

Silence, Violence and the Loss of Innocence:  
Children in Narratives about the Spanish Civil War and its Aftermath

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Literary Studies BA Thesis

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MLA 8 Referencing System

30 June 2020

6251 Words

## Abstract

The Spanish Civil War took place between 1936 and 1939 and was followed by almost forty years of dictatorship. Due to repression during the dictatorship and the 'pacto del olvido' that was established in 1977, a big part of the stories about the war and its aftermath have to this day not yet been shared in Spain.

One way in which artists deal with (the lack of) stories about the war and its aftermath is by using a child as the main character in their artistic creations. In this thesis, I analyse *Los Abel* (Ana María Matute; 1948), *Cría cuervos* (Carlos Saura; 1976) and "La lengua de las mariposas" (Manuel Rivas; 1995) in order to look at how the child character reacts to the historical context of the narrative. Moreover, I explore how the time period each work is produced in affects the stories and what it means for each author to be writing about the civil war and its aftermath.

The children in the stories are affected by the atmosphere that surrounds them, which leads to an internalisation of silence, violence and the end of their childhood innocence. As their families do not inform them about the past, the children are left confused and unable to talk to others about their feelings. These narratives remain relevant nowadays in contemporary Spain as only recently Spanish society has begun looking at its past and reassessing what is being told to younger generations.

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	4
<b>2. Theory</b> .....	5
2.1. Generational Transmission .....	5
2.2. The Child as the Main Character .....	6
2.3. Aesthetics in Context .....	8
<b>3. Analysis of the Narratives</b> .....	9
3.1. Los Abel: Silence and Stagnation .....	9
3.2. Cría cuervos: Ghost-figures and Violence .....	11
3.3. La lengua de las mariposas: Broken Silence and Lost Innocence .....	13
<b>4. Discussion and Conclusion</b> .....	15

## 1. Introduction

The Spanish Civil War took place between 1936 and 1939 and was followed by a long period of dictatorship, which ended with the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975. During the dictatorship, the prevailing narrative about the war had proclaimed the nationalist side as the victor. The voices of those on the losing side were hardly heard, as fear and repression led to an internalisation of silence. From 1975 onwards, Spain was redirected towards democracy. To ensure a smooth transition, politicians adhered to the 'pacto del olvido', a pact which was officially institutionalised in 1977 and in which the divisive memory of past events would temporarily be set aside so as to be able to work jointly towards a brighter future. Whereas this pact served a clear political purpose, it also led to many stories about the war remaining silenced, especially the ones from the losing side of the conflict. Feeling unable to share their stories, many had trouble with mentally healing from the horrors of war. Even though nowadays efforts are being made for the reconstruction of cultural memory, such as the retrieval of stories from those on the losing side of the conflict or the appearance of laws that promise to address the past, Spanish society is still tainted by an atmosphere of silence, division and pain, as these feelings are continuously transmitted from generation to generation.

One way in which artists have dealt with the legacy of the Spanish Civil War has been in exploring the theme of childhood in narratives about the war period and its aftermath. In these stories silence, violence and the loss of innocence are recurring themes, hereby breaking the silence present in Spanish society around the topic of the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath. As Jo Labanyi argues, the past still plays an important role in the present, affecting it continuously (113), which is why these sorts of stories remain relevant nowadays.

In this thesis, I will analyse three narratives: The novel *Los Abel*, written by Ana María Matute and published in 1948; the film *Cría cuervos*, directed by Carlos Saura and premiered in 1976; and the short story "La lengua de las mariposas", written by Manuel Rivas and published in 1995. These three narratives have been chosen because they all have a child who is greatly affected by the atmosphere in Spain from 1936 onwards as a central theme. Furthermore, all three of them were produced in different time periods, which allows examining the different objectives of the artists when writing in relation to the historical context.

Analysing these narratives makes it possible to reflect on the effect of silence in processes of generational transmission that have taken place in Spain since the start of the

civil war, hereby answering the following research questions: To what extent can the behaviour of the child protagonist in the stories of *Los Abel*, *Cría cuervos* and "La lengua de las mariposas" be explained as a reaction to the historical context the story is set in? What does this tell us about the artist's own position in relation to the Spanish Civil War and its legacy?

In trying to answer these questions, existing theory on the following three aspects will be applied: Firstly, processes of generational transmission. Secondly, the figure of the child as the main character, specifically focusing on its implications and possibilities for the narratives. Thirdly, the possibilities that specific time periods grant to artistic creation in Spain. In analysing this last aspect, I will use a classification devised by Labanyi. Finally, the narratives will be compared with one another.

