Family Relationships in Contemporary Crime Fiction

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La Famiglia

Edited by

Bill Phillips

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INTRODUCTION

"The Family must never die," (Puzo 1996, 196), says Don Domenico Clericuzio in *The Last Don*. The Don's concern is understandable given the exciting lives of Mario Puzo's crime families, whose villainous activities rarely give them time to catch their breath. In *The Godfather* we learn that "The day after the shooting of Don Corleone was a busy time for the Family" (Puzo 1970, 113), as the spiral of violence accelerates under the brutal leadership of the Don's's eldest son, Salvatore Corleone, popularly known as 'Sonny'. But it is Michael, the studious youngest son who finishes the job, murdering the culprits, Sollozzo 'the Turk' and police Captain McCluskey, over their spaghetti in an Italian restaurant. "You, the high-class college kid, you never wanted to get mixed up in the Family business" (Puzo 1970, 136), expostulates Sonny, but Michael will not be restrained.

Family for these fictional mafiosi is always spelt with a capital 'F', and Puzo spins a romantic tale of Italian-Americans of Sicilian origins in which only blood can be trusted (though rarely even that), as centuries of oppressive and corrupt regimes have subjected and inured the island's peasantry to lives of brutality, poverty and privation. The blood-soaked figures of the crucifixion and pietà provide a model of physical and spiritual suffering in which the father oversees the deeds and death of the son while the mother holds his bleeding head in her arms. There is no-one like Puzo for depicting the monstrous hypocrisy of these pious, pitiful people. For the Corleones "Blood was blood and nothing else was its equal" (Puzo 1970, 101), but this is, of course, an ambiguous statement: there are the blood-ties of family, the bloody business of the Family and blood-letting within the family itself.

The murderous, dysfunctional *Famiglia*, ruled by its pitiless Godfather and his homicidal sons, is a marvellous metaphor for the 'family' in general. Indeed, both in crime fiction and real life it is commonplace to suspect someone in the family when murder takes place, especially the men. "Husband checks out?" asks Spenser of Lt. Quirk after being hired to investigate the murder of Olivia Nelson in Robert B. Parker's *Paper Doll*. "How long you think I been doing this? Who do we think of first when a wife is killed?" is Quirk's axiomatic reply (Parker 16). Fiction and reality

coincide: “Half of female adult victims aged 16 and over were killed by their partner or ex-partner (82 homicides) in the year ending March 2017” according to the UK Office for National Statistics (Flatley). True, the partner or ex-partner, may also be a woman, as the website recognises: “Partner or ex-partner includes adulterous relationship, boyfriend or girlfriend, common-law spouse or cohabiting partner, ex-spouse, ex-common-law spouse or ex-cohabiting partner, ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend, spouse (including civil partner)” (Flatley), but mostly they seem to be men; in the same year, “only 3% of male victims aged 16 and over were killed by their partner or ex-partner” (Flatley). The website is coy about identifying the sex of the perpetrator, but the difference between victims is clear: women are seventeen times more likely to be murdered by a partner or ex-partner than men.

The family as a social unit is a global phenomenon. Occasionally, societies at different times and in different places offer alternatives—Classical Sparta or the matrilinial Minangkabau people of Sumatra, for example, or celibate religious communities—but families consisting variously of parents, children, grandparents, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, all livng together or in close proximity, are to be found just about everywhere. And murder and mayhem are to be found there as well, as demonstrated by the abundance of crime novels from South Africa, Australia and India—to name just three countries in a world increasingly fascinated by crime narratives. The three afore-mentioned countries were all colonies of the British Empire, and postcolonial studies takes an interest in those places whose peoples and cultures were subjugated by a colonial power in the relatively recent past. Fiction from postcolonial countries—at least when not written by the (ex)colonisers themselves—provides an alternative voice to the earlier colonial discourse, reassessing the impact of the colonial occupation on lost, misrepresented, damaged or unfolding lives and cultures. Over recent decades crime writers have shown an interest in injustice, poverty, insecurity and inequality—issues which are also of concern to many postcolonial crime writers. Given the preponderance of crime in the family, it is hardly surprising, then, that family, crime fiction and postcolonial preoccupations provide a fascinating combination.

The essays compiled in this collection deal with all of these issues. Elena Losada's analysis of crime fiction written by women from various parts of Spain discusses the way in which a feminisation of the crime genre has transformed it, not only by providing a space and a voice for women—who can be doctors, judges, police—but by shifting the emphasis away from the lone detective and his windswept street. People, as Losada

reminds us, have families—someone must have conceived them, and given birth to them, if nothing else—and the relationship between women, especially mothers and daughters, is a particularly fertile ground for the crime writer's imagination. Katarzyna Paszkiewicz chapter, "It All Stays in the Family" continues the theme of crime and family relationships with a reading of *The Girl on the Train* (2015) in the context of the domestic noir genre, as does Cristina Alsina whose analysis of *Gone Girl* (2012) questions expectations of gender behaviour.

Another fertile area for crime writers is the alternative family. Carme Morell's chapter on *Sherlock*, the 2012-2017 BBC series of dramatisations of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, questions the traditional heterosexual nuclear family, as does Catalina Ribas's chapter on female sleuth, Phryne Fisher. Set in Australia, the Phryne Fisher stories provide a critical analysis of early twentieth century colonial rule in which racism, and class and gender inequality, are institutionalised by government and white society. Colonialism and its consequences are also central to the chapters by María Xesús Lama López and Martin Renes. The former analyses the Galician novel *Meu pai vaite matar* (My Father Will Kill You) by María Xosé Queizán and which is set in both the southern Galician port of Vigo, and Patagonia. Argentina has long been the destination of Galician emigrants, so much so that Spanish immigrants in general are referred to as "Gallegos" (Galicians), whether they are from Galicia or not. Lama's study theorises the novel as a "transgenerational transfer of trauma" in which crime within the family crosses generations and spans the Atlantic in a journey of discovery and rebirth. A similar journey of discovery is analysed by Martin Renes in his study of Sally Morgan's autobiography, *My Place* (1987). When viewed as a crime narrative, the damage inflicted on Aboriginal communities and families by the British and Australian governments is thrown into vivid focus, while Morgan's investigation into her own and her family's past includes many of the characteristics of detective fiction. Postcolonial concerns are also the subject of Isabel Alonso's chapter about South African writer Farida Karodia's novel *A Shattering of Silence*. Set in Mozambique, it deals with the greatest crime of all: war, and the effect that this most traumatic of disasters has on families, and children in particular.

