

The Spaces of Martín Marco

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Abstract

In *La colmena*, Camilo José Cela places his characters in an environment of fragmentation and vigilance that reproduces the Franco regime's desire for authoritarian control, bolstered by harsh laws that encouraged vigilance among its citizens. Though Cela once likened the workings of his novel to the intricate gears of a clock, one character, the wandering vagabond Martín Marco, threatens the integrity of the system by seemingly remaining outside it. Through a close reading of the geography of the novel and of the spaces in which Martín maneuvers, I explore the permeable boundary between private and public space and how this breakdown affects personal networks. Martín's experience of space and place reveals that in the difficult postwar *años del hambre*, even fragmented spaces and gaps fall short of offering any type of refuge because they too form part of a disciplinary structure that has little tolerance for vagrant individuals.

*Aquí, Madrid, entre tranvías
y reflejos, un hombre: un hombre solo.*
— Ángel González

The intricate structure of Camilo José Cela's *La colmena* allows the author the flexibility to position his characters in a multitude of locations throughout postwar Madrid. More than a story, his novel is the portrayal of an environment, a habitat. *La colmena*'s three days of action progress over seven chapters that present the plot in scrambled order. Its fragmented storylines appear throughout the text in seemingly unconnected vignettes, thereby creating the title's beehive, made up of individual worker bees toiling in their separate cells.¹ In addition, Cela himself likened the structure of his work to the inner gears of a clock: "múltiples ruedas y piecitas que se precisan las unas a las otras para que aquello marche" (qtd. in Sobejano, *Novela* 76). *La colmena* extends the ordered systems of the clock and the beehive to Madrid, a city that the Franco regime—especially its Falangist sectors in the early 1940s—considered a blank slate that would "pay for the sins" of the Second Republic and regain its glory as center of an empire. Like a precise timepiece, a functioning, ordered system would be most appealing to those sectors of society that had rebelled against an elected government that they considered chaotic and weak. In order to discipline its new capital, the Franco regime enacted penal and spatial practices that encouraged vigilance among its ordinary citizens and complicity with the state apparatus of repression. In a similar fashion, the narrative structure of *La colmena* reproduces the regime's authoritarian control through a technique of fragmentation and vigilance.

From the fragmented time and space of Cela's story emerges one character that serves as an unwitting and unintentional guide to the city: Martín Marco, the practically homeless and usu-

¹ See Dougherty, Durán, Foster, and Sobejano ("Olor." "Prólogo." *Novela* 76-81) for comments on this narrative structure.

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ally penniless poet who appears in every chapter, serves as a common link among many other characters and their storylines, and is the focus of the novel's open-ended conclusion.² Through a close reading of the geography of the novel and of how Martín experiences the spaces through which he maneuvers, I explore the permeable boundary between public spaces and private places. The novel's fragmented structure eliminates the masses from the city and leaves individual characters exposed. As a result, there is no place in the urban "hive" that offers complete refuge. Furthermore, the fragmentation of space creates voids or gaps in the city that initially appear outside the system of vigilance. In a time such as the postwar *años del hambre*, I argue, even these spaces fall short of offering refuge to those who wander among them. Instead, they too form part of the dominant disciplinary structure; fragmentation's pieces leave gaps that are just as disciplined as the spaces where the presence of the authoritarian state is more obvious. Through Martín Marco, Cela examines the effects of this spatial order on a certain kind of inhabitant of postwar Madrid.

My use of the terms *space* and *place* in the context of disciplinary Madrid follows the conceptualization of these ideas in the tradition of humanist geography, which considered not just the physical characteristics of landscape and topography, but the meaning attached to these through their human usage. For the humanist geographers, place can be defined as experienced space, or space with a memory. "Space' is more abstract than 'place.' What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (Tuan 6). Place is "a way of understanding the world"—one that both informs and reflects a person's experience (Cresswell 11). On the other hand, as the unknown, space carries with it not only the promise of new experiences but also the threat and vulnerability of being exposed. Space provides room for movement, yet the stability of place offers a chance for pause and refuge (Tuan 6). Both space and place are integral parts of human experience and one is necessary for the recognition of the other: "Human lives are a dialectical movement between shelter and venture, attachment and freedom" (Tuan 54). With this in mind, the microcosm of *La colmena*, especially as Martín Marco experiences it, becomes a study of the public and private space of postwar Madrid and demonstrates the way in which neither the freedom of space nor the shelter of place can be fully realized. Because he is essentially homeless Martín constantly moves in and out of potentially safe places that offer no refuge and threatening spaces that provide, ironically, his only opportunities to relax. *La colmena's* narrative structure illustrates how distinctions between space and place break down in the context of Franco's Madrid, for neither spatial concept connotes an escape from the discipline that Foucault termed a "micro-physics of power:" the "dispositions, maneuvers, tactics, techniques, functionings" that mold an individual into a useful force as both a "productive body and a subjected body" (26). In Franco's hive, as in Cela's, each "bee" has its function, yet in order to for it to fulfill that function, it must have a place from which perform it. Although place and space are supposedly individually determined, *La colmena* reveals the extent to which the fascist city regulated movement and molded the experience of its citizens.

