

The Female as Battleground: Carmen de Burgos's *Quiero vivir mi vida*

Shirley Mangini

In Carmen de Burgos's last novel, *Quiero vivir mi vida*, the author appears to shape the book conforming to the ideas of endocrinologist and writer Gregorio Marañón on the subject of intersexuality.¹ Yet Burgos's interpretation of the misogynistic Marañón is suspect. The protagonist, Isabel, is a young, married woman who resents her husband because she would prefer to have the freedom that men have. She becomes obsessed with her plight and her body becomes the battleground for her confused identity. When her illness, intersexuality, is diagnosed by a Marañónian-like doctor, the catastrophes predicted are cloaked in the gloom and doom of a gothic novel. Isabel oscillates between promiscuity and religious fanaticism until she finally murders her husband in order to "steal his soul." By turning the beautiful Isabel into a monstrous criminal, rather than proving Marañón's theories on the dangers of intersexuality, Burgos turns patriarchal discourse on its head and reveals the misogynistic plot against women.

In recent years, various critics have speculated on the intentions of Carmen de Burgos (*Colombine*) in writing her last novel, the disconcerting *Quiero vivir mi vida* (1931). The protagonist, Isabel, is a restless and neurotic woman who blames her unhappiness on her marriage and who wishes she could be a man; that is to say, she longs for the freedom and privilege of men, "to live HER life."¹ As critics have pointed out, Isabel's "disease" is closely based on the theories of endocrinologist Gregorio Marañón—the book is dedicated to him and he wrote the prologue—on the subject of what he called "intersexuality."² In the novel, after years of behavior ranging from frivolousness and promiscuity, to melodramatic angst and religious obsession, this *Burgosian* incarnation of a gothic anti-heroine finally murders her husband.

The thorny question regarding *Colombine*'s motivation in writing this novel has been addressed by several critics. Why would the author—who had spent her thirty-odd years in Madrid advocating and writing about women's rights—frame her last novel around the ideas of a scientist who believed that a woman's only role in life was

procreation?³ The issue is complex and multifaceted. In the first place, Marañón's theories on intersexuality were not apparently misogynistic. As he describes them in *Los estados intersexuales en la especie humana* (1929), they were based on research on the primary and secondary physical and behavioral characteristics that some women and men possessed that were "inappropriate" to their sex, the most extreme case being *hermafroditismo*, and the least, *androgynismo*, such as hirsute women and men with high-pitched voices.⁴ *Colombine* no doubt found Marañón's ideas fascinating, since she had shown an interest in gender-bending characters in earlier novels, such as *El veneno del arte* (1910). Burgos obviously admired Marañón; he was the first Spaniard to enter the field of endocrinology and he was internationally well known. Thomas Glick argues that, in spite of his conservative, biologically deterministic theories on women, he had curiously defended many of the causes feminists such as Burgos defended: legal equality of men and women, female suffrage, and divorce. Marañón had also been responsible for opening the floodgates on taboo sexual issues and had spoken out in defense of prenatal care for women (Glick 77-80). It must be especially emphasized that theirs was a mutual admiration society. Marañón had praised *Colombine* for her ground-breaking book, *La mujer moderna y sus derechos*,⁵ and also extols her virtues in his preface to *Quiero vivir mi vida*: "Lo que quería, sobre todo, era rendir un homenaje de admiración a la vida de esta noble luchadora, que no ha conocido una batalla sin una batalla; y en todas se ha puesto invariablemente del lado de la dignidad de la mujer y de la justicia y la libertad de las mujeres y de los hombres" (13).

As many scholars have pointed out, World War I had brought the issue of gender to the foreground when men went to the trenches and women left the home to replace them in the workplace. Women were empowered during the Great War and the fact that they were now visible in the public sector would provoke a backlash that was championed by the patriarchy. When the war ended and the soldiers returned—many physically or mentally debilitated—women were expected to retreat to the home to repopulate their countries and resume their subaltern roles. As I have discussed in the past, even though Spain was not at war, the fear that gripped patriarchy to the north also left its mark on Spain. The so-called "new woman," or even worse, the "feminist," was debated, often vilified, in newspaper articles, lectures, scientific and non-scientific treatises.⁶ In *Quiero vivir mi vida*, I venture that Burgos—in spite of her *Marañonian*

plot—uses themes from a series of texts on female inferiority to expose their fallacies, while also denouncing, as Establier Pérez points out, the censurable behavior of men. Burgos reassembles the patriarchal discourse in vogue into an equivocal, contestatory novel—full of elements that parody the gothic genre—laying bare the fallacies and pseudo-science of the misogynistic enterprise by utilizing Isabel as a "battleground" for patriarchal warfare.