## 2. Theory

### 2.1. Generational Transmission

According to the moment children are born in in relation to the Spanish Civil War, they can be classified into three generational groups: first-generation children, who as a child personally experienced the Spanish Civil War; second-generation children, who were born in the period directly after the civil war and who, because of temporal proximity to the events, felt its consequences in a direct way; and third-generation children, whose only connection to the war is through stories and memories that are passed on by older generations, thereby only feeling the consequences of the war in an indirect way. Regardless of which generation they pertain to, children who are in contact with war are to a bigger or lesser extent affected by the traumatic events of it. This can be linked to Marianne Hirsch's concept of 'postmemory'; a term initially coined for second-generation offspring of Holocaust victims, but which can, if interpreted more broadly, also be applied to the case of Spain:

Postmemory describes the relationship that the generation after those who witnessed cultural or collective trauma bears to the experiences of those who came before, experiences that they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behaviors among which they grew up ... these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right ... it is to be shaped ... by traumatic events that still defy narrative reconstruction and exceed comprehension. These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present. (Hirsch 106-7)

Spain has, however, for a long time lacked many of the stories and images that Hirsch refers to, both in family settings and in the broader cultural memory of the country.

Intergenerational relationships are an important factor in processes of cultural memory. Aleida Assman sees the family as a "site of memorial transmission" (in Hirsch 110) and Eva Hoffman has noted that in the family, not only memories, but "emanations" and a "chaos of emotions" (in Hirsch 111) are expressed. In the three narratives that will be studied, families have a central role and will provide a lens through which the transmission of memory in different harsh conditions, as censorship or trauma, will be analysed.

Postmemory does not only concern the transmission of memories but also what is done to process and honour these. Hirsch highlights the artistic creations that surge out of passed-on history, which will contribute to cultural memory. It is often the second or later generations who create art from the memory of the events and Hirsch argues that their artistic creations will be

shaped by the attempt to represent the long-term effects of living in close proximity to the pain, depression, and dissociation of persons who have witnessed and survived massive historical trauma. They are shaped by the child's confusion and responsibility, by the desire to repair. (112)

In the case of Spain, silence adds to the confusion of later generations, as they have difficulties in understanding why their families are traumatised without knowing the events they went through. Those who were children at the time of the conflict, like Matute or Saura, were also often unconscious at the time of the influence the events would later have on themselves and their families.

As generations that stand further away from the conflict have grown older and time has passed, an increasing number of family stories have begun to be shared (Labanyi 111) and, as Isabel Cuñado argues, younger generations feel the need to examine- and write about a past that was taboo for a long time (4). In Spain, in many of these stories, artists choose the figure of the child as the main character.

## 2.2. The Child as the Main Character

A child or early adolescent being the main character has become a recurrent element in narratives about the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath. This allows for studies of intergenerational memory, as children usually find themselves surrounded by family members, and as stated, families are crucial sites of intergenerational transmission. In general, the interest in child figures can be explained along two main lines.

To begin with, some of the writers and directors who have created narratives about the civil war and its aftermath were first- or second-generation children themselves. As Silvia-Corina Popovici writes,

los escritores de la posguerra estaban marcados por los horrores de la guerra y querían ... presentar los acontecimientos después de la guerra para justificar la realidad social ... o los propios autores se identificaban como víctimas infantiles y aceptaban la influencia de la guerra sobre su vida. (290)

Alison Ribeiro de Menezes adds to this argument by stating that "[the] choice of childhood as a point of view from which to engage with the past is not unexpected ... children's lives were haunted by the fear, repression, and sense of loss that their parents experienced" (88). In representing the war and its aftermath through a child focaliser, authors also grant validity to the child's experiences, as "historians tend to regard children as war's victims, rather than as thinking subjects with a personal vision of conflict" (100).

