

**From Rebel Girls to *Chicas Raras*:
The Influence of Elena Fortún's
Celia in Carmen Laforet, Carmen
Martín Gaité and Ana María
Matute**

Ana Puchau de Lecea

orcid.org/0000-0001-6268-4952

Doctor of Philosophy

July 2020

Faculty of Arts

School of Languages and Linguistics

Department of Spanish and Latin American Studies

University of Melbourne

Submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Abstract

In late 1920s' Spain, Elena Fortún (pseudonym of Encarnación Aragoneses, 1886-1952) started publishing "Celia y su mundo", considered the best children's books series of the time. Her innovative character, Celia, tries to make sense of a world dictated by grown-ups and continually attempts to escape their impositions. Through the voice of a character belonging to two traditionally marginalized groups, children and women, Fortún found a way to transmit progressive messages to her readers. However, as she gets older, the character who broke the mould with her transgressive behaviour and convincing speech, gradually adapts to what is expected of her. The historical events reflected in the books range from the final years of Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, to the historical advances of feminism during the Republic and their loss during Franco's dictatorship after the Civil War (1936-1939).

This thesis contends that the *Celia* series planted the seed of postwar *bildungsroman* for Carmen Laforet (1921-2004), Carmen Martín Gaité (1925-2000) and Ana María Matute (1925-2014), who read *Celia* in their childhood and whose novels featured teenage girls fleeing their oppressive households. The trace of Fortún's *Celia* is analysed in the works: *Nada* (1944) and *La isla y los demonios* (1952), by Laforet; *Entre visillos* (1952) and *El cuarto de atrás* (1978), by Martín Gaité; and *Los Abel* (1948) and *Primera memoria* (1959), by Matute.

By breaking the rules of children's literature, usually didactic and moralistic, Fortún created a character that paved the way to arguably the first generation of Spanish women writers. Celia was considered a rebel just because she could not make sense of her status quo, which continually limited her existence to that of a silent secondary character. Frustrated, Celia spoke to her girl readers who considered themselves *raras* for pretty much the same reasons and who created brave, nonconformist female characters years later.

Declaration

This is to certify that:

- I. This thesis comprises only my original work towards the Doctor of Philosophy degree;
- II. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used; and
- III. The thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length exclusive of tables, maps, figures, foreign language examples, bibliographies and appendices.

Ana Puchau de Lecea

2nd July 2020

Acknowledgments

Infinite gratitude to my partner, César, who has supported me in every way during this journey.

Thank you to my supervisors, Professor Alfredo Martínez-Expósito and Professor Vicente Pérez de León, for their guidance and feedback on this thesis. I am forever indebted to Professor Vicente Pérez de León and his family, Alicia Martínez-Marco and their son Marco. Thank you for your trust and generosity over the years. I also want to thank the Chair of my Committee, Dr. Tess Do, for her support and continuous encouragement during my candidature.

Professor Lesley Stirling, Professor Clara Tuite, Associate Professor Birgit Lang, Dr. Mara Favoretto and Dr. Bruce Hurst also contributed time and feedback to this project at different stages –thank you. In addition to my research, during my years at the University of Melbourne I have had the privilege to teach Spanish literature. It has been as challenging as it has been rewarding and I want to thank my students for sharing their insight on complex matters with me. Thank you also for your interest in my research and for your support.

This project would not have existed without my family's *sobremesas* in front of the TV, watching episodes of *Celia*. Thanks to my parents and siblings, la abuela Mari Cruz and la Tía. Together we enjoyed the adventures of a little *madrileña* who would accompany me forever.

I am also indebted to Cristina and Anna, my second family. Thank you for being my refuge since I started feeling like a bit of a *chica rara* myself and for not letting go of my hand from then on. Thanks to my friend Katia and her six brave girls (Sofía, Blanca, Inés, Paula, Estela and Ángela), for being in my life.

So many friends have contributed to the development of this project through genuine interest and support. I would like to thank my colleagues Associate Professor Adriano Duque and Dr. Felipe Muñoz for taking this journey with me even before it started. I am grateful to Sara Tomás for her help and support throughout this project –and beyond. A special thank you goes to Angela Schuster and Lucas Castillo, who have kindly and enthusiastically proofread articles, conferences and chapters since this project began.

I also want to express my gratitude to my Australian family, Bea, Natasha, Riccardo, Melanie and Nadia (and Jordi and Margot), for being by my side during the highs and lows of this project. A big thank you to Alice Brush at the Abbotsford Convent, for welcoming me

into the Kids Program. I also want to thank Margaret Robson Kett and Anna Dollard, for allowing me into their wonderful Kids' Own Publishing universe.

Finally, I would like to thank my sister, María del Mar, who one day went from being a “niña” to a “chica” in the same sentence, suddenly making me the younger sister to have someone to look up to forever.

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Introduction

Aim of the thesis and Research Questions

In 1928, by creating *Celia*, Elena Fortún (Encarnación Aragoneses 1886-1952) used the tradition of the child as a marginal character and the use of their voice as a literary device to convey unpopular messages. Through the first person narration of a seven year old girl, Fortún offered a child-centered perspective, which was radical and new –and became an unprecedented success. Years later, after the Spanish Civil War, and under Franco's Dictatorship, the novel *Nada* (1944) by Carmen Laforet initiated a literary "boom" in stories of growth featuring female adolescents written by women. Carmen Martín Gaité's and Ana María Matute's novels also reflect a stifling context representing post-war Spain. These writers connect the use of young female characters with the underrepresentation of women writers and female characters in Spanish literature.

As will be explained, girls belong to a double minority: children and women. This is a fact which will inform the assessment of Fortún's contribution to the history of Spanish literature, in which a rebel girl from a series of children's books influenced, years later, the appearance of a generation of recognized women writers. Laforet (who shared correspondence with Fortún when she became a famous writer), Martín Gaité and Matute read *Celia* in their childhood and acknowledged the impact Fortún had on their writing. This intertextual and intergenerational relationship raised the following research questions:

1. What impact did Elena Fortún have in 1940s-1950s Spanish literature? How should her place in the Spanish literary canon be reconsidered?
2. What is the evolution (or involution) of Celia's character throughout the series? How is it related to historical events and changing ideologies?
3. Is there a continuity in Spanish pre and post-war narrative? How are authors and characters from before and after the conflict connected?
4. How does the tradition of the sincere marginal character communicating subversive messages contribute to this continuity?

Methodology

I will answer these questions through the close reading of the ten volumes that constitute the *Celia* series and six novels by the previously mentioned postwar women writers: Laforet,

Martín Gaité and Matute. My literary analysis will focus on tracing the common themes between the two sets of readings, considering how historical events impacted on the characters and their authors. This thesis vindicates Fortún's place in the history of Spanish literature, highlighting the influence of Fortún's *Celia* in key female authors of postwar Spain. Hence, this thesis is framed within the literary criticism that, through a Feminist lens, tries to recover forgotten women writers and their works (Arkininstall 2014; Bermúdez and Johnson 2018; Balló 2016; Bieder 2018; Bravo-Guerreira and Maharg-Bravo 2003; Caamaño Alegre 2007; Capdevila-Argüelles 2008; Pérez and Ihrle 2002). Moreover, I will be using Childhood Studies to contextualize the implications that different concepts of childhood have on the creation and reception of child characters.

During the last decade, the rise of critical perspectives such as Feminism and Race Studies has restored voice to those characters that at the time had not been given adequate attention. The fact that the voice of children is currently being studied means that until recently it has been disregarded, and as Locke (2011) warned, there is a risk of ownership and of an interested reading of this voice. From the perspective of the adult world, the child represents "the other," as they were either female characters or racial minorities, but with the difference that, although they were unheeded, they could use their own words. A detailed account of childhood and femininity as socially constructed concepts is proposed, according to the authors and characters analysed, particularly focusing on the girl, the main character of Fortún's *Celia* series.

Summary of Chapters

My thesis being structured into three chapters will facilitate the elaboration of my research questions. The first one examines the tradition of the literary representation of children as truth tellers. In the second chapter, I analyze the evolution of *Celia*, greatly dependent on the historical, political and ideological changes that affected Fortún. Finally, the third chapter examines Fortún's impact on the works of Laforet, Martín Gaité and Matute.

The first chapter, *Children and Fools Tell the Truth*, frames the importance of Fortún and her strategy of using a little girl to convey subversive messages. The chapter presents a threefold approach spanning concepts of childhood, how they affect the representation of children characters in literature, and the presence –or lack thereof, of women writers in Spanish literature. Although through the ages, children, fools and women have not been considered full participants in their societies, the rise of critical perspectives on women and

racial minorities has restored voice to those characters that until recently had not been given enough attention.

Chapter 2, *Elena Fortún and Celia*, examines Fortún's and Celia's evolution depending on the historical events in Spain over different time periods. In late 1920s' Spain, Fortún (1886–1952) started publishing “Celia y su mundo,” regarded as the best children's book series of the period. Celia is considered a rebel by grownups because she does not understand the limitations imposed on her and confronts authority. In addition, the combination of Celia's age and gender makes her a daring marginal character. A close reading of the series allows the exploration of the aspirations and frustrations of young girls and women during the Republic until the post-war period, since the character grew up and became an adult in the books Fortún wrote in over more than two decades. Although there is a tendency to recall the non-conformist Celia written before the Civil War, she is not the same kind of character as in later volumes. In these stories, the protagonist seems like an aberration of the original and is forced to conform as she grows up in an increasingly hostile world. The second part of the *Celia* series overlapped with the appearance of a new generation of young female characters who had read the first Celia stories.

Chapter 3, *The Rebel Girl Becomes a Chica Rara*, examines Fortún's impact on the next generation of women writers and their characters, known as *chicas raras*.¹ Laforet, Martín Gaité and Matute read *Celia* in their childhood and acknowledged the impact Fortún had on their literary vocation. Laforet had correspondence with Fortún after winning the Nadal prize for *Nada* in 1944. Moreover, Martín Gaité wrote the prologue for the reprinted works of Fortún in the 1990s, vindicating the influential figure that Fortún represented for writers in the 1950s. Martín Gaité studied the figure of Celia and her author (2002, 2006) and was in charge of the screenplays for the adaptation of *Celia* to television (1993) as well. Likewise, Matute, who admitted becoming a writer after reading children's classics (mostly the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen), acknowledged Fortún as one of the few – if not the only – notable Spanish children's authors when she was a young reader. The shared literary technique adopted by Fortún and the *chicas raras*, using childhood to express a deep sense of isolation and lack of understanding of the world, connects them even though their literary works were published in different social contexts. I examine the factors that explain

¹ The term *chica rara*, coined by Carmen Martín Gaité (1978), could be translated as ‘weird girl,’ ‘rare girl,’ ‘odd girl’ (O’Byrne 1990; Brown 2013), ‘strange girl’ (Mayock 2004; O’Leary and Ribeiro de Menezes 2008) or even ‘queer girl’ (Labanyi 2015), which shows the richness, nuances and ambiguity of the concept. In this thesis, I am sticking to the original version in Spanish to acknowledge this complexity.

the decision of the authors to use the young female character in their novels and that links them to the tradition of the marginal literary character with a voice in the context of the Francoist literary scene, highlighting the influence of Fortún's literature in key female authors of the period.

Chapter 1. Children and Fools Tell the Truth.

“¡Ay madre! Los niños y los locos dicen las verdades” (*Celia en el colegio* 154)

1. Introduction

In 1929, by creating *Celia*, Elena Fortún used the tradition of the child as a marginal character and the use of their voice as a literary device to convey unpopular messages. Through the first person narration of a seven-year-old girl, Fortún offered a child-centered perspective, which was radical and new –and became an unprecedented success. This chapter contextualizes *Celia* in the tradition of this type of character in Spanish literature, taking into account her belonging to two oppressed groups: children and women. The literary analysis of *Celia* in Chapter 2 and the *chicas raras* in Chapter 3 will benefit from this historical and literary account.

Marginal characters are those who, by their very nature, are not expected or even allowed to play an active role in society. Because these groups do not exist within the operating scheme of their communities, racial minorities, women, children, and the mentally or physically disabled, they are silenced and their opinions are neglected. However, in many cases, when children and fools speak, they are believed to tell the truth: “Los niños y los locos dicen las verdades,” which makes their use in fiction a conscious twofold decision. Since children are not allowed to have a voice, the decision to give them one in fiction becomes inevitably a symbolic one, even political.

The novelty of Fortún’s writing relies, however, on incorporating her somehow unpopular ideas in the realm of children’s literature, traditionally moralizing and deeply affected by fabricated concepts of childhood. This tradition is continued by the *chicas raras* of the 1940-50s, who have read *Celia* and acknowledge her influence. These authors constitute the first academically recognized generation of women writers in the history of Spanish literature, and connect the use of these characters with the underrepresentation of women writers and characters in Spanish literature. The fact that girls belong to a double minority: children and women, is relevant for the assessment of Fortún’s contribution to the history of Spanish literature. I claim that *Celia* as a rebel girl in her series of children’s books influenced, years later, inspired the first generation of recognized women writers.

The intertwined tracking of the concepts of childhood and children characters in literature and gender ideology through the centuries shows the importance of Fortún as a

creator who draws from the literary tradition and from concepts that limit the understanding of childhood and the invisibility of women, and subverts them one by one. Fortún's readers are exposed to a vast and unlikely range of possibilities for young female characters. I argue that this exposure will undoubtedly have consequences for her readers, some of whom will be part of the first literary generation that recognizes the creative work of women (1940s-1950s), and which again affects more women readers –whether they become writers or not.

1.1 The Construction of Childhood

The use of children characters in Spanish literature is the focus of this chapter. My approach to the use of child characters in this thesis is based on the understanding that childhood is a social construct. The different concepts of childhood are constructed historically, socially, politically and economically. Definitions of childhood are also diverse, contradictory and contingent, mostly determined by history, politics, religion or culture, society, and even subjectivity.

Historically, childhood has been defined differently in diverse periods and cultures. In fact, some scholars have argued that childhood has never existed at all, and that it is indeed a relatively recent invention (Ariès 1960). Childhood is also determined politically, with shifting definitions to suit particular agendas. Religion or culture can also add markers to define childhood through practices that will be forms of initiation or marks for recognizing when childhood ends and adulthood starts (for instance, *bar* or *bat mitzvah* in Judaism and *quinceañera* in Central America and Latino communities elsewhere).

Childhood is also determined socially. As will be explained later in this chapter, one of the key criticisms of Piaget's theory is that his stages of development are founded on socially practiced stages that were being practiced in his culture (Switzerland) at the time of his research (mid-twentieth century). One major drawback of this approach is that it is built on social rather than scientific knowledge. Socially practiced milestones in children's lives, (for instance, when they are allowed to walk home from school), will vary substantially depending on the kind of society they are raised in, and would affect the evaluation of their performance according to a model based on stages of development. Childhood is a relative notion which is generally defined by what adulthood is not. Luann Walther (1979) defends that "Childhood is the invention of adults, reflects adults needs and adults fears quite as much as it signifies the absence of adulthood. In the course of history children have been glorified, patronised, ignored, or held in contempt, depending upon the cultural assumptions of adults"

(64). According to these patronising and condescending definitions by adults (or “los mayores” in Fortún’s works) children are often depicted as: small, carefree, vulnerable, dependent, malleable, naive, innocent.² In the adult/child binary, children are defined by everything they *are still not*, which makes it a deficit model of childhood, focusing on a lack of ability.³

Since the 1970s the rise of critical perspectives such as Feminism and Critical Race Theory⁴ in the Humanities have restored voice to those characters that had historically been overlooked. The fact that the voice of children is currently being studied means that until recently it was also neglected. For this purpose, Childhood Studies considers the ways in which different disciplines have studied and constructed childhood by critically evaluating diverse claims about the nature of childhood drawing from different evidentiary sources.

This section proposes an exploration of the social factors that determine what childhood is and what it looks like, and how notions of childhood differ depending on the culture, time or location. For the analysis of the implications of children characters in literature, I examine the most pervasive theoretical approaches for the understanding of childhood. I am particularly interested in examining how theories of childhood shed light on the social environment of the girl-protagonist both as a way of manufacturing children’s attitudes, but also of disclosing the values and contradictions that are being imposed on them, all of which will inform the key character profile in Fortún’s corpus.

1.1.1 The Voice of the Child

In their introduction to the book *Infant Tongues: The Voice of the Child in Literature* (1994) Goodenough, Heberle and Sokoloff emphasise the interest in the use of the infant’s voice in literature has created among the critics in recent decades. Giving voice to the consciousness of the child, however, requires a construction and mediation that is “never free from adult concerns, whether to indoctrinate young minds or to wrest young minds free of conventional assumptions” (Goodenough et al. 3).

The main problem with the representation of the child in literature is given by “the uniquely difficult accessibility of children’s consciousness to the adult imagination, [and the]

² Literally “not guilty,” from the Latin *innocentem*.

³ As will be explained later in this chapter, this definition is the opposite in a rights-based approach of childhood, in which children are defined by their capacities instead of their deficits, and the “child/adult” binary becomes “minor/adult.”

⁴ Critical Race Theory (CRT) developed during the mid-1970s as a response to what was identified as dangerously slow progress following Civil Rights in the 1960s. CRT most representative scholars are Derrick Bell, Patricia J. Williams, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw and Richard Delgado.

attendant complexities entailed in speaking for children” (Goodenough et al. 2). In the case of children’s literature, Jacqueline Rose’s (1984) quote is self-explanatory: “Children’s fiction sets up the child as an outsider to its own process, and then aims, unashamedly, to take the child *in*” (2). On these basis, the texts conceived and written for children would present two problems: first, the mere representation of the child character; second, imagining the consciousness and the reception of the reader (Goodenough et al. 4). Similarly, the series “Celia y su mundo,” is part of the “[m]any texts written from a child’s viewpoint [that] are brilliantly creative, subversive, or compensatory, precisely because children speak from a realm as yet inappropriate, or only partially appropriated by social or cultural intentionality” (Goodenough et al. 4).

The development of these works raises awareness of the necessity to explore the interaction between the adult author and the child’s consciousness that it serves, and to whom they give voice. In this case, the author and character of *Celia*, serve to know how “[t]he child’s voice has been mediated, modified, or appropriated by an adult voice” (Goodenough et al. 9). The problem with the social commitment that Fortún shows through the inquisitive voice of Celia is that the girl’s (Celia’s) point of view is a construction made by adults (Fortún) who represent and reconstruct childhood by their own means. Erica Burman’s (2008) claim comes to mind: “representation is always a practice of power” (16). The danger of these representations and the ‘appropriation’ mentioned by Goodenough et al. is that the character may serve different ideological interpretations depending on the prevailing political agenda.

The representations of children and their interpretations respond to the influence of different concepts of childhood, either as victims or culprits of guilt. Using innocence as a discriminating tool, different authors have pondered the ambiguous nature of children and their ability to embody the atavic sins of the society that purportedly educates them. From Augustine of Hippo’s (354-430) idea of children as inheritors of the original sin to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s (1712-1778) depiction of the innocent child, there are instances on how different concepts of childhood affect the representation of children in literature and how they overwhelmingly rely on their assumed truth-telling nature.

1.1.2 Concepts of Childhood

Concepts of childhood constitute the ideas expressed by the underlying theories, understandings and philosophies of the prevalent images of childhood. Far from being

universal, concepts are often subject to temporal and spatial limitations. In her book *The Child in Question*, Diana Gittins wonders:

What could be more universal than a child? Each and every one of us is born of a mother, born utterly helpless, powerless, unable to speak or control our bodies. The human infant, the infant's body, must surely be a biological given, an essential fact that cannot be regarded as 'constructed' in any other sense except a physiological one? Yet a baby is born into a social world, a linguistic world, a gendered world, an adult world. Arguably the infant in its utter helplessness, without control or language, is given meaning by adults in the context of a wider culture. (21)

Tensions and contradictions implicit in notions of children and childhood can be appreciated in different sources, including literature. As this chapter examines, children can represent at once innocence, beauty and hope, while at the same time are neglected and abused.

Depending on different concepts of childhood, children are considered sponges, innocent, vulnerable. These concepts limit children and confine them to particular roles in society. As will be shown through literary examples, children are often idealised, adored, protected, but misheard, ignored, and somehow abused at the same time.

1.2 Marginal characters

Children have been historically confined to the margins of societal structures and they have not been considered worthy of being listened to. Paradoxically and precisely because of their condition as marginalized characters on the fringes of society, children are allowed to have a voice in literature. From the perspective of Childhood Studies, I use the theories of Goodenough et al. (1994) and Locke (2011), who have studied the multiple possibilities of the use of children's voices in literature. Depending on the context, there is a risk of appropriation and of a self-interested reading of these voices.

Using the concept of *parrhesia* or truth-telling as a starting point, this chapter explores the opportunities and risks of using a child's perspective in literature. In a series of six lectures at the University of California at Berkeley, Michel Foucault examined the term *parrhesia*, or 'free speech' and the *parrhesiastes* as a truth-teller: "The parrhesiastes is not only sincere and says what is his opinion, but his opinion is also the truth. He says what he knows to be true. The second characteristic of *parrhesia*, then, is that there is always an exact coincidence between belief and truth" (3). In order to examine the use of the literary device *parrhesia*, I provide examples from Spanish literature from the thirteenth-century *Cantar de*

Mío Cid, the fourteenth-century *El conde Lucanor*, the seventeenth-century picaresque novels and *Don Quijote*, to Fortún's *Celia* during the twentieth century.

These stories will be examined considering the tradition of using marginal characters (mainly children, but also fools) as a way to speak an inconvenient truth.⁵ As Alice Byrnes did in her book *The Child. An Archetypal Symbol in Literature for Children and Adults* (1995), I will be referring to examples from literature for children and adults, but mostly for adults until the appearance of Fortún's *Celia* series in the twentieth century. I am offering examples from both literature and children's literature, since I want to track the figure of the child as an archetype all the way to the narrative of the girl in the twentieth century. In any case, the division between children's and adult literature has never been clear:

A curious thing about children's literature is that often it is appealing to adults, while an interesting thing about adults' literature is that it is adapted for children. Such an observation leads one to the notion that something of the child remains in the adult, while something in youth aspires to adulthood. Perhaps, traditional distinctions between children's and adults' literature are too exclusive. Maybe, customary separations between children and adults are too rigid. (Byrnes 1)⁶

While Byrnes uses the Jungian concept of the archetype to interpret a wide range of children characters in literature, I will identify the literary tradition of using the *parrhesiastes* and the influence in *Celia* and the *chicas raras* explored in Chapter 3. More specifically, the use of girls as protagonists is especially problematic. As illustrated by the French idiom: *Pour savoir vrai de chose toute, yvre, effant, sot et femme escoute*⁷ (Cf. late fourteenth-century), girls belong to two historically oppressed groups, women and children, meaning they are doubly neglected. From the thirteenth-century girl in the *Poem of the Cid* who confronts the hero while the rest of the town is hiding to the twentieth-century modern *Celia*, girl characters embody an even more complicated role than boys, since they are traditionally

⁵ Or, in the words of Mark Twain in *On the Decay of the Art of Lying* (1885, 2008): "Note that venerable proverb: Children and fools always speak the truth. The deduction is plain: adults and wise persons never speak it" (5).

⁶ There are many examples about the rigidity of the separation between children's and adults' literature. Sticking to Spanish literature, Juan Ramón Jiménez's celebrated prose poem *Platero y yo* (1914), has been usually classified as a children's book. In his "Prologoillo," however, Jiménez stated that he wrote it for "¡qué sé yo para quién!... para quien escribimos los poetas líricos... Ahora que va a los niños, no le quito ni le pongo una coma" (i). And, in case this last sentence needed further explanation, he adds: "Yo nunca he escrito ni escribiré nada para niños, porque creo que el niño puede leer los libros que lee el hombre, con determinadas excepciones que a todos se le ocurren" (i). As will be discussed in Chapter 3, Ana María Matute had a similar approach to the limits or categorization of children's literature, defending that: "No hay literatura menor, hay Literatura, y nada más, buena y mala, y nada más" (Ayuso). Consequently, Matute famously wrote adults' and children's stories, since along with the main argument of this thesis "los cuentos para niños son importantísimos" (Ayuso).

⁷ To know the truth about everything, listen to drunkards, children, idiots and women (My trans.).

praised for and expected to be quiet and accept submissive roles within their societies. When women raise their voice to defend their interests or integrity, they are often made into an object of derision and cast in a role where they are constantly required to choose between two patriarchal figures, that of the father or of their new-found lover. When girls do speak up, however, the interpretation of their behaviour can be radically different and contradictory depending on the prevailing ideology: is it innocence, courage, or impertinence?

Quoting the French feminist Poulain de la Barre (1648–1723), Amelia Valcárcel (2019) explains that being a woman is no different from being a man, but being condemned to a perpetual minority of age (26). Responding to their double marginality, the concepts of childhood and the assumptions on women's roles or even abilities/capacities explored in this chapter will found the different interpretations of *Celia* in Chapter 2, and the beliefs in adolescence in Chapter 3.

1.3 (Lack of) Women Writers

By offering a sample of the use of children's characters in Spanish literature, the scarce recognition of women as creators is blatant. Before the twentieth century, the names of women on the list of Spanish authors appeared rarely, as an exception to the norm. As will be discussed, between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, only Santa Teresa, María de Zayas, Cecilia Böhl de Faber, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, Rosalía de Castro and Emilia Pardo Bazán are considered worthy of being recognized or even mentioned in literary studies. However, as Janet Pérez and Maureen Ihrie acknowledge in their *Feminist Encyclopedia of Spanish Literature* (2002) some of these women writers were appropriated into the official literary canon, omitting their more controversial work or dismissing its innovative features (9).

As Carmen Martín Gaité already denounced in *Desde la ventana* (1992), the lack of recognized and published women authors in Spanish literature consequently has led to the persistence of female characters made by men who insist on stereotyping women. In her own words, “Las mujeres no existían como tales, las fabricaban los hombres, eran el reflejo de lo que la literatura registraba, bien superficialmente, por cierto. Pero en su verdadera condición, en la naturaleza de sus ansias, contradicciones y sufrimientos no profundizaba nadie” (44). Following Martín Gaité's commitment to the recuperation of the lineage of Spanish women writers, this chapter shows their underrepresentation until the twentieth century, when writers

like Laforet, Martín Gaité or Matute contributed by offering more authentic images of women in literature.

Moving on to the body of the chapter, I will use the theory of Childhood Studies to examine and interpret the cultural ideas behind the use of some of the most popular child characters in Spanish literature. The purpose of this is to justify the use of the girl character in Fortún's *Celia* and its impact on the next generation of women writers, focusing on three concepts: childhood, child characters in Spanish literature and the representation of women writers. They are interwoven in this chapter (and, more broadly, in the rest of this thesis), closely linked and representative of Fortún's importance in Spanish literature.

2. Children in Spanish Literature

2.1 Thirteenth Century. *El Cantar de Mío Cid*.

From a historical perspective, concepts of childhood have come a long way. In his *Introduction to Roman Law* (1902) James Hadley explains the Roman doctrine of *patria potestas* –paternal power– which entitled a father “to the entire services and acquisitions of the child; he could inflict on him any punishment, could sell him into [slavery], and had over him even the *jus vitae et necis*” (105), which is ‘the power of life and death,’ and, therefore, of corporal punishment.

The *patria potestas*, which lasted through the life of the *pater familias*, originated in the idea of family unity, being the father its single representative and executive (105). This means that the father not only had power over his children, but also over his wife. Being part of his properties, the father could decide over the life of his family without being questioned or punished by other authorities. According to this concept, children were under the authority of their father and their role in society was comparable to any other possessions.

As it has been explained, concepts of childhood depend in part on cultural and religious beliefs. One of the oldest ideas associated with childhood is that of the original sin, by Augustine of Hippo (or Saint Augustine, 354-430). According to Augustine, children are born inheritors of the original sin that the guilt of Adam caused all humans to inherit. Thus, children are in a way primitive and savage. As sinners, humans are utterly depraved in nature, they lack the freedom to do good, and cannot respond to the will of God without divine grace. In a context in which the only way to moral goodness is through a life lived in God's grace,

the child is positioned as ‘evil’ errant (naughty) in need of containment or discipline to set them on the ‘right path.’

This concept is clearly identifiable in the Celia series. In the second volume, as a result of her undesirable behavior, Celia is sent to a catholic boarding school where the nuns will try to rectify her conduct. In *Celia en el colegio* (1932), Fortún takes sides and defends Celia and the child readers from the prologue: “A Celia la han llevado a un colegio interna. ¡Celia era mala! Aquellas travesuras que tanto os han hecho reír y que ella os ha contado en el libro *Celia: lo que dice*, eran maldades. Ser mala es no adaptarse a las costumbres de los mayores” (7).

The effort to correct disobedience is a recurrent topic in children’s literature, which is moralistic by definition. Children’s books want to educate and correct children in order to avoid situations in which they question the authority of the elders or the validity of their arguments.⁸ Fortún also takes into account the bias of children’s behavioral definitions, naturally established by adults. If an adult’s desire is for children to obey without questioning, not to do so would mean not complying with their standards and therefore being ‘bad’ and needing to be corrected.

An early example of the tradition of the girl character in Spanish literature is found in *El Cantar de Mío Cid*, the oldest preserved Castilian epic poem composed sometime between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The story takes place during the *Reconquista*, or reconquest of Spain from the Moors, and it tells the adventures of the Castilian hero, the Cid. In the poem the hero finds refuge in the city of Burgos after being exiled by the king. Although he is considered a hero by the people of Burgos, they have been threatened by the monarch and cannot help the Cid.

While everyone in town remains enclosed in their homes scared of how the Cid will react when denied accommodation, only a nine-year old girl dares to confront him and asks him to leave: “Cid, en el vuestro mal vos non ganades nada, / mas el Criador vos vala con todas sus virtudes sanctas” (24). The scene concludes with an intervention of the narrator who stated how the girl went away after she spoke, indicating a certain immunity against authority. Acting somewhere between innocence and bravery, the girl exposes herself to a

⁸ The concepts of the child as chattel and the sinful child coexist with the child savage and the child as a blank slate. The following chapters will show the pervasiveness of these concepts, for instance in the authoritarian relatives of the *chicas raras* who want to correct and tame them.

double set of standards that tend to victimize her and to exalt her at the same time. Her own marginality functions here as a form of immunity.

The powerful effect of the interaction between a nine-year old girl and the Christian hero, who obeyed her and left Burgos with his men is reinforced by the combination of her age and gender, which makes this girl without a name a daring marginal character that confronts a figure of power. The scheme of a girl versus hegemony, or patriarchy, is found in Celia, who faces authority figures. She dares to say what others will not, showing innocence or courage depending on the reader. The interpretation of her message depends of course on ideology.

The episode of the girl in *El Cantar del Mío Cid* and the discussions between Celia and “los mayores” find their roots in the medieval literary motif of *Puer senex*, by which “certain children were characterized as having traits appropriate to persons of very advanced years; and, conversely, aged persons were sometimes endowed with the attributes of children such as innocence or even a juvenile appearance”⁹ (Carp 736). Used profusely in hagiographies, the motif also appears in secular literature of the Middle Ages. Teresa C. Carp (1980) argues that the *puer senex* scheme is the reflection of an idea of childhood in which infants and children are perceived as miniature versions of adults.

Drawing on this idea, the French social historian Philippe Ariès (1914-1984), famously argued that there was no place for childhood in medieval times, nor any interest in seeing it as a separate stage: “In mediaeval society the idea of childhood did not exist; this is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken or despised. The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children: it corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood ... as soon as the child could live without the constant solicitude of his mother, his nanny or his cradle-rocker, he belonged to adult society” (125).

Ariès’ analysis of childhood in mediaeval society is through art and so he derives his major historical evidence from portrait painting, where children are depicted dressed the same way as adults and doing the same work. Children are often portrayed as miniature adults, both in terms of their anatomy and physiognomy (Carp 737). Ariès’s interpretations of his sources conclude that children were expressed relatively little affection possibly because parents did not want to be too attached to their children due to the high infant mortality. According to Ariès, the growing interest in children during the seventeenth century and the expansion of the school system favored their gradual separation into age and into schools.

⁹ Doña Benita is a good example of an older character that shares with Celia a childish and magical universe.

However, critiques of Ariès denounce a weak evidential base which draws upon artworks only, and even from that source there are counter examples, particularly of parents expressing affection towards their children. Archard (2004) argues that people in the past did not lack a concept of the child, but lacked current concepts of the child.

In her study of the literary *puer senex* type, Carp (1980) describes Seneca's ambivalence in his characterization of children, sometimes portrayed as miniature adults but often admitting their differences: "He claims that children are flawed by the same "defects" as other groups defined by Roman thinkers as of inferior status, such as women and slaves; that is, children are characterized by irrationality, weak intellect, and emotionalism" (739). This ambivalence is just another example of the paradox that children are considered to require special needs and care, and at the same time the idea that children's ultimate goal has to be to behave like adults, and for that they need to be constantly tamed.

Very importantly for this thesis, Carp (1980) also lists children as one of the marginalized groups "of inferior status" in the Roman era, again alongside women and slaves. Women are naturally inferior because they are "defective" men (Valcárcel 33). Marginalized both by their age and gender, the nine-year old girl in *El Cantar de Mío Cid* and Celia portray a double marginalization. As it has been discussed, children and women are considered unable to survive by themselves, hence these two characters are doubly innocent and ignorant. The ambivalence resides in that, despite this, following the *puer senex* scheme, both girls present themselves as wiser, more reasonable than the adult characters confronting them, hence questioning the arguments defended by their elders.

2.2 Fourteenth Century. *El Conde Lucanor*.

The strategy of the marginal character telling the truth reappears in Don Juan Manuel's *El Conde Lucanor* (c. 1335), a didactic and moralistic book from the fourteenth century.¹⁰ In the "Example 32," entitled "De lo que contesció a un rey con los burladores que le fizieron el paño," the Count Lucanor asks his counselor Patronio for advice on a secret deal that has been proposed to him. Following the structure of *exempla*, Patronio tells the story of a moor king who is tricked by three rascals who convince him to pay for and to finally wear a

¹⁰ The purpose of the book was to provide any nobleman of the time with the theoretical and practical knowledge to succeed in many different situations, including marriage, business, relationships and finances. In order to be truly practical, the book was written in a straightforward manner, refusing the usual adorned language of the time.

dress suit made from a very special fabric: this cloth being magical and only visible to those who are of legitimate birth (but really there being no cloth at all). Driven by greed, the king thought he would inherit the possessions of those who were not born from their fathers, since “los moros non heredan cosa de su padre si non son verdaderamente sus fijos” (138).

Before trying on the dress suit himself, the king asked some of his closest vassals to inspect the tailors’ work and to describe the magical cloth to him and their answers were always enthusiastic for fear of retaliation. During the occasion of the royal parade, the rascals encouraged the king to wear the custom-made suit so as to display such a luxurious fabric in public. The king agreed and accepted their help to get dressed in a suit he could not see. In this condition, naked, the king rode his horse into the city and, while the people could see him naked, no one would dare admit it. Only an African slave “que non avía que pudiesse perder” (141) defied the king and shouted: “Señor, a mí non me enpece que me tengades por fijo de aquel padre que yo digo, nin de otro; et por ende, dígovos que yo só ciego, o vós denuyo ydes” (141). Once the servant had dared to uncover the secret, another vassal said the same and everyone started laughing at the king who then realized the rascals had tricked him.

In the nineteenth century, the Danish author Hans Christian Andersen popularized this *motiv* in the short tale *The Emperor’s New Clothes*.¹¹ An illustrative difference between both stories is that Andersen uses the figure of a child to expose the truth: “But he isn’t wearing anything at all!” and the father tries to justify that reaction: “Goodness gracious! Did you hear *the voice of that innocent child!*” until the child’s remark was whispered from one person to another and the crowd shouted the truth again and again.

This change of the marginal character who tells the truth, from the African servant in the Spanish fourteenth century tale to the nineteenth century child, is particularly interesting. On the one hand, from the point of view of Ariès, childhood did not exist in the Middle Ages, and this is how it appears in *El Conde Lucanor*, in which it is the African slave who tells the truth. On the other hand, both stories portray truth-telling characters that belong to the “inferior status” defined by Seneca (the defective children, women and slaves), which is in fact a prerequisite for a *parrhesiastes*.

However, in Andersen’s version in the eighteenth century, the romantic idea of children as innocent had already permeated society. The child tells the truth and signals how the king wears no robe. In doing this, the child discloses how the nature of his innocence lies precisely in ignoring the social rules that may constrain them. The child is free to speak their

¹¹ Included in his *Fairy Tales told for Children* (1837).

mind without fear of any reprisal. In both cases, the fact that the characters who confront the king are out of society – consciously in the case of the African servant and not so in the case of the child – brings them the freedom to speak for themselves.

Francesc Massip (2012) has studied how noblemen in the Middle Ages used to surround themselves by fools or buffoons, who were often perceived as talismans touched by divinity. Unlike the counsellors that surrounded the king, whose interests in power depended on the nature of their relationship with him, the fool and his refreshing sincerity were protected by his insanity. This extreme honesty relieves the king of preoccupations and anxiety, which according to Massip makes the fool serve as a therapeutic function.

However, at the same time and along with the buffoon and the misshapen, the fool provokes laughter and can be bullied, amusing the monarch and those who serve him. The character shows complexity: his messages are respected but he is also abused. It is believed that God speaks through the mouth of the child or the fool. They are not respected as people because they are not considered as such; the only interest in them relies on their almost magical capacity to tell the truth without any adornments. They do not represent a menace to the hegemonic system because they do not belong to it, they are outsiders. Thus, paradoxical as it may seem, collective consciousness accepted certain superiority of fools over the sane, given their alleged connection with God. Similarly, as in life, in Fortún's stories children are often idealised, adored, protected, but misheard, neglected and ignored.

In the late Middle Ages, a literary "discurso de la excelencia de las nobles mujeres" (Valcárcel 29) emerged, providing models of self-esteem and behavior for noble women. It provides a list of real or fictitious queens, heroines and saints of the past, hence offering different models of femininity. As Valcárcel (2019) acknowledges, this "discurso de la excelencia" is not produced without dissent, as it encouraged misogynist tendencies in literature. One discourse exalts feminine virtues and qualities by giving examples, while the other one is concerned with the defects allegedly engendered by women. However, neither of the two discourses questions that women should be under the authority of men, but they disagree in regards to the respect that they should receive.

Regarding the misogynist discourse and treatment of female characters in literature, another story in *El Conde Lucanor* comes to mind. The "Exemplo XXXV," entitled "De lo que contesció a un mancebo que casó con una muger muy fuerte et muy brava," is based on the *motiv* of the taming of the shrew or *la mujer brava*, showing the consequences of disobeying a husband or trying to be something other than an accommodating wife. As will

be examined in the next chapters, this kind of *motiv* continues until the narrative of the *chicas raras* in the twentieth century, with characters that drown in their own words.

2.3 Sixteenth Century. Erasmus and the *pícaros*.

One of the most influential essays of the Renaissance also uses the proverb ‘children and fools tell the truth.’ At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Desiderius Erasmus (1469-1536) published *The Praise of Folly* (1511), an ironic essay showing the subversive potential of Humanism. In the context of tension between the Old and the New Learning, Scholastic and Humanism, Erasmus communicates his own ideas by putting words into Folly’s mouth. Using this strategy results in tremendous ambiguity, since among the apparent nonsense of the narrative, flashes of wisdom will emerge.

Through the notion that fools have the privilege of speaking the truth without offense, Erasmus shows a playful irony and it is now the reader who decides what is foolish and what is not. In this way, propositions that are generally considered to be foolish will need a second thought. Erasmus found a device whereby he may say what he wished, speak the truth from his point of view, and still plead immunity.

According to Folly, one of the reasons she should be praised is that natural fools are the happiest of men. This happens because they are free from fears and duties, enjoy affection from everyone and special favors from kings, they can speak the truth without offense and, maybe more importantly, they are much happier than scholars. This coming from Erasmus, one of the most eminent and influential scholars of the time, proves again his playful irony and reminds the reader of the ambiguity of their interpretations.

The Picaresca, a literary genre that gave voice not to fools, but to *pícaros*, or rogues, emerged during the mid-sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth century. The early publication of the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* in 1554 initiated the picaresque novel, consolidated by Mateo Alemán’s *Guzmán de Alfarache* fifty years later (1599 and 1604) with great commercial success. According to Mas (1986) it also initiated the representation of childhood as an autonomous age in Spanish literature (30). The picaresque genre is defined as the recount of the adventures of a rogue who tries to integrate himself into society. It is usually written in the first person, taking the form of fictional autobiographies of criminals or beggars who made their living serving different masters.

According to Reinhard Kuhn in *Corruption in Paradise. The Child in Western Literature* (1982), “The theme of the martyred child has nowhere been exploited more

strikingly than in the picaresque novel. Although their protagonists often survive physically because ... they adapt themselves to the circumstances in which they find themselves, they are usually destroyed spiritually” (79).¹² The search for respectability is a common feature in the protagonists’ context of social climbing-and-falling. Existing on the fringes of society enabled them to be critical of generally respected institutions, since “the social and religious preoccupations of the greatest of the early Spanish picaresque novels are at heart inseparable” (Riley 18). For instance, *Lazarillo* was published in the context of the religious reform in which Erasmus took part, and decades later, Alemán’s *Guzmán de Alfarache* and Quevedo’s *El buscón* (1604) “show a deep Counter Reformation anxiety about evil” (19).¹³

The Cervantes scholar E.C. Riley (1986) acknowledged the awareness of the crisis that Spanish society experienced during the early seventeenth century. In a time where theories that had been accepted for centuries began to fall apart, literary works reflected a mood of *desengaño* (disillusionment). In this regard, the picaresque novel is a reaction against heroic and idealistic romance (21) where the *pícaro* tears the hero away from Spanish narrative. An especially interesting antihero of the picaresque is López de Úbeda’s *La pícara Justina* (1605), whose protagonist is a female rogue, combining the marginalities of her age and gender. Justina is one of the first female protagonists of the Spanish novel (after Francisco Delicado’s *La Lozana andaluza*, 1528). She is notably a free and independent spirit who adopts an active role that differs from the conventions of the literary female condition.

However, Justina is not only far from the usual female literary characters, but more importantly from the ideal role for women preached in the sixteenth century. As stated by the poet and scholar Fray Luis de León in *La perfecta casada* (1584), “a la mujer buena y honesta la naturaleza no la hizo para el estudio de las ciencias ni para los negocios de dificultad, sino para un solo oficio simple y doméstico, así les limitó el entender y por consiguiente les tasó las palabras y las razones” (320). While Fray Luis described the duties of married women towards their family, household and God, López de Úbeda challenged that common vision through the critical spirit of his character Justina and the use of sense of humor, which left no social statuses or institutions free of blame and satire.

¹² Kuhn (1982) examines the nature of the enigma posed by the child in literature. In his book, children characters are classified into three categories: the child as a redeemer, a threat and a pure enigma.

¹³ As Kuhn (1982) also observes, both in *El Lazarillo* and *El Buscón* the early revelation of the mother’s degraded status (prostitution) serves as an initiation for the protagonists (81). According to the concept of the sinful child, both characters could be considered doubly sinners and should therefore engage seriously in their search for respectability.

2.4 Seventeenth Century. Don Quixote as the truth seeker fool archetype.

Miguel de Cervantes's (1547-1616) literary masterpiece *El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, *Don Quixote*, also emerged in this changing social and cultural context. Published in 1605, coinciding with the latest picaresque novels, *Don Quixote* was an immediate success. While *Lazarillo* and *Guzmán de Alfarache* were the only narrators in their texts, Cervantes incorporates a multiple authorial perspective which encourages critical thinking from the reader. Under the influence of Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* (and certainly by his *Enchiridion militis christiani*, where he shares his ideas about interior devotion against traditional religiosity), Cervantes also puts his words in the mouth of a fool.

While others hesitated to question the established values in their writings, "mindful of the possible consequences of open dissent in the rigid theocracy they lived in" (Johnson 10), Cervantes decided to adopt the rhetorical strategy based on pervasive and systematic irony that he learned from Erasmus. Ambiguity would result in different interpretations of any given situation, depending on the reader's ideologies. For this reason, almost every possible reading of the book has been matched by its contrary. Through this wise madness, Cervantes could express the truth with laughter and call things by their name.

This seems possible in the context of the Baroque, when the defect (the deformed pearl or 'baroque' that gives it its name) is elevated to the rarest form of beauty. Massip (2012) reminds us that kings and great governors surrounded themselves with marginal or deformed characters as miracle mascots to ensure a kind of supernatural protection, which they also used to stand out for their artistic abilities or for their eloquence and natural grace. Moreover, the presence of the fool among the powerful served also to reassure them about their superiority and their own mental health, using abnormality to accentuate normality. In the same way, children, as undeveloped adults, are used in contrast to adults to accentuate the norm. In *Celia*, Fortún skillfully turns this strategy around by telling her stories from the girl's point of view, which accentuates the hypocrisy of "los mayores," or those who are supposed to be superior.

In this contradictory context, consciously tamed by ambiguity, Don Quijote talks lucid nonsense. There is hope in his discourse, and in what the character represents. Although (or *because*) he is a fool, he is honest, he shows and eventually respects different visions of reality and embodies the coexistence of different groups within society (the priest, the barber, educated women and the galleys) in different surroundings (the inn, the palace).

In this regard, Carroll B. Johnson (1990) has stated that “Don Quixote’s madness can be seen as an expression of all that is new, the future instead of the past, self-creation instead of determinism, liberation instead of conformism, a slap on the face of the established order, but also the source of inevitable conflicts he is destined to lose, because he is heterodox and alone” (11). This kind of hope may also be applied to what Fortún does with Celia. In a time of change, Fortún wrote from the point of view of a character who did not usually have a voice: a little girl.

More importantly, Celia’s voice was used to raise questions about different concepts and statuses taken for granted in 1920s Spanish society. Using Celia’s voice allows Fortún to question power dynamics and still plead immunity.¹⁴ In theory, even if the words of children offended someone, they could not be punished because they would not be able to defend themselves. Or, as Don Quixote explains: “Women, children and churchmen, as they cannot vindicate themselves when they are injured, neither are they capable of receiving an affront” (II, 32). However, in the novel, the shepherdess Marcela, Dorotea, or the captive Zoraida, are examples of free-thinking, independent women whose speeches written in the early-seventeenth century still surprise the contemporary reader.

María Jesús Fraga (2012) wrote about the similarities between the characters of Don Quixote and Celia. Both protagonists are animated by the desire to live the lives of the characters of their favorite readings. They mistake fantasy for reality causing situations with almost always adverse results. In the end, both characters arguably evolve or regress: while Don Quixote reverts back to sanity before dying, Celia reaches adulthood by resigning her fantasies. Different interpretations will depend on the ideology of the reader, as will be explained shortly.

Similarly, Cervantes hides himself under the mask of Don Quixote’s madness to exert a sharp criticism of the society and politics of his time, thus avoiding the possible reprisals of the monarchy, nobility and clergy. From the use of Celia’s apparently innocent wisecracks, Fortún criticizes the bourgeoisie of the twenties in which there are still traces of the centuries-old traditions in coexistence with a growing social unrest. This was pointed out by Carmen Martín Gaité (“Arrojo y descalabros”): “La eficacia de Elena Fortún, así como su pervivencia, consisten en la viveza y realismo de unos diálogos que, al ser puestos en la boca de niños, facilitan una crítica social encubierta tras la ingenuidad y la ironía. Me atrevo a decir que en este caso un niño es un parapeto ... ” (100).

¹⁴ At least until Francoist censorship reacted against the character, as explored in Chapter 2.

Celia's childlike curiosity, her lack of understanding of adult discourse and the persistence of her inquisitiveness show the topics that worried the bourgeois society of the time. The portrayal of schools and religious institutions as repressive environments for children (and adults), contrasting with the apparent defenselessness of children, was especially appreciated during the Republic, where children's agency was encouraged. However, in later decades, the strategy of the marginal character that had worked as a "parapet" could no longer avoid censorship. Fortún received criticism and the Franco regime temporarily banned all her works in 1945 and *Celia en el colegio* from that year until 1968, editing out some of her novels until they were republished in 1992. This will be examined in more detail in Chapter 2.

Regarding education, the English philosopher and theorist John Locke (1632-1704) saw the infant's mind as a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate. For Locke, children are born unpopulated by anything, not by innocence, they are empty vessels waiting to be populated by their environment, they are a blank canvas. According to the concept of *tabula rasa*, adults play a critical role in the lives of children and in determining what sort of adult will emerge from a child. Locke's opinions are pivotal in the ongoing debate surrounding children are the result of the environment or product of genetics. He argued that children are the product of the environment, and following an empiricist approach, all knowledge comes from experience. Thus, education plays a critical role in determining what kind of adult a child will become.

The *tabula rasa* tradition is important in the "innate vs environmental" debate in that it emphasises the environmental side. If adults are the result of children being exposed to their environment, adults are products of their environment, not of genetics. A consequence of Locke's theory is that children were not entitled too much in the way of rights, just for subsistence, since he did not necessarily see children as worthy beings. Instead, they were future beings, future adults, people who had not yet been turned into something worthwhile. Adults have access to resources, power and responsibility, but the child is still developing, growing to become complete.

Locke's theories were highly influential in subsequent environmental theorists of childhood¹⁵ and the ongoing debate on the "innate vs environmental." As will be examined in

¹⁵ B. F. Skinner (1904-1990), an American psychologist, claimed that only the environment shaped the child. He was part of a group known as behaviourists- which argued that humans are governed by rules of behaviour, without space for free will, nor to make decisions. On the other hand, Albert Bandura (1925-), a Canadian-American psychologist, father of the Social Learning Theory states that learning occurs through observation and

the next chapter, the concept of the child as an empty vessel that Locke spread in the seventeenth century is very much linked to children's literature and the idea of children as future adults and citizens. In the context of the publication of *Celia*, the establishment of the Second Republic in 1931 confirmed and accelerated the process of promoting reading, since the potential to educate Spanish citizens was a key element of the Republic.

With regard to the representation of women writers in this period, in "Buscando el modo" (55-75) Martín Gaité writes about the difficulties women have experienced in writing throughout history. The same *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* (1575) by Juan Huarte de San Juan that has been studied by Cervantists for its influence on the characterization of Don Quixote's madness, also concludes that, when God filled the brains of Adam and Eve with wisdom, "es conclusión averiguada que le cupo menos a Eva, por la cual razón dicen los teólogos que se atrevió el demonio a engañarla y no osó tentar al varón temiendo su mucha sabiduría. La razón de esto es, como adelante probaremos, que la compostura natural que la mujer tiene en el cerebro no es capaz de mucho ingenio ni de mucha sabiduría" (Huarte). According to traditional commandments, writing represented a daunting challenge for women.

In spite of this, Santa Teresa de Ávila (1515-1582) found recognition in her mystical work, which described her personal and religious experiences. In addition to providing a method, *Camino de Perfección* denounced ecclesiastical misogyny. Like the *chicas raras*, Santa Teresa parted from obedience "para desobedecer, para hacer las cosas a su modo, y ese es su mayor timbre de gloria, no solo como mujer, sino como renovadora del lenguaje" (67). Santa Teresa's language is marked by a conversational style –very much like Martín Gaité's, in which simplicity and the use of metaphors and popular forms makes her mystical poetry and reflective prose intelligible.

According to Martín Gaité, Santa Teresa's self-confidence made her an "atrevida, respondona, insumisa" (67), adjectives that could also be applied to describe Celia. In fact, there are many parallels between the two: while Celia reads the lives of saints at school, including that of Santa Teresa, famously the saint was a curious child who organized outings from home with her brother to Christianize the moors. Celia, on the other hand, left home or school looking forward to new adventures and both were punished when their families found

modelling, meaning that children repeat adults' behaviour. This theory has implications of Locke's *tabula rasa* views and gives more responsibility to parents, since everything they do affects the child.

them. Santa Teresa and Celia were also avid readers, in the case of Santa Teresa, she read books of chivalry, while Celia read hagiographies and fairy tales.

