



Mujeres de Ventas:
Women's Prison Writing
In Franco's Spain

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines women's political imprisonment in Franco's Spain, focussing on the literary production of the inmates of the *Cárcel de Ventas* women's prison in Madrid. In analysing the prison writings of Juana Doña, Mercedes Núñez Targa and Ángeles García Madrid, it proposes that these texts allow their authors to create a narrative space wherein the Republican female prisoner is able to re-construct and re-assert her own identity, selfhood and subjectivity in the face of imprisonment. In this sense, this work contends that the carceral testimony of these women stands as a form of resistance against the silencing frame of incarceration and Francoist repression. In its exploration of the construction of the self within each narrative, this thesis also analyses the narratives' construction of solidarity, femininity and sincerity within the prison, arguing that these each constitute a means of opposing the dehumanisation of the Republican woman. Finally, combining an analysis of the testimonial text with a consideration of each author's position as a subaltern subject during the time of the dictatorship, it proposes a new understanding of this subaltern position in a modern, twenty-first century context, which troubles the conception of the prisoner narrative as an unheard story. This research thus offers a new perspective on the Republican woman's prison text, allowing for a thorough examination of its role as a view from inside of history.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my partner, Ben Lealan, without whose constant support I would be utterly lost. I love you!

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INTRODUCTION

“Explica todo lo que has visto aquí. Que los de la calle lo sepan”

(Núñez Targa, 2016, 118).

On August 31st, 1933, after two years of building works, the city of Madrid opened its new women’s ‘model prison’. Conceptualised and designed by Victoria Kent, head of the Second Spanish Republic’s *Dirección General de Prisiones* from April 19th 1931 to June 8th 1932, Ventas was to represent the idea of what a modern prison could be: as part of the Second Republic’s societal reformation, the new prison aimed to be “más moderna, más humana, más científica” than the existing system, with a focus on “sensibilidad, compasión [y] bondad hacía los presos” (Holgado, 2003, 39). To this end, the prison was centred upon education and rehabilitation — to such an extent that it was compared to a school in a number of articles and press reports — and Kent, following the example of socialist lawyer Luis Jiménez de Asúa, also chose to move away from the religious doctrine at the centre of Spain’s prison system, with the introduction of secular prison officers and the removal of obligatory attendance at weekly religious services (Holgado, 2003, 42). The new prison of Ventas thus signified a move towards “un discurso humanista, buscando la dignificación del recluso y especialmente de la mujer” (Holgado, 2003, 39). Indeed, Kent’s focus was largely on improving material conditions in women’s prisons across Spain, which she found to be distinctly lacking. In an interview with journalist Josefina Carabias, Kent proclaimed that “la mujer delinque poco, pero sufre un castigo mil veces más duro que el hombre. Yo he visto cárceles de mujeres y son un espectáculo de horror” (cit. in Núñez, 1998, 394). From the very conception of the prison, then, the specificity of the gendered experience of imprisonment was taken into consideration, and Kent spent many years travelling around the country and visiting various existing women’s

prisons as preparation for the opening of Ventas. Issues that she highlighted during these visits included the poor quality and quantity of daily rations, the use of chains and metal bars, the significant overcrowding in many provincial prisons, and the frequent separation of mothers and children (Vaamonde, 2011, 48-53; Holgado, 2003, 54-56). A series of reforms were implemented to overhaul large parts of the prison system: after the inauguration of Ventas, female prisoners held in various parts of Spain were transferred to the new prison, designed to hold 500 women at full capacity in cells significantly larger than those in other prisons across the country, and featuring large galleries for mothers and children as well as terraces to allow prisoners some freedom in an outside space (Fundación Cárcel de Ventas, 2017). The design of the prison, as Kent stated after its opening, was a “símbolo concreto de la doctrina penal y penitenciaria que simultáneamente se estaba ocupando de llevar a la práctica a través de sus reformas” (Holgado, 2003, 64), and was undertaken with input from imprisoned women Kent met on her prison visits. As Vaamonde writes in his study of Kent and her reforms, the new “prisión moderna” represented a sincere attempt on the part of prison authorities to “dar voz a los encarcelados [...] para poder mejorar sus condiciones y derechos y hacer constar sus reivindicaciones” (2011, 43).

The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, however, put an end to Kent’s prison experiment after less than three years. From July 24th 1936 to March 26th 1937, Ventas became “Prisión Provincial de Hombres número 3”, housing some thousands of Nationalist soldiers and sympathisers captured by the Republican forces during the war. Owing to the large amount of space Kent had designated for each prisoner, as well as specialised galleries for expecting mothers, breastfeeding mothers and mothers in labour, the prison became a “caótico depósito de presos”, until eventually even the dining hall was used to house prisoners (Holgado, 2003, 86). During this time, the women who had previously been held in Ventas were transferred to

two other women's prisons in Madrid, where they remained until March 1937; on the 26th, the previous female inhabitants returned to Ventas following the transfer, release or execution of its male population (Holgado, 2003, 93). By the end of 1938, the prison began to fill with Republican women, and by March 1939 the population of Ventas neared five thousand, described in various sources as “una almacén de reclusas” wherein women and children lived in “las peores condiciones imaginables” (Fundación Cárcel de Ventas, 2017). Various scholars estimate that at its highest occupancy during the Franco regime, Ventas housed some ten thousand women, the most highly populated prison in the country (Mangini, 1995, 101). As Holgado writes, the prison, previously imagined as a symbol of a new, reformist era, now symbolised the epitome of “la represión desplegada por el régimen franquista contra las mujeres del bando vencido [...] las expuso a la ira de los vencedores y a su deseo de someterlas a un castigo ejemplarizante” (2003, 120). Throughout the nearly forty-year Franco dictatorship, the women of Ventas recorded their prison experiences in numerous different forms, including prose, poetry, and novels. This study draws its focus from three such works, and will examine the prison texts of Juana Doña, Mercedes Núñez Targa and Ángeles García Madrid, three authors imprisoned in Ventas at roughly the same time during the early years of the Francoist New State. In my analysis of these three texts, I aim to explore the way in which each author uses her text to represent the experience of imprisonment in Franco's Spain, and in particular the use of the prison text as a narrative space through which the author is able to construct a discourse of solidarity that stands against the oppressive imprisoning regime. The decision to focus only on texts produced by women held in Ventas will also allow for a spatial tracking of memory, as the prison itself functions as a physical space that, much like the texts themselves, participates in each narrative and each author's construction of her own carceral reality and subjectivity. Indeed, as Kim Richmond writes in her study of German women's prison texts, the prison writer does not represent a homogenous group, as “she/he varies across time,

geography, gender, class, sexuality and subjective experience” (2010, 11): thus, by narrowing the focus of my study to three texts produced in a similar context at a similar time, I am able to explore each author’s representation of her own subjective experience within the same carceral space and reality. In this way, I am also able to explore each text’s varying representation of certain shared experiences within the prison, including notable events such as the *saca* of the *trece rosas* as well as more quotidian details such as the daily routine, the prison food, or interactions with a particular inmate.

It is not my aim, however, to compare these details from each text in order to come to any kind of conclusion that might determine its historical or factual accuracy: as I detail below, I rather propose to explore each author’s representation of her prison experience in order to understand the construction of her own subjectivity within the text. To this end, I approach the prison narratives of Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid through a testimonial lens, rather than examining them as historical sources as such. There exists a large body of work detailing the historical context of imprisonment in Franco’s Spain, as well as work that considers the testimonial texts of prisoners as important historical documents: see, for example, Mangini (1995), Sobrequés i Callicó, Ruiz and Sala (2003), di Febo and Juliá (2005), Holgado (2003; 2015). In this thesis, however, my aim is to establish the carceral testimonies of Franco’s female prisoners as examples of a transgressive literary practice that functions as a site of both resistance and reconstruction of the prisoner’s self and world. Furthermore, I have chosen sources that span a range of narrative forms including poetry, first-person testimony and third-person narrative, in order to explore the way that genre and form contribute to each author’s reconstruction of her experience. Below, I briefly introduce each author and her text — Núñez Targa’s *Cárcel de Ventas*, Doña’s *Desde la noche y la niebla* and García Madrid’s *Requiem*

por la libertad — in chronological order of publication, as well as the theoretical framework that informs this study and my understanding of Spanish women's prison narratives.

Mercedes Núñez Targa, born in Barcelona in 1911, describes herself in her testimony as the daughter of “una familia acomodada” (2016, 33). In the early 1930s, she found work in the Chilean Consulate as a secretary to Pablo Neruda. She was also a member of various political organisations including Ateneu Enciclopèdic Popular, a pedagogical group that gave public lectures on literature and politics (Núñez and Solé, 2016, 265), the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas (JSU), a communist youth organisation, and the Partido Socialista Unificado de Catalunya, where she carried out bureaucratic work for Republican forces during the Spanish Civil War (Holgado, 2003, 355). In 1939, under surveillance from the Dirección General de Seguridad, she was arrested in La Coruña and held for a year in the provincial prisons of Betanzos and La Coruña before her transfer to Ventas on March 6th, 1940. Upon arrival at Ventas, Núñez Targa was charged with involvement in a clandestine resistance network that covered the North of Spain (Fundación Cárcel de Ventas, 2017); in October of the same year she was officially charged with “auxilio a la rebelión” and sentenced to twelve years’ imprisonment (Fundación Cárcel de Ventas, 2017). After two years, she was released from Ventas and returned to Barcelona. In September 1942, she crossed the Pyrenees into France, where she was detained in a mountain town and subsequently transferred to Argelès internment camp for having illegally crossed the French border. After her release, she joined a Spanish resistance movement and was detained a third time in Carcassonne alongside her comrades in 1944; after this arrest, she was transferred to Ravensbrück, the Nazi concentration camp, on June 23rd, 1944. After the liberation of the camps in 1945, Núñez Targa remained in exile in Paris where she published a series of anonymous or pseudonymous works detailing her prison experiences and the repression of the Franco regime. In 1967 her first book, *Cárcel de Ventas*,

was published, detailing the two years she spent incarcerated in Madrid: it is this work that I will focus on in my study. In 1975, after the death of Franco, she returned to Spain, where she continued both her literary and political work. In 1980 her second testimony *Destinada al crematorio* was published, first in Catalan under the title *El carretó dels gossos*, spanning her years in the prison camps of Argelès and Ravensbrück. Núñez Targa died in Vigo in 1986, just over a decade after the end of her exile in France.

Juana Doña, born in a working-class area of Madrid in 1918, joined the Juventudes Comunistas in 1933 at the age of fifteen (Pike, 2014, 57). During the time of the Second Republic she was active in a number of political organisations, including the Agrupación de Mujeres Antifascistas, the Comité Central de las Juventudes Comunistas (CCJC), of which she was elected secretary, and the JSU. Following her involvement with the JSU, she also began a romantic relationship with Eugenio Mesón, the leader of the organisation's Madrid section: she would later have two children with Mesón. Her first arrest was in 1933 for her participation in a general workers' strike, and she was subsequently arrested numerous times during the Second Republic and the Civil War for her continued political activity. At the end of the war, she was detained alongside Mesón, who was imprisoned in Porlier whilst Doña was transferred to a concentration camp (Fundación Cárcel de Ventas, 2017). After her release she returned to Madrid, where she was involved in clandestine activity with the JSU, for which she was arrested and tortured in Ventas prison. This second incarceration lasted until May of 1941, and upon her release she continued her clandestine work for the JSU and the Agrupación de Mujeres Antifascistas (Pike, 2014, 57). In 1947 she was arrested again, and in the period between 1947 and 1962 spent time in numerous prisons including Ventas, Málaga, Guadalajara and Segovia. As the last prisoner in Spain to be sentenced to death, her sentence was eventually commuted to thirty years' imprisonment by Eva Perón. Her first text, *Mujer* (1977), explores

women's experiences in Franco's Spain from a political perspective, and her second, *Desde la noche y la niebla*, was published in 1978 after the death of Franco, and details her long incarceration. Owing to her clandestine status, *Desde la noche y la niebla* features protagonists with fictionalised names in order to protect both herself and her comrades (Doña, 1978, 21). Her other works include *Gente de abajo* (1992), an account of her clandestine work, and *Querido Eugenio* (2003), an extended love letter dedicated to Mesón. Following her release from prison, Doña ran as a candidate for the Communist Party of Spain in the country's first and second democratic elections and remained involved in politics until her death in Barcelona on October 18th, 2003.

Ángeles García Madrid, born 1918 in Madrid, also began her political involvement at a young age, joining the *Círculo Socialista* aged sixteen. After the *Revolución de Asturias*, García Madrid joined the JSU and the *Partido Socialista de España Juventudes Socialistas*. After the outbreak of the Civil War, she worked for the Republican forces in Madrid, sewing uniforms for the 49 *Brigada Mixta*, a regiment formed in the neighbourhood where she was raised and also working as a tram conductor on multiple lines across the city, an occupation taken up by many young women at the time to replace men who had joined the armed forces (Fundación *Cárcel de Ventas*, 2017). On the night of May 14th, 1938, García Madrid was detained at her home alongside the majority of her neighbours, and subsequently held in an improvised prison in Madrid for nearly a month, where she was interrogated and tortured by Francoist authorities (García Madrid, 1982). From here, García Madrid was transferred to *Ventas*, where she too was charged with "auxilio a la rebelión" (Fundación *Cárcel de Ventas*, 2017). According to her testimony, she began to write poems inside the prison as a means of surviving her imprisonment (García Madrid, 1982). On April 8th, 1940, she was sentenced to twelve years' incarceration: during this time, she served parts of her sentence in the prisons of *Ventas*, *Tarragona*, *Les*

Courts and Girona. Whilst in the Girona prison she fell gravely ill and was eventually released in February of 1942, after which she returned to Madrid. Her first text was a collection of poems entitled *Al quiebro de mis espinas: poemas desde la cárcel*, published after Franco's death in 1977. In 1982, she also published a work of prose testimony, *Requiem por la libertad*, which explored in detail her journey through Franco's prison system. For many years after her release, she served as secretary of the Asociación de Ex-Presos y Represaliados Políticos (Fundación Cárcel de Ventas, 2017), an organisation dedicated to preserving the memories of political prisoners under Franco. She lived in Madrid until her death in November of 2015.

Testimony, History and Prison Writing

The concept of testimony is a challenging one, and generally difficult to define in absolute terms. Speaking in a generalised sense, McMyler has defined testimony as “something like ordinary everyday informative or purportedly informative statements” (2011, 52). More specifically, Sara Jones defines testimony as “a communicative act in a given cultural context in which a witness gives an account of something he or she has directly experienced for the benefit of an audience that has not” (2019, 260). In the case of this study, as I have laid out above, this experience is that of women's political imprisonment in Franco's Spain narrated to the reader after the fact, in some cases as many as twenty years later. This context thus allows for a further specification of my definition of testimony: whilst there exists a large body of work that examines testimony as a form of knowledge (see, for example, McMyler, 2011; Lackey and Sosa, 2006), this study will focus on testimony as a form of recounting past traumatic events, or what Verónica Tozzi refers to as “limit events”, which she defines as “events of victimization on a massive scale and intensity” (2012, 3). For Tozzi, whose work builds on Hayden White's studies of “witness literature” (2010, 114), the testimonial narrative

is a vital means of interpreting history, as it not only recounts this traumatic event in the past but effectively re-constitutes it in the present (2012, 4). Thus, in both White's and Tozzi's approach to testimony, the witness narratives of those who experienced these "limit events" (Tozzi, 2012, 3) stands not only as an affirmation that these events took place, or a recounting of the facts of the event, but also as a reconstitution or "enactment [...] of *what it felt like* to have had to endure such 'facts'" (White, 2010, 123, emphasis in original). Aleida Assmann, similarly, refers to testimony as "indispensable" in its provision of "a view from the inside" of certain historical events such as the Holocaust, arguing that the point of testimonial narratives "is less to tell us what happened than what it felt like to be in the centre of those events; [to] provide very personal views from within" (2006, 263). Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman, in their important study *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (1992), put forth a similar view on the concept of truth and authenticity within the testimonial narrative. Laub, himself a Holocaust survivor, writes of a woman who recounted her experience of the Auschwitz uprising: in her testimony, she describes the sight of four chimneys in flames, exploding (1992, 59). Historically, however, we now know that only one chimney was blown up during the uprising, not four. For Laub, however, "one chimney blown up in Auschwitz was as incredible as four. The number mattered less than the fact of the occurrence [...] that was historical truth" (1992, 60). Here, then, Assmann's argument echoes Laub's, where the woman's testimony from Auschwitz is indispensable in that it provides us with a view from the inside of the camps, meaning that its factual accuracy is less important than its representation of the survivor's own experience. In Chapter One, which examines my definition of carceral testimony in more detail, I will return to this discussion of truth and authenticity as it relates to these specific texts, and my approach throughout this study will echo this position. My aim is not, as Smith and Watson write, to become a "detective of authenticity" (2012, 590) or to comb through the prison texts of Doña, García Madrid and

Núñez Targa for factual evidence and discrepancies, but rather to examine each author's representation of her own experience inside Ventas.

If the writing of testimony is so closely related to traumatic events in one's past, then, the study of testimony is often linked to that of witnessing and that of trauma. As Anne Cubillé writes, the testimonial witness cannot be "alone in the testimonial act" (2005, 10); the writing of these historical events thus requires the reader of a written testimony to inhabit a secondary role as witness to its witnessing, forming a part of what Shoshana Felman refers to as the "chain" or "alignment of witnesses" (2018, 53). First in this chain, as set out above, is the witness to the event itself, but this act of witnessing is then "reliant on the wider community to act as a further form of secondary witness by ensuring that their testimony finds broader relevance" (Jones, 2014, 24). The testimonial text creates a community of witnesses from its readers (Margalit, 2002, p 155). Further, in the writing of a testimonial text, the author thus inhabits a dual role as witness not only to herself but to others whose experience broadly aligns with her own: in the case of this study, her fellow inmates inside Ventas. The chain of witnessing thus incorporates distinct roles or "levels" (Felman and Laub, 1992, 75), wherein one is simultaneously a witness to oneself and to others. In Chapter One and Chapter Three of this thesis, I will further explore the role of the witness within the prison narrative of the Republican female prisoner, focussing in particular on the role of the implied reader as constructed in the text itself, whilst Chapter Two will examine in more detail the texts' representation of witness-acts within the prison and who may be included or excluded from this narrative. In Chapter One, this exploration of the reader's witnessing role will also facilitate my exploration on the role of trauma within the texts. Dori Laub theorises that the witness to trauma is subjected to further traumatisation through the "not-telling" of their story, which serves as "a perpetuation of its tyranny" (1992, 79). Furthermore, trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth and Bessel van

der Kolk have found that traumatic experiences are not fully realised at the time of their happening (Caruth, 2018, 34; van der Kolk and van der Hart, 1991, 432), often causing greater distress for the trauma survivor in the future as they attempt to recall these dissociated memories (van der Kolk and van der Hart, 1991, 433) or experience visceral and intense flashbacks of the initial trauma (Caruth, 1995, 4). For Laub and other academics working in the field of testimony and autobiography such as, for example, Leigh Gilmore and Suzette Henke, the transmission of the trauma survivor's testimony to a reader or secondary witness then constitutes a means of "repossessing one's life story" (Felman and Laub, 1992, 85) or, in Henke's words, a "publicly accessible 'ritual of healing' that inscribes the victim into a sympathetic discourse-community and inaugurates the possibility of psychological reintegration" (2000, xviii). In articulating the memory of the traumatic event and addressing this memory to another person, the testimonial witness is able to "break the frame" imposed by her trauma (Gilmore, 2001, 8). In the case of the prison narratives I will examine in my study, this is particularly relevant in the case of Ángeles García Madrid, who refers to the process of writing her prison testimony as a means of healing from her experience. Narrating one's trauma, however, is often a complicated process. As Leigh Gilmore writes in her study *The Limits of Autobiography*, first-person accounts of trauma — and in particular, women's first-person accounts of trauma — are often doubted "because [women's] self-representation already is at odds with the account the representative man would produce" (2001, 22). Here, then, questions of truth and authenticity within the testimonial text are once again relevant, but the question of how testimony represents a breaking with traditionally recognised forms of life writing is also raised.

Thus, in discussing testimony and life writing, it may also be useful to define what is meant by the term 'autobiography': I do not define the texts that form the corpus of this study as such,

but a consideration of the genre will provide useful context for my exploration of testimony. Philippe Lejeune, in his influential essay “The Autobiographical Pact”, defines autobiography as a “retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality” (1989, 4). Expanding upon this definition, Lejeune asserts that autobiographical works must fulfil certain requirements in order to be considered true autobiographies: they must be written in prose, centre the individual life of a narrator who is identical to and whose name corresponds with that of the author, and the narrator must be identical to the principal character of the narrative. Certain genres, such as memoirs, personal novels, diaries and autobiographical poetry, do not fulfil all of these requirements, and thus do not truly constitute autobiography (1989, 4). Most important, for Lejeune, is the relationship between the author, narrator and principal character of the autobiographical text: when all three are identical, the writer of autobiography enters into “a contract between author and reader” in which they express their intention to convey a true and authentic personal narrative (1989, 14). The mode of reading autobiography is also thus determined, as once the autobiographical pact is “signed” the reader “will want to look for differences [...] to think of himself as a detective [...] to look for breaches of contract” (1989, 14). Here, then, we are reminded of Smith and Watson’s assertion that modern readers of life narratives frequently see themselves as “detectives of authenticity” (2012, 590); whilst Lejeune’s concept of autobiography forms an important part of this study, particularly in Chapter One and its definition of carceral testimony, my use of the autobiographical pact will focus on the ways in which the reading of testimony is influenced by understandings of autobiography as a genre rather than echoing these modes of reading in my own work. Furthermore, as not all of the texts that form my corpus of prison texts conform to Lejeune’s definition of autobiography, I will also make use of other theories: in particular the work of Paul John Eakin, who notes that Lejeune’s definition of autobiography “make[s] no place for

relational identity and the hybrid forms in which it characteristically finds expression” (1999, 58). Eakin, in his study *How Our Lives Become Selves*, explores the concept of relational identities and the autobiographical text that offers “not only the autobiography of the self but the biography *and* the autobiography of the other” (1999, 58), which provides a point of comparison between the plurality of the prison texts that form the basis of this study and the individuality of Lejeune’s definition, as well as that of other autobiography scholars such as Georges Gusdorf.

The multiple critiques of autobiography as a genre that exist, particularly those rooted in feminist and postcolonial theory, will also be fundamental throughout this study and in establishing testimony as a form of what Barbara Harlow has termed “resistance literature” (1987, 2) and Caren Kaplan “out-law genre” (1998, 208). Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, for example, write that autobiography “became the term for a particular generic practice that emerged in the Enlightenment and subsequently became definitive for life writing in the West” (2010, 2). For Smith and Watson, autobiography as a genre privileges individual, autonomous narratives wherein the narrator’s experience is understood as universal (2010, 3). Implicit in this understanding of autobiographical writing, then, is “the assumption that many other kinds of life writings produced at the same time have lesser value and were not ‘true’ autobiography — the slave narrative, narratives of women’s domestic lives, coming-of-age and travel narratives, among others” (2010, 3). Gillian Whitlock, similarly, posits that the autobiographical genre as we have come to understand it “privileges a specific Enlightenment archetype of selfhood: the rational, sovereign subject that is conceived as western, gendered male, and [...] racially white [...] prioritis[ing] authenticity, autonomy, self-realization and transcendence” (2015, 3), and Leigh Gilmore writes that autobiography constitutes a “Western mode of self-production [...] which features a rational and representative I at its centre” (2001,

2). Gilmore also proposes that autobiography traditionally represents this “I” as “utterly unique and [...] able to stand for others through acts of self-inspection and self-revelation” (2001, 19). These critics and scholars of life writing, then, posit that autobiography as a genre or a label inadequately encompasses the diverse forms of life writing that have always existed across many different cultures, relying on prescriptive understandings of what constitutes autobiography. Testimony, on the other hand, can be seen to defy these expectations. If, as Beverley writes, each individual testimonial narrative “is a fundamentally democratic and egalitarian form of narrative [that] evokes an absent polyphony of other voices, other possible lives and experiences” (2003, 34), then the individual narrative privileged by traditional autobiography thus gives way to a plural, metonymic narrative as the author’s social group and her place within it are fundamental to her text: Doris Sommer notes that “one way of marking the difference between women’s testimonials and autobiographies [...] is precisely the testimonials’ insistence on showing relationships” (1988, 129). The narrative of the testimonial text, rather than a unique single narrator to whom the reader may or may not relate, represents a collective subject in a language “that does not equate identity with individuality” (Sommer, 1988, 111). Similarly, for Caren Kaplan, testimonial literature (which also, informed by Barbara Harlow, includes the prison memoir) breaks the “most obvious rules” of autobiography as a genre, thus allowing for a “deconstruction” of our understanding of autobiography and revealing the power dynamics integral to its construction as a genre (1998, 208). In Chapters One and Two of this thesis, I will return to the plural and metonymic voice of the testimonial text, analysing the ways in which each author’s narrative of Ventas prison situates its inmates within their own communities and networks of solidarity; Sommer’s work in particular will form a key part of my understanding of these prison texts as testimonies that create a shared narrative space. The idea of testimony as a means of deconstructing the genre of autobiography will also form an important part of both the first and third chapters of my work, which will

explore in more detail the ways in which each of the prison texts interacts with autobiography as a genre.

