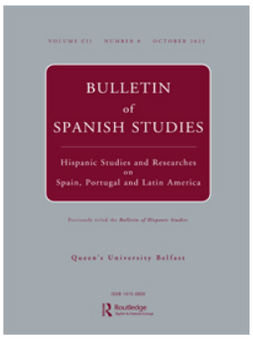

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Two Perspectives on the Spanish Civil War: Genre, Gender and the International Dimension of the War in Ilsa Barea-Kulscar's *Telefónica* (1949) and Arturo Barea's *La llama* (1946)

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Porque me creo que vuestra guerra es mi guerra.[1]
Ilsa Barea-Kulscar

[…] porque escribir era para mí parte de la lucha, parte de nuestra guerra contra la vida y la muerte, y no sólo una expresión de mí mismo.[2]
Arturo Barea

1 Ilsa Barea-Kulscar, *Telefónica*, edición bilingüe, trad. Pilar Mantilla, ed. & intro. de Georg Pichler (Gijón: Hoja de Lata, 2019 [1st German ed. 1949]), 160. Further references to *Telefónica* are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the main text.

2 Arturo Barea, *La forja de un rebelde*, ed. & intro. de Francisco Caudet (Madrid: Cátedra, 2019 [1st English ed., trans. Ilsa Barea-Kulscar, 1946]), 1331. Further references to *La forja de un rebelde* are to this edition and will be given in parentheses in the main text.

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Ilsa Barea-Kulscar's *Telefónica* (1949) and Arturo Barea's *La llama* (1946)—the third book of his trilogy *La forja de un rebelde*—present two complementary perspectives on the Spanish Civil War from the Telefónica building in Madrid. This building, a key symbol of the Republican resistance, was a priority target for the Nationalists due to it being home to the Press Office of the Second Republic's Foreign Ministry and the tallest building in Madrid. *Telefónica* takes the form of a novel but is based on Ilsa's experience, focusing on four days, from 16 to 19 December 1936. In contrast, *La llama* is part of an autobiographical trilogy: the first book, *La forja* (1st English ed., trans. Peter Chalmers Mitchell, 1941), narrates Arturo's childhood in Lavapiés; the second, *La ruta* (1st English ed., trans. Ilsa Barea-Kulscar, 1943), covers his service in the Rif War; and *La llama* (1st English ed., trans. Ilsa Barea-Kulscar, 1946) details the tensions leading up to the Civil War, Arturo's work at the Foreign Ministry's Press Office, his relationship with Ilsa and their departure into exile.[3] This article will examine how each narrative employs different literary genres to convey their authors' perspectives on the Spanish Civil War. Both works aim to document the war and emphasize its international significance, while also reflecting their personal experiences of alienation: Arturo as a Spaniard amidst international journalists and Ilsa as a woman navigating a deeply misogynistic environment. Thus, the juxtaposition of these narratives provides a more nuanced understanding of the conflict.

Arturo Barea was born into a humble family in Badajoz. After his father's death when he was two months old, his mother moved to Madrid to work as a laundress. Arturo's uncle funded his education in Madrid until he began working at thirteen. He later served in the Rif War and witnessed Spain's defeats. In 1924, he married his first wife, Aurelia Rimaldos, with whom he had four children. When the Second Republic started, he joined the Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) and, during the Civil War, worked as a censor for the Foreign Ministry's Press Office in Madrid. There, he met his second wife, Ilsa Kulscar. Ilsa, born Ilse Pollak in Vienna in 1902, became politically active while studying at the Faculty of Politics and Law of the University of Vienna. In 1921, she joined the Austrian Communist Party (*Kommunistische Partei Österreichs*). She and her first husband, Leopold Kulscar, remained politically engaged, which even led them to a four-month imprisonment in Romania and Hungary on charges of Soviet espionage. When the Spanish Civil War broke out, Ilsa decided to take part. She arrived in Madrid in November 1936 and joined Arturo at the censorship office. Although their

3 When studied together, Arturo Barea and Ilsa Barea-Kulscar are often referred to as Barea and Ilsa, respectively. To avoid this gender bias, both will be referred to by their first names throughout this article.

relationship began with mutual distrust, they gradually fell in love while working under the war's harsh conditions.

The censorship office had strict orders to prevent foreign journalists from reporting Republican defeats. Ilsa opposed this policy as she believed it would only strengthen the Nationalists' credibility abroad. After persuading Arturo, they managed to change how Republican censorship operated, which earned her both admiration and suspicion. Following months of intense work, they felt forced to flee Spain, largely due to growing hostility from the Communists in the Republican government. While Ilsa had longstanding communist ties, Arturo, a socialist, collaborated with the Partido Comunista de España (PCE) in Madrid but was never a militant. As the PCE's influence grew, the couple fell out of favour. Ilsa's past criticisms of the party made her vulnerable, leading to suspicions of Trotskyism and their dismissal from the censorship office in 1937. The couple first fled to France, where they spent a year in precarious conditions, and then to England, where they continued their political activity, working for the BBC and writing. In 1957, Arturo passed away due to a heart attack without having returned to Spain. After his death, Ilsa moved to London and eventually to Vienna, where she continued writing and working in politics until she passed away in 1973.[4]

Despite decades of neglect, Arturo has gradually become a well-known writer. Besides *La forja de un rebelde*, he published another narrative, *La raíz rota*, short stories, political essays (such as *Struggle for the Spanish Soul*, co-authored with Ilsa), essays on literature (such as *Unamuno* and *Lorca, el poeta y su pueblo* in collaboration with Ilsa) and talks for the BBC.[5] Ilsa's role in Arturo's productions went far beyond co-authoring some of his books and translating most of them into English. As Eva Nieto McAvoy explains:

> She was his intellectual partner and moral supporter, and many of Arturo's texts—particularly the political—resulted from the couple's

4 The information on the Bareas' lives was obtained from Arturo's autobiographical trilogy (see above, note 2), Michael Eaude's work on Arturo, Georg Pichler's study on *Telefónica* and letters kept in the Bareas' archive in the Bodleian Libraries. See, respectively, Michael Eaude, *Triumph at Midnight of the Century: A Critical Biography of Arturo Barea. Explaining the Roots of the Spanish Civil War* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2011); Georg Pichler, '*Telefónica* de Ilsa Barea-Kulscar', in Barea-Kulscar, *Telefónica*, trad. Mantilla, ed. Pichler, 305–38; and the Archive of Arturo and Ilsa Barea, Bodleian Archives & Manuscripts, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, MSS. 12614/1–56.

5 See Arturo Barea, *Cuentos completos*, ed. Nigel Townson (Madrid: Debate, 2001); Arturo Barea, *La raíz rota*, ed. & prólogo de Nigel Townson (Madrid: Salto de Página, 2009); Arturo Barea & Ilsa Barea-Kulscar, *Struggle for the Spanish Soul & Spain in the Post-War World*, with a Foreword by William Chislett (London: The Clapton Press, 2021); Arturo Barea, *Lorca: El poeta y su pueblo* (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1957); and Arturo Barea, *Unamuno* (New Haven: Yale U. P., 1952).

discussions and shared readings of the British press and other materials.[6]

Her letters, kept in the Bareas' archive at the Bodleian Libraries, also prove her essential role in publishing Arturo's work, even after his death.[7]

Although Ilsa's work has received much less attention, she played a key role in the Republican exile community and worked as a translator for numerous exiled writers.[8] She also co-authored several books with Arturo and wrote a non-fiction book, *Vienna: Legend and Reality*.[9] Even if barely mentioned, she wrote poems and short stories in English and German, most of which remain unpublished.[10] Ilsa also had a contract with the British publishing house Secker & Warburg to publish her autobiography, *Alone and Together: An Essay in Biography and Autobiography*, but only completed a few pages.[11] Scholars have not yet compared *La llama* and *Telefónica*, despite the pertinence of this comparison. The representation of the international dimension of the Civil War and women's experiences of the conflict in both narratives has not attracted much attention either.[12]

Another important element is the added complexity in both narratives due to their translation and publication history. *La forja* was first published in English, translated by Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell, while later editions of this volume, along with the translations of the two

6 Eva Nieto McAvoy, 'A Spaniard in Hertfordshire: The Intellectual Exile of Arturo Barea', PhD thesis (Birkbeck College, University of London, 2017), 45.

7 Archive of Arturo and Ilsa Barea, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, MSS.12614/46 & MSS.12614/49.

8 See Rosa Martí, 'Ilsa Barea, La forja de una traductora', *1611. Revista de Historia de la Traducción*, 12 (2018), [1–7] (pp. [1–4]); available at <https://raco.cat/index.php/1611/article/view/344213> (acccessed 23 September 2025).

9 Ilsa Barea-Kulscar, *Vienna: Legend and Reality* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966).

10 Archive of Arturo and Ilsa Barea, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, MSS.12614/29.

11 Ilsa Barea-Kulscar, *Alone and Together: An Essay in Biography and Autobiography*, unpublished and incomplete ms., Archive of Arturo and Ilsa Barea, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, MSS.12614/22.

