

**Title:** The Politics of Food & Hunger in Spanish Literature, 1945-2015

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### **Introduction: The Politics of Food and Hunger in (Post-)Civil War Spain**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1938, Francoist planes flew over Madrid, an ominous sight that had become commonplace during the rebels' brutal two-and-a-half-year siege on the capital. Rather than bombard the city with explosives, the Nationalists dropped 'bread bombs' ('bombas de pan') – parcels of white bread – in bags adorned with propagandistic rhetoric that promised resources in order to ingratiate the Francoist insurgents to the starving citizens.<sup>1</sup> The Nationalist slogan 'ni un hogar sin lumbre, ni un español sin pan' that was repeated by Franco in speeches throughout the conflict, and echoed in the rhetoric printed on 'bread bomb' parcels, indicates not only how the rebels exploited Spaniards' desperation, but also speaks to the ways in which material need dictated how the conflict played out.<sup>2</sup> Efforts to abet mass hunger were indeed critical to the Civil War, as partisan interpretations of deprivation and rationing were strategically enforced by both sides. In Republican territory, meagre supplies and rationing regulations were delineated as a patriotic act in defence of Spain's democratically elected government. As Suzanne Dunai explains, 'ordinary Spaniards were encouraged to express their patriotism and support for the Republican effort with every shopping trip that they made and every meal that they cooked',<sup>3</sup> while authorities in Madrid and Barcelona 'attempted to maximise home-front mobilization of the war effort by redefining cooking and eating through wartime propaganda'.<sup>4</sup> In December 1938, leaflets were circulated promising Republican soldiers Christmas hampers of condensed milk, candied fruits, sugared almonds, biscuits, *turrón*, and cider if they defect.<sup>5</sup> When Franco's rebels took Madrid in March 1939, just a month before the end of the War, crowds rejoiced and sang the fascist anthem 'Cara al Sol' as the Auxilio Social (Social Support) disseminated bread, chocolate and condensed milk.<sup>6</sup> Exhausted, brutalised, and starved by Civil War, 'many urban Spaniards eventually welcomed at least the material promises that Franco and the Nationalists made for "Country, Justice, and Bread", as well as with the slogan: "Not a single home without firewood or a Spaniard without bread"'.<sup>7</sup>

Testament to the empty promises of Nationalist rhetoric, 'early' Francoism would become known as the infamous 'años del hambre' (1939-52), a period characterised by food shortages, mass starvation, rampant disease and poverty, rationing, and malnutrition. In the aftermath of the

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<sup>1</sup> Carmen Gutiérrez Rueda and Laura Gutiérrez Rueda, *El hambre en el Madrid de la Guerra Civil (1936-1939)* (Madrid: Ediciones la Librería, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> The Francoist slogan has various iterations, also frequently cited as 'ni un hogar sin lumbre, ni una familia sin pan'.

<sup>3</sup> Suzanne Dunai, 'Home-front Cooking: Eating and Daily Life in Republican Cities during the Spanish Civil War', in *Spain at War: Society, Culture and Mobilization, 1936-1944*, ed. by James Matthews (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 177-93 (pp. 189-90).

<sup>4</sup> Dunai, 'Home-front Cooking', 190.

<sup>5</sup> Pedro Corral, *Desertores: La Guerra Civil que nadie quiere contra* (Barcelona: Debolsillo, 2006), 188.

<sup>6</sup> Óscar Rodríguez Barreira, 'Franco's Bread: Auxilio Social from Below, 1937-1943', in *Memory and Cultural History of the Spanish Civil War: Realms of Oblivion*, ed. by Aurora G. Morcillo (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013), 319-57 (pp. 320-21).

<sup>7</sup> Dunai, 'Home-front Cooking', 190.

Nationalists' victory, hunger proved an effective means of oppressing Republican supporters; when Franco declared an end to the War on 1 April 1939, many who opposed him passively accepted defeat, downtrodden and disillusioned by exhaustion, poverty and hunger.<sup>8</sup> The deplorable conditions and mass overcrowding in state prisons meant that 'spaces of confinement became also spaces of extermination' due to hunger, disease and torture, while hunger formed part of the 'dehumanization process' in Spain's concentration camps.<sup>9</sup> Historiography on hunger and famine in Francoist Spain has elucidated how the regime's autarchic economic policies exacerbated the impact of the 1939-42 and 1946 famines that devastated communities throughout southern Spain and, critically, how food – and, indeed, a lack thereof – was politicised under the regime, utilised as a means of abusing, disenfranchising, and criminalising those deemed enemies of the state. In the seminal *Franco's Famine: Malnutrition, Disease and Starvation in Post-Civil War Spain*, Miguel Ángel Arco Blanco and Peter Anderson explicate:

the poorest sectors of society, many of whom had supported the defeated Second Republic against General Franco, suffered the most. They included rural and urban waged workers, women, the elderly and children hailing from families impoverished and broken apart by the war or the dictatorship's programme of executions, incarcerations and purges.<sup>10</sup>

Accordingly, food was a cherished commodity, essential to health and survival and, too, symbolic of liberty and prosperity, both during the Civil War and the early decades of the regime. Even by the mid-1950s, when the availability of food increased, hunger was emphatically politicised:

Hunger meant misery, death, and humiliation for the poor, but it was also a political opportunity for the regime's demagogues who nursed ambitions for greater power.<sup>11</sup>

Rather than acknowledge the hardships faced by Spaniards, the state delineated romanticised conceptualisations of food to defend its autarkic, isolationist policies. Propaganda in the form of postcards and advertisements in Falangist women's magazines depicted food preparation as a reification of hegemonic gender politics and a harmonious homelife, while NO-DOs (Noticiario y Documentales Cinematográficos) promoted local foodstuffs, effectively obfuscating the realities of food shortages, rationing, and rampant black-market activity.<sup>12</sup>

The politics of food, hunger, and the 'hunger years' in Spanish literature form the basis of this analysis, focalising post-War novels, fictionalised memoirs, and contemporary postmemory texts. By centring this subject matter, this article can be situated within scholarship on 'hunger memory' in transnational contexts and the burgeoning field of food studies in Spanish cultural output, marked by Lara Anderson and Rebecca Ingram's special edition in the *Bulletin of Spanish*

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<sup>8</sup> Stanley Payne, 'De la posguerra a la tecnocracia (1939-1959)', in *La época de Franco 1939/1975*, trans. by Carlos Caranci (Madrid: Espasa, 2007), 97-188 (p. 98).

<sup>9</sup> Alfredo González-Ruibal, 'Beyond the Mass Grave: Producing and Remembering Landscapes of Violence in Francoist Spain', in Ferrán and Hilbink, 93-118 (p. 99, p. 101).

<sup>10</sup> Famine 'exerted its grip most firmly' across Murcia, Castilla la Mancha, Extremadura and Andalusia. Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco and Peter Anderson, *Franco's Famine: Malnutrition, Disease and Starvation in Post-Civil War Spain* (Dublin; London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2021), 6.

<sup>11</sup> Antonio Cazorla Sánchez, *Fear and Progress: Ordinary Lives in Franco's Spain, 1939-1975* (Chichester/Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 64.

<sup>12</sup> Lara Anderson, *Control and Resistance: Food Discourses in Franco's Spain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 38.

*Studies*.<sup>13</sup> As a focal point of literary analysis, food, Nicola Humble opines, is ‘over-saturated with meaning, full to dripping with associations and histories and practices and prohibitions and feelings and memories’, noting ‘the multifarious ways in which food both works and plays within texts, and the variety of functions – ideological, mimetic, symbolic, structural, affective – which it serves’.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, literature is a particularly illuminating medium for (re)constructing (post)memories of hunger, as historiography underscores how trauma and shame fragment, refract, and corrupt first-hand narratives of this period. In addition to the more overtly humiliating and shameful brutalities enacted by the Nationalists in the post-War era, particularly gender-based and sexual(ised) violence, such as shaving women’s heads, sexual abuse, and the forced ingestion of castor oil, Layla Renshaw observes how many express shame and trauma when recalling having their homes ransacked and food stolen.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, testimonies and oral histories speak to a subconscious unwillingness to recognise the hunger, starvation or deprivation suffered by one’s own family; to acknowledge and confess one’s own wanting, seemingly, would constitute weakness, victimhood, or vulnerability. One woman recalling the post-War era in Logroño (La Rioja, Northern Spain), for instance, is somewhat self-contradictory, explaining that though there was ‘no money’, ‘we didn’t go without food’.<sup>16</sup> Gil Andrés observes this peculiarity, noting how some confess to the scarcity of resources and criminal practices replied upon to source food, and yet, do not admit to having experienced hunger.<sup>17</sup> With this in mind, the elasticity of literature – that is, its multiple interpretative layers, which leave room for nuances, contradictions, and paradoxes – facilitates reflection and communication on traumatic pasts that may otherwise remain silenced.