Like the *chicas raras*, as Martín Gaité observed, Santa Teresa “exploraba el camino según lo iba recorriendo” (73). According to Martín Gaité, “toda su vida fue una lucha grandiosa, como de auto sacramental, entre el entusiasmo y el decaimiento, entre la enfermedad y la entereza, entre la soberbia y la humildad, entre la libertad y la sumisión, entre la actividad y la contemplación, entre el orden y el desconcierto” (74). This quote also applies to Fortún, who cites her several times in her correspondence with Carmen Laforet, as explored in Chapter 3.

Other famous exceptions to the lack of women in literature in the seventeenth century are those of María de Zayas y Sotomayor (1590-1661), Ana Caro de Mallén (1590-1646) and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648-1695). María de Zayas wrote predominantly novels, the protagonists of which challenged the stereotypes in the literature of the time. Through her characters, educated and intelligent women like her, she explored the issue of women's access to education: “Porque las almas no son hombres ni mujeres. ¿Qué razón hay para que ellos sean sabios y nosotras no podamos serlo?” (*Novelas ejemplares y amorosas o el Decamerón español*).

Ana Caro de Mallén, poet and playwright of the Golden Age, is considered together with María de Zayas one of the first professional writers, since she made a living with her comedies. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, moreover, represents one of the greatest figures of novohispana literature and demanded women's access to education throughout her work, and more famously in her autobiographical essay “Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz” (1691).

In spite of the prejudices, illustrated in the words of Fray Luis de León and Juan Huarte de San Juan, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed the works of women writers and the creation of female characters who used their voice to claim women's freedom and their right to education. As will be explained in a moment, these women writers anticipated Feijóo's essay in defence of women, and authors like Emilia Pardo Bazán will continue to claim this educational equality and the oppression to which women have been subjected in Spanish history.

2.5 Eighteenth Century. Innocent, enlightened children.

As a reaction to the excessive baroque style came the Enlightenment. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Spanish literature, the essay was the dominant genre.

Its intentionally clear and natural prose was partly educational and doctrinal, and showed a desire to approach the problems of the time, tending to reform customs often in the epistolary form or as journal articles. The message was the key, and the essay was a genre which permitted a profound analysis of the ideas intended to persuade the reader.

Benito Jerónimo Feijóo (1676-1764), Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (1744-1811) and José Cadalso (1741-1782) are the most important essayists of the period, although they also cultivated satirical poetry and theatre. Within the collection of essays *Teatro crítico universal o Discursos varios en todo género de materias para desengaño de errores comunes* (1726–1739), Feijóo wrote his controversial “Discurso en defensa de las mujeres,” which vindicated women’s aptitude for all kinds of sciences and their contribution to the arts. His plea in favour of women begins by acknowledging the difficulty of his mission: “En grave empeño me pongo. No es ya sólo un vulgo ignorante con quien entro en la contienda: defender a todas las mujeres, viene a ser lo mismo que ofender a casi todos los hombres” (Feijóo).

The controversy relies, however, on the clumsy final part of his defense of women, since Feijóo admits that he is not a judge, but a mere advocate. Through logic and experience, he refutes all the judgments of authority, but, as a priest, when he encounters the sacred texts (and the menace of the Inquisition) he avoids to be categorical and concludes that, if God established the superiority of men over women in the Genesis, it is to be believed that he gave the government to the gender in which he recognized greater capacity (Feijóo). In this way, the modernity of the text remains as a documented good intention to ending discrimination against women. However, the conclusion is far from the initial objective, since Feijóo is unable to question God’s words and decisions.

In the same period, the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) writes the influential *Émile, or On Education* (1762), in which Rousseau himself is the tutor to an imaginary young pupil, Émile. The book is a treatise on the nature of education that reflects much of the concerns of the enlightened on the need to properly instruct the people. Until then, children were not considered persons in their own right, but rather as adults in an embryonic stage of development. Moreover, according to Byrnes (1995), children were expected to behave like “miniature adults,” and although they should imitate their elders, there was no notion that adults might learn from children (12).

According to Rousseau, children are born into an original natural state of essential goodness and their innocence is being threatened by the “corruption” of society. In Rousseau’s terms, childhood is lyrical, “the sleep of reason,” in which the child represents the

return to nature. This “innocent” child contrasts greatly with the Hippo’s sinners: while for Hippo’s children are born under the original sin and need to behave well and be baptized to become sinless adults, Rousseau’s recommendation for innocent children is to be raised in nature until twelve years of age to keep them pure, and away from the corrupting influence of adults.¹⁶

During the Romantic Movement the child often appears as a symbol of innocence and renewal with a redemptive mission. Rousseau’s ideas on the regeneration of the nation were not only influential in France but inspired a Regenerationism movement in Spain. However, in *Émile, or On Education* (1762), Rousseau’s contribution towards considering the child as a person and not as a mere sketch of preparation for their adult stage is devalued when it comes to girls. In this case, a natural determinism guides their education, focused on becoming a mother and wife as their vital function.

In discussing the female character in the book, Sophie, Rousseau explains that a girl cannot be educated to be independent, nor to have judgment, because she is destined to serve. As Valcárcel (2019) notes, if a girl like Sophie had developed her own will and complex capacity, she could not endure her destiny as a servant. That is why it is convenient and appropriate to adapt her, to educate her so that she can face that fate (35). It is concluded that, in the context of building a modern society, to be born poor could not condemn the expectations of a child, but to be born a woman definitely would.

Also in the Eighteenth century, the Industrial Revolution meant the transition to new manufacturing processes in Europe and the United States, in the period from about 1760 to sometime between 1820 and 1840. Among others, the social effects of the Industrial Revolution were chronic hunger and malnutrition and limited opportunities for education, since children were expected to work. Since operating machinery did not require strength, employers could pay a child less than an adult even though their productivity was comparable. The industrial system was new, which meant that adult labourers were not more experienced just because they were older. This made child labour the labour of choice for

¹⁶ As will be examined in Chapter 3, Ana María Matute somehow shares this vision of adulthood as a corrupted childhood. In an interview in the newspaper *Ya*, Matute summarises her ideas about the prefiguring role of childhood in adult life: “Es un gran error decir que el niño es un proyecto de hombre; yo pienso que es al revés: que el hombre es un trocito de niño que fue, porque a lo largo de la vida si cambiamos, siempre es para empeorar” (31).

manufacturing in the early phases of the Industrial Revolution between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries.¹⁷

The debate over education and the importance of theatre goes back to the nineteenth century production of *El sí de las niñas* (1805). Leandro Fernández de Moratín (1760-1828) used this platform as a mirror to promote reformist ideas associated with the Enlightenment. As opposed to the essay, the predominant literary genre in nineteenth-century Spain, theatre introduced hundreds of people of different social statuses to new ideas every night. In his play *El viejo y la niña* (1790), Moratín critically showed the consequences of arranged marriages and his ideological disagreement of suppressing girls' will in marriage.¹⁸

Moratín most famous play *El sí de las niñas* (1805), is an elaboration of this topic offering a happy ending this time: the old Don Diego will not marry Doña Paquita, since she is in love with his nephew, Don Carlos. Through these successful plays, Moratín problematised the commodification of girlhood at a time when marrying young girls to wealthy old men was common practice in Spain. *El sí de las niñas* ignited national debates about education, disobedience and the questioning of obedience as a virtue, which delved into the topic of the problem of girls' education. Not questioning the freedom to choose whether to get married or not, Moratín argued that, since women were going to get married, they should at least choose with whom. This argument will still be relevant more than a century later, and Fortún will refer to Moratín in *Celia institutriz*, as explored in Chapter 2.

The motto '*instruir deleitando*' (to teach so that learning is enjoyable) was part of the Enlightenment philosophy, following horatian precepts also shared by Cervantes. In the first part of *Don Quijote* (1605), Cervantes often claimed that fiction must both teach and delight: "enseñar and deleitar juntamente" (I:47). This maxim would also be used in the rise of children's publishing houses at the beginning of the twentieth century in Spain, in which Celia was created and where pedagogy played a crucial role in the common goal of developing future citizens to regenerate the nation.

¹⁷ Up until then, children collaborated at home and provided for the family, their community. In 1833 and 1844, Britain passed the first general laws against child labour, the Factory Acts, by which children under nine years of age were not allowed to work. Children were not permitted to work at night and their workday was limited to twelve hours under the age of eighteen. On the other hand, the Eighteenth century also saw the development of schools and education. While formal schools can be traced to classical antiquity - ancient Greece, Rome, China and India, Britain approved the Elementary Education Act in 1880 by which school attendance was compulsory from five to ten years of age. School then started being seen as a marker of childhood.

¹⁸ Isabel sees her relationship with Juan thwarted when she discovers she has been betrayed by her family to marry old Don Roque.

2.6 Nineteenth Century. Arenal and Pardo Bazán's Women Rights Fight.

Concepción Arenal (1820-1893) and Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851-1929) represent the bridge to feminism that will culminate in the historic achievement of women's rights during the Second Republic. Arenal, who allegedly attended law school disguised as a man,¹⁹ was concerned for the rights of individuals by enacting an approach to the neglected and defenceless, and saw women as a collective for whose rights there was much to fight for.

This incipient feminism is the result of a series of changes in society such as the educational advances proposed by the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, the triumph of economic industrialism, and the establishment of a class society in which the destiny of the individual was no longer determined by his or her origin, but rather by his or her capabilities. However, it is a democratic system which only allows men to vote, and that excludes women as citizens. In this context, the incorporation of women into the world of paid labour is a fundamental element of economic independence, albeit with a great inequality of conditions with respect to men.

In this regard, the writer Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851-1929) denounced the fact that women were not considered as people with their own life project. As she would reflect in her literary work, girls like the young Fortún (and later Celia) are educated in submission and obedience. This contributes to women's identification with the idea of the traditional *ángel del hogar* imposed on them, making it very hard to imagine other possible destinies. Pardo Bazán, born from a wealthy family, was educated at the *Liceo Francés* in Madrid only thanks to her father's commitment to her education. In her opinion, women were not educated but tamed to fulfil the roles they were forced to occupy in society. In her speech for the 1892 *Congreso Pedagógico*, Pardo Bazán critiqued the goals of the education available to women: “No puede, en rigor, la educación general de la mujer, llamarse tal *educación*, sino *doma*, pues se propone por fin la obediencia, la pasividad y la sumisión” (qtd. in Bieder 161).

For Pardo Bazán, the conservative-liberal confrontation of the nineteenth century obstructed progress for Spain and for women's rights. Spain was left out of Europe by plunging into a sterile political conflict that obstructed the overall progress of society. According to Pardo Bazán, women were victims of this political delay and blockade that continued to hinder their access to public spaces. Moreover, women should be able to express their opinions and speak, not only write, because women could serve society only through their development as individuals. However, the 1870 Penal Code, the 1885 Commerce Code,

¹⁹ Cfr. Valcárcel (61).

and the 1889 Civil Code ensured women's submission in the private home and kept them under the tutelage of men, who officially acted for them in the public sphere (Scanlon 123-137).

In the rest of Europe the bourgeois revolutions considered the human being a citizen. The idea that sovereignty resides in the people claims men not as subjects, but as citizens with rights. However, the ideals of the French revolution: freedom, equality, fraternity, developed during the nineteenth century for only half of the population: men. Rousseau, philosopher and pedagogue whose ideas influenced the French Revolution and the theories on childhood, thought that the life of the women must be directed to make that of the men easier and more pleasant. Similarly, as seen in *Émile*, his contribution to education in which children are finally considered as persons in themselves, is devalued when it comes to girls. According to Rousseau, a natural determinism guides their education, focused on being a mother and wife as a vital function.

Spanish feminism, which cannot be called suffragism until the Second Republic, was a peaceful and permanent revolution, in which Fortún actively participated. For Pardo Bazán, before fundamental rights were achieved, there was more equality (meaning that men and women had the same lack of rights). In Spain, the feminine suffrage was not demanded until the twentieth century because the previous despotism would not guarantee real change. For Arenal, on the other hand, the vote contradicts, in principle, her idea of the feminine nature: kind and unrelated to what she considers the murky world of politics. However, after her fight for the education of girls and their consequent access to a qualified profession, Arenal considers it a contradiction that women do not have access to vote.

Despite the discrimination in intellectual circles, Arenal received the prize of the *Real Academia de Ciencias Morales y Políticas*. In her work, she denounced the influence of public opinion and its use as an element of oppression and control over women.²⁰ Pardo Bazán also talked about the fear of public opinion when a woman writes. Education in Spain created self-conscious and passive mothers which Pardo Bazán depicted in her literature, with the ideological message that women had no rights.

Feminism (and Pardo Bazán through her literary works) demanded a new structure of relations at the individual and family levels, and of social and political relations. The social

²⁰ Arenal's *La mujer del porvenir* (1869) was her first feminist book, followed by *La mujer en su casa* (1881), *Estado actual de la mujer en España* (1884) o *La educación de la mujer* (1892). In these works, Arenal claims women's intellectual capacity and their right to receive an education that allows them to carry out any profession on equal terms with men.

power of the Catholic Church delayed this concession of rights to women, and Spain's social and ideological changes compared to other countries. In her essays "Buscando el modo" and "El hombre musa" in *Desde la ventana* (1992), Martín Gaité also names Rosalía de Castro (1837-1885) and Cecilia Böhl de Faber (1796-1877) as contributors to the roster of nineteenth-century women writers for very different reasons. While Galician Rosalía de Castro (54) is praised for the simplicity of her style, Böhl de Faber (who wrote *La gaviota* under the pseudonym Fernán Caballero) remained a creator of female archetypes, a writer of romance novels (83).

At the end of the eighteenth century, and following the wake of the journalistic specialisation that had first led to the birth of women's magazines, a number of gazettes intended for children appeared. The first to appear in Spain was *La Gaceta de los niños*, in 1798. These diverse periodical publications targeted all members of the family, encouraged good reading habits in children (Sánchez 340) and normalised the act of reading at home (Franco 256). These early children's publications combined didacticism and entertainment, and included related illustrations to exemplify and reinforce the text's message following its original pedagogical aim (Sánchez 340).

Between the 1830s and 1910s, a long process of transition in the field of the production and commercialisation of books allowed for the transformation of the publishing industry from an archaic production system to a modern business with commercial formulas (Martínez 13). This process naturally affected the editing of children's literature and determined the reception of Celia, as I examine in Chapter 2.

3. Twentieth Century. Elena Fortún's *Celia* and the origins of the *Chicas Raras*

The political shifts during the 1920s and 1930s encouraged the child study movement in the twentieth century. During World War 1 (1914-1918) the widespread conscription resulted in mass medical and psychological testing. Post-World War 2 (1939-1945) most governments moved women out of the work force and back into the mothering role at home, and children were moved to school. As a result, there would be increased availability of employment for returning soldiers.

During this time, childhood undergoes a decisive turnaround with the discoveries of psychoanalysis, becoming the true prefiguring age of life. With founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) the interest in infancy and childhood gained such importance that it also promoted the study of childhood and childrearing among social scientists. One of his disciples, Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung (1875-1961), identified the child as an archetype in literature. According to Jung, archetypes emerge from the personal unconscious, arising from the human psyche and offering possibilities of personal growth. However, the child emerges also from the collective unconscious, which is why they appear in literature consistently over the course of history in cultures from all around the world (Byrnes 1).²¹

Also in the twentieth century, the French biologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980) studied the development of children's understanding. His views on how children's minds work and develop have been enormously influential, particularly in educational theory.²² Particular insight was gained into the role of maturation in children's increasing capacity to understand their world: they cannot undertake certain tasks until they are psychologically mature enough to do so. According to Piaget, children's thinking does not develop entirely smoothly, but there are certain points at which it moves into completely new areas and capabilities.

These transitions mark the entry into different "stages" of development: about eighteen months, seven years and twelve years. These ages have been used as a basis for planning and development in areas such as scheduling the school curriculum, or health

²¹ Ana María Matute, studied in Chapter 3, is the main representative of this change of perspective in the representation of children in literature. Matute's characters explore the difficult and contradictory world of childhood and adolescence. As a result, some of her adult characters bear the nostalgic mark of a precociously lost childhood. Connecting to Freud's psychoanalytic theory, some of Matute's adult characters show the suffering of having grown physically, but keeping the children they were inside.

²² Erik Erikson's (1902-1994) research on developmental psychology draws upon Piaget's work.

checks. It has also been understood that before these ages children are not capable of understanding things in certain ways. However, critiques of Piaget include the underestimation of children's capabilities, the limitation of the context of his research -small scale studies in white middle class two parent European families in the 1960s, and women's and children's perspectives ignored (Burman 2008). Furthermore, Piaget's discourse of the developing child implies that there is a finished project: adults. The stages influenced how children are viewed regarding their capabilities, affecting the school system, classification of toys and media, and even legal structures.²³

3.1 *Celia's* reception and the *ILE*

During the mid-nineteenth century, the interest in the world of children that literature had awakened was also extended to the fields of medicine, psychology and art. Doctors felt the added difficulty with the child patient as *in-fans* (Morán 137), made them unable to verbalise their symptoms. Again, the close relationship linking children and women made it clear that women were not allowed to speak. It seems a clear example of social commitment that, from Rosa Chacel (1898-1994), Spanish authors like Fortún decided to combine both factors (childhood and femininity) to convey the messages of their works. Celia shares with the reader, who does not necessarily have to be another child, her view of the world in which she is growing up. In *Celia, lo que dice* (1929), the presentation of Celia in a first narrative voice, which is that of the author herself, enables her to take sides between adults and children and to refer to the silence always demanded from the latter:

¡Y qué tono se dan! «Cuando las personas mayores hablan, los niños no rechistan». «A los mayores no se les contradice nunca». En la mesa: «A comer y a callar». No sé adónde llegarían las cosas si hubiera que callarse siempre . . . ¡Y es inútil explicárselas! Sin embargo, Celia siente la necesidad de decirlo todo, y va a contar todos los menudos incidentes de su vida inquieta, que para los que tengan su edad serán claros y transparentes, y un poco absurdos para las personas mayores, tan intolerantes e injustas casi siempre. (*Celia, lo que dice* 41-42)

²³ The latest shift in the conceptualization of childhood was the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which provided a rights-based approach of childhood, considering children's need of protection, provision and participation. In this model, children are defined by their capacities instead of their deficits, and the "child/adult" binary becomes "minor/adult."

Celia rebels against the continued imposition of children being silenced, as Fortún did in her introduction to the first book. The character's frustration is evident when her complaints are not heard, and she is not allowed to negotiate a new situation. In fact, Fortún does not appear to be indoctrinating, but encouraging a critical perspective for the child reader.

As shown in many of her articles (*Cartas a la mujer tinerfeña* 1926),²⁴ Fortún was committed to childhood and a great part of her success as an author was closely related to her education in the newest pedagogical strategies.²⁵ Fortún used children's logic to raise questions about socially acceptable concepts or institutions and to denounce the belief that logic and normality were relative concepts rarely shared among children and adults. According to Fortún's ideas in her book *El arte de contar cuentos a los niños* ([1947] 2008), stories awaken children's attention and imagination, and their intellectual and possibly moral future depend on them. Her commitment to children in the *Celia* series was not only through Fortún's prologues, but also through the voice of her protagonist. The presentation of Celia in the first person, enables her to take sides among children and adults and allows her to refer to the silence always demanded from the latter.

This strategy is representative of Fortún's progressive ideas taking into account that, as Arkinstall (2014) acknowledges, "The considerable limitations placed on women's participation in the public sphere were sanctioned through the ... cultural model of Woman as Angel in the House, obedient wife, and self-sacrificing mother, a paradigm with which [women] writers engage, negotiate, and, where possible, contest" (6). In this way, Celia contests the restraints of her age and gender; she creates her own spaces and has her own opinions. As it has been shown, the first decades of the twentieth century witnessed a change in attitude towards children. On the one hand, childhood appears as an idealised and pure past phase to be retrieved through memory in literary representations. Furthermore, childhood stands for futurity, for "desires of change that derive from the idea that children will build a better world and also ensure continuity through the transmission of genes to other generations" (Rocha 125).

²⁴ Fortún's career as a writer started with this series of articles or *cartas* published in *La Prensa* (Canary Islands). This could be part of the freethinking periodicals Arkinstall (2014) argues "afforded women the opportunity to cross the culturally constructed, gendered divide between a feminized literary realm and a masculine political sphere, and articulate their political opinions ... through their political essays" (14). In her sometimes political letters in *La Prensa*, Fortún advocated for the abolition of prostitution and women's suffrage.

²⁵ Including Piaget's theory on children's cognitive development, which considered children more active thinkers than previously thought.

Fortún uses a child's logic in her writing to raise questions about consolidated concepts or institutions. Through Celia's point of view, "logic" and "normality" are relative concepts, which children and adults hardly ever share. An example of this is the story "*Promesas sin cumplir*" in which Celia memorises a lesson without understanding the words which leads to several amusing misunderstandings which is a way for Fortún to criticize an obsolete educational system, based in memorization, repetition and obedience. Celia elaborates her own theory about the underlying reasons behind her mistakes:

– En los libros nada está claro... Todas son palabras que no se dicen nunca.

Y mamá dijo que sí, que los libros de los colegios son retorcidos y confusos.

– Lo dirán así para que no entendamos nada, ¿verdad, mamá? (*Celia, lo que dice* 66)

The fact that children are supposed to learn out of indecipherable texts is only one of the paradoxes that Fortún uses to criticise traditional pedagogy. In these stories, the child's voice can refer critically to a period of history that was especially difficult and unfair to the most vulnerable. The apparent simplicity of their stories hides the use of different techniques, such as the narrative strategy of the child's viewpoint or the effectiveness of the message being received by the child reader.²⁶ The complicity of Pilar, Celia's mother, admitting that textbooks are not written in a way in which 'learning is enjoyable,' is another way to be on the side of children and, at the same time, present adults as human and contradictory, trying to offer the best education to their children but also admitting that some teaching strategies are obsolete. In this scene, Pilar seems to feel guilty because she is delegating Celia's education to a third party, instead of spending more time with her and being part of her learning process.

As Carmen Martín Gaité (1993) observed, "[u]na de las modalidades estilísticas de Elena Fortún . . . estriba en aplicar la lógica infantil para desmontar las frases hechas" (34). Using this logic of the child's voice that questions the system of the world in which the characters live, the author is finally able to present valid alternatives to social constraints: "They are icons, figures that are taken to embody fundamental possibilities and problems, even long after their historical contexts have vanished and their authors have died, and like all cultural artifacts they are subject to many kinds of appropriation and misreading" (Locke 4). Despite belonging to a distant historical context, the girl-protagonist continues to offer new and different interpretations. One example is the current reading of the work of Fortún,

²⁶ In his book *Critical Children*, Richard Locke recognises "the critical importance of children and their function as critics of their worlds" (4). For Locke, child-story authors "use children caught in violent situations as vehicles of moral and cultural interrogation" (4), just like Fortún does in *Celia*.

which notes that “era Celia la que iniciaba la protesta y sugería explicaciones alternativas de la realidad, gracias a las cuales se revelaba que las cosas no siempre son lo que parecen” (Martín Gaité, “Elena Fortún y su tiempo,” 8).

This growing interest is particularly intense in Spain, where the Institución Libre de Enseñanza, an innovative educational project based on the ideas of Karl Krause,²⁷ proposes new pedagogies. Their educational plan consists of two elements: the teacher and the child, in whom the national transformation depends on. This sense of hope and the vision of childhood as the future, embodying all that is new, brings us back to the interpretations of *Don Quijote* and *Celia* as characters that defy social expectations and follow their (author’s) ideals. Francisco Giner de los Ríos (1839-1915), founder of the *ILE*, proposed a change based on apparently simple principles that modified the educational approach dramatically.

The *ILE* insisted on welcoming children into the knowledge experience as soon as possible. The role of a child protagonist is taken seriously throughout the educational process and is highlighted at tertiary level by trying to improve the quality of education at Spanish universities. The *ILE* based its method and diffused Maria Montessori and Jean Piaget’s ideas, whose proposals concerning child psychology changed the European educational landscape. As will be examined in Chapter 2, this enthusiasm for childhood is present in the publishing practice as well. Sensitivity towards childhood and education was shown in different aspects: the educational drive, the association of childhood with a certain lyricism, and the surrender to a project of national reformation (seeing children as future citizens).

The *ILE* had plans for social reformation based on the recovery of folklore, life in contact with nature, and the cultivation of conversation as a superior way of teaching and learning. Fortún had her own links to these specific plans, since she had published a compilation of *Canciones infantiles* (1934),²⁸ insisted on the presence and protection of animals in the stories of *Celia* as well as in her early articles, and elevated the art of dialogue in children’s literature. This social commitment was not only through *Celia* and the other characters, but also through Fortún and her prologues and dialogues (which is relevant to the next section of this chapter).

From the use of *Celia*’s apparently innocent thoughts and reflections, Fortún criticizes the bourgeoisie of the twenties in which there are still traces of the centuries-old traditions in

²⁷ Krausism was an intellectual movement based on the doctrines of the German philosopher Karl Krause (1781-1832), aiming for social and cultural change and looking for the modernisation of the country through industry, democracy and education.

²⁸ The *Canciones* have been recently reprinted as part of the “Biblioteca Elena Fortún” in Renacimiento (2019).

coexistence with a growing social unrest. This was pointed out in *Pido la palabra* (1998) by Martín Gaité who stated that Fortún's effectiveness consisted of on the one hand in the liveliness and realism of some dialogues, and, on the other, when put in the mouth of children, those dialogues allowed some social criticism. Rousseau's concept of the child as innocent and their alleged naivety was used by Fortún to spread the message of a more egalitarian society. Martín Gaité sees this use of the child character as a "parapeto" (100).

Celia's childlike curiosity, her lack of understanding of adult discourse and the persistence of her inquisitiveness show the topics that worried the bourgeois society of the time. The portrayal of schools and religious institutions as repressive environments for children (and adults), contrasting with the apparent defencelessness of children, was especially appreciated during the Republic, where children's agency was encouraged.

As will be explored in Chapter 2, rather than being a monolithic category, the concept of education emerges in *Celia* as a discriminating element indicative not only of social norms but also of proper social behavior. Opposing the good versus the bad education, Fortún and Celia discuss innate and environmental approaches to one's behavior and education. For instance, in the first book of the series, *Celia, lo que dice* (1929) there are several scenes in which Celia shows what she thinks about studying. For example, in the scene "Corte de pelo":

—¡A estudiar, niña!

—Bueno, vamos a decir tonterías que no se entienden —y me fui con ella... (...)

—¡Oh, qué ignorancia! ¡Teguible ignorancia la del pueblo español!

Miss Nelly aprovecha todas las ocasiones para insultarnos... (99-100)

Moreover, in a later scene, Fortún faces traditional pedagogy with Celia's learning preferences. Doña Benita, "una señora vieja, que también cuidó a mamá cuando era pequeña" (147) shares with Celia her particular vision of the world:

—Y las estrellas, ¿qué son?

—Pues los brillantes de la capa de nuestro Señor.

— Si te vas a creer todo lo que te digan en el colegio... (...)

— ¡Mamita! Ya no quiero ir al colegio, ni que vuelva miss Nelly. Doña Benita lo sabe todo y me lo explica mejor... (147-149).

Celia prefers doña Benita's take on everything, since she also has the capacity to interpret reality through a magical lens. Doña Benita's function is to connect Celia and her readers

with popular fantasy, allowing them to imagine and propose their own responses to everyday situations.

According to Martín Gaité (2002) and Fraga (2011), the point of view of the girl was incorporated by Fortún to criticize society by way of naivety and irony. However, Francoist censorship did not forgive the lack of child innocence in Celia, which was a major requirement for their model of a girl. The strategy that worked for Fortún during the transitional period of the Republic did not prevent a different reading of her works years later.

3.2 The Child as Reader: Modelling Ideology

Celia cannot model adult behaviour, but she opens up a world of possibilities for the voice of children, especially girls. Celia's behaviour is genuine, born of her curiosity and the confusion generated by grownups' contradictory messages. From the prologues to Celia's answers or reflections, child readers find a liberating model compared to the traditional morals of children's literature of the time. Celia questions what adults say and is in command of her words and actions.

The growing field of children's magazines in which Fortún created Celia did not yet have a long tradition. At the end of the eighteenth century a number of gazettes intended for children appeared,²⁹ following the wake of the journalistic specialisation that had first led to the birth of women's magazines. These diverse periodical publications targeted all members of the family encouraging reading habits in children (Sánchez García 340) and normalising the act of reading at home (Franco 2005 256). These early children's publications combined didacticism and entertainment and included related illustrations to exemplify and reinforce their message following its original pedagogical aim (Sánchez García 340).

Between the 1830s and 1910s, a long process of transition in the field of book production and commercialization allowed for the transformation of the publishing industry from an archaic production system to a modern business with commercial formulas (Martínez 13). This process naturally affected the editing of children's literature and determined the reception of Celia.

²⁹ *La Gaceta de los niños* was the first children's magazine to appear in Spain, in 1798.

3.3 Celia in the 1940-1950s

At the end of the fifth volume of the series by Fortún, *Celia y sus amigos* (1935), Celia said goodbye to her readers, summoning them to the adventures of her brother, since she had already grown up:

¡Adiós, todos vosotros, que sois mis amigos desde que era pequeñita!... Ya soy mayor; mis aventuras de niña no pueden continuar más tiempo...

Lo que antes os hacía gracia, ya no la tendrá... Ahora mi madrina os va a contar las travesuras de Cuchifritín, en *Cuchifritín, el hermano de Celia*, y me veréis pasar a través de ellas como una niña buena y razonable... ¡Adiós!... (212)

Celia has grown up and with her childhood she will lose her sense of humour and her questioning of the norm. Coinciding with the end of the Spanish Civil War, *Celia madrecita* (1939) is published, a book in which a fourteen-year-old Celia becomes the principal carer of the household after her mother passes away. The radical turn of the character, from the novelty of her rebelliousness to her wedding in *Celia se casa* (1950) is analyzed in the next chapter.

The disappearance of the first Celia coincides in time with a significant increase in the number of women writers in the post-war period. At last, women are entering the Spanish literature realm, their works are officially being recognized and they are winning awards. As explored in this chapter, until then women had been portrayed as an exception to the (masculine) norm, isolated cases that were studied as such (as the above-mentioned Pardo Bazán or Rosalía de Castro). At only twenty-three years of age, Carmen Laforet unintentionally became the leader of a new generation by winning the Premio Nadal in 1944 with her novel *Nada*. As will be explored in Chapter 3, the perspective on the themes in the novel contrasted strikingly with the patterns of the romance novel usually read and written by women.

Using again the double marginality of a female adolescent character, women writers in the nineteen fifties began to stand out thanks to literary competitions. The above mentioned Carmen Laforet, Carmen Martín Gaité, Ana María Matute and others like Elena Quiroga or Dolores Medio won the Premio Nadal, which helped launch their careers. The female adolescent character was a common characteristic in many of their novels, which I explore in Chapter 3 as a strategy to avoid censorship among other reasons. The close reading of the chicas raras in Chapter 3 focuses on three topics of interest to Fortún, as seen in this

chapter: Family relations (children vs. adults), social awareness (changing roles of women), and literary vocation (the impact of literature on the authors and the characters).

Their condition of female teenagers, according to what has been stated in this chapter, would enable them to convey messages of disconformity with the lack of freedom of their immediate environment, but at the same time would allow them to get away with it. These characters suffer their families' urge for domestication when they start to dissent. As it has been shown, this is a *motiv* in Spanish literature, from *El Conde Lucanor* in the Middle Ages to the twentieth-century *Celia* and the *chicas raras* analyzed in subsequent chapters.

4. Concluding remarks

Historically, children and women have been lumped together under the understanding that they were defective, incomplete beings. As a result of these beliefs, women and children have not been taken into account, and not considered an active part of society, hence, silenced. The scarce representation of women writers and children's literature in the literary canon is a direct consequence of this discrimination. Thus, the fact that girl children characters have a voice is a radical, political, and a subversive act of change that Fortún and the *chicas raras* used to raise their voice. The boom in young female characters in the 1940-50s is not a coincidence, but a consequence of acknowledging the work of women writers, who were able to portray female characters far from the stereotype that predominated in Spanish literature until then.

As my argument has underscored, there is a notion that children sit out of adult worlds. Hence, they have been portrayed and used as marginal characters in literature for children and adults. Literature has taken advantage of (and contributed to) society's contradictory concepts of childhood. Therefore, reactions to children's characters are also contradictory, depending on the context in which they are read, depending on who reads them. While Celia's belligerence can represent a threat for the adults, it can also represent relief and hope for her readers, who feel that at last someone speaks their language. At least throughout the first half of her series, Fortún freed Celia of the traditional moralistic roles of girls in children's literature and of the social conventions imposed upon them.

As shown in this chapter, definitions of childhood are diverse, contradictory and contingent, but tend to relegate children to a liminal space in society. The images of childhood portrayed in Spanish literature for children and adults relied on archetypal characters that promoted a continuation of the status quo or that amused the readers with the multiple attempts to transcend that liminality (*pícaros*). In this contradictory context, children and fools, Celia and Don Quijote, talk lucid nonsense. Using Celia's voice allows Fortún to question power dynamics and to denounce unfair situations, since, as Doña Benita claims when she visits Celia in *Celia en el colegio*, “¡Ay madre! Los niños y los locos dicen las verdades” (153).

As shown with the examples from some of the *Celias*, the novelty introduced by Fortún was writing from the children's point of view, which gave an innovative twist to children's literature. In previous literature, the adults were always right, because everything was considered from their point of view, and the child received warnings and discipline

(Bravo-Villasante 11). Now, children's logic does not coincide with that of the grownups. The reader has two points of view: the adult's and the child's, and most of the time they realize that the child is right, and grownups appear as authoritarian, despotic and even absurd.

Fortún's books can be read as historical documents. They reflect the life of an upper-middle class family in 1920s Spain. The work is not exempt from social criticism. Fortún was concerned about social inequality and considered children to be the most unprotected victims in the conflicts created by adults (García Padrino 33). Based on the tradition of the marginal character in literature, Fortún's creative process introduced a remarkable renewal of the realistic treatment of the particular world of childhood (García Padrino 41), as an 'intra historical' recreation of everyday life. The dramatic historical events of the twentieth century undoubtedly affected the creation of children's narrative and the lives of their readers.

Celia and the *chicas raras* are evidence that the writing of a woman critical with her time has consequences, and that, by discriminating women writers, literature has also discriminated women readers, preventing them from alternatives to archetypal female characters constructed by men –or, in any case, by women who perpetuate conservative and submissive female role models. Furthermore, limiting concepts of childhood affect children's lives and their representation in literature, and vice versa. Fortún's contribution using the scheme of a girl versus hegemony, or patriarchy, is found in *Celia*, who faces authority figures, as once did the girl of the Cid, the *pícaros* or even Don Quixote. Celia dares to say what others will not, showing innocence or courage depending on the reader. This strategy allowed Fortún's impact on a new generation of readers, as will be explored in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

Chapter 2. Elena Fortún and *Celia*

1. Introduction

This chapter analyzes the appearance and evolution in Spanish literature of the character of Celia, a seven-year-old girl from an upper-middle-class family in Madrid, who tries to make sense of a world dictated by grown-ups and continually attempts to escape their impositions. Celia shares with her readers (both children and adults) her experiences and frustrations from her own point of view, which allowed Elena Fortún, her creator, to spread a critical vision of the adult world. Following on from the representations of childhood in Spanish literature examined in Chapter 1, the focus of this chapter is the close reading of the series “Celia y su mundo” to get a conclusion on the contribution of these series to the evolution of the character based on “the child who tells the truth.” The chapter is framed in the historical and cultural circumstances of Fortún’s life, including:

- 1) the originality and success of the character contextualized in the Spanish children’s literature apogee of the late 1920s,
- 2) the changing role of women before and after the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and
- 3) the shifting and contradictory concepts of childhood and girlhood that affected the creation and reception of the series over different decades.

In late 1920s’ Spain, Fortún (1886–1952) started publishing “Celia y su mundo,” currently considered the best children's book series of the time in Spain (Sánchez 263; Escobar 328). Early in the series, Celia reacts as a rebel to grownups and does not seem to understand the limitations imposed on her. However, as she gets older, the character who broke the mould with her transgressive behaviour and convincing speech, gradually becomes more adapted to the adult universe. Moreover, after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Fortún is forced into exile and so is her character, returning to Spain to be forced to adapt to a new society.

This chapter examines the social, political, and cultural changes that made Fortún’s *Celia* series possible and the challenges she had to face in different periods. The modern history of Spain background is akin to the main character in the *Celia*'s series, affecting her destiny. The historical events reflected in the books range from the Regenerationism of the last years of Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship and the rise of children's literature, to the

historical advances of feminism during the Republic and their loss during Franco's dictatorship after the Civil War (1936-1939). A close reading of the series allows the exploration of the aspirations and frustrations of young girls and women during the Republic until the post-war period, since Celia grew up and became an adult in the books Fortún wrote over more than two decades.

“Celia y su mundo” published by Aguilar Publishers, consists of twenty one books. The first titles in the series were compilations of the stories that Fortún had published in the children’s supplement *Gente Menuda*. However, the success of the first edited volumes had Aguilar ask her for books directly.³⁰ The focus of my analysis is to see the evolution of the character throughout the series, taking into account how historical and social events influenced her transformation from the first volume, in which she is seven years old, to the last one, at the age of nineteen. To this end, in this chapter I focus on the ten novels in which Celia is the main protagonist and are narrated from her own point of view.³¹ These are: *Celia, lo que dice* (1929), *Celia en el colegio* (1932), *Celia novelista* (1934), *Celia en el mundo* (1934), *Celia y sus amigos* (1935), *Celia madrecita* (1939), *Celia en la revolución* ([1943] 1987), *Celia institutriz en América* (1944), *El cuaderno de Celia. Primera comunión* (1947) and *Celia se casa (cuenta Mila)* (1950).

In my analysis, I follow the chronological order in which the volumes were published, with the exception of *Celia en la revolución*, which was written in 1943 but not discovered and published until 1987. In my study, I give it the place it would have in a logical sequence of events and by age of the protagonist. After *Celia en la revolución*, in which Celia is caught up in the Civil War, comes *Celia institutriz en América* (1947), that is, Fortún’s forced exile when the Franco dictatorship was imposed. This chapter contends that the dramatic historical events in twentieth-century Spain shaped the creation of children’s narratives, and the lives of their readers. Book after book, Celia’s identity was shaped by diverse circumstances and their cross-cultural implications, which influenced Fortún, Celia and her readers.

³⁰ The titles of the series “Celia y su mundo” are: *Celia, lo que dice* (1929), *Celia en el colegio* (1932), *Celia novelista* (1934), *Celia en el mundo* (1934), *Celia y sus amigos* (1935), *Cuchifritín, el hermano de Celia* (1935), *Cuchifritín y sus primos* (1935), *Cuchifritín en casa de su abuelo* (1936), *Cuchifritín y Paquito* (1936), *Las travesuras de Matonkikí* (1936), *Matonkikí y sus hermanas* (1936), *Celia madrecita* (1939), *Celia institutriz en América* (1944), *El cuaderno de Celia. Primera comunión* (1947), *La hermana de Celia (Mila y Piolín)* (1949), *Mila, Piolín y el burro* (1949), *Celia se casa (cuenta Mila)* (1950), *Patita y Mila, estudiantes* (1951), *Los cuentos que Celia cuenta a las niñas* (1951), *Los cuentos que Celia cuenta a los niños* (1952), *Celia en la revolución* (1987). Based on Celia's character, Fortún also wrote books focusing on secondary characters, such as her siblings Cuchifritín, Patita and Mila, and her cousin Matonkikí.

³¹ As will be explained, *Celia se casa* is the only exception in my analysis, since it is narrated by her younger sister, Mila. I have included this book in my analysis because although Celia is not the narrator, she is still the main protagonist and it is the last volume of her series.

Celia's inquisitive nature in the first volumes fades towards the middle of the series, when she must take care of her sisters and ends up adapting to the conventions of a society that had always seemed illogical to her and against which she had famously rebelled. The first part of this chapter, *Celia, the Rebel Girl*, focuses on the first half of the volumes in the *Celia* series, in which she is a surprisingly rebellious child. The second part of this chapter, *Celia, the Chica Rara Who Was Not*, focuses on the involution of the character with the arrival of an authoritarian regime.

The topics I analyse in *Celia* are changing concepts during the series, either because of Celia's change in attitude or because of the ideological change of society, are: the world of children vs. the world of adults; education and pedagogical ideas; feminism and the changing roles of women; reality and fiction, intrahistory and reflection of Fortún's life in *Celia*; social injustice through classism, racism, violence against animals; physical, symbolic or spiritual mobility as a need to flee; and the literary vocation and intertextuality. These seven themes appear to a greater or lesser extent in each of the books in the series and share the ideological basis of Fortún, who was concerned with the limitation of female roles in her time.³² Fortún participated in the historical change of the Second Republic and denounced through her articles the abuse that women, children and animals had to endure.

The thorough study of these themes throughout the series shows the dynamics between the characters and the context in which their stories are written, which also framed Fortún's personal circumstances. In addition, the conclusions on these topics will serve as a basis for the analysis of the novels of the *chicas raras* in the 1940s-50s. Although Celia's stories have been reprinted since the 1920s, later generations may recall the character from the screen adaptation by José Luis Borau for Spanish TV in the 90s. Celia has been enjoyed by generations of readers in their childhood who barely even know anything about her creator. However, if they are familiar with Celia's adventures, they might know quite a lot about Fortún's own journey, since as Carmen Bravo-Villasante (1986) stated, "en el fondo Celia es Elena Fortún" (9).

³² In *Representing Agency in Popular Culture* (2018), Ingrid E. Castro considers how childhood emerged as a facet of social sciences in the 1980s, and how children employ, are denied, and/or understand agency. Castro examines the liminal space children occupy in society acknowledging that "generational power differentials between girls and boys must be specifically investigated within hegemonic, patriarchal societies to truly understand the intersection of gender with generation in the girlhoods and boyhoods of childhood" (265-266). This chapter considers girls education and their portrayal in literature.

1.1 Celia is born.

Fortún's natural dialogues and her interactive style are recognizable in her early articles she wrote in magazines such as *Royal*, *La Moda Práctica*, *Crónica*, and *Estampa*.³³ Being published in the first instance in *Gente Menuda*,³⁴ the weekly children's supplement to the journal *Blanco y Negro*,³⁵ part of the *ABC* newspaper, Celia is unquestionably linked to the journalistic experience of her author. Reflecting on the ephemeral nature of magazines, Helma Van Lierop-Debrauwer (2016) argues that, in addition to often being considered a mirror of their time, reflecting contemporary social and cultural issues, magazines also play an active role in shaping that reality (71). According to Van Lierop-Debrauwer (2016), in the case of children's periodicals, this makes magazines an interesting source for studying views and representations of the world, but also images of children (71). Fortún's *Celia* portrays the ideal child in line with adult's expectations (obedient, silent, submissive), but also suggests another model: a curious, inquisitive child whose desires inevitably collide with their expectations.³⁶

Many characters and situations in *Celia* were inspired by Fortún's real life friends and family. It seems that Celia's character was inspired by her friend's Mercedes Hernández³⁷ daughter, Florinda Díez Hernández. Florinda was a curious girl who loved reading and listening to Fortún's stories.³⁸ In addition, Cuchifritín, Celia's brother, was inspired by

³³ For a detailed account of Fortún's journalistic collaborations, see Fraga (2013).

³⁴ Instead of her real name, Encarnación Aragoneses, she used the pseudonym "Elena Fortún" from her first journalistic collaborations. The name belongs to the protagonist of the novel *Los mil años de Elena Fortún* (1922) written by her husband. In *Gente Menuda* she also used the pseudonyms of Doña Quimera, Luisa and La Madrina (from 1930 she also uses those of: el Mago Pirulo, el profesor Bismuto and Roenueces, a journalist bunny).

³⁵ *Blanco y negro* was the most complete of the periodicals of the first third of the 20th century and the one with the largest circulation, with more than one hundred thousand copies in 1928-29 (Fraga 242), the time when *Celia* appeared, which influenced the popularity of the character.

³⁶ In her analysis of children's narrative written by women in the 1920-30s, Sánchez Pinilla (2012), stresses that Fortún's success, as that of other women writers, takes place in an environment that had a certain social acceptability since the transmission of oral culture and the world of children was part of their social and family role as women (60). In addition, the supplement is presented outside the newspaper, which is the undisputed core edition. In this way, writing in the margins and dealing with issues that concern them socially, the growing collaboration of women in the press is not questioned.

³⁷ In 1922 Fortún moved to Tenerife, due to her husband's, Eusebio de Gorbea, new military posting. They spent two years on the Canary Islands with their friends Eduardo Díez del Corral, who served with Gorbea at the military academy, and his wife, Mercedes Hernández. This trip is crucial for Celia's future creation, since Mercedes' children (Eduardo, Florinda, and Félix) will be a valuable source of inspiration for Fortún when she begins writing for children.

³⁸ This is what Fortún expresses in the handwritten dedication of a book to Florinda: "A mi deliciosa hada, que tantos cuentos ha inspirado" (Dorao 74). Otherwise she sends Florinda the book *Celia lo que dice*, with a letter: "así como yo te veo, eres Celia. Cuando me hablan de ti siempre me describen tu espíritu inquieto, lleno de curiosidades, aficionada a leer cuanto cae en tus manos, tal vez un poquito romántica en el fondo, para que nadie descubra ese tesoro de ternura que sólo tu madre conoce... Así veo yo a Celia y así eres tú. Una niña sencilla, que sepa hablar con naturalidad y gracia, capaz de desempeñar airoso el papel de Celia en vida, no creo que

Félix,³⁹ Florinda's brother; Cecilia, Mercedes' sister with whom Fortún spent time in Santander, was tía Cecilia; and the cousins Clara and Genoveva inspired the twins Miss Fly and Pili. As Dorao (2001) notes, Paulette could have been inspired by Mercedes, Fortún's loyal friend always willing to help. Celia's grandfather, Don José, was named after Mercedes' father and Florinda's grandfather.

The multiple coincidences between Fortún's life and Celia's adventures demand a profound analysis of Fortún's biography (Dorao 2001). The Elena-Celia binomial can be seen as two parallel lives, one real and one imaginary. Although inspired by Florinda's wit, the identification of the author with her central protagonist manifests in the contexts of each series of adventures. Hence, Celia is not presented living on the Canary Islands, but in the familiar calle Serrano in Madrid, spends the holidays in Santander, and is an exile in Argentina after the war.

The weekly short stories or scenes published in *Gente Menuda* since 1928 often share a similar structure in which Celia presents her readers with adventures as independent episodes, with familiar dialogues and an evaluative conclusion of what has just happened. The first compilation of stories published in book form, *Celia, lo que dice* (1929) consisted of 42 scenes or short stories and was the first in the series of "Celia y su mundo". The interest that Celia's stories awakened in publisher Manuel Aguilar is explained through the analysis of the unprecedented publishing activity in which they were written (1929-1987).⁴⁰ Studies by Sánchez García (2001), Franco (2005, 2006), Díaz-Plaja (2011) and Escobar (2016) provide additional connections between the changing business of children's literature during the 1920s-1930s and the creation of Celia.

1.2 Children's literature until 1929.

During the 1920s and 1930s, when Celia was published, children's literature was being consolidated as a genre in itself. Public initiatives such as the "Fiesta Nacional del Libro" in 1926 under Primo de Rivera ensured the advantages that the promotion of reading

haya otra más que tú" (Dorao 83). In her study *Elena Fortún, periodista* (2013), Fraga adds: "Algunas niñas quieren conocer a Celia. Dime dónde puedo verla –me dicen en las cartas. Y yo no me atrevo a decir que está en Santa Cruz, pero así lo pienso" (27).

³⁹ This is confirmed by the dedication printed in *Cuchifritín, el hermano de Celia*, 1935: "A Félix Díez Hernández cuyas ocurrencias infantiles han inspirado a Cuchifritín, más de una vez, las suyas" (Dorao 64).

⁴⁰ In his book, *Una experiencia editorial* (1972) Aguilar explained his turn to children's literature: "Decidí editar literatura para los niños el mismo día en que me puse a leer unos originales que me aportó una magnífica escritora, prematuramente muerta, Elena Fortún. Había nacido Elena con el destino de escritora para niños. Tenía su vocación marcada por el entusiasmo y la fatiga. ... Yo, que, vuelvo a decirlo, no soy altruista, creí en la escritora, en su porvenir y en los resultados económicos de la edición" (710-711).

in children would bring to the publishing business. The establishment of the Second Republic in 1931 confirmed and accelerated the process of promoting reading, since the potential to educate Spanish citizens was a key element of the Republic.⁴¹ The cultural context favoured the diffusion of children's literature due to interest for the new reader and a collective will to spread reading among children, especially through weekly stories and the series of stories for children (Escobar 324-325). The collaboration between Aguilar and Fortún was particularly noteworthy, since the quality of the text was enhanced with illustrations by Molina Gallent and Viera Sparza for *Celia*, Serny for *Chuchifritín* and Ricardo Fuente for *Matonkikí*.⁴² This combination of literary talent has been considered to produce the best children's books of the time (Sánchez García 263, Escobar 328).⁴³

These are the volumes that Martín Gaité (2002) remembers from her early reader experience: “Aquellos libros cuadrados de tapa dura, ilustrados primero por Molina Gallent y luego por Serny, cuya primera edición constituye hoy una rareza bibliográfica, circulaban por todas las casas sobados, releídos, desencuadrados, a veces con calcomanías pegadas en la primera página y las ilustraciones coloreadas con lápices Faber” (“Elena Fortún y su tiempo” 40). These are also the books that Marisol Dorao (2001) remembers as a reader in the introduction to her biography of Fortún (7) and the researcher María Jesús Fraga in her prologue to *Elena Fortún, periodista* (2013) and which she would reread with her children (13).

The presence of the girl as the protagonist in children's literature experienced a boom in the second half of the nineteenth century with *Sophie's Misfortunes* (1858) by the Countess of Ségur where, despite its moralising intention, a model of the spontaneous and natural girl is presented in the form of small episodes in which dialogue predominates (and in which, in some way, they find their model Fortún, Borita Casas and even Elvira Lindo). Sophie was followed by the most important female characters in children's literature: Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865); Louise May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868); Johanna Spyri's *Heidi* (1880); and J.M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* (1911). Celia's readers had access to translations of these classics between 1925 and 1928 (Fraga 244), hence they knew Celia and all these protagonists, who offered a wide range of representations of

⁴¹ The importance of reading in progressive discourse is understood within the framework of the pedagogical renewal that emerged between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century explained in Chapter 1.

⁴² See García Padrino (1997) “Los ilustradores de Celia.”

⁴³ Fortún defended the importance of the illustrations: “Si supieran los editores el valor de una bonita ilustración, de unos alegres dibujos de colores, de una impresión clara y limpia; mejor aún si lo supieran los autores, no se publicarían, a veces, bonitos cuentos bajo una portada gris y sin relieve. No tenemos derecho a escatimar en el arte en el libro del niño” (qtd. in Fraga 2013 238).

femininity. This sample of female behaviour clashed with the Spanish conservative model of girls.

1.3 *Celia*'s style and originality

Celia's perspective to reality is undoubtedly the style element that distinguishes *Celia* stories. In Fortún's fictional universe, the traditional point of view has simply been reversed, putting children at the centre of the story and leaving the adult world as a backdrop. As examined in Chapter 1, Fortún used the tradition of the marginal character that prevails in Spanish literature in the form of marginal truth-tellers (*pícaros*, *Don Quixote*). Her vindication of childhood is a revolutionary proposal. For Martín Gaité (2002), the presentation of the adults as entities that can be analysed by the child is the most groundbreaking element in Fortún's narrative, since "Semejante novedad entraña una subversión de valores con respecto a la literatura infantil al uso, donde siempre habían sido los padres y maestros quienes amonestaban al niño o criticaban su conducta, pero no al revés" ("Arrojo y descalabros" 83).

