Personal Writing Goes Public: Social Commentary on Women's Lives in Carme Riera's Temps d'una espera

Lo personal sale al público: comentario social sobre la situación de la mujer en Temps d'una espera de Carme Riera

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Summary: In Carme Riera's personal writing she expresses her own opinions directly as she confronts some of the challenges women continue to face in contemporary society. In this study, we explore one of Riera's more personal and autobiographical works —*Temps d'una espera*— with the hope of gaining a better understanding of the self-mediation that occurs in the writing of autobiographical texts. I argue that by going public with her private writing, Riera helped to illuminate the struggles of at least one sector of Catalan life during the late 20th century, and by doing so she provides readers with important social commentary on the situation of women and their position in the public sphere.

Key words: Carme Riera. Feminism. Public sphere. Autobiography.

Resumen: En la escritura personal de Carme Riera ella expresa sus propias opiniones de una manera directa, al enfrentarse con algunos de los desafíos que siguen siendo cuestiones importantes en la vida de la mujer hoy en día. En este estudio, exploramos una de las obras más personales y autobiográficas de Riera, *Temps d'una espera*, con el propósito de entender mejor la auto-mediación que ocurre en el acto de escribir los textos autobiográficos. Demostraré que, al publicar su escritura personal, Riera ayudó a iluminar la lucha de por lo menos un sector de la vida catalana durante las últimas décadas del siglo XX, y que por lo tanto ella proporciona a los lectores un comentario social importante sobre la situación de la mujer y su posición en la esfera pública.

Palabras clave: Carme Riera. Feminismo. Esfera pública. Autobiografía.

As Spain embarked on its tumultuous and rapid transition from the decades-long dictatorship to a democratic system of government, the changes occurring in the social and cultural sectors of society were palpable. A sphere of public authority that had been tightly controlled by the Franco regime was blown wide open in the years after Franco's death with the successful establishment of a democratic parliamentary constitutional monarchy. However, in the area of women's rights change occurred at a slightly slower pace. The initial granting of these rights was not completed until the 1980s, after the approval of the 1978 Constitution, with the decriminalization of divorce in 1981 and the very partial legalization of abortion in 1985[1]. To win these and other victories proponents of women's rights took to the streets, held meetings, wrote and spoke about the need for equality, and generally raised a ruckus whenever they could. The people who carried out these activities and formed this group of unknown and ever-changing number of strangers constituted a public, and what's more, I contend that they represented a counterpublic, the activity of which continued well into the 1980s and 1990s. One example of the continuing activity of this transformative counterpublic can be found in Carme Riera's autobiographical text *Temps d'una espera*. Riera employs the genre of autobiography to write about a transgressive topic: in her case, motherhood becomes a path to claiming power for women in society through both intellectual and biological creative authority. We will see how by going public with her personal writing Riera's work contributes to the pursuit of a transformative feminist counterpublic, helping to illuminate the struggles of at least one sector of Catalan life during the late 20th century and by doing so provides readers with important social commentary on the situation of women and their position in the public sphere. Before exploring Riera's text, however, we will briefly review some critical theory regarding public sphere studies that will be helpful to our analysis and discussion.

Perhaps the most influential work in establishing the conversation around the notion of a public sphere continues to be Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. As many critics have pointed out in response to Habermas's text, the late appearance, in 1989, of an English translation sparked renewed interest in this early work by the author, particularly given its timing in relation to other major world events including the fall of the Berlin Wall. Since then, Habermas's text has inspired responses from feminists, political scientists, philosophers, historians and many others. His ideas continue to generate debate and are worth summarizing here, along with the criticism of a few key scholars of public sphere studies, as a point of departure for our discussion of Riera's text. Two of the most important concepts of Habermas's theory, that Nancy Fraser and others have highlighted, continue to be the identification of the public sphere as an "arena of discursive relations" and the definition of the public sphere in the political realm as one

