**Resistance and Survival: Deconstructing the Narratives of Women Political Prisoners after the Spanish Civil War**

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*Abstract*

This thesis offers a comparative reading of life writing by female political prisoners who were imprisoned after the Spanish Civil War, studying six texts in particular: the two volumes of *Cárcel de mujeres* by Tomasa Cuevas; *Desde la noche y la niebla* by Juana Doña; *Réquiem por la libertad* by Ángeles García Madrid; *Abajo las dictaduras* by Josefa García Segret; and *Aquello sucedió así* by Ángeles Malonda. The representation of women’s imprisonment in Spain has been dominated by Communist narratives, while texts by non-Communist women have largely been ignored. Situating these life writing accounts during the Transition when they were published allows us to analyse them as responses to the process of democratisation and as constructions, rather than as simple factual representations of life under the dictatorship. A comparative reading of Communist texts demonstrates the high degree of similarity between them, highlighting that they offer ideologically-driven depictions of imprisonment as a collective experience. Reading them alongside non-Communist life writing shows that the Communist narrative foregrounds resistance at the expense of exploring the individual, emotional, and intellectual struggle for survival that many women faced as political prisoners in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War.

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# Introduction

The topic for this thesis stemmed from my interest in the role of women in twentieth-century Spain, particularly during the Spanish Civil War, and those who entered politics such as Federica Montseny, Victoria Kent, Clara Campoamor, and Dolores Ibárruri.[[1]](#footnote-1) Several women who formed part of the political elite such as Ibárruri and Montseny, wrote memoirs about their experiences of the Civil War.[[2]](#footnote-2) Their life writing situates them as political actors, highlighting their roles in decision-making processes amongst the leading figures of the conflict. Whilst investigating these women’s writing, I came across multiple prison memoirs that were not by women who formed part of the political elite, but by non-elite women who had decided to record their experiences of imprisonment and repression. Although I had not studied autobiography before, my interest was piqued by the idea of reading about what life was like for ordinary Spaniards who suffered repression, told from their own perspective rather than mediated by a historian. When I examined the scholarship on the subject, I found many articles on women’s prison writing, as well as histories of the prisons and even biographies of some notable prisoners such as Matilde Landa.[[3]](#footnote-3) But there were few, if any, works that took a text-centred, comparative approach to women’s prison memoirs, studying them as constructed documents and considering not only the themes, but also the form and the style across the corpus. Furthermore, apart from an essay by Christina Dupláa, which considers the prisoners’ motivations for publishing during the process of democratisation, none of the scholarship situates the memoirs in the historical context of when they were published: largely during or immediately after the Transition.[[4]](#footnote-4) It struck me as incongruous that there were numerous memoirs discussing repression published in this period, when Spaniards were allegedly neither willing to discuss the Francoist past nor interested in doing so. The narrative of the *pacto de olvido*, the so-called pact of forgetting, can be found both in scholarship and the media, arguing that during the 1970s Spaniards agreed to forget the past, in order to move forward and establish democracy.[[5]](#footnote-5) However, as Jo Labanyi argues, this was not ‘a determination to forget, but a decision not to let the past affect the future’.[[6]](#footnote-6) The idea of the *pacto de olvido* is an interpretation of the past which has evolved from the late 1990s and early 2000s, influenced by a new generation of Spaniards, as discussed below. Consequently, the concept of a pact of forgetting obscures the fact that there was dialogue in multiple public spaces—the memoirs of former political prisoners being one example, as well as historical scholarship and cultural productions—of how to engage with the legacy of the Civil War during and after the Transition.

The first reading of the primary texts also raised further questions, as some of the memoirs were extremely coherent, telling a very similar story of life in prison, whereas others presented their memories in a less structured way with a different focus. Accounts which were structured around acts of solidarity and resistance between political prisoners focused on communal acts, like strikes, and emblematic figures who had taken on specific significance within this resistance, as well as bearing witness to the repression. These accounts appeared to offer a more coherent narrative of prison, because the narrative was collective and therefore replicable and seemed to have been accepted as authoritative by historians and literary scholars.[[7]](#footnote-7) In contrast, accounts which focused on the individual and rejected a collective position appeared less coherent and seemed to have been relegated to footnotes in studies on women’s political imprisonment in Spain.[[8]](#footnote-8) Furthermore, there was a clear distinction between historical and literary scholarship in the field: most historians rely upon a history of women’s imprisonment in Spain that used the memoirs as sources, without investigating the textual construction of the self in life writing. It became clear that a comparative analysis of the better and lesser known memoirs by women who were political prisoners would contribute to a gap in the scholarship. The comparative, literary approach taken in this thesis helps to establish how and why the women constructed their memoirs, studying the structures, themes, and patterns that the women use to persuade the reader. In this introduction, I establish how I selected the texts for this study from the wider corpus, before situating them within the historical context of both when they were written (1978-1985) and the period they discuss (1936-c.1960).

I have found over thirty different memoirs by women political prisoners, published between 1938 and 2004. The earliest were published during the Civil War as an international cry for help and to denounce the prisoners’ treatment, such as Pilar Fidalgo’s *A Young Mother in Franco’s Prisons* (1939).[[9]](#footnote-9) These differ greatly from later memoirs by political prisoners, both in their role as propaganda in the war, but also because the immediacy of their publication did not give the authors the benefit of reflection over many years. Aside from Fidalgo’s 1939 pamphlet, those published by women who were anti-Francoist came largely in three waves.[[10]](#footnote-10) A few were published outside of Spain in the 1960s by women who had gone into exile; the vast majority were published in Spain during, or immediately after, the Transition; and some have been published since the turn of the millennium, in response to the renewed interest in the legacy of the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship.[[11]](#footnote-11) Several texts have also been re-edited and re-published since 2000, evidence of the growing public and scholarly interest in these women’s experiences.[[12]](#footnote-12)

This thesis focuses specifically on the body of texts that were published during or immediately after the Transition, and of this dozen or so texts it studies six in particular: the two volumes of *Cárcel de mujeres* (1985) by Tomasa Cuevas; *Desde la noche y la niebla* (1978) by Juana Doña; *Réquiem por la libertad* (1982) by Ángeles García Madrid; *Abajo las dictaduras* (1982) by Josefa García Segret; and *Aquello sucedió así* (1983) by Ángeles Malonda.[[13]](#footnote-13) These women and their texts share two defining characteristics, which structure them as a coherent corpus despite various socio-political, geographical, and economic differences.

First, the central theme of all the narratives is imprisonment in Spain either during the Civil War or the first few months after its end, meaning that the women were all convicted for wartime activities. Ricard Vinyes distinguishes between this group of prisoners which he terms *anteriores*, and those who were convicted of political crimes in the post-war which he terms *posteriores*.[[14]](#footnote-14) These groups of prisoners were not mutually exclusive: Cuevas and Doña, for example, can be categorised as both *anteriores* and *posteriores* because their political activity, both during the war and in the resistance to the dictatorship as members of the *Partido Comunista de España* (PCE), meant that they were arrested several times. The two groups had different experiences, though. *Anteriores* were accused of ‘military rebellion’ and imprisoned as part of relatively indiscriminate repression to subjugate the defeated side. These prisoners were often sentenced to harsh terms, but were mostly given parole or released by the mid-1940s as part of a series of pardons, as the prison system was nearing collapse.[[15]](#footnote-15) In contrast, *posteriores* were accused of political crimes in the post-war period, including any kind of clandestine political organisation or resistance. These prisoners were frequently tortured and served long prison sentences throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. *Posteriores* were usually Communists, or members of the *maquis*, the largely Communist-led guerrilla fighters who lived in mountainous regions of Spain.[[16]](#footnote-16) The fact that all the memoirs in the corpus were written by women who were *anteriores*—whether or not they were later charged as *posteriores* as well—is important because they shared certain experiences of imprisonment during the Civil War and the immediate post-war period.

The memoirs of women who were imprisoned towards the end of the regime, but who did not experience repression during the immediate post-war period, offer an interesting point of comparison here. Lidia Falcón and Eva Forest both wrote memoirs during the Transition about their experiences of being imprisoned for political activity in the 1970s.[[17]](#footnote-17) Their experiences of anti-Francoist resistance as *posteriores* were very different to those of the *anteriores* imprisoned twenty years earlier, not least because of the desperately overcrowded conditions of prisons during the 1940s. The political atmosphere of the 1960s in Spain was also different, with the conflict between the regime and regional terrorist groups such as ETA, but also because of the various pressure groups, as discussed later in this introduction, that were changing the way that Spaniards thought about how they engaged with the state. The experiences of *anteriores*, then, were distinctive and are the main focus of the texts by Cuevas, Doña, García Madrid, García Segret, and Malonda which helped me to define them as a corpus.

The second defining characteristic of the corpus is that the memoirs were written and published in Spain during or immediately after the Transition. During the period between Franco’s death in November 1975 and the general election in 1982, the country underwent a process of democratisation.[[18]](#footnote-18) Former prisoners were able to publish their experiences of repression as a consequence of the lack of censorship and liberalisation of the public sphere that Spain underwent after Franco’s death. However, most scholarship has not recognised that this group of texts was also published as a response to how Spanish society was dealing with the dictatorial past and the legacy of the Civil War. This relates in particular to the idea of a spirit of consensus, or as it is commonly called, the *pacto de olvido*, in which the various actors involved in establishing democracy in Spain, including political parties and the media, agreed not to use the past against one another in order to facilitate the process.

The concept of the *pacto de olvido* has become disproportionately representative of the Transition since the new millennium, when the revived interest in Spain’s modern history led younger generations to question why their parents and grandparents had not tried to resolve issues from the Civil War and the dictatorship. This can be seen particularly through the work of civic groups, the most prominent of which is the *Asociación para la recuperación de la memoria histórica* (ARMH), which was founded in 2000 and which campaigns to locate and exhume mass graves containing victims of the dictatorship. The banner of the ARMH’s webpage, for example, declares ‘¿Por qué los padres de la constitución dejaron a mi abuelo en una cuneta? Pongamos fin al olvido y al silencio […] Que nadie nos robe de la historia, ni el dolor, ni la memoria.’[[19]](#footnote-19) The work of the ARMH is valuable and their argument draws attention to the fact that processes of justice and reconciliation for the victims of the dictatorship were sacrificed in the belief that this would ensure a stable democratic transition. However, the idea that Spain’s history has been stolen, forgotten, or silenced, is problematic for several reasons. As Joan Ramon Resina observes

Those who denounce the problematic transmission of the past in the decades after Franco’s death rarely acknowledge that distorting and forgetting may be essential for remembering […] even under the best of political circumstances, the past is not available in its totality.[[20]](#footnote-20)

This quotation highlights the extent to which the term ‘historical memory’ exploits an emotional, political, and social response to the past. Memory is subjective and fallible and so its employment in representing a specific group—such as the Nationalists or the Republicans—can only ever be a construction. As such, as Paloma Aguilar argues, the idea that Republican history has been stolen or forgotten is inaccurate, particularly in relation to the process of Transition:

Que las políticas de la memoria hayan sido insuficientes, y así lo es realmente, y que la voz de las víctimas no haya suscitado la misma atención que en otros países no quiere decir que la democracia española se haya edificado sobre la amnesia o sobre la ausencia de memoria. Pocos procesos de cambio político han estado tan inspirados por el recuerdo del pasado y por las lecciones asociadas al mismo, como el español.[[21]](#footnote-21)

While Aguilar acknowledges the insufficiency of the politics of memory after the Transition, she highlights the importance of the memory of the Civil War in determining how Spaniards approached the process of transition to democracy. According to Víctor Pérez Díaz, the war was re-framed by generations that had grown up under *franquismo* as a tragic inevitability, ‘distancing themselves from the traditional posture of the combatants of the war, and refusing to take sides’.[[22]](#footnote-22) Aguilar also acknowledges this generational difference, commenting that ‘No ha sido casual que fuera ésta [generación], y no otra cohorte más madura, la que tomara las riendas del país en los primeros años de la democracia’.[[23]](#footnote-23) Aguilar argues that certain generations are united by significant events that take place in their lives: the Civil War was the defining event for one generation in Spain and the Transition for another. Several generations of Spaniards had lived their lives in the shadow of the Civil War and the process of democratisation became their way to distance themselves from the political extremism of the Second Spanish Republic and the civil conflict. The term *convivencia* was representative of this desire to draw a line under the past, advocating that Spanish citizens should try to coexist peacefully. As such, the events of the 1930s were present in the minds of Spaniards during the Transition, but as a form of politics that they wished to eschew rather than emulate.

While Spaniards were keen to distance themselves from the past, though, it is important to recognise that there was no enforced silence on the issue of the Civil War during or immediately after the transitional period. Writing that he wants to ‘acabar de una buena vez con la falacia de que hemos vivido sometidos a una tiranía de silencio’, Santos Juliá indicates the multiple avenues through which the Civil War and the dictatorship remained in the public sphere throughout and following the Transition: ‘toda clase de libros, académicos y de divulgación, memorias de una infinidad de protagonistas, documentales, vídeos, exposiciones, ciclos de conferencias [y] coloquios […] publicados o celebrados durante el último cuarto del siglo XX’.[[24]](#footnote-24) The silence in the public sphere was far from absolute, as evidenced by the memoirs discussed in this thesis: cultural productions and scholarly works that dealt with the repression were produced in Spain even during the earliest stages of the Transition.[[25]](#footnote-25) However, politicising the past was taboo during the process of democratisation and during subsequent governments in the 1980s and 1990s, and the emphasis was on moving forward rather than looking to the past. As such, the *pacto de olvido* is not an accurate representation of the public mood surrounding memories of the Civil War during the Transition.

That the idea of the *pacto de olvido* should gain such prominence around the turn of the millennium was also a product of political manoeuvring; a consequence of the *Partido Popular*’s (PP) victory in the 1996 general elections, which resulted in the first right-wing government after the death of Franco. Although the *Unión de Centro Democrático* (UCD), which won the first elections in 1977 and 1979, was a centre-right party, the electoral success of the PP was seen as the return of right-wing politics to power.[[26]](#footnote-26) This was because the PP was how the *Alianza Popular* (AP) had re-styled itself: the AP was founded by Francoist ministers, who in the 1970s viewed themselves as the ‘continuadores del régimen’.[[27]](#footnote-27) Juliá argues that the Left realised that the Civil War and the succeeding dictatorship had never been formally condemned by the Cortes and so began tabling proposals to that effect. This move, undoubtedly aiming to remind the electorate of the dictatorial past of the PP, re-politicised issues surrounding repression, thereby bringing it to the attention of a new generation of Spaniards.[[28]](#footnote-28)

The focus on the problematic idea of Spain’s ‘forgotten’ past in this section is to highlight how the women’s memoirs published during the Transition were part of a wider movement to acknowledge and remember Francoist repression. This thesis re-frames the discussion surrounding the memoirs of female political prisoners by situating them as a response to the Transition. Rather than focusing solely on the events of the 1930s and 1940s, which the memoirs discuss, broadening the scope of the analysis to the Transition and the consolidation of democracy acknowledges the influence that this turbulent period had upon the writers. By considering them as a body, I highlight that the decision to bear witness to Francoist repression during the Transition was a considered response to the sacrifices that were made in the name of democratisation. This allows for a more nuanced perspective of what motivated the women to write: an omission from current scholarship.

## The Transition and its role in the writing of political prisoners

The process of democratisation in Spain, as Víctor Pérez Díaz argues in *The Return of Civil Society* (1993), began years before Franco’s death in 1975, starting not with the legislation to regulate the political regime change, but the social processes that were necessary to create the impetus for change. Pérez Díaz criticises the *reforma pactada/ruptura pactada* model of the Transition, which suggests that democratisation was achieved because elite political figures across the spectrum were able to put aside their differences in the name of consensus.[[29]](#footnote-29) He argues, instead, that politicians who survived the regime change and worked to implement democratisation, were those who were able to react most effectively to the changing societal mood. This model depicts politicians as making ‘choices [that] are not so much deliberate calculations as belated reactions to ongoing processes the elites hardly understand, much less control’. [[30]](#footnote-30) As such, Pérez Díaz makes the case that Spain had already developed the civil society necessary to make the transition to democracy a success before Franco’s death allowed the official process to be set in motion.

In relation to the women political prisoners, Pérez Díaz’s civil society approach allows us to explore the Transition much more adequately than the *reforma pactada /ruptura pactada* model for two related reasons. The elite model is problematic because it excludes the contribution of women, who held none of the decision-making positions, such as writing the constitution. With its focus on those in positions of power, the *reforma /ruptura* model also relegates the importance of the multiple ways in which Spanish society had begun to reject authoritarianism, including the work of women who formed part of the resistance. These societal changes created spaces in which those who were opposed to the dictatorship could mobilise for change. As such, viewing the Transition from the perspective of civil society is much more appropriate for the women who are the subject of this thesis; this model allows us to focus on the ordinary citizens who organised around specific issues and thus developed the civic consciousness that would lead to democratisation.

Social changes began in the 1960s, when the regime’s policy of economic modernisation transformed Spanish society. This reduced the nation’s active agricultural population from 50 per cent to 25 per cent, leading to rapid migration to urban areas.[[31]](#footnote-31) As many towns and cities were unable to keep up with the growth, civic organisations were formed to demand amenities, such as better housing, roads, and schools. Participation in these types of neighbourhood associations was initially deemed as non-threatening political action by the regime, as their capacity for organisation was localised. However, as Pamela Radcliff highlights,

the new generation of associations that began by addressing the pressing needs of daily life ended up framing these needs within a collective ‘citizen movement’ that connected the local with the national by demanding the democratization of the state as the solution to these problems.[[32]](#footnote-32)

These types of associations, as well as the Francoist vertical trade unions, were also infiltrated by clandestine political movements and parties such as the PCE and feminist groups. Such infiltration allowed political groups to gain influence and a legal platform while reaching a broader audience and mobilising different sectors during *franquismo*.[[33]](#footnote-33) As Radcliff notes, broaching legal organisations allowed the anti-regime resistance to ‘bring significant social capital to an emerging cycle of mobilization’, providing neighbourhood organisations with ‘clear leadership potential and the capacity to see the “big picture”, or how the “local alternatives” linked up with the “global democratic alternative”’.[[34]](#footnote-34) For women, this kind of political action also allowed them to create a platform for feminist issues within the wider debate surrounding democratisation.[[35]](#footnote-35) Women’s organisations, such as the *Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres* (MDM), which was founded in 1965, pushed for equal rights by campaigning on issues such as women’s education, birth control, and divorce.[[36]](#footnote-36)

Another element which helped civil society to develop in Spain was the (re)emergence of groups that dealt with employment rights. In the late 1950s and 1960s, dissident workers groups took advantage of labour committees within the only legal trade union, the *Organización Sindical Española* (OSE), and formed the *Comisiones Obreras* (CCOO), which began to represent the rights of employees collectively.[[37]](#footnote-37) Along with the *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT), a longstanding trade union in Spain that was prohibited after the Civil War, they fought for better wages and working conditions and organised strikes throughout the 1960s and 1970s, resulting in millions of hours of lost work.[[38]](#footnote-38) Monica Threlfall argues that mass protests and strikes were instrumental in destabilising Spain’s first Prime Minister, Carlos Arias Navarro, a right-wing hardliner who was not committed to democratic change, after Franco’s death in 1976.[[39]](#footnote-39) Women were also involved in workplace disputes, particularly in the 1970s, and undertook various forms of protest such as strikes, demonstrations, and petitions.[[40]](#footnote-40)

Having supported the Nationalist ‘crusade’ during the Civil War, and as one of the supporting pillars of *franquismo* during the 1940s, elements within the Catholic Church also became advocates for change during the 1960s. The Church began to modify its position towards the regime after Pope John XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council in October 1962, which directed Catholic policy towards the defence of human rights and criticised authoritarianism. Basque and Catalan clergy were also vocal in criticising the injustice and corruption that they saw in society.[[41]](#footnote-41) Furthermore, grassroots movements including the *Hermandades Obreras de Acción Católica* (HOAC) and the *Juventud Obrera Católica* (JOC) had been involved in working-class concerns such as wages and working conditions since the 1950s.[[42]](#footnote-42) Like the civic associations mentioned above, these groups were officially religious associations, giving them the ability to organise and to congregate legally. As Frances Lannon argues, their systems of militant activism, which aimed to identify and solve problems on both a local and a national scale, were ‘dangerously effective’ within ‘a political regime that encouraged people to see nothing, to have no independent judgement, and to remain isolated and passive’.[[43]](#footnote-43)

Anti-regime resistance also stemmed from regional tensions in Catalonia and the Basque Country, as activists fought for independence. Brutal repression of political dissent led to the emergence of militant opposition groups, such as *Euzkadi ta Azkatasuna* (ETA) in 1959 and the *Frente Revolucionario Antifascista y Patriota* (FRAP) in 1971.[[44]](#footnote-44) Violent conflict between these groups and the government forces led to the Francoist government executing and imprisoning militants, as well as imposing a curtailment of legal rights in the Basque Country.[[45]](#footnote-45) Eva Forest, who had her letters and diaries from prison published while she was still incarcerated, was accused of involvement in an ETA bombing in Madrid in 1974.[[46]](#footnote-46) Although she was never charged, she was held until 1977, when she was released according to the Political Amnesty law of October that year.[[47]](#footnote-47) The law was one of the cornerstones of the Transition, as it freed all those who were serving sentences for political crimes, including members of ETA and other terrorist organisations.[[48]](#footnote-48) Importantly, though, the Amnesty Law also protected Francoists from retroactive judicial measures relating to repression. Although this was accepted as a measure to secure a smooth transition to democracy at the time, this has since become one of the most contentious issues of democratisation.[[49]](#footnote-49) Giuliana Di Febo argues that campaigning for political amnesty was also a key issue in forcing women to move beyond a secondary role and take the lead in organising protests.[[50]](#footnote-50)

There were key moments of change throughout the Transition that determined how it progressed and which had a direct impact on the way that the women political prisoners viewed the process. The passing of the Law for Political Reform in 1976 under Arias Navarro’s replacement, Adolfo Suárez, and its approval by referendum in December of that year, began the process of dismantling the Francoist legal framework for authoritarianism, legalising political pluralism and establishing the regulations for future elections.[[51]](#footnote-51) In the elections in June 1977, the electorate voted overwhelmingly for parties that were viewed as ‘moderate’ as opposed to those that reminded them of the divisions of the Civil War, such as the AP and the PCE.[[52]](#footnote-52) These parties suffered not least because their leaders were emblematic figures during the Civil War and the dictatorship: Santiago Carrillo led the PCE and Dolores Ibárruri maintained a prominent position within the party; and Manuel Fraga, a Francoist minister, founded the AP. Furthermore, as Eusebio Mujal León notes, Carrillo’s ‘repeated references to the war indicated that he had failed to lay down the burdens of the past’, highlighting a lack of engagement with the spirit of consensus of the Transition.[[53]](#footnote-53) For Communists, including some of the women who are the subject of this thesis, this overwhelming defeat in the elections—the PCE returned just 9.3% of the vote—was a shock.[[54]](#footnote-54) Given their role in leading much of the organised resistance to the dictatorship, they had expected the electorate to view them as defenders of democracy and trust them with their vote. In December 1978, the new Constitution was approved by national referendum, which gave a place in law to a certain amount of autonomy for the Spanish regions and separated Church and State and, in 1979, the second democratic elections after Franco’s death took place, cementing the position of centrist politics.[[55]](#footnote-55) Democracy was threatened on 23 February 1981, when Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Tejero Molina stormed the Spanish parliament in an attempted coup d’état, but it failed within a matter of hours after King Juan Carlos, as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, ordered civil and military authorities to defend democracy.[[56]](#footnote-56) The attempted coup caused fear amongst the Spanish population, but the victory of the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) in the 1982 general elections, particularly as it introduced the first victory of a ‘genuine party (rather than a transitional coalition)’, underlined the fact that Spanish democracy was established and that the Transition was over.[[57]](#footnote-57)

That political prisoners chose the period of transition and consolidation of democracy to write and publish their memoirs of Francoist repression speaks, then, of their need to comment on this process. As discussed above, the politics of consensus meant that political parties agreed not to instrumentalise the past—both the conflict of the Civil War and the repression under Franco’s rule—in order to avoid destabilising the transition to democracy through recrimination. The Amnesty Law of 1977 was important for this, as the decision not to investigate or prosecute human rights abuses meant that there was a line drawn underneath the past. While this may have ensured a relatively smooth path to democratisation, the publication of memoirs about repression, such as those discussed in this thesis, shows that this did not necessarily satisfy the victims.

Every life writing account in this thesis passes comment on the way that the Transition was executed. This commentary can be seen particularly in the introductory materials such as prologues by the authors, but also introductory essays by other contributors. Although this thesis primarily studies the women’s own accounts of their experiences, an analysis of paratextual materials demonstrates a deliberate decision by the author and the publisher to situate memories of repression within a debate about what was sacrificed in order to ensure a smooth transition to democracy.[[58]](#footnote-58) The introductions written during the Transition are distinctly ambivalent about how the past was dealt with during the process of democratisation: while the women express a willingness to engage with the idea of consensus in Spain, there is also a sense that it is not a convincing solution for them. Some women challenge the necessity of not dealing directly with Francoist repression, while others situate their texts as bearing witness to the suffering and the sacrifice of the defeated side. To some extent, the writing process is also presented as a form of justice: not that the women are seeking civil or criminal prosecution, but that telling their own story is a form of setting the record straight about their own alleged criminality.

Some of the former political prisoners question the extent to which *convivencia* is possible without an acknowledgment of the past. Josefa García Segret writes, for example, that ‘sería inexacto inclinar la balanza de terror más hacia un lado que a otro, en ambos se mató ciega y fieramente, sin compasión y escrúpulos’ (14). However, though García Segret does not seek ‘revancha’ and while she recognises that discussing repression ‘no facilita la convivencia’, she insists that is it necessary to create a public record of the past: ‘es lo que España necesita en este momento de su Historia, las nuevas generaciones lo demandan y el sentido común lo hace obligado’ (14-15). She identifies the strategy of not dealing with the dictatorial past as problematic, correctly predicting that younger generations would want to know about the repression, as could be seen at the beginning of the new millennium with the ‘memoria histórica’ movement. This same ambivalence can be seen in the introduction to Malonda’s *Aquello sucedió así* by Luís Hernández Alfonso, who argues that ‘Cicatrizadas en lo posible las profundas heridas causadas por la guerra civil y la postguerra, ni la autora de este libro ni su prólogo pretenden resucitar resentimientos ni afanes vindicativos’ (7). On the one hand, Hernández Alfonso acknowledges that the divisions of the Civil War are only superficially healed but, on the other hand, he argues that discussing those divisions is not an attempt to seek conflict with enemies. This position expresses a desire for *convivencia* between Spaniards, while still remembering the past. Another prisoner, Petra Cuevas, a Communist who contributed her testimony to Tomasa Cuevas’ *Cárcel de mujeres*, discusses bumping into an acquaintance after Franco’s death who had denounced her many years earlier:

Bueno, pues qué vamos a hacer, nos dimos la mano… ¡han pasado tantos años! Él estaba muy cambiado, me saluda y yo le respondo. Si tienes que borrar de tu mente la revancha con el enemigo, como no lo vas a hacer con los que fueron amigos. (II, 117-8)[[59]](#footnote-59)

The shaking of hands in this episode is symbolic of consensus; neither party is ignorant of what passed between them, but there is a willingness, particularly on the part of Petra, to accept this gesture as a truce. The tone of this quotation also hints at the absurdity of the situation, however. If Petra is expected—perhaps referring to the Amnesty Law of 1977—to forget ideas of revenge against her enemies, then of course she can do it for people that used to be her friends. Again, this quotation does not wish to challenge the process of democratisation, but it does recognise some of the pitfalls in the way it is being enacted. The examples above highlight that the memoirs situate themselves within a discussion of the Civil War and Francoist repression, but that they do not engage with a discourse of blame. The writers are not questioning the validity or the necessity of the Transition, but they are examining, to a greater or lesser degree, whether the past is being dealt with correctly.

The alleged spirit of consensus is further challenged when the introductions discuss the need to bear witness to the sacrifice of dissidents who opposed the regime and to the suffering of those who were its victims. Acacia Uceta, who wrote a prologue to the 1982 edition of García Madrid’s *Réquiem por la libertad*, questions whether the political prisoners can ever be free of the shadow of persecution:

la libertad de un ser humano es algo tan absoluto y tan sutil que, cuando se está un tiempo privado de ella, ya no se recupera nunca en su plenitud […] Es una herida que, si ya no sangra, no por eso ha dejado de doler. El tiempo y las posibilidades perdidas son irrecuperables. La libertad que hoy se les dé, no es ya la que antes tuvieron. (13)

Uceta argues that the effect of political imprisonment on the individual is irredeemable, that no reparation can be made for what these women have lost. When read in the context of consensus politics, which looked to draw a line under the past, this statement is powerful: for those who were victims, it may not have been possible for them to ever feel the full freedom of democratic Spain, so damaged were they by their experiences. Like the statements above, Uceta is not attempting to undermine the democratic process, but to probe the way that political decisions can affect individuals.

The two Communist narratives also focus the introductions on the sacrifices made by militants during the regime. In *Desde la noche y la niebla*, published in 1978 before the new constitution was approved, Doña argues that ‘sin la participación abnegada de miles de mujeres en todos los frentes […] hoy no se habría conquistado este derecho de presentarnos con nuestros nombres’ (19). Although this is, in part, a feminist statement (as discussed in the second chapter of this thesis), it is also a shout for recognition. Political activists sacrificed their freedom and their lives in order to resist the dictatorship, so the right of women to present themselves under their own names has two meanings. It refers to clandestine practices of assuming different identities, but also to the fact that women made important contributions to the struggle that were ignored by men. Doña makes the point that democracy would not have been an option without the anti-Francoist resistance. This argument was ahead of its time, given the prevalence of the *ruptura/reforma pactada* model. The idea that anti-Francoist resistance contributed to creating the conditions for democratisation reflects the civil society model of Pérez Díaz from the 1990s, but the post-millennial drive to ‘reclaim’ the history of the resistance takes this much further. For example, Almudena Grandes’ introductory essay to the 2012 re-issue of Doña’s *Desde la noche y la niebla*, argues that members of the resistance were the ‘auténticos autores’ of the Transition, a position which highlights the influence of Communist life writing on the historiography of Francoist repression (10).Communists certainly see themselves as the ‘auténticos autores’ of the Transition and the coherence of that message—along with the post-millennial drive to recuperate the ‘memoria histórica’ and the power of Di Febo’s original study on women’s contributions to the resistance—has swayed the historiography in favour of representations of resistance. Nonetheless, by focusing on sacrifices made by militants, Communist memoirs become an antidote to the decision not to instrumentalise the past during the Transition. Doña feels a duty to tell but also an anger at the way the contribution of dissidents to fighting for democratic culture and society has been ignored.

A similar argument is made by Josep Benet in his prologue to Cuevas’ *Cárcel de mujeres*, in which he states that

Sí, hoy es necesario que se publiquen libros como los de Tomasa Cuevas. Porque las viejas generaciones no deben olvidar, ni las nuevas ignorar, unos hechos que es imprescindible tener presente para conocer en toda su realidad lo que fue el franquismo. Pero también para que nunca se olvide el ejemplo de tantas mujeres que militaron en los tiempos difíciles, gracias a cuya lucha y sacrificio hemos podido recuperar la democracia. (9)

Like Doña, Benet makes the point that remembering the past is not just about historicising repression, but also about acknowledging the incessant struggle of so many Spaniards who contributed to creating the conditions which made democracy possible. Furthermore, the *anteriores* suffered some of the worst violence and deprivation during the early stages of the dictatorship; conditions that had changed dramatically by the 1970s. However, it is also important to recognise the political argument behind this message: Communists were not just trying to open up dialogue on how the Transition sacrificed Republican history, but also to carve out a place for the PCE within the historiography of resistance. As mentioned above, the first general elections in 1977 were a disappointment for the PCE. The Party gained only nineteen deputies, just five percent of the available seats, and never recovered a position of power.[[60]](#footnote-60) Politically, then, the PCE needed its history of resistance to be remembered if they were to have any hope of garnering popular support, or even if they were to be remembered. In the aftermath of the election, as Mujal León notes, the PCE found ‘itself in danger of becoming an essentially marginal spectator to the struggle for political power in post-Franco Spain’.[[61]](#footnote-61) Furthermore, as Catherine Epstein observes in relation to the memoirs of East German Communists, reflecting on the past was perhaps preferable to dwelling ‘on a future that threatened to become mundane’.[[62]](#footnote-62) Nonetheless, the insistence of the various contributors, whether Communist or not, to bear witness to sacrifice and repression supports the argument that these memoirs offer a commentary on the way that the dictatorial past was dealt with during the Transition.

To some extent, the publication of memoirs during the Transition was also a response to the lack of transitional justice for victims of repression. The 1977 amnesty was clearly a much greater concession for those who had perpetrated crimes in the name of Franco and the Nationalists, given the scale of the repression carried out during ‘peace’ time.[[63]](#footnote-63) Consequently, there is a sense in García Madrid’s introduction to *Réquiem por la libertad* that the memoir becomes a way of voicing her position as a victim, rather than as a political criminal:

Desde luego, no he pretendido en estas páginas, especialmente, ensalzar o rebajar cualidades o defectos de esta o aquella persona. Estos personajes han vivido realmente, y muchos aún viven, y yo tan sólo he procurado que aquí sigan viviendo para que sea, precisamente el lector, quien los juzgue como crea más oportuno. Lo que sí debo de advertir es que entre los muchos defectos que en este libro pueda hallar, no busque el de la hipérbole; no la encontrará. (9)

This argument suggests that García Madrid writes her memoir so that the reader can put the dictatorshipon trial. Uceta’s introduction about García Madrid suggests that she wrote in the third person to make the narrative more objective (13). In this way, García Madrid’s statement above makes a claim for truth: she argues that her narrative is not exaggerating the events, but that she can be relied upon to depict the past faithfully. García Madrid’s deference to the reader’s judgement suggests that writing and publishing her memories becomes a form of justice for her. Leigh Gilmore argues that autobiographical writing, and the public sphere it enters, can become a ‘jurisdiction’, in which the author can present their narrative of injustice to a public audience for judgement. As can be seen in the writing of García Madrid, Gilmore asserts that ‘Thinking of autobiographical self-representation as a jurisdiction helps to clarify the kind of agency such a text can claim and the quasi-legal authority it possesses’.[[64]](#footnote-64) If García Madrid’s narrative is read and believed, then this both replaces and highlights the absence of a true process of reparation and justice in Spanish law. This does not mean, necessarily, that García Madrid wanted to see her persecutors prosecuted, but simply that in the absence of such a process, writing her version of the truth became a form of justice and can therefore be read as a process of catharsis.

The context of the Transition, then, nuances the understanding of memoirs by women political prisoners under Franco. The publication of these texts contributed to a public discourse about the Civil War and the dictatorship: questioning the concessions that were made in the name of democracy, bearing witness to the suffering and the sacrifices of the defeated, and acting as a substitute for the lack of justice that the victims were afforded. Viewing these texts as a response to the processes of the Transition adds another dimension to their study: women were not only publishing their memoirs in light of the lifting of censorship, but also as a reaction to the way that democratisation was being undertaken in Spain.

## Mass imprisonment in the immediate post-war period

It is, of course, also important to contextualise the experiences of imprisonment that the women discuss in their memoirs. Many of these experiences were general, experienced by both men and women who suffered repression, while others were gender specific. At the end of 1939, the year which marked the end of Spain’s Civil War, there was a national prison population of 270,719, with sufficient housing for only 20,000 inmates.[[65]](#footnote-65) The vast discrepancy in these figures highlights the speed with which the prison population had grown, borne out of Nationalist policy to incriminate those who had in any way allied themselves with the Republican government during the war. This policy of incarceration began in Nationalist-held territory on 19 July 1936 and continued throughout the war and immediate post-war period.[[66]](#footnote-66) It was a consequence of a culture of repression, fear, and denunciation, which was cultivated to stifle opposition and cement the values of the victors. The Nationalists comprised various conservative groups within society that feared the democratisation, secularism, and desire for economic change that the popular parties of the Second Republic legislated for, believing that the turbulence caused by such political upheaval equated to lawlessness.[[67]](#footnote-67) Furthermore, Nationalist ideology included a gendered element, which Aurora G. Morcillo terms ‘true Catholic womanhood', mandating that women conform to traditional gender roles and relegating them to the domestic sphere through a series of legislative measures.[[68]](#footnote-68) People that opposed these values were seen as a threat to the hegemony of the post-war Spanish state and were imprisoned en masse.[[69]](#footnote-69) Groups which opposed the Nationalist uprising were also pathologised as suffering from Marxist degeneracy, as discussed by Michael Richards in his article on the racial, pseudo-scientific testing at the women’s prison in Malaga.[[70]](#footnote-70) In juridical terms, the high level of political imprisonment stemmed from a decree made by the Nationalists’ *Junta de Defensa Nacional* (National Defence Council) in July 1936, which ruled that the army’s insurrection against the Republican government was legal and which declared martial law throughout Spain.[[71]](#footnote-71) This meant that anyone who opposed the Nationalist forces could be tried for ‘military rebellion’, something which Ramón Serrano Suñer, Franco’s Minister of the Interior, described as *justicia al revés*.[[72]](#footnote-72) The legal specifications for what constituted ‘military rebellion’ were kept deliberately vague and citizens were threatened with punishment if they did not denounce family members, friends, and neighbours who they suspected of political crimes.[[73]](#footnote-73) As such, Spaniards were arrested in their thousands, tried, and given harsh sentences, which included the death penalty.

The ambiguity of the legal definition of ‘military rebellion’ and the pressure on Spanish citizens to denounce one another meant that women were imprisoned for a vast array of reasons. Despite the striking image of the *miliciana* used in propaganda by the Left during the Civil War, few women were actively engaged in combat and even these were removed to the rearguard by 1937.[[74]](#footnote-74) Women’s ‘military rebellion’, then, was largely confined to the home front. Women’s political crimes ranged from direct participation in the war effort—organising resources and mobilising men, working as nurses, or working to replace men that had gone to war— to what Ángeles Egido León terms ‘el delito consorte’: women who were arrested and tried because they were simply the mothers, wives, sisters, daughters, or girlfriends of men from the Republican side.[[75]](#footnote-75) Furthermore, many women were arrested as ‘enlaces’, that is, acting as points of support for the guerrilla fighters who were often relations. As Mercedes Yusta indicates, these women became political criminals for offering ‘una ayuda que ellas no percibían en general como una actividad política, sino como una continuación de sus tareas domésticas’.[[76]](#footnote-76) Richards has also argued that the terminology by which women were sentenced under the bracket of ‘military rebellion’ was gendered, as only women were accused of ‘excitación a la rebelión’ and ‘excitación militar’.[[77]](#footnote-77) Men and women were also denounced because of personal enmities or because the accuser hoped to gain some personal benefit or to ingratiate themselves with the new authorities. Regardless of the severity of the alleged crime, Spaniards were arrested and often held for many months before they were tried, a direct consequence of the number of people that were being incarcerated during and after the Civil War.[[78]](#footnote-78)

Aside from the division between crimes committed during and after the war, women’s experiences of being arrested and imprisoned were relatively similar, though there were differences between rural and urban environments. The social controls of the new regime were easier to maintain in smaller, rural communities. Consequently women were more likely to be subjected to greater surveillance, meaning that transgressions, such as not attending church, were more likely to be noticed. Although urban women benefited from a larger degree of anonymity in this sense, there was more chance that they would have become politicised through contact with trade unions and other political organisations and, therefore, were likely to face a different kind of repression. Most women were arrested in their homes, although some, who had attempted to flee the country at the end of the war, were held in concentration camps at the borders before being registered and shipped back to their hometowns to be arrested by their local authorities.[[79]](#footnote-79) Police or members of Falangist groups often arrived during the night and the women were forced to dress hurriedly before being taken to holding cells for questioning. It was common for political activists to be beaten savagely and subjected to other torture techniques, such as electrocution, for information on fellow militants. Torture was also gendered, with women being subjected to beatings directed at their wombs if they were known to be pregnant and electrocution of their nipples.[[80]](#footnote-80) Women who were related to political activists, or who acted as *enlaces* for guerrilla fighters, were also tortured, but it was not an automatic consequence of arrest and was much more likely to occur to those directly affiliated to political parties than women who were not. None of the non-Communist women discussed in this thesis, for example, were tortured during questioning, suggesting that this was an element of interrogation which largely affected political activists. However, it is also possible that these women were not tortured for other reasons such as their social class or connections.

There were further gendered aspects of arrest, such as the public humiliation of women or the use of rape as a tool of repression. Particularly in rural areas, although not exclusively, women often had their heads shaved, were forced to drink castor oil in order to ‘purge’ them—as it gave them uncontrollable diarrhoea—and were made to clean public spaces such as barracks, public toilets, and churches.[[81]](#footnote-81) The spectacle of humiliation, as Maud Joly observes, was a fundamental part of establishing a culture of fear and repression, as well as re-establishing traditional gender norms by making visible and shaming women who transgressed those norms.[[82]](#footnote-82) The idea of purging also relates to the regime’s approach to imprisonment, with its focus on redemption: if women could purge the ‘evil’ of dissident thought from their minds, they would have been transformed by their punishment.[[83]](#footnote-83) The threat of rape can be found in almost all of the women’s prison narratives. Rape was used as a tool of control, as a spoil of war, and as a way of shaming left-wing women. Irene Abad also argues that this was a way of nullifying defeated Republican men, ‘un intento por demostrar el desposeimiento al que se quería someter al preso político’.[[84]](#footnote-84) In the narratives of female prisoners, these rapes are often committed by Moroccan or Italian troops or by Falangists. In the case of the North African troops, their representation as rapists was linked to a wider obsession in Spain, with racist and colonialist overtones, of ‘moros’ as over-sexualised savages; this was knowingly deployed by Nationalists in their attempt to demoralise and scare Republicans during the Civil War.[[85]](#footnote-85) Nonetheless, women of any age were at threat of sexual violence during their arrest and some prisoners bore children while incarcerated that were the result of rape.[[86]](#footnote-86)

Once questioned, prisoners were usually then transferred to prison in order to await trial. Because of the strain that the military courts were under—despite many of the safeguards of the judicial system being removed—prisoners could wait months, or even years, before being tried. Prison conditions were terrible, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the war. Overcrowding meant that multiple women were forced to sleep in cells intended for one prisoner, sleeping on the floor on mats as all furniture had been removed to create more space. From the end of the war until late 1940 in Ventas prison in Madrid, the largest women’s prison through which many prisoners passed, there was so little space that prison functionaries were unable to close cell doors, as women were overflowing onto walkways, communal spaces, patios, bathrooms, and even stairwells.[[87]](#footnote-87) The prisons were not equipped to cope with the demands put upon their infrastructure by such congestion. Consquently, there were insufficient services for women to wash and toilets regularly blocked through overuse. As a consequence, it was profoundly difficult for prisoners to maintain a good standard of hygiene and, combined with the close conditions in which the women lived, illnesses such as tuberculosis and typhus, as well as lice, scabies, and other such infestations, spread uncontrollably.[[88]](#footnote-88) There was virtually no medical provision provided by the prison authorities and so women had to either request medicine from family and friends outside the prison or suffer untreated. Illness was exacerbated by the poor quality and quantity of food served. Meals lacked protein, oils, and vitamins and usually consisted of thin stews with vegetables. Although the *Dirección General de Prisiones* (the body which ran the prison system)set rations for prisoners, Vinyes highlights that these were often stolen by prison administrators for ‘el lucro personal’.[[89]](#footnote-89) As a consequence of national privation—which is discussed in chapter three of this thesis—and corruption within the prisons, women who had a support network outside the prison walls were forced to request supplementary food from relatives and friends.[[90]](#footnote-90) Particularly among Communists and other political activists, some prisoners organised themselves into ‘families’ so that resources were shared equally between those who received supplementary packages and those who did not. However, not all prisoners took part in this and food sharing was organised on a more ad hoc or personal basis. As all Spanish citizens were rationed during the 1940s, though, the resources prisoners received from outside were meagre and most women suffered hunger.

Life in prison was also lived in the shadow of executions, both for prisoners sentenced to death and those not. After the Civil War, more than 50,000 people were killed by the new regime and prisoners were permanently on edge for changes to their daily routine, hurried footsteps of functionaries, or the sound of keys opening cell doors after dark.[[91]](#footnote-91) Once women were called for execution, they spent the night in the prison chapel, where the religious personnel of the prison attempted to persuade them to confess if they had not already done so. At first light, they were then removed from the prison, driven to a cemetery, and shot, often along with male prisoners from other penitentiaries. For the prisoners in Ventas, this was made profoundly worse by the fact that the shootings took place within earshot of the prison: the women were able to hear the burst of gunfire and counted the coups de grâce to ascertain how many people had been killed.[[92]](#footnote-92) Women were far less likely to be executed than men, but this meant that they suffered disproportionately in terms of grieving for male relatives who died (grief as a theme is discussed in greater depth in chapters two and three).

Another gendered aspect of women’s imprisonment was that women were forced to keep young children with them in prison. This was a common circumstance for those whose family members were in exile, or were also in prison, or who had been killed during the war.[[93]](#footnote-93) Children were not provided with their own food in prison, meaning they had to share with their mothers and were subject to the same overcrowded, unhygienic conditions. The regime also created the Prisión Maternal de San Isidro, more commonly known as the Prisión de Madres Lactantes,in Madrid following the pseudo-psychiatric analysis of Antonio Vallejo-Nágera. This institution deliberately kept women away from their children as much as possible to ‘combatir la propensión degenerativa de los muchachos criados en ambientes republicanos’.[[94]](#footnote-94) The separation of mothers and children from other prisoners did little to improve the living conditions for the children, however, and many of the women discuss the high infant mortality rate in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War.[[95]](#footnote-95) From March 1940, once children reached their third birthday they were transferred to state organisations if there were no family members to care for them, where they were educated to reject the ideals of their parents and to embrace *franquismo*.[[96]](#footnote-96) Vinyes notes that in 1942 there were 9,050 children in religious schools or public institutions, whose parents were incarcerated, and that this rose to 12,042 the following year.[[97]](#footnote-97) For women whose children were looked after by a relative outside prison, they were able to spend an afternoon with their sons and daughters on certain religious festivals, particularly *El Día de la Merced* (24 September).[[98]](#footnote-98) This was a propaganda effort, aimed to make the regime look merciful, something which Doña remarks upon:

En un régimen de dureza y falta total de derechos para los presos, en la mente de muchos no cabía el por qué de este gesto tolerante… ¡Claro que al día siguiente todos los periódicos de la nación daban cuenta del trato ‘humanitario y cristiano’ que se recibía en las cárceles españolas! (310)

However, these visits, along with other benefits such as normal communication with families via visits and letters, could be curtailed as punishment for breaking rules within the prison.

When the prisoners’ cases were finally heard, they were tried by military tribunal because the Nationalists had declared martial law in Spain on 28 July 1936, which would last until April 1948.[[99]](#footnote-99) The volume of prisoners with cases waiting to be heard put enormous strain upon the military judicial system. As the Director General of Prisons, Máximo Cuervo, pointed out in a report to Franco in 1940, the rate at which prisoners were being sentenced meant that it would take three years to clear the backlog and ensure that all prisoners had been put on trial.[[100]](#footnote-100) This was in spite of the fact that many procedural safeguards had been dispensed with such as only giving the legal defence—who was also a member of the military—a matter of hours to prepare a case before the trial began and allowing the tribunal to try prisoners collectively, despite there only being one lawyer to build all of their cases.[[101]](#footnote-101) As well as being sentenced to war crimes such as ‘adhesión a la rebelión’, the criminal records of women were often marked with moral judgements about the way they lived their lives such as ‘conducta licenciosa’, ‘vivir amancebada’, or ‘excesos de lenguaje’.[[102]](#footnote-102) Sentencing was harsh, with the lowest penalty being six years and a day, up to the maximum sentence of the death penalty.[[103]](#footnote-103) All of this took place in front of a public gallery, providing the regime with the opportunity to spread the fear of repression, and trying and sentencing large groups of people took a matter of hours. The only element of being put on trial that was of any use to the prisoners was the fact that they were able to exchange messages with people from other prisons, making the cells a locus for communication.[[104]](#footnote-104)

The prison system was diverse and there is no study which breaks down the different kinds of institutions for women. However, in my research I identified multiple different institutions for holding women. Before sentencing, women were sometimes held in remand centres (which were often requisitioned buildings such as convents or abandoned houses) or police cells, although women seem to have been transferred more quickly to prisons in larger cities like Madrid and Barcelona. Once sentenced, the women were usually then transferred to major regional prisons to serve out their sentences. Some prisons, like Segovia, were transformed into sanatoria for prisoners with tuberculosis and Communist prisoners mention a ‘penal psiquiátrico’ called Quiñones in Madrid for prisoners who were considered to be insane by the regime. As María Valés points out, though, in Quiñones ‘Había enfermas de nervios, locas rematadas no eran, ellos las volvían locas de las inyecciones, de las duchas frías que les daban’ (II, 46-7).[[105]](#footnote-105) Some Communist prisoners, who the regime viewed as particularly dangerous, were also held at a maximum security institution in Guadalajara called a ‘penal de castigo’, where they were confined to their cells for the majority of the day. In response to the high levels of prostitution in Spain, as discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, the prison authorities also created prisons for prostitutes such as Oropesa.[[106]](#footnote-106) Once women had been tried, they were generally then moved to a different prison, or several different prisons, to serve out their sentences; the *posteriores* were most likely to be moved regularly, either as punishment or in an attempt to break down Communist organisation in prisons. In the early years of the dictatorship, when the volume of prisoners was still very high, prisoners were usually transported by rail, crammed into cattle wagons and freight carriages for days on end while they moved across the country. Being transferred was particularly difficult if prisoners were moved a long distance from their families, as it cut off their regular supply of supplementary food, help with washing clothes and bedding, and contact with the outside world through visits. From January 1939, prisoners had the right to redeem their sentence through work, according to the *Ley de redención de penas por el trabajo*.[[107]](#footnote-107) There were various stipulations about who could access this right: in order to work, prisoners had to have been sentenced; they could not have been convicted under the *Ley para* *para la Represión de la Masonería y el Comunismo*; they could not have attempted to escape prison; and they could not have returned to prison following a further crime.[[108]](#footnote-108) For every two days they worked for a pittance, prisoners could redeem one day of their sentence, furthering the regime’s presentation of incarceration as a method of saving women from their sins.[[109]](#footnote-109) As Giuliana di Febo highlights, this system actually became a source of cheap labour for the state, exploiting the vulnerability of the prisoners.[[110]](#footnote-110)

For many prisoners, their release came suddenly and unexpectedly and, for the majority, it was a consequence of mass pardons issued by the state. The regime called this process *liquidación de responsabilidades*, setting up commissions to review sentences and issuing a series of mass pardons from June 1940 until October 1945.[[111]](#footnote-111) In her work on the Transition, Aguilar distinguishes between the concepts of amnesty and pardon: an amnesty is ‘the total pardon or non-recollection of the crime’, whereas a pardon is an act of clemency, ‘in which respect the crime for which [the person] was convicted continues to have effect and the consequent civil responsibility persists’.[[112]](#footnote-112) As such, these mass releases are referred to as pardons throughout this thesis, as clemency was not the motivation for releasing the prisoners. Rather, it was essential to relieve the pressure on the prison administration and justice system, as the high volume of prisoners meant they were nearing collapse.[[113]](#footnote-113) Release was dependent upon the agreement of the local parole board in the town where the prisoner originated from and was generally subject to the rules of *libertad condicional*: prisoners were expected to report regularly to local police stations and could be internally exiled if their local parole board was unwilling to have them readmitted into the neighbourhood. When prisoners were internally exiled, they were sent to small towns where they could easily be observed, making local people ‘proxy surveillance agents of the central state’.[[114]](#footnote-114) Life after imprisonment was hard for women. Many were left to bring up their families alone, as their husbands were also incarcerated, or had been killed during the war. It was extremely difficult to find work for those with previous convictions and no working papers and women were often forced to turn to crime and prostitution in order to make a living; both of which could result in subsequent convictions.[[115]](#footnote-115) Particularly amongst the *posteriores*, who were likely to have been imprisoned for much longer, there was also a sense that they had become institutionalised, so re-entering society was something they faced with apprehension.

## Studying Spanish women political prisoners and their life writing

Giuliana Di Febo’s *Resistencia y movimiento de mujeres en España 1936-1976* (1979) was the earliest study of women’s political imprisonment in Spain. Her use of testimonial sources to establish a history of the prison system recognised the fundamental importance of the prisoners’ own narratives in understanding Francoist repression. Di Febo bases her analysis upon the testimony of ‘la mujer española en la resistencia antifranquista’ and the first half of the study focuses primarily on women’s experiences of imprisonment in Ventas prison in Madrid, including an appendix with testimony.[[116]](#footnote-116) By placing resistance at the centre of her analysis, di Febo relies heavily upon the voices of Communist women, establishing a paradigm that has since largely been followed by other scholars of the history of prisons. Consequently, di Febo’s presentation of prison life is shaped by that of Communist women and largely represents the experiences of those who were young, urban, and militant. Although these women were *anteriores* and tell the narrative of mass imprisonment and repression during the immediate post-war period, they would almost certainly have been arrested repeatedly and served longer sentences as *posteriores*. This distinction is important, as these women were militants and activists and their narratives reflect their deeper political engagement and commitment to resistance. Their repeated political offences meant that they remained in prison when other women, who were less politically active, had been released during the mass pardons. However, they represented only one group among the thousands of women who were incarcerated in 1939.[[117]](#footnote-117)

The influence of di Febo’s decision to focus on testimony from political activists who were part of the resistance can be seen throughout much of the scholarship on women’s prisons, although no further research on women’s prisons was undertaken until the 1990s. 1993 saw the publication of an article on the history of the ‘Trece Rosas’, a group of thirteen young activist women who were executed summarily in August 1939 for trying to reorganise the *Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas* (JSU), the youth wing of the Communist Party in their local area of Madrid.[[118]](#footnote-118) In this brief article, Mirta Núñez Díaz Balart and Antonio Rojas Friend established facts surrounding the case from an investigation in the military justice archives. As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, the story of the Trece Rosas, though well-known amongst many women political prisoners across Spain, became emblematic for Communist women. As such, the study of these women—rather than any other group of prisoners that were executed—continued di Febo’s model of focusing on the narrative structures and tropes that can be found in the writing of political activists.

The following year saw the publication of two substantial pieces of research on women’s prisons: *Mujer, cárcel, franquismo. La Prisión Provincial de Málaga (1937-1945)* by Encarnación Barranquero Texeira and others, which mainly uses official records with limited recourse to oral history; and Fernanda Romeu Alfaro’s *El silencio roto: mujeres contra el Franquismo*, which was based upon her interviews with women who formed part of the resistance to Franco.[[119]](#footnote-119) While Barranquero Texeira’s study is less well-known, *El silencio roto* is frequently cited, arguably because of its use of testimony to recover the history of women who suffered repression and were part of the resistance.

The preference for using testimonial sources—following di Febo’s paradigm—is a consequence not only of the paucity and poor quality of existing official sources, but also affects the kind of women whose voices were heard and subsequently the kind of history that was written. In his study of Ventas, Fernando Hernández Holgado states that the lack of official documentation made reliance on testimonial sources essential. However, he also argues that he wished to write ‘una especie de *microhistoria desde abajo*’ [original emphasis], focusing on the women’s own lived experience that simply could not be represented by studying prison records.[[120]](#footnote-120) Other historians faced the same problem: although it is possible to establish the policy of the *Nuevo Estado* through the use of official sources, the most detailed information about incarceration under Franco came from the memories of former political prisoners.[[121]](#footnote-121) Testimonial sources are, of course, a valuable and essential part of historicising marginal groups that have been excluded from official discourse, but the established network between members of the resistance—and in particular Communists—made it easier to find political activists. If a scholar made contact with one member of the resistance, there was then an established network of other former prisoners to interview. However, this network was likely to have multiple shared characteristics, particularly in terms of political ideology, education, and level of militancy. Cuevas, for example, mentions that she first interviewed women she knew and this gave rise to a network of other contacts who wished to tell their stories (II, 14). We can also see this reliance on the narratives of Communists in *El silencio roto*. Of the 88 women that Romeu Alfaro interviewed, 59 percent were from the PCE or other Communist groups. Not only is the Communist presence in these interviews disproportionate compared to their representation in the female prison population, but it is clear that Romeu Alfaro also followed di Febo’s model of focusing on women who were political activists. Di Febo and Romeu Alfaro’s studies are are also similar in that the representation of life in prison is incidental, rather than the primary focus of the research. These investigations represent life in prison because so many political activists were imprisoned as dissidents, but the titles of the monographs reveal that these women have been selected because they were part of the resistance. Consequently, di Febo, and then Romeu Alfaro, established a paradigm that placed members of the resistance at the heart of historical studies of women’s political imprisonment.

As discussed above, the new millennium saw a revival of interest in the Spanish Civil War and two key historical studies were published early in the decade: Ricard Vinyes’ *Irredentas: las presas políticas y sus hijos en las cárceles franquistas* (2002) and Fernando Hernández Holgado’s *Mujeres encarceladas: la prisión de Ventas: de la República al franquismo, 1931-1941* (2003).Vinyes and Hernández Holgado reconstruct life in prison in a broader way, distinguishing between different groups of prisoners and acknowledging the fact that those who formed part of the anti-Francoist resistance after the war were treated more severely. The studies address the regime’s pseudo-psychological and ideological reasoning for imprisonment, as well as prison conditions, torture, executions, and the way that political activists organised within the prison walls to alleviate communal suffering. Vinyes also investigates the experiences of children who were imprisoned with their mothers and who ended up being taken into the draconian social care system. Furthermore, in making women the centre of their studies, they acknowledge that women’s experiences of imprisonment were different to those of men.

There is a fundamental change in tone between the studies from the 1970s and the post-millennial investigations, though. Whereas di Febo and Romeu Alfaro spoke of women who were part of the resistance, Vinyes and Hernández Holgado discuss ‘presas políticas’, though they all rely on the testimony of political activists. Of course, many women who were part of the resistance were political prisoners, but not all political prisoners were part of the resistance. This conflation is almost certainly a consequence of heavy reliance on the testimony of Communist women: the coherence of their narrative, based upon a shared oral history of resistance, makes their voices seem representative. This results in the same representations of life in prison and the same anecdotes being reproduced throughout their memoirs.

Nonetheless, the significance of these studies, along with Michael Richard’s article on the study of female political prisoners in Málaga by Vallejo Nágera, revived interest in creating a history of women’s imprisonment under Franco.[[122]](#footnote-122) Much of the recent scholarship on women’s prisons has focused on specific areas, broadening and deepening the field. Some studies have broached regional questions or focused on individual prisons such as Ana Aguado and Vicenta Verdugo’s 2011 and 2012 investigations into women’s prisons in Valencia, or Ascensión Badiola Ariztimuño’s 2015 doctoral thesis on prisons and concentration camps in the Basque Country.[[123]](#footnote-123) Other scholarship focuses on questions of female sexuality and the gendered repression of women.[[124]](#footnote-124) Furthermore, historians have undertaken biographies of significant female political prisoners. For example, David Ginard i Féron investigates the life of Matilde Landa, a Communist from an upper-class background, who was thrust into a leadership role of the PCE’s clandestine work after more senior figures went into exile, and who committed suicide to avoid betraying her political values.[[125]](#footnote-125) Another example is Mónica Carabias Álvaro’s biography of Rosario Sánchez Mora, nicknamed ‘La Dinamitera’ for her work in explosives during the Civil War.[[126]](#footnote-126) Women’s prisons also feature as subsections in more generalised research on prisons and repression. Carme Molinero’s *Una inmensa prisión* (2003) has a chapter by Ricard Vinyes on the conditions for women and their children as political prisoners in the immediate aftermath of the conflict. *Una inmensa prisión* situates women’s experiences within the wider context of political imprisonment and concentration camps in Spain, thereby offering a focus on women that is not found in other work on the subject such as Javier Rodrigo’s *Cautivos: campos de concentración en la España franquista, 1936-47* (2005).[[127]](#footnote-127) Enrique González Duro’s *El miedo en la posguerra* (2003) covers similar themes to those found in Vinyes’ chapter in *Una inmensa prisión*, but also considers the treatment of prostitutes, the pseudo-scientific race ideology of Vallejo-Nágera, and resistance activities undertaken in prison by women who were political activists. As mentioned above, though, all historians rely on the testimony of political activists in order to substantiate their findings. In the first chapter of this thesis I problematise the uncritical use of Communist narratives, which structure the prisoners’ memoirs according to a specifically Communist model of life writing.

Aside from historical studies on women’s prisons, the prisoners’ memoirs themselves are the subject of literary scholarship. These studies explore the nature of autobiography that stems from a collective, traumatic experience, considering how and why the women reconstructed and published their memories. Shirley Mangini first noted the constructed nature of Spanish women’s prison memoirs in *Memories of Resistance* (1995). She stressed that the need to speak, as well as the long period of time that passed between imprisonment and telling, meant that the memoirs should be read for their emotional truth rather than historical accuracy.[[128]](#footnote-128) This highlighted the need to read women’s prison memoirs as constructed documents rather than as factual accounts. Within her wider study of resistance to the dictatorship, Mangini studies the testimony of multiple authors, including Cuevas, Doña, García Madrid, and Malonda, engaging with the principal themes such as the brutality of prison conditions and defining their goal as ‘to protest the systematic violation of their rights during the regime’.[[129]](#footnote-129) Like historical scholarship of women’s prisons—and apart from an edition of the *Monographic Review/ Revista Monográfica* in 1995, which contained two essays on the writing of Spanish female political prisoners—the main study of these memoirs has been post-millennial.[[130]](#footnote-130) Some scholars have created bibliographies of the memoirs, grouping them, investigating their authors, and providing contextual information with little analysis.[[131]](#footnote-131)

Holly Pike, in her recent doctoral thesis, has examined specific theoretical concerns within a larger corpus of texts such as how the prisoners’ narratives approach the physicality of their bodies and the carceral spaces in which they were held.[[132]](#footnote-132) Studying the life writing accounts of Doña, Cuevas, O’Neill, and Real in depth, Pike reads the texts through the theoretical frameworks of Bordieu, Lacan, Foucault, and Kristeva. My approach differs substantially from Pike’s for two reasons. First, my approach allows a close reading of the primary texts to direct the focus of the thesis. And second, it engages with the writing of women who were neither Communists nor members of the elite, broadening the corpus and studying the impact of this on how we understand women’s narratives of prison.

