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# "Chicas Raras:" A Comparative Literary Study of Historical Spanish and 21st Century Feminism

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**“*Chicas Raras*:” A Comparative Literary Study of Historical Spanish and 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
Feminism**

A Thesis

Presented to the Departments of Modern Languages and English

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

and

The Honors Program

of

Butler University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for Graduation Honors

Serenity Joy Dzubay

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## Introduction: *Chicas Raras* and Forgotten Feminism

Carmen Martín Gaité coined the term *chica rara* in her essay of 1987, *Desde la Ventana*, which explains the literary protest against the Franco regime's enforcement of femininity. This protest was most evident through female protagonists, or *chicas raras* (Cruz-Cámara 97). The *chica rara* is a literary character who is not only defying social norms, but also exploring her role as a woman apart from what is expected of her. In her article "'Chicas Raras' en Dos Novelas de Carmen Martín Gaité y Carmen Laforet," Cruz-Cámara states "Es bien conocida la visión ultraconservadora de la mujer ideal que el régimen franquista impuso desde su subida al poder...una femineidad uniforme basada en la domesticidad y la maternidad" [The ultra-conservative vision of the ideal woman that the Franco regime enforced after its rise to power is very well known...a standardized femininity that was based on domesticity and maternal in nature] (97). The beginnings of the *chica rara* were born out of distaste for a society that was forcibly binding its women to restrictive social conventions, and the creation of atypical protagonists was a method that women could use to express their frustration safely.

Women throughout history have been given limited life choices due to their gender, a phenomenon which I intend to study through a portion of the history of Spain. Due to Franco, whose dictatorship began in 1939 and ended in 1975, many Spanish women experienced drastic repression of their rights. Franco created a society in which women were supposed to be "amas de casa" or "ángeles del hogar," essentially meaning "angels of the house." Because of the authoritarian and hyper-masculine nature of his government, there were not many outright protests for women's rights; however, many people mistakenly believe that Spanish women were simply helpless victims due to a lack of manifestation against the government and social

normalcies. Feminist protests in Spain were slightly more hidden than in countries such as the United States, as they were embedded in sources such as literature, but they were anything but quiet.

My project is inspired by the lives and literature of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Concha Méndez, Carmen Martín Gaité, and Ana Rosetti, and how they used poetry and literature to resist political and gender oppression before, during, and after the Franco regime. My thesis will lead a discovery of how women have creatively resisted patriarchal societies through the combination of a historical and literary study of rebel feminist writers living within the confines of subjugation. Oppression of female rights is nothing new. As a female citizen of the United States living underneath Trump's government, I have personally experienced gender discrimination in my work environment, my school environment, and even during the process of submitting my proposal for this thesis. And although times have changed as our societies have developed, women are still experiencing wage gaps and sexual harassment today. We may have more means to speak out against discrimination, but we can learn from, what I would argue, are *chicas raras*, such as Méndez, Martín Gaité, and Rosetti, who rebelled against gender discrimination through their writing. Their protest may feel silent, but on second glance one will discover that it was in fact rambunctious and defiant, sarcastic but heartbreaking at times, and **has** often been ignored or silenced.

This project aims to answer the question as to how women reacted against oppressive societies and governments through literature. There are four primary sections; one for each author that I have chosen. Each section includes a historical background and literary analysis of selected texts from the author's larger works. These women lived in drastically different times, thus the most logical way to organize the sections is chronologically- beginning with Sor Juana

and ending with Rossetti. First, Sor Juana presents the other three authors with a surprisingly modern framework, as her rebellion against society took place during the creation of the New World in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Sor Juana embodies ideologies that are similar to modern-day feminist rhetoric and reflect those discussed within the sections of the other authors. The next three authors are chronologically ordered according to when they were writing most of their work and/or what period their work reflects upon during the turbulent era of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Spain; Méndez reflects the pre-Franco period, Martín Gaité represents the during-Franco period, while Rossetti represents the post-Franco period. Each woman lived a completely different life and wrote within the confines of diverse political and cultural periods; however, all their writings yearn for freedom and liberation of women from societal conformity. These women could not remain silent despite society's wishes, and rebel in unique ways through their writing.

In the spirit of Martín Gaité's *Usos Amorosos de la Posguerra Civil Española*, a text that was both autobiographical and research-based, I have written four secondary reactionary pieces that are inspired and correspond with each of my chosen writers. Three of these pieces are poems, while one is written in prose, reflecting upon the stylistic choices of each author. These sections are meant to be a creative pause between each author and should help reflect on both the author and the modern-day context of what they have written and accomplished. These creative-political pauses are reflective of my own 21<sup>st</sup> Century experiences, as well as an addition of my own voice within academic analyses of the lives and literature of these impressive authors. In the spirit of their accomplishments, I felt it necessary to add my own creativity to the project.

Like the women before them, such as Sor Juana de la Cruz, Spanish women took to literature to describe their frustrations in more cunning ways, creating a rich history of Spanish feminism that is often forgotten or remains unknown. This project will thus bring some of their

work back to the spotlight. Sor Juana was perhaps one of the first modern feminists, due to her broad education and witty writing, and proves to be an interesting framework to modern feminism.

### **Sor Juana: The Modern Feminist of New Spain**

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz is perhaps one of the most interesting but complex figures of her time. She broke many of the social norms required of women during the 17th Century but she was admired for it during and after her life. She was rumored to be in love with a woman and wrote about it. She decided to become a nun, rather than marry, in order to continue her education. She was, at one point, considered one of the most highly educated women in New Spain. One author questions whether Sor Juana “was a Mexican poet, a Spanish poet, or a ‘universal one,’” due to the relevance of her poetry throughout the ages, her ability to capture sentiments of her nationality as a Spaniard in the New World, and her speculations on being a woman in a time when women simply did not have rights (“Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz” *Gay & Lesbian Biography*). Sor Juana was a highly educated woman who wrote what we refer to today as feminist rhetoric in a time when it was unacceptable to do so, and her life and writings are still relevant today.

Sor Juana was born illegitimately in either November 1648 or 1651; there are many sources that say both. She was raised by her mother and spent many of her younger years in the library of her grandfather. By the age of 15, she was considered one of the most highly educated women in New Spain <sup>2</sup>, and, as an adolescent, gained the favor of the virrey and virreina <sup>2</sup>; Leonor Maria Carreto and Antonio Sebastian Alvarez. In 1669 she decided to join the convent of “las jeronimas” in order to continue her education (“Sor Juana Inés De La Cruz: Biografía De 1648-1695” *Mexico Desconocido*), as she would have been prevented from any sort of

scholarship had she married instead of becoming a nun. Previously, Sor Juana had been invited by the virreina to serve as a lady of the court in 1665, which she obviously declined (“Sor Juana...” *Gay & Lesbian Biography*).

Before joining her convent, Sor Juana spent time with the court, writing sonnets. She gained the favor of the virrey for her wit. Her first writings were called “Un Amar Ardiente: Poemas a la Virreina,” which included love poems that were specifically written to a woman named Laura (“Sor Juana...” *Mexico Desconocido*). There were about 50 poems that confirmed the romance between two women, which were Sor Juana and very possibly the virreina herself (Miranda). Sor Juana’s first book after she had joined the order of las jeronimas was called “Inundación Castalida,” which consisted of poetry regarding various themes of her life such as her time in the court, her love for a woman, and her religion (Harlan). She went on to write “Carta Athenagorica” in 1690, in which she berated a famous sermon written by Antonio Vieyra, causing questions regarding her true dedication to Christ. Afterwards, she wrote “Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz” in 1691, where she tried to “...reivindica el derecho de las mujeres al aprendizaje, pues el conocimiento ‘no sólo les es lícito, sino muy provechoso’” [reclaim the right of women to learn, through the thought that ‘it is not only fair, but also very beneficial’]. (Miranda). She is said to have possessed more than 4,000 works of poetry, theater, music, astronomy, mathematics, and books of many other themes in her habitation in the convent (“Sor Juana...” *Mexico Desconocido*), and wrote many other works that I either have not mentioned or have possibly been destroyed or lost. She died the 17th of April in 1695 due to a plague.

Sor Juana lived in a time where women essentially had two options in life; to marry or become a nun. Bonnie McEwan states in her article, “The Archaeology of Women in the Spanish New World,” that “although Spanish women engaged in a variety of trades – from folk medicine

to textile production, the acceptable professions of women in ‘polite society’ were mostly restricted to homemaker and nun” (33). Although this first applied to Spanish society, this belief was carried over into the New World when many Spanish men started immigrating to the Americas. With this immigration, however, came a newfound demand for women, meaning that even the poorest of pure-blooded Spanish women were considered highly valuable in the aristocracy of New Spain. McEwan continues by stating “The advantages for women living in the colonies were both social and financial. They immediately became a part of an elite group of individuals whose supremacy was enhanced with religious purity...” (34). Women had to follow a strict regimen, and the purer they appeared, the more valuable they were. Money and origins did not matter so long as a woman obeyed society’s rules and was a pure-blooded Spaniard. Sor Juana, incredibly enough, managed to find loopholes within the strict rules of her society, whilst still appearing to abide by the social law.

Sor Juana’s situation was special, and McEwan gives us a context as to how Sor Juana was able to control her life despite the rigid social contract women of her society were required to follow. Although Sor Juana was not born legitimately, she was given an elevated status simply because there were not many women living in the New World, let alone of pure Spanish blood. McEwan also helps to explain why Sor Juana decided to become a nun rather than marrying into a rich family, which she could have easily done due to her connections with the court. It is understandable why Sor Juana converted at such a young age; she was likely being pressured to marry, which forced her into a decision that would help her continue her education. Her decision has allowed us to recover some of the wittiest and most beautiful works of literature that were written during the 17th century, as well as a window into the mind of a woman who was oppressed by her society and government.

