

DIARIES, LETTERS AND REFLECTIONS:
LIFE-WRITING IN
CARMEN MARTÍN GAITE'S
CUADERNOS DE TODO
AND
HER NOVELS OF THE 1990s

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I, Maria-José Blanco confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the various kinds of material (including diary-style writing, impressions of people and places, and notes on work in progress) collected in Carmen Martín Gaité's *Cuadernos de todo* and subsequently considers the significance of diaries, letters, and life-writing in her novels of the 1990s.

After observations on the importance of diaries and letters in women's literature, there is an assessment of such narrative material in the contemporary novel and references to how Foucault's essay on 'self-writing' serves to channel the ideas of the self-reflective capacities of letters and diaries. There follows an examination of *Cuadernos de todo*, with particular reference to the use of diaries and letters in Martín Gaité's work, their relationship to the 'writing-cure'.

The section dedicated to *Cuadernos de todo* opens with an analysis of the first *cuadernos* (which were written in the 1960s) as notebooks used by the author as a site for her reflections on society and other matters, themes which are developed in her later novels. Next, there is a discussion of how Martín Gaité used these *cuadernos* as a writer's notebooks, for developing ideas on her novels and essays, showing the close link between the authors 'diaries' and her work, between life and literature. The *cuadernos americanos* constitute the last part of the assessment of *Cuadernos de todo*. Written during different periods the author spent on lecture-tours and as a university teacher in the United States, these *cuadernos americanos* are particularly significant for her development as a novelist. They reveal a new approach to diary-writing as, free from the family and the social commitments she had in Spain, the author found more time for reflection. The last of the *cuadernos americanos* is also a clear example of the use of diary writing as therapy, of the 'writing-cure'.

The final part of the thesis focuses on Martín Gaité's four novels of the 1990s – in which the use of diaries, letters, and life-writing is especially significant. Here the theories of Donald Winnicott and Nancy Chodorow on child development and motherhood, themes which run throughout Martín Gaité's writing, are discussed to shed additional light on the author's approach to life-writing and fiction.

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INTRODUCTION

Carmen Martín Gaité (1925-2000) was, in the second half of the twentieth-century, a prolific author who cultivated many different literary genres, starting in 1947 with the publication of her first poem, ‘La barca nevada’, and then her first short story, ‘Desde el umbral’, published in 1948 in *Trabajos y días* when she was a student at the University of Salamanca.¹ She was subsequently identified as one of the group of writers known as the ‘Generación del Mediosiglo’ or ‘Generación del 50’. She worked continuously until her death in 2000, and her unfinished novel *Los parentescos* was published in 2001.

Like many other fiction writers of her generation, Martín Gaité began as a short-story writer, publishing her first collection, *Las ataduras*, in 1960 and *Cuentos completos* in 1978. *El balneario*, her first short novel, winner of the the Premio Café Gijón 1954, and published in 1955, can be seen as a literary bridge between her short stories and her novels. Martín Gaité published her first novel, *Entre visillos*, in 1957. It won the Premio Nadal and was followed by *Ritmo lento* in 1963, a finalist in the Biblioteca Breve de Narrativa competition of 1962. She published nine full-length novels in total, two novellas, *El balneario* and *Caperucita en Manhattan* (1990), as well as some fiction for children. Her novelistic career was marked by a number of periods of ‘silence’ which allow us to divide her output into three main phases: the 1950s and 1960s, with the publication of the first two novels; the 1970s, with the appearance of *Retahílas* (1974), *Fragmentos de interior* (1976), and *El cuarto de atrás* (1978), which

¹ In the Biblioteca Virtual Cervantes, it is now possible to read her first short stories and poems published in *Trabajos y días* (Salamanca 1946-51): ‘Desde el umbral’ (1948) and ‘Historia de un mendigo’ (1950), and the poems ‘La barca nevada’ (1947), ‘En mi vejez’ (1949) and ‘Destello’ (1949).

won the Premio Nacional de Literatura; and the 1990s, which saw the publication of her last novels, *Nubosidad variable* (1992), *La Reina de las Nieves* (1994), *Lo raro es vivir* (1996) and *Irse de casa* (1998). Although *El cuarto de atrás* is a novel which took the author in a new direction in her career, the death of her parents in 1978, especially her mother's,² and most importantly the death of her daughter in 1985, meant that she did not published another novel until the 1990s, although she continued publishing other work. During those years and until the publication of *Nubosidad variable* in 1992, the author took refuge in children's literature and focussed her energies on finishing some of the work she had been preparing for years, publishing books such as *El cuento de nunca acabar* in 1983 or *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* in 1987.

During these periods of 'silence', Martín Gaité never stopped researching and writing. In the 1960s she started her research on historical and cultural material, stating in 1971 that she needed to escape from fiction: 'Todas las historias de ficción que leía o intentaba escribir me parecían repetidas, me aburrían.'³ Her investigation into Don Melchor de Macanaz (1670-1760) started in 1962, after she had written *Ritmo lento*, and culminated in the publication of *El proceso de Macanaz: Historia de un empapelamiento* in 1970. Subsequently, and encouraged by her investigation into Macanaz's biography and the world in which he lived, Martín Gaité published a volume of cultural history, *Usos amorosos del dieciocho en España*, in 1972.

The author also published many articles in newspapers and magazines, as well as working as a literary critic for *Diario 16* from 1976 until 1980, compiling some of these articles in collections such as *La búsqueda de interlocutor y otras búsquedas* (1973) and *Agua pasada* (1993). In addition, Martín Gaité published monographs such as *El cuento de nunca acabar*, *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*, *Desde la ventana: Enfoque femenino de la literatura española* (1987) and *Esperando el porvenir: Homenaje a Ignacio Aldecoa* (1994).

The 1980s saw the publication of a number of children's stories: *El castillo de las tres murallas* (1981), *El pastel del diablo* (1985) and *Caperucita en Manhattan* (1990). Her volumes of poetry include *A rachas* (1976) and *Todo es cuento roto en Nueva York* (1986), and among her theatrical works are *A palo seco (Monólogo en un acto)* (1986) and *La hermana pequeña* (1999). The author also collaborated in the

² As she stated in 1980: 'Mi madre murió en diciembre de 1978 [...]. Y desde entonces he andado con los rumbos un poco perdidos, aunque parece que ya los voy recobrando', 'Bosquejo autobiográfico', in *Agua pasada* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1993), p. 31.

³ *La búsqueda de interlocutor y otras búsquedas* (Barcelona: Destino, 1982), p. 59.

writing of scripts for films and television series. Some were based on her short stories, such as, *Emilia, parada y fonda* (1976), based on ‘Un alto en el camino’ (1958), or *La conciencia tranquila* (1956) (never filmed), based on the short story of the same name. Other scripts were for television series such as *Teresa de Jesús* (1983) and *Celia* (1993). She also wrote the script for one episode, *Salamanca*, for the series *Esta es mi tierra* (1983). Furthermore, Martín Gaité worked as a translator, translating work from the Portuguese, Italian, French and English.

Finally, Martín Gaité possessed another artistic talent: she enjoyed drawing and creating collages. This material was included in some of her other work, for example the illustrations for *Caperucita en Manhattan* or the collages which appeared on the covers of some of her novels or monographs.

In the last thirty years Carmen Martín Gaité’s work has been amply studied. Since 1980, when the author travelled to the United States as an invited writer at Barnard College, New York City, a number of monographs on her work have been published. *From Fiction to Metafiction: Essays in Honor of Carmen Martín Gaité* (1983), edited by Mirella Servodidio and Marcia L. Welles, was the first, with a total of fifteen articles, five of them on *El cuarto de atrás* and others on her early work, as well as an interview with the author and an essay written by Martín Gaité especially for the volume, ‘Retahíla con nieve en Nueva York’.⁴ This was followed by Joan Lipman Brown’s *Secrets from the Back Room: The Fiction of Carmen Martín Gaité* (1987), also planned, as stated in *Cuadernos de todo*, during her stay in New York. For this volume Martín Gaité wrote an autobiographical text, ‘Un bosquejo autobiográfico’.⁵

Spain followed suit after the American recognition. Although Martín Gaité’s work had been recognised through the award of literary prizes (Premio Café Gijón in 1954, Premio Nadal in 1957 and Premio Nacional de Literatura in 1978),⁶ as well as through articles in literary journals and chapters in books (in some cases she was the

⁴ For a detailed study of the critical work on Martín Gaité up to 1998, see Carlos Uxó, ‘Revisión crítica de los estudios sobre su obra’, where the critic looks at the books and articles on the author published between 1977 and 1998, <http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/cmgaite/c_uxo1.htm>

⁵ Elsewhere, the author comments on her reception in America: ‘He estado en América muchas veces, pero he escrito poco de América, porque creo que para hablar de las cosas tienes que haber alcanzado la sabiduría que da el contacto cotidiano. En América, empezando con la labor crítica de la prof. Joan Lipman Brown, se me ha estudiado mucho. El texto *From Fiction to Metafiction* [...], con los trabajos de R. Gullón y de G. Sobejano, entre otros, representó el inicio, de España, de una valoración diferente de Carmen Martín Gaité’, in Emma Martinell, ‘Entrevista con Carmen Martín Gaité’, <www.ucm.es/info/especulo/cmgaite/entr_cmg.htm>

⁶ Later, Martín Gaité received the Premio Anagrama de Ensayos (1987), the Premio Príncipe de Asturias (1988) and the Premio Nacional de las Letras in 1994, as well as a number of other awards.

only woman represented in a collection),⁷ it was not until 1990 that the first book dedicated to her work was published in Spain. Carmen Alemany Bay's *La novelística de Carmen Martín Gaité* contains a short biographical sketch as well as an analysis of the author's short stories, poetry, essays, and her first five novels, with a particularly detailed study of *Entre visillos*. This monograph was followed by Pilar de la Puente Samaniego's *La narrativa breve de Carmen Martín Gaité* (1994), which was the first book to look exclusively at her short stories. It also included, in the opening chapter, an extensive study of Martín Gaité's generational context and Spanish postwar narrative. In 2000 María de los Angeles Lluch Villalba's *Los cuentos de Carmen Martín Gaité: Temas y técnicas de una escritora de los años cincuenta* appeared. This work examined the short stories, undertaking a detailed study of the structure, narrative voice, time, space, characters and style of each of these, but also included an essay on the author's response to, and development during, the postwar period.

There have also been a number of books edited by Emma Martinell Gifre, some consisting of anthologies of the author's work, others based on conferences in her honour. *Hilo a la cometa: La visión, la memoria y el sueño* (1995), an anthology of Martín Gaité texts, studies the themes suggested in the title, dividing them into subthemes such as 'El escenario exterior', 'El escenario interior', 'El estancamiento de lo cotidiano', 'La presencia del otro, el resurgir de la memoria' or 'La frontera entre lo vivido y lo soñado'. This work presents fragments from the author's texts and comments from the editor on the different themes. Another of Martinell Gifre's works on the author is *El mundo de los objetos en la obra de Carmen Martín Gaité* (1996), which deals, as the title indicates, with many of the objects (houses, windows, curtains, rooms, mirrors, furniture, clocks, shoes, bags, newspapers, notebooks, and so on) found in the author's work. Martinell Gifre analyses the role these objects play in the author's narratives. This critic also co-ordinated two volumes of essays of homage to the author: *Carmen Martín Gaité* (1993), based on a conference, 'La Semana de Autor', which took place in Buenos Aires in October 1990, and where Martinell Gifre accompanied the author. This work brings together the transcription of the papers and the discussions that took place during the conference. This was followed by a conference on the occasion of the award of the Premio Nacional de Letras Españolas in 1994 and which resulted in the publication of *Al encuentro de Carmen Martín Gaité: Homenajes y bibliografía* (1997).

⁷ See for example, Juan Paredes Núñez, *5 Narradores de posguerra* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1987).

This compilation, presented and introduced by Martinell Gifre consists of a series of talks and a round table, with participants such as Josefina Aldecoa, Belén Copegui, José Luis Borau, Maria Vittoria Calvi and Jorge Herralde. It also includes the transcription of two talks by the author, ‘La mirada ajena’ and ‘La edad de merecer’.

In the 1990s new perspectives on Martín Gaité’s work began to be developed. Mercedes Carbayo Abengózar’s *Buscando un lugar entre mujeres: Buceo en la España de Carmen Martín Gaité* (1998) studies Martín Gaité’s work from a feminist perspective up to *Lo raro es vivir* (1996), including her non-fiction work. Adrián M. García’s *Silence in the Novels of Carmen Martín Gaité* (2000) examines three novels, *Retahílas*, *El cuarto de atrás* and *Nubosidad variable*, analysing the idea of ‘silences’ as a narrative strategy in these three novels. In addition, the e-journal *Espéculo* presented a monographic edition (web-page) in 1998, co-ordinated by Martinell Gifre, containing a number of articles on Martín Gaité’s work, including studies on the reception of the author’s writing in France, Germany, Italy and the United States. This e-journal continued adding new articles to the 1998 Martín Gaité special edition until 2003, with a section in 2000 which contained a list of newspaper articles, letters to the directors of *La Vanguardia* and *ABC*, and opinions of Martín Gaité’s collaborators in the wake of the author’s death.

Martín Gaité’s work has, therefore, been studied from many different perspectives. There have been assessments involving feminist and psychoanalytical theories. Metafictional and autobiographical aspects of Martín Gaité’s work have been published, as well as considerations of her as a Realist and Postmodern writer. She has been compared to authors such as, Doris Lessing,⁸ Miguel de Unamuno and Jorge Semprún,⁹ and Juan Goytisolo.¹⁰

Martín Gaité died on 23 July 2000. Since her death there has been an uninterrupted publication of her manuscripts, starting with her unfinished novel *Los parentescos* in 2001. In the same year Plaza & Janés published a collection of Martín Gaité’s poems, *Poemas*, which includes a CD of the author reading the poetry. This was followed by her *Cuadernos de todo* (2002). The latter work contains the author’s notebooks or diaries, written from 1961 until her death and which will be examined in

⁸ See Linda Chown, *Narrative Authority and Homeostasis in the Novels of Doris Lessing and Carmen Martín Gaité* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990).

⁹ See Liliana Soto Fernández, *La autobiografía ficticia en Miguel de Unamuno, Carmen Martín Gaité y Jorge Semprún* (Madrid: Editorial Pliegos, 1996).

¹⁰ See Doris Gruber, *Literarische Konstruktion und geschlechtliche Figuration: Das Erzählwerk Carmen Martín Gaités und Juan Goytisolos im Kontext des Frakismus* (Berlin: Edition Tranvía, 2003).

this thesis. In 2005, *Visión de Nueva York*, another of Martín Gaité's notebooks was published, revealing a more graphically creative side to the author. This particular notebook is, in effect, a scrapbook she composed during her first long stay in New York and which started as a 'cuaderno de recortes de prensa, esmaltado de vez en cuando con algún comentario'.¹¹ It ended up as a book of collages in which the author pasted show tickets, hotel bills, photos, theatre programmes, and so on. *Visión de Nueva York* and *Cuadernos de todo* reveal a more intimate side to the author, as in these notebooks can be found her moments of despair as well as, on the other hand, her happiness and excitement when struck with a new idea for a book.

In 2007 Martín Gaité's manuscript *El libro de la fiebre* (written in 1949) was published.¹² This book is fundamental to an understanding of her development as a writer. In this first-person narrative she describes her weeks of illness (forty-eight days with typhoid fever, which at that time was life-threatening, as she explains in her 'Bosquejo autobiográfico'). In this work Martín Gaité writes of the dreams and hallucinations she suffered and, in the third part, she looks back at those days she spent in bed, reflecting on the book she was writing and the way to finish the story, which, in fact, she never accomplished. This is the only work in which the author clearly identifies herself as the protagonist of her narration, and thereby anticipates some of the characteristics of what was going to be her most famous novel, *El cuarto de atrás*. *El libro de la fiebre* was not published at the time, largely on account of the negative remarks of Martín Gaité's then boyfriend, Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio. The author comments in 'Bosquejo autobiográfico': 'Estaba muy entusiasmada y me parecía muy bonito, pero Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, a quien se lo enseñé pocos meses después, cuando lo volví a ver en Madrid, me dijo que no valía nada, que resultaba vago y caótico' (*Agua pasada*, 19).

As well as these posthumous publications, two volumes with the author's talks and articles have been published. *Pido la palabra*, a collection of twenty-five of the talks Martín Gaité gave and which had not been published in *Agua Pasada*, was published in 2002.¹³ *Tirando del hilo (Artículos 1949-2000)*, published in 2005,

¹¹ *Visión de Nueva York* (Madrid: Siruela/Círculo de Lectores, 2005), [p. 21]. The pages of the collages are not numbered. However, the logical number of each page will be indicated in square brackets.

¹² This work never appeared during the author's lifetime, except for a couple of fragments published in *Alcalá: Revista Universitaria Española* on 25 January 1952.

¹³ Some of the talks in *Pido la palabra*, as well as the ones that constitute *Desde la ventana* and *Esperando el porvenir*, which Martín Gaité gave in the Fundación Juan March, have been made publicly available and can be found on the Fundación's website: <<http://www.march.es/conferencias/anteriores>>

recovered 192 of her articles written between 1949 and 2000 – from the first article, ‘Vuestra prisa’, written when the author was twenty-four years old, to ‘De Furtivos a Leo’, her last article published in May 2000.

The publication of Martín Gaité’s *Obras completas* began in 2008. The first volume contains her novels from *Entre visillos* to *El cuarto de atrás* and includes an unpublished manuscript, *La charca* (1955). This manuscript contains the first notes for *Entre visillos*, presenting a number of characters who would appear in the published novel, such as Pablo Klein, Goyita, Julia, Mercedes and Elvira. But there is an important absence, Natalia (in *La charca*, María is the name of the youngest sister of Julia and Mercedes and is only briefly referred to in the narrative).

In the same way that the early poems and short stories published in *Trabajos y días*, disclose the beginnings of Martín Gaité’s literary career, both *La charca* and *El libro de la fiebre* reveal her first ventures into the novel, the first phase of the author’s period of learning. As the editor of the *Obras completas*, José Teruel, comments in the presentation of the work, these are ‘un testimonio de primera mano de la vacilante etapa de aprendizaje que supuso su paso del cuento a la entrada en la novela’.¹⁴ The following years will see the publication of a total of six volumes of the complete works, with new manuscripts being published.

Critics have also been very busy since her death. Some published the dissertations and theses they had been working on during her life-time. Lissette Rolón Collazo’s *Figuraciones: Mujeres en Carmen Martín Gaité, revistas femeninas y ¡Hola!* (2002), looks at the representation of women in the feminine press and in Martín Gaité’s work. In addition, José Jurado Morales has published two monographs: *Del testimonio al intimismo: Los cuentos de Carmen Martín Gaité* (2001) (a reworking of his Master’s dissertation on Martín Gaité’s short stories) and *La trayectoria narrativa de Carmen Martín Gaité (1925-2000)*, published in 2003. This book undertakes a thorough analysis of Martín Gaité’s novels (including the posthumous novel *Los parentescos*), dividing her work into three periods: The Postwar, Transition, and Democracy. Here the critic examines each novel in terms of historical background, the readers’ perspective and the literary context.¹⁵

¹⁴ Cited in ‘Martín Gaité total: Presentado en Madrid el primer volumen de las obras completas de la escritora, fallecida en 2000’, ELPAÍS.com, 2 June 2008,

<http://www.elpais.com/articulo/cultura/Martin/Gaité/total/elpepucul/20080602elpepucul_6/Tes>

¹⁵ Other countries have also seen the publication of monographs based on doctoral theses on the author’s work. For example, in France, Anne Paoli published *Personnages en quête de leur identité dans l’oeuvre*

Others published works in honour of the author after her death. Biruté Cipliauskaitė published in 2000 *Carmen Martín Gaité (1925-2000)*, a study which offers a very personal view of the author and constitutes an individual homage to the writer. Drawing on her extensive knowledge of contemporary Spanish literature, Cipliauskaitė looks at Martín Gaité's work through the author's biography, whilst also comparing her fiction with that of contemporary writers and examining influences, such as that of Unamuno, on her narrative output. Also, after Martín Gaité's death two volumes of essays were compiled: *Carmen Martín Gaité: Cuento de nunca acabar/ Never-ending Story* edited by Katleen Glenn and Lissette Rolón Collazo was published in 2003, bringing together fourteen articles in English and Spanish. These were by critics such as Ángeles Encinar, Janet Pérez, Antonio Sobejano-Morán, María Elena Solino and Patrick Paul Garlinger. As well as her full-length narratives, these articles deal with the author's short stories, children's fiction and cultural studies. There is also a section titled 'Homenajes', in which friends and fellow writers, Soledad Puértolas, Rosa Montero and Belén Copegui, honour the author.

In Spain, Alicia Redondo Goicoechea co-ordinated a collection of seventeen articles in Spanish, titled *Carmen Martín Gaité (2004)*, with critical essays by, among others Mercedes Carbayo Abengózar, Emma Martinell Gifre, José Jurado Morales, Iñaki Torre Fica and Ignacio Soldevila, covering the author's novels from *Entre visillos* to *Los parentescos*, as well as her short stories, poems, essays, and children's stories. The volume includes an update of Carlos Uxó's 1998 bibliographical study, entitled 'Five years of studies on Carmen Martín Gaité 1998-2002'.

María José Casorran Marín published *Estudio crítico de 'El cuarto de atrás'* in 2006, written with secondary-school students in mind, but also helpful to anybody studying that novel. Two books by David González Couso, *Los perfiles gallegos de Carmen Martín Gaité* and *Una propuesta de lectura para 'Caperucita en Manhattan'* were published in 2008. This latter book is a reader's guide to *Caperucita en Manhattan*, again aimed at secondary-school students. It looks at the biographical context of the work and is divided into an examination of the different narrative

romanesque de Carmen Martín Gaité (2000). This work focuses on Martín Gaité's novels from *Entre visillos* to *La Reina de las Nieves* and her characters' search for identity. In Italy, Maria Vittoria Calvi published *Dialogo e conversazione nella narrativa di Carmen Martín Gaité* (1990). In Germany, Annette Paatz published *Vom Fenster aus gesehen? Perspektiven weiblicher Differenz im Erzählwerk von Carmen Martín Gaité* (1994), an extract of which was published in Spanish in *Especulo* as 'Perspectivas de diferencia femenina en la obra literaria de Carmen Martín Gaité', <http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/cmgaite/a_paatz1.htm>

components: narrator, space, time and characters. *Los perfiles gallegos de Carmen Martín Gaité* offers a study of *Las ataduras* (1959) and *El pastel del diablo* (1985), and the link with San Lorenzo de Piñor, a village in the province of Ourense, Galicia, where Martín Gaité spent her childhood holidays.

Nuria Cruz-Cámara's *El laberinto intertextual de CMG: Un estudio de sus novelas de los noventa* was published in 2008. Here the critic brings together five articles she had published in different journals along with two new articles on *Nubosidad variable* and *Irse de casa*. Cruz-Cámara studies different levels of intertextuality in the 1990s novels, looking at romance, quest romance, *novela rosa* and psychoanalysis, for example. *A Companion to Carmen Martín Gaité*, by Catherine O'Leary and Alison Ribeiro de Menezes, appeared in 2009. It is a critical companion with chapters divided by works (there is chapter for each of the nine novels, and one on each of the following: Short Stories, Essays and Historical Writing, *El cuento de nunca acabar*, Theatre and Poetry, and Children's Literature and *Los parentescos*). However, it does not address recent publications such as *El libro de la fiebre* or the notebooks.

Two volumes, which were planned for 2009 publication, are *Approaches to Teaching the Works of Carmen Martín Gaité*, edited by Joan Lipman Brown, and *Beyond the Back Room: New Perspectives on Carmen Martín Gaité*, edited by Marian Womack and Jennifer Wood. The latter is a volume which will explore Martín Gaité's work according to the following different headings: Visual, Space, Fairytale, The Fantastic, The Art of Writing, and Cinema.

Apart from these book-length studies, many articles have also been published in the last three decades, most of them looking at the author's late fiction. In addition there have been special journal issues dedicated to the author. For example, in 2002 *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* presented a special issue introduced by Patrick Paul Garlinger, titled 'Diálogo crítico sobre Carmen Martín Gaité', which included five articles by Garlinger, José Jurado Morales, Andrew Bush, Alicia Andrew and Stephanie Sieburth, all dealing with different aspects of her narrative. *Revista Turia* published in 2007 a monograph with articles written by Martín Gaité's manuscript editors, Maria Vittoria Calvi and José Teruel, as well as contributions from friends and colleagues such as José Luis Borau, recalling their stay in New York at the time when John Lennon was killed, or Maricruz Seoane, who writes of the times she spent with Martín Gaité in libraries and archives. This issue also includes an interview with Ana María Martín Gaité. In addition, *Género y géneros: Escritura y escritoras iberoamericanas* (2006), the

proceedings of a conference held in Madrid in May 2004, includes a section on Martín Gaité, with three articles dedicated to the author's work.

Even though *Cuadernos de todo* appeared in 2002, one aspect of Martín Gaité's output that has still not been sufficiently studied, and with the notebooks becomes an easier task, is the examination of the author's work in the context of her own biography.¹⁶ Here I refer not simply to the details of Martín Gaité's biography (although in some cases these will be of value), but to aspects of her personality, her views, her creative activities and how she deals with difficult and traumatic times in her life. In many of her novels there are characters who go through experiences similar to her own: separation from a husband, the break up of relations with childhood friends, the difficulties of managing roles as a mother, a daughter and a writer, or responding to the death of loved ones. These characters often reflect the way the author thinks, her reactions, her peculiarities, her hobbies, while, at the same time, they can serve the author as mirrors that reflect herself and also allow her to go deeper into herself. As Calvi indicates, her work and her biography were always closely connected:

El marcado tono intimista de sus escritos, incluidas sus novelas, invita a una lectura autobiográfica de su obra; la autora siempre ha sido consciente de ello, y ha dejado entreabierto la puerta de acceso a su interioridad o, mejor dicho, ha dejado traslucir la imagen de su interioridad que ha querido construir a través de su obra.¹⁷

Intimate and auto-reflective narrative and the idea of the writing-cure, 'writing [...] used as a therapeutic tool',¹⁸ is what is most relevant in my study. As Calvi indicates, Martín Gaité's novels allow the reader access to an image of the author's interior, of her intimate life, or at least the image that she decided to construct of herself.

¹⁶ Critics such as Maria Vittoria Calvi and José Teruel, thanks to their work as editors of the author's manuscripts, have started looking at her literary work from a more intimate, biographical perspective: see introduction to *El libro de la fiebre* (2007) by Calvi, or her article, 'El autobiografismo dialógico de Carmen Martín Gaité', in *Turia: Revista Cultural*, 83 (2007), 223-35. The notes by José Teruel to *Tirando del hilo* (2006), and his introduction to *Carmen Martín Gaité: Obras completas*, I (Madrid: Galaxia Gutenberg/Círculo de Lectores, 2008), are also important. Another example of the biographical approach to Martín Gaité's narrative is Teruel's article on *Caperucita en Manhattan*: 'Un contexto biográfico para *Caperucita en Manhattan* de Carmen Martín Gaité', in Ángeles Encinar, Eva Löfquist and Carmen Valcárcel, eds., *Género y géneros II: Escritura y escritoras iberoamericanas* (Madrid: Servicio de Publicaciones de la UAM, 2006), 143-51.

¹⁷ Calvi, 'El autobiografismo dialógico', pp. 223-24.

¹⁸ Stephen J. Lepore and Joshua M. Smith, eds., 'The Writing Cure: An Overview', in *The Writing Cure: How expressive Writing Promotes Health and Emotional Well-Being* (Baltimore, MD: United Books, 2002) 3-14 (p. 3).

This thesis will focus on letters and diaries as well as on other forms of life-writing, as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson explain it: ‘We understand *life writing* as a general term for writing of diverse kinds that takes a life as its subject. Such writing can be biographical, novelistic, historical, or an explicit self-reference to the writer.’¹⁹ The use of a very plain language borrowed from the streets, and themes which many of her readers could identify with, made Martín Gaité’s novels of the 1990s popular with the reading-public. This may be due to the fact that, as Smith and Watson explain in their introduction to *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, ‘women reading other women’s autobiographical writings have experienced them as “mirrors” of their own unvoiced aspirations’.²⁰ In her novels Martín Gaité writes about themes which concern herself and the things she feels closest to. Themes such as the role of women in Spanish society, motherhood, and especially the theme of the family, come up again and again in her *Cuadernos de todo* and are developed in her later novels. As she states in her notebooks: ‘Todo lo que somos las mujeres está relacionado con la familia. Por eso escribimos preferentemente de familia’.²¹ Indeed, the author’s relationships with her parents and with her daughter are present throughout the *Cuadernos de todo*. And certainly family relationships, as well as the use of letters and diaries, are particularly significant in *Nubosidad variable* (1992), where two friends recover their past and take control of their lives through their writing. With the publication of *Cuadernos de todo* it is possible to see how many of the themes dealt with in *Nubosidad variable* are linked to material in the *Cuadernos*. Indeed, her 1990s novels maintain a great affinity to the content of *Cuadernos de todo*, her diaries which she started writing the day of her thirty-sixth birthday.

To enable the analysis of life-writing in Martín Gaité’s work: her diaries or *Cuadernos de todo* as well as her novels of the 1990s, it is necessary to look at life-writing and self-writing as self-examination tools. Michel Foucault’s study on ‘Self-writing’ will guide the discussion on diaries and letters and the way these forms of life-writing encourage self-reflection and self-examination. Studies on the intimate diary and the diary novel by theorists and critics such as Béatrice Didier, Alain Girard and H. Porter Abbot will also help to show the way these intimate, first-person narrations are

¹⁹ *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 3.

²⁰ *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), p. 5.

²¹ Cited in ‘El Cuaderno de todo de Carmen Martín Gaité’, *El cultural.es*, 5 December 2001, <http://www.elcultural.es/version_papel/LETRAS/3674/El_Cuaderno_de_todo_de_Carmen_Martin_Gait_e/>

used by Martín Gaité and some of her characters. The idea of the writing-cure is also going to be developed. Writing as a therapeutic tool in moments of despair is one of the main ideas I will examine in this thesis. Martín Gaité's characters of the 1990s novels take pen and paper to recover their past. The way they do this is by going back to their childhood and adolescence, remembering thoughts and experiences they have buried in the past.

This thesis will examine a number of aspects of the *Cuadernos* which have never been studied. First of all, the *Cuadernos* will be analysed as the place in which personal reflection, thoughts and ideas are developed. Attention will also be drawn to the social criticism found in its pages as well as its use as a site for dialogue with other writers Martín Gaité had read. These aspects of the *Cuadernos* link with the 1990s novels in the self-reflective aspect of life-writing together with the ideas on society and the strong intertextuality found in her later work. Consideration will also be given to the notebooks as tools for a writer's work, the place to note ideas for new projects, looking at the close relationship between life and literature in Martín Gaité's work. Finally, there will be a discussion of the *cuadernos americanos*, the notebooks the author wrote during the periods she spent in America as an invited writer, which reveal very much a diarist's approach to the *Cuadernos*, concluding with the idea of the *Cuadernos* as a *tabla de salvación* (writing-cure) for the author in moments of difficulty.

The years during which the author kept her *cuadernos* were years when her roles as a mother, wife, and writer, were inseparable. In fact, from the first notebook it is possible to see the relationship with her daughter and, as José Carlos Mainer indicates, she was one of her main interlocutors:

Su hija, Marta Sánchez Martín, que había vivido con ella trances amargos y con la que mantuvo una relación no siempre fácil, pero que vino a suponer en su obra la presencia y el estímulo de una sensibilidad más joven, una *interlocución* que fue trascendental [...] en la evolución temática de la escritora.²²

Indeed, it was her daughter who gave the author her first *cuaderno de todo* as a birthday present. Marta lived with her mother until her death in 1985 and she was her mother's sole companion after Martín Gaité's separation from Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio in 1970. During the first months after Marta's death the author thought she would never find a

²² José-Carlos Mainer, 'Carmen Martín Gaité o la búsqueda del lector', *Turia: Revista Cultural*, 83 (2007), 189-202 (p. 192), and in 'Las primeras novelas de Carmen Martín Gaité', prologue to *Obras completas*, I, p. 56.

reason to live. Her sister Ana María stated that Martín Gaité felt that everything was finished: ‘Se acabó la historia ésa de la fantasía y de la imaginación. Se ha roto todo.’²³ However, after six months spent in America the author came back with two projects which rescued her from the complete despair she had felt before her journey. These projects resulted in the publication of *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* and *Caperucita en Manhattan*. As José Teruel observes in ‘Un contexto biográfico para *Caperucita en Manhattan*’:

Estas maletas [con las que viajó la autora a los Estados Unidos] contenían todas las fichas sobre los *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* y sus apuntes sobre el cuento español contemporáneo para las clases de Vassar College (origen de lo que será *Esperando el porvenir*). En esas maletas estaban los únicos rastros de continuidad que Carmen Martín Gaité necesitaba y deseaba seguir manteniendo con el paso del tiempo: su escritura. Y en ese apartamento de la calle 51 [...], como en ese paseo matutino, alrededor de Liberty Island, ya se comenzó a gestar *Caperucita en Manhattan*.’ (144)

Thus writing was what helped Martín Gaité give purpose to her life. As Rosa Montero stated: ‘tras el fallecimiento de su hija. Durante varios años apenas si fue sombra de sí misma [...]. Parecía a punto de rendirse. Y después el milagro [...]. Volvió a escribir con talento y deleite y publicó las obras que más éxito han tenido de toda su carrera.’²⁴ Indeed, writing was what gave Martín Gaité the will to carry on after her daughter’s death. In this thesis I intend to show how the author, through her characters, shows the way she recovered from her traumatic moments.

From *Caperucita en Manhattan* on, every one of her protagonists is looking for answers, each of them has gone through difficult times which have had a dramatic impact on their lives and they all will hold on to writing as their *tabla de salvación*. Themes such as parent-child relationships, marital relations, and the unstoppable process of getting older, as well as the death of parents, are not only recurrent in her notebooks but also in her 1990s novels. As Calvi observes: ‘Entre sus páginas autobiográficas y las obras de ficción no hay una clara línea divisoria: la escritora parte del yo, de su experiencia personal, para llegar al mundo, a través de la creación

²³ Cited in Juan Carlos Soriano, ‘Ana María Martín Gaité: “Nadie, ni siquiera yo, conoció del todo a Carriña”’, *Turia: Revista Cultural*, 83 (2007), 267-79 (p. 275).

²⁴ Rosa Montero, ‘La Reina de las hadas’, in *Carmen Martín Gaité: Cuento de nunca acabar/ Never-ending Story*, ed. by Kathleen M. Glenn and Lissette Rolón Collazo (Boulder, CO: Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies, 2003), 5-7 (pp. 6-7).

literaria.²⁵ Martín Gaité gives her characters paper and pen to express their concerns, in the same way that she turned to writing for the same purpose. The role and importance of the writing of letters and diaries, and other forms of life-writing, which the author appreciated throughout her career, is repeatedly ‘discovered’ by her characters. The key characters of her 1990s novels write their lives, their own stories, letting the writing lead them to understand the reason for their situations and the predicaments they find themselves in. In many cases these characters do not seem aware of the way they have reached such an unsatisfactory situation. Writing is a *tabla de salvación*. They use writing as therapy in their moments of misfortune, moments when they need to look at themselves, analyse their past and their present circumstances, and then take charge of their lives and, consequently, change their future. This is the writing-cure, the psychoanalytical understanding of the need to express one’s thoughts and feelings after a traumatic experience. As has been pointed out: ‘The application of writing for therapeutic ends seems to have emerged from the psychotherapeutic tradition of using expressive therapies to relieve ailments associated with traumatic experiences.’²⁶

The isolation needed to reflect and write is also highlighted in these novels and can be found throughout the pages of *Cuadernos de todo*. As José Teruel comments on the writing process of *Caperucita en Manhattan*: ‘con la libertad pasa igual que con la soledad: únicamente metiéndose de lleno en sus fauces puede llegar a regalarnos su fruto’ (146). The loneliness the author felt after the death in 1978 of her parents, especially after her mother’s death, gave rise to a new way of writing in her notebooks. She recorded her dreams with greater intensity than previously. A project entitled ‘Cuenta pendiente’, in which the author looks back at her parents’ lives and notes the recurrent dreams in which her parents appeared, are a reminder of Leonardo’s notebooks in *La Reina de las Nieves*. Here, the death of the character’s parents makes him confront his own life and the writing of his dreams reveals his fears as well as his family past. The dreams Sofía writes of in her ‘diary’ in *Nubosidad variable*, after her marriage has ended, are also similar to the author’s dreams, while the letters her friend Mariana writes link with the author’s idea of the need for an interlocutor. In *La búsqueda de interlocutor* the author talks in terms of a ‘sed de que alguien se haga cargo de la propia imagen y la acoja sin someterla a interpretaciones, un terreno virgen para dejar caer muerta la propia imagen, y que reviva en él’ (17). The characters of her

²⁵ Calvi, ‘El autobiografismo dialógico’, p. 235.

²⁶ Lepore and Smith, p. 3.

1990s novels will see the image of themselves reflected in their writing, which will enable them to recover and start again.

Therefore, in this study heavy emphasis will be placed on the parallel between Martín Gaité's *Cuadernos de todo* and her novels of the 1990s, examining the way the author and her characters use writing to find the answers needed to understand their current predicaments. Through the writing of diaries and letters, and by engaging in other forms of life-writing, Martín Gaité's characters will make sense of their present once they have understood their past. Certainly, there have been some articles which have served as an introduction to *Cuadernos de todo*,²⁷ and *Visión de Nueva York*,²⁸ and one other which looks at love and sexuality in *Cuadernos de todo*.²⁹ However, the content of *Cuadernos de todo*, apart from these few articles, has not been studied in detail until now, although it is, I contend, fundamental to an understanding of the work of the author.

In order to discuss the use of diaries, letters and other kinds of life-writing engaged throughout Martín Gaité's career, it is useful to consider epistolary literature, as well as diary-writing and life-writing, 'self-referential-writing',³⁰ or self-reflective writing, in order to appreciate the way Martín Gaité used these literary forms in her novels and in her own diaries or *cuadernos*. Yet she not only used these writings as a literary strategy in her own work, she also reflected in her articles and essays on the significance of diaries and letters in general, and as well as in other writers' work. As a literary critic Martín Gaité wrote articles for example on *The Genesis of Dr Faustus* (1949) by Thomas Mann;³¹ *The Golden Notebook* (1962) by Doris Lessing,³² or *Letters to Felice* (1973) by Franz Kafka,³³ works which use diaries and letters as their narrative chassis. As a historical and cultural researcher, the author came into contact with many letters, diaries and other manuscripts which served as the basis for drafting the narrative

²⁷ See Maria Vittoria Calvi, 'Los *Cuadernos de todo* de Carmen Martín Gaité: Lengua y memoria', in *La memoria delle lingue: La didattica e lo studio delle lingue della Penisola Iberica in Italia* (Messina: Andrea Lippolis, 2004), 37-50.

²⁸ Gladys Granata de Egües, 'La literatura y la vida: los Cuadernos de Carmen Martín Gaité', *Revista de Literaturas Modernas*, 36 (2007), 123-36.

²⁹ Beatriz Celaya, 'El amor es una tara: *Cuadernos de todo*, de Carmen Martín Gaité', *Neophilologus*, 91 (2007), 221-41.

³⁰ This is a term used by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson when talking about life-writing, p. 1.

³¹ In this work, Mann describes and reflects on the writing of his 1947 novel, *Dr Faustus*. This work was published in Spanish as *Los orígenes del doctor Faustus: La novela de una novela* (1977).

³² Published in Spain as *El cuaderno dorado* (1978).

³³ Kafka's letters to Felice Bouer were written between 1912 and 1917 (the author died in 1924). The letters were first published in 1967, with an English version appearing in 1973 and the Spanish version, *Las cartas a Felice*, being published in 1977. See Martín Gaité, *Tirando del hilo (Artículos 1949-2000)*, ed. by José Teruel (Madrid: Siruela: 2006), 151-53.

of history. Also, in her role as translator, she chose many works which had life-writing at their core. Works such as *Les Lettres Portugaises* (1669), translated as, *Cartas de amor de la monja portuguesa Mariana Alcoforado* (2000); *Letters to Merline 1919-1922*, by Rainer Maria Rilke, which she translated as *Cartas francesas a Merline* (1987); *Caro Michele* (1973) by Natalia Ginzburg, translated as *Querido Miguel* (1989), or *A Grief Observed* (1961) by C.S. Lewis – a work the author wrote to enable himself to understand life after his wife’s death – translated as *Una pena en observación* (1988),³⁴ all show the author’s interest in these kinds of writing. Furthermore, in her books of essays, such as *El cuento de nunca acabar* and *Desde la ventana*, Martín Gaité has dealt with epistolary literature and the use of diaries in literature, as well as what she called ‘escritura egocéntrica’, as self-writing.

Chapter 1 of this thesis looks at epistolary literature, diary-writing and self-reflective writing, especially in France, the United Kingdom and Spain. It addresses writers’ diaries and the changes – towards a more reflective and metafictional process – produced in these kinds of writing and the writers’ need for autoanalytical writing. Furthermore, the chapter will consider epistolary literature and women as both the object and subject of writing. It will also discuss the differences and similarities between diaries and letters in literature, as well as the use of diaries, letters, and memoirs in contemporary Spanish women’s writing. To analyse the use of diaries and letters in literature, I refer to Foucault’s article ‘Self writing’, which is part of a series of studies the philosopher developed on ‘the arts of oneself’ in the Greco-Roman world.³⁵ In this article Foucault studies two forms of ‘ethopoietic writing’ (209), the *Hupomnēmata*³⁶ and the *Correspondence*. These types of writing and the Foucault’s study link with the idea of writing as a self-reflective act.

³⁴ For more information on her work as a translator, see José Jurado Morales, *La trayectoria narrativa de Carmen Martín Gaité (1925-2000)* (Madrid: Gredos, 2003), 473-74.

³⁵ *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth: The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. by Paul Rabinow, trans. by Robert Hurley and others (London: Penguin, 1997), p. 207.

³⁶ ‘*Hupomnēmata*, in the technical sense, could be account books, public registers, or individual notebooks serving as memory aids. Their use as books of life, as guides of conduct, seems to have become a common thing for a whole cultivated public. One wrote down quotes in them, extracts from books, examples, and actions that one had witnessed or read about, reflections or reasoning that one had heard or that had come to mind. They constituted a material record of things read, heard, or thought, thus offering them up as a kind of accumulated treasure for subsequent rereading and meditation. They also formed a raw material for the drafting of more systematic treatises, in which one presented arguments and means for struggling against some weakness [...] or for overcoming some difficult circumstance’, *Foucault, Ethics*, pp. 209-10.

Chapter 2 will briefly look at the use of letters and diaries in Martín Gaité's narrative, in order to assess the evolution of this literary strategy throughout her career. With this analysis I intend see the way Martín Gaité's work gradually evolved towards a more self-analytical and self-reflective writing. In Chapter 3 her *Cuadernos de todo* will be the first of her works to be analysed in detail. This chapter is divided into three sections, which analyse the most important functions of her various *cuadernos*. The first section will look at the first three *cuadernos* and their importance as the basis for her notebooks. Here the focus will be on the use of these *cuadernos* as a site for reflections on society, especially the role of women in Spanish society of the 1960s. I will look at the different themes that are relevant from the first *cuadernos* and that are developed in the author's later work, such as women's role in society, motherhood and consumerism. This section will also analyse the use of these *cuadernos* as places to 'converse' with the books the author was reading at the time. With the study of these first *cuadernos* a link will be made between the notebooks and Martín Gaité's fictional work, showing the way in which the author not only used her notebooks to reflect on society but transported those reflections into her fictional characters.

The second part of Chapter 3 will look at the *cuadernos* as a writer's workshop, focusing on the less intimate side of the notebooks and analysing the way Martín Gaité oeuvre developed from the moment it was first conceived to the moment it was published, examining at the way life and literature were always intertwined. The last section of the chapter will consider the notebooks the author composed during the periods she spent in United States as an invited lecturer at different universities. These periods in America were crucial in her career as it was during these years that she started being acclaimed by academic critics and saw the publication, as mentioned earlier, of the first monographs on her work. These years also enabled the author to isolate herself from the many commitments she had in Spain and allowed her to reflect on her work and herself. This section also looks at the writing of the *cuadernos americanos* as therapeutic after her daughter's death, when writing was her only escape. As Martín Gaité's friend María Cruz Seoane explains, after the death of her daughter, Marta: 'Se mantenía a flote agarrándose al salvavidas del trabajo.'³⁷ And as Teruel points out, America is: 'donde se da cuenta de que avanzar era seguir con la pluma en la mano, y era sentir esa mágica transformación del tiempo inerte en tiempo de

³⁷ María Cruz Seoane, 'La historia y las historias en la obra de Carmen Martín Gaité', *Turia: Revista Cultural*, 83 (2007), 214-22 (p. 222).

escritura.’³⁸ The pages of the last *cuaderno americano* are a particularly clear example of the therapeutic side of writing and leads into the last section of the thesis, Martín Gaité’s novels of the 1990s.

The four novels published in the 1990s: *Nubosidad variable* (1992), *La Reina de las Nieves* (1994), *Lo raro es vivir* (1996) and *Irse de casa* (1998), will be examined separately in the last four chapters. Here, these four works will be assessed in terms of their use of letters, diaries, and other life-writing material, and the idea of the writing-cure as being beneficial for the characters of the novels as well as for the author herself. As Calvi indicates:

En Carmen Martín Gaité encontramos, por ejemplo, una estructura recurrente, tanto en obras de ficción como en fragmentos autobiográficos, que combina la retrospectiva con el diario: esta modalidad comporta la aparición de un yo, narrador y personaje, que reconstruye episodios del pasado, más reciente o más remoto, a través de la escritura; el movimiento oscilante de la memoria, impulsado por un acontecimiento clave, se combina con el día a día, la anotación de los hechos presentes, de manera que el proceso introspectivo se hace más dinámico y abierto a los cambios.³⁹

The protagonists of Martín Gaité’s later novels use reflective writing to look back at their lives after having gone through some kind of traumatic experience. This technique of reflecting on the past to be able to deal with difficult present times is one of the main characteristic of psychoanalysis and has been described as ‘recovering the original memories of a trauma through techniques such as free association, talking, and releasing the appropriate affect associated with the trauma’.⁴⁰ This is what has come to be known as the ‘talking-cure’. Martín Gaité’s protagonists use this kind of technique but instead of recovering their memories through talking they will do it through writing, the ‘writing-cure’. The links between the notebook material in *Cuadernos de todo* and the novels will be revealed and discussed, concluding with the idea of *Cuadernos de todo* and the 1990s novels as mirrors for the author, mirrors used to reflect her life in her later years.

In addition to the study of letters and diaries and their therapeutic capacity, aspects of the relationships of the main characters in these novels will be analysed from

³⁸ Teruel, ‘Un contexto biográfico’, p. 145.

³⁹ Calvi, ‘El autobiografismo dialógico’, p. 225.

⁴⁰ Lepore and Smith, p. 4.

a psychoanalytical perspective. As was stated earlier, family relationships were fundamental in Martín Gaité's writing. In her novels it is possible to see how her characters reflect on their relationships with mothers, daughters and fathers in order to understand their lives better. Due to the importance of family relationships and motherhood in Martín Gaité's work I have frequently referred to psychoanalytical theory, especially in my examination of the characters in her 1990s novels, and with particular reference to the theories on family relationships of Nancy Chodorow and Donald Winnicott. This psychoanalytical analysis will be linked with the study of self-reflective writing as therapeutic writing.

With the publication of several of Martín Gaité's manuscripts after her death in 2000, especially *Cuadernos de todo*, new perspectives have opened up in approaches to the author's work. By accessing those of Martín Gaité's notebooks and other manuscripts that have been published it is now possible to investigate and trace the early steps in her literary career, as well as witnessing a more intimate side of the author's character.

CHAPTER 1

LETTERS, DIARIES AND SELF-REFLECTIVE WRITING

Letters and Diaries in Women's Writing

Letters and diaries have often been linked to women's writing, either through the writing of intimate diaries and correspondence, or through different literary genres. We see female characters in novels writing their diaries or letters to their lovers or friends, or even imagining those possible letters they would like to send. Indeed, Ruth Perry comments: 'Women seemed to have a special affinity for this personal one-to-one format.'⁴¹ And Elizabeth Goldsmith refers to an observation made by Jean de la Bruyère in 1684: 'Women, he reflects, have a special facility for epistolary expression, giving their letters a natural quality that men have to struggle to achieve.'⁴²

Since medieval times there have been examples of correspondence as literary genre.⁴³ In the sixteenth century, women start having more presence in this genre. The genre increasingly includes women as the writers of letters, even though men are generally the creators of such characters in novels. However, the eighteenth century is the century par excellence of epistolary literature, as revealed in studies such as Gilroy and Verhoeven's *Epistolary Histories*, which continues to link women and letters, 'letter as feminine',⁴⁴ or that of Perry, who writes about women in the eighteenth

⁴¹ *Women, Letters and the Novel* (New York: AMS Press, 1980), p. xii.

⁴² Goldsmith ed., *Writing the Female Voice: Essays on Epistolary Literature* (London: Pinter, 1989), p. 46.

⁴³ See Gonzalo Pontón, *Correspondencias: Los orígenes del arte epistolar en España* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2002).

⁴⁴ Amanda Gilroy and W.M. Verhoeven, eds., *Epistolary Histories: Letters, Fiction, Culture* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p. 1.

century not only as the literary subject but as the eager reader of the time: ‘By the beginning of the eighteenth century, a sizable female audience was beginning to be assumed for fiction of all sorts’ (18). Female characters in the novels take the quill to write their most intimate feelings, reflecting on women’s real situations, at the same time that ‘the seduction novel’,⁴⁵ as Janet Gurkin Altman calls it, creates models for women to escape their everyday lives.

On the other hand, diaries written by women gain in importance at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Nora Catelli gives a date and a reason for such an increase:

No cabe duda de que la fecha clave aquí es 1800 y que el diario llamado ‘íntimo’ reconoce sus orígenes en Francia alrededor de ese año. [...] Y no por casualidad ese mismo año 1800 [...], supone un cambio en las costumbres de vivienda y trabajo de la clase media y la consagración de un modelo de mujer laica, encerrada en el círculo familiar, esposa y madre: el ángel del hogar.⁴⁶

She goes on to note that there is a change in the kind of women who write diaries. They are: ‘mujeres confinadas. Pero ya no en celdas, sino en la vida familiar, en el círculo doméstico’ (93). The number of published women writers grew considerably:

El hecho incuestionable es que la incorporación de la mujer a la literatura – que, de modo general en el mundo occidental, tiene lugar en el siglo XIX – transforma la literatura universal. [...] El siglo XIX cambia la dirección literaria del ‘yo’ al ‘tú’, y quien había sido siempre receptor se convierte en emisor.⁴⁷

Furthermore, the feminine model in the nineteenth century novel continued being women as wives and mothers, as Carolina Sánchez-Palencia comments in her study on the English sentimental novel:

En toda novela doméstica de estos años subyace la ética puritana que una vez más relega a la mujer a la esfera de lo privado como baluarte de los valores espirituales, y que tiene su máxima expresión en la figura victoriana del ‘*Angel in the House*’.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Janet Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), p. 15.

⁴⁶ El diario íntimo: Una posición femenina’, *Revista de Occidente, El diario Íntimo: Fragmentos de diarios españoles (1995-1996)*, 182-83 (1996), 87-98 (p. 92). Hereafter, this issue of the *Revista de Occidente* will be referred to as *RO: El diario*.

⁴⁷ María Pardo, ‘La vida vislumbrada’, in *La vida escrita por las mujeres, III: La pluma como espada*, ed. by Anna Caballé (Barcelona: Lumen, 2004), 15-40 (p. 19).

⁴⁸ *El discurso femenino de la novela rosa en lengua inglesa* (Cádiz: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad, 1997), p. 60.

However the women portrayed in these novels, as Sánchez-Palencia continues, could be interpreted from a different point of view:

Más allá de estos argumentos tan ortodoxos en los que las madres, hijas y esposas restauran la paz del hogar ejercitando sus cualidades ‘típicamente femeninas’, convenga desentrañar la insatisfacción sexual y social de unas mujeres destinadas a una vida familiar de monotonía y frustraciones. (60)⁴⁹

María de Carmen Simón Palmer observes: ‘En España la sociedad premió a las escritoras que no se dejaron corromper por corrientes extranjeras, y que escribían tras realizar sus tareas domésticas y dejar a sus hijos acostados’.⁵⁰ In fact, the restricted position of Spanish women writers during the nineteenth century is accurately portrayed by Rosalía de Castro in her ‘Carta a Eduarda’,⁵¹ where a woman writer writes to another discouraging her from her vocation, due to the fact that, as the author of the letter observes (Rosalía explains how she found the letter inside a wallet in the street and decided to publish it as she thought its content to be truthful to reality), women writers, if they try to write like men, will never be taken seriously.

The beginning of the twentieth century witnessed a proliferation of the publication of letters, diaries and autobiographies. In Spain some members of the Generation of 1898 published their diaries, such as Unamuno, with his philosophical reflections on life and religion.⁵² This diary, written in the last years of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century is, in Anna Caballé’s words, fundamental to the history of the intimate diary in contemporary Spain.⁵³

Among the women writers there is Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda’s letter-diary. This Cuban poet lived in Spain during most of her life and although she died in 1873 her diaries were not published until 1907. The diary and letters written to her lover Ignacio de Cepeda, were published under the titles: *Diario de amor* (1914) and *Diario íntimo* (1945). The first part of the diary represents an interesting example of a diary with the characteristics of a letter. The diary-memoir which she wrote in 1839,

⁴⁹ These themes will continue being developed in the post-civil war novel written by women, a period, especially in the 1940s, when women’s social situation was closer to the nineteenth century than to the first half of the twentieth century.

⁵⁰ ‘La mujer y la literatura en la España del siglo XIX’, *Centro virtual Cervantes*, <http://213.4.108.140/obref/aih/pdf/08/aih_08_2_069.pdf>, p. 595.

⁵¹ Rosalía de Castro, *Obras completas*, I, ed. by Marina Mayoral (Madrid: Turner, 1993), pp. 655-59.

⁵² *Diario íntimo* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1991).

⁵³ ‘La trayectoria del diario íntimo en la España contemporánea podría arrancar del diario espiritual escrito por Miguel de Unamuno’, in ‘Ego tristis (El diario íntimo en España)’, *RO: El diario*, 99-120 (p. 109).

after meeting Cepeda is dated and, as with other diaries, she describes moments of the day, places she visits and people she meets, with Ignacio de Cepeda as her interlocutor at all times, in the same way as in the letters. This notebook, which Gómez de Avellaneda gave to Cepeda, was kept together with the letters she sent him from the year they met until 1854, and this material was published after Cepeda's death by his widow in 1907, under the title: *Autobiografía y cartas (hasta ahora inéditas) de la ilustre poetisa Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda*.

The letters written by Emilia Pardo Bazán to Benito Pérez Galdós are an interesting example of correspondence between writers as they not only used their letters to talk about their friendship and love but also to reveal their projects and literary successes. As Carmen Bravo Villasante comments in the prologue to the letters: 'La lectura de los epistolarios de escritores es sumamente reveladora no sólo de su personalidad literaria y humana, sino por las posibilidades que ofrece de esclarecer su obra.'⁵⁴ Pardo Bazán also left a short autobiography, the 'Apuntes autobiográficos', published in the first edition of *Los Pazos de Ulloa* (1886). Caballé comments on the audacity of this eighty-page autobiography:

Si ya constituía atrevimiento insólito dedicarse por entero a la creación literaria [...], mayor era la osadía mostrada por la novelista gallega al intervenir intensamente en las polémicas y controversias estéticas de su tiempo o bien al exponer, sin modestia alguna, su proceso de formación como escritora.⁵⁵

Another important letter-writer is Rosa Chacel. *Cartas a Rosa Chacel* published in 1992, consists of letters from friends and fellow-writers, covering the period 1938-88, and was published during her lifetime. The writers include María Zambrano, Luis Cernuda, Mercé Rodoreda and Dolores Medio, and constitute an important link between writers in Spain and in exile. In 1998, *De mar a mar: Epistolario Rosa Chacel – Ana María Moix* was published with the complete correspondence between the two writers, revealing what the editor has called a 'coloquio epistolar'.⁵⁶ In the same way as Chacel,

⁵⁴ Emilia Pardo Bazán, *Cartas a Benito Pérez Galdós*, prologue and ed. by Carmen Bravo Villasante (Madrid: Ediciones Turner, 1975), p. 1.

⁵⁵ 'Memorias y autobiografías escritas por mujeres (siglo XIX y XX)', in *Breve historia feminista de la literatura española*, ed. by Iris Zavala, 111-37 (p. 117).

⁵⁶ The editor of the letters, Ana Rodríguez Fischer, also comments on the similarities between Chacel's letters and her diaries: 'En las cartas de Rosa Chacel no sólo hay coloquio. Hay en ellas mucho soliloquio [...]. Y así a través de esas páginas nos llega también la expresión de variados estados de ánimo, pensamientos figuraciones, e incluso la cuidada plasmación del mundo onírico. Son estos pasajes los que aproximan el epistolario chaceliano a su personal alcancía', prologue to *De mar a mar: Epistolario Rosa Chacel - Ana María Moix* (Barcelona: Península, 1998), p. 15.

Zenobia Camprubí's epistolary has also been published, the first volume consists of the nearly 700 letters written to Juan Guerrero Ruiz, with whom Camprubí corresponded between 1917 and 1954 (when Guerrero Ruiz died).⁵⁷ Again, these letters provide an important historical document on the life of Spanish writers in exile and their relationship with those who stayed in Spain.

Laura Freixas, in her introduction to a special 1996 issue of *Revista de Occidente* on the intimate diary in Spain, discusses the birth of the writer as diarist in the nineteenth century:

Amiel ignora si su diario se publicará algún día, pero Constant, Stendhal, Lord Byron, Walter Scott, Carlyle, Tolstoi, Emerson ... saben o suponen que así será, y los Goncourt, Katherine Mansfield, Virginia Woolf, Anaïs Nin, Simone de Beauvoir, André Gide, Witold Gombrowicz, Julien Green ... ya escriben su diario con la intención explícita de publicarlo (en todo o en parte, corregido o reescrito, en forma de diario o reelaborado como memorias).⁵⁸

These diarist-writers had a great influence in the work of twentieth-century Spanish writers, who, as Freixas also explains, knew many languages and were capable of reading other writers' work in their own languages, especially French and English. In Carmen Martín Gaité's case (who read and translated Portuguese, Italian, English and French literature), we know of her identification with Katherine Mansfield's or Franz Kafka's diaries by reading her own notebooks or diary pages.⁵⁹ Katherine Mansfield also writes about other writers' diaries in her diary pages, such as Dorothy Wordsworth whose journal and poem Mansfield copies in hers and comments on the need to read Goethe's 'Poetry and Truth': 'That's the sort of strain – not for what it says and means, but for the "lilt" of it – that sets me writing.'⁶⁰

While in Spain until well into the twentieth century, few intimate diaries were published, in other countries, the publication of diaries such as Virginia Woolf's, Katherine Mansfield's or Anaïs Nin's, or memoirs, like Simone de Beauvoir's became an extended practice. Virginia Woolf's and Katherine Mansfield's diaries were published and edited by their husbands soon after their deaths and have been published in their totality so that researchers and literary critics can understand the production of

⁵⁷ See *Epistolario I: Cartas a Juan Guerrero Ruiz 1917-1956* (Madrid: Publicaciones de la Residencia de Estudiantes, 2006).

⁵⁸ 'Auge del diario ¿intimo? en España', in *RO: El diario*, 5-14 (pp. 5-6).

⁵⁹ See Martín Gaité, *Cuadernos de todo* ed. by Maria Vittoria Calvi (Barcelona: Areté, 2002), pp. 216 and 458.

⁶⁰ *Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by J. Middleton Murry (London: Constable, 1927), p. 4.

their work. Simone de Beauvoir, while thinking about writing her memoirs started reflecting on her position as a woman in society and these reflections resulted in *Le Deuxième Sexe* (1949). The writing of her memoirs was left until later, with *Mémoires d'une fille rangée*, the first part of her autobiography, published in 1958.⁶¹

In Europe, intimate diaries written by people who lived through important historical events were very popular during the two world wars and the post-war periods. While in the First World War we find a great number of letters and diaries written by soldiers at the front, in the Second World War women start telling their stories through their diaries. Anne Frank's has made it possible to learn about the terrible circumstances many Jewish families had to go through before and during the war. In Great Britain, diaries and letters written by women in the 1930s and 1940s are irreplaceable sources for studying the history of the people.

In France, Philippe Lejeune has gathered diaries written by women in the nineteenth century, *Le Moi des demoiselles* (1993), and the twentieth century, written mainly in France, and has also produced a study of intimate diaries over the centuries, *Le Journal intime: Histoire et anthologie* (2006). Lejeune explains how he started investigating diaries which had never been published before as he thought these were the ones which could show the reality of diary writing (in contrast to the work done by Béatrice Didier and Alain Girard who study published diaries), taking him into the archives where he rescued diaries of different periods and published them in his books. Another of his investigations involved interviews about the use of diaries nowadays. His findings appeared in *Cher cahier: Témoignages sur le journal personnel* (1989), where he shows a number of letters responding to his question 'Why do people write a diary?', and also in *La Pratique du journal personnel: Enquête* (1990), a study he made amongst a group of high school and university students, and teachers.⁶²

In Spain few diaries were published during the Civil War on everyday living conditions. However, there is one example of a diary produced by a writer, Concha Espina, and which she defines as 'una especie de rezo',⁶³ *Esclavitud y libertad: Diario*

⁶¹ Jo-Ann Pilardi comments: 'Beauvoir tells us that, though she wanted to write an autobiography, she decided to question first the importance of her gender to her individual life: "I wanted to write about myself... I realized that the first question to come up was: What has it meant to me to be a woman?"', *Simone de Beauvoir: Writing the Self. Philosophy Becomes Autobiography* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), p. 25.

⁶² Following Lejeune's ideas, Manuel Alberca has done similar work in Spain, publishing his findings in 1997. See 'El diario íntimo, hoy (encuesta)', *Boletín de la Unidad de Estudios Biográficos*, 2 (1997), 11-25.

⁶³ *Esclavitud y libertad: Diario de una prisionera* (Valladolid: Ediciones Reconquista, 1938), p. 6.

de una prisionera. In this document, Espina describes the days spent in her house in Luzmela where she found herself imprisoned by Marxist, republican soldiers from the beginning of the war until 31 August 1937, when the Nationalists arrived in the village, under the command of her sons. Yet later there are diaries written by writers in exile, such as Rosa Chacel's *Alcancía: Ida* (1982), María Zambrano's *Delirio y destino: Los veinte años de una española* (1989); Zenobia Camprubí's *Diario I: Cuba (1937-1939)* (1991); Victoria Kent's *Cuatro años en París (1940-1944)*, published in Buenos Aires in 1947; Silvia Mistral's *Éxodo: diario de una refugiada española*, published in México in 1940 or Federica Montseny's *El éxodo: pasión y muerte de españoles en el exilio*, published in Toulouse in 1969. After Franco's death, Federica Montseny, like many other authors and politicians, published her memoirs of those years, *Mis primeros cuarenta años* (1987).

Of course, during the twentieth century many important works of fiction with substantial autobiographical elements using diaries, notebooks, and letters as part of the narrative were published. Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962) is a good example of the use of a writer's notebook. In this work, a young writer, a single mother, writes simultaneously a diary divided into four notebooks of different colours, and a novel, 'Free Women', which interweave, forming *The Golden Notebook*. A few years later Lessing published *The Diaries of Jane Somers* (1984), a novel that appeared a year earlier under the title *The Diary of a Good Neighbour* and with the pseudonym Jane Somers, which the author used to see the reaction of the critics to her book before knowing the identity of the real author. In Spain fictional diaries and memoirs written by women also appear: Rosa Chacel's *Memorias de Leticia Valle* (1945), Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria* (1959), or Dolores Medio's *Diario de una maestra* (1961). With works of fiction that use words such as 'diary' or 'memoir(s)' in their title, it should be noted that, according to the narratologist Gérard Genette, such titles use these terms as what he calls a 'genre indicator' or 'genre designator'.⁶⁴ Genette explains how 'the genre indication can serve as a relatively autonomous paratextual element, [...] or it can take over – to a greater or lesser degree – the title or subtitle' (58). One thing that these titles clearly do is to lead the reader towards thinking what they are about to read is a type of intimate first-person narration.