Finally, Bill Phillips and Haritha Chalil Savithri, in "The Family and Performativity in Vikram Chandra's *Sacred Games*", bring us back to the Mafia Don and the construction of a crime family. Chandra's novel, however, is set neither in Sicily nor America, but in Bombay. The protagonist's efforts to establish his own *famiglia* are used by the author to analyse the weight of religious myth in Indian society, the consequences

for world peace, and the hope that common humanity will prevail over religious fundamentalism.

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TERRIBLE MOTHERS: FOUR IMAGES OF "THE BAD MOTHER" IN CONTEMPORARY SPANISH CRIME FICTION (DOLORES REDONDO, ROSA RIBAS, SUSANA HERNÁNDEZ, MARGARIDA ARITZETA)[1]

ELENA LOSADA SOLER

Abstract: Crime fiction authored by women has led to the emergence of new female investigators (policewomen, female judges, female journalists, female forensic doctors) who have revised, distorted, and reconstructed the old gender and genre roles that characterize this type of narrative. One of the most frequent and outstanding features of this new fiction is the presence of social and family bonds that move the female investigators away from classical figures of lone detectives, such as Sherlock Holmes or Philip Marlowe. These new female characters have mothers and their relationship with them is, on the whole, bad. Through the notions of maternity formulated by Adrienne Rich and Luisa Muraro, amongst others, and through the Lacanian concept of "havoc", we aim to analyze the specular mother-daughter relationship in the works of four contemporary Spanish women writers.

Introduction

According to Tolstoy, in the now famous beginning of the novel *Anna Karenina*, "Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way". So too is every unhappy relationship between a daughter and her mother, every matrophobic relationship, unique, while matrophilic relationships all tend to look the same.

[1] Translation by Andrea Ruthven.

Using family conflicts as a microcosmic means of representing macrocosmic problems and circumstances is a practice as old as literature itself, and continues even today in the twenty-first century and in the popular literary genre of crime fiction in all its sub-categories, not just in so-called domestic noir. Murdering the family, murdering for the family, within the family, with the family, all demonstrate the strength of this bond, even in its most perverse form. And among all the family bonds, perhaps the most special in its intensity, variety, and capacity for generating pain and malfunction when it goes awry, is that between a daughter and her mother.

The present chapter aims to analyse this topic as it appears in the crime novels published by four women authors in Spain after the year 2000: Rosa Ribas, Susana Hernández and Dolores Redondo, publishing in Spanish, and Margarida Aritzeta, publishing in Catalan. First, however, it is worth delineating a brief panorama of crime fiction written by women in Spain, given that the "colander" effect of the canon – in this case the crime fiction canon – means that women always seem to be filtered out.

With the 1979 publication of Lourdes Ortiz's novel *Picadura mortal* [A Fatal Sting], the contemporary trajectory of women publishing crime fiction in Spain began. Although Emilia Pardo Bazan was a pioneer who published *La gota de sangre* [The Drop of Blood] in 1911, and in the 1930s some mystery novels like *Crim* [Crime] (1936) by Mercè Redoreda, were published, for political and cultural reasons, the first contemporary crime novels written by women in Spain— including all of the subgenres, not just mystery but also *noir* or police and courtroom procedurals— do not emerge until the final years of the Transition. During the dictatorship, because of the obvious socio-political reasons which made it rather difficult to narrate crime, given that, in a society of "order" crime could not exist, crime novels were only minimally present (*El inocente* [The Innocent], by Mario Lacruz, is an exception). When texts of this kind were published, as paperbacks or dime novels, the action usually took place in another country—often in the United States—and the author would use an Anglosaxon pseudonym. Writing at the beginning of the 1960s, this was the case for María Fernanda Cano Caparró, whose pen-name was Mary Francis Colt, for the *noir* novels that she wrote for Bruguera.

After its increasing success through the pioneering work of Vázquez Montalbán, the genre grew during the 80s and 90s and during the first decade of the 21st century until becoming what it is today: an undeniable reality, as undeniable, in fact, as the important role the women authors

play in this literary genre[2]. Crime fiction—and its female authorship—can no longer be considered as marginal. Women have collaborated, to an important degree, in creating the boom in the genre, which is increasingly less paradigmatic, with more flexible templates, until it has become a narrative form around which a large portion of popular literature is articulated: mysteries and crimes set in the present or the past (Roman, medieval or Victorian detectives), investigated or committed by men and women from a wide variety of social, cultural and sexual spheres. The "crime novel formula" has spread its borders toward other genres: horror, police, urban novels, etc. On the other hand, the traditional Anglo-Saxon hegemony (begging the pardon of Simenon's Maigret, Camilleri's Montalbano, and Márkaris' Kostas Jaritos) has been replaced by Scandinavian crime fiction, with its cruel and icy crimes, and which includes a number of highly relevant women.

In Spain we can also find the names of many women. It goes without saying that the women writing Spanish crime novels are not a homogenous group, and not all of them are writing from a feminist perspective, not all of them use the same literary models, not all have the same social perspective, and the results they achieve are not all on the same literary scale, but among them all they create a diverse literary fabric that contributes to making women's writing more visible.

In an attempt at a, necessarily, incomplete, summary, it is worth mentioning how, after the aforementioned novel by Lourdes Ortiz,[3] the

[2] One of the results of the research project *Mujeres y novela criminal en España (1975-2010): autoras, figuras de poder, víctimas y criminales* [Women and Crime Novel in Spain (1975-2010): Women Writers, Power Figures, Victims and Criminals] (MUNCE) FEM2011-22870 and of the follow-up, *Víctimas y agresoras. Representaciones de la violencia en la narrativa criminal escrita por mujeres* [Female Victims and Aggressors. Representations of Violence in Crime Fiction Written by Women] (VANACEM). FEM 2014-55057-P is an open access online database (www.ub.edu/munce) which functions, among other things, as a catalogue of women's crime writing, which is neither scarce nor merely anecdotal, but constitutes an extensive, complex, and ever-increasing corpus.