Fortún acknowledged the potential of writing from literary marginality (as examined in the Picaresca) and continued with the tradition of the marginalized character who seems to live apart from social reality and who tries to create a parallel world in which she can live without being questioned. Ana Díaz-Plaja mentions Celia up to three times in the conclusions of her book *Escrito y leído en femenino: novelas para niñas* (2011), where Celia is presented as a counterexample, as an exception to the norm in many aspects of the novels for girls.⁴⁴ Díaz-Plaja warns that if not all the readers recognise the value of a genre that is marginalised by criticism and scarcely valued in literary education in the literary formation, even less will readers recognize their knowledge of novels for girls (384). However, as this thesis argues, the writers of the 1940s and 1950s acknowledged the importance that "Celia y su mundo" had in their literary vocation, as will be examined in Chapter 3.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ More than a genre in itself, Díaz-Plaja (2011) considers novels for girls as a cross of genres, including genres of children and young-adults literature: story, didactic book, adventure novels, detective stories, *Bildungsroman*; and other genres like the *folletín* and the *novela rosa* (385).

⁴⁵ After analysing the characteristics of the novels for girls, Díaz-Plaja (2011) closes her study with other possible research perspectives, which are again relevant for the study of *Celia* and for this thesis. Díaz-Plaja recommends the study of the authors of children's literature of the 1960s (Gloria Fuertes, Montserrat del Amo, Ana María Matute, etc.) and their relationship with novels for girls, which is closely related to the aim of this thesis. Ivana Calceglia could have done so in her study *Crescere nel racconto* (2019), but although she looks at Fortún and Matute as authors of children's literature, she does not relate them or point out the possible influence of one on the other.

From this new critical and ironic perspective, that of an autonomous girl, the mutual incomprehension between children and adults is revealed, often represented in the confused crossing of their respective discourses. The lack of connection between the two worlds through the play of denoted and connoted language is a source of constant comedy in *Celia's* series.

Celia's adventures have other elements that contribute to the coherence of the scenes in their transition from the weekly magazine publication to their compilation in book form. The situations and events are varied, with many characters from diverse backgrounds and treated in a realistic way. Action and characters are presented to readers in a real time and place, the Spain of the 1920s, meaning a strong identification of the reader with the character. This happened to a little Martín Gaité (2006), who experienced a “identificación apasionada” (“El crecimiento de Celia” 396) and considered Celia a friend growing up with her, “Porque cuando yo leí este texto, en mi casa de Salamanca, también tenía siete años” (“Arrojo y descalabros” 83). Essential for this thesis, the characters present themselves immersed in a temporal evolution that affects and transforms them and their readers at the same time.

Escobar (1990) observes that another unifying element of *Celia's* narrative in the books are the prologues, in which the narrator addresses her readers, underlines the importance of the settings and even draws some moralising consequences from what is to be told (329). However, these are not traditional morals warning of negative consequences that an undesired behaviour on the part of the child could have, but contributions to mark the differences in expectations between adults and children.

Readers are practically another character in Celia's adventures. They are frequently addressed to judge the fairness of specific situations and are expected to meet with her again in sequels. Fortún uses a variety of strategies such as different kinds of perspectivation (first person dialogue and narration), a topic of interest for children, and an evaluation of the scene after an unsuccessful interaction with a grown-up. The child reader can react to the passage by recognizing the context and the role of the characters but also by empathizing with Celia's evaluative use of reported speech as a conclusion to the scene. Without appearing to set a moral standard, a reflection is invited.

The effect of the girl's voice in these stories is reinforced throughout the series by Celia asking the reader direct questions that evoke a sense of confidentiality and intimacy. In *Celia, lo que dice*, Fortún deliberately considers the reader as part of the plot and addresses her in the feminine: “Tú, lectora, lo comprenderás mejor” (53), “Presta atención, lectora” (70). With this inclusive formula, the author directly challenges the child, and the reader

approaches this incomplete text that must be built as it is being read. These two examples of interaction are offered at the beginning of the book and give the impression that the author/character is reading her story to the audience, inviting the participants to give their opinion and establishing a dialogue with her audience, rather than writing books to be read without interrogation.⁴⁶

According to Díaz-Plaja (2011), novels for girls present a thematic dispersion always reproducing the following communicative scheme: a woman author who writes about a female character, targeted to a girl reader (383). This arrangement is a consequence of the incorporation of women in authorship in the nineteenth century, and the segregation of the female's reading audience, and, consequently, children's. However, Fortún only addresses her readers in feminine in the first two volumes of the series, *Celia, lo que dice* and *Celia en el colegio*. For the rest of the volumes (and coinciding with the publication of *Cuchifritín, el hermano de Celia*, 1935) she uses the masculine plural, broadening the audience of her message on equality.

Based on their personality, Díaz-Plaja divides the protagonists of the novels for girls into two large groups: the good and thaumaturgical who radiate kindness, and the inquisitive ones. The inquisitorial nature of Celia and her consistent questioning of reality makes it easy to group her into the latter, but the majority of her adventures begin by trying to help someone (she wants to be a fairy, like her idealised mother, to take care of the family in *Celia, lo que dice*, 1929), and she graciously declares her will to become a martyr and a saint in *Celia en el colegio* (1932). As for her relationships with other characters, the central character of novels for girls, and certainly in *Celia*, is usually the only protagonist. While her relationship with adult characters is frequent, the presence of other children is secondary: her brother and sisters, all of whom she takes care of in different ways, or her imposed wealthy girlfriends and classmates.

Another stylistic aspect of Fortún's narrative to be explored in depth (particularly in Chapter 3, in relation to the *chicas raras*), is intertextuality. Celia filters reality through the stories she is fond of, which makes her perspective rarely coincide with that of others (adults and even other child characters). Celia compares events that happen to her with scenes she has read in the stories and inevitably expects a magical resolution, which rarely occurs and leaves her disappointed. Moreover, first in her weekly publications and later in the book

⁴⁶ Fortún started this writing style in the *Cartas a la mujer tinerfeña*, in which she addressed her readers as "Lectora amiga" (*El camino* 19) and used rhetorical questions to get their attention, engagement strategies that she would use later with Celia's readers.

series, Celia refers to characters and places from previous stories that her readers can recognize, expanding her universe book after book. Finally, *Celia novelista* (1934) introduces Celia as a writer and collects stories that she herself invents and writes for her readers.

I. Celia, the Rebel Girl

2. Analysis of the series. Part I.

The first five volumes on which the first part of this chapter focuses are:

Celia, lo que dice (1929). This novel situates Celia in the Spain of the 1920s. At the age of seven, Celia lives in Madrid's Calle de Serrano and narrates in first person her frustrating disagreements with grownups. As a result of these misunderstandings, Celia is sent to a boarding school and relates her new adventures with the nuns at *Celia en el colegio* (1932). During the summer, Celia is the only girl who does not go on holiday with her family, so she takes advantage of the solitude of the school to give free rein to her imagination and finally writes her own stories, portrayed in *Celia novelista* (1934). Finally, Tío Rodrigo takes Celia out of the nun's school and starts *Celia en el mundo* (1934), with new adventures in Madrid and in France, where she makes new friends. However, her parents put her back in another school in *Celia y sus amigos* (1935), although it does not last long and she can enjoy a period of greater freedom with her friends and family.

2.1 *Celia, lo que dice* (1929)

“El Teddy Bear que me trajeron los Reyes se parece a miss Nelly como si fuera hijo suyo. Papá y mamá se enfadan cuando lo digo. Tú, lectora, lo comprenderás mejor” (53).

The first book in the series “*Celia y su mundo*,” *Celia, lo que dice* (1929) was a compilation of some of the stories that Fortún had published in *Gente Menuda*, in which Fortún introduced the seven-year-old girl character of Celia Gálvez de Montalbán. In this volume Celia retells scenes of her daily life from the first person, her perspective as a girl who does not understand the world of grownups and whose interpretation of reality does not usually coincide with the adults’. For Celia, the stories she reads in her books make much more sense, and she unwittingly applies this filter of fantasy to what happens around her, to the despair of her elders. Celia’s point of view is always inquisitive, questioning and non-conformist, something new in the Spanish tradition of child characters, even more in feminine protagonists.⁴⁷

As this chapter will show, this first Celia will be remembered even after the political circumstances seem to force her transformation into a more submissive one. The analysis of this first book is slightly longer than the rest in the chapter, since it sets the tone for the series. One of the main themes analysed in this section is the relationship between children and adults, with the sub-themes of: silence, hypocrisy and loneliness. Celia does not fit well in the roles imposed on her as a child and specifically as a little girl, which leads her to being considered “rebelde,” in line with the treatment of female characters and women roles in the 1920s, especially the relationship between Celia and her mother.

Celia lives in the central calle de Serrano in Madrid, and through her adventures she introduces her friend Solita, the doorman’s daughter;⁴⁸ Maimón, the servant that tío Rodrigo brought from Africa; María Teresa and other girls from the park with the same social status. Reading *Celia* provides an intrahistory, an approach the Spain of the 1920s fashion and customs. Due to their professional obligations and social relations, Celia’s parents do not spend much time with her, and delegate her care to the maid Juana, the governess Miss Nelly or her beloved caregiver Doña Benita. In other words, Fortún introduces characters from different backgrounds, different layers of society, and with their different accents, one of

⁴⁷ For Sánchez Pinilla (2012), the ideological element of the story also lies in showing a desirable model of childhood. Celia is an adventurer par excellence, a role previously assigned to boys (64).

⁴⁸ Solita’s creation was inspired by Vicenta, the janitor’s daughter in the house where Fortún lived as a child (Dorao 33).

Fortún's most successful stylistic traits that makes reading these stories aloud an unforgettable experience.⁴⁹

The analysis of the book focuses on subjects in which Fortún was genuinely interested, such as children's agency vs. adults' authoritarianism, the role of women in society and the mother-daughter relationship, which is essential to assess Fortún's impact on the *chicas raras*, examined in Chapter 3.

2.1.1 Children vs. Adults

Celia lo que dice, and more specifically, the prologue, sets the tone for Fortún's revolutionary view of childhood, with which she gives children a voice. From the first line of the prologue of the book, Fortún sets the binary "children vs. grownups", introducing Celia and her age, alongside the adults' assumptions to it:

Celia tiene siete años, la edad de la razón. Así lo dicen las personas mayores.

Celia es rubia, tiene el cabello de ese rubio tostado que con los años va oscureciéndose hasta parecer negro. Tiene los ojos claros y la boca grande. Es guapa. Mamá se lo ha dicho a papá en secreto, pero ella lo ha oído.

No se envanece por tal cosa. Es seria, formal y reflexiva, razonadora. Porque, ¿de qué serviría haber alcanzado la edad de la razón si no sirviera para razonar?

Así, pensando y pensando, ha entendido que, siendo los mayores tan grandes y tan ásperos, tan diferentes en todo a los niños, no pueden comprender nada de lo que los niños piensan o hacen. ...

¡La edad de la razón! ¿Será por haber pasado esa edad por lo que los mayores no comprenden las cosas más sencillas? (42)

The figurative language used by grownups governs the reality of children. However, the literal meaning of their words is not explained, creating a world inaccessible to children and incomprehensible to Celia. To Fortún, the adults' use of different layers of meaning without even realizing discredits their authority and she positions herself very clearly in favour of the children: "Celia siente la necesidad de decir todo, y va a contar todos los menudos incidentes de su vida inquieta, que para los que tengan su edad serán claros y transparentes, y un poco absurdos para las personas mayores, tan intolerantes e injustas casi siempre" (42).

⁴⁹ No doubt it was for Martín Gaité and her sister Ana María, and for Matute and her sister María Pilar, as Chapter 3 will show. Silvia and Cristina Cerezales Laforet also recall reading Fortún's books with her mother, Carmen Laforet (Laforet and Fortún 9-18).

According to the narrator's description, Celia is literally big-mouthed. As for her personality, we can see Fortún's sympathy towards her character, who seems not to be appreciated among the adults around her. In her prologue, Fortún also denounces the simplistic view of the children's world by adults, according to which children are carefree, unconscious and happy by nature. Fortún, on the other hand, considers that "[Adults] sí que lo son, que se van a la calle cuando quieren, se acuestan cuando les parece bien, comen lo que les gusta y rompen lo que se les cae, sin que nadie acuda a darles azotes" (42), which reminds the adult readers of their privileges.

Silence, hypocrisy and loneliness are tightly linked themes in the series, and particularly in *Celia lo que dice*. According to Fortún, grownups always think they know what children need or what is best for them. Grownups do not listen but demand silence when they speak, which is judged by Fortún as a clear abuse of power: "¡Y qué tono se dan! 'Cuando las personas mayores hablan, los niños no rechistan'. 'A los mayores no se les contradice nunca'. En la mesa: 'A comer y a callar'. No sé adónde llegarían las cosas si hubiera que callarse siempre" (42). Adults' silencing authority over children is a constant theme in *Celia's* series, especially in the first part.⁵⁰

However, using her own voice, Celia reveals what adults say about other adult characters, that is their hypocrisy: "la miss es testaruda como la capa de un mulo (lo dice Juana)" (49). Celia also has her opinion about miss Nelly: "El Teddy Bear que me trajeron los Reyes se parece a miss Nelly como si fuera hijo suyo. Papá y mamá se enfadan cuando lo digo. Tú, lectora, lo comprenderás mejor" (53). In other words, while grownups are allowed to criticize each other, Celia should not establish physical similarities between teddy bears wearing wire mesh glasses and the grumpy governesses. In addition, Celia counts on the understanding of her readers, who are likely to find themselves in similar situations. Similarly, adults insist that children do not lie but also that they do not listen to situations in which, according to Celia's logic, "esa es la verdad" (117), hence truth is also proposed as a relative concept. This idea connects to the concept of *parrhesia*, explored in Chapter 1. Celia is used by Fortún as a *parrhesiastes* or truth-teller because Celia says what she knows to be true.

The few exceptions to this hypocrisy are on Celia's father's part. All that is expected of Celia is to obey, like in the decision to cut her hair. Faced with the explanation that she has

⁵⁰ Adults remind Celia that "Las niñas han de ser discretas y no ocuparse de lo que dicen los mayores" (96) and later she laments: "¡Ay qué pena, no me querían oír!" (118).

to cut her hair for the summer, whether she likes it or not, she applies the same logic and cuts the hair of Pirracas, the cat of Angora, and is punished for it. “La niña tiene razón” (101) admits her father, who in a way understands Celia's logic, always alien to the reasoning that leads to decision making at home.

In addition to the silence imposed on Celia, adults always seem to be too busy to devote time to her. This lack of attention sometimes results in her terrible loneliness. In this example, Celia sees her mother leaving again and asks her where she is going: “No seas preguntona. Voy de compras, de visitas, a tomar el té.” “¿Y todas las mamás se van de casa por la tarde? (...) Yo me quedo triste y con el deseo de seguir preguntando” (58). Celia ends the conversation begging: “Mamita, no te vayas siempre de casa al anochecer, que a todos nos da miedo estar sin ti” (59).⁵¹ Fortún shows a rebellious girl in the eyes of the adults, but that deep down she is only asking for attention and affection. She feels lonely in what Martín Gaité (2002) called a “búsqueda fallida de interlocutor” (“Arrojo y descalabros” 86). In other words, all Celia asks for is someone to listen to her, which is continually denied –and functions as a trigger for Celia to write her own experiences and share them with her readers.

2.1.2 Mother-daughter relationship

The challenge of having an independent life outside the home and at the same time being present in family life was one that Fortún knew well. However, when she writes her stories, she seems to have a message for the accidental audience of her work: mothers as mediators reading to their children. In many scenes, Fortún portrays Celia along with her mother as a representation of an old system that needs to be revised. Celia is aware that the role of the daughter in that relationship is terribly underestimated so she will avoid being in that position as much as she can.

The scene in which she is playing at her friend María Teresa's house in *Celia, lo que dice* provides an amusing example of this. In this passage, Celia refuses any possibility of playing the character of the daughter, usually a passive personality condescended to by her mother. Instead, Celia suggests three interesting feminine characters: Hollywood star and *femme fatale* archetype Greta Garbo; a cook, a familiar figure for her, since she had cooks and maids (and they seemed to have more freedom than herself); and a witch, practically the opposite of the conservative and predominant *ángel del hogar*. In this way, Fortún, through

⁵¹ According to Martín Gaité (2002), Celia's failed interactions with her mother “constituyen pasajes donde el talento psicológico de Elena Fortún raya a la altura de una novelista de primera categoría” (“Arrojo y descalabros” 92).

Celia, proposes different types of femininity for her readers, and moreover, shows that she prefers other options over the one that she is expected to uphold.⁵²

In another situation, Celia's mother can not play with her because she has to “Tomar la cuenta a la cocinera, escribir dos o tres cartas y salir a las seis a tomar el té con mis amigas del Lyceum” (64). In line with the faithful portrayal of society at the time when the Celia stories were set, but also as evidence of Fortún's social commitment, she introduces Celia's mother as a member of the Lyceum Club Femenino. If the girl reader was not familiar with such a modern institution, she would learn about it from Celia. In this subtle way, Fortún spread the idea of a progressive society, in which women were not synonyms of submission and domesticity.⁵³

2.1.3 Girls and Women. The Lyceum Club Femenino

Celia could not accompany her mother to the Lyceum, since, among other things, it was “un paraíso para madres cansadas del que, naturalmente, estaban excluidos los niños” (“Elena Fortún y sus amigas” 64). The Lyceum Club Femenino in Madrid was one of the most popular feminist institutions that illustrated women's growing participation in Spain during the final years of Alfonso XIII's reign (1886-1931).⁵⁴ The Lyceum was founded in 1926 by the pedagogue María de Maeztu along with Victoria Kent, Zenobia Camprubí, María Lejárraga (de Martínez Sierra) and Encarnación Aragonese, that is, Elena Fortún. Since free university education had been made available from 1910, some of them had already finished their tertiary studies and were working outside of the household. The greater influx of female students led to the creation of residences for their accommodation such as the *Residencia de Señoritas*, run by Maeztu herself.

⁵² The following childhood memory of Ana María Matute seems to be taken from the same scene: “Las niñas jugaban a dar té y cosas de ésas, pero yo prefería “hacer de papá”. Porque el papá leía periódicos. Y me sentaba a leer tebeos. Yo siempre me he desmarcado de ese papel supuestamente femenino, siempre he sido muy natural, he seguido mis impulsos” (qtd. in De la Fuente 18). Chapter 3 examines further parallels between the work and ideas of Fortún and Matute.

⁵³ According to Caamaño (2007), Fortún knew that children's literature was a very powerful indoctrinating tool, since it was one of the first cultural artifacts with which children come into contact (35), and she used it to spread her ideas on equality and respect.

⁵⁴ The Lyceum was a meeting point where women from middle and upper classes organised and enjoyed varied educational and cultural events: concerts, art exhibitions, reading groups and conferences, inviting other writers and poets like Federico García Lorca and Rafael Alberti, Ramón Gómez de la Serna or Miguel de Unamuno. Others declined the invitation, as the poet Concha Méndez remembered: “una vez invitamos a Benavente, que se negó a venir, inaugurando como disculpa una frase célebre del lenguaje cotidiano: «¿Cómo quieren que vaya a dar una conferencia a tontas y a locas?»” (Ulacia 26). This anecdote is evidence of the opposition the club encountered from more conservative positions, which would have preferred that women stayed at home. However, that was the alternative the Lyceum was offering to women. As Aurora Lanzarote explained, the club “ha nacido porque vamos sintiendo las mujeres la necesidad de vivir en el mundo, de descansar una hora del trabajo del hogar, para dedicarla al trato con las demás mujeres” (Aguilera Sastre 71).

The Lyceum focused on of culture, the first institution in Spain aimed at connecting self-taught women who possessed or aspired to develop an artistic and intellectual talent (Balló 23).⁵⁵ The aim was to create an inter-generational sisterhood movement in which women would collaborate and help each other.⁵⁶ They belonged to the well-known artistic generations of 1898, 1914 y 1927,⁵⁷ “compuestas, según los manuales al uso, en su casi totalidad por varones” (Núñez 403).⁵⁸ After the pioneering feminists Concepción Arenal (1820-1893) and Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851-1929), studied in Chapter 1, came the Generación del 98 with María Goyri (1873-1955), María Lejárraga (1874-1974) and Carmen Karr (1865-1943). The Generación del 14, to which Fortún belongs, included the pedagogues María de Maeztu (1881-1947) and María Luisa Navarro de Luzuriaga (1890-1947), the graphologist Matilde Ras (1881-1969),⁵⁹ Isabel Oyarzábal, Carmen Baroja, Margarita Xirgu (1888-1969), and the lawyers Clara Campoamor and Victoria Kent (who would famously lead the debate for women's suffrage in Parliament in 1931, with Campoamor's victory and the achievement of the vote for women).⁶⁰ The Generación del 27 featured Rosa Chacel, María Teresa León, Maruja Mallo, Ernestina de Champourcín, Concha Méndez, Carmen Conde and María Luz Morales.

⁵⁵ Beyond the artistic connections that the Lyceum fostered, it also served to discuss and demand women's rights, whose proposals were presented to the government in 1927. When the Second Republic was proclaimed in 1931, members such as Victoria Kent, Isabel Oyarzábal, María de Maeztu and María Lejárraga took up positions in the government.

⁵⁶ The precarious legal situation of women in those years, who along with minors and the disabled did not have the right to have their own economy links to the perpetual minority of age described by Valcárcel (2019) as seen in Chapter 1. The members of the Lyceum had to face many problems in order to legally constitute the association. This situation will begin to change during the Republic thanks to the demands of some of the Lyceum members, such as Victoria Kent (Balló 29).

⁵⁷ Membership rolls vary by study. Cfr. Núñez (1998), Balló (2016), Martín Gaité (2002).

⁵⁸ Núñez insists that “Faltan estudios sobre las mujeres que al filo de los años veinte y treinta formaban parte de la élite cultural del país. En algunos casos no se conocen los datos biográficos más elementales” (403). In the same vein, Balló claims that “Investigaciones sobre ellas son una justa relectura de la historia cultural española. Sin ellas la historia no está completa” (19). One of these “investigaciones” is Shirley Mangini’s *Las Modernas de Madrid* (2001), which emphasizes the existence of modern women and women's associations.

⁵⁹ The relationship between Fortún and Ras was very close. In her Introduction to *El camino es nuestro* (a compilation of texts and letters written by Fortún and Ras), Capdevila-Argüelles (2014) examines their “ambigüedad genérica y sexual” (XVIII). Dorao (2001) had mentioned this “relación amistad-amor” (272) in *Los mil sueños de Elena Fortún*: “De Matilde Ras, grafóloga, he oído rumores de una cierta tendencia al lesbianismo, aunque no tengo ninguna prueba documental” (248). Dorao supports this point by recalling “una velada acusación de lesbianismo que apareció alrededor de algunos miembros del Lyceum Club ... en la que [Fortún] estaba implicada como sujeto paciente” (272). Capdevila-Argüelles also investigates Fortún’s sexuality in her prologue to *Oculto Sendero* (2016), the novel that Fortún left unpublished. This facet of Fortún’s identity also intrigued Martín Gaité (“Elena Fortún y sus amigas”), who chose to “Dejemos escondido lo que ella, tal vez, prefirió dejar así, lo que se fue consumiendo día a día en la hoguera secreta de su propio vivir” (79).

⁶⁰ Victoria Kent feared that most women would protest at the polls against the secular state, damaging the new progressive government.

At the Lyceum, Fortún met the writer María Lejárraga (1874-1974),⁶¹ who encouraged her to start publishing fictional stories after reading some of her personal notes. As Martín Gaité (1993) pointed out, it is unlikely that Fortún would have written Celia's stories if she had not met Lejárraga, who insisted on the uniqueness of her style retelling children's adventures, as Fortún had never planned on writing children's literature. "La incorporación de [Fortún] al mundo de las letras responde a un proceso de incubación lento y soterrado, de donde no está ausente la casualidad. Ni fue una escritora precoz, ni el espaldarazo para decidirse a serlo se lo dio precisamente su marido" ("Elena Fortún y su tiempo" 58).⁶²

Like the modern women that attended el Lyceum, Celia's mother, Pilar de Montalbán is educated and spends a lot of time away from home and from her daughter. Her portrait fits the prototype of an urban woman of the twentieth century described by María-Gloria Núñez (1998): an image of a woman of middle or upper class, with a youthful and sporty appearance, opting for shorter skirts and hair, and functional dresses without corsets (401).⁶³

Pilar and Celia's relationship illustrates the role of women in 1920s Spain and the uncertain role that motherhood had in the life of the new modern women. Like them, Pilar has travelled, speaks different languages and has colleagues in cultural circles. As Capdevila-Argüelles (2008) observes, Celia's mother represents a desire to be active outside of the home, to have a life separate from her family duties and independent of her husband (112); she shares these desires with Fortún. Pilar and Celia are two of the "figuras femeninas [que] emergen como personajes pictóricos o literarios fuertes, emancipados, que luchan contra su destino" (Balló 25) –the same could be said of the *chicas raras* twenty years later.

⁶¹ Lejárraga, who worked for *ABC*, introduced Fortún to the newspaper managers and her stories started being published in 1928 and were enjoyed by children and adults alike. Lejárraga was married to Gregorio Martínez Sierra, one of the most represented playwrights in the 30's. Alda Blanco (1999) claimed the authorship of Lejárraga in the works signed by her husband, among which there were several novels and books about feminism. Just as Fortún used Celia to introduce subversive messages about adult society, Martín Gaité (2002) points to Lejárraga's strategy by also using her husband's name as a vehicle for the dissemination of her ideas about women's emancipation (73).

⁶² The reason for this comment on Gorbéa's literary jealousy can be guessed from a letter to Mercedes in November 1951: "Al año de llegar de Canarias ganaba yo con *Blanco y Negro* mil pesetas mensuales, que entonces era mucho dinero. Entonces me empezó a odiar Eusebio, que hasta entonces siempre se había dado mucha importancia conmigo" (Dorao 110). Field (1986) also shared the challenging circumstances in which Fortún had to write: "cuando empezó a escribir ... tenía que encerrarse en el baño para que no la viera su marido, porque era causa de escándalo y de prohibiciones absolutas" (24).

⁶³ These stylish women were represented in the drawings of illustrators such as Rafael de Penagos, Salvador Bartolozzi or Carlos Sáenz de Tejada. They also collaborated on children's publications and in the magazine *Blanco y Negro*, where Celia's literary journey began.

Celia and her father respect and admire the kind of independent woman Pilar is, but at the same time they feel abandoned by her. In this way Fortún shows the tension between children's emotional needs and the pull of female emancipation, which in Celia's case creates an orphan by neglect, before her mother dies in *Celia madrecita* (1944). The space created by this distance is filled with readings and Celia's imagination and reasoning, which are usually discouraged and even punished.

However, Celia's father is generally more sympathetic towards her, and their relationship is very close since they find common ground in missing Celia's mother when she is away. Interestingly enough, it is Celia's father who presents her with a notebook so she can begin writing down her stories. This gesture is especially representative of Fortún's modern spirit since the father not only gives the girl permission to have her own ideas and a space in which to write them down, but he also encourages her to do so. Writing is considered a transgressive act since it fosters autonomy and individuality and can be used to create alternate realities. In contrast to the depicted support of Celia's father, Fortún had to start writing secretly to avoid disturbing her husband who was fairly well known as a writer and who did not take it well that she was becoming more successful than him (Dorao 2001).

2.1.4 Rebel girl

Celia's constant questions and her inadequacy to the world that adults want her to fit into make her considered as a rebellious child. What is expected of her is to obey, to be a "niña buena." She is aware of how the elders consider her, and she expresses this in a dialogue while playing with her teddy bear, inspired by Miss Nelly, and her little doll Julieta. The fictional Miss Nelly insists that:

–Las niñas deben ser ordenadas.

–¿Qué niñas?

–Las niñas distinguidas.

–Julieta no es una niña distinguida: es solo una niña buena.

–No es buena, es rebelde (...) Pero hay que obligarla a ser obediente. (54-55)

Miss Nelly, who listens behind the door, will denounce such a game to Celia's mother, who, fed up with her mischief, ends up sending Celia to a boarding school. The tension between the good girl and the rebellious girl is still present in the main character of the next book in the series, *Celia en el colegio* (1932).

2.2 *Celia en el colegio* (1932)

“Ser mala es no adaptarse a las costumbres de los mayores” (7)

As a consequence of her undesirable behaviour, in the second volume of the series Celia is sent to a boarding school and recounts her new adventures with the nuns. The analysis of this book focuses on Fortún’s criticism of traditional pedagogy, as opposed to her progressive ideas based on children’s active involvement in their learning process. This subject relates to the changes in education during the 20th century examined in Chapter 1 and is relevant in the analysis of the oppressive education forced on to the *chicas raras* in Chapter 3.

Through her confinement in a Catholic boarding school, *Celia en el colegio* (1932) offers a variety of situations where the character is forced to fit a very specific feminine mold. Although the Republic established a secular state in which religion could not interfere with educational projects, the catholic education tradition was hard to erase. The constitutional prohibition of the Church's participation in teaching created tension among people who supported the reform but considered this measure radical. The traditional education depicted in *Celia en el colegio* prepares girls for their roles as submissive women in an oppressive system (Caamaño 39), in which students are not allowed to have their say, but they are trained to become passive under a strict discipline.

Similarly to the new woman of the Republic, Celia continually rejects the limitations of this imposed role. She defies the oppressive control of the nuns and runs away on several occasions, refusing and defying the domesticity expected from her. Caamaño (2007) suggests an amusing comparison where “Celia es como la República: joven, vibrante y emprendedora” (46). These features are linked with the will of independence and freedom, where they will find contradictions in their obsession to change and modernize their traditional settings. As will be explored later, both Celia and the Republic will see their projects truncated by the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship.

After nine years of dictatorship under General Miguel Primo de Rivera, the Second Republic was established in Spain on 14 April 1931. Niceto Alcalá Zamora led a provisional government with republican and socialist representatives, which aimed to regenerate the nation through an agrarian reform, participation of the working class and strict control over the military and the Catholic Church. *Celia en el colegio* reflects Fortún’s interest in education in the context of improving the education system during the Republic.

Fortún criticized education through incomprehensible language, and preached by example. She always wrote thinking of the children, speaking to them “como le hablaría otro

niño, con palabras sencillas y claras” (qtd. in Fraga 2013 121). In *Celia en el colegio*, Fortún positions herself on Celia's side again from the prologue:

A Celia la han llevado a un colegio interna. ¡Celia era mala! Aquellas travesuras que tanto os han hecho reír y que ella os ha contado en el libro *Celia: lo que dice*, eran maldades. Ser mala es no adaptarse a las costumbres de los mayores. Nosotras, sus amigas, hemos prometido ir a verla los domingos, porque le hemos tomado cariño y no queremos dejarla sola con sus inquietudes. ¡Hoy es domingo! (7)

As the narrator of the prologue, Fortún gets into the story and joins her readers' weekly visit to Celia at the boarding school (through the pages of *Gente Menuda*). To add to the theatricality, they ring the doorbell (“tilín, tilín”) until Celia receives them: “¡Cuánto me alegro de que hayáis venido!” (7). The readers are completely integrated into the story; they go to see Celia and are welcomed by her, which creates an emotional bond with the fictional character. The onomatopoeias and the reader's supposed interaction with Celia herself ooze theatricality, demonstrating Fortún's awareness of how to engage children through storytelling.

On his first visit to the boarding school, Celia's father, concerned about her well-being, asks her if she is happy there, to which Celia replies affirmatively. Celia is lying, but she feels guilty for her father's worries about her: “Yo no puedo consentir que papá esté disgustado, y estoy pensando en el modo de salir de aquí” (13). Celia pretends to be sick, sleepwalks (another girl's sister was sent home for this reason), and even plans a kind of spiritual escape: becoming a saint. Reading hagiographies, Celia realizes that she has traits in common with the saints:

Todas las historias comienzan así: ‘Fue Eulalia, desde su más tierna edad, el asombro de su noble familia...’. O ‘En la ciudad de Asís nació la niña Clara, rara joya de valor inestimable’. ‘La bienaventurada Genoveva fue una niña extraña...’

Porque todas las santas fueron muy raras cuando eran pequeñas, y tenían unos padres muy malos. (62)

Celia identifies with the strangeness of the saints as children, and with the neglect from their parents. None of these strategies works better than giving free rein to her imagination by writing in the notebook her father gave her, which she will do during the summer until tío Rodrigo picks her up to go see the world.

Following the quixotic comparison explored in Chapter 1 (and which Martín Gaité, Escobar and Fraga insist upon), it could be said that Celia survives the school experience by filtering reality through the perspective of the stories she has read. She hears stories from

other girls and from the nuns and finds these explanations of reality more beautiful than what she used to experience at home. The school is also full of places that stimulate her imagination: going down the stairs of the convent “se llega a una cueva que es grande y oscura y está llena de cajones rotos. ¡Deben de pasar en ella cosas preciosas, como en los cuentos!” (10).⁶⁴

2.2.1 Pedagogic Innovation. The *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*.

Fortún's ideas about education aligned with the philosophy of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, founded by Francisco Giner de los Ríos in 1876. The *ILE* refused authoritarianism and memory-based learning. Instead, it offered an atmosphere based on equality and free-thinking, with coeducation and secularism, where children were active participants in their learning process. This promoted a respectful relationship between teachers and children, and encouraged artistic sensibility and healthy habits (Carbayo-Abengózar 76).⁶⁵

As opposed to these precepts, Celia's catholic boarding school was segregated by gender and imposed silence and obedience over the students, who needed to respect the “silencio mayor” several times a day -which was a great struggle for Celia's “boca grande,” as per Fortún's first description. “Hay que estar en silencio todo el día,” (10) menos en el recreo. De nuevo, el colegio es una extensión de la educación tradicional y represiva que le ofrecía Miss Nelly, a su vez contratada por sus padres, que se desentendían de su papel como educadores.

Fortún followed the *ILE*'s guidelines and collaborated with their mission in different ways (studying and teaching at the *Residencia* and enrolling her son Luis into the *Instituto-Escuela*). She believed in the importance of reading stories to children and worried about the little time mothers spent at home and their lack of contribution to their children's education. Beatriz Caamaño (2007) explores the influence of religion and traditional education in the

⁶⁴ Towards the end of the volume, after being stung by bees, Celia makes her will accompanied by Doña Benita, and, in the purest Don Quixote style, seems to come to her senses and admits to having been bad and says goodbye to the world from her imagined deathbed: “Yo, Celia, con toda mi razón y dos años más, hago el presente testamento para repartir mis bienes ... pido perdón a todo el mundo por lo mala que he sido, y me despido hasta el día del juicio final. Amén” (180).

⁶⁵ The innovative ideas generated by the *ILE* produced other institutions such as the Junta para Ampliación de Estudios, which promoted scientific research and education through scholarships to study abroad; and the *Residencia de Estudiantes*, which famously hosted the male members of the Generación del 27. The *Misiones Pedagógicas* were also a project of the *ILE*, which began in 1931 with the Republic and ended with the outbreak of the war in 1936. Through plays, mobile libraries and film sessions, their objective was to transfer knowledge and culture to rural areas, since illiteracy in Spain in the 1930s exceeded 30% of the population (Franco 2005 255), 38.4% in the case of women (Richmond 5).

construction of femininity in *Celia*. The model promoted by the ILE –and surely followed and practiced by Fortún– was an instruction based on communication between student and teacher, with the objective of raising critically thinking children who deciphered reality on their own terms. Instead, traditional education denied children’s agency and trained them to adapt to oppression.

The model depicted and criticised in *Celia en el colegio*, is a social institution that served as a site for traditional female socialization, in which the nuns deprive the girls of their individuality and educate them in submission and domesticity. Celia, who represents the new woman, experiences many difficulties in enduring such demands and refuses the physical and behavioral limitations forced upon her by her superiors. Her desire for independence and resistance to indoctrination continuously juxtaposes with what is expected of her, and her behaviour is a bad example for the rest of the students: “Con usted han entrado en el colegio la indisciplina y el desorden. Después, con acusarse, ya cree que todo está arreglado. Pero Dios lo ve todo y la castigará” (70). Celia takes responsibility for her actions, and hopes that her good will is understood. This will eventually evolve into an intention to become a saint (also triggered by the reading of hagiographies) as a symbolic way to escape her oppressive context. Not surprisingly, the vigilant nuns disapprove of this occurrence.

However, Don Restituto, the school chaplain, is an exception to the norm. Also opposed to an educational model based on repetition and memorization, Don Restituto encourages critical thinking by taking parables for what they are, without giving them a literal meaning. Although he is the highest representative of the Catholic Church in the school, he is also the least conservative one, since he asks the girls to reason their answers. Like Celia's father, Don Restituto is more understanding and flexible with Celia than most of the women around her (mother and nuns), true perpetuators of the patriarchal model.

2.2.2 Girls and Women

“¿Es así como se despide usted? ¿Pero no ve que va sin abrigo y con la cabeza al aire?” (205)

The task of the *ILE*, with its controversial coeducation, meant an increase in the number of girls in primary education, but also in secondary and higher education. For this higher education, the *Residencia de Señoritas* was founded in 1915 as the first official centre in Spain for university women, directed by the young educator María de Maeztu (1881-1948). Similar to the *Residencia de Estudiantes*, it provided accommodation as well as a laboratory, library, and a series of courses, concerts and conferences aimed at expanding their

education. The *Residencia* contributed to a generation of women with or without a university education (as in the case of Fortún), who traveled and spoke other languages, participated in politics and defended equal rights.⁶⁶

Far from expecting her to pursue higher education, Celia is forced to take sewing classes to prepare her for her future as a mother, wife, and caregiver. However, her creativity does not follow these lines, and she is constantly scolded because she does not fit the prototype of the delicate and skilful girl with the needle. The more she complains, the more the nuns scold her for not being good at sewing: “¡Pero qué manos de trapo tiene usted! –me decía la madre Mercedes–. ¡Es usted un chico!...” (110). Celia is immediately described as clumsy and “desmanotada” (132), traits that are considered as masculine and not typical of the delicate girl she should be.

This definition of skills, and above all of their context, the interior, comes from the idea of tasks that the Enlightened determined for women, which related to the reproduction of the species that were developed within the family and the home, outside the public space occupied by men. Belonging to the private space, women were excluded as citizens, as Rousseau argued. In this way, reason, culture and the public became the property of the masculine, and feeling, nature and the private of the feminine (Núñez 400). The education that Celia receives (and which Fortún criticizes) is anchored in this model, which she neither understands nor accepts. One example of this is one of her imaginary adventures in which she becomes a snail and meets a snail prince who is willing to marry her:

–Princesa caracol, ¿quieres ser mi esposa?

–Muchas gracias, hijo. ¿Y eso para qué?

–Para que te vengas conmigo al palacio de mi padre. Aquí estás expuesta a todos los peligros.

–No, no. En las casas me quieren mucho al principio, y luego me echan. Prefiero quedarme aquí. ... Mira, príncipe, no me marees... yo soy Celia. (218)

In addition to presenting elements of avant-garde literature, which, as Fraga (2013 265) and Martín Gaité (“Interpretación poética”) recognize, will become more apparent in *Celia novelista*, this scene shows a Celia who is not impressed by meeting a prince, much

⁶⁶ Part of this new female elite founded in 1918 the Asociación Nacional de Mujeres Españolas (ANME), which defended specific rights for women and would become the most important feminist organization in Spain. Its founding programme called for the reform of the Código Civil, the abolition of legalised prostitution, the right of women to enter the liberal professions and hold official positions, equal pay, and the promotion of education. Pressure from the modern women and the ANME brought progressive changes to the Republic, including women's suffrage promoted by leaders Clara Campoamor and Victoria Kent.

less by being asked to marry him. Chastened by her role within the home, not even a palace can compete in attractiveness with her freedom, that of 'being Celia', without depending on anyone else, so representative of the values for which Fortún fought. Furthermore, on one of the school outings to her friend María Luisa's house, the mother superior calls Celia's attention to the fact that she is not wearing a hat: “¿Pero no ve que va sin abrigo y con la cabeza al aire?” (205). At the thought of leaving school, Celia needs nothing more than what she is wearing, which connects her with “Las sinsombrero,” the women of the Generation of 27 who discarded the hat as a symbol of modernity.

Artist Maruja Mallo explained that “Un día se nos ocurrió a Federico, a Dalí, [Concha Méndez] ... y a mí quitarnos el sombrero porque decíamos parece que estamos congestionando las ideas, y atravesando la Puerta del Sol nos apedrearon llamándonos de todo ... se comprende que Madrid vio en eso como un gesto rebelde y por otro lado narcisista ...” (qtd. in Balló 17). Celia fits in perfectly with the young modern who, through this clothing transgression, expressed their rejection of the established order. Caamaño (2007) summarizes that in the years of the Republic

Spanish women were able to move from one of the most backward societies and politics in 1930s Europe to become the legal equals of men, they were able to vote and stand for parliament. For the first time, women could get divorced, sign contracts, act as legal witnesses and guardians, and administer estates. The Second Republic opened public spaces that had previously been closed to women. ... However, it should be emphasised that Spain was mainly a rural and very unevenly developed state, and consequently most changes took place in the few urban and industrialised areas. (79)

Celia craves open spaces and escapes from the school on numerous occasions. Instead of a break that is limited in time and space, Celia enjoys symbolic play in the company of the village children, friends of the altar boys Lamparón and Pronobis. They talk and play differently, handling materials without fear of getting dirty. They run, play with rag balls and sing songs different from those of the school. Despite not entirely belonging to this group either (they don't let her use the coveted weight to measure some imaginary ingredients, for example), Celia is fascinated by the apparent freedom that other children enjoy, and at the same time, Fortún shows another reality to her readers. Chapter 3 will explore the fascination that children in rural areas also aroused in Martín Gaité and Matute.

2.3 *Celia novelista* (1934)

“No me hizo caso, porque todo el mundo tiene esa costumbre” (50)

In the third volume of the series, *Celia novelista* (1934), Celia shares with Fortún her passion for writing, and presents her readers with stories written by her, where she can decide the fate of her own characters. During the summer, Celia's classmates have left with their families, but no one comes to get her. When Celia's father left her at the school, “cuando se fue lejísimos con mamá y Baby, me regaló un libro precioso, con unas hojas blancas y las tapas de piel. –Para que escribas en él tus fantasías– me dijo” (7), providing her with an imaginary way to escape. Although, as Martín Gaité (2002) acknowledges, this is not the most interesting book in the series from a literary point of view (“Interpretación poética” 117), this volume is particularly interesting to look at intertextuality, the stylistic aspect of Fortún's narrative in which Celia relates with her readings. Escobar calls the context created by Fortún “dimensión metanovelesca” (18) by having Celia write her adventures and trying to make her schoolmates believe that they have really happened to her, since “lo que está escrito es como si hubiera pasado siempre” (162). The analysis of this volume also reveals the use of literature as a refuge, which Celia shares with the *chicas raras* of Chapter 3.

Locked up at school during the summer, Celia doesn't know what to do with her loneliness. She plays at being Caperucita, recognizes situations from *The Thousand and One Nights* and, at another quixotic moment, she confuses some rams with warriors: “–¿Qué ves, hermana Ana? –Veo la pradera y una gran polvareda. –¿Son nuestros guerreros? –No, que son carneros” (9). She thinks of rewriting the stories she knows, but soon realizes that she wants to be the protagonist:

¡Fantasías! ¿Podría escribir todo eso en un libro con las hojas blancas y las tapas de piel? No, no; esos son cuentos que están escritos en muchos libros... Yo tenía que inventarlo todo, todo, y contarlo como si fuera verdad y estuviera pasando... Sería la historia de una niña que se llamaría Celia, como yo, y andaría sola por el mundo... ¿Una niña como yo? No, no; yo misma... (...) Había que pensarlo mucho antes de empezar. (...) Casi fue verdad aquel día que vino doña Benita y me llevó con ella a pasar unos días fuera del colegio, en la fonda de la plaza... (10)

According to Martín Gaité, the sentence “Había que pensarlo mucho antes de empezar” (*Celia novelista* 10) is key to all literary endeavour, that is “una labor de tiento, reflexión y paciencia” (“Interpretación poética” 117). Furthermore, the fact that Celia is included in fiction stories gives an even more real dimension to the character, since

Si alguna duda hubiera podido abrigar el lector infantil sobre la identidad real de Celia Gálvez, al llegar a este punto se le disipaba por completo. No era una niña de novela por la razón irrefutable de que confesaba estar jugando a ser una niña de novela. Mayor garantía de su existencia no se podía encontrar, como tampoco una estrategia más eficaz para que naciera en mí, la amiga a quien estaba haciendo tales confidencias, el afán de emularla. Yo también había decidido ponerme a escribir, pero me hacían falta el aliento y el ejemplo de una niña de mi edad, mucho más fuerte y sobre todo mucho más útiles que el consejo de un profesor. (“Interpretación poética” 117)

In Martín Gaité’s identification with Celia (and, presumably, for many of her readers) the illustrations play an important role. Martín Gaité demonstrates this by recalling a drawing by Molina Gallent representing Celia writing in bed, in the light of a small lamp and leaning over her notebook. Against the wall, Celia’s shadow is drawn. Martín Gaité confesses that “Podría decir, sin énfasis alguno, que es una escena que me ha acompañado siempre, un dibujo que podría hacer con los ojos cerrados, aunque se perdieran mis libros de Celia y nunca los volviera a ver” (120). Such is the impact of a paper girl on a real one, who shares with her moments of loneliness and incomprehension, and the desperate search for an interlocutor. Martín Gaité was one of Celia’s interlocutors, which resulted in an intergenerational literary influence. Through Celia, a fictional character, Fortún paved the way to creative unfolding for a new generation of girls who otherwise would not have been encouraged to write or known that they had something to say.

Celia’s unfolding consists of becoming Celinda, a stork tamer. In the first part of the book, she invents and writes down the adventures she cannot experience herself, like travelling around the world with the puppeteers looking for her parents. Celia will share what she writes with her friends when they return to school at the beginning of the year. Besides the nomadic life, the circus gives its members the possibility of transformation, of becoming admirable beings every night.

For Bravo-Guerreira and Maharg-Bravo (2003), in this story Celia represents to a certain extent, what Martín Gaité later called the *chica rara* to describe the protagonists of novels written in the postwar period by Spanish novelists such as Carmen Laforet (204). They are part of a type of woman who questions the normality of the domestic behavior that society imposed on them. Although Celia is still a child she does not follow the traditional rules, despite being continually subjected to taming, as Pardo Bazán denounced at the end of

the century. Celia resembles the *chicas raras* who want to take to the streets, to breathe, as the next chapter will explore.

The difference between children and adults can also be seen in the fiction that Celia writes in *Celia novelista*. Her models in real life are the adults who abuse authority and she takes advantage of her marginal position to subvert them as soon as she has the opportunity to use her own voice, in this case a literary one. In this way, Celia is accompanying in her fiction a group of puppeteers she met on a school outing with doña Benita.⁶⁷ At times, she claims possibilities that are always questioned by adults, for example, by questioning the normality of certain situations, or by assuming that no one listens to her, as when she tells Monsieur, the head puppeteer, one of her discoveries but he “No me hizo caso, porque todo el mundo tiene esa costumbre” (50). In short, when silence is imposed, as at home or at school, Celia cannot express her point of view, and when she has no restrictions, what she says is ignored. Therefore writing is the only thing that allows her to express and share what she thinks and feels.

At the end of the summer, the schoolmates return from vacation and Celia tells them all about her adventures. However, the girls laugh at her and, in a censorious gesture of her fantasy, her classmate María Luisa throws her book down the well, assuring that all those stories are a lie. This adds another metaliterary layer to the story, in which Celia has to rewrite from memory so that her readers can read it: “No respondo de que sea enteramente igual a la primera; pero he procurado recordarlo todo, y creo que os gustará...” (71).

In the second part of the book, after getting a taste for “a esto de escribir todo lo que me pasa por la cabeza” (75) Celia writes *Las vacaciones de Lita y Lito*⁶⁸ in her grammar book. Celia writes the adventures of the siblings Lolita and Rafaelito for her brother Cuchifritín, her new interlocutor.⁶⁹ The characters are, coincidentally, abandoned by their parents in a school when they left “a la Cochinchina, a ganarse la vida” (75). However, at the end of the volume, Celia acknowledges the difficulty of writing fictional stories and tells the readers that in the next books she will continue to share her own adventures:

⁶⁷ Fraga (2013) notes that in the supplement these adventures were presented as lived by Celia, while in the book they are imagined and written by her (262). Fortún probably wanted to give more cohesion to the volume by presenting two collections of Celia's supposed writings.

⁶⁸ The second part is an adaptation of the series “Las aventuras de Lito y Lita” that Fortún had published in *Gente Menuda*.

⁶⁹ This is how she expresses it in the ending of the *Celia en el colegio*, where she calls on her readers to read her new adventures “donde he tratado de recordar mis sueños imaginados con los titiriteros, y he escrito mi primera novela para leérsela a mi hermanito” (225).

Se acabó la historia de Lita y Lito, que me ha costado muchísimo trabajo sacarme de la cabeza para haceros reír, amigos míos.

Y, por ahora, no volveré a ser novelista. Es difícil y comprometido.

... Ahora seguiré contando mis aventuras a los que sois mis amigos y habéis leído

Celia: lo que dice, y *Celia en el colegio*, que continúan con *Celia en el mundo*, y para las que nada he tenido que inventar, porque ellas son la verdad verdadera (163).

Apparently Celia preferred, as Fortún, stories based on her own experiences.

Celia novelista is not so important within the series because of the adventures themselves, but because it portrays literature as an escape and refuge. From that dimension, Celia and her readers can design their own circumstances and trace their destiny. In the regulated world in which Celia lives, and later the *chicas raras*, literature is an escape route that allows them to leave their world and create a custom one. As explored on Chapter 1, if the *Quixote* was a response to books of chivalry, Celia's adventures are a response to fairy tales and the *chicas raras* to the romance novel. The pattern of literature that influences and encourages new genres is repeated with these characters, who tirelessly try to find their place.

2.4 *Celia en el mundo* (1934)

—¿Y yo qué cuento, tío?

—¡Chist! Las niñas no hablan. (30)

In the fourth volume of the series, *Celia en el mundo*, tío Rodrigo finally takes Celia out of the nun's school and she can explore what lies outside its walls. But back in Madrid, Celia feels alone. Her parents are away, leading a life full of what Celia finds to be exciting adventures in which she is again not included. In the prologue, Fortún insists that this world is very “poco razonable, llama a las cosas con nombres equivocados, habla con frases hechas, rechaza los cuentos de los niños y admite los que las personas mayores han inventado a capricho” (7). Fortún takes a child's side and encourages children to be critical of the world view they receive from adults, however, her defence of childhood contrasts with a stereotypical view of Maimón, one of the characters in the series. For the analysis of this volume I propose a post-colonial reading of the use of this character and its inconsistency with Fortún's criticism and social commitment to children and women.

In Madrid, Celia only has the company of Maimón and the maid Basíldes, although adventures await her in France, where she meets Paulette. Celia is already nine years old and Fortún warns her readers that her adventures will not last forever: “Sólo vosotros, los que la habéis seguido desde que tenía siete años, vais a asistir al desenvolvimiento de esta niña, que pronto dejará de serlo” (7). This formula includes Celia's child readers in her adventures and development, as they have been the intimate recipients of her stories for two years, as well as experiencing in their own flesh the injustices and contradictions of living in a world dominated by adults. Once again, Celia and her readers accompany each other in their solitude.

Tío Rodrigo is the adult protagonist of this book, who frees Celia from her confinement in the school and is critical of both the education of the nuns and the continued absence of Celia's parents. For her readers, Celia has barely spent a year at the boarding school, but for her it has been “más de mil años” (103) given her boredom and loneliness. For her uncle, the nuns acted as soldiers given the discipline and authority to which the girls were subjected. Moreover, in *Celia lo que dice* her mother disagreed with some aspects of traditional education, but even so she keeps imposing it on her daughter. To question the kind of education Celia receives and to be consistent with her sense of modern womanhood would give her more work than putting her in a nun's school. Although tío Rodrigo only went to school for a visit, he took Celia away claiming that her father had sent for her. In contrast,

Celia's parents are the biggest absentees. They are abroad with Cuchifritín and do not even write or call regularly.