Secondly, the figure of the child was productive in terms of evading censorship, which was especially strict until the sixties. As stated by Randolph D. Pope,

Any cultural object ... was scrutinized for its political impact ... The creative and critical literature of this period must be read, therefore, with an imagination trained to notice the ideological slant of authors and the many allusions that evaded censorship, some intended by the authors, others invented by readers' active and creative mistrust. (134-135)

After the sixties, censorship was gradually relaxed, in part because of an attempt at internationalising Spain and its culture. There was, however, still no place for critiques of the regime, for which artists had to find allusive strategies. By using children as main characters, artists employed innocent agents and their "perspective on war in order to make socio-political commentaries" (Ribeiro de Menezes 100). Furthermore, the power of imagination of children allowed the artist to "conectar con nuevos espacios imaginarios o míticos y ... permite posibilidades múltiples de indagación ... [o] aludir a las realidades ásperas de la hora de escribir sin que la censura encuentre algún motivo para rechazar las obras" (Popovici 290).

In some of the narratives covering the period since the Spanish Civil War, the structure of the family is used in an allegorical way too, as Franco himself traced parallels between the state and the family, proclaiming himself to be the father of the homeland (Ribeiro de Menezes 76). In contrast, mother-figures often appear as allegories for the republican past. Although the use of allegories was crucial until Franco's death, from 1975

onwards, allegorical narratives slowly began to be replaced by narratives with a more direct and realistic representation of the civil war- and dictatorship periods.

### 2.3. Aesthetics in Context

Labanyi, one of the most influential scholars in the field of Spanish cultural memory studies, explains that after Franco died,

few films and almost no fiction writing dealt with the subject [of the Civil War and the dictatorship] in the first ten years ... Films on the war ... began to appear regularly from the mid-1980s ... driven by a nostalgic desire to romanticize the Republic. Since the late 1990s, escalating after 2001, there has been a flood of novels and collections of testimonies on the wartime and postwar repression as well as a significant number of fiction films and documentaries. (95)

Labanyi proposes a classification of the films that were produced in Spain after the civil war. On the one hand, there are those which refer to the war and the dictatorship in an allegorical and abstract way. On the other hand, there are films which represent the events in a more concrete and realistic way. The division is marked by the time period in which the films were created, which allows looking at the possibilities each time period grants to the artist in their silencing or unsilencing of stories. Although Labanyi applies her classification to films only, in this thesis it will be applied to all three narratives.

Films that use allegory recurrently introduce ghost-figures, which symbolise the theme of haunting. Ghost-figures could be used to represent "voices from the past that have not previously been allowed a hearing" (109). The theme of haunting also represents the situation in Spain at the time most allegorical narratives were produced, when the memory of the war lived as a ghost in society. The theme of haunting also works well with the child as the main character because it allows artists to play with the boundaries of the child's imagination. Furthermore, Labanyi comments that these narratives are productive in the understanding of the past:

[t]here is a danger, in the texts that are opting for documentary realism, of producing a "feel-good factor" that makes readers or spectators feel morally improved by having momentarily "shared" the suffering represented in the text, without going on to make any connection with the present. The texts that ... focus on the past as a haunting ... retain a sense of the difficulty of understanding what it was like to live that past. (112)

Films that showed a more realistic account of society during the war and the dictatorship started to appear a decade after Franco's death. Many of these narratives focus on the republican side of the conflict, to contrast the silencing of their version of history that had taken place since the civil war.

Analysing the aesthetics of a narrative, while taking into account the time period in which it is produced, allows for an exploration of the processes of memory transmission not only in the narrative itself but also in the life of the artist.

### 3. Analysis of the Narratives

#### 3.1. *Los Abel*: Silence and Stagnation

The novel *Los Abel* was written by Ana María Matute in 1948. The story is a frame narrative, as, in the first chapter, the cousin of main character Valba finds her diary. From this moment on, the story goes back to the past until the last chapter of the novel, which takes the reader back to Valba's cousin's narration. In her diary, Valba, a silent and lonely character, writes about her life in rural Spain between the ages of twelve and sixteen, in the first decade after the civil war. She is part of a big family, but the siblings are unable to establish meaningful relations and slowly start to separate from each other because of differences in ideology.

The diary format allows for a realistic first-person narration of the events, and the reader is able to observe Spanish society along with Valba. As Matute was born in 1925, both she and Valba are first-generation children, although the fictional Valba lives through the war as a child, while Matute herself did so as an adolescent. As *Los Abel* was published during the first and harsher years of the dictatorship, in her narration Valba omits direct references to the war and the dictatorship, which can be read as an internalisation of silence of both she and Matute. However, different aspects of the story can be read allegorically as a critique of the damaging effects of war on innocent bystanders.