[3] Lourdes Ortiz has only written the one crime novel. Of the 130 titles listed in the database, only 44 are part of a series, the rest are isolated Works. The phenomenon of the "one-off novel" is quite frequent among women writers—contrary to the tradition in this literary genre, that is sustained by the loyalty readers feel for the main characters, from Sherlock Holmes to Pepe Carvalho—and this could be interpreted in a variety of ways, as a stylistic exercise—the case for Carme Riera, who has claimed that she has no desire to repeat the experience—or as a demonstration of women authors' aversion to being labelled as writers of a literature that literary criticism has scorned, even today (though things are slowly changing).

pioneers of the 1980s emerged: Marina Mayoral, Núria Mínguez, Josefa Contijoch, Maria Aurèlia Capmany and Maria-Antònia Oliver, among others. In the wake of their work came the series by Alicia Giménez Bartlett, featuring the detective Petra Delicado, which is a milestone in the genre, representing as it does a new form of women's empowerment in a world that—in both reality and in fiction—barely makes room for a woman detective. In the 21st century, names such as Berna González Harbour, Blanca Álvarez, Mercedes Castro, Rosa Ribas, Cristina Fallarás—who uses the most terrible acts of violence in a way that is most interesting for gender studies—, Empar Fernández and her novel *Gris asfalto* [Grey Asphalt], with its strong interest in social issues, or Dolores Redondo, who maintains one foot in the genre of fantasy through her novels rooted in Basque anthropology, a style followed more recently by Eva García Sáenz de Urturi. There is a wide range of offerings that cover the entire ideological spectrum, from the lesbian crime fiction by Isabel Franc and Susana Hernández to the curious case of the Catholic crime novels by Reyes Calderón, and that reflect attitudes and aesthetics that are at times antagonistic. On the other hand, women's crime fiction has expanded equally into all of the languages and cultures of the Spanish state, each with its own sociolinguistic situation and potential reading public. The production in Catalan is notable, and it is worth pointing out the contributions of Margarida Aritzeta, who has once again taken up her "criminal" side, Teresa Solana, who, in *Negres tempestes* [Black Storms] interestingly joins an ironic depiction of contemporary Barcelona with historical memory, the social *noir* writing of Anna Maria Villalonga, or Carolina Solé's only contribution, *Ulls de gel* [Eyes of Ice] which shows us that crimes are also committed in rural areas, and of course the acclaimed Carme Riera's sole foray into the genre in her novel *Natura quasi morta* [Nature is Almost Dead]. In the French Basque country, Itzaro Borda has created a rural detective, Amaia Expeldoi, who investigates in equal measure the mysterious murder or the theft of a cow, or the disappearance of some participants in an onomastics conference in Bilbao. And in Galicia, Laura Caveiro offers a wonderful parody of the paradigms of North Amercian noir fiction in *Polas inmensas e alleas fortunas* [For the Immense Fortunes of Others].

The crime novel, understood as a narrative structured around a crime and its investigation, directly reflects social realities, changes and contradictions that can remain hidden in other literary genres; this is why it is so interesting for gender studies. The current boom reflects political and social evolution; the crime novel was the first to react to the economic

crisis and its consequences, it also shows the diversity of cultural identities and has also reflected on questions pertaining to gender.

The first of these is the representation of powerful women, empowered women with agency, who are quite different from the traditional model (the spinster Jane Marple or the widow Jessica Fletcher, women of a certain age, with no visible sexuality, and as such 'not womanly', similar to the active and grumpy old women in Dickens), capable of combining the "virility" necessary to carry out a good investigation with their more "natural" inclinations toward domesticity. The new detectives work without experiencing the ethical conflicts that Amelia Valcárcel calls "the master's power" (1994: 165), that is, they participate in the same patriarchal power structure: they are policewomen (Petra Delicado, by Alicia Giménez Bartlett; María Ruiz, by Berna González Harbour; Cornelia Weber-Tejedor, by Rosa Ribas; Amaia Salazar, by Dolores Redondo; Norma Forester, by Teresa Solana; Mina Fuster, by Margarida Aritzeta; Rebeca Santana, by Susana Hernández, etc.) or judges (Gabriela Aldama, by Elisa Beni or Lola MacHor, by Reyes Calderón). And, by creating these female figures, equipped with "the master's power" and his phallic symbolism—the law and the gun—the authors have also, of necessity, created new masculinities: subaltern men, like Fermín Garzón in Alicia Bartlett Giménez's works, men who are victims and "fragile men", thereby profoundly altering the conventions of crime fiction as a literary genre and also the stereotypes linked to each gender. The new detectives, to a large extent working as police officers, are characters that relate to their environment in a quite different way from the solitary detectives of North American crime fiction: they have families, parents to care for, social relationships, and unresolved issues around maternity and motherhood, as well as a different awareness of their bodies, a body that is no longer only susceptible to the traditional methods of harming women, for example through physical or sexual abuse, but also through being shot. To this effect, the relationship that detective María Ruiz (*Margen de error* [Margin of Error], by Berna González Harbour) has with her convalescent body after she is seriously wounded in the line of duty in the previous novel is especially suggestive. The relationships, the inclusion of the detective in the world, also constitute a different characteristic in comparison with the crime fiction paradigm, especially when compared to the classics written by men. Remember that Sherlock Holmes had no mother, nor did Sam Spade or Philip Marlowe, or even Pepe Carvalho. Certainly, more recent characters have started to have more interpersonal relationships, sometimes in rather more unconventional ways than with the calming presence of Mrs. Maigret, who acted as a resting place for the