[1] In March 2010, Spain passed a more liberal abortion bill that permits voluntary abortions through the first 14 weeks of pregnancy, and up to 22 weeks in certain cases. This law is scheduled to take effect on July 5, 2010 (Ceberio Belaza)

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"constituted by private people," in contrast to the state. These ideas represent a vital part of Michael Warner's argument while also occupying a central place in the feminist revisions of Nancy Fraser, Seyla Benhabib, and Joan Landes. Essentially, Habermas's theory describes the development of a public sphere that defines itself by a practice of debate and an exchange of ideas between private citizens in a public arena. He also demonstrates a preference for a single public sphere, *the* public, rather than imagining a use for multiple publics. As Nancy Fraser explains, Habermas privileges the single public throughout *Structural Transformation* as the ideal situation whereas *the proliferation of a multiplicity of publics represents a departure from, rather than an advance toward, democracy* (122). Fraser also highlights the fact that Habermas *casts the emergence of additional publics as a late development signaling fragmentation and decline* (122). This idea of the public sphere as "one and indivisible" leads us to one of the key problems of Habermas's theory that several feminist critics, including Fraser, have identified[2]: mainly, he fails to consider women as part of the bourgeois public sphere.

Like Nancy Fraser, Seyla Benhabib recommends that feminists engage with Habermas's theory critically while also entering into a dialectical alliance with it. Benhabib also advocates for the "feminization" of practical discourse, which will require questioning *unexamined normative dualisms as those of justice and the good life, norms and values, interests and needs* (95). Essentially, her proposal for a post-Habermasian theory and practice of public participation requires a reworking of old perceptions and attitudes to make space in public for so-called feminine concerns such as child care, reproductive rights, domestic violence, and care for the sick, the young and the elderly (BENHABIB: 94). To be effective, this refashioning of old perceptions must be practiced in the everyday discourse of life, morality, jurisprudence and the state. Similarly, Nancy Fraser does not propose to discard Habermas's theory, but rather she suggests that we regard it as a point of departure rather than as a final destination. Her main concerns with Habermas's specific elaboration of his idea are the systematic exclusion of women and the fact that he theorizes a *bourgeois* public sphere that lost its relevance long ago. Fraser asserts that *Some new form of public sphere is required to salvage that arena's critical function and to institutionalize democracy* (111). Unlike Habermas, Fraser favors a system of multiple publics rather than a single public. Specifically, she advocates for alternative publics, which she calls subaltern counterpublics *in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs* (123). Fraser cites the various *journals, bookstores, publishing companies, film and video distribution networks, lecture series, research centers, academic programs, conferences, conventions, festivals, and local meeting places* of the *late-twentieth-century U.S. feminist subaltern counterpublic* as well as the new terms invented by this group for *describing social reality, including 'sexism,'. . . sexual harassment* as evidence of its existence (123). She affirms that "Armed with such language, we have recast our needs and identities, thereby reducing, although not

[2] See, for example, *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse* edited by Johanna MEEHAN, or *Feminism, the Public and the Private* edited by Joan LANDES.

eliminating, the extent of our disadvantage in official public spheres" (123), something that also occurred to a certain degree during Spain's transition to democracy as women began to claim cultural, social, political, and legal space for themselves. In the end, at the core of Fraser's recommendations lies the elimination of social inequality, and therefore the inclusion of women and every other group excluded from the bourgeois public sphere, and the privileging of multiple publics over a single public sphere. While Benhabib's and Fraser's proposals may seem radical or impossible, their ideas have generated further thought in the area of publics, alternative publics, and what Michael Warner calls counterpublics[3]. Warner in particular engages with Nancy Fraser's argument and endeavors to elaborate and clarify her concept of subaltern counterpublics.