Marañón, under the guise of improving conditions of childbirth, had the opportunity to "prove" the biological and social—if not emotional and psychological—inferiority of women. Their biological difference, in contrast to the energetic and superior male glandular system, rendered women static: "La mujer está hecha para el ahorro de la energía, para concentrarla en sí, no para dispersarla en torno; como que en su seno se ha de formar el hijo que prolongue su vida, y de su seno ha de brotar el alimento de los primeros tiempos del nuevo ser" (*Biología* 10). His equally prestigious partner in "misogyny," the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, was also influential in proving, through biological determinism, the inferiority of women:

En el mismo instante en que vemos una mujer nos parece tener delante un ser cuya humanidad íntima se caracteriza, en contraste con la nuestra varonil y la de los otros varones, por ser esencialmente confusa . . . pero no tiene sentido desear que la mujer deje de ser "sustancialmente" confusa. Equivaldría a aniquilar la delicia que para el varón es la mujer gracias a su ser confuso. . . . En la presencia de la Mujer presentimos los varones inmediatamente una criatura que, sobre el nivel perteneciente a la humanidad, es de un rango vital algo inferior al nuestro. No existe ningún otro ser que posea esta doble contradicción: ser humano y serlo menos que el varón. En esa dualidad estriba la sin par delicia que es para el hombre masculino la mujer. (167-68)

Sexual reform was a hotly debated issue at this time and inextricably related to the "female question," or "feminist problem," as Marañón called it. The proponents of sexual reform—whose goal was supposedly the improvement of sexual relations in marriage in order to keep men from adultery—were strongly influenced by Freud. They fixated on women's bodies—most especially their libido and orgasm—rather than their civil rights. The patriarchal discussion never acknowledged the fact that binary rules about gender were responsible for the slow progress of women's development, but rather

concentrated on the "congenital" mental, physiological, and emotional weakness of their lot. While women like Burgos fought to bring the dialogue on the urgent need for women's education and civil rights to the foreground, patriarchal chatter about sexual reform and maternity kept the dialogue in the murky terrain of the feminine mystique; the patriarchy wanted to politicize the female body in order to conquer it, not to educate women or to advance their innate rights. As *Colombine* had remarked in *La mujer moderna*, "Aunque la vida humana esté influida por el sexo, aunque exista un *acento sexual*, como dice Marañón, es absurdo forjar con esto un nuevo eslabón de la cadena femenina. Es monstruoso dar al sexo esa importancia que le concede Freud para que se infiltre en todo y todo lo subordine" (34). In spite of Burgos's respect for the endocrinologist, there is no doubt that she could not accept the majority of Marañón's ideas on women. His theories were based on an inherent contradiction: women were equal, yet different: "Nadie puede sostener hoy día que la esencia de la masculinidad sea superior a la de la feminidad. Son simplemente distintas; y su excelencia depende, justamente, de su distinción, que debe llevarse hasta su máxima" (*La Educación Sexual* 14). And as Glick points out, Marañón consistently confused "biology with culture" (Glick 78); after all, the "máxima" for women was reproduction.

Of special interest is Marañón's misinterpretation of, or resistance to, the subtext of *Quiero vivir mi vida*; while he identifies Isabel, the protagonist, as an intersexual woman, he believed that her unraveling was fueled by jealousy of another woman, her husband's lover, Matilde. As we shall see, *Colombine's* objective could not be more different. Also Marañón sympathizes with the "poor" husband, Julio, whom the endocrinologist considers to be the object of the central "tragedy" in the book because he endures Isabel's mercurial behavior. Marañón remarks in the prologue of *Quiero vivir mi vida*: "He aquí la tragedia. Porque su marido, que es marido y amante, es, entretanto, siempre el mismo. Por ser hombre está menos sujeto a la desconcertante evolución interior" (10). It is curious that Marañón—because of his condemnation of male adultery in his writing—does not refer to Julio's infidelity, ignoring the fact that his seduction of Matilde is vulgar in its predictability: first, he hires her to work in his bank, after confirming that she is vulnerable and alone; then he seduces her with gifts and attention and, finally, rents a "love nest" for their trysts. Julio, most importantly, shows complete indifference about the precarious social situation of his girlfriend as an unmarried

mother and an outcast, and about the plight of his "bastard" son. The narrator tells us that as Julio leaves Matilde's after his usual matinee at the apartment, "Salí de allí feliz y satisfecho, con inconsciencia de la situación que había creado a aquel hijo y aquella pobre mujer, que ocupaban en su vida un lugar tan secundario. Consideraba aquello como un paréntesis en su vida y luego ésta volvía a su verdadero cauce. Tornaba al lado de Isabel siempre enamorado y sin dar importancia a lo que no consideraba más que como un accidente de su vida, que en nada perjudicaba al cariño de su mujer" (197-98). Marañón appears to be completely oblivious to Burgos's intention to demonstrate Julio's narcissism. While it is possible that he read the novel hastily, it is more likely that his biologically deterministic notions about gender roles blinded him to the obvious social problems presented in the novel.