warrior, as is the case for the detective Leo Caldas in Domingo Villar's novels, however, without a doubt, one of the specific characteristics that can be traced in crime fiction by women, and taking into account the need to be especially careful with binary identity labels, is the creation of detectives with strong community and familial ties. Women such as Ana Martí (Rosa Ribas), Amaia Salazar (Dolores Redondo), Rebeca Santana (Susana Hernández) or Mina Fuster (Margarida Aritzeta) are, in spite of themselves, strongly linked to their mothers. From what Adriana Cavarero has called "an individualist ontology of disassociation"[4] (2009: 48), which has dominated European culture and which is especially visible in Hobbes' self-referential subject, for whom the other is always the wolf stalking its prey, there seems to emerge, albeit timidly, a tendency in the new crime fiction toward a concept of relationships derived from the consciousness of horror, of the constant professional contact with evil and the probability of losing one's own life or that of family and friends, a need for relationships that Judith Butler praised in post-9/11 North American society. These detectives, primarily police officers, know that "there is nothing in our social constitution as women that excludes us from becoming violent" (Butler, 2006: 70), however, precisely because they are constantly exposed to violence, both from others and from the self, they are conscious of their vulnerability and of their need to build affective bonds.

Together with the empowered women and the men who follow a model of masculinity in transition, there have also appeared new interpretations of social crimes, such as abuse or trafficking in women, as seen in *El hombre del corazón negro* [The Man With the Black Heart] by Ángela Vallvey, or depictions of new types of criminal women: women who murder for reasons unrelated to their feelings or in ways that are not traditionally tied to female stereotypes (using poison or tricking a man into committing the crime for her), women who participate in organized crime or who commit murder to gain power. Perhaps this is the most innovative—and the most disturbing—element to emerge in consideration of evil women in these texts. Might bad women be acting of their own volition, without being a victim of the patriarchy? Can the one who gives life also be the one to take it? The question of evil women has been a difficult one for feminism to come to terms with, and in studying it we come up against the non-normative, that which transgresses patriarchal stereotypes and the frameworks of feminist theory alike, which have attempted to sidestep the issue because of the discomfort that it awakens

[4] Unless otherwise indicated, all direct quotations cited in this chapter were translated by AR.

and for the ease with which it can be distorted. Female criminals have been treated by classic criminology of the Lombroso school as either monsters or victims, neither of which are individuals with their own agency, regardless of whether or not this agency is to do ill. But the "symbolic catastrophe", to use Adriana Cavarero's words (2009: 180), represented in the case of the Abu Ghraib torturers has demonstrated the need for this kind of analysis.

Mothers and daughters: Four matrophobic relationships

Of the social and familial ties, those that the detectives weave with their mothers are, as indicated, especially important. In some cases (though these are few), these mother-daughter bonds are positive, as seen in the relationship that the detective Weber-Tejedor, by Rosa Ribas, has with her mother Celsa. What are more abundant, however, are the "terrible mothers": Amaia Salazar's ogre-mother in the trilogy by Dolores Redondo; Ana Martí's matriarch (Ribas-Hofmann), Rebeca Santana's criminal-mother (Susana Hernández) and the "devouring mother", in both the Lacanian and the general sense, of Mina Fuster (Margarida Aritzeta).

For good or bad, the mother-daughter relationship is an exceptionally strong bond. It is worth taking a brief moment to consider here the difficulties that feminist thinkers have had throughout the 20th century to come to terms with the question of maternity (Kristeva or de Beauvoir, for example[5]), especially in terms of the social discourse around maternity and to not fall into the trap of lauding the feminine that comes with it. Today, and always, the topic is rather polemical because there is something in maternity that is essentially contradictory for the construction of a free subjectivity, and because the heaviest pressure for women is constructed around it. In the current climate of biologism, maternity has once again taken a central role within the new avatars of the patriarchy and in certain feminisms. The result is a general blaming, even for the so-called "Grey Wave", of all women who do not fit into the discursive model: the bad mothers, the not mothers, the part-time mothers, those that have doubts, those who do not breastfeed or who resist attachment parenting, etc.

[5] Though de Beauvoir coincides with Kristeva in that "in the future, the mother will cease to exist as the antithesis of the subject and object" (553; translation by AR), she does not see in this collapse a reason for joy but rather a feminist principle inciting women to reject maternity because it destroys feminine subjectivity (Zerilli, 1996: 156).

Turning, then, to the mother-daughter relationship, or as is the case here the daughter-mother relationship, because they are always narrated from the point of view of the daughter, as the most frequent (De la Concha 2004: 16) given that most generations look to even the score with the previous, not the following, generation. We will begin with two simple premises. The first was stated by Adrienne Rich in her famous essay on maternity: "Women are also born of women" (Rich 1996: 46). The second comes from Luisa Muraro in *The Symbolic Order of the Mother*, and is even simpler: "The logical beginning is that I should learn to love my mother" (Muraro 1994: 18). It is not always that easy. In a patriarchal society, learning to love the mother—and the grammatical construction is key here, as it implies a performativity and a will that goes beyond the presumed filial instinct—is a process of interpretation of our identity that allows us to order, and disorder forever, the "symbolic order" (Muraro 1994: 21).

In the case of the daughter-mother relationship, a speculative bond of acceptance or rejection is drawn. The mother is what we will be or what we hope not to be. This is the essential ambiguity: wanting to be her but not wanting to be her, not "turning into your mother" (Rich 1996: 339). The female characters in these novels establish an unequivocal relationship of rejection with their mothers and try to avoid identifying with them.

This rejection occurs to different extents in each novel. In those about the journalist Ana Martí[6], set in Barcelona in the 1950s, Rosa Ribas and Sabine Hofmann present a situation of discreet confrontation that can hardly be called rejection with a "mother who has adapted to the patriarchy and wants a daughter as well adapted as she is" (Sau 1990: 147), an attitude that was quite common at the time the novel is set. The relationship between the detective of the Mossos d'Esquadra Mina Fuster and her mother, the insufferable Maria de Amorebieta i de Landáburu, progresses in the two novels[7] by Margarida Aritzeta, of which she is, to date, the protagonist, toward what could directly be defined as the devastation caused by a mother who has "adapted to the patriarchy who can barely tolerate and even rejects the daughter who seeks to free herself" (Sau 1990: 147). The cases of Rebeca Santana, the junior detective in the

[6] *Don de lenguas* [Gift For Languages] (2013), *El gran frío* [The Great Cold] (2014), *Azul marin*o [Navy Blue] (2016).