2.4.1 Children vs. Adults

Celia seems to have found an ally in tío Rodrigo, who in a way feels that it is her parents' responsibility for Celia's lack of adaptation to the world of the adults. However, in her new routine, tío Rodrigo takes her for a walk in the Retiro Park and is surprised that she does not play every step of the way, calling her “sosa” (10). Again, adult expectations clash with what a child can do on their own: “si querrá que me suba a los árboles?” (10) wonders Celia, who is forced to entertain herself so that adults think she is having fun. Pre-established ideas of how a child behaves produce frustration in both adults and children, who never seem to meet those expectations.

Another example of the hypocrisy of adults is reflected in mass, when Celia hears some ladies commenting on the dresses of others. Tío Rodrigo tells Celia that she should only listen to the priest, but Celia tells her readers that in reality “El señor del sombrero estaba jugando con el bastón; la señorita de luto estrenaba hoy el vestido, porque ¡se miraba más!⁷⁰..., y las de la amiga tampoco oían misa...” (22). While Celia was asked to be silent and focused, adults were not giving such example. As the analysis of *El cuaderno de Celia* will show, Fortún disagreed with a certain piousness of Spanish society, and the impositions of the Catholic Church.

The imposition of silence continues when they go on visits, in which her uncle reminds her “Que seas formalita y callada. No hay nada más antipático que una niña metomentodo...” (29). Celia sees how adults interact and is able to tell it from the outside, in a very funny scene. They ask each other about cultural news, but

Hablan a un tiempo y no se entienden. No sé yo para qué querían saber lo que le pareció al tío, si luego no le han hecho caso... Cuentan una historia muy larga y muy aburrida... Luego cuenta otra una señora que está a mi lado y que, además de ir al

⁷⁰ This scene is reminiscent of the one in Fortún's personal journal “Nací de pie” published in the volume *El camino es nuestro* (2015). According to Capdevila-Argüelles and Fraga (2015), the autobiographical episodes in this notebook bring together “miedos infantiles” (5), however, they contain something much more complex: a face of her own childhood that is far from the innocence that is generally assumed for children. Although these autobiographical notes do not provide relevant information (they have already been interpreted and partially published by Dorao in her biography *Los mil sueños de Elena Fortún*, 2001), they do reveal a series of concerns and a style found years later in *Celia* (classism, education, feminism; and the forms of dialogue, exclamations, suspension points, evocations, respectively). The notes collected in “Nací de pie” form a kind of memoir based on short scenes “probablemente redactado en el exilio” (Capdevila-Argüelles XIV).

teatro, ha estado también en América. ... Van por turno. Me parece que el tío va a ganar a todos, porque grita más y cuenta más mentiras. ... Menos mal que nadie lo escucha. Todos están pensando en lo que van a contar. Se lo noto yo en la cara.

—¿Y yo qué cuento, tío?

—¡Chist! Las niñas no hablan. (30)

However, when tío Rodrigo is interested after Celia interrupts with a comment during an undesired conversation, he laughs: “¡Has estado genial!” (44). This creates further confusion since the rules are not stable and Celia can be applauded or whipped depending on the occasion: “El tío me dio un cachete por charlatana, y lloré” (121). This will not be the only physical abuse Celia receives in this volume, as after a tantrum, tía Julia “me levantó las faldas y ¡me dio la azotaina más horrible que me han dado en mi vida!...” (149).

Her uncle and aunt feel they have the right to beat Celia because they have taken care of her education, which, in their opinion, sometimes requires physical corrections. In their abandonment, the infrequent calls from Celia's parents, who “casi están al otro lado del mundo” (69), make it difficult for Celia to recognize her voice, which will lead to a disheartening situation in which Celia makes a mistake when she calls trying to talk to her mother, and another woman follows the conversation out of pity.

When summer arrives, Celia goes with her uncle, Maimón and Basíldes to the south of France.⁷¹ The trip is stimulating for Celia as it takes her away from her usual world of restrictions: “Yo quisiera ir en tren toda la vida” (81). In the same way, books continue to provide an escape from reality and give her examples of adventures and behaviors: “yo leía a la sombra de un árbol en un libro precioso, que me ha comprado el tío ... Cada vez que leía un capítulo alzaba los ojos para pensar un rato en cómo podría hacer yo las mismas cosas que las niñas del libro” (92). But soon she meets at last a real girl whom she admires and with whom she befriends: “Paulette es una niña encantadora: yo creo que es la única niña encantadora que he conocido” (96).

Like the *chicas raras*, Celia barely has a relationship with girls her own age. The friends that are imposed on her in Madrid and at school are too similar to grownups. It is not by chance, then, that Celia's first friend is a foreigner, since she thinks and acts differently and what she does fascinates her. Paulette can speak French with her and exchange songs and poems, since “en el colegio le enseñan poesías bonitas..., no de aquellas que me enseñaban a mí las madres...” (98). However, Celia does not know how to surprise her friend, since she

⁷¹ The descriptions are based on María Lejárraga's house in Cannes, where Fortún had visited her.

only knows stories “¡Y los cuentos no le gustan a Paulette! No le importan los príncipes y las princesas encantados, ni los cisnes que se vuelven niños... Ya sé yo por qué no le gustan los cuentos que no han pasado nunca. Es que ella vive como en un cuento, y su jardín y su pérgola, y ella misma, y todo lo que hace y dice es bonito como un cuento de hadas...” (100). In contrast to the more traditional Spanish education that Celia has experienced, Paulette represents modernity, the girl Celia can be if she is allowed to think for herself.

2.4.2 Maimón, the Savage

Maimón's character demands a study from a post-colonial perspective. Maimón is the “morito absurdo” (7) that tío Rodrigo brought back from Africa as a servant after his military involvement in Morocco.⁷² Through the character, Fortún continues to show the diversity of Spanish society in the 1930s, only in this case she does not position herself in favour of the oppressed, but uses him as a comic resource. Like Celia, Maimón represents a double marginal position, as he is a child (his age is never revealed) and African. That's why Maimón has a predilection for Celia (“¡Ese sí que me quiere!” 47). Despite the differences, they both live on the margins of a society that oppresses them and does not take them into account.

Fortún's style, which is characterized by her desire for social justice and which supports and gives visibility to the oppressed and less privileged, seems to contradict these representations of characters as underdeveloped.⁷³ Celia, who is equally sensitive to discrimination, does not defend the “moro pillo” (60) much either. In a letter to her friend's Mercedes Hernández eldest daughter, Merceditas, the same year that *Celia en el mundo* was published, 1934, Fortún leaves a comment that shows her bias towards the Arabs as an undeveloped people:

⁷² The Spanish protectorate in Morocco was established in 1912 by a treaty between France and Spain. Spain ceded its last territories in 1958.

⁷³ Molina Gallent's illustrations and the representation of characters of African origin in the TVE series are undoubtedly an interesting field in which to explore a post-colonial perspective in greater detail. For example, in the first scene of *Celia lo que dice* King Balthazar (who “se parece al lacayo de la tía ...”) has a linguistic variety of Caribbean, showing the confusing ideas about the characters of African origin. Moreover, Molina Gallent's illustrations use exaggerated and stereotyped features for Maimón and Balthazar, such as bulging eyes and thick lips (very moderate, in contrast, in Jesús Bernal's illustrations for *Celia se casa*). These features are sometimes used to frighten children, referring to the feature of the savage par excellence: cannibalism. In *Celia lo que dice*, Celia is frightened by “el Coco”, a black character who lives in her staircase and who is said to have a children's museum. Similarly, on an outing to the tea room with her uncle, a waiter warns her to behave, “que te va a morder el negro!” (54) in reference to a dancer who accompanied jazz musicians.

¡No quisiera que te casaras, querida mía! Tú eres una chica moderna y los españoles siguen siendo moros. La mujer tiene que darles hasta sus pensamientos más íntimos, carecer de personalidad, (no) tener más ambiciones que las que él tenga, y demostrarle en todo momento que él es un ser superior y ella un reflejo de él... ¡Pobre de ella si tiene personalidad! Al principio, esto es delicioso. ‘¡Fundirse en uno siendo dos!’ dice Villaespesa, que es un moro de las Alpujarras (citado en Fraga 2013 47).

With Maimón, Fortún uses the child-savage trope described by Wesseling (2016) to bring out the supposed deficits of children and non-Western peoples, foregrounding the ways in which they fall short of the standards set by modern Western man (5). Maimón is a “savage” brought from the colonies and even Celia infantilizes him. When they are left alone at home, she is in charge and has to correct him if she sees that he takes longer than he should: “Yo no tenía más remedio que regañarlo” (60), since she was the only one there to do so, showing herself to be more adult than him even though she is a child. Maimón will excuse himself by saying

–Celia, bunita,⁷⁴ yo correr, correr, y perder el camino, y correr, correr...

–Sí, sí; mentiras tuyas... Y mientras yo aquí, muertecita de miedo y solita...

Acabamos llorando los dos, hasta que me acordé que lo había reñido porque estaba de ama de casa y no tenía más remedio... (60)

Fortún, who so gracefully and skilfully imitates and shares different varieties of Spanish with her readers, does not give much depth to Maimón's way of speaking, which is characterised by the use of the infinitive avoiding conjugations. This makes Celia exclaim: “¡Maimón no aprende a hablar nunca!” (*Celia y sus amigos* 97) and links to Wesseling's (2016) explanation that “Savages neither change nor progress ... because they have been given up as being beyond redemption altogether. Obviously, the term with the greatest potential for demonizing others is ‘savage,’ and other derogatory labels such as ‘barbarian’ or, worst of all, ‘cannibal,’” (Wesseling 6). Basíldes, the maid, calls Maimón “moro del infierno” (24), or “bárbaro” (25), but he is not only verbally abused, but is also beaten while receiving insults (“fiero,” “indino,” “bribón,” 26).

Unlike the relationship between children and adults in *Celia*'s books, Maimón's characterization has not overcome the test of time. The respect and care with which Fortún

⁷⁴ Anyone who has seen the TVE television series (1993) will remember the insistence with which Maimón refers to “Celia, bunita”. She is the only one who feels some empathy for him and they try to help each other in the face of the injustices of adults.

describes childhood contrasts with the stereotyping of characters such as Maimón or her students in *Celia institutriz*, who were once under Spanish rule.

2.5 *Celia y sus amigos* (1935)

“Pero yo creía que entonces no había niños ni mamás...” (125)

Celia y sus amigos, the fifth book in the series, is the last one published before the outbreak of the civil war. The book is still a compilation of stories published weekly in *Gente Menuda*. This analysis focuses on illustrating and discussing two aspects of Fortún's commitment to discriminated beings: her defence of animals, and her demand for equality in girls' education.

In *Celia y sus amigos*, after her international travels, Celia's father wants her to be educated in a Spanish school. The answer to Celia's “cabecita novelera” (or “soñadora” 7) is to lock her up again because, apparently, “Celia en el mundo había hecho demasiadas tonterías” (7). However, tío Rodrigo rescues her from school again so that Celia can play and travel with new and old friends. At last she seems to be in a universe that belongs to her, inventing and dreaming around people her age, in a world of childhood that, as Fortún insists in the prologue “apenas tiene comunicación con el de las personas mayores, aunque a veces parezca que se mezcla y compenetra” (7).

In the same year of publication of *Celia y sus amigos*, 1935, Fortún collaborates in the *Almanaque Literario* with the section “Libros de niños.” It stresses that very little children's literature is published in Spain and reflects on the landscapes and environments of traditional stories that children can access. Fortún urges the need for children to see their environment reflected in the stories they read, “Que el héroe camine por pinares de España, beba agua fresca de un botijo de barro y viva en una casita encalada de Castilla para que realidad y cuento se hagan una sola poesía en su alma” (qtd. in Fraga 2013 236). Naturally, this is one of the keys to Fortún's narrative, and one of the ways in which she achieves the identification of her readers with her protagonist:

Celia es una niña como otra cualquiera, de las que vemos pasar en un autobús que las lleva a casa desde el colegio. Vive en la calle de Serrano, y tiene un papá y una mamá que la riñen y la miman, y son justos o injustos con ella, según el estado de sus nervios.

Su historia es sencilla por fuera y prodigiosa por dentro. Es una vida vulgar, que todos los días se viste en el ropaje de maravilla, fantaseando, imaginando y viviendo en un mundo de aventura y de milagro. (qtd. in Fraga 2013 237)

In fact, the atmosphere and the characters that participate in Celia's adventures are shared with most of her readers and are also common through most of the books, which contribute to

the cohesion between them: the Calle Serrano, El Retiro Park, Segovia, Santander... and also the school with its terrible rules and where silence is imposed.

At the age of ten, Celia has now been placed in a nun's school in Toledo. The nun's mission is to convince Celia's desperate parents that they will fix her. However, loneliness weighs on her. Even when the girls go out with their families, no one picks Celia up, who laments: "Ya estoy harta de no tener ni mamá, ni casa, ni vestido de máscara..." (41)⁷⁵ and disguises herself as an ostrich to celebrate the carnival, since "No hay que estudiar ni acostarse temprano... ¡Nada más que volar! ¡Y era justamente lo que yo no podía!" (45). Becoming a bird momentarily covers her desire to escape.

At school, Celia will tell stories to the girls in the evening and begin a correspondence with her brother, whom she finally calls "Cuchifritín"⁷⁶ and who then becomes the only possible interlocutor, given the imposed silence.⁷⁷ While Cuchifritín tells her tricks in his letters, Celia realizes her role of supposed exemplarity, evidencing the difference in age between them: "No sé si te habrá gustado esta carta tan larga, que parece un cuento, Cuchifritín, rico; pero me parece que casi no te habrás enterado de nada, porque eres muy pequeño, y aquí todas somos muy mayores y todo es muy complicado" (34). Being an adult or a child needs a reference and, in this case, Celia will serve as a model for her brother. As a consequence, she warns him that, from experience, certain behaviours could cost him the confinement in a boarding school "con señores vestidos de negro de esos que no dejan jugar a todas horas, ni reír, ni subirse a los árboles" (68).

2.5.1 Animal Welfare

Fortún always defended respect for animals, both in articles in the press and in their continuous appearances in Celia's volumes.⁷⁸ Self-confessed antibullfighting, she regrets the lack of sensitivity of Spanish children towards animals ("Estampas infantiles" 1926) and is ashamed that Spain is known abroad for its cruelty to animals. She also defended them from different pseudonyms in the reader's section of *Gente Menuda*, as when Celia replies to a girl: "aún en esta carta te muestras partidaria de los toros... ¡pero chica! Todo lo que sea ver sufrir a un animal me horroriza," or when Roenueces confesses that "A los toros nos llevaron una

⁷⁵ As Chapter 3 explores, Matute's characters also have lapidary phrases about their abandonment.

⁷⁶ She discovers that his name is Juan Antonio, but in a rather quixotic attitude she chooses a less vulgar and more sonorous name for him: Cuchifritín.

⁷⁷ Cuchifritín answers her letters, although, considering he was born when Celia was seven, he could barely be three.

⁷⁸ This is stated in a letter to Esther Tusquets in 1950: "Yo los quiero, y los defiendo y sufro mucho por ellos."

vez, al Mago Pirulo, al Doctor y a mí, y dimos tantos gritos y lloramos tanto, que nos echaron” (qtd. in Fraga 2013 423), dissuading her readers from witnessing a bullfight.

Celia also does not understand the feast of rivers of blood that are described outside the bullring when she gets lost in Madrid in *Celia lo que dice*, and her love for the animals leads her to the extreme of bringing home, with the complicity of Doña Benita, a donkey that was going to be sacrificed. In *Celia y sus amigos*, Fortún uses for the third time in the series a scene in which Celia saves some kittens from drowning. They are Dulcinea’s kittens (in her umpteenth reference to Don Quixote), the school cat: “¡Los pobrecitos estaban en un cubo de agua en el patio! ¡Vaya un rato horrible que estaban pasando!... Dulcinea quiso volverse loca de alegría cuando los vió” (78). The nun, however, is not as happy to see them again: “¿Quién ha vuelto a traer estos bichos aquí?” Celia is astonished that they do not value her feat and that they accuse her of meddling, but “¡Aún fue peor lo que pasó después!” since the kittens disappear again so that she finds them stuck in a covered well. Without hesitation, Celia sets out to rescue them with her friend Dolores, who falls in and breaks her arm. This is one of the triggers for Celia's expulsion from school, which facilitates her reunion with Maimón and Paulette.

2.5.2 Girls and Women

Celia’s cousins, José Ramón and the twins Miss-Fly and Pili, arrive in Paris to join Celia, Cuchifritín and Paulette. One afternoon,

Cuchifritín dijo que él también quería aprender a hacer tricot; pero José Ramón se burló de él.

–¡Tonto, más que tonto! Esas son cosas de chicas... Los hombres no cosen...

Como mi hermanito es muy testarudo, se puso a discutir, diciendo que sí que cosen los hombres, y que él los ha visto... A poco más va y dice que papá cose también.

–Cuchifritín, no seas pesado, hijo. Yo te daré mi libro grande de estampas para que te entretengas mientras nosotras trabajamos... ¡Huy, qué niños éstos, qué guerra dan! (196)

This scene is interesting because it questions the tasks and skills assigned to men and women. The nuns who taught Celia how to sew complained that she was a tomboy. When Cuchifritín wants to imitate his sister with the needle, José Ramón confronts him.⁷⁹ Fortún raises the issue and keeps Cuchifritín firm in his purpose, but is not so firm with Celia's

⁷⁹ Cuchifritín met a man who could sew in "En casa del modisto," a scene published in *Gente Menuda* in 1935, the same year that *Celia y sus amigos* (collected in *El camino* 115-118).

opinion. She instead offers her brother another distraction so that he does not get further entangled in the argument with his cousin. Although Celia does not defend Cuchifritín, Fortún raises the problem that boys and girls may like to engage in activities that adults divide by gender (which, with Celia's discussed sewing talent, is not based on ability). This approach to equal education connects her with the ideas of the *ILE*, which, as explained, promoted equality and respect between boys and girls through co-education.

In another interesting moment from the point of view of the role of children and women in history, Celia and her friends find a tin containing ancient coins, which they identify as the treasure of some child many years ago. Tío Rodrigo was about to tell them from what year it might be when Celia interrupts: “Sí, sí, tío, ya sabemos todo eso... Pero yo creía que entonces no había niños ni mamás... Como en mi libro todos tienen casco y espada!...” (125). No doubt it would have been a kid like her, playing with her friends, who hid the two thousand year old Roman coins... But were there children then? And their mothers? In one sentence, Celia summarizes the lack of representation of the two social groups to which she belongs: women and children. Celia is surprised to see that someone like her could have lived with the soldiers who appear in the books. History is written from that point of view, and, as a girl and a woman, Celia is not part of it.

Knowing Fortún's background and after these examples, it is hard to understand that Fraga (2013) finishes her excellent study with the following appreciation:

Es cuestionable argumentar que las entregas de Celia tengan connotaciones feministas. Celia no se defiende por ser mujer, sino por ser niña. La prueba es que desde que alcanza la pubertad mantiene un resignado silencio. En efecto, Celia reclama sus derechos en tanto que pertenece a un mundo infantil, todavía supuestamente indiferenciado y en el que no es ‘peligroso’ que una niña sea autónoma, pero estos se ven truncados una y otra vez y con el mayor rigor por la autora desde su adolescencia, haciéndola renunciar repetidas veces a las condiciones de igualdad que exigiría y que queda rubricado con la inapelable sentencia que la joven Celia pronuncia en la primeras páginas de *Celia en la revolución*, donde se evocan sin asomo de ironía los primeros días de la guerra: “Sí, Valeriana, como tiene que ser. Por eso Dios ha repartido los cuidados. Las mujeres al hogar, y los hombres a todo lo demás...” (483-484)

I profoundly disagree with Fraga in this point. As it has been explained in Chapter 1 (and through the examples of these first five *Celia* books), being a girl is not the same as being a boy. It is important to recall the radically different treatment that Rousseau gives to Émile

(innocent, representing the future) and to Sophie (future mother and wife, born to serve). As I argued in the first chapter, being a girl is the sum of belonging to two historically oppressed social groups: that of women and that of children. Fortún, who fought for equal rights, not only of children, but of women with respect to men, is twice as subversive in choosing a girl as the protagonist of her stories.

Furthermore, the fact that there is no shadow of irony in Celia's quoted sentence depends greatly on the reader's interpretation. That has been one of the characteristics of using the child's voice, as examined in the first chapter. My interpretation is precisely the opposite, criticizing the Rousseauian vision I have just recalled and questioning gender roles, as Fortún always did and has just been demonstrated. The eloquent title of the article by Bravo-Guerreira and Maharg-Bravo (2003), "De niñas a mujeres: Elena Fortún como semilla de feminismo en la literatura infantil de la postguerra española," relates this feminism to the impact it will have on its female readers, some of whom will become writers and who also use young female characters, as I demonstrate in the next chapter. In my view, it is impossible to "cuestionar" the "connotaciones feministas" of a writer who had to lock herself in the bathroom to write (Field 24) so that other girls could find a model in which to project their vocation. Although it is true that Celia suffers a transformation in her passage to adolescence, the character suffers with it, trying to expand her margin of action.

Fraga supports her argument by recalling Fortún's "ideología pacifista" in her chronicles and stories, as well as "el deseo de mantener a los niños al margen de cualquier disputa partidista" (484), as though Fortún's feminism could be reduced to a character's sentence in a volume she never saw published, rather than a characteristic and transversal feature of her narrative (not just her fiction). Choosing a female character that breaks not only with the literary tradition of the male protagonist, but also with the social idea of quiet and submissive girls, was not a deliberate creative and ideological act, with much to vindicate. It is surprising that Fraga should thus end her study trying to disassociate Fortún from an ideological use of her character, when Fraga herself has quoted her saying "No hay que avergonzarse de ser feminista: ello es tan natural que no serlo es lo absurdo" (qtd. in Fraga 2013 77).

At the end of the volume, one last upset, losing Cuchifritín in the woods, will be the trigger for Celia's parents to board her again, now in Paris. Celia bids farewell to her readers saying that "Ya soy mayor; mis aventuras de niña no pueden continuar más tiempo... Lo que antes os hacía gracia, ya no la tendrá..." (212) and summoning her readers to read Cuchifritín, Celia's brother, where "me veréis pasar a través de ellas como una niña buena y

razonable... ¡Adiós!...” Celia has grown up and her readers are supposed to grow up with her. She presupposes that the distinction between good and bad has changed for them and that they would no longer enjoy themselves if she kept getting into trouble. It is, as she says, the last book of her adventures, at least of her childhood adventures.

In sum, the girl character that allowed Fortún to convey unpopular messages about education and the limiting roles expected for women, enters now in her adolescence. The volumes analyzed in the second half of this chapter correspond to her adolescence and show a Celia changed by historical circumstances and social and family expectations.

II. Celia, the *Chica Rara* Who Was Not

The focus of my analysis is to see the evolution of the character throughout the series “Celia y su mundo,” taking into account how historical and social events influenced her transformation from the first volume, *Celia lo que dice* (1929) to the final one, *Celia se casa* (1950). After the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Fortún is forced into exile and so is her character, until they go back to Spain and adapt to a changed society. This section focuses on the second half of the Celia series, which portrays a contrasting character to the rebel girl in the first volumes.

Fortún’s biography (Dorao 2001) and Celia’s adventures present the reality of Spain in a specific time period. As seen in the first part of this chapter, the first stories were published at the beginning of the thirties and reflect “las modas, novedades y deslumbramiento que ocurrieron en los albores de la República y, más tarde, una vez establecida ésta” (“Arrojo y descabros” 100). Later, Celia accompanies Fortún and her readers in the different volumes of the series through the trauma of the Civil War (1936-1939), her exile in Argentina, and post-war Spain.

The last section of this chapter focuses on the ideological clash between *Celia* and Francoism (1939-1975), eventually resulting in the censorship of some of the books in the series. As opposed to the guidelines of the *ILE* followed by Fortún, Franco imposed a model of compliance and domestic education for girls. It is crucial to understand the social and political role of women in Spain during the Second Republic, the Spanish Civil War and Francoism to fully understand the importance of Celia as a character talking to young girls and the reception of her message over different time periods.

3. Analysis of the series. Part II.

The five volumes on which the second part of this chapter focuses are: *Celia madrecita* (1939), *Celia en la revolución* (1943, 1987), *Celia institutriz en América* (1944), *El cuaderno de Celia. Primera comunión* (1947), *Celia se casa (cuenta Mila)* (1950). Among the novels for girls, *Celia* stands out due to the complex construction of characters that display their evolution –or better, her regression. In contrast with the first novels, where the free and naughty character of Celia was considered as rebel, *Celia, madrecita* (1939) presents a regression by taking part in the patriarchal family assuming the role of the mother. Although her transition from girlhood to womanhood is abrupt and traumatic, she understands that she is not allowed to rebel against this new situation by showing resilience.

The stories of these two *Celias* coexisted under the dictatorship and displayed contradictory roles of femininity (active and passive, inquisitive and submissive), showing how the historical context and Fortún's personal experiences interfered with the building of Celia's identity.

2.6 *Celia madrecita* (1939)

“Lloré sobre mis catorce años, que habían sido felices hasta la muerte de mi madre, mis tres cursos de Bachillerato, que consideraba perdidos, y los pájaros de mi cabeza, que aleteaban moribundos...” (8)

Celia madrecita (1939) marks the involution of the character, from a rebellious girl to an adolescent who must bow to family (and social) circumstances.⁸⁰ This sixth volume starts when Celia’s mother dies giving birth to Mila, the newest member of the family, and at fourteen, Celia is in charge of raising her little sisters (Teresina and Mila).⁸¹ The problematic role of motherhood to Pilar explored in the first part of this chapter is in the end symbolically lethal, and is passed on to the next feminine character in the family: Celia. While she misses her life as a student and her independence, she also feels she is needed at home and shows resilience to endure her new role. In contrast, her father, who was once an ally in her dream to become a writer, is now a limiting figure who needs her at home, representing a patriarchal force of submission.

Celia realizes her responsibilities in life and sees her dream of becoming a writer fade away. Her commitment to the care of the home makes the character, whose rebellion has vanished, barely recognizable. Her father wants her to persevere in her studies, but at the same time he overwhelms her by reminding her of her obligations: “has de continuar siendo la madrecita de tus hermanos. Ser el eje de la casa” (92) (or the “pilar,” her late mother’s name). As Caamaño (2007) observes, Fortún seems to recover some of the traditional ideas about women, using a discourse similar to that of the right (49), more specifically the one promoted by the Sección Femenina de Falange,⁸² created in 1934 as a reaction to the ‘new woman’ of the Republic. The aims of the organisation were: “the co-operation of women in the formation of an imperial and greater Spain; the encouragement of a national-sindicalist

⁸⁰ Since the publication of Celia’s last volume in 1935, until *Celia madrecita* the series continued with: *Cuchifritín, el hermano de Celia* (1935), *Cuchifritín y sus primos* (1935), *Cuchifritín en casa de su abuelo* (1936), *Cuchifritín y Paquito* (1936), *Las travesuras de Matonkikí* (1936) and *Matonkikí y sus hermanas* (1936). The continuity of the series is achieved through the character of Cuchifritín, who is very similar to his inquisitive sister. Moreover, as Fraga (2013) notes, the fact that the main character is now a boy has as a consequence –and perhaps as a reason– an increase in the number of readers, as many boys who would never have been interested in Celia’s adventures could now read those of her brother (328). Matonkikí, on the other hand, takes over from Cuchifritín to continue expressing the atypical vision of Fortún’s childhood through a cross-eyed girl who lisps... and always tells “her” truth. With her, according to García Padrino (1986), Fortún “rompía los últimos moldes anquilosados de los protagonistas típicos e idealizados en una increíble bondad y no menos insulsa candidez” (46).

⁸¹ Taking into account that the character grows with her readers, this volume can be considered as literature for young people, as Franco (2006) does. Moreover, this is the first book in the series that is conceived as such, and not as a compilation of the short texts that were published weekly in magazines without presenting a strict continuation from one story to the other.

⁸² After the first biennium of the Republic came two years of right-wing government. In 1933, José Antonio Primo de Rivera created La Falange, a movement based in Italian fascism.

spirit in all aspects of life, and the promotion of love of the Patria in the fight against what was perceived as an anti-Spain” (Carbayo-Abengózar 79). The features of the supposed national identity that women had to reproduce were “hardwork, stoicism, a good demeanour, thrift and a readiness to sacrifice themselves for the well-being of the Patria” (Carbayo-Abengózar 80).

Celia reproduces these characteristics, which her readers could never have imagined. The hard work comes with the demands of running a household: “Tienes quince años, hija mía, y ya debes ser tú quien se ocupe de administrar la casa... ya sé que esto te va a ser difícil sin una madre que te dirija...; pero hay que amoldarse a las circunstancias. Valeriana no sabe, y por ahorrar, nos matará de hambre; yo tampoco sabría ni tengo tiempo para ello... Tú verás” (118). Celia's father allows her to keep the money he earns (in a job that is never defined). Now she takes care of the house, realizing the work involved in managing money for a household and the difficulty of organizing weekly menus so that everyone is healthy by substituting some foods for others that are cheaper.

The notion of sacrifice is also intrinsic to *Celia madrecita*. Celia's mother's life was sacrificed in giving birth to Mila, and Celia's life was sacrificed in taking away a present and a future.

– Hija mía..., ya no te hablo de mis sacrificios, que son muy grandes... No hay tertulia, ni café, ni nada de lo que esa pobre mujer haya podido decirte..., sólo hay el sacrificio de todas las horas del día..., porque cada uno hemos de sacrificarnos en la medida de nuestras fuerzas... ¿Qué sacrificio hemos de pedirles a tus hermanas? Para ellas, todo cuanto hagamos es poco... Tú y yo únicamente hemos de llevar la carga... ¡Y bien me duele que tú la lleves!... ¡Bien me duele, hija!

Tuve que consolar a papá y asegurarle que estaba contenta, que era feliz cuidando de él y de las niñas..., que no cambiaría mi vida por la de ninguna chica de mi edad... Y además, ¡era verdad esto! (169)

However, Celia's desire for sacrifice is not in the sense of the Sección Femenina's self-sacrifice, but ability. Celia is able and willing to help her family because of her genuine concern for her father, the only one who listened to her when she was little and who still has high expectations for her.

The Sección Femenina “functioned as the transmission-belt for the moral and political values of the regime. The causes associated with the Nationalist victory –a return to patriarchal society and restoration of traditional gender roles – remained SF's fundamental doctrine” (Richmond 4). Pilar Primo de Rivera, the leader of the Sección Femenina was the

sister of José Antonio, founder of Falange killed in a Republican prison at the beginning of the war, and daughter of Miguel Primo de Rivera, the military dictator of Spain between 1923 and 1930. Richmond (2003) states many of the contradictions of the Sección Femenina, which promoted marriage and family life but also supported working women unions and the determination of women who wanted to be useful for their patria and needed to study and work outside of the home.

2.6.1 Between a *novela rosa* heroine and a *chica rara*

Celia's change in behavior is incomprehensible for Ana María Moix (1976 33), since “no se comprende muy bien, dentro de la trayectoria de la obra de Elena Fortún, cómo su personaje, la niña que siempre ha hecho lo que le ha dado la gana, que no quería aprender a coser, a cocinar ni a lavar, deja sus estudios y ... desempeña perfectamente el papel de madrecita sacrificada y estudia por las noches” (33).

Bravo-Guerreira and Maharg-Bravo (2003) also notice “una lucha y una lucidez en el personaje que se manifiestan en un claro desgarramiento interior” (204), admitting that the character is very different from that of the first volumes, but recognizing in it the pain of giving up her training but also the satisfaction of feeling needed and useful for the survival of the family in her new role. Thus, the Celia who had been dodging being tamed, in the words of Pardo Bazán regarding female education, is suddenly locked into the role of mother. According to Bravo-Guerreira and Maharg-Bravo (2003), one of the first conclusions that the girl readers could draw from this change is that the abnegation of women is an unavoidable destiny and, although hard, desirable especially from its transformation into mother (204).

This dramatic change also disappointed María del Prado Escobar (1990), who asserted that the meaning of Fortún's *oeuvre* was completely distorted after the Civil War, where Celia appears to be a “vulgar” hero from a *novela rosa* (328). The *novela rosa* (romance novel), is, in short, a romantic novel, but the term distinguishes it chronologically from the period of Romanticism. The plots were based on a love story that ended in a wedding and the consequent sacrifice of an independent or professional future for the woman.⁸³ However, Fortún's treatment of Celia's transformation is more complex than a mere accommodation to ideological and editorial requirements. Although Celia does not rebel against her circumstances, *Celia madrecita* insists on the frustration of abandoning her

⁸³ The contrast between the *novela rosa* and the *chicas raras* will be explained in detail in the next chapter.

studies and her dream of becoming a writer and the difficulties of caring for her sisters and the house, in contrast to the abnegation promoted by the Sección Femenina.

However, the suffering of the character could also accompany other readers who went through a similar situation, and who could share their frustration with none other than Celia, the rebellious girl with whom they felt identified years before. This reading is closer to that recalled by Martín Gaité (2006), who, instead of becoming disenchanted with the character because of her drift towards submission, “A mí el crecimiento de Celia y su transformación en eventual *madrecita* de dos muñecas de carne y hueso me emocionó como ninguna novela de amor o de desgracias me ha emocionado nunca” (“El crecimiento de Celia” 400).

Although Celia had already been somewhat orphaned by neglect since the beginning of the series, her mother's death represents a definite limitation to her destiny.⁸⁴ “Lloré sobre mis catorce años” (8) giving up her studies and experiencing her definitive transition to the adult world and the role of mother and family caregiver before her time. The grandfather, representative of the patriarchal society, reminds her that her obligation is “dejar esas zarandajas de estudios en que os ocupáis ahora las chicas y venir junto a tus hermanas” (7), representing the traditional and submissive vision of women, subject to domesticity and the care of others. *Celia madrecita* is the definitive drift of the protagonist towards an imposed life, of giving satisfaction to the needs of others, sacrificing her own goals.

Tía Julia, who had taken her in in Madrid and paid for her studies, agrees that “Ahora lo que importa es la situación de esas criaturitas sin madre, a la que tú tienes que substituir...” (8). Celia's good grades are a guarantee of her sense of responsibility, “y eso vale mucho en la vida cuando hay obligaciones que cumplir...” (8). There is no escape, no one thinks about her independence, or her education. The easiest thing and what is natural for the rest of the characters is that she abandons her plans for the future and goes to cover the role of mother, which on the other hand, her mother always delegated to schools and nannies.

There is nothing left in the family home of the responsive girl who was Celia. Instead, she takes orders from her grandfather over her father's hopes for her to finish her studies and it is she who demands proper behaviour from her sister Teresina. Celia's spontaneity is devastated by her role as a mother, she becomes an object for her family and the rest of society and, as much as this involves an inner wound, she reproduces the patterns of patriarchal society with her sisters. In this way, she becomes both repressed and an agent of repression as her mother, nuns and nannies had been with her before.

⁸⁴ It will be the opposite for the *chicas raras*, as I discuss in the next chapter.

Caamaño (2007) observes that this behavior, although it is unexpected in Celia, is not new among women, who often contribute to their own subjugation (50). Celia's own mother, despite her modern attitudes, also chose a traditional and limiting education for her. As it has been shown, the organization of the Sección Femenina also consisted of a hierarchy in which the women watched over each other, and, in accordance with its precepts, Celia taught her sister Teresina⁸⁵ to sew (paradoxically, since she is now the “torpe”), to keep quiet and not to lie.⁸⁶ On the other hand, the pressure she puts on her sister (who replaces her as an inquisitive character)⁸⁷ is the continuation of the pressure she imposes on herself, feeling ashamed of her ragged clothes because she is aware of the social norms she should fit into.

The loneliness that Celia had always felt is now added to the nostalgia of the life she was leading in Madrid. Mila, the newborn sister, is entrusted to a midwife in a nearby village, the father worked for a lawyer and Cuchifritín studied in England,⁸⁸ away from any responsibilities. It is clear to everyone that Celia's new responsibilities are due to the fact that she is a woman. Doña Rosario expresses it in this way: “Vaya, vaya, ¡catorce! ¡Cómo se pasa el tiempo! ¡Cualquiera diría!... ¡Pobrecita! Habrás sentido mucho a tu mamá... ¡Claro! Pues ahora a ser formal, porque cuando se tienen principios eso es el todo... Y es lo que se dice, el que a los suyos se parece... Las niñas ya se sabe... ¡Que es lo que pasa! Si fueras un niño, ya sería otra cosa. ¡Claro! Pero así...” (53). Indeed, and as a consequence, Celia takes care of Teresina and studies her lessons, with the aim of continuing her studies to become a librarian or a lawyer one day. The girls in the village don't understand why she studies, while her classmates in Madrid write to her telling her news about fashion, cinema, literature and abhorring the *novela rosa*.

As shown, Celia's transformation disappointed some critics (Moix 1976; Escobar 1990), considering her too similar to a *novela rosa* heroine. However, Fortún found a way to criticize this genre in the words of one of Celia's friends, who admits to abhor “el ingeniero que se casa al final con la duquesita” (40). This progressive character refused this kind of literature, which was greatly consumed after the war, and fought against by the *chicas raras*.⁸⁹ In addition, in the “Correspondencia de *Gente Menuda*,” Celia explains to her

⁸⁵ Teresina's doll was named Solita, after “la niña del portero” (20), Celia's only friend in her first adventures that her readers would remember.

⁸⁶ This female surveillance scheme reaches out to *chicas raras*, who are pressured by aunts and stepmothers.

⁸⁷ Or, as Martín Gaité (2006) put it, “aunque aquella niña ya no tenía tiempo de jugar ni de charlar conmigo, pasaba la antorcha de la fantasía y del comentario a sus dos hermanas” (“El crecimiento de Celia” 400).

⁸⁸ As Félix Díez Hernández did.

⁸⁹ Moreover, Celia's orphanhood links the character with the teenage girls in the 1940s and 1950s *bildungsroman*.

readers that she knows “pocas de esas novelas tan tontas, porque mi papá, que tiene buen gusto literario, no me permite leer más que las que están muy bien escritas.” On another occasion, she explains that “no me gustan nada, y no quisiera que te aficionaras a ellas ... en general son muy tontas” (qtd. in Fraga 2013 424). In other words, through her suggested readings, her feminist agenda also goes against a type of novel aimed at young women that is characterized by the wedding as a happy ending.

In Santander, where her mother's sister tía Cecilia⁹⁰ lives, Celia meets other girls, Adela and her brother Jorge, who will appear again in later volumes. There, her aunt buys her clothes that make her feel good, although it exposes her to the stress of feeling judged by her level of concern for her physical appearance. In Segovia, Doña Rosario contributes to that feminine vigilance of what is acceptable in a young woman “Las chicas de ahora no tienen corazón... Aún no hace el año que murió la madre y ya está pensando en modas...” (62). These criticisms are devastating for Celia, who “tenía mucha pena de haber perdido a mamá..., y muchas noches me despertaba llorando, pero ¡me hubiera consolado tanto una chaqueta de ante! Creo que me ayudaría a llevar la desgracia..., mientras el verme mal vestida me hacía doblemente desgraciada. ¡Ni el abuelo ni doña Rosario lo comprendían!” (62).

Given the circumstances, the way Celia sees herself has a great impact on her self-image. Although she is not interested in “las modas” like the girls in the village (and like the *chicas raras*), in a way she wants to feel that she belongs to a group, that her clothes do not show that she cannot afford to wear new ones. This tension puts her in uncomfortable positions, always on the lookout for what others will say. For example, to encourage her and make her look better, tía Cecilia suggests that she puts on lipstick, which she rejects because her father would not like it (189). The connotations of “pintarse” were already controversial in *Celia lo que dice*, where Celia fights with a girl who says her mother “se pinta” (91) as if it were an insult. Celia feels pressure to do everything, to live up to the expectations that are held of her on different levels: as a little mother, as a young orphan, and, paradoxically, as a student.

While the patriarchal society (the grandfather, the other girls, Doña Rosario) does not expect a young girl to continue her studies, and even less so with such family circumstances, Celia's father shares with the protagonist his dream of a career. He was the one who gave her

⁹⁰ Fortún had spent some time in Santander where she met Cecilia Hernández, sister of her friend Mercedes and Florinda's aunt, who inspired the character of tía Cecilia, also Celia's maternal aunt.

stories and a notebook, encouraging her to write. If books had always been a refuge for Celia, now it was textbooks, study (far from the terrible experience with the education of nuns in previous volumes). However, it also becomes a burden by not wanting to disappoint the hopes of her father, who is absent for days because of work: “¿Estás contenta, hija mía? ¡Qué frío hace! Habrás estudiado, ¿verdad, Celia?” (22). Despite the difficulty of balancing the housework and her sisters with her academic progress, Celia feels responsible for giving him joy, as she did at *Celia en el colegio*.

The tension between the heroine of a *novela rosa* and a *chica rara* is not the only one portrayed in *Celia madrecita*. On the train, Celia describes the climate of tension in Spain:

Encontrábamos labradores que segaban los trigos y se paraban a ver pasar el tren...

Luego hacían un gesto extraño; levantaban el puño cerrado, mirando hacia nosotros...

¿Lo harían todos? Sí, casi todos. Apenas había alguno, que al sentir al tren, no se incorporara de su trabajo con el puño levantado... Cerca de una estación, un grupo de hombres extendió de pronto la mano, como si quisieran saber si llovía... (202)

According to her father, “Saludan..., cada uno según su ideología..., o según la de otros... Están los ánimos a toda presión, como una caldera próxima a estallar...” (202). The progressive changes of the first two-year period of the Republic had produced a radicalization of the right, which ruled in the second two-year period, and at the same time increased the gap with other groups that felt underrepresented. The tension of growing communism in Europe, fascism and the power acquired by the Falange led to General Francisco Franco’s *coup d’état* on July 18th, 1936, the subsequent Civil War and, with the victory of the nationalists, the period known as Francoism. The next day, Celia must travel to Madrid to take her exams. The volume concludes with a reference to the day of Franco’s victory:

—¿Qué día es mañana?

—Es 18 de julio... ¡Ojalá vuelvas pronto! —dijo el abuelo.

Y el corazón se me apretó sin saber por qué... (205)

2.7 *Celia en la revolución* (1943, 1987)

“Yo no quiero que mis nenas odien a nadie. Los niños son todos iguales...” (195)

Celia en la revolución is actually the draft of a manuscript that Fortún finished in 1943.⁹¹ Researcher Marisol Dorao’s tenacity located it among the documentation given to her by Fortún’s daughter-in-law, Ana María Hug, on a trip to the United States. The volume is a testimony of the horrors of war, through which Fortún shapes her own experiences, showing a narrower distance between the character and the writer. While Gorbea, Fortún’s husband, returns to service in the army of the Republic, she participates in different social actions and, given the circumstances, develops her journalistic facet more than her creative one, with articles that describe shelters and the new reality for millions of people, in particular children. As will be shown, some of these articles served as a setting for *Celia en la revolución*,⁹² where the characters coincide with personalities of the time.

Returning to the last scene of *Celia madrecita*, Celia recounts her experience of the civil war, from July 1936, when her grandfather is shot in Segovia accused of having given weapons to the peasants to defend themselves from the rebels. As a consequence, Celia leaves for Madrid with Valeriana and her sisters to join her father. When Celia arrives in Madrid, tía Julia explains that she has exchanged her house in Chamartín for the one they had in the mountains (38), just like Fortún did. Moreover, an important event in the life of Fortún inspires a scene in the following pages: Celia visits her father in the Hospital of Carabanchel because “le ha atravesado una bala el pulmón” (42), just as Fortún had visited her husband, at the same hospital and for the same reason at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War (Dorao 114).

In the hospital, Celia meets her friend María Luisa, who informs her of the existence of a “convento al final de Serrano, con jardines, biblioteca y juegos para los niños,” (47)⁹³ in

⁹¹ As explained in the introduction to this chapter, *Celia en la revolución* is an exception to the chronological analysis of Celia’s books. The logic of Celia’s vicissitudes has prevailed over the date of publication, since this volume was written in 1943 but only published in 1987. Its discovery during the dictatorship could have put the life of Fortún in real danger. Fortún asked her friend Inés Field to burn it: “necesito que ... apartes de lo que [Gorbea] ha de mandarme el paquete de *Celia en la revolución*, que está en borrador y no debe venir” (Dorao 183). The book was republished by Renacimiento in 2016 as part of the Biblioteca Fortún and adapted for the theatre by the Centro Dramático Nacional in 2019.

⁹² Fraga (2013) highlights a series of 24 collaborations for the magazine *Crónica* between 1935 and 1938. In the articles Fortún exposes the unjust differences that social inequalities cause in children, both in their daily life (housing, hygiene, food) and in their access to education.

⁹³ Fortún wrote about this hostel in *Crónica*, on August 16, 1936. Although in the article Fortún says that the children sing the International, the novel eliminates the scene to avoid taking an ideological position. Similarly, in the article “El convento incautado y las niñas que vivían al margen de la vida,” (*Crónica*, September 6, 1936) reproduced in *El camino es nuestro* (2014 91-95), a girl is reminded that “Republicana ya lo eres, porque tu patria es una república” (90). This article describes the work of the pedagogue María Luisa Navarro de

which both end up collaborating. They begin a series of references that not only affect the life of Fortún, but also the personalities that had been protagonists of social and cultural progress during the Republic. Among the caretakers is “Laurita de los Ríos, la hija del Ministro [of Education between 1931 and 1933, Fernando de los Ríos], y una chica andaluza, hermana de García Lorca el poeta” (85). Days later, Laurita “cree que han matado al hermano de Isabel García Lorca... que le han fusilado los fascistas, allí en Andalucía...” (86), giving news of one of the most disheartening events of the beginning of the war, the execution by firing squad in Granada of Federico García Lorca.

There are key historical references such as when María Luisa’s brother is imprisoned in the convent of San Antón, where also “Maeztu, [and] el escritor Muñoz Seca” (92) were taken. María Luisa’s brother would suffer the same fate as Ramiro de Maeztu (brother of María, the founder of the Lyceum) and Muñoz Seca, both executed by militiamen in October and November 1936, respectively. This balance in the reflection of the victims on both sides prevents that, despite Fortún’s identification with the ideas of the Republic and her husband’s military affiliation, *Celia en la revolución* attempts to show a balanced view of the conflict. The narrator gives voice to ideas which do not necessarily align with Fortún’s and which Celia herself does not necessarily share: “dentro de un mes está aquí Franco... es un hombre muy piadoso y oye misa todos los días... su mujer es toda una señora... y tienen una niña que es un encanto...” (132).⁹⁴ Celia lacks political ideals (“yo soy ... lo que sea papá o lo que seas tú...” 162), losing the critical capacity that characterized her as a child.

Bombs keep falling closer to the centre of Madrid and shelters are being evacuated, forcing Celia’s younger sisters to flee to Valencia with Valeriana. Celia loses communication with them and, concerned about their safety, she will be looking for them in different cities during the rest of the novel. Throughout her adventures, Celia learns about the macabre vocabulary of war. Thus, her readers learn, for example, that “cuando hablan de besugos, se refieren a los fusilados de la noche” (43). Sometimes, the definition is offered to Celia by another character and she shares it, as when she learns that “Han dado el paseo al señor Miranda ... Me explica: los milicianos, que se han apoderado de todos los autos, se presentan en una casa, llaman al dueño, o a los hijos, les invitan a dar un paseo, les llevan a las afueras y les fusilan en un descampado” (55). Or “Me explica que ‘checa’ se llama a las prisiones que han establecido los comités comunistas o anarquistas, donde llevan a los prisioneros para

Luzuriaga (1890-1947), member of the Lyceum and also exiled in Buenos Aires after the war that probably inspired the name of Celia’s friend.

⁹⁴ Carmen Franco Polo, who Martín Gaité remembers seeing as a child in *El cuarto de atrás*.

juzgarles...” (61). The bodies in the ditches are also part of the landscape of Celia's tours of the city.

As far as hunger is concerned, Fortún recovers for Celia some recipes for the use of food that she had shared in her articles for *Crónica*,⁹⁵ such as the case of potato skins (“era exquisita friéndola con cebolla” 247) or oranges. Celia's experiences during the war in terms of food include selling dogs and cats meat, giving “gato por liebre.” There is no lack of reference in the book to the care and suffering of domestic animals:⁹⁶ Celia's cat, Kinoto, starves to death (237) and she sees a dog dying while waiting for its already dead owners “La historia de este animal me conmueve más que todo lo que he oído hasta ahora...” (129).

In terms of Celia's education, the novel also talks about the Escuela Única, about which Fortún had written in other articles, and which for Celia's father represents the ideal school:

la escuela que ya existe en América, donde el hijo del obrero se sienta en el mismo banco que el hijo del propietario, sin más diferencia que las limitaciones impuestas por la misma naturaleza... Eso queremos, eso, tú y yo para el pueblo, y eso le hubiera dado la República... y esa esperanza viene a quitársela esta revolución de aristócratas y de lacayos... (130).

Towards the end of the book, Celia meets a former teacher who had been part of this ideal: “Hemos trabajado con fe en el porvenir ... Mi esperanza de ‘Escuela única’ la he visto aquí realizada” (258), but it is cut short by the war and its outcome.

In Valencia, looking for her sisters, Celia meets a militiaman: “Soy Jorge Miranda, el hermano de Adela...” (137), who she had met in *Celia madrecita* and with whom she will keep in touch while looking for her sisters in Albacete and Barcelona. On the train she is sitting in front of a member of the international brigades that arrived in Spain trying to stop fascism in Europe: “¡Es un francés que ha dejado su patria para ayudarnos!” (144). In Barcelona, on the other hand, she witnessed the bombing of an international aircraft. A woman exclaims: “¡Son italianos! Han tenido que buscar extranjeros para que nos maten... ellos no se hubieran atrevido... son italianos y alemanes...” (199). The result of such a bombardment is an image reminiscent of Picasso's Gernika: “Traen agarrado de las puntas un hule azul con restos sangrientos... trozos que parecen brazos, piernas, cosas sin forma, rojas de sangre...” (201). Similar to the attack that led to the Gernika tragedy “El bombardeo ha

⁹⁵ “La nueva cocina madrileña impuesta por la guerra” (October 18, 1936. In *El camino* 101-104).

⁹⁶ In her article “Pequeños dramas al margen de la tragedia” she considered the creation of a ration card for animals (*Crónica*, July 18, 1937. In *El camino* 105-108).

sido por el centro... Justamente a la hora de salir los chicos de los colegios... Así hay docenas de criaturas muertas..., y lo que es peor, vivas pero sin brazos o sin piernas... o con la cara destrozada... ¡No puede haber perdón para este crimen de los bombardeos...!” (201).

Once in Barcelona,⁹⁷ the journey in search of the sisters and Valeriana does not end, as they assure him that they are in France,⁹⁸ “y menos mal que no las llevaron a Rusia...” (174) in reference to the “niños de Rusia,” sent by the Republican authorities to the Soviet Union between 1937 and 1938 to prevent them from suffering in the war. In the subway, Celia finds the platforms “abarroados de gente, de colchones, de alforjas, de cestos... Son los fugitivos de Aragón” (188). In Madrid, the subway was often crowded, protecting people from the bombs of other airplanes: “Son rusos... vienen a defendernos” (222), but the aid from the Soviet Union to the Republic was not enough to win the war at that point.

With official recognition that “¡Se ha perdido la guerra!” (263) Celia is in the same situation as Fortún –similarly to *Celia madrecita*, the tension between following her individual interests or sacrificing herself and following her father and family. Celia does not think her father can survive alone and feels that she cannot abandon him (just like Fortún with Gorbea). Celia thinks of going to France, where her sisters are (Luis and Ana María for Fortún) and they advise her to go to Valencia and from there to Marseille, exactly the same as Fortún did to get to the Sète refugee camp. Celia’s friends want to prevent her from leaving Madrid, and even Aguilar, the publisher-turned-character, insists that Celia stay in Spain (as he did with Fortún): “Nos tiene a nosotros que la queremos de verdad. Tendrá trabajo en nuestra editorial” (268).