⁶⁴ See *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 94-103.

It should be stated that Spanish epistolary fiction and the publication of intimate diaries and memoirs has not been as rich and important as in some other countries. As Patrick Paul Garlinger indicates: ‘In comparison to the French and English canons, Spain cannot lay claim to a quantitatively rich epistolary history.’⁶⁵ In the case of diaries, Spain is in the same situation. Laura Freixas comments: ‘Hasta por lo menos este siglo la historia del diario íntimo en España ha sido la de una llamativa ausencia.’⁶⁶ As Enric Bou explains, fear of reprisals for keeping possible incriminatory documents made the diary practice rare for most of the twentieth century: ‘La cultura hispana se encuentra en la periferia en cuanto a la práctica del diario, pero las circunstancias no han ayudado en exceso a su proliferación y prestigio.’⁶⁷ Another possible reason for the diary being less widespread until recent years is the Catholic practice of confession. Women, especially, used the confessional as the place to relieve their day-to-day worries. As Maurice Blanchot observes: ‘Los siglos más cristianos ignoran este examen que no tiene como intermediario el silencio. Se nos dice que en el protestantismo favorece esta confesión sin confesor.’⁶⁸

Yet there have been changes in recent decades, with a proliferation in the publication of ‘intimate’ diaries and the use of diaries and letters in novels. Freixas notes: ‘A partir de 1980 florecen los *Diarios*, ya sean íntimos u obras de ficción, ya sean textos recientes o títulos antiguos rescatados o reeditados.’⁶⁹ Certainly, after Franco’s death a number of writers and political figures published their memoirs of the war and post-war years. Indeed, Carmen Martín Gaité comments in her most famous novel *El cuarto de atrás* that the number of memoirs published during those years was overwhelming: ‘Desde la muerte de Franco habrá notado cómo proliferan los libros de memorias, ya es una peste.’⁷⁰ And as Alicia Redondo Goicoechea comments, not only writers described their experiences under the dictatorship women politically active during the years before, during and after the war, and who had to live in exile, were also publishing their memoirs:

La mayoría de estas autoras [escritoras feministas, comunistas, opositoras al régimen] empezaron a contar sus vidas más o menos noveladas a partir de la

⁶⁵ *Confessions of the Letter Closet: Epistolary Fiction & Queer Desire in Modern Spain* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. xxvi.

⁶⁶ ‘Auge del diario ¿íntimo?’, p. 5.

⁶⁷ ‘El diario: periferia y literatura’, *RO: El diario*, 121-62 (p. 122).

⁶⁸ ‘El diario íntimo y el relato’, *RO: El diario*, 47-54 (p. 52).

⁶⁹ ‘Auge del diario ¿íntimo?’, p. 10.

⁷⁰ *El cuarto de atrás* (Barcelona: Destino, 1996), p. 128.

muerte de Franco en 1975. [...] también están los escritos autobiográficos de Dolores Ibarruri, de Pilar Jaraiz Franco, etc.⁷¹

Nowadays it seems that letters are falling into disuse with the emergence of the internet: e-mails, instead of letters, and blogs, instead of diaries, begin to constitute epistolary and autobiographical genres in their own rights. Books are published in which e-mails take the place that letters once held, for example *Una piedra roja, una piedra azul, una piedra amarilla* (2007), a book containing the e-mails and diaries of a young woman, Marta Pérez Martín, who died of cancer. But, that is another story that belongs more to the future than to the present.

Diaries versus Letters

Although there are certain differences in the narrative forms of letters and diaries, there are also many features that these narrative forms have in common. The first and most significant difference is that letters are conceived in relation to an addressee, to a reader, while diaries are written, in principle, without an interlocutor and not intended for publication. This is what Jamile Trueba Lawand defines as distant conversation: ‘una conversación por escrito con alguien que está ausente’,⁷² although, as Porter Abbot explains: ‘Fictive diarists commonly address their remarks to someone – friend, lover, God, the diary itself’.⁷³ Looking at the use of diaries and letters in fiction, Lorna Martens finds a natural evolution from the epistolary novel into the diary one:

The epistolary novel was the structural ancestor of the diary novel. It initiated a line of development in narrative technique that the diary novel continued, [...] one need think only of the ‘dear diary’ convention to realize to what extent intimate diary keeping was influenced by letter writing.⁷⁴

Indeed, the privacy or intimacy of the diary is what Abbott defends: ‘The term “diary” evokes an intensity of privacy, cloistering, isolation, that the “letter” does not’ (11),

⁷¹ ‘Las autoras frente al espejo: Imágenes y modelos’, in *Lo mío es escribir: La vida escrita por las mujeres*, I, ed. by Anna Caballé, 11-53 (p. 39).

⁷² *El arte epistolar en el renacimiento español* (Madrid: Támesis, 1996), p. 24.

⁷³ *Diary Fiction: Writing as Action* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 10.

⁷⁴ *The Diary Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 56.

while other critics have underlined the fact that both forms suggest: ‘authenticity and intimacy’.⁷⁵ Also, Caballé points out that:

El diario suele apoyarse en una escritura de gran pureza, en el sentido de que en su organización y estructura no están presentes las ataduras impuestas a la estructura literaria: no hay interacción social, no hay otro interlocutor que uno mismo, ni tampoco limitaciones técnicas o estilísticas que obliguen al diarista a acomodar su discurso a determinadas convenciones formales (aunque sí éticas y sociales).⁷⁶

However, the absence of ‘technical or stylistic’ limitations could also be applied to epistolary writing. The truth is that the difference between the two forms is not that clear. Many times letters are never sent, or are not even written, as, for example, in Saul Bellow’s novel *Herzog* (1965),⁷⁷ or Josefina Aldecoa’s *La enredadera* (1984). Diaries, though, do seem to have an interlocutor in the diarist’s mind. Sometimes diaries are published in life, such as Anaïs Nin’s, Unamuno’s or Rosa Chacel’s, or could be read by the author years later, who at that point will become the interlocutor of his/her own diaries. Another relationship between diaries and letters, as Richard Hardack points out, is that ‘letters become forms of interactive diaries’.⁷⁸

Michel Foucault, in his essay, ‘Self-writing’, makes a distinction between letters and diaries, and at the same time puts them in the same category, as both are ‘self-examination’ tools:

As Seneca points out, when one writes one reads what one writes, just as in saying something one hears oneself saying it. The letter one writes acts, through the very action of writing, upon the one who addresses it, just as it acts through reading and rereading on the one who receives it. In this dual function, correspondence is very close to the *hupomnēmata*, and its form is often very similar. (214)

However, at the same time he finds that the difference between correspondence and the diaries written in Ancient Greece, or *hupomnēmata*, centres on the presence of the writer:

⁷⁵ See, for example, *Epistolary Histories*, ed. by Gilroy and Verhoeven, p. 1.

⁷⁶ ‘Ego tristis’, p. 101.

⁷⁷ Gurkin Altman notes that: ‘Bellow’s novel the addressees never even receive Herzog’s letters. Whether written on paper or merely mental, all about three of these letters are never mailed’ (p. 34).

⁷⁸ ‘Bodies in Pieces’, in *Epistolary Histories*, ed. by Gilroy and Verhoeven, 126-51 (p. 129).

The letter makes the writer ‘present’ to the one to whom he addresses it. And present not simply through the information he gives concerning his life, his activities, his successes and failures, his good luck or misfortunes; rather, present with a kind of immediate, almost physical presence. (216)

Also, as will be seen, diary writing helps the writer to reach subjectivity. Letters, on the other hand and in Foucault’s words, represent ‘an objectification of the soul’ (217), or ‘self-objectivation’, a term used by C.A. Longhurst when discussing the second and third part of Baroja’s novel *El mundo en ansí*.⁷⁹ Martín Gaité, in her *Cuadernos de todo*, comments on the freedom of writing diaries without the intention of publishing them: ‘Los diarios tienen a veces una frescura que jamás podrá tener la obra deliberadamente hecha para publicar’ (455). While Anaïs Nin states: ‘Starting a diary, and writing in it “is as easy as breathing.”’⁸⁰

A parenthesis needs to be made here to explain the distinctions to be found among the different uses of the term ‘diary’. First, Alain Girard’s definition: ‘Il est écrit au jour le jour. En cela, il s’oppose à toute oeuvre composée. Quelles que soient les intentions qui président à sa rédaction, un journal n’obéit en effet à aucune règle imposée.’⁸¹ This type of daily-written diary that Girard talks about is criticised in Martín Gaité’s *Cuadernos de todo* due to its obsessive daily punctuality: ‘Siempre van más deprisa los días que su recuento. A papá le pasaba igual con los diarios, la preocupación por registrar, por dejar todo ordenado por fechas, en papelitos y luego ¿de qué valió?’ (503). A definition which fits better with the idea of the diary which will be addressed here is Freixas’s: ‘una reflexión, en primera persona y enraizada en la cotidianidad, sobre la condición humana y el sentido de la vida.’⁸² The reflective side of the diary or notebooks is what will be found not only in Martín Gaité’s *Cuadernos*, but also in the ones written by the protagonists of her novels.

Another definition which fits perfectly when describing Martín Gaité’s ‘diaries’ is the one given by Pío Baroja regarding the novel: ‘un saco en que cabe todo’.⁸³ The ‘diaries’ or *cuadernos de todo* that Martín Gaité wrote for more than forty years maintain a kind of routine, although they were not written every day and the themes

⁷⁹ Pío Baroja: *‘El mundo es ansí’*, Critical Guides to Spanish Texts, 20 (London: Grant & Cutler with Tamesis, 1977), p. 78.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Curtis W. Casewit, *The Diary: A Complete Guide to Journal Writing* (Allen, TX: Argus Communications, 1982), p. 14.

⁸¹ Alain Girard, *Le journal intime* (Presses Universitaires de France: Paris, 1986), p. 3.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁸³ *Obras completas*, VII (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1949), p. 1032.

they deal with vary enormously, depending on the times in which the author was living. These diaries-notebooks could be considered to be what Girard calls ‘dietario’: ‘Lo que diferencia, según Girard, al diario íntimo del dietario; a saber: en el primero predomina lo afectivo, en el segundo lo intelectual; el primero (conserva o no las fechas) está enraizado en la vida cotidiana, mientras que el segundo resulta intemporal.’⁸⁴ Even though in Martín Gaité’s notebooks we can see in many pages a lack of intimacy and a predominance of intellectual reflection, the term diary could also be used. In *Cuadernos de todo*, especially in the early *cuadernos*, we see the author taking notes of what she reads, what she hears in the street, in order to make comments about it afterwards. Diarists write what they read to meditate on, in Seneca’s words to ‘digest’, as Foucault explains: ‘It is a matter of unifying these heterogeneous fragments through their subjectivation in the exercise of personal writing. Seneca compares this unification, according to quite traditional metaphors, with the bee’s honey gathering, or the digestion of food, or the adding of numbers forming a sum’ (213).

Diaries can create great freedom for the writer. The free flow of the writing is the characteristic that Caballé sees as fundamental, while as Beatrice Didier comments:

Parce que ce type d’écriture ne connaît pas de règle, ni de limite véritables, le journal peut s’ouvrir à n’importe quoi. Tout peut devenir journal. Le diariste peut intégrer à son texte ses notes de blanchisseuse, des coupures de presse, des fragments, des brouillons de textes en gestation; finalement, presque tout.⁸⁵

Martín Gaité’s *Cuadernos de todo* have been called by Maria Vitoria Calvi, editor of the *Cuadernos*, ‘diarios en libertad’. The *Cuadernos de todo* not only help the author to note her ideas and the first drafts of literary projects, they also reveal her changes of humour and show her reflections on the world that surrounds her. The difficulty when confronted with a blank page is constant in the diaries. Alain Girard explains how: ‘A partir du XIX siècle, les écrivains font état de leur peine, et l’une des raisons d’être du journal intime a été de se délivrer de cette peine en la racontant’ (xiv). This function of the diary is constant amongst twentieth-century authors, as can be seen in the diaries and notebooks of Katherine Mansfield, Franz Kafka, Rosa Chacel, Anaïs Nin, or Virginia Woolf, amongst others. For these authors, their diary or notebook’s pages serve to unite their work with their private lives. Even though, in some cases, they do not present exact facts of their most intimate lives, they exhibit within the pages

⁸⁴ See Freixas, ‘Auge del diario ¿íntimo?’, pp. 12-13.

⁸⁵ Béatrice Didier, *Le journal intime* (Presses Universitaires de France: Paris, 1991), p. 187.

feelings of despair or happiness which they experience during the years they are writing their diaries. In *Cuadernos de todo* can also be found intimate moments in which the author narrates her despair.

There are also letters amongst the diary pages: in some cases these letters are copied and sent, other times they are left forgotten in the diary pages. As Foucault comments: ‘Notebooks, which in themselves constitute personal writing exercises, can serve as raw material for texts that one sends to others’ (214). Many writers use their diaries as pages for the drafting of their letters. Indeed, Martín Gaité comments in her *Cuadernos de todo* on the use of letters to help the writer to focus on moments of their lives: ‘El único sistema adecuado para esos casos es el de las cartas, donde todo se mezcla, lo que se piensa con lo que se oye, con lo que se añora, con la hora que es, con lo que se ha venido a hacer aquí’ (119). Letters give the writer great freedom as they do not follow a particularly strict form. At the same time, the use of letters in literature has also served authors to give their characters authenticity, and give themselves the freedom to write with different voices. As Manuel Alberca indicates: ‘Junto al epistolar, el diario personal es el más habitual de los géneros autobiográficos, frecuentado por las personas anónimas’ (12).

The Epistolary Novel: Women as Object and Subject of the Discourse

The beginning of epistolary literature can be dated to the sixteenth century, when the familiar letter starts to be thought of as a literary genre. First, women started to write letters, writing manuals became more and more popular, even though the publication of letters written by women was still not seen in a good light.⁸⁶ As Goldsmith explains, authors from this period saw the possibility of introducing letters written by women into their narratives: ‘By the eighteenth century the practice of male authors appropriating the female voice in their fictions had become a popular and innovative narrative ploy’ (vii). Famous examples are *Les Lettres portugaises*, published in French in 1669,⁸⁷ with

⁸⁶ ‘To publish a woman’s letters, even if the purpose of publication was to praise female epistolary style, was in some way to violate her personal integrity. Published epistolary writing by women was therefore rarely signed, and was often in fact produced by male writers “imitating” the way women wrote.’ Goldsmith, p. vii.

⁸⁷ These Portuguese letters, as Claudio Guillén explains in *Múltiples moradas*, were thought, thanks to the effectiveness of the writing, to be authentic letters written by a young Portuguese woman from a convent: ‘Durante doscientos cincuenta años numerosos lectores en varios países creyeron a pies juntillas en la

Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* (1747-48) the par excellence example of eighteenth-century epistolary literature in English and *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (1782) in French.

From the sixteenth century there are examples of women publishing epistolary literature: Verónica Franco, is the sixteenth-century Italian representative; in the English seventeenth century Aphra Behn, one of the first women to earn her living as a writer, was the author of *Love-letters from a Nobleman to His Sister* (1684-87). In the eighteenth century there is Mary Manley with *Court Intrigues in a Collection of Original Letters from the Island of the New Atalantis & c.* (1711), Eliza Haywood with *Love in Excess* (1719), and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, with her *Turkish Letters* (1724),⁸⁸ all appearing in England. As Ruth Perry observes:

Educated women, too, now found it possible to make a living writing stories according to the popular formula, or publishing diaries or letters in a culture which thought it anomalous for a gentlewoman to produce anything more public. Women's writing, of course, was not taken seriously but thought of as a new, pleasant way for women to busy themselves. (16)

Letters in literature had a favourable reception during the eighteenth century, as they supposedly reflected authenticity, real lives. As Perry notes:

Middle-class readers could identify with characters who sat down to write letters which told of the agonies of love, or reported experiences of travelling, or revealed secrets, or gave advice, or arrange intrigues. [...] The language generally used in epistolary fiction was common rather than literary, and the characters who wrote news to their families or advice to their friends were all plausible types. (13-14)

In these novels, the 'editor' would write a preface to demonstrate the letters' authenticity, found or 'inherited', in which the reasons for their publication was also explained. This Practice was also used in the Spanish nineteenth-century novel, for example with *Pepita Jiménez* and in the early twentieth-century with Pío Baroja's *El mundo es así*. Perry explains the need to use this formula in eighteenth-century literature:

realidad de una mujer inexistente. El presupuesto que hizo posible este éxito excepcional de la ilusión de no ficcionalidad fue que la expresión totalmente creíble de un amor tan apasionado como el de la monja portuguesa no podía sino ser espontánea y verídica.' *Múltiples moradas: Ensayo de literatura comparada* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 1998), p. 227. Martín Gaité translated the letters, as was mentioned in the introduction, with the title *Cartas de amor de la monja portuguesa Mariana Alcoforado* (Madrid: Hiperión, 2000).

⁸⁸ See Perry, pp. 15-16.

Fictions [...] particularly those in letter form, were often passed off as historically true [...]. Because of the residual Puritan distaste for ‘falsehood’, as well as the new craze for scientific objectivity, the contemporary preference for stories of ‘real people’ dictated that much fiction be framed as first person writing: diaries, journals, travelogues, confessions, memoirs, autobiographies, and letters. (x-xi)

This way of authenticating the letters seemed to be necessary in the epistolary novels of the time. The desire to peep into other people’s lives without their knowledge are fulfilled when these letters are presented as written by others and published without the knowledge of the author of the letters. Perry notes: ‘Because letters reveal the self, reading the letters written and intended for other eyes is the most reprehensible invasion of privacy and consciousness in epistolary fiction’ (130). And it is presumably because of this that it gives us such pleasure. As Martín Gaité comments on the subject of letters and History: ‘Cualquier aviso de publicación de un epistolario póstumo despierta una mezcla de avidez y mala conciencia. Es como estarse asomando por la rendija de una puerta para sorprender la intimidad ajena.’⁸⁹

The epistolary novel, however, experienced a decline in the nineteenth century. Although letters still play an important part in some narratives, they will serve more as channels to past information or explanations of certain themes which may be taboo. As Martens explains:

It is well known that the epistolary novel enjoyed a tremendous volume of production until the end of the eighteenth century and then began to decline, [...] the intimate letter itself became passé. In the course of the nineteenth century it became less and less natural to confide the secrets of one’s heart to a friend. In the meantime a new genre, the secret journal, began to displace the letter in its function. (100)

However, the second part of the twentieth century sees a resurgence, although nothing like on the scale of the eighteenth century: letters have in this later period a more introspective and metafictional character.

As is well known, Carmen Martín Gaité spent long periods of her life in the archives studying the life of Melchor Rafael de Macanaz (1670-1760) and she researched the love customs of women in the eighteenth century. For both studies,

⁸⁹ *El cuento de nunca acabar* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1988), p. 248.

letters formed an important part of her research. With regard to the period when she was researching the life of Macanaz, the author commented on her feelings as she read the letters written by the statesman from prison:

Además de darme noticias acerca de aquella injusticia, que era lo que en principio me había intrigado, me empezó a dar noticias también de su alma, de sus obsesiones, de su envejecer. Me enteré del daño que le estaba haciendo aquella soledad de la que no quería darse cuenta, su situación de desplazado, de fantasma del pasado, que no acepta serlo, de hombre que habla para nadie. [...] Llegué a sentir que se dirigía a mí personalmente.⁹⁰

These studies of Macanaz's activities would have some influence on the novels the author wrote later, especially in *Lo raro es vivir*, where the protagonist Águeda is, like the author in the 1960s, researching the life of a historical character with a 'vida [...] novelesca'⁹¹ similar to that of Macanaz.

The interest in Macanaz's life, which Martín Gaité discovered mainly through the reading of his letters, led her not only to study this historical character but also the life and circumstances of the people who had any kind of relationship with him, names which appeared in the letters and other papers that Martín Gaité read in the archives. As the author noted in *La búsqueda de interlocutor*, this wish to know about one person brings the need to discover other people's lives: 'ocurre con los muertos como con los vivos, que es vicioso interesarse solamente por una persona en la vida, cerrándose a otras amistades, y que una historia particular, sin referirla a sus continuas interferencias con las de los demás, ni se entienden ni significan nada en absoluto' (60). In her 1990s novels it is possible to see the way one character (two in the case of *Nubosidad variable*) has the centre stage introducing through the telling of his or her story many other characters who will make sense of their lives. The possibility of friendship through literature is another of the aspects that the author talks about when reflecting on her years studying Macanaz: 'Nos hicimos un bien mutuo. Su trato me sacó de la prisa, y de muchas melancolías y agobios personales, aparte de los viajes que me llevó a emprender y las personas, vivas y muertas, que con ocasión suya conocí' (*La búsqueda de interlocutor*, 71). Finally, the author was also influenced by this study when writing her later work on the need to reflect. In an interview, Martín Gaité observed of her years

⁹⁰ Quoted in Federico Campbell, 'Carmen Martín Gaité: La búsqueda de interlocutor', in *Conversaciones con escritores* (Mexico D.F.: CONACULTA, Dirección General de Publicaciones, 2004), 231-40 (p. 238).

⁹¹ *El proceso de Macanaz: Historia de un empapelamiento* (Moneda y Crédito: Madrid, 1970), p. xix.

as a researcher on Macanaz: ‘[Saqué] de este trabajo una capacidad de reflexión y paciencia que no tenía.’⁹² As will be seen, in her 1990s novels reflective writing would be fundamental.

Reflective Writing: The Writing-Cure

In her *Cuadernos de todo* Martín Gaité affirms: ‘La mujer escribe para liberar su alma, hace un camino solitario y partiendo de cero (a tuestas) hacia el autoanálisis’ (605). Or as Ciplijauskaité comments: ‘El recurso de la primera persona sirve, además, como el modo más adecuado para la indagación psicológica. La narrativa adquiere puntos de contacto con procedimientos psicoanalíticos.’⁹³ Following up the theme of women as writers of diaries and letters, Perry’s study gives a number of suggestions about the psychoanalytical function of that kind of writing, for as will be seen, as women write they reflect constantly on their lives. Reflection, as will be seen in this study, is fundamental to Martín Gaité’s characters of her 1990s novels. Isolation and solitude are key themes in her literary work and are also present in her *Cuadernos de todo*. And as Perry points out, these are fundamental for the character’s self-examination:

The isolation of the characters is essential to the epistolary formula because it throws the characters back into themselves, to probe their own thoughts, their own feelings. [...] What the characters enact in their seclusion is at the core epistolary novel: a self-conscious and self-perpetuating process of emotional self-examination. (117)

Or, as Martín Gaité says: ‘Para escribir hay que partir de la soledad. Por eso las mujeres, cuando se enfrentan a ella sin paliativos, están más dotadas que nadie para explorar esa condición que – de ingrata como padecida – puede pasar a ser riqueza como explorada’ (*Cuadernos*, 607). In the case of letters, as Perry continues, this reflection is transmitted to the interlocutor: ‘In epistolary fiction, then, writing letters is a way of at least sharing oneself with another, and perhaps even creating a version of the self for the occasion’ (135). This will be seen, for example, in the relationship between Sofía and Mariana, the friends in *Nubosidad variable*.

⁹² Quoted in Biruté Ciplijauskaité, *Carmen Martín Gaité (1925-2000)* (Madrid: Ediciones del Orto, 2000), p. 27.

⁹³ *La construcción del Yo femenino en la literatura* (Cádiz: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad, 2004), p. 170.

On the other hand, as Caballé observes, diarists need not only solitude but also a moment of crisis, or an experience of some kind of depression or lack of communication in order to feel the need to pick up the pen:

Se ha repetido en numerosas ocasiones que la noche y la soledad, cierta tristeza de ánimo, las dificultades e insatisfacciones de la vida resultan ser las condiciones más favorables a la escritura diarística. [...] Tal vez lo contrario no tenga demasiado sentido: los estados de euforia y bienestar reclaman ser vividos intensamente y en eso agotan su potencial realizador, mientras que la falta de correspondencia entre lo íntimo y lo ajeno es el mimbre más adecuado para tejer la meditación que, de una manera u otra, requiere el hecho de escribir un diario.⁹⁴

Martín Gaité's characters of her 1990s novels are seen trying to recover from some event in their lives, which has been the catalyser of their writing, and understand themselves better, taking night and solitude as their companion. All of her characters go through a moment of crisis in their lives which makes them stop and think about their present situation; isolation, solitude, and the need to communicate will trigger reflection. Thus Leonardo, in *La Reina de las Nieves*, after leaving prison finds out about his parents' death; Sofía and Mariana in *Nubosidad variable*, meet at a party after having lost contact during their youth; her mother's death (and the birth of her own daughter) is what brings Águeda to write her life in *Lo raro es vivir*; her second husband's death is for Amparo Miranda, in *Irse de casa*, what triggers her need for autoanalysis. In every case, these events will make the protagonists take decisions for the first time in their lives, and writing will help them to understand their situation and be able to go on. They are in Perry's words: 'People whose urge to communicate takes the form of writing' (xii).

Cuadernos de todo reveals how some events in Martín Gaité's life also catalysed her writing. There are the pages written in USA after her daughter's death; the recurrent dreams after her parents' death; the impossibility of continuing with some projects after the death of a friend. But what is apparent is the help that writing about these feelings brings to the author. As Rita Felski observes: 'El diario [...] está frecuentemente originado por un momento de crisis particularmente de la autora del mismo. El texto

⁹⁴ 'Ego tristis', p. 100.

aparece totalmente inmerso en la experiencia de ésta y, por el hecho de seguir el ritmo vital.⁹⁵

There are other authors who use the diaries in such a way. For example, Elena Soriano wrote *Testimonio materno* after her son's death. She observes: 'Este libro no pertenece a ningún género literario determinado. Es un híbrido de varios diferentes [...]. Apuntes deshilvanados, sin fecha.'⁹⁶ Also, Lolita Bosch published *La persona que fuimos* in 2006, a book begun only a few days after her painful separation from her boyfriend. The author comments:

'No es que esas cosas te curen, sólo dejan que te expliques lo que ha pasado. Cuando después de una larguísima relación te quedas sola, es como si te hubieran soltado en el vacío y sólo quieres explicarte qué ha pasado, por qué estás ahí, sola', así que escribes.⁹⁷

Others, such as C.S. Lewis, wrote diaries to overcome the death of a loved one. *A Grief Observed* (1961), written after Lewis's wife died, was translated by Martín Gaité and published in 1994 under the title *Una pena en observación*.⁹⁸ So when the writers or the protagonists take the story of their life in their own hands they reach a moment of understanding: 'entender su vida y su personalidad desde una percepción individual, sin necesidad de confirmación externa.'⁹⁹ When this kind of reflective writing is taken up by women it has been seen by some critics as subversive, as women go from being the objects of their stories to being the narrators and the protagonists of those stories. As Margaret McLaren observes:

Since the 1970s, there has been an explosion of women's autobiography. Women's autobiography has a special place in the feminist canon. It is significant for at least two reasons; it allows the woman to speak for herself, and it draws on her own experience. Autobiography is a form of self writing that demonstrate the self's active self-constitution.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Quoted in Ballesteros, p. 123.

⁹⁶ *Testimonio materno* (Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1986), p. 9. In this book the author analyses certain problems young people in Spanish society are confronting, especially problems with drugs, which will also be seen in some of Martín Gaité's novels.

⁹⁷ Cited by Laura Fernández, 'Lolita Bosch explora «la intimidad» en un libro autobiográfico', *El Mundo*, 6 October 2006, <<http://www.elmundo.es/papel/2006/10/06/catalunya/2034149.html>>

⁹⁸ This book was given to Martín Gaité by one of her students at Vassar College during the autumn of 1985, after her daughter's death. See Teruel, 'Un contexto biográfico', p. 145.

⁹⁹ Quoted in Ballesteros, p. 30.

¹⁰⁰ *Feminism, Foucault and Embodied Subjectivity* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), pp. 151-52.

Or as Ciplijauskaitė observes, with regard to the contemporary feminine novel: ‘En muchas de estas novelas la protagonista no sólo es mujer, sino además escritora: se trata de una emancipación en dos niveles diferentes. Al autoanálisis se une el problema de la expresión. [...] un camino hacia la auto-realización.’¹⁰¹ On the subject of diaries and memoirs Verónica Luna comments:

Debido a su carácter de intimidad, como una interacción del ‘yo’ con el mundo, como una división entre lo público y lo privado, muchos personajes se refugiaron en la privacidad del diario para expresar su verdad ante la vida y su tiempo. [...] Éstos no sólo servían para descargar la memoria sino también como un instrumento de autocontrol y conocimiento de sí mismo, asumiendo su práctica una especie de examen de conciencia.¹⁰²

And Ballesteros, with regard to Spanish feminine writing, says: ‘El diario es el espacio que favorece el psicoanálisis’ (32).

In some novels the protagonists are writing on the advice of their psychiatrist, or, in the case of *La Regenta*, Ana Ozores is fostered by her spiritual tutor. In *Nubosidad variable*, the psychiatrist, Mariana, advises her friend Sofía to write. This type of writing is what María José Palma Borrego has called ‘relato de cura femenino’. She notes: ‘En general, podemos decir que el “relato de cura femenino” introduce en la autobiografía femenina una temática específica, a saber, la confrontación de un “sujeto femenino” hembra con la muerte y su reconstrucción como sujeto de deseo.’¹⁰³

However the ‘reconstrucción como sujeto de deseo’ will surely not be the goal these women want to reach. Their main goal is to take control of their own lives.

Marlene Schiwy, gives a list of psychologists and psychiatrists who encourage their patients to write a diary, to help them from one session to the next, recovering in that way certain memories and reaching an understanding of their present situation. Schiwy also recommends diary-writing even if one is not in therapy: ‘You don’t have to be in therapy to experience the powerful healing benefits of keeping a diary. Through consistent and honest journal writing, you can become your own therapist.’¹⁰⁴ Even

¹⁰¹ *La novela femenina contemporánea (1970-1985): Hacia una tipología de la narración en primera persona* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 1994), p. 13.

¹⁰² ‘Diario, memorias y crónica’, *Correo del Maestro*, 122 (2006), <<http://www.correodelmaestro.com/antiores/2006/julio/anteaula122.htm>>

¹⁰³ ‘La autobiografía psicoanalítica femenina o el “relato de cura” femenino’, in *Autobiografía en España: Un balance*, ed. by Celia Fernández and María Ángeles Hermosilla (Madrid: Visor, 2004), 533-40 (p. 534).

¹⁰⁴ *A Voice of Her Own: Women and the Journal-Writing Journey* (New York: Fireside, 1996), p. 120.

though writing a diary cannot be compared to psychoanalysis, what is evident in Martín Gaité's characters and in her own diaries, is how writing will help as a *tabla de salvación* (in the author's words) or as writing cure in moments of difficulty. But not only writing will help in such moments: reading what one wrote will give the diarists an external perspective of the feelings, making the understanding of problems easier, looking at them in perspective and being able to take decisions on the steps needed to be taken to change the situation.

Not only diaries help to overcome these situations. Letters written in moments of isolation, can also be a benefit. As Foucault observes: 'The letter one writes acts, through the very action of writing, upon the one who addresses it, just as it acts through reading and rereading on the one who receives it' (214). He goes on to say that this type of writing, correspondence, was the first kind of 'narrative of the self'; in the letter one 'reviews one's day', in Foucault's words, this is a clear practice of 'self-examination' (219). Books such as *The Writing Cure: How Expressive Writing Promotes Health and Emotional Well-Being* (2002),¹⁰⁵ show a series of alternative treatments for not only psychological concerns but also physical illnesses, such as cancer. Perhaps one of the best literary examples of the use of psychoanalysis and writing as therapy is Marie Cardinal's *Les Mots pour le dire* (1975). In this autobiographical work, the author, having spent years under psychiatric treatment, decides to try psychoanalysis and write the novel which will later be published. Gunthórunn Gudmundsdóttir comments on this work: 'All of Cardinal's descriptions of writing talk of joy, freedom, and independence. It is a continuation of the importance she places on words in her autobiography and how, as in psychoanalysis, one can use them to cure oneself.'¹⁰⁶

Entering the 'inside', as Béatrice Didier calls it, helps the writers to find themselves and be born again:

Ce retour au-dedans est plus ou moins clairement assimilé à une seconde naissance. [...] Cette deuxième naissance, d'autre part, est une naissance à la parole, ou du moins à l'écriture du journal, transcription du discours intérieur. Ainsi s'opère la découverte de l'identité et du "je".¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Stephen J. Lepore and Joshua M. Smith, eds, *The Writing Cure: How Expressive Writing Promotes Health and Emotional Well-Being* (Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 2002).

¹⁰⁶ *Borderlines: Autobiography and Fiction in Postmodern Life Writing* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), p. 135.

¹⁰⁷ *Le Journal intime*, pp. 90-91.

As will be seen, diary and letter-writing, as well as other kinds of writing of the 'I', will help Martín Gaité and her characters to close painful periods of their lives and start anew.

Diaries and Letters in Contemporary Spanish Women's Writing

Diaries and letters nowadays enjoy great freedom and openness, freedom which in past centuries was limited by stylistic restrictions, critiques and censorship. Although in Spain most published diaries are written by male authors, it has become more common to see female writers' diaries in bookshops. From the first part of the twentieth century Rosa Chacel's, María Zambrano's or Zenobia Camprubí's diaries are available, with Camprubí's last diary, *Diario 3*, appearing in 2006. Memoirs have also begun to be an important part of literature published by women in Spain.

From the 1980s the proliferation of diaries and memoirs has been constant. In fiction there are also a great number of novels using diaries and letters as vehicles to develop the narrative. For example, Lucia Etxebarria's *Un milagro en equilibrio* (2004), uses the form letter-diary-memoir written to the daughter. In Carme Riera's *La mitad del alma* (2003), the mother's letters are interwoven with the daughter's diary, written while she looks for answers about a moment in her mother's life she was unaware of.¹⁰⁸ Works such as Laura Freixas's *Último domingo en Londres* (1997), where the letters and diaries written by four friends alternate in the narrative, give the reader different points of view for their story. Soledad Puértolas writes two autobiographical texts, *Recuerdos de otra persona* (1996) and *Con mi madre* (2001). In Josefina Aldecoa's *Porque éramos jóvenes* (1986), the letters written to David channelled the story, and *La enredadera* (1984) again presents a story told from two different points of view, although the letters in this novel are never written. In Rosa Montero's *La función Delta* (1981), the diary and the memoirs of the protagonist, ill with cancer, alternate.

Other texts have a clearer autobiographical root, for example, Rosa Regàs's *Ginebra* (1987), where the author tells of her years in the city working as an interpreter,

¹⁰⁸ Kathleen M. Glenn, on the subject of Carme Riera's narrative, comments: 'Se ha afirmado, con notable desprecio, que mientras los hombres escriben libros, las mujeres garabatean cartas. Sin embargo, Riera, como muchas de sus contemporáneas – Rodoreda, Mayoral, Montero, Carmen Martín Gaité, Montserrat Roig y Ana Maria Moix – reivindica el valor literario de la carta.' 'Voz, marginalidad y seducción en la narrativa breve de Carme Riera', in *Literatura y feminismo en España (S.XV-XXI)*, ed. by Lisa Vollendorf (Barcelona: Icaria, 2005), 339-52 (p. 348).

and *Diario de una abuela de verano* (2004), in which the author narrates her memoirs (taken from her diaries) of the summers spent in her country house looking after her grandchildren, while her children stayed in the city working. In 2001 Cristina Fernández Cubas published *Cosas que ya no existen* (2001), a collection of short stories which, as the author says, she does not want to call ‘memoirs’ and instead calls ‘libro personal’ or ‘un libro de recuerdos’.¹⁰⁹ Memoirs, true or partially fictional, have also seen a revival in the last few years. Josefina Aldecoa wrote her memoirs, publishing *En la distancia* in 2004 after having published *Confesiones de una abuela* (1998). Rosa Montero’s *La loca de la casa* (2003), Laura Freixas’ *Adolescencia en Barcelona hacia 1970* (2007), and Esther Tusquets’ *Habíamos ganado la guerra* (2007) also serve as examples.

In Esther Tusquets’ *Correspondencia privada* (2001), the author published four letters, the first one written to her mother, ‘Carta a la madre’ (published in *Madres e hijas*), and a further three to former love or lovers: ‘Carta a mi primer amor’, ‘Carta a Eduardo’ and ‘Carta a Esteban’. Carme Riera’s *Tiempo de espera* (1998), published in catalan as *Quadern d’una espera*, tells of the author’s pregnancy, while in *Cuestión de amor propio* (1988), *Questio D’amor Propi* (1987), a single letter constitutes the novel. Of this novel Kathleen M. Glenn comments:

Riera rompe la tradición literaria y elige para su protagonista una mujer de cuarenta y ocho años. [...] Las mujeres mayores de [...] [treinta años] están relegadas generalmente a papeles secundarios de madre, tía, abuela o madrastra, y aparecen retratadas como malhumoradas, hipócritas, avariciosas y enfrentadas con las mujeres jóvenes.¹¹⁰

While many contemporary authors use the diary or letter strategy to present their characters to the reader, to make them, in some ways, more human, it should be noted that Carme Riera sees this as mere commercial strategy. In an interview she gave in 1982 she commented:

‘Yo me sé la receta para un best-seller de mujeres’ [...] ‘Puede ser, por ejemplo el diario de una escritora, hecho con un poco de feminismo pero no mucho, algo de sentimentalismo, un punto erótico, pero muy leve, algunas relaciones confusas, porque lo del aborto ya está un poco pasado, y un lenguaje sencillito,

¹⁰⁹ *Cosas que ya no existen* (Barcelona: Lumen, 2001), pp. 12, 13.

¹¹⁰ ‘Voz, marginalidad’, p. 349.

muy denotativo.’ Con estos ingredientes, dice Carmen Riera, ‘se puede garantizar la venta de muchos miles de ejemplares.’¹¹¹

Conclusion

Letters and diaries have an important function as channels to make women’s voices present at moments when it would be difficult to be heard. Letters and diaries have, over the centuries, been closely linked to women and their writing. The idea of taking an expression of writing which relates to women and turning it into a form of feminine writing could be seen as subversive – as some critics such as Patrick Paul Garlinger have suggested:

The longstanding link between letters and women’s writing – a means of keeping women from the masculine-dominated domain of literature, some might argue – has been revalorized in contemporary feminist studies as a mode of rescuing and recuperating the suppressed voices of women. [...] In recent studies of epistolary fiction, Anee Bower and Diane Cousineau have upheld the longstanding notion that the letter can function as a space for women writers, where writing can become a means of reconstructing oneself as a subject.¹¹²

Or in Ciplijauskaité words: ‘Escribir se vuelve igual a crearse.’¹¹³ In the same way, it will be seen with Martín Gaité’s work that writing the self is fundamental for women to take control of their own stories. Ballesteros writes: ‘La mujer se convierte en sujeto de discurso, rompiendo con la tradición discursiva masculina que la relega generalmente al papel de objeto de la representación’ (5).

Writing a diary can serve as therapy, the writing-cure. Carmen Martín Gaité writes, reflecting on Katherine Mansfield’s diaries: ‘Estoy segura que la meditación es el mejor remedio para la enfermedad de mi espíritu, para su falta de dominio sobre sí mismo’ (*Cuadernos*, 458). With regard to the writing of one’s own life, she writes: ‘Contar alivia de ese peso insoportable con que nos abruma lo meramente padecido, nos convierte en protagonistas, nos ayuda a sobrevivir y a rechazar’ (*El cuento de nunca*

¹¹¹ Cited by Rosa María Pereda in ‘Carmen Riera, “Yo me sé la receta para un ‘best-seller’ de mujeres”’: Se presentó su novela “Una primavera para Domenico Guarini”’, *El País* 3 February 1982. <http://www.elpais.com/articulo/cultura/ORTEGA/_SOLEDAD_/NO_USAR/Carmen/Riera/receta/best-seller/mujeres/elpepicul/19820203elpepicul_6/Tes/>

¹¹² *Confessions of the Letter Closet*, pp. 32-33.

¹¹³ *La novela femenina*, p. 20.

acabar, 122). In *Nubosidad variable* Mariana asks Sofía to write and this self-reflective writing helps her to go through difficult times. In the case of Leonardo of *La Reina de las Nieves* it is possible to see the fascination the author felt for the diary as a cure.

The epistolary novel takes the reader closer to ‘real’ characters, while the publication of diaries puts the reader in contact with the more human side of the public persona. These types of narrative, real or fictional, lead the reader to the interior of people, to their deeper thoughts and feelings, and at the same time these types of writing allow writers to view themselves from the outside, reflected as they are in their text as if it were a mirror. As Didier comments:

Le journal peut créer un phénomène de dédoublement sur lequel nous allons revenir; il peut donc être à lui seul, par rapport à l’écrivain, cet autre dont le regard est un miroir. [...] Miroir, reflet, regard, sont des termes qui reviennent souvent sous la plume des diaristes, parce qu’ils répondent à une réalité.¹¹⁴

Even though in Spain well into the twentieth century women did not publish their diaries, while epistolary or diary novels were normally published by men, there has been a great increase in the number of female authors publishing either life-writing novels or their own diaries and memoirs since the 1980s. This new phenomenon is seen by some as a formula to create a best-seller, even though the reason for those kinds of novel to become best-sellers may be the way they portray women taking control over their own lives. In Martín Gaité’s case, not only will her characters take control of their lives through their reflective writing, they will also be seen as small pieces of a broken mirror which reveal the author. As will be seen, in some ways, through the writing of her characters the author also reached her own *tabla de salvación*.

¹¹⁴ *Le Journal intime*, p. 113.

CHAPTER 2

LETTERS AND DIARIES IN CARMEN MARTÍN GAITE'S WORK

In the 1990s, Carmen Martín Gaité had a spectacular resurgence, this decade being her most prolific in terms of number of novels published and number of readers. As was mentioned in the introduction, after her first novels, published in the 1950s and 1960s, Martín Gaité had a long period spent as a historical and cultural researcher, and as a critic and essayist. The author described, in some interviews made in the 1960s, her discontent with the novel, both as a reader and a writer: 'Me aburrí de novelas, de leerlas y de escribirlas. [...] Empecé a sentir la necesidad de enterarme de algunas verdades. La historia de España, por ejemplo, la conocía de un modo deficiente y superficial.'¹¹⁵ This period, the early 1960s, also sees the beginning of her *Cuadernos de todo*. She comments: 'A partir de esta novela (*Ritmo lento*) comencé a interrogarme sobre las cosas e inauguré lo que yo llamo **Cuadernos de todo** que son blocks donde anoto lo que se me ocurre y de donde he sacado material.'¹¹⁶

Martín Gaité's 1990s novels reveal a noticeable degree of projection of the author in her characters. All the characters in her novels show some similarities to the author: either with regard to her obsession with the redecoration of her house (with a marked critique of consumerist society and the need to renovate and hoard even when there is no need), or concerning writer's block. Even though it is not exactly true that all her characters keep a *cuaderno de todo*, it remains that writing is an important part of their lives. All her characters look to other characters in novels or fairy tales with whom

¹¹⁵ Campbell, pp. 235-36.

¹¹⁶ Quoted by Mercedes Carbayo Abengózar, *Buscando un lugar entre mujeres: Buceo en la España de Carmen Martín Gaité* (Málaga: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad, 1998), p. 88.

they identify, making these novels intertextual and metafictional, novels in which writing or its difficulty is foregrounded. These novels use diaries and letters and reflective writing as narrative forms, either for the protagonists to be able to understand their present situation, or to show others their need for self-discovery. The protagonists of the 1990s novels, in contrast to those of her other novels, spend many hours in complete solitude, giving free rein to their thoughts and reflections on their lives and their future and, in every case, they change their lives as result of these long hours of reflection. These protagonists find in their writing a means of therapy through which they are able to analyse their deepest traumas, and which allows them to make decisions and change their lives.

Letters and diaries had already been part of Martín Gaité's narratives of earlier decades but without such a clear effect on the actions of the protagonists. On many occasions, through her essays and notations, the author put down her ideas on the importance of letters and diaries. For her, to write a letter was one of the easiest ways of writing and there are letters throughout her work. As she writes in *El cuento de nunca acabar*, one only needs to sit down and start describing the place from where one is writing for other thoughts to start streaming out. The best way to write a letter is in complete solitude, as she explains in her *Cuadernos de todo*: 'así se escriben las cartas buenas, como las que yo escribía en estado de trance, cuando todo el silencio de la casa me arropaba y se volvía música' (216). From her first short stories, letters, written or received, are present. In some cases they form an important part of the narrative. In others, there are simple mentions of not much obvious importance, but they always serve to indicate contrasts or reflect on the situation of the protagonist. So, in 'Ya ni me acuerdo' (1962),¹¹⁷ the letter that the girl from the country writes to the film-maker suggests a contrast between life in the city and in the country. In 'Las ataduras' (1959) (*Cuentos completos*, 89-135), Alina writes a postcard to her parents telling them about her happiness. Although the reader can see how different reality is, there is once more a contrast between truth and lies, between life in a Galician village and in a city like Paris. In 'Un alto en el camino' (1958) (*Cuentos completos*, 136-48), the lack or the prohibition of letters written abroad suggests the censorship of the postwar period. In this story it is the husband who forbids his new wife to communicate with her sister who lives in France. In another story, the idea of not having an interlocutor for the

¹¹⁷ *Cuentos completos* (Madrid: Alianza, 1989), pp. 73-88.

letters is what makes them part of the story. So in ‘Los informes’ (1954) (*Cuentos completos*, pp. 294-308), the maid looking for work in the city thinks of her recently deceased mother who will not be there to receive her news.¹¹⁸ Elsewhere, a promised letter which is never written makes us aware of class difference: in ‘La chica de abajo’ (1953) (*Cuentos completos*, 274-93), the daughter of a concierge awaits the letter that her friend promised to write before she moved to another town.

The use of diaries as a narrative strategy emerges in Martín Gaité’s first novel, *Entre visillos* (1957). The novel is divided into chapters with first-person or third-person narration. With a good number of characters, it is mainly narrated by the voices of two protagonists, Natalia and Pablo Klein, who, through the writing of their diaries (or first-person reflections in the case of Klein) give a point of view from their different social positions. Natalia’s diary opens the novel, while Pablo’s closes it. Natalia presents an internal point of view, as a young woman who has to fight repression and lack of freedom in provincial Spain of the 1940s. As Joan Lipman Brown comments: ‘The young hero Natalia’s older sister and their friends personify this status [“women exist only to be acted on by men” S.M. Gilbert and S. Gubar, 1979, p. 8]. Lacking any means of self-actualization, they seem indistinguishable from one another. [...] Only Natalia shows promise of formulating and expressing her own ambitions.’¹¹⁹ Natalia’s diary gives her a voice which other female protagonists lack,¹²⁰ their conversations being mere background noise. Natalia, however, is capable of putting her thoughts in writing and crossing the barriers of silence imposed by society. As Carbayo Abengózar comments, with her diary Natalia ‘evita la incomunicación y se confirma a sí misma adquiriendo una confianza que le va a llevar a enfrentarse a su padre’.¹²¹ Natalia’s diary serves as the repository of the circumstances the protagonist is going through and as a way of relieving her frustration and incomprehension of the society she has to live in. Even so, Natalia is still too young to be able to reflect on her past in the way that the protagonists of the 1990s novels will do.

¹¹⁸ Later in life, Martín Gaité reflected on the same idea after her parents’ death. See ‘Bosquejo autobiográfico’, *Agua pasada*, p. 24.

¹¹⁹ Joan Lipman Brown, ‘The Challenge of Martín Gaité’s Woman Hero’, in *Feminine Concerns in Contemporary Spanish Fiction by Women*, ed. by Roberto C. Manteiga, Carolyn Galerstein, and Kathleen McNerney (Potomac, MD: Scripta Humanistica, 1988), 86-98 (p. 88).

¹²⁰ With the publication of the manuscript *La charca* (1955), it is possible to see how the author did not include Natalia in the first drafts of her novel and how the inclusion came after her daughter’s birth in 1956.

¹²¹ *Buscando un lugar*, p. 67.

Just as C. in *El cuarto de atrás* explains how she used to show her diary to her childhood friend, Tali (Natalia) in *Entre visillos*, shows hers to her best friend, Alicia. Even though in *Entre visillos* Tali feels ashamed of this, as the difference in social class between the two friends impels her friend to understand the things she writes about, which are, in Tali's opinion, too vain. As Alicia comments: 'nuestra vida va a ser muy distinta. Basta ver las cosas que escribes tú, y lo que piensas y eso. Verás cómo luego, dentro de un par de años, no seremos amigas ya, no lo podremos ser.'¹²²

Pablo's narrative, on the other hand, gives an external point of view, the point of view of a foreigner who finds the repression and the rules which drive Spanish society difficult to understand. Pablo holds the reins of the novel, being the narrator of seven of the eighteen chapters, interwoven with Tali's diary and the voice of the extradiegetic narrator, who is witness to the conversations of the rest of the characters. His story serves as a contrast to that of the inhabitants of the town and when he decides to leave, his return home does not suggest much hope for the future of life in a provincial town. In Natalia's case, at the end of the narrative some things have changed and she seems to be strong enough to confront her father, even though her future is still uncertain: 'De lo de mi carrera no le he dicho nada. Me he dormido muy tarde haciendo diario' (230).

Julia, Natalia's sister, writes and receives letters from her boyfriend, who lives in Madrid. These letters are their only way of communicating, as every brief encounter they have is full of confrontations and regrets. The letters show their love and Julia's taste for melodrama: 'Sobre la A cayó una lágrima. La dejó empapar el papel y luego la corrió un poco con el pañuelo. Hacía bonito' (110). They also show the difficulties of a relationship at a distance, where the time lapse between the letter written and the letter received makes understanding each other's feelings difficult. There are other letters in the narrative, such as the one sent by Elvira to Pablo: 'casi una declaración de amor' (95). In the letter Elvira is able to say things that she will never be able to repeat in front of Pablo.

After six years without another novel, *Ritmo lento* appeared in 1963, but to a lukewarm reception.¹²³ This novel could be classified as a psychological novel, in which the protagonist, David Fuentes, reflects on his life and the circumstances which

¹²² *Entre visillos* (Barcelona: Destino, 2002), p. 221.

¹²³ Drowned by the success of Mario Vargas Llosa's *La ciudad y los perros* (1963) and the Latin-American boom, Martín Gaité commented in an interview that from that year on, literary attention in Spain turned towards the Latin-American novel. See Carmen Martín Gaité's interview *A Fondo*, <<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=8932946931150749996>>

have made him end up in a psychiatric hospital. Using a form of psychoanalytical therapy, the psychiatrist encourages him to talk about his past. Indeed, David seems to be writing his past, although it is unclear whether he is actually taking notes or only thinking about that past. At times, the protagonist makes references to his notebooks or to notes he is taking or needs to take.¹²⁴ He speaks, for example, of the papers he has in front of him, which were soaked by the rain when he left the window open (89). On another occasion he comments on the notes he took, in notebooks which remind us of the author's:

En aquel cuaderno, que empecé llamando 'el cuaderno fichero', terminé por anotar todas las incertidumbres provocadas en mí por el tema del empleo del tiempo y relacionadas de algún modo con él, las cuales anotaciones al cabo se desbordaron de su condición marginal e invadieron todo el ámbito del cuaderno. Así que cuando este primero se gastó, me vi obligado a sustituirlo por otro y aquel por uno más. (101)

At the same time that the protagonist reflects on his past he makes a critique of the situation in Spanish society, especially women's roles in the 1960s. There is a clear parallel with the author's own critique in her first *Cuadernos de todo*. Also, letters appear in the narrative to mark key moments in David's life: 'David's first-person narrative opens with the arrival of a letter from Lucía. His monologue closes the same way [...], with the receipt of another letter, this time from his father.'¹²⁵ In fact, in the prologue David refers to the first letter, which opens the protagonist's story. After this short prologue, in the first chapter, David starts relating the arrival of a letter written by his ex-girlfriend, Lucía. Through a detailed analysis of the letter, he starts taking the reader into his world. His father's letter is a cry for help to which David responds too late, finding his father dead from an overdose after returning from the psychiatric hospital. This way of opening and closing the novel gives letters an important presence in the narrative. Although the letters, as well as the self-reflective cure David is going through, will not change his personality, this is the first novel in which the author used self-reflective writing to great effect.

After this novel, as has been noted, Martín Gaité decided to spend time researching Spanish history and cultural history. She studied the life of Melchor de

¹²⁴ *Ritmo lento* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1984), p. 37.

¹²⁵ Joan Lipman Brown, *Secrets from the Back Room: The Fiction of Carmen Martín Gaité* (Valencia: University of Mississippi, 1987), pp. 87-88.

Macanaz, publishing *El proceso de Macanaz: Historia de un empapelamiento* in 1970 (later re-edited as *Macanaz, otro paciente de la Inquisición* in 1975). Later, using material researched for her doctoral thesis, ‘Lenguaje y estilo amorosos en los textos del siglo XVIII español’ (1972), she published in the same year *Usos amorosos del dieciocho en España*. This work looks at the extramarital customs of Spanish women in that century, examining, for example, the ‘situación y papel de las mujeres en la sociedad’,¹²⁶ ‘los albores de la sociedad de consumo’ (21) and ‘el problema del aburrimiento femenino’ (21-22), themes which can be found in her notebooks and later novels. Subsequently, *El Conde de Guadalhorce, su época y su labor* (1977) was commissioned by the Ministerio de Obras Públicas and in the *Cuadernos de todo*, *Cuaderno 16*, there is a logbook or *cuaderno de bitácora*, on the day-to-day development of the research for this work (notes from the 27 April to 30 May 1976), so adding another dimension to her ‘diaries’.

The influence of the years Martín Gaité spent researching in archives and libraries, and the many letters read during the research, would have been important to her when using diaries and letters as a form to thread the narrative in her later novels. Indeed, in *La búsqueda de interlocutor*, the author comments on the reading of Macanaz’s letters:

¡Cuánto escribió en su vida Don Melchor de Macanaz! Cartas y más cartas a ministros en candelero, a púrpura dos romanos, a amigos perdidos, a confesores del rey y de la reina, a hermanos y sobrinos que dejó en la provincia o en Madrid, cartas farragosas y justificatorias desde distintos tiempos y países. (62)

She also refers to the most important moment in the research, when Macanaz ‘talked’ to her for the first time:

En una de aquellas cartas demenciales y obsesivas de su vejez, escrita en París, me parece, Macanaz, una mañana, me habló por primera vez directamente. [...] se quedó mirando al futuro de sus papeles, tuvo miedo a la caducidad de cuanto estaba diciendo, miedo a estar hablando en el vacío para nadie. Era la primera vez que yo lo veía así y me sobrecogió. (69-70)

She comments on what reading his letters, written from exile, meant for her: ‘además de darme noticias de aquella injusticia, que era lo que en principio me había intrigado, me

¹²⁶ *Usos amorosos del dieciocho en España* (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores, 1972), pp. 2-3.

empezó a dar noticias también de su alma, de sus obsesiones, de su envejecer.¹²⁷ One of the novels in which this influence can be clearly seen, as was seen in Chapter 1, is *Lo raro es vivir*, where the protagonist is a historical researcher whose investigation is into the life of Luis Vidal y Villalba, a character from the eighteenth century on whom Martín Gaité intended to develop a project.

After her works on political and cultural history, Martín Gaité turned again to the publication of fiction, with novels that had been developed during her years in the archives. The first one was *Retahílas* (1974), in which the author uses dialogue as the narrative thread. Here, two characters, Eulalia and Germán, aunt and nephew, talk during one night about their lives. Waiting for the death of Eulalia's grandmother, both characters reflect on their present lives and the way they have reached this point. The chapters alternate, threading both stories through their shared memories, or through their doubts about certain events in their past. The dialogue use by Martín Gaité resembles a succession of monologues, as both aunt and nephew never interrupt each others speeches, starting their own monologue only when the other asks a question which is then answered. These monologues, at the same time, resemble a series of letters: the way they are written resembles answers to a letter, as if there has been time to formulate the answer. As Brown comments: 'The characters express themselves as if they actually were talking, although the format of their alternating discourses resembles the sending and answering of letters.'¹²⁸

Also, the language used is closer to written language, even though Eulalia comments on the difficulty of putting in writing the dialogue they are engaged in that night: 'fijate el esfuerzo que supondría escribir esto mismo que ahora te voy diciendo.'¹²⁹ In fact, the length of the chapters, of the monologues or 'retahílas', makes it impossible to read them as a dialogue between two real-life people. But as well as the dialogue-monologue-letter between Eulalia and Germán, there is the constant presence of the grandmother's trunk. This trunk, which the grandmother brought all the way to Galicia from Madrid to have next to her until her death, is full of letters, photographs and papers which constitute her whole life, her memories. Occasionally Eulalia

¹²⁷ Quoted in Campbell, p. 238.

¹²⁸ *Secrets from the Back Room*, p. 120.

¹²⁹ *Retahílas* (Barcelona: Destino, 2003), p. 74.

comments on the responsibility that inheriting those papers means to her, as she will not know what to do with them.¹³⁰

The two also talk about letters burned in moments of elation. This idea is repeated in other works by the author, who admits to having burned letters and papers in the same way as her characters, and who regards this burning as a kind of purifying ceremony. Germán tells Eulalia of the night when, with his ex-girlfriend, they decided to burn all their love letters, choosing Saint John's day – the night when in Spain the 'hogueras de San Juan' are celebrated. In contrast with the grandmother's papers which she takes with her to her deathbed, the strange pleasure of reading letters written in other moments of their lives is what Germán wants to erase: 'es una sensación muy rara volver a leer cosas tuyas que escribiste es un trance determinado, revive ruidos, colores, si te dolía o no la cabeza' (155). As will be seen in *Fragmentos de interior*, this way of clinging to the past, rereading old letters, can be very detrimental, impeding any continuation towards the future. This kind of renewal through the destruction of past manuscripts, which have a different meaning for later generations, suggests the times Spain was going through in the 1970s, when new generations were looking for change in a society that had been at a standstill for so long.

In *Fragmentos de interior* (1976), letters play an important role, especially for two of the characters in the novel: Agustina, the mother of Jaime and Isabel and Diego's ex-wife, and Luisa, the girl who comes from the country to work as a maid in Diego's house. Agustina takes refuge in the letters written by Diego when they first meet. She does not want to confront her present situation and even writes to Diego every day, as one of the maids comments: 'Hay temporadas que le da por escribirle dos al día y son todas iguales.'¹³¹ Agustina spends her days in bed reading and drinking gin with Diego's letters surrounding her. Some of these letters appear in Chapter 4 of the novel (41-42, 44-45). Agustina is a character living in the past who does not want to admit reality and who tells the same story over and over again to whoever is available to hear it. She is what her daughter calls 'un espécimen puro de narración única' (54). The need to cling to the past through the letters serves as a contrast, as was seen earlier, with the indifference that Germán shows when burning his love letters and with the burning of documents and other papers that the protagonist of *El cuarto de atrás* talks about. Since

¹³⁰ Martín Gaité knew years later what it was to inherit papers, letters and photographs from loved ones, first with her father's papers and then with her daughter's. See *Cuadernos de todo*, pp. 474, 612-13.

¹³¹ *Fragmentos de interior* (Barcelona: Destino, 1996), p. 88.

these two novels were written just before and after Franco's death, the reader is invited to think of the need for renewal that Spain was going through.

Diego seems to represent the author's alter ego. He used to be a researcher, who in his youth travelled to Coimbra thanks to a grant.¹³² He is also a writer, who, like Leonardo's father in *La Reina de las Nieves*, never gets to finish his novel, having a folder full of 'posibles comienzos'. In addition he is a parent who has a very good relationship with his daughter.¹³³ We see in Chapter 5, how father and daughter are able to talk freely and how the father feels comfortable in his daughter's bedroom, which he thinks is the most comfortable one in the house. He is going to use this room to start writing again, which also occurs with Sofía in *Nubosidad variable*, who writes in her daughter Encarna's bedroom. He also is a critic of the consumerist society that he finds himself part of because of his new romantic partner, Gloria, who on one occasion tells him, when she finds him looking through her papers: '¿No entiendes que los amantes de ahora ya no escriben cartas?' (11). Finally, he is a good letter-writer, as we see through access to the letters he wrote to his ex-wife. One of the notes that Diego reads when he decides to sit down and write says:

La situación de empezar era siempre la misma [...]. Rebuscar esforzadamente en el interior de uno mismo, después de muchas horas de debatirse en una yerma sábana de hastío y decir con una especie de reiterada compunción: 'Hay que hacer algo, hay que hacer algo por salir' (68-69).¹³⁴

And this thought, which Diego never manages to realise, is the one that will be passed on to the protagonists of the 1990s novels, who will be able to get out of the situation of monotony (*hastío*) and sadness (*compunción*) in which they find themselves at the beginning of the novels, after looking within through their reflective writing.

Luisa, on the other hand, reminds us of some of the characters of the author's first short stories: a young woman coming from the country to work as a maid in a house in the capital. She escapes some of the 1950s and 1960s parameters, in the way that, for her, working as a maid provides an excuse to travel to Madrid to find her lover, a film-maker, Gonzalo, whom she met in her village and to whom she writes passionate letters. Luisa has only one letter from Gonzalo, the single one he has written to her and

¹³² See *Fragmentos*, p. 54. It is well known that Martín Gaité had a grant to study in Coimbra, her first journey abroad. She mentions this in *El cuarto de atrás* (p. 42) and also *Agua pasada* (p. 17).

¹³³ The author comments on her relationship with her daughter: 'Mi hija es muy amiga, nos reímos mucho juntas y nos lo contamos todo', *Agua pasada*, p. 23.

¹³⁴ In *Cuadernos de todo* this way of encouraging oneself in moments of being stuck will be seen again.

which can be read in Chapter 8 (101). She discovers that Gonzalo never received her letters which she wrote daily, as he had moved house. She collects those letters and in a scene which reminds us of Agustina on her deathbed, Luisa reads the letters she wrote not that long before. Rereading the letters makes her wake up and decide to return to her village (after finding out that she is not pregnant), a resolution that suggests the difference between the generations living in Spain in the 1970s.

El cuarto de atrás (1978) has been described by Patrick-Paul Garlinger as an epistolary novel without letters: ‘At the risk of oversimplifying we might say that *El cuarto de atrás* is a lesbian novel without lesbians and an epistolary novel without letters.’¹³⁵ The blue letter which appears and disappears throughout the narrative gives rise to memories which add to the protagonist’s story, similar to the memories Germán talks about in *Retahílas*. Old letters, as well as bringing memories from the past, are a reminder of the inexorable passing of time and the arrival of old age, and that is why, as C. explains, she burned a large pile of papers and letters one day after reading a poem by Antonio Machado:

Me vi disparada a la vejez, condenada al vicio de repasar para siempre cartas sin perfume, con la tinta borrosa de tanto manosearlas y llorar sobre ellas y me entró un furor por destruir papeles como no recuerdo en mi vida; me levanté y me puse a sacar cartas y a vaciar el contenido del baulito, lo apilé todo ahí en el pasillo y lo fui tirando a la caldera de la calefacción sin mirarlo, una hora estuve y a cada puñado crecían las llamas, sabe Dios cuántos tesoros caerían. (46-47)

This shows a development in relation to Agustina’s attitude in *Fragmentos*: this can be seen as the first step in the new Spain moving towards the future. Here there are also references to the notebooks written by the author, explaining their function as a place to write ideas for new books and essays. The 1970s were some of the most productive years in Martín Gaité’s career as will be seen in Chapter 3, which deals with *Cuadernos de todo*.