12 Regarding Arturo's *La llama*, scholars such as Nigel Townson and Michael Eaude have done extensive work to recover Arturo's legacy, focusing mostly on its significance as a Civil War testimony and publishing his work. Nieto McAvoy, who organized the Bareas' archive at the Bodleian Libraries, has analysed Arturo's legacy from a global perspective and highlighted the importance of Ilsa's work. Few works address *Telefónica*, with notable exceptions being Pichler's introductory study to the 2019 edition (see above, note 1) and Calero Valera's analysis of the narrative through the concept of 'travelling memory'. See Barea, *Cuentos completos*, ed. Townson; Arturo Barea, *La forja de un rebelde*, ed. & trad. Nigel Townson (Madrid: Debate, 2000 [1st English ed., trans. Ilsa Barea-Kulscar, 1946]); Arturo Barea, *Palabras recobradas*, ed. Nigel Townson (Madrid: Debate, 2000); Eaude, *Triumph at Midnight of the Century*; Nieto McAvoy, 'A Spaniard in Hertfordshire'; and Ana Calero Valera, 'Viajar y vivir peligrosamente. Ilsa Barea-Kulcsar y la Telefónica', in *Grenzen überschreiten: Frauenreisen zwischen Deutschland - Spanien - Hispanoamerika*, ed. Isabel Gutiérrez Koester & Ingrid García-Wistädt (Madrid: Iberoamericana/Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert, 2021), 171–82.

subsequent volumes, were done by Ilsa.[13] Most critics believe that when the Argentinian publishing house Losada later published the trilogy in Spanish, they used Ilsa's Spanish translation from her own English version.[14] Although Ilsa's Spanish version was criticized for its mistakes and Anglicisms, most were corrected in Nigel Townson's 2000 Debate edition.[15] There has been some speculation about what happened to the original Spanish version. While William Chislett believes it was lost, Francisco Caudet argues that complete versions in Spanish of the two final volumes never existed.[16] In fact, Arturo was accused of not having written the trilogy by himself but in collaboration with Ilsa. Margaret Weeden, who lived with the couple, denied this rumour twice.[17] While Caudet believes this denial, he wonders how free Ilsa's translations were and how much their collaborations influenced the final piece. He suggests that: 'él hacía apuntes, borradores y versiones en español de partes y capítulos de las novelas, que eran de su completa autoría, y ella hacía, basándose en esos materiales, su "libre versión inglesa"'.[18] Although it is difficult to determine the extent, Ilsa played a significant role in shaping Arturo's trilogy.

Ilsa began writing *Telefónica* in France and finished it in England in 1939. However, it was not published until 1949, serialized in the Austrian newspaper *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, and only in 2019 was it published as a whole—both in the original German, and in a Spanish translation by Pilar Mantilla. It was published alongside 'Madrid, otoño de 1936' (itself published in full for the first time), a short text she wrote in 1965 for *Der Spanische Bürgerkrieg in Augenzeugenberichtenn* (Düsseldorf: Karl Rauch, 1967), a German anthology on the Spanish Civil War by Hans-Christian Kirsch, which included only a third of the original. Since Ilsa wrote *Telefónica* in

13 Caudet notes that it remains unclear whether Ilsa's translation of *La forja* was entirely new or simply a revision of Chalmers Mitchell's version (Francisco Caudet, 'Esta edición', in Barea, *La forja de un rebelde*, ed. Caudet, 343–6 [p. 345]). See Arturo Barea, *The Forge*, trans. Peter Chalmers Mitchell (London: Faber & Faber, 1941); Arturo Barea, *The Forge*, trans. Ilsa Barea-Kulscar (London: Faber & Faber, 1946); Arturo Barea, *The Track*, trans. Ilsa Barea-Kulscar (London: Faber & Faber, 1943); and Arturo Barea, *The Clash*, trans. Ilsa Barea-Kulscar (London: Faber & Faber, 1946).

14 Caudet, 'Esta edición', in Barea, *La forja de un rebelde*, ed. Caudet, 345. See Pablo Rojas Sánchez, 'Entresijos editoriales de la primera versión castellana de *La forja de un rebelde* de Arturo Barea', *Cuadernos para la Investigación de la Literatura Hispánica*, 49 (2023), 257–89.

15 William Chislett, 'Del Madrid de la guerra civil al exilio en la campiña inglesa', *Arturo Barea. La ventana inglesa*, Centro Virtual Cervantes, n.d., n.p., <https://cvc.cervantes.es/literatura/escritores/barea/chislett.htm> (accessed 6 August 2024). See above, note 13.

16 See Chislett, 'Del Madrid de la guerra civil al exilio en la campiña inglesa'; and Francisco Caudet, 'Introducción', in Barea, *La forja de un rebelde*, ed. Caudet, 13–341 (p. 102).

17 Caudet, 'Introducción', in Barea *La forja de un rebelde*, 101.

18 Caudet, 'Introducción', in Barea *La forja de un rebelde*, 101–02.

German and did not translate it into the main languages in which Arturo's trilogy was being published and becoming a best seller, she was likely targeting a different readership. As Georg Pichler explains, *Telefónica* aligns with the tradition of social criticism novels from the late 1920s and early 1930s, linked to the German magazine *Die Linkskurve* (*Turn to the Left*) and the German Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller (Association of Proletarian-Revolutionary Authors). These works were accessible, educational and aimed at mobilizing readers for the socialist cause. *Telefónica* follows this approach, seeking to inform, particularly female readers, about the Spanish Civil War, the siege of Madrid and to advocate for female emancipation.[19] Thus, both texts are shaped by their expected readership, translation history and, significantly, Ilsa's work.

The following pages will analyse the differences in the literary genre between both books and how these differences enabled the authors to present their perspectives on the Civil War. Their testimonies are crucial for understanding this key moment in European history from two often underrepresented perspectives: its international dimension and women's experience. To do so, this article will first analyse their genres, then their representation of the war's international dimension and, finally, their treatment of gender.

Genre and Autobiographical Writing

The genre of *La forja de un rebelde* has provoked significant debate among critics. Nieto McAvoy not only considers it an autobiography but also maintains that all of Arturo's work is, to some extent, autobiographical.[20] Similarly, José Rodríguez Richart claims that the trilogy 'quiere ser autobiográfica y veraz' and has 'un valor documental y testimonial para mí incuestionable'.[21] Javier Sánchez Zapatero and Jesús Guzmán Mora, however, argue that Arturo's trilogy cannot be considered strictly autobiographical due to the ambiguity surrounding its reception: while Arturo referred to it as 'rigurosamente autobiográfica', it was published by Losada in the series 'Los grandes novelistas de nuestra época' and is often read as 'una novela histórica, una novela autobiográfica o una novela testimonial'.[22] Critics have also emphasized its close links with history.

19 Pichler, '*Telefónica* de Ilsa Barea-Kulscar', 337.

20 Nieto McAvoy, 'A Spaniard in Hertfordshire', 97.

21 José Rodríguez Richart, 'Algunos aspectos de "La forja de un rebelde" ', *Actas del X Congreso de La Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas: Barcelona 21–26 de agosto de 1989*, 4 vols (Barcelona: Promociones y Publicaciones Universitarias, 1992), III, 223–40 (p. 226).

22 Javier Sánchez Zapatero & Jesús Guzmán Mora, 'Guerra, compromiso y amor: de *La llama* (Arturo Barea, 1951) a *La noche de los tiempos* (Antonio Muñoz Molina, 2009)', *Estudios Humanísticos. Filología*, 37 (2015), 139–60 (pp. 142–43).

Gonzalo Torrente Ballester, who considers the three books historical novels, claims: 'para novela le sobra historia; para historia le sobra todo lo que hay en ello de novelesco'.[23] In contrast, for Juan Luis Alborg, the trilogy cannot be considered historical due to its temporal proximity to the events it recounts.[24]

These claims point to the pillars of the ambiguity around its genre: it was written as an autobiography, often read as a novel and contains a significant historical dimension. This combination enhances its testimonial value. The autobiographical aspect allowed Arturo to express himself and shape his identity through writing. The fact that it could be read as a novel made the narration more engaging and likely attracted more readers. Further, Arturo was not interested in narrating his life as a classic autobiography, but in portraying his journey as a participant in recent Spanish history. In the prologue to *The Track*, Arturo explains that, while the first two books narrate his life, neither 'is meant to be autobiographical in the strict sense of the term, for neither has been written with the intention of telling the public about the author's private life'; instead:

> In taking and exploring my past self as a member of the Spanish generation which was the core of the Civil War, I hoped to expose some of the roots of the war. I wanted to describe the shocks which had scarred my mind, because I am convinced that these shocks, in different individual forms but from the same collective cause, scarred and shaped the minds of other Spaniards too.[25]

The individual and the collective spheres, and, consequently, the autobiographical and historical elements, are intrinsically linked.

While the bibliography on *Telefónica* is scarce, the issue of its genre is relevant. On its cover, *Telefónica* is described as 'una vibrante novela basada en sus propias experiencias de guerra' and most reviews define it as a 'novela'.[26] Some of these also emphasize the idea of 'testimonio' or 'novela

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23 Gonzalo Torrente Ballester, *Panorama de la literatura española contemporánea* (Madrid: Ediciones Guadarrama, 1956), 358.

