

resume o encanto das mais belas do mundo.

Sabe-se que a erudita Luisa Sigéa, uma das mais brilhantes musas da corte a que presidia a Princesa D^a Maria, era espanhola pela família e pelo nascimento e a Espanha voltou, pelos acasos da vida, tendo casado ali. Apesar disso, nunca pôde esquecer o lindo país de Portugal, que tanto encantou a sua admirável e brilhante mocidade, confessando-lhe sempre o seu amor e as suas saudades.

Dona Vicenta Maturana, uma poetisa gaditana, que no século XVIII foi muuito festejada e ocupou um lugar de destaque, não só nas letras como na corte de Fernando XII onde ocupava um lugar de camarista e confidente literária da rainha Dona Maria Josefa Amalia, foi uma grande amiga de Portugal onde residiu após a morte do seu pai na Guerra da Independência.

Depois de viúva, aqui regressou e morreu nos arredores de Lisboa. Nas suas poesias e novelas há muitas referências a nossas paisagens e nossos costumes.

Mais tarde também aqui residiu e aqui morreu a grande poetisa Carolina Coronado, que deixou uma tradição de muita simpatia na sociedade do seu tempo e ainda hoje é lembrada entre nós.

Não, é, pois, de admirar que o novo livro de Carmen de Burgos seja quase português, pelo interesse e amor que a sua autora tem pelo nosso país e pelo que reflete sob o aspecto português na questão social que muito bem classificou de *A mulher moderna e os seus direitos*.

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CROSSING TO THE OTHER SIDE

THE AFTERWORLD AND AFTERMATH OF TRAUMA, WAR, AND EXILE IN ROSA CHACEL'S CIENCIAS NATURALES (1988)

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ABSTRACT: This article offers a reading of Rosa Chacel's *Ciencias naturales* as a testimony to the trauma and grief that Republican supporters suffered as a result of the Nationalists' victory in the Spanish Civil War, the consequences of exile, and the loss of the liberal Spain and cultural avant-garde with which Chacel identified. Whereas Chacel's three diaries have attracted many critical studies, hardly any exist on *Ciencias naturales* and none, to my knowledge, has linked Chacel's diaries with that novel. Arguing that Chacel's use of the diary in *Ciencias naturales* can be seen as a site of memory as developed by Pierre Nora, this study draws on theories of trauma to illuminate how Chacel's last work in her trilogy of memory novels bears witness to the original wound of the Civil War, constantly reiterating structures, symbols and motifs that articulate the paradigm of departure and return characteristic of traumatic memory. Finally, in its concluding section, the essay links Chacel's *Ciencias naturales* with José Ortega y Gasset's project of historical reason.

KEYWORDS: Rosa Chacel, novel, *Ciencias naturales*, exile, trauma, places of memory, Spanish Civil War, Second Republic, historical reason.

CRUZANDO A LA OTRA ORILLA: el averno y las secuelas del trauma, de la guerra civil y del exilio en *Ciencias Naturales* (1988) de Rosa Chacel

RESUMEN: Este artículo ofrece una lectura de la obra *Ciencias naturales* de Rosa Chacel como testimonio del trauma y el dolor que sufrieron los defensores de la República a raíz de la victoria de los nacionales en la guerra civil española, con sus secuelas de exilio y pérdida de la España liberal y de la vanguardia cultural con la que Chacel se identificaba. A pesar de que los tres diarios de Chacel han despertado un gran interés crítico, apenas hay estudios sobre *Ciencias naturales* y en la bibliografía consultada no se relacionan los diarios de Chacel con esa novela. A partir de la premisa de que el uso del diario que hace Chacel en *Ciencias naturales* puede ser considerado como un lugar de la memoria en términos de Pierre Nora, este estudio se apoya en las teorías del trauma para mostrar cómo la última de las novelas de la trilogía de la memoria es un testimonio de la herida de la guerra civil, con la constante reiteración de estructuras, símbolos y motivos que articulan el paradigma de la partida y el retorno, típicos de la memoria traumática. Por último, en sus conclusiones, este trabajo relaciona la novela *Ciencias naturales* con el proyecto de Ortega y Gasset sobre la razón histórica.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Rosa Chacel, novela, *Ciencias naturales*, exilio, trauma, lugares de memoria, Guerra Civil, Segunda República, razón histórica.

Ciencias naturales (1988) is Rosa Chacel's last work in her trilogy of memory novels, which also comprises *Barrio de Maravillas* (1976) and *Acrópolis* (1984). The text opens with the image of a ship on the open sea, in wartime, en route to Argentina, bearing into exile Manuel Falcón and his secretary, Elena Moreno, the alter ego of Chacel herself. Once in Buenos Aires, Elena likens having crossed the ocean to passing from the living world to the afterworld and non-existence of Lethe: "[P]asamos el charco y 'Más allá del Lete' . . . Más allá del Lete, nada, nada..." (Chacel, 1988: 20-21). This analogy is not fortuitous. The waters of Lethe bring about oblivion, in contrast to the fountain of memory presided over by the goddess Mnemosyne (Le Goff, 1992: 64), whom Chacel always acknowledged as

her "deidad tutelar" (Chacel, 1982a: 55). It is this struggle between oblivion and memory that *Ciencias naturales* records, registering the loss, pain and grief that accrues from the author's forced separation from Spain. That the novel testifies to the experience of exile provoked by war is emphasized in its epigraph, which describes it as a "relato del exilio" and a narration of souls lost in the maze of freedom or democracy, "un esbozo de almas perdidas en el laberinto de la libertad" (Chacel, 1988: 5): an allusion to the crushing of the Spanish Second Republic by Francisco Franco's Nationalist forces¹. A few pages on, the relationship between Elena and Falcón, as well as the novel itself, is described as "[e]sta relación, creada por la guerra" (13).

Elena's act of crossing the Atlantic, from Europe to South America, takes place in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War and during World War II, conceivably drawing on Chacel's own flight from Bordeaux to Río de Janeiro in the early part of 1940. Chacel had left Spain in March 1937, taking her young son, Carlos, to Paris and in 1938 to Athens, at the invitation of Máximo José Kahn, the Republican Ambassador to Greece. Some six months later, in March 1939, Chacel and Carlos were once again on the move, via Alexandria to Marseilles and Switzerland. There she joined her husband, Timoteo Pérez Rubio, who, as President of the Defence Board of Spain's artistic patrimony, had overseen the removal to safety in Valencia of the Prado artworks from a Republican-held Madrid under fire from Nationalist forces. When the family departed for Latin America, Chacel had already started her diary, in a notebook that Kahn had gifted to her, which would be published in 1982 as *Alcancía (Ida)*, together with its sequel, *Alcancía (Vuelta)*².