In his influential work *Publics and Counterpublics*, Warner, like his predecessors, also reflects the influence of Habermas's idea of the public sphere as an arena of discursive relations. He begins the chapter from which the book takes its title by describing three different senses of the word "public". First he defines "*the* public" versus "a public" where "*the* public" represents a "kind of social totality" that defines "the people in general", and "a public" refers to a more specific, well-defined and finite public like a theatre audience or those in attendance at a sporting event or concert (65). But it is the third sense of "public" that Warner focuses on and defines as *the kind of public that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation* (66). By "texts" Warner does not mean just written discourse, but any act—whether written, performed or spoken— that constitutes a discursive text. For Warner, such a public must be a self-organized relation among strangers that consists of speech that is both personal and impersonal, is constituted through mere attention, occupies a social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse, and acts historically according to the temporality of its circulation, all of which should culminate in poetic world making (65-124). For all these criteria to be fulfilled in an attempt to establish a public *all discourse or performance addressed to a public must characterize the world in which it attempts to circulate and it must attempt to realize that world through address* (WARNER: 114); this is what constitutes poetic world making. Furthermore, any public that conceives itself as a counterpublic *maintains at some level, conscious or not, an awareness of its subordinate status. The cultural horizon against which it marks itself off is not just a general or wider public but a dominant one* (WARNER: 119). It is this question of what constitutes a counterpublic on which I wish to focus for the moment. In his discussion of counterpublics, Warner begins with Nancy Fraser's concept of subaltern counterpublics. As he refines the definition of a counterpublic, Warner wonders *why would counterpublics of this variety [the subaltern variety described by Fraser] be limited to 'subalterns'?* and *How are they different from the publics of U.S. Christian fundamentalism, or youth culture, or artistic bohemianism*" (119). He determines that they are no different:

[3] Joan LANDES offers a discussion regarding the radical nature of the proposals of BENHABIB and FRASER.

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> *Each of these is a similarly complex metatopical space for the circulation of discourse; each is a scene for developing oppositional interpretations of its members' identities, interests, and needs. They are structured by different dispositions or protocols from those that obtain elsewhere in the culture, making different assumptions about what can be said or what goes without saying. . . . such publics are indeed counterpublics, and in a stronger sense than simply comprising subalterns with a reform program* (119).

Essential to Warner's definition of a counterpublic is the notion of conflict, the "awareness of its subordinate status", and a sense of risk in belonging to the group. He maintains that counterpublics are similar to publics in a number of ways including the need to address strangers in order to exist, but he says that unlike in a public those strangers addressed by counterpublic discourse *are socially marked by their participation in this kind of discourse; ordinary people are presumed not to want to be mistaken for the kind of person who would participate in this kind of talk or be present in this kind of scene* (WARNER: 120). Warner explains that participation in a counterpublic becomes a transformative experience: *The subordinate status of a counterpublic does not simply reflect identities formed elsewhere; participation in such a public is one of the ways in which its members' identities are formed and transformed. A hierarchy or stigma is the assumed background of practice. One enters at one's own risk* (121). It is this desire for transformative change that motivated the Spanish women's movement beginning in the 1960s and continuing into the late 1980s.

In the narrative present of Riera's diary, 1986, feminism and women's rights had been newly institutionalized with the declaration of equality in the 1978 Constitution and the creation of the Instituto de la Mujer in 1983 (LARUMBE, 2002; BROOKSBANK JONES, 1997). While the alternative public established by feminists in the 1970s started out as a counterpublic, that is, a public formed in opposition to the dominant general public which sought not only to effect public policy, but also to change the "space of public life" (WARNER, 2002: 124), in 1986 this feminist public already had been incorporated into the political structure of the state through the creation of the Instituto de la Mujer, the official public space from which women's rights and women's issues would be addressed. However, the legal status of women and the official public image of women's rights as defined by the government almost never mirror the everyday lives of the women who one assumes were intended to receive the benefits of this official, public status. As evidenced by the continuing fight for abortion rights during the 1980s as well as the general lack of change in attitudes toward women (BLANCO CORUJO and MORANT DEUSA, 1995: 56) despite significant legal victories, it is clear that in 1986 there was still much work to be done on the road to equality. In other words, feminist counterpublic discourse continued to play a role in changing the "space of public life", most specifically through literature and writing but also through radical activism as well as institutional means. Carme Riera's autobiography of motherhood, a topic that had not yet been addressed by Spanish writers, serves as one example of how a transformative feminist counterpublic remained active. Through its publication and circulation, Riera's private writing ceases to be a communication intended for her daughter and becomes an address to a public