In *Los estados intersexuales* Marañón includes a chart called "Caracteres sexuales," which describes men and women's "anatomical" differences accurately; yet when he gets to "functional" (behavioral) differences, he begins to ascribe his own misogynistic theories to differentiate the sexes. For example, according to Marañón, men have a much stronger libido and an innate need for orgasm, while women do not; therefore, chastity is not an "organic tragedy" for them (46-47). But he truly crosses the line when he talks about men as non-emotional, with "músculos enérgicos, nervios estables y resistentes y cerebro razonador" (56); men are therefore abstract and creative, which history has proven: "Con la excepción de algunas mujeres citadas constantemente, por cuya misma escasez define su excepcionalidad, puede afirmarse que la reacción del pensamiento humano y todo el tinglado técnico de la civilización es obra de hombres" (58).

In an article from 2002, I suggest that Burgos could have very well also mined other sources for *Quiero vivir mi vida*. One of those is Edmundo González Blanco's essay entitled *La mujer según los diferentes aspectos de su espiritualidad*, published in 1930.⁷ His book was inspired by Marañón's and Ortega y Gasset's misogynistic ideas, but especially by the ideas of Roberto Nóvoa Santos, a pathologist and a dyed-in-the-wool misogynist whose theories were partially based on Marañón's ideas on intersexuality. Also influenced by Freud and Darwin's ideas on women, Nóvoa claimed in his book *La mujer, nuestro sexto sentido y otros esbozos* that "la mujer adulta se comporta como un sér infantilizado" (32) and that she possesses a "psique histeroide" (33). The female, according to Nóvoa, was,

essentially, a "frustrated male" (Glick 82).⁸ Although Marañón was a more subtle writer who tried to deemphasize the sensationalistic aspects of his ideas on intersexuality—a fact undermined, nevertheless, by the crude photographs in *Los estados intersexuales*—some of his followers had no qualms about representing modern women as aberrant, fearsome creatures.

González Blanco had no medical background, but was rather a journalist who wrote essays on a wide variety of topics and embraced Nóvoa Santos's "scientific" misogyny. True to his profession, the writer deployed various yellow-press tactics to persuade his readers. Using age-old sexist and racist phrenology theories, González Blanco assures his public that women's brains are like those of the simian species. For him, women are inferior in every way, but he does concede that there are exceptions. Nevertheless, those cases are, as Marañón and Nóvoa had insisted, intersexual. While the researchers express this "fact" with scientific jargon, González Blanco translates their theories for the common man: "Y si hay mujeres que, por la amplitud de su mente, se han hecho dignas de todas las libertades morales e intelectuales, esto confirma mi razonamiento. Eran hombres. Dánse errores en la naturaleza, y algunas veces los sexos están mal distribuidos" (275). Embedded in González Blanco's text lies a key phrase that seems to me to be a point of departure for the plot of *Quiero vivir mi vida*: "con las mujeres todo lo que no es útil es peligroso. No hay término medio. El librepensamiento conduciría a la mujer en línea recta a la licencia en las costumbres y al vicio. La libertad es un peso muy grande para ella" (299).⁹ In subsequent pages of his text, González Blanco outlines the misogynistic ideas of Moebius from his book, *Inferioridad de la mujer*, which Burgos had translated and for which she had written a prologue in 1903. González Blanco recognizes *Colombine's* impartiality in the text; yet he uses Burgos to launch an attack on feminist women writers, which could have also, unwittingly, incited her to conjure up the anti-heroine Isabel. He laments the fact that "Hoy, que la producción de novelas . . . es casi exclusivamente trabajo femenino, los autores del sexo débil reproducen también el retrato ideal de la mujer imaginado por el hombre, sencillamente porque las mujeres autoras son incapaces de elevarse por encima de la tradición, y de pensar de una manera original" (319). González Blanco also reflects Ortega's idea that women lack originality when he discusses their "aesthetics": "Las mujeres no aman ningún arte, ni tienen el sentimiento de la poesía, ni la inteligencia de la música. En

ellas, el ejercicio de un talento es un puro acto de imitación, un pretexto, una afectación explotada por sus deseos de gustar, pues son incapaces de desinterés" (377). He also laments all the trappings of the modern woman that feminism has "caused": short hair, revealing clothing that is "decadente y perturbador" (369). The author becomes very agitated when he describes the styles that leave women "almost nude"; in a prose style reminiscent of *modernismo*, he explains: "Triste desvarío el de esas doncellas vigorosas, esbeltas, gráciles y voluptuosas, que sacrifican estérilmente a una moda absurda y enferma el deleitable misterio de sus eburneas formas y la solidez rosada de sus tentadores descotes, hurtándonos, en cambio, la contemplación de su hermosa cabellera, atributo femenino el más característico y seductor" (370). Reflecting Marañón's constant use of scientific *ismos*, González Blanco states that the use of modern clothing is an "aberration" and assures us that it was worn by "tipos patológicos de *transvertismo* y de *androgynismo*" (375).¹⁰