Sor Juana was an incredible writer. She wrote in the Baroque style, which did not include much of a personal voice, but rather focused on the manipulation of language (Miranda). In his article “Biografía De Sor Juana Inés De La Cruz,” Antonio Miranda states

“su obra abarca poesías líricas, dramáticas, alegóricas, sacras, festivas y populares, además escribía de continuo en verso y en prosa...Inscrita en el estilo barroco, su poesía es rica en complejas figuras del lenguaje, conceptos ingeniosos y referencias a la mitología grecolatina” [her work covered poetry that was lyrical, dramatic, allegorical, sacred, festive and popular; in addition, she continuously wrote in verse and in prose...infused with the Baroque style, her poetry is rich with complicated linguistic phrases, ingenious concepts, and references to Greco-Latin mythology].

Much of Sor Juana’s work has inspired many famous authors and is still highly relevant today due to its wit and well-written references to philosophy, science, and mythology.

One of Sor Juana’s most famous works is a poem called “Hombres Necios,” which literally means “Foolish Men” in English. The work is reminiscent of a geometric proof, consisting of 17 stanzas- each stanza has four lines, with a rhyme scheme of ABBA, and each line consists of 8 syllables. Her use of a consistent rhyme scheme and tools such as alliteration also work to create a poem that sounds like a children’s rhyme, as if she is taunting men in the same way that a young child would with his/her friends. In her poem, she accuses the men of her time of several crimes, such as hypocrisy and sexual impurity. In this poem, Sor Juana accentuates the severe double standard that existed in her time; men were pardoned from the exact sins that women committed, who, for their vices, could be killed, scorned, and exiled from their families. Sor Juana was bold to write this poem, considering the nonexistent rights of women and Sor Juana’s ability to lose her position as a nun. She uses various satirical images

and tactful verses to describe the irony of the contradictory treatment of men and women, thus attempting to free women of the outrageous accusations that men place on them of which they are often also culpable.

Sor Juana begins “Hombres Necios” with a very bold statement; “hombres necios que acusáis/ a la mujer sin razón” [foolish men who accuse/ women without reason] (l. 1-2). She makes it clear from the beginning that she will be critiquing “stupid men” who “accuse women” without a logical explanation to do so. She immediately sets the satirical and accusatory tone of the poem with this line, especially through her searing use of the word “necios,” which means foolish and headstrong. As Sor Juana continues, she uses two lines to satirize what men consider bravery. She describes their courage as completely witless, using the lines “al niño que pone el coco/ y luego le tiene miedo” [of the child who dons the scary mask/ and then becomes afraid of himself] (l. 15-16). Sor Juana ironically uses this image to critique men’s arrogant sense of bravery as well as to demonstrate men’s hypocrisy. Sor Juana uses the image of a child to taunt the men she is addressing, thus inverting the traditional positions of men and women, where men are traditionally the ones to sneer at women in literature. Sor Juana continues her critique of men’s hypocrisy by stating, “quejándoos, si os tratan mal,/ burlándoos, si os quieren bien” [you complain, if [women] treat you poorly/ you joke, if [women] want you properly] (l. 27-28). She clearly focuses on a double standard in these lines. She uses parallelism in the structure of these two verses to point out the incorrect reasoning of men. By using lines that perfectly mirror each other grammatically, she is demonstrating a geometrical concept; that because these two verses are parallel and mathematically cannot intersect, that men are hypocrites for both accepting and practicing the two ideologies at once.

Sor Juana remains faithful to her form throughout the entirety of her poem, showing a logic that would perhaps not be expected of women during the 17th century. Although the entirety of Sor Juana's poem is impressive, she includes a series of four stanzas toward the end of the poem that include paradoxical ideologies, which give "Hombres Necios" a sophistication in its craftsmanship of words, but also capitalize on the blisteringly sarcastic tone and child-like rhyme that the poem controls. In the first of these stanzas, Sor Juana points out, once again, the double standard in what men expect from women. She ends this stanza with the lines "a una culpáis por crüel/ y a otra por fácil culpáis" [to one you blame for being cruel/ and to the other you blame for being easy] (l. 35-36). Sor Juana creates lines that once again are grammatically parallel to one another, which reflects the paradoxical thinking of a man. A man cannot "blame" a woman for being "cruel" (as in not giving into his flirtations) but then also accuse another for being "easy." The paradoxical nature of the lines once again highlights men's hypocrisy.

Sor Juana references the Fall to compare men's sins to the most severe of sins. She asks who is more at fault in sleeping together outside of marriage, "la que cae de rogada/ o él que ruega de caído?" [she who falls from prayer/ or he who begs for the fall?] (l. 51-52). She uses a mirrored phrase structure, "cae de rogada" vs "ruega de caído," to once again indicate the same theme of paradoxical thinking that she did in lines 35-36. She also uses a female pronoun, "la," in the first line to indicate that it is a woman who falls for the man's begging, and a masculine pronoun, "él," in the second line to demonstrate that it is the man who begs for the fall. The reference is obviously biblical, as she alludes to the fall of humanity in Genesis; however, it is not Eve who begs Adam to fall from the graces of God into sin as is described in the Bible. Rather, in "Hombres Necios" it is the man who begs the woman to fall from purity into sin. Sor Juana switches the gender roles to demonstrate that men are committing a graver sin than women

are because they are at fault for convincing women to fall into lust. For Sor Juana, men should be castigated either just as severely or more severely as women for their sins because they have initiated the interaction and participated in it themselves. The comparison to the first and most transcendent sin also highlights the gravity of the situation.

Sor Juana finalizes her theme of paradoxes and hypocrisy by both using the same mirrored phrasing as previous stanzas and capitalizing on the tone of a taunting children's rhyme. Sor Juana asks who is worse, "la que peca por la paga/ o él que paga por pecar?" [her who sins for payment/ or he who pays to sin?] (l. 55-56). The alliteration in these two lines is perhaps the pinnacle of Sor Juana's taunting poem, as it reflects the sound of a children's rhyme perfectly. She also uses mirrored grammatical phrasing to once again proclaim the paradox in the double standard held between women and men. The similarities in grammar equate the man and woman in these phrases- their sins are equally as wrong, so why is the woman punished but not the man? By using alliteration and mirrored sentence structure, Sor Juana not only taunts the hypocrisy of men in a childlike manner, but also calls attention to the lack of rationality in condemning women for being prostitutes but permitting men to freely pay for them. These lines are perhaps the culmination of the poem, as they refer to one of the most hypocritical acts that men commit- paying for prostitutes but condemning them in court and in life.

Sor Juana ends "Hombres Necios" with a powerful line. In the last stanza she begins by stating that she has used the poem to expose the men she has been criticizing and finishes with "pues en promesa e instancia/ juntáis diablo, carne y mundo" [thus in promise and application/ you unite devil, flesh, and the world] (l. 67-68). Sor Juana finishes the poem as she started it- by ridding the poem of rhetorical language and stating her exact opinion. She states that men, in many of their actions, "unite the devil, flesh, and the world." By using these three words, Sor

Juana is making a very explicit reference to sin and stating plainly that through their duplicity and paradoxical behavior, men combine the worst of the secular world. They become the embodiment of sin, relieving women of the blame. Also, by stating that men unite the most sinful parts of the secular world, she is declaring that they will ultimately be judged by God, due to the critical role that repentance of sin plays in Christianity. Sor Juana tells the men of her society that they will be eventually judged in heaven even if they escape castigation on Earth.

Sor Juana is perhaps what we may refer to as one of the first modern feminists, as her writing is remarkably similar to modern-day feminist rhetoric. She was boldly pro-gender equality during a time when it seems as though it would have been impossible to do so. She defied the patriarchy yet won its favor. She was outspoken and defiant but is ultimately more well-known than other male writers of New Spain. Sor Juana lived in an entirely different time than Concha Méndez, Carmen Martín Gaité, and Ana Rossetti, but her ideologies are shared by these writers who lived and wrote centuries after her death. She is one of the most discussed feminist writers in the Spanish language due to her critical view on the world and her beautiful writings.

Although many Spanish-speaking and feminist scholars are aware of her presence, Sor Juana is one of the many authors who is overlooked even though she was speaking out against the oppression of women in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Women who protested through writing are severely overlooked and underappreciated, even though their protests were extremely impressive due to the political climates that they were writing in. Sor Juana is one of the best examples of this phenomenon because of the extremity of the oppression she was facing. Her writing was blatantly critical during a period when it was extremely risky to be as outspoken about

oppression of women as she was. Sor Juana is truly an inspiration and provides a framework of discussion for the other three authors I will be analyzing.

### **Sor Juana Reflection- a Creative-Political Pause**

Gender is a social construction that is created by the society in which an individual lives. Judith Butler is a modern feminist theorist who wrote a book called “Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity” which was originally published in 1990. In the text, Butler discusses identity politics and the creation and maintenance of gender within society. She explains that political structures are put in place to maintain and limit their populations, which includes the issue of gender. The individuals who are produced from these restrictions are defined through said political structures, limiting their possibilities to a unique identity (Butler) 3. Not only is gender politically restricted, but it is also defined by a specific culture and time.

Butler states that,

Originally intended to dispute the biology-is-destiny formulation, the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex 3.

Thus, gender, which is attributed to an individual at birth based upon their sex, becomes a product of the culture in which an individual lives. Gender is not a universalized concept as one may originally think. Different societies emulate unique expressions of gender depending upon what their culture believes gender is. And, in most societies, the concept of gender, is produced through a binary context, namely the concept of a “man” and the concept of a “woman.”