24 Juan Luis Alborg, *Hora actual de la novela española* (Madrid: Taurus, 1962), 217–18.

25 Arturo Barea, 'Author's Foreword', in his *The Track*, trans. Barea-Kulscar, 1–3 (pp. 1–2).

26 Hoja de Lata defines it as a 'novela' (Hoja de Lata, 'Telefónica' <https://www.hojadelata.net/tienda/telefonica/> [accessed 17 July 2024]) as do reviews by Miguel Caballero ('Propaganda, bombardeos y rascacielos', *Revista de Letras*, 31 January 2020, n.p., <https://revistadeletras.net/ilsa-barea-kulcsar-propaganda-bombardeos-y-rascacielos/> [accessed 17 July 2024]); Patricia Pizarroso Acedo ('Mujer intelectual y extranjera en el Madrid de la Guerra Civil. *Telefónica*, de Ilsa Barea-Kulcsar', *Contrapunto. Revista de Crítica Literaria y Cultural de la Universidad de Alcalá*, 16 October 2019, n.p., <https://revistacontrapunto.com/mujer-intelectual-y-extranjera-en-el-madrid-de-la-guerra-civil-telefonica-de-ilsa-barea-kulcsar/> [accessed 17 July 2024]); and Luis Arias ('Madrid, capital contra el fascismo', *El Comercio*, 22 June 2019, p. 5).

autobiográfica'.[27] Significantly, the original German manuscript was titled *In der Telefonica. Roman* (*In the Telefonica. A Novel*).[28] This choice of title contrasts with Weeden's remarks:

> Ilsa wrote a novel about her experiences in Spain, entitled *The Telefónica*. It was written in German and she never tried to publish it, feeling it was too autobiographical; but during the last years of her life, when interest seemed to be reviving in the Spanish Civil War, she was considering doing something about it.[29]

This ambivalence between fiction and autobiography observed in Ilsa herself is also noticeable in the scant scholarship on *Telefónica.* For Ana Calero Valera:

> Ilsa Barea-Kulscar ficcionaliza en su novela lo vivido en primera persona durante la Guerra Civil, y aunque transforma personas en personajes, o desplaza en el tiempo algunos acontecimientos históricos y no-históricos, el sustrato del que se nutre la trama es en esencia su experiencia propia.[30]

In contrast, Pichler emphasizes its fictional side:

> *Telefónica* es una historia ficticia que se basa en hechos reales […] Los personajes de la novela son invención, compuestos por trazos de personas reales a las que cambia los nombres, el origen social, la profesión y la fisonomía. En cuanto a su historia personal y vital, el personaje del comandante Sánchez poco tiene que ver con su modelo real, Arturo Barea, al igual que la (bastante vaga) biografía de Anita no tiene muchos puntos en común con su autora.[31]

Although we are not concerned with determining whether fiction or testimony predominates, these quotes illustrate their co-existence. The pertinent question here is what the effects of blending both are, which is

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27 Myriam Soto and Cristina Díaz refer to it as a 'novela autobiográfica' ('Telefónica, la película', *Cadena Ser*, 16 March 2021, n.p., <https://cadenaser.com/emisora/2021/03/16/radio_madrid/1615915562_408729.html?ssm=tw [accessed 17 July 2024]); and Clara Morales as a 'testimonio' (' "Ilsa la de la Telefónica": un testimonio desde el corazón de la Guerra Civil', *InfoLibre*, 22 May 2019, n.p., <https://www.infolibre.es/cultura/ilsa-telefonica-testimonio-corazon-guerra-civil_1_1170704.html> [accessed 17 July 2024]).

28 Ilsa Barea-Kulscar, *In der Telefonica. Roman*, Archive of Arturo and Ilsa Barea, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, MSS.12614/38.

29 Margaret Weeden, 'Ilsa Barea. A Personal Record',1–12 (p. 5), Archive of Arturo and Ilsa Barea, Bodleian Libraries, Oxford, MSS.12614/24.

30 Calero Valera, 'Viajar y vivir peligrosamente', 176.

31 Pichler, '*Telefónica* de Ilsa Barea-Kulscar', 335–36.

analysed throughout this article. To begin, we can examine the preliminary section of *Telefónica*, 'En lugar de una dedicatoria':

> Pronto no se entenderá cómo fue. Surgirán leyendas que ocultarán a los hombres vivos o ya muertos que no quisieron someterse y no se entregaron porque no les parecía justo. En aquellos meses yo vivía en la Telefónica de Madrid. Quiero intentar hacer vivir a estas personas—no la verdad oficial sino la verdad interior de todos nosotros—en un libro, tal y como se han adueñado de mí: por eso no veo el sentido de dedicarles este libro. (*Telefónica*, 9–10)

Ilsa pursued a testimonial aim ('hacer vivir a esas personas') and, significantly, relied on fiction to shape their 'verdad interior'. Simultaneously, by including this note, she presents herself as an authority on the subject and establishes a link between herself and Anita, her *alter ego*.

Although both narratives share a testimonial goal, they approach it differently. Michael Eaude considers that, while the first half of *La llama* masterfully outlines the events before and during the war, the second shifts to a more personal account, which disrupts the trilogy's coherence.[32] Nevertheless, this personal focus highlights the war as the narrative climax: it drives Arturo to write the trilogy and helps him resolve his feelings of being caught between two worlds.[33] Thomas Couser defines testimonies as memoirs which are 'not distinguished so much by the relation between the narrating I and the narrated I as by the relation between the I and the world' and where 'the emphasis is on the I as an eye, a witness, of some injustice that the narrative seeks to put on record'.[34] The second half of *La llama*, which aligns with the story in *Telefónica*, remains focused on Arturo's role as a witness to the war but with a noticeable increase in 'the relation between the narrating I and the narrated I'. Arturo delves more into his emotional struggles with his wife and his lover María, his relationship with Ilsa, the challenges at the censorship and his declining mental health. While these personal elements also bear testimony of the war, they contrast with the rest of the trilogy and, interestingly, with Ilsa's account.

The first level on which Ilsa's narrative is different is its third-person omniscient narrator not linked to the protagonist. This narrator allowed Ilsa to incorporate different characters' perspectives, including Agustín

32 Eaude, *Triumph at Midnight of the Century*, 77–78.

33 Blanca Gómez García, 'Genre Hybridity and Exile: Autobiographical Narratives by Spanish Writers Exiled in Great Britain after the Spanish Civil War', PhD thesis (University College London, 2024), 91.

34 Thomas Couser, *Memoir: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 2011), 41.

Sánchez (who impersonates Arturo), Anita Adam (Ilsa), Pepa (Agustín's wife), Paquita (his lover) and Lolita (his daughter), as well as journalists and censors. Free indirect speech is employed to shift between these perspectives, which enriches the narrative's testimonial value. There is, however, a protagonist, Anita. Despite Pichler's assertion that Anita differs from Ilsa, they share many traits: Anita is the only foreign woman in the Republican censorship office, changes its functioning, falls in love with its head and has significant international contacts, among other aspects. However, other details, not only related to Anita, were modified. Readers familiar with Arturo's account may notice these changes, which serve the narrative's development. For instance, Ilsa altered certain historical dates—changing Communist leader Buenaventura Durruti's death from 20 November to 18 December—and invented events—such as an attack in the Parque del Oeste on 17 December—to make them fit her timeline.[35] Personal details are also altered: Arturo's wife did not stay in the basement of the Telefónica building, nor did his lover work there, but in *Telefónica*, Pepa and Paquita do, which allows a deeper exploration of this love quadrangle. Certain events, like the trap set for Anita, remain ambiguous even for readers of *La llama*. Furthermore, Ilsa's gender and background shape her focus, which highlights aspects often overlooked in Arturo's account, such as his relationship with the three women, the challenges faced by Ilsa as a foreign woman and societal misogyny. In contrast, Arturo's perspective delves into issues related to his interactions with international journalists who either seem against the Republic or view it through orientalizing lenses.[36] Ultimately, both narratives reveal how Arturo and Ilsa, through their evolving understanding of each other, feel less isolated and recognize their tendency to 'other' one another.

Another interesting difference between both narratives involves the relationship between the narrated I and the narrating I and the use of metafiction.[37] Nieto McAvoy notes that in *La llama*, 'we find the

35 Pichler, '*Telefónica* de Ilsa Barea-Kulscar', 336.

36 'Orientalism' was defined by Edward Said as: 'the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating restructuring, and having authority over the Orient' (Edward Said, *Orientalism* [London: Penguin, 1995 (1st ed. 1978)], 11). Spain sits in an awkward place in this regard: it is not geographically part of the Orient, has a colonial history and has contributed to Orientalization, but has also been orientalized by Northern Europeans and Americans since the nineteenth century, often due to its Muslim-Arab heritage. See Beatriz Marín Aguilera, '(De)orientalising Spain: The "Other" from Within', *Revista Arkeogazte Aldizkaria*, 6 (2016), 75–89.

37 Metafiction is 'a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about

narrator suddenly analysing the war in Spain from the vantage point of knowing how it ended'.[38] This perspective allows the reader to understand the relationship between the narrating I and the narrated I, also conditioned by the passage of time. Towards the end, Arturo explains that he started *La forja* to find the conflict's roots and cope with his shell shock. He also depicts how, in France, he writes stories on the war while Ilsa translates these and other texts to support them financially. However, *Telefónica* is not mentioned even if Ilsa would have been writing it at that point. The omission might be intended to foreground Arturo's narrative, but we cannot be certain. Either way, these metafictional elements reinforce the relationship between the narrating I and the narrated I. By contrast, *Telefónica* presents Anita as a censor, journalist and translator but not as a writer, although Agustín is not either. The absence of a metafictional layer creates a clearer separation between author and *alter ego*, heightening the ambiguities between fiction and autobiography.

Thus, while both narratives have a strong testimonial dimension, *Telefónica* relies more on fiction to enhance it. This feature aligns with María Cristina Dalmagro's view of autofiction as the hesitation between fiction and autobiography, which allows self-expression without completely exposing the self thus enabling the (re)construction of individual and collective memory.[39] Indeed, even if the term 'autofiction' had not yet been coined, it provides a useful framework for understanding the differences in genre between these books and how these differences allowed the authors to represent different perspectives on the war. Significantly, Manuel Alberca, in his famous study on autofiction, included Arturo's trilogy in the appendix 'Esbozo de inventario: autoficciones españolas e hispanoamericanas (1898–2007)', although without explanation.[40] For Alberca, autofiction is a 'novela del yo' where autobiography and fiction are balanced—'equidistancia de ambos pactos'.[41] Despite the impossibility of exact measurement, *La forja de un rebelde* leans more towards autobiography, since Arturo intended it as such, while in *Telefónica* fiction and autobiography hold equal weight. Significantly, *Telefónica* lacks another key feature of autofiction according to Alberca, 'identidad nominal

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the relationship between fiction and reality' (Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* [London: Methuen, 1984], 2).