We know from *Quiero vivir mi vida* that Burgos read Marañón attentively; she uses his vocabulary and even some of his case studies, as we shall see. Clearly she was widely read in the "field of misogyny," as can be observed in her rebuttals to a plethora of male writers in *La mujer moderna*. Her shocking melodrama of the "monstrous" and "idle" Isabel ravaged by an "intersexual" illness is not, therefore, so surprising after all. Burgos's subtext reveals how the female body became a "war zone" that was analyzed as an object so that "it" could be understood, and therefore controlled. Through Isabel's husband Julio and especially, through his doctor friend, Alfredo—a character representing Marañón—one can see the pattern of how the female body was "vivisected" and "dismembered" and the mind analyzed and "lobotomized" by these early twentieth-century writers and scientists.

As critics have pointed out, Isabel—who grew up in the countryside—was raised as a tomboy by her father, who was convinced that "aquella educación varonil era la más a propósito para hacerle vivir" (23-24).¹¹ Burgos reveals that Isabel's education induced a spirit of independence in her—as visible in her constant battle cry "Quiero vivir mi vida"—that was in direct conflict with societal mores that dictated women's lives.¹² Burgos highlights the blatant differences between the lives of men and women of, specifically, the upper-middle class¹³—as well as how Isabel deviates from the life prescribed for women of her status at that time. Isabel is, indeed, talked into marriage because she herself seems to want to fend

off the disasters that would inexorably result from her desire to live differently. She is, after all, a member of the upper-middle class, who viewed things and people as commodities. Marriage was an economic contract with strict clauses: very simply, a man of means was to marry a woman of beauty—preferably without any daunting intellectual attributes—whose virginity was intact. Julio and Isabel fit the bill very nicely: a prosperous banker marries a beautiful young woman who has no education to speak of, except that learned in the drawing room. Yet, Isabel, from the beginning of the book, exhibits a deep sense of malaise about her "luck." She sorely misses her virginity because it was her "intimate secret" (20), the one thing that she owned. Julio, in contrast, misses the promiscuity of his days as a bachelor (29).

At this point, Isabel's body becomes a battleground for her confused identity. As a consumer who has purchased Isabel's virginity, Julio becomes the enemy. The narrator tells us that Isabel "Experimentaba la sensación de que su matrimonio, en vez de representar ese triunfo social de la mujer que toma categoría en la vida, la inferiorizaba" (20). Isabel feels sullied. Stripped of the power and mystique that the intact hymen held for patriarchy—it was a symbol of independence for Isabel—she feels empty and angry.¹⁴ When she sees a very "modern," bejeweled woman sitting alone, drinking alcohol and smoking—whom Julio eyes with interest—she is jealous of the woman's freedom. Her marriage and the subsequent loss of her virginity also present her with a fearsome possibility, that of getting pregnant; Isabel views the process of reproduction with physical repulsion, but also with furor over the fact that maternity is an unassailable requirement for women. In one of her more melodramatic moments, Isabel vociferates Burgos's ideas about the tragedy of women who feel obliged to be "cadañeras," epitomized by Rosita, Isabel's sister, who feels that her exclusive role in life is to reproduce. Berta, Rosita's sister-in-law, supports Isabel's position: "—Es que la mayoría de las gentes—dijo—no piensan la responsabilidad en que incurren al traer un ser al mundo" (37). Rosita's husband defends Marañón's precept that: "Precisamente vuestra importancia en el mundo es la maternidad" (37). Isabel intervenes, condemning the patriarchal pact: "—Pues yo no deseo tener hijos—declaró con violencia—. Fisiológicamente la maternidad me parece una porquería. Se engaña a las pobres mujeres cantando alabanzas a la madre, para que no se nieguen a dar a luz y no falten ángeles para el cielo y soldados para la guerra" (37). In response to

this subversive statement, Isabel's mother exclaims in horror: "—¡No repitas eso donde te oigan!—" (37).