Most scholars, however, have approached one or two authors, comparing the way that they present their memories, particularly focusing on the different forms that these life writing accounts take: texts transcribed from oral testimony such as Cuevas’ *Cárcel de mujeres* or García’s *Las cárceles de Soledad Real*; third person narratives such as the memoirs of Doña and García Madrid; correspondence, such as the letters of Enriqueta Otero Blanco; and more traditional memoirs like those of Núñez or O’Neill.[[133]](#footnote-133) Following on from Díaz Balart and Rojas Friend’s historical analysis of their lives, Tabea Alexa Linhard also studies different accounts of the execution of the ‘Trece Rosas’ to investigate their emblematic status.[[134]](#footnote-134) As such, memoirs by left-wing political prisoners have become well-established as an area of scholarship. Memoirs by right-wing prisoners such as Rosario Queipo de Llano, Herta Björnsen de Wedel, Regina García, Pilar Millán Astray, and Margarita Olanda Spencer are yet to be investigated as a corpus.[[135]](#footnote-135)

Returning to the Republican memoirs that are the subject of this thesis, several scholars employ autobiographical theory to demonstrate the constructed nature of life writing accounts. By focusing on the texts as constructions, this highlights both that the memories have been through a process of selection and editing and that memory is subjective and fallible. As discussed above, the authors’ construction of their texts and their decision to publish during the Transition demonstrate a clear political intent to their writing, which has been observed by several scholars. Christina Dupláa focuses particularly on the decision to publish during the democratisation process, raising questions about collective memory and challenging the legacy of the dictatorship at a time when legislators were keen to avoid the subject. She argues that the various women brought their experiences of repression into the public sphere to make the point that their struggles should not be forgotten in a period of freedom.[[136]](#footnote-136) Similarly, Ana Corbalán, in her essay on Doña and the Argentinian writer Margarita Drago, suggests that political prisoners constructed their memoirs with the aim of highlighting a collective experience, minimising details that could discredit their political goals such as ‘emotional weaknesses or […] the frictions they experienced living together in prison’.[[137]](#footnote-137) The women’s unity became a tool to defend their identities as victims of *franquismo*, to denounce human rights violations, and to document acts of resistance and so this information was prioritised to present a collective identity.[[138]](#footnote-138) Labanyi notes the way that female political prisoners used their status as victims to create a public space for justice; their narratives ‘han desempeñado una función compensatoria sustituyendo al proceso judicial que no se ha producido’ during the Transition.[[139]](#footnote-139) Gina Herrmann also addresses the way that women’s testimony can change over time in her article on Remedios Montero, indicating that changing political circumstances determine the selection of memories and the way that they are presented.[[140]](#footnote-140) The acknowledgement that the memoirs are constructed to make a political point marks a clear distinction between historical and literary research into women’s prison experiences: the authors were not simply bearing witness to the atrocities of the defunct dictatorship, but engaging in negotiations about how the Republican past was being remembered during the Transition.

## Approach and overview of chapters

Given the variety of life writing by women political prisoners under Franco, current scholarship does not reflect the diversity of narratives that exist. Although literary scholars have addressed the constructed nature of these memoirs, the reliance on a history of women’s imprisonment, which is taken largely from the politicised memoirs of Communist women, is problematic. Anti-Francoist prisoners were a heterogeneous group, who experienced life in prison and wrote about these experiences in different ways. As a consequence, I began this research with a close reading of each account of imprisonment. This helped to focus on the form and the style of the texts, but also to consider the specific themes that each author presented in their narrative. Much is made of the orality of women’s testimony, given the influence of Cuevas’ *Cárcel de mujeres*, and some scholars make the link between the memoirs of female political prisoners in Spain and the *testimonio* genre.[[141]](#footnote-141) *Testimonio* is a genre associated particularly with native Latin American populations, in which a single speaker narrates the testimony of the collective to an outside interpreter, detailing their repression in an attempt to protest.[[142]](#footnote-142) *Testimonio* is usually published with an effort to reproduce the orality of the conversation between the narrator and the person investigating, eschewing any attempt to make the text literary. There are undoubtedly similarities, particularly in the Communist texts, which rely on a shared oral history of resistance, but women’s prison narratives in Spain do not fit within the definition of *testimonio*. For example, four of the five principal memoirs discussed in this thesis were written as texts directly by those who suffered repression rather than transcribed from interviews, thereby resembling life writing more closely than the *testimonio* genre.[[143]](#footnote-143) Several of the memoirs are also very literary, using different narrative devices to engage the reader in the experiences related, particularly Doña’s ‘novela-testimonio’. As such, this thesis approaches the texts as life writing accounts: writing about the self which does not conform to the term ‘autobiography’, a term that has been criticised for its canonisation of the works of white men at the expense of writing by slaves and women, for example.[[144]](#footnote-144) The life writing accounts that form the corpus for this thesis go beyond traditional autobiography because they display varied form and style, as well as different methods of committing the memories to paper. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson’s thoughts on searching for historical facts within life writing also shaped the way that this thesis approached the texts of political prisoners:

While autobiographical narratives may contain information regarded as ‘facts,’ they are not factual history about a particular time, person, or event. Rather, they incorporate usable facts into subjective ‘truth’ […]The complexity of autobiographical texts requires reading practices that engage the narrative tropes, sociocultural contexts, rhetorical aims, and narrative shifts within the historical or chronological trajectory of the text. To reduce autobiographical narration to facticity is to strip it of the densities of rhetorical, literary, ethical, political, and cultural dimensions.[[145]](#footnote-145)

Following Smith and Watson, the body of memoirs in this thesis were subjected to close reading, considering not just the information that is presented, but also the way in which it is communicated. In taking an approach that treated the primary texts as life writing, engaging with all aspects of their narrative, it became immediately clear that texts by Communist women mapped closely to scholarship on women political prisoners in Spain. In contrast, life writing accounts by non-Communist prisoners did not closely match this representation of prison life.

The disparity between Communist and non-Communist texts prompted me to group them accordingly. Communist memoirs display clear themes such as bearing witness to the brutality of the regime and discussing attempts to alleviate the plight of the women through political organisation within the prison environment. Furthermore, the tone of these texts focuses on the positive aspects of collective struggle; both the sense of solidarity between the prisoners and their refusal to give in to defeatist attitudes. Making the link between the similarities of the Communist narrative led to an investigation into the scholarship surrounding Communist autobiography. Igal Halfin and Jochen Hellbeck have both investigated Communist life writing in the Soviet Union, highlighting the public function of these documents.[[146]](#footnote-146) Within the Communist Party, life writing was an essential part of proving their political convictions and aspiring Party members needed to be able to write about their class origins and journey to ideological enlightenment in order to join. This also meant that life writing was subjected to public scrutiny as to whether it met the required standards, creating a set of criteria that needed to be satisfied in order to become a member. Consequently, an unofficial formula for writing an appropriate account of your own life spread through the Communist Party, not just in the Soviet Union, but internationally, as Communists were encouraged to read the life writing of other members.[[147]](#footnote-147) The first chapter of this thesis considers how the narratives of Spanish Communists, who were imprisoned by the Franco regime, fit within the wider genre of Communist life writing, particularly following Herrmann’s delineation of the genre in *Written in Red*.[[148]](#footnote-148) Focusing particularly on Cuevas’ *Cárcel de mujeres* and Doña’s *Desde la noche y la niebla* within the wider corpus of Communist texts, the key themes that comprise their politicised resistance narrative are explored: political organisation in prison in order to resist repression; a sense of solidarity and community between the prisoners; and the presentation of Communist deaths as heroic.

The close reading of *Desde la noche y la niebla* also highlighted that, while it largely conforms to the Communist paradigm, certain aspects of Doña’s ‘novela-testimonio’ demonstrate a lack of uniformity with other Communist texts. There are two clear themes which are largely absent from the writing of other Communists, but which are evident throughout *Desde la noche y la niebla*: Doña’s response to imprisonment at times privileges gender over class and the individual over the collective. Furthermore, Doña uses the semi-fictionalised form—rather than relying on the transcribed oral form of Cuevas or Real, for example—of her text to explore these themes; themes which would be considered inappropriate or a sign that she was lacking political commitment in traditional Communist life writing. To investigate why Doña constructed her text in a non-orthodox way, I looked at the wider corpus of her writing, particularly her 1977 Marxist-feminist treatise *La mujer* and her response to her husband’s prison journal called *Querido Eugenio: una carta de amor al otro lado del tiempo* (2003).[[149]](#footnote-149) The second chapter of this thesis explores Doña’s own writing alongside Marxist-feminist criticism such as Michèle Barrett’s *Women’s Oppression Today* (1980) and research on the division of public and private life in Communist societies by scholars such as Deborah A. Field and David Lloyd Hoffmann.[[150]](#footnote-150) This analysis highlights how Doña’s evolving ideology and her use of a semi-fictionalised narrative form allows her to develop and question the scope of Communist narratives of imprisonment.

Even though certain aspects of *Desde la noche y la niebla* challenge the Communist narrative of imprisonment, it is still recognisably a Communist text and its influence in the history of women’s prisons can be seen in scholarship on the subject. As such, the third chapter of this thesis focuses on memoirs of imprisonment that bear a limited resemblance to the Communist narrative: García Madrid’s *Réquiem por la libertad*; García Segret’s *Abajo las dictaduras*; and Malonda’s *Aquello sucedió así*. These texts were approached—like the rest of the life writing in the thesis—by beginning with a close reading. The reading provided clear links between the non-Communist texts: they are not narratives of resistance, but narratives of survival. This does not mean that there is a definitive counter-narrative to the Communist representation of imprisonment, but rather that a survivalist attitude in which left-wing women had to find a way to survive in a hostile state, shaped the production of the memoirs. This chapter explores themes that are not found in Communist narratives of prison such as the sense of injustice that the women felt at how they were treated by the Francoist legal system and the different coping mechanisms that women outside of a political party used to ensure they survived imprisonment. The narratives explore living and negotiating with multitudes of strangers and the way that they maintained a sense of self in the face of repression. While there is no single survival narrative, the analysis of non-Communist texts in this thesis explores different voices of women political prisoners, nuancing and broadening our understanding of imprisonment under Franco.

The analysis in this thesis approaches the memoirs of women political prisoners as constructed texts, to demonstrate that the historiography of imprisonment in the immediate aftermath of the Spanish Civil War has been heavily influenced by and politicised in favour of Communist representations of prison life. The aim of the analysis is to explore the gaps and silences in this narrative by engaging with a broader corpus of texts, thereby highlighting the plurality of experiences and representations of imprisonment.

# Chapter one: The resistance narrative: the Communist construction of prison in the life writing of Tomasa Cuevas and Juana Doña

In the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, Communist prisoners were the most active and organised group within the prison system. It is unsurprising, then, that after the death of Franco, Communist women were also one of the most prolific groups to write about their incarceration. Their texts are defined by a clear ideological message, which bears witness to the suffering of the defeated Republican side while representing the PCE as the centre of a network of resistance across Spain that worked against the dictatorship. Particularly since the new millennium, this has led to a representation of these political activists as agents in the transition to democracy in Spain, conferring upon them a significant role in the debate about how to deal with the legacy of Spain’s dictatorial regime.

As established in the introduction, Communist women’s prison writing offers a specific narrative of incarceration that offers a largely homogeneous account of prison life during the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent Franco dictatorship. The Communist narrative of prison has shaped academic studies and wider cultural production, for example: Dulce Chacón’s bestselling historical novel, *La voz dormida* (2002), which relies heavily on these same narratives to discuss women’s imprisonment.[[151]](#footnote-151) Aided by the clear and consistent message, the voice of Communist prisoners has thus come to dominate the historical representation of life in prison under Franco, albeit at the expense of other prisoners’ narratives.

The texts that are the primary focus in this chapter are two volumes of testimony titled *Cárcel de mujeres* (1985), which were collected by Tomasa Cuevas, and the ‘novela-testimonio’ *Desde la noche y la niebla: Mujeres en las cárceles franquistas* (1978)by Juana Doña.[[152]](#footnote-152) These texts have been selected from a body of Communist prison works, which includes Consuelo García’s 1982 biography of Soledad Real, and Mercedes Núñez’s *Cárcel de Ventas*, which was published in exile in 1967.[[153]](#footnote-153) Although the chapter draws on the reading of this entire corpus, the principal focus will remain on Cuevas and Doña for several reasons. Both texts are seminal within the field but have been the subject of little textual analysis, and each has been considered significant enough to be republished in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, while using radically different approaches, both Doña and Cuevas take a collaborative approach to narrating their memories.

## Communist life writing

From the earliest moments of the Soviet Union, the processes of life writing became integral to the development of political consciousness. Fearful of people jumping on the bandwagon following the Russian Revolution, the Communist Party dictated that all applicants must write a short autobiography detailing how they had become ideologically engaged with Communism. Igal Halfin, who has studied how these autobiographies were deconstructed for the purposes of punishing Party members, highlights how life writing came to represent Communist integrity:

The Party had to take the stories comrades told about themselves as evidence of their otherwise hidden moral character. Because self-introspection was ineluctably linked with self-narration, autobiographies, their syntax, their meaning, and the ways in which they were publicly interrogated became a crucial component of the Communist hermeneutics of the soul. Composing their own detailed life stories, each comrade had to understand where he came from, what had brought him into the Party, and what his duties were toward the movement.[[154]](#footnote-154)

While the prospective Communist was expected to look inward to assess their ideological convictions, these pieces of life writing subsequently developed a public and performative quality. Halfin argues that Communists modelled their own life writing on autobiographies that were circulated by the Party, and that these documents ‘deindividualized lives’, as autobiographical details could be ‘pruned, embellished, or ignored’ in order to conform to the template.[[155]](#footnote-155) These autobiographical texts were not only written for a public audience, but the author was also aware that its content would be reflected upon critically as evidence of his or her engagement with Communism. Although this practice began within the Soviet Union, it quickly became assimilated by other Communist parties across Europe. This does not necessarily mean that Soviet-style narratives were imposed by the Party, but that the proliferation of autobiography throughout Communist culture internationally had an influence in shaping the production of these documents: Communists, through their memoirs, diaries, and other forms of life writing, wanted to ‘write themselves into their social and political order’ by emulating what they read.[[156]](#footnote-156)

Conforming to this social and political order was not as laden with risk for Communists in Spain as for those original autobiographers in the USSR. Halfin highlights that the reason these forms of life writing became so formulaic was that after the Stalinist purges of the 1930s, in which these autobiographical sketches were used against people to condemn them, the role of life writing became linked to just two basic autobiographical selves: good or bad.[[157]](#footnote-157) However, the Communist Party as a critical body, emulating the increasingly suspicious nature of Soviet Communism, is something that we do see reflected in the life writing of Spanish Communists. Jorge Semprún’s *Autobiografia de Federico Sánchez* (1977), for example, charts the ideological disillusionment of Federico Sánchez, Semprún’s *nom de guerre* when working underground in Franco’s Spain, at the progressive Stalinisation of the PCE.[[158]](#footnote-158) Though Semprún continued to believe in Communism, he was expelled from the PCE in 1964 because he disagreed with the Stalinesque focus on ideological conformity and strict hierarchical rule. This stemmed from his disagreement with the leadership of the PCE about the direction the Party should take in the fight against *franquismo*.[[159]](#footnote-159) Scholarship on Communist life writing has found evidence of this need for conformity. Halfin emphasises the public nature of autobiographical writing for Communists, arguing that these documents came to reflect their ideologically convinced public persona rather than the self-doubt and reflection that Jochen Hellbeck notes in Soviet diaries of the same era.[[160]](#footnote-160)

Although Semprún expresses contempt for the Stalinisation of the PCE, this Soviet model was still influential in the rest of Europe; for most Communists, such as Tomasa Cuevas, producing an autobiography meant adhering to this set of criteria, whether this was done consciously or not. In Soviet-style life writing, the narrative often begins in youth and discusses the author’s route to conversion. If the author is from a working-class background, the narrative often features a life of hardships and struggle, which is alleviated (at least in their ability to understand and articulate their oppression, if not always materially) by their ideological transformation through Communist teachings. As Halfin points out, though, the Communist from more bourgeois beginnings has to distance him or herself from this upbringing and produce a more convincing tale of conversion.[[161]](#footnote-161) In the narrative, political conversion leads to a sense of belonging and purpose within the Communist movement, which is then tested by a period of struggle: typically war, illness or imprisonment. These life writing accounts also focus on the author’s contributions to the implementation, or maintenance, of a Communist state (either successfully or unsuccessfully, depending on the nationality of the writer). The narrative will then generally end at a positive moment that looks towards a Communist future. For example, Catherine Epstein suggests that the memoirs of East German Communists—which she describes as ‘strikingly formulaic’—often peter out at an indeterminate point in the 1950s.[[162]](#footnote-162) This, therefore, includes the period when the German Democratic Republic was established, but ends before the need to confront Khrushchev’s condemnation of Stalinism in 1956 and the seismic ramifications that this caused throughout the Communist Party across the world.[[163]](#footnote-163)

Gina Herrmann’s *Written in Red* was influential in reading the Communist texts that constitute the corpus for this thesis. Her study engages with Communist life writing in Spain, considering how autobiographical practices from the USSR became ingrained in the life writing of Spanish Communists. Herrmann analyses memoirs by leading Communists—both those who remained lifelong Party members, and those who broke with Stalinism, such as Ibárruri and Semprún—and investigates the way they negotiated between the self and the Party, ‘between the language of authority and the autobiographer’s personal language’.[[164]](#footnote-164) The autobiographers included in *Written in Red* offer intellectual and artistic analyses of Spanish Communism, focusing on a ‘sustained affective experience of militancy’, whether they remained committed to the Party or broke with it.[[165]](#footnote-165) However, the memoirs of ‘Party People’, as Herrmann terms them, are excluded from *Written in Red*: the writing of ordinary militants was ‘centrally concerned with an individual’s experience with and interpretation of the vicissitudes of party membership and the historical events in which Communism and Communists were significantly implicated’.[[166]](#footnote-166) While the memoirs of ‘Party People’ focus on the more mundane, and at times brutal, aspects of grassroots militancy, many lack the self-reflective qualities and intellectual depth that make the texts considered in *Written in Red* so interesting. However, the exclusion of memoirs by ‘Party People’ is problematic, particularly for this thesis, as it prioritises the accounts of elite Communists over the voices of rank-and-file militants. As most of the elite from the PCE were forced (but also able, compared to ordinary members) to go into exile, Herrmann recognises just two influential phenomena in the life writing of Spanish Communists: the Civil War, and the protracted Republican exile. As such, *Written in Red* excludes the voices of ordinary Party members, and omits a third influence on Spanish Communist life writing: the resistance within Spain, and the suffering caused by Francoist repression. While Herrmann’s earlier article ‘Voices of the Vanquished’ (2003) explored her interviews with ordinary left-wing women who were involved in the Civil War, their experiences of repression and militancy under Franco’s rule are absent from *Written in Red*.[[167]](#footnote-167)

Yet Communists chose to focus on resistance and repression when writing and publishing their memoirs during the Transition, a time when Communist identity was facing new challenges. After attempting, and failing, to secure electoral success, Communist narratives returned to a paradigm of identity that focused on their role in the resistance, highlighting both their contribution and the persecution that they suffered as a consequence. This allowed Communists to inscribe themselves in the historiography of the defeated Republican side that emerged after Franco’s death. As such, resistance in Spain should be considered as another sub-category of Herrmann’s phenomena which define Spanish Communist life writing. Locating the women’s accounts that are the subject of this thesis within a third phenomenon of Communist life writing also emphasises that the memories of these women were filtered through their ideology. Beyond simple factual accounts, bearing witness to suffering and repression, their narratives write the history of political imprisonment in Spain into a Communist framework of interpretation as the work of Tomasa Cuevas and Juana Doña shows.

## Tomasa Cuevas’ *Cárcel de mujeres* (1985)

One of the seminal works by a female political prisoner, the two volumes of *Cárcel de mujeres* house the testimony of over 40 women. Their stories were collected and edited into their published format by Tomasa Cuevas, a Communist and a former prisoner herself, and the volumes became a cacophony of condemnation against the regime. Each woman was either interviewed by Cuevas and the interview transcribed, or a written summary of their prison experiences was submitted, giving many of the chapters an oral quality dependent upon the register and intonation of each woman. These individual units of testimony are framed by the autobiography of Cuevas who discusses her upbringing and her political life.

Cuevas’ own narrative takes the form of whole chapters, but she also provides a short contextual introduction to each of the other prisoners’ testimonies, detailing how she knew each woman or how they came into contact again to work on the project. We can see how this approach links many experiences together. Some chapters by other contributors clearly aim to bear witness to the repression: by not trying to tell a single coherent life story but incorporating a multiplicity of anecdotes about the suffering of other inmates, these sections become a cumulative condemnation of the Franco regime’s brutality. Other women use the style of a memoir, focusing principally on their own experiences in prison, and giving scant information about their lives before or after this event. These chapters are interspersed through Cuevas’ own life narrative, which follows a more traditional, linear pattern of Communist autobiography. However, it is worth noting that each brief autobiographical introduction to a different woman’s testimony situates Cuevas in various temporal moments: how she knew each prisoner, if and how these women came into contact during the clandestine years, and how they met again in order to produce the testimony. This does not fit in with the linear nature of Cuevas’ own life story, but I would suggest that these small introductions should be considered addenda rather than a breakdown of this linearity. Cuevas speaks in detail about episodes from her youth, discussing her conversion to Communism, her imprisonment, and her clandestine activity during the dictatorship. This fulfils an important function in the texts, providing the reader with some order and coherence in the vast amount of testimony held by the two volumes. In his analysis of Ruth First’s prison memoir about apartheid in South Africa, Paul Gready argues that this approach—weaving the author’s narrative into those of other prisoners—represents a ‘reworking of the conceptions of genre and authorship’ towards a ‘more collective and collaborative conception of life writing.[[168]](#footnote-168) Like First, in using a collaborative approach to life writing, Cuevas maximises the resonance of the collective narrative in two ways.

First, as Cuevas’ own autobiography frames the contributions of other women, we are invited to see her life story as representative of theirs. Because so few of the women give any information about their lives outside prison, Cuevas constructs an image for us from her own autobiography of working-class origins and political struggle that becomes representative of the other contributors. This technique reinforces the impression that the Communist narrative is typical of all prisoners, that one voice can represent many. Second, the sheer quantity of material in the two volumes overwhelms the reader, with wave after wave of information condemning prison conditions and the brutality of the authorities, as well as memories of solidarity and emblematic figures in the prison community. *Cárcel de mujeres* was later edited into a single volume, as well as being translated into English, which condenses the material and offers a clearer narrative structure.[[169]](#footnote-169) However, what is lost in these two later editions is the sense of overwhelming condemnation of the Franco regime which the repetition in the original volumes of *Cárcel de mujeres* produces. The inclusion of the testimony of over 40 women creates a sense of a collaborative discourse, as Gready observes, reinforcing the impression that Cuevas’ texts represent a whole chorus of the oppressed.

The coherence of the Communist message masks the fact that several aspects of *Cárcel de mujeres* remain unknown to the reader, particularly regarding how the text was edited and constructed. Although Cuevas claims not to have edited the words of her fellow prisoners—‘No las he alterado. Sus voces quedan en las cintas para cualquier comprobación’ (II, 10)—a close reading of the text demonstrates that Cuevas clearly has exercised editorial rights over the testimony of the other prisoners. For example, in the introduction to Pilar Calvo’s testimony, Cuevas describes the two women chatting and states ‘*Recojo algunos de sus relatos’* (I, 145) [original emphasis], indicating that not all of their discussions are included. While this does not mean that she has altered what Calvo has said, it does imply that certain information is edited or omitted. Another issue relating to the editorial opacity of *Cárcel de mujeres* is that the reader does not have any information about when the women were interviewed, meaning that the interviews could theoretically have taken place any time between 1975 and 1985. This turbulent decade of Spanish history witnessed the country’s transition from dictatorship to democracy, and altered the women’s opinions and interpretation of their own past, particularly the way they presented the history of the PCE. These kinds of editorial issues abound throughout the two volumes of testimony, not only highlighting their constructed nature but also indicating that a close analysis of the material is necessary to gain a fuller understanding of the texts.

Cuevas constructs the two volumes of *Cárcel de* mujeres using a collaborative discourse because it produces a coherent message of resistance and repression, demonstrating why the Communist narrative of prison has become so ubiquitous. The voices of women from different backgrounds (albeit largely Communist, but with some other groups included) are presented collectively and unanimously in their criticism of the Franco regime. These women are linked through, and represented by, the autobiography of Cuevas, whose life story follows the Soviet model. In this way, Cuevas writes herself and the other contributors to *Cárcel de mujeres* into the history of the Communist Party, which is presented as ineluctably linked to the history of anti-fascist resistance in Spain.

## Cuevas’ life narrative: a case study of Soviet-model Communist autobiography

Cuevas’ narrative within *Cárcel de mujeres* follows the Soviet model of autobiography almost identically. She begins with her youth, emphasising her working-class background, the struggles faced by her family, and the transformation that political conversion gave to her life. The euphoria of political involvement during the Second Republic and the Spanish Civil War was soon followed by the hardships of prison. This did not deflate her commitment to the Communist cause, either within the prison (as will be discussed later) or as part of the resistance after her release. The two volumes of *Cárcel de mujeres* end on a positive note, as Cuevas hopes they will inform future generations and act as a deterrent to a repetition of the horrors of the Civil War and the repression of the dictatorship. Furthermore, from the early pages of *Cárcel de mujeres*, Cuevas makes us aware of her own knowledge of, and interest in, the Soviet Union (I, 26-7).[[170]](#footnote-170) All of these elements give us a clear indication that Cuevas was aware of, and influenced by, Soviet-style autobiography. This section focuses on two key elements of Cuevas’ memoir—the working-class origins of her family and the transformation that political conversion produced in her life—as a small case study of the influence of the Soviet model upon the Communist prison narrative.

Cuevas begins her story with her upbringing in Brihuega, a village in the province of Guadalajara. She conforms to the Soviet model, claiming her Communist identity when she points out the indisputable working-class credentials of her family. Her maternal grandfather was a construction worker, and her paternal grandfather ran a large oven where local women went to bake their bread. Cuevas emphasises the tradition of work, explaining that ‘Mi padre era un niño cuando empezó a trabajar en una fábrica de harina del pueblo y además tenía que ayudar a sus padres yendo al bosque a buscar leño para el horno’ (I, 13). Continuing this pattern, Cuevas and her siblings were forced into work at a young age—Cuevas began working aged nine—because both her parents struggled to work at different points in her childhood. At one point, Cuevas worked four different jobs: delivering milk in the morning, working during the day in a factory, carrying water from a well to her parents’ landlord’s house in the evening, and making alterations to clothing at night (I, 24). She comments that this situation enraged her: ‘Pero ello me causaba rebeldía. Me rebelaba contra todo lo que me explotaba’ (I, 25). This statement fulfils two functions in the creation of Cuevas’ Communist identity: it reinforces her proletarian roots, demonstrating that she too forms part of the working class, but also allows her to express dissatisfaction with, and alienation from, capitalism. Soledad Real, another Communist whose biography forms part of the corpus of prison memoirs, recounts a similar intolerance of injustice as a young girl at work. From the age of nine, like Cuevas, she was employed in a small workshop, where the apprentices were beaten and mocked. Real recalls losing her job after striking one of her superiors and reflects that ‘A mí me ocurre que de temperamento soy humilde y me amoldo, pero cuando me pisan no me aguanto y muerdo. La injusticia es algo que no he aguantado nunca.’[[171]](#footnote-171) These types of incidents are common in Communist autobiography: reflecting an innate sense of injustice and a streak of rebellion that reject the exploitative nature of capitalism, they foreshadow the development of a Communist consciousness in later life.[[172]](#footnote-172) The information that Cuevas provides about her youth—such as the death of two of her siblings, her father’s struggle to find work, and her own lack of schooling through the necessity to work—evokes the image of a difficult, proletarian upbringing, and a rejection of capitalist oppression, which would have been familiar to other Communists. This aids Cuevas in writing herself into the political order and demonstrating her ‘hidden moral character’, as mentioned above.

The influence of the Soviet model of autobiography on Cuevas’ life writing account can also be seen in the transformative quality that political engagement brings. Cuevas’ political connections allowed her life to change in three key ways: her burden of work was alleviated; she developed a political consciousness; and she found connection with a community. An architect she met through the Party gave her brother a permanent job, providing the family with one stable income (I, 28). This allowed Cuevas to drop some of her work commitments, relieving her of some financial pressures. As a narrative device, this presents the PCE as a supportive community, and it allows Cuevas to transition from an overworked child into a young activist for the Party.

Second, Cuevas’ political understanding was developed through contact with colleagues and other members of the PCE, allowing her to fight some of the injustices she witnessed, and was subjected to, as a girl. Discussions with colleagues allowed her to understand social inequality, showing her that ‘hay que luchar, tenemos que vivir mejor. Tenemos que hacer una España democrática’ (I, 26).[[173]](#footnote-173) These discussions prompted her to stand up for workers’ rights in her job at the factory: ‘En la fábrica yo era la más protestota: por cualquier cosa protestaba. Pero no sólo lo hacía por mí. Protestaba a lo mejor por los otros, por algún nuevo aprendiz que había, por lo que fuese’ (I, 25). The knowledge of injustice becomes a source of power and a weapon in Cuevas’ hands, allowing her to challenge authority and to support others around her who are in need. Her identity, which she describes in her childhood as ‘rebelde, por naturaleza,’ becomes ‘protestota’: instead of a belief that she is naturally anti-social, her knowledge of politics allows her to see herself as a legitimate protester and a protector of others (I, 15). Although this helps Cuevas to develop her identity as instinctively rebellious, in the autobiography she is also constructing herself in a leading role as a Communist by presenting herself as involved in workplace disputes. In *Cárcel de mujeres*, Cuevas presents a public persona, leaving no room for the doubt or reflection that Hellbeck notices in diaries. This continues throughout her autobiography, during the war and her imprisonment, and also throughout her clandestine work.

Cuevas’ political conversion also helped her to develop a sense of community. We see evidence of Cuevas’ connection to this community when she discusses a demonstration held on 1 May to mark International Workers’ Day. Cuevas comments that

Ese 1 de mayo fue y ha sido inolvidable para mí, con el pueblo en la calle. La manifestación se desarrolló de una manera asombrosa, como nunca hubiéramos pensado, con gente de los pueblos de los alrededores que habían venido a la capital. Se oían canciones de todo tipo revolucionario, incluso la *Internacional*, *La joven guardia*… fue un día difícil de olvidar. [original emphasis] (I, 30)

As part of a collective action, Cuevas also recalls a public demonstration, held after the victory of the Left in the February 1936 elections, to demand the release of political prisoners (I, 35). The strength of the public movement forced the local authorities to obtain permission from the central government for the prisoners’ immediate release, which was then celebrated by the demonstrators. These two events were formative experiences for Cuevas, giving her a sense of her place in the community, and also an understanding of the power of collective action. Community in Communist society is described by Hellbeck as ‘the source of true subjecthood’ which ‘promised vitality, historical meaning, and moral value’, and Cuevas found her ‘true subjecthood’ through participation in collective actions.[[174]](#footnote-174) Within the context of Communist life writing, Epstein argues that this is because Communists believe that their lives are ‘meaningful only if inscribed in the collective Communist epic of resistance and redemption’.[[175]](#footnote-175) Thus, Cuevas’ euphoric recollection of these moments highlights her sense of belonging within that community, and simultaneously inscribes her life into the history of the PCE in a way that she recognises from other Communist autobiographies.

That Cuevas should include information about her youth and political conversion in a collection of prison memoirs directly points to the influence of Soviet-style autobiography on *Cárcel de mujeres*. As discussed above, this technique not only situates her own life within the Communist tradition, but also frames the memoirs of the other contributors in this way. Through combining her own recollections of a life lived in pursuit of a Communist society with other women’s prison memories, Cuevas incorporates a broad spectrum of memory while simultaneously maintaining the focus and influence of the Communist message within the texts. This grants *Cárcel de mujeres* a depth that can be lacking from other Communist autobiographies, such as Núñez’s *Cárcel de Ventas*, for example.

## Juana Doña’s *Desde la noche y la niebla: Mujeres en las cárceles franquistas* (1978)

Though using a radically different technique, and departing from the strictures of the Soviet model, Doña is also able to incorporate a plethora of different women’s experiences into her narrative. In contrast to *Cárcel de mujeres*, in which Cuevas makes a direct claim for unaltered truth, Juana Doña obscures the role of *Desde la noche y la niebla* as an autobiographical document behind the appearance of fiction. While this breaks with the Soviet model of Communist autobiography, the collaborative discourse which links all of the Communist women’s prison writing constitutes the foundations of Doña’s text too. First published in 1978 and narrated in the omniscient third person voice, the protagonist of this text is ‘Leonor’, a young Communist activist with a husband and baby. However, the paratextual materials, including an introduction by Doña herself, indicate that the reader should consider the text ‘una novela-testimonio’. This term seemingly places it within both the fiction and non-fiction categories, linking Leonor with Doña herself (19). Doña goes on to state that ‘quiero dejar constancia que ni uno solo de los relatos que se cuentan aquí son producto de la imaginación; quiero aclarar, asimismo, que no es una novela auténticamente autobiográfica’ (21). The categorisation of this text as autobiographical is, therefore, problematic. While Leonor does narrate some of Doña’s own experiences—such as her attempt to flee Spain at the end of the war via Alicante—there are other aspects that are completely fictionalised (51-66). For example, Leonor is imprisoned continuously from 1940 until 1960, whereas Doña was imprisoned in the post-war period, released, and then arrested again in 1947 (338).[[176]](#footnote-176) Doña claims that the text was produced in this way because of her continuing role in the clandestine resistance to the Franco regime after her release from prison: she wished to hide her own identity and that of other women. This argument is not entirely convincing, as the ownership of such a manuscript would undoubtedly have incriminated Doña if she had been found with it.[[177]](#footnote-177) However, the simultaneous use of a fictional protagonist and the claim for truth (if not exact autobiographical truth in relation to Doña personally) creates a distinct set of narrative possibilities for Doña. She can create a wider, collaborative discourse, based upon both her own experiences and those of other women—hence her argument that nothing in the text is a product of imagination—without being reproached for deviating from her own personal history, as seen in the criticism of Rigoberta Menchú’s *testimonio*. Creating the character Leonor gives Doña the opportunity to knit together aspects of the female prison experience that would have been familiar to her, even if she was not always directly involved herself. In this way, she cannot be accused of misrepresenting her own past, but can still make the claim that *Desde la noche y la niebla* is a product of real life.

Structurally, the text comprises two introductions, one by Alfonso Sastre and one by Doña, in which she justifies her authorial decisions to blur the lines between autobiography and fiction; two main narrative sections which focus on Leonor’s experiences; and an epilogue which acts as a snapshot of the moment that Leonor is released from prison. The 2012 re-print (the edition which is cited in this chapter) also includes an introductory essay by Almudena Grandes and, importantly, a second epilogue. This second epilogue is taken from the second edition of *Desde la noche y la niebla* from 1978. It is signed ‘Leonor’ but includes details that hint it is actually written from Doña’s perspective rather than from that of her fictional protagonist. For example, though the details of Leonor’s life remain the same, Doña switches the narration from third person to first person, which gives the impression of greater intimacy. Like Semprún, who gave his *Autobiografía de Federico Sánchez* the subtitle ‘novela’, the paratextual materials from *Desde la noche y la niebla* challenge the reader’s perception of the text as a work of fiction. Throughout the main body of the text, the reader engages with Leonor as the protagonist of a fictional account of prison life. This is undoubtedly one of the advantages of Doña’s approach to a collaborative discourse when compared to the barrage of voices in *Cárcel de mujeres*: the use of a single voice allows the narrative to flow, encouraging the reader to identify with Leonor. However, the introductions and epilogues jar this perception, as the reader begins and ends the text with reminders of the historical realities upon which it is based. Doña’s determination to highlight the text’s factual and autobiographical basis means that the pretence of fiction is shattered. The framing of the text is one of the reasons why *Desde la noche y la niebla* should be considered life writing rather than fiction.

The narrative *Desde la noche y la niebla* follows a relatively linear structure and focuses largely on the life of Leonor. The body of the text is divided into two parts: the first discusses Leonor’s life from the end of the war up to the commutation of her death sentence and removal to a new prison, thereby largely focusing on her early imprisonment. In this section Leonor is caught up in the events in Madrid at the end of the war and attempts to flee with her family from the port of Alicante. When this fails, she is held in concentration camps with her son before being returned to Madrid by the authorities. Once there, she is pursued by the police for several months until she is captured and brutally tortured for information about her comrades. Leonor is then held in Ventas prison, and is sentenced to death by military tribunal before having her sentence commuted to 30 years imprisonment some months later. Her husband is executed and she spends the following 20 years being moved from prison to prison across Spain. The second part skips to the later years in prison, where Leonor reflects back on different events at other prisons while she is being housed in the ‘penal de castigo’ in Guadalajara. This final section ends not with Leonor’s release, which is narrated in the epilogue to the first edition, but with an anecdote about a tragic occurrence in the life of another prisoner, whose two children are killed in a house fire. The main body of the ‘novela-testimonio’ ends with Leonor commenting that the prisoners ‘vieron pasar cada tragedia detrás de los muros de los penales, siempre esperando un nuevo dolor’ (336). The decidedly ambiguous ending to *Desde la noche y la niebla* represents one of the many ways in which Doña’s writing does not conform to the Soviet model of Communist autobiography that we see in *Cárcel de mujeres*. Aside from Doña’s apparent refusal to focus on a positive Communist future and the semi-fictionalisation of the account, *Desde la noche y la niebla* also breaks with the more traditional style of Communist autobiography by beginning *in medias res*. In this way, it skips any political justification of Leonor’s upbringing or discussion of her political conversion. Doña’s non-conformity to the Communist paradigm is discussed in greater depth in the second chapter of this thesis. Nonetheless, *Desde la noche y la niebla* fits unequivocally within the sub-genre of Communist writing that focuses on women’s prison experiences, as the analysis of the themes and motifs that Doña employs will demonstrate later in this chapter.

A feature of *Desde la noche y la niebla* that clearly conforms to the Communist women’s prison narrative is its reliance on a shared oral history of resistance that was cultivated by the PCE during the dictatorship. Particularly in *Cárcel de mujeres*, many women claim that they contribute their testimony to create a public record of Francoist repression. Cuevas states that she and the other former prisoners ‘queremos que nuestras vidas sean parte de la Historia de nuestra España’ (I, 241). Blasa Rojo, another contributor, wants to set the record straight ‘porque los jóvenes piensan que son fantasías’ (I, 67). Declarations like these perhaps contributed to the prominence of the ‘pacto de olvido’ narrative, popularised by the ‘memoria histórica’ debate in Spain from 2000, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis. However, when reading Sastre’s introductory essay to *Desde la noche y la niebla*, it becomes clear that there was also an oral historical record that was developed and shared within Communist groups in Spain. Commenting on his reading of Doña’s text, Sastre says

No se trataba de un mundo totalmente desconocido para mí. Mujeres muy amigas – como Tere, Isabel, Fifí,…-, ya nos habían hablado muchas veces, en círculos familiares, de ese siniestro mundo; y personajes tan grotescos como la ‘Veneno’ formaban parte para mí de un censo de personajes conocidos. […] Tere Morán particularmente nos había contado en familia – y nos había hecho vivir imaginariamente – mil cosas de aquel mundo, con el cual me he reencontrado ahora, muy vívidamente, en estas páginas de Juana Doña. (14)[[178]](#footnote-178)

Although this did not form part of a public discussion during the dictatorship, memories of repression were clearly openly discussed within Communist circles. The oral transmission of information about prison life, including the political prisoners’ daily struggles and successes, would have created a shared narrative, which in turn shaped the production of the memoirs. As a consequence, throughout both *Cárcel de mujeres* and *Desde la noche y la niebla* we see the same stories told: the struggles for daily survival, the organisational and political successes of the political prisoners, and their interactions with *comunes* (those with criminal convictions), prison functionaries, and the religious personnel who ran the institutions. These episodes provide a framework within Communist life writing accounts that fulfils two functions. The first function is to promote a resistance narrative, which helped to situate the PCE at the heart of the opposition to the Franco regime during the Transition, when the Party was battling to ensure its legacy was remembered. The second function is to create a distinct community of political prisoners, which allows their shared memories to generate a collective identity. This is important on a political level, to help them bear witness to what they suffered, but also, on a personal level, to document the years that they spent together and the relationships that they built in that time.

Furthermore, the interdependence of the Communist prison narrative explains most clearly how *Desde la noche y la niebla* can be considered as a form of the collaborative discourse that is demonstrated in *Cárcel de mujeres*. The plethora of voices and the repetitions which form the body of Cuevas’ text are inverted in Doña’s narrative. The way that Doña’s ‘novela-testimonio’ conforms to the Communist paradigm shows that she has clearly used the oral history of the Communist network to inform her writing. However, these different voices and experiences are channelled into the unifying figure of the protagonist Leonor, reducing the cacophony of condemnation to a single voice that synthesises the different positions. This is not to say that Leonor does not represent Doña’s own memories—much of *Desde la noche y la niebla* is distinctly personal, particularly that which relates to her husband and family—but rather that the sequence of events does not necessarily correspond with her own life. Doña’s motivations for recounting her experiences in this way, putting to one side her claim about protecting those who were part of the clandestine resistance, are potentially varied. Perhaps aiming to make the text as representative as possible of the experiences that she had heard about, Doña may have chosen to develop a narrative which reduced her role as a protagonist. In her introduction to the text, Doña devotes half a page to listing the women that she knew, stating that ‘Estos nombres simbolizarán a miles de mujeres, aquellas valerosas mujeres de todos nuestros pueblos que también fueron héroes en el duro combate silencioso por sobrevivir a la más tenaz y negra represión que jamás hemos sufrido’ (22). Doña is evidently keen to bear witness to the suffering of these women, and to show that her story and theirs are inextricably linked. In this way, the character Leonor becomes a palimpsest that bears traces of all the Communist prisoners.

Another possible motivation for Doña reducing her protagonism of *Desde la noche y la niebla* is the difficulty of remembering events that are personally traumatic. In this context, Alicia Ramos Mesonero compares Doña and Ángeles García Madrid, who both wrote their memoirs in the third person. Ramos Mesonero argues that the two authors ‘Narran sus vivencias carcelarias en tercera persona, por ser demasiado doloroso recordarlo en primera, y, al distanciarse de lo narrado, no expresan resignación, tristeza ni rencor’.[[179]](#footnote-179) While this statement is somewhat problematic, as there are clear expressions of sadness in Doña’s writing that will be discussed in the next chapter, Ramos Mesonero highlights the use of the third person as a narrative device to distance the author emotionally from her own life experiences. There is evidence of this hypothesis in Doña’s 2003 text *Querido Eugenio*. This text is shaped as a conversation between Doña and her deceased husband Eugenio Mesón. Mesón was a leading figure in the *Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas* (JSU), who was executed by the Franco regime in 1941. Mesón wrote a political and personal tract to Doña whilst in prison, and Doña published it, and responded, in *Querido Eugenio*. This response is written to Mesón and details their history as a couple up until his execution. Doña comments on the potency that these memories have for her:

Quisiera mantener la memoria de más de medio siglo que hemos dejado atrás y guardar tu recuerdo tal cual eras, oler todavía tu piel, conservar tu cara de preocupación, pues nadie más que yo te conocía. La vorágine de mi larga vida ha sido un esfuerzo de miedo y amor. Tenía miedo de todo lo que contenía esa carpeta. Todo ella me atrapaba. Nuestro amor, el corto tiempo que vivimos inmensamente felices. Sólo nueve años, Eugenio querido. ¡Ha pasado tanto Tiempo! Que pudiera parecerme una gota de mi vida, y, sin embargo, lo siento como un océano.[[180]](#footnote-180)

This passage underscores the conflicting emotions that the past holds for Doña. Her memories of her husband and their life together are bittersweet and raw, despite the passage of time. They continue to hold such power over Doña that she is afraid to open the folder that contains her husband’s notebooks and to face their contents. It is likely, therefore, that Doña’s memories of imprisonment, which are intrinsically linked with her grief for her husband in *Desde la noche y la niebla*, are equally problematic for her. To mediate these problematic memories in *Querido Eugenio*, Doña’s voice and her memories are linked to her husband’s through her use of the ‘tu’ and ‘nos’ pronouns, which deflects attention and allows her to share the role as protagonist. Using a similar technique in the ‘novela-testimonio’, Doña protects herself from this role as protagonist by creating the character Leonor, which in turn mediates the traumatic nature of these memories.

Regardless of Doña’s motivations for filtering her own memories and those of other women through Leonor, this technique undoubtedly demonstrates an alternative method of creating a collaborative discourse. As such, *Desde la noche y la niebla* is comparable to *Cárcel de mujeres* in its desire to represent the voices of a multitude of female prisoners. The themes that Doña and Cuevas present in their life writing demonstrate a clearly defined narrative of how political imprisonment was viewed by Communists and of how they wanted their incarceration to be remembered. Their presentation of political life in prison plays an important part in defining and commemorating the role of the PCE in the resistance to the dictatorship and represents, consequently, a large part of the Communist women’s prison narrative.

## Political life in prison: educational programmes

The Communist women in *Cárcel de mujeres* and *Desde la noche y la niebla* are united by their status as political activists. During and after the Civil War, women were arrested for political activism, but also for other acts which the Francoist authorities deemed to be political: whether for hiding and supporting loved ones who formed part of the guerrilla resistance; in lieu of other family members; or ‘por delaciones interesadas, que respondían a la lógica vengativa y ejemplarizante con la que los “nacionales” encararon el fin del conflicto’ according to David Ginard i Féron.[[181]](#footnote-181) In contrast, Communist women generally played a much more active role, through membership of political parties and organising in the rearguard, and then as part of the resistance to the Franco regime post-1939. Consequently, they were better prepared mentally for the hardships of imprisonment, a distinction that an anonymous contributor to *Cárcel de mujeres* pointedly makes:

Las jóvenes y algunas veteranas luchadoras de organizaciones políticas y sindicales podían considerar su detención con una perspectiva más amplia, pero las mujeres detenidas por no haber encontrado al marido, al hijo, por haber insultado a los fascistas, por haber gritado contra los aviones que bombardeaban, por haber sido de izquierda, por haber votado al Frente Popular, por haber lavado ropa para las milicias (recibiendo condenas de considerable duración), que habían sido golpeadas e injuriadas al ser detenidas, para todas estas mujeres el drama individual era un sufrimiento irracional e inesperado. (II, 16)[[182]](#footnote-182)

The language of this quotation specifically differentiates political activists, including Communist Party members, from other prisoners that were arrested and imprisoned for reasons deemed to be political by the right-wing authorities. While political activists could rationalise their imprisonment as a sacrifice to the greater cause of anti-fascist resistance, non-activist political prisoners were less able to reconcile their wartime actions with their subsequent punishment. We also see the Communists’ preparedness for struggle and resistance at several points in *Desde la noche y la niebla*. For example, when Leonor is first admitted to Ventas, she requests to see the doctor for the injuries she has received during questioning. Doña writes that

Leonor no había pretendido al insistir sobre la visita del médico que éste le aliviara sus dolores. Sabía que allí, como en todas las cárceles, decenas de presos se morían todos los días sin que a los médicos de prisiones les importase nada, sin embargo querían hacer constancia de las torturas. (124)

Although Leonor has just been admitted to prison, she is already familiar with the rules and systems of resistance; she knows that she should see the doctor to help build a body of evidence detailing the prisoners’ mistreatment. Leonor clearly understands what to expect in prison, and has strategies in place to combat it.[[183]](#footnote-183) These examples locate the testimony in *Cárcel de mujeres* and *Desde la noche y la niebla* as representing a separate, combative perspective on life in prison from the thousands of other female political prisoners. However, simultaneously, many Communist women try to present their testimony as though it is representative of all prisoners. The belief that Communist prisoners can speak on behalf of other women, while also representing themselves as separate and different, is an aspect of their narrative that is considered in greater depth later in this chapter. Nonetheless, the following sections demonstrate how the Communist narrative focuses particularly on elements of resistance and political activism: educational programmes; hunger strikes and protests; and evidence of a network of resistance across Spain. The Communist narrative of prison is structured around topics that focus on resistance, thereby emulating the Communist life writing model, and writing the women into its specific political history. Furthermore, this kind of writing is viewed in itself as a political act.

Beginning with educational programmes, the Communist narrative of prison focuses particularly on its drive to promote literacy amongst prisoners. Literacy plays a central role in the formation of a Communist consciousness. According to Jochen Hellbeck, Soviet Communists considered it essential to engage individually with the central tenets of ideology rather than learning ideas by rote, as the former would demonstrate a pure and conscious relationship with the Party. However, Hellbeck also writes that words could

impart to individuals the consciousness of a larger whole and mould them into particles of a collective body. Most important, revolutionary words had an intense biographical appeal; they created personal threads in a larger narrative of class struggle, emancipation, education, and empowerment, and thereby made the revolutionary message relevant to those to whom it preached.[[184]](#footnote-184)

For Communists, then, there were defined links between consciousness, literacy, and autobiography. In order to produce conscious citizens for the Communist future, there was a need for ideologues to be literate, both to read revolutionary theory and also to consciously assess their own position in relation to the Party. Furthermore, as discussed above, Communists had to write a personal assessment of their lives and their political development in order to become a member of the Party in the first place. Classes to promote literacy, culture, and political training were, consequently, a fundamental part of political activism for Communists within the prison system in Spain.[[185]](#footnote-185)

Figures from the 1930s shows that around a third of all Spaniards were illiterate and an even higher percentage of women were unable to read or write.[[186]](#footnote-186) Literacy became a sought-after skill within the prison walls because, as women were transferred to prisons across the country, almost all communication with family members was through letters. Although some women helped others by writing on their behalf, the need for literacy was clear.[[187]](#footnote-187) As prison terms were harsh—the lowest sentence given for a political prisoner in the early 1940s was 6 years and a day—Communists identified a need for women to have a focus away from the monotony of prison routine. By organising classes, Communists met a practical need within the prison. In her memoir *Cárcel de Ventas*, Mercedes Núñez, a Communist, tells the story of a political commissar called Clara, who tackled illiteracy in Ventas. As soon as Clara saw a prisoner looking ‘abatida e inactiva’, she interrogated her about her level of literacy. If the prisoner could read and write well, Clara encouraged her to teach, and if the prisoner was illiterate then Clara insisted she attend classes the following morning.[[188]](#footnote-188) This anecdote represents the Communists as an immovable but nurturing force within the prisons, maintaining strict discipline with regards to activity and morale while having the best interests of other women at heart. Communists take pride in recounting the organisational achievements of the PCE in *Cárcel de mujeres*. One prisoner, Manoli, says that

Lo mejor de la prisión era la maravillosa organización del Partido, que te hacía sentirte plenamente feliz por cuanto allí se trabajaba. Era la Guerra Mundial y leíamos cuanto caía en nuestras manos, amén de que conseguíamos tener los partes ingleses que circulaban por Madrid clandestinamente y de la misma forma llegaban a nosotras. Teníamos organizados grupos de cultura, pues dentro de la cárcel había muchas intelectuales cumpliendo condenas. También se daban cursillos políticos bien programados que nos formaban muchísimo; teníamos una – digamos – biblioteca ambulante, y con nuestras aportaciones íbamos comprando libros que todas leíamos y al fin se rifaban entre las que formábamos la biblioteca. (II, 120-1)[[189]](#footnote-189)

Manoli is Manolita del Arco, a Communist who was continuously imprisoned for almost 19 years, making her the female political prisoner who served the longest single sentence.[[190]](#footnote-190) Manoli’s comments demonstrate the different activities that Communists co-ordinated in prison but also highlight the sense of purpose and action that existed despite extreme restrictions. Aside from the obvious advantages to mental health that regular intellectual stimulation meant, the educational programmes came to help Communist political prisoners create a sense of identity in various ways. Writing about Robben Island prison in South Africa, Gready comments that these sorts of activities displayed ‘prisoner determination, ingenuity, and increased organization in the field of recreation and culture as they continually reinvented a meaningful life and world’.[[191]](#footnote-191) The fact that Communists portray themselves as being at the centre of educational programmes in their life writing accounts highlights that this was a collective source of pride to these women. In this way, the collaborative discourse in *Cárcel de mujeres* and *Desde la noche y la niebla* not only allows the prisoners to create a repository for their memories, but also reinforces their collective identity.

During this period, literacy and learning in the prison system also gave Communist women unprecedented access to ideological training. Although women were political activists throughout the war, their duties tended to lie in practical organisation, rather than in the theoretical, ideological, and creative spheres.[[192]](#footnote-192) When imprisonment made their normal organisational activities physically impossible, the women were able to spend time engaging in intellectual and ideological discussions as a consequence. Describing her transfer to Segovia prison, where most Communist prisoners were concentrated from the late 1940s onwards, Manoli comments that

Íbamos contentas a Segovia, ya que aunque la cárcel nos era desconocida, no lo eran los cientos de camaradas que allí se encontraban. Sabíamos que al ir allá, nos encontraríamos en una auténtica escuela política, social y cultural y las condenas, largas y crueles en sí, lo eran menos cuando el ambiente que te rodeaba era positivo. (II, 131)

It is important here to note the overall tone throughout Manoli’s contribution to *Cárcel de mujeres*, both in this quotation and in the others that are cited throughout this chapter. Manoli’s testimony is exceptional because of the overwhelmingly positive way in which she remembers life in prison. She demonstrates commitment to the Communist narrative in a way not seen in other contributors’ testimony; her response to imprisonment is almost certainly conditioned by the length of time she was incarcerated. Nonetheless, Leonor also makes a case for Segovia being a positive environment in comparison to other institutions in *Desde la noche y la niebla*:

Se estudiaba, había un cuadro artístico por el cual se redimía; cocina de economato donde se podía guisar los propios alimentos; correspondencia en carta y más tiempo de visita con los familiares, incluso se podía protestar sin sufrir castigos de aislamiento del trato vejatorio de las funcionarias. El régimen de mayor libertad permitía una vida política intensa, todas las organizaciones funcionaban a ‘tope’; existía un Comité Unitario donde se tomaban la mayoría de los acuerdos para la vida colectiva de la prisión. (274-5)

Although Leonor quickly recognises the illusory nature of this alleged liberalism, presenting a more nuanced picture of the realities of prison, Segovia is once again depicted as a positive environment where women were able to focus on their ideological development. Furthermore, if you compare this to the comments of Adela, a prisoner in *Cárcel de mujeres*, about her life working in the political underground after her release, then the difference is stark. Although Adela states that she does not regret the political work that she did, she does question why her gender prevented her involvement in the ideological side of Communism. She asks

A mí… ¿Por qué no me han enseñado? ¿Es que piensan que no somos capaces? Políticamente no puedo profundizar en una discusión porque no he hecho reuniones políticas, por la situación clandestina que tenemos, pero a mi marido lo nombraron miembro del Comité Central. […] La mujer tiene que ocuparse de la compra, de la casa, de la ropa. […] O sea que las mujeres en general, sólo hemos servido para trabajar sin ninguna educación política. (II, 210)

This quotation highlights the contrast for female prisoners between their ideological life in prison among other women, and their practical, political role when working clandestinely alongside men. In this sense, incarceration is presented as a boon to the political education of women, who were able to find the time to develop their own political consciousness. Such individual development demonstrates how and why some women chose to view imprisonment in a positive light. Part of the Communist narrative, therefore, focuses on the development of women’s political identity and a regained or developed sense of agency despite being physically restricted by their sentence. This is also contrasted with membership of the PCE when they were in competition with men for different roles: outside prison, they held a secondary status within the Party to their male counterparts, whereas in prison, gender was not relevant to ideological engagement and personal development.

While educational programmes produced psychological and ideological benefits for many women prisoners, these achievements also hold propagandistic value within the Communist narrative. In *Desde la noche y la niebla*, Leonor contemplates a group of peasant women who are learning to read and write in a class that she is teaching:

Leo las vio inclinadas sobre sus cuadernos, con las caras contraídas en un supremo esfuerzo de atención; los dedos torpes para manejar el lápiz en unas manos encallecidas; manos y mentes que se iban desbrozando poco a poco. Su vida trabajada nunca les había permitido tener horas para ellas mismas y ahora, a pesar de la tragedia que les envolvía, querían aprovechar este ‘compás de espera’, dedicar a algo ese tiempo que les iba entre las manos en días de ‘holganza’ como llamaban a esta inactividad forzosa en su sentido sobrio de la vida de trabajo. (182)

The tone of this passage is intriguing. Leonor admires the women for making the most of their wasted time in prison by learning. To a certain extent, this reflects Doña’s interest in feminism at the time she was writing *Desde la noche y la niebla*. However, despite this admiration, the tone is also quite condescending: Leonor sees herself as the civilised Communist bringing education to the simplistic, infantilised peasantry. The women’s faces are contorted with the effort of trying to hold pencils in their clumsy, calloused hands, as their minds are opened to the possibilities of a Communist world. Even the choice of the word ‘desbrozar’ seems unusual in this context. Rather than education filling the brain with information and broadening horizons, Leonor sees the minds of the *campesinas* being cleared of the unnecessary. Though not wishing to diminish the work of Communist prisoners, this passage highlights the slightly patronising and proselytising motivations evident within the drive to educate other women.

Nonetheless, representing literacy and educational programmes is a defining theme of the Communist narrative of imprisonment for two reasons. First, engaging in communal educational programmes helped Communist women to develop ideologically, and to see themselves as part of a wider project in resisting the dictatorship. This created a sense of pride and affective bonds, which they wished to pay tribute to in their writing. Second, personal and collective development fits with the principle of Communist autobiography (and of autobiography more widely) of care for the self.[[193]](#footnote-193) The prisoners’ impulse to write about their didactic role, or their role as a student, relates inherently to Communist models of behaviour: the women were adhering to several tenets of ideology, by educating themselves and others in order to resist the repressive conditions in prison. As the focus on education allows the women to strengthen their Communist identity, thereby inscribing themselves into a revolutionary history, it becomes one of the defining features of the archetypal Communist prison narrative.

## Political life in prison: hunger strikes and protests

The Communist women’s narrative also focuses on the various hunger strikes that took place in the 1940s to protest against certain conditions or situations within the prisons. Strikes and protests were a focal point for prisoners not only because they were an attempt to improve prison conditions, but also because they represented a collective stand against the dictatorship. There are two principal strikes that the women recount—one in Ventas prison in Madrid, and another in Segovia—as well as many other smaller acts of protest.

The strike in Ventas took place in January 1946, when one of the prisoners, who was in charge of supervising a certain group of women (*mandanta*), refused to serve the food that had been cooked because it was of such poor quality. She was put in solitary confinement for her lack of cooperation; the other prisoners immediately went on hunger strike as a protest, demanding that the quality of the meals be improved and that the prisoner be released from her punishment. The strike lasted six days and was successful in that all of the demands were met by the prison authorities. However, there were serious consequences for this act of protest. In *Cárcel de mujeres*, Manoli writes that

Como era una época de grandes necesidades materiales y todas estábamos subalimentadas y habíamos sufrido la guerra, en la que también habíamos carecido de muchas cosas vitales para el organismo […] la salud de gran número de compañeras quedó quebrantada. (II, 123)

Manoli also comments that those who had taken part in the hunger strike had a note put on their files that haunted the prisoners for the rest of their sentences; this often meant that prisoners were transferred from prison to prison as punishment, or had parole refused. Nonetheless, she deems the strike to have been an inordinate success, with between sixty and seventy per cent of the prison population taking part, and their demands being met. Manoli finishes her commentary on this episode with the following triumphalist statement:

La huelga de hambre, cuyos resultados, como ya he dicho, fueron fructíferos, hicieron que la Dirección nos respetase un poco más como presas políticas […]. A partir de este momento podíamos pisar fuerte, hasta el punto de que si alguna vez el rancho—de todas formas escaso y de mala calidad—no estaba en las debidas condiciones, era el propio Director el que nos visitaba en las galerías para pedir disculpas por dichas anomalías. (II, 123)

Once again, it is worth noting that Manoli’s testimony is exceptionally positive, and that her triumphalist tone reflects her ideological interpretation of her memories. Nevertheless, Manoli marked this episode as evidence of a changing dynamic between the prisoners and the authorities: she believed that the prisoners were respected because of their actions and that they could ‘pisar fuerte’, that is, have more confidence in their status as political prisoners. The aims of the strike and the outcomes in this situation appear to have been relatively straightforward. Although there were some negative consequences to their behaviour, a demonstration of resistance to the regime was met with compromise from the prison authorities, giving the prisoners a sense of victory.