One of the most relevant elements of the story is the sombre atmosphere. As Popovici argues, in the oeuvre of Matute, the influence of the civil war appeared in a distinctively pessimistic and depressive tone: "este dolor de vivir ... abre temas adyacentes como la soledad, la incapacidad de una comunicación eficiente, la miseria" (292). The novel is placed by Gonzalo Sobejano in the tradition of confessional novels, which were common in the 1940s in Spain. In these novels,

Reflecting the coercions of an oppressive historical climate, the world of these novels revolves around an individual ... [who, suffering] the emptiness of inner exile, or, paralyzed by indecision, becomes lost in monologues suffused with

memory and endless waiting. Such ... novels feature a person who ... struggles to discover or attain an authentic self. (176)

Valba's paralysis and inability to communicate efficiently are seen in her silenced character and her difficulty in establishing meaningful relations. Throughout the whole story, Valba tries to figure out her feelings towards her siblings: "Una furia violenta, un odio extraño me exaltó –no sé si es que el amor y el odio se confunden dentro de mi corazón –" (Matute Pos 2871, ch.29). Even though she knows that her siblings will always be there because of their family bonds "Hermanos ante todo y sobre todo ... La sangre, vivificándonos con su bramido y su dolor, con su goce y su tormento" (Pos 1918, ch.18), their family dynamic is dysfunctional, which can be read as an allegory of the dysfunctionality of the Francoist regime, when taking into account the parallels traced by Ribeiro de Menezes between the regime and families in narratives about the time period.

In Spanish culture, the Spanish Civil War is seen as a war between brothers and sisters of one same motherland, which is why the war is often referred to as a fratricide. The theme of fratricide appears in this novel in the family name, Abel, which intertextually refers to the religious story of Cain and Abel. Furthermore, at the ending of the story, one of Valba's siblings murders the other, which is also a reference to the fratricidal civil war. Valba witnesses the murder of her brother Tito and breaks down saying "¡Dios mío, Tito era la juventud!" (Pos 2912, ch.29). Valba, like many other of Matute's characters, will be unable to overcome the loss of her pre-traumatic innocence (Omlor 126), as Valba's childhood innocence is murdered along with her brother.

It is not only Valba's family which is divided in this narrative. When Valba visits a town close to where she lives to pick up her sister, she observes "unos hombres que comían en la acera bajo un andamio. Habían hecho un fuego minúsculo y fugaz, basado en hojas secas y papeles sucios. No hablaban casi: comían un bocado y se ponían a mascar, muy despacio, mirando hacia otro lado, o hacia el cielo" (Pos 1800, ch.17). Even though these men live in the same town, made a fire and are having lunch together, they consciously avoid looking at each other and prefer to lunch in silence rather than to communicate. The general atmosphere of individualism, silence, and division is taken in by Valba, causing her to be disappointed in society and to feel lost: "todo lo desconocía respecto a ellos, respecto al mundo entero, respecto a mí" (Pos 1881, ch.17).

Even though at the ending of the story four years have passed, Valba is still as lost as at the beginning of it. This represents the spiritual stagnation that was present in Spain during the post-war period, where stories were untold and scars unhealed. As George Wythe argues,

in the story "there is an overtone of the hurrying of time, but underneath the feeling persists that nothing really changes" (20). In writing about a dysfunctional family and a child who feels lost and is greatly affected by the sombre atmosphere around her, Matute seems to be criticising the damaging effects of the war and the dictatorship on innocent bystanders. When taking into account that the story is both set and published during the first decade of Franco's dictatorship, with *Los Abel*, Matute might have wanted to come to terms with her own childhood, as Popovici and Ribeiro de Menezes suggest about some first-generation authors, while also portraying the sombre atmosphere she lived in at the time, focusing on individual suffering rather than making political commentary.

### 3.2. *Cría cuervos*: Ghost-figures and Violence

In *Cría cuervos*, directed by Carlos Saura, the viewer follows the character of eight-year-old Ana, one of three sisters who go to live with their aunt in 1975, after both of their parents die. Ana continuously imagines her mother living alongside her, mixing memories of the past and fantasies with her real life. According to Ho-Joon Yim, Ana symbolises all of the children who had to live through the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship that followed (501), as she is a child who presents signs of trauma as a result of the atmosphere of secrecy and betrayal that she is surrounded by, combined with her ignorance of past events.