2 Several critics have addressed Martín's qualifications as the protagonist of a novel with so many storylines. For example, David Henn notes that neither J.L. Alborg nor Santiago Vilas consider Martín to be the protagonist of the novel (142). However, Henn does concede that no character is "more important" than Marco. José Ortega, on the other hand, clearly states, "Martín Marco debe ser considerado como el protagonista central de *La colmena* por ser el que de una forma más clara y completa ejemplifica los problemas de orden ético del autor" (92). According to David Foster, Martín is the "vertebra for a novel which to many critics seems to be the invertebrate novel without equal," and "any thematic analysis of *La colmena* would have to consider Marco as an important point of departure" (80). Finally, for Manuel Lacarta, "Poco a poco Martín, el eterno derrotado, el bohemio por necesidad, se va convirtiendo en ese personaje entorno al cual se configura la imagen plural y única de un Madrid desesperanzado y errabundo" (139).

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According to the humanist geographer Edward Relph, “Place is not just the ‘where’ of something; it is the location plus everything that occupies that location seen as an integrated and meaningful phenomenon” (3). Thanks to Cela’s meticulous naming of the streets and neighborhoods in which the action of the novel takes place, the “where” of *La colmena* is clearly identifiable. This specificity, more than any general description of landscape, produces the image of the city that appears in the reader’s mind. In the novel’s complex narrative, each of the hundreds of characters has his or her place, a location that is related to the individual and which plays an important part in the elaboration of his or her identity. Many characters never appear away from their primary locales, and many places are in turn identified by the characters that occupy them (e.g., *el café de doña Rosa*, *la casa de doña Margot*, *el bar de Celestino*). Thus, the action involving certain characters happens in their associated locations, and likewise, any action that occurs in a determined place will include the characters that “belong” there. After the first chapter, which takes place almost entirely in Doña Rosa’s cafe, the action moves to certain recurrent bars, private residences, and small businesses that begin to form a constellation of significant locations. These places can be considered, in the lexicon of Kevin Lynch, as either “nodes” that bring characters together or “landmarks” that serve to orient the reader and help form the complete mental picture of the landscape of the novel.³ The structural fragmentation therefore intensifies the microcosm of the novel because the narration periodically returns to certain locations, which may appear repeatedly although they are the setting of only one scene.

In contrast, Martín Marco uncovers an important portion of the hive of the city: unlike the majority of the novel’s huge number of characters, Martín does not have any corresponding, dedicated space. Because of his personal circumstances—some revealed in the narration, others left to the reader’s imagination—Martín is condemned to wander the city. Through him, Cela illustrates in a literary medium Henri Lefebvre’s tenet that “the urban phenomenon is made manifest as movement” (174). Cela creates an agitated hive to reveal a city in transformation, a postwar society that is in recovery but that is not static. In his *Topographies of Fascism*, Nil Santiañez describes several examples of “fascist urban writing” that exhibit a similarly fragmented structure to *La colmena*’s:

In each novel, the novelistic discourse breaks up the chronological order of events and fragments the story. Simultaneity predominates over sequentiality. The juxtaposition of storylines with their own temporality and the fact that they are usually if not always told discontinuously create a fictive world whose fragmentation refracts the city’s polymorphism as well as the simultaneity of urban experience. (207)

The city is composed of individual cells portrayed in multiple, simultaneous, scrambled storylines that give the reader numerous perspectives on the spaces and places that constitute Cela’s Madrid.

Thus, the hive, which has so often been interpreted as a collective environment, is in *La colmena* more a collection of *individual* units. It becomes an ideal metaphor for Hannah Arendt’s description of totalitarian movements: “mass organizations of atomized, isolated individuals” (323). In Cela’s hive each character is focused on what immediately surrounds him or her, without a vision of the larger world (Ingenschay 126). The city is made up of public and private places where negotiation takes place on a small scale, between individuals, and where nearly every

³ See Asún, Sherzer, and Pérez Moreta for further descriptions of the novel’s microcosm, comprised primarily of the districts of El Refugio, Ibiza, and Salamanca.

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person seems concerned only with how the situation might benefit him or her. Public places—streets, bars, cafés, markets, public transportation—are the sites of petty deals and small transactions that depend on looking the other way and ignoring, for example, the poor *gitano* boy who sings on the corner or the aging former prostitute who dresses up in public but who has nightmares caused by the hunger she feels at home. Doña Rosa's and the other cafés provide a place to talk, and the hive-like interaction of the first chapter sets a model for the rest of the novel; the criss-crossing storylines among its clientele and employees show how conversations at one table may be completely ignored by the people at the next. The characters' perspectives are dependent on their place within the complex system of the hive and as long as nothing disrupts that system they are content to go on with their daily lives and remain isolated from each other.

Still, Cela's network of unobservant individuals is at odds with a postwar society in which the dictatorship encouraged both external and internalized surveillance. Because he seemingly moves freely within the city and has no set place of his own, Martín Marco, homeless vagabond, threatens the stability of the urban system and therefore experiences it differently than the other characters in the novel. As the narration makes clear, the way in which he perceives his role as a conscientious individualist within a corrupt system contrasts with the way he is treated by the collective: as a vagrant who must be eliminated as detritus. Because he belongs nowhere, he is distinctly "out of place" and must negotiate the city as such.