The strike in Segovia, although viewed by the prisoners as overwhelmingly successful, was much more ambiguous in its outcomes. Taking place in January 1948, two years after the strike in Ventas, the prisoners protested against the punishment of a young Communist, Mercedes (Merche) Gómez, who had given a visiting Chilean journalist a fair appraisal of prison conditions. The journalist had come to review the prison system as part of a fact-finding mission about the Franco dictatorship and had requested to speak to the prisoners alone, although the interview took place in front of the prison authorities. In response to questions, Gómez highlighted that the women were political prisoners and complained about the conditions in prison. Although the journalist requested that there be no reprisals for what she was told, Gómez was immediately put into solitary confinement. The other prisoners knew that Gómez was being singled out for representing their collective position, and went on hunger strike to demand her release. The strike went on long enough for women to become seriously ill and to need to be revived with glucose (II, 36). The anonymous contributor to *Cárcel de mujeres* comments on the consequences of the hunger strike:

Tres semanas de celda para unas, seis para otras y el aislamiento del resto de la reclusión hasta septiembre fueron, con las acostumbradas notas graves en el expediente, las consecuencias. Pero, en efecto, Merche salió a la vez que las demás; y en este sentido habíamos ganado. (II, 37)

Another prisoner, María Valés, agrees with this statement, writing that

Esa huelga, en mi opinión, terminó con un triunfo para las reclusas, aunque varias quedamos en celdas algunos meses, pero Merche siguió el mismo régimen de celda y ni ella ni a ninguna nos hicieron expediente y a las que quedamos en celda, nos dieron nuestros petates y ropas. (II, 50)[[194]](#footnote-194)

Curiously, the Communists viewed the hunger strike as a success, despite many women being sanctioned with solitary confinement, essentially sharing in Gómez’s punishment. If we consider the strike as an act of open defiance, however, and as a source of agency to women who were otherwise contained in a system without rights, this offers a different perspective of the situation. The prisoners were protesting against an act of injustice towards a fellow inmate and, as an overt act of resistance to the regime, this was recognised by the authorities and punished. As such, their protest was acknowledged, and though perhaps not as successful as the strike at Ventas, the women took a memorable, collective stand against the dictatorship.[[195]](#footnote-195)

This sense of collective action is evident in Leonor’s discussion of a protest which led to another hunger strike in Málaga from *Desde la noche y la niebla*. Despite the authorities’ insistence that they should participate in religious ceremonies, the prisoners refused to kneel for the Stations of the Cross. As the political prisoners were surrounded by guards demanding that they kneel, Leonor comments that ‘Una voz serena pero enérgica salió del grupo de reclusas: “¡Noo!”, fue un no tan decidido que acalló los gritos histéricos de las “autoridades”’. Consequently

No hubo ‘vía crucis’ y sí celdas de castigo. Al día siguiente de estar incomunicadas, declararon la huelga de hambre. Estuvieron sin ingerir ni una gota de agua durante diez días; hasta que ganaron la batalla de no ver más a las ‘catequistas’, ni acudir al ‘rosario’. (260)

This scene emphasises the role that protest and strike had for the Communist women, showing how these kinds of memories became emblematic of heroism. The unifying rejection of religious practices resulted in a resounding ‘no’, which shocked the authorities into silence, and opened up a battleground for them to demand concessions to their political status. This was a collective act in the face of persecution and, while costly, produced quantifiable outcomes.

If we compare these strikes to the never-materialising general strike that Jorge Semprún bemoans in *Autobiografía de Federico Sánchez*, this perhaps highlights the comparative sense of success and agency that the women may have felt during their protests. Admittedly Semprún’s negative comments about the PCE’s inability to organise a national strike in Spain came after his expulsion from the Party, but his frustration is clear:

toda mi vida de militante comunista se ha desarrollado bajo el signo de la huelga general, que seguía siendo, sin duda, algo apocalíptico, pero ya no inquietante, sino todo lo contrario: la explosión inmediata y festiva de una nueva realidad social. […] Pero la historia profana nunca resulta tan bonita como la sagrada: bajo el signo de la huelga general no hemos vencido.[[196]](#footnote-196)

It is interesting to compare the agency of a male Communist working clandestinely in Spain with the actions of female political prisoners inside the prison walls. Semprún and his comrades were attempting to arrange a strike across the whole of Spain, coordinating vast numbers of participants with the aim of overthrowing the Franco dictatorship. These actions were conducted clandestinely for fear of capture and torture, and were unsuccessful in part because of the scale of the project. In contrast, the female prisoners had a limited sphere of action within which they had tangible, localised problems. They did not have to be clandestine in their organisational activities because they were already subject to punishment by the Francoist state, so they could stage a protest with relative ease. Consequently, their actions had visible results and measurable outcomes for other prisoners. As discussed above, imprisonment allowed the women to develop their political agency in a way that was considerably more difficult within the Party because of gender restrictions. Although the hunger strikes were limited in their success, and, to a modern reader, perhaps demonstrate more deeply the sacrifices that women made, their presentation as positive and successful highlights their importance to the female political prisoners.

Reflecting on strikes and protests, these activities help to define the Communist narrative of resistance in prison. Whether or not the protests were measurably successful, what is important is that in *Cárcel de mujeres* and *Desde la noche y la niebla* these activities are presented as successful. Acts of protest demonstrate a collective attitude of self-sacrifice and rebelliousness, which helps Communists’ to present themselves as leading the resistance. We can see this presentation in *Desde la noche y la niebla*, whenLeonor comments that

No importaba el mayor o menor número de presas políticas, por donde pasaban mantenían una posición de resistencia y dignidad, una especie de cordón umbilical las unía de cárcel a cárcel y cada protesta y cada lucha traspasaba los muros de las prisiones, las protagonistas sabían que pronto su acción sería comentada y saludada por sus hermanas presas en otras cárceles. En cada penal se luchaba como se podía por ir conquistando al menos el derecho de ser tratadas como personas. […]

No sólo se resistía, sino que se crearon múltiples vehículos por donde recibir el oxígeno del exterior. (265-6)

Communists were not passively waiting out their sentences, but were taking a stand at whichever opportunity arose, simultaneously reinforcing their status as political prisoners. This gave Communist prisoners a place within the network of resistance to the dictatorship, both inside and outside of the prison walls.

## Political life in prison: a network of resistance across Spain

While primarily focusing on how the prison community resisted the dictatorship from custody, the Communist narrative also highlights the ways in which dissidence crossed the prison walls. This network of resistance is visible in acts of solidarity—passing in both directions—between prisoners and the wider community. The concept of a wide network of resistance across the whole of Spain is an important narrative device: it undermines the legitimacy of the Franco dictatorship and reinforces the idea that the prisoners were not isolated dissidents in the face of overwhelming support for the regime.

Particularly in *Cárcel de mujeres*, many of the women report instances of material solidarity with the prisoners by strangers. For example, women incarcerated in Palma de Mallorca were sent fish by the locals to try to alleviate their hunger, although this was then sold to the women by the prison authorities rather than being included in their daily ration, an example of prison authorities abusing the vulnerability of the prisoners for ‘el lucro personal’ (213, I). In the Basque Country, some women who were held briefly without charge in the prison Orúe ensured that, on national holidays, young prisoners were sent baskets of food sourced from the local community: ‘para hacer este paquete se habían ido al mercado y habían ido puesto por puesto pidiendo que les dieran algo diciendo que era para unas chavalas de Madrid que se iban a morir de hambre’ (124, I). Community support often continued upon the prisoners’ release too. Petra Cuevas comments that, although she was unable to find work after being freed, people on the outside ‘se han portado muy bien conmigo, cuando salí se desvivían por invitarme a comer, a recibirme en su casa, me daban cariño’ (116, II). These instances of solidarity are significant because they demonstrate support for the prisoners which extended beyond their own network of friends and family. Although the women include these stories as a method of giving recognition to the people who helped them, these acts of kindness also highlight that the prisoners were not isolated dissidents, but that they had public sympathy.

The political women also highlight that they were able to contribute to the resistance on the outside too. In both *Desde la noche y la niebla* and *Cárcel de mujeres*, the women discuss their support for the *guerrilleros* that were fighting the regime in the mountains. In an extraordinary feat of cunning, the women who were forced to work in the sewing workshops in Ventas produced extra clothing from the material, which was smuggled out of the prison and sent to the guerrilla fighters. Antonia García claims that, after the first piece of cloth was measured and cut in front of the functionary, ‘Las cortadoras colocaban de otro modo la pieza para que en cada una saliera prenda y media […] dando el resultado de que si nosotras hacíamos doscientas piezas para intendencia, cien eran para nosotras’ (73, II). This operation celebrates the triumph of anti-Francoist resistance over the seemingly hapless prison administration. The inclusion of this story bolsters the impression of the extent of resistance to the regime. However, Doña’s character Leonor also offers a more introspective analysis of the importance of these acts to the prison community. Leonor muses that, as well as showing solidarity with the guerrilla fighters, these gestures also represented ‘una gran dosis de romanticismo y esperanza’ for the political prisoners. As a consequence, ‘Las mujeres creaban y esto les imprimía una gran confianza en ellas mismas, en sus propias facultades, no solamente estaban sobreviviendo, sino venciendo en muchos casos al medio destructor que las envolvía’ (269). The vastly unequal fight between the regime’s forces and the guerrilla fighters was never going to overthrow the dictatorship, particularly after the PCE’s support for the armed struggle was withdrawn in 1948.[[197]](#footnote-197) Doña’s analysis demonstrates, though, that the presentation of a resistance network across Spain was as much about the illusion of dissidence as it was about the reality. Particularly for Communist prisoners who served some of the longest sentences, especially those women who were repeat offenders (*reincidentes*), the vision of a dissident community resisting the regime comforted them during their bleak period of incarceration.

The focus on the political life of the Communist prisoners in this section has highlighted several key aspects of their archetypal prison narrative. As militants, their portrayal of prison life focuses largely on political organisation and its benefits to the community. This feeds into both their application of Communist militancy to the prison environment and their view of the PCE as an agent of change in Spain. Political activities provided the women with a sense of purpose, allowing them to reinforce their status as activists and to develop themselves ideologically. Their ability to continue these activities is constructed to present them as making a mockery of the prison authorities and, by extension, the dictatorship. It also provides a sense of community for the women. Furthermore, it highlights that they were not isolated dissidents and suggests that they represented part of a wider network of resistance. As such, the Communist women’s prison narrative often focuses on the communal rather than the individual and the political rather than the personal. It is incorrect to assume, however, that the Communist women’s prison narrative is devoid of the personal. The following section of this chapter considers how the Communist women defined their community, the ways in which they bear witness to the persecution of the regime, and how the years in prison created a bond between the women that was both personal and political.

## Constructing community: political women

As mentioned above, Halfin describes community as ‘the source of true subjecthood’ for Communists.[[198]](#footnote-198) However, a close reading across the corpus reveals that Communist prisoners failed to agree on who did or did not form part of this community. At times this conflict demonstrates discord between the anti-Francoist resistance narrative and different interpretations of Communist ideology, while at others it is simply a demonstration of personal differences between the women. The ways in which Communist women define themselves as a community, and also what they define themselves against, are hallmarks of their narrative of prison.

There is a link between the Communist obsession with defining the prison community—something which cannot be found in the life writing accounts of non-Communist women—and the PCE’s attempt to redefine itself during the Transition. The Party believed its electoral success would be determined by both its combative role during *franquismo*, but also its alleged mass appeal to the working class. As such, the message of the Communist women’s prison narrative represents an ideological stance, depicting them as representative of the whole community whilst also engaging as a defined political group in resistance. In demonstrating these conflicting positions, there is a larger focus in this section on *Cárcel de mujeres* because of the variety of voices and opinions that are represented within the two volumes.

The Communist women’s desire to construct a community of political prisoners is as divisive as it is unifying. Most scholarship discusses female political prisoners as having one shared experience, something with which many of the women who contribute to *Cárcel de mujeres* initially agree.[[199]](#footnote-199) The political community can appear, at first, as widely inclusive to all female political prisoners. Several of the women discuss their experiences as something that can only be fully understood by those who were also imprisoned. Paz Azati argues that ‘Aunque lo digamos, aunque lo expresemos, nunca lo comprenderán los que no han estado en la cárcel, lo que ha sido eso. Sólo lo comprendemos las que hemos estado dentro’ (II, 98). Antonia García frames her own testimony as representing ‘lo que he pasado yo, lo que han pasado los que yo he visto, lo que hemos pasado todos nosotros’ (II, 65), just as Azati states that ‘Lo que yo pasé en Ventas es lo mismo que han pasado todas’ (II, 93). In this way, contributors to *Cárcel de mujeres* allow their experiences to link all female political prisoners together, broadening the representativeness of the texts while simultaneously maintaining the distance of readers who were not imprisoned. These statements also imply that these women’s experiences are the hegemonic representation of life in prison under Franco. As we have seen in Cuevas’ use of a collaborative discourse in *Cárcel de mujeres*, the experiences of one woman (or several women in this case) are extrapolated to represent the whole.

There are also political prisoners who exist in a liminal state within the discussion of community in the narrative, who the other prisoners recognise as part of the community, but who they do not feel they can speak for. Political prisoners who were accompanied by their children in prison or who lived under a death sentence are often discussed by other prisoners or by themselves in similar language: their experiences are described as different and apart from that of other women. To some extent, this separation could be a consequence of their physical separation in different galleries from the other prisoners, which began as early as the summer of 1939 as the prisons became more organised.[[200]](#footnote-200) The conditions of incarceration of these two groups of women are deemed in *Cárcel de mujeres* to be more brutal than for other prisoners. Describing how mothers and their children lived in Ocaña, María del Carmen Cuesta comments that

Cantidad de madres con sus pequeños sin otra sobrealimentación que el rancho […] no había agua para la limpieza de los pequeños, no tenían donde tender la ropita que no era lavarla, sino limpiarla, a veces con los mismos pipís de las madres. El sufrimiento de estas mujeres era tremendo […] *Hay que pasarlo para saber lo que es eso.* (I, 187) [my emphasis]

Although it is clear that these women and their children experienced suffering, Cuesta believes that this experience is outside the understanding of those who have not experienced it. This sentiment is echoed by Petra Cuevas, who gave birth to a daughter in prison who died six months later. Petra states that ‘Sólo otra mujer, que haya tenido un hijo en estas condiciones comprenderá lo que sufrimos allí, la impotencia que se siente y al mismo tiempo la responsabilidad’ (II, 106). Soledad Real comments that ‘Las que peor se lo pasaban eran las madres […] Quiero decir que era una vida misérrima y que las madres tenían muchos más problemas que nosotras’.[[201]](#footnote-201)

The concept of a group apart from the central community is continued in descriptions of women living under the sentence of death. The sole anonymous contributor to *Cárcel de mujeres* describes the death penalty thus: ‘Sólo ellas mismas, las que sobrevivieron, tienen derecho a hablar de esto. Las demás únicamente podemos hacerlo desde fuera, tras la barrera invisible e insalvable que las separaba de nosotras’ (II, 19). Paz Azati echoes this sentiment when discussing women that were being led to their executions, stating that ‘Yo he conocido a mujeres cuyos ojos han sido para mí una obsesión durante años. Eran, no sé… los ojos de alguien que ve más allá de nosotros, que aún vive’ (II, 98). Women whose death sentences were commuted seem to occupy a liminal state in the writing of *Cárcel de mujeres*. They were lucky enough not to have been amongst those who died for their beliefs, but they suffered a kind of mental torture that other prisoners could not fully comprehend. The experiences of both mothers and women that lived under the death penalty is a topic within the testimony that begins to group women by their different experiences, allowing for a more nuanced interpretation of community in prison narratives.

Within *Cárcel de mujeres*, the Communists’ argument for a supportive community that includes all of the female political prisoners is continued when discussing inmates that represent other political factions. In her brief introduction to Pilar Pascual Martínez’s testimony (which is titled ‘La socialista’), Cuevas writes that Pascual Martínez ‘era socialista pero no hacía diferencias; si una era presa política era antifranquista, era una compañera’ (I, 201). Here, the sense of belonging is transmitted through the ideology of anti-Francoism rather than through a more partisan idea of community. Thus, Cuevas highlights that political differences were put to one side in prison. One Communist inmate, Ángeles Mora, also discusses this issue, focusing particularly on Socialist prisoners who had supported the Casado coup that brought an end to the Civil War.[[202]](#footnote-202) Mora comments that although the women who were part of the Junta Casadista ‘Tenían más miedo a nuestra [the Communists’] reacción que a la de los franquistas,’ for having betrayed the Popular Front cause, she emphasises that ‘Para nosotras quedaba claro que eran presas de Franco y que su error lo pagarían caro’ (I, 149). Mora goes on to describe how the Communists made a concerted effort to maintain contact with these prisoners, who were kept in solitary confinement, and to show them solidarity by sending them food and maintaining correspondence with them before their execution several months later.

This example is significant because it presents the Communists as a conciliatory and nurturing force, as highlighted in relation to literacy and education within the prisons. However, in the wider corpus of life writing by Communist prisoners, this political conformity begins to break down. Soledad Real discusses ideological tensions in prison, particularly with anarchists. In Les Corts prison in Barcelona, Real recalls that the Communists were accused of being ‘colaboracionistas’ by anarchist women for attempting to engage with problems that the prison population faced, such as caring for the young, the ill, and the elderly.[[203]](#footnote-203) Anarchist women believed that these issues were the responsibility of the prison authorities, and that Communists were solving problems for them. Real comments that ideological tensions—particularly in the earlier years of imprisonment, and not in Ventas, which had some form of cross-party committee to discuss political matters—often resulted in confrontation and ‘insulto personal’, which meant that the different factions kept their distance from one another.[[204]](#footnote-204) In Málaga prison, Real also accuses the anarchists of affecting morale between prisoners, a problem which was, in her opinion, resolved by the influence of the Communists. She claims that the anarchists created an environment where everything had a price: women paid to read each other’s newspapers and charged to write a letter on someone else’s behalf. Real states the women were even practising usury with one another.[[205]](#footnote-205) While the problems Real discusses are, in part, related to localised issues in certain prisons, her depiction of other political factions paints a more complex picture of living alongside one another. While there were undoubtedly many women that were able to work together regardless of their ideology, political differences also caused rifts.

The image of one unified political prisoner community becomes even more problematic when we consider certain instances where Communists were criticised, and even ostracised, by other members of the PCE. As discussed earlier, the progressive Stalinisation of international Communism led to the Party becoming increasingly inward-looking and self-critical. Throughout the corpus there are examples of Communist women who criticised, or were subjected to criticism by, other Party members. Such criticism highlights divisions within the political community, which the Communist women were keen to represent as unified. Conversely, by discussing acts of ideological criticism in their narratives, the women are conforming to the *autocrítica* paradigm in Communist life writing and culture, and are thereby writing themselves into this tradition. This also led to growing ideological intransigence, particularly among prisoners that served long sentences.

There are examples where a strict maintenance of Party discipline demonstrates how rigid rules for conduct could affirm and connect the community. In Núñez’s *Cárcel de Ventas*, the ‘commissar’ Clara, who was mentioned earlier in this chapter, tries to imbue Núñez with a sense of purpose. Clara argues thus:

La cárcel no es un paréntesis en la vida. Es un nuevo terreno de lucha. Los sueños estériles en el petate, el mirar melancólicamente hacia atrás y lamentarse sobre lo que pudo haber sido y que no es, no conducen a nada. […]

Ellos tratan de crear aquí todas las condiciones posibles para que nos embrutezcamos […] Un simple relajamiento de lenguaje, de limpieza, por pequeño que sea tiene su importancia. Significa una concesión hecha al enemigo ¿comprendes?[[206]](#footnote-206)

The message is clear: as a Communist, there were standards that the women were expected to meet and Núñez comments that these firm words ‘despiertan en mí una alegría profunda’.[[207]](#footnote-207) Rather than allowing the prospect of imprisonment to depress her, Clara encouraged Núñez to resist through her behaviour. The role of ideology in the community, which sometimes led to political intransigence and sectarianism, also played a role in motivating the prisoners, unifying them around a common goal. Reading the gaps and silences in this message, though, it is clear that women had to conform, or face potential ostracism from the group.

The concept of community within the Communists’ life writing was also subject to change, depending on how the contributor’s perspective altered. An example of the fluctuation of community is the inclusion in *Cárcel de mujeres* of the testimony of María Salvo, nicknamed ‘Cionin’. As a consequence of her wartime activities, including her role as a propaganda secretary for the Communist movement in Barcelona, Salvo was imprisoned. However, in 1943 the Communist newspaper *Mundo Obrero* published a denunciation against Salvo, accusing her of having provided information that led to the arrest of several comrades (II, 152). Although Salvo protested her innocence, she was ostracised from the Communist community within the prison, and was not allowed to participate in Party activities. Eventually, Salvo was allowed back into the ranks of the Party in prison, but her comment on this change of affairs is revelatory. She states that ‘Mi situación especial me producía amargura y seguía sintiéndome marginada pero he de reconocer que de una forma personal se me dispensó un trato de favor’ (II, 156). Salvo acknowledges that she was permitted to re-join the community, but not because her innocence had been recognised, meaning that she still suffered marginalisation. Salvo’s situation demonstrates the power that the Communist notion of community held within the prisons. Despite her exclusion, Salvo still praises the community throughout her testimony. Admittedly, Salvo’s testimony was provided after her re-admittance to Party circles, and was given in conversation with Cuevas, which would have directed and shaped the kind of account Salvo gave. Nonetheless, the extent to which Salvo is able to be positive about the community in prison demonstrates the way that autobiographical processes were linked to Communist identity for militants. For example, Salvo comments that

Es un sentimiento noble en que el sacrificio personal no cuenta; lo esencial era superar entre todas todo lo desagradable, lo más duro, de forma colectiva; así florece ese lazo de camaradería, que sólo puede darse en las más terribles situaciones. Yo he recapacitado durante estos años en que gozo de libertad, sobre lo que pasé presa; y son muchos los momentos que recuerdo en que no me sentí desgraciada. (II, 163)

As Salvo was marginalised throughout much of her prison sentence, it is interesting that she frames her response to that situation many years later in terms of sacrifice and putting the collective ahead of the individual. Although in her own words Salvo considered herself to have been marginalised, her interpretation of Communist ideology allowed her to re-inscribe herself within this community. Accepting marginalisation was her personal sacrifice and demonstration of her ongoing commitment to the values of the prison community. Cuevas’ inclusion of Salvo’s testimony in *Cárcel de mujeres*, in itself, also includes her within the prison community, despite her ostracism during those years.

The changing boundaries of who can and cannot form part of the community must be attributed, in part, to the fact that these memoirs were produced so many years after the women were actually imprisoned. In this way, the Communist women’s prison narrative reflects both the memories of the former prisoners as well as how their ideas and opinions about captivity changed after their release. This aspect of reassessment demonstrates that the notion of the prison community is subjective and flexible, perhaps never fully or definitively constructed, and subject to change over time.

## Constructing community: prostitutes and *chivatas*

The importance of defining community within the prison walls for Communists can be measured not just against who was included, but also through those who were perceived as outside of the community. This relates particularly to prostitutes and *chivatas*, women who acted as informants to the authorities. Studying how these women are presented helps to define the boundaries of community within the Communist women’s prison narrative. It provides information about which behaviours were considered unacceptable if women wanted to become part of the community, creating a binary opposition between Communists and *comunes*.

In post-war Spain, levels of prostitution increased dramatically. Raquel Osborne notes that, in 1940, over a million women were single in Spain, and that, until 1950, only 16 per cent of women were recorded as working.[[208]](#footnote-208) Nationalist doctrines encouraged strict, traditional gender roles, attempting to restrict women to the domestic sphere. Dire economic circumstances meant, however, that increasing numbers of women, whose families had been decimated by war and repression, were forced into crime. In some cases, this meant theft or working in the black market, but up to 200,000 women may have been working as prostitutes in Spain in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War.[[209]](#footnote-209) The regime annulled the 1935 Republican prohibition of legalised prostitution, highlighting the ‘double morality’ of the regime: working-class women were necessary objects for male sexual gratification, in order to preserve the virginity of the women that were eligible for marriage.[[210]](#footnote-210) Although sex work was permitted in brothels, severe deprivation meant that many women sold their bodies illegally on the streets. This caused problems for the authorities, as Bandrés notes, not least because it offended the Church, but also because it led to high levels of sexually-transmitted diseases.[[211]](#footnote-211) The police cracked down on prostitution outside of brothels, meaning that large numbers of sex workers were imprisoned alongside political prisoners. These women were often referred to as ‘piculinas’ or ‘quincenarias’, which related to their short prison terms of fifteen days. Within their narrative, prostitutes function as the Other, helping Communist women to delineate the boundaries of their own identity, but also as a further example of the consequences of Francoist repression.

The sense of disgust that Communists feel towards prostitutes can be seen in the testimony of Nieves Waldemer Santisteban in *Cárcel de mujeres*, who objected to being housed with prostitutes and other common prisoners. This was because ‘no teníamos ninguna relación con el crimen,’ but she also poses the concern that prostitutes were disease-ridden and were being housed ‘entre mujeres *honradas* y niños, con toda clase de enfermedades que traían […] fácilmente se podían haber *contagiado* todas’ [my emphasis] (I, 79). Here, Waldemer Santisteban establishes categories of inmates: the political prisoners represent innocence, honour, injustice, cleanliness, and health; the prostitutes are a source of crime, guilt, dirt, and disease. Prostitutes, who came from the same socio-economic background as most PCE activists, were judged as inferior and separate from political prisoners. Aside from the obvious belief that sex workers were physically and morally unclean, there was an attempt to distance themselves because the dictatorship deliberately constructed an image of the ‘red’ Republican woman as morally contemptible.[[212]](#footnote-212) Rosario Sánchez Mora, comments on the aspersions cast on Republican women by ‘algunos sectores de la sociedad’. She complains that, as a militiawoman in the war, she was motivated by ‘ilusión y heroísmo por un ideal noble’ but that *milicianas* were later accused of being prostitutes (I, 159).[[213]](#footnote-213) For political prisoners, then, it was important to distinguish themselves morally from prostitutes and other common criminals, as the label of ‘Red whore’ was used by the regime to undermine their political stance.

However, in *Cárcel de mujeres*,María del Carmen Cuesta discusses prostitutes as a target for political education and as potential converts to Communism, a stance which links to the earlier discussion of the ideological importance of education for Communists. In the following extract, Cuesta relates their attempts to convert prostitutes in Les Corts prison in Barcelona:

Con estas chicas empezamos nuestro trabajo hablándoles de los problemas de tipo social, las consecuencias por las que atravesaba el país después de la guerra civil. Les empezábamos a hablar de los problemas de los trabajadores y ellas contestaban que no encontraban trabajo y, a nuestra manera, íbamos abriéndoles un poco los ojos a los problemas del país en ese momento determinado. Y me acuerdo que antes de salir de Les Corts ingresaron unas de estas quincenarias y nos dijeron que había dos que se habían marchado a trabajar a la vendimia porque les había afectado muchísimo lo que nosotras les habíamos hablado y entonces dijimos: ‘¡Victoria!, hemos conseguido dos.’ (I, 186-7)

Although this anecdote carries propagandistic value for the PCE, as the activists were able to convince two women to leave sex work, it also nuances the depiction of how Communists viewed prostitutes.[[214]](#footnote-214) Rather than maintaining her distance, Cuesta attempted to engage these women, who would have had a similar socio-economic background, by educating them about their oppression. Despite their similar origins, Osborne highlights the differing educational levels of political activists with their peers. During the Second Republic, working-class Spanish women and girls were able to access good-quality education for the first time, but for Communists

A ello se unió la intensa politización y culturización surgida al calor de los amplios movimientos sindicales y reformistas de la época, lo cual les había permitido mejorar sus condiciones de vida.[[215]](#footnote-215)

Osborne contrasts Communists’ political and cultural development with that of prostitutes, whose ‘escaso nivel cultural, unido a las condiciones de miseria reinantes y la consideración social de su trabajo’ meant that there was often a great disparity between women who shared a working-class background.[[216]](#footnote-216) Communists were well-placed to pass on the benefits of their greater education in an attempt to mobilise and politicise prostitutes. Cuesta’s testimony highlights, thus, that the Communists’ desire to define themselves against sex workers did not always manifest itself as revulsion. Some Communist women recognised the proselytising possibilities in their shared origins and attempted to educate the women in class oppression. While this did not mean that some Communists viewed prostitutes as part of the political prisoner community, building ties with them could produce tangible outcomes.

In defining their community, however, some Communists were willing to take this position further, and portrayed sex workers as victims of post-war repression. This allowed Communists to judge prostitutes as political prisoners by analysing their situation in terms of capitalist exploitation. In *Cárcel de mujeres*, Manoli states that discussions between the two groups, as well as having ‘un valor incalculable’ for the prostitutes, was also of great value for the political prisoners. It was important, she argues, because it reminded the political prisoners of the prostitutes’

valores humanos y que en un 90% de los casos, en aquel tiempo, la causa que las había arrastrado a aquella situación era la posguerra, en que el hambre y la miseria eran dueños y señores de los hogares de los trabajadores y en que la mayoría de estas chicas eran huérfanas de guerra o tenían a sus familiares en la cárcel o fusilados. Hay que tener en cuenta el grado de analfabetismo e ignorancia existentes, el grado de rencor en las gentes que tenían posibilidad de darles un trabajo; y por tanto la cárcel estaba justificada, ya que no tenían otra salida para no morir de hambre. (II, 127)

In this quotation, Manoli focuses on the economic and social realities that pushed many women into selling their bodies. Unlike the Communists that see prostitutes as morally and physically reprehensible, this approach, which is similar to that of Cuesta, encompasses both the subjugation of the working classes by capitalism and the moral inconsistencies of the Franco regime. Manoli depicts the situation for women in the post-war years as extremely difficult: many were excluded from work through the vengeful policy of the dictatorship, but they were already in dire circumstances due to their class status, lack of education, and loss of male workers who supported the family. Through her presentation of sex workers as exploited, Manoli highlights both her ideological viewpoint as a Communist and exposes Francoist economic repression. This locates prostitutes within the bracket of those repressed by the dictatorship and they can therefore be included within the political prisoner community, but only insofar as they show the potential for conversion to Communism.

It is relatively difficult to reconcile these more conciliatory points of view, which present prostitutes as victims of repression and of capitalism, with the opinions of some Communists that sex workers were physically and morally repugnant. That prostitutes in prison are a theme throughout the Communist women’s narrative of prison emphasises further that Communists use their life writing as a way of defining group identity. As a narrative device, prostitutes allow Communist women to relate their personal experiences of imprisonment, but also to represent a collective position in the face of repression.

The discussion of informants, or *chivatas*, in prison also highlights the complexity of community construction within the Communist narrative. Though many informants were *comunes*, others formed part of the political prisoner community. These women were in prison because they were being persecuted by the Franco regime for alleged political crimes, but they were also excluded from the political prisoner community because they were believed to have committed crimes against their comrades. As such, some *chivatas* were doubly marginalised. Several Communists discuss *chivatas*, commenting on their treatment by other prisoners. Manoli, who spoke with such empathy about the difficult position of prostitutes, relates what she considers to be a humorous anecdote about informants. With scorn, Manoli states that ‘Estas mujeres eran verdaderas confidentes de las funcionarias y éstas sabían aprovecharlo para sus fines en contra de la verdadera clase política imperante en la prisión’. With this as the reasoning, she goes on to describe how the political prisoners ‘sin distinción de partidos’ decided to give one of the *chivatas* ‘una buena “tunda”’, meaning a good beating (II, 125). Manoli gives no further details about whether this woman was seriously injured or what happened to her later, but it is clear to see that women who chose to ally themselves with the prison functionaries were viewed with disdain and treated with violence. This also provides insight into the functioning of the political prisoner community. Some informants were held as political prisoners, but their choices and behaviour inside the prison walls excluded them from the society of political women, or as the Communist prisoners saw it, from the true political power within the prison, ‘la verdadera clase política imperante’ (II, 125).

One *chivata* in particular was the focus of the prisoners’ ire: Mari Carmen Vives. In *Cárcel de mujeres*,Carmen Machado comments that Vives was ‘la responsable de una cantidad enorme de caídas en Madrid’, that she was protected by the nuns in prison and that, when she was released, she was believed to have been given a place in a convent (I, 112). Her responsibility for many arrests in Madrid meant that her fellow political prisoners held her in contempt. However, Cuesta provides more information about Vives, particularly about how she was treated in prison. Cuesta states that Vives was actually a member of the JSU, and that she was only sixteen years old when she was tortured for information by the authorities. Vives was blamed for providing the information that allegedly led to the arrest, prosecution, and execution of the group of young activists that included the famous ‘Trece Rosas’. Commenting on the reaction of the rest of the prisoners to Vives when the Trece Rosas were executed, Cuesta writes that ‘Cuando sacaron a las menores la tuvieron que coger—de alguna galería, no sé dónde estaba, ella siempre iba sola, nadie le hablaba—meterla en la enfermería porque las mujeres quisieron lincharla’ (I, 189).[[217]](#footnote-217) Vives was, then, a member of the Communist community who was completely ostracised for her inability to remain silent under torture. This made her position more difficult, because the scorn of her fellow political prisoners placed her outside of their support network. It also shows a profound lack of empathy on the part of the other prisoners towards a young woman who had cracked under torture. The idea that Vives was herself a victim of Franco surfaces only once, when Cuesta muses on the idea of vengeance and reconciliation during the Transition:

¿Te das cuenta de lo que supone, de lo trágico que es eso? Yo he dicho al pasar el tiempo que quizás fuimos un tanto inhumanas, que no debimos haberlo hecho porque no se sabe hasta qué extremos te puede llevar una tortura, de la resistencia de que eres capaz, ni de tener la suficiente entereza para guardar silencio en algunas cosas. De esta chica yo no sé si la pegaron, si la torturaron, lo único que sé es que tenía dieciséis años y que tampoco se le podía hacer responsable de una cosa así. Porque dónde ella haya podido vivir después, eso debe de haberla marcado de una manera atroz. (I, 189)

Cuesta’s older self reflects on Vives’ exclusion from Communist society within the prison walls, touching upon the difficulties that this would have caused Vives even after her release from prison because of the lack of a support network. Furthermore, Cuesta acknowledges that, in excluding Vives from their community, they were forcing her to bear the responsibility for executions, which had no other cause than Francoist repression. By including more detail about Vives’ situation, considering her position in the face of torture, the reader is allowed to empathise with her. Cuesta’s attempt to reinsert Vives into the prison community recognises this injustice, and also relates her situation to the spirit of *convivencia* during the Transition. She is not only bearing witness to the atrocities of the regime, but also acknowledging the cruelties that were carried out in the name of anti-Francoism. In this way, Cuesta recognises the negative consequences of Communist dogmatism in prison, which is discussed in greater depth in the second chapter of this thesis. This also highlights that the Transition period, when the prisoners’ testimonies were written and published, influenced the way that the Communists viewed themselves.

The need to construct a community is, then, a peculiarity of the Communist women’s prison narrative, and is not found in the other prison life writing accounts in this thesis. To some extent, this is a characteristic of Communist ideology: the need to constantly reassess their position in relation to the Party (*autocrítica*) stemmed from a culture created in the Soviet Union of purging individuals who did not meet its standards. This created an identity that was both stable and unstable: stable in that the Party remained a constant point of identification for Communist women, but unstable in that the parameters of what was expected of militants were in flux. In this case, Communist women needed to write themselves and their actions into the political narrative, while at the same time maintaining a depiction of resistance to Franco based on the conformity of the collective across Spain. When these life writing accounts were being written and published, the need to present a united anti-Francoist resistance, with the PCE at its heart, was a specific reaction to the Transition. The lack of electoral success for the PCE meant that Communists needed to present their importance in the resistance to avoid drifting into obscurity. As such, the different way in which each Communist woman narrates community relates to her individual ideological interpretation of how to write the political prisoner community—led by the PCE—into Spanish history.

Although this section has shown that the political prisoner community was subjective in many ways, theorised through different interpretations of Communist ideology, it is indisputable that the Communist narrative of prison is depicted as representing all political prisoners. As such, the final sections of this chapter explore how the community is represented.

## Bearing witness

Although bearing witness is a phenomenon that occurs throughout all women’s prison writing from this period, it pervades the Communist narrative. Persecution suffered by other women is mentioned frequently, primarily discussing issues such as torture, rape, execution, and madness caused by acts of cruelty and repression. This section considers examples from across the corpus to demonstrate how and why Communists assumed the responsibility of reporting and remembering women whose stories, they believed, would otherwise not have been told. The Communist narrative also offers a rebuttal of many of the accusations that were made against ‘red’ women by the regime.

Using an anecdotal form of reporting, Núñez’s *Cárcel de Ventas* sketches the repression that women suffered at the hands of the regime, and demonstrates the drive that Communists felt to bear witness to the violence of the authorities. Through Núñez’s account, the reader learns of ‘Nieves C. A esta mujer le hicieron numerosas incisiones en la vulva, con ayuda de una navajita y le rociaron las heridas con vinagre y sal’; ‘A Maruja G. le pegaron sin cesar para que dijera el paradero de su marido, antifascista destacado. Hartos de pegarle sin resultado, la rociaron con gasolina y le prendieron fuego’; and pregnant women who were beaten by the police, such as ‘La mujer, Carmen P., abortó y desde entonces sufre de horribles dolores abdominales’.[[218]](#footnote-218) Just as Cuevas created a collaborative discourse through providing the reader with the voices of multiple women, Núñez’s list of torture produces a similar effect, with each instance adding to the horror at, and condemnation of, the Franco regime. However, though the effect upon the reader is similar, this is not a collaborative discourse, but the voice of one woman recalling the horrors that she has seen. Bearing witness highlights the sense of responsibility that the Communists feel towards other prisoners, but also demonstrates the militancy of Communist women: just as Doña’s Leonor knew to call for the doctor in prison, so that her torture was documented, Communists recognised the necessity of documenting repression for posterity. Furthermore, Cuevas states that ‘queremos que nuestras vidas sean parte de la Historia de nuestra España’ (I, 241). Cuevas’ use of the plural here indicates a desire for the narrative to represent the collective, rather than the individual, but also indicates that bearing witness is motivated by a need for their experiences to be documented in the history of Spain. By taking the lead in depicting persecution suffered at the hands of the regime, Cuevas presents the PCE as the forefront of the anti-Francoist struggle.

Communist women also bear witness to acts of violence and repression to refute claims made by the regime about left-wing women. In his study on the psychological tests performed on ‘Marxist’ women, Michael Richards has stated that these women were tried by the authorities for ‘“horrific murders, burnings, and sackings” and “egging-on” their menfolk to all kinds of disorders’. These studies found that ‘“red women”’ had an ‘“unnatural” active sexuality’ which ‘was opposed to maternity’ and that conditions traditionally viewed as female, such as hysteria, ‘were linked to women’s revolutionary behaviour’.[[219]](#footnote-219) The dictatorship wanted to classify left-wing women as bloodthirsty, promiscuous, and mentally unstable; in commemorating the persecution suffered by Republican women, Communists highlight that these were in fact characteristics of the regime. Discussing rape as a moral crime also links Communist women to the category of virtuous women upon whom a sexual attack was a crime within Francoist ideology, distancing themselves once again from prostitutes, and the label ‘Red whore’.

For example, Valés and Real both recount an episode of a woman who was raped by her captors and subsequently deemed insane. Valés remembers her friend, Pili López, who was held in a psychiatric prison, Quiñones, because ‘habían abusado trece hombres de ella cuando la detuvieron y estaba destrozada de los nervios y de todo’ (II, 46). In a strikingly similar episode relating to ‘P.L.’—it seems likely that she is also discussing Pili López—Real highlights how this woman was psychologically damaged by being raped: ‘Imagínate lo que harían con ella que entró a la cárcel trastornada, babeando. Que las compañeras durante un año seguido se lo tuvieron que hacer todo: lavarla, vestirla, darle de comer. Es que no contenía ni la baba en la boca.’[[220]](#footnote-220) These anecdotes take the accusations directed at left-wing women and turn them on their head. Far from being promiscuous, the female prisoners were actually the target of rape and sexual abuse by their captors. By including instances of rape in their life writing, the Communist prison narrative counteracts the Francoist discourse of shame. These anecdotes re-direct the focus from the victim to the perpetrator, highlighting that the group that was sexually dysfunctional was actually the authorities. It is important to note, too, that Pili López’s rape is presented as the cause of her mental instability. In her discussion of Quiñones prison, Valés goes on to argue that most of the women held there were actually ‘enfermas de nervios, locas rematadas no eran, ellos las volvían locas de las inyecciones, de las duchas frías que les daban’ (II, 46-7). Rather than mental health problems causing women’s ‘revolutionary behaviour’, the reader is shown that mental instability was caused by the cruelty to which female political prisoners were subjected. In this way, the Communist women’s prison narrative takes responsibility not only for commemorating women that suffered and died, but also for fundamentally rejecting the Franco regime’s claims about their status as political women. Bearing witness to repression challenges the myths that were circulated about left-wing women for forty years, as well as bringing the violence perpetrated against women into the public sphere during the Transition.

The texts in the corpus also bear witness to the executions of political women, focusing on the senselessness of the death penalty, which targeted ordinary women. These anecdotes tend to focus on the minor nature of the women’s alleged crimes as a demonstration of the regime’s random brutality. In *Desde la noche y la niebla*, Leonor lists the crimes of a group of women who were executed:

¿Qué habían hecho estas mujeres para ser fusiladas? La abuela Sebastiana y su hija eran campesinas de un pueblo de Madrid y cuando el levantamiento fascista del 18 de julio el alcalde de su pueblo, republicano y cuñado suyo, las puso al frente de un taller de costura para ‘equipar’ a los mozos que salían del pueblo para el frente. Su único delito había sido coser y llevar una banderita republicana prendida en la blusa y… ser la cuñada y sobrina del alcalde republicano. La abuela Sebastiana tenía 70 años, su hija cuarenta. […] Antonia Benítez y Rafaela Díaz estaban acusadas en el mismo expediente de haber ‘requisado’ un convento de monjas, tenían 24 y 25 años respectivamente; María Soto, de haber llevado ‘mono y pistola’, también de 25 años. (171-2)

Listing their crimes and ages highlights the mundanity of the accusations. None was the leader of a political movement, nor were these women murderers or military commanders. They represent a cross-section of ages, figuratively invoking three generations of Spanish women. The crime of having worn ‘mono y pistola’, implying that the woman was a *miliciana*, was a common accusation against women on the Left.[[221]](#footnote-221) The idea of the ‘mono y pistola’ was something that played into the regime’s imagery of ‘rojas’ and became part of the language of generic denunciations of women. The extract above is used by Doña to demonstrate the vindictive and senseless nature of the regime’s bloodshed, and the Communist prison narrative often bears witness to the victims in this way. As such, it takes responsibility for commemorating women that the Francoist authorities tried to erase from history. This also links to the emotional bonds that were formed between the community of political women, which is discussed later in this chapter. The executions of Communists, however, are presented in a different light.

## Heroic death

Bearing witness to executions feeds directly into Communist rhetoric, by presenting the deaths as heroic and as a final act of resistance to the regime. While execution exists within all left-wing prison writing, heroic death is a specifically Communist phenomenon. The way in which Communists’ executions are presented informs the reader of how they viewed their incarceration and their place within the resistance to Franco. As discussed earlier, Communists saw themselves as intrinsically linked to the Party, which gave their lives meaning. In this way, their deaths were not senseless, but were sacrifices to a greater cause. This affected how Communists were allowed to express their emotions and grieve, and also the ways in which they framed the death sentence psychologically. The concept of heroic death is an aspect of the Communist narrative of prison that fundamentally differs from life writing by other female political prisoners.

In *Desde la noche y la niebla* and *Cárcel de mujeres*, there are several examples of how heroic death functions in the Communist women’s prison narrative. Cuevas provides a typical example of how execution is portrayed: ‘A nuestros hombres no les faltaba valor para morir cara al enemigo. En muy pocas ocasiones se ha oído un lamento o un quejido. Salían cantando canciones revolucionarias, dando gritos a la República y llamándolos asesinos’ (I, 94). The men going to their deaths showed neither weakness nor fear, facing their executioners with bravery and defiance. In this way, they were able to show that they were not ashamed of their alleged crimes and that they maintained their ideological convictions until the end. Undoubtedly, many men did face their killers in this way, defiant until the last and refusing to give them the satisfaction of appearing afraid. There is also the sense that this was a sacrifice that they were willing to make for the greater cause of Communism. However, in the construction of the Communist narrative, there is little space given to Communist deaths that do not fit within the rhetoric of bravery.

In some instances, heroic death is reported anecdotally, focusing on the occasionally tragicomic situation and acts of bravery or defiance of the prisoners. In *Cárcel de mujeres*,Agustina Sánchez Sariñena discusses how her mother-in-law, Josefa Perpiñán, was taken to the prison chapel the night before her execution to await the dawn. As was customary, the religious personnel of the prison spent the night trying to persuade her to confess and to commend her soul to God. In the last minutes before her execution, the priest gave the women a statue of Jesus to kiss. Sariñena, who was allowed to spend the night in the chapel with Perpiñán, states that: ‘mi suegra cogió el Cristo y se lo tiró a la cabeza del cura, no lo mató porque el otro bajó la cabeza, si no, creo que lo deja en el sitio’ (I, 210). This scene, which would be comic in its absurdity if it was not followed by Perpiñán’s execution, provides another example of how the Communist notion of heroic death functions. Perpiñán was defiant and angry about what she had been subjected to, and seized the opportunity to resist and reject the power of the authorities. Although there was no way that she could save herself, her dignity and her political integrity overcame the repressive intentions of the prison clergy. The tragicomic element to the heroic death narrative can also be found in *Desde la noche y la niebla*. One character, Marta, relates how her friend Lolita was called for execution while she was in the middle of telling a joke. Her friends were full of terror for her, but Lolita calmly requested that she be allowed to finish. After the punchline, ‘ella rió con una sonora carcajada y viendo las caras angustiadas de sus compañeras les preguntó: “¿No os ha hecho gracia?, pues la tiene, independientemente de que me maten”’ (247). Lolita did not quite laugh in the face of death, but she was determined that her death would not make her lose her sense of humour. She went to her death unchanged, another act of defiance in the face of the authorities.

These instances of heroic death are particularly interesting because they focus on the bravery of women. Tabea Alexa Linhard has commented how some women’s deaths, such as the suicide of Lina Odena, became part of the canon of heroic death in Republican history only because they could be narrated to fit existing gender roles.[[222]](#footnote-222) Women’s heroic death in the Communist narrative—aside from the execution of the Trece Rosas—does not conform to this gendering. The characteristics that Perpiñán and Lolita display are aggression, defiance, and humour, putting their deaths on an equal footing with those of men. While the PCE may not have recognised the importance of gender equality in their policies, the Communist women’s narrative of prison allows women an equal status with men in the bravery of their death.

While much of the Communist narrative of heroic death focuses on it as a final act of resistance to the regime, there is evidence to suggest that it also functioned as a comfort to those who remained. In *Desde la noche y la niebla*, there are two separate occasions where Leonor’s family use the idea of the heroic death to comfort her. When her husband Emilio is shot, Leonor’s sister tells her that ‘Murió noble y valiente como había vivido’ (215). Later in the text, Leonor’s death sentence is commuted on the same day that the rest of the people she was tried with are executed. Leonor’s mother says that ‘como todos, hija mía, murieron gallardamente’ (237). The concept of the heroic death becomes a tribute to those who have died, confirming their ideological integrity to Leonor and ensuring them a place as martyrs to the Communist cause. Although this portrayal certainly has propagandistic value for the Communists, emphasising their political credibility even when faced with death, it demonstrates how the women’s prison narrative becomes a vehicle for commemorating lost comrades and giving them a place in Spanish history.

## Acceptable emotion: The heroic death of the Trece Rosas

The shared oral history of the PCE meant that there are also instances of heroic death that took on mythological status within the Communist women’s prison narrative. The heroic death of the Trece Rosas, executed on 5 August 1939 after a summary trial, became emblematic for the surviving prisoners. Their story is told throughout the corpus of Communist women’s prison writing, regardless of whether the narrator was actually present in Ventas at the time of the execution. For example, Soledad Real tells the story of the Trece Rosas, admitting that it has become a ‘leyenda’, even though she was in a concentration camp in France when the executions occurred.[[223]](#footnote-223) Beyond simply bearing witness to and commemorating the deaths of comrades, the narrative of the execution of the Trece Rosas was significant to Communists because it became an emblem of resistance that could be transmitted between groups and generations. The story, which all Communists would have known, became a communal repository for personal grief and anger towards the dictatorship, which was less easily expressed in reporting individual deaths. In *Desde la noche y la niebla*, Leonor was chided by her comrades for her lack of ‘entereza comunista’ (305) for displaying her emotions: the division between public and private in Communism, which is discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, highlights that personal feelings were not openly expressed amongst Communists. By sharing and commemorating the deaths of the Trece Rosas, Communist women were able to channel their emotions into an acceptable format that placed the community, rather than the individual, at the centre of the narrative.

Although accounts of the Trece Rosas’ execution differ, it is established that thirteen young women, ranging from their teens to their late twenties, were arrested, sentenced to death and executed for an alleged attack on the Francoist state in August 1939.[[224]](#footnote-224) Some women claim that the young activists were charged with attempting to organise an attack on Franco’s life, whereas others suggest that it was for the murder of a senior army official, Galbadó, his daughter and his chauffeur.[[225]](#footnote-225) However, Cuesta, who was among those arrested along with the Trece Rosas but was not given the death penalty, claims that the only aim of reorganising the JSU at that point in time was to ‘conseguir algunos céntimos, un poco de tabaco y comida para llevarlo a las cárceles’ (I, 180). In reality, as Linhard states, ‘the women’s affiliation with the Communist Party ultimately explains their death sentence’ and that the ‘likelihood is that the women had simply been involved in re-establishing contacts in order to regroup and reconstitute’ the JSU in the aftermath of the Civil War.[[226]](#footnote-226) The word ‘simply’ is a misnomer here, as reconstituting a political party in the aftermath of the Civil War would have been difficult and dangerous. Nonetheless, the Trece Rosas were summarily tried on 3 August, along with 56 men, all of whom were members of the JSU in Madrid, and their executions took place two days later in the Cemetery of the Almudena in Madrid, near Ventas prison, on 5 August 1939.[[227]](#footnote-227) This was particularly shocking to the prison community, as it was the first time that minors (the Spanish age of majority in 1939 was 21) had been executed at this point in Ventas prison; a group that many of the women had believed would be exempt from death.

The Communist re-telling of the Trece Rosas’ execution focuses particularly on the youth and the courage of the women. Their youth is emphasised when Machado refers to the group as ‘chicas’ and ‘niñas’ (I, 120), and Real says that the young women writing their final letters in the chapel looked like ‘escolares haciendo sus deberes’.[[228]](#footnote-228) The focus on youth allows those bearing witness to juxtapose it with death in the prisons, emphasising the brutality of the regime.[[229]](#footnote-229) Machado comments that in ‘Menores’, the youth wing of Ventas prison, for many of the young women held there ‘de catorce y dieciséis años […] [the execution of the Trece Rosas] era la primera vez que se enfrentaban con un fusilamiento’ (I, 120).[[230]](#footnote-230) The contrast between youth and death allows the prisoners to express outrage and horror at the persecution of teenagers by the Francoist state, through highlighting the violation of natural laws—namely, that the young should outlive the old. However, it is also important to deconstruct the version of youth that Communists portray, and recognise that, to some extent, it is an emotive narrative device. The Trece Rosas were political activists, part of a wider network of people that had been involved in the war effort and that had taken responsibility for political mobilisation in the rearguard. Though seven were legally minors, none of them was a child or a schoolgirl, as implied in the testimony of Real and Machado. Life was hard for working-class people and, as the case study on Cuevas earlier in this chapter demonstrated, children as young as nine were often expected to work and to take on other adult responsibilities in order to support their families. Furthermore, the discussion of the *chivata* Mari Carmen Vives highlighted that she, as a 16 year old, was expected to take responsibility for having revealed the names of comrades under torture, despite being younger than all of the Trece Rosas; her youth was not a mitigating factor in her total ostracism from the political prisoner community. This discussion is not intended to argue that the execution of the Trece Rosas was justified, or that they were not very young to have been shot so brutally. It does argue, though, that their youth was of greater symbolic value to their fellow prisoners than it was of relevance to their execution. In the narrative, the youth of the Trece Rosas becomes a construct to contrast their heroic self-sacrifice with the cruel repression of the regime.

The second element to the legend of the Trece Rosas is their courage in the face of death. When they were called for execution, Machado comments that one of the young women stated simply ‘¡Pobrecilla, mi madre!’ because her brother had been executed only days before (I, 120). The anonymous contributor to *Cárcel de mujeres* also mentions this episode, stating that the girl expressed sorrow for her mother with ‘sólo dos lágrimas que le caían lentamente por las mejillas’ (II, 20). Other members of the Trece Rosas encouraged the girl to be brave (I, 184). The account given in *Desde la noche y la niebla* provides an example of how the oral sharing of this narrative has allowed alterations to appear: Leonor comments that ‘las trece muchachas se juntaron sin una lágrima en sus ojos juveniles’ (190). Once they had been executed, according to Cuesta, a prison functionary returned to tell the prisoners how the young women died, claiming that ‘habían salido cantando himnos de la Juventud y que habían muerto dando vivas’ (I, 184). In this way, the story of the Trece Rosas conforms to a paradigm of martyrdom, taking on quasi-religious imagery.[[231]](#footnote-231) Right-wing narratives of the martyrdom of religious personnel contain many of the elements that we have seen thus far in the story of the Trece Rosas. Religious women were presented as young, implying that they were untainted, and they went to their deaths bravely, but without violent resistance, maintaining a sense of dignity, worthiness, and passivity.[[232]](#footnote-232) An example of this in the narrative of the Trece Rosas is the reaction of the functionary, who was overcome by the bravery of the women facing execution despite the fact she was their enemy. As before, the courage of the Trece Rosas has become a trope of their heroic death, highlighting that the anecdote is repeated again and again throughout the Communist women’s narrative of prison, and that it has been constructed for a purpose.

In this way, the story acts as a vehicle for the wider frustration, horror, and grief felt by the prisoners. However, its repetition in Communist narratives reveals its imprint upon their collective consciousness, and is evidence of the way that the Communists’ shared oral history functioned. There are many instances of repression that different women bear witness to, but the story of the Trece Rosas compelled women to share it again and again. The Trece Rosas became a symbol of grief for prisoners, who invested their emotions in the story; in sharing it, it became a part of their collective identity. Communist political intransigence in prison meant that women rejected expressions of emotion as a display of weakness, fearing it would lead to a demoralising and individualised atmosphere. However, in telling the story of the heroic death of the Trece Rosas, the women were able to channel their personal grief into a collective grief for their fallen comrades. The emotion became both political and communal, creating a bond between the prisoners and leading to its hagiographic enshrinement in their narrative of repression.

## Emotional bonds between Communist women

In *Cárcel de mujeres*, Cuevas comments how she is not in contact with many of the women who she was imprisoned with. She laments that

Después de abandonar la cárcel no he vuelto a saber nunca más de estas chicas; las condiciones de nuestra vida clandestina no nos permitían tener correspondencia por aquí y por allá con nuestras amistades, con gentes con las que has vivido tan íntimamente y has querido tanto; parece como si las hubieras olvidado, pero no, no es así. Yo no he olvidado a mucha gente que ha estado junto a mí en las cárceles, la vida que he tenido que hacer después de salir no me ha permitido tener contacto con ellas (I, 196).

Although Cuevas lost touch with her fellow inmates, this quotation shows that the emotional bonds forged during imprisonment were long-lasting and had a profound impact upon the women who were incarcerated together. Life as part of a Communist cell, particularly in clandestine conditions such as those experienced under *franquismo*, necessarily restricted the number of contacts that Party members had with one another in order to maintain their safety.[[233]](#footnote-233) This would have limited the ability of militants to maintain friendships in as close a way as they might have hoped. However, within the Communist women’s prison narrative, there is a clear sense that incarceration forged a bond between the women, something that they wish to pay tribute to in their life writing accounts. Most Communist writing does not privilege personal relationships because, as discussed earlier in the chapter, commitment to the Party was placed above all else. Thus, the fact that the Communist women’s prison narrative is, in part, a homage to the personal relationships within the community differentiates it from the writing of other female prisoners, who do not represent the same sense of community in their writing.

Across the corpus, there are multiple examples of how Communist women formed a deep, personal bond. As a reader I became aware of how these expressions of community and friendship represented a deeper relationship as a consequence of Leonor’s comments in *Desde la noche y la niebla*. There is a moment where Doña’s voice is clearly projected through Leonor. When she was reunited with one of her old comrades in Alcalá de Henares prison, though they talked about their families on the outside, they quickly slipped into discussing events that they experienced during their incarceration. Leonor comments that

Y es que 19 años de cárcel era su realidad. La realidad de ellas era ese mundo que palpitaba con sus mismos latidos, las mujeres que habían envejecido juntas, que hablaban el mismo lenguaje, que habían sufrido idénticas penas, las que, unidas día a día, año tras año, lucharon juntas por imponerse. La vida de cada una era la vida de todas y por ello los pequeños detalles de esas existencias eran su mundo, su conocimiento, su realidad. (325)

Leonor has a painful realisation that she and her fellow inmates became institutionalised and estranged from life outside the prison walls. Particularly in the case of Communists, who were often re-imprisoned as *posteriores*, some women spent many years incarcerated. Imprisonment became normalised, and this brought them closer together as a community. Leonor later comments how society had changed so much from when she was imprisoned: no longer war-torn, Spain had continued and developed, leaving the prisoners behind (345). In *Cárcel de mujeres*, Salvo comments on this same institutionalisation. Discussing how she had to learn to use everyday items again, such as money or a knife and fork, Salvo says that ‘Era otro mundo al que me debía adaptar; era una forma de vivir extraña para mí […] aun la conversación de mi familia y de los amigos tan próximos a mí, no podía seguirla, es como si entre nosotros existiera un muro que había que derribar poco a poco’ (II, 173). Lengthy prison sentences meant that many prisoners were released into a world that was unfamiliar to them and they had to learn to live again amongst family members whose lives had altered and moved on. Consequently, relationships between prisoners were intensified, as they could take comfort in their familiarity with one another and share the strange experience of re-encountering life as free women.

Another factor that led to the intensification of bonds between Communist women was their status as outsiders. Although this was not experienced by all women, there are examples throughout the corpus of prisoners facing isolation because they were rejected by family members and society. Perhaps the most heart-rending instances of this are women who were rejected by their families after their incarceration. In *Cárcel de mujeres*, Manoli contributes a posthumous tribute to her friend María Blazquez del Pozo, who was shunned by her family after her release. She comments how ‘La recriminaban que había abandonado a sus hijos por hacer vida de partido, pero ella siempre dijo que cuando el partido la mandaba algo lo hacía siempre pensando en el bienestar de sus hijos. Pero ellos no la perdonaron y esa fue su lucha’ (I, 134). Blázquez del Pozo’s family viewed her political activity and subsequent imprisonment as an abandonment and severed contact with her. Doña also comments on this in *Desde la noche y la niebla*, as her friend Paquita’s son ‘se desentendió’ (washed his hands) of his mother (343-4). It is interesting that Manoli frames her friend’s situation in terms of ‘lucha’: by relating her rejection to the political struggle, it becomes a necessary burden that a Communist must bear, rather than a tragic occurrence. In her analysis of Dolores Ibárruri’s autobiography *El único camino* (1962), Herrmann highlights the seemingly incongruous nature of Party membership with familial relationships: ‘Pasionaria seems to reveal her individual pain, only to discard that individuality when she renders family life an existential impossibility because the chance for spiritual and economic survival lies only with Communism’.[[234]](#footnote-234) In Spain’s patriarchal society, the discord between the domestic and the political appears to have caused problems for Communist women, leaving some rejected and isolated.

Communist prisoners also often faced wider social ostracism when they were released. Real discusses societal rejection at several points in her account. After being released from prison, a previously friendly neighbour spat at her in the street. On another occasion, she was thrown out of a shop because other customers refused to purchase from the same place as ‘una comunista y una presidaria’.[[235]](#footnote-235) While these instances occurred shortly after her release from prison, Real continued to be hounded by her neighbours’ children and grandchildren many years after: the children would come to the window of her flat and chant ‘Pu-ta, pu-ta’.[[236]](#footnote-236) The Franco regime deliberately created a climate in which hostility towards those on the Left was encouraged. Their status as outsiders would have contributed to the emotional bond forged between the Communist women which is evident in their life writing accounts.

Communist women recognised their institutionalisation, as well as their familial and social exclusion, and so the prison community became a source of collective identity that anchored them. Even if they were unable to maintain relationships with one another in freedom, the memory of community in prison provided them with comfort, which can be seen in the way they reflect on incarceration in their writing. Salvo, for example, comments upon the supportive nature of the prison community, and claims that a collective approach to the harsh conditions bred camaraderie. Almost nostalgically, she states that ‘son muchos los momentos que recuerdo en que no me sentí desgraciada’ (II, 163). Another Communist, Elvira, chose to focus on positive remembrances: ‘Los recuerdos que mejor conservo de la cárcel fueron la humanidad que había entre nosotras, el compañerismo que teníamos, el sacrificio de unas para con otras. No teníamos nada nuestro, todo era de todas. Todo esto es lo que recuerdo’ (II, 142). A testament to the resilience of the Communist women, their positive memories of community become a tribute to other prisoners, and redirects the focus from the individual narrative to the collective. Another prisoner, Pilar Calvo, recalls in *Cárcel de mujeres* how she tried to support other prisoners after her release. She tells of getting illegal correspondence into prison and of preparing whatever food she could to support her comrades. Calvo reflects that ‘Era mi ilusión y mi deber ayudar a mis compañeras’ (I, 147). These acts of solidarity demonstrate the continuing importance of the prison community to women, even after their release. The positive communal feeling that is a feature of the Communist women’s prison narrative is a phenomenon that does not appear in other prison writing. Communist women turned to one another in prison and after their release because of the emotional bond that developed between them. This bond became a driving force in their desire to tell their life stories.