After *El cuarto de atrás*, Martín Gaité did not publish another novel until the 1990s, even though during those years she never stopped working as a literary critic and essayist, and also published three books for children. Yet in *El castillo de las tres murallas* (1981) diaries are also important, with Serena writing of her dreams in a green

¹³⁵ *Confessions*, p. 36.

velvet notebook (similar to the one the author had when she was a child),¹³⁶ which will help Serena's daughter to understand her mother better. However, fundamental to the study of diaries, letters and reflective writing in Martín Gaité's work is *El cuento de nunca acabar* (1983). In this well received collection of essays Martín Gaité draws on years of reflection on the theme of narration, integrating incidents which happened to her during the years she was preparing the book. In this work, the author reflects on letters and diaries. In the third prologue, she comments on the easiness of writing letters:

Me parece muy sintomático, por ejemplo, el hecho de que en trances de acidia y empantamiento, lo que menos pereza dé sea ponerse a escribirle una carta a un amigo, al primero que se nos pase por la cabeza. Porque, claro, en una carta no se tiene por desdoro empezar describiendo la habitación de la fonda desde la cual elaboramos el mensaje ni si se oye el pitido de un tren a través de la ventana, ni si el empapelado de la pared es de florecitas amarillas con una greca malva en el remate. Circunstancias que, al ser consignadas en primer lugar, desplegarán su poder de convocatoria y hasta podrán llegar a marcar el texto de la carta misma, con lo cual acabarán contándose cosas que ni por lo más remoto se habían formulado en el propósito inicial y que surgen entrelazándose tan estrechamente con la descripción situacional que luego, en el texto resultante, será difícil separar lo que el remitente piensa y añora y ha venido a hacer a esta ciudad de lo que está viendo y oyendo. (33-34)

This technique will be used by the two protagonists of *Nubosidad variable*, making it, in their narrative, part of the rules they made up in their youth. Martín Gaité also refers to letters in the chapter titled 'Río revuelto', where, as the title indicates, she piles up a number of ideas in rough form, something also seen in *Cuadernos de todo*, referring to narration in a more or less direct way. In one of the sub-chapters titled 'Literatura epistolar', the author describes the emotion of receiving a personal letter and the way in which this emotion is recreated for readers of epistolary literature: 'hay una curiosidad irreprimible por meter las narices en correspondencias ajenas, por soñar que es uno aquel destinatario. (Tampoco lo es ya – por supuesto – el que relee, al cabo de los años, una carta vieja dirigida a ese otro que él era)' (247). There is also a reference to the relationship between letters and history, as was mentioned previously in the

¹³⁶ *El castillo de las tres murallas*, illustrated by Juan Carlos Eguillor (Barcelona: Lumen, 1991), p. 6.

discussion of *Macanaz* and *Usos amorosos del dieciocho*, and how epistolary material was an important part of her years of research in the archives: ‘Los archivos están plagados de cartas, que nos ayudan a componer, fragmentariamente, el rompecabezas de la historia’ (247).

In *El cuento de nunca acabar*, more than in any other book, the soul of the author’s notebooks is apparent. Prologue 5 is titled ‘Mis cuadernos de todo’ and in it Martín Gaité describes how these *cuadernos* became part of her life, a theme which will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter. In *El cuento* there are quotes taken from the notebooks and in some cases, as was seen in the third prologue, the author writes as if she were composing a diary: ‘Se me han ocurrido estas cosas porque hoy he estado ayudando a mi hija, que se examina de primero de letras’ (34). She even follows the diaristic form of writing the date: ‘Todavía no son las doce. Pongo la fecha: 21 de junio de 1974’ (37).

The difficulties of writing, a theme which also recurs in Martín Gaité’s notebooks, has a place in these essays. Such moments are what she calls ‘bache de empantanamiento’ (48). She includes in them not only thoughts she had after thinking of writing *El cuento*, but also reflections already written in her first *cuadernos de todo*, which she reads and copies years later: ‘No hay duda – escribía yo en uno de mis cuadernos de todo en 1964 – que lo que no voy escribiendo, por escribir se queda’ (53). In Chapter 3 there will be a more detailed consideration of the relationship between the *Cuadernos de todo* and *El cuento de nunca acabar*.

Desde la ventana (1987) is a compilation of essays based on talks given by the author at the Fundación Juan March in November 1986, entitled ‘El punto de vista femenino en la literatura española.’¹³⁷ In these talks the author reflected on women and literature or ‘La cuestión de si las mujeres tienen un modo particular de escribir’ (25), as she observes it in the opening words of her introduction to the book. There are a few comments on the subject of letters and diaries in literature written by women, as Emma Martinell Gifre notes in the prologue to the second edition:

En su soledad, hacen [las mujeres] de la carta o del diario su interlocutor que, si bien callado, acepta de buen grado el divagar de su mente, el vuelo de su fantasía, o el estallido de sus sentimientos contenidos. Martín Gaité indica lo

¹³⁷ *Desde la ventana* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1996), p. 33.

propicios que le han resultado siempre a la mujer el diario y las epístolas, formas en las que se encauza su capacidad creativa.¹³⁸

Examples of epistolary literature and diary writing, as Martín Gaité indicates, contribute to ‘un punto de vista femenino directo y en carne viva’ (116). Discussing the theme of women and love in literature, the author comments on how the need to give expression to desires makes women write letters to their loved ones: ‘Y es verdad que el amor, ya sea divino o humano, puede considerarse como uno de los principales acicates de la escritura femenina’ (58). However, she also points out that although ‘Pocas cartas de pasión se conservan escritas por mujeres reales’ (59), literature is full of examples of love letters supposedly written by women.

As was mentioned in Chapter 1, the author also believes that: ‘Sin duda que la forma epistolar ha debido ser para las mujeres la primera y más idónea manifestación de sus capacidades literarias’ (59). If the ideal interlocutor is not found, the ‘you’ in the love letter will be invented. An invented interlocutor shows, in Martín Gaité’s words, the relationship between letters and diaries: ‘El paso del “tú” real al “tú” inventado tiene su correlato literario en la transformación del género epistolar al pasar a otra modalidad también muy grata a la mujer introvertida: la del diario íntimo’ (60). In their personal diaries, women can create their own perfect love and write them letters full of emotions and sentiments. Yet in Spain, as was noted in Chapter 1, there are few published diaries written by women. As the author says:

No es este un género del que queden en España demasiadas muestras auténticas, aunque haya sido explotado como artificio literario, consciente el transcriptor de diarios apócrifos femeninos que es en secreto y entre las cuatro paredes de un recinto cerrado donde la mujer se encuentra más a sus anchas para ensayar, libre de trabas impuestas por la vigilancia ajena, un desagüe a sus capacidades expresivas. (60)

In *Desde la ventana*, Martín Gaité discusses Santa Teresa de Jesús and her *Libro de la vida* and asks herself about the role of the interlocutor in this diary: ‘Escrito en primera persona, como podría estarlo un diario íntimo o una carta, las alteraciones de ritmo vienen motivadas por la duplicidad de la emisión, es decir, por la índole tan distinta de los presuntos receptores del mensaje. Porque ¿para quién escribía Teresa?’ (68). However, the author seems to have an answer to her own question, indicating the

¹³⁸ Prologue to *Desde la ventana*, 2nd edition (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1993), pp. 9-10.

importance that first-person narration has for her as a method of self-reflection and auto-analysis: ‘Teresa de Ahumada, cuando moja la pluma en el tintero, no busca más “tú” que el suyo, más respuesta que la suya’ (69). While diaries and even letters, can be a place for reflection for women, this mode of writing can also help other women seeking answers. Another work which Martín Gaité considers is Rosalía de Castro’s *Carta a Eduarda*, where, as was mentioned in Chapter 1, a woman writes to another giving her advice about the futility of her desire to become a writer, while also offering a critique of the situation in which women found themselves in her time and the difficulties of escaping their social niche. Martín Gaité’s comments on this work recall *Nubosidad variable*, where two women are the interlocutors:

Lo más interesante de este texto es su tono llano, de charla entre dos mujeres. No en vano se ha elegido el género epistolar, tan propicio al desahogo y a la ironía, para colorear con ejemplos concretos una queja que pierde así toda la altisonancia teórica de los discursos varoniles. Y, como consecuencia su eficacia es mucho mayor. (93)

Desde la ventana finishes with one of the author’s dreams in which she is writing a letter to her mother; instead of using the written word she is using sign language sent through the window of her New York apartment. This dream-letter was published as ‘De tu ventana a la mía’ and demonstrates the importance of the letter as method of communication, even if never written and addressed to one who is not alive.

To the 2000 edition of *La búsqueda de interlocutor*, were added a number of talks and articles from the 1990s, and these should be examined together with the articles that form the first edition of the early 1970s. *La búsqueda del interlocutor y otras búsquedas* (1973), draws us to the search of the interlocutor, real or ideal. The eponymous article contains an idea which the author has explored throughout her career: ‘se escribe y siempre se ha escrito desde una experimentada incomunicación y al encuentro de un oyente utópico’ (*La búsqueda de interlocutor*, 28). In order to start writing, a person needs isolation, a key theme in Virginia Woolf’s essay *A Room of One’s Own* – which the author mentions in her introduction to *Desde la ventana*. Martín Gaité comments: ‘nunca habría existido invención literaria alguna si los hombres, saciados totalmente en su sed de comunicación, no hubieran llegado a conocer, con la soledad, el acuciante deseo de romperla’ (28). This isolation and self-imposed excommunication will be a constant preoccupation for her characters in the 1990s novels. Solitude, always present in her reflections, could and should be, in Martín

Gaite's words, transformed into a positive state for women who should take refuge in solitude in order to find themselves. Writing in solitude, whether in diaries, letters, novels, short stories, film scripts or cultural and historical essays, is what will bring them closer to reflection.

With *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* (1987) the author returns to the love customs of Spanish women; here it is her own experience, as a woman who lived in postwar Spain, that she is dealing with. She supports her own memories with visits to newspaper libraries, reading newspaper and magazine articles of the postwar period. Letters do not appear in the narrative, even though the cover of the first edition shows a photographic portrait of a dreamy young woman and an envelope drawn in a corner with the sender's address: 'Una romántica. Paseo del Chopo 5. León'.¹³⁹ The idea of isolation as fundamental to writing is also presented here and, for example, the author quotes an article published in 1951 in the magazine *Letras*, written by J.L. de Auria:

La mujer es ante todo intimidad y vida privada; ...su papel es más bien silencioso, de pura presencia. Si opera lentamente, como un clima, si representa la serenidad callada frente a la ruidosa acción del hombre, es evidente que donde se encontrará a sus anchas, donde dará sus mejores frutos si acaso trata de comunicar sus pensamientos, será en las cartas, documentos íntimos, privados y confidenciales por excelencia.¹⁴⁰

This silence fomented by postwar society meant that letters and diaries were the only places where young women were able to unburden: 'A la jovencita de postguerra le encantaba escribir cartas' (175). They particularly liked to send letters to Agony Aunts, the only people who could understand their worries:

La complicidad que se establecía mediante aquella correspondencia fomentaba el gusto por lo secreto [...]. Las periodistas anónimas encargadas de aquella sección fija eran conscientes, sin duda, de que sus consejos, aunque fueran de repertorio, iban a ser recibidos como agua de mayo por cada una de aquellas desorientadas y borrosas muchachas a quienes se llamaba 'querida amiga', y que lo que necesitaban sobre todas las cosas era que alguien les hiciera caso. (175)

Also the author notes that they used to write using pen-names, such as 'Dama romántica', 'una romántica', 'provinciana romántica' (174).

¹³⁹ *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1987).

¹⁴⁰ *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1994), p. 175. Further references to this work will be to this edition.

There is a special mention of the correspondence between women and men at the front during the war, who had never met before: ‘la guerra había fomentado las confidencias epistolares entre desconocidos de sexo contrario mediante la institución de las madrinas de guerra, encargadas de consolar [...] a un soldado del que podían acabar enamorándose sin haberlo visto nunca’ (153). And near the end of the work the author describes the custom of sending back love letters once the relationship had ended: ‘había la costumbre de que se devolvieran los regalos y las cartas que se hubieran podido escribir. Muchas veces esta petición, que solía partir de la novia, era un pretexto [...] para reanudar el rosario amoroso de reproches y disculpas’ (207).

Diaries and letters were, therefore, always an essential part of Carmen Martín Gaité’s work. Letters appeared in her earliest short stories and were, in her opinion, the easiest thing to start writing. She included letters sent to lovers, read and reread after end of the affairs; letters showing the contrast between the worlds of the country and the city; and those revealing different ways of seeing the world. All these appeared before the publication of *Nubosidad variable*, where she explored the possibilities of the epistolary novel to its full potential. Yet it was not until the publication of *La Reina de las Nieves* that she made complete formal use of the diary as the way to thread a novel, even though, as has been pointed out, her first novel, *Entre visillos*, had already played with the diary as a form to give voice to a silenced protagonist.

During the 1960s and 1970s the author spent much time thinking about the way narration works and the functions that diaries and letters have had in literature. Also through her work as a researcher, Martín Gaité uncovered a great number of letters and revealed an essential part of rewriting the history of the people. The author frequently analyses the use of letters in the postwar era, a type of writing-practice flowing from women’s state of isolation and solitude, fulfilling a need to express, in both diaries and letters, their preoccupations and desires. She also criticises, through her protagonists, the tendency to hold onto old letters which, over the years, become ‘vacías de contenido’ (45), as Martín Gaité puts it in *El cuarto de atrás*. Even though the author used letters and diaries as part of her narrative strategy during her whole career, it was not until the 1990s that her protagonists employed this kind of self-reflective writing to bring about changes in their lives. The protagonists of the 1990s novels are much more aware of the psychotherapeutic benefits of writing about one’s life, exploiting this type of writing to its limits and exploring the possibilities that it provides as an escape from their predicaments.

CHAPTER 3

CUADERNOS DE TODO: CARMEN MARTÍN GAITE'S DIARIES

Introducing *Cuadernos de todo*

Cuadernos de todo (2002) is a compilation of the notebooks or diaries Carmen Martín Gaité began in 1961, when her daughter Marta gave her a notebook on her birthday with the title 'Cuaderno de todo' written on the first page, and which, according to the author, gave her the freedom to write 'todo lo que quepa' (*Cuadernos de todo*, 27). The author recounts the story of the gift in one of the prologues to *El cuento de nunca acabar*:

Mi hija, que tenía entonces cinco y medio, me pidió un duro porque quería hacerme un regalo, y yo, desde la terraza de casa, la vi bajar a saltitos las escaleras de una calle por donde no pasan coches y donde a veces la dejábamos salir a jugar con otros chicos del barrio. Había una papelería allí cerca y en seguida la vi volver muy ufana con el cuaderno nuevo en la mano. Era – y es, porque lo tengo aquí delante – un bloc de anillas cuadrulado, con las tapas color garbanzo, y en el extremo inferior derecha la marca, Lecca, entre dos estrellitas, encima del numero 1.050, todo en dorado. Cuando me lo dio, me gustó mucho ver que había añadido ella un detalle personal al regalo. En la primera hoja había escrito mi nombre a lápiz con sus minúsculas desiguales de entonces, y debajo estas tres palabras: 'Cuaderno de todo.' (43)

From that day on, she gave the title *cuaderno de todo* to the rest of her notebooks.

Cuadernos de todo consists of thirty-six notebooks plus a chapter called 'Fragmentos inéditos y notas fugaces', which is the result of Maria Vittoria Calvi's

edition of the more than eighty notebooks and papers that Ana María Martín Gaité handed over after her sister's death. The notebooks cover many different kinds of narration, from the most intimate, what we could describe as her diaries, with dreams, letters and poems, to the most public output, with the transcription of talks she gave or fragments of works she published.

The size and form of the *cuadernos* is not uniform: although most are ring-bound school notebooks, there are some notebooks with hard covers or decorations on the front. In some cases these *cuadernos* were a present from a friend. Calvi gives a short summary, at the beginning of each notebook (or chapter) of their dates and themes, as well as their form, colour and size. There is also a facsimile image of each notebook. In *Cuadernos de todo* there are notebooks with only four pages, such as *Cuaderno 4*, and others with many more, for example *Cuaderno 13*, with fifty-one. This latter is a *cuaderno de limpio*, which the author used to copy quotes from old notebooks, while making notes, at the same time, of ideas and thoughts for new projects. In this notebook there are also some old drawings which the author cut and pasted to save them from oblivion. Some *cuadernos* in *Cuadernos de todo* consist of two or more notebooks, due to the small quantity of pages used in them: these are *Cuadernos 6, 8* and *9*. Another one, *Cuaderno 4*, consists of odd scraps of paper. At the end of *Cuadernos de todo* is a chapter titled 'Fragmentos inéditos y notas fugaces', which consist of notes from many different notebooks. The unpublished fragments involve two manuscripts: the first one is a play, 'A pie quieto, Comedia en un acto' (643), written in 1953 and the second 'Fin de año' (650), an unfinished drama from 1958.

The first three notebooks, as well as having the words *Cuaderno de todo* written on each cover, with the number, are some of the longest ones. Also, these three notebooks are the only ones which seem to follow continuity in time and themes, even though the second one does not have a single date written on its pages. The rest of the notebooks in *Cuadernos de todo*, although presented in chronological order, are sometimes superimposed, revealing, in some cases, notes completed several years after they were started.¹⁴¹ 1974, for example, is one of the most prolific years and there are six *cuadernos* in this collection dated that year.

¹⁴¹ Ana María Martín Gaité comments on her sister's lack of method when using a notebook: 'Podía empezar un cuaderno con una novela, pero, si estaba en la cama, por no andar buscando otro papel, le daba la vuelta y escribía un artículo, y por el medio igual iba un poema', cited in Soriano, 'Ana María Martín Gaité', p. 276.

The structure of the entries does not follow an exact pattern. In many cases there are no dates, although we have an approximate idea of the time when they were written thanks to dated entries in the same notebook or through the commentaries about the books the author is reading or notes she is making. As well as written notes, *Cuadernos de todo* also contains the author's drawings and collages, telephone numbers quickly written, or small personal reminders. Many notebooks contain a facsimile image of those notes or drawings.

The entries vary enormously in size: some are short sentences written quickly, as notes of fleeting ideas which the author wants to catch on paper. Examples are the first entries with the heading 'Para *El cuarto de atrás*' (177, 192) with just a single sentence written, or the six words written to encourage herself: 'Trataremos de reanudar el *Neverending tale*' (312). On the other hand there are texts which cover several pages, such as the one written for *La Reina de las Nieves*, which the author subtitles 'Retahíla en plan chalado' (559) and where a series of ideas for the novel are jotted down in the same way as the short sentences mentioned above, although in this case the fleeting ideas that are going through her mind form a kind of chain. The heading *Retahíla* is used at other moments in the *cuadernos*, when the author lets her thoughts fly freely, spitting them out, as Martín Gaité says: 'Escupir, no digerir, vomitar lo que se ve' (534). Most of the longer entries consist of notes taken for *El cuento de nunca acabar*. In some cases there are notes copied from earlier notebooks, for example the ones on pages 301-09, where, as the author explains, she is copying notes taken in *Cuadernos 1, 2 and 3*: 'Procuraré no limitarme a copiarlas sino ampliarlas a la luz de ese nuevo propósito' (301). Other example of these entries is 'El interlocutor de la narración egocéntrica', which goes from page 323 to 328, or 'Para *El cuento de nunca acabar*' (251), where the reflections on narration continue in the mind of the author during several days when she was writing the notebook, from 24 October to 4 November 1974.

An important feature of the notebooks is the notes made with ideas for a novel or an essay, such as those already mentioned with regard to *El cuento*. Some notes consist of only two or three sentences, others form a large part of one chapter of the published work. It is interesting to see how the novels evolved from the moment the author had the first idea to the time they were published, as well as how, on some occasions, the

story remains unchanged, almost word for word.¹⁴² What is really impressive is the author's capacity to work on different projects at the same time: novels, short stories, and essays. Bearing in mind that, as well as writing, she was translating, giving talks, papers and classes in different universities, this provides a clear idea of the productive capacities of the author, who continued working until her death.

Martín Gaité observes that many authors had used their notebooks and diaries to jot down ideas, impressions, feelings: 'Me parece algo tan natural eso de ir apuntando cosas, impresiones, como para fijarlas y que quede algo de lo que has visto o pensado.'¹⁴³ However *Cuadernos de todo* contains not the typical diaries written daily, describing the events of the day, like Virginia Woolf's or Rosa Chacel's. Martín Gaité's are notebooks or diaries where life and work are completely interconnected, as is the case with Katherine Mansfield's or Franz Kafka's notebooks/diaries, which Martín Gaité was familiar with and which she writes of in her notebooks. Thus, in August 1974 she writes: 'Escribir de un tirón paga más. Así escribió Kafka la noche del 22 de septiembre de 1912, cuando yo no había pensado siquiera en nacer. ¡Qué valentía de élan hacer eso! Así se escriben las cartas buenas' (216). One entry in Kafka's diaries reads: 'September 23. This story, *The Judgment*, I wrote at one sitting during the night of the 22nd-23rd, from ten o'clock at night to six o'clock in the morning.'¹⁴⁴ In fact, this influence can be seen in the novel Martín Gaité was working on at the time, *El cuarto de atrás* (1978) which according to the narrative was composed during one night.¹⁴⁵

Carmen Martín Gaité's notebooks have a great affinity with those of Katherine Mansfield, especially in the feelings Mansfield expresses as a writer: her moments of elation or depression, as well as the need to write. Martín Gaité comments:

No sé hasta qué punto es o no lícito escribir un diario, pero reconocerse en él tanto como yo lo he hecho en el de K.M. atenúa la posibilidad de opinión. Estoy segura que la meditación es el mejor remedio para la enfermedad de mi espíritu, para su falta de dominio sobre sí mismo. (458)

¹⁴² Although as Calvi explains in her 'Criterios de selección y de edición', many of the pages which refer to the manuscripts of published work have not been integrated in this volume, p. 14.

¹⁴³ See Marie-Lise Gazarian Gautier, 'Conversación con Carmen Martín Gaité en Nueva York', in *From Fiction to Metafiction: Essays in Honor of Carmen Martín-Gaité*, ed. by Mirella Servodidio and Marcia L. Welles (Lincoln, NB: Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies, 1983), 25-33 (p. 29).

¹⁴⁴ *The Diaries of Franz Kafka 1910-1913*, ed. by Max Brod (London: Secker & Warburg, 1948), pp. 275-76.

¹⁴⁵ The author states how the idea for the novel came during a stormy night when she was suffering from insomnia, similar to the story of the novel. See Gazarian Gautier, p. 29.

The ups and downs of writing are what link writers' notebooks and diaries. Mansfield writes: 'I am sure that this Sunday is the worst of all my life. I've touched bottom',¹⁴⁶ while Rosa Chacel comments: 'Estoy tratando de trabajar. He abandonado las cartas que debía escribir [...]. No tengo ganas de hacer nada.'¹⁴⁷ Yet these notebooks and diaries enable such writers, as will be seen with *Cuadernos de todo*, to get back to writing, to give themselves encouragement about their writing, as is the case with Chacel: 'Como no tengo valor para escribir sobre nada de lo que verdaderamente me preocupa, me angustia, me atormenta, apuntaré un sueño' (56).

Cuadernos de todo contains what María Vitoria Calvi calls in her prologue, 'diarios en libertad' (11). These are notebooks that Martín Gaité takes with her everywhere¹⁴⁸ and are used when a thought comes to her that prevents her from concentrating on anything else. They are there to record that thought or idea and give some form to it. Putting it down in the notebook, the author is able to pursue a dialogue with the idea:

Todos debiéramos *apuntar nuestras reflexiones*. No por lo que valgan, sino *porque dan lugar a otras* [...] tirar de lo que se piensa [...]. Se suelen achacar los males del mundo a la neurosis, a la angustia. Pero esta angustia no es sino un resultado. Resultado de no entenderse, de ahogar los pensamientos. Yo nunca sufro más que cuando siento la cabeza llena de pensamientos sin cocer, sin formular, y sé que están ahí, pero los disperso a manotazos por no sentir la bulla que forman [...]. El único remedio racional es abrirles la puerta y darles salida por orden. (28) (My italics)

Again it is possible to make a parallel with the *Hupomnēmata*, notebooks, which, as Foucault writes: 'constitute, rather, a material and a framework for exercises to be carried out frequently: reading, rereading, meditating, conversing with oneself and with others.'¹⁴⁹

As observed in Chapter 1, *Cuadernos de todo* could be designated as diaries or as 'dietario', as the work combines intimate writings with intellectual reflections. It is very close to the Greek *Hupomnēmata* Foucault mentions:

¹⁴⁶ *Journal of Katherine Mansfield*, ed. by John Middleton (London: Persephone Books, 2006), p. 38.

¹⁴⁷ *Alcancía: Vuelta* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1982), p. 279.

¹⁴⁸ Martín Gaité wrote in *El cuento de nunca acabar*: 'la costumbre de meter en el bolso mi "cuaderno de todo" de turno, cuando salgo a la calle, ha llegado a hacerme tan inexcusable que su olvido acarrea en mí la misma desazón que el de las llaves o el monedero', p. 44.

¹⁴⁹ *Ethics*, p. 210.

One wrote down quotes in them, extracts from books, examples, and actions that one had witnessed or read about, reflections or reasonings that one had heard or that had come to mind. They constituted a material record of things read, heard or thought, thus offering them up as a kind of accumulated treasure for subsequent rereading and meditation. (209)

And he goes on to explain the need to have the notebooks always ‘Near at hand’: ‘not just in the sense that one would be able to recall them to consciousness, but that one should be able to use them, whenever the need was felt, in action’ (210).

Martín Gaité takes notes of what she hears in the street, of what she reads, and then she rereads her notes later on. In some moments in *Cuadernos de todo* we sense the compelling need to externalise her thoughts, moments of crisis when her notebooks will help the author to start again. On the other hand, the dialogue in her head, which must be written in order to preserve it, can be combined with other thoughts leading her to the writing of a book, a short story, a novel, an essay, or a talk. Martín Gaité’s characters often express these thoughts when they talk with others, especially in her 1970s novels, *Retahílas* and *El cuarto de atrás*, where dialogue has the function of threading or connecting thoughts that develop when the characters converse with someone. In her 1990s novels, as will be discussed, the dialogue will take place on paper, with the writing of letters, diaries and memoirs.

In some pages of the notebooks, though, the dialogue, instead of bringing new thoughts, stops suddenly and is never continued. In this, there is a similarity to Hélène Cixous’s notebooks:

I might start, for instance, writing on the page, following a line of thought, and suddenly there is a kind of acceleration in my thinking, its all, the question is that of the speed of my thinking, and the nature of it. Because it can be of a discourse, which organizes itself in sentences. Or it's a sudden flash of metaphor. Or it is a kind of vision which might be compared to a dream.¹⁵⁰

This type of fast writing seems to be closer to the thinking process of the author as the thoughts do not seem to have been developed before putting them onto the paper –what Maria Vittoria Calvi has called ‘una vertiente más íntima y espontánea’ (11). In some cases these notes are simple thoughts or private notes, like those written in a diary, notes written not to be forgotten. In other cases, Martín Gaité is referring to an audience, to a

¹⁵⁰ *The Writing Notebooks*, ed. and trans. by Susan Sellers (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 116.

reader as if she needed them to maintain the dialogue: ‘Se me dirá: “primero es el comer”. Y yo sé lo urgente que es. Nótese que no hablo de soluciones’ (37). In fact, the use of ‘se me dirá’, is repeated throughout *Cuaderno 1*. This formula, together with other colloquial forms such as ‘quiero decir’ or ‘nótese que digo’, creates a sense of real dialogue with a possible interlocutor. As the author explains when talking about her notebooks: ‘lo que quería era entretenerme e imaginar que le estaba diciendo algo a alguien, a no sé quién.’¹⁵¹

In the first *cuadernos* there is a ‘dialogue’ between the author and the books she is reading at the time. She takes notes of material that catches her eye and then comments on it, as if she were giving an answer to the author of the book she is reading, giving her opinion about what she has just read. Compare Cixous: ‘Sometimes in the notebooks [...] it is a kind of inner dialogue I have with another work, because when I write I also read [...]. It’s a way of hearing another voice than mine. And immediately the dialogue starts’ (116). Sometimes Martín Gaité’s dialogue with these books and authors is continued through several pages of the notebooks; at other times a simple comment indicates what she was reading at the time.

Reading *Cuadernos de todo* allows a better understanding of the process of writing as well as the need that Martín Gaité had to write, which made her a writer. In the interview with Gazarian Gautier, she explains: ‘Me recuerdo siempre con un lápiz o una pluma en la mano, desde muy pequeña. No es que quisiera ser escritora, es que escribiría’ (29). The need to talk and the lack of an interlocutor present at every moment is what makes the writer write, a theme which the author developed in her journalistic articles and in her books of essays: ‘Si uno pudiera encontrar el interlocutor adecuado en el momento adecuado, tal vez nunca cogiera la pluma.’¹⁵² This is one of Martín Gaité’s firm beliefs and is clearly reflected in her writing. Indeed, in her novels even her characters take the pen with a person in mind, that perfect interlocutor, as will be seen in *Nubosidad variable*. In *Cuadernos de todo* she observes: ‘Mi enfermedad consiste en mi silencio. Es forzoso imaginar un interlocutor, no puede uno salvarse de otra manera. Y si la imaginación no es capaz de forjarlo, se va uno tragando todo deseo de hablar’ (212) (My italics). Indeed, *El cuarto de atrás* clearly reveals the way she creates, imagining an interlocutor, to extract everything that is inside. The advantage of creating or

¹⁵¹ Cited in Gazarian Gautier, p. 29.

¹⁵² See Gazarian Gautier, p. 27.

inventing an interlocutor is that it will not disappoint the writer, and will help to attain the goal of putting thoughts in writing:

Inventar un interlocutor no es un escape, en cuanto que ése, inventado, te ayuda a decir lo que querrías decir a todos estos otros a cuyo santuario no llegas, y si llegaras correrías el peligro de perderte en dulces celebraciones que te entorpecerían el cabal discurrir que en común con ellos pretendes. (122)

The author presents her theories on writing and its relation to the interlocutor in books such as *La búsqueda de interlocutor y otras búsquedas* (1973) and *El cuento de nunca acabar* (1983). In the former she states: ‘Se escribe y siempre se ha escrito desde una experimentada incomunicación y al encuentro de un oyente utópico’ (28-29). And in the latter she notes: ‘El primer interlocutor satisfactorio y exigente venimos a ser, así, nosotros mismos. Nos proclamamos destinatarios provisionales del mensaje narrativo, mientras seguimos esperando, soñando, invocando a ese otro que un día nos vendrá a suplantar’ (119).

According to Martín Gaité, one can understand one’s own life and history through literature and writing, this being one of the characteristics of autobiographical writing:

Sin posibilidad de salir de una cotidianidad absorbente en la que no hay tiempo para profundizar en uno mismo, la autobiografía obliga a parar, a reflexionar, a analizar, a replegarse en una interioridad protegida de la agresividad exterior [...] *búsqueda de un espacio en el que se impulse el reconocimiento del yo.* [...] Si por un lado se reflejan las vivencias pasadas, por otro se reflexiona sobre ellas.¹⁵³ (My italics)

This type of autobiographical writing is what Martín Gaité develops in her novels of the 1990s. She gives her characters the time to reflect, in solitude, on their lives in order to be able to ‘recognize themselves’ or, in Foucault words, ‘to bring our body into subjection’ (208). Indeed, the author observes that she needs this type of writing, as it is necessary to be able to think and reflect. She states in *Cuadernos de todo*:

Tengo que volver a descubrir el placer de escribir en mis cuadernitos junto a la vidriera de un café luminoso, el goce de dejar a los pensamientos que se produzcan y lubrifiquen con libertad, dar puerta abierta a la curación del logos,

¹⁵³ Quoted in Lydia Masanet, *La autobiografía femenina española contemporánea* (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1998), pp. 7, 9.

menos hablar, menos ver a la gente y más concentrarme, escribir, criar ámbitos interpersonales, sosegados, cosa previa a cualquier discurrir. (204)

Such thoughts are reflected in her notebook pages, as she encourages herself by observing the blank pages to be filled.

This style of narrating, which is always up to the minute, comes from the observations that she carried out of people around her. With her notebooks always at hand she was able to transcribe conversations, the nuances of language of the street. As she comments in *El cuento de nunca acabar*: ‘Han viajado conmigo por bibliotecas, cafés, trenes, archivos y autobuses’ (44). Indeed, in *Cuadernos de todo* she reveals herself writing while travelling on buses, train and underground, in hotels and cafés, and at her friends’ houses.¹⁵⁴ Biruté Ciplijauskaitė indicates the need Martín Gaité had of moving amongst different people, walking in the street to be able to take note of everything she hears: ‘¿Usted cree que yo escribiría si no utilizara los autobuses?’ le pregunta la autora a su entrevistador, Miguel Villena. ‘Sólo en la calle, y en plena libertad, puede “capturar el murmullo de la vida cotidiana.”’¹⁵⁵ In her notebooks she relates her journeys and her impressions of the towns, cities, and countries she visits. She even reveals her moments of elation and depression, moments when it seems impossible to continue writing: ‘Pero ahora no puedo reposar en nada de lo que escribo; por eso enmudezco días y más días. Todo lo que escribo no puedo verlo más que como retazos, tentativas que no hacen sino acuciar mi desazón’ (142).

But Martín Gaité never gives in her notebooks a more specific idea of her state of mind, at least not in the published *Cuadernos de todo*. For example, she does not refer to her feelings after Franco’s death, she leaves that to her novels. She does not talk of her separation from her husband and the fear of solitude: some of her protagonists will be the ones to express those feelings. Nor does she write about her daughter’s death, but we can feel her broken spirit when confronted with a blank piece of paper after the event. Her novels and the characters written in them were the ones Martín Gaité used to channel some of her pain and frustration. Through the characters of the 1990s novels especially, the reader is able to experience the difficulties Martín Gaité

¹⁵⁴ From the headings of many of the diary entries it is possible to see where she is located the moment she writes. One interesting example is found in *Cuaderno 12* where, after many written pages about the theme of narration, the author stops to comment: ‘¡Qué puesta de sol estoy viendo desde el circular (26 de octubre) por la calle de Segovia abajo!’, p. 256. Since *el circular* was one of the buses Martín Gaité used to take in Madrid, this type of commentary and the headings allow the reader to witness the moments and places where the author was writing her notebooks.

¹⁵⁵ *Carmen Martín Gaité*, p. 34.

must have felt at certain times in her life: the death of the love ones, the separations and the loneliness that follows.

In this chapter on the *Cuadernos de todo* I shall begin by focusing on the first three notebooks, as they are the only ones that are connected sequentially by number and dates. These *Cuadernos* cover a long period, from 1961 to 1967, with a final note in *Cuaderno 3* written in June 1970. From 1964 there are other notebooks which overlap in time with the first three: *Cuaderno 4* consists of fleeting notes taken during 1964 and *Cuaderno 5*, or *Cuaderno dragón*, consists of notes taken during 1965. The three first notebooks also follow a correlation in the themes and serve as an example of what were going to be Martín Gaité's inseparable companions. The time when she is writing is a time of changes in Spanish society and in Martín Gaité's life. Themes which were important in her life and which are consequently going to be used in her later novels appeared from the first pages of these *cuadernos*: women's new roles in society, motherhood and consumerism are some of the themes which bother the author during the 1960s and which are reflected by her characters not only in her earlier novels but will continue throughout her life.

Subsequently, the rest of the *Cuadernos de todo* will be examined with special attention given to the use of the notebooks in the development of her published work: notebooks as a writer's workshop or *cuadernos de bitácora*. There will be an examination of the way different works appear in the notebooks and develop through the pages. In this section I intend to show the close relationship between the *cuadernos* and her fictional work, between her life and her literature. Attention will also be paid to the *cuadernos americanos*. These deserve special attention as they belong to a period in Martín Gaité's life when she started being recognized and appreciated outside Spain. Her first lengthy stay in New York in the autumn of 1980 is the beginning of the serious recognition of the author and her work. That period is also a time of solitude and separation from the obligations and commitments she had to deal with in Madrid.¹⁵⁶ In these *cuadernos* it is possible to see a more intimate side of the author as she narrates her comings and goings in America. The last *cuaderno americano* also gives a very rare picture of the author's need to write after her daughter's death. This *cuaderno* presents to the reader the way the author used her *cuadernos* as therapeutical tools, and this links

¹⁵⁶ See Martín Gaité interview *A Fondo*.

with the subsequent chapters that examine her novels of the 1990s, in which her characters find in writing the cure that enables them to continue with their lives.

The First *Cuadernos de todo* (Beginning 8 December 1961)

In *Cuaderno 1*, as well as explaining its origins, Martín Gaité describes the type of notebook that it is going to be, one in which everything can be included:

Pero hoy quiero empezar este cuaderno, siguiendo la dirección que en la primera página ha estampado a lápiz la Torci,¹⁵⁷ como una dedicatoria al regalármelo. Ha puesto debajo de mi nombre las tres palabras siguientes: CUADERNO DE TODO.

Para ella, en un cuaderno se puede meter, como en un cajón, todo lo que quepa. Basta con empezar. En este cuaderno, pues, no debo tener miedo de meter lo que sea, hasta llenarlo. La Torci me ha dado permiso. (27)

Her first notebook is full of thoughts and reflections, especially about the family, marriage and women. She is, of course, a woman, a mother, a wife, and a writer, writing during a time when the first feminist movements under the dictatorship started having a voice. This was the period when the Asociación de Mujeres Universitarias was created in 1953, the Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres in 1964,¹⁵⁸ and the Seminario de Estudios Sociológicos de la Mujer was funded by María Lafitte, in 1960.¹⁵⁹ This was a time when the first books on civil and labour rights for women, written by Lidia Falcón at the beginning of the 1960s, were published.¹⁶⁰ A time when laws such as the *Ley de Derechos Políticos, Profesionales y Laborales de la mujer y el niño*, were approved, in July 1961,¹⁶¹ giving women a number of rights that had been taken away from them. Even though they still did not have equal rights, women start being part of the

¹⁵⁷ Her daughter Marta, born in May 1956 and known as ‘la Torci’ on account of the position in which she slept when she was a baby, has a fundamental part in the pages of the notebooks as she was a companion to her mother until her early death, just before she turned thirty. They both lived, until her death in April 1985, in the same apartment on Doctor Esquerdo, Madrid, where Martín Gaité lived after her marriage to Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio in October 1953.

¹⁵⁸ See Rosa Pardo, ‘El feminismo en España: Breve resumen, 1953-1983’ in *El feminismo en España: Dos siglos de historia*, ed. by Pilar Folguera (Madrid: Pablo Iglesias, 1988), 133-40.

¹⁵⁹ See Amparo Moreno Sardá, ‘La réplica de las mujeres al franquismo’ in *El feminismo en España*, 85-110.

¹⁶⁰ See for example *Los derechos civiles de la mujer* (1963) or *Los derechos laborales de la mujer* (1964).

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

workforce,¹⁶² part of the Government statistics.¹⁶³ Thus Martín Gaité started writing her notebooks at a time when feminist theories, like those of Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedman, whose books were published in Spain in the mid-1960s, were trying to change the role of women in society, by opening women's eyes to their position as victims of a patriarchal society and questioning their roles as mothers and wives. Martín Gaité felt that maternity and family were still important in women's lives and that she needed to defend them.

In her 1979 essay 'Le Temps des femmes',¹⁶⁴ Julia Kristeva documents two generations of feminists. The first generation, the suffragettes and existential feminists, demanded equal rights with men, rejecting 'the attributes traditionally considered feminine or maternal' (193). A second generation, 'women who came to feminism after May 1968' or who came from a 'psychoanalytical experience' (194), on the other hand, embraced maternity and difference. For these feminists, work and maternity are compatible and they find this experience 'indispensable to their discovery, not of the plenitude, but of the complexity of the female experience' (205). Martín Gaité, in *Cuadernos 1* and *2*, when reflecting on work and maternity, feels that women have not expended enough time analysing their desires, both as mothers and workers. She criticises the first type of feminism Kristeva identifies, as she feels closer to the idea of change for women as women: she believes in the reconciliation of maternity with political or historical time. As Vanessa Knights explains: 'One of the main ideological issues which has divided the Spanish feminist movement since the 1970s is the debate between equality and difference feminists.'¹⁶⁵ This is a new theme in the 1970s feminist scene. Knights continues with reference to the feminist conference celebrated in Granada in 1979: 'Older women on the panel seemed confused by younger women in the audience arguing against equality and for postmodern theorizing of difference' (29).

¹⁶² The number of women workers grew: 'de un 9% en 1930, a un 8,3% en 1940, 15,8% en 1950, 20% en 1960 y 24% en 1970', Moreno Sardá, p. 88.

¹⁶³ Geraldine Scanlon explains that one of the causes of the increase in the female workforce was: 'Las reformas de la posición legal de la mujer introducidas en 1958 y 1961 no eran [...], un mero intento de mejorar la "imagen democrática" de España; en gran medida estuvieron inspiradas por la crisis económica del final de la década de los cincuenta [...]. Uno de los métodos para lograr la expansión industrial consistía en incrementar la población laboral, y como la mano de obra masculina no daba prácticamente más de sí, lo único que se podía hacer para incrementar significativamente la población laboral era el reclutamiento de las mujeres', *La polémica feminista en la España contemporánea: 1868-1974* (Madrid: Editorial Akal, 1986), p. 342.

¹⁶⁴ See Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time', in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 187-213.

¹⁶⁵ '¿Feminismo de la igualdad/Feminismo de la diferencia?: A Study and Bibliography of the Debate and its Implications for Contemporary Spanish Women's Narrative', *Hispanic Research Journal*, 2 (2001), 27-43 (p. 28).

The older feminists are the ones who could be heard in Spain during the 1960s, and this is one of the reasons why many Spanish women rejected the feminist label.

Carmen Martín Gaité, like many other Spanish women (including writers), denied her status as a feminist.¹⁶⁶ For her, feminism, especially during those first years of relaxation in the social norms, has a negative sense: ‘Yo soy antifeminista. Yo aspiro a la libertad. Las feministas hablan de libertad, pero la llevan como una pedrada para arrojársela a la cara a los demás.’¹⁶⁷ Discussing in the *Cuadernos* the disenchantment women were experiencing, Martín Gaité distinguishes three periods: ‘1.^a época: aceptación, sumisión; 2.^a: euforia, rebeldía (feminismo), afirmando tener lo que no se tiene (por revancha); 3.^a (que apunta ahora): descontento, una especie de pérdida de fe en los ideales’ (75). She links the idea of rebellion and revenge to feminism, seeing as a consequence the disenchantment women suffer after gaining a certain amount of freedom. At the same time, Martín Gaité published articles which together with what she wrote in her notebooks reveal her ideas about the situation of women in Spanish society of the time. Articles such as: ‘Las mujeres liberadas’, published in *Triunfo*,¹⁶⁸ or ‘Personalidad y libertad’, published in *Medicamenta*,¹⁶⁹ portray women who start finding freedom through work and the separation from their husbands, but have not thought about their new situation and its consequences.

Many critics have cited her writing as an example of feminist, not simply feminine, writing. Articles such as ‘Carmen Martín Gaité: A Feminist Author’,¹⁷⁰ or ‘Significación social de las novelas de Carmen Martín Gaité en cuanto al desarrollo de la conciencia feminista en la España del siglo XX’,¹⁷¹ emphasize the importance of the author as a feminist writer. Others, such as ‘Replegando la voz: Carmen Martín Gaité y la cocina de la escritura’,¹⁷² not only present her as a feminist author; she is also

¹⁶⁶ Carbayo Abengózar gives her opinion on the reason why Spanish women felt so reticent to define themselves as feminists: ‘Ser feminista era ser “marimacho” o lesbiana o fea [...] si eras de izquierdas no podías ser religioso, si eras feminista no podían gustarte los hombres, si eras comunista, no debías tener posesiones’, *Buscando un lugar*, p. 118.

¹⁶⁷ Cited by Montserrat Escartín Gual in ‘Noticias de Carmen Martín Gaité y *Retahílas*’, in *Retahílas* (Barcelona: Destino, 2000), 169-232 (p. 194).

¹⁶⁸ *La búsqueda de interlocutor* (1982), pp. 123-31.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-11.

¹⁷⁰ Phyllis Zatlin Boring, ‘Carmen Martín Gaité: A Feminist Author’, *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, 3 (1977), 323-38.

¹⁷¹ Mercedes Carbayo Abengózar, ‘Significación social de las novelas de Carmen Martín Gaité en cuanto al desarrollo de la conciencia feminista en la España del siglo XX’, in *El papel de la literatura en el siglo XX: I Congreso Nacional Literatura y Sociedad*, ed. by Fidel López Criado (A Coruña: Servicio de Publicaciones, 2000), 361-75.

¹⁷² Jacqueline Cruz, ‘Replegando la voz: Carmen Martín Gaité y la cocina de la escritura’, in *Sexualidad y escritura (1850-2000)*, ed. by Raquel Medina and Barbara Zecchi (Barcelona: Anthropos, 2002), 249-69.

criticised for not being a committed feminist author. The most adequate term to describe Martín Gaité's ideas on feminism would be Alicia Redondo Goicoechea's 'feminismo polifónico', which the critic sees as a feminism that is 'liberador, que defiende la diferencia [...] dentro de una igualdad de derechos que reconozca la maternidad'.¹⁷³

Women's Role in Society

In her first *cuadernos*, the author seems to be criticising not the condition of women in society, but those who wish to change their condition with no real belief in what they want to take on, and without believing in what they are going to do. There is clearly an antifeminist position in the way she talks about women who called themselves feminists:

La polémica entre los sexos va siendo un tema demasiado reiterado, sobre todo si se tiene en cuenta algo evidente: que ni los hombres ni las mujeres por mucho que polemiquen llegan a entenderse entre sí. [...] Mientras hagan [las mujeres feministas] todo lo que hacen en función de 'no ser menos que los hombres' no habrán abandonado su condición satélite y será como si no hubieran pensado en nada ni trabajado en nada. (33)

Martín Gaité's critique of feminist women is mainly directed at those women who demand complete equality with men. As Kristeva notes in 'Women's Time', at times such women forget their feminine or maternal attributes when demanding that equality (193). However, Martín Gaité could be seen as a feminist writer in that she defends the understanding between genders, proclaiming difference, coexistence and dialogue between men and women as the only solution to the problem. She observes:

Si cambiásemos impresiones con los demás respecto a las cosas con la misma viveza e interés con que hablamos de personas y escuchamos lo que los otros dicen, iríamos al fondo en lugar de quedarnos en la cáscara; es decir entenderíamos esos cambios y altibajos que condenamos, nos pasman o nos indignan en los demás, y al descubrir el porqué de sus comportamientos sabríamos lo que hay en ellos de fenómeno social que igualmente a los demás alcanza y en qué medida serían evitables muchos errores de convivencia. (34)

It is possible to see in certain of her novels the importance of dialogue between men and women. For example, in *Retahílas* there is a significant connection between aunt and

¹⁷³ 'Introducción literaria: Teoría y crítica feministas', in *Feminismo y misoginia en la literatura española*, ed. by Cristina Segura Graiño (Madrid: Narcea, 2001), 19-46 (p. 41).

nephew, and their conversation, which lasts a whole night, allows them to openly talk about their feelings and desires. In *El cuarto de atrás* a complete stranger is the one (the literary device) who allows the protagonist to dig into her past and think about her projects for the future.

In *Cuadernos de todo* Martín Gaité not only criticises feminists but also women in a general way. In *Cuaderno 1*, her ‘target’ is women seeking independence through paid work: ‘Las mujeres que tratan de independizarse hoy día arreglan el problema desde fuera. Imitan los gestos, la actividad, la libertad externa del varón. Sin haber conseguido ni de lejos la interna’ (45). Here, she seems to believe that women simply want to work in order to show men that they are able to; in her words: ‘para sentirse más revalorizadas como hembras, como presa aun más deseable’ (46). She sees the only solution as being convinced of wanting to do it for one’s own satisfaction: ‘Cuando una mujer no pretenda demostrar ni que es muy mujer ni que deja de serlo y se entregue a cualquier quehacer o pensamiento desde su condición sin forzarla ni tampoco enorgullecerse de ella, sólo entonces será persona libre’ (33). She, however, believes in work as a means of satisfaction for one’s own self, not simply to convince others: ‘Pero es que una persona no tiene que darse a valer. Tiene que hacer bien las cosas que hace, tiene que hacerlas de verdad, entregarse a lo que haga. Tiene que hacer algo, no fingir que lo está haciendo’ (46). The notion of ‘darse a valer’ is key here. During the Industrial Revolution, when men began leaving the household to work outside the home and earn wages, the value of money changed the value of work. This undermined the work done by women, especially in the home, where they cared for the children and managed the household economy. Referring to the changes in Spanish society as it moved from a rural to an urban population, Amparo Moreno Sardá documents how these spatial changes (from country to city) also changed the way work was valued as women also began to incorporate themselves into urban life. With the modernization of the household, housework was devalued, money being the measure to value work. As Moreno Sardá explains:

En la medida que se incorporaron a la vida urbana, estas mujeres vivieron la desmembración de la familia extensa junto con la modernización elemental de las casas [...] y la devaluación del trabajo doméstico, debido a que el dinero se impuso cada vez más como medio imprescindible para la adquisición de los medios indispensables para la subsistencia y, por tanto, como patrón de

valoración social (tanto cobras, tanto vales, tanto eres; en consecuencia, toda actividad no remunerada significa actividad devaluada). (87)

Martín Gaité's comments show that she considered that the real issue was in the way society valued work, so that: 'El sentirse valorada una mujer tiene gran relación con la independencia económica' (74). The dependence women of the 1960s still experienced was a historical reality maintained by men over the centuries. As Simone de Beauvoir points out:

History has shown us that men have always kept in their hands all concrete powers; since the earliest days of the patriarchy they have thought best to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes of law have been set up against her.¹⁷⁴

Thus Martín Gaité defends the work done by women in the home by investing it with greater value than was generally acknowledged: 'Yo no digo que una mujer tenga que dedicarse forzosamente a tareas caseras; digo que si las hace debe trascenderlas [...] crear algo con él' (81). She argues for women's housework and caring for the family to be considered as acts of generosity on their part. Also, she would like women to think about their work in the home in a positive way and as an opportunity for reflection: 'se ha dado en confundir el sosiego con la inmanencia,¹⁷⁵ la pasividad, la cerrilidad, la pereza mental y demás actitudes viciosas y descarriadas que el sosiego y el silencio han tenido una parte meramente accidental' (93). That space for reflection, which men, she suggests, generally do not have, is what women should embrace instead of rejecting.

The peace, which Martín Gaité proposes as the enviable preserve of women in the home, can, however, be experienced by men who decide to abandon 'historical time', the time of 'honor y gloria' (94), and retire to reflect, choosing 'silencio y sosiego' (94). While some men may actively choose to retire and reflect, women, in Martín Gaité's view, passively suffer this space of silence and *sosiego* as a punishment that has, she believes, its origins in their childhood. Of course, in this Martín Gaité is referring only to women who are sufficiently privileged to have free time to reflect on

¹⁷⁴ *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. by H.M. Parshley (London: Picador 1988), p. 171.

¹⁷⁵ The existentialist vocabulary of 'transcendence' and 'immanence' in relation to women is to be found in *The Second Sex*, originally published in French in 1949. As Toril Moi explains: 'Beauvoir's main thesis [...] is simple: throughout history, women have been constructed as man's Other, denied the right to her own subjectivity and to responsibility for her own actions. [...] patriarchal ideology presents woman as immanence, man as transcendence', in *Sexual/Textual Politics* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 92. The idea of woman as immanence or passive being is what Martín Gaité wants women to fight against.

life, rather than worrying about money and other life concerns. However, in her notebooks she is not alert to this and does not distinguish between social groups.¹⁷⁶

Motherhood

In many of Martín Gaité's novels there is distinction between women who are mothers and 'independent' women. As Eulalia says to her friend Lucía in *Retahílas*: 'En España, Lucía, no cabe compaginar, lo sabemos de sobra, o eres madre o te haces persona' (106). After this observation, which Lucía thought was 'una clasificación de libro de texto malo', she goes on to say 'se podía inventar algo distinto de lo que veíamos a nuestro alrededor, y eso era lo apasionante, una forma de ser madre que no tuviera por qué excluir la de seguir siendo persona' (106). In *Cuadernos de todo*, Martín Gaité comments extensively on motherhood, a type of motherhood close to what Lucía refers to in *Retahílas* when she asks: '¿Por qué razón el concepto de madre iba a ir inevitablemente unido a quejarse y suspirar o a tiranizar o a seguir rutinas?' (106). In later novels it is still possible to see female characters divided depending on their roles as mothers or childless women. It is not until *Lo raro es vivir*, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, that the protagonist combines her role as mother and worker.

The author considers caring for one's child and facilitating his or her development towards independence as an important part of the role of mothers in society. Yet she criticizes women who live through their children: 'no es "razón de su vida", es decir "objeto de trabajo, atención y reflexión", sino ciegamente su vida' (80). In effect, Martín Gaité sees the role of the mother as one who facilitates the children's development by giving them freedom to better understand the world, by giving them the tools to reach 'criterio autónomo' (80) or independent judgement. Here, Martín Gaité's point echoes child psychologist Donald W. Winnicott's notion of the 'good-enough mother': 'The good-enough mother [...] starts off with an almost complete adaptation to her infant's needs, and as time proceeds she adapts less and less completely.'¹⁷⁷

Thus Martín Gaité defends women in their roles as wives and mothers, as she believes that these responsibilities, to be done well, 'requieren mucha generosidad, tiempo y atención' (46). Of course, the child's need of a mother (or mother figure) in

¹⁷⁶ Even though, in her short stories, poor women from the cities, women from the countryside and women who work in domestic service are represented, with the writer revealing their difficulties and contrasting them with the middle-class women she is criticizing, in her notebooks these working-class women hardly have a place.

¹⁷⁷ Donald W. Winnicott, 'Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena', *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* 34 (1953), 89-97 (p. 94).

the first years of life is a subject still studied by psychologists. One of the first psychologists to use the ‘object relation theory’ with reference to child development was Melanie Klein. *Love, Guilt and Reparation* contains a compilation of articles published between 1921 and 1945, dealing with child development in the first years of life. Donald Winnicott and Nancy Chodorow also belong to an area of psychoanalysis which studies infancy and family relations from the point of view of the ‘object relation theory’. The importance of the mother in the baby’s first moments of life, the complete dependence needed for the child to reach independence and play as the first manner of emotional communication, are some of the notions these psychologists work with and are echoed in Martín Gaité’s ideas on motherhood and the parent-child relationship.

The theme of the parent-child relationship is fundamental throughout Martín Gaité’s career. Her 1990s novels will reveal the need of daughters to reconcile with their mother, after the latter’s death, in order to be able to continue with their own lives, as will be seen in *Nubosidad variable* or *Lo raro es vivir*, while the search and encounter with the mother is privileged in the case of Leonardo in *La Reina de las Nieves*. As Kimberly Chisholm comments:

This examination becomes more focused in the 1990s novels [...]. As mothers come increasingly to the fore, Martín Gaité details the process by which each enables or fails to enable her child to establish and maintain the subjectivity for which Martín Gaité’s filial characters incessantly search.¹⁷⁸

The maternal relationship with children is dealt with from *Cuaderno 1*. The author reflects on play as important for the child’s development and, at the same time, she affirms the importance of letting the child develop its own way of thinking:

El juego como expresión de libertad. [...] Tiene más libertad para jugar y desarrollar sus posibilidades un animal que no debe enfrentarse angustiosamente con el problema del sustento [...], pero por otra parte esta protección bloquea a veces su “ser adulto” y comportarse de un modo autónomo. (79)

Martín Gaité understands the difficulty mothers have in distinguishing between their own independence and that of their children. At the same time, she sees how women may find looking after their children a barrier which prevents them from attaining their own goals: ‘Separan lo uno [el cuidado de los hijos] de lo otro [cualquier actividad externa a la casa]. Intuyen que hay otra cosa’ (81). And she asks herself: ‘¿Qué

¹⁷⁸ ‘Maternal-Filial Mirroring and Subjectivity in Carmen Martín Gaité’s *Lo raro es vivir*’, in *Carmen Martín Gaité*, ed. by Kathleen M. Glenn and Lissette Rolón Collazo, 109-27 (p. 109).

diferencia esencial existe entre ese trabajo y el que se haga en un colegio, en una academia, en una oficina?’ (81). The author believes that mothers should give their children, through playing and telling stories, answers to all their questions:¹⁷⁹ ‘Hay, por ejemplo, muchas madres activas, progresistas, [...] y sin embargo hacen hijos para luego quitárselos de encima comprándoles tebeos interplanetarios’ (37).

Sometimes, though, she seems to contradict herself, especially when she has to decide whether women know the importance of their place in society: ‘Las mujeres saben que la estabilidad de una sociedad reposa entre sus manos de madres’ (82). If women really knew their fundamental role, they would have more consideration for, and pride in, themselves. Yet Martín Gaité comments on the same page: ‘Si la consideración de un ama de casa fuera mayor, a las mujeres les gustaría más ser amas de casa’ (82). She seems to wonder how women can sit and simply look at the changing world around them. How can women let others take decisions for themselves? Martín Gaité lays the blame for this kind of position on cinema and literature, which endorse romantic love, marriage and children as the only goals in their lives. Thus love and marriage come under attack. She seems to find herself in a moment of crisis when she starts thinking about all the ideas with which the young girls of her generation were indoctrinated. These girls were keen readers of romantic novels (the *novela rosa*) in which love and marriage is presented as the only ambition. Such ideas were developed years later in her book of essays *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* (1987), where Martín Gaité looks at her generation, young girls of the postwar period, and the way they dealt with love. In *Cuaderno 1* she writes:

Todas las canciones y novelas de amor hablan de magia y ensueño. Es el amor la culminación de lo inexplicable. Siempre se ha echado mano de mentiras para sostener el amor, se ha rodeado su nacimiento de un aparato fabuloso. Pero tanto esfuerzo obliga a no reconocer que fue en vano. (52)

Family Relationships

Everyday life with the spouse, and sex, are an important part of the disenchantment:¹⁸⁰ ‘De verdad el sexo ha tenido siempre el mismo valor: un rato’ (115). The excitement of the first moments of love, the only thing talked about in the romantic novels, finishes,

¹⁷⁹ The author in her ‘Bosquejo autobiográfico’ relates the way her parents always answered all her questions, see *Agua pasada*, p. 13.

¹⁸⁰ For the development of the theme of love and sex in *Cuadernos de todo*, see Celaya ‘El amor es una tara.’

and women then want more; they demand from their husbands that the marriage union be permanent:

El matrimonio sólo puede servirnos para enseñarnos que la felicidad es fugaz. [...] y de aceptar esa realidad es de donde viene la riqueza. [...] Y el único esfuerzo positivo de la vida en común debía ser el de librar al otro lo más posible de la propia interferencia y no dejarse a su vez tarar por la suya, [...] porque así de verdad serían dos colaborando. (53)

Beatriz Celaya comments on the way Martín Gaité keeps quiet any theme related to sexuality, not only in her notebooks, but in her novels and in her book of essays, *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*: ‘el deseo sexual femenino no sólo estaba ausente del discurso franquista, también parece estarlo en el mismo análisis que realiza Martín Gaité muchos años después’ (234).

These years when the author stopped publishing novels and dedicated her time to historical research, perhaps because of the difficulty of writing creatively, were also the years when her marriage was going through a crisis which culminated in separation in 1970. In any case, intimate subjects are something Martín Gaité did not like talking about in interviews or writing about even in her notebooks,¹⁸¹ consequently it is difficult to know exactly what kind of problems she was going through during those years. Her critique of women, marriage and sex, though, are good indicators of the author’s disappointment with love as presented in the romantic novels she, like many of her female characters, read as a young girl. The sadness she sometimes writes about may also indicate the crisis she was going through:

Recuerdo cuando iba al parque hace unos años. Todo se me volvía mirar el reloj. Cerraba los ojos, tomaba el sol, y las conversaciones en torno me resbalaban. Cuándo serán las doce, Cuándo serán las doce y cuarto. No estaba tan triste como ahora, pero siempre estaba esperando algún acontecimiento exterior y me consumía. De fuera pensaba que me iba a venir, como el maná, la liberación. (50)

Martín Gaité has noted that her husband taught her to live solitude, and her dedication to *Usos amorosos del dieciocho* reads: ‘Para Rafael, que me enseñó a habitar la soledad y a no ser una señora.’ In fact, solitude and isolation are themes repeated throughout all her work and are found in the early pages of her notebooks. Solitude,

¹⁸¹ Some details about ‘la vida privada de otras personas’ have been edited so as not to appear in the *Cuadernos de todo*, as Calvi explains, p. 15.

often concerning women, but also as suffered by men, is analysed in the *Cuadernos*, where she differentiates between ‘soledad en compañía’ and ‘soledad física’ (55). The author states: ‘Vivir en común debía ser no pedir al otro que llene nuestro vacío sino ayudarle a encontrar su soledad, no estarle tendiendo continuamente la mano’ (56). Indeed, she sees solitude as a positive condition as it helps thinking, it gives freedom. She also criticises those who do not know what to do with their solitude: ‘Dicen: es que “naturalmente” una mujer sola se aburre’ (56). Martín Gaité celebrates solitude: she can see in it a place for reflection, from where it is possible to write, from where one can create oneself before presenting it to others. At the same time, the author believes that independence for women has arrived too soon, before they can understand the consequences of their new role in society, and she also suggests that independence can bring the anguish of solitude: ‘La mujer emancipada rechaza y sufre la soledad más que nunca, perdida en la confusión de letreros que la circundan. Al aburrimiento de la mujer que hacía media ha sucedido la angustia de la soledad’ (94). As Carbayo Abengózar notes with reference to Martín Gaité’s novels:

En los años sesenta y setenta, cuando el feminismo hace posible que las mujeres empiecen a tener una habitación propia, la autora pone en boca de sus personajes las contradicciones y las carencias de ese feminismo que pretendía igualar sin entender las diferencias.¹⁸²

For Martín Gaité the solitude some women experience in their homes can serve as a refuge: ‘Una mujer debiera tener más paz y equilibrio que cualquier oficinista, mayor capacidad de autoconstrucción si fomentara su razón, su autonomía’ (81). She believes in change from the inside and does not accept that the changes society brings are enough: women have to understand these changes before taking part in them. She suggests that the use of our intelligence is the only way out of difficult moments, the only way to develop thoughts on a changing society, and the only way for women to escape their state of immanence. She talks of ‘inteligencia como instrumento’ (37) and also observes: ‘La capacidad de reflexión es lo único que puede salvar al hombre de desear las guerras y también de pudrirse en la paz’ (32).

¹⁸² ‘Significación social de las novelas de Carmen Martín’, p. 373.

Consumerist Society

One other theme which appears repeatedly in the author's notebooks and is developed in her later novels is consumerism in capitalist society. Living standards in Spain had fallen behind over many years, however in the 1960s they rose rapidly.¹⁸³ Martín Gaité criticises the attitudes of women in this capitalist society: '¿Qué tienen las mujeres de ahora que nunca están contentas? Sencillamente que les han hecho tener fe en los ambientes, en los uniformes, en las neveras, en lugar de haberles enseñado a tenerla en sí mismas' (97). This kind of attitude, the author believes, encourages social injustice and class difference:

Cuando veo a tantas señoras que riñen a sus criadas, que cierran las casas con llave, que se pavonean sobre el malestar de otros seres más inferiores económicamente, que han cerrado la puerta de sus vidas a cualquier interés ajeno a la propia comodidad familiar, a esas gentes que aplican sólo la ternura de puertas adentro, precisamente por lo que el hecho me repugna y me conmueve.
(36)

Martín Gaité had developed these themes of social injustice and class difference in her short stories such as 'Los informes' (1954) and 'La tata' (1958).

The ideas which she develops in her notebooks on consumerism, women in the workplace or the mother-child relationship, are the ones she would like other women to think about. Her critique of women who have nothing to talk about, who do not have the need to get out of the house to communicate with others, cannot be turned against Martín Gaité. She blames women who do not have any interests outside the house; she envies men who go out to the bar, to the 'tertulia', to discuss things outside the home. The vacuity found in some middle-class women can be seen in some of the characters of Martín Gaité's short stories, for example 'Tarde de tedio' (1970) or 'Retirada' (1974), where the author presents women of the middle class with nothing to do, having maids and nannies who look after their children and spending all day at the hairdresser or waiting for their husbands to take them out.

