just the object of the lover, who wants to possess his prey at any price. They, too, have a voice that they want to be heard, and they, too, experience a range of desires that they suppress to preserve their honour. However, the authors of these *novelas sentimentales* were men and they did not permit the women to do otherwise.

The feminine novel of Galvarriato deals with five sisters, daughters of a tyrannical father, who does not allow his daughters any freedom, not even to marry the men they love. The daughters are beautiful and virtuous like the adored damsels in the *novela sentimental*. Their loves, too, end in death: *Cinco sombras* is the story of the deaths of all five sisters. However, it differs from the 15th-Century genre in that in *Cinco sombras* the women are the subjects and not the objects of love. It is women's feelings that we get to know: their loves and their deaths. Their lovers are a sharp contrast to the heroic men of the *novela sentimental*, gentle and insignificant young men. The sheer inhuman cruelty of the father drove the daughters to their death, a cruelty that, like their deaths, is not explained. Until now, why five young women met with death in an otherwise idyllic and tender novel remained a mystery. Comparing the novel with the sentimental genre illuminates the inseparable connection between love and death in both the genre and novel. The death of the five sisters should be interpreted as a rebellion against the patriarchal oppression of woman, a really unparalleled rebellion. Once again, embedding the novel in a frame, that of the sentimental genre, allowed the novel to evade censorship to such an extent that, the novel was heartily recommended "literature for the young".

The third and last novel, *Los Abel* by Ana María Matute, I have interpreted as a feminine *Bildungsroman*. The *Bildungsroman* relates the

search for the purpose in life, the inner and gradual growth of a young person, and is characterized by resistance from the main character. When this young person is a man, he has to endure disappointments and adversity before reaching some sort of ideal attitude toward life. The adolescent in the feminine *Bildungsroman* or development-novel has to learn that almost no search is in store for her. When she is almost an adult, she must allow herself to realise that she has very few choices. From one dependent position, that of a daughter, she moves to the next stage of dependency, that of a wife. Sooner or later she must realise the boundaries that society imposes on her, and from which there is no escape. Many heroines react to this perspective with despair, apathy or rebellion.

By reading Matute's novel as a *Bildungsroman*, the passive, as well as active, rebellion of the seventeen year-old motherless protagonist, Valba, is obvious. Though despair and frustration are apparent in her behaviour she first tries to adapt somewhat to her situation. At her wit's end and for lack of a better alternative, she almost lets herself be lured into a marriage to Eloy, a man she does not love. However, her father's death gives her the drive to resist her fate. The second part of the book covers her rebellious phase, which, however, comes to nothing. Back again in the parental home, she rejects marriage to Eloy and remains empty-handed. The end of the book resembles the beginning. The only difference is that Valba is a few years older, which is typical for the circular character of the feminine *Bildungsroman*. Valba has made no progress and the book ends without any prospect, in total stasis, or standstill. In this case framing is effective because censorship considers the rebellious character as an inevitable part of the genre and, therefore, does not take it too seriously.

Embedding the three novels in a frame that encloses and disguises the rebellion, has also had an explanatory function. Each of the three genres has functioned as a model for analysis, enabling the hidden rebellion in each novel to become visible. Particularly in the first two novels, this analysis reveals the hidden rebellion. As for Matute's novel, applying the model of the *Bildungsroman* has sharply marked the heroine's resistance against the destiny of women dictated and applauded by the Franco regime.

While the novel *Nada* has received much scrutiny, literary critique has never ventured beyond labelling the book as ambiguous and ambivalent. The two other novels have certainly never been unmasked as rebellious literature. With this research I hope to give not only a first impulse to a more accurate historiography of the Spanish feminine novels of the 1940's, but also to provide insight into the strategies of three important female authors, who in spite of their problems voiced their protest.