The film premiered in 1976, one year after the end of Franco's dictatorship. Saura, a first-generation child born in 1932, produced *Cría cuervos* as a political commentary, breaking his own silence by representing the silenced figure of Ana. As he expresses in an interview, "I believe that when Franco was still alive, I had a moral obligation- maybe more for myself than for society to do everything that was possible within my form of work to help change the political system as quickly as possible" (in Kinder 15-16). As production took place during the last year of the dictatorship, the critique of the regime, shown through the traumatised figure of Ana and the oppressive atmosphere she lives in, could still only be presented allegorically. This was also accomplished through the introduction of the trope of haunting, in the form of the figure of Ana's dead mother. As Ana is the focaliser of the story, which is made clear through subjective camera shots, Saura can play with Ana's childish imagination, allowing her mother to live alongside her. The non-linear structure of the film, in which Ana's fantasies and memories are mixed with reality, also contribute to its general ambiguity, which made it more difficult for censors to point out explicit critique of the regime.

Ana's character is marked by silence and trauma and surrounded by an atmosphere of betrayal and mistrust. As the story is set in 1975, Ana and her sisters are third-generation children. They have not been in direct contact with the war and although their father served in the military, the conflict is only once vaguely alluded to (1:30:59-1:31:21), in a scene which makes it clear that the sisters know nothing about it. Although in some parts of the film Ana is shown dancing and having fun with her sisters, the children are conscious of the negativity around them. When playing house, they fight with each other instead of pretending to be a loving family. They do not completely understand the times they are living in, as no one seems to have shared history with them, but they are nonetheless aware of the atmosphere of secrecy and silence around them. Lacking knowledge of the past, they are also unable to communicate with each other about it, which isolates Ana from her sisters.

Ana is haunted by negative feelings and the memory of her mother. She repeatedly plays the song *Porque Te Vas*, by Jeanette; a song about someone wondering why her loved one leaves, reflecting her inability to accept her mother's loss. Ana's attachment to her mother has been read by Yim as a more general attachment to the past: Ana's mother stands as a symbol for all of the victims of the civil war (501) and for the Republican past and childhood innocence that are now gone. No one in the film talks to Ana about her mother nor the past, which leaves her having to deal with grief and pain on her own, making her angry, confused and violent.

Child-narratives from the post-war period often featured a monster. As Sarah Wright comments, the monster could refer to the "monstrosity of those who grew up in its aftermath [that of the civil war] in a repressive regime" (94), as is the case for Ana. Some films also introduced the theme of the 'monstrous child', which "allows for reflection on the legacy of the Spanish past on a nation who for so long were the 'children' of a patriarchal fantasy" (Wright 17). Ana is a monstrous child too, which is shown through her violent instincts: Instead of accepting her aunt, Ana has violent reactions to her presence, such as pointing at her with a gun or trying to poison her, because she feels as though her aunt is taking her mother's place. Ana's violence is again shown in a scene where she imagines how she would jump off a roof and take her own life, something that is reinforced by the movement of the camera, which "wheels wildly round, re-creating the perspective of her imagined suicide" (Smith, *Criterion*) or when she confesses that she would have liked to kill her father. Paul Julian Smith also points to the fact that violence "is bequeathed from one generation to another, from guilty or forgetful adults to uncomprehending children" (*Criterion*). In this film,

this does not only apply to physical violence but also to the violence, hate and oppression that are carried through words.

Childhood is in this film perceived as something dark. In an interview, Saura has confessed that he perceives childhood not as an innocent stage, but rather as "a stage where nocturnal terror, fear of the unknown, loneliness, are present with at least the same intensity as the joy of living and that curiosity of which pedagogues talk so much" (in *Kinder* 23). It is important to remember that Saura is a first-generation child, which means that his childhood was marked by the war and the harsh repression that followed. In the film, adult Ana, who introduces some parts of the story in flash-forwards to the future, comments:

No entiendo las personas que dicen que la infancia es la época más feliz de su vida. En todo caso para mí no lo fue. Y quizá por eso no creo en el paraíso infantil. Ni en la inocencia, ni en la bondad de los niños. Yo recuerdo mi infancia como un período largo, interminable, triste, donde el miedo lo llenaba todo. Miedo a lo desconocido. (00:45:19-00:45:54)

Although Ana does not live through the war as a child, as Saura did, she does live in a household in which the internalised silence defines the atmosphere.