Las dudas de mi corazón se van disipando con sus palabras... Tiene razón, aquí mi vida está asegurada, económicamente viviré bien, tengo mi casa, antes de un mes las niñas estarán conmigo y formaremos esta familia que la ternura y devoción de Valeriana libra de toda preocupación... Pero papá no puede volver, papá se irá solo a América, solo para siempre, sin hijos, sin mujer, sin nadie que le pase la mano por la frente y le lleve el periódico a la cama. ¡Pobre papá! ¡No, no irá solo! Irá con sus hijas, con su hogar... ¡con lo que queda de su hogar! (268)

The desolation of the war and an uncertain future begins to take a toll on Celia, who after the sacrifices of *Celia madrecita*, has seen her life interrupted by a conflict in which she had no part and which has taken away so many loved ones:

⁹⁷ Celia rents a room at Calle Lauria (179), where Fortún would live on her return to Spain after her exile.

⁹⁸ Fortún made these trips following the trail of her son Luis and daughter-in-law, trying to arrange their transfer as civil servants to Barcelona and to guarantee their safety.

Anochece. Voy con María Luisa por la calle de Fortuny y una congoja me hace vacilar... Me siento en el encintado de la acera y lloro, lloro a gritos... Lloro por Jorge,⁹⁹ por mi abuelo, y tía Julia y Gerardo... y mis hermanitas, pobres como las ratas, y mi padre desterrado, y por mí... ya tan desdichada... ¡Lloro porque hemos perdido la guerra! (268)

In these war times Celia has been unable to complain, let alone survive. Busy throughout the volume with locating her sisters, helping those around her and surviving on the road, this is one of the only times she allows herself to explode and express her frustration over a situation that seems incomprehensible to her. As Martín Gaité said, “Pues ahí han llegado las cosas, a lo más grave, a cegarle los sueños a Celia, a dejarla descarnada y sin identidad, a negarle el derecho a la palabra y a la protesta en nombre de la razón” (“El crecimiento de Celia” 401). The war has taken away her dreams, the small possibility she saw of continuing with them in *Celia madrecita*.

The scene of her farewell, alone in Chamartín's house, is that of a Quixotic ‘donoso y grande escrutinio’ in which she has to take “lo que más quiero... no lo que puede hacerme falta...” and she decides to take H.C. Andersen’s stories but leave “al Quijote con ilustraciones de Moreno Carbonero, y este otro que yo leía cuando chica... y que así, como sus dibujos, imaginaba siempre a Sancho y a Don Quijote...” (271). Her mother's portrait and letters close the suitcase to start a new life from scratch. “¡Sola...! Todos, uno tras otro, han ido dejándome sola antes de que me fuera...” to which the response is, in a resilient attitude that rare girls will inherit: “¡No, no estoy sola! -me repito para darme ánimos-. ¡Estoy en las manos de Dios!” (300). *Celia en la revolución*, a draft of a novel so different from the first compilations of the series, is valued by Martín Gaité as a “Testimonio en verdad inapreciable y de una gran riqueza literaria, pero que a mi manera de entender nada o muy poco tiene que ver con la saga de los Gálvez” (“El crecimiento de Celia” 396).

2.7.1 1939-1975. Francisco Franco Dictatorship

Franco's dictatorship not only meant a veto on the advances in women's rights that had taken place during the Republic, but also a step backwards in women's participation in society, sustained for almost forty years. Progression in female rights that other countries had also experienced since the mid-19th century was cut short in Spain after the Civil War. For

⁹⁹ When they asked for him at the Ministerio de Guerra, the answer was: “Jorge Medina... muerto” (263).

instance, in the first months of the Republic, the government declared women over the age of 23 eligible to be deputies to the constituent courts for reasons of impartiality and justice (Núñez 1998 408), which meant that the Republicans Clara Campoamor and Victoria Kent and the Socialists Margarita Nelken and Matilde de la Torre could defend their ideas directly in parliament, representing ‘la mujer nueva’, against the conservative ideas of Francisca Bohigas, of the Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas (CEDA, governing during the second biennium).

Maternity insurance was one of the most important social improvements, as was the guarantee of health care for female employees (410). Dismissals due to marriage were declared unjustified (411) although women still needed their husband's permission to be employed, as they were considered under the same heading of “persona de capacidad limitada,” for which persons under eighteen years of age or married women needed a legal representative (insisting on the idea of the eternal minority of women explored in the first chapter). As for the abolition of prostitution, for which Fortún had fought so hard, it was not included in the new Constitution (417). Instead, the law on divorce and civil marriage was passed in 1932.

However, after 1939, women lost the political rights and responsibilities they had achieved under the Republican government. Carbayo-Abengózar (2001) notes that, with the help of the Sección Femenina to manage women's support, the regime was more easily established (81). As opposed to ‘la mujer nueva’, active outside the home, “women were confined indoors, identified with nature and excluded from the civilised public political domain” (81). The liberty that represented the República's allegory, ‘la niña bonita,’ contradicted the feminine values of respectability of the Francoist regime, which quickly domesticated her. The ‘mujer nueva’ was substituted by the ‘nueva mujer’ of francoism, a ‘nueva vieja mujer’, in reality, since it rescued the 19th century marginalization scheme that the Republic had overcome. Ideas associated with women such as cleanliness, self-control or motherhood were rescued, all of which linked to religious fervour. Francoism considered the feminist movement as something unnatural (which supposedly rejected femininity and denied motherhood), since the submission of women to men had been created by God. Women were then designated to remain under the yoke of the patriarchal family. Institutions such as the Lyceum Club, where Celia was born, had no reason to exist and was closed in 1939 to become the Club Medina of the Sección Femenina. This place was one of the very few offering cultural events after the war (Richmond 89). It was precisely where psychiatrist Antonio Vallejo-Nájera (1944) gave a lecture. During the Franco regime, he developed

programmes on the inferiority of women, concluding, for example, that: “A la mujer se le atrofia la inteligencia como las alas a las mariposas de la isla de Kerguelen, ya que su misión en el mundo no es la de luchar en la vida, sino acunar la descendencia de quien tiene que luchar por ella” (44).

Women’s alleged inferior intelligence did not deprive them of being responsible for the upbringing of future Spaniards; on the contrary, it made them responsible for such a task. The Sección Femenina under the guidance of Pilar Primo de Rivera started to train the new Spanish women through a pyramidal structure in which women were the controlling and the controlled, as it has been shown in some of Celia’s stories and will become evident in the *chicas raras*. The term ‘mujer nueva’, is contradictory to what was asked of her: to renounce a professional career, to base her behavior on old ideas of traditionalism, with religious and patriotic values, and to prioritize the care of the family. The Catholic Church helped to ensure this drift, as it was given back control of the educational system that it had lost to the secularism of the Republic.

2.8 *Celia institutriz en América* (1944)

Celia's readers had access to *Celia institutriz en América* five years after her last published book, *Celia madrecita*. *Celia en la revolución* was never published until 1987 and this causes a hiatus between *Celia madrecita*'s premonitory ending and this volume. *Celia institutriz* presents Celia and her family pressured by economic needs. Friends from Spain arrive with news of a devastated country, but there is no more news of the war –essential if Fortún wanted to continue publishing during Franco's regime. After the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Fortún is forced into exile due to her sympathy towards and participation in the Republic, and so is Celia. Topics analysed in this book are the reflection of Fortún's experience in exile, the romance novel twists in the book that make Celia sometimes unrecognizable, and the Francoist censorship in *Celia*.

Fortún and Gorbea arrive in Buenos Aires in November 1939. Their friend and member of the Lyceum, Victorina Durán¹⁰⁰ introduces them to Natalio Botana, director of the newspaper *Crítica*, who provides work and lodging in Avenida de Mayo to them.¹⁰¹ Gorbea receives commissions for translations and Fortún writes for local periodicals, while her stories continue to be published in the Spanish press.¹⁰² Recommended by Durán and Botana, Fortún enters the Registro Civil, where she meets Inés Field, establishing a very important personal and creative friendship. Field introduces her to the Club Argentino de Mujeres, founded in the 1930s with the model of the Lyceum Club. In 1945, Fortún starts working at the Biblioteca Municipal, where she performs archival tasks and tells stories to the children who use the library network, activity which connects with her experience and commitment before and during the war.

As *Celia madrecita* and *Celia en la revolución*, *Celia institutriz en América* (1944) was conceived directly as a novel, without having previously been published in periodicals. This can be seen in Fortún's style, since while the use of dialogue is very characteristic of her work, in this volume the descriptions dominate, which greatly affects the rhythm of the

¹⁰⁰ Durán (1899-1993) convinced them of the opportunities Argentina had to offer. Until recently, the Argentine period has been the least documented in Fortún's life. The discovery of her personal collection in the RAE library by García Carretero (2019) will shed light on Fortún's exile through letters and photographs.

¹⁰¹ Celia and her family would also stay at a pension on Avenida de Mayo, except for Cuchifritín, who stays at his uncle's: "Cuchi es feliz. ¡Qué chico! Él ha nacido para ser feliz siempre. Vive con los tíos, cuidado y mimado, está aprendiendo a conducir el auto..." (37). While he is spoiled, Celia travels around Argentina alone securing a salary for her family. In *Celia en la revolución*, Cuchifritín was also safe in England: "Papá me dice en su última carta que mi hermano es feliz en su colegio de Londres y que me manda un abrazo..." (271).

¹⁰² These stories were published as books years later: *Los cuentos que Celia cuenta a las niñas* (1950) and *Los cuentos que Celia cuenta a los niños* (1951). In both cases Celia is only an excuse to compile the stories, since she only appears in the prologues.

development of the story, which is not divided into scenes. Moreover, as García Padrino (1986) points out, the characteristic differentiation between the tone used by the adult characters and that of children, whose answers and phrases, animated with an evident wit, are blurred in this volume, which delves into melodramatic terrains, moving away from the first Celia and approaching the romance novel heroine that triumphed in the 1940s-50s in Spain (51).

The novel is structured into two parts that reflect the harshness of the exile experience and offer multiple levels of fictionalized reality. On the one hand, Fortún's biographical details are recognizable through the words of her protagonist and, on the other, a changing depiction of America is offered to her Spanish readers depending on her vicissitudes. In the first part, following the transatlantic journey, the characters experience some excitement upon their arrival in America, a land of opportunities where Buenos Aires seemed to be a lively city. However, “todo fue de otra manera de como pensábamos” (24). Reality sets in and the weight of exile prevails and the now nineteen-year-old Celia is sent to work as the teacher of two girls to support her family.

Changing space and relationships contribute to Celia's sense of loneliness and marginalization. Given that most of the local characters were based on Fortún's acquaintances in Buenos Aires, *Celia institutriz* offers a unique perspective on the Spanish people exiled in Argentina during the thirties and forties: a certain enthusiasm at the arrival but also the anguish of uncertainty upon the forced disruption of their lives in Spain.

Fortún also proves her mastery of reproducing different varieties of Spanish. She imitated the accent from different Spanish regions in earlier volumes, and in *Celia institutriz* she shows Argentinian Spanish to her readers.¹⁰³ Upon her arrival to Buenos Aires, Celia meets her tía Carmen: “¡Selia! Soy Carmen, tu tía Carmen, la prima de tu mamá. ¿No les hablaba ella de mí? ¡Pero *ché*, qué linda sos!” (30) and kindly defines this Spanish variety to her readers: “Tenía el hablar dulzón y desfiguraba las palabras o les ponía el acento caprichosamente” (30). At the same time, this volume illustrates the historical values of Spain's imperial past that García Padrino (2018) attributes to children's literature between

¹⁰³ Celia also shares the Argentinean lexicon through misunderstandings, as she had always done between adults and children. This time, not even adults understand each other, like Valeriana, who is indignant about being called ‘gallega,’ since she is ‘castellana.’ Celia shares some expressions that surprise her, such as ‘estar parado’ (instead of ‘de pie’) (39), or calling what she knows as ‘autobuses’ ‘colectivos’ (42). As she had done in *Celia en la revolución*, she sometimes provides a definition of words she had not heard before, such as “chicha, la bebida fermentada del maíz” (276).

1939 and 1945 (15), partly as a reaction to the international isolation under the first years of Francoism, which motivated the search for the original roots of Spanish history and culture.

In the first part of the book, Fortún introduces her Spanish readers to the overwhelming bustle of Buenos Aires, where she tries to make a name for herself as a writer, encouraged by her father. After going through the war (which has not been shared with her readers), Celia tries to recover the dreams she had before becoming a *madrecita*, which had been postponed and that seemed to have disappeared for good after the war.

Tú podrás acabar aquí tus estudios y hacerte un gran nombre como cuentista. Parece que las revistas infantiles valen poco; no hay quien sepa escribir para niños. En cuanto sepan quién eres... tendremos que defendernos de los contratos que te llegarán por todas partes... ... ¡Hija mía! Eres demasiado modesta, Celia. ¡Pero si a Celia la conocen en el mundo entero! Podrías ganar lo que quisieras... (29)

However, the publishing companies she visits do not wish to collaborate with her. Celia, who already mentions her publications of children's stories in *Celia madrecita*, begins an anonymous life in Buenos Aires just as Fortún did. In view of the lack of success, tía Carmen recommends that she looks for a job as a governess to start earning money as soon as possible: “*Mirá*, no te acordés de lo que hacías en España... ¡Cuentos para niños! Con eso no vas a hacer nada... No, no; lo mejor es *ubicarse en seguida*...” (32). Celia's hopes of continuing with her writing fade: “Según hablaba tía Carmen, iba cayendo sobre mí una capa de fría ceniza. Yo aún quería agarrarme a una esperanza, convencerme a mí, al convencerla a ella, de que nosotros éramos gente de excepción” (32).

Before leaving for her new experience as a governess, Celia meets up again with her friend Paulette, who reassures her and does not doubt her future success: “Todo se arreglará... Ya verás. ¡Mi Celia, que se va a hacer célebre aquí! ¿Ya habrás escogido la plaza donde van a poner tu estatua?” (38).¹⁰⁴ Despite the encouragement, “Un sordo resentimiento, que me duele como una herida honda hace subir las lágrimas a mis ojos. Creía yo que me querían más... ¡Que me tenían en más! ¿Por qué me han engañado?” (38). The confusion and resentment that she had felt in *Celia madrecita* and at the end of *Celia en la revolución* return when Celia sees herself as the one who always sacrifices the most in the family.

¹⁰⁴ In *Celia en la revolución* her friend María Luisa also joked: “¡Te levantarán una estatua!” (247). The joke came true in 1957, when a statue was erected in Madrid's Parque del Oeste in Fortún's honour accompanied by the silhouettes of a girl and a boy, who could be Celia and Cuchifritín.

2.8.1 *Novela rosa*

In her difficult adaptation to the new environment,¹⁰⁵ Celia's father speaks to her on the phone about the challenge of new beginnings and the need to overcome any difficulties (67), being resilient, something about which Celia is already an expert. At the Hacienda El Jacarandá (Natalio Botana's actual home), Celia seduces her difficult new students with her exemplary "instruir deleitando."

At the hacienda Celia also meets Poroto, with whom she protagonizes an aberrant scene compared to the first Celia. A dance, in which she is dressed as the Cinderella that she is (98), seems to be her definitive transition to a heroine of a *novela rosa*, including references:

Exagero lo que me ha pasado o lo modifico, como si le estuviera contando una novela... No soy enteramente yo... Hasta la voz y la risa me han cambiado... Pero comprendo que a él le gusto así, y decido quedarme para siempre en ese estado, parecida a la muchacha de una novela que estoy leyendo. (102)

This scene shows the dangers of the romance novel as a sentimental education for women, since, after presenting this unrecognizable Celia, it ends with a misunderstanding à la *Don Juan Tenorio*, in which Celia and Paulette, who was about to become a nun, were sharing a boyfriend without knowing. This sentimental tone is one of the disadvantages that García Padrino (2018) attributes to the poverty of children's and young people's creations during the autarchic period of Franco's regime (1945-1951), since this style provided a certain escape from the harsh reality of the moment (15), which is exactly what Celia uses it for.

Caamaño (2007) states that in this volume Celia "se convierte en la heroína de una novela rosa" (52), in which she even considers marrying the widowed father of her students. However, as Franco (2006) acknowledges, the ending does not correspond "al tema tan banal y de novela rosa de la jovencita pobre que se casa con un hombre rico y mayor" (759). Indeed, Celia's new love affair is more reminiscent of the old man and girl cliché, as in Moratín's *El viejo y la niña* (1790) examined in Chapter 1 to criticise arranged marriage. The forty-five-year-old doctor tries to impress Celia, who is barely twenty, by spending "un día rosa" (192) in the delta del río Tigre or by showing her his library of "libros raros y preciosos: un *Quijote* por un alemán; la *Divina Comedia*, con ilustraciones de Gustavo Doré... Los cuentos de Grimm..." (195). (The combination of *Don Quixote* and the Brothers

¹⁰⁵ Which Fortún uses to describe details of the local flora and fauna to her readers.

Grimm no longer surprises Celia's readers) However, he dies in an accident¹⁰⁶ and Celia finds another family to work with.

In the second part of the book, Celia is a governess for Walter,¹⁰⁷ an English boy, who lives in the jungle on the border between Argentina and Bolivia, described with passages of a nature so different from that of Spain. Caamaño (2007) observes a religiosity much more intense than in Celia's childhood and more in accordance with the values of Franco's regime (52), which can be appreciated in the constant recognition that Celia grants to God's creation (before palm groves or colourful skies) and also in the fact that she takes care of saying her prayers together with the girls she takes care of. The conversion of the character is preceded by that of her author, a product of her friendship with Field, who discovered in her a Catholicism very different from that of Spain, as will be shown in *El cuaderno de Celia*.

With Walter, Fortún finds a way to return to the theme of the relationship between children and adults which had always fascinated her. Walter has created an alternate personality, Pedrote, with whom he can be rebellious and make his sensitivity resist the roughness of the adults. The humiliation of a physical punishment to Walter makes Fortún protest from Celia's voice:

Viven los pequeños entre los adultos, participan de sus alegrías y sus inquietudes, se les habla como si fueran hombres, se les dan lecciones de honradez y dignidad, se marca ante ellos la diferencia que hay entre el sirviente inculto, obligado a hacer por ello las más bajas tareas, y el señorío del hombre ilustrado..., y un buen día se les inflige la pena más degradante... (294)

The identification goes further when Celia hears Walter crying in his room and decides not to interrupt his venting, because:

Conozco bien esta necesidad de evadirse que acomete a algunos niños... ¡Así fue Celia! Estas criaturas que crecen solas bajo la mirada atenta de los padres, asfixiados por su cariño absorbente, que tiende a anularlos..., que ni llorar los deja:

—¿Por qué lloras, Celia?

¡El placer de llorar por nada! Y ese escudriñar en los pensamientos, ese exigir que el hijo sea siempre igual a la imagen que ellos se han forjado de él y que tal vez no es permanente...

—¡Pero, Celia, ¡tú no puedes decir eso! ¡Tú no puedes sentir así! ¡Tú no puedes...!

¹⁰⁶ Natalio Botana, who inspired the character, also died in a car accident.

¹⁰⁷ Inés Field's brother's name (Dorao 304).

¡Dios mío! ¿Cómo explicar que todos podemos hacerlo todo... y, sobre todo, pensarlo todo en algunos instantes?

¡Oh la urgente necesidad de huir, de correr por el campo, llegar al horizonte y desaparecer al otro lado de la tierra!... O, lo que es lo mismo, hundirse entre la multitud para no ser hallado más... (298)

Certainly, this intervention does not only respond to the memories of misunderstanding from the past, when Celia was considered a rebel for not responding to the prefabricated image of a child held by adults. The complaint is mixed with the expectations that are still held about her and her behaviour. Her way of feeling certain situations, or of valuing them as fair or unfair, continues to be questioned and manipulated by adults to accommodate their interests, as we have seen with the call of Celia's father to the Jacarandá to reassure her and remind her that sacrifice and loneliness are her obligation in these circumstances.

Once her commitment to the Anderson family is over, Celia returns to Buenos Aires on another long trip through the jungle. “El andar acompasado de la mula me sume en una especie de alucinación... Segovia..., mamá..., la casa del abuelito... Luego Santander, tía Cecilia... la guerra... ¡Jorge!” (348) The death of her loved ones and the memories of the war torment Celia, who bears the responsibility of supporting her family morally and financially. The spectacular nature on the way back does not surprise her as it did a year ago, since “La selva no ha cambiado tanto, sino yo” (348). Celia's journey is a *bildungsroman* within a bigger one, which is the series. In a year of change and much loneliness, Celia has continued to transform herself.

From Buenos Aires, Celia receives a letter from her father, who again has unexpected news: Jorge, who had been left for dead in the war, has been looking for her during these years and has asked her father for her hand in marriage. Celia's father informs her that he has accepted on her behalf, which outrages Celia: “¡Qué rabia tengo! ¿Cómo se habrá atrevido papá a disponer de mí como si yo fuera una maleta? ‘Me han pedido tu mano y la he concedido’ ¡Pero papá se cree que estamos en el siglo de *El sí de las niñas*!” (357) in another clear reference to Moratín's play mentioned in Chapter 1 about claiming women's consent in marriage, beyond a transaction between families. In a much more expected response from the first Celia, the protagonist makes her refusal clear: “Has hecho muy mal en admitir la pretensión de Jorge, papá querido. ¡Muy mal! Yo no pienso casarme nunca. ¿Qué sabes tú los planes que yo tengo? ¿Cómo te atreves a decidir de mi vida sin consultarme?” (357).

Aside from its *novela rosa* twists, Franco (2006) considers that *Celia institutriz* shows successfully and “para un público joven, la vida del exilio en las dificultades económicas:

esto, no hay que olvidarlo, en un género, la literatura infantil y juvenil, que durante mucho tiempo seguirá siendo acrítica, apromblemática y moralizadora en España” (759).

2.8.2 Francoist Censorship in Celia

Although Fortún’s books circulated freely during the first years of the Franco regime, in 1945 *Celia, institutriz* was banned, and months later the publication and circulation of Fortún’s works was prohibited. This circumstance was decisive in her later creative work, as she became even more cautious of what could be published. The depiction of a family fleeing postwar Spain in *Celia institutriz* should be enough to consider the author a leftist and consequently, ban her books.¹⁰⁸

After being praised in the 1930s, Celia’s naturally rebellious nature did not escape Francoist censorship. As opposed to the guidelines of the *ILE*, Franco imposed a model of submission and domestic education for girls based on the conservative norms of the Sección Femenina. Girls were now only considered in their future roles as mothers and nurturers, and the principal features of national-catholic women were chastity, submission to men and a tendency for a lack of rationality (Craig 1998 69). Far from these qualities, *Celia*’s books advocate for the liberation of girls and women and question patriarchy and authority in general.

Ian Craig (1998) has studied censorship in children’s literature under Franco, and provides evidence of the menace Celia’s rebellion represented to the Francoist understanding of feminine submission and the unequal standards of censorship that existed depending on the gender of the protagonists. As he points out, Fortún had everything going against her with the new circumstances in which her books were going to be published: she was a woman (dealing with the prejudices about what kind of literature women should write); she portrayed a girl protagonist, moreover behaving contrary to the official model and showing initiative; and she introduced contemporary Spain as the context for her stories –the same as the child reader (77). That is, the features that made *Celia* a groundbreaking creation at the time of its publication, made it a suspect under Franco’s dictatorship. The fact that the reader could relate a fictional story to their immediate environment –therefore acknowledging different ways to build their identity, was a dangerous idea in the eyes of censors.

¹⁰⁸ Anyone could denounce a book to the *Ministerio de Propaganda* if they thought the content was against Francoist ideology.

Francoism celebrated obedience as virtue. In a militarized society where men had to obey their superiors, children had to obey adults and show respect by self-censoring their words. A woman's role as housewife, mother and as a support for the husband erased the advances obtained by the feminists during the Republic (Bravo-Guerreira and Maharg-Bravo 2003 202). In contrast, the *Celia* stories in circulation since 1929 offered an opposing model of behavior, with a protagonist who questions the authority of grown-ups, showing a lack of conformity and confronts the adults with a child's logic. In contradiction to the irrationality of the Francoist prototype for girls, Celia's opinions are reasonable if they are heard. The imposition of silence among children was one of the abuses Fortún had denounced in *Celia* from the beginning, challenging Francoist precepts. Celia reacts against the continued burden of silence and feels frustrated when her complaints are not heard and she is not allowed to negotiate a new situation. In fact, Fortún does not appear to be indoctrinating, but encouraging a critical perspective for the child reader.

Not surprisingly, some of *Celia*'s books had difficulty being published and even reprinted under the dictatorship. The figure of Elena Fortún was suspicious, a feminist writing in exile under a pseudonym, and married to a Republican. Craig (1998) provides evidence of a letter from Aguilar in 1943, where after being asked about Fortún's political tendencies, he would try to describe her as a modern woman who would never have included "antifascist" content in her stories. Only two years later, *Celia institutriz* was censored, as well as the rest of Fortún's works. No reasons were given; but it is likely that a person with influence denounced the content (73).

However, *Celia en el colegio*, would be denied re-edition on several occasions and finally rated as appropriate for readers older than sixteen (Craig 74). The importance of silence and obedience is evident in many of *Celia*'s books, but perhaps more importantly in this one, in which the catholic boarding school served as a site for traditional female socialization. According to the censorship report in 1956, the book was "antipedagógico por la continua desobediencia, falta de respeto, falta de aplicación de la protagonista" (Craig 74) and the over patience and tolerance of the nuns with the "rebelde" made them appear as "tontas y exageradas" (74). The report also admits that "en los colegios hay niños del tipo de Celia, pero hay otros que debían haberse perfilado" (74), like girls "modelos y espejos de inocencia" against the "díscolas y rebeldes" that Celia represents.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ The Gabinete de Lectura Santa Teresa de Jesús (1942), founded by the Church group *Acción Católica*, promoted children's literature from a Catholic perspective and found *Celia en el colegio* and *Celia institutriz*

Dorao (2001) explains that, when the second edition of Celia's series was being prepared, the priest of the Tribunal considered that *Celia en el colegio* could only be published by somehow modifying the scene in which Celia realizes that the chaplain is wearing pants under his cassock, and thinks that he is fooling everyone because: “no es un señor cura. ... Es un hombre... Lleva pantalones como mi papá...” (82). According to Dorao, Fortún refused to change the scene and suppress it, so that second edition of the series came out with all of Celia's books except that one (312).

According to Martín Gaité (1993 36) and Fraga (69), the point of view of the girl was incorporated by Fortún to criticize society by way of naivety and irony. However, Francoist censorship did not forgive the lack of child innocence in Celia, which was a major requirement for their model of a girl, and banned and systematically cut some of the titles in the series. As Burman (2008) argued: “representation is always a practice of power” (16). The danger of these representations and the ‘appropriation’ mentioned by Goodenough et al. is that the character may serve different ideological interpretations depending on the prevailing political agenda. The strategy that worked for Fortún during the transitional period of the Republic did not prevent her works from being banned decades later, since Celia showed an alternative path to the traditional role of women.

“inconvenientes.” This meant that children should not have access to them due to an allegedly inconvenient presentation of its family and religious aspects (García Padrino 2018 51).

2.9 *El cuaderno de Celia. Primera Comunión (1947)*

“Sienta muy mal en una religiosa la curiosidad, y en una niña también” (54)

The ninth volume in the series, *El cuaderno de Celia* (1947) is a rare book in which Celia goes back to being her nine-year-old self and displays a submissive character.¹¹⁰ Through the resource of an old notebook she received from the convent where she took her first communion, Celia shares her “maravilloso, sobrehumano vivir” (8) with the girls who will receive their communion now. However, beyond Celia's spiritual conversion (partly based on that of the author), the volume is a response to the censorship that had already banned some of her books. In this way, Fortún brings Celia closer to the “marcada orientación religiosa” (García Padrino 2018 15) of other children's publications of the first post-war period.

The rules of Francoism for a reform of the educational system determined the conditions of children's literature. According to García Padrino (2018), child protagonists were imposed as male and female archetypes of an idealized childhood (23), in order to correct the progressive ideas of the *ILE* that considered children owners of their words. Moreover, this forging of model protagonists and clichéd situations did not constitute a new or original contribution to Spanish children's literature. These examples had already been used in the most didactic 19th century creations (23), showing a paternalistic and protective idea of childhood from the point of view of adults (24).¹¹¹

In addition to the year of publication of *El cuaderno de Celia*, 1947 is the year Fortún received a letter from Carmen Laforet, beginning a correspondence that would last until Fortún's death in 1952. In her first letter, still from her exile in Buenos Aires, Fortún explains to Laforet the price she had to pay with the censorship: “Mi último libro en España fue recogido por la censura luego de estar en los escaparates. Ahora han prohibido *Celia en el*

¹¹⁰ In my analysis of the novels, I have maintained its chronological position in terms of date of publication, as a sign of how censorship can affect the literary work of a writer and the evolution of a character. Analysing *El cuaderno* after *Celia novelista*, when Celia would have been nine years old, would not be relevant to the purpose of observing the character's arc depending on the social context.

¹¹¹ One exception to these examples was *Antoñita la Fantástica* (1945), by Borita Casas (1911-1999), which was in line with Celia's formula for being a girl protagonist faced with the adult world. The setting also reproduced the contemporaries of the author and her readers, based on the realistic reflection of customs of the time. It was also presented in short chapters, by its original means of diffusion -the weekly stories of *Gente Menuda*, in the case of Celia and those of the radio in that of Antoñita (García Padrino 2018 31). With the growth of the protagonist, Casas gradually gave greater prominence to Antoñita's younger sister, as Fortún did with Cuchifritín and later with Mila. Antoñita's coexistence with characters created in the mould of the regime shows the inconsistency of censorship, more examples of which will be shown in Chapter 3.

colegio y para seguir publicando el resto ha sido preciso hacerles varios cortes” (*De corazón y alma* 30).¹¹² She also shares with her the process of creating the book:

Ahora estoy haciendo un librito, *El cuaderno que olvidó Celia*, que son treinta días en el convento, cuando tenía nueve años, para hacer la primera comunión. Parece que una de las cosas que indignan a las monjitas de España es la falta de religiosidad que parecen revelar mis libros. Bueno, ahora verán. Que va a ser algo místico pero no ñoño, y hasta con un poquito de gracia conventual, si no somos de burla. Necesitaré las licencias eclesiásticas.¹¹³ No sé si estos señores se encontrarán algo que no esté completamente en el dogma. Es posible... (Laforet and Fortún 31).

The result of this strategy is *El cuaderno de Celia*, where social criticism found in *Celia en el colegio* disappears in favour of silence and submission. Whereas the education she receives here hardly differs from that of *Celia en el colegio*, her attitude is different; now there is no rebellion, no questioning of authority. In contrast to the freedom of thought of the Republican educational system, the national side proposed a program based on the control of thought, which Fortún exemplifies with an unrecognizable Celia. When she is scolded, she regrets what she has done, and she does not try to justify her actions or the intentions behind them.

As Caamaño (2007) observes, like many Spaniards under Franco, Fortún seems to try to erase her past and does so by “reconstruyendo (¿destruyendo?)” (54) her character. If she wanted to continue publishing in Spain, she could only adapt the character to suit the dictatorial regime ideology. As Caamaño points out, Fortún's religious conversion may be sincere, but also timely (54). Through her friendship with Inés Field, a spiritual mentor with whom Fortún discovered a Catholicism very different from the one she had learned in Spain:

Después de haber sido espiritista, teósofa, y hasta Rosacruz, ahora soy profundamente católica ... Aquí [in Argentina] la Iglesia es más limpia, más filosófica, más sana... ¡Allí me ahogaba! Puedes creerme que soy católica porque he aprendido a serlo fuera de España: en España, la iglesia es beligerante, como dijo una vez Azaña, y es un partido más que una religión, mientras que fuera de España es una filosofía, es algo aparte de todas las ideas y de todos los partidos (Dorao 160).

In homage to Field, through whom Fortún discovered a spirituality different from Catholic dogmatism, the nun who takes care of Celia and guides her during the month of

¹¹² Fortún is even more outraged when she tells her friend Mercedes (1947): “¿Tú sabes que han recogido mi último libro? ¿Tú sabes que no se puede volver a imprimir otro de los de Celia? ¿Tú sabes que los de Cuchifritín han sido cortados por la censura? Qué suerte estar lejos!” (qtd. in Fraga 2013 55).

¹¹³ Fortún is more pessimistic about censorship in a letter to Mercedes (1947): “Dudo que me lo admitan aunque es el más puro cristianismo” (qtd. in Fraga 2013 55).

discovery in the convent is called Sor Inés. In addition, the dedication to her spiritual master, is found at the end of the book and not on the first page “por no ofender a la humildad de su alma, mas para sor Inés y por sor Inés ha sido escrito” (179). Field herself explained in a letter to Carmen Bravo-Villasante that given Fortún's continuing existential problems, her knowledge of Christianity and her mystical aptitude, the approach to the sacraments and liturgical practice “dio un sentido a sus sacrificios. Y de esas recobradas comuniones nació la primera comunión de Celia, *El cuaderno de Celia*” (Field 25).¹¹⁴

In the convent, Celia discovers her soul, faith, humility, charity, learns to be patient, not to judge, and to pray. As for faith, Sor Inés explains that “Tenemos que tener fe siempre: fe en Dios, fe en nosotros mismos, que con la ayuda de Dios lo podemos todo” (23). This quote connects with Celia's last line in *Celia en la revolución*, (“¡No, no estoy sola! -me repito para darme ánimos-. ¡Estoy en las manos de Dios!” 298) in which, encouraging herself to carry on despite the loneliness she feels at the end of the war, she shows an inner strength that she will share with the *chicas raras*. With regard to prayer, Celia explains that she has learned “bien, bien el Padrenuestro” (50) by understanding what each word means. This is certainly a change if we remember how she recited a teaching without comprehending it in *Celia lo que dice*, or when she prayed in *Celia en el colegio*. In a way, Fortún is less dogmatic in her portrayal of formation in the Christian faith, showing that Celia now memorizes and repeats, but understanding what she says.

Furthermore, there are messages that clash with the ideas she had defended in the first volumes, such as a devastating stifling of curiosity: “Sienta muy mal en una religiosa la curiosidad, y en una niña también” (54). In this case it seems that Sor Inés is speaking for the Sección Femenina. Such a statement would be interpreted as irony read from the code that the readers have learned through the first Celias, but it is not so clear after *Celia madrecita* and *Celia institutriz*. It is said quite clearly that Celia is being domesticated in the convent, but Sor Inés acknowledges that “Aún me cuesta doblar su carácter y detener su curiosidad. Todo lo quiere saber. ¡Es más preguntona!...” (86) and she is silenced by reminding her that “es un grave pecado la curiosidad” (86). Moving the message that girls should not ask or wonder about things for themselves seems the saddest ending for Celia, whose modernity consisted in questioning any established norm.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ The volume did not enjoy commercial success, as she confessed to Mercedes (1951): “es el que menos se vende y el que más disgustado tiene a Aguilar” (qtd. in Fraga 2013 61).

¹¹⁵ Although Celia is not recognizable in terms of her attitude, some stylistic features link the volume to the themes and style of the collection. For example, the responsibility with animals, the inclusion of traditional

As Bravo-Villasante (1987) reflects, it is precisely the curiosity and capacity for wonder that Fortún deeply admired in children (9), making this repression by Sor Inés even more dramatic and significant. In contrast, the superior's advice to control Celia's eagerness to know is to read the lives of saints, coinciding with the upsurge of hagiographic literature in the postwar period that García Padrino studied (2018 17) and which Celia had already become fond of in *Celia en el colegio*.

Sor Inés continues to challenge Celia's submissive limits. The confusion about what is right and what is wrong reaches her beloved readings, whose relevance begins to be questioned. Little Red Riding Hood is eaten by a wolf, Snow White chokes on an apple and Celia does not come out of her confusion exclaiming: “¡Yo no quiero que pasen esas cosas!” Moved, Sor María José, said that “¡Celia es una santita!,” to which Sor Inés replied: “Nada de santita ... Una rebelde es Celia. Ella quiere que todo sea a la medida de su deseo, hasta lo que ha pasado hace miles de años” (127). Even when the character is stripped of the characteristics that made her special, of her ability to see the world through readings with that “interpretación mágica de la realidad” that fascinated Martín Gaité (2002), she is still considered “rebelde” by the nuns, just as Miss Nelly called her in the first volume.

After receiving her First Communion, Celia left the convent with her father, assuring that “me olvidé en seguida de la paz del convento y su austera cordura, y continué haciendo y diciendo bobaditas” (178). Fortún seems to seek to guarantee the coherence of the series if we were to continue reading *Celia en el mundo* later, but at the same time she is condemning that volume and the following one, *Celia y sus amigos*, admitting that in them she does not behave with sanity, that is to say, like the patriarchal society in which she lives expects a girl to behave. 1948 will be a decisive year in terms of Fortún's personal life, since, while she travels to Spain to process her husband's amnesty in order to return to Madrid, he takes his own life in Buenos Aires.¹¹⁶ In 1949 she travelled to Argentina to collect her things and, after a few months of difficult coexistence with her son Luis and her daughter-in-law Ana María in the United States, she returned definitively to Spain, where her publisher was waiting for her.

songs, the reference to classic stories and the incorporation of different linguistic varieties according to the origin of the characters.

¹¹⁶ Rosa Chacel found inspiration in Gorge for her character Damián Vallejo in *La sinrazón* (1981).

2.9.1 *Celia bibliotecaria*

During the war and the exile in Argentina, Celia had to put aside her dreams of pursuing a professional career. However Fortún had planned a professional and independent future for Celia with *Celia bibliotecaria*, fulfilling her dream of becoming a librarian, finally surrounded by books and not getting married. Although this would have returned some modernity to the character, Fortún's publisher refused this idea and demanded a happy ending for the series in line with the ideology that limited women's existence to marriage and motherhood.

The unpublished *Celia bibliotecaria*¹¹⁷ offers a professional future for Celia where, finally among books, Fortún would share her knowledge and anecdotes of her years as a librarian in the Municipality of Buenos Aires and her training in the Residencia de Señoritas. This destiny would mean the literary professionalization of Celia, who had already recognized in *Celia novelista* that writing was too difficult and had expressed in *Celia madrecita* her intention to continue studying: "Ahora "hago" el Bachillerato, y luego "haré" Filosofía y Letras y tal vez Derecho, y seré bibliotecaria o abogada..." (49). Furthermore, in the "Correspondencia de *Gente Menuda*," Celia herself had shared her plans directly with her readers: "Seré archivera, que me gusta mucho más que ninguna otra profesión, y así podré pasarme la vida leyendo" (quoted in Fraga 2013 423).

A "Rara chica huérfana" (24) could have been portrayed around the character of Celia according Capdevila-Argüelles (2017) alluding to another possible ending for the character: becoming a librarian *chica rara* who writes her own future in Barcelona (where Fortún herself was starting it). However, in an interview with Josefina Carabias in 1948, Fortún revealed that "[The publisher] quiere que la casemos, pero... no sé... no sé qué hacer" (Dorao 141). This doubt carries the weight of choosing a conventional path for Celia, an end for her character. Fortún, who insisted on the mistake her marriage had been, faced a difficult decision giving Celia the same ending. However, concerned about following the rules of the regime, "se empeñó Aguilar en que había que casarla enseguida" (310), and *Celia se casa* was published in 1950. However, as Capdevila-Argüelles (2017) observes, "Al dejar esbozado el principio de otro final para el personaje de Celia, Fortún conecta con la vida escondida de la generación de mujeres a las que el personaje hubiera pertenecido, la

¹¹⁷ Some drafted chapters are accessible online in Madrid's public library network: <http://www.bibliotecavirtualmadrid.org/>

generación de Carmen Laforet” (24). This relationship will be explored in detail in the next chapter.

Interestingly, in her interaction with her readers, Celia, or Fortún, share in “Correspondencia de *Gente Menuda*” her favourite readings. Among them, is *Little Women*: “¿Has leído Mujercitas, de Luisa Alcott? Es un libro precioso, en que hay cuatro chicas de nuestra edad. Ellas me han enseñado a ser valiente y a llevar con alegría las contrariedades ... De las cuatro hermanitas, yo la que prefiero es Jo, y yo quisiera ser como ella de abnegada y alegre” (qtd. in Fraga 424). Although Alcott sacrificed Jo by marrying her and Fortún did the same with Celia, these endings were the only safeguard to the survival of the character in the form of the republishing of the series, instead of being censored or directly non-elegible for publication. Even with this ending for Celia, Fortún found the space to warn her readers about the sacrifices of marriage, in the voice of Mila and the nuns, as will be shown in the next section.

The dramatic historical events of the twentieth century undoubtedly affected the creation of children’s narrative and the lives of their readers. Franco imposed a model of compliance and domestic education for girls. It is crucial to understand the social and political role of women in Spain during the Second Republic, the Spanish Civil War and Francoism to fully understand the importance of Celia as a character talking to young girls and the reception of her message over different time periods.

2.10 *Celia se casa. Cuenta Mila.* (1950)

“Celia, que es más lista que ninguna, se está volviendo tonta por culpa de Jorge” (8)

Published ten years into Franco’s dictatorship, the tenth and last book in the series, *Celia se casa* (1950) is a clear example of an ideological (and commercial) adaptation of the narrative and the character. This volume is the definitive farewell to the character in which, as in her childhood readings with which she was often critical, and just like in the *novela rosa*, marriage marks the end of women's social life, and now Celia’s. Far from any other adventure, marriage and motherhood will now be her new responsibilities.¹¹⁸ Celia's disappearance is evident from the title, where “cuenta Mila” reports the change in perspective. Readers attend Celia's wedding and preparations as narrated by her younger sister. Celia has definitely lost her voice.

Narrated from Mila's perspective,¹¹⁹ Celia appears as a supporting character at her own wedding. It is an ending so far removed from what would have been expected from the original character, that even in *Celia institutriz* she reminded her father that “Yo no pienso casarme nunca” (357). Therefore, it would be uncomfortable to hear Celia in the first person, excited about a wedding that makes her sacrifice an artistic career that readers know is important to her. Conversely, from the supposedly naive eyes of Mila, who inherited the confusions of the figurative language of the first Celia, certain situations can be shown as ridiculous in the adult world. Circumstances have made Celia become just another adult, whose dreams of independence and creativity are fading, often acting as a repressive agent for her sisters.

The subtlety of shifting the focus and using Mila as the parapet that Celia was during the Republic protects Fortún's values, despite sacrificing her main character. In this way, Fortún is able to distance herself from an already unrecognizable Celia, an aberration of the character who impacted children's literature in the late 1920s. This strategy allows the eight-year-old Mila to admit that “Celia, que es más lista que ninguna, se está volviendo tonta por culpa de Jorge” (8). A soldier like Gorbea, and an engineer like the one “que se casa con la duquesita” in the *novela rosa* her friend abhorred, Jorge is considered by all to be a good match. Readers had met him in *Celia madrecita* and had learned of his death in *Celia*

¹¹⁸ According to Dorao, the book “Se lo habían inspirado esas niñas que se casan como si el matrimonio no fuera más que jugar al amor” (170). When the novel was finished, Fortún began to prepare *Celia y Miguelín*, in which she had a three-year-old son and which was never published.

¹¹⁹ Fortún had already published Mila's adventures in the magazine *Semana* and Aguilar had published two books with her as the main character: *La hermana de Celia, Mila y Piolín* (1949) and *Mila, Piolín y el burro* (1949). In addition, Fortún prepared *Patita and Mila, estudiantes*, which has recently been published by Renacimiento (2019).

institutriz (which is discovered in *Celia en la revolución*, published only in 1987). However, if Celia was to marry, she would have to marry someone the readers already knew, and Fortún makes him reappear after a misunderstanding.

Celia's sister, Teresina (Patita), who is already twelve years old, says that she will never marry, as Celia had said in the previous volume, *Celia institutriz*. However, her goal is not an independent life, but “cuidar de papá” (8). Once again, the paradox of being a woman in a patriarchal society, in which either women leave a *patria potestas* to enter another, or do not leave. If Mila replaces the Celia in disarray, Patita replaces the Celia who sacrificed herself for her father and family in the last volumes.¹²⁰ There is little continuity with *Celia institutriz*,¹²¹ with barely a reference to a journey at the beginning of the book, but none to the period of exile to which the family was forced (much less the reasons why they had to leave). The war and Argentina disappear from the memory of the characters and Celia marries in a Madrid in which, except for some financial concerns, it seems that nothing has changed from the one she left before the war. A second life then begins for Celia's family, a bourgeois family in decline. The family moves to Chamartín, to the house of the war (where Fortún lived), where they are in contact with nature and animals. Again Doña Benita, as old in body as she is young in spirit, accompanies them in this stage. Unexpectedly, Sor Loreto y Sor San José (the nuns of the school) visit Celia, and give her the wedding rings (171). Sor Loreto, perhaps in a final plea about the difficulties of marriage to the readers, warns Celia that it is easier to love God than to dedicate oneself to one's family and husband:

–Yo tengo una hermana casada, ¡y no sabe su caridad lo que es esa alma! Ocho hijos tiene, y poco dinero..., y siempre alguno enfermo..., y los malos humores del marido... ¡El amor de Dios es más seguro! Jesús no muere, ni se enferma, ni nos deja de amar... (173)

This speech is undoubtedly more in line with Fortún's view of marriage, which she expressed to Field in 1951 one year after the publication of this volume, when she acknowledged “...el disparate que hice al casarme. Ni yo quería tener hijos ni el ser madre me producía ningún placer. Yo tenía en mi cabeza de 19 años toda una novela. Hubiera deseado, no casarme, sino juntarme con mi marido, tener dos o tres hijos, y que me hubiera abandonado. En secreto te diré que eso hubiera sido la solución de mi vida” (Dorao 73).

¹²⁰ A similar concern had been experienced by Fortún with Gorbea, for whom she sacrificed herself for fear that he could not survive alone. Such concern became evident when Gorbea committed suicide in Fortún's absence.

¹²¹ Franco (2006) points out the illustrations (by Bernal) as another element of rupture with the series, very different from the ones which gave identity to the character (760).

Fortún, who married off Celia at the same age as she married Gorbea, could not give her that solution to her life.

In another autobiographical twist, and to the family's chagrin, Celia and Jorge will go live in Barcelona after they are married, as this is his new military posting (like the many times Fortún moved with Gorbea) and where Jorge's parents give them a house as a present. Symbolically, the distance also frees Celia from that precocious family, from her sisters/daughters. On the other hand, Barcelona is the city of Fortún's second chance in Spain, after her exile.

Cuchifritín, who had stayed in Buenos Aires studying with tío Rodrigo, appears by surprise for Celia's wedding, securing a reunion of the characters for his big sister's farewell. Even Maimón appears in passing with a company of puppeteers to greet Mila and say goodbye to Celia (177). In her farewell to her sisters, Celia makes the twelve-year-old Patita now a mother, leaving her in the care of her father and Mila:

Tú, Patita, vas a cuidar de papá y de Mila, ¿verdad? Sí, ¡claro! Y tú, Mila, vas a ser muy buena, muy buena, ¿verdad? Os escribiré todas las semanas...

¡Hijas!... Ya estoy casada... Tengo que vivir con Jorge... lejos de aquí.

“¡Y así se casó Celia y se fue de casa..., y no volvió!” (201)

Afterwards Mila explains, with Fortún adding in parentheses and capital letters in case it was not clear enough: “(FIN DE CELIA)”.

If Celia appeared in the 1930s as a response to the female passivity of traditional tales, her farewell, not even narrated by her, is a clear conservative involution. The rebellion that Celia shows in her childhood fades away towards the middle of the series, forced by historical and personal circumstances to conform to the social norms that she had always rejected. This change in the protagonist can be interpreted as an annihilation by the Franco ideology and its censorship.¹²² However, as Caamaño (2007) points out, this was not the case, since the first part of the series continued to be published, and pre-war copies would pass from hand to hand (56). The two Celias, the rebel and the young adult, coexisted during the dictatorship, offering contradictory models of femininity.¹²³ Nevertheless, as argued at the

¹²² Martín Gaité regreted that “la guerra ha matado a la Celia a la que nosotros conocíamos” (“El crecimiento de Celia” 402).

¹²³ The series “*Celia y su mundo*” has also been considered a “*bildungsroman* truncado” (Capdevila-Argüelles 2005) due to the regression of the protagonist over the last volumes rather than her evolution. However, the notion that the character became a conservative model does not necessarily mean that her evolution was ‘truncated’, but that it certainly deviated from the progressive model she was inspired to be.

beginning of this chapter, it is the first Celia who is recalled by her readers (and viewers, thanks to the TV adaptation by Martín Gaité and Borau in 1993).

3. Concluding remarks

As explained in this chapter, from Celia's first appearance, the character went through a monarchy, a republic, a civil war and a dictatorship. The anchorage in her real socio-historical context is one of the character's signs of identity, which will condition her behaviour, her decisions and, finally, her evolution. From this perspective, for the contemporary reader, the story of Celia provides an important vision of how historic and cultural events such as war or dictatorship can change the life of a child.

As examined in Chapter 1, Fortún used the tradition of the marginal character that prevails in Spanish literature in the form of truth-tellers (*pícaros*, *Don Quixote*). Celia's perspective to reality is undoubtedly the style element that distinguishes her stories. In Fortún's fictional universe, the traditional point of view has simply been reversed, putting children at the centre of the story and leaving the adult world as a backdrop. Celia, like Fortún's creative works, was born in a context of freedom and represents the conflict between the new and the old (what she does not understand, what is imposed). In her adventures, the distance between adults and children, or between men and women, is incomprehensible to her and she is unable to meet the expectations of others.

However, modernity creates anti-modernity (resistance to change, criticism and censorship) and the apparent carelessness of those who feel outside the system (and Celia is somehow doubly so, as a child), represents a threat to those who have always been in control and want to keep it at all costs. Adults go so far as to impose verbal and physical abuse on children, and patriarchal societies fail to grant or withdraw rights from women that would make them equal to men. The period of the Republic, like that of childhood, tends to be idealized. For some, it was too big a change and for others it was not enough. On the other hand, childhood is an idealized yet abused stage. Adults write books for ideal children, not real ones, which are not allowed to speak. As explored in Chapter 1 and as illustrated by the examples of *Celia* in Chapter 2, it is understood that childhood means innocence and tenderness, while adults impose themselves violently on children and underestimate their reasoning capacity, even more so of girls, to whom silence is obliged.

That is why it is so important for Celia to appear, in a changing context, a couple of years before the establishment of the Republic, to put adults in the right place. As opposed to the moralizing children's books or novels for girls about flat characters who did everything according to the norm in order to perpetuate it in their readers, Celia is confused about her own reality and does not hesitate to make it known. She has her own ideas and she doesn't

understand others that are imposed without reasoning. Celia does not understand why adults are so closed to hearing another way of doing things, which is a metaphor for modernity. The resounding success of the books shows that a large part of society was eager for this change: children who enjoyed this new perspective, which reproduced scenes that they could experience in their own skin, in the same place, at the same time as the character. Many parents were also eager for change and did not hesitate to buy *Celia*'s books and share them with their children, to read them together and laugh, and sometimes to find a mirror in which to see their intransigence reflected.

The topics analysed in this chapter are changing concepts during the series, either because of Celia's change in attitude or because of the ideological change of society. Fortún, who participated in the historical change of the Second Republic and denounced through her articles the abuse that women, children and animals had to endure, introduced in her stories the themes that she needed to denounce, such as: the world of children vs. the world of adults; education and pedagogical ideas; feminism and the changing roles of women; reality and fiction, intrahistory and reflection of Fortún's life in *Celia*; social injustice through classism, racism, violence against animals; physical, symbolic or spiritual mobility as a need to flee; and the literary vocation and intertextuality. These seven themes have been analysed in this chapter, illustrating Fortún's ideological basis –and will serve as a basis for the analysis of the novels of the *chicas raras* in the 1940s-50s in Chapter 3.