Subalternity

This discussion of testimony's potential to deconstruct hegemonic definitions of what constitutes autobiography thus brings me to a second concept that will be fundamental to this study. In the assertion that testimonial narratives are written "from the margin of literature" by "those subjects [...] excluded from authorised representation when it was a question of speaking and writing for themselves rather than being spoken for" (Beverley, 2003, 31), Beverley invokes the power dynamics of not only literature but also of a society wherein the testimonial narrator may not be able to speak at all, and is rather spoken for or spoken over; later in his essay *The Margin at the Centre*, he argues that testimonial narration "has to involve an urgency to communicate, a problem of repression, poverty, *subalternity*, imprisonment, struggle for survival, implicated in the act of narration itself" (2003, 33, emphasis mine). Gayatri Spivak, similarly, writes that testimony is "the genre of the subaltern giving witness to oppression" (1998, 7); Whitlock refers to the testimonial narrator as a "subaltern subject" and asserts that testimony "enables accounts of social injustice and oppression, of violence and suffering" (2015, 9). What, then, is meant by the terms 'subalternity' and 'subaltern subjects'? The term 'subaltern' itself was coined by Italian intellectual Antonio Gramsci in his prison writings, a series of essays written in the early twentieth century during his incarceration under Mussolini's fascist regime. For Gramsci, the "subaltern class" constitutes the social class that is "always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise" (1971, 56), namely the oppressed lower classes. Spivak, drawing on Gramsci's work as well as that of Marx, has since examined the concept of subalternity in great detail in her study "Can the Subaltern Speak?", asserting that the subaltern subject is one who is in fact denied access to

subjectivity through the “epistemic violence” of being Othered, unheard, spoken for and spoken over rather than being allowed to speak and be heard in one’s own voice (1988, 280). In her critique of Foucault and Deleuze, Spivak demonstrates this epistemic violence in highlighting their “privileging of the intellectual” even when claiming to speak for the oppressed, denouncing “benevolent first-world appropriation and reinscription of the Third World as an Other” (1988, 289) and the “first-world intellectual masquerading as the absent nonrepresenter who lets the oppressed speak for themselves” (1988, 292). Further expanding on the idea of epistemic violence and subject-/object-ivity, Spivak examines the case of colonial laws in British-occupied India: she formulates the sentence “white men are saving brown women from brown men” to demonstrate the silencing of Indian women’s voices and experiences inherent in the British outlawing of the practice of “sati”, or “widow-sacrifice”, erasing the widow’s free will by situating her merely as “*object* of protection from her own kind” (1988, 297-298, emphasis in original). The subaltern voice is therefore that voice that remains unheard in public, political and academic discourse; in comparing this silencing to that of Foucault, Deleuze and other Western intellectuals, Spivak thus highlights the way subaltern voices are routinely silenced or subsumed by those benevolent first-world voices who claim to speak for, represent, or act in the interest of the subaltern subject. This understanding of the subaltern, further, is “situational” (Spivak and Harasym, 1990, 141). For Gramsci, the term was rooted in class analysis and functionally synonymous with the proletariat, whilst Spivak’s work acknowledges those parts of identity and subalternity that do not necessarily “fall under strict class analysis” (Spivak and Harasym, 1990, 141) such as, for example, gender or race: she writes that the woman or the “sexed subaltern” is “doubly in shadow” (1988, 288), later adding that “if you are poor, black, and female, you get it in three ways” (1988, 294). Spivak’s work on the subaltern will form a key part of my work on prison testimony throughout this study, but particularly in the second and third chapters. In Chapter Two, I focus on the de-

subjectification of Republican female prisoners under the Franco regime, using the concept of the subaltern, alongside the work of Judith Butler and Julia Kristeva on subjectivity and abject domains, to explore the ways in which these prisoners use their carceral testimony to represent and write back against the objectifying and Othering experience of their imprisonment¹. In Chapter Three, which examines the question of subalternity in more depth, I explore each text's representation of the multiple silencings of Republican female prisoners under Franco through both the denial of their political status and the prison authorities' re-writing of the prisoner narrative. In the second half of this chapter, I also approach the texts from the context of reading and marketing these texts in the present-day and the effect this may exercise over our understanding of subaltern narratives, with a particular focus on the role of the paratext and the different modes of reading this may encourage.

Building on this understanding of subalternity, then, Spivak goes on to question whether the subaltern can ever truly speak, in the sense of being heard and understood. In reading history written by others speaking for the subaltern, Spivak writes, it is impossible to “put together a voice” that truly belongs to the subaltern speaker (1988, 297); thus, particularly for the gendered subject, there is “no space from which the sexed subaltern can speak” (1988, 307). What, then, does this mean in terms of our understanding of testimony? In an interview with Leon de Kock, Spivak expands further on the concept of subaltern speech, stating that “when you say cannot speak, it means that if speaking involves speaking and listening, this possibility of response, responsibility, does not exist in the subaltern's sphere [...] to do *a thing*, to work for the subaltern, means to bring it into speech [...] you don't give the subaltern voice” (Spivak

¹ My understanding of the Republican female prisoner under Franco as a subaltern subject is also informed by Shirley Mangini and her work on women's lives through the dictatorship. As Mangini writes, Republican women in Spain during this time can be theorised as “colonial subjects”, colonised both “economically and politically by their own white European countrymen [...] doubly or triply subjugated to men (husband, father, brothers)/god (priest)/civil authority (after the war, Franco's Gestapo-like police)” (1995, 55).

and de Kock, 1992, 46, emphasis in original). Testimony, then, provides such an opportunity to bring the subaltern voice into discourse. The act of life writing itself, as Smith and Watson assert in *Reading Autobiography*, enables the “self-reconstruction and self-determination” of the testimonial author through her narrative (2010, 70), thus allowing her to re-assert her own subjectivity and to speak out against her Othering. Writing specifically on women’s narratives, Smith and Watson explore the perception of testimony as a “coming to voice” whereby the narrator might articulate this “emergent subjectivity outside or against the repressive constraints of asymmetrical gender relations” (2010, 85). Here, testimony is thereby a means through which the sexed subaltern is able to speak to her experience and to re-assert her own subjectivity. Addressing the issue of listening, Doris Sommer, in her essay on Latin American women’s *testimonios*, writes that the very structure of these testimonial narratives exposes the intellectual’s tendency to speak over the subaltern, stating that “our habit of identifying with a single subject of the narration (implicitly substituting her) simply repeats a Western logocentric limitation, a vicious circle in which only one centre can exist” (1988, 118). For Sommer, the plural, metonymic voice of testimony “produces complicity” in the reader, reminding us that “politics is not necessarily a top-down heroic venture” (1988, 118): in this understanding, testimony thus constitutes a vehicle through which the subaltern voice may be heard and the reader might understand how to work, using Spivak’s term, “for the subaltern” (Spivak and de Kock, 1992, 46), as well as to further force the reader to confront the hegemonic discourse that has silenced it in the past. Similarly, to return to Laub and the role of the reader in the testimonial narrative, it is the reader (or listener, in Laub’s discussion of audiovisual testimony) who bears part of the responsibility for bringing the testimony to voice. As he writes, the testimonial witness “is talking *to somebody*: to somebody they have been waiting for for a long time” (1992, 71, emphasis in original) — the secondary witness, the listener to or reader of trauma, then fulfils this role as “somebody who hears” (1992, 70). Without this witness-act,

the testimony is not fully realised, and the subaltern voice remains unheard, what Whitlock refers to as “the sound of one hand clapping” (2015, 68). Beverley holds a similar position, asserting that our reading of testimony allows for the creation of “a discursive space where the possibilities of such an alliance [between the subaltern subject and first-world reader] might be negotiated on both sides” (2003, 47). Both Laub and Beverley, however, also warn of the dangers inherent in becoming a witness to testimony: Laub writes that, in the case of oral testimony, the interviewer’s role is to be “unobtrusively present” in order to not prohibit the “free expression” of the testimonial narrator (1992, 71) and Beverley, in his essay on Rigoberta Menchú and David Stoll, explores the potential for academics and scholars to engage in exactly the same speaking-over of the subaltern voice that Spivak condemns in her critique of Foucault and Deleuze (2003, 82-83)². In Chapter One of this thesis, I will return in much greater detail to both the witness-act and the concepts of truth and authenticity in the carceral testimonies of Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid, exploring the different ways in which these texts represent and engage with the chain of witnessing and the discourse between writer and reader. In Chapter Three, I will also examine the different ways in which the subaltern voice may speak through the testimonial text, culminating with an examination of each author’s voice in a twenty-first century context and the ways in which this might affect our reading of the texts and the subaltern voice.

Finally, a large part of my work on subalternity in this study will rely on my definition of the prisoner — and in particular, the female prisoner — as a subaltern subject in Franco’s Spain, and of how this subalternity is represented, resisted and underwritten throughout the carceral testimonies of these women. Here, then, it may be useful to explore some of the work around

² In the third chapter, I will also examine this statement in my consideration of the role of the editor of testimonial texts, which is again related to the idea of ‘speaking over’ the subaltern voice.

prison writing — and, again, women’s prison writing particularly — that I will be working with in this study and the ways in which this work might overlap or intersect with my understanding of the subaltern and of testimony. Sarah Colvin, in her work on prison writing in post-war Germany, refers to prisoner narratives as “unlistened-to stories” (2017, 440): borrowing this phrase from Primo Levi’s Auschwitz memoir, *If This is a Man*, she asserts that “speaking out is not the same as being heard” and that often, when prisoners do write, narrate or otherwise attempt to publicise their experiences of imprisonment, they are often not listened to and not heard (2017, 441). The prison thus forms not only a physical or spatial border but also a cultural border, an “inside/outside binary” (Turner, 2016, 28) between the prisoner and the rest of society, whereby those on the inside cannot be fully understood by those on the outside and the prisoner is rendered both “invisib[le] and inaudib[le]” (Colvin, 2017, 442). In the case of female prisoners, this invisibility is often exacerbated. Elissa Gelfand, for example, writing specifically on French women’s prison writing since the 18th century, states that the female prison writer has historically been “characterised according to her sex as well as her criminality” (1981, 188), leaving her doubly marginalised as both a criminal and a woman. Many scholars have explored the way that the imprisoned female body has historically been constructed as a site of gendered deviance and abjection, with her threat to society understood as a “moral-sexual one” (Gelfand, 1981, 189): a woman’s criminal or political transgressions are thus further condemned as “unfeminine acts” (Richmond, 2010, 21) as she has broken both “gender and judicial law” (Richmond, 2010, 21). If, then, the male prison writer is understood as a subaltern subject whose story remains unheard on the outside of the prison walls, the female prison writer is “even more deeply in shadow” (Spivak, 1988, 287). In Chapter Two, I will examine in more detail the construction of femininity and imprisoned womanhood in Franco’s Spain. Particularly, both in this chapter and in Chapter Three, I am interested in the specific way in which women’s carceral testimony is embodied. Spivak has represented the

female body as a means of speech when words remain unheard: the final pages of “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, as I will explore in further detail in the third chapter of this thesis, recount an instance in which the voice of the sexed subaltern is heard through the “physiological inscription of her body” (1988, 308). Testimony, too, is often similarly represented as an embodied form of witnessing, a means through which the “solid and incontestable” body of a person “testifies to having lived” (Gilmore, 2001, 12). Writing specifically of women’s texts, Gilmore observes that these testimonies are often accounts of “what it means [...] to have a body” (2017, 21); Felman also writes that the testimonial witness is “witness to the body”, that testifying is a physical and embodied “act” (1992, 108n). Considering the embodied nature of testimony alongside the embodied experience of imprisonment, then, I will examine the ways in which Franco’s female prisoners, within their prison narratives, represent and reconstruct their own bodies as sites of resistance, of witnessing and of testimony.

CHAPTER ONE

DEFINING THE TEXTS OF FRANCO'S FEMALE PRISONERS AS CARCERAL TESTIMONY

Shirley Mangini, in her study of women's memory of the Spanish Civil War, refers to the prison narratives of Republican female prisoners as "memory texts" that might serve to aid historians in piecing together a female perspective of the war and the subsequent dictatorship (1995, 105). In this view, the prison text is a means through which historians or scholars might "conjure up the past": concerned with the literary expression of the texts and what they say about women's role in Spanish society, Mangini asserts that they constitute an important "historical, sociological and literary source" (1995, 65). In similar studies of incarceration during the Franco era, such as in Fernando Holgado's work on Ventas prison (2003), the prison texts of Republican women are frequently cited as historical or factual references. In this thesis, however, rather than as strictly historical documents, I approach the prison texts of Juana Doña, Mercedes Núñez Targa and Ángeles García Madrid as personal, testimonial narratives through which each author is able to reconstruct her own selfhood and subjectivity in the face of her prison experience. As I have explored in my introductory chapter, testimonial writing constitutes a witness-act that provides "a view from the inside" of certain historical events (Assmann, 2006, 263): in my study of these texts, I will examine the ways in which each author, in her representation of the inside of Ventas, uses her text as a site of self-construction and a means through which to resist the silencing frame of the prison. Building upon the theoretical framework I have previously laid out, I will set forth in this chapter an examination of what I will refer to in this thesis as 'carceral testimony', which I will define with reference to these prison texts.

This chapter will thus focus on what I have identified as three fundamental elements of carceral testimony. In the first section, I will explore each text's construction of a plural, metonymic subject; I propose here that the prison texts of Republican female prisoners may be read as collective documents, wherein the narrative space created by each author may be understood as an example of what Eakin has termed "relational autobiography" (1999, 43). As I noted in my introduction to this thesis, such relationality has been highlighted as a common feature in women's life-narratives (Sommer, 1988, 129): thus, I will also consider here the specifically gendered nature of this solidarity within the texts through a consideration of their representation of mother-daughter relationships. This understanding of the collective nature of each text will also then facilitate my discussion of witnessing within the narratives, which I propose is also undertaken as a collective act, wherein each author serves not only as a witness to her own experience but to that of her comrades inside the prison. Finally, I will close this chapter with an examination of the concepts of truth and authenticity within the testimonial text: returning to my analysis of the work of Dori Laub and "historical truth" (1992, 60), I will consider the difference between sincerity, truth and factual accuracy in carceral testimony, focussing in particular on each author's stated desire to write 'the truth' in the face of a repressive, silencing regime that frequently misrepresented the realities of political imprisonment for both men and women.

Plurality and solidarity in the Republican female prison text

From the very first page of each text, Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid all frame their carceral testimony as a narrative of solidarity. Each opens with a dedication that highlights a collective, plural subject, thus allowing her to locate her own story within a larger [hi]story of women's imprisonment and women's resistance. These dedications read as follows:

Para mi hija.

A la memoria de mi madre, la gran víctima de mi cautivero.

Para ensalzar el recuerdo de aquellas compañeras que, menos afortunadas que yo, murieron en él. (García Madrid, 1977)

A cuantas mujeres sufrieron la injusta represión; porque el olvido no llegue a hacer estéril su martirio. (García Madrid, 1982)

A la memoria de mi madre. Para ti, que fuiste la mujer más valerosa que conocí. (Doña, 1978)

A vosotros, jóvenes, hijos de los vencedores y de los vencidos, os lo dedico con admiración y cariño. (Núñez Targa, 2016)

This focus on the collective is, as Doris Sommer writes, often a particularly salient feature of women's testimony and, I propose, particularly of women's carceral testimony: in writing testimony, the singular "I" of the author "represents the plural not because it replaces or subsumes the group but because the speaker is a distinguishable part of the whole" (1988, 109). The author does not privilege her own position in claiming to speak 'for' others, or that her own narrative perfectly encapsulates multiple others, but rather posits that her own experience and her own testimony is one amongst many — her fellow prisoners are represented as her "compañeras", comrades, equally worth listening to even when they cannot tell their own stories. Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid, in making such solidarity and collectivity evident from their very first words, thus immediately draw the reader's attention to the fact that their own narratives, while not necessarily universal, are metonymic, situating each author's identity as "an extension of the collective" (Sommer, 1988, 108). This metonymy is crucial throughout each woman's prison writings, allowing the three authors to identify themselves as part of a larger community within the female population of Ventas. I wish to highlight here the relational nature of these prison texts. As Paul Eakin writes in his study of life writing, the self is "defined by — and lives in terms of — its relations with others" (1999, 43). I argue that this

is particularly true in the case of the prison, and that this relational existence is represented by each author as a means of survival inside Ventas. Prison is a uniquely isolating experience: it is thus in the face of this isolation that the prison writer seeks to build a community of prisoners within her work, the collective nature of which serves to undermine and contest “the social order which supports the prison apparatus and its repressive structures” (Harlow, 1987, 123). Furthermore, each arrested for her participation in Republican resistance movements during the Civil War and the immediate *posguerra*, Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid use their narratives to represent the political nature of their imprisonment: in particular, García Madrid, whose dedication immediately reminds the reader of the “injusta represión” (1982) suffered by women under the Franco regime. As committed socialists (Núñez Targa, García Madrid) and communists (Doña) as well as Republicans, the construction of a narrative space in which each author locates herself within a larger collective of women dedicated to a singular political cause allows her to engage in a metonymic “re-definition of the self and the individual in terms of a collective enterprise and struggle” (Harlow, 1987, 120). The collective nature of carceral testimony is thus a means for each author to speak out not only against her own oppression, but that of women in prisons across Spain.

Within the works themselves, then, all three authors make repeated references to their comrades, allowing the narratives to centre the collective rather than an individual protagonist as such. This structure is particularly evident in Núñez Targa’s *Cárcel de Ventas*, written as a series of vignettes that describe different aspects of prison life. Often these vignettes focus on one fellow prisoner, detailing the charges against her, the specific violence she endured at the hands of prison guards, her own acts of resistance, or other elements of her life (2016; 43, 47, 50, 68, 77). The majority of these women are named — Matilde Revaque, Brígida Jiménez, Doña Pepita, Nicolasa Blas Santamaría — and Shirley Mangini notes that they are afforded

almost more space within the narrative as Núñez Targa's own history, allowing *Cárcel de Ventas* to stand as “a series of anecdotes describing the bravery and tragedy” of the author's comrades (1995, 113) rather than as a singular, personal narrative. Thus, Núñez Targa shares not only the physical space of the prison with these women, but also the narrative space she creates within her testimony, as the text itself becomes a demonstration of solidarity and collectivity within the prison. The narrator is not the only protagonist, but rather one amongst many, establishing the solidarity between prisoners at a narrative level and rendering the text an “object of collective experience” (Pike, 2014, 253). Though both Doña and García Madrid's narratives are more traditionally structured, they are still spaces of collectivity and solidarity — both, like Núñez Targa, centre their comrades in their detailing of prison life and include other women's stories from inside Ventas. García Madrid, for example, recounts an instance in which multiple women attempted to reduce the sentence of pregnant inmate, Marina, whose execution had been planned for after the baby's birth:

Después [...] le fue concedida la libertad [...] Y ahí quedó también, con la satisfacción de su obra, un manojito de mujeres como María Lacrampe, Hortensia, Lola Freixa, Matilde Landa, Julia Vigre, Claudina García y un gran y maravilloso etcétera. Socialistas y comunistas unieron sus esfuerzos por arrancar, siquiera una vida, de una muerte injusta y arbitraria. (¡Qué gran lección para unos y otros!) (1982, 127).

Here, the political nature of this collectivity is again evident, as García Madrid emphasises in particular the harmony of socialists and communists working together, exalting the “gran lección” this unity offers the reader. In this way, the carceral testimony also becomes a means for its author to counter the common view of political or Republican women in Spain as

monstruous, bestial and uncivilised (González Duro, 2012, chap. 1 para. 12)³. García Madrid's collection of poetry, *Al quiebro de mis espinas*, also includes multiple poems centred upon or dedicated to others. "A trece flores caídas" tells the story of, and is dedicated to, "las trece menores que fueron fusiladas juntas" (1977, 18). Others are dedicated to friends: one poem is titled "A Rosarito, mi amiga, muerta en la prision de Gerona" (1941), and "Galería primera" is dedicated to "Virtudes, y [...] los 59 compañeros fusilados en la misma madrugada". "Galería primera" tells the story of those women sentenced to the death penalty, in particular the young Virtudes: "¡Tú no eras la heroína, eras la niña / que querría [sic] abrazarse a su muñeca! ¡Y aún estabas bonita!" (1977, 20-25). In *Desde la noche y la niebla*, Doña also dedicates significant space to the lives and experiences of the women she knew in prison: indeed, she states in her introduction that the names of the women included in her narrative further serve to represent "miles de mujeres [...] de todos nuestros pueblos que también fueron héroes en el duro combate silencioso por sobrevivir", a statement she follows with a list of the names of some forty-three women detained in various prisons before also acknowledging those anonymous women whose names have not been recorded (1978, 22). Thus, the collective nature of Doña's carceral testimony serves as a means of the re-insertion of Republican women and their forgotten stories into the history of Spain and the Civil War. García Madrid, too, asserts that her narrative constitutes an act of memorialisation, stating that the lives of her comrades within the prison represent "cosas que no pueden quedar en el olvido" (1982, 122). Each author thereby creates a shared space within her writing, a space in which not only her own voice but the voices and [hi]stories of others can be heard and amplified, given a platform from which to speak out against the silence of the prison. As Susan Stanford Friedman writes in her study of women's autobiography, the power of these narratives is in their collectivity:

³ I will return to this in much more detail in Chapter Two, which focusses on establishing the carceral testimony as a means of re-framing women's political activity in Franco's Spain.

the protagonist is never “the isolated being”, and the narrative “has its centre everywhere and its circumference nowhere” (1988, 72). The carceral testimony is thus a collective production, an expression of the solidarity between the prisoners of Ventas — to return to Sommer’s theory of testimonial writing, the Republican female prisoner’s re-construction of the self within her narrative is thus achieved through her connection to other members of the collective (1988, 108).

Solidarity within the texts is also situated within intergenerational legacies of mothers and daughters, a particularly gendered representation of collectivity. In their introductions, both Doña and García Madrid make reference to these intergenerational links: Doña names her mother “la mujer más valerosa que conocí” (1978, dedication), and García Madrid dedicates her collection of prison poetry to both her mother and her daughter, thus bringing together three generations of women living and resisting under Francoist rule. These intergenerational narratives, in their “thinking back through the mothers” (Martin, 1988, 98), demonstrate another form of collectivity within the narrative of resistance and further our understanding of each author’s own relational construction of her selfhood: as Marianne Hirsch writes in her study of mothers and daughters in literature, the mother-daughter relationship serves to represent “women’s basic and continued relatedness and multiplicity” (1989, 20). The carceral testimony of Republican female prisoners thus constitutes another means through which the prison writer is able to construct her own identity through her text, situating her selfhood within this “fundamental interconnection” (Hirsch, 1989, 130) between multiple generations of women. Furthermore, the specific example of intergenerational solidarity displayed in these dedications is in itself an act of resistance against the Francoist regime, as it demonstrates a passing of political consciousness from mother to daughter, and in García Madrid’s case, to daughter again. In this familial, matrilineal representation of women’s political engagement,

García Madrid's testimony thus serves to undermine "traditional boundaries between the personal and the political, the public and the private" (Ferrán, 2014, 123) which were fundamental in the Franco regime's effort to deny women's access to the political sphere. The rigidly traditional notions of the family espoused by the regime's Nationalist-Catholic rhetoric, which went to great lengths to ensure that Republican political ideas were not passed from parent to child (Picornell-Belenguier, 2006, 124), are also negated by this representation of a politically community made up of mothers and daughters. In terms of the family, and particularly the mother, the onus was on raising children who would grow to become dutiful citizens of the New Spanish State (Morcillo, 2008, 33), and so Doña and García Madrid's emphasis on these oppositional, matrilineal relationships constitutes a form of active, rebellious motherhood (or daughterhood) that works against the Francoist state. Within *Cárcel de Ventas*, Núñez Targa also exemplifies this political aspect of motherhood in her relationship with Clara, an older inmate and a 'mentor' to other women inside the prison: she describes how Clara, whom she refers to jokingly as "mi comisario" inspires not only herself to join the prison school (2016, 68) but also many other women in her daily walks around the prison, recruiting them as teachers if they know how to read and write and as pupils if they do not. She also helps fellow inmates repair ripped garments (2016, 70), offers moral support during "noches de saca" (2016, 74), and cares for the children inside Ventas (2016, 77). Clara is thus a sort of surrogate mother-figure within the prison, from whom others learn to survive and resist: as Núñez Targa herself puts it, these small daily acts "también forma[n] parte del resistir" (2016, 66). As Ferrán writes in her article on oppositional familial practices in the literature of Franco's prisons, this formation of alternative families and the emphasis on what she terms "transgressive motherhood" (2014, 125) also constitutes a means of resistance for imprisoned women, functioning "not only as a means of survival for all but also as a demonstration of solidarity among the women and an affirmation of political activism and agency" (2014, 124). The

solidarity expressed in Núñez Targa's testimony thus again allows the author to re-assert her status as a political prisoner and to emphasise the women's acts of resistance within the prison.

The connection with one's own biological mother is also represented within each text as a vital lifeline inside the prison: as a visitor who brings food packages, news and support from the outside world and also, crucially, "esperanza y razón de ser" (García Madrid, 1982, 88), the Republican mother is represented even outside of the prison walls as a fundamental part of the texts' collective voice. Indeed, throughout *Requiem por la libertad*, García Madrid writes of the support she received from her mother during the time she spent in prison, noting that these familial relations were "donde sacamos los presos todo lo bueno" (1982, 151) and a reminder that "no estaban solos" (1982, 153). For Doña, who was herself a mother at the time of imprisonment, these acts of solidarity also extend to her own child: for example, after a visit with her son in which he asks for a small toy horse like one of his friends, Leonor writes to her family members "para rogar [...] que no le enviaran ningún dinero y que lo guardaran hasta reunir lo que pudiera costar un 'caballo como el de Carlitos'" (1978, 224), sacrificing money that could be used for her own comfort in order to care for her child. Núñez Targa, in detailing her release from Ventas, recounts how each inmate offers the address of their mother, who will feed and house her: "vete a mi casa [...] no te dejarán en la calle. Donde comen tres comen cuatro" (2016, 118). Another inmate, with a young daughter, asks that Núñez Targa visit and "háblale de mí" (2016, 118). Here, then, Núñez Targa represents motherhood as a further collective act within her narrative: regardless of familial connections, this "transgressive" matrilineal relationship "disassociates the nurturing quality of a mother from the sphere of biological reproduction connecting it instead to that of social and political solidarity" (Ferrán, 2014, 125). Thus, motherhood in the carceral testimony is represented by each author as a particular form of solidarity between both family members and fellow inmates, and asserts the

importance of such relationships for the survival and wellbeing of the imprisoned women. In Chapter Two, which explores the gendered experience of imprisonment, I will return in more detail to the representation of motherhood in each text as an expression of resistance against the gender ideology imposed by the Franco regime.