[7] *L'amant xinès* [The Chines Lover] (2015) and *Els fils de l'aranya* [The Spider's Webs] (2016).

novels by Susana Hernández[8], and Amaia Salazar, the detective in the regional police force in Dolores Redondo's Báztan trilogy[9], are even more extreme than the first two. Rebeca Santana's mother is a murderer serving time in prison and Amaia Salazar is the daughter of a psychotic murderer and member of a satanic cult. In the face of such "terrible mothers" the daughters' reactions must be constructed far more elaborately.

The patriarchal and the "devouring" mother

In Ribas' and Hofmann's trilogy, set in Barcelona between 1954 and 1958, the protagonist Ana Martí's only possible career is as a journalist. A Spanish woman in the 1950s was prohibited from joining the police or judiciary, such that the only profession she could exercise that would bring her in contact with criminal investigations was journalism, though she generally had to publish her articles under a male pseudonym. This is the case for Ana, who leads a double life through her texts in the imaginary, but realistic, *Mujer Actual* [Contemporary Woman], where she signs her own name, and those texts she publishes under a man's name, or anonymously, for *El Caso* [The Case], for decades the most widely read newspaper featuring police reports in Spain.

Ana Martí wants to be a different kind of woman than the one her time allows her to be: she is interested in culture, social issues, and she is aware of the political happenings of her time because her father, a famous journalist during the Republic, was punished under the Franco regime. Her mother, Patricia Noguer, on the other hand, is a woman fully of her time. As the wife of a victim of reprisal, she has seen how her social status and her daily life have collapsed and she experiences a change in flat and neighbourhood as an unjust exile. This fictional mother, faithful to the exquisite reality with which Ribas and Hofmann have constructed the narrative, could be no other way, nor could her relationship with her daughter be any different. Mrs. Noguer, in her newly reduced circumstances, wants a better future for her daughter, social status like the one she has lost, a status that can only be achieved, in her mind, by marrying well. In 1950s Spanish society, men—fathers or husbands—are the ones who confer social rank on women, just as they give them a name in society: "Patricia Noguer de Martí", through the use of the humiliating

[8] *Curvas Peligrosas* [Dangerous Curves] (2011), *Contra las cuerdas* [Against the Ropes] (2012), *Cuentas pendientes* [Pending Accounts] (2015).
[9] *El guardián invisible* [The Invisible Guardian] (2013), *Legado en los huesos* [Inheritance in the Bones] (2013), *Ofrenda a la tormenta* [Offering to the Storm] (2014).

"de" (in English "of") that makes the dependence in the relationship glaringly obvious. Patricia Noguer wants the best for her daughter, and honestly believes, belonging as she does in all aspects to the patriarchal structure, that the best thing is a respectable husband. She cannot understand why her daughter rejects this future and breaks off her relationship with a "good catch": "For her mother, it was a catastrophe. Her daughter had broken up with a promising lawyer in order to continue, as she called it, her 'fantasy of being a journalist'" (Ribas and Hofmann 2014: 47). As Adrienne Rich stated, "the mother is afraid to appear in the eyes of society as the one responsible, to a certain extent, for the daughter's deviance" (1996: 335). Ana Martí, however, does not entirely reject her mother, even though she cannot accept her world. She separates the feelings she has for her from her inability to accept the model of femininity she represents, choosing instead an alternative model, her cousin Beatriz Noguer, philologist and victim of reprisal. She is the symbolic mother who can do what her biological mother cannot: open doors rather than closing them.

Mina Fuster, the protagonist of Margarida Aritzeta's novels, lives in a very different Spain, but her problems with her mother are even worse than those of Ana Martí. In the two novels published to date, the dislocation of the criminal genre in contemporary Catalonia becomes clear. Barcelona is no longer the only possible location, other minor spaces, urban, semi-rural or touristic in the province of Tarragona become the setting for the adventures of detective Fuster in a strictly contemporary frame. Mina's sphere of action is varied, but her mother, Maria de Amorebieta i de Landáburu, only has one, a luxurious attic apartment that she rarely leaves, in a coastal town in Tarragona. However, even though she occupies such a determined and closed space, Maria de Amorebieta is constantly out of place, as her mildly ironic name suggests. Her surnames, with their rather pretentious air of old nobility, are incongruent with her environment, given that the woman lives alone now that her husband has, in more ways than one, gone to a better place, and her home is not a stately manor house in Navarra but only an apartment on the coast, surrounded by noisy tourists.

Mina's mother is selfish, insufferable, and an old-fashioned snob, for whom others are always "riffraff" or "trash": "What happened to others never mattered to her, she was the centre of the world, and when she whistled, everyone had to come running. One of those mothers that no one would want to put up with" (Aritzeta 2016: 44-45). Mrs. Amorebieta is a dominating and castrating woman for a daughter who came too late, and who was unwanted, and further still, seems determined to ruin all of the

expectations she had placed in her. This woman, whose past holds a secret that might be revealed in the next novel, is constantly wreaking havoc on her daughter's life. All of her behavior and conversation is directed at undermining (perhaps the detective's name is not a coincidence, Mina means "to mine" or "undermine") her self-esteem by questioning each and every element of her life: her work, her friends, her relationships, her clothing, etc. Added to this is Mina's feeling of guilt for not earning her mother's approval regardless of what she does, rather she lives with the bitter feeling that she is "killing her mother with disappointment": "Now you'll tell me that the air can hurt me. If I haven't died from disappointment in you, a little bit of air will hardly do anything!" (Aritzeta 2015: 99).