of strangers. The intended recipient for her commentary on the social and historical status of women becomes anyone who will pay attention and her commentary on the continuing lack of equality experienced by women encourages readers to participate in making a change, thus contributing to the discourse of a transformative counterpublic. Earlier autobiographical and semi-autobiographical texts served as a precursor to Riera's work and asked some of the questions that Riera attempts to answer. To cite just two examples, both Montserrat Roig's *L'hora violeta* and Rosa Montero's *Crónica del desamor* wonder about women balancing their public and private selves, they discuss the difficulties of marriage and cohabitating with men, of raising children while trying to sustain or establish a career. For her part, Riera begins to suggest how society might change its thinking about motherhood, a change that must begin with the empowerment of women through creation, both intellectually and biologically. In this way Riera's work reflects the legacy of the Transition with respect to the women's movement and the position of women in society.

In *Temps d'una espera* Carme Riera reveals her innermost thoughts to her unborn daughter during the nine months of pregnancy. She catalogs details of every kind, including the reactions of the baby's father to her movements, visits to the doctor, advice given to her by friends, reflections about what life might be like inside the womb, and thoughts she wishes to share with her daughter about her experience of the pregnancy and about society and life in general outside the womb. As she affirms in her prologue, Riera did not originally intend to publish the diary, but when she mentioned the existence of the diary at a conference, a group of North American academics urged her to consider publishing it. By making public her writing about an intensely private space such as the womb and a mother's connection to her yet-to-be-born daughter, Riera exposes the reality of gestation in both its biological and intellectual/literary senses, and thus reaffirms the place of women in the public space while also making a concern historically relegated to the feminine, domestic space a public matter for all of society to consider. In 2010, the age of rampant blog writing, Riera's text would not be considered new or unusual. These days it is easy to find blogs and advice columns, as well as tell-all essays, diaries, and letters published in the form of books, regarding everything related to parenting from advice for new mothers to the advantages and disadvantages of co-sleeping and from how to talk to your teen to a mother's confession of combining drinking and play dates[4]. The point is that motherhood and parenting seem to be everywhere these days. The advent of the new media permits any woman (or man or child) who can open an account on sites like blogspot the ability to share experiences, even if in an impersonal and virtual medium.

However, during the nine months from late 1986 to early 1987, when Riera wrote her diary, and even in 1998 when she published it, the blog barely existed and

[4] To provide just one example, among the long list of blogs on the website of *The New York Times*, which cover just about every niche of news-reading publics imaginable, one can find a blog titled "Motherlode: Adventures in Parenting" authored by Lisa BELKIN.