Martín Gaité has a head full of ideas which, like noisy neighbours, do not allow her peace and quiet: she needs to get them out, to 'talk to them', and this dialogue will be recorded on paper. As an intellectual for whom the home is not the only thing in her

¹⁸³ For a discussion of *desarrollismo* in Spain, see Alex Longhurst, 'Culture and Development: The Impact of 1960s "desarrollismo"', in *Contemporary Spanish Cultural Studies*, ed. by Barry Jordan and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas (London: Arnold, 2000), 15-28.

life, she finds it impossible to understand the position some women of her generation take. These are those who accept their passive role as wives and mothers, and whose only theme of conversation is the house and the children, and who seem to take pleasure in their own problems:

La mujer va a prolongar los motivos de su disgusto, a ahondar en ellos, va a ‘comentar’ con las amigas comprensivas, raza horrible que debería desaparecer de la faz de la tierra. Nunca quiere, generosamente, olvidarse de sí misma dándose a otro tema, fundiéndose en el interés por otra conversación, asomándose a una ventana. (56-57)

Her protagonists of the 1990s novels take a different position. They appear outside this capitalist and consumerist society, they are in the edge of that society while they see the other female characters of the novels rush around buying goods to have the most modern of houses. The male characters have joined the consumerist frenzy by marrying women who are more concerned with looks than the intellectual needs of the people around them. Sofía, Mariana, Casilda, Águeda and Amparo do not seek the company of other women to convey their frustrations; instead they find in solitude and reflection their weapon against their problems. These women find in their writing the way to understand themselves in the same way that Martín Gaité uses her *cuadernos* as a place to converse with herself.

Cuadernos para el Diálogo

There is also to be found in the pages of the first notebooks a dialogue with the outside world, not only through the thoughts the author reveals about the world, but also by means of a dialogue with other writers and their ideas. As Foucault indicates in ‘Self Writing’, Seneca stresses the need to read other texts in order to be able to help one’s own thoughts and ideas to develop: ‘the practice of the self involves reading, for one could not draw everything from one’s own stock or arm oneself by oneself with the principles of reason that are indispensable for self-conduct: guide or example, the help of others is necessary’ (211). Responding to authors such as Bertrand Russell, José Ortega y Gasset, or Antonio Machado, Martín Gaité appears to be answering letters written after reading their books, in which she develops those writers’ thoughts, as if they were posing questions she needs to answer. Indeed, in *Cuaderno 12* the author comments on the idea of the first notebooks as a base from which to maintain a dialogue with the authors she reads:

Mis cuadernos de todo surgieron cuando me vi en la necesidad de trasladar los diálogos internos que mantenía con los autores de los libros que leía, o sea convertir aquella conversación en sordina en algo que realmente se produjera. Los libros te disparan a pensar. Debían tener hojas en blanco entre medias para que el diálogo se hiciera más vivo. (264)

In *Cuaderno 2*, dedicated mostly to this type of diary, there are clear examples of this kind of writing. Thus the author comments, amongst many others, on Georg Simmel's ideas about *Cultura Feminina* (72) which makes her think about women's disenchantment with their society and the need to make themselves valued. Reading Wilhelm Wundt's *Elementos de psicología de los pueblos*, she reflects on solitude and the need for material goods: 'En el apego a las cosas hay mucho del miedo a quedarse solo, desprotegido' (76). This kind of dialogue is connected to the themes that concern the author and which appear in her later works. She reveals how her readings are linked to her reflections on the position of women in society when she responds to books such as Thorstein Veblen's *Teoría de la clase ociosa* by discussing women's work in the home and their 'aparente liberación' (68) through the goods consumerist society provides. Reading Simone de Beauvoir's *Le Deuxième sexe* makes her think of women's revenge the necessity of communication in marriage and the need for women to reach transcendence: 'La mujer no ha comprendido que no es la supremacía económica y por ende la de dominio del mundo la que debe envidiar al macho y desear poseer, sino la posibilidad y capacidad de transcendencia' (88). With regard to solitude, she responds to books such as Erich Fromm's *Psicoanálisis de la sociedad contemporánea*, which makes her think about the need for intimacy and about women working outside the home. On the subject of capitalism she reads Max Weber's *La ética protestante y el espíritu del capitalismo*. Here she expresses her feelings towards capitalist society and the need to reach the unreachable: 'La desesperación viene de que nos han presentado como únicamente deseable y hermoso lo que no se sabe si se va a poder alcanzar o no' (71). Reading Evelyne Sullerot's *La presse féminine* (82), Martín Gaité reflects on motherhood and the influence of women's magazines. And, on the theme of love, the author reads classics such as *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (103), *Madame Bovary* and *La Regenta* (85). Influenced by these readings, she wrote articles such as 'La influencia de la publicidad en las mujeres', published in December 1965 in *Cuadernos para el*

Diálogo,¹⁸⁴ or ‘De Madame Bovary a Marilyn Monroe’, published in *Triunfo* after the actress’s death in 1962.¹⁸⁵ All of these are themes which she develops later on in her fiction. Some of these books she is reading are also brought into her novels, with the protagonists revealing close relationships with fictional characters that have had a great influence on their lives.

The Writer’s Workshop

With *Cuaderno 3* there begins another thematic aspect of *Cuadernos de todo*: this is the author’s work in progress. In this part of the chapter, the close relationship between the *Cuadernos de todo* and her published work will be discussed. Sometimes life and literature are so closely connected that Martín Gaité clearly incorporates her own experiences in her published work, as will be seen with *El cuento de nunca acabar* or *El cuarto de atrás*. At other times the experiences she has gone through or she is going through at the time of writing form part of what her characters are going through in their lives, and here it is possible to see the ‘influence’ of the author on her characters.

Even though from *Cuaderno 3* the work in progress can be more easily identified, some of the ideas exposed in the two first notebooks will find a place in the pages of her published work, and, as has been seen, various themes treated such as women’s role in society, motherhood, family relationships and consumerism, will surface in her short stories and the novels published later. Now, novels such as *Fragmentos de interior* and *Retahílas*, as well as her historical study on Macanaz, are seen clearly delineated in *Cuaderno 3*. This can be termed the ‘writer’s workshop’, as it reveals how a work starts taking shape in the author’s head and is developed slowly on account of personal circumstances and external influences.

Siempre he echado de menos, al cabo de mis diferentes invenciones narrativas que culminaron en el resultado de un libro nuevo, no haber llevado, paralelamente al trabajo que iba configurando y creando el libro, un diario donde se diera cuenta de los avatares, interrupciones y altibajos de esa elaboración.
(381)

¹⁸⁴ See *La búsqueda de interlocutor y otras búsquedas*, 113-21.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 133-46.

These words, written by Martín Gaité at the beginning of her only *cuaderno de bitácora* (*Cuaderno 16*) dedicated to the development of the Count of Guadalhorce's biography, are repeated on other occasions during her life.¹⁸⁶ They also introduce the notes that will be discussed next. What is revealed in *Cuadernos de todo* is exactly this, a great *cuaderno de bitácora*, in which can be discovered the way in which many of her works started and the vicissitudes which led to their conclusion.

In *Cuadernos de todo*, Martín Gaité describes her thoughts, her feelings, and her up and downs during the time she was preparing her work, or during the period when her books were mere ideas and projects without a title. There are notes which discuss her difficulties as well as her moments of excitement when developing a new idea. Sometimes these projects did not materialise. Elsewhere can be seen the very words later published in her novels, essays or talks.¹⁸⁷ Of all of Martín Gaité's works, the one which receives most space in the *Cuadernos* is *El cuento de nunca acabar*. In this work the bridge between life and literature is continuously crossed. Martín Gaité writes her life at the same time that she reflects on the subject of narration. This was also the work the author used to introduce the *Cuadernos* to her public in prologue 5 of the book and this will be the first work looked at here.

***El cuento de nunca acabar* (1983)**

From the beginning of *Cuadernos de todo*, the relation between these notebooks and *El cuento* can be traced. Her ideas for *El cuento de nunca acabar* were already exposed in *Cuaderno 1* (1961) and continued even after the publication of the book in 1983.¹⁸⁸ Martín Gaité's reflections on the theme of narration, which are the ones she was

¹⁸⁶ These same words were used in her article, 'La novela de la novela', on Thomas Mann's *Los orígenes del doctor Faustus: La novela de la novela*, published in *Diario 16* on 7 February 1977. See Martín Gaité, *Tirando del hilo*, p. 75. In the same way, we find this idea in 'Retahíla con nieve en Nueva York', a text written by the author for *From Fiction to Metafiction*, during her first long stay in New York. In this case she changed the words slightly: 'una especie de cuaderno de bitácora para registrar la historia de lo que iba pensando y sintiendo, de lo que me movía a escribir y de cómo el hecho de escribir influía en mi humor y lo modificaba', pp. 22-23.

¹⁸⁷ There are more notebooks and manuscripts dedicated exclusively to her published work which have not been included in *Cuadernos de todo* due to their length, as Calvi explains in 'Criterios de selección y de edición', p. 14.

¹⁸⁸ Calvi comments on the intimate relationship which exists between *El cuento de nunca acabar* and *Cuadernos de todo*: 'Ambas obras comparten el rechazo de los géneros establecidos, la busca de la estética de lo provisional e incierto, que encuentra su razón de ser en las conexiones significativas que relacionan lo cotidiano con lo universal y imperecedero. La escritura se fundamenta en la observación y en el gozo que esta produce', 'Presentación de los *Cuadernos de todo* en Salamanca', *Especulo: Revista de Estudios Literarios* (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) 2003, <www.ucm.es/info/especulo/cmgaite/c_todo.html>

working on for *El cuento de nunca acabar*, are also fundamental to the rest of her work. Because of its subject, and its close relationship to the author's life, she found this book of essays difficult to finish, as she admitted: 'este trabajo, que lleva el título previo de *El cuento de nunca acabar*, amenaza con ser demasiado fiel a su título porque no lo acabo nunca, abierto, como está, por naturaleza, a toda clase de interrupciones' (*Agua pasada*, 24).

El cuento and *Cuadernos de todo* complement each other. The idea of keeping a diary or *cuaderno de bitácora* for *El cuento* is also stated in the book.¹⁸⁹ *El cuento* needs the *Cuadernos* as a place in which to reflect at all times: the author writes in the notebooks any thoughts she had on the theme of narration during the years she worked on it. Martín Gaité also uses *El cuento*, or *neverending* as she called it, in moments when dejection overwhelmed her, it was the safety net to keep her writing. Ana María Fagundo calls *El cuento*: 'una narración cuya protagonista es la propia autora a la cual vemos pensando, escribiendo, viviendo,'¹⁹⁰ as she does in the *Cuadernos*. Because of the freedom Martín Gaité allowed herself in this work (she comments on the idea of writing a book on narration and how she did not want to follow the pattern other writers have used when writing on the same subject), she permitted herself to write anything that came into her head and employed the title *El cuento de nunca acabar*. Under this heading can be found personal experiences and feelings, as well as theoretical ideas derived from other readings.

The first knowledge the reader has of this work, according to the editor of *Cuadernos de todo*, are the notes taken in Teruel in September 1963 on the pleasure of writing a letter, which are included in prologue 3 to *El cuento*. Even though this is the first clear note taken for *El cuento*, the author used other notes made in *Cuadernos 1* and 2. For instance, in *Cuaderno 1* there is a note titled 'El respeto por la letra escrita' (31) which the author used in the first part of 'Río revuelto', entitled 'Los apuntes' (*El cuento*, p. 233).

Cuaderno 4 includes the story of a walk Martín Gaité took with her daughter during their holiday in El Boalo, Madrid, on 31 July 1964 and which she published, edited, in the third part of *El cuento*, under the title 'Ruptura de relaciones'.¹⁹¹ Until

¹⁸⁹ See *El cuento de nunca acabar*, pp. 215-16.

¹⁹⁰ *Literatura femenina de España y las Américas* (Caracas: Editorial Fundamentos, 1995), pp. 147-48.

¹⁹¹ Although the first part of the story is reproduced nearly verbatim from the *Cuadernos de todo*, *El cuento de nunca acabar* contains a much longer version which the editor may not have reproduced in the *Cuadernos de todo*, as she did with other manuscripts of published works.

then, the author had not given a title to her thoughts and reflections. In fact, it is not until *Cuaderno 11* (October 1974) that the title of the book appears for the first time: ‘*El cuento de nunca acabar*. (Asunto cuya solución se retarda indefinidamente.) Venir a cuento. Déjate de cuentos. Chisme. Noticia. Correvedile. Enredo, maraña, intriga, historia, hablilla. Dar palabra’ (237). This paragraph also gives a synopsis of the book and its topics, indicating that in *El cuento* there are reflections on every kind of narration, from the popular ‘correvedile’ to the most serious ‘historia’. At that time, October 1974, the author gave a definitive title to the book in *Cuaderno 13*: ‘20 de octubre. He pensado el título de *El cuento de nunca acabar* para mis reflexiones sobre la narración, ensayo o lo que vaya a ser’ (298).

Cuaderno 12 is one of the most important in the development of *El cuento*. From this moment onwards most entries under this title had to do with the idea of narration; whether they were her own ideas, reflections from something she heard or observed in the street, or the development of a thought after reading a book on that theme. Some examples of themes that she develops here are: ‘Dorian Gray’ (179) (*El cuento*, 280); ‘Narración vacía’ (252) (*El cuento*, 310), or ‘La literatura epistolar’ (339) (*El cuento*, 247).

The books she was reading at the time influenced her work enormously. For instance, in *Cuaderno 21*, while reading Katherine Mansfield’s diaries and Margarita Nelken’s *Las escritoras españolas*, she discusses women writers, their readers, and women characters in the novels. These reflections were called in her notebooks, ‘El narrador testigo’ (460), a theme which in *El cuento de nunca acabar* was titled ‘La mujeres noveleras’ (63). Some other authors Martín Gaité read during her ‘research’ on narration were: Tzvetan Todorov (251), Roland Barthes (265), Felix Schwartzmann (259), Nicolas Leskov (269) and Marthe Robert, of whom she comments: ‘Hoy, hablándole a Lozano de *El cuento*..., me he dado cuenta de que no pretendo elucubrar ni hacer teoría de nada [...]. Si quisiera elaborar una teoría coherente y correcta como la de Marthe Robert, material tendría más que de sobra’ (276).

Once Martín Gaité gave the title to the project, for a long period of time she worked constantly on it. Ideas about narration had been in her head for many years and in *Cuaderno 13* she comments on the use of earlier ideas from her first cuadernos: ‘Hoy, en la tarde del 27 de octubre de 1974, voy a tratar de pasar a limpio, en este cuaderno tan agradable que me regaló Torán, algunas de las notas que salgan a relucir en mis cuadernos viejos y que tengan que ver con el asunto de la narración’ (301).

These notes, once copied in a new notebook, develop into new ones, as happened many times with old *apuntes*. *Cuaderno 14*, written during the first half of 1975, is also full of notes on narration. Here she returns to themes dealt with in other notebooks and develops ideas on ‘literatura epistolar’ (339, 347), ‘la narración amorosa’ (341), ‘la mujer novelera’ (345) or ‘la narración tánatos’ (349). However, her work on narration was interrupted after a friend’s death, a friend who had helped her reflect on the theme, as will be seen below. So far, examples of the way in which many of the notes that Martín Gaité wrote in the notebooks were used in *El cuento* have been indicated, but something that does not appear in the published book but which is found in the *Cuadernos* involves the difficulties the author encountered trying to conclude this project.

El cuento de nunca acabar was dedicated to Gustavo Fabra. Martín Gaité talked about him during the presentation of the book in the Ateneo in Madrid on 22 March 1983, as she explains in the note to the second edition of the book. This great friend was her main interlocutor while she was preparing the book, and when he died, in December 1975, the author found it impossible to continue with the work without his help:

Primera interrupción. Desde que dejé ordenado lo que antecede han pasado seis meses, he perdido el estímulo de mi trabajo que ya parecía surcar las aguas con un ritmo seguro – lo cual no significaba ninguna garantía y me vuelve a asediar la zozobra. Hoy, al fin, 30 de abril de 1976, pienso que tal vez confesarlo aquí y recapitular las causas de este quiebro, [...] podrá servirme de punto de partida para arrancar a decir algo nuevamente.

Una de las cosas que han pasado en este tiempo es que en diciembre del año pasado murió repentinamente el amigo con quien yo más había hablado de los avatares de este libro y a cuya memoria se lo querría dedicar, si soy capaz de seguirlo [...]. Todo lo que antecede lo ha leído él y, a partir de ahora ya se lo estoy dedicando a unos oídos ausentes, a un rostro cuya expresión sólo muy a duras penas consigo evocar y reconstruir. (368-69)

In the same way that Martín Gaité’s protagonists of the 1990s novels used writing as a way of dealing with their traumatic losses or traumatic experiences, the author uses her notebooks as a *tabla de salvación* and her work as the space to bring her back from her *zozobra*. Thus, a few pages later, dated June 1976, Martín Gaité starts encouraging herself to continue with the project: ‘Al *neverending* no le tengo que tener miedo. Está. Tengo que recordar que puedo contarle por donde quiera, darme cuenta de

cómo interesa a Carlos, a Arcadio, a oyentes nuevos, y eso que está sin elaborar’ (372). Although it is known that her work on *El cuarto de atrás* took over, delaying the conclusion to *El cuento* for later, the author still continued encouraging herself: ‘Me voy a meter de lleno en el *neverending*. Es la única salida verdadera’ (397), she wrote in the Ateneo on 7 January 1977. Indeed, new interlocutors helped her to return to this project:

Estuve en el Ateneo todo el día, previo comer en Alcalá 35. [...] En las páginas anteriores quedan muestras de mi trabajo. [...] Luego vino a casa Millás y estuvimos hablando del *neverending*. Es muy lúcido y me puede ayudar, en adelante, hablar con él. Tanto a él como a Ricardo les parece sugerente conservar dos letreros laterales del borrador. Esto facilitaría las cosas, esa ligereza de factura (aun cuando amplíe algo) que también Nacho me insta a conservar. Tal vez revise lo ya hecho y lo despiece un poco en este sentido para que, en este caso, el libro tuviera una mayor unidad. (400)

In 1978 Martín Gaité was still encouraging herself: ‘Insistir, en el *neverending*, en el “encuentro con la literatura”’ (440). Indeed, through the long journey from the beginning of the project and until the end, many people encouraged her to finish it. On 10 January 1977 she wrote:

A lo largo de estos años les he hablado mucho a los amigos de la historia de este libro, que se vincula con mi propia historia (Brigitte, Eduardo, Ricardo, Nacho, Gustavo, Pablo, Aguirre...). Les hablo de algo que no está, les hablo de sus orígenes y de un proceso doloroso. (Y tengo miedo de acabarlo). (406)

Nevertheless, some friends were not that optimistic about its success:

Domingo 23 de marzo [1980]. Ateneo. Acabo de estar en la tertulia del Lyon con Josefina. Eugenio me desanima para el *neverending*, me viene – como Rafael antaño – con letreros, con clasificaciones de lo que es o no es sustancialmente la narración, habla de la búsqueda de la verdad, de la filosofía. Y yo, la verdad, creo que mi libro, por este camino, no va a gustarle nada. (491)

Ultimately, it was during a long period spent in the United States that the author decided to resolve the neverending tale: ‘Después de nueve años de trabajar en él, terminé de ordenar los apuntes que componen su última parte la madrugada del primer día de octubre de 1982 en Charlottesville, Virginia. Eran las cuatro de la madrugada y había luna llena’ (*El cuento*, 12). The months spent in the United States gave the author time, in complete solitude, to be able to finish this book. Solitude is often a fundamental

requirement for the writing of the self, as Didier explains: ‘La solitude crée une aire de silence et de liberté, au sein de laquelle le moi pourra vraiment exister.’¹⁹² The room of one’s own which Virginia Woolf talked about, an author Martín Gaité discover while in America,¹⁹³ made this solitude possible. As will be seen later, in the section on the *cuadernos americanos*, her stays in the United States were significant for the author, not only because of her recognition by the critics (until then never received on such a scale in Spain), but also because of the time and space that she enjoyed, and needed, to reflect in solitude. In an interview given on her return to Spain from her first visit to the United States in 1979, the author commented:

El cuento de nunca acabar. No es que lo esté preparando. Es que es un libro que creo que lo he estado preparando desde siempre. Lo que pasa es que ahora, después de mi visita a los Estados Unidos y tras el éxito que ha despertado, me ha vuelto la gana de continuar.¹⁹⁴

However, during the time that she was working on *El cuento de nunca acabar*, Martín Gaité was developing other projects which saw the light before *El cuento*, the most important being *Macanaz*, *Retahílas*, *Fragmentos de interior* and *El cuarto de atrás*.

***Retahílas* (1974)**

In the final note of *Retahílas*, the author writes:

Empecé a tomar apuntes para esta novela en junio de 1965, en un cuadernito que llamo, para mi gobierno, ‘cuaderno-dragón’ por un dibujo que me había hecho en la primera hoja un amigo que entonces solía decorar mis cuadernos. Terminé su redacción definitiva la tarde del 31 de diciembre de 1973, en mi casa de Madrid. (166)

The first note in *Cuadernos de todo* for *Retahílas* is in *Cuaderno 3* and was written in Alzola in August 1967 (133). This text was used in the chapter ‘E. Dos’ (*Retahílas* 59), although the author had already started taking notes for the novel in 1965 as she stated above. In November 1965, in *Cuaderno 3*, there appears a note about a mysterious woman:

Ya sé que existe esa mujer. Os lo digo. La he visto – la veo casi siempre que estoy aburrída y me quiero poner a escribir. No puedo dar detalles precisos de su

¹⁹² *Le journal intime*, p. 89.

¹⁹³ Martín Gaité writes about her ‘encounter’ with Virginia Woolf and her ‘A Room of One’s Own’ in *Desde la ventana*, p. 25.

¹⁹⁴ Alicia Ramos, ‘Conversación con Carmen Martín Gaité’, *Hispanic Journal*, 1 (1980), 117-24 (p. 124).

rostro porque está formado de expresiones cogidas a retazos de varias mujeres.
[...] De pronto lo deja todo y se va a ver a la abuela. (124)

However, most of the notes taken during 1965 for *Retahílas* are found in *Cuaderno 5*, the so-called *cuaderno-dragón*. This novel is one of the few which maintains its title, theme, and structure, although the dialogues of some notes in the notebooks were changed to monologues in the novel. The notes for the novel appear scattered throughout the notebooks and are sometimes headed by the names of the characters: 'Eulalia' (165), 'Para Germán' (153). Others have headings that indicate themes dealt with, such as 'Dos conversaciones tuve con ella sobre amor' (153), while others simply state 'Para *Retahílas*' (177). Notes without a heading can be recognized through the names of the characters, or the settings. The author does not write about the novel as such, or deal with the structure, or the use of dialogues or monologues: the notes are just put on paper in form similar to that in the novel. Only in *Cuaderno 7* does she make notes on the novel's development and how to link the different chapters:

G. Cinco (Armaduras de las familias. Puede acabar con consideraciones sobre lo pseudo hippie que enlaza con G. Seis. Ruina.) E. Seis (Envejecer... al salir de la peluquería. Futuro de la casa. Enlazar el tema de la ruina con el de la ruina de unos determinados supuestos que dejan de valer como 'chepita en alto'). (180)

Themes which can be found in other parts of the *cuadernos*, such as solitude, liberated women or family relationships, find a place in the dialogue between the characters. At the same time, some of the books the author was reading at the time are mentioned in the conversation: for example *Dorian Gray* or *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (*Retahílas*, 75 and 107). In *Cuaderno 8* (1973-74) we find the last notes for *Retahílas*, notes which deal with the idea of the first love, and first years of marriage, which link to a note taken for *El cuarto de atrás* in the same *cuaderno* (see p. 98). After this the novel was published.

***Fragmentos de interior* (1976)**

During the 1960s *Fragmentos de interior* was also being developed. Although at first the author gave a different title to the project, calling it 'Bajo el mismo techo', the characters and settings of what was going to be the novel were distinguishable from the beginning. *Cuaderno 3*, page 99, contains part of the first version of what was going to be Chapter 1. Gloria is the first character to be 'introduced' in the notebooks, together with the maid (who changes name, from Remedios in this first version to Pura in the

novel). The difficult relationship between them is also presented in this version. On page 121 of the same notebook, there appears the first version of what was going to be part of Chapter 2 of the novel.

However, this novel was left aside for a few years and then taken up again in *Cuaderno 13*, in which Martín Gaité reads through the notes made in her first notebooks to continue with *El cuento de nunca acabar*. The theme of the difficult relations between the lady of the house and the maid is reworked. In *Cuaderno 15* there also appears one letter signed by D. and addressed to Agustina, and an extract of another. These notes were made in the Ateneo on 3 February 1976, and are headed ‘Capítulo IV’ (364). Even though there appear to be no more notes on this novel in the notebooks, we know that the author wrote the whole novel in a very short time, even though the idea for it first occurred in the 1960s. Emma Martinell Gifre comments on the speed with which the author wrote the novel: ‘Martín Gaité escribió la novela en tres meses, de enero a marzo de 1976. [...] Sabemos que la novela fue fruto de una especie de reto, mantenido entre Carmen Martín Gaité y un amigo, Ignacio Álvarez Vara.’¹⁹⁵

***El cuarto de atrás* (1978)**

During the writing of *Retahílas* and *Fragmentos*, and the period of *Macanaz* and *Guadalhorce*, Martín Gaité was working on the novel which for many is her masterpiece, *El cuarto de atrás*. During the development of this novel different projects occurred to the author. These projects became connected, resulting in a single piece of work which is itself a combination of different literary genres: an autobiographical novel, a historical novel, and a fantastical narrative.¹⁹⁶

The first entry, written in the spring of 1973, with the heading *El cuarto de atrás*, does not bear any relation to the final novel: ‘Barcelona vista a través de mis intentos fallidos de asumirla’ (177), apart from giving a name to the new project. The next entries (6-7 April 1973) link the project to the idea of memoirs: ‘Revivir para *El cuarto de atrás* el momento de ebullición de mis versos, aquel invierno en Valladolid, mis luchas a solas y a ciegas, rechazando la burguesía’ (191-92). A few lines later, the author writes of ‘el aire que me entraba allí en la plaza dando vueltas en la bicicleta’

¹⁹⁵ ‘*Fragmentos de interior*’, in *Carmen Martín Gaité*, ed. by Alicia Redondo Goicoechea, 161-71 (p. 161).

¹⁹⁶ Carmen Alemany describes *El cuarto de atrás* as being: ‘A mitad de camino entre las memorias, la narrativa tradicional, el reportaje y la novela de misterio’, *La novelística de Carmen Martín Gaité* (Salamanca: Ediciones de la Diputación, 1990), p. 152.

(192). In October of the same year the idea becomes clearer: ‘cuando hablas con pasión o amor siempre echas mano de materiales olvidados, almacenados en el cuarto de atrás’ (198), bringing the theme of the past into the project. In fact, ‘Pesquisa personal’ (185), which would develop into *La Reina de las Nieves*, started as a project to recover personal stories mixed with Spanish history, and women’s social history in particular. This project, which the author saw as: ‘Novela, en cierta manera de ciencia ficción. Onírica. Melibea. Camino de perfección. Alicia a través del espejo. Un P. Klein para quien Salamanca es una familia “agitanada” a lo payo’ (208), surfaced in different books, including *El cuarto de atrás*, *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* and the novel it eventually inspired, *La Reina de las Nieves*. Those notes, first made for ‘Pesquisa’, that ended up contributing to *El cuarto de atrás* transformed science fiction into literature of the fantastic after the author had read Tzvetan Todorov. Although, with reference to *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, ‘Pesquisa personal’ was dedicated to Lewis Carroll (281), it was, of course, in *El cuarto de atrás* that Carroll was acknowledged with a dedication: ‘Para Lewis Carroll, que todavía nos consuela de tanta cordura y nos acoge en su mundo al revés’ (*El cuarto*, 7).

In *Cuaderno 11* the entries under the heading ‘*El cuarto de atrás*’ refer to past and present, to changes in the way things are seen:

La luz, el gas, el agua, eran como los humores del cuerpo. En la infancia y la juventud corren sin que los advirtamos, nos servimos de ellos a manos llenas pero no nos molestan ni nos duelen. En la edad madura hay que pagar por ellos, atenderlos. (231)

At the same time, Martín Gaité’s thoughts about writing an autobiography slipped into her notebooks: ‘Tengo que escribir una autobiografía de mi relación con los temas y mi oscilación a la caza de ellos al tiempo que hablo de los temas mismos’ (234). Indeed, earlier in the notebooks, when confronted with writer’s block, she commented:

6 de agosto [1974] noche. Soledad. [...] Podía hacer una narración en la dirección de ahondar en los antiguos “cuéntame” de la Torci,¹⁹⁷ no comprendía que no me acordaba de qué libros leí primero que otros, de qué pensaba, de cómo me vestía, de cómo empleaba cotidianamente mi tiempo. (214)

On 23 January 1976 the author wrote in *Cuaderno 13*: ‘Para la novela nueva *El cuarto de atrás*’ (309). Then in 1977 a new project appeared which was swallowed into

¹⁹⁷ The idea of an interlocutor who encourages one to talk had already been developed in *Retahílas*: ‘Basta con que un amigo te pida “cuéntame” para que salga todo de un tirón.’ *Retahílas*, p. 74.

El cuarto, ‘Entrevista imaginaria’ (312). The idea of a stranger who would help her to live the dreams of romantic novels, like the ones written by Carmen de Icaza, took shape. The theme of romantic novels, and their influence upon young women like her, was also, of course, developed in *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*, as well as in *Retahílas*. There are comments on romantic novels and the influence of romantic films in the first notebooks. And during the last night of 1976, the author imagines the form her project on the ‘Usos amorosos’ could take:

un entrevistador venía y me preguntaba que cómo había pasado el año y lo que había pensado a lo largo de él y cómo era mi infancia y cuales mis lecturas y yo le hablaba de Franco y de su muerte y luego de mis recuerdos de películas infantiles, del Instituto, de los bailes. (396)

That interviewer, however, will appear in *El cuarto de atrás* as the mysterious visitor who helps the protagonist to remember and weave together her work and her life, while also mentioning the other project she has been working on, *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española*, that would be published a few years later.

Cuaderno 17 is the most important with regard to the development of *El cuarto*. Starting in December 1976, the first note, entitled ‘Las encuestas’ (389), was followed by notes on books on memoirs and historical works about the Spanish Civil War. These notes were followed by one titled ‘Para un cuento fantástico’ (390), which relates to the ‘conversations’ the author had with Todorov’s book, *Introduction a la Littérature fantastique* (1970). This chain of thoughts was foreshadowing what *El cuarto de atrás* was going to be. One note which shows the excitement Martín Gaité is feeling is interspersed with notes about narratives of the fantastic: ‘(Mira Juan, lo de “naturaleza muerta” no vas a verlo escrito como te esperabas. Te brindo y prometo una sorpresa que va a romper todos los moldes, palabra dada el 22 de diciembre del 76 en el Ateneo a las seis de la tarde)’ (391).

Although contemplating writing a novel of the fantastic, the author was still thinking about ‘Pesquisa personal’: ‘Esto puede enlazar con el tema de *Pesquisa personal*, pero debo narrarlo en forma más simple y escalofriante a la vez. Menos introspección, menos claves para el lector de que estoy escribiendo una novela fantástica’ (391). As was said earlier, some of the ideas for ‘Pesquisa personal’ were taken up in *El cuarto*. Martín Gaité, after her encounter with Todorov, had much clearer ideas regarding what the novel should be about. Earlier in her career she had flirted with the idea of writing a novel of the fantastic, and certainly *El balneario* has some

characteristics of this kind of narrative. But, as the author observed, her fear stopped her from going all the way. The author needed nearly thirty years and experience as a published writer in order to be able to realize her first literary impulse and write a ‘fantastic’ novel, integrating her own life and experiences in her work. She was able in this way to combine life and literature with all the attendant consequences, producing a novel that would make her known throughout the world. Martín Gaité reflects in her notebooks:

La llamada de lo fantástico la sentí por primera vez en 1949, en mis intentos fallidos del *Libro de la fiebre*. [...] Ahondar en el estilo del *Balneario*, sería ahora que sé muchas más cosas y tengo mejor gusto y pulso más seguro, mi salida de los infiernos. Aquello me ha dado una identidad, dormida en mí, que estaba empezando a olvidar, a enterrar. Ahora desafiare genialmente. Me tengo, al fin, que atrever. Con aparente ingenuidad y prudencia. Despistando. Se van a quedar fríos. Dinamita pura y – hasta ahora – no había disparado. Ya es hora. (391-92)

However, a few days after her encounter with Todorov, Martín Gaité seemed to have doubts again and returned to her safety net, *El cuento de nunca acabar* (394). On 24 January 1977, she writes:

Vuelvo a estar en blanco. Lo que me falta es el empuje para dejarme a la invención. ¿De dónde viene – cuando baja – ese entusiasmo, ese estímulo? [...] Yo sé escribir e incluso he llegado a seleccionar ciertos principios para hacerlo que pueden servirle de norma a otro que no sabe. Pues ¿por qué me he aburrido de ponerme a hacerlo, si tengo temas y me saldría bien? (408)

Cuaderno 18 reveals the manuscript of the beginning of the first chapter for *El cuarto* and the dedication to Lewis Carroll. In this notebook there are a few more notes used for the novel and the observation: ‘Para el final de *El cuarto de atrás*’ (427). Many of the ideas written in the *cuaderno* are used in the novel, even though some of the words found in the *cuaderno* were changed. Indeed, one very important change is the dialogue C. has with her daughter at the end of the novel, one detail of which is especially interesting is the omission of one particular adjective. Whereas in the novel the daughter says: ‘¡Qué bien!, ¿no?, decías que no eras capaz de arrancar con nada estos días’ (*El cuarto*, 206), in the *cuadernos* she wrote: ‘¡Qué bien! Cuánto me alegro. Decías que estabas deprimida, que no eras capaz de arrancar con nada’ (429). It is very significant that the word ‘deprimida’ is used in the *cuadernos*, in pages written for

herself and suppressed in the novel that was going to be made public. Throughout the notebooks her moments of despair are indicated, but with her autobiographical novel the author must have felt the need to suppress a state of mind which could be taken out of context by the readers. *El cuarto de atrás* is the novel which most clearly presents the author as a fictional character. Perhaps because of this Martín Gaité took care in the published work not to be completely open to the reader. In the following novels, written after her parents' and her daughter's death, she would 'hide' behind principal characters quite different from herself, even though they revealed some of the author's traits.

The ending of the novel also changed: 'Para el final. Veo desprenderse, entre las esterillas, el sombrero negro y los zapatos que llevaba en la mano el hombre de la playa' (431). The object the man in black left behind changed from a hat and the pair of shoes to the golden pillbox, an object which has a greater significance for the novel and for the notion of remembering which runs through it. Also, the blue letter disappeared in the first version whereas in the novel C. finds it under the engraving of Luther and the Devil (*El cuarto*, 206).

***La Reina de las Nieves* (1994)**

Although *La Reina de las Nieves* was published two years after *Nubosidad variable*, it was conceived much earlier than *Nubosidad*. As was mentioned earlier, *La Reina* started its life under the title 'Pesquisa personal', and what started as being the author's personal *pesquisa* ended up being the quest of the protagonist of the novel to find answers to his life and his personal situation.

On 28 April 1974, Martín Gaité wrote in her notebook ideas regarding 'Pesquisa personal': 'Posible incorporación a *Pesquisa personal* de este tramo de vida cotidiana que supone el menester de ir las mujeres a peluquerías' (185), a theme that had already been used in 1970 in one of her short stories 'Tarde de tedio'. Even though this idea is not incorporated in *La Reina de las Nieves*, what the author did use were the notes she took the same day on the idea of drugs as stultification, although in her first note she suggests the idea of society, and coexistence with the partner, as anaesthesia 'empobreciendo sus respectivas neuronas' (185). The protagonist of *La Reina de las Nieves* needs to escape from his addiction to drugs in order to be able to take charge of his life: 'Droga = anestesia. Quien la toma es porque no se atreve a soñar con posturas extremas ni a inventar nada' (185). The next day, she enters in another notebook her thoughts on the solution to the protagonist's problems: 'Sólo lo personal, lo

trabajosamente inquirido en soledad y esfuerzo le podría devolver la magia del amor y de la vida, por eso se afana en esa secreta pesquisa' (207). And, in the novel, we find the protagonist writing in his notebooks/diaries, in his father's study and in complete isolation, until the moment he finds once more a reason to live.

Over the next months, the novel starts taking shape in the notebooks. In *Cuaderno13* she writes what seems to be part of the first chapter with a dedication 'Para Lewis Carroll' (281).¹⁹⁸ In this first version of the chapter, the protagonist has already taken his pen to write his thoughts, in order to understand his present circumstances in relation to his past. Also included is the character of the girl who picks him up, in this case from the station instead of from the prison, taking him to what seems to be a commune where they live. In the novel, that commune will remain in the past of the protagonist (Leonardo refers to it when reading his old diaries) and the protagonist jumps out of the car before getting there. One aspect of this first version, which remains one of the most important indicators of the protagonist's need to write, is his memory loss: 'Si ella dice que he dormido en el suelo ya más veces, será verdad, yo no lo sé, no me acuerdo de nada, que me deje en paz' (283). Also, the name of the girl changes from Carola (283) (the name that Martín Gaité gives to the woman who phones C. in *El cuarto*) to Carlota (288), then to Ángela, her name in the novel.

On 21 September 1974, Hans Christian Andersen's story appears for the first time in relation to this project: '*Pesquisa personal* tiene que tener algo el tono de cuento prodigioso, de niño de Andersen a quien se le clava el cristalito en el ojo mientras Gerda lo llora sin que él se sepa llorado' (288). Much later, on 15 May 1978, Martín Gaité wrote what seems to correspond to part of the second chapter of the novel, since it keeps most of the theme and the plot. The arrival of the protagonist at his parents' house after many years of absence is the beginning of this first version. In the novel we read: 'Hace más de siete años que no trasponía la puertecita de hierro que lleva a la fachada trasera, y cuando lo hice fue horrible, una sensación como de hundirse en el vacío.'¹⁹⁹ In the first version of the *Cuadernos*, apart from changing the amount of time the protagonist has been away from home, the feeling of anxiety is already present: 'Hacía tres años que no ponía los pies en aquella casa, y los primeros días fue horrible' (316). Characters such as the black butler or the grandmother are already there in this first version. The

¹⁹⁸ As was pointed out earlier, Lewis Carroll was transferred to *El cuarto de atrás*, published many years before *La Reina de las Nieves*.

¹⁹⁹ *La Reina de las Nieves* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1994), p. 74.

room where he is going to spend the first days after his arrival, as well as some of the objects (his grandmother's bed, for example) or the chaos that prevails in the room (because of redecorating) are also present.

The idea of writing an erotic novel titled *Los objetos del deseo* had also been considered a few days earlier, '9 de mayo de 1978' (313). From that project, *La Reina*'s protagonist took on some of the characteristics of the male protagonist of the project which never saw the light, for example the writing of the notebooks and the need to isolate himself to be able to write: 'El cuaderno era negro, con tapas duras. La tinta corría bien por él, pero aquella chica enfrente de mí, intrigada, me estorbaba' (314). The mauve flowers which appear at the beginning of *Cuaderno 13*, reappear again in this new project: 'Escribí debajo del texto que acababa de leer, "Flores malvas"' (314). This recalls the words the author had written four years earlier in the same notebook: 'Estas dos palabras, "flores moradas", las tengo apuntadas en el paquete de pitillos ya vacío que venía fumando esta tarde en el tren' (282). Also, the train which appears in both notes is transformed into the car the girl uses to pick him up from prison. In the same notebook, more than two years after her last notes on *Pesquisa*, on the 26 April 1980 (*Cuaderno 13*), the author picks up the novel incorporating the theme of the connexion between past and present, and the reading of his father's letters. Even though Martín Gaité had written in her notebooks on 7 January 1977: 'Pero volver ahora sobre historias frías como *Pesquisa* me haría tener una fidelidad de oficio y forzada a algo que tal vez se haya muerto' (402), she seems to find it difficult to abandon completely this project.

The author gives the novel its final title in 1980: 'Notas para *La Reina de las Nieves* (Según voy copiando lo que tengo el 3 de julio de 1980)' (321), heading a number of notes on the themes she wants to use in the work. This is followed by part of Chapter IV. This chapter, in the first version of the notebooks and in the novel, incorporates Andersen's story in the narrative. In both cases, as well as incorporating the characters from the fairytale and transcripts of the story, the protagonist comments on his identification with both children in *The Snow Queen*. The 'pesquisa personal' seems to have been undertaken by the author who, after her parents' death, will be seen to start her own *pesquisa* into her and her parents' past in *Cuenta pendiente*.

Cuaderno 30 (February 1983-September 1983), picks up the novel again with a version of part of Chapter 1 of the novel and with the incorporation of 'la señora de la Quinta Blanca' (548). Although some details change in the novel, such as the name of

the old owner of the house or the number of years that the new owner has lived in it, the words are almost the same. The prison, in which the protagonist finds himself at the beginning of the novel, appears in the notebooks for the first time in August 1983. From these notes, which the author calls ‘retahílas en plan chalado’ (559), a series of points without apparent connexion appear. Of these points, only a few found space in the novel: the lighthouse, the lighthouse keeper’s friend, the different social classes, the lack of freedom money brings and the search for the mother, amongst others. In the autumn of the same year, the author writes about reading the second chapter to a friend. The last notes for the novel in *Cuadernos de todo* are in *Cuaderno 34* and were made on 8 June 1984.

In the preliminary note to the novel, Martín Gaité explains how work on it was left aside at the beginning of 1985, when her daughter fell ill, and how she was not able to pick it up until much later:

Esta novela, para la que vengo tomando notas desde 1975, ha tenido un proceso de elaboración lleno de peripecias. La empecé a escribir ‘en serio’ en 1979, por primavera, y trabajé en ella con asiduidad hasta finales de 1984, sobre todo en el otoño de ese año, durante una estancia larga en Chicago. [...] Sin embargo, a partir de enero de 1985, y por razones que atañen a mi biografía personal, solamente de pensar en *La Reina de las Nieves* se me helaba el corazón, y enterré aquellos cuadernos bajo siete estadios de tierra, creyendo que jamás tendría ganas de resucitarlos. (11)

The author felt that this novel was so close to her daughter that, after her death in 1985, she found it impossible to continue writing it. There was a long period when her grief for the loss of her daughter did not allow her to concentrate. However, her long stay in the United States in the autumn of 1985, where she found herself completely alone and with few obligations, allowing her enough time to reflect, was a period when she regained the strength to take up her writing, although she did not publish another novel until the 1990s.

Nubosidad variable (1992)

There are few entries for *Nubosidad variable* in *Cuadernos de todo*. The first link with the novel comes from some papers dating from 1981,²⁰⁰ which, as Calvi indicates in her introductory note to *Cuaderno 26*, refer to the homonym chapter ‘Clave de sombra’ (511). The first note to be found referring to the title ‘Para *Nubosidad variable*’ (553) comes at the end of *Cuaderno 30*. This note, written in September 1983, seems to be a conversation between mother and daughter, although this is not very clear: there are no names or situations that remind us of the novel. The second note appears in *Cuaderno 33* although it was written earlier, in June 1983:

Ir a casa de la abuela Dolores el día de su santo equivalía a tener que reconocer: “¡Ya está aquí la semana santa!”. Y los esfuerzos para convocar a mis hijos a aquella casa ¿en qué iban a redundar? (Frente a mi vislumbre angustioso de tener que convidar a El Boalo.)²⁰¹ (585)

This note starts to reflect some of the themes that appear in the novel, at the same time linking the feelings the author had when confronted by the situations the fictional protagonist is thinking about. Written in the first person and starting at the beginning of the note with the author’s voice, Sofía (the fictional character) remembers family meetings and obligations and how the children are growing up and leaving the home. She thinks about her youth and reflects on the changes in society over the years.

In April 1984, in the same *Cuaderno 33* which she used again a year later, and after having been working on *La Reina de las Nieves*, the author admits to being bored with the novel and adds: ‘me hace guiños *Nubosidad variable*’ (587). Following this comment there is a short note in which the protagonist of *Nubosidad variable* reflects on the time one spends looking after one’s body, ‘empaquetar el cuerpo para luego sacarlo embalsamado a pasear’ (587). This is followed in *Cuadernos de todo* by a version of Chapter I of *Nubosidad variable*. Here we can see that some details, such as the millions of pesetas spent on the redecoration of the bathroom, were changed from the one million which the author thought it would cost in 1984 to three millions in 1992. Sofía’s husband’s name also changes, from Gerardo to Eduardo. However, there is no explanation for this. The last note to be found, amongst other notes from different notebooks and other scraps of papers, is found in what Calvi titled ‘Notas fugaces’. This

²⁰⁰ It is interesting to note that at this time the author’s mother had recently died and the dreams which the protagonist Sofía describes bear a close relationship to those Martín Gaité uses in *Cuenta pendiente*.

²⁰¹ Martín Gaité’s family has a country house in El Boalo (Madrid) which she used frequently.

note, as the editor explains, appears in a notebook dated 1989, although the note came from an earlier *cuaderno*. This note refers to the other protagonist of the novel, Mariana, and her relationship to two of the men in her life: ‘Mi historia con Raimundo y con M. Reina entra en valor al cesar’ (664). After this, there is a note which explains: ‘Este desahogo de Mariana – supongo que más bien breve – será un “bocadillo”, antes de que Sofía empiece a contestar a su primera carta’ (664). This observation is one of the few sentences that indicates the direction of the novel.

Cuenta pendiente: An Unfinished Project on Life-Writing

With regard to an assessment of Martín Gaité’s notebooks as writing-cure, one of the most interesting projects is her unfinished *Cuenta pendiente*. *Cuenta pendiente* was begun as a response to her parents’ death: ‘Mis padres estaban, de fondo, en todo lo que hacía, aunque no lo viera. ¿Cuándo se empiezan a deteriorar las defensas, a asaltarte los fantasmas que has logrado mantener a raya?’ (432). This note was written at the end of *Cuaderno 18*.

On 19 November 1979 (*Cuaderno 22*) the author states with reference to a dream, under the heading *Cuenta pendiente*: ‘tenía que ver como todos los de este año, con la muerte de mis padres, pero ellos no salían’ (467). The papers and documents are the protagonists of the dream, documents that she, already dead as she relates in the dream, has to find and collect so that others would be able to ‘contar como había sucedido’ (467). A few months after her parents’ death, in ‘Domingo de Resurrección, 6 de abril’ (470), written in diary form, the author describes in the course of more than four pages, her dreams and the memories she has of her parents:

Ya hace más de un año que murieron mis padres, los dos en otoño de 1978 con mes y pico de diferencia, y desde entonces no sólo se me aparecen muchas veces en sueños y me dicen cosas que no entiendo o se me olvidan al despertar, sino que he empezado a padecer durante el día un fenómeno que se va agudizando y que interpreto como una especie de respuesta o complemento a esas pláticas nocturnas: la tendencia a hablar sola. (470)

In these lines, Martín Gaité gives details of her parents, their habits, which they kept most of their lives, the objects which were important in their world, and even the poems written by her father (473). She even starts thinking about this project as a possible novel: ‘porque tal vez el muchacho de mis sueños de anteaer (posible iniciación de *Cuenta pendiente*) sea una transformación’ (479). Although she seems to

abandon the idea of the novel, her dreams of her parents still fill the pages of her notebooks. There is, for example, mention of a dream she had in New York on 6 October 1980 in *Cuaderno 25* or the one she has in Madrid on 14 July 1981 in *Cuaderno 27*. Elsewhere, Martín Gaité published one of the dreams she had in New York in which her mother appears ‘De su ventana a la mía’.²⁰² In the United States the author also reflects on the diaries written by her father (503) – which presumably connects with the dream on the papers people leave behind after death.

At the end of 1982, during another trip to America, Martín Gaité resumed the project once more: ‘Partir del entorno (de la soledad que destila) para que cada objeto de los que ves o paso de los que das provoque una asociación de ideas no sólo hacia el pasado sino hacia el futuro’ (541). This idea does seem in fact very close to the function that remembering has for many of the character of her 1990s novels. The author will use her mother as the interlocutor in her project: ‘A mamá: a ti te lo tengo que dedicar lo de *Cuenta pendiente*, a ti te lo digo. [...] Buscar por ahí, hablarte de mis apuntes. Necesito que estés tú oyendo, que sea para ti, si no, no se engrasa el engranaje’ (584) [26 June 1983]. Also in 1983, she dreamt again of her father during another one of her stays in the United States (*Cuaderno 32*), and in April 1984, after a year of having promised her mother to dedicate the book to her, she was still making notes for the project: ‘Meterme con *Cuenta pendiente*, tal vez en plan diario, donde se fueran comentando y fechando los extractos de cuaderno donde aparecen notas y apuntes sobre este tema’ (586).

In May 1984, Martín Gaité made notes on the illness and death of her father, and the need to remember all the details to be able to relive those memories. She also remembers their last conversation. In addition, she recalls images of America and links them to her mother, with whom she talked about the country in an idealised way. The author describes the dreams she had after visiting America, and consequently talks of different aspects of the project: ‘En este trabajo hay dos vías: la de la emoción y la del cerebro (ahora que ya está todo distante y que no duele, que solamente es oquedad, la puedo llenar con mis angustias de entonces)’ (601). However the project was completely abandoned after her daughter’s death in 1985, although the seed that Martín Gaité planted in these notes bore fruit in her later novels, in which the protagonists use their notebooks to remember the past, with a view, as the author stated in one of her notes, to look towards the future.

²⁰² In *Madres e hijas*, ed. by Laura Freixas, 39-44.

The American Notebooks

The time spent in the United States of America as an invited writer, giving talks as well as teaching in different universities and colleges, was very important for Martín Gaité. During these periods the author made very methodical notes on her stays. *Cuadernos de todo* contains a total of six ‘American notebooks’ which cover from autumn 1980 (*Cuadernos 25 and 26*); January 1982 (*Cuaderno 28*); winter 1982 (*Cuaderno 29*); winter 1983 (*Cuaderno 32*) and August-September 1985 (*Cuaderno 35*), also known as ‘El otoño de Poughkeepsie’ (611). In addition, there is a collage notebook, published in 2005 and titled *Visión de Nueva York*, some of the pages of which were reproduced – in black and white – in *Cuadernos de todo* and before that in *From Fiction to Metafiction*. This collage-notebook covers the period 17 September 1980 to January 1981. In relation to life-writing and writing as therapy, it is interesting to note that Martín Gaité’s first stay in America happened after her parents’ death and the last after her daughter’s death. These *cuadernos* are also the ones which follow a structure more closely akin to that of diary-writing, as the author seems to have more time to reflect on her days. The periods she spent in the United States gave the author the opportunity for the solitude she had missed in Madrid. This made these American sojourns particularly important in the development of the notebooks as a site for thinking about her life.

In these notebooks, the author relates her journeys through the country, her encounters with different people (critics, lecturers, students, other writers and friends), the food she eats and the parties she goes to, the films she watches and the exhibitions she visits, the books she is most impressed with and her personal feelings in general. As said above, these notebooks are her most diary-like notebooks, as in many of them she writes almost daily and notes her experiences of the day. The period when she travels coincides with the presidential elections of 1980 and 1984, and she gives her impressions of American politics, comparing the different reactions of the Spaniards and Americans when confronted with elections and politics in their countries:

Despotricar del propio gobierno es algo que sólo podemos hacer los españoles con otros españoles para que resulte un poco divertido, llevamos años haciéndolo, es el deporte nacional por excelencia. Aquí eso no se estila. A Reagan ni lo nombran siquiera, nadie le saca nunca a relucir ni para bien ni para mal. (622)

The Iran-Iraq War and John Lennon's murder, are also events which coincided with Martín Gaité's stay.²⁰³ Shopping in the streets of New York fascinates her and she even includes details of what she buys and the clothes she wears to attend different talks, lectures or presentations, such as what she wears for the talk at Wellesley College:

Viene a recogerme Elena Gascón Vera. Paseo con ella por el Boston viejo; compras en el sótano barato (una combinación rosa Valladolid y un jersey de rayas malva, gris y marrón). [...] Luego conferencia sobre la aparición de la mentira. Llevaba la falda de *pied-de-poule* larga y el jersey de esta tarde. (505)

The author compares images of the United States to Edward Hopper's pictures,²⁰⁴ an artist who will appear in many of her notebook pages: 'Esa que va a meterse a un piso prestado y a sacarle calor a esos objetos, a esa llave, a esa cama donde no dormiré, soy yo la desarra, una mujer de Hopper' (532). This artist is for Martín Gaité the one who best represents American life: 'Sí, New York (Hopper lo supo ver mejor que nadie) es una mezcla de agobio y libertad' (495). In her notebook, *Vision of New York*, she makes a collage in homage to Hopper, showing her admiration after visiting a Hopper exhibition: 'Hago este collage el 28 de septiembre, early Sunday morning; la exposición la vi ayer sábado con Manolo Arroyo y es como para morirse' (*Visión de Nueva York*, [32-33]). Some years later she gave a talk based on one of Hopper's painting, *Hotel Room*, at the Museum Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid, on 14 December 1996.²⁰⁵

In most cases, the notebooks present moments of enthusiasm for the people Martín Gaité meets. Her work is being valued and she feels comfortable amongst Americans: 'No me querría ir nunca de New York. Estoy descubriendo la vida, de verdad' (500). She feels full of optimism: '¡Me gusta tanto estar aquí, veo el porvenir como algo tan alegre!' (580). There is a contrast between the pages written in America,

²⁰³ In the preface to *From Fiction to Metafiction* the editors discuss the author's impressions of events such as Lennon's death or the presidential elections during her stay in New York: 'Martín Gaité viewed these slices of "American life" at close range and even joined the throngs of Lennon mourners in Central Park as they sang the litany "Let it be, let it be"', p. 11. José Luis Borau also writes about this episode, when he accompanied the author outside Lennon's apartment, see 'Al día siguiente', *Turia: Revista Cultural*, 83 (2007), 249-60.

²⁰⁴ Other Spanish writers have made the same comparison, presenting Edward Hopper as the painter who best reflects New York. Antonio Muñoz Molina, in his book *Ventanas de Manhattan* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 2004), states that Hopper represents 'la realidad de New York retratada', p. 56. Elvira Lindo talking about the Village in New York mentions: 'Saint Mark's Place, una calle tan ligada a las canciones de Lou Reed como a los cuadros de Edward Hopper.' 'Nueva York un amor correspondido', in *I love NY: Diez autores en busca de una ciudad*, ed. by Antonio Gala (Madrid: Planeta, 2002), 267-97 (p. 294).

²⁰⁵ 'El punto de vista, Edward Hopper: *Habitación de hotel*' (Madrid: Museo Fundación, Colección Thyssen-Bornemisza, 1997).

where she finds herself welcomed, and the city she lives in, Madrid: ‘Lo de New York es, creo, una cuestión de luz. [...] Madrid es que es muy feo, no espabila’ (505).

Furthermore, the freedom that solitude gives her in New York also serves to contrast with her life in Madrid, which is full of commitments that do not allow her to work. In fact, a few months before she travelled to New York the author wrote: ‘Tal vez es que esta temporada Madrid me sienta mal, la casa con su continuo telefonar, generalmente asuntos para Marta y Carlos o recados aburridísimos para mí; tal vez para recobrar el gusto por la libertad necesitaría estar completamente sola’ (478). She found that solitude in her New York apartment.

Martín Gaité’s *cuadernos americanos* reveal a much more optimistic way of thinking than in the other notebooks she wrote in Spain, either before or after her journeys. In *Cuaderno 25*, the first notebook in *Cuadernos de todo* of her journey to America, she writes of a long stay in New York in the autumn of 1980. From there, she travelled to other cities, including Boston and Cleveland, and finished in José Luis Borau’s house in California (13 January 1981), where she admits to experiencing one of the happiest moments of her life: ‘La felicidad, lo más parecido a la felicidad que he probado hace muchos años’ (509).

In this notebook most of the entries are dated. She was writing every few days at the beginning, and daily between 25 October and 3 November. Many of the notes simulate a telegram written so as not to forget the moments she is experiencing:

1 de noviembre. Ingredientes para la paella con Illia y Fernando. Incidente en el supermercado. Excursión a Vermillón junto al lago Eire. Día gris y medio lluvioso.

El flea market. Vuelta al refugio de Fernando. Illia y yo en el sofá, contándonos cosas mientras que él prepara la paella. Paella divina. Baile con gente disfrazada en la casa española, chimenea encendida. (507)

The author encourages herself with regard to her work and the need to take advantage of the periods of solitude which allow her to work better. America becomes the place where dedication to her writing will be her primary concern: ‘Es un tiempo precioso este de América. Acordarme de las condiciones tan adversas en que escribí *Entre visillos*, de las ganas que tenía de que dieran las ocho para subirme a aquella buhardilla’ (496). Without family responsibilities, the author can have periods of complete concentration on writing. And she has Virginia Woolf and her *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) in mind: ‘Es mi amiga ahora, desde el verano’ (496). In fact, the first contact

with Virginia Woolf's essay came in the United States, as Martín Gaité noted in her book on Spanish women's writing, *Desde la ventana*:

Recuerdo muy bien el primer texto que despertó mi curiosidad con relación a este asunto y me hizo reflexionar sobre él, fue el ensayo de Virginia Woolf, *A room of one's own* (Una habitación propia), que leí durante mi primera estancia en Nueva York, en el otoño de 1980. (25)

Furthermore, there are collages in honour of Virginia Woolf in *Visión de Nueva York*.²⁰⁶

Visión de Nueva York is a notebook composed parallel to *Cuadernos 25*. This notebook takes the reader closer to the author's experiences, especially of the time spent in New York. As already mentioned, *Visión de Nueva York*, a book in facsimile, was published in 2005 showing a new side of Martín Gaité as a multifaceted artist. As her friend Ignacio Álvarez Vara comments: 'La afición de dibujar le venía a Calila de siempre. Entre sus viejos cuadernos rescatados, los había de dibujo y salvados de su mano.'²⁰⁷ But this notebook-collage is an especial example of her love for other kinds of artistic manifestation. Indeed, the author commented on the need to use image more than words in a city like New York: 'aquí me gustaría ser más un pintor o un fotógrafo que un escritor.'²⁰⁸ *Vision of New York*, as Martín Gaité called it, is a notebook consisting of ninety-two pages of collages that she produced between 17 September 1980 and 24 January 1981. Most of the collages were produced during her stay in New York from where she travelled to other places to visit friends or to give talks, such as New Haven, Philadelphia, Maryland, Cleveland, Boston, New Jersey, Oberlin (Ohio) or Mount Desert Rock. The last fifteen collages were made after she left New York, on her way to José Luis Borau's house in California, passing through Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Santa Mónica, where she ended her stay.

On many pages a connexion can be seen between the collages and the notes the author made in *Cuaderno 25*,²⁰⁹ even though the images in *Visión de Nueva York* make the reader more alive to the author's experiences during her stay in the United States. *Visión* started with written pages in diary style, integrating some cuttings from newspapers. The first entry covers four of the pages of the notebook and relates the way Martín Gaité decided to start this scrapbook after finding the images, in two different

²⁰⁶ See Appendix, figures 3 and 4.

²⁰⁷ 'CMG con NYC de fondo', in *Visión de Nueva York*, pp. 125-30 (p. 125).

²⁰⁸ *From Fiction to Metafiction*, p. 32.

²⁰⁹ See, for example, the note written on *Cuaderno 25* (pp. 498-99) and Appendix, figure 1, where the author writes about going to see Woody Allen's film *Stardust Memories*.

newspapers, of the two men who ‘discovered’ America for her. The first was her friend Nacho (Ignacio Álvarez Vara), who encouraged her to visit New York:

Cuando mi amigo Nacho, allá por el año 74, quería ser periodista, me hablaba mucho de América y me decía que New York se parecía un poco a la Gran Vía de Madrid, y que era una ciudad que estaba seguro de que a mí me podría gustar mucho. [19]

And then Edward Hopper, the artist who, it is clear, best represents for the author the image of New York. In these early pages she comments on the purpose of this notebook: ‘Como homenaje a Hopper, y en recuerdo de Nacho, he decidido, pues, empezar este cuaderno de recortes de prensa, esmaltado de vez en cuando con algún comentario’ [21]. Even though newspaper articles and her own writing cover most of the early pages of the notebook, slowly the images start taking over from the words and the last collages made in New York are solely images of newspaper cuttings, bills, cinema and theatre tickets, and photographs.

Cuaderno 25 showed that Martín Gaité was witness to some important events and news which appeared in American newspapers during her stay, and in *Vision of New York* she composed collages which reflected some of those events, such as the collages she made after John Lennon’s murder [81-82], or the one referring to the Iran-Iraq War [31]. She followed the Carter-Reagan election [36], watched their debate [55] and commented on the election of Ronald Reagan: ‘¡Buena se nos viene encima! Se salió con la suya el Ronnie’ [62]. Just as in other notebooks, the author mentions the homages organized for her, pasting in invitations to parties and posters of some of her talks. The spare time she enjoyed going to the theatre, the cinema, nightclubs, the ballet or classical concerts are also a very important part of the collages, with the presence of the tickets she used, the programmes for, or the reviews of, the shows she went to. There are reminders of the jazz clubs the author visited, such as The West End, with a collage in honour of Alberta Hunter [79], of visits to churches, such as the Cathedral of St John the Divine to see a concert by Paul Winter & The Winter Consort [88], or St Paul’s Chapel at Columbia University, where she attended an organ concert [41]. Here she comments on all the opportunities New York presents her with: ‘Lo quiero todo. Es lo malo de New York, que lo quiere uno todo y que continuamente te salen al paso tentaciones inesperadas. Y yo no sé decir que no a ninguna, y ando de acá para allá, a merced de mis pasos, ¡tan feliz!’ [41]

There are images of Edward Hopper's exhibition at the Whitney Museum on 27 September 1980 [32-33] or the visit to the Cornell Thomas Traherne exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, about which she comments: 'No voy a atreverme a hacer "collage" con un "collagista"' [77-78]. Both give an idea of her taste in art. Authors such as Virginia Woolf also have a place in the collages with three pages dedicated to the writer and *A Room of One's Own*. As Martín Gaité states in the collage, she read this during her stay in America: 'Ahora [...] he comprado *A room of one's own*, que he terminado de leer este fin de semana en New Haven y que me congracia con la Woolf ya definitivamente' [27]. There is a drawing of the cover of the book, done by Martín Gaité, on one corner of the collage. This collage was followed by another titled 'HOMENAJE A VIRGINIA WOOLF', which shows images of women, old and young, with the words 'Broadway because I want to be alone' pasted on the collage.²¹⁰ Martín Gaité also wrote a note which reads: 'Women never have an (*sic*) half hour that they can call their own' and 'no es oro todo lo que reluce' [29]. Another author admired by Martín Gaité and met by her in New York was Tzvetan Todorov, who gave a talk at Columbia University on 22 November 1980: 'He conocido a Todorov, y me parece, casi seguro, que era el hombre del sombrero negro' [73].

The people and sights Martín Gaité encounters in the streets are also important. She tends to portray types she would have not been familiar with in Spain, like the steel-drum musician she sees on 5th Avenue, and whose photograph appears in one of the newspapers she reads:

El otro día cuando compré con Philip en la 5a Avenida los periódicos que motivaron mi idea de hacer este cuaderno, justo al salir de la librería Rizzoli, vimos a este señor que ahora recorto y pego aquí. Su instrumento es un tambor de acero [...]. O SEA QUE HE VISTO A ESE SEÑOR, mira por donde. [25]

Her lectures and talks are also included in these collages, with a poster of her lecture at Barnard College on 20 October 1980 titled 'El cuento de nunca acabar' [51], a poster which was used on the cover of *Visión de Nueva York*. This type of collage, with the author's images pasted on them, are pieces of visual evidence and that appear to make her stay in New York seem much more real. She uses images of herself in other collages, such as the one on Mount Desert Rock, where she believes to have found 'La isla de Bergai' [60], including a photograph of her taken on the 'island'. The island of

²¹⁰ See Appendix, figure 4.

Bergai is, of course, one important feature of the early part of *El cuarto de atrás*. Bergai was an island invented by the author and her best friend from high school and used as a fantasy ‘refuge’ from their everyday lives. There is also a photo by the Statue of Liberty, posing next to her daughter Marta. In addition there are various images of the Statue of Liberty and the notation: ‘La libertad siempre da algo de miedo cuando se ve de cerca, ¿no lo sabías?’ [86]. The author also draws herself on some occasions, as in the collage where she writes: ‘Ya peinando canas, puso proa a Hollywood, se fue a vivir con un director de cine y (¡lo que es más desfachatez!) inauguró el año 1981 ¡estrenando unos vaqueros!’ [95] – a sentence that makes her a character of her own story.