Sor Juana lived in a society that considered its women to have one of two purposes; to either become a nun or to marry and have children. Women of her time were supposed to be

quiet keepers of the household, lack a proper education, and be complacent toward their husbands and other male figures. Because gender is a social construct rather than biological and inherent, however, Sor Juana was able to perform outside of the traditional role expected of her. This likely would not have been possible had she not found favor with the virrey and virreina <sup>2</sup> of New Spain, because many women of her period were politically castigated as well as privately when they did not perform their expected duties. Still, Sor Juana bravely fought against subjugation of women during a period when it was virtually impossible to do so without being punished or killed.

In modern-day Westernized cultures, to be gendered as a woman comes with other expectations, because, as Butler points out, gender is not a universal concept and we are living in an extremely different period than Sor Juana was. Western women today have more rights than ever but are still expected to act within a small box. A woman is permitted to hold a job; however, she is still expected to marry, have kids, and take care of a household virtually by herself as well. A woman must be strong in the work place, but if her voice is too loud or her words too insensitive, she is discredited. A woman may hold the same title as a man in the workplace, but she will not receive the same pay. A woman may remain single, but she will be questioned for it her whole life. Yes, being a woman today may be easier than before, but there is still discrimination that needs to end.

“Foolish Men who Limit Me”

Foolish men, indeed, accusing ladies  
 Of immense and monstrous crimes- the horror  
 Of a dish defiled! How to adore her  
 When she will not wash your new Mercedes.

If she only had a skinny waist, or  
 An enormous bust, perhaps some large thighs-  
 But it doesn't matter, I mean, *your size*.  
 From me, the ideal form must be begged for.

Was it really Eve that sinned? The footrace  
 Really won? The golden apples shimmer'd  
 In the sinking sun. Deceit, a glimmer  
 Shone in your eyes, as you ended the chase.

A mistake, perhaps, completely harmless  
 Should have been forgiven. But her eyes were  
 Tempting. You knew that just a seed assur'd  
 Marriage, Hades. Her life is now charmless.

Slith'ring snake, advancing slowly, where is  
 That celestial pride? You lure her to eat  
 In a slimy, vile disguise. Words so sweet  
 Eve could not resist. Eternal sin lives.

Why was Daisy ditzy? Gatsby young and  
 Fine? Fantine was just a little whore, but  
 Jean Valjean a god divine? I rebut-  
 Where does Joan of Arc fit in this wasteland?

Mother or wife, kids are life, clothes too tight.  
 Clean that floor, though you work more, do *your* chores.  
 Pay her less to wear a dress. Close that door  
 Ma'am, hear **no** more. If you only knew spite.

Foolish men who limit me, I argue  
 My decree; as the ocean is the sea,  
 Stones are rocks, and seedlings are younger trees  
 Think about equality, I charge you.

### **Concha Méndez: Overlooking an Artist**

Concha Méndez was born in 1898 in Madrid (Ramos). She a widely unknown member of the Generación del '27, which included Spanish artists such as Federico García Lorca and Salvador Dalí. She wrote poetry. Her first poems had a playful and sarcastic feminist tone; however, like many of her colleagues, she was banished from Spain when Franco came into

power, changing the tone of her poetry drastically. She wrote about her sadness in exile, and while her poetry became more sophisticated, it was virtually lost due to her lack of recognition within the artistic movement. Méndez never returned to Spain, even after she was able to do so, and died in Mexico in 1986 (Ramos).

Méndez was first introduced to the Generación del '27 when she was only 17 years old (Abdelazim 2). Rasha Abdelazim, in her article “Poesía Desarraigada de Concha Méndez” explains Méndez’s first encounter with the filmmaker Luis Buñuel, which soon turned into a friendship of seven years and helped to introduce her to the other artists of the Generación '27. Abdelazim states that

“durante este tiempo Concha Méndez tuvo acceso a la movida literaria de la época gracias a la amistad de Buñuel con los demás compañeros de la Residencia Estudiantil. A partir de aquel entonces Concha Méndez empezó a frecuentar los recitales de García Lorca, de Rafael Alberti entre otros, las exposiciones de arte y las tertulias literarias” [during this time Concha Méndez had access to the literary movement of the era and to the other colleagues of the Student Residence thanks to her friendship with Buñuel. Because of this, Concha Méndez began to frequent the recitals of Garcia Lorca, of Rafael Alberti, and others, as well as art expositions and literary social-gatherings.] (Abdelazim 2).

This introduction to the Generación '27 was groundbreaking for Méndez, as she was suddenly exposed to the vanguard artistic movement that was beginning in Spain at this time. Méndez was able to find her voice within this movement and began to write her own poetry.

The Generación '27 was an innovative artistic movement that occurred during the 1920's in Spain which rejected traditional art forms. According to Vicente Nuñez, in his article "La Generación '27: Características," members of this literary movement shared similar dates of birth and vanguard ideologies. What is perhaps most influential about the movement is the influence of Luis Góngora. 1927 was

"el tercer centenario de la muerte de Góngora, y un acto celebrado en el Ateneo de Sevilla reunió a la mayoría de los miembros del grupo" [the third centenary of the death of Góngora, and was celebrated in the Atheneum of Seville, where a majority of the members of the group reunited.] (Nuñez 1)

Góngora is a famous Spanish poet of the "Siglo de Oro," or "Century of Gold" in English, which was perhaps one of Spain's most important literary movements that occurred in the later 16th and 17th centuries. It included works such as "El Ingenioso Don Quijote de la Mancha" by Miguel de Cervantes. Góngora was used as the inspiration of the poets of the Generación '27 because of his ability to create his own reality through poetry. The poets of the Generación wished to update and renew the stereotypical rhetoric Góngora once so skillfully created. The poets of the Generación '27 valued the past and employed diverse styles within their poetry, as well as synthesized traditional art with modern and untraditional ideologies (Nuñez 1). The poets of this movement are considered some of the greatest in Spanish poetry, but even Nuñez's article leaves out one important name; Concha Méndez.

Concha Méndez's name did not actually appear in an anthology about the Generación '27 until 1934, by a man named Gerardo Diego (Abdelazim 3). She is frequently excluded in articles regarding the movement now as she was during her lifetime, such as that of Nuñez; however, Méndez played an active role in the Generación '27. She wrote her own poetry, spent time with

the same men who are remembered as the faces of the movement today, and had groundbreaking feminist ideologies that have simply been ignored because of her irrelevance to a masculine-dominated movement. In Carlos Ramos's short article regarding the life of Concha Méndez, he briefly mentions her feminist activism toward the final years of 1920, and states that she was part of a club that "consintía de un grupo de mujeres inquietas y preocupadas por la cultura femenina" [consisted of a group of women who were unsettled and preoccupied with the feminine culture] in Spain. Spanish women during this time did have the right to vote, but were still considered *amas de la casa*, or mere housewives. Méndez would have been experiencing a sort of psychological exile at this point in her life. She was given the right to vote as a woman, and wrote incredible and witty poetry, but was both excluded from the public sphere and unrecognized in the Generación '27 due to her status as a woman. Méndez would have felt the discrimination against women that her society produced, as well as her invalidation as an artist as every article about the Generación seemed to leave out her name.

In 1931, Mendez married Manuel Altolaguerre, a fellow member of the Generación '27. They lived together in London from 1933-35, where she gave birth to her first daughter, Paloma. But they were legally exiled from the Spain in 1936 when the Spanish Civil War began (Ramos). This happened to almost all of the members of the Generación '27, besides Lorca who was actually killed. Abdelazim states,

"Muchos poetas del 27 sufrieron la experiencia dura del exilio por su ideología política. La separación de la patria, de la familia y del entorno social marcó buena parte de su producción literaria" [Many of the poets of the Generación '27 suffered the difficult experience of exile because of their political ideology. The separation from their

homeland, from their family, and from their social environment marked a large part of their literary production.] (4)

For Méndez, this separation from her motherland was devastating. In Catherine Bellver's article "Tres Poetas Desterradas y la Morfología del Exilio," she describes Méndez as feeling a great "desesperanza," or "hopelessness." Bellver states that this is largely due to the fact that Mendez had three personal losses; "la de su primer hijo, la de su patria, y la de su amor" [that of her first child, that of her homeland, and that of her love] (53). I would however, like to add to this statement, as though I believe all these losses capitalized upon her sadness, her experience of physical exile was also wakeup call for her. Méndez had always been an exile; however, her physical exile was the first time that she realized her lifelong exile. At first, Méndez was socially exiled from her country as a woman, as well as the Generación '27, which she was an important and unrecognized member of. Second, she was physically cast out from the place she grew up in because of her association with a literary movement that she was not even recognized for academically. I will go into more detail about this sentiment in my analysis of her poem "Ven Tristeza...!"

Bellver explains in her article that artists such as Méndez and the others who belonged to the Generación '27 have always been in an exiled state, as they "tratan de desenvolverse dentro de un ambiente de alguna forma hostil a la libre expresion artística...por ser no-conformista se exilia a si misma" [try to unfold their emotions within an environment that is in some way hostile to their artistic expression...because they are non-conformist, they exile themselves] (54). Therefore, we may see Méndez as a social exile, who has been exiled from the public sphere because she is a woman, exiled from the artistic movement that she greatly contributed to because she is not a man, exiled from society because she is a non-conformist, and then also

exiled from her country because of her involvement with the Generación '27 that she is, once again, hardly even accredited for. Méndez experienced the most acute and painful kind of exile there is; from everything that she believes in.

The change in Méndez's poetry, therefore, is both understandable and heartbreaking. In order to notice the drastic shift in her tone, we will examine two poems written by Méndez. The first is "La Pescadora" [The Fisherwoman], which was included in her book *Surtidor* in 1928. This would have been written when Méndez was involved with the group of feminist women in Madrid who were questioning their place in society before the Civil War, thus explaining the feminist sentiment that is present within the poem. The other is "Ven Tristeza...!" [Come, Sadness...!] which was included in her work *LLuvias Enlazadas* in 1940. Méndez would have written this shortly after her exile, as it was published four years after.

