Also in the newspapers: Spanish women in defense of the 2nd Republic

Matilde Eiroa San Francisco*, José Mª Sanmartí Roset**

* Facultad de Humanidades, Comunicación y Documentación Universidad Carlos III de Madrid
** Facultad de Humanidades, Comunicación y Documentación Universidad Carlos III de Madrid

Abstract

This article analyzes the journalistic facet of a generation of Spanish women who were formed in the 1920s and 1930s; women who had an important public presence in the Republican years due to their struggle for freedoms and social progress.

In order to gain a clearer understanding of this reality, we used a deductive and comparative perspective in our research. This perspective itself forms part of the theoretical framework of the history of communication and the new political history- two conceptual proposals which provide us with the opportunity to examine the internal factors in women's history.

Our main aim in the article has been to recover the informative output that these women built up throughout the leading communication media at the time; an output which perhaps constitutes the least known aspect of a feminist collective which was so prominent in political or literary circles.

Keywords: Women, Spain, Civil War, Journalism, 2nd Republic.

Introduction

The historiography produced on the subject of 20th century Spain already includes a number of studies that have recovered the names of women who contributed in different ways to the political, social, economic and cultural evolution of the country. This is particularly the case in the periods of the Second Republic (1931-1939) or the Civil War (1936-1939), where research has used primary and secondary sources to reconstruct the histories of the most relevant of these women. This research forms part of a long legacy of publications ranging from studies of these women as a group (Nash, 1999; Ramos, 2005) to analysis of relevant personalities (Ramos, 1999; Tavera, 2005; Vilardell, 2007) which, in part, have been reviewed by M. Moreno Seco (2001) with the aim of calling attention to the significant female presence in found in Spanish public life during that time. In doing so, this research has also accounted for their activities against the reactionary forces that attempted to halt the liberalizing movements that broke out in Spain during the Thirties.

One aspect that has rarely been dealt with, however, has been that of their professional careers. In part, this has been due to the slow and restricted access that Spanish women have had to the labor market and from the lack of historical sources that resulted from this. In recent years, this limitation of resources has been reduced as a result of better accessibility to archives as well as traditional sources with a new

perspective which has enabled knowledge of little known events and individuals to be recovered from official documents.

In this article we attempt to reconstruct the journalistic facet of an exceptional generation of women that was formed in the Twenties and Thirties and which gained a high degree of public visibility in the Republican period. Cataloging this wave of women as a "generation" similar to that of 1898 or 1927 is complicated due to their disparate origins, cultural production and education. S. Manguini (2001) used the term "las modernas de Madrid" ("modern women of Madrid"), a name which has been often used by historians when referring to the avant-garde and progressive nature of this group found in numerous professional and intellectual circles. Recent research, especially since the publication of the Historical Memory Law of 2007, indicates the presence of a movement or "generation" defined by its commitment to a project of liberal policy expressed through an intense participation in society of that time[1].

Contemporary Spanish society then benefited from both their work in the press and their activity (political or otherwise); it was via both this work and activity that these women transmitted their ideological interests to the bulk of concerned readers or listeners at a time when the mass media in Spain was growing and consolidating. These reasons and others have led us to analyze women journalists in the same way other works have studied women writers, poets, politicians or artists. Our aim is similar to that of M. Marzolf (1977) and the authors reviewed by R. Curry (2009), that is, to provide these women with their rightful place in history. The names we have chosen for this work share a particularity related to their professional activity: a professional dedication divided between communication – newspapers, radio and propaganda – politics, literature and intellectual activity. As we will see, few of them dedicated their time exclusively to the news sector as the Republican environment fomented participation in multiple activities. The fact that the women we have included here were also distinguished in other professional areas, including the intellectual, is an aspect which is still relatively ignored in specialized research[2].

1. Pioneers in an environment of change

It is generally agreed that the first third of the 20th century was a golden era for Spanish culture and for journalism. Juan Marichal symbolizes this happy conjunction in a study of three multifaceted personalities that marked this period: Miguel de Unamuno, José Ortega and Manual Azaña – three great intellectuals who maintained close links between the university, journalism, literature and politics (Marichal, 1987: 11).

[1] The publications indicated in the bibliography offer proof of this.

[2] This is an aspect that has been reclaimed by Hilda L. Smith in her article 'Women's History as Intellectual History. A perspective on the *Journal of Women's History*', *Journal of Women's History* 20:1, 2008, pp. 26-32. From the same author, 'Women Intellectuals and Intellectual History: their paradigmatic separation', *Women's History Review* 26:3, 2007, pp. 353-368.

They lived in the so-called 'silver age' of Spanish culture and in the 'golden age' of Spanish journalism, areas in which they played a leading role.

Yet this was not an easy time in the passage of Spanish history. After the great colonial defeat of 1898 and the subsequent loss of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, some leaders proposed programs for renewal that clashed with the inertia of the regime of the Bourbon restoration (imposed in 1875). Unable or unwilling to impose democratic change, this regime went into crisis in 1917 and was replaced by the dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera (1924-29). There was then, in turn, widespread opposition to de Rivera's policies that restricted and limited freedom.

