Balancing Acts? Relational Responses to Trauma in Twenty-First Century French and Spanish Women's Writing

Hannie Lawlor

Wolfson College

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Trinity Term 2020

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Short Abstract

This thesis focuses on contemporary French and Spanish intergenerational stories in the wake of traumatic loss. Through the lens of these texts, it engages with Paul John Eakin's theory of 'relational lives' and with current conceptions of what constitutes an 'ethical' representation of the multiple, interlocking stories in a family history. By drawing the French and Spanish traditions of life-writing into the discussion of relational lives, which has focused primarily on Anglo-American examples, my thesis expands the parameters in terms of geography as well as genre. While French women writers have been at the centre of output and innovation in European life-writing, contributions by their Spanish counterparts are considerably less prominent. The dialogue my study instigates, however, demonstrates that contemporary women writers are in fact grappling with similar questions when giving voice to traumatic experience; the Spanish texts simply tend towards more fictional strategies of representation.

I argue on this basis that the fictional or autofictional staging of intergenerational stories offers as much insight into what it means to write a relational life as do more overtly autobiographical accounts. At the heart of this question are the ethical challenges that the texts in my corpus address and the narrative solutions they offer in response. These texts put questions to the notions of ownership, appropriation, displacement and ventriloquism which pervade existing discussions of ethics in life-writing and trauma

theory, and which are inclined to portray the relationship between subjects as fixed and predetermined. In their place emerges a more malleable conception of ethical practice, one which perceives subject positions to be forged instead in the *act* of telling the story. This thesis seeks to re-describe ‘relational lives’ accordingly as a specific mode of writing and so to clarify why it should be distinguished from the claim that all life-writing is ‘relational’.

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Long Abstract

In the twenty-first century landscape of life-writing, the relational nature of every autobiographical endeavour goes virtually unquestioned. Theory and practice alike demonstrate a keen awareness that any one life-story is made up of multiple others, shaped by the many lives with which it intersects. Coined by Susan Stanford Friedman to describe female-authored autobiography, the concept of 'relationality' now encompasses *all* life-writing. Since then, the connections between the author, their family members and the surrounding social, cultural and historical narratives have been understood as an essential aspect of the writing and interpretation of every life-story. These connections have been explored most prominently in a specific sub-set of life-writing that Paul John Eakin labels 'relational lives'. In these texts, the author recounts the life of a 'proximate other', who is most frequently a family member, alongside her or his own life, and the relationship between the two interconnected narratives takes centre stage. Although by no means written by women exclusively—Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, for example, is a pioneering work in this genre—these intergenerational stories have emerged most persistently in female-authored life-writing.

Until now, the discussion of relational lives has concentrated primarily on Anglo-American examples. This thesis intends to expand the parameters of the discussion in terms of geography as well as genre. My corpus draws into dialogue texts from two traditions of life-writing that are, on the face of it, very different: texts published in

France, which has been consistently at the centre of output, theory and innovation in autobiography, and in Spain, where the genre has been given considerably less prominence. Through the comparison this thesis undertakes, we see that contemporary women writers are in fact grappling with similar questions. At the heart of these projects is a fusion of autobiographical and biographical modes, with which the authors foreground the bonds between an individual story and the ongoing family history in which it unfolds. The principal difference between these French and Spanish works lies in the generic strategies that the authors mobilise in order to represent and navigate these bonds. Whereas most of the French examples I examine adopt approaches that are overtly autobiographical or autofictional, the Spanish texts tend more towards fiction in their representations of intergenerational trauma. This thesis argues, correspondingly, that the fictional and autofictional staging of family histories can offer as much insight into what it means to write a relational life as do avowedly autobiographical approaches.

As it stands, there is significant ambiguity over the definition of relational lives. If all life-writing is understood to be relational, why does this type of text warrant a specific label? Eakin, G. Thomas Couser and Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson all offer descriptions of relational lives that hinge on the special emphasis the texts place on the autobiographer's relationship with a proximate other. Yet the prominence afforded to familial relationships has long been a key tenet of women's autobiography. This thesis seeks to develop an alternative definition of relational lives, one which takes as its focal point the question of how the author or narrator relates to the proximate others she strives to represent. At the heart of this question are the many narrative and ethical challenges that emerge from the attempt to write a shared story when only one subject holds the pen. In the introduction to this thesis, I summarise these challenges with the following question: to what extent can and should we speak for the other subjects whose lives form

such a crucial part of our own? By ‘can’, I refer to the limits of the subjective writing perspective and whether one can ever claim insight into the perspectives of others; by ‘should’, to the various ethical problems that arise from speaking in their place. What I perceive as the crucial development in the twenty-first century texts I have chosen to analyse is their conscious engagement with these questions. While such challenges pertain to all relational lives, they are of particular significance in the examples of ‘post-traumatic’ life-writing on which this thesis focuses. In these texts, the narrative speaker testifies to shattering events that have left an irreparable tear in her family history. Although the definition of trauma is subject to much debate, taking their cue from Sigmund Freud many theories share the same starting point: the etymology of the word, which derives from the Greek meaning ‘wound’. It is the understanding of traumatic experience as causing a rupture in one’s very self that, I propose, epitomises the ethical dilemmas in writing relational lives. Figured as a wound, trauma signifies on the one hand the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the life-stories of the victims and those of their proximate others, even as they form part of the same family history. On the other hand, the wound foregrounds the fissure at which one life, and one story, seeps into another. Bleeding into the life-stories of the victim’s significant others, the traumatic repercussions become a necessary part of the author’s account of herself. Yet how can she testify to an event which, by its very nature, eludes the grasp even of its subject?

In intergenerational stories of traumatic experience, the narrative connection between writing and non-writing subjects is thus as problematic as it is paramount. In cases where suffering has long been kept silent—the Spanish Civil War, of course, is one such example—this connection offers perhaps the only opportunity for the story to be heard. The turn of the millennium acts as a landmark moment in this respect, given the shift it marks away from the devastating mass traumas of the twentieth century and thus

from the possibility of first-hand testimony. At the same time, however, such attempts at representation risk being met with accusations of appropriation, of the author laying claim to a story that is not her own. In the introduction I engage with this question of appropriation, and with that of ventriloquism, questions which underpin ethical studies of life-writing as well as trauma theory. In the former, theorists including Couser and Philippe Lejeune suggest that the principal problem stems from the individual nature of authorship. Their studies presume a power imbalance that is tipped irrevocably in relational lives in favour of the writing subject, which in the majority of family stories is the second generation. Couser describes the writing of these texts as an inevitable act of ventriloquism, in which the author projects her own voice onto the proximate others whom she purports to represent. There is a conspicuous clash, therefore, between these dynamics of ventriloquism and those conceived in studies of intergenerational trauma. The theory of traumatic transmission, as it is developed by Nicolas Abraham and Mária Török, regards second-generation subjects not as ventriloquists, but *ventriloquised*, when a traumatic secret suppressed by the previous generation resurfaces and possesses them. By examining these two antithetical conceptions of ventriloquism side-by-side, this thesis establishes the complexity of the power relations in intergenerational representations of traumatic experience. The one-sided approach to agency in studies of relational lives, which sees power as held inevitably by the writing subject, is replaced by a two-way struggle for narrative space.

The examples of French and Spanish women's writing in my corpus expose and explore this relational struggle. As they broach the question of a narrative balance between the stories of different generations, these family narratives also complicate the perception that pervades ethical studies of life-writing that the power relations between writing and non-writing subjects are fixed. The assumption that the ventriloquising of the

other's voice is unavoidable has resulted in little attention being paid to the efforts that authors make to restructure these asymmetrical power relations. My corpus, on the other hand, challenges the assumptions that ground existing conceptions of ethics in writing intergenerational stories. By shifting the spotlight to the diverse narrative strategies mobilised in these texts, this thesis argues that in place of the set subject positions and predetermined power dynamics that life-writing and trauma theory alike prescribe, contemporary women writers are shaping their own, alternative ethical practice within the texts they write. I describe these practices as relational balancing acts, which assume different forms according to the particular challenges the authors face. Each part of my thesis takes one of these balancing acts as its focal point. By moving from works where the writers are furthest removed from the trauma they recount to texts dominated by the author's more immediate, personal ordeal, it considers how the key ethical concerns change depending on the author's proximity to the traumatic event. The crises range from the Second World War to incestuous abuse, and the first two sections of the thesis move from large-scale traumas to losses that are increasingly focused on the individual. While recognising the specific challenges that writing in the wake of these different traumas brings, this thesis also calls attention to the connections that transpire from the narrative and ethical questions they share. Questions of agency, voice and narrative space traverse the many painful experiences of which the authors give an account.

The thesis turns first to postmemory, a term coined by Marianne Hirsch to describe how children of parents affected by the Holocaust cope with the overwhelming inherited memories of their parents' trauma. Postmemory originates in transgenerational haunting, but goes a step further, exploring not only how these writers voice their parents' experience, but also how the compulsion to tell this story affects their own narrative. For Hirsch, the potential for displacement is present on *both* sides. As they give voice to a

trauma that is not their own, the second generation risk appropriating their parents' stories, just as the overwhelming nature of the trauma threatens to displace their life experiences, to encroach on their narrative space. The first two chapters of this thesis engage closely with the poles of appropriation and displacement that Hirsch envisages. They observe how the narrative strategies adopted in four postgenerational responses to mass trauma call into question the implications of both these ethical parameters. Chapter One examines the issue of appropriation in two responses to the Holocaust: Colombe Schneck's *La Réparation* (2012) and Juana Salabert's *Velódromo de Invierno* (2001). By drawing on the motif of replacement that the texts share, it explores the ways in which both authors use focalisation to forestall arguments against articulating an ordeal that is not their 'own'. In Chapter Two, I turn to the Spanish Civil War and the question of displacement in Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* (2002) and Lydie Salvayre's *Pas pleurer* (2014). With reference to the dynamics of ventriloquism, the chapter reflects on how an ethical representation of the other's voice might rely on subverting fixed subject positions and the sense that there is but one 'place' in the text from which the story is told.

The second part of the thesis turns its attention to texts which incorporate or make their principal focus the lived traumatic experience or loss of the author herself. Given the closer proximity of these authors to the events they relay, questions of identification and separation come to the fore. Chapter Three engages with texts in which this tension emerges primarily from the relationship between the life-stories of the author and her proximate others. Nicole Lapierre's *Sauve qui peut la vie* (2015) and Gabriela Ybarra's *El comensal* (2015) both recount the author's personal loss alongside a trauma suffered by the previous generation. In view of the starkly different pictures the texts paint of the links between these traumatic histories, the chapter scrutinises the matter of agency or lack thereof in family stories in the face of intergenerational transmission. In the texts

with which I engage in Chapter Four, the pull between identification and separation surfaces most strongly between the subjects themselves rather than their stories. The author's individual loss is the single traumatic focus in Milena Busquets's *También esto pasará* (2015) and Sophie Daull's *Camille, mon envolée* (2015). Both texts are written in response to the death of the autobiographical 'other', the loss of Busquets's mother and Daull's daughter respectively. Through the prism of these mother-daughter relationships, I consider how the authors attempt to navigate in narrative terms the tension between the desire to hold on to the lost loved one after her death and the obligation to let her go.

The impossible conversations with the lost loved one that Busquets and Daull seek to realise through writing are probed further in the final section of the thesis. Christine Angot's *Un amour impossible* (2015) and Cristina Fallarás's *Honrarás a tu padre y a tu madre* (2018) foreground the complexities of competing versions of the family story 'speaking' to one another when traumatic experience has opened up a deep divide between perspectives. This section undertakes a more direct comparison of the challenges of balancing these perspectives when the author is close to or removed from the trauma that she voices, and when the event itself is individual or collective in scope, since the two texts stand at opposite ends of this spectrum. Both Angot and Fallarás are born of a 'misalliance' between two opposing sides, and in view of the painful conjunction between family histories they represent, the chapter explores the texts' success in reconciling the clashing versions of events. By analysing the narrative conversations they stage, I ask whether life-writing can, and indeed whether it should, perform a kind of negotiation between voices and versions.

From the narrative solutions these texts propose in response to the ethical questions they navigate, a more complex understanding of intergenerational relations unfolds, one which poses a challenge to current conceptions in autobiography theory of

who can, should and does tell the story. As they articulate and attempt to reconfigure the asymmetrical relationship between the voice or perspective of the author and those of the other subjects implicated in these family stories, the texts point to a desire in contemporary life-writing practice to bear witness to the many voices that go unheard. The preoccupation with making audible these missing voices that contemporary French and Spanish women's writing share, I conclude, provides the basis from which to establish a clearer definition of relational lives. This redescription of writing relational lives as a specific and innovative mode of telling an intergenerational story leads us to reflect on the repercussions for our understanding of all life-writing as 'relational'.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would never have come to be without the brilliant supervision of Marie-Chantal Killeen and Daniela Omlor. Their advice, insights and encouragement have been invaluable to my growth as a researcher. They have inspired me as academics but also as people, and I cannot thank them enough for their dedication and kindness.

I am very fortunate to have also had the support of Xon de Ros throughout this project. She has been a constant source of support and wisdom during my time at Oxford, and I am indebted to her for the many opportunities she has given me. My thanks goes also to my Transfer and Confirmation examiners for the time they have taken to read my work and the excellent advice they have given me: to Laura Lonsdale and Ève Morisi, whose attentive readings helped guide my project in its early stages, and to Ian Maclachlan and María del Pilar Blanco, for their encouraging feedback and expert recommendations.

Pursuing this project was made possible by the generous financial support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Oxford Centre for Life-Writing. I am also grateful to the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages and Wolfson College for travel grants that enabled me to attend stimulating conferences and undertake research in Madrid.

It has been a privilege to be part of the Modern Languages Faculty for the last three years and to have the opportunity to work alongside an amazing group of graduate students in the Spanish and French sub-faculties. Special thanks go to Annabel Rowntree, Nupur Patel, Lucas-Jan Dörre and Gilly Mroz, who have all provided a listening ear when I needed it most. I am especially thankful to my wonderful friends Bex Bowen, Vittoria Fallanca, Sarah Jones and Rachel Skokowski, for their astute proofreading, delicious brownies and unwavering support.

I would not have started this project, and certainly not finished it, without the love, belief and infinite patience of my (long-suffering!) family and friends, who have been with me through all the ups and downs of the past three years. To say thank you doesn't quite cover it, but I am endlessly grateful to my partner, Joey, who, on top of proofreading and putting up with my many thesis woes, has been my rock through the hardest of times and never failed to make me smile. To my dad, who has rescued me and my laptop on more than one occasion when we have gone into crisis mode. To my mum, for all the time she has poured into listening to my work, discussing ideas and supporting me in every possible way.

And finally, to the person who taught me how to search for the sunshine, this thesis is for you. I will be forever grateful for all that you have given me.

Thanks, Ang.

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Introduction

Relational Selves and Relational Lives

In the twenty-first century landscape of life-writing, the relational nature of every autobiographical account goes virtually unquestioned. Theory and practice alike demonstrate a keen awareness that any one life-story is made up of multiple others, shaped by the many lives with which it intersects. Coined by Susan Stanford Friedman, the concept of 'relationality' was first developed as the hallmark of female-authored autobiography, in contrast to the prevailing tendency to view the autobiographical self as individual and autonomous. Drawing on Nancy Chodorow and Sheila Rowbotham's theories of relational female selfhood, Friedman argues that Georges Gusdorf's accepted model of the autobiographical self, in which one's unique selfhood is defined in opposition to others, excludes women.[1] Inverting this individualistic model, she produces an alternative, relational one in which women's autobiographical identity is defined *with* others rather than against them.[2] Paul John Eakin and Nancy Miller extended Friedman's theory to encompass male- as well as female-authored autobiography in the 1990s. In their respective works *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* and 'Representing Others: Gender and the Subjects of Autobiography', they demonstrate that *all* life-writing is inherently relational.[3] Since then, the connections between the author, her or his family members and the surrounding social, cultural and historical narratives have been understood as an essential

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[1] Friedman explains that the identification, interdependence and community that Gusdorf rejects when defining the autobiographical self are key features of Rowbotham and Chodorow's accounts of the development of female identity. The importance of the mother-child relationship, they argue, gives rise to fluid ego boundaries and a relational sense of self. 'Women's Autobiographical Selves: Theory and Practice', in *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, ed. by Shari Benstock (London: Routledge, 1988), 35–56 (38–42).
[2] Ibid., 56.
[3] Paul John Eakin, *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Nancy Miller, 'Representing Others: Gender and the Subjects of Autobiography', *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 6.1 (1994), 1–27.

aspect of the writing and interpretation of every life-story. These connections have been explored most prominently in a specific sub-set of life-writing that Eakin labels 'relational lives'. In works such as Kim Chernin's *In My Mother's House* (1983) and Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1986/1991), the author recounts the life of a 'proximate other', as Eakin puts it, who is most frequently a family member, alongside her or his own life, and the relationship between the two interconnected narratives takes centre stage.[4] Eakin describes the cohabitation of life-stories in the texts as 'not only the autobiography of the self but the biography *and* the autobiography of the other' (italics in original).[5] Following this logic, which posits two narrative speakers and two autobiographical selves who share the same textual space, both the author and her or his proximate other hold agency. Susanna Egan terms such a relationship 'mirror talk': she conceives the subjects as becoming alternately 'self' and 'other' for one another in the telling of their life-stories. Because the subject positions are interchangeable and interdependent, neither perspective is privileged over the other.[6] The narrative balance that Egan's 'mirroring' posits is problematic; Eakin himself acknowledges that the stories are 'on unequal footing' given the control that the author ultimately exerts over the writing process.[7] He observes that while the ostensible focus of the relational lives he examines is on the other's life-story, the author's account of her or his recording of that other life—what he calls 'the story of the story'—in fact takes precedence. Eakin attributes this dominance to a leftover desire for autonomy on the part of the author. In other words, he interprets the asymmetry between stories as the symptom of a conflict within the relational project. I argue, by contrast, that in contemporary women's

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[4] Eakin uses the term 'proximate other' to express the intimacy of the tie between this subject and the autobiographer (1999), 86.
[5] Ibid., 58.
[6] Susanna Egan, *Mirror Talk: Genres of Crisis in Contemporary Autobiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 25.
[7] Rocío G. Davis considers the illusory nature of this balance in her study of transcultural collaborative autobiographies. 'Dialogic Selves: Discursive Strategies in Transcultural Collaborative Autobiographies by Rita and Jackie Huggins and Mark and Gail Mathabane', *Biography*, 28.2 (2005), 276–94 (283).

writing, the inevitable imbalance between stories and the tensions between subjects is portrayed as a fundamental part of the process of writing relational lives. As Eakin's study makes plain, intergenerational stories have been written by both men and women. I contend that the relational imbalance discussed in this thesis has emerged most persistently in female-authored examples. What I perceive as the crucial development in the twenty-first century texts I analyse is the emphasis they place on the narrative and ethical challenges of their writing projects, challenges that have not yet been fully explored in theoretical studies of life-writing.

Expanding Geographical Parameters: Traditions of Life-Writing in France and Spain

Until now, the discussion of relationality by Anglo-American critics has concentrated primarily on works written in English, and the textual examples to which Eakin refers in developing his theory of relational lives come from this same sphere. With the exception of Philippe Lejeune's work on collaborative autobiography, which serves as an important touchstone for Eakin's theory, the French tradition is conspicuous in its absence. The absence is more striking still if we consider the role that family stories by French and Francophone women have played in paving the way for a new conception of autobiography. Michael Sheringham explains that the works published by Nathalie Sarraute, Marguerite Duras, Annie Ernaux and Assia Djebar in the 1980s—the same decade in which the Anglo-American texts on which Eakin draws were published—were instrumental in shifting autobiography to the central position it has occupied ever since in French literature and culture. One key aspect of this repositioning of autobiography in the literary field, as Sheringham describes it, is the 'prominence given to relationships with significant others' in these texts. Whilst he construes this emphasis on relationships as a perennial feature of women's autobiography, it is given a 'new twist' through the innovative approaches of these

women authors to autobiographical writing.[8] The so-called autobiographical 'self', first of all, is portrayed as emerging at the intersection of individual, familial and social narratives. All four women authors cast doubt on an individual's purchase on her or his life-story in a way that makes them clear precursors to the recent examples of writing relational lives that constitute the corpus of this study.

My project draws contemporary French texts, which build on this well-established practice in women's autobiography, into dialogue with Spain's very different tradition of life-writing. Examples of Spanish autobiography are also missing from existing critical discussions of relational lives. Yet whereas the underrepresentation of French literature seems a glaring omission, the absence of Spanish texts is less surprising. In terms of output, theory and innovation in European life-writing, the two countries appear to stand at opposite ends of the spectrum. The prominent position that autobiography has occupied in France for the last three decades could hardly be more different to its relative invisibility in the Spanish literary landscape.[9] Citing Spanish autobiography theorist Manuel Alberca, Maite Usoz de la Fuente suggests that this invisibility is the product of an entrenched devaluation of autobiographical genres.[10] María-José Blanco and Claire Williams have observed moreover that the lack of autobiographical writing and criticism in the Hispanic world has been particularly pronounced in the case of women authors.[11] This is not to say that no such

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[8] Michael Sheringham, 'Changing the Script: Women Writers and the Rise of Autobiography', in *A History of Women's Writing in France*, ed. by Sonya Stephens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 185–203 (188).

[9] By relative invisibility, I refer to the disparity between the growth of autobiography theory in France in the 1970s and the lack thereof in Spain. Thus far, the twenty-first century has seen significantly more works on autobiography published by Spanish theorists, yet the fact that these writers draw heavily on French theory and examples seems to reinforce the absence of a parallel tradition in Spanish literature. See for example Ángel G. Loureiro, *The Ethics of Autobiography: Replacing the Subject in Modern Spain* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000); Jesús Camarero, *Autobiografía: Escritura y existencia* (Barcelona: Anthropos, 2011); and José María Pozuelo Yvancos, *De la autobiografía: Teoría y estilos* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2006).

[10] Maite Usoz de la Fuente, 'Gendered Genres: Autobiographical versus Autofictional Readings of Elvira Lindo's *Lo que me queda por vivir*', in *Feminine Singular: Women Growing Up through Life-Writing in the Luso-Hispanic World*, ed. by María-José Blanco and Claire Williams (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2017), 229–40.

[11] Blanco and Williams (2017), 26.

examples exist, nor that this body of literature has nothing to contribute to the discussion of writing relational lives. In fact, the mainstay of relationality—that is, the crucial role that others play in helping to construct and articulate one's identity—comes into view clearly in post-Civil War publications by women writers, perhaps nowhere more notably than in the work of Carmen Martín Gaite and Esther Tusquets. While Martín Gaite and Tusquets are first and foremost novelists (whose writing styles differ considerably), both pursue questions of plural and split identities throughout their oeuvres. Their most famous works, *El cuarto de atrás* (1978) and *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* (1978) respectively, could be described as semi-autobiographical explorations of identity, which hinge on the presence of an interlocutor.

It is no accident that both texts were published in the late 1970s. In Spain, of course, the period constitutes a crucial political turning point, marking the death of Franco, the abolition of censorship and the start of the Transition to Democracy. The same period, according to Sheringham, represents a turning point in France for autobiography, in view of pioneering publications by Lejeune, Roland Barthes and Georges Perec.[12] Certainly, the stark difference in the stature of autobiography in these two countries is driven by the political circumstances in which women authors were writing. The long years of self-censoring in Spain could not but leave their mark on the practice of self-writing.[13] Yet there are unmistakeable parallels between these French and Spanish works and the ways in which they engage with questions of relational selfhood. The split narrative voice that Sarraute employs in *Enfance* (1983), in which the second-person speaker 'tu' challenges the ability of the first-person 'je' to recollect her memories, resonates palpably with the relationship

[12] Sheringham (2000), 185–86.

[13] Jaime Céspedes Gallego notes that there was a proliferation of autobiographies during the nineteenth century that stopped abruptly under the dictatorship. 'La autobiografía española de finales del siglo XX' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Murcia, 2005), 110. Life writing was frequently produced, on the other hand, by Spaniards in exile. See for example Karla Zepeda, *Exile and Identity in Autobiographies of Twentieth-Century Spanish Women* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012).

between self and interlocutor in *El cuarto de atrás*. If we consider that the mysterious figure of the man in black in this text, who at once prompts and challenges C.'s reconstruction of her life-story,[14] is most likely another manifestation of the narrative persona, the similarity of Martín Gaite and Sarraute's approaches to autobiographical identity could scarcely be stronger. Further echoes resound between the narrative projects of Tusquets and Duras: both authors feature a recurring cast of characters in slightly changing guises across a series of semi-autobiographical works, which foreground the plural, shifting and collaborative constructions of selfhood in writing.[15] The similarities between these narrative projects suggest that in both Spanish and French women's writing, there is a long-standing engagement with questions of selfhood that are at the very heart of theories of writing relational lives. The principal difference, then, seems to lie in the generic strategies that Spanish authors mobilise in order to broach these questions, strategies which are less overtly autobiographical than those of their French counterparts. In the contemporary works discussed here, the divide between these two approaches is not quite as clear cut, yet the gulf between the reputations of the French and Spanish life-writing traditions remains. By undertaking a comparison of recent intergenerational stories published in the two countries, this thesis investigates the points of convergence and divergence in contemporary practices of women's life-writing. From this dialogue, the contributions that both French and Spanish women's writing make to reshaping the existing discussion of relational lives become clear. The shared questions raised by these two ostensibly different traditions serve to broaden the parameters of this discussion, and to challenge the 'ethics' of life-writing as it is currently conceived.

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[14] The man in black also serves to complicate the autobiographical status of *El cuarto de atrás*, given the role he plays in establishing the fictional intertexts of the fantastic and the *novela rosa*.

[15] I refer here to Esther Tusquets's trilogy *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* (1975), *El amor es un juego solitario* (1979) and *Varada tras el último naufragio* (1980), and to Duras's so-called Indochina cycle, *Un barrage contre le Pacifique* (1950), *L'Amant* (1984) and *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord* (1991).

Ethical Dilemmas in Telling Family Stories

At the heart of the French and Spanish writing projects in my corpus is the fusion between autobiographical and biographical modes that Eakin describes, a fusion through which the authors foreground the bonds between an individual story and the ongoing family history in which it unfolds. My thesis focuses on the ethical questions that recur in the course of these intergenerational stories. To what extent can and should we speak for the other subjects whose lives form such a crucial part of our own? By 'can', I refer to the limits of the subjective writing perspective and whether one can ever claim insight into the perspectives of others; by 'should', to the ethical problems that arise from speaking in their place. Indeed, the assumption that we can give an account of our lives is explicitly problematised by many of the earlier autobiographical works previously mentioned. In her book *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, Adriana Cavarero observes that the beginning of one's autobiography can never be known except through the narration of others.[16] This begs the question: if an account of the author's own past proves so evasive, how can she possibly articulate the experiences of other subjects in her family story on their behalf? In addition to the slippery elusiveness of the writer's own life-story is the question of the information she deliberately curtails or obscures: the parts of the story she elects to modify and the secrets she keeps. Even if the author is able to give a partial account of these experiences, to use her narrative remove as well as biographical or historical research to fill in some of the gaps and her authorial platform to make the story heard, questions remain over the ethical implications of doing so. In Linda Alcoff's article 'The Problem of Speaking for Others', which draws on the line of questioning that Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak pursues in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', she comments on the growing criticism in feminist theory of speaking on another's behalf. The criticism stems, she notes, from the heightened awareness of the impact of the

[16] Adriana Cavarero, *Relating Narratives: Storytelling and Selfhood*, trans. by Paul A. Kottman (London: Routledge, 2000), 39.

speaker's social position on what she says, and the risk that her privileged position will result in the further silencing of the people she wishes to represent.[17] Alcoff hastens to point out that the notion of speaking only for ourselves is equally problematic, not least because it represents an abdication of responsibility towards those who lack such a platform from which to speak.[18] The problems that Alcoff identifies arise in cases where the speaker is testifying, on another person's behalf, to something they *want* to speak about. In the face of narrative silences, secrets and fabrications—telling another person's story, in other words, that the subject herself did not want to be heard—there is a dramatic escalation in these ethical stakes.

Double Binds in Post-Traumatic Life-Writing

While the questions of whether we can and should speak for our proximate others thus pertain to all relational lives, they are of particular significance in the corpus analysed here. These texts are examples of what I will refer to as 'post-traumatic' life-writing, where the narrative speaker testifies to shattering events that have left an irreparable tear in her family history. While the definition of trauma is subject to much debate, many theories, taking their cue from Sigmund Freud, share the same starting point: the etymology of the word, which derives from the Greek meaning 'wound'.[19] This understanding of traumatic experience as causing a rupture in one's very self, I argue, epitomises the ethical dilemmas in writing relational lives. Figured as a wound, trauma signifies on the one hand the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the life-stories of the victims and those of their proximate others,

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[17] Linda Alcoff, 'The Problem of Speaking for Others', *Cultural Critique*, 20 (1991), 5–32 (6).
[18] Ibid., 7–8.
[19] The figuration of trauma as wound underpins Cathy Caruth and Leigh Gilmore's work on trauma. Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Gilmore, 'Limit-Cases: Trauma, Self-Representation, and the Jurisdictions of Identity', *Biography*, 24.1 (2001), 128–39 (131–32). Dominick LaCapra defines trauma along similar lines, describing it as creating holes in one's existence. *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 41.

even as they form part of the same family history. On the other hand, the wound foregrounds the fissure at which one life, and one story, seeps into another. Bleeding into the life-stories of the victim's significant others, the traumatic repercussions become a necessary part of the author's account of herself. Yet how can she testify to an event which, by its very nature, eludes the grasp of its subject? Cathy Caruth develops the implications of the 'wound' further when, taking up Freud's concept of *Nachträglichkeit*, she theorises trauma as a gap in one's experience. The trauma can be assimilated only belatedly, she claims, through its intersection with another traumatic history.[20] While the elusiveness of the experience redoubles the difficulty of testifying to the trauma of a loved one, it simultaneously increases the sense of obligation. If we consider Caruth's theory of belatedness in relation to family stories, when the victim is unable to 'work through' the trauma in her lifetime, the responsibility passes to subsequent generations to get some purchase on the ordeal in her place.

The narrative connection between writing and non-writing subjects in intergenerational stories of traumatic experience is thus as problematic as it is paramount. In cases where suffering has long been kept silent, this connection offers potentially the only opportunity for the story to be heard. The turn of the millennium acts as a landmark moment in this respect, given the shift it marks away from the devastating mass traumas of the twentieth century and thus from the possibility of first-hand testimony. The increased sense of urgency to preserve these stories as their subjects pass away is perhaps most vivid when we think of the Holocaust and the pledge to never forget the suffering of the victims.[21] In other cases of mass trauma, however, the turn of the century offers the first opportunity for a full acknowledgement of events in the public sphere. In the European context, the Spanish

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[20] Caruth (1996).
[21] See for example Federica K. Clementi, *Holocaust Mothers and Daughters: Family, History and Trauma* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2013), 2. Electronic resource.

Civil War is a conspicuous example of this belated recognition. The *ley de amnistía*, which guaranteed impunity for the perpetrators of crimes during the Civil War and dictatorship, was a break with the past endorsed by all political parties in an effort to pave the way for the Transition to Democracy. While some Republican perpetrators certainly benefitted from the resulting *pacto de olvido* along with their Nationalist counterparts, it prolonged the silence of the victims of the regime.[22] Only in the year 2000 did the recovery of these suppressed stories begin in earnest in the public domain, upon the foundation of the *Asociación para la recuperación de la memoria histórica*,[23] and it was not until 2007 that the *ley de memoria histórica* was passed to repeal the stifling effects of the amnesty law. As Jo Labanyi has remarked, this led to a 'boom' in accounts of the Civil War in Spanish literature, the majority of which are fictionalised representations of the experiences of the victims.[24] The prevalence of fiction in these accounts can be understood first as an admission of the writers' own remove from the suffering, one which speaks to the many testimonies that have already been lost. It also points to a continued tendency to write obliquely about the events that transpired, that is, for the author to obscure her own connection to the Civil War and dictatorship despite the far-reaching impact they had on Spanish family histories.

Formal Expectations and Ethical Complications in Trauma Theory

The recourse to fiction in representing traumatic experience has been subject to criticism in trauma theory, especially with regard to accounts of the Holocaust. Robert Eaglestone suggests that the problem lies in the facile identification on the part of the reader that fictional

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[22] Jo Labanyi, 'Memory and Modernity in Democratic Spain: The Difficulty of Coming to Terms with the Spanish Civil War', *Poetics Today*, 28.1 (2007), 89–116 (93–94).
[23] Founded by Emilio Silva and Santiago Macias, the *ARMH* started the movement to excavate the mass graves of Republican victims of the Civil War and Francoist regime. Emilio Silva, 'Mi abuelo también fue un desaparecido', *Crónica de León*, 8 October 2000, n.p. <http://www.derechos.net/esp/algomas/silva.html> [accessed 29 June 2020].
[24] Labanyi defines the memory boom as the surge since the 1990s of novels, testimonial writings, fiction films and documentaries on the Civil War and the post-war repression in Spain (2007), 95.

forms presuppose. Whereas testimony rejects identification of this kind, he contends, fiction largely encourages it, leading the reader to 'grasp' the experiences of the victims rather than register the incomprehensibility of their suffering.[25] Eaglestone's claim illustrates the extremes around which discussions as to what constitutes an 'ethical' representation of trauma are frequently structured. Colin Davis identifies the antithetical positions between which the debate vacillates: on the one hand, the injunction that no one has the right to speak in the place of victims, as espoused by American-Romanian writer and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel; and on the other, Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman's assertion that an ethical response to trauma requires the listener to become co-owner of the experience.[26] Davis expresses the problematic nature of both positions in similar terms to Alcoff, but he makes the risks incurred more tangible. To allow the experiences of the victims to go unspoken perpetuates the endeavour of the perpetrators to suppress them; to claim to share in the other's pain is a self-serving illusion that reinforces the authority of the listener.

Such extremes surface recurrently, as Eaglestone's argument demonstrates, in the restrictions some trauma theorists apply to the form that accounts of trauma should take. Although most critics have moved away from the implication that we cannot, and therefore should not, voice the suffering of the victims, there remains an expectation that the unrepresentable nature of trauma must be mimicked in its form. Anne Whitehead observes, for example, the recurrence in trauma fiction of techniques including fragmentation and repetition.[27] She insists that these techniques by no means constitute 'rules' by which trauma fiction should operate; it cannot be coincidental, however, that they are patent in so many

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[25] Robert Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the Postmodern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 38. Electronic resource.
[26] Colin Davis, *Traces of War: Interpreting Ethics and Trauma in Twentieth-Century French Writing* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), 4.
[27] Anne Whitehead, *Trauma Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 3. Electronic resource.

acclaimed trauma narratives.[28] Critical reception is clearly shaped, as Roger Luckhurst states, according to a 'particular trauma aesthetic' in which formal choices must convey that the event 'confounds narrative knowledge'.[29] In my study of intergenerational narratives that range from the openly autobiographical to the fictional, I will demonstrate that the ethics of representing traumatic experience are not in fact predetermined by the form the account takes. Testimony is staged in these texts through a variety of generic strategies and an equally diverse set of narrative techniques. The ethics of the authors' writing practices are shaped *within* the texts, I contend, by how they address and respond to the particular challenges they face in giving an account of intergenerational trauma.

Current Conceptions of Ethics in Relational Lives

In *How Our Lives*, Eakin argues that the relational understanding of identity makes the matter of ethics in life-writing a complex one. The relational lives he analyses blur the boundaries between the life of the author and her or his proximate other in a way that makes it difficult to determine where one begins and the other ends.[30] Eakin addresses the repercussions of these blurred boundaries with respect to the question of privacy. His discussion of ethics focuses on the transgressions made in publishing intimate details about the lives of one's significant others, or even about one's own, considering the consequences such details may have for the people close to the author.[31] Privacy is also the primary focus of Nancy Miller's exploration of the ethics of her own family memoir, in which she reflects

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[28] Whitehead focuses her attention on works by Caryl Philipps, W. G. Sebald and Toni Morrison, authors who feature prominently as examples in trauma theory.
[29] Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (London: Routledge, 2008), 88.
[30] Eakin (1999), 160.
[31] The example of the latter to which Eakin refers is Kathryn Harrison's *The Kiss* (1997), in which the author claims to have had an incestuous relationship with her father. He notes that the main source of the criticism the text has received is, ostensibly, the impact such a public disclosure could have on the lives of Harrison's children (1999), 156.

on the betrayal of a loved one's trust in exposing personal details about them.[32] Both Miller and Eakin foreground the complexity of the issue of privacy in these cases, given that such details are often a crucial component of an account of one's own life.[33] By drawing attention to the notions of ownership, property and autonomy that underpin legal definitions of the transgression of another's privacy, Eakin indicates that such an ethical parameter is not fit for purpose in the case of relational lives. It is surprising, then, that he fails to suggest the same for the other focus of ethical debates to which he refers: appropriation. The most virulent accusation with which life-writing in response to trauma is met is that the author is testifying to an experience that is not her or his 'own'; Benjamin Wilkomirski's *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood* (1996) in which the author claims, falsely, to have been interned as a child in a Nazi concentration camp, is the most infamous example.[34] Critical opinion is more divided on whether the text that regularly accompanies *Fragments* in studies of the ethics of life-writing, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1983), should be deemed an act of appropriation. While aspects of Menchú's first-person account of the Mayan genocide in Guatemala have been proven untrue, the fact that the atrocities to which she gives voice were indeed experienced by other members of her family and community has led to a complex ethical debate.[35] Although the use of the first person makes the text an extreme example of the blurred boundaries in interlocking life-stories, Menchú's *testimonio* highlights the vital role that voice plays in discussions of appropriation. Nowhere is this connection more prominent than in collaborative life-writing, where the matter of appropriation revolves around the gap that exists in the text between the identities

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[32] Nancy Miller, *Bequest and Betrayal: Memoirs of a Parent's Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).
[33] Eakin (1999), 181.
[34] For a discussion of the complexities of Wilkomirski's case, see Stefan Mächler's *The Wilkomirski Affair: A Study in Biographical Truth*, trans. by John E. Woods (London: Picador, 2001).
[35] Much as many critics pair the text with *Fragments* as examples of appropriation, others argue that the *testimonio* as a genre allows for the expression of collective experience in the first person. See for example Gilmore (2001), 131; Alcoff (1991), 17–18.

of victim, 'speaker', and author. Marking out what is 'proper' to oneself, the notion of appropriating another's story or voice is founded on a similar logic of ownership to privacy, but Eakin does not problematise it along the same lines. Instead, he describes the act of ventriloquism as embedded in the practice of writing relational lives, as well as in the ethical debates it engenders:

> in a culture centered on individualism, representation of the self and voice of the other acquires a special power. How that power is exercised becomes the central problem of the ethics of life writing, for there is no getting around the fact that ventriloquism, making the other talk, is by definition a central rhetorical phenomenon of these narratives. Proximate collaborative autobiography seems to embrace, conceptually, the reality of relational identity, the structuring bond between self and other, but the desire for autonomy, for mastery of one's origins, for authorship, persists.[36]

Eakin's portrayal of ventriloquism brings into sharp relief his perception that ethical tensions are the product of a lingering impulse towards individualism, not only on the part of the writer in this case, but also the reader. Making the other talk, he suggests, is the foundation of the narrative process in relational lives; it becomes problematic only in the light of the importance that we continue to place, as a society, on individual autonomy and authorship.

Ventriloquist or Ventriloquised: Conflicting Conceptions of Narrative Agency in Life-Writing and Trauma Theory

Eakin's depiction of ventriloquism as inevitable serves to sidestep this aspect of the discussion of ethics in *How Our Lives*. Nevertheless, the potential appropriation of another's voice and story remain the dominant focus of ethical debates on collaborative autobiography.[37] Lejeune and G. Thomas Couser, to whose work Eakin briefly refers,

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[36] Eakin (1999), 180–81.

[37] Claudia Mills puts forward a counterargument when she claims that 'Where your story is inextricably intertwined with mine, I can no longer be charged with appropriating your story, for the line between mine and thine has been blurred past any usefulness'. 'Appropriating Others' Stories: Some Questions about the Ethics of Writing Fiction', *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 31.2 (2000), 195-206 (203). While Mills is right to identify and complicate the clear-cut division between life-stories, her conflation of life-stories into one is problematic, especially in accounts of traumatic experience, in that it fails to recognise the gaps between the experiences and perspectives of different subjects.

consider the matter at length, and come to similar conclusions. In 'L'autobiographie de ceux qui n'écrivent pas', Lejeune observes that there is an obvious imbalance between subjects in texts where the author writes someone else's story under the guise of it being the latter's autobiography. He perceives the power dynamics as divided into two types: ghost-written autobiographies, in which the agency lies with the non-writing, celebrity subject, and ethnographic autobiographies, in which the author has conclusive control over the silent subject's life-story.[38] Couser takes up the two categories of collaborative autobiography that Lejeune identifies and separates them into a variety of different sub-categories, one of which is Eakin's relational lives. He situates these sub-categories on a spectrum of power dynamics, a kind of seesaw in which agency always tilts towards either the writing or non-writing subject. In terms of ethics, more attention has been paid thus far to the ethnographic variety of autobiography. In these texts, the voices of 'speaker' and 'editor' are merged into one in such a way that, according to Couser, the dialogical process is concealed behind a monological product.[39] Through the sliding scale of agency he develops, he argues that the same illusion is at work in *all* the sub-categories to varying degrees. Collaborative autobiography, he asserts, cannot but be ventriloquistic. A voice that does not originate with the subject is projected onto her, and the power dynamics of this act simply differ according to where the text is situated on his spectrum. Whereas ethnographic autobiographies attribute the text to a speaker who has no editorial input, in ghost-written autobiographies the subject claims credit for a voice that is not her own.[40] Couser situates relational lives closest to the centre of the scale, where agency might be more evenly distributed between writing and non-writing subjects. Yet substantial ethical issues still emerge, he insists, from the

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[38] Philippe Lejeune, 'L'Autobiographie de ceux qui n'écrivent pas', *L'Esprit Créateur*, 20.3 (1980), 9–20.
[39] G. Thomas Couser, 'Making, Taking and Faking Lives: The Ethics of Collaborative Life Writing', *Style*, 32.2 (1998), 334–50 (335).
[40] Ibid., 344.

ventriloquistic nature of these narratives, especially if the proximate others are 'vulnerable subjects' who cannot speak for themselves.[41]

Couser's emphasis on the ventriloquising of vulnerable subjects has paved the way for a strongly one-sided examination of the ethics in relational lives. Studies presume a power imbalance that is tipped definitively in favour of the writing subject, which in the majority of family stories is the second generation.[42] Hence there is a conspicuous clash between these dynamics of ventriloquism and those conceived in theories of intergenerational trauma. The notion of traumatic transmission, as it is developed by Nicolas Abraham and Mária Török, regards second-generation subjects not as ventriloquists, but *ventriloquised*, when a traumatic secret suppressed by the previous generation resurfaces and possesses them.[43] If we consider these two antithetical conceptions of ventriloquism side-by-side, the power relations in intergenerational representations of traumatic experience become more complex. The one-sided approach to agency in relational lives, which sees power as held inevitably by the writing subject, is replaced by a two-way struggle for narrative space. We see this intersection in Marianne Hirsch's idea of postmemory. Hirsch envisions postmemory as the consequence of traumatic recall at a generational remove: she coined the term to describe how children of parents affected by the Holocaust cope with the overwhelming inherited memories of their parents' trauma.[44] Postmemory originates in transgenerational haunting, but goes a step further, investigating not only how these writers voice their parents' experience, but also how the compulsion to tell this story affects their own narrative. For Hirsch, the potential for displacement is present on *both* sides. As they

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[41] G. Thomas Couser, *Vulnerable Subjects: Ethics and Life Writing* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), xi.

[42] Notable exceptions to this are representations of the disability or premature loss of a child, of which Couser studies several examples. In my corpus, only Sophie Daull's *Camille, mon envolée* is written from a parental perspective.

[43] Nicolas Abraham and Mária Török, *L'Écorce et le noyau* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978; repr. 2001).

[44] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 5–6. Electronic resource.

give voice to a trauma that is not their 'own', the second generation risk appropriating their parents' stories, just as the overwhelming nature of the trauma threatens to eclipse their life experiences, and encroach on their narrative space. The central challenge in postmemorial texts, as Hirsch sees it, is to make the stories of different generations contiguous rather than competing.[45]

Reconceptualising Power Relations in Contemporary Women's Writing

The examples of French and Spanish women's writing that this thesis will examine expose and explore this relational struggle. As they broach the question of a narrative balance between stories, these family narratives also complicate the perception that pervades ethical studies of life-writing that the power relations between writing and non-writing subjects are fixed. By moving from works where the writers are furthest removed from the trauma that they recount to texts dominated by the author's more immediate, personal ordeal, I will consider how the key ethical concerns change depending on the author's proximity to the traumatic event. While recognising the specific challenges that writing in the wake of these different traumas brings—particularly with respect to silences and taboos—this thesis also calls attention to the connections that emerge through the narrative and ethical questions they share. Questions of agency, voice, and narrative space traverse the many painful experiences of which the authors give an account. The crises range from the Second World War to incestuous abuse, and the first two sections of the thesis move from large-scale traumas through to losses that are increasingly focused on the individual. In *The Poetics of Transgenerational Trauma*, Meera Atkinson exposes what she refers to as a 'collective denial around the social effects of family trauma'. So-called family violence such as spousal homicide and infanticide, which have received limited attention thus far in trauma theory,

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[45] Hirsch (2012), 20.

are deemed ahistorical rather than understood as being linked to, and transmitted through, patriarchal social structures.[46] The texts I discuss strive to make plain the constant interplay between individual, familial and collective narratives of trauma. The range of responses offered by these authors regarding the implications of these connections shines a spotlight on the matter of whether one is ever able, in the face of intergenerational transmission, to dictate the development of one's life-story. As the authors explore the process of recounting these interconnected stories, they also consider how this agency, or lack thereof, functions in narrative terms. To what extent can the subjects of these life-stories 'write' them, so to speak, if they do not hold the pen?

The assumption that the ventriloquising of the other's voice is unavoidable in relational lives has resulted in little attention being paid to the attempt that authors are making to restructure asymmetrical power relations. In *How Our Lives*, Eakin alludes to studies by Mark A. Sanders and Anne. E. Goldman which break with the seeming consensus in ethical studies on the one-way power distribution in collaborative autobiography. Sanders and Goldman suggest that a closer examination of the tensions in such narratives reveals a greater capacity for agency on the part of the non-writing subject than might first appear. Eakin seems to dismiss this possibility and concurs instead with Couser and Lejeune when he describes the distribution of power as 'necessarily unequal' in the light of the authorial signature that the texts bear. From his perspective, regardless of the terms of the collaboration, 'an act of appropriation has occurred' in publishing the text.[47] I argue, rather, that in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the power dynamics in writing relational lives, it is necessary to pay closer attention to the kind of tensions observed by

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[46] Meera Atkinson, *The Poetics of Transgenerational Trauma* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 2.
[47] Eakin (1999), 176.

Sanders, Goldman and more recently, Bettina Stumm.[48] Although these theorists' works are sociological studies of so-called 'as-told-to' autobiographies, my corpus demonstrates that these tensions are no less perceptible in relational lives. Whereas Sanders and Goldman place the responsibility with the reader to uncover the voices of the non-writing subjects, in the texts I analyse this is a crucial component of the author's own writing project.

Relational Balancing Acts

The array of ethical questions that the texts address, and themselves raise, exposes the limitations of the dual focus on appropriation and privacy in the discussion of relational lives as it stands. By challenging such parameters, contemporary women writers sculpt their own alternative ethical practice. While Eakin indicates that ethical reflections by the authors of relational lives, if they take place at all, occur *after* the book's publication, the texts I explore include such reflection as an integral part of the narrative process. In Alcoff's discussion of how we might lessen the dangers of speaking for others, she concludes that doing so should depend on whether it ultimately empowers the speaker. Following Spivak, she writes that 'speaking for' others in an ethical manner must be a process of 'speaking with and to others'.[49] The conclusions Alcoff draws offer a viable ethical code in cases of as-told-to life-writing, particularly because of the emphasis in 'speaking with' on allowing *both* voices to emerge in the telling of the story. Yet for the most part, the relational narratives I examine tell a shared story in the absence of its other subjects; the loss of these family members acts as the narrative trigger.[50] The endeavour to make the telling process one of 'speaking with

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[48] Anne E. Goldman, 'Is That What She Said? The Politics of Collaborative Autobiography', *Cultural Critique*, 25 (1993), 177–204; Mark A. Sanders, 'Theorizing the Collaborative Self: The Dynamics of Contour and Content in the Dictated Autobiography', *New Literary History*, 25.2 (1994), 445–58; Bettina Stumm, 'Witnessing Others in Narrative Collaboration: Ethical Responsibility Beyond Recognition', *Biography*, 37.3 (2014), 762–83.

[49] Alcoff (1991), 23–29.

[50] The exceptions to this in my corpus are *Pas pleurer* and *Un amour impossible*, both of which stage conversations they had with their proximate others regarding the events they recount in the text.

and to' rather than 'for' becomes considerably more challenging in these cases, and the potential empowerment difficult to discern. Questions of how far we can and should tell the life-stories of others in these texts are better conceptualised, I argue, as a kind of balancing act. In her discussion of representing people with disabilities, Laura Davy proposes the concept of 'relational autonomy', which she describes as a 'balancing act' between relationality and autonomy. According to Davy, striking such a balance is essential when speaking for subjects with disabilities while continuing to respect and encourage the unique identity and selfhood of the individual.[51] In this thesis, I too perceive narrative responses to the ethical challenges of telling the other's story as a balancing act, but one which is part and parcel of relating to one's proximate others in life-writing. These relational balancing acts assume different forms according to the principal ethical questions the authors face.

Each part of my thesis takes one of these balancing acts as its focal point. The first section turns to postmemory, and the poles of appropriation and displacement that Hirsch sets out in these intergenerational narratives. I will consider how the narrative strategies adopted in four postgenerational responses to mass trauma call into question the implications of both these ethical parameters. In Chapter One, I examine the issue of appropriation in two responses to the Holocaust: Colombe Schneck's *La Réparation* (2012) and Juana Salabert's *Velódromo de Invierno* (2001). By drawing on the motif of replacement that the texts share, I explore the ways in which both authors use focalisation to forestall arguments against articulating an ordeal that is not their 'own'. Chapter Two turns to the Spanish Civil War and the question of displacement in Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* (2002) and Lydie Salvayre's *Pas pleurer* (2014). With reference to the dynamics of ventriloquism, I reflect on

[51] Laura Davy, 'Between an Ethic of Care and an Ethic of Autonomy', in *Relationality*, ed. by Simone Drichel, *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities*, 24.3 (2019) ,101–14 (110).

how an ethical representation of the other's voice might rely on subverting fixed subject positions and the sense that there is but one 'place' in the text from which the story is told.