### **Hunger and the ‘Hunger Years’ in Post-War Fiction**

Despite the conspicuous absence of the ramifications, impact, and politicisation of hunger in contemporary memory and political rhetoric, hunger – understood broadly – pervades popular culture in early Francoism.<sup>18</sup> The brutality, deprivation, and bleakness of the ‘hunger years’, evokes the symbolic subtexts of ‘hunger’, alluding to the state’s strict censorship, restrictions on individual liberties, and the insidious influence of Nationalist propaganda on cultural output.<sup>19</sup> The post-War novel can be characterised by intimate portrayals of desperation and poverty, with explicit references to hunger, exhaustion, and illness. Of the hundreds of characters in Camilo José Cela’s *La colmena* (1951), set in Madrid during the harsh winter of 1941-42, the majority are ‘apathetic, discouraged, hungry, unemployed, or penniless’, with many others dealing on a black market that

<sup>13</sup> Introduction. Transhispanic Food Cultural Studies: Defining the Subfield’, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 97(4) (2020), 471-483.

<sup>14</sup> Nicola Humble, *The Literature of Food: An Introduction from 1830 to Present* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), 3, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Layla Renshaw, *Exhuming Loss: Memory, Materiality and Mass Graves of the Spanish Civil War* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2011), 70.

<sup>16</sup> Carlos Gil Andrés, “‘Tengo grabado todo aquello’”. La memoria de los años cuarenta tiene nombre de mujer’, in *Los «años del hambre». Historia y memoria de la posguerra franquista*, ed. by Miguel Ángel del Arco Blanco (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2020), 23-45 (p. 37).

<sup>17</sup> Gil Andrés, “‘Tengo grabado todo aquello’”, 37.

<sup>18</sup> Though the 2022 Democratic Memory Law was ratified with the expressed intention of correcting the blindspots and omissions of its 2007 predecessor, the Historical Memory Law, there is still no explicit reference to famine or mass hunger. BOE, ‘Ley 20/2022, de 19 de octubre, de Memoria Democrática’ <<https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2022-17099>> [accessed 24 July 2024]

<sup>19</sup> Helen Graham, ‘Popular Culture in the “Years of Hunger”’, in *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction, the Struggle for Modernity*, ed. by Helen Graham and Jo Labayni (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 237-45 (p. 237).

thrived in response to food shortages.<sup>20</sup> In women's writing of the 1940s, hunger is a common complaint, in reference to both the material reality of rationing and the metaphoric potential and physical resonance of this sensation to connote a desperation for agency and independence. In Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945), persistent hunger is both a grievance and representative of the social inequalities of the period; for the protagonist in Rosa Chacel's *Memorias de Leticia Valle* (1945), an insatiable 'hambre loca' indexes a longing for education and sexual frustration.<sup>21</sup>

In *Hunger and Modern Writing*, Daniel Rees recognises this nexus of the corporal reality and affective connotations of hunger, with hunger simultaneously understood as 'a physiological process that affects the body as a result of the need for food, the lack of which leads to discomfort, listlessness, and eventually death' and 'that of the mind or intellect, the kind of hunger that is normally associated with an individual's desire or appetite for immaterial things – whether this is for a new form of knowledge, sentiment, or for a different way of perceiving the reality of the world'.<sup>22</sup> The intuitive link between hunger and affective distress is reflected in critics' synopses of *Nada*: Roberta Johnson and Israel Rolón-Barada link Laforet's personal letters to the 'moments of hunger and loneliness' that Andrea suffers, while Patricia O'Byrne characterises the protagonist's experiences in the Calle Aribau as a life of 'hunger and rows'.<sup>23</sup> Sally Perret, focalising affect and senses, perceptively interrogates:

subtle ways in which the theme of hunger functions as affect in the novel: it affects the content of the narration (that is, the way Andrea and the other characters behave and the choices they make), and it is affective, in the sense that the structure and style of the narration entice the reader to be moved by the descriptions of hunger.<sup>24</sup>

The older Andrea effectively 'recreates what it was like to be on the verge of starvation' and, too, there is an implicit critique of the regime's obfuscation of food shortages, deprivation, and hunger in post-War Spain.<sup>25</sup>

When applied to female characters, hunger takes on an empathically sexed quality, with the impact of deprivation intrinsically understood in relation to sex. On the one hand, the figure of hungry women and children is invested with political and emotional resonance; in Irish literature depictions of the Great Famine (1845-52) typically utilise the trope of starving women – often mothers – and children.<sup>26</sup> In *The Feminization of Famine*, Margaret Kelleher relates this to Ireland's colonial history, presupposing a conflict between 'hypermasculine' imperialism and the symbolic

<sup>20</sup> Camilo José Cela, *La colmena* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1951); Janet Perez, 'Prose in Franco Spain', in *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature* (Cambridge University Press) 628-42 (p. 631).

<sup>21</sup> Carmen Laforet, *Nada* (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1945); Rosa Chacel, *Memorias de Leticia Valle*, ed. by Carmen Morán Rodríguez (Valladolid: Cátedra Miguel Delibes, 2010), 103.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Rees, *Hunger and Modern Writing: Melville, Kafka, Hamsun, and Wright* (Cologne: Modern Academic Publishing, 2016), 2-3.

<sup>23</sup> Roberta Johnson and Israel Rolón-Barada, 'Carmen Laforet's *Nada*: From Letter to Novel', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 93(9) (2016), 1571-89 (p. 1574); Patricia O'Byrne, 'Gisel Dara's *Todo* (1951): A Recontextualization of Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1945)', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 91(7) (2014), 729-45 (p. 736).

<sup>24</sup> Sally Perret, 'A Nothing That Does Things: Hunger as Affect in Laforet's *Nada*', *Hispanic Research Journal*, 13(4) (2012): 334-46 (p. 335).

<sup>25</sup> Perret, 'A Nothing That Does Things', 335, 337.

<sup>26</sup> 'One of the major roles that women play in Famine fiction is that of the suffering mother who is made to go through the ordeal of seeing her children die of starvation'. Marguérite Corporaal, Christopher Cusack and Lindsay Janssen, *Recollecting Hunger: An Anthology. Cultural Memories of the Great Famine in Irish and British Fiction, 1847-1920* (Dublin, Portland, OR; Irish Academic Press, 2012), 18.

mother Ireland.<sup>27</sup> The starved female body not only speaks to corrupted maternity, but expedites sexual exploitation. Nicolás Fernández-Medina observes how it is hunger that compels the prostituted women in *La colmena* to resort to transactional sex:

throughout the novel, Cela repeatedly emphasizes the bodily ‘point of view’ of existence (the self as a body existing in a precise time and place), which is perhaps most poignantly illustrated in the depiction of the hungry prostitutes Elvirita or La Uruguaya, who sell their ailing bodies without a second thought in order to meet their most basic survival needs.<sup>28</sup>

Selling sex was indeed a common recourse for desperate women in post-War Spain, as ‘[t]housands of women became full-time or part-time prostitutes’.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, female characters’ hunger and emotional distress speaks to the gendered dynamics of eating disorders, as criticism of women’s writing attests.<sup>30</sup> While the realities of shortages and poverty in post-War Spain undoubtedly meant that food was scarce for many, that does not discount the potential for self-inflicted restrictions. Caragh Wells, indeed, notes that Andrea’s emotional and physical fragility in *Nada*, along with her decision to spend her limited allowance on luxuries rather than food, could indicate that she is suffering from anorexia.<sup>31</sup> Self-restriction not only speaks to the emotional distress that engenders disordered eating, but also represents the trauma of living under an authoritarian regime, whereby personal disquietude has a political source. The ‘hunger’ endured by the eponymous protagonist of *Memorias de Leticia Valle*, moreover, is seemingly not a consequence of shortages:

En silencio, como todos los días entre nosotros, mi tía me puso en el plato un enorme pedazo de gallina cocida en el puchero; yo lo hice desaparecer en cuatro bocados y ella volvió a servirme otras muchas cosas. Como vio que yo no la contenía, exclamó: «¡Qué modo de comer, señor, no he visto cosa igual!».

Ella no podía comprender que el hambre que yo tenía en aquel momento no podía saciarse con nada.

Otra persona, con semejante angustia, no habría podido tragar una miga de pan. Yo estaba sintiendo una especie de impaciencia que me atragantaba, y devoraba todo lo que tenía delante como para acabar con ella. Porque de pronto me parecía que lo primero que había que hacer era acabar con algo, o hacer que algo cambiase, que ocurriese cualquier cosa.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Margaret Kelleher, *The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible?* (Duke University Press, 1997), 187. A sexed reading of cultural representations of famine and hunger is of course not limited to Ireland; Kelleher also examines the Bengali famine of the 1940s in her monograph, while Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley considers ‘feminized’ images of famine in relation to China. Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley, *Tears from Iron: Cultural Responses to Famine in Nineteenth-Century China* (University of California Press, 2008), 189-210.

<sup>28</sup> Nicolás Fernández-Medina, ‘Through the Sartrean Lens: Existential Freedom in Camilo José Cela’s *La colmena*’, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 91(6) (2014), 847-67 (p. 859).