Proclaimed pacifically in April of 1931, the Second Republic opened up the way for change that had been systematically denied by the Monarchy. The obstructionism of the Right, the redefinition of the role of the army and the Catholic Church, the insertion of women into a democratic and modern society, the pressure from emerging nationalisms in Catalonia, Basque Country and Galicia, workers' struggles inspired by anarchism and socialism, and educative and agrarian reform, all constituted great challenges to a regime that was more audacious than efficient. And it was in this environment of controversy, and amidst an institutional push towards a modern and dynamic society, that a generation of great journalists developed in which women gained pride of place.

Indeed, relationships between politics, literature and journalism had generally been deep and long lasting since their inception in the 17thcentury. It was in the 20thcentury that the business establishment led to the creation of a much more specialized profession that was increasingly dedicated solely to mass media (Estévez, 1998: 253-275). In spite of persistently adverse conditions such as the decreasing power of business, low levels of culture or high levels of illiteracy, the practice of a more modern form of journalism sprang from the industrial and urban bourgeois revolution (initiated by the Constitution of 1876 in a conservative-liberal context) and the arrival of new media (cinema and radio) and new communicative specialties. Compared with other European countries and with the USA, Spain was a late comer to the various generations of mass media. Indeed, it suffered an almost structural lack of conditions that such media require: urban society, a consolidated transport network, a political and educative culture, the inalienable right to freedom of expression and opinion and a certain level of acquisitive power.

The Second Republic (1931-39) encouraged the application of many fundamental freedoms and rights, such as universal suffrage, gender equality (Aguado, 2005: 105-134) or freedom of information (as included in different articles in its Constitution). This had a direct impact upon the access that women had to the liberal professions and related activities such as sport or leisure. Encouraged by international circumstances and by centers of pioneering feminism, Spanish women were slowly but steadily integrated into this new environment of culture and work (Capdevila-Argüelles, 2009). Despite this, the incorporation

of women into the labor market was not easy and historiography and various sociological and labor studies have revealed the circumstances that prevented such incorporation. Women's access to the liberal professions, and more specifically journalism, was restricted by objective factors such as the high level of female illiteracy, the lack of structural support, the persistence of legal and social obstacles that limited women's activities, and most particularly, a paternalist and sexist mentality that opposed the idea of women working (Altés, 2007).

Women mainly entered the field of journalism via the two previously mentioned means of politics and literature. This was not just because it was the usual route followed by men, but because literary activity (together with teaching children) was, despite numerous obstacles, more accepted in a contemporary society marked by a profoundly conservative nature (García-Albi, 2007).

Such obstacles did not mean that women had been completely absent from this sector- as attested by the names of those who worked in newspapers and magazines for women in the 19th century, or those who used pseudonyms in articles until well into the 20th century. María de la O Lejárraga (1874-1974), for example, derived the pseudonym of María Martínez Sierra (Blanco, 2006: 337-345) from the name of her husband, Gregorio Martínez Sierra (who was also a writer). When her true identity was revealed in 1948, she was able to lay claim to an enormous professional legacy.

Some female journalists and literary figures (Several studies: 2006) had already appeared mid-way between the 19th and 20th centuries and were an influence in the years to come. Carmen de Burgos (1867-1932), Sofía Casanova (1861-1958) and Teresa de Escoriaza (1891-1968) (Palenque: 2006: 319-434) worked as writers and newspaper editors and did not hesitate to go as war correspondents to Morocco, or, in the case of Sofía Casanova, to the European front during the First World War.

In Barcelona, Dolors Monserdá (1845-1919) and Carme Karr (1865-1943) distinguished themselves as authors of drama and poetry (Real, 2006) and, above all, created a school of promising young journalists who were to create a name for themselves in later years (Redortra, 2006). All of them would go about opening the way for the incorporation of women into a profession that had until then been monopolized by men.

2. Social, formative and ideological profile

Many of these women came from the middle and upper-middle classes and had connections to the worlds of literature and journalism. The parents of Federica Montseny (1905-1994) were editors of the anarchist magazine, *La Revista Blanca,* while the father of Anna Murià (1904-2002) was not only a film maker but also director of an important weekly magazine in Barcelona, *La Dona Catalana,* which published his

daughter's first articles. Matilde de la Torre (1884-1946) belonged to a Cantabrian family that was heavily involved with the magazines *La Abeja Montañesa* and *El Atlántico*.

Their 'milieu' was generally cultured, liberal, progressive and closely related to Republican values, even if some of them came from comfortably well-off and conservative families. As such, they had a privileged education that was often imparted in French or German, or they studied abroad; a most infrequent education in Spain at the beginning of the century. Because it was not unusual for these women to know languages other than Spanish, they even occasionally made a living through translation- such was the case with Margarita Nelken who translated the works of Franz Kafka from German to Spanish. Some, like María Ugarte or Victoria Kent, studied at university, but this was not common since discrimination against women was actually just as intense as it was in the newspaper room and for very similar reasons. The popular cultural centers such as the athenaeums also played a significant role in their education.