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was certainly not the phenomenon it is today. Riera's diary reveals a private space that ordinarily is only shared by other women, and its publication signified a shift of that private space into the public eye. This is not to say that pregnancy and motherhood have been a secret among women until this moment, rather it highlights the fact that even just twelve years ago the literary telling of a woman's intimate experience of pregnancy occurred with less frequency. The diary serves as a sort of autobiography of Riera's second pregnancy and as a biography of her daughter's first moments of existence. But it is also more than that. It expresses the preoccupations and hopes of a mother for a girl being born in Spain in the late 1980s, which are surely different than those one might express for a boy being born at the same time. In fact, as many other critics have pointed out, the entire tone of the text makes an obvious shift when Riera discovers that she is carrying a girl: *Ara que sé que ets una nina, un dolç projecte de nina, crec que aquestes notes tenen un altre sentit* (…) *A partir d'ara no sols escric a la recerca d'una destinatària implicada en els esdeveniments d'una manera directa sinó també d'una còmplice amb la qual compartesc el gènere i la història* (85) (Now that I know you are a girl, a sweet project of a girl, I think that these notes have another meaning (…) From now on I not only write directly to an addressee implicated in the events but to an accomplice with whom I share a gender and a history)[5]. In spite of the fact that Riera's aunt asserts that *En els temps que corren* (…) *és molt millor tenir nins* ("In these times . . . it's much better to have boys") especially since she had read around that time that one hundred girls had been sexually assaulted, Riera feels that in her daughter she now has an accomplice with whom to share the history of women and to continue the fight for equality. Riera responds to her aunt with a "No comment" and assures her daughter that her family will love her as soon as they see her and that her aunt will be happy to have someone to inherit all her jewels. From this point on, Riera's text takes on a more historical and political quality as she instructs her daughter in the stories of mythological women, the political situation of women during the Transition and before, as well as her family history and stories of the women who raised her. While many critics locate Riera's historical and political statements within the context of homosexual love and the construction of the self as subject through that homosexual relationship[6], I also find it relevant to focus on the text as a private document that when made public becomes part of the socio-historical and political discourse on the status of women in Spain.

In a moment toward the end of the pregnancy, Riera reflects on the existence of exclusively male clubs and societies and wonders if men created them out of envy for the feminine spaces of reclusion that women inhabited in earlier times, often to seclude themselves during menstruation. Riera seems almost nostalgic in her discussion of a time when women had their own space that perhaps was necessary to feel in harmony with oneself and with other women (152). She says that women have lost that space, and that men have conquered it. Now, it is women who are excluded from the mysterious meetings of men. Still, the diary itself constitutes a female space created by

[5] All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
[6] See, for example, the articles by Kathryn EVERLY or María CAMÍ-VELA.

Riera for herself and her daughter. It is a private space that exists within the public world, available to anyone with access to the text. But perhaps it is not completely accessible to everyone. Riera does make this very private event —the gestation of her second child— into a published text, but the text is a mediated space. As the author, Riera controls what is written, she is the creator, the mother of this text, just as she is the creator, with the help of the father, of her daughter. She shapes the text and reveals to the reader, through a narrative self, what she deems important, just as in an autobiography where the author employs a narrator to construct a past self that matches the image that the author wishes to project, with a greater or lesser degree of truth. Riera, rather than inhabiting a public space that was previously denied to her (GÓMEZ REUS and USANDIZAGA, 2008: 24), opts for inhabiting a very private space, that of motherhood and the womb, in a very public way through publishing and through the discussion with her unborn daughter of important feminist theory and practices. Motherhood becomes a site of activism, where new wave feminists can reclaim and even exalt their biological nature while maintaining their independence as beings who think, write and create in an intellectual sense. It is no wonder, then, that Riera expresses her preference for Adrienne Rich's brand of feminism over that of Simone de Beauvoir. According to Riera, Rich *Defensa, per damunt de qualsevol altre, el dret de ser dones, persones de sexe femení, i, en conseqüència, també la possibilitat de ser mares, sense entrebancs ni models imposats* (110) ("Defends, above all else, the right to be women, people of the female sex, and, consequently, also the possibility to be mothers, without obstacles nor imposed models"). In an entry about her own abilities as a domestic angel, Riera references her mother's and grandmother's futile attempts to teach her to sew. She says that her mother, although having attained a degree in semitic philology that she never used, only scolded her for her domestic inabilities. In the end she revindicates the transformative quality of weaving and connects herself and her daughter to a long line of mythological women who sewed and gave birth:

> *Filar, teixir o cosir, activitats que ja no són necessàries en la vida domèstica del món industrializat, foren considerades en èpoques remotes com a poders transformadors relacionats amb la vida i la mort, i, naturalment, amb la maternitat* (…) *Les Parques són femenines, la Balanguera, també, i Ariadna treu del laberint el seu enamorat mitjançant un fil* (141).
>
> Spinning, weaving or sewing, activities that are no longer necessary in the domestic life of the industrialized world, long ago were considered transformative powers related to life and death, and naturally, to motherhood. (…) The Fates are feminine, the Balanguera[7], also, and Ariadne rescued her lover from the labyrinth by using a thread.