<sup>29</sup> Cazorla Sánchez, 64. Mary Vincent observes how the state recognised ‘official’ brothels until 1956, while 1940s Barcelona had 104 licensed brothels and records indicate that there were 20,000 women resorting to prostitution in Madrid. Mary Vincent, *Spain 1833–2002: People and State* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 174.

<sup>30</sup> See: Petra M. Bagley, Francesca Calamita and Kathryn Robson (eds), *Starvation, Food Obsession and Identity: Eating Disorders in Contemporary Women’s Writing* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2018).

<sup>31</sup> Caragh Wells, “‘Su larga trenza de pelo negro’: The Phenomenon of Disordered Mourning in Carmen Laforet’s *Nada*”, *The Modern Language Review*, 107(4) (2012), 1123-40 (p. 1127).

<sup>32</sup> Chacel, *Memorias de Leticia Valle*, 207.

Such insatiable hunger intimates an inner turmoil and could be understood in relation to the protagonist's age: at eleven years old, Leticia is likely entering puberty. For Julia Kristeva, a child's rejection of food signifies repudiation of their caregivers:

“I” want none of that element, sign of their desire. “I” do not want to “I” do not assimilate it, “I” expel it.<sup>33</sup>

With this in mind, Leticia's ravenous appetite could be understood as a response to her aunt's authoritarian caregiving and the restrictive model of womanhood that she imposes on the protagonist. At the same time, Kristeva's theorisation suggests that part of Leticia's disordered eating is a consequence of the fractured maternal bond; Leticia's aunt is indeed only present in her life as a substitute for her deceased mother. An intriguing parallel is presented here with *Nada*, given Andrea's mother is also dead. For both female protagonists, their disordered eating could be taken as a trauma response to intimate as well as socio-political conflicts, with food the source and means of how their anguish manifests given the loss of their biological nurturers. The interface of physical and emotional distress that this suggests is not limited to female protagonists in post-War Spanish fiction, though it is inherently interrelated to sex and gender politics. Julián in Laforet's short story 'El regreso' (1954) is a salient example. When critiquing the mental illness that afflicts the protagonist, Caragh Wells notes that his despair likely stems from 'his inability to fulfil the role as head of the family and provider' and, intriguingly, that 'extreme hunger may have exacerbated his condition'.<sup>34</sup>

The foregoing illustrates how existing scholarship has recognised the political, affective, and gendered undertones of hunger in post-War fiction, providing critical, cultural, and scholarly context for the analysis that follows. Though hunger – understood as both an iteration of a physiological need for food and manifestation of emotional desperation – is omnipresent in post-War Spanish fiction, the violent realities of famine are not centred. The most salient reason for this is of course Francoist censorship and the regime's ideologically motivated manipulation of food shortages, with propaganda utilised to reframe limited resources as an organic fallout of the Civil War.<sup>35</sup> Controls on cultural output, Michael Ugarte explicates, were critical during the 'hunger years' and, as Jo Labanyi observes, 'banned' topics often centred on questions of hunger, such as food shortages, droughts, epidemics, and references to banquets held in Franco's honour.<sup>36</sup> In relation to *Nada*, Sally Perret notes how, though Andrea is 'constantly in search of her next meal' and is often distracted and distant (perhaps suggesting hunger), such details are 'not at the forefront of the narration, however; otherwise, it is likely that Laforet's novel would not have been published'.<sup>37</sup> Read allegorically, the trope of young female characters plagued by hunger – whether or not this is of their own volition – resonates with both the failings of the paternalistic state and suggests a form of resistance. With hunger simultaneously revealing the harsh realities of post-War Spain and

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<sup>33</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York, Columbia University Press, 1982), 3.

<sup>34</sup> Caragh Wells, 'The (Male) Problem That Had No Name': Male Neurosis in Postwar Spanish Fiction and Film, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 97:2 (2020), 191-209 (p. 201).

<sup>35</sup> Arco Blanco and Anderson, 20-21.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Ugarte, 'The Literature of Franco Spain, 1939-1975', in *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature*, ed. by David T. Gies (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.611-9 (p.611-2); Jo Labanyi, 'Censorship or the Fear of the Mass Culture', in *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction: The Struggle for Modernity*, ed by Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi (Oxford University Press, 1995), 207-14 (p. 209).

<sup>37</sup> Perret, 'A Nothing That Does Things', 335.

presupposing desperation, trauma, and frustration, self-inflicted deprivation can be understood as an implicit rejection of sustenance provided by the state, which is invested with patriarchal and Nationalistic ideation.

### The Politics of *Pan* in (Post-)Francoist Literature

Historiography of Spain's 'hunger years' illustrates the social, political, and emotional capital of bread. With bread an effective metonym for the material and ideological (false) promises of Francoism, the regime capitalised on food to construct an idealised, propagandistic – and fundamentally distorted – vision of life in Nationalist Spain, as encapsulated by the 'ni un hogar sin lumbre, ni un español sin pan' slogan. Though bread is invested with social and political purchase in diverse cultural and geographical contexts, its omnipresence in the Spanish diet means it functions as a metonym for food and Spanish identity. Layla Renshaw cites intriguing anecdotal evidence that indicates how meaningful bread was for desperate citizens. One woman recalls her uncles' murder at the hands of Francoist guards in an altercation that began over 'a crust of bread', which, as Renshaw notes, could be understood literally, denoting delirious hunger, or could metaphorically represent goods or money. Another recalls her mother violently smacking her across the face when she incessantly asked for bread as a child.<sup>38</sup> Of all food products, bread was particularly effective for Francoist propaganda as it evokes the Eucharist, connoting an imbrication of Catholicism, ritual, and a paternalistic provider. White bread became a much-coveted delicacy in post-War Spain as it spoke to both a material need and the harsh distinction between the promises and reality of the Francoist regime. For many, their experiences constituted a perverse subversion of the pure, nutritious resource conceptualised by state propaganda; rather than plentiful and white, bread was scarce and, due to scant ingredients, low quality and of a darker, 'black' hue; the so-called 'black bread' that epitomises the deprivation citizens endured during early Francoism.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, there was a 'stigma placed on darker bakery, which Civil War survivors from both sides associated with the fear and hunger of the early post-war years' and, consequently, reified 'the undisputed hegemony of white bread in the collective imagination'.<sup>40</sup>

The multifaceted ideological and affective connotations of bread in post-War Spain pervade (post)memory texts of the 'hunger years'. In his insightful interrogation of 'black bread' and hunger, José María Rodríguez García observes how Cela alludes to the political capital of bread in post-War Spain in his 1953 novel *Mrs. Caldwell habla con su hijo*, published the year after rationing cards were rescinded and the 'commercializing of white bread' was 'liberalised'.<sup>41</sup> In the words of Cela's eponymous protagonist:

El pan, hijo mío, es el más típico y manido símbolo de la nutrición el alma del hombre no es omnívora, Eliacim. ¡Queremos pan!, gritan los hambrientos. Yo me gano mi pan honradamente, dicen los funcionarios pobres. Te daré pan, anuncia el ejército sitiador a la plaza sitiada, si te entregas en tal o cual plazo; si no, te daré hierro, inmensas nubes de hierro. [...]

<sup>38</sup> Renshaw, *Exhuming Loss*, 96, 39.

<sup>39</sup> Some Spaniards did maintain access to white bread via the black market, as evidenced by an interviewee cited in *Franco's Famine*, who remembered her relative privilege. Anderson and Arco Blanco, *Franco's Famine*, 104.

<sup>40</sup> José María Rodríguez García, 'Kneading, Eating, Longing: Rye Bread and Hunger for Memory in Contemporary Galician Literature', *Modern Language Notes*, 127(2) (2012), 341-63 (pp. 344-45).

<sup>41</sup> Rodríguez García, 'Kneading, Eating, Longing', 344.

El pan que comemos, hijo mío, es un sucio producto de las propagandas, un alimento nocivo para el cuerpo y para la memoria, el entendimiento y la voluntad. [...]

El pan que comemos, Eliacim, no debiéramos comerlo. El legislador del futuro prohibirá el consumo del pan.<sup>42</sup>

The refractory, fragmented quality of *Mrs. Caldwell habla con su hijo*, which is communicated through distinct narrative levels and voices, serves to underscore the way in which propagandistic rhetoric is transmitted, with echo, influence, and imitation central to the narrative.<sup>43</sup> What is particularly intriguing about Cela's reflections on the propagandistic multitudes of bread in Francoist Spain is how it can be seen to inflect memory, understanding, and will, a trope that remains tangible in post-Francoist literary depictions of sullied bread. Rodríguez García further identifies some revealing patterns and tropes in contemporary Galician literature. In relation to Xosé Neira Vila's *Memorias dun neno labrego* (1961), Rodríguez García explains how class and social standing are conveyed via food availability and food practices, with the most deprived limited to 'pan negro', the well-connected able to access white bread ('pantrigo') with relative ease, and those who – like the child protagonist, Balbino – who are typically reduced to poor quality bread, only occasionally accessing better quality produce.<sup>44</sup> A more nutritious diet is indicative of emotional catharsis and social progress: 'The desire to eat *better* was informed by a more general appetite for upward mobility and the sanitation of one's memories of past sufferings'.<sup>45</sup> Manuel Riva's Galician poem 'O pan negro' (1985) provides Rodríguez García with a salient example of the critical temporality of rye bread, not least of all because its publication roughly coincided with a trend when 'upscale artisanal bakeries in Galicia – flamboyantly called "boutiques do pan" at the time – began to commercialize, with great success, whole-grain breads that were more refined than their counter-parts in the post-Civil War period and tasted considerably better'.<sup>46</sup> The poem dialogues with both the present and the past, simultaneously engaging with the contemporaneous resurgence of rationing recipes and the rural landscape of 1940s Spain.

