

# A Critical Geography of Home: Teresa Moure's *A Intervención*

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'Son os remendos quen nos restitúen,  
as cicatrices as que fan fogar'

Berta Dávila (32)

Geographers Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling have written that home is 'a complex and multi-layered geographical concept' that includes 'a place/site, a set of feelings/cultural meanings, and the relations between the two' (2–3). The question of home offers a useful point of entry for an exploration of the ways in which individuals are embedded within social structures, and how they use narrative and other creative and interpretive practices to negotiate and work through what home means to them. In this article, then, I show how Teresa Moure's novel *A intervención* (2010) reveals home as a process of intersection between space, identity, and power that is iteratively carried out through narrative, memory, and artistic practice.

Teresa Moure is professor of linguistics at the Universidade de Santiago de Compostela and the author of numerous works across such diverse genres as children's fiction, essay, and theatre. *A intervención* is Moure's fourth novel, following *A xeira das árbores* (2004), *Herba moura* (2005), and *Benquerida catástrofe* (2007). In the author's own words, the novel proposes 'unha intervención política' and reflects her desire for Galicians to become aware of their 'capacidade para transformar a sociedade en moitos sentidos' (Díaz n. pag.). In the author's view, attitudes toward nature and the awareness of Earth as an ecological system are in especially urgent need of transformation. In her 2008 essay *O natural é político*, Moure argues that global capitalism sponsors an ideology of growth and consumption that must be challenged for the long-term benefit of humanity and the planet. For Moure, *environmentalism* is a mere palliative that allows the world's biggest consumers of energy and resources – those of us living in developed nations – to absolve our guilt through recycling and the kind of 'conspicuous conservation' that economists have theorised; Moure advocates instead an *ecological* approach that views the planet as a complex system of which humanity is but one constituent part.

In light of Moure's ecological activism, the fact that *A intervención* centres around an Earth Art project that consists of planting an immense flower garden atop an abandoned mine would seem significant, perhaps all the more so given that, as I write this in the summer of 2013, the people of Galicia are engaged in a massive effort to stop new opencast gold-mining operations – proposed by international mining concerns and supported by Galicia's conservative government – from going forward. On Sunday, 2 June 2013, thousands attended a march and rally in Santiago de Compostela to show their opposition to these mining projects, seeking to 'protexer "o futuro das comarcas" fronte "ao capital especulativo"' (Rodil n. pag.).<sup>1</sup> This opposition between concrete, familiar, local spaces and the anonymous forces of international capital is of course a common trope in the age of globalisation, and it points to the fact that personal affective relationships with small-scale geographies are instrumental in mobilising political action and raising awareness of much larger issues of structural oppression.<sup>2</sup> Xurxo Borrazás has written about his experience attending an informational session organised by a local activist group in which speakers outlined the dangers of the mining project proposed for Corcoesto. The author relates that as he listened to the presentation, the slideshow displayed maps and toponyms 'entre os que eu vía o lugar dos meus avós, onde nacera miña nai, o Ramallón de Valenza de Coristanco, e Lestón, onde aínda viven o tío Manolo e a tía Carme: a carón da súa casa vai quedar o xigantesco cráter e vai pasar o río Lourido despois de ser desviado' (Borrazás n. pag.). Perhaps because of Borrazás's personal relationship with the potentially affected sites, he is especially moved: 'Un saúu de alí co corazón encollido e cheo de forza, de argumentos e de amor pola terra que o viu nacer e pola súa xente. Iso é a Política de verdade e non as leas de pouca monta entre o BNG e Anova' (n. pag.). Borrazás, while already intellectually aligned with the anti-mining activists, is inspired by a presentation that has made the danger patent on a personal scale – a crater right next to his aunt and uncle's house – and, further, has suggested that the solution depends, not on the politicians, but rather on individuals and the community.

In the context of Borrazás's experience, the etymological connection between ecology and home becomes relevant. While ecological concerns

1 Amanda Boetzkes writes that Earth Art uses not only the land, but also other 'elementals [such as] sky, light, water, and weather' to produce 'sensorial plenitude' and 'unrepresentability' (Boetzkes 16). In the context of Moure's novel, the intervention produces in the artists a range of sensory and affective experiences that in some sense defy representation, with the effect that readers are implicitly called upon to enact their own (political and artistic) interventions in order to complete the immersive aesthetic experience that the novel suggests.

2 This is reflected in Rodil's article, which registers anti-mining protesters' affirmation that 'Estamos fart@s de ser unha colonia'.

are ultimately global, they are often experienced most immediately at the microgeographic scale. And while we tend to think of home as intensely local and personal, Blunt and Dowling have argued that home is multi-scalar and that 'senses of belonging and alienation are constructed across diverse scales ranging from the body and the household to the city, nation and globe' (27). Furthermore, echoing Sallie Marston, Blunt and Dowling argue that 'the social, physical, cultural and emotional infrastructure provided in and by households [...] connects with, and constructs, the scales of home, nation, and city' (28). What, then, does this have to do with planting flowers on an old mine site? Within the context of Earth Art, the intervention from which Moure's novel takes its title, is a fairly primitive example of a 'site-restoration project' or 'reclamation art' (Boetzkes 31); primitive in the sense that its first-order effects do not go much beyond 'aesthetic revitalization of space', nor do they contemplate the kind of 'ecological resuscitation' (Boetzkes 31) that requires the collaboration of engineers and other specialists. In this article, rather than considering the