[7] The Balanguera is the official anthem of Majorica. It was inspired by the 1903 poem of the same name by Joan Alcover i Maspons. It features a feminine character called "Balanguera", who reflects on the past and the future through weaving.

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Like Ariadne, Riera uses her own thread to find her way out of the patriarcal labyrinth and to create a space for women. In *Temps d'una espera* Riera fuses her creative work (writing) with her re-creative (or reproductive) work as she knits her story, and that of her daughter, with a pen as her needle and blue ink as her thread. In an entry dated December 31, 1986, Riera toasts her daughter saying: *Jo brind per tu, en el secret d'aquesta plana, amb tinta blava, aixec la ploma i brind per tu, el meu altre jo, la filla que em fa ser mare* . . . (93-94) ("I toast to you, in the secret of this page, with blue ink, I raise my pen and I toast to you, my other self, the daughter who will make me a mother. . . ."). In that moment, she and her daughter become two halves of one whole, a notion she references later in the text, as she writes their story both with her pen and with her body.

Although not strictly an autobiography, Riera's text, in the form of diary entries, does present a history of the author's experience of biological gestation as well as a pre-history of her daughter's life. Riera, therefore, writes for herself but also, and perhaps more importantly, she writes for and to her daughter. As other critics have recognized, in Riera's text gestation becomes synonymous with both biological reproduction and intellectual production. She stakes her claim to these creative forces —both the biological and intellectual— throughout the work. She affirms:

> *Concebre, generar, produir, gestar, donar a llum, parir. Paraules que s'apliquen també a la creació literària, considerada com un part. No deixa de ser curiós que l'activitat intel·lectual hagi estat vetada durant tants d'anys a la dona.* (…) *Ara ja no. Ara ja estam iniciant-nos en la igualtat, acostumant els homes a ser els nostres companys, la qual cosa no és sempre fàcil* (180).
>
> Conceive, generate, produce, gestate, give birth, bear children. Words that also apply to literary creation, which is considered a birth. It never ceases to be strange that intelluctual activity should be prohibited to women during so many years (…) Not any more. Now we are already initiating ourselves in equality, getting men accustomed to being our companions, which is not always that easy.

In her discussion of autobiographical manifestos, Sidonie Smith maintains that *autobiographical writing has played and continues to play a role in emancipatory politics* (434). She contends that *The autobiographical manifesto asserts unqualifiedly, even exuberantly, both the politicization of the private and the personalization of the public, effectively troubling the binary complacencies of the* ancien régime *of selfhood with its easy dichotomization of private and public* (436-437). Through this theoretical lens we can view Riera's more political comments in her diary as private manifestations of the public struggle for women's rights that she maps on her pregnant body. She employs an intellectual means of creation —writing— to discuss her biological means of creation, and thus manifests both the biological and intellectual power of women, on the page and on the body, even going so far as to

equate the two by calling her diary *un úter de paper* (123) ("a paper uterus"). She locates women's liberation in the appropriation of the act of creating:

> *No entenc com les dones no hem fet valdre molt més aquesta facultat meravellosa, aquest do impagable que suposa donar vida, i no hem transformat aquesta prerrogativa en arma . . . amb la qual, si no canviar, almenys renovar el món. . . . La maternitat ha constituït, bàsicament, un lloc de reclusió, i no un lloc de creació expansiva. De vegades hem abdicat de les nostres prerrogatives, d'altres les hem cedit estúpidament* (174).
>
> I don't understand how women have not valued more this fantastic ability, this invaluable gift that assumes giving life, and have not transformed this privilege into a weapon . . . with which, if not to change, at least to repair the world. . . . Motherhood basically has constituted a place of seclusion, and not a place of expansive creation. Sometimes we have abdicated our privileges, other times we have stupidly given them up.