A passion for travel both within Spain and abroad is characteristic of almost all of these women. María Ugarte took part in a well known trip organized by the School of Humanities in Madrid that went to the Eastern Mediterranean in 1933; María de la O Lejárraga lived in Paris; Concha Méndez in London; Irene Falcón in London and Moscow; Margarita Nelken traveled across France, Scandinavia and Russia; and Constancia de la Mora spent time studying in London. For various reasons they often moved around, one such example being that of Silvia Mistral (1914-2004) who lived in La Habana, Galicia and Barcelona before going into exile.

They maintained close ties with the great intellectuals, writers and artists of the age that made up part of their family, professional or educational environment; this enabled them to participate in the literary and artistic worlds of Spain, Europe and even Latin America (a fact that became apparent when these women subsequently found themselves obliged to leave Spain for exile in 1939). Their active participation in feminist, progressive, political and republican centers, movements, organizations was intense, as shown by their membership in the *Liga Internacional de Mujeres Ibéricas e Hispanoamericanas*, the *Asociación Femenina de Educación Cívica* and the *Asociación de Mujeres Antifascistas* (International League of Iberian and Hispano-American Women, the Feminine Association of Civic Education, the Association of Antifascist Women) or the Lyceum Club (Fagoaga, 2002: 145-167) where they met with others who fought for women's rights and for citizens' freedoms. These circumstances became indicative of the "feminine social network", created in the Twenties in favor of progress, which leads us to the conclusion that this was a "generation" of women at par with other generations of men of culture and intellect. This social integration converted them into activists whose politics were close to those of the Republicans, whether they belonged to left-wing political parties and held public positions or whether they stayed away from politics.

3. The way to journalism through literature and politics

The path usually taken by these women began with a literary career which led to one in journalism. Examples of precocious careers in this regard were frequently found, such as that of Mercedes Pinto Armas de la Rosa y Clos (1883-1976), known since childhood as 'the poetess of the Canaries' (Domínguez, 1991: 310-326). Margarita Nelken also began to write in European art magazines from the age of fifteen, whilst Cecilia G. de Guilarte sent her first article to a magazine in Barcelona when she was eleven and, by the time she was twenty, had written various short novels.

Thanks to a great and demonstrable vocation for literature, such women cultivated all sorts of genres, from popular romantic novels to drama, theater, essays, poetry or memoirs. Their output was enormous, varying in quality, but reaching high levels in those countries of exile where they had established their new home after the defeat of the Republic in 1939. Some, such as María Ugarte and Teresa Pàmies, won important literary prizes and achieved a degree of fame as authors of works which were very much in accord with their progressive, feminist and republican ideology. Another feature in common was their tendency towards a literature that concentrated on local customs and on realism -without neglecting moral and religious reflections- as a means of analyzing the world that surrounded and fascinated them. Isabel Oyárzabal's book *En mi hambre mando yo (*'In my hunger, I decide'*)* is a good example of the use of the daily life of peasants in Andalusia in order to denounce the exploitation and poverty that they suffered.

It was this same impulse that led them to journalism; they wanted to express their life experiences and social and professional aspirations as women who belonged to a society that promoted an important process of change. As such, they inherited a traditional fusion between politics and journalism that had characterized most of the 19th century in Spain. Indeed, it was this process which led to their incipient liberation as women and citizens and helped construct a democratic Spain, a fact that explains why none of these women later supported the Franco dictatorship.

Some of them formed a highly combative group in politics. Their liberal convictions had led them, from an early age, to political activism against the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera (1924-29) and then, to side with the Second Republic. This also meant that these women remained firm in their political commitment. Clara Campoamor (1888-1972), Mercedes Comaposada (1901-1994), Irene Falcón (1907-1999), Victoria Kent (1898-1987), Matilde Cantos (1898-1987), Federica Montseny (1905-1994), Isabel Oyarzábal Smith (Isabel de Palencia) (1878-1974), Teresa Pàmies (1919) and Margarita Nelken (1896-1968) were all active members of various parties and eventually occupied positions of responsibility, such as parliamentary deputies, ambassadors or ministers in the Spanish government. Clearly aligned with the Republic in a country that was politically and socially very polarized, they encouraged reform programs and, later on, the military struggle against the armed uprising of July 18, 1936 that led to the Franco dictatorship.

They knew that their hopes for progress for both the poorer classes and women could only be realized within the context of the Second Republic; once this was defeated, their dynamic and innovative attitude was rewarded with the exile that cost them so dearly.

They were not professional journalists-not in the way it would be understood nowadays- but rather they used the fields of both politics and literature as a stage to fight for their ideas. They pushed for a society transformed by a greater presence of women, but they did not limit themselves to purely political work in the parties, parliament or government organizations. Instead, they understood the need to spread their ideals by means of the mass communication. They were united by these ideals and their work in the numerous and active- although disorganized- feminist and left-wing organizations of the Twenties and Thirties.