As well as portraying herself as a tourist or a character in a narrative, Martín Gaité’s work as a writer is also suggested in the collages, with images of typewriters or fountain pens and comments on the amount of work involved or the money she has been offered for her work [38]. In other collages she warns herself: ‘Calila, ándate con ojo, que mucho recortar y pegar, mucho andar callejeando y mucho ir a celebrar la fiesta de la Hispanidad al consulado Español, pero ya llevas más de un mes en New York y con *El cuento de nunca acabar* no te metes en serio.’ Yet she writes in the same collage: ‘no hagas caso, honey. Tú vive, let it be, déjate al vaivén de los días...’ [44]. In fact, she suggests that the experiences she is living at that moment will help her to create later on:

La cosecha vendrá luego. Cuando ya no tenga que madrugar y tomarme un NoDoz para llegar despejada a mi clase en Milkbank Hall. Cuando me siente en otro lugar, lejos, a la luz de una lámpara a recordarlo. Sacaré entonces mis cuadernos de todo y ... words will come. [46]

In this quote it is also possible to see the importance of her ‘diaries’ as a place to note the present to be used in the future, that is the use of the diary as a memory aid. In the same way that travel writers often use photographs as well as diaries to remind themselves of the places they have visited and the people they met, Martín Gaité uses her collages filled with photographs, newspaper cuttings, tickets, bills as well as comments and reflections of her life in America.

The author’s apartment in New York is also a protagonist in the collages. She uses photos of the apartment and the mess she sometimes finds, with letters and

accumulated work on the desk [68]²¹¹ or the floor [61]. These letters, as well as phone calls keep her in contact with Spain and her family, especially her daughter, and she pastes in some collages images of telephones and envelopes she has received from her home country. There is, as has been noted, an acknowledged contrast between her life in the United States and her life in Spain, and one collage which expresses these feelings is the one produced on Christmas Day, when she writes:

¿Dónde están aquellas de la Calle Mayor? ¿Qué diría la tía Carmen si levantara la cabeza y viera que he pasado el día sola en mi apartamento de la calle 119, que no he probado bocado porque tenía la nevera vacía y que no echaba de menos nada ni a nadie? MANHATTAN estaba desierto y me gustaba sentirme en una ciudad extraña, olvidada de todos, bloqueada por la nieve. Saboreando la despedida. [90]

As was mentioned earlier, these moments of complete solitude, which she cannot enjoy in Spain, are a very special part of the author's stay in America. Even though, she can see the negative side of the isolation that people suffer in New York, with collages portraying women alone peering through windows, or the collage in homage to Greta Garbo, where she pastes extracts about her solitary and difficult life which she found in the *New York Post* after having had a dream in which Garbo appeared: '¡Qué cosas!' [30].

Yet, with regard to her own writing, she continued to be mindful of the project on *El cuento de nunca acabar*. Even so, she was not working on a novel at that moment and the kind of work she was engaged in, giving talks and classes, was satisfying enough for her:

Acordarme mucho del tiempo mucho más sincopado que voy a tener en Madrid para escribir. [...] Me parece que ya se me está acabando el tiempo porque está a punto de cumplirse un mes de mi llegada a New York y todavía no me he metido a fondo a trabajar. [...] No tengo por qué sentir la idea de trabajar como una obligación inescapable. Estoy trabajando, en las clases que doy, en las que tomo, en los libros que leo, en dejar de fumar. Lo importante es sacarle placer y tranquilidad a cada hora. Y así, sólo así, de repente un día me pondré con entusiasmo a la máquina, espontáneamente, cuando menos lo decida. (497)

²¹¹ See Appendix, figure 2.

In fact, it was not until 1982, during her stay in Charlottesville, that Martín Gaité decided to conclude her *Neverending tale*. As she explains in the note to the second edition, the time she had in America allowed her to finish this project:

Depués de nueve años de trabajar en él, terminé de ordenar los apuntes que componen su última parte la madrugada del primer día de octubre de 1982 en Charlottesville, Virginia. [...] El tiempo no oprimía, pasaba de puntillas por encima de mí, y algunos días, cuando llegaban las ocho de la tarde, me daba cuenta de que me había olvidado de comer. [...] Casi nunca sonaba el teléfono. (*El cuento*, 12-13)

Cuaderno 28, which contains only six pages, constitutes what the writer termed ‘una larga “retahíla” neoyorkina’ (531-34). It is a notebook in which there are reflections on life, with the past and the present merging in her thoughts. She reflects on her youth, on her projects and on the present day. And in this ‘retahíla neoyorkina’ the author begins to recount a chain of images which simulate a dream. This kind of narration continues for nearly four pages in the notebook and the author explains this succession of rapid thoughts and images as: ‘dejar venir la palabra, todo consiste en eso’ (534).

Cuaderno 29, written during her stay in Charlottesville in the autumn of 1982, is again full of notes on her journeys and the talks she gives during her stay. She writes as if making notes for a travelogue:

En New London, Connecticut, había una estatua de mujer, algo así como alegoría a la libertad, con una paloma en la cabeza. Greyhound tenía la oficina de parada junto a la estación. Un tren de Amcoach estaba saliendo, esperando primero la gente para el transbordo. El cielo se había despejado un poco antes. Hacía un sol espléndido. Era el 19 de noviembre, viernes, 1982. Había un puerto precioso a la derecha. (539)

Indeed, the way she narrates her stay in New York, and her trips from this city, suggest travel-writing,²¹² with descriptions of the weather, the people she encountered, the parties she attended, and the scenery seen from the train or the car:²¹³

²¹² Although Martín Gaité does not make extensive or detailed observations on American society and culture in the way that many travel writers have done.

²¹³ In her book *Estampas Bostonianas y otros viajes* (Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 2003), Rosa Montero also gives accounts of her journeys in the United States during her stay as an invited teacher at Wellesley College in 1985. Even though, her experiences during her stay are very different from those of Martín Gaité. Montero opens her work with these words: ‘Lo único que he llegado a saber a ciencia cierta sobre los americanos es que son raros, muy raros’, p. 33. However, in the prologue written for the publication of the book she took back what she said: ‘Después de escribir estos artículos viví otro año

Viaje de vuelta de Mount Desert. Penobscot river cruzado en Bucksport por un alto puente metálico, pintado de verde y seguido por su margen derecha hasta Belfast pasando por Searsport. Luego desde Camden se descubre Penobscot Bay, a las diez, con el sol queriendo salir entre nubes, ¡Dios, qué abanico de belleza, con toda la hondura de panorama marino y las rachas de luz sobre el agua alborotada y gris, entre los árboles amarillos de la costa, islas con pinos a lo lejos! (507-08).

This detailed account of what she sees demonstrates her enthusiasm for observing everything around her, in a country where things seem new and exciting. This excitement accompanies her everywhere, with descriptions of where she goes, what she does and who she meets:

18 de noviembre.

En New Haven, estaba a esperarme Manolo Durán. Conferencia sobre el siglo XVIII [...]. Cena en casa de Manolo con Dionisio Cañas.

19 de noviembre.

Temprano Manolo me vuelve a acompañar a Greyhound. Llego a las 12 a Providencia. Estaba a esperarme Héctor Medina, cubano entusiasta. [...] Coloquio (con exposición de libros). Tarde: conferencia exitosa. Conocí a un hermano de Eduardo Rodríguez, a Pepe Amor, reencuentro con Bob Manteigna [...] y su novia Teresa, salmantina, y Jeffrey (*sic*) Ribbans. (540)

Cuaderno 32 describes a stay in New York and journeys to Vassar College, Charlottesville and Philadelphia. It is during this stay that her novel, *El cuarto de atrás*, was published in English and she writes on 6 November 1983, on the flight to New York: ‘Las ceremonias de la presentación de *The Back Room* no sé aún cuáles serán ni me importa mucho’ (571). The next day the first presentation of the novel took place: ‘Con Joan en The Theatre Shop antes de la presentación en The Hispanic Institute’ (572). The launch of *The Back Room* makes the author think about the way she writes: ‘Toda mi literatura oscila entre lo excepcional soñado desde lo cotidiano y al revés. Porque lo excepcional cuando se tiene da miedo y se quiere convertir en rutina, no se aguanta’ (572).

Each of Martín Gaité’s stays in America is filled with gatherings for her. A window is filled with her work in a bookshop on 5th Avenue (513); she attends

más en Estados Unidos y creo que conocí mejor a los norteamericanos. Hoy los considero más complejos, más contradictorios y más diversos’, p. 31.

receptions in her honour: ‘Ayer estuve en Bronxville, en el colegio Sarah Lawrence, con Roberto y con intérprete simultánea. Show por todo lo alto. Y luego charla con los alumnos, con vino y queso’ (514); she is invited to parties, for example the one at Marcia Welles’ house on 25 October 1980, where she goes accompanied by Joan Lipman Brown, her ‘amiga filadelfiana’ (504). Critics and academics take advantage of her presence to give her their articles on her work for her to read:

Estaba muy contenta con el artículo que me dio ayer Linda Levine sobre *El cuarto de atrás*. [...] Y ahora estoy pensando en lo que dice [...] me hace reflexionar (tan lejos me parece) sobre aquella enajenada angustia que me tenía prisionera, y que fue lo que me llevó a escribir *El cuarto de atrás*. (499)²¹⁴

This comment ties in with the writing of *El cuarto de atrás* discussed in Chapter 2, where the writer uses the word depressed in her notebooks but decides not to use it in the novel. And, again, it serves as a contrast with the times of happiness and freedom she is enjoying in America.

The critics use this time to show her material they are working on: ‘Día 26 [octubre, 1980]. Domingo. [...] Comiendo en el restorán vienés y leyendo el maravilloso prólogo inglés al libro de Joan’ (504);²¹⁵ she gives interviews, such as the one with Héctor Medina on 20 November 1982 (540) or with Moraima Semprún: ‘17 de noviembre [1983] [...] he desayunado con Moraima y ella me ha hecho una entrevista’ (578). In addition, she is invited to give lectures or participate in discussions of her own work or that of other Spanish authors of her generation, such as her lecture on ‘El punto de vista femenino en literatura’, given on 28 October 1980 (505), or the lecture on the eighteenth century given on 18 November 1982 in New Haven (540). In *Visión de Nueva York* the author comments: ‘no hacen más que surgirme conferencias (bien pagadas) y proposiciones, por ahora de lo más honesto. Aquí desde luego, lo de escribir puede dar una pasta fina. Y no es que eso sea absolutamente todo pero, como decía Jesús, SIEMPRE ANIMA.’ [38]

Martín Gaité’s association with her literary critics of the time was very important for her, and with some of them she had more than just a professional relationship. These were people who were going to promote her work. However, with Joan Lipman Brown who published *Secrets from the Back Room* in 1987, Martín Gaité

²¹⁴ This article is included in *From Fiction to Metafiction*, titled ‘Carmen Martín Gaité’s *El cuarto de atrás*: A Portrait of the Artist as Woman’, 161-72.

²¹⁵ The book she refers to, published a few years later, is Joan Lipman Brown’s *Secrets From the Back Room*.

developed a great friendship: ‘¡Qué gusto poder albergar conmigo aquí a Joan! Hemos comido cosas ricas. Hemos hablado sin parar, se ha echado la siesta, nos hemos arreglado como para la fiesta de la Cenicienta’ (504).²¹⁶ She also dined with Mirella Servodidio and Marcia L. Welles, editors of the first book dedicated to her, *From Fiction to Metafiction* (1983), and which contains articles written by some critics whom the author would meet in her stays. It is clear that Martín Gaité found in her critics the company she needed in America: ‘Vino Marie-Lise Gazarian, quiere promocionarme. Se estuvo tres horas. Llama Philip. Llama Linda. Llama Flora. Llama Marcia. Llama Roberto’ (513). And, of course, that her critics were able to get from her the input needed to published their articles and promote her work in America.

Her friends in the United States facilitated her contact with the cities she visited. Consequently she felt at home; she was not just a visitor or a tourist but took part in the daily life of the locals. Thus, she goes to pick up a child’s friend from school, goes shopping with her friends, goes out for dinner, and follows the political debates on the television:

Amanece lloviendo. Como en casa de Solina Salinas y de compras con ella (gangas baratas). Vuelvo a Roseland. Viene Mad. con Gustavo Alfaro y vamos a la MIT. Cena allí con Elena Gascón Vera, Margerit y otros. [...] Luego nos fuimos a casa de Margerit a ver por T.V. el debate Reagan-Carter (505).

The contacts the author makes and the people she meets provide a stimulus for her. She takes notes of what she sees, especially the differences between Spain and the USA:

Fuimos a cenar a un sitio donde la mesa es de chapa y el cocinero guisa allí mismo, a la vista de los comensales, como en una representación teatral. No paran de ocurrírseme cosas, ideas, todo es para mí un puro estímulo. El restaurante se llamaba Benihama of Tokio. (499)

Despite the company she had, Martín Gaité would sometimes find herself alone, lost and frightened. Yet, she always tried to escape from the sense of isolation: ‘La soledad – aunque acose, aunque sea mala consejera – no debe ser sustituida por una rutina organizada y por una serie de quehaceres obligatorios, compulsivos’ (496). On

²¹⁶ In fact, their relationship started before Martín Gaité visited New York and the influence that Brown had on the author can be seen in some of the notebooks, especially when the Spaniard was trying to give up smoking. Thus in *Cuaderno 20*: ‘Madrid, 11 de agosto de 1978. Acabo de despedirme de Joan en el hotel Wellington. [...] Me ha aconsejado que lleve un cuadernito donde apunte los pitillos que me fumo cada día y las distintas horas y circunstancias en que fumo’, p. 443.

the other hand, even when she gets lost she seems to find in New York a peace missing at other times in her life:

Y al salir, ¡Dios mío! qué temporal, yo tenía que llegar en tres cuartos de hora a la fiesta de la Columbia, llegué empapada al hotel a cambiarme, [...] y luego ya en la calle imposible encontrar un taxi, [...] me metí en un 104 que se averió a la altura de la 96, y de nuevo esperando con un transfer en la mano, pero ni miraba la hora, era raro, estaba tranquila, ¿esperan por mí?, ¡pues que esperen! [...] Me emborraché un poco y luego vine en metro con los Germano, que me regalaron un paraguas rojo, y Juan Benet hasta el hotel. Juan me compró el *Village News* y lo estoy leyendo ahora, la mañana del 11, en la cama. ¡I love NY! (574)

However, there are also relaxed moments of domesticity: ‘Arreglando una falda toda la tarde junto al fuego, mientras Manolo leía el periódico y Gloria dormía. Necesitaba descansar’ (541). But these need to be contrasted with difficult moments when the lack of understanding of the places, or the language, put her in anguishing situations, such as the time when she missed her train to Vassar College: ‘You miss the train!, ¡Había que hacer transbordo!...Acaba de venir uno con un walkie-talkie y me ha dicho que he perdido el tren. Un negro, compadecido, me ha acompañado a la compañía de taxis y en uno de ellos voy ahora’ (572). In fact, the writing of the notebook is rudely interrupted when she is told that she missed the train, the thread of her thoughts is cut and she is unable to continue them. Indeed, this event is narrated again in her next visit to Vassar College, in August 1985. On this occasion the journey from New York was very different. The author was picked up by car and taken all the way to her apartment door. But now she goes back to the story of her first visit in greater detail:

De lo que sí me acuerdo es de que iba tan ensimismada escribiendo que no me enteré de que el tren se había parado en una estación desconocida, y decían algo por un altavoz. Cuando levanté los ojos, estaba sola en el vagón, miré extrañada por la ventanilla [...] Para llegar a Poughkeepsie, tenía que haberme bajado allí como todo el mundo, y hacer trasbordo [...] Me lo explicó desganadamente un empleado gordo que recorría los vagones vacíos, y que al principio no le entendía nada. Ni él a mí [...]. Cuando llegó a un superficial entendimiento de mi problema, me sugirió que tomara un taxi y yo le ofrecí una propina si me acompañaba a buscarlo. (620)

Although her experiences in the United States were exciting and interesting for the author, at times the amount of work, as well as the social obligations, made her feel tired and lost:

Cómo venía de lleno y de alborotado el tren que me trajo de New York a Philadelphia. Ya el subway no llegaba a la calle 116, eran las diez. Y luego una chica en Pen Station me acompañó por el camino más corto a sacar los billetes. ‘See you later.’ Pero no la volví a ver. [...] Vi a Marc, en la estación, después de diez minutos, como al ser más amigo y amable del mundo. (514)

There were also moments of sadness, especially when she says goodbye:

Noto, de repente, la despedida inminente desplomándose sobre mí. Dentro de cuatro días dejo este apartamento para siempre. Todavía está lleno de globos y serpentinas de la fiesta de mi cumpleaños, tendría que ponerme a pensar en cómo ordeno mis papeles, en cómo organizo las cosas para mi viaje de vuelta. Pero lo único que soy capaz de hacer es seguir en la cama mirando un tronco de árbol con las ramas nevadas, saboreando este tiempo fugaz e infinito. (542)

Martín Gaité’s dreams are an important part of her writing, and, occasionally, these dreams are linked to her times in America, with the reality surrounding her there transported to her real dreams: ‘Las palabras de todos los desheredados del mundo, con cedilla, con tilde, comas y capirucho, disgregándose, convirtiéndose en rápidos amagos de compañía, barridas como hojas instantáneas por las calles de New York dan lugar a mi sueño’ (569). Her parents are often present in these dreams, her father appears as an actor who has to perform his last role in a play – a dream she writes about on 6 October 1980. Elsewhere, he is the owner of a hotel where she is staying, as she notes on 6 November 1983. Martín Gaité’s mother is also present in her thoughts. Visiting a friend in hospital reminds her of the days just before her mother’s death. The fact of being in America makes her think of her mother, as she was the first to encourage her to accept the invitation to participate in the conference at Yale in 1978:

Ver New Haven desde la autopista lluviosa ya anocheciendo es una visión de la ciudad tan diferente de la que tenía hace dos años, cuando mamá aún vivía y acariciaba como algo irreal la idea de venir al congreso de Yale. Las manos de mamá acariciando las mías, bendiciendo mi porvenir. ‘¿Has llamado a ese señor?’ Sí, tal vez hoy mismo, hace dos años, y ya llevaba ella la muerte dentro. Y yo no sabía lo que era América, ni su tamaño, ni dónde estaba Yale, ni a qué distancia de New York, ni a qué estado pertenecía. (508)

These images merge with other memories: sometimes the diaries that she is writing blend with the diaries her father used to write. In addition, and maybe because of the frequency with which she is writing her own diaries, she also reflects on the purpose and content of diaries: ‘Los diarios se escriben siempre para alguien. Se da importancia a lo cotidiano’ (503). She writes about her father’s diaries (to which she had referred on other occasions), of their methodical structure. Apparently, her father used to write his diary daily, noting every event of the day:

para mi padre, escribir algo todos los días en el Luxindex [marca de los diarios que usaba] se había convertido en una obligación y a medida que fueron pasando los años yo creo que se dio cuenta de que suponía una tarea no sólo algo enojosa sino también inútil. (628)

Martín Gaité, on the other hand wants to write a much freer kind of diary: ‘Gracias a que no me he propuesto escribir un diario, puedo volver a este cuaderno de forma gratuita y placentera, sin el agobio de no haber anotado a su tiempo tal cosa o la otra’ (627). About her collage-diary, she writes: ‘Yo debo procurar que el mío de collages sea visualmente divertido’ (503). But a diary is not just for enjoyment, it should be understandable for others:

Anotar en mogollón, los diarios no valen. Cuando yo me muera, ¿entenderá mi hija lo que dice aquí?, ¿lo sabrá poner en orden? No. Lo tengo que poner en orden yo. Orden frente al caos [...]. ‘¿Qué pensó aquella noche que garrapateaba?’, dirá la Torci pero no entenderá mi miedo. Si no lo explico yo. (533)

Later, after her daughter’s death, these thoughts will be linked with her daughter’s diaries, those which she never wrote. Indeed, during her stay at Vassar College, Martín Gaité used a notebook which she had bought for her daughter but which she never wrote in: ‘Se había limitado a pegarle dentro una etiqueta donde dice con mayúsculas CUADERNO DE TODO, ni una hoja escribió, nada de nada, se debió poner enferma poco después’ (628).

This last of the American notebooks, *Cuaderno 35*, ‘El otoño de Poughkeepsie’, written during Martín Gaité’s stay at Vassar College in the summer-autumn of 1985, is full of sadness and despair on account of the recent death of her daughter, Marta: ‘Son las seis de la tarde, veintiocho de agosto y estoy sola, más sola que lo que he estado nunca en mi vida, rodeada de silencio’ (611). She feels lost: ‘estoy perdida en medio de un bosque. Tal como suena, no es una metáfora’ (611). Yet, up to a point, this stay,

where the writer's solitude and isolation are intense, helps her to overcome her loss: 'Vivir sola completamente en una casa en medio del bosque, donde sólo tres veces en tres días ha sonado el teléfono, es algo muy balsámico' (617). Indeed, she interprets her need to write as a lifeboat: 'He sacado del equipaje mis libros y mis cuadernos y los he colocado de forma provisional, sin creermelo mucho que me vayan a servir para algo, sin creermelo mucho nada de lo que pasa ni de lo que veo. Tal vez por eso mismo necesite apuntarlo' (611). This idea of the need to write and writing as *tabla de salvación*, the writing-cure, after her daughter's death is what the author will develop in her 1990s novels, novels where the act of writing and the need to write is paramount.

Martín Gaité starts this notebook describing the room where she is going to spend her next few months – just as Mariana does when she writes her first letter to Sofía in *Nubosidad variable*. She continues reading and rewriting notes she had taken in Spain a few days earlier – just as Leonardo does when he leaves prison in *La Reina de las Nieves* – words which show her emptiness after Marta's death: 'qué verano tan largo, qué avanzar tan penoso el de las horas arrastrándose por las habitaciones de esta casa donde nunca volverá a oírse la llavecita en la puerta ni su voz llamándome por el pasillo' (612). These pages also contain some reflections on her life which strongly link the author with her characters of the 1990s novels. There are reflections on her notebooks: 'notas que luego no sirven para nada, pero en el momento parece muy urgente tomarlas, no sé cuantos cuadernos tendré metidos en cajones por Doctor Esquerdo con apuntes garabateados a toda prisa' (619). She also reflects on her daughter's notebooks:

Aparecen [...] agendas y cuadernos, papeles y cuadernos, apuntes y cuadernos, muchos sin empezar o con una hoja escrita [...], amaba los cuadernos bonitos como nada en el mundo, pero luego escribía casi siempre en folios volanderos.

Nunca ordenaba nada, nunca tiraba nada, nunca acababa nada. (612-13)

And she reflects, briefly, on papers in general: 'No sé para qué escribo, si odio los papeles, si lo que más querría es prenderles fuego a todos' (613). As will be seen, her characters of the 1990s novels write their lives in their notebooks, reread their writing, start novels which are never finished and burn old letters to start anew.

Usos amorosos de la postguerra española, a project which Martín Gaité had already discussed in *El cuarto de atrás*, is taken to America to serve as a continuation of her writing; this is now going to be resumed and she writes its introduction during her stay at Vassar College. *Caperucita en Manhattan*, meanwhile, was a 'present' her friend

Juan Carlos Eguillor gave her when she was staying in his New York apartment: ‘Ha inventado una historia de una niña en Brooklyn. [...] Me ha dado los papeles para que yo siga escribiendo por donde quiero, pero es que, desde que he llegado aquí, la historia se ha transformado en otra’ (618). Eguillor, a friend with whom she collaborated on *Diario 16*, helped the author to settle after arriving in New York and before travelling to Vassar College. Her conversations with him encouraged the author to distance herself from the present time as they talked about when they used to work together, just after Franco’s death, and the changes Spain had gone through. Martín Gaité describes their conversations and realises how writing has changed her way of perceiving her present situation:

he estado releendo lo que llevo escrito [...], veintiocho páginas [...] esa peculiar transformación del tiempo de inerte en tiempo de escritura me ha ayudado a lidiar la soledad y a convertir esta habitación vacía en un refugio al que siempre estoy deseando volver, en mi casa. (623)

As she reflects on her writing, she realises that writing is everything and can be found in every activity she does:

me parecía haber entendido una cosa muy importante, que meterse a escribir equivale exactamente a salir a dar un paseo, así cuando esté tumbada en la hierba mirando las nubes y notando que respiro con regularidad y acordándome de los que ya no respiran, sintiéndolos conmigo dentro de mi corazón, estoy escribiendo también, más que nunca, y las nubes recogen lo que escribo. (629)

This quote clearly shows the great importance that the author gave to writing during this stay. It also parallels the first dream Sofía writes about in *Nubosidad variable*, where she and Mariana are lying on the grass looking at the clouds go by: ‘Estábamos tumbadas en el campo mirando las nubes’ (*Nubosidad*, 11). Shortly after Martín Gaité finishes this last American notebook with a message of hope: ‘el sol nace de la confusión’ (630).

Conclusion

Cuadernos de todo is a fundamental work in Martín Gaité’s biography. As her diaries, they show a side of the writer which was never seen before. The 1960s, when she started writing her *Cuadernos de todo*, were for Martín Gaité years of great changes, a

period when she decided to leave fiction aside to concentrate in her work as a researcher. As a mother of a young child she was able to see the importance of mothers to their children's upbringing. As a writer she was engaged in discussions on feminism and consumerist society. As an intellectual, she read other writers' and thinkers' opinions and put many of her thoughts in her notebooks. Her *Cuadernos de todo* were the place to think and develop her thoughts; it is possible to see in the notebooks her need to write, to note her ideas and experiences, and have a 'dialogue' with these thoughts. As Martín Gaité commented, this type of autobiographical writing is the best way to stop and look at one's life. Subsequently it will be shown how this reflective writing influenced the way she developed her characters in her later novels, characters who will take their pen and paper to write their present, make sense of their past, and confront their future.

After the first, more critical *cuadernos*, her work as a writer took on greater importance and she used the notebooks as a crucible for her work. The notebooks can be seen as her 'writer's workshop', where it is possible to see how some of her work started and developed over the years. Often the author took many years to bring to fruition some of her work. *El cuento de nunca acabar* was developed over nearly ten years and in her notebooks it is possible to see its evolution. It is also possible to see how *El cuarto de atrás* took many ideas from different projects to make up the complicated novel that it is. These pages not only show the author's work in progress, they also reflect the close relationship that Martín Gaité always maintained between life and literature.

Finally, the *cuadernos americanos* show the periods spent in America as very special for the author. Her work was acclaimed and during these visits she had the time needed to concentrate on it, without the responsibilities she had in Spain. 'A room of her own' is what Martín Gaité found in the United States, with the accompanying solitude and isolation needed to collect and transcribe thoughts and reflections. She also used this time to engage in a much more methodical completion of her notebooks. In the *cuadernos americanos* very descriptive writing is found, much more like a diary than the rest of the notebooks, where she jots down her daily comings and goings as well as her dreams. Other times, as in the 'retahílas', she writes her thoughts as they come, casting them on the paper, reflecting on her past and on the present she is living through. The last of the *cuadernos americanos* is also a clear example of the use of Martín Gaité's notebooks in a therapeutical way. After her daughter's death, the author

was able, in complete solitude, to reflect on her past, allowing her, through the writing of the *cuadernos*, to recover the will to live, the wish to continue with her writing.

Indeed, the importance of the time spent in America will be seen in some of her later work. It is possible to see an influence in the way her characters write their notebooks, reflecting in complete solitude on their lives. What can also be appreciated is the way the physical presence of New York is employed in a novel such as *Irse de casa*. *Caperucita en Manhattan* is also an obvious tribute to the places the author visited in New York and the people she met in its streets, with the main character, Sarah Allen, who lives in Brooklyn and dreams of going to Manhattan on her own, and a grandmother who lives in Morningside. Sarah has an adventure which takes her through the subway and the streets of New York, led by the Statue of Liberty, and meeting Mr Wolf in Central Park. In this book, Martín Gaité relates some of her impressions of New York, such as the appearance of Manhattan and the strange and fascinating people she encountered there. *Irse de casa*, as mentioned above, is another clear example of the influence of the months spent in the United States. The author is able to describe the streets of New York in the same confident way that she writes about Madrid, writing, in this case, about the life of upper-class Americans in contrast to the working-class portrayed in *Caperucita*.

A final point should be made here. Reading the pages of the *Cuadernos de todo* and seeing the valuable literary information found in them, serves as a reminder of those other notebooks, letters and papers, containing many other thoughts, ideas and projects, which will never be seen, on account of Carmen Martín Gaité's decision to destroy some of her old papers.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ The forthcoming publication of her complete works will make available not only her published work but also some other unpublished manuscripts as well as letters and a diary or notebook written in 1977, 'Libro de la memoria diaria'. See: http://www.elpais.com/articulo/narrativa/refugio/Carmen/Martin/Gaite/elpepuculbab/20070825elpbabnar_7/Tes

CHAPTER 4

NUBOSIDAD VARIABLE:

LETTERS AND DIARIES, FEMALE FRIENDSHIP THROUGH WRITING

Although the writing of *Nubosidad variable* (1992) is given relatively few specific references in the *Cuadernos de todo* it is, nevertheless, the novel in which the author's projection into her characters is most transparent. The way the protagonists write their lives also represents an outstanding example of writing as therapy, using formulas of the writing of the self amply discussed by the author. This is certainly the novel which best presents the use of diaries and letters in Carmen Martín Gaité's work. In this narrative the author employs an old formula of presenting friendship between women through epistolary writing.²¹⁸ Most of the novel, apart from the four-page epilogue, is 'written' by two friends, Sofía and Mariana, who meet after many years and decide to rekindle the lost friendship, first of all through their writing. This novel has strong metafictional aspects, with the process of writing always being foregrounded throughout the work. The protagonists are writing and commenting on their writing, with the reader witness at the end of the novel to its 'editing'. Life and literature are interlaced, with Sofía as the character who finds it more difficult to separate both aspects of her life. Towards the end of the novel, Mariana begins to see her life as part of a novel for which she starts

²¹⁸ As Janet Todd explains: 'Eighteenth century fiction is rich in presentation of female friendship, by both men and women. [...] The fictional friendship grew out of the idea of the confidante – the correspondent in the epistolary novel or the recipient in the memoir, both favoured forms in the eighteenth century', *Women's Friendship in Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p. 1.

taking notes, developing the people she meets as main or secondary characters in her narrative.²¹⁹

In Chapter I Sofía begins the novel by giving the reader information about their encounter. After years of separation the two friends meet at an exhibition. The first mention of this meeting is at the end of Chapter I, when Sofia writes: ‘Quién podía imaginarse que, después de los años mil, en ese local rebosante de famosos iba a encontrarme contigo, lo que son las cosas, con Mariana León en persona.’²²⁰ In Chapter II more is learned about that encounter and their relationship through Mariana’s letter to Sofía. It is also made clear that Chapter I forms part of the ‘homework’ Mariana set her friend Sofía at the exhibition:

Contesto, aunque sea en plan telegrama, a la nota que acompaña a tus ocho folios mecanografiados. ‘Te mando los deberes²²¹ – me decías – . Gracias, Mariana. Hace mucho que nadie me ponía deberes de este tipo y lo he pasado muy bien haciéndolos. Si no te aburre, puedo continuar.’ No es que no puedas, es que debes, puesto que de deberes se trata. (33)

Even though, when they meet after so many years, they seem to have the same connection they had when younger, they are still not sure if their friendship can survive the years of separation. It is for this reason that they start writing. As Mariana says: ‘aún puede ser quebradizo el suelo que pisamos. Esta cautela de lo epistolar me parece saludable’ (23). And as Sofia indicates towards the end of the novel, with reference to Mariana: ‘Escribir es un pretexto para volver a verla’ (366). Also, before they meet again the two protagonists must order their past. In Nuria Cruz-Cámara’s words:

El re-encuentro de las dos amigas de la adolescencia tiene lugar en un momento en que sus vidas parecen haber llegado a un punto muerto, o mejor, a un punto crítico en que debe tomarse una decisión: avanzar hacia el futuro – tras la toma de conciencia de su pasado y de su presente – o quedarse estancadas en este pasado.²²²

²¹⁹ Marcia L. Welles comments in a review of the novel: ‘Mariana León had no literary pretensions at all. Before her epistolary adventure, her “work in progress” was a theoretical treatise on eroticism. Gradually fiction supersedes nonfiction: the people she encounters become characters, primary or secondary, and she contrives possible plots’, *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, 47 (1994), 256-59 (p. 257).

²²⁰ *Nubosidad variable* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2002), p. 19.

²²¹ Homework (or *deberes*) is one of the terms used in psychotherapy when referring to the assignments sent by the therapist to their patients. See *The Writing Cure*, p. 6.

²²² ‘*Nubosidad variable: Escritura, evasión y ruptura*’, *Hispanófila*, Num. 126 (1999), 15-25 (p. 18).

The 'homework' that Mariana sets her friend after their first meeting is transformed into a diary-memoir which Sofía starts sending to Mariana. After the first part has been sent, Sofía continues writing with Mariana as her interlocutor, 'Pensando sólo en Mariana [...], escribiendo para ella' (234), even though she does not send any more. Instead, at the end of the novel, when they meet again, she shows her friend what she wrote. Mariana encourages Sofía through her letter to continue writing. In the same way that Sofía sends only the first part of her 'homework', Mariana sends Sofía only her first letter.

The chapters alternate between Sofía's homework and Mariana's letters. Sofía opens the novel and also writes the last chapter. In general, the way Sofía writes simulates the diary form: she writes every day about what has happened and these daily events remind her of other moments of her past.²²³ Mariana, on the other hand, uses the epistolary form. She follows letter-writing conventions, with a greeting, 'Querida Sofía' (20), a date and a place of origin, 'Madrid, 30 de abril, noche' (20), as well as a closing and signature at the end of the letter: 'Te abraza con cariño, Mariana' (33). Nevertheless, both literary approaches vary, and at times we see Sofía communicating with Mariana as if the former were writing a letter: 'Aunque ahora, mientras escribo esto, me pregunto: ¿te encontré en persona o en personaje? (Continuará, Mariana, aunque no sé por dónde)' (19). Similarly, Mariana abandons the epistolary form so as to be able to narrate, in a more introspective way, some important moment of her story.²²⁴ Sofía only leaves the diary form consciously in one of the chapters, Chapter IX, where she opens with 'Querida Mariana' (145). This style of writing is abandoned half way through the chapter to return to a kind of writing more similar to diary form, when she writes: 'Esta carta, pues ha dejado de serlo y pasará a engrosar mi cuaderno de deberes' (152). This chapter is then followed by the one in which Mariana abandons the epistolary form and does not start her letter with 'Querida Sofía'.

As Christine Arkinstall comments, Sofía and Mariana use their writing 'towards a recovery of selves',²²⁵ as until this point they have only served as mirrors of others.

²²³ As noted in Chapter 1, Girard's definition of 'diary' can be applied to Sofía's: 'Il est écrit au jour le jour. En cela, il s'oppose à toute oeuvre composée. Quelles que soient les intentions qui président à sa rédaction, un journal n'obéit en effet à aucune règle imposée' (p. 3).

²²⁴ Mariana abandons the epistolary style in Chapters X, XII and XVI, although in X and XVI Sofía still appears as the addressee of the missive.

²²⁵ 'Towards a Female Symbolic: Re-Presenting Mothers and Daughters in Contemporary Spanish Narrative by Women', in *Writing Mothers and Daughters: Renegotiating the Mother in Western European Narratives by Women*, ed. by Adalgisa Giorgio (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002), 47-84 (p. 66).

But, thanks to the fact that they are mirrors who reflect the people who surround them,²²⁶ both protagonists, through their writing put the reader in contact with a generation of Spanish women born during the postwar period. With their stories, these two women write about their first love, their first literary encounters, their teachers, their ambitions, as well as with the new generations, the great changes after Franco's death, and the PSOE's election to government in 1982. However, as Janet Pérez observes: '*Nubosidad variable* focuses more upon the individual consequences of biographical decisions, even though the individual characters are simultaneously representative of Spanish women of their class and generation' (55).

Sofía and Mariana also need each other as mirrors to reflect onto. In their writing they discuss past events that only they know about. They are thus the only ones who can understand their past desires and ambitions. They are the ones who can reassure each other that their past memories actually happened: 'Pero seguro que tú te acuerdas. Menos mal que existes tú' (258), Mariana writes. These memories are what Sofia calls 'contraseña para reconocernos' (232). Like Eulalia in *Retahílas* and C. in *El cuarto de atrás* (and the author herself), they are witnesses to historical and social changes as well as great generational changes, and through their writing they try to understand their decisions, or lack of them, which took their lives on such different paths. *Nubosidad variable* has been compared to *Entre visillos*, *El cuarto de atrás* and *Retahílas*,²²⁷ and it can be argued that these two women represent an evolution of the female protagonists of earlier Martín Gaité novels. As Alicia Redondo Goicoechea indicates: 'Desde sus primeras protagonistas de *El balneario* a las últimas de *Los parentescos*, [...] el modelo de mujer propuesto ha ido transformándose paralelamente a las etapas que ha recorrido la autora y la sociedad española.'²²⁸ Despite their different characters, a parallel can be drawn between Eulalia and Mariana, as independent childless women, and between C. and Sofía as mothers and housewives with a profound love of writing. Sofía and

²²⁶ For a study of the significance of the mirror in Martín Gaité's work, see for example, Antonio Sobejano Morán's 'Funciones textuales del espejo en la narrativa de Carmen Martín Gaité', in *Carmen Martín Gaité: Cuento de nunca acabar/ Never-ending Story*, ed. by Kathleen M. Glenn and Lissette Rolón Collazo, 183-95; Anne Paoli, 'Mirada sobre la relación entre espejo y personaje en algunas obras de Carmen Martín Gaité', *Espéculo: Revista de Estudios Literarios*, <http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/cmgaite/cmgaite_inde.htm>; and Janet Pérez, 'Structural, Thematic, and Symbolic Mirrors in *El cuarto de atrás* and *Nubosidad variable* of Martín Gaité', *South Central Review*, 12 (1995), 47-63. Each one of these critics links the idea of the mirror in the narrative with Lacan's theory of the 'mirror stage'.

²²⁷ See Pilar de la Puente Samaniego, '*Nubosidad variable*', *Anales de Literatura Española Contemporánea* 18 (1993), 404-06; and the review of the novel by Kathleen M. Glenn, *Hispania*, 76 (1993), 297-98.

²²⁸ 'Las autoras frente al espejo', p. 17.

Mariana can be seen as the two sides of a coin which integrate the idea of ‘Spanish middle-class woman’. They could also be seen as the two sides of the author. Ina Schabert notes: ‘All knowledge of another person is also knowledge about oneself and all writings representing the other also reveal the writer himself’,²²⁹ and in *Nubosidad variable* Martín Gaité divides herself into two, the housewife and mother, and the independent, working woman.²³⁰ The themes, especially those which refer to women in society, which the protagonists of *Nubosidad variable* discuss in their writing, are of course themes the author deals with in other works. The development of these themes can be seen especially in the reflections of her first *Cuadernos de todo*, in which the author, as was seen in Chapter 3, reflects constantly on the position of women in Spanish society of the 1960s.

Here it will be fruitful to examine the two sides of the coin separately, just as the author presents them in the novel, with Sofía, the representative of the woman who gave up studying to marry and have children, and Mariana, who follows a career in medicine, specialising in psychiatry, which at that time was a world dominated by men, and consequently she sacrificed the sentimental side of her life. Theories by the psychoanalyst and sociologist Nancy J. Chodorow shed light on two fundamental aspects of the protagonists’ relationships to the society in which they live. Sofía will be considered in her role as a mother through Chodorow’s study on maternity, *The Reproduction of Mothering*. Mother/daughter relationships are very important in this novel, as they are in the subsequent novels of the 1990s. In *Nubosidad variable* the author seems to be exploring this kind of relationship especially through the character of Sofía, a character named after Martín Gaité’s grandmother.

Subsequently, Mariana’s role as a psychoanalyst will be studied with reference to *The Power of Feelings*, in which Chodorow examines some of the terms fundamental to psychoanalysis, such as transference and projection. A monograph by Carmen Alborch, will also contribute to this analysis, through a theme amply dealt with by Martín Gaité in her novels and articles,²³¹ as well as in her *Cuadernos de todo*, that of

²²⁹ *In Quest of the Other Person: Fiction as Biography* (Tubingen: Francke, 1990), p. 3. Adrián M. García also comments: ‘the protagonists together mirror Martín Gaité herself’, *Silence in the Novels of Carmen Martín Gaité*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), p. 97.

²³⁰ Although the author has commented: ‘ninguna soy yo misma’, it could be argued that although she is indeed not one of them she is represented in both at the same time. Cited in Anne Paoli, *Personnages en quête de leur identité dans l’oeuvre romanesque de Carmen Martín Gaité* (Aix-en-Provence: Publications de l’Université de Provence, 2000), p. 238.

²³¹ See, for example, Martín Gaité’s article ‘Las mujeres liberadas’, in *La búsqueda de interlocutor y otras búsquedas*, 123-31.

female solitude. This is especially relevant in this novel, as it is also the title of the psychiatrist Mariana León's largest files.

Sofía's Diary: 'Un ajuste de cuentas con el tiempo'

Sofía, as was noted earlier, uses the diary-memoir form for her writing. She calls this type of writing '[un] ajuste de cuentas con el tiempo' (298). She writes what she calls her notebooks or 'deberes', referring to situations she is living in the present and remembering, through this present, a past which relates to these situations, reflecting at all times on her experiences of the past or the present. As Smith and Watson explain: 'remembering involves a reinterpretation of the past in the present',²³² and this is what Sofía is doing throughout the novel. These memories are like flashbacks that, as Sofía observes, she pastes onto the collage which forms her life: 'Tengo que atender a este flash back, lo tengo que pegar en el colage, aunque sea con saliva' (45). For the collage, she uses other documents which help her recover her past:

Usaré la técnica del collage y un cierto vaivén en la cronología. Aparte de la versión aportada por tu carta [...], cuento con otros elementos que me pueden servir para refrescar la memoria: varias cartas de amor y de ruptura [...], retazos de un diario que empecé a raíz de la muerte de mamá y [...] unos apuntes, que paso a poner en limpio, tomados hace pocos días. (153)²³³

The encounter reminds them of a saying they used when they were young, and which Sofía wrote in her diary of the time: 'la sorpresa es una liebre, y el que sale de caza, nunca la verá dormir en el erial' (18). This is one of the expressions which form part of what they call their 'léxico familiar'.²³⁴ Another such saying is the one their literature teacher used to address to Sofía to encourage her to continue writing, and

²³² Smith and Watson, p. 16.

²³³ Later on, in Chapter XI, she uses her godmother's letter sent from Paris, giving her advice about the break-up with her friend: 'Tengo aquí delante de los ojos dos cartas de mi madrina, que no copio para que este relato no se vuelva tan largo como aquel invierno. Pero su lectura me está ayudando a reconstruir la sensación de zozobra y desarraigo que acompañaron a mi insensible espera del amor', p. 204.

²³⁴ Natalia Ginzburg's autobiographical novel, *Léxico familiar* (*Lessico Familiare*, 1963) was known by the author who wrote a critique of the Spanish translation for *ABC Literario* on 10 June 1989. See *Carmen Martín Gaité: Tirando del hilo*, 422-24. The author published other articles about the Italian author: see *Agua pasada*, 'El murmullo de los cotidianos', 205-08, published in *Saber leer* June-July 1991, and a homage published in *ABC*, 9 October 1991, which can be found in *Agua pasada*, 348-51. Martín Gaité also translated two novels by Natalia Ginzburg: *Caro Michelle* (1973), an epistolary novel, translated as *Querido Miguel* (Barcelona: Lumen, 1989) and *Tutti nostri ieri* (1952), translated as *Nuestros ayeres* (Barcelona: Círculo de Lectores, 1996).

which Mariana uses in her first letter: ‘Siga usted, señorita Montalvo, siga siempre’ (33). These words bring memories and cause emotion to Sofía when reading her friend’s letter: ‘Encima de la frase de don Pedro Larroque, que revive al hacerla suya [...], concretamente encima del “siempre”, se me ha caído una lágrima’ (145). Indeed, this comment demonstrates the feelings both friends experience when they receive each other’s news. Mariana also comments on what she felt when Sofía’s parcel arrived: ‘Ya al coger el sobre abultado y ver mi nombre manuscrito por ti me dio un vuelco el corazón y noté que me estabas devolviendo algo olvidado’ (29). Along with these feelings, both friends also experience the desire to continue with their written communication after so many years of separation.

Sofía mentions a great number of characters, calling them ‘trociitos de espejo’, and all of which are important for an understanding of her life. These ‘trociitos de espejo’ are referred to at the beginning of the epigraph to *Nubosidad variable* in a quotation from the introduction to Ginzburg’s *La città e la casa*, an epistolary novel published in 1984: ‘Cuando he escrito novelas, siempre he tenido la sensación de encontrarme en las manos con añicos de espejo, y sin embargo conservaba la esperanza de acabar por recomponer el espejo entero’ (9). The image of the smithereens or fragments of a mirror is repeated throughout the novel, with the different characters and their stories being the pieces which will form the complete mirror at the end of the novel. Martín Gaité comments:

La escritura femenina alude a un mundo fragmentario y mezclado que, según metáfora de Natalia Ginzburg, nunca podrá quedar reflejado en un espejo de cuerpo entero, sino en añicos de espejos rotos, un mundo de vislumbres en cada uno de los cuales ya está la esencia de otra cosa, cortes laterales en una realidad que nos hurta. (*Tirando del hilo*, 431)

One of the collages Sofía creates: ‘Gente en un cóctel’ (35), contains pasted pieces of foil (taken out of a packet of Winston), which represent these ‘añicos’. The ‘collage’ which Sofía creates through her writing gives an idea of Spanish middle-class society of the 1980s and the world she lives in. There are characters like the downstairs neighbour, ‘señora Acosta’, who represents the middle-classes, obsessed with the damp stains in her bathroom ceiling, or Sofía’s maid, Daría, and her daughter, Consuelo, who represent the working class and suggest the differences between generations in their attitude to their employers. There is Cayetano Trueba, the van driver, who gives his point of view on society and the environment; Gregorio Termes, architect and painter,

who represents the fashionable rich and can only talk about money; Sofia's sister-in-law, Desi and her husband, who are representative of the new rich. Also portrayed are Sofia's three children. Amparo, who works as an air stewardess, is responsible. The other two, Encarna and Lorenzo, are lost and without a goal in life. As well as being types who make up the society of the time, all these characters demonstrate Martín Gaité's skill at capturing different street voices.

The 'voice', as well as some of the characteristics, minor obsessions and habits of the author, are also reflected in Sofia's writing. Just like the author, she rereads her notes, rewrites them, and makes collages which show her feelings at certain moments.²³⁵ She writes in the Ateneo and even buys her notebooks in Martín Gaité's favourite stationers, Muñagorri: '(Me fueron a buscar al Ateneo. Yo estaba describiendo, en el cuaderno comprado en Muñagorri, la fiesta de Gregorio Termes. Ahora he empezado otro)' (156). And also like Martín Gaité, Sofia hates redecorating the house. As Jurado Morales indicates when discussing the author's work: 'El lector recibe no sólo una historia más o menos atractiva sino también, y por encima de todo, la voz subjetiva y sincera de una escritora empeñada en transmitir su particular visión del mundo.'²³⁶

The use of the diary form makes Sofia's writing more reflective and allows her to think again about her past. Mariana's writing, on the other hand, is more immediate, although she also uses reflective writing to understand some episodes of their life, which, as she says, will give to whoever reads them two sides, or versions, of the same experience: 'Ahora que lo pienso, seguro que hablamos de las mismas cosas en más de una ocasión y con un tratamiento diferente' (339). As Sofia writes her diary she has her friend in mind as the necessary interlocutor to continue with her *pesquisa* through her past. For example, when she rewrites her notes, Sofia thinks about Mariana reading them: "'Mira, te he traído de regalo este cuaderno"; así que me gozo en irlo llenando despacio, esmerándome en la letra. Eso es como estar ya con ella también ahora según

²³⁵ As already mentioned, Martín Gaité's love for drawing and collages is well known. The author used one of these collages in the first edition of *Nubosidad variable*. For a study of this collage and others produced by the author, see Kathleen M. Glenn, 'Collage, textile and palimpsest: Carmen Martín Gaité's *Nubosidad variable*', *Romance Languages Annual*, 5 (1993), 408-13.

²³⁶ 'La narrativa de Carmen Martín Gaité, la esencia misma del ensayo', in *Actas del VIII Simposio Internacional sobre Narrativa Hispánica Contemporánea: Novela y Ensayo* (El Puerto de Santa María: Fundación Luis Goytisolo, 2000), 95-108 (p.102). Antonio Torres Torres also comments on the similarities between Sofia and the author: 'Sofía [...] es quien encarna un mayor número de características autobiográficas de Martín Gaité.' 'La perspectiva narrativa en *Nubosidad variable* de Carmen Martín Gaité', *Anuario de Estudios Filológicos* 18 (1995), 499-506 (p. 504).

lo escribo' (76). And like her friend, Mariana has Sofía in mind: 'Menos mal que has aparecido, que puedo imaginar que me escuchas' (70). As Ruth Perry indicates in *Women, Letters and the Novel*: 'letters are a particularly potent medium for fantasy because they have the magical ability to bring people to life: addressing others on paper evokes their palpable presence' (104). Perry goes on to say: 'Letters allow a person to keep a relationship going in the imagination' (114). In the case of *Nubosidad variable*, Sofía is going through a time in her life when she lacks an interlocutor who can listen. Her children are grown up and she lives with a husband with whom she hardly communicates. Consequently, her encounter with Mariana and with her own writing opens new ways of communication.

In her marriage, Sofía finds herself in a similar situation to the protagonist of Esther Tusquets's novel, *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* (1978). They both feel complete indifference towards their husbands, who are more interested in money, success and redecorating their homes (to be one step ahead of others) than in saving marriages that have long stopped functioning. In these two novels, both protagonists see their husbands as if they were strangers with whom they share a bed. As Carmen Alborch comments: 'La soledad aparece cuando eres consciente de la distancia que separa tu propia alma de la persona que está sentada en la butaca de al lado.'²³⁷ In *Nubosidad variable*, the character of the husband (a character both in Martín Gaité's novel and in Sofía's narrative), although present, is not fundamental to the account. As Sofía writes: 'Era un personaje que se había metido equivocadamente en la escena. ¿Salir a comer con él? No, no, qué cosa más aburrida. Menos mal que ya hace mucho que no me lo propone' (118). Every time she writes about him it is either to show a lack of understanding, 'Me parecía un extraño' (15), or to explain their problems: 'Yo con Eduardo me casé sin estar enamorada y de ahí viene todo' (169). Later, she explains the reason for their union: 'Me casé embarazada de tres meses' (201).

This type of male character occurs in other Martín Gaité novels, and seems to represent a stereotype of the 1980s Spanish middle-class man. Such men were involved with the underground political movements of the 1970s and yet during the years of the PSOE and economic prosperity they seem to forget their struggles for a better society, joining the ranks of the 'yuppies' and being concerned more about money and professional success than the world around them. As María del Mar López Cabrales

²³⁷ Solas: *Gozos y sombras de una manera de vivir* (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 2006), p. 120.

indicates: ‘En estas novelas los personajes masculinos que aparecen sirven de contraste con los femeninos que, normalmente, son más fuertes y son el eje de la novela en su totalidad.’²³⁸ The indifference Sofía feels towards her husband allows her to leave her home after listening to a conversation which confirms that he is involved with another woman. For his part, her husband reproaches her for having remained stuck in the past, for not being interested in new ways of life, for not recognizing some of the most influential people in the society he tells her about (17), and for reading (again) *Wuthering Heights*: ‘¿No comprendes -dijo Eduardo- que seguir leyendo *Cumbres borrascosas* es quedarse enquistada?’ (17). Indeed, both Sofía and Mariana constantly refer to books, films, and the music of their youth or of their present, filling the novel with intertextual remarks which go from *Wuthering Heights* to *Nada*, from Garcilaso and Manuel Machado to Katherine Mansfield and Simone de Beauvoir. Also, there are references to Anna Karenina, Greta Garbo, James Dean, Michael Jackson, the Beatles or *Presuntos Implicados*, as well as to characters from children’s stories, such as *Sleeping Beauty*, *Peter Pan* or *Celia*. All these references provide a tour through the cultural baggage of a generation.²³⁹

Emily Brontë’s novel, though, was fundamental in the development of both friends and appears again and again throughout the narration as a parallel or contrast with situations they have lived through. In fact, Martín Gaité translated *Wuthering Heights* in 1978 and she also wrote prologues to the novel.²⁴⁰ References in *Nubosidad variable* to this novel also take us closer to the author’s preferences as well as the influence that the books she was reading at the time had on the novels she was writing. For example, Martín Gaité was reading *Wuthering Heights* during her journey from Dublin to Cork on 23 February 1983: ‘Me siento desligada de todo, libre y perdida al mismo tiempo. Me pongo a leer *Cumbres borrascosas*. De repente tengo veinte años’ (*Cuadernos de todo*, p. 545). Her reaction to reading a novel she once read in her youth is the same one that Sofía seems to experience in *Nubosidad variable*.

²³⁸ *Palabras de mujeres: Escritoras españolas contemporáneas* (Madrid: Narcea, 2000), p. 38. It is also worth adding, with reference to Martín Gaité’s novels, an observation Martín Gaité used in her critique of Rosa Montero’s *Crónica del desamor* (1979): ‘no hay en toda la narración un hombre que salga bien parado’, *Tirando del hilo*, p. 275.

²³⁹ For a detailed account of the intertextual allusions in the novel, see Carmen Servén, ‘La amistad entre mujeres en la narrativa femenina: Carmen Martín Gaité (1992) y Marina Mayoral (1994)’, *DICENDA: Cuadernos de Filología Hispánica*, 16 (1998), 233-43 (pp. 235-37).

²⁴⁰ See, for example, *Agua pasada*, 113-21.

Sofía prefers to live in a world of literature and imagination, as she confesses: ‘Reconozco que no me gusta la realidad, que nunca me ha gustado’ (111). For her, writing is necessary to feel alive. When she was younger she showed her enthusiasm for writing: ‘De lo que más me acuerdo es de que escribía muchísimo. Poemas, comienzos de novela, diario’ (167). Here can be found, once again, similarities to the author. Martín Gaité frequently comments on her love for writing and how she began writing at an early age: ‘yo llevo escribiendo, creo, desde que tenía doce años y que mi primera novela no la publiqué hasta los veintinueve. Lo cual te indica que no tenía prisa.’²⁴¹ But when Sofía marries, she stops writing, not letting her imagination fly. Although occasionally during her marriage Sofía starts writing again (for example when she begins writing a diary after her mother’s death),²⁴² she never feels motivated to continue. However, when she starts writing after her encounter with Mariana, she recovers the feelings she had during her youth and is able to begin a new stage in her life. That is the reason why other characters see her as a new person; she has been able to get out of the hole she fell into: ‘no hay mejor tabla de salvación que la pluma. Gracias, Mariana, por habérmelo vuelto a recordar’ (210).

Writing allows Sofía to realise that she is no longer attached to her home and her husband, and so feels free to leave them. She has her children to support and encourage her need for independence. ‘El refugio para tortugas’ (42) or ‘refu’, the name given to her mother’s house, where her two older children live now, is, as its name reflects, the refuge Sofía chooses for her escape. In this refuge the wish to write is rediscovered and she chooses the kitchen (after tidying up and cleaning it, like a ‘good’ housewife) as the place to write:

Termino de recoger también la mesa y le paso una bayeta húmeda por el mármol. Esto ya parece otra cosa. Creo que voy a buscar una lámpara de flexo, en el salón tiene que haber alguna, y me voy a venir aquí a escribir, porque es que ya no me caben en la cabeza las cosas que se me ocurren para apuntar.
(376)²⁴³

²⁴¹ See Gazarian Gautier, p. 29.

²⁴² As was discussed in Chapter 3, Martín Gaité also started a project in diary form after her parents’ death, titled ‘Cuenta pendiente’.

²⁴³ In *El cuarto de atrás* we also see the protagonist, C., tidying up the kitchen table before going back to the living room where the man in black is waiting: ‘Me pongo a recoger unos restos de merienda que había sobre la mesa y llevo los platos sucios al fregadero, luego paso un paño húmedo por el hule de cuadros’, p. 73. There is also the comment she ‘hears’ from the young girl she sees reflected in the mirror: ‘Anda que también tú limpiando, vivir para ver’, p. 75.

As will be seen in *Lo raro es vivir*, the kitchen, a room traditionally seen as ‘the woman’s place’, in which she should have felt alienated, can be a place of liberation for a woman.²⁴⁴ The kitchen was also for earlier generations, such as Sofía’s mother, their ‘kingdom’, even though, as Sofía’s mother says: ‘tal vez porque entre todos fomentaron en mí esa convicción’ (348).

The first move from the marital home to the parents’ house does not seem to be a very liberating action; but it is thanks to this first step that Sofía is able to have a dream where she ‘becomes’ her mother:²⁴⁵ ‘pensaba con sus frases y revivían sus recuerdos’ (381).²⁴⁶ In this way, she is able to see how her mother actually understood her, since because of the way she behaved, she never had the opportunity to admit it. Sofía has also fallen into this isolation but, unlike her mother, escapes it. Her dream of having been her mother and of having heard her thoughts and wishes (even if it was under the influence of hashish) is enough for her to feel liberated from the pressure her mother always exerted on her, and to forgive her. In *Cuadernos de todo*, as was seen in Chapter 3, it is possible to read some of Martín Gaité’s dreams in which her parents are the protagonists, most of them written under the heading of ‘Cuenta pendiente’.

Adalgisa Giorgio explains in the introduction to the collection *Writing Mothers and Daughters*, how in the last decades there has been a significant shift in the way relationships between mothers and daughters have been represented in European literature: ‘It is possible to identify a broad shift from rejection of or indifference to the maternal to a desire on the daughter’s part to examine her bond with the mother.’²⁴⁷ In *Nubosidad variable* we see this shift in the case of Sofía, who moves from feelings of guilt, due to the hatred she felt towards the mother who always wanted to control her

²⁴⁴ María Moliner comes to mind as a woman who produced a fundamental work for Spanish language from her kitchen table. See ‘Conversación con Fernando Ramón Moliner, hijo de María Moliner’, <http://www.mariamoliner.com/maria_moliner_mi_madre_3.pdf>

²⁴⁵ Leonardo of *La Reina de las Nieves* talks to his grandmother and his mother in his dreams, allowing the reader to hear their voices through him. However, just like Sofía the night she spends at her mother’s house, Leonardo smokes hashish, which may be the cause of what could have been a simple hallucination. Sofía’s older daughter, Encarna, explains that this kind of *desdoblamiento* which her mother has suffered could be produced by smoking hashish, a substance which also helped her the night before to write her ideas more clearly. This kind of stimulus is not only used by Martín Gaité’s characters, we can also find it in other contemporary writers such as Carme Riera or Lucía Etxebarria.

²⁴⁶ This type of dream can be related to what Freud called ‘wish fulfilment’: dreams in which we can reproduce through the dream a wish not realised in our lives. Thanks to her dream, Sofía will understand her mother and forgive her, just as will occur in Leonardo’s dreams in *La Reina* and Águeda’s in *Lo raro es vivir*. See Sigmund Freud, *La interpretación de los sueños* (Barcelona: Planeta Agostini, 1985), pp. 16-21 and 587-606.

²⁴⁷ Adalgisa Giorgio, ‘Mothers and Daughters in Western Europe: Mapping the Territory’, in *Writing Mothers and Daughters*, 1-9 (p. 5).

life,²⁴⁸ to a wish to know her mother better so as to understand her and forgive her. On this issue, Chodorow explains the need for women to shake off their feeling of guilt in their relationships with their mothers: ‘Guilt and sadness about the mother are particularly prevalent female preoccupations, which are as likely to limit female autonomy, pleasure, and achievement as any cultural mandate.’²⁴⁹ And in fact, the real liberation for Sofía will come after confronting and understanding her feelings towards her mother.

Sofía’s dream has also revealed another relationship, the one between grandmother and granddaughter. Encarna (who, like her mother, writes stories and takes her name from her grandmother) was her grandmother’s best interlocutor: ‘Jamás me ha dado nadie tan buena conversación, con aquella voz dulce, persuasiva y sincera que me llegaba directamente al alma, y mira que es difícil a mí llegarme al alma’ (349). The relationship grandmother-grandchild can be liberating, as can be seen in *Caperucita en Manhattan* or in *La Reina de las Nieves*, in which the grandmothers serve as a refuge for the grandchildren, avoiding mothers who do not understand them. However, in Encarna’s case she is able to maintain good relations with both generations.

The three generations of women represented in this novel are important for understanding the position of a woman such as Sofía who, although she followed the traditional route by marrying and having children, is always challenging the reasons for re-enacting certain conventions. Reflecting on her life, she writes:

Aprobado en hija de familia. Aprobado en noviazgo. Aprobado en economía doméstica. Aprobado en trato conyugal y en deberes para con la parentela política. Aprobado en partos. Aprobado en suavizar asperezas, en buscar un sitio para cada cosa y en poner a mal tiempo buena cara. Aprobado en maternidad activa, aunque esta asignatura, por ser la más difícil, está sometida a continua revisión. (116)

Sofía does not follow the rules of behaviour that a middle-class housewife is expected to follow. She is close to her children, having with them, as grown ups, a good relationship. Her children once needed her as a mirror in which they could be reflected. She gave them all the time and affection they needed, but now they have grown up and

²⁴⁸ ‘A mi madre empecé a odiarla desde que supe que me leía las cartas de Guillermo. Hace diez años, cuando murió, me di cuenta de que todavía no había sido capaz de perdonarle aquello’ p. 39. Sofía writes this sentence after having repressed the wish to hear her daughter, Amalia’s, telephone conversation.

²⁴⁹ *The Power of Feelings: Personal Meaning in Psychoanalysis, Gender and Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 89.

have their own lives and do not need her in the same way: ‘A lo largo de una serie de años, que ahora se pierden en la niebla, mi equilibrio mental estuvo supeditado al logro de recetas de cocina apetitosas y de un comentario aprobatorio por parte de los duendecillos reflejados en mi espejo’ (41).

As was seen in Chapter 3, ideas about maternity and the need for the mother to be with her children had been discussed by the author in her notebooks. Martín Gaité does not understand women who have children and then leave them to be looked after by others. Neither does she understand the difficulty some mothers have in communicating with and caring for their children. In the same way as the author, Sofía’s relationship with her children is one of friendship.²⁵⁰ Sofía’s children also encourage her to continue with her writing:

nos ponemos [Sofía y Encarna] a hablar de problemas de elaboración literaria, de coincidencias, metáforas, principios y finales, con un entusiasmo propio de quien tiene sed atrasada de algo, quitándonos la palabra una a otra. Parece como si no hubiéramos hablado de otra cosa en toda la vida. (383)

Theories on the importance of the mother in the baby’s development were discussed at length during the 1950s and 1960s and are still an important component of most psychoanalytical theories. As Chodorow indicates: ‘An investigation of the requirements of mothering and the mothering experience shows that the foundations of parenting capacities emerge during the early period.’²⁵¹ Chodorow continues: ‘The experience of satisfactory feeding and holding enables the child to develop a sense of loved self in relation to a loving and caring mother’ (78). And Sofía seems to understand that a child needs: ‘un cariño incondicional’ (287). This is one of the reasons she defends her children in front of their father, something she feels her mother never did for her.

However, there is not only the need of the child for the mother: but the mother also feels pleasure in this relationship. Discussing her relationship with Encarna, Sofía comments: ‘era mi mayor fuente de luz y energía’ (294). Indeed, as Chodorow indicates:

Women get gratification from caring for an infant, analysts generally suggest, because they experience it as an extension of themselves. The basis for ‘good-

²⁵⁰ It should be noted that Martín Gaité’s daughter, Marta, lived with her mother until her death.