Acts of witnessing and the urge to narrate

Carceral testimony is dependent on acts of witnessing. Each text, as an account of its author's own life experiences, is necessarily a witness text: it is rooted in the fact that its author saw and experienced the events she describes in her narrative first-hand. Each author, in her introduction, makes clear that her ensuing narrative is one born of this personal experience, and that the [hi]story within is her own. García Madrid describes her writing process as following “el hilo de mis recuerdos” (1982, 11), Doña writes “cuando en el 67 escribí este relato, aún mantenía muy vivo el recuerdo de mis años de prisión [...] no pretendía más que dar testimonios vivenciales de mi pequeño entorno” (1978, 21), and Núñez Targa states that “[yo estuve] encarcelada durante varios años, e incluso un tribunal, muy en serio, me juzgó y condenó por ‘ayuda a la rebelión’” (2016, 34). In *Destinada al crematorio*, Núñez Targa also makes a much more obvious reference to this act of self-witnessing, writing that at Ravensbrück she saw “*con mis propios ojos* todo aquello del ‘campo de asesinos’, y no como espectadora, sino como prisionera” (2016, 125, emphasis mine). As Anne Cubillé writes of testimony as a form of witness literature, “to be one's own witness is an important site of resistance [...] the ability to speak for oneself is a resistant act” (2005, 78) — the carceral testimonies of Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid bear witness to their own incarceration, allowing the act of testifying to convert a narrative of oppression and silence into one where they may now reclaim ownership of their own [hi]stories. Where prison “signifies silence, obedience [and] repression” (Mangini, 1995, 99), the prison narrative then comes to signify the

opposite, creating a space wherein its author is able to speak and resist this enforced silence. However, each of the three authors also emphasises that she is not only a witness to herself, but to others. From the dedications on the very first pages, as I have explored above, each text is dedicated to other women: to mothers, daughters and comrades, and specifically to women who can no longer tell their own stories, relying on others to ensure that they are memorialised. Doña, for example, includes the aforementioned list of names, ensuring that her comrades are remembered alongside herself, and writes that it was not only herself but “todas” who suffered the “desatada represión de ese vendaval” (1978, 23). Núñez Targa, in her introduction to *Cárcel de Ventas*, writes that her objective was to record “aquella hora demencial de la posguerra vivida por las reclusas de Ventas” (2016, 34), not just herself but all of the inmates of the prison, and García Madrid states that *Requiem por la libertad* provides a space within which her comrades “sigan viviendo” (1982, 11) preserving them within her prison narrative alongside her own memories. Each author’s narrative is thus constructed upon these multiple acts or “levels” (Felman and Laub, 1992, 75) of witnessing: both that of bearing witness to oneself and one’s own experiences, and that of bearing witness to the lives and experiences of others, in this case fellow inmates of Ventas prison. In creating a textual space within which their comrades’ experiences may be remembered and preserved, Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid all bear witness to these comrades as well as to themselves: they thus testify to what Agamben, in his work on Holocaust testimony, has termed the “lacuna” (1999, 33). As Agamben writes, part of the value of testimony lies in “what it lacks”, namely the voices of those witnesses who died inside the prison, who cannot and do not bear witness in the same way as the survivor is able to (1999, 34). In this sense, the prison writer must then bear witness to this impossible witnessing: to borrow from the title of Charlotte Delbo’s work, the writer of testimony must “carry the word” (Delbo, 1966) for her comrades. Here, then, I propose that

shared narrative space created by carceral testimonies also encompasses a further level of solidarity, in testifying to this identified ‘gap’ in testimony.

Within the testimonies themselves, these multiple levels of witnessing become more evident. In García Madrid’s poem “Tú, madre, y yo, solas (Mayo, 14, Madrid, 1939)”, which describes the night of her arrest, the poetic voice encompasses two separate witness-acts on the part of both García Madrid and her mother:

Madre, ¿sabes tú qué quieren?

[...]

El silencio por respuestas

con tu llanto por palabras

[...]

¿Adónde me llevan, madre?

En la cera de tu cara

me respondió la agonía

que aún me va comiendo el alma (1977, 15-17).

Here, as the mother witnesses the daughter’s fear, and her arrest, the daughter also witnesses the mother’s pain, which she feels as her own even into the present day (“aún me va comiendo el alma”). García Madrid thus encapsulates the entwinement of these witness-acts: in her writing of the poem, she bears witness to her own experience of her arrest, to the experience of the mother who witnesses the arrest of her daughter, and also, in her expression of her mother’s pain at what she sees, to the act of witnessing itself. Furthermore, the speaker’s first response to her fear is to ask her mother for an explanation, for help — the experiences of both are thus linked, each not only witnessing but also feeling the pain of the other. As I have already explored above, motherhood is a recurrent theme in all the carceral testimonies I include in this

study, but García Madrid's work in particular makes repeated reference to this specific form of mother-daughter witnessing. *Requiem por la libertad*, ostensibly Ángeles's narrative, includes multiple passages where the line between the speaker's own narration is blurred with that of her mother. In the below excerpt, for example, which begins in a narration of García Madrid's life in Ventas (the cellmates who share between them the news from their respective families), the text then transitions seamlessly into narrating, from her mother's perspective, such a piece of news (a neighbour who requests the use of García Madrid's mattress whilst she is in prison in exchange for helping to secure her freedom), and then back once again to García Madrid's perspective as she dissuades her mother from bringing her the mattress in question to sleep on whilst she is imprisoned.

Entre ellas se referían todo lo que les decían sus familiares y todas sabían de las mismas desilusiones. [...] Sin embargo, no era ella sólo; también la madre de Ángeles encontró al fin lo que tanto buscaba. Ese falangista que “podía hacer algo” [...]

— Verá yo vengo de parte de mi primo Óscar - así se llamaba el falangista - a pedirle a usted un favor: Dice mi primo que si le puede usted prestar la cama de su hija. Es que está durmiendo con mi hijo y no se encuentra a gusto. Como usted ahora no lo necesita...

La mujer ocultó como pudo su decepción. Aquella petición parecía llevar implícita la idea de demora en la consecución de la libertad de su hija

[...] La verdad es que Ángeles dormía bastante incómoda en el suelo, pero pensando en que su familia no podía pagar un medio de transporte [...] procuró disuadir la idea de la madre. (1982, 105).

Again, then, García Madrid embodies these multiple witness-acts in her narrative — the text bears witness to her own experience within the prison alongside the experiences of her mother,

which are told not as second-hand reported speech but as direct experiences in the same way as García Madrid's own. The mother worries for the daughter and the daughter worries for the mother as each witnesses the other's suffering.

Witnessing in the carceral testimony is thus constructed as a collective act: as I explored above, there is no true 'protagonist' within these carceral testimonies, as equal space is afforded to the narrator and to her comrades. This act of witnessing, I argue here, is also intertwined with the so-called "urge to tell" (Pike, 2014, 89): as testimonial writers, each woman is "*moved to narrate*" by the urgency of that which she has witnessed, portraying her own experience as a part "of a *collective memory and identity*" in order to "[set] *aright* official history" (Yúdice, cit. in Gugelberger and Kearney, 1994, 4, italics in original). Again, this desire to tell the stories of others alongside one's own is evident from the author introductions at the beginning of each text. Núñez Targa, for example, describes how upon her release she was asked by another woman to share what she had seen and experienced inside the prison and to make others aware of what was happening to women inside Ventas, a request that weighed upon her conscience "como una promesa no cumplida" until, twenty years later, she completed her prison narrative (2016, 34). Doña, similarly, writes that *Desde la noche y la niebla* stems from the urge to tell the Spanish public about the horror of her years in Franco's prisons, to recognise women's contributions to the revolution and their sacrifices during the years of the *posguerra* (1978, 20). In particular, Doña notes that "rara vez se hablaba o escribía sobre las heroicidades de las luchadores-mujeres [...] a las mujeres se les han dedicado unas líneas apenas [...] sin embargo, por las prisiones han pasado miles y miles de mujeres; no ha habido una sola lucha antifascista donde las mujeres no han participado" (1978, 20), thus highlighting the lack of recognition of women's involvement in the war and the subsequent anti-Francoist resistance, as well as the

aforementioned desire to “set aright” this official history by re-inserting women into its narrative.

Within the texts themselves, all three authors describe one emblematic event — the “saca” of the trece rosas — that encapsulates both the “urge to tell” and the collective act of witnessing that I have described here. Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid all devote significant space to the thirteen minors, members of the JSU, sentenced to death on August 3rd, 1939 and executed by firing squad on August 5th. All three women refer to the minors as the “trece rosas”, but also mention many of their full names⁴, thus again re-inscribing these names into history, ensuring that their memories are preserved in the narrative and in the mind of the reader. In *Cárcel de Ventas*, Núñez Targa emphasises their bravery and resilience: “Nos han condenado a muerte - dijeron - y la sentencia será cumplida dentro de 48 horas. No nos importa, ni nos arrepentimos de nada. Con nosotras o sin nosotras, nuestra causa triunfará [...] Cuando vinieron a sacarlas marcharon a la muerte como verdaderas heroínas, dando vivas y cantando” (2016, 55). García Madrid describes this same resilience and dignity in the face of death, writing in particular of Julia Conesa that “la serenidad de aquella forzaba la admiración [...] en sus negros y hermosos ojos no había lágrimas; ni siquiera una lágrima” (1982, 112). She mourns their loss in a sonnet entitled “A trece flores caídas”: “¡Trece penas! / Trece flores tronchadas en el suelo” (1977, 19) and also expresses her desire to re-insert their names into the history of Francoism as a reminder of its cruelty, writing “Julia... Virtudes... Joaquina... Aquellas chiquillas empujadas a una estremeedor Gólgota, iban a ser la más dramática denuncia a la patente injusticia de Franco y su tan cacareada paz” (1982, 113). For Doña, the night of the “saca” was “la más dolorosa” of her time in prison (1978, 189): she writes that the charge against them (“complot contra Franco”) was “tan ridículo que se hacía inconcebible que

⁴ Many names are also featured in the list in Doña’s introduction.

por tal acusación pudiesen ser ejecutadas” (1978, 189), going on to detail the evidence of their innocence. Like García Madrid and Núñez Targa, Doña again emphasises the dignity and bravery of the thirteen minors, writing that they were “irreductibles” and faced their sentencing “con una serenidad que helaba la sangre en las venas de las adultas”, but she also emphasises a final act of solidarity amongst the inmates of Ventas: “hicieron su ‘pequeño testamento’, ‘para ti, mi cuchara, y para la otra el cinturón, cepillo de dientes como recuerdo y el peine’ [...] todo lo repartieron” (1978, 190). Each text thus testifies for the *trece rosas* in the face of the impossibility of the minors’ own testimony: the prison writer is situated within a chain of witnesses, testifying not only to her own experience, but also to that of others. This representation of the *trece rosas*, however, also serves a specific purpose within the prison narratives, allowing the author to highlight certain aspects of the Republican female prisoner such as her youth, innocence or compassion for others. In this way, the collective body of inmates — including the author herself — is drawn into what Vosburg refers to as a “humanising process”, wherein the image of the prisoner is designed to inspire empathy and sympathy in the mind of the intended reader (1995, 129). In Chapter Two, I will explore in more detail the performance of femininity within the prison text and the particular mode of reading this inspires.

In this interpellation of the imagined reader, then, the carceral testimony also entails a third witness-act that lies at the intersection of reading and witnessing. As Laub writes in his study of witnessing in Holocaust testimonies, the testimony “is not a monologue” and cannot take place in solitude. The writer of testimony is a witness who is “talking to somebody: to somebody they have been waiting for for a long time” — this “somebody” is the reader, in the position of “one who hears” (Felman and Laub, 1992, 71). Thus, the reader then enacts a third act of witnessing in bearing witness to the testimony before her, becoming a witness to the act

of witnessing itself. García Madrid makes reference to this third witness-act in her introduction, writing that she has recorded the lives of her friends and comrades “para que sea, precisamente el lector, quien los juzgue como crea más oportuno” (1982, 11), and to allow this reader to “conocer algo más del pasado” (1982, 12). Throughout *Requiem por la libertad*, García Madrid also addresses the reader directly in a series of footnotes intended to clarify certain aspects of the narrative for an intended reader who might not have first-hand experience of life during the Spanish post-war period: in describing the building in which she lived prior to her arrest, for example, she uses a footnote to explain that neighbours in apartment buildings often took turns to keep watch during the night (1982, 42). Núñez Targa addresses the reader in the same way, using her footnotes to clarify, for example, the full names of women she refers to by their nicknames within *Cárcel de Ventas* and to inform the reader of certain biographical details, such as in the case of Nicolasa Blas Santamaría, “la Nico” (2016, 43). In discussing the reader, I argue here that the inclusion of such footnotes serves to associate the carceral testimonies of Núñez Targa and García Madrid with historical or academic work, where a reader would usually expect these textual elements. Thus, each author inspires a mode of reading that orients their intended reader, conflating her testimony with historical fact — or encouraging this reader to do so. The narratives also allow the reader to establish a greater understanding of the experiences of women imprisoned during Francoism: in reading the examples of suffering already discussed above, such as frequent “sacas”, poor conditions and cruelty, alongside representations of the enduring resistance and solidarity of the imprisoned women, the reader thus becomes witness to these experiences and the witnessed past is re-constituted in the present (Tozzi, 2010, 4), allowing for a transcendence of the inside/outside binary created by the prison walls. The carceral testimonies of Republican female prisoners thus “call the reader in” to fill a role in the testimonial network (Sommer, 1995, 118), constructing a sense of complicity between the author, her community, and the reader. The relationship between

narrator and reader is therefore an extension of the metonymy between the narrator and her own community, and it is through this metonymy that the carceral testimony allows for a “historical eyewitnessing” (Felman and Laub, 1992, 109) of the collective history within. As Gillian Whitlock writes, it is in the absence of this witness that testimony fails: “the sound of one hand clapping” (2018, 68). Instead, then, the testimony creates a community of witnesses out of its readers (Margalit, 2002, 155) in order to ensure its history is not forgotten. In Chapter Three, I will return to the question of reading carceral testimony in a specifically modern-day context, addressing the effect this might have on our understanding of the Republican female prisoner as a subaltern subject and the role of the reader in the wake of what Smith and Watson have termed the “memoir boom” (2010, 101).

The “urge to tell” and the witness narrative in the carceral testimony can also take a different form, as is made evident in García Madrid’s introduction to *Requiem por la libertad*. As well as writing to share with others what she has experienced, the author states that her narrative was also a work of personal healing and trauma recovery: “me ha sido preciso [...] el drenaje de aquella zona [de tanto doloroso recuerdo] y el avenamiento [sic] del pesar en ello contenido, queriendo evitar que un rebose inesperado me causara un daño mayor” (1982, 11). Here, then, the desire to tell her story is also rooted in the desire to avoid further traumatising, and the re-telling of the prison narrative becomes, as Sarah Colvin has similarly observed in her study of German women’s prison writing, an act of survival (Colvin, 2014, 591). By recounting the traumatic memories of Ventas in her writing, García Madrid engages in a “re-externalising” of the traumatic event of imprisonment, a therapeutic process that, according to Dori Laub, can only be achieved when the trauma survivor is able to articulate and transmit her trauma to another, secondary witness (Felman and Laub, 1992, 69), in this case the reader. As a form of trauma writing, García Madrid’s prison narrative provides a way for her, as a writer, to “bear

witness to a past that was not fully experienced at the time” (Caruth, 1995, 151). Thus, as “the not-telling of [a] story serves as a perpetuation of its tyranny” (Caruth, 1995, 79), *Requiem por la libertad* — as well as *Al quiebro de mis espinas*, García Madrid’s collection of poetry — serves as a rupture with this tyranny, the tyranny of fascism and of Francoist repression and imprisonment, and with the regime’s imposed silence⁵. This examination of the urge to tell through reference to trauma theory is also relevant in my analysis of Doña and Núñez Targa’s introductions to their texts, though less explicitly expressed. Consider, for example, Núñez Targa’s reference to her fellow inmate, who asked her to tell her story: “me ha estado arañando la conciencia como una promesa no cumplida [...] y he pergeñado este relato, forzosamente incompleto” (2016, 34). This description of the emotional and physical need to fulfil this request illustrates Laub’s definition of the “imperative to tell and be heard”, which can become an all-encompassing task given that, for the trauma survivor,

no amount of telling seems ever to do justice to this inner compulsion. There are never enough words or the right words, there is never enough time or the right time, and never enough listening or the right listening to articulate the story that cannot be fully captured in thought, memory, and speech (Felman and Laub, 1992, 78, italics in original).

After the experience of trauma, the survivor is compelled to communicate her story. The act of telling, or writing, thus serves as a means of breaking with the discursive frame of silence that symbolises imprisonment, allowing her to work through her traumatic experience and becoming a new method of survival and resistance — even if, as Laub writes, this task can never be entirely completed (1992, 62). This process of communication, the need to tell or to

⁵ I use the word “fascism” here specifically as, in their work, all three authors (Doña in particular, who repeatedly emphasises her own political stance within *Desde la noche y la niebla*) characterise their resistance as “antifascist”. Generally, however, the Franco regime is not referred to by historians as a fascist regime but rather a “fascistized dictatorship”, bearing many of the hallmarks of fascism but — particularly after the split with the Falange — not entirely aligned with its ideology (Saz Campos, 2004, 345). For a more thorough examination of Franco and fascism, see Saz Campos (2004) or Linz (1964).

write, is also incomplete without the secondary witnessing enacted by the reader of the trauma narrative: the urge to narrate is also accompanied by the need to be heard or read, the need for somebody who will witness the survivor's story. I have already explored above the need for a reader to act as witness to the act of witnessing itself — however, in the case of the trauma narrative, the reader is doubly important, taking on “the responsibility for bearing witness that previously the narrator felt [she] bore alone, and therefore could not carry out” (Felman and Laub, 1992, 85). This convergence between the survivor of trauma and the reader of trauma thus facilitates a repossession of the act of witnessing, allowing the trauma survivor to enact her own resistance and to counter the isolation and secrecy of the prison and the “invisibility and inaudibility” of the prisoner narrative (Colvin, 2017, 442). All three authors rely on the “power of telling” what they themselves have witnessed (Portela, 2003, 27) in order to re-insert Republican female prisoners into Spain's Civil War narrative; to recognise the bravery and suffering of fellow prisoners; to heal from or accept traumatic memories as part of one's life experiences. Witnessing and writing, in this sense, is “an act of survival” (Rich, 1970, 90). In the role of the witness, the reader of trauma acts as a counter to the “unlistened-to story” (Colvin, 2017, 440) of the trauma of imprisonment, and the testimony in itself is a communicative act. Below, I explore the ways in which the communicative nature of testimony allows its author to construct a series of specific, purposeful narratives, which I will then expand upon further in Chapter Two.

Truth and authenticity in the testimonial text

Also crucial to these witness narratives, then, and stressed in each author's introduction, is the concept of truth. In her introduction to *Requiem por la libertad*, García Madrid emphasises the veracity of her ensuing narrative multiple times, repeating that the women within “han vivido realmente” and warning that the reader “no busque [...] la hipérbole; no lo encontrará” (1982, 12). Doña, too, assures her reader that, although names have been changed to protect identities,

“ni un solo de los relatos que se cuentan aquí son producto de la imaginación” (1978, 21), and Núñez Targa admits that, while she may have made certain mistakes, *Cárcel de Ventas* remains an authentic, truthful account of her time in prison: “Tal vez Clara no se llamaba Clara. Tal vez atribuyo a Rosita una frase que dijo María o Luisa, no sé. Mi preocupación ha sido restituir con la mayor fidelidad posible aquella hora demencial de la posguerra vivida por las reclusas de Ventas” (2016, 34). In the prologue to *Destinada al crematorio*, Núñez Targa also makes a second promise to the reader that she has not excluded her own moments of weakness from her narrative nor attempted to paint herself as a perfect heroine, but rather has included ‘everything’:

Me sacan de quicio los que cuando escriben sus memorias se muestran modestamente a sí mismos como los perfectos héroes [...] Yo, no. Yo he tenido miedo, mucho miedo, e insensateces, también he hecho muchas; he pasado hambre e incluso he tenido deseos de quitarle la comida a una compañera. Todo os lo contaré y no haré trampa (2016, 126).

This emphasis on the truthfulness of each narrative is central to my analysis of carceral testimony, as the concept of a witness narrative hinges on both the witness giving her testimony with “sincerity, competence and [the] intention to speak the truth” (Schmidt, 2017, 92), and the understanding that her audience (or reader) will accept the truth of her given history. However, as I explored in the introductory chapter to this thesis, the concept of historical truth in the testimonial narrative is necessarily somewhat troubled. Furthermore, as illustrated by Núñez Targa and her admission to the fallibility of her memory, the concept of “the truth” is again complicated by the fact that these testimonies were written after the fact of each author’s imprisonment. As both Núñez Targa and García Madrid affirm in their introductions, then, it would be impossible to remember with total accuracy every single conversation and every word spoken during her time in Ventas, and it is thus likely that mistakes will have been made

in the creation of each author's carceral testimony. Often, as Smith and Watson have observed, this kind of discrepancy leads to readers acting as "detectives of authenticity, publicly alleging in offline and online venues that such-and-such book is a case of false witnessing" (2012, 590) and to the labelling of certain testimonial authors as "tainted witnesses" (Gilmore, 2017, x)⁶. By prefacing her narrative with this admission of potential inaccuracy, the testimonial writer is then able to re-orientate the intended reader, whom she asks to expect sincerity rather than concrete, irrefutable fact. Most importantly, as Núñez Targa assures, "no haré trampa" (2016, 126): she will not play tricks [on the reader]. García Madrid's assertion that her narrative will be free of hyperbole — despite the "muchos defectos" it might contain (1982, 11) — is an expression of this same sentiment, as is Doña's explanation that, whilst some names may have been changed or invented, the events of her narrative are all related as she experienced them. Particularly in the cases of García Madrid and Doña's narratives, which are written in the third person as opposed to the first-person of Núñez Targa's *Cárcel de Ventas* and *Destinada al crematorio*, these assertions allow the authors to establish themselves as "narrators of their own histories", and to claim their "author-ity" over their testimonies (Pike, 2014, 92) despite the narrative distance between author and protagonist. Thus, the power of these carceral testimonies "derives more from a pledge of truthfulness and a performance of good faith than from a strict, conclusive evidentiary reliability" (Sarker and Walker, 2009, 21). As Laub expresses in his example of the chimneys at Auschwitz, the nature of testimony is that it provides a personal account of one's experience: as each person will experience an event differently, the concept of truth may therefore vary between accounts (1992, 60). The carceral testimonies of the women of Ventas, then, each testify to the personal experiences of their authors, providing the reader with not 'the truth' but 'a truth'. Doña testifies to this difference

⁶ As was the case, for example, in David Stoll's "exposé" of Rigoberta Menchú, in which Stoll claimed that elements of Menchú's life narrative had been fabricated in order fit a certain narrative. For a more thorough examination of both Menchú's testimony and Stoll's claim, see Beverley (2004).

in her own introduction to *Desde la noche y la niebla*, stating that her narrative “no pretendía más que dar testimonios vivenciales de *mi* pequeño eterno” (1978, 21, emphasis mine). Indeed, in Doña’s narrative in particular, the concept of the truth is troubled once more by the fact that the author defines her text as a “novela-testimonio” (1978, 19) rather than an explicitly autobiographical work. The reasons for this are further explained in her introduction, where Doña states that her clandestine status in Spain after her release from Ventas meant that certain elements of her testimony were changed in order to protect both her own identity and that of her comrades inside the prison (1978, 21). She also states, however, that “ni uno solo de los relatos que se cuentan aquí son producto de la imaginación” (1978, 21). I propose, then, that the truth contained within these testimonies — whilst certainly valid and important as a historical or sociological source — is valuable for more than only the verifiable, factual information they contain (Hartman, 2002, 11), offering us instead a better understanding of each author’s own “pequeño eterno” (Doña, 1978, 21). The carceral testimony of the women of Ventas thus allows the author to represent her own experience and offers the reader an understanding of “what it felt like to be in the centre” (Assmann, 2006, 263) of such an experience.

In the case of these particular carceral testimonies, those of Franco’s female prisoners, the need for truth and authenticity within the narrative is amplified by the regime’s own concealment and censorship surrounding information on imprisonment under Franco. As Ricard Vinyes affirms, the number of Spaniards held in prisons across the country was habitually misreported in both official documents and regime propaganda (2003, 163) in an attempt to obscure the true scale of the prison population, which had increased dramatically in practically every region

following the end of the Civil War⁷ (Sombría, 2003, 179). Even the testimonies I study here vary significantly in their reported numbers of women in Ventas: Doña writes that there were “cerca de catorce mil mujeres” (1978, 114) in the prison at the time of her detention, García Madrid some “diez u once mil” (1982, 66) and Núñez Targa a more modest “más de seis mil” (2016, 36). In terms of scholarship that has since been carried out with regard to Ventas, both Mangini (1995, 101) and di Febo (1979, 28) place their estimates for its total population somewhere between ten and fourteen thousand, whilst Holgado reports only four thousand (2003, 138) — however, to return to the concept of authenticity in the carceral testimony, I would argue that the specific figure reported by García Madrid, Doña or Núñez Targa is less important than their representation of the experience of the prison itself. All three, for example, testify to the overcrowded space, with women housed “en los pasillos, en las escaleras, en los propios retretes” (Núñez Targa, 2016, 35), and the unsavoury conditions caused by such close confinement, such as bedbugs (García Madrid, 1982, 72) and a lack of sanitation that often led to illness (Doña, 1978, 164). In terms of eyewitness accounts and what they can tell us about the experience of women’s imprisonment under Franco, it is perhaps these details that are more pertinent in allowing the reader to understand each writer’s own reality, rather than a number whose verification is troubled by the imprisoning regime’s own censorship. This same censorship also extended to the number of political prisoners incarcerated across the country, as evidenced by references from the Ministerio de Justicia to “el número de presos *indebidamente llamados políticos* que hubo en las cárceles españolas inmediatamente después de la Victoria” (cit. in Vinyes, 2003, 163, emphasis mine) and new policies under which those detained for their political activity were subsequently classified as delinquents, criminals or socially in-adapted individuals (Vinyes, 2003, 163).