Yet at the same time there were important differences between them. M. Comaposada and F. Montseny were active members of anarchist organizations, such as the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT, or the National Confederation of Labour); M. Nelken, T. Pàmies and Irene Falcón were in the *Partido Comunista de España* (PCE, or the Spanish Communist Party); M. Cantos, V. Kent and I. de Palencia were socialists; Clara Campoamor belonged to the liberal right. Their social origins were likewise different even if they came from the middle or high bourgeoisie- although there were exceptions in the high bourgeoisie (Isabel Oyarzábal, Irene Falcón, Victoria Kent, Matilde Cantos or Margarita Nelken) and in the popular classes (Mercedes Comaposada, Clara Campoamor, Teresa Pàmies or Federica Montseny). Obviously this last group did not always receive a full education and were often self-taught, doing what they could to balance study and reading with various jobs (often more than one at a time in order to survive and help their families wherever possible). Women belonging to other classes received a more privileged education, such as that from the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza, la Junta de Ampliación de Estudios* (Free Institution and Teaching, the Board of Continuing Education) or from foreign educational centers; their contacts with the Republican elite and the possibility of working in various fields not only enabled their political and journalistic evolution, but also their participation in subsequent struggles (including the Civil War). A peculiar case is that of Victoria Kent in which she combined her university studies in Law with work as a librarian in the Student Residence Center (the latter was a center for intellectuals such as Federico García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, Niceto Alcalá Zamora -who came to be the first president of the Second Republic-or Ramón Gómez de la Serna -whom Kent knew personally). In any event, the influence of parents and the family in general was a decisive factor for most of these women.

It was normal that in their early work, which was often connected to journalism and literature, there was already some sort of perspective on Spanish politics. This was to help them to get involved in groups opposed to the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera, and later on, to right-wing forces. *La Asociación*

*Nacional de Mujeres Españolas (ANME), la Liga Femenina Española por la Paz y la Libertad, el Lyceum Club, la Agrupación Unión Republicana Femenina o la Asociación de Mujeres Antifascistas (*The National Association of Spanish Women, the Spanish Feminine League for Peace and Liberty, the Lyceum Club, the Association of Female Republican Unions or the Association of Antifascist Women) not only provided a context for their defense of women's rights but also a stage for conducting politics. Women from the poorer classes usually became members of the parties and class unions at an earlier age, and their biographies detail imprisonments, persecution, clandestine activity and torture.

The end of the military dictatorship in 1930 and the commencement of the Second Republic in 1931 gave them the opportunity to widen their civic, political and journalistic activities, and to even occupy positions of responsibility in the new democratic state. A good example is that of Isabel Oyarzábal (Ballesteros, 2009); in 1930 she was the only woman on the Permanent Commission on Slavery at the Society of Nations. In 1931 she was appointed government advisor at the 15th International Labor Conference and participated on the Expert Committee on Female Labor, created to analyze the social and economic consequences of incorporating women into the work force. And in 1933, she continued to be the only female minister plenipotentiary in the Administration Committee of the Society of Nations (Di Febo, 2009).

Equally remarkable is the case of Victoria Kent, first female graduate of Law to be a member of the *Colegio de Abogados de Madrid* (Madrid Bar Association) (1925) and who first gained attention with her defense of her teacher and Republican leader, Álvaro de Albornoz (1930). In 1931 she was elected deputy for Madrid and, in 1936, deputy for the district of Jaén (Andalusia). Clara Campoamor (Vilardell, 2007) was an active member of the Radical Party (which she abandoned for its support of the right-wing *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* (Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Rights) and as deputy she was one of the staunchest defenders of the female suffrage, which was passed in 1931 (Fagoaga & Saavedra, 1981), and of the feminist movement in general. Despite her militant anarchism, Federica Montseny was named Minister for Health and Social Welfare between November, 1936 and May, 1937 –at the height of the Civil War (Alcalde, 1983; Lozano, 2004; Tavera, 2005; Marín, 2005).

Their political activities extended to working with newspapers which were usually run by political parties or unions. A press, in other words, that despite its different ideological tendencies, was aligned with the Republic and with its secular and progressive views in general, and which revealed itself to be critical of the traditional privileges of the elite and of the Catholic Church. These collaborations 'marked' them in the same way as their political work, and led them to be considered later on as *prejudicial* and *disloyal* by the forces of the uprising of July 18, 1936. They were also welcomed by the great liberal newspapers of the time such as *El Sol*, which employed writers such as Isabel Oyarzábal (under the pen name of Beatriz Galindo), Mercedes Comaposada, Clara Campoamor or Victoria Kent, or *El Heraldo*, *La Hora de España*, *La*

Voz, *El Liberal* of Bilbao, *La Vanguardia*, *Ahora*, *El Nuevo Heraldo*, *La Publicitat*, *La Veu de Catalunya*, etc. They were clearly a minority when compared to their male counterparts and generally they were assigned events related to culture, theatre, or they wrote columns which slowly began to introduce news about feminist issues of the time, especially the right to vote.