Saura has admitted that he produced the film as a political commentary, by portraying confused, isolated and traumatised children as a consequence of the atmosphere in Spain during the dictatorship. The film ends with a voice-over of Ana's sister, retelling a nightmare that she has had, in which she is kidnapped. This adds a macabre tone to the film, showing that not only Ana but also the rest of the children are having dark thoughts as a consequence of the atmosphere they are living in. The lack of communication between generations not only makes younger generations ignorant of why they live in a certain atmosphere, but it also makes them incapable of communicating with those of their own generation about the effects it has on them.

### 3.3. La lengua de las mariposas: Broken Silence and Lost Innocence

"La lengua de las mariposas" is a short story that is part of Manuel Rivas' anthology *¿Qué me quieres, amor?*, originally published in Galician in 1995. The story became widely known because of its film adaptation directed by José Luis Cuerda, which premiered in 1999. In the short story, an adult Moncho looks back on the friendship he had as an eight-year-old boy with his first schoolteacher, Don Gregorio. The story is set around the year 1936. When war breaks out at the ending of the story, Don Gregorio is imprisoned because of his republican ideology and Moncho feels obligated to turn his back on him.

Although the story is narrated in past tense, it is focalised through the character of young Moncho, without interference of the opinions of his older self. Daniela Omlor argues that narratives that look back on childhood years often do so in order to "[come] to terms with childhood events" (127). While Moncho is a first-generation child who witnesses the start of the civil war, Rivas is a second-generation child, as he was born in 1957. Because of the time at which "La lengua de las mariposas" was published, both Spanish society and the outbreak of the civil war could be presented realistically while also including republican perspectives. In the years following the publication of the anthology, the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory would be founded, followed by the Historical Memory Law in 2007, which shows that Spain was slowly starting to look at its past and opening itself up to stories that differed from the nationalist glory narrative that had prevailed during the dictatorship.

At the beginning of the story, Moncho is afraid to go to school because of the stories he has heard about it from his family. When he comes to know his teacher, who treats him with kindness, they develop a friendship, which allows Moncho to enjoy school and make friends of his own age too. It is not clear to Moncho at the time, but in his teaching, Don Gregorio shows his republican ideology: Not only does Don Gregorio focus his lessons on biology rather than on religion, but he also uses the poetry of Antonio Machado, a republican, in his classroom. Moncho feels a lot of respect for his teacher: "Sentí pronto que el silencio del maestro era el peor castigo imaginable. Porque todo lo que tocaba era un cuento atrapante"<sup>1</sup> (Rivas 6), and unconsciously comes to see Don Gregorio's version of the world as the ideal one. Initially, Moncho's parents are also quite fond of Don Gregorio. Moncho's father, a tailor, is a republican too and in return for Don Gregorio's kindness to his son, he makes him a fitted suit. Before the outbreak of the war, Moncho's mother, a clear supporter of traditional values, also respects the teacher: "Si él lo dice, es cierto" (6); and prepares snacks for him when he takes Moncho on excursions. However, when war breaks out and republicans are taken as prisoners, Moncho and his family are forced to take a different position.

In the story, knowledge, education and innocence are corrupted by the outbreak of the war as Moncho breaks his learning process to support hate. In the final pages of the story, Don Gregorio is one of the republican prisoners who are conducted down the town square on their way to the trucks. Moncho and his parents stand among the villagers, who are shouting at the prisoners and insulting them. Pushed by fear and by his pleading wife, Moncho's father,

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<sup>1</sup> Although the narrative is originally written in Galician, the quotes are taken from the Spanish translation. The short story is not available in English and as I do not speak Galician, I do not want to translate from a source other than the original into English.

in spite of his own political beliefs, starts insulting them too and encourages his son to do the same. Moncho obeys when he sees rage and fear in his father's eyes and even throws rocks at the prisoners while the trucks are leaving. As he recalls: "Buscaba con desesperación el rostro del maestro para llamarle traidor y criminal. Pero el convoi era ya una nube de polvo a lo lejos y yo, en el medio de la alameda, con los puños cerrados, sólo fui capaz de murmurar con rabia: '¡Sapo! ¡Tilonorrinco! ¡Iris!'" (10). The words he uses to insult Don Gregorio are normal words related to biology that he learnt from his teacher instead of real insults. This is however more painful, as he is using knowledge learnt from Don Gregorio to hurt him and to support hate towards the enemies of the nationalists. In condemning his teacher because of his ideology, Moncho loses his childhood innocence by turning innocent silence into hate speech.