⁷ Actual numbers are hard to determine as a result of this obfuscation: the official figure reported by the Ministerio de Justicia in 1940 numbered some 270,719 prisoners, but historians’ estimates vary between 100,000 (Mangini, 1995, 101) to one million prisoners (Gómez Braco, 2010, 6) at the end of the Civil War.

Thus, adhering to an archetype wherein political dissidence was defined as an inferior and perverse mental nature, the Franco regime systematically denied the existence of political prisoners. Female political prisoners, that “hyperinvisible” prison population (Davies, 1999, xi) found themselves all but erased from official statistics and the public eye, as women who did not conform to the new Nationalist-Catholic ideal of “true Catholic womanhood” (Morcillo, 2008). Indeed, women who did not conform to this new religious-feminine ideal were condemned by the new regime as “putas rojas”, red whores, a term that designated “a physical and social enactment of transgression” (Pike, 2014, 30). This term referred to women “without morals or shame” who were deemed the cause of “the destruction of Spain” for both political and gendered transgressions (Osborne, 2011, 511). The prison texts of Republican female prisoners, however, repeatedly emphasise their own political identity: Doña, for example, describes her membership in one of the prison “células” (1978, 164), made up of militant women and members of the Partido Comunista who worked together to improve the lives of women inside Ventas by organising collective responses to the struggles of imprisonment. Within these groups, women also organised political meetings and readings, and even organised the distribution of prison newspapers (Pike, 2014, 247). All three women also testify to direct acts of resistance. In *Cárcel de Ventas*, Núñez Targa reports a strike undertaken by women in the Ventas sewing workshop after the workers did not receive the rations they were promised (2016, 116), and in *Desde la noche y la niebla*, Doña reports having taken part in a hunger strike to protest the mistreatment of Aurora, a fellow prisoner (1978, 308). Many of the women in Ventas are also introduced with reference to their political alignment: García Madrid writes that Pilar Fernández “había pertenecido al Círculo Socialista de Pacífico” (1982, 77), the Burgos sisters, Isabel Ponce and Isabel Alvaro Martín are “del

S.I.M⁸” (1982, 81), and María Lacrampe and Carmen Castro were “socialistas” (1982, 113). Thus, even in the face of the regime’s erasure of Republican women’s political activities, the women of Ventas use their carceral testimonies to re-assert this political identity and to emphasise the political status of their imprisonment. To return, however, to my discussion of solidarity, this emphasis on the political prisoners of Ventas is present in the texts at the cost of a form of narrative of solidarity that might include the prison’s common-law inmates. Indeed, these women are explicitly excluded from the texts: in one instance in *Cárcel de Ventas*, for example, a young woman named Conchi attempts to joke with some of her fellow prisoners, who reject her attempts at friendship: “Somos políticas [...] déjanos en paz con tus granujerías [...] la interpelada la rechaza bruscamente” (2016, 101). Doña is similarly dismissive of common-law prisoners, referring to them derisively as thieves or criminals (1978, 282) whilst simultaneously emphasising the communal spirit and moral strength of her fellow political detainees (1978, 163). Thus, the emphasis on the women’s political convictions and the solidarity between political prisoners creates a pronounced division within the texts, whose narrative space does not include certain members of the prison population. In Chapter Two, I will return to this discussion of exclusionary solidarity as I explore the ways in which the carceral testimonies of imprisoned women in Franco’s Spain also write back against the designation of their political behaviour as a deviant and unfeminine act (Richmond, 2010, 20).

Where female prison writers, then, have been theorised by Elissa Gelfand to be “triply damned” (1983, 20), as women, prisoners and writers whose marginal texts are “too often lost in the marginal literature of the prison” (Scheffler, 2002, xv), the female prison writers of Franco’s Spain were additionally subjected to the fourth damnation of being Republican. Of the three writers, Doña talks most explicitly of this marginalisation in her introduction, highlighting the

⁸ The Servicio de Información Militar, military intelligence for the Fuerzas Armadas de la República Española.

many thousands of women incarcerated under Franco (1978, 20) and noting that even as men's prison narratives were being published across Spain in order to break the circle of censorship and control enforced by the regime, women's prison narratives were overlooked as simply "cosas de mujeres" (1978, 20). Women, and particularly imprisoned or Republican women, were thus a marginal or subaltern subject in Franco's Spain: in a position "without identity" (Spivak, 2005, 476) as theirs was routinely denied, subject to the repeated "epistemic violence" (Spivak, 1988, 278) of removal from official histories and denial of a forum in which to be heard. Thus, the carceral testimony's emphasis on women's participation in the resistance and their experiences as part of the penitentiary universe (Vinyes, 2003, 155) becomes another form of writing back against the social invisibility and inaudibility of imprisoned women (Colvin, 2014, 592), allowing them to assert the authority of their experience. Doña, for example, writes that *Desde la noche y la niebla* "testimonia el sufrimiento de miles de mujeres que fueron perseguidas, torturadas y ejecutadas por defender los derechos generales de nuestro pueblo oprimido [...] refleja, ni más ni menos, que su martirio a secas" (1978, 23). García Madrid also notes that silence and enforced forgetting of the Franco regime "no llegue a hacer estéril [el] martirio" of the women who suffered in Franco's prisons (1982, dedication). I have already mentioned examples of specifically political resistance within the prison, such as hunger or labour strikes, but the texts also testify to a second site of resistance in maintaining one's identity as a means of resistance against both the negation of women's political identity under Francoism and the depersonalisation of imprisonment. Consider, for example, the advice given by Clara, Núñez Targa's 'mother' inside Ventas:

La cárcel no es un paréntesis en la vida. Es un nuevo terreno de lucha [...] Ellos tratan de crear aquí todas las condiciones posibles para que nos embrutezcamos [...] Y nosotras, contra viento y marea, debemos hacer todo lo humanamente

posible para no dejarnos embrutecer y vigilarnos severamente hasta en los más mínimos detalles.

[...]

Eso es. ¡Resistir! (2016, 66).

In *Desde la noche y la niebla*, Doña characterises the daily resistance of the inmates of Ventas in the same way:

Había un rasgo común en todas las presas: no se sentían vencidas. A pesar de la gran represión sufrida por cada una, a pesar de sus condiciones de vida inhumana, se vivía con una altísima moral que hacía frente, de mil maneras, a aquel enemigo que físicamente se tenía encima. Desde el primer momento las presas comprendieron que su única salvación era no perder su espíritu militante, que al terror de la cárcel había que hacerle frente con la organización (1978, 163).

The focus on the personal strength as well the political identity of the female prisoner thus creates a new site of resistance (Richmond, 2010, 105), again allowing the writers to claim their own “author-ity” (Pike, 2014, 92) and attest to the resistance embodied within the act of maintaining one’s dignity and political beliefs within the prison. In this way, each author rejects the positioning of the Republican woman as a dangerous ‘red whore’, instead representing her bravery and dignity through this emphasis on the daily struggle to survive within the prison. The carceral testimonies of Franco’s female prisoners, with their focus on the truth of lived experience, thus serve as a process of “recuperación de identidad” (Doña, 1978, 19) for those whose identities were routinely hidden, denied and silenced during the forty-year dictatorship.

Conclusion

The prison texts of Republican female prisoners, then, offer a unique view from inside the walls of Ventas prison. In this chapter, I have examined the ways in which the carceral testimonies of Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid function as a site of narration within which each

author is able to write back against the silencing frame of her imprisonment, speaking out against the censorship, repression, and political oblivion experienced by Republican women under the Franco dictatorship. In each of these texts, I have identified certain elements that I propose are integral to my understanding of the prison narrative as a form of gendered, carceral testimony. The first of these elements, the construction of a shared narrative space and the texts' metonymic voice, is evident in each author's representation of women's solidarity within the prison. In the emphasis on this sense of community, wherein equal importance is given to both the narrator and her comrades, the creation of familial networks between both inmates and biological family members allow the women of Ventas to survive the isolating experience of imprisonment. These networks between the women thus redefine "traditional notions of heroism, activism, agency, and, indeed, politics itself, highlighting the value and political import of women's experiences of everyday resistance to power" (Ferrán, 2014, 124). This narrative solidarity, I argue, is also evident in the texts' construction of a series of witness-acts, as the author bears witness not only to herself but to the women around her. Most importantly, as I have examined through my consideration of Agamben's theory of testimonial "lacuna", the testimonial author also bears witness to what Agamben has termed "impossible testimony" (1999, 34): the testimony of those women who died or were executed in Franco's prisons, who did not survive in order to serve as their own witnesses. Further, this series of witness-acts also involves the reader, who functions as a third witness in this chain and allows the author's testimony to be assimilated and understood, satisfying her "imperative to tell and be heard" (Felman and Laub, 1992, 78). Finally, I argue that the carceral testimonies of Franco's female prisoners trouble our understanding of historical truth, offering instead a personal narrative wherein the author is able to represent her own experience and reclaim her subjectivity and selfhood in the face of a regime that routinely obfuscated, censored and erased the realities of imprisonment in Spain. I propose that the 'value' of these texts, rather than in verifiable or

factual accuracy, lies in their transmission of each author's own experience of reality inside Ventas. In the next chapter, I will build upon my understanding of these concepts within the testimonial text in order to explore the particularly gendered narratives of imprisonment offered by Doña, García Madrid and Núñez Targa, with particular reference to the dehumanisation and abjectification that characterise the female prison experience.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GENDERED EXPERIENCE OF IMPRISONMENT

Building on my exploration of carceral testimony in Chapter One, and particularly its discussion of solidarity and motherhood within the prison, in this chapter I examine the gendered experience of imprisonment in Ventas, as recounted in the narratives of Doña, García Madrid and Núñez Targa. I propose that all three women's prison experiences create a gendered, embodied narrative of imprisonment, within which the reader may identify a constant tension between the dichotomy created by the National-Catholic regime of the 'puta roja' (red whore) and the 'ángel del hogar' (angel of the household, or family). Through a close examination of this dichotomy and its construction through both public and political discourse, and of Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection, I will explore the ways in which the female carceral experience in the texts is centred upon the a/objectification of the female prisoner and her body, and the different ways each author subsequently writes back against this experience. The body of the female prisoner is objectified and abjectified in multiple ways by the prison authorities of Ventas: I begin my exploration of the gendered female prison experience with an examination of the performance of femininity within the prison and the emphasis placed upon remaining 'feminine' despite the challenges presented by the daily conditions of prison life. I will then consider the role of motherhood within the prison, a discussion that will be informed by the ideas of femininity set forth in this first section, and will explore the tension between politics and motherhood that is evident throughout the narratives. I will also examine the ways in which the prison itself systematically Others the Republican female prisoner, enforcing this dichotomous gender ideology through the routine infliction of torture and sexual violence upon the prisoners; the enforced lack of hygiene and prevention of access to medical care; and the

constant hunger that characterises each author's prison experience. Finally, I will conclude with an exploration of the ways in which the inmates of Ventas use their prison narratives to represent their resistance to this torture.

As the theory of abjection will form a key part of my analysis throughout this chapter, I will begin here with a definition of the term "abject". In her essay *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva defines the abject as that which is "opposed to *I* [...] is radically excluded and draws me to the place where meaning collapses [...] is a brutish suffering that 'I' puts up with [...] a weight of meaninglessness" (1982, 1-2, emphasis in original). Examples of abjection, for Kristeva, include bodily contamination — such as dirt or defilement in the form of polluted food — and the danger proposed by that which is "improper" or "unclean" (1982, 2). The cadaver is provided as an example *par excellence* of abjection, in the embodiment of death and defilement that represents what the subject must "permanently thrust aside in order to live" (Kristeva, 1982, 4). The body forms a border between the 'I', or the subject, and the abject: the corpse thus represents the other side of this border, encroaching upon the living in its depiction of "what life withstands" (1982, 4). Judith Butler similarly posits the abject as that which is opposed to the subject. For Butler, the domain of the abject is the domain of those "who are not yet subjects, but who form the constitutive outside of the domain of the subject", thus constituting the "unlivable and uninhabitable zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject" (1993, xiii). Here, then, the abject provides the means through which the subject may assert its own autonomy and self-identification, positioning itself as a subject only through its denunciation of what is defined by social norms as abject (Butler, 1993, xiv). Each of these perspectives on abjection will be key in my examination of carceral testimony in this chapter. In the gender ideology espoused by the new National-Catholic regime, I argue, it is Republican women who constitute Butler's

domain of the abject: Republican or ‘red’ women, as I will explore in the first part of this chapter, repeatedly found their femininity denied by the a regime that emphasised women’s roles as homemakers, mothers and wives, and those women who did not adhere to this ideal were demonised in public discourse and portrayed as “depraved, sick, degenerate and brutal women” (Osborne, 2011, 515). Thus, as I will go on to examine in more detail, the ideal of the “ángel del hogar” becomes the legitimate model of femininity under Francoism through its opposition to, its repudiation of, and its negative identification with (Butler, 1993, xiii) this transgressive model of womanhood portrayed by the regime as immoral and indecent. I will also explore the ways in which the narratives themselves, in their various reclamations of Republican femininity, in turn make their own claims to subjectivity and selfhood through relegating other prisoners — namely, lesbians and prostitutes — to the domain of the abject. In the second half of the chapter, I will go on to argue that the experience of prison as portrayed in the texts is one of abjection, wherein the female prisoners of Franco’s Spain are repeatedly Othered, objectified and abjected by prison experiences that include torture, rape, illness and hunger: I posit that these experiences are designed as a systematic process of “mortificación del yo” (Trillo, 2011, 41) through which the selfhood and subjectivity of the Republican female prisoner is repeatedly denied.

Negotiating Femininity

After the Civil War the new Francoist regime set about its reconstruction of the country under the new platform of National-Catholicism. Rooted in Catholicism and the recovery of tradition that had been threatened by the social and political advances of the Second Republic (Morcillo, 2008, 4), the new regime espoused a return to domesticity, good mothering and housewifery as the foundation of what Morcillo has termed “true Catholic womanhood” (2008, 1). This recovery of tradition evoked the model of domesticity found in such texts as the sixteenth-

century *Instrucción de la mujer cristiana* (Juan Luis Vives, 1523) and *La perfecta casada* (Fray Luis de León, 1583) as examples *par excellence* of the new regime's gender ideology, assigning to Spanish women "the sacred mission of efficient management of the home" (Nash, 1998, 28) and restricting women's activity to the private, domestic sphere. Indeed, the regime put great emphasis on these traditional gender roles, and the women who adhered to this feminine model of the dutiful wife and mother were celebrated and glorified in public and political discourse, as patriotic wives and mothers working to regenerate the nation after the devastation and loss of the Civil War (Pike, 2014, 23). In Paula Trillo's incisive study of gender and Francoism, these women represented the new nation-body, the heroic mothers "benedicid[as] por Dios y por Patria" (2011, 50). The body of the Spanish woman was thus a key building block for the new Nationalist-Catholic dictatorship, literally forming the foundations of the New Spain in its production of children who would grow to serve the country with a strong sense of patriotism and Catholic morality inherited from the traditional family unit (Cazorla Sánchez, 2010, 142). The importance of religion in this Francoist construction of womanhood is evident in each of the narratives: upon her arrival at Ventas, for example, García Madrid recalls how each inmate is asked if she is "Católica, Apostólica y Romana" and, regardless of her answer, is recorded in the prison ledger as such (García Madrid, 1982, 66). Attendance at weekly Mass was also required of the inmates (García Madrid, 1982, 141; Doña, 1978, 296), and Núñez Targa describes how Julia Lázaro, a committed Communist and atheist, was blackmailed by prison authorities who refused to let her breastfeed her newborn child until she agreed to confess to the prison priest (2016, 86). The failure to adhere to these socio-religious expectations, and this attempt at a forced religious conversion, is thus a means of marking the difference between the pious feminine ideal set forth by the regime and the dissident Republican woman. Furthermore, as the household functioned as a microcosm of Spain's National-Catholic social domain, the woman-as-mother was expected to take on an

educational role for her children, acting as a moral teacher who would oversee their religious education (di Febo and Juliá, 2005, 77) and thus ensure the moral re-education and regeneration of the country. To this end, the children of Republicans were removed from the care of their parents and placed in the custody of Nationalist families (Vinyes, 2003, 164) in order to prevent the child's parents from passing on their political beliefs to a new generation. Núñez Targa also refers to this practice in her narrative (2016, 87), repeating a phrase often used by the nuns who ran the prison — “menos semilla de rojos” (2016, 60). The ideal Nationalist-Catholic Spanish woman, then, embodied the role of the “ángel del hogar” for whom the household “figured as the maximum horizon for women's self-fulfilment and social role” (Nash, 1998, 27), and it is through the embodiment of this role that she became a subject of the new nation.

The construction of this legitimate feminine model, however, also necessitated the “eradication” (Pike, 2014, 23) of those women who did not adhere to its ideal. As Judith Butler theorises in *Bodies That Matter*, the “exclusionary matrix” through which this ideal subject has been formed also produces “a domain of abject beings [who] are not yet subjects but who form the constitutive outside of the domain of the subject” (1993, xiii). In the case of Franco's Spain, public and political discourse served to de-legitimise those women who failed to embody these familial and social roles, thus excluding them from this domain of the subject, where they instead remained “dentro del terreno de lo abyecto, lo no-decible [y] lo no-simbolizable” (Trillo, 2011, 50). Doña comments on this exclusion in her narrative: at the moment of Leonor's arrest, she describes how the landlady of her boarding house explains to the Falangist officer that there cannot be a Republican inside as all her boarders are “señoritas honorables”, and then, as Leonor is taken away, exclaims “¡En mi casa una roja! Y yo creía que era una señorita!” (1978, 111). In contrast to the feminine ideal of the “ángel del hogar”, a respectable and decent woman, the Republican woman was then repeatedly demonised, described as “[a]

filthy [...] ugly, disgusting beast” (Mangini, 1995, 93) and a violent criminal: one account of imprisoned Republican women written by a female Nationalist, for example, refers to the brutish murderers, thieves and “even a cannibal” who could be found amongst the Red *milicianas* (Mangini, 1995, 93). The body of the female Republican, often dehumanised and referred to as “la bestia roja” (González Duro, 2012, chap. 1 para. 8), was thus situated as a site of dirt and contamination, a symbol of the invasion and corruption of Spain that the new regime sought to rectify — thus creating a “dichotomous paradigm of femininity” (Pike, 2014, 24) wherein the good Catholic mother stood in opposition to the abject figure of the Republican criminal. Frequently, blame for the brutality and violence of the Civil War was placed in the hands of the Republican woman as a punishment from God for her transgression and immorality. *El Pensamiento Navarro*, a daily newspaper in Navarra, published the following editorial in 1936, assigning the guilt for the war dead to women’s immodesty:

¡Cuántos jóvenes que por ti pecaron, mujer, han muerto! Por tu causa, por tus carnes desnudas, por los brazos sin ropa, por tus pechos descubiertos [...] Sé modesta, mujer, te lo pide Dios. Te lo exige la sangre de tus hermanos, tal vez de otros amigos, de tanto español muerto en el campo. Muertos por ti, por tu culpa (cit. in González Duro, 2012, chap. 1 para. 9).

As evidenced here, the “immoral” body of the Republican woman was frequently sexualised, constructing upon it an embodied site of threat and disruption to Catholic morality that again placed her at odds with the ideal of the moral wife and mother whose life was dedicated to her husband and children (Ruiz Franco, 2007, 37). Mangini describes the rumours that accompanied Republican women to the front lines of the Civil War, women who were said to “lack any moral ideals” and “offer favours” of a sexual nature to soldiers, viewed as prostitutes who were responsible for the widespread proliferation of sexually transmitted diseases (1995, 84). As Gentry and Sjoberg have explored in their study of women’s political violence,

women's involvement in conflict is often delegitimised through its association with sexuality: in this way, Republican women's contributions to the war effort were dismissed and diminished, characterised⁹ as acts inspired by the women's "sexual dependence and depravity" (2007, 12) rather than any true political conviction. As a woman who had rejected her natural role within the household, the politically active woman was situated as the carrier of "filth [...] and dreaded diseases" (Mangini, 1995, 85), whose sins were written on her body¹⁰. The stigmatisation of Republican women as prostitutes continued after the end of the Civil War: a means of survival for many women living in poverty, whose husbands had been killed or incarcerated, the prevalence of prostitution in cities nonetheless provided a further means for the Franco regime to propagate the image of Republican women as "sucias, corruptas y putas" at the same time as many Nationalists continued to make use of their services (González Duro, 2012, chap. 7 para. 28). In official documents from military trials the only recorded occupation for women other than housewifery was prostitution (Sánchez, 2009, 65). Despite the hypocrisy of many officials continuing to visit Spain's brothels throughout the nearly forty-year dictatorship (Osborne, 2011, 529), women's sexuality was consistently criminalised, signifying a transgression of the virtually asexual model of femininity ascribed to the True Catholic Woman (Juliana, 2018, 36). The Republican woman thus came to embody the figure of the "puta roja", the antithesis of the "ángel del hogar", who represented the "Anti-España" (Trillo, 2011, 49) and was both Othered and a/objectified in public and political discourse. Under the label of the "puta roja", Franco's new National-Catholic regime "conflated sexually, socially, and politically inappropriate feminine behaviours" as symbols of dissent (Pike, 2014, 30) that blurred the lines between political and moral transgression, producing what Trillo¹¹ has

⁹ On both sides, as I will explore later in this section.

¹⁰ Later in this chapter, I will expand further upon the squalid conditions of the prison and the intentional denial of basic hygiene as a means through which the Franco regime and the prison authorities ensured the bodily contamination of the Republican prisoner in order to Other her from the clean and respectable National-Catholic ideal of womanhood.

¹¹ Informed by Butler and *Bodies That Matter*.

referred to as a delegitimised model of femininity (2011, 50) upon whose negation the legitimate, traditional feminine role was constructed.

Each of the three authors, however, uses her narrative as a means to create an image of the imprisoned Republican woman that counters those found within Francoist propaganda. The prisoners' femininity, denied by the Franco regime, is emphasised within the texts through a focus on physical appearance. Those whose hair has not been shaved, a common punishment employed by guards in order to "despersonalizar a las mujeres" (Doña, 1978, 298), are careful to keep it neat and tidy as a symbol of their femininity (González Duro, 2012, chap. 2 para. 29; García Madrid, 74). Each author also frequently describes the appearance of her comrades, often commenting on their youth and beauty (García Madrid, 1977, 8, 24, 48; Núñez Targa, 2016, 55; Doña, 1978, 194) as a means of countering the aforementioned image of the Republican woman as ugly or monstrous that was prevalent in much of the regime's propaganda. Furthermore, as I have already explored in Chapter One, each text also places significant emphasis on the solidarity and camaraderie between the women of Ventas, working to humanise the female prisoner in the eyes of the reader by emphasising her relationships with others. This emphasis on the women's solidarity serves as another means through which the authors are able to resist and counter the prevailing image of the Republican woman as a violent criminal by highlighting, for example, her kindness and care for her fellow prisoners in the form of sharing food and resources amongst cellmates (Doña, 1978, 170; Núñez Targa, 2016, 97; García Madrid, 1982, 79); comforting words between friends (Doña, 1978, 115; García Madrid, 1982, 86; Núñez Targa, 2016, 35); the establishing of a school run by inmates (Núñez Targa, 2016, 67; Doña, 1978, 154) or the small measures of help offered to the sick (Doña, 1978, 162; García Madrid, 1982, 36). This image of the Republican female prisoner created in the text constitutes an attempt to make her a site of "positive reading" within the narrative

(Vosburg, 1995, 130), emphasising her physical beauty, her femininity and her kindness. As Sidonie Smith writes, the woman who writes autobiography “reveals in her speaking posture and narrative structure her understanding of the possible readings she will receive from a public that has the power of her reputation in its hands” (1987, 49): the prison narrative, then, constitutes for its author a narrative space within which the reputation of the female political prisoner may be rehabilitated, emphasising that she and her comrades, rather than violent and immoral criminals, are instead “[unas mujeres] absolutamente sencillas y normales” (García Madrid, 1982, 12).

The narrative of solidarity within the prison texts, however, is necessarily limited only to those prisoners who can be said to adhere to this ideal — to this end, certain other prisoners, such as the non-political or common-law prisoners I discussed in Chapter One, are excluded either from such a discourse of solidarity or from the narrative altogether, as are lesbians and prostitutes. As Raquel Osborne has observed in her study of sexuality amongst prisoners of the Franco and Nazi regimes, many female prisoners formed lesbian relationships during their incarceration (2009, 60), and other prison narratives such as that of Carlota O’Neill affirm that instances of lesbian relationships between prisoners were relatively common¹² in Spanish prisons during the Franco dictatorship. In the three prison texts that form the basis of this study, however, references to lesbianism are scarce: García Madrid makes a comment about an amusing incident in which a lesbian prisoner, who is also a prostitute, “le estaba haciendo extrañas señas” (1982, 68), Doña remarks that “se dieron contados casos de lesbianismo entre las miles y miles de mujeres *por delitos políticos* que pasaron por las cárceles” (1978, 324, emphasis mine), and lesbian prisoners are absent entirely from Núñez Targa’s *Cárcel de*

¹² For a more thorough examination of Carlota O’Neill’s work and her comparatively liberal attitude towards both lesbians and prostitutes within the prison of Melilla, see Osborne (2011).