And what also can not be forgotten is these women's work in the many feminine publications that sprung up during this time, such as *Ellas*, *Mundo Femenino*, *Nosotras*, *Mi Revista*, *Cultura Integral y Femenina*, *La Dona Catalana*, etc. These publications were linked to professional journalism at the time and produced all sorts of genres, from reportage to interviews or chronicles. Their articles often dealt with the rights of children, workers, women, or prisoners, or went on to attack social inequality, the privileges of the most powerful or the abuses of the Catholic clergy. All in all, these women did not hold back from expressing their opinions in editorials and columns in newspaper pages in an interpretive and committed journalism so representative of the turbulent times of the Second Republic.

Even if women were very rarely employed at the newspapers as fixed staff, they did write for all types of publications and transmitted their literary work via the Sunday supplements or large weeklies such as *La Estampa* or *Lecturas.* Although not overly common, there were some women journalists who specialized in areas then considered to be feminine (such as art - in which we have already indicated the work of Margarita Nelken) or in other less common areas such as the case of the cinematic criticism of Silvia Mistral.

Even more exceptional was the sporting journalist Anna Mª Martinez i Sagi (1907-2000), successful at a time when sport was an almost exclusively masculine affair. She understood physical activity to be a means of emancipation for women and personally took part in many sports, above all athleticism, and in sporting centers such as the Barcelona Football Club. Martínez i Sagi thus took up the message of republican education regarding the contribution made by sport to personal development and social modernization. Clearly, the practice of sport -and its treatment by the media- occurred at a time when mass society in Spain was in the process of consolidation; one of the characteristics of this society was precisely the promotion of leisure, sport and the spectacle. Martínez i Sagi's militant views on progress were revealed when, during the Civil War, she was transferred as correspondent to the Aragonese front and subsequently went into exile in the USA.

4. Practicing journalism in an unregulated and 'all-male' profession

In spite of progress made, journalism and other liberal professions were still part of the male domain; previously mentioned areas, as well as work methods and company organization, also fell within these bounds. The lack of resources, the increasing speed and immediacy of information, the type of average

reader and inherited habits all led to male domination of the newspaper room hierarchy. More accustomed to such types of work environment, men could accept women as work companions or as subordinates, but it was another thing to accept them as managers and executives.

On the other hand, journalism in Spain during these years was conducted with very little regulation; a fact that objectively worked against women, as they were less protected by the law. It was common for the same journalist to work in different mediums, and even ones with disparate ideologies. Contracts were scarce, hours and days off were not clearly established and, unlike other sectors, the unions had little presence (the first strike of Spanish journalists was not called until 1919 and ended in failure). Neither men nor women had real journalistic training as the first journalism schools were not established in Spain until 1926. Journalists were self-taught and, in the majority of cases, went to educational centers that were more or less related such as Law, Medicine, Philosophy, Humanities or Education. In line with the thinking of the time, these were considered to be areas that were more appropriate for women.

The absence of professional and labor laws meant that in those years of political and social agitation it might even be physically dangerous to cover specific information related to disturbances and street battles, strikes, organized violence, police action and events in general. While information sources came from the state administration, the police, or businesses these were also male fiefdoms which reluctantly contemplated the intrusion of female reporters. What is more, information also had to be sought in bars and pubs, sporting centers, casinos and clubs or simply in the street; all them undoubtedly areas that did little to favor journalism practiced by women. Facts freely given to men were often kept from women only because of their gender.

It was precisely the presence of this generation of women in the newspaper room that helped journalists to establish a more professional profile. At the turn of the century, the sensationalist press depicted journalists as bohemians who were often alcoholic, undisciplined, venal, unscrupulous and ignorant. Female journalists brought a perspective that was more vocational, serious, and ultimately, more professional, in contrast to values that were largely based on experience and -of course- on corruption and favoritism.

The vigorous personality of these women and their involvement with feminist, left-wing and Republican movements allowed them a high degree of integration into newspaper rooms made up of men (whom were mostly sympathetic with Republican values).

What is more, testimony at the time sincerely praised the journalism of these female colleagues, such as the recognition for the work of Mª Luz Morales and Josefina Carabias, two professionals who were admired for the quality of their interviews and chronicles.

It is thus not surprising that some of them were already appreciated for their contributions to language and to the genres of journalism, as well as for their more realistic focus on information. Analysis carried out

after the fall of the Franco regime reveals that their journalistic texts possessed a quality that consistently matched their literary texts- many of them being of a very high level indeed.

A notable example is that of the Barcelona journalist Irene Polo (1909-1942). One of the few professional female journalists, her work was highly praised by her colleagues in the Thirties and by those who studied her work after the return to democracy in Spain. As a young woman, this self-taught journalist worked for a film producer and distributor and in the process amassed a great degree of knowledge on cinema of the Thirties. Beginning her career in journalism in local weeklies and dailies, she applied an incipient audiovisual language to her chronicles and reports, giving them a dynamism and freshness that brought them closer to the reader (something that was fairly unusual at that time).

There were other cases such as that of Mercedes Segura, who ended up -like many others- exiled with her husband in Mexico (in this case the journalist Alard Prats). Constancia de la Mora y Maura occupied executive positions during the Civil War as head of war censorship in the Office for Foreign Press in the Republican Government. Very much appreciated by the European and North American correspondents, de la Mora y Maura was an aristocrat educated in the United Kingdom who had adopted liberal and republican positions and then found herself among the ranks of the Communists. As a result of her contacts, her exile in the USA was rather comfortable and she published *In Place of Splendour.* Radio, a novelty among the variety of media available, was another source of work for women journalists, such as Mª del Carme Nicolau i Massó (1901-1990), a presenter and editor at Radio Barcelona (as well as a collaborator in art and women's interest magazines) whose career ended with the exile of the Republicans.