In "La Pescadora," the narrative voice is that of a fisherwoman; therefore, the stereotypes that are denied are those that are associated with her job as a fisherwoman and her position in society as a female. The poem consists of two stanzas with four lines each, which are constructed out of eight syllables and an ABCB DEFE rhyme scheme. Méndez does not waste time on a complex construction, rather attempting to keep her poem simple and focused. The poem has a sort of musicality that is reminiscent of Sor Juana's "Hombres Necios," which also lends itself to a childlike and sarcastic tone within the text. The narrator begins explicitly by saying she "no [quiere] la pipa curva" [does not want the curved pipe] (l. 1). By referencing a phallic object that is widely associated with men, as smoking was a man's hobby rather than a woman's, she rejects a sexual stereotype (that women automatically have sexual desires for men). In the next line, Méndez uses the opposite image of a pipe that is widely stereotyped as a representation of women, the "pañuelo bordado" [embroidered handkerchief] (l. 2). By rejecting sexual desire and

the expectation of womanhood through equal but opposite images, Méndez creates one overarching rejection of what is expected of her narrative voice.

Méndez's narrator continues to reject other feminine images, such as "rosas" [roses] (l. 3). Roses are an archetype through literature that have been associated with femininity and the proposal of love. Thus, the fisherwoman rejects both her own femininity, and the romantic love of a man. She is fiercely independent and does not agree with the societal regulations that are expected of her. The list of these rejections leads to her conclusion in the second stanza- that she is unwilling to accept a man as her lover and will do anything to prevent the event from occurring. The fisherwoman is so opposed to being dominated by her stereotypical place in society and a male that she is willing to go all the way to a "puerto distante" [distant harbor] (l. 6) in order to avoid him. The strength of her rejection, as well as the blatant teasing tone in the poem, reveal Méndez's playful voice, and thus her rejection of society. However, the poem also reveals Méndez's experience of inequality to men and her recognition of stereotypes placed upon women. Although she is playful and biting, this poem reveals her preliminary feelings of exile from society simply due to her gender.

In Méndez's "Ven Tristeza...!" ["Come Sadness...!"] her tone shifts from simple and playful to heartbroken. Within this heartbreak, however, she has discovered a clarity of the world that she did not have before. It is a poem that has lost the feeling of ridicule and child-like taunting that "La Pescadora" so easily commands. There are once again only two stanzas, with four lines each, and a rhyme scheme that is the same as "La Pescadora." But the lines are far more complex, each containing 14 syllables instead of 8. The language is less clever and taunting, being replaced with a sound that is slower and more lamenting. The words of "Ven Tristeza...!" seem to have a rolling quality to them, especially through the use of alliteration (m

in the first and fifth lines and s in the third and fourth lines). “Tristeza” [Sadness] is personified, through both its use as a proper noun as well as the narrator’s description of it as a “hermana” [sister] (l. 1). She envisions sadness as a personal relation- someone she can trust and confide in. Méndez’s narrator describes Sadness as a sort of universal truth that has existed for “siglos” [centuries] or even “milenios” [millennia] (l. 2) but has only recently become acquainted with the narrator. In Abdelazim’s article, she states that Méndez uses these lines to “muestra que la pesadumbre es una fuerza intangible que nace del interior de la poeta” [show that grief is an intangible force that is born from inside the poet] (6).

Furthermore, the poem uses the command form of “come” (“ven”) three times in the first stanza, which in Spanish has a more demanding tone than in English. In regards to the repetition of “ven” Abdelazim comments that

el imperativo “ven” repetido tres veces en la misma estrofa es una evocación que intensifica la necesidad del yo poético de buscar la compañía de este sentimiento descrito como “la esencia de los sueños” [the command form of “come,” repeated three times in the same stanza, is an invocation that intensifies the narrative voice’s need to find company in her sentiments, described as ‘the essence of dreams’] (6).

Because the word “ven” in Spanish takes on a command form, it evokes a feeling of desperation within the poem, as if the only way to find relief for the narrator is if she fully embraces her sadness, even in her dreams. Thus, an important shift in tone appears in the fifth line, as she changes from desperation and heartbreak to realization and clarity. Suddenly, Sadness has caused Méndez to “[ver] el mundo, mejor, más verdadero” [see her world better, more true] (l. 5). Méndez’s physical exile has allowed her to see a truth that has existed in her life since she lived

in Spain- that she has always been an exile. Due to her sadness, the world has been revealed to her in a way that is more of a reality than before.

Méndez states that sadness does not “[pone] cristales a este sol de la vida” [put window panes up to the sun of this life] (l. 6). The use of the word “cristales” in this line, which can mean both “crystals” and “window panes” in Spanish, is an important choice of vocabulary, because it connotes both the beauty of gems and the quality of windows. Window panes are an object that can both be seen through and can reflect other objects like a mirror would. For Méndez, the window panes “para que al reflejarse nos parezca el reflejo” [do not reflect [the sun] so that it appears to us a reflection] (l. 7), as window panes normally would from the outside. She no longer sees the beauty and dazzling nature of the sun’s reflection on a window. Instead, she sees with clarity “una verdad solemne” [the solemn truth] of life, which is either “vana o suicida” [futile or suicidal] (l. 8). Méndez no longer sees the same beauty of the sun through its glittering reflection on a window pane, which is representative of the beauty that she used to see in her life. Instead, she sees the truth of all that has happened to her- that she has been living blinded by a falsified beauty of life, but her reality is that she has always been an exile from society even before her physical banishment from Spain. For Méndez, this is a “solemn truth,” but perhaps a welcome one, as her sadness has finally allowed her to see her world accurately.

### **Concha Méndez Reflection- A Creative-Political Pause**

Simone de Beauvoir, one of the first modern feminist theorists, suggested that women are the second sex, and that one is not born a woman but rather is made into one. Women are taught to be secondary through their entire life, to be dominated by men, and to maintain their position as a quiet subject. Butler capitalizes on Beauvoir’s theory in “Gender Trouble,” by stating that “it follows that woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully

be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification. 3” Thus, gender is constantly changing with cultural phenomena, political movements, current fashion trends, etc. The feeling of subversion, however, remains constant throughout the life of a woman. Furthermore, although gender may change with political and cultural periods, it still presents itself as hereditary. Butler explains that “gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. 3” Gender is not biological, but it has the appearance of being intrinsic due to the strict societal regulations that are associated with gender. When someone does not fit an expected framework, they are ostracized and overlooked, becoming a social exile.

Méndez did not fit into the framework expected of a woman during her lifetime. Nor did Méndez fit into the expected identity of an artist, as the arts were dominated by men during her life. Thus, she experienced severe exile in both of the major sectors of her identity; the first, because she did not perform her gendered obligations as she was supposed to, and the second because she did not fit into the male-dominated field that she became a part of. Then, when she realized that she was also expendable from her country after her physical exile, Méndez fell into a sort of existential depression due to her inability to be accepted in the groups that made up the major pieces of her identity- that of her gender, her art, and her country. Méndez experienced one of the most extreme forms of ostracization that there is- she was an exile in all aspects of her life.

The experiences of modern Western women are mostly incomparable to the events that occurred in Mendez’s life simply due to the unique nature of her situation. There are certain cases, however, that cause similar detrimental ostracization from “normal” society. One of the

major expectations that women of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are pressured into is having children and a husband. This pressure has the capacity to force women into abusive relationships, causing many women to be subjected to physical violence and mental abuse from their partners. The abuse is often misunderstood, along with the women themselves, who become social exiles if they speak about their experiences openly. They are seen as liars or are simply misunderstood because the trauma of abuse is not widely and acceptably discussed. Some women face pressures to stay in their relationships, thus experiencing discreditation after a breakup because of the sheer amount of time they remained with their partner. Abuse is perhaps one of the most misunderstood topics of the modern age and is perpetuated due to society's lack of support for victims and disbelief in their words.

We are taught to be subservient to men, even when it hurts. We are denied acceptance of our trauma from our peers, even though it happened. We are told by society that if we do not fulfill our gendered obligations, and do not give ourselves to men even if they are abusing us, that we are not good enough. It is time to change the conversation on abuse and believe women who have had this horrific experience, instead of treating them as social exiles.

### The Temple

He desecrated my temple and stripped away the holy figures  
Leaving me nothing. I drowned in holy water  
As he burned my chapel. Beauty amidst ashes.  
He left nought but blood of a naïve lamb's slaughter.

Oh Sadness, old friend, you descend to comfort me  
As I cease to recognize my face in the glass.  
Though a pine tree may grow sideways in constant wind  
Still it lives. Still it grows. Still we exist, alas.

### **Carmen Martín Gaité: A Literary Rebellion**

The Spanish Civil War took place from 1936-1939, bringing about the fall of the Spanish Second Republic and the beginning of the Franco regime. The war was brutal, and according to the article “La Guerra Civil Española” from the U.S. Holocaust Museum Encyclopedia, “aproximadamente 200,000 personas murieron como resultado de asesinatos sistemáticos, violencia de las turbas, tortura u otras brutalidades” [approximately 200,000 people died as a result of systematic assassinations, violence from the mobs, torture, and other brutalities]. The war lasted three violent years, with lots of bloodshed from both the Republicans and the Falangists, who were Franco’s soldiers. Both sides of the Civil War begged for help from other countries; and while the Republic received none, Franco was able to secure help from Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Thus, the war ended in Madrid, which was the last territory to be taken by the Falangists (“La Guerra Civil Española”). The war was violent, but because of Franco’s rise to power Spain’s situation did not improve, due to the enforcement of newfound systematic oppression within the government.