# Chapter two: Exploring the individual and the feminist: Juana Doña’s departure from the Communist narrative of prison in *Desde la noche y la niebla* (1978)

The body of life writing by Communist women imprisoned under Franco largely follows a coherent narrative and structure. However, this apparent coherence betrays gaps and silences within the texts which relate to the women’s experiences of prison as individuals, away from the collective life that they share as Communists. This chapter returns to *Desde la noche y la niebla* as an example of how the uniformity of the Communist women’s narrative of incarceration can be questioned. It is important to highlight that much of Doña’s ‘novela-testimonio’ conforms to the accounts of prison life provided by her fellow Communists: she focuses on the benefits of political activism in prison—e.g. educational programmes and strikes and protests—commemorates the community of female prisoners, and presents Communist deaths as heroic (though not always unquestioningly). However, the reader steadily becomes aware that Doña’s ‘novela-testimonio’ also demonstrates a counter narrative through the structure of the text and the themes that she selects. This becomes evident in Doña’s decision to discuss the position of women in Spanish society and the impact of Francoist repression on the individual. Furthermore, Doña presents certain aspects of Communist resistance as repressive to the individual, creating parallels with the repression of the regime. Doña’s counter narrative displays a tension between the individual and the collective, as well as revealing her changing political beliefs. As such, *Desde la noche y la niebla* questions the representativeness of the Communist women’s narrative of prison, and suggests other ways of reading this history.

Gina Herrmann argues that autobiographical writing which focuses on the political ‘always depends on a subtle negotiation between the language of authority and the autobiographer’s personal language’ and that it is necessary to examine ‘how the autobiographer represents, through a textual system, his or her attachments to political and ideological discourse’.[[237]](#footnote-237) In *Desde la noche y la niebla* the reader sees evidence of this negotiation as Doña attempts to faithfully reconstruct her own history along with that of the PCE. At times, the two can be incompatible. Doña’s negotiation with the ‘language of authority’—not the language of *franquismo*, her oppressors, but, rather, the indomitable, sectarian language of Communism—creates slippages within the narrative voice, which allow her to represent other subject positions, such as widow, mother, and feminist. While Doña does not break entirely with her Communist ideals, she nuances her representation of life in prison to include a subtle critique of the Party’s dogmatism in the face of oppression, and to reflect on elements of her personal life and ideological development which would not normally constitute part of a Communist autobiography.

This chapter is divided into two sections. It begins by reflecting on Doña’s ideological development, particularly with regards to the feminist movement in 1960s’ and 1970s’ Spain and her break with the PCE, and her motivations for writing a testimonial novel. This first section includes analysis of a further text published by Doña in 1977, *La mujer*,a Marxist-feminist treatise which pre-dates the publication of *Desde la noche y la niebla* in 1978, and an interview that Doña gave to *Triunfo* magazine in 1978.[[238]](#footnote-238) Discussion of these additional texts helps to construct an image of Doña’s ideological development, indicating in part why *Desde la noche y la niebla* differs from other Communist memoirs from the same period. As seen in all the other primary texts that form the corpus of this thesis, Doña’s ideological development in her life writing also highlights that *Desde la noche y la niebla* is very much a product of the Transition. This leads on to an analysis of the ways in which Doña implements a counter narrative throughout her ‘novela-testimonio’, initially focusing on the feminist tone of her writing.

The second section of this chapter considers the relationship between the individual and the collective as Doña negotiates Communist politics of the private life. It initially discusses the public/private dichotomy in Communism derived directly from Stalinist culture in the USSR, and another text published by Doña: *Querido Eugenio: una carta de amor al otro lado del tiempo* (2003).[[239]](#footnote-239) In *Querido Eugenio* Doña reproduced and responded to the prison notebooks of her husband, Eugenio Mesón, a leader of the JSU who was executed by the regime in 1941.[[240]](#footnote-240) This highly emotional text demonstrates the extent to which revolution and love were inextricably linked for Doña and Mesón. Thus, this section focuses on three areas of *Desde la noche y la niebla* that highlight Doña’s engagement with the conflict between the personal and the political: the depiction of grief; the effect of imprisonment upon the individual; and criticism of the dogmatism of Communists in the face of Francoist repression. In conjunction, the two sections of this chapter reveal some of the gaps and silences within the Communist women’s prison narrative, demonstrating the extent to which the Communist representation of imprisonment is influenced by ideological concerns. A discussion of the counter narrative in Doña’s text also offers a starting point from which to consider other Republican memoirs later in the thesis, which highlight the spectrum of ideas and interpretations surrounding women’s imprisonment under Franco.

## Doña’s ideological development: breaking with the PCE, feminism, and the Transition

Doña’s experience of wartime Spain and much of the succeeding dictatorship was directly influenced by her Communist ideology, an experience reflected in her writing. Doña’s writing conforms to the narrative style of other Communist women prisoners, focusing on the political life of women in prison; a desire to commemorate the community and solidarity that the women shared; bearing witness to the brutality of the regime; and inscribing the PCE at the centre of the resistance. However, within a year of being released from prison in 1962 and several years before her ‘novela-testimonio’ was written in 1967, Doña left the PCE ‘a causa de sus diferencias políticas e ideológicas’.[[241]](#footnote-241) The decision to leave should be regarded as factional rather than as an abandonment of her Communist ideals, as Doña went on to join the *Partido Comunista de España* *(marxista-leninista)* (PCE (m-l)) in 1964.[[242]](#footnote-242) Seven years later, Doña left the PCE (m-l) to join the *Organización Revolucionaria de los Trabajadores* (ORT) and the *Unión para la Liberación de la Mujer* (ULM), which were ideologically linked by a Maoist-Leninist interpretation of Communism.[[243]](#footnote-243) Doña stood as an ORT candidate for the senate during the 1977 elections—gaining 320,000 votes but no seat—and was unaffiliated with the party by the following year, according to an interview she gave to *Triunfo*.[[244]](#footnote-244) Alfonso González-Calero, the interviewer, writes that Doña remained ‘comunista siempre de corazón’ despite her independent status; he also notes that though Doña had left various political parties, she was unwilling to criticise them.[[245]](#footnote-245) Despite leaving the PCE, Doña clearly did not break with her Communist beliefs.

Doña also developed ideologically because of her engagement with feminism, a movement which only began to find its feet in Spain in the latter stages of the 1960s. Monica Threlfall has discussed the reasons that feminism was hampered in Spain, indicating four key problems. First, Threlfall cites the power and influence of the Catholic Church in Spain and its veneration of the ideal of the perfect woman, a Virgin Mary figure whose foundation was abnegation and self-sacrifice. Aurora G. Morcillo, who has studied how Francoist policy aimed to mould women into a role based on traditional Catholic beliefs, writes that under *franquismo* ‘The ultimate role model prescribed for women was the Virgin Mary, in whom both virginity and motherhood coincided’.[[246]](#footnote-246) Second, the pervading cultural and political power when these ideas were married with fascist beliefs of women’s domestic and maternal role meant that women were taught to believe that they were engaging politically by retreating from the public sphere. Threlfall comments that ‘the fascists did not ignore women, but drew them in to participate in their ideal by exulting domestic drudgery and humdrum lives’.[[247]](#footnote-247) These beliefs were reinforced by the *Sección Femenina*, the powerful women’s group of the Falangist political party, which attained enormous influence over women’s lives within the Franco regime.[[248]](#footnote-248) Third, there was no coherent political movement in Spain that the feminists of the 1960s could model themselves upon.[[249]](#footnote-249) Finally, the opposition to the dictatorship was predominantly left-wing and either viewed women’s liberation as a bourgeois distraction from the real struggle, or fundamentally failed to understand that women could be oppressed not only by capitalism but also by men and patriarchal systems of power.[[250]](#footnote-250)

According to Threlfall, these four elements converged to create an environment in which feminism was seen to lack legitimacy, both by the dictatorship and by illegal opposition groups within Spanish society. Furthermore, the emergent feminist movement in Spain in the later years of the dictatorship was largely divided between *militancia* *única* and *doble militancia*.[[251]](#footnote-251) *Militancia única* meant that women refused to engage with the existing political processes—including the illegal opposition to Franco—because they represented the hierarchical, patriarchal power structure. Valiente states that those who subscribed to *militancia única* argued that ‘Women had to discover themselves (their capacities and wishes repressed in a male-dominated society) and create bonds of solidarity with other women while participating in nonhierarchical only-female groups’.[[252]](#footnote-252) In contrast to this, women who undertook *doble militancia* were members of political parties who sought equality for women through the existing structures of illegal opposition parties. Although there was some cross-party collaboration—for example in the creation of the *Movimiento Democrático de Mujeres*, an organisation that aimed to mobilise women politically—most feminists that undertook *doble militancia* were of the PCE.[[253]](#footnote-253)

The women’s movement in Spain also took advantage of the legal channels available to them, such as infiltrating regime-sanctioned associations like the *Asociación Castellana de Amas de Casa y Consumidoras*. This provided them with a platform through which to engage with other women, introducing them to political action, though not necessarily feminism.[[254]](#footnote-254) As discussed in the introduction to this thesis, ordinary Spaniards’ engagement with community associations and local pressure groups created a civil society which determined the way in which the Transition progressed. It was in this intersection of Doña’s developing ideology and the changing political environment that she wrote and published *Desde la noche y la niebla*. As such, Spain’s process of democratisation should be recognised as definitive in the construction of the text.

## *La mujer* (1977) and its relationship with *Desde la noche y la niebla*

Doña’s *La mujer* is a Marxist-feminist treatise which comments on the position of women in Spanish society throughout history, and incorporates a manifesto for the ORT’s political intentions with regards to women. It was published in 1977 by Emiliano Escolar, a press associated with the ORT, presumably to raise Doña’s profile in advance of the elections to the senate.[[255]](#footnote-255) In *La mujer*, Doña differentiates herself from radical feminist groups in Spain—i.e. those women that undertook *militancia única*—that viewed the patriarchal family and male privilege as the main causes of women’s oppression. Radical feminists, according to Doña, saw women as a separate class to men and believed that women from all sectors of society needed to attack the structures of the patriarchal family in order to be freed. In contrast, Doña argues that women’s oppression is characterised by economic relations in the same way that capitalism affects all oppressed social groups. Doña writes that to ‘sostener que las mujeres son un todo homogéneo y que representan una clase es olvidar que la opresión ejercida sobre las mujeres tiene caracteres distintos en las diferentes capas de la sociedad’.[[256]](#footnote-256) In her comparison of class differences between ‘trabajadoras’ and ‘oligarcas’, Doña goes on to argue that while bourgeois women suffer some oppression common to all womankind, they are, in fact, in a superior position to the male and female working class.[[257]](#footnote-257) The solution, according to Doña, is for women of all classes to unite, to help to raise the consciousness of other women to their situation, and to defend women’s rights without separating their objectives from those of the general class struggle.[[258]](#footnote-258) These arguments reflect the standard Marxist-feminist position that working-class women are doubly oppressed: though all women, whether bourgeois or proletarian, suffer gender oppression as a consequence of patriarchal structures in society, working-class women are uniquely oppressed by their class.

Michèle Barrett explains that the role of a Marxist feminist is to ‘explore the relations between the organization of sexuality, domestic production, the household and so on, and historical changes in the mode of production and systems of appropriation and exploitation’.[[259]](#footnote-259) In this way, much of *La mujer* is focused on providing a historical analysis of the position of women in Spanish society. Doña cites the legal changes brought about by the Republican Constitution of 1931, including equality in the eyes of the law and the right to universal suffrage, before providing a critique of women’s place in society throughout *franquismo*. Doña denounces the dictatorship for devaluing women’s political and social role, while aiming to ‘elevarla exclusivamente al papel de “agente procreador”’.[[260]](#footnote-260) Her argument highlights various legal concerns for women, indicating how laws which penalised abortion and adultery, for example, were discriminatory towards women and were founded upon an idea of the patriarchal family.[[261]](#footnote-261) The main thrust of Doña’s analysis, however, focuses on the place of women within the Spanish labour market. She argues that, as a consequence of workplace inequalities, women remained dependent upon men, and that ‘Sólo a través de esta función social la mujer comenzará a tomar conciencia de su situación y a disponer de los instrumentos para liberarse de ella’.[[262]](#footnote-262) The argument follows that the value of employment is not working in itself but that, in escaping the home, women will value their abilities and unite for their mutual liberation. Doña attacks working conditions for women, including lower salaries, and the lack of state-funded amenities to alleviate their domestic burden, which encouraged women to drop out of the employment market. Therefore, for Doña, the proper incorporation of women into the workplace with equal rights has both a feminist and a Marxist outcome: it will not only release women from their domestic burden and alleviate social inequality but, in doing so, will also help women develop an ideological consciousness to enable them to add their voices to those of their male colleagues in the fight for political change. As a manifesto for the ORT, then, *La mujer* offers women a series of practical policies which would facilitate their entrance into the workforce, and promotes legal reforms that would place women on an equal footing with men before the law.

Reading *La mujer* alongside *Desde la noche y la niebla* emphasises how Doña’s political beliefs had begun to move away from an orthodox Communist position. This does not mean, however, that the influence of Communist autobiography was absent from the processes of creating the ‘novela-testimonio’. While Doña may no longer have been a member of the PCE, her memories of activism were dominated by Party life and the strong emotional bond that Communist prisoners developed. Consequently, despite breaking with the PCE in 1962, *Desde la noche y la niebla* does not bear any similarity to conversion narratives, such as the multi-authored essays in Arthur Koestler’s *The God That Failed* (1950) or Regina García’s *Yo he sido marxista* (1946), as Doña makes no attempt to distance herself from her own Communist past.[[263]](#footnote-263)

We have already seen how Communists were encouraged to view themselves and their lives in terms of the Party, as well as being encouraged to commit their memories to paper.[[264]](#footnote-264) Coming from this ideological culture, as well as being part of the generation that actively attempted to preserve a history of anti-Francoist resistance, Doña’s memories would already have been influenced before she began to write them. It is unsurprising, for example, that Doña writes about the execution of the Trece Rosas, as this constitutes a fundamental element of the Communist women’s narrative of prison. However, Doña also attempts to break free from this set narrative to incorporate other subject positions that are representative of her life. For example, she problematises the Communist presentation of death as heroic, and questions the collective repression of emotion during the militants’ incarceration. Therefore, although *Desde la noche y la niebla* irrefutably constitutes a part of the corpus of Communist women’s prison writing, it also breaks with the template substantially.

*La mujer* aids the reader by highlighting Doña’s developing spectrum of ideology, showing that throughout her life Doña critically engaged with and challenged her own ideology. It brings new meaning to *Desde la noche y la niebla*, because it allows us to begin deconstructing the different arguments that Doña makes throughout her ‘novela-testimonio’: for example by studying the different periods when Doña was developing her life writing account. Published in 1978, *Desde la noche y la niebla* discusses Doña’s experiences at the end of the Civil War and her imprisonment as a Communist militant, ending at the point of her release and, therefore, before her decision to leave the PCE in 1964. However, the main body of the text was written in 1967, when Doña was a member of a different political party, the PCE (m-l). The second epilogue was written much later, as Doña comments on meeting Mariana in 1993 at a demonstration on 1 May (346). Similarly, the introduction is dated February 1978 and we know that by May 1978 Doña described herself as politically unaffiliated, though she still held Communist beliefs, as expressed in the interview with *Triunfo*. With this knowledge we can tell that the introduction was almost certainly written when Doña was in the process of disengaging herself from the ORT. Furthermore, in the same interview Doña comments that she made some alterations to the text after it was written, although no date is specified.[[265]](#footnote-265) While it is difficult to determine which political influences were most important when the text was being written, this convoluted evolution reveals Doña to be intellectually and ideologically engaged with her political membership. Doña was not a militant that accepted the Party line at face value, but instead constantly questioned and re-evaluated her political stance, working through new political ideas.

Reading *La mujer* and *Desde la noche y la niebla* together also accentuates the different functions of the texts. While *La mujer* is a manifesto outlining proposals in an analytical manner, supported by data, *Desde la noche y la niebla* functions as a literary memory text, bearing witness to the persecution of the regime and commemorating the resistance. Crucially, though *Desde la noche y la niebla* is written from the perspective of ‘Leonor’, Doña intended the text to be representative of her personal thoughts and emotions surrounding the past. In her interview with *Triunfo*, Doña outlines more clearly than in her ambiguous introduction to her ‘novela-testimonio’ why it was written in the third person. Doña maintains that she did this, as well as changing some names and events, to protect the identities of those working clandestinely for the Party. Doña claims, however, that Leonor represents Doña’s emotional truth. The interviewer asks ‘Entonces, ¿la Leonor de la novela eres tú, lógicamente?’, to which she responds:

En lo fundamental, sí. Todo el comienzo del relato, últimos meses y caída de Madrid, huida a Valencia y Alicante, regreso a Madrid, huida de un escondrijo a otro, porque naturalmente nadie podía albergarme al estar yo buscada por la Policía, etcétera; todo eso, hasta mi primera detención, es exactamente igual en la novela que en la realidad. Luego, ya hay algunos cambios.[[266]](#footnote-266)

The aforementioned changes are largely altered to fit with the narrative of Leonor’s one period of imprisonment (from late 1939 to early 1960), rather than Doña’s two (from 1939-1942, then from 1947 to 1962). As such, Doña tells that

el episodio que cuento de una campesina toledana que traía y llevaba dinamita para la guerrilla, en realidad es algo que hacía yo en el período en que estuve en libertad (1942-47), pero como en el relato estoy durante esos años en la cárcel, lo tuve que poner en boca de otra persona que estaba fuera y que luego sería detenida y nos lo contaría en la prisión.[[267]](#footnote-267)

These comments highlight simultaneously the vein of autobiographical ‘truth’ that runs through *Desde la noche y la niebla*, but also its fictitious and constructed nature. According to Doña, the majority of the events are told exactly as they happened, but they are built to fit within a narrativised structure that lends itself to being read as a novel. The novelisation transforms the text from a personal testimony that aims to record a history of Francoist repression into something that is designed to entertain. In this way Doña attempts to engage the audience and elicit their empathy, convincing them of her point of view. Doña describes her motivations for doing so in *Triunfo*, stating that ‘Los historiadores no han estado, la mayoría, en las cárceles. Pienso que ellos suelen tender bastante a ser asépticos.’[[268]](#footnote-268) Doña compares the sterilised version of history provided by historians with the social commentary that a novel can portray: ‘Si Galdós no hubiese escrito los *Episodios nacionales*, seguramente no conoceríamos esa parte de la Historia de esa forma tan directa y cálida como él nos lo contó. Tendríamos que conformarnos con fríos textos, con valor científico, pero sin calor humano.’[[269]](#footnote-269) For Doña, memoir-writing goes beyond simply recording her testimony for posterity: Doña’s wants to engage her readers by exploring her emotional truth and helping them to imagine what it felt like to be imprisoned during the dictatorship. We begin to see the tension between the collective and individual representation of imprisonment, a domiant theme throughout *Desde la noche y la niebla*. The complementary reading of Doña’s different texts allows the reader to explore the tensions between her changing ideology and her understanding of her own past, as well as how Doña instrumentalises her writing for political ends.

## Is *Desde la noche y la niebla* feminist?

Describing *Desde la noche y la niebla* as feminist contradicts Doña’s own classification of the text, as she ends her introduction to the memoir with the statement ‘quiero aclarar que este relato es un testimonio de mujeres pero no feminista’ (23). Doña argues that the text was written before she had been introduced to feminist ideas, and that she would have altered its focus to consider ‘por qué la mujer en todos los tiempos y circunstancias lleva la peor parte’ (23). As a consequence

este testimonio no plantea la gran problemática de la mujer como ser inferiorizado a través de los siglos, sólo testimonia el sufrimiento de miles de mujeres que fueron perseguidas, torturadas y ejecutadas por defender los derechos generales de nuestro pueblo oprimido, pero que no pusieron nunca en cuestión su propia opresión.

Refleja, ni más ni menos, […] su martirio a secas (23).

Despite Doña’s apparent rejection of a feminist label for her text, there are several reasons this statement should be reconsidered after a close reading of *Desde la noche y la niebla*.

First, it could be argued that Doña makes this claim as a mediating strategy with regards to her audience, which she may have expected to be predominantly left wing. Many women of Doña’s generation, particularly Communist women, rejected the feminist label as subordinate to their larger political goals.[[270]](#footnote-270) Brooksbank-Jones states that the feminist aspirations of some political women ‘caused tensions with fellow party members, some of whom were concerned that feminist issues might distract from what were seen as more immediate political priorities. Reservations were strongest among older women […] for [whom] party concerns had always come first.’[[271]](#footnote-271) The problematic aspect of feminism for many Communist women is highlighted in the second epilogue to *Desde la noche y la niebla*, in which Doña attempts to discuss her introduction to feminist thought while in exile in Paris with her three closest friends from prison, Paquita, Adela, and Mariana: ‘me miraron asombradas y se dijeron, “las mujeres comunistas ya luchamos por todos los oprimidos”, fueron tan rotundas que comprendí que aquella parte de su mente cerrada aún tenía candados’ (348). Doña’s closest friends rejected feminism as unnecessary, evidence of the kind of prejudices which might have encouraged her to dissimulate the role of feminism in the text to avoiding discouraging readers with orthodox political beliefs.

However, while Doña may have mediated her feminist ideology during the initial period of writing in 1967, when the feminist movement in Spain was in its formative years, the same cannot be said when the introduction was written in 1978. By then, Spain had held its first free elections since the death of Franco and was in the process of writing a new constitution, which came into law several months after *Desde la noche y la niebla* was published. Women’s movements and feminism in general had become a significant force in Spanish politics, with different pressure groups lobbying on issues such as the legalisation of divorce and abortion during the drafting process of the Constitution.[[272]](#footnote-272) Furthermore, by the 1979 elections around half of those who voted for the PCE identified as centre-ground democrats rather than explicitly committed to Communist ideology.[[273]](#footnote-273) It is unlikely that Doña’s claim that the text is not feminist was exclusively motivated by the desire to mediate her feminist beliefs to a sceptical Communist audience, as the majority of Spanish society was embracing the political pluralism of the new democracy.

Doña also claims that *Desde la noche y la niebla* is not feminist because it was written before she had come into contact with feminist thought. This does not necessarily preclude the text from being feminist though. In the second epilogue, Doña says that her introduction to feminism produced the sensation that ‘mil preguntas nunca articuladas, a pesar de haber vivido en un mundo de mujeres parte de mi vida, se agolparon y tuvieron respuesta’ (348). The previous chapter of this thesis discussed a trope of Communist life writing in which Communists claimed that they were born with an innate sense of injustice that was brought to fruition through a development in their political understanding. Whether consciously or subconsciously, Doña mimics this trope in relation to feminist thought. Though she was not able to articulate it, Doña argues that she was already concerned by some of the problems with which feminism attempts to engage. As such, it is possible to view in the text the underlying issues that Doña was later able to articulate through her introduction to feminist thought. As is discussed throughout this section, though, there are clear differences between Doña’s early feminist ideas and the manifesto which she wrote in 1977, *La mujer*; Doña’s knowledge of feminism—and particularly Marxist-feminism—does not necessarily reinforce her initial thoughts and reactions to the position of women in Spanish society.

## Framing the text as feminist

The clearest indication that *Desde la noche y la niebla* can be read, in part, as a feminist text is its actual content. Through her framing of the text and selection of themes and characters, Doña undeniably places women at the heart of her narrative. *Desde la noche y la niebla* goes beyond other Communist texts in its attempts to comment on the persecution of women as a specific and separate phenomenon to that of men. Doña’s ‘novela-testimonio’ also incorporates an analysis of women’s position in Spanish society, not just as part of Francoist repression, which sets it apart from the corpus of Communist prison writing. Although some aspects of this commentary on feminism concern events that do not relate directly to women’s imprisonment in the text—including domestic abuse and sexual assault in Spanish society—they are of note because of the way in which they help to contextualise Doña’s presentation of incarceration as feminist.

Doña frames the main body of *Desde la noche y la niebla* with an introduction and two epilogues, the first written in character in the third person and the second written as ‘Leonor’ but with Doña’s voice. The use of the first person in the second epilogue signals that we are hearing the voice of Doña, as does Doña’s decision to include details that give away her true identity (for example, although Leonor was imprisoned for 20 years, the epilogue refers specifically to Doña’s 18 years of incarceration) (343). As discussed in chapter one, Doña uses paratextual materials to emphasise the autobiographical truth of the text despite its use of fictional elements. She employs this same technique to draw attention to feminist ideas, stating her intention to put women at the centre of her narrative. The introduction argues that ‘En este proceso de recuperación de identidad de todo un pueblo las mujeres deben de emerger con luz propia’ and ‘sin la participación abnegada de miles de mujeres en todos los frentes […] hoy no se habría conquistado este derecho de presentarnos con nuestros nombres’ (19). While the Communist narrative clearly tries to carve out a place in Spanish history for the PCE, Doña wants to do the same for women. Although Marxist-feminist thought looks to the past to demonstrate a history of women’s economic and social oppression, Sarah Leggott observes in her analysis of Nieves Castro’s memoir that the average Communist autobiography does not:

By portraying communism as gender neutral in her narrative, Castro follows the ideology of her Party […] However, in the case of the Communist movement, gender neutral in fact appears to equate to masculinist, as men’s experiences are constructed as normative, with differences between comrades disregarded.[[274]](#footnote-274)

By contrast, Doña declares herself to be reclaiming the role of women in Spain’s history on an emotional, commemorative basis, which centres on women’s pride and their social value within society. This is separate to their economic value as workers that a Marxist-feminist analysis of history would champion, and the orthodox Communist position which simply subsumes women’s differences within a class analysis. Doña’s personal interpretation of feminism goes further than Marxist-feminism, highlighting how she is willing to foreground her individual political stance instead of adopting a collective position.

Doña’s desire to record the histories of women is based upon more abstract ideas of social worth than are represented within the economic arguments of a Marxist-feminist analysis of history. Her writing coincided with an international period of feminist awareness that women had been obstructed from political power and, therefore, from the traditional histories that only remembered a male elite. Leggott notes, for example, that in his introduction to Castro’s memoir, Santiago Carrillo praises Castro’s activism, stating that without her political role ‘bien podría haber sido hoy una madre y una abuela *sin historia*’ [my emphasis].[[275]](#footnote-275) The reader can sense Doña’s anger and frustration that the role of women was neglected, even in the dissident literature that was circulating secretly in Spain in the later years of the dictatorship. When Doña attempted to get her ‘novela-testimonio’ printed clandestinely, she was told by publishing houses that they were not interested in ‘una “cosa” de mujeres’ (20). While the heroic exploits of men were being read in dissident circles, ‘A las mujeres se les han dedicado unas líneas apenas, en ese río de volúmenes que se ha escrito sobre la guerra civil y la resistencia de nuestro país’ (20). These women, Doña argues, engaged in every aspect of resistance to the Franco regime and suffered the same persecution as men; in some ways, they suffered more ‘porque hay torturas y humillaciones que sólo pueden infligirse en el cuerpo de una mujer’ (20-1). For Doña, it is important to bear witness to the suffering of women, who were under-represented in the historical record of the repression. Though Doña probably refers here to rape and sexual assault, scholars have demonstrated a wider gendered approach to punishing women in Nationalist Spain and during the succeeding dictatorship. As mentioned in the introduction, this included acts such as shaving women’s heads, and publicly humiliating women by purging them with castor oil and parading them naked in the streets. Maud Joly writes how

Los rapados y las purgas de mujeres apuntan a la reapropiación de lugares simbólicos, y a la sumisión visible de los cuerpos de la enemiga. Dos tipos de reconquista que se consumaron por medio de una violencia total, degradante, ritualizada y pública.[[276]](#footnote-276)

In referring to this gendered persecution, Doña denounces the patriarchal nature of Francoist repression while simultaneously censuring the ignorance or indifference of the Left to the situation of women and their activism. She highlights that the devaluing and subjugation of women was not just a symptom of right-wing ideology, but a problem that pervades Spanish society.

The second epilogue continues this feminist framing of *Desde la noche y la niebla*. As mentioned above, Doña discusses her introduction to feminism during her exile in Paris and comments that ‘empecé a mirarme de forma distinta, y encontré que una parte de mi mente jamás había funcionado’ (348). Although she was unsuccessful in convincing her friends of the importance of feminism, Doña uses paratextual materials to ensure that it is a theme throughout the text. Feminist thought acts as a bookend to *Desde la noche y la niebla*, framing the plight of female prisoners and Spanish women in general in those terms. In this way, we see the heterogeneity of Doña’s political beliefs. Although published after *La mujer*, Doña still maintains a broader feminist position in her ‘novela-testimonio’, denouncing the gendered persecution of women and historicising women’s contributions to post-war resistance that have been seen by men just as footnotes. Doña seems to subscribe to a feminism that is both emotionally and intellectually informed, making it personal to her. Furthermore, in a text that largely follows a Communist narrative of women’s imprisonment, Doña’s feminist argument is unusual, subverting the reader’s expectations.

The main body of the text also provides a commentary on the status of women in Spain. One example is Leonor’s thoughts about her fellow activists while at a political rally organised by the *Agrupación de Mujeres Antifascistas* (AMA).[[277]](#footnote-277) The AMA was one of several groups responsible for organising women in the rearguard during the Civil War, and Leonor muses over the women that she sees before her:

Hace tres años—pensó—no hubieran soñado siquiera con estar aquí. Las necesidades de la guerra ha [*sic*] incorporado a la inmensa mayoría de estas mujeres a una vida activa. Este hecho las ha radicalizado; en estos tres años han aprendido mucho, despertando de su letargo para mirarse a sí mismas como a seres nuevos. Sus manos les han demostrado que eran útiles para algo más que lavar, zurcir o cocinar. Algunas ya eran obreras pero de la más baja categoría, nunca saltaban la valla del peonaje. Ahora eran especialistas en la industria de la guerra, enfermeras, dirigían talleres, guarderías…, etc. (36)

In this passage, Doña reflects on the personal and social benefits that women have gained as a consequence of their incorporation into leadership and organisational roles in Spanish society. The reader is impressed with the rapidity and the radical nature of this change, as women are now in roles that they could not have dreamed of three years earlier. No longer simply cooking, cleaning and darning, the women have woken from their lethargy to become new selves that are specialists and directors. Although women gained these jobs in the absence of men, not as their co-workers, this presentation of them escaping the home correlates with Doña’s later ideas in *La mujer*: women discover what they are capable of when they enter the workplace. The influence of Doña’s feminist interpretation of the past is particularly evident here, as she analyses the benefits that women have reaped from working in the rearguard. This was not reflected in the organisational aims of the AMA at the time, which Nash describes as revealing a ‘lack of any systematic reflection or awareness of gender-specific issues’.[[278]](#footnote-278)

Furthermore, while the work of the rearguard is often seen as subordinate to those on the frontlines, Doña deflects the focus away from the war (and men) entirely and focuses on the benefits that women have reaped from their position. This section of the text brims with pride that women have shown themselves to be as capable as men, but Doña also highlights the threat posed to them by *franquismo*. One of the orators at the rally warns her listeners that ‘las mujeres tenemos mucho que perder, si nuestros enemigos vencen, seremos otra vez sometidas, todo lo que hemos adquirido con la República será barrido’ (36). Defeat in the war is described specifically as a threat to women and their social status; women risk being subjugated once more and losing the rights that they have gained. That Doña should frame the loss of the war specifically in relation to women’s rights suggests that a feminist sensibility informs the text.

While other Communist prisoners do comment on their work in the rearguard during the war, there is a distinct lack of the positivity that Doña shows for the new roles that women have embraced. Rosario Sánchez Mora, ‘la Dinamitera’, for example, compares the risk that she took as a *miliciana* on the frontlines ‘con ilusión y heroísmo por un ideal noble’ with rearguard life, ‘donde se está más tranquilo, más cómodo y se gana más dinero’ (I, 160). Her inference is that the work of the rearguard is secondary to that of life on the frontline, and that it is not based on passion and idealism. Sánchez Mora contrasts the heroism of the frontline with a feminised rearguard that is more tranquil and comfortable; in this way, these two spheres are gendered. The secondary status of rearguard work is recognised, too, by Soledad Real, who states that ‘Seguro que lo era [secundario], pero la mujer no se siente discriminada, porque su trabajo adquiere tal volumen que no le da tiempo a pensar’.[[279]](#footnote-279) In Real’s response, we see the traditional secondary status of women within the PCE entrenched: women are there to serve the antifascist or revolutionary cause and will become equal citizens when Communist society is attained. Furthermore, Nash stresses that the successes of women’s organisations such as the AMA in mobilising for the war effort were limited, both in the spectrum of women they attracted and their overall influence during the Civil War. Although thousands of women did participate in antifascist activism, Nash highlights that most of these were already members of political parties.[[280]](#footnote-280) Doña’s claim above, then, that the war effort had incorporated most of the women at the political rally to ‘una vida activa’ does not reflect the reality: political women were already incorporated in roles that exceeded gender norms for women in Spanish society. The limited successes of organisations such as the AMA to integrate into the war effort, according to Nash, was a consequence of ‘mistrust of female competence together with ingrained hostility […] toward the presence of women in a traditionally male domain’. As such, ‘the influence of the AMA in official circles was of little significance’ and it was ‘reduced to sporadic auxiliary support activities’.[[281]](#footnote-281) In many ways, this makes the case for Doña’s feminist interpretation of rearguard activities even stronger, as her presentation of women’s role in the war effort does not betray any frustration or disappointment at its secondary nature. Furthermore, her positive presentation of women’s work in the rearguard highlights that she has politicised this memory to support her feminist beliefs. Her positive and feminist evaluation of women’s contribution demonstrates a marked departure from other Communist texts that form part of the corpus.

## Spain as a patriarchal society: domestic violence and rape

A further example of Doña’s feminist approach to constructing her narrative is one of the minor storylines relating to Leonor’s mother, Cristina. Cristina features in the text as a supporting character, who has very little dialogue and whose primary function is to care for her daughter while she is imprisoned. However, Doña delves briefly into Cristina’s personal history, discussing her separation from her husband of twenty years (88-9).[[282]](#footnote-282) Her husband is described as a typical Spanish man—‘no era peor que los demás’—who was known by his wife to be a womaniser (88). Cristina accepts this state of affairs, along with the fact that he controls and is physically violent towards her, because ‘“él era bueno, no les faltaba de comer ni de vestir, otros ni siquiera cuidaban así a su familia”’ (88). The voice of the narrator intercedes at this point to comment that Cristina ‘ni siquiera podía concebir que las cosas fueran de otro modo’ (88). Doña emphasises that Cristina’s position as a subjugated wife was historically typical for women in Spain and, as such, Cristina becomes a symbol of women’s social status. However, when Cristina discovers that her husband has a daughter by another woman, she gives him an ultimatum to choose between the two families. He chooses the other family and Cristina is distraught, though Doña comments that ‘Poco a poco fue asimilando la nueva mentalidad de sus hijos y eso la dio fuerzas para soportar una separación’ (89).

Although we are not told explicitly what this ‘nueva mentalidad’ is, Leonor and her sister are both politically involved in the rearguard and represent the values that formed part of the modernising legislation of the Second Republic with regards to women. Helen Graham discusses the concept of ‘the new woman’ in her essay on Amparo Barayón, the wife of Ramón J. Sender who was murdered in the Nationalist zone in October 1936.[[283]](#footnote-283) According to Graham, Barayón was murdered because she represented the progressive mentality of ‘the new woman’, having sought independence, working to support herself, and educating herself politically and culturally.[[284]](#footnote-284) The political work and rearguard activity of Leonor and her sister—along with Leonor’s civil marriage to Emilio—represent some of the ways in which the Second Republic offered opportunities for women to break with the traditional, domestic, and religious role that had historically been ascribed to them. This tangential discussion about the breakdown of Cristina’s marriage is not essential to the development of the plot and should be seen, therefore, as an authorial decision by Doña to explicitly comment on the position of women in Spanish society. Cristina acts as a point of contrast to the politically active women that are the main focus of *Desde la noche y la niebla*, as a woman that led a traditional domestic life and who was dominated and then abandoned by her husband. In this way, Doña demonstrates that the subjugation of women under the Franco regime is not a new phenomenon but a continuation of the historical norm; a further break from the Communist narrative about the dictatorship. It is also worth considering that the discussion of Cristina’s marriage offers a place where Doña’s various feminist ideas can converge. Although Doña is commenting on the way that women have historically been vulnerable and subordinate to their spouses, she also characterises the marriage as one built upon a financial foundation, as Cristina values her husband primarily for his ability to provide for the family. Cristina’s economic dependence on her husband fits within the Marxist-feminist framework that suggests women are trapped intellectually and financially by their domestic role. This highlights that Doña holds a broad spectrum of feminist ideology, incorporating a Marxist analysis with a more general understanding of women’s position in Spanish society.

The discussion of sexual assault and rape in the text further highlights the cultural and historical precedent for the subjugation of women. Doña uses this discussion to demonstrate that *franquismo* represents a continuation of the status quo rather than a new paradigm in the way that women are treated in Spanish society. The violation that the different women report in prison throughout *Desde la noche y la niebla* is mirrored by the attempted rape of Leonor. Although not all men are portrayed as sexual predators, Doña emphasises that there is an underlying problem in Spanish society. The first instance of sexual assault in the text is when Leonor is in hiding. After moving from location to location to evade her persecutors, Leonor finds herself in the house of Luisa, a distant cousin of her mother. Luisa is presented as browbeaten and afraid of her husband, Pedro, who has ‘doblado la cerviz de la mujer a fuerza de servirle’ (100). While Luisa is out, Pedro attempts to seduce Leonor and becomes forcible when she rejects him. Leonor escapes by breaking a jug over his head, provoking his anger, and is beaten by him until he throws her out of the house. This distressing episode is predicted by Luisa some time earlier, who warns Leonor in advance that

Tienes que irte, ya has visto la actitud de Pedro hacia ti, tengo miedo. No debí permitir que vinieses a esta casa, pero quiero a tu madre y tenía necesidad del dinero que nos da por tu hospedaje. Sin embargo, debí pensar en mi marido, no tiene escrúpulos de nada. Hemos vivido los tres años de guerra en la zona franquista, es capaz de denunciarte si no consigue sus propósitos. (101)

This passage is key to the characterisation of Pedro as a misogynist. His wife is afraid of him and was able to pre-empt how he would behave, showing that his attack on Leonor is characteristic rather than a profound lapse in judgment. Furthermore, Luisa’s description that Pedro is unscrupulous and will denounce Leonor if she does not relent to his advances paints a picture of a man that is skilled in the manipulation and control of women and of others. Though Luisa highlights that she and Pedro lived in the Nationalist zone throughout the war, it is important to recognise that Pedro is ostensibly not a Francoist: he and his wife are willing to shelter a political fugitive rather than automatically turn her over to the police, as those on the Right would. While Luisa worries that Pedro will denounce Leonor if she refuses his advances, this is not linked to his ideological beliefs but is a threat used to exert control.[[285]](#footnote-285) Doña’s inclusion of this episode allows her to broaden the scope of her criticism of Spanish society. Although rape and sexual abuse are themes throughout the Communist women’s prison narrative, Doña is not just accusing figures of authority within *franquismo* (such as soldiers, prison guards, etc.), as other texts do. Linking Pedro with Cristina’s husband, these men are represented as average members of society that inherently believe in their right to dominate and subjugate women according to their need for power. Doña characterises Spanish society as historically and culturally patriarchal in a way that allows her to make women and their social status—alongside her ideological beliefs as a Communist—a key theme in the text.

This is not to say that Doña does not discuss rape within Francoist power structures, which she presents as ‘el pan nuestro de cada día’ because of its frequency (183). As discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis, the Communist women’s prison narrative bears witness to the sexual abuse that women suffered while simultaneously condemning the lies that the regime propagated about political women by labelling them as prostitutes. While she also aims to do this, Doña’s analysis of rape as a structure of power rather than desire is revealing.[[286]](#footnote-286) For example, Doña includes an anecdote about the rape of a group of prisoners which includes a woman in her seventies. Her rapists say to this woman, a widow of more than thirty years, ‘“abuela, la vamos a deshollinar, lo debe tener lleno de telarañas”’ (183). In this brutal comment we see that the rapists make fun of the elderly woman; she is not an object of desire but a left-wing woman, a figure of disgust and someone to be humiliated and subjugated. In response to this incident, the narrator of *Desde la noche y la niebla* comments that ‘Las violaciones a las detenidas nada tenían que ver con el deseo sexual, era simplemente un acto de poder y humillación, el sadismo de sentir debajo de ellos unos cuerpos que se desgarran de horror en un acto que está hecho para el placer’ (183-4). This analysis transfers the blame from the woman to her aggressor: it is not that the woman is too provocative, thereby inciting desire, but that the man has a need to dominate his victim. Doña’s analysis of rape therefore clearly demonstrates the feminist sub-narrative that runs throughout her text.

## Motherhood

The final aspect of Doña’s feminist commentary in *Desde la noche y la niebla* is the effect of motherhood upon women. The presentation of motherhood through the character Leonor is largely positive: although she is separated from her son for many years because of her imprisonment, they share a close and loving bond. However, there are several instances in which motherhood is shown to be a specific burden on women that is symptomatic of the gender-based inequality in Spanish society. One example of this is the death of children that are held captive with their mothers. The suffering of children in prison is a theme throughout the Communist women’s prison narrative, which focuses on the cruelty of keeping children in unhygienic conditions with little food or access to medical care. However, Doña specifically focuses on women bearing the brunt of this suffering, as Leonor asks

¿por qué siempre tienen que ser las madres, las mujeres, quienes llevan la peor parte? El padre pobre no se funde en un todo con el hijo pobre. Preso o no el padre recibirá la noticia de su hijo muerto, la noticia concreta y el golpe le sumirá en el dolor, pero es un dolor que nada tiene que ver con la agonía de sentir cada minuto que aquello se te va, que a pesar de tu infinito cansancio y fatiga no puedes cerrar un ojo, porque te empeñas en ‘ver’ y sentir hasta el último latido de aquel corazón. (195-6)

This criticism of gender roles is fascinating, as the narrator highlights the double burden that female prisoners suffer; not only must they be imprisoned themselves, but, in many cases, they are forced to expose their children to this suffering too. While Doña does not necessarily suggest that men should take on this burden, she acknowledges that there is an imbalance in society’s expectations of the sexes that puts women at a disadvantage. This negative presentation of the hardships of being a mother raises several themes within her narrative. Undoubtedly, one of these is a direct attack upon the hypocrisy of *franquismo*, which enshrines women’s role as mothers while allowing them and their children to suffer and die in prison. In presenting it in a negative light, Doña contests the regime’s narrative of motherhood and exposes the horror that can result from the wrong circumstances.

The horrors of motherhood can also be seen in an anecdote from earlier in the text when women are being transported back to Madrid from the concentration camps in cattle wagons behind a train. The women and children are left for days with little water or food and no access to sanitation in the heat of the Valencian sunshine. Children begin to die and decompose, and there is nothing that the mothers can do to stop it (79-80). Here, the Francoist ideal of the mother in the image of the Virgin Mary is contrasted with the squalid realities of death and decomposition. Of course, Leftist women would have been excluded from this elevated understanding of motherhood, as Irene Abad discusses:

esta exaltación de la maternidad no se aplicaba de igual manera a todas las mujeres españolas, puesto que excluía de manera rotunda a todas aquellas que, según el régimen franquista, no podrían garantizar la aceptabilidad socio-política de sus hijos por estar ellas mismas al margen de la sociedad a consecuencia de su disidencia política.[[287]](#footnote-287)

According to the research of Vallejo Nágera, Republican women suffered from a ‘degeneración psicológica’, which made them incapable of being the kind of mother that was acceptable within Francoist society.[[288]](#footnote-288) Thus, as Abad highlights, in the eyes of the victors this justified the beating of female prisoners in the womb and the lack of medical care provided for pregnant women and new mothers, as the death of their child would mean ‘un rojo menos’.[[289]](#footnote-289) Undoubtedly, in her anger at the position of mothers in prison, Doña is expressing a sense of the double burden borne by women in society, both as defeated Republicans and as women. This echoes the position of Marxist-feminists, which argues that, in any situation of oppression, women are doubly oppressed by their gender. This quotation also offers a subtle critique of Communist rhetoric around mothers. Women were exhorted by figures such as Dolores Ibárruri to produce sons and allow them to be martyrs in the Civil War.[[290]](#footnote-290) This mimicked religious imagery, categorising women as mothers and asking their contribution to the political cause to be the sacrifice of their children. In Leonor’s statement above—‘¿por qué siempre tienen que ser las madres, las mujeres, quienes llevan la peor parte?’—there is a challenge to the PCE to reconsider the role of women. By referring specifically to the suffering of women as separate and different from that of men, Doña exposes a fundamental contradiction in the Communist ideal of equality.

The other aspect of motherhood that demonstrates Doña’s feminist approach to *Desde la noche y la niebla* is one brief thought which crosses the mind of her character Pura. Pura is part of Leonor’s ‘family’ in Ventas, a small group of women that shared their resources to make sure that everyone was supported. Doña provides a small amount of contextual information about Pura, writing that she was sent to be a nurse to a child in Madrid when she was eight years old because her parents were unable to support their many children. Pura’s reflections on this part of her life generally fall within a Communist analysis of social inequality, as she compares the situation of her own family with that of the rich family for whom she works. Pura terminates her thoughts with the idea that ‘mientras hubiese esos niños, las madres serían esclavas’ (196).[[291]](#footnote-291) These few words, referring to Pura’s own overpopulated family, reveal a different, although not contradictory, interpretation of their situation. Pura sees the situation of families who are unable to control the amount of children they have as a specific problem for women. Although the anecdote itself focuses on the economic hardships that these families face, this comment appears to move away from this idea and to focus on the issues that women encounter. Unfortunately this comment is not developed and the plot moves on, but it is important to consider the inference of this statement, which supports family planning. In Pura’s opinion, these women are enslaved by their position; although the parents together bear the financial responsibility of children, the mother endures the physical aspect, as well as the burden of care. Contraceptive methods, or the right to abortion, would place control of a woman’s body back in her own hands and would free her from the responsibility of multiple births.

An analysis of *Desde la noche y la niebla* and *La mujer* highlights that Doña creates space in her narrative for both orthodox and unconventional positions. While Doña clearly links misogyny to capitalist exploitation, demonstrating the double marginalisation of working-class women, her interpretation of feminism also moves beyond this. Not simply arguing for women’s equal incorporation into the class struggle through work, Doña shows that Spanish society is historically patriarchal, and includes criticism of those on the Left. Furthermore, Doña shows her personal anger at the way that women have been treated, and how they have been marginalised in a history of resistance to the regime.

## The private lives of Communists: Doña and Mesón’s revolutionary love

Doña also implements a counter narrative within *Desde la noche y la niebla* in an attempt to represent how imprisonment and the repercussions of the Civil War affected the individual not just as a consequence of Francoist repression, but also due to Communist dogmatism. Along with the feminist nature of the ‘novela-testimonio’, this is another of the features that sets *Desde la noche y la niebla* apart from other works in the corpus of Communist women’s prison writing in Spain. In her discussion of grief, despair, isolation, emotional repression, and sectarianism, and also of love and passion, Doña negotiates her Communist ideology—which I argue represents ‘the language of authority’, as Herrmann terms it—with her personal recollections of imprisonment. In this way, Doña seeks to write a history that commemorates the suffering of both the collective and the individual, in contrast to Communist memoirs where emotional and personal themes are uncommon.

In Soviet Russia, autobiographical writing became enmeshed in the public sphere, and this was emulated by Communist Party ideologues internationally, including in Spain. This reflected the way in which Communists wanted to write themselves into the political order, and how autobiographical documents were widely read to determine the author’s political credibility. Similarly, ideas of morality and how Party members lived their private lives became linked to a public performance of ideological adherence. Deborah A. Field has commented on the ideological foundation of the interdependence of the public and private in the USSR, writing that it stemmed, in part, from a ‘vision of the Communist future, when morality, rather than law or force, would be “the only form of regulation of the relations between people”’.[[292]](#footnote-292) Likewise, on the phenomenon of state intervention in the private sphere in Soviet Russia, David Lloyd Hoffmann notes that

the discourse on culturedness emphasized proper conduct in everyday life, including bodily hygiene, domestic order, and labor efficiency, as well as a demonstrative appreciation of high culture. While Soviet cultural education paralleled similar programs in other countries, it also stressed the elimination of egoism and the championing of collectivism over individualism. Soviet authorities believed that individuals could realize their full human potential only by joining the collective and engaging in socially useful labor. Thus they espoused an illiberal subjectivity that sought to enlighten and transform individuals even as it opposed individualism.[[293]](#footnote-293)

As both Hoffmann and Field argue, a central belief of Soviet policy was that in cultivating citizens that recognised the benefits of a sanitary, cultured life that was based on hard work and communal living, these people would choose a full life lived as part of the collective rather than a partial life of individualism. Of course, there was no state intervention in the life of Spanish Communists (at least not the intervention of a Socialist state), but in the same way that the model of Communist autobiography was emulated, members of the PCE turned to the USSR for guidance on how to live their lives. Within the context of political repression in Spain, the set of principles which directed the ideologue to a communal life away from individualism became an outright rejection of the cultivation of a personal life away from the collective. As such, it is not surprising that the Communist women prisoners—whose political beliefs became the centre of their lives during long periods of imprisonment—did not choose to represent their personal feelings in their autobiographical writing (which were, of course, public documents in their eyes and the eyes of the Party).

As Leggott observes in her analysis of Nieves Castro’s memoir, ‘The marginalisation of details regarding the author’s personal life is not unique to Castro’s work, also being a feature of the testimonies produced by a number of her contemporaries.’[[294]](#footnote-294) Consequently, Doña’s willingness to address themes and issues from her personal life represents a profound break from the norms of Communist autobiography. Several elements contribute to this, some of which coincide with themes discussed earlier in this chapter. As mentioned previously, Doña argued in an interview that accounts of the Francoist repression were ‘asépticos’ and that she had novelised her memoirs in order to achieve a representation of history like that of Galdós’ *Episodios nacionales*. Novelisation allows Doña to convey a more individual and emotional representation of imprisonment because the reader expects to engage with a character in a novel and to be provided with insights into their thoughts and feelings. Furthermore, although Doña is clearly the protagonist, she is removed from this role directly by the creation of the character ‘Leonor’ and can therefore reveal more individualism than other Communists who wrote traditional memoirs. Another element to Doña’s individual approach to her memoir is her feminist ideology. Part of the feminist movement aimed to create a history of women that broke with the norms created by and which narrated the exploits of men.[[295]](#footnote-295) In this way, Doña may have chosen to include her thoughts and emotions as representative of her experience of imprisonment, following the feminist mantra that ‘the personal is political’. While acknowledging the importance of Doña’s choice of genre and her decision to write women into Spanish history, the intrusion of the private sphere into a Communist narrative of prison is also fundamentally linked to Doña’s relationship with her husband, Eugenio Mesón. A complementary reading of *Desde la noche y la niebla* with *Querido Eugenio* (2003), in which Doña reprinted Mesón’s prison notebooks and wrote a response, demonstrates the relationship between love and revolution.

Mesón’s notebooks, which he wrote while he was awaiting execution, and Doña’s response in *Querido Eugenio*, written in 2002, portray their Communist beliefs and their love for one another as inextricably linked. We have seen how Communist life writing aims to inscribe the author into the life of the Party and that collective life is seen as true subjecthood, but both Mesón and Doña experienced life as part of the collective through their relationship with one another. The privileging of a personal relationship while writing about revolutionary life, seen in both *Desde la noche y la niebla* and *Querido Eugenio*, is something I have not encountered in any other Spanish Communist texts. Indeed, as Shirley Mangini notes, ‘for the Communists sexual desire was considered the most insidious form of weakness’.[[296]](#footnote-296) This is significant because it suggests that Doña and Mesón had a different understanding of the private and the collective in Communist life, which they approached as a couple rather than as individuals. As can be seen in the following passage, Mesón inextricably links his love for Doña with Communist thought:

Jamás sentí, desde que se fundieron nuestros corazones y nuestros cuerpos por primera vez, deseos de otra muchacha. No. Has llenado mi vida tan completamente que fuera de ti todo me parecía vacío. […] Esto ha podido ser porque tanto tú como yo teníamos un concepto muy claro del amor entre comunistas. Siempre te consideré en condiciones de igualdad de derechos y actitudes; respeté como debía tu personalidad humana y comunista.[[297]](#footnote-297)

Mesón speaks both of their emotional and physical love and the way in which it is bound by their political beliefs. Mesón explicitly links this all-encompassing view of love to their mutual understanding of Communism; the reason that they have been able to give themselves completely to one another is because they respect each other as human beings and as Communists. He also writes that ‘Nuestro cariño era un cariño nuevo porque estaba sellado en la lucha común que unía nuestras vidas. […] Vivíamos felices porque con nuestro cariño crecía nuestra actividad e influencia revolucionaria’.[[298]](#footnote-298) Mesón argues that love and Communism are linked: their love is made more passionate and alive through their political beliefs and it aids them in pursuing action on behalf of the collective.

In words that echo Leonor’s sentiments in *Desde la noche y la niebla*—as discussed later in this chapter—we also see that Doña’s love is grounded in a physical, sexual relationship. In Doña’s response to Mesón, she recalls fearing for his life one night during the Civil War and, upon him returning home while she was showering, rushing out naked to meet him. She was seven months pregnant and they showered together and then made love.[[299]](#footnote-299) This memory, which embraces the sensuous image of a heavily-pregnant, naked Doña, demonstrates the extent to which sex is a fundamental part of their relationship, which neither Doña nor Mesón view as contrary to their Communist beliefs. One could argue that Mesón’s notebooks are essentially a long goodbye to Doña, placing their relationship at the centre of the narrative and thereby making it a private, rather than a political document (even though they eventually became public when Doña published them). However, Communist life writing is almost universally written with a public audience in mind: as Hellbeck comments, even personal diarists were not free from desiring to ‘write themselves into their social and political order’.[[300]](#footnote-300) Mesón’s notebooks would have been passed through several hands to reach Doña outside the prison walls, and it is almost certain that he would have expected them to reach a wider audience still. Real remembers hearing the diary of an executed Communist being read aloud to women inside the prison, bearing great resemblance to the situation of Doña and Mesón: ‘Se llamaba este diario *Cuarenta días de fiebre* y había sido escrito por el novio de una compañera. A este novio lo fusilaron y durante el tiempo que transcurrió desde su condena hasta que lo metieron en la capilla, cuarenta días, escribió un diario.’ [[301]](#footnote-301) This highlights that these documents were public rather than private. Furthermore, as Herrmann has shown, Communist life writing offers a paradox for the reader: the genre creates expectations of learning intimate details about the author but this ‘[b]ourgeois discourse of privacy, emotion, and unique individuality’ is seen as a threat to fully embracing collective life.[[302]](#footnote-302) As such, it is important to recognise that the reciprocity between love and revolution that we see in Doña and Mesón’s marriage is something which is not expressed in other Communist life writing, and, as discussed below, that it contributes directly to the shaping of the counter narrative in *Desde la noche y la niebla*. Doña’s decision to privilege the telling of intimate emotions and personal relationships stems directly from her and Mesón’s interpretation of the public and private in Communist thought.

## Contesting heroic death: the grief of the individual

Doña’s main discussion of grief in *Desde la noche y la niebla* centres on the execution of Leonor’s husband Emilio, which reflects Doña’s own experiences. Doña’s husband Mesón was executed by firing squad on 3 July 1941 for his role as a leader of the JSU in Madrid. His death is mirrored almost exactly in the death of Leonor’s husband Emilio in *Desde la noche y la niebla*, who is also imprisoned and shot for being a leader of the JSU. Likewise, the letter that Mesón sent to Doña from the chapel before his execution, a right granted to those whose death sentence was to be enforced, is echoed in the letter that Emilio sends to Leonor (214).[[303]](#footnote-303) Although the letter is not reproduced verbatim, the sentiments are the same: love for his wife and family and an assertion of his Communist beliefs. For example, in the original letter Mesón writes about the mass grave where his body will lie, stating that their bodies are ‘lo único que de nosotros pueden fusilar’.[[304]](#footnote-304) In Emilio’s letter, he writes that ‘sólo podrán fusilar nuestros cuerpos, ahí quedan nuestras ideas’ (214). Given the verisimilitude of the events and the status of *Desde la noche y la niebla* as a semi-fictionalised account of Doña’s prison experiences, Leonor’s grief should be read as Doña’s own emotions. This presentation of grief signals a slippage in the Communist narrative voice, as the personal and emotional suffering of Communist women prisoners is not typically a theme in their memoirs. As such, the discussion of grief allows Doña to nuance her representation of life in prison.

One way in which grief affects Leonor in the ‘novela-testimonio’ is through her belief that she has lost her sense of self. After the initial news of Emilio’s death, the omniscient narrator comments that ‘Algo se había roto en su interior. Ese ser completo que ella era quedó destrozado. No le bastaba su firme voluntad de vivir. Se sentía endurecida y se palpaba tratando de ver si era la misma persona de hacía ocho días’ (213). To some extent, this presentation of a broken self could be analysed in light of ideas from trauma theory that consider the fragmentation of the self in literature as a by-product of a traumatic event.[[305]](#footnote-305) Leonor’s grief is expressed through the breakdown of her sense of self and being: she is described as destroyed, not knowing if she is the same person she was before the knowledge of her husband’s death. However, evidence of fragmentation does not extend beyond this one paragraph, making a cogent argument for this impossible. What does become clear, though, is that Leonor’s imprisonment, particularly while she is held in solitary confinement after being sentenced to death, has an impact on her grief. While Leonor may not have lost her sense of self, the conditions in which she finds herself exacerbate her grief and allow her too much time and space in which to become completely lost in the act of mourning:

Hora tras hora y en silencio con la cabeza reclinada sobre la pared absorbiendo el trocito de azul enrejado que se veía por la ventana, pensaba en Emilio, esta obsesión desalojó su mente de cualquier otro pensamiento. A veces tenía que hacer esfuerzos para darse cuenta de que aún vivía. Y de pronto le entraban ansias de vida, de estrechar a su hijo entre los brazos, de reunirse con los suyos, de reírse. (231)

The monotony of prison life offers little to distract Leonor, particularly as she has been separated even from other inmates after she is sentenced to death. With little to do other than think, Leonor becomes so focused on Emilio and his death that she is no longer sure that she lives herself. While thoughts of her surviving family keep her from giving in to grief completely, it becomes clear in this short passage that grief takes on a new dimension within the prison walls. In Leonor’s case, without even the distraction of fellow inmates, it becomes all-consuming. This perhaps offers an explanation for the comparative lack of grief demonstrated in the Communist texts in the corpus of women’s prison writing when contrasted with other writers who are not part of this political community.

The moment in *Desde la noche y la niebla* when Leonor’s grief becomes most visceral is when she is cut off from the support of her fellow ideologues and from the activity which they engender within the prison walls: in isolation, the individual disassociates from the community. Admittedly, Leonor’s solitary confinement begins relatively soon after Emilio’s death, so she is in the early stages of grief and is more prone to feel the loss keenly. However, Leonor’s physical isolation from her comrades mimics the isolation that the women who were not political activists feel as a consequence of their imprisonment. As such, Doña’s treatment of grief within *Desde la noche y la niebla*, particularly while she is being held in solitary confinement, is much more similar to the grief shown by non-political activists than other Communists in their writing. This suggests that the role of a supportive community in prison ameliorated conditions for the women, providing further evidence for the assertion that Communists had a different experience of prison to other women. While this almost certainly does not mean that the Communists did not feel grief, the experience of it was framed in a different way to that of other prisoners because they turned the prison into a political environment, solely focused on resistance.

To some extent, there is an element of textual construction to Leonor’s grief, which suggests that solitary confinement functions as a narrative device for Doña to explore the emotion. Although some Communist women do discuss their experience of living in isolation under the death penalty, the focus of their testimony is largely to describe the mental torture that living under threat of execution brought, or the work of Matilde Landa, who operated an office from Ventas to try and obtain pardons while she was imprisoned there.[[306]](#footnote-306) In contrast, the novelisation of *Desde la noche y la niebla* means that Doña can use solitary confinement as a space for Leonor’s thoughts to roam. This provides a good example of the difference in function and motivation for producing testimony compared with Doña’s ‘novela-testimonio’. The women who contribute to Cuevas’ compendium of testimony feel that they are contributing to a Communist history of incarceration; it is not a space for them to explore their own personal responses to isolation under the threat of execution, beyond the fact that it was a form of torture and repression imposed by the regime. For Doña, though, her more individual approach to representing life in prison means that the isolation of solitary confinement provides a space to explore different emotions and ideas, and to build the characterisation of Leonor away from the collective life of Communist women in prison. Holly Pike argues that one of the disciplinary features of the Francoist prison system was that collective life in prison ‘inculcate[d] specific altered behaviours and a carceral habitus amongst the prison populus who [felt] forced to regulate their actions and self-presentation’.[[307]](#footnote-307) She further argues that the collective behaviours meant that female prisoners were constantly performing a role, which became ‘tantamount to the eradication of the individual amidst the prison community’.[[308]](#footnote-308) As discussed later in this chapter, Doña was fully aware that the performance in prison was not solely for the benefit of the Francoist authorities but, in the case of Communist prisoners, it was also for one another: dogmatism was engendered by a constant need to perform resistance to oppression. Consequently, although it encompassed the threat and worry of execution, solitary confinement was also a space in which Doña was able to allow the façade of resistance to drop. In this way, the reader sees how Doña allows Leonor to embrace her grief as an individual. The collective life experienced by Communist prisoners offered a fundamentally different psychological space to women who were not politically affiliated.