However, in spite of the growth in women's press and the progressive amount of professional work done by women, few held executive positions in the media at the time (although there were some exceptions, such as Carlota O'Neill, who directed the magazine *Nosotras* in Madrid, or María Luz Morales who managed *La Vanguardia* during the Civil War). Beyond positions on the editing board, it was most unusual for women to professionally progress up the managerial ladder; this became another reason to get involved in other related activities such as literature and politics. It must not be forgotten, however, that had it not been for the Civil War, some of these women would have reached management positions in Spain (many, in fact, later achieved these positions in the media while in exile).

5. The Outbreak of the Civil War

The outbreak of the Civil War intensified the role of women journalists as they became completely committed to the struggle against the forces of the military rebels (Moreno, 2005: 165-195; Nash, 1999). This was the moment when many of them decided to go out onto the streets to defend the freedoms they

had gained with the arms they had available: the pen and the word. Their radio speeches (Millán, 1999: 199-2004), reports, chronicles or published interviews in various rearguard media, or the contributions sent from the front, altogether form a testimony to their important contribution to the Republican cause. As has been shown by the extensive historiography on the matter, these women- just as with nurses, fashion designers, teachers and militia, and women in general- played a relevant role in places where they were able to help the people that needed them.

From the very first day, women journalists were brutally arrested and punished by the military rebels. The most significant case is that of Carlota O'Neill, arrested in Melilla on the same day the uprising began (July 17th, 1936), and who was sentenced to six years in jail for being married to a missing republican soldier. She concentrated her efforts on mobilizing human, economic and military resources via her information releases, articles and proclamations that often had clearly propagandistic purposes. Such work was continued abroad with the goal of transmitting a positive image of the Republic and- despite its internal tensions- the justice of the Republican cause.

Other women reacted in a similar way. Isabel Oyarzábal, for example, was a correspondent for the British newspaper the *Daily Herald* and her reports attempted to counterbalance *franquista* propaganda and to show that those in the military uprising were actually aligning themselves with totalitarian and antidemocratic forces. As a result, her incisive journalist work criticized the attitudes of those Western countries that recognized General Franco's regime. At the same time, she occupied various diplomatic positions in Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark with the task of intensifying commercial relationships and taking up on the work done by career diplomats who had gone over the ranks of the *franquistas* (Rodrigo, 1998: 341-348). As head of press censorship and foreign correspondents, Constancia de la Mora was (as we have already mentioned) another example of a woman with a position of much responsibility in the communications area of the Republican government. It was precisely her professionalism and her fair manner of dealing with people that earned her much respect among the international press and which helped in her new condition as exile from 1939 onwards.

Employed in Barcelona as editor of the youth magazine *Juliol*, Teresa Pàmies traveled around the front and took part in campaigns to recruit young volunteers for the Republican army. She dedicated herself to tasks such as cultural activism, aid to the wounded and the refugees, and to political meetings. A member of the *Joventuts Socialistes Unificades de Catalunya* (Unified Socialist Youth of Catalonia), she traveled to New York in 1938 to the Second World Congress of Youth for Peace and joined a commission set up to meet President Franklin D. Roosevelt in order to explain the situation in Spain from a Republican point of view.

Another emblematic case was that of Margarita Nelken, war correspondent in Extremadura and Toledo and combatant in defense of Madrid in autumn of 1936. Her education and mastery of several languages led

her to dedicate her efforts to helping journalists and visitors from other countries. At the same time, she wrote for the communist magazine *Mundo Obrero* and collaborated in organizing the civilian population and in keeping its spirits up. She was also at the front in Aragon and then, at the end of the war, she went to Barcelona and from there, into exile (Martínez, 1997; Martínez, 2007).

Other women acted as propagandists, speakers, writers, photographers, radio presenters or reporters, especially in the Republican rearguard, where there was much work to be done to help the troops or keep the population alert to fascist activities.

6. Exile- a new scenario for an old battle

The victory of the *franquista* forces and the last wave of Republican exiles from February-March in 1939 meant a radical and brutal rupture in the careers of all these women. The winners carried out a drastic repression against all those they could detain under the Law of Political Responsibilities of February, 1939 (a tool used by the Franco authorities to ban all organizations, parties and left-wing unions and to prosecute their members). The remaining exiles crossed the border to escape a merciless persecution; in most cases, France was their first destination. This first step was made very difficult by various circumstances such as the concentration camps (where Teresa Pàmies was sent) or the lack of assistance from the French authorities and was further complicated in May, 1940 with the invasion of France by the 3rd Reich. This situation caught Victoria Kent in Paris and she was forced to hide in the Mexican embassy in order to avoid being extradited to Spain or being sent to one of the concentration camps (Gutiérrez, 2001; Ramos, 1999; Villena, 2007). Some stayed in France for years, as was the case with Federica Montseny who settled in Toulouse. Others headed off to different countries, choosing their destinations according to their means, family connections, friendships and the comings and goings typical of these situations. Often they made various stops during their time in exile, such as Mada Carreño's stay in England. Others had to travel to other destinations such as the Dominican Republic where living conditions and persecution by the authorities forced them into a new exile. There were cases of permanent and even rapid settlement, such as that of Irene Falcón in the Soviet Union, who gained asylum because of her communist activism.