Isabel becomes progressively more obsessed and suffers, in true gothic fashion, constant hysterical episodes and her chimerical behavior takes a physiological toll on her. Isabel herself wages the battle against her plight as a female through her mysterious maladies. Yet Burgos's subtext especially reveals her denunciation of patriarchy's appropriation of the female body and mind through the dialogue between Julio and Alfredo. Julio approaches his doctor friend and begs him to observe Isabel. The doctor had harbored negative feelings about Isabel since her wedding because he found her to have "un temperamento complicado y peligroso para la felicidad de Julio" (55) and he is not anxious to be around her.¹⁵ Though Alfredo was obviously jealous of Isabel because she has taken away his best friend, his condemnation of her is attributed to her dysfunctionality: "Yo la he creído siempre una hipertiroidea de temperamento complicado" (79-80).¹⁶ He reluctantly agrees to see her and describes how he will dissect her brain before going on to her body: "Deseo auscultar primero su espíritu. Hay enfermedades que se agarran al hígado espiritual o al cerebro del espíritu y luego se extienden a los órganos del cuerpo físico . . . Sin el conocimiento del doble que existe en cada persona, yo no soy capaz de diagnosticar" (80). Surprisingly, Julio responds to this Unamunesque observation with great trepidation: "—Te confieso que tengo cierto miedo a tus teorías" (80). Although not accompanied by clanking chains and the requisite dark and stormy night, the suggestion of mysterious forces and air of gloom and doom create a gothic atmosphere.

Alfredo is an equivocal character throughout the book. Although his statements are always very serious and scientific-like, he often appears to be the object of criticism or ridicule. For instance, as a spokesman for Marañón, Alfredo is an idealist on the theme of marriage (Gómez-Santos 44). His solution for a solid marriage seems to parody a medical intervention: "Pero yo no me casaré si no llego a encontrar un suero fabricado con sangre de los dos cónyuges que haga consistir la ceremonia nupcial en ponerles una inyección, con la cual se aseguren el amor y la fidelidad, a fin de que el lazo sea verdaderamente indisoluble" (54). Burgos reveals the irony of Alfredo's idealism and caution about women when he says: "Lo único que deseo . . . es tener la llave de mi espíritu y no dejar que me influya la opinión ajena" (54). The narrator comments on this statement: "Fiel a esta aspiración vivía encerrado con la vieja gobernanta que

había heredado de su madre" (54). There is no ideal marriage and Alfredo is destined for *solteronismo*, if we can coin another *ismo*. When Alfredo expounds on his theories on the importance of women's fashions with Isabel, she questions his ideas by remarking "Hace usted unas asociaciones de ideas muy extrañas" (88). Burgos also suggests that Alfredo's ideas are not particularly sound when she has Isabel's sister Rosa comment on the "disparates de Alfredo" (89). In addition, when Alfredo speaks, the content and tone of his diatribes are unmistakably pedantic.

Alfredo also seems to be a contradictory force in the novel when he appears to vindicate intersexual women. Astutely, Burgos tucks in at the end of the novel her pitch for assertive, independent women who contribute to society. In fact, Alfredo seems to be describing someone much like Burgos:

Casi todas las mujeres maduras tienen también mayor libertad en sus actos y a veces sólo en sus palabras. Se desarrolla en ellas mayor interés por las funciones propias de la naturaleza masculina: les interesa más la vida pública, la sociología, la política, el feminismo. Es curioso que cuanto más triunfa en ellas el varón son más feministas. (227)

Alfredo also states that women have "un mayor desarrollo de las ideas de justicia" (227). He goes on: "Esas tareas de propaganda social las compensan. Siempre ha habido una válvula abierta a sus actividades. En nuestras abuelas era el misticismo, en nuestras madres la filantropía, ahora la propaganda social de un lado y los deportes de otro; pero todo se suma y se condensa en una palabra: Ocupación y libertad" (227). Therefore, it seems Alfredo's role in the novel is twofold: he serves as a voice for demonstrating *Colombine's* resistance against the misogynist campaign that Maraño and his cronies had launched, as well as a voice for that campaign.

Isabel occasionally uses her body as a way to prove her difference; for instance, she cuts her hair in the *garçonne* style to look like a boy (50). But mostly she uses her body as a siren would. Isabel has learned from other women how to captivate her husband's attention so that she can manipulate him; she also uses her body to attract and entice other men, so that she can later repudiate them. At one point, she fixates on wearing clothes that will maximize her cleavage, which in some passages becomes a synecdoche. Isabel is her cleavage; her breasts seem to take the place of her entire body. As González Blanco had prescribed, Isabel is "la solidez rosada de sus

tentadores descotes" (370). With this "bait," she mesmerizes an innocent and awkward youth from the provinces, Enrique, who falls hopelessly in love with her; when she rejects him after a brief affair, he commits suicide.¹⁷ Burgos is undoubtedly denouncing the way women have been groomed to utilize their bodies for social and economic commerce. Ironically, Maraño considered this habit to be the female's main source of empowerment: "Pero no olvidemos que, por encima de todas las aspiraciones del feminismo quedará siempre en manos de la mujer el más legítimo de sus resortes de dominación, el encanto sexual, con el que no se gobierna el mundo, pero sí a los hombres que le [sic] dirigen" (*Biología y feminismo* 46).