Chacel's diaries in three volumes, *Alcancía (Ida)*, *Alcancía (Vuelta)* and the posthumous *Alcancía. Estación Termini* (1998) have provoked a good number of critical studies³. Very few scholars, however, have ad-

¹ Later Elena refers to her diary writing as follows: "Esto que estoy haciendo aquí—que estoy pretendiendo hacer—es la manifestación—presentación diría—del exilio" (Chacel, 1988: 82).

² For details in this paragraph, see Ana Rodríguez Fischer (1988a: 17-19).

³ Regarding Chacel's diaries, see María del Mar Inestrillas (2003), Sérgio Massucci Calderaro (2011), Moisés Mori (1998) and Maite Zubiaurre (2002).

dressed *Ciencias naturales* and none, to my knowledge, has linked Chacel's diaries with that novel⁴. The purpose of this study is not only to explore the function of the diary in *Ciencias naturales* in relation to memory and loss. More specifically, I also propose to offer a reading of the text as a testimony to the trauma and grief suffered by Republican supporters as a consequence of the Nationalists' victory in the Civil War and the loss of the liberal Spain and cultural avant-garde with which Chacel identified⁵. Finally, in its concluding section, the essay will link Chacel's *Ciencias naturales* with José Ortega y Gasset's project of historical reason.

Like the text of *Ciencias* itself, the diary can be seen as a site of memory as developed by Pierre Nora, who defines the *lieu de mémoire* as excluding the event as event to center instead on sites; indeed, for Nora, the *lieu de mémoire* constitutes a "*templum*: something singled out within the continuum of the profane (whether in space, time, or both), a circle within which everything counts, everything is symbolic..." (Nora, 1996a: 18, 20). The notion of the diary as a place where memory is salvaged for future use is suggested in Elena's implicit allusion to her diary as a chest that preserves garments from decay: "Este tiempo, puesto aquí con naftalina, ¿es digno de conservar?" (Chacel, 1988: 24). This image of the glory box formulates the diary as a receptacle that is domestic, private and anchored in the feminine. Nevertheless, because "baúl" can also signify a traveller's trunk, it refers to the potential of the diary to enter public space, albeit in a peripheral way; as a container proper to the transient, it connotes a discourse always in transition and of precarious status.

Through its repetitive nature, diary-keeping can be construed as a

⁴ Among the few substantial studies on Chacel's *Ciencias naturales* are those by Lieve Behiels (1994) on historical discourse in the novel and Tatjana Gajic (2002: 258-82), who deploys Etienne Balibar's theories on nationalism and racism to read the text in terms of the failure of Chacel's cultural generation's project of reform. For a recent excellent study on Chacel's work, which does not include *Ciencias naturales*, see Lidia León-Blázquez (2011).

⁵ Shirley Mangini (2001: 146), for instance, places Chacel within the 1927 Generation, considering her to be the foremost female novelist of the avant-garde writers. Chacel also saw herself as having anticipated the *Nouveau Roman* of the 1950s and early 1960s, and refers in 1967 to her "empeño desesperado por entrar en contacto con los escritores franceses. . . no voy a modificar mi opinión sobre su valor ni sobre su calidad, sistema y tensión profesional, que me son tan próximos" (Chacel, 1982b: 28).

habit of mind essential for fixing and preserving memory. Indeed, in her essay, "Sendas recobradas de la generación del 27," Chacel likens memory to a young girl who hammers nails into a house under construction (Chacel, 1993e: 268)⁶. Together with recollections, habits of mind constitute for French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs one of the two moments of memory that configure the social imagination. As Patrick Hutton explains, Halbwachs argues that both habits of mind and recollections are essential for constituting places of memory:

In habit, we bear memories forward unreflectively as commonplaces. In recollection, we reconstruct the past retrospectively by localizing specific images in relationship to these well-formed places of memory. . . . Places of memory, therefore, are like crossroads where habits of mind and particular recollections encounter and reshape one another. (Hutton, 1993: 79)

The repetition inherent in diary-writing underlines the entrapment and mental paralysis that, as Chacel continually insists in *Alcancía (Ida)* and *Alcancía (Vuelta)*, characterized her existence in Buenos Aires and Río. Cut off from the European avant-garde milieux from which she formerly drew inspiration, from direct access to the powerful cultural networks vital for literary recognition, and from a reading public who might understand her works, Chacel stresses that validation by an other is paramount if works are to attain presence and relative permanence (1982b: 9). Restricted also by gender discrimination, domestic obligations, economic hardship, and physical complaints, the writer that is reflected in Chacel's diaries continually bemoans the household tasks, necessary writing commissions in the form of translations and the odd film script, and the lack of energy that keep her from her own creative work⁷. As she states in *Alcancía (Vuelta)*, her present constitutes "la ausencia integral" (Chacel, 1982b: 18).

Nevertheless, although Chacel stresses the ravages of passing time on personal projects, her diaries also seek to immobilize time and record for posterity a cultural inventory of letters written and received, and of

⁶ In Acrópolis this same act also symbolizes dialogue: "El hablar es—y será por los siglos—una continua disputa, un continuo machacar clavos . . ." (Chacel, 1984: 360).

⁷ For such references, see Chacel (1982b: 18, 28-29).

films viewed and books read, as well as documenting more mundane, personal matters such as domestic accounts, personal fears and phobias, and dietary régimes. Hence diary entries may not be the kind of writing that Chacel most desires, but they do constitute bankable materials on which her trilogy will later draw.

Chacel's desire to bestow permanence on the essentially impermanent is expressed in the theme of literary economy that dominates her own and her character's diaries. Hence in *Alcancía (Ida)* Chacel refers to her diary as a "cartilla de ahorros" (Chacel, 1982a: 17), while in *Ciencias naturales* Elena conflates diary writing with economic matters: "Me dan ganas de hacer bien lo que en la página anterior hice tan mal ... La verdad es que quisiera hacerlo mejor, pero me creo incapaz y desisto... Hablando en plata, ignoro el estado de mis finanzas ..." (Chacel 1988: 28). This idiomatic saying, "hablar en plata," constitutes a prominent leitmotiv in the novel⁸. Among its multiple values, it refers to Chacel's practice of expressing complex concepts in colloquial terms, to her identification with the avant-garde Generation of 1927 known as the "Edad de Plata," and to her protagonist's physical location in Buenos Aires, on the River Plate⁹.