Most of them, however, ended up in France or in Mexico (a country that received the bulk of the Spanish Republican exiles) (Domínguez, 2009). The opportunities provided by the government of President Lázaro Cárdenas, and the linguistic similarity and journalistic and literary relationships from previous periods, allowed for a generous welcome, but were not able to alleviate the painful tensions and after effects of exile. Logically, with the passing of time, there were changes in the choice of destination, mostly within the Latin American region. Certainly they were years of desperation, of disillusionment at seeing the

permanence of the Franco regime, and also times of disputes and confrontations between the exiles themselves.

Cultural and material life in their new homes outside of Spain was difficult for mostly everybody. At the beginning, at least, they had to undertake a variety of activities to survive; these included agriculture, in the case of María Ugarte, selling cosmetic products, as did Silvia Mistral, or local crafts and tourism, as was the case with Constancia de la Mora. The very fact that their professional activity once again flourished in exile is solid proof of their bravery; such terrible experiences inspired an interesting literary current in the form of memoirs. Mada Carreño wrote *Los diablos sueltos (*'The Devils Unleashed'*)* (1975) and Carlotta O´Neill narrated her vicissitudes in *Una mujer en la guerra de España (*'A Woman in the Spanish War'*)*. At times their experiences were expressed in the form of novels, as was the case with Luisa Carnés (Clarita Montes) who expressed the drama of double identity of the exiles in with *El eslabón perdido (*'The Missing Link'*).* Journalistic reflexes led Silvia Mistral to start making notes on her last days of the war and as the first in exile in France. These notes were then converted into a most moving work, *Éxodo. Diario de una refugiada española* ('Exodus Diary of a Spanish Refugee'). María de la O Lejárraga also wrote a passionate biography, *Una mujer por los caminos de España (*'A Woman in the Paths of Spain*')* in which she related her Republican experiences. Autobiography was likewise used by Victoria Kent in her book *Cuatro años en París* ('Four Years In Paris'), Constancia de la Mora in her *Doble Esplendor* (Double Splendor) (Greene, 1993:36-54) and Concha Méndez, who narrated the story of her life to her granddaughter Paloma Ulacia at her home in Coyoacán (México) and who later converted these conversations into *Memorias habladas, memorias armadas* ('Spoken memories, armed memories'*).*

Various Mexican newspapers and magazines gave them column space. The daily *Excelsior*, for example, opened up its pages to the literary collaborations of Silvia Mistral and Mada Carreño and to the accredited art criticism of Margarita Nelken. *Mañana, Hoy, Tiras de Colores, El Tiempo*, *El Nacional, Revista de la Universidad, Vida Literaria, Diálogos* and *Revista de Revistas* successfully published articles and work produced by this group of women. There was also some experimentation being carried out, for example in the magazine *Rueca* (considered to be the first feminist magazine in Mexico) where Mada Carreño first published some of her poems and essays.

At times they climbed to positions of responsibility; a noteworthy case being that of María Ugarte in Santo Domingo who went from being the first female journalist in the Dominican Republic to holding relevant positions in newspapers such as *El Caribe* or *La Nación*. After having been the first female editor of leading Spanish newspapers *El Imparcial* y *El Regional*, Cecilia G. Guilarte was chief editor in 1941 (and later on, manager) of the Mexican magazines *Mujer* and *El Hogar de México.* Victoria Kent founded and directed the

magazine *Ibérica*, first published in the United States in 1954 with the aim of denouncing the dictatorships of Franco in Spain, and of Antonio Oliviera de Salazar in Portugal.

Following the initiatives made during their Spanish period, these women in exile were not new to the world of publishing. One significant case was that of the Mada Carreño who participated in '*Ediciones Xóchtil*' in Mexico with a considerable presence of exiled Spanish Republicans. In Havana, Concha Méndez and her husband started a publishing house, which edited –amongst other works- the collection of poems '*El Ciervo Herido*' ('The Wounded Deer´). Working intensely in these positions, these women were engaged in cultural activism in their host countries and encouraged literary, artistic and journalistic activities (the Spanish Athenaeum in Mexico was one of the most prestigious institutions that welcomed them). For thirty years, Mada Carreño herself sponsored the literary prize ´Magda Donato´ (pseudonym of Carmen Nelken) which was awarded to many Spanish and Mexican intellectuals.