The relationship between the two women comes to be framed as a "war", born from a profound incomprehension of each other: "For twenty-five years now this deaf battle had been waged. It started one day when she was ten and decided she did not want to go to horse-riding classes, as her mother wanted, nor did she want to play the violin […] I hate you mum, she ended up saying, you have no idea how I hate you. And from then on they had not managed to love each other […]" (Aritzeta 2015: 106). This quotation demonstrates how Mina shows her hatred, a hatred that is more a desire for freedom and an expression of her helplessness arising from not being able to love her mother. This inability to love is solidified by the verbal expression of hate, and creates such a profound breach that the possibility of love is forever prevented. And without love, these two women are but strangers: "For Mina, this woman would always be full of surprises, until the day she dies. And then maybe she would realise that she had never found the way to get close to her, to share anything. They were two strangers. Two strangers that had never known how to love each other, unless always being at each other's throat was a way of loving" (Artizeta 2016: 220). We do not yet know what past secret is hidden by the strange baby picture that Mina finds, but we can imagine the effects of this conflict-filled relationship, of the constant fighting, in Mina's personal life and her predilection for difficult men.

The criminal mother

If Mina Fuster's relationship with her mother is defined by emotional warfare, the relationship that Rebeca Santana has with her mother is clearly matrophobic. Throughout the three novels with Santana as protagonist that Susana Hernández has published to date, the relationship Rebeca has with her mother the murderer, and her mother's presence as a

character, has evolved markedly, and the mother's character has grown to the extent that she fulfills an important role in the third novel.

Rebeca Santana, the character created by Susana Hernández, is a junior detective in the National Police, with a degree in Criminology and Psychology, and is a lesbian in a context that does not favour diversity. This diversity can be seen in Rebeca's social circle, where different paradigms for insertion in heteronormative society can be observed. Rebeca herself has no desire to reproduce the heteropatriarchal paradigm in a lesbian version, and she seems to integrate her homosexuality with no difficulty. However, her delay in telling her colleagues and the answer she gives her friend Vicky who asks her why a non-hegemonic subject like Rebeca would become part of a law enforcement agency with such a long tradition of homophobia, "I don't have to air my private life" (Hernández 2011: 49), indicates that the topic is hardly resolved.

Despite all of this, Rebeca's principal problem is her conflictive relationship with her mother, Puri Garcia—a common and humble name when compared to that of Maria de Amorebieta i de Landáburu—, is serving a sentence in a women's prison in Barcelona for having killed her husband's lover and child with a hunting rifle, earning the title "the birthday murderer" in the tabloids. All of Rebeca's decisions are marked by this matrophobic relationship: she studies psychology (to understand?) and becomes a police officer to compensate through her belonging to "the order" for the "disorder" created by her mother's act: "She did everything she could to be the flip side of the coin, the other side of the mirror; to be, in the system, everything she wasn't. This is why she decided to join the force. To be on the other side. On the good side. Would it be enough?" (Hernández 2011: 84).

The narration of the murder, what Rebeca calls "The Great Tragedy" (Hernández 2015: 111), becomes as important an element in the novel as the book-burning in the Pepe Carvalho series by Vázquez Montalbán. And this story—The History—is told through a different narrative form in each story. In *Curvas peligrosas*, it is told through the insertion of a tabloid television programme that makes the protagonist relive the horror of what happened, and in *Contra las cuerdas* the narrative is written in Susana Hernández's characteristic heterodiegetic voice. In the third novel, *Cuentas pendientes*, "The Great Tragedy" is not just an analepsis from the protagonist's past, because her mother, recently released from the prison, has disappeared and Rebeca must find her. Here, the relationship with her mother becomes a second, autonomous plot in the novel. By becoming its own plot and developing throughout the entire novel, the succinct explanation of what happened years ago is resolved with the narrator

saying: "Puri, the junior detective's mother, condemned for a double-homicide committed twenty-two years earlier" (Hernández 2015: 15).

This "bad mother", who is so obsessed with her husband that she cannot love her daughter, causes more harm than Mrs. Amorebieta, and causes a rejection that leads the protagonist to question her own idea of maternity: "Motherhood is overrated […] All the cows, pigs and ants on the planet have more maternal instinct than my mother. She did not want to have children […] She had me for my father, because he wanted a child. It was a way to keep him, nothing more. I was a bother to her. She had to take care of me, feed me, and what's worse, share my father with me, and she could not stand it" (Hernández 2012: 65). The anguish caused by the maternal detachment becomes, for Rebeca the child, true fear, almost as primal as the fear Amaia Salazar fears from her mother-ogre: "As I child I was afraid, so many times, fear that she would do something to me. Sometimes I would catch her looking at me… and it gave me the chills. I know she thought about it, that she thought about hurting me, in getting rid of me. This feeling haunted me for years" (Hernández 2015: 66).

We could think that it is Rebeca's fear that has constructed this spectre of maternal aggression, but an external voice, that of the widow of the woman Puri killed, corroborates this image of the "bad mother" independent of the fact that she is a killer: "When she scolded Rebeca, she didn't do it in a way that was, what can I call it… normal […] She only really loved him, that simpleton" (Hernández 2015: 165).

Junior inspector Santana refers several times to the desire mentioned earlier by Adrienne Rich to "not be like her", to deny the trace of her mother in her own body, a desire to extirpate this trace to such an extent that it becomes terribly literal when she decides to use sulfuric acid to erase the features she sees in the mirror that belong to her mother: "I wanted to erase her face from my mirror. I wanted to do so at any price. Seeing her face in my own, looking so much like her, drove me crazy" (Hernández 2012: 66).

In absolutely negating her mother, all the positive elements connoted by maternity—a mother's smile, physical contact—are transformed into something negative, strange, or useless. "Her mother's smile was as strange to her as the customs of the Amazon tribes. She didn't know how to handle that smile so that it didn't hurt her" (Hernández 2012: 120-121).