²⁵¹ *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University California Press, 1979), p. 77.

enough'²⁵² early mothering is 'maternal empathy' with her infant, coming from total identification with it rather than (more intellectual) 'understanding of what is or could be verbally expressed' about infantile needs. (87)

In fact, in Chapter XV, titled 'El trastero de Encarna', Sofía narrates the first moment of complete understanding between her and her eldest daughter: her poor relationship with her husband and her tiredness after having had another baby, collide with the jealousy of her eldest daughter, who needs her mother even more. Yet Sofía finds at that moment that her communication with her daughter is easier than before: 'Me dio un vuelco el corazón y nos miramos en silencio, tanteando la posible certeza de estar compartiendo una emoción rara y preciosa' (289). The episode narrated by Martín Gaité in *El cuento de nunca acabar*, 'Ruptura de relaciones' (222-27), about a holiday spent with her daughter, is a reminder of this type of understanding between mother and daughter.

In contrast to a mother's need to protect her children is the idea that the children need independence and have other relationships apart from that with the mother. As Chodorow indicates, the preoccupation with excessive protection for children started in the United States during the 1940s:

Beginning in the 1940's, studies began to claim that mothers in American society were 'overprotecting' their children and not allowing them to separate. [...] These mothers were rearing children when the new psychology was emphasizing maternal responsibilities for children's development, when women were putting more time into childcare even as there were fewer children to care for, when family mobility and the beginning of suburbanisation were removing women from daily contact with female kin. (212)

When she was a small child, Encarna witnessed the isolation her mother was feeling and understood her need to be rescued which is why the child offered her a place to escape from the adults surrounding her:

–¿Sabes para lo que tengo ganas de ser mayor? – me preguntó.

–No sé. Siempre dices que no quieres ser mayor.

–Para tener una casa y llevarte a vivir conmigo. Una casa pequeña, con balcones, y delante el mar. Y tú no tendrías que hacer nada, sólo contar cuentos. (296)²⁵³

²⁵² The idea of the 'good-enough' mother developed by Donald W. Winnicott will be further examined in Chapter 5. Although the theories of Winnicott and Chodorow have been criticised, these theories appear to relate to many of Martín Gaité's ideas on maternity. For a critical study of their work, see *From Klein to Kristeva: Psychoanalytic Feminism and the Search for the "Good Enough" Mother*, Janice Doane and Devon Hodges, eds. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

Sofía's 'diary' reveals the isolation she still experiences, as she has lost her friends and feels a stranger amongst her husband's friends. Also present are the accusations she receives not only from her husband but also from Daría, the maid, and from the psychiatrist she visited after her children left home: 'Que Encarna y Lorenzo no aceptan la realidad tal como es, que no quieren parecerse a su padre en nada. Y que yo tengo la culpa. De eso hablaba con el psiquiatra. Los comprendo, no les doy alas pero los comprendo' (124). Except for the youngest one, Amelia, who still lives at home but has a job, Sofía's children have not been able to 'leave the womb', living in their grandmother's house and even having the services of the maid her mother sends to clean the house. However, at the same time we see how, when Sofía needs help, the first person she thinks of is her eldest daughter:

La necesidad de ver a Encarna inmediatamente coincidía con el deseo fogoso y repentino de escapar de casa, de rebelarme contra la mentira, de romper amarras. 'Tengo que hablar con Encarna, contarle todo lo que me pasa y lo que siento ahora, no puedo demorarlo ni un minuto más; de las personas que tengo cerca ella es la única que me entiende.' Y el refu se me presentó de repente como aquella casita con balcones al mar que su imaginación infantil edificara para brindarme asilo. (304)

The 'refuge' ('el refu') helps Sofía to find not only her daughter but also her mother. As was mentioned previously, in what was her parents' house and where her mother died, Sofía has her dream, and comes to forgive the fact that her mother never let her be free. The encounter with her daughter the morning after the dream is crucial in her decision to leave everything and go to find the only person she really wants to be with, her friend Mariana:

Le hablo [a Encarna] con la mayor superficialidad posible de la pelirroja [la amante de su marido] y de mi decisión de desaparecer de casa por unos días. Sin embargo, al final se me quiebra la voz.

– ¡Pero qué unos días, mamá! Si lo que tienes que hacer es irte para siempre. Ya hace siglos que no pintas nada ahí, nada en absoluto. ¡Venga, por favor, no te

²⁵³ Telling stories was always one of Martín Gaité's passions and influenced her decision to take up writing, as we learn in the introduction to *El castillo de las tres murallas*: 'lo que más le gustaba era que le contaran cuentos o contarlos ella. [...] Lo malo es que no siempre que quería contar un cuento encontraba alguien dispuesto a oírlo [...]. Se dio cuenta de lo necesario que es escribir los cuentos que no se pueden contar' pp. 5-6.

pongas a llorar ahora! Pues sólo faltaba. Que se la coma con patatas a esa cursi. Olvídalos. Y a la tía Desi, igual. Pasa de ellos. (386)

Sofía needs to leave both homes to find herself, and it is thanks to her encounter with Mariana and her rediscovery of the pleasure of writing that makes it possible – as Sofía writes to Mariana: ‘Desde que me he puesto a escribir, mi vida ha dado un giro copernicano’ (71). Later, she observes: ‘escribir me sacaba del infierno’ (125).²⁵⁴ Eventually, Sofia starts thinking of her writings as part of a novel: ‘De pronto me da por pensar en que el comienzo de esta novela debía coincidir con el análisis de aquellos cinco meses y pico en que la hoy doctora León se convirtió para mí en una desconocida’ (158). This episode marks the traumatic beginning of the friends’ separation. Writing is Sofía’s way to recover the repressed memories which come back to her after meeting Mariana again. This is the main theme Sofía deals with in her writing. To this she adds all the ‘trociitos de espejo’ and comments at the end of the novel: ‘si siguen entrando personajes accesorios, esta cocina va a convertirse en el camarote de los hermanos Marx’ (379).

Mariana’s Letters: From Projection to Introspection through Writing

With her opening letter Mariana quickly puts Sofía in the picture by giving what look like stage-directions: ‘es de día, en primer término sofá, por el lateral derecha puerta que da al jardín’ (20). She gives the date and the time, describes the room where she is, the location of different objects in the room, the lighting, where she is writing and the paper she is using to write, which was bought in New York (21). This mention of New York is a reminder of the author’s affection for and interest in the city – already discussed in Chapter 3 with reference to her collages and notebook material. The emotions Mariana feels while sitting looking at the room are also expressed in the letter:

Del pasillo se entra directamente a la parte del mirador, que llamo para mis adentros ‘la boca del lobo’. O sea, que ese espacio, por bonito que te lo pinte, me angustia un poco, para qué te lo voy a negar, a veces casi como una película de miedo. Es donde paso consulta. (22)

²⁵⁴ Adrián M. García, in his study of ‘The Silent Interlocutor’ in *Nubosidad variable*, dedicates a section of the chapter to ‘Writing as Therapy’, pp. 85-100.

Just as Sofía has narrated the encounter between the two friends, Mariana indicates her present state, her place of work, her fears and solitude. From early on she indicates the difficulties she has with her work, even though she is a famous psychiatrist who has achieved success in her career.

It is interesting that Mariana is the one who writes letters. Francisco Javier Higuero indicates that she uses the letter form because of her need to communicate with others, while Sofía needs the solitude that diary writing gives, as she has always found herself surrounded by family:

Mariana, a pesar de vivir sola, siente una necesidad interna ineludible de entrar en comunicación pragmática con alguien [...]. Sin embargo, Sofía, que ha vivido siempre presuntamente acompañada en un contorno matrimonial y familiar burgués, sabe aislarse y refugiarse en el ámbito imaginario, reflejado [...]. Los textos escritos de Mariana y Sofía responden a estos talantes existenciales y de convivencia. Aquélla, en su afán incontenible por encontrar un narratario e interlocutor con el que entrar en comunicación, escribirá cartas, sirviéndose del género epistolar como el más apropiado para sus fines perseguidos. Por otro lado, Sofía, al vivir rodeada de gente con la que podía comunicarse, no necesita recurrir a la escritura con fines directamente pragmáticos, sino si lo hace es para estar a solas consigo misma y expresar así sus reflexiones sobre lo que le ha acontecido, haciendo uso del género autobiográfico del diario.²⁵⁵

Although Higuero makes a number of interesting points here, the situation in which Sofía finds herself at the moment of writing is much more isolated than that of Mariana. Although Sofía is surrounded by people, as Higuero indicates, ‘podía comunicarse’, she does not find anyone with whom to talk about her problems and desires: she only seems to serve as an interlocutor for others. As the reader discovers through Mariana’s account of their reunion, Sofía is completely alone, even though she is surrounded by people. At the party, she does not talk to anybody and nobody tries to approach her; whereas Mariana, once in conversation with her friend, is always interrupted by people greeting her.

It appears that Mariana’s occupation, listening to people with problems, makes the need to communicate to Sofía more pressing: ‘Yo estoy necesitando de un psiquiatra más que todos mis pacientes juntos. [...] Menos mal que has aparecido, que puedo

²⁵⁵ ‘La exploración de la diferencia en *Nubosidad variable* de Carmen Martín Gaité’, *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 73 (1996), 401-14 (p. 410).

imaginar que me escuchas' (70). Mariana, who never felt she had any literary inclinations (she comments on more than one occasion on the excellence of Sofia's writing and compares it to her own), uses a form of writing more used in everyday life. Nevertheless, in the second paragraph of her first letter, Mariana describes the new-found pleasure writing this kind of letter has brought her:

Si supieras el milagro que es para mí volver a tener ganas de escribir una carta no de negocios, no de reproches, no para resolver nada. Una carta porque sí, sin tener de antemano el borrador en la cabeza, porque te sale del alma, porque te apetece muchísimo. (20)

This is a form of writing which the author defends as being entirely spontaneous: 'Me parece muy sintomático, por ejemplo, el hecho de que en trances de acidia y empantanamiento lo que menos pereza dé sea ponerse a escribirle una carta a un amigo, al primero que se nos pase por la cabeza' (*El cuento de nunca acabar* [1983], 33).

The formula the author describes in *El cuento de nunca acabar* for starting a letter, 'Porque, claro, en una carta no se tiene por desdoro empezar describiendo la habitación de la fonda desde la cual elaboramos el mensaje' (33), is precisely, as was noted earlier, the one used by Mariana. For Mariana, writing also serves as a 'tabla de salvación' (56), and in the same way that the reading of Sofia's 'primeros deberes' serves Mariana as 'abono' (144) for her life, the letters written to Sofia but not sent, also serve as 'fertilizantes' for her own thoughts:

Una [de las cartas] – la del tren – metida incluso en un sobre grande con tus señas escritas, la otra ni siquiera. Son fertilizantes para mí. Releerlas me ayuda a coger el hilo del tiempo reciente y estimula no sólo mi recuperación anímica sino también la evolución de mi trabajo. (128)

As a psychiatrist Mariana knows how to listen and give advice to her patients. As well as using Sofia as her own 'psychiatrist' to whom she can tell what she has never told anyone before, through her letters she is also going to give Sofía a number of guidelines to follow. In the first letter to Sofía, she reiterates the need to continue with the 'homework', as if she were her psychiatrist: 'Te pedí que por favor te pusieras a escribir sobre lo que te diera la gana, pero enseguida, esa misma noche al llegar a casa. [...] a muchos de mis pacientes les pido eso mismo' (32). She also gives her friend advice on how to continue with her writing as if she were referring to the creation of a novel: 'Para próximos capítulos: el personaje de Eduardo no interesa al lector. ¿No podía ser desplazado un poco de la acción, darle menos papel?' (34). As was noted at

the beginning of this chapter, there is strong metafictional character to the novel, with the process of writing an integral part of the account.

There are, of course, other novels in which psychiatrists encourage their patients to write so as to understand their own problems. A good example is Simone de Beauvoir's *La Femme rompue* (1968), where the protagonist writes in response to her analyst's recommendation. In the case of Monique, the novel's protagonist, instead of understanding her problems and getting better, she gets deeper and deeper into a fictional life, and this drives her to complete desperation. In Carme Riera's novel *La mitad del alma* (2004), the protagonist also confesses that it was her psychoanalyst who encouraged her investigate her mother's past and write her diary-letter about her findings. In the case of *Nubosidad*, Sofía tells her husband that she is writing under psychiatric prescription:

Pareció alterarse ligeramente y me preguntó que si había vuelto al psiquiatra. Yo bajé los ojos hacia la mesa y mi caligrafía me hacía guiños amistosos desde el cuaderno y los papeles sueltos, como la luz de un faro. Sonreí. Me sentí totalmente dueña de la situación.

—No, hombre, no te preocupe. Es que tengo un alter ego que me manda escribir. (197)

The character of Mariana as a fashionable psychiatrist/psychoanalyst has certain negative aspects. Thus, one of her patients whom Sofía meets describes her as a cold and distant woman: 'Siempre inalterable, siempre por encima de todo, fría como un témpano, no sabía lo que era la pasión' (84).²⁵⁶ In her letters to Sofía, Mariana explains the reason for her distant manner and reflects on her past behaviour and how she feels currently. After reminding Sofía of the fact that she left university in her second year to get married, Mariana observes: 'Yo no tiré la toalla, me agarré a ella en una reacción incluso demasiado compulsiva, ésa es la verdad. Y sin embargo, mi trayectoria profesional, valga lo que valga, arranca de aquel enfrentamiento primero con la calamidad' (26). Subsequently when she reflects on her fear of solitude she writes about her life in Madrid and how her busy working life never allows her to be alone:

Lo único bastante seguro es que sonaría mucho el teléfono, que no pararía de mirar la agenda y que no tendría tiempo de quedarme a solas conmigo misma ni de preguntarme por qué no me aguanto. Me dedicaría a darles recetas sobre

²⁵⁶ Alborch comments how: 'Hay mujeres que se imponen como disciplina ser frías e inaccesibles para transmitir una imagen de poder' p. 186.

cómo aguantarse a sí mismos a los enfermos que vienen a mi consulta aquejados de esa incapacidad. (87-88)

The relationship Mariana has with some of her patients (especially with Raimundo who becomes her lover) is totally outside the boundaries of psychoanalytical practice. Her relationship with other patients also continues outside the consulting room, as Mariana writes to Sofía informing her: ‘Te diré que la relación con gran parte de las personas que trato actualmente me viene por la vía del diván, lo cual a la larga resulta empobrecedor y fatigoso’ (52). The transference²⁵⁷ in the consulting room between Raimundo (a manic depressive whom she herself diagnosed as ‘ciclotímico’, 55) and Mariana is not viewed positively by the psychoanalyst, who allows herself to be led by her feelings towards her patient, trying to cure him of his homosexuality not only on the chaise longue but also in bed (23).²⁵⁸ She sees Raimundo as the man who needs her help, but not as his psychiatrist, instead as his ‘woman’:

Me sorprendí imaginándome con un mandil y un escobón, abriendo las ventanas y entonando coplas alegres, mientras de la cocina venía un olor a guiso casero, y yo me acercaba a la mesa grande, casi con devoción, a poner en orden los papeles de Raimundo. (63)

Mariana admits being aware of the problems she has with Raimundo although she does not seem to have the power or the will to rebel against them: ‘[Raimundo] está pasando por una crisis infernal y no se alivia hasta que me la trasfiere a mí’ (30). This countertransference²⁵⁹ experienced with her former patient leads her to believe that she is the only person who understands him, therefore the only one he needs.

Another of Mariana’s patients, with whom the psychiatrist breaks all professional rules, is Silvia, a friend of Raimundo and with whom she has been in love since she was young. She writes to Sofía:

²⁵⁷ With regard to this term, Chodorow notes: ‘Projection (sometimes called externalization) and introjection (sometimes called internalization), as these express unconscious fantasy, are the major modes of transference. In projection and projective identification, we put feelings, beliefs, or parts of our self into an other’, *The Power of Feelings*, p. 15.

²⁵⁸ In Freud’s time homosexuality was studied as a problem which needed to be cured. Freud refers to it as ‘inversion’, others, such as Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Lefèvre Pontalis, refer to it as ‘perversion’. One of the explanations Freud gave for the ‘problem’ was: ‘homosexuality in the male derived from the boy’s refusal to relinquish his first love-object, the mother, his subsequent unconscious IDENTIFICATION with her and his consequent search for love-objects that resembled himself,’ cited in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary*, ed. Elizabeth Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 158. It is surprising, though, to find in the 1980s a character like Mariana who still refers to homosexuality as a problem to be cured.

²⁵⁹ ‘Countertransference is broadly defined as the “whole of the analyst’s unconscious reactions to the individual analysand – especially to the analysand’s own transference”’ Ibid., p. 431.

Para que lo entiendas mejor, te diré que en un trabajo como el mío se requiere un raro equilibrio entre la curiosidad y la pasividad. [...] Yo siempre he estado ansiosa frente a Silvia, desde el primer día, y cada vez más. La perturbación que me producen sus informes sobre Raimundo – mayor aún por culpa de mi empeño en disimularla – es un estorbo para hacerme cargo de sus propias perturbaciones. (99)

And even though she knows that she is not the correct person to treat Silvia, Mariana not only sees her as a patient, she also lets her believe that they are good friends and uses Silvia's house as a refuge to escape from Raimundo.

For Mariana, taking refuge in Silvia's house will not, though, serve as an escape route and it is not until she decides to leave the house and hide in a hotel, completely alone, that she is able to decide what to do to resolve her situation. Carmen Alborch comments: 'El miedo a la soledad es peor que la soledad misma, sobre todo si nos obliga a soportar relaciones asfixiantes' (128). And, indeed, the fear of solitude is central to the relationship Mariana has with the world around her. In fact, Martín Gaité comments in her *Cuadernos de todo*: 'El amor dificulta la soledad por las ataduras que cría. Es el mayor escape conocido, el mayor espejuelo de compañía. La gente cuanto más miedo tiene a la soledad física, más se ampara en el amor' (128).

It is in her role as a psychiatrist that Mariana manages to keep the longest sentimental relationship, this is with Raimundo. The fact that he has never committed totally to their relationship may be because of his homosexuality (or bisexuality). However, she will never feel trapped in this relationship as Raimundo's bipolar disorder makes him desire and reject her continuously, although, as was seen earlier, this relationship has become a labyrinth she does not know how to get out of. Chodorow proposes that: 'The capacities that enable us to create personal meaning – capacities for transference, projection, introjection, and unconscious fantasy – are innate human capacities that develop and unfold virtually from birth, in a context of interaction with others.'²⁶⁰ These capacities have been developed by Mariana in such a way that she does not seem to be able to relate to others in any other capacity than through her own projection or as different from herself. When people do not conform to her projected image, Mariana feels the need to separate from them so as not to disappear as a person. Mariana's envy of Sofía's capacity to isolate herself in her own interior world, a world

²⁶⁰ *The Power of Feelings*, p. 14.

Mariana was not able to penetrate, made her react by separating. As Nuria Cruz-Cámara observes:

El análisis de las relaciones amorosas de Mariana pondrán en evidencia las contradicciones del personaje, quien se mueve entre una mirada distanciada e irónica (que desprecia la novela rosa y descubre lucidamente sus trampas) y un inconsciente que, por el contrario, ha articulado sus expectativas amorosas en torno a este paradigma literario.²⁶¹

In her letters, while reflecting on these relationships, Mariana realises that what she needs is ‘pactar con la soledad’, or as Martín Gaité wrote in her *Cuadernos de todo*, ‘comerme el mundo desde mi soledad, convertir la soledad en faro’ (479). Mariana writes:

Por más vueltas que le demos, todo es soledad. Y dejar constancia de ello, quebrar las barreras que me impedían decirlo abiertamente, me permite avanzar con más holgura por un territorio que defino al elegirlo, a medida que lo palpo y lo exploro, lo cual supone explorarme a mí misma, que buena falta me hace.

Porque ese territorio se revela y toma cuerpo en la escritura. (130)

From this point in the narrative, writing becomes an important part of her life. She wants to continue in her friend’s footsteps and start playing with the idea of writing a novel. Indeed, Mariana changes the way she writes: ‘Lo que quizá tendría que hacer es atreverme con un texto poético donde diera rienda suelta a todas estas contradicciones con una novela quizá, y dejarme de tanto psicoanálisis’ (193). She considers different ideas about the path her writing should take: ‘Podría ser una especie de diario desordenado, sin un antes y un después demasiado precisos, escrito a partir de sensaciones de extrañeza’ (228). Or, after days in solitude, she spends her time ‘inventando comienzos para un novela epistolar dirigida a un destinatario del que también se ignora casi todo’ (323). In the end she arrives at the idea of turning her letters and Sofía’s ‘deberes’ into a novel: ‘Y me pongo a pensar que igual entre lo que traigas tú y lo que tengo yo salía una novela estupenda a poco que la ordenáramos, o incluso sin ordenar’ (339). She has come to reflect herself in Sofía as the person who can encourage her on her new adventure, as her role model:

Ya llevo varias horas escribiendo en plan ‘ejercicio de redacción’, lo mismo que te receté a ti. Y eso me ha traído como consecuencia que ordene los papeles de la

²⁶¹ *El laberinto intertextual de Carmen Martín Gaité: Un estudio de sus novelas de los noventa* (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2008), p. 46.

mesa, rompa muchos que son innecesarios y encuentre otros que creía haber perdido. (314)

In her letters, Mariana begins to divide into two characters, the psychiatrist, Dr León, who tries to give advice to the person inside her, the woman, Mariana: ‘Y tú, doctora, me impedías gritar y me mandabas contestar con mesura a las intrincadas sinrazones de mi paciente’ (133). Some episodes show a dialogue between the two characters, such as when she decides to leave her friend Silvia’s house and reflects on the decision. Subsequently, Mariana confesses to Sofía at the end of Chapter VIII that her relationship with her superego is deteriorating (144): ‘Porque tú, doctora, no me permites ser grosera ni dejar a un paciente en la estacada, por mucho que lo esté deseando. Y esa simbiosis contigo es mi condena’ (135).²⁶² The psychiatrist’s rationality is, as Mariana realises, what has stopped her from being a ‘real’ or ‘complete’ woman, in the same way that Sofía’s marriage was what shattered her dreams. As Mariana informs Sofía: ‘Igual dejamos yo la psiquiatría y tú a tu marido’ (340). Thus, they are both going to cut their ties.

Conclusion

Nubosidad variable was the first novel Carmen Martín Gaité published after her daughter’s death in 1985 and in it the author seems to be projecting her need to investigate her past through her protagonists. Through their writing both protagonists come to understand their past and the reason why they find themselves in the state they are in at the beginning of the novel, when they meet again after years of separation. Once they have acknowledged the reason for their drifting apart, they begin to rid themselves of what stops them from changing their lives. For Mariana it is the fear of solitude: ‘todo es soledad. Y dejar constancia de ello, quebrar las barreras que me impedían decirlo abiertamente, me permite avanzar con más holgura por un territorio que defino al elegirlo’ (130). For Sofía it is her image of being a mere reflection of

²⁶² Cruz-Cámara comments that Martín Gaité’s rejection of psychoanalysis is reflected in the fact that the character of the psychoanalyst gives a very negative portrait of this career. The critic observes: ‘El signo más evidente del desprecio por el psicoanálisis se halla en el hecho de que, al final de la novela, Mariana abandone su profesión, para la cual, además, confiesa no tener vocación ni creer en su capacidad curativa’, *El laberinto intertextual*, p. 64. Nonetheless, as has been seen in this chapter, Martín Gaité has a good knowledge of the practice of psychoanalysis and knows how to apply its fundamental terms, which seems to belie any ‘disdain’ she may have felt towards it.

others: ‘yo era un espejo de cuerpo entero que los reflejaba a ellos al mirarlos, al devolverles la imagen que necesitaban para seguir existiendo’ (40-41), a mirror which is not needed any more.

So, Sofía leaves her husband, her marital home and, later on, her maternal home, shedding the guilt she felt for not having been able to forget her mother. For her part, Mariana escapes from a relationship she created and breaks the bonds which keep her tied to Raimundo when she leaves Silvia’s house: ‘¡He conseguido escapar! Fue como una bombilla encendida en mi mente. Porque además, el gozo de comprenderlo arrastró la decisión de una nueva escapatoria’ (134). Having taken these steps one by one, with the constant help of their writing and with the idea of the interlocutor in their minds, both women find the necessary strength to start again. Both characters gradually merge into one which is close to the author. Culminating in the last occasion when they meet again and put together their writing with the intention of creating a novel with the title *Nubosidad variable*:

Cuando te enseñe mis cartas sin enviar [...], verás que la primera es fruto del insomnio en ese mismo tren [en el que se encuentra Sofía en ese momento]. Forman un montón considerable, más de cien folios. Me doy cuenta de que no he hecho otra cosa desde que salí de Madrid más que escribirte, que gracias a eso me he mantenido en vida y no puedo dar por perdido un viaje tan absurdo. Pero mi mayor alegría en este momento es saber que tú tampoco has abandonado tus ‘deberes’ y que me traes el regalo de varios cuadernos. [...] Y me pongo a pensar que igual entre lo que traigas tú y lo que tengo yo salía una novela estupenda. [...] Y fijate si estaré loca, hasta me he puesto a acordarme de que cuando vivía en Barcelona conocí a alguno de los editores que ahora están pegando, por ejemplo Jorge Herralde,²⁶³ que tiene fama de descubrir a gente nueva y atreverse a lanzarla. (339-40)

Through her letters, Sofía served Mariana as the ideal interlocutor, so as to be able to order her own thoughts, revealing desires and frustration she had never before disclosed: ‘Yo esta noche te estoy contando cosas que no he contado nunca, que ni a mí misma me había contado así, tan despiadadamente’ (97). In effect, Sofía has been her psychoanalyst, the one to whom the patient can relay the most intimate feelings. With one of the protagonists being a psychoanalyst, Martín Gaité was able to use the

²⁶³ Jorge Herralde is in real life a writer, editor and the owner of Editorial Anagrama, who first published *Nubosidad variable*.

psychoanalytic technique of the talking-cure and transform it into the writing-cure, using writing as *tabla de salvación*. As Chodorow notes: ‘Psychoanalysis enables us to see how patterns from the past affect, shape, and give meaning to the present and enables the present to reshape memory and the past.’²⁶⁴

Sofía needed that first push from Mariana to start writing again and she writes with the idea of showing her writing to Mariana. Writing has served both of them as a cure and Martín Gaité has presented in her protagonists two middle-aged women who were experiencing a mid-life crisis and who helped each other, as interlocutors and mirrors, to confront themselves and be born again, as ‘el conocimiento de sí mismo [que] se adquiere a través de la exposición que destina a su interlocutor’.²⁶⁵ As Alborch comments: ‘Aprendimos que la amistad entre mujeres podía ser un buen antídoto contra el asunto principal de este libro, el desamor y la soledad’ (12). And these two states are what both friends conquer, through their writings and the possible publication of their memoir – which will allow them to regain their freedom.

²⁶⁴ *The Power of Feelings*, p. 249.

²⁶⁵ Iñaki Torre Fica, ‘Discurso femenino de autodescubrimiento en *Nubosidad variable*’, *Espéculo: Revista de estudios literarios* (Universidad Complutense de Madrid), 2000, <www.ucm.es/info/especulo/cmgaite/ina_torre.html>

CHAPTER 5

LA REINA DE LAS NIEVES: A PERSONAL SEARCH THROUGH DIARIES AND LETTERS

La Reina de las Nieves was published in 1994, although, as the author indicates in her ‘nota preliminar’, it started as a project at the end of the 1970s. This novel reveals many of the themes already exposed in *Nubosidad variable*, especially those related to Martín Gaité criticism of Spanish society in the 1980s. Although the author sets the narration in the 1970s, many of the problems referring to Spanish youth became more acute in the following decade. The length of time and the difficulties the author found during the years of preparation of this novel make it a complicated piece of work.²⁶⁶ The four chapters which constitute the first part of the novel are structured in a way which makes it difficult for the reader to instantly understand the relationship between the main characters. In fact, the two main characters do not meet until page 320, and their relationship is not clear until page 299. However, the author gives hints throughout that first part that suggest their paths will cross sometime in the future.

The novel is divided into three parts. The first and third parts consist of four chapters each and are recounted by an extradiegetic narrator. The second part, written in diary form, is ‘taken’ from the ‘cuadernos de Leonardo’, the work’s protagonist. Leonardo starts writing these notebooks after his parents’ death, a time when he feels he needs to make sense of his past to understand his present circumstances. Leonardo describes his thoughts and feelings, as well as the steps he needs to take in order to search his past and make sense of his present. He seems to have lost all memory of his

²⁶⁶ See Chapter 3 for a study of the development of this novel in the *Cuadernos de todo*.

past after spending some time in prison and starts rediscovering it through his writing; as he admits: ‘gracias a la escritura, la estoy empezando a recuperar’ (161). The writing of the notebooks will also allow him to see himself reflected in them, enabling him to study his situation from an objective perspective. As in *Nubosidad variable* the process of writing is central to the narrative, making Leonardo’s writing a self-conscious text.

The novel is closely related to Hans Christian Andersen’s story, *The Snow Queen*. This fairy tale was one of Marta’s favourites and Martín Gaité comments in the novel’s ‘nota preliminar’ that she had great difficulties continuing with the story (after Marta’s illness and death): ‘a partir de enero de 1985, y por razones que atañen a mi biografía personal, solamente de pensar en la Reina de las Nieves se me helaba el corazón, y enterré aquellos cuadernos bajo siete estadios de tierra, creyendo que jamás tendría ganas de resucitarlos’ (11). There are as well other literary works which throw light on the presentation of the two main characters, Leonardo and Casilda. They are both clearly reflections of the characters in Andersen’s tale and, in addition, Leonardo is compared to the protagonist of Albert Camus, *L’Étranger* (1942), while Casilda is seen as a projection of the protagonist of Henrik Ibsen’s *The Lady From the Sea* (1888). In these two works the protagonists are presented as different, independent and non-conforming to social norms, in a similar way to the two main characters of *La Reina de las Nieves*. This way of looking at Casilda and Leonardo as essentially non-conforming types is principally the view of Eugenio, Leonardo’s father. In the letter Casilda reads in Chapter 3, Eugenio compares her and Leonardo with himself: ‘también sé que me desprecias. Como Leonardo. [...] Perteneceís a una raza distinta. A ese grupo de seres privilegiados y superiores para quienes la soledad supone liberación y no condena’ (47). The use of the words ‘solitude’ and ‘freedom’ indicates the main themes in the novel. Both themes were dealt with extensively by Martín Gaité in her previous works, especially in *Cuadernos de todo* and *Nubosidad variable*. In *Cuadernos*, Martín Gaité wrote: ‘no podemos pensar, carecemos de soledad y libertad para ello’ (56), suggesting the importance which both states have in moments of reflection. While in *Nubosidad variable* the protagonists try to achieve solitude to attain freedom, in *La Reina* the main characters are on their own from the beginning, after having rejected company and social conventions. As was seen in Chapter 3, the idea of solitude was part of the story of the novel from the beginning when the author started writing it in the 1970s.

Letters are also an important part of the narrative. Leonardo discovers a number of letters and other documents hidden in his father’s safe. These letters put the

protagonist in contact with his father's past, a past which Leonardo knew little about. The characters of Casilda and Eugenio (as well as the grandmother) develop through the letters which are merged in Leonardo's notebooks. As well as in the letters, in the third part of the novel Casilda gives the reader a number of clues which will make clear some of the circumstances Leonardo has been discovering.

Suspense is one of the characteristics of the diary-novel, as H. Porter Abbott explains in *Diary Fiction: Writing as Action*.²⁶⁷ And in *La Reina de las Nieves*, the author has indeed applied this literary technique to give the narrative authenticity. Discovering his past is a slow process for the protagonist. First of all, Leonardo must discover the identity of the mysterious woman known only in his father's documents as S. For the reader, the development of the story is as slow and suspenseful as the process of discovery the protagonist must go through as he reads the documents in his father's study and writes up his discoveries afterwards.

In the same way that *Nubosidad variable* was a good example of epistolary writing between women as a narrative formula (even though Sofia uses diary-writing), *La Reina de las Nieves* seems to follow every 'function' in Porter Abbott's book on *Diary Fiction*. For the examination of this novel and the analysis of the development of the protagonist, Leonardo, through self-reflective writing, Abbott's study of the diary-novel will be used. Furthermore, focusing on a key thematic and dramatic aspect of the narrative, child development theories will be considered in order to understand the changes Leonardo experiences in the novel as he starts reflecting on his past. The Mother/child (son) relationship is again important here and, as guides, Bruno Bettelheim's and Donald Winnicott's theories on child development will be brought into play.

Leonardo's Notebooks: Writing (oneself)/Discovering (oneself)

H. Porter Abbott distinguishes three different functions in what he calls 'diary fiction as a field'. These functions which, as Abbott explains, characterise the diary as a literary document are: 'mimetic', 'thematic' and 'temporal' (18). In his section, 'Mimetic Functions: The Illusion of the Real' (18), Abbott proposes the idea of the diary as a

²⁶⁷ Abbott, p. 27.

document and, as such, makes it more believable than any other type of narrative: ‘This is the sort of document that people who are not professional writers actually write. As such, it is a kind of realistic absolute or terminal point’ (19). In his section ‘Thematic Functions: Isolation and Self-Reflection’, Abbott considers the solitude the writer requires in order to write. Another characteristic of the diary-novel is that the text is a mirror (reflection) for the diary-writer who will reread it: ‘We are restricted to a document that emanates from *inside* the story. We sit at and read what the diarist describes himself as sitting at, writing, and often, as we are, reading himself’ (24). A third aspect is discussed in his section ‘Temporal Functions: Immediacy, Suspense, and Timelessness’ (27). Here he considers the way the writer lives in the present and how the future forms the diary that is written, since the diary gives form to past, present and possibly future. A sense of suspense is created by the fact that both the diary-writer in a narrative and the reader are unaware of what will happen; they will discover this together. Apart from those functions, which Abbott argues can be found in other types of writing, the function which is special to diary-writing is what he terms, ‘The Special Reflexive Function’. He proposes that the plot, what happens, is closely connected to diary-writing: ‘It is a reflexive text – not simply in the sense of a self-reflecting or self-conscious text, but in the sense that the text exerts an effective influence on its writer’ (38).

From the title of the second part it is made clear that the reader is dealing with Leonardo’s notebooks: ‘Segunda parte. (De los cuadernos de Leonardo)’ (67). At the same time, Leonardo immediately acknowledges that he is in the process of writing: ‘igual que ahora sé que tengo la pluma en la mano’ (69). He starts writing the ‘story’ of his life, just like Mariana and Sofía of *Nubosidad variable*. In Chapter II of the second part, Leonardo starts the story from the beginning, from the moment he arrives back home, as, he comments, is done in ‘good’ novels: ‘Empezaré contando cómo fue la llegada. Las buenas novelas, él [su padre] lo decía siempre, suelen empezar con una llegada’ (73).

Leonardo’s writing of the notebooks normally takes place in his late father’s study. This study is not only important as the place where the diarist, in Abbott’s words, should be composing the diary. This is also a place of origin for Leonardo, the place he has to transform into his own by changing the image of his father in his last years. Opening his father’s safe, after having found the code, allows him into a world which his father, in life, could not let him explore, but for which he had offered clues. This

world contains his father's most intimate secrets, the ones which allow Leonardo to learn aspects of his own existence. Opening the safe also opens a dialogue between father and son, something that was not possible during their life together. Inside the safe there are documents which, in the novel, alternate with Leonardo's own writing and which reveal to the reader past times, before the protagonist's birth. These documents tell of the father's youth in Galicia. In addition, amongst the documents are letters written to the father, signed with the initial 'S' and thus indicating an unknown relationship. S's letters, together with those the grandmother wrote to her son, gradually fill the puzzle which constitutes the life of the protagonist until, at the end, the puzzle is complete and the reader is able to understand Leonardo's mysterious and strange character, as well as his isolation from his family.

The protagonist gives many details of what is happening in his life from the moment he arrives in his father's study and decides to start writing. He even notes the conversations he has with people, dead or alive, who cross his path. These conversations and documents from the past (letters, manuscripts and other material found in his father's safe) help Leonardo untie the knots of a past he never understood. He narrates the methodology he adopts when writing these notebooks:

A ratos atiando a los argumentos plasmados en los papeles que don Ernesto me dejó, otras veces a los que se esconden detrás del faro [donde se encuentra la caja fuerte]. Y de esta mezcla de pasado y presente surge un nuevo surco intemporal: el de mi escritura. (119)

The dialogues reproduced in Leonardo's notebooks, such as the one when his father appears in his study, help the reader to understand certain details. For example, this dialogue with his father refers to past conversations and the relationship which existed between them. His father is also presented as an ideal interlocutor, someone who can listen all night long. The differences and difficulties which they had when his father was alive are erased after his death and now Leonardo is free to talk to him as his equal: 'Y entonces nos miramos. [...] Sencillamente nos estábamos mirando por primera vez en la vida con equivalente fijeza, estableciendo una especie de complicidad' (70). Just as with his father, Leonardo converses with his mother and his grandmother. These conversations are guided by Leonardo, which helps him to develop a better relationship with the two women. He finds it easier to talk to them now, especially with his mother, as he can decide what to talk about and when to finish the conversation:

Casi siempre es después de apagar la luz y extender el cuerpo buscando un acomodo para convocar el sueño, cuando me habla mi madre de problemas domésticos. Nunca le contesto. [...] No me gusta humillar a los muertos. Y además, aunque la convenciera de algo, que lo dudo, ya no tiene remedio. (221-22)

Leonardo does not have friends to return to when he leaves prison. Those he formerly had and who involved him in the situation which took him to prison belong to a past he cannot remember. It is as if he had to forget everything that happened before going to prison in order to be able to start anew. His hallucinations and dreams at the beginning of the novel are produced by hashish. In prison, that substance helps him relax and forget his situation. Then when he leaves prison and is still in a catatonic state, he uses hashish to be able to think. Arriving at his parents' house he describes his state in the following way:

‘¿Para qué he venido’, me preguntaba. ‘¿Para qué?’ Incapaz de detener mis pasos o de retroceder, [...] luchaba entre dos fuerzas encontradas, según dejaba atrás los ruidos de la calle y reconocía contornos del jardín: una que me urgía a seguir avanzando en nombre de una inercia olvidada, otra que me avisaba del peligro y me aconsejaba escapar de nuevo a la falsa aventura, a buscar un remedio de refugio en viviendas y voces más o menos recordadas, en locales ruidosos donde corren la droga y el dinero [...]. Obedecí por fin al mandato primero, pero sin convicción, pensando: ‘¡Qué más da, también esto es un sueño!’ (74)

The lack of an available interlocutor (especially after his father's former chauffeur/secretary, Mauricio Brito, leaves the house) and the need to understand his past, which as was mentioned earlier is in a fog, makes Leonardo take up a pen and start writing his notebooks. As Martín Gaité notes many times, there is a close relationship between the lack of an interlocutor and the need to write.

His notebooks serve Leonardo to describe not only his present moments but also his dreams and hallucinations. Thanks to the importance he has always given to his notebooks he can reread them, thus allowing the reader information on his whereabouts before prison:

Me incluyen, a pesar mío, en escenas como de cine mudo ocurridas en Tánger, en Ámsterdam, en Verona, en una cárcel, en el Boulevard Saint-Germain. [...]

Me veo dentro de sueños sucesivos, gesticulando junto a seres borrosos, diciendo palabras que no oigo, fingiendo pasiones que no siento. (72)

Leonardo's notebooks have similarities with Martín Gaité's *Cuadernos de todo*. Leonardo writes, 'antes las estuve relejendo y copiando en limpio con algunas rectificaciones en el mismo cuaderno que estoy usando ahora, amarillo con argollas, tamaño folio' (78), which is, of course, an illogical comment for somebody who is writing in the notebook he is describing. Similarly, though, the author notes in her *Cuadernos de todo*:

Hoy, en la tarde del 27 de octubre de 1974, voy a tratar de pasar a limpio, en este cuaderno tan agradable que me regaló Torán, algunas de las notas que salgan a relucir en mis cuadernos viejos y que tengan que ver con el asunto de la narración.

Procuraré no limitarme a copiarlas sino ampliarlas a la luz de ese nuevo propósito, de ese hilo que se va poco a poco configurando, y que espero que las ordenará de alguna manera que todavía no sospecho.

Esto se llama coger el toro por los cuernos: revisar cuadernos viejos, llevo mucho tiempo sabiendo que es esto lo primero que tengo que hacer, volver al origen, partir de mis primeros cuadernos de todo, pero no me atrevía. Es como bajar a la bodega a explorar los cimientos se la casa y es duro de pelar. (301)

In fact, this note was written by the author at a time when she was working on *La Reina de las Nieves*, although then the novel still did not have its title. But with these words it is possible to see the way the author writes in her notebooks influences her protagonist. Another characteristic which both writer and protagonist share is the writing of their dreams where they both 'meet' their dead parents and talk to them. As was seen in Chapter 3, Martín Gaité started her own *pesquisa* in *Cuenta pendiente*, a project where, amongst other things, she wrote her dreams relating to her parents after their death. The worlds of the writer and her fictional character are constantly interlaced. As Abbott observes:

Diary fiction not only mirrors the author's own situation (writing alone in a room), but, more important, its unique conditions can make it a kind of laboratory in which the real author examines the behaviour of his or her medium in the course of day-to-day living. (50)

Reading old notebooks, however chaotic they may be, also helps Leonardo, in the same way that they helped the author, to understand the need to start again.

Leonardo writes:

Hoy he revisado cuadernos de los últimos años, y me ha parecido pasar la mano por las cicatrices de mi conflicto frente a la escritura. En todos ellos se alternan los más inconsistentes desvaríos y las notas más caóticas con algún espacio en blanco, a partir del cual la caligrafía se recompone y, durante unas líneas, que progresivamente se van desintegrando, se mantiene un propósito de orden: la promesa de un auténtico comienzo. (71)

But that beginning will not happen until he starts in the place where he lived and where his parents' spirits are still alive. Leonardo finds it difficult to confront the person he has become in the last years, years when he decided to escape from his family, from a mother he never loved, from his wealth, and from a life he saw as inauthentic.

After his grandmother's death (the only member of the family whom he feels gave him love), Leonardo does not seem to have anything in common with his parents and decides to escape. But after their death he is able to return home and start again: '¡Sí, he vuelto! [...] Ahora voy a empezar. [...] he cerrado todos mis cuadernos y los he guardado en el macuto. [...] Tengo que emprender la pesquisa solo' (73). As has been seen, solitude and isolation are fundamental to reflect and write up those reflections. Consequently, the writing of the diary and the writing of a novel start merging in Leonardo's head. Is he writing for his readers or for himself? At the same time his own writing is muddled up with his father's frustrated desire to be a novelist: 'de joven había querido ser escritor' (114).²⁶⁸ Ultimately, he follows his father's rules of writing.

Leonardo relates where and how he writes, what made him start writing at such and such a moment, as well as his thoughts or the circumstances which took him to write his thoughts:

Hice un alto en la labor para sacar de mi macuto, que había dejado contra la pared, una libreta con tapas de hule que estrené en la enfermería de la cárcel y apuntar este paralelo entre la reconstrucción de los sueños y la de la cama, tema

²⁶⁸ Many of Martín Gaité's characters are frustrated writers who keep folders with beginnings for novels which, for one reason or another, never reach an end, similar to her daughter, who never finished anything as the author stated in *Cuaderno 35*. There are, for example, folders like the one C. keeps in *El cuarto de atrás*, full of newspaper and magazine cuttings and ideas for books and articles. Eugenio also has another similarity with the author, his love for the eighteenth century. This is developed by Águeda in *Lo raro es vivir*.

bien sugerente. Las sugerencias luego se fueron ampliando y me senté en el suelo para escribir más cómodo. Llené varias páginas. (77)

The above detailed account makes his narration a statement to be read by others and one which is written with an imaginary interlocutor in mind.

Leonardo's diary writing also reveals a double perspective. He is both the narrator and protagonist of his story; he is living it and writing it: 'Mi vida era aquella marea de palabras, pero al mismo tiempo la contemplaba desde lo alto, impávido, con ojos de gaviota' (71). As Abbott observes:

In diary fiction of any psychological pretension, the diarist is usually concerned, with greater or less intensity, to see himself through the agency of his diary. It can be a task roughly equivalent to levitation, involving as it does the difficulty of the subject being its own object. (25)

In his diaries, Leonardo emerges as different people: the one who wrote in his notebooks (and the 'character' he was writing about), different from the 'I' in the present moment. This 'I' also divides itself into the narrator and the protagonist, as well as the reader of the diaries: 'Pero mis cuadernos, además, me atrapan con tentáculos mucho más peligrosos, al sugerirme la identificación con las andanzas y mudanzas de la persona que los escribía' (72). This split even leads him to talk to himself: 'Pero no escribas más, mírame y dime. ¿Has vuelto de verdad?, ¿te has atrevido?, ¿no será, como siempre, retazos de tu sueño?' (72). In the same way that in *Nubosidad variable* Mariana separates into the woman and the psychiatrist, Dr León, Leonardo also compares himself with Dr Jekyll when he sees himself in the mirror. Gérard Genette explains the different layers that form this type of narrative:

The journal and the epistolary confidence constantly combine what in broadcasting language is called the live and the prerecorded account, the quasi-interior monologue and the account after the event. Here, the narrator is at one and the same still the hero and already someone else. The events of the day are already in the past, and the 'point of view' may have been modified since then; the feelings of the evening or the next day are fully of the present, and here focalization through the narrator is at the same time focalization through the hero.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹ *Narrative Discourse*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 218.

Martín Gaité writes in her notebooks: ‘No hay duda de que lo que no voy escribiendo, por escribir se queda’ (*Cuadernos de todo*, 140), and Leonardo is afraid of not noting everything that happens to him. When he leaves the house he despairs for not having a piece of paper on which he can write as soon as possible what has just happened to him and the thoughts which develop after these experiences:

‘Necesito otro lector agregado, eso es lo que pasa, ni más ni menos, una persona que me leyera’, pensé en un rapto de iluminación repentina. Y me pareció tan importante el hallazgo que lo apunté en una servilleta de papel, medio a escondidas. (179)

Indeed, writing his diary becomes the most important thing for him: ‘Soñaba con un cuaderno sin estrenar a la luz tamizada de la lámpara verde’ (201). In fact, there are moments of despair when he finds himself without a notebook. So, when he has to leave his father’s study to visit the family accountant to clear up some points about his situation, this makes him lose his way. His steps take him to the bars where he used to go with his old friends,²⁷⁰ although, just like Sofía when she wakes up in ‘el refugio’, Leonardo cannot remember how he got there. He realises his personality has changed but he is still unable to go against his impulse:

Y es que los deseos de huir chocaban con algo que me resistía a registrar por las buenas como ganas de acostarme con la primera mujer que se me había puesto a tiro. [...] Por otra parte, la ginebra y el hash incrementaban mi fatiga, tanto para hacer el esfuerzo de levantarme como para interpretar síntomas de motivación compleja. (180)

For Leonardo to live the same way he used to is now a waste of time. The meeting in the bar with old friends makes him reflect on his tendency to run away: in this case what he wants to run away from are drugs and also the inertia which does not allow him to think. He needs to continue writing down every question which comes into his head and, to this end, he borrows pen and paper from the girl in the cloakroom. Thanks to his inertia, though, the other girl he meets in the bar drives him to her home, where he meets another character of the novel and this gives him the last clues he needs to get to Casilda Iriarte. Mónica, the room-mate of the girl from the bar, puts Leonardo in contact with some ‘old friends’, literary works which will bring him memories of his early youth and of his former interests: Erich Fromm’s *El miedo a la libertad* (208);

²⁷⁰ This episode, narrated over two chapters, XI and XII, shows a group of young people in a bar in Madrid with drugs, alcohol, music and free love as the influences to which they are exposed.

Mircea Eliade's *Lo sagrado y lo profano* (210); Adelbert von Chamisso's *El hombre que perdió su sombra* (217) and Casilda Iriarte's *Ensayos sobre el vértigo* (219). This last work, mentioned in the context of real literary works, becomes part of the reader's reality. The image on the cover of Casilda's book, 'Caminante sobre un mar de niebla' by the German Romantic painter, Caspar David Friedrich, an artist whom Leonardo mentions in other moments of the novel, gives Casilda's book yet another level of artistic reality.

As was seen in Chapter 4, Martín Gaité's readings become part of her protagonists' own readings. For instance, there is a comment on Erich Fromm's *Psicoanálisis de la sociedad contemporánea* in *Cuaderno 2* of *Cuadernos de todo* (79-82) where the author writes about solitude and intimacy. Furthermore, Martín Gaité published an article in which she mentions Mircea Eliade's book in 1990. Here the author writes about the need for solitude of young people, and she writes: 'En las aficiones de la juventud actual se ha instalado el terror al aburrimiento y la necesidad de conjurarlo como sea, de no dejar espacio sin imágenes ni ruidos por donde pueda colarse el aprendizaje de la soledad' (*Tirando del hilo*, 438). This idea links with the novel's themes of solitude and Leonardo (and Mónica) as different to others.

The encounter with Mónica suggests another recurrent theme in Martín Gaité's work, destiny. Destiny has a fundamental function in the encounter, in the same way as happens in *Nubosidad variable* with Sofía and Mariana. The meeting between Leonardo and Mónica not only happens in a physical way: it also works through literature, opening the possibility of dialogue between man and woman, crossing gender barriers and revealing common intellectual interests. This situation recalls the conversation between aunt and nephew in *Retahílas* or between C. and the man in black in *El cuarto de atrás*. Furthermore, the conversation between Mónica and Leonardo and the books they discuss also give indications of their characters. Mónica identifies her situation with Chamisso's protagonist, the man who lost his shadow (her shadow being her mother), linking as well the lack of shadow (of the mother) with the feeling of vertigo, the theme of Casilda Iriarte's book. And this book connects in the novel with the fear of freedom, or with the vertigo felt in moments of freedom. The symbiosis between reality and fiction, or the 'amalgama vida-literatura' (126), as much in Leonardo as in Mónica,

serves as a reminder of the difficulty Sofía in *Nubosidad variable* has in separating life from her readings.²⁷¹

Meeting Mónica and the consequent reading of Casilda's book, gives Leonardo courage to make his final decision. At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist is presented as not responsible for some of his actions. Indeed, it is not until the development he goes through as he writes his diaries that he is able to make the decision to meet Casilda, with all its consequences. From that moment onwards the diary disappears from the novel, having lost its main function, to serve as a guide for the future.²⁷² Leonardo's decision to visit Casilda Iriarte changes his life forever.

The Letters: Searching for the Mother

The letters can be seen as 'secondary characters' of the narrative as their reading helps Leonardo (and the reader) to understand the past, and to hear the voices of those who wrote them. The first letter in the novel is the one written by Leo's father, Eugenio, and sent to Casilda. This letter is the last Eugenio wrote before his death. As Leonardo discovers, Casilda and Eugenio maintained an epistolary relationship for most of their lives: 'mi padre, aunque posiblemente ya hubiera conocido a Gertrud Scribner, seguía manteniendo relaciones epistolares con la nieta del farero' (238).

The letters Leonardo finds in the safe, the fragments of which are merged in his narrative, come from the two women, the initials of whose first names, together with that of Leonardo, make the code which opens the safe. These are the initials of what his father termed 'personas queridas' (116). This is the first mystery Leonardo has to solve: Leonardo finds the answer to the first clue, a flower, which read the other way is the name of a river, 'Lis', 'Sil'. Then, after opening the safe, Leonardo writes about the time he found out about the safe's existence, hidden behind the picture of the lighthouse

²⁷¹ There are other characteristics which link Sofía and Leonardo, such as their love for George Moustaki's music (*La Reina*, p. 178) and (*Nubosidad*, p. 40); the need to write what is happening in order to be able to assimilate what is going on in their lives 'demasiados datos a la vez', p. 126; or the inertia which dictated their lives until the moment they started writing themselves.

²⁷² Leonardo takes all his notebooks with him to Galicia. Thinking about the possibility of losing them he reflects: 'comprendía que perderla [la maleta en donde se encuentran los cuadernos] habría significado perder el rastro de los últimos meses y de todo el tiempo que dormita en el lago helado de la memoria', p. 322, which resembles the moment when, arriving at Kennedy Airport, the author feared she was going to lose the suitcases with all her notebooks. See *Cuaderno 35*, pp. 613-16.

and where his father hid all his secrets.²⁷³ Although he knows the subjects of two of the initials, I for Inés, his grandmother, and L for Leonardo (his mother's initial G, is, of course, not one of them), S is a mystery to him. Thus, he will need to open the safe to find out the identity of the person behind that initial. This initial comes to reveal three women; Sila, Silveria and Casilda. These, then, represent other women: his father's girlfriend; the young girl who travels to England to meet her father and who writes the story and becomes the protagonist of the novel *El periplo*; the woman who bought La Quinta Blanca, and the author of the book on vertigo that Leonardo found in Mónica's house.

Each one of these women develops through the letters, books and other documents that Leonardo reads, until the moment the protagonist discovers that they are all one:

Después de un repaso febril a los papeles de Sila, donde ya tanto sale a relucir el vértigo, padecí un espejismo. Las vi fundirse a la una con la otra dentro de un hexágono que contiene todo el zumo rosado y gris de los atardeceres precipitados desde que el mundo sobre la isla de las gaviotas, la C abrazándose a la S, los ojos de la niña que mira al mar y sueña con viajes imposibles desembocando en los de la mujer que retorna de esos viajes, los mismos ojos que se sustituyen y confunden, la misma cosecha de mirada, la misma mujer, el mismo faro. (236)

In the third part of *La Reina*, the character of Casilda takes protagonism. As a writer herself, the process of writing and the need to write is brought into play. Similar to the protagonist in *Nubosidad variable*, Casilda uses writing as a refuge and similarly to the author, her need to write and the pleasure she gets out of it can be clearly seen in her face: 'y cuando te metes en tu cuarto y empieza a sonar el tecleo de la máquina, [...] te sienta tan bien. Se te nota en la cara' (292-93).²⁷⁴ In this third part Casilda talks about old letters and documents and their use when writing a story. She also confesses to Mauricio that since she talked to Leonardo she has him as his interlocutor: 'escribiendo para él, soñando con él' (307). Sila's old letters also seem to be addressing Leonardo, who responds as if they were a real person talking to him: 'Tienes razón – le digo –,

²⁷³ This memory makes Leo think about another fairytale, Perrault's 'El gato con botas'. The author uses this fairytale as an example, together with Pulgarcito, of characters in control of 'su propio destino'. See *El cuento de nunca acabar*, p. 125.

²⁷⁴ In 'Bosquejo autobiográfico', the author relates the way her mother could see in her face the moment when she had a new project in mind. See *Agua pasada*, p. 31.

para eso está el arte' (123). He then begins to find the person who writes the letters closer to himself, feeling, once he starts reading Casilda's *Ensayos sobre el vértigo*, that he is the one who is writing it: 'lo escribo al leerlo' (224).

The letters written to different parts of the world not only make the person who wrote them present, they also show the trajectory of the addressee. Through the addresses written on the envelopes, 'Mi padre está en Santiago estudiando Derecho, mi padre está en Madrid, mi padre está en América del Norte, estado de Illinois, lo veo por los sobres, que algunos se conservan' (122), and through the observations that the letter writers make of what he had written to them, more of the personality of Leo's father emerges:

<<... Después de besarnos, sé que estamos llenos de deseos que nos separan. [...] Dices: 'te estás evaporando', y suena a reproche. [...] Por ejemplo, cuando no te hago caso y me quedo mirando el mar. De nada te sirve entonces preguntarme rabioso '¿qué piensas?', forzándome a que atienda y quite los ojos del mar. No me zarandees, déjame, no sé explicar lo que pienso.>> (124)

The fragments of the letters written by the grandmother also reveal some of Eugenio's feelings, such as the lack of understanding he felt from his mother: '<<Te crees que no sé lo que te pasa>>, le dice en una carta, <<pero cuanto más me hablas de dinero, de negocios y de la gente tan importante que estás conociendo, más atisbo lo que escondes a tu madre>>'' (129).

The letters Eugenio wrote to his son, although infrequent in the narrative, give an idea of their relationship. Leonardo maintains a 'relación epistolar' (145) with his father over a long period after he left home. But Leonardo started abandoning the writing of letters to his father, gradually loathing them when his mother's signature started appearing on these letters, and thereby interfering in a genuine spontaneous relationship between father and son:

En la esquina superior del texto se había colado ahora una apostilla oblicua y siempre idéntica: <<Besos, mamá>>, decía. [...] La incursión de su firma no sólo mediatizaba y teñía de convencionalismo las palabras de mi padre, sino que entorpecía, por añadidura, la espontaneidad de mi respuesta. (145)

These letters are documents from the father's past, but by copying parts of them in his notebooks, the protagonist is giving them a new temporality, forming part of the text which in the present helps form his future. The protagonist/diary-writer, becomes

the editor of the letters which he transcribes.²⁷⁵ Indeed, the paragraphs that Leonardo transcribes in his diary give a much more complete view of the relationship between S and Eugenio. One of the facts that the son comes to understand better is the difficult relationship he had with his mother, and in consequence, with his father. In effect, the difficulties in their relationship hindered the development of the child Leonardo. As Donald W. Winnicott observes:

Only if there is a good-enough mother does the infant start on a process of development that is personal and real. If the mothering is not good enough then the infant becomes a collection of reactions to impingement, and the true self of the infant fails to form or becomes hidden behind a false self.²⁷⁶

The idea of the ‘good-enough mother’ developed by Winnicott, discusses the needs the baby has from the moment it is born and how the mother is the facilitator of those needs: ‘The good-enough mother [...] starts off with an almost complete adaptation to her infant’s needs, and as time proceeds she adapts less and less completely.’²⁷⁷ The mother must be the one who facilitates the child’s adaptation to the environment through the functions which prepare him for his independence: ‘holding’, ‘handling’ and ‘Object-presenting’.²⁷⁸ For normal development to take place, the child needs a ‘facilitating environment’: ‘The facilitating environment is first absolute and then relative important, and the course of development can be described in terms of absolute dependence, relative dependence, and towards independence.’²⁷⁹ In Leonardo’s case, the narrative reveals the rejection his mother felt for him, a mother who denies him an adequate environment in which to develop. The father, who could have given the boy the emotional support to mature, was too weak to confront even his own mother. Eugenio found that the only way out was separation from a strong mother (and also from the woman he loved). In the United States he finds another woman who, although physically weak, knows how to keep Leonardo’s father close to her. Eugenio’s escape,

²⁷⁵ A similar example of this type of writing is found in Carme Riera’s novel, *La mitad del alma* (2004), where the writer/protagonist/narrator writes the novel with the hope of finding the mystery man who gave her a number of letters written by her mother to a lover the protagonist knew nothing about. The selection of the passages from the mother’s letters that the narrator/protagonist chooses is made, in her words, with regard to the need to find the mystery man.

²⁷⁶ *The Family and Individual Development* (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1989), p. 17.

²⁷⁷ ‘Transitional Objects’, p. 94.

²⁷⁸ Winnicott, *The Family*, p. 18.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p. 19.

according to Fromm's theories, is externalized in the masochistic relationship he maintains with his wife, Gertru.²⁸⁰

Casilda, Leonardo's blood mother, is the only character in the novel who is not afraid of freedom. When she leaves her Galician village she is not escaping but confronting her past, travelling to meet her father. Although in love with Eugenio, Casilda knows that the difference in social class will never let them continue with their relationship. She also needs a freedom he would never have been able to give her. Eugenio also needed to leave the country to find success, to show the world (and his mother) how much he was worth. As Fromm notes: 'The self-confidence, the "feeling of self", is merely an indication of what others think of the person. It is not *he* who is convinced of his value regardless of popularity and his success on the market' (103). Of course, Casilda never really abandoned Eugenio, and even showed her love after his marriage by giving him the son his wife could not.²⁸¹

As well as through these letters, Casilda, Sila, becomes part of Leonardo's world thanks to his reading of her book, *Ensayos sobre el vértigo*. This book will link with another manuscript he found in the safe, the first novel written by Casilda, *El periplo*. In this she recounts her life, although in a fictional way, and which is in Leonardo's opinion rather extravagant. Some of this material that Leonardo copies is already known to the reader from the story Antonio Moura tells Casilda, the mysterious lady from *La Quinta Blanca*, in the first part of the novel. Although Leonardo thinks that the story from *El periplo* is pure fantasy, the reader knows that there are in it many aspects of 'reality', despite their being dressed up as fiction.

Letters other than the ones found in Eugenio's study that are important in the novel are the ones written to be read only after a death. For example, the grandmother's letter that Gertru gave her son, does not give Leo the confession he was expecting. His grandmother asks him to keep *La Quinta Blanca*, which she gave him as an inheritance, all his life. However Leonardo, rebelling against the person who loved him most,

²⁸⁰ Erich Fromm explains: 'The individual finds himself "free" in the negative sense, that is, alone with his self and confronting an alienated, hostile world. In this situation [...] [t]he frightened individual seeks for somebody or something to tie his self to; he cannot bear to be his own individual self any longer, and he tries frantically to get rid of it and to feel security again by the elimination of his burden: the self', *The Fear of Freedom* (London: Routledge, 1961), p. 130.

²⁸¹ As a contrast to Casilda's generation, the freedom women in Leonardo's generation have is indicated. Single women's pregnancies are not kept a secret anymore and women are able to take the initiative inviting a man home or sleeping with him. The unhappiness which those relationships can bring is also presented, relationships where drugs and alcohol have a central role and where feelings, even though present, are frequently repressed or exaggerated due to the influence of drugs.

decides to get rid of the property as soon as possible and escape. On the other hand, the letter given by the priest to Casilda after Moura's death, brings great, although sad, memories from the past, showing how Moura had recognised her upon her return to the village as the granddaughter of the lighthouse keeper, even though he never told her.

Casilda's character is presented mainly through her letters, and is developed in the first part of the novel by the narrator and in the third part through her own confession. Chapter III of the third part is titled 'Confidencias' and shows two characters, a man and a woman, who during one night converse about their past, serving as another reminder of the two Martín Gaité's novels where that type of interlocution is central. In these confessions, or *confidencias*, Casilda talks about her life. Her interlocutor, Mauricio, thinks that she should write her memoirs, 'la novela de su vida' (296), instead of telling it to him. Eugenio had also asked her to write and publish her autobiography, for he needs her memoirs to understand what happened to his life: 'Lo que me estaba encargando era que hablara por escrito de nuestros amores' (299).

For Casilda it is difficult to talk about her past since the most difficult chapter of her life was her son Leonardo's birth, the son she gave to Eugenio and his wife to be raised as their own: '¿Cuándo mete tijera la censura? ¿Cuándo nos enteramos de que tu bella esposa es estéril o un poquito más tarde?' (299). Casilda also has documents, given with Moura's package, which help her remember her story: letters, photographs, and the diary she wrote in her youth, and in which she described the first time she talked to Eugenio. The photograph of Casilda that Leonardo found in the safe links with a copy of the photo Casilda finds amongst the other documents, connecting the two protagonists once again. As occurs in *Nubosidad variable*, Leonardo catches the night train to meet Casilda, taking with him his notebooks. The union of the two stories thus will come to constitute the novel.

The Fairy Tale: A Psychoanalytic Perspective

In the 1980s Martín Gaité published two children books, *El castillo de las tres murallas* and *El pastel del diablo*, and worked on another, *Caperucita en Manhattan*, which was published in 1990. These stories, together with the translations she did of other fairy tales and children stories, amongst them *Cuentos de hadas* by Charles Perrault (1980), *Cuentos de hadas victorianos* (1993) or *La princesa y los trastos* (1995), influenced *La*

Reina de las Nieves which she was preparing during those years. This influence is clear in the use of Andersen's story *The Snow Queen* as intertext.²⁸² In her novel parts of Andersen's story are interpolated and also reworked. Thus, in *La Reina de las Nieves* the main character is reflected in certain the characters of Andersen's story.²⁸³ Leonardo has to put together, like Kay, the protagonist of Andersen's story, the pieces of mirror which compose his life, achieving this through the writing of his notebooks.²⁸⁴ Also, some of Kay's characteristics, especially the coldness he feels in the presence of the Snow Queen are to be experienced by Leonardo. In Martín Gaité's novel Leonardo's mother, a character mainly seen through his notebooks, is also presented as a woman with a heart of ice. In addition, Leonardo is seen writing his notebooks to save his future, in the same way that Kay assembles the pieces of glass in order to escape the Snow Queen's castle. Leo's resolution to continue with his search is also a reminder of Gerda's determination to find Kay. On one occasion he thinks of Gerda and follows her example after deciding to go and meet Casilda: 'Se acordó de Gerda y fue como quitarse una venda de los ojos. ¿Había tenido ella en cuenta los cambios de temperatura para seguir adelante en el complicado periplo que había de llevarla [...] a devolverle la memoria a Kay? (310).