38 Nieto McAvoy, 'A Spaniard in Hertfordshire', 148.

39 María Cristina Dalmagro, 'La autoficción como espacio de re-construcción de la memoria', *RECIAL: Revista del Centro de Investigaciones de la Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades*, 6:7 (2015), 1–22 (p. 1).

40 Manuel Alberca, *El pacto ambiguo: de la novela autobiográfica a la autoficción* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2007), 301.

41 Alberca, *El pacto ambiguo*, 92.

expresa', which *La llama* does present.[42] However, despite their different names, the link between Anita and Ilsa is unmistakable and established by the author in the preliminary section. Consequently, *Telefónica* could be considered an early example of autofiction.

Another useful framework to understand the genre of *Telefónica* is Leigh Gilmore's theory of autobiographics.[43] Following the development of critical analysis of women's autobiography from the 1990s, Gilmore offers a feminist critique of autobiography and argues for a mode of reading that exposes self-representation as a contradictory code. Early feminist criticism of autobiography initially sought thematic and formal consistency across women's autobiographies, even suggesting that women represent the self through representing others.[44] In contrast, Gilmore's work builds on feminist theory to analyse how women use self-representation to exchange their position as objects for the subjectivity and agency involved in writing about themselves. *Telefónica* exemplifies this dynamic: Ilsa employs self-writing to present her experience as a foreign woman in the war and to criticize the misogyny she faced. Yet, it is not a response to *La llama*, where Ilsa appears more as an object, since she wrote *Telefónica* first. However, contemporary readers often perceive their relationship differently. Since Arturo's trilogy was published much earlier, many encountered his book first and read *Telefónica* as a complement. This perception is reflected in the titles of several reviews: Carlos Joric's 'La forja de una rebelde'; Alberto de Frutos' 'Ilsa Barea, otra rebelde'; and Erich Hackl's, which only identifies Ilsa by her relationship with Arturo: 'La mujer de su vida'.[45]

Gilmore argues that the 'question of gender' in autobiographical writing cannot be studied by 'compulsory lumping together of all male-authored texts, on one side, and all female-authored texts on the other'.[46] Instead, it must be analysed through each text's engagement with dominant discourses on truth and identity and how self-representation is shaped by proximity to these discourses' definitions of authority. Ilsa writes to express 'la verdad interior de todos nosotros' in opposition to 'la verdad oficial' (*Telefónica*, 9–10). Thus, Gilmore defines autobiographics as 'those changing elements of the contradictory discourses and practices of truth

42 Alberca, *El pacto ambiguo*, 92.

43 See Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation* (Ithaca: Cornell U. P., 1994).

44 Gilmore, *Autobiographics*, xiii.

45 See Carlos Joric, 'La forja de una rebelde', *Historia y Vida*, 620 (2019), p. 92; Alberto de Frutos, 'Ilsa Barea, otra rebelde', *Historia de España y del Mundo*, 174 (2019), p. 103; and Erich Hackl, 'La mujer de su vida', *El País*, 7 June 2019, n.p.; available at <https://elpais.com/cultura/2019/05/22/babelia/1558534785_690211.html> (accessed 30 September 2025).

46 Gilmore, *Autobiographics*, 12–13.

and identity which represent the subject of autobiography'.[47] She emphasizes that autobiographics can take multiple forms and argues that women's autobiographical writing challenges the conventional notions of truth, placing it in other forms of self-representation such as fiction, poetry and others' biographies.[48] This perspective is particularly useful in exploring *Telefónica*: Ilsa transcends traditional boundaries of genre and gender (both *género* in Spanish) and challenges prevailing narratives about the Civil War, offering a gendered perspective on this historical moment.

It is also important to remember that *Telefónica* was first published as a serialized novel. The narrative itself incorporates elements reminiscent of melodrama and the Spanish f*olletín*, including a female lead, extremely dramatic situations, a love quadrangle and an attempted murder of the protagonist. Drawing from the German tradition of social criticism novels from the late 1920s and early 1930s, Ilsa probably employed these techniques to enhance the novel's appeal and raise awareness of Spain's situation more effectively.

Thus, Arturo intended *La forja de un rebelde* to be perceived as truth, although it is often regarded as a novel. Rather than focusing on his life, he sought to represent others and trace the war's roots, which gives the narrative a strong historical dimension. *Telefónica*, by contrast, takes the form of a novel but is rooted in Ilsa's experiences. It also pursues a testimonial goal, achieved through a blend of autobiography and fiction. Therefore, while *Telefónica* can be considered an early example of autofiction, *La llama* aligns more closely with autobiography. The following sections will examine how these different approaches shape their portrayals of the war's international dimension and perspectives on gender.

An International War

Both *La llama* and *Telefónica* explore the war's international dimension and the international presence in Spain, particularly journalists, activists and the International Brigades. As Julián Casanova states, until July 1936, Spain was a marginal country on the international stage. However, the military uprising of that month changed everything. The conflict became a focal point for global powers, dividing public opinion, fuelling passions and reflecting the international battle between fascism, democracy and communism.[49] To prevent an armed conflict between European states, Britain and France fostered the Non-Intervention Agreement in August

47 Gilmore, *Autobiographics*, 13.

48 Barbara Blackburn, review of Leigh Gilmore, *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Women's Self-Representation* (1994), *Feminist Teacher*, 9:2 (1995), 94–95 (p. 94).

49 Julián Casanova, *A Short History of the Spanish Civil War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021 [1st ed. 2013]), 71.

1936, with twenty-seven states pledging not to aid either side of the war. However, Germany and Italy infringed on it and continually supplied resources to the Nationalist faction, which was crucial for their victory.[50] In response, the Comintern Secretariat sent volunteers to support the Republican side. These volunteers arrived from Poland, Italy, Germany and France, with North Americans joining later. Studies estimate nearly 35,000 foreign volunteers fought in the International Brigades, although at no point were there more than 20,000 at once. By 1938, this number had dwindled significantly.[51]

From the outbreak of the war in *La llama*, Arturo describes rising tensions due to the lack of international help towards the Republic. His narrative repeatedly references the Non-Intervention Agreement:

> […] cuando comunicaron que las fuerzas italianas blindadas y de infantería constituían la vanguardia de las fuerzas rebeldes, se estrellaron contra la censura de sus propios editores: había que conservar la comedia de la no intervención. De repente nuestro servicio de censura y los corresponsales extranjeros se encontraban siendo colaboradores en el deseo de hacer conocer lo que estaba pasando a los pueblos de Inglaterra, Francia y los Estados Unidos.
>
> (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1210–11)

This quote reflects the frustrations of being silenced by international powers who conceded to the Nationalists by promoting the Non-Intervention Agreement but failing to act when it was violated. Significantly, *Telefónica* never mentions this agreement. Further, Ilsa omits the Bareas' exile in France, which Arturo included to criticize France's treatment of Republican refugees, a recurrent theme in Republican exile literature.[52] This difference may stem from several factors such as their expected readership. Arturo's book, first published in English, likely targeted readers from Britain and the US, countries mentioned above. Conversely, Ilsa wrote her narrative in German and although it is difficult to determine her intended readership in 1939, she published it in Austria ten years later.[53] The Non-Intervention Agreement might have not resonated as strongly in an Allied-occupied Austria. Another possible factor is linked to how both narratives achieve a

50 Glyn Arthur Stone, 'Neville Chamberlain and the Spanish Civil War, 1936–9', *The International History Review*, 35:2 (2013), 377–95.

51 Casanova, *A Short History of the Spanish Civil War*, 84.

52 For instance, Jorge Semprún, *Le Grand voyage* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963); Max Aub, *Campo francés* (Turin: Ruedo Ibérico, 1965); and Luisa Carnés, *De Barcelona a la Bretaña francesa* (Sevilla: Renacimiento, 2014 [1st ed. 2011]).

53 Francisco Ayala famously discussed the challenges exiled writers face in finding a readership. See Francisco Ayala, 'Para quién escribimos nosotros', *Cuadernos Americanos*, 8:1 (1949), 36–58.

similar goal—reporting Spain's situation to the world—through different tactics and genres. In Arturo's narrative, the narrated I and the narrating I are closer. The latter points directly to the causes of the Republic's defeat and criticizes the countries that abandoned the Republic. In *Telefónica*, the distance between the narrated I and the narrating I is pushed apart through fiction. Ilsa is more subtle and refrains from directly accusing anyone: readers are told a fictionalized but real story and encouraged to empathize with it.

Another key theme in both narratives is the role of international journalists and writers. Both the Nationalists and Republicans used propaganda to shape global perceptions of the war. Few foreign journalists knew Spain well, and even those who did relied on translators.[54] After the coup, the Nationalists abolished press freedom, seized media outlets and arrested or executed suspicious journalists. Franco established a Press Cabinet in 1936, later known as the 'Press and Propaganda Office', initially led by pro-Nazi journalist Juan Pujol and later by General Millán Astray. The Nationalists used translators to compile press summaries and news updates, which were censored by the Press Office and military officials.[55] On the Republican side, Carlos Esplá became Minister of Propaganda in September 1936. After Largo Caballero's resignation in 1937, the Ministry was moved under Julio Álvarez del Vayo. The Republicans produced books, pamphlets, radio broadcasts, and films in multiple languages to gain international support.[56] As shown in *La llama*, Rubio Hidalgo was initially the Chief Censor of the Press Office but left the capital when the government moved to Valencia. Later, when Communists gained more influence in the government, he was succeeded by Constancia de la Mora, who subtly dismissed Ilsa and Arturo.