In the second part of the thesis, I turn my attention to texts which incorporate or make their principal focus the lived traumatic experience or loss of the author herself. Given the closer proximity of these authors to the experiences they relay, questions of identification and separation come to the fore. In the texts I investigate in Chapter Three, this tension emerges primarily from the relationship between the life-stories of the author and her proximate others. Nicole Lapierre's *Sauve qui peut la vie* (2015) and Gabriela Ybarra's *El comensal* (2015) both recount the author's personal loss alongside a trauma suffered by the previous generation. From the starkly different pictures the texts paint of the links between these traumatic histories, I interrogate the matter of agency or lack thereof in family stories in the face of intergenerational transmission. In the texts discussed in Chapter Four, the pull between identification and separation surfaces most strongly between the subjects themselves rather than their stories. The author's individual loss is the single traumatic focus in Milena Busquets's *También esto pasará* (2015) and Sophie Daull's *Camille, mon envolée* (2015). Both texts are written in response to the death of the autobiographical 'other', the loss of Busquets's mother and Daull's daughter respectively. Through the prism of these mother-daughter relationships, I analyse how the authors attempt to navigate in narrative terms the tension between the desire to hold on to the loved one after her death and the obligation to let her go.

The impossible conversations with the lost loved one that Busquets and Daull seek to realise through writing are probed further in the final section of the thesis. Christine Angot's *Un amour impossible* (2015) and Cristina Fallarás's *Honrarás a tu padre y a tu madre* (2018) foreground the complexities of competing versions of the family story 'speaking' to one another when traumatic experience has opened up a deep divide between

perspectives. Here I undertake a more direct comparison of the challenges of balancing these perspectives when the author is close to or removed from the trauma that she voices, and when the event itself is individual or collective in scope, since the two texts stand at opposite ends of this spectrum. Both Angot and Fallarás are born of a 'misalliance' between two opposing sides, and in view of the painful conjunction between family histories they represent, I explore whether the authors succeed in balancing the clashing versions of events. By examining the narrative conversations they stage, I consider whether life-writing can perform a kind of negotiation between voices and versions.

From the narrative solutions these texts propose in response to the ethical questions they navigate, a more complex understanding of intergenerational relations comes into view, one which poses a challenge to current conceptions in autobiography theory of who can, should and does tell the story. By articulating and attempting to reconfigure the asymmetrical relationship between the voice or perspective of the author with those of the other subjects implicated in her family story, the texts point to a desire in contemporary life-writing practice to make room for the many voices that go unheard. The preoccupation with making audible these missing voices, I suggest, provides an important insight into what it means to write relational lives. Currently, there is little to distinguish relational lives from the relational nature of all life-writing. According to Eakin's definition, these are life-stories in which special emphasis is placed on the autobiographer's relationship with a proximate other. Couser, for his part, proposes the alternative term 'narratives of filiation', in which the text serves to forge in writing a relationship that was lacking in life.[52] But as we have seen, the prominence afforded to familial relationships has long been a fundamental tenet of women's autobiography. By teasing out the balancing acts these writers perform, this study demonstrates that contemporary French and Spanish women's writing offers a clearer

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[52] G. Thomas Couser, 'Genre Matters: Form, Force, and Filiation', *Life Writing*, 2.2 (2005), 139–56 (151).

definition of relational lives as a specific and innovative mode of telling an intergenerational story.

Chapter One

Traumatic Legacies and Narrative Claims: Rewriting Relations in Colombe Schneck's *La Réparation* and Juana Salabert's *Velódromo de Invierno*

Postmemory wrestles with a paradoxical inheritance. Unconsciously, even unwillingly, bequeathed, what the second generation gain are the first generation's losses. In the case of traumatic legacy, the proprietors are always already dispossessed. Caruth maintains in *Unclaimed Experience* that traumatic events are lived as if happening to someone else; as if they do not 'belong' to the subject.[53] This dispossession prompts a postgenerational responsibility to 're'-claim shattering first-generation experiences, by telling their stories. Hirsch sees the central problematic of postmemory as how we can 'best carry their stories forward, without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves, and without, in turn, having our own stories displaced by them'.[54] She outlines a reciprocal danger of displacement, which impinges upon the narrative space of first and second generations, self and other. The challenge she sets in postmemory is to rework this either-or logic, and so accommodate *both* stories being told. To my mind, a closer inspection of the risk of 'appropriation' to which she refers is crucial to this reworking. From the perspective of Hirsch's critics, the notion of postmemory is itself suspect in that it paves the way for the appropriation of traumatic experience. Ernst van Alphen, for example, argues that 'postmemory' is better understood as the children of survivors' desire to forge a connection to their parents' past in response to their radical *disconnection* from the experience.[55] For Kathy Behrendt, the imagined identification with the victims in postmemory becomes

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[53] Colin Davis describes how Caruth's work institutes this separation between subject and experience as a paradigm in trauma studies. *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, and the Return of the Dead* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 94.
[54] Hirsch (2012), 2.
[55] Ernst Van Alphen, 'Second-Generation Testimony, Transmission of Trauma, and Postmemory', *Poetics Today*, 27.2 (2006), 473–88 (487).

problematic as soon as Hirsch extends the term to apply to works whose authors have no familial ties to the trauma. Behrendt alleges that expanded in this way, postmemory can be applied 'with equal facility to […] the authors of fraudulent Holocaust memoirs'.[56] Certainly, the question of 'fraudulence' in postmemorial work is a slippery one. The attempt to evaluate whether, in testifying to the traumatic experience of first-generation subjects, the author appropriates their story raises similar issues to those which we explored in relation to ethical studies of collaborative autobiography. To conceive life-shattering experiences as 'proper' to each individual is to regard them as possessions, as *property*, in a way that overlooks the repercussions of the event for the victim's significant others. The premise of individual property forms the basis of Eakin's critique of a 'privacy-based ethics' in relational lives. Such narratives encapsulate, he proposes, Lejeune's assertion that 'presque toujours la vie privée est une copropriété'.[57] For postmemorial writers, the clash between conceptions of co-property and appropriation is felt acutely. Victoria Aarons and Alan L. Berger argue that the third generation are faced with 'the tension between the need to bear witness to the past and the anticipated taboo against doing so', a kind of double bind which gives rise to 'a fear of intrusion and fraudulent appropriation'.[58] They are faced at once with the obligation to 'carry forward' the story of the previous generation, as Hirsch puts it, and with the accusation of laying claim to the traumatic experience of another. In terms of inheritance, such writers are left a traumatic legacy over which they have full responsibility, but to which seemingly they have no right.

The notion of the 'right to write' is interrogated persuasively in two recent examples of postmemorial writing about the Holocaust: Colombe Schneck's *La Réparation* and Juana

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[56] Kathy Behrendt, 'Hirsch, Sebald, and the Uses and Limits of Postmemory', in *The Memory Effect: The Remediation of Memory in Literature and Film*, ed. by Russell J. A. Kilbourn and Eleanor Ty (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013), 51–67 (56). Electronic resource.
[57] Eakin (1999), 169; Philippe Lejeune, *Moi aussi* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1986), 55.
[58] Victoria Aarons and Alan L. Berger, *Third-Generation Holocaust Representation: Trauma, History, and Memory* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2017), 6. Electronic resource.

Salabert's *Velódromo de Invierno*. Both texts recount a genealogical search to uncover a suppressed family trauma, and both authors grapple with their indirect connection to the harrowing legacy that has passed down to them. Each is under scrutiny on different grounds, the objections embedded in the form their narratives take. *La Réparation* is an autobiographical account whose third-generation author leads a life worlds apart from her family's suffering during the Nazi annihilation of the Jews in Lithuania. Her narrative project is riven by the anxiety that she is too far removed from their story to justify its telling. Salabert is displaced further from the experiences she relates, writing outside a family framework. The daughter of Spanish Republican exiles, her Holocaust fiction is an example of what Hirsch terms 'affiliative' postmemory. It marks a cultural rather than familial transmission of trauma.[59] Centred around the fictional Landerman family, *Velódromo* draws on real-life experiences of the Jewish round-up to figure the escape of a young girl, Ilse, from the titular velodrome. Through the character of Ilse's son, Salabert considers the impact of the event on the second generation; narration is shot through with the question of who 'rightfully' inherits the traumatic legacy.

From within these autobiographical and fictional frameworks, Schneck and Salabert devise similar strategies to validate their own narrative positions. Both instil the idea of replacement—and by default, of displacement—at the centre of their texts: they feature a postgenerational figure named after a young child murdered in the Holocaust, whose story has since been silenced. From this logic of substitution emerges an antagonistic pair, a relationship in which the presence of one is predicated on the absence of the other. An either-or premise seems, at first, to pervade the texts in a manner that recalls the propensity that Hirsch describes in postmemory for the story of one generation to eclipse the other. In this chapter, I argue that it is by revising these dichotomous dynamics that Schneck and Salabert

[59] Hirsch (2012), 35.

reassert their narrative claim to the family stories they tell. The authors challenge the implicit 'versus' and so muddy the dividing lines between self and other, *my* life-story and *yours*, on which accusations of appropriation are mounted. With these boundaries blurred, testifying to traumatic experience cannot be the 'property' of any one person. To draw such a conclusion by no means shuts down the ethical debate. On the contrary, it generates a new series of uncertainties. How does one tell the story of a life-shattering experience without divesting its survivors of their narrative place? How might this process resist filling in the painful silences and thus filling up the empty spaces left by its victims and their missing versions? These questions suffuse the narrative dynamics of both texts, and Schneck and Salabert offer compelling answers in their re-staging of the relationship between 'testimony' and teller in intergenerational stories.

1.1 The Matter of Inheritance

From the outset, *La Réparation* is marked by the question of who has, or does not have, the right to speak, and to claim a part in a story that precedes them. Schneck begins by disclosing a deep distrust in her narrative justification:

> Je me suis d'abord trompée.
>
> Je me disais c'est trop facile, tu portes des sandales en chevreau mordoré, tu te complais dans des histoires d'amour impossible, tu aimes les bains dans la Méditerranée et tu crois qu'une fille comme toi peut écrire sur la Shoah?[60]

Cast simultaneously as judge and (false) claimant, the self-doubling dynamic that Schneck creates by juxtaposing 'je' and 'tu' effects a separation between her story and that of her

[60] Colombe Schneck, *La Réparation* (Paris: Grasset, 2012), 22. Henceforth page numbers will be listed in the body of the text.

family during the Holocaust. She appears twice bound to her own everyday pleasures and predicaments, which stand in stark contrast to the near-complete annihilation of the Lithuanian Jews by the Nazis. Accordingly, Schneck anticipates the two-generational remove from the suffering she recounts as controverting her claim to its telling: the gulf between their lives equates to an impenetrable divide between their life-stories. Such a gulf is even wider for Salabert, of course, if we consider the lack of familial connection to the experiences she relays. By drawing on sources that are not personal but historical, she *adopts* rather than inherits the painful legacy of the 'Velódromo de Invierno'.[61] The question of whether this gives Salabert a 'legitimate' case for narrating the 1942 round-up unfurls in the text through a persistent interrogation of origins and relations. Illegitimacy is embodied: the genealogical search that Salabert stages is set in motion when Herschel, the son of fictional survivor Ilse, travels from his home in Puerto Rico to Spain to claim the possessions bequeathed to him by Javier Dalmases, his legally declared but not biological father. What is left to Herschel, however, goes far beyond Dalmases's estate. His search entails coming to understand Ilse's traumatic legacy, which she withheld while alive but entrusted to him after death in her writings. To do so, he visits another Holocaust survivor and friend of both his mother and Dalmases, Sebastián Miranda: a Sephardic Jew who enabled Ilse to flee to Spain after her escape from the velodrome. Herschel also seeks the identity of his unknown father on this expedition, whom he believes could be Sebastián. Pitting the legal against the familial, Herschel's inheritance complicates the division between legitimacy and illegitimacy from the start. If we read these blurred boundaries in relation to Salabert's own

[61] Hirsch describes the second generation as 'adopting' first-generation traumatic experiences in the sense of perceiving them as events that they could themselves have lived through, and so inscribing them into their own life-stories (2012), 34. Here, I distinguish between 'inheriting' traumatic memories and choosing to testify to memories registered outside the framework of the family. I use adoption in a legal as well as a metaphorical sense to analyse the relational processes in play in *Velódromo*.

indirect connection to the Holocaust, Herschel's status as heir illuminates the intra- and extratextual processes of adoption at work in *Velódromo*.

Although Schneck's familial link is not in doubt, the legitimacy of her narrative claim in *La Réparation* is nevertheless subject to dispute. In fact, the question of inheritance intensifies the ethical stakes of her project, we might argue, given the pains that Schneck's family take to keep the knowledge of their traumatic experiences from her. Whereas Salabert portrays Herschel's parents as choosing to share their traumatic legacy with him, even if the transmission takes place only after their deaths, Schneck's grandmother and mother actively refused to pass the story on: 'Depuis 1945, Ginda et Hélène, la mère et sa fille sont restées silencieuses' (22). The dilemma Schneck faces in telling the story is twofold: to do so would transgress the silence imposed by the first and second generations and re-open the wounds they had sought to seal. Laid bare, these wounds risk seeping into the life-stories of future generations and submersing them in the same traumatic legacy. Both concerns are founded on the perception of a fraudulent claim: taking possession of and passing on a painful patrimony that previous generations had refused to hand down. Schneck conceives this gesture as an unequivocal *dis*inheritance: 'Il n'y a pas de transmission aux enfants et aux petits-enfants' (26). What is passed down is not the story, but its silence, a censorship that dominates mother-daughter relationships throughout the text.

It is worth noting, however, that Schneck portrays the resulting feelings of illegitimacy as a past misconception. If we turn back to the opening section of *La Réparation*, she prefaces her anxieties over giving an account of her family history with the assertion that 'Je me suis d'abord trompée'. Schneck frames her own doubts, in other words, as preceding her present authorship. Writing *La Réparation* seems to reconnect her to the family history from which she had been cut off by her mother and grandmother's silence. It is on the basis of this narrative connection that Schneck justifies interweaving her own experiences with

those of her family during the Holocaust in the autobiographical account that follows. The forging of an alternative relation to the story through writing also plays a crucial role in Salabert's exploration of the legitimacy of her narrative project. Through the lens of Herschel's genealogical quest, she reflects on the association between authorship and the 'right to write' which dominates discussions of the ethics of Holocaust fiction. In an interview, Salabert suggests that she wrote the text as a homage to 'las víctimas del nazismo, intentando "devolverles la voz"'.[62] She wishes to bear witness to those who suffered in the Nazi genocide and thereby return the power of voice to its silenced victims. Yet her decision to stage the story of the 'Vél d'Hiv' through fiction casts further doubt on the validity of her narrative claim. Sue Vice observes that Holocaust fiction is a genre prone to controversies over authorial credentials because it is (wrongly) judged according to the same criteria as testimony. Authority is conferred on the basis of the author's relationship to the events they describe.[63] In *Velódromo*, Salabert entwines the matter of Herschel's legitimacy and legacy with that of her authorship to challenge the assumption that the right to bear witness to traumatic experience should be determined by biographical connection. Theirs is an indirect, but no less binding, inheritance.

The complication of so-called 'illegitimate' narrative claims in *La Réparation* and *Velódromo* demands a more critical view of the use of appropriation as a marker by which to evaluate the ethics of postmemorial narratives. While Aarons and Berger suggest that 'the essential and not-insignificant distinction between survivor writing and second-generation narratives is one of proprietary rights and authorial legitimacy',[64] Schneck and Salabert call these anticipated features of their writing projects into question. For the remainder of this

[62] Verónica Abdala, 'Pensé que podía devolver la voz a las víctimas del Holocausto', *Página/12*, 1 August 2001, n.p. <https://www.pagina12.com.ar/2001/01-08/01-08-01/pag26.htm> [accessed 22 April 2018].
[63] Sue Vice, *Holocaust Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2000), 4. Electronic resource.
[64] Aarons and Berger (2017), 60.

chapter, I turn to the different approaches the authors adopt to expose the antagonistic logic of legitimacy, property and possession, and thus to subvert the singularity of authorship and authority in their stories of traumatic experience. I reflect on how, by rewriting the relationships between life-stories in postmemory, Schneck and Salabert force us to resituate the ethical debate.

1.2 Relations, Repairs and Replacement in *La Réparation*

In *La Réparation*, Schneck's narrative project originates from the assumption that to establish a connection between past and future generations is simultaneously a binding and destructive act. Her investigation into the family history is prompted by the intergenerational link that she inadvertently brings into play. Having named her daughter according to a friend's suggestion, she suddenly recalls her mother's dying wish that if she were to have a girl, she should make her middle name Salomé after Hélène's cousin 'dont il ne reste rien' (11). In the grip of superstitious thinking, she fears having consigned her daughter to the same premature demise as her namesake, whose death in the gas chambers at Auschwitz, alongside her grandmother Mary and cousin Kalman, opens the narrative. Schneck's apprehension sheds light on her perception of the mother-daughter relationship more broadly: 'Salomé est née et j'étais paniquée. Comment pourrais-je continuer à vivre, si ma fille mourait à son tour?' (12). Her implied answer, that she could not, evokes the enmeshment of mother and daughter described by Luce Irigaray in her essay *Et l'une ne*

bouge pas sans l'autre.[65] Here, mothers look to be shackled to the fate of their children,[66] a deadly tie that becomes a brutal reality when her family's experiences of the 'selections' at the Kovno ghetto are narrated. Schneck's question foregrounds the renunciation of individual agency within these binding relationships. The feared repetition of the first Salomé's tragic fate implies that Schneck's daughter has directly *replaced* her namesake. When these dynamics of replacement and enmeshment combine, individuals come to appear substitutable. Perhaps as an attempt to counter this, Schneck places the two Salomés in opposition: 'Salomé Bernstein, la cousine de ma mère, est née en 1936, ou 1937, je ne sais pas. Je regarde ma fille Salomé, vivante, se réveillant tous les matins comme un miracle. Elle crie toutes les nuits' (64). Communicated through her repeated cry, her daughter's piercing presence is the antithesis of the first Salomé's deathly absence, and more poignantly still, of her silenced story. They are conceived as an antagonistic pair, one that fixes absence and presence, speech and silence, in corresponding binary modes.

It is through this relationship and the 'either-or' logic it instigates that the titular process of reparation is introduced. When Ginda meets her great-granddaughter for the first time, Schneck imagines that the birth of the 'new' Salomé might open up lines of communication:

> Ginda aurait peut-être été enfin prête, c'était le moment ou jamais, le moment de ce qui aurait pu ressembler à une réparation. Une nouvelle Salomé venait de naître, elle hurlait, elle était ravissante, elle était vivante. Ginda aurait pu me dire ce qu'elle avait appris quand elle était allée à Munich, en 1946, retrouver et entendre ses sœurs qui avaient survécu. (19)

Punctuated by speculative turns and conveyed through the conditional perfect, reparation remains purely hypothetical: the presence of the narrator's daughter in no way 'stands in'

[65] Luce Irigaray, *Et l'une ne bouge pas sans l'autre* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979; repr. 1987).
[66] Clementi observes that mothers and their children were bound together in the Shoah insofar as the gas chambers were the 'default fate' for women who arrived at the concentration camps pregnant or with young children (2013), 11.

for the devastating absence of the first Salomé. By indicating that this would *resemble* a 'réparation', Schneck depicts such a process as appearance rather than reality, a patching over in lieu of filling in. Such a conception of replacement brings to mind the double meaning of the 'dangereux supplément' that Derrida theorises in *De la grammatologie*. The 'supplément' is both an inessential extra, *adding* to what is already there; and a substitute, *standing in* for that which is missing.[67] Supplying an element that is at once additional and lacking obscures the distinction between presence and absence. Itself reliant on supplementation, what is assumed to be the original presence is exposed as an effect, produced through a sequence of substitutions. Derrida observes that the supplement points up a fundamental lack in the absent 'original' that it replaces. On this basis, the original is definitively, and always already, displaced.[68]

This 'danger' haunts Schneck's portrayal of replacements, and thus of reparations, throughout the text. The dual effect she discerns is encapsulated in the polyptoton she employs in the above passage. Her use of 'ravir' in the excerpt to describe how Ginda regards Salomé—'elle était ravissante'—is framed by two further occurrences of the verb in the same passage: 'Elle la trouvait ravissante malgré ses pleurs' and 'Ginda semblait ravie de cette naissance' (19). Like Derrida's 'supplément', 'ravir' has a double meaning, encompassing both the ideas of producing delight and snatching away. It denotes a simultaneous process of giving and taking that also characterises compensation: acknowledging and thus testifying to the loss, but also claiming to assuage it. In *La Réparation*, this motif emerges emphatically in terms of speech and silence. Valérie Débieux, in her review of the text, argues that its reparation lies in supplanting silence with story: 'Il faut parler, il faut écrire. L'ordre des idées ou leur rangement au sein du récit paraît

[67] Jacques Derrida, 'Ce dangereux supplément', *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967), 203–34 (208).
[68] Ibid., 211–12.

subsidiaire, comme s'il fallait, avant toute chose, "réparer" un silence qui n'a que trop duré'.[69] This substitutive logic diverges sharply from how Schneck associates reparations with restoring communication in the above passage. To refer back to her use of 'ressembler', any such simple replacement of the suppressed story with its telling is depicted not only as a mere façade, but as a hope that is unfulfilled: 'Elle ne m'a rien dit. Je ne l'ai pas non plus questionnée' (19). The preponderance of negative particles rather signals what *cannot* be said, as Schneck acknowledges the inadequacy of language in conveying traumatic experience. The potential for dialogue ends with silence on both sides, and so appears to point more towards what is irrevocably broken than what can be repaired.

Schneck reflects further on this mutual silence when she returns to the motif of reparation in another vignette of the relationship between grandmother and granddaughter. When Ginda takes little Colombe to buy a doll with the reparations money that she had received, the failed purchase is dominated by an unspoken awareness of the grandmother's irreparable distress:

> Nous rentrons toutes les deux, elle me tient par la main. Elle ne me demande pas pourquoi je ne voulais pas de poupée, je ne lui demande pas pourquoi les Allemands veulent la "réparer". Rien ne pourra réparer sa détresse. (21)

Again, silence reigns on both sides. Yet the unspoken understanding that grounds this exchange challenges the assumption that silence forecloses communication. As Hirsch writes, 'silence, absence, and emptiness are also always present, and often central to the work of postmemory'.[70] Hirsch plays here with the dialectic between presence and absence in a way that speaks to how Schneck interlaces rather than opposes these states throughout *La Réparation*. It is by refusing to equate silence with non-communication, by refusing to 'replace' what has gone untold between mothers and daughters, that Schneck justifies her

[69] Valérie Debieux, '*La Réparation*, Colombe Schneck', *La Cause Littéraire*, 26 September 2012, n.p. <http://www.lacauselitteraire.fr/la-reparation-colombe-schneck-2> [accessed 22 April 2018].
[70] Hirsch (2012), 247.

own narration. As much as speech, she makes *silence* part of how the story is passed down. We see this in the juxtaposed relationships between Schneck and her great-aunt-in-law Myriam, and Myriam and her own daughter, Faye. When Schneck contacts Faye to ask whether Myriam would consider discussing her experience of the Holocaust, she receives a strongly positive response. Yet despite Myriam's willingness to share her story with her great-niece-in-law, it appears she has repeatedly withheld her memories from Faye.[71] By placing silence and communication side-by-side in this way, *La Réparation* testifies to the loss of dialogue even as it allows for new, ever-incomplete conversations to be started.

Uncoupling Antagonistic Pairs

Whilst mother-daughter relationships remain characterised throughout by what cannot be said, other familial bonds prove a rich source of communication. In this sense, Schneck risks founding the narrative process on a further opposition, contrasting the many accounts and multiple voices with the silence handed down from mothers to their daughters. She unsettles this all-or-nothing dynamic by embodying it in the text, through the mother of her childhood friend Aline. The mother enacts this extreme opposition in her traumatic response: initially speaking of nothing but the Holocaust, she is subsequently unable to speak of it at all. She is caught in a bind between saying everything or nothing in a manner that recalls the now-obsolete paradigm of earlier Holocaust studies, which 'privileged the unspeakability of events and theorized that telling the story was inevitably a healing act'.[72] Trapped in this dilemma, Aline's mother is condemned to vacillate between two poles and so restricted to what Dominick LaCapra, taking his cue from Freud, describes as an endless acting-out, as

[71] In keeping with the standard setting in therapy, Myriam is able to communicate her experiences when her interlocutor is a relative outsider rather than a close relation. Following this logic, Schneck perhaps moves towards working through her own inherited experiences via her indirect relationship with the ultimate readers of *La Réparation*.

[72] Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, 2nd edn (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 220.

opposed to a working-through.[73] Schneck eschews this paradigm, structuring *La Réparation* in a way that erodes the distinction between telling and not telling the story. What is left unsaid thus forms an inextricable part of what is said, with silence woven into every exchange. One such example is Myriam's testimony, which is an essential source for the story Schneck tells. It delays nonetheless the climactic revelation of what happened in the final selection at Kovno, and so affirms that speaking out is not the same thing as papering over the gaps in traumatic experience. Myriam's narration also brings to light holes in earlier accounts: what she relays at times directly contradicts information from testimonies gathered by Schneck's uncle, Pierre.[74] Schneck includes these inconsistencies in the text to show that there is no 'total recall', and no omniscient account. Rather, it is through convergences and divergences that the story comes to be told; a patchwork of different versions that defies the dichotomies of speech *or* silence, right o*r* wrong, one *or* the other.

The collapse of such either-or logic in the text is most evident when the suppressed trauma at the heart of the story is finally revealed. When Gila, the post-war daughter of Schneck's great-aunt Macha, divulges how her mother and her aunt Raya were separated from their children in the selection, Schneck comes to realise the futility of the choice she feared between having to survive without one's children or die alongside them. While awaiting selection, Mary had taken her grandchildren Salomé and Kalman from Macha and Raya, pretending to be their mother and thereby giving her daughters the chance to survive. Making this terrible sacrifice worthwhile reverses the answer presupposed in Schneck's question: mothers can, and indeed must, go on living. The 'choice' her question had implied

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[73] LaCapra (2001), 21–22.

[74] A key example is when Myriam recounts being stopped by a soldier on the way into Lithuania after the liberation. Schneck comments that the same anecdote had been attributed to Macha and Raya in earlier testimony (99), dismissed by Myriam as a mistake made by its postgenerational narrators (131). This displacement calls to mind Perec's *W ou le souvenir d'enfance* and its motif of 'false' memories, here situated in relation to the process of writing as opposed to remembrance. Through this allusion, Schneck pre-empts accusations of 'misappropriating' other people's stories in writing *La Réparation*.

becomes redundant: 'Cette question, vivre sans ses enfants ou mourir avec eux? La réponse de Raya et Macha de vivre et de vivre entièrement, m'a portée' (150). Transported beyond the relational bind she had established, Schneck recognises that the all-determining *ou* in her question requires reformulation. Parent-child relationships are not a matter of living together or dying together, but a reality of survival, separation and connection that lies outside such either-or logic. The suppression of this knowledge is portrayed as the product of a relational tie which assumes and perhaps even dictates that mothers are unable to continue living without their children. In the wake of inconsolable loss, Macha and Raya's moral imperative to live on, and particularly their choice to have more children, reconfigures this parent-child bind as relationships. The fixed pair dynamic in Schneck's original question is remodelled as one that is multiple and inexhaustible.

Rather than compensating for irremediable losses, or filling painful silences, the process of 'réparation' might therefore be better read as one of *re-pairing*. Conceived in relation instead of opposition, the *or* that sets silence apart from communication, revelation from concealment, cedes to *and*. This 're-pa(i)rative' process is best illustrated by the way Schneck reconsiders the relationship between the two Salomés as the text progresses. Although her project is instigated by her daughter's birth, *La Réparation* does not end with the explanation of the first Salomé's death. It concludes instead with a reaffirmation of the latter's life that subverts the binary oppositions between birth and death, and between presence and absence. That Schneck draws her narrative to a close upon receiving a previously unseen photograph found amongst Ginda's belongings serves to reassert Salomé's story: 'Salomé Bernstein est née début mars 1937, elle est morte fin octobre 1943. Elle aurait soixante-quinze ans aujourd'hui. Elle est enfin devenue pour moi une absente' (212). Here, Schneck demonstrates that the birth of her daughter does not detract from or compensate for the loss of her namesake, but rather testifies more fully to it. It triggers the

recovery of the first Salomé's story, just as the latter's legacy labels, at least in part, the former's life. With each informing an essential part of the other, their earlier mutual exclusivity evolves into interdependence.

Central to the reconfiguration of antagonistic pairs is Schneck's redefinition of replacement in *La Réparation*. We see its impact in the relationships Schneck outlines between Macha and Raya's children, Salomé and Kalman, and their post-war half-brothers and sisters; the so-called 'replacement children'. As with the dichotomy between telling and silencing the story, Schneck incorporates potentially oppositional relations into the text. When discussing how Gila regards her relation to her half-siblings, Schneck invokes Annie Ernaux's *L'autre fille* as a point of comparison. In this text, Ernaux writes about her own discovery of being a 'replacement child', born after her sister's childhood death. She understands this relationship as pure substitution: 'Mais toi et moi étions destinées à rester uniques [...] je suis venue au monde parce que tu es morte et je t'ai remplacée'.[75] Hers is the consummate antagonistic pair: given that her parents could only afford to support one child, Ernaux visualises a single space, one vacated by her sister's death and filled by her own birth. This spatial configuration is the cornerstone of Gabriele Schwab's characterisation of the replacement child, whom she describes as 'unable to develop a sense of coming into his or her own place'.[76] She sees this sense as blocked by the confused boundaries between the two children, who merge together in the parents' unconscious replacement fantasy, condensed into one child.[77] Read in this light, it is not only the oppositional logic of 'one or the other' that threatens relationships in *La Réparation*, but also that of 'and', which risks amalgamating family members and thus denying each her or his own place in the narration.

[75] Annie Ernaux, *L'autre fille* (Paris: NiL, 2011), 61.
[76] Gabriele Schwab, *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (Chichester, NY: Columbia University Press, 2010), 122.
[77] Ibid., 124.

In (re-)writing these relations, Schneck seeks to counter both logics: opposition as well as fusion.

Multiplying People, Parts and Pieces

Having recast antagonistic relations as interdependent, Schneck postulates a different kind of relationship between Macha and Raya's pre- and post-war children. Their mutual dependence is manifest: Gila notes that without the death of her half-brother, she would not have been born (141). Likewise, the essential role that she and Benny play in the text proves that the perpetuation of Salomé and Kalman's life-stories depends on their post-war siblings' narration. However, Schneck affords a greater emphasis to individual agency within this interdependence. Meticulously describing their characters, appearances and professions, Schneck takes pains to ensure that Gila and Benny's distinct identities are demarcated in the text; they are by no means restricted to their narrative roles. She conceives them as 'characters' in their own right, rather than as replacement children divested of their own 'place'. In so doing, Schneck adumbrates a somewhat different process of replacement, one that accounts for both senses of the word. Gila and Benny help restore their lost half-siblings to their rightful place in the family narrative, while also establishing their own spaces in the story. By creating these separate spaces, Schneck preserves the individual definition that overlap between the different characters would risk eroding. The resulting relationships in *La Réparation* correspond to how LaCapra suggests that traumatised subjects might begin to work through their experiences. For him, the key to a successful renegotiation of relationships to trauma lies in transforming binary modes of thinking. By drawing attention to the intersections between history and memory, working-through and acting-out, and identification and difference, he does not advocate an approach that erases distinctions, but

one that accounts for the common ground between them.[78] Schneck deploys a similar strategy in writing relations. She subverts the 'either-or' dynamics dictated by dichotomies and founds the inclusive logic she instils in its stead on multiplication rather than fusion.

By multiplying narrative spaces, Schneck makes room for individual lives in the text outside traumatic relational binds. Beyond pointing to the deaths of their half-siblings, the post-war children in *La Réparation* personify Macha and Raya's decision to go on living. It is this impulse to live, and live to the full, that Schneck pinpoints as the primary focus of the text. Although the communication with her interlocutors is instigated by Schneck's drive to uncover the harrowing experiences of the Holocaust that her family had kept secret, their exchanges are not defined by these horrors. Across the text, conversations emphasise life before, during and beyond trauma: Myriam, for example, agrees to speak to the Spielberg Foundation on the basis that she can attest to the happiness of pre-war life in Lithuania (116). Moreover, these exchanges are *dialogues*, not monologues: Pierre, Myriam and Gila all ask Schneck about her life in turn, drawing her formerly dismissed and derided romantic tribulations into the text. The vital emphasis on living throughout gives grounds for Schneck's claim to the story that she writes. As the narrative unfolds, her life is continually juxtaposed with the suffering endured by the first generation, her amorous anxieties painted as self-indulgent trivialities.[79] Her story persists nonetheless. Schneck's whims and preoccupations serve to punctuate, and even interrupt, the progression of the main plot.[80] The misgivings voiced in her self-reflexive commentary pre-empt objections to her narrative

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[78] Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 196.

[79] Consider Schneck's trip to Kovno to visit the site of Salomé's selection. On this journey, thoughts of the annihilation of the Jewish people during the Holocaust are juxtaposed with her preoccupation as to whether her lover will see her as more desirable because of her trip to Odessa (182).

[80] This is the case when she decides against visiting her cousin Yoav, whose father first told Gila what had happened in the Kovno selection: 'Je veux tout savoir mais j'ai préféré passer l'après-midi au bord de la piscine du Hilton de Tel-Aviv que de faire les deux heures de route pour aller le voir' (158).

justification, and perhaps heighten the impression of authenticity by foregrounding the subjective lens through which her account is filtered.

Far from being eclipsed by the trauma she tells, Schneck's life thus forms a fundamental part of *La Réparation*. While articulating the suppressed knowledge at its centre, Schneck forges her own place within the family story: the narrative irrevocably affects her life, but her life also perpetually inflects its narration. By interpolating the everyday into her accounts of acute suffering, she enacts in writing her family's overarching impulse to live on, as jarring and discomfiting as it may feel. Their anguish and loss tear an irreparable hole at the heart of the family and forever alter the life-stories of all those within it. Yet just as silence does not preclude communication in *La Réparation*, and the vitality of one child in no way lessens the tragic loss of another, the fractures left by trauma do not prevent other pieces of the story from being told. Schneck shows that the harrowing experiences her predecessors endured form one aspect of the family (hi)story, and that her text is but one instance of its telling. Any suggestion that her account is definitive is undercut by the way in which she heralds her conclusion: 'Ce livre était terminé' (211). By confining this ending to the text she writes, Schneck highlights that *La Réparation* is but a single part of a continuing family narrative. The logic of multiplication that she implements establishes narration as an amalgamation of different versions; accounts that neither smoothly coalesce nor neatly converge, but that are all crucial components of an ever-expanding story. The many parts and pieces from which this story is told consequently require multiple *people* to tell it. Just as *La Réparation* writes Schneck's own life into the family story, so does it reaffirm her claim to its narration.

1.3 Missing Fathers and Illegitimate Authors: *Velódromo de Invierno*

Schneck demonstrates in *La Réparation* that irrespective of generational distance, her life remains part of the family narrative. She forges an autobiographical link to the stories of her family members outside the logic of traumatic binds or complete disconnection, one which enables her to articulate the suffering they endured alongside her own very different life experiences without detracting from the silences, gaps and tensions that exist between them. Salabert's connection to the fictionalised family history she writes in *Velódromo*, on the other hand, cannot but be affiliative.[81] The question of where she stands in relation to this story emerges in the text in part through the figure of Sebastián, whose relationship to the Landerman family history is similarly uncertain. He appears to doubly 'stand in' for the late Dalmases, as executor of the latter's will and Herschel's (potential) father. As 'albacea testamentario', Sebastián is responsible for overseeing that Herschel receives what Dalmases left to him in his will.[82] His role is to ensure that the legacy passes down according to the deceased's wishes, and that Dalmases's absent voice continues to hold sway over the inheritance proceedings. In this capacity, Sebastián's witnessing echoes Salabert's reason for writing, her desire to return the power of voice to the silenced victims of the Nazi genocide through her text. The position she adopts in this witnessing is aligned with that of Sebastián: he too is displaced from both the domain of the family and the central traumatic experience of the 'Vél d'Hiv', but he is nonetheless the primary source of the story that Herschel receives. Unlike Sebastián, who plays a fundamental part in the unfolding of events, Salabert's witnessing is self-appointed and her knowledge of the Holocaust indirect.

[81] Following the distinction that Edward Said draws in *The World, the Text and the Critic* (1983), Sebastiaan Faber identifies the tension between filiation and affiliation as a key motif in recent Civil War novels in Spain. I argue that the motif also emerges strongly in *Velódromo*. 'La literatura como acto afiliativo. La nueva novela de la Guerra Civil', in *Contornos de la narrativa española actual (2000–2010): Un diálogo entre creadores y críticos*, ed. by Toni Dorca and Palmar Álvarez-Blanco (Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert Verlagsgesellschaft, 2011), 101–10 (103). Electronic resource.

[82] Juana Salabert, *Velódromo de Invierno* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 2001), 31. Henceforth page numbers will be listed in the body of the text.

Her impulse to voice the story of the victims stems from the emotional impact of reading first-generation accounts of the Holocaust including Anne Frank's diary.[83] As for the argument that authority to write about the Holocaust is determined by biographical connection, Salabert's narrative claim is twice thwarted. By obscuring the lineage according to which legacy is 'rightfully' passed down, however, Salabert complicates any straightforward trajectory between trauma and its retelling.

Fictionalised Relations and the Staging of Testimony

For Caruth, indirectness has a crucial part to play in the representation of traumatic histories. She takes Marguerite Duras's *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) as a paradigmatic example: the interest of the text lies, she suggests, 'in how it explores the possibility of a faithful history in the very indirectness of this telling'.[84] In *Velódromo*, Salabert seems to follow similar logic. In a manner reminiscent of Perec's *W ou le souvenir d'enfance*, she weaves indirectness into the structure of the story she writes, interlacing traumatic past and narrative present through two textual threads. The novel alternates between the Landerman family's internment in July 1942 and Herschel's genealogical journey in 1992. The former begins in a quasi-historiographical mode, relayed from a detached third-person perspective where the unidentified narrator surveys the action from above:

> La pista y el graderío inferior iban llenándose poco a poco. Los gendarmes escoltaban a través de los corredores a los grupos de recién desembarcados de los traqueteantes autobuses municipales de la TCPR que esa misma madrugada habían cruzado, distrito tras distrito, la ciudad vencida. (11)

Separated from the scene by the deictic 'esa', the narrator assumes a bird's-eye perspective, looking down onto the velodrome with a view across the vanquished city. In terms of space

[83] Abdala (2001), n.p.
[84] Caruth (1996), 27.

as well as time, Salabert dislocates focalisation from action; she situates the scene as part of a retrospective historical narrative. From this angle the figures below blur into 'grupos', plural reference points that evoke the collectivising procedure of the round-up. The distance established here between narrator and characters is thrown into sharp relief when considered in conjunction with the opening of the second section. Beginning *in medias res*, the 1992 narrative plunges the reader into an unspecified perspective which only later emerges as that of Sebastián. Contrary to the text's seemingly omniscient opening, this free indirect discourse closely aligns narrator and characters. Salabert intersperses these antithetical points of view to inscribe a tension between historiographical and fictional modes and their effect on readerly proximity. She draws the divergent relationships that they produce into the novel through metatextual commentary. At regular intervals, Sebastián criticises historical representation as an inherently alienating process. In contrast to the critical mistrust regarding the use of fiction in testifying to trauma, Sebastián dismisses *evidence* as insufficient in representing experience when he condemns the public photograph of the velodrome. Taken from a position of remove akin to the impersonal stance first evinced in the text, the photograph 'falsely' represents the victims' ordeal because it depersonalises both subject and object of the gaze. Sebastián contends that 'Mienten las fotos, como miente la sonoridad de esos nombres inscritos en papel timbrado sucediéndose en una lista de monstruoso orden alfabético si la enuncian y recitan voces anónimas cuya indiferencia distorsionan y multiplican los altavoces de la desdicha' (65). Collective testaments to trauma are portrayed in this sense as devoid of affect.[85] They seem to generate a dehumanised accumulation of victims, produced by the 'voces anónimas' that recite their incongruously ordered names. Chiming with the distinction Gabriele Schwab draws between a narrative

[85] See Aarons and Berger for a discussion of the depersonalising effects of collectivised memorials to the Holocaust and the corresponding desire in third-generation narratives to 'grasp the particularity of experience' (2017), 75.

that merely informs and one that performs an act of witnessing, [86] Salabert depicts these voices as emotionally detached from the individuals that they presume to remember, and so unable to give an adequate representation of them and their experiences.

'Truthfully' testifying to trauma here becomes contingent on the re-personalisation of the victims' stories.[87] Salabert stages these dynamics in *Velódromo* through a progressive alignment of initially conflicting points of view. As the narrative unfolds, perspective in the 1942 sections becomes increasingly subjective. It moves away from the impartial standpoint of the opening lines and towards affiliating focalisation with character gaze. Ilse's thoughts become increasingly present as she nears her escape: the narration is punctuated by ellipses that mirror the disjointed pattern of the protagonist's impressions as she is compelled to flee (238–40). In this shift from objective narration to free indirect discourse, emotional detachment from the characters cedes to engagement. Salabert infuses factual details with personal experience to counteract the static remove of historical accounts. This process of postgenerational witnessing is conceived as the sole means through which the first generation can truly escape their traumatic binds. Sebastián identifies this as the impulse driving Herschel's journey to Spain, and as the very basis of the legacy he comes to claim: '—Has venido a sacarla de veras del Velódromo de Invierno que nunca abandonó realmente, Herschie. Únicamente tú puedes hacerlo, para que sobreviva en ti. Sólo tú puedes salvarla' (63). Only by Herschel assuming responsibility over the terrible experiences he has inherited can his mother be freed from the cyclical structures of acting out, and at last leave the velodrome behind her. Joining together in testifying to her devastating losses leads to a kind of re-embodiment in which Ilse lives on post-mortem in her son. This process is neatly

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[86] Schwab (2010), 57.

[87] According to Hirsch, this is the chief aim of postmemorial work: to '*reactivate* and *re-embody* more distant political and cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression' (italics in original, 2012), 33.

encapsulated in the return to the 'Vél d'Hiv' photograph at the end of the novel. On this occasion, the static snapshot is brought to life:

> —Te busqué en esa foto, detrás de las filas de las gentes sentadas, detrás de la mujer rubia, detrás de las niñas y de la anciana y del gendarme, primero aterrado, y después contento porque paso a paso llegabas hasta esa puerta…
>
> Llegabas hasta mí, que soy todas las calles de tu vida. (262)

Herschel's postgenerational search draws Ilse out from behind the depersonalised rows of people bound to the velodrome, who sit fixed perpetually in its historical frame. Founded on reciprocity, his look is the antithesis of the disidentification earlier condemned by Sebastián.[88] Herschel transforms the photograph by imbuing it with his mother's life and journey, which flow directly into his own. Agent and object of the gaze fuse together in a reciprocal venture to take up and work through their shared traumatic legacy. Impelled by the affective engagement of Salabert's fictional approach, this metaphorical journey extricates the individual self from the freeze-frame of history and enables Ilse's final escape.

Significantly, the form this journey takes is far from straightforward. The teleological progression towards Ilse's escape is disrupted by and within the 1992 strand, and the dialogical structure of Herschel's exchange with Sebastián is also unsettled by the multiple memories, characters and events that permeate the free indirect discourse. The story is channelled through Sebastián's perspective in such a way that his life becomes the prism through which the action is seen. His position introduces a third temporality into the text: the 1492 expulsion of the Sephardic Jews from Spain.[89] A further parallel surfaces between Sebastián and the author herself in the light of their shared legacy of exile. As the biographical backdrop for both narrating and writing *Velódromo*, exile and its repercussions

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[88] Hirsch describes the familial look constituting 'I' as 'always looking and looked at, self and other(ed)' in *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 9.

[89] Tabea Alexa Linhard, 'The Maps of Nostalgia: Juana Salabert's *Velódromo de Invierno*', *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, 60.1 (2007), 61–77 (61).

play a powerful role in the text's structure. Pertinently, Mari Paz Balibrea defines exile as a vanishing point:

> Exile implies a centrifugal movement. It is by definition dispersion and the multiplication of difference in time and space, a vanishing point on the national map exposing the exiled person to interpellation by a myriad of new historical configurations beyond the nation of origin.[90]

These dynamics of dispersion and multiplication come to light as the principal narrative is inflected and redirected by Sebastián's own harrowing memories of the Holocaust, as well as by those passed down from his ancestors' expulsion. Occurring in 1942 and 1492 respectively, these two sites of trauma interlink to form an anagrammatic temporal frame. Composed of one set of numbers rearranged into a different order, the dates represent the same constituent parts split up and recurring in a new configuration. If we apply this logic to the historical events that they symbolise, the relationship between first- and second-hand experiences in the text marks a traumatic return in a different form. In keeping with Freud's theory of latency, where trauma is registered only when transcribed into another (hi)story,[91] the Nazi persecution that Sebastián endures and recounts is what triggers the reflection on his diasporic inheritance. This intersection establishes a reciprocal relationship between memory and postmemory in which each influences the interpretation of the other, and vitally, both might begin to be understood. Perpetually interpolated by different times and lives, *Velódromo* attests to the impossibility of trauma's 'direct' transmission. Indeed, Sebastián concludes by asserting that indirectness is what enables experience to be truthfully portrayed and sufficiently grasped. As the mirror-image of his earlier avowal, 'mienten los espejos' (115), his final words contrast direct and indirect representation: 'Nunca mienten los espejos deformantes del dolor,

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[90] Mari Paz Balibrea, 'Rethinking Spanish Republican Exile. An Introduction', *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 6.1 (2005), 3–24 (7).

[91] As Caruth explains, Freud contends in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) that the traumatic context of the Nazi persecution of the Jews in which he was writing could only be understood through reference to another history, that of the Jewish exodus from Egypt (1996), 12.

Herschel. Nunca' (232). For Sebastián, the pretence that historical representation produces an unproblematic *reflection* of events is superseded by the profound truth that emerges through *refraction*. Representations that are skewed by the pain of experience, or in other words refracted by affective response, are construed as the only means of resisting falsification.

Interrogating Origins

In view of the parallels Salabert develops between Sebastián's position and her own, the perception that his perspective plays a similar role to this distorting mirror provides pivotal insight into her approach to authorship. As a medium through which the principal narrative is recounted and refracted, Salabert's stance might be read in response to her own traumatic inheritance, and to the dynamics of exile that Balibrea describes. Although like Schneck, Salabert emphasises the inevitable, and indeed necessary, subjectivity of her account, she does not do so by foregrounding her position within it. Instead, transported beyond any one point of origin, she seems to vanish into the fabric of the text. Until this point in *Velódromo*, questions of origin have been underscored as the narrative builds towards Herschel asking Sebastián if he might be his father. Sebastián's vehement denial forecloses any climactic revelation; the father's identity remains unresolved. It is at this point that Sebastián disappears from the text, when Herschel leaves Madrid to travel to the site of Ilse's trauma in Paris. The search for his father is left behind along with Sebastián, complete with the latter's earlier assurance that 'la gente como yo no dejamos herencias' (84). Salabert couches his denial in the language of legacy to intermingle the themes of paternity, patrimony, and writing. The link she establishes here between children and inheritance posits a further parallel between Sebastián's potential

fatherhood and her authorship, and so between Herschel and the text itself.[92] Triggered by his 'illegitimacy', the doubts Herschel voices regarding his claim to Dalmases's bequest are layered with Salabert's own anxieties: is the text she writes a 'legitimate' testament to the suffering of the victims she seeks to represent?

Herschel's fear of being labelled an 'impostor' (62) invites comparison with Javier Cercas's 2015 publication of the same name; all the more so by virtue of its subject matter.[93] Cercas's work deals with an extreme example of fictionalising real experiences in the Holocaust. His focus is Enric Marco, an infamous figure in Spain who falsely alleged that he had been imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps. As Cercas's text advances, the divisions between fiction and reality, real and false identity, become increasingly blurred. Beyond simply denoting Marco and his deception, the title becomes a triple referent, uniting protagonist, author and the text itself under the banner of *El impostor*. In a similar vein, accusations of imposture could be levelled at Herschel, Salabert and *Velódromo*. All three risk being perceived as taking over a traumatic legacy that is not theirs to possess. The fundamental difference is that whilst Marco stands in the place of someone else, writing himself into (and the actual subject out of) the life-story of deportee Eric Moner, Salabert conceives Herschel as the sole legatee. He does not 'appropriate' someone else's legacy by virtue of being the only one left to claim it. His inheritance is no less legally binding for not being strictly 'familial'. It is along similar lines that Salabert envisages her personal responsibility to the silenced victims of the

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[92] For an account of the bind between narratives of inheritance and paternal authority, see *Troubled Legacies: Narrative and Inheritance*, ed. by Allan Hepburn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 7. Electronic resource.

[93] Daniela Omlor explores the idea of the impostor in detail in her analysis of *Velódromo* and Salabert's later novel *La noche ciega* (2004). She interprets the figure in *Velódromo* as representing the symptoms of dissociation produced by trauma, and as the means through which Salabert unsettles feelings of empathy in the reader. 'Desaparecidos, *revenants* e impostores en la novelística de Juana Salabert', *Neophilologus*, 101.2 (2017), 237–51. Here, I extend the idea of the impostor to encompass Salabert's own anxiety surrounding her 'right to write'.

velodrome. She ultimately erases the emphasis on birthright from the text: the question should not be *who* rightfully receives the effects of traumatic experiences, but *how* we might bear witness to their victims.