Bread, therefore, can be fundamentally understood as an emphatically-politicised site of memory, facilitating and encapsulating collective memory of the 'hunger years'. This trait is tangible in post-Francoist literature, as evidenced by Agustín Gómez Arcos' *El niño pan*, which was first published in French in 1983 and gained popularity in Spain with María Carmen Molina Romero's 2006 translation. Based on the author's first-hand experiences of childhood during the early years of the regime in an Andalusian *pueblo*, the novel offers an intimate account of poverty, hunger, and Francoist oppression, foregrounding the material and physiological realities of food restrictions. Though written in French – the language of Gómez Arcos' exile – the novel can be understood within the trend of 'Spanish artists who cultivated an interest in memory during the 1980s', precursors of the post-2000 memory boom.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, as *El niño pan* manifests the author's childhood memories, the narrative communicates Spain's history and, accordingly, its words,

<sup>42</sup> Cela, Camilo José, *Mrs. Caldwell habla con su hijo* (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino), 189.

<sup>43</sup> See: Susan Polansky, 'Narrators and Fragmentation in Cela's *Mrs. Caldwell habla con su hijo*', *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, 21(3) (1987), 21-31 (p. 24).

<sup>44</sup> Xosé Neira Vila, *Memorias dun neno labrego* (Sada: Edición do Castro, 1961).

<sup>45</sup> Rodríguez García, 'Kneading, Eating, Longing', 349.

<sup>46</sup> Rodríguez García, 'Kneading, Eating, Longing', 360.

<sup>47</sup> Samuel O'Donoghue, 'Disinherited Trauma in Adelaida García Morales' *El Sur*, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 97:6 (2020), 983-1004 (p. 984).



regardless of the language in which it was originally written.<sup>48</sup> References to hunger pervade the narrative, with ‘hambre’ harbouring a double meaning, as acknowledging or denying one’s hunger – ‘(no) tener hambre’ – acting as a shorthand for emotional endurance. As well as functioning as a metonym for food in general, bread can also be seen to encapsulate the liberty and agency that were suffocated during the ‘hunger years’, as political oppression and economic stagnation stripped individuals of dignity. The insidious impact on family relationships is exemplified by a loaded exchange between ‘el niño’ and his father:

«–Padre, tengo hambre. Dame pan. [...] –No hay –murmuró con la voz quebrada de los hombres que lloran–. No hay pan, hijo mío.»<sup>49</sup>

The metaphorical meaning of ‘pan de cada día’, to mean one’s quotidian routine or experience, becomes doubly-loaded, as the harsh realities of post-War Spain distort the protagonist’s life; ‘el niño supo irremediamente que la tristeza sería su pan de cada día’ (169). Examples of famine foods and reworked recipes speak to the bartering and resourcefulness that Spaniards resorted to in order to survive, often with unsatisfactory results. The ‘migas’ prepared by the protagonist’s aunt are unappetising, ‘verdes y grises, con ese calor de las cosas que tienen mal sabor’ (124), while the narrative underscores poor nutrition by repeatedly referring to the meal ‘as if it were food’ (130; 131). The violent impact of starvation on the body is detailed, with arresting descriptions of the protagonist’s stomach as ‘perpetuamente vacío y hambriento’ (124) and comparable with ‘un pequeño pozo sin medida’ (83), as are references to disease and suffering. Though the protagonist’s grandfather’s ultimately fatal illness is expressly stated to not be related to malnutrition, it results in ‘un hambre canina’ (100) that renders him ‘tan insaciable como un niño en crecimiento’ (100). As a consequence, the grandfather consumes all of the bread and milk that had been reserved for the family, leaving his surviving relatives without.

In the first of four chapters entitled ‘El pan’, the quality, availability, and ritual of bread speaks to the family’s desperation and social capital of the produce, a trope that endures throughout the narrative. Despair and desolation results in an oppressive environment, with the young protagonist fixated on – and seemingly obsessed with – bread. Ordered to eat by his mother, who reassures her son that ‘[a]ún hay pan’ (39), ‘el niño’ observes the bread:

Lo vio. Vio el pan en la mesa. Redondo y moreno, fuera de la realidad. Éste tomaba el aspecto de la atónita mirada con la que su madre lo contemplaba. La madre no se atrevía a tocarlo con la mano. La mano de la madre, temblorosa, avanzando hacia el pan, retirándose asustada, como ave que no encuentra el nido.

Conoció el pan, lo reconoció. Lo miró con nuevos ojos, tan dorado, lleno de sol. Entró en el pan. Era como descubrir un monte, o un árbol, a través de viejos siglos de existencia. Su

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<sup>48</sup> As María Carmen Molina Romero explicates, ‘[l]a historia de *El Niño Pan* bucea en los recuerdos de la infancia de Gómez Arcos, y por lo tanto, las palabras también tendrían que ser las de aquí, las que oyó en su pueblo natal de Énix siendo niño y las que le enseñaron la vida’. ‘Traducción y memoria histórica: *El niño pan* de Agustín Gómez Arcos’, *Cédille. Revista de estudios franceses*, 4 (2008), 237-52 (pp. 244-45).

<sup>49</sup> Agustín Gómez Arcos, *El niño pan*, trans. by María Carmen Molina Romero (Barcelona: Editorial Cabaret Voltaire, 2006), 51. Further references are to this edition and will be given parenthetically in the main text.

existencia, la de ellos. Por primera vez en su vida, supo el pan. Y, cuando su mano alcanzó la hogaza, ese gesto definió la oración del pan: «El pan nuestro...». (39)

While the mother's anxiety serves as a reminder of the paucity of bread, the child protagonist's fascination speaks to his awe for this now-coveted foodstuff and, accordingly, a newfound appreciation that is romanticised by childlike wonder. Whereas critical consensus understands the effect of defamiliarizing the familiar – or *ostranenie* – as a means of lifting 'the otherwise humdrum dreariness up to something marvelous', the depiction in *El niño pan* is politically coded, as what Nationalist rhetoric promised would be plentiful is in fact miraculous.<sup>50</sup> With childhood ubiquitous in Spanish literature, children's innocence, naiveté, and potential to envisage alternative social paradigms is capitalised on as a means of inviting the reader to perceive the social and affective purchase of bread within the context of post-War Spain.<sup>51</sup> The defamiliarization of bread that this scene suggests therefore delineates not just personal experiences of hunger and destitution, but also connotes how bread took on metaphysical qualities of liberty and privilege. By foregrounding the aesthetic appeal of bread – 'tan dorado, lleno de sol' (39) – Gómez Arcos underscores how desperate hunger reshapes one's view of food and subverts Francoist rhetoric from within, as the dearth of fresh bread makes it an extraordinary curiosity. Rather than plentiful and nourishing, as promised by the Francoist slogan 'ni un español sin pan', bread has become an exotic delicacy.

The ritualistic practice of preparing and sharing the loaf are described in intricate detail, echoing the Christian sacrament that is alluded to through the designation of '«El pan nuestro...»' (39). The reappropriation of ideological rhetoric are tangible in a particularly poignant episode that reflects on receiving '[e]l primer pan de la posguerra' (82), phrasing that is repeated twice. The depiction of the bread and the family's reactions underscore the loaf's poor quality, financial expense, and family's profound disillusionment:

Mirando el pan minúsculo, la madre suspiró; cogió el dinero y lo contó: seis reales, una peseta y media [...]

El padre miraba el pan sin decir ni una palabra; negando con la cabeza. El niño sentía sus esfuerzos para no hablar delante de ellos con juramentos.

Poco después, se fueron cada uno a su ocupación y él quedó solo en la cocina, frente al pan. Ese pan de la posguerra, sucio y degradado, estaba ante sus ojos. Redondo, farsante, sobre la mesa como si fuera un pan de verdad. Quiso tentarlo aunque sólo fuese para avivar el feliz recuerdo, alzó la mano, la extendió... Esa hogaza pardusca no tenía la clara aureola de otras veces, ni despertaba esa llamada animalesca de la sustancia de los buenos alimentos; era una bazofia. En unas pocas semanas de hambre, su estómago era ya un pequeño pozo sin medida donde había arrojado caprichoso apetito de niño. Rozar con un dedo tembloroso este repulsivo pan tuvo otro sentido para él: un acto religioso, regreso a los orígenes, la sensación que otra etapa comenzaba, otra vida: la del pan... aunque esta hogaza pardusca no se pareciera en nada el pan dorado, tierno que hacía su madre. (82-83)

<sup>50</sup> Yuriko Saito, *Aesthetics of the Familiar: Everyday Life and World-Making* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 13.