La llama depicts the foreign journalists in Madrid as either supporting Franco or supporting the Republic but viewing Spain through orientalizing and patronizing lenses. As Nieto McAvoy explains, the predominant frameworks through which the Western, especially British, public understood Spain then were the Black Legend and the romantic myth, both of which orientalized Spain.[57] As Sebastiaan Faber argues, Spain:

> […] functioned for both England and America at crucial historical moments as a 'constitutive other' to help define themselves as nations. An exoticized, demonized representation of Spain as an empire in decline (the 'Black Legend') served to bolster both countries' self-image

54 Marcos Rodríguez-Espinosa, 'Taking Sides: Translators and Journalists in the Spanish Civil War', *Journalism*, 23:7 (2022), 1567–83 (p. 1568).

55 Rodríguez-Espinosa, 'Taking Sides', 1570–71.

56 Rodríguez-Espinosa, 'Taking Sides', 1575.

57 Nieto McAvoy, 'A Spaniard in Hertfordshire', 171.

> as the only legitimate source of enlightened modernity. A similar process of 'othering' Spain allowed for idealizing (but no less distorted) representations of Spain by oppositional movements, most notably, romanticism.[58]

Arturo is aware of this perception and, although he admits the importance of informing the world about Spain's situation, most of his references to international journalists are negative. For instance:

> […] cuando me enfrenté con los periodistas, me encorajinó la seguridad cínica con que daban nuestra derrota por cierta y trataban de infiltrar sensaciones en sus despachos; como consecuencia, me dediqué a cumplir las órdenes oficiales con una furia salvaje …
>
> (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1106–07)

This quote also reveals the internal war within the propaganda office. Other journalists unapologetically support Franco's victories: 'Había textos que no disimulaban, entre malicias, la alegría de que Franco estuviera, como ellos decían, dentro de la ciudad' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1134–35).

In contrast, those journalists who support the Republic tend to fall for the stereotype of a romanticized Spain. For instance, Arturo is pleased to see an English journalist writing an 'historia humana' about the hardships faced by the people of Madrid, only to be disappointed:

> […] tuvo que describir a Gloria, que era rubia, como una morena de pelo endrino, con una rosa tras de la oreja 'porque los lectores de Londres piden un poco de color local y no quieren que se les robe su idea de Carmen'.
>
> (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1203)

This romanticized image of Spain contrasts with more nuanced 'historias humanas' in *La llama*. Another relevant example is the depiction of Ernest Hemingway, which has drawn scholarly attention, particularly in relation to Arturo's critique of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) in his 'Not Spain but Hemingway'.[59] Here Arturo states:

> […] the inner failure of Hemingway's novel—its failure to render the reality of the Spanish War in imaginative writing—seems to me due to the fact that he was always a spectator who wanted to be an actor, and who wanted to write as if he had been an actor. Yet it is not enough to

58 Sebastiaan Faber, *Anglo-American Hispanists and the Spanish Civil War: Hispanophilia, Commitment, and Discipline* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 7–8.

59 See Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (London: Random House, 1994 [1st ed. 1940]); and Arturo Barea, 'Not Spain but Hemingway', *Horizon*, 3 (1941), 350–61.

> look on: to write truthfully you must live, and you must feel what you are living.[60]

Similar ideas appear in *La llama*, where Arturo additionally accuses him of patronizing Spain:

> Cuando charlábamos en el patio del ministerio rodeados de las académicas esculturas, que le proporcionaban material inagotable para sus chistes, podía apreciar qué cerca estaba de entender las bromas de doble sentido en el idioma castellano, y qué lejos—a pesar de su innegable deseo de lograrlo—de conseguir hablar con nosotros de hombre a hombre.
>
> (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1241)

Arturo's description of Hemingway's approach contrasts with his description of his own work in the prologue to *The Track*. Hemingway's novel was not representative of the truth because he had not experienced it firsthand, he wrote it from an ivory tower ('el patio') and adopted a superior stance (unable to 'hablar con nosotros de hombre a hombre'). For Nieto McAvoy, Arturo's review

> […] must be read primarily as Barea's proclamation, in a particular moment of the early 1940s, that he himself was the true authoritative voice that could best interpret such cultural nuances to foreign readers. Hemingway's novel may be popular, but it was not a true representation of Spain. For the latter, the public needed Barea.[61]

Thus, Arturo's critique of all international journalists—not only Hemingway—can be seen not only as a critique of their attitudes towards Spain and the war and a symbol of the international powers' abandonment of the Republic but also as Arturo's way to foreground his role in reporting the war truthfully. Notably, Arturo does commend Hemingway for being one of the few to oppose Ilsa's persecution by the Communists.

Similar critiques appear in *La llama* related to other international visitors. Arturo criticizes how, after the Republican government's relocation to Valencia, Madrid becomes a playground for wealthy British supporters of the Republic. In fact, influential Republicans like Constancia de la Mora were critical of the foreign 'wartime tourists' who, despite the hardships of war, complained about delays and food shortages. However, most of these visitors contributed to propaganda efforts and raised significant funds and supplies for Republican hospitals back in their countries.[62] In *La llama*,

60 Barea, 'Not Spain but Hemingway', 361.
61 Nieto McAvoy, 'A Spaniard in Hertfordshire', 104.
62 Rodríguez-Espinosa, 'Taking Sides', 1575.

Arturo describes this phenomenon as 'esta moda de las visitas' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1217) and 'el flujo incesante de turistas que no cesaban de llegar a Madrid […], con muy buenas intenciones indudablemente, pero casi siempre egocéntricos' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1217). True to his direct approach, he names specific individuals:

> […] tres diputadas de la Cámara de los Comunes, la duquesa de Atholl, Eleanor Rathbone y Ellen Wilkinson; y con ellas Dame Rachel Crowdy, una dama de la alta sociedad interesada en obras de beneficencia.
>
> (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1217)

Significantly, some of these figures are praised in autobiographical narratives by other Republicans exiled in Britain, such as Esteban Salazar Chapela and José Antonio Balbontín, due to their support of the Republic.[63] Furthermore, Arturo cannot avoid mentioning the Non-Intervention Agreement again:

> No podía tomar parte en la conversación entre ellas pero me daban tentaciones de preguntarles descaradamente si no podían haber hecho algo sobre la no intervención sin venirse de juerga a Madrid.
>
> (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1218)

Interestingly, here Arturo notes Ilsa's efforts to welcome them, reflecting her interest in soft power, also evident in *Telefónica*. Arturo's mistrust of the international visitors, combined with his misogynistic prejudices, initially makes him reject Ilsa. However, as he observes her work and dedication, he realizes his biases. From the beginning, Ilsa emphasizes her commitment: 'Yo he venido aquí como una socialista y no como corresponsal de un periódico' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1146). Still, Arturo highlights their different levels of involvement: 'Ella no sufría la guerra civil en su propia sangre como yo; ella pertenecía a los otros, a los que van a lo largo del camino fácil de la acción política' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1174).

Ilsa's depiction of the war's international dimension and the foreign journalists differs significantly. She portrays the ongoing struggle between foreign journalists and Spanish censors but strives to depict her *alter ego* as deeply committed to the Republican cause. Anita asks herself: '¿Por qué estoy aquí?' and replies: 'Quiero pensar que pertenezco a este lugar […] hay que hacer que los de fuera sepan lo que ocurre aquí. Que se lucha. Para que

63 José Antonio Balbontín praises Ellen Wilkinson and Esteban Salazar Chapela refers to Lady Atholl as a friend of the Republic. See, respectively, José Antonio Balbontín, *Mis impresiones de Inglaterra*, ed., intro. & notas de Aitor Larrabide (Sevilla: Renacimiento, 2014), 220; and Esteban Salazar Chapela, *Perico en Londres*, ed., intro. & notas de Francisca Montiel Rayo (Sevilla: Renacimiento, 2019 [1ª ed. 1947]), 93.

no sea en vano' (*Telefónica*, 67). Later, Anita asserts: 'Porque me creo que vuestra guerra es mi guerra' (*Telefónica*, 160). These statements contrast with Arturo's view of Ilsa as part of 'los otros'. Ilsa's approach likely aimed to move the international readers and make them feel involved or even responsible, a sentiment also reflected in 'En lugar de una dedicatoria':

> Estoy en Inglaterra. Pero el zumbido de motores de avión se oye más que el chisporroteo de la madera húmeda de la chimenea. Tres pájaros negros surcan en un vuelo bajo y lento el apacible horizonte. ¿Aviones de maniobras o la fuerza aérea? Aquí tienen tiempo de formar a los pilotos porque Madrid ha resistido hasta ayer, no se rindió hace dos años y medio. (*Telefónica*, 9)

Ilsa establishes a temporal connection between the Civil War and the Second World War, emphasizing the Allies' moral obligation towards Spain.