Intergenerational Collaboration

Having written out the omniscient third-person narrator and left behind the potential 'author' figure, Salabert concludes by amalgamating both strands of the text. In the final section, the narrative unfolds from Herschel's point of view as he travels through Paris, but the observations made originate from outside his individual perspective.[94] Salabert establishes his gaze at the intersection of the personal and the historical, and so consolidates the parallel between Herschel and the text itself. He becomes a living memorial to those who died in the 'Vél d'Hiv' deportation, just as the text pays tribute to the tragic historical reality by way of personal investment and emotional engagement. Herschel's pilgrimage to Paris takes him at once backwards and forwards, as he retraces his mother's footsteps and moves towards claiming his traumatic legacy. Over the course of this journey that he and Ilse undertake together, Salabert conceives their voices as coming to co-exist. At first, as with the individual testimonies in *La Réparation*, their perspectives are interspersed but separate: Ilse's escape from France is recounted partly through her own writing, demarcated in direct speech, and partly through what Herschel reiterates from his reading (243–49). Herschel remains situated in the narrative present and Ilse in the past. Yet this initial separation subsequently gives way to a more closely interwoven narration in which their voices join together, combining first- and second-

[94] When Herschel sees a spray of white flowers while walking through the Marais, his observation triggers a reference to their symbolic representation of the 1944 liberation of Paris (243). His gaze becomes the vehicle through which past and present are interconnected, providing access to the real historical backdrop of the text.

generational standpoints to tell Ilse's story (250–56). The final section thus sees the perspectives of writer and reader, the voices of victim and witness, coalesce. Only now is Ilse's escape fully realised, implying that this dual frame of reference is imperative in order to come to grips with traumatic experience.

It is through this compound focalisation that Salabert understands the text as giving voice to the victims. Out of Herschel and Ilse's interlocking voices, a third perspective emerges: that of the first Herschel, Ilse's little brother who died after being deported from the velodrome. The generational bind is more consciously established and enacted here than in *La Réparation*. Having absorbed the similarities that Ilse pinpoints between them, Herschel sees himself as mirroring and perpetuating many of the child's traits. Combined with the memories of Herschel that pervade Ilse's writing, these parallels introduce the child's perspective into their shared narrative space:

> Sin duda, también aquel niño cuyo nombre él había heredado, aquel niño que tanto se parecía a su madre, Annelies Blumenthal, de casada Landerman, también soñó en algún momento de su desamparo último con que quizá en *Pitchipoï* no todo fuese tan terriblemente malo… Porque después de todo, *allí* se habían llevado a su madre, *allí* tenía que estar esperándolo su madre… Aguardándolo con la misma impaciencia con que esperó a Ilse, que nunca había vuelto… Aquel niño de rizos cuyas tranquilas facciones ahora exhibía él, su sobrino. (italics in original, 248)

Framed by Herschel's perspective and inflected with Ilse's guilt at not having returned, the child's thoughts come to the fore in the transgenerational space that their intertwined voices create. Salabert's repetition of 'también' echoes the cumulative rather than mutually exclusive logic of *La Réparation*. Daniela Omlor considers this to be symptomatic of Salabert's writing, where her characters tend to quote the words of the deceased in their own interior monologues:

> [A] menudo son sólo las cursivas las que diferencian los pensamientos de los muertos de los de los vivos. Así, la memoria parecería ser un palimpsesto que surge del

> solapamiento de varios traumas, y, al mismo tiempo, hace que la narrativa adquiera una voz perceptiblemente polifónica.[95]

As Omlor's image of the palimpsest implies, Salabert adopts layering as the technique through which the voices of the victims might be heard. It is the minimal separation between the perspectives of Ilse and the two Herschels in the above quotation, their voices so closely aligned that not even speech marks separate them, which differentiates the polyphonic dynamics in *Velódromo* from those of *La Réparation*. Whereas Schneck distinguishes and often opposes the different voices through which the family story is told, Salabert interweaves and erodes the distinctions between them. Hers is a logic of interpenetration in lieu of distinct multiplicity.[96]

Re-Staging the Relationship between Testimony, Teller and Text

How, then, does this unfold in terms of relations? Max Silverman also takes up the figure of the palimpsest when he argues that layering is the chief strategy for reworking competitive dynamics between different traumatic histories. In *Palimpsestic Memory*, he draws on Freud's theory of screen memories to depict substitution as a process of doubling rather than effacement, 'by which the displaced object continues to haunt a visible site'.[97] Silverman's account of substitution sheds light on the different conception of 'replacement children' that underpins *Velódromo*. Despite standing in not for a lost child, but a lost sibling, Herschel's role seems to correspond more closely to Schwab's theory than do the post-war children in *La Réparation*. In view of how his voice fuses with that of the first Herschel, his narrative position resonates with what Hirsch refers to as a 'memorial candle'; a '[stand-in] for another lost child who become[s] responsible for perpetuating remembrance, for combatting

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[95] Omlor (2017), 249.
[96] Terms borrowed from Henri Bergson's 'Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience' (1889).
[97] Max Silverman, *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Film* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2013), 16. Electronic resource.

forgetting, for speaking in two overlapping voices'.[98] These dynamics of overlap provide important insight into Salabert's configuration of relationships in the wider text. Unlike in *La Réparation*, characters in *Velódromo* each become an inextricable part of the other. So too, as we have seen, do their voices. This motif is consolidated when Herchel's first-person narration becomes an imagined dialogue with his mother: 'He leído tus palabras, me he adueñado de ellas y ellas se han apropiado de mí, esas palabras que dibujan el texto sagrado de tu vida y esa escapatoria hacia el encuentro conmigo, que también soy todos los tuyos' (261–62). The incorporation of the processes of 'taking ownership' and 'appropriating' conveys how Salabert's narrative strategy disrupts the perception of what can be considered 'proper' to us in the first place. Lives and life-stories are figured as flowing into one another in an inextricable process of overlapping. It becomes impossible to determine where one ends and the other begins, just as it is impossible to divide them up in terms of belonging(s). Indeed, Salabert effects a shift in this excerpt away from who is telling these stories to what is being said. Words are granted agency beyond their status as possession, supplanting Herschel as subject in relaying Ilse's life-story. The text's final line relates the independent agency of voice to the genealogical heritage of the text: 'Y entonces oigo mi voz que dice "Ilse, soy Herschel. Soy tu hijo"' (263). As Marie-Chantal Killeen explains, in order to hear one's own voice it must be detached from its source.[99] By depicting Herschel as listener, Salabert makes his voice a semi-autonomous agent. Herschel's identity is reaffirmed in a mutually constitutive recognition between mother and son, with the question of fatherhood, and thus of authorship, definitively cast aside. If Ilse and Herschel represent the original site of trauma and its testimony, the relationship between them is firmly reasserted, regardless of the absence of a father figure. By this logic, the text's relation to the traumatic experiences

[98] Hirsch (2012), 214.
[99] Marie-Chantal Killeen, *En souffrance d'un corps: Essais sur la voix désincarnée* (Quebec: Éditions Nota Bene, 2013), 12.

it recounts is also reaffirmed. In eliding Sebastián as potential author from the text, as well as refusing to carve a set narrative position for herself within it, Salabert cuts the text loose from the biographical ties by which its validity is measured. Her fiction stands in its own right. Related in a different way, it is no less an offshoot of the trauma it seeks to witness, and a means of giving voice back to its silenced victims.

Salabert thus undermines the emphasis on 'authorship' to quash the question of who has the 'authority' to testify to trauma. She justifies her own claim in a very different way to Schneck, who does so by demonstrating that her narrative pertains to many different people. Whilst Schneck writes herself *into* the story, Salabert writes herself *out* of it. She obscures the distinctions between people in and between parts of the story to signal that what matters is not who testifies, but the 'testimony' itself. These blurred boundaries are precisely where Robert Eaglestone situates the ethical critique of using fiction to write about the Holocaust.[100] While Eaglestone argues that the reading process allows for a 'grasping' of experience, in which the victim is taken as oneself, I have shown that Salabert's use of identification has the opposite effect in *Velódromo*. Salabert's circuitous structure, as Omlor asserts, induces 'empathic unsettlement': the strategy that LaCapra proposes to mitigate against overidentification in reading.[101] I would suggest that this also applies to how Salabert represents relationships in writing. As we have seen, her shifting use of focalisation means that she does not establish her own intradiegetic space. Instead, she develops parallels with the character of Sebastián, as a narrative source whose legacy of exile speaks to her own, but also with Herschel, as a second-generation figure who embodies her particular anxieties of authorship. There are also clear similarities between Salabert and Ilse, as the only female

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[100] Eaglestone (2004), 30.
[101] Omlor (2017), 248–49. Pertinently, LaCapra defines empathic unsettlement as a means of putting oneself in the other's position but avoiding taking her or his place by remaining alert to the difference between them. 'Trauma, Absence, Loss', *Critical Inquiry*, 25.4 (1999), 696–727 (722).

protagonist and actual author in the text. Yet crucially, these plural identifications are only ever partial. The characters diverge from Salabert far more than they converge, in terms of gender, age, generation, and most importantly, experience. As with the two Herschels, identification functions as a process of overlapping. Employing a technique reminiscent of the palimpsest, in which each layer remains visible, Salabert further emphasises the overhangs, the places where they do not intersect. She unsettles focalisation to make the text a compendium of these partial relations. It is in this way that she decouples voice from subject, making it an object that can at least in part be 'given back' to the victims.[102] Created in relation, *Velódromo* ultimately stands independently: a 'testimony' which belongs to no one but resonates with innumerable other stories that remain untold.

1.4 Resituating the Ethical Debate

The defence that Schneck and Salabert mount for their right to articulate traumatic (hi)stories of which they were not the victims has significant repercussions for how we conceptualise relations in life-writing. Key to shoring up their respective narrative claims is the case that Schneck and Salabert make for the autobiographical and fictional approaches they adopt. Both authors expose the antagonistic dynamics behind inquiries into who has the 'right' to speak in a way that also challenges the conception that there is a 'right' way in which to tell the story. The respective strategies of fusion and multiplication through which they refigure 'replacement' demonstrate that the redress the authors seek through writing neither entails speaking in place of the victims' silenced voices nor filling in for their irreparable losses. For Schneck and Salabert, writing lives torn apart by trauma is not an act of narrative

[102] Killeen's work (2013) explores in detail voice in this capacity, as a separate object of reflection.

substitution; the telling of a story that belongs to someone else. It is a process that reveals the extent to which life-stories affect and inflect each other, even when experience seems to set them apart. As such, *La Réparation* and *Velódromo* demand a different conception of the interconnecting stories across generations; one which recognises the limitations of categories such as 'rightful' inheritance and appropriation. They move towards new relational spaces by challenging this perception of life-stories as *property*. Rewriting antagonistic relationships in this way recalls Michael Rothberg's proposed revision of the competitive dynamics of remembering multiple traumatic histories. So-called 'competitive memory' considers public focus on one history to automatically eclipse all others. For Rothberg, this stems from the (incorrect) assumption that to strive for the recognition of one's own identity excludes the memories and identities of other people as a matter of course. His concept of multidirectional memory controverts this antagonistic logic, affirming that 'the borders of memory and identity are jagged; what looks at first like my own property often turns out to be a borrowing or adaptation from a history that initially might seem foreign or distant'.[103] Rothberg reformulates belonging as borrowing and therefore exposes this premise of ownership as deceptive. The shared bases of different stories mean that they are inherently interconnected; by unfixing the boundaries between them, Rothberg prevents these connections from being reduced to appropriations. Silverman describes the implications of this plural understanding of memory and history in terms that pertain specifically to how we picture self-other relations. Drawing on Pierre Nora's theory of 'lieux de mémoire' in the absence of 'milieux', Silverman's work calls us to envisage a 'new, ethical site of memory once memory is no longer the property of an autonomous subject'.[104] The recognition that

[103] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 5.
[104] Silverman (2013), 179.

remembering traumatic events invariably implicates several people makes it necessary to resituate the ethical debate.

That is not to say, however, that the struggle for narrative space Hirsch identifies in postmemory is seamlessly reconfigured in these texts. I would suggest that both Rothberg and Silverman overlook the difficulties of counterbalancing different histories in the figures of multidirectional and palimpsestic memory that they devise. To what extent does narrative weight tip in one (hi)story's favour in the act of writing? How far does one story layer obscure the other? Contemporary authors such as Schneck and Salabert consciously address the impossibility of achieving such a perfect balance. *La Réparation* is a case in point: Schneck presents the potential for one story to interrupt the others in the painful jarring she induces between narrating traumatic events and everyday life. Similarly, Salabert's layering technique necessarily foregrounds one story as it shifts another to the background. Narrative space is not equally distributed between the characters, just as equal textual weight is not afforded to their different experiences. Sebastián's own suffering in the concentration camps, for example, remains ancillary to the principal traumatic thread of the 'Vél d'Hiv' round-up. In the next chapter, I turn to texts which engage pointedly with the inevitable imbalance between stories in postmemorial narratives.

Chapter Two

Displaced Subjects and Ventriloquised Voices: Intergenerational Relations and The Ethics of Representation in Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* and Lydie Salvayre's *Pas pleurer*

Founded on a logic of property and possession, 'appropriation' proves an ineffective hallmark in *La Réparation* and *Velódromo* by which to measure the success of postmemorial work. What, then, of the second challenge that Hirsch outlines: to carry forward the stories of the first generation 'without, in turn, having our own stories displaced by them'?[105] The displacing effect that Hirsch identifies in the compulsion to tell these stories derives from Nicolas Abraham and Mária Török's theory of transgenerational haunting, in which suppressed traumatic knowledge surfaces in the second generation. Likened to an act of ventriloquism, the 'fantôme' of first-generation trauma 'fonctionne comme un ventriloque, comme un étranger par rapport à la topique propre au sujet'.[106] Ventriloquised by that which the first generation were unable or unwilling to reveal, the second generation are cast as mere mouthpieces, possessed by a narrative that is not their own. The outcome is a displaced voice: although second-generation subjects appear to be speaking, the real source of what is said is the absent first generation. Abraham and Török's conception of this relationship as ventriloquistic points to an extreme power imbalance. The ventriloquist's illusion relies on the binary modes of activity and passivity, speech and silence. Generated by the unidirectional relationship between puppeteer and puppet, such antagonistic power play poses little problem: the active subject simply speaks through the passive object. Considerably more problematic, however, is when both sides of the subject-object divide have—or perhaps more accurately, *should* have—a voice, and a story to tell. The resulting

[105] Hirsch (2012), 2.
[106] Abraham and Török (1978), 429.

tension comes to the fore in postmemory, which I perceive as an interplay between transgenerational haunting and life-writing; the site, in other words, of two clashing conceptualisations of telling the other's story. In both theories, the relationship between self and other in the transmission process is conceived in terms of ventriloquism. Much like Abraham and Török's figuration, G. Thomas Couser identifies an asymmetrical power play, this time between author and autobiographical subject. He concludes that '[c]ollaborative autobiography is always inherently ventriloquistic'.[107] Yet the displacement he discerns runs counter to transgenerational haunting. From Couser's perspective, authority is tipped perpetually towards the writing subject, and away from the other whose life-story she narrates. His claim shifts displacement to the heart of ethical issues in telling someone else's story. Couser posits a single place from which to speak: that of the author. All other 'voices' are therefore a product of the ventriloquistic act, an illusion wherein the author throws her own voice to make it look as though the autobiographical subject were speaking. By this logic, far from being ventriloqu*ised*, second-generation writers are ventriloqu*ists*.

As the meeting point between these two theories, postmemory sees displacement pull in two antithetical directions. In the midst of this back-and-forth motion, the question of balance moves to the fore. The seesawing power relationships highlight the difficulty of counterbalancing voices when representing traumatic experiences that were not, and *cannot* be, shared. Engaging with the inevitable narrative imbalance that ensues forms an essential part of two recent Spanish Civil War narratives: Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* and Lydie Salvayre's *Pas pleurer*. In contrast to the inclusive narrative dynamics of *La Réparation* and *Velódromo*, these texts appear to exemplify a binary logic of 'either-or'. Both tell the story of the Republican struggle in (auto)fictional form, from different periods: *Pas pleurer* focuses on the beginning of the war and *La voz dormida* on its repressive aftermath. On the

[107] Couser (1998), 344.

face of it, the texts demonstrate how postgenerational experiences come to be eclipsed by first-generation trauma. Despite both authors being part of the second generation, narrative space tips overwhelmingly in favour of the first: the story of their lives, and of the post-war generation more widely, is omitted almost entirely. These 'either-or' dynamics are not, however, born merely of Chacón and Salvayre's retelling, but are embedded in the way in which the (hi)story of the Civil War first came to be told. Competitive memory took on a concrete reality: as the Republican side were vanquished by Franco's nationalist forces, so too their story was written out by the dictatorship's history-making. In *La Réparation* and *Velódromo*, the silencing of suffering in the Holocaust constituted an unwillingness on the part of the survivors to relive and risk repeating its emotional impact. The agency behind the decision, as painful as it proved, remained with the first generation. By contrast, suppressed stories of the Spanish Civil War were the product of a calculated political agenda. The correlation between the binaries of speech and silence, and activity and passivity, came into full force as the Nationalists sought to secure their victory by erasing the other side of the story and thereby expunging the Republican legacy. To ensure consensus, alternative voices were subdued during the transition to democracy, where the potential conflict between competing histories was quelled through the *pacto de olvido*.[108] The recent proliferation of accounts of the Civil War in the so-called 'memory boom' in Spain is interpreted as a reaction against this long repression.[109] In *La voz dormida* and *Pas pleurer*, the compulsion to make the Republican side of the story heard is the bedrock of the intergenerational relationship. Having been long denied public recognition of their experiences, the first

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[108] Drawing on Paul Ricœur's critique in *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* (2000), Ofelia Ferrán interprets the pact as the product of a politics of consensus, which foreclosed the emergence of dissenting voices that might endanger the 'seamless' transition from dictatorship to democracy. *Working Through Memory: Writing and Remembrance in Contemporary Spanish Narrative* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2007), 41–42.

[109] General consensus is that this turn to the past was triggered by the political shift back towards the right, which saw the Partido Popular come to power in 1996, and that it escalated after 2001 with the excavation of mass graves of Franco's victims. Labanyi (2007), 95–97.

generation in these texts seek to preserve their story through their second-generation interlocutors. This is not ventriloquism as Abraham and Török understood it; not a question of secrecy but of 'oversharing', so to speak. In critical studies of the memory boom, the surge in such accounts is figured not in terms of traumatic legacy, but of *debt*, where 'la deuda con el pasado traumático' compels the postgeneration to bring their predecessors' histories to light.[110] Such an interpretation of transmission and retelling provides potential insight into the narrative imbalance that comes to the fore in *La voz dormida* and *Pas pleurer* in a way that it did not in *La Réparation* and *Velódromo*. With inherited debt comes the added obligation to repay, to give up something of one's own to compensate for past actions which were not. Applying this logic to life-stories, does the obligation to redress the censorship of the Republican story translate into a call for second-generation writers to cede their own narrative space?

It is true that in both texts, the first-generation story comes at the expense of the author's account of herself. Yet in fictionalising real-life experiences of the Civil War and dictatorship, Chacón and Salvayre assume ultimate agency over the representation. The tension between intra- and extradiegetic agency in these texts bring postmemory's conflicting power relations into view. Do Chacón and Salvayre in effect write out their life-stories in the process of articulating experiences of the Civil War? Or is the striking narrative imbalance in the texts more akin to the ventriloquist's illusion, where the other's voice is in reality a creative projection of the author's own? And assuming this *is* the case, do the authors in fact perpetuate the gesture of silencing the first generation, by speaking in their place? This chapter investigates the extent to which Chacón and Salvayre themselves grapple with such double displacement. By comparing their different approaches to retelling the

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[110] *Entre la memoria propia y la ajena: Tendencias y debates en la narrativa española actual*, ed. by Raquel Macciuci, María Teresa Pochat Muro, and Juan Antonio Ennis (La Plata: Ediciones del Lado de Acá, 2010), 31.

other's story, I consider how successfully each author negotiates the ethical challenges of this (potentially ventriloquistic) undertaking.

2.1 Loudspeakers and Mouthpieces: Contrasting Approaches to Telling the Other's Tale

La voz dormida and *Pas pleurer* share a similar dynamic to *La Réparation* and *Velódromo*: one is an example of familial postmemory, the other affiliative. On this occasion, however, the *familial* text is written at a geographical remove. Born in France following the wartime exile of her parents, who fled when the Falange seized control of their village in Catalonia, Salvayre writes her mother's story, but in a different mother tongue. Whereas Schneck and Salabert were forced to seek the story that their mothers' lifelong silence had denied them, Salvayre's mother Montse is a vibrant presence in *Pas pleurer*, and the impetus behind the narration. The text's narrative present stages Montse recounting the beginning of the Civil War to her daughter, Lydie. Hers is a story of the brief but glorious interlude of Republican passion and liberation during the summer of 1936 in Barcelona, and of the tragic loss with which it ended. Salvayre's autofiction juxtaposes the momentary hope that Montse recollects with the concurrent atrocities in Majorca witnessed by French writer Georges Bernanos, whose account of the brutal Republican repression Salvayre reads alongside listening to her mother's reminiscences. It is Montse, however, who dictates the main body of the narrative. The action is confined to the brief period of her life she is able to remember, from 1936 to her exile in 1937. To circumscribe the story in this way establishes Montse as the agent behind the narration, which has a discernible impact on Salvayre's role as relayer. Part and parcel of Montse's limited recollections is the omission of Salvayre's story: the shared 'bios'

between her mother's life and her own is largely absent from the text. Devoid of her own place in Montse's story, Salvayre's position is poised to become one of mere mouthpiece.

In *La voz dormida*, Chacón's story is also missing, yet for a markedly different reason and to almost antithetical effect. Like Salvayre, Chacón's immediate family went through the Civil War.[111] Her family's Nationalist allegiance, however, saw her *prehistoria* oppose the Republican struggle to which both authors give voice. *La voz dormida* tells the story of a group of Republican characters in the aftermath of Franco's victory, whose lives intersect in Las Ventas, a women's prison in Madrid. Narrative perspective fluctuates from inside the prison, where the principal focus is on one 'prison family' comprising Hortensia, Elvira, Reme and Tomasa, to the city itself, where Hortensia's sister Pepita bridges the spatial divide between Las Ventas and the mountainous area outside Madrid. There, Hortensia's husband Felipe and Paulino, the brother of Elvira and future love interest of Pepita, continue the armed Republican resistance. The narrative Chacón writes clashes, therefore, with the Nationalist version of events that she received as a child. Like Salabert, her relationship to her source material is purely affiliative, but the position from which she writes becomes more problematic in view of her relational ties. The ethical dilemma escalates given the step closer to writing real lives that *La voz dormida* takes in comparison with *Velódromo*. *La voz dormida* marks what Labanyi refers to as the first 'foray by a woman writer into the docufable genre'.[112] Its innovation lies in its hybrid form: Chacón conducted intensive research prior to her writing, collecting real-life accounts which she fictionalised to form her narrative framework. Although some of these testimonies had already been published, they

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[111] Chacón articulates some of her family's wartime experiences in her earlier novel, *Cielos de barro* (2002), which, unlike *La voz dormida*, also addresses acts of brutality on the Republican side. José Andrés Rojo, 'He querido explorar el lado oscuro, oculto y silenciado de la posguerra', *El País*, 06 September 2002, n.p. <https://elpais.com/diario/2002/09/06/cultura/1031263201_850215.html> [accessed 06 August 2020].

[112] Labanyi coins the term 'docufable' to refer to fictionalised documentary texts, in which the author produces a fictional narrative on the basis of extensive historical research she or he has carried out (2007), 105.

remained largely unread. Kathryn Everly, Sarah Leggott and José Colmeiro attribute this poor circulation to the unadorned form and limited avenues of distribution of the accounts, given the authors' limited exposure to education and to writing under Franco.[113] All three critics view Chacón's transformation of these testimonies into a highly crafted narrative, and the media attention that it attracted, as instrumental in bringing these stories into view. Contrary to Salvayre, who preserves the idiosyncrasies of individual language through Montse's mixture of French and Spanish, Chacón's mediating role could be construed as one of loudspeaker. She elides the particularities of individual testimony in her synthesis, 'mainstreaming' the accounts in her re-writing so that they might reach a wider audience.[114] Consequently, while the critics are right to emphasise the crucial contribution that Chacón's work has made to revising the Civil War narrative in Spain, they overlook the ethical questions that her approach raises. Latent in channelling individual testimonies through her own authorial platform is the distinct possibility of further silencing the first-generation subjects.

The comparison of the extradiegetic processes behind *La voz dormida* and *Pas pleurer* points to two very different responses to representing other voices. The respective writing practices lend themselves to antithetical authorial positions, loudspeaker and mouthpiece, which epitomise the divergent directions of displacement in postmemory. Each provides a frame through which to examine the ethical implications that we have already identified. Does Chacón displace the first generation, albeit inadvertently, from their

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[113] José Colmeiro, 'Re-Collecting Women's Voices from Prison: The Hybridization of Memories in Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida*', *Foro Hispánico*, 31 (2008), 191–211 (194–95); Kathryn Everly, 'Women, Writing and the Spanish Civil War in *La voz dormida* by Dulce Chacón', *History, Violence, and the Hyperreal: Representing Culture in the Contemporary Spanish Novel* (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 2010), 63–84 (72); Sarah Leggott, *Memory, War and Dictatorship in Recent Spanish Fiction by Women* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2015), 50–51.
[114] In his discussion of ventriloquism, Steven Connor describes amplified voices as 'closing up' space. *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3–43 (33–34). This understanding underpins my conceptualisation of Chacón's role as 'loudspeaker': she magnifies the reach of the voices of the victims by compressing them into a homogenous and more immediately accessible whole.

testimonies via the privileged social position that she inherited? Is Salvayre's seeming self-silencing to give voice to her mother actually a carefully constructed (and ethically dubious) illusion? By exploring the relational strategies that each author puts in place to voice experiences that are not her own, we see how dualistic positions are brought to bear in the texts and the ways in which they come to shape the intergenerational relationship.

2.2 Magnified Stories, Minimised Voices: *La voz dormida*

At first glance, Chacón's writing project appears closely aligned with that of Salabert in *Velódromo*: to testify to the suffering of those unable to tell their own story and, as Salabert puts it, 'devolverles la voz'. In an interview with the author, José Andrés Rojo describes Chacón's endeavour in these very terms, perceiving *La voz dormida* as the means through which 'ha devuelto la voz a las mujeres que se vieron obligadas a guardar silencio'.[115] Chacón's response points to a subtly different aim. She remarks that '[a]unque hayan tenido que callar durante muchos años, sus historias están ahí. Y es necesario rescatarlas'.[116] It is not the voices of the victims that Chacón seeks to rescue, but their stories. I have argued that Salabert succeeds at least in part in her aim by writing a 'testimony' that belongs to no one person, and which can therefore resonate with the untold stories of numerous other victims. The issue in *La voz dormida* is that the accounts Chacón collates do indeed belong to someone, insofar as the text is based on pre-existing testimonies from real lives. Etymologically speaking, 'rescatar' is noteworthy in this respect. Its connotations of

[115] Rojo (2002), n.p.
[116] Ibid.

'capturing' or 'taking' hint at the danger of the text assuming possession of the stories that it strives to save from oblivion, and so displacing their subjects.

Chacón's placement of the story over and above the real lives behind it prompts a much more complex entanglement between reality and fiction than was present in *Velódromo*. The hybrid form is most visible in the interplay between text and its paratexts, a relationship that has received substantial critical attention in studies of *La voz dormida*.[117] The novel is divided into three parts and its interweaving of fictional stories with historical episodes emerges most explicitly in the documents included at the end of each section. Modelled on actual documentation from the regime—an end-of-war declaration, an execution warrant, and directives for conditional release—they make manifest for the reader the blurring between authenticity and invention that recurs throughout the text. The central document, an official death sentence for Hortensia, a fictional character, indicates the impetus behind this overlap. By contrasting the impersonal discourse of the dictatorship with the emotive fictional narrative that she develops, Chacón combats its dehumanisation. During the regime, such dehumanisation was used to dual effect: to justify the barbarity inflicted on Franco's political opponents by depersonalising the victims, and to create the illusion of omniscience by which the historical narrative of the victors asserted control.[118] Chacón counteracts both strategies by *re-embodying* Francoist discourse through her use of hybridisation. Her affective portrayal of the physical and psychological suffering inflicted on the characters brings its human impact to light. Moreover, the fictionalisation of 'real' historical documents aligns the two discourses in a way that exposes 'History' in the regime as a narrative construct. Pretensions of impersonality and omniscience collapse, for example,

[117] Two examples of critics who explore this hybrid form in detail are José Colmeiro (2008) and Meredith L. Jeffers, 'Transcription in Twenty-First Century Peninsular Narrative Fiction' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Colorado, 2013).
[118] David K. Herzberger, *Narrating the Past: Fiction and Historiography in Postwar Spain* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 16–17.

when Franco's bulletin announcing the end of the war is preceded by its personification in the prison guard La Zapatones, who walks around repeating the declaration as a refrain.[119] Introduced via its caricatured quotation, official discourse is reduced to a product of Chacón's fiction.

Substituting the Subject

The link that emerges here between fictionalisation and personalisation is key to unpicking the relationship in *La voz dormida* between testimony and text. Chacón's front cover illustrates this intersection: a photograph of a *miliciana*, whose real identity is unknown, wearing full military garb and with a child in her arms. Drawing on Tabea Alexa Linhard's work, Edurne Portela observes that this iconic image has been used in several non-fiction texts on the Civil War. These include Shirley Mangini's *Memories of Resistance: Women's Voices from the Spanish Civil War* which, as the first text to focus on women's role in the war effort, is a clear predecessor to *La voz dormida*. Portela links the use of this photograph to postmemory, and to Hirsch's perception of how the second generation view images from the Holocaust.[120] For Hirsch, 'repetition, displacement, and recontextualisation' are essential for surviving with and redirecting the otherwise 'mortifying gaze' of these images.[121] Certainly, all three strategies are mobilised in Chacón's choice of front cover. The photograph is not merely the face of *La voz dormida*. Rather, Chacón blurs the lines between text and paratext by incorporating it into the main body of the narrative. In a *mise-en-abyme*, the reader sees Felipe poring over a photograph of his wife, in which Hortensia is wearing a pair of earrings that he had given her and holding someone's else's child. The two

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[119] Dulce Chacón, *La voz dormida* (Barcelona: Debolsillo, 2002), 156–57. Henceforth page numbers will be listed in the body of the text.
[120] Edurne Portela, 'Hijos del Silencio: Intertextualidad, paratextualidad y postmemoria en *La voz dormida* de Dulce Chacón', *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, 41 (2007), 51–71 (57).
[121] Hirsch (2012), 120.

photographs are evidently one and the same: the unidentified woman on the front cover becomes one of Chacón's fictional characters. By *repeating* the image of the *miliciana* in the diegesis, Chacón narrativises the photograph, and thereby *recontextualises* it: she makes the image part of her own story. The issue with such a process arises from its central stage, *displacement*. Chacón's recontextualisation of the image has been well received on the whole. Critics have interpreted the author's co-optation of the unknown subject into her story as a form of personalisation. Portela connects the photograph to Chacón's overarching narrative strategy:

> Chacón reivindica el derecho a la memoria de aquellos que todavía no lo han adquirido y otorga historias a aquellos que desaparecieron de ella debido a la represión, como en el caso de esa miliciana fotografiada que, para los lectores y lectoras de *La voz dormida*, siempre será Hortensia.[122]

Portela perceives the characterisation of the *miliciana* as the very means by which Chacón 'rescues' women's stories that would otherwise be—or in this case have *already* been—lost. Such a reading epitomises the danger of displacement at the heart of the recontextualisation process, which neither Portela nor, more surprisingly, Hirsch herself problematise. The substitution of the identity and story of the *miliciana* with those of Hortensia results in the supplanting of its real subject. Chacón uses fiction to supply the missing narrative of the *miliciana*, to stand in for what has been lost.

In privileging its ability to bring to life otherwise unheard stories for the reader, Portela neglects the ethical questions posed by Chacón's postmemorial endeavour. I perceive the strategy of displacement by which the image operates as symptomatic of the wider relationship between testimony and text. In the absence of a fixed identity, the image acts as an icon in which, as Everly notes, 'one woman becomes representative of many'.[123] Its composite nature allows for Chacón's unproblematised substitution of the real-life *miliciana*

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[122] Portela (2007), 68.
[123] Everly (2010), 73.

with her own fictional character. The same process of amalgamation and substitution forms the basis of Chacón's transformation of the testimonies that she receives into the text that she writes. It is triggered by the greater importance that Chacón places on the story than she does on the individual subject. She develops a narrative behind the image to make 'readable' the Republican women's resistance that it represents, transforming individual experiences into an iconic story that appeals to a wider audience. Turning survivor accounts into a cohesive fictional narrative in this way shifts the emphasis on *authorship*—the hallmark of testimony—to *readership*. Such a shift is effected from the opening of the narrative, where Chacón introduces the character later to become the face of the novel: 'La mujer que iba a morir se llamaba Hortensia' (13). Poignantly, this woman destined to die is the sole author figure in *La voz dormida*. Hortensia dedicates most of her time to writing down her experiences in the blue notebook given to her by and addressed to her husband. Somewhat paradoxically, her writing does not give her a voice in the text. Extracts from her notebooks are never presented directly; instead, insights are filtered through the lens of third-person narration. Yet Chacón's disembodied narrator is figured not so much as an alternative author as she is a reader. From the first line, the recurrent use of prolepsis indicates that knowledge of Hortensia's notebooks is acquired not through omniscience but in hindsight. In a manner that resonates with Roland Barthes's 'La Mort de l'auteur' (1967), Hortensia's death halfway through the text makes her story entirely dependent on such a reader. Her narrative position is an extreme example of how writing one's own life-story is perpetually framed by the gaze of the reading other, and subject to her or his transmission.

Individual Voices or Collective Communication

The inescapable demise of the writing subject in *La voz dormida* gives insight into the narrative function of the first generation. It transfers agency from writing to reading in a way

that has significant repercussions for Chacón's reception and transmission of individual testimonies. To return to the front cover, the dependence of Hortensia's Republican resistance narrative is illustrated through a questionable set of gender dynamics. While her military uniform underlines the active engagement of women in the war effort, the baby in her arms ensures that the role of motherhood is never eclipsed. Implicit in this pairing is that women's principal form of participation is via legacy: their testament hinges on the Republican narrative being passed on to the next generation. To some extent, Chacón's stress on the transmission process undercuts the agency of first-generation women. What takes precedence is not the singular experience of the subject, but her narrative role. Leggott praises this shift in emphasis since, she contends, it enables Chacón's successful representation of collective experience in *La voz dormida*: 'the stories recounted reflect the more generalized repression of republican women'.[124] Linhard, by contrast, draws out the problems with prioritising narrative function. In her study of women in the Mexican Revolution and the Spanish Civil War, she highlights the recurrent reduction of their personal experiences to symbols and literary tropes. One such example is the motif of the Trece Rosas.[125] For Chacón, the real story of the thirteen young women held in Las Ventas before being executed for belonging to the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas serves as a touchstone between her text and historical reality. Building on the recognisability of the motif, she puts her own text on an equal footing by telling their story via the parallels that the fictional characters perceive with Hortensia's fate. In doing so, she aims to produce a narrative that acts as a similarly recognisable point of reference. Chacón uses this collective communication to reverse the regime's repression of Republican voices, made painfully evident in the shared outcome of the stories. Pepita and Dolores Conesa, the mother of one

[124] Leggott (2015), 51.
[125] Tabea Alexa Linhard, *Fearless Women of the Mexican Revolution and the Spanish Civil War* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 118.

of the Trece Rosas, both write to Franco to plead for the commutation of Hortensia and Julia's death sentences; both go unheard. It is the failure of individual attempts to be heard that prompts Chacón to opt for collective communication over individual specificity. She strives to produce a Republican (hi)story which pierces through the deaf ear that was turned to the victims of the dictatorship. Throughout the text, the limited impact of lone voices is repeatedly underlined, as in the conversation between the characters when Elvira falls ill: '—Elvirita se ha puesto mala./ —Tiene calentura desde que salió del "cubo"./ —Habrá que avisar a la guardia civila./ —Para el caso que te va a hacer' (20). Such insensibility becomes impossible when the voices of the inmates join together. Orchestrated by Reme, the collective breaking into song is the means through which the characters save Tomasa from further attack by the prison guard (51), and provide cover for Elvira's escape (278). In coming together as one, voices change from an ineffective form of individual expression to an instrument for collective effect. From this Republican chorus, Chacón creates the titular 'voz dormida'.

While many critics have considered the collective nature of this voice, there remains a strong tendency to emphasise the individual agency of characters therein. Leggott and Oaknin argue that Chacón's third-person narrative viewpoint privileges character perspectives, allowing them to tell their own story.[126] Colmeiro comes closest to addressing the synthesising effect of the narrative voice when he suggests that 'it is the author's voice which speaks for those silent women, and the novel is the instrument to make their individual memories come alive and the channel to make them known to readers at large'.[127] Understanding Chacón as the central channel through which individual experiences are articulated corresponds in part to my description of her role as loudspeaker. Colmeiro's

[126] Leggott (2015), 48; Mazal Oaknin, 'La reinscripción del rol de la mujer en la Guerra Civil española: *La voz dormida*', *Espéculo*, 43 (2009), n.p.
[127] Colmeiro (2008), 200.

comments, however, only take into account the magnifying effect of this narrative process. He focuses on the way in which Chacón gives voice as opposed to the particularities of individual *voices* that she simultaneously erases. Take for example the characters' conversation concerning Elvira's fever, in which individual parts are not clearly assigned. The subjects of the final two lines are apparent only in the action that follows this exchange and those of the first two lines remain ambiguous. Unsourced, any clear-cut distinction between these voices dissolves. Far from pointing towards character autonomy, voice in *La voz dormida* consolidates Chacón's insistence on collective output to the detriment of singular source. Her strategy for maximising communication of the Republican story, and of course her own readership, relies on the uniformity of this centralising channel. Indeed, Chacón implies that to make room for individual voices is to endanger such transmission. On visiting day in Las Ventas, for example, when the characters attempt to hold separate conversations with their families, the ensuing effect is a cacophony. In the midst of the clamour, the guards force Elvira's grandfather to leave before he can grasp her message to him about her torture and resistance: 'Se abre paso entre los familiares, que continúan gritando mientras se empujan unos a otros para ocupar el espacio que ha dejado libre junto a la valla metálica. Y se marcha sin haber comprendido nada' (18). What results from this simultaneous sounding of separate voices is the total *failure* in communication. It is telling that this clash is figured in terms of jostling for space. Chacón depicts the contesting voices in a way that also speaks to the danger of competing individual accounts obscuring the collective struggle they seek to convey. Her approach lies in siphoning the diverse, overlapping accounts that she receives into a single story, decoupling narrative from its speakers and so producing the united 'voz dormida'.

Models of Transmission: Tensi and the Text

This singular voice, however, is sleeping: a latent rather than active subject. Whereas Colmeiro perceives its reawakening as implicit, conveying a 'memory that has been rekindled',[128] I argue that Chacón's choice of title has different implications. The text itself embodies the sleeping Republican voice: it is awakened not by being written, but by being read. This is not to say that Chacón relinquishes her own authority in communicating the story. Rather, she incorporates the process into the text, positing two alternative models of transmission. The first is familial, and through it Chacón exposes the attack on lineage during the dictatorship: the principal vehicle used by Franco to expunge the Republican legacy.[129] Much like the conjunction between potential fatherhood and authorship in the character of Sebastián in *Velódromo*, maternity and writing are fused in Hortensia, who is pregnant when she is imprisoned. Through this amalgamation, Chacón represents the frustrated transmission between first and second generations under Franco. Like the deadly tie between mothers and their children in the Holocaust selections that Schneck reveals in *La Réparation*, Hortensia and Tensi form an antagonistic pair: Hortensia's death sentence is reprieved only until she gives birth. The foreclosure of their relationship recurs in the physical separation of mother-daughter pairings throughout the text, which sees mothers unable to hold sway over what happens to their children.[130] In the light of the fragility and frustration of the individual mother-daughter bond, Chacón illustrates the impossibility of direct inheritance. Transmission from mother to daughter, via Hortensia's notebooks, is ultimately accomplished in the text, but only by expanding the relational network. An intricate chain of connections and communications succeeds in delivering Tensi to Pepita after Hortensia's

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[128] Colmeiro (2008), 193.

[129] See Mercè Picornell-Belenguer, 'La voz dormida, la voz presente. Notas sobre la inscripción de la identidad de las mujeres represaliadas por el franquismo en "La voz dormida" de Dulce Chacón', *Letras Femeninas*, 32.2 (2006), 117–43 (124).

[130] We see this in the characters of Sole and Amalia, where Sole is imprisoned and unable to prevent Amalia's torture, and of Doña Celia and her daughter Almudena, who has been executed before the narrative begins.

execution. Once more, reading functions as the main intermediary for this transmission process. Pepita reads the notebooks to Tensi until she is able to do so for herself, and so ensures that Hortensia's story survives through the second generation.

To hinge first-generation perpetuation on widening the relational network serves, at least in part, as a form of justification for Chacón's own affiliative relationship with her narrative material. Nonetheless, the products of this intergenerational transmission establish considerable differences between intra- and extradiegetic processes. Tensi's position in the narrative is determined wholly by her relation to and preservation of her mother's legacy. Characterised as a child by her reading of Hortensia's notebooks, she joins the Communist Party upon turning eighteen and dedicates her life to continuing her parents' struggle. She is, in short, the incarnation of her mother's writing, of first-generation testimony. Her voice and story become simply an extension of Hortensia's own, brutally stopped as it was by the regime. Chacón thus depicts a stark divergence between Tensi and the text. The disparity between them is a question of agency, one derived from the respective mode of transmission that each embodies. It surfaces primarily through the contrast between the inheritance that Tensi receives and the one which *La voz dormida* passes on to its readers. The transmission of Hortensia's legacy appears complete when Pepita decides that it is time to give the final souvenirs to the former's daughter, the earrings and the warrant for her execution. Pepita withholds the blood-stained scrap of the dress that Hortensia was wearing when she was executed, however, to spare Tensi from the most painful evidence of her mother's oppression (400–01). The selective nature of this transmission reinforces the control that the first generation exert over the process: Chacón portrays Tensi's inheritance as determined by Pepita's bequest.

Whereas Tensi represents the receipt and repetition of first-generation legacy, a very different dynamic emerges between receiving and retelling stories in *La voz dormida*. Rather

than being restricted to knowledge that the first generation choose to hand down, the reader acquires information that is at times explicitly against the character's will. Perhaps the clearest example is when Reme, one of the key figures in Hortensia's prison family, tells the story of her arrest and humiliation. There is a striking disjunction between the account that her interlocutors hear and the one which the reader comes to receive:

> Pero a sus hijas no les pasó nada gracias a Dios, ni a su hijo tampoco. Gracias a Dios y gracias a uno de los falangistas que entraron a registrar la casa.
>
> —Era falangista, y buena persona, y no consintió que raparan a mis hijas, ni que les dieran a beber guarrerías.
>
> No lo consintió. Pero no pudo evitar que las obligaran a fregar el suelo de la parroquia. Pero eso Reme no lo cuenta, porque prefiere no contarlo. (61)

Here, the juxtaposition between direct and indirect discourse supplies the strongest counterpoint to Leggott and Oaknin's perception that characters in *La voz dormida* tell their own stories. Although Reme chooses which parts of the story the other characters hear, the text imparts the painful details that she tries to suppress. Echoing and extending Reme's abridged version, narrative voice assumes an autonomy that is independent of character discourse. Agency shifts from the process of telling to that of retelling. As is evident in this example, the shift has serious ethical implications, foremost amongst them that it takes away control over the representation of the story from its subject. Much as Tensi's story is indeed evacuated by the weight of first-generation trauma, making her a mere replica of her mother, Chacón's text shows substantial independence from its source material. I perceive the ensuing dynamics of reading and retelling as exemplified in the text when Hortensia receives a letter from Felipe. Forced to conceal their communication, she follows his instructions that she should swallow the letter after reading it:

> Antes de tragarse el papel, Hortensia lo retiene en la boca. Lo ha leído más de veinte veces. Lo ha memorizado y sigue las instrucciones de Felipe. No lo rompas, podrían encontrar los pedazos. No quiere tragar, desea mantener en su boca los besos que le manda Felipe. No lo quemes, podrían sorprenderte antes de que hubiera ardido por

> completo. Quiere saborear su nombre, escrito por la mano de Felipe. Cómetelo, Tensi, no sabe mal, y piensa en mí. (33)

As Hortensia chews the letter, excerpts from Felipe's writing and the emotions evoked in her reading become interspersed, producing an amalgamation of their perspectives. Crucially, the full letter is not included: we see only the snippets that surface in Hortensia's memory of its reading. The strongly sensual depiction turns the focus to her affective response. Once swallowed, the source in its original form is destroyed. It is absorbed by and becomes part of the one who has read and will re-tell it, with its own autonomy definitively lost. In this respect, the reading of the letter provides an interesting frame through which to interpret Chacón's transformation of the testimonies that she receives. In magnifying the reach of the story, her fiction 'swallows up' individual accounts as they are made more palatable for a wider readership.

Swallowed Sources and Narrative Additions

Transferring agency to the second generation is the means by which Chacón avoids the displacement that Tensi's passive receipt embodies. Rather than simply regurgitating the testimonies, Chacón makes the story her own. In the text's closing epigraph, her dedication to the survivors who told her their stories conceives narration as akin to giving away: 'Mi gratitud a todas las personas que me han regalado su historia' (425). By this logic, accounts pass from their first-generation narrators to Chacón as recipient, and are assimilated into her overarching narrative. The placement of the acknowledgements after the text itself is telling in this respect. Stuart Davis interprets Chacón's inclusion of these references as a 'privileging of informational sources'.[131] Were the acknowledgments to precede the main body of the narrative, this could well be the case. As it stands, like the front cover, where the

[131] Stuart Davis, 'Reading Beyond Cognitive Meaning: Affective Strategies in Novels of the Spanish Memory Boom', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 94.8 (2017), 801–15 (805).

miliciana definitively becomes Hortensia for the reader, the real testimonies to which Chacón refers simply become an echo of the fictional story that the reader has consumed. Structurally, the sequence between telling and retelling is reversed, an inversion in which source is swallowed up by output, and the weight afforded to individual authorship eclipsed by the prominence given to readership. Perhaps the principal issue with such a reversal is that Chacón does not extend it to encompass her own authorship. The process remains extratextual, as does her relation to the sources of the story. We might expect the anxiety of authorship that is apparent in *Velódromo* to be exacerbated in *La voz dormida* given Chacón's Nationalist heritage. Instead, it is absent, written out along with Chacón's own life-story. A revealing difference emerges in her dedication to the Republican victims compared with the legacies we have explored thus far. By fashioning the narration of previously suppressed stories as a 'gifting' process, Chacón figures intergenerational transmission not in terms of loss but of (self-)gain. The joint ownership of the stories that she comes to claim, coupled with the omission of her *prehistoria*, might be read as an attempt to forge an alternative lineage.[132] At the very least, interpreting the life-stories of others as a gift is to regard them as an extra dimension added onto one's own. In this sense, Chacón's narrative process invites a return to Derrida's concept of the 'supplément'. To perceive the stories as an addition fails to reflect the fundamental lack on which they are based, that is, the irrevocable loss of stories of the Civil War such as the one of the *miliciana* on the front cover. Unlike *La Réparation*, which preserves to an extent the painful silences and irreparable rents in the narrative, Chacón fills in the spaces in which these irretrievable

[132] Ferrán suggests that in *La voz dormida*, Chacón 'adopts' the stories of the victims, a process which I have argued that Salabert puts on display in *Velódromo*. Chacón's description of the witnesses as having gifted their stories to her, Ferrán believes, is testament to this adoption process. 'Oppositional Practices in Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida*: Affirming Women's Testimony and Agency', *Hispanic Issues On Line*, 14 (2014), 118–37 (128). The difference in ethical terms, from my perspective, is that while Salabert stages her 'adoptive' relationship to the text as one that is ever partial, Chacón's metaphor of 'gifting' portrays an unproblematised transfer of ownership in the narrative process.

stories should stand with her authoritative account. She effaces the alterity of the story that she writes. By obscuring her own remove from the narrative, Chacón risks displacing further the voices of the Republican victims that she strives to represent.

2.3 *Pas pleurer*: Speaking in (M)other Tongues

In *La voz dormida*, the principal ethical issues that emerge stem from Chacón's unproblematised separation of speaker from story. The text might be read as an (auto)fiction, where the subject becomes an optional, and fundamentally substitutable, addition to the narrative that is produced. Applying the same detachment to her own life-story allows Chacón to remain outside the text. She masks her relation to the traumatic legacy that she receives and relays, and thus fails to address the inescapable otherness of the experiences and voices that form the bedrock of her work. Salvayre, on the other hand, puts her remove from the story she writes on view from the outset. She situates herself at the beginning of *Pas pleurer* not as author, or re-teller, but as reader. Despite resembling free indirect discourse, the opening lines are quickly revealed to be the words of another writer, Georges Bernanos:

> Au nom du Père du Fils et du Saint-Esprit, monseigneur l'évêque-archevêque de Palma désigne aux justiciers, d'une main vénérable où luit l'anneau pastoral, la poitrine des mauvais pauvres. C'est Georges Bernanos qui le dit. C'est un catholique fervent qui le dit.
>
> On est en Espagne en 1936. La guerre civile est sur le point d'éclater, et ma mère est une mauvaise pauvre. Une mauvaise pauvre est une pauvre qui ouvre sa gueule. Ma mère, le 18 juillet 1936, ouvre sa gueule pour la première fois de sa vie. Elle a quinze ans.[133]

[133] Lydie Salvayre, *Pas pleurer* (Paris: Seuil, 2014), 11. Henceforth page numbers will be listed in the body of the text.

In stark contrast to *La voz dormida*, the seemingly disembodied third-person narration is immediately located: first with Bernanos, and subsequently as transcribed by the narrator. The delayed revelation of the first-person voice points to Salvayre's potential displacement both as narrator and as author. Unlike Chacón, she is present in the text through her homonymous autobiographical persona, Lydie. Yet, paradoxically, she is also situated outside the narrative space that she outlines. Her use of 'On est' produces a collective in which the two discourses introduced, that of Bernanos and the narrator's mother, Montse, will cohabit. Set in 1936, this is a narrative space that cannot be shared by its second-generation narrator. The disjunction between narrative space and voice illustrates Lydie's separation from the stories that she will re-tell, while continuing to implicate her perspective through first-person narration. In this way, Salvayre gestures to the alterity of the experiences but also towards the quintessentially subjective channel through which they are relayed. She makes her narrative position visible and thereby steps away from the illusion of impersonality engendered by the extratextual 'loudspeaker' role that Chacón assumes.