As Isabel ages, she is even more convincing as the "poster" woman for Maraño's theories. *Colombine's* use of melodrama intensifies as she describes her protagonist at age forty; Isabel's skin darkens, her Adam's apple becomes prominent and she begins growing whiskers (217).¹⁸ She also becomes more despotic and violent. Maraño explains how females evolve during their *climaterio*, or change of life: "Y entonces surge el otro sexo, el vencido, singularmente en la mujer, que en esos días tumultuosos adquiere un matiz virloide, ya de un modo violento, ya con detalles apenas perceptibles: son los años en que la matrona se hace gruesa, enérgica de carácter, y ve surgir quizá un vello inicial o pronunciado en la cara y en el tronco" (*Tres ensayos* 175). Between her bouts of promiscuity and religious fanaticism, Isabel contemplates suicide, but is unable to carry out the act; yet toward the end of the novel, she manages once more to make her body the site of her crisis and becomes ill and lies unconscious for two weeks. Isabel cannot divorce Julio because it is against the law.¹⁹ Yet she seems to find a solution to her dilemma when she decides to become a nun.²⁰

Underlying all this is an essential fact: What would a woman without education or talent do if she left her husband? She could not divorce and marry another, a highly unusual prospect anyway, since she would not appeal to men because she is no longer nubile. Ostracized from society and without any skills to earn a living, a nunnery or suicide appear to be the only options. But Burgos defies tradition and subverts the boundaries of good novelistic taste; she permits Isabel to murder her husband, thereby confirming the Freudian "penis envy" theory: "¡Aborrezco a los hombres... los desprecio... y quiero ser hombre también!..." (248). *Colombine* ends the book in an even more transgressive fashion by turning Isabel into a female Dracula of sorts: "Pero la idea fija, que predominaba en el

Notes

¹ In my opinion, Burgos's objective is not to suggest that Isabel is a lesbian; at least the character never displays any bisexual or homosexual behavior in the novel, as do other characters in this and other novels by the author. Carmen Urioste-Azorra, on the other hand, believes that "Isabel es una mujer con una clara inclinación al lesbianismo," which her mother, Doña Milagros, wards off by pushing her into marriage (87).

² Marañón borrowed the term intersexuality from Richard Goldschmidt (Germany, 1878-Berkeley, CA, 1958), a controversial biologist whose study of genetics and the intersexual nature of the gypsy moth influenced the Spanish doctor's theories. Marañón defines intersexuality as "*aquellos casos en que coinciden en un mismo individuo—sea hombre, sea mujer—estigmas físicos y funcionales de los dos sexos; ya mezclados en proporciones equivalentes o casi equivalentes; ya, y es mucho más frecuente, con indiscutible predominio del sexo legítimo sobre el espúreo*" (*Los estados* 3-4). The novel is dedicated to Marañón with these words: "Ofrenda al ilustre doctor Marañón, que de modo tan competente, sereno y noble, ha estudiado la intersexualidad, iluminando este problema con luces de ciencia y de piedad."

³ Susana Cavallo believes that Burgos intentionally created Isabel "as a pathological case" that proves Marañón's theories. In spite of her original surprise at finding the "paternalistic" and "reactionary" theories of the prestigious doctor to be the motivation for the book, Cavallo ultimately concludes that Burgos believed in him because of his "visionary" ideas on women as different, but not inferior (172, 177). Nerea Aresti is also of the opinion that Burgos faithfully translated Marañón's theories into novelistic form (239). Roberta Johnson, less convinced that Burgos embraces Marañón's theories, is of the opinion that the novel reveals "the breakdown of fixed boundaries between male and female identities" and that the author proves that traditional gender models are a thing of the past (210). Gabriela Pozzi, who utilizes Judith Butler's theories on the "abject subject" to analyze the novel, concludes that Burgos "Cita al endocrinólogo directamente para luego desautorizar sus palabras y poner de manifiesto el hecho de que sus teorías inhiben el desarrollo del ser humano, y limitan sus posibilidades de 'vivir su vida,' al hacer que el cuerpo sea su destino. En fin, podemos leer esta novela, por un lado, como una respuesta a la concepción esencialista de Marañón, y por el otro, como una reflexión sobre lo que significa el asumir un papel socialmente construido que nunca se ajustará por completo a nuestro ser íntimo" (2). Establier Pérez, who most closely examines Burgos's use and manipulation of Marañón's theories in her book on the author, feels that *Colombine* slowly turns Isabel into a monster to prove that accepted male attributes—such as unscrupulousness, arbitrariness, narcissism, jealousy, especially unfaithfulness—are unacceptable (131-35).

cerebro, deshecho por la lucha de elementos antagónicos, venció. Sin conciencia de lo que hacía, aproximó sus labios a los labios del moribundo y le sorbió el último aliento en un beso largo, largo... aspirado, profundo. Quería apoderarse de su espíritu... beberselo... hacerlo suyo, lograr su aspiración suprema... Tuvo un grito de triunfo al creer que lo había conseguido: —¡Al fin le he robado su alma de hombre!" (249). Isabel's life does not unravel out of jealousy of another woman, but rather because of her envy of Julio, who symbolizes the prosperous patriarchal everyman. In her insanity, she assassinates that everyman who has limited her freedom. The tormented Isabel, guided by dark forces, turns into a gothic anti-heroine. The prophecies suggested throughout the novel about intersexual women, alas!, have come true.