The action of *La colmena* takes place during three days in December of 1943.⁴ *La colmena's* setting is therefore the Madrid of the early postwar, a period of hunger, repression, and reconstruction, in which the *estado de guerra* (state of war) was still very active. The Franco regime enacted laws meant to legitimize its victory in the Spanish Civil War and to suppress any opposition from those sectors of society that had fought against it in the war or that continued resisting it afterwards. Among others, three laws in vigor at the time influenced the actions and movements of ordinary Spanish citizens: the 1933 *Ley de vagos y maleantes* (Law of Vagrants and Miscreants), the 1939 *Ley de responsabilidades políticas* (Law of Political Responsibilities), and the 1940 *Ley para la represión de la masonería y el comunismo* (Law for the Repression of Freemasonry and Communism). Within this legal framework, insults, threats, extortion, sexual abuse, and public humiliation became mechanisms through which citizens who supported the Nationalist regime could victimize those who had not (Cenarro 78). While the laws themselves were aimed at individuals considered enemies of the regime, a consequence of the laws was to make public space risky—not necessarily because of how they defined space, but because of their effects on actions in public: anyone could be accused of treason against the new government and later prosecuted or directly executed. Vigilance—by state officials and private citizens—became integrated into everyday life; the falsely accused could be deemed as guilty as those who had actually broken laws, especially when the law—as in the case of the *Ley de responsabilidades políticas*—was made retroactive to before the Civil War even began. *La colmena's* structure of fragmentation and simultaneity reproduces the social and legal environment of the period by creating an atmosphere that would foster vigilance. By hopping from site to site, the plot makes the reader aware that nothing is outside the public's gaze. Both private and public spaces are visible, and therefore susceptible to surveillance.

In an environment of vigilance such as this, personal networks can function in several ways.

⁴ Cela admits to having written *La colmena* between 1945 and 1950 (Cela "Historia" 134). In the introduction to the first edition, the author situates the action of the novel in 1942. However, as has since been pointed out, historical events mentioned in the final chapter, such as the Teheran Conference and Roosevelt's visit to Malta, prove that the action takes place in 1943. See Asún (24) for clarification.

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On the one hand, movement through space exposes individuals to the watchful eyes of friends and family, but also to those of strangers who may observe the comings and goings of neighbors and visitors. There is an exceptional example of this in *La colmena* in doña María Morales de Sierra, a woman who, while seated at her living room window, provides a running commentary to her husband about the movements in the streets below. On the other hand, networks of friends and family can also serve as support networks that provide protection, food, and shelter. To move around city is to move among the cells that offer at least the possibility of support. The poet José Manuel Caballero Bonald's *censo de personajes*—compiled after the novel's 1951 first edition and included in subsequent editions—recognizes over three hundred characters, many of whom are identified by their relationships to other characters, even if they never appear together in the text. These networks take on a spatial dimension when members are aware of who belongs within the networks' spaces and who is an outsider; citizens "belong" to certain locations that befit their roles in society. Deviation from those locations is cause for suspicion; the laws give authorities and neighbors the mechanism to enact their suspicion by denouncing the suspected.

Due to his constant, aimless wandering through the city streets, Martín Marco initially appears to be in an ideal position to be one of the observers. Throughout the novel, Martín travels by metro, by tram, and on foot to different sectors of the city, especially in the neighborhoods of Chamberí, Salamanca, and Ibiza. In this way, Martín's wandering could also connect him to the tradition of the *flâneur*, "the loafer, usually a young man, who walks the streets with no great urgency, seeing, looking, reflecting" (Wood 48). *Vagar* (to wander, roam, or drift), the verb most associated with Martín's wanderings, expresses the imprecision of his movements and the overall absence of ambition that marks his attitude. For example, in an early scene in the novel, Martín looks into the luxurious windows of a bathroom supply store and marvels at the fancy water faucets and toilet bowls. As they did for the *flâneur* of nineteenth-century Paris, the streets offer commercial goods through brightly lit shop windows. For Martín, the luxury of the bathroom fixtures represents leisure, even suggesting a quiet place to read beautifully bound books by Keats, Valéry, or Mallarmé. However, they also cause him to reflect on his own poverty and on the inequality that the fixtures signify, and his thoughts turn to social reform. The narrator, in a somewhat mocking tone, states that Martín has vague political ideas: "A Martín le preocupa el problema social. No tiene ideas muy claras sobre nada, pero le preocupa el problema social" (225),⁵ a nod to the conscientious *flâneur* that he considers himself to be.

The irony of this moment at the bathroom supply store lies in the way it aligns Martín from early on with images of refuse and garbage. He has just been ejected from doña Rosa's café because he cannot pay his coffee bill and he stops to admire toilet bowls—objects to dispose of waste, no matter how luxurious they may be. Likewise, Martín is disposable; he roams the city streets because he does not have a place to settle. The nearest site that he has to a "home" is a cot in a broom closet where a friend allows him to sleep as long as he never asks for money, he never brings guests, and he is out of the house between nine a.m. and eleven p.m. every day (252). Martín's lack of a steady home casts him out into the city streets, where he is confronted with not only the cold of winter—a factor of which the reader is constantly reminded—but also to the exposure of open space. Without a place of his own, he must look for ways to balance the threat of public spaces with the refuge of private places. From the very beginning of the novel we see that his supposed places of refuge prove to be fleeting and contingent on conditions that he

⁵ All page numbers and direct quotes from *La colmena* refer to the Asún and Sotelo Vázquez edition (Clásicos Castalia, 2001).