Interestingly, Ilsa also seeks to convey the Spanish perspective on foreign visitors. Thus, Agustín says to Anita:

> Además, para un extranjero es imposible entender la psicología española, y como se trata de nuestra guerra, no debería olvidarlo nunca. Aquí no puede usted tomar decisiones según sus normas. Evite los errores habituales de los extranjeros. (*Telefónica*, 42)

Simms, an international journalist, also captures this idea: 'Nosotros estamos aquí por unos periódicos. Los españoles, por su vida' (*Telefónica*, 16). Both statements echo Arturo's sentiments in *La llama*. In fact, Ilsa goes a step further by depicting Anita as holding prejudices against the Spaniards to then criticize these biases:

> Pero qué absurdo, no se puede considerar enemigos a los reporteros a priori. Al final, Sánchez ayer lo entendió. Lo que no es poco para un español. Alto ahí, ese es otra vez uno de los prejuicios arrogantes de los que hablaba Sánchez. Exactamente igual de falso que la idea que tienen los españoles de los extranjeros. Tiene que conseguir ser una mediadora. (*Telefónica*, 83)

Ilsa recognizes the tendency among international journalists to patronize Spanish people but also challenges Agustín's view by noting that not all foreign visitors fit this mould. Anita's self-perception as 'mediadora' reflects Ilsa's aim with *Telefónica* itself—to act as a bridge between Spaniards and non-Spaniards—and aligns with her later work as a translator for Republican exiles. In her incomplete autobiography, Ilsa acknowledges the Spaniards' wariness for foreigners but finds it understandable, which shows her nuanced perspective: 'Two weeks in Spain had inured me to a

tinge of xenophobia—a most understandable reaction—in most Spaniards outside the official circles and an intellectual clique'.[64]

Nevertheless, Ilsa occasionally reproduces patronizing and exoticizing perspectives without question. When Anita talks about Spanish censorship, she claims: 'Va a impedir que la prensa extranjera se eche a perder por culpa de algún capitancillo español inculto' (*Telefónica*, 126). This remark portrays her as a saviour while depicting Spanish men—suggested by the indefinite 'algún'—as insignificant—implied by the diminutive suffix '-illo'—and uneducated. Similarly, she arguably exoticizes Spain by depicting certain Spanish characters in a melodramatic style, a tendency rarely applied to foreign characters. Aside from Agustín, who sometimes fits the temperamental and passionate 'macho' stereotype, and Valentín, depicted as exceptionally cruel, most negative portrayals involve Spanish women. Pepa embodies the 'hysterical' woman obsessed with appearances and her husband; Paquita is the classic malicious *femme fatale*, fixated on beauty and determined to harm Anita; and most women working at the Telefónica are vain and cruel towards each other.

The final significant group of international visitors depicted in both narratives is the International Brigades, whose contrasting portrayals offer a compelling basis for comparison. In *Telefónica*, the Brigades are primarily represented through the Belgian commissioner Gottfried, a fictionalized depiction of Gustsav Regler, the German commissioner of the XII International Brigade. When Warner, a British journalist, asks Anita for new story ideas, she suggests writing about the Brigades as she remembers Gottfriend's words: 'Tienes que procurar que el mundo sepa de nosotros […] Los de fuera tienen que saber lo que hemos hecho por Madrid. Los españoles no van a contarlo' (*Telefónica*, 140). Again, the division between foreigners and Spaniards emerges, this time from the former's perspective. However, Warner reminds Anita that censorship prohibits reporting on military matters. Despite this, Anita—allowing herself a romanticized vision of the Brigades ('En su imaginación, con un romanticismo que no se solía permitir' [*Telefónica*, 140])—takes the risk, which proves successful. The same event appears in *La llama* but with key differences. Here, Gustav Regler visits Ilsa, who later tells Arturo: 'Tiene razón. La Brigada Internacional es la cosa más importante que ha pasado durante años en el movimiento obrero y sería una inspiración tremenda para los trabajadores de todas partes' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1164). She further emphasizes their importance by contrasting them with their governments 'organizando la no intervención' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1165). Then, Ilsa goes against the rules and publishes stories about them, which attracts significant international attention. However, Arturo soon becomes furious since 'sólo las Brigadas aparecían en los despachos de

64 Barea-Kulscar, *Alone and Together*, 3.

prensa, como si ellos solos fueran los salvadores de Madrid' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1165) while '[el] pueblo de Madrid' and 'los soldados improvisados de los frentes de Carabanchel, del Parque del Oeste y de Guadarrama' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1165) were forgotten. In *La llama*, Ilsa is also frustrated, and both decide to censor further reports on the Brigades, which reinforces Arturo's 'sentimiento amargo de aislamiento entre nosotros, los españoles, y el resto del mundo' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1165). In contrast, in *Telefónica*, Ilsa barely engages with this issue, likely to avoid reflecting the very division Arturo describes. This omission is particularly striking compared to her thoughts expressed in 'Madrid, otoño de 1936'. Here, she acknowledges the initial success of her decision but also how foreign journalists increasingly focused on the International Brigades, sidelining Spanish fighters. She considers that this perspective was not only 'objetivamente falso' and 'ofensivo para los españoles', but also had lasting effects:

> […] todavía hoy me parece que en algunos libros sobre la Guerra Civil ronda como un fantasma tanto una sobrevaloración del papel de las Brigadas Internacionales como una infravaloración de los soldados españoles.[65]

Ilsa was aware of these negative consequences but chose to omit them in *Telefónica*, likely to pursue her goal of acting as a 'mediadora'. This intent appears clear when Anita states 'Trabajo aquí igual que luchan mis amigos de la Columna Internacional' (*Telefónica*, 40), reinforcing a sense of unity and encouraging the reader to empathize with the Brigades by equating them to the protagonist.

As covered above, *La llama* is very direct when criticizing the countries behind the Non-Intervention Agreement and the international visitors. Arturo aimed to present his trilogy as the definitive account of the war, positioning himself as an authoritative voice capable of tracing its origins and holding those responsible for the Republic's defeat accountable. In contrast, *Telefónica* adopts a subtler approach, avoiding direct mentions of the Non-Intervention Agreement and refraining from condemning any international powers. Ilsa presents herself as a 'mediadora', using fiction to illustrate both the Spaniards' and the international visitors' perspectives, the suffering faced by the Republicans and the significance of the Civil War globally.

Women at War

During the Second Republic, Spanish women gained unprecedented rights, including access to voting, divorce, to signing contracts and standing for parliament. However, these changes affected mainly urban areas while

65 Ilsa Barea-Kulscar, 'Madrid, otoño de 1936', in her, *Telefónica*, trad. Mantilla, ed. Pichler, 281–98 (p. 293).

Spain remained largely rural and unevenly developed.[66] Simultaneously, amid growing clashes between left-wing groups and Falangists, the Sección Femenina (SF) of the Falange was created in 1934. Their goals were 'the co-operation of women in the formation of an imperial and greater Spain; the encouragement of a national-syndicalist spirit in all aspects of life, and the promotion of love of the Patria'.[67] During the Civil War, the SF was essential on the Nationalist side, promoting traditional roles like sewing for propagandistic aims and caring for the wounded. In contrast, the image of the *miliciana* initially gained popularity on the Republican side. However, while she seemed to challenge traditional female roles, offering a revolutionary model of womanhood, the *miliciana* was more of a symbol designed to provoke men into fulfilling their 'virile' duty as soldiers.[68] Rather than encouraging women to fight, slogans like 'Hombres al frente, mujeres a la retaguardia' reinforced gender divisions, with women largely confined to supportive roles at home, which caused little opposition by militant women.[69] Yet, Esther Gutiérrez Escoda has documented 3,603 military women who were officially recognized as military members by the Republican authorities after the militias were dissolved in 1936.[70] Thus, although the war did not redefine traditional gender roles, women were key in resisting fascism, often transforming their traditional roles as mothers and housewives into active community support.[71]

Regarding politics, women's mobilization reflected the polarized political landscape, as female organizations aligned with specific political ideologies rather than forming a unified feminist front. Anarchists and dissident Marxists advocated for an antifascist and revolutionary fight, while communists and socialists rejected revolutionary aims, leading to the 'civil war within the civil war' and the sidelining of anarchist groups.[72] This ideological conflict impacted women's organizations, with groups like the Agrupación de Mujeres Antifascistas (AMA) and Mujeres Libres sharing goals like access to education and work, but lacking a true transclass unity or common gender agenda.[73] The AMA, linked to the Partido Communista de España, focused on antifascism, while Mujeres Libres, an anarchist

66 Mercedes Carbayo-Abegónzar, 'Shaping Women: National Identity through the Use of Language in Franco's Spain', *Nations and Nationalism*, 7:1 (2001), 75–92 (pp. 78–79).

67 Carbayo-Abegónzar, 'Shaping Women', 79.

68 Mary Nash, *Defying Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War* (Denver: Arden Press, 1995), 53.

69 Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, 101.

70 Esther Gutiérrez Escoda, 'Las mujeres militantes en la Guerra Civil Española. Política, Sociedad.y Administración Militar de la II República (1936–1939)', Doctoral dissertation (Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 2022), 149.

71 Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, 180.

72 Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, 63.