Around the same period of time, Carmen Martín Gaité was born in 1925 in Salamanca, a small city in the Spanish region Castilla y León, which is approximately two and a half hours north of Madrid. She died in 2000 in Madrid (“Carmen Martín Gaité”), meaning her life spanned the entirety of one of Spain’s most turbulent eras- namely pre, during, and post-Franco and the Spanish Civil War. In her interview with Joaquin Soler Serrano from 1981, Martín Gaité tells Serrano that she was only 11 years old when the Spanish Civil War began. Salamanca was essentially the central meeting point of Franco and the Falangists, and she distinctly remembers seeing Franco several times during her childhood. Martín Gaité also felt that her house was always full of “angustia” [anguish] due to the constant memory of people who were exiled and

killed during or after the war, which includes one of her uncles who was exiled. She states that “siempre había un cierto peligro” [there was always a true danger] (Carmen Martín Gaité) in Salamanca due to the presence of Franco, who strictly upheld his own beliefs at all costs.

Martín Gaité wrote an account of the Franco regime in her book *Usos Amorosos de la Posguerra Española [Courtship Customs in Post-Civil War Spain]*, which recounts Franco’s ideologies and oppressive laws against women. The book is both autobiographical and research-based, and recounts the history of the Franco regime through Martín Gaité’s personal experience, newspaper articles, primary sources, etc. In the first chapter of the book, *Bendito Atraso*, Martín Gaité gives background information about Franco’s ideologies and the government that he enforced. She begins by explaining that he was raised by a father who was a militiaman of no consequence, and a mother who was “anodina y resignada, a la que siempre veneró como modelo de mujeres” [dull and resigned, and one whom he always considered to be the model woman] (9). Martín Gaité also explains that during Franco’s service in a different war, the Moroccan War that took place in the 1920’s, he began to reject Christianity. When he rose to power, she states that

“su régimen solo podría arraigar y popularizarse asociándolo con el concepto de ‘españolidad’ que los republicanos habían traicionado, al beber su ideología en fuentes de ‘ateísmo materialista’ importadas de extranjera. La verdadera España la representaba el...era el mismo” [his regime could only take hold and popularize itself by associating with a concept of “Spanishness” that the Republicans had betrayed, by drinking from fountains of ‘materialistic atheism’ that he imported from other countries. The true Spain was represented by him...[Spain] was Franco himself.] (9).

Through the text, Martín Gaité not only explains the laws that were enforced by the Franco regime, but demonstrates the forcefulness by which Franco upheld his beliefs. If anyone were to cross him, or disagreed with his ideologies, they would be punished in some way. And this is how Franco ran the country for forty years- his citizens could either follow exactly what he said, or they could be exiled or maybe even killed.

Martín Gaité herself recognized this danger, as *Usos Amorosos de la Posguerra Civil Española* was not published until 1987, over a decade after Franco's death in 1975. Martín Gaité could not have published this work while Franco was still alive due to its blatant criticism of his regime; however, she could safely write other novels and researched texts as long as her opinions were well-masked. She received her degree in Philosophy and Writing from Salamanca, where she also became an actress for a short time. She then moved to Madrid in 1950, where she met Ignacio Aldecoa and became introduced to the "Generación '55" ("Carmen Martín Gaité. Biografía")- another famous literary movement in Spain (similar to the Generación '27 but with different defining characteristics in the literature). In her interview with Soler Serrano, Martín Gaité describes why she began to write novels instead of continuing with her academic work, explaining that she began to spend time with new friends who had, as she describes, a "desprecio mas o menos ostentoso de los estudios universitarios" [a disdain that was almost ostentatious for studying at a university]. Her time spent with these friends, who made up the Generación '55, are what she credits for launching her literary career during the '50s.

Although she did become a part of the Generación '55, Martín Gaité returned to academia in the 1970s. She published her dissertation *Usos Amorosos del Dieciocho en España* in 1972 and received her doctorate from the University of Madrid ("Carmen Martín Gaité. Biografía"). Martín Gaité must have been considering the topic of Franco's Spain as she wrote

her dissertation, considering that the names of her two books are so incredibly similar; however, she needed to be patient, masking her opinions in other formats such as novels. Although Martín Gaité went on to write more in academia, she seems to have been predominantly known as a novelist in Spain, as her interview with Soler Serrano is suspiciously sparse of discussion of her academic writing. She was and still is, however, known for the experimental nature of her novels and other writings, and their focuses such as “dreams versus reality, the power of literature, and life in Spain” (“Carmen Martín Gaité”). In my own opinion, her writing is also notable for its autobiographical elements, and how she combines them with surreal and introspective narration. One of her novels that exemplifies this style is *El Cuarto de Atrás*, published in 1978. Because of this novel, Martín Gaité was the first female writer to win the Premio Nacional de Literatura [National Award for Literature] in Spain (“Carmen Martín Gaité”). In her interview with Soler Serrano, Martín Gaité states that *El Cuarto de Atrás* reflects some of her memories of the post-war period, which can be found in *Usos Amorosos de la Posguerra Española* as well. I will discuss more about *El Cuarto de Atrás* later.

Many of Martín Gaité’s texts published after the Franco regime reacted to the severe sexism and sense of oppression that Martín Gaité and other women experienced while Franco was in power. During the regime, women had rights that were surprisingly similar to those given to women in Sor Juana’s time. In the chapter *En Busca de Cobijo* [*In Search of Shelter*] in Martín Gaité’s *Usos Amorosos*, she opens by stating that

“Mucho antes que una jovencita le llegara la edad de ‘echarse novio,’ ya había anidado en su mente una noción muy clara...si no tenía vocación de monja, quedarse soltera suponía una perspectiva más bien desagradable, ‘desairada.’” [Much before a young girl came of age to ‘secure a boyfriend,’ a very clear idea had already been dwelling in her

head...if she did not become a nun, to stay single entailed a rather unpleasant prospect, to be ‘spurned.’] (23).

Martín Gaité also explains that being a nun was romanticized, and while her family and boyfriend could cry for her, the woman who became a nun would still be looked upon with pride. A woman who had passed the age to marry, however, and remained single “solía ser detectada por cierta intemperancia de carácter, por su intransigencia o por su inconformismo” [was usually characterized by a certain lack of restraint in her personality, either for her inflexibility or for her non-conformism] (24). Nor were women permitted to have a complicated vision of life. They required to present themselves as stable and always smiling (25). Martín Gaité, as an educated woman who received her doctorate three years before Franco’s death, was quite obviously enraged by the thought that she needed to conform to these strict societal regulations. And while Martín Gaité did marry one of the members of the Generación ’55, she later got a divorce, which would have been virtually unheard of during the Franco regime. The topic of her husband seems to be mostly avoided, as he is not mentioned in her biographies nor was he spoken highly of in her interview with Soler Serrano. She may have been the embodiment of rebellion against oppression of women, but it is possible that Martín Gaité also felt as if she fell victim to societal pressures that existed during the Franco regime. Martín Gaité was, however, a real-life *chica rara* because she fought these ideologies.

As I explained in the introduction, Martín Gaité was the author who coined the term “*chica rara*,” in her essay *Desde la Ventana* from 1987. A *chica rara* was a literary character who did not conform to society’s expectations, such as getting married or becoming a nun as Martín Gaité describes above. Coincidentally enough, *Desde la Ventana* was published in the same year that *Usos Amorosos de la Posguerra Civil Española* was published, and Gaité has

quite obviously included reflections on the similarities between what could be considered real-life *chicas raras* and those included in literary texts. In the chapter *En Busca de Cobijo*, Gaité states

“no todas las chicas señaladas por la sociedad como raras tenían que sentirse inferiores a causa de su complejidad. Nadie se ha preguntado, que yo sepa, si el llevar al contrario al mandamiento de la sonrisa no podía significar en otros casos, además de motivo de tormento, una actitud deliberada de rebeldía.” [not all the girls (*chicas*) identified as unique (*raras*) by society had to feel inferior due to their complexity. No one asked them, that I know of, if wearing a smile could mean other things contrary to the demand that they must do so, beyond the motive of torment, such as a deliberate attitude of rebellion] (27).

Martín Gaité draws a clear connection between “*chicas raras*” and real-life women in this sentence. *Chicas raras* are protagonists that defy social norms and explore their roles as women apart from what is expected of them in society. As Martín Gaité had mentioned earlier in the chapter, women in Spanish society were expected to lack complexity and forever wear a smile; however, they could use this smile as a sort of rebellion against societal pressure. So long as these women were smiling and performing their roles in society, they could resist in creative ways and have their non-conformity go virtually unnoticed. And while these Spanish women went through the motions of what was expected of them, which was no less than “torment” as Martín Gaité states, they were secretly revolting against their oppression.

Martín Gaité, who was one of these complex woman forever wearing a smile, performed her role in society and rebelled in what small ways she could during the Franco regime; however, after it ended, Martín Gaité was able to write much more freely. In her award-winning novel *El*

*Cuarto de Atrás* [*The Bedroom in the Back*], Martín Gaité explores ideas of the *chica rara* as well as rebellion within confined spaces. In her article “‘Chicas Raras’ en Dos Novelas de Carmen Martín Gaité y Carmen Laforet,” Nuria Cruz-Cámara introduces the importance of the use of space in the discourse regarding *chicas raras*. She states that *chicas raras* interact with oppression from

“los espacios interiores, y, como consecuencia, del grupo familiar dentro de tales espacios...la calle, que, en contraste, aparece como un recinto liberador y un lugar donde las protagonistas amplían su punto de vista; y los/as carceleros/as, figuras parentales que actúan como obstáculo para su búsqueda de independencia” [interior spaces, and, consequentially, from the familial group inside of these spaces...the street, in contrast, appears to be a liberating open space and a location where protagonists can broaden their point of view; and the prison guards, aka relatives, act like an obstacle standing in the way of their search for independence.] (98).