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does not meet. Therefore, rather than having the freedom to move around, Martín is compelled to wander, unable to come to rest at any place that would offer him some regularity and protection—in contrast to other characters who can afford to have their homes, their places of work, and their tables at cafés and bars.

Rather than a leisurely *flâneur*, then, Martín's wandering puts him in the position of a vagabond, a figure that has posed a threat to civilized society throughout history. The vagabond's elusiveness is threatening because, as Tim Cresswell suggests, he is a figure "without place," where place refers to "both a geographical location and a clear place in a social hierarchy" (III). For Zygmunt Bauman, the vagabond is a threatening figure because of "his apparent freedom to move and so to escape the net of the previously locally based control. [...] You do not know where he will move next, because he himself does not know or care much" (qtd. in Cresswell III). The vagabond threatens sedentary society because he does not fit into the normal expectations of settled life. Martín has an established network of friends and family within Madrid, yet he fails to remain anywhere for an extended time because he has no productive place.

Martín's supposed profession, writer, is impossible to realize if he is constantly on the move. He sometimes spends his mornings in certain public buildings because they give him shelter from the cold and a hard surface on which to write, but at no point in the narration does Martín ever actually write anything. When he is recognized as a writer by his acquaintances, he shows some shame in his work and he does not like to admit that he still writes verses. This is why his brother-in-law looks down on him so much and considers him a "vago parásito" (234). During the postwar regime that craved order, *vagar* also connects to a condition that would put Martín Marco in danger of legal prosecution. As opposed to the bourgeois *flâneur*, who can wander and benefit from his potential to consume the goods that he passes, Martín has no money and is therefore more akin to the trash littering the streets. Unlike the *flâneur*, whose wandering may actually be a purposeful activity, the vagrant wanders because he has nothing else to do; his wandering becomes a threat because it has no inherent ending. With that "threat" in mind, the *Ley de vagos y maleantes* (Law of Vagrants and Miscreants), a remnant of the Second Republic, was passed in August 1933 to fill gaps in the existing penal code and thereby create new delinquents for minor crimes for which there had previously been no punishment. Until the Franco regime passed its own updated *Ley de vagos y maleantes* in 1954, it used the Republican law and its special courts to prosecute such vague offenses as "la vagancia, la mendicidad, el hampa y la mala vida" (Heredia Urzáiz 115). Much of the ambiguity stems from the definition of who could be considered "dangerous," left up to judges who could condemn the new "criminals" to harsh prison sentences in the name of reform.⁶

For Martín Marco, the possibility of being arrested as a vagrant is very real, though he does not always appear aware of that threat. Throughout the novel Martín feels most comfortable in the city streets, alone and at night. For example, in contrast to the paranoia that he feels during the day, Martín is quite at ease in the abandoned streets of nocturnal Madrid:

Martín Marco vaga por la ciudad sin querer irse a la cama. No lleva encima ni una perra gorda y prefiere esperar a que acabe el Metro, a que se escondan los últimos amarillos y enfermos tranvías de la noche. La ciudad parece más suya, más de los hombres que, como

⁶ During the Franco regime, this law was widely used to persecute homosexuals, even though homosexuality was not made illegal in Spain until the updated 1954 law. In *La colmena*, the extended episode with the characters of la Fotógrafa and el Astilla puts them at risk under this law though neither is implicated in the murder of la Fotógrafa's mother.

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él, marchan sin rumbo fijo con las manos en los vacíos bolsillos— en los bolsillos que, a veces, no están ni calientes—, con la cabeza vacía, con los ojos vacíos, y en el corazón, sin que nadie se lo explique, un vacío profundo e implacable. (358)

With the rest of Madrid asleep and indoors, Martín experiences the city without interruption and without the suspicion and unease that he feels around others. Furthermore, the empty city offers the possibility of a blank slate. In this sense, it is not only the ideal space for Martín to travel through unthreatened, it also reflects the utopian city of a space that has neither history nor memory. For a moment, the streets are wiped clean of the people that transit them during the day and Martín can wander as he pleases through a city space that is purified by the absence of city life. This cleansed city is the ideal fascist city: it has been de-historized and de-socialized, so that all that remains is pristine, empty *space*, untouched by the chaos of urban activity that characterized Madrid in the eyes of many Falangists. “El nuevo sistema político decidió, ante todo, que Madrid debía purgar sus culpas: era preciso borrar un siglo de ‘liberalismo urbano’ y rescatar a la ciudad abandonada a la ‘injuria de las hordas’, en manos de los ‘estratos ínfimos del pueblo’ que la habían convertido en un ‘emporio de pavorosa suciedad’” (Juliá, Ringrose, and Segura 547). The *vencedores* treated Madrid as a criminal that had to be made accountable, forced to repent, and ordered to conform to the new regime’s vision of Spain.⁷