Indeed, the very word "alcancía" stresses writing as painstaking saving and investment. The term, Chacel confides in her foreword to *Alcancía (Ida)*, denotes the humble money-box or "hucha" proper to the domestic sphere, whereby present expenditure is sacrificed in the hope of future gain. Given that this traditional Spanish money-box is fashioned from clay, it also functions as a metonymic marker for earth and, by extension, for land and nation. In writing her diaries, Chacel effects a series of symbolic deposits: "[S]e nos ocurre asociarla con el depósito de horas, pensamientos, anhelos que tuvimos la debilidad de enteleger en cuader-

⁸ Similar instances are as follows: "Hablando en plata—mi habitual estribillo" and "No repito lo de hablando en plata, porque esa frase indica que lo que damos con nuestro hablar tiene algún valor..." (Chacel, 1988: 191).

⁹ Chacel's ethos of representing difficult philosophical concepts in tangible, everyday terms comes from José Ortega y Gasset's recommendations for avant-garde literature in his 1925 work, *La deshumanización del arte*, where he states: "[D]amos plasticidad, objetivamos, mundificamos los esquemas, lo interno y subjetivo" (Ortega y Gasset, 1981a: 41). Regarding Spain's literary and cultural "Silver Age" see José-Carlos Mainer (1983).

nos." In so doing, she mints her own currency: "[M]onedas de tiempo, acuñadas en minuciosos dinares diarios" (Chacel, 1982a: 8). While publishing them involves breaking open the box and exposing one's innermost being¹⁰, Chacel combats her fear of having saved mere loose change with the word "alcancía," whose etymological root is, as she remarks, *kantz* or "tesoro escondido" (Chacel, 1982a: 9), a fortune grown in the fertile and sacred soil of memory: "[L]a millonada del tiempo germinando a sus anchas en el humus sagrado de la memoria" (Chacel, 1982a: 8). Also semi-concealed within "alcancía" is the verb "alcanzar." Meaning "to reach" or "attain," it emphasizes that, for Chacel, her diaries effect a constant return to what has ceased to be and hence potentially yield returns in multiple intersecting ways: they return her to a reading public and public visibility, afford her a viable financial return, and enable her to return, both imaginatively and literally, to a beloved Spain.

Chacel's diaries, and especially *Ciencias naturales*, reveal on many levels the kinds of displacement that characterize trauma, defined as a wound to the physical and/or psychic self. As Cathy Caruth notes, in its psychological form trauma does not manifest itself during the catastrophic event but subsequent to it, in the very process of surviving it¹¹. Hence, she states that "the traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, [but] it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time" (Caruth, 1995a: 8). These geographical and temporal displacements that accompany the suffering of trauma are evident in Chacel's trilogy. If the first two volumes, *Barrio de Maravillas* and *Acrópolis*, set in Madrid, were largely written outside Spain, the last text, *Ciencias naturales*, set in Buenos Aires, was only written once Chacel, by then in her eighties, was again resident in Spain. Indeed, in *Ciencias naturales* exile is posited as a necessary condition for great literary creation: "Muchas cosas grandes de esta tierra [Argentina] se escribieron, seguramente, en París... Esta tierra que está aquí callada, allá lejos se hizo" (Chacel, 1988: 122).

¹⁰ As Chacel states: "Publicar, en vida, los diarios íntimos es un acto de impaciencia, semejante al que se comete cuando se estrella en el suelo la hucha. . . . que desparrama impúdicamente sus entrañas" (Chacel, 1982a: 7-8).

¹¹ See Caruth (1995a: 9; 1995b: 4).

Madrid in *Barrio de Maravillas* and *Acrópolis*, and Buenos Aires in *Ciencias naturales* constitute places of memory in the sense developed by Halbwachs. As Hutton explains, for Halbwachs remembering depends on a process of localization:

In remembering, we locate, or localize, images of the past in specific places. In and of themselves, the images of memory are always fragmentary and provisional. They have no whole or coherent meaning until we project them into concrete settings. Such settings provide us with our places of memory. (Hutton 1993: 77-78)

In Chacel's *Ciencias naturales*, Madrid and Buenos Aires stand for paradigms of presence and absence, past and present, respectively. Although Chacel also spent many years of her exile in Brazil, Buenos Aires is the space in which she chooses to place her fictionalized memories of the exile that she and other avant-garde contemporaries endured. Memory and remembering effect Chacel's literal and metaphorical journeys from here to there, from Latin America to Europe, from Buenos Aires to Madrid, from cultural oblivion to literary resurrection. Buenos Aires, therefore, is never home but the point from which geographical, temporal and emotional distance from Spain is measured. Nevertheless, for Chacel absence and death can be transformed into presence and life through memory and writing. Those who frequent sites of memory, Chacel repeatedly insists in her trilogy, are *revenants*, beings who return from the other side of death, with her fictional other Elena Moreno asking: "¿Cómo es posible que haya pasado todo lo que pasó, que nos encontremos ahora aquí... como dos *revenants*...[?]" (Chacel, 1988: 45).

Even though Chacel was physically absent from Spain for most of the Civil War, that conflict was ever present in her mind. The trauma associated with that experience and, more specifically, Chacel's guilt at surviving it, resurfaces in Elena to confirm Caruth's thesis that "*survival itself... can be a crisis*" (1995b: 9). Guilt at having survived is evident in Elena's diary entry as follows:

Así se bailaba y se bebía en Atenas, celebrando el hecho de estar vivos, lejos de los que morían, porque el sentimiento de deserción, de escapada que nos conturbaba a veces, siempre se presentaba en forma alternativa, ¿si en vez

de esto, hubiéramos hecho lo otro? Lo otro—digno y práctico—sólo podía haber sido morir, y no, no morimos, ellos sí. (Chacel, 1988: 202)

That *Ciencias naturales* is a narrative about the wounds and trauma inflicted through war stands out in its opening episode, where the narrative voice inserts a foreign text that relates an unexpected, life-threatening blow to a warrior, arguably symbolic of the Republican cause: "*De [sic] les premiers moments, d'un coup inattendu, le guerrier qui seulement sur son bras a conté git sur la terre froide traîtreusement vaincu... eso sí dice: el porrazo fue inesperado... ¡Ahí le duele!*" (Chacel, 1988: 10). Ensuing references to war abound: the insistence on ruins or "escombros" (10), on the "guerra silenciosamente mantenida" and on the "tránsito por la tierra en guerra, que negaba la guerra haciendo la guerra" (11). Later Elena's diary entry refers to the "herida que no cicatriza" (90) and to the exile caused by war: "[L]o que se llama exilio—con sus causas y efectos consecuentes, motivantes la guerra. Guerra como efecto, causa, cohesión a la causa—libertad atropellada—y sus desgarrones, efectos perdidos, muertes..." (90-91)¹².