The dramatic historical events of the twentieth century undoubtedly affected the creation of children's narrative and the lives of their readers. Franco imposed a model of compliance and domestic education for girls. It is crucial to understand the social and political role of women in Spain during the Second Republic, the Spanish Civil War and Francoism to fully understand the importance of Celia as a character talking to young girls and the reception of her message over different time periods.

The enthusiasm of the 1920s moved into the literary sphere and the desire for change included children in the consumption of literature. The novelty was the quality of that literature, in which the moral did not take precedence over form. Through an inquisitive girl, funny dialogues and a recognizable background, Fortún offered scenes that could be read before going to sleep or one after the other. Some of the girls who enjoyed laughing with Celia were Carmen Laforet, Carmen Martín Gaité and Ana María Matute, which goes to prove that children's literature does not only make readers, but writers.

However, as explained in this chapter, some of the *Celia* books would be denied re-edition under Franco's censorship, which read Celia's disobedience as a threat to its ideology

based on silence and submission. This shows the ambivalence of representation of children, the self-interested reading of children's voices. As it has been shown, Franco's ideology affected Celia's transformation from the middle of the series. However, this transformation is very nuanced. Although Fortún was not able to give Celia an independent, professional future as a librarian and had to finish the series with her wedding, Fortún continued to find a way to show her ideological and personal conflicts. In the end, somehow, Celia gives in (as did Jo in *Little Women* due to publishing pressures), but Fortún makes sure to show her disappointment –unlike the stoicism enacted by the Sección Femenina. Celia has to adapt, but other characters, like Mila, take witness of her rebellion, which allows Fortún to keep a door open to disagreement.

The children born in the thirties, educated in the dictatorship under the indoctrination of the Catholic Church and the Sección Femenina, ignored the advances carried out by their immediate generation. The changes in gender roles that had begun in the twenties stopped, leaving a model of the post-war housewife, pleasant but with firm religiosity, imposed by the regime. The *novela rosa*, also tried to mould a generation of young women who should be ready to get married and to adapt to a submissive life as the carer of the family. Fortunately, a bunch of *chicas raras* had read Celia's stories when they were little. From the perspective of their young female voices, Laforet, Martín Gaité and Matute acknowledged Fortún as their literary inspiration and wrote stories about *chicas raras*, girls who were not comfortable with the feminine role expected from them, and who subverted traditional codes of female behaviour. As examined in Chapter 3, through their novels, these writers also portrayed different kinds of femininities to their readers.

Chapter 3. 1940-1950s: The Rebel Girl Becomes a *Chica Rara*

1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the influence of Elena Fortún's *Celia* on the next generation of women writers, specifically on the topic of the literary *chicas raras*. This chapter examines Spanish women writing in the 1940s and 1950s and its connections to *Celia* and the style and main themes used by Fortún. Under Franco's dictatorship, novels like *Nada* (1944) by Carmen Laforet, initiated a boom in novels featuring adolescents written by women. These stories of personal growth or *bildungsroman* show the stifling post-war Spanish context represented by an unstable family atmosphere. The characters' orphanhood and the authoritarian nature of their guardians created a sense of misunderstanding and loneliness that compelled them to run away from home in search of their own identity.

Having offered a preliminary approach to the work of Fortún and *Celia* in Chapter 2, the focus of this chapter is to demonstrate her influence on the mid-century novel, focusing on the production of women authors. *Celia*'s coming-of-age story links Fortún's oeuvre directly to the stories written by women who read *Celia* growing up and who survived the Spanish civil war. These *chicas raras*, which I explore, as reflected in the works of Laforet (1921-2004), Martín Gaité (1925-2000) and Matute (1925-2014), had a fundamental autobiographical weight, since as writers who cultivated the narrative of the girl, they also considered themselves 'weird' in the Spanish society of their time. The second part of the *Celia* series, in which the character undergoes a regression, overlapped with the appearance of a new generation of young female characters who had read the first stories.

Laforet, Martín Gaité and Matute read *Celia* in their childhood and acknowledged the decisive influence that Fortún had had on their literary careers.¹²⁴ Laforet would even show her admiration for Fortún at a personal level, sharing correspondance with her. Moreover, Martín Gaité wrote the prologue for the reprinted works of Fortún in the 1990s, vindicating the influential figure which Fortún represented in writers during the 1950s. In addition, she studied the figure of *Celia* and her author (2002, 2006) and was in charge of the screenplays

¹²⁴ Born between 1921 and 1925, Laforet, Martín Gaité and Matute were part of the first generations of *Celia*'s readers (Laforet was seven, the same age as *Celia* when she first appeared in *Gente Menuda* in 1928).

for the adaptation of *Celia* for television (1993).¹²⁵ Likewise, Matute, who admitted to becoming a writer after reading children's classics (mostly the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen), acknowledged Fortún as one of the few –if not the only- notable Spanish children's authors when she was a young reader (Vera 2014). Martín Gaité argues (“Arrojo y descalabros”),¹²⁶ that some male authors of the *generación de medio siglo*¹²⁷ like Jaime Gil de Biedma and Juan García Hortelano¹²⁸ recognized the impact that *Celia*'s reading had on their literary vocation. However, my research focuses on the *chicas raras*, particularly on the representation of girlhood –mostly portrayed as a protagonist by women writers. As analyzed in Chapter 2, the main themes in Fortún's writing are: The world of children vs. the world of adults; Education and pedagogical ideas; Feminism and the changing roles of women; Reality and fiction, intrahistory and autobiographical reflection; Social injustice through classism, racism, violence against animals; Mobility, both physical and symbolic or spiritual; Literary vocation.

The panoramic study of these themes in different works by Laforet, Martín Gaité and Matute enables to trace Fortún's influence on their literary vocation and writing. The works analyzed are: *Nada* (1944) and *La isla y los demonios* (1952), by Carmen Laforet; *Entre visillos* (1952) and *El cuarto de atrás* (1978), by Carmen Martín Gaité (1925-2000); and *Los Abel* (1948) and *Primera memoria* (1959), by Ana María Matute (1925-2014). These were the first novels published by Laforet, Martín Gaité (except *El cuarto*, as will be explained later in the chapter) and Matute, and they portray girl protagonists. This allows a closer approach to *Celia*'s influence on the writers' initial literary production (a more detailed rationale of this selection is provided in each section). The themes examined in Fortún's writing are divided into three blocks, illustrated through two novels by each author:

1. Family relations (childhood and education)
2. Social awareness (feminism, changing roles of women, social injustice, mobility)

¹²⁵ For studies on the adaptation of *Celia* for television, see Harvey (2011) and Vernon (2015).

¹²⁶ Returning to Martín Gaité's quote that in part motivates this thesis: “un estudio riguroso de la obra de Elena Fortún, a quien todos los escritores de los años cincuenta habíamos saboreado en la infancia, explicaría cuáles fueron los principios del llamado «realismo social» de la novela de medio siglo” (“Arrojo y descalabros” 101).

¹²⁷ The “generación del 50”, “del medio siglo” or “de los niños de la guerra” is a classification for writers and poets who experienced the Spanish Civil War as children. Martín Gaité, Laforet and Matute are part of it, along with writers and poets such as Dolores Medio (1911-1996), Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio (1927-2019), Ignacio Aldecoa (1925-1969) Jaime Gil de Biedma (1929-1990), Josefina Aldecoa (1926-2011) and Francisco Nieva (1924-2016), among others.

¹²⁸ “Tanto Gil de Biedma, como García Hortelano, como yo, hemos manifestado muchas veces nuestro entusiasmo por Elena Fortún, y confesamos que nos influyó. Yo quiero declararlo aquí en público, en mi nombre y en el de mis dos amigos desaparecidos” (101). The playwright Francisco Nieva also vindicated Fortún in his article: “Elena Fortún y Richmal Crompton” ABC June 3, 1990.

3. Literary vocation (reality and fiction, intrahistory and autobiography, literary vocation and style)

Fortún's influence is seen differently in these sections given the different circumstances of each of the authors comprised in this chapter. Thus, the works of Laforet are analysed in light of her correspondence with Fortún;¹²⁹ the works of Martín Gaité from the perspective of her studies on Fortún; and those of Matute through her identification with and defence of childhood, which undeniably link her to Fortún. As with Fortún, analysing the themes of family relations, social conscience and literary vocation, allows one to identify certain parallels between reality and fiction, considering the biographical circumstances of the authors.

Laforet was fifteen when the war broke out, and Martín Gaité and Matute were eleven. For this reason, the *Generación del 50* or *de medio siglo* is also known as “los niños de la guerra,” a term coined by Josefina Aldecoa in her eponymous book.¹³⁰ As Matute recognized after the Civil War: “El mundo cambió para nosotros de una manera brutal. Todo el mundo encerrado en el paréntesis que va desde la infancia a la adolescencia se había consumido en tres años de asombro y de descubrimiento demasiado brusco ... Conocimos la vida, la crueldad, el odio, la muerte y también algo tan importante como el amor y la amistad” (Gazarian-Gautier 72). As will be shown, the subject matter and point of view of the three authors' works is closely related to their experience of the Civil War as children, and their style also coincides in the way they avoided the censorship of the 1950s.

This group of women writers is not only the first of the post-war period, but it is also the first time in the history of Spanish literature that the talent of different female voices is rewarded at the same time in literary competitions, representing a great novelty.¹³¹ As seen in Chapter 1 and as Martín Gaité explains in *Desde la ventana* (1987), until then women writers had been the exception, isolated cases that seemed to confirm the rule that, as Pilar Primo de Rivera said: “Las mujeres nunca descubren nada. Les falta, desde luego, el talento creador reservado por Dios para inteligencias varoniles; nosotras no podemos hacer nada más que

¹²⁹ For studies on this correspondence, see Capdevila-Argüelles (2017), Martín Gutiérrez (2018) and Calceglia (2018).

¹³⁰ The pedagogue and writer Josefina Aldecoa (1926-2011), wrote *Los niños de la guerra* (1983) and *Historia de una maestra* (1990). Her approach to childhood and pedagogy through the influence of the *ILE* fits with that of Fortún.

¹³¹ An article in *El Correo Literario*, (1 July 1951) read: “Carmen Laforet, Elena Quiroga, Mercedes Formica, Eulalia Galvarriato, Elena Soriano, Ana María Matute, Rosa María Cajal. Resulta difícil componer por la banda masculina una lista así –juvenil, constante, insistente, persistente” (qtd. in Caballé and Rolón 487). As will be explained in the section devoted to Laforet, this represented a threat for some male writers.

interpretar mejor o peor lo que los hombres [nos dan] hecho” (qtd. in *Desde la ventana* 103).¹³²

Barely a year after this speech, Laforet's victory in the first edition of the Nadal Prize broke down the myth of women's creative inability and paved the way for recognition of the work of other women. The Nadal prize, organized by the literary magazine *Destino*, is the most representative prize of this new era and contributed to the success of the three authors: Laforet won it with *Nada* in 1944, Martín Gaité with *Entre visillos* in 1957, being Matute a finalist in 1947 with *Los Abel* and winner in 1959 with *Primera memoria*. The Nadal prize also meant a launching for other female writers: Elena Quiroga,¹³³ Dolores Medio and Luisa Forrellad. Never before in the history of Spanish literature had the talent of so many women been recognized at once, which, as will be discussed could be felt as a threat to some male writers.¹³⁴

¹³² Conference at the first council of the Servicio Español de Magisterio (S.E.M.), *ABC*, 6 February 1943 (7).

¹³³ Laforet recommended Quiroga's *Viento del Norte* (1950) to Fortún: “además es una mujer, y por eso me gustaría que tenga éxito” (Laforet and Fortún 67).

¹³⁴ In this regard, Ramón Buckley's *La doble transición* (1996) explains how women's writing anticipated the political transition from Franco's dictatorship into democracy in the 1970s. According to Buckley, Laforet, Matute, and some of Martín Gaité's works were written from a new point of view, challenging patriarchy. This change in style also affected Spain's transition into democracy and modernity.

2. *La chica rara*

As examined in Chapter 2 through the volumes of *Celia*, in clear regression from the social advances of the Second Republic, the state and the Catholic Church imposed a uniform femininity based on domesticity and motherhood. Carmen Martín Gaité coined the term *chica rara* in an essay with the same title in the collection *Desde la ventana* (1987). Analyzing Laforet's *Nada*, Martín Gaité describes the protagonist Andrea as “una chica ‘rara’, infrecuente”¹³⁵ (111) regarding the ultra-conservative vision of the ideal woman of the Franco regime at the end of the war in 1939. The term *chica rara* could be translated as ‘weird girl,’ ‘rare girl,’ ‘odd girl’ (O’Byrne 1990; Brown 2013), ‘strange girl’ (Mayock 2004; O’Leary and Ribeiro de Menezes 2008) or even ‘queer girl’ (Labanyi 2015), which shows the richness, nuances and ambiguity of the concept. I am sticking to the original version in Spanish to acknowledge this complexity.

In contrast to the usual *novela rosa* stereotype, Andrea represented a “paradigma de mujer, que de una manera o de otra pone en cuestión la normalidad de la conducta amorosa y doméstica que la sociedad mandaba acatar, va a verse repetido con algunas variantes en otros textos de mujeres” (“La chica rara” 111). Just as *Celia* continually questions the normality defended by adults, Andrea's oddness lies in her discomfort and rejection of the female roles in which she is supposed to fit. The questioning of the norm of the first *Celia* and of the *chicas raras* is the starting point for this chapter, which establishes the links between the character of Fortún and several protagonists of the post-war novel.¹³⁶

Through these characters, the common features are revealed that allow them to identify with the model of the *chica rara* and whose marginality turns them into critical instruments that defy the oppressive environment of Franco's Spain for women. The 'strangeness' of the protagonists is established in relation to the 'normality' of the society in which they live, which, among other things, relegates them to the domestic space. In the overwhelming interior spaces, the family is the oppressive nucleus whose function is to guarantee the compliance of order.

¹³⁵ As explained in the Introduction to this thesis.

¹³⁶ I am using the term “postwar” novels following Elizabeth Ordóñez's (1991) “tripartite structure,” which proposes the following periodization: post-War (nineteen-sixties), transition (nineteen-seventies) and post-Franco (nineteen-eighties) (27). The novels in this project are narratives of the postwar period (1939-1975) with the only exception of Martín Gaité's *El cuarto de atrás* (1978). This novel is by all means a transition work that reflects back to what life was like for an adolescent during Franco's dictatorship and provides information about Martín Gaité as a *chica rara* herself in a context of social oppression, which works both as a novel to analyze and as a framework through which to explore the rest of the works.

Consequently, the exterior spaces, the streets, represent the desired freedom where to find independence and to move away from the focus of patriarchal submission.

Through these elements, examined from Celia's perspective in the previous chapter, this chapter proves the link between the *chicas raras* and Fortún's character. If, as it has been argued, *Celia's* series can be considered a *bildungsroman*, the works of the *chicas raras* also continue with this structure of the coming of age novels. Moreover, like Celia, by being female teenagers the main characters face a double marginalization. They are teenagers, girls whose strangeness begins to manifest itself with respect to the prevailing models and ideals of their society. The *chicas raras* present common features that will be explored before the analysis of the novels. These are: adolescence, orphanhood, their estrangement from the protagonists from the *novelas rosa*, the confinement to indoor spaces and the violent family relations they grow up in, the autobiographical component of the novels, and the strategy of using such an odd character in order to deal with censorship.

2.1 Adolescence

The post-war writers gave primary importance to adolescence as a stage in the formation of their female characters.¹³⁷ Laforet, Martín Gaité and Matute used the double marginalization (being children and women) of the permanent minority resource that Fortún had already used to present their novels from an alternative and novel point of view. As will be shown in the section on censorship, this could play in their favour. The age of the *chicas raras* analysed in this chapter ranges from Matia and Valba's fourteen, Marta and Natalia are sixteen and Andrea is eighteen, which connects them with the second Celia (who turns fourteen when she becomes a *madrecita*).¹³⁸

By leaving (more abruptly than progressively) the regulated stage of childhood, the characters face a transition to adult life. The confusion and uncertainty of forming their identity is linked to feelings of frustration and rebellion. Family, friendships and childhood experiences are very much involved in this process of building an identity. Faced with a lack

¹³⁷ It is important to remember that some writers had already used this type of character during the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. In some works by Pardo Bazán (*La madre naturaleza*, 1887) and Mercè Rodoreda (*Aloma*, 1938) young women appear who prioritise their education and vocation to the forced fate of marriage. This is a new model of a character in transition from childhood to adulthood, whose sensitivity forces her into solitude. In accordance with the social advances of the Second Republic, the protagonist rebels within her possibilities against a context that considers her inferior and oppresses her.

¹³⁸ After *Nada* (1944), novels by the previous generation whose main characters were teenagers continued to appear, such as *Memorias de Leticia Valle* (1945) by Rosa Chacel or *La plaza del diamant* (1962) by Rodoreda, whom Martín Gaité considered “una de las mejores escritoras de la península ibérica” (*Desde la ventana* 117).

of role models to admire and imitate, the *chicas raras* are forced to create their journey as they go through it, to find out at the same time who they are and who they want to be. The traumatic context in which they grow up exerts greater pressure to know themselves, but is at the same time a great impetus for that growth and search for identity.

The authors of the *chicas raras* were also marked by the hunger and desolation of the post-war period. In *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* (1987), Martín Gaité explains how austerity was installed in all areas of daily life, so that “Lo más importante era el ahorro ... : guardarlo todo, no desperdiciar, no exhibir, no gastar saliva en protestas ni críticas baldías, reservarse, tragar” (13). “Tragar” is as much a part of the resilient strategy of the *chicas raras* as it was of Celia's, and they can do it only because they have their sights set on a liberating future and do not waste energy trying to change the repression in the home. For her part, Matute recalls that “La posguerra fue algo peor que la guerra misma ... Cayó un telón de mediocridad siniestra, donde todo era gris, amorfo, sin luz ni color; una vida nueva en la que no pasaba nada” (81). That “nada” of blackouts and food shortages that Laforet portrayed in her novel and unwittingly became a mirror of a generation.

As post-war survivors in their teens, the writers project their own experience in their novels, reflecting on their own transition to adult life in such conditions. For this reason, as Antonio Vilanova analyses in *Novela y sociedad en la España de posguerra* (1995), the authors pay special attention to the environmental and family factors as determinant of the feelings and behaviour of the characters (175). Authors and characters are unable to accept the new established order, becoming non-conformist adolescents and adults who use writing to find an answer to the abrupt end of their childhood, or to the “pérdida del paraíso” (Díaz 33) that the war meant for them.¹³⁹

2.2 Orphanhood

As explained in the previous chapter, Franco's ideology returned women to their domestic confinement and to their role as self-sacrificing mothers and wives whose mission was to transmit the national ideals and traditional values that their sons and daughters were to embody and pass on to the next generation. However, through the orphanhood of their characters, the women writers studied in this chapter refused to collaborate with the prevailing ideology. By creating motherless characters, Laforet, Martín Gaité and Matute refused to give

¹³⁹ Also referred to the loss of the social advances of the Second Republic, which had exposed them to unprecedented freedom.

women that role which the state, the church, and society itself force them to accept. The absence of the mother frees the protagonists from a limiting model of what it means to be a woman, since the transmission of those values advocated by the regime is broken.

The fact that the *chicas raras* do not have mothers allows them to idealise them rather than remember them, which contributes to a proper understanding of what it means to be a woman. The death of the mother allows Marta to leave *La isla* without remorse, idealizing a relationship in which she would be understood and encouraged to seek her path. The death of Valba's mother in *Los Abel*, on the other hand, prevents her from collaborating in the transmission of a limiting model for her, which forces her to obey and educate in submission also to her younger sister, “la pequeña” Olivia. As Capdevila-Argüelles (2008) observes, orphanhood is a common trait in the *chicas raras*, which justifies the lack of identification with their mothers, as it had happened to Celia (125-126).

However, the absence of mothers does not break the chain of transmission of traditional and oppressive values, as other family members feel responsible for the education of the *chicas raras* by imposing values that guarantee the family's good reputation. The end of the war brought women back to the starting line in terms of rights and education, making this request necessary again. Women (now silently) demanded what the feminist Pardo Bazán had maintained at the end of the 19th century: that education “is the only method for liberating women from subordination to male authority figures, since at present a woman's existence does not revolve around her own life but rather her husband's and her children's ... Only education can teach women to reorient the axis of their life to achieve ‘la dignidad y felicidad propia’” (Bieder 164). Aunts, grandmothers and even sisters-in-law are determined to ‘tame’ *chicas raras* who will not accept the fate they try to impose on them. As much as they cannot actively oppose it, these characters find ways not to conform to social norms and always have their sights set on a future that suits them and the steps they have to take to achieve it.

2.3 *Anti-novelas rosa*

The *chicas raras* are confronted with the female models and ideals imposed by Franco's ideology and highlighted in the *novela rosa* (romance novel). Carmen de Icaza (1899-1979), who participated in the Sección Femenina de Falange and the Dirección General de

Propaganda during the dictatorship, was one of the most popular writers of the genre.¹⁴⁰ The protagonists of her novels were the *chicas casaderas* conceived by the regime, whose duty was to perfect their housewives' skills to fulfill their destiny: getting married. As shown in the first chapter, if the picaresque novel was a reaction to the romance novel (Riley 21), the *chicas raras* are to the *novela rosa*, as they are “en abierta ruptura con el comportamiento femenino habitual en otras novelas anteriores escritas por mujeres” (“La chica rara” 111).¹⁴¹

Since the publication of *Nada*, “las nuevas protagonistas de la novela femenina, capitaneadas por el ejemplo de Andrea, se atreverán a desafinar, a instalarse en la marginación y a pensar desde ella; van a ser conscientes de su excepcionalidad, viviéndola con una mezcla de impotencia y orgullo” (“La chica rara” 112). As opposed to the heroine of the romance novel, the *chica rara* is a solitary, rebellious, independent and sensitive adolescent who lives in a hostile environment characterised by hypocrisy and injustice and who, as she grows up, is definitively confronted with the cruel reality of adults. The character therefore breaks with the traditional model of woman and proposes a new type of female identity that defies the limits imposed on her.

The *chica rara*'s insubordination poses a threat to the system and confuses her family, who want to maintain control over her. The challenging of the rules is seen physically in the general disinterest of the protagonists in their physical appearance, perhaps also exacerbated by the lack of the mother. Her unkempt hair or disinterest in fashion challenges the official way a young woman has to present herself to society. This supposed neglect in turn represents her lack of interest in marriage, which is supposedly the main objective of a girl of her age as well as her well-groomed appearance. This lack of interest in marriage translates, in principle, in a lack of interest in romantic relationships with their male counterparts. This can be read as gender ambiguity (especially in the case of Andrea and her fascination for her girlfriend Ena). However, the *chicas raras* reject the company of other girls their age (*chicas casaderas*) because of their different interests and goals in life. Despite their initial rejection to romantic relationships, the six protagonists will embark in relationships with older and younger male lovers as part of their coming of age.

The scarce scope of action of the *chicas raras* is reflected in the impotence with which they observe a reality that confines them to the domestic and of which they do not want to be a

¹⁴⁰ Some of her most popular novels were *Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas* (1936), *La fuente enterrada* (1947) and *Yo, la Reina* (1950). Moreover, Corín Tellado (1927-2009) is considered the most read Spanish author after Cervantes.

¹⁴¹ Ochoa (2006) reflects about the ‘anti-novela rosa’ (124), making an interesting distinction between romance novel heroines and the *chicas raras* as anti-heroines.

part: “Laforet ha delegado en Andrea para que mire y cuente lo que sucede a su alrededor, en que no la ha ideado como protagonista de novela a quien van a sucederle cosas, como sería de esperar, sino que la ha imbuido de las dotes de testigo” (“La chica rara” 105). Natalia, too, in *Entre visillos*, watches helplessly as her friend Gertru becomes a *chica casadera* from a *novela rosa*, obsessed with her new domestic life. The writers' subversion in creating characters that transgress these models is to make them masters of urban space.

2.4 Confinement and family dynamics

Paradoxically, the refuge of the *chicas raras* is the outside, the streets, since “no aguantan el encierro ni las ataduras al bloque familiar que las impide lanzarse a la calle. La tentación de la calle no surge identificada con la búsqueda de una aventura apasionante, sino bajo la noción de cobijo, de recinto liberador” (“La chica rara” 113). If, for Celia, leaving home (or school) could mean disguising her need to get rid of so much adult imposition as an adventure; for the *chicas raras*, family, home and repression are synonymous with characters who, consequently, “Quieren largarse a la calle, simplemente, para respirar, para tomar distancia con lo de dentro mirándolo desde fuera, en una palabra, para dar un quiebro a su punto de vista y ampliarlo” (113). That is why walking the streets is their favourite pastime and the journey is part of the story of Andrea, Marta or Natalia, who open up new stages boarding trains, cars or boats.

At a time when, if they wanted to travel, women had to do so with the permission of their fathers or husbands, moving around meant challenging the patriarchy. In the same way, wandering alone in the streets of the city is a challenge to the established order, feeding on what people will say. However, as Ochoa (2006) observes, “The Franco regime neglected ... that the home can be a site of female transgression” (4). From a young age, the protagonists try to find a private space for themselves within the home in which they can read, write, or look through the window. It is the case of the *logia*, for Matia or the library for Marta and Natalia.

Andrea, on the other hand, realizes that she will never be able to have a room of her own with the privacy she desires. Even after inheriting her aunt Angustias' room, the rest of the family uses it to store things or talk on the phone. However, the search for solitude and the act of writing her own thoughts in a diary are actions of female transgression, of the search and recognition of her individuality. This behavior challenges an imposed model of womanhood that does not question her roles or her nature.

2.5 Autobiographical elements

The search for identity connects the adolescent protagonists with their authors, who also reflect on their past through writing. Just as in Fortún we found motivation to write from the point of view of a girl who can expose equality issues that concerned the author and her feminism, the authors of the *chicas raras* considered themselves *raras*. Through the reading of the novels and the consideration of the writers' biographies, there is an identification of the processes of searching for the authors and their characters, which try to define themselves. The anxiety to find their vocation, to know who they are and who they are meant to be, sometimes becomes an endless path of self-discovery as the correspondence between Laforet and Fortún (2017) will show.

In their letters, both Laforet and Fortún speak of the need to prune oneself (“podarse”), to listen to oneself and to reserve energies for creation. Marta Camino is the prophetic name that Laforet gives to the protagonist of *La isla y los demonios*, who creates her own escape route where there was not one before. In a similar way, Valba, from *Los Abel*, listens to herself and respects the limits of what she wants and what she does not want in her life. Although her inner voice sometimes contradicts itself, the important lesson for the character is that there is something in her that knows what she can do and where she belongs (and especially where she does not). The coming of age story of the protagonists is sometimes based on aspects of their writers' lives, hence the analysis of the works will be accompanied with excerpts from interviews and letters that illustrate this relationship. Margaret Jones (1970) considers the coincidence between certain biographical aspects of the authors and their works a characteristic of this generation: “Una ojeada a su obra colectiva revela las semejanzas que podrán considerarse como las bases de una obra generacional. Tienen en común la tendencia a la autobiografía trasladada a la experiencia novelística y refinada por el arte” (“Del compromiso” 125). The situations in which the protagonists live are based on environments or thoughts common to the experience of their authors, which were also considered *raras* in the context in which they grew up.

First-person narration is also an important common feature that links them to *Celia's* stories, told from her perspective as an unruly child. This type of narration (through the diary in *Entre visillos*, or as a reflection of the experiences of adolescence in the other novels analysed in this chapter) also favours the exploration of the authors' own experience and the inclusion of some easily traceable episodes and characters in their biographies. It is not surprising, then, that the protagonists also practice writing as a method of reflection and self-

exploration. Writing is part of the path they take towards maturity, especially in traumatic situations. The mark of the war and post-war that the authors lived, part of “los niños de la guerra,” also marks the lives of their characters.

The particularity of the *chicas raras* within their generation is that, in addition to misery and hunger, the post-war period also brought a drastic change in their status as women, imposing a model dedicated exclusively to marriage and motherhood. In this sense, Laforet, Martín Gaité and Matute contribute to "a dismantling of a totalitarian past by writing in a first person female voice to break with their role in history as defined by Franco" (Ochoa 5). Their writing habit and their desire to explore, to leave the house, unite them with Celia and with the investigation of her identity. First-person writing adds a testimonial quality that brings them closer to their readers, just as Celia connected with them. The characters themselves seem to entrust a secret to the readers, far from the third-person narrator that dominated the *novela rosa*.

2.6 Dealing with censorship

One of the other challenges faced by the post-war writers was the censorship imposed by the regime, which sought to eliminate any hint of rebellion against the established system, as well as possible criticism of the Catholic religion or suspicious moral behaviour. Matute herself said that creative freedom during the post-war period “Era una farsa. La censura era temible a todos los niveles, todo estaba prohibido” (Gazarian-Gautier 81). The novels included in this chapter expose the hypocrisy of society while managing to avoid criticism from censors. As examined in previous chapters, the use of a character who does not seem to belong to society has been traditionally used as a technique to avoid censorship. The protagonists’ non-conformity with the ideology of a regime that could not be questioned allowed the *chicas raras* to be considered by censors as a model that readers would not want to emulate, hence it did not need to be censored. From this point of view, as explored in Chapter 1 in the context of using the voice of children vs adults, abnormality (*chicas raras*) accentuates normality (the roles imposed by the Sección Femenina).¹⁴²

In the words of Patricia O’Byrne (1990): “La *chica rara* is how Martín Gaité refers to the non-conforming young heroines and it was through an emphasis on the “oddness” and unrepresentativeness that they achieved certain immunity from the censor” (205). Their youth

¹⁴² Raquel Osborne’s *Mujeres bajo sospecha. Memoria y sexualidad, 1930-1980* (2012) examines not normalized female sexualities in the context of the Sección Femenina under Francoism.

works as an attenuator of their confrontation with traditional values that makes their rebelliousness seem less aggressive. Just as Fortún used a girl as a parapet to question the status quo, in the post-war period the adolescent becomes “un instrumento narrativo eficaz para sacar a la luz actitudes transgresoras que hubieran sido innombrables de otra manera” (Galdona 200).¹⁴³

The following sections of this chapter exemplify the characteristics of the *chicas raras* through the protagonists by Laforet, Martín Gaité and Matute. Traits such as orphanhood, imposed confinement, their rebellion or insubordination to what is established, their vocation to read and write and their determination to continue their studies, the construction of their identity, relate them directly to Celia. In addition, the examples of each author will be illustrated with their reflections on the importance of Fortún's writing in their vocation and works.

¹⁴³ For a thorough contextualization of censorship during Francoism, see Lucía Montejo Gurruchaga's *Discurso de autora: género y censura en la narrativa española de posguerra* (2010).

3. Carmen Laforet (1921-2004)

This section shows the relationship between Carmen Laforet's work and that of Fortún through two of Laforet's novels: *Nada* (1944) y *La isla y los demonios* (1952). The characteristics of the *chicas raras* exposed in the first section of this chapter are analyzed in the two protagonists of the novels: Andrea and Marta and are compared with those of Celia, analyzed in Chapter 2. The analysis is divided into the three areas in the evolution of Celia's character: Family relationships, social awareness and literary vocation. Born in 1921, Laforet is part of the first generation of *Celia*'s readers. When Celia appears in *Gente Menuda* in 1928, Laforet is the same age as the character, seven years old.

Laforet read *Celia* in her childhood and acknowledged the decisive impact Fortún had on her writing. Laforet could even show her admiration for Fortún at a personal level, sharing correspondence with her. The correspondence between Laforet and Fortún is used to demonstrate the thesis that Fortún's contribution has been fundamental to Spanish narrative in the 20th century, especially women's writing. After receiving the Nadal prize for *Nada*, Laforet wrote a letter to Fortún to share the award with her since she had learned how to write by reading *Celia*, to which Fortún reacted with pride and surprise and expressed her admiration for her: "su divina humildad diciendo (¡justed que es en estos momentos la primera escritora española!) que aprendió a escribir de mí... me conmueve hasta los huesos. Y no por ser yo quien escribió esos libros que usted leía cuando era chica, sino por esa pureza del alma que le hace decirlo" (Laforet and Fortún 29). I analyse Laforet's novels in light of their correspondence (*De corazón y alma*), which provides a framework to examine the influence of Fortún in Laforet's writing. More broadly, their relationship of mutual admiration provides evidence of the trace of Fortún's children's books in the history of Spanish Literature.

Laforet burst into the panorama of Spanish literature in 1944 by winning the first edition of the Nadal prize. Her victory was no stranger to controversy, since one of the male finalists, García Ruano took great offense in losing before an unknown young woman:

Debemos estar entrando en la era gloriosa de las féminas que escriben. ¿Y escribe tan gloriosamente esa jovencita para que su obra prevalezca sobre la de autores consagrados, que llevan años rompiéndose los cuernos para escribir libros, que tienen los artículos por millares, con la audiencia de centenares de lectores? Díganme: ¿la obra premiada merece el bofetón público que acaban de darme? (Agustí 176)

Ignacio Agustí, founder of *Destino* magazine and jury member for the award, confessed that his friend's disappointment made him doubt the wisdom of his vote. This is how he explains it in *Ganas de hablar* (1974): “tuve que pensar y sopesar realmente el valor de las dos obras. Tuve que ponerme a pensar que, a mi juicio, la novela de Ruano no solamente no era mejor que la de Carmen Laforet, sino que tampoco superaba a la de Barbeito ni a otras. Respiré hondo, hice acopio de fuerzas y me dispuse a contraatacar” (177).

Two clear ideas emerge from this controversy: first, the threat that the emergence of a generation of women writers posed to certain male authors, and with it, the potential offense of being measured against them (and, above all, losing). Secondly, Agustí's explanation reveals the concern that a male member of a jury could feel about the possibility of offending a male writer and colleague, for which he would have to make sure his opinions were justified in a much more precise way, establishing a double standard in the consideration of the work of male versus female writers. These reactions are not surprising taking in consideration that, as seen in previous chapters, cultural tradition (and the Sección Femenina at that point) insisted that women were not good at creating (but at procreating). This socially accepted idea made losing against a young woman a public humiliation.¹⁴⁴ It was one thing for women to write, another thing for them to win prizes.

In her winning novel *Nada* (1944), Laforet presents the first post-war *chica rara*, Andrea, an eighteen-year-old girl who travels to Barcelona to study at university. The protagonist speaks in the first person about a year of her life in Barcelona, until she leaves again, this time to Madrid. Leaving (or fleeing) to the capital is also the aim of Marta, protagonist of *La isla y los demonios* (1952), a sixteen-year-old who suffers with her particular confinement in Gran Canaria. I explore these characters as a continuation of Fortún's use of the girl as a marginal character and through the topics that characterised Fortún's writing.

In *Nada*, Andrea is introduced arriving by train to Barcelona, where no one is waiting for her. This sense of loneliness and adventure is reflected at the beginning of the novel: “Era la primera vez que viajaba sola, pero no estaba asustada; por el contrario, me parecía una aventura agradable y excitante aquella profunda libertad en la noche” (13). Living her girlhood in a post-conflict scenario, the character is marked by marginalization and violence. However, she questions the normality of domestic conduct and constructs strong responses

¹⁴⁴ This offense is reminiscent to that of Feijóo in Chapter 1: “defender a todas las mujeres, viene a ser lo mismo que ofender a casi todos los hombres” (Feijóo).

through her non-conformist behavior, challenging both the expectations that society has of her, and the rules of the dominant *novela rosa*. In *La isla y los demonios* it is Marta Camino who waits in the port of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria for the ship in which some relatives arrive as war refugees. The beginning of the novel is irremediably reminiscent of the beginning of *Celia institutriz*, arriving with her family to Buenos Aires in a boat, only this time it is the teenager who receives their relatives on land. The enthusiasm of Celia and Cuchifritín on their arrival contrasts with the fatigue of the Camino siblings arriving in the Canary Islands.

Marta lives with her stepbrother José and his wife, Pino, far from Las Palmas. Connecting with the romantic belief that the countryside is healing, Marta's family moved there permanently when her mother, Teresa, went mad as a result of the trauma of seeing her husband die in an accident. The arrival of some relatives from the peninsula brings new excitement to Marta, who wishes they will change the miserable atmosphere of the family home. Marta's aunt and uncle, Honesta and Daniel Camino, arrive with the poet Matilde, and the artist Pablo, who Marta hopes will provide her with intellectual and artistic stimulus. The family's visit, but above all the influence of Pablo, and the prospect of a future as suffocating as her present awaken Marta's yearning for freedom, who wants to go study in Madrid and leave the island on which she feels imprisoned.

Instead of perceiving *Nada* and *La isla* exclusively as post-war novels, I suggest that they share many of the aspects that defined Fortún's pre-war literature such as the use of a marginalized character, the sense of isolation, and the distance from the adult universe. Focusing on Laforet's first two novels: *Nada* (1944) and *La isla y los demonios* (1952), I put forward the notion that pre-war and post-war feminine literature in Spain using child characters as sincere marginal subjects reflects literary continuity, instead of an abrupt change. Moreover, Patricia Molins (2012) considers Andrea as a continuation of Celia, whose stories offered a *bildungsroman* of the modern woman, trapped between her will for independence and the restrictive familiar circumstances (86).

3.1 Family relations

The vicissitudes of the *chicas raras* are framed within the family dynamics of authority and lack of communication. Although the first lines of *Nada* reflect the enthusiasm for her arrival in Barcelona, Andrea's excitement about the future represented by her new

stage in Barcelona fades as soon as the door of the house on Aribau street opens: “Luego me pareció todo una pesadilla” (15). The hopes and expectations that led Andrea to Barcelona collide on her arrival to an old, ramshackle house inhabited by spectral creatures. From the first moment in the hall she feels the hunger, the cold and the humidity that condition life in the flat, full of aggression, shouts, slams, insults, fights and an imposed silence.

Upon her greeting, Andrea observes that: “En toda aquella escena había algo angustioso, y en el piso un calor sofocante como si el aire estuviera estancado y podrido. Al levantar los ojos vi que habían aparecido varias mujeres fantasmales” (16). These women were her grandmother, the maid, her aunt Gloria and the “autoritaria” (18) tía Angustias, who will feel responsible for the newcomer adapting to her norms. “Sentí que me ahogaba (...) Tenía miedo de meterme en aquella cama parecida a un ataúd” (20). So quickly Andrea’s feeling of freedom and great expectations becomes one of suffocation.

Coming from a small town, Barcelona was “la ciudad que a mí se me antojaba como palanca de mi vida” (23), a real starting point. However, she will have to face the authority of Tía Angustias, who takes it upon herself to “moldearte en la obediencia” (20), like the taming of the shrew that has been shown in the Celia series. Without letting Andrea speak, Angustias warns her that “La ciudad, hija mía, es un infierno (...) Te lo diré de otra forma: eres mi sobrina; por lo tanto una niña de buena familia, modosa, cristiana e inocente. Si yo no me ocupara de ti para todo, tú en Barcelona encontrarías multitud de peligros. Por lo tanto, quiero decirte que no te dejaré dar un paso sin mi permiso. ¿Entiendes ahora?” (26-27).

Andrea's orphanhood plays a fundamental role in her relationship with her family, but above all with Angustias, who calls herself Andrea’s guardian. She allows her to study, but “Letras, ¿eh?” (28), nothing that could threaten her reputation by being perceived as too independent of a young woman. In her first talk, Angustias also took the opportunity to put Andrea in a position with respect to family members, and to criticize Gloria, her uncle Juan's wife. To Andrea, used to keeping quiet, “... mi tía fue muy antipática. Creo que pensé que tal vez no me iba a resultar desagradable disgustarla un poco, y la empecé a observar de reojo. ... ella continuaba su monólogo de órdenes y consejos ...” (28). Later, Andrea will recognize that after their first conversation “supe que nunca íbamos a entendernos,” (61) because the conversations with Angustias were not such, but monologues loaded with prejudices and with a biased way of understanding the world and acting in it. Those of an adult woman versus that of an adolescent. This kind of abuse of power is reminiscent of Celia, in whose books grownups are right simply because they are older and do not listen to young people. Andrea and Celia are presented in a first narrative voice to be that of their authors taking sides

between adults and children or adolescents and referring to the silence always demanded of the latter.

Faced with the continuous imposition of an appropriate behaviour, Andrea's rebellion consists in adopting an apparent passivity, not protesting but neither actively participating in what is entrusted to her: “Yo no concebía entonces más resistencia que la pasiva. Cogida de su brazo, corría las calles, que me parecían menos brillantes y menos fascinadoras de lo que yo había imaginado” (34). The streets seem to lose their shine, but Andrea is still finding her place, from which she has no way of escaping. However, this was not the first time she had to find her way out of the authority of others. Before Barcelona, she had already defied the rules by smoking, even if she didn't like it: “En el pueblo lo hacía expresamente para molestar a Isabel, sin ningún otro motivo. Para escandalizarla, para que me dejara venir a Barcelona, por imposible” (41).

This passive resistance in the form of small defiances is the way in which the *chicas raras* confronted the context in which they were trapped. The silence regarding the immediate past of the civil war confined them in a place they neither understand nor want to abide by. The resignation to perform a passive role is not part of their plans and they rebel within their possibilities against the moulds of behaviour imposed on them by their relatives. Although, as Ochoa states, “The *chica rara* shows no interest in courtship and prefers solitude over socialization,” (2) the unbearable suffocation of the family environment makes Andrea find some comfort and enjoyment in her university friendships: “Por primera vez en mi vida me encontré siendo expansiva y anudando amistades. ... Sólo aquellos seres de mi misma generación y de mis mismos gustos podían respaldarme y ampararme contra el mundo un poco fantasmal de las personas maduras. Y verdaderamente, creo que yo en aquel tiempo necesitaba este apoyo” (61). Andrea's inability to communicate in her immediate environment makes her socialize with her peers, although this does not take away from the fact that she is the *rara* within the group, as her peers Pons and Ena recognize at different moments.

Andrea's reflection on her friendships can be interpreted as the manifesto of a new generation that wanted to separate themselves from the fear and silence in which adults remained trapped. This fear translates into abusive, overwhelmingly violent relationships like the one between Juan and Gloria. Andrea recalls murder threats and reproaches, “Todo esto estaba sembrado de palabrotas que recuerdo bien, pero ¿para qué las voy a repetir?” (182). This way of not being explicit with the swear words can be a strategy of Laforet to avoid censorship without sacrificing the effect of verbal abuse on the protagonist.

The abuse of authority by adults also affects the family dynamic in which Marta Camino, protagonist of *La isla y los demonios* (1952),¹⁴⁵ grows up. As a teenager, silence is part of her life and not even when her relatives arrive on the island does she have the opportunity to share ideas with them “porque nadie la escuchaba” (24). Like Tía Angustias for Andrea, her stepbrother José is the greatest obstacle to Marta's freedom, whom she describes as “muy autoritario y soberbio” (44). Both protagonists are also united by orphanhood, which, as we shall see, can function as a disadvantage and as a liberating element depending on the occasion.

Enthused by the presence of Matilde, a renowned poet, Marta tries to share some of the texts she writes with her. However, Matilde does not pay the slightest attention to her and criticizes her egocentrism, accusing her that “Muchos de mis mejores amigos han muerto, otros están pasando hambre, otros abocados al destierro. ¿Quieres que me extasíe delante de una adolescencia llena de problemas falsos y literarios? Me repugna. Nunca piensas en la guerra ¿verdad?” (70). Matilde recriminates Marta's lack of commitment and participation, which seems unfair especially when we know from her conversation with Chano, the gardener, that Marta would go to war “si fuera un hombre..., y si no hubiera que matar a nadie...” (51).

As naive as some of Marta's ideas may seem, the recrimination of an active commitment to war on the Peninsula seems unfair to a sixteen-year-old adolescent who is never listened to or taken seriously anyway. Precisely because of this, there is a tension between what Marta says or thinks she would do in certain situations and what she is actually capable of doing. Sometimes knowing that she is not allowed to speak or do something on her own may be reason enough for her not to be able to reply when she is verbally abused or not to take action and leave.¹⁴⁶

However, the abuse is not always verbal, but also physical, in a violent environment such as the house in which her own mother is locked up. On one occasion when Marta dares to respond, defending her place in the family, José:

le soltó una palabrota, y luego dos bofetones sonoros. Le dejó los dedos marcados en las mejillas. Marta quedó quieta... Vio que la vieja Vicenta, ordinaria y obtusa, se

¹⁴⁵ *La isla* actually works as a previous stage of Laforet in the Canary Islands. Born in Barcelona, the family moved due to the father's job. At the age of thirteen her mother died. Similarly to *Celia madrechita*, “la infancia de Carmen, objetivamente, cinco días después de cumplir los trece años, ha terminado” (Agustín Cerezales 12).

¹⁴⁶ *La isla* is the only one of the six novels analysed that is written in the third person, which distances the protagonist a little more from her readers. Laforet explained it to Fortún: “En realidad es de técnica totalmente contraria a *Nada*, en donde una persona joven se convierte en una voz que cuenta lo que ve. Esta se escribe en tercera persona. Quisiera que el protagonista verdadero de la novela fuera la la isla de Gran Canaria” (41).

paraba un momento para ver su humillación, pero que Matilde no se volvía. En aquellos segundos de pesadilla, notó que en un extremo del comedor, Daniel y Honesta se hacían los disimulados. A nadie le importaba que la castigaran. (73)

For Marta, defending herself against being ignored has no result other than verbal and physical abuse, and the humiliating confirmation by the silence of others that the punishment is well deserved - even if those who remain silent are the same who reproach her for her inactivity. This scene is also reminiscent of the concept of *patria potestas* explored in Chapter 1, by which the *pater familias* has all rights over his family. Being José and Tía Angustias responsible for Marta and Andrea's reputations, they are entitled to punish them without being questioned or censured by anybody. Not being their fathers, José and Tía Angustias are their guardians and represent the patriarchy under which society is ruled.

Towards the end of the novel, another argument ends up in a violent fight, in which Pino encourages José to end Marta's defiance: "¡No eres hombre si no la matas!" (174) which leads to "José perdió la cabeza y empezó a cruzarle la cara a bofetones" (174). Again, physical punishment is not only allowed but even encouraged by the wife of the *pater familias* until deadly consequences. This scene shows the hypocrisy of the freedom and the abuse men could inflict without being questioned or punished. Having been unfaithful to Pino, José does not receive external judgment or punishment, while Marta is bludgeoned just for the rumour that she is dating someone her age.

While for Celia the death of her mother was the element that impeded her independence, making her the mother of her sisters and an indispensable female figure in the family, the death of Marta's mother is presented as a liberation from the guilt of leaving the island and her sick mother. Assessing the options of running away from home, Marta thinks to herself:

Es como si estuviera muerta. Nunca estuviste con ella. Nunca te necesitó... Ni la necesitaste desde que dejó de estar en tu vida. ¿Te habría entendido alguna vez?... Ella era una mujer feliz en su casa. Le gustaban sus pequeñas joyas, sus cositas, como dice la majorera. No leía, no soñaba con otros mundos y no era histérica ni desgraciada como Pino. Sin embargo... ¿Te hubiera detenido de poder hacerlo?... Desde que creciste pensaste, más que en ella, en tu padre, que te dejó un cajón lleno de libros en el desván. La vas a dejar para siempre. Mírala. (195)

Marta's sick mother could not ask her not to go, but it is unlikely that she would have encouraged Marta to leave that domestic life she had enjoyed (without reading or dreaming of other worlds). "Marta no era nadie, no se sentía atada a nadie, y eso le daba fuerza," (196)

after all, her mother had been absent due to senility more than if she had died, for Marta did not retain an idealised image of her mother. Moreover, unlike Celia, she was not responsible for younger members of the family, so she would not leave anyone behind. As Laforet expressed to Fortún: “debajo de toda la tristeza hay una especie de limpieza espiritual que a un[a] le da seguridad en sí misma” (105).

As Ellen Mayock (1996) observes, *Nada* presents the civil war through family conflict, “Las descripciones físicas de la casa de Aribau la establece como un microcosmos de la España fascista de la posguerra; el hambre constante [...] y el deseo de control por parte de unos personajes y de libertad de este control opresor por parte de otros” (32). Moreover, *La isla y los demonios* could be read under the same lens, since Marta and Andrea are both collateral victims of the adult disputes and more broadly, of national political conflict. In both novels, the house and the family are but a symbolic representation of a major problem: that of the oppression of women in post-war Spanish society. This is more difficult to escape than a family or a specific geographical situation, which is why Andrea's instinct was not mistaken in considering Barcelona as a lever in her life, which ends up taking her to Madrid. For both Andrea and Marta, the trip to the capital opens the door to a future in which they will have family freedom, and which represents the hope of an escape from oppression.

Andrea and Marta are sensitive, observant critics of their surroundings eager for freedom. Their growth is marked by disenchantment with what it means to be an adult, entering a world that differs markedly from the freedom they crave. The beginnings of the two novels, marked by the illusion of a new beginning, will lead to the disappointment of the replacement of one repressive environment by another. However, thanks to their passive resistance, Andrea and Marta transcend the disenchantment of their adolescent experience and find an alternative way out of the fate that seems to be reserved for them.

3.2 Social awareness

As a *chica rara*, Andrea's femininity is far from the prevailing model of the time. This mismatch is shown, for example, in her lack of interest in fashion and her emotional detachment and lack of collaboration with Juan and Gloria's son. Andrea only feels ashamed of her attire when she feels out of place, with clothes that reveal her lack of money and make her feel inferior when she would like to impress, as in the party to which she is invited by her classmate Pons. On all other occasions, she does not care about fashion or how she is perceived from the outside, unlike other girls her age.

This trace of Andrea's personality (and the *chicas raras*'s in general) sets her apart from the "estilo" praised by the Sección Femenina. As Richmond (2003) states, the term was used "to denote a simple but smart way of dressing together with a confident manner and social graces. This set an SF member apart from the stereotypical intellectual woman whose absorption in learning had caused her to neglect her personal appearance and forget how to behave with men" (10).

Furthermore, Andrea separates the concepts of young girl and caregiver. We barely know that Juan and Gloria's baby is a boy, let alone his name. This lack of information is interesting especially because the narrative is Andrea's own, which reveals her lack of interest in the baby, either in spending time with him or in caring for him or helping his parents, behaviours that would be naturally associated with those of a young woman her age in preparation for what would have to be the role of her life: that of mother and wife. Andrea, on the other hand, shows no maternal instinct or appreciation for the baby in the house. She does not feel that his wellbeing is her responsibility, nor does she ever offer to take care of him.

As for social inequality, Laforet shows abuses of power even within the misery of the house. Even in the face of hunger there are inequalities, as the maid Antonia rations the food making sure to keep the best part for herself and her dog, as she has threatens the family to disclose information about the brothers' (Juan and Román) affiliations during the war. This type of extortion must have been common, as Fortún exposes a similar case in *Celia en la revolución*: "En casa de tía Julia hay una criada que la soborna para no decir que Gerardo es de los sublevados" (58).

Hunger wreaks havoc on Juan, who has nervous tics, such as those described by Fortún in *Celia en la revolución* when a woman draws attention to Celia:

Casi todos los que vienen de Madrid están locos -dice la señora apaciblemente-. ¡Se pasa allí tanta hambre! ... Una prima mía ha llegado hace un mes y aún no se le ha quitado el tic nervioso... y usted ¡no se ofenda, señorita! Pero usted habla sola... Ya se lo hemos notado mi hija y yo... No vaya a ofenderse por lo que le digo, porque ya sabemos lo que es la debilidad. (282)

Andrea, who survives on her small orphan's pension and does not eat at home to save her family money, is starving. She discovers little pleasures like toasted dried fruit, or gobbles up

cakes at the cinema as soon as she gets her paycheck.¹⁴⁷ She calls “gusto de rebeldía” (120) spending money on unaffordable things like a bouquet of roses for Ena's mother (with whom she develops a loving friendship) when she is invited for lunch, adding her to the “patriarcal familia” (122).