Of all the abuse Isabel had directed against herself, this final act of madness would have the most dire consequences: she would undoubtedly be incarcerated for life, whether in a prison or an insane asylum. Her body would now be the object of constant vigilance and total control. Ironically, Isabel's desire to "live her life" led her to a complete loss of freedom. Burgos suggests that Isabel had run out of options in a world that offered women so few. Although Burgos's exaggerated outcry regarding the female condition seems ludicrous to some critics, it could also be seen as an effective way to subvert patriarchal theories about women, as well as to elucidate the injustices perpetrated against the female population. I would add, moreover, that by using Marañón's ideas and appropriating his scientific language, she both manages to question the soundness of his theories and to legitimize her text through association.²¹ Perhaps Burgos's ultimate subversion is the latter: by purporting to be a disseminator of *Marañonian* theory, and then asking him to write the prologue, she veils her feminist agenda and secures a wider audience. And through the use of parodic gothic devices, Burgos presents us with a subtle postulation: the exaggeration inherent in the gothic novel is as outdated and ridiculous as the patriarchal plot designed to keep women from becoming part of modern society. By turning patriarchal discourse on its head, Burgos's subtext gives us the ultimate truth: patriarchy epitomizes the "gothic villain" who is appropriating and controlling the female body and mind, and making women the victims of its insidious campaign.

⁴ The book is full of "freak show" photographs of beings with strange bodies equipped with "intersexual" genitalia. It should be emphasized that Marañón's deep interest in questions of sexual fluidity and gender aberration was also a sign of the times; between the wars, sexual promiscuity and gender-bending were widespread, as was visible in the Weimar Republic. On this subject, see Theweleit and Mizejewski. In his prologue to *Los estados intersexuales*, Marañón explicates the fact that intersexuality was a current topic and that—except for homosexuality—it was "normal": "A unos y otros tengo que decir desde ahora que los estados intersexuales no son estados de perversión, de anormalidad monstruosa o pecaminosa del instinto, tal como muchos parecen interpretar esta vasta y reciente rama de los conocimientos biológicos. La intersexualidad es un elemento de la normalidad sexual actual, y su conocimiento uno de los puntos de partida de la normalidad futura" (X).

⁵ In *Los estados intersexuales*, Marañón defends himself against what he construed as unjust criticism, when he was labeled an "antifeminist." As he does so, he acknowledges Burgos's fairness in her judgments about his work: "De esta injusticia nos compensa el juicio, no siempre favorable, pero siempre ecuánime, de otras mujeres, entre ellas CARMEN DE BURGOS, en su admirable estudio, lleno de generosa comprensión, sobre la mujer moderna" (169n3). In *Tres ensayos sobre la sexualidad*, he again denounces feminists, this time for not rallying against male adultery and for aspiring only to "pequeñas aspiraciones políticas y sociales, que no disuaden de la flojez del ambiente nacional." He again praises *Colombine* for *La mujer moderna y sus derechos*: "Salvo honorosas excepciones como la de Carmen de Burgos, cuyo hermoso y generoso libro . . . me complazco en encomiar, por lo mismo que no comparte enteramente mis puntos de vista. Se trata, sin duda, del documento feminista más importante publicado en nuestra patria" (237).

⁶ See Mangini, *Las modernas de Madrid*.

⁷ Mangini, 43-44. Coincidentally, the article deals with the literary battle between *Colombine* and Edmundo's brother, the adventurer and writer, Pedro González Blanco.

⁸ Novea Santos, in fact, shared the podium with Marañón in Cuba in 1927, when both were pelted with the shoes of feminists in the audience who protested against their "atrocities" (Glick 82). Novea defends himself in *La mujer, nuestro sexto sentido y otros esbozos* regarding the accusations by the Cuban women (63-76).

⁹ Here he echoes one of Marañón's tenets on how to keep men manly and women womanly, by declaring "guerra implacable al ocio" (*Tres ensayos* 214-15).

¹⁰ If one had thought that literature and art theorists had abused the use of *ismos* in the first third of the century, it becomes clear that the scientists were not far behind. In *Los estados intersexuales*, Marañón describes, among other *ismos*, *hirsutismo*, *virilismo*, *hermafroditismo*, *pseudo-hermafroditismo*, *diletantismo*, *coleccionismo*, *narcisismo*, and *vaginismo*.