Mastering trauma relies on repetition. According to Susan Brison, it is only when one repeats a story and attempts to control its narrative that traumatic memories can eventually become meaningfully reintegrated into life histories (Brison, 1999: 46-47). In turn, Dori Laub speaks of the fact that "repossessing one's life story through giving testimony is itself a form of action, of change, which one has to actually pass through in order to continue and complete the process of survival" (Laub, 1995: 70)¹³. As mentioned, these repetitive narrative acts are at stake in Chacel's own diary-keeping, reiterated yet again in fictionalized form in Elena's diary.

¹² Elena also refers to the *maquis*, the resistance guerrilla movement that continued fighting against the Franco dictatorship after the close of the Civil War: "También han hablado, con conocimiento de causa, de los que andaban a tiros por las montañas: de éstos no sé nada" (Chacel, 1988: 50).

¹³ Elsewhere Caruth rephrases this process as follows: "For what is the story of the mind's attempt to master the event retrospectively if not the story of a failed return: the attempt, and failure, of the mind to return to the moment of the event? The theory of repetition compulsion as the unexpected encounter with an event that the mind misses and then repeatedly attempts to grasp is the story of a failure of a mind to return to an experience it has never quite grasped, the repetition of an original departure from the moment that constitutes the very experience of trauma" (Caruth, 2003: 60).

Repetition also characterises how narratives of trauma bear witness in a displaced symbolic form to the original wound. At the same time, repetition constitutes the trauma sufferer's attempt, as Caruth puts it, "*to claim one's own survival*" (1996: 64). Thus Caruth remarks that psychic trauma is "not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor," as well as through "insistently recurring words or figures," especially those of "falling,' burning,' or 'awakening'" (1996: 4-5). Consequently, she stresses, trauma relies on a narrative of departure and return (Caruth, 1996: 65), precisely the paradigm that conforms *Ciencias naturales*. Not only do the characters' thoughts continually depart in search of the past and return the recovered memories into their present. The opening and closing episodes respectively also relate the departure from Europe and Spain, and the return.

The initial pages describe Elena Montero's and Manuel Falcón's departure into the unknown, symbolized by the all-encompassing darkness that, in sinister fashion, envelops the vessel and sea: "[S]e posesiona del barco la oscuridad" and "la oscuridad que abarca a la alta mar" (Chacel, 1988: 7). On a metaphorical level, the ship in darkness suggests the darkness facing the traveler of memory, who also ventures into a territory shrouded in darkness; hence Hutton states, glossing Hans-Georg Gadamer's 1960 work, *Truth and Method*, that "[i]t is at the edge of memory that the past recedes into strangeness and historians must become accustomed to its alien character" (Hutton, 1993: 23). More significantly, in relation to the text's themes of trauma and grief, the ship also represents survival, given that the shipwreck was a prominent symbol for the disasters of war that were firstly, Spain's 1898 defeat in the Spanish-American conflict and secondly, the Civil War¹⁴.

In what can be construed as a displacement of the recent historical

¹⁴ For the symbol of the shipwreck in these two contexts, see Julián Marías (2005: 355-59, 367-70). That first catastrophe lent its date to the so-called 1898 Generation, from which Chacel's own generation, known as the Generation of 1927 or Generation of the Republic, would partially take its bearings. Elena refers to the cultural creators of the Second Republic as follows: "Los poetas desatados en la República, aquí y allá los poetas metiéndose en todo" (Chacel, 1988: 70).

events of the Civil War and European conflict, Elena registers her terror at the elimination of all known coordinates on entering the never-ending darkness, a well-known symbol of fascism:

El terror es lo que el yo constata al entrar en la oscuridad que no tiene principio ni fin . . . es el terror ante la oscuridad volitiva, ante lo que vulgarmente se llama no saber qué hacer ni qué querer . . . puesto que es inevitable que hacia esa oscuridad hay que ir, surge en el acto la pregunta sobre la niebla de donde partimos, y no se alcanza a verla, no se alcanza. (Chacel, 1988: 8)

This departure is itself a re-presentation of a former sea and night and another enforced voyage, when Elena left Greece for Marseilles:

Claro que hubo otra noche, en otro mar—el mar, la mar, ¿puede ser otro u otra?—, la alta mar, en aquel mar, en aquella noche . . . La mar, el Mare Nostrum estaba iluminado por la profunda oscuridad, que se despedía—nos despedía . . . También había sido una orden la que nos había lanzado—a pleno sol—hasta el confín. (Chacel, 1988: 8)

The ensuing transit across the Atlantic, from a nebulous past into an unknown future, originates in a prohibition and goes toward an intersection: "Prohibido rasgar un fósforo en cubierta" (7) and "Reencuentro, repetición como constatación de la constancia—lo que no olvidamos nos espera" (12). In this sense the voyage from Europe to South America enacts the principle of memory as conceptualized by Azade Seyhan: "Memory is a phenomenon of conceptual border zones. It is an intersection and an interdiction. It dwells at the crossroads of the past and present. It bans the recall of certain events and prohibits entry into cordoned-off areas of the past" (2001: 31).

The narrative insistence on structures and motifs of departure and return has clear parallels with psychoanalytic concepts pertaining to traumatic memory, based on Freudian and Lacanian theories on the role of absence and presence in defining the subject. For Freud, the infant child works through the displeasure and fear that result from the mother's temporary absences with a game of "*fort*"/*da*" (German for "there" or "gone," and "here" or "present," respectively), which involves throwing away and retrieving a loved toy or object representative of the maternal figure (Freud,

1955: 14-15)¹⁵. Reinterpreting this paradigm, Jacques Lacan perceives the object, as Kaja Silverman explains it, not so much as representative of the missing mother as standing for the subject's "own missing complement." Lacan, Silverman continues, "interprets the story more as a parable about the disappearance of the self than the disappearance of the mother" (Silverman, 1983: 168). Extrapolating from Freud and Lacan, Chacel's own creative "game" enacted in her memory narratives centers on re-presenting the loss and temporary recovery of a cherished object—a motherland equated with Republican Spain and her avant-garde generation—that also constitutes a vital part of her own identity.