The wandering of Marta and Andrea, so characteristic of the *chicas raras*, allows them to take a liberating distance from their domestic spaces. Although walking alone in certain areas of the city can be dangerous, like when Andrea follows Juan through the *barrio chino* for fear that he will kill Gloria: “Creo que alguien me dijo una bestialidad. Ni siquiera estoy segura, aunque es probable que se metieran conmigo y se rieran de mí muchas veces” (178). Despite these risks, the streets are a refuge for those for whom prison is their own home: “A veces se me ocurría pensar, con delicia, en lo que sucedería en casa. Los oídos se me llenaban con los chillidos del loro y las palabrotas de Juan. Prefería mi vagabundeo libre” (126).

In addition to Andrea's “vagabundeo” through the streets of Barcelona, there is a type of abstract mobility: what Martín Gaité calls ‘las fugas’. Trapped on the island, Marta escapes from an adverse reality by taking refuge in “su abstracción” (*La isla* 23). At night, when José and Pino used to argue loudly about domestic or economic issues, “Marta se aislaba en una especie de neblina detrás de sus propias imaginaciones” (28). Without freedom of movement, Marta compensates with her inner world of reflection, creating a place where she can isolate herself and even plan how to escape. Thus, at bedtime, she was not sleepy, but rather wanted to go to bed alone in her room without hearing any arguments (30).

The *chicas raras* take advantage of these moments of solitude as spaces for reflection far from the noise that surrounds them. By isolating themselves mentally, even when surrounded by people, they withdraw from hostile reality and reserve an inner space for self-knowledge. Knowing that they are accompanied by themselves makes them confident in their decisions even when they have family and friends against them. These escapes are therefore a training for physical escape, in which they will really leave their environment in favour of the unknown without feeling fear. In Marta's case, she is not afraid to go to Madrid to study alone, because in reality “Las mayores alegrías, las mayores penas que había tenido en su corta vida, las había pasado en soledad. Recordó sus vagabundeos, por las calles de Las Palmas, y sus llantos por cosas que ellas no tenían ni idea, y recordó una noche con luna,

¹⁴⁷ In her article “Discurso gastronómico, discurso de poder. Una crítica a la dictadura franquista en *Nada* de Carmen Laforet” (2007), María Inés Ortiz proposes a reading of the novel based on the control of food distribution in the family unit as a critical representation of Spanish society and the oppression of women in it.

cuando ella se bañaba sola, en el mar. La soledad no le daba miedo. Ni lo desconocido” (306).

The extraordinary suggestions that the words “artistas”, “bohemos” and “vagabundos” (29) had for Marta made her feel identified with the adjectives with which her uncles defined themselves: “Yo también soy una vagabunda” (30).¹⁴⁸ However, this identification also connects her to her father, whom her grandfather had told her years earlier: “Era un tipo algo bohemio y vagabundo... ... a veces un hombre sale así, y entonces es una desgracia: no puede parar en ningún sitio. Siempre tiene ganas de marcharse” (31) to which Marta had responded: “‘¿Y una mujer?’ El abuelo se echó a reír y le acarició la cabeza. ‘No, una mujer no... Nunca oí eso. Iría contra la naturaleza.’ Sin embargo, Marta se estaba convenciendo de que, a pesar de todo, algo de vagabunda tenía ella. Siempre soñaba con ver países lejanos. Las sirenas de los barcos le arañaban el corazón de una manera muy extraña” (31). Marta is a *chica rara*, a girl whose desire to see the world goes against nature.

This is also how her friends see her. They do not understand that she might want to leave the island instead of wanting to get married like the others. Her friend Anita tries to dissuade her from the idea of leaving: “No te hace falta que te lleven a Madrid. ¿No te daría pena dejar la isla? Lo que tú debías hacer es buscar un buen chico y casarte. Tú no eres fea, ¿sabes?” (69). This quote connects Marta's destiny on the island with her physical appearance and a future as a wife. Her aunt Honesta reminds her that “Sí, tienes poco atractivo, pero es porque no quieres tenerlo; hay que cuidarse más...” (56). Marta has no interest or skill in make up or presenting herself better, for that she would need “tiempo, deseo de agradar, paciencia” (187), qualities common to their friends, happy and comfortable in their homes: “tenían lo que querían, y no deseaban fugarse” (187). Care for appearance is, in short, another way of settling down that the *chicas raras* reject. Her indifference or refusal to marry confirms Marta's weirdness. The example of José and Pino's relationship, make her reject the trap of no longer remaining under her brother's control to depend on her husband, as her new romantic interest, Sixto, takes for granted. In spite of knowing what society thinks of a woman who goes her own way, Marta prefers and chooses a vagabond life.

What really worries Marta is having to ask permission to leave the house and she is perfectly aware that this limitation is exclusive to her condition as a woman. “Hay seres que

¹⁴⁸ “Vagabundear” was a common word in Laforet's vocabulary. Indeed, in her correspondance in Fortún (2017), she encouraged her to get better so they could bum around their cities together: “Cuando estés bien del todo vagabundaremos juntas y nos iremos. Te contaré muchas cosas más, como siempre pensé que haría, y nos conoceremos mucho más” (67). Laforet and Fortún finally met in Barcelona in 1950, on the occasion of a lecture by Laforet at the Ateneo Barcelonés, as documented by Capdevila (2017).

salen y se mueven sin consultar con nadie estos movimientos. Si yo fuera un muchacho, a nadie le extrañaría que yo saliese por las mañanas. ... Quizá podría escaparme de casa, como Pablo” (116). From the gardener to her newfound and idealized Pablo, Marta is surrounded by male characters whose independence is taken for granted. For Marta “es tan estupendo andar sola por las calles, verlo todo. No sé, me parece que es la primera vez en mi vida que no estoy encerrada” (118). The house, the family space, represents the frustration of a desire apparently natural, but which exposes their desire for independence. Her stepbrother José is the biggest obstacle in her search for independence and acts as a jailer, locking her up for two weeks when he discovers her relationship with Sixto.

In one of her letters, Laforet confessed to Fortún the anguish of feeling trapped as a little girl, wishing her daughters greater freedom:

Yo les digo siempre que cuando sean mayores podrán hacer todo lo que les dé la gana, y que viajarán y que vivirán conmigo o solas, como quieran... Todo para que se hagan a la idea de que el mundo puede ser suyo. Esto es un engaño, pero por lo menos un engaño esperanzado. Yo recuerdo siempre que cuando tenía cinco años dije a mi madre que estaba deseando ser mayor para salir sola a la calle. Me contestaron que mientras más mayor fuese más acompañada iría siempre. Para mí esta contestación fue horrible. Me acuerdo todavía de la perra que cogí y de lo angustiada que me pareció la vida en aquel momento. (Laforet and Fortún 43)

Like her protagonists, Laforet had felt herself without the freedom to leave, physically trapped by what society understands a girl or woman should do. The imposition of physical or geographical limits is not the only one that Marta faces because she is a woman. Her future role as a wife is taken for granted and as a woman she will have to give up her university studies in favour of the elders of the household or her own children. When Pino accuses José of sleeping with the maids, Marta is surprised by her own sense of disgust and criticizes Pino for not leaving him: “‘Si yo estuviera segura de una cosa así me separaría de mi marido. No se puede saber eso de un hombre y seguir queriéndole.’ Pino se echó a reír de una manera desagradable. ‘Tú no sabes nada de la vida. ¡Idiota!’” (42). Once again, Marta's words are interpreted as an impertinence from someone who does not know the complications of life, underestimating her vision of the world and the problems she may have. In any case, Marta is unable to put herself in Pino's shoes, whose life is based on silence and appearances, and in whom there is no possibility of a separation.

In another discussion about her future, Pino despairs at Marta's insistence on continuing her studies: “‘¡Tú crees que vas a hacer todo lo que se te antoje, en el mundo...!

¿Por qué no pides la luna a tu hermanito?’ ‘¡No sé por qué no puedo! Hay miles de mujeres que estudian’” (148). Marta grew up during the Second Republic, seeing it as natural for women to continue their studies after high school. This is the image of the future that she has for herself and she refuses to dismiss it because of her closed environment.

The confinement poses a threat to the mental health of the protagonists. Andrea is afraid of going crazy like Juan and of becoming hysterical from hunger: “Ya me vuelvo yo loca también” (254). Marta, on the other hand, is afraid to go crazy like Pino. Teresa is under lock and key and so is Pino, whose duty as daughter-in-law is to take care of her: “Bien sabido. Una mujer joven y sana tiene su vida amarrada a la vida de una loca” (62). This near future also haunts Marta, whom José reminds of her obligation when she finishes her “estúpidos estudios.” Marta, who has learned not to respond, “tragó saliva y sintió que una vida gris, pesada como el plomo, seca como la arena, se le venía encima” (119).

Caring for children and the elderly is the main duty of women. Even Pablo, the character who represents for Marta the opposite of the narrowness of ideas she sees at home, sometimes preaches to her about how women should behave:

Algunos días Pablo no era simpático, sino abrumador. Daba consejos sobre lo que las mujeres deben hacer para que los hombres puedan vivir a gusto. Las mujeres deben estar metidas en casa, sonreírles a ellos en todo, no estorbar para nada, no manchar jamás su pureza, no producir inquietudes.

—Yo no quiero manchar mi pureza, pero no me gusta estar siempre en casa. (121)

With Pablo she can at least exchange ideas, but he serves to see the contradictions and hypocrisy of people who consider themselves progressives.

Discovering her identity is not only the result of her time alone, but of the exchange with other characters and the difference of opinions. The fact that she does not share the interests of her friends makes Marta a *chica rara* among people her age, but she also does not share the world view of adults, even those she admires, like Pablo. Similarly, exploring what would be a relatively conventional relationship with Sixto also makes her confirm that she does not want it. She discovers herself through exposure to new relationships and situations, and giving herself full permission to reject them. Besides the backdrop of the civil war, the protagonists have in common their forced (and at the same time chosen) isolation from society and their consequent desire to escape and become independent. These are features that the novel has in common with Laforet’s biography, as the autobiographical component of the *chicas raras* analysed at the beginning of this chapter. Laforet wrote to Fortún: “En ella van muchas cosas que yo miré en mi adolescencia. Piedras y luces y mares... Los seres

humanos que intento dibujar son inventados, y las circunstancias, todas” (Laforet and Fortún 57).¹⁴⁹

3.3 Literary vocation

Reading and writing are two of the quintessential modes of escape for the *chicas raras*.¹⁵⁰ Andrea's fondness for reading is evident in her presentation upon arriving in Barcelona. The imprint of these readings makes her describe her experiences on numerous occasions through the filter of her literary baggage. She meets families who “tuvieron muchos niños, como en los cuentos” (23); she remembers transforming herself in her childhood dreams into a princess “como describían los cuentos” (218); or she feels “como la Cenicienta del cuento, princesa por unas horas” when invited to a party (206).

Andrea imagines the ball through her literary imagination: “para mí la palabra baile evocaba un emocionante sueño de trajes de noche y suelos brillantes, que me habían dejado la primera lectura del cuento de la Cenicienta” (206), just as Celia felt in the dance scene of *Celia institutriz* (published the same year). Both are in a situation that is alien to their social context, they are nervous about not being up to it, but at the same time excited about becoming the protagonists of what they had read as children. Similarly, the structure of the works she has read provides Andrea with a pattern through which she observes the relationships around her.

In one of the most tense and violent scenes in *Nada*, Andrea tries to give poetic justice to Gloria and Juan's relationship: “‘Si aquella noche –pensaba yo– se hubiera acabado el mundo o se hubiera muerto uno de ellos, su historia hubiera quedado completamente cerrada y bella como un círculo.’ Así suele suceder en las novelas, en las películas, pero no en la vida...” (251). Like Marta, Andrea misses the logic of literary works in real life, which is always more complicated and incomprehensible.

In *La isla*, Marta had access to reading and serenity to enjoy books alone in her grandparents house in Las Palmas: “encontró aquel cajón de embalaje con los libros que habían pertenecido a su padre, y sintió un gran placer de irlos leyendo uno a uno en secreto. Ni a su abuelo, que fiscalizaba cuidadosamente sus lecturas, se atrevió a decirle nada de esto.

¹⁴⁹ In *Carmen Laforet. Una mujer en fuga* (2010) Caballé and Rolón demonstrate that some of the characters and the circumstances in *La isla* are also based on Laforet's biography.

¹⁵⁰ As much as they were for their authors. Laforet wrote to Fortún (2017) regarding *La isla*: “este trabajo, mientras lo hago, para mí es importante, porque me libera de otras muchas cosas. Me sirve de huida de mis malos fondos revueltos..., y ya está; por eso escribo, aunque me angustie escribir también” (39).

Más tarde, cuando ella empezó a escribir fantasías, le gustaba escribirlas allí” (33), so she had a place to read and write, sheltered from the world and somehow connected to her father, the ‘vagabundo’. In her situation of confinement during her childhood, books represented an enormous space open to new adventures.

In her adolescence, the *novelas rosa* are added to her readings. As it could not be otherwise, the reading of such novels had also permeated Marta, who thought that, after kissing Sixto, “esta dulzura, este olvido que tenía desde el día anterior quizá era estar enamorada. Pero lo pensaba por primera vez. Se sentía también un poco heroína de novela. ... también había leído muchas novelas, y algunas terribles y crudísimas” (167). However, everything is much easier in books: “Todas las muchachas entendían las crudas complicaciones de los libros; mientras las cosas sucedieran en papel impreso les parecían naturales, pero es distinto de la vida. En la vida se comprende menos...” (168).¹⁵¹

The shared literary technique adopted by Fortún and Laforet, using girlhood to express a deep sense of isolation and lack of understanding of the world, relates to both authors even though their literary works were published in different social contexts. Both of them show a lack of intellectual freedom, childlike in the case of Fortún, and totalitarian in the case of Laforet. The will of the characters to disobey social representations is often misunderstood and punished, which corresponds to pedagogical and psychological beliefs about feminine nature at the time. I will examine these factors to explain the decision of the authors to use the young female character in their novels and to link it to the tradition of the marginal literary character who is allowed to have their say.

Although the format of the series by Fortún and the novels by Laforet are very different, Laforet’s creation of Andrea and Marta follows the same characteristics established by Fortún, using the *chica rara* in order to express a sense of feminine isolation. In the case of Fortún, the lack of understanding from both the masculine and the feminine adult world. In the case of Laforet, she was able to recreate the repression and suppression of feelings and lack of freedom associated with Franco’s dictatorship.

In 1944, Laforet recovered the figure of the marginalised girl who Fortún had portrayed in her stories. For generations, Celia would be the example of another kind of girl,

¹⁵¹ References to the *novela rosa* can also be found in *Entre visillos*, by Carmen Martín Gaité, and even affect the way in which the protagonist of *El cuarto de atrás* narrates some situations worthy of this type of novel. Living their own experiences through the lens of their readings is a trait that the *chicas raras* share with Celia, who refers to characters from the stories she has read and even writes her own (*Celia, novelista*). More examples of intertextuality will be analysed in the section dedicated to Ana María Matute, who incorporates readings from her childhood into the imagery of her characters, such as Matia with Peter Pan.

different from the type supported and encouraged by the institutions of the time. Carmen Laforet, who had read *Celia*'s stories as a young girl, continued with an unadapted character in post-war Spain with *Nada*, offering the story of Andrea, a teenager who witnesses the misery and the suffocating atmosphere of the time. However, unlike Celia, her protagonist Andrea does not feel free to speak for herself and is always trapped in silence. The result of such experience at the end of the book is as if she had lived "nothing."

Another formula that unites Laforet's style with Fortún is that of novelling within a lived environment and with an invented plot (Sobejano 144). In Laforet's novels and in her characters Laforet's features are recognizable through her sensitivity, character or ideals. The same can be said of Celia's stories, in which they can be recognized not only the atmosphere in which Fortún lived, but also the tension of finding her place within modernity (through her mother, Pilar de Montalbán, or Celia herself), and of having to betray her ideals later due to ideological repression after the war.

Celia, Andrea and Marta present parallels in their way of living and facing their reality. All three characters are sensitive, critical, observant of their environment, eager for freedom and in some way rebellious. Their growth is marked by disenchantment in facing the adult world to which they will soon belong (control and authority, feeling different). The characters and situations that cross their path, such as disappointing first kisses or the abandonment of friendships, make their initial hopes fade away. However, these stumbles are also what encourage them to keep going, inventing a new path in which they can be themselves. If Celia betrayed her desire for independence, Andrea and Marta continue to run away from the models that society imposes on them.

A *chica rara* herself, the following lines that Laforet wrote to Fortún could have been written by Andrea or Marta:

En mi vida siempre encontré motivos para renunciar a algo. Aprendí poco a poco que cualquier cosa hay que pagarla, y nunca tomé nada sin saber de antemano que tenía un precio..., solo que alguna vez me sorprendió lo terrible que era el precio este que había que pagar. Una vez llegué hasta la anulación de lo mejor de mí... Me quedé como muerta espiritualmente. Traté de rehacerme, me rehíce, y luego vi un camino mejor... (103)

Envisioning and creating a new path required a lot of courage for Laforet and her *chicas raras*, who continued building opportunities for themselves from scratch time and again. "Yo creo que el valor es quizá el intentar esa superación y luchar por ella..., ¿no te parece?" (104).

4. Carmen Martín Gaité (1925-2000)

This section shows the relationship between the work of Carmen Martín Gaité and that of Fortún through two of her novels: *Entre visillos* (1958) and *El cuarto de atrás* (1978). The characteristics of the *chicas raras* exposed in the first section of this chapter are analyzed in the two main characters of the novels: Natalia and C. These are compared with those of Celia, analyzed in Chapter 2. This section is divided into three points common to the novels and to the evolution of Celia's character: Family relationships, social awareness and literary vocation. The numerous articles, interviews and collaborations in which Martín Gaité has referred to Fortún demonstrate the thesis that Fortún's contribution has been fundamental to Spanish narrative in the 20th century, especially the writing of women. Martín Gaité read Celia in her childhood and acknowledged the decisive impact Fortún had on her writing. Moreover, Martín Gaité wrote the prologue for the reprinted works of Fortún in the 1990s, vindicating the influential figure that Fortún represented for writers in the 1950s. In addition, she studied the figure of Celia and her author (2002, 2006) and was in charge of the screenplays for the adaptation of *Celia* to television (1993).

Martín Gaité is fundamental in this third chapter for two reasons: the first one because she coined the term *chica rara* in her essay *Desde la ventana* (1987), a feminine approach to Spanish literature in which this thesis is supported from the first chapter. The second reason is that, as a child reader of *Celia*, Martín Gaité claimed Fortún and her indisputable mark on

the generation of writers of the 1950s. Martín Gaité's contribution to Spanish literature includes novels,¹⁵² short stories, children's books,¹⁵³ translations, essays¹⁵⁴ and screenplays.¹⁵⁵

Entre visillos (1958) portrays adolescent courtship experiences in a provincial town. This choral novel won the Nadal Prize fourteen years after Laforet had won the first edition with *Nada*. Through the characters of Natalia, Elvira and Pablo, Martín Gaité shows the relationships and limitations that a provincial city offers to young women. Natalia is the *chica rara* who would like to continue studying, an idea that opposes her father's plans for her. At her high school she meets Pablo Klein, the new German teacher, who encourages her to go to Madrid to attend university. The novel ends with Natalia saying goodbye to Pablo on the platform, without knowing whether she will finally go to Madrid.

El cuarto de atrás (1978), on the other hand, recounts a night in the life of writer C., Martín Gaité's alter ego. Through a dialogue with a mysterious character, the protagonist reflects on her life, on the craft of writing and on the changing circumstances of Spanish society at the end of Francisco Franco's dictatorship. This feature of style makes the novel read as if the protagonist were telling it aloud. *El cuarto de atrás* is practically a memoir by Martín Gaité disguised as a fantasy novel, with Todorov and his *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (1970), which the character literally stumbles upon at the beginning of the novel.

Twenty years separate these two novels. According to Ordóñez's (1991) classification, *El cuarto de atrás* (1978) is a "transition novel," since the author reflects back

¹⁵² Martín Gaité's works span from her first novel *El balneario* (1954) to the posthumous *Los parentescos* (2001). Matute's posthumous novel *Demonios familiares* (2014) is also about family relationships.

¹⁵³ In "Inyecciones de infancia" (2006), Martín Gaité shares her thoughts on the classification of children's literature, which coincides with that of Fortún and Matute: "Yo soy poco amiga de poner etiquetas a las obras de ficción, y menos a las mías, que bastante trabajo tengo con escribirlas. Pero en relación con el libro citado [*Caperucita en Manhattan*, 1990]... puedo decir que lo están leyendo igual los chicos que los grandes, y que a través de los comentarios que me llegan no me parece que lo entiendan peor unos que otros ni que les divierta menos" (465). And she confesses the "influjo positivo" Celia had on *Caperucita en Manhattan*, since its creation coincided with "me encargaron unos guiones para televisión sobre las aventuras de Celia. Este trabajo ... es indudable que volvió a espabilar mi interés por los niños rebeldes, inquietos y con sed de aventura. Es decir, que la relectura de Elena Fortún significó una inyección vitamínica para reanudar la historia interrumpida de Sara Allen" (465). Martín Gaité then expands Celia's curiosity to three of her girl protagonists: "Sara, Altalé y Sorpresa, se parecen un poco en su afán por escapar de una realidad agobiante y rutinaria. Como Celia, el personaje inmortal de Elena Fortún, están decididas a rechazar todo lo que no les parece lógico. Y esta lucha contra los argumentos de los adultos no la acometen con otras armas que las de su encendida y todopoderosa curiosidad. Perder la curiosidad por completo equivale a envejecer sin remisión" (466). Hence, Martín Gaité's children's literature also was somehow influenced by Fortún.

¹⁵⁴ Some examples are *Usos amorosos del dieciocho en España* (1972), based on her doctoral thesis, and *Desde la ventana* (1987), in which she famously coined the term *chica rara*.

¹⁵⁵ "Catorce guiones de una hora de duración –y dos años de ocupación– con que ambos adaptamos las primeras andanzas de su heroína infantil preferida, la Celia de Elena Fortún; todo para que luego en el castillo de las tres murallas (léase Televisión Española) sólo aceptaran rodar media docena de capítulos sin que nadie se tomara nunca la molestia de explicarnos por qué" (Borau 2002 10).

to what life was like for an adolescent during Franco's dictatorship and provides information about Martín Gaité as a *chica rara* herself in a context of social oppression, which works both as a novel to analyze and as a framework through which to explore the rest of the works. Indeed, Franco's death in 1975 marked Spain's shift from dictatorship to democracy, and the consequent abolition of censorship. Referring to the protagonist of the transition novel, Mayock (2004) explains that "The female protagonist is no longer the youthful and relatively innocent 'chica rara', but is instead transformed into many characters" (122). In *El cuarto de atrás* it is a middle-aged writer.

2.1 Family relations

Entre visillos begins with an entry in Natalia's journal in which she rejects the rules that are imposed on women in her society. The provincial town where she lives reflects the vigilance of the enforcement of those rules, the prejudices and the hypocrisy of the post-war Spanish society in which it is integrated. A motherless girl, Natalia enjoys books and is one of the few young women to continue her studies in high school. The arrival of the new German teacher, Pablo Klein, will encourage her to pursue university studies in Madrid. Elvira, another *chica rara*, will count on Pablo's complicity in sharing the frustration of her confinement, aggravated by the recent death of her father.

As in Laforet's novels, the house becomes the microcosm that represents repression at the state level and Natalia and Elvira try to get around it as best they can. Like Andrea, Natalia cannot enjoy a room of her own, sharing it for study with her sister Mercedes or her aunt Concha, who acts as the women's watchdog of the Sección Femenina on different levels. Furthermore, the confinement and mourning in *La isla y los demonios* and *Entre visillos* are irremediably reminiscent of the play *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (1936) by Federico García Lorca, which denounced precisely the abuse of power by an ultra-conservative and misogynist society.¹⁵⁶ Elvira, like Adela in Lorca's play, cannot accept the sacrifices that the rules of mourning impose on her after her father's death and feels that she is drowning within the walls of her house: "Aquí tendría que estar usted hace diez días de la mañana a la noche, aquí en esta casa, a ver si se ahogaba o no se ahogaba, como yo me ahogo" (55).

¹⁵⁶ Cruz-Cámara (2003) also notes this link.

The mourning had familiar deadlines, and Elvira's mother ensures that the city knows that they are being met: “A la madre le gustaba que estuvieran los balcones cerrados, que se notara al entrar de la calle aquel aire sofocante y artificial. ‘Es una casa de luto’, había dicho” (122). The internal and external vigilance required that it not only be a house of mourning, but that it had to look like one. In this way, Elvira's mother is an obstacle to her independence, since her function is to transmit the patriarchal and oppressive values imposed by the regime.

Written as a veiled memoir, *El cuarto de atrás* recounts the childhood memories of the protagonist, C., who remembers the fear, the cold, the bombings and stories of other children buried under the bombs (57). In such a context, “felicidad” was inconceivable in war (69), however, the memories are of a certain freedom, in which children could go shopping, to the rationing lines that Celia described in *Celia en la revolución*. At home, the back room that gives the title to the novel “Era muy grande y en él reinaban el desorden y la libertad, se permitía cantar encima de un sofá desvencijado y con los muelles rotos al que llamábamos el pobre sofá, tumbarse en la alfombra, mancharla de tinta, era un reino donde nada estaba prohibido,” (187) since the back room was owned by C. and her sister, without negotiations.

However, the changes that the back room underwent also represented the advance of the war and the needs it imposed and the growth of the girls who occupied it: “Hay como una línea divisoria, que empezó a marcarse en el año treinta y seis, entre la infancia y el crecimiento” (188). The room gradually became a pantry, “hasta que dejamos de tener cuarto para jugar, porque los artículos de primera necesidad desplazaron y arrinconaron nuestra infancia, el juego y la subsistencia coexistieron en una convivencia agria, de olores incompatibles” (189). As seen with Celia, historical events displace the experiences of children, depriving them of the few spaces that belong to them.

However, outdoor spaces had other attractions for playing:

a las casitas, como se jugaba mejor era en verano, al aire libre, con niños del campo que no tenían juguetes y se las tenían que ingeniar para construirselos con frutos, piedras y palitos, y que, precisamente por eso, nunca se aburrían. Cogían una teja plana y decían “esto era un plato”, machacaban ladrillo y decían “esto era pimentón”, y resultaba todo mucho más bonito, yo lo sentía así, pero cuando llegaba el invierno me olvidaba y sucumbía a las exigencias de una industria que fomentaba el descontento y el afán de consumo. (190)

The scene of free play described by C. with the village children is suspiciously similar to the one Celia tells when she meets the altar boys' friends in *Celia en el colegio*:

–Pues nosotras *juebamos* a las tiendas, al escondite y al titirisí.

–Bueno; pues a eso quiero jugar yo.

¡Qué juego más bonito! Machacamos ladrillo para hacer una cosa que se llama pimentón, y con yeso hicimos azúcar. Después lo pesamos en un pesito hecho con dos cáscaras de pepino y unas cuerdas. (26-27)

Fortún's fascination with underprivileged children has been explored in Chapter 2, as has her commitment to bringing that reality closer to her readers. The description of Celia and C.'s games of Fortún and Martín Gaité may demonstrate an influence of Fortún's readings on Martín Gaité's memories, but certainly on Fortún's documentation work, so useful for the history of Spanish childhood.¹⁵⁷ On the other hand, this free play vs. regulated play, or the fabrication of elements and the use of imagination for one's own entertainment, is in line with the pedagogy of the *ILE*, explained in Chapter 2. Luis, Fortún's son, attended the *ILE*'s Instituto-Escuela, which was also attended by Ana María, Martín Gaité's older sister,¹⁵⁸ which shows the progressive nature of their family. Martín Gaité did not get to attend the Instituto-Escuela because of the outbreak of the civil war, when she was eleven years old.

Salamanca, C.'s (and Martín Gaité's) hometown, becomes the capital of the national side during the civil war, so the protagonist remembers seeing Carmencita Franco on numerous occasions, a girl like her in “zapatitos de charol” (64) who must have been very bored accompanying her father, General Francisco Franco.¹⁵⁹ C. pitied Carmencita, since in the city, children “salen a las visitas” like Celia with tío Rodrigo in *Celia en el mundo*. She also accompanied the older ones on errands, to visit other grownups and she was moved practically like an object, an ornament that complemented what was really important: the interaction between adults. In these situations, children must show how polite and adorable they are.

In this respect, C. recalls the dressmaker's daughter's violent transformation into a silent and distant mannequin (83), a normal girl who, when the time comes, has to play the role of a flesh and blood mannequin to show the clothes to the customers, among them C.'s mother. The character's connection to the girl she was is great, sometimes she even talks to her (22, 89) from the house where she grew up. In a way she has not changed, she retains her

¹⁵⁷ In her essay *El cuento de nunca acabar* (1983), Martín Gaité explored “esta atracción que siente el niño de buena familia por la libertad y el desarraigo de la calle cuajada de peligros” (“Arrojo y descalabros” 87) and that is also common to Matute.

¹⁵⁸ With whom she enjoyed Celia in their childhood, as she recalled in a series of conferences on Fortún: “Con esta voz o parecida nos lo leíamos una a otra mi hermana y yo de pequeñas, y ahora lo repito ante ustedes como homenaje inagotable al teatro que es la vida mientras la vivimos.” (“Arrojo y descalabros” 114).

¹⁵⁹ Salamanca became Franco's first military headquarters (Richmond 7).

artistic chaos and maintains a certain domestic order, which in her childhood was taken care of by maids who seemed to be ageless (88).

As for education, C.'s mother is proud that her daughter likes to study, even though her grandmother thinks she likes it “demasiado” (78). As the next section shows, it seems that in the education of a girl there is no exact or recommendable measure of the taste for reading or study, since obtaining good grades is an obligation of the girl as a pupil, but too much interest in learning is a threat, showing the ambition of wanting to go further than what is intended for her. In the eyes of society, C. must be dedicated without wanting to be an intellectual.

2.2 Social awareness

Natalia has no intention of getting married, which distinguishes her from the young women around her. In the same spirit, she refuses to groom herself in order to “sacarse partido” to please a suitor. Her sister and aunt insist on numerous occasions that she wears make-up, or heels (as Andrea and Marta were), or that she goes to a prom. However, this kind of formalization of the search for a boyfriend is detestable for Natalia. Her friend Gertru, on the other hand, does go through the long dressing ritual, which Natalia describes as a terribly limiting event, since her friend cannot move normally for fear of ruining the dress. Just as Gertru loses her freedom in this symbolic moment, she also shows interest in having a life as a wife and mother and ends up rejecting the idea of continuing her studies, which is a major loss for Natalia, who sees in her what she does not want to be. The Casino, as a meeting place for the city's young people, also represents a space for watching over the behaviour and relationships of each other (a place that C., from *El cuarto de atrás*, also frequented, and who, like Natalia, did not give a reason for the boys to notice her).

In Elvira's case, her interest in travelling and painting and her initial lack of interest in marriage also distinguish her from the other young women in the city, from which she does not hesitate to boast: “leo y tengo inquietudes que otras chicas de aquí no suelen tener. Ellas me ponen verde, te lo puedes figurar, porque tengo amigos y salgo y voy a los sitios. ... Porque con las chicas me aburro, lo lógico” (141). However, as with Celia, Elvira feels the tension of rejecting social norms and at the same time fulfilling other people's expectations, which limits the independence of her actions. As a result, Elvira lies and manipulates others as she wants situations to be seen from the outside, causing her to betray herself and transform into what she criticizes. While Natalia and Laforet's *chicas raras* are honest with

themselves and take the necessary steps to reach their desired autonomy, Elvira fails in her rebellion, committing herself to marrying someone she doesn't admire just because she believes it will make Pablo jealous.

In the face of the stifling space that the home represents, Natalia and Elvira enjoy walks in the small city, sometimes near the river, enjoying nature, or just looking out the window. The connection with the outside world is fundamental for the *chicas raras*, who challenge the imposition of domestic space as a natural environment and want to conquer public space, step by step. For Natalia, the justification for the walks will have to be excused with some mistake of streets, or the visit to some companion before returning home from high school. The small spaces of freedom, especially after sharing them with the security of Pablo Klein, whose reputation in the city is not questioned for being a foreigner, feed her desire to conquer other spaces and the departure to Madrid to continue her university studies is becoming more and more possible. As Fortún did with Paulette, Celia's French friend, Martín Gaité contextualizes Pablo Klein's progressive ideas in his foreign identity. The defence of a higher education for women as something natural comes as much from the professor as from Martín Gaité.

In *El cuarto de atrás*, C. does have a room of her own (14), a space to think and write. However, far from this kind of artistic sensibility, the education of young women in the post-war period was based on their ability to identify fabrics (12). The girls received their domestic education from Franco's Servicio Social,¹⁶⁰ without which they could not go abroad. In the words of C., through the courses in the Servicio Social she had to prove “que tenía madera de futura madre y esposa, digna descendiente de Isabel la Católica” (42), a matter in which she did not succeed and which forced her to pay a fine. Having obtained the certificate when she was twenty, she convinced her father to allow her to enjoy a scholarship in Coimbra, fulfilling her “ilusión de salir ... Portugal me pareció el país más exótico y más lejano de la tierra” (43).

Through her memoirs, C. reveals the fashions of her youth, such as the one of curling her short hair “Era algo indispensable saberse poner los chifles, no se podía ir por la vida con el pelo tan liso” (66), like the technique in *Celia en el colegio* that left her hair “como a los negros” (106). Some exceptions to this fashion were Greta Garbo, who was “desafinaba” (66) in everything and the first woman to win the Nadal prize. The two examples that subvert the

¹⁶⁰ Women were compulsory enrolled with the Sección Femenina while they were completing their mandatory Servicio Social. This made it difficult to ascertain if they would have joined if they had had a choice (Richmond 96), which seems unlikely in the case of Martín Gaité.

image of Spanish post-war women are closely linked to this thesis. Firstly, “¿quién iba a atreverse a imitar a Greta Garbo?” (66), well, Celia. As we saw in Chapter 2, in *Celia, lo que dice*, she refuses to play the role of daughter (she has had enough of being one in real life): “Yo quiero ser una Greta Garbo..., o la cocinera, o una bruja, pero hija, no” (69).

Furthermore, C. alludes to Carmen Laforet, without naming her

Recuerdo que cuando le dieron el primer premio Nadal a una mujer, lo que más revolucionario me pareció, aparte del tono desesperanzado y nihilista que inauguraba con su novela, fue verla retratada a ella en la portada del libro, con aquellas greñas cortas y lisas. Sentí envidia pero también un conato de esperanza ... (66)

Like Celia, C. remembers and alludes to other types of femininity that were presented to her as alternatives. One of them, unattainable, the second one, hopeful. These exceptions mark an aspirational path that finally seems adaptable to C.'s reality. In the construction of her own femininity, the character relied on the invaluable complicity of her mother, who freed her from the bonds imposed by society and broke the chain that transmitted traditional and oppressive values:

Mi madre no era casamentera, ni me enseñó nunca a coser ni a guisar ... en cambio, siempre me alentó en mis estudios, y cuando, después de la guerra, venían mis amigos a casa en época de exámenes, nos entraba la merienda y nos miraba con envidia.

“Hasta a coser un botón aprende mejor una persona lista que una tonta” le contestó un día a una señora que había dicho de mí, moviendo la cabeza con reprobación: “Mujer que sabe latín no puede tener buen fin”, y la miré con un agradecimiento eterno. (93)

This approach to femininity, avoiding the transmission of domestic tasks (sewing was already taught in Servicio Social) and encouraging study and critical skills were the opposite of the predicaments of the Sección Femenina, which considered a woman less attractive if she wanted to know, which in turn distracted her from her fundamental work: care and support of the husband and children. However, as the years went by, C. found herself from time to time in front of a mirror reflecting on her eight and eighteen-year-old self, amazed to see a cloth in her hand cleaning the kitchen (74-75). She immediately justified that she was not what she seemed, that she had not simply become a housewife, but at the same time she recognised the difficulty of reconciling an artistic life with family life, as Fortún and Laforet also recognised.

“La retórica de la posguerra se aplicaba a desprestigiar los conatos de feminismo que tomaron auge en los años de la República y volvía a poner el acento en el heroísmo abnegado de madres y esposas, en la importancia de su silenciosa y oscura labor como pilares del hogar

cristiano” (93). However, as Ochoa (2006) observes, “There are apparent contradictions in Spain between women writers who express feminist concerns in their work but deny classification as “feminist” (25). Martín Gaité did not consider herself a militant feminist, but “Yo tengo un feminismo a mi manera: es decir que es un respeto por la mujer y la seguridad total de que en muchos aspectos es más fuerte que el hombre pero, como lo sé, no necesito salir con banderas a proclamarlo. Estoy tan segura, que no necesito decirlo” (Soler Serrano 2002).

The post-war rhetoric that discredits feminism seems to have made a dent in Martín Gaité, when she states that “Una mujer cuando está ya picada por el feminismo suele tratar de parecerse, aunque ella no lo cree, suele imitar esos defectos del varón que existen y que tanto está denostando, como son el avasallamiento y el ser una persona más mandona y esas cosas” (Soler Serrano 2002). The refusal to be branded as a feminist contradicts her criticism of a sexist ideology and rhetoric through her own behaviour and that of her characters. Similarly, it does not fit in with her work in recognizing forgotten women authors, such as Fortún, denouncing the invisibility of women

En el Espasa no viene. Ni por Fortún, ni por Aragoneses, ni por Gorbea, que es el apellido de su cónyuge. En cambio a él le dedica el Espasa un artículo bastante amplio, con foto, y se le ve delgadito, peinado a raya, con lentes pequeños, chaleco y aspecto pulcro, como de profesor, aunque no lo era, sino un militar de alta graduación, aficionado acérrimo al teatro, y autor de algunas obras que hoy nadie recuerda. (“Elena Fortún y su tiempo” 42)

In her articles, Martín Gaité denounces the absence of sources about Fortún, an author who marked the childhood of different generations and does not have an entry in the encyclopedia, while her husband, now irrelevant, can easily be found. This quote is also relevant in a broader sense, showing the scarce and belated acceptance of women authors in the Spanish literary canon, as the section on Matute will show.

For C., leaving the house was already a source of excitement since she was little. Even when accompanying her mother on errands, C. enjoyed wandering the streets, window-shopping, which slowed down the pace of chores: “¡Vamos, hija!, ¿qué miras?” (85). Later on, she learns that women who walk the streets, alone or in company, are called “Frescas,” “sueñas,” or “locas” (124-125) and are the target of general whispering animated by a rhetoric of chastity that demands a domestic life. For this reason, the decision of the *chicas raras* to go out on the streets as well is consciously transgressive. However, they also knew how to escape without going out, as explored in the next section.

2.3 Literary vocation

In *Entre visillos*, Natalia not only shows interest in the books she has to study with and which will take her to Madrid, but she also writes her own personal diary. Like Celia, the act of writing in a young woman is a subversive act, as she tries to find her own voice. If continuing to study for city girls is already something that makes Natalia a *chica rara*, even more so is the act of writing, which means that she thinks she has something to say, in the face of the imposition of the silence that reigns for women.

However, this section dedicated to the literary vocation and intertextuality is much more prevalent in *El cuarto de atrás*, where the dialogical style serves no other function than to continue the narration so that the author can share her experiences with her readers. This dialogic style is the one Fortún had used in her periodicals and that will be maintained when publishing the *Celia* in book format. Through the questions, the characters can tell a story with the detail that interests them. In this case, Martín Gaité writes a novel about the craft of writing full of fantasy, with the promise that, one day: “Palabra que voy a escribir una novela fantástica” (19).

The interplay between fiction and nonfiction is one of the narrative features of the novel which, according to Brown (2013), pioneered the hybrid novel and still defines contemporary Spanish literature (9). This gaming relies heavily on intertextuality, with references both to the literary work of C., Martín Gaité's alter ego, and to the readings that marked her, such as Antoniorrobes or the *novelas rosa*. In this way, the narrator refers to a key aspect for the *chicas raras*, that of literature as a refuge (56), and as a tool to transform reality. Moreover, like Celia at the end of *Celia novelista* (a book that has been shown to impact a young Martín Gaité in Chapter 2), C. is honest in sharing her frustration about the difficulty of writing, the volatility of ideas and the extreme difficulty of putting them on paper.

As for the *novela rosa*, C. remembers one about a girl who dares to study a degree and ends up marrying her Latin teacher, which disappoints her:

no me quedé muy convencida de que la chica esa hubiera acertado casándose con un hombre mucho más viejo que ella ... tanto ilusionarse con los estudios y desafiar a la sociedad que le impedía a una mujer realizarlos, para luego salir por ahí, en plan *happy end*, que a saber si sería tan *happy*, porque aquella chica se tuvo que sentir

decepcionada tarde o temprano; además, ¿por qué tenían que acabar todas las novelas cuando se casa la gente?, a mí me gustaba todo el proceso del enamoramiento, los obstáculos, las lágrimas y los malentendidos, los besos a la luz de la luna, pero a partir de la boda, parecía que ya no había nada más que contar, como si la vida se hubiera terminado. (92)

This description and reaction at the end of a *novela rosa* could have been perfectly that of Martín Gaité to *Celia se casa*, which, after her insistence on university studies that give her a certain independence, means the end of the character. The obstacles of Celia and Jorge's relationship had appeared throughout *Celia madrecita*, *Celia en la revolución* and *Celia institutriz*, until it ended in the disappointing happy ending alluded to by C. This happy ending and the sacrifice of her future is what the *chicas raras* –and their authors– refuse. Even though Laforet, Martín Gaité and Matute got married when they were young, they were brave enough to separate from their husbands at a time when it was not socially accepted. During the Franco regime, divorce was forbidden and a legal separation was an inconceivable scandal (which had disgraceful consequences for Matute regarding the custody of her child).

Literature also serves C. as a refuge, as a way of escaping without going out into the street, the connotations of which we have already explored in the previous section. C. talks about how she sometimes wrote letters to herself. For lack of another, she was her own interlocutor in her practice of writing as conversation. In addition, the protagonist admits that she has always been able to entertain herself with her own dreams and thoughts, creating a world of her own where she did not have them (like Celia): “Desde pequeña he sabido entretenerme con mis propios sueños y mis propios pensamientos”. The back room represents in this case the place that allowed that independence, “donde aprendí a jugar y a leer” (90).

However, in addition to the physical “fugas” (going out into the street like the protagonists of *Entre visillos*) or literary escapes (through books, reading or writing), C. also speaks of a kind of mental escape through the creation of an imaginary island, Bergai, whose name combined the first syllable of each of their surnames: “‘Si te riñen, te vas a Bergai –dijo ella– ya existe. Es para eso, para refugiarse.’ Y luego dijo también que existiría siempre, hasta después de que nos muriéramos, y que nadie nos podía quitar nunca aquel refugio porque era secreto” (194). C. confesses that after that moment, a quarrel with her parents did not affect her, for “Les miraba como desde otro sitio” (195). In spite of her abstraction, “La isla de Bergai se fue perfilando como una tierra marginal, existía mucho más que las cosas que veíamos de verdad, tenía la fuerza y la consistencia de los sueños” (195). As Celia had already proved, “todo podía convertirse en otra cosa, dependía de la imaginación. Mi amiga

me lo había enseñado, me había descubierto el placer de la evasión solitaria, esa capacidad de invención que nos hace sentirnos a salvo de la muerte” (195), something that transcends us.

In the solitary evasion of reading, Martín Gaité admits that as a child, through Fortún, she found two friends who, like Bergai, seemed real:

Celia y Cuchifritín se salían del libro para jugar con nosotros a cosas prohibidas en nuestros cuartos «de atrás» entre tinteros destapados, revoltijo de juguetes, cuadernos de dibujo y libros de texto; nos escondíamos debajo de las mesas y de las camas cuando oíamos por el pasillo pisadas enérgicas de las personas mayores y cuchicheábamos hablando mal de ellas, comentando lo que se aburrían y también aquella manía suya de mandar y de explicar las cosas con palabras que nunca se entienden. Y era Celia la que iniciaba la protesta y sugería explicaciones alternativas de la realidad, gracias a las cuales se revelaba que las cosas no siempre son lo que parecen. (“Elena Fortún y su tiempo” 40)

For Celia herself, literature was a refuge, just as it was for little C. her island of Bergai, because “cuando todo en torno le fallaba, Celia recurría a los sueños, a la literatura. Ésa fue otra de las complicidades que mi amiga del alma me propuso, hasta el punto de que me atrevo a decir que fueron sus brillantes y atrevidas sugerencias las que me indicaron el camino para iniciar el cual no hacía más compañía ni equipaje que el de un cuadernito rayado: el camino de la literatura” (“Interpretación poética” 116). Through Celia, a fictional character, Fortún paved the way to creative unfolding for a new generation of girls who otherwise would not have been encouraged to write or known that they had had something to say.

However, the fixation of the young Martín Gaité with Celia made her not notice the possibility that it was an invention, that she had a creator: “Su conversión casi inmediata en amiga de carne y hueso fue para mí un fenómeno tan natural y absorbente que distrajo mi atención de aquel otro nombre de mujer que figuraba junto al suyo y se volvía, por contraste, un tanto irreal, ya que aceptar la existencia de Elena Fortún equivalía a poner en tela de juicio la de Celia y admitir que era un invento de aquella señora” (“Elena Fortún y su tiempo” 40).

The experience was not such for Laforet, who always kept the author behind the stories in mind. In a letter to Fortún herself, she acknowledged that:

me has hecho mucho bien siempre, desde que yo era una niña a quien tú no conocías y que vivía muy lejos de ti, pero que en tus cuentos maravillosos aprendía sencillez, belleza, gracia, y adivinaba detrás de aquello un alma –la tuya– llena de cosas extraordinarias. Adivinaba yo tu generosidad, tu comprensión, tu capacidad de

cariño... Y claro es, yo no analizaba nada de esto, pero te quería y te hablaba desde niña y siempre me acompañaste en mi soledad. (Laforet and Fortún 125)

Martín Gaité, who had recognized Celia's influence on her writing, met Marisol Dorao, Fortún's biographer, at the presentation of *Celia en la revolución* in the Spanish National Library in 1987. Her lecture led to a series on Fortún that she read at the Fundación Juan March and that would serve as a prologue to *Celia*'s 1992 reprint.¹⁶¹ Martín Gaité's involvement with the character led to the adaptation of *Celia* for Televisión Española, in the series directed by José Luis Borau, in which she collaborated as a scriptwriter and appeared as Sor Gaitera in a scene at the school.

According to Brown (2013), Martín Gaité lived through many literary and historical periods and also defined them, since "her novels trace huge transformations in Spain over the course of the twentieth century" (9), which is also true for Fortún. Martín Gaité's narrative is characterized by her graceful language with colloquial dialogue and the quest for individual freedom for her female characters (10), to which Fortún's influence was crucial. "A la niña que yo fui no le importaba nada de Elena Fortún, pero a la mujer que soy ahora nada puede gustarle tanto como seguirle el rastro a aquella escritora que sin duda llevaba una niña dentro y me la regaló para que jugara con ella" ("Elena Fortún y su tiempo" 41). Fortún had accompanied Martín Gaité, "La vida de Elena Fortún, de 1886 a 1952, es decir, sesenta y seis años, alguno de los cuales compartió conmigo, aunque nunca nos viéramos ni supiéramos una de otra" ("Elena Fortún y su tiempo" 42). After Martín Gaité's death, Fortún's books remained in the family library (Constenla).

¹⁶¹ José Teruel (2006) explains that Martín Gaité started her research on Fortún around 1986, on the occasion of Fortún's hundredth anniversary. Although she met Dorao, who focused her research on Fortún's biography, Ana María Martín Giate stated that Martín Gaité had been tempted to research more about Fortún's life until the end of her life (394).

5. Ana María Matute (1925-2014)

This section shows the relationship between Ana María Matute's work and that of Fortún through two of her novels: *Primera memoria* and *Los Abel*. The characteristics of the *chicas raras* exposed in the first section of this chapter are analyzed in the two main characters of the novels: Matia and Valba. These are compared with those of Celia, analyzed in Chapter 2. This section is divided into three points common to the novels and to the evolution of Celia's character: Family relationships, social awareness and literary vocation. The interviews in which Matute has referred to Fortún reinforce the thesis that Fortún's contribution has been fundamental to Spanish narrative in the 20th century, especially the writing of women. Matute, who admitted becoming a writer after reading children's classics (mostly the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen), also read Celia in her childhood and acknowledged Fortún as one of the few –if not the only– notable Spanish children's authors when she was a young reader (Vera 2014). A fascination with childhood and a devotion to the classics of children's literature, such as Andersen, connect Fortún and Matute.

“¿Sabes lo que es sentirse la *niña rara*, la niña incomprendida?

Tanto en el colegio como en casa era la rarita” (“Imprescindibles” 2013)

In “Arrojo y descalabros de la lógica infantil,” Martín Gaité vindicated the enthusiasm with which she and other contemporary authors (Gil de Biedma, García Hortelano) read Fortún's work “y confesamos que nos influyó” (101), to which she added: “A Ana María Matute convendría preguntárselo” (101). Although there are no such direct testimonies to Fortún's influence on Matute, both authors agreed on their respect and fascination with childhood. Matute's narrative is notable for its connection with children, for its vivid recollection of her childhood and the vision of it preserved in her writing. For both Fortún and Matute, childhood is a magical, but not idealized world, always seen from the inside rather than the outside (as is usual). From their point of view, “the others” are the adults, not the children.¹⁶²

Indeed, Matute's childhood shares some characteristics with those of the first Celia. Belonging to a bourgeois family, she spent her childhood between Barcelona and Madrid due to her father's business. This back and forth affected her early relationships, since “No

¹⁶² Ivana Calceglia's study *Crescere nel racconto: Elena Fortún e Ana María Matute* (2019) reinforces this point. Calceglia puts the authors together to discuss the definition of children's literature and to examine the treatment of the world of children in their works. However, she does not establish a relationship of influence between their writings. I argue that they have so much in common because Celia's reading left a trace (conscious or unconscious) on Matute.

podíamos hacer una amistad profunda porque... Entonces no se daban cuenta, en aquella época, que, para nosotros era bastante negativo aquello porque cuando volvíamos al año siguiente ya éramos diferentes. A esa edad se nota mucho el cambio ¿sabes? Y éramos ... los niños de ninguna parte” (*La niña de los cabellos blancos* 2014). This sense of non-belonging will be translated into her characters, as will be shown in a moment. Also like Celia, Matute had access to the family library, becoming an early reader and writer.¹⁶³

As for the spaces, Matute always felt connected to nature and the rural: she spent the summers in Mansilla de la Sierra, La Rioja, her mother's land where she went to recover from a childhood illness, just like her character *Paulina* (1960) and Teresina, Celia's little sister in *Celia madrecita*. In contrast to the modernity and pollution of the cities, there is the romantic belief explored in Chapter 1 that nature heals, and Matute finds in the rural a reality very different from the urban bourgeois world in which she and her siblings grew up –as it happened to Celia in *Celia en el mundo* and *Celia y sus amigos*. Moreover, in the countryside, in contact with nature, Matute made new friends and discovered another social reality. Poverty and hunger were part those children's lives, which impacted Matute: “Estas cosas me arañaban por dentro. Me daba cuenta de que había algo ahí que no funcionaba. Que lo que nos decían, lo que debía de ser, y de funcionar, y la religión y todo esto, resulta que luego, en la vida, no funcionaba aquello... no ligaba” (Matute 2014). Matute shares with Fortún the sense of social injustice explored in Chapter 2 through her periodical collaborations and of course the books of Celia, denouncing the different opportunities available to children of different socioeconomic realities, and the hypocrisy of adults (parents and nuns) by permitting this.