73 Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, 63–65.

organization, aimed to liberate women from oppression related to ignorance, gender and class.[74] Similarly, the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM) formed a Female Secretariat in 1936, mainly to recruit female members rather than addressing women's broader subordination. Ultimately, political allegiance, not gender solidarity, defined these groups' priorities and rivalries, preventing a cohesive women's movement.[75] Internationally, leftist movements were also struggling to address gender equality directly, often reproducing sexist attitudes or treating women's oppression as a subset of broader social issues rather than a distinct concern.[76]

During the Spanish Civil War, approximately 700 foreign women volunteered, a small fraction of the 35,000 international supporters of the Republican forces. Many were rejected due to perceived inadequacies, particularly mothers and those without relevant training.[77] Most served as nurses or translators, with few—like photographer Gerda Taro—taking on other roles. Ilsa's *Telefónica* offers invaluable insight into her experiences of the war as a foreign woman. Although Anita is the protagonist, she does not appear until page 36, which highlights the lack of women in that environment. While *La llama* barely explores the difficulties faced by women then, it serves as an interesting counterpoint to *Telefónica*. This contrast is evident in a moment depicted by both: their first meeting. Three key elements appear in both narratives. First, Arturo's/Agustín's irritation at being asked to work with a woman. In *La llama*, Arturo thinks: '¿Para qué demonios me mandaban a mí a una mujer de Valencia? Ya era bastante complicado con los hombres. Mis sentimientos, todos, se rebelaban contra ella' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1146). In *Telefónica*, Agustín says this directly to Anita: 'Ahí no hay mujeres' (*Telefónica*, 36) to which Anita firmly replies: 'Desde hoy sí, comandante Sánchez' (*Telefónica*, 36). Anita senses Agustín's thoughts and speaks up:

> Está claro que no quiere aquí ni extranjeras ni mujeres. Por desgracia hablo algunos idiomas y conozco la situación de la prensa internacional, conocimientos que al parecer aquí brillan por su ausencia. (*Telefónica*, 40)

There is also a sharp contrast in how Ilsa/Anita speaks to Arturo/Agustín. While Anita uses 'su voz más fría (y eligió ese registro conscientemente)' (*Telefónica*,

74 Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, 78.

75 Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, 93–97.

76 See Sharif Gemie, 'Anarchism and Feminism: a Historical Survey', *Women's History Review*, 5:3 (1996), 417–44; Rosa Mª Capel Martínez, 'Mujer y socialismo (1848–1939)', *Pasado y Memoria. Revista de Historia Contemporánea*, 7 (2008), 101–22; and Brigitte Studer, 'Communism and feminism', trans. Regan Kramer, *Clio. Women, Gender, History*, 41 (2015), 126–39 (p. 136).

77 Raanan Rein, 'The Meites Sisters and the Spanish Civil War: Women's Support for Republican Spain from Within and Without', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 22:4 (2023), 503–21 (p. 504).

40), Ilsa: 'Habló francamente de ella misma, ignorando o tal vez no enterándose de mi antagonismo' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1146), which makes her seem either unaware of the situation or avoiding confrontation. Ilsa's direct depiction of the rejection she faced for being a woman contrasts with her subtlety in depicting the war's international dimension. This more outspoken approach seems fitting to ensure the message reached contemporary readers, who might have not empathized with women's suffering as readily.

The second element is Arturo's/Agustín's ruthless physical judgment of Ilsa/Anita. In *La llama*:

> […] una cara redonda, con ojos grandes, una nariz roma, una frente ancha, una masa de cabellos oscuros, casi negros, alrededor de la cara, y unos hombros anchos, tal vez demasiado anchos, embutidos en un gabán de lana verde, o gris, o de algún color que la luz violada hacía indefinido. Ya había pasado de los treinta y no era ninguna belleza.
>
> (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1145–46)

In *Telefónica*:

> La mujer tenía los ojos muy claros—probablemente grises—y sus pupilas se empequeñecieron rápidamente. Tenía las cejas duras y una boca pálida —al menos sin pintar—muy recta. No era nada guapa. Tanto mejor […] era lo que él denominaba cuadrada, muy musculada, probablemente deportista. De treinta y tantos, no estaba mal de tipo, demasiado masculina para él, sobre todo la expresión de su cara y el comportamiento. (*Telefónica*, 37)

While both focus on similar physical features and draw the same conclusion (not pretty, masculine and in her thirties), *Telefónica* provides a more detailed description and emphasizes her masculinity more. Additionally, in *La llama*, Arturo judges Ilsa's personality: '¡Buena pieza me había caído en suerte! ¡Revolucionaria, intelectual y sabihonda!' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1147). These quotes illustrate how ugliness and beauty are used against women in misogynistic ways, becoming the measure of women's value under patriarchy.[78] Building on this point, Ela Przybylo and Sara Rodrigues argue that the ' "caricature of the ugly feminist" demonstrates that ugliness is as much about appearance as it is about behaviours that depart from the social norms acceptable in and to capitalist patriarchy'.[79] In both narratives, the female protagonist is rejected for being a woman,

78 Ela Przybylo & Sara Rodrigues, 'Introduction: On the Politics of Ugliness', in *On the Politics of Ugliness*, ed. Sara Rodrigues & Ela Przybylo (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 1–31 (p. 8).

79 Przybylo & Rodrigues, 'Introduction: On the Politics of Ugliness', 8.

which is intensified by her perceived ugliness. In *La llama*, Ilsa's ugliness is increased by her behaviour, as being revolutionary, intellectual and intelligent defies social norms for women. Moreover, despite his harsh judgment, Agustín/Arturo objectifies Anita/Ilsa. In *La llama*: ' "Pero … tiene una boca deliciosa", me dije a mí mismo. Y me asaltó de pronto una curiosidad irresistible por verla en detalle' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1149) and in *Telefónica*: 'Le gustaba esa boca, pensó que sería agradable besarla. Solo eso, nada más' (*Telefónica*, 41). This attitude illustrates the contradictions of the patriarchal treatment of women as Ilsa/Anita is simultaneously objectified and rejected for her ugliness. While there is a greater emphasis on ugliness in *Telefónica*, which shows the unfair treatment of women, the objectification is more intense in Arturo's account, which, significantly, recounts his own thoughts.

The third element concerns the motivations behind Ilsa's/Anita's involvement in the Civil War. In *Telefónica*, Agustín directly questions Anita: '¿No tenía nada que hacer afuera?' to which she reponds: 'Sí, tengo trabajo afuera. Pero ahora no hay nada tan importante como España. Y quiero imaginar que puedo y tengo que hacer una labor útil aquí' (*Telefónica*, 39). In *La llama*, Ilsa explains it as part of her life story without being asked: 'Bueno, a ella le parecía que era la cosa más importante para los socialistas que ocurría en el mundo y quería ayudar' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1147). Responding to Ilsa's more direct depiction of men's rejection of her, Agustín questions Anita's reasons. Her answer is also more passionate, emphasizing the war's importance from an international perspective and her desire to contribute more explicitly. Another key aspect is their interactions regarding titles and roles. In *La llama*, Ilsa says to Arturo '¿Quieres que te ayude, camarada?' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1146) and Arturo, shocked, asks her why she calls him 'camarada'. Ilsa, also surprised, answers by emphasizing her commitment and Arturo accepts reluctantly (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1146). In contrast, in *Telefónica*, Agustín says: '– Señorita (a una desconocida de abajo no la voy a llamar camarada), voy a bajar a hablar con usted' (*Telefónica*, 36). Anita's sharp retort, 'Aquí no debería llamar a nadie "señorita", comandante' (*Telefónica*, 37), shows her readiness to assert her presence and challenge Agustín's hostility. Therefore, Anita's firmness and Agustín's antagonism in *Telefónica* contrast with the more subdued interactions in *La llama*.

Furthermore, *Telefónica* allows the reader insight into Anita's judgment of Agustín, a perspective unavailable in *La llama*:

> Ella vio las sombras bajo sus pómulos y en las sienes, sus largas extremidades, las finas aletas de su nariz, el cansancio. Muy español, una raza susceptible, muy nervioso, probablemente muy decente e hipersensible, todo llevado al extremo, juzgó ella. (*Telefónica*, 37)

Anita judges Agustín physically and through cultural stereotypes, which mirrors the exoticizing views that Ilsa criticizes elsewhere and illustrates the persistent nature of these stereotypes in that environment.

Moreover, *Telefónica*, by merging fiction and testimony, introduces several female characters who are barely or not at all present in *La llama*. Concha, Lolita and Lucrecia stand out as some of the positive female characters. They share key traits: they like Anita, embrace the freedoms granted to women during the Republic, and defy traditional gender roles. Concha, likely inspired by one or more real individuals, is a working-class woman who looks after the refugees in the Telefónica's basement. She introduces the importance of education for women's liberation when asking Anita 'si no es mejor para las mujeres que estudien mucho […] ¿Y que no necesiten un hombre para ser algo?' (*Telefónica*, 105). The depiction of Lolita, Agustín's daughter, contrasts with Arturo's portrayal of his children, barely present in his trilogy. Ilsa reimagines Agustín with two children, a boy and a girl, who stay with their mother in the Telefónica's basement. Lolita embodies the rejection of traditional gender roles:

> […] una vez papá me regaló un avión. No vuela, pero se puede ver muy bien cómo está hecho por dentro. ¿Sabes? A Juanito le habían traído los Reyes uno grande que puede volar, y yo también quería uno. Pero mamá no quería porque soy una niña. Y yo ya tenía una muñeca, y a los chicos les regalan muchas cosas interesantes. (*Telefónica*, 53)

Agustín, despite his misogynistic views shared above, understands her frustration over being confined to a mothering role since childhood and being treated differently from her brother. Another example is Lucrecia, the only other woman with a significant role in the Telefónica and Anita's Spanish counterpart. Her male colleagues accept her because they see her as 'completamente asexuada' (*Telefónica*, 115). She is often defined as extremely ugly, which paradoxically earns her respect: since men cannot sexually objectify her, she is allowed to work with them. However, many men struggle to accept her power: '[Lucrecia] [d]ijo todo eso con mucha amabilidad, pero Manuel se dio perfecta cuenta de que había asumido el mando. Eso le molestó como hombre y como político' (*Telefónica*, 116). Like Anita, Lucrecia senses men's attitude towards her which she describes as 'esa arrogancia genuinamente masculina' (*Telefónica*, 116).