As Freud stipulates, the trauma sufferer is not so much concerned with memories of the event as with attempts not to remember it, which result in involuntary manifestations of the trauma in recurring symptoms (Caruth, 1996: 61)¹⁶. Building on this concept, Caruth posits that "[t]o listen to the crisis of a trauma . . . is not only to listen for the event, but to hear in the testimony the survivor's departure from it; the challenge of the therapeutic listener, in other words, is *how to listen to departure*" (1995a: 10). While this kind of listener is evoked in the opening pages of *Ciencias naturales*—"Parecería, parecerá, parece a ese interlocutor ante el cual repaso mi programa, repito, corrijo, enmiendo, insisto . . ." (Chacel, 1988: 9)—the repeated departures in the text from referring explicitly to the traumatic event are palpable in a discourse of allusion and ellipsis. One such instance is the (non)-mention of the impact of World War II on Marseilles: "[Y] Marsella, ya convulsionada por la cosa que da asco—la misma cosa, la única cosa—, la muerte que nos da asco amontonada..."; another can be found in the disguised, partial reference to *Poeta en Nueva York* (1929-1930) by Federico García Lorca, murdered by the Nationalists in 1936: "Y el poeta americano clamando por la muerte de miles de patitos y cerdos sacrificados . . . por la muerte de perros heroicos que salvan

¹⁵ Chacel was well acquainted with Freud's works and he is mentioned in *Ciencias naturales* in Elena's diary as the possible "inventor" of confession (Chacel, 1988: 216).

¹⁶ Freud states: "I am not aware, however, that patients suffering from traumatic neurosis are much occupied in their waking lives with memories of their accident. Perhaps they are more concerned with not thinking of it" (Freud, 1955: 13).

niños perdidos o combatientes sitiados" (Chacel, 1988: 11)¹⁷.

These types of textual departures represent Elena's need not to touch the wound, equivalent to remembering the past: "No hay que tocarlo, ni siquiera con manos asépticas... El mero hecho de coger un bolígrafo... ya significa acercarse al lugar ulcerado intocable" (Chacel, 1988: 17) and "Pusimos el pie en tierra y nos juramos no ponerlo en la realidad. ¡No tocar, no recordar nada que hiciese coherente nuestra llegada, nuestra vida!" (46). However, Elena repeatedly highlights her inability to avoid returning in her memories to the raw wound: "¿Por qué Mnemosina se empeña en sobar lo viscoso, lo espinoso, lo candente?... y ¿cómo evitar que lo toque?, y ¿cómo lograr que se toque lo que no se toca, es decir, que se toque el no tocar...[?]" (18) and "Mnemosina es incoercible..., no hay medio de reprimirla..." (19).

According to Carol Acton, under traumatic circumstances day-to-day survival is often only made possible through avoidance (Acton, 2007: 29). In *Ciencias naturales* this daily struggle between the need to remember and the desire to avoid the pain that memories bring is evident in the function of Elena's diary. Diary-keeping, Elena confesses, appears to offer a means of emptying memories of their power to wound and suppressing pain: "El recurso fue pueril: anotar—salió a flote el viejísimo propósito de anotar a diario—, poner fechas y colocar debajo los pormenores de la más banal cotidianidad, con la esperanza de dejar algo ahí, inmovilizado, desangrado del latido que el recuerdo suscita" (Chacel, 1988: 46). Elsewhere she underlines that what would be most preferable is not to leave any room for memory and, recalling the opening image of the ship advancing in an "oscuridad sin orillas" (12), live from day to day without temporal horizons: "[L]o recto sería vivir yendo al grano, sin dejar memoria, sin dejar espacio a la memoria, vetando con rigor su intervención, dejando paso sólo a lo que vivimos día a día, sin horizonte" (19). Nevertheless, as Elena narrates, traumatic memories involuntarily irrupt into her consciousness, catching her throat, impeding their expression and provoking displacements

¹⁷ The poem to which Chacel alludes is Lorca's "New York (Oficina y denuncia)": "Todos los días se matan en Nueva York / cuatro millones de patos, / cinco millones de cerdos" (García Lorca, 1992: 203-04).

of thought:

[E]l recuerdo anotado que ya no consiste en esa irrupción que sube a la garganta . . . Te enseñó las tontas páginas intrascendentes, . . . y de pronto encuentro en ellas algo que no fui capaz de anotar... Había empezado a deshacer el rencor fácilmente, apresuradamente, como soltando los hilos de un tejido incorrecto, pero llegué a un punto en que la trama era apretada, justa, estricta, tan firme que no se podía deshacer y lo dejé en blanco... Resbalé hasta la mañana radiante de Luján. . . . (46)

As a narrative mode, the diary mimicks memory's workings in that it is fragmentary, selective and retrospective, often defying exact chronologies. The fragmented nature of Elena's diary as text and the way in which it disrupts linear narrative in *Ciencias naturales* resembles the characteristics of traumatic memories, which Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart describe as "the unassimilated scraps of overwhelming experiences, which need to be integrated with existing mental schemes, and be transformed into narrative language" (1995: 176). Moreover, at the same time as the diary purports to be a truthful document, revealing the innermost secrets of the private subject, behind its very presence stand the multiple absences of forgetfulness, inexactness and omission. This interplay and tension between presence and absence, allegedly exact recording and (un)intentional lacunae can be glimpsed in Chacel's own admission from *Alcancía (Vuelta)*: "En este diario no hay una sola falsedad, ni un solo adorno ni un solo artificio, pero hay muchas omisiones" (Chacel, 1982b: 34).

Perhaps the most striking omission from Chacel's own diary entries in the three volumes of *Alcancía* and Elena's diary is the lack of precise references to years, confirming Caruth's definition of trauma as "a break in the mind's experience of time" (Caruth, 1996: 61). This omission can be read as symptomatic of the way in which trauma sufferers experience time: they are locked into reliving the catastrophic event even while simultaneously attempting to avoid the historical event that shattered their lives. Indeed, as van der Kolk and van der Hart note, "the traumatic experience/memory is, in a sense, timeless. It is not transformed into a story, placed in time, with a beginning, a middle and an end . . . If it can be told at all, it is still a (re)experience" (1995: 177). Elena's avoidance of dates is evident in her

dismissive comment that "las fechas quedan ahí para los que leen los periódicos y saben que en tal año ruidosos cambios de regímenes determinaron las trayectorias individuales . . ." (Chacel, 1988: 197). Dates have the power to return fractured selves to the catastrophic event, reawakening emotional associations. One key episode in *Ciencias naturales* where this process can be observed is when Elena, on translating Gustave Flaubert's 1869 novel, *L'éducation sentimentale*, from French into Spanish comes across the date of 1839, which transports her instantly, by association, to the end of the Civil War in 1939 and the date of her earlier exodus from Spain in 1937: "¡1839-1937!—las mismas frases, ¡las mismas!, llenas de verdad, de justicia, de heroísmo y de horror" (Chacel, 1988: 123)¹⁸. Another example is Elena's reaction to the Día de la Patria celebrated in Argentina on 9 July, which makes her aware of her feeling of foreignness, given that it is her friend María Constancia's day and not hers: "Por ser el Día de la Patria—de su patria" (25).