The works analysed in this section are *Los Abel*, finalist of the 1948 Nadal Prize, and *Primera memoria*, winner of the 1959 edition.¹⁶⁴ Both novels are *bildungsroman*¹⁶⁵ narrated

¹⁶³ The book *Cuentos de infancia* (2002), with a prologue by Ana María Moix, reproduces in a facsimile way the stories that Matute wrote when she was five years old. In a letter to Rosa Chacel in 1965 (published in *De mar a mar*, 1998), Moix acknowledges that she began writing thanks to Matute. “Yo empecé a escribir leyendo su obra, a los 12 años, y desde entonces he seguido su obra con un interés hecho casi fervor. Tal vez es por eso que aún la sigo leyendo” (29). If Laforet wrote the magazine *Grupitos* with her schoolmates in Las Palmas (Caballé and Rolón 2010), Matute wrote and illustrated the magazine *Shibil*, which her brothers were impatiently waiting for (“Imprescindibles” 2013). In 1943, when she was only seventeen, Matute wrote her first novel, *Pequeño teatro*, which impressed Ignacio Agustí, who agreed to publish some of her stories in the literary magazine *Destino* (*Pequeño teatro* would not be published until eleven years later, after winning the Premio Planeta 1954).

¹⁶⁴ By then she would have been awarded the Gijón prize (*Fiesta al noroeste*, 1952), the Planeta (*Pequeño teatro*, 1954) and the Nacional de Literatura (*Los hijos muertos*, 1958). In 2010 she received the Cervantes Prize (2010), confirming her status as one of the fundamental writers of contemporary literature in Spanish.

¹⁶⁵ This formula was also used by Matute in *Luciérnagas* (1949), *Algunos muchachos* (1964) and *Paraíso inhabitado* (2008).

from the voice of a girl who, like Matute herself, has witnessed the war and grows up during the post-war period. As expected from the biblical reference in the title, *Los Abel* tells the story of a family and the clashes between the siblings, referring to the fratricidal civil war that had devastated the country and the childhood of Matute and her generation. The family name presages a tragic end, and does not disappoint. The children protagonists, but above all Valba, suffer the anguish, tension and suffocation of the search for their place in the world. The voice of teenage Valba connects the novel with the first Nadal winner, *Nada*, which had so much impact on critics and readers. The novel is actually a manuscript signed by the protagonist, Valba Abel, which another character finds in the abandoned family home, years after the story was written. The story of the Abels is unveiled from the eyes of a fourteen year old.

Matute continues with the narrative strategy of the voice of a teenage girl in *Primera memoria*. Matia's efforts not to abandon the world of childhood are in vain in the context of the civil war. The island to which she has been sent by her authoritarian grandmother is also a metaphor for the intervening space in which she finds herself without being able to turn back. The Civil War, a conflict created by the adults, is represented by that of the children of the island, who also form sides, and marginalize and oppress the weak. Between compulsory Latin lessons and boat trips, Matia feels homesick and suffocates from becoming an adult, turning the novel into a childhood elegy.

3.1 Family relations

Valba, the teenage protagonist of *Los Abel*, has the characteristics of a *chica rara* who, like Andrea in *Nada* or Marta in *La isla y los demonios*, “pertenece a una familia rara, y esa puede considerarse la fuente de sus problemas frente a la sociedad” (“La chica” 113). However, as Martín Gaité acknowledges, “no tiene por qué ser siempre necesariamente así, sino justamente al revés,” that is, the characters, like Natalia and Elvira in *Entre visillos*, are not in “un entorno familiar que cuestione las normas de convivencia habituales, sino todo lo contrario. Y, sin embargo, ellas, cada una a su manera, sí lo hacen. Las dos son chicas raras y su comportamiento está presidido por el inconformismo” (113). This was also the case with Celia, who grows up in a wealthy family which does not question the status quo.

The ‘strange’ circumstances of the Abel siblings (Aldo, Gus, Tito, Valba, Juan, Tavi and “la pequeña” Olivia) are living in a remote house in a ravine. Motherless, they are known in the village for behaving like “unos salvajes” (30). From an early age, Valba has been

plagued by the problem of the *chicas raras*: the feeling of not belonging and their consequent desire to escape. Valba's voice is brave and moving. She always speaks of a strong voice inside her that pushes her forward, that does not want her life to be ostracized from the family. However, the same voice sometimes tells her that there is no remedy, that her destiny is to stay within the four walls of that house or to marry someone she does not love. Despite the moments of despair, her inner voice is a compass that firmly guides her. In the face of adversity, Valba shows resilience by convincing herself that the situations she deeply rejects are temporary, as are the relationships that disgust her, and that she will find a way out so as not to betray herself (“Yo no seré así, yo nunca seré así” 175).

Valba's first-person account begins when she returns home from boarding school where she studied for eight years. At the age of fourteen, she feels a certain lack of adaptation to her family environment: “Me sentía a veces muy niña ... Otras veces, en cambio, me invadía una atroz sensación, con deseos de abandonarlos a todos, de huir no sé a dónde, ni a qué” (37). She does not feel at ease, she knows she is not a child, but she does not want to be what she seems to be destined to be: someone's wife. However, there is not as much reference to the adults as if they were the enemy. Her mother, who died while she was at boarding school, was quite permissive of children. On the other hand, her relationship with her father is confusing. Having been at the boarding school for most of her childhood, she has not had much contact with him or her siblings.

As seen in the protagonists of *Nada*, *La isla* or *Entre visillos*, motherlessness is a characteristic of the *chicas raras*, which is also shared with Celia. In much more traumatic circumstances Valba also loses her father when he collapses while they take a walk in the woods without Valba being able to do anything to save his life. Unable to move him, she has to wait for Aldo to appear, who will carry the body on the back of his horse, in an epic and memorable image that turns the elder brother into a hero and the new head of the family.

As far as education is concerned, Valba despises the nuns at the school where she was boarded for eight years. However, when she decides to go to the city after her father's death, she sends her younger sister to suffer the same fate. Or perhaps precisely to avoid it. Far from the “Celia madrecita” who sacrifices her studies to take care of her little sisters when her mother dies, Valba locks up her little orphan sister with a letter to the principal which says: “envío esta pequeña para que estranguléis en ella cualquier anhelo de vida, a fuerza de dulzona hipocresía” (135). As disheartening as it may seem for Valba to abandon her little sister in a boarding school that will drown any hint of personality in her, her motives are

more complex and profound: “Era preciso encerrarla allí, para que no se pareciese a mí” (136).

Valba decides to “encerrar” her sister in a school/prison similar to the ones from which Celia ran away several times. This is not Valba's only reference to the school as a prison, for when she saw the prison on the outskirts of the city, “No podía evitarlo: todo en ella me sugería la idea de un gran colegio, sucio y absurdo. Todo en ella me recordaba vagamente el colegio de Tavi. Era de una grisácea comicidad aquel juego de hombres encerrados, con sus horarios y sus horas de recreo y sus castigos” (196). Martín Gaité had made a similar comparison about the school next to Natalia's high school in *Entre visillos* (based on Martín Gaité's own memories, as she acknowledges in *El cuarto de atrás*).

Valba wants to save her sister from the feeling of being a *chica rara* like her, unable to find the “vocación” her father demanded of her, or her place in the world. The nuns, on the other hand, will provide her with an education based on conformity and submission, to try to prevent her from knowing herself and her possibilities. Valba considers it easier to live in conformity with a life that has been previously planned by society than to constantly ask herself what her role in the world is, unable to reject the models of caregiver and mother that are expected of her. At the same time, taking care of “la pequeña” would force Valba to give up the search for herself, and to be the only one of her siblings who cannot leave the home to make her own life. In this way, Matute exposes the differences between being a boy and a girl, since, as will be explored in the next section, Valba's brothers do not need to confront these decisions. In the end, Valba brings her sister to the boarding school and leaves for the city.

This relationship with the school is reminiscent of Celia's relationship with the nuns and of Matute herself, who confessed: “Era muy mala estudiante. No me interesaba nada lo que aquellas señoras me decían y me contaban. ... ¿Sabes qué pasa? Que un niño no puede hacer caso de una persona en la que no cree. De una persona a la que considera una idiota. Y a mí me pasaba, que aquellas pobres señoras me parecían idiotas de solemnidad” (“Imprescincibles” 2013). Valba, just like Matute as a girl, dismisses the nuns by not considering them worthy of her respect. Like Fortún does in *Celia en el colegio*, and as examined in the second chapter of this thesis, Matute criticizes education in submission and questions the authority of the adults just because they are.

If Matute thought the nuns were “idiotas de solemnidad,” her sister María del Pilar did not have a very different opinion. In fact, in the documentary *La niña de los cabellos blancos* (“Imprescincibles” 2013) María del Pilar Matute declared that Ana María saved her

childhood, since when she came home from school “me leía *Celia, Heidi*... bueno, era una gozada.” Which proves again that, by portraying a girl who does not conform with abuse, Fortún made the lives of other girls, like Ana María and María del Pilar Matute, more enjoyable, and provided an alternative to the submission they were forced into at their very own school/prisons.

The feeling of uprooting mentioned above, which Matute herself defined as “los niños de ninguna parte” (“Imprescincibles” 2013), is shared by Matia, the protagonist of *Primera Memoria*, who warns at the beginning of the novel: “quien no haya sido, desde los nueve a los catorce años, atraído y llevado de un lugar a otro, de unas a otras manos, como un objeto, no podrá entender mi desamor y rebeldía de aquel tiempo” (12). The adults have been passing her from one to the other as an object of their property and have taken responsibility for her education after the death of her mother. Matia was left in the care of her mistress Mauricia when her father went to the front line until, at twelve years old, her grandmother sent for her to be taken to the island when Mauricia became ill. She was rebellious in her attitudes: “no desaprovechaba ocasión para demostrar a mi abuela que estaba allí contra mi voluntad” (12). Nobody had asked her if she wanted to be there.

Matia rejects adults, does not want to be part of their world and is terrified of becoming a woman. She expresses her anguish at approaching adulthood and recalls her childhood as a lost paradise, especially the years spent in the countryside, on her father's farm, surrounded by her dolls, the little theatre and her readings. Free time play in the woods was over when, at the age of twelve, her grandmother warned her: “Te domaremos” (13). Like Celia and Valba, she was torn from her own world and locked up in a regulated place that annihilated her imagination of which she could only escape when she was expelled for kicking a nun: “Sin saber por qué ni cómo, allí me sentí malévola y rebelde” (17), as opposed to the civilizing space school was supposed to be, which should have fixed the “embrutecimiento” of her time in nature.

While Valba and her siblings eventually had a ridiculous tutor by the name of don Pirulo (notably as Fortún's “el mago Pirulo”),¹⁶⁶ El Chino was Matia and her cousin Borja's teacher while they cannot go back to school due to the war. El Chino is exploited by Matia's grandmother and by Borja himself, who blackmails him by revealing that he tried to abuse

¹⁶⁶ At this point it is no longer a coincidence that the teacher takes the name of one of the characters that Fortún created for *Gente Menuda* and with whom Matute should be familiar. The magician Pirulo, who has his own play in the collection *Teatro para niños* (1942), had been created by Fortún together with Roenueces and Bismuto and his adventures had been published in *Gente Menuda* since 1931.

him one day in the forest. When the war ends, the cousins' paths separate, each being sent to a school to continue their studies.

At her grandmother's house, perpetuator of patriarchal control, Matia feels the bitterness of having left her childhood behind, with her books and experiences of her father's house. Gorogó, her rag doll, is the only glimpse of her childhood she can hold on to. In this way, *Primera memoria* is a novel of discovery in which Matia enters a world of betrayals, of hateful adults and of children who learn the bad things about them. The grandmother is the repressive element of the family unit, her authority represented in her cane. She is usually described using animalizations and, like Angustias (*Nada*) and Pino (*La isla*), she is the continuator of the patriarchal discourse and the guardian of the traditional social forms.

Motherless, Matia is abandoned by her father and confined to an island with no name, –like Marta in *La isla*. Matia's father was fighting on the Republican side in the war, while her cousin Borja's father was fighting on the National side (“Mi padre es coronel y puede mandar fusilar a quien le parezca” 65). The violence of the children's games on the island dismantles the cliché of childish innocence, but at the same time it serves as a representation of the cruelty of the adults, showing the hypocrisy of being surprised by the violent behavior of children who play at imitating the actions of their elders. Matia and Borja were on one side, facing “los otros.” On the other hand, the war also took the adults out of their routine, distracting the lives of the children, where there was room for the unexpected: phone calls, visits or news on the radio altered the life of their nameless island, in “el perdido punto en el mundo que era la casa de la abuela” (10).

Challenging the ideas of innocence and purity that older people expect from children, Borja knew how to pretend: “Era dulce y suave, digo, cuando le convenía aparecer así ante determinadas personas mayores. Pero nunca vi redomado pillo, embustero, traidor, mayor que él; ni, tampoco, otra más triste criatura” (12). Borja keeps pretending until he betrays Matia at the end of the novel, “sonreía tratando de ser amable, como cuando pedía algo a la abuela” (188). However, looking back from her narrative, Matia comes to understand the circumstances of Borja's behaviour and somehow forgives him: “(Tal vez, pienso ahora, con toda tu bravuconería, con tu soberbio y duro corazón, pobre hermano mío, ¿no eras acaso un animal solitario como yo, como casi todos los muchachos del mundo?)” (35).

The loneliness of childhood that Matute insists on so much translates into secrets and silence on Matia's island. In dreamlike landscapes, boats are a means of transport and a place to store stolen treasures, such as the money, cards, liquor and cigarettes Matia and Borja used to play with on the sly, or the carbine with its bullets and the knives from their dead

grandfather's room. One of the scenes that will change Matia's life will take place in this landscape, the discovery of a body on the shore. “Ese hombre está muerto, lo han matado. Ese hombre está muerto” (43) Matia repeats herself, in shock.¹⁶⁷ “Había oído muchas cosas y visto, de refilón, las fotografías de los periódicos, pero aquello era real” (45). It was so real that this man was someone's father, Manuel's, who asked for the boat to take the body. In a scene as shocking as the death of Valba's father (*Los Abel*), the boat slowly disappears into the sea, rowed by Manuel. No one on the island helped that family, and no one was supposed to know that they did. Matia and Borja had to continue “como si nada hubiera pasado” (52), for fear of being accomplices to something, of positioning themselves in someone's favour.

Again, children are the victims of adult conflicts, and facts like these create even more distance between the two worlds, as perceived by Matia: “Qué extranjera raza la de los adultos, la de los hombres y las mujeres. Qué extranjeros y absurdos, nosotros” (114). Growing up, from twelve to fourteen years old, Matia does not distinguish well which of those worlds she belongs to in certain moments:

Y yo estaba a punto de convertirme en una mujer. O lo era ya, acaso. sentí las manos frías, en medio del calor. “No, no, que esperen un poco más... un poco más.” Pero ¿quién tenía que esperar? Era yo, solo yo, la que me traicionaba a cada instante. Era yo, yo misma y nadie más, la que traicionaba a Gorogó y a la Isla de Nunca Jamás. Pensé: ¿Qué clase de monstruo soy ahora?” Cerré los ojos para no sentir la mirada diminuta-enorme del dragón de San Jorge. “¿Qué clase de monstruo que ya no tengo mi niñez y no soy, de ninguna manera, una mujer?” (148)

Unable to stop her development, Matia's conflict is enormous. Losing her childhood means losing the only security she has ever had, her doll, her theatre, her books, the company of her most beloved objects. Becoming a woman means becoming one of those “(Oh, sucias y cursis, patéticas personas mayores)” (177).

¹⁶⁷ Matute remembered the impact on her of seeing a man killed during the war: “pero no muerto, matado. Tenía barba, y la mano así, y un trozo de pan y chocolate. Y entonces yo me di cuenta... tuve por primera vez la conciencia de lo que era la muerte, porque hasta entonces era una palabra ... Aquel hombre tenía ahí, en la mano todavía abierta, un trozo de pan con chocolate que no se había podido comer ... A partir de la guerra yo me di cuenta de muchísimas cosas que nunca más se me olvidaron y me marcaron para siempre. La guerra fue una escuela tremenda. Dura, pero provechosa. Me di cuenta de que ‘nos han engañado’. El mundo no es como nos han contado. Es otra cosa” (“Imprescindibles” 2013).

3.2 Social awareness

In line with the *chica rara* character model, Valba doesn't feel the slightest interest in her physical appearance. She is reproached by a friend of her mother's ("Qué poco femenina eres" 39), her father, and even her brother Aldo: "Sí, debes peinarte mejor, como dice papá, ¿sabes? La verdad, Valba, pareces un potro" (93). Valba's wild appearance is compared to Jacqueline, her only friend and representative of the traditional model of woman promoted by Franco's ideology and popularized in the *novela rosa*. Jacqueline is a *joven casadera* woman like Gertru in *Entre visillos*, worried about her appearance and so excited about her future as a wife and mother that she prefers not to take notice of her boyfriend's cheating. When Valba is asked why she does not paint herself, she answers sarcastically: "Sería peor" (153). Valba, who had grown up in isolation and among male siblings, finds herself insecure in her first interactions with Jacqueline: "Me parece raro hablar con una chica. No sé si sabré qué decirle, y a lo mejor me dan ganas de marcharme" (98).

Running away is always a *chica rara*'s favourite option. It is, in fact, the way in which Valba's story begins: "Como voy a irme pronto, he estado hoy recorriendo la casa despacio, creo que por última vez" (33). Since she was a child, Valba had lived by the windows, from where she saw people arrive at the house in the ravine and from where she looked at the stars at night, feeling "una repulsión hacia la tierra y las gentes; y un deseo inconcreto de liberación. 'Necesito huir de todo lo conocido', pensaba. No era curiosidad hacia una vida diferente: más bien una ansia a la que no veía límite posible" (63). Suffocation is the driving force behind Valba's journey to find herself and her place in the world.

The suffocation that Valba experiences is the result of the limiting role that society has imposed on her. Among them is the education of "la pequeña" orphan sister, making her at only fourteen the little mother that Celia was, while her male siblings enjoy the freedom that their gender gives them and explore different facets (military, artistic). However, as we know, Valba will not assume this obligation, showing an attitude contrary to the care that is supposed to be given to women and that Andrea had also shown with the baby of the house of Aribau. Caught between expectations, Valba does not find the way to challenge them and wonders "¿Es que va a suceder siempre lo mismo? ¿Voy a esperar aquí algo que ni siquiera puedo soñar, acibillada a sensaciones?" (90). Within its limitations, a love affair with the young doctor, Eloy, seems a way out. However, Valba feels the conflict of leaving one limited existence to enter another.

Comprendí por qué temía a Eloy. Porque me arrastraba a la fuerza a una existencia limitada. Yo no quería apagarme lentamente en su vivir en declive: asiéndonos uno a otro como un último recurso. No quería los despojos de su existencia gris. Le huía. Mientras fuera posible le huiría. Y me imaginé unida a aquel hombre de dientes rotos y muñecas desnudas que iba de un lado a otro paseando instrumentos. (90)

The contradiction of the feeling of love as one of freedom and the restrictive consequences of a future as a grey wife accentuate Valba's despair: "El amor era el principio de la vida, y parecía extraño que el amor de Eloy me apagase y me matara" (99). "Estoy cansada de no vivir –pensé" (105). Her father's insistence that each of his sons find his vocation feeds Valba's frustration, unable to "Encontrar mi puesto," which his father asked for as a simple thing (107). The mother's lack of guidance is evident in the scene where, full of hatred, Valba runs to find her photograph "La rompí en muchos, muchísimos pedazos, como si así me fuera posible vengar aquella vida estéril que nos había dado" (123).

The death of her father in the forest, in only her company, the unexpected urgency of death reveals the mediocrity of her own life: "Su muerte hacía más patente mi vida: aquella vida mía que estaba traicionando, dejándola languidecer en las noches calurosas, bajo el peso de estrellas. No; no era posible sumergirse en el amor de Eloy ... Era preciso amar, odiar, sufrir y reírse de vez en cuando. Era preciso arrancarle una voz a la existencia, aunque sólo fuera una voz" (138). The search for her own voice was to leave her sister in the school, despite the confusion and fear that this entailed, in which she was as soon surprised by her nervous laughter (like that of Marta who irritated Pino in *La isla*) as she recognized her desire to cry.

Valba "no había conocido nada tan intenso, tan maravilloso como aquella huida" (138) that led her to finally start a life in the city. Walking without responsibility, discovering the streets and a certain rebellion against what had been expected of her: "Me gustaba tanto sentirme así, vagando sola, sin ruta, sin proyectos..." (142). On one of her walks alone, Valba enters a church on New Year's Eve and "Una mujer gruesa y vieja se acercó a sisearme con reproche que llevaba la cabeza descubierta. Me toqué el cabello con las manos, me levanté y salí de allí" (181). As Celia was noticed at school, Valba is also a *sinsombrero*, the kind of young woman explored in Chapter 2 who does not compromise her appearance or behavior to social customs. However, Galo appears on the way to her independence, creating a new conflict for her. Valba admits that she did not go to the city to seek a relationship, but to discover her own path, to open her horizons, to live. But she is alone and does not reject

his company: “Galo era la libertad, y su boca tenía un gusto amargo,” (195) that of the paradox of having a partner as security to become independent.

Finding the vocation her father was asking for, she continued to pursue it, until one night she came to the conclusion that it was “‘Vivir’, me dije. Esta era la única vocación: la de cada uno de nosotros, la que cada uno interpretaba a su modo, ‘Defínete’, me dije. Una súbita y salvaje alegría me azotaba. ‘Defínete por fin’” (200). Taking charge of her own life is challenging enough for Valba to consider it her vocation. For her brothers the process seems much easier, as they can choose a destiny without being confronted with what is expected of them. Valba, on the other hand, has to challenge the rules to define herself, and against the clock: “Yo no aguardaría el amor cansado de un hombre que decidiera casarse conmigo ... Los años galopaban como los minutos; yo me quedaría un día muerta en un camino; podía durar sólo unas horas o tal vez medio siglo” (201).

Valba decides to walk the path, with its risks and consequences, and not to be tied to a love of a *novela rosa* “no iba a haber noches de color de rosa para mí” (204). On that night of self-discovery, sensuality and determination come together, wishing that her relationship with Galo would be the escape she so desires, but feeling at the same time that this adventure would soon end, leaving her humiliated again. In fact, Galo leaves and Valba assumes his decision “Una noche roja no me daba ningún derecho sobre un gris amanecer” (205), to then receive lessons on the importance of love in existence, “Parecía un profesor,” (205) as Pablo, in *La isla*, treats them paternalistically when they distance themselves from them.

Y así me fui de allí, de la ciudad pequeña y provinciana donde creí que iba a superar el primer capítulo de mi vida. ... Y no había dulzura de arrepentimiento en mi regreso, no había nostalgia de hijo pródigo. Llevaba tal vez una maldición dentro de mí, nací con ella tal vez, e iba pesándome un dolor hecho de decepciones y confundiéndose con ella. (207)

As for Andrea, this first escape will not be the final one for Valba, who declares that “No voy a casarme con nadie, y menos aún con [Eloy]” (215), since, as Martín Gaité explained in *El cuarto de atrás*, marriage was the end of everything, where the novels and the lives of their protagonists ended. While Andrea goes to Madrid, Valba stays alone in the family home before leaving again, leaving her manuscript in a drawer.

In *Primera memoria*, Matia's grandmother insists on controlling her education, her behaviour and even her physical appearance, since “es lo único que sirve a una mujer, si no tiene dinero” (119). This concern justifies continuous examinations of her hands, eyes, teeth and hair (“lacio hasta la desesperación” as C.'s), which will guarantee her attractiveness as a

joven casadera. The freckles on Matia's face and the scratches on her legs denote her preference for the outdoors, which distinguishes her from young women of her own age, confined to the interior of the home. However, her grandmother remains hopeful that Matia's disinterest in fitting into the feminine ideal she is required to live up to will change when her body does: "Estás tan delgada... En fin, supongo que es cosa de la edad. Hay que esperar que te vayas transformando, poco a poco. De aquí a un par de años tal vez no te conozcamos" (120).

These words are reminiscent of those that Andrea (*Nada*) also heard from the grown-ups when she was "una niña cetrina y delgaducha, de esas a quienes las visitas nunca alaban por lindas y para cuyos padres hay consuelos reticentes... esas palabras que los niños, jugando al parecer absortos y ajenos a la conversación, recogen ávidamente: 'Cuando crezca, seguramente tendrá un tipo bonito', 'Los niños dan muchas sorpresas al crecer'..." (217). As Fortún denounced, adults talk in front of children about their expectations, as if they did not hear them.

As for orphanhood, the absence of Valba's mother (*Los Abel*) gives her the freedom to discover adult life on her own terms, but Matia's orphanhood relegates her to the orders of her grandmother. As the only representative of traditional values in the absence of her parents, the grandmother sees the need to correct Matia, separating her from the only maternal figure she had had, her mistress Mauricia. Matia's accumulated loneliness, the lack of a maternal or paternal figure, or her forced separation from them, make her react violently when her friend Manuel, who is ignored by everyone, tells her about his love for Sanamo, an old fool from the island:

Deseé fugazmente ser mala, cruel. (Y no se me ocurría nada que decirle contra las palabras que me dolían: '*le quiero mucho*'. Pues sólo se me atropellaban tonterías como: 'Pues yo quiero mucho a Gorogó: pues yo quiero mucho a aquella bola de cristal, y quiero mucho, quiero mucho...'. Qué dolor tan grande me llenaba. ¿Cómo es posible sentir tanto dolor a los catorce años? Era un dolor sin gastar. (149)

In her loneliness, Matia cannot find anyone who she loves, she can only name her most beloved objects. Similarly, she is not sure if she has ever been loved, and is only able to compare herself to a beloved fictional character, Andersen's "la Joven Sirena quería que la amasen, pero nunca la amó nadie. ... Acaso, solo deseaba que alguien me amara alguna vez. No lo recuerdo bien" (83).

To this feeling of not belonging is added that of asphyxiation due to the impositions of her grandmother and the coercion of Borja, who, like el Chino, threatens to expose some

of her secrets. The need to escape is frustrated by the vigilance of adults and children. Not surprisingly, her grandmother does not want to see them “vagabundear” (26), but it is even less negotiable that Matia accompanied Borja when he joined the other children. The differences in the type of freedom accessible to children begins to become evident as Matia grows up, even more so if they plan to spend nights away from home “Dos de las veces que fueron al Naranjal les acompañé hasta el Port, a despedirles, sin que la abuela lo supiese. Luego volvía a casa, en la Leontina, odiando ser mujer” (98). To the limitations imposed on the children, Matia has to add those of being a woman, even though she is not yet a woman:

Contra todo, al regresar en la Leontina –desterrada por ser muchacha (ni siquiera una mujer, ni siquiera) de la excursión al Naranjal–, contra todos ellos, subía a mi habitación, sacaba de bajo los pañuelos y los calcetines a mi pequeño Negro, miraba su carita y me preguntaba por qué ya no le podía amar. (117)

Caught between two repressed social groups, children and women, Matia drowns in the loss of her childhood, which no longer allows her to love her rag doll. Gorogó (el Negro), who had been her only interlocutor, is discovered by tía Emilia, who thinks he is a sleeping doll. This outrages Matia, who thinks to herself: “Este es para otras cosas; para viajar y contarle injusticias. No es un muñeco para quererle, estúpida” (127). At the same time, according to the interpretation of adults, when they grew up, neither children nor Matia maintained their supposed childish innocence, so they could no longer share games away from the vigilance of adults.

Within that prison, Matia began to imitate Borja, in order not to be overwhelmed “Se puso a reír con malicia, y yo también reí, procurando entrecerrar los ojos como él” (67). Interestingly, Borja's defiant laughter is sometimes associated with the feminine, with “los labios encendidos como una mujerzuela” (19), or when “volvió a reírse de aquella forma casi femenina que tanto me irritaba” (55). This comparison may be due to the chain of feminine vigilance that have been insisted upon in this chapter, promoted by the Sección Femenina to ensure the transmission of the traditional values that it defended and exemplified with the family members who guard *chicas raras*.

On the slightest occasion, Matia would escape with Manuel to visit Jorge de Son Major, a mysterious character on the island with whom all the children seemed to be in love (and with whom it is suggested that there is a family relationship, as it is suggested that Matia's hair is reddish, like that of Manuel and the fascinating Jorge). Borja, jealous of Matia's closeness to Jorge, threatens to expose her and calls her a pervert “¡Enamorada a los catorce años de un hombre de cincuenta!” (206), to which Matia replies “Tú más pervertido,

puesto que eres un muchacho, y también...” (206). It is then when Borja boasts of his privileges for being a man and mentions her father that ends up disappointing Matia:

–¡Bah, cosas de chicos! ¡Lo tuyo es peor! A ti te meterían en un correccional por perversa. ... ¡Una niña de catorce años, con dos amantes! ... encima tienes malos antecedentes: tu padre...

Me levanté y le zarandeeé por un brazo. Le hubiera llenado de bofetadas, de golpes, de patadas, si no estuviera tan asustada. De un tirón se rasgó la sutil neblina, el velo, que aún me mantenía apartada del mundo. De un brutal tirón apareció todo aquello que me resistía a conocer. (231-232)

The abandonment of childhood, which had been gradual, is consumed in this scene, from which there is no longer any deception about the cruelty of the world, of people, whatever their age.

Although Matia and Valba acknowledge their limitations as opposed to their male counterparts, Matute refused being “tagged” as a feminist, insisting that it was obvious and logical to strive for equality and that it was unnecessary to describe oneself with a word in particular (“Imprescindibles” 2013). As it has been mentioned and illustrated with Martín Gaité, “There are apparent contradictions in Spain between women writers who express feminist concerns in their work but deny classification as ‘feminist’” (Ochoa 25). This has an interesting relationship with the recognition of Matute through literary awards. Referring to the Cervantes Prize, she said: “¡Botaría de alegría, si me lo dieran! ¿Para qué voy a mentir? Pero no lo espero. No porque sea mujer y piense que hay discriminación hacia las escritoras sino porque no les debo gustar. Así de sencillo” (*La razón* 2008). With this *excusatio non petita accusatio manifesta*,¹⁶⁸ Matute referred to the controversial distribution of the awards, which had only recognized the work of two women (the Spanish philosopher María Zambrano in 1988 and the Cuban poet Dulce María Loynaz in 1992) when Matute finally won the award in its 35th edition in 2010.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Matute was selected to join Real Academia de la Lengua Española in 1998. In her speech she dedicated a few words to the poet Carmen Conde, a contemporary of Fortún and the first woman to become a member of the RAE (in 1979. Elena Quiroga joined in 1984). Since 1998, the year Matute joined, the following women have been appointed: Carmen Iglesias (2002), Margarita Salas (2003), Soledad Puértolas (2010), Inés Fernández Ordóñez (2011), Carme Riera (2013), Aurora Egido (2014), Clara Janés (2016) and Paz Battaner (2017), that is, a total of eleven women since the RAE was founded in 1713 (RAE).

¹⁶⁹ Since Matute won the Cervantes Prize in 2010, only two other women have received the award: Mexican Elena Poniatowska in 2013 and Uruguayan Ida Vitale in 2018.

3.3 Literary vocation

Both Matia's and Valba's worlds, are strongly influenced by writing. Valba finds her way to explain the history of her family and her self-discovery from her own point of view. This results in the manuscript of the novel *Los Abel*. This section focuses on *Primera memoria*, in which again the love of books is instilled (actively or passively) in the protagonist by her father. Matia treasures the books her now-absent father gave her that represent her connection to him. This relationship had already appeared in *Celia*, through her stories and the notebook where she writes, and in *Nada* and *La isla*, where Andrea arrives in Barcelona carrying books from her father's library, and Marta takes her father's books that were left in her grandfather's attic, respectively. Like solitude as a living space, reading is for the *chicas raras* an instrument of escape and connection rather than knowledge. This type of paternal orphanhood also has the characteristic of not being limiting, but of opening up worlds through books.

Sometimes, the stories they read make the protagonists feel alone or lost, they feel it is unfair that they have no family, but at the same time reading brings them stories where they see themselves reflected without a patriarchal figure that controls their movements. In any case, the fact that it is the fathers and not the mothers who own a library is not a coincidence, but the result of the mothers' lack of formal education. While men did have access to education, women faced many prejudices if they wanted to study or train beyond high school, as experienced by Celia and explained by C.

Furthermore, in *Primera memoria* we can see the intertextuality that has been examined in Fortún, which mixed Celia's adventures with the stories that the character had read and that inevitably accompanied her. To such an extent are the stories of who Matia is, of her identity, that it incorporates passages from *Peter Pan* or *The Little Mermaid* in transcendental moments of her life. Matute was aware of the importance of children's stories and defended them from the prejudices of a biased canonical view: "todavía, en mi época, ... algunos escritores importantes, que no quiero nombrar, me decían: '¿Por qué haces eso, si es literatura menor?' No hay literatura menor, hay Literatura, y nada más, buena y mala, y nada más" (Ayuso).

Symbolically, on her arrival on the island, Matia misses her books, which were left behind and had been her company:

Ah, sí, y mis álbumes y mis libros: "Kay y Gerda, en su jardín sobre el tejado", "La Joven Sirena abrazada a la estatua", "Los Once Príncipes Cisnes". Y sentí una rabia

sorda contra mí misma. Y contra la abuela, porque nadie me recordó eso, y ya no lo tenía. Perdido, perdido, igual que los saltamontes verdes, que las manzanas de octubre, que el viento en la negra chimenea. (16)

Matia had lost her shelter of books, but not the stories she read in them, as they would accompany her during her stay on the island. With Borja, they had created another safe space for them, the lodge. There “hallábamos el único refugio en la desesperante casa” (20), as C. had found in her back room. When this space was not safe enough due to her distrust of Borja, Matia created her island within the island where she could take refuge from children and adults:

(Dentro del armario, estaba mi pequeño bagaje de memorias: el negro y retorcido hilo de teléfono, con su voz, como una sorprendente sangre sonora. Las manzanas del sobrado, la Isla de Nunca Jamás, con sus limpiezas de primavera)... Pero vivíamos en otra isla. Se veía, sí, que en la isla estábamos como perdidos, rodeados del pavor azul del mar y, sobre todo, de silencio. ... Allí, en la logia, apretaba a mi pequeño Negro Gorogó, que guardaba desde lejana memoria. Aquel que me llevé a Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles, que me quiso tirar a la basura la Subdirectora, a quien propiné la patada, causa de mi expulsión. Aquel que se llamaba unas veces Gorogó –para el que dibujaba diminutas ciudades en las esquinas y márgenes de los libros, inventadas a punta de pluma, con escaleras de caracol, cúpulas afiladas, campanarios y noches asimétricas-, y que otras veces se llamaba simplemente Negro, y era un desgraciado muchacho que limpiaba chimeneas en una ciudad remotísima de Andersen. (116)

Matia's life, her universe, fits into a little piece of her secret closet that connects her to phone calls with her father, her childhood readings and her doll, whom she draws her own kingdom. Her reading of Peter Pan will influence her understanding of Borja's growth, and the role of her adversaries, as well as the children's apparent refusal to grow up:

Tiznado y oscuro, Guiem salió del bosque. Bajó la manga de su jersey hasta cubrirse los dedos, de forma que surgía el gancho, retorcido y siniestro. (*El Capitán Garfio luchó con Peter Pan en los acantilados de la Isla de Nunca Jamás*. Borja, desterrado Peter Pan, como yo misma, *el niño que no quiso crecer volvió de noche a su casa y encontró la ventana cerrada*. Nunca me pareció Borja tan menudo como en aquel momento. *Hizo la limpieza de primavera, cuando la recogida de las hojas, en los bosques de los Niños Perdidos*. Y los mismos Niños Perdidos, todos demasiado niños, de pronto, para entrar en la vida, en el mundo que no queríamos –¿no queríamos?– conocer). (162)

The world that Matia feared to know fed the anguish that her own development caused her, for which she desired an immediate end, a way out, “Algo como un agujero por donde escapar de la vida” (178), as Alice did. The moment to leave the island finally arrives, even if it is to shut herself up in another school. To do this, “Me cortaron las trenzas y me dejaron la melena lacia, rozándome apenas los hombros, echada hacia atrás mediante una cinta de terciopelo negro, que me convertía en una Alicia un tanto sospechosa” (213).¹⁷⁰

At the moment of leaving, picking up her things, Matia feels guilty, responsible, a traitor with the story that Borja has invented to betray Manuel, with the only objective of punishing her. Manuel is innocent but he will go to a reformatory, without Matia showing her face for him. For tía Emilia, that an innocent young man goes to jail does not deserve so much concern: “ya te darás cuenta algún día de que esto son chiquilladas, cosas de niños...”

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

This farewell, to the island and to childhood, leaving Gorogó behind, allows one to recall that of Celia at the end of *Celia en la revolución*, saying goodbye to the beloved objects of her childhood, which she does not know if she will ever see again, among them, “Adiós armarito donde yo guardaba mis juguetes cuando era niña... Adiós... Tal vez no os vuelva a ver... pero os llevo dentro de mi cabeza y podré verlos como un libro de estampas...” (271). Both endings show the effect that the Civil War has on its protagonists, forcing them to leave their childhood behind for good. Loneliness has been present in their lives (and in those of the other *chicas raras*) in the form of various absences¹⁷¹ and it seems that it will continue to accompany them, now consciously.

In the inevitable solitude to which they are forced, Matia and Celia, Valba, Natalia, C., Andrea and Marta, find different refuges where they can take shelter from surveillance,

¹⁷⁰ María Elena Soliño has studied the role of fairy tales and the novela rosa in twentieth-century Spanish culture examining the works of Carmen Martín Gaité, Ana María Matute and Esther Tusquets. These are considered “‘gendered texts,’ since they engage with works that were primarily intended to educate their female target audience” (1). By presenting an overview of the production and reception of Perrault, Grimm and Andersen, Soliño argues that, to this day, fairy-tale stories continue to communicate “cultural notions of morality, sexuality, and patriarchal authority” (27).

¹⁷¹ To the protagonist of *Luciérnagas*, “Siendo muy niña, le sorprendió saber que Sol –tal como la llamaban todos– era como un disfraz, un bello y luminoso fuego que ocultaba aquella palabra oscura: soledad” (11).

abandonment and absences on their journeys. Growing up in a well-off family, Matute had access to reading, but she was also free to devote herself to writing: “Yo tenía que dar forma a algo que había dentro de mí. Eso sí recuerdo. Cuando era muy pequeña, yo decía: ‘yo haré esto’” (betevé 2010). Like Celia, she has access to books and safe time and space to enjoy them, but also the determination to be a writer “Para quejarme de las personas mayores” (betevé 2010). Her mother supported her literary vocation, “Sin embargo, cuando se dio cuenta de lo que yo hacía me apoyó, aunque no dijera nada, y tuvo un gran respeto por ello. Y eso que en aquella época, que una niña saliera escritora era una cosa... [pone cara de escándalo], vaya, de locos. Casi de prohibirlo” (Cañas). As Díaz-Plaja said in her study of girls' novels, the act of writing was one of unheard of subversion.

As a child, Ana María Matute had access to foreign books, her admired classics, the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen. Asked about her references, she admits that her imagery resorts to the Anglo-Saxon world, “porque leí mucho sobre aquellos autores y escenarios durante la infancia, y era muy receptiva a todo eso. Además, en España era realmente muy difícil encontrar autores orientados a un público infantil... Toda la literatura infantil que me llegaba era de autores de fuera, menos alguna excepción contada, como Elena Fortún y su *Celia*...” (Vera 2014). The Celia that she read to her sister María del Pilar when she arrived home from school is the link with a character like her, a “niña rara” with the need to write.

Fortún and Matute coincide in their representation of childhood and the conflict between the child's vision (perceived as innocent and idealistic) and the reality created by adults. The result of this confrontation is disillusionment (or “desencanto,” as in Laforet's analysis), the dropping of Matia's veil as she comes face to face with the cruelty of her peers. As seen in previous chapters and as Fraga (2013) emphasizes, Fortún's identification with childhood was also profound. In her own words: “Ya no podré hacer en mi vida más que obra para chicos. Me encuentro completamente infantil y los problemas de los grandes me tienen casi completamente sin cuidado” (45). Many years later, according to Laforet's testimony, Fortún had confessed to her: “–Yo no sé cómo escribo –me dijo un día–; me sale todo con mucha facilidad y sencillez. Creo que consiste en que nunca he salido del todo de ese mundo de los niños” (45). Similarly, Matute always recognized that her inner child was very much alive and considered that, contrary to belief, “el niño no es un proyecto del hombre que será, sino que el hombre es lo que queda, si es que queda algo, de aquel niño, y, desde luego, no para mejorarlo” (Redondo 32).

6. Concluding remarks

This chapter has demonstrated the profound relationship between Fortún's work and that of three renewers of Spanish narrative: Carmen Laforet, Carmen Martín Gaité and Ana María Matute. The three writers recognized Fortún at different times as an essential figure in their childhood readings, that is, in their discovery of literature. Their statements support the indelible mark that Fortún's work left on their novels, as demonstrated through the study of family relationships and conflict between child and adolescent characters and adults; the characters' awareness of their social inferiority by belonging to two marginalized groups: children and women; and the weight of intertextuality and the characters' interest in reading and writing, which *Celia* pioneered in the 1930s. Fortún's contribution has been fundamental to Spanish narrative in the 20th century, especially the writing of women.

This chapter has explored the connections between Fortún and Laforet, Martín Gaité and Matute in light of the themes previously analysed in *Celia* in Chapter 2. The seven themes explored in Fortún's series have been condensed into three: Family relations (childhood and education), Social awareness (feminism, changing roles of women, social injustice, mobility), and Literary vocation (reality and fiction, intrahistory and autobiography, literary vocation and style). This analysis has proven how Fortún and the *chicas raras* shared, years apart and in very different political and social circumstances, the literary technique of using childhood to express a deep sense of isolation and lack of understanding of the world. *Celia* in the 1920s and the *chicas raras* in the 1940s-50s show the continuity in the literary scene in pre and post-Civil war world through the use of a non-conformist young female character. When *Celia* writes, she rejects fairy tale endings, as in the story with the snail prince explored in Chapter 2. Just as *Celia* doesn't perpetuate the stereotypes of what she has read in her stories, so do the *chicas raras* with what they read in the predominant *novela rosa*, since their authors were conscious that “El vehículo fundamental que fija y pone en circulación tales modelos de conducta es la literatura, o al menos lo ha sido hasta la aparición del cine” (“Estilo amoroso” 177).

From this perspective, the intertextual relation between *Celia* and the *chicas raras* is one that affects them in a liberating way, being able to detach themselves from the success of the *novelas rosa* and follow their precepts. The writers and the characters influenced by Fortún are critical in the way they use their writing, questioning the norm and expressing their values. Natalia writes in her diary; Marta writes her own stories, unable to find an

interlocutor; Andrea, Valba and Matia write their *bildungsroman* from the first person narration, as Celia did.

Conclusion

Seen in its historical context, Elena Fortún's "Celia y su mundo" remains a unique children's book series, which clearly benefits from a feminist lens. The story of Celia sheds light on the pre-war era in Spain, but also on the period during and after the conflict. Read as a character study of the protagonist the books are essentially stories about resolution in which Celia is an example of someone who uses the events of her own life to create her future and overcome oppression, thus encouraging agency in her readers. However, the end of the protagonist as the antithesis of what she had dreamed of becoming as a little girl, also provides an important vision on how historic and cultural events such as war or death can change the life of a child.

As explored in Chapter 1, Fortún's contribution was writing from the children's point of view, which gave an innovative twist to children's literature. However, the use of marginal characters to convey inconvenient truths is a common theme in Spanish literature. In *Celia*, Fortún used the literary strategy of a girl versus patriarchy, confronting authority figures and institutions as once did the girl of the Cid, the *pícaros* and Don Quixote, who also questioned their status quo. Using this literary scheme, considering herself an outsider, Celia dares to say what others will not, raising questions about uncontested issues.

As examined in Chapter 2 through a close reading of the series, the character created during the progressive period as an emancipatory figure undergoes a regression as she grows older from book to book because of historical events like the Civil War and the state's system of repression through censorship that also affected Fortún's personal life. As it has been shown, although there is a tendency to recall the non-conformist girl created before the Civil War, this is not the same Celia in later volumes. In these stories, the adolescent is an aberration of the original and is forced to conform as she grows up in an increasingly hostile world. The historical, social, and cultural circumstances in which the stories were written shaped Celia's character, who shows herself not only as a dynamic psychological entity, but also as a dynamic entity located within that particular social and cultural context. It seems like the advice Fortún gave to Laforet after she got married, could have been written for Celia: "Sea usted feliz muchos años y acepte con alegría la responsabilidad de vivir una vida que no estaba destinada a usted" (Fortún and Laforet 30).

As it has been argued, Fortún's work led to the creation of the *chicas raras* in Spanish literature during the 1940s and 1950s. The style of her dialogues, the social commitment, the point of view of children, and, most importantly, the point of view of the girl and the

empowering messages of independence, emerge years later in literature for and by female youths who refuse to watch the world from behind the curtains. Based on girls' and women's participation, not marginalization, Fortún's literary corpus is not only essential to understanding the history of children's literature in Spain, but also post-war Spanish literature. Fortún, Laforet, Martín Gaité and Matute incorporated women's subversion of traditional codes of female behaviour in their narratives by using characters that have usually not been considered an active part of society, hence, silenced.

Celia's non-conformism and later embodiment of an imposed traditional role before Laforet, Martín Gaité and Matute's protagonists, offers the opportunity to observe changes in the social construction of girlhood through time. The point of view of the girl as a non-conformist subject is used as a mirror of what took place in Spain before, during, and after the Spanish Civil War and reflects literary continuity, instead of abrupt change. Moreover, the continuous, and yet shifting, presence of *chicas raras* in twentieth-century Spanish literature encloses the concept of girlhood as a historical and social construction. Often classified as rebellious, nonconformist or non-submissive misfits, Celia and the *chicas raras* explored in Chapter 3 emerge as characters as they construct their own individual experiences as a way to position themselves in relation to social and cultural expectations.

The fact that this thesis exemplifies the influence that Fortún's work had on the next generation of women writers proves that literary production has contributed throughout our recent history to consolidate these sociocultural elaborations in the collective imagination, trying to promote or question the changes of traditional roles. Beyond the claim that Fortún is the author behind the very popular *Celia* stories, the originality of this project is to propose Fortún's work as the seed of the *chicas raras*. Although Nieva de la Paz (2009) argues that the women writers in the 1920s represent the “‘eslabón perdido’, que fue silenciado y negado a las jóvenes generaciones de posguerra” (12-13), I agree with Capdevila-Argüelles (2017) in Fortún's “importante papel de vínculo entre diferentes generaciones de escritoras españolas” (19), who read Fortún's children's books when they were little, as acknowledged by Laforet, Martín Gaité and Matute and as examined in Chapter 3.

Like Celia, the characters Andrea, Marta, Natalia, C., Valba and Matia, created in the 1940-1950s, struggle to find their place in the world. On the one hand, the originality of this thesis resides in the premise that Fortún's literary corpus is not only essential as a means to understand the history of children's literature in Spain, but also in post-war Spanish literature. In this light, I claim the importance of Fortún's use of the young female character as a marginal and sincere character within the continuity it allows after the Spanish Civil War.

This thesis is timely in that it is poised to capitalize on the current moment of fresh energy in the editing of Fortún's primary texts. Fortún's books are being republished by the publishing house Renacimiento in its very own "Biblioteca Elena Fortún." This nostalgic collection includes forewords by different writers and researchers as well as the publication of the novel *Oculto Sendero* (2016), which had never been published before. As part of a broader recognition of Fortún's place in Spanish literature, in 2016 a plaque was placed in Fortún's childhood home and the library in the Retiro Park in Madrid was renamed after her. Moreover, in early 2020, *Celia en la revolución* and an adaptation of Fortún's biography were adapted for theatre by the Centro Dramático Nacional.

This thesis is part of the scholarship that has arisen in previous years focused on the recovery and vindication of previously disregarded Spanish women writers (Arkininstall 2018; Balló 2016). The research by Janet Pérez and Maureen Ihrie with their *Feminist Encyclopedia of Spanish Literature* (2002) or Alda Blanco's (1999) vindication of María Lejárraga (who wrote under her husband's name: Gregorio Martínez Sierra) destroy the myth that there were no women writers until post-war Spain. As stated by Linda Gould Levine and Ellen Engelson Marson in *Spanish Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Source Book* (1993), there is a responsibility to investigate new paths and share the resources in order to offer a more complete version of the history of Spanish literature:

Our task of creating patterns of diversity, of seeking those common experiences that led from silence to expression and from submission to subversion... the contributors have constructed, reconstructed, rescued, and disinterred a lineage of female artistry consistently ignored or neglected to the margins, glorified only to be forgotten, critiqued and mythified in the annals of Spanish literature. (xiv)

Fortún's stories, which took the character of a little girl from her expected silence to radical expression, from submission to subversion (and inevitably back to submission in her later stories), has also been neglected in the margins of Spanish literature. Due to political issues first, and later prejudices about children's literature, the importance of her work in the lineage of women writers has been ignored. Luckily, the last five years has seen a resurgence of interest in her life and works by researchers who refused to believe in a literary canon that excluded women. As Valcárcel (2019), they said "hasta aquí hemos llegado" (12).

As for Further Research, given the interest that Fortún has aroused in recent years, some studies have been published which open up other avenues of research. For example, in Ivana Calceglia's book *Crescere nel racconto: Elena Fortún e Ana María Matute* (2019), the limits of children's literature in Fortún and Matute are studied, although it stops short of

establishing a relationship of influence between the writers. On the other hand, Fortún's personal documents that were in the possession of her biographer, Dorao, have been digitized and are now accessible online in Madrid's public library network. Also over the last few months, researcher Inmaculada García Carretero (2019) located a box of personal documents that will allow the study of Fortún's exile in Argentina through letters and photographs, shedding light on the most undocumented period of her life.

Along those lines, in Chapter 2 I give a glimpse of what a postcolonial reading of the series would look like with some examples of the representation of racial minorities in the books. In line with this, the series would benefit from a postcolonial reading, especially of the Latin American version of *Celia lo que dice* originally published in 1929, that Fortún published in 1940, during her exile in Buenos Aires. This new version was created because Fortún's publisher, Aguilar, wanted to adapt *Celia* to a potential Latin American audience. To that end, Fortún eliminated specific references to Spanish locations and tried to neutralize local expressions. However, the exchange did not work, since one of the most original and engaging features in *Celia* was precisely that her readers deeply identified with her. As this section shows, the research on Fortún is very much alive.

This intertextual and intergenerational study questions the limitations of canonical classifications, in which discrimination against women and children go hand in hand. As explored in Chapter 1, and as claimed by Martín Gaité and Matute in Chapter 3, the division between children's and adult's literature has never been clear. However, children's books, often written by women, have been frequently classified as of an inferior category. Nevertheless, this thesis has highlighted the unambiguous connection and influence of children's and adults' literature. As Byrnes (1995) argued,

Since there is interaction between the child and adult within the mature personality, it seems reasonable that there would be some connection between children's and adults' literature. Whether in the genre of children's books or mainstream literature, stories of the archetypal child have the potential to impact upon the mind and heart of the reader. It is appropriate, then, that the canon of literature be expanded to include books for youngsters and adults, from past years and present times, and from cultures near and far. (Byrnes 100)

This reasoning has been crucial for the investigation of women's genealogy and the bonds among women writers and girl readers (and later, writers) in this thesis. The fact that Fortún, a women writer, wrote under a pseudonym and cultivated a genre often considered as

‘menor’ are, as Martín Gaité denounced, “detalles bastante elocuente de su infravaloración deliberada” (“Celia. Raíces y frutos” 459).

Fortún and the *chicas raras* offered varied perspectives (child, feminine) on women’s experiences to contrast official historical accounts (from an adult, masculine point of view). As it has been discussed, Fortún’s literary legacy is undeniable, not only due to the quality and relevance of her children’s books, but because her stories shaped other stories. Through Celia, a fictional character, Fortún paved the way to the creative unfolding of a new generation of girls who otherwise would not have been encouraged to write, or even to know that they had something to say.

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