<sup>51</sup> See Lorraine Ryan for an illuminating overview of children and childhood in Spanish literature. *Memory and Spatiality in Post-Millennial Spanish Narrative* (London; New York: Routledge), 118.

With such a visceral depiction of hunger all the more arresting when it relates to the suffering of a child protagonist, whose stomach has shrunk as a consequence of extended deprivation, the novel humanises its subversion of Francoist rhetoric. Inflation and rampant black-market activity are alluded to through the details on costs, while the loaf now has the appearance of the infamous ‘black bread’. As the ‘hunger years’ have become increasingly harsh, the protagonist is now confronted with ‘hogaza pardusca’, a sullied debasement of the golden bread that his mother used to bake that is literally and metonymically corrupted by the social, ethical, and economic bankruptcy of the Nationalist state. Not only does this underscore the regime’s failure to deliver on its propagandistic promises, but so too does it highlight the hypocrisy of Francoist rhetoric that purported to support and reinforce the family model. The religious imagery – expressly underlined in the narrative, as holding the bread is described as ‘un acto religioso’ – speaks to the nexus of memory, suffering, and sacrifice that characterises the rite.

Emili Teixidor’s 2003 Catalan-language novel *Pa negre*, translated into Spanish by the author with the title *Pan negro* in 2004, shares many critical similarities with *El niño pan*, namely a titular reference to bread and the story of a young boy protagonist trying to navigate the brutality of Spain’s ‘hunger years’. Xosé Neira Vila’s *Memorias dun neno labrego* (1961) also centres on a child male protagonist during this period, indicating a narrative paradigm that surpasses linguistic, cultural, and geographical demarcation, capitalising on the emotional and political resonance of ‘black bread’ to reify collective memory of Francoist oppression and Republican victimhood. Whereas *El niño pan* constitutes a narrativisation of the author’s childhood, *Pan negro* is a fictional account of eleven-year-old Andrés (Andreu in the Catalan edition), whose father is persecuted for his Republican loyalties. The novel provides intimate insight into how food and famine foods – such as black bread – were produced, bought, and disseminated, along with many secondary effects of food shortages and famine, such as illnesses, exhaustion, prostitution, and black-market trading. The title – ‘black bread’ – capitalises on an image of poverty, desperation, and shortages to evoke both the material reality of hunger and speaks to political oppression. As Lorraine Ryan observes, ‘pan negro’ functions as a ‘metaphor of a soulless and cruel society’ and ‘constitutes a class and social marker, firmly locating Andrés within the rural Republican poor, for whom subsistence was a daily struggle’.<sup>52</sup> Historically, the titular foodstuff symbolically connoted survival and endurance under the regime, as ‘black bread’ was ‘associated with the survival of the defeated, and hence, its attainability became an all-consuming concern for the defeated, and in fact, the measure by which they gauged their chances of survival’.<sup>53</sup> At a time when white bread and bars of chocolate are rare ‘tesoros’, food functions as a barometer for material security, emotional wellbeing, and political connections.<sup>54</sup> The protagonist’s awed depiction of the abundant, delicious breakfast of milk, biscuits, Serrano ham, jam, butter, and chocolate that he enjoys in the home of a lawyer he visits with his mother is as indicative of the occupier’s ideological allegiances as the portraits of the Generalísimo that adorn the walls (133-34).

Spaces, practices, and routines related to the preparation and consumption of food play a key role in the novel and, as noted in relation to *El niño pan*, ‘hambre’ conveys not only physiological need, but also speaks to characters’ mettle. Enquiring as to another’s hunger essentially functions as a shorthand for asking after emotional and physical wellbeing, and encouraging others’ to eat constitutes a means of nurturing, soothing, and consoling; *abuela* Mercedes, for instance, gently coaxes Andrés to eat: ‘Si no tienes hambre, come como si tuvieras,

<sup>52</sup> Ryan, *Memory and Spatiality*, 120, 121.

<sup>53</sup> Ryan, *Memory and Spatiality*, 121.

<sup>54</sup> Emili Teixidor, *Pan negro* (Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, 2004), 122. Further references are to this edition and will be given parenthetically in the main text.

que los mordiscos te harán venir el gusto de comer. El comer abre el apetito' (241). As this suggests, hunger is sometimes self-inflicted or indicative of (dis)stress, which echoes the link between trauma and literary expressions of hunger explored in relation to post-War fiction. Bereft at the fate that has befallen her family following her husband's death, Andrés' mother refuses food that is readily available and, instead, watches the others consume the food prepared by the neighbours (273). The protagonist's cousin, Nuria (*la Lloramicos*), begins to reject food after falling ill in the weeks approaching her Holy Communion. Due to her impressionability, Nuria's weight loss results in her further refusing food; 'cuando comentábamos que había adelgazado, empezaba a darle asco la comida' (94). Ryan astutely attributes Nuria's illness as her body 'as a finely attuned register of environmental tensions that pits her burgeoning subjectivity against the forcefulness of a new social order'.<sup>55</sup> The fact that self-imposed deprivation is one in way in which this sickness manifests (Nuria also loses her hearing and has a fever), is reminiscent of the theme of self-inflicted hunger experienced by (typically young, female) characters in post-War Spanish fiction. While voluntarily refusing food is not limited to women or girls in *Pan negro* – the protagonist, for instance, struggles with a restricted appetite – Nuria's plight could be taken as emotionally induced: though her fever appears to evidence an infection, it is implied (at least according to Andrés) that she feigns her loss of hearing.<sup>56</sup> A refusal to eat food that is available, be it due to psychological or physical reasons, functions as a convenient literary device to convey the psychic trauma that torments the characters, in response to the social and political tensions, with hunger simultaneously – and paradoxically – functioning as a means of resistance, reasserting agency, and self-control.<sup>57</sup>

The grim reality of daily life during the 'hunger years' is denoted through the frequent references to disgust in the novel, deployed as a perceptual and physiological response. Indicative of poor hygiene and disease avoidance, disgust is a particularly poignant emotion in this context as it is commonly related to food, as Sara Ahmed explicates in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*:

Food is significant not only because disgust is a matter of taste as well as touch – as senses that require proximity to that which is sensed – but also because food is 'taken into' the body. The fear of contamination that provokes the nausea of disgust reactions hence makes food the very 'stuff' of disgust.<sup>58</sup>

The repulsiveness of 'black bread' is unpacked in such a way as to underscore the trauma of the war and its corruption of Spanish society, as delineated in the narrative by Andrés' grandmother:

—¡Es que el pan negro que les dan de racionamiento no se puede comer! Una vez vino una pobre mujer y me trajo un cuscurro de esa asquerosidad de pan para que me hiciera cargo de lo que tenían que comer. Casi lloré de pena, era como un trozo de carbón o de serrín sucio. Pensé que la maldita guerra llega incluso a dañar el pan, a matar el pan, porque

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<sup>55</sup> Ryan, *Memory and Spatiality*, 131.

<sup>56</sup> Andrés' difficulty eating is described as follows: 'yo comí poco. Tenía un nudo en el estómago que me estorbaba sin hacerme daño. Un estorbo, sólo. Una traba' (429). This scene occurs towards the end of the novel and can therefore be understood as a physical reaction to longterm undereating and the traumatic experiences he has endured.

<sup>57</sup> Yi-Peng Lai makes a similar argument in relation to 'fasting girls' and literature of the Irish famine; 'the abstinence from food provides a way to distance one from the ideology of the oppressors'. 'History, Hunger, and the Construction of an Irish Homeland: Emma Donoghue's *The Wonder* and Mary Gordon's *Pearl*', *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 60:1, 58-66 (p. 59).

<sup>58</sup> Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Second Edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 83.

aquello no era pan, aquello era un pan muerto, sin alma y sin virtud. Lo guardé, me guardé aquel mendrugo de pan negro, no me atreví a tirarlo, y lo puse a los pies de la virgen del canterano, en la sala, a ver si los de arriba hacían un milagro como aquel de las bodas, cuando Jesús convirtió el agua en vino porque su madre se lo pidió, porque él ni se daba cuenta de que el vino se había acabado y los invitados bebían cualquier cosa. O el de los panes y los peces, que también sería un buen milagro para los tiempos que corren. Pero el cielo no nos escucha, parece que no merecemos ningún milagro. (90)

The poor quality of the ‘black bread’ is indicative of not just inadequate nourishment, but so too the failings of the state to provide for its citizens. Emphatically unappealing and inedible, the bread is described in such a way as to evoke revulsion, alluding to Ahmed’s characterisation of disgust: ‘[t]he body recoils from the object; it pulls away with an intense movement that registers in the pit of the stomach. The movement is the work of disgust; it is what disgust does’.<sup>59</sup> Instead of providing a source of nutrition, the sullied crust evokes disgust and bears no resemblance to food, alluding to the poisonous discourses and practices of the Francoist state. If the depiction of food in literature ‘is a thing of power’, with the ‘power to emblemize and power to disrupt’, its role here can be understood as an affront to the Nationalists’ paternalistic rhetoric, which promised moral reckoning and fresh, white bread, with the two mutually representative in this context.<sup>60</sup> The reality, however, subverts this propaganda, with both the bread and political assurances corrupted and unpalatable. Leaving the crust at the Virgin’s feet can be seen to imply that the state is failing in its responsibility to provide in accordance with Christian principles; rather than depend on the National-Catholic state, Spaniards must look to Christ. At the same time, the bread can be understood as a symbol of the Spanish nation: brutalised, sullied, and violated by the Civil War, leaving society ‘dead, soulless, and worthless’; ‘aquello era un pan muerto, sin alma y sin virtud’ (90).