While these positive female characters embody the Republic's progressive ideals and freedoms afforded to women, Paquita and Pepa are echoes of an earlier mentality. They are obsessed with appearances and want a man at the centre of their lives. Paquita is depicted as obsessed with Agustín and cruel to Anita, criticizing her appearance—'se estaba pasando una vez más el peine seco por el pelo espeso que se quebraba (¡Qué seco tenía que estar,

qué mujer más torpe!), se empolvó la nariz, se limpió las uñas (¡Sin pintar!)' (*Telefónica*, 71)—and convincing Valentín to get rid of her. Pepa, who, symbolically, was named Doña Pura in the original manuscript, has delusional ideas about her social status that reflect the concept of 'cursilería', defined by Noël Valis as:

> […] a recurring (and unstable) historical sign of the uneven processes of modernity that have characterized nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spain […] lo cursi also stands as an internalized marker of inadequacy and insecurity in periods when class distinctions were evolving or breaking down, or when advances in modernization stimulated social transformations.[80]

The period portrayed saw rapid changes in class distinctions and Pepa embodies that internalized marker of inadequacy. Her insistence on being treated as part of a higher class while staying in the Telefónica with people who have lost everything seems absurd. Her pretensions are further emphasized by her luxurious mattress, expensive clothing and her demand to be addressed as 'doña'. This depiction is less pronounced in *La llama*, where Aurelia is a minor character. However, Arturo notes her dissatisfaction with moving to Lavapiés, as she feels it is beneath their class. Ilsa's creation of these characters through testimony and fiction illustrates how she embraced the contradictions inherent in autobiographical writing, as described by Gilmore, and used them to her advantage. This approach allowed her to transcend rigid genre boundaries and rely on self-representation to leave her position as an object—in which most men she encountered placed her—to embrace the agency involved in expressing her own experience of the war as a non-Spanish woman. Through the positive female characters, she offers hope as they embody qualities such as solidarity (especially towards other women), ambition, intelligence and dedication. The negative characters enabled her to explore women's internalized misogyny and the difficulties she faced as a result. As Pichler observes, while the portrayal of female characters is not free of clichés, it reflects Ilsa's didactic intent.[81]

Another crucial aspect in women's portrayal is the concept of 'ser fea', obsessively reiterated in *Telefónica*. All women mentioned above are often described as ugly, and even in accounts of bombings, the women who die are described in similar terms: 'había dos hermanas que debían de ser gemelas, feas, pobres niñas, y les cayó una bomba en su casa' (*Telefónica*,

80 Noël Valis, *The Culture of Cursilería: Bad Taste, Kitsch, and Class in Modern Spain* (Durham, NC/London: Duke U. P., 2003), 19.

81 Pichler, '*Telefónica* de Ilsa Barea-Kulscar', 335.

178). Breanne Fahs, who examines the concept of 'failed femininities' related to ugliness, argues:

> The specter of failure—of femininities that are devalued—seems to lead women not only to regulate and discipline their own bodies to avoid ugliness but also to devalue and make abject other women's bodies that they perceive as lower status. This twin process of self-regulation and the making of other women's bodies into spectacles of disgust constitutes the core of 'failed femininities'.[82]

It remains unclear whether Ilsa intended to criticize the persistent focus on women's physical appearance by both men and women or if she inadvertently perpetuated this dynamic herself. Anita's reflections on feeling judged by other women suggest that both forces were at play. After judging a woman physically, she wonders:

> 'Dios, ¿no estaré siendo injusta porque hay mujeres más guapas que yo?', se dijo Anita. Yo no soy así. Pero esas de ahí no me gustan; eso es todo; no tienen matices, tienen la voz ruda y los cuerpos estirados con movimientos de seducción aprendidos. (*Telefónica*, 70)

While she questions herself for judging other women, she too falls into this trap as her conclusion is another physical judgment. This dynamic mirrors how Ilsa depicts Anita's prejudices against the Spaniards to criticize those assumptions, yet later Anita expresses other prejudices without questioning them. Both examples highlight the challenges and limitations of this narrative that attempted to portray all parties' motives. Regarding the concept of 'failed feminities', it is also relevant that when Paquita's scheme to kidnap Anita fails, she feels: 'derrotada y fea' (*Telefónica*, 224), which reflects the ties between appearance and worth in patriarchal societies.

La llama also shows how beauty is a central value for women in patriarchal societies. Besides the descriptions of Ilsa seen above, Arturo's harsh portrayal of María reflects this: 'la menos atractiva de las cuatro mecanógrafas', 'un cuerpo huesudo lleno de ángulos', 'Su piel aceitunada tenía el aspecto de sucia', 'La cara […] ligeramente picada por la viruela' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 980). Przybylo and Rodrigues argue that ugliness operates through intersecting factors such as 'gender, ability, race, class, body size, health, sexuality, and age and in dialogue with other concepts such as "dirt" and "monstrosity" '.[83] Arturo's depiction of María exemplifies

82 Breanne Fahs, 'Imagining Ugliness: Failed Femininities, Shame, and Disgust Written Onto the "Other" Body', in *On the Politics of Ugliness*, ed. Rodrigues & Przybylo, 237–59 (p. 241).

83 Przybylo & Rodrigues, 'Introduction: On the Politics of Ugliness', 4.

this intersectionality, linking her perceived unattractiveness to body size, race, health and the notion of 'dirt'.

Another relevant dynamic in Arturo's depiction of gender involves his commitment to reflecting the truth and the relationship between the narrating I and the narrated I. When Arturo narrator looks back to his marriage to Aurelia and his 'official affair' with María, he views this arrangement as part of 'ser un buen burgués' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 934), which he now rejects. Similarly, he admits that his attitude towards María had been 'fría y egoísta' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 982), as he knew she was hoping to marry him, but he had no such intention. Eaude interprets this as:

> Just as Barea got rid of Aurelia and his children by plunging into his work, then evacuating them to the Levante […], so he got rid of María. It may not have been the kindest way to resolve his emotional problems: nevertheless, his unpleasantness is mitigated for the reader because it is he himself […] who provides the basic information about his own sentimental education, many negative aspects included.[84]

Thus, as part of Arturo's goal to portray the truth, '[e]ven in this most intimate area, Barea sought to explain the common problems of his generation'.[85] While it might be positive that Arturo did not conceal his past misogyny, he seems to justify his actions beyond his responsibility. He frames his behaviour as part of the education of the time and often hides behind his quest for true love, even after marrying Aurelia. Despite the temporal distance between the narrating I and the narrated I, he does not question his decisions to get married without love and out of pride and get rid of Aurelia and María. On the contrary, the narrator describes the war as an opportunity to free himself from his 'vida burguesa' and from both women: 'Me liberaría de las dos mujeres' (*La forja de un rebelde*, 1,067). As is common with autobiographies, Arturo appears to justify his actions—and misogyny—before the reader. As part of that justification, Aurelia and María, despite being surprisingly minor characters, are depicted negatively: Aurelia as bad-tempered, resentful and at times 'cursi', and María as needy, bland and ugly.

Conclusion

To conclude, this article has examined how Ilsa's *Telefónica* and Arturo's *La llama* employed different literary genres to present complementary perspectives on the Civil War. Arturo's trilogy, written as a truthful account with a strong historical dimension and often read as a novel, gains testimonial value from this combination. In contrast, *Telefónica* achieves its

84 Eaude, *Triumph at Midnight of the Century*, 95.
85 Eaude, *Triumph at Midnight of the Century*, 95.

testimonial aim by merging autobiography and fiction. In depicting the war's international dimension, Arturo adopts an authoritative voice to criticize the Non-Intervention Agreement, the international journalists, the 'wartime tourists' and even the International Brigades. As a Spaniard who lived through the conflict, the testimonial nature of his account reinforces his critique. *Telefónica*, by contrast, adopts a subtler approach. Ilsa blends fiction, testimony and autobiography to create characters that reflect both foreigners' and Spaniards' perspectives, even depicting her *alter ego* holding prejudices against the Spaniards to criticize those biases. She avoids direct references to the Non-Intervention Agreement or critiques of the international community. Instead, she offers a fictionalized yet experience-based story that invites readers to reach their own conclusions. She also sidesteps divisive topics between Spaniards and foreigners—such as the overshadowing of the people of Madrid by the International Brigades, despite expressing frustration with this elsewhere—to act as a 'mediadora', encourage solidarity and focus on the injustices done to the Republic.

The treatment of gender follows completely different approaches. *Telefónica* provides insight into Ilsa's experiences as a foreign woman during the war, again blending fiction and testimony. Her critique to the misogyny she endured is much more direct than her depiction of the war's international dimension, likely to ensure the message clearly reached contemporary readers less inclined to empathize with women's suffering. To this end, she introduces characters combining fiction and testimony to represent the freedoms granted to women under the Republic contrasted with figures who embody traditional mindsets. In the same line, *Telefónica* offers valuable insights into how beauty and ugliness are used under patriarchy to determine women's value. While *La llama* pays little attention to women's experiences, Arturo's prejudices offer a relevant contrast to Ilsa's account, such as the depiction of the couple's first encounter and the portrayal of María as ugly. Although Arturo admits his past misogyny, he downplays his responsibility in abandoning Aurelia and María, framing his actions as part of his generation's emotional education.

Ultimately, both narratives offer invaluable and complementary insights into the Spanish Civil War and their different narrative strategies and perspectives gain greater depth when read in dialogue.*

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