Although she laments the fact that women have not turned their reproductive power into a weapon to improve the world, she suggests that maternity should be considered a space of creative expansion alongside the space of intellectual creative expansion that women in Spain reclaimed during the transition to democracy. And while she admits that considerable progress had been made during Spain's Transition, she indicates throughout the text that women still have much work to do, specifically she informs her daughter,

> *Durant aquests anys —l'edat que et separa a tu del teu germà [13 years]— la situació de la dona ha millorat en el nostre país, no n'hi ha dubte. La qual cosa no vol dir que no necessitam seguir reivindicant la igualtat davant de la llei, fins i tot en la vida quotidiana. La diferència biològica no pot ser només una càrrega. No ha de ser-ho. Cal lluitar per un món més just, més honest. El feminisme és una qüestió moral* (169).
>
> During these years —the number of years that separate you from your brother— the situation of women has improved in our country, there's no doubt about that. Which isn't to say that we don't need to continue to revindicate equality before the law, most importantly in everyday life. Biological difference cannot be just a burden. It shouldn't be. We must fight for a more just, more honest world. Feminism is a moral question.

Assertions such as this one convert Riera's seemingly personal diary written for her daughter into a public autobiographical manifesto that urges her daughter's generation, and other future generations of women, to continue fighting for equality, not only in terms of legal rights but in their everyday lives. When Riera remarks on her husband's worries regarding the difficulty she might have coordinating her work with the care of the baby, her words become a political statement: *'Compt amb el teu ajut', li he dit. 'Ara estàs menys ocupat que aleshores, quan tenies una feina realment difícil, i absorbent. Contra*

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Franco vivíem pitjor, molt pitjor' (168) ("'I'm counting on your help', I told him. 'Now that you are less busy than before, when you had a really difficult, engrossing job. Against Franco, we lived worse, much worse'"). Later in that same entry she acknowledges that some women still suffer in their domestic life from violence perpetrated by their husbands and that it's a public problem yet to be resolved, but she says that for *les sortades, les que tenim companys intel·ligents i capaços, hem començat a compartir les tasques*, ("the lucky ones, those of us that have intelligent and capable companions, we have begun to share the chores") signifying a change in the domestic sphere that has allowed women to maintain fulfilling professional lives while still enjoying the experience of motherhood and family life. In this way the personal becomes political and the political becomes personal. As she says, feminism is a moral question, a question of human equality.

While Riera's personal writing may not be considered by some to constitute a militant feminist autobiographical manifesto, it does suggest, in not-so-subtle language, the participation in a counterpublic of women who refuse to accept the status quo with regards to their reproductive and intellectual creative spaces. As Michael Warner tells us, *Counterpublics are spaces of circulation in which it is hoped that the poesis of scene making will be transformative, not replicative merely* (122). Indeed, Riera's text describes physical transformation as well as suggesting intellectual transformation as she imparts the knowledge of the past on her daughter while insisting on a better future for all of us. In order to effect this transformation, Riera is forced outside the private space of maternity and the womb as Kathryn EVERLY affirms:

> *Sin embargo, la necesidad de navegar por la precaria historia de la mujer e intentar reivindicar la posición de la mujer embarazada dentro del marco socio-histórico empuja a la autora afuera de su propio cuerpo. Riera habla de la mitología* (36-37), *el discurso religioso aristotélico* (59) *y la institución de la maternidad* (146), *entre otros temas históricos* (305).

Not only is Riera forced outside her own body, but she and her text find themselves navigating a counterpublic sphere that had only recently been born itself. It is through participation in this transformative feminist counterpublic during Spain's Transition that Riera, and other women of her generation, could begin to negotiate a public subjectivity. By making her personal writing public, Riera continues to challenge society's notions of female subjectivity and what it means to be equal.

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