It is quite fitting that this instance of Martín’s wandering, as well as what will follow, take place in the district of Salamanca. This neighborhood was included in the original planning of the *Ensanche*, the extension begun in 1857 of the city beyond its seventeenth-century walls, guided by what was known as the *Plan Castro*. The area in which Martín wanders on this night was planned as a middle-class neighborhood, divided “en manzanas separadas por anchas calles, colocando en plazas situadas entre varias de aquéllas, jardines que, cerrados por verjas, serán sólo del disfrute particular de los vecinos fronterizos” (Carballo, Pallol, and Vicente 73-74). Not only is this remarkable for the idea of gardens open only to surrounding neighbors, but because it hints at the level of surveillance necessary to ensure that the gardens remained private—still an aspect of the Salamanca neighborhood today. In contrast to the jumbled web of streets that characterizes the old center of Madrid, the district of Salamanca’s grid is instantly recognizable on the map as the result of rigid urban planning. Rather than planning the city around existing physical and social configurations, a grid system is based on abstract space, with little regard to the natural landscape that lies beneath (Fraser 373). Furthermore, Cela’s repetition of the *vacío* shared by the character and the city echoes Henri Lefebvre’s notion of the *void*, the space through which the state has always expressed itself. The empty space, broad avenues, and plazas of Haussman in Paris, Cerdà en Barcelona, and Castro in Madrid could only be created by institutions, and the state is the only institution that can manage the type of planning that would result in the “dictatorship of the straight line” (Lefebvre 109). Though this planning is the result of an earlier period in Spanish history, this also happens to be the place in which Martín Marco must confront the dictatorship of Francisco Franco most directly.

At night, as the above passage suggests, Martín is able to let down his guard regardless of being in the exposed empty streets. As he does so, the narration notes that he walks through these streets rather absent-mindedly, “arrastrando los pies, . . . haciendo ¡clas! ¡clas! sobre las losas

7 Uncharacteristically, Martín himself echoes some of this viewpoint while he admires the bathroom fixtures in a scene described above: “Debería nombrarse una comisión de sabios que se encargase de modificar la humanidad. Al principio se ocuparían de pequeñas cosas [...] y después [...] podrían hasta ordenar que se tirasen abajo las ciudades para hacerlas otra vez, todas iguales, con las calles bien rectas y calefacción en todas las casas” (225).

de la acera” (363). His sense of security could be related to the fact that during the war, Franco ensured that the district of Salamanca would be spared from bombing, making the neighborhood a refuge where citizens could feel safe and even sleep at night (Preston 341). Ironically, though, when Martín is at his most relaxed, he is also at his most vulnerable. Cela places him in a situation in which, though alone—or perhaps *because* he is alone in the hive—he immediately becomes the object of suspicion, and it is during one such moment of relaxation that he is challenged to identify himself as a productive, legitimate member of society. The narration thus transfers the disciplining of the city space to the disciplining of the citizen, and this supposedly open *space* becomes an intensely experienced *place* for Martín.

At this moment, a police officer intercepts Martín and requests his documentation, but the reader already knows that Martín does not carry an identification card. Pages earlier, Martín lit a cigarette butt that he carried with other used butts in an envelope sent from the *Diputación provincial de Madrid. Negociado de cédulas personales*. The narration explains that the *cédulas personales* were no longer in use at this time and that the government had announced “unos carnets de identidad, con fotografía y hasta con las huellas dactilares” (360). The shift from an identification card issued by provincial governments (the *cédula personal*) to a national identification system (the *Documento Nacional de Identidad* or *DNI*, established on 2 March 1944 and still in use today), signals increased administrative authority by the national government. However, the envelope, like the cigarette butts inside it, was not originally his, but rather belonged to his brother-in-law. Once again, Martín’s identity is linked to objects of refuse that are of no use to anyone else.

Without identification, Martín is anonymous from the perspective of the state and a menace as an unpredictable vagabond. From the officer’s point of view as a representative of an authoritarian regime, Martín’s lack of identification card and his resulting anonymity are threatening. This policeman is one of the novel’s few manifestations of the direct presence of the regime in the lives of the characters, and José Luis Giménez Frontín has observed that within this encounter:

[T]odo el clima de represión política de la postguerra alcanza su mejor y más fiel retrato en ese miedo “irrefrenable”, “irracional” al encuentro con el Padre omnipotente, de un joven cualquiera que no ha cometido delito alguno y que sabe perfectamente que su inocencia no es garantía alguna de inmunidad. Porque, en las sociedades dictatoriales [. . .] de lo que realmente se trata es de que todo detenido es culpable por el hecho de haber sido detenido. (53)

Although he has done nothing, the only way for Martín to demonstrate his “innocence” to the policeman is by identifying himself. However, lacking the official criteria of individual identity that the state requires of him, Martín must find an alternate means of establishing that he is not a criminal or a threat to the officer’s social order. He quickly states “Yo soy escritor, yo me llamo Martín Marco” (365). This means nothing to the officer, so Martín must instead let ideology serve as his identity card, even if to the reader this action seems insincere. Martín tells the officer that he writes for “la prensa del Movimiento,” and specifies some of the provincial newspapers in which his articles have been published. The notion of empire implicit in his latest article, “Razones de la permanencia espiritual de Isabel la Católica,” fits into the exaltation of Spain’s glorious past that was typical of official culture of the 1940s (Asún 365 n. 26). Martín’s only productive source of income is as a writer, but in order to be published, he must work from within the official media. Just being an *escritor* does not convince the policeman that he is any

sort of writer who may be trusted; Martín must be a writer of the *Movimiento* in order for the officer to be satisfied and to release him.