Although many critics link the character of Gerda to Casilda, Casilda does not take the necessary steps to rescue Leonardo/Kay from his 'prison'. The only moment when the protagonists are compared is in the encounter at the end of the novel: 'Por fin has venido Gerda, cuánto has tardado en venir' (331), Leonardo says to Casilda, although Leonardo was the one who went to find her. During the second part of the novel Leonardo never stops his search to understand his past and save himself, in the same way that the female protagonist in Andersen's story never gives up in her search for Kay. Rolón Collazo comments on the fact that Leonardo takes control, but using

²⁸² As this novel has such a close relation to Andersen's story it has often been studied as part of the author's children stories. Carbayo Abengózar includes it under the subtitle 'Los cuentos de hadas' in *Buscando un lugar entre mujeres*, p. 130, and Lissette Rolón Collazo under 'Representación y re-escritura del cuento de hadas', in *Figuraciones: Mujeres en Carmen Martín Gaité, revistas femeninas y ¡Hola!* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2002), p. 154.

²⁸³ In her novel *Primera memoria* (1960) Ana María Matute also uses Andersen's story to indicate aspects of her protagonist's feelings. Interestingly the figure of Kay also appears in Matute's latest novel *Paraíso inhabitado* (2008).

²⁸⁴ The pieces of mirror are a further reminder of Natalia Ginzburg's words that serve as an epigraph to *Nubosidad variable*.

Casilda's writing as 'enigma que debe desentrañar'.²⁸⁵ Finally, in Martín Gaité's words, 'Gerda lo llora sin que él se sepa llorado' (*Cuadernos de todo*, 288).

The novel contains another two works as intertext, works which even though they are not as obvious as Andersen's story, serve to illustrate some of the characteristics of the main characters. Meursault, the protagonist in Albert Camus's *L'Étranger* is mentioned by Leonardo as the character his father used to compare him to:

El papel del extranjero me vino adjudicado el día en que mi padre me comparó con el protagonista de la novela de Camus, cuando se la di a leer. Yo, por mi cuenta, ya me había identificado con ese personaje de ficción. Pero el espaldarazo definitivo me lo dio él cuando me dijo, al devolverme el libro, que no le extrañaba que me hubiera gustado tanto porque el protagonista era igual que yo. (138-39)

This link between Camus's character and Leonardo helps to reinforce the connection with Andersen's protagonist, as Meursault, like Kay and Leonardo, cannot cry:

In our society any man who doesn't cry at his mother's funeral is liable to be condemned because he doesn't play the game. In this sense, he is an outsider to the society in which he lives, wandering on the fringe, on the outskirts of life, solitary and sensual.²⁸⁶

These words of Camus, found in his epilogue to *L'Étranger*, are a reminder of Leonardo's impassivity at certain moments which make him seem detached and different. His attitude when in prison is reminiscent of Camus's protagonist when he finds himself incarcerated. Furthermore, Leonardo does not seem to feel any emotion when notified he is going to be a father, while the news of his parents' death, even though it makes him react and leave the car when he finds out, does not seem to alter his catatonic state. Finally, Leonardo associates the reading of Camus's novel with the period of his grandmother's death and when he decided to separate from his parents: 'Creo que el libro de Camus lo leí el mismo otoño en que murió la abuela de repente y que más o menos por ese tiempo di por cancelada la obligación de bajar a sentarme con ellos a la mesa de caoba del comedor' (147).

The second work which encapsulates some of the characteristics of the other main character of Martín Gaité's *La Reina de las Nieves* is Henrik Ibsen's *The Lady*

²⁸⁵ *Figuraciones*, pp. 163-64.

²⁸⁶ Albert Camus, *The Outsider*, trans. by Joseph Laredo (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 118.

from the Sea. In this case, Casilda is compared to Ibsen's Elida. The first person to do this is Antonio Moura, the former schoolteacher and an old friend of her grandfather. Eugenio also compares them in a letter, and subsequently, Leonardo also links both characters. Ibsen's protagonist is easily compared to Casilda: they are both daughters (or granddaughters) of a lighthouse keeper, and both love the sea and feel as free as the sea:

Haven't you noticed that the people who live out there by the open sea are a different race? It's almost as though they lived the same life as the sea does. Their way of thinking, feeling – they're like the tide, they ebb and flow. And they can never uproot themselves and settle anywhere else.²⁸⁷

These words spoken by Elida's husband about his wife's character anticipate the words written by Casilda in a letter to Eugenio:

¿Y qué si soy del mar, si él me trae y me lleva y me conoce y no le tengo miedo? No te fíes de mí, ya te lo aviso, Eugenio, ni me echas la culpa de mis mareas altas ni de mis remolinos o resacas. No tiene explicación (ni se la busques) el oleaje libre de la vida, qué le vamos a hacer, eso no se controla. Si dices tú que la pasión te ha hecho perder la libertad, es porque no conoces la pasión por la libertad misma. (122)

The difficulty Elida has in committing herself to her husband, is also, up to a point, reflected in Casilda's reticence to be with Eugenio. Both protagonists need freedom to be able to choose their own course of action.²⁸⁸

Looking more closely at the relationship between Andersen's fairy tale and the novel, what emerges is the importance of the figure of the grandmother in Leonardo's life. This is not only because she was the one who looked after him when he was a child because of the difficulties his mother found in caring for him, but also on account of the great influence on his life the fairytales she told him, especially Andersen's *The Snow Queen*, had and still have.²⁸⁹ Throughout her career, Martín Gaité indicated her belief in the importance of the fairytale in a child's development. Its importance for the child lies

²⁸⁷ Henrik Ibsen, *The Lady from the Sea*, trans. by Michael Meyer (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1960), p. 75.

²⁸⁸ Although as María Elena Soliño affirms: 'In many respects, Ibsen's Elida is a much weaker character than Sila', in *Women and Children First: Spanish Women Writers and the Fairy Tale Tradition* (Potomac, MD: Scripta Humanistica, 2002), p. 152.

²⁸⁹ In Martín Gaité's work, grandmothers (grandparents), as in *Caperucita en Manhattan*, or her posthumous novel *Los parentescos*, have a fundamental role in the bringing up of the child when their relationship with the parents (especially with the mother) is not satisfactory. In Andersen's story the figure of the grandmother is, of course, also important as the storyteller.

not only in the fable as such but also in the narrator of the story and the mode of narration:

A través de los cuentos que le dedican a él, el niño recibe dos dones de diferente índole: uno, relacionado con el asunto del cuento mismo; otro, con la actitud y la identidad de la persona que se lo cuenta. [...] porque significa una prueba de atención y de amor por parte del narrador físicamente presente, cuya voz oye y cuyos ojos le miran. (*El cuento*, 85).

Indeed, in *La Reina de las Nieves*, Leonardo asks his grandmother to tell him Andersen's story again and again:

Por fin llegaba el episodio más triste del cuento [...]. Este prelude ya inexorable de la desgracia, se abría siempre con las mismas palabras invariables [...]. Había otra particularidad que nunca variaba [...]. Y es que la abuela las leía. O por lo menos fingía leerlas, porque se las debía de saber de memoria, lo mismo que yo. (104-05)

Andersen's fairytale is also central to the novel and prominent in Leonardo's diaries. The first time the story is mentioned is in prison, in Chapter II of the first part, and in relation to dreams and the unreality of living in prison. With Chapter IV of the second part, the story starts being intercalated in Leo's narrative. The opening four lines of the fairytale beginning with, *Principiaba el estío*' (97), introduce the chapter titled 'El rapto de Kay'. This chapter contains one of the most dramatic references to the tale, the moment when Kay is taken and kissed by the Snow Queen. The last chapter of the novel, Chapter IV of the third part, 'El cristalito de hielo', also reworks and refers to the end of Andersen's story.

Throughout Martín Gaité's novel Leonardo sees himself constantly reflected in the fairytale's protagonists: 'Yo había dibujado muchas veces en mis cuadernos aquellos dos protagonistas infantiles de Andersen, con los cuales compartía, desde mi solitaria condición de niño rico y enfermizo, la alegría por la llegada del verano' (97). This identification helps him to escape his own self, to see himself from the outside, writing about himself as if he were a different person. Sometimes the tale seems as real as the circumstances he is going through. Leonardo tries to reconstruct his past through the notebooks, using as a parallel Kay's misfortunes and comparing them to his own. While in Andersen's story Kay has to put together the puzzle composed by the pieces of the broken mirror to be able to escape the Queen's castle, Leonardo has to assemble the puzzle which is his life, putting together every piece of paper he finds in his search.

Thus he links the passage about Kay and Gerda's last journey in the sledge with the journey to the cemetery after her grandmother's death, and the tears for her death, with the last time he was able to cry.²⁹⁰ He relates the answer his grandmother gave him to his question concerning when he would get the splinter of ice in his eye, 'Tardará, tardará, ya me habré muerto yo' (103) with the moment when he reads the letter his grandmother had written to him to be read after her death: 'mi madre se fue por fin del cuarto, tras darme un beso en la mejilla, apenas rasgado el sobre y recorridas las primeras líneas del texto, sospeché que el cristalino de hielo se me estaba metiendo por un ojo' (158). At the same time he associates his mother with the Snow Queen:

La mensajera de aquella carta, a quién siempre besé y llamé madre con cierta aprensión, al sacarla de entre los pliegues de su manto blanco y tendérmela, me estaba dando también la clave de su propia identidad. [...] Tu carta póstuma me la trajo en persona la Reina de las Nieves. (160)

In his notebooks, Leonardo had already referred to his mother as the Snow Queen when he narrated the dream of the first night spent in his parents' house. This dream recalls Sofía's in *Nubosidad*, the night she goes back to her mother's house. Leonardo starts his dream: 'Me quedé dormido y me transformé en mi madre' (84). This is a dream which he had experienced many times before, in fact since childhood. In the dream he is Kay and the statue in La Quinta Blanca's garden is the Snow Queen, who transforms herself into his mother: 'También era, al mismo tiempo, el pequeño Kay siguiendo a la Reina de las Nieves y sabía [...] que, para salvarme del peligro, tenía que recordar el cuento y contárselo a alguien' (85). And that is what Leonardo is doing in his notebooks, remembering, telling and retelling to himself and the reader his story and Andersen's fairytale.

Bruno Bettelheim's theories suggest the need a child has for fairytales to be able to make sense of their own reality: 'Los cuentos de hadas suelen plantear, de un modo breve y conciso, un problema existencial. Esto permite al niño atacar los problemas en su forma esencial, cuando una trama compleja le haga confundir las cosas. El cuento de hadas simplifica cualquier situación.'²⁹¹ As Leonardo writes his narrative, he evokes the image of himself as a child, listening to his grandmother telling the story of *The Snow*

²⁹⁰ After the funeral Leonardo remembers having been ill with hepatitis for months when the only thing he could do was to note his delirious dreams. This episode is a reminder of the author's illnesses in 1949, when she was in bed for forty-eight days and which led to the writing of one of her first works *El libro de la fiebre*. This work, in which she narrates the dreams and hallucinations she experienced during the illness, was published in 2007.

²⁹¹ *Psicoanálisis de los cuentos de hadas* (Barcelona: Editorial Crítica, 1977), p. 16.

Queen, and this makes him think about his own origins: ‘Yo tampoco sabía por dónde había llegado hasta el jardín de las estatuas’ (109). Leonardo uses the tale from his childhood, through the meaning that story had for him, to reach a conclusion about his feelings and the circumstances which have taken him to the present moment. Telling the tale makes him understand his fears. As Bettelheim comments: ‘Al hacer referencia a los problemas humanos universales, especialmente aquellos que preocupan a la mente del niño, estas historias hablan a su pequeño yo en formación y estimulan su desarrollo’ (13). The child Leonardo, not having fully understood or accepted the fairytale, needs to go back to it to decipher it, and it is then that he starts linking his own life to the character from *The Snow Queen*, his mother, and the distance between them. From that moment on he is able to liberate himself from his obsession and grow up.

The end of the Martín Gaité’s novel links the end of the Andersen fairytale with the end of a period of Leo’s life and, the beginning of a new phase with his real mother, Casilda:

Casilda se incorporó, adelantó el cuerpo y empezó a besarle despacio en la frente, en las mejillas, en los párpados. Luego, cuando vio que llegaba el momento, juntó las manos y las colocó bajo la barbilla de Leonardo, a modo de cuenco, para recoger aquel llanto que, desbordando los ojos incapaces de contenerlo, ya le resbalaba manso por la cara.

Notó que, dentro de la primera lágrima, relucía una especie de aguja de vidrio que vino a pincharse, al caer, en la palma de su mano izquierda. La cogió con dos dedos de la otra y la miró al trasluz. Era el cristalito de hielo. (331)

Conclusion

At the beginning of the novel Leonardo was in a cataleptic state, living his reality as if he were part of a fairytale. Andersen’s story obsessed him in such a way that he felt completely identified with its protagonist. His stay in prison made him bury into his unconsciousness the life he lived previously and the memories from that time would have to be recovered.²⁹² From his prison cell Leonardo was able to reach the Snow

²⁹² Bettelheim comments: ‘Si se reprime el inconsciente y se niega la entrada de su contenido al nivel de consciencia, la mente consciente de la persona queda parcialmente oprimida por los derivados de estos

Queen's castle, induced by hashish. The narrative reveals how the protagonist needs to escape from that condition through connecting with the fairytale in order to be able to grow up and also to belong. As Bettelheim explains:

El psicoanálisis se creó para que el hombre fuera capaz de aceptar la naturaleza problemática de la vida sin ser vencido por ella o sin ceder a la evasión. [...] Este es precisamente el mensaje que los cuentos de hadas transmiten a los niños, de diversas maneras: que la lucha contra las serias dificultades de la vida es inevitable, es parte intrínseca de la existencia humana; pero si uno no huye, sino que se enfrenta a las privaciones inesperadas y a menudo injustas, llega a dominar todos los obstáculos alzándose, al fin, victorioso. (15)

But instead of confronting his family problems, in the past, Leonardo decided to escape. Instead of confronting his grandmother's death which left him 'extraviado y sin protección alguna' (150), he decided to destroy what he loved most and blots out the memories of his grandmother.²⁹³ It is only when he decides to go back to his origins and make sense of his past that Leonardo can start the cure, confronting his past even though he still feels he is in a dream. The natural development from childhood to maturity is going to come about, in Leonardo's case, through the writing of his notebooks over a period of three months. It is a process that takes place from the moment he returns to his father's study to the moment he is seen to be born again after meeting his real mother for the first time and being accepted by her. This novel shows a way of using psychoanalytic techniques to recover the past. Leonardo needs to go back to his childhood, to his life even before he was born to understand his past in order to be able to continue with his life. The beginning of his 'therapy' coincides with his parents' death and his release from prison. Leonardo, through his writing, is going to find his real mother, to recover his real self. The fairy tale helps in this case as a place for the protagonist to escape while he is trying to understand the world around him.

In the second part of *La Reina de las Nieves*, Leonardo's notebooks and the process of writing are foregrounded. This novel could be categorized as a diary-novel as

elementos inconscientes o se ve obligada a mantener un control tan rígido y compulsivo sobre ellos que su personalidad puede resultar seriamente dañada', p. 14.

²⁹³ Erich Fromm, in *The Fear of Freedom* (which Leonardo tells Mónica he has read many times), discusses the escape mechanisms a man uses to run away from society. One of them is destructiveness: 'Destructiveness [...] is rooted in the unbearableness of individual powerlessness and isolation. I can escape the feeling of my own powerlessness in comparison with the world outside myself by destroying it. To be sure, if I succeed in removing it, I remain alone and isolated, but mine is a splendid isolation', p. 154.

it follows the ‘functions’ this type of novel has in Abbott’s words. The reader follows, together with the protagonist, the steps he needs to take to discover his past, following his thinking process as he writes his notebooks. The writing is central to the narrative and, at the same time, Leonardo discovers through the reading of his father’s letters a time in the past he knew little about. The discoveries take him back to his childhood, to Galicia and to a mother he never knew. In *La Reina de las Nieves*, Martín Gaité once again gives the protagonist the tools to search for his past, to make sense of his present and take charge of his future, and in this novel, he is also helped by a mature woman, a writer, who chose isolation to be creative and find freedom. In this way at the end of the novel the ‘happy ending’ is achieved, just as in Andersen’s fairytale.

CHAPTER 6

LO RARO ES VIVIR: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS FROM HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Lo raro es vivir is the only novel of the 1990s in which the author gives the leading role to a woman much younger than herself. In *La Reina de las Nieves* the protagonist was a young man of about thirty and the principal female character, his real mother, was of a similar age to the author. In *Nubosidad variable*, the two leading characters are also of a similar age to the author when she was writing the novel, and the same can be said of *Irse de casa*. In *Lo raro es vivir* (1996), Águeda is the same age as Leonardo in *La Reina*, a similar age to Sofia's children in *Nubosidad* and Amparo Miranda's in *Irse de casa*.²⁹⁴ The protagonism of a younger woman gives this novel a special place in Martín Gaité's work. The novel is written from the point of view of a generation of women born in the late 1950s or the 1960s. Many of the themes discussed in Martín Gaité's other novels of the 1990s, the relationship between parents and children, divorce, Madrid nightlife, alcohol, drugs, or lack of motivation amongst young people, are repeated in *Lo raro es vivir*. With Águeda, though, the other side of that life is seen. She closes a chapter of her life involving the apathy and indifference that followed the first years of the *movida*,²⁹⁵ and moves into another chapter where she is able to take decisions for herself, continue with her career and create a family, all of which give her purpose in life. In this novel there is an underlying belief in hope for the future.

²⁹⁴ The same age Martín Gaité's daughter was when she died.

²⁹⁵ In Marta Moriarty's words (a gallery owner during the time of the *movida*), what the *movida* signified was: 'la muerte de los ideales, la muerte de la familia, la muerte de la sociedad, aquello que rompe estructuras.' Cited in Cruz-Cámara, *El laberinto intertextual*, pp. 77-78. For a study of the *movida* in *Lo raro es vivir*, see Cruz-Cámara, pp. 91-113.

Furthermore, as Carbayo Abengózar observes, the novel suggests ‘la posibilidad del matrimonio feliz basado en la diferencia dentro de la igualdad’.²⁹⁶

However, Águeda does have certain characteristics in common with the author and some of her earlier characters. She is a researcher who works in archives, which links her with the author’s work as a cultural and historical researcher. And similar to other characters of the 1990s novels, Águeda follows a series of quests, not only to find out about her research subject but about her own life. She tries to give sense to her life and her relationship with her mother, writing, by the end of the novel, about her life and the changes brought about by her (re)search.

The idea of death and the purpose of existence is developed as a theme from the beginning of the novel and pursued throughout the narration. As José Jurado Morales comments: ‘Desde un principio la autora ha ideado la novela y su protagonista bajo una perspectiva existencialista. La concepción de la muerte como fin último de la existencia humana.’²⁹⁷ The chapter titled ‘Cuatro gotas de existencialismo’ suggests the principal idea of the novel as ‘la extrañeza ante el vivir’.²⁹⁸ The notion of anguish or nausea is explained to Águeda by Moisés (the owner of the bar that Águeda uses as a refuge from her insomnia): ‘La angustia nace de la conciencia de mortalidad’ (76).²⁹⁹ This notion provides the focal concept of the novel. The idea of life, the passing of time, and the death of loved ones is central to Martín Gaité’s trajectory, in her notebooks as well as in her fiction, especially after the death of her parents and her daughter. Also the possibility of communicating with the dead is an important part of her work, as was seen in *Nubosidad* and *La Reina*.³⁰⁰ As was suggested in these two novels and in *Lo raro es vivir*, the dead talk to us in our dreams, although as Águeda comments: ‘porque hablan, claro, pero se olvida’ (76).

²⁹⁶ Mercedes Carbayo. ‘A manera de subversión: Carmen Martín Gaité’, *Especulo: Revista de Estudios Literarios* (Universidad Complutense, 1998), <www.ucm.es/info/especulo/cmgaite/carbayo.htm>

²⁹⁷ Jurado Morales, *La trayectoria narrativa*, p. 338.

²⁹⁸ *Lo raro es vivir* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1999), p. 75.

²⁹⁹ It is interesting to observe the similarities, granted the many differences, between Águeda and Antoine Roquentin, the protagonist of Sartre’s *La Nausée*, a novel which Águeda discusses with Moisés in Chapter VII, pp. 77-78. Both Águeda and Antoine are researching into the eighteenth century and spending many hours of their days in the library surrounded by manuscripts.

³⁰⁰ The author also relates moments of communication with her dead parents, especially through dreams, as seen in ‘Cuenta pendiente’, in Chapter 3. She comments on the positive influence people can have from ‘the other world’: ‘Era “la primera vez que una persona desde el otro mundo me mandaba sus bendiciones”’, the author commented on her grandmother after receiving the Premio Nadal for her first novel, *Entre visillos*, which she presented under her grandmother’s name, Sofía Veloso. Cited in the introduction to *Carmen Martín Gaité, Obras completas I*, ed. and intro. José Teruel (Madrid: Galaxia Gutenberg/Círculo de Lectores, 2008), p. 13.

At the beginning of the narrative, Águeda's mother has just died (eight weeks before the first visit to her grandfather). Her mother's death is fundamental to the protagonist's development as a woman. At the end of the story Águeda narrates her own pregnancy and motherhood. For the study of this novel, Chodorow's ideas will once again be brought into play. Her work, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (1989), will shed light on some of the points of development in the life of the protagonist, especially the independence that Águeda must gain through a better understanding of her mother in order to become her own self. Also in this chapter, ideas about the mother/daughter relationship, which were developed in earlier chapters, will be returned to, using texts such as Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* and also the concept of the 'Good-enough mother' developed by Winnicott, thereby pursuing again a psychoanalytic perspective to study the author's presentation of the protagonist's feelings and development.

Historical Research: Waking Up to Life by Diving into a World of Lies

The reader is made aware from the beginning of the novel that what is to come is a retrospective story. The epilogue is the only part of the novel written in the present, the moment when the protagonist is writing her story. Águeda reveals that the events of which she is writing occurred two years earlier, starting on the 'treinta de junio' at 'las siete de la tarde más o menos' (11). These events immediately make her aware of her own existence, taking her out of her routine, of a life she lived without thinking. She starts reflecting on life, and later in the narrative these reflections expose the idea which is central to the novel:

Lo raro es vivir. Que estemos aquí sentados, que hablemos y se nos oiga, poner una frase detrás de otra sin mirar ningún libro, que no nos duela nada, que lo que bebemos entre por el camino que es y sepa cuándo tiene que torcer, que nos alimente el aire y a otros ya no, que según el antojo de las vísceras nos den ganas de hacer una cosa o la contraria y que de esas ganas dependa a lo mejor el destino, es mucho a la vez, tú, no se abarca, y lo más raro es que lo encontramos normal. (73)

These ideas are a reminder of some of those Martín Gaité revealed in her *Cuadernos de todo* after a friend's death:

Uno tiene su tiempo en esta vida, no tiene otra cosa. Y yo desde el día en que murió mi amigo he sentido más acuciante y alta que nunca la llamada de las cosas que él ya no veía para que mirara yo, de las gentes para que las atendiera. [...] Y con mayor deseo que nunca de ponerme a escribir. Pocas veces me ha sido más difícil. (140)

In *La Reina*, death was seen to provoke reflections on life and this will also be the case in *Irse de casa*, just as it was in those pages of *Cuadernos de todo* that Martín Gaité wrote after her friend's death. The difficulty the author felt when sitting down to write is also found in Águeda, who needs to put her life in order before she can continue with her writing. The immediacy of the diary and letter-writing of the first novels studied in some ways disappears in *Lo raro es vivir*, even though, as will be seen, the freshness of the events that Águeda recounts, and which changed her life, is not completely lost.

Chapter I describes Águeda's visit to her grandfather's residence. Her conversation with the director of the residential home reveals the circumstances which provoked such a visit, with the reader made aware of the mother's sudden death and of the similarities between mother and daughter: 'Estoy asombrado de cómo se parece usted a su madre. [...] Supongo que se lo habrán dicho infinidad de veces' (16), says the director to Águeda as soon as he sees her. It is also indicated that mother and daughter did not have a very good relationship, as Águeda tells the director: 'Vamos a dejarlo en un trato distante' (16).

Consequently, the director feels that Águeda could impersonate her mother for a few hours, in order to say goodbye to the grandfather as he is not aware of his daughter's death. Such a strange proposition arouses feelings in Águeda about her relationship with her parents and her life in general, which she had tried to forget. Águeda reflects especially on her emotional situation, looking back at the changes she has gone through since she met her partner, Tomás. In fact, Tomás is one of the few male characters in Martín Gaité's 1990s novels who is given a positive role. He is presented as a man who understands a woman's need for space, encouraging Águeda in her research and questioning her about her relationship with her mother and the way she presents it.³⁰¹

The idea of becoming another person gives free rein to Águeda's imagination which, for a few days, is involved in a world of fantasy where lies overtake any kind of

³⁰¹ It transpires that Tomás never met Águeda's mother as she feared her mother's powers of seduction would take him away from her.

reality. As María Castrejón Sánchez points out, some of the chapter titles serve as metaphors for aspects of the protagonist's life: 'Podemos comprender el carácter que quiere imprimir a la obra: la vida es para Águeda un compendio de metáforas personales.'³⁰² And indeed, the titles of these also take the reader into a world of fantasy, 'El planeta de cristal', 'Bajada al bosque', 'La estatua viviente' or 'Las escaleras del diablo', and are a reminder of some of the author's stories for children.

Águeda used her imagination by writing song lyrics before she qualified to work as an archivist. This artistic gift seems to have been taken from Sofía in *Nubosidad*, who, although she had a great ability to compose songs and poems,³⁰³ never explored her potential in a financial way as Consuelo, her maid's daughter, encouraged her to do. Another characteristic which Águeda seems to have inherited, in this case from the author, is her interest in eighteenth-century history. Her research on Luis Vidal y Villalba (one of Martín Gaité's projects which she wrote about in her notebooks but never pursued),³⁰⁴ comes from an idea which, Águeda explains, was taken from a French academic at the Sorbonne.

The need to go into the archives to escape from reality is a theme dealt with in this novel and the author had indeed commented on the addictive nature of this activity: 'Meterse en archivos es un opio, si das dos chupadas vuelves.'³⁰⁵ Research practice helps Águeda to escape her own life; 'beber olvido' (42) is how the protagonist refers to her research into other people's lives. This is the researcher's escapism: 'si yo me seguía metiendo en averiguaciones sobre un aventurero del siglo XVIII y sus mentiras, ¿no era para escurrir el bulto de otra pesquisa pendiente y mucho más sinuosa, que interfería aquella?' (97). Or as she admitted earlier in the novel: 'Hurgar en el pasado remoto puede ser un lenitivo. El cercano hace más daño' (50). Yet the historical research is going to turn into personal research into her present life: 'En lo que me equivoqué fue en creer que entregarme de lleno a mi trabajo [...] significaba tomar una vía que me apartaba de aquella tupida maraña' (29). As María Luisa Guardiola Tey indicates: 'La joven investigadora participa en un juego de espejos dirigidos uno hacia

³⁰² María Castrejón Sánchez, 'Lo raro es vivir', in *Carmen Martín Gaité*, ed. by Redondo Goicoechea, p.195.

³⁰³ The author's love for poetry and song writing is well known. She published books on poetry and also used to read her poems or sing songs in La Manuela (a bar in the centre of Madrid), together with her brother-in-law, Chicho Sánchez Ferlosio. Martín Gaité even performed with Amancio Prada, a recital which was made into a record, *Caravel de caraveles*. See Alicia Ramos, 'Conversación con Carmen Martín Gaité' p. 118.

³⁰⁴ See *Cuadernos de todo*, pp. 287, 367, 401.

³⁰⁵ See Campbell, p. 240.

otro y descubre cómo es ella misma al identificarse con el personaje dieciochesco.³⁰⁶

This is similar to Martín Gaité's own research, as Elide Pittarello observes: 'Su busca del tiempo perdido fue siempre doble, porque dar con partes olvidadas de la vida ajena era también sacar a la luz partes remotas de su propia vida.'³⁰⁷

The results of Águeda's research on Vidal y Villalba, which is interspersed with the developments during her week of self-discovery, seem to have been provided by the author so as not to be completely lost. Thus she finds a fictional context in which to situate her historical research. Chapters IV, VII, IX, and X contain many details of the life of Vidal y Villalba and José Gabriel Tupac Amaru, a historical character who, as Águeda confesses, is someone who 'verdaderamente me enamoró' (51). The confusion Águeda has to confront is how to connect all the threads her research presents, and how to shape them into a publishable study. This raises questions concerning how researchers should present their findings and these reflections are a reminder of those Martín Gaité committed to her notebooks on 7 January 1977:

Acabamos de pasar Galapagar, antes de llegar a Villalba. De repente he revivido la escena del piquete que Floridablanca mandó a esperar al extraño prisionero Luis Vidal y Villalba, que venía de Londres. La exploración de su equipaje. Tengo la suerte de recordar esta historia como si fuera verdadera y actual, como si me hubiera pasado a mí. Historia abierta, enigmática. ¿Por qué no la escribo así, en plan historia fantástica, enigmática y abierta, explicando el proceso que me ha traído a recordarla? No necesitaría casi ni tener que volver a los archivos. Sería un ejercicio literario divertido y apasionante para mis ratos de desaliento. Inventar el montaje original que le podía dar. Explicar mis reflexiones posteriores a Macanaz, las diferencias y concomitancias entre la historia y la novela. A pegotitos sueltos. Sin pretender cerrar ni redondear. Tal como se conserva en mi memoria. (*Cuadernos*, 401)

Martín Gaité, indeed, wrote parts of that story through Águeda. In a similar way, the novel shows how, although what Águeda has set out to do is to write a thesis titled 'Un aventurero del siglo XVIII y su criado' (44), the facts she is discovering are so interesting, and in some cases so incredible, that they could be written as if for a mystery novel. But, should a researcher use the facts she has discovered as if they were

³⁰⁶ 'Lo raro es vivir: Propuesta vitalista de Carmen Martín Gaité a finales del siglo XX', in *Género y géneros II*, ed. by Ángeles Encinar and others, 133-42 (p. 137).

³⁰⁷ 'Artesanías autógrafas de Carmen Martín Gaité', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*, 5 (1993), 101-18 (p. 102).

fiction? Tomás recommends that Águeda write them as she tells them: ‘Parece una novela –decía Tomas–. Es una pena que no puedas escribirlo en forma de novela’ (45), to which she answers: ‘Hombre, qué cosas tienes. Eso no sería una tesis doctoral’ (45). Nevertheless, she feels that the best way to tell the story would be as if it were a tale:

Hasta que me di cuenta de que era con él [su gato] con quien necesitaba hablar antes de ponerme escribir nada, que se había subido allí para escucharme y que si le contaba la historia de Tupac Amaru como a un gato de cuento de hadas, no sólo lo entendería sino que tal vez me ayudase a entenderlo a mí. (85)

Such questions evoke the contemporary historical novel, often written by women, and in which everyday life takes on great importance and the way the account narrated is closer to the genre of fiction, despite the use of historical materials. As Alicia Redondo indicates in her introduction to *Lo mío es escribir*:

Desde el punto de vista femenino formal lo que estas novelas históricas femeninas suelen tener en común, además de lo fragmentario de los sucesos narrados, es la desaparición del narrador que lo sabe y lo juzga todo como un dios inmisericorde, para dejar paso a narradores personales que relativizan lo visto y a la vez, lo dotan de autenticidad.³⁰⁸

This is what Águeda does every time she relays her discoveries and this is what her interlocutors encourage her to write.

To be able to represent the role of her mother, Águeda needs to research her life in a similar way to how she researches her historical character; she needs to find photographs and old papers to remember her mother as she really was: ‘mi infancia yacía mutilada sobre la moqueta, habría que hacerle la respiración artificial o tal vez la autopsia, buscar fotos, papeles, recordar cómo se vestía, el gesto tras el cual ocultaba sus enfados, prepararme, en una palabra’ (54). Thus her personal research becomes tangled up with the historical research. Going, as she is, through such difficult times, Águeda finds it impossible to separate her life from her research, behaving in many cases like the subject of her research character: ‘¿Será posible? –me dije–. Estoy tan loca como él, todo se contagia. ¡Voy a acabar como Vidal y Villalba!’ (81).

Although the letters and other documents used in her research are not present in the novel, Águeda is constantly referring to them. It seems that, on some occasions, the protagonist believes herself to be the only interlocutor Vidal y Villalba has. He talks to

³⁰⁸ Redondo Goicoechea, *Lo mío es escribir*, p. 22.

her through his letters, letters which in some cases had not been read for centuries.

‘Vidal y Villalba [...] llevaba más de cuatro años pegándome voces por dentro a ver si lo sacaba de los papeles polvorientos y me hacía cargo en serio de su historia’ (201).

This recalls how Martín Gaité felt Macanaz was talking to her:

En una de aquellas cartas [...], Macanaz, una mañana, me habló por primera vez directamente. [...] fue cuando me dijo que acaso aquello que venía escribiendo con tanta urgencia no lo iba a recoger nunca nadie. [...] me lo decía como para que se lo desmintiera. (*La búsqueda de interlocutor*, 58-59)

Although the author considers herself, like Águeda, the direct interlocutor of a character from the past, at times Martín Gaité doubts the author’s and researcher’s rights to publish letters and diaries written without the expressed consent of the author:

Los archivos están plagados de cartas, que nos ayudan a componer, fragmentariamente, el rompecabezas de la historia. Sin el estímulo de un interlocutor concreto a quien dirigir esas quejas, peticiones, confidencias o declaraciones, muchos personajes del pasado no habrían dejado noticia de su vida ni de su alma. Pero, ¿es lícito hacer pasar por producto literario lo que nunca pretendió serlo y, precisamente por eso, nació con tan genuina frescura? (*El cuento de nunca acabar*, 247-48)

Here, again, the theme of the need for an interlocutor surfaces. In the chapter ‘Un gato que escucha’, Águeda tells her cat the story of Vidal y Villalba, a story which, as was seen earlier, other people had suggested to her that she relate as fiction. The night – an important moment for confessions – when Águeda talks to her cat, Gerundio, helps her to reflect on her historical research and she starts writing it:

Pero lo más importante de aquella vigilia es que el relato oral dirigido a Gerundio me había abierto cauce a la palabra escrita. Le perdí el respeto al cuaderno de Tomás y fue como desatracar un desagüe, lo empecé decidida, sin miedo a las tachaduras ni a las repeticiones. (90)

Personal Written Reflections

Although Águeda’s narration is written with hindsight, reconstructing past events, the immediacy of the changes developed in the protagonist is not lost. As José Jurado Morales observes:

En *Lo raro es vivir* resulta imposible imaginar a Águeda en compañía. Esa ajetreada y decisiva semana de su vida es sólo realizable desde la reflexión. El presente se explica desde el pasado gracias al recurso de la escritura y la autobiografía, método habitual en la novela existencial para reconstruir la trayectoria vital del personaje por lo que tiene de lenitivo.³⁰⁹

A woman needs solitude and isolation to be able to reflect and not just act, finding in that solitude her independent self. That is the reason many writers defend solitude as the place for writing, an idea expounded in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. In the 1960s Martín Gaité also wrote her ideas on the need for solitude:

Lo malo de la relación con los seres humanos es la capacidad de concentración que nos roba. Si se pudieran mantener despiertas y en forma nuestras disposiciones mentales tanto en presencia de los otros seres como en la soledad, claro que el fruto de ese ejercicio sería más rico y más interesante, que las mismas alteraciones que la interferencia de los demás produciría en el campo de nuestro interés, caso de poder ser correctamente registradas, lo abonarían y ampliarían mucho. Pero, por el contrario, nos comen y hacen desaparecer del campo. (*Cuadernos*, 132)

Although the writing in *Lo raro* describes past events, the reader has access to the protagonist's meditations and how they change her personal history. In Águeda's case, writing her past makes her understand the changes that came about after her mother's death and how they changed her life forever.

In *Lo raro es vivir*, Águeda reflects constantly on her relationship with other people, both in her present life and her past, not from a position of isolation as a unique and solitary person, but in relation to those who were part of her past. Águeda meets some of the characters she knew in her first years as a young independent woman. She finds old night-life companions, 'comparsas de mi alborotada juventud' (37), people she calls 'rizofita' (37), for whom the idea of settling down and finding a proper job is only something that a psychiatrist would suggest. The word *rizofita* occurs in *Cuadernos de todo* (231). Águeda, just like Sofía and Mariana in *Nubosidad*, Sara in *Caperucita en Manhattan*, and Martín Gaité, makes up words to express ideas or feelings which only their closest companions understand. As was seen in *Nubosidad variable*, this is the

³⁰⁹ Jurado Morales, *La trayectoria narrativa*, p. 348.

‘léxico familiar’, to use Natalia Ginzburg’s term. Águeda’s mother, she informs us, also used to make up words.

Moriarty comments on the years of the *movida*: ‘El compromiso era una mala palabra [...]. En los 80 estaba muy mal tomarse en serio cualquier cosa. Incluso profesionalizarse, porque era meterse en la rueda.’³¹⁰ Águeda now sees how the friends she had in her early youth as characters belonging to another life, in a similar way to Leonardo. These casual meetings make her think about her life and value her relationship with Tomás. Reflecting on the past makes her relive a dream she used to have when she was younger, between the age of thirteen and eighteen, and links the man of her dream with her present partner: ‘Estaba emocionada porque acababa de hacer un descubrimiento asombroso: Tomás se parecía al chico de mis sueños de adolescente más que nadie. Había estado ciega. Era él’ (152). Furthermore, writing and reflecting about oneself, as seen in the other novels studied, makes the protagonist split into different characters. In Águeda’s case, thinking about her present circumstances led her to try to see herself before she arrived in Tomás’s life: ‘De pronto se produjo una especie de desdoblamiento, como si hubiera perdido mi identidad como pareja de Tomás, sin dejar por eso de moverme con soltura por aquella casa que conocía y de la que tenía llave’ (66). This scission induces her to talk to herself: ‘¡Largo, basta de encerrona! La calle abre otra perspectiva, ¿no lo sabes ya?’ (66).

Although the account is narrated two years after the events described, the moments in the novel when Águeda is writing are apparent. She, like the author, always carries a notebook with her: ‘lo apunté en una agenda que saqué de la maleta del prestidigitador, en una zona que titulo <<EXCRECENCIAS>>’ (107). In many cases her writing is linked to discoveries in her historical research, in others, though, she transcribes thoughts, poems or her dreams in order to be able to analyse them later: ‘Me desperté y busqué a tientas mi agenda para apuntar el sueño’ (118). This, again, will be written in the section titled ‘<<EXCRECENCIAS>>’ (120). This noting down of dreams was seen in *Cuadernos de todo* and, as has been mentioned, is also practised by many of the author’s protagonists. In fact one of Águeda’s dreams helps her in developing an understanding of her mother and is the trigger which makes her decide to visit her grandfather, posing as her mother.

³¹⁰ Cited in Cruz-Cámara, *El laberinto intertextual*, pp. 94-95.

In her writing, Águeda reveals her relationship with her mother and the similarities between them, similarities that for many years she escaped from but which, in the present, are going to help her understand better not only her mother but also herself. Indeed, she will discover her mother through her father's eyes, as he looks at her as if she were her mother: 'Sigo oyendo su voz al oírte a ti. Y viéndola al mirarte' (111), her father confesses. This confession allows her to see herself in a different way and decide to take on the role of her mother: 'Ahora mismo soy ella' (111), she admits to herself. After writing up the dream, she starts looking at the mirror and talking as if she were addressing her mother: 'Me acerqué al espejo y puse los labios sobre mi imagen. Eran las paces que habían quedado pendientes en el sueño' (121-22). Similar to Sofia, Águeda is able to forgive her mother after making sense of the dream.

There is one other aspect to Águeda's story. As she writes, Águeda narrates the way she discovers and makes sense of some of the events in her past: 'Tomás que odia las tinieblas, me había sacado de la luz, porque despide luz. [...] Estaba emocionada porque acababa de hacer un descubrimiento asombroso' (151-52). Thus she needs to tell her story to understand it: 'cuando te pones a atar cabos, cada uno tenemos nuestra propia novela enquistada por ahí dentro. Hasta que no la cuentas a otro no lo sabes' (208). And the discoveries she makes in writing and relating her life will change her for ever. As the director of the residential home informs her: 'No parece usted la misma que hace una semana [...]. [M]e encuentro ante alguien que no se esconde, que va de bulto de las cosas, ante una persona de verdad' (216).

Mother/Daughter Relationship: The Future, Maternity

Águeda's mother, Águeda Luengo, is a famous artist, a strong and independent woman – in this respect she reminds us of Casilda in *La Reina*, Mariana in *Nubosidad* and Amparo in *Irse de casa* – who divorced her husband and went to live in a duplex which she designed in order to house her daughter in an independent apartment. This situation, though, was not accepted by Águeda, who moved to an attic apartment in the old centre of Madrid. Yet although Águeda does not want to live with her mother, she finds her another companion, Rosario, a woman a few years older than herself, to serve as a surrogate daughter. Rosario was also the individual who introduced Águeda to the theme of her quest for the purpose of existence: 'Desde que el mundo es mundo, vivir y

morir vienen siendo la cara y la cruz de una misma moneda echada al aire. [...] Para mí, si quieren que les diga la verdad, lo raro es vivir' (184).

The relationship between the mother and Rosario is not entirely clear and at times one could suspect that there might be a romantic relationship: 'Yo no era don Blas de Hinojosa, ni se trataba de interrogarla sobre el tipo de relaciones que hubiera podido mantener con mi madre, ni de echar cuentas o sacar trapos sucios del pasado' (203). Águeda has these thoughts the day she decides to visit Rosario (at her mother's duplex) to collect some of her mother's clothes, and after she has decided to impersonate her mother. The problem with Águeda's mother seems to be her independence. As Chodorow indicates:

For the infant, the mother is not someone with her own life, wants, needs, history, other social relationships, work. She is known only in her capacity as mother. Growing up means learning that she, like other people in one's life, has and wants a life of her own, and that loving her means recognizing her subjectivity and appreciating her separateness.³¹¹

Although the mother wants to be a good mother, giving her daughter a place to live, Águeda feels that her mother's life, which is full of engagements, does not leave space for her: 'Me gustaba presumir ante mis amigos de madre no empachosa ni fiscalizadora, pero nada ansiaba tanto como sus preguntas y el gozo maligno de dejarlas sin contestar. La verdad es que ella había llegado a hacerme cada vez menos' (162). This feeling of not being of interest to her mother is repeated throughout the novel. Chodorow notes: 'Idealization and blaming of the mother are two sides of the same belief in the all-powerful mother' (90). And when Águeda decides to leave her mother's home, the best way she finds to express her feelings is by letter, although she never dares to send it:

Querida madre:

Cuando te dije ayer que me marché de casa, no me pediste explicaciones. Eso es lo que más me duele de ti, [...] hubiera preferido que dieras un portazo y que se tambaleara alguna de las paredes de ese dúplex reciente y suntuoso que detesto. (185-86)

In the letter she is also able to confess the link between her parents' separation and her escape from her mother's house. Águeda presents herself as a little girl who wants her mother's attention. Águeda does send some letters to her mother which she

³¹¹ Nancy J. Chodorow, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 90.

believes she must have destroyed as she was not ‘amiga de conservar papeles viejos’ (148). However, in general, she writes letters more for herself than to send to others, noting: ‘muchas cartas las escribo y no las mando nunca. Viven un tiempo dentro de mí, repito su texto y luego a olvidar que no las he mandado’ (148). She used to send letters to her mother when she was younger, though, letters which her mother never answered.

It is possible to see in the narrative the need that Águeda has for her mother and the pride which prevented her from getting close to her and expressing that need. On the other hand, with her father she feels freer to express her feelings, since she also feels more protective towards him. She writes: ‘Mis esperanzas, ya bastante problemáticas, de encontrar consuelo y apoyo en aquel señor se volatilizaron. [...] yo seguía siendo una especie de coraza para él, desde niña supe que era más débil que mamá’ (108).³¹²

Furthermore, Águeda can confess to him her need for her mother after her death: ‘Ahora daría lo que no tengo por oírlo. Me conformaba con cinco minutos, aunque fuera para echarme una bronca. Que además, por desgracia, no me las echaba nunca’ (111).

Mother and daughter are very similar; they look alike and have the same voice and similar writing. These characteristics, which might at other times have irritated Águeda, will help her pay the last debt her mother left unpaid, the last goodbye to her father. Consequently, Águeda writes and delivers a letter to the director of the residence and to her grandfather in the role of her mother when she decides to impersonate her, informing the reader of her decision: ‘Creo que empiezo a considerarme preparada para el juego’ (112).

Some of the most important and dramatic moments of the novel occur when Águeda decides to dress up as her mother to visit her grandfather. Until this point there has been a radical change in the protagonist’s attitude to life. Before taking the decision she needed to discover many sides of her relationship with her mother: ‘No me estaba preparando en absoluto para suplantar a mamá, no me atrevía con ese papel. No me atrevía con ella, [...] nunca me había atrevido a derribarla de su pedestal’ (57). As Chodorow explains, one of the most important actions needed to change the mother/daughter relationship is to take the mother down from the pedestal of the perfect mother: ‘To begin to transform the relations of parenting and the relations of gender, to

³¹² There is here once more the character of the weak man who is dragged by a new, young and attractive wife, into a life of consumerism, more concerned with the house and new furniture than with her husband’s intellectual needs. The character of Águeda’s father is similar to that of Leonardo’s father in *La Reina* or to Sofía’s husband in *Nubosidad*. Tomás, however, serves as contrast. He is a young man who has a different attitude towards women. He is what Castrejón Sánchez calls: ‘un modelo masculino nuevo’, p. 193.

begin to transform women's lives, we must move beyond the myths and misconceptions embodied in the fantasy of the perfect mother' (96).

Águeda, as she noted at the beginning of the novel, had a distant relationship with her mother. In her writing Águeda reflects on the moments she spent with her mother and the kind of association they had. She starts remembering and writing stories of moments when they were both close, moments of happiness which erase her resentment over the lack of love she felt from her mother. Moments such as the last day they spent together, which she admits was 'una verdadera fiesta' (200). Also, she remembers their trip to Tangier, when her mother had a miscarriage.³¹³ This particular episode shows her how at times her mother needed her daughter close to her: 'Sabía que no podía apartarme de allí porque la estaba protegiendo, que mi sitio era ese, nunca en mi vida he vuelto a saber con tanta certeza que estoy donde tengo que estar como aquel atardecer en Tánger' (169).

During the time she reflects on her life, Águeda dreams of her mother: not as a strong and powerful woman, but as a weak woman living in poverty and abused by her partner, a woman who needs her daughter's help. But this help will not be received: 'Supe que todo se arreglaría si nos abrazábamos ella y yo, pero no era capaz de acercarme ni de decirle una frase cariñosa, aunque lo deseaba mucho' (118). This type of dream could be categorised as 'wish fulfilment' as, thanks to it, Águeda sees herself for the first time in her life as stronger than her mother, in control of both her mother's life and her own. She manages, thanks to the dream, to dismantle the pedestal she had put her mother onto. This kind of reflection helps her to change her relationship with her mother (although the change happens after the mother's death). From the moment of the dream, Águeda realises that it was not her mother who was the cause for their distancing. As Castrejón Sánchez suggests: 'no queda a nadie a quien echarle las culpas. Quizá esto sea crecer' (197). Taking responsibilities for her actions instead of blaming others is Águeda's way of growing up.

After the dream, Águeda experiences a split in her personality which prepares her for the visit to her grandfather. He will be the one to show her the opinion her mother had of her, which is similar to how she regards her mother: 'Dices que es despegada, que no le dan tus cosas ni frío ni calor, pero puedes equivocarte, seguramente te necesita más de lo que pensamos' (221-22). The idea of motherhood,

³¹³ Martín Gaité travelled with her daughter to Tangier in July 1972. There is a drawing by the author of a local street scene in *Cuadernos de todo*, p. 167.

dealt with in many of Martín Gaité's novels, will have a point of inflection in *Lo raro es vivir*. While in novels such as *Retahílas* or *Nubosidad variable* the decision to be or not to be a mother varied amongst the different female characters, Sofía is a mother, Mariana is not; Lucía is a mother, Eulalia is not,³¹⁴ in *Lo raro es vivir* the reader is presented with Águeda's change of attitude towards the idea of maternity. From the first decisive dismissal, '¿Embarazada yo? –protesté–. De ninguna manera, ¡Dios me libre! No quiero hijos nunca, nunca. ¡Jamás en mi vida!' (19-20), to the conclusion of the novel, 'Aquella misma noche me quedé embarazada' (226), Águeda has gone from the complete rejection of motherhood to embracing it, and with all its consequences.³¹⁵ This change of attitude in the protagonist parallels the changes experienced amongst the different generations of feminists during last century. As Chodorow observes:

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, feminists raised initial questions and developed a consensus of sorts about mothering. [...] These consensual positions among feminists all centred on the argument that women's lives should not be totally constrained by child-care or childbearing. Women should be free to choose not to bear children; should have easy access to safe contraception and abortion; should be able to continue their other work if mothers; and should have available to them good day-care. In contrast, recent feminist writing on motherhood focuses more on the experience of mothering: if a mother wants to be a mother, what is or should be her experience? [...] Feminist writing now recognizes that many women, including many feminists, want to have children and experience mothering as a rich and complex endeavor.³¹⁶

In *Cuadernos de todo*, Martín Gaité exposed her ideas on motherhood, including the possibility of reconciling being a mother with a professional career:

A un niño hay que vestirlo, lavarlo, darle de comer. Y en esta reata de acontecimientos a que la mayoría de las mujeres dedican un esfuerzo casi siempre de inútil derroche, van dejando su piel y sus ilusiones con amargura. Creen que ya no les queda tiempo 'para lo otro'.

³¹⁴ What can be found with that generation of women is the excision between the 'feminists' and those who accept the patriarchal ideals of womanhood in their role as mothers and housewives. As Chodorow indicates, some feminists believe that: 'Women's goal in life is to attain sexual individuality, which is the opposite of being a mother. [...] Nancy Friday poses a choice for women between exercising their procreative capacities and expressing their sexuality.' *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*, pp. 84-85.

³¹⁵ Kimberly Chisholm makes an interesting comment on Águeda's 'overly ardent protestation' of maternity as a disguise of 'a desire for maternal-filial connection', in 'Maternal-Filial Mirroring', p. 114.

³¹⁶ *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*, p. 79.

Separan lo uno de lo otro. Intuyen que hay otra cosa ¡Pero si todo está mezclado! Claro que hay otra cosa que no son las papillas, pero esa cosa se puede encontrar y descubrir también mientras se hacen las papillas. (81)

These reflections, written in the 1960s, are a pointer towards the protagonist's attitude to maternity at the end of *Lo raro es vivir*. Águeda will be able to look after her daughter and continue writing her thesis, and will combine both responsibilities with pleasure. In fact, it is interesting to see how, during the 1960s, Martín Gaité criticised in her *cuadernos* the attitude women had on maternity and work when she was herself researching on Macanaz and the cultural history of the eighteenth century, demonstrating by her example the possibility of working and also caring for her daughter, just as Águeda will come to do. As the author stated in an interview: 'Nunca he pensado que la condición de ser mujer o ser madre, pueda robar tiempo a una escritora.'³¹⁷ Even though it is possible to see how many women writers of Martín Gaité's generation found it difficult to combine being a writer and a mother, and either started or continued publishing after their children had grown up, Josefina Aldecoa and Esther Tusquets serve as examples.

For Águeda, maternity is not synonymous with a lack of independence. She does not stop working, as was the case with Germán's mother, Lucía, in *Retahílas* or Sofía in *Nubosidad* – women who had to choose between being a mother and being an (independent) person, as Eulalia, the 'voice' of Spanish feminists of the 1960s expressed it in *Retahílas*. Together with her partner, who encourages her in her work, Águeda is able to combine maternity and writing:³¹⁸

Cierro el gas, porque el café ya está. Me lo sirvo y me lo traigo en una bandeja a un rincón con escritorio que se ha puesto en un recodo de la cocina. Fue idea de Tomás. Quiere que si me visita la inspiración cuando estoy guisando o dando de comer a Cecilia tenga a mano un lugar donde apoyar mis libros y cuadernos sin que se pringuen de yogur.³¹⁹

Hace una semana que he vuelto a ponerme con la historia de Vidal y Villalba y me gusta repasarla por las mañanas. Es como hacer memoria. (227-28)

³¹⁷ Ramos, p. 119.

³¹⁸ There are other contemporary writers who have combined both work and motherhood, such as Almudena Grandes or Lucía Etchevarria, who in her semi-autobiographical novel *Un milagro en equilibrio* (2004) has a protagonist, Eva Agulló, who writes her life with her baby daughter by her side.

³¹⁹ The kitchen is again shown as a place where it is possible to find independence.

Going back to her research, which she interrupted in order to make sense of her life, is what has allowed Águeda to relive those events of the past. As Guardiola Tey explains: ‘El desorden de ambas vidas requiere atar los cabos sueltos para dar forma a la narración’ (137). Instead of using it as escapism, her research has helped her to review and give shape to her own life.

Conclusion

Throughout *Lo raro es vivir* there are many parallels which can be drawn between Martín Gaité’s interests and preoccupations of the 1960s, as she researched her biography of Macanaz and was preparing her thesis, and those of Águeda. The protagonist of the novel, though, belongs to a later generation and brings with her a message of hope for the future, thanks to the independence and freedom women of her generation experience and their ability to create their own families without losing that freedom.

Águeda, who at the beginning of the novel was researching the life of the historical character, Luis Vidal y Villalba, enters, through that work, another investigation, that of her own life catalysed by her mother’s death and the idea of impersonating and ‘becoming’ her mother for a few hours. Her study of both Vidal y Villalba and her mother become entwined in her narration. Trying to play well the role as her mother, she reflects on her own life, and also meets acquaintances from the past. They allow her to see herself reflected in others, and this enables her to discover other sides of her life and personality she had tried to erase. Even though Águeda spends much of her time on her own, she needs those secondary characters in order to understand her past. She starts writing her findings, both about her life and about the historical character of her research, and through the analysis of her dreams, which she records in her notebook, she is able to take the decision which is going to change her life, to ‘become’ her mother. Before she adopts this role, Águeda has to understand their relationship and be able to forgive her mother through writing about the moments of happiness they lived together.

The catalyst that decided Águeda to research her own life is her mother’s death; and even though the type of writing she produces in *Lo raro es vivir* is not as immediate as in the earlier novels studied, her research into her mother’s life and her own past will

change the course of her future. The death of the mother, as one of the characters tells Águeda, is the moment when maturity really starts: ‘a partir de ahí es cuando empiezas a envejecer’ (148). In *Lo raro es vivir*, the real catalyst for life-writing, though, is going to be her daughter’s birth. Águeda does not seem to need writing as *tabla de salvación*, as was seen in the other protagonists, this is despite the fact that the protagonist uses a metaphor for writing comparing the moment she starts writing as ‘desatascar un desagüe’ (90). Indeed, the search into her past changes her attitudes, especially towards motherhood. While in *La Reina de las Nieves* the novel ended at the moment the protagonist finds the mother, in *Lo raro es vivir* the narrative goes beyond this point and the reader is able to see into the protagonist’s future. Martín Gaité seems to have crossed a barrier with this novel and reach a point in the future where writing is just part of life and not a way to be able to live.

CHAPTER 7

IRSE DE CASA: LIFE THROUGH THE CINEMATOGRAPHIC LENS, WRITING ONE'S OWN LIFE-SCRIPT

Irse de casa (1998) is the last of Martín Gaité's novels which the author saw published. It shares some of the characteristics of her other novels of the 1990s, regarding structure and theme. However, at the same time, and in contrast to the others, it reveals a parallel with the author's first novel, *Entre visillos* (1957), especially in the number of characters present and voices heard. The novel is narrated in the third-person singular with an omniscient narrator, allowing the reader to be witness to the lives of the various characters found in the novel at different times in their histories. As Jurado Morales notes: 'necesita de un narrador externo que logre hilvanar con verosimilitud esos fragmentos y encauzar el argumento hacia su final sin quedar nada suelto.'³²⁰ The epigraphs of the novel, from Aldous Huxley and Clarice Lispector, in fact, refer to the idea of a history formed by many stories. And one of the characters of the novel, Florita, comments: 'Gente [...], lo que hay que añadir a ese argumento es gente. [...] Gente que vaya contando también sus historias, [...] un choque de historias.'³²¹ The third-person narration and the way the narrative is presented not from just one perspective takes away some of the intimate atmosphere of the earlier novels discussed here.

In *Irse de casa*, Amparo Miranda, a sixty-three-year-old woman, resident in the United States returns to her Spanish home town after forty years of absence. The reason for her journey, the reader learns, is the film script her son Jeremy has written, *La calle del olvido*, which will be the catalyst for her life-writing. After a few days wandering

³²⁰ *La trayectoria narrativa*, p. 399.

³²¹ *Irse de casa* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1998), p. 34.

aimlessly, a series of encounters makes Amparo decide to take charge of her own story and start taking notes about her experiences in her home town in order to contribute to and modify her son's script. As in Martín Gaité's other novels of the 1990s, where protagonists take charge of their present situation in order to change their fate, Amparo adopts a series of decisions concerning her life after having 're-encountered' her past. Although Amparo is the protagonist of the novel, she only appears in some chapters of the work (fewer than half), and this gives a greater prominence to the many secondary characters who populate the pages.

The title of this last novel of Carmen Martín Gaité is what Genette would term a 'thematic title',³²² in that the title signals the principal theme of the narrative, in which a number of the characters are seen to have left either the parental or marital home – usually on account of difficult or failed personal relationships or conflicts of one kind or another. 'Leaving Home' was also a game that Amparo used to play as a child to escape the sad reality of her dark and unhappy home. Her son Jeremy also wanted to play that game with her as he could see that his mother also felt trapped amongst her husband's family, although she knew that 'A veces escaparse es peligroso' (303). However, coming back 'home' for Amparo is the catalyst that enables her to confront her memories and free herself from a repressive past which she always tried to forget. Indeed, Amparo talks about New York as a place for forgetting one's feelings: 'En estos días he pensado mucho en mis defectos especialmente. Tengo agujetas de tanto pensar, te lo juro, había perdido la costumbre. En América se piensa poco' (324).

Certainly one of the key points in *Irse de casa* is the need to confront and remember the past, and the difficulty this causes. This is addressed in the book which Valeria gave her aunt to read after her separation, 'un ensayo sobre la memoria' (93):

Exigir a la memoria que se enfrente con lo desagradable ayuda a esclarecer qué decisiones se tomaron libremente y cuales bajo esclavitud, sin olvidar que esa esclavitud puede fomentarla la protagonista misma que hace memoria por culpa de la habitual sumisión femenina a las medias verdades. (93)

The need to confront the past, and the decisions taken in the past, is the common theme in Martín Gaité's novels of the 1990s: analysing oneself in order to start anew and thereby seek a better future. In *Irse de casa*, the structural device that is employed to introduce and develop this theme is the draft film script that will propose a version of

³²² See Genette, *Paratexts*, pp. 81-85.

Amparo's life; that, presumably (but this is not certain), brings about Amparo's journey to her home town; that will be followed by her for a while, but will later be modified by her and, ultimately, controlled by her.

In addition to themes found in Martín Gaité's novels of the 1990s, such as parent-child relationships and youth and drugs, this novel alludes to *Entre visillos*, reminding the reader about the social and cultural repression of the Franco era and the differences with present-day Spain.³²³ It is also possible to see in this novel the influence of the film scripts Martín Gaité wrote in the 1980s. In this chapter, the importance of letters in the narrative as voices from the past, or explaining decisions taken in the present, will be examined. The discussion of the device of the draft of a film script as the vehicle for life-writing in *Irse de casa* will be central to the assessment of this chapter. The theories of Winnicott and Chodorow on family relationships will also inform the analysis of this novel.

Mother/Daughter Relationship: Letters of Love and Friendship

The novel opens with a prologue titled 'Pórtico con rascacielos', which has the reader witness a scene between two young people, Jeremy and Florita, in New York, in a restaurant on Third Avenue. They are discussing the possible shooting of a film. Jeremy's idea is to relate the story of his mother, Amparo, using episodes from her past in Spain, but also looking at the present, represented by another rootless woman in the city, with his mother's 'voz en *off*' (15), just as she uses when she talks to herself. This first idea for the structure of the film does not make sense to Florita, the actress who may perform the role of the other woman. Even though Amparo will take her son's script with her to Spain, she has not given him much hope that she will finance the project. Jeremy says of his mother: 'No me ha querido financiar la película, pero la está copiando' (31). Everything changes, however, after Amparo confronts her past in Spain and also observes the transformations that her home town has gone through while she was living away. She will become both the script-writer and the protagonist of her own story, as well as the producer of the film.

³²³ For a study of the parallels between *Entre visillos* and *Irse de casa* as *quest-romance* and autobiography, together with *El cuarto de atrás*, see Cruz-Cámara, *El laberinto intertextual*, 182-96.

Amparo is the daughter of a single mother, a circumstance which was viewed unsympathetically in post-war Spain. Her mother, Ramona Miranda, took refuge in a small city after giving birth to her illegitimate daughter and, late in the novel, the narrator remembers the time when Amparo was told of her father's existence: 'Tardó en saber que era hija de soltera. [...] Cuando murió ese padre nunca visto fue la primera vez que Amparo tuvo noticia de él [...] tendría ella once años' (189).

This secrecy concerning her origins contrasts with the situation of Amparo's own daughter, María, who has a child with a Greek artist and is pregnant again by him, even though he is living with another woman. As Amparo comments towards the end of the novel: 'Hoy día ser hija de madre soltera tiene poco de folletín' (325).

Over-protectiveness and resentment towards other people formed an integral part of the upbringing that Ramona gave her daughter, whom she encouraged to work hard at school and to be proud and ambitious: 'A la señora Ramona le gustaba poco que aceptara favores o regalos de 'esa gente'; pueden creer que somos unas muertas de hambre, tú te estás costeando todos los estudios por ti misma' (191). The dressmaker Ramona was jealous of anybody who had a close relationship with her daughter, such as Olimpia Moret, the rich girl who was one of the few friends Amparo made in the town. In Chodorow's views, the relationship between a single mother and her child will be damaging: 'My view is that exclusive single parenting is bad for mother and child alike. [...] mothers in such settings are liable to overinvest in and overwhelm the relationships.'³²⁴

The feeling of being different and the repressive conditions that her mother imposed on her, made Amparo careful about her friends. Olimpia and Abel Bores were the only people who related to her before she left to go abroad and work in Geneva as an interpreter.³²⁵ However, Amparo's relationship with these two is complicated by class difference.³²⁶ Both friends were from the best families in the town and both were in love with her. Indeed, one of the letters referred to in the novel arises from Amparo's relationship with Olimpia.

In *Confessions of the Letter Closet*, Patrick Paul Garlinger refers to the possibility of a homosexual relationship in *El cuarto de atrás* between C. and her

³²⁴ *The Reproduction of Mothering*, p. 217.

³²⁵ In fact, the author's sister, Ana María, worked in Geneva during the 1980s. See Carmen Martín Gaité's interview *A Fondo*.