This is not the only way in which Doña’s depiction of grief differs from that of other Communists. Through Leonor’s grief for Emilio the reader is invited to consider the complex emotions that govern the physical loss of another person. Death manifests itself through absence, but Emilio’s death reminds Leonor of his physicality and, in particular, their sexual relationship. When Leonor receives Emilio’s final letter, her thoughts return to their short marriage and the sexual expressions of their love:

Desde que fundieron sus cuerpos siempre tuvieron ansias el uno del otro, por el temor de que uno de los dos sucumbiese en aquella atroz vida que les había tocado vivir. Sólo llevaban dos meses de casados cuando fueron separados por la violencia que les envolvió; aún no conocían sus cuerpos, estaban en el balbuceo de una vida que a ellos, en su amor, les parecía que debía ser eterna, por eso, en aquellos tres años de guerra, cada encuentro era nuevo, gozoso, apasionante y ya no quedaba nada, no habría más encuentros, ya jamás vería reír sus ojos, ni sentiría sus manos acariciantes, todo ese gran amor que cada uno encerraba se había desparramado con su sangre, ella estaba vacía, sin amor y también sin sangre… (214-5)

In highlighting Leonor’s sexual relationship with her husband at this point in the text, Doña contrasts the carnal man with the lifeless corpse. When Leonor’s mother comes to visit her after Emilio’s death, Leonor asks whether Emilio ‘¿Quedó muy desfigurado?’ (215). At this point, although he is dead, Emilio remains a physical being for Leonor in her imagination; he has not yet slipped into the status of memory, and the state of his corpse is important to her. This becomes evident, too, in Doña’s response to Mesón in *Querido Eugenio*. When Doña reads Mesón’s notebooks after his death, she writes that for the first few months ‘no leía lo escrito. Sólo oía tu voz. Era como tenerte a mi lado, tangible, cercano, y al posar mi cabeza en la almohada seguía oyéndote nítido, tu aliento acariciaba mi cara’.[[309]](#footnote-309) Even though she knows Mesón is dead, Doña still experiences him in her imagination as a living man. This could also be attributed to her feminism as she is willing to show herself as a sexual being, remembering Mesón’s body next to her in bed. Doña presents the loss of a spouse in such a corporeal way within *Desde la noche y la niebla* because she recollects her own grief and she wants to represent the physicality rather than the abstract of loss in the text. In *Borderlines*, Gunnthórunn Gudmundsdóttir discusses the effect that larger historical events have upon the way individuals remember their own lives, which can overshadow the importance of personal memories at times (she is considering, for example, memoirs written about the Holocaust). She writes that ‘When events of this magnitude take place the private is completely invaded by the public, and there does not seem to be any room for private reminiscence’.[[310]](#footnote-310) The grief of the defeated Republicans is often discussed in the collective, particularly as the reclamation of their loss was not allowed in a public context until after Franco’s death. In writing Leonor’s grief for Emilio in such a physical way, Doña directs her presentation of mourning away from the collective towards the individual. Emilio is not representative of the Republican dead, he is Leonor’s husband who lived and loved and whose physical being has been destroyed. This further demonstrates Doña’s non-conformist approach to the collective and the individual in her political beliefs: she does not believe that her revolutionary fervour is compromised by showing her grief by remembering their love, and is willing to break with the Communist women’s narrative of prison to express this.

Within this individual, physical, and sexual representation of grief lies a decision to move away from a Communist narrative of death. As discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis, Communist narratives portray the executions of their comrades as a final act of resistance to the dictatorship, transforming them into martyrs for the cause. This is one of the issues in *Desde la noche y la niebla* where the reader sees most clearly Doña’s struggle to negotiate her own ‘personal language’ with the ‘language of authority’—i.e. the language of Communism—as Herrmann terms it. There are several instances in the text where Doña follows the party line with regards to the framing of death. For example, in the early pages of *Desde la noche y la niebla*, Leonor is at home worrying that Emilio might have been killed in a bombing raid one evening. Quickly she chides herself:

De pronto se reprochó su egoísmo; pensó en los millares […] de enamoradas que cada noche llorarían en sus camas vacías para siempre por la noticia de ‘muerte en combate’ […]. De tantas mujeres, en su sencillez y grandeza, cambiaban sus vestidos claros por ropas de luto y duelo, sin estridencias ni quejas. (41)

Although this statement is not framed in ideological terms, thematically it mirrors a more political statement made by Emilio in his final letter to Leonor, when he states that ‘nuestra vida ya la entregamos cuando nos entregamos a esta causa, miles y miles para nosotros la dieron y aún ha de costar muchos sacrificios’ (214). The message of these two statements is that personal sacrifices must be made to further the Communist cause and that individual feelings are selfish and have no place within the collective. As discussed above, however, Doña does not want her portrayal of grief in *Desde la noche y la niebla* to submerge the individual within the collective.

There are instances within the text where Doña is clearly questioning the Communist portrayal of every death as heroic. For example, one of Leonor’s comrades from before her imprisonment, Clara, is executed by firing squad. Leonor initially attempts to frame Clara’s death within the collective: ‘Leonor unía el dolor que sentía por la muchacha, por Emilio, por Julia y por los millares de conocidos y anónimos que día tras día caían bajo el tableteo de la ametralladora’ (229-30). But this approach is overshadowed when Leonor ensures that Clara’s possessions are passed on to her mother as her legacy. The narrator remarks that ‘Leonor estaba segura que a la madre la quedaría imborrable el legado del rostro destrozado de su hija’ (230). Returning to the corporeality of the deceased, Doña does not allow the Communist idea of heroic death to supersede the personal. While Clara’s life may have been taken in the name of a political cause, the reality of the grief is personal and physical: Clara’s mother will always remember the trauma of seeing her daughter’s damaged, dead body. Doña also contests the rhetoric of heroic death when Leonor is considering the sentiments of Emilio’s final letter to her. In his attempts to posthumously raise her spirits, Leonor recalls his arguments: ‘“26 años de vida no son pocos si se ha sabido escoger el camino, no pasar por él como ciegos”. “¿Te hubiera gustado morir de vieja y en la cama?”, “¿pero cómo llegan los pobres a viejos?, ¿no mueren mil veces en el camino?...”’ (232). Emilio’s words are laden with ideology: he is a man that has chosen his path and he compares his few years of action with the oppressed masses, who might survive to old age but at the cost of a lifetime of suffering and humiliation. Emilio is able, or at least attempts, to contextualise his own life within the framework of heroic death. However, Leonor is less convinced and muses that ‘Sin embargo, sí quería morir de vieja, 26 años le parecían muy poco para una vida’ (232). Doña deconstructs the hyperbole of the heroic death to focus on what death means to the individual: 26 is a young age to contemplate death without regret, even in a life lived to the full. These examples demonstrate Doña’s unwillingness to subsume her own experience of loss within the Communist narrative of grief, which she is unable to relate to. In this way, Doña exposes one of the gaps within the Communist narrative: the lack of an individual response to incarceration. Doña’s response to grief once again demonstrates her ability to weave different interpretations of the prison experience through her narrative.

## The isolation of imprisonment

When Doña departs from the Communist women’s prison narrative to other aspects of incarceration, the division between the individual and the collective experience deepens. This section considers two aspects of the individualisation of *Desde la noche y la niebla*: Leonor’s relationship with her family, which reflects the changes that her own personality has undergone through imprisonment, and a loss of hope for the future, which also incorporates the women’s struggle to readjust to life after imprisonment. These two themes reveal an undercurrent of negativity about life, which counteracts the overwhelming optimism and positivity with which the Communist narrative discusses the collective endeavours of the political community in the face of their persecution.

The semi-fictionalisation of *Desde la noche y la niebla* allows Doña to present Leonor’s relationship with her family in more depth than the Communist narrative normally allows. In Communist life writing accounts, familial relationships are not usually a theme unless they support a political point (for example, Cuevas discusses her family to emphasise her working-class background). In contrast, Doña makes a point of discussing the impact that imprisonment—and particularly such a lengthy imprisonment—has upon familial relations. When Leonor has been imprisoned for 12 years, she reflects upon the changes that have taken place in her family:

Un álbum, repleto de fotografías colocadas por fechas y que a Leonor se le antojaban con nervio y sangre, como la existencia que encerraban, hacía que Leo viviese la vida a saltos: Laura del brazo de su marido, 1946…, los primeros pantalones largos de su hijo, 1951… […] En la soledad de su celda ella repasaba las hojas de este álbum y se fijaba tanto en cada rasgo de sus caras que parecía que le hablasen. Le gustaban las primeras hojas, donde estaban de niños, como les dejó, los sentía más suyos. (280-1)

Leonor is drawn to her family but simultaneously excluded from their lives because of her incarceration. She tries to maintain a link to them through the photographs that they send her, but the leaps between the events produce a sense of disconnection, no matter how much she studies them. Consequently, she prefers the photos of when they were all children because they depict memories that she shares. Similarly, Leonor measures her son’s progress through childhood and youth through the jumpers that she knits for him for his birthday every year, noticing one year that ‘Cuando le enviaron estas últimas medidas se asombró del ‘estirón’ que había dado’ (257). Each item that she makes is, of course, bigger than the last, emphasising the sensation that Leonor only experiences family life in leaps. That Leonor clings to her family despite her disconnection is only exacerbated by their visits to the prison twice a year. Leonor feels ‘Ilusión y sufrimiento, miedo y esperanza’ when she sees her family leave, knowing that it will be many months until she speaks to them again (281). This suffering is compounded by the fact that viewing her family reveals to Leonor the changes in herself. Leonor attempts to ‘esconder el gesto vigilante que les acompañaba siempre y borrar el rictus amargo de la boca’, in order that her family ‘no se fueran más tristes de lo que habían venido’ (282). Seeing her family members’ behaviour together reminds Leonor that she has become institutionalised in her many years apart from them. She no longer finds it easy to relax or speak freely, although she tries to hide this from her relations. Leonor’s sense of alienation from and simultaneous deep longing for her family contributes a sadness to Doña’s narrative of prison, once again exploring elements of her personal life which would be considered too individual and bourgeois for other Communist texts. In considering the human as well as the political impact of imprisonment, Doña nuances the prison narrative and highlights a fundamental gap in the way that the Communist women’s prison narrative presents incarceration.

Negativity can also be found in other aspects of *Desde la noche y la niebla*. Though the women accepted their imprisonment as part of their resistance to the regime, Leonor and a few other inmates are held in the prison at Guadalajara, a *penal de castigo* where the women prisoners were sent as punishment and at which they were subjected to even greater isolation and a harder daily regime than other prisons. Guadalajara housed just a handful of political prisoners who were kept to a routine of almost total solitary confinement, meaning that there was little change or variety to their life over many years. In *Desde la noche y la niebla* the prisoners dream of being moved to another prison in Alcalá de Henares where the majority of the political prisoners, particularly the Communists, were held in the later years of their confinement. Such a transfer allowed the women to be reunited with old friends, provided opportunities to be more involved in political discussion, and gave them the option to work in order to reduce their prison sentence.[[311]](#footnote-311) However, Leonor begins to lose faith that she will be transferred there:

pasaban los meses y ellas continuaban allí encerradas, como olvidadas leprosas; salvo las familias, nadie se acercaba a ese penal de Guadalajara, pensaban con desesperanza que, ¿si sería posible que las dejasen allí olvidadas para terminar sus largas condenas? No podrían resistir seis años más si todo iba bien metidas en esas mazmorras. (304)

The language of this passage is not typical of the Communist women’s prison narrative: the women are ‘olvidadas leprosas’, figures on the margins of society rather than part of a community as they are used to. Furthermore, Leonor is driven to despairing thoughts and doubts her own and her fellow prisoners’ ability to resist such isolation until the end of their sentences. Such a defeatist attitude simply does not form part of the normal approach of Communist thinking, which focuses on collective action and the possibilities of the future with tremendous zeal. Although it is not hard to see why such conditions would produce disillusionment in the women, it is a surprise that these emotions should be expressed in writing. Doña clearly made the choice to represent this sense of despair in *Desde la noche y la niebla*. This humanises Leonor as a character, as the self-denial of Communists in their memoirs can create a barrier between the reader and their purist ideological stance. Doña’s decision to focus on her fears demonstrates again that she wants to portray an individual as well as a political response to imprisonment, which sets her writing apart from other Communist memoirs that maintain their ideological focus throughout.

Doña also represents the difficulties that women face once they have been released from their long period of incarceration. In the second epilogue, ‘Leonor’ (written in the first person at this point, thereby implying the actual voice of Doña) reunites with her three friends from prison, Adela, Mariana, and Paquita. Though Doña expected her friends to be happy in their freedom, she found that they were not. She notices that

Su lenguaje era todavía un poco carcelario; me dijeron que no entendían muy bien a la gente; las modas era un ‘poco horribles’; la sociedad competitiva que ya empezaba a despuntar las confundía; mantenían todos los tics de la cárcel, y tuvieron que hacer un esfuerzo para dejar de hablar de ésta porque cansaron a familiares y amigos. (342-3)

The reader can see that her friends became institutionalised during their long imprisonment and their reintegration into Spanish society was hindered by this. The world had changed since they were last free and this made them nostalgic. Alhough they clearly did not miss imprisonment itself, they were nostalgic for the friendships that they developed there and for a life that they understood. Friends and family expected the women to be the same as they were before and to want to put their persecution behind them. However, this put the women in a difficult position, as they were expected to try and forget about a large portion of their life, one which they cherished because of its symbolic role in the resistance to Franco. In leaving those years behind and assimilating into modern society the women would be lessening the impact of their own sacrifice and accepting the status quo, which was understandably unpalatable to them. Doña also comments on her own difficulties after her release, finding herself in ‘un mundo desconocido’ (345). She contrasts Spain of the 1960s with the post-war society that was based on poverty, hunger, and guerrilla warfare, shocked by ‘La mezcla que se había operado en la sociedad, la “normalidad” de la vida’ (345). Although the divisions within Spanish society were as deep as they were during the Civil War, in many ways normal life had resumed and her family had moved on with their own lives, making Doña feel as though she had been left behind. This melancholic and nostalgic approach to the past marks *Desde la noche y la niebla* as different to other texts by Communists: there was no triumphant end, looking towards a glorious future. Although she was proud of the resistance that the Communists maintained in the face of their persecution, the years of imprisonment took their toll on Doña and her friends and her writing is tinged with disappointment and suffering. Doña’s depiction of the effects of imprisonment on the individual, therefore, is at odds with the positive and collective nature of Communist women’s prison writing generally. Her disconnection from friends and family, her loss of hope for the future, and her sense of dissonance within 1960s’ Spain upon her release all create a negative, individualist feel to *Desde la noche y la niebla*, particularly in the latter stages of the text. While much of the text follows the structure and tone of Communist writing, the personal side of Doña’s narrative provides a further example of the struggle between her personal language and the language of authority.

## Questioning dogmatism

The conflict between the language of authority and Doña’s personal language is most evident in her criticism of the PCE, which reveals her complex emotional response to imprisonment. The previous chapter of this thesis discussed how Communist ideology and the culture of Stalinism meant that critiquing the Party was an intrinsic element of each militant’s political duty. In blowing the whistle on Party members who did not maintain the high standards expected, whether moral or ideological, the accuser believed that they were aiding the political cause. However, the criticism that Doña presents in *Desde la noche y la niebla* is different. Her arguments represent her inner monologue, a debate which she is unable to resolve as she holds competing points of view. There are two instances in the text where Communist dogmatism is questioned: the first is when Leonor reacts to the plight of Susana, a non-conformist militant in the PCE, and the second is Leonor’s discussion of the prisoners’ political intransigence at the end of the main body of the text. These two episodes reflect Doña’s ongoing internal struggle, which highlights an undercurrent of uncertainty that differs from most Communist writing.

The first episode considers Susana, a new prisoner in Guadalajara. Susana recounts her personal and political history to the other prisoners, which departs from the ethical foundation that the Communists normally view as sacrosanct. In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, Susana attempted to care for her mother, her sister, and her son, while her brother and father were imprisoned for being Communists. She struggled to make ends meet and was forced to steal food and coal in order to survive. Susana’s brother and father were shot, and her mother died not long after, while Susana’s sister, Rosa, became a prostitute and was charged with caring for Susana’s son while Susana was working for the Party. While Rosa was looking after the boy and Susana was a fugitive, the child was sexually abused by his teacher and was knocked down and killed while trying to escape him. Rosa accused the teacher and was imprisoned in Oropesa, a prison for prostitutes, while Susana was left trying to come to terms with the catastrophic loss of her family. In telling this story, Susana largely privileges the personal over the political, as the narrator comments: ‘Susana ya no habló más, no explicó su detención, ni cómo cayó, ni su condena siquiera, eso no tenía importancia para ella, era la inmensa tragedia de su pobre vida lo que tenía que contar’ (296). Doña presents Susana’s story and the way it is told to the other prisoners as personal, thereby departing from the prescribed, impersonal Communist model and seemingly fitting with her own more individualist presentation of prison life. There is no doubt that this anecdote is deeply political: it centres on the systematic destruction of a family through Francoist repression and the grief it causes. A personal story with a political undercurrent fits with the Communist use of familial anecdotes, as discussed above, initially making Doña’s use of Susana’s tragic life story relatively unremarkable.

However, Doña includes Susana as a subversive character who attacks the post-war organisation of the PCE. She comments that when she found the Party again ‘éste estaba lleno de desconfianzas […]. Los bulos e incluso las calumnias alrededor de muchos camaradas creaba[n] un ambiente malsano’ (294). The other prisoners ask Susana if distrust between Party members caused her problems and Susana denies it, but argues that clandestine work made Communists too hard on one another:

en nombre de la clandestinidad se cometen muchas injusticias, yo no fui una purista, robé y hubiese matado por salvar a los míos y comer yo misma pero, ¿cómo echarme a mí la culpa de esa actitud?, ¿hasta dónde llega nuestro puritanismo, que perdemos de vista el bosque por el chopo que tenemos enfrente?, ¿y quién da el derecho a unos pocos para que se erijan en jueces implacables? (294).

Susana’s claim that she stole and would kill to save her own family goes against the moral code that Communists considered inviolable.[[312]](#footnote-312) As discussed earlier in this chapter, living a moral life was deeply ingrained in the ideologues through their imitation of policies in the USSR. Women prisoners were outraged that the Franco regime linked them to thieves, prostitutes, and murderers, and rejected this label, claiming to hold themselves to a higher moral standard. Susana is aware that she holds a non-conformist approach to Communist ideology, but uses her position as an outsider to challenge the dogmatism of her fellow ideologues. When she asks them why she should be blamed for her survivalist attitude, Susana makes the point that her decisions were a consequence of post-war repression rather than a lapse in her own morality. She also accuses the PCE of intransigence, putting ideological purity ahead of practicality. She believes that the Communists should be supporting rather than judging one another in the fight against Franco. In the text, Doña neither challenges nor agrees with Susana’s stance, as the narrator merely comments that Leonor thinks ‘indudablemente, Susana no es una comunista ortodoxa’ (294). The absence of commentary on Susana’s attack upon the PCE is a comment in itself. Doña has chosen to include Susana’s story out of all the different prisoners that she encountered and, more importantly, has decided to include Susana’s criticism. This demonstrates that Doña wants her ‘novela-testimonio’ to consider the problems that the PCE encountered in its clandestine opposition to the regime rather than omitting it from the text.

Consequently, Susana becomes a vehicle to foreshadow Doña’s own doubts about the repercussions of the PCE’s political intransigence later in the text. These doubts arise when Leonor reflects on the women she has known throughout her imprisonment and the changes that this has caused in them. Leonor comments on how the women have become hardened: ‘Rígidas y sectarias siempre se pecaba por exceso, nunca por defecto de rigidez. Había una especie de pugilato en el “espíritu de sacrificio”, en “dar ejemplo”. A veces Leonor pensaba que sólo les faltaba el cilicio’ (323). The prisoners are so intent on keeping their Communist ideology intact that they become almost combative with it, competing to be the most self-sacrificing. The description chimes with Doña’s later religious imagery in describing the prisoners as ‘monjas rojas’: they have become almost fanatical in their devotion to their ideology (324). This fanaticism makes the women exclusive, refusing to forgive mistakes and weaknesses. In the reference to nuns, Doña also highlights the sexual repression that the Communist prisoners subjected themselves to. Soledad Real, for example, discusses her refusal to acknowledge her own sexual desires even as she was aware that other prisoners were masturbating and admits that ‘si entonces me hubieran dicho, por ejemplo, que la mayoría se masturbaban me hubiera pegado con cualquiera. […] [Y]o he sido posiblemente una de las más torturadas en este sentido por no permitirme el hacerlo.’[[313]](#footnote-313) Real was so convinced of the need to subordinate the individual to the collective that she repressed her own desires and enforced the culture of repression on others. But, as Leonor comments, ‘eran años de selectividad y solo las “mejores”, las que no flaqueaban ante nada, tenían el derecho al respeto y al aprecio de las demás, las débiles no tenían lugar entre ellas’ (323). Although Leonor claims to be surprised that there were very few who were weak and therefore expelled from the Party, she admits that women were afraid of being marginalised and left alone during their imprisonment, so they hid their weaknesses and desires from one another. In his discussion of the Soviet Union, Oleg Kharkhordin argues that in its attempt to forge a new society with collectivist principles at its foundation, the state intruded into the private life of the individual and produced a ‘pervasive and […] increasingly cynical dissimulation’ of individualistic behaviours.[[314]](#footnote-314) In this way, we can see how the dogmatism of Stalinist values became replicated within the prison environment: the performance of political adherence in order to gain group acceptance meant that women were forced to repress their own feelings in the name of resistance. Consequently, the discussion of a private life is conspicuous in its absence in the life writing of Communist women prisoners.

Leonor’s fundamental criticism of the intransigent behaviour of the Communists during incarceration demonstrates a marked departure from the rest of the corpus of Communist writing. Leonor says that:

Aquel purismo de años llegó a deshumanizar los rasgos más sensibles de la naturaleza. Era algo monstruoso que en más de tres lustros nunca aflorasen ni personal ni colectivamente los íntimos deseos de aquellos cuerpos que habían sido encerrados en la plenitud de la juventud. Ninguna de entre ellas hablaba de sus ansias, de sus deseos, de sus frustraciones. […] sentir deseos o hablar de ellos era una ‘debilidad’. A fuerza de esconderlo, se terminó por creer que no se sentía (324).

This critique resonates with the overall tone of much of *Desde la noche y la niebla*. Leonor does not waver in her commitment to the Communist ideal, but rejects the idea that having personal relationships and feelings should be subordinated to political ideology. In denying the personal and repressing their own physical and emotional needs, according to Leonor, Communism becomes inhumane and monstrous, particularly when imprisonment has isolated the women from their support network. This relates back to Doña and Mesón’s conception of their relationship as love and revolution inextricably linked: their passionate and sexual love is both cemented by their political beliefs and contributes to their political activism. As such, the reader should interpret the repression of the prisoners’ private life in light of the lack of discussion surrounding their grief, their sexual desires, their loss of hope in the face of long-term repression, and the terrible monotony of their lives throughout their long sentences. Doña’s different conception of public and private in relation to Communism, along with her evolving political ideas, allow her to access and represent her memories of prison in a way that other Communist prisoners cannot.

That being said, almost as soon as this criticism is voiced, Leonor presents the other side of the argument. Leonor wonders to herself whether dogmatism is inevitable in the face of the repression:

A la ferocidad del enemigo, a lo monstruoso de su opresión, no cabía más que combatirle, aportando cada uno, si no lo mejor, sí al menos lo más resistente, lo que no pudiese ser mellado. Cualquier flaqueza que debilitase esa resistencia en esa lucha por sobrevivir debía ser apartada del camino. Así fueron sacrificadas muchas mujeres. La falta de entereza o el liberalismo se pagaba con un precio tan alto que a pesar de las injusticias es lo que daba calidad y seguridad a esa resistencia (324).

Leonor immediately and forcefully rejects her own criticism of the ideological intransigence of the political prisoners. She argues that the lack of compassion only matched that of the regime, and that such inflexibility was necessary to resist the repression that they were suffering. In this passage, the reader can see clearly Doña’s battle between the language of authority and her own personal language. Her own experiences tell her that the prisoners suffered more because they were unable to confess their hopes and fears to one another. But the language of authority, her Communist analysis of the situation, tells Doña that there was no other way to ensure that their resistance remained firm in the face of repression. It is possible that Doña has no way of resolving this debate in her own mind; she cannot help but feel the pain of many years suppressing her emotions from her comrades, when they were mutually in need of support, but she accepts the logic that it was a necessary evil to combat the dictatorship. Pike discusses how one of the central aims of the prison life and routine was to re-programme the deviant individual to conform to the norms of Francoist society.[[315]](#footnote-315) It could be argued that, in a similar way, Communist dogmatism provided an opposite process of re-programming, altering the prisoners’ behaviours to conform to a model of resistance at the expense of their individuality and enabling them to resist Francoist ‘reprogramming’. As such, this highlights the force with which *Desde la noche y la niebla* departs from the model of the Communist women’s prison narrative. By presenting her conflicting ideas on the subject of political intransigence, Doña allows a note of uncertainty to creep into her assessment of the PCE’s role within the resistance to the regime. In asking at what price these sacrifices were made, Doña does not undermine the validity of the Communist Party’s role in Spanish history but poses the question of whether it justified the cost to the individual. Doña’s presentation of an alternative model for the cultivation of a private life alongside the collective simultaneously offers a critique of the PCE’s dogmatism while representing her own political beliefs and memories of the Civil War and the succeeding dictatorship.

# Chapter three: Enduring Francoist repression: narratives of survival in the prison memoirs of Ángeles García Madrid, Josefa García Segret, and Ángeles Malonda

Memoirs by non-Communist political prisoners, such as Ángeles García Madrid, Ángeles Malonda, and Josefa García Segret, represent a body of work that has been little studied, and which paints a different picture of Francoist repression to the largely coherent corpus of Communist texts.[[316]](#footnote-316) This third chapter breaks with the first two chapters by considering the memoirs of women who were not Communist and who had neither an ideologically-grounded framework for their text nor a shared history of resistance upon which to structure their reflections of the past. The differences between Communist and non-Communist texts are significant. The life writing of Communists portrays a constant struggle to resist the regime, with the ultimate aim of overthrowing the dictatorship. They rejected the legitimacy of the state and its institutions, due to both the illegal status of the PCE—which meant that its members were au fait with operating outside of the law—and their ideological vision of how the state should be reconfigured.[[317]](#footnote-317) The Communist focus on resistance relegated the importance of the individual but simultaneously offered a socio-politically affirming group identity and support network within a hostile state. However, the many thousands of political prisoners in Spain that were not Communists could not codify their experiences of repression within the same ideological framework. For these women, their arrest, interrogation, possible torture, and imprisonment came as a profound shock, not only because of the immediate and long-term impact on their own life but also because of the way they believed the relationship between a state and its citizens should function. Despite the regime change, most continued to view themselves as Spanish citizens, subject to the just arbitration of law. Although many hoped fervently (though secretly) for Franco’s reign to be toppled, either by the Allied forces in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War or by international sanctions in later years, the majority of non-Communist prisoners did not actively work against the regime in the period covered by the memoirs. Rather, their pressing focus was to ensure their own survival and that of their family and friends during their imprisonment and then after their release.

In *Réquiem por la libertad* (1982) by Ángeles García Madrid, *Abajo las dictaduras* (1982) by Josefa García Segret, and *Aquello sucedió así* (1983) by Ángeles Malonda we see responses to political imprisonment that, despite differences of age, background, wealth, and region, have a substantial degree of commonality. That is not to say that there is a generic non-Communist women’s prison narrative: the differences between the women, as listed above, produced texts that vary greatly in narrative style, structure, and tone. However, the points at which non-Communist memoirs do intersect demonstrate profoundly different preoccupations to the narratives of their Communist counterparts and this chapter focuses on these themes and narrative strategies. All three memoirs reveal the injustice of the Francoist legal system, the struggle for survival in prison, the realities of mass cohabitation with strangers—particularly the need for negotiation—and the vulnerability of non-Communist prisoners and their families to exploitation. Furthermore, the life writing of García Madrid, García Segret, and Malonda displays a variety of coping strategies which helped individuals, who lacked the kind of supportive network and community of which Communists could boast, to survive Francoist repression.

The chapter will begin by introducing each of the texts that form the corpus, discussing their form, style, and content. The first to be analysed, *Réquiem por la libertad*, straddles Communist and non-Communist writing in its style. García Madrid, as a young, working-class, politically-active woman from Madrid, shared a similar socio-economic background to Communist inmates. However, as a Socialist—and as her narrative largely demonstrates—the ideological differences between García Madrid and Communist prisoners provided her with a different impression of imprisonment under Franco. The next memoir, García Segret’s *Abajo las dictaduras*, is several steps further removed from the experience of Communists: as a middle-aged, professional teacher from Galicia, her narrative reflects the consequences of punishment upon a woman who took a moral and political stance as a community leader. The final memoir analysed, Malonda’s *Aquello sucedió así*, represents the effects of imprisonment on a woman whose life experiences were almost as far-removed from those of Communist prisoners as possible. Nonetheless, despite being wealthy, university-educated, a business owner, and not a political activist, Malonda suffered Francoist repression like thousands of other women. As such, these three memoirs act as a cross-section of left-wing women who were not members of the PCE, and provide a wealth of different information that cannot be found in Communist memoirs. In presenting different approaches to writing a memoir of imprisonment under Franco, the analysis of non-Communist texts further demonstrates that the coherence of the Communist narrative and its presentation of life under *franquismo* can, and should be, subjected to scrutiny.

## *Réquiem por la libertad* by Ángeles García Madrid

Ángeles García Madrid’s 1982 *Réquiem por la libertad* is a memoir written in the third person, which follows the protagonist ‘Ángeles’ from her arrest in Madrid in May 1939 to the day of her release from prison in Girona three years later.[[318]](#footnote-318) Unlike Doña’s decision to semi-fictionalise her memoirs through the voice of her protagonist ‘Leonor’, García Madrid makes it clear that the text represents her own memories, despite the use of the third person. Both the preamble by the author and the introduction to the text by the poet Acacia Uceta highlight the fact that *Réquiem por la libertad* is a memoir, with Uceta claiming that García Madrid wrote in this way ‘para disolver mejor su objetividad y soslayar toda tentación de protagonismo’ (13). While this may be true, it seems highly likely that writing in the third person also acts to distance García Madrid from her traumatic past, as Alicia Ramos Mesonero has suggested.[[319]](#footnote-319) García Madrid states explicitly in her ‘Preámbulo’ that she attempted to repress her memories of persecution:

hice cuanto me fue posible por confinar en una parcela de mi cerebro tanto doloroso recuerdo, buscando así la forma de seguir viviendo valiéndome de la parte no dañada; pero inevitablemente, me ha sido preciso de vez en cuando el drenaje de aquella zona y el avenamiento del pesar en ella contenido, queriendo evitar que un rebose inesperado me causara un daño mayor. (9)

The writing of *Réquiem por la libertad* becomes an extended form of this ‘drenaje’, allowing García Madrid’s painful memories of incarceration to spill out and become concrete on the page in front of her. Though the narrativisation of her memories acts as a form of catharsis for García Madrid, she distances herself from the events through her avoidance of personal pronouns when writing from the perspective of ‘Ángeles’, like Doña in *Desde la noche y la niebla* and *Querido Eugenio*. There is also a sense that García Madrid needs to release her traumatic memories in order to protect her mental health; the pain that those memories cause her, even many years later, is dangerous. As such, this sense of distancing becomes even more important; García Madrid’s use of the third person acts as a barrier to protect her from her own memories while she relives the past in her writing.

The text follows ‘Ángeles’ in post-war Madrid, a young member of the PSOE who worked as a tram conductor during the Civil War, as she was arrested, taken to a police cell, and interrogated over the course of several weeks. Ángeles was denounced by an elderly and mentally-ill neighbour, whose Falangist nephew used the baseless accusations to further his own career.[[320]](#footnote-320) She was held in Ventas prison from the summer of 1939 until she was put on trial and sentenced to twelve years imprisonment. García Madrid discusses her farcical trial in great depth and, although she was told she would be sentenced to thirty years imprisonment because of the seriousness of the crimes she had allegedly committed—including having ‘asesinado a catorce o quince falangistas, jactándose de ello’—she was able to defend herself in court and the sentence was reduced (116). The prisoners’ ability to speak at their own trial is largely absent from the Communist narrative of prison, and is discussed in greater depth later in this chapter. After her sentencing, she was transferred to Girona prison, via Tarragona and Les Corts prison in Barcelona. García Madrid writes how her skill as a poet became a tradable good during her imprisonment, which she used to earn money and privileges from other inmates and the nuns who ran the prisons. Ángeles suffered progressively worse health due to the prison conditions and poor nutrition, and was committed to the infirmary with suspected tuberculosis, though this diagnosis proved to be incorrect. The narrative ends when Ángeles was released from the infirmary in Girona under the auspices of ‘libertad condicional’.[[321]](#footnote-321)

The memoir is a linear narrative interspersed with select examples of García Madrid’s own poetry taken from her autobiographical collection, *Al quiebro de mis espinas* (1977), which act as a snapshot of different moments throughout her experiences of imprisonment.[[322]](#footnote-322) The text also includes a handful of footnotes, which act to provide supplementary information or thoughts about the text and to reference the inclusion of material from di Febo’s *Resistencia y movimiento de mujeres en España 1936-1976*. This final point is of particular interest when reading *Réquiem por la libertad* because García Madrid’s descriptions of Ventas prison bear striking resemblance to the narratives of Communist women prisoners. Her choice of themes—e.g. the execution of the ‘Trece Rosas’, notable figures such as Matilde Landa, Matilde Rebaque and ‘La Veneno’, and working to protect the children who were imprisoned with their mothers etc.—reflect a familiarity with the Communist narrative of prison. García Madrid was held prisoner in Ventas during the first chaotic months of repression in Madrid and would therefore have experienced the same events and prison conditions as other Communist women. Furthermore, unlike Malonda and García Segret, García Madrid was a young, working class woman from Madrid and so shared a socio-political background with many of the Communist women. Given its metropolitan location and its status as a centre where women were processed and then moved on—Hernández Holgado describes it as ‘un gigantesco corazón, bombeando presas a modo de sangre hacia dentro y hacia fuera, distribuyéndolas por toda la geografía del Estado franquista’—Ventas was a hub for militancy and resistance compared to other prisons.[[323]](#footnote-323) As such, it could be argued that the atmosphere of political activism in Ventas influenced García Madrid and this is reflected consequently in her memories of that period.

However, as these textual similarities cease once García Madrid was transferred to other prisons, the influence of the Communist narrative of prison on García Madrid’s memories of Ventas becomes clear. The fact that García Madrid clearly read di Febo, which relies heavily upon the testimony of Communist prisoners, and chose to reference it suggests that her memories of Ventas were influenced and structured by the Communist narrative of imprisonment. As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, Communist authors selected certain themes, events, and figures from imprisonment to represent the prison experience which formed part of their shared oral history. This same narrative can be seen clearly in di Febo, both in the structure of *Resistencia y movimiento de mujeres en España 1936-1976* and in the sources that she uses to support her argument. For example, the sub-headings of the index include ‘las detenidas madres’, ‘la solidaridad’, ‘la primera huelga de hambre’, and ‘las condenadas a muerte y Matilde Landa’, which mirror the tropes of the Communist prison narrative and place emphasis on resistance in prison. [[324]](#footnote-324) Similar themes can be found in García Madrid’s reflections on Ventas, such as her discussion of various members of the prison authorities—‘la Topete’ and ‘la Veneno’ for example—or her relation of the ‘Trece rosas’ death story (79-80; 80-9). This is not to say that García Madrid did not experience the events that she discusses in her text. Her memory of the execution of the ‘Trece rosas’, for example, was almost certainly of great importance to her, as she was friends with one of this group, Julia Conesa, with whom she worked on the trams during the Civil War. García Madrid’s narration of these events differs from the Communist telling: it does not become a collective vehicle for emotion, as in Communist narratives, because García Madrid does not build hope and then crush it. Rather, her narrative focuses on the trauma of the loss for her personally, with memories that are disordered and yet unforgettable. Nonetheless, García Madrid’s inclusion of the Trece Rosas narrative continues the pattern of mirroring Communist narratives in the early stages of *Réquiem por la libertad*.

Once García Madrid was moved from Ventas, though, her narrative loses its sense of collective resistance that is clear in the earlier parts of her memoir. When Communists were sent to other prisons, for example, their narratives often focused on how they fought to establish their rights as political prisoners with prison authorities, often through protests or collective acts or resistance. Thus in Málaga prison, Soledad Real remembered all the Communists refusing to take part in religious acts or processions and being transferred to Segovia as punishment.[[325]](#footnote-325) In contrast, once García Madrid left Ventas, her narrative becomes much more focused on her personal relationships, such as with the nun Hermana Ángeles, or the other inmates of the infirmary in Girona. Although García Madrid relates anecdotes of her relationships with other prisoners throughout the whole memoir, her choice of themes while remembering Ventas reflects the narrative framework that can be seen in all Communist prison narratives. This supports the argument that Communist life writing accounts have dominated the representation of prison life. Particularly when representing Ventas—a Communist emblem of women’s resistance—García Madrid draws on their collective framework to structure her own memories.

While the Communist influence is clear in the sections about Ventas, García Madrid’s compassionate, astute, and wry observations of imprisonment under Franco reflect fundamentally different relationships, both amongst the prison community and between the prisoners and the authorities, to the ones found in Communist writing. There is a sense that the women were forced to adopt a survivalist attitude in order to resist the hardships with which they were faced. Examples of this include a basic class system emerging between the poorer and wealthier prisoners, politics surrounding issues of food, and a willingness to negotiate and form relationships with the prison authorities and other inmates. In contrast to the militant working-class narratives, *Abajo las dictaduras* by Josefa García Segret, like *Réquiem por la libertad*, demonstrates an individual approach to survival for those outside of the Communist network of support and resistance, thereby aiding the reader in developing a broader profile of prison narrative by non-Communist women in Spain.

## *Abajo las dictaduras* by Josefa García Segret

In *Abajo las dictaduras* (1982) García Segret tells of her arrest and imprisonment from October 1936 until 1944. She was moved between prisons across Spain, passing the majority of her sentence in Saturrarán in the Basque Country and Palma de Mallorca, before eventually being released after eight years in prison. Her husband, Hipólito Gallego Camarero, was also a teacher and a member of the PSOE and was brutally murdered in a ‘saca’ in October 1936 for his role in resisting the Nationalist coup d’état in July 1936. García Segret was sentenced to death for her left-wing ideals and pretended to be pregnant to buy time before her sentence was eventually commuted to a term of imprisonment. García Segret’s text offers a different perspective on women’s imprisonment under Franco for several reasons. First, she was born in 1900, making her around twenty years older than women such as Cuevas and Doña. Along with Malonda, she was more prone to nostalgic reflection on the past, as is discussed later in this chapter. Furthermore, she was a professional woman from a military family, meaning that she had a different educational and class background from most Communists. Finally, she lived and worked in Galicia and was never imprisoned in Madrid or Barcelona. This meant that her interpretation of prison life was influenced by regional and local factors rather than by the experience of imprisonment in metropoles, which were hubs of anti-Francoist resistance and which generally form the basis of Communist memoirs.

In contrast to the linear narrative of *Réquiem por la libertad*, *Abajo las dictaduras* is deliberately non-linear and composite in its materials, which means the reader must actively work to piece together the first-person narrative. The text begins with an ‘Aclaración’ and a prologue, in which García Segret justifies her decision to write and publish her memoirs during the Transition. She argues that, while she does not wish to stir up past grievances which will affect the spirit of ‘convivencia’, she believes that a history of Francoist repression ‘DEBE DE EXISTIR’ (14). This statement reflects the tone of most writing by former women prisoners who did not want to contravene the zeitgeist of the Transition. Nonetheless, they took issue with the regime’s presentation of history and the way that the process of democratisation was relegating the importance of resistance to Francoist repression. The main body of *Abajo las dictaduras* begins with short, reflective pieces of writing and poetry which were written during the early years of her imprisonment. These reflective pieces provide very little information about prison life and mainly focus on the grief that she feels for her elderly father, who died while she was imprisoned, and for her husband, as well as remembering the happy life that she lived before the war. They function on various levels: as an outlet for grief and nostalgia; as a device to remind the reader that she is both a political activist and a woman; and as an act of intellectual rebellion against the dictatorship.

The second section of the text is described by García Segret as a ‘granada de espístolas’, in which she reprints a large body of her own letters, written between 5 January 1941 and 16 February 1954. These letters were generally sent to her friends outside the prison walls who provided her with material and economic support throughout her imprisonment, and upon her release she also wrote to other friends who were former prisoners. Because García Segret’s only remaining family—her husband and father—died during the war, she was heavily reliant upon the support of friends and acquaintances, something which became a source of problems and guilt for her. The content of the letters varies greatly. Some letters, particularly those while she was imprisoned, focus on issues of survival, as García Segret discusses the items that she needed her friends to provide her with and her continual health worries. Many other letters discuss politics at a national and international level; García Segret wrote these in code to talk about Francoist repression, the progress of the Second World War, and her hopes that the Allies would topple the dictatorship in Spain once they had dealt with Hitler and Mussolini.[[326]](#footnote-326) This correspondence functioned as a conduit of information, as part of a network between anti-Francoists across Spain. Later letters also discuss issues of survival for ex-prisoners in Nationalist Spain, particularly their vulnerability to exploitation, social exclusion, and the threat of continuing persecution by the police.

The final section of *Abajo las dictaduras* returns to the beginning of García Segret’s persecution in 1936 and is the only section of the memoir that is narrated in a linear way. The author recalls how she was repeatedly interrogated by the police in the early months of the war as to her husband’s whereabouts, before being exiled from Galicia. She was then arrested and brought back to Guillarey in Galicia to be tried, arriving on the same day that her husband had been executed illegally by a local right-wing group during a ‘saca’. Before being tried and sentenced to death for her beliefs, García Segret informed her solicitor that she believed herself to be pregnant, though she knew this to be untrue, in order to try and save her life. Although she was given the ultimate penalty, this was suspended until her child was born. García Segret altered her waistline with cotton pads and persuaded two doctors to lie and confirm that she was indeed pregnant. These actions allowed enough time for García Segret’s death sentence to be reduced to a prison term and she faked a ‘parto de sangre’ with the help of the doctors who had lied for her. The text ends with a short reflection on her survival after imprisonment, in which she gives thanks to those who helped her.

The non-linear structure of *Abajo las dictaduras* lends authenticity to García Segret’s narrative and allows her to gain the trust and sympathy of the reader. Smith and Watson highlight the importance of this bond of trust between author and reader in life writing:

When life narrators write to chronicle an event, to explore a certain time period, or to enshrine a community, they are making ‘history’ in a sense. But they are also performing several rhetorical acts: justifying their own perceptions, upholding their reputations, disputing the accounts of others, settling scores, conveying cultural information and inventing desirable futures, among others.[[327]](#footnote-327)

In this quotation we can see how much the author relies upon the reader when chronicling their own life: in providing an account of an event or a period of their past, the autobiographer needs to be believed, to justify their own perception of their life. Arguably, this is not always the case. Authors like Jorge Semprún, for example, who produce multiple and contradictory versions of their own life story, are clearly making a statement about the subjectivity of ‘truth’ and history. However, García Segret was not attempting to challenge the reader’s perception of truth but to challenge the version of history promulgated by the regime. By the time *Abajo las dictaduras* was published there was an established counter narrative. As this thesis argues, though, the counter narrative was dominated by Communist accounts of a specific, combative approach to *franquismo*, focusing on resistance to, rather than existence alongside, the dictatorship. Because *Abajo las dictaduras* differs from the standard account of resistance, it is evident in García Segret’s writing, and particularly in the way that she chose to structure her text, that it was imperative for her to gain the reader’s trust.

The non-linear narrative helps García Segret to achieve this by allowing her to build a relationship with the reader before she confronts them with behaviour of which she is ashamed. There is a sense that García Segret felt that she needed to justify her decision to lie about being pregnant in order to avoid execution. García Segret allowed her captors and enemies to believe that she was four months pregnant, meaning that the child had to be illegitimate because she had not seen her husband for longer than this.[[328]](#footnote-328) She argues that she needed to survive for her father and that, although it caused her pain and ‘repugnancia […]fingí, fingí durante nueve meses’ (218). This demonstrated great ingenuity and courage, forcing García Segret to put her own raw grief to one side and allow her enemies to believe that she had been unfaithful to her husband. In doing so, she accepted her captors’ perception of left-wing women as shameful and promiscuous in order to survive.

The fear of not being believed, particularly when writing a memoir that differed from both Francoist history and the Communist counter narrative, would have made the need to convince the reader even more imperative. Furthermore, while this can only be discussed speculatively, García Segret may have been aware of Communist narratives of heroic death and felt that her strategy for survival seemed cowardly or lesser in some way in comparison.[[329]](#footnote-329) In either of these scenarios, the non-linear composition of the narrative allows García Segret to build up a political character who endures terrible hardships for her beliefs. Her grief and suffering is obvious both in her poetic writing from the early years of her imprisonment and in her correspondence, in which she details the awful conditions of imprisonment and the persecution she faced after her release. She also demonstrates her continuing political ideals through her coded passing of information about Francoist repression, the progress of the Second World War, and other matters of international politics relating to Spain. For example, in a letter written in prison in Palma de Mallorca from 3 August 1941, García Segret told her friends that the leaders of the exiled Republican government had allegedly met with representatives of the United States to discuss the Franco regime:

Le dicen a Berta en una carta, como el ‘Faro de Vigo’, que el consejo de familia se ha reunido con los de tía Nica-Nora en la finca de tía Maximiliana con el fin de recuperar aportando lo que cueste, los bienes de padrino. (51)

In the memoir, each actor in this scenario is footnoted to explain their codename, highlighting that García Segret was keen that the reader should understand her political message. [[330]](#footnote-330) The deliberate inclusion of such political information along with details of her suffering and grief means that by the time the reader is confronted with her decision to lie in order to avoid execution, they are convinced by her status as a suffering political prisoner. The coded letter writing also demonstrates that there were various ways of resisting the dictatorship. As is discussed later in this chapter, the non-Communist memoirists did not take part in the clandestine resistance of the PCE, but they equally were not ‘reformed’ by Francoist imprisonment. Rather, their resistance was to survive the repression while maintaining a sense of self. In this way, the writing of *Abajo las dictaduras* acts as a form of self-justification and as catharsis for García Segret, while also allowing her to express an alternative version of history from the existing narrative and counter narrative of the dictatorship and the Transition.

*Abajo las dictaduras* is, therefore, profoundly different in its content and style from *Réquiem por la libertad*, but it undoubtedly shares common themes, such as demonstrating the political prisoners’ will to survive. It is also another example of texts by political prisoners who existed outside of the model of support and resistance that is so striking in the writing of Communists. The third non-Communist prison memoir considered in this chapter, Ángeles Malonda’s *Aquello sucedió así*, is one step further removed from the structured and ideologically-driven narrative of Communists than the texts by García Madrid and García Segret.

## *Aquello sucedió así* by Ángeles Malonda

In many ways, the wealth and connections of Ángeles Malonda made her an atypical political prisoner under Franco, as the majority of women that were incarcerated were of a working or lower-middle-class background. However, despite emanating from a different social stratum, Malonda’s life writing in *Aquello sucedió así* (1983) demonstrates that she was part of a specific group of women that were imprisoned not for their own actions, but either for the actions of their family members or upon the basis of a malicious denunciation. These women were either unaffiliated with a political party or apolitical and struggled to understand or reconcile their imprisonment with their wartime behaviour. Malonda’s status as a non-activist, wealthy political prisoner makes her narrative of particular interest in nuancing the presentation of Franco’s repression of the defeated side.

*Aquello sucedió así* is a linear, although relatively chaotic, narration of events that Malonda wrote for the most part during her time in prison. Born in 1902, Malonda begins by introducing her life until the point of the Civil War, discussing her privileged upbringing and education and her father’s liberal beliefs about women’s role in society. While studying Pharmacy in Madrid, Malonda lived at the famous ‘Residencia de Señoritas’, through which she came into contact with leading figures from the Spanish intelligentsia.[[331]](#footnote-331) Once she finished her studies, she bought a pharmacy in Gandía and managed the business independently of her husband, Antonio Azcón Cornell, who ran a mobile pharmaceutical laboratory and was also the president of the Valencian branch of the Pharmacists’ trade union affiliated to the UGT. After her husband underestimated the amount of political responsibility that he would have to assume as president of the trade union, the couple fled separately to Barcelona. Malonda tells how they were both arrested on the basis of denunciations and returned to Gandía, where they were imprisoned to await trial. Azcón Cornell was shot dead through a window in the prison’s infirmary where he was working and the majority of *Aquello sucedió así* reflects Malonda’s grief and profound disbelief at the situation that she found herself in. Despite not suffering the same lack of necessities as other women, thanks to the support of her wealthy mother, Malonda writes of her vulnerability in the face of a profound dislike that the prison director, ‘La Nati’, developed for her in Valencia. Although she was initially sentenced to twelve years imprisonment, this ruling was rejected and Malonda was given the death penalty. The shock of this was profound to Malonda and she initially considered taking her own life before being convinced of the futility of such an action by another inmate. The sentence was commuted to twelve years and Malonda was released, under the dictates of ‘libertad condicional’ including internal exile, in August 1943 after four years imprisonment. The text ends with Malonda’s legal fight to regain her pharmacy, which had been unlawfully seized at the end of the Civil War, and the ongoing threat of persecution by the police.

Although *Aquello sucedió así* begins in Malonda’s youth and ends with her activities after her release, thereby seemingly linear in form, the disjointed narrative—comprising passages that are almost diaristic with flashbacks and recapitulations—makes it seem fragmented. In terms of form, therefore, the memoirs of both Malonda and García Segret could not be further from the linear and structured narratives of Communist women. Thematically, the text shares many characteristics with *Réquiem por la libertad* and *Abajo las dictaduras*, particularly with regard to the grief that Malonda and García Segret feel for their husbands and the disbelief that all three women share at the Francoist legal system. However, *Aquello sucedió así* is by far the most individualist and inward-looking of all the texts that form part of the corpus for this thesis. As discussed later in this chapter, the impulse to turn inwards and disengage from the prison environment is a coping strategy shared, to a greater or lesser extent, by all the non-Communist memoirists. While Communists actively engaged with prison life through political activism as a form of resistance, many non-Communist prisoners distanced themselves from their surroundings to survive the mental hardships of incarceration.

It is also important to recognise that, unlike García Madrid or García Segret, Malonda was not a political activist, stating in a diary entry from 1940 that

Para actuar en política había que definirse. No tuve necesidad de ello y siempre me mantuve apolítica. El partido en el que culminen mis ansias aún tiene que nacer, y sólo tendría que estar basado en humanitarismo, justicia social, respeto a las ideas de cada uno. (66)

As is discussed later in the chapter, while Malonda did not belong to a political party, this does not mean that the community around her did not make assumptions about her political ideology based upon her the way she lived her life. As an educated, independent business owner with known liberal ideas—the model of the ‘new woman’—Malonda clearly attracted the loathing of those on the Right in her community.[[332]](#footnote-332) In *The Francoist Military Trials*, Peter Anderson demonstrates the importance of grassroots collaboration in Francoist repression, arguing that the regime made the municipality or village ‘the beating heart of the repression’.[[333]](#footnote-333) Malonda’s narrative becomes a case in point for this argument: she was denounced by a local man and her prosecution was based upon rumours spread by her neighbours. Furthermore, the fact that Malonda struggled to obtain parole and was then forced to go into internal exile in August 1943 upon her release suggests that her enemies still controlled her fate. Anderson argues that prisoners who were given lighter sentences despite local opposition were often refused parole by the local committees, who were also responsible for deciding to force prisoners into internal exile.[[334]](#footnote-334) Instead of taking a political approach to imprisonment, Malonda’s narrative focuses instead on the realities of living as a persecuted citizen under *franquismo*: the chaos of the post-war environment; the opportunistic culture of denunciation; and the suffering caused to families by persecution. Her individualist approach to incarceration highlights the realities of Francoist repression for women who were forced to define themselves as political prisoners, despite lacking the ideology or the sense of community that political affiliation engenders.

## The spectacle of justice: arrest

The fact that García Madrid, García Segret, and Malonda discuss their trials in detail immediately separates their narratives from those of Communist women. Aside from Cuevas, who describes the trial of an elderly woman, ‘La Letona’, in greater depth to highlight its farcical nature, most Communist women spare only a few lines to discuss the judicial process (I, 101). An example of this is Rosario Sánchez Mora, ‘la Dinamitera’, who comments that ‘Más tarde se me llevó a juicio, en 1939; me echaron pena de muerte y vine toda entera y tranquila puesto que ya lo esperaba. Los denunciantes eran de mi pueblo y fascistas al estilo de Hitler, así que no me cogió de sorpresa’ (I, 161). There is a sense of inevitability in Sánchez Mora’s statement that reveals her level of political preparation. She was not surprised by the severity of her sentence, both because she would have been aware how other Communists had been punished and also, more importantly, because she did not expect justice from the new regime. The anonymous contributor to *Cárcel de mujeres* makes this point explicitly when describing the differences between the mentality of Communists and other political prisoners: of the Communists, ‘nadie esperaba justicia ni piedad’ (II, 16). For Communist women the Francoist judicial process does not appear to have even merited more than a comment or two. In contrast, the non-Communist writers discussed in this chapter are fixated on the fact their expectations of justice have not been met. Consequently, their texts focus on clear themes, such as the widespread use of false accusations and denunciations, the lack of adequate legal representation, and the spectacle of being put on trial. All of these themes demonstrate a sense of shock and trauma regarding the women’s relationship with the state. Nationalist manipulation of Spanish law was later described as ‘justicia al revés’ by Ramón Serrano Suñer, Franco’s Minister of the Interior, as citizens that had remained loyal to the legitimate Republican government were decreed guilty of rebellion from July 1936 under Nationalist rule.[[335]](#footnote-335) The argument behind this, as Paul Preston explains succinctly, was that ‘the military had legitimately assumed power on 16 and 17 July (before the actual military uprising) and therefore […] the defence of the Republic constituted rebellion’.[[336]](#footnote-336) The reverse logic of this legal position left many left-wing Spaniards alienated from the judicial process, upon which they believed their rights as Spaniards were founded.[[337]](#footnote-337) In life writing, Leigh Gilmore argues that the exercise of the law can cause trauma, not only because the subject is aware of the law working against rather than for them but also because of the power dynamics that it implies: as legal institutions are seen to uphold the concepts of legality and morality, those who fall foul of the law are seen to be anti-social. As a consequence, it is common to fetishise the law ‘by vesting in it all sorts of romantic notions about its ability to reveal the truth instead of focusing on its limitations and contradictions: its restrictive protocols surrounding the presentation of evidence, its prevailing notion of justice, and the authority it procures for itself through hypocrisy’.[[338]](#footnote-338) Relating to law as the ultimate manifestation of truth, therefore, legitimises those who wield that power and when that power is misused there is a traumatic rupture between socially constructed ideas of justice and reality. In light of this, we can see the root of the difference between Communist and non-Communist depictions of being put on trial. Communists did not relate to the law as an institution that represented them and, therefore, did not expect any measure of justice from it. In contrast, non-Communist women believed that the rule of law was separate from, and superior to, the state and so its corruption and use as a political tool shocked them profoundly, leading to a greater focus in their narratives.

Expectations of justice were further complicated because of the divided rule of Spain throughout the Civil War. The Nationalists imposed martial law in the areas of Spain they controlled from July 1936, applying this retroactively from March 1939 to the rest of Spain. Because it was a military dictatorship, people were generally tried by court martial, even after the end of the war, which guaranteed the ideological adhesion of the judges to the regime, if not their understanding of the law. Suspects were tried for various forms of ‘rebelión,’ classified under headings including ‘inducción’, ‘provocación’, ‘excitación’, ‘auxilio’, or ‘adhesión’ to the rebellion.[[339]](#footnote-339) Furthermore, and particularly during the early years of *franquismo*, the regime left the guidelines as to what constituted rebellion deliberately vague, meaning that Spaniards could be imprisoned simply for not actively supporting the Nationalist uprising. This was a shock for much of the Left, as they had been led to believe that only those with blood on their hands would face repercussions.[[340]](#footnote-340) Malonda actually states this belief as the reason for not going into exile with her husband at the end of the war (29). Consequently, a culture of denunciation arose, which meant that any suspicion that a person was not in favour of the regime could lead to arrest and imprisonment. The narratives of female political prisoners highlight that these denunciations could also be opportunistic or malicious and many people who felt they had been victimised by the Republicans also denounced their neighbours.[[341]](#footnote-341) Consequently, Spaniards were imprisoned *en masse* in the immediate post-war years. This section discusses how García Madrid, García Segret, and Malonda narrate the injustice of the legal system under Franco, particularly the experience of being put on trial. It also considers the ways in which non-Communist women continued to expect justice from the law, despite their experiences providing overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

For Malonda and García Madrid, their arrest was based upon denunciations by neighbours or acquaintances, all of whom had opportunistic motivations. Malonda, who heard rumours that denunciations were being made on the basis of ‘la envidia, de la codicia ajena, de cuantas malas pasiones sea capaz de albergar la humanidad ruin’, fell victim to an opportunistic accusation by a man from Gandía, who happened to see her in Barcelona (37). She was told many years later by a friend, who asked the man why he denounced Malonda, that his wife suggested he report her ‘con la esperanza de obtener algún beneficio de ello’ (46). García Madrid writes that she was denounced by an elderly neighbour who suffered from mental health problems. These accusations were then exploited by her nephew, ‘Abelardo’, a Falangist who used them to further his career, despite knowing that his aunt was not of sound mind. García Madrid writes that ‘se estaban viviendo unos momentos en los que hacer méritos—léase detener cuantos más rojos, mejor—tenía gran importancia y grandes compensaciones, por lo que no le fue nada costoso condescender con su familiar y pasar por alto sus posibles lagunas mentales’ (20). In both cases, the men who reported the women were manipulating the post-war environment, aware that it was fundamentally corrupt, in order to gain some personal benefit. Under Francoist judicial procedures during the Civil War and its immediate aftermath, as Anderson observes, ‘a simple denunciation (anonymous until 1941) could be deemed as sufficient “evidence” to secure conviction’.[[342]](#footnote-342) Conxita Mir also highlights that, although the authorities were forced to prohibit anonymous denunciations, these were still routinely used throughout the 1940s and 1950s.[[343]](#footnote-343) It was also the responsibility of the accused to disprove the charges, rather than a case being built by the prosecution.[[344]](#footnote-344) As such, the prosecutions levelled against García Madrid and Malonda, based upon false denunciations, were representative of the situation that many women found themselves in.

However, Malonda, García Madrid, and García Segret also had something else in common, which would almost certainly have exposed them to other people’s reprobation: they were women who had taken on roles in the public sphere. Malonda was a business owner and a pharmacist; García Segret was an openly Republican teacher; and García Madrid worked as a conductor on the trams in Madrid, replacing men who had gone to war. In *Réquiem por la libertad*, Ángeles is recognised by one of her interrogators from her work as a tram conductor, leading Ángeles to reflect, chillingly, ‘en cuántos habrían estado observando a unos y a otros como él había hecho’ during the war (34). García Madrid’s realisation that her job made her visible to unknown observers is equally applicable to García Segret and Malonda, who clearly made enemies as a consequence of their public profile. García Segret is defiant about this, stating—of her and her husband—that ‘nuestro celo republicano era público’ and ‘nuestras ideas democráticas eran patentes’ (241). In *Abajo las dictaduras*,she presents herself as a community leader, implementing the spirit of the Republic through her role as a teacher. Given the scale of repression directed towards teachers after the Civil War, many of whom were ‘depurado’ for their involvement in promoting secular and mixed education according to Republican law, this would certainly have made her a target of suspicion and anger for right-wing members of the community and her denunciation would have been encouraged by the regime.[[345]](#footnote-345) Malonda, however, seems less certain about how she might have gained a negative reputation amongst some sectors of the community. She recognises that ‘Viví otra vida, la de muchacha universitaria que trabaja, estudia, se divierte […] Parte de la sociedad mojigata la censuraba, la criticaba, y parte de la gente joven la envidiaba’ (69-71). However, for most of *Aquello sucedió así*, she attributes her persecution to jealousy that people had of her happy family and for their liberal way of thinking (101). Almost certainly, it was a mixture of the two, with Malonda’s wealth, education, and liberal lifestyle engendering fear and hatred amongst more conservative sections of the populace. What becomes clear in considering the culture of denunciation, however, is that this was a community matter and women such as Malonda, García Madrid, and García Segret became targets because of their public role. Anderson argues that the ‘strength of feeling boiling over among many at the grassroots of society […] meant that a great deal of the initiative for the judicial repression came from below’.[[346]](#footnote-346) Unlike Communist women, who were arrested because of their political activism, these women were singled out by members of their own community because their lifestyle choices and positions of relative power made them visible.