Throughout the three novels, however, the daughter-mother relationship evolves. In the first novel, the absolute hate is violently verbalized: "I wish for you, mum, all the suffering in the world. I hope you die alone, like the dog you are" (Hernández 2011: 81), with a force that is increased by the contrast between the affectionate 'mum' and the brutality

of the rest of the sentence. In the third, the ferocious hate is transformed to the point where she recognizes its uselessness, to the point where she finds that her hate for her mother is the dead weight keeping her from moving forward: "No. I don't hate her. Not any more. […] I'm so tired. I don't want to waste any more energy on hating her" (Hernández 2015: 248).

The monstrous mother

If the potential for the mother to exert physical violence on her daughter is a possibility that never materialises in Susana Hernández's novels, in the case of Amaia Salazar, the character created by Dolores Redondo, the act is not just carried out, but is only the beginning of something even more terrible: that a child must accept that her mother wants to kill her. Salazar remembers how: "When I was nine, my mother hit me on over the head with a steel rolling pin; when I was lying unconscious on the floor, she hit me again, and then she buried me in the kneading trough and emptied two 50-kilogram sacks of flour over my body … that's why I lived the rest of my childhood with my aunt" (Redondo 2013: 348).

This cold account of the facts that Amaia tells her husband many years later, without apparent emotion, without adjectives, without assessment, without crying, indicates the depth of her *vulnus*, of the pain that can only be narrated superficially because the words to express its essence cannot be found. In Amaia Salazar's case, there is no possible ambiguity: she must avoid becoming like her mother, she cannot be, for her son that everyone thought would be a girl, who has broken the female continuum in the family, the monster that her mother was for her. A mother that forced her to accept the unacceptable, that her mother was not nutrition, protection, or love, but death: "You don't love me, she whispered. And she knew she had to run, because it was the night of her death" (Redondo 2013: 34).

The *crescendo* of Rosario's violence toward her daughter passes through four well-differentiated phases. In the first, the mother rejects the daughter and allows no physical contact, not even being near her child. When the mother and father dance with their two older daughters, the third, the one who is excluded, "Knew that if she got up and joined the group, the dance would stop the second she even brushed against her mother" (Redondo 2013: 79). In the second phase there is a small physical violation that carries an important cultural weight: the mother cuts off her daughter's hair as a punishment. This symbolic mutilation, the destruction of her femininity (which is also an important motif in Carmen Laforet's 1945 novel *Nada*) is especially painful for Amaia: "The day after her

communion, her mother made her sit on the bench in the kitchen, braided her hair and cut it off" (Redondo 2013: 122). The third phase is the aforementioned attempt to kill her daughter, the violence converted into a brutal aggression with the intent to kill: "Crazed with fear, she turned her face toward her mother in time to see the coming blow from the steel rolling pin that her father used to roll out the pastry" (Redondo 2013: 227). Finally, the process culminates in a fourth moment, when she accepts that her mother is a monster. This phase is produced after the murder attempt and before the child is definitively separated from the mother, when this is turned into not a potential attempt but a living nightmare: "Her mother came to the door of the living room and she could finally see her face. This was enough […] and she knew that she would lose control of her bladder […]" (Redondo 2013: 243). The same mother-ogre that many years earlier, apparently weakened and interned in a mental clinic, can still terrify her daughter the police officer by whispering: "I won't eat you now, but I would if I could get up" (Redondo 2013: 285).

Being the object of a mother's hate is shown as monstrous in Dolores Redondo's trilogy, especially in the first novel, where the bases are set, with elements taken from fairy tales that construct Rosario as an "ogress", the witch who eats the children in Hansel and Gretel or the *Baba Yaga* of Slavic lore. The debt to this tradition is explicitly expressed in the first volume, when Amaia sees the cadaver of a young woman that has been strewn with flowers and exclaims: "It's Snow White" (Redondo 2013: 238). The whole trilogy is based on this premise, and owes much to Basque ethnology, and acquires another traceable element: the reworking of the very themes of children's literature.

The mother-ogre owns a bakery, Mantecadas Salazar, that acts as Amaia's centre of attention, much like the witch's gingerbread house in Hansel and Gretel, and like those children, attracted by the sweets, finds pain within the flour and sugar, through the pastry tool turned into a weapon of aggression: the steel rolling pin. What can produce pleasure can also cause death. Furthermore, the dichotomy between Rosario, the mother, and Engrasi, the aunt, reproduces the characters of the step-mother and the fairy godmother, with the additional problem that Rosario is actually a mother, not a trope like the step-mother from the stories. The three Salazar sisters also fit with the three-part structure of children's stories analysed by Vladimir Propp. Flora, Rosaura, and Amaia—the strong, the weak, and the interrogator—reproduce the essential structure of popular literature, from folk tales to King Lear. Flora is a duplicate of the mother, Rosaura inherits the sweetness and weakness of the father, and Amaia, who wants to flee, ends up returning to the scene of the horror to

start a criminal investigation that is also an interrogation that leads her to discover why her mother hates her. Finally, the resolution of the police case, which forms part of the paradigm of the genre, coincides here with an essential structural element in the construction of popular stories: the death of the villain and the restoration of good. As Bettelheim asserts: "The child feels like the world functions perfectly and can only feel secure if they know that the villains are always punished" (Bettelheim 1979: 209).

Conclusion

As we have seen, the power of fairy tales, and their ancestral themes and motifs, even serve today as a means of articulating contemporary texts, like a trilogy of crime novels that are only apparently different, serving as a means of creating the framework of images that allow for the description of the oldest of fears: that our mother does not love us and that she will hurt us.

Through these 21st century Spanish novels, we can see four different representations of matrophobic relationships, at different levels and severity: two situations of maternal hostility, a relationship in which the daughter unequivocally rejects her mother, and the impossible relationship with a monstrous and insane mother. But the four, Ana, Mina, Rebeca, and Amaia, cannot ignore this bond that causes them such pain, because even though it harms and hinders their lives, it is the primary and essential bond with which every woman must come to terms throughout her life. For this reason, studying this bond in popular literature like crime novels allows us to analyse the stubborn persistence of its power.