Space became an important part of the *chica rara*'s experience because space has been traditionally gendered. Women are meant to stay in the house as mothers and guardians of order and cleanliness, while men are encouraged to walk freely, and both obtain and maintain jobs in the outside world. For this reason, as Cruz-Cámara states, the street is where *chicas raras* discover their freedom, away from the oppression of family members and the house itself.

In *El Cuarto de Atrás*, Martín Gaité redefines her own space, away from gendered stereotypes and societal oppression. In Carmiña Palerm's article, “Re-inhabiting Private Space: Carmen Martín Gaité's *El Cuarto de Atras*” she summarizes the main ideology within the novel;

In the first pages of the novel we find a woman protagonist who from the depths of her refuge seeks to narrate her past through an art of memory...the protagonist is in need of an *interlocutor*...but this *interlocutor* is not simply a listener, but someone whose role can be more closely associated with that of an analyst- someone who not only listens to the patient's stories, but who also seeks to organize these stories into a coherent narrative (118).

This "interlocutor," which in Spanish literally means "conversational partner," is defined within the novel as the man in black, who helps the narrator to organize her thoughts. The novel contains an overarching discussion of "a record of experiences which, like those of many other women, has been obliterated from the official written history of the Francoist regime" (Palerm 119). Beyond the *chica rara*, who dominates spaces that are not traditionally hers, Martín Gaité uses the novel to redefine spaces and objects that she feels to represent the Franco regime and thus oppression of women. She shoves the story of women that had been virtually removed from the history of the Franco regime back into discussion, and she herself reclaims history by controlling the discourse regarding women in the Franco regime.

By redefining common household objects and spaces, Martín Gaité takes control of the Francoist narrative. Palerm states that "the recovery of the past not only happens through her interaction with the *interlocutor* but also through the objects (the mirrors, couches, chairs, armoires) which have migrated with her and have occupied certain spaces (the kitchen, the backroom, the attic)" (120-121). Palerm continues by stating that these spaces and objects define both everyday life and renewal and recovery, and Martín Gaité reinvents traditionally oppressive spaces, such as the kitchen, into locations of creativity and freedom for women (121). *El Cuarto de Atrás* is a novel that goes a step beyond the *chica rara*; where the *chica rara* escapes

oppressive spaces to the street where she may find freedom, Martín Gaité uses her narrator to command spaces that have been traditionally confining and dominated by gendered ideologies, making them her own. The novel is a process of healing from the Franco regime, and Martín Gaité's way of defining a new era where women may take control of their lives and relieve themselves from the oppression that they experienced with Franco. The novel also brings women's experience into the spotlight, revealing truths that the Franco regime would never have discussed.

### **Carmen Martín Gaité Reflection- A Creative-Political Pause**

Martín Gaité wrote her more famous academic work in the 1970s and '80s, which is around the same time that the discussion on modern gender theory was being established. Gayle Rubin was a feminist theorist who wrote her piece "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" in 1975, which is interestingly the same year as Franco's death and a similar timeline to Martín Gaité's writing. Rubin's principle ideology in the text is that women are used to maintain social ties through marriage-exchange, turning them into a commodity (204-205) <sup>4</sup>. Rubin states that "one begins to have the sense of a systematic social apparatus which takes up females as raw materials and fashions domesticated women as products" (158) <sup>4</sup>. Within Rubin's discussion, she explains that women are products that should be exchanged and are taught to maintain proper social behavior in order to make themselves as attractive as possible to a man to initiate the marriage-exchange. Emulating proper gendered qualities is thus a requirement to the marriage-exchange system.

Because of her study on this system of exchange, Rubin creates a term called the sex/gender system, which is a precursor to Butler's theories of gender as a social construct. Rubin defines the sex/gender system as "the set of arrangements by which a society transforms

biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied” (159) 4. Rubin explains that biological sexuality is the rationale behind the transference of women through marriage. The desire to satisfy one’s sexuality is the driving force behind the creation of women as commodities. “Domesticity,” as Rubin mentions, is the most attractive component of a woman in the marriage-exchange system, meaning that women are compelled to emulate certain qualities of domesticity and the prescribed gender that their society requires in order to successfully complete the marriage-exchange their families require.

Rubin was speaking out against the marriage-exchange system in the ‘70s just as Martín Gaité spoke out against Franco’s sexist government through both *El Cuarto De Atrás* and *Usos Amorosos de la Posguerra Civil Española*. Both authors similarly believed that women were being forced into roles of domesticity for the purpose of marriage, as well as for the purpose of subjugating women within a sexist system. Women were defined in the Franco era as subservient to their husbands and were expected to marry to become angels of the house. Rubin and Martín Gaité came to similar conclusions about their own commodification, and defied expectations by writing credible academic pieces about the exploitation of their gender. Martín Gaité takes it a step further by redefining traditionally feminist spaces and objects, enacting a healing process in which she may create her own space that defies Franco’s gender norms, declassifying women and creating freedom within a rigid gendered system.

From the time that women are born, they are told to be perfect visions of the domestic household. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the principal beginnings of this teaching occur through television. Commercials will depict young girls playing with makeup, cooking, and babies, while young boys are displayed playing with science kits and pretending to be engineers. Objects are gendered from the first breath of a woman to the last, through advertising, television shows, and

media, creating spaces and objects in which boys and girls are supposed to act within from the time they are able to understand language. The sectors are completely separate, but the use of television as a mechanism for the enforcement of gender is effective as it affects the subconscious more than it does the conscious mind, causing girls and boys to believe in their prescribed gender from childhood to adulthood. This limits individuality and creativity, creating gendered spaces outside of the television and within reality. Girls without these marriageable qualities are made fun of, and eventually forced into the subjugation of the identity society prescribes.

#### “Pink Dresses, Green Bags”

They laughed at me. At first, I didn't understand. I never watched TV. My brother and I always played barefoot outside in the cold dirt, trying to escape the wind that pulled at our clothes. We ran fast enough that it seemed like the world would never catch us.

We never had much money. My mother would take us to the thrift store, which smelled like old fabric and summer rain. I would run through the aisles of color-coordinated clothes, brushing my small fingers across the animal prints and velvet blouses. We'd always walk out with a green bag, as full as Santa's with secondhand clothes. I'd skip to the car as the sun gently touched my broken skin. It was rare that you didn't see me covered in bruises and scrapes from running through the woods.

But they laughed at me. No, I did not have the pretty, pink, stiff dresses that all of them did. My hair was short and boyish, not pulled back by the little bows that oppressed their thoughts. No, I did not proudly advertise the names of “Polo” and “Hollister.” Sometimes, I came to school in my brother's old clothes, covered in prehistoric images of dinosaurs and shark

jaws with teeth as sharp as their words. I had not seen the pinkwashed commercials with girls twice our age putting on makeup and playing with the skinny, dead dolls that had drowned in the stereotypes of our society.

I grew my hair out. It was heavy, suppressing my freedom. I covered my face in that awful, greasy Barbie makeup. I could always feel it sink into my skin, my blood, then my bones, like the Titanic at the bottom of the ocean, drowning its occupants in the process. I started to feel the suffocating humidity of late spring in thrift shops, to feel a hatred for those ridiculous neon green bags my mother ordered me to carry like some sort of chain to my previous liberties. I tried to be like them, but still they laughed at me.

But now, I still love the trees and the muddy earth under my feet, and the wind as she talks to me. She tells me that I am free, even though society pressures me. I will wear makeup from time to time, but now I know that I am not a definition in a dictionary, determined by the three lines of text in a giant book of possibilities. My hair may be long, but only because I want it to be. My dresses may be pink, but they don't rigidly contain me. And sometimes even Santa decides that he wants to come in for a quick greeting, leaving me a neon green bag full of newfound independence.

### **Ana Rossetti: Postmodern Poetry and Newfound Freedom**

Franco died in 1975 (Robbins, *A History of Chueca 4*), which prompted the beginnings of a movement called "*la movida madrileña*." Because of the authoritarian Franco regime, Spain missed out on approximately 40 years of modernization and cultural revolution, meaning that Franco's death and the end of censorship prompted an explosion of culture, sex, drugs, and rock and roll within Spain. This movement was particularly important in Madrid. Jill Robbins, in her

article “A Brief History of Chueca and Madrid’s Queer Space,” describes the origins of the movement. Robbins explains that Chueca, where the *movida madrileña* originated, is a neighborhood in Madrid that was historically not considered to be an official part of the city. Because of the “criminals and monsters” who lived in these outskirts, Franco decided that the “post-war reconstruction of Madrid” (as in, after the Guerra Civil of Spain) needed to morally and politically clean up neighborhoods such as Chueca. Instead of eliminating the “working class and working-class prostitutes,” however, Franco sort of created a stronghold for what he considered to be the immoral citizens of Madrid who refused to be erased by the government (Robbins 3-4). Thus, during Spain’s transitional period into democracy, which occurred immediately after Franco’s death in 1975 and prompted the *movida madrileña*, Chueca became one of the “key sites of Madrid’s ‘queer city’” (Robbins, *A History of Chueca* 7) and, also, one of the key components of the *movida madrileña*.

To understand the importance of this explosion of culture, we must first understand the restrictions of the Franco regime and the isolation of Spain from the rest of the world. According to Kenneth Maxwell’s article “Spain’s Transition to Democracy: a Model for Eastern Europe?” Spain “had an insignificant role in international affairs” for almost fifty years, “as a result of the Civil War and nature of the Franco regime” (Maxwell 36). Instead, under Franco’s command, Spain had almost completely been cut off from international trade relations and the international community in general. Maxwell states that “Spain did not share the modern industrialized nations’ formative influences and common experiences, such as the victory (or defeat) in World War II, postwar reconstruction, and the building of European transnational institutions” (Maxwell 37).