The fact that this loaded critique of ‘black bread’ is communicated through the protagonist’s grandmother is significant for two interlinked reasons: firstly, it provides pertinent insight that is beyond the young protagonist’s comprehension and, accordingly, it speaks to the interface of bread, hunger, and memory. Indeed, Andrés himself acknowledges that his grandmother’s outpouring is somewhat unexpected and, yet, recounts somewhat perplexing routines practiced by his older female relatives:

Lo que sí habíamos presenciado todos era que cuando algún trozo de pan se caía al suelo la abuela se apresuraba a recogerlo y antes de devolverlo a la mesa o al cajón le daba un beso. Y cuando retiraba el mantel, después de una comida, lo mismo ella que tía Bina, lo doblaban con mucho cuidado para no tirar ni una miga al suelo, recogían todas las migajas en un cuenco y las guardaban para hacer sopa o las mezclaban con la leche por la mañana, de desayuno, para hacer remojones, decían. (90-91)

The evident desperation to not let any food go to waste makes clear that resources were sparse, making characters’ periodic refusal of food all the more telling. The act of kissing the bread alludes to the religious rite of the Eucharist, reappropriating the sacrament in such a way as to imbue women with the power of sanctifying the bread. The liturgy can indeed be understood as a ‘gendered contested space where power dynamics are at play’ and, by inverting the sexed roles, a

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<sup>59</sup> Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 85.

<sup>60</sup> Humble, 257

feminist initiative is implicit.<sup>61</sup> Andrés' grandmother's reflections on transubstantiation further illustrate a perceptive reflection on the symbolic significance of bread that eludes the young protagonist:

–La patria es la tierra que te da de comer, y ahora se me ocurre que los curas predicán que Dios mismo es un pedazo de pan, se convirtió en un pedazo de pan, o sea que con el empeño no es suficiente para que haya un Dios o una patria, tiene que haber algo de más sustancia, la tierra que pisas, el pan que cueces, el vino que trasiegas... (220)

On one level, the grandmother's exasperation can be taken as an invitation to the younger generation to interrogate religious orthodoxy and rituals; at the same time, this conversation is led by three women, who are silently observed by the men and boys (including Andrés). There is an implicit sense that women are best placed to lead such a critique, as the protagonist observes that the means and mode of delivery is emphatically gendered; the men are unwilling to intervene, while the women 'hablaban de la misma manera que servían la mesa, como una tarea doméstica más, como si su obligación fuera animar la comida' (219).

The sexual and gender politics at play here are ambiguous: while the metaphor of the women serving a meal detracts from what amounts to a forceful critique of the clergy, this – somewhat clumsy – imagery dialogues with questions of womanhood and food politics that surpass ideological demarcation. Indeed, though Rebecca Ingram explicates that culinary discourses in twentieth-century Spain 'compelled new thinking about the roles of women and new behavior among them', effectively facilitating (proto)feminist thought, Lara Anderson recognises how Francoist rhetoric capitalised on food and cooking practices, inculcating women to what was 'expected of them in the household' and cultivating 'compliant subjectivities'.<sup>62</sup> In *Pan negro*, the young protagonist's organic association between women and food alludes to Francoist indoctrination and, yet, the political agency that food imagery and routines affords women effectively subverts this from within. Rather than present bread as a means of indoctrinating women to Nationalist ideation, the routines and language of food facilitate the grandmother's condemnation of the Church and the state in the novel, alluding to a feminist take on culinary practices that is palatable and disarming.<sup>63</sup> Hunger and the refusal of food, on the other hand, can be seen to denote the oppression of women in *Pan negro*. As touched on above, Andrés' mother frequently refuses food that is readily available, seemingly due to emotional turmoil, much like his cousin Nuria's curious sickness. The protagonist's mother's apparent strained relationship with

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<sup>61</sup> Lilian Cheelo Siwila, "“Do this in remembrance of me”: An African Feminist Contestation of the Embodied Sacred Liturgical Space in the Celebration of Eucharist", in *Liturgy in Postcolonial Contexts: Only One Is Holy*, ed. by Cláudio Carvalhaes (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 83-94 (p. 83). María Liñeira offers a compelling reading of a subverted Eucharist 'transformed into an allegory of collective feminist revolution and salvation' in Lorena Conde's 2019 play *Santa Inés*. 'Twenty-First-Century Galician Food Femininities in Lorena Conde's *Santa Inés* and Oliver Laxe's *O que arde*', *International Journal of Iberian Studies*, 35(3) (2022), 253–70 (p. 262).

<sup>62</sup> Rebecca Ingram, *Women's Work: How Culinary Cultures Shaped Modern Spain* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2022), 141. Lara Anderson, *Control and Resistance: Food Discourse in Franco Spain* (Toronto; Buffalo; London: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 12.

<sup>63</sup> In relation to Carmen de Burgos' cookbooks, Rebecca Ingram recognises that these texts share much in common with 'her more overtly feminist work' and, yet, the subject matter allows Burgos to 'present her work disarmingly'. 'Bringing the *escuela* to the *despensa*: Regenerationist Politics in Carmen de Burgos's Cookbooks', in *Multiple Modernities: Carmen de Burgos, Author and Activist*, ed. by Anja Louis and Michelle M. Sharp (Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2017), 181-96 (p. 187).

food seems to predate the harsh post-War years, as Andrés recalls how her deference to her husband manifested in relation to (not) eating:

En la mesa, mi madre no movía la cuchara hasta que él no había probado y aprobado cada plato y no empezaba a comer hasta que él no se había tragado las primeras cucharadas.  
(123)

With food and eating practices functioning as a convenient metaphor for relationship paradigms, the couple's mealtime habits connote both an asymmetrical power dynamic and romanticised devotion. While the protagonist understands his mother's behaviour in relation to the latter ('Mi madre lo adoraba. Lo adoraba literalmente' [123]), the reader is invited to look beyond his naiveté. Taken in isolation, this scene can be understood as Andrés' acceptance of a patriarchal worldview, as this a relatively rare instance where his mother's vulnerability does not frustrate him,<sup>64</sup> suggesting self-restriction as indicative of self-restraint and integrity. The protagonist himself observes this, as he admits admiring her ability to endure hunger:

A mí me daba la impresión de que era indestructible, un tipo de mujer que desafiaba las leyes de la naturaleza y que no padecía el mismo frío ni el mismo sueño, ni sentía la misma fatiga ni la misma hambre que nosotros. (120)

A concrete example of her avoiding food in her son's presence further underlines the protagonist's seeming obliviousness to his mother's feelings, as she holds a spoonful of rice 'como si se hubiera olvidado de comer o hubiera perdido el apetito' (103). Again, the reader will likely infer the most probable reason for her conspicuous avoidance of food: his mother is prioritising her family over her own wellbeing. With limited resources to spare, she feigns indifference or distraction so as to leave as much as possible for her son, who – given his age – remains oblivious to her sacrifice.

In this sense, the narrative draws on the trope of the 'desperate mother' that pervades hunger literature and personifies the harsh reality faced by mothers during periods of hunger and famine.<sup>65</sup> As well as providing an affective insight into the emotional toll of motherhood during the 'hunger years', this behaviour can also be understood as a perverse manifestation of Francoist propaganda that put the onus on mothers to nurture and provide for their families. Advertisements in the Sección Femenina's *Y: revista para la mujer* exemplify how food and familial politics were central to the anti-black market propaganda disseminated under the regime, such as '¿Sería capaz de hacer esto?', which satirises a woman presenting a bomb at the dinner table to dissuade mothers and wives from utilising the black market; and 'Sin cartilla ni estraperlo', which celebrates a homemaker showcasing her ability to cook and prepare food within rationing limits and is accompanied by recipes.<sup>66</sup> By foregrounding mothers' responsibilities to shoulder the burden of mass and desperate hunger, resonating strongly with Nationalist rhetoric during the harshest period

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<sup>64</sup> Ryan, for instance, observes how the protagonist is agitated by his mother's complaint to the landowners, believing her complaints to be exaggerated and futile. *Memory and Spatiality*, 132.