Nonetheless, the culture of denunciation could only take hold in communities because it was encouraged and supported by the judicial system, which acted upon spurious accusations. Not only did it arrest those accused, but the entire legal process was manipulated and corrupted to achieve the level of repression and social cleansing desired by the Francoist authorities. García Madrid observes in *Réquiem por la libertad* that the scale of the repression in the immediate post-war environment could only be attained by bypassing the correct processes of the law:

Comenzó a decirse que le era bastante difícil entender cómo podía haber tantas condenadas a muerte y tantas y tantas otras sin esa horrible pena, pero también juzgadas y condenadas. […] habría que conceder una enorme eficacia a los jueces del régimen franquista y a sus colaboradores, que les permitiera tal celeridad para ordenar detenciones, hacer averiguaciones, obtener pruebas, comprobarlas y, en consecuencia, administrar justicia. Y teniendo en cuenta el escaso tiempo transcurrido desde el final de la guerra, tenía que pensar que o estaban prescindiendo de todas las formalidades citadas o bien juzgaban a los acusados por lotes y al por mayor. ¿Cuál sería la respuesta?... Seguramente las dos. (51)

The inability of the judicial system to cope with the volume of cases was acknowledged by Máximo Cuervo, the national director of prisons. He disclosed that

La carencia de un Cuerpo Jurídico experto suficiente para atender el volumen de la represión ha obligado a habilitar para las funciones de la justicia militar a un gran número de abogados sin experiencia, sin conciencia profesional y sin la especialización militar, y que por consecuencia no se dan cuenta del problema gravísimo que tienen entre manos y de la necesidad angustiosa de terminar su liquidación.[[347]](#footnote-347)

Consequently, García Madrid’s observation that it would have been impossible to follow normal procedures such as verifying evidence, given the sheer numbers of prisoners, is astute and is reflected throughout the memoirs of all three women. The first example of this is that Malonda, García Segret, and García Madrid all denied the charges that were laid against them, but there was no attempt to investigate the truth. Malonda writes that she told the judge that came to the prison to get her to sign her charges that they were false. He responded that he already knew this, but ‘Si hubiéramos triunfado en las primeras veinticuatro horas, como era lo proyectado, tú y tu marido hubierais sido de los primeros en caer’, because they were known to be left wing (64).[[348]](#footnote-348) This demonstrates that the judicial system was openly manipulated to persecute those perceived as political enemies. In the same situation, García Madrid protested her innocence and was hit in the face for her alleged impertinence by a judge who came to read the charges (108). In *Abajo las dictaduras* García Segret also recognises that ‘No importaba que yo hubiera rebatido debidamente los cargos durante los interrogatorios […] todas aquellas fantásticas acusaciones eran para hacerme pasar por una mujer terrible’ (219). What becomes clear to the reader is that the women had very few resources available to them to defend themselves; the authorities were either unwilling to listen or complicit in bastardising the law to use it as a tool of repression. This is one of the ways in which we see the differences in the narratives of Communist and non-Communist women. Communist women did not expect justice and chose instead to live outside of the law because they did not recognise the legitimacy of the existing institutions: the only option for them was attempt to overthrow the regime. In contrast, García Madrid, García Segret, and Malonda all hoped to return to a normal life and accepted, to varying degrees, that they had to conform to life under Franco. García Madrid says, for example, ‘Los vencidos sabían que tendrían que aceptar el nuevo régimen de grado o por fuerza y contribuir a la reconstrucción de ésta desgraciada España rota’ (61). Although she was clearly reluctant, as was García Segret when she hoped for the Allies to overthrow the dictatorship, there is not the same militancy and rejection of the state that can be seen in Communist texts. As such, it is not surprising that the corrupted legal system becomes a theme throughout non-Communist women’s narratives, particularly as they discovered that the law was being manipulated as a tool of persecution and repression.

## The spectacle of justice: trial

Another aspect of the injustice of the legal system that permeates the writing of García Segret, García Madrid, and Malonda is the performance of being put on trial and sentenced. Although the women feared that they would not have a fair hearing, given their treatment under interrogation, the spectacle of ‘justice’ becomes a pivotal moment in all three texts. There is a connection between the Francoist use of the legal system and Michel Foucault’s analysis of public executions, which lies in the way that the judiciary is used to demonstrate power. As Foucault states in *Discipline and Punish*, public execution ‘did not re-establish justice; it reactivated power. […] Its ruthlessness, its spectacle, its physical violence, its unbalanced play of forces, its meticulous ceremonial, its entire apparatus were inscribed in the political functioning of the penal system.’[[349]](#footnote-349) This description, although related to the use of public execution during the 17th and 18th century in France, represents specifically the goals of the Francoist judiciary. The trials had two principal aims: to enforce the regime’s socio-political programme by convicting those deemed to be political enemies; and to act as a tool of repression for the wider community by displaying the violence and suffering they could expect if they went against the new authorities. Non-Communist women were aware of the spectacle of justice, then, and their narratives reflect a desire to portray it, which is not found in Communist texts.

Perhaps the most aware of the performative aspect of being put on trial of all three prisoners, even as it was occurring, García Segret engaged with the spectacle to convey her own message to the spectators and her enemies. In *Abajo las dictaduras*, when she arrives at the courtroom there is a crowd gathered outside, as she had expected, including the men that had denounced her and been involved in the murder of her husband. García Segret emerges from the police car dressed in her mourning clothes, covering her head and face with a veil. She writes that

Aquella severa presencia, recordando al sacrificio, unida a la suave expresión del semblante, la frente alta y mirando siempre hacia delante, cautivó la atención de los circunstantes, dejando confusos a mis enemigos, que oían los elogios que tributaban los demás a aquella mujer, que ellos estaban empeñados a matar. (238-9)

García Segret’s choice of attire and her deliberate behaviour convey multiple messages to the waiting audience. Mary Vincent discusses the performativity of wearing the ‘mantilla’—the Spanish high comb and lace—in post-war Spain, as women used it to signal their patriotism and dignity, as a symbol of bourgeois etiquette, and as a sign of submission to the Church.[[350]](#footnote-350) Although García Segret wears a simple veil rather than the mantilla, she is adopting and subverting the same ‘politics of gesture’ to convey a message to the audience outside the courtroom, and to her reader. Her mourning dress and veil remind the crowd that she had been recently widowed, thereby signalling the murder of her husband and the guilt and complicity of some of those present. In itself, the act of wearing mourning was subversive, as some women were punished for remembering Republican dead.[[351]](#footnote-351) She also looked straight ahead as she was walking with a gentle look on her face, distancing herself from the image of the ‘roja’ as deviant and lascivious, and further contrasting her dignity with the morbid curiosity of those in the crowd. She notices the success of this technique, as her enemies were left confused because the rest of the audience praised her dignity. García Segret is well aware that the judicial process functions as an ‘espectáculo’, as she calls it, which is used to shame the defendant and their family and to act as a tool of fear and repression for other members of society (238). As such, she acknowledges the performance and attempts to subvert it by counteracting the crowd’s expectations of a prisoner.

The courtrooms had a public gallery, too, and consequently the spectacle continued therein. In the immediate aftermath of the war most prisoners were subject to military rather than criminal or civil law cases, although civil law was used to strip those on the Left of assets in punishment for their ‘rebellion’. As such, all the roles, including the legal defence, were fulfilled by military men. García Madrid comments that she did not expect to be tried by military tribunal and, as the men file into the room, she remarks that ‘Esto la preocupó aún más, a pesar de encontrarlo totalmente absurdo’ (114). García Madrid’s worry and sense of the absurd was not unfounded, as the army’s judicial powers over civilians broke down the barriers between the powers of the state: those who controlled the production of law also controlled its arbitration. The prosecutor also formed part of the military tribunal that judged the accused, thereby lessening the impartiality of the sentencing further.[[352]](#footnote-352) The absurdity of the legal process becomes even clearer to the reader when the women begin to discuss how trials progressed. In most cases, the prisoners did not speak to their defence lawyer—also from the military—before entering the courtroom and Malonda argues that ‘Apenas han ojeado los sumarios, por lo que desconocen las circunstancias que concurren en cada caso’ (99).[[353]](#footnote-353) Furthermore, the defence knows that ‘su labor es de puro trámite, encaminada a procurar un aspecto de “legalidad” jurídica a juicios cuyos resultados están previstos’ (99). Malonda’s fear that the judicial process was purely for show seemed to be unfounded when the judge overturned the request for the death penalty, stating that the accusations were based on rumours and speculation and that ‘Esto no es la justicia que quiere Franco’ (65).[[354]](#footnote-354) However, this judge was subsequently removed from his post for being too lenient and Malonda’s death sentence was confirmed by a second trial (100). Malonda expresses shock and rage at her original conviction being overturned: ‘Este nuevo fiscal no tuvo inconveniente en discrepar de su compañero, también jurídico español, preparado en las mismas facultades, habiendo bebido de las mismas fuentes, interpretado igualmente, según una psicología jurídicamente semejante, las fuentes del derecho’ (100). We see here the discrepancy between Malonda’s expectations of justice and the realities of how the legal process was executed under the new authorities. Malonda believed that the law should be such that it is interpreted in the same way by different people, but the reality under *franquismo*—with its conflation of the powers of the state—was that political concerns manipulated the judicial process. In this way, the exercise of law became a performance of ideology rather than an impartial analysis of information.

García Segret highlights the spectacle of justice in her description of her trial as well. Her case was heard at the same time as that of her murdered husband—García Segret recounts how the prosecutor ‘desenterraba a mi esposo, lo apostrofaba, lo batía con furia y lo condenaba por su acendrado republicanismo’—and the reader is shown that there is no attempt made to follow any kind of impartial legal process (240). García Segret is the only writer in the corpus who seems to have had any kind of choice in her defence lawyer or any contact with him before her trial. This was due to advice from her connections outside the prison, who counselled her to choose a man from the list of those approved who held legal qualifications as well as being part of the military (234-5). However, even with the aid of a sympathetic and qualified defence lawyer, García Segret was unable to defend herself in the courtroom. Although the lawyer attempted to present witnesses in her favour

les fue imposible declarar a ninguno, porque los miembros del tribunal, echados a ellos como facinerosos, no los dejaban hablar, diciéndoles que era falso lo que venían a decir. Temblé entonces por la libertad y la vida de aquellos hombres, a quienes el tribunal amenazó con dejarlos ya detenidos en la cárcel de Vigo. (242)

Not only were the witnesses not allowed to speak, but they were threatened with imprisonment for attempting to present their evidence. This highlights, once again, the position which the prisoners were placed in: they had few, if any, resources to defend themselves against the biased authorities (with the exception of García Madrid, as discussed later in this section). García Segret’s description of herself during the trial only furthers this sense of defencelessness. She acknowledges that her role in the judicial process was to sit in the courtroom ‘recibiendo aquel aluvión que sobre mí descargaba en esa violenta perorata aquel fanfarrón de patriotería’ (240). The spectacle of the judicial system functions in several ways throughout García Segret’s trial, and indeed in the case of the other prisoners’ too. In front of the public gallery containing members of the local community, the women were accused of terrible crimes and given little opportunity to defend themselves, which would in itself have been pointless, as the sentences were often decided and announced before the trial had taken place according to García Segret (236).[[355]](#footnote-355) García Segret even notes that her enemies deliberately spoke of her inevitable death sentence within earshot of her elderly father before it had been announced, demonstrating again the local aspect of repression (252). The public nature of the trial made it a spectacle for the community: the prisoners and their families were shamed and marginalised and the process acted as a warning to other citizens of what they could expect if they challenged the new regime. Furthermore, as Mir highlights, and particularly in rural areas, the collaboration of the local community in denouncing and testifying against their neighbours ‘fue un elemento, no ya necesario, sino integrante de la represión’.[[356]](#footnote-356) As is evident when reading the memoirs of non-Communist prisoners, the judicial system under Franco was, therefore, political rather than legal. Its spectacle of justice was intended to consolidate its power over the defeated populace rather than to administer the law to protect all Spanish citizens.

## The spectacle of justice: challenging the legal system

While the spectacle of power in the judicial system is something that would have affected all the prisoners, Communist or otherwise, what is particularly noticeable in the non-Communist texts is that the women continue to expect some level of justice. Despite their experiences of the legal system persecuting them, all three women still place some belief in the law to aid them in various ways. Furthermore, there is evidence that the law—in certain cases, and only when deployed correctly—could be used as a means to defend the defeated Republicans, even as early as the 1940s. Di Febo recognises the prisoners’ engagement with the corrupted judicial system in Matilde Landa’s work to try and save women sentenced to death with her ‘oficina de penadas’ in Ventas. Di Febo describes Landa’s bureaucratic approach to this task as

uno de los primeros ejemplos de la voz jurídica militante—que más tarde constituiría uno de los puntos cardinales de la lucha antifranquista por parte de los abogados demócratas—que ponía al desnudo la arbitrariedad de los juicios y descubría contradicciones dentro de las mismas leyes.[[357]](#footnote-357)

What becomes clear when reading non-Communist texts, however, is that there was also a ‘voz jurídica’ which was not militant and which was being used by prisoners much earlier than the 1960s. In *Réquiem por la libertad*, *Abajo las dictaduras*, and *Aquello sucedió así*,we see the law being used by individuals as both a weapon for survival and as a tool to settle personal scores, rather than as a collective stance against *franquismo*.

The legal system is used to García Madrid’s advantage in two separate incidents in *Réquiem por la libertad*. First, as mentioned above, García Madrid was actually able to defend herself during her trial. At the end of the whole process, prisoners were asked if they had anything to add before they were sentenced. For example, when García Segret is asked this in *Abajo las dictaduras*, she accuses the judges of cowardice for attacking her dead husband and states that it is not worth contributing anything to the record when the law is being so manipulated (244)*.* In her memory of the trial of ‘La Letona’, Cuevas also records that the elderly woman was asked if she had anything to add, and Cuevas replied ‘No tiene nada que alegar’ on her behalf, as ‘La Letona’ was too deaf to hear the question (I, 101). García Madrid explains that most prisoners just replied that they had nothing to add: because they were so overwhelmed by the situation they found themselves in; because they lacked the education or understanding of the justice system to produce a coherent argument; or simply because they believed it would make no difference (120). However, García Madrid took this opportunity to defend herself using the techniques that she learned as part of her political training as a Socialist. She says that she rebutted the accusations point by point and was shocked that she was allowed to speak for over 15 minutes (120). At the end, the judge said to her ‘Cálmese y tome asiento; esta Presidencia le promete tomar en cuenta su defensa’ (120). García Madrid’s presence of mind to stay calm and refute the charges laid against her is impressive, but it also demonstrates that she continued to believe that factual reasoning held sway within the Francoist judicial system. Arguably, this is correct, as she was sentenced to twelve years in prison rather than the expected death penalty (125). We also see this belief when a new round of charges were laid against her by the same woman who denounced her originally. García Madrid had some understanding of how the legal system worked and believed that she could not be tried for the same crimes again. Thus, when the investigator began to relay the charges to her and asked whether she has been tried for them before, ‘Ángeles’ resolves that ‘aunque pensaba que sería muy fácil descubrir la verdad, se dispuso a decir que sí a cualquier cosa que le fuese leída’ (123). In this case, we see García Madrid using her knowledge of the legal system to protect herself against false denunciations. Once again, García Madrid’s tenacity was rewarded and the charges were dropped with no further consequences (124). Fundamentally, although her entire experience of imprisonment had only shown her injustice, these instances demonstrate that she still maintained hope that legal processes would override the political manipulations of the authorities, and in both situations her hopes were realised.

García Segret had a similar experience of this too. Her decision to pretend to be pregnant was based upon her belief that the legal system would not execute a pregnant woman. She writes that

No era la defensa en sí lo que a mí me preocupaba, porque ya de antemano estaba sentenciada; lo que sí me importaba era que, en el momento oportuno, al ser juzgada, hiciera constar que me hallaba embarazada, si así no lo hacía todo mi artificio se vendría abajo. (221)

Like García Madrid, García Segret had an intuitive understanding of how the legal system functioned under Nationalist rule. Though she did not expect the law to be applied dispassionately, she believed that her own manipulation of the justice system could protect her from being executed, if only temporarily. This technique succeeded, granting her a stay of execution until her sentence was commuted to imprisonment some time later (107). The reader sees how non-Communist prisoners were willing to engage with the legal system and manipulate it in order to counteract the corruption that made political prisoners susceptible to the violence of the law.

Malonda offers the most surprising case of continuing attempts to procure justice under *franquismo*. After she fled Gandía to follow her husband at the end of the war, her house was looted and the pharmacy was seized by an individual (50, 66). In *Aquello sucedió así*, Malonda tells of her attempts to regain her pharmacy through legal channels in 1955, twelve years after her release from prison. In court, Malonda’s lawyer proved that the pharmacy was taken by force, without any kind of authority for requisition by the state, and then transferred into the possession of a man through the procurement of illegal contracts (163). Despite the court ruling in favour of Malonda, the defendant went to a higher political power in Madrid and had the case overturned: in ‘una querella criminal de un elemento rojo contra un falangista’, it was ordered that the court must ‘absolver al falangista’ (164). Eventually Malonda bought the pharmacy back from the man who took possession of it illegally and had to ‘entregarle una considerable cantidad para que desalojara’ (165). Understandably, she was upset and angered by this injustice, but this situation reveals to the reader that, like García Segret and García Madrid, Malonda continued to place her trust and belief in the Francoist legal system. To some extent, Malonda’s ability to even bring a case to court as a former political prisoner is evidence of her wealth and powerful connections, highlighting her different status to the majority of ex-prisoners. Nonetheless, given the persecution she suffered as a political prisoner it is astounding that she continued to seek legal redress within a system that was biased against her. It also demonstrates, once more, the difference between Communist and non-Communist prisoners: Malonda continued to view herself as a Spanish citizen who should be able to seek protection and justice from the law.

This profound sense of injustice is also the reason that non-Communist women felt motivated to write their memoirs during the Transition. As noted in the introduction to this thesis, García Madrid explained that writing was a form of catharsis for her, allowing the ‘drenaje’ of the trauma of imprisonment. She also commented that she had attempted to write her memoir as objectively as possible so that the readers could judge what happened for themselves. García Madrid’s comments provide insight into her motivations for writing during the Transition, which can be extrapolated to cover other non-Communist writers such as García Segret and Malonda. The sense of injustice at their treatment during the dictatorship could only have been further exacerbated by the decision to offer amnesty to all perpetrators of violence on both side of the political divide in 1977. Not only had these women’s search for justice been violated by their political imprisonment after the Civil War, the process of democratisation, which had been their hope for change in society, also failed them. Furthermore the Right remained free from persecution and most continued in positions of power and status. The conflict between the desire for democracy and the search for justice can be seen in the way that the women introduce their texts: as discussed above, García Segret believed in ‘convivencia’, but also knew that a history of repression ‘DEBE DE EXISTIR’. The introduction to *Aquello sucedió así* is equally ambivalent. Consequently, writing and publishing their memoirs became a form of redress for García Madrid, García Segret, and Malonda, with their audience being asked to judge the injustice to which they were subjected.

In all three texts then, Francoist justice is presented as a spectacle that actively persecuted the regime’s supposed political enemies and acted as a form of social control for communities. The narratives of non-Communist women differ greatly from their Communist counterparts because they continued to believe in the rule of law, which meant that their texts expressed outrage and horror at its bastardisation. This is not the only aspect in which non-Communist texts are different, however. Another theme that offers a stark contrast to the Communist women’s narrative of prison is survival in prison, both surviving the hardships of imprisonment and learning to cohabit in extremely difficult conditions with strangers. A key example is how women outside of the Communist network negotiated the politics of food in order to survive.

## Cohabitation and survival in prison: food politics

The narratives of Communist women reveal very few issues surrounding cohabitation with their fellow political prisoners. As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, daily life was structured around communal survival and resistance. Although all the Communist women suffered hunger, their resources were shared equally among ‘families’ so that no person within their network was left unsupported. In addition, daily life was structured so that survival became politicised: teaching other prisoners to read and write became an act of resistance, as did taking on roles within the prison system with the aim of gleaning communal benefit from them. Their militant stance also led to regular stand-offs with the authorities: because survival was politicised, they could not compromise with the prison functionaries or nuns for fear of losing their ideological distance. However, for women who were outside of this network of support, negotiation and compromise with their fellow prisoners and the authorities became an essential tool for survival. This is not to say that non-Communist women did not feel a sense of community with their fellow political prisoners, as there are multiple instances of solidarity in *Abajo las dictaduras*, *Aquello sucedió así*, and *Réquiem por la libertad*. However, because the narratives discussed in this chapter do not politicise daily acts of survival in the same way as Communist narratives, it is possible to explore cohabitation in prison in a different way. To begin, this section will examine the politics of food—one of the most pivotal aspects of survival in prison—and how the women’s desperate need forced them to negotiate the dynamic between solidarity and survival with their fellow prisoners.

Food is a theme in almost all the texts in my corpus, Communist and non-Communist. The desperately hungry women became obsessed with food because the meals provided by the authorities were lacking in quality and quantity. Some prisons provided watery stews with bits of potato floating in them; others provided lentils or rice. However, the portions were small and the diet was fundamentally lacking in protein, oils, and vitamins. Consequently, the prisoners were dependent on food parcels or *paquetes* that were sent in by family of friends to help sustain them. These comprised food items such as tins of sardines, fruit, and bread, but also other necessary items like soap, toothpaste, clothes and combs. In the Communist model of prison organisation all of this food was automatically shared between small ‘families’ of prisoners, who were grouped together to make sure that those who did not receive outside help could benefit from the resources of other women. As such, Communist narratives only discuss food in two ways: either as a demonstration of the cruelty and lack of care of the authorities or as a model of collective living and resistance. In contrast, the ways in which non-Communist writers discuss food in prison highlight the different levels of politics and negotiation that prisoners who were not affiliated to a ‘family’ had to cope with.

Before discussing the presentation of food issues in *Abajo las dictaduras* and *Réquiem por la libertad* it is important to acknowledge that there is almost no mention of food in Malonda’s *Aquello sucedió así*. This is in itself revealing of how the politics of food functioned in prison. Malonda was from a wealthy family and was imprisoned relatively locally to her home. It is almost certain, then, that she did not suffer hunger, as her relatives would have been able to supplement her diet with regular packages to the prison or gifts of money to spend in the ‘economato’, a kind of shop in the prison for food and other necessities. However, Malonda would have been one of a handful who were fortunate in this way. Most prisoners were from impoverished backgrounds and even those who had access to extra supplies from outside the prison walls often found themselves cut off from this support if they were transferred to different prisons. Consequently, *Aquello sucedió así* is exceptional in the absence of food as a theme.

In comparison, García Segret struggled profoundly with hunger throughout her incarceration. Following the murder of her husband and the death of her father, she found herself without any living relations upon whom she could rely to provide her with supplementary items. This would have made her extremely vulnerable as a prisoner, because she had no relatives to care for her. Consequently, García Segret was forced to rely upon the support of friends. Although she does not make hunger a focus of her memoir, there are clear signs throughout the text that she suffered. For example, she adds a footnote in the text to explain her comment in a letter to friends that she is surviving because she has ‘una voluntad’:

En el año 40 y a parte del 41, para aplacar el hambre espantosa que con la calderada de rancho las monjas me hacían sufrir, recogía cuando no me veían las mondas de plátano y naranjas, las lavaba y las comía, así como las mondas de patatas y tronchas de col del desperdicio. Bien lavadas las cocía y las comía. (75)

Despite being forced to scavenge to survive while incarcerated in Palma de Mallorca, García Segret did have some friends who were able to send her food. Her letters to these women reveal the extent to which she was forced to rely upon the support and kindness of friends, who would have almost certainly been suffering their own economic hardships in the post-war economic climate.[[358]](#footnote-358) This extract from one of her letters is worth quoting at length as it reveals various dynamics at play in her survival:

Podéis mandarme si os resulta más económico el envío como este último que me mandasteis, cuatro paquetes de un kilo con algo de tocino para guisar la harina […]. Ya sé el precio que tiene la harina, pero eso ahí será más fácil hallarla que las demás cosas que tendréis que pagarlas a peso de oro y yo aquí me arreglo muy bien con lo que os digo y algo de dinero que me podéis mandar todos los meses.

Todo lo que me habéis mandado en los paquetes me ha producido gran emoción: el queso del país, los chorizos, el arroz arreglado por mí, que rico: el café, el azúcar… Todo, todo me recordaba tiempos pasados en que yo vivía con personalidad, hoy soy un objeto, como lo que dan y sino bebo. Si Berta trabajara le darían dinero, pero a ella no le dan trabajo de punto. Por eso tengo que molestaros a vosotras para todo. (47)

Clearly, on a day-to-day basis García Segret relied upon making simple pancakes or thickening her prison rations with flour, reduced to eating the most basic staples to survive. Her friends also attempted to supplement her diet with other items, such as cheese and cured meat, and García Segret highlights the importance of these luxuries for maintaining a sense of self in an environment that was intended to reduce the women to nothing. However, García Segret was also painfully aware that she was completely reliant upon the kindness of her friends. In a footnote to the letter, she writes that Berta was an alias she used to confound the censorship of the authorities and that the nuns in the prison refused to give her paid needlework like other women to earn money; this was because of her refusal to ‘claudicar’, to give in (47). This is almost certainly to do with García Segret’s attitude to religion, as just a few pages earlier in *Abajo las dictaduras* she mentions that as the nuns ‘me tienen tanta hincha por la cuestión religiosa, se vengan en todo lo que pueden’ (42). Although García Segret wanted to try and make something for her friends to sell, thereby contributing towards her maintenance in prison, this route was blocked by the punishment of the religious personnel who were intent on reforming her attitude to religion. This extract highlights the precariousness of García Segret’s position: cut off from the possibility of earning money in prison, her only way to access the items she needed to survive was through the kindness of friends. This perhaps explains García Segret’s continual use of code to discuss international politics in the same letters with her friends. Because of the way women were constantly being moved between prisons across different regions of Spain, information could be shared and passed on.[[359]](#footnote-359) In this way, García Segret attempted to repay the debt to her friends by maintaining a correspondence that contained encoded political information. Nonetheless, the letters in *Abajo las dictaduras* highlight the uncertainty of survival for women who were outside of the Communist network in prison.

*Réquiem por la libertad* provides further examples of how food as a theme highlights the daily struggles to survive in Franco’s prison system. García Madrid’s memoir reflects both the need to negotiate with other prisoners and also her strong sense of self-preservation, which sometimes overruled her moral compass. ‘Ángeles’ was one of the prisoners that received regular packets of food from her mother and who shared her food on an ad hoc basis. In Ventas, one of her neighbours from home, Carmen Pascual, offered to share her *paquete* with ‘Ángeles’. However, Pascual excluded another cellmate and neighbour of theirs—also Carmen—because the second Carmen had never been able to share anything. García Madrid comments that

La muchacha le dio las gracias y miró a la otra Carmen que, como es natural, acusó el golpe. Ella no había tenido nada que dar; su marido estaba en la cárcel y su hermano estaba manteniendo a sus dos hijos. Nadie le mandaba nada, pero ella ya agradecía mucho que se cuidasen de los niños. Su gesto era tan dolido que formó la decisión de Ángeles. (59)

Consequently, ‘Ángeles’ decided to share all of her food with the Carmen who did not receive any outside help. This passage undoubtedly demonstrates García Madrid’s compassion to the reader, which is evident throughout *Réquiem por la libertad*, but it also exposes the dynamics of sharing food away from the Communist structure of ‘families’. Those who received support were in no way compelled to share their food. Pascual made the decision that it should be upon a reciprocal basis, thereby sharing food with women from whom she might also receive supplies. García Madrid, however, made a sympathetic choice to share her packages with someone that she knew would never receive support. Interestingly, though, both Pascual and García Madrid only decide to share food—in this example, at least—with women whom they knew previously; other cellmates were not considered in their decision making. This example reveals the extent to which survival in prison was dependent on networks of support, both in and outside the prison. Women would have to ensure that they were amenable to their fellow prisoners, but also be willing to negotiate the situation in which they found themselves.

The politics surrounding food also juxtaposes the sense of solidarity that political prisoners felt for one another with the questionable morality that women were forced to employ in order to survive. ‘Ángeles’ found herself at the centre of these situations. In one case, she was struck down by a mystery illness which made her want to sleep all the time. She was prescribed powdered milk by the doctor, which would have been a luxury both in the prison environment and outside the prison walls too. García Madrid remarks, however, that she was not asked to share this by other prisoners who were aware that she needed it to recover: ‘muestras de compañerismo eran allí bastante normales entre presas políticas’ (99). This demonstration of solidarity is entirely lacking, though, in the next example. García Madrid recalls her mother sending a meal to her in Ventas which needing warming. She left it in the oven in the kitchen, but when she returned it had disappeared, presumably eaten by another prisoner. García Madrid decided to steal a jug full of hot chocolate that she found, commenting that ‘Sin pensarlo ni un momento cogió el asa del recipiente […] y salió de la cocina con la tranquilidad del que ha hecho tan solo lo que debía. Tal vez, casi seguro, la víctima de este robo no era la culpable del otro, pero…’ (100). García Madrid’s decision to steal the hot chocolate, despite being the victim of theft herself, clearly does not fit within the model of solidarity that is evident throughout Communist narratives of prison. It is a hasty act, borne out of disappointment and frustration, but it is also an act of survival. García Madrid shared the hot chocolate with other prisoners, all of whom benefited from this act as they would have shared her mother’s meal, and the rest of the text highlights that García Madrid is not generally an immoral or rash person. In this example, though, survival was the foremost priority, despite the immorality of her act.

The politics of food in *Abajo las dictaduras*, *Aquello sucedió así*, and *Réquiem por la libertad*, therefore, exposes and nuances the dynamics of solidarity and survival between political prisoners. A few women, like Malonda, were lucky enough not to suffer from hunger and *Aquello sucedió así* is conspicuous in barely discussing food. Most prisoners, though, struggled with hunger and were reliant upon some form of help in order to survive. The politics of food in *Réquiem por la libertad* and *Abajo las dictaduras* also demonstrate that life in prison put the women in situations where they had to make ambiguous moral choices. This is in stark contrast to the Communist narrative of prison, which generally presents only those memories which are unambiguous, and can therefore be politicised.

## Cohabitation and survival in prison: negotiating relationships

Another feature of the Communist narrative of prison is the women’s ideological rigidity, as discussed in the second chapter of this thesis. This lack of compromise gave the Communists a strong communal platform on which to make demands—such as in the case of hunger strikes—but also to reject the intimidation and manipulation of prison authorities, allowing them to refuse to take part in religious ceremonies, for example. This stance gave the women a sense of group identity, focus, and collective protection, because they knew they had the support of the community in the decisions they took. However, it caused the Communist women to be treated with more severity and suspicion by the prison authorities and to set their community apart from other women. In comparison, other prisoners who did not benefit from this group identity and sense of ideological purpose regularly needed to negotiate their relationships in order to achieve successful cohabitation within the prison system. There is a greater focus on *Requiém por la libertad* in this section, as García Madrid portrays prison relationships in detail. Relationships with other prisoners are less important in García Segret and Malonda’s texts, as they are more interested in documenting their internal struggles than their environment, perhaps as a consequence of their different backgrounds and the fact they were both trying to comprehend the murders of their husbands throughout their imprisonment.

The different approaches of Communists and other political prisoners can be seen in *Aquello sucedió así*, when Malonda discusses an order from the prison authorities in Valencia that all prisoners had to take communion or be ‘incomunicada’ for three months.[[360]](#footnote-360) Most women were not inclined to comply, and Malonda reports that ‘Al grupo de las de filiación comunista les ha llegado de fuera la consigna de “no tragar”’ (104). However, the majority of the non-Communist women agreed with the opinion of another prisoner when she said ‘Yo no le doy a mi madre el disgusto de estar incomunicada tanto tiempo, así que allá la responsabilidad, si es que la hay, para quienes nos obligan’ (104). As a matter of conscience, the Communist prisoners refused collectively to take communion and were willing to accept the punishment that came with it. For those that were forced to survive outside of this community, however, the decision was related to how they negotiated their relationships with their family members. Most opted for practicality, putting their ideological concerns to one side and acceding to the order from the prison authorities in order to facilitate the happiness of their family members. This also had the added benefit of allowing them to maintain the supply of correspondence and food entering the prison, thereby enhancing the likelihood of their survival. While it could be argued that the non-Communist women had little choice as to whether they accepted communion or not, this example does prove that there was a path of lesser resistance in prison. In this situation, Malonda and other non-activist prisoners chose to accept the demands of the authorities in order to live with less hardship and to prioritise family ties.

Successful cohabitation between the prisoners themselves was also reliant upon instances of negotiation. An example of this is García Madrid’s description of trying to buy safety pins from other women in Tarragona prison. ‘Ángeles’ was told by another prisoner that rats as big as rabbits were crawling over her in her sleep (139). In order to fasten her bedsheet around her tightly, she attempted to get safety pins from the other prisoners. Initially she called out across the large room where they were being held to ask if she could borrow safety pins, and was met by silence. She then explained her predicament and offered to buy them, prompting some prisoners to ask how much she was willing to pay. ‘Ángeles’ suggested a ‘real’ but this was deemed to be insufficient: ‘Era muy buen precio para aquel tiempo—y casi para hoy—pero el silencio y las sonrisas decían bien a las claras que la oferta no era suficiente’ (143). Eventually, ‘Ángeles’ offered double this price and was able to purchase five. Although this is a relatively small matter in García Madrid’s experience of prison life, her memory of it demonstrates one of the many dynamics at play between the women who were incarcerated together. Communist narratives present the sharing of resources as political, in which women uniting their resources against the shared enemy became an act of resistance. However, the description of negotiating to buy safety pins relates the more mundane struggle for survival and the opportunities for business within the prison environment. García Madrid needed safety pins for her own sense of dignity and comfort; the women who sold their pins were trading some of their few resources for money, negotiating for a higher price in order to ensure their own survival. This exchange highlights that commerce and survival existed alongside acts of solidarity, nuancing our understanding of how strangers coexisted day-to-day in prison.

The social complexity of prisoners coexisting is further developed when García Madrid discusses the prison class system, which she argues was based upon a wealth divide. She comments that there were women of different ‘categories’ within the prisons: women of the first category were wealthy and employed women from the third category for various tasks; women of the second category were those that neither employed nor were employed. The poorest women in prison performed ‘los oficios de cualquier sirviente’ for the rich prisoners because ‘la peseta que recibían diaria, como jornal, solían mandarla a la calle para atender las necesidades de sus hijos de corta edad, desprovistos de lo más elemental para subsistir’ (166). Furthermore, this system influenced the relationships between the prisoners and their jailers, as García Madrid observes that ‘Lógicamente, quienes pagaban también lo hacían—y mucho más espléndidamente—a las monjas; ya que éstas les alquilaban el cuarto particular’ (166). There is evidence in *Aquello sucedió así* that suggests Malonda was one of the prisoners of the ‘first category’ when she comments on her return to the Convento de Santa Clara, where she had a good relationship with the prison governor:

En unos días he podido apreciar el buen ambiente que aquí se respira. Convivir con compañeras seleccionadas con las que consigues simpatizar y, aún más, a las que llegas a querer, resulta muy agradable. Esto se aprecia mejor después de haber sufrido la convivencia forzosa con cientos de mujeres en local insuficiente, soportando… ¡tantas cosas! (108)

The language of this passage implies that Malonda was able to pay for the privilege of selecting her cellmates when she was staying in the smaller prison, thereby confirming García Madrid’s observation.[[361]](#footnote-361) The Communist narrative of prison does not avoid the subject of wealthier prisoners. For example, María Valés tells of a prisoner receiving a large package of food ‘con kilos de fruta y queso’—items which would have been costly, highlighting the prisoner’s wealth—and sitting down to eat without sharing with her desperately hungry cellmates (II, 56). However, there is no mention of a class-based system within prison, with some women serving their fellow prisoners for money, almost certainly for ideological reasons. While the reader might expect Communists to be preoccupied with class divisions in the prison environment, the absence of this discussion is perhaps a reflection of the political goals of the PCE during the Transition when their prison memoirs were written. The narrative of resistance that runs throughout Communist texts aims to present the PCE leading a united front against the regime and the idea of some prisoners employing others would certainly detract from the levelling presentation of camaraderie and solidarity between the women. Equally, it is highly unlikely that Communist women would have acted as servants or employers within the prison because the strength of their support network would have made it less necessary. As such, García Madrid’s observation of a class system functioning within the prison environment demonstrates the need to read beyond Communist texts in order to gain a fuller understanding of prison life under Franco.

In reading a spectrum of views across all the texts included in this thesis, then, we understand that the cohabitation of female prisoners required negotiation. Although the high level of solidarity between prisoners was undeniable, there were also spaces in the daily existence of the women which required discussion and transaction for their mutual survival. All of the texts, both Communist and non-Communist, contain examples of solidarity between prisoners, but the non-Communist memoirs provide a more nuanced understanding of daily life that is absent from Cuevas or Núñez, for example. The supportive community that the Communist network created meant that they did not need to negotiate to the same extent to survive within prison. However, those outside of the community often had to act for their own individual survival in order to manage being incarcerated. The comparative power of the Communist network can also be seen when the reader considers the vulnerability of non-Communist women within the prison system.

## Persecution, harassment, and exploitation: the vulnerability of non-Communists and their families

The lack of a supportive community, such as that of the Communist women, meant that prisoners and their families were vulnerable to exploitation, harassment, and malicious gossip. Women such as García Madrid, García Segret, and Malonda, were forced to rely upon immediate friends and family for support, most of whom were also struggling to survive in the post-war economic climate and who suffered the stigma of being connected to a ‘roja’. Furthermore, each component of their status as political prisoners made them vulnerable: they were vulnerable because of their gender, their dissident political beliefs, and their status as prisoners or former prisoners after their release. While these same labels were undoubtedly applicable to Communist prisoners, these women were part of an organised community which had connections beyond the immediate family realm. There was a chain of command, of goods, and of information, which allowed the women to act collectively and which also allowed them a certain level of security; to attack one was to attack all, which would have made them more difficult to single out. This is not to say that the Communists had an easier time in prison, as their combative stance often led to harsh punishment. However, this was a collective punishment, rather than being singled out for persecution, often making them less vulnerable as individuals. An example of this is when the Communists went on hunger strike in Segovia in 1948, as discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. In texts such as *Réquiem por la libertad*, *Abajo las dictaduras*, and *Aquello sucedió así*, however, it is evident that non-Communist women could not find protection in a collective identity. The following section considers examples from both within and outside of the prison walls of women being subject to persecution, harassment, and exploitation, as well as finding themselves victims of confidence tricks. It also examines the fact that some of those who were exploiting prisoners and their families were themselves vulnerable in post-war society, nuancing the idea that people were eithers victors or victims in post-war Spain.

The women’s prison memoirs demonstrate that there was enormous variation in the way that the different institutions were run. Although the prisons were regulated by a centralised body and were subject to inspections, the evidence from the texts suggest that governors were given considerable control over how their prison was managed on a day-to-day basis.[[362]](#footnote-362) In some cases, this worked to the prisoners’ advantage, as we have already seen in the way some prisoners could negotiate privileges. Doña writes of how the prison in Segovia, for example, had a less harsh regime than some others because of the prison governor: ‘Se decía que su director estaba tachado de “izquierdista” y, de hecho, allí se respiraba un ambiente de cierto “liberalismo”’ (274). Similarly, Malonda describes the governor of Santa Clara prison in Valencia province as ‘un hombre bondadoso que hace cuanto puede por aliviar la triste situación de las recluidas’ (68). However, there were also many examples of prison directors who abused their positions.[[363]](#footnote-363) Discussing a hunger strike in Amorebieta prison, Cuevas describes how the prison governor threatened to put all of those protesting in the courtyard of the prison and execute them with a machine gun, telling them that ‘no le pedirían ninguna responsabilidad’ for their murders (II, 193). In *Aquello sucedió así*, though, Malonda discusses her persecution in Valencia by Natividad Brunete Gómez, who the prisoners called ‘La Nati’.[[364]](#footnote-364)

Malonda describes how she instantly disliked ‘La Nati’ and that the director was not popular amongst the prisoners because of how she governed the prison: ‘Las compañeras de encierro me dicen que es arbitraria, […] histérica y propensa a enfurecerse por cualquier nimiedad. Fomenta el “chivateo”, favoreciendo a las reclusas que lo ejercen, de tal modo que resultan repulsivas para las demás’ (82). Although she was one of a group of women whom ‘La Nati’ contemptuously denominated ‘las intelectuales’, Malonda believed that the director developed a curious dislike for her in particular. This dislike led to multiple instances of persecution. On one occasion, Malonda was placed in a punishment cell with other women for having said goodbye to Communist prisoners who were being transferred to another prison. Although, in this instance, the punishment was collective, Malonda believed this to be ‘un plan preconcebido’ so that ‘La Nati’ could mark her as politically affiliated on her prison record and thereby have more cause to punish and isolate her (122). On another occasion, the governor physically separated Malonda from a friend while they were chatting and told the other woman that she would shave her head and send her to another prison if she spoke to Malonda again. Malonda writes that this made her feel ‘la impotencia e imposibilidad de defenderse contra tanta monstruosidad’ and that the governor ‘lo ha llevado a cabo sólo por el placer que le produce el molestarnos a todas, y en particular a un grupo que tratamos en todo momento de mantenernos dignas’ (128). The fact that ‘La Nati’ had formed a personal dislike of Malonda was also shown in her decision to have Malonda brought back to Valencia after she had been sent to work in the infirmary of another prison because of her pharmaceutical expertise. A friend in Valencia, another inmate who was the governor’s hairdresser in prison, told Malonda that ‘La Nati’ had described her as ‘la niña mimada’ and that she had insisted upon Malonda’s return because she could not bear the idea of her having power and freedom at the other institution (140). These examples contrast the largely unchecked power of prison officials with the vulnerability of individual prisoners. ‘La Nati’ was able to govern the prison almost as her own personal fiefdom, making favourites of those who agreed to spy on their fellow prisoners and persecuting women whom she disliked.[[365]](#footnote-365) Conversely, Malonda lacked any power to defend herself from the machinations of the governor. She comments that her complete lack of control over her life made her feel that prisoners were ‘como marionetas movidas por hilos invisibles, independientes de nuestra voluntad, puesto que como autómatas hemos de obedecer’ (107). Vinyes argues that the prison authorities deliberately created this sense of uncertainty as a method of control, as prisoners had no ability to determine a multitude of elements, small and large, within their own lives.[[366]](#footnote-366) This image of a political prisoner as passive and powerless could not be more different from the sense of purpose that Communist women exude in their narratives, and highlights the differences that existed between those who formed part of the Communist community and those who experienced imprisonment as an individual.

The lack of an extended support network also affected the non-Communist prisoners economically in some prisons. García Madrid tells of a system of exploitation in Ventas that provided inmates with the opportunity to have letters sent out of the prison clandestinely. Prisoners were allowed to send letters periodically (usually once a fortnight or so) that were of a prescribed length and subject to censorship by the prison authorities. These letters could only be sent to family members but excluded relatives who were also imprisoned. In order to bypass these rules, the prisoners could send letters secretly via messengers, but at a price, as García Madrid describes:

Estos [hombres] entraban o sacaban de la cárcel lo que fuese, con tal de que les diesen lo que pedían. Dichos empleos los conseguían por medio de amistad con las funcionarias y, en algunos casos, por ser familiares suyos; la verdad es que su oficio consistía en exprimir un poco más los bolsillos de aquellas presas que tenían algunas monedas. Concretamente para sacar una carta y echarla al correo, había que pagar dos pesetas con cincuenta céntimos y esto, para quien nada tiene y en el año 39 resultaban desorbitado, pero no había más arreglo que éste. (94)[[367]](#footnote-367)

This system, which provided a much-needed service for prisoners at extortionate rates, would not have been necessary for Communists, who successfully smuggled information into and out of the majority of prisons where they were housed. Most Communists mention these systems. Manoli describes their ability to read ‘partes ingleses’ which informed them of the progress of the Second World War, and Soledad Real highlights how information was brought into and sent out of prison clandestinely with the help of prisoners’ families in ‘un bocadillo, ya en un tubo de pasta de dientes o en una cazuela de doble fondo’ (II, 120). Furthermore, even prisoners that were in solitary confinement could be reached, despite their apparent seclusion from other prisoners and their family members, as Manoli highlights: even in the most severe cases, the Communists ensured that prisoners received ‘noticias de sus familiares y lo mejor de cada paquete’ (II, 122). This demonstrates the difference that being part of the Communist network made to prisoners, as these political activists and their contacts outside of the prison were schooled in the art of clandestine resistance and had the necessary networks both in and outside prison. As such, non-Communist prisoners were considerably more vulnerable to extortion and corruption because of their lack of connections.

The vulnerability of political prisoners extended beyond the prison walls, affecting their families too. As Anderson observes, local prisoner supervision boards (*Juntas Pro-Presos*) were established in April 1939 with the aim of ‘monitoring the behaviour of all those related to the incarcerated and ensuring the prisoners’ families “respected the law of God and that they showed true love for the Patria”’.[[368]](#footnote-368) These boards were run by the mayor, the priest, and a local right-wing woman, which meant that ‘centrally based officials were passing down the tasks of surveillance and discipline to grassroots Francoists’.[[369]](#footnote-369) The support of right-wing members of the community was also (briefly) made a prerequisite of parole by the regime in 1940, although this was quickly replaced by internal exile when local authorities were unwilling to agree to the release of prisoners.[[370]](#footnote-370) This placed a lot of leverage into the hands of certain people, many of whom abused their power for their own benefit. For example, in *Réquiem por la libertad* García Madrid tells of her mother’s attempts to gain the support of the much-desired ‘falangista que “podía hacer algo”’, meaning someone that could support a petition for parole (78). This man, Óscar, was a cousin of a neighbour and promised to help García Madrid’s mother secure the release of her daughter. However, the neighbour then requested that Óscar be allowed to ‘borrow’ García Madrid’s bed—‘Como usted ahora no la necesita…’—and, though suspicious, García Madrid’s mother gave it to him so as not to damage the relationship and harm her daughter’s chances of being released from prison (78). Óscar then avoided any further contact with her mother and it became clear that he had manipulated her in order to gain something from her vulnerable situation.

We also see the struggle to find a right-wing ally in *Aquello sucedió así,* when Malonda laments that ‘¿es posible que en tres años no hayan encontrado mis familiares alguien que les escuche? No haría falta otra cosa. Pero no; por lo visto, todo queda en promesas’ (146). In these examples the reader sees the difference again in the vulnerability of non-Communist women, compared to that of Communist prisoners. It is considerably less likely that Communist women would have found themselves in the position of needing to gain a recommendation from a local Falangist, or seeking their help, for several reasons. Communists were much more likely to be sentenced more severely, particularly those who were released from prison and then convicted again, thereby excluding them from the decreed pardons for lesser sentences. The anonymous contributor to *Cárcel de mujeres* comments on this, for example: ‘En cuanto a las detenidas por asuntos de posguerra […] todas sabían que estaban implicadas en actividades clandestinas y que las sentencias, y sobre todo el trato recibido en Gobernación, era durísimo’ (16). Furthermore it seems unlikely, given their sense of dignity in their role as political prisoners that Communists would have stooped to beg their enemies to speak on their behalf for their parole. Consequently, there is no mention in the Communist narrative of the kind of exploitative scenario which García Madrid’s mother found herself in.

The lack of a support network, and their marginalised social status, also made non-Communist women more susceptible to exploitation upon their release from prison. García Segret, who lost her only two remaining family members while imprisoned, found herself in a precarious situation following her release. Having no relatives to support her, she was forced to rely upon the charity of friends, who were themselves struggling to survive in the post-war economic climate. In a letter from September 1946, García Segret wrote of her distress at having to accept charity to survive, which she describes as ‘un insulto a la dignidad de la persona y que hace imposible la vida material del ser humano’ (132). García Segret clearly felt keenly the vulnerability of her position, particularly as she had been tricked by the people she was living with to extort money from her earlier that year. Although there is little information about this episode in *Abajo las dictaduras*, García Segret explains how she was told by those accommodating her that she was being hunted by the police, thereby making sheltering her more dangerous and justifying the need for her to pay a higher price. García Segret discovered eventually that she was a ‘víctima de un vil chantaje’ (121), but this episode highlights the difficult situation that women like García Segret were placed in after their release. As well as her lack of a familial support network, García Segret’s difficulties were undoubtedly exacerbated by her former status as a middle-class professional. The Communist women who wrote or contributed testimony about their prison experiences were all of a working-class background. Consequently, upon their release from prison they returned to the same milieu, taking work in factories, as servants, or doing piecework at home. In contrast, García Segret would have been unable to return to her profession as a teacher, being ‘depurado’ because of her political beliefs. Instead, she would have had to find some other form of semi-professional work, and the reader sees her various attempts to support herself, including working at a sanatorium and as a manager at a boarding school (165; 194). These positions offered García Segret little stability, though, as her past as a political prisoner often caught up with her. In a letter from 1954, ten years after her release from prison, García Segret writes of her difficulties in keeping a job:

Queridísima amiga: Agradezco infinito sus buenos deseos, pero no creo que pueda estar mucho tiempo; pues el otro día, estando en el café el Director, oficiosamente le dijeron—como para advertirle—que tenía de Encargada del Colegio una Señora *antirreligiosa*. El pánico que le invadió fue tan grande que se le notaba exteriormente la preocupación, hasta que me lo comunicó, diciéndome que era necesario evitar que ese concepto cundiera hasta los chicos, para que no inquiriesen. Le tranquilicé a ese respecto, diciéndole, además, que mi estancia en el Colegio no era problema, ya que yo saldría en cuanto fuera necesario. Por lo tanto, tendré que dejar de trabajar en Vigo, pues el virus invade todo y nadie quiere contacto con lo que se mira destacado. (194) [original emphasis]

This quotation describes the difficulties that her status as a former prisoner caused her. What is particularly striking is that her previous conviction prevented her from being able to settle in one place: once it was known that she was ‘antirreligiosa’, this information spread and unavoidably marked her as an outcast. Although this sense of rootlessness was something that affected many political prisoners, including Communists, and particularly regarding the internal exile that was often a condition of parole, Communists were at least certain to find ways to reconnect with the Party. This would have ensured some level of support wherever they went, something which non-Communist prisoners could not rely on and which further highlights their greater vulnerability.

However, it is also important to recognise the root causes of a society where citizens exploited one another. Del Arco Blanco’s *Hambre de siglos*, as mentioned above, discusses the profound hunger that the majority of middle- and working-class Spaniards suffered throughout the 1940s. The regime’s autarchic economic policy aspired to make the country self-sufficient by substituting imports for internal production, believing that the ensuing economic growth would lead to industrial development. However, the high levels of state intervention necessary for autarchy, such as price fixing across multiple sectors, meant that inflation rose dramatically and stalled economic growth. Consequently, as del Arco Blanco highlights, there was no money for investment in new technologies and production reduced dramatically, both in industrial and agricultural production. This led to both high unemployment and severe food shortages in a country that was recovering from civil war.[[371]](#footnote-371) García Segret commented on food shortages two years after her release in a letter to her friend in 1946, lamenting that

los precios de lo más necesario parecen cosa fabulosa, fantástica, sin embargo, nada más real; aquí el aceite en la fecha que usted me escribió estaba el litro a ciento y pico de pesetas, y adulterado; el pan de maíz a diez cincuenta, ahora bajó algo con la cosecha; pero las habichuelas están a quince pesetas al kilo, el azúcar a cuarenta y dos y las patatas a cinco pesetas el kilo y queriendo subir, así que ¿quién puede comer? (132)

The expense and poor quality of many staples was not something that just affected those suffering Francoist repression, though. Some years earlier in 1939, del Arco Blanco cites the concerns of an English industrialist living in Jerez in relation to the scarcity of food. Noting the impossibility of obtaining basic items such as sugar, oil, and potatoes, and the extreme scarcity of others such as meat, eggs, and rice, he remarked that ‘si nosotros nos sentimos perpetuamente hambrientos, puede imaginar qué debe estar sintiendo el obrero’.[[372]](#footnote-372) Food shortages affected the majority of those in Spain to a greater or lesser degree and most people would have been battling to make ends meet. Consequently, the survivalist attitude that we see in non-Communist texts, where women were often forced to place their individual needs ahead of the collective, should also be extrapolated to analyse the behaviour of those who sought to exploit them. The functionaries that arranged for messages to be smuggled out of prison by friends or family members, as noted by García Madrid, or the tricksters that persuaded García Segret to pay more for ‘hiding’ her in their accommodation, are examples of this: people whose day-to-day survival, and the survival of their families, relied upon eking out money and resources in any way possible. As with García Madrid’s decision to steal the jug of hot chocolate, it is not a debate about morality, but a reflection upon the harsh realities that ordinary people suffered as a consequence of the poor economic planning of the Francoist government.

Although the analysis in this section suggests that Communists were less vulnerable to exploitation, this is not to say that they did not experience it. As discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis, for example, Juana Doña found herself at the mercy of a distant relative who attempted to rape her when she was at her most vulnerable. What it does demonstrate to the reader, however, is that the representation of vulnerability and exploitation by both Francoist authorities and members of the public is largely absent from the Communist narrative of imprisonment. Doña’s inclusion of her vulnerability made her Communist narrative exceptional; it was designed that way to simultaneously criticise political dogmatism while highlighting her own feminist analysis of the position of women in Spain. The absence of vulnerability from most Communist narratives can be explained in two ways, then. The first is that the support network formed by Communists across Spain and their knowledge of clandestine practices did genuinely alleviate some stresses of imprisonment (albeit causing them greater difficulties because of their combative stance towards the regime). It is also absent from the narratives of Communist women because of the effect an acknowledgement of vulnerability would have upon the psyche of the Communists and the portrayal of their resistance narrative. Personal emotions and vulnerabilities were unacceptable in the Communist community because of the devastating effect that they believed it would have upon morale. This extends to the Communist narrative of resistance, which was being presented as a counter narrative of Spanish history during the Transition. As it portrays the majority of Spaniards as united in their opposition to the regime, admitting the murkier exploitation of prisoners by other citizens would undermine the binary vision of twentieth-century Spanish history as good versus evil, or right versus wrong, which the Communists were keen to establish, with their own Party at the centre of the resistance. This is also the reason that the mental hardships of imprisonment are not addressed in the Communist women’s narrative of prison. As analysis of *Réquiem por la libertad*, *Abajo las dictaduras*, and *Aquello sucedió así* demonstrates, though, there is considerable evidence that mental survival was one of the obstacles that prisoners faced.

## Coping strategies: poetry as intellectual and emotional struggle

The use of verse—either poetry or song—is a feature of most writing by political prisoners during the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. It is least common in the writing of Communist women, although they do recount several political songs that they sang, such as ‘Cárcel de Ventas’ and ‘Es la Pepa una Gachi’.[[373]](#footnote-373) These songs were satirical, mocking the situation that the prisoners found themselves in and their captors, and the lyrics form part of the women’s collective memory. However, verse is a feature of almost all texts by non-Communist prisoners. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, some prisoners such as García Madrid, the left-wing Carlota O’Neill, and the right-wing Pilar Millán Astray wrote entire collections of poetry, communicating their experiences of imprisonment.[[374]](#footnote-374) These volumes act as snapshots, encapsulating specific memories and remembering comrades who had been executed. Others, like García Segret, García Madrid, and Malonda, intersperse their memoirs with poetry. Though there is not space in this thesis to engage comprehensively with the bodies of verse written by political prisoners in Spain, the following sections will consider the way García Segret and García Madrid wrote poetry as a coping mechanism during their imprisonment. While both wrote as a form of intellectual stimulation, they also used poetry in different ways. Through verse, García Segret explored her sense of loss and grief, portrayed herself as both activist and woman, and expressed her intellectual freedom in the face of Francoist repression. Conversely, García Madrid traded her skills as a poet and thus found a way to accommodate herself with the prison authorities and the new political climate, while not losing her sense of self as a political prisoner.

It is clear that prisoners needed to find a way to combat the intellectual monotony of prison life. Communists had activism and political debates to stimulate them, and García Segret writing coded letters about politics was another version of that. However, correspondence was infrequent and poetry became an outlet for the prisoners’ minds. García Madrid traded her poetry with the nuns in Girona as a way of gaining valuable time alone, creating a space for creativity but also for quiet and reflection, which was scarce within the prison walls. In the case of García Segret, while *Abajo las dictaduras* mostly contains her re-published correspondence, she also found intellectual stimulation and a sense of release in writing verse. In a letter to a friend in November 1941, with a poem attached, she commented that

Con respecto al pensamiento dejo que la mente y la imaginación se expansionen, pues ‘máquina que no trabaja dice que se enmohece’, y yo procuro (aún sintiendo mucho el desgaste que se produce) que mi cerebro no se atrofie por falta de uso. (54)

Malonda, who had equally been used to a professional life before imprisonment, complains of the effects of such inactivity in prison too:

Pesa sobre una la insulsez de una vida de parasitismo e inutilidad. Todos tus movimientos, en todo momento, han de obedecer a una voz de mando que te es dada sin cesar. […] todas las justas ambiciones, como es el de sentirte útil en la vida; cualquier aspiración en el orden que sea, todo, todo, ha tenido que desaparecer para quedar el individuo convertido en un autómata que se ha de mover a capricho de quien le ordene. (123-4)

García Segret, García Madrid, and Malonda were independent women and the sense of unjust imprisonment, combined with their continual inactivity, affected their sense of self. As is discussed in the following section, Malonda coped with this situation partially by contemplating her own suicide. The poetry of García Segret and García Madrid, however, offer different insights into how women used verse to survive imprisonment.

García Segret’s poetry has several functions within her memoir. The first is to express nostalgia for a domestic life which has been taken from her, and which she cannot recover. García Segret’s longing for the past is evident in poems such as ‘¡¡¡Añoranza!!!’ and ‘Reflejos’, which focus on the small pleasures of domestic life. In ‘¡¡¡Añoranza!!!’, which was written in March 1938, García Segret dreams of a peaceful day spent with her husband:

Sueño…

… mi vida pasada.

Sueño, mi vida de amor.

Sueño… aquel cuento de hadas.

Qué vivimos, tú y yo.

Sueño…

… que somos felices,

en hogar encantador.

Sueño, que tú me sonríes,

pleno de vida e ilusión.

Sueño…

… que llegas cansado…

del trabajo abrumador,

te sonrío y animado

descanso en el salón.

Sueño…

… que corto las flores…

Mientras tú, lees tranquilo.

Sueño, los bellos fulgores,

que destella nuestro nido.

Sueño…

… que tú y yo paseamos,

sanos y largos senderos…

Alegres pinares cruzamos,

respirando con ensueño. […] (20-1)

This excerpt provides us with a sense of the theme of the whole poem. Its title has already established that García Segret is longing for the past, but the first word of each stanza reminds us that this can only be a dream, as her husband’s murder has destroyed the possibility of re-enacting this in the future. Though it seems like a fairy tale to her, García Segret is simply remembering instances of everyday life: cutting flowers from the garden, greeting her husband after work, and walking through a forest with him. Remembering happier times from the past through writing distracts García Segret from the pain of the present and the uncertainty of the future. Although not in lyrical form, these same themes can be found in *Aquello sucedió así* and *Réquiem por la libertad*. Malonda remembers the happiness of her home throughout the memoir, often as a comment upon the state of post-war Spanish society (17; 40; 96-7; 101; 132). She also includes memories of her life with her husband before the war, such as in the section ‘Rememoración’, in which she describes the pleasure and camaraderie of their business trips together in their car (118-9). Similarly, García Madrid’s thoughts turn to home when she finds herself in a highly stressful and dangerous situation under questioning. She describes how ‘acaso como autodefensa […] pensó, se imaginó, estar en su propia casa y que la persona que allí se hallaba temblando, nada tenía que ver con ella’ (38). These examples highlight a profound thematic difference between Communist and non-Communist texts, as nostalgia is not generally a feature of the Communist narrative.

As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, Communist women look positively upon their conversion to Communism and the arrival of the Second Republic, which they recall as moments when they achieved ‘true subjecthood’, as Halfin puts it, within collective political actions. This experience, however, is something that fits within the larger model of Communist life writing, almost as a rite of passage, rather than a generally positive outlook on the past. Spanish Communists were writing their memoirs during the Transition to expose the repression that they suffered and fought against, rather than to remember their youth nostalgically.[[375]](#footnote-375) While their role in the resistance was something that they were proud of, it is fundamentally different from the kind of nostalgia that can be seen in García Segret’s poetry. García Segret and Malonda were women of a different generation to the majority of the young Communists. Around twenty years older than most of the Communists, García Segret and Malonda would perhaps have been more prone to nostalgia, reflecting on younger and happier times. Most of the Communists were still in the flush of youth, experiencing the Republic and the Civil War as the norm. As such, the nostalgia that we see in *Abajo las dictaduras* and *Aquello sucedió así* should be considered as a definitive difference between Communist and non-Communist memoirs of imprisonment. This is a consequence of generational and ideological differences, but also of the way that the women engaged with their carceral surroundings: Communist narratives tend to look to the present and the future, rather than longing for the past.

García Segret’s nostalgic poetry also focuses specifically on the domestic realm. In ‘Reflejos’, she remembers ‘mi casita| toda, tan hermosa y linda’, going on to describe various parts of her home, such as the curtains and furniture (30). To some extent, this is because her home remains something tangible that she can remember and return to, unlike the family members that are gone. In a later stanza of ‘Reflejos’, García Segret comments that ‘Ya sólo quedan reliquias,| de quienes allí vivían’ highlighting the connection between the dead and their material surroundings (30). In this way, her home binds her with the memories of her lost family members, almost standing for them metaphorically. However, there is also a sense that García Segret published these poems early on in her memoir to encourage the reader to consider her as a woman, rather than as a ‘roja’. As mentioned above, García Segret was aware—in a way that is not as evident in most of the other prison memoirs—that she was presenting herself to an audience. *Abajo las dictaduras* does portray her as a Republican, liberal, professional woman, but her inclusion of these nostalgic verses about the domestic sphere reminds us that she was also a wife and a daughter, that she had a home. In her discussion of Dolores Ibárruri’s autobiography *El único camino* (1963), Herrmann discusses the debate surrounding the presentation of the public and private spheres in the autobiographies of female political activists. Herrmann contradicts the idea that the presentation of the domestic and maternal in Ibárruri’s memoir revealed her true self (as opposed to wearing the mask of political activism), arguing that ‘the difficulty of carrying out both [activism and domesticity] well certainly does not mean that female militancy is inherently paradoxical’.[[376]](#footnote-376) García Segret was aware of the alleged contradiction between being both political and domestic, something which the Francoist demonisation of left-wing women played upon, and attempts to counteract that in her narrative.[[377]](#footnote-377) She was not afraid to present herself simultaneously as a professional, a political activist, and a wife who enjoyed domestic pleasures. In many ways, then, García Segret’s narrative coincides with the feminism found in Doña’s *Desde la noche y la niebla*: although the women hold different political beliefs, they do not see a contradiction between the various roles, both public and private, that they fulfil.