Ventas. García Madrid's dismissal of the existence of lesbians within the prison as "algo cómico [...] una cosa nimia" (1982, 68) is a significantly more lenient response than in *Desde la noche y la niebla*, where Doña notes that women suspected of 'improper' relationships with other women were shunned by the political prisoners and found themselves expelled from their political parties, thus excluded both socially and politically from life in the prison (1978, 324). Furthermore, her emphasis that instances of lesbianism were few amongst specifically political prisoners implies a separation between the 'good', decent political prisoner and the immoral, degenerate common-law prisoners who engage in acts of sexual transgression (Osborne, 2011, 515). She describes the rationale behind such a response, noting that a main concern for political prisoners when serving their lengthy sentences was to "acorazarse en los 'principios', en la 'firmeza' y en la disciplina del Partido [...] que todas y cada una escondían sus flaquezas y se trataba a porfía de ver quién se mantenía más 'pura'" (1978, 323). Both responses, however — as well as the erasure of lesbian existence from Núñez Targa's narrative, which renders the lesbian prisoner completely invisible — serve to distance the Republican female prisoner, concerned with keeping her body pure and maintaining the rigid party line, from the lesbian inmate who has committed "one of the worst crimes against human integrity" (Mangini, 1995, 130). Prostitutes, similarly, are rejected and criminalised by the political prisoners in their narratives. García Madrid writes that women imprisoned for prostitution often carried sexually transmitted diseases, describing the "pústulas y otras lacras que [las] disfiguraban" and the cruel remarks that other political prisoners would make with reference to these illnesses (1982, 221). She also notes that the prostitutes would often leave "cosas repugnantes en la pileta de la ducha" (1982, 221) that other women found difficult to disinfect and clean, reinforcing the perception of the prostitutes as unclean as compared to the political prisoners who did their best to maintain proper hygiene. Even as the carceral testimonies of political prisoners attempt to confer upon the Republican woman a legitimate expression of femininity in her endeavour

to preserve her bodily purity, then, the rejected lesbian prisoners and prostitutes must remain at the margin of the prison society, constituting for the political prisoners that abject body which is cast off as “that site of dreaded identification against which — and by virtue of which — the domain of the subject will circumscribe its own claim to autonomy and to life” (Butler, 1993, xiii). In this sense, the narratives’ reclaiming of femininity for the Republican female prisoner constitutes an “uncritical miming of the hegemonic” (Butler, 1993, 90), an act of resistance towards the gender ideology of the Franco regime that nonetheless remains constrained by its terms and leaves a significant portion of the prison population behind.

Doña— the most militant and politically active of the three authors at the time of her arrest — dedicates a significant amount of space in *Desde la noche y la niebla* to celebrating the military and political activity of her prison comrades. As I previously explored in Chapter One, the inclusion of other women’s stories creates a shared narrative space, allowing for each woman’s story to be heard. Here, I argue that the women’s stories themselves also constitute a challenge to the gender ideology of not only the Franco regime, but also of the Republican forces and the *maquis*, the guerrilla fighters whose resistance continued after the end of the Civil War. As Mary Nash has found in her study of women and the Civil War, the prevailing attitude amongst anti-Francoist forces was that “la retaguardia era la única esfera social en la que debían intervenir las mujeres” (2016, 109). Even when women were present at the front lines they were often ridiculed and discredited, and their duties were limited to cooking and cleaning for the male soldiers (Serrano, 2011, 175). Thus, the prevailing attitude amongst the Republican forces minimised women’s contributions to the war effort and the subsequent resistance, relegating the female Republican to the domestic sphere in much the same way that the archetype of the “ángel del hogar” limited women’s place in society to the home. Both García Madrid and Núñez Targa, in their prison narratives, seem to adhere to this ideal. In her

introduction to *Requiem por la libertad*, García Madrid writes that the women in her narrative “no son destacadas dirigentes ni grandes activistas” (1982, 12), minimising the political aspect of their resistance by stating that they fought for survival rather than for a political cause (Serrano, 2011, 172), and in *Cárcel de Ventas* Núñez Targa emphasises that her participation in the resistance, “aunque sincera y entusiasta, fue modestísima [...] ni disparé un solo tiro, no ostenté ningún cargo, ni pronuncié algún discurso” (2016, 33). Statements such as these, as I explored above, allow the authors to reclaim a particular form of femininity in their adherence to certain gender norms: the women of these narratives are “sencillas y normales” (García Madrid, 1982, 12) rather than armed revolutionaries, who were often depicted as “militante[s] y agresiva[s]” and whose transgression of their social role “obstruía el desenvolvimiento correcto del esfuerzo bélico” (Nash, 2016, 66). By contrast, Doña’s introduction stresses that women were present in the armed resistance to Francoism, often as organisers: “ellas han estado presentes [...] hasta en los riscos de las montañas como guerrilleras [...] no han sido sólo colaboradoras, sino organizadoras de la resistencia, han sido una cantera inagotable que ha nutrido la diversidad de formas clandestinas a lo ancho y lo largo de nuestro país” (1978, 20), and notes that their contributions were vital to the war effort. Within the narrative, Leonor is arrested for her direct involvement in the Comité Provincial de la Agrupación de Mujeres Antifascistas¹³, and subsequently in Madrid’s clandestine resistance. Similarly, in her account of the detention of female guerrilla fighters, Doña repeatedly emphasises their military prowess and their importance to the *maquis*: Carmen is described as “lo más importante de aquel sector para los ‘hombres del monte’”, the Marín sisters “participaron en muchas escaramuzas, las tres eran diestras con las pistolas”, and Lucía “suplió multiplicado por cuatro el esfuerzo de su marido y hermano” (1978, 270-273). In her exaltation of women’s active involvement in

¹³ A women’s organisation — that Doña herself also belonged to — that sent nurses, ambulance drivers, uniforms and other necessities to the front during the war (Doña, 1978, 30).

resistance movements, Doña thus asserts that women's contributions were equally as significant as those of their male counterparts and rejects the restrictive gender roles set forth by the Republican forces in statements such as “Los hombres al frente. Las mujeres a la retaguardia” (cit, in Nash, 2016, 67).

Despite Doña's emphasis on women's active participation in the Civil War and the resistance, both the Francoist and Republican intertwined narratives of purity and femininity are nonetheless evident in all three texts' depiction of motherhood both in- and outside of the prison. As I have already explored above, motherhood was a fundamental element in the Franco regime's construction of the dichotomous “ángel del hogar”/“puta roja” relationship, with the respectable National-Catholic woman constituting the regime's image of a good mother: religious, self-sacrificing, and devoted above all else to her family and her *patria*. Indeed, in the public and political discourse of the New Spain, motherhood and femininity were all but one and the same, as women's natural femininity was conflated with her role as a mother and her love for her children (Trillo, 2011, 62). The Republican woman, on the other hand, was frequently depicted as a bad mother due to her failure to fulfil her social role and replicate this traditional familial structure, and her children were removed from her care “para evitar cualquier contagio del virus republicano y marxista” (Trillo, 2011, 49). Doña, García Madrid and Núñez Targa, however, use their prison texts to create a counter-narrative to such a perception of Republican motherhood. Primarily, each text's depiction of the mothers' gallery and the incredibly poor conditions for children within the prison serve to place the blame for their suffering in the hands of the prison authorities, thus absolving the Republican mothers of the stigma of being ‘bad mothers’. Núñez Targa writes that mothers were not even given soap by the prison guards, nor did they have access to running water to keep themselves and their young children clean (2016, 59), and Doña, similarly, writes that children often died in the

mothers' gallery from illnesses such as dysentery and scabies, caused by the poor conditions and lack of water (1978, 164). All three authors also place significant emphasis on the moral character of the mothers imprisoned inside Ventas, describing the sacrifices they made to keep their children safe. Doña, for example, writes how those mothers "se desdoblaban mil veces para transmitir un hálito de vida a sus hijos moribundos, pretendían a fuerza de voluntarismo salvarles, pasaban minuto a minuto, hora a hora y día a día el infierno de ver que su voluntad nada podía contra el hambre y la miseria" (1978, 195), and García Madrid notes that, as children did not receive their own daily rations, their mothers gave up some or often all of their own small amount of food to ensure that their children were fed (1982, 120). Leonor, mother to a young son who is not with her in the prison, spends her time writing letters to him, knitting a jumper for him on his birthday (Doña, 1978, 257). Similarly, García Madrid describes how her own mother worked tirelessly to have her released from prison, regularly sending food and supplies to her daughter in prison despite her limited income (1982, 106). At multiple points in the text, García Madrid inserts various narrative asides praising the strength or virtuousness of both her own mother and other mothers inside the prison with their children — after describing the tension of her arrest, for example, she exclaims in parentheses "¡Dios, de qué estarán hechas las madres!" (1982, 27), and later dedicates a significant amount of space to celebrating the "espíritu y la fortaleza" of Republican mothers both in- and outside the prison (1982, 92). In the narrative of motherhood constructed within each text, then, Republican mothers are depicted as caring and self-sacrificing, willing to go without in order to ensure their children's wellbeing: motherhood is understood as "un instinto natural de la mujer-madre, que la lleva a estar dispuesta a sacrificarlo todo [...] para preservar a su/s hijo/as" (Trillo, 2011, 54). In the same way as the narratives of female martyrdom examined by Gentry and Sjöberg in their study of women's political violence, women's "family-based or maternal motivations are featured at the expense of the political" (2007, 86) — or, in the case of these prison texts,

as a counter-narrative to the political — in order to create an image of the Republican woman centred upon her inherent maternal instincts. Echoing García Madrid’s earlier statement that the women of Ventas were “sencillas y normales” (1982, 12), then, the prison narratives create a further site of positive reading wherein the female prisoner is understood through a code of “maternal self-sacrifice” (Gentry and Sjoberg, 2007, 74). Indeed, this emphasis on motherhood, a cornerstone of the Franco regime’s gender ideology, was also evident within Republican discourse: as Nash writes, mothers were depicted in Republican propaganda as “heroínas de la retaguardia” who constituted “el modelo imperante a imitar por las mujeres” (2016, 68). Indeed, Republican women’s groups such as the AMA¹⁴ highlighted the “espíritu de construcción y [...] amor materna” of Republican women, describing these as important elements of the fight against Francoism (Nash, 2016, 69). Thus, even as the texts counter the Franco regime’s denunciation of Republican mothers as dangerous or unfit (Trillo, 2011, 54), they also construct a series of positive readings that are rooted in women’s role as mothers, and their conflation of femininity and motherhood serves to echo the discourse of the National-Catholic regime — again returning to Butler and the recreation of hegemonic discourse (1993, 30). Claims to femininity, within the narratives constructed by Doña, García Madrid and Núñez Targa, are thus consistently constrained by traditional gender ideologies that restrict the women they depict to roles that emphasise their purity and traditional performance of familial roles.

Torture and Sexual Violence

Torture and violence are experienced within the Cárcel de Ventas as frequent, almost daily occurrences. Both subjectivity and selfhood, as Paul Eakin writes, are “deeply rooted in the body” (1999, 20), and so the experience of torture — also deeply rooted in the body, as this is the site of the torture — is one that disturbs the prisoner’s sense of self through bodily

¹⁴ Agrupación de Mujeres Antifascistas, a feminist and antifascist organisation founded in 1933.

distortion. The experience of torture, as Elaine Scarry notes, is profoundly dehumanising: it deconstructs or “unmakes” the self (1985, 20), using pain as a means to destroy those who experience it (1985, 29). Within each narrative, the Franco regime’s commonplace use of torture is made evident — Núñez Targa in particular dedicates a chapter to the prevalence of torture within the prison, which she titles “Moderna Inquisición” (2016, 61), and both Doña and García Madrid note that there were barely any women inside Ventas who had not, at some point in their incarceration, experienced torture (Doña, 1978, 128; García Madrid, 1982, 106). In particular, all three authors make reference to the application of electric currents to the prisoners’ bodies (Núñez Targa, 2016, 62; Doña, 1978, 137; García Madrid, 1982, 83), a form of torture whose use by the Francoist authorities during interrogations has been well documented (Cenarro, 2003, 151; Martins Rodríguez, 2017, 122). The language used to describe the process of torture illustrates for the reader the two simultaneous processes of objectification and abjection that are enacted upon the body of the Republican female prisoner. As the tortured body is reduced to its experience of pain, the narrative focuses on the parts of the body that are suffering: García Madrid focuses on the fingers of an inmate who has had electric currents applied to her hands, noting that they are hard to ignore and describing them as “inflamados [con] un color violáceo renegrido” (1982, 83); Doña describes Leonor’s own torture with electric currents by focussing on the nipples, where the current was applied, making her scream in pain (Doña, 1978, 137); Núñez Targa, in recounting the torture of her comrades, again focuses on the parts of the body in pain, describing how one inmate “muere los labios para no gritar” and another who, after having been set on fire by officers, is so severely burned that “sus manos y el cuello no son más que costurones informes” (2016, 61). Rather than as part of the body, the site of pain during torture is thus experienced as a separate entity, with the narratives highlighting only the parts of the body that are subjected to the torture; all are described in a way that allows the author to distance herself from the experience

of pain, as the tortured body is detached from the self. This experience of intense pain during torture “destroys a person’s self and world” as the body becomes a sum of its pains, removed from consciousness (Scarry, 1985, 35). In *Desde la noche y la niebla*, for example, Doña describes the aftereffects of Leonor’s torture: “[t]rató de echarse de nuevo [...] su cuerpo, dolorido y magullado, se negaba a cualquier movimiento” (1978, 113). Her body, separate from the self, refuses to move. By separating Leonor from “su cuerpo” the body is thus objectified, dehumanised, highlighting “the destruction of the body and the self through violence” enacted by the Francoist prison authorities (Pike, 2014, 128). This use of language highlights the way in which the experience of torture renders the body “against”, identifying it as “not oneself” or “not me” (Scarry, 1985, 52). This splitting of the body from the self through the infliction of violence thus serves to both object- and de-subjectify the victim of torture, whose experience of pain is “world-destroying” (Scarry, 1985, 29) in its deconstruction of her selfhood.

It is this act of de-subjectifying, separating the body and the self, that serves to illustrate the second process of dehumanisation enacted upon the body of the Republican female prisoner as a result of torture: that of abjection. Kristeva describes the abject as “the terror that dissembles”, that which “disturbs identity” (1982, 4) — the act of torture, as a dehumanising and objectifying experience, is thus an act of abjection in that it serves to sever the connection between body and self, expelling the “I” from the now grotesque and beaten body. The language of the abject is ubiquitous in each narrative: Núñez Targa, for example, describes how a fellow inmate’s body no longer resembles “forma humana” after her torture (2016, 61), and García Madrid describes the prisoners leaving the “macabra sala” where the torture took place in terms of “sangre, miembros tumefactos, rostros inflamados [y] angustia” (1982, 34), an impersonal description that serves to emphasise the physical destruction of the body and its wholeness (Pike, 2014, 129), thus separating the anguish of the tortured body from the

prisoners themselves. Doña describes an instance in which witnessing the torture of a fellow prisoner also becomes a form of torture for Leonor: “[e]n medio de la habitación, colgado por los pies y con la cabeza hacia abajo, pendía un hombre completamente desnudo. Por distintas partes de su cuerpo brotaba la sangre. La cara congestionada, violácea, los ojos completamente abiertos, parecían salirse de las órbitas” (1978, 135). This prisoner is anonymous, his nakedness and the fragmentation of his body (“la cabeza”/ “la cara”/ “los ojos”) emphasising the breaking down of his identity through the process of torture. The constant presence of blood and of violet, bloodshot skin in these narratives of torture also exemplifies the abjection of the tortured body, illustrating its closeness to defilement and to death which for Kristeva represents the “utmost of abjection” (1982, 4).

A further example of the Franco regime’s a/objectification of the female prisoner is the recurrent theme of sexual violence within the narratives. The torture inflicted upon the inmates of Ventas is frequently depicted as sexual in nature, such as in the previous example of the electric shock applied to Leonor’s breasts in Doña’s *Desde la noche y la niebla*, or in one instance in Núñez Targa’s *Cárcel de Ventas* wherein Nieves C., a fellow inmate, is tortured by Francoist officers who make a series of incisions in her vulva, which they then cover in vinegar and salt before forcing her to run (2016, 61). Doña, in her introduction to *Desde la noche y la niebla*, also makes reference to “torturas y humillaciones que sólo pueden inflingirse en el cuerpo de una mujer” (1978, 21), and in the narrative itself she affirms that “las violaciones eran el pan nuestro de cada día, el abuso de poder de los hombres sobre las mujeres, en estas circunstancias, adquiriría proporciones dramáticas, las llamadas ‘rojas’ eran menos que nada para los machos fascistas” (1978, 183). Núñez Targa makes a veiled reference to the use of sexual violence as an interrogation technique — “hacen contigo lo que les da la real gana” (2016, 43) — and García Madrid echoes Doña’s description of sexual violence as an almost

daily occurrence, writing “no hacía falta ser joven, para llegar allí violada y medio deshecha” (1978, 106). Paula Trillo describes the sexual abuse within the prison as part of “[un] proceso de contaminación física [y] mortificación del yo” (2011, 41), again emphasising the presence of the abject within the prison narrative. The process of objectification of the incarcerated body is thus simultaneous to, and inextricable from, the process of abjection, and it is this use of torture as an a/objectifying experience that was so instrumental in the Franco regime’s construction of the Republican female prisoner as a perverse and dangerous Other (Trillo, 2011, 31). In reducing the imprisoned Republican woman to her a/objectified, Othered body it then became possible to establish these decrepit and “physically grotesque” bodies (Pike, 2014, 126) as a danger to the newly purified, National-Catholic body politic (Trillo, 2011, 22) of Spain itself, and to subsequently classify them as “puros cuerpos disponibles para ser clasificados, invadidos y erradicados” (Trillo, 2011, 32). Furthermore, the infliction of sexual violence upon the Republican prisoners in the texts is also implicitly associated with the label “puta roja”: in *Requiem por la libertad*, for example, a guard screams that Ángeles is nothing more than “una puta roja” (García Madrid, 1982, 40), and one of the guards who torture Leonor in *Desde la noche y la niebla* remarks that “todas las rojas sois unas putas” (Doña, 1978, 131). Thus, the use of sexual violence served as another means through which Franco’s National-Catholic regime was able to reinforce the image of the Republican woman as indecent and immoral: in the discourse of the officers who committed the acts of violence, the female prisoners were “personas social y moralmente desacreditadas, que tal vez consentían el ultraje, incluso lo provocaban” (González Duro, 2012, chap. 8 para. 29). By including these instances of rape and sexual violence in their prison texts, the authors are able to comment on the widespread use of such violence as a form of humiliation and a/objectification for the female prisoner, and, by representing the cruelty of the guards and the prison officers who perpetrated this violence, to counter the narrative that Republican women ‘provoked’ their own rape.

Both the food and the living conditions within the prison also provide a further example of the systematic torture and a/objectification of the women of Ventas. Hunger is a constant in each of the prison texts that form a part of this study, as are squalid living conditions and the lack of access to proper medical care. In García Madrid's *Requiem por la libertad*, hunger characterises Ángeles's time in Ventas from her very first day in the prison: unable to eat the soup full of worms served at dinner, she divides her portion between her starving comrades and continues to do so at every meal until the supplementary food she receives from her mother runs out (1982, 71). Later, suffering from severe malnutrition, Ángeles begs her cellmates to leave her in peace during the daytime, as the only time she does not feel her hunger is when she is sleeping (1982, 132). Doña, too, recounts the all-consuming hunger of Ventas, describing it as “un hambre feroz primitiva [...] un hambre animal” (1978, 162) and later “hambre animal sin esperanza de saciarla; hambre que hacía desfallecer a las más fuertes y ponía furiosas a las más serenas; hambre que iba con ellas pegada más cerca que su propia sombra” (1978, 198). In particular, this reference to bestial, animal hunger serves to reiterate the a/objectification of the prisoners, who are made to feel like animals and thus removed from their humanity and subjectivity through the experience of extreme hunger. The poor quality of the meals served to the inmates of Ventas is also noted by each author, for example through the recurrence of the worm soup in García Madrid's narrative, Núñez Targa's references to the “anatomías [...] mal nutridas” of herself and her comrades (2016, 44) and Doña's description of the daily ration as “escasa” and “una bazofia” (1978, 176). The descriptions of the food served to the inmates — here I return again to García Madrid's description of her daily ration, the soup from which the women were obliged to “retirar los gusanos muertos [...] para así comer luego lo que había en el fondo [...] la muchacha comenzaba a sentir náuseas” (1982, 70) — demonstrates what Kristeva refers to as “food loathing”, described as “the most elementary and most archaic form

of abjection” (1982, 2). Symbolising a transgression between the abject and “the self’s clean and proper body” (Kristeva, 1982, 75), the “polluted” food (Kristeva, 1982, 75) served to the inmates of Ventas thus represents a further means of a/objectifying the prisoner. To return to my earlier discussion of femininity, Ángeles’s refusal to eat this polluted food could be read as a further attempt to maintain the bodily purity that was expected of the political prisoners, thus enforcing a separation between the “clean and proper” body (Grosz, 1994, 194) and the contaminated food: as Grosz writes, the division between the inside and the outside of the body is a border from which autonomy and self-identity are derived (1994, 194), and so the refusal to allow the contaminated food to cross this border constitutes a re-affirmation of this autonomy. However, the hunger that the women feel as a result of refusing to eat the food, I argue, is also an a/objectifying experience and another form of torture in that it serves to separate the female prisoner from her body, creating a sense of Otherness from one’s self — consider, for example, Doña’s animalistic hunger, or García Madrid’s prolonged illness as a result of her malnutrition, which she describes as an “invasión” upon her body (1982, 132) — thus breaking down the border between inside and outside, resulting in the body’s eventual contamination despite the subject’s continued refusal to ingest the contaminated food. Specifically, the texts’ demonstration of the extreme hunger illustrates clearly the lack of control over one’s own body experienced by the inmates of Ventas, emphasising the Franco regime’s approach to the female body as “an object to be manipulated and controlled” (Morcillo, 2008, 5). The body of the female Republican prisoner in each narrative thus exemplifies the body’s significance as “object and target of power” (Foucault, 1977, 136), echoing the loss of bodily control experienced through the infliction of torture.

The texts further emphasise this enforced lack of control over the body in their depictions of the poor conditions and lack of access to medical care within the prison. Illness is a recurring

theme within all three texts, as are the squalid living quarters and the lack of water to wash. “Aquí lavarse es un lujo”, one of the older inmates tells Núñez Targa on her first day in the prison, going on to note that “aquí no cogemos el tifus por milagro” (2016, 45). All three authors note the prevalence of bedbugs and other insects in the cells, where women are forced to sleep on the floor (1978, 193; 1982, 72; 2016, 65), and Núñez Targa references the prison guards’ refusal to distribute necessities such as soap (2016, 59). Doña reiterates this lack of resources, stating that within Ventas “no había agua, ni retretes” (1978, 161). In particular, all three texts reference the mothers’ gallery, notably worse than the rest of the prison in terms of hygiene, illness and mortality rate, which I have explored above in my discussion of motherhood within the prison. In terms of health, all three authors note the prevalence of a multitude of illnesses within the prison: Doña, for example, writes that “todas las mujeres padecían de sarna ulcerada y se rascaban la piel hasta desollarla; la avitaminosis abrías llagas purulentas en las piernas y en las manos; los piojos se las comían” (1978, 161). As I have explored above, the presence of illness in the texts is often linked to prostitutes or common-law prisoners (García Madrid, 1982, 221), thus allowing the political prisoners to similarly separate themselves from this form of abjection within their narratives through associating the spread of illnesses with non-political prisoners. The narratives also effectively illustrate the intentional nature of such illnesses and poor conditions through their depictions of the prison doctors: García Madrid, for example, describes how women were prescribed food as the cure to their illness despite the fact that good, healthy food was clearly unavailable (1982, 132), and Doña writes of the doctors’ indifference in the face of the inmates’ suffering, describing the women as merely the regime’s guinea pigs (1978, 124). Most notably, Núñez Targa describes how the prison, in Victoria Kent’s original design, had included “canalizaciones de agua en toda la cárcel [...] hay hasta duchas, lavabos, baños y lavaderos [...] pero ‘esos’ han cerrado el agua y han dejado tan sólo esa fuente [...] quieren obligarnos a vivir en la porquería, por

rebajarnos, por hacernos sufrir” (2016, 46), highlighting the intentional, calculated nature of the inmates’ suffering. Distanced from the ideal of the New Catholic Spain built upon the cornerstones of “moral and physical purity and cleanliness” (Pike, 2014, 194), the prison space and the women within it are thus again systematically excluded from the formulation of the new Spanish nation-body, both Other and abject in their bodily contamination. To return again to the gender ideology of the Franco regime, this intentional Othering and a/objectification of the Republican female prisoner serves as another means through which the femininity of the political prisoners is denied by the prison authorities, separating the women of Ventas from the ideal of the morally and physically clean “ángel del hogar”. Furthermore, the intentional contamination of the body of the female prisoner through the denial of her basic hygiene needs constitutes a physical enactment of the Franco regime’s gender discourse: inside the prison, the Republican woman is not only depicted as dirty, ugly and monstrous (Mangini, 1995, 85), she is physically rendered as such. As Foucault has explored in his study of the delinquent, the prison serves as an “artificial and coercive” space (1975, 251), and within these carceral testimonies it is made clear that the prison is a key element in the separation between the “ángel del hogar” and the “puta roja”.