³²⁶ The first characters to discuss the class difference between Amparo and Olimpia and Abel, are the women of the Greek choir at the beginning of Chapter Two.

childhood friend. This theory is based on the letter signed with an initial, but then Garlinger concludes that his speculation has no foundation: ‘The letters that circulate phantasmatically in *El cuarto de atrás* are not lesbian love letters’ (54).³²⁷ However, the author seems to have taken Garlinger’s idea and introduced it into *Irse de casa*, where there is indeed a letter written by Olimpia declaring her love for her absent friend Amparo. Continuing with his hypothesis, Garlinger explains:

Martín Gaité’s dismantling of the telos of romantic union between man and woman associated with amorous and sentimental letter fiction opens up the possibility that the love letter, once destined for a man, might be written for and read by another woman. (55)

Late in the narrative, during a conversation with Agustín, her doctor and confidant, Olimpia confesses her first loves: ‘yo de niña me enamoré de un chófer de mi padre, y luego de una amiga a la que idealicé durante años porque era pobre y guapa, lo contrario que yo’ (274).³²⁸ Agustín also confesses: ‘su gran pasión de juventud había sido un compañero del instituto que escribía versos y que luego murió de tuberculosis’ (275). This confession is answered by Olimpia: ‘somos homosexuales vergonzantes’ (275), which brings the discussion once again to the theme of homosexuality. During Franco’s time male homosexuality was penalised and, in the case of women, was inconceivable, as Garlinger explains:

The Francoist construction of female identity in Spain negated lesbianism as a possibility [...]. [S]ame-sex desire between women simply did not figure conceptually in juridical prohibitions, [...] lesbianism was rarely, if ever, named as such.³²⁹

Amparo, on the other hand, wished Abel Bores (who never wrote to her) had been the writer of Olimpia’s letter, which she kept for a number of years: ‘se estremecía de placer imaginando que hubiera podido recibir de Abel Bores una carta parecida y por

³²⁷ In his book, Garlinger, not only denies that type of sexual desire in the novel, he even tells the story of the letter Martín Gaité wrote to him to reject such an idea: ‘Martín Gaité made it clear to me that, for her, there never was a question. In a letter sent to me in reaction to an earlier published version of this interpretation, Martín Gaité maintained that the man in black had made a mistake. The scene, she corrected me, was meant to be ironic, to show the man in black seeing something that was not there. Martín Gaité is right, as we have seen that the man in black misreads C.’s desire as “lesbian”. Her desires cannot be reduced to that signifier’, p. 52.

³²⁸ This kind of feeling of the ‘poor’ rich girl can also be seen in *Celia*, the protagonist of Elena Fortún’s children stories, which Martín Gaité transformed into a television series and which she used to refer to as one of her first influences. See ‘Elena Fortún y su tiempo’ and ‘Elena Fortún y sus amigas’ in *Pido la palabra*, pp. 39-58, 59-79.

³²⁹ *Confessions*, p. 49.

eso la guardó, en vez de romperla inmediatamente' (217). In *Irse de casa* it appears that Amparo is playing with the idea of the ideal interlocutor, wishing to change the identity of the sender of the letter for the one she had wanted to receive it from.

This letter and the desire Olimpia feels for Amparo remind the reader of the theme of restrained homosexuality in other 1990s novels of Martín Gaité. As Beatrice Didier suggests: 'La femme qui écrit libère des fantasmes homosexuels qui sans l'écriture seraient peut-être toujours demeurés refoulés.'³³⁰ Indeed, it is possible to see this kind of ambiguous relationship in Leonardo and Julián Expósito, his cellmate, in *La Reina de las Nieves*; in Raimundo's bisexuality and the close relationship between Sofía and her daughter's best friend, Soledad, in *Nubosidad variable*, as well as in the relationship described between Águeda's mother and Rosario in *Lo raro es vivir*. The friendship of Olimpia and Amparo also reminds the reader of other friendships between women which the author portrays in other novels, such as those of Eulalia and Lucía in *Retahílas*, C. and her childhood friend in *El cuarto*, or Sofía and Mariana in *Nubosidad*. However, the friendship of Amparo and Olimpia was not able to develop because of Amparo's mother's fears of social rejection.

Amparo never answered Olimpia's letter, nor did she give anybody her address in New York since she chose to cut the threads that linked her to her past. Another important epistolary aspect of the novel is Ramona's epistolary relationship with Társila del Olmo, her only friend in Spain (even though in the narrative only one of the letters is reproduced). Amparo's mother was never able to break completely with her past, even though she had to suffer the rejection of conservative Spanish society. Their correspondence, 'su último enlace secreto con la ciudad' (185), ended with Ramona's death.

These letters, which Amparo never saw, were intercepted by her son, Jeremy, after his grandmother's death. The grandson decided to burn her letters, erasing the evidence of a woman who always felt rootless in a society where she never learned the language. In fact, the burning of the letters is treated as a ritual similar to the scene in *Retahílas*, when Germán and his girlfriend burn all their letters in the bonfire on St John's night, or the moment in *El cuarto de atrás* when C. recalls the burning of letters and other documents, which Garlinger terms a 'purification ritual.'³³¹ In *El cuarto de atrás* the process is described as follows: 'He quemado tantas cosas, cartas, diarios,

³³⁰ *L'Écriture-femme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1981), p. 27.

³³¹ *Confessions*, p. 43.

poesías. A veces me entra la piromanía, me agobian los papeles viejos. Porque de tanto manosearlos, se vacían de contenido, dejan de ser lo que fueron. [...] La última gran quema la organicé una tarde de febrero, estaba leyendo a Machado en esta misma habitación y me dio un arrebató' (45). This act of burning these documents involves the destruction of the past and also the destruction of various kinds of written expression.

In *Irse de casa*, Jeremy chooses the Bronx as the ideal place to burn the letters: Eran cartas de una amiga de España y se referían a gente que él no conocía. Se puso en cuclillas y las fue tirando despacio a la hoguera, los niños negros se reían muchísimo. [...] La última carta tardo en quemarse. (257)

Through Ramona's last letter to Társila, remembering an afternoon when she was happy, the reader learns of her feelings and regrets concerning her daughter's upbringing: 'Vivo en una casa que tiene de todo, mi yerno me respeta y está enamorado de Amparo, ahora tienen otra niña. [...] si sufre nunca te va a pedir ayuda [...]. Yo la enseñé a ser como es, me moriré con ese remordimiento' (310).

With regard to communication between mother and daughter, although they lived together all their lives it was never very satisfying. From an early age Amparo knew that it was better not to tell her mother what she felt, fearing her mother's reproaches for going out with people of her own age, or for the fact that she had fallen in love with a man from a higher social class, as had happened before they left the town: 'dos años antes de abandonar definitivamente la ciudad, cuando conoció a Abel Bores' (310). Her mother would presumably have worried that her daughter might suffer the same misfortune of being abandoned as she had been by Amparo's father. Even in America her mother did not trust anybody: 'Su madre desconfiaba de todo el mundo y estaba con el alma en un hilo hasta que la oía volver' (197). The fact that Ramona never learned English made her always dependent on her daughter, although Amparo felt a great distance between them: 'Estoy siempre sola, es mi condición' (194-95), Amparo tells her future husband the day she met him.

Although Amparo's life apparently seems fulfilled after marrying, having children and becoming a successful designer, at the age of sixty-three she still feels she has not taken any real decisions in her life, having always done what other people expected of her. As Winnicott observes of this kind of situation:

Development is a matter of inheritance of a maturational process, and of the accumulation of living experiences; this development does not occur, however,

except in a facilitating environment. [...] [It] can be described in terms of absolute dependence, relative dependence, and towards independence.³³²

Most of the decisions Amparo takes in life seem to arise from inertia, thinking only about what would be best for her mother. Chance also seems to play a significant part in her life, such as the evening when she met her husband: ‘Supo con total certeza que, si quería, se podía casar con él’ (197), but she is practical and does not talk about love when considering the outcome. The sentimental relationship with her lawyer after her husband’s death is also not explained. He, to her surprise, declared his love to her and she decided to maintain a comfortable and unassuming relationship which lasted until his death. Similar to other characters in Martín Gaité’s novels, Amparo does not seem to take any decisions but allows things to happen to her. Even the week she spends in her home town, the protagonist decides not to take decisions and to let things happen. It is not until the end of the novel that Amparo decides to change her life by taking a decision for herself. In other Martín Gaité novels it has been seen how chance plays an important role in the protagonists’ decisions to change their life. Examples include the encounter of Sofía and Mariana, as well as Leonardo’s finding out about his parents’ death or meeting Mónica, who gives him the clue that enables him to find Casilda. Furthermore, in *Irse de casa*, the theme of chance in life is what Abel Bores had been taking notes on the same morning that he meets Amparo: ‘el concepto de azar en Bergson’ (319).

In the prologue to the novel the relationship between Amparo and her children is presented from their point of view. Furthermore, the actress with whom Jeremy is talking, at the beginning of the novel, tells him before leaving: ‘si habla sola será porque tiene secretos, todas las madres los tienen. [...] Sabemos muy poco de nuestras madres’ (15). This theme, the lack of communication between parents and children, is recurrent throughout the novel. Everyone in the novel, except Abel Bores and his daughter, Rita, seem unable to communicate adequately. Indeed, it is Jeremy’s desire to learn more about his mother that has driven him to write the script.

The prologue also contains the first letter of the novel, written by Amparo to her daughter María the day she decides to travel back to Spain: ‘por una vez no pienso en los demás, y me voy. Ha sido un impulso súbito’ (22). Jeremy reads the letter in the ‘sewing room’ of his mother’s luxury apartment, which reveals to the reader the only

³³² Winnicott, *The Family*, p. 19.

place in the house where Amparo has left any traces of her past in Spain. Her sewing room in New York serves as a reminder of the small home, a basement flat of ‘cincuenta metros cuadrados y un retrete con ducha’ (42), which served also as a dressmaker’s workshop, where she grew up in Spain: ‘El desorden y la aglomeración del cuartito lo convertían en recodo clandestino de subversión, en escondite y nido’ (23). This sewing room represents for Amparo not only a place of subversion, but also the only link with Spain; the sewing room is the first place she thinks of when, in her home town, she buys a doll for her granddaughter. The antique shop where she buys the doll is situated in the place where her family home once was. Amparo contemplates the moment she will give the doll to her grandchild: ‘El paquete lo abriría Caroline en el cuartito de costura de Lexington Avenue. Esperaría a que estuvieran las dos solas’ (213). The shop where she buys the doll for her granddaughter and the place she lived as a child are linked here, and at the same time Amparo makes up a story around the doll, remembering the stories she used to tell herself as a child. The house, even though repressive at the time she lived in it, was at times escaped from in her imagination.

In fact, Jeremy knows little about his mother’s past. With his psychiatrist he is analysing his relationship with his family:³³³ ‘Hoy le tocaba contarle cosas de la abuela Ramona [...] qué tipo de relaciones mantuvo con la familia Drake y hasta qué punto influyó su condición de madre soltera en la educación que su hija Amparo les dio a ellos’ (252). For Jeremy, Spain is represented through his grandmother. Jeremy seems to understand the relationship between his mother and his grandmother, maybe due to his analysis with different psychiatrists: ‘Jeremy dijo que María no había acertado nunca a tratar a la madre, que lo que necesitaba era cariño, había recibido poco cariño de la abuela Ramona, y se había vuelto desconfiada, y un poco rígida’ (251). Amparo also reflects on her own inflexibility towards her children:

Tú, Jeremy, idealizas a la abuela, porque no la padeciste en la época de miseria.

Y sin embargo – pensó de pronto, y fue como si el aire se parara – yo también he exigido sacrificio a mis hijos, me he empeñado en que lo consigan todo con esfuerzo y sin ayuda. (288-89)

Throughout the novel the changing of Amparo’s position in relation to her children, after finding her past and understanding the reason for her own attitudes towards them, is apparent. She remembers when her older child was born and her

³³³ We find once again that one of Martín Gaité’s characters is visiting a psychiatrist.

wishes at that moment: ‘Y nació Jeremy, y ella pensó que nunca tenga miedo a la libertad, que sepa crecer por sí solo y que se enfrente a mí cuando haga falta’ (330). On her last day in her home city, Amparo imagines the conversation she will have with her son, telling him of her decision to finance his film. And during her dinner with Abel Bores she inwardly admits the envy she feels towards the relationship between her old friend and his daughter: ‘Yo a mi hija nunca supe tratarla’ (324). She recognises that she has made mistakes but that it is not too late: ‘Yo he cometido en mi vida muchas equivocaciones. Pero siempre se puede rectificar’ (324). It is possible to see the changes which Amparo goes through as the narrative progresses and as she takes notes for the film script. As said earlier and as it will be seen later, from Chapter Twenty-three, comments on the film are more common. The film becomes more and more part of the narrative and the romantic evening spent with Abel encourages her to change: ‘Ya no teme al futuro porque sabe que siempre podrá recordar esta noche’ (326).

Although *Irse de casa* cannot be classified as an epistolary novel, letters have an important role in the narrative as they serve as links between past and present and give background information on certain characters and situations. As Jurado Morales indicates: ‘Las cartas del presente ayudan a avanzar la acción’,³³⁴ while the letters of the past reveal moments lost in the memory of those who lived them. The letters written by Amparo inform the reader of her decisions, initially of leaving New York (the letter written to María) and finally of leaving Spain (the one written to Ricardo). The letters written by Ramona and Társila del Olmo link past and present, even though only one letter is included in the novel, the existence of the correspondence is mentioned at different times in the narrative. The other two letters in the novel also tell of decisions taken by other characters. Thus the note written by Marcelo to Amparo, inviting her to the last performance of his play, as well as the note written by Agustín to Olimpia, are letters which bring a close to different subplots of the narrative.

The last letter in the novel, written by Amparo to the waiter in the Spanish hotel, Ricardo, serves as a continuing link between Amparo’s return to New York and the town she has rediscovered in Spain. In this letter, Amparo expresses her desires to keep in contact with Ricardo with the idea of involving him in the writing of the film dialogues. It is clear in the letter that her decision to go back to New York and start working on the film is imminent: ‘Mi hijo va a empezar a rodar una película que tiene

³³⁴ Jurado Morales, *La trayectoria narrativa*, p. 402.

por escenario una provincia española y necesitamos un persona con buen oído y olfato literario como tú' (344). Indeed, Amparo specifically asks him to watch the women of the so-called Greek chorus: 'No dejes de estar atento a las señoras del coro griego' (344).

The Greek Chorus: Themes and Characters of the Novel

In *Irse de casa*, Amparo is presented to the reader as a mature but beautiful woman, with money and style. Her presence as a rich, attractive woman is constantly endorsed by the narrator's observations: 'Se alisa el vestido frente al espejo de tres cuerpos,³³⁵ sonríe, se mira los zapatos italianos carísimos, la cintura sin michelines, no representa ni cincuenta' (59). It is also confirmed by the comments of other characters:

Cuatro señoras que salen de la cafetería se la quedan mirando. [...] Se fijan sobre todo en los zapatos, a juego con el bolso y el cinturón.

-¡Que mujer más elegante! ¿Habéis visto? Debe de ser extranjera. (61)

At the same time Amparo is portrayed as a mystery to people in her home town. She pretends to be a foreigner, using her husband's surname and even, at times, imitating an American accent, as if playing the role of the foreigner. Only one character seems to have realised who she is: Ricardo, the hotel Excelsior's waiter, is the only one who has linked her with a figure from the past mentioned by the 'Greek chorus'. He also plays the role of 'spying' on the gatherings of the ladies who meet every day at the hotel's café to gossip about everyone in the town.

This 'Greek chorus', as Ricardo calls them, are the first to talk about Amparo's past: 'Son otros tiempos. Yo veo lógico que la gente quiera medrar. Amparo y su madre se adelantaron a su tiempo. Eso es lo que nos escuece' (42). Chapter Two, where these women first appear, is almost entirely written like a film script in which dialogue takes over narration. In the tradition of the classical Greek theatre, these women serve the reader as a link with other characters of the novel, commenting and giving information about characters who are presented later in the narrative.³³⁶ Most of the characters who

³³⁵ The mirror is again an important item in the narrative just as it was in *Nubosidad* and *La Reina*. At times, it serves as a witness of the character's moments of solitude and the interlocutor in those moments.

³³⁶ Ignacio Soldevila Durante, in his study of the novel, suggests a parallel between the 'Greek chorus' and the comedies of Jacinto Benavente: 'Este paso de comedia incisivo por el despliegue de la superficialidad de la burguesía provinciana, recuerda el recurso habitual de las comedias benaventianas.'

cross paths in the novel are under their scrutiny. These ‘señoras de toda la vida’ (46), of a similar age to Amparo, have witnessed many changes in their Spanish provincial society. They all know someone who is going through one type of crisis or another. Divorces, diets, youth, drugs, anorexia, are some of the themes which these women present to the reader, with a realism typical of Martín Gaité’s narratives. But above all, they serve as contrast to Amparo, who, although the same age, has lived through very different circumstances.

In a note to the novel found in *Cuadernos de todo*, it emerges that the author first intended Amparo to be the one who would put the reader in contact with the social reality of the ordinary people she finds in her home town:

El desvivir de Amparo a medida que va perdiendo las nociones de tiempo y geografía. Se encuentra (extrañada) hablando con la gente de barrios marginales, preguntándoles por el paro, por precios de alquiler, por la demolición de lo viejo, cuestión okupas, se cree que es una socióloga. (*Cuadernos*, 668)

Although in the novel Amparo does not interrogate the people she comes across, she does, indeed, wander the town, but mainly keeping to the new prosperous residential district where the hotel is, or the old centre where she used to live.

The decision to leave social themes (and gossip) to the women of the ‘Greek chorus’ works better in the novel, allowing the reader to see the point of view and attitudes of insiders, instead of using the ‘foreigner’ to study the behaviour of the ‘natives’, as if she were a sociologist or anthropologist. The reactions of the women to change and its repercussions on the everyday life of the society they live in, show a more realistic, local (although largely negative) portrait of that society. Amparo, on the other hand, is given the role of the silent witness, who, like a camera, shows the scenes that happen in front of her.

The women who form the ‘Greek chorus’ in *Irse de casa* recall the young girls in *Entre visillos*, whose banal conversations suggest the reality of the society they live in. In *Entre visillos*, Pablo Klein is the foreigner, the character who is different from that society: the role in *Irse de casa* that is given to Amparo. Also, the great number of characters in the novel presents what Jurado Morales calls an ‘efecto de mosaico a base de fragmentos.’³³⁷ These characters reveal the different types which form the social

³³⁷ *Irse de casa, o el haz y el envés de una aventurada emigración americana*, in *Carmen Martín Gaité*, ed. by Alicia Redondo Goicoechea, 199-206 (p. 202).

³³⁷ Jurado Morales, *La trayectoria narrativa*, p. 399.

range. Starting with the marriage of Manuela Roca and Dr Agustín Sánchez del Olmo, which has ended in divorce. This match between the daughter of one of the ‘best’ families and the son of a seamstress, Társila del Olmo generated a great amount of gossip. This match reveals a changing society. Even though their union is seen with unsympathetic eyes, they were able to marry, something unthinkable in postwar Spain, as the comments of the Greek chorus make clear. Manuela, who dies in a car accident when travelling back to her family holiday home, is a character who, although she finds some independence leaving home, will never understand her role in society.

The ill-fated Manuela seems to be followed by a camera, as she is mainly presented in cinematic situations, such as reading by the swimming pool or driving her car through the city streets. She is also shown as representing a piece of ‘género teatral del absurdo’ (80) or of a piece of Golden Age theatre in the scene ‘played’ with her maid, Rufina. Manuela, indeed, sees herself as part of a ‘comedia’ (81), commenting on the loss of her role as the protagonist of the plot and visualising herself as the secondary character: ‘La actriz secundaria, abrumada ante el peso de tanta responsabilidad y cada vez más hundida en la consideración de su descenso de categoría, había apoyado el codo en el brazo de la butaca y se tapaba la frente con la mano’ (80-81). Like Manuela, Agustín also seems to be followed by a camera, which witnesses different moments of his life. He is seen meeting people, putting the reader in contact with another stock character, the problematic youth who lacks a goal in life. This character type includes Marcelo, a young man from Madrid, who leaves Madrid to break with a life ‘a la deriva’ (118) and with drugs, and also Alicia, a young anorexic who lives with her divorced mother and seems to choose self-destruction as her way of rebelling against social norms.³³⁸

The presentation of these different characters emphasizes the key theme of the novel, which, as the title indicates, is leaving home. The narrative develops a number of characters who have left home to find their own selves. Yet, as has been seen with Manuela, leaving the family home did not help her to understand herself or be fulfilled. And there is Valeria, Manuela’s niece, who although a successful radio presenter feels that the apartment she lives now in cannot be called home: ‘En ninguno de los refugios más o menos provisionales donde había vivido desde que se independizó de la familia, había conseguido ese bienestar, que cada día añoraba más ardientemente’ (151). Yet

³³⁸ For a study of the young in *Irse de casa*, especially of the characters of Alicia and Valeria, see Cruz-Cámara, *El laberinto intertextual*, 113-28.

Valeria is envied by her aunt, who thinks that her independence and rejection of her family and social conventions, ‘vivía con un chico sin casarse’ (99), show the difference between generations. The reader, on the other hand can see the insecurity Valeria feels, as, although proclaiming free love and independence, she does not like the fact that her boyfriend sleeps with other women. Valeria, for her part, envies Rita Bores, her childhood friend who still lives with her father and maintains a good relationship with him. Rita, the owner of the antique shop and daughter of Abel Bores, opens the narrative to another type of youth. Even though she has not left home and feels comfortable living with her father, she is an entrepreneur with her own business and with a boyfriend who lives in Switzerland. Rita and Valeria’s friendship and reunion indicate a new hope for the future. Indeed, these two women represent the future in the same way as Águeda in *Lo raro es vivir*.

The contrast between the different generations and the repressions which some of the characters feel with regard to the paternal home, especially Manuela and Valeria, or Alicia in the case of the maternal one, may well reflect the social and cultural repression suffered in Franco’s Spain during Amparo’s youth. Although times have changed dramatically, and Spanish society of the 1990s is much more progressive, *Irse de casa* suggests a clear critique of the lack of freedom and limited goals that young people still experience. This is possibly due to the economic pressures that consumerist society exerts. Indeed, in her *Cuadernos de todo*, the author develops the theme of women as victims of the consumerist society which began in the 1960s, see for example, ‘Buscar un ambiente’ in *Cuaderno 3* (96-97), and continues on this topic with articles such as the one published in *La Vanguardia* in 1994:

No es la pérdida de memoria, sino la imposibilidad de adquirirla lo que se extiende como inquietante epidemia en la juventud actual, ansiosa de consumir y devorar por entero el presente en el instante mismo en que es percibido.

Incapaces de relacionar cosa con cosa, desvinculados del ayer y del mañana, muchos de nuestros jóvenes viven con el hilo perdido. (*Tirando del hilo*, 483)

As this novel clearly indicates, to leave home is not necessarily synonymous with freedom.

The Script: Taking Charge of One's Own Life Through Writing

During the 1980s, Martín Gaité worked on different television scripts, such as the television series *Santa Teresa de Jesús* (1983), *Fragmentos de interior* (1984) and *Celia* (1993). She also produced the script for the documentary *Salamanca*, in the series *Ésta es mi tierra* (1983).³³⁹ The influence of this involvement can be seen in her novels. Details on narrative 'sets' or the attitude of a character in a scene, as well as the beginning of chapters which take the reader right to the heart of the action are typical of the film or TV script (or of theatre plays, a genre which Martín Gaité also practised). As Margaret Parker observes: '[*Irse de casa*] features cinematic techniques used in previous novels, such as unmarked transitions, multiple points of view, and accounts of the same event from various perspectives.'³⁴⁰ As well as that, this novel is paved with references to film and cinema. Furthermore, in the novel, as in a film, we can 'hear' the 'sound tracks' which follow the characters in different scenes. For example, *Strangers in the Night* is the song that Amparo listened to in her future husband's car the night they met; while *Yesterday* is the one Abel Bores plays to celebrate his re-encounter with his former love.

From the prologue onwards the author seems to be creating film scenes. Comments on script-writing and filming are made throughout the novel, especially in the prologue, where the film script or filming is referred to on nearly every page, as well as towards the end of the novel, from Chapter Twenty-three onwards. Thus the dramatic impetus for the novel and its development, are provided by Jeremy's project. One of the many examples is the early scene in Amparo's apartment in Manhattan when her children find their mother's money, while looking through her coats and wardrobes:

Venga vamos a repartir. Lo importante es que te guste la escena. ¿Verdad que no desentona?

–En absoluto. Es un *gag* genial.

–Me alegro que sepas apreciarlo. [...] En una escena como ésta, si se les hubiera ocurrido, acabarían llegando la policía. (30)

At other times, the sense of a scene being filmed is completely explicit: 'La cámara iba siguiendo sus pasos vacilantes a través de edificios en ruinas' (32).

³³⁹ See Jurado Morales, *La trayectoria narrativa*, p. 476.

³⁴⁰ 'Revisiting Spain as Liberation from the Past in *Irse de casa* and *A Woman Unknown*: Voices from a Spanish Life', *South Central Review*, 18 (2001), 114-26 (p. 115).

In *Irse de casa*, the idea of the film is constantly present in the narrative, and life-writing is produced through the rewriting of the film script. There are a number of circumstances, places and people which stimulate Amparo's consciousness, making her understand the reason for her journey. The first place which reminds her of her past in a town she hardly recognises is the Plaza del Rincón, an encounter that marks the beginning of her writing:

Llevaba dos mañanas viniendo tempranito a sentarse allí y seguía sin pasar casi nadie, o los que pasaban no la veían, en eso consistía la magia del lugar, la misma que la llevó de adolescente a elegirlo como escondite, tan inconfundible para ella como invisible para los demás; y recuperar esa sensación de privilegio vino a suponer el primer acontecimiento digno de reseña en su travesía del desierto: 'He estado en la plazuela del Rincón y existe', anotó escuetamente por la noche en su agenda. (142)

This square, which she finds by chance, is where she used to take refuge from her mother and her home. These associations again take her back to her childhood experiences.

Társila's hairdresser is the second place where Amparo confronts her past. The unexpected encounter with Társila's home, 'la primera casa que le habían ofrecido desde su retorno a la ciudad', and 'su viejo armario de luna' (182), take her back to the times when her only friend was the image she could see in the mirror. Talking to herself, or to her reflected image, was one of the games her friend Olimpia taught her, a game which, as the reader sees, she still likes playing. Through the mirror, Amparo recalls the moment she left the town with her mother to move to Geneva. The encounter with her old wardrobe encourages Amparo to continue writing her own story: 'Necesitaba tomar notas de todo aquello, rumiarlo a solas. Ya empezaba a haber argumento' (187). This encounter also encourages her to reread her son's script: 'Recién concluida la relectura al sexto día de estancia en su ciudad, Amparo supo con certeza no sólo que ese texto había sido el desencadenante del viaje emprendido, sino que se había movido a su dictado desde que llegó' (207). Writing and reading her own story breaks with the indifference she had assumed since her arrival, and she begins to take charge of her future: 'Me quiero salir del guión de Jeremy –dijo—. Ir de verdad a la calle del Olvido' (207).

'La calle del Olvido', the title of Jeremy's script and also the name of the street where Amparo grew up, brings her in contact, again, with a past she wanted to forget.

The house, converted to an antique shop, is now an open space without walls, and this takes Amparo back to her childhood dreams: ‘Soñaba con demoler todos los tabiques y convertirse en habitante de un lugar grande y silencioso para ella sola’ (210). The antique shop of Rita Bores (coincidentally the daughter of Amparo’s old love) is an airy and light space, but Amparo’s home was full of gloom, of partition walls which separated minuscule rooms. This scene, together with the Plaza del Rincón, suggests to the reader the feelings of repression and entrapment Amparo suffered in her home town and which she can still feel: ‘No era capaz de encontrarle sentido a su viaje. Y sin embargo, no se quería ir. No podía. La ciudad la tenía atrapada’ (149). Indeed, the author suggests the physical and psychological oppression citizens of a small Spanish town might feel.

Amparo, having stepped out of what once was her home, crosses the street to look at Olimpia’s house. Olimpia is reciting part of Macbeth’s address to the witches,³⁴¹ which could be seen as a scene within a scene. The woman who appears in the balcony looks like an old woman with white hair and Amparo recognises her former friend. Amparo, on the other hand does not feel like an old woman, having had a face-lift and a liposuction to look younger. Her friend’s image awakes in her a ‘mezcla de remordimiento, piedad y éxtasis’ (219), but, most importantly, this scene ends with Amparo anxious to continue her modification of Jeremy’s script: ‘Tenía hambre y sed, pero sobre todo muchas cosas que apuntar para inyectarle vida al guión de Jeremy’ (219).

As discussed earlier, Amparo adopts the role of spectator, or witness, who does not interfere with the town’s life and the people she meets. She is the camera or audience who looks without being seen: ‘Amparo levanta el telón de sus parpados’ (193). In fact, Martín Gaité defined Amparo as: ‘una especie de ojo que ve todo lo que ocurre a su alrededor y lo que pasa a los demás.’³⁴² After Manuela Roca’s death, and once each of the characters in the novel have had their period of protagonism, the reader is witness to what could be termed the film’s key scene. In Amparo’s version of the script, the very first scene could begin with the funeral service for Manuela:

La película podría empezar ahora, se dijo Amparo Miranda, mientras subía las escaleras de la Catedral. Esa mujer que hemos visto deambular por parajes

³⁴¹ This, interestingly, involves his request for information concerning his future. *Macbeth*, Act IV, Scene I.

³⁴² Cited in Jurado Morales, *La trayectoria narrativa*, p. 399.

desiertos e irreales mientras se suceden los títulos de crédito está llegando a un templo donde hay mucha gente, pero nadie la mira ni la reconoce. Ha sobrevolado mares, ciudades y montañas para asistir al entierro de una amiga o tal vez de un pariente cercano, eso mejor que lo decida Jeremy. (286)

Inside the cathedral, Amparo, who is completely detached from the funeral service she is merely witnessing, reflects on her days in the town and the steps to follow. She has changed her attitude to life and has decided to go back to New York and exploit a new opening, a new future: ‘este viaje ha sido como cascar una alcancía y que se derrame todo el caudal de pensamiento cautivo, los argumentos del pasado, del presente y del futuro se han echado a rodar como monedas vertiginosas’ (288).

Towards the end, the novel seems to have turned into a film which has started to be shot. As mentioned earlier, Chapter Twenty-three is littered with commentaries on the script and the filming. It is as if each one of the scenes has a camera in front, following the movements of the protagonist. At the same time she imagines the directions to be followed as if she were directing the filming:

Amparo sigue de pie con la espalda apoyada en la columna y el órgano lleva unos minutos sonando; a ti que no te vean, le dice Amparo a Jeremy, que se oculta con su cámara en el coro, pero sácalo todo. Fíjate bien en los gestos de las señoras, detente en los rostros que se miran con pasmo, cada una puede estar recordando una anécdota de la difunta y entre todas compondrían una historia que tal vez no coincidiera con lo más escondido de su persona. (288)

In a way, the scene in the cathedral could be regarded as ending the novel and beginning the film; an ending similar to those of *El cuarto de atrás* or *Nubosidad variable*, where the novel is revealed to the reader as the pages that have previously been read. In this case it is the script that Amparo has been rewriting and that can now start being filmed. However, what Amparo had not counted on is an encounter which is going to add a new scene to the script. This new scene will also be fundamental to her way of looking at the future, and will close unfinished business or an ‘asignatura pendiente’ from her past. The moment when Amparo sees Abel Bores inside the cathedral changes her plans for the day and the script of the developing film.

This encounter, which Amparo had wished for from the moment she arrived in the town,³⁴³ but which she decided to leave to chance, makes the romantic ending she had actually rejected as ‘barato y ventajista’ (287).³⁴⁴ Abel and Amparo have supper, on her sixty-fourth birthday (a birthday he still remembers), in a secluded, mountain restaurant while the Beatles song, *Yesterday*, plays in the background. This scene could easily compete with the best *novelas rosas*. The ‘restaurante con velitas’ (287), which she had pictured with Marcelo, is used in the scene with Abel. Even though this scene is a real cliché of the best sentimental novels or romantic films, the author decides not to give her character the classical happy ending reuniting them forever, but instead leaves an open ending in which their paths may cross again. Amparo suggests that Abel could be part of the film: ‘podríamos llamarte para el rodaje’ (323). Yet, Amparo decides not to stay in the town and live a love story which she had dreamed of all her life. Instead, she decides to go back to New York, give up her business, change her profession, and start a new and better relationship with her children. For the first time in her life, she takes a decision on her own. After the death of her mother, her husband and her lover, Ralf, she is alone for the first time, finding with that isolation the freedom to choose her own path.

Conclusion

The prologue to the novel includes the first letter written by Amparo to her daughter María, giving her the news of her departure for Spain. The last chapter, Chapter Twenty-eight, ends with Amparo’s letter to Ricardo informing him of news of her departure for New York. These two letters show a different woman. The first reveals a woman who had just followed an impulse and who is not sure of her aim; she is just leaving to find ‘una bocanada de olvido’ (22). The last letter presents a woman much more sure of herself, who seems to know exactly what she wants: ‘se me ha ocurrido a última hora, pero lo veo tan claro’ (344). Instead of finding a ‘gust of oblivion’, Amparo has confronted her past and has decided to make the film of her life, *La calle del olvido*,

³⁴³ In Chapter Three and after reading in the local newspaper an article about Abel Bores, the narrator comments on Amparo feelings: ‘ha encontrado un motivo fulminante para salir. No a buscarlo, sino a pasear por la misma ciudad donde él aún vive y por la que puede apetecerle salir a pasear [...]. El viaje de Amparo ha cobrado sentido, se ha convertido en una aventura’, p. 59.

³⁴⁴ Marcelo had sent her a ‘carta medio de amor’ (p. 248) and asked her to meet him at the theatre, which she decides against.

so as not to forget it. Her journey has taken her to her past, made her reflect on her present, and taken charge of her future. As with the protagonists of the other Martín Gaité novels of the 1990s, Amparo has changed her life through reflection and writing. But, of course, the life-writing in this novel is begun through the film script her son, Jeremy, had written to explore his mother's past. As Biruté Ciplijauskaitė notes: 'se trata de reproducir el nacimiento de una película.'³⁴⁵

Jeremy's film script is rewritten by Amparo, who starts rediscovering her past in flashbacks, interposing scenes from the past with scenes from the present she is experiencing. The people and places she encounters inspire her to take notes to add to and develop her son's original idea. In her notebook or diary, she jotted down 'impresiones de la ciudad, muchas de las cuales se entretrejan ya con el guión' (287).

Thematically, the novel also relates back to a repressive past which reminds the reader of the era of *Entre visillos*. This period is presented by Amparo's memories, the letters of Ramona and Társila del Olmo, as well as by the comments the women of the 'Greek chorus' make regarding the transformation their society has gone through. The life in Spain of the 1950s is what Amparo has to confront, the period of her life when the society she lived in with her mother did not allow her to be whatever she wanted, so she ran away from it, trying to forget it. These memories are what Amparo is going to rescue through her writing. These memories are also going to make her realise the importance of her upbringing, her relationship with her mother, in the context of her relationship with her own children, and the way she has repressed their impulses. Reflecting on her past is going to make Amparo realise the need to change, to take decisions in order to have a better relationship with her children and also take control of her life. Even though this novel and its characters are not as close to the person of the author as her other characters of the 1990s novels, it is possible to see the influence Martín Gaité's biography still had, especially during the periods spent in the United States.

³⁴⁵ Ciplijauskaitė, *Carmen Martín Gaité*, p. 64

CONCLUSION

The use of diaries, letters and other types of life-writing in literature has evolved during the centuries, developing a more introspective and metafictional character, as well as presenting a therapeutic side of self-writing. That evolution can also be seen in Carmen Martín Gaité's literary career. Diaries and letters have been part of the author's output from her first novels and short stories. She not only used diaries and letters as a narrative strategy, she also reflected on this kind of writing in many of her essays and articles. One important aspect of life-writing is the need of isolation and solitude in order to develop into self-reflection, a type of writing especially close to women who need to conquer solitude, as the author proposed in her *cuadernos*, women should confront their solitude instead of hide from it is.

Looking at letters, diaries and life-writing in literature provided me with parameters for understanding the development of these types of writing and their function in Martín Gaité's work. In literature, this development went from narratives which started as mirrors of life, presenting the novels, especially epistolary novels, as the simple reproduction of 'real letters' found by the editor, towards a more clear fictional narrative which indeed copied real life. The development of life-writing goes from an objective representation of female characters portrayed by male writers, to a subjectivity of women who take control of their own narratives and present themselves as the creators and protagonists of their own stories. In relation to the different kinds of life-writing it was seen that there are differences and similarities between letters and diaries even though it is difficult separating the different types of life-writing, as many of their characteristics overlap. Both types of writing in Foucault's words share a self-examination aspect, this is writing as a self-reflective act. Studying writing as a self-reflective act took me to life-writing as therapeutic writing, the writing-cure, writing after traumatic or difficult times, where the writers are able to see themselves from an

objective point of view and by studying themselves, looking at their past, understand their problems. This is a writing which also serves as mirror or reflection, as Didier points out ‘miroir, reflect, regard’³⁴⁶ are terms which often appeared in diaries. Life-writing which becomes *desdoblamiento* (‘dédoublement’ in Didier’s words) of the one who writes, or is a kind of ‘levitation’³⁴⁷ in Abbott’s terms. As José Teruel expresses it: ‘En el momento en que escribo yo comienza a nacer mi *otro*’,³⁴⁸ the writers look at themselves from the outside, writing themselves, creating themselves.

In this thesis I have attempted to show how in Martín Gaité’s work the foregrounding of various kinds of self-reflective writing culminated in her 1990s novels, especially *Nubosidad variable* and *La Reina de las Nieves*, which were also her most popular ones with the Spanish reading-public. These are novels where the author seems to be reflecting herself into her own characters. In Martín Gaité’s fiction up to the 1990s although several principal characters write diaries and letters (as was seen, for example, with Natalia in *Entre visillos*) this writing does not involve changes in their lives or a quest to understand how they have developed. The diaries and letters these characters produced served as a place in which to note their experiences and preoccupations, but without the self-reflective, self-examining aspect her later novels would reveal. Maturity and personal loss brought about a more reflective type of writing. The function of writing the self as *tabla de salvación* or the writing-cure is the main focus of the study. In the novels of the 1990s, Martín Gaité’s characters use writing as a way to understand their lives, make sense of their present after going through difficult or traumatic experiences. As José Teruel indicates:

A partir de de *Nubosidad variable*, de esos desconcertantes laberintos afectivos y desarraigados empezaron a salir sus protagonistas con desenfado e ironía, con la terapia de la palabra escrita y buenas dosis de representación, que en el fondo fueron las mejores armas de Carmen Martín Gaité.³⁴⁹

In the first part of the thesis I analysed the use of letters and diaries and other kinds of life-writing used as self-examination tools. I tried to differentiate between

³⁴⁶ *Le journal intime*, p. 113.

³⁴⁷ Abbott, p. 25.

³⁴⁸ José Teruel, ‘El rescate del tiempo como proyecto narrativo: *El cuarto de atrás* y otras consideraciones sobre Carmen Martín Gaité’, in J.M. Martínez Cachero and others eds., *Mostrar con propiedad un desatino: La novela española contemporánea* (Madrid: Eneida, 2004), 191-209 (p. 194).

³⁴⁹ José Teruel, Introduction to Carmen Martín Gaité, *Obras completas I*, pp. 44-45

different kinds of life-writing such as diaries, letters and memoirs finding common aspects of these types of ‘narrative of the self’³⁵⁰ which have reflection in their core. I looked at the different definitions of diary, in order to understand Martín Gaité’s use of her *cuadernos de todo* as diaries or *dietarios*. These are indeed diaries which are used not only to write personal everyday experiences but more notebooks where as their title indicates, everything goes. They are the type of diaries without rules, in Didier words, and they are also similar to the *Hupomnēmata* discussed by Foucault.

With the publication of her *Cuadernos de todo* in 2002, Martín Gaité’s readers were able to penetrate a personal world which had mostly been hidden before. The *Cuadernos* are, in effect, the author’s intimate diaries, and even though they can also be regarded as the writer’s workshop or *dietarios*, in them the reader is given access to many of the preoccupations Martín Gaité had throughout her life. Starting in the 1960s, her *cuadernos* constituted a new way to approach and develop a more intimate side of writing. Adopting her daughter’s suggested title of ‘cuadernos de todo’, Martín Gaité’s notebooks become a place to write everything.

I started analysing the first three *cuadernos* and their critical function as the author was writing through a time of change both in Spain and in her own life. These notebooks could be seen as the most impersonal or intellectual ones in the way that she seems to be writing about the world outside herself. The author started using her notebooks as places to discuss her thoughts about society, specially the thoughts that came to her after reading books on themes such as religion, culture, philosophy and sociology. I studied the function of these *cuadernos* as the place to have a ‘conversation’ with the books Martín Gaité was reading at the time. Even though there is little information in these first *cuadernos* about the author’s private life, these notebooks can be seen as a kind of escape valve where the writer could express some of her thoughts which were otherwise difficult to express. The themes dealt with in these *cuadernos* were indeed very close to the author’s preoccupations as a woman and a mother. Themes such as the role of women in society, female friendship, relations between men and women, love, motherhood and family relationships are a fundamental part of the first pages of the *Cuadernos de todo*. It is also possible to see how from the first pages, even though the author never said to be writing a diary, her own preoccupations are constantly interlaced with her reading and writing.

³⁵⁰ Foucault, p. 219.

From *Cuaderno 3* Martín Gaité starts using the notebooks in a different way. Thus, her work in progress starts filling the pages. Looking at the function of the *cuadernos* as the writer's workshop, examining the different entries the author wrote in these works (with regard with the subsequent creation of *El cuento de nunca acabar*, *El cuarto de atrás*, *La Reina de las Nieves*, and so on) it is possible to see the connection between her personal circumstances and her fictional characters' preoccupations and development. The author's work always had a close relationship to the author's life and circumstances. *El cuento de nunca acabar* is a good example of how Martín Gaité's thoughts were interwoven with her biography, ending in a work where the idea of narration is discussed through the author's personal experiences. Reading *Cuadernos de todo* it is also possible to understand the evolution and complexity of some of her published works, which were developed over many years. Indeed, there are frequent links between the first notebooks and the ideas which the author used in her later novels. Such links lead into one of the ideas studied in this thesis, the development of the characters of the novels as mirrors of the author.

'Cuenta pendiente' (1979), a project the author started after her parents' death, reveals a more intimate side of the author as the subjects of her writing are her parents as well as her own memories and dreams after their death. This project, which she envisaged as a possible novel, takes the reader to the notebooks as a location in which she writes in an intensely personal fashion after the death of her parents. The death of the parents in 1978, although expected, is one of the traumatic experiences in the author's life. The loss of the mother was also the moment for Martín Gaité to start thinking about herself as an older woman. This year starts a more reflective type of writing which is closely related to the kind of writing Martín Gaité's protagonists of the novels of the 1990s will engage in. Most of these female protagonists write in their mature years, after having lost their mothers (or parents) and in some cases once they have themselves become mothers. As Didier comments:

La présence de la mère prend inévitablement pour les femmes un autre sens que pour les hommes, puisque leur mère est leur exacte matrice, leur préfiguration. D'autant plus sensible que l'âge de l'autobiographie est souvent celui de la maturité, et du moment où elles saisissent la ressemblance avec leur mère, ayant alors l'âge qu'elle avait lors de leur enfance.³⁵¹

³⁵¹ *L'écriture-femme*, p. 26.

As the author wrote in a note to the publication of her ‘Bosquejo autobiográfico’ (1980) in *Agua pasada*: ‘para un lector que no conozca mi biografía reciente, donde lea “soledad” y “muerte”, puede estar seguro de que mi vivencia de esas dos nociones era aún bien incompleta’ (11). While the author wrote in her diaries or *cuadernos* on the subject of her parents’ death, a few years later she did so again after her daughter’s death. The death of her two main interlocutors, her mother and her daughter, left the author with a great emptiness which she seems to be transferring to her characters’ lives, giving them her own questions, and doubts, about life and family relationships. It was thanks to her writing that the author managed to get over that emptiness: ‘estoy sola, más sola de lo que he estado nunca en mi vida, rodeada de silencio [...]. sin crearme mucho nada de lo que pasa ni de lo que veo. Tal vez por eso mismo necesite apuntarlo’ (611). These were the words the author wrote on the day she arrived at Vassar College on 28 August 1985. I looked at the idea of writing as *tabla de salvación* or the writing-cure, after the death of the parents, especially Martín Gaité’s mother with whom the author had a very close relationship, and a few years later of her daughter, a death that the author found difficult to overcome.

The best example of the use of Martín Gaité’s *Cuadernos de todo* by the author as psychoanalytic tool is revealed by the above lines written in America after her daughter’s death (1985). Being in America allowed her to put the necessary distance between and gain the necessary solitude and isolation from people who new of her recent loss. In addition, this complete isolation helped her look into herself and find reasons to write. The author’s sister comments on how,

Cuando murió Marta se fue a América, empujada por mí, porque ella no quería, pero yo casi la obligué a que se marchara. Eran seis meses y pensé que, como allí nadie había conocido a mi sobrina, no sé cómo explicarte, podía ser un corte en su vida del que, a lo mejor, venía un poco de salvación.³⁵²

Since 1980, Martín Gaité had encountered in the United States many ‘rooms of her own’, where, as well as finding solitude and suffering bereavement, she found herself and lived some of her most fulfilling moments. These American notebooks are also a clear illustration of the use of the notebooks as diaries, written nearly every day, and in this respect are different from any of the other notebooks that had been written in her home-country. The *cuadernos americanos* show moments of happiness and optimism in

³⁵² Cited in Juan Carlos Soriano, p. 274.

the writer's life, which contrast with the pages written in her home country. These *cuadernos* present another aspect of the *cuadernos de todo* as diaries with pages such as the ones she produced for her scrap book *Visión de Nueva York* where writing serves more as a souvenir of the good times spent in this country. Even though it is possible to find in the *Cuadernos de todo* pages written in times of difficulty, the use of diaries as therapeutic tools is made more clear in her novels.

In this thesis I have analysed Martín Gaité's novels of the 1990s, and the use of diaries, letters and life-writing to understand the characters' past, make sense of their present and take charge of their future. For this to happen her characters had to go through very difficult times which made them reflect on their present life. They all had to go through a crisis to feel the urge to examine their past lives. The need to re-encounter (and understand) the mother, even after her death, is also fundamental for Martín Gaité's characters. Dreams and noting them helps to understand the mother, conquering through the dreams a more open communication. Martín Gaité's characters, just like herself, find communicating with the death in their dreams a way to continuing having them as part of their life. The themes studied in the author's first *cuadernos* are also developed in these novels making a parallel between the author's and her characters. It is also possible to see the way Martín Gaité 'gives' her protagonists some of her own characteristics, especially the need to write in moments of desperation.

In the 1990s Martín Gaité seems to be looking for answers about the meaning of life, after the death of her daughter, and this quest is projected into the protagonists of her novels.³⁵³ These protagonists all search their past to understand their present situation, taking writing as their own *tabla de salvación*. Martín Gaité gives pen and paper to every one of her protagonists. From Mariana and Sofía who need to make sense of the moment of separation in their youth to Amparo who travels back to her home town in Spain to understand her present life, every one of the protagonists of Martín Gaité's novels published in the 1990s uses writing as their way to reach that understanding. They all are going to go back to their early years before they reached maturity to see what circumstances took them to the place they find themselves at. They are especially going to be examining family relationships, the separations from their mothers and the need to make peace with their mothers through their understanding to be able to grow and become the adults they are with all their consequences. They are

³⁵³ It should be noted that *La Reina de las Nieves* and *Nubosidad variable* are both dedicated to Marta.

going to take control of their lives once they stop blaming others for their present situations. Psychoanalytic theories helped with the examination of these characters to be able to understand family relationships.

While it is possible to see Mariana, Sofía and Leonardo writing in the present and the urgency these characters have to write their thoughts, reflections and experiences; Agueda and Amparo are going to write their lives once they have lived those circumstances which they are going to reveal in the novels. Agueda writes two years after the episodes she relates happened; while Amparo, although takes notes of some of the episodes she is living, leaves the writing of her life (her script) for the future. As time passes, the need to write, to be able to survive, becomes less urgent and indeed, it is possible to see Martín Gaité in *Cuadernos de todo* (at least in the published work) writing less and less as the years pass. From *Cuaderno 35*, the last of her *cuadernos americanos*, written in 1985, there is no continuation of her diaries. The last chapter or *cuaderno* in the published work is *Cuaderno 36*, which consists of notes taken in 1992. After that, the *notas fugaces* at the end of the collection give examples of notes taken in 1990, 1997 and a final note of 1999. The last note in *Cuadernos de todo* is a farewell from the author: ‘Escribo desde el más allá. [...] No sé dónde estaré enterrada, pero estaré en un sitio desde el que no podré hablar, y los que vienen a llorarme no pueden hablar por mí’ (669). Whether the author (or her sister) decided to destroy the notebooks written in the last decade of her life or whether the decision was simply not to publish them is something that remains unknown.³⁵⁴ Similarly, the protagonists of the last two novels, *Lo raro es vivir* and *Irse de casa*, even though they still search for an understanding of their past, do not have the need to note their findings in order to be able to continue. The writing is left for the future.

The importance of life-writing in Martín Gaité’s 1990s novels is fundamental for an understanding of the author’s biography. Analysing the novels and her *Cuadernos de todo* in conjunction, it is possible to draw a series of parallelisms which before the publication of the *Cuadernos* would have been more difficult to form. Writing as *tabla de salvacion* is something Martín Gaité did in her *cuadernos* and gave to her protagonists to allow them to have a future. Martín Gaité’s biography, her fiction and life-writing are interwoven, and in this thesis I have aimed to establish many parallels between the characters of her novels and the author.

³⁵⁴ Calvi comments on *Cuaderno 36*, in a short introductory note, that this is: ‘El último *Cuaderno de todo* de cierta extensión [...] que se ha incluido en la presente edición’, p. 631.

This thesis has attempted to develop a new path in Martín Gaité studies by examining in detail many of the aspects of her *Cuadernos de todo* and linking them to the author's work, especially to her novels of the 1990s. José Teruel and Maria Vittoria Calvi are, of course, the critics who carried out the preliminary work analysing Martín Gaité's fiction in relation to her notebooks in some of their articles and introductions. Here, though, I have undertaken a much more comprehensive study of the *Cuadernos de todo* and their relation to character development in the late novels, focusing on diaries, letters and life-writing as self-reflective writing as therapeutic. I have intended to reveal the extent to which the various forms of personal writing that Carmen Martín Gaité cultivated throughout her career have been harnessed for the development of the characters and the dramatic and thematic content of her late novels as well as the way her characters took the idea of the writing-cure further than the author ever did in her own *cuadernos*.

With the publication in the coming years of Martín Gaité's *Obras completas* and the appearance of more of her unpublished manuscripts and letters, the study of the author's personal writing will become more significant. As José Teruel has noted: 'Toda la narrativa de Martín Gaité, desde sus primeros cuentos [...] hasta su particular *Persiles*, *Los parentescos*, es una profunda reflexión sobre la necesidad de prolongar nuestra vida en otra.'³⁵⁵ With this thesis I have attempted to open a new path into Martín Gaité's studies, one which will look at her work from a more intimate, personal way.

³⁵⁵ Teruel, 'Un contexto biográfico', p. 47.

APPENDIX**DIARIES, LETTERS AND REFLECTIONS: SOME AMERICAN COLLAGES**

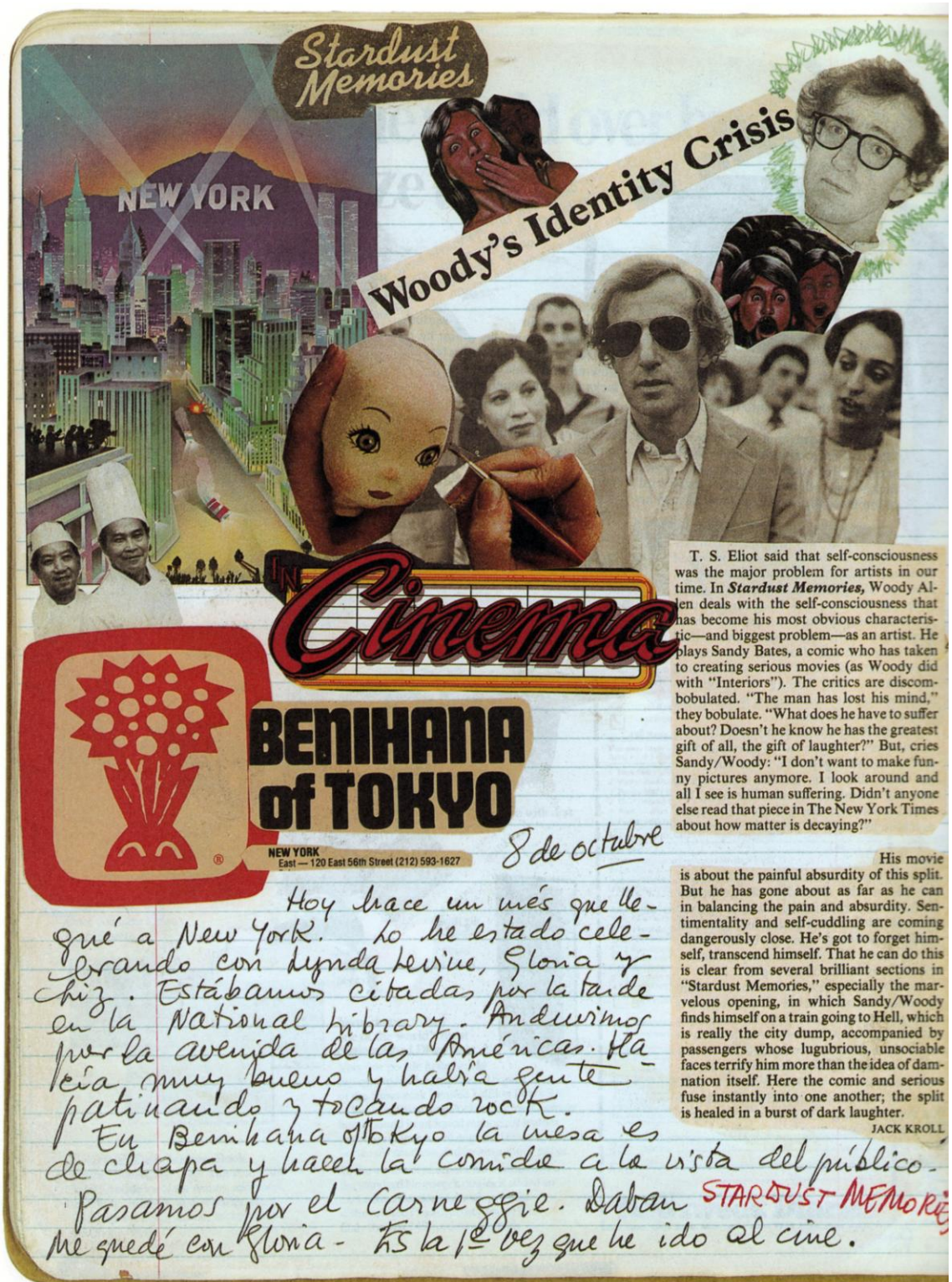


Figure 1. This collage indicates the way that, at times, Martín Gaité used her scrapbook as a diary that reflected her professional activity – a meeting at the National Library with, among others, Lynda (*sic*) Levine (the critic Linda Gould Levine) – as well as social activities. The latter included a visit to a Japanese restaurant (although she gives

no opinion on the food) and taking in Woody Allen's *Stardust Memories* (released September 1980). Again, she offers no opinion on the film but does include Jack Kroll's mixed review.



Figure 2. Here, in a self-mocking way, the author suggests, by use of cuttings, the untidiness of her apartment and work desk. However, the faint quotation from the Book of Genesis, in the bottom right-hand corner, ‘... y la luz fue hecha’, optimistically indicates that she is writing, creating. Also, the inclusion of the package from Spain that had contained a cassette of music, the picture of the radio, and the insertion of the treble

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clef, the musical staff, and the words 'SWEET 'N LOW' all suggest the importance of music to the writer.

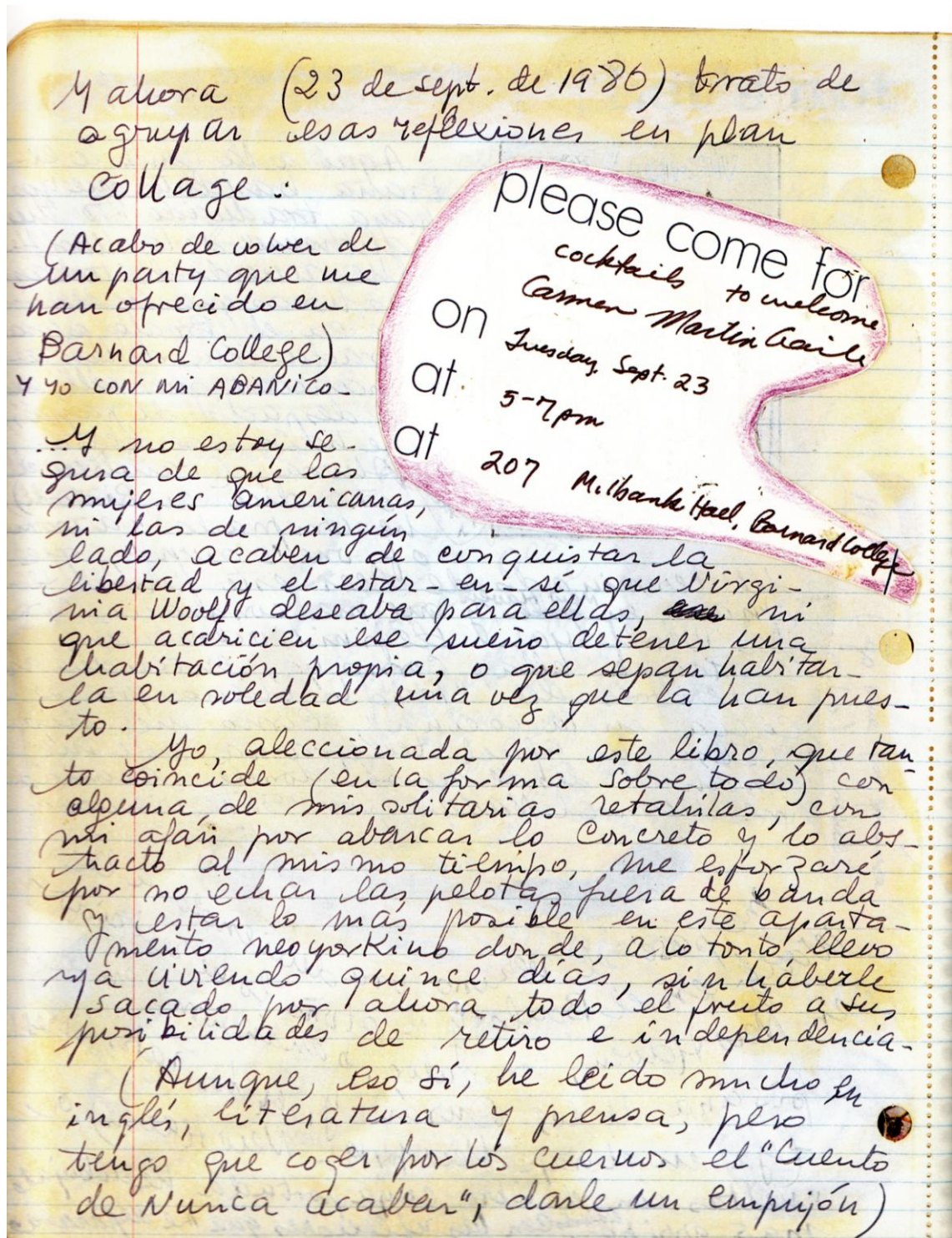


Figure 3. With this entry (which, in truth, just about qualifies as a collage) the author, after returning from a cocktail party, meditates in the kind of way she often does in her *Cuadernos de todo*. Here, her subject is the validity of the ideas discussed in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* for women writers or potential women writers everywhere. Martín Gaité is doubtful that women have achieved the freedom,

expression, and creativity that Woolf expounded – even suggesting that she, personally, has yet to fully exploit her current situation and opportunities. She finishes on a slightly more positive note by referring to the amount of reading she has undertaken and then signals her determination to resume work on what would later be published as *El cuento de nunca acabar*.

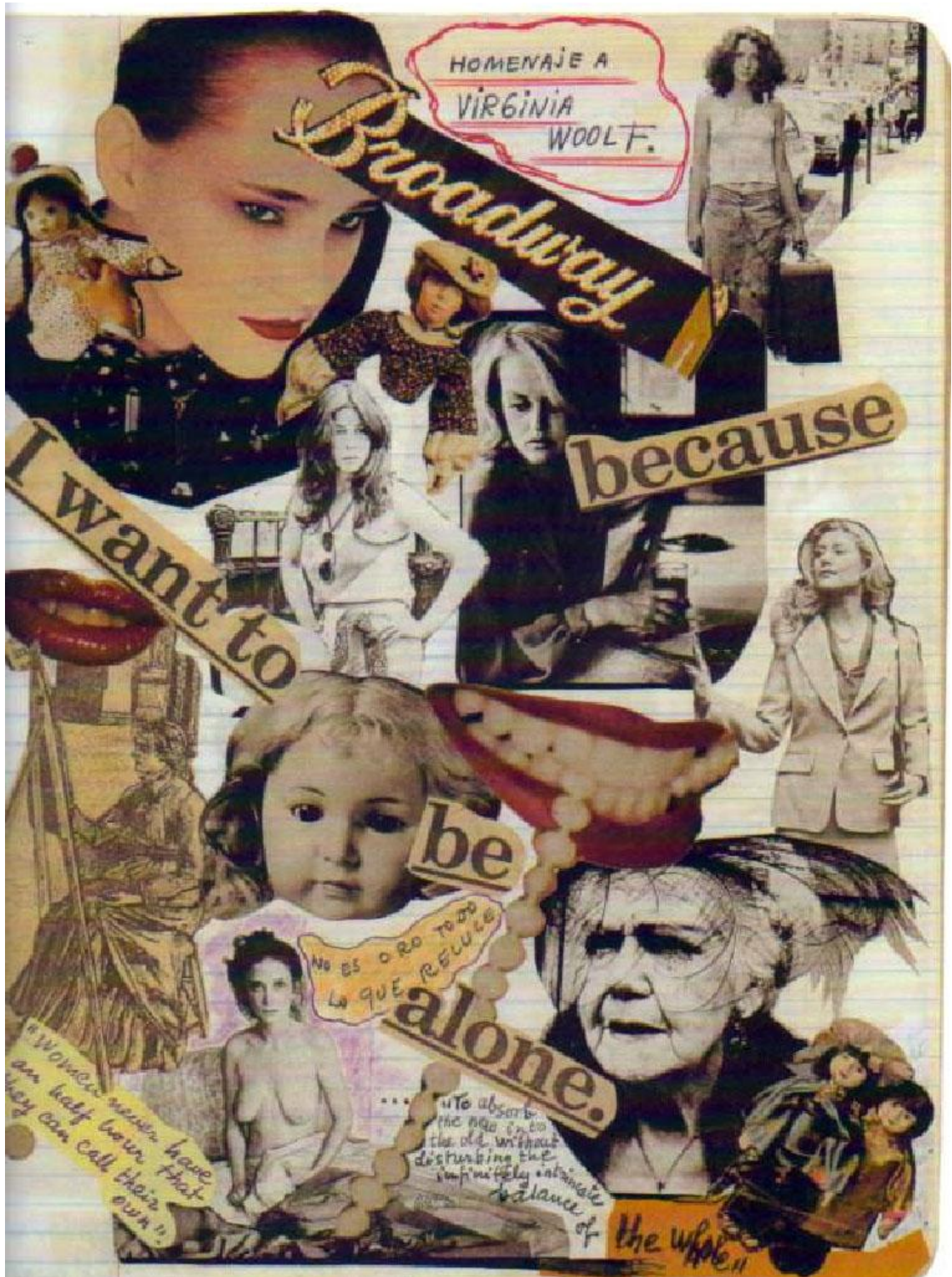


Figure 4. This is a collage *par excellence*, revealing not only the author's artistic touch but also a bold ideological vein. Seemingly titled as a homage to Virginia Woolf, the careful arrangement shows a series of solitary women, emphasized by the newspaper words 'because I want to be alone', as well as various figures of dolls. These dolls

obviously evoke the social and cultural situation of many women in western society, as well as presumably alluding to Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. The two images of lipstick-painted female mouths no doubt suggests the perception of women as simply sex-objects. Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* is signalled with the (telescoped) quotation 'Women never have an half hour ...', taken from Florence Nightingale's novel *Cassandra* (mentioned in Chapter 3 of *A Room*), and the words of Woolf from Chapter 5 of *A Room*: '... to absorb the new into the old ...'

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