Beyond a severe lack of international relations and role within the international community, Franco placed a severe censorship on all television, books, and movies that were either made in the country or imported. In Christina Gómez Castro's article "Translation and Censorship in Franco's Spain: Negotiation as a Pathway for Authorization," she explains the nature of the censorship that took place during the Franco regime. The topics that were considered to be taboo during the Franco regime included "sexual morals, political beliefs, the use of improper language and religion (Gómez Castro 65). Nearing Franco's death, however, the law became slightly less strict. Gómez Castro states that "the Law of Press and Print issued in Spain in 1966 came to replace the legislation that had been operative in the country since the victory of the nationalist party after the Civil War...[it] changed how the system of censorship had been working until then because after it the control was based mainly on two procedures: the previous consultation or prior censorship" (Gómez Castro 64). Books that were once denied could be resubmitted for approval under another title, another cover, a softening of the translation, etc. (Gómez Castro 66). Although this law allowed certain media to slip through the system unnoticed, it still required the changing of certain phrases and would catch books or movies that were simply too explicit for the moral crusade Franco intended to implement.

Thus, the *movida madrileña* was a natural reaction to the freedom of Spain from the Franco regime. Spain was, for a long time, virtually cut off from the rest of the world. Spain did not participate in major world events such as World War II, and did not reap any consequences, beneficial or not, from the War. What was published in Spain was limited to the restrictions that Franco deemed to be proper and upheld both religion and morals. As we know from Carmen Martín Gaité's experience, women of the Franco regime were meant to be forever smiling and picturesque parts of domesticity- their only focus was to be a perfect wife. There was little

rebellion, except for the little neighborhood of Chueca and likely other microcosms of revolutionary ideologies, and little reason to attempt a change in the political system until Franco died.

This was the Spain that Ana Rossetti was born into. She was born in Cadiz, Spain in 1950 (Robbins 31, *Herversions*). Cadiz is a beautiful city located in the Southern region of Spain, known as Andalusia, which is widely known for its rich culture. Robbins argues that this culture helped to shape Ana Rossetti's work, as her "representations of human bodies bear traces of [Andalusian] religious images, texts, and rituals...and with their eroticism, openness, and sexual ambiguities" (Robbins 36, *Herversions*). At the time that Rossetti was born, Franco's Spain was still thriving, but it seems that by the time the censorship laws started slipping in 1966, as Gómez Castro alludes to in her article, and Franco's Spain was beginning to experience some foundational issues. Robbins explains that Rossetti moved to Madrid in 1968 to "pursue her studies in Interior Architecture with a specialization in stage design and costume, which she finished in 1972." She then became an actress for a brief period after another actress fell ill on the road, but her company ceased to exist in 1977 (Robbins 32, *Herversions*). Thus, when Franco died, Rossetti began to pursue her literary career, as did many others, due to the newfound freedom in media after the end of Franco's censorship. In the introduction to Nancy Bundy's interview with Ana Rossetti in 1989, Bundy states that Rossetti "es uno de los miembros más destacados de la nueva generación de poetas que empezaron a publicar sus obras hacia 1980, o sea, que aparecieron cuando ya había desaparecido el dictador" [is one of the more prominent members of the new generation of poets who began to publish their work in 1980, or also, that appeared after Franco had already disappeared] (Bundy 135).

In the interview, Ana Rossetti goes explains the creative beginnings of her career as a poet and writer, which occurred after her grandparent's death. Their house was a place where Rossetti and her family “*hacían funciones de teatro, leían todos juntos, pintaban, los disfrazaban, estaban todo el día en pleno juego*” [did theatrical performances, read with everyone together, painted, got dressed up in costumes, and spent the whole day playing games] (Bundy 136). Rossetti accredits her university studies, however, as the serious beginnings of her career as an intellectual and writer. The vast amount of work that Rossetti has published is notable. By 1989, she had published five volumes of poetry and one novel (Bundy 135). In 2019, she has published countless other poems, novels, short stories, articles, peer reviews, etc. and is considered one of the great writers of her generation in Spain. But her career started in Madrid during the *movida madrileña*, which influenced her work along with her upbringing in Andalusia.

Two of Rossetti's more famous poems include “Chico Wrangler” and “Calvin Klein Underdrawers.” The poems are similar in their eroticism and bending of gender norms. In both poems, clothing becomes a representation for desire of the male body and is emblematic of sexual parts of the male body. The poems open a space in which women reduce men to their figures, reversing the long-held tradition of eroticizing and dehumanizing the female body by allotting a space where men and women are put on an equal and sexualized playing field. Carmela Ferradans, in her chapter “Reflections on a Woman's Eye: Ana Rossetti and the Wrappings of Desire,” argues that Rossetti uses these two poems as “an attempt to answer this basic question of why it is that men are not considered objects. Her explanation is a poetic illustration of what a male-object would be, how he would be perceived, and what would be the consequences for this subject/object relationship” (Ferradans 223).

“Calvin Klein Underdrawers” and “Chico Wrangler” first appeared in an anthology of poetry by women in 1985, published by Ramón Buenaventura (Ferradans 232). Both poems feature a specific part of the male body that is framed by a piece of clothing, namely the legs and thighs of a man in “Chico Wrangler” as well as the penis in “Calvin Klein Underdrawers.” The clothing acts as a Freudian fetishization of the male body, which directly contradicts traditional psychoanalytic theories as Rossetti places a woman in the role of fetishizing clothes to represent erotic parts of a man. Essentially, a fetish is the placement of sexual meaning on a body part or object that is not genitalia. Although this is perhaps obvious to some, a fetish comes with a long line of male-dominated psychoanalytic theories that began with Freud. Rossetti uses both of these poems to create a space in which women’s sexual desire is recognized and defies gender norms by reversing traditional concepts of fetishization.

In “Chico Wrangler” Rossetti reflects upon an advertisement for Wrangler Jeans. The poem is written in free form, lacking any rhyme or metric qualities, but rather relying on alliteration, vivid imagery, and metaphor to create the beauty and art clearly present within the lines. The free form aids the poem in its rebellious nature, as Rossetti is not only rebelling against conventional social norms, but she resists traditional poetic format to create her own effeminate and defiant space. Rossetti’s narrator begins the poem with the phrase “dulce corazón mío de súbito asaltado/ todo por adorar más de lo permisible” [sweet heart of mine that is suddenly assaulted/ all because I adore more than what is permitted] (l. 1-2). Rossetti begins the poem literally by stating that the ad her narrator is looking at has “assaulted” her heart because she “adores more than what is permitted.” The second line is perhaps more interesting than the first, as it entails a certain criminality in wanting the model that is depicted in the ad. Women are traditionally not supposed to openly sexually desire men, thus the narrator’s actions are

scandalous because she is becoming non-conformist by openly desiring the Wrangler model in the photograph.

Rossetti continues by using both alliteration and descriptions of clothing to evoke emotions. Much of the poem includes alliteration of the letter 's,' which is most prominent in the fourth line. Rossetti describes the cigarette that the model has in his mouth, saying that "y en sus jugosas sedas se humedece" [and in your juicy silks it dampens] (l. 4). Although the alliteration of 's' may be found in the English translation, it is more prominent in Spanish, evoking the sound of a provocative whisper. In fact, the whole poem sounds as if it should be whispered due to the repetition of the 's' sound throughout, giving the poem a sexual undertone as if it is a sort of bedroom secret.

Beyond the sound of the alliteration, Rossetti uses images of clothing and fabric to evoke eroticism. In line four, she compares the model's lips to "jugosas sedas" [juicy silks]. In line five, she refers to the model's shirt as "incitante" [provocative], while in line seven and eight Rossetti talks about the model's strong arm that "de la mínima manga/ sobresale" [stands out from a tiny sleeve]. She finally references the model's perfect legs that are inside "del más ceñido pantalón" [of a most tight-fitting pantleg] (l. 11). All these images combine the appearance of either fabric or a piece of clothing with the sexualization of the model that Rossetti is looking at. The comparison of the model's attractive body parts with clothing turns the model into a sexual object that is represented through his clothing; namely, he is fetishized through his outfit. By using images of clothing to eroticize the model, Rossetti is not only placing a feminine voice as the desirer of a man (which is an untraditional perspective), but she is also revolting against the male-dominated field of psychoanalysis by bringing women's sexuality into the conversation of

fetishization. Women have been the objects of desire rather than the desirers, and Rossetti uses “Chico Wrangler” to defy that concept.

In Rossetti’s sister poem “Calvin Klein Underdrawers,” she also implements free form, but relies heavily on metaphor and anaphora to create her poem unlike in “Chico Wrangler.” The poem retains the same defiant qualities, which are contributed to through her rebellion against traditional poetry by using free verse. In some ways, however, this poem is more explicit than “Chico Wrangler” due to the types of metaphors Rossetti uses. Much of the poem includes natural imagery to evoke emotion, and wording that is explicitly meaningful. Because of this, the poem is almost more defiant, as Rossetti is using traditional literary forms, such as metaphor, to create an explicit sexual female experience. Ferradans explains that the poem was inspired by one particular advertisement, displayed in 1983, which was one of the first sexualized campaigns of men’s underwear (which did not exist before the 1980’s). She states that “the particular ad that inspired ‘Calvin Klein, Underdrawers,’ portrays the tanned body of the athlete-model covered only by the white, crisp, Calvin Klein briefs, leaning against what Persin describes as ‘a postmodern version of a Corinthian column’ and/or a huge (re)duplication of the male genitalia” (Ferradans 230). Thus, Rossetti was not only reacting to a severe lack of sexualization of men in light of severe and constant over-sexualization of women, but also one of the first times in advertising that men’s underwear campaigns were beginning to be overtly sexual. Rossetti was also reacting to a new lack of censorship after Franco’s death, which allotted a space for women to express themselves more openly.