Re-claiming Subjectivity

Throughout their narratives of Ventas, then, Doña, García Madrid and Núñez Targa all employ various means of writing back against these processes of a/objectification and de-subjectification. Primarily, the act of writing itself serves as a means through which the author may reclaim both her humanity and her subjectivity: if, as Scarry writes, the experience of torture actively destroys language and so the possibility of communicating one’s experience to others (1985, 172), then the act of narrating one’s torture is thus an act of agency that breaks with the silencing frame of the torture and allows for the narrator to reframe her experience.

Doña, for example, expresses her desire “que se conociera todo el horror de [...] las cárceles franquistas de mujeres” and describes *Desde la noche y la niebla* as a means through which she is able to “denunciar y poner al desnudo las iniquidades que las mujeres han sufrido y sufren en las cárceles” (1978, 20), using the text as “deliberate discourse” that allows its author to “regain control over her world” (Gabriele, 1995, 107) and reframe the narrative of torture. In all three texts, the imprisoned Republican woman occupies the position of the victim of violence at the hands of an unjust regime rather than the position of the perpetrator of such violence, offering a counter-narrative (Assmann, 2006, 193) to that propagated by the Francoist regime wherein Republican women were depicted as violent criminals. Guilt, as is emphasised in each narrative, must now attach to the actors of the regime (Colvin, 2014, 17) and not to the prisoner; it is the torturer who lacks humanity and not the tortured woman (García Madrid, 1982, 141). This reversal of the dehumanising process of torture is evident in all three women’s narratives — all refer to the policemen and prison guards, for example, as animals. García Madrid describes the officer who interrogates Ángeles as “[un] bestia” and “[un] animal” (1982, 43), and refers to the guards in general as “cerdos” (1982, 53); Núñez Targa writes that the Francoist soldiers who tortured an inmate and her son “tienen corazón de lobo” (2016, 50), that La Serafines, one of the nuns who worked in the prison, lacked “el menor rasgo humano” (2016, 86), and describes one of the prison guards as “animado de un odio bestial” (2016, 115); Doña describes Leonor’s torturers as “gatos jugando con un ratón antes de deshacerle a zarpazos” (1978, 132), using the same imagery later in her narrative as she writes that the prison guards “jugaba[n] con las presas como el gato con el ratón” (1978, 285). The women of Ventas, meanwhile, are described as “maltratada[s]” (1978, 107), subject to the “garras” and “salvajadas” of the Francoist officer, that “bestia sádica” (García Madrid, 1982, 83). Here, then, the narrative of a/objectification I explored above is reversed, with the prison guards reduced to animals through the act of torture rather than the prisoner. García Madrid, in her collection

of poetry *Al quiebro de mis espinas*, also responds to the a/objectification of the body of the female prisoner by reminding her reader that “no son cuerpos los que se lamentan. / No son cuerpos. / Son las almas” (1977, 31), again emphasising the prisoner’s humanity. Thus, it is the agents of the regime who are dehumanised in the prison narrative, as the language of abjection shifts from the tortured female prisoner to her torturer. In such a depiction of her prison experience, the woman prison writer is able to reframe her experience in response to her own dehumanisation, a/objectifying the torturer and the prison guard in rendering him, as Sidonie Smith writes in her study of Black women’s narratives of rape and sexual violence, “less than fully human” and “assigning him a position low on the chain of being” (1993, 47). This reframing of the experience of torture is a vital means of survival for the female prisoner, as it is in contrast to this act of dehumanising the torturer that she is then able to reclaim her own humanity, utilising the autobiographical act as a “humanisation process” through which both her suffering and that of her comrades within Ventas is made visible (Vosburg, 1995, 129). The language used to describe the women’s torture and their experience of pain is also a linguistic device that allows the authors to create a greater sense of empathy within the reader. In their use of emotive language in instances such as, for example, Leonor’s utter terror at the sight of her fellow prisoner suspended from the ceiling (1978, 135), or Núñez Targa’s description of a mother’s torture in front of her child (2016, 62), the authors convey to the reader a sense of the pain the women experienced, preventing the reader from observing this pain on a detached level with “the remote character of some deep subterranean fact” (Scarry, 1985, 3) and encouraging, rather, an emotional response (Fifield, 2015, 121). The prison text thus allows its author to construct an empathetic space in which her narrative can be heard: as Henke writes, this sympathetic reception is “crucial to [the testifier’s] healing process”, constituting a form of “public validation of her life testimony” (2000, xii).

Furthermore, each author also responds to the systematic “mortificación del yo” of the Republican female prison experience (Trillo, 2011, 41) by using her narrative as a means of “self-affirmation through writing” (Gelfand, 1983, 192). Following my exploration of the power of naming in Chapter One, I argue here that the act of naming is again significant when read as a response to the dehumanising, a/objectifying experience of torture and violence within the prison. To return to Scarry and *The Body in Pain*, the tortured prisoner is robbed of the means to “project the self” (1985, 35) through the infliction of pain. Thus, the use of proper names within the prison narrative and specifically the narrative of torture constitutes a challenge to both the secrecy and silence imposed by the torture (Harlow, 1992, 255) and this dehumanising, a/objectifying function. As I examined in Chapter One, each author constructs a shared narrative space within her text: specifically in response to torture, Núñez Targa constructs a narrative in which her comrades speak in the first person of their own experiences within the prison. Elena Cuartero describes how the officers who interrogated her forced her to climb a ladder and then pulled it from under her, covering up their actions by reporting that she had attempted suicide. After recounting her experience of torture, she emphatically states “sé que me matarán [...] pero quiero que todo el mundo sepa lo que han hecho conmigo” (2016, 61). Other women in the narrative, even when they do not speak for themselves in the same way as Elena Cuartero, are always named¹⁵: in her chapter “Moderna Inquisición”, Núñez Targa includes the [hi]stories of Nieves C., Maruja G. and Carmen P. alongside that of Cuartero. Similarly, in her denunciation of the brutal treatment of the prisoners, Doña refers specifically to Julia Lázaro, emphasising her youth (“tenía veinte años) and the cruelty she experienced at the hands of the prison guards (1978, 184) and to the members of Leonor’s prison ‘family’, Carmela and Amelia. The reader is thus reminded that the women within the

¹⁵ Some surnames, however, are shortened simply to initials: unlike Doña, Núñez Targa offers no explanation for this in her text. It is possible that it is an attempt to protect the anonymity of some comrades, or equally possible — particularly considering her admission in the introduction that her memory is not infallible — that these surnames were simply unknown.

prison narratives are real people, again serving to emphasise their humanity. Perhaps most significantly, all three texts are explicitly autobiographical — either on a textual level as is the case for Núñez Targa and García Madrid, or a paratextual level as is the case for Doña —and published under the author’s own name, thus allowing the autobiographical act to serve as a means of “self-inscription” into history (Parry, 2004, 22) for the prisoner who has previously seen her own selfhood erased.

As well as the act of narrating itself, each author also employs various different means of writing back against this imposed Othering and contamination within her prison text. Returning, for example, to a conversation between inmates that I previously explored in Chapter One, Núñez Targa’s prison mentor Clara discusses the importance of hygiene within the prison:

Ellos tratan de crear aquí todas las condiciones posibles para que nos embrutezcamos [...] Y nosotras, contra viento y marea, debemos hacer todo lo humanamente posible para no dejarnos embrutecer y vigilarnos severamente hasta en los más mínimos detalles. Un simple relajamiento [...] de limpieza, por pequeño que sea tiene su importancia. Significa una concesión hecha al enemigo ¿comprendes? (2016, 66).

Similarly to the focus on femininity I explored previously, Clara explains to her fellow inmates that keeping oneself clean and one’s possessions neat and tidy constitutes a form of resistance against the Francoist regime and the prison authorities, for whom the prison serves as a means of desensitising and dehumanising the Republican woman. The imprisoned female body, imagined by the Francoist regime as a site of control, is thus transformed within the prison narrative and instead becomes the site of women’s resistance. In this way, each narrative testifies to the body’s power “rewrite its environment” (Grosz, 1994, 188), and this act of

keeping oneself clean thus serves as a contrast to the texts' descriptions of the abjectification of the women's bodies. Indeed, the descriptions of the unsanitary conditions within the prison and the guards' attempts to dehumanise the prisoners ultimately emphasise the women's own act of resistance in expelling, as far as possible, the abject contamination of the prison from their own bodies. The act of keeping oneself clean is also a means through which the inmates of Ventas may again re-assert their own femininity, embodying and reiterating the gender norms of both the National-Catholic regime and the Communist Party wherein the ultimate expression of femininity is in the embodiment of cleanliness and purity. Whilst, then, the political prisoners' attempts to maintain their own level of cleanliness may be read as a subversion of the Francoist image of the Republican woman as unclean, it is also possible to read this insistence on remaining "escrupulosamente limpias, y bien vestidas dentro de su natural modestia" as a form of resistance that nonetheless remains, as I explored above, "largely constrained by the terms of the original assailment" (Butler, 1993, 90).

To this end, the women's clothing also serves a similar purpose in each narrative. Doña describes how Leonor, on the occasion of her first visit from family, is gifted a red scarf to wear as it will make her appear less pale and sickly (1978, 166); García Madrid notes her gratitude to a brother-in-law who sends regular packages of clean clothing (1982, 192); Núñez Targa describes how Clara insists that her fellow inmates keep their clothes clean and even repairs the skirts of a woman who cannot sew herself (2016, 70). All three narratives note that women often dressed in their best clothing for their sentencing or execution, borrowing what they could from other inmates (2016, 55). This focus on appearance relates back to my previous exploration of the creation of "positive readings" (Vosburg, 1995, 130) within the prison text: in emphasising the women's efforts to dress well and maintain a feminine, attractive appearance (as, for instance, in Doña's example of the scarf, or wearing one's best clothes for

appearances in public) each author creates an image of the Republican female prisoner that conforms to societal expectations of women wherein clean, modest and attractive dress was expected to echo their feminine virtue and purity (Morcillo, 2008, 64). Furthermore, as Charlotte Ross has explored in her study of Primo Levi's work, clothing offers a practical layer of security — against, for example, the cold or the dirt of the prison — but also a symbolic layer of protection against the dehumanising experience of imprisonment, as it represents that the wearer belongs to a “‘civilised’ humanity as opposed to pre-human, inferior life forms” (2011, 29). The focus on clothing as well as cleanliness within the texts thus provides the authors with a means through which to again reassert their humanity, emphasising the Republican prisoners' embodiment of conventional femininity within their narratives through their representation of its conformity to aesthetic norms of presentability, countering the “degrading” (Vosburg, 1995, 130) image of the Republican woman formulated by the Franco regime and the prison authorities.

Not all representations of women's resistance within the texts, however, are predicated on this notion of positive readability, or indeed even on the idea that keeping oneself clean and healthy constitutes a resistant act. García Madrid writes of one inmate, Joaquina, who refuses to wash during her time in Ventas, proclaiming that “es que tengo hecha la promesa de que mientras no salga de aquí, no me lavo” (1982, 89). I argue here that this refusal to wash constitutes a second form of embodied resistance against the Franco regime, wherein the unwashed body becomes a form of protest against the bodily control exerted over the inmates of Ventas. As Mary Douglas has written, the body is a “highly restricted medium of expression”, expected to conform to a multitude of social norms that include proper grooming (1966, 72). The body is thus an image of society, and societal control is echoed in discourses of bodily control (Douglas, 1966, 78). Under the Francoist National-Catholic regime, as I have explored above,

bodily purity was of the utmost concern — doubly so for women — and so the act of refusing to conform to this standard of physical cleanliness and purity thus constitutes a breaking with the social order imposed by Francoism. Furthermore, in stating that her refusal to wash is a condition of her continued imprisonment, Joaquina explicitly links the contamination of her body to her experience of incarceration. To return to Kristeva and abjection, if the abject is that which “threatens order” (Kristeva, 1982, 4), then this particular instance of bodily contamination and abjection as a result of imprisonment, as “dirt that signals a site of possible danger to social [...] systems” (Grosz, 1994, 192), thus becomes a means through which the Republican female prisoner may denounce the imprisoning regime as abject itself. García Madrid’s own description of Joaquina’s unwashed body is also laced with disgust — “sus pies y sus piernas estaban tan sumamente sucios que, cuando se quitaba las negras medias, parecía dejarse otras gris oscuro” (1982, 88) — and she notes multiple attempts by other women to force Joaquina to wash, through insults and threats as well as bribery and even blackmail, as García Madrid writes that she refused to write the illiterate Joaquina’s letters to her family unless she washed herself (1982, 89). The disgust of the other prisoners is significant here, as Joaquina’s means of protest is at odds with the importance each text places on rejecting the contamination/abjection of the prison and maintaining cleanliness despite the squalid conditions — her refusal to wash is thus also perceived as a threat to the social order created by the inmates themselves. In the same way as the lesbian prisoner and the prostitute, then, Joaquina is thus rejected by her fellow inmates for her failure to conform to gendered expectations of presentability, and ultimately constitutes another site of abjection through which the political prisoners of Ventas may assert their own femininity through emphasising their moral and physical cleanliness.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored each text's representation of engendered imprisonment inside Ventas, analysing the construction of the female prisoner's a/objectification and subsequent resistance within the prison texts of Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid. In each of the texts examined here, I have identified elements of tension between the idealised figure of the "ángel del hogar" and the demonised "puta roja" created by the Franco regime and its focus on women's religious, moral and bodily purity, exemplified in the prison narratives of Franco's female prisoners through their representation of the dehumanisation, de-subjectification and a/objectification of the Republican female body. In particular, the multiple instances of torture in these texts including physical and sexual violence, starvation, and negligent standards of hygiene inside Ventas, allow the authors to represent the prison authorities' deliberate abjectification of the women's bodies and their reduction to "puras nudas vidas" (Trillo, 2011, 51), whilst simultaneously writing back against this systematic breaking down of the self, using the text as a narrative space in which this self may then be re-asserted and re-constructed. The testimonial text, in this sense, thus allows for a re-embodiment of the selfhood that has been stripped from the Republican female prisoner, as she uses her carceral testimony to remind the reader of her humanity, and that of her comrades, bringing "public attention to the double repression experienced by the many disenfranchised women [...] in prison, rescuing them from oblivion in the process" (Vosburg, 1995, 128). My examination has also shown how Doña's testimony, in particular, also highlights the ways in which the gender ideology of the Franco dictatorship was often echoed in the rhetoric of the Republican forces: in *Desde la noche y la niebla*, she uses her narrative to emphasise women's contribution to the war effort and to the active resistance, both clandestine and military, of many Republican women during the Civil War, thus forming a counter-narrative to the popular opinion that women's place was in the home and the "retaguardia" (Nash, 2016, 109).

My exploration of abjection and subjectivity in this chapter, however, has also shown that the reclaiming of subjectivity, selfhood and femininity in each author's carceral testimony is, for the most part, rooted in what Vosburg has termed "positive reading" (1995, 130). In their emphasising of the female prisoners' self-sacrificing motherhood, youth, femininity and 'pure' physical appearance, as well as the rejection of figures within the prison such as the lesbian and the prostitute who are cast off and abjectified in each narrative, the subjectivity constructed within the text is necessarily limited only to those prisoners who conform to a certain moral and physical ideal. As Judith Butler writes in *Bodies That Matter*, the act of subject-formation also requires "the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings [...] who form the constitutive outside of the domain of the subject" and against whom the subject can make her claim to selfhood (1993, xiii). The carceral testimonies of Franco's female prisoners thus engage in what Butler has termed an "uncritical miming of the hegemonic" (1993, 90) through their reproduction of the Franco regime's prescriptive angel/whore dichotomy: it is this act of abjectifying the Other prisoner, the lesbian or the prostitute, that allows the political prisoners of Franco's Spain to "construct an identity beyond that of the overtly sexualised and socially denigrated puta roja" (Pike, 2014, 150). In the next chapter, I will build upon these ideas of subjectivity, abjection and the body in my exploration of the representation of subalternity in the carceral testimony of female prisoners.

CHAPTER THREE

CARCERAL TESTIMONY AND THE SUBALTERN

In this chapter, I analyse the prison texts of Doña, García Madrid and Núñez Targa in relation to the concept of the subaltern. As I have already demonstrated in previous chapters, at the time of writing all three women would have been speaking from a position of subalternity, subject to an interwoven, double-edged oppression in Francoist Spain. Not only were they women “writing from the margins” (Beverley, 2004, 29) of Francisco Franco’s new patriarchal, Nationalist-Catholic regime, they were also Republican women, *putas rojas* who were generally viewed as “less than nothing” by both the Francoist state and the general public (Mangini, 1995, 129); and they were also prisoners, frequently described as dangerous delinquents in whose moral perversion lay the root cause of the devastation of the Civil War (Trillo, 2011, 25). I have already examined Gayatri Spivak’s essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in detail in my introduction to this study: as Spivak writes, the subaltern subject is incapable of self-representation or speech, and must be represented or spoken for (1988, 276). This inability to speak is part of what Spivak refers to as “epistemic violence” (1988, 280), whereby the subaltern is systematically denied access to subjectivity through these processes of Othering and silencing. In Chapter Two, I explored the ways in which Republican women’s prison narratives portray the a/objectification and removal of the prisoners’ subjectivity, establishing the figure of the imprisoned *puta roja* as the Other upon which Spanish womanhood and identity was constructed in the rhetoric of the Francoist New State. I will build upon this understanding of the female prisoner’s subaltern position in Francoist society in order to examine the way that each prison text both exposes and responds to this subalternity: as well

as Spivak's essay, I also utilise Foucault's work on the "power of writing", which he defined as "an essential part in the mechanisms of discipline" (1977, 189). For Foucault, the process of documentation, examination, sentencing and case work forms a series of writings through which the prisoner may be defined, marking the "formalisation" of the prisoner's status within the power relations of the prison (1977, 190). I argue that this power of writing constitutes a form of epistemic violence specific to the prisoner who, through this repeated process of rewriting, is systematically both spoken for and spoken over. In the second half of this chapter, I also use Spivak's work alongside that of Sarah Colvin, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, Emilie Pine, and John Beverley to examine the concept of speaking as a subaltern subject in both a twentieth-century and a modern-day context. As Spivak defines the subaltern subject's inability to speak as an inability to be heard and understood (1988, 297), I use these scholars' work on the reception of testimonial texts to inform my discussion of the politics of reading, as the reception of Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid's prison texts in the present day — when they have, for example, been widely reprinted and placed on university curricula — is markedly different to the time of their release.

In the first part of my exploration, then, I examine the ways in which each text creates a space wherein Republican female prisoners testify to their own routinely silenced experiences. Analysing the dynamics of subalternity within the texts, this section aims to consider each author's depictions of the female prisoners' subaltern status in Franco's Spain and the various means of speaking and writing back against the epistemic violence of the dictatorship that are employed by the prison writer within her testimony: taking the sentencing and silencing of the women of Ventas as examples of Foucault's "power of writing" (1977, 189), I explore the ways in which this process is both portrayed and resisted in each text. Further, drawing on my discussion in Chapter Two of Butler, Kristeva and the abject, I ask whether the process of

moving the “margin to the centre” in these narratives (Beverley, 2004, 29) thus allows for the creation of yet another margin, giving certain inmates of Ventas a platform from which to speak and be heard whilst leaving others behind as the subaltern female who “cannot be heard or read” (Spivak, 1988, 308). In the second section of this chapter, I consider the effect that this subalternity exercises over our reading of the texts, exploring the contexts in which they were written and published — for example, in exile, or many years after their original conception due to the censorship of the Franco regime — and what it means for the subaltern female prisoner to truly speak and be understood today.

Subaltern Narratives

I have already examined, in the previous two chapters, the gender ideology of the National-Catholic regime. Here, I argue that this ideology served to render Republican women simultaneously hyper-visible¹⁶ and invisible within Francoist society: the public and political discourse of the regime frequently cited the immorality and delinquency of Republican women as a danger to the nation and the cause of its moral degradation (Trillo, 2011, 25), thus creating a hyper-visible Other against which the new Spanish nation-body was to be constructed, whilst the mass incarceration of Republican or “anti-Spanish” women and the subsequent obfuscation of their carceral reality through the routine censorship of letters and prison documents (Pike, 2014, 33) rendered the real experiences of these women invisible to the public. Both of these positions thus contributed in various ways to the marginal or subaltern position of Republican women during the Franco dictatorship. In the public Othering of the Republican woman — as in, for example, the construction of the “ángel del hogar”/“puta roja” dichotomy that I discussed in Chapter Two, which excluded Republican women from the “domain of the

¹⁶ The term hyper-visible here refers to the specific, purposeful positioning of a group in the public eye, wherein their ‘Otherness’ becomes a means through which other members of society may assert their own normalcy and subjectivity (Arat-Koç, 2012, 9).

subject” and instead rendered them abject and un-grieveable lives (Butler, 1993, xiii) — she is thus denied the opportunity to represent herself, relegated to what Trillo has referred to as the domain of the un-speakable and un-representable (2011, 50). The texts, as I have already explored, make this form of Othering visible in their representations of the torture and a/objectification of Republican women’s bodies within the prison. Furthermore, the confinement of Republican women either to prisons or to the domestic sphere constituted a silencing of their voices in the public sphere, rendering them socially invisible (González Duro, 2012, chap. 7 para. 8)¹⁷. The prison narratives of Doña, García Madrid and Núñez Targa represent this invisibility in various ways, detailing the multiple silencings of the Republican women imprisoned inside Ventas. In some cases, such as in the representations of inmates who have lost the ability to speak through the experience of trauma, this silencing becomes a literal act: Núñez Targa, for example, describes the case of Eugenia, “la loca”, an elderly woman who witnessed the murder of her daughter by Falangist officers (2016, 48). According to Núñez Targa’s testimony, the trauma of this event drove Eugenia to madness, literally silencing her in that her capacity to speak was reduced only to “frases incoherentes” (2016, 48). García Madrid also writes of a similar instance, referring to a fellow inmate named Vicenta as a madwoman on account of the fact that she barely speaks, and communicates predominantly in broken or indecipherable sentences (1982, 259). In both cases, the trauma of violence and imprisonment at the hands of the Franco regime leaves its female prisoners unable to voice their own experiences — García Madrid, in her introduction to *Requiem por la libertad*, also writes that she herself experienced this form of silencing, confiding in her reader that her time in prison constituted such a painful memory that she was unable to speak of it for some time

¹⁷ Here I refer to both actors of the Franco regime and the Republican troops during the Civil War, whose beliefs, as I explored in Chapter Two, often centred upon women’s place in the *retaguardia* as mothers and homemakers and discouraged their active participation on the front lines. Whilst the *milicianas*, as represented in Doña’s text, represent an exception or an alternative to this traditional role, the prevailing attitude on both sides of the conflict was that women did not belong at the front (Nash, 2016, 109).

after her release (1982, 11), and Núñez Targa similarly confesses that she was only able to write *Cárcel de Ventas* “a veinte años de distancia” (2016, 34). As I explored in Chapter One of this thesis, trauma theorists and psychiatrists such as Dori Laub have posited that when the trauma survivor is unable to externalise the event through voicing it, the self is effectively “annihilated”, as one’s life experiences fundamentally cannot be heard (Felman and Laub, 1992, 68). Gilmore, too, proposes that trauma itself is often “unspeakable” and “resistan[t] to representation” (2001, 46), again highlighting the silencing effect that traumatic experience exerts over the survivor and positioning the trauma narrative as an unheard story. This representation of women’s silence within the texts effectively demonstrates the epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988, 280) of their imprisonment, illustrating how the prison system, as Elissa Gelfand has written in her study of women prison writers in France, relegates its female political prisoners “to silence and oblivion” (1981, 198) through the traumatic experiences of both violence and imprisonment itself: the Republican woman’s prison narrative is thus an example of what Colvin refers to as a marginal or subaltern story (2017, 440), and the voice of the prisoner remains unheard.

A further depiction of the silencing of women’s voices within the texts can be found in their descriptions of solitary confinement. Used frequently in prisons across Franco’s Spain, the confinement of prisoners to isolation cells for extended periods of time as a form of punishment is well documented in both historical studies (Vinyes, 2003, 171; Urzaíz, 2014, 482) and in the prison testimonies themselves. Núñez Targa, for example, writes that she was “incomunicada” for some time at the beginning of her imprisonment (2016, 35), and later describes the case of a fellow inmate who was placed in solitary confinement for the duration of five and a half months, who recounts her sense of total isolation and lack of communication with both the other inmates in the prison and the outside world (2016, 110). Doña, similarly, writes of

Leonor's three-month long solitary confinement at the beginning of her time in Ventas, describing the "silencio de tumba" (1978, 114) in the isolation cells and the "mutismo" they produced in the inmates (1978, 122). Here, then, the female prisoner in isolation is depicted as literally cut off from the world and from anyone who might hear her speak, thus again allowing Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid to effectively represent the Republican female prisoners' silencing by the prison system and the isolation it enforced. As well as this social element of silencing, the isolation cells also constitute a means of depoliticising the prisoners, as the prisoner in solitary confinement is no longer recognised as part of a larger political body but is rather reduced to her own individual body "and nothing more" (Whalen, 2007, 59) by removing her from her community of fellow prisoners. García Madrid, for example, describes the case of Matilde Landa, a fellow prisoner who was confined to an isolation cell for over half a year as punishment for refusing to renounce her Communist beliefs (1982, 123). In this instance, the punishment of the isolation cell is a direct response to women's political engagement: García Madrid thus illustrates not only how women are punished for making the transgressive step from the private into the political sphere, but also the nature of the punishment, itself designed to forcibly silence the female political prisoner and to separate from her counterparts. As I addressed in Chapter One, a further means of silencing female prisoners under Franco may be found in the routine denial of their political status. I argue here that the refusal to consider women as political prisoners constitutes another means through which the "power of writing" (Foucault, 1977, 189) of the prison is used to deny the prisoners access to the political sphere, instead condemning them to silence.