<sup>65</sup> Iterations of 'desperate mothers' pervade commemorative practices and cultural output of the Great Irish Famine and the Holocaust. Oksana Kis, 'Women's Experience of the Holodomor: Challenges and Ambiguities of Motherhood', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 23:4 (2021), 527-546 (p. 528). Swati Parashar and Camilla Orjuela, "'Slow" Violence and Gendered Memorialisation', in *Routledge Handbook of Feminist Peace Research*, ed. by Tarja Väyrynen, Swati Parashar, Élise Féron and Catia Cecilia Confortini (London: Routledge, 2021), 409-19 (p. 411).

<sup>66</sup> '¿Sería capaz de hacer esto?', *Y: revista para la mujer nacional sindicalista*, 1 July (Madrid, 1942), 31; 'Sin cartilla ni estraperlo', *Y: revista para la mujer nacional sindicalista*, 1 August (Madrid, 1942), 30.

of the ‘hunger years’, Teixidor intersects gender and memory politics in such a way as to underscore how gendered roles shaped how hunger was experienced, understood, and remembered. Given personal memories inflect the narrative, the depiction of Andrés’ mother can be understood as both an intimate reflection on how the author’s own mother – or female relatives – endured hunger, echoing the empathically gendered experience to which historiography attests, and a self-consciously critical simplification that invites reassessment. Rather than reinforce and reify the image of silent female suffering, Teixidor relies upon the refracted interpretation of a child that underlines how hunger memory is imbued with familial, social, and political baggage to suggest a more realistic alternative: that of the added, silenced burden bore by women.

### **Spain’s ‘Hunger Years’ in Almudena Grandes’ Postmemory Novels**

Hunger, food and famine provide an intriguing focal point for postmemory texts, as Spain’s ‘hunger years’ are at once omnipresent in social memory and conspicuously absent in historical memory laws. Accordingly, the ‘imaginative investment, projection, and creation’ that characterises postmemory’s ‘connection to the past’ can be capitalised on in fiction to (re)consider a form of post-War violence that is widely acknowledged within society and cultural output, yet still omitted in legal discourses.<sup>67</sup> Of the vast and varied literature of Spain’s ‘memory boom’, Almudena Grandes’s vast output is amongst the most commercially successful. In ‘Episodios de una Guerra Interminable’, Grandes consistently and creatively engages with the question of ‘hunger’, capitalising on the metonymic potential of a physiological sensation that denotes desperation and providing an intimate depiction of the quotidian realities of Francoist Spain. In *Inés y la alegría* (2010), the first instalment of the ‘Episodios’, food, cooking, and hunger are central to the ways in which identity, community, and solidarity are constructed in the narrative. The novel offers a fictional recreation of a little-known attempt to overthrow the Francoist regime that occurred in 1944, when exiled Republicans living in France re-entered Spain via the Valle de Arán. The eponymous Inés aids and nurtures the resisters by working as a cook, sourcing, and preparing food for the Republican guerrillas in Bosot, and, later, opening and running a Spanish restaurant while exiled in Toulouse. The novel is structured in such a way as to foreground Inés’ relationship with food, as indicated by some of the chapter titles: ‘La cocinera de Bosot’, ‘El mejor restaurante español de Francia’, and ‘Cinco kilos de rosquillas’. References to scarce supplies pervade the novel, confronting the distortion and deceit of Francoist propaganda that cultivated a myth of opulence. Food and experiences of hunger are omnipresent, indicative of both material hardships and the ways in which citizens negotiate survival in post-War Spain. Reworkings of recipes, food substitutions, and individuals’ eating practices are frequently detailed, while hunger becomes a means of communicating emotional and mental fortitude. Whether or not individuals are hungry, which is a repeated refrain throughout the novel, simultaneously connotes emotional resilience and material need, echoing the metonymic meaning of ‘hambre’ in *El niño pan* and *Pan negro*.

Critical readings of *Inés y la alegría* have offered illuminating interpretations of the critical roles that food and hunger play, underscoring the interface of food – or a lack thereof – and politics. In his thoughtful analysis of food and national identity in the novel, Alvin Sherman recognises the personal, cultural, political, and social purchase of food and cuisine, surmising:

Within this isolated geographic location in Northern Spain Grandes develops a secondary plot around the kitchen where she reminds the reader of the feelings of nostalgia, security

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<sup>67</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 5.



and unity that come from socializing around food and eating. The natural outcome is that Inés, the cook, becomes a substitute ‘mother figure’ whose traditional dishes help the soldiers as they, on the one hand, grapple with feelings of foreignness and isolation and on the other struggle to find a measure of security, belonging and happiness in a country where they and their political ideologies have been banned by the Francoist regime. For Inés cooking plays an equally significant function. While in the kitchen she is liberated from the circumstances that limit her individuality and help her overcome her own alienation from home and family.<sup>68</sup>

Much in the same way that food preparation takes on an important social and political function, hunger is invested with questions of identity, solidarity, and connection. In Lorraine Ryan’s meticulous interrogation of gender and memory in Grande’s postmillennial novels, she makes several perceptive observations about how hunger and the ‘hunger years’ are delineated in the text. For Ryan, ‘all culinary acts, from the obtainment of ingredients to the relationships existing within the kitchen space, are invested with political overtones’ and, accordingly, Inés’ dedication to nurturing and feeding the guerrillas ‘establishes a dichotomy between *los años del hambre* (the years of hunger) in Franco’s Spain and the camp’s relative abundance, as her resourcefulness in obtaining ingredients contrasts with the inability of the Franco regime to provide for the populace’.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, food and hunger can be seen to dialogue with gender and sexual politics. Not only does Inés’ role suggest a ‘maternal figure’ that acts as the ‘lynchpin of the exiled community’, but so too is there an empathically sexed dynamic to food preparation and reception; the ‘men’s expressions of hunger are outward manifestations of their sexual, emotional, and psychological deprivation’, Ryan writes, and ‘their effusive appreciation of Inés’ culinary excellence functions to expose some of the hidden fears and anxieties of the men’s familial history’.<sup>70</sup>

The relationship between Inés and Galán offers an intriguing parallel with the depiction of Andrés’ parents in *Pan negro*, as seemingly loving relationships nevertheless depict an asymmetrical dynamic in relation to the preparation and consumption of food. Rather than uncritically interpret this paradigm as inherently patriarchal, the agency afforded by cooking and consuming food (or indeed refusing food) speaks to a more complex relationship between sexual and food politics. On one level, there is indeed an unsatisfactory feminist reading of Inés’ role routinely preparing food for her lover. Grande seems to acknowledge this as, when the pair reunite after a brief separation, Galán flippantly remarks: ‘¡A ver quién me iba a hacer ahora a mí dos huevos fritos!’.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, Galán’s interpretation of Inés’ reaction to his hunger suggests that – at least to his mind – she is happiest when providing for him: ‘Cuando anuncié que estaba a punto de morirme de hambre, Inés también se puso muy contenta’ (370). An overlap of sexual and maternal tenderness and care characterises how food is depicted in relation to the couple. Strong sexual undertones underpin the dynamic of Inés feeding Galán, yet this routine ultimately places Inés in a maternal role, which is alluded to in the scene where the aroma of a meat dish prepared by Inés reminds Galán of his childhood (370). Echoing the agency food affords the grandmothers in *El niño pan* and *Pan negro*, the characterisation of Inés ultimately capitalises on the politicisation of

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<sup>68</sup> Alvin F. Sherman, Jr, ‘Food, War and National Identity in Almudena Grandes’ *Inés y la alegría*, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 93(2) (2016), 255-74 (pp. 257-58).

<sup>69</sup> Lorraine Ryan, *Gender and Memory in the Postmillennial Novels of Almudena Grandes* (New York; London: Routledge, 2021), 46.

<sup>70</sup> Ryan, *Gender and Memory*, 46, 45.

<sup>71</sup> Almudena Grandes, *Inés y la alegría* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 2010), 422. Further references are to this edition and will be given parenthetically in the main text.

women's responsibility for sourcing and preparing food in Francoist Spain, effectively subverting it from within as she sustains the maquis and resistance network. Given the political purchase of food in this context, Inés' role is imbued with social and sexual privilege, as Galán – and indeed the other maquis – are reliant on her sustenance.