Discourses in Dialogue

The attention Salvayre draws to the subjectivity of her representation immediately sets up a more ethical premise from which to tell the other's story. Whereas Chacón seems to subsume the voices of the survivors under her own, Salvayre begins by quoting from Bernanos's testimony. This temporary deferral of first-person narration presages rather different power relations between the author and her sources to those in *La voz dormida*. The question is not so much whether Salvayre displaces first-generation subjects as whether she is herself displaced. In fact, her transcription of Bernanos's writing, the exact repetition of his words, invites comparison with the position of Tensi in Chacón's text. Such a parallel is reinforced in that Lydie's identity is established only in relation: she is introduced through the deictic

'ma mère'. Located between the two first-generation discourses, does Lydie's voice, much like Tensi, simply become a vessel for perpetuating the first-generation story? Does Salvayre imply that to allow other voices to come to the fore is to elide one's own? I argue that the opening of *Pas pleurer* subverts the either-or dynamics on which such displacement is premised. Initially, the two discourses that Lydie draws together do seem to subscribe to a binary logic. Bernanos and Montse approach the Civil War from opposite ends of the social and ideological spectrum: Bernanos as a conservative, Catholic and bourgeois French writer, and Montse as one of the Republican 'mauvais pauvres' that he describes. Yet Salvayre forestalls this binary opposition since it is Bernanos who acts here as the voice of condemnation for the Catholic Church's complicity with the Falange. The principal distinction between Bernanos and Montse appears instead to be one of speech and silence. The authorial platform from which Bernanos articulates his sympathy is a world apart from the voiceless Republican victims whose annihilation he recounts. This division into active subject and passive object of the authorial gaze is problematised, however, when Montse starts to speak. Her coming to voice marks a significant shift in narrative dynamics, brought to the reader's attention by the repeated 'ouvre sa gueule'. Salvayre's emphatic use of the colloquialism signals that Montse's own voice is made present in the text through that of her daughter. Following this logic, Lydie's role becomes one of interrelation. Rather than constructing the discourses of Montse and Bernanos in opposition, her narrative provides the site at which they enter into a retrospective dialogue in writing, in which *both* come to voice.

The dialogue that Salvayre initiates does not pass over the question of the power balance between the different voices in play. On the contrary, the dissonant class and gender dynamics that Montse and Bernanos represent underscore issues of narrative agency and authority. Montse's coming to voice evinces a permeability between subject positions which leads in turn to a reversal of anticipated authority between male and female, bourgeois and

working-class voices. Although the text ostensibly begins from Bernanos's perspective, his discourse is quickly co-opted into the telling of Montse's story. Her experience of Republican excitement in the anarchist stronghold that was Barcelona in 1936 is juxtaposed with the brutal butchery that Bernanos witnesses in Majorca, to provide Lydie with a more complete picture: 'Je l'écoute [ma mère] me dire ses souvenirs que la lecture parallèle que je fais des *Grands Cimetières sous la lune* de Bernanos assombrit et complète' (16). The complementary role assigned to Bernanos here leaves little room for doubt as to the relationship between the two discourses: Bernanos's testimony is ancillary to the mother's narrative. This reversal of authority extends to encompass Salvayre's authorship. Chacón's agency remains unquestioned through her role as re-teller; Salvayre, however, positions herself as recipient. She portrays Lydie principally as listener and reader, while Montse's colloquialisms surface in the language of narration; that is to say, the aspect of the narrative process that Couser perceives as tipped perpetually towards the writing subject. Clearly, *La voz dormida* is the product of such a power dynamic. In its bid to iron out individual idiosyncrasies in order to produce a more consumable poetic version, the text exemplifies an author's propensity when relaying the stories of others to replace the subjects' voices with her own. Salvayre endeavours to override displacement of this kind in *Pas pleurer* by staging such a tendency to modify voices. While listening to Montse's account, Lydie intervenes to correct her mother's language by supplying the proper French translation for her Hispanicisms. Lydie's attempted insertion of language is repeatedly frustrated, however, in comical linguistic interplay. In these exchanges, Montse either replaces the word before going on to repeat the mistake later in the same passage,[134] or leaves what she has said unchanged, as when she relates the run-up to José's call for the villagers to revolt:

[134] One such example is when Lydie corrects the Hispanicism 'griter': 'Alors, quand on se retrouve en la rue, je me mets à griter (moi: à crier), à crier […] Et moi je grite encore plus fort' (13). The narrator's interjection

> Auparavant, il est allé chercher son ami Juan qui habite tout en haut de la calle del Sepulcro, une rue en côte comme ça, dit ma mère en inclinant sa main, un raidillon dis-je, tu inventes des mots maintenant? dit ma mère que ce mot amuse. (43)

As Lydie's bid to fill in her mother's vocabulary gap is laughingly dismissed, protagonist seems to supplant narrator as the authority by which the language of narration is determined.

The Role of 'Twoness' in Telling the Story

By incorporating, and thus holding in check, the narrator's changes, Salvayre transforms the telling process into an interspersion of the voices of mother and daughter. She creates a hybrid which develops principally through language rather than form, as was the case in *La voz dormida*. The coexistence of voices takes on a tangible dimension in the text as the interplay between French and Spanish becomes increasingly noticeable. While initially, Spanish appears to encroach upon the French, the instances of infiltration by the mother tongue extend into whole sections as heightened emotion in the story causes the French language to give way. These fluctuating power dynamics unfold in the narration of José's revolutionary speech, delivered to rally the villagers to the anarchist cause:

> Et nous ne nous calmerons pas avec quelques os et quelques caresses. Se acabó la miseria. La revolución no dejará nada como antes. Nuestra sensibilidad se mudará también. Vamos a dejar de ser niños. Y de creer a ciegas todo lo que se nos manda.
>
> Tonnerre d'applaudissements. (46)

Framed as applause to the speech, French shifts from the principal language of narration into the acquiescent mode of reception. By depicting the language of action as permeating the one of narration, Salvayre establishes the dynamics between host and guest languages not as fixed, but fluid. This hybrid has the opposite effect to the amalgamation of testimonies and fictional text in *La voz dormida*, where Chacón's elision of the hybridising process leaves

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is parenthesised, and despite being incorporated temporarily into the narrative, Montse's subsequent usage sees the return of 'griter', thus writing out Lydie's correction.

the reader, paradoxically, with its homogenised product. Hybridity in *Pas pleurer* is the means through which the mother tongue is staged and (at least partially) preserved. Making present the languages of both the country of origin and of reception moves exile from the backdrop, as it was in *Velódromo*, to the foreground. As the bridge between past and present, first and second generations, exile physically and emotionally divides the different lives and life-stages but also crucially connects them. It triggers a 'twoness' that shapes Salvayre's own position: 'Je ne suis pas toute une, je suis inséparablement Française et Espagnole'.[135] Montse's physical separation from Spain is thus conceived very differently to the dynamics of displacement we might anticipate. Salvayre's emphasis on being *both* French and Spanish, 'and' as opposed to 'either-or', challenges any impression of a single 'place' from which the story is told. By including Montse's *frañol*, Salvayre demonstrates that just as narrative voice in *Pas pleurer* is not limited to a single language, neither is it dictated by a single subject. Instead, the text conjoins two modes of expression: of the mother as well as the daughter, teller as well as re-teller.

The coexistence of voices is far from harmonious. Rather, Lydie's interjections into the story are portrayed as interruptions. Stifled in language, her interventions are also suppressed with respect to form when she sketches her writing project:

> Ma mère s'appelle Montserrat Monclus Arjona, un nom que je suis heureuse de faire vivre et de détourner pour un temps du néant auquel il était promis. Dans le récit que j'entreprends, je ne veux introduire, pour l'instant, aucun personnage inventé. (14)

Echoing Barthes's description of the author as scriptor and orchestrator, Lydie claims that she will transcribe rather than transform, preserving orality in a way that resonates with the emphasis on 'dire' over 'écrire' in the opening quotation. The limitation of her own creative agency as she re-tells the story becomes the means through which she lends

[135] Eléonore Sulser, 'Lydie Salvayre: "Je ne suis pas toute une, je suis inséparablement Française et Espagnole"', *Le Temps*, 29 August 2014, n.p. <https://www.letemps.ch/culture/lydie-salvayre-ne-suis-toute-une-suis-inseparablement-francaise-espagnole> [accessed 31 August 2018].

Montse her authorial platform. Salvayre appears to overturn the power that Couser attributes entirely to the writing subject. An important difference exists, however, between Lydie's position and that of Tensi as mere mouthpiece for the first-generation story in *La voz dormida*. Whilst Barthes subordinates the role of scriptor to that of the reader, Salvayre emphasises writerly agency. Her use of 'vouloir' and the parenthetical 'pour l'instant' portray this as a conscious decision, not an unavoidable position. Nevertheless, the narrative role that she postulates is called into question by her authority over the writing process. Her input becomes evident in 'le récit que j'entreprends', where the impression of joint ownership over the account in writing clashes with the passivity that she envisages in its narration. Here, Salvayre points up the tension between her wish to allow Montse to tell her own story, and the automatic power that she holds over the account as author. Whereas joint ownership in *La voz dormida* sees control slide conclusively from teller to re-teller, Salvayre's attempt to preserve Montse's agency draws attention to the duality of her position: she is at once listener and relayer, reader and author.

Autofiction and the Question of Narrative Source

The conflict between these concurrent narrative and authorial positions is apparent in the text's autofictional label. The genre marker confirms that Salvayre's role of scriptor, based on a choice not to fictionalise the 'characters', was not sustained through the telling process. Salvayre herself acknowledges this in interviews, where she undercuts the writing premise outlined in the text: 'Tout n'est pas autobiographique, quoi que j'en dise au début du livre. Ma mère, mon père sont devenus des personnages'.[136] Retelling becomes an inherently fictionalising process once more, as proximate others are transformed into characters.

[136] Sulser (2014), n.p.

Despite her professed intentions, authorial agency prevails. The imbalance seems still more problematic than in *La voz dormida*, given the invisibility of the fictionalising process. While for Chacón, fictionalisation represents a conscious strategy, in *Pas pleurer*, it undermines Salvayre's narrative aims: a mere unwanted outcome. Even though she strives to suppress her voice inside the text to maintain her mother's narrative agency, she cannot circumvent her role as orchestrator in its writing. The invented elements are not merely a product of Salvayre's retelling, however, they are also a question of Montse's embellishments:

> [C]et été qu'elle a, je présume, rétrospectivement embelli, dont elle a, je présume, recréé la légende pour mieux combattre ses regrets à moins que ce ne soit pour mieux me plaire, cet été radieux que j'ai mis en sûreté dans ces lignes. (221)

The refrain-like use of 'je présume' restricts Lydie's position apropos potential fabrications to one of supposition. Since every story is reconstructed subjectively, elaborated for the listener as well as for one's own benefit, Salvayre indicates that fiction is already present in Montse's account prior to its subsequent reconstruction (and re-embellishment) in *Pas pleurer*. By highlighting the fact that as recipient, she lacks a reliable gauge with which to determine those aspects of Montse's story that may be fictional, Salvayre debunks any sense of an authoritative account. Her approach in this respect diverges significantly from that of Chacón, whose neat tying-up of narrative threads through her fiction risks presenting itself as the definitive version. The emphasis Salvayre places on the limitations of her position as listener also allows her to acknowledge the subjectivity of her own retelling. The narrative process in *Pas pleurer* thus demonstrates a keener awareness of the importance—and indeed the challenges—of upholding the agency of first-generation subjects. Salvayre does not suggest that such an endeavour is seamlessly realised in *Pas pleurer*. She illustrates her *attempt* to represent the mother's voice faithfully rather than replace it with her own, but also the impossibility of suppressing her influence as writing subject. The way in which she makes the telling of the story a central part of its retelling allows Salvayre to stage rather

than swallow up Montse's own narration. Drawing the two processes into dialogue, she creates an exchange between the narrative voices of mother and daughter which challenges the perception of life-writing as ventriloquistic.

In the dialogical dynamics in *Pas pleurer*, we see a tension that recurs throughout Salvayre's oeuvre surrounding the relationship between different voices. Her works have given rise to a polarised critical interpretation: some perceive them as monologic, others interpret the same texts as polyphonic.[137] José Arráez, for his part, argues that when the inner thoughts of different characters are relayed in *Pas pleurer*, '[l]a voix de Montse cède la parole aux protagonistes des événements'.[138] If we consider the tragic climax of Montse's story, when her brother José is shot, it appears at first as if we are indeed inhabiting the latter's perspective:

> Jeté brusquement à terre, il tâta la plaie indolore qui ouvrait sa poitrine, regarda ses doigts pleins de sang, murmura dans une colère désespérée Qu'est-ce qu'ils m'ont fait?, essaya de bouger ses jambes qui restèrent inertes, voulut crier Juan sans en trouver la force et appela au secours des images aimées qui ne vinrent jamais [...] Puis les coups de feu peu à peu s'assourdirent, tous les bruits peu à peu s'assourdirent, et il se sentit glisser lentement dans quelque chose de tiède, de fade et d'envahissant. Seul face au ciel immense. Sans une main amie. Sans un regard d'amour. Solito como la una (ma mère ici essuie une larme). (204–05)

Contrary to Arráez's interpretation, the real source of the narration is revealed through the transition into Spanish in the final line. By underlining Montse's affective response through the aside, Salvayre reveals the trigger for the ever-more poeticised description. Clearly, the impossible insight into José's final moments is born of his sister's grief-stricken imagining. The passage unveils a narrative paradox: these observations can be gleaned only by

[137] The tension emerges most clearly in Marie-Pascale Huglo and Susan Bainbrigge's conflicting readings of Salvayre's novel *La Compagnie des spectres*. Huglo, 'The Salvayre Method', trans. by Roxanne Lapidus, *SubStance*, 35.3 (2006), 35–50; Bainbrigge, 'Haunting Histories of Transgenerational Trauma in Lydie Salvayre's *La Compagnie des spectres* (1997): A Taking Stock of "Madness" and "Transmission"', *Modern Languages Open* (2017), n.p.

[138] José Arráez, 'Les voix/es de la mémoire dans *Pas pleurer* de Lydie Salvayre', *French Cultural Studies*, 28.2 (2017), 186–97 (190).

inhabiting José's perspective, yet such an insight is impossible given the isolation in which he dies. The emphasis throughout the passage is on what *cannot* be heard, seen or felt from José's experience. In stark contrast to Chacón's disembodied 'voz dormida', Salvayre sources voice in order to problematise pretensions to perspectives that are not one's own. She punctures such purported insight in the case of life-shattering—and in this example, life-ending—experiences that cannot be shared. Montse, not an omniscient narrator, and certainly not José himself, remains the narrative 'source' throughout her account.

If Montse's voice thus frames the perspectives of the other characters, might we better understand her account as ventriloquistic rather than polyphonic, as one voice that dominates rather than a dialogue between several? While the monologic dynamics of her account do gesture towards the tendency to ventriloquise other voices, polyphony is nonetheless present in *Pas pleurer* in a way that it is not in *La voz dormida*. Both in Montse's story and in the relationship between the text's two principal discourses, the dialogue between voices takes place at a more unconscious level. Montse's quasi-monologue in fact highlights how far one narrative voice is made up of multiple others. As Killeen notes, psychoanalysis has established that voice is a composite and parasitic construct, and so dissipated the illusion that it is a marker of individuality.[139] Montse's narration is layered with the voices and perspectives of others to which she has listened and which she relays in turn. While access into José's perspective, for example, is determined by her retrospective interpretation, it was his infectious enthusiasm for Anarchism that shaped the political and personal trajectories at the heart of Montse's story. In this regard, other character voices are indeed represented through Montse, but they also inform and inflect her voice as they are absorbed by it. Dialogue thus occurs at the level of language in a way that echoes Mikhail

[139] Killeen (2013), 17.

Bakhtin's understanding of polyphony in the novel.[140] Bakhtin perceives 'internal dialogization' as the defining aspect of prose style; he sees dialogic structures not simply as staged but as inherently present in discourse.[141] In *Pas pleurer*, Salvayre presents dialogue as taking place belatedly. She interweaves Montse and Bernanos's perspectives into an exchange that could never have transpired in life, yet which is now realised in writing. The onus passes to Lydie, in her capacity as the recipient of both accounts, to draw out the connections between the different experiences; connections that become visible only in retrospect.

Intertextual Infusion

This dialogue is not limited to the two protagonists: it transverses the different narrative planes in the text. Salvayre extends the technique of 'sourcing' to other characters, notably José, through which she reveals their absorption and regurgitation of other discourses. Such borrowing is key to José's political rhetoric, palpable in his following diatribe against social hierarchy:

> Le matin, il tempête contre les mauvais riches, pléonasme dit-il (il a découvert ce mot dans le journal *Tierra y Libertad*) puisqu'il n'est que de mauvais riches, quelle est, dites-moi, la fortune qui n'est pas volée? […] le soir il rêve tout haut de choses fabuleuses et promet à sa sœur Montse un monde où aucun être ne sera jamais plus ni le servant ni la propriété d'un autre, où aucun être n'aliénera jamais plus en faveur d'un autre la part de souveraineté qui lui revient (phrase empruntée au journal *Solidaridad Obrera*), un monde juste et beau, un paraíso. (21–22)

Suffused with borrowed terminology, his discourse becomes an offshoot of the Republican press that he reads. Salvayre again uses parenthesis to expose the source of the terminology

[140] Although critics including Colmeiro (2008) have applied Bakhtin's theory to *La voz dormida*, I argue against their perception of polyphony in the light of the novel's premise of mainstreaming individual voices. I see the theory as applicable instead to the exchange between voices that emerges in *Pas pleurer*.
[141] Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist; trans. by Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 259–422 (284). Electronic resource.

that José uses, and in doing so highlights that voices of others are always latent in one's own. Even more striking is the crossover that Salvayre creates here between José and Bernanos. José's petition repeats the opening line of the text with a twist, as Bernanos's 'mauvais pauvres' transforms into his 'mauvais riches', an overlap which is reinforced by the reference to 'paraíso', itself a term borrowed from religious discourse. Responsibility shifts here to Salvayre's own reader to detect the implicit dialogue that is taking place, all the more so since José's borrowing is rooted in the reading process. By linking the language of José and Bernanos, character and author figure, Salvayre establishes an overlap that obscures the distinctions between narrative levels in the text.

Whereas Chacón separates intra- and extradiegetic narrative processes, Salvayre intertwines them when she draws attention to the many sources on which her own retelling rests. While her principal intertextual framework is *Les Grands Cimetières sous la lune*, her 'borrowings' are not limited to her reading of Bernanos. The title is one such example. On an intradiegetic level, Salvayre takes 'Pas pleurer' from Montse's life philosophy (220), but adds another layer to the borrowing process when she observes in interviews that the phrase is from a letter by Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva.[142] Quoting other texts, and ventriloquising other voices, is a process that is in play outside as well as inside the text. Just as Derrida's figure of the 'supplément' undermines the idea of an original, the constant interaction between voices and stories and the multiple layers of which they are comprised means that the narrative is rather *always already* displaced in *Pas pleurer*.[143] Indeed, the displacement of voices is not merely a product of the author's agency over the retelling process, but an inevitable part of narrating one's *own* experiences.

[142] Sulser (2014), n.p.
[143] Derrida (1967), 211–12.

These reciprocal dynamics problematise the notion of displacement further in *Pas pleurer* by disrupting any sense of teleological progression. By intertwining different narrative stages, Salvayre transforms the straightforward trajectory from telling to retelling which catalysed displacement and replacement in *La voz dormida*. No longer linear, the pathway between them comes to resemble a back-and-forth exchange, as Lydie suggests when she envisages the story taking shape: 'L'été radieux de ma mère, l'année lugubre de Bernanos […] deux scènes d'une même histoire, deux expériences, deux visions qui depuis quelques mois sont entrées dans mes nuits et mes jours, où, lentement, elles infusent' (221). In the infusion of Montse and Bernanos's stories, drawn together into the crucible of Lydie's narration, each comes to influence the other and together they inform the way that the story of the Civil War is told. Likewise, these permeable accounts come to shape, and are in turn shaped by, Lydie's life through their reception and relaying. Salvayre's own story is therefore written out of *Pas pleurer* to very different effect than in *La voz dormida*. Omitting her *préhistoire* allows Salvayre to show that narrating first-generation experiences reveals, and also creates, part of her life-story. She enters here into the shared narrative space from which she was excluded prior to her recounting. In place of a linear progression, Salvayre moves towards more simultaneous narrative dynamics, entwining the accounts of first and second generations in a way that defies the displacement of one by the other.

2.4 Reciprocal Relations and the Ethics of Postmemory

To understand the relationship between source and output as a mutually shaping exchange as opposed to a straightforward progression challenges not only the causal dynamics of displacement, but also those of postmemory. In her study of post-Holocaust Jewish literature,

Kirstin Gwyer regards the disruption of notions of belatedness and evacuation as key to the authors' attempt to overcome the sense that the story is not theirs to tell. She suggests that by transforming their use of intertextuality from a citational to a dialogic mode, the authors are 'seeking to dispel a linear, unidirectional view of the relationship between (writing) generations as one of source and reception or memory and postmemory'.[144] Through the duality that pervades *Pas pleurer*, Salvayre supplants binary and teleological structures in a similar vein. She transports the text outside of the sequential relationship between memory and postmemory where, as we see in *La voz dormida*, narrative source is succeeded and inevitably supplanted by its rewriting. It is through questioning the hallmarks by which a successful postmemorial endeavour is gauged that Salvayre, Schneck and Salabert establish their own ethics of representation. The concepts of displacement and appropriation, the authors demonstrate, conjure the same competitive dynamics between stories that postmemory seeks to surpass. Like ventriloquism, they prescribe set subject positions that carve out one place from which to speak. Comparison of the four texts and their markedly different narrative dynamics has shown that these positions are forged instead in the writing process. The diverse strategies that the authors employ in writing other lives rely on an active process of *relating* rather than on pre-determined relations. Through the reciprocity, simultaneity and infusion of the transmission process that *Pas pleurer* in particular illustrates, Salvayre, Schneck and Salabert move beyond the conception that the relationship between generations is one of potential displacement and appropriation.

Still more problematic is the third element of the challenge Hirsch postulates when she considers how postmemorial writers might 'best carry their stories forward, without appropriating them, without unduly calling attention to ourselves, and without, in turn,

[144] Kirstin Gwyer, '"You think your writing belongs to you?" Intertextuality in Contemporary Jewish Post-Holocaust Literature', *Humanities*, 7.1 (2018), 1–18 (5).

having our own stories displaced by them'.[145] Added to the ethical pitfalls of appropriation and displacement is the danger of prioritising one's own position. Across the four texts considered so far, staging the author's narrative position has in fact proven essential to ethical representations of first-generation stories. Whether the author positions herself inside the text, as is the case in *La Réparation* and *Pas pleurer*, or outside in *Velódromo*, Schneck, Salvayre and Salabert make visible their relationship with the other's story in a way that makes their narration less ethically problematic than in *La voz dormida*, where Chacón obscures her own affiliation. The omission of the relationship between Chacón's *prehistoria* and the story that she comes to tell in *La voz dormida* sparks her failure to address the fundamental gap between them. Schneck, Salabert and Salvayre all 'call attention' to their particular relation to the text, on the other hand, in a way that acknowledges the simultaneous overlap with, and alterity of, first-generation life-stories. Postmemory is perhaps better understood as the site at which different (hi)stories can enter into dialogue, where the gaps between generations, exacerbated in the wake of trauma, play as crucial a role in their representation as do the points at which they intersect. If this is the case, and the ethics of representation in postmemory rest on complicating the 'connections' created in intergenerational transmission, what happens in the case of a shattering experience endured by the author? The relationship between life-stories takes centre stage in the texts I explore in the second part of the thesis, where the authors navigate their own experience of loss in relation to their family histories. Tensions between continuity and separation are at stake as the authors consider the extent to which their own response to trauma is dictated by the narratives that precede and surround them.

[145] Hirsch (2012), 2.

Chapter Three

Legacy, Lineage and *lignes de fuite*: Intergenerational Transmission in Nicole Lapierre's *Sauve qui peut la vie* and Gabriela Ybarra's *El comensal*

In the first section of this thesis, the connection that the texts construct between life-stories reframes the link between generations in narratives of trauma. Legacy produces an alternative lineage: a line that is drawn through the act of bearing witness in writing rather than founded on family ties. Integral to the lineages that these authors sketch is the way in which the narrative process dispels the fixed nature and singular direction of the connection between the life-stories of different generations. Nonetheless, in the dominating focus on inheriting the story, an intergenerational 'line' remains very much at the centre of their postmemorial projects. The relationship created through writing functions as a conduit for the transmission of legacy, and reconnecting stories that life-shattering experience had seemed to separate irrevocably forms the basis of the narrative process. But what happens when the traumatic thread that intertwines first- and second-generation stories in this way is no longer singular? The emphasis on connection is less straightforward in texts that have more than one traumatic focus, when, for example, the author recounts her own experience of loss alongside the suffering endured by the previous generation. Salvayre's subtle shift in *Pas pleurer* towards something closer to a reciprocal negotiation between stories becomes in these texts an active exchange: postmemory enters into dialogue with memory as two painful histories collide in the same textual space.

The desire to establish a link between the stories, which Schneck, Salabert, Chacón and Salvayre all share, is in these cases replaced by questions. How do these histories intersect? To what extent does the experience of one traumatic event determine the way in which one lives another? Emphasis shifts to the *effect* of joining the dots between different

experiences, since interrelation both enables the expression of the first generation's story and risks fettering the second generation's coming to voice. Tying the author's history to what precedes her casts doubt on her agency, on her capacity to dictate its course. Do the identification and continuation that intergenerational transmission assumes thus curtail the author's ability to navigate and articulate her own traumatic history? In this chapter, I explore the antithetical answers to these questions that emerge in two recent autobiographical works: Nicole Lapierre's *Sauve qui peut la vie* and Gabriela Ybarra's *El comensal*. Both texts are structured around two painful histories, one an event experienced by the author, and the other by the previous generation. In *Sauve qui peut*, Lapierre relays her family's suffering during the Holocaust, alongside the post-war suicides of her mother and sister. *El comensal* tells the story of the murder of Ybarra's grandfather by Basque separatist organisation ETA, and the loss of her mother to cancer. As far as the traumas themselves are concerned, *Sauve qui peut* and *El comensal* bear little resemblance to one another. The violence that they recount is alternately self-inflicted and politically motivated, the ordeal that they voice in one case perpetrated by humans and in the other produced by bodily cells. The texts differ too in terms of genre: whereas Lapierre, an anthropologist, looks to the social sciences to tell her family story, Ybarra turns to autofiction. What *Sauve qui peut* and *El comensal* do share, however, is the way in which they interlace two decidedly different histories into the same textual space. Underpinning the narrative dynamics of the two texts is their bifocal perspective. Not only do the authors conjoin memory and postmemory, first-hand loss and life-shattering events undergone by family members, but both are alive to the ties that extend outwards from the family history to the wider historical narrative. While the texts examined so far focus on personal experiences in the context of mass upheaval, Lapierre and Ybarra engage pointedly with the interplay between individual and collective narratives of trauma. In both texts, each family's past suffering occurs within a wider framework of violence: in *Sauve*

qui peut, the Holocaust and its very different outcomes for Lapierre's parents and their families, and in *El comensal*, the climate of terror engineered by ETA and the threat that it posed for the Ybarras. The devastating events that the authors themselves endure, by contrast, are more localised experiences of loss. By interweaving an event that implicates society as a whole with another that pertains principally to the family, both authors draw attention to the intersections between individual, familial and social frameworks.

The dual traumatic focus in *Sauve qui peut* and *El comensal* thus sheds light on the numerous connecting threads between the stories they recount. The intergenerational relationship is less a singular path from the legacy of one traumatic event to the response to another, than a set of relations that lie at the heart of every account of oneself. As Judith Butler explains:

> When the 'I' seeks to give an account of itself, it can start with itself, but it will find that this self is already implicated in a social temporality that exceeds its own capacities for narration; indeed, when the 'I' seeks to give an account of itself, an account that must include the conditions of its own emergence, it must, as a matter of necessity, become a social theorist.
>
> The reason for this is that the 'I' has no story of its own that is not also the story of a relation—or set of relations—to a set of norms.[146]

Butler's formulation of the autobiographical account as always already relational chimes with the role of postmemory in the texts examined in the first section of the thesis. Here, however, the 'relation' between the life-stories of first and second generations is pluralised into a wider network of social 'relations', in which individual, familial and social histories alike are inscribed. The norms to which Butler refers are the moral and ethical markers by which behaviour is conditioned and identity is fashioned. They are, in other words, the *rules* according to which the individual operates. If we consider the etymological roots of 'norm', 'a carpenter's square', we might construe the intersections between these sets of rules as

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[146] Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 7–8. Electronic resource.

right angles, interlocking to form a fixed social frame. In narrative terms, telling one's life-story is an act that takes place within a wider historical framework that is already in position. This is certainly the case in *Sauve qui peut* and *El comensal*, where individual losses are inserted into a collective context alongside the experiences of mass trauma. Yet given that the 'I' in these texts seeks to give an account not only of her experience, but also that of her close relations, an additional familial 'frame' is lodged between the individual and social histories that Butler outlines. Lapierre and Ybarra address the way in which the story of the author relates to the ongoing family narrative as well as how this family story is itself determined by the social context in which it takes place. Reading this double frame as a kind of *mise-en-abyme*, the author's story appears regulated and confined to an increasingly constricted narrative space.

What I want to explore in this chapter are the disparate ways in which Lapierre and Ybarra envisage these sets of relations. The spotlight is no longer simply on the second generation's weaving of the narrative thread that enables the perpetuation of the family story, but on the multiple yet distinct lines that tie together individual, familial and social narratives of trauma. A potential source of agency seems to emerge for Butler in the process of narration, when she envisages the life-writer as one who analyses and articulates the collective story through the medium of her individual writing practice. To what extent do Lapierre and Ybarra view their telling of the story as a reshaping of these sets of relations? Of particular interest to this discussion is Butler's description of the wider social narrative as a 'temporality'. I will look at how the various connections between first- and second-generation experiences unfold in terms of time as well as space, at the directions of movement of the lines that Lapierre and Ybarra draw. The two contrasting pictures that are produced of the relationship between the authors' stories and those that precede them invite a closer interrogation of lines and legacies. What are the ramifications of traumatic legacy

as a narrative link between the life-stories of different generations? What do the resulting relationships between lines and legacies actually look like?

3.1 (Dis)Connecting Traumatic Histories

Both *Sauve qui peut* and *El comensal* begin with a prologue, or 'nota previa' in Ybarra's case, in which the authors frame the autobiographical narrative that ensues as familial rather than individual. In Butler's terms, Lapierre and Ybarra do not 'start with themselves' but adopt positions as the narrators of a traumatic history that is long underway. The trajectories of their accounts differ considerably, however, in how they move between family narrative and historical context. Ybarra proceeds chronologically, starting with an account of her grandfather's murder in the first half of the text and moving in the second half to entwine this postmemory with the painful loss of her mother, who died from colon cancer in 2011. Lapierre, on the other hand, begins by listing the succession of suicides in her family. The death of her grandmother in a gas explosion in 1934, an event shrouded in mystery as to whether it was deliberate or accidental, is followed a generation later by the suicide of Lapierre's sister, who hangs herself in her apartment. Eight years later, their mother takes her own life when she jumps from a motorway bridge. Into this story Lapierre integrates the experiences of her Jewish family during the Second World War, the Vichy regime and the Holocaust, and moves back and forth between individual and collective traumatic events for the remainder of the text. From the outset, the authors' presentations of their respective writing projects map out their texts' different trajectories. In the opening line of *El comensal*, Ybarra situates familial loss in a historical context even before she reveals the event itself: 'Esta novela es una reconstrucción libre de la historia de mi familia, sobre todo la primera parte, que transcurre en el País Vasco en la primavera de 1977, seis años antes de que yo

naciera'.[147] Using temporal and geographical referents to elicit the reader's prior knowledge of the climate of terror in the Basque country in the 1970s, Ybarra points towards a story that is already known. Such an impression redoubles in the light of Ybarra's portrayal of the text as *reconstructing* her family history. The description of this narrative reconstruction as 'libre' refers to her recourse to imagination as a way into understanding the stories that she tells. Hers is an autofictional as opposed to professedly factual autobiographical account. This 'free' reconstruction takes place, however, within the confines of the political context that she depicts as determining the grandfather's fate, fixed in a historical frame.

The implications of repetition that are present from Ybarra's incipit have little in common with Lapierre's approach to family history. Where Ybarra strives to reconstruct that history, Lapierre conceives of the story as a starting point: the text 'commence par un récit familial, intime' (10).[148] Known for studies of the legacy of the Holocaust on Jewish memory which include *Le Silence de la mémoire* (1980) and *Changer de nom* (1995), in *Sauve qui peut* Lapierre explores similar questions, this time through the lens of her own family and their experiences. Looking at once inwards and outwards, Lapierre plays with the shifts between familial and historical narratives to telescopic effect. She brings the bigger picture into view just as she narrows and personalises the focus when it becomes too broad. Following a discussion of the divergent experiences of the two sides of her family during the Holocaust, one a story of resistance and survival, the other of near-complete annihilation, Lapierre broaches the matter of suicide from a sociological point of view. She surveys existing approaches to explaining its causes, from Émile Durkheim to Jean Améry, and puts forward her own evaluation of the ethics of such an endeavour. Lapierre then moves on to

[147] Gabriela Ybarra, *El comensal* (Barcelona: Caballo de Troya, 2015), 11. Henceforth page numbers will be listed in the body of the text.
[148] Nicole Lapierre, *Sauve qui peut la vie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2015), 9. Henceforth page numbers will be listed in the body of the text.

compare present-day experiences of emigration with those of her father before and during the Holocaust, and finally summarises the stages of collective memory that have come to mould our contemporary understanding of the Shoah. These eclectic narrative threads are pulled together around the familial and collective traumas and the question of destiny that both pose for Lapierre. How far, she seems to ask, do historical forces determine the course of these stories to the detriment of individual agency? Lapierre answers with a story whose scope becomes ever wider, progressing through the text from a 'récit intime' towards a collective form of resistance: 'J'aimerais que ce livre, écrit sur fond de drames passés, collectifs et privés, soit une lecture revigorante, une sorte de fortifiant pour résister au mauvais temps présent' (11). She envisages the traumatic histories that she shares as grounds for withstanding the prejudice and intolerance that she sees resurfacing dangerously in contemporary society. Rather than being a cathartic end in itself, telling these stories becomes the basis for future action and agency. While she interweaves collective and private traumas in structural terms, Lapierre refuses to merge them together. She rejects the idea that the mass trauma of the Holocaust was the impetus behind the family suicides, or in other words, the potential 'solution' of historical determinism.

El comensal exhibits no such objection to tying together its traumatic threads. Indeed, Ybarra's account emerges precisely from the interrelation of the two shattering events that she articulates. She notes that it was only after her mother's death that she had felt compelled to find out more about her grandfather's murder, a story which until that point had existed for her only as a hotchpotch of different versions from sources outside the family. Javier Ybarra's kidnapping and murder are public knowledge, and the silence that surrounds the story in her family is at odds with the many voices from outside who tell it. As a child, Ybarra received various accounts from schoolfriends of the recovery of her grandfather's body, and a plethora of reports were published in newspapers that remain available online.

Ybarra depicts the intimate experience of her mother's death as the trigger for her desire to establish her own roots in the grandfather's story and thus to stake a more individual narrative claim. In short, *El comensal* seems to sketch out a rather different course to *Sauve qui peut*. Whilst Lapierre's sociological approach uses her familial story to provide a foundation for collective resistance, Ybarra attempts to regain through writing a personal purchase on a narrative that has long been a public possession: 'Metí el nombre de mi abuelo en Google y visité hemerotecas. Tomé muchas notas sobre lo que leí: transcripciones literales de noticias y reacciones. Pero las escenas que imaginaba terminaron filtrándose en mi crónica' (12). She makes this fusion of archival research and imagined reconstruction the bedrock of her autofictional approach.

The passage from public knowledge to personal account is embedded in the structure of the text. Although first-person narration is used throughout *El comensal*, in a similar vein to *Pas pleurer* the point of view assumed by Ybarra in the opening section is closer to a third-person narrative mode. She re-stages the period of the grandfather's kidnapping and murder, focusing on how the events transpired for his children, from an imagined bird's eye perspective: 'La mañana del 20 de mayo de 1977 Marcelina puso un hervidor de agua en el fuego' (15). Adopting this narrative position places Ybarra at a remove from the story that she imparts, compared to the account she offers of her mother's cancer diagnosis and death. In this second section, the narrative of her mother's illness and death as it was experienced by the daughter is interspersed with extracts from the writing present. These sections closely resemble diary entries and give an account of the narrator's compulsion to repeat actions and return to locations from the previous year, in order to recreate and relive her relationship with her mother. Her grandfather's story, and the continued threat to the family after his death, never disappears from view. Rather, it resurfaces in a more personal vein, as the narrator explores her relationship to the terrorist narrative that led to his death and to the

legacy of fearful silence in her family. Through the interconnection of the two histories, Ybarra's initial remove from the family story is replaced by affective engagement. Like Schneck in *La Réparation* and Salabert in *Velódromo*, Ybarra founds her writing project on coming to claim a suppressed family story. Yet while theirs is a journey towards unearthing the unspoken story, given that the Ybarras' family history has already been widely told, her account is better understood as a process of *re*-claiming her own place, and the place of her family, from within a historical narrative that ostensibly excludes them.

Sauve qui peut, on the other hand, is not about reclaiming familial legacy but refusing it. Transmission in Lapierre's family, on the face of it, is not a mere matter of passing down the story but one of fatal repetition: 'Dans ma famille on se tuait de mère en fille. Mais c'est fini. Il y a longtemps déjà, je me suis promis qu'accidents et suicides devaient s'arrêter avec moi. Ou plutôt, avant moi. Sauve qui peut la vie!' (9). Maternal legacy, for Lapierre, seems to be one of suicide. Conceptualised as a kind of causal enchainment, it epitomises the negative understanding of transmission as anchoring the story of the second generation ineluctably to the fate of the first. Yet from the beginning, Lapierre casts herself as the interrupter in the sequence of mother-daughter suicides, the break in this familial chain. The titular exclamation sets up the text as a form of injunction that withstands intergenerational transmission through writing: *Sauve qui peut* appears to draw Lapierre's life-story away from familial legacy as strongly as Ybarra gravitates towards it. I want now to consider in more detail these divergent narrative directions and the way in which they complicate our understanding of legacy as it has been shaped by the texts examined so far. Given Ybarra's readiness and Lapierre's refusal to interconnect traumatic histories, how do their conflicting conceptions of legacy invite a different understanding of the relationship between life-stories?

3.2 Lines of Flight in *Sauve qui peut la vie*

Although Lapierre initially depicts the sequence of suicides in her family as a deadly causal chain, the conviction with which she asserts her own role in severing it points to a different interpretation of the link between the life-stories that one inherits and forges for oneself. Her eponymous call to break away is described in terms of a line that is quite distinct from the intergenerational enchainment of the opening line. As is the case in *Pas pleurer*, the title of *Sauve qui peut* is a quotation, whose source Lapierre identifies as Jean-Luc Godard's 1980 film. Unlike Salvayre, she explicitly acknowledges the borrowed nature of her title, but she also accentuates the way in which the quotation's meaning is transformed in her writing. She argues that a vital change occurs when 'la vie' is removed from the parentheses in which it was placed by Godard: 'Le sauve-qui-peut, c'est la débandade, la déroute. Le sauve qui peut la vie, c'est la ligne de fuite, l'échappée parfois belle' (9). Contrary to the derailing that she perceives as central to Godard's truncated phrase, the *ligne de fuite* retains the concept of a line, but one that crucially leads away from its course. In the context of the intergenerational relationship, the figure of the line of flight fundamentally blurs any sense of a direct descent from one generation to the next. While the starting point of a *ligne de fuite* is identifiable, the end, by definition, is not. Lapierre thus contests the notion that the line of descent necessarily determines the position of the next generation, the very link on which *lineage* rests. No such lock exists between the two stories: correlation, in other words, is not causation. The position of the second point—or in terms of lineage, of the second generation—remains undetermined.

For Gilles Deleuze, the *ligne de fuite* is the very antithesis of a predetermined progression from one point to the next. He interprets the line as a form of

'déterritorialisation',[149] theorising it in opposition to the fixation on roots and the trajectory from past to future that they map. The focus, he suggests, should not be on either the start or end point, but on the movement traced by the line itself: 'Ce n'est jamais le début ni la fin qui sont intéressants, le début et la fin sont des points. L'intéressant, c'est le milieu'.[150] Here, we can see an interesting parallel between Deleuze's emphasis on the middle and Butler's disruption of the starting point in the account one gives of oneself, whereby one's story is always already in motion. In terms of Lapierre's life-writing project, the *ligne de fuite* is of particular relevance in the light of Deleuze's theory of rhizomes. He draws a distinction between the arborescence, with its emphasis on origins, and what he terms rhizomatic structures, of which the line of flight is one example: 'Un rhizome ne commence et n'aboutit pas, il est toujours au milieu, entre les choses, inter-être, *intermezzo*. L'arbre est filiation, mais le rhizome est alliance' (italics in original).[151] Rhizomes, unlike trees, are not tied to any one root system; rather, each separate piece generates shoots, allowing new plants to spring up ceaselessly in multiple places. For Deleuze these connections, based on alliances in lieu of filiations, provide an escape from the search for roots that underlie arborescent models: 'Le rhizome est une antigénéalogie […] Il est étranger à toute idée d'axe génétique, comme de structure profonde'.[152] Rhizomatic structures such as lines of flight offer an alternative to tracing genealogies, a way out of the Oedipal narrative and the family tree.

How does this fit, then, with the 'récit familial' in *Sauve qui peut*? Does Lapierre's conception of the line of flight offer the route out of the family story that Deleuze describes? For Lapierre, the line comes to represent how she reformulates the relationships between the many stories that make up this genealogical narrative. If we take the line of flight as a figure

[149] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977), 47.
[150] Ibid., 50.
[151] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Capitalisme et schizophrénie: Mille plateaux* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1980), 9–37 (36).
[152] Ibid., 18–19.

for these different histories, their intersection—or more poignantly the lack thereof—creates a type of vanishing point. In art, the vanishing point is the tool by which the artist directs the spectator's gaze, constructing the angle from which she or he perceives the picture. Considering the relationship between life-stories in this way marks a significant departure from this study's exploration of relations up to now. At first glance, Lapierre's play with lines might call to mind Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory that we analysed in the comparison between *La Réparation* and *Velódromo*. Rothberg challenges both the assumption of a straight line running from memory to identity and the possibility of remembering a traumatic history in isolation.[153] Lapierre, however, seems to move beyond this idea. Rothberg's theory of multidirectionality is based on a point of convergence which makes visible the links between histories, read as they should be in relation to each other. While for Rothberg, the line that connects different memories *does* make present the position of each in relation to the other, Lapierre's *ligne de fuite* demonstrates that such a clear point of convergence is but an illusion. Despite appearing to meet, the storylines that Lapierre traces here in fact never quite do: the link is always a product of perception rather than reality.

Missing Links in Intergenerational 'Chains'

Such imaginary points of intersection become evident as Lapierre engages with the ostensible 'chain' of mother-daughter suicides in her family in more detail. What seems to be the origin of this tragic sequence of events, the grandmother's death, looks unlikely by the end to be a suicide at all. According to the version that Lapierre's mother tells her and her sister Francine, their grandmother's death is the result of an unintentional explosion, caused by an inflammable cleaning product placed next to the lit boiler. Francine, however,

[153] Rothberg (2009).

refuses to believe the account of accidental death, and imposes instead an interpretation that grants the grandmother agency:

> Devenue mélancolique après un chagrin d'amour, ma sœur s'était persuadée que la grand-mère, trop malheureuse, s'était suicidée. Elle-même a lutté contre une dépression qu'elle n'a pu surmonter. Désespérée, elle a mis fin à ses jours en se pendant dans son appartement, le 22 juillet 1982. Sa propre fille, Yona, venait d'avoir dix-huit ans. L'histoire semblait se répéter. (15)

Lapierre's choice of the verb 'sembler' is pivotal: what *seems* to be a story repeating itself is in reality a construct created by Francine's projection, by her desperate desire to find a mirror for her struggle. The pronominal ambiguity of 'elle-même' is telling: Lapierre portrays Francine as reading backwards, re-interpreting the grandmother's death in the shadow of her own depression. By unravelling the supposition of a self-perpetuating sequence, Lapierre lays the foundations for a more critical consideration of intergenerational transmission. She develops this principally via her own 'reading' of her mother Gilberte's suicide:

> Après son suicide, j'ai pensé qu'elle ne supportait pas de survivre entre ces deux mortes, Francine et Sarah, l'une la renvoyant à l'autre. Je raisonnais comme mon père à propos de ma sœur: il me fallait une explication et j'invoquais le trauma. Mais je sentais bien que c'était trop simple et qu'à l'évidence des maillons me manquaient. (116)

Trauma and its transmission to subsequent generations has underpinned my reading up to this point, serving as the principal narrative link. Here, Lapierre complicates this story. She engages self-consciously with the temptation to use trauma as a means of tying together painful narrative threads, for instance, by depicting Gilberte's death-story as if it were dictated by those of her mother and daughter. The interlocking frame that loss forms around Gilberte invites an interpretation of the suicide in terms of traumatic transmission, through which the narrator might insert her mother's death into a story that simply repeats like a curse across generations. Rather than neatly aligning these familial losses in a series of causes and effects, however, Lapierre resists the explanatory powers of such a concept. In

so doing, she undercuts the impression of an inexorable intergenerational chain. In its stead, she imagines a line made up of perpetually missing links: knots are replaced by loose ends that attest to the individuality of life- and death-stories within the overarching family history.

By refusing to allow the theory of traumatic transmission to fill in these missing links, Lapierre returns agency to her mother and sister over their decision to end their lives. She presents suicide not as a symptom, but as a choice. Privileging individual agency in place of causal connection, Lapierre writes against the idea that life-stories are locked into a legacy of trauma. This is not to say that the temptation to seal the gaps between them by way of retrospective explanation does not persist. She notes, for example, that after her mother's suicide she sought to elucidate Gilberte's past, specifically Gilberte's relation to her own mother Sarah's death. From Lapierre's search, three more versions of Sarah's death come to light, two from relatives and one from a newspaper report at the time. All three tell a similar tale that differs from both Gilberte and Francine's accounts. According to Jacques, the brother of Lapierre's uncle-in-law, and to the newspaper, one of the two other people in the house at the time of the accident—that is to say, either the maid or Gilberte herself—had left the gas turned on, which had built up in the room when the grandmother came to strike a match and thus caused the explosion. Neither version reaches a definitive conclusion as to which of the two people did leave the tap on, an answer that Jacques's sister purports to supply. She informs Lapierre that the ambiguity in Jacques's version arose purely from a desire to shield the latter from the reality that her mother was in truth responsible for her grandmother's death. Lapierre's verdict, however, is equally categorical: she concludes that 'Je ne saurai jamais ce qui s'est vraiment passé' (120). Having ruled out any definitive explanation, she uses the story of her grandmother's death as an emblem of resistance to any single version of events. Significantly, she situates this death-story and its perpetual incompletion at the source of the family history that she goes on to tell: 'L'histoire, du moins

le peu que j'en sais, remonte à ma grand-mère, Sarah, que je n'ai pas connue' (13). By setting out the story's defiance of absolute explanation along with her own ever-partial access to it as narrator, Lapierre consciously obfuscates the origins of *all* the stories that she recounts. She makes the starting point itself one of the missing 'maillons'.

Erasing Causal Connections

Drawing attention to these gaps and contradictions, and thus to the limits of her account, allows Lapierre to respond to the ethical dilemma encountered in *Sauve qui peut*. The uncertainties surrounding her narrative claim far outweigh those with which Schneck and Salabert wrestle, which are prompted by their remove from the experiences they voice. Lapierre fears that sharing her mother and sister's stories through her writing might undermine their painful decision to cut them short. Her attempt to restore agency to them by rejecting a totalising explanation of their lives and deaths is given broader resonance in the challenges she poses to existing efforts to theorise suicide.[154] What Lapierre decries as she accumulates these discordant theories is the social determinism that underlies them, which in her eyes 'supprime toute autonomie de l'individu' (92). This disregard for individual autonomy is most prominent in the earliest of the theories that she describes, Émile Durkheim's 1897 study *Le Suicide*. Durkheim compares the rates of voluntary death across countries and time periods, but also across sexes, religions and levels of education, in a bid to map out collective tendencies and so uncover the social causes of suicide (88–89).

Durkheim's theory of suicide as socially determined could not be more different from the final treatise that Lapierre cites, Jean Améry's *Porter la main sur soi* [*Hand an sich*

[154] In *Suicide Century*, Andrew Bennett argues that an epistemic desire stands at the heart of twentieth-century suicide narratives, in which the author attempts to enter the mind of the suicide to give 'the inexplicable act […] some sense or meaning'. *Suicide Century: Literature and Suicide from James Joyce to David Foster Wallace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 54.

legen. Diskurs über den Freitod, 1976], which argues against the attempt to define, or explain away, the final act of another. Of all the theories that Lapierre outlines, Améry's refusal to analyse suicide comes closest to her own approach. She too perceives a threat to individual agency at the core of these analyses:

> Quelque chose en moi s'insurge contre le fait d'analyser un suicide, de lui trouver une cause, et plus encore une seule. Car il me semble que c'est faire violence à la personne qui a décidé de mettre fin à sa vie. Une violence d'autant plus grande qu'elle n'a plus voix au chapitre. C'est oublier la complexité de son histoire et nier cette part de liberté dans ce qui demeure un choix, fût-il sous très forte contrainte. (101)

Lapierre's reluctance to establish trauma as an explanation extends here to a wider rejection of root causes. Of equal danger to the perceived link between traumatic histories produced by intergenerational transmission, she suggests, is the bind between individual life-stories and the collective historical narrative that socially determined theories of suicide imply. The reference to a 'contrainte' provides important insight into her conception of these ties. She in no way denies the links between individual stories and their contiguous narratives, be they familial or collective, but she is adamant that these connections are not causally determined. One story does not *dictate* the other. Individual agency is figured here as an almost physical form of resistance against such a pull.