Over the years, these women played an increasingly important role and some of them went on to occupy positions in companies and public institutions at the same time that they were settling into their new homes. Perhaps the most notable case was that of María Ugarte at the University of Santo Domingo and at the General National Archives, where she gave classes in Library Sciences and Archiving. Cecilia G. Guilarte is still remembered as director of the Department of University Extension in Sonora at the University of Sonora (Mexico) and her magazine *Universidad de Sonora.*

There is evidence that these women took part in *antifranquista* acts that were carried out by the exiled political parties or unions, particularly those belonging to the Communist Party and to organizations under its influence such as *La Unión de Intelectuales Libres* or *La Unión de Mujeres* (The Union of Free Intellectuals or the Women's Union). One example is Teresa Pàmies, the only woman from the Spanish delegation at the World Congress for Peace in 1950 (held simultaneously in Paris and Prague). She led an intense personal life and activist career as mother to five children and radio presenter for broadcasts in Spanish and Catalan for *Radio Moscow* and *Radio Prague* in which she specialized in reports on Spain. At *Radio Independent Spain- the Pyrenean*, she broadcast her chronicles under the pseudonym of Núria Pla, as well as working as editor at *Nuestra Bandera, Nous Horitzons*, *Mundo Obrero* y *Treball* (Pàmies, 2007).

The press used by the exiles relied on the presence of these women who never ceased defending the culture and values of the Republican system of ideas. Informing, writing, and creating in the exile press, they attempted to maintain the standards of intellectual, political and propagandistic work that they had begun during the Civil War. Magazines such as *España Popular, España Peregrina, Las Españas* or the *Boletín de Información de Intelectuales,* are only some of the leading papers, created in exile as means of expressing Republican values, in which one can find examples of the journalistic work of these women.

Whilst these Republican women were completely removed from public registers and spaces by the Franco regime, they continued to triumph and gain public recognition with prizes and awards. Particularly remarkable is the case of María Ugarte who, after receiving various awards in the Dominican Republic, was awarded the National Literary Prize in 2006 and was declared a Living Cultural Treasure, thus becoming one of the cultural symbols of this Caribbean country. In Mexico, Carlotta O´Neill was the recipient of various acts of homage, Magda Donato was declared Best Actress in 1960 by the Association of Theater Critics, and Mada Carreño was celebrated by public events in her honor upon her death in the year 2000.

There were some women who went back to Spain but their return was almost always difficult and painful because of the double estrangement from both home and host countries, personal circumstances, and the disinterest -or even enmity- of the authorities and predominant *franquista* circles of power. This turned out to be the situation in the case of Cecilia G. Guilarte, who in 1964 (at the height of the Franco dictatorship) went back to her native Basque country. Several of her articles in *La Voz de España* testified to this double rupture and to a strong nostalgia for Mexico where she had left a husband and daughters. She continued to write for the Mexican press and in Spain was a finalist in the 1968 Premio Planeta with her novel *Todas las vidas (*'All lives'*)* and won the Águilas prize with *Cualquiera que os dé muerte* ('Whoever gives you death').

Less fortunate was Anna María Martínez i Sagi who made her home in the small villages of Mallorca and Catalonia, where she remained in obscurity as a writer and journalist. Clara Campoamor, previously a deputy who defended women´s right-to-vote, settled in Geneva and even wanted to return to Spain in 1951 but her status as a Mason, and her refusal to provide the Franco authorities with names of Masons, drove her to choose exile once again. Carlota O´Neill made sporadic return trips during the last years of the Franco dictatorship, but her opposition to both the system and to the transition to democracy after 1976 obliged her to give up the idea of living in Spain again and she died in Caracas, Venezuela.

For nearly 40 years, the Franco dictatorship not only forced most women journalists to remain in exile, it also erased them from its circles of power. After three decades out of the country, they were unknown to the great majority of the Spanish population. Bustling with energy and determination, these women often ended their journalistic and professional careers in the host countries, frequently with recognition and sometimes without it. They maintained their Republican convictions and gave shape to them through many projects and articles that today form part of the political and cultural heritage of Spain and the nations that hosted them. It was a harsh punishment that the Franco dictatorship imposed upon their defense of Republicanism and upon their defense of progressive values and emancipation of women in all walks of life.

This shameful silence was sadly maintained throughout many years of the Political Transition to democracy (initiated in 1976). Allotting these women only a small role in the process of change, the new democratic institutions perpetuated the veil of oblivion that had previously served to 'hide' these women (as part of the

'pact of silence' never made explicit by the protagonists of the transition process but practiced in reality). The effect of the 'erasure' that the Franco dictatorship carried out for so many years with impunity, was that it led, in part, to a lack of historical sources, and that studies carried out during these first fifteen years of democracy, were almost ignored.

Fortunately the slow but steady historical recovery of the exiles, together with the efforts of family, local authorities, cultural centers and some academics, has brought to light the great contributions that these women made to journalism and to society in general. Mid-way through the Eighties, publication began of projects and articles related to them and their works began to be re-edited and distributed. Although it was too late, there were also acts of homage made in their native regions and home towns. From 1995 onwards, research was increased in this area and as of 2000 the situation could be said to be improving steadily. Although there is still much to be studied and repaired, the general and specific biography continues to be of great interest and allows us a global perspective of the contributions made by this generation of Spanish women journalists.

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