As Wright argues, the reader might wonder whether Moncho has become a monstrous child too (100) in the last pages of the story. His rage could ultimately be interpreted not as directed towards Don Gregorio but rather as a product of fear and confusion caused by the sudden outbreak of the war and the hate he feels around him. Propelled by the events that are taking place around him, he suddenly has to replace his friendship and admiration by hate without truly understanding why.

Because of the moment at which the story was published, twenty years after the end of the dictatorship, Rivas is allowed to explore the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, without having to use allegory, as a way to reflect on the past. By introducing republican perspectives too, Rivas contributes to the unsilencing of the experiences of those on the losing side of the war.

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

The goal of my thesis was to analyse to what extent the behaviour of the child protagonist in the stories of *Los Abel*, *Cría cuervos* and "La lengua de las mariposas" can be explained as a reaction to the historical context the story is set in, and what the narratives say about each author's position in relation to the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath.

The stories all cover different periods since the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Although the children in the narratives have different sexes, pertain to urban and rural settings and are aged eight to sixteen, there are also recurring elements in each narrative. Each child suffers from the impact of the war in similar ways, such as being surrounded by a sombre atmosphere, internalising silence, becoming violent or by having their childhood innocence murdered.

The atmosphere in the narratives plays a big role in all three stories. In *Los Abel* and *Cría cuervos*, the child is surrounded by a sombre atmosphere, full of untold stories and marked by division, individualism and silence. In "La lengua de las mariposas", the atmosphere is light and sweet until the ending of the story, when war breaks out. The last pages of the story provide a raw contrast with the atmosphere of the rest of the story, and Moncho suddenly too lives in confusion, hate and fear.

Silence is also a theme that recurs in all three narratives. Both Valba and Ana internalise silence as a consequence of the war and the atmosphere they find themselves in, which is full of negative emotions. Both of them feel unable to share their pain with others, preferring their own world; Valba in the form of her diary and Ana in the form of her ghost-mother, to the real world, in which adults keep secrets from them. Moncho has a best friend from whom he can learn and in which he can confide. His silence is due to his shyness, but it also helps him to listen and learn. However, when war breaks out, he is suddenly pushed to break his silence to insult his friend and support hate.

All of the children lose their childhood innocence as a consequence of someone else's ideology or the atmosphere they live in. They are thrown into "un universo donde al final los más pequeños serán contaminados por lo cruel, absurdo y grotesco de los adultos" (Pérez Bernardo 48): Valba has to watch while her brother is murdered, Ana inherits violence and wishes to kill both her father and her aunt, and Moncho turns from an attentive and shy child into a child who rages and discriminates. In contrast to Valba, Ana and Moncho become violent themselves as a product of the confusion they feel, which is a feeling shared by Valba too. Without understanding the historical events that lead to their situations, the children are unable to identify their feelings and ask for help.

The stories were all written during a different time period, which is clear in the omission of direct references to the historical context in *Los Abel*, the use of allegory in *Cría cuervos* and the more direct representation of the outbreak of the war in "La lengua de las mariposas". Although in her narrative Matute presents internalised silence, she also breaks her silence by creating art about the time period she lives in, focusing on the individual impact of the sombre atmosphere present in Spanish society rather than providing political commentary during the harshest years of the dictatorship. Saura produces his film, as much of his art, as a critique on the regime during the last year of the dictatorship, and must use allegory to evade censorship. Rivas, in publishing the short story twenty years after the end of the dictatorship, writes realistically about the outbreak of the war in order to reflect on the past. Creating stories about the civil war and its aftermath enables the artist to ask questions about

generational transmission and silence, or to come to terms with memories, whether pertaining to the family or the broader cultural memory of the country. Furthermore, it allows the audience to reflect on what part of history, if any, is being transmitted to younger generations.

As division perpetuates and extremist left- and right-wing parties reappear in politics, narratives about the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath become even more relevant in Spanish society. Many war-stories have not yet been heard and many scars have not yet been healed. Ignorance can lead to confusion, which, as seen in these short stories, can fade into hate, violence and an inability to communicate and empathise with others. More than eighty years after the ending of the Spanish Civil War, fewer and fewer first-generation children remain alive, which increases the importance of exploring their stories before it is too late.

There are many stories available and being produced about the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath. In this thesis, only three stories were analysed. It would be interesting to compare the situation and feelings of other child characters with those of Valba, Ana and Moncho. Furthermore, a gendered analysis of the effects of war or an analysis of relationships between children of the same generation are possibilities for further research.

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