In *Sauve qui peut*, this resistance is expressed clearly in the relationship that Lapierre conceives between the two narrative threads, between her family history of suicide and the mass trauma of the Holocaust. Instead of attributing the suicides of her mother and sister to their scarring wartime experiences, she portrays maternal legacy—paradoxically but persuasively—as one of survival. Whereas almost all the family on her father's side perished, everyone on her mother's side managed to escape, and Lapierre notes that '[a]ujourd'hui, repensant à la façon dont ils ont traversé la guerre, c'est la résolution, la débrouillardise, le dynamisme qui me frappent' (73). The element of choice that determines her mother and sister's suicides is similarly present in her parents' experience of the Holocaust, Lapierre

proposes, but in their will to survive. What underpins both traumas in the text is the potential to decide one's own fate. Just as Lapierre recognises the pull of constraint on this choice in the case of her mother and sister's suicides, she also recognises the factors of good fortune and economic means in the family's survival during the Holocaust, which enabled them to go into hiding. At the same time, she claims that the part played by individual agency in this survival is often overlooked. Drawing on the Existentialist understanding of freedom, Lapierre emphasises the self-determination of the family story within the collective framework of persecution.

Individual Agency and Measures of Perception

According to Lapierre, the key difference between her advocation of individual choice and that of Améry is the motto that one extrapolates from their respective works:

> Sa façon de défendre les suicidés et de dire non aux appropriations les concernant me touche, comme un écho de ce que je ressens à l'égard de ma mère et de ma sœur. En même temps, tout son livre crie sauve qui peut la mort et cela, je ne peux le partager. (112–13)

For Lapierre, defending individual agency is not only a matter of accepting the decisions of her mother and sister to die, but also of marking her family's valiant survival in the face of collective persecution and annihilation. As we have seen, her own call of 'Sauve qui peut la vie' stands first and foremost for her refusal to follow the same course as her mother and sister, which in itself separates her from Améry who ultimately chose to take his own life. Later in the text, Lapierre also uses this motto as a testament to her parents' choice to live on after the devastation of the Holocaust. For Élie and Gilberte, this takes the form of a refusal to pass on the story of the Shoah:

> Je crois qu'ils voulaient, avant tout, nous en protéger. Ou plutôt nous en délester, afin qu'ainsi allégés nous puissions plus aisément nous intégrer dans la société, nous projeter dans l'avenir et réussir, notamment par la voie privilégiée des études. Pour

> Élie et Gilberte, c'était évident. Pari sur le savoir et sauve qui peut la vie, là aussi. (214)

Like Schneck and Salabert, Lapierre attributes the survivors' silence to the desire to protect their children. She conceptualises this in terms of directions of movement, in relation to her earlier reconfiguration of legacy as a *ligne de fuite*. From the perspective of Lapierre's parents, to enable their children to move forwards they must cut the ties of their own traumatic history. There is a clear trajectory from present to future in this passage that appears unproblematised by a return to the past. Insofar as Gilberte and Élie are concerned, the focus is not on the start, but on the end point: epistemological gain is a forward- rather than backward-looking endeavour.

Yet for the author of *Sauve qui peut*, looking backwards is necessary, because the reflection on past trauma is a means of empowerment for future action. The oscillation between past, present and future in the text traces a different approach to legacy, an approach that Lapierre affirms in her choice to write. While claiming to share the family trait of refusing to wallow in misery over one's fate, she nevertheless rejects the implication that the sole solution is silence—*not* telling one's story—or submission—being destined to repeat it (25–26). The references to weight imagery in this passage, in the verbs 'délester' and 'allégés', resonate with an earlier discussion in which Lapierre uses such imagery to express how successive generations take up legacy and, vitally, move forward. Although her parents believed that stifling the story of the Holocaust would release future generations from the burden of family history, Lapierre's weighing up of legacy is not as clear-cut. The opening chapter of *Sauve qui peut* derives its title from the classic trick question as to which is heavier, 'un kilo de plumes [ou] un kilo de plomb'. In place of the 'right' answer—that of course they weigh the same—Lapierre argues that the measurement itself is irrelevant: 'peu importe, ici, la mesure. Ce sont leurs constellations imaginaires qui n'ont pas le même poids' (35). If we interpret these 'constellations' as an illustration of the ways in which one

generation join up the dots between their own story and the ones that pre-exist them, 'weight', it seems, is determined not by objective calculation but by perception. Such a formulation takes us to the heart of Lapierre's conception of legacy. Her family history is freighted by both feathers and lead: 'Dans ma famille, il y a des semelles de plomb, qui entraînent par le fond, et des ornements de plumes qui frémissent au vent' (37). Like intergenerational transmission, the weight of the legacy that the second generation come to bear is contingent on the angle from which they perceive it, an angle that Lapierre constructs and controls via the *lignes de fuite* that she traces. Moving forward is not a matter of cutting off connections to the past, if such a thing were even possible, but of future generations choosing where to position themselves in relation to the histories that precede them.

Familial Frameworks and the Scope for Renovation

From the position that Lapierre adopts, then, what picture of the family story emerges in *Sauve qui peut*? The way that Lapierre constructs this shared history is embodied in the house that she inherits, and which she describes in the following terms: 'C'est donc une néo-maison de famille, le bâti est ancien, mais l'aménagement, l'ameublement, la décoration, qui paraissent être là de longue date, sont récents. Ils ne résultent pas d'une sédimentation des générations' (33). Like the Ship of Theseus, which remains fundamentally the same despite all the parts that are replaced, the structure of the house is long-standing while its contents are new, chosen rather than bequeathed. In narrative terms, Lapierre acknowledges the pre-existing framework—that is, the fact that the stories of several generations are situated in the same family narrative—but indicates that the decisions as to what happens inside are made in the present. She rejects the idea of intergenerational transmission as sedimentation, as if the stories all settled and coalesced into the same foundational layer. Instead, she emphasises the power and necessity of renewal, the changes brought about by new generations as they

make the space their own. Without moving outside of the existing structure, Lapierre underscores the agency that each new generation hold in reshaping the family home, and indeed their history, from the inside. Whilst maintaining continuity she accommodates difference, promoting the separation between their stories that remained a source of discomfiture for Schneck in *La Réparation*, in the latter's ever-uneasy comparison between her own trivial concerns and the unspeakable suffering of previous generations. The angle from which *Sauve qui peut* approaches legacy marks a departure from the texts analysed to this point, and is perhaps most striking in the importance it grants to appropriation, this time coded in a positive sense: 'Très vite, enfants et petits-enfants se la sont appropriée, ils y retrouvent leurs jeux, leurs livres, la cabane de l'an passé' (34). As she repeats the possessive pronoun, Lapierre portrays successive generations taking possession of the family story. If Schneck and Salabert's narratives destabilise the divide between 'mine' and 'yours' in a way that forestalls accusations of appropriation, Lapierre advocates an alternative understanding of what it means to 'appropriate' the existing family space. To make the space one's own, she observes, does not diminish its otherness and its capacity to surprise her:

> Et s'il est devenu familier, il garde malgré tout pour moi une touche d'étrangeté. Je suis dedans avec joie, j'y accueille enfants, petits-enfants et vieux amis, un peu dehors aussi, ébahie et ravie de contempler ce lieu où reviennent tous mes 'petits'. (34–35)

As the current owner of the family home and teller of the family tale, Lapierre envisages her narrative place, in the manner of a Möbius strip, as at once inside and outside, an in-between position which perfectly mirrors the cohabitation of old and new, inherited and acquired. Likewise, her sense of assuming ownership is situated at the intersection of familiarity and alterity. In his discussion of suicide, Jean Améry condemns 'appropriating' the other's story, as he understands it, as a bid to strip the subject of ownership over their decision, something that Lapierre also resists. She imagines a different kind of appropriation that reinforces rather

than writes out an appreciation of otherness. It registers the tension between belonging and non-belonging at the heart of taking possession.

This tension speaks to the gaps that remain even as the stories of different generations are interlaced in one text through Lapierre's telling. Like the lines of flight that never actually meet, the points of non-convergence are what allow these stories to escape the clutch of a totalising myth and develop in their own direction, where they can in turn remodel, and regenerate, the family history. The breaks in the line allow for forward movement without severing past from present. Lineage in its most basic form is carried and passed through the name, a name which in the case of the Lapierre family has undergone various changes. The name change is symptomatic of a wider decision taken by so many Jewish families to leave behind the surname for which they had been stigmatised during the long history of persecution that culminated in the Holocaust. Exploring this choice and the criticism that it often elicits from other Jews is the central focus of Lapierre's book *Changer de nom*, and her conclusions are reiterated in *Sauve qui peut* in defence of her own father's decision to opt for a French name. The original name 'Lipsztejn' was changed to 'Lipotin' in the false papers that the parents procured during the Second World War, in an attempt to avoid detection and deportation. Lapierre notes that once the war was over, keeping a name that was indissociable from the fear and hardship that the family had endured seemed out of the question. The challenge that pronouncing 'Lipsztejn' held for the French had led Élie and Gilberte to enrol their second daughter, the author herself, in school under the more manageable 'Lipstein'. Élie later spurned the German origins of this name and chose to change it legally to the French 'Lapierre', a testament also, she suggests, to his love for his adopted country (156–67). She vehemently rejects the accusation that this affiliation, and the decision to adopt a new name more broadly, constitutes a sort of shameful renunciation of Jewish identity:

> En voulant soustraire les leurs à l'hérédité du malheur, en se refusant à laisser en héritage un patronyme stigmatisant, renonçaient-ils pour autant à être juifs et à ce que leurs descendants le soient? Nullement. Ni dans ma famille ni dans celles, nombreuses, que j'ai interviewées. (169)

Here, Lapierre calls into question the supposed incompatibility between changing names and retaining Jewish identity, and by extension, between assimilation and preservation. Jewish identity, she argues, is no less cherished in families who sought to protect future generations from the persecution that they had themselves endured. Her emphatic use of the gerund in 'En voulant' and 'en refusant' gestures towards this continuity. In fact, in the case of her own father's name change, the kernel, 'stone', remains the same: 'd'un nom à l'autre, il avait gardé une trace, un signe crypté de continuité: la traduction de *stein* en pierre' (italics in original, 167). Much like the family home, or indeed the Ship of Theseus, changes made do not, or not only, represent a break with or rejection of the past; they also ensure its survival and continuity.

Heredity or Heritage: Contrasting Conceptions of Legacy

Rather than perceive the change in name as cutting off future generations from Jewish legacy, Lapierre seeks to redefine what precisely is being passed on. The distinction that she makes between heredity and heritage is the cornerstone of her approach. Heredity is defined as a negative transmission, a curse-like force that binds future generations to past 'malheur'. In Lapierre's view, critics of Jewish families who have changed their name uphold an unspoken fantasy of origin as well as a fixed idea of inheritance that is predicated on an unbroken line, along which later generations are merely the prolongation of the first. The enumeration at the start of Lapierre's text of the mother-daughter suicides seems to participate in such a legacy. Heritage, by contrast, is framed as a choice, a matter of what to take *forward* which transports legacy beyond slavish repetition and self-perpetuation. For Sigrid Weigel, the need to make the link between legacy and generations to come, not only

those past, was the focus of the 1972 UNESCO *World Heritage Convention*. She notes that the goals set out by the organisation were to protect, preserve and pass on cultural and national heritage and suggests that '[w]ith this formulation, it was expressed that that which is to be preserved as inheritance, and passed on to future generations, is not to be understood as self-evident, but rather as a result of negotiation, conflict, and controversy'.[155] Understood in terms of heritage, legacy is the product of a reciprocal exchange between and within generations, a passage that accounts for disjunctions and divergences as opposed to a fixed and direct trajectory from past to future. Like the family home in *Sauve qui peut*, where regeneration and renewal are what keep the house alive, the movement and tension that perpetually transform heritage impel its transmission. The same connection between movement and survival is the impetus behind the decision taken by Lapierre's family and many others to change their surname. The name, which is, after all, the very sign of relation, becomes a moving construct; lineage in *Sauve qui peut* is disrupted and revivified at its source.

The distinction that Lapierre draws between heredity and heritage comes into sharp focus in the epilogue, which supplants the seeming inexorability of intergenerational transmission posited in the prologue. Crucially, Lapierre reframes transmission as a question, asking what her family have handed down to her that she in turn would like to pass on to her descendants and even extend beyond the familial circle (246). Through the lines of flight she pursues, she seeks to decentre the fixed places that in her view underpin both inescapable transmission and immovable social frames. Stany Grelet and Aude Lalande identify this displacement as the principal motif across Lapierre's previous works.[156] Her

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[155] Sigrid Weigel, 'Inheritance Law, Heritage, Heredity: European Perspectives', *Law and Literature*, 20.2 (2008), 279–87 (283).
[156] Stany Grelet and Aude Lalande, 'Déplacés, déplacer: Entretien avec Nicole Lapierre', *Vacarme*, 47.2 (2009), 4–12 (4).

overt impulse to 'démonter cette logique des places' (189) through her writing injects the narrative that she constructs in *Sauve qui peut* with the movement *away*—from determinism, causality and teleology—that gives the text its title. In replacing the conception of legacy as heredity with that of heritage, Lapierre pictures her own narrative inheritance as a process of building upwards. The traumatic histories that she recounts are figured as *foundation* rather than frame, the very 'fond de drames passés' to which she refers in the prologue (11). For Lapierre, these past experiences form a base for resistance, for the 'morale de la solidarité et de l'engagement' towards which she strives in writing *Sauve qui peut* (247). Charging this project with Sartrean terminology, she indicates that individual agency—that is to say, the capacity illustrated by the line of flight for determining the direction in which to take forward one's life-story—carries a social responsibility. Following Sartre, Lapierre portrays this freedom of choice as encompassing the potential, and indeed the duty, to withstand and transform the 'mauvais temps présent', as she defines it, which threatens to resurrect the intolerance and prejudice of the past histories that she relays. To return to Butler, the 'set of relations' that Lapierre conceives between past and present, individual and collective histories, is not an immovable *mise-en-abyme* of one story firmly enclosed within another. The edges of these frames are porous, the connections between the lines that create them never forming complete joins. Tracing a similar trajectory to the line of flight, such permeability shows that individual stories are embedded 'from the start' within narratives that are already in motion, but also that it is possible to puncture, and perhaps even remould, these existing frameworks.

3.3 Narrative Loops and Impending Returns in *El comensal*

In distinguishing heritage from heredity, Lapierre defies the causal logic that sees the traumatic history of one generation predetermine another. She upholds agency and the ability to shape one's story by unsettling the fixed subject positions that an understanding of intergenerational transmission as inexorable seems to imply. From the start of *El comensal*, however, a palpably different appraisal of such positions comes to light. Like Lapierre, Ybarra makes immediate reference to her title, explaining the function of the eponymous dinner guest:

> Cuentan que en mi familia siempre se sienta un comensal de más en cada comida. Es invisible, pero está ahí. Tiene plato, vaso y cubiertos. De vez en cuando aparece, proyecta su sombra sobre la mesa y borra a alguno de los presentes. (15)

Around the Ybarra dinner table, places are quite literally set. Depicted as the legend passed on from one generation to the next, this laid table around which they wait for the absent 'comensal' becomes a figure for the family story. Whereas in *Sauve qui peut*, the line of flight denotes the directions in which Lapierre takes the family history forward, the anticipated movement in *El comensal* is one of return. Here the *ligne de fuite* is supplanted by a loop that produces a very different kind of 'vanishing point' to that of *Sauve qui peut*, since the return of the missing guest signifies the erasure of another family member. Contrary to the Jewish tradition of leaving a place during the Passover meal for the prophet Elijah, whose return is awaited as a sign of the imminent resurrection of the dead, the wait that Ybarra describes does not lead to new life but seals further loss. She perceives this wait as the very link between the traumatic histories that she relates in *El comensal*. If Lapierre oscillates between the two principal threads throughout *Sauve qui peut* without tying them together, Ybarra for her part uses the transition between the first and second sections of the

text to establish a clear narrative connection between her grandfather's murder and her mother's death:

> La muerte de mi madre resucitó la de mi abuelo paterno. Hasta entonces, para mí el asesinato eran solo unas esposas metidas en una vitrina al lado de las llamas de bronce que mis padres trajeron de Perú. El tedio de la enfermedad llamó al tedio de la espera del secuestro. Mi padre empezó a hablar de rosarios manchados con sangre. Yo aún tardaría varios meses en comprender su dolor. (60)

Although their causes are entirely unrelated, Ybarra's response to these losses draws a vital link between them. Her description of her mother's death *resurrecting* that of her grandfather indicates a kind of life-line between the two histories, one which for Ybarra revivifies the latter's story and, perhaps most importantly, her own relationship to it.

Common to both traumas is the excruciating experience of 'tedio': the powerless wait between the mother's terminal diagnosis and her death, and between the ransom deadline and the grandfather's murder. Ybarra's image of the rosary, a closed circle of beads, makes tangible the narrative loop and the trajectory of return in which her text is engaged from the very beginning. The religious references here similarly reinforce the impression that this wait is overlain with a pre-determined fate, an interlude before the inevitable. There is a conspicuous clash, however, between the teleological outlook in religion—that is, the passage from death to resurrection that heralds hope for rebirth and new life in God—and Ybarra's text. In *El comensal* the inverse is true: birth, and second births in particular, seem to presage death. When pregnant with Ybarra's younger sisters, the mother almost dies owing to a placental abruption, after which, in another kind of inescapable wait, she is forced to lie still until full term as any movement could prove fatal for either her or her unborn twins (155). While in this instance, all three survive, Ybarra compounds the ominous associations of birth when relaying her mother's actual death from cancer. The doctor expresses her conviction that the tumour has been successfully removed—a conviction that later turns out to be mistaken—by assuring the mother that she will live to meet her grandchildren (67).

The attention that Ybarra draws here to the connection between birth, death and future generations speaks to the narrative of heredity at the centre of the text. Just as suicide appeared at first to constitute a deadly maternal legacy in *Sauve qui peut*, cancer ravages the mother's side of the family in *El comensal*. These cancers vary in type: the mother, as has been noted, dies from colon cancer, her own mother from a brain tumour, and her father from a cancer that is not specified in the text. Their deaths combine to form a maternal legacy that is not psychological, as is the case for Lapierre, but *biological*. Heredity is not merely an approach to transmission made up of conflict and negotiation, as Lapierre seems to suggest, but a very real genetic burden. Ybarra makes plain the ineluctable nature of this transmission at the start of the second section, when she foreshadows the story of the mother's death with a more inconsequential but no less inescapable maternal legacy. She describes the attempt and failure of her grandmother to 'correct' in her daughter the physical defect in her nose that she had herself passed down:

> La operación había sido idea de mi abuela. El hueso que salía de su tabique era aún más prominente y le incomodaba recordarlo en otra nariz. Yo también lo heredé, aunque el mío es solo un piquito que a mi madre le gustaba acariciar. (59)

The surgery on the mother's nose fails, and the sequence of transmission remains unbroken as it continues, albeit in a less prominent form, in the narrator. This kind of intergenerational transmission, encoded in one's very genes, has little to do with Lapierre's assessment of repetition across generations in which frames of perception play the principal role. Ybarra evokes instead the impossibility of changing heredity, despite the lengths to which one might go in order to do so.

Political Chains in the Family History

Just as heredity results in a physical and biological bind between generations in *El comensal*, the tie between an individual's story and the social context out of which it evolves becomes

a destructive reality in the event of the grandfather's murder. As the patriarch of a family that was once amongst the most powerful in the province, Javier Ybarra was murdered by ETA because he represented the Spanish-centred political control that they violently opposed. Ybarra points to the grandfather's death, and the family story more widely, being fettered to the political narrative through the handcuffs that come to symbolise the story for the narrator. These handcuffs, which were used to secure Ybarra's father during his own father Javier's kidnap and now stand inside a glass cabinet, connote a type of connection that is quite unlike the missing links in *Sauve qui peut*. Their purpose as shackle is twofold: they brutally conjoin the stories of father and grandfather as well as familial and collective histories. Their position *inside* the glass cabinet also sheds light on Ybarra's relationship as narrator to the grandfather's story. In spite of the considerable impact of the threat posed by ETA on Ybarra's life as she was growing up—she recounts, for example, the family's forced move to Madrid, her father's subjection to multiple death threats and the failed delivery of a parcel bomb—we have seen that her sense of a personal connection to the grandfather's death-story only develops belatedly, triggered by her own traumatic loss. It is fitting, then, that the narration in the first section of the text mimics the effect of the glass cabinet, by seeming to enclose and seal off the story from the one who tells it.

This narrative position, Ybarra intimates, is the result of her family withholding the tragedy from her. As is evident in the prologue, public accounts are her sole point of access to the story, since silence endures in her family until the publication of Ybarra's book.[157] Whereas for Lapierre, the private family story provides insight into the wider social narratives pertaining to European Jews, France under the Occupation and post May '68,

[157] In an interview for *The Guardian*, Ybarra explains that she did not dare ask anyone in her family for information about her grandfather until after she had published *El comensal*. Richard Lea, 'Terror Hits Home: Gabriela Ybarra on the Family Stories Behind her Novel', *The Guardian*, 11 April 2018, n.p. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/apr/11/gabriela-ybarra-dinner-guest-grandfather-murder-interview> [accessed 03 April 2019].

Ybarra is forced to work backwards. Even as events unfold in the text, Ybarra makes clear that the story to be told is never in the family's full possession. Symbolically, the grandfather's house—the site of his abduction and the place in which his children wait and attempt to secure his return—is situated at a 'cruce de avenidas' (28). As the point of intersection between lines that *do* in fact meet, we might read this crossroads as emblematic of the grandfather's story, of the deadly convergence between individual and political histories by which it is determined. From start to finish the story is lived out in the public eye, with messages being passed to and from the kidnappers, the kidnapped and his family via collective channels of communication such as radio broadcasts and newspapers.[158] Ybarra depicts the press as a constant presence around the house: the family, and chiefly her father, are interviewed repeatedly and always forced to fashion the story in the knowledge that the kidnappers are watching. In the immediate aftermath of the abduction, for instance, Ybarra's father issues a statement attesting to the calm and courteous behaviour of the kidnappers, one which is highly incongruous considering the terrifying sequence of events to which we have just been party as readers (21). The family's account is continuously self-censored with these addressees in mind, who therefore control not just the course that the story takes, but also the way in which it comes to be told. By interspersing narrative sections with newspaper accounts, Ybarra embeds the fact that this history is as much public as it is private.

Fixed Narrative Frames

In the face of the family's self-censorship and subsequent silence, Ybarra appears *twice* removed from the account that she gives. Nonetheless, in the second half of the text she gives

[158] The kidnappers reveal where the family can find the first ransom note, for example, by ringing into a broadcast on Radio Popular de Bilbao (26).

voice to a more personal, affective response to her grandfather's murder and the implications it has for the whole family. Should we interpret this shift in narrative perspective as Ybarra breaking through the glass wall and penetrating the cabinet that seems hitherto to have closed off the grandfather's story from her? In other words, has she succeeded in securing some sort of individual purchase on the family history that she articulates? At first sight, the form that the second part of *El comensal* takes would suggest that this is indeed the case. Diary entries starting from one year later punctuate the retrospective narrative of the mother's illness and death: they seem to carve out an intimate space for Ybarra's individual story within the family history that she narrates. These extracts from between 2012 and 2014 are placed unequivocally in the present and make frequent references to the act of writing. Importantly, however, what this writing present relays is Ybarra's attempted return to the past. She describes repeating her actions from the time of the mother's illness: spending the night with the same disappointing lover, eating at the same restaurant, revisiting the same hospital. It is no coincidence that the writing present begins in the hospital waiting room: '*Viernes, 10 de agosto de 2012*/ Hoy he vuelto a la primera sala de espera del hospital que visité con mis padres' (italics in original, 71). Reinforced by the deictic 'Hoy', the immediacy of this reliving seems to inscribe the writing present in a past time of action. Ybarra's dating of each entry produces a series of what we might conceive as narrative 'snapshots'. The desired effect is to make time stand still, creating a kind of stasis that corresponds to the wait which underlies both traumatic histories.

The result of freeze-framing the present in this way becomes evident in the text when Ybarra discusses a real snapshot. This photograph is of her mother, taken in Death Valley in the Atacama Desert.[159] Unlike the two pictures of her father in handcuffs that Ybarra

[159] The backdrop of the Atacama Desert is itself imbued with traumatic significance as the site of the largest concentration camp in Chile under Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship, and the place where the bodies of victims of the regime were dumped. Patricio Guzmán's documentary *Nostalgia de la luz* (2010) explores the

features, along with the newspaper report of the grandfather's abduction in which they were originally printed, she does not include this image of her mother. Nor does she filter it through the perspective of the writing present, but instead inserts a note she had written upon first finding the picture after her mother's death:

> Es habitual que, tras la muerte de un ser querido, sus familiares y amigos miren y compartan fotos para recordarlo. En esta situación, la percepción de los espectadores suele estar alterada. Nada parece fortuito, todo son pistas capaces de aclarar las causas del fallecimiento.
>
> En la fotografía anterior, mi madre está sentada al pie de una pared rocosa en el valle de la Muerte, Chile. Yo también tengo retratos en este valle, pero estos serán irrelevantes hasta que me muera. (154)

For Hirsch, family photographs such as this one are important tools in postmemorial work in that, contrary to the 'flat two-dimensionality' of historical photographs that we saw in *Velódromo*, they can bridge the distance between spectator and subject and encourage identification.[160] By choosing not to include this picture, Ybarra blocks, perhaps deliberately, this impression of proximity. Whereas the father's photographs have already been opened out to the public eye, as readers we are limited in *El comensal* to Ybarra's description of the image of her mother. The picture itself remains private, and the gaze familial.

The way in which Ybarra 'snapshots' in writing her initial response to finding the photograph also diverges sharply from Hirsch's argument that looking at photographs is a means of reanimating the past, of 'undoing the finality of the photographic "take"'.[161] Ybarra seems to privilege stasis over animation. She does so in an effort to capture the ramifications of reading backwards and to expose the tendency to rewrite the other's life-story in the knowledge of her death-story. While Lapierre perceives herself as successfully resisting this type of re-reading by refusing to impose a retrospective explanation on her mother and

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collective resistance in Chile, much like in Spain, to confronting this violent past through the lens of the painful search a group of women undertake to recover the remains of their family members.

[160] Hirsch (2012), 38.

[161] Ibid., 36.

sister's suicides, Ybarra construes it as inevitable. In including the note and concentrating on her previous perception, she temporarily prevents replacing the photograph with a present re-reading. In its place, however, comes an account of the unavoidability of reinterpretation from a position of hindsight. Through the *mise-en-abyme* in which the narrator looks at herself looking at the photograph, Ybarra points to a series of frames, in which each life-story is fixed and mirrored by both what has come before and what will come after. The Janus-like gaze that she adopts, looking at once backwards through the lens of the subject's death-story and forwards towards the spectator's own death, cannot fail to remind us of Barthes's elegiac essay *La Chambre claire*, on whose theory of photography Hirsch also draws. Barthes famously defines the *punctum*, the aspect of the photograph that inspires the poignant identification that Hirsch describes, in terms of a conflation between past and future: 'le punctum, c'est: *il va mourir*. Je lis en même temps: *cela sera* et *cela a été*; j'observe avec horreur un futur antérieur dont la mort est l'enjeu' (italics in original).[162] For Barthes, the viewer is pierced by the point where looking backwards heralds the inevitability of one's own future demise. In terms of lines, the trajectory from present to future purports to retrace that which transpires in the photograph from present to past.

Of particular pertinence to the line that Ybarra traces to her future death-story is the relationship that Barthes examines in his essay between photography and lineage. He suggests that photography can capture and draw out genetic traits in a way that the naked eye cannot: 'la Photographie, parfois, fait apparaître ce qu'on ne perçoit jamais d'un visage réel (ou réfléchi dans un miroir): un trait génétique, le morceau de soi-même ou d'un parent qui vient d'un ascendant'.[163] Albeit pictured in words, the photograph of the mother appears to play this exact role, exhibiting the narrative of heredity into which Ybarra is genetically

[162] Roland Barthes, *La Chambre claire: note sur la photographie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), 150.
[163] Ibid., 160–61.

locked. Rather than gaining a more individual purchase on the family history, she inscribes her own story therein. Her reference to her own death constructs the relationship between life-stories in the family as a kind of sequence. Just as she has experienced her mother's death and 're-read' the picture of her as a result, so too will *Ybarra's* death be experienced and her story 're-read' by a family member from a future generation, in an infinitely repeating pattern. The implication here that Ybarra's story has yet to be processed intensifies in the context of the bereavement that she narrates. The difference between the narrative and diary modes of the first and second sections illustrates the importance of 'belatedness' in trauma theory. As we have already seen, Freud argued that trauma cannot be experienced in the present; to be grasped it must in some sense be transcribed into another story.[164] When Caruth takes up Freud's concept of latency, she proposes that the articulation of both histories is realised not through each subject coming to understand the other's trauma, but through the mutual impossibility of 'knowing' their own traumatic experiences.[165] Although she refers to the dialogue between different subjects in Duras's *Hiroshima mon amour* and *El comensal* is a case of a single author recounting two traumatic histories—one which she experiences, the other which she did not—Caruth's theory provides an interesting insight into the narrative dynamics in the second half of Ybarra's text. The articulation of the author's experience serves as the site at which the other's story, or what Hirsch would call her postmemory, might come to be understood. Ybarra's own devastating loss, however, continues to elude her grasp in a way that accounts for the prevalence of the present tense: the painful memory of her mother's death has yet to be assimilated. The diary form captures her immediate response in lieu of processing it, as is the case with the photograph, where the snapshot's relevance arises from the future gaze of the spectator who will have experienced

[164] This is the case for Sebastián, the hero in *Velódromo*, whose persecution by the Nazis triggered his engagement with his diasporic inheritance.
[165] Caruth (1996), 42.

Ybarra's death. In this way, as she gives an account of the family history from her perspective, she also carves out a space in which successive generations might write *her* story.

The Burden of Legacy: Notions of Narrative Agency

The room that Ybarra makes for future generations in this narrative does not resemble the accumulative space that Lapierre sets out when she figures the family home in *Sauve qui peut*, where each generation make the house their own. In *El comensal*, Ybarra depicts the New York apartment that she bought together with her mother as she is leaving it for the last time, on the point of her return home to Spain to try and come to terms with her mother's death. In *Sauve qui peut*, the addition of furniture means that each generation are able to 'appropriate' the space. Ybarra focuses, on the other hand, on the emptying out of the apartment:

> He pasado toda la mañana haciendo cajas, y mientras las hacía, he disfrutado observando cómo poco a poco se despejaba el espacio. Mi madre solo conoció el piso vacío y hoy siento que la casa solo tiene sentido así. (151)

Once more, the trajectory is one of return as opposed to progression. As Ybarra restores the space to its original state of emptiness, she aligns her narrative gaze with the past perceptions of her mother; this is an act of subtraction, not addition. Implicit in clearing out her belongings is the idea of dispensing with the sense that the space 'belongs' to her. The passive position that Ybarra assumes as observer, manifest in the self-reflexive 'se despejaba el espacio', evinces a similar dissociation from the room's contents to the detachment from objects and places that distinguishes the mother in the text. Ybarra describes her in these very terms of non-possession: 'Mi madre tenía un carácter desprendido de los lugares, de los objetos y de su propio cuerpo' (59). Etymologically speaking, the mother's characterisation

as 'desprendido' is significant: defined as 'desatar lo que estaba fijo', 'desprender' is a matter of severing connections, and 'desprendido', of not being tied down.[166]

Pertinently, Ybarra conceives the result of this detachment with respect to weight. Not tied down even to her own body, it seems, the mother is presented in terms of lightness on numerous occasions in *El comensal*. Employing similar imagery to Lapierre's 'kilo de plumes, kilo de plomb', Ybarra places her mother and father at opposite ends of these metaphorical scales:

> Mi padre es el opuesto de mi madre. Mi madre era una pluma. Mi padre es una mole de hormigón a la que le gustaría ser pluma. Mi madre era desprendida y viajaba en autobús. Mi padre solo podía moverse con escolta. Mi madre dejaba atrás el pasado. Mi padre siempre tiene presente su historia familiar. (147)

Feather-light, Ybarra's mother is juxtaposed with the concrete-like solidity of the father, who is held down by the heaviness of his ever-present family history. The implication that each parent's weight is determined by their relationship to the past resonates with Lapierre's understanding of the weightiness of legacy as a measure of perception. The reality in *El comensal*, however, is that the mother's story *is* in effect tethered to the body, to the brutal physical deterioration to which Ybarra bears witness in the text. This being the case, the comparison here between feathers and concrete differs considerably from Lapierre's conclusion in *Sauve qui peut*. Irrespective of the disparate ways in which Ybarra's mother and father relate to the stories that precede them, they are no more in control of the course that their own story takes. While the father is anchored definitively to the past, the mother drifts forward towards an inescapable future, and neither has agency over these ties. Ybarra perceives each parent as prey to a particular narrative of heredity: on the mother's side, as we have seen, this burden is biological, and on the father's, it is genealogical. These narratives extend in different directions, with one side of the family predisposed to deadly

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[166] 'Desprendido', in *Diccionario de la lengua española* <https://dle.rae.es/?id=DP6xpgu> [accessed 08 May 2019].

cell mutations and the other shackled to a long-standing terrorist threat. It is at the site of their intersection that Ybarra's story is situated, fixed, it would appear, between an inherited past and a predestined future.

The impact of these narratives of heredity on the agency of Ybarra's own story comes into focus through the position that she adopts as writer. Her version of the grandfather's death is, necessarily, a rewriting, a fictional reconstruction from her perspective based on the published accounts that she has read. Yet the death of Ybarra's mother has *also* already been written, despite being a private loss that has no bearing on the political context. When three obituaries are printed in the newspaper following her death, it becomes apparent for Ybarra that not only the story of the grandfather, but the family story as a whole, is the preserve of a public narrative (139). Through her research, she comes to understand that the reason behind this is the perpetual politicisation of the Ybarra name and all who bear it: 'después de haber leído durante meses la historia de mi abuelo en las hemerotecas, comprendo que el símbolo de Neguri y de mi apellido aún perduran. Mi intimidad aún es política. La muerte de mi madre también' (140). Tracing the family history back to before the 1870s, when they were one of a dozen families who held political sway in Biscay, she apprehends the deep-rooted bind between the story of the Ybarras and that of the province. The life-stories of individual family members therein are set automatically in the same social framework, in a narrative space that is never private, but always to some degree public. The Ybarra name acts as an immovable anchor between the family story and collective history. The rigid relationship that it symbolises speaks to a dynamic between stories that is a far cry from the one in *Sauve qui peut*, where the multiple changes to the family name make it a figure of movement and transformation. In *El comensal* name has a mooring effect, but for Lapierre it holds the potential to liberate the individual story from a collective history of discrimination. The authors' contrasting approaches to naming and being named also shed

light on the narrative positions they adopt. Ybarra is clearly depicted, in the above excerpt, as a reader. In the research that she undertakes, she reads the name as it is etched in an existing social narrative: it is, in other words, already written. Lapierre's name, on the other hand, is ultimately indistinguishable from her own writing:

> Quant à ce nom de Lapierre, je me le suis approprié. Mes enfants portant celui de leur père, il n'aura pas de postérité, sinon sur la couverture de mes livres. Un nom de plume? Pas exactement. Mais un nom assez léger, qui n'arrime à rien, qui n'assigne à rien surtout. (176)

In the absence of posterity, 'Lapierre' comes to signify the very lack of legacy. The further reference to 'appropriation', to making the name her own, is telling. Enduring only as a 'nom de plume', the name in *Sauve qui peut* becomes a product of Lapierre's authorship, the inverse of *El comensal* where the tie to the collective, political frame that *Ybarra* signifies seems to dictate the terms of the family story that she comes to write.

Intertextual Loops and the Family Tomb

Embedded in Lapierre's 'pen name' analogy is a connection between the name, writing and lightness. The double meaning of 'plume' in French, at once 'feather' and (synecdochally) 'pen', implies that the act of writing has the potential to transfigure the 'stone-like' burden of the past and thus prevent it from weighing down the future. In *El comensal*, Ybarra depicts the writing process quite differently. Rather than providing a potential loophole in the political and historical frameworks that circumscribe the family story, the act of writing—and for that matter, of reading—is equally bound to them. The bind between Ybarra's text, the family history and the surrounding social narratives is reaffirmed by the principal intertextual references that she makes. The first of these is the epigraph, taken from Antonio Machado's 1914 poem 'Las encinas', which Ybarra subsequently incorporates into the main body of the narrative when she reveals that her attachment to the quotation stems from her

father's reading to her at bedtime as a child. The emphasis that he (and later she herself) affords these lines is, for Ybarra, political:

> Es política la entonación de mi padre al leerme *Las encinas* de Machado antes de dormir: 'Quién ha visto sin temblar/ un hayedo en un pinar'. Siempre enfatizaba estos versos. Mientras escribo sobre mi familia, releo a Machado y repito con frecuencia el poema. Imagino a mi madre y a mi abuelo como encinas (sencillos, vigorosos, pero sin tormento). (140–41)

By drawing attention to the influence that her father's reading has over her life-writing practice, Ybarra integrates the present text simultaneously into familial and collective narratives. The reference to 'Las encinas' enshrines this double inscription. Given that Machado considers the oak to be a typically Castilian tree, the father's love of the poem and Ybarra's subsequent characterisation of the mother and grandfather as 'encinas' is indicative of the family's political ideology. The history into which the Ybarras read and write themselves here is specifically Spanish rather than Basque. However, the insistence on these particular lines also speaks to the painful consequences of this Castilian identification for the family, which makes them the target of ETA. Beech trees at the centre of a pine grove are, for Machado, an ominous sign, a dark core at the centre of a light patch of trees. They symbolise a hidden, traumatic secret, much like the suppressed story of the grandfather's death that stands at the heart of the Ybarra family. The image could also intimate the secret that Ybarra herself appears to keep when telling this story in *El comensal*. When she brings to light the events of the grandfather's murder, she leaves buried the principal reason behind ETA's choice of target. Javier Ybarra's nationalist allegiance during the Civil War is never actually articulated, it is implied only in passing in relation to the grandfather's own authorship. As part of Ybarra's research, she reads the book that her grandfather wrote in 1947 on the history of the province, *Política Nacional en Vizcaya*. The prologue of this book is written by none other than Rafael Sánchez Mazas, a well-known Nationalist writer and a leader of the Falange (140). She quotes from this prologue Sánchez Mazas's description of

a politics of families in Vizcaya, which he deems distinct from the politics of individuals elsewhere in Spain and Europe at the time. Ybarra does not comment on the link between Mazas and her grandfather, but in placing these fascist associations side by side with her discussion of the family name, she points to the political ramifications for her own writing space.

Both the reference to Machado's poem and to the grandfather's writing thus seem to confirm the position of Ybarra's story at the meeting point of political and familial narratives. The sense of repetition that she creates through this use of intertextuality is revealing in this respect. Ybarra's re-reading and citation of 'Las encinas', for instance, does not function in the same way as the principal intertextual reference in *Sauve qui peut*, where Lapierre reshapes the quotation to fit her own purpose. Here, Machado's words are simply reproduced, a kind of reiteration that redoubles when considering that Ybarra's citation is in itself a repetition of the father's reading and of the epigraph. The implications of this intertextual layering for Ybarra's writing position become evident in the other literary source that she cites twice in the text, Swiss author Robert Walser's 1917 novella *El paseo* [*Der Spaziergang*]. In this work, Walser recounts a walk taken by the narrator, a struggling writer on a series of mundane errands, through the Swiss landscape at the time of the First World War. The relevance that it holds for *El comensal* is that in this fictional work, the narrator envisages the snowy forest tomb in which he would like to die, a description that perfectly matches the place in which the body of the author himself was found when he died some four decades later (94). Walser wrote, vicariously, his own death-story, and Ybarra's citation of the text provides an important glimpse into how she conceives of her life-writing practice. Contrary to the agency that Walser assumes, Ybarra perceives her death-story as already written, a re-inscription of the narratives of heredity that dictate both sides of the family history.

The text closes with Ybarra's own pilgrimage to the woods, to the site of the grandfather's murder. She identifies the place where he was shot by following the original instructions that were issued by the kidnappers for the police to recover the body. The immediacy with which Ybarra narrates the journey, as when she writes 'He vuelto al coche. Son las 16.04' (168), in fact marks the culmination of her trajectory of return, of her bid to relive the past through the writing present. As well as positioning herself at the scene of the traumatic event, she intersperses the account of her journey with extracts from the kidnappers' instructions. In so doing, she seems to weave her writing into the pre-existing narrative of the grandfather's death. She consolidates this assimilation of her personal, present writing into a past, public narrative in the closing lines, ending with the words of Walser:

> Mientras tomo notas pienso en mi abuelo, en mi madre y en mi padre. En mi madre diciéndonos: 'Sed sencillos'. En mi abuelo diciendo: 'Lo más que me pueden hacer es darme dos tiros'.
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> * * *
>
> Sería hermoso tener en el bosque una tumba pequeña y tranquila. Quizá oyera el canto de los pájaros y el susurrar del bosque sobre mí. Lo desearía.
>
> Robert Walser. (168–69)

Here, Ybarra ties together the *death-stories* of her mother and grandfather with her father's *life-story* and, more implicitly, with her own. The tripartite sequence, 'en mi abuelo, en mi madre y en mi padre', followed by the reiteration of 'En mi madre [...] En mi abuelo' opens up a gap which awaits the inscription of the father's final message. Whereas Lapierre is keen to show the missing links in intergenerational relationships, for Ybarra these links simply have yet to be filled. She points to the inevitable elongation of a chain that always already exists. In beginning and ending with intertextual references to forests—the closing evocation of Walser's wood prompts a return to the epigraph and Machado's pine grove—Ybarra encloses the text as a whole in a narrative loop. The way in which she connects the ends of

this loop invites comparison with Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope and the intrinsic interrelation of time and space in narrative that it signifies. Ybarra frames *El comensal* with parallel temporal and spatial movements of return to the start, not only of the text itself, but also of the family's history. Drawing together political and personal narratives, past and future death stories, she seems to recreate in writing the tomb in which the grandfather lay, carving out a forest chronotope as the structure for the family story.

3.4 Images of Intergenerational Transmission

Through the forest chronotope in *El comensal*, Ybarra paints a different picture of the agency of individual stories within a family history to the one that comes into view in *Sauve qui peut*. Remember that Deleuze distinguishes the emancipatory *ligne de fuite* from the desire to trace one point back to another, a desire that he characterises as a love of 'les racines, les arbres, le cadastre, les points d'arborescence, les propriétés'.[167] It is this very same imagery that comes to stand for the Ybarras' history in *El comensal*, where the line of heredity that knots together individual and collective, past and future narratives, figures legacy as family tree. Her writing traces a genealogy that stands firm, much like the 'encinas' with which she compares her grandfather and mother. The very real matter of intergenerational transmission lends *El comensal* a sense of inevitability, of destiny, yet the act of writing also attests to the Ybarras' collective strength and to the endurance of the family line. The roots that anchor this familial structure represent a set of relations between individual life-stories that bear little resemblance to Lapierre's rhizomatic lines of flight. For Ybarra, the connections between these stories are what keep them and the family history as a whole alive, but for

[167] Deleuze and Parnet (1977), 48.

Lapierre, survival is dependent on the discontinuities in these lines, on the vanishing points that leave room for individual redirection and collective regeneration.

Underpinning the capacity, or lack thereof, for individual agency in *Sauve qui peut* and *El comensal* is a dialectic between stasis and movement. As in Butler's description of social history as a 'temporality', time and narrative space in the texts are closely entwined and this dialectic is most obvious in their interplay. Ybarra's writing is structured around an anticipated return that characterises even the physical journeys in the text: her pilgrimage to the place of the grandfather's death, her mother's final journey home to Spain after her failed cancer treatment in New York, and the author's own return home thereafter. Unlike the vital link between change and survival in *Sauve qui peut*, the morbid compulsion to repeat in *El comensal* associates movement with death. Ybarra shapes the text around this direction of return through the intertextual forest frame that she fashions, starting and finishing with the words of others in a way that compounds the pervasive motif of the story as already written. Such loops provide a narrative counterpoint to the lines of flight in *Sauve qui peut*, which by their very nature can never meet, or indeed end. In lieu of the circularity of *El comensal*, Lapierre charts a distinct progression from prologue to epilogue 'qui va de la séparation à la transmission' (246). Transmission, following Lapierre's logic, is contingent on separation, on dispelling the sense of a causal sequence of traumatic histories which opens the text. She rejects what might appear to be a 'hereditary' impulse towards suicide, and in its place emphasises the agency behind both the death- and life-stories in her family history. Her own inheritance is the refusal of the idea that history, collective as well as familial, is inexorable; she considers legacy instead as a question of individual choice and of future progression within a set of constraints. Ybarra's narrative loop is founded on a wait for the inevitable, one which ties together the two traumatic histories in an understanding of legacy as a matter of heredity.

One conceives legacy as fixed, the other as mutable: *El comensal* and *Sauve qui peut* thus each call into question the other's approach to transmission. The repercussions of the rigid relationships that Ybarra envisions between lives and life-stories are apparent in the text itself, in the devastating impact on the author's sense of agency. Yet Lapierre's resolute assertion of personal freedom in determining legacy also requires further examination. *El comensal*, for example, brings to the fore the harsh reality of heredity in some family stories. Lapierre's emphasis on moving forwards, on building upwards, fails to engage with the risks inherent in the weakened structure on which such progression stands. In building on top of 'fêlures', the cracks in the foundations, she papers over to some extent the traumatic fissures in the family story. What both texts do, however, is expose the assumptions about transmission on which the concept of postmemory is premised. Whereas Schneck, Salabert, Chacón and Salvayre share the view that the transmission of traumatic experience in retelling the previous generation's story is an unquestionable imperative, Lapierre and Ybarra invite a closer interrogation of such a claim. In reading the texts side by side, it is clear that upholding agency in an intergenerational narrative space relies on a reconceptualisation of transmission, and an interpretation of legacy as a process of regeneration rather than as a lock to a predetermined story. For both Lapierre and Ybarra, the complexities of navigating this question of agency lie far beyond the simple markers of appropriation and displacement that Hirsch outlines. They alert us to a more innate threat to individual agency in interwoven lives and life-stories, a threat that is exacerbated in the wake of trauma.

Although the relationships between life-stories are almost antithetical in formation—narrative locks in *El comensal* and points of non-convergence in *Sauve qui peut*—a kind of vanishing point repeatedly emerges in both narrative projects with respect to telling the other's story. In different ways, both authors point to the same fundamental unknowability of the other's story: Lapierre refuses to impose an explanation on the family suicides and

Ybarra emphasises the necessary recourse to imagination. This unknowability, this sense of separation felt even in the grips of intergenerational transmission, becomes the foundation of their ethical approaches. Regardless of whether they conceive relations as binding or as malleable, both authors recognise one's inevitable limitation in providing access to the other's perspective. Their own traumatic losses seem to make Lapierre and Ybarra alive to the ever-incomplete account that it is possible to give of another's life-story. In the next chapter I turn my attention to the consequences of this unbridgeable gap between perspectives when relations appear to be at their closest, in texts where the author's intimate experience of loss constitutes the single traumatic focus.

Chapter Four

Burials, Exhumations, and Textual Tombs: Addressing the Other in Milena Busquets's *También esto pasará* and Sophie Daull's *Camille, mon envolée*

At the heart of the different conceptions of intergenerational transmission in *Sauve qui peut* and *El comensal* is a tension between identification and separation. Does the author's life-story continue along the trajectory traced by previous generations, towards a pre-determined outcome? Or does she perceive her agency in this ongoing family narrative as having the potential to develop it in a different direction? Comparing these two texts makes plain the necessity of forging one's own storyline, one that connects to but crucially moves beyond the existing family history. The alternative, as we saw in Ybarra's autofiction, is to understand inheriting this history as inexorable. Past and future family stories fuse together in *El comensal* to form a tomb-like structure that awaits the inscription of the author's own death-story. In the works I consider in this chapter, the tomb becomes the site at which the tension between identification and separation in an intergenerational story is most visible. Whereas in *Sauve qui peut* and *El comensal*, this tension emerges principally in relation to how different generations navigate traumatic experience, in these texts it is embedded in the loss of the loved one that the authors relate. Milena Busquets's *También esto pasará* and Sophie Daull's *Camille, mon envolée* oscillate between proximity and distance as they grapple with the respective losses of their mother and daughter. Unlike the accounts that Lapierre and Ybarra give of their mothers' deaths, in which individual loss is narrated alongside an experience of collective trauma, the bereavement that Busquets and Daull articulate appears utterly disconnected from wider historical events. Busquets recounts the loss of her mother, author Esther Tusquets, who died at the age of 75 following a lengthy battle with Parkinson's disease, and Daull tells the story of the sudden death of her adolescent

daughter as the result of an unexplained infection. Nonetheless, their personal stories of grief take on a universal dimension. Both authors engage with the paradigmatic tension between identification and separation around which explorations of the mother-daughter relationship typically revolve, be they in the context of literature, psychology, biology or psychoanalysis. As the texts make evident, such tension redoubles in this relationship in response to loss, as the survivor negotiates the pull between holding onto and letting go of the loved one.

The painful fluctuation between these poles, and the 'either-or' that seems correspondingly to govern the mourning process,[168] comes to light in the authors' parallel treatment of the tomb. Busquets and Daull rail against the restricted access to the other that cemeteries impose: the locked gates come to symbolise their definitive separation from the loved one, which both authors strive to surmount through the texts that they write. Although the circumstances of the losses differ (with the painfully slow decline of Busquets's mother on the one hand, and the shocking sudden death of Daull's daughter on the other), as do the modes in which the authors give voice to their bereavement (*También* is an autofictional narrative; *Camille* takes the form of a diary), both accounts make surprising use of the second person. Busquets and Daull employ the same impossible structure of address, in which they position the lost loved one as the recipient of her own death-story. Note that these are not occasional apostrophes, which might serve to showcase the impact of the loss on the narrator in the eyes of the reader; this would amount to an act of self-staging, as Jonathan Culler suggests, rather than a means of establishing a relationship with the absent other.[169] Instead, the address is sustained throughout both texts in a way that ostensibly attempts to restore the presence of the loved one through the writing process. In her study of obituaries, Marie-

[168] In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, LaCapra identifies and problematises the tendency to reduce the possibilities in the mourning process to two extremes: total mastery of the loss on the one hand, and endless melancholia on the other (2001), 71.
[169] Jonathan Culler, 'Apostrophe', *Diacritics*, 7.4 (1977), 59–69 (63).