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IT ALL STAYS IN THE FAMILY: THE REVIVAL OF DOMESTIC NOIR IN 21ST CENTURY CRIME FICTION

KATARZYNA PASZKIEWICZ

Abstract: This chapter explores the current revival of domestic noir, in particular, its distinctive dramatization of the problems and contradictions of the contemporary family. While vastly popular and visible in the mainstream press, the genre has yet to receive sustained scholarly attention. In critical discourses that circulate around novels labelled as domestic noir—most of which are authored by women—the genre has been trivialized because of its focus on "feminine" private preoccupations, such as relationships, family life and motherhood. In contradistinction to this critical derision, I call for a reappraisal of domestic crime fiction, in which a number of contemporary writers have pursued observant cultural commentary on the gendered inequities of family life. The proposed reading of *The Girl on the Train* (2015) by British author Paula Hawkins in the second part of this chapter will show the domestic noir genre to be unexpectedly well placed to critique contemporary gender roles and lingering social inequalities in the domains of work, motherhood, finance and domestic responsibilities.

In their recently published collection on neoliberalism and the collapse of a progressive politics of the family, Roberta Garrett, Tracey Jensen and Angie Voela aptly remind us that "the family, as we know, has only ever succeeded through a gendered and generational exercise of power under which some members flourish and others are exploited" (2016, viii). Under neoliberalism, they add, "the complex machinations of the nuclear family fantasy—a problematic space which relies on the exercise of such gendered and generational power, but also a space where political claims to a generous, stable, secure family wage can be made—have […] started

to fray" (2016, viii).[1] The editors build here on Lauren Berlant's influential work, *Cruel Optimism* (2011), in which she famously dubs our historical present "crisis ordinariness." Berlant considers crisis not as an exceptional state, sited in trauma, but as "process embedded in the ordinary that unfolds in stories about navigating what's overwhelming" (2011, 10). Despite deteriorating social, economic, and environmental conditions in Western societies, she argues, people still seem to remain attached to fantasies of the "good life," no matter how injurious or cruel these fantasies might be. The scholar turns to aesthetic as a way of apprehending and adjusting to the current pressures in our lives: it allows us "to rehabituate our sensorium by taking in new material" and "provides metrics for understanding how we pace and space our encounters with things" (2011, 12). In reference to this issue, Berlant suggests that some "genres," understood broadly as affectively-invested zones of expectations about the narrative shape a situation might take, are no longer sustainable in the present and that new aesthetic forms are emerging: alternative genres that allow us to experience and recognize modes of living not rooted in normative good life fantasies (2011, 12). If, as several commentators have argued, "the dream of neoliberalism […] enables new kinds of fantasies, anxieties and defenses" (Garrett et al. 2016, x), how do these manifest in different spheres and practices of mediation, for example in popular culture? What are the new aesthetic forms that are taking hold in the present and how do they depict, manufacture, regulate or undermine the nuclear family fantasy?

Crime fiction, in particular its recently revived variant, domestic noir, has an important role in articulating these tensions. In scrutinizing the middle-class home—which, "despite its symbolic importance as locus of comfort and identity, is a difficult and anxiety-inducing location, hiding the passions and vices of its outwardly respectable inhabitants from public view" (Cain 2016, 289) —it speaks volumes about the ways in which domestic life serves as a crucial site for the exercise of biopolitical power, elucidated by Foucault in *The Birth of Biopolitics*. Arguably, it also opens up spaces for resistance, not simply as a way of adjusting to the present, but also as a series of potentialities that open up new sensibilities.

This chapter explores the current upsurge in domestic noir, in particular, its distinctive dramatization of the problems and contradictions

[1] Following these authors, I understand neoliberalism as a form of biopolitical engineering, in Foucauldian terms: "an aggregation of ideas, a discursive formation, governmental programmes, and over-reaching ideology, a hegemonic project, an assemblage of techniques and technologies for the formation of subjects" (2016, x).

of the contemporary family. While vastly popular and visible in the mainstream press, the genre has yet to receive sustained scholarly attention. In critical discourses that circulate around novels labelled as domestic noir—most of which are authored by women[2]—the genre has been trivialized because of its focus on "feminine" private preoccupations, such as relationships, family life and motherhood. In contradistinction to this critical derision, then, I call for a reappraisal of domestic crime fiction, in which a number of contemporary writers have pursued observant cultural commentary on the gendered inequities of family life, despite its reputation for banality.

In order to address the multifarious phenomenon of domestic noir in contemporary Western culture, I will adopt the critical traditions of Cultural Studies to underline the delimiting ideological ramifications effected by discourses surrounding this genre. I scrutinize the US/UK media reception of a set of novels promoted as domestic noir, while also drawing on textual analysis. The proposed reading of *The Girl on the Train* (2015) by British author Paula Hawkins in the second section of this chapter will show the domestic noir genre to be unexpectedly well placed to critique contemporary gender roles and lingering social inequalities in the domains of work, motherhood, finance and domestic responsibilities.

Domestic or Chic(k)?

Even though "domestic noir" as a genre label was used earlier in discussion of film noir popularized in the 1940s, more recently the term has been employed to describe a literary phenomenon which emerged after the publication of Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl* (2012), a suspenseful tale of a dysfunctional marriage in which the husband is (apparently) implicated in the disappearance of his wife. Both the book and its film adaptation, directed by David Fincher in 2014, were met with commercial success and critical acclaim, and gave rise to the widespread circulation of the label "domestic noir" in the mainstream press. What domestic noir novels seem to have in common,[3] as noted by a number of journalists who have

[2] There are several male writers, too, for example S.J. Watson and his novel *Before I Go to Sleep* (2011), adapted to cinema by Rowan Joffé (2014).

[3] Writing for *The Guardian* Jon Stock (2014) identifies five novels as "chick noir," another term for domestic noir: *Gone Girl*, A.S.A. Harrison's *The Silent Wife* (2013), Natalie Young's *Season to Taste* (2014), Lucie Whitehouse's *Before We Met* (2014) and Jean Hanff Korelitz's *You Should Have Known* (2014). All of these examples were published between 2012 and 2014 and were written by British or American authors. Other frequently quoted titles include *The Girl on the Train* and