Rossetti’s narrator uses natural imagery and metaphors pertaining to Greco-Latin art to describe both the model and envision herself as his boxers. The narrator begins the poem by imagining herself as the white Calvin Klein underwear. She wishes to be a “nevada arena/

alrededor de un lirio” [snow-like sand/ surrounding a lily] (l.1-2). The narrator also wishes herself to be an “hoja de acanto” [acanthus leaf] (l. 3) molded onto his stomach. While the desire of the narrator to be “snow-white sand” is quite clear- meaning she wishes to be the white fabric of the model’s underwear- the use of a flower as a metaphor is more ambiguous. A lily is a flower that is traditionally associated with female genitalia, fertility, and purity when blooming. The use of the word “lirio” creates a slight sexual ambiguity, where the reader could interpret the image as the genitalia of a man or a woman, depending on whether the flower is budding or blooming. Although the poem makes it obvious that the narrator is desiring a man in later lines, Rossetti begins with a lack of clarity by using an image of a flower, which is traditionally an effeminate image, to not only describe a man but also turn him into the desired rather than he whom desires. She also purposefully leaves out what stage the flower is in, making the image gender-ambiguous.

Furthermore, the narrator wishes to be an “hoja de acanto.” Acanthus leaves are traditionally carved into Ancient Grecian and Roman architecture/statues due to their ornamental appearance. Perhaps one of the most stereotypical images associated with this part of antiquity are the perfect marble statues of the male body, creating a feeling of masculinity and male domination when referencing this era. Thus, acanthus leaves have the same strong sentiments of male domination attached to them. Their appearance may even be likened to a man’s muscular abdomen, explaining the narrator’s desire to mold herself like an acanthus leaf onto the model’s stomach. By placing these two lines right next to each other, Rossetti is creating a sexually ambiguous image for her audience. She imagines the male model in a space of traditionally female imagery, while permitting her narrator, whom we presume is female, to play a more dominant and traditionally masculine role within the poem.

The narrator continues the poem by wishing she were a “*flor de algodonoero que en su nube ocultara/ el más severo mármol Travertino*” [cotton flower that might hide in its cloud/ the hardest Travertine marble] (l.4-5). Although explicit, the imagery in these lines was very thoughtfully placed; first off, there is a very literal meaning to these lines- that the narrator wishes to be the cotton of the underwear that she sees in the advertisement “hiding” the model’s genitalia. However, the use of the phrase “*flor de algodonoero*” [cotton flower] instead of just saying “*algodonoero*” [cotton] is purposeful in that the shape of the cotton flower is round, a similar shape to the male testicles. The narrator is once again placing herself in the position of an image that is traditionally male, but she does so discreetly. The image of “*travertine marble*” is once again associated with Ancient Greece and Rome as well as other classical architecture, placing this image in the realm of masculinity and likening the model’s penis to the perfection of a Greek statue. Thus, the two images feel masculine, once again bringing sexual ambiguity and a reversal of gender roles into the poem. As Ferradans puts it, “here, the subject of desire tries to be the object of desire” (231), which explains why sexual ambiguity is so important to this poem- the narrator cannot be blatantly female if she is to dominate the male object. Rather, the narrator must occupy traditionally masculine imagery in order to dominate the male object properly.

Rossetti ends the poem with a series of “*fuera yo*” statements, meaning “would that I were” in English. She plays with descriptive imagery of the body, such as “*fuera el abismo oculto de tus ingles*” [would that I were the hidden abyss of the top of your thighs] (l. 10). The final line of the poem is “*fuera yo, Calvin Klein*” [would that I were, Calvin Klein]. Rossetti culminates the domination of the female narrative voice over her male object by stating that she wishes to be Calvin Klein clothing. The use of clothing, like in “*Chico Wrangler*,” is a symbol

for fetishization, but the image of feminine domination is more clear in this poem. Rossetti uses traditionally masculine imagery to allow her narrator to dominate the model in the Calvin Klein advertisement sexually, equating the importance of men's and women's sexuality and bringing the neglected narrative of women's desire and sexuality into the spotlight.

### **Ana Rossetti Reflection- A Creative-Political Pause**

Freud is the father of modern psychology, due to his discovery of the subconscious. He also led several discussions on sexuality, coining curious terms such as the Oedipus Complex. In Freud's "On Narcissism," he explains the terms "sublimation" and "idealization." Sublimation is the process of directing instinct away from sexual desire, and "in this process the accent falls upon deflection from sexuality" (152) *s*. Idealization is a process of exalting an object beyond its worth, which includes "the sexual overvaluation of an object" (152) *s*. Freud encourages his patients to use sublimation in order to "meet demands [of the ego] without involving repression" (152) *s*. Essentially, what Freud encourages is to steer away from sexual impulses in order to control the subconscious and one's most instinctual desires.

The field of psychoanalysis has been generally dominated by male figures such as Freud, who are seen to be geniuses and exalted for their revolutionary theories. Many of these psychiatrists, however, disregard women in their academic writing, and discourage impulse desires such as sexuality. Much of Freud's work is masculine-centric, completely disregarding the desires of women and the complexity of their minds. In Ferradans's "Reflections on a Woman's Eye: Ana Rossetti and the Wrappings of Desire," she explains that fetishization is not traditionally seen as possible in the female brain, stating that "according to Freud, women rarely fetishize...arguing about female fetishism becomes, then, a way of challenging the conventional psychoanalytic model of female sexuality" (226). Thus, Rossetti has discredited two of Freud's

academic ideologies through her writing of poetry. The first that she rejects is that sexuality should be repressed in order to maintain control of the ego, while the second is that women cannot fetishize because they do not have the ability to have sexual desires as men do.

Rossetti is an impressive poetic figure because of her rejection of gendered stereotypes, and her open sexuality in a world where women were not seen as highly sexual beings. She breaks with traditional psychoanalytic theory by defiantly talking about her own sexual desires. In a world where women were being sexualized and stereotyped in ad campaigns for nearly the entirety of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and sexual male underwear ads were just beginning to appear, Rossetti defiantly objectified men in the same way that women had been sexualized since the beginning of advertising. Although slightly more subliminal, Rossetti's message is clearly an argument for equality in the most rebellious way possible.

Today advertising is flooded with sexualization of both sexes, to the point that audiences have become desensitized to the sight of a partially naked male or female on television. Women are still more likely to be portrayed naked than men are, however, which still feeds into the male fantasy more than it does the female. There are also plenty of fashion shows in existence that are meant to sexualize the vulnerability of the female body as well, such as the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show, in which unrealistically thin women walk down a runway in front of millions of viewers in lingerie and angel wings. In sexualized ads of men, however, they are displayed in dominant positions. Women are nearly always portrayed as vulnerable sexual objects, contributing to the rhetoric of women as secondary and defenseless, and subliminally encouraging their subjugation. Advertising has come a long way since Rossetti's time, but it is time to change the message from vulnerable and sexualized women to the power of femininity.

*Lamentation of Abercrombie*

I watch through a black and white window  
As the tectonic plates on your back  
Collide, creating cliffs under your skin.  
My fingertips fidget  
As I watch the wind run its hands through your hair.  
If only I were the hot ink flowing down your shoulders,  
Staining the crevices of your sides,  
Dripping down you, Vatican statue;  
Three-fourths marble, one-fourth indigo.  
If only I were the blue embrace gracing your rocky thighs,  
The ocean as the waves break, slamming into you.  
If only I were the blue threads,  
Grasping desperately at your thighs as you walk.  
If only I could claw my way into the paper,  
To the forgotten empire,  
Claim the throne as your queen-  
Watch the waves recess, the threads break,  
The indigo bleach itself as it vanishes.  
If only just to reveal what's underneath.  
If only.

**Conclusion**

Literature is a powerful tool in which women have been able to subtly voice their opinions and speak out against discrimination. We have learned about women from four vastly different periods of time, with unique histories and contrasting personal experiences. Each of these women, however, felt the oppression that they faced and were unable to remain silent. Although this revolution felt silent, their writing is proof that women have been fighting bravely

for equality in historical periods where their opinions have been omitted, and their strength has been forgotten. It is their turn to be either emphasized or added to history books and discussed in academia.

Their work is distinct, but each author that I have discussed effectively demonstrated the necessity of equality in their writings. Sor Juana argued that women should not be punished for the same crimes that men eluded and emphasized the hypocrisy in the inequality of the justice system of New Spain. Concha Méndez made her feelings of exile from society clear, and her personal experience of the reality of social exile brought awareness to the tragedy of her lack of recognition in the Generación '27 and her ostracization from society as an artistic woman. Carmen Martín Gaité defined a new style of academic writing, breaking with traditionally masculine academic formats. She combined her personal experience with her research, and redefined feminine spaces in her novel to reclaim women's independence away from the enforcement of domesticity from the Franco regime. And finally, Ana Rossetti defied traditional psychoanalysis and capitalized upon women's sexuality, arguing for equality through what we may call a sort of ultimate rebellion.

Incredible authors such as these women have laid the foundation for current feminist discourse and have provided the space in literature to make it possible for women to voice their opinions. They created a feminist revolution despite severe political oppression and enforcement of stereotypes, proving that women deserve the equality that they fought for through their intelligent and artful writing. This fight for equality has not ended, however, as gender discrimination still exists. The media has become a place in which perpetuation of domesticity and female vulnerability is constantly in the spotlight. Movies, advertisements, TV series, etc. contain gendered stereotypes that are being subconsciously fed to us from childhood, and they

limit the possibilities of life in the minds of young women. Women of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century deserve the rights that women such as these authors were only dreaming of and must continue the fight for equality that has been started by important feminist writers such as these. Equal pay is possible, the end of gendered discrimination is possible, and the creation of strong future generations of women is also possible. Since we ourselves are those who make up society, it is our job to change the discourse regarding women and promote equality.

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## Footnotes

1. All Spanish texts are translated by me, Serenity Dzubay
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