Although a major part of *Ciencias naturales* takes the form of Elena's diary, this genre is complemented by many occurrences in the novel being recounted several times over and from different perspectives in other voices and styles, ranging from first-person stream-of-consciousness discourse to a third-person narration by an omniscient narrator. Not only do such retellings reenact yet again the paradigm of departure and return of the trauma sufferer. It is also pertinent that the diary and the stream-of-consciousness discourse both partake formally of characteristics of written and oral texts. As written texts, they attempt to still time and thus preserve it from historical erosion; as quasi-oral forms, they insert time into an everlasting present, epitomized by the connection of the diary and interior monologue with a day-to-day present and present moment, respectively. Both forms are essential for transforming absence into presence and keeping alive what Elena considers to be a sacred memory: "Porque la memoria es como un lugar sagrado en el que todo duerme vigilante" (198).

¹⁸ Regarding this episode in Flaubert's novel, Behiels observes that although the context there is not 1839 but the 1848 Paris Revolution, the speech invites those present to a funeral prayer in homage to Spain's freedom (Behiels, 1994: 97). Still more relevant for my argument is the fact that this uprising led that same year to the creation of the French Second Republic, which, like the Spanish Civil War, lasted for three years.

Not surprisingly, the sacredness of memory constituted a characteristic of the classical tradition of mnemonics, whereby, as Hutton elucidates,

places provided an architectonic design in which the knowledge to be remembered was to be situated. These were places deeply embedded in the mind of the mnemonist that could not be forgotten. The architecture of place, often conceived as a palace or a theater, might be likened to a sacred space with which the mnemonist possessed intuitive familiarity. (Hutton, 1993: 30).

In *Ciencias naturales* this symbolic palace, which represents the essence of Chacel's avant-garde generation and gives its name to the text's title, is the Museum of Natural Sciences, described by the narrative voice as follows: "[E]n la colina había un palacio. En el palacio reinaba la realeza de múltiples hermanas, más numerosas que las musas, MUSEO DE CIENCIAS NATURALES" (Chacel, 1988: 183).

Elena's above description of memory as a sacred, and hence timeless, place where all exists in a sleeping but vigilant state evokes the dual, parallel worlds in which trauma sufferers simultaneously live: "the realm of the trauma and the realm of their current, ordinary life" (van der Kolk and van der Hart, 1995: 176). One of Elena's diary entries represents such a state as akin to sleepwalking: "[P]ara mí la evocación era un regusto de lo lejano, ¿las tierras?... Sí, las tierras, pero además—y con más pasión—las palabras en estos cantos, de un castellano que no se le pone el sol... tengo que hacer algo para salir de mi sonambulismo" (Chacel, 1988: 95). Many episodes in *Ciencias naturales* constitute veritable palimpsests, in which a subtext tacitly informs and disturbs the surface text. One of the most telling centers on Elena's nocturnal contemplation of the Buenos Aires Recoleta cemetery, portrayed as resembling a sentinel or "casi vigía" (34). There the Carrara marble returns her to Europe, while the graveyard awakens both fear and hope, reminiscent of the return of traumatic memories of death and the hope of awakening or departing from them: "[E]l mármol de Carrara, en medio de la noche, manteniendo su valor—su más allá del miedo—su certeza de lo que creemos esperanza, que en él es forma... Eso es, desde el balcón mi especie de oración nocturna, una despedida de lo que

se ve, aunque apenas se vea..." (34). Beneath the name Recoleta there beats another location in Madrid on which the Museum of Natural Sciences originally stood: the Paseo de Recoletos¹⁹. This ghostly inhabiting of one place by another confirms the relationship of presence and absence as enacted in the "fort"/"da" pairing, given that for Lacan, as Silverman illuminates, "[w]ith the addition of 'da' to 'fort,' the latter falls to the position of a signified to the former. In other words, 'da' henceforth means 'fort' . . ." (Silverman, 1983: 171). That Elena's vigil of the tombs from her window does not so much constitute an encounter with buried bodies as with unburied memories is confirmed by her later following declaration: "El cuerpo insepulto e incorrupto de un montón de años sigue ¡existiendo!... sin disiparse las reminiscencias de su fue. Fue es suficiente oración fúnebre" (Chacel, 1988: 190).

Trauma, as Caruth argues, is "what comes unexpectedly" (1996: 114n5). The sudden shattering of a previously whole self that characterizes trauma is most cogently symbolized in *Ciencias naturales* through the 1944 San Juan earthquake, as a result of which Manuel Falcón, the *maestro* for Elena's cultural group, dies. The equation of the earthquake with the Civil War is intimated when Elena's diary entry refers to that conflict as the "derrumbe" and the "dolor causado por la tierra" (Chacel, 1988: 117). Later this analogy is extended when the reference to the "desastre de San Juan" centers on the opening up of the earth that divides the city irremediably in half: "[S]e abre una zanja que deja media ciudad a un lado y media a otro... Un todo, un algo que era uno, queda partido en dos, sin posible reunión..." (201). Immediately that divide becomes emblematic of ideological divisions that pit father against son and divide national families: "¿Cómo se puede comprender que un padre y un hijo se dividan por una zanja que se llama *idea* o *tierra* o *pueblo*?" (201). A paragraph later, the reference to

¹⁹ Until 1907 the Madrid Museum of Natural Sciences and the School of Fine Arts encompassed the building that is today Spain's National Library, situated on the Colón square from which the Paseo de Recoletos departs. From 1907 to 1910 the Museum and School were relocated to the former Palace of Industry and the Arts on the Paseo de la Castellana, where Chacel studied sculpture from 1914 to 1918. Chacel draws on these historical resonances in Elena's following statement: "La forma, la que estudiamos en la Escuela, me trajo a la memoria los mármoles de la Recoleta, vigilados por mí, desde mi balcón por la noche. No dejo de pensar en ellos . . ." (Chacel, 1988: 217).

the outbreak of the Civil War becomes explicit: “[P]oco antes del estallido—mes de julio del 36 . . .” (202). Further similarities between war and earthquake are evident in the following description of wars, where deep sociopolitical layers erupt into cities:

[É]stas, concertantes de la negación, dejan sus residuos, . . . este hecho que convulsiona la vida urbana, trayendo gérmenes de los bajos fondos . . . Bajos, suena mal, pero quiere decir hondos, profundos yacimientos que, de pronto, dejan de ser yacentes y salen a fuera, irrumpiendo en la ciudad (150)

Apart from its symbolic value for critiquing the consequences of war, the San Juan earthquake also arguably refers to the dismantling, through the Civil War, of Chacel’s cultural roots, equated in the text with the death of Falcón, who represents the so-called 1898 Generation²⁰. The import of that Generation for the Spanish nation was, as Julián Marías puts it, “tectónica,” given that its members “lleva a cabo una elevación total de España, . . . inicia nuevas maneras de pensar y escribir; supera la dependencia respecto a otros países de Europa” (Marías, 2005: 359).