While interrogation of the ideological subtexts of bread is tangible in *El niño pan* and *Pan negro*, as discussed in the previous section, a singularity of *Inés y la alegría* is the overt critique of Francoist rhetoric. Through Inés' reflections on the political discourses that have shaped collective consciousness, Grandes unpacks the falsities of culinary nationhood perpetrated by the Nationalist state. After meeting Mercedes and Matías, two children who provide free labour in the kitchen in Bosent, Inés muses as to the ideological capital of Nationalist rhetoric that promised sustenance and security:

Entonces recordé aquel lema, ni un hogar sin lumbre, ni un español sin pan, y cómo me impresionó su acierto la primera vez que lo leí. Qué bueno, pensé, y lo comenté en la cárcel, con mis compañeras del Socorro Rojo, tendría que habérsenos ocurrido a nosotras, ¿cómo no se nos ocurriría una cosa así? Ni un hogar sin lumbre, ni un español sin pan, una frase sencilla, elemental, pero capaz sin embargo de transmitir fe, calor, una modesta y, por tanto, verosímil confianza en un modesto porvenir sin hambre, sin frío. Aquel era el lema del Auxilio Social, ni un hogar sin lumbre, ni un español sin pan. Lo demás, lo que estaba aprendiendo aquella noche, no se leía en ninguna parte. (388)

By reiterating the core slogan – ‘ni un hogar sin lumbre, ni un español sin pan’ – three times, Grandes revives Nationalist rhetoric in such a way as to invite critique and underscore the ultimate failing of this political promise. Indeed, Inés recognises why this phrase was so appealing and, yet, ultimately failed to materialise. Much in the same way the character of Inés offers a pro-Republican distortion of the woman as provider paradigm, the discourses of Nationalist Spain are reappropriated; voiced and critiqued through the Republican Inés. The protagonist's culinary career in France consolidates a sense of national community for exiled Republicans, dialoguing with Sidney Mintz's conceptualisation of eating as a means of liberation and identity:

Consumption, then, is at the same time a form of self-identification and of communication. [...] this act of choosing to consume apparently can provide a temporary, if even mostly spurious, sense of choice, of self, and thereby of freedom.<sup>72</sup>

In *Casa Inés*, pluralistic Spanish identities are reflected and embraced by the availability of regional dishes, such as *fabada* and *cocido gallego*, while celebratory banquets reaffirm the exiles' ideological allegiances. As Ryan recognises, the restaurant:

consolidates exilic communal female bonds, and positions the female cooks as the guardians of Spanish cuisine and a distinctly Republican culture, which hosts politicised banquets, like the annual commemoration of the instauration of the Second Republic on April 14, and *La Pasionaria's* fiftieth birthday party.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Sidney W. Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 13.

<sup>73</sup> Ryan, *Gender and Memory*, 52.

Through a female-centric network, this space of preparing, consuming, and celebrating food facilitates the commemoration and conservation of Republican heritage and memory. An inherently feminist reading is underscored by the fact that the *Casa Inés* founded in democratic Madrid is inherited by the protagonist's daughter, Virginia, who takes the reins of the both the kitchen and the politicised space of rebellion that it represents.

In Grandes' 2015 novel *Los besos en el pan*, a parallel is drawn between the 'hunger years' and contemporary economic hardship, with the narrative centring on a Madrid neighbourhood during the 2008 Spanish recession. Culinary practices are commonly referenced in the main body of the narrative, which focalises the tribulations of neighbours during 'la crisis', though it is the novel's brief introductory section that memorialises this environment during the 'hunger years', presupposing parallels between these periods of economic hardship and suggesting that the topography bears the mark of this traumatic history. In the present ('Ahora'), food and mealtimes are a frequent focus, reinforcing the contrast with the deprivation that scars the past ('Antes'), when hunger, desperation, and oppression were intimately interconnected:

Por eso los mayores tienen menos miedo. Ellos hacen memoria de su juventud y lo recuerdan todo, el frío, los mutilados que pedían limosna por la calle, los silencios, el nerviosismo que se apoderaba de sus padres si se cruzaban por la acera con un policía, y una vieja costumbre ya olvidada, que no supieron o no quisieron transmitir a sus hijos. Cuando se caía un trozo de pan al suelo, los adultos obligaban a los niños a recogerlo y a darle un beso antes de devolverlo a la panera, tanta hambre había pasado sus familias en aquellos años en los que murieron todas esas personas queridas cuyas historias nadie quiso contarles.

Los niños que aprendimos a besar el pan hacemos memoria de nuestra infancia y recordamos la herencia de un hambre desconocida ya para nosotros, esas tortillas francesas tan asquerosas que hacían nuestras abuelas para no desperdiciar el huevo batido que sobraba de rebozar el pescado. Pero no recordamos la tristeza.<sup>74</sup>

Through this affective description of food practices, Grandes underscores the desperation that devastated the Spanish population and speaks to the gender politics that shaped food preparation and hunger memory – as indicated through the reference to 'nuestras abuelas' – and, critically, the transgenerational heritage that characterises memory politics in contemporary Spain. At its essence, this routine can be seen to epitomise postmemory of the 'hunger years' as the act is passed through the generations, resonating with Marianne Hirsch's conceptualisation of postmemory as the experience of those 'dominated by narratives that preceded their birth' who are 'shaped by traumatic events that they can neither understand nor re-create'.<sup>75</sup> Juxtaposing this depiction of the practice of kissing bread with how this habit is presented in *Pan negro* indicates both how food and hunger memory is preserved by women, as it is grandmothers who perpetuate this rite, and reifies a sense of identity that invokes Republican victimhood. In both *Pan negro* and *Los besos en el pan*, there is an emphasis on how the younger generations observe and learn this behaviour, yet, in Grandes' novel, it is explicitly outlined that intergenerational trauma is passed on through food practices, despite the fact that the grandchildren have no intimate understanding of 'un hambre desconocida

<sup>74</sup> Almudena Grandes, *Los besos en el pan* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 2015), 16-17.

<sup>75</sup> Marianna Hirsch, 'Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy', in *Acts of Memory. Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. by Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe and Leo Spitzer (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1999), 2-23 (p. 8).

ya para nosotros' (16), nor do they remember the emotional turmoil ('la tristeza' [17]). By contrast, the protagonist of *Pan negro* is acutely aware of why bread is cherished, offering a generational disparity: Teixidor's personal memories of the 'hunger years' mean that the novel blurs the boundaries of fiction and memory, while Grandes' postmemory text foregrounds a traumatic heritage that focalises collective rather than personal memory. If traumatic history is not 'worked through and integrated', Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's theory of the crypt conceptualises, 'the next generation will inherit the psychic substance of the previous generation and display symptoms that do not emerge from their own individual experience', indicating that the transmission of this act constitutes transgenerational trauma.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, the act of kissing the bread is fundamentally a reification of collective trauma that Grandes aims to resolve, as indicated by her dedication to the novel: 'A mis hijos, que nunca han besado el pan' (9).

### Conclusions: Politicising (Post)Memory of Food and Hunger

Though notoriously silenced in legal and political discourses, Spain's 'hunger years' proved fertile ground for literature, with the symbolic capital of hunger and food intersecting with Republican, Nationalist, gender, sexual, and memory politics as a means of connoting trauma and resistance. In the literary texts examined here, culinary imagery and depictions of the conceptualisation, preparation, and consumption of food denote loaded semiotic purchase; as Anderson and Ingram observe, food 'encapsulates transformations, solidifications, movement, flows, divisions'.<sup>77</sup> A tangible trope that prevails is a concerted effort to subvert the culinary propaganda of 'Franco's bread', as evidenced in a vignette in Cela's 1953 *Mrs. Caldwell habla con su hijo* and passages in Grandes' post-2000 *Inés y la alegría* and *Los besos en el pan*. Similarly, in the (post-)Francoist *Memorias dun neno labrego*, *El niño pan*, and *Pan negro*, all of which blur the boundary of memory and fiction, the quality of bread connotes political allegiance and, accordingly, economic security, while cherishing bread – exemplified by the act of kissing – is presented as a form of transgenerational trauma. The infamous 'black bread' functions as a metonym for Republican victimhood and an inherently-politicised site of memory, enabling and symbolising collective memory of the 'hunger years'.

A defining characteristic of 'hunger years' literature is the affective capital of 'hunger', with disordered eating omnipresent and, curiously, sometimes self-inflicted. Hunger, indeed, encapsulates the 'dualist position' between mind and body, 'two distinct yet mutually influencing entities'.<sup>78</sup> The trope of (self-)starved female characters speaks to an inherently sexed resistance to the paternalistic state and oppressive models of womanhood; while the insatiable appetite of the eponymous protagonist in *Memorias de Leticia Valle* suggests desperation for agency, descriptions of *Nada's* Andrea allude to anorexia, insinuating trauma. The 'desperate mother' trope that pervades Irish hunger literature is manifested by the mothers in *El niño pan* and *Pan negro*, with the female body the site of hunger politics, while food, hunger, and sexual politics intersect with the depictions of prostituted women in Cela's *La colmena* and the dynamic between Inés and Galán in Grandes' *Inés y la alegría*. Whereas 'hunger' – in all its semiotic potential – indexes trauma and facilitates resistance in the post-War novel, it is the preparation and dissemination of food that engenders female agency in post-Francoist texts. The physiological and metonymic qualities of 'hunger' and the social and cultural purchase of food index social, mental, and political trauma and, at the same time, symbolise and enable resistance to Francoist oppression.

<sup>76</sup> Schwab, Gabriele. *Haunting Legacies: Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 49; Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, ed. and trans. by Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>77</sup> 'Introduction. Transhispanic Food Cultural Studies', 483.

<sup>78</sup> Rees, *Hunger and Modern Writing*, 3.