Laure Florea remarks that only in very rare cases is an address to the deceased sustained throughout a text. The purpose of this address, as she interprets it, is to 'redonner corps à l'absent'.[170] This endeavour to re-embody the other through writing, I argue, is at the core of Busquets's and Daull's resistance to the physical separation that the grave represents. In invoking the mother and daughter whose death-stories they write, they aspire to a kind of textual resurrection, whereby the deceased subject is transported out of the grave and re-placed inside the narrative. The text substitutes as a burial site, so to speak, in which the authors might continue to be with the significant other that they have lost.

Serving to offset the sense of definitive separation, the recreation of their relationship in writing seems to constitute a refusal to accept the loss and let the other go. For Freud, of course, such a 'letting go' is fundamental to the mourning process. The choice not to do so, to refuse to withdraw the libido from the lost loved object, is what he theorises as melancholia: a pathological holding-on that is the antithesis of so-called successful mourning.[171] The idea that this holding-on might manifest itself as an alternate burial site invites comparison with Nicolas Abraham and Mária Török's conception of the mourning process. In this model, the 'either-or' on which Freud bases mourning and melancholia recurs in the alternatives of introjection and incorporation that Abraham and Török envisage in response to the death of a loved one. Successfully mourning the other, they claim, is a process of introjection, in which the lost love object is swallowed up as the survivor makes their qualities a part of her- or himself. Incorporation, by contrast, occurs when the ego internalises the love object and instead of making it into part of the self, builds a crypt inside the psyche in which to house the significant other in an effort to keep her alive.[172] To return

[170] Marie-Laure Florea, 'Interpeler l'absent. Le rôle de la convocation du disparu dans les nécrologies', *Corela*, HS-8 (2010), n.p.
[171] Sigmund Freud, 'Mourning and Melancholia' [1917], in *Collected Papers*, ed. by Joan Riviere, 5 vols (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1924–1925), iv, 152–170 (157–59).
[172] Joan Kirkby, '"Remembrance of the Future": Derrida on Mourning', *Social Semiotics*, 16.3 (2006), 461–72 (465–6).

to the notion of substitute burial sites in *También* and *Camille*, then, in what way can these texts be said to constitute a kind of crypt? Characteristic of the crypt is its location underground: it is a tomb that is concealed from view. The interment of the other that Abraham and Török theorise has a similar element of secrecy. The crypt is constructed, they suggest, through a process of intergenerational transmission in which an unspeakable secret is supressed by the parent and passed on unconsciously to her or his child. Unwittingly bound to this 'mute pact', as Esther Rashkin observes, the psychic processes necessary for introjection are disrupted in the child, leading to the 'holding on' to the lost loved one at the heart of incorporation.[173] The transmission of traumatic secrets is a key aspect of—and even the primary trigger for—the intergenerational life-stories that we have explored to this point. *También* and *Camille*, however, mark something of a departure from this focus on uncovering and giving voice to repressed trauma and its impact on subsequent generations. Writing in the immediate throes of grief, Busquets and Daull stand at the closest remove from the story of loss that they tell. The intimacy of address that both authors employ, writing as if speaking directly to the lost loved one, makes an unlikely setting for divulging secrets that either party may have stifled. The confessional tones in these texts are rooted in the guilt that the authors feel in response to their own 'living on' and the separation from the loved one that this signifies. Moreover, in making the absent other the recipient of the story, Busquets and Daull carve out a separate place for their mother and daughter through the narrative process; a position that is necessarily distinct from that of the speaker who is invoking them.

As well as denying the disconnection from the loved one that the cemetery enforces, therefore, the text seems also to offer an alternative to the consuming identification

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[173] Esther Rashkin, *Family Secrets and the Psychoanalysis of Narrative* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 27–28.

symbolised by the crypt. As Daull and Busquets narrate their grief, they seem to move towards making the text something of a middle ground between these external and internal burial sites. Such a middle ground calls into question the dichotomy between letting the other go and pathologically holding on that underpins Freud's and Abraham and Török's conceptions of mourning alike. Reburying the other in writing in fact brings to mind Derrida's understanding of the mourning process, which rejects the equation between introjection and successful mourning. Derrida deems introjection untrue to the memory of the other, because simply making the lost loved one part of the self is to rob them of their otherness. In its place, he advocates what Abraham and Török look upon as the 'pathological' alternative: incorporation. But unlike Abraham and Török, Derrida conceives the incorporation of the other as ever partial: in his view, a gap always remains between self and other. The lost loved one is neither resurrected nor is she absorbed into the self, he argues; rather, she preserves her otherness even as she is 'inside' the ego.[174] Of particular significance to Busquets' and Daull's narrative projects is the notion in Derrida's model of mourning of a continuing conversation with the deceased.[175] 'Bereaved memory', as Derrida calls it, always bears the trace of the lost loved one's speech. Following this logic, the survivor cannot but make the other speak when remembering them, since the other has always already spoken.[176]

Considering the structure of address and the informal register they employ, Daull and Busquets seem to strive towards a similar ongoing dialogue with the lost loved one through the texts that they write. The enduring relationship that this implies introduces an alternative to the stark choice that Freud and Abraham and Török posit between cutting ties to the loved one or being trapped in a paralysing bind. In the face of this dichotomous logic, how do

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[174] Jacques Derrida, *Mémoires: Pour Paul de Man* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1988), 21–22.
[175] Kirkby (2006), 466.
[176] Derrida (1988), 37–38.

Daull and Busquets try to carve out a space 'in between'? The key to striking the necessary balance in these texts between identification and separation lies in the dialogue they set up. This dialogue widens the supposedly exclusive relational space shaped by the structure of address. For what seems to be a dialogical narrative relationship is in fact triangular, redirected in the absence of the addressee via the actual reader of the text. The permeable narrative positions produced in this process underlie the reburial process that each author undertakes. In *También*, Busquets effects this pluralisation from within the address itself, through repeated shifts in referent. Her first-person fictional narrative is punctuated by asides, mainly to the mother, but also to her own various lovers. Daull, conversely, maintains the all-absorbing focus of the singular address to her daughter throughout *Camille*. Pluralisation instead takes place through the paratextual, and later intertextual, frames that she devises. It is interesting to note that despite Camille's unchanging position as the 'tu' in the narrative, the text itself is dedicated not to Daull's daughter but to her mother, whose life was also violently cut short when she was murdered in Daull's early adulthood. The triangular relationship that this instigates comes to fruition in Daull's 2016 publication, *La Suture*. By dedicating the account of the mother's childhood and adolescence to Camille, she establishes an intertextual dialogue between their life- and death-stories.

From the diverse strategies that Busquets and Daull adopt to open out these relational and intergenerational spaces, strategies which pertain to genre, fiction, and intertextuality, two rather different burial processes emerge. At the core of each reburial in writing is the question of where each author places the absent other in the telling of her death-story. The difference between the narrative positions that Daull and Busquets carve out for their lost loved ones demonstrates that this reburial is not restricted to the figure of the textual tomb. Cenotaphs, scattered ashes and burial shrouds emerge as alternate shapes for the stories of loss that Busquets and Daull recount. In this chapter, I compare the narrative and ethical

implications of the various ways in which Daull and Busquets lay their loved ones to rest through writing. I focus in particular on their endeavour to make present the perspective that is missing in the reburials that they perform. To what extent do they succeed in creating something like an ongoing dialogue with the significant other in their texts? And how might the collaborative relationships that they portray in telling the story construct a kind of narrative coexistence in the wake of loss?

4.1 The Function of Funerals

In *También* and *Camille*, funerals fulfil a central narrative function. Both Busquets and Daull open the text with reference to the burial of their loved ones. Where they position the funeral in relation to their respective writing projects, however, produces two very different narrative structures. While for Busquets, burying the mother marks the starting point of her narrative, Camille's funeral delimits Daull's writing project: she sets out to give an account that goes up to, but crucially no further than, the day of the daughter's burial. To venture beyond this, Daull suggests, would be to place herself and her grief at the centre of a story intended to testify to Camille's bravery in the final days of her life. Busquets, by contrast, appears from the outset to embrace this foregrounding of the self. A series of self-portraits defers the revelation that the narrator, Blanca, is in fact giving an account of her mother's funeral:

> Por alguna extraña razón, nunca pensé que llegaría a los cuarenta años. A los veinte, me imaginaba con treinta, viviendo con el amor de mi vida y con unos cuantos hijos. Y con sesenta, haciendo tartas de manzana para mis nietos, yo, que no sé hacer ni un huevo frito, pero aprendería. […] Pero nunca me imaginé con cuarenta años, ni

> siquiera con cincuenta. Y sin embargo aquí estoy. En el funeral de mi madre y, encima, con cuarenta años.[177]

Introduced in this manner, the present narrative seems to fill the gap in Blanca's imagining of the different stages of her life, her mother's death something of a supplement to her own evolving life-story. The emphasis that Busquets places on self-portraiture is a telling nod to the autofictional form that the story takes in *También*. Blanca's account of her experiences in the period following the funeral resembles an interior monologue, and from these opening lines Busquets draws attention to the self-centring impetus of this narrative style. Considering the emphatic presentness of the narrative, with events relayed seemingly as they unfold, references to the act of writing are conspicuous in their absence. Such an absence increases the narrative distance between Blanca and Busquets, despite the numerous parallels that prior knowledge of the author's biographical information invites. Like Blanca, Busquets was forty at the time of Esther Tusquets's death, and the textual setting of Cadaqués is the real site where her mother is buried. Yet the fact that Blanca does not write in her capacity as narrator sets her apart from Busquets as author, offering perhaps the clearest indication that Busquets is staging as opposed to wholly espousing Blanca's perspective. Just as Busquets postpones revealing the mother's death as the trigger for Blanca's crisis in self-perception, so too does she delay introducing in these opening lines the role that the mother will play in the narrative process. As Blanca moves on to discuss the ravaging effects of dementia on the mother's character and thus on her relationships, she switches from the possessive 'mi madre' to a direct address to the mother as 'tú'. This mode of address in fact permeates the text, inserting the mother into what appears at first to be an account entrenched in the narrator's self-centred reflections.

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[177] Milena Busquets, *También esto pasará* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2015), 9. Henceforth page numbers will be listed in the body of the text.

The incorporation of the lost loved one into the telling process also underpins Daull's account of her daughter's death in *Camille*. Unlike Busquets, however, Daull defers neither the revelation of the loss, nor the second-person address, but fuses them together in the abrupt opening line, 'Tu es enterrée depuis une semaine exactement'.[178] Beginning *in medias res* and delaying the identification of the addressee, Daull establishes a highly intimate relational space, one which places the reader on the outside, a quasi-voyeur of a private narrative. This immediacy and intimacy, as well as the reader's uneasy sense of encroachment, is embedded in the form of the text. Daull relays Camille's death and the subsequent processing of her own grief by interweaving two times of writing that closely resemble diaries. One records the tragic events of Camille's short illness, death and the preparations for her funeral in their immediate aftermath, and in the other, Daull reflects on her own continuing life and grief as she transposes the original recording into the present text. She describes her project in this writing present in the following terms: 'essayer de mettre au propre et de donner une suite aux quelques lignes que ton papa et moi avons griffonnées sur un cahier bleu, cinq jours après ta mort' (11). The process of writing up 'in neat' the events and emotions that she and her partner had scribbled down at the time is not one of writing *out*. Rather than amalgamating these notes into a cohesive writing present, she interlaces the two times of writing in her telling of the story. She makes Camille's funeral the reference point that draws them together, but again resists any smooth overlap by preserving a gap between them: the 'writing past' records the period from the rapid onset of Camille's illness to the day of her burial, with the writing present commencing one week later. What the product of this amalgamation *does* seem to elide is the role of Camille's father in the writing process. Whereas the initial recording was a communal project started by both parents, there is a distinct shift in the text itself towards a more individual

[178] Sophie Daull, *Camille, mon envolée* (Paris: Philippe Rey, 2015), 11. Henceforth page numbers will be listed in the body of the text.

undertaking, in which the structure of address sees the collaboration between mother and father supplanted by one between mother and daughter. Daull herself acknowledges this, noting that 'papa a doucement disparu au fil des pages' (177). In what she confesses to be a jealous guarding of her daughter's affections, she subsumes his individual relationship with Camille in the text under a 'nous' in which she is always also a part. Even when it is extended on occasions to include the father, the focus never moves away from the mother-daughter relationship. Tellingly, Daull situates the start of the death-story in her final trip to the theatre with Camille, and of which the father was not a part. Following the show, Camille went to bed with a fever from which she would not recover. From this point, Daull gives a day-by-day detailed account of her daughter's rapid deterioration and increasing delirium. The narrative of the pain and panic of Camille's final hours lies at the centre of the text, interspersed with sections from the writing present that constantly remind the reader of the story's inevitable conclusion. Daull's account continues through the aftermath of Camille's death, foregrounding the abyss between the inconceivability of the loss and the business-like formality of funeral arrangements.

In the writing present, Camille's death acts as a monumental turning point by which the progression of time is determined henceforth. Daull dates her diary entries, which relay the jarring continuation of life without Camille, according to how many days, weeks and months have passed since the latter's death. The story of the mother's 'living on' in *Camille* is thus governed by the temporality of the daughter's death-story. The principal narrative purpose that Daull outlines places Camille at the heart of the writing present. Telling the story takes on the form of an *obligation* to her daughter:

> Je vais relater dans le détail ta lutte, ton combat, blitzkrieg, parce que, putain, qu'est-ce que tu as été forte dans cette traversée de la fièvre et de la douleur […] je te le dois. Tu as si peu vécu que les quatre derniers jours de ta vie méritent bien un peu de précision historique. (12)

Here, Daull couches Camille's struggle in language of warfare, which increases progressively in scale and culminates in the hyperbolic reference to the 'blitzkrieg' of the Second World War, to convey the lightning-like strike of her devastating illness. Elevating Camille's individual death into a titanic battle, Daull's recourse to mass trauma as a metaphor expresses the overpowering impact of the loss. The emphatic presence of the second person in this passage is symptomatic of the narrative voice that she adopts throughout the text. It shapes a seemingly exclusive relational space in which she writes at once about, for, and to the daughter. Daull's colloquial language reinforces the intimacy of the address by creating a conversational tone, as if writing were an effective substitute for a communication that can no longer take place in life. She seems to eliminate the formalisation that would register the third party who ultimately reads her account. Busquets' tone is similarly conversational in *También*. In fact, the Spanish equivalent of the same striking oral marker, 'putain', appears when she introduces the mother as addressee in a discussion of the ravaging effects of the latter's illness:

> Al final, la enfermedad, que la expulsó salvajemente de su trono y destrozó sin piedad su reino, hizo que nos puteara bastante a todos, y claro, eso se paga a la hora del funeral. Por un lado, tú, la muerta, les puteaste bastante, y por otro lado yo, la hija, no les caigo demasiado bien. (10)

Apart from underscoring the orality of the discourse, the repetition of 'putear' also highlights the shift from the description of the mother in the third person into a direct address. There is a corresponding shift in the position of the narrating subject from the collective 'nos' into a closed alignment with the mother, in which everyone else is placed outside as 'they'. The self-designation of 'la muerta' and 'la hija' mimics the detached lens through which, according to Blanca, the loss is viewed by all who stand outside this painful but unbreakable mother-daughter bond.

At first, therefore, the conversation that Busquets initiates seems to echo the exclusivity of the relational space in *Camille*. The singularity of this address is swiftly undercut, however, when the mother's place as addressee is usurped by a handsome stranger that Blanca sees at the funeral: 'Me pregunto cuál es el protocolo para ligar en un cementerio. […] O quizá esa chica que está a tu lado, apretándote la mano y mirándome con curiosidad e insistencia, sea tu novia. ¿No es un poco bajita para ti?' (13). Unlike the consuming invocation of the daughter in *Camille*, the structure of address that Busquets puts in place is plural and shifting. These shifts are a permanent feature of the multiple, intersecting and universally disappointing romantic interactions that drive the action in *También*. Portrayed as representative of her instinct to live on, Blanca's sexual desire cohabits with her grief in this passage in a pairing that recurs throughout the text. Blanca recounts the series of flirtations and sexual encounters that she pursues— with her two ex-husbands, a married lover, the handsome stranger and several old acquaintances—which act as a screen for her intense sorrow as she seeks to come to grips with the loss of her mother. Poignantly, the site at which all these relationships overlap is the town in which the mother is buried. After the funeral, Blanca goes with her children and her two best friends, Sofía and Elisa, to stay in what was formerly the mother's house and her own childhood holiday home. She gives an account of her fleeting encounters as various lovers past and present pass through Cadaqués, encounters which all revolve, according to Blanca, around the primary relationship between mother and daughter. These erotic exploits also serve as a delaying device that allows the narrator to postpone visiting her mother's grave, and the action in Cadaqués concludes with her eventual, aborted attempt to enter the cemetery in the early hours of the morning, when the gates are locked.

This failure to visit the grave also emerges as a motif in *Camille*, in which Daull makes a point of recording the times when she does not go to the cemetery rather than when

she does: 'Anniversaire. Suis pas allée au cimetière' (151). By calling attention to these missed visits, Daull presents writing as a sort of surrogate for the pilgrimage to the grave. Like Busquets, who emphasises the separation from the loved one that the locked gates signify, Daull laments the restrictions that cemeteries place on the mother-daughter relationship:

> C'est quand même bizarre, cette histoire de tombe; cette prolongation de toi derrière un portail dont les grilles ferment à 17 heures en hiver et à 18 heures à partir du mois prochain. Et si j'avais envie de te rendre visite en pleine nuit? (133–34)

We might read Daull's recording of her failures to visit the grave as a turn away from the physical site of Camille's burial and towards creating her own 'histoire de tombe': an alternative, textual tomb in the account that she writes. In their article on *Camille*, for example, Bernard Lehut and Mathilde Cesbron liken the text to a '[u]n mausolée de papier érigé par l'auteure à sa fille'.[179] These are the very terms that Daull used in an interview to explain her purpose for writing both *Camille* and *La Suture*: 'Il s'agissait plutôt d'écrire un tombeau poétique à ma mère, à ma fille'.[180] A prevalent commemorative practice of the Renaissance, the 'tombeau poétique' was the name given to a volume of texts by different authors compiled to pay homage to the deceased, who was often a prestigious contemporary writer.[181] Perhaps most relevant to Daull's framing of her narrative project in these terms is the recurrent trope, in the 'tombeau poétique', that the written tribute supersedes the physical tomb. While marble eventually disintegrates along with the body, the written monument is eternal. Through the textual tomb that Daull crafts, she endeavours to transport the mother-

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[179] Bernard Lehut and Mathilde Cesbron, '"Camille, mon envolée", le livre poignant de Sophie Daull', *RTL*, 01 December 2015, n.p. <https://www.rtl.fr/culture/musique/camille-mon-envolee-le-livre-poignant-de-sophie-daull-7780692697> [accessed 13 September 2019].

[180] Nicolas Blondeau, 'Sophie Daull: "Un livre de deuil est comme un exorcisme"', *Le Progrès*, 21 November 2016, n.p. <https://www.leprogres.fr/sortir/2016/11/21/un-livre-de-deuil-est-comme-un-exorcisme> [accessed 13 September 2019].

[181] Joël Castonguay Bélanger, 'L'édification d'un Tombeau poétique: du rituel au recueil', *Études françaises*, 38.3 (2002), 55–69 (56).

daughter relationship outside of the locked gates and into a narrative space over which she holds agency.

In *También*, Busquets fantasises this transportation in concrete terms. When Blanca abandons her bid to force open the gates and looks out over the harbour, she describes her mother appearing in the distance, walking along the pier on the way to board her boat. Let us turn now to the narrative and ethical implications of this imaginary transportation of the lost loved one into the text. If the purpose of the mode of address in Busquets' and Daull's accounts is to effect a kind of narrative resurrection and reburial, what form do these 'textual tombs' take? And how might the use of the second person in their narration lead to two different kinds of metaphorical reburial? Finally, how does Daull's subsequent work, *La Suture*, reopen the tomb that she constructs in *Camille*, and introduce a third type of textual reburial, one guided by yet another code of ethics? In comparing these reburial processes, I want to tease out the different narrative relationships between mother and daughter, writing and non-writing subjects, to which they give rise. Do these contrasting approaches to telling the other's story subscribe to the ethical demands that have been delineated in this study thus far? And if not, to what extent do they succeed in paving alternative routes to a more collaborative narration?

4.2 Scattered Ashes in *También esto pasará*

Whereas in *Camille*, the address to the lost loved one is consistent and consuming, in *También*, the 'tú' is mobile, shifting from the mother, through various lovers, and back again. The constant in this changing structure of address is the narrator herself, making Blanca the abiding focus of the story that she recounts. Far from idolising her relationship with the

mother, as one might expect in an obituary, the address begins with an accusation. She voices the extreme challenges and losses she had to face as a result of her mother's dementia:

> Es culpa tuya, mamá, claro. Fuiste depositando, poco a poco y sin darte cuenta, toda la responsabilidad de tu menguante felicidad sobre mis hombros. Y me pesaba, me pesaba incluso cuando estaba lejos, […] incluso cuando me aparté un poco de ti al ver que, si no lo hacía, no sólo morirías tú bajo tus escombros. (10)

Blanca's sole attribution of blame here is softened by the addition of 'claro', and points to the self-ironising tone that runs throughout the text. The conceptualisation of this relational struggle in terms of distance, however, hints at a wider tension between overidentification and separation in *También*. For even when Blanca apparently succeeds in establishing some kind of distance during her mother's illness, she describes the burden of responsibility as persisting, unaffected by her attempts at detachment.[182] Sorting through the belongings that have passed down to her becomes a figure for Blanca's navigation of their relationship following the mother's death:

> Algunos días, pensaba que lo iba a tirar todo y, al cabo de cinco minutos, me arrepentía y decidía guardar hasta el último cachivache. Tres horas después, volvía a pensar que lo iba a regalar todo. Supongo que estaba empezando a decidir a qué distancia exactamente quería vivir de ti. Es un difícil equilibrio, resulta más fácil guardar las distancias con los vivos. (39–40)

The sorting process swings between two poles: either keep all her mother's belongings, or give them all away. As she compares this to the poles of proximity and distance, and identification and separation, between which mother and daughter oscillate, Blanca notes the intensification of these difficulties after the mother's death. She strives to strike a balance between these extremes of hoarding or discarding everything; this is a balance, to draw on

[182] The repetition of 'pesar' here invites comparison with the texts examined in the previous chapter, in which Lapierre and Ybarra conceived the traumatic legacy passed down from one generation to another in terms of weight.

Freud's opposition between mourning and melancholia, between clinging to the mother or definitively letting her go.[183]

Blanca's endeavour to position herself between these two poles captures in a nutshell her narrative pursuit. Calling attention to the self-absorbing nature of grief, she notices that the loss that she experienced has unsettled her sense of where she stands, of her place in the world. In narrative terms, she portrays this 'place' as having been determined by the mother's gaze: 'Nunca volveré a ser mirada por tus ojos […] Mi lugar en el mundo estaba en tu mirada' (77). The principal source of the daughter's grief, over and above never *seeing* the mother again, is the prospect of never *being seen* by her. Her erotic exploits are driven at least in part by a desire to fill in this missing 'mirada': making herself the object of the male gaze becomes a means of affirming her existence in the absence of her mother. The transient and ever-disappointing nature of the romantic encounters, however, mean that the lover's look is never sustained. To relocate her own 'place', Blanca turns instead to telling the story as a means, however precarious, of reinstating the mother as the subject of the gaze. By addressing the mother, Blanca positions her as reader, and so moulds the narrative into the object of her now-absent gaze. Making the mother present is thus a strategy that Blanca adopts principally in order to gain some purchase on her own position in the story. The substitution embedded in these narrative dynamics assumes an extradiegetic dimension when we consider the autofictional form of the text, and the relation between author and narrator. Blanca's narrative acts as a fictional substitute for Busquets's real experience, through which the latter at once seeks her own 'place' following the death of Esther

[183] Freud (1924–1925), 153.

Tusquets—and in particular, her place as author in the wake of Tusquets's literary renown—and stages the foregrounding of the self that this process entails.[184]

Mothers, Daughters, and Others

While Busquets's use of autofiction thus showcases the placement of the self at the centre of the shared mother-daughter story, it also serves in part to subvert it. The choice never to name the mother in the text is a pointed one. Rather than limiting the narrative to her own lived experience, Busquets describes the text in an interview as

> una carta de amor de una hija a una madre y, en el fondo, da igual quién sea la madre o quién sea la hija, pues el amor es un sentimiento muy universal y el amor entre una madre y una hija es una de las relaciones más complicadas.[185]

Fictionalisation, for Busquets, is the vehicle through which she aspires to transform her own story into one that is more representative, to reflect a more paradigmatic mother-daughter relationship in *También*. The tensions and resentment that Blanca voices are not unique to her, or indeed to Busquets, but speak to the more universal experience that Busquets seeks to convey as she recreates her own relationship with her mother in the text. Yet at the same time as Busquets effects a kind of blurring between mother-daughter relationships, the gap between author and narrator in autofiction separates her representation of this paradigmatic experience from that of Blanca. The latter seems unwittingly to embody the two attitudes that she perceives in her friends, Sofía and Elisa: 'La una se dedica a disfrutar del mundo y la otra a sufrirlo y analizarlo' (43). Blanca's embrace of life in the face of loss is evident in

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[184] In an interview, Busquets notes that she was only able to start writing after her mother had died, and she suggests that one reason for this was the fact that her mother was an author. 'Entrevista, Milena Busquets, *También esto pasará*', *Para todos la Dos*, 09 April 2015 <http://www.rtve.es/alacarta/videos/para-todos-la-2/para-todos-2-entrevista-milena-busquets-tambien-esto-pasara/3081592/> [accessed 10 September 2019].

[185] 'Milena Busquets asegura que "sin pasión, la vida no vale la pena"', *Agencia EFE*, 14 January 2015, n.p. <http://www.efe.com/efe/espana/cultura/milena-busquets-asegura-que-sin-pasion-la-vida-no-vale-pena/10005-2510771> [accessed 13 September 2019].

the series of sexual liaisons that form the main body of the action in the text. Dispassionately analysing her desires even as she acts upon them, she links sex to her impulse to live on.

The paradoxical role of sex in the narrative present maintains the tension between separation from the mother and a continuing identification with her. Despite illustrating Blanca's drive to live on after her mother has died, the multiple liaisons on which she embarks do not suggest that she has relinquished this relationship, nor that she is seeking to replace it. On the contrary, Blanca's self-analysis positions the mother-daughter relationship as the starting point of all her interactions with others:

> En parte consciente, supongo, de que el amor de mi vida eras tú y de que ningún otro amor huracanado podría con el tuyo. Después de todo, amamos como nos han amado en la infancia, y los amores posteriores suelen ser sólo una réplica del primer amor. (77)

Blanca's use of sententia here stands out against her strongly subjective narrative, which comes to resemble a stream of consciousness. The emphatic repetition of 'amar…amor' produces a proverb-like structure; it gives an impression of incorporated discourse that recurs repeatedly in Blanca's analyses of her own actions. Busquets portrays her in this way as parroting psychoanalytic discourse. By depicting the 'primer amor', the model, as it were, for these 'amores posteriores', as the relationship with the *mother*, rather than with the father, Blanca describes a kind of failed Electra complex.[186] The mother-daughter bond forms the basis of her heterosexual relationships in a text where the father is virtually absent, appearing only in a discussion of how the mother constructs his death-story for the daughter. Given the plasticity of this gender divide, there is more than a trace of irony in Blanca's subsequent stereotyping: she repeatedly groups men and women on the basis of gender roles. Consider, for example, her account of a sexual encounter with Santi, her married lover; she claims that:

[186] Blanca articulates this inversion of gender dynamics when she states that 'Dicen que la mayoría de las mujeres buscan a su padre a través de los hombres, yo te busco a ti, lo hacía incluso cuando estabas viva' (96).

'La fuerza física de los hombres sólo debería servir para darnos placer, para estrujarnos hasta que no quede ni una sola gota de pena ni de miedo en nuestro interior' (31). Blanca's typecasting of men as mere objects of female desire is a parodic echo of the reductive stereotypes that the reader might expect to be applied more commonly by men to women. Sententia is coupled with an emphatic transition to the collective to draw the jarring nature of this gender-stereotyping into sharp relief. Whether Blanca is conscious of the irony of subsuming all relationships into her own heterosexual experience is left deliberately unclear.

As Busquets underscores the prescriptive nature of Blanca's generalisations, she uses this irony to reaffirm the autofictional distance in *También*.[187] She perhaps also points to the limitations of her own narrative project's claim to represent a universal mother-daughter relationship. This logic of substitution nonetheless marks the point at which Busquets's and Blanca's attempts to reconstruct the mother's place—and by default, their own—coincide. Just as Busquets's use of autofiction obscures the divide between her own relationship with Tusquets and the one between Blanca and her mother, Blanca's narration makes the relationship a fundamental part of every interaction in the text. As these interactions all come to intersect in Cadaqués, Blanca envisions her various lovers melding together when she looks into the eyes of Óscar, her ex-husband:

> en sus suaves ojos oscuros se funden los ojos más apocados y enloquecidos de Santi y los más claros y tristes del misterioso desconocido de hace un rato, como en un caleidoscopio mágico capaz de convocar a la vez fragmentos del pasado, del presente y del futuro. (124)

She visualises this blurring together as a magical kaleidoscope, which pulls together fragments from different relationships to form a picture; a picture, following Blanca's logic,

[187] There is a prevailing tendency in scholarship on *También* to read the text as an autobiography rather than an autofiction. Doing so collapses the distinction between author and narrator, and so disregards Busquets's use of irony. This is the case in Ewelina Topolska's study of the text, in which she denounces what she perceives as Busquets's advocation of 'kidult' behaviour and self-indulgence. 'La mujer contemporánea como kidult. *También esto pasará* de Milena Busquets, el síntoma de nuestros tiempos', *Lublin Studies in Modern Languages and Literature*, 41.2 (2018), 153–64 (159).

of the core relationship with the mother. It is no accident that Busquets locates this blurring together of the lovers in their eyes. By making the gaze the site of substitution here, she also offers an insight into the narrative gaze and its shifts in address. In an account that ostensibly relays the loss of the mother-daughter relationship, the interpolation of addresses to these lovers serves in fact to assert the omnipresence of this bond.

Textual Resurrections and Narrative Agency

Formed from a fusion of past, present and future, this kaleidoscopic picture is underpinned by a sense of timelessness that reflects the setting of the action in Cadaqués. As the site of Blanca's childhood holidays, as well as the mother's final resting place, Cadaqués seems to constitute a space outside of linear time in the text. The stasis of this summer interval in *También*, as evidenced by the choice of the present tense, mimics the pause in the normal progression of life that grief produces. Narrative time is conceived instead in terms of cycles of mourning, as when Blanca meets with Santi: 'mentalmente ya he empezado a calcular los minutos que faltan para que se vaya y me quede sola y tu muerte vuelva a asaltarme y todo vuelva a empezar' (96). Through Busquets's use of polysyndeton and the repetition of 'vuelva a', the cyclical nature of this subjective time becomes apparent. Blanca's liaisons with her lovers are depicted as a temporary postponement of this consuming grief cycle, a strategy of delay which we also saw in Blanca's repeated deferral of her visit to the cemetery. This series of erotic exploits culminates in Blanca seeing a former lover at a party and choosing not to sleep with him. Her decision breaks through the delay that sexual desire has afforded to this point in the text, and once she has left the party, Blanca goes to visit her mother's grave. The locked gates that she encounters represent the 'normal' time within which the physical burial site is restricted, which runs counter to the timelessness that characterises grief in the text. The failed visit ends, however, with a fantasised transportation

of the mother outside of these gates. Busquets effects a physical resurrection in which Blanca sees the mother walking along the pier below:

> De repente, la veo. Camina por el muelle con su camisa descolorida de cuadros azules encima del traje de baño, con sus preciosas piernas morenas siempre llenas de moratones, sus chanclas de niña pequeña con los pies para dentro, las gafas torcidas, el pelo hecho un desastre debajo de una gorra reseca por el agua salada, va acompañada por sus tres perros—Patum, Nana y Luna—, que se acaban de dar un chapuzón, y se dirige, feliz, hacia su barca. […] Antes de subir, se da la vuelta, me sonríe y me dice:
>
> —También esto pasará.
>
> Y me guiña un ojo'. (168)

While Busquets draws on the trope of the afterlife, derived from Ancient Egyptian mythology, as a setting sail into the next world, she does not idealise or transfigure the appearance of the mother. The detailed physical description of her mother's ruffled hair and bruises rather grounds the image in the everyday, bringing her back to life in the text exactly as Blanca remembers her. At first this textual resurrection seems to shore up the daughter's control over the narration of their shared story. Given the titular reference that draws the scene to a close, we might read this image as an emblem of the text as a whole. The mother materialises in response to the daughter's invocation, '"Mamá, mamá"', a clear nod to the wider use of direct address. In turning to smile at her daughter, she becomes the subject of the gaze and so appears to fulfil Blanca's wish to be looked at, to recreate the mother's gaze in the text so as to find her own place therein. As a projection of Blanca's desires, this resurrection continues to foreground the self in the narrative process.

Our perception of narrative agency as purely one-sided is complicated, however, by the fact that it is the mother, and not the daughter, whose words give the text its title. The influence that this instance of direct speech grants the mother amplifies as the title is discussed further. For Blanca, the phrase derives from a story that her mother told to comfort her after the death of her father. In this tale, an emperor gathers together all the wisest people

in the kingdom to find a phrase that works in every circumstance; 'También esto pasará' is their collective solution:

> Los sabios se retiraron y pasaron meses y meses pensando. Finalmente, regresaron y le dijeron al emperador. 'Ya tenemos la frase, es la siguiente: "También esto pasará". Y añadiste: 'El dolor y la pena pasan, como pasan la euforia y la felicidad'. Ahora sé que no es verdad. Viviré sin ti hasta que me muera. (170)

As part of a (death-)story that the mother tells, the title signals the role that she plays in the narrative process. Here, agency shifts dramatically away from the daughter: in spite of Blanca's rejection of the mother's axiom, it becomes the name of the text. The title thus signals the gap between intra- and extradiegetic narrative planes in Busquets's autofiction. As narrator, Blanca rejects the forward progression that the future tense of the title implies, replacing it with an image of perpetual mourning. She locks her life and death to the loss of the mother in a way that invites comparison with Freud's theory of melancholia. Busquets uses the title to illustrate her own alignment, by contrast, with the mother's consolatory conception of loss in the death-story that she tells. Rather than denoting a progressive detachment from her mother, the acceptance that grief will always pass with time in fact reaffirms their relationship. This shared understanding of loss shifts the grieving process in *También* beyond melancholic entrapment, but crucially does so without the severing of ties to the loved one that Freud considered indispensable to successful mourning.

In espousing the mother's version of loss rather than the daughter's, Busquets signals a more collaborative narrative process than seems to be present in the project that Blanca outlines as narrator. This synergic narration is at the heart of Busquets's resurrection of the relationship with her own mother in *También*. Given that Esther Tusquets was a celebrated literary figure, writing is a key component of this relationship. The challenge of striking a balance between identification and separation is not merely represented by, but rather embedded in, the writing process as Busquets comes to articulate her identity as an author. The solution she seems to propose is the integration of her mother's writing practice into her

own. Motifs from Tusquets's work are present throughout *También*, creating a kind of dialogue between their oeuvres. Chief among these is the recourse to water imagery: in addition to its prominence in the Cadaqués landscape, the sea is used as a symbol for sex (126) and to describe the mother's illness, with Parkinson's disease 'flooding' her brain. The sea is at the centre of Tusquets's most famous work, *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*, which is also set over the course of a summer in Cadaqués. Busquets reinforces this intertextual dialogue by making an explicit allusion to the text's title when Blanca discovers that even as the mother was dying, she ensured that the boat at Cadaqués was put back on the water: 'Qué loca, mamá, qué loca. ¿En serio pensabas que podrías ir en barca? ¿Seguirá allí el mismo mar, a pesar de tu ausencia?' (28). The image of the boat on the water, as we have seen, also encloses the scene of the mother's resurrection. If we read this scene in the light of the reference made to Tusquets's *El mismo mar*, the textual afterlife that Busquets figures comes into view. Transported beyond the restrictions that the cemetery imposes, the mother-daughter relationship seems poised to live on in *También*—itself a line from Tusquets's *Varada tras el último naufragio* (1980)—through the enmeshment of their writing practices.[188]

A Scattering of Ashes

What happens, in this case, to the question of proximity in the mother-daughter relationship in the wake of loss? In an interview, Busquets reiterates the need to establish some distance from the deceased. She stresses the fact that 'es muy peligrosa estar muy cerca de los muertos

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[188] In *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, Harold Bloom conceives the enmeshment between first and second generations of writers in similar terms. He too employs water imagery when he depicts the precursor's influence as at once necessary and overwhelming: 'The precursors flood us, and our imaginations can die by drowning in them, but no imaginative life is possible if such inundation is wholly evaded' (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973; repr. 1975), 151. Busquets's use of water imagery, however, seems to symbolise the narrative control that she assumes over this influencing process.

[…] hay que mantener una cierta distancia'.[189] On the face of it, the enmeshment of her writing practice with that of her mother seems to fall prey to the danger of overidentifying with the lost loved one. Yet this enmeshment resists the wholesale incorporation of the mother and her writing into the text. As the product of a failed mourning process, such an incorporation would contradict the title, which explicitly moves away from melancholic entrapment. To eschew this substitution of cemetery for crypt, an alternative burial site must be found in the text, but the burial process that Busquets pursues in *También* departs from the singular monument to the mother that a textual tomb would represent. The shifting structure of address and the multiple liaisons that she recounts point towards dissemination, a process more akin to a scattering of the ashes. By placing the mother-daughter bond at the heart of all these relationships, Busquets makes the mother omnipresent in the text. Similar to the fragmented image of the kaleidoscope that she employs, the remnants of their relationship transform every aspect of the narrative, much like the telling of their story is peppered with references to Tusquets's writing. Towards the end of *También*, this scattering becomes a figure for the interaction between mother and daughter. When Blanca remembers moments when she and her mother would catch each other's eye, the mutual experience of their gazes meeting is described as a magical connection which produces pixie dust:

> Recuerdo habernos mirado en algún momento, a través de una mesa llena de gente, o paseando por una ciudad desconocida, o en medio del mar, y haber sentido las dos que caía polvo de hadas sobre nuestras cabezas y que tal vez no nos pondríamos a volar allí mismo como aseguraba Peter Pan pero casi. (170–71)

Rather than Blanca simply being looked at by the mother, Busquets develops the gaze in this image into one that is reciprocal. The imagined pixie dust sparked by this mother-daughter connection also symbolises a meeting of their writing projects. As Busquets goes on to specify, the image is taken from the fairy tale *Peter Pan*, references to which frame

[189] 'Entrevista, Milena Busquets, *También esto pasará*' (2015), n.p.

Tusquets's *El mismo mar*. If we take this pixie dust as representative of Busquets's amalgamation of their writing practices in *También*, their collaborative storytelling can indeed be conceived as a scattering. The resulting mother-daughter relationship marks a distinct shift away from their problematic overidentification at the start of the text. Diametrically opposed to the heavy burden that Blanca mentions in the opening pages, the near potential for flight that this pixie dust grants them redescribes the connection between them as virtually weightless. It appears to keep the dangers of overidentification at bay, even as the writing projects of mother and daughter coalesce. The lifting of such a burden relies perhaps on the incomplete alignment that Busquets expresses in this passage. Concluding with 'casi', she frustrates any simple equation of the mother-daughter bond as it is depicted here and the fairy tale to which Tusquets alludes. This ever-partial overlap preserves a gap at the same time as Busquets connects their writing practices in order to tell their shared story in *También*. Much like the presence of Busquets's personal experience in her autofiction, the influence and memory of the mother is scattered throughout: it permeates all aspects of the text and its characters, without absorbing them altogether. The same is true of the allusions that Busquets interweaves to Tusquets's oeuvre. Their inclusion shows that the mother's writing has shaped that of her daughter without detracting from Busquets's own identity as an author.

This balance between identification and individuation emerges most clearly in the conception of legacy at the end of the text. After Blanca's assertion of the unremitting grip of the mother's loss, she enumerates the characteristics, both positive and negative, that the mother has passed on to her: the tendency to fall in love at first sight, her passion for art and literature, her absence of conscience and her sense of rebellion, to name but a few. She also lists the qualities that she claims not to have inherited herself—her mother's magnanimity and her tolerance, amongst others—but which she sees beginning to blossom in her children.

The recognition of the persistence of certain characteristics leads Blanca to affirm the prolongation of the mother's story, promising that 'Algún día, hablaremos mucho de ti' (172). She points to an ongoing dialogue through which this story will be perpetuated, a transgenerational space that resonates with Busquets's dedication of the text to her parents as well as to her children: 'Para Noé y Héctor./ Y para Esteban y Esther'. Rather than creating a deadly bind, as was the case in *El comensal*, these dedications remain separate despite being interlinked by the 'Y'. Busquets leaves the text deliberately open-ended in a way that makes room for future generations to determine the direction that the family story will take. The final image in *También* is of the mother's jacket, the wearing of which earlier in the text had embodied Blanca's refusal to let her mother go. Here, however, the same image signifies renewal: 'Anteayer, llevé tu chaqueta a la tintorería, me la devolverán el jueves, "como nueva", me han dicho' (172). Much like Lapierre's conception of each generation making the family home new, Busquets depicts Blanca as revitalising the mother's jacket in her wearing of it, in making what she has inherited her own. The return of the jacket 'like new' is symptomatic of the continuation of the daughter's relationship with her mother, but in a new configuration. As Blanca envisages the future discussion and perpetuation of the mother's story with her children, she also contemplates the plans they will later make without her. The text concludes by proposing an intergenerational space that can accommodate the continued 'living with' the lost loved one that is at the heart of Derrida's model of mourning.[190]

[190] In *Spectres de Marx* (1993), Derrida argues that the ghost—a figure for what lies beyond our comprehension—should not be dispelled, as Karl Marx suggested, but 'lived with'. María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren describe this state of 'living with' as an 'open, welcoming relationality', which I perceive as underpinning the intergenerational space that Busquets envisages at the end of *También*. *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 33.

4.3 Constructing a Cenotaph: *Camille, mon envolée*

It is by opening out the mother-daughter story into a transgenerational conversation that Busquets strikes a balance between keeping the mother close and moving on with her life. The nature of the loss in *Camille*, however, seems to stunt any such future dialogue. Having lost her mother at the age of twenty to a brutal murder, the sudden death of her daughter leads Daull to characterise herself as '[s]ans ascendant ni descendant' (117), radically cut off from intergenerational connection. The relational space shaped by the mode of address is, as we have seen, exclusive. Daull incorporates this exclusivity into the form that she uses to tell the story of Camille's loss, setting out to write 'le journal de ta mort' (17). Given that diaries are written typically by and for the same individual, mother and daughter are entwined here into a seemingly self-contained narrative relationship. The image of writing her daughter's diary also raises questions as to the ethics of this intimate enterprise. Daull appears to pre-empt ethical questions of this kind through the collaborative nature of the narrative towards which she strives. After remarking that she owes it to her daughter to tell of the latter's bravery, Daull also recognises the personal desires that drive her writing:

> Et puis je m'ennuie sans toi, sans t'écrire. On s'écrivait tout le temps—nos lettres, nos textos. Je promets je vais forcer mes mots pour qu'ils échappent au sirop de deuil un peu gluant, poème pompeux, élégie larmoyante; je vais inaugurer ton outre-vie avec une plume trempée dans ton regard quand il s'ouvrait grand: franc, droit, lumineux. (12–13)

Coupled with her use of the diary form, the attention that Daull draws to the focus on the self in grief recalls the *Journal de deuil* that Barthes begins to write the day after his mother dies in 1977. Barthes regards grief as making him the inevitable centre of his writing project: 'Le chagrin est égoïste./ Je ne parle que de moi. Je ne puis parler d'elle'.[191] While Daull also observes the potential for her account of loss to become similarly submerged in the 'sirop de

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[191] Roland Barthes, *Journal de deuil: 26 octobre 1977–15 septembre 1979*, ed. by Nathalie Léger (Paris: Seuil, 2009), 208.

deuil', here she transforms the diary into an instrument of resistance to this self-absorption. Imagining that she is dipping her pen into her daughter's perspective, she envisions her diary-writing as a joint project, one which she attempts to construct in narrative terms by making Camille the addressee and thus the subject of the gaze. Emulating Camille's frank perspective, she suggests, is the means through which she can stop the story from becoming an elegiac immersion in her own sense of loss. Daull's wish for the death-story that she writes to be shaped by the daughter in this way figures the dynamics of the gaze very differently to those of *También*. She does not merely want to restore her position as object of the loved one's gaze, as is Blanca's principal motivation, but for them to become co-writing subjects. Daull portrays the 'outre-vie' that *Camille* inaugurates, her daughter's textual afterlife, as the product of this fantasised collaboration.

Decomposing Bodies and Narrative Holes

Whereas in *También*, apostrophe is interspersed with Blanca's first-person narrative, Daull adopts the second person throughout *Camille*. Telling the story as if directly to the daughter underlines the temporal difference that exists between the story of Camille's rapid decline, death and burial, and the narrative present. Daull's account of her care for Camille is set against the backdrop of collective Christmas preparations, which become ever-more incongruous as Camille's feverish delirium increases and the extent of her suffering becomes apparent. This incongruity is all the more poignant in Daull's interlacing of the writing present with the foreshadowing of Camille's death. Even as she directs the story to her daughter, she cannot but acknowledge the brutal reality of Camille's death by admitting the futility of such a mode of address: 'C'est un rapport parfaitement absurde parce que je l'adresse à une morte; je te dis *tu*, je te dis *mon chaton*, alors que tu ne m'entends plus' (italics in original, 12). Daull undercuts her address from within as if to resist the lure of

magical thinking in grief. In *Discrepant Solace*, David James describes magical thinking as a process in which the author concurrently conjures and questions 'consolatory counterlives'.[192] Like Octave Mannoni's fetishist, Daull knows very well that Camille will not hear her questions but nevertheless continues to entreat her response. Rather than restoring Camille's presence through the text, therefore, Daull's address seems cruelly to accentuate her absence. The shocking disparity in tone between the intimacy of the direct address and the impersonality of 'une morte'—like the designation of the mother as 'la muerta' in *También*—encapsulates Daull's fluctuation throughout the text as regards the position that she grants Camille as listener. She seems consciously to avoid the elevation of elegy by using the physical reality of Camille's dead body to anchor the narrative each time that it tends towards self-consolation. This tension develops principally around the motif of the grave. Daull explains that the choice to bury Camille is not in keeping with the family's tradition of cremating deceased loved ones. She associates cremation with the loss of a fixed place in which to be with the loved one, commenting for example that she never visits the Vosges where she had scattered the ashes of her parents. The interment of Camille's body is designed to protect it from dispersion, so that her loved ones may visit her grave (73). Subsequently, however, Daull rejects embellishments to this burial site, such as the flowers that family friends have planted there: 'Des pensées, des jonquilles et des narcisses. Mais en fait qu'est-ce que tu en as à foutre?' (79). By concluding the list of flowers with 'narcisses', Daull points to the self-comfort that drives this cherishing of the grave. The harsh language of her rhetorical question cuts sharply through this consolation, reminding the reader of Camille's position underneath and not above the ground, from where she is unable to appreciate the flowers that adorn it. Daull emphasises the physical reality of this position through recurrent references to her daughter's decomposing body, addressing Camille as she

[192] David James, *Discrepant Solace: Contemporary Literature and the Work of Consolation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 25–26.

lies ‘parmi les asticots’ (115). In contrast to the fantasised restoration of the mother’s body exactly as it was in life when she appears in *También*, the reminders of Camille’s dead body tether her to the grave.

Camille’s textual resurrection is thwarted, moreover, by the limitations that Daull places on her writing project. By refusing to write beyond the point of Camille’s funeral, she seems to resist the fantasy of transporting her daughter into the text:

> Voilà, mon chaton, j’avais promis que j’irais jusque-là. Pas au-delà. Pas au-delà de toi sous terre. Parce que, comme je l’ai dit, il y a presque quatre mois déjà en commençant ce texte, je me connais, après ça va tourner en mots pompeux qui friment en poème, en élégie, en ode, en requiem égocentré. Si ce n’est pas déjà fait. (186)

Whereas the burial of the loved one was the starting point of *También*, it marks the end of the account that Daull gives. The anaphoric use of ‘Pas au-delà’ represents her emphatic negation of going beyond this interment in telling Camille’s story. Instead, she seems to effect in writing the sealing over of her daughter’s tomb, circling back to and reaffirming the narrative project that she outlined at the start of the text. Echoing her earlier fear of turning Camille’s story into a sentimentalised elegy in its telling, Daull explains that the reason behind her refusal to write on any further is the danger of making the story all about her. Daull does not merely incorporate this potential for self-centralisation, the ‘requiem égocentré’ that through Blanca, Busquets puts on show in places in *También*. Rather, she seeks to counteract it, curtailing the account that she gives to ensure that Camille remains at all times the focus of the story. The contrast in this respect between the two texts comes to the fore when Daull goes into more detail about her reason for avoiding Camille’s grave on the three-month anniversary of her death: ‘Je voulais aller nulle part. Mais il n’y a pas de nulle part. Je le savais déjà mais, depuis que tu es morte, ça me manque vraiment, un endroit où disparaître’ (151). Unlike Blanca, who sets out to re-establish her own place in the wake of the mother’s loss, Daull wishes to disappear. She aspires, it seems, to vanish along with

Camille. This desire to be 'nulle part' is symptomatic of a wider narrative endeavour to align her position with her daughter's absence. Whilst her husband searches desperately for a medical explanation of Camille's death, Daull suggests that no clarification could, or indeed should, fill the chasm of her loss. Just as Daull underlines the futility of her husband's quest for explanation, so too does she reject the offers of consolation that she receives:

> *Elle avait fait son temps de vie, même si court*
> *Il y a le mystère de la vie, et il y a le mystère de la mort*
> *C'est la vie…*
>
> Les gens ont des phrases toutes faites tirées de leurs manuels de consolation…
> Je ne veux pas être consolée.
> Je vis la coupure, la vie tranchée. C'est tout. (55)

Daull takes refuge in this very inconsolability in a way that brings to mind Barthes's *Journal de deuil*. Much like Daull chooses to live her loss as an alternative to being consoled, Barthes describes inhabiting his grief: 'J'habite mon chagrin et cela me rend heureux'.[193] He makes explicit, however, the fact that doing so is in itself a source of comfort. To immerse himself in his grief, Barthes writes, removes it from the supposed linear trajectory towards working-through on which he perceives psychoanalytic conceptions of mourning to be based. His own bereavement, which he characterises as 'erratique', admits no such progression.[194] Barthes aims not to expel his grief—the goal of working-through in psychoanalysis—but to transform it from a static state into one that is continuous and thereby, as he puts it, 'vivre avec mon chagrin'.[195] In a similar vein, for Daull, the text seems to offer the kind of imaginary space in which she can live her loss, and by default, 'live with' her lost loved one. She turns to her own writing, in other words, as she turns away from the commiserations of others. By divorcing the set phrases of sympathy from their subjects and demarcating them from the rest of the text, she calls attention to the discrepancy between cliché and invention,

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[193] Barthes (2009), 185.
[194] Ibid., 81.
[195] Ibid., 187.

between the formulaic attempts at consolation and her own creative approach. Daull's narrative 'je' is isolated against the generalisation of 'les gens' in a way that encapsulates the relationship between her voice and the words of others for the majority of the narrative. The lack of direct speech is striking: Daull's virtual exclusion of voices besides her own points to her inscribing and inhabiting the 'coupure' of Camille's voice in the text, as opposed to entering into alternative dialogues.