Though he acted more relaxed in the nighttime streets of the city (“¡clas! ¡clas!”), this episode demonstrates that Martín cannot experience the city freely because he does not have his own place within the social hierarchy. He may feel that the empty streets offer him the space to drift aimlessly, but the episode with the officer reinforces how the fascist ordering of place demands an already-existing identity that fits into acceptable categories. No matter how much wandering Martín may do, he depends on being recognized as a member of the established system for his own safety and survival. He cannot defend his condition as a vagabond if he wishes to remain one.

Martín’s emphasis on his production for the *Movimiento*’s press as a mechanism for self-preservation is further explained when we consider his position as a political dissident in Franco’s regime. David Henn has noted that “The overall impression gained of Marco is that of an underfed and dissatisfied intellectual, prone to aggression and self-pity, who assumes the role of conscience of his society” (145). In Martín’s mind, he is a forward-thinking intellectual with a moral conscience much more advanced than those around him. Furthermore, another of Martín’s defining characteristics is his “persecution complex,” manifested as a noticeable paranoia and self-perception as the victim of others’ mistrust, selfishness and spite (Henn 145). An example of this suspicion is his reaction when he runs into Nati Robles, an old friend from college, whom he fails to recognize: “Martín mira con cierto miedo a todas las caras que le resultan algo conocidas, pero que no llega a identificar. El hombre siempre piensa que se le van a echar encima y que le van a empezar a decir cosas desagradables; si comiese mejor, probablemente no le pasaría esto” (306). Nati Robles was involved with Martín in the *Federación Universitaria Escolar* (F.U.E.), a socialist and Communist-led student group formed in 1926 in opposition to the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and the dominant Catholic student associations of the time (Casanova and Gil Andrés 97). Martín’s association with this group would make him susceptible to persecution by the government under both the *Ley de responsabilidades políticas*, which outlawed political parties other than the FET y de las JONS and persecuted all citizens that may have “complicated” “el triunfo providencial e históricamente ineludible del Movimiento Nacional”, and the 1940 *Ley para la represión de la masonería y el comunismo*, which made it illegal to belong to the Freemasons or the Communist party (Díaz Gijón et al. 45). Because of this risky political past, Martín’s paranoia may not be completely unfounded, especially given that his homelessness and constant rejection push him to an exterior, public space that does not belong to him or to anyone else.

Martín’s attitude is warranted, however, in a postwar society that actively repressed and persecuted dissidents. Paul Ilie termed this the “inner exile” that characterized a large portion of the population that remained in Spain after the war. According to Ilie, territorial exile and residential exile (by those who remain in a place after a war but who do not agree with the ideology of the group in power) result in similar types of alienation: “both types enact the pattern of expulsion from home followed by dreams of lost order and harmony, and both types are condemned to *wandering*” (51, emphasis added). Although he remains within Madrid and within a community of acquaintances and family, Martín feels separate from them and in some senses, superior. In Martín we have a man whose convictions are never presented completely clearly and whose pride is contradicted by his actions; he is not close to anyone, but we never get the sense that anyone wants to be very close to him. His interests and thoughts are usually focused on whatever is most beneficial to him. However, at the same time, his inner exile brings about a “passivity and a semi-impotence” (Ilie 57) that is especially strong when he is alone in the city’s

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public spaces. He cannot benefit from the potential freedom of open space because his endless wandering does not allow him to feel comfortable.

In Martín Marco, rather than a conscientious, relaxed *flâneur*, we find a writer who does not write and who is forced to spend his days wandering suspiciously through streets that he looks at with contempt and distrust. Martín's insularity and self-absorption, brought on mainly by fear, do not allow him to observe much of the world around him. Though he prides himself on being enlightened, he has a rather limited perspective and he cannot see far beyond himself. Martín may move from cell to cell when he visits his acquaintances, but he is never able to break out of his own cell as an unwelcome vagabond. His exiles—both his inner exile and his forced wandering during the day—are not of his choice.

The panic that Martín feels after his encounter with the policeman draws him towards a brothel run by a doña Jesusa, a friend of his late mother's. It is fitting that Martín finds refuge among prostitutes after he has essentially sold himself and his convictions in order to get away from the police officer. Martín's flight from the officer to the brothel is a movement from the exposed space of the streets to a place of safety. In fact, because of the scattered order of the novel's chapters, the last two locations in which Martín appears, the brothel and the cemetery, are spaces in which we observe a change in his attitude. In both of these sites, Martín exhibits an optimism and a serenity that were not present while he drifted among his network of family and friends. The brothel and the cemetery emerge as possible gaps in the network of vigilance that otherwise has contained Martín.

Earlier in the novel, the narration describes the different types of prostitutes in the "hotelitos" of the streets of Alcántara, Montesa, and de Las Naciones, an area that Cela knew well after living for several years on Alcántara Street (Pérez Moreta 257). Prostitution was indeed legal and tolerated in Spain in the 1940s—hence the term *casas de tolerancia* as a euphemism for the brothels (Martín Gaité 102). When Martín goes to the brothel, he is actually entering a place condoned by the state to which he is susceptible and which he has just encountered in the streets. This helps explain Cela's presentation of the brothel as warm and inviting. As Giménez Frontín states, "Cela representa todavía a la generación de españoles que encontraron—o dicen que encontraron—un cálido refugio sexual, amistoso e incluso sentimental en los burdeles, frente a una sociedad pacata de costumbres intolerantes que, precisamente por ello, los toleraba" (59). The brothel into which Martín is admitted "como un hijo" is the clearest representation in the novel of the nurturing refuge that defines place and distinguishes it from the uncertainty and threat of the open space outside.