Hence *Ciencias naturales* not only narrates Elena’s personal trauma, in itself a fictional representation of Chacel’s own experience. It also registers the collective trauma suffered by the members of Elena’s circle who have been displaced and separated by the Civil War. Confirming Kai Erikson’s statement that “when the community is profoundly affected, one can speak of a damaged social organism in almost the same way that one would speak of a damaged body” (Erikson, 1995: 188), Chacel’s text conveys her cultural generation’s experience of the rupture and dismemberment caused by war and exile with images of uprooting and wrenching apart: “[E]ran adioses—arrancamientos de inúmeros lugares” and “Y se hacía por prolongar el desgarramiento . . .” (Chacel, 1988: 11)²¹. As Elena’s

²⁰ Regarding Manuel Falcón as representative of the so-called 1898 Generation, see Arkininstall (2009: 152).

²¹ For Pierre Nora the concept of generation constitutes a *lieu de mémoire* or site of memory, where there takes place “the eternally reemerging dialectic of a past that remains present, of actors who become their own witnesses, and of new witnesses in turn transformed into actors” (Nora, 1996b: 530-31). As he continues, a generation is “a product of memory, an effect of remembering” and “the most instinctive way of converting memory into history” (Nora, 1996b: 522, 528). For a more extensive discussion of Chacel’s trilogy in relation to the concept of generation, see Arkininstall (2009: 147-57).

diary entry states, separation constitutes another form of death: “[E]so es la muerte, la separación” (216), while the divisions and exile that war causes make personal and collective wholeness impossible:

[N]o hemos vivido porque, hasta en lo mayor—lo más real—no hemos estado—quiero decir asistido—más que con una parte, fracción o perspectiva de nuestra integridad. Ahora tenemos una idea clara de lo que nos falta allá, y es inútil creer que aquí estamos completos. ¿De quién o quiénes hablo? Ello mismo, lo que quisimos defender o salvar, se ha—nos hemos—fragmentado, dividido... (203).

However, as well as tracing the unravelling of life’s threads through war, exile and trauma, *Ciencias naturales* also, and more importantly, testifies to a process of rebuilding a self, community and cultural polis through the characters’ sharing of their experiences in exile. Hence, as Erikson notes, “trauma shared can serve as a source of communality in the same way that common languages and common backgrounds can . . . the shared experience becomes almost like a common culture, a source of kinship” (Erikson, 1995: 186, 190). Fundamental in Elena’s gradual recovery of her ability to express the trauma suffered are her reencounters with lost members of her cultural group, especially Máximo Montero.

Elena’s serendipitous meeting with Montero in the café La Estrella forces her to face buried memories: “[E]ra como si el hombre viniese de sitios que me hubiese jurado no recordar, como si él supiera todo lo irresistible, lo definitivamente arrancado de mi pensamiento...” (Chacel, 1988: 38). Associated with such a confrontation are the ambivalent emotions that accompany trauma, in that the meeting simultaneously arouses in Elena both the desire to overcome loss and also fear at having to acknowledge its void: “La confrontación—en ella—es búsqueda de las piezas perdidas del puzzle—espanto ante los huecos vacíos...” (40). It is relevant that their ensuing reminiscences do not follow an ordered linear narrative but criss-cross unexpectedly and chaotically between the distanced past and daily present, between there and here, the Spanish war and their South American exile:

No es factible un *rapport* sistemático que empiece por el principio y siga un orden; lo pertinente es la afluencia impremeditada de lo que se suele

llamar *recuerdos*.. La forma en que se produce no es un fluir de preguntas y respuestas, sino un entrecruzamiento de lo más distante con lo cotidiano... (41).

Equally as important for Elena's recovery from her trauma is the epistolary exchange into which she enters with her former friend, art critic Martín Vélez, who is now lecturing in Boston. Like diaries, letters are crucial vehicles for negotiating and resolving individual and collective wartime loss and grief (Acton, 2007: 8-9). On the one hand, Elena's diary entries are the means through which she communicates with her self, in what she calls an "autodiálogo" (Chacel, 1988: 78). On the other, they also resemble traumatic memory, which van der Kolk and van der Hart, drawing on the theories of Freud's contemporary, Pierre Janet, define as "a solitary activity" that takes an excessively lengthy time to express (van der Kolk and van der Hart, 1995: 163). In contrast, the letters exchanged between Elena and Martín can be seen as an expression of narrative memory, defined as "a social act" (van der Kolk and van der Hart, 1995: 163). Attaining closure on traumatic memory requires integrating the experience within recovered cognitive constructs and successfully completing a narrative structure (van der Kolk and van der Hart, 1995: 160, 162).

Elena's successive reencounters with exiled members of her cultural generation enable the gradual transition in the text from traumatic memory to narrative memory and hence her return to the lost loved object, Spain. Martín's articulated but ambivalent desire to return to Spain—"como una cita dudosa y deseada sobremanera"—finds a parallel resonance in Elena: "[L]e digo, yo también, yo igual, completamente igual" (Chacel, 1988: 210). Elena's original departure from Spain into exile as Falcón's secretary becomes transposed in the final pages of the text into her anticipated return as Martín's secretary once Franco falls (211). Martín's actual return to Spain and Barcelona releases in Elena a flood of memories that now center on her life prior to the Civil War (213-19). His return to places that Elena's letter asks him to revisit—those that she describes as "los más persistentes en mi memoria" (221)—registers the disappearance of some and changes in others (222). Elena recounts that, although he is not happy, Martín does not believe that he has lost time; on the contrary, he has returned to himself: "No cree haber perdido el tiempo; no está contento, pero

está en sí mismo" (223). Martín's re-encounter with his lost self enables Elena to share vicariously in his return through his letters and, in so doing, to regain the vision lost through her psychological death: "[R]econociendo que lo que gano también es . . . ampliación de mi punto de vista, casi operación quirúrgica que me devuelve la visión perdida por... apatía, pereza, desfallecimiento mental" (224).

The event that will definitively restore Elena physically to Spain is Franco's death. It is significant that the inability of the traumatized subject to articulate specifically the catastrophic event, the inexpressible, is evident in Elena's inability to name Franco and his anticipated death directly, as exemplified in her reiterated elliptical references to waiting for that occurrence: "Treintaitantos años esperando que caiga, ¡y no cae!" (225), "espera lo que haya de pasar" (227) and "a la espera de lo que ha de suceder" (231). Even when Franco dies, he still cannot be named: "Hasta que un día *aquello* pasa" (231).