¹¹ *Colombine* also uses Isabel's nephew to illustrate another case of intersexuality induced by upbringing, but here suggests hermafroditism and homosexuality. The effeminate Julito was brought up among women. The narrator describes Julito and his roommate, who is obviously his lover. It is most likely that these characters were inspired by the photographs of genitally *intersexed* people in Marañón's *Los estados*: "Los dos amigos formaban una pareja extraña. Julito, con su figura andrógina y débil, lo parecía más al lado de Ricardo, especie de gigante, de gran corpachón y curvas grasas, excesivamente desarrollado de medio cuerpo arriba" (127).

¹² The theme of the metropolis as inherently unsavory is suggested here; Isabel grew up free in the countryside, and now she is "enjaulada" in Madrid (24).

¹³ It is important that Burgos chooses not the working class, but rather—as is usually the case in her novels and novellas—the monied, urban bourgeoisie, to make her case. The signs of capitalist modernity abound, beginning with Isabel and Julio's expensive automobile, a Packard; in the early 1930s, the only people who had cars were very wealthy. Burgos also provides details about Isabel's lavish clothes, furnishings, and the social life of the upper-middle class. She reflects the themes of the day, such as "La moda es estar delgadas" (87) or, in the words of Alfredo: "La moda, que renueva a la mujer, la favorece para mantener la ilusión del hombre," (88) a sentence which appears to come straight out of the most important women's fashion magazine at that time, *Blanco y Negro*.

¹⁴ Marañón cites a case reminiscent of Isabel's plight: "Yo he sido consultado varias veces por estos casos de incapacidad orgánica y psicológica para soportar la intimidad sexual; incapacidad de la que se derivan, a veces, graves trastornos nerviosos y conyugales; y siempre se trataba de mujeres con estigmas netos de intersexualidad" (*Los estados intersexuales* 166). While the doctor describes the biological problems related to such cases, Burgos avoids discussing intimate questions of sexuality or gender abnormalities in the novel, except when she describes Julito and his boyfriend.

¹⁵ Alfredo's instincts appear to prove him right. Isabel would not heed his advice, but asked him to make house calls so that she could seduce him. Fearful that Isabel would be successful, Alfredo goes off to Argentina for a period of time. Isabel proves herself to be, on several occasions, a *donjuanesque* character, a theme on which Marañón wrote extensively.

¹⁶ Unless in those days a hyperthyroid condition was judged based on visible symptoms, which include weight loss, anxiety, insomnia, fatigue, hair loss, palpitations, rapid heartbeat, sweating, diarrhea, weakness, panic attacks and depression, it seems ludicrous that Alfredo would be able to diagnose this disease without a medical examination.

¹⁷ Isabel's remorse for causing Enrique's demise leads her to take refuge in the church. While Isabel has the affair at a seaside resort, Julio stays in Madrid, which sets the

stage for his adulterous relationship; at this time, he meets Matilde, who would later become his lover and would bear him a child.

¹⁸ As Anja Louis points out in her book, *Women and the Law: Carmen de Burgos, An Early Feminist*, melodrama is Burgos's most efficient vehicle for driving her points home. Louis states that "Burgos's fiction demonstrates that melodrama can also reveal an interpretive space that can work against the seemingly conservative textual surface" (151). Melodrama affords Burgos the opportunity to let her female characters denounce their destiny, as we have observed when Isabel rejects motherhood. Just as she decried the condition of women in her seminal essay, *La mujer moderna y sus derechos*, in her novels, Burgos places those accusations in the mouths of her main characters. As Louis says: "by turning to fiction as a vehicle, [Burgos] allows the reader to judge moral dilemmas in their contextual particularity, showing the causes and consequences of women's moral reasoning" (Louis 151-52). I would add that melodrama is an integral element of the gothic novel, vestiges of which, as mentioned, abound in *Quiero vivir mi vida*.

¹⁹ For Burgos, the legalization of divorce was one of her main concerns, especially because of her own personal experiences. Throughout her years in Madrid, she campaigned for divorce; in fact, when it became legal in 1932, she was commended for her work in that area (Louis 165).

²⁰ Throughout the novel, Burgos criticizes the control that the Catholic religion wielded over women in Spain.

²¹ Helena Establier Pérez explains the contradiction: "a la vista del desacuerdo entre algunas de las ideas de Marañón a las que hemos aludido anteriormente y las que desarrolla *Colombine* en *La mujer moderna y sus derechos* y en varias de sus novelas, parece más lógico pensar que la escritora hiciera un uso selectivo de las teorías de Marañón en beneficio de sus reivindicaciones acerca de la necesidad de una única moral, retomando sólo aquello que le parecía más rescatable para conseguir el respaldo científico que le permitiera contestar con argumentos sólidos las retorcidas argumentaciones de los misóginos y antifeministas" (126). She also insists that, after offering us a clinical case of intersexual degeneration, Burgos's ultimate goal is that of offering a social and moral criticism of the establishment (136).

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