Things are not as private as they appear, however, and Cela uses several locales dedicated to clandestine or casual sexual encounters to illustrate that they too have a role within the disciplinary structure of postwar Madrid; they too are susceptible to an internalized surveillance that negates privacy. Among these is a doña Celia's *casa de citas*, a private home where lovers meet to spend furtive afternoons. On the wall of doña Celia's best bedroom hangs the portrait of the woman's deceased husband, don Obdulio Cortés López. According to the narration, the portrait is more than a simple decoration or memorial and serves a clear purpose: "don Obdulio, desde un dorado marco purpurina, con el bigote enhiesto y la mirada dulce, protege, como un malévolos y picardeado diosillo del amor, la clandestinidad que permite comer a su viuda" (310). When a father unexpectedly encounters his daughter in the stairwell leading to doña Celia's, which they both frequent with their lovers, don Obdulio's portrait becomes an active part of their particular storyline. First, the father's lover threatens to expose the daughter's secret relationship by sending the portrait to the girl's house. In turn, the daughter's boyfriend resends

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the photograph to the father, with a note accusing him of activities that could be persecuted under the *Ley de responsabilidades políticas*. These exchanges reveal the true nature of don Obdulio's portrait: rather than protect the secrecy of his widow's clients as the narration claims, the man's image watches over the couples who come in search of privacy. Unmarried and adulterous clients expected the *casa de citas* to be a discreet, protected place that would provide refuge for their sexual activity. In this case, however, don Obdulio's intervention compromises their privacy because the threat of political repercussions would have very real ramifications in postwar Spain. When personal connections prove as threatening as official ones, secrecy and anonymity can no longer be counted on as protection against the attention of the authorities.

In the case of Martín Marco, doña Jesusa's brothel offers the semblances of a refuge and safe place, but the effects of that safety on his attitude are unexpected, given the public persona that he exhibits in the streets. Recall that Martín flees to the brothel as a reaction to his encounter with the police officer. In its quality as a refuge from the cold emptiness of the streets and the threat of official vigilance, the brothel is the closest manifestation to a home that Cela allows him. Once Martín is admitted into the brothel, he is able to look for the warmth that is alien to him during his paranoid wanderings of the day. Though he depends on his identity to enter the place, once inside, he is able to discard the memory of who he is outside and take on quite another role: the "underfed and dissatisfied intellectual" that Martín portrays in the streets disappears once he enters the brothel. The narration makes clear that in this moment Martín and the prostitute Pura do not feel any real affection: "Cuando falta el cariño hay que buscar el calor" (375). Their role-playing is not at all sexual, especially when compared to the couples over whom don Obdulio watches at doña Celia's *casa de citas*. Instead, as they spend time together, Martín and Pura fall quite naturally into the category of a committed couple: they fall asleep in an embrace, "como dos recién casados" (375); the next morning they coo and laugh before getting out of bed, and Martín, "igual que un poeta de dieciséis años," recites a sonnet by Juan Ramón Jiménez (433). In this way, the brothel emerges not so much as outside of Spain's traditional hierarchy, but rather as a place that conforms to the ideals and categories of family that dominated societal expectations during the postwar. Here, instead of reinforcing the home through a direct contrast, the brothel actually substitutes the home by replicating the emotional bonds of domestic space that are absent in Martín's everyday experience. The brothel becomes a place charged with meaning for Martín because he is able to take on a role that differs from the one with which he entered: the security of this haven transforms the "underfed and dissatisfied intellectual" into an affectionate husband. However, these bonds are only available to him in a place in which sex is commodified and perverted; the reader knows that for Martín the refuge is only temporary.⁸

As such, his encounter with Pura anticipates the open-ended final chapter of the novel, in which he moves to another potential gap in the disciplinary structure. Martín rides a tram from Atocha to Ventas and then walks to the Almudena Cemetery, where his mother is buried. This is the first time in the novel that any character *physically* leaves the center of Madrid, to considerable effect on Martín and on his attitude. By being outside of the constraints that the city seems to place on him, Martín is able to relax much as he did in the protected space of the brothel.

Until this point, the narration has kept to a well-defined and limited section of Madrid's

8 At the end of Chapter 4, the disjointed vignettes allow Cela to contrast Martín's night in the brothel with several other couples who spend the second night of the action together. Among these is Martín's sister, Filo, and her husband, who discuss the chances of having another child before they make love. The chapter closes with a montage of intimate moments, through which Cela addresses the night's refuge from the harsh world for married couples and single men and women alike.

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center, mainly in the northern and eastern areas of the *Ensanche*. This last chapter takes Martín to the very edges of the urban landscape, to a cemetery surrounded by a shantytown where children play in the puddles of a creek bed and women dig through trash. Later, the final words of the book will allude to another extra-urban space, “los pueblos de cinturón,” which will cause Martín to chuckle to himself, perhaps because of the name but also perhaps because they are an area that is foreign to him as a city dweller. By including this here, Cela acknowledges the liminal zone of the urban environment, where death and squalor overlap. The city of Madrid, at least its central areas revealed in the novel, may well be a hive of activity, but it has little regard for a liminal zone that lies beyond the reach of public transportation and is dedicated to the dead. Cela stresses this at the beginning of the chapter: “Nadie se acuerda de los muertos que llevan ya un año bajo tierra” (439). The dead and the shantytowns that Martín passes on his way to the cemetery are out of sight and out of mind. Now aware of them, Martín’s *conciencia social* reemerges, and he wonders whether this poverty is caused by a problem of production or of distribution. That this idea would come to him in a place that is the manifestation of detritus, filled with the refuse of the city but hidden from the city, is not a coincidence: Martín, who spends his days floating around the city like a piece of trash, is comfortable here. Furthermore, contrasted with the wealthier parts of the city to which Martín is an outsider, this liminal space between the life of the city and the death of the cemetery brings forth in Martín something unexpected: ambition.