This censure of the Republican female prisoners' political convictions is also evident in multiple instances within the narratives wherein the women of Ventas are sentenced on the basis of fabricated charges. In *Cárcel de Ventas*, Núñez Targa writes that numerous women in

the prison were charged either with having stormed the Cuartel de Montaña¹⁸ or desecrated the body of the General López Ochoa¹⁹, despite not having been involved in either offence. An elderly, illiterate woman also states that she does not even understand the charges against her, and another woman is said to have been charged with the crime of belonging to the Unión de Muchachas²⁰: her fellow inmates express their disbelief, as the woman is sixty-two years old and very unlikely to belong to an organisation of young women (2016, 72). García Madrid writes that the reason for her own arrest was her involvement with both the PSOE and the JSU, but that she was ultimately charged with having seized multiple hotels; dressed “de mono”; carried a pistol; served on the front for four months during the war; and murdered some fourteen or fifteen Falangist officers (1982, 156). Doña, too, mentions a number of cases where her comrades were sentenced on false charges, such as cases in which women were arrested and charged with the murder of a specific person who could be found “oronda y feliz, al otro lado de la capital” (1978, 193). In each narrative, these cases serve to highlight the cruelty of the Franco regime and the arbitrary imprisonment of Republican women: the detailing of these false charges allows each author to assert her own innocence and that of her comrades, as well as to reject their portrayal as criminals. I argue, however, that they also serve to illustrate a further method of silencing these women and obscuring their real political beliefs and contributions. As Higón and Martí have explored in their study of female prisoners in Valencia, the same charges were often levied against multiple women in order to homogenise Republican female prisoners as a group, characterising them as “todas [...] rojas, todas [...] idénticas y, en fin, todas [...] culpables” (2014, 656). The imprisonment of these women on false charges then serves to remove their political agency, instead pathologising the Republican woman as a

¹⁸ The siege of the Montaña barracks was a two-day siege on Falangist officers inside a barracks complex in Madrid, from the 18th to the 20th July 1936.

¹⁹ A military general nicknamed “the butcher of Asturias” by left-wing Spaniards after his involvement in the quelling of 1934 Asturian miners’ strike; killed awaiting trial in Madrid at the outbreak of the Civil War.

²⁰ A young women’s organisation linked to the Agrupación de Mujeres Antifascistas and the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas.

violent criminal and constructing the women's political involvement as "disordered" and "monstrous" (Gentry and Sjoberg, 2015, 98): in sentencing women for violent crimes they had not committed, the Francoist prison authorities succeeded in propagating an image of the Republican woman as "filthy [...] violent and brutish" (Mangini, 1995, 93). Furthermore, as I explored in Chapter One, prison authorities and the actors of the Franco regime routinely obfuscated official figures regarding political prisoners and particularly female political prisoners, who were frequently recorded as common-law prisoners or deviant, perverse women (Vinyes, 2003, 163). Thus, women's political contributions are again kept in the shadows (Spivak, 1988, 289), unseen and unheard as a result of the Franco regime's "explicit eradicat[ion] of political forms of femininity" (Pike, 2014, 33). The political female prisoner thus represented as a subaltern figure in Franco's Spain, unable to speak for herself as her words and deeds are routinely re-written by the imprisoning authority.

Doña, García Madrid and Núñez Targa, however, also use their prison narratives as a means through which to counteract these multiple silencings, both exposing and underwriting the marginal or subaltern position of the Republican female prisoner. In particular, one significant means through which the authors are able to reclaim their agency within the prison text is by narrating their own silences in situations such as interrogations by prison officers. Both Doña and García Madrid place significant emphasis on such a use of silence in their narratives: Doña, for example, repeatedly highlights Leonor's resolve during her torture by Falangist officers as she refuses to give up her comrade, Galván, despite the extreme violence she is subjected to, which she describes as the total destruction of her body (1978, 132-148). Even when questioned by a cellmate, who presents herself as a friend and ostensibly another comrade of Galván, Leonor maintains her silence, noting that the "chivatas" in Ventas were often police informants and repeating only "no conozco a ese hombre" (1978, 144). García Madrid, similarly, describes

the interrogations in the *checa* as a game in which officers attempted to goad her into making false accusations about her neighbours, emphasising that her only response was to repeat that she hardly knew her neighbours and would not make false statements against them “aunque me maten” (1982, 44). The narrative also highlights the solidarity of the other prisoners in the same *checa*: García Madrid writes that her neighbour, Narciso, staunchly refused to confess to having seen her “llevando mono y pistola” despite his own torture (1982, 48). As Elaine Scarry writes in *The Body in Pain*, when one confesses during interrogation or torture, “one betrays oneself and all those aspects of the world [...] that the self is made of” (1985, 29) — when a confession is made, the pain of the tortured subject is thus understood as the torturer’s power (Scarry, 1985, 37). In the event of these interrogations or tortures where confession is deliberately withheld, then, I argue that the texts represent silence as a means through which the prisoner may assert her own agency and power, affirming rather than betraying the self in the refusal to turn over one’s comrades. Further, the reader of carceral testimony is explicitly aware of what is left unsaid in these silences: in *Desde la noche y la niebla*, for example, it is clear from previous chapters that Leonor does indeed know Benito Galván despite her statements to the contrary, as she is depicted talking with him some time before her arrest (1978, 92). In her depiction of Leonor’s staunch silence, then, Doña also underwrites the erasure of Republican women’s status as political prisoners and their expulsion from the political sphere of Franco’s New Spain, as the choice to remain silent is presented as an act of political agency. As I explored in the previous chapter, the act of narrating one’s torture is an act of agency that allows the tortured subject to reframe her experience: narrating one’s silence, then, also allows the tortured prisoner to reassert both her agency and her own political voice.

Faced with the silencing of their voices, the prison narratives of Doña, García Madrid and Núñez Targa also illustrate the different ways in which the female prisoners of Ventas use their

bodies as a means of speaking out from within the prison. As Spivak proposes in her work on the subaltern, the body is an important site of protest for those marginalised subjects whose voices remain unheard. “Can the Subaltern Speak?” describes the case of Bhuvanewari Bhaduri, a member of an armed group fighting for Indian independence who had been tasked with a political assassination and, finding herself unable to go through with the assassination but similarly unable to refuse it, committed suicide (1988, 307). For Spivak, Bhaduri’s life thus represents “a situation where a subaltern person had tried extremely hard to speak, to the extent of making her damned suicide into a message” (Spivak and de Kock, 1992, 44). Unable to speak or be heard in any meaningful context, then, Bhaduri’s body thus represented her only means through which to be heard. In the previous chapter, I explored the ways in which the prison text represents the body of the female political prisoner as a site of contested identity, a/objectified by the Franco regime and reconstituted as a site of positive reading by the prisoners themselves: here, I also argue that the prison text also constructs the body of the female political prisoner as a site of protest, a means of speaking when one’s voice remains unheard. Doña, for example, highlights an instance in which Leonor asks to see the prison doctor after she is tortured. After examining her body, the doctor tells her “Esto no es nada” (1978, 124), words which Doña contrasts with a description of Leonor’s injuries: “las llagas abiertas de los muslos y una herida en la rodilla con gran hinchazón y los bordes purulentos; la dolía tanto que no le dejaba casi mantenerse en pie [...] En algunos sitios aún se veía cómo el vergajo se había llevado las tiras de la piel” (1978, 123). Throughout the text, descriptions of the prisoners’ bodies illustrate the way they have been mistreated by prison officers. Upon entering Ventas for the first time after her isolation, Leonor observes her comrades, noting how their bodies “llevaban las señales de las torturas, las características rayas de los vergajazos cruzaban todos los cuerpos” (1978, 151); later, she describes the effects of the institutional neglect of the prisoners, writing of diseases that “en algunos casos, alcanzaba lo monstruoso,

las piernas de las mujeres parecían sacos terrosos, las venas se reventaban y se abría la piel dejando heridas profundas: avitaminosis, parálisis...” (1978, 286). Núñez Targa positions the suffering of the prisoners in a similar manner. Writing of an instance in which the daily ration of food was possibly poisoned, she describes a “noche de pesadilla” in which “numerosas mujeres han debido ser llevadas a la enfermería en grave estado. Otras, sin fuerzas para sostenerse, se han quedado acostadas en las celdas por falta de sitio en la enfermería” (2016, 108). After the event, when the prison officials were offered assistance from doctors on the outside, Núñez Targa records the official response: “Las presas de Ventas están perfectamente atendidas” (2016, 109). Here, then, the prison text reminds us of “the testimony offered by bodies” (Gilmore, 2017, 4) as the imagery of the brutalised body speaks for itself within the narrative — even as Leonor’s complaints to the doctor go unheard, or prison officials declare that everyone is in perfect health, the prison texts testify to the reality of life inside Ventas in their representation of tortured and suffering bodies. Bodies, then, are positioned within the texts as a means through which to testify to the truth of “who can be harmed [and] who can harm” (Gilmore, 2017, 21), even when women cannot speak or are silenced by conflicting official narratives.

Using the image of the body in an alternative way, García Madrid’s poem “Un mar de muertos” represents the women of Ventas as dead bodies in order to illustrate life within the prison: “Un mar de muertos. / Eso es lo que esto es. Un mar de muertos. / Simulan que respiran, pero engañan. / Aquí ninguno alienta. Nadie anhela. / [...] Alguno grita y dice yo estoy vivo! / Pero ya ves que miente” (1982, 32). By representing the prisoners as a sea of dead bodies, García Madrid invokes the Franco regime’s use of imprisonment as a form of social purification or extermination: the paradox of being dead but appearing to breathe, or being dead-but-alive, positions the prisoners as bodies who are not-lives or “shadow lives” (Butler, 2016, xxix).

According to Butler, these shadow lives are those subaltern members of society who, through war or imprisonment, “cannot be lost, and cannot be destroyed, because they already inhabit a lost and destroyed zone” (2016, xix) — thus, whilst not actually dead, the inhabitants of Ventas are also “ungrievable” (Butler, 2016, xix), not alive, and excluded from meaningful participation in the New State (Trillo, 2011, 30). The dead-but-alive subjects of García Madrid’s poem effectively illustrate this exclusion. Furthermore, when the prisoner in the poem attempts to speak — in order to claim that they are alive — the poetic voice dismisses this speech, asserting that it is a lie, again invoking the silencing of prisoners’ voices and the invisibility of the prison experience in much the same way as the prison guards in Doña and Núñez Targa’s texts dismiss the suffering of the women of Ventas in their assertion that that all is well inside the prison. The dead body acts as a metaphor through which García Madrid is able to articulate the prisoners’ inability to speak, writing this inability through the “physiological inscription of [the] body” (Spivak, 1988, 308).

Furthermore, and as I briefly discussed in Chapter One, the act of writing itself is a resistant act that allows imprisoned women to speak out against the enforced silence of the Franco dictatorship. As Doña herself states in her introduction to *Desde la noche y la niebla*, the carceral testimony of the women of Ventas constitutes “un proceso de recuperación de identidad de todo un pueblo de mujeres” whose voices were silenced by the regime and the prison system (1978, 19). This introduction, written after Franco’s death in 1978, includes a list of some forty-three names — some full names (“Pilar de la Torre, Manuela del Arco, Antonia García...”) and some first names or nicknames (“Pepita, Adela, las hermanas Cuesta...”) — and Doña affirms that “estos nombres simbolizarán a miles de mujeres [...] que también fueron héroes en el duro combate silencioso por sobrevivir a la más tenaz y negra represión que jamás hemos sufrido” (1978, 22). This naming is particularly significant as a

form of “rupture with the discourses of silence and oblivion concerning Franco’s female political prisoners” (Pike, 2014, 59), as Doña’s self-positioning within this list of imprisoned Republican women becomes not only a means of establishing a network of collectivity and solidarity in the face of Francoist repression, but also of re-writing those names into a history of the dictatorship wherein the Republican women’s “heroicidades y entregas han sido de segunda fila y, a pesar de poblar las cárceles y los penales, bastaba con menciones esporádicas” (Doña, 1978, 21). Both Núñez Targa and García Madrid also use the proper names of most of their comrades throughout their narratives²¹, thus again recording these names as part of the history of Ventas: each of the texts, then, becomes a memorialising space within which the author is able to amplify the voices of her fellow Republican female prisoners, and the prison narrative thus constitutes an act of resistance against the imposed silence of the forty year dictatorship, whilst the authors’ inclusion of their own names amongst the many others of their testimonies signifies an act of “self-inscription” into history (Parry, 2004, 22). As Paul Gready writes, the prison narrative is thus a means through which the prisoner is able to write “against the official text of imprisonment” (1993, 489), allowing for the restoration and reclamation of the prisoner’s silenced or erased sense of self and voice. This self-inscription into history, then, serves to break the frame of the experience of imprisonment, allowing for it to be read instead on the prisoner’s terms and not on those of the imprisoning regime — the prisoner’s narrative has previously been “written” for her by the State during the experience of interrogation, imprisonment and trial (Gready, 1993, 498), whereas the narrative of her own carceral testimony creates an oppositional “power of writing” (Foucault, 1977, 189) in which the marginal or subaltern voice of the women of Ventas is given a platform from which to speak. This act of writing and recording oneself as a part of history is also portrayed in the prison text

²¹ As I explored in Chapter One, this difference is a result of Doña’s clandestinity during the later years of the dictatorship, which necessitated the use of false names in much of her work.

as a vital part of life in Ventas. In *Cárcel de Ventas*, Núñez Targa recalls a conversation with a fellow prisoner who was confined to an isolation cell for five and a half months (the same inmate already discussed above). Asked how she stayed sane over such a long period of time, the woman responded that she found a nail on the ground and sharpened it to a fine point. “Aquel clavo me salvó”, she tells Núñez Targa. “Hice un calendario en la pared, donde cada día marcaba la fecha y el día de la semana. Encima le puse mi nombre. Si desaparezco —me decía— alguien sabrá que pasé por aquí. Y esa idea me consolaba un poco” (2016, 112). García Madrid also makes numerous references to her “afán [...] por componer poemas” from inside the prison, writing poetry which she uses to record the injustice of her own situation and that of her comrades in Ventas despite objections from the prison guards (1982, 254). For the isolated prisoner in Núñez Targa’s testimony, the simple act of recording her name on the wall with a nail is becomes literally life-saving: the idea that someone, in the future, will know of her existence serves to counter her silencing and allows her to endure her long solitary confinement. Similarly, for García Madrid, her prison poetry is a way to represent the material conditions within the prison even when the truth of her narrative is contested by those in charge, allowing her to record her own counter-history of women’s imprisonment inside Ventas. As Butler writes of prison poetry in *Frames of War*, these writings from inside the prison are “appeals [...] efforts to re-establish a social connection to the world” (2016, 59). The act of writing is the act of leaving a mark: like the prisoner who carves her name into the cell wall, writing inside the prison is “an effort to leave [...] a trace, of a living being [...] a sign formed by the body, a sign that carries the life of the body” (Butler, 2016, 59). Thus, the prison narratives present the act of writing from inside the prison, as well as retroactively from outside, as a vital means of survival and resistance for Franco’s female prisoners, with both forming a part of the prison writers’ “reconstruction and interpretation of [their own] immediate history” (Harlow, 1992, 10).

To return, however, to my discussions of solidarity inside the prison from the previous two chapters, not all the women of Ventas are included in this reclaiming of history. Whilst the texts record the experiences of political prisoners, allowing their [hi]stories to be re-inserted into their own counter-history of Francoist repression, the experiences of common-law prisoners, lesbians and prostitutes are absent from this narrative: indeed, these prisoners are often separated and silenced within the narratives by the political prisoners themselves. García Madrid describes a lesbian prostitute whose advances scared and disgusted the political prisoners, noting that none dared to talk to her for fear of making enemies amongst the common prisoners (1982, 219); Doña, similarly, separates the political prisoners from the common prisoners within her narrative, noting the “ladrona habitual” amongst the latter (1978, 282) and often referring to them within the narrative as simply “una común” (1978, 330) rather than by their names, thereby excluding the common-law prisoners from the “homenaje con sus nombres propios” she describes in her introduction (Doña, 1978, 21). Notably, none of the common-law prisoners ‘speak’ within Núñez Targa’s text — whilst there are multiple chapters within her shared narrative space that are dedicated to retelling the stories of various inmates within the prison, all are women imprisoned for political reasons, thus rendering the common-law inmate effectively invisible within the narrative save for those instances in which she is rebuffed by the political prisoners. As I explored in Chapter Two, then, the narrative separates the ‘good’ political prisoner from the ‘bad’ or ‘dangerous’ common-law prisoner, who is denied access to the same subjectivity that the political prisoners claim through their writing, remaining instead in Butler’s domain of “abject beings” with no claim to subjectivity or personhood (1993, xxi). It is this “obliteration of the trace of the Other [from] Subject-ivity” (Spivak, 1988, 281) that positions the common-law prisoner, the lesbian and the prostitute within the prison narrative as the subaltern voice which cannot speak: even as the political

prisoner speaks, these voices remain silenced, subjected still to the epistemic violence of their removal from both the histories and the counter-histories of the Franco dictatorship. Indeed, the texts instead appear to be constrained by the regime's exclusionary rhetoric, imitating it even in their own acts of resistance. Such a construction of abjection and subalternity within the prison texts thus allows Doña, García Madrid and Núñez Targa to claim their own selfhood through the denial of that of the abjectified Other. If, as Beverly writes, the testimonial text "speaks for, or in the name of, a community or group" (2003, 33), such a group, in the case of these particular carceral testimonies, does not include Ventas's common-law prisoners. The positioning of the "margin at the centre" (Beverly, 2003, 29) thereby begets a new margin, occupied by the subaltern common-law prisoner who "has no history and cannot speak" (Spivak, 1988, 287).

Reading the Past in the Present

I have already explored elsewhere in this study the act of writing carceral testimony as an act of both resistance and survival. Here, I wish to explore the act of publishing carceral testimony, and in particular the different modes of reading encouraged by our approach to subaltern texts. As I detailed in my introductory chapter, the publishing of one's testimony offers a means through which the subaltern voice can be brought into discourse: for the Republican female prisoners of the Franco dictatorship, the act of publishing provided a platform, allowing the writer to "display publicly the *real* bodies" within the prison, making those bodies "visible" and "readable" to those outside the prison walls (Vosburg, 1995, 128, emphasis in original). The aim of these texts is to allow the prisoners to speak, to ensure that their voices do not remain unheard or forgotten (García Madrid, 1982, dedication). Thus, in the face of the "stripp[ing] of the self" brought about by the experience of imprisonment (Gabriele, 1995, 98), the published carceral testimony allows its author to assert her own authority and subjectivity

in a public forum, constituting a means of breaking with the Franco regime's enforced "female silence" (Gabriele, 1995, 99). The publication of a subaltern narrative, however, as Sarah Colvin writes in her study of German women's prison narratives, is often not necessarily the same thing as the subaltern voice being heard (2014, 441). Thus, the context in which the prison texts of Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid were produced and circulated provides a certain insight into the texts themselves and the way they were received by the Spanish public at the time of publication. After the death of Francisco Franco, and the end of the nearly forty-year dictatorship, Spain embarked upon its transition to democracy, which was marked not by a significant resurgence of collective memory, but by the so-called *pacto del olvido*, or "pact of forgetting". Not a formalised pact as such, the *pacto del olvido* was rather a recognition that, in order to move forward with the process of democratisation, the recent past ought to be laid to rest. To this end, laws such as the 1977 *Ley de la Amnistía* were passed by Adolfo Suárez's transition government — this amnesty law sheltered from prosecution, amongst others, those who had committed "actos de intencionalidad política, cualquiera que fuese su resultado" (BOE, 1977) during the war and the subsequent *posguerra* period, and supposedly aimed to make the transition to democracy as smooth as possible, avoiding the re-awakening of "longstanding historical controversies" by assigning equal responsibility to both sides who had fought in the Civil War (Encarnación, 2014, 28). Even within the Communist Party, this attempt at a consensus was embraced as the "best way to ensure a stable democratic regime" (Encarnación, 2014, 29): defending the amnesty law in Parliament in 1977, the PCE's Marcelino Camacho Abad addressed those present, asking "¿[c]ómo podríamos reconciliarnos los que nos habíamos estado matando los unos a los otros, si no *borrábamos ese pasado de una vez para siempre?*" (1977, para. 2, emphasis mine). Thus, for the majority of Spain's political class, the *Ley de la Amnistía* was a means to "abrir la vía a la paz y a la libertad" (1977, para.

2), a process that necessitated the closure of the previous chapter of history and the opening of a new, clean page.

Doña, in an interview with Spanish newspaper *El País* concerning the publication of her testimonial text *Querido Eugenio*, refers to this reconciliatory stance during the transition years as “horroros[a]”, constituting another form of silence and silencing for those who wished to speak (*El País*, 2003). Discussing the publication of *Desde la noche y la niebla*, the first of her texts to address her imprisonment under Franco, she states that there were elements of the text that she was advised to remove: “Madrid no se rindió. La Junta del coronel Casado se la entregó a Franco. Ya lo quise decir en el primer libro que escribí, pero entonces Santiago [Carrillo] me dijo que no lo publicara, que no era el momento, que no convenía. Era la transición” (*El País*, 2003). Here, then, Doña implies that her desire to write her own testimony, recounting her own truth in full, is at odds with the aims of the transition and its focus on moving forward rather than continuing to unearth the past: the voice of the Republican female prisoner is thus again silenced as Doña’s narrative in its entirety has not been “brought to speech” (Spivak and de Kock, 1992, 46). Furthermore, in her introduction to *Desde la noche y la niebla*, she suggests that her journey to publishing this testimony was a somewhat complicated process: initially, she writes, she hoped it would be published as “una edición pirata” under Franco, but was informed by journals and printing presses that “no hacían piraterías tratándose de una ‘cosa’ de mujeres [...] que no ‘estaba el horno para bollos’” (1978, 20). Despite this refusal, however, she also writes that at the same time “ya circulaban por el país libros-testimonios, denuncias, relatos y toda clase de escritos contra la dictadura [...] de las cárceles masculinas” (1978, 20). To illustrate this imbalance, Holgado points to the *Libro Blanco de las Cárceles Franquistas*, published in Paris in 1976, which featured only three women’s testimonies amongst its impressive collection of prison memoirs and reflected men’s prison experiences as universal

with no reference to their gendered specificity (2015, 286). Also publishing in the early years of the transition, García Madrid's collection of poems *Al quiebro de mis espinas* (1977) was self-published in small numbers and has not been reprinted since. Doña, as I explored in Chapter One, first wrote *Desde la noche y la niebla* using false names to protect herself and her comrades, and Núñez Targa, writing outside of Spain, nonetheless also felt the effects of the dictatorship, publishing *Cárcel de Ventas* without her second surname, as well as several other works released anonymously or under various pseudonyms (Holgado, 2003, 357) so as not to impede her eventual return to her home country as well as to avoid potential persecution (Holgado, 2015, 285). Not only, then, was the publication of each author's carceral testimony impeded by the transition, but also by the fact that it women's testimony: both the *pacto del olvido* and the androcentricity of twentieth-century Spain thus "condemned [imprisoned women's] texts to relative obscurity" in comparison to those written by men (Pike, 2014, 65). Thus, whilst the act of publishing might represent a form of "coming to voice" (Smith and Watson, 2010, 85) for the female prisoners of Franco's Spain, or indeed an act of resistance against the regime and the silence of the transition, their texts still remained at the margins of public discourse.

The context of reading the prison texts of Republican women in the twenty-first century, however, is markedly different from that of reading in the twentieth. Since the early 2000s, Spain has moved away from the politics of the transition and the *pacto del olvido*: by the mid-2000s there existed some 160 memory groups across the country (Encarnación, 2014, 159), including the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (ARMH), which has since become one of the leading proponents of the exhumation of mass graves of executed Republicans in order to "pedir justicia para los que la merecieron y no la tuvieron" (ARMH, 2018). Further, in 2007, the PSOE government under Zapatero passed the *Ley de la Memoria*

Histórica, the first law of its kind to formally condemn the Franco regime (BBC Mundo, 2007). Passed in October 2007 “por la que se reconocen y amplían derechos y se establecen medidas en favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia durante la Guerra Civil y la dictadura” (BOE, 2007), the law called for the removal of Francoist monuments and statues and the exhumation of multiple mass graves across the country, alongside various other measures designed to begin the process of reconciliation with the victims of Francoist repression (BOE, 2007). As part of this reconciliation, many of the old Francoist street names now bear the names of victims of Francoism, including those named for Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid in the capital city. Indeed, since the turn of the century, Spain has witnessed a “boom de la memoria”, a resurgence of cultural memory of the Franco dictatorship “which has complemented the civil campaign to recuperate Republican memory in Spain” (Ryan, 2012, 450). This so-called boom, or “memoria-cascada” (Holgado, 2015, 301), led in many cases by the grandchildren of Republicans killed under Franco (Renshaw, 2011, 25), is not only a social but also a literary movement. In fact, the two are often intertwined: Emilio Silva, for example, the founder of ARMH, has claimed that the foundation of his organisation was prompted by research he was undertaking at the time for a novel about the Civil War (Renshaw, 2011, 26). Other writers whose texts form a part of this memory-boom claim motivations similar to those of the testimonial narrator. Antonio Altarriba, for example, whose graphic novel *El arte de volar* reinterprets his father’s experience as a Republican soldier and his life under the subsequent dictatorship, states that he wrote “por la necesidad de aliviar mi dolor y de recuperar la memoria de mi padre” (Martin, 2016, 294). Similarly, Dulce Chacón, the daughter of Nationalist parents and author of the bestselling novel *La voz dormida* — which explores Republican women’s prison experiences during the postwar period — states that her writing constitutes an attempt to “explorar ese lado oscuro, oculto y silenciado de la posguerra” (*El País*, 2002). Chacón laments the same exclusion of women’s history, and in particular

Republican women's history, that Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid denounce in their narratives: “nos han contado muy mal la historia, nos han ocultado una parte muy importante. Los libros, las instituciones, incluso los propios relatos de los que vivieron aquello, fuera en el bando que fuera, han callado sobre lo que pasó de verdad” (*El País*, 2002). Other popular literature of the boom includes the novels of Javier Cercas and Almudena Grandes as well as the internationally popular civil war novels by Carlos Ruiz Zafón, and the story of the *trece rosas* in particular has served as the source material for several books (notably, Jesús Ferrero's 2003 novel) and a film adaptation in 2007 detailing the imprisonment, sentencing and execution of the thirteen young women.