García Segret also wrote poetry about her grief while she was imprisoned, mourning both her murdered husband and her elderly father, who died while she was in custody. Poems such as ‘Tristezas’, ‘Vuela, pensamiento, vuela’, ‘Plegaria’, and ‘Dolora’ allowed García Segret to reflect on her sorrow, frustration, guilt, and anger at the deaths of her loved ones. These poems often address a subject—the deceased or the personified ground that holds their remains—and there is a corporeality about the poems that bears a striking similarity to Doña’s expression of individual grief in *Desde la noche y la niebla*. The poetry also demonstrates how García Segret’s imagination acts as a release for her grief, allowing her mind to go where her confined body cannot.

‘Tristezas’, for example, is addressed to Gallego Camarero, her husband who was killed in a ‘saca’, and allows García Segret to contemplate his suffering: ‘Ya sé que sufriste mucho,| desde tu triste partida.| Ya sé… que tu cuerpo mustio, |¡tenía horribles heridas!| ¡Tu tormento fue horrible!| ¡Tu agonía infinita! | Mi dolor, mi desconsuelo| no cesarán mientras viva’ (23). In this poem García Segret attempts to reconcile her living husband, whom she addresses, with the decomposed remains that she knows he must now be. This highlights the disconnection felt by women such as García Segret, who lost family members without being able to see their bodies; it was hard for them to comprehend fully their loss or to mourn in a public way. We also see García Segret’s preoccupation with the physical remains of her loved ones in ‘Dolora’, in which she addresses the earth where her husband and father are buried (29). García Segret’s decision to focus on the corporeality of her husband’s death is similar to Doña remembering her sexual relationship with her husband while reading his final letter, as discussed in the second chapter of this thesis. Both women were attempting to accept the deaths of their partners and this made them think of their physical being. While Doña remembers Mesón’s body as living and breathing, García Segret tries to imagine the physical effects of torture and death on Gallego Camarero’s body. Doña’s approach relies upon memory, but García Segret is forced to use her imagination to picture the death of her husband. This perhaps explains why she finds that poetry the most appropriate form to express this grief. Unlike the correspondence, in which she relates the mundanities of every-day life to her friends, or her memoir-writing, in which she details the events that led to her faked pregnancy, the creative composition of verse constructs a space for her imagination to be free.

Through imaginative poetry, García Segret is also able to picture herself escaping the confines of the prison walls to mourn. In ‘Vuela, pensamiento, vuela’, García Segret describes her spirit leaving her body and flying to where her loved ones are buried: ‘Prisión de Saturrarán,| que tanto cierras mi cuerpo,| mi espíritu, vuela allá…| lejos… junto a un cementerio’ (24). She pictures her spirit ‘pasando hierros y puertas’ and arriving at the cemetery to give the deceased a kiss (25). This poem becomes a personal act of resistance. In imagining her spirit leaving the prison behind and seeking out her dead, she is intellectually defying the repression of the Francoist authorities. Though they can confine her, they cannot repress her mind. The imagined freedom also creates a space for García Segret to mourn and she once again uses poetry as an approach to grief. García Segret’s poetry of grief should also be considered in relation to the restriction on mourning the Republican dead to the private sphere, as dictated by the Francoist authorities. After the war, Francoist authorities refused to issue death certificates for their enemies, and bodies were not counted or registered, while the Nationalist dead were memorialised as martyrs in public spaces through religious ceremonies and monuments.[[378]](#footnote-378) Ignacio Fernández de Mata terms the lack of a space to grieve as ‘bad death’, describing it thus:

If the necessary rites, which symbolically procure a restful peace, are not followed; if the dead are not (re)located in their proper places, where the living can mourn and visit them; if the living cannot bid farewells, and thereby, their acknowledgement to “their dead”, individuals are not (re)inscribed in the cycle of life and death that characterizes personal and group existence.[[379]](#footnote-379)

This describes the experience of those on the defeated side who lost loved ones. By not allowing a space for Republicans to publicly grieve for their dead, the regime was intentionally excluding them from Spanish society. As such, García Segret’s poetry of grief becomes a way to externalise her loss, both a form of catharsis and a form of personal rebellion within a state that repressed her right to mourn. In this way, García Segret’s poetry is a form of self-expression for survival, allowing her to convey her identity as a widow, a grieving daughter, and a political activist, while she is physically and intellectually removed from society.

## Coping strategies: poetry as accommodation

While García Madrid’s *Réquiem por la libertad* includes excerpts from her volume of autobiographical poetry, *Al quiebro de mis espinas* (1977), this section focuses on the poetry that she wrote for the nuns who ran the prison in Girona. García Madrid’s abilities as a poet were a skill that she traded for money and privileges, demonstrating her willingness to negotiate in order to survive within the prison environment (182). Her negotiations with the religious personnel show a form of rapprochement between the nuns and the prisoners, considering particularly the fact that the nuns requested religious verses from her. This was not an ideological rapprochement, as García Madrid is not indicating that the women were somehow reformed by the regime’s repression. Rather, the incident demonstrates that the prisoners could sometimes find a space for common existence and negotiation with their custodians. It also provides comment on the way that some of the regime’s enforcers were less willing to enact the demonisation and marginalisation of the defeated than others.

The fact that García Madrid was asked to write poetry at all demonstrates that the nuns in Girona changed their opinion of the political prisoners. When the women first arrived, García Madrid tells us that ‘Aquellas monjitas […] no eran mala gente, pero estaban tan predispuestas contra las “rojas” que […] la idea que estaba inculcada en ellas se tradujo rápidamente en tratos disciplinarios’ (181). One of the nuns, Hermana Ángeles, was so terrified of the ‘presas rojas’ who, she had been told, had committed ‘barbaridades’, that she employed one of the common prisoners—a murderer—as a bodyguard (182-3). Over time, though, García Madrid built a relationship with Hermana Ángeles, who was responsible for her wing in Girona, and she paints the nun’s character meticulously in *Réquiem por la libertad*: from her habit of speaking in diminutives, to her humanity, which made the prisoners look fondly upon her whiskered face that they once thought ugly. The sense of naivety that García Madrid portrays in her depiction of Hermana Ángeles highlights that she was not an ideologue of the regime, but an elderly woman who had led a sheltered, religious life and who was suddenly confronted with a multitude of ‘dangerous’ political women. Furthermore, García Madrid emphasises the disruption that prisoner caused in the nuns’ sanctified spaces and routines, in which the religious women had traditionally aimed to be as silent as possible. Housing prisoners meant that it was no longer possible to impose silence, thus violating the religious traditions of that convent. García Madrid suspected that, for some nuns, ‘lo que verdaderamente las apenaba era que tuvieran encerradas a aquellas mujeres tan injustamente’ (184). She reports Hermana Ángeles as complaining that ‘¡Y para todas estas injusticias estamos ofendiendo a Jesús Sacramento!’, referring to the unjust incarceration of the political prisoners. Even the Reverend Mother of the convent admitted that the prisoners ‘no son lo que nos advirtieron al anunciarnos su llegada’ (190). This suggests that in getting to know the prisoners better, she could see the discord between the regime’s depiction of the women and the reality. It is not unusual to find instances of sympathetic authority figures, which feature in the writing of both Communist and non-Communist prisoners. However, these examples demonstrate that García Madrid presents the nuns as not entirely certain, or willing, in the role that they were expected to fulfil as custodians of hundreds of female political prisoners.

Based upon García Madrid’s experience in Girona, the division between those with authority and those incarcerated was not always so clearly defined. This becomes evident when we consider the fact that García Madrid was approached by Hermana Ángeles to write two religious poems for the nuns to read during their *tertulias*. This request created a space for her to negotiate the privilege of being exempt from formation, but it also reveals the attitude of the nuns towards their prisoners. First, in asking a favour, the nuns were clearly willing to cede power to García Madrid. A favour implies that something is owed and, as García Madrid astutely realised, this put her in a position to negotiate. While negotiation does not mean that they were equals, it did open up a space for dialogue, thereby reducing the distance between the women. Second, that nuns should ask a ‘roja’ to write religious verses for them meant that they clearly did not believe the regime’s rhetoric that political prisoners were all dangerous atheists. The nuns deemed García Madrid sufficiently knowledgeable about Catholicism to be able to write poetry that they would appreciate. The religious order understood something, then, that the political leaders refused to recognise: that Catholicism pervaded Spanish society as a set of cultural practices, regardless of whether women were religious or not. In this way, García Madrid’s religious poetry became a space in which the nuns and the political prisoners could share ideas.

The reader can see this space in the episode where García Madrid was asked to write religious poetry to be read during the visit of the Mother General (*Superiora General*). One poem was a greeting from the nuns and the other was a greeting from the prisoners. The second of these, which García Madrid reproduces in part, was the source of a power struggle between the Mother Superior of the convent and García Madrid. García Madrid was summoned to meet the Mother Superior, who the prisoners had not met, to discuss the following stanza addressed to the Mother General: ‘Vos rogaréis por que Él vea| nuestra inocencia y es fijo| que Juez indulgente sea,| pues preso por una idea| fue Jesús…, y fue su Hijo’ (189). García Madrid’s writing manipulates religious language to make a political point: a political prisoner’s crime is to believe something different to the authorities, a crime for which Jesus was crucified. The significance of this stanza was not lost upon the Mother Superior, who initially struggled to address her concerns directly:

‘Verá usted’ empezó insegura la monja, ‘a mí, personalmente, me gusta lo que dice, pero… dese cuenta que comparar a Jesús con cualquier mortal es una irreverencia y yo pienso que, por otra parte, a usted no le va a costar mucho trabajo enmendar esos versos, para mi tranquilidad siquiera. (189)

The ellipsis in this quotation reveals the Mother Superior’s indecision. Both women were aware that the alleged irreverence was not the cause of the problem, but the fact that the plight of the political prisoners was being so adeptly compared to that of Jesus. The fact that the Mother Superior was unwilling to address this directly is just one example of how García Madrid’s religious poetry created a space for dialogue between the women: the need to change the verse was not dictated, but requested, and the Mother Superior’s hesitancy shows that she was unsure of the power dynamic between them. García Madrid refused to alter the verses, arguing that ‘Nadie puede negar que Jesús pagó demasiado caro ser un idealista, así como nadie podrá evitar que, quienes estamos en esta situación creamos, con toda sinceridad, en la tremenda similitud entre aquélla y estas injusticias’ (190). This statement is a powerful assertion, both in forcing the Mother Superior to acknowledge the real reason that her poem is controversial and in García Madrid’s defence of her status as a political prisoner. García Madrid goes on to suggest that, if the Mother Superior was so worried about the poem, she should simply not read it. Her suggestion became a rallying cry for all of the other political prisoners when García Madrid told them of her conversation and she notes with some amusement that ‘Lo más curioso era que, hasta las mujeres que nunca habían leído un poema, estaban dispuestas a defender con uñas y dientes la maternidad de aquél’ (190). The poem was eventually read without changes being made and García Madrid acknowledges a measure of satisfaction that ‘se había obtenido un pequeño punto. Pequeño, pero al fin y al cabo… un punto’ (191).

This episode bears a similarity to the protests of Communist women in prison, who continually fought the prison authorities to be recognised as political prisoners. However, while García Madrid did become involved in a power struggle with the Mother Superior in order to have the political prisoners’ dignity recognised, the incident is not about resisting the authorities. Rather, García Madrid’s poetry found a way to accommodate the plight of political women within the ideology of the regime. García Madrid chose the language of her oppressors to simultaneously highlight its hypocrisy, while bringing the political prisoners closer to the religious women who were their custodians. We can see this in the fact that the tête-à-tête led to the Mother Superior’s admission, as mentioned above, that she had been misinformed about what the political prisoners were when she was told to house them. As such, García Madrid’s poetry becomes a way of broaching the divide between two groups of women who were not as dissimilar as the regime might have wanted them to think. In itself, this is a form of survival in prison: instead of building ideological barriers, as Communist women did, García Madrid tried to find a way of lessening the gap between the political prisoners and their captors.

## Coping strategies: contemplating suicide

While García Segret and García Madrid wrote poetry as a way of surviving prison, Malonda used her diaristic writing during her imprisonment to contemplate a more violent solution to her problems: suicide. Though only a short episode in *Aquello sucedió así*, it is a memorable one for Malonda’s seemingly dispassionate assessment of her situation. Shocked by the fact she had been sentenced to death, Malonda considered various ways that she could kill herself, and remembered an anecdote about another prisoner throwing herself from a balcony. Malonda was eventually persuaded against the idea by her fellow prisoners, who accused her of cowardice and argued that, in killing herself, she would only hasten the goal of her enemies, while her execution could yet be commuted (79). There is a similar episode in O’Neill’s memoir, when she suggests that she wanted to die because she was grieving for her husband.[[380]](#footnote-380) Mangini speculates that this might be a class phenomenon, as no working-class women consider suicide, but both O’Neill and Malonda wish for death.[[381]](#footnote-381) While this is a possibility, it is important to recognise the function of the texts in this context. The working-class women who wrote memoirs were all political activists, and largely Communists, and this kind of mentality would have been impossible to express without suffering accusations of defeatism and cowardice, thereby isolating them from their ideological support network. Nonetheless, in this context, Malonda reflects on her experiences living under the death penalty and states that:

Si ponía fin a mi vida, por fuerza cesarían sus sinsabores ante lo irremediable y para mí sería una liberación. […] Yo no sentía miedo por la muerte en sí. Mi desesperación tenía otros motivos: la indignación ante la impotencia a que me veía sometida, el asco de vivir en sociedad tan degradada que tiene que tolerar tanta indignidad, tanta ignominia. No era, ni mucho menos, el pánico del que se aferra a la vida, del condenado que quiere vivir a toda costa y piensa con horror en el fusilamiento. Ante este pensamiento, no perdía la serenidad. Precisé de más valor para dejar de realizar mi idea que el que hubiese necesitado para ponerlo en práctica. (78)

Malonda presents her contemplation of suicide as a rational response to her death sentence. Although she understandably felt desperate, she did not believe that ending her life was a rash decision, as shown through her description of suicide as a ‘liberación’ and her continuing ‘serenidad’. As such, Malonda’s process of weighing up the possibilities and the consequences is interesting when viewed as a coping mechanism.

Discussing suicide towards the end of the Third Reich, Christian Goeschel has identified several key motivations for this act: as an attempt to gain an honourable death, whether in the tradition of honour relating to soldiers or for the women who feared rape by the Soviet troops; as a way of regaining control over a situation; or as a reaction to fear for the future.[[382]](#footnote-382) Although from a radically different ideological background, the situation of the defeated Germans and defeated Republican Spaniards does bear some similarities: both experienced the nullification and de-legitimisation of their socio-political beliefs and the fear of violent repression against self and family. As such, there is a basis for applying some of Goeschel’s key motivations for suicide during or after conflict in *Aquello sucedió así*, despite the fact that Malonda did not eventually go through with the act. In particular, Goeschel’s concept of regaining control explains Malonda’s contemplation of suicide and her decision to include these ruminations in her narrative of life in prison. The words that Malonda chooses to describe her predicament reveal a sense of anger and shame about her position: she is angry at being powerless and being forced to live in such an undignified and dishonourable way. Malonda argues that she is not afraid of death and that it would be a liberation from the suffering, both emotional and physical, that she is being forced to endure. In her narration, Malonda also emphasises the alleged rationality of her decision. She claims that she considers ‘el medio de dar fin a mi vida con el menor sufrimiento posible’, and suggests that she examines these methods ‘con sangre fría’ (78). Malonda presents herself as clinically assessing the methods to end her life, which she feels has become degrading. The death sentence that looms over her has made her feel impotent; suicide, then, becomes a method of escape and of regaining control over her own life, even if it means taking the decision to end it. Malonda’s inclusion of contemplating suicide in *Aquello sucedió así* becomes an assertion of her free will and a method of distancing herself from the situation she found herself in, much like García Segret’s expressions of grief and nostalgia in her poetry.

The choice to include her contemplation of suicide in the narration of her incarceration also highlights a further difference between Communist and non-Communist narratives. Although she is eventually dissuaded from going through with the act because of her daughters, Malonda’s thoughts of suicide are an individual act of control. She does not feel the need to live and resist at all costs or shame at the individualism of her idea. We can compare this position to the Communist Matilde Landa, who took her own life in the prison in Palma. Born in 1904, Landa was the daughter of a well-known Republican lawyer and ‘krausista’, who had links to the ILE.[[383]](#footnote-383) Landa herself was university educated and, after joining the PCE in 1936, worked for the Socorro Rojo for the duration of the Civil War as the person responsible for inspecting hospitals and the evacuation of children to ‘colonias’.[[384]](#footnote-384) At the end of the war when other, more senior figures from the Communist Party were going into exile, Landa was put in charge of the clandestine reorganisation of the PCE in Madrid. However, this failed in part because ‘le faltaba experiencia política y de ningún modo se la podía considerar una profesional experta en la lucha clandestina’.[[385]](#footnote-385) She was arrested in April 1939 and was sentenced to death later that year, although this was commuted in June 1940. Landa was considered a prisoner of great importance to the regime and, after being transferred by plane to the prison in Palma in 1940, great efforts were made to convert her to the Francoist cause.[[386]](#footnote-386) The prison authorities used various tactics: isolating her from the other prisoners; using emotional blackmail to convince her to be baptised; and engaging her in intellectual debates on religion and politics. When the pressure became too much for Landa on 26 September 1942, she threw herself from a height onto the terrace of the prison, succumbing to her injuries later that day, although not before being baptised *in articulo mortis* by the prison authorities.

Landa is an emblematic figure in the writing of Communist women prisoners because of her work in Ventas to try to save women that were sentenced to death. However, few of the women that remember her for creating the ‘oficina de penadas’ refer to her suicide, highlighting their ambivalence over her decision to take her own life. Suicide, as a theme, is largely absent from Communist testimony, despite evidence that it did occur in the prisons, which suggests that the complexity of the act made it unsuitable for inclusion with the Communist narrative of resistance.[[387]](#footnote-387) This suggests that Mangini’s belief that suicide was a class phenomenon is problematic: the absence of suicide from Communist narratives is further evidence that they were ideologically-driven documents, rather than proof that working-class women did not contemplate suicide or take their own lives. Antonia García, one of the only women who discusses Landa’s suicide in depth in *Cárcel de mujeres*, defines it explicitly as an act of resistance, claiming that Landa ‘prefirió la muerte a renunciar los principios por los que había luchado y estaba luchando’ (II, 81). Another Communist who contributed to Cuevas’ collection of testimony, Angelita, also defends Landa, stating that ‘Una revolucionaria no lo hace cuando tiene todas sus energías y toda la fuerza de un organismo fuerte y sano’ (II, 193). Angelita was arguing that Landa had been so worn down by the tactics of the authorities that she was no longer physically and mentally able to resist. Angelita’s defensiveness highlights that there was criticism of the suicide, a stance which Ginard i Féron also discovered in his interviews with former prisoners.[[388]](#footnote-388) The silence surrounding Landa’s suicide in the majority of Communist testimony is as a sign that, in most cases, suicide was considered an act that was too individualistic and pessimistic to form part of the Communists’ resistance narrative in prison. As such, Malonda’s open discussion of her suicidal thoughts contrasts with the Communists’ reticence on the subject, further demonstrating the difference in the way that Communist and non-Communist women portrayed imprisonment. The different coping mechanisms displayed by García Segret, García Madrid, and Malonda highlight the fact that prisoners had to survive imprisonment both physically and psychologically. The absence of psychological hardship from the Communist women’s prison narrative does not suggest that they did not experience it, but that the topic was taboo. The Communist community expected total commitment to resistance, and this included mental resistance too.

This chapter demonstrates that women prisoners who were not Communists wrote very different life writing accounts of incarceration under Franco. Rather than placing resistance at the heart of their narratives, the memoirs by García Madrid, García Segret, and Malonda focus on survival in prison and post-war Spain. Their sense of justice, which was violated by political imprisonment during the regime and then disappointed during the Transition, became the source of inspiration for writing and publishing their texts. This is in stark contrast to the Communist women’s prison narrative, which developed from a desire to portray the history of the resistance with the PCE at the centre. Non-Communist women, then, highlight the Foucauldian spectacle of justice in Franco’s Spain, which sought to establish the power of the new state and to cow the populace in fear. The need for justice is absent from Communist texts, because they did not view the dictatorship as capable of enacting justice. For women outside of the Communist network of support, their narratives also demonstrate that survival in prison was linked to an ability to negotiate with their fellow prisoners and with the authorities, even though this also left them vulnerable to exploitation. *Réquiem por la libertad*, *Abajo las dictaduras*, and *Aquello sucedió así* also show that survival in prison meant finding a way to deal with psychological hardships. In the case of García Segret and Malonda, this meant finding an outlet for their intellect and their grief in an environment which sought to nullify them, helping them to regain a sense of power and agency. For García Madrid, this meant finding a way to bridge the gap between the prisoners and the authorities, accommodating the prisoners within the regime while highlighting their unjust persecution.

# Conclusion

This thesis reads the narratives of women political prisoners under the Franco dictatorship comparatively, as constructions, situating them as responses to the process of democratisation in Spain rather than as simple factual representations of life under the regime in the post-war years. It explores life writing accounts by Communists, whose representations of imprisonment have formed the basis for the majority of research into women’s political imprisonment in Spain, and non-Communists, who have been largely ignored. By reading a broad corpus in this way, I deconstruct the tropes of the Communist narrative of resistance and explore the gaps and silences in their life writing accounts. This allows me to investigate how non-Communist women discuss their experiences of prison, highlighting themes and styles that are not visible with the ideological framework of Communists. My analysis focuses primarily on six texts: the two volumes of *Cárcel de mujeres* by Tomasa Cuevas; *Desde la noche y la niebla* by Juana Doña; *Réquiem por la libertad* by Ángeles García Madrid; *Abajo las dictaduras* by Josefa García Segret; and *Aquello sucedió así* by Ángeles Malonda.

Beginning with the moment when these texts were published—during or immediately after the Transition—allowed me to explore the women’s motivations for writing. While this was undoubtedly a response to the lifting of censorship, all the texts that form the corpus for this thesis pass comment on the process of democratisation. Christina Dupláa initiated this argument in 2000 by suggesting that former prisoners, like Cuevas, were writing as a response to the ‘pacto de olvido’.[[389]](#footnote-389) The coherence of the Communist narrative and its focus on resistance indicated, however, that militants were not just writing to contest the lack of focus on repression, a consequence of the political decisions taken to ensure democratisation. Members of the PCE were also re-evaluating their secondary status in democratic politics following a series of electoral disappointments, and wanted to write themselves and the Party into the history of the anti-Francoist resistance. For non-Communist women, the Amnesty Law meant that their persecutors would never face prosecution, so publishing their life writing accounts became a way of redressing the balance. Though they were not seeking revenge, nor attempting to change the law, writing their accounts became a form of justice.

Situating these texts during the Transition also helps us to read them as constructions rather than as simple factual accounts of repression in the aftermath of the Civil War. When read comparatively, Communist women’s narratives of prison demonstrate a high degree of coherence. This is partially explained by international Communist traditions of autobiography, which exhorted Party members to consider their lives solely in relation to Communism. The Communist women’s narratives of prison thus focus on political acts and exclude personal and emotional details. Communist texts focus almost exclusively on acts of resistance and on bearing witness to repression, but they also use the same themes (political organisation, hunger strikes and protests, education) and focus on the same emblematic figures (‘la Veneno’, Matilde Landa, the Trece Rosas, etc.). This is at the expense of personal reflections on the impact imprisonment had upon the individual. Communist narratives are not devoid of the personal, however. Communist women shared deep affective bonds due to the length of time they were imprisoned, their social exclusion upon release, and their sense of pride at their role in the resistance. The extent of the coherence of this message demonstrates that the clandestine Communist network kept an oral history of repression alive during the dictatorship as a further act of resistance to the silence that was maintained by the regime in the public sphere.

The coherence of Communist texts can also be seen in the way their narratives have influenced the cultural productions about women’s political imprisonment in Spain. Twenty-first century authors have used life writing accounts to appropriate the authority and emotional truths of repression and resistance into their novels, such as Almudena Grandes’ inclusion of Juana Doña as a character in *Las tres bodas de Manolita*, and various real-life episodes in Dulce Chacón’s *La voz dormida*.[[390]](#footnote-390) Both authors use real activists as characters or incorporate activists’ memories into their novels for various reasons. While the authors undoubtedly intend to include these memories as a method of paying tribute to the suffering of those who took part in resistance, they also incorporate real-life accounts to lend authenticity to their own writing. An unintended consequence of including life writing accounts in their own novels is that Grandes and Chacón unintentionally mimic the tropes of the Communist narrative, thereby perpetuating the dominance of an ideologically-driven representation of imprisonment.

While Grandes and Chacón ostensibly eschew partisanship by making their protagonists—Manolita and Pepita—non-political characters (i.e. not members of political parties), the presence of memories and characters that have been lifted more or less directly from Communist life writing accounts demonstrate the influence of the Communist narrative. For example, Chacón’s character Hortensia is separated from her baby and held in the prison chapel the night before her execution. In an effort to persuade her to confess, the priest offers to allow her to breastfeed her daughter if she consents but, as a matter of principle, Hortensia refuses.[[391]](#footnote-391) This episode relates precisely Núñez’s anecdote of a Communist, Julia, who is told she will be allowed to breastfeed her baby if she confesses. Julia replies ‘Soy comunista convencida, no creo en Dios y no me confesaré’.[[392]](#footnote-392) This memory contrasts the emotional blackmail of the prison authorities with the ideological integrity of Communist women. It is also important to comment on Chacón’s inclusion of the story of the Trece Rosas, a fundamental pillar of the Communist women’s prison narrative. Chacón’s uses specific details of the Communist narrative, such as the young woman who laments her mother’s sorrow on losing another child after her brother had also been executed. Chacón also includes Julia Conesa’s final letter to her mother, which is one of the most well-known symbols of the Trece Rosas.[[393]](#footnote-393) These examples demonstrate that Chacón directly lifted parts of the Communist narrative and transplanted them into her novel to lend it emotional truth.

Similarly, Grandes uses Doña as a minor character in *Las tres bodas de Manolita*, and the premise of the whole novel is lifted from *Querido Eugenio.* In *Querido Eugenio*,Doña tells how a priest in Porlier, a men’s prison in Madrid, would allow women to ‘marry’ a prisoner for the price of several hundred pesetas, tobacco, and cakes.[[394]](#footnote-394) This is something that Doña represents as invaluable time for her and other women whose partners and family members were sentenced to death. Grandes has taken this one specific memory and fictionalised it—although we see Doña the character visiting Mesón in Porlier in the novel—to create a text that resonates with sympathy and admiration for women’s role in enduring and resisting the regime. However, what is particularly striking in *Las tres bodas de Manolita* is the extent to which Grandes has also mimicked the narrative devices of Communist writing, without recognising or acknowledging their ideologically-driven representation of the resistance.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I show how Communist women wrote memoirs that extrapolated the political memories of activists to represent the whole prison population. Furthermore, the dominance of Communist life writing as a genre structured and defined the way that women were able to respond emotionally to their imprisonment. Grandes’ character Manolita is portrayed as non-political and is given the nickname ‘la señorita Conmigo No Contéis’ by her brother’s friends, who laugh at her because she is unwilling to become involved in politics.[[395]](#footnote-395) Even though Manolita becomes drawn into helping the PCE in the resistance, she is not portrayed as a political activist. Nonetheless, Manolita’s observations about experiencing post-war repression clearly mimic the Communist women’s narrative of prison. Whilst waiting to visit her betrothed, Manitas, in Porlier, Manolita comments that

volví a sentir que las dos formábamos parte de algo mucho más grande que nosotras, como si la cola de Porlier no fuera una larga fila de mujeres solas, sino una sola mujer y a la vez la madre, la hija, la hermana, la mujer de todos.[[396]](#footnote-396)

In this quotation, and throughout *Las tres bodas de Manolita*, Grandes homogenises the post-war experiences of women: the suffering of individual women becomes collective, as they become the symbolic mother, daughter, sister, and wife of the persecuted men. This is a typical Communist narrative device and Grandes uses it for the same reasons that the Communists did: individual suffering is extrapolated to become something greater and more meaningful, something that serves a purpose and has an emotional resonance that hooks the reader. We can also see Grandes’ use of the Communist narrative in Manolita’s emotional response to repression:

con el tiempo comprendí que la alegría era un arma superior a odio, las sonrisas más útiles, más feroces que los gestos de rabia y desaliento. […] Por eso me acostumbré a sonreír siempre, a toda hora […] para que entendieran que no podían herirme, ya no, y mis sonrisas, las de las demás, se fueron infiltrando poco a poco en mi interior, moldeando mi carácter para hacerme cada vez más fuerte.[[397]](#footnote-397)

Manolita’s strength mirrors how Communist women portrayed their emotional experience of repression. Negativity was seen as defeatism and a collective life was the source of true happiness. Grandes perhaps writes this trait into her character to pay tribute to the endurance of women, but in doing so she emulates another key trope of the Communist narrative.

The influence of Communist writing is further evident in the fact that both authors sign off their novels by referencing a series of people for their contributions to the production of *La voz dormida* and *Las tres bodas de Manolita*. For Chacón, this list includes Tomasa Cuevas, Soledad Real, Juana Doña, Manolita del Arco, José Amalia Villa and ‘Reme y Florián, Celia y El Grande’, that is Remedios Montero and her husband Florían García.[[398]](#footnote-398) Grandes mentions Doña, as well as Amalia Villa, amongst others. All of these were Communists, many of them were female prisoners, and the authors list their historical sources to lend their novels authority. However, there is no explicit recognition within either text that the narrative is definitively influenced by Communist contributions: Grandes references these names as factual sources, while Chacón makes no attempt to highlight the political ideology of her influences. In discussing the modern interpretations of the Trece Rosas narrative, Kajsa Larson has suggested that Emilio Martínez Lázaro’s 2008 film production de-politicised the narrative for a 21st century audience.[[399]](#footnote-399) While neither Chacón nor Grandes offer a sanitised version of prison life or shy away from the political complications of the period, there is little evidence that the Communist portrayal of prison life has been questioned. *La voz dormida* and *Las tres bodas de Manolita* utilise Communist accounts to lend their narratives authority and emotional truth without addressing their political nature.

The other texts that form the corpus for this thesis, however, demonstrate the extent to which the Communist women’s narrative of prison is directed solely by ideological concerns.In many ways, *Desde la noche y la niebla* by Juana Doña is a model Communist narrative, with its focus on acts of resistance and its imperative to bear witness to the repression. Yet Doña, who left the PCE after her release from prison while remaining a staunch Communist, also explores her changing ideology and challenges the dogmatism of the PCE in her memoir. Her exploration of feminism highlights that Spanish women suffered the effects of the patriarchy before Franco had won the war, as well as the inherent sexism of the PCE. Doña’s belief that the personal and the political are interconnected—both as a consequence of her feminism and her relationship with her Communist husband, Eugenio Mesón—also explores the impact of imprisonment upon the individual. Her ability to explore her grief and to first challenge the dogmatism of the Party in the anti-Francoist resistance, and then reject her own questions, demonstrates the absence of these themes from other Communist life writing accounts.

The writing of non-Communist women, like García Madrid, García Segret, and Malonda, then, allow the reader to understand what political imprisonment was like for women who had neither the mental nor the material support that being part of the Communist resistance engendered. Though there is no single narrative that counters the Communist presentation of life in prison, *Réquiem por la libertad*, *Abajo las dictaduras*, and *Aquello sucedió así* do share themes that indicate the struggles that these women faced. All three accounts focus on both the injustice of the Francoist legal system and its use of spectacle in oppressing the populace. This demonstrates one of the largest differences between the Communist and non-Communist experience of political imprisonment. Communists did not expect justice from the regime, but neither did they recognise the legitimacy of the dictatorship. In contrast, non-Communist women continued to expect their legal rights as Spanish citizens to be fulfilled because they accepted that the regime was the new source of power in Spain, however fervently they might wish for its downfall.

The texts by García Madrid, García Segret, and Malonda also emphasise the struggle to survive on a day-to-day basis within the prison system. Lacking the support network of Communist prisoners, these women had to negotiate with their fellow political prisoners and the authorities and also make questionable moral decisions upon occasion, in order to ensure their survival within the prison environment. This left them extremely vulnerable but also, at times, allowed them to avoid punishment by accepting the mandates of the prison authorities. Communists, in contrast, had a strong network of support, but caused themselves profound difficulties by challenging their captors to acknowledge their rights as political prisoners. Non-Communist texts help the reader to explore the impact of political imprisonment upon the individual, as their narratives explore the importance of mental survival. For García Segret this meant maintaining a sense of self in an environment designed to nullify the individual; for García Madrid it was about accommodating herself as a political prisoner within the regime; and for Malonda it was about regaining a sense of agency by contemplating suicide.

The Communist women’s narrative of prison, which has been so influential on the historiography of the repression, as well as on cultural productions in the twenty-first century, only explores experiences of imprisonment that fit within a specific ideological framework. While their life narratives make an undoubted contribution to our understanding of anti-Francoist resistance, I argue that reading a broader corpus of writing, which includes women who were not Communists, allows us to nuance our understanding of what political imprisonment was like under the Franco dictatorship. This leads us away from a view of political imprisonment as an act of resistance, and allows us to explore the personal, emotional, and intellectual effects of imprisonment upon women. Furthermore, it nuances the over-politicisation of an experience that devastated the lives of thousands of women in post-war Spain, regardless of whether they were political activists or not.

# Appendix A – Editions of primary texts

Appendix A shows the different editions of Spanish women’s prison memoirs that I encountered during the project.

Björnsen de Wedel, Herta, *Cárcel de Ventas,* trans. by Francisca Gallardo de Nicolau (Madrid: Aguilar, 1941)

Blanco, Carlos, Manuel Ballesteros and Julia Vigre, *Memoria viva de los exilios* (Madrid: Entimema, 2001)

Canales, Lola, *Alias Lola: historia de las últimas presas políticas de la cárcel de Ventas* (Madrid: Ediciones Temas de Hoy, 2007)

Castro, Nieves, *Una vida para un ideal: recuerdos de una militante comunista* (Madrid: Ediciones de la Torre, 1981)

Cuevas Gutiérrez, Tomasa, *Cárcel de mujeres (1939-1945)*, 2 vols (Barcelona: Ediciones Sirocco, 1985), I

 — *Cárcel de mujeres*, 2 vols (Barcelona: Ediciones Sirocco, 1985), II

 — *Mujeres de la resistencia* (Barcelona: Ediciones Sirocco, 1986)

*— Presas: mujeres en las cárceles franquistas* (Barcelona: Icaria Editorial, 2005)

Cuevas Gutiérrez, Tomasa, and Mary E. Giles, *Prison of Women: Testimonies of War and Resistance in Spain, 1939-1945* (Albany: State University of New York, 1998)

Doña Jiménez, Juana, *Desde la noche y la niebla: mujeres en las cárceles franquistas*, 1 edn (Madrid: Ediciones de la Torre, 1978)

 — *Desde la noche y la niebla: mujeres en las cárceles franquistas*, 2 edn (Madrid: horas y HORAS la editorial, 2012)

 — *La mujer* (Madrid: Emiliano escolar, 1977)

 — ‘La mujer y las elecciones’, *En lucha*, 21 May 1977 <http://ort-ujm.es/main/index.php?option=com\_content&view=article&id=221&limitstart=3> [accessed 28 June 2016]

 — *Querido Eugenio: una carta de amor al otro lado del tiempo* (Barcelona: Editorial Lumen, 2003)

Falcón, Lidia, *En el infierno: ser mujer en las cárceles de España* (Barcelona: Ediciones de Feminismo, 1977)

Fidalgo, Pilar, *Une jeune mere dans les prisons de Franco* (Paris: Editions des Archives Espagnoles, [1937 ?])

— *A Young Mother in Franco’s Prisons* (London: United Editorial, 1939)

Forest, Eva, *Diario y cartas desde la cárcel* (Paris: Editions des Femmes, 1975)

 — *From a Spanish Jail*, trans. by Rosemary Sheed (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1975)

— *Journal et lettres de prison* (Paris: Editions des Femmes, 1975)

García, Consuelo, *Las cárceles de Soledad Real* (Barcelona: Ediciones Alfaguara, 1982)

 — *Las cárceles de Soledad Real* (Barcelona: Círculo de Lectores, 1988)

García, Regina, *Yo he sido marxista: el cómo y el porqué de una conversión* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1946)

García Madrid, Ángeles, *Al quiebro de mis espinas: poemas desde la cárcel* (Bilbao: Gráficas Ayala, 1977)

 — *Réquiem por la libertad*, 1 edn (Madrid: Copiasol, 1982)

 — *Réquiem por la libertad*, 2 edn (Madrid: Editorial Alianza Hispánica, 2003)

García Segret, Josefa, *Abajo las dictaduras* (Vigo: Artes Gráficas Galicia, 1982)

Malonda, Ángeles, *Aquello sucedió así* (Madrid: Departamento de Publicaciones de la Asociación de Cooperativas Farmacéuticas, 1983)

 — *Aquello sucedió así*, 2 edn (Valencia: Universitat de Valencia, 2015)

Martínez, Esperanza, *Guerrilleras, la ilusión de una esperanza* (Madrid: Latorre Literaria, 2010)

Millán Astray, Pilar, *Cautivas: 32 meses en las prisiones rojas* (Valencia: Editorial Saturnino Calleja, 1939)

Montero Martínez, Remedios, *Historia de Celia: recuerdos de una guerrillera antifascista* (Barcelona: Rialla, 2004)

Núñez, Mercedes*, Cárcel de Ventas* (Paris: Editions de la Librairie du Globe, 1967)

O’Neill, Carlota, *Una mujer en la guerra de España* (Madrid: Oberón, 2003)

— *Romanzas de las rejas* ([s.l.]: [s.n.], 1964)

— *Una mexicana en la guerra de España* (Mexico City: La Prensa, 1964)

— *Los muertos también hablan: continuación de una mexicana en la guerra de España* (Mexico City: La Prensa, 1971)

Queipo de Llano, Rosario, *De la Cheka de Atadell a la prisión de Alacuas: impresiones, estampas y recuerdos de los rojos* (Valladolid: Librería Santaren, 1939)