The sole figure that she invites into this singular conversation with Camille, and which extends the structure of address temporarily, is that of her own mother, to whom she also dedicates the text. Daull envisions a shared memorial to the mother and daughter that she has lost which transforms the 'tu' into a 'vous':

> [J]e vous ai réunies dans une seule chandelle en espérant simplement que vous soyez tranquilles, peinardes, en repos dans le rien. Moi, je reste, je veille, je vous prolonge, je vous invente, la très vieille dame, la blonde ado, mon corps entier comme une chapelle ardente, tout mon dedans façonné par la poussière de vos restes, tout mon dehors irrigué par le lait de vos silences, fontaine de Jouvence. (168)

In this passage we see a clear shift from external to internal memorial, so to speak, from candle flame to Daull's body itself becoming the 'chapelle ardente'. At first, the image appears to embody Abraham and Török's crypt, with Daull's whole self transfigured into a monument to her loved ones. Nonetheless, as she brings the picture into focus, the relationship between Daull and her lost love objects is rather different. A tension emerges between the idea of prolonging her mother and daughter's foreshortened lives, through and perhaps even in place of her own, and her inventing of them. This invention complicates the implication that Daull is swallowed up in the incorporation of her lost loved ones. Here she is no longer consumed but consumer, feeding off their remains. The trope of the fountain of youth consolidates the idea that their loss of life results somehow in her gain, a manifestation of Daull's survivor guilt in a chain of intergenerational loss. She depicts the reinvention of the mother and daughter, in her desire to perpetuate them, as a parasitical relationship. In

narrative terms, such a relationship indicates the inevitability of Daull becoming the centre of the story that she tells of Camille's death. The reference to her loved ones' silence is especially revealing in this respect, as it suggests that the narrative ultimately fails to restore their voices. This silence is coupled with Daull's portrayal of the mother and daughter's resting places as 'dans le rien'. Emptied of its connotations of hope for an afterlife, the religious image of the 'chapelle ardente' becomes a mere container for their absence.

We see this same emptiness in Camille's placement in the text more widely. Daull closes the text with reference to her final performance of the theatre season in *Les Petites Empêchées*, a play which, painfully and pertinently for Daull, concludes with the line 'Adieu mon enfant'. In a loop back to the start of the text, she envisions Camille walking towards her after this performance, much in the same way as the writing past began, but in a scene that can now only be imagined:

> Tu t'avançais vers moi, tu me voyais te voir, et le fil entre nous, d'or celui-là, se tendait d'amour, de fierté, d'un orgueil femelle, d'une assurance d'amazone.
>
> Moi qui aimais tant te voir de loin, maintenant je suis servie—je ne te vois plus du tout.
>
> Adieu, mon enfant. (189)

As in *También*, a powerful connection between mother and daughter is produced in the meeting of their gazes, figured this time not as pixie dust but as a thread. Couched in terms of maternal lineage and female strength, this thread recalls the umbilical cord that first tied together mother and daughter. Just as Daull depicts the 'cordon' between them as having been cut again by Camille's death (182), she presents the connection between their gazes as disappearing along with the daughter. The narrative ends with an assertion of Camille's definitive absence as object, and more poignantly still as subject, of the gaze. The theatre setting is significant: implicit in the idea of Camille looking at Daull from far away is the daughter's position as a spectator, who is watching her mother perform. Daull does not place

herself simply as the object of Camille's gaze, but rather conceives a mutual 'look' in which she observes Camille watching her. From the overlap she establishes between the closing line of the text and that of the play, we might read Daull as attempting to recreate this reciprocal gaze in writing. Yet while Busquets's textual resurrection of the mother seemed to symbolise the successful recreation of this gaze, Daull makes clear at the end of the text that she is addressing an absent spectator. In a notable departure from the resurrective dynamics in *También*, it is not Camille herself, but her loss, that is 're-housed' in the text. Like the 'chapelle ardente', the textual tomb marks Camille's absence, which Daull seals over as she bids her daughter farewell in the final line.

4.4 Burial Shrouds in *La Suture*

Despite the apparent finality of this goodbye in *Camille*, Daull does not leave the daughter's death-story enclosed in the text. Instead, she seems to re-open the 'tombeau poétique' two years later, through the publication of *La Suture*. From its very title, *La Suture* inverts Daull's previous narrative approach. In place of the cut cord is a stitch, which symbolises the very different project that Daull undertakes in this text. Instead of inscribing and inhabiting the 'coupure' left by loss, she sets out to sew it up:

> Je vais reprendre le fil générationnel que la mort a trouvé marrant de couper entre ses dents, telle une couturière capricieuse et impatiente, et je vais raccommoder les trous, faufiler des pièces aux coudes et genoux de ce grand squelette prématurément décharné. Je vais les coudre ensemble.[196]

[196] Sophie Daull, *La Suture* (Paris: Philippe Rey, 2016), 11–12. Henceforth page numbers will be listed in the body of the text.

In the wake of the deaths of both her daughter and her mother Nicole, a maternal line cut short on both sides, Daull spins this intergenerational thread through writing. Her recourse to the metaphor of sewing speaks to the specifically female 'line' that she seeks to restore. Nancy K. Miller has observed that the language of textile production evokes 'a metaphorics of femininity deeply marked by Freud's account of women and weaving'.[197] In 'Arachnologies', Miller uses a re-reading of the myth of the first woman weaver, Arachne, to posit an alternative theory of the text to Barthes's 'hyphology'. The subject in Barthes's model, Miller notes, dissolves in the secretions of his own textual web. To approach the text as an independent product, she argues, is to erase the agency and (gendered) identity of its author. Miller calls for us to read the text instead as an 'arachnology' and look within the web for the woman weaver, that is to say, to probe the text for the artist's gendered signature. In *La Suture*, Daull further subverts Barthes's hyphology: she sets out the text as the thread through which she can trace back, to cite Miller, to her own 'place of production'. Her signature is not a mere matter of individual subjectivity, she implies, but is to be found within the severed intergenerational narrative that she seeks to stitch back together.

Daull figures the family story as a skeleton stripped bare by the premature curtailing of Camille and Nicole's life-stories, and in opposition to all of the approaches that we have seen to telling the other's story thus far, she aims to cover over these underlying lacerations of loss. She explains her intention in *La Suture* to 'poser une équation à deux inconnues: le passé de ma mère, le futur de ma fille. Brouillons éternels. Clairement, ces deux inconnues le resteront pour toujours' (11). In a kind of epistemic mirroring, she pairs the impossible knowledge of the future her daughter would have had with the mystery surrounding the first twenty-six years of her mother's life, up to the point when she met Daull's father, Francis.

[197] Nancy K. Miller, 'Arachnologies: The Woman, The Text, and the Critic', in *The Poetics of Gender*, ed. by Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 270–96 (271).

These stories, Daull suggests, remain permanently in draft form, as hypothetical sketches. Yet in *La Suture*, she converts the 'brouillon' of her mother's untold adolescence into narrative. She uses the few mementos that her father had gathered up and placed in a shoebox after the mother's death—photos of Nicole as a child and a teenager, postcards, pay slips and a letter—as sources for the genealogical quest on which she embarks.

These keepsakes fail to provide any meaningful leads, however, and Daull's genealogical quest is reduced to a largely fictional reconstruction of her mother's life. She structures the narrative around the four different addresses to which the postcards to her mother were sent: Coulommiers, Le Blanc, Contrexéville and Belfort. Daull's own visits to these places prove less than fruitful in supplying keys to the mother's story and her imagination supplements, and indeed supplants, them as the principal narrative source. In this inversion, the genealogical journey becomes a corollary to her fiction, rather than the other way around: 'je gonfle mes poumons de cet air tout chargé de vieux pollen généalogique. Je surinvestis les lieux, je suis excitée moi aussi, je veux absolument trouver des images qui collent à ma fiction' (42). Daull seeks out these places from her mother's past, in other words, as a means of confirming the narrative that she has already fabricated. In an intentional twist on the usual relationship between 'fact' and 'fiction' in reconstructing a life-story, Daull aspires to use the few real sources that she possesses to validate her own invention. The image of her inhaling genealogical particles also playfully turns inside out the analogy that we might anticipate of her breathing new life into the stories that she tells. This inverted relationship recalls the 'chapelle ardente' in *Camille*, in which the silences of the missing loved ones are figured as milk, a life-giving source from which Daull seems to feed. Although in *Camille*, she mentions this egocentric impulse as part of an effort to resist it, in *La Suture* she embraces it. Emphatic first-person narration takes the place of the insistence on the 'tu' in *Camille*, and Daull depicts the disappearance of the subjects of the

story as giving her license to invent it. She thus regards the death of Paulette, her mother's half-sister and the last remaining person who could have shed light on the former's childhood, as justifying this narrative approach: 'Je peux donc broder, comme on dit mentir. Je vais tisser une étole à réchauffer mes mortes, composer une histoire à me repeupler, pour épaissir mon sang que l'absence du leur a rendu trop liquide' (18). Here, the question that Daull poses implicitly in *Camille* as to who exactly is being consoled resurfaces, specifically in relation to Daull's fictionalisation. Her desire to preserve the open wound of Camille's loss, rather than to attempt to seal it, speaks to the resistance to the concept of consolation that James discerns in trauma narratives. He notes that in contemporary critical reception, the value of representing trauma is premised most frequently on the conveying of its irreparability. The use of form to mimic this brokenness is considered to be at the heart of an 'ethical' representation.[198] Daull certainly espouses such a view in *Camille* through the 'coupure' that she seeks to transcribe into the text. She uses the answer to her implied question—that consolation is undeniably for the living, for herself and not Camille—to try to resist it. Any comfort in the writing process stems instead from her embrace of the irredeemable nature of the loss. In *La Suture*, on the other hand, she adopts a very different approach. Much as she initially intends to warm her loved ones with the stole, the recourse to blood imagery quickly reveals Daull herself to be the recipient of this warmth. Telling the story in *La Suture* becomes a life-source for her, a vital blood flow that is absent in the loved ones that she has lost. The key difference is that in embroidering this 'étole'—which Daull equates with her fictional recreation of the story—she embraces the very form of self-comforting that she had sought to keep at bay in *Camille*.

Of the three texts, it is *La Suture* that undertakes the most conscious reburial in writing. The stole that Daull envisages becomes a burial shroud at the end of the text, which

[198] James (2019), 16–17.

she describes having woven to cover both her mother and daughter. Theirs is a joint shroud, in keeping with her intention to 'coudre ensemble' the mother's unknown past with the daughter's missing future. If we consider it in the light of the critical outlook on consolation in trauma narratives, the metaphor of sewing that forms the basis of this burial practice raises significant questions about the ethics of Daull's enterprise in *La Suture*. James observes that the texts he examines 'uncouple consolation from distraction, appeasement, and soothing repair',[199] an approach not dissimilar to the one that Daull adopts in *Camille*. Daull's metaphor of sewing in *La Suture*, by contrast, embeds this very repair unabashedly into her narrative practice. Before deeming this practice somehow less ethical as a result, we should first reflect on what the narrative does in fact intend to repair. Daull does not set out to 'repair' the losses of her mother and daughter, as if such a thing were ever possible, by trying to restore their presence through the narrative. She makes clear, for example, that telling the story is a revitalising source for her and not for them. What she aspires to sew back together are the connections between their life-stories. At the heart of this stitching together of stories is another impossible conversation. Unlike in *También* and *Camille*, this desired conversation is not between mother and daughter, as is indicated in the shift away from the dynamics of direct address. Daull tries instead to create a conversation between her lost loved ones themselves. She endeavours to join together the stories of grandmother and granddaughter, whose lives never overlapped, so that 'ces deux mortes bavardent au ciel' (11). More than a canvas for the imaginative reconstruction of the mother's adolescence, then, *La Suture* is the site of an intergenerational communication that was never possible in life. Just as she dedicates the story of the daughter's death to her mother, she directs the story of the mother's life in *La Suture* 'À Camille'. As in her earlier text, Daull points out the limitations of this narrative project, and she dismisses its pretensions to anything resembling

[199] James (2019), 40.

a narrative resurrection of her mother and daughter: ‘Il faut la vidange de mes orgueilleux poumons qui croient ressusciter les morts pour les coller dans un roman comme des gommettes dans un cahier de coloriage’ (61). Of note here are the terms in which Daull conceives this attempted resurrection in writing. What is produced, she observes, are paper replicas; she describes Camille as an ‘*être de papier*’ (italics in original, 13). Such paper bodies are a far cry from the seamless transportation of the mother’s ‘real’ body into the text that Busquets fantasises. Flesh made word, they symbolise the same fundamental absence as the empty tomb figures in *Camille*.

Sewing the Shroud

In the burial process that Daull simulates in *La Suture*, she makes a conscious move away from this cutting and pasting of the missing other into the text. Having embraced the egocentric impulse that she fought to suppress in the earlier text, she shifts the focus from her loved ones onto the burial process itself. *La Suture* concludes with the image of Daull stitching together the joint burial shroud:

> Je dois les protéger du froid, mes autopsiées. Coudre, tricoter, tisser, œuvrer. Il m’arrive encore d’entendre le zip de leur housse mortuaire en PVC stérilisé, alors j’ai fait le pull en mohair à quatre manches longues; j’ai fait le gros édredon bourré de plumes d’oies migratrices; et j’ai fait l’oreiller brodé à leur chiffre—pas ceux de l’équation du début, celui des initiales entrelacées dans les serments. J’ai fait le lit des morts, afin qu’ils nous engendrent. (205)

Daull’s sewing up reverses the cutting open of autopsy: she strives towards stitching her loved ones back together with a view to making them whole. The anaphoric use of ‘j’ai fait’ and the accumulation of materials from which the grave cloth is made highlight her fabrication, in both senses of the word, of the ‘lit des morts’. With the comfort of the (fictional) resting place that she creates in her writing, she attempts to counteract the brutality of the sudden death stories of her mother and daughter. The excessive detail of her

description cannot but expose the superficiality of this process, for the intricacies of the shroud, like the floral adornment of the grave in *Camille*, can only be appreciated from the outside. In the implicit emptiness of the 'lit des morts', she acknowledges that the shroud she sews merely covers over the fundamental loss beneath. Moreover, the division between 'nous' and 'ils', between those living and dead, signals a certain acceptance of the separation from her loved ones. Yet even as it seems to divide the two groups, Daull's burial practice establishes a certain reciprocity between them. The language of textiles in which she formulates her narrative project is telling. Given that Nicole was a seamstress by trade, Daull appears to continue her work in writing. By adopting Camille's gaze and taking up her mother's needle, she portrays her significant others as providing her with the very material with which to pull their stories together. From these sources, however, Daull weaves a narrative thread that is very much her own. She patches together an intergenerational story, a joint burial shroud, which is underpinned by her own desire for reconnection in the wake of such loss. By proclaiming that she herself is the beneficiary of this comforting narrative, Daull challenges existing conceptions of the ethics of telling the story of loved ones in their absence. The approach that she advocates at once exposes and accommodates the nature of this story as constructed by, and ultimately for, the writing self.

4.5 Ethical Reburials and Alternative Conversations

Key to narrating the shared story of loss in all three texts are the conversational dynamics towards which Busquets and Daull move. The fact that within these 'conversations', the voice of the lost loved one is, by necessity, missing, calls the ethics of this enterprise into question. Is the structure of address that the authors employ in fact a form of prosopopoeia,

in which the supposed interlocutor, according to Paul de Man, is a 'fiction of the voice-from-beyond-the-grave'?[200] De Man likens this fabrication of the other's voice to a form of 'de-facement' of the deceased. Read in this light, Busquets's and Daull's attempts to restore the significant other's presence through the text invite a return to the question of ventriloquism. The ongoing dialogue that Derrida posits in his conception of mourning, however, attributes a different role to the lost loved one. As we have seen, he considers the other to have always already spoken in bereaved memory. Busquets and Daull embed the trace of the other's voice into the stories that they write, by conceiving the 'conversations' in their respective texts as a form of intertextual exchange. *También* gives fullest expression to such a dialogue, in as much as the mother's voice remains at least partly accessible after her death via her own oeuvre. As perpetually partial as these conversations with the dead are, they inject an element of reciprocity into the narrative process.

While this reciprocity takes various forms, in all three texts it signals the influence that the loved one holds even after her death over the mother or daughter who is left behind to write their shared story. It testifies to a continuing connection between their life-stories yet still recognises their inevitable separation. For Daull and Busquets, this acknowledgement is instrumental in avoiding the pitfall of ventriloquism of the other. Although their intertextual exchanges go some way towards making present the other's perspective, both authors also draw attention to the gaps left by the absent reply. They do so in different ways: in *También*, Busquets underscores the manifestly one-sided nature of her opening accusation to the mother, 'Es culpa tuya, mamá, claro' (10). In *La Suture*, Daull frequently elaborates various hypotheses of how a scene from her mother's life may have unfolded before going on to write the version of her choosing, whilst of course admitting the limitations of her own perspective as narrator: only her mother would be able to choose

[200] Paul de Man, 'Autobiography as De-facement', *Modern Language Notes*, 94.5 (1979), 919–30 (927).

which, if any, of the versions comes closest to what actually happened. *Camille* makes the missing reply most striking, through the motif of unanswered and unanswerable questions that runs throughout the narrative. There are instances in all three texts in which the loved one's reply is 'written in', inferred by the author or narrator in what they go on to write. But on the whole, the balance that Busquets and Daull strike in the different textual reburials they perform rests on the way in which they refrain from responding on the other's behalf.

The coexistence between identification and separation in these texts produces something of a middle ground between the two extremes that emerged from the comparison of *Sauve qui peut* and *El comensal*. As in Derrida's model of mourning, which posits a space between the poles of mourning *or* melancholia, introjection *or* incorporation, Busquets and Daull envisage the possibility of living on without necessarily letting the loved one go. In narrative terms, this middle ground emerges in the authors' oscillation between making present the perspective of their lost loved ones and recognising its absence. This balancing act relies, however, on a certain alignment of the viewpoints of writing and non-writing subjects, or in terms of the mode of address, on their narrative gazes pointing in a similar direction. The lives of Busquets's and Daull's loved ones are presented as peculiarly legible. Any serious divergences between their perspectives, any secrets that they may have kept, remain buried. The question of whether life-writing can indeed make room for the reply of the voices that are missing, which Busquets and Daull appear to affirm, takes a different turn in stories where the interpretations of writing and non-writing subjects differ dramatically. The final section of the thesis will consider whether the so-called conversations in such texts can ever accommodate competing accounts without one writing out the other.

Chapter Five

Clashing Family Stories and Inconceivable Conversations: Christine Angot's *Un amour impossible* and Cristina Fallarás's *Honrarás a tu padre y a tu madre*

By balancing attempts to recreate the perspective of the loved one with an acknowledgement of its fundamental absence, Busquets and Daull make room for the voices that are missing in the stories of love and loss that they write. Telling the story in this way allows them to place a continuing connection with their proximate others at the heart of their intergenerational narratives. The claim to such a connection between the perspectives of writing and non-writing subjects becomes more complex, however, when the family story is split into competing 'sides'. In this chapter, I explore two texts which grapple with the challenges of narrating a family history that is deeply divided: Christine Angot's *Un amour impossible* and Cristina Fallarás's *Honrarás a tu padre y a tu madre*. Both authors are born of a so-called misalliance: Angot is the product of a taboo liaison between a bourgeois Christian father and a working-class Jewish mother, and Fallarás of a marriage between Republican and Nationalist Spanish families, who also occupy polarised positions in the social hierarchy. The authors' family histories, in other words, are made up of two supposedly incompatible halves, and in both cases the collision between them has devastating consequences. The violent ways in which these respective conflicts erupt are as different as the proximity of the authors to their traumatic impact. In *Honrarás*, Fallarás, through her narrative persona Cristina, tells the story of both sets of her grandparents and how they came to be on opposing sides of the Civil War. Long before the marriage of their grandchildren, one grandfather formed part of the Nationalist firing squad that executed the other. Fallarás writes from a two-generational remove, but Angot is herself the site at which the clash between the two sides of her family story culminates. In *Un amour* 'Christine'

gives yet another account of the incestuous abuse she suffered at the hands of her father and what she considered to be her mother's silent complicity, a story that she has told in several previous works.[201]

At first, these texts seem to have little in common. Fallarás and Angot endeavour to come to grips with traumatic events that differ as much in scope—the mass trauma of the Civil War, on the one hand, and intrafamilial abuse on the other—as in their proximity to the author. In fact, familial and collective histories are interwoven in both texts in a way that complicates any such division. Fallarás focuses not so much on the experience of the Civil War itself as on the family lives that precede and proceed from it. She writes in the stories of her grandparents' upbringings, which she sees as determining the different 'sides' on which they came to stand, along with that of her own childhood as the granddaughter of both victors and vanquished. Angot, conversely, embeds what is ostensibly a familial conflict in a clash between social classes. She re-stages the story of her abuse in *Un amour* by changing its frame. Christine situates its beginning in the period prior to her own birth, alleging that her parents' misalliance is the trigger. She interprets her father Pierre's incestuous rape as driven by the desire to reassert his social distinction from and domination of her mother, by his refusal to recognise Christine as his daughter.

In *Un amour* as well as in *Honrarás*, therefore, the traumatic secrets around which the narratives turn shed light on the deep fractures between the author's family lines. The division gives rise to discordant experiences of the same life-changing event; to two incompatible versions, so to speak, of the same story. Given that the authors find themselves at the intersection of these genealogical lines, we might expect them to write from a liminal position, a vantage point from which they can speak for both sides and thus negotiate a

[201] The incest narrative recurs throughout Angot's oeuvre from her first published work, *Vu du ciel* (1990); she recounts her own abuse in detail in *L'Inceste* (1999) and *Une semaine de vacances* (2012).

dialectical solution to the family 'problem'. Yet Angot and Fallarás show that any such intermediary space has been violently written out of the family story. In its place is a permanent tension between speech and silence, in which giving voice to one side of the story necessarily stifles the other. These 'either-or' dynamics are palpable in *Honrarás* in the expunging of all traces of Fallarás's paternal grandfather. His conclusive absence, Fallarás demonstrates, is symptomatic of the silencing of the entire paternal side of her family with respect to the Civil War. The only account of the conflict that she hears as a child are her maternal grandfather's glorified reminiscences of killing Republican soldiers, a one-sided story in keeping with the singular, state-sanctioned version of events under Franco. In both familial and social domains, in short, any version of the conflict that might compromise or challenge the narrative of the victors is repressed. *Un amour* makes these antagonistic dynamics between alternate accounts even more explicit. Unusually, the competing versions are not those of her and her father, which she sees as overlapping during her adolescence through the incestuous secret that they share, but rather her own perspective and that of her mother, Rachel. While Rachel claims to have known nothing of Pierre's abuse, Angot has repeatedly portrayed her mother as having turned a blind eye to what was taking place. This accusation in Angot's previous works made her mother into the principal target of blame. In *Un amour*, she recognises that these existing accounts have occluded Rachel's side of the story.

Angot and Fallarás thus set out to disrupt these one-sided accounts of the family history. In their attempts to uncover and incorporate the perspective that previous articulations of the story had masked, they turn to dialogue. Like those of Daull and Busquets, the conversations that Angot and Fallarás pursue in their texts are, strictly speaking, 'impossible'. Fallarás undertakes to converse with her deceased relatives, in order that their particular versions of events might be channelled through the text. *Un amour*, on

the other hand, insists on the brokenness of the communication between mother and daughter in the wake of the revelation of the father's incestuous abuse. The few exchanges that do take place fail to allow both perspectives to emerge, and the bid to restore something like a dialogue between mother and daughter in the text remains unfulfilled. The impossible dimension of these conversations points to the perpetual incompletion of the authors' endeavour to account for and interweave conflicting versions of the family story in a single narrative. In this chapter, I want to explore the different strategies that Angot and Fallarás adopt as they attempt to draw these competing narratives into dialogue. If these texts, like their narrators, are produced in the union of incompatible sides of the story, what shape does this misalliance take in narrative terms?

5.1 Misalliance, Transmission and Incestuous Desire

The life-stories of Angot and Fallarás alike, as we have seen, originate in a 'misalliance'. Misalliances are improper or unsuitable binds, connections between two sides that should in fact remain separate. The understanding of misalliance as a false affiliation emerges in two different guises in Freudian psychoanalytic theory. Used first by Freud in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), 'mésalliance' is an early term for 'transference': he applies the French word to the phenomenon of the patient transferring suppressed feelings from previous relationships, often from her or his childhood, onto the therapist.[202] 'Mésalliance' denotes the erroneous connection that patients make, therefore, between these different relationships. When Freud takes up the term again some years later in *The Psychopathology of Everyday*

[202] Jean-Michel Quinodoz, 'Studies on Hysteria', *Reading Freud: A Chronological Exploration of Freud's Writings*, trans. by David Alcorn (London: Routledge, 2005), 9–21 (18).

Life (1901), he adds an important social dimension to this definition. In this text he discusses parapraxes that are made by, about, or to Jews, and considers these slips in speech to be produced by what he calls the 'mésalliance' between a Jew and a Gentile. The anxieties that underpin the relationship between these distinct social groups, he argues, surface inadvertently in the confusion of words with similar roots but different meanings. Behind Freud's two uses of 'mésalliance' thus lies the idea of contamination: a false connection that confuses words or identities and creates a hybrid that reveals repressed relational desires or anxieties. Jay Geller observes that, according to Freud, the fears that parapraxes betray around the intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles in his contemporary Vienna are driven by the perceived 'contamination' of the gene pool and the dissolution of so-called 'German' identity that this entails.[203] The condemnation of such misalliances, in other words, stems from the urge to transmit and consolidate one's own identity through future generations.

The link that Freud establishes between misplaced connections and intergenerational transmission stands at the heart of the misalliances in *Un amour* and *Honrarás*. In the family histories they delineate, the identity that these infelicitous matches put at stake is less one of 'race' than of class.[204] Fallarás exposes 'misalliance' as a concept rooted in upper-class privilege when she contemplates the gated community in which she was brought up. Her journey to reconnect with her dead relatives leads her back to this childhood home, which becomes the site for her writing of the story. She describes this setting as:

> una casita abandonada en medio de las ruinas de lo que fue la Grand Oasis Park, urbanización parida en los años setenta para que los hijos de los *high class* no tuvieran que mezclarse con el resto. O sea, para evitar la contaminación, qué idiotez.[205]

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[203] Jay Geller, 'The Psychopathology of Everyday Vienna: Psychoanalysis and Freud's Familiars', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 85.5 (2004), 1209–1223 (1214).

[204] Angot portrays questions of 'race' and class as tightly interwoven in *Un amour*: the class struggle she recounts has its roots in the historical relationship between Gentiles and Jews.

[205] Cristina Fallarás, *Honrarás a tu padre y a tu madre* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2018), 155. Henceforth page numbers will be listed in the body of the text.

Here, Fallarás makes explicit the concern with contamination that caused upper-class families such as her own—the victors, so to speak, of the Civil War—to erect a boundary that closed off their homes from the outside world. With the personifying 'parida', she unmasks the eugenics behind the construction of this 'urbanización'. Shutting out external influence is designed to prevent bourgeois children from mingling outside their own social milieu. There is a clear link between the urge to preserve upper-class identity and the fear that its transmission through future generations will be somehow diluted should any 'mixing' take place with children from other backgrounds. Fallarás's sardonic mimicking of such upper-class discourse as she differentiates 'los *high class*' from 'el resto' highlights the particular perspective from which a relationship is condemned as a 'misalliance'. Written from the ruins of Grand Oasis Park, where the boundaries between inside and outside the compound have crumbled away, Fallarás's account exposes the futility of these designs to segregate and so keep singular bourgeois identity.

According to Christine in *Un amour*, a similar fantasy of social separation underlies incestuous abuse. At the end of the text, she purports to explain the disastrous unravelling of their so-called family story to her mother, claiming that Pierre's rape was a case of social rather than individual desire. Her analysis is strongly inflected by Pierre Bourdieu's theory that supposedly individual stories are in fact determined by the social structures in which they originate, structures which are transmitted from one generation to the next. Even more clearly than in *Honrarás*, Angot reveals the separation into superior and inferior social groups on which the notion of misalliance rests. Yet in Christine's account, it is not the liaison between members of these groups that is off limits but the official recognition of the relationship, for example, through marriage:

> Vous pouviez avoir une relation, mais à condition de respecter certaines règles, qui garantissaient que tu n'infiltrerais pas son monde. Qu'il y aurait des limites. La séparation de vos deux mondes devait être établie, et la supériorité du sien devait être

> maintenue, bien au-dessus. Il ne fallait pas qu'il y ait de fusion. Donc, évidemment, il ne t'épouserait pas.[206]

Recalling the boundary fence surrounding Grand Oasis Park, the dividing lines between upper- and working-class worlds guard against their eventual 'fusion'. Christine considers this social separation as her father's precondition for pursuing his relationship with Rachel. The baseline for this separation, she observes, is Pierre's declaration from the beginning that he will never marry Rachel. His desire to have a child with her, by contrast, shows that the proscribed fusion between classes is not biologically determined.[207] The 'mésalliance' between them, as Christine conceives it, arises only when Rachel persuades Pierre to recognise their daughter legally and give her his surname. The transmission of the Angot name, and the amalgamation of class identities that it signifies, is what makes this liaison taboo.

It is the social recognition of this connection, Christine argues, that Pierre aims so violently to invalidate through his incestuous abuse:

> C'était la négation automatique [de la reconnaissance]. Changement de point de vue. L'interdit fondamental, là, c'est plus celui des relations sexuelles entre ascendants et descendants, mais celui de la mésalliance. Comme ça il y avait toujours d'un côté toi, et de l'autre lui. (210-11)

Incest is constructed as a counterforce to the effects of the misalliance: a relationship in which one taboo effectively negates the other. The bind between them is present from the text's very title which, subverting romantic expectations of star-crossed lovers, simultaneously designates the parents' misalliance, the father's incestuous desire, and the resulting destruction of family bonds. By replacing the filial relation between them with one that is sexual, Pierre's rape of Christine annuls his identification of her as his daughter.

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[206] Christine Angot, *Un amour impossible* (Paris: Flammarion, 2015), 205. Henceforth page numbers will be listed in the body of the text.
[207] This is not to underestimate the power dynamics of gender behind Pierre's motivations. By inscribing himself onto Rachel's body, he returns and reduces her to her biological role as mother.

Christine's explanation departs from the two principal opposing theories of incest, the first proposed by the sociologist Edvard Westermarck and the other by Freud. For Westermarck, the incest prohibition arises from an innate aversion to sexual relations between people who have been raised together.[208] But in Freud's view, all infants have incestuous impulses—impulses which of course form the basis of the Oedipal complex—and the incest prohibition in society exists to repress them.[209] Christine puts forward a third possibility: in her analysis, Pierre's incestuous impulse is ingrained not in the individual but in the social unconscious. If the transmission of upper-class identity is determined primarily along social lines, Pierre's disavowal of this filial bond restores his and Rachel's milieux to their original state of separation.

The destructive relationship that Angot exposes between misalliance, incest and the transmission of class identity also resonates with *Honrarás*. In Fallarás's narrative, unlike Angot's, incestuous desire is only ever implied. The implication, however, is that this desire is the secret trigger behind the catastrophic divisions that frame her family history. The secret surfaces in a discussion with her mother about the latter's grandfather, Delfín Sánchez Juárez, who was the grandson of the former Mexican president and national hero, Benito Juárez. Tracing back to the start of her own grandfather's family story, Cristina recounts how Pablo Sánchez (Juárez) and his younger brother were sent by their aunt to a Jesuit boarding school after their mother died in childbirth and their father failed to return for either her or their children. This abandonment remains something of a mystery, and the absence of explanation is emphasised by the jarring jump from the account of Delfín's *coup de foudre* encounter with Sophie Larqué, his future wife, at a hotel in Pau, to the story of her childbirth,

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[208] Debra Lieberman, Daniel M. T. Fessler, and Adam Smith, 'The Relationship Between Familial Resemblance and Sexual Attraction: An Update on Westermarck, Freud, and the Incest Taboo', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37.9 (2011), 1229–1232 (1229).
[209] Bertrand Pulman, 'A Contribution to the History of the Debate Between Sociology and Psychoanalysis: The Responses of Westermarck, Durkheim and Freud to "the Horror of Incest"', trans. by Amy Jacobs, *Revue française de sociologie*, English edn, 53.4 (2012), 414–38 (423).

death and burial in Elizondo for which he is absent. When Cristina returns to this story in the writing present, she notes that her initial version had cast Delfín as a wilful deserter. Her mother María Jesús challenges this interpretation: she implies that the agency behind the abandonment lay not with Delfín but his sister Cristina, after whom the narrator is named. It is María Jesús's version that shapes the way in which this story is told in *Honrarás*, which grants the sister the dominant role in the events that unfold. The control that the latter exerts over her brother is evident from the start, but it looks at first as if her fury at his departure with Sophie is fired by the latter's unsuitability as a match. Coupled with her perception of Sophie as an 'animalillo ordinario' (103), the fact that attention is drawn insistently in the narrative to Sophie's working in a humble hat shop subtly designates Delfín's misalliance as the source of Cristina's rage.[210]

Inklings emerge subsequently that Cristina's drive to thwart this relationship is about more than protecting the family name. When the narrator presses her mother further as to the nature of Cristina's powerful hold over Delfín, she replies that 'Creo que detrás de esto hay una historia de amor' (189). María Jesús's disclosure that when Delfín's grave was found by Pablo and his body exhumed, his sister's glove was found lying across his face, appears to confirm this suspicion. In describing the cause of Delfín's death, Fallarás hints heavily that the sibling relationship was indeed an incestuous one when she notes that being shot in the face was the fate typically inflicted by a jealous husband on his wife's lover.[211] Cristina's glove thus comes to signify both her role as lover and the hand that she had in keeping Delfín from his children. The narrator portrays this story of the glove as a turning point in her

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[210] For a discussion of the possible allusions to prostitution in the insistence on Sophie's profession, see Ana Casas, 'El detenido-desaparecido y la autoficción de los "nietos": *Honrarás a tu padre y a tu madre* de Cristina Fallarás', *Revista Letral: Revista Electrónica de Estudios Transatlánticos de Literatura*, 23 (2020), 168–91 (179).

[211] In her analysis of *Honrarás*, Casas observes that the alternative version of Delfín's death which comes to light is that he was shot by a jealous husband (2020), 179. She does not address, however, the implications of the emphasis that Fallarás places on the finding of Cristina's glove upon Delfín's remains.

conception of the family history: '—Y allí, sobre los restos de su rostro reventado, estaba el guante de mi abuela Cristina./ Quiero gritar: ¡Un momento, un momento, un momento! Pero esto lo cambia todo. Todo el relato cambió durante aquella cena' (193). The uncovering of this secret functions as a kind of narrative fulcrum which changes the whole story. It offers an intriguing parallel with the 'changement de point de vue' that Pierre's abuse brings about in Angot's family narrative. In both cases, the incestuous relationship determines and distorts the perspective from which the story comes to be told. This official version has been constructed by the bourgeois part of the family, the authors suggest, with the intention of writing out the 'other side' appended to their genealogy through the act of misalliance.

Retracing Family and Story Lines

In *Un amour*, Angot frames this transmission of the family story explicitly in terms of an incestuous drive when Christine concedes that by repeatedly denigrating her mother, 'j'ai joué le jeu de mon père' (194). She admits that once she had met her father, she compared Rachel to him unfavourably, attributing greater worth to Pierre's intellect, worldliness and experience. In her eagerness to take after him, Christine excitedly directs her mother's attention to the physical resemblance between her and her father: '—La forme de mon pouce c'est la même que la sienne. Exactement. Regarde. Regarde mes doigts. Tu as vu? T'avais jamais remarqué? Tu trouves pas que je lui ressemble?' (116-117). This desired identification with the father takes place at the expense of the mother: just as Christine values Pierre's education, knowledge and taste—all advantages, of course, of his upper-class upbringing—she criticises Rachel's lack of such qualities. As if in a nineteenth-century Naturalist novel, social privilege merges here with biological heredity to consolidate and conserve *haut-bourgeois* identity: 'De père en fils on y avait souvent été médecins, on y était curieux du monde, on y avait la passion des huîtres' (8). Angot uses the 'on' to convey the

uniform nature of this identity and the erasure of gender, which binds together the generations of father and son in an embedding of class structures. The equation that she proposes here between paternal legacy and self-perpetuation adds an essential dimension to Christine's sociological explanation of Pierre's rape. Contrary to Westermarck's theories about inbreeding, the importance attached to Christine's resemblance to her father inscribes narcissistic desire at the heart of his incestuous abuse. The self-same dimension of this sexual act reinforces the perception that Pierre is seeking somehow to reverse the melding of his class identity with that of Rachel. Raping his daughter is constructed as a fantasy of self-replication, an act which paradoxically doubles his genealogical line through Christine even as he denies it. There is more: by way of this paternal doubling, in which Pierre subsumes Christine's identity into his own, maternal legacy is effectively erased. The narcissistic compulsion to preserve bourgeois identity, in other words, propels Pierre to suppress the mother's side of the genealogical story and replace it with his own. Christine develops a parallel between this drive towards self-perpetuation and her own treatment of Rachel in previous works, in which the account of the abuse that she gives comes at the expense of the mother's voice. In a discomfiting mirroring of Pierre's self-replicating gesture, Christine seems unconsciously to consolidate her narrative claim by enforcing a singular storyline.

This connection between narcissistic desire and the transmission of only one's own side of the story offers some insight into why the revelation of the incestuous secret in *Honrarás* 'cambia todo'. Cristina's jealous actions, Fallarás implies, have determined the course that the family history has taken, by redirecting both its narrative and genealogical lines. Her successful thwarting of Delfín's return to Sophie created the illusion that he had abandoned her. The perceived negation of their relationship serves to 'rectify' the fusion of social milieux in their misalliance; it follows that, like in *Un amour*, the divide between Delfín and Sophie's upper- and working-class origins is more rigidly reinstated. What is

more, the fact that Delfín is forced to relinquish his children also allows his sister to counteract as far as possible the merging of the Sánchez Juárez and Larqué family lines. When she recounts the episode in which Pablo chances upon his father's grave and realises that he had in fact died in Zaragoza in 1935, the narrator notes that this discovery contradicted the version of events supplied to him by his aunt Cristina, who had claimed that Delfín had passed away shortly after Sophie. Having erased their father's influence alongside that of the mother, Cristina takes control of the upbringing of the two boys, dispatching them to the boarding school where they stayed until the expulsion of the Jesuits under the Second Spanish Republic. Fallarás imputes her grandfather's Nationalist allegiances to the attack on the institution that had become his home. This conveniently personal, depoliticised account of Pablo's decision to fight for Franco—a decision, of course, that led him to become second in command of the firing squad that would execute Fallarás's future paternal grandfather—places his aunt Cristina correspondingly as puppet-master, dictating the direction of his life-story. Her influence over the family history is made evident in the writing present when María Jesús, in a telling parapraxis, refers to her as 'mi abuela Cristina, en fin, mi tía abuela Cristina' (188). The deliberate obfuscation as to whether Cristina is María Jesús's grandmother or her great-aunt attests to the successful effacing of Sophie Larqué from the genealogical narrative. Consummating her incestuous desire, Cristina replaces Sophie in the family history, in effect, as the mother of Pablo and Delfín. She makes them twice the sons of the Sánchez Juárez side of the family, a self-doubling that sets the stage for the domination of the Nationalist strand of the story. It is no coincidence that Cristina's forename is passed on to the author herself as well as her surname: the duplication seems to corroborate the double transmission of the Sánchez Juárez line that she desires. Christened by her paternal grandfather, Cristina Fallarás Sánchez (Juárez) comes to symbolise the agency that the

upper-class half of the family has held thus far over their history, and how a misalliance threatens once more to disrupt it.

Both *Un amour* and *Honrarás* thus expose the incestuous dynamics of the way in which the family history has been handed down to them. The drive to uphold the social status that the misalliances in these stories risk compromising forces their different narrative lines into one that is singular. This 'official' account of the family history legitimises one version of the story as it rules out any others that might contradict it. Just as Angot, through Christine, confesses her complicity in perpetuating her father's legacy, Fallarás makes plain the exclusively bourgeois perspective from which the histories of her family and country alike were told to her as a child. Both authors acknowledge their own role in skewing, in favour of the dominant class, the storytelling process. The impossible conversations to which Fallarás and Angot turn in these texts attempt to restore the perspectives that have been written out of the family history, while also surpassing the antagonistic relationship between telling one version of the story and suppressing another. Neither author excludes the perspective that has prevailed to this point: Angot incorporates the accusations of the mother that have monopolised previous accounts of the abuse, and Fallarás includes the story of her maternal as well as her paternal grandparents. I will now turn my attention to the different approaches that Angot and Fallarás employ to make these clashing perspectives on the family history speak to one another. As they braid the separate strands of this story into a shared narrative space, do the authors manage to bring about something like a dialectical resolution? By probing the authors' own assessments of the success of their narrative dialogues, I examine to what extent it is possible to shift the transmission of a divided family history beyond any one point of view.

5.2 Illusory Exchanges in *Un amour impossible*

Angot opens *Un amour* by focusing on what appears to be her own, radical 'changement de point de vue' on the incest narrative that courses through her oeuvre. She re-sets the scene in a way that challenges the change in perspective that Pierre's incestuous abuse is designed to effect, as well as the exclusively first-person viewpoint that she has adopted in previous works. The opening line, 'Mon père et ma mère se sont rencontrés à Châteauroux' (7) is written in the mode of a conventional family narrative. Angot uses deictics to write Pierre back into the very family story from which he had attempted to extricate himself, at the same time as she reinstates the merging of social milieux via the 'et' that binds him and Rachel together. Her characteristic use of the first person is curious here considering that the beginning of the story precedes her.[212] The narrative speaker is still Christine, but the viewpoint from which events are relayed in the first section is in fact that of Rachel. First-person narrative voice, in other words, becomes a vehicle for third-person perspective. Claire Devarrieux and Laurence Houot both argue that Angot's espousal of her mother's point of view harmonises perspectives that had formerly been at odds with each other. But such a reading overlooks the significance of Angot's choice to retain the narrative 'je'. Houot goes so far as to interpret the text as a reconciliation between Christine and Rachel.[213] Her claim that the differences between their views on the traumatic events are resolved in *Un amour* is supported by the fusion of their perspectives through which the story is told. Yet as the text builds towards exposing the (open) secret of Pierre's incest, the fissures beneath this supposedly synergic narration come to the surface. The account of Pierre and Rachel's

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[212] As Cavarero states in *Relating Narratives*, the beginning of all autobiographies can only be known through the narration of others (2000), 39. These narrative dynamics become crucial in *Un amour* to highlighting the lack of agency that Christine holds over the events that determine her life-story.
[213] Laurence Houot, '"Un amour impossible": Christine Angot, la genèse', *Culturebox*, 18 August 2015, n.p. <http://culturebox.francetvinfo.fr/livres/romans/un-amour-impossible-christine-angot-la-genese-225449> [accessed 01 February 2020]

relationship and of Christine's birth, childhood and adolescence proceeds chronologically, with any knowledge of the incestuous rape withheld in the text until it is abruptly announced to Rachel by a family friend. Given the first-person narrative mode, the references to Christine's abuse at the hands of her father are glaring in their absence. At the centre of *Un amour* is an epistemological conflict as to who knows, who does not know, and who pretends or is compelled not to know about the abuse that is taking place. The pairing of Rachel's perspective on events with Christine's voice serves only to highlight the jarring effect of their alignment.

One-Way Conversations

By laying bare the suppression of one perspective by the other when they come together in the text, Angot undermines from the outset the potential for more than one version of the story to be voiced. Far from offsetting this impression, the prominent role that dialogue plays in the narrative reinforces it. Large parts of the story are told through staged conversations, between Rachel and Pierre in the first part of the text, and subsequently between Rachel and Christine. They may *look* like dialogues but they seldom behave like them. This is visibly the case when the communication between Rachel and Pierre shifts to letters, after he refuses to return when she finds out she is pregnant. Angot structures the story of Christine's childhood around an epistolary exchange between Rachel and Pierre, in which the former attempts to cultivate a relationship between him and Christine. Alerted by Pierre to the way that the lines of paternal legacy determine social narratives, Rachel seeks to restore Christine's inheritance by persuading Pierre to recognise his daughter. Her desire for their daughter to bear his name becomes the central focus of the exchange of letters between them and the story that ensues. In this supposedly two-way communication, we only see Pierre's replies: the content of Rachel's letters is described in the narrative rather than transposed

into the text. As well as pointing to the discrepancy between their levels of attachment—it is highly improbable that Pierre would have kept Rachel's letters, contrary to her impassioned guarding of his—including only Pierre's half of the communication structurally reflects his social dominance. Pierre, and not Rachel, Angot implies, holds the agency and power to dictate the family relationships. This one-sided negotiation of Christine's name, which positions Pierre as the absent author, is juxtaposed with the growing dialogue between mother and daughter as Christine grows up. Unlike the monologic nature of Pierre's letters, which rarely invite a response from their recipient, the sections of dialogue between Rachel and Christine recreate the natural flow between voices in conversation. When Christine enquires about Rachel's relationship with Pierre and the circumstances of her own birth, both mother and daughter shape the narration:

> —Pourquoi vous avez voulu un enfant?
> —Parce que c'était un grand amour Christine.
> —Pourquoi vous vous êtes pas mariés alors?
> —Il avait des idées précises sur le genre de femme qu'il voulait, je pense que je correspondais pas à ce qu'il recherchait. Il voulait une femme plus docile je pense. Et puis…c'est difficile tu sais. Il n'y avait sans doute pas que ça.
> —Il y avait quoi d'autre?
> —Eh bien notamment sur le plan social.
> —C'est-à-dire?
> —Ma famille, mes origines, mon milieu, mémé, tout ça…pour lui c'était pas… C'était pas ce qu'il recherchait.
> —Il aimait pas Mémé? (104)

This conversation forms a pair with the first exchange between Rachel and Pierre in the text, in which he outlines the different categories of love and notes that theirs is not the kind that involves marriage (14-15). Pierre's lecture-like explanation bears no resemblance to the active exchange between Christine's questions and Rachel's responses. Theirs is a more collaborative account, in which Christine's child-like perspective exposes the incomprehensibility of Pierre's social agenda when Rachel presents his reasoning. Despite Rachel's assertion that she was not 'docile' enough for Pierre, she goes on to passively regurgitate the way in which class hierarchy has regulated their relationships. This seeming

acceptance is at the heart of the accusation that mounts gradually as the narrative edges towards the revelation of Pierre's abuse. Although Angot shows in *Un amour* how both father and daughter have contributed to suppressing the mother's side of the story, there is a sense that Rachel, too, has participated in this effacement process. The emphasis that Rachel places on paternal legacy leads her to underestimate her own role in her daughter's life and it is this miscalculation, according to Christine, which results in her blindness to Pierre's abuse.

Broken Communication and Narrative Blind Spots

When communication with her daughter begins to break down during Christine's adolescence, Rachel interprets the sudden decline in their relationship as Christine's 'understandable' rejection of her in favour of Pierre (140-1). Having forced Pierre to recognise Christine before leaving Châteauroux, Rachel is able to reconstruct the family story when they arrive in Reims. Through this new start, Christine enters school with the surname Angot in place of Schwartz, she sees her father frequently, and her previous illegitimacy disappears along with any knowledge of the family's background. Just as the mother-daughter dialogue communicates the depth and intimacy of their bond in Châteauroux, in Reims it conveys the progressive deterioration of their relationship. Leading up to the disclosure of Pierre's abuse, the smooth dialogue born of easy, daily interaction between mother and daughter is replaced by snatches of stilted conversation. These fragments are interspersed with narrative commentary that signals the failure of this communication, as is the case after Christine signals that she did not enjoy the week she had spent with her father in Strasbourg because of his outbursts: 'Dans la voiture la conversation n'a pas continué' (148). The inadequacy of the mother-daughter dialogue in telling the story comes to light through this increasing turn to narrative, which draws attention to what is *not*

said as Rachel and Christine attempt to communicate. The full extent of its limitations becomes evident upon the brutal announcement that Pierre 'la sodomise depuis des années' (156). The direct language that is employed cuts through the miscommunication and silence between mother and daughter that precedes it. We realise that, in contrast to Rachel's interpretation, the dramatic change in the dialogue between mother and daughter is in fact a symptom of the enormous strain of the traumatic secret that Christine was forced to keep. Angot seeks here to recreate the 'shocking' impact of this revelation on Rachel through the reader. She makes plain what both parties have allowed to pass unseen in the story to this point and calls into question the mother's avowed astonishment when she hears of the incestuous abuse. Rachel is hospitalised with an 'infection des trompes': 'Elle tombait des nues. En même temps…elle n'était pas surprise' (156). Angot's wordplay does not derive only from the double meaning of 'les trompes' (fallopian tubes) and the reflexive verb 'se tromper' (to make a mistake); she draws too on the deliberate misleading or self-deception that 'tromper' signifies. Christine's accusation thus infiltrates the mother's narrative point of view. She insinuates that like the reader—who has been privy to the incest narrative in previous works by Angot and simply shelved this knowledge, as one suspends disbelief so as to be shocked again—Rachel professes an ignorance that is rather suspect.