With Franco's death comes Elena's acceptance of Martín's invitation to return to Spain: a decision reached after a lengthy meditation on what crossing to that other shore or side exactly means. In what could stand as a poetic account of trauma, with its characteristics of repetition, terror, violence, and encounter with and survival of death, the narrative voice asks:

¿Valdría la pena de cruzar el océano? De un lado y de otro de las dos orillas, "La Repetición" . . . ¿Qué es la repetición? Cuando se pone el terror y el amor en los platillos de la balanza que funciona con curvas de sube y baja . . . Terror del hundimiento, terror de no encontrar la elevación a lo excelso; la verdad, la vuelta, porque volver es volver a lo mismo, y ¿qué es lo mismo? ¿Es la resurrección de la carne? Eso es lo deseado por las dos orillas . . . haber muerto, haber sentido—vivido—la muerte, la separación, y volver a tocar, a apretar entre los brazos *aquello*... Saber que *aquello* existe y que la distancia es mensurable, que sólo consiste en ir o venir... (233)

The promise of Elena's return to Spain means conquering the death of separation from the loved object and effecting the reunion of the two shores of Latin America and Europe, the exiled Republican avant-garde with a new Spanish avant-garde: "[L]a batalla es batalla de orillas sobre el mar o el tiempo—, la otra orilla se siente otra, la lucha es más que po-

seer, destruir la otredad: es lucha de absorción, de anhelo vital, de unión” (234)²². From voyage out to flight back, from seaport to airport, the final two pages narrate Elena’s return to Madrid, on which word the text concludes. During the flight back Elena sleeps. Her awakening just as the plane is about to reach its destination symbolizes her re-entry into historical time—“el invierno-primavera del 1975” (Chacel, 1988: 232)—her completion of her narrative, and her replacing the trauma of war and exile with a present open to the future.

Chacel’s *Ciencias naturales* plays out in dramatized form the quest of her characters, in a time of historical shipwreck and unreason, to endow their fragmented lives with meaning and return themselves and valued pasts into a post-Franco historical present. In another sense, Chacel’s memory texts can also be seen, I suggest, as a dialogue with an absent mentor: the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset. Although her relationship with Ortega was conflictive, Chacel recognized herself as his disciple and sought to embody his theories in her narrative practice²³. I suggest that with the title *Ciencias naturales* Chacel indirectly refers to Ortega’s concept of historical reason, which, challenging Descartes’ paradigm of pure reason, affirmed the necessity of grounding philosophy in the contingencies of historical realities. Thus in *La razón histórica*, a course delivered in September and October 1940 at the University of Buenos Aires during his own exile from Spain, Ortega contends: “El hombre, no tiene naturaleza, lo que tiene es historia... ¡Ha empezado la hora de las ciencias históricas! La razón pura . . . tiene que ser sustituida por una razón narrativa. . . . Y esa razón na-

²² Chacel was rediscovered by a younger avant-garde generation known as the Novísimos, who saw her as one of them. In particular, Chacel’s relationship with Novísimos Ana María Moix and Pere Gimferrer was instrumental in her returning to Spain in 1974 (see Arkininstall, 2009: 142). For further details on this relationship, see Chacel (1982b: 32, 248), and Chacel and Moix (2003). To a large extent, it was Chacel’s acclamation by the Novísimos that led to her being reinstated, in her seventies, as a major writer and to being culturally remembered.

²³ On Chacel’s difficult relationship with Ortega, see Teresa Bordons and Susan Kirkpatrick (1992). Chacel acknowledges Ortega’s influence on her work in essays such as “Ortega” (Chacel, 1993b), “Ortega a otra distancia” (Chacel, 1993c) and “Respuesta a Ortega” (Chacel, 1993d). Regarding the influence of Ortega’s aesthetics on Chacel, see Arkininstall (2009: 142-43, 150-53), López Sáenz (1994) and Rodríguez Fischer (1988b).

rrativa es ‘la razón histórica’” (Ortega y Gasset, 1981b: 237)²⁴. Elucidating Ortega’s theory, Julián Marías declares that “[l]a historia como *res gestae* es para el hombre el equivalente de lo que la naturaleza es para las cosas. La historia es el sistema de las experiencias humanas” (Marías, 2005: 39). The substitute for this unrealized project of historical reason, Marías continues, following Ortega, is literature, which he considers “la base de la inteligibilidad de la historia” (Marías, 2005: 40).

Chacel’s trilogy of memory novels not only materializes in literary form the essence of Ortega’s theory of historical reason. They also constitute, I argue, a response to Ortega’s rejection of memory as thematically viable for the Spanish novel. Thus in 1956, in her essay “Respuesta a Ortega: La novela no escrita,” Chacel alludes to Ortega’s stance and her future trilogy as follows:

Y me ha causado verdadero desconcierto esa repugnancia de Ortega por el recuerdo. . . . Yo quería levantar, para Ortega, un fantasma: el de aquella vida que él suscitó y que parece frustrada, pero a la que, personalmente, considero, aunque breve, imperecedera. . . . en un largo estudio de la literatura y la vida de mi generación, que dedicaré a su memoria . . . No quiero existir en el presente del pensamiento hispano si no puedo hacerlo desde allí y desde entonces . . . manteniendo al hablar de Ortega la pureza y la fe de aquel tiempo. (Chacel, 1993d: 382, 384, 393)

From there, South America, and from then, the years of post-war exile, Chacel’s *Ciencias naturales*, like her trilogy as a whole, vindicates the importance of memory for the unfinished cultural project that Ortega and her avant-garde generation held dear. It is not just a thinly disguised account of Chacel’s own emotional landscape during her exile. More importantly, the work re-introduces a painful past into the post-Franco years

²⁴ Earlier, in *Historia como sistema* (1935), Ortega explains what he means by history as a science: “La historia es ciencia sistemática de la realidad radical que es mi vida. Es, pues, ciencia del más riguroso y actual presente... El pasado no está allí, en su fecha, sino aquí, en mí” (Ortega, 1958: 45). In *Ciencias naturales* Martín arguably embodies the premises of Ortega’s historical reason: “[N]o es que él no pueda desechar el apasionado impulso que le hizo volver; es más bien un raciocinio, podría decir casi científico: algo así como intuición de una ciencia natural que hubiese aprendido. . . . No, aprendido no, practicado en un mundo—grupo, clase, escuela—que vivimos...” (Chacel, 1988: 223).

of the late 1980s and asks that Spain's present engage with the ghosts of its past, to return them from the shades of Lethe and bring their spirit back to life.

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