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1. For short biographies and speeches in the Cortes by these women and others, who were all members of the Spanish parliament during the Second Republic, see: María Dolores Pelayo Duque, *Mujeres de la República: las Diputadas* (Madrid: Congreso de los Diputados, Departamento de Publicaciones, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Dolores Ibárruri, *El único camino* (Barcelona: Bruguera, 1979); Federica Montseny, *Mis primeros cuarenta años* (Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1987). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. David Ginard i Féron, *Matilde Landa: de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza a las prisiones franquistas* (Barcelona: Flor de Viento Ediciones, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Christina Dupláa, ‘Mujeres, escritura de resistencia y testimonios antifranquistas’*, Monographic Review/Revista Monográfica*, 11 (1995), 137-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. For example, see: Gregorio Alonso, and Diego Muro, ‘Introduction’, in *The Politics and Memory of Democratic Transition: The Spanish Model*, ed. by Gregorio Alonso and Diego Muro(Routledge: New York, 2011); Carsten Humlebæk, ‘The “Pacto de Olvido”’, in *The Politics and Memory of Democratic Transition: The Spanish Model*, ed. by Gregorio Alonso and Diego Muro (Routledge: New York, 2011), pp. 183-98; Helen Graham, ‘The Spanish Civil War, 1936-2003: The Return of Republican Memory, *Science & Society*, 68 (2004), 313-28 (p. 324); Fiona Govan, ‘Spain’s Law “to Right Wrongs” of Franco Era’, *Telegraph*, 11 October 2007, < http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1565884/Spains-law-to-right-wrongs-of-Franco-era.html> [accessed 14 August 2017]. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Jo Labanyi, ‘Memory and Modernity in Democratic Spain: The Difficulty of Coming to Terms with the Spanish Civil War’, *Poetics Today*, 28 (2007), 89-116 (p. 89). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For example: Tomasa Cuevas, *Cárcel de mujeres (1939-1945)*, I (Barcelona: Ediciones Sirocco, 1985); Tomasa Cuevas, *Cárcel de mujeres*, II (Barcelona: Ediciones Sirocco, 1985); Juana Doña, *Desde la noche y la niebla: Mujeres en las cárceles franquistas* 2 edn (Madrid: horas y HORAS la editorial, 2012). Subsequent references to the primary texts that constitute the main corpus of this thesis will be made in the body of the text in parentheses. Where relevant, the volume number will be included to distinguish between the texts. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For example: Ángeles García Madrid, *Réquiem por la libertad*, 2 edn (Madrid: Editorial Alianza Hispánica, 2003); Josefa García Segret, *Abajo las dictaduras* (Vigo: Artes Gráficas Galicia, 1982); Ángeles Malonda, *Aquello sucedió así* (Madrid: Departamento de Publicaciones de la Asociación de Cooperativas Farmacéuticas, 1983) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Pilar Fidalgo, *A Young Mother in Franco’s Prisons* (London: United Editorial, 1939). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Right-wing women, such as Pilar Millán Astray and Rosario Queipo de Llano, also published memoirs in the first years of the dictatorship, as propaganda for the regime, glorifying the Nationalist crusade and helping to establish the legitimacy of the dictatorship. Pilar Millán Astray, *Cautivas: 32 meses en las prisiones rojas* (Valencia: Editorial Saturnino Calleja, 1939); Rosario Queipo de Llano, *De la Cheka de Atadell a la prisión de Alacuas: impresiones, estampas y recuerdos de los rojos* (Valladolid: Librería Santaren, 1939). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For example, both Carlota O’Neill and Mercedes Núñez published their memoirs in exile in the 1960s, and women such as Remedios Montero, Esperanza Martínez, and Lola Canales, have published memoirs since 2000. Carlota O’Neill’s volume of autobiographical poetry *Romanzas de las rejas* was published in 1964 when she was in exile in Mexico, in the same years as her first volume of memoirs, *Una mexicana en la guerra de España*. These were followed by *Los muertos también hablan* in 1971. All three volumes were republished in 2003 under the name *Una mujer en la guerra de España*. Carlota O’Neill, *Una mujer en la guerra de España* (Madrid: Oberon, 2003); Aurora M Ocampo, and others (eds), *Diccionario de escritores mexicanos: siglo xx: desde las generaciones del Ateneo y novelistas de la revolución hasta nuestros días*, VI (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2002), p. 134; Mercedes Núñez, *Cárcel de Ventas* (Paris: Editions de la Librairie du Globe, 1967); Remedios Montero Martínez, *Historia de Celia: recuerdos de una guerrillera antifascista* (Barcelona: Rialla, 2004); Esperanza Martínez, *Guerrilleras, la ilusión de una esperanza* (Madrid: Latorre Literaria, 2010); Lola Canales, *Alias Lola: historia de las últimas presas políticas de la cárcel de Ventas* (Madrid: Ediciones Temas de Hoy, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. For example, Juana Doña’s *Desde la noche y la niebla* (1978) was re-published in 2012 with a new essay by Almudena Grandes; Tomasa Cuevas’ *Cárcel de mujeres* (1985) was edited and translated into English by an American scholar, Mary E Giles, in 1998, and an re-edited version of the original was also produced in Spanish in 2005; and Ángeles Malonda’s *Aquello sucedió así* (1983) was re-published in 2016. Juana Doña, *Desde la noche y la niebla: mujeres en las cárceles franquistas*, 2 edn (Madrid: horas y HORAS la editorial, 2012); Cuevas Gutiérrez, Tomasa, and Mary E. Giles, *Prison of Women: Testimonies of War and Resistance in Spain, 1939-1945* (Albany: State University of New York, 1998); Tomasa Cuevas, *Presas: mujeres en las cárceles franquistas* (Barcelona: Icaria Editorial, 2005); Ángeles Malonda, *Aquello sucedió así* (Valencia: Publicacions Universitat València, 2015). For further information on the various primary texts and different editions, please refer to Appendix A. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Cuevas, *Cárcel de mujeres (1939-1945*); Cuevas, *Cárcel de mujeres*; Doña, *Desde la noche y la niebla*; García Madrid, *Réquiem por la libertad*; García Segret, *Abajo las dictaduras*; Malonda, *Aquello sucedió así*. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Ricard Vinyes, *Irredentas: las presas políticas y sus hijos en las cárceles franquistas* (Madrid: Ediciones Planeta, 2002), pp. 20-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Julius Ruiz, *Franco’s Justice: Repression in Madrid after the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 85-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The *maquis* numbered between 5,000 and 6,000 armed men, and more than 20,000 *enlaces* (people that aided them) were imprisoned, all of whom participated in resistance to the regime. The movement was largely dominated by Communists, but petered out after the PCE rejected armed resistance as a tactic in favour of mass movements such as general strikes in 1948. Secundino Serrano, *Maquis: historia de la guerrilla antifranquista* (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 2001), p. 20; pp. 297-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Lidia Falcón, *En el infierno: ser mujer en las cárceles de España* (Barcelona: Ediciones de Feminismo, 1977); Eva Forest, *Diario y cartas desde la cárcel* (Paris: Editions des Femmes, 1975). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Some commentators date the end of the Transition as December 1978, when the Constitution was ratified by referendum. However, Víctor Pérez Díaz argues that the process of ‘consolidation’ of democracy—when ‘there is a widespread expectation that the regime is going to stay […] since there is no credible threat to its existence’—did not begin in Spain until the electoral victory of the PSOE in 1982. Víctor M Pérez Díaz, *The Return of Civil Society: The Emergence of Democratic Spain* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 3-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. From 2000, civic groups led by the grandchildren of people that lived through the Civil War, particularly the ARMH, brought the issue of justice for Republican victims into the public arena. The initiative of these groups led to a law being proposed by the PSOE in 2004 and passed in 2007, which was nicknamed the ‘Ley de Memoria Histórica’ by the press. The law was designed to extend the rights of Republican victims of the Civil War, and to remove Francoist symbols from public places, but its small budget and its lack of punitive or truth measures meant that many of the civic groups that campaigned for transitional justice were disappointed. H. Rosi Song, *Lost in Transition: Constructing Memory in Contemporary Spain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), p. 29; Georgina Blakeley, ‘Evaluating Spain’s Reparation Law’, *Democratization*, 20 (2013), 240-59; <http://memoriahistorica.org.es/> [accessed 11 May 2017]. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Joan Ramon Resina, ‘Short of Memory: the Reclamation of the Past Since the Spanish Transition to Democracy’, in *Disremembering the Dictatorship: The Politics of Memory in the Spanish Transition to Democracy*, pp. 83-126 (p. 85). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Paloma Aguilar, *Políticas de la memoria y memorias de la política: el caso español en perspectiva comparada* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2008), p. 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Pérez Díaz, *The Return of Civil Society*, p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Aguilar, *Políticas de la memoria*, p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Santos Juliá, ‘Echar al olvido: memoria y amnistía en la transición’, *Claveles de razón práctica*, 129 (2003), 14-24 (pp. 17-8). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Jo Labanyi’s article ‘Memory and Modernity in Democratic Spain’ discusses several films which focused on the Civil War and post-war repression as their central theme, and which were produced during 1970s and 1980s in Spain, such as Carlos Saura’s *Cría cuervos* (1976) or Jaime Chávarri’s *Las bicicletas son para el verano* (1984). Some examples from the bibliography for this thesis are: Giuliana Di Febo, *Resistencia y movimiento de mujeres en España 1936-1976* (Barcelona: Icaria, 1979); Jorge Semprún, *Autobiografía de Federico Sánchez: novela* (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1977). For more references to scholarly work on opposition movements during *franquismo*, see also: Monica Threlfall, ‘Reassessing the Role of Civil Society Organizations in the Transition to Democracy in Spain’, *Democratization*, 15 (2008), 930-51 (p. 934). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Mary Vincent, *Spain 1833-2002: People and State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Richard Gunther, and others, *Spain After Franco: The Making of a Competitive Party System* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Juliá, ‘Echar al olvido’, p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. For more information on the *reforma pactada / ruptura pactada* model, see: Gunther, *Spain After Franco*; José María Maravall, and Julián Santamaría, ‘Political Change in Spain and the Prospects for Democracy’, in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe*, ed. by Guillermo O’Donnell and others (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 71-108. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Pérez Díaz, *The Return of Civil Society*, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. The regime abandoned its economic policy of autarky and opened itself up to foreign investment and trade in 1959 as part of the Stabilisation Plan. This changed the economy and allowed for rapid industrialisation of the economy, but also exposed Spanish society to ‘institutional and cultural transformations’, as Víctor Pérez Díaz notes. Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia: The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy*, trans. by Mark Oakley (New York: Berghahn, 2002), p. 154; Vincent, *Spain 1833-2002*, p. 182; Pérez Díaz, *The Return of Civil Society*, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Pamela Radcliff, ‘Social Movements, Democratic Transition, and Citizenship: Spain in the 1970s’, in *Performing Citizenship: Social Movements Across the Globe*, ed. by Inbal Ofer and Tamar Groves (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 10-29 (p. 12). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Monica Threlfall, ‘Gendering the transition to democracy: reassessing the impact of women’s activism’, in *Gendering Spanish Democracy*, ed. by Monica Threlfall and others (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 11-54 (pp. 22-4). [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Radcliff, ‘Social Movements’, p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Celia Valiente, ‘The Feminist Movement and the Reconfigured State in Spain (1970s-2000)’, in *Women’s Movements Facing the Reconfigured State*, ed. by Lee Ann Banaszak and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 30-47 (pp. 34-5). [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Di Febo, *Resistencia y movimiento*, pp. 158-61; Threlfall, ‘Gendering the transition’, pp. 20-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. The regime introduced two separate laws to allow collective bargaining and shop steward committees, the Ley de Convenios Colectivos in 1958 and the Ley de Jurados de Empresa in 1953. These rights were used by trade union movements, such as the Communist Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) and the Socialist Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) to negotiate for workers’ rights. Particularly in the case of the CCOO, it operated at the fringes of the law: by infiltrating established committees within the Francoist vertical trade union, they were able to gain control of the decision-making process across many regions of Spain, while being tolerated by the state. However, as a consequence of growing unrest amongst workers in the late 1960s, the CCOO were made illegal in 1968. Pérez Díaz, *The Return of Civil Society*, p. 14; José María Maravall, *Dictatorship and Political Dissent: Workers and Students Unions in Franco’s Spain* (London: Tavistock, 1978), pp. 26-33; Eusebio Mujal León, *Communism and Political Change in Spain* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983), p. 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Maravall, ‘Political Change in Spain’, p. 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Threlfall, ‘Reassessing the Role of Civil Society’, pp. 940-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Di Febo, *Resistencia y movimiento*, pp. 164-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Frances Lannon, *Privilege, Persecution, and Prophecy: The Catholic Church in Spain 1875-1975* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), pp. 246-52; Aguilar, *Políticas de la memoria*, pp. 245-6. For more information on the role of the Church in the Transition, see: Michael Richards, *After the Civil War: Making Memory and Re-Making Spain since 1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 247-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. As Vincent highlights, there was also a crossover between the CCOO, the JOC, and the HOAC, with militants sometimes having dual membership. Vincent, *Spain 1833-2002*, p. 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Lannon, *Privilege, Persecution, and Prophecy*, pp. 233-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. ETA was a Basque separatist group, established in 1959, which seeks independence from Spanish rule. From the 1960s, ETA launched a campaign of violence intended to provoke retaliation from the dictatorship under the belief that the spiralling crisis would lead to the Basque Country being granted independence. Along with growing workers’ unrest in the region, the violence triggered brutal repression from the regime, including the declaration of a ‘state of exception’, which suspended constitutional guarantees, in August 1968. ETA were responsible for over 800 deaths from 1968 until 2010, including the assassination of Franco’s Prime Minister Luis Carrero Blanco, who Franco had primed as his successor, on 20 December 1973. After declaring a ceasefire in 2012, ETA disarmed formally on 17 April 2017. The FRAP was a radical Marxist-Leninist organisation, associated with the Partido Comunista de España (marxista-leninista) [PCE (m-l)], which was involved in student protests during the 1970s. The FRAP had a brief armed phase, in which it assassinated two policemen in the summer of 1975. Robert P. Clark, *The Basque Insurgents: ETA, 1952-1980* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1984); Giles Tremlett, ‘Exclusive: Eta documents reveal details of weapons dumps as group disarms’, *Guardian*, 8 April 2017 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/08/eta-basque-separatist-group-formally-disarms-arms-cache> [accessed 16 August 2017]; ‘ETA anuncia en un comunicado ser ya una organización “desarmada”’, *El Mundo*, 7 April 2017 < http://www.elmundo.es/espana/2017/04/07/58e6c5e622601d2d428b4671.html> [accessed 16 August 2017]; Carlos Hermida Revillas, ‘La oposición revolucionaria al franquismo: el Partido Comunista de España (marxista-leninista) y el Frente Revolucionario Antifascista y Patriota’, *Historia y Comunicación Social*, 2 (1997), 295-310. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Vincent, *Spain*, p. 197; p. 218; Richards, *After the Civil War*, pp. 256-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Forest, *Diario y cartas*; Clark, *The Basque Insurgents*, p. 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Michael Eaude, ‘Eva Forest’, *Guardian*, 6 June 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2007/jun/06/guardianobituaries.spain> [accessed 13 July 2017]; Di Febo, *Resistencia y movimiento*, p. 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. The amnesty also returned pension rights to people that had fought in the Republican army, or civil servants that had lost their posts for political reasons. Paloma Aguilar, ‘Judiciary Involvement in Authoritarian Repression and Transitional Justice: The Spanish Case in Comparative Perspective’, *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 2013 (7), 245-66 (p.256). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. In 1998, Baltasar Garzón, a Spanish judge, issued an arrest warrant for the former Chilean dictator, Augusto Pinochet, for human rights violations; he was in the United Kingdom at the time. In his attempt to have Pinochet extradited to Spain to face trial for crimes committed in Chile, Garzón highlighted the lack of transitional justice for victims of the Franco regime. Although Garzón’s attempt to arrest Pinochet highlighted the problems with the 1977 Amnesty Law, Aguilar argues that multiple factors led to transitional justice being re-assessed in Spain, such as the role of pressure groups, like the ARMH, in demanding reparation; the 70th anniversary of the Civil War; and the political need for the new PSOE government to be seen to deal with the issue, as they had tabled so many proposals whilst in opposition. Paloma Aguilar, ‘Transitional or Post-transitional Justice? Recent Developments in the Spanish Case’, *South European Society and Politics*, 13 (2008), 417-33 (pp. 427-9); David Sugarman, ‘The Pinochet precedent and the “Garzón effect”: On Catalysts, Contestation and Loose Ends’, *Amicus Curiae*, 42 (2002), 10-16 (p. 16); Madeleine Davis, ‘Is Spain Recovering Its Memory? Breaking the *Pacto del Olvido*’, *Humans Rights Quarterly*, 27 (2005), 858-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Di Febo, *Resistencia y movimiento*, pp. 154-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. José Ramón Montero, and Ignacio Lago, ‘The Selection of an Electoral System: Less Consensus, More Heresthetics’, in *The Politics and Memory of Democratic Transition: The Spanish Model*, ed. by Gregorio Alonso and Diego Muro (Routledge: New York, 2011), pp. 41-70 (pp. 51-4). [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Alonso and Muro, ‘Introduction’, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Mujal León, *Communism*, p. 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Paul Preston, *The Triumph of Democracy in Spain* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Threlfall, ‘Reassessing the Role of Civil Society’, pp. 942-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Prince Juan Carlos, the son of the heir to the throne, was named by Franco as his successor in 1969, after the Caudillo had named Spain a monarchy in 1947. Despite being Franco’s protégé, Juan Carlos understood the popular desire for change in Spain and became, as Pérez Díaz argues, ‘an ambiguous symbol for political change, as he could be seen both as a guarantor of continuity and as a promise of reform’. Diego Muro, ‘The Basque Experience of the Transition to Democracy’, in *The Politics and Memory of Democratic Transition: The Spanish Model*, ed. by Gregorio Alonso and Diego Muro (Routledge: New York, 2011), pp. 159-80 (p. 175); Vincent, *Spain 1833-2002*, p. 164; p. 182; Pérez Díaz, *The Return of Civil Society*, p. 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Desfor Edles, Laura, *Ritual and Symbol in the New Spain: The Transition to Democracy after Franco* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 145-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Paratextual materials are a ‘combination of *peritext* (all the materials inside the book) and *epitext* (elements outside it such as interviews and reviews) […]Peritext*s* are the materials added in the publishing process that accompany the text in some way, including such elements as cover designs, the author’s name, the dedication, titles, prefaces, introductions, chapter breaks, and endnotes.’ These materials ‘can dramatically affect [the text’s] interpretation and reception by variously situated reading communities’. Sidonie Smith, and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, 2nd edn (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), pp. 99-100. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Petra Cuevas is not a relation of Tomasa Cuevas. I will continue to refer to her as Petra Cuevas to avoid confusion. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. In the 1982 election, for example, they again received only 19 deputies. Montero and Lago, ‘The Selection of an Electoral System’, p. 58; p. 61. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Mujal León, *Communism*, p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Catherine Epstein, ‘The Production of “Official Memory” in East Germany: Old Communists and the Dilemmas of Memoir-Writing’, *Central European History*, 32 (1999), 181-201 (p. 186). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. At the time of the 1977 Amnesty Law, it may not have appeared that this was such a great concession to Francoists, as ETA’s campaign of violence was prolific and highly visible: in 1976 and 1977 alone, they were responsible for 26 deaths, as well as wounding seven people and kidnapping three. However, it is clear today that the figures were vastly disproportionate. At the time of Franco’s death in November 1975, there were 749 *etarras* in prison that benefited from the amnesty. However, recent research has given the number of those executed by the regime during the dictatorship as 20,000, compared to over 800 by ETA between 1968 and 2010, as mentioned above. As such, while ETA may have been highly visible as a violent separatist group during the Transition, the concession to the Francoist authorities was clearly much greater. As Aguilar highlights, anti-Francoist political prisoners had already been tried and punished in most cases, whereas those who had supported the regime avoided these processes. Clark, *The Basque Insurgents*, p. 103; p. 249; Paul Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* (London: Harper Press, 2012), p. xi; ‘ETA anuncia en un comunicado ser ya una organización “desarmada”’, *El Mundo*, 7 April 2017 < http://www.elmundo.es/espana/2017/04/07/58e6c5e622601d2d428b4671.html> [accessed 16 August 2017]; Aguilar, ‘Transitional or Post-transitional Justice?’, p. 420. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Leigh Gilmore, ‘Jurisdictions: *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, *The Kiss*, and Scandalous Self-Representation in the Age of Memoir and Trauma’, *Signs*, 28 (2003), 695-718 (p. 696). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. The number of prisoners in the figures was published by the regime, and it should be treated with some caution as there is little clarity in how they reached this number. Francisco Moreno gives the number of women prisoners in 1940 as 17,800, but once again this is based upon a Ministry of Justice report from 1946. Hernández Holgado highlights the difficulties in knowing exact figures, as the regime was secretive about the number of political prisoners initially, and later refused to classify political prisoners as such, treating them as common prisoners. Ricard Vinyes, ‘El universo penitenciario durante el franquismo’, in *Una inmensa prisión: los campos de concentración y las prisiones durante la guerra civil y el franquismo*, ed. by Carme Molinero and others (Barcelona: Crítica, 2003), pp. 155-75 (pp. 160-1); Michael Richards, *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco’s Spain, 1936-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 83; Fernando Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres encarceladas: la prisión de Ventas: de la República al franquismo, 1931-1941* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2003), pp. 132-3; Francisco Moreno Gómez, ‘La represión en la posguerra’, in Santos Juliá (ed.), and others, *Víctimas de la guerra civil* (Madrid: Ediciones Temas de Hoy, 1999), pp. 277-336 (p.288). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Santiago Vega Sombría, ‘La vida en las prisiones de Franco’, in *Una inmensa prisión: los campos de concentración y las prisiones durante la guerra civil y el franquismo*, ed. by Carme Molinero and others (Barcelona: Crítica, 2003), pp. 177-98 (p. 197). [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. The Second Republic was established on 14April 1931, prompted by the abdication of Alfonso XIII, after the Socialists, and other anti-monarchist parties, won the majority of seats in the municipal elections. A time of great political upheaval in Spain, left-wing governments attempted to reform Spanish society, both by modernising the economy through agrarian reform, and by establishing liberal laws, which gave new freedoms, particularly to women. This was met by violent resistance from right-wing factions and the elite, and frustration from those on the Left, for whom the changes were neither sufficiently wide-reaching nor implemented quickly enough. The social turbulence this caused, and the inability to find a solution which provided stability, were factors in the eventual outbreak of Civil War. For more information on the Second Republic, see: Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution and Revenge* (London: Harper Perennial, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Morcillo refers to various pieces of legislation, which regulated whether or not women were allowed to enter the workforce, and how they behaved as mothers for example. It is also important to recognise that while the vast majority of women were expected to conform to these roles, women also held positions of relative political power through the *Sección Femenina de las FET*, as demonstrated by Inbal Ofer in *Señoritas in Blue*. Aurora G Morcillo, *True Catholic Womanhood: Gender Ideology in Franco’s Spain* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), pp. 4-5; pp. 31-6; Inbal Ofer, *Señoritas in Blue: The Making of a Female Political Elite in Franco’s Spain* (Brighton: Sussex Acadmic Press, 2009). [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. For more information on repression during the Franco regime, see, for example: Enrique González Duro, *El miedo en la posguerra: Franco y la España derrotada: la política del exterminio* (Madrid: Oberon, 2003); Santos Juliá, (ed.), and others, *Víctimas de la guerra civil* (Madrid: Ediciones Temas de Hoy, 1999); Julián Casanova and others, *Morir, matar, sobrevivir: la violencia en la dictadura de Franco* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2002); Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust*; Richards, *A Time of Silence*. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. In their study on the women’s prison in Malaga, Encarnación Barranquero Texeira and others argue that women were not only portrayed in the media as being justly punished for their actions during the Civil War, and usually convicted without proof, but that their actions classified them as being ‘enfermas psicópatas’. Michael Richards, ‘Morality and Biology in the Spanish Civil War: Psychiatrists, Revolution and Women Prisoners in Málaga’, *Contemporary European History*, 10 (2001), 395-421; Encarnación Barranquero Texeira, and others, *Mujer, cárcel, franquismo. La Prisión Provincial de Málaga (1937-1945)* (Málaga: [n.pub.], 1994), p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. The legality of the uprising was based upon the alleged illegitimacy of the Republican government’s authority, as defined by the Bellón Commission, a group of Nationalist supporters comprising ex-ministers, professors, and lawyers. They claimed, amongst other things, that the Republican government had committed electoral fraud to win the elections in February 1936, and had ordered the assassination of José Calvo Sotelo, a right-wing politician. Richards, *A Time of Silence*, p. 77; Ruiz, *Franco’s Justice*, pp. 1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Ramón Serrano Suñer was Franco’s brother-in-law, and he held several Ministries throughout the dictatorship. The description of Francoist justice as ‘justicia al revés’ was made in his memoirs, which were published in 1977. Ruiz notes that Serrano Suñer’s acknowledgment of the injustice of Francoist repression was ‘accompanied by a refusal to accept any responsibility for the post-war repression’. Ruiz, *Franco’s Justice*, pp. 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Peter Anderson, ‘Singling Out Victims: Denunciation and Collusion in the Post-Civil War Francoist Repression in Spain, 1939-1945’, *European History Quarterly*, 39 (2009), 7-26 (p. 16). [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Mary Nash, *Defying Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War* (Denver: Arden Press, 1995), p. 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Ángeles Egido León, *El perdón de Franco: la represión de las mujeres en el Madrid de la posguerra* (Madrid: Los libros de la catarata, 2009), p. 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Mercedes Yusta, ‘Rebeldía individual, compromiso familiar, acción colectiva: las mujeres en la resistencia al franquismo durante los años cuarenta’, *Historia del presente*, 4 (2004), 63-92 (p. 66). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Barranquero Texeira and others also mention the term ‘seducción militar’ in the list of crimes with which women political prisoners were charged in Malaga prison between 1937 and 1945, although it is not entirely clear what this entails. Richards, ‘Morality and Biology’, pp. 400-1; Barranquero Texeira, *Mujer, cárcel, franquismo*, p. 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Vinyes, ‘El universo penitenciario, pp. 161-2; Ruiz, *Franco’s Justice*, p. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. For more information on concentration camps in Spain, see: Carme Molinero, and others (eds), *Una inmensa prisión: los campos de concentración y las prisiones durante la guerra civil y el franquismo* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2003); Javier Rodrigo, *Cautivos: campos de concentración en la España franquista, 1937-1947* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. In Cuevas, one prisoner tells how a *miliciana* was beaten in the womb so badly that she miscarried her child, before dying herself (II, 187). Men’s genitalia were also targeted—some women report mutilation of the male corpse during torture—and so this point acknowledges simply that different forms of torture were employed for men and women. García Segret, for example, reports of men in her local area whose genitals were cut off as torture during their ‘saca’, before execution (184-6). Irene Abad, ‘Las dimensiones de la “represión sexuada” durante la dictadura franquista’, *Revista de Historia Jerónimo Zurita*, 2009 (84), 65-86 (pp. 68-9). [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Conxita Mir observes that the social and moral control mechanisms of the regime were more effectively implemented in rural than in urban areas, something which can be seen in public humiliation of rural women after their arrest. Fernanda Romeu Alfaro, *El silencio roto: mujeres contra el Franquismo* (Oviedo: JC Producción, 1994), p. 40; Conxita Mir, ‘El sino de los vencidos: la represión franquista en la Cataluña rural de posguerra’, in *Morir, matar, sobrevivir: la violencia en la dictadura de Franco*, ed. by Julián Casanova (Barcelona: Crítica, 2002), pp. 123-93 (p. 126); Shirley Mangini, *Memories of Resistance:* *Women’s Voices from the Spanish Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Maud Joly, ‘Las violencias sexuadas de la Guerra Civil española: paradigma para una lectura cultural del conflicto, *Historia Social*, 61 (2008), 89-107 (pp. 102-3). [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. Ángela Cenarro, ‘La institucionalización del universo penitenciario franquista’, in *Una inmensa prisión: los campos de concentración y las prisiones durante la guerra civil y el franquismo*, ed. by Carme Molinero and others (Barcelona: Crítica, 2003), pp.133-53 (pp. 135-40). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Abad, ‘Las dimensiones’, p. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Elisabeth Bolorinos Allard, ‘The Crescent and the Dagger: Representations of the Moorish Other during the Spanish Civil War’, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 93 (2016), 965-88 (p. 970); Sebastian Balfour, *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 285. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Doña tells of a woman, Julia Lázaro, who became pregnant after being raped. She gave birth two months after being sentenced to death and was executed 15 days later. The authorities tried to give the infant to her sister, who was also in the prison, but the woman refused as the child ‘le daba horror’. Doña reports that the baby was sent to a Francoist orphanage (184). [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres encarceladas*, p. 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres encarceladas,* pp. 147-58; Barranquero Texeira and others, *Mujer, cárcel, franquismo*, p. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Vinyes, *Irredentas*, pp. 117-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. For more information on hunger in Spain in the post-war environment, see: Miguel Ángel Del Arco Blanco, *Hambre de siglos: mundo rural y apoyos sociales del franquismo en Andalucía Oriental (1936-1951)* (Granada: Comares, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Ruiz, *Franco’s Justice*, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Romeu Alfaro, *El silencio roto*, p. 42. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres encarceladas*, p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Vinyes, ‘El universo penitenciario’, p. 164. For more information on Vallejo Nágera, see: Richards, ‘Morality and Biology’; González Duro, *El miedo en la posguerra*, pp. 49-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Although I have been unable to find any figures for the infant mortality rate, several of the prisoners comment on high fatality amongst children, particularly in the early years of the regime when the prisons were at their most overcrowded. For example, Paz Azati remembers that ‘Todos los días tú veías por el suelo de la enfermería de Ventas los cadáveres de quince o veinte niños que se habían muerto de meningitis’ (II, 93). Similarly Carmen Machado reflects on the deaths of children in the prisons: ‘se declaró una epidemia de encefalitis letárgica: los mismo niños que el día anterior habíamos visto jugando con la inconsciencia de sus pocos años […] aquellos niños empezaban a adormilarse y la mayoría de ellas no despertaban’ (I, 122). Another article published in *El silencio roto* states that ‘Durante el verano de 1941 murieron seis o siete niños diariamente. Sus cadáveres eran amontonados en un wáter al que acudían las ratas. Isabel Parrilla detenida comunista, permaneció toda una noche velando el cadáver de su pequeña hija con el fin de impedir que los roedores la devoraran’. Romeu Alfaro, *El silencio roto*, p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Di Febo, *Resistencia y movimiento*, p. 37. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Vinyes, ‘El universo penitenciario’, p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Various women discuss being allowed to spend time with their children in the prison walls such as Malonda (pp. 92-4), and Doña (p. 310). [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Ruiz, *Franco’s Justice*, p. 4; Vincent, *Spain 1833-2002*, p. 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Ruiz, *Franco’s Justice*, p. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Peter Anderson, *The Francoist Military Trials: Terror and Complicity, 1939-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 54-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. As well as martial law, Republicans were also tried in criminal law. The regime created the *Ley de Responsabilidades Políticas* in February 1939, which criminalised, in theory, anyone that had not supported the Nationalists. Preston observes that it was ‘designed not just to punish the defeated but also to pay for the war that had been inflicted upon them’, as those found guilty were subject to massive fines and the confiscation of property. Ana Aguado, and Vicenta Verdugo, ‘Las cárceles franquistas de mujeres en Valencia: castigar, purificar y reeducar’, *Studia Histórica. Historia Contemporánea*, 29 (2011), 55-85 (pp. 69-70); Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust*, pp. 503-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. This was the lowest penalty stated in a circular from 1 March 1940 explaining the *Ley para la represión de la masonería y el comunismo* (Law for the Repression of Masonry and Communism) for anyone who had supported the left-wing Popular Front, although there were lower penalties for other crimes such as owning an unlicensed gun. José Manuel Sabín*, Prisión y muerte en la España de postguerra* (Madrid: Anaya and Mario Muchnik, 1996), p. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. González Duro, *El miedo en la posguerra*, p. 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. For further information, see: Santiago Vega Sombría, and Juan Carlos García Funes, ‘Lucha tras las rejas franquistas. La prisión central de mujeres de Segovia’, *Studia Histórica. Historia contemporánea*, 29 (2011), 281-314. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. For more information on Oropesa and other institutions for prostitutes, see: Mirta Núñez Díaz Balart, *Mujeres caídas: prostitutas legales y clandestinas en el franquismo* (Madrid: Oberon, 2003); [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Ruiz, *Franco’s Justice*, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Gutmaro Gómez Bravo, ‘El desarrollo penitenciario en el primer franquismo (1939-1945), *Hispania Nova: Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 6 (2006), 491-510 (p. 505). [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Aguado, ‘Las cárceles franquistas’, p. 71. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Di Febo, *Resistencia y movimiento*, p. 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Although the regime officially declared that there were no more prisoners held on crimes related to their activities during the war in this final pardon, there was in fact another commission which dealt with reviewing the sentences of political prisoners until December 1966, thirty years after the end of the war. Egido León, *El perdón de Franco*, pp. 81-2; Ruiz, *Franco’s Justice*, pp. 116-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, p. 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Vinyes, ‘El universo penitenciario’, pp. 161-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Anderson, *Francoist Military Trials*, pp. 127-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Mangini, *Memories of Resistance*, p. 132; p. 143; Richards, *A Time of Silence*, p. 167. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Di Febo, *Resistencia y movimiento*, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. For a discussion of the figures, see above in ‘Mass imprisonment in the immediate post-war period’. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Mirta Núñez Díaz Balart, and Antonio Rojas Friend, ‘Las trece rosas: nuevas revelaciones sobre su ejecución’, *Historia 16*, 205 (1993), 21-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Barranquero Texeira, *Mujer, cárcel, franquismo*; Romeu Alfaro, *El silencio roto*. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres encarceladas*, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Cenarro, ‘La institucionalización del universo penitenciario franquista’, pp. 133-53. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Richards, ‘Morality and Biology, pp. 395-421. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Aguado, ‘Las cárceles franquistas’; Ana Aguado, and Vicenta Verdugo, ‘Represión franquista sobre las mujeres: cárceles y Tribunales de Responsabilidades Políticas’, *Hispania Nova: Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 10 (2012), 1-24; Ascensión Badiola Ariztimuño, ‘La represión franquista en el País Vasco. Cárceles, campos de concentración y batallones de trabajadores en el comienzo de la posguerra’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Raquel Osborne, ‘Good girls versus bad girls in early Francoist prisons: sexuality as a great divide’, *Sexualities*, 14 (2011), 509-25; Joly, ‘Las violencias sexuadas’, 89-107; Abad, ‘Las dimensiones de la “represión sexuada”’, pp. 65-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Ginard i Féron, *Matilde Landa*. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Mónica Carabias Álvaro, *Rosario Sánchez Mora, la dinamitera (1919): historia de una mujer soldado en la Guerra Civil Española* (Madrid: Ediciones del Orto, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Rodrigo, *Cautivos*. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Mangini, *Memories of Resistance*, pp. 56-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Mangini, *Memories of Resistance*, p. 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Dupláa, ‘Mujeres, escritura de resistencia’, pp. 137-45; Nancy Vosburg, ‘Prisons With/Out Walls: Women’s Prison Writings in Franco’s Spain’, *Monographic Review/Revista Monográfica,* 11 (1995), 121-36. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Alicia Ramos Mesonero, *Memoria de las presas de Franco* (Madrid: Huerga y Fierro, 2012); José Romera Castillo, ‘La memoria histórica de algunas mujeres antifranquistas’, *Anales,* 21 (2009), 175-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Holly Pike, ‘No/Bodies: Carcerality, Corporeality, and Subjectivity in the Life Narratives by Franco’s Female Prisoners’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Birmingham, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. For example: Catherine O’Leary, ‘Bearing Witness: Carlota O’Neill’s *Una mujer en la guerra de España*’, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 89 (2012), 155-68; Ángel Rodríguez Gallardo, *Letras Armadas: as vidas de Enriqueta Otero Blanco* (Lugo: Fundación 10 de marzo, 2005); Ángel Rodríguez Gallardo, and Rebeca Martínez Aguirre, *La escritura femenina en reclusión: cartas de Enriqueta Otero Blanco* (Santiago de Compostela: Fundación 10 de marzo, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Tabea Alexa Linhard, ‘The Death Story of the “Trece Rosas”’, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 3 (2002), 187-202. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Herta Björnsen de Wedel, *Cárcel de Ventas*, trans. by Francisca Gallardo de Nicolau (Madrid: Aguilar, 1941); Regina García, *Yo he sido marxista: el cómo y el porqué de una conversión* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1946); Margarita Olanda Spencer, *Prisionera del Soviet* (San Sebastián: Editorial Española, 1938). [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Dupláa, ‘Memoria colectiva’, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Ana Corbalán, ‘Feminine Voices of Resistance against Dictatorships: Prison Memories from Spain and Argentina’, in *Dictatorships in the Hispanic World: Transatlantic and Transnational Perspectives*, ed. by Patricia L. Swier and Julia Riordan-Goncalves (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), pp. 23-47 (p. 25). [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Ana Corbalán, ‘Feminine Voices of Resistance against Dictatorships: Prison Memories from Spain and Argentina’, in *Dictatorships in the Hispanic World: Transatlantic and Transnational Perspectives*, ed. by Patricia L. Swier and Julia Riordan-Goncalves (Madison, NJ: Dickinson University Press; Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), pp. 23-47 (p. 31). [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Jo Labanyi, ‘Historias de víctimas: la memoria histórica y el testimonio en la España contemporánea’, *Iberoamericana*, 24 (2006), 87-98 (p. 91). [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Gina Herrmann, ‘Reenactments of Remedios Montero: Oral History of a Spanish Guerrillera in Testimony, Fiction and Film’, *Hispanic Issues Online,* 10 (2012), 123-138. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. For example: Susana Cavallo, ‘Autobiografía, testimonio, y ficción en la literatura carcelaria femenina: Lidia Falcón, Tomasa Cuevas y Eva Forest’, *DUODA Revista d’Estudis Feministes*, 10 (1996), 87-100; Labanyi, ‘Historias de víctimas’, pp. 90-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. *Testimonio* is a genre associated with subaltern populations, particularly in Latin America, which delivers a collective and communal account, protesting against oppression, to an outside interlocutor. Rigoberta Menchú is a Guatemalan woman, whose *testimonio* about the repression of indigenous Mayas became the centre of scholarly debate, after its truthfulness was questioned by an American anthropologist, David Stoll. For more information on the *testimonio* genre, see: John Beverley, ‘The Margin at the Center: On *Testimonio* (Testimonial Narrative)’, *Modern Fiction Studies*, 35 (1989), 11-27; Doris Sommer, ‘“Not Just a Personal Story”: Women’s “Testimonios” and the Plural Self’, in *Life/Lines: Theoretical Essays on Women’s Autobiography*, ed. by Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 107-30; Leigh Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001); Arturo Arias, ‘Authoring Ethnicized Subjects: Rigoberta Menchú and the Performative Production of the Subaltern Self’, *PMLA*, 116 (2001), 75-88. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. José Ignacio Álvarez Fernández, in his comparison of Spanish testimony with the Latin American *testimonio* genre, argues that the fact that the prisoners themselves are the ones that write or collate the memories is a distinguishing factor between the two groups of texts. José Ignacio Álvarez Fernández, *Memoria y trauma en los testimonios de la represión franquista* (Barcelona: Anthropos Editorial, 2007), p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul: Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Catherine Epstein’s research on Communist life writing in the German Democratic Republic demonstrates this, for example. Epstein, ‘The Production of “Official Memory’, 181-201. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Gina Herrmann, *Written in Red: The Communist Memoir in Spain* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Juana Doña, *La mujer* (Madrid: Emiliano escolar, 1977); Juana Doña, *Querido Eugenio: una carta de amor al otro lado del tiempo* (Barcelona: Editorial Lumen, 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Michèle Barrett, *Women’s Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis* (London: Verso, 1980); Deborah A. Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev’s Russia* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); David Lloyd Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. A film adaptation was made of *La voz dormida* (2011), which followed on from the success of *Las 13 rosas* (2007), portraying the executions of the group of women bearing that name. Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres encarceladas*; Vinyes, *Irredentas*; Dulce Chacón, *La voz dormida* (Madrid: Santillana Ediciones Generales, 2002); *La voz dormida*, dir. by Benito Zambrano (Warner Bros. Entertainment, 2011); *Las 13 rosas*, dir. by Emilio Martínez Lázaro (Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 2008). [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. There is a third volume by Cuevas titled *Mujeres de la resistencia* (Barcelona: Ediciones Sirocco, 1986) which does recount some women’s prison experiences. However, the main thrust of this text is to discuss women’s roles in the resistance to the dictatorship and, due to the different focus, this third volume will not form part of the principal material for analysis. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Consuelo García, *Las cárceles de Soledad Real* (Barcelona: Ediciones Alfaguara, 1982); Núñez*, Cárcel de Ventas*. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Halfin, *Terror in my Soul*, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Halfin, *Terror in My Soul*, pp. 18-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Halfin, *Terror in My Soul*, p. 262. For more information on the Stalinist purges of the 1930s, see: Catherine Merridale, *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Russia* (London: Granta, 2000), pp. 246-51. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Semprún, *Autobiografía*. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Semprún uses the term *autocrítica* to demonstrate the growing Stalinisation of the PCE. *Autocrítica* translates literally as self-criticism, but in two different episodes in the text Semprún notes how the term was used in a non-reflexive, accusatory way by members of the Party to show how the language of Stalinism policed non-conformity. Semprún, *Autobiografía*, p. 15; p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. While Hellbeck notes that the Soviet diarists do question themselves and their place in a Communist society, this is not to say that the diaries reveal a side that is more critical of the Party. Rather, the diarists use the space to focus on how they can conform better to the revolutionary ideal of Communism. Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind*, pp. 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Semprún comments on his own experience of feeling the need to justify his privileged upbringing, describing it as ‘el complejo de los orígenes sociales’. Halfin, *Terror in My Soul*, p. 28; Semprún, *Autobiografía*, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Epstein, ‘The Production of “Official Memory”’, pp. 183-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. For more information on Khrushchev’s ‘Secret Speech’, see: William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (London: The Free Press, 2003), pp. 270-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Herrmann, *Written in Red*, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Herrmann, *Written in Red*, p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Herrmann, *Written in Red*, p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Gina Herrmann, ‘Voices of the Vanquished: Leftist Women and the Spanish Civil War’, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 4 (2003), 11-29. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Ruth First was a South African Communist and political activist, who campaigned against apartheid and was detained for several months for her beliefs, before going into exile. Paul Gready, *Writing as Resistance: Life Stories of Imprisonment, Exile, and Homecoming from Apartheid South Africa* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003), p. 46; Shula Marks, ‘Ruth First: A Tribute’, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 10 (1983), 123-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Cuevas, *Presas*; Cuevas and Giles, *Prison of Women*. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. This is common throughout Communist autobiography. Several women reference the influence of Maxim Gorky’s *The Mother* (1906), for example. Real claims ‘Es el libro que me lanzó a la lucha, que me dio conciencia, que me dejó las cosas claras’. García, *Soledad Real*, p. 42; Núñez, *Cárcel de Ventas*, p. 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. García, *Soledad Real*, p. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Mangini notes childhood rebellion in Ibárruri’s life writing, too, using this example from *They Shall Not Pass* (1966): ‘During my adolescence I was filled with a bitter, instinctive resentment which made me lash out against everything and everybody (at home I was considered incorrigible), a feeling of rebellion that later became conscious indignation’. Mangini, *Memories of Resistance*, p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. It is important to recognise here that, although the colleague of Cuevas claims to be working towards a democratic Spain, the Communist Party was in fact working towards a society which would, in theory, do away with the need for democracy or governance of any kind. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind*, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Epstein, ‘The Production of “Official Memory”’, 181-201 (p.199). [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Doña was imprisoned from 1939-42, then from 1947-62. During this second imprisonment, she was sentenced to death, before having this sentence commuted to 30 years in prison. The death sentence was commuted because Eva Perón made a direct appeal to Franco after receiving a letter from Doña’s son. Doña, *Querido Eugenio*, n.p. [inside front cover]; Doña, *La mujer*, pp. 11-2; Alfonso González-Calero, ‘Juana Doña: mujeres entre rejas’, *Triunfo*, 20 May 1978, <http://www.triunfodigital.com/resbcombinada.php?autor=Gonz%E1lez-Calero,%20Alfonso&inicio=0&paso=10&orden=Seccion> [accessed 21 June 2016], p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Although it was not published until 1978, Doña states that the text was written in 1967, so it would have implicated Doña and others if it had been found. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. ‘La Veneno’ was the nickname of one of the prison functionaries who worked at Ventas prison in Madrid. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Ramos Mesonero, *Memoria de las presas de Franco*, p. 261. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Doña, *Querido Eugenio*, p. 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Ginard i Féron, *Matilde Landa*, p. 139. For more information on reasons for the imprisonment of women, see: Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres encarceladas*, pp. 114-20; Serrano, *Maquis*, pp. 218-27; Romeu Alfaro, *El silencio roto*, pp.44-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. This quotation is taken from the testimony of the only anonymous contributor to the two volumes of *Cárcel de mujeres*. Hernández Holgado has identified her as Josefina Amalia Villa, a member of the PCE. I will continue to refer to her as the anonymous contributor, as it is how she is referred to in *Cárcel de mujeres*. Her willingness to contribute testimony in anonymity highlights the importance for Communists of bearing witness. Fernando Hernández Holgado, ‘Juana Doña y el manantial de la memoria. Memorias de las cárceles franquistas de mujeres (1978-2007)’, *Arenal: Revista de Historia de Mujeres*, 22 (2015), 283-309 (p. 302). [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. In *Querido Eugenio*, Doña states that she was also imprisoned before the war for political activities, in Ventas in 1935, and in 1933 too. Leonor’s knowledge of how to respond to mistreatment in prison clearly derives from Doña’s own experiences in this case. Doña, *Querido Eugenio*, pp. 100-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. Hellbeck, *Revolution*, p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. Recognising the importance of education and literacy, however, was not only of interest to the PCE. Throughout the Second Republic and the Civil War, the Left implemented various strategies to try and educate the masses, including establishing the *Federación Española de Trabajadores de la Enseñanza* (FETE) and the Misiones Pedagógicas in 1931. For more information on educational movements during the Second Republic and the Civil War, see: Antonio Malero Pintado, *Historia de la educación de España: la educación durante la Segunda República y la guerra civil (1931-1939)*, 5 vols (Madrid: Secretaría General Técnica. Centro de Publicaciones. Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1991), IV, pp. 266-267; José Francisco and Pastora Herrero (eds), *Partidos políticos y educación: alternativas de futuro* (Place of publication unknown: Editorial Miñón, 1978), pp. 90-105; Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, pp. 118-9; Sandie Eleanor Holguín, *Creating Spaniards: Culture and National Identity in Republican Spain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002), pp. 16-78. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. Mercedes Vilanova, ‘Anarchism, Political Participation, and Illiteracy in Barcelona between 1934 and 1936’, *American Historical Review*, 97 (1992), 96-129 (pp.99-100). [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. Cuevas mentions writing letters for an inmate in her eighties from Guadalajara, Daniela Picazo (I, 235). Doña’s character Josefina writes letters for ‘decenas de campesinas analfabetas’ (183). Real mentions letter-writing several times. García, *Soledad Real*, p. 132; p. 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. Núñez, *Cárcel de Ventas*, p. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. Several prominent female intellectuals were imprisoned, such as Matilde Landa and María Sánchez Arbós, who were connected with the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (ILE). This was a secular project founded in the 1870s in Spain that aimed to provide education free from religious or political bias. For more information, see: Fernando Millán, *La revolución laica de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza a la Escuela de la República* (Valencia: Fernando-Torres Editor, 1983), pp. 35-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. From this point on I will continue to refer to Manolita del Arco as Manoli, as this is how she is named in *Cárcel de mujeres.* Jorge J. Montes Salguero, ‘Manolita del Arco, veterana militante comunista y republicana’, *El País*, 21 January 2006 <http://elpais.com/diario/2006/01/21/agenda/1137798006\_850215.html> [accessed 18 November 2015]. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. Gready, *Writing*, p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. There were many different wartime activities that women carried out for political parties, such as demonstrating, organising workshops, persuading men to go to the front, working for the *Socorro Rojo*, nursing, looking after children, amongst other things (I, 101, 136, 148, 180). Mary Nash discusses the roles that women fulfilled during the war extensively throughout *Defying Male Civilization*. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. Foucault writes about the tradition between care for the self and autobiography from Ancient Greek time, commenting that ‘Taking care of oneself became linked to constant writing activity’ (27). See Michel Foucault, ‘Technologies of the Self’, in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. by Luther H. Martin and others (London: Tavistock, 1988), pp. 16-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. The term ‘expediente’ means a prison file or record. In these two examples the term is used differently, however. In the first, the anonymous contributor uses the phrase ‘notas graves en el expediente’ to mean that the existing prison files of the prisoners have a note written in them to mark the prisoners who took part in the hunger strike as troublesome. In the second example, Valés uses the phrase ‘ni ella ni a ninguna nos hicieron expediente’, meaning that new criminal procedures would not be brought against the prisoners, and so Valés is denying that their actions held serious consequences for the prisoners. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. In his analysis of the Bilbao general strike of May 1947, Robert P. Clark argues that ‘Despite the limited gains and brutal repression that were the balance of consequences of the 1947 strike, many Basques considered it a success because it was the first open challenge to the Franco regime since the Civil War. The PNV, the Basque government, and the Resistance Committee all gained considerable prestige for having been able to conduct such a dangerous exercise’. There are clear parallels between this example of protest in the Basque Country, and the strike in Segovia in 1948: open protest against the regime, whichever form it took, was a goal in itself, and won its leaders prestige. Clark, *The Basque Insurgents*, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. In other sections of the text Semprún is even more scathing in his criticism of the PCE and its leadership in relation to the general strike. He states that ‘Así, a lo largo de los años, corroída por la cancerosa proliferación de la ilusión ideológica, la Huelga General dejó de ser el objetivo estratégico de una práctica de masas, realista, capaz por ello de transformar, al menos parcialmente, la realidad social, para convertirse en la justificación cuasi religiosa de una política pragmática, siempre oscilante entre el triunfalismo extremista y el oportunismo más inconsistente’. Semprún, *Autobiografía*, pp. 80-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. During a visit to the USSR, Stalin advised the leadership of the PCE to end its support for the armed struggle and to use clandestine tactics to bring about national strikes, in order to overthrow the dictatorship. Mujal León, *Communism*, pp. 17-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. Halfin, *Revolution on my Mind*, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. For example: Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres encarceladas*; Vinyes, *Irredentas*. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres encarceladas*, p. 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. García, *Soledad Real*, p. 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Segismundo Casado, a Colonel in the Republican army, was convinced of the futility of resistance to the Nationalist troops and believed that Franco would honour his promise that those without blood on their hands would not be punished. He led a coup against the Negrín government in March 1939 and, as part of this, waged war on the PCE, arresting as many members as possible. Casado’s attempt for a negotiated peace failed as Franco would only accept unconditional surrender. The Nationalists won the war and Casado went into exile in Venezuela. For more information on this topic, see: Pierre Broué and Émile Témime, *The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain*, trans by. Tony White (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), pp. 524-37; Helen Graham, *The Spanish Republic at War, 1936-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 407-25; Preston, *The Spanish Civil War*, pp. 296-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. García, *Soledad Real*, pp. 130-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. García, *Soledad Real*, pp. 132-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. García, *Soledad Real*, p. 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Núñez, *Cárcel de Ventas*, p. 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Núñez, *Carcel de Ventas*, p. 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Raquel Osborne, ‘“Entonces ellas se convertían en rojas”: desencuentros y amistades entre prostitutas y rojas en las cárceles franquistas’, *Mora*, 15 (2009), 103-18 (p. 105). [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Núñez Díaz Balart, *Mujeres caídas*, p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Javier Bandrés, and others, ‘Mujeres extraviadas: psicología y prostitución en la España de postguerra’, *Universitas Psychologica*, 13 (2014), 1667-79 (p. 1668); Richard Cleminson, and Claudio Hernández Burgos, ‘The Purification of Vice: Early Francoism, Moral Crusade, and the Barrios of Granada, 1936-1951’, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*,16 (2015), 95-114 (p.109). [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Bandrés, ‘Mujeres extraviadas’, p. 1668. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. Osborne, ‘“Entonces”’, p. 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. For more information on how left-wing women were demonised, see: Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, pp. 112-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Cuesta’s testimony also demonstrates the inconsistency of Communist ideology, as sex work was not considered real labour. As discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, women’s emancipation and their roles in society were not challenged within the Communist movement until the late 1960s, after the explosion of feminism, and then somewhat reluctantly. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. Osborne, “‘Entonces’”, p. 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Osborne, ‘“Entonces”’, p. 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. Mercedes Núñez also claims that when the Trece Rosas were taken for execution, the prison functionaries put Mari Carmen Vives in the infirmary to protect her from the other prisoners. Núñéz, *Cárcel de Ventas*, p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. Núñez, *Cárcel de Ventas*, pp. 39-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Richards, ‘Morality and Biology’, 395-421 (p. 399; p. 416; p. 400). [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. García, *Soledad Real*, pp. 120-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. For example, Ángeles García Madrid and Cecilia Abad were accused of having worn the ‘mono y pistola’ during their trials, which they flatly denied. García Madrid, *Réquiem por la libertad*, p. 116; Cuevas (I, 70). [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. In this case, Lina Odena, a *miliciana*, shot herself after capture. Linhard argues that this act becomes gendered in its re-telling because it is implied that she committed suicide to avoid rape by her captors, thereby maintaining her honour. Tabea Alexa Linhard, *Fearless Women in the Mexican Revolution and the Spanish Civil War* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, 2005), p. 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. García, *Soledad Real*, p. 93. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. The actual charge was of trying to reorganise the JSU. Núñez Díaz Balart and Rojas Friend, ‘Las trece rosas’, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. The anonymous contributor to *Cárcel de mujeres* states that the women were accused of having ‘organizado el asesinato de Franco el día de Desfile de la Victoria, 18 de mayo del 39’ (II, 19), whereas María del Carmen Cuesta believes they were punished for the murder of Galbadó, despite the fact they did not do it (I, 182). [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Linhard, ‘The Death Story of the “Trece Rosas”’, p. 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Núñez Díaz Balart, ‘Las trece rosas’, p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. García, *Soledad Real*, p. 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. It is interesting that in this juxtaposition of youth and death there is no mention of the high rates of infant mortality within the prisons, which are commented on earlier in this chapter. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. Here, Machado is not referring to the Trece Rosas themselves but to other young women that were being held in ‘Menores’. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. There is a precedent for the use of religious imagery by those on the Left. Herrmann has argued that Pasionaria used Marian tropes of sacrifice and maternity to broaden her appeal within left-wing Spanish culture that, while overtly atheist, was still grounded culturally in Catholic ideology. Herrmann, *Written in Red*, pp. 35-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. For more information on the martyrdom of religious personnel in Spain, see: Mary Vincent, ‘The Martyrs and the Saints: Masculinity and the Construction of the Francoist Crusade’, *History Workshop Journal*, 47 (1999), 68-98. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. For example, Semprún discusses how the number of contacts that each Communist had was deliberately limited in order to avoid being able to reveal too much information if captured. When his comrade Simón Sánchez Montero does not arrive for a meeting, Semprún is quickly able to ascertain that he has been arrested and knows which contact has delivered Sánchez Montero to the police. Semprún, *Autobiografía*, pp. 32-66. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. Herrmann, *Written in Red*, p.45. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. García, *Soledad Real*, p. 258. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. García, *Soledad Real*, p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. Herrmann, *Written in* Red, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. According to its website, *Triunfo*, which was originally a weekly magazine about cinema, became a proponent of left-wing ideas and culture throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Its editor, José Ángel Ezcurra Carrillo, described it as a group of journalists and intellectuals working together to ‘inventar fórmulas de comunicación con un número importante y creciente de españoles y logró […] horadar la coraza de intransigencia – y desafiar la represión – de un régimen autoritario que fué responsable ante su pueblo de una era de injusticia e intolerancia’. José Ángel Ezcurra Carrillo, ‘Crónica de un empeño dificultoso’, *Triunfo Digital*, 26-27 October 1992, < http://www.triunfodigital.com/TE.pdf> [accessed 18 August 2016], p. 2; Juana Doña, *La mujer* (Madrid: Emiliano Escolar, 1977); González-Calero, ‘Juana Doña: mujeres entre rejas’. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. Doña, *Querido Eugenio*. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. Doña, *Querido Eugenio*, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. Doña, *La mujer*, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. There is a discrepancy here between the information provided in the introduction to *La mujer* and González-Calero’s interview. González-Calero gives the date of Doña leaving the PCE as 1964, which is more than a year after her release in 1962. I consider this to be an editorial error in one of the two publications, although it is not clear which. Gregorio Morán discusses the two key splits which took place in the PCE in the early 1960s, the key actors in which he groups as ‘Maoístas y revisionistas’. The ‘revisionistas’ Fernando Claudín and Jorge Semprún were expelled from the Party in 1964 for advocating a fundamental tactical change, based on the fact that Spanish society had changed socioeconomically. The ‘Maoístas’ split from the Party to form the PCE (m-l) in late 1963/ early 1964 as a result of ideological differences, stemming from the Sino-Soviet split. Doña joined the PCE (m-l), so it is possible that a Maoist interpretation of Communist thought was the reason for her break with the PCE. However, Doña was also the Party contact for Claudín when he was in prison during the Second Republic and was friends with his sisters Isabel and Pilar. Pilar Claudín was also imprisoned with Doña in Segovia in 1948. As such, it is also possible that Doña left the Party in solidarity with Claudín. Gregorio Morán, *Miseria y grandeza**del Partido Comunista de España 1939-1985* (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1986), pp. 372-80; Doña, *Querido Eugenio*, p. 91; González-Calero, ‘Juana Doña’, pp. 34-5; Mujal León, *Communism*, pp. 80-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. Doña, *La mujer*, p. 12; González-Calero, ‘Juana Doña’, p. 34; Valiente, ‘The Feminist Movement’, p. 33. For more information on the ORT and the ULM respectively, see: Francisco Moreno Sáez, ‘Partidos, sindicatos y organizaciones ciudadanas en la provincial de Alicante durante la Transición (1974-1982): Organización Revolucionaria de Trabajadores’, *Archivo de la democracia*, <http://www.archivodemocracia.ua.es/db/artículos/8.pdf [accessed 19 July 2016]; and Asociación Mujeres en la Transición Democrática, *Españolas en la transición: de excluidas a protagonistas (1973-1982)* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1999), p. 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. González-Calero, ‘Juana Doña’, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. González-Calero, ‘Juana Doña’, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. Morcillo, *True Catholic Womanhood*, p. 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. Threlfall, ‘Gendering the Transition’, p.17. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. For more information on the SF, see: Ofer, *Señoritas in Blue*; Kathleen Richmond, *Women and Spanish Fascism: The Women’s Section of the Falange 1934-1959* (London: Routledge, 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. Morcillo, *True Catholic Womanhood*, pp. 15-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. Threlfall, ‘Gendering the Transition’, p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. Valiente, ‘The Feminist Movement’, pp. 34-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. Valiente, ‘The Feminist Movement’, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. Anny Brooksbank-Jones, *Women in Contemporary Spain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 4; Threlfall, ‘Gendering the Transition’, pp. 20-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Threlfall, pp.22-4; Radcliff, ‘Social Movements’, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. Moreno Sáez, ‘Partidos, sindicatos y organizaciones ciudadanas’, p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. Doña, *La mujer*, p. 81. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. Doña, *La mujer*, pp. 82-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. Doña, *La mujer*, p. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. Barrett, *Women’s Oppression Today*, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. Doña, *La mujer*, p. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. Doña, *La mujer*, pp. 62-7. For a comprehensive discussion of the law relating to women during the Second Republic and under Franco, see: Rosario Ruiz Franco, *¿Eternas menores? Las mujeres en el franquismo* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. Doña, *La mujer*, p. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. Arthur Koestler and Richard H.S Crossman, *The God That Failed: Six Studies in Communism* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1950); García, *Yo he sido marxista*. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. Halfin, *Terror in my Soul*; Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind*; Epstein, ‘The Production of “Official Memory”’. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. González-Calero, ‘Juana Doña’, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. González-Calero, ‘Juana Doña’, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. González-Calero, ‘Juana Doña’, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. González-Calero, ‘Juana Doña’, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. González-Calero, ‘Juana Doña’, p. 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Rosa Sánchez Mora, ‘la Dinamitera’, makes this point in *Cárcel de mujeres*, for example: ‘Es cierto que a través de la historia, en general, la mujer no ha estado considerada como igual al hombre, pero ¿es que la mayoría de las mujeres han hecho algo para enfrentarse a defender sus derechos? Hoy se habla mucho de feminismo, pero yo no estoy segura de que ese camino de lucha sea el camino de la igualdad con el hombre, sólo luchando codo a codo con él no nos sentiremos menospreciadas’ (I, 158). [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. Brooksbank-Jones, *Women in Contemporary Spain*, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. Brooksbank-Jones, *Women in Contemporary Spain*, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. Brooksbank-Jones, *Women in Contemporary Spain*, p. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. Sarah Leggott, ‘A Testimony of Female Communist Militancy: Nieves Castro’s *Una vida para un ideal*’, *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research*, 8 (2002), 89-102 (p. 94). [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Leggott, ‘A Testimony of Female Communist Militancy’, p. 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. Joly, ‘Las violencias sexuadas’, p. 102. Abad also explores other ways, such as economically, that women suffered under the Franco regime: Abad, ‘Las dimensiones de la “represión sexuada”’. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. For more information on the role of women’s organisations in the Spanish Civil War, see: Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. García, *Soledad Real*, p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, p. 72. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. In *Querido Eugenio*, we learn that Doña’s parents were in an unhappy marriage and that they separated in the spring of 1936. Doña writes that her father was authoritarian but there is no discussion of an extramarital affair. Doña, *Querido Eugenio*, pp. 106-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. Graham, ‘The Spanish Civil War’, p. 317. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. Graham, ‘The Spanish Civil War’, pp. 315-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. Conxita Mir recognises that denunciation was used by some in Spanish society as a way of taking revenge for old feuds or disputes. Mir, ‘El sino de los vencidos’, p. 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. María Bevacqua writes that although the idea of rape as humiliation and violence rather than sex is largely attributed to Susan Brownmiller’s *Against Our Will* from 1975, these ideas were expressed as early as 1948 by the feminist poet Ruth Herschberger in *Adam’s Rib*. María Bevacqua, *Rape on the Public Agenda: Feminism and the Politics of Sexual Assault* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000), p. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. Abad, ‘Las dimensiones de la “represión sexuada”’, p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. Abad, ‘Las dimesiones de la “represión sexuada”’, p. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. Abad, ‘Las dimesiones de la “represión sexuada”’, p. 76; Graham also discusses the regime’s attack upon the motherhood of ‘red’ women in her essay on Amparo Barayón: Graham, ‘The Spanish Civil War, 1936-2003’, p. 317. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. Herrmann, *Written in Red*, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. This phrase echoes the language of Catalan birth control campaigns, which were aimed to help women avoid the ‘slavery of continuous motherhood’. Mary Nash, ‘Marginality and Social Change: Legal Abortion in Catalonia during the Civil War’, in *Marginated Groups in Spanish and Portuguese History*, ed by. William D. Phillips and Carla Rahn Phillips (Minneapolis: Society for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies, 1989), pp. 169-84 (p. 177). [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality*, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*, pp. 16-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Leggott, ‘A Testimony of Female Communist Militancy’, p. 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. Although this example relates to literary criticism rather than history, Toril Moi highlights that Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (1969) was an early example of women reading ‘against the grain’, that is adopting alternative reading strategies in order to counter a tradition of male interpretation of novels. Toril Moi, *Sexual/ Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Methuen, 1985), pp. 24-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. Mangini, *Memories of Resistance*, p. 130. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. Doña, *Querido Eugenio*, p. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. Doña, *Querido Eugenio*, p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. Doña, *Querido Eugenio*, p. 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. Hellbeck, *Revolution on my Mind*, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. García, *Soledad Real*, pp. 177-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. Herrmann, *Written in Red*, p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. Doña, *Querido Eugenio*, pp. 73-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. Doña, *Querido Eugenio*, p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. For examples of how fragmentation functions within trauma theory, see: Lyn Marven, ‘“In Allem ist der Riss”: Trauma, Fragmentation, and the Body in Herta Müller’s Prose and Collages’, *Modern Language Review*, 100 (2005), 396-411; José María Ruiz Vargas, ‘Trauma y memoria de la Guerra Civil y de la dictadura franquista’, *Hispania Nova: Revista de Historia Contemporánea,* 6 (2006), 299-336. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. For example, Blasa Rojo discusses the mental torture of living under the death penalty, and Rosario Sánchez Mora discusses the work of Matilde Landa, both in Cuevas: (I, 67); (I, 161-2). [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. Pike, ‘No/Bodies’, p. 216. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. Pike, ‘No/Bodies’, p. 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. Doña, *Querido Eugenio*, p. 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. Gunnthórunn Gudmundsdóttir, *Borderlines: Autobiography and Fiction in Postmodern Life Writing* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), p. 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. Proceeding from a decree signed by Franco in 1937, in 1938 the Ministry of Justice created the ‘Patronato Central para la Redención de Penas por el Trabajo’, which allowed prisoners to reduce their sentences through work. Originally several groups of political prisoners were excluded from this right: prisoners that had not been sentenced; those that had attempted to escape; ‘reincidentes’, those who had been released from prison after the war and then re-imprisoned for offences against the dictatorship; and any prisoner sentenced under the Ley contra la Masonería y el Comunismo. However, after the mass pardons in the early 1940s, the decree was relaxed to allow these groups to redeem their sentences through work to stop the system collapsing, which would have lost the regime a source of cheap labour vital to the economy. Some prisoners were resistant to the idea of working to redeem their sentences, as Soledad Real highlights, believing that this amounted to collaborating with the regime. However, Communists tended to see this as an opportunity to gain control over certain aspects of the prison environment. González Duro, *El miedo en la posguerra*, pp. 148-55; García, *Soledad Real*, pp. 233-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. In *Cárcel de Ventas* by Mercedes Núñez, for example, a woman tells how she has been forced into stealing by the post-war climate. She is imprisoned for theft and tells Núñez that she has hidden the information from her husband, a political prisoner. She fears that he will find out and she will be rejected: ‘El día que lo sepa me escupirá a la cara, o me echará, o me matará ¡qué sé yo!’. Mercedes Núñéz, *Cárcel de Ventas* (Paris: Editions de la Librairie du Globe, 1967), p. 84. For more information on the development of a Soviet morality, see: Hoffmann, *Stalinist Values*. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. García, *Soledad Real*, p. 183. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. Oleg Kharkhordin, ‘Reveal and Dissimulate: A Genealogy of Private Life in Soviet Russia’, in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, ed. by Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 333-363 (p. 335). [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. Pike, ‘No/Bodies’, p. 224. [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. Ramos Mesonero, *Memoria de las presas de Franco*; Hernández Holgado, ‘Abajo las dictaduras: las cartas de Josefa García Segret’, *Memòria antifranquista del Baix Llobregat*, 6 (2007), 6-8; Mangini, *Memories of Resistance*; Aguado, ‘Las cárceles franquistas’; Aguado, ‘Represión franquista’. [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. The PCE suffered repression during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, but was then legalised during the Second Republic. After the victory of the Nationalists in 1939, all political parties (apart from the Falange) were outlawed. The PCE was finally legalised in 1977 as part of the ‘Ley para la Reforma Política’. Mujal León, *Communism and Political Change*, p. 7; p. 153. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. It is not made clear in the text how long García Madrid was held for, but Ramos Mesonero states that she was imprisoned for three years. Mesonero also states that García Madrid was released in February 1942 but does not provide a source to support the statement. Ramos Mesonero, *Memoria de las presas de Franco*, p. 264; p. 278. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. Ramos Mesonero, *Memoria*, p. 261. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. Until 1941, denunciations could be made anonymously, and the Code of Military Justice regulated that prosecution should be begun for ‘any denunciation worthy of consideration’. As such, denunciations could be made with impunity. Anderson, *Francoist Military Trials*, p. 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. García Madrid writes in *Réquiem por la libertad* that she was sentenced to twelve years imprisonment. As such, she would have been eligible for parole from April 1941, as part of the series of decrees to relieve the vast overcrowding of the prison system. Ruiz, *Franco’s Justice*, p. 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. Ángeles García Madrid, *Al quiebro de mis espinas: poemas desde la cárcel* (Bilbao: Gráficas Ayala, 1977). [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres encarceladas*, p. 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. Di Febo, *Resistencia*, p. 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. García, *Soledad Real*, pp. 205-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. Cenarro observes that the censorship of correspondence was largely undertaken by religious personnel within the prison system and notes that this intimate knowledge of prisoners’ personal matters was used as a method of gauging which individuals would be most susceptible to the regime’s ‘esfuerzos regeneradores’. As Mir comments, the hope that the Allies would intervene in Spain once the Second World War was over was a common one. Cenarro, ‘La institucionalización del universo penitenciario franquista’, p. 149; Mir, ‘El sino de los vencidos’, p. 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. After his failed attempt to defend the town of Tuy against the insurrection in July 1936, García Segret’s husband went into hiding. García Segret reports that the prison director asks her about her alleged pregnancy in shock, exclaiming ‘¡Pero eso – dijo no es de su esposo! Porque usted no estuvo con él desde…’ (219). [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. Although there is no way to ascertain that García Segret was aware of other prison narratives, sufficient material had been published on the matter for it to be a possibility. The heroic death narrative can be found in di Febo’s *Resistencia y movimiento de mujeres en España 1936-1976* (1979), or Doña’s *Desde la noche y la niebla* (1978), for example. [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
330. In various footnotes, García Segret explains that she is ‘Berta’, ‘Faro de Vigo’ is a newspaper in the prison, ‘el consejo de familia’ is the exiled Republican government, ‘tía Nica-Nora’ stands for representatives of the United States, and ‘tía Maximiliana’ is Mexico (51). [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. Malonda mentions going to lectures by figures such as Ortega y Gasset, Ramiro de Maeztu, María Martínez Sierra (María Lejárraga), Eugenio d’Ors, Victoria Kent and Margarita Nelken (19). For more information on the Residencia de Señoritas, see: Raquel Vázquez Ramil, *La Institucion Libre de Enseñanza y la educación de la mujer en España: la Residencia de Señoritas (1915-1936)* (Coruña: [s.n.], 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. In describing her social circle, Malonda wrote that ‘La libertad y amplitud de pensamiento nos permitían dialogar y respetar toda idea ajena o discrepancia que pudiera surgir’ (101). This liberal attitude to life would have been anathema to her right-wing fellow citizens. [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. Anderson, *Francoist Military Trials*, p. 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. Anderson, *Francoist Military Trials*, pp. 127-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. Cenarro, ‘La institucionalización del universo penitenciario’, p. 134; Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust*, p. 473. [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust*, p. 472. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. For more information on the Francoist legal system, see: Ruiz, *Franco’s Justice*; Sabín, *Prisión y muerte*, pp. 23-75. Martial law remained in place until 1948. Other laws were created to impose civil sanctions on the populace, such as the Ley de Responsabilidades Políticas in 1939, which demanded economic reparation from those who had not supported the Nationalist uprising. García Segret writes about her husband being charged with political responsibilities, which she describes as ‘mezquino’, or avaricious (62). She is also exasperated and aggrieved at the futility of the process, as her husband had been murdered over two years previously in a ‘saca’. [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. Gilmore, *The Limits of Autobiography*, p. 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
339. For more information on the sentencing terminology and its corresponding penalties, see: Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres encarceladas,* p. 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust*, p. 477. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. Mir, ‘El sino de los vencidos’, p. 184. [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. Anderson, *Francoist Military Trials*, p. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
343. Mir, ‘El sino de los vencidos’, p. 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
344. Anderson, *Francoist Military Trials*, p. 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
345. *Depuración* was the term given to the purging from their posts of civil servants, teachers, journalists and diplomats, as well as other professional bodies, who were deemed to be pro-Republican. These professionals were ordered to present themselves to the authorities for investigation. See ‘The Decontamination of Madrid: The Purges of Civil Servants, Professionals, and Others’ in Ruiz for more information about the process of depuración. Ruiz, *Franco’s Justice*, pp.165-91. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
346. Anderson, *Francoist Military Trials*, p. 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
347. Vinyes, ‘El universo penitenciario’, p. 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
348. A similar episode can be seen in O’Neill’s memoir, when she is told that the authorities cannot find any evidence against her, but that ‘Esto no quiere decir que usted y su sirvienta salgan en libertad’. O’Neill, *Una mujer en la guerra de España*, p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
349. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), p. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. Mary Vincent, ‘Expiation as Performative Rhetoric in National-Catholicism: The Politics of Gesture in Post-Civil War Spain’, *Past and Present*, 203 (2009), 235-56 (pp. 245-6). [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. Richards writes that a woman in Córdoba was arrested, forced to ingest castor oil, and had her head shaved as punishment for wearing black after her brother, a Communist who was tortured by the authorities, took his own life. Richards, *A Time of Silence*, p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. Anderson, *Francoist Military Trials*, p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
353. This was a consequence of a circular from the High Court of Military Justice in November 1936, which ruled that the defence lawyer would only be given the defendant’s charges four hours before they were prosecuted, making it impossible to build a case. Paloma Aguilar also recognises that it was compulsory for the defense lawyer to be the lowest-ranked member of the military taking part in the court martial, giving him even less authority and ability to defend the prisoners. Anderson, *Francoist Military Trials*, p. 54; Aguilar, ‘Judiciary Involvement’, p. 250. [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. Malonda was still sentenced to twelve years’ imprisonment at her first trial for her left-wing beliefs, but the prosecutor’s initial demands for the death penalty were overturned (65). Anderson recognises that often ‘local authorities went to little effort to cloak the flimsy nature of the allegations they levelled’ and that they were based upon hearsay and rumours. Anderson, *Francoist Military Trials*, p. 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. This claim is substantiated by Anderson, who notes that ‘judges did not put much store by the public cross examination of witnesses because they felt that testimony had been more than sufficiently tested when judicial investigation officers preparing prosecutions took statements. Thus the authorities established “guilt” not in the courtroom, but in their “investigations” that preceded the trial days’. Anderson, *Francoist Military Trials*, pp. 54-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. Mir, ‘El sino de los vencidos’, p. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. The phrase ‘voz jurídica militante’ refers to the work of left-wing lawyers in the late 1960s who began to challenge the authority of the regime by bringing cases of labour law to the courts. Di Febo, *Resistencia*, p. 61; Vincent, *Spain 1833-2002*, pp. 206-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
358. Del Arco Blanco explores the hunger suffered by the majority of Spaniards after the war, citing the regime’s persistent belief in an autarchic economic policy as the cause. However, he also emphasises that hunger became a further tool of repression, as it made citizens both reliant upon the support of Francoist charitable institutions for survival, and too focused upon survival to engage in serious resistance to the regime. This highlights the extreme sacrifices that families made to support their loved ones in prison, as they too were suffering from profound deprivation, and the vulnerability of prisoners, such as García Segret, who lacked family members to support them. Del Arco Blanco, *Hambre de siglos*. [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
359. Vinyes notes that the regular movement of women from prison to prison produced ‘un fluido intercambio de información sobre los distintos lugares de encarcelamiento’. Clearly, this also facilitated the passing of other information, including political developments. Vinyes, *Irredentas*, p. 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
360. Although ‘incomunicada’ can mean to be put in solitary confinement, in this case the prison authorities were threatening to stop the prisoners receiving visits, letters, and packages from the outside. [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
361. The exercise of this privilege seems to have been dependent upon the authorities that were running the prison; interestingly, in Malonda and García Madrid’s narratives it was nuns that allowed women to pay for privileges. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. Cenarro analyses the differences between the regulations that the regime set for prisons and the reality of their implementation in ‘La institucionalización del universo penitenciario franquista’, pp. 133-53. [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
363. Cenarro highlights that, though the Director General de Prisiones established regulations for appropriate behaviour for prison personnel—such as not blaspheming or subjecting prisoners to abusive treatment—between 1936 and 1954 there were more than 3,000 investigations opened into those working in prisons. Cenarro, ‘La institucionalización del universo penitenciario franquista’, pp. 150-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
364. Natividad Brunete Gómez was a prison functionary during the Second Republic and, after being put through the process of ‘depuración’, was reinstated and rapidly promoted. She was the governor of the provincial prison in Valencia from September 1939 until the late 1940s, with her sister Luisa Brunete as ‘Jefe de Servicios’. Aguado, ‘Represión franquista’, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
365. ‘La Nati’ did eventually lose her position within the prison because of the way she abused her power. In August 1943 the prisoners circulated a document highlighting the various way she exploited her position, including stealing food and firewood that was destined for prisoners, and a prison guard that had fallen foul of the governor made a complaint to her superiors. ‘La Nati’ was removed from her post and the prisoners who had circulated the denunciation were sent to Segovia as punishment for their subordination, despite the claims being proved true (150-1). Her removal from post had little to do with her behaviour towards the prisoners themselves, though, and was instead a consequence of her fraudulent actions, thereby demonstrating the lack of concern that the prison authorities had towards prisoners’ welfare. Aguado and Verdugo also suggest that she was only removed from her post temporarily, as her signature appears on prison documents until 1948. Aguado and Verdugo, ‘Las cárceles franquistas’, p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
366. Vinyes, ‘El universo penitenciario durante el franquismo’, p. 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
367. Cenarro writes that ‘Aceptar dádivas y dinero por los favores realizados fue moneda corriente en las prisiones de Franco y, aunque se podía sancionar con la suspensión temporal de empleo y sueldo por considerarse falta grave, en muchas ocasiones quedó impune ante la falta de pruebas.’ Cenarro, ‘La institucionalización del universo penitenciario’, p. 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
368. Anderson, *Francoist Military Trials*, p. 127. [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
369. Anderson, *Francoist Military Trials*, p. 127. [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
370. Ruiz, *Franco’s Justice*, pp. 125-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
371. Del Arco Blanco, *Hambre de siglos*, p. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
372. Del Arco Blanco, *Hambre de siglos*, p. 299. [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
373. Political prisoners referred to the death penalty as ‘La Pepa’. For lyrics, see: Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres encarceladas*, p. 9; Cuevas, *Cárcel de mujeres*, II, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
374. García Madrid’s collection of poetry *Al quiebro de mis espinas* was published in 1977, five years before *Réquiem por la libertad*. The collection is autobiographical and reflects many of the same experiences that can be found in her later memoir. Some of the same poems are re-printed in *Réquiem por la libertad*. O’Neill’s volume of poetry *Romanzas de las rejas* was published in 1964 when she was in exile in Mexico. Millán Astray, the sister of the Nationalist General José Millán Astray, was imprisoned in August 1936 in Alicante until the end of the war because of her connection to her brother and her Falangist beliefs. Millán Astray’s volume of poetry about her prison experiences was published in 1940 and was dedicated to the ‘glorioso Caudillo que nos abrió las puertas del cautiverio’. García Madrid, *Al quiebro de mis espinas*; O’Neill, *Una mujer en la guerra de España*; Ocampo, *Diccionario de escritores mexicanos*, p. 134; Millán Astray, *Cautivas*. [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
375. This is not uniformly true of all Communist memoirs from all periods. When studying the memoirs of East German Communists from the 1980s, for example, Catherine Epstein observes that ‘Old Communists’ new interest in writing memoirs coincided with the SED [Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands] leadership’s desire to reinvigorate the myth of a glorious, Communist-led antifascist struggle. Two decades after the establishment of the GDR [German Democratic Republic], the inspiration and revolutionary élan of the early postwar years had waned. […] A “Great Future” for socialism no longer seemed so certain. Rather than dwell on a future that threatened to become mundane, the SED now focused the East German population’s attention on a golden “Great Past”’. Epstein, ‘The Production of “Official Memory”’, p. 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
376. Herrmann, *Written in Red*, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
377. The alleged transgression of being a political activist as a woman was also profoundly hypocritical, considering the fact that the Falange had the *Sección Femenina*, led by Pilar Primo de Rivera, which functioned as ‘el vehículo de transmisión de la ideología franquista sobre las mujeres, y el principal instrumento del que se sirvió la dictadura para intentar llevar a cabo [una] *política de feminización*’ [original emphasis]. Ruiz Franco, *¿Eternas menores?*, p. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
378. Richards, *A Time of Silence*, p. 30; pp. 71-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
379. Ignacio Fernández de Mata, ‘So That We May Rest in Peace: Death Notices and Ongoing Bereavement’, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 12 (2011), 439-62 (p. 441). [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
380. O’Neill, *Una mujer en la guerra de España*, pp. 193-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
381. Mangini, *Memories of Resistance*, p. 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
382. Christian Goeschel, ‘Suicide at the End of the Third Reich’, *Journal of Contemporary Studies*, 41 (2006), pp. 153-73. [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
383. For more information on Landa, see: Ramos Mesonero, *Memoria*, pp.98-126; Ginard i Féron, *Matilde Landa*. The philosophy of Krause was developed from Enlightenment thinking and was imported into Spain by Julián Sanz del Río, and studied later by Francisco Giner de los Ríos and Gumersindo de Azcárate. It focuses on rationalism and liberalism of the State, with a stress on the importance of science and a rationalist approach to religion, which can be achieved through an ethical and moral re-education of man. For more information on krausismo, see: Elías Díaz, *La filosofía social del krausismo español* (Valencia: Fernando Torres, 1983), pp. 46-61. [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
384. Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres encarceladas*, p. 261. For more information on the Socorro Rojo and the ‘colonias infantiles’, see: Laura Branciforte, ‘Legitimando la solidaridad femenina internacional: el Socorro Rojo’, *Arenal*, 16 (2009), 27-52; Rosalía Crego Navarro, ‘Las colonias escolares durante la Guerra Civil (1936-1939)’, *Historia Contemporánea*, 2 (1989), 299-328; Juan M Fernández Soria, ‘La asistencia a la infancia en la guerra civil. Las colonias escolares’, *Revista Interuniversiraria. Historia de la Educación*, 6 (1987), 83-128. [↑](#footnote-ref-384)
385. Ramos Mesonero, *Memoria*, p. 109. This sentiment is echoed by Ginard i Féron who states that ‘su experiencia política, en un sentido estricto, era más bien escasa; nunca había ocupado un cargo relevante en el partido y, desde luego, distaba mucho de ser una profesional de la clandestinidad’. Ginard i Féron, *Matilde Landa*, p. 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
386. Ginard i Féron, *Matilde Landa*, p. 122. Ginard i Féron questions whether Landa actually was transferred by plane, as some testimonies claim, stating that other prisoners and Landa’s niece told him that she was part of a normal transfer when he interviewed them. That other prisoners believed Landa was given preferential treatment should perhaps be seen as a reflection of her significance to them, adding to the myth surrounding her person. [↑](#footnote-ref-386)
387. Hernández Holgado discusses the case of a woman, Teresa Báñez Torres, who hanged herself in Ventas in 1939. In her suicide note, Báñez Torres wrote the following: ‘Yo no he robado ni matado a nadie, me quito la vida porque después del bien que hice no me quiere nadie ni tengo a quien delatar’. Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres encarceladas*, p. 150. Doña also discusses the suicide of a male prisoner during interrogation, but it is implied that he took his own life to avoid accidentally revealing information, arguably making the death less ambivalent and more heroic: he kills himself to protect the collective from his own weakness. Doña, *Desde la noche y la niebla*, p. 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
388. In a communication sent to Ginard i Féron, Nieves Torres states the following: ‘Desde el principio se dijo que se había suicidado y también el motivo por el que lo había hecho. La verdad es que entonces algunas presas pensamos que debería haber hecho frente a aquella situación, que con aquella gente no se podía dialogar, que cómo podía ser que una mujer tan completa y tan valiente hiciera eso. Era más bien una crítica, no es que se la condenase ni nada de eso. Desde luego con el tiempo he cambiado de opinión, pero en aquella época pensábamos así’. Ginard i Féron, *Matilde Landa*, p. 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-388)
389. Dupláa, ‘Memoria colectiva’, pp. 34-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
390. Almudena Grandes, *Las tres bodas de Manolita* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 2014); Chacón, *La voz dormida*. [↑](#footnote-ref-390)
391. Chacón, *La voz dormida*, p. 243. [↑](#footnote-ref-391)
392. Núñez, *Cárcel de Ventas*, p. 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-392)
393. Chacón, *La voz dormida*, pp. 215-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-393)
394. Doña, *Querido Eugenio*, pp. 197-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-394)
395. Grandes, *Las tres bodas de Manolita*, p. 39 [↑](#footnote-ref-395)
396. Grandes, *Las tres bodas de Manolita*, p. 368. [↑](#footnote-ref-396)
397. Grandes, *Las tres bodas de Manolita*, pp. 643-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-397)
398. Chacón, *La voz dormida*, n.p. end of novel. [↑](#footnote-ref-398)
399. Kajsa Larson, ‘Remembering the Thirteen Roses: Blurring Fact and Fiction’, *Nomenclatura: Aproximaciones a los estudios hispánicos*, 2 (2012) <http://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1017&context=naeh> [accessed 25.02.16], 1-21 (pp. 1-2). [↑](#footnote-ref-399)