By ending the part of the text that purports to be told from Rachel's viewpoint with Christine admitting the mother's 'guilt' on her behalf, Angot strips away the semblance of cohabitation between the mother's perspective and the daughter's voice. Telling the story in such a way either silences Christine, who of course has been party to the abuse all along, or Rachel, as Christine overrides the latter's perspective with her own denunciation. Angot demonstrates that within this apparent co-existence, there is in fact room for only one view of events. Once her version of the story has been proved unreliable, Rachel's perspective vanishes from the text. Angot establishes a direct correlation between Rachel's falling silent

and Christine's coming to voice by beginning the subsequent section with an immediate assertion of agency by Christine: 'J'ai écrit à mon père que je ne voulais plus le voir' (157). This conspicuous shift in perspective signals the start of the second part of the text. Whereas Christine's voice was stifled, at least in part, in order to make room for Rachel's viewpoint, here she sets out her authority over the direction in which the story develops, an authority that she impresses through writing. Angot tacitly associates Christine's coming to voice with her own authorship. She seems to enact the narrative dynamics of her oeuvre at the start of this second section, in which the emphasis on first-person narration eclipses Rachel's perspective entirely.

Silences, Silencing and Sociological Solutions

The abrupt transition from one point of view to the other underscores the silence to which Christine's account reduces Rachel. Perhaps the most powerful example occurs when Christine recounts that she transferred the blame for her abuse onto her mother in the wake of Pierre's death:

> Dans les années qui ont suivi, j'ai commencé à lui attribuer mes échecs. Je l'accusais de ne pas s'être remise en question, de n'être restée en analyse que trois ans, d'avoir trouvé en mon père un coupable facile, de ne pas avoir réfléchi à sa propre responsabilité dans ce qui m'était arrivé. Je lui conseillais de ne pas s'étonner, par conséquent, de la difficulté dans laquelle sombrait notre relation. Je lui disais que j'étais la victime de leur égoïsme à tous les deux. (176)

Christine's own admission of guilt here changes the usual narrative dynamics of Angot's oeuvre. As critics such as Ruth Cruickshank and Shirley Jordan argue, 'speaking out, speaking out of turn' is the means through which Angot powerfully breaks through the silence in which the incest taboo continues to be enshrined in society.[214] But in *Un amour*,

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[214] Shirley Jordan, 'Reconfiguring the Public and the Private: Intimacy, Exposure and Vulnerability in Christine Angot's *Rendez-vous*', *French Cultural Studies*, 18.2 (2007), 201–18 (214); Ruth Cruickshank, 'Christine Angot: Trauma, Transgression and the Write to Reply', *Fin de millénaire French Fiction: The Aesthetics of Crisis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 168–213 (171).

the relationship between speaking out and staying silent is different. In this passage, for example, the spate of accusations reflects the dominating presence of Christine's voice in previous works. The anaphoric 'je' casts mother and daughter into the fixed roles of speaker and silent listener: in this quick succession of allegations, no space is left for the mother to respond. Yet framed by Christine's concession, this narrative monopoly is not allowed to run unchecked. Contrary to her endeavour to eradicate silence at all costs, by confronting the reader with accounts of her abuse in unsparing detail, here Angot seems to incorporate silences into her work. In the first part of the text, the muting of the daughter's voice as she is abused, and in the second, the censoring of the mother as she is blamed, serve to elucidate the inevitably partial perspective from which the story is being told.

The antagonistic dynamics that Angot stages in *Un amour* of speech *or* silence, one version *or* the other, become entrenched in the modes of communication that govern the second part of the text. For just as the relationship between mother and daughter breaks down completely, so does any real dialogue between them. In its stead are brief, infrequent and mundane telephone calls where the unspoken agreement is that only Christine is permitted to ring: it is she who initiates and cuts short these strained exchanges. Telephone calls are subsequently replaced by text messages that seem only to widen the gap in communication between mother and daughter and thus the fissure in their relationship. It is through this very exchange of messages, however, that the connection between them slowly begins to be restored. In an attempt to invert the power dynamics, on this occasion Angot includes only *Rachel's* half of the communication. The fact that we derive Christine's questions from Rachel's replies offsets to some extent the primacy given to the 'je' in the narrative sections. Agency slides back and forth between mother and daughter in a way that reinforces the 'either-or' that underlies their exchange, but that also points to Angot's desire to move beyond it.

The exchange of messages leads to a face-to-face meeting, which is relayed through the longest sustained dialogue in the text. Ultimately, this so-called conversation leaves much to be desired. Although on the face of it, their discussion of the incestuous abuse and the reasons behind it provides the opportunity for both perspectives on the story to be aired, it turns into yet another monologue by Christine. The sociological 'lecture' that she delivers stifles response:

> —Tu veux que je te dise vraiment comment je vois les choses? Je suis sûre de ce que je dis. Tu peux ne pas être d'accord. Mais moi je suis sûre. Vous apparteniez à deux mondes différents, étrangers l'un à l'autre, en tout cas c'est comme ça que les choses ont été posées dès le départ. (204)

The rhetorical question encapsulates Christine's dismissal of her mother's reply. While she entertains superficially the possibility that Rachel might not share her opinion, her blunt, closed statements foreclose an exchange of views by forcefully presenting her interpretation as the definitive solution. Angot establishes a link between this conversation—or better said, the lack thereof—and the way in which the narrative has unfolded thus far. Unlike the conversation when Christine was a child about Rachel's relationship with Pierre, in which each question and response followed naturally from the other, the jolting between topics here demonstrate Christine's control over the story. Amid a story about a necklace that Pierre had given Rachel, Christine abruptly changes the direction of the conversation: '—Je peux te poser une question qui n'a rien à voir?/—Bien sûr./—Il parlait des Juifs quelquefois?' (199). As this line of questioning develops, despite Rachel's repeated hesitations Christine continues to insist that her mother give her an example of Pierre's anti-Semitism. Directing Rachel's account of their relationship in this way enables Christine to shore up the sociological solution that she provides in *Un amour*. It explains, for example, the weight she gives to the bind between the family story and the social narratives that precede and surround it. By making this conversation an emblem of the narrative thus far, Angot points to the way in which the story to this point adheres to Christine's explanation of events. This

interpretation glosses over the mother's perspective, Angot implies, in the very same manner as she is silenced in their discussion.

To stage Christine's position as listener in this way signals the failure of the narrator throughout the text to represent different sides of the story, and indeed to recognise the power that she has to do so. Even as Christine appears to acknowledge her hand in writing out her mother's perspective, she portrays the impulse to do so as inherited from her father. She explains his drive to suppress the mother's side of the genealogical story, in turn, as part of a wider social compulsion to secure a bourgeois identity. That a text which reveals the fundamental limitations of any singular perspective should also apply a single sociological explanation so unquestioningly is certainly ironic. Christine elicits her mother's account in this conversation, but the version that transpires is filtered through what Christine expects and wants to hear. The reception and transmission of Rachel's story are conceived as a selective process in which the mother's version is inevitably contaminated by that of the narrating subject. Much like the threat to class separation that misalliance poses, this narrative contamination undercuts the claim that two distinct 'sides' of the story are articulated in *Un amour*. The two halves of the text, like those of the conversation between mother and daughter, are but an illusion, since both are shaped by Christine's singular perspective. The patent imbalance of this conversation indicates that the attempt to move away from the narrative dynamics of previous works in *Un amour* in order to include the mother's point of view has ultimately failed.

A Different Kind of Conversation

Un amour does not end, however, with this one-sided conversation. The narrative concludes rather with a return to the telephone conversations and electronic communication between Christine and Rachel, but with a significantly more positive outlook: 'On a commencé à se

téléphoner plus souvent, et plus régulièrement' (216). Merged together into the 'on', mother and daughter become equal agents in their communication. This is by no means a smooth restoration, as a subsequent missed conversation between them shows: Christine telephones Rachel, but her mother is unable to talk to her because she has dinner guests. Instead, she sends an email in reply which sets the tone for a different, more balanced kind of exchange between mother and daughter:

> J'ai regretté de ne pouvoir te parler hier, mais ce n'était pas facile. […] Lors de la lecture de ton manuscrit, j'avais relevé quelques petites choses à te communiquer éventuellement. Est-ce que ça t'intéresse? Libre à toi ensuite. Rien de très important. (217)

Like the chain of text messages transcribed into the narrative, this email allows Rachel's voice to emerge where it had been suppressed in the conversation. Vitally, it also makes space for the daughter's reply. It is worth noting that the connection between the conversational and narrative dynamics in *Un amour* arises in relation to Christine's manuscript. Despite Rachel's rhetoric of self-effacement in this email, the fact that Christine has asked for her mother's feedback on the manuscript and that Rachel elicits Christine's opinion in return points to the prospect of a negotiation over how the story may be told.

Whether or not this manuscript refers to *Un amour* is left ambiguous, but considering that this is essentially a *missed* communication between mother and daughter, Angot seems to picture a future narrative negotiation, a potential revision, perhaps, of the work we have just read. At the end of both sections, Angot's belated identification of perspective unravels the premise of alignment between the points of view of mother and daughter, by enacting and exposing the restrictive angle from which the story is narrated. In each case, it is this very alignment that blocks one version of the story or the other from view. It is hardly surprising, then, that Angot sees potential in the more broken communication that takes place between Christine and Rachel at the text's close. The gap that this mode of exchange

establishes between their points of view appears to be the very medium through which *both* voices might be heard, without one suppressing the other. By foregrounding the breaks in their communication, and the painful and incomplete move towards a different kind of dialogue, Angot disentangles the clashing perspectives of mother and daughter that were falsely enmeshed in the first section of the text. Distinguishing these points of view, she suggests, is the first step towards the prospective narrative negotiation that she imagines, towards an exchange of versions in which each challenges and exposes the limitations of the other without either being reduced to silence.

5.3 Dialogues with the Dead: *Honrarás a tu padre y a tu madre*

In *Honrarás*, this strategy of separation appears to be in place from the outset. Fallarás divides the family story explicitly according to different points of view, apportioning the narrative of her paternal and her maternal grandparents into two distinct sections, 'El asesinato' and 'El coronel'. The final section, 'La familia', recounts the fusion of these family histories through the narrator, Cristina. Fallarás's addition of a third section posits a shared space in which, unlike in *Un amour*, these two sides might come together. The seemingly dialectical structure she adopts points to the development of a new version of the family story in *Honrarás* via a process of dialectical reasoning, in which Fallarás successfully brings the different perspectives into dialogue. The potential for amalgamating these opposing sides and their competing claims in the text rests on the different conversational dynamics that Fallarás delineates. Angot's narrative negotiation is tentatively set in the future, as a prospective conversation between mother, daughter and their versions of the story. In *Honrarás*, conversely, dialogue is introduced as the very foundation of the

present narrative project: 'Me llamo Cristina y he salido a buscar a mis muertos. Caminando. Buscar a mis muertos para no matarme yo. ¿Para vivir? No estoy segura. Convocarlos, dialogar con mis muertos' (11). Part and parcel of the dialogue that Cristina constructs with her dead relatives through the text is the need first to 'convocarlos', to gather them together; the distinction between sides melts away in the indiscriminate 'los muertos'. The place that the narrator herself assumes in this conversation appears to be a liminal one, poised between the living and the dead. From this in-between position, she underplays the implied choice between one or the other by acting as a bridge between the two worlds. Casting herself as a channel for communication between them, she minimises her own intervention in the process.

Cristina portrays this effacement as a prerequisite for her narrative journey, which begins with a surrendering of her past self:

> Me llamo Cristina y salí de Barcelona a pie hace cuatro días. Al amanecer. Eché a andar con la sensación flotante que imprime en el ánimo la total desposesión. Sencillamente eché a andar. No queda nada atrás. Nada de lo que fui. Nada de lo que tuve. (20)

By cutting ties with her past, identity and possessions, Cristina indicates, she is primed to occupy the liminal position that she envisages. The description of this as a form of dispossession assumes a significant social dimension in the context of Fallarás's oeuvre, given the author's own account of eviction in her previous text, *A la puta calle: Crónica de un desahucio* (2013). When she finds herself on the streets with her two young daughters, her temporary ejection from the capitalist economy allows her to bear witness to its injustices. In *Honrarás*, she seems to employ this dispossession as a narrative strategy through which she might give a more perspicacious account of her family's history, as well as of contemporary society and Spain's recent past. The reference to 'la desposesión' recalls Ybarra's depiction of her mother in *El comensal* as weightless, burdened neither by her past

nor by family legacy. This is not so much Cristina's natural state, Fallarás indicates, as an active process in which she must strip herself of her belongings before undertaking her genealogical journey.

The link between relinquishing her belongings and engaging in dialogue with the dead comes into view when Cristina observes that what we possess in fact blocks us from hearing the voices of 'nuestros muertos', voices which she intends to recover:

> Aquello que poseemos, que creemos poseer, ahuyenta a nuestros muertos, impide que sus voces lleguen hasta nosotros. Quizás todo silencio, todo miedo, toda cobardía estén construidos para poseer, para acumular, para no perder aquello que creemos poseer.
>
> O podría deberse también a nuestra necesidad de ser amados. O sea, de pertenecer. (167)

By divesting herself of possessions, Cristina seeks to break through this silence and the dynamics of belonging it supports. Her claim that 'No queda nada atrás' suggests that she has successfully written out her past, as if such a clean break were possible. The implications for Cristina's belonging in the genealogical sense are evident in the repeated introduction 'Me llamo Cristina': her surname is deliberately withheld on each occasion. In the context of divided family lines, she detaches herself from either 'side' as she strives to recover the voices of *all* her deceased family members. At the end of the text, she considers the account that she has given as contingent on this emancipation: 'sin haber echado a andar desnuda de las cosas y las personas, nada de todo esto habría sido relatado' (167). Much like the reverse disinheritance that Rachel accepts from Christine in *Un amour*—when the latter seems to reject maternal legacy in favour of the paternal one—Cristina envisages a narrative process that disclaims familial bequests. Leaving her free to 'andar desnuda' does not mean that Cristina is at liberty to determine the destination of her story. She is steered instead in a different direction by the dead ancestors that she seeks, who draw the narrator towards her deserted childhood home in Grand Oasis Park. Not only is the abandoned house the place

where Cristina writes, it is also where she imagines her ancestors passing through and telling their stories. Having determined her route they now guide her pen, as she cedes her voice to theirs: ‘Y escribo, ellos me dictan’ (61).

Traumatic Gaps and Crippling Connections

The passive position that Cristina assumes here resonates with the one Christine adopts in the first section of *Un amour* as a channel for the mother’s voice. Whereas Angot thus exposes the impossibility of becoming the other’s mouthpiece, through the divergences that she discloses between narrative voice and viewpoint, Fallarás—or at least Cristina—proclaims the success of this enterprise. In the dialogic writing process that Cristina envisages, her ancestors are able to tell their own stories through a kind of hole or a wound in her self: ‘estos personajes […] van narrándose ahora a través de mí, las historias del Félix Fallarás, de Presentación Pérez, de Pablo Sánchez (Juárez) Larqué, el coronel. Ellos existen en mí y a través de mí. Ahí está mi herida’ (70). This ‘herida’ is quite unlike the figure of the wound in the texts examined thus far. In *Camille*, for example, Daull’s choice to preserve the open wound of her daughter’s loss is an ethical strategy that accounts for Camille’s missing perspective; the wound represents the gap where Camille’s voice should have been. Fallarás’s conception of the wound is closer to the Freudian image of traumatic experience in the tale of Tancred and Clorinda. The story goes that after Tancred inadvertently kills his beloved Clorinda on the battlefield when she was disguised as an enemy knight, he slashes the bark of a tree in despair and blood streams out in place of sap as Clorinda cries that he has wounded her once more. Taking up this image in *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth interprets the voice emanating from the wound as representative of the otherness of traumatic experience, in which another’s voice bears witness to an event that the subject herself cannot

fully comprehend.[215] In *Honrarás*, Fallarás extends this image into an emblem of intergenerational transmission. She portrays the wound as a type of collective inheritance: 'Todos andamos con nuestra herida a cuestas, lo sé, pero la mía apestaba. Por eso me eché andar y por eso salí a buscar a mis muertos. Las heridas las heredamos. El silencio las infecta' (161). The universal nature of this wounding is indicative of the bind in *Honrarás* between familial and social narratives. Fallarás connects the stifling of half her family's history with the *pacto de silencio* in Spain, which brought about on a national level the same silencing of the trauma of the Civil War and its aftermath for those on the losing side. This silence, she argues, infects the wounds that we bear; in doing so, it triggers Cristina's genealogical project. The traumatic wound represents not only the impetus behind the search for her family stories, therefore, but the vehicle for intergenerational communication. She reappropriates the wound in *Honrarás*, it seems, as a narrative strategy for telling the other's story.

Fallarás reproduces the notion of a narrative gap through which other voices can emerge in the form of the text. The highly self-reflexive writing present is interspersed throughout 'El asesinato' and 'El coronel' with narrative sections that relay events from the grandparents' pasts. In these sections, Cristina borrows a quasi-omniscient style that seems to suppress her own subjective position. From this third-person viewpoint, character thoughts, emotions and dialogues are witnessed as if the reader were inhabiting the perspectives of the protagonists themselves. The first section tells the story of Presentación Pérez and Félix Fallarás, the narrator's paternal grandparents: the narrative proceeds from Presentación awaiting Félix's return on the day he is to be dragged from his home by Falangists, through the frantic efforts of Presentación and Félix's mother to elicit the help of their upper-class employers in saving him, up to the moment of his death by firing squad.

[215] Caruth (1996), 2–3.

The traumatic transmission that Cristina envisages in *Honrarás*, in which previous generations speak through those present, underpins his death-story. It is represented by the figure of the family name which, as in *Un amour*, plays a powerful role in how events unfold. For Félix Fallarás, the connection that is forged with the previous generation in bearing his father's name becomes a deadly bind. Despite having distanced himself from Félix Fallarás the elder's unionist involvement and political activism, their shared name causes the confusion of their identities by the Falangists and sees the son executed in his father's place.

The destructive dimension of transmission in *Honrarás* is palpable, too, on the other 'side' of the family story. Fallarás chooses to introduce the colonel into the narrative, somewhat comically, as riddled with a sexually transmitted disease. The notion of contamination re-surfaces here, in the form of a physical infection, to designate the colonel's inappropriate sexual liaisons. Fallarás transforms it into a metaphor, however, when she develops a parallel between the colonel's infection and the silence that surrounds parts of her family's history, most notably with respect to her paternal grandfather. Silence proves similarly contagious: 'Me llamo Cristina y esta es la historia de una familia y sus silencios. La historia de cómo el silencio contagia, atraviesa generaciones y fermenta' (34). Conjoined through her own birth, the family histories that she narrates are paradoxically held together by silence. This silence seems to negate Félix Fallarás's existence for the second time by denying him his story. Fallarás anticipates the danger that entwining these stories poses in narrative terms when she recounts the first time in which the two histories collide. Just prior to Félix's execution, she fantasises a fleeting moment of connection taking place between the two grandfathers:

> Por un segundo, los ojos de los dos hombres se cruzan, en ambos casos teñidos de una ligera compasión que desaparece al instante. […] La escena dibuja un cuadro de extrañeza general, el asombro de que sus protagonistas, los que van a morir y los que van a matar, sean seres humanos. (74)

As Cristina imagines the gazes of her two grandfathers meeting, she indicates the potential for a future alignment between their perspectives to take place in the text. Zooming out temporarily, Fallarás observes that as it is presently narrated, the scene unites perpetrators and victims in a shared humanity. The fleeting façade of a level playing field vanishes abruptly, of course, when Félix is shot. Here Fallarás identifies both the temptation to bring about a kind of reconciliation between conflicting perspectives in the account of the family history that she gives, and the danger of neutralising their differences in this way. To do so, she suggests, would replicate the fatal consequences of the first meeting between the two grandfathers in the telling of the story, of one side, so to speak, writing out the other.

To what extent does Cristina shift the family history beyond these contagious dynamics of silence and censoring as she brings the competing perspectives together in *Honrarás*? As she moves towards interweaving the different strands of the story, does she succeed in forging a different mode of connection and transmission to the destructive ones that she identifies in 'El asesinato'? The second section concludes with a very different meeting between the two families, one which prefaces 'contamination' of another kind: the misalliance between the narrator's parents. It closes with a conversation between the son of Presentación Pérez and Félix Fallarás, who shares his father's name, and Pablo Sánchez (Júarez) Larqué, on the day that the latter's daughter accompanies him to the bank and meets Félix for the first time. Concluding 'El coronel' with this conversation seems to prefigure Cristina's drawing the family histories into dialogue in the final section of *Honrarás*. The account of this chance meeting clearly evokes the previous fatal encounter between the two families even as it seemingly sets a new relationship in motion:

> El joven levanta la vista. Sus dos ojos de color añil van del padre a la hija durante un segundo antes de que se levante y se acerque a saludar.
> —Félix—habla el director del banco–, ya conoces a don Pablo Sánchez Larqué. –El joven asiente con la cabeza.
> —Félix Fallarás–se presenta–, para lo que precise a partir de ahora.

—Félix…¿cómo ha dicho?–pregunta el recién llegado.
—Fallarás. Félix Fallarás. (142–43)

The second in which Félix Fallarás looks up and across from father to daughter recalls the second that Cristina imagines in which his father's gaze meets that of Pablo. The repetition of the family name across the scene consolidates this parallel; it evokes Félix Fallarás's name being called prior to his execution. This anagnorisis is, of course, one-sided. It aligns the reader with Pablo's perspective as we too identify the moment as one of repetition and recognition, sharing knowledge which Félix the younger does not (yet) possess. As Pablo's double-take implies, the previous generation seem to speak once more through those present in this scene via the shared name, which again blurs the identities of father and son. Rather than focus on an incipient conversation between Félix Fallarás and María Jesús (who remains a silent bystander throughout the scene), Fallarás portrays the first meeting between the children as overshadowed by the ghost of the one between their fathers.

The traumatic enmeshment of identities and encounters in this conversation presages the discomfiting union that is to follow, both between the children and in the text as the family histories are joined in 'La familia'. Intergenerational transmission dominates the possibility of a new relationship between these family stories in a way that also calls into question the seamless cutting of ties to her past that Cristina professes at the start of the text. The capacity for such separation, and with it the potential to retrieve perspectives from both sides of the familial divide, disappears when she goes on to equate her own identity with that of the family history. This fusion of self and story is made explicit in an exchange between Cristina and Manolo, an interlocutor who passes through the house in which she is writing and whose presence is otherwise unexplained. To Manolo's request that Cristina tell her ancestors' stories, she replies that she herself is their story:

[…T]ienes que contar esa historia.
—Déjame en paz, eso ya me lo has dicho.

—Esa que guardas es *la historia*.
—La historia soy yo.
—Siempre. Pero deja eso. Cuenta la historia de ellos.
—Yo soy la historia de ellos. (65)

Cristina's claim to a liminal position from which she might give a more balanced account is compromised here in her portrait of herself as the embodiment of the family history. Her exchange with Manolo establishes a tension between Cristina's protestation that she 'is' the story and the need to tell 'their' story that Manolo continues to stress. Manolo insists on differentiating speaker from story, while Cristina asserts that she and the family history are one and the same. Fashioning herself and her life-story as products of intergenerational transmission in this manner seems to renounce, correspondingly, her ability to change the way in which it has been handed down. The commandment from which the text takes its title, to honour both parents, looks increasingly like an unattainable aspiration.

Singular Family Lines and Suppressed Sides of the Story

The doubt cast by this fusion of self and story on Cristina's ability to balance alternative points of view is reaffirmed as she ties together the separate strands of the family history in the final section. From the start, 'La familia' unsettles the narrative balance between the different family lines that the ostensibly dialectical structure of the text anticipates. Before moving into the writing present, the section begins with a final episode from the point of view of the colonel, situated in Zaragoza in 1983. In this scene, Fallarás portrays the latter's attempt to record his own version of his life-story as he traces it back to the story of his grandfather, Benito Júarez. The brief *mise-en-abyme* of the colonel as would-be author sets the stage for the narrative power dynamics that will be unmasked in 'La familia': it portends the writing present being dictated by the Sánchez Juárez family line. In the supposed fusion of the family histories, only one of the family lines has truly fed into the way in which the story has been passed on to and perpetuated through Cristina. The final section thus functions

as a type of confession of the choice Cristina made as a child to belong to one 'side' of the family rather than the other. She visualises this decision in terms of the possessions that surrounded her as a result of the Sánchez Juárez family's gains from the war, trappings which directly controvert her pretensions to 'desposesión': 'Todo,/ casas de veraneo, piscinas de riñón, pavos reales, trayectos en coche, cristaleras, balcones, buganvillas […] todo sin excepción/ levanta, forma parte de esta construcción sobre el silencio. Y ahí reside la opción./ Mi opción' (209). This childhood choice, Cristina suggests, has made her complicit in the silencing of the other side of her family. Despite her undertaking to alter this in the writing present, 'La familia' reveals the dialogue on which she embarks to be equally distorted. As Cristina recounts episodes in which fragments of the family history come to light, the paternal side of the family are invariably the agents behind it, be it the colonel, his wife María Josefa, or María Jesús. In a similar vein to Angot's belated identification of perspective in *Un amour*, certain anecdotes from 'El asesinato' are repeated in conversations between Cristina and her mother. Their reiteration demonstrates that the story that Cristina has told, in particular that of Delfín and Sophie, has been shaped through dialogue with the maternal side of the family alone.

Fallarás illustrates the effect of this singular dialogue on the father's side when Cristina asks her parents to tell her the story of how they met. At first, the story of their misalliance seems to surpass the divisive familial differences through their love. Yet in the repeated conversation that Cristina describes, it is only ever her mother who responds. We soon discover that the success of their relationship depends on the suppression of the father's side of the story:

> Esta escena ha ocurrido varias veces.
> Mi padre y mi madre están sentados en el salón de casa después de una comida familiar. Mi padre y mi madre se profesan y se han profesado siempre un amor sin fisuras. Nada se sitúa por encima de ese amor, ni sus antepasados, ni sus descendientes […]

> —¿Cómo os conocisteis?
> En una de las primeras ocasiones en las que sucede esta escena, mi madre contesta:
> —Fue en el banco. Tu padre trabajaba en el Hispano. Siempre dice que se enamoró de mis manos.
> Mi padre, que bebe su cortado junto a una mesa auxiliar, vuelve la cabeza, observa las manos de mi madre y su mirada se adentra hacia algún lugar que no nos pertenece. No me he preguntado nunca cuándo dejó de responder mi padre a las preguntas porque ya le conocí así. Imagino que, puestos a adoptar el relato del otro, cederle las respuestas evita malentendidos. (210-211)

The repetition of 'mi padre y mi madre' conveys the rehearsed united front between Cristina's parents; it echoes the balance between them posited by the title of the text. As the passage progresses, Cristina juxtaposes this bond with the reality that it allows only one of their voices to emerge. The question of different sides returns as Cristina divides her parents once more along the lines of belonging, and again acknowledges her own allegiance. Cristina fuses with her mother into the 'nos' that is unable to access the space of the father's gaze, which thus lies outside the limits of her narration. She depicts her father's mute acquiescence to the mother's version as a ceding of his narrative agency. His choice to 'adoptar el relato del otro' is designed to avoid 'malentendidos', to paper over the inevitable divergences, as it were, between their versions of events. It is not possible to join the side of the victors of the Civil War without adopting their account at the expense of one's own. By drawing attention to these antagonistic dynamics, in which one side of the story must be sacrificed for the 'misalliance' to function, Fallarás indicates the impossibility of accommodating both sides when two conflicting family histories are joined together.

Narrative Disjoins

Like Angot, Fallarás uses the final section to expose the disingenuity of seamlessly fusing together competing perspectives. The inevitable outcome of connecting the stories in this way is that one or the other will be silenced. Is this to say that the dialogue on which Cristina embarks in *Honrarás* is ultimately frustrated? Does this conversation, too, remain beyond

the bounds of the text? While Angot moves towards this potential conversation at the end of *Un amour*, in 'La familia' Fallarás seems to place the prospect of something like a dialectical exchange between the conflicting sides even further out of reach. Contrary to the established account of her parents' love story, Cristina's narrative of their marriage strips away the veneer of a harmonious union between their families. When narrating the moment in which they are wed, she separates the families back out onto their opposing sides of national history:

> La hija del coronel Pablo Sánchez (Juárez) Larqué, el que llegó al cuartel de Castillejos de Zaragoza en 1936 para unirse al golpe de Estado encabezado por Francisco Franco, el alférez que asistió a un fusilamiento en el cementerio con la entrepierna en carne viva, y el hijo de Félix Fallarás Notivol, el Félix Chico, el que justo antes de ser fusilado contra la tapia de Torrero supo que en realidad querían matar a su padre, se casaron el 29 de junio de 1967. (154)

Cristina's mocking of the language of wedding announcements here brings the perturbing nature of this union to the fore. Through this microcosm of the two family histories, and a brutal reminder of the fatal connection that already exists between them, Fallarás violently undercuts the impression of smooth reconciliation. Indeed, she accentuates the jarring nature of their espousal in Cristina's response to the wedding photograph: 'Tengo ante mí la fotografía. Me estremezco. Miro al coronel./ Miro a Presentación, la viuda de Félix Fallarás. Me estremezco' (154). Coupled with the stark specification of Presentación as the widow of the man for whose death the colonel was partly responsible, the narrator's repeated shuddering encourages the reader to react with similar unease to the amalgamation of the two families.

Cristina's response evokes the horror that lies behind this presumed reconciliation between the Fallarás and Sánchez Juárez families. She seems to react to the invisible shadow cast by Félix's absence in a way that brings to mind the leitmotif of the skeleton in the family home that runs throughout the writing present. The story of a little bird that became trapped

in the chimney before the family went on holiday when Cristina was a child, and whose skeleton everyone could see but of which no one spoke upon their return, becomes emblematic in the text of the wilful silencing at the heart of the family history. Clearly, this familial *pacto de silencio* is symptomatic of the political accord in Spain to suppress the traumatic secrets of the Civil War. In both histories, the supposed 'consensus' is exposed as an act of complicity which reinforces the narrative of the victors by suppressing uncomfortable realities that might unsettle it. Through the figure of the family home, Cristina shows how this superficial accord is created—its location is designed, as we have seen, to shut out the potential contamination of the narrative of the victors with that of the vanquished Republicans—and seeks to lay bare what is hidden behind it. The house's upper-class casing symbolises the domination of the maternal line over the shared family space, and the silent presence of the 'esqueleto invisible' stands for the suppressed story at its core. When Cristina returns to the house to write, she discovers that the exterior structure is collapsing. In situating her writing project within these crumbling walls, Fallarás makes the narrative part of the wider endeavour in contemporary Spain to break through the victor's encasing of the story of the Civil War:

> Ahora aquí ya no vive nadie y lo que fue una pretenciosa casita de dos plantas y bodega estilo ibicenco adosada a otras ha perdido el encalado. En el dormitorio principal, el que da a la vieja piscina grande ya reventada, se han abierto unas grietas por las que entran la hiedra y la humedad de este verano pegajoso y miserable, mosquitos y salamanquesas.
> Todo se desmorona excepto la puñetera rejilla con su patita colgando. (40)

Now deserted, Fallarás demonstrates, the house's glossy whitewash is fading to unveil the cracks and crevices beneath. These fissures reveal the sole part of the house that remains unchanged, the 'invisible' skeleton at its centre. The parallel between the disintegrating house and the family story that Cristina is in the process of recovering is reinforced in the description of the present narrative as 'una historia en descomposición' (34). Etymologically speaking, 'descomposición' denotes something that is broken down into simpler

constituents, a separation out into parts that chimes with Angot's disentangling of perspectives in *Un amour*. Just as the site of her writing is falling apart, Cristina tells the story as it is unravelling. Her narrative thereby exposes the rifts between the family stories that persist even in the narrative space that they come to share, fractures which in turn force an encounter with the skeleton that has thus far been ignored.

It is in the absence of its inhabitants, Fallarás suggests, that the cracks in the house have been allowed to surface. She builds on the parallel between the family home and its history as she implies that a similar separation, this time between self and story, is instrumental in the dialogue that she endeavours to create in *Honrarás*. In a kind of narrative loop, Fallarás returns to the conversation that opens the text, which she recalls having with her mother when she was a child, about her fear of the dead. Her mother's response is that the prospect of our lost loved ones returning should not inspire fear, but joy, considering the opportunity that it would grant us to ask them questions. Cristina's address to her mother at the text's close claims that she has managed to hold such a conversation: 'Sí, mamá, ya he hablado con ellos. Y tenías razón. Tenían tantas, tantísimas cosas que contar, tantas preguntas que contestar' (217). The role of questioner that Cristina takes on as she elicits her ancestors' responses and stories posits a rather different dynamic between the narrator and the story that she tells than the one that she outlined in conversation with Manolo. She appears to have moved away from the former fusion between self and story and towards acknowledging the gap between them, the element of otherness in the stories that she seeks.

We might interpret this separation between self and story as another of Fallarás's narrative strategies to coax out the voices that she seeks. The incompleteness of this process is evident, of course, in the enduring attachment between Cristina and the maternal family line in 'La familia'. Fallarás assumes some distance from her narrative persona, however, as she purports to effect this separation more fully on an extradiegetic level through her

signposting of genre. Whereas Angot refuses the label of autofiction, Fallarás performs this very labelling inside the text when she refers to the narrative sections as '*faction*', a hybrid of fact and fiction (italics in original, 78). Asserting that the life-stories of her grandparents were 'muy similares a las narradas', she produces a slippage between the real and the fictional, and between author and narrator. These conscious misalignments form part of Fallarás's wider rejection of smooth connections and superficial reconciliations, one which develops most palpably in her use of form. Critics such as Santos Sanz Villanueva have interpreted the clash between the styles of the narrative past and writing present as a failure on the part of the author: 'Ambas líneas se entrecruzan pero no se sueldan. En realidad, responden a dos novelas distintas'.[216] The perpetual disconnect between these two narrative modes is better explained, I would argue, as a pointed choice by Fallarás. Creating a disjointed narrative experience jars the reader into being alert to the conflicting and seemingly incompatible ways in which the story is told. Like Angot, Fallarás invites us to take a closer look at narratives that supposedly cohere, to attend to the divergences between perspectives that are whitewashed under the guise of reconciling competing versions. By enacting rather than simply exposing these disjoins, she presents *Honrarás* as moving nearer to the type of exchange between perspectives that remains hypothetical in *Un amour*.

Much like Fallarás reappropriates the wound as a figure through which other voices might be heard, she portrays the fissures in the family history as enabling other perspectives to become visible. Making the former family home the site of her writing introduces the very 'contamination' that the house and the official family story are constructed to prevent. The original meaning of the verb 'contaminate', 'to bring into contact', offers insight into the type of dialogue to which Fallarás lays claim in *Honrarás*. By writing the experiences of

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[216] Santos Sanz Villanueva, '"Honrarás a tu padre y a tu madre"', *El Cultural*, 16 March 2018, n.p. <https://elcultural.com/Honraras-a-tu-padre-y-a-tu-madre> [accessed 01 February 2020].

both family lines into a supposedly exclusive bourgeois domain, Fallarás establishes the impurity of the 'official' account of the family story at its very source. She breaks through the narcissistic family narrative that her namesake Cristina Fallarás sought to create, proving it to be as artificial—and indeed as perishable—as Grand Oasis Park, and opens out both these singular spaces to contesting viewpoints. Certainly, the 'casing' of the text seems to concede that this dialogue fails to attend equally to the voices of the maternal and paternal sides of her family. The front cover features only the faces of the colonel and María Josefa, implying that they dominate the narrative that follows. Through the clefts that Fallarás conceives in and between selves and stories, however, she edges closer to making present the conflicting perspectives in *Honrarás* than was the case in *Un amour*. These fissures complicate the illusion of unanimity in the family story, by disclosing the divergences between different perspectives, as well as the separation into opposing sides, by revealing the porosity of the boundaries between them. Fallarás's drawing of the disparate stories into the same dwelling thus cracks open the established account of the family history, and makes room for more of a negotiation with the other perspectives, versions and voices involved.

5.4 Contaminating Conversations

In staging an impossible dialogue between their divided family histories, neither Fallarás nor Angot claim to reconcile the conflicting perspectives that they articulate. Such a dialectical resolution presupposes an equal space afforded to the different viewpoints, a narrative balance that is foreclosed in these texts by the deep divisions of traumatic experience as well as by the authors' bias towards their own version of the story. As the authors unstitch the

storytelling process, they show that the pretence of parity or unanimity between different perspectives is always in some sense disingenuous. They demonstrate that, in keeping with the incestuous desire at the heart of both histories, the 'official' version that has been passed down results from the drive to perpetuate one family line at the expense of the other. In an attempt to facilitate a different kind of transmission, Angot and Fallarás endeavour to restore the contrasting accounts of the family history that have been forcefully merged into one as it has been handed down. Separated anew, the divergences between these stories shine through. By foregrounding the points at which one version of the story conflicts with and challenges the other, Angot and Fallarás highlight the limitations of seeing the story from a single point of view. They actively recreate, by making it tangible in narrative terms, the very misalliance that has been repressed in the act of transmission.

At the same time, Angot and Fallarás complicate the division into different sides on which the concept of misalliance is predicated. In both texts, efforts to separate these so-called 'sides' ultimately fail. The authors approach the contamination between perspectives differently. Angot, for her part, emphasises the way in which Christine's perspective as narrating subject infiltrates the perspective of her mother that she purports to voice. She portrays as inevitable the process of receiving and retelling another's version of the story through one's own conclusions. Fallarás uses this 'contamination' to resist the exclusion of her paternal family's perspectives from their shared history. Whereas Angot considers that it compromises the emergence of other voices, Fallarás perceives it as enabling them. The capacity to develop the author's own version of the family history in these texts into more of an exchange seems to depend on where Angot and Fallarás position themselves in relation to the story. Comparing the success of their narrative conversations suggests that the closer the author stands to the story, the less agency she holds in redressing the one-sided dynamics of transmission that she exposes. Angot's refusal to identify where she stands in relation to

Christine allows the latter's sociological version of the story to run uncontested in *Un amour*, and in this account, Christine buries the individual agency of her authorship beneath a self-repeating social narrative. Fallarás's differentiation of herself from her narrative persona in *Honrarás*, on the other hand, allows her to distance herself further from the story that she writes. Certainly, her account is not impervious to the propensity that *Un amour* puts on display to superimpose one's own conclusions on the family history. The supposedly 'objective' narrative sections fill in missing pieces of the story with creative assumptions in a way that fails to register the inaccessibility of the lost voices that she seeks to recover. By labelling the story as 'faction', however, Fallarás acknowledges the limitations of her account to provide anything like the 'real story'. Extricating oneself from one's own version of the family narrative proves considerably more difficult in *Un amour*, given Angot's far closer proximity to the traumatic events that unfold. For Fallarás, such separation functions as a strategy that helps her move beyond the constraints of her own perspective, and into something closer to a narrative exchange.

Regardless of whether or not they come to fruition, the narrative negotiations in *Honrarás* and *Un amour* leave uncertain the extent to which each 'side' of a family story does, or indeed ever can, speak to the other. For both Angot and Fallarás, it is thanks to the clashes between alternative versions, and not the connections, that a 'fuller story' might come into view. By making room for both knowledge of events and its blind spots, the authors strive to make these impossible conversations, broken and necessarily partial as they may be, into a medium for telling their family story. Their desire to pass on more than just their account testifies to a compelling preoccupation when writing shared stories—especially in the face of painful divides—to turn the various, and often conflicting, voices that are implicated into a crucial component of the narrative process.

Conclusion

Writing Relational Lives

Angot and Fallarás's impossible conversations exemplify the tension between traumatic divisions and dialectical resolutions that unites the various ethical dilemmas explored in this thesis. Their texts direct our attention to the challenge that all the authors face to varying degrees, that is, to balance their own account of the family story with those of the other subjects they represent. Dialectical resolution proves ever elusive, however, and according to the authors of *Un amour* and *Honrarás*, this is necessarily so. For Angot and Fallarás, the discord and dissent in the dialogues they write attest, crucially, to the existence of these different viewpoints. In place of a parity that can only ever be feigned or manufactured, they make the perceptible asymmetry of their accounts the foundation of their narrative approach. However imbalanced, fragmentary and unrealisable the dialogues may be, the prominent role that narrative conversation plays across all the texts symbolises a shared desire to make other perspectives a part of the writing process. Given the inevitable gap between these perspectives, capturing the other's version of the story can only ever be a work of fiction. Fallarás and Angot draw attention to the hypothetical nature of the conversations they write, as do Daull and Busquets when they insist on their interlocutors' painful silence. Even in the texts where conversations do in fact take place with the subjects themselves, such as *La Réparation* and *Pas pleurer*, the author rarely claims to give an objective account of the other's perspective or to transcribe faithfully her or his voice. Rather, these perspectives are all shown to be filtered through or produced by the author's subjective storytelling. Yet in spite of its unattainability—or perhaps because of it—dialogue takes centre stage as the medium for narration. The authors seem to strive towards an ever-partial recovery of other viewpoints by emphasising the way in which their own identity, experiences and outlook

have been sculpted by the overlap with the family stories that precede and surround them. Broadly speaking, these narrative conversations are best understood as the process through which the authors place their own text in dialogue with the many versions that are missing from the family stories they relay.

Writing relational lives is thus not merely to make the relationship between author and subject the main focus of a memoir, as Eakin and Couser imply. The narrative approaches of these authors rest on more than the simple recounting of interrelated life-stories. What they share is the undertaking to *relate* to the other subjects implicated in these intergenerational stories even as they write them. Existing definitions of relational life-writing tend to concentrate primarily on the content of texts. A clearer understanding of what is at stake emerges once we shift the focus onto form. In this thesis I have sought to demonstrate that 'relating' is an act embedded in the telling of the story. Writing relational lives is a specific mode in which the authors aspire to move beyond merely telling an intergenerational story from a singular perspective, by making space in their accounts for the voices that remain unheard.

Questions of Ethics in Relational Lives

The understanding of relational lives as a mode of telling the story helps clarify why it should be considered as distinct from the umbrella term 'life-writing'. While Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson include relational life-writing in their list of autobiographical genres, they note that in their view, 'relationality characterizes all autobiographical writing'.[217] Smith and Watson's hesitation over whether this is indeed a specific genre exemplifies the confusion in attempts thus far to elucidate the relationship between relational lives and life-writing

[217] Smith and Watson (2010), 279.

more broadly. The source of the confusion, as we can see here, is the conflation of relational life-writing with relationality. That all life-writing is relational is a well-established argument. The basis of this claim, however, is the relational nature of all lives, as opposed to the way in which they are written. Yet if we consider relational lives as a mode of life-writing in which relating to one's proximate others is constitutive of the narrative process, it becomes clear that 'relational life-writing' is not a mere tautology. To interpret relational lives as a particular *mode* is also to avoid the potential constraint of pinning it to a single genre. As the wide spectrum of texts we have examined makes plain, the approach to staging intergenerational stories in response to trauma is far from homogeneous. The narrative and ethical concerns that pertain to writing relational lives are as present in Salabert's fictionalised version of the 'Vél d'Hiv' round-up as they are in Lapierre's more sociological account of the Holocaust and suicide. The comparison of French and Spanish texts in this study shows clearly that fictional and autofictional representations of intergenerational narratives in response to trauma offer a peculiarly valuable insight into writing relational lives. Indeed, the fact that traumatic experience and loss serve as a foundation for all these family histories sheds light on the indispensability of invention and imagination as a means through which one might relate to the perspectives of proximate others in their absence. It is no coincidence that the Spanish texts we have examined all tend towards the fictional end of this spectrum, even in *El comensal* and *También*, where the authors write of losses that they experienced personally. The sample of texts demonstrates a deep-seated tendency in Spanish women's writing to obscure autobiographical referents. This recourse to fiction makes the parallels between the key question these texts and their more overtly autobiographical French counterparts explore—that of how intergenerational stories of trauma and loss might be told ethically, in a manner that accommodates difference and disagreement—all the more striking. To broaden our perspective of the different shapes that relational lives might take

thus expands the parameters of existing discussions in terms of genre as well as geography. It reveals in turn that life-writing has a more significant presence in contemporary literature by women authors in Spain than it might first seem.

The dialogue between these French and Spanish traditions puts questions to conceptions of ethics both with respect to writing intergenerational stories and to voicing the traumatic experiences of others. The need to revise the criteria according to which representations of intergenerational trauma are assessed emerges most prominently in this thesis with respect to postmemory. Although Hirsch shifts postmemory beyond a familial framework, the intergenerational relationship she posits remains decidedly unidirectional. The assumption of a linear transmission of the story from one generation to the next fails to account for the reciprocity that forms such an essential part of the storytelling process. The antagonistic logic underpinning the principal pitfalls that she identifies—appropriation, displacement and drawing attention to one's subjective position—collapses in the intersubjective narrative relationships forged by Schneck, Salabert and Salvayre in particular. The problematic assumptions of appropriation that these texts draw out, of course, also pertain to studies on the ethics of life-writing more broadly. All the texts call into question the prevailing tendency in studies by Eakin, Couser and Lejeune to construe the relationship between writing and non-writing subjects in collaborative autobiography as inevitably ventriloquistic. There is a more nuanced portrayal of agency in these texts, I have established, thanks to the malleable conception of subject positions they put forward. It is by foregrounding the way in which each story shapes and is shaped by the other as they come to be told that Schneck, Salvayre and in a different way, Salabert, unsettle the exclusive purchase of either generation on narrative agency. If subject positions are produced in the writing of the story as opposed to preceding it, collaborative life-writing cannot simply be placed on an ethical continuum according to 'type' in the manner that Couser maps out.

Following Couser's logic, the direction and degree of ventriloquism can be gauged in terms of whether the text is an example of ethnographic autobiography, ghost-writing, relational lives and so forth.[218] To consider relational lives instead as a specific mode of writing is to resist any such predetermined categorisation. It demands a less rigid conception of ethics, first of all, in which the ethics of intergenerational narratives are negotiated inside the texts themselves, by the author's response to the particular challenges that she encounters.

Narrative Solutions and Relational Writing Modes

Contrary to Hirsch's claim that one should avoid drawing undue attention to oneself in postmemorial works, making one's subjective position visible underpins the many different ethical strategies that have emerged in this thesis. In fact, it is the primary mode through which the authors articulate and try to move beyond the limits of their own perspective. Schneck, Busquets, Daull and Angot pre-empt various charges of misappropriation, fabrication and bias in their accounts, charges which all revolve around the blind spots of their viewpoints as authors. Their narrative sightlines are judged to be partly obscured either because they are too far removed from the traumatic experience to which they bear witness—Schneck, who observes the chasm between her own life and the lives of her Jewish family two generations earlier, encapsulates this position—or else because they are too close to it, like Angot. The four authors go to different lengths to overcome these impediments. While Busquets and Angot simply remind us of their authorial blind spots, Daull and Schneck travel considerable distance to trace sources from their family's pasts and include the testimonies of others. The emphasis all the texts place on staging the voices of others in their absence—*La voz dormida* being of course the notable exception—at first appears to confirm the

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[218] Couser (1998), 334.

suspicion that relational lives are intrinsically ventriloquistic.[219] I have argued, however, that the insistence by these authors on their limited access to the other's account does not fit the mould of the ventriloquist's illusion, in which she 'throws' her voice to make it appear as if the other is speaking. Even the most fictive of dialogues—we might think, for example, of the perspectives of the dead relatives that Fallarás seeks to channel in *Honrarás*—sketches distinct positions for writing and non-writing subjects, much as the latter's voice remains inaccessible. The failure to register these different positions has proven to tip narrative agency powerfully in one direction, not only in *La voz dormida*, in which Chacón obscures the alterity of the Republican story that she writes, but also in *El comensal*, where Ybarra's understanding of traumatic legacy as locking her life-story to that of the previous generation erases her own capacity to determine its direction. In the other texts I have analysed, by contrast, the authors' narrative approaches are based on exposing these fissures. The gaps they lay bare take various shapes: Daull, Busquets, Angot and Fallarás, for example, inscribe them in the form of missing replies, empty tombs and traumatic wounds. Lapierre and Schneck employ a similar technique, using the incompletion of the narrative puzzles they present to point to the pieces of the story that are missing. Salabert and Salvayre take a different tack. Rather than leaving these holes open, they use genre markers such as 'autofiction' and 'novel' to signal the use of fiction in their accounts to fill them in. Daull embraces this strategy most openly when in *La Suture* she seems to reverse the approach adopted in *Camille*, consciously sewing together the gaps in her loved ones' life-stories through a process of imaginative creation and embellishment. She hypothesises a series of potential scenarios in her mother's life, from which she selects but one, to highlight the subjectivity of her version of events. Daull's emphasis on the ever-partial nature of her account sheds light on another of the key ethical strategies in the post-traumatic narratives

[219] Ibid., 344.

we have explored. Several of the texts take pains to dispel the illusion that theirs is a definitive account, whether by foregrounding their recourse to invention, or by gesturing to the possible alternative versions of the same story, as is true of *La Réparation* and *Honrarás* as well as *La Suture*. Schneck, Fallarás and Daull strive in this way to carve out a space for other perspectives, even if these remain ultimately outside the bounds of the text.

In my introduction, I suggested that we might conceptualise the relationship between the stories of writing and non-writing subjects as a kind of balancing act. The analysis of these texts, however, has complicated the idea of polarisation on which such a balancing act would hinge. The question of balance that emerges is much more complex than one of appropriation or displacement, identification or separation, one 'side' of the family story, so to speak, or the other. It is a matter of how the author might recognise the often-irretrievable nature of the voices and versions of other subjects while still drawing attention to the ways in which they shape the story she comes to write. The shift in contemporary women's writing towards this relational mode of narrating traumatic experience, towards testifying 'together' with the missing voices of other subjects, has implications for our understanding of life-writing more generally. Texts such as the ones that we have examined invite us to re-evaluate the sweeping application of the label 'relational', to consider whether it is true of the *process* of writing life-stories. Writing relational lives thus uncovers a broader base for studies on the ethics of life-writing. To what extent, we should ask, does a text translate 'relationality' into narrative practice?

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