As he distances himself from that place, he begins to feel a freedom and an optimism that was not available to him in the city: “Martín nota que la vida, saliendo a las afueras a respirar el aire puro, tiene unos matices más tiernos, más delicados que viviendo constantemente hundido en la ciudad” (451). For Martín, the transformation is quite profound; it is here that he appears to assume his role as a writer more ambitiously than before. He asks for a newspaper in order to look at the classifieds and begins to dream of settling down and finding a job in a government office that might possibly leave him some extra time to write. In other moments, open spaces have threatened this character. In this final episode, however, when Martín seems to have gained some perspective on his situation by temporarily being outside of it, open space represents promise and prospect, not danger.

The irony of the final episode, like that of the night he meets the police officer, lies in the fact that just as Martín feels most secure, he is indeed most vulnerable. The reader, and most of Martín’s friends back in the city, knows that an *edicto*—a public announcement made by the courts in order to locate individuals who had no known address—has been issued for his arrest.⁹ Once again, without a residence, Martín cannot be located by the state, and while he stays in the cemetery and ignorant of the edict against him, he remains elusive to the court system that is searching for him. Martín’s movement into open space, however, has left him more exposed in other ways. By leaving the center of Madrid for his visit to the cemetery, Martín has also moved out of the range of his network of protectors (Henn 144). Martín’s trip to the cemetery is interspersed in the final chapter with brief accounts of his friends and family reading the *edicto* in the newspaper and mobilizing to find him in the places that he usually frequents. Unfortunately, by not being in any of those places—places that have repeatedly rejected him—Martín is unable to benefit from his network. By stepping out of the city center and out of his support network, Martín realizes his individuality, which will inevitably bring about his downfall. At the ceme-

⁹ Unfortunately for Martín, the *edictos* appear in one of the only sections of the newspaper that he decides not to read while he is still in the cemetery, a choice that leads José Ortega to conclude that his intention of self-transformation is only “falso y pasajero” (94).

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tery he has found a place where he can be comfortable, but without the normalizing role that he found at the brothel, he has become separated from the collective and therefore vulnerable. He will eventually be caught—perhaps even betrayed by his brother-in-law, who believes that it is best for Martín to turn himself in. The freedom that he feels at being outside the reach of the official and informal vigilance of the city proves once again to be a false freedom.

The brothel and the cemetery thus emerge as possible gaps in the control of urban space enacted by the regime—one in the heart of the city yet removed from it through the protection of doña Jesusa and her prostitutes and tolerated as such by postwar culture, the other beyond the urban landscape and forgotten or ignored by those who live within it. The distance between being tolerated and being ignored frames through contrast the other fragmented storylines. Cela begins his novel in doña Rosa's café, where patrons are surrounded by other people yet hardly aware of what is going on around them; the interspersed vignettes of the first chapter demonstrate their isolation, a structure that is repeated throughout the novel. The one obvious exception to this is doña Rosa herself, who watches over her café like a prison warden. Martín Marco is the first victim of her vigilance and he is expelled from her place because he does not have the economic means to remain there. This casting out begins Martín's wandering through the city space, a journey that will continue until he arrives at the cemetery. There, he can feel a sense of freedom even though at that moment, his network of family and friends is most aware of him. Martín feels comfortable in both the brothel and the cemetery because he can let down his guard without having to play the part of the disaffected intellectual that he fancies himself to be. While present in these places, he does not feel the presence of others who may be watching him and judging him.

In the "pálido reflejo" of the Madrid in which Cela lived in the 1940s, police officers and night watchmen walk the streets, housewives spy from behind drawn curtains, and apartment walls are so thin that neighbors hear each other and their intimate conversations. In addition, those who have money to access a supposedly more intimate place, such as doña Celia's *casa de citas*, are aware that the vigilance of the street can penetrate the walls of their bedrooms. Gossip, or, worse, political threats reduce the boundaries between public and private. If disciplinary force is meant to break down the collective into its individual parts, *La colmena*, through its structure and content, illustrates the fragmentation of the collective in postwar Madrid. For while *La colmena* is often thought of as a *novela colectiva* due to the sheer number of its characters and its fragmented story, the truth is that the collective, as mass, never appears in the novel. Rather, the immediate postwar stands as a period of individualization and isolation. The shock of the war—reinforced by censorship, food shortages, economic autarky, and fascist rhetoric and repression—subdued the populace so that its only reaction was de-politization and introversion. Martín Marco, who first appears to be a conscientious outsider, embodies the effects of this environment on one individual. His vagabond status has no place in the system of the city and he is drawn back into a social structure that does not quite know what to do with him and that therefore will either force him to conform to societal norms or risk being removed from it through his arrest.

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