Indeed, the memory of the *trece rosas* has been interpreted through a variety of mediums, also including multiple documentaries, poems, theatrical performances and one flamenco show (Botrán, 2009, 199), and it seems that their experience has come to function almost as a stand-in for that of all female prisoners under Franco²². Botrán observes this series of reinterpretations of the deaths of the *trece rosas*, writing that their narrative “parece calar hondo en la conciencia de la sociedad acrecentado incluso por el testimonio directo en varios documentales televisivos de los familiares de las víctimas de las JSU así como el de algunas de las supervivientes que convivieron con estas trece jóvenes en el periodo en el que estuvieron privadas de libertad en la Cárcel de Ventas de Madrid” (2009, 202). She also suggests that part of this fascination may stem from the fact that they were women: as Santiago Carillo states, “en este tipo de dramas históricos como son las guerras civiles son las [mujeres] que más sufren, mucho más todavía que los hombres” (*Que mi nombre no se borre de historia*, 2004). Part of the interest in these narratives, then, is the experiences of suffering and imprisonment

²² I will return, by way of conclusion to this thesis, to the *trece rosas* and recent debates over their particular memorialisation in Spain.

that they relay to the reader and so, particularly in the case of women's narratives, the perceived subaltern position of the author or protagonist becomes a commodity that can be packaged, marketed and sold to an audience. As Emilie Pine writes, this commodification of memory (and in particular traumatic or painful memory) creates a so-called "memory marketplace", which she defines as "a symbolic space where values are produced and consumed [...] an 'institution of power' and a 'site of contest' within which actors seek to have their memories witnessed in order to generate and maximise both cultural and social capital" (2020, 18). Pine also acknowledges that "processes of memorialising often overlap with processes of commodification" (2020, 19), with survivors' memory and voice serving as a marketing tool in an oversaturated market. In their discussion of what they term the "memoir boom", Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson also discuss the marketing of memory texts for a mass audience, highlighting the paratextual elements that are added to testimonial narratives during the publishing process: they argue that through this process our interactions with testimonial literature are "multiply mediated" by the addition, removal or editing of the book's cover, blurb, preface and other paratextual elements (2010, 101). The cover, in particular, plays a significant role in determining how a text will be read: the covers of the most recent editions of Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid's prison texts, for example, provide an interesting comparison with those of their first editions and an insight into the way that new editions have been marketed for specific audiences.

Let us consider the first edition of García Madrid's *Requiem por la libertad*, published in 1982. The cover illustration shows a woman with a shaved head in a white dress, chained to a woman in a black dress, also with her head shaved. Neither woman has any facial features, suggesting that both could represent any one of the number of women imprisoned under Franco, and the woman in white holds her hand out to the woman in black in a show of friendship or solidarity.

Although the women are chained, the background details feature blooming flowers and raised bayonets in red ink: one interpretation of this imagery might suggest a form of hope, in the flowers, and Republican strength or resistance in the red bayonets. However, the cover of the most recent edition of the book, published in 2003, depicts a woman alone in her cell, huddled under a barred window. The image suggests isolation, loneliness and suffering, in contrast to the imagery on the original cover and indeed the narrative itself which, as I have already explored in some depth, is largely rooted in the solidarity between the political prisoners of Ventas. As Gillian Whitlock observes in her study of “veiled best-sellers”, covers such as this are designed to market “the cheap read that sustains voyeurism and propaganda; the selling of sensational stories of abuse in the guise of compassionate concern” (2007, chap. 4 para. 29). The back cover of the 2003 edition, which makes reference to García Madrid’s “carga de dolor [y] de miseria” as well as the “sufrimiento, la humillación y la tortura física y moral” of Ventas, appears to market the suffering of female prisoners under Franco in a similar manner. Thus, in the context of the memory marketplace, it could be argued that such marketing reduces the “painful memory” of García Madrid and other survivors of Francoist repression to “symbolic commodity” (Pine, 2020, 15) whereby “distress, misery and suffering have become the raw goods’ that attract the largest audiences” (Pine, 2020, 21). The most recent cover of Núñez Targa’s *Cárcel de Ventas* illustrates a similar commodification of memory: whilst the first edition, published in 1967, features illustrations drawn by the author (Fundación Cárcel de Ventas, 2017) of a mother and child and a large number of faceless female prisoners, the 2016 edition published by Editorial Renacimiento shows a black and white photo of Núñez Targa herself, testifying at the trial of René Bach²³ in Carcassone in 1945. The use of this photo on the cover of her prison text would imply that the narrative within is more akin to legal testimony

²³ Bach, a member of the Gestapo, was responsible for the suffering and torture of women in the Ravensbrück concentration camp, where Núñez Targa was held during the Second World War after her release from Ventas.

than to personal life narrative, thus informing our mode of reading the text. To return to Smith and Watson, and the dangers of reading life writing, this implication of concrete legal testimony creates the expectation of inscrutable fact rather than personal experience. Further, it also serves to “legitimate” Núñez Targa’s own trauma in the context of the memory marketplace, allowing for “the creation of a hierarchy of suffering as trauma” (Pine, 2020, 22) as one narrative is legitimised through its association both with our idea of legality and justice and with the publishing industry itself. Finally, a new edition of Doña’s *Desde la noche y la niebla* was published in 2012 by horas y HORAS as part of a series entitled “Colección La cosecha de nuestras madres”, with the cover design featuring portraits of various female authors such as Adrienne Rich, Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf and Charlotte Brönte. According to the editors, the series of re-edited works aims to “editar y traducir teoría, mujeres de otras culturas y reeditar libros olvidados de nuestras madres” (horas y HORAS, 2016): giving women a voice in the twenty-first century when they may not previously have been able to speak or be heard. As Smith and Watson write, however, such a packaging of “several heterogenous stories as a collection can blur their different contexts and truth claims, giving the misleading effect of a single, shared story” (2010, 101). I argue that this is the case here: by marketing Doña’s prison narrative as part of a series alongside the works of the Brontë sisters or Audre Lorde, a politics of reading is created whereby the reader expects the same thing from each of these vastly different narratives. The perceived subaltern position of these ‘forgotten’ texts and of ‘woman’ as a heterogenous class is thus again used as a marketing tool, reducing subalternity or gendered experience to a commodity that can be sold and consumed. Indeed, the back cover of each new edition of these prison narratives makes reference to the unheard nature of Republican women’s prison narratives — describing them as “una memoria del olvido” (Doña, 2012, book jacket) and “ignorada por la inmensa mayoría de los españoles de hoy” (García Madrid, 2003, back cover) — using this as another selling point for an

audience who, as Pine writes in her exploration of Irish revolutionary narratives, “might be assumed to be fatigued by the monolithic anticolonial narrative” (2020, 24).

If the subalternity of these narratives is key to their marketing, we might then question whether they truly remain subaltern voices in the twenty-first century. As Whitlock writes, there exists a large market for narratives of subalternity: referring to what she calls the “alterity industry”, she observes that these narratives have become a commodity marketed towards “large metropolitan readerships” with an appetite for “culturally othered goods” such as subaltern life narratives (2007, chap. 1 para. 27). Thus, to return to Spivak, a life narrative with such a wide audience necessarily troubles our understanding of the text as subaltern, as it is fundamentally no longer unheard, unlistened-to or “in shadow” (1988, 287). Here, then, I argue that reading the prison texts of Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid in the context of the *boom de la memoria* in Spain and the wider demand for such narratives in today’s cultural and literary marketplace thus allows for a rethinking of our definition of these texts as subaltern. Indeed, if, as I have explored above and in the previous two chapters, the act of writing their carceral testimonies allowed these authors to reclaim their subjectivity, then they can no longer be considered subaltern in the sense of Spivak’s definition, wherein the subaltern subject is unable to represent herself and is thus “not seen as a representative consciousness” (1988, 275). Writing on precarious and un-grievable lives, which I explored in the previous chapter, Butler similarly asserts that the public sphere “is constituted in part by what cannot be said and what cannot be shown” and that it is the “limits of the sayable” that thus define subjectivity and which subjects “appear as viable actors” (2004, xvii). For a non-grievable life to thus become grievable, and for those faces and voices to be “admitted into public view [...] to be seen and heard”, then the limits of the sayable must be disrupted or reconfigured (Butler, 2004, xviii): in breaking with the silencing frame of the prison, carceral testimony aims for precisely this

kind of disruption, allowing prisoners to speak and to situate the prison experience “in the common ken” (Colvin, 2017, 449). In transcending the “inside/outside binary” (Turner, 2016, 28) between the prisoner and the outside world that I explored in my introductory chapter, the writer of carceral testimony is thus able to claim her subjectivity, her grievability, in the public forum created by the circulation of her testimony. In transmitting her narrative to an audience of readers, she is no longer truly a subaltern subject.

This reprinting and recirculation of Doña and Núñez Targa’s prison texts, in particular, has also allowed for their voices to be heard in new, previously un-publishable ways. The 2012 *horas y HORAS* edition of Doña’s *Desde la noche y la niebla* features a second epilogue in which the third-person narration of the previous edition is replaced by a first-person ‘I’ narrative, detailing the moment of Leonor/Doña’s release from prison: “fue en el momento de sentarme en el banco de sucia madera de aquella placita de Alcalá de Henares cuando todo mi cuerpo desentumeciéndose tomó conciencia de que era libre” (2012, 339). In the first person, Doña describes Leonor’s/her life after leaving the prison as well as the fates of her cellmates, of whom “alcanzamos la libertad seis de las once” (2012, 347). Drawing the third- and first-person narratives together, Doña refers back to comrades from the main body of her testimony, describing her meetings with Paquita, Mariana and Adela (2012, 342) and two funerals she attended with Berta and Carmela: in 1972, that of Dña. Justa, “nuestra directora de folklore regional en la prisión”, and that of Dolores Ibárruri in 1989 (2012, 347). Similarly, the most recent edition of Núñez Targa’s *Cárcel de Ventas*, published in 2016 under the title *El valor de la memoria: de la cárcel de Ventas al campo de Ravensbrück* alongside her text *Destinada al crematorio*, also includes an extensive bibliography of works published by Núñez Targa either anonymously or under one of various pseudonyms. Comprising some seventy works, the bibliography brings together a collection of texts written under the names “A.D”, “Andrea

Docaño”, “Anita Dámaso” and “María Rosa Codesido” (2016, 314-319), thus allowing them to be recognised as Núñez Targa’s own work after the need for self-censorship or clandestinity experienced at the time of their initial publication. Both of these second editions thus assert each woman’s “author-ity” (Pike, 2014, 92) over her own life and work, again allowing for the re-inscription into history “con sus nombres propios” (1978, 21) that Doña discusses in her introduction to the first edition of her text. In the face of the silence and authority of the prison, then, where the female prisoner is “deprived of any means of asserting her autonomy” (Gabriele, 1995, 98), resulting in a “dispossession of the self” (1983, 125), the publication of these texts with their proper attribution thus allows for the “transcendence of the prison experience” (Huling, 2002, xiii): the reclaiming of these anonymous or pseudonymous texts provides a means for the female prisoner to assert her own humanity and life experience, now recognised as her own, in the face of the “spirit-killing” experiences (Huling, 2002, xiii) of imprisonment, censorship and the denial of her subjectivity and personhood. Reading in the present-day, then, allows the reader to better understand Doña’s text as a personal testimony, with the weaving together of both the third- and first-person narratives allowing her voice to more clearly be identified with the voice of “Leonor”, and to recognise Núñez Targa’s essays as part of a larger body of writing, comprising a number of works on both her time in Ventas and her exile in France (2016, 314-319), thus ensuring not only that her experience will not be forgotten in its “breaking with female silence” (Gabriele, 1995, 99) enforced by the Franco regime but also that it will be remembered as, explicitly, her own experience, recorded in her own voice.

We must also note, however, that both texts were published posthumously, after Núñez Targa’s death in 1986 and Doña’s in 2003. Here, then, the question of whether this is a case of editors and publishers speaking over the voices of the authors themselves must again be raised. If, as

Karlene Faith has written in her study of women's organising inside the prison, the most important thing for the female prisoner is to be able to speak in her own voice (2000, 160), then we must question whether this posthumous changing of Doña's narrative or reclaiming of Núñez Targa's anonymised essays truly constitutes a means of 'speaking' for the subaltern female prisoner. Without the input of the women themselves, it could be argued that the publishing of these altered texts constitutes merely another rewriting of the female prison narrative by external actors. As I have explored above, prisoners are "rigorously and violently rewritten" (Gready, 1993, 492) by the imprisoning authority, whilst the prison narrative serves as a means of "self-empowerment" through which the prisoner may in turn "recreate, restore and make visible [her] sense of self and world" (Gready, 1993, 493). The reframing of this inherently personal narrative after the death of the prison writer, without her consent, may thus constitute a further silencing of her voice and a second violent rewriting of her experience — to return to Spivak, rather than speaking, the subaltern subject is here being spoken for (1988, 278). A further example of this rewriting of Republican women's prison experiences can be found in the English translations of Tomasa Cuevas's testimonial compilation, *Mujeres en las cárceles franquistas* (1982). In its first printing, Cuevas's text comprised a huge number of first-hand accounts of women's experiences in Franco's prisons, transcribed from personal interviews carried out by Cuevas herself. The original text was later extended and published for a second time in 1985 as a trilogy: *Cárcel de mujeres I and II*, and *Mujeres en la Resistencia*. In 1998, this trilogy was edited, curated and translated by Mary Giles, an American academic, and published under the title *Prison of Women*, and a further edition — this time in Spanish, though again edited by Giles in conjunction with Cuevas — was then published in 2005 as *Presas*. In her foreword to the English edition of the text, Giles notes that her task as she understood it was "to reshape [...] reduce [...] find coherence in [...] and select an appropriate number of representative testimonies for one book from the number" (1998, ix). To do so, she

chose to bring Cuevas's own story "sharply into the foreground", focussing her narrative solely on one testimony and "trimming away" the polyphonous element of the original text to feature instead only two or three other voices that serve to complement this more individual narrative, thus eliminating the perceived "redundancy" of these multiple voices (1998, x). I wish to draw a parallel here with the editing of both Doña and Núñez Targa's texts, as I argue that each example constitutes a re-writing of the prisoner narrative in such a way that it changes the meaning — and thus silences the voice — of the original text. Indeed, to return to my above discussion of the role of marketing and paratext in the production of life narratives, I argue that such editing serves to conform the individual narratives to one "master script", thus erasing the individual witness (Smith and Watson, 2010, 134). The posthumous reprintings of *Desde la noche y la niebla* and *Cárcel de Ventas*, then, inspire a similar politics of reading to Giles' *Prison of Women*: they serve to make the prison narrative "coherent" (Giles, 1998, ix), providing a satisfying ending wherein the author is finally able to publicly re-instate her own identity for a readership that both desires and demands this kind of closure (Whitlock, 2014, chap. 4 para. 6).

Conclusion

Each of the prison texts of Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid thus functions as a means through which the author is able to both denounce and write back against her subaltern position as a Republican female prisoner in Franco's Spain. Within the texts, the women of Ventas represent the multiple silencings of the gendered prison experience in various ways. The traumatic experience of imprisonment and torture — the "obliteration of the contents of consciousness", as Scarry writes (1985, 54) — is described as a means of silencing both current and former prisoners, who find themselves so traumatised they can no longer speak to their experiences, such as in Núñez Targa's *Cárcel de Ventas* and García Madrid's *Requiem por la*

libertad. The use of solitary confinement and punishment cells within the prison also serves to silence its inhabitants, isolating the imprisoned woman from her comrades and further removing her from her selfhood and subjectivity: in isolation, the prisoner is reduced to a single body as she is further removed from the political sphere. This depoliticization of female prisoners under Franco is further evidenced in each text's accounts of the false charges brought against the women of Ventas, as well as their acknowledgement that women were frequently denied 'political prisoner' status. The texts depict this homogenisation, demonisation and de-subjectification of the female prisoner as fundamental elements of the regime's "power of writing", within which the Franco dictatorship was able to engage its political prisoners in "a mass of documents that capture and fix them" (Foucault, 1977, 189) as subaltern subjects within the New State. I have argued here that this then constitutes an example of what Spivak has termed "epistemic violence" (1988, 280), wherein the Republican female prisoner is repeatedly silenced, spoken for and spoken over by the imprisoning authority in trials, sentencings, interrogations, legislation and prison rules (Gready, 1993, 492). However, I have also explored the multiple ways in which each author uses her text as a means to write back against this silencing of her voice, constituting what Gready has referred to as an "oppositional power of writing" (1993, 493). The act of writing carceral testimony, primarily, allows the prison writer to regain control over her own narrative and to "dispute the manner in which the experience of imprisonment is to be written and read" (Gready, 1993, 493). Through writing, the prisoner — the prison writer or, as is the case in Núñez Targa's narrative, any prisoner with access to a wall and a writing implement — is able to leave behind a record of her existence, thus providing her with a means of re-inscribing her own selfhood, breaking the silencing frame of her incarceration. As in Chapter Two, the body is also represented in each text as a site of resistance, illustrating the body's own power as a site of testimony when speech is impossible. Finally, Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid also use their prison texts to underwrite the

narrative of silence within the prison, framing the prisoner's decision to remain silent in certain situations as a means of reclaiming her own agency.

This understanding of each author's subaltern position at the time of writing her text also then informed my exploration of reading subaltern narratives. As I have detailed here, I argue that the publication of Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid's narratives of Ventas in the twentieth century constituted a form of "coming to voice" (Smith and Watson, 2010, 85) through carceral testimony, providing a platform from which each author was able to speak out against the dictatorship: as Doña writes in her introduction to *Desde la noche y la niebla*, the publication of her carceral testimony constituted a means through which she was able to "denunciar y poner al desnudo las iniquidades que las mujeres han sufrido" (1978, 20). Similarly, both Núñez Targa and García Madrid describe their texts as an act of speaking out against the "mezquinidad y barbarie" of the Franco regime (García Madrid, 1982, 12) and of bringing public attention to "aquella hora demencial de la posguerra vivida por las reclusas de Ventas" (Núñez Targa, 2016, 34). Finally, this chapter has also explored the politics of reading these prison narratives in a twenty-first century context, which I argue troubles our definition of the texts as subaltern. Owing in particular to the processes of editing, rewriting and reprinting that are necessary to the modern-day marketing of testimonial texts — which might be understood as a further form of speaking over the testimonial author — I do not argue that they have completely achieved "the subaltern's cultural and political movement into the hegemony" (Spivak, 1988, 283). However, through my examination of the *boom de la memoria* in Spain and the growing demand for testimonial narratives in today's marketplace, as well as the commodification of such narratives in the "memory marketplace" (Pine, 2020, 18), I have shown here that these narratives may no longer constitute what Sarah Colvin refers to as "unlistened-to stories" (2017, 440). As Carrasco de Miguel writes, the publication of these

prison texts allows their authors to claim for themselves “un nombre, un identidad [...] una historia propia” (2018, 370): able to represent herself through her carceral testimony, the Republican female prisoner may no longer be considered entirely subaltern.

CONCLUSION

Each of the prison narratives of Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid ends with its author's release from prison. Núñez Targa, writing of the day she left Ventas, describes the feeling of camaraderie and solidarity she felt upon leaving her comrades: "queridas hermanas, comprendo el mensaje de lucha y de esperanza que lanzáis con nuestra canción, la que se canta de pie en Ventas: no abandones jamás el combate, pase lo que pase, cueste lo que cueste; sé digna de todas las que has visto caer frente al enemigo" (2016, 119). Immediately after she is informed of her release, she describes how her thoughts turned "con rabia contenida" to those comrades who remain in the prison, and those who were executed during the two years she spent in Ventas: she remembers Rosita Ventura, "una mujer valiente y hermosa", whose death sentence was carried out two days before Núñez Targa's release and whose memory "está vivo en mí como una quemadura" (2016, 118). García Madrid ends her prison narrative in *Requiem por la libertad* with a similar reflection on her own freedom and the continued imprisonment of many of her comrades. Preparing for her return to Madrid after leaving the prison of Girona, she writes

Comenzó vestirse; despacio, pensativa; meditando sobre cuántas de las mujeres que allí quedaban, jóvenes o no, conocerían el día de su libertad y quiénes serían las que nunca vieran el sol ni respirasen más aire que el de aquél u otros pestilentes e infectos agujeros hasta sucumbir, agotado su aliento, en la empañada lucha contra tanta calamidad... Y cuántas caerían aún frente a los pelotones de fusilamiento ante la impasible mirada de mujeres como Carmen Castro, María Topete, María Teresa Igual [...] Levantó decididamente la cabeza y contempló el lejano horizonte. Era

preciso vivir: incluso por cuanto dejaba atrás... o tal vez, esencialmente, por ello,
¡Sobreviviría! (1982, 333).

Doña, similarly, ends her narrative by contrasting Leonor's new freedom, after twenty years of imprisonment, with the injustices faced by those women who remain in prisons across Spain. Leonor's release from the prison of Alcalá de Henares is related only in the epilogue, which comes directly after the account of a fellow prisoner, Regina Álvarez, who learns from a prison guard that both of her children have died in a fire at her mother's home. Recounting Regina's story, Doña ends the main body of her testimony with a reflection on the lives of imprisoned women: "estas penalidades les habían acompañado a través de todos estos años de encierros. En el camino se dejaron seres entrañables y quedaron como mutiladas; marido, hijos, padres, hermanos, amigos. Y ellas vieron pasar cada tragedia detrás de los muros de los penales, siempre esperando un nuevo dolor" (1978, 336). Even upon her release, then, the prison writer continues to act as a witness to others: her testimony, as Laub observes in the case of Holocaust narratives, is her means "of being, of surviving, of resisting" (1992, 62). As Núñez Targa writes in the final pages of *Cárcel de Ventas*, the role of these texts is to represent the invisible experiences of Republican female prisoners during the Franco dictatorship "que los de la calle lo sepan" (2016, 118). The final words of García Madrid's narrative also exemplify this sense of solidarity amongst the women of Ventas, and other prisons throughout the country, as she states that she feels it is her duty to survive "both despite and because of the numerous erasures, invisibilities, and destructions wrought on the Francoist female prisoner" (Pike, 2014, 300). The prison text itself, then, becomes a symbol that its author has indeed survived, signifying her own self-reconstruction in the face of this invisibility and, where her comrades have not survived, her narrative aims to ensure "que aquí sigan viviendo" (García Madrid, 1982, 11).

In this study, I have examined the carceral testimonies of the women of Ventas prison as a form of “resistance literature” (Harlow, 1987, 2) that provides each author with a platform from which to speak out against the Franco regime and the realities of women’s imprisonment in Spain’s postwar period. Examining these texts through a testimonial lens in this way has allowed me to consider the way that each author uses her text to tell us, as Assmann writes in her study of testimony, “what it felt like to be in the centre” of such an experience and to provide “personal views from within” (2006, 263): in this study, Assmann’s proposal, that testimony offers a view from the inside of an event, has taken on something of a double meaning, as each text also offers a view from inside the prison walls. From this testimonial perspective, I have argued in this study that the prison texts of Doña, Núñez Targa and García Madrid are useful to us not only as historical documents, but as life narratives that serve to re-constitute the past in the present (Tozzi, 2012, 5), thus allowing them to stand as part of a re-inscription into history as participants in “the collective job of creating and shaping representations of what has happened” (Tozzi, 2012, 16). In particular, I have shown that these carceral testimonies speak to a particularly gendered experience of imprisonment, wherein the prison writer uses her narrative as means through which to construct her own selfhood and femininity in the face of the Franco regime’s prescriptive, religious gender ideology. I would like to close this thesis, then, in highlighting the significance of these texts today in the twenty-first century. As is evidenced by the emergence of the ‘generation of grandchildren’ in Spain, the memory of the Civil War and the *posguerra* period is approaching what Assmann refers to as the “shadow line”: that point in time wherein an event passes from “contemporary history” to “remote history” (2006, 271). Furthermore, the rise of political parties in Spain such as the right-wing Vox, whose official election platform included a return to the dichotomous view of the right-wing “España Viva” and the left-wing “AntiEspaña” (El País, 2019a), has led to new debates over the memory of Francoism and the victims of the dictatorship: in a televised

interview on news channel RTVE, Vox secretary-general Javier Ortega Smith claimed that Spanish historians and politicians since the transition period had been engaged in “una operación de humo” that aimed to rewrite the country’s history from an imbalanced left-wing perspective. Speaking on the topic of the memory of Francoism, Ortega Smith declared that the *trece rosas*, rather than victims of the fascist dictatorship, in fact “cometieron crímenes brutales [...] lo que hacían era torturar, violar y asesinar vilmente” (RTVE, 2019). As noted by El País, even the Franco regime’s fabricated charges against the *trece rosas* did not include any reference to such violence committed by the thirteen minors (El País, 2019b). In the same interview, Ortega Smith also claimed that the memorialisation of the victims of Francoism was based on historical lies, as well as refusing to condemn the dictatorship (RTVE, 2019). In this context, then, the carceral testimonies of Franco’s female prisoners offer a form of what Assmann refers to as a “powerful veto” (2006, 271): the existence of testimony as “an action in the present” (Tozzi, 2012, 3) thus allows for the creation of transgenerational memory through its interpellation of the reader into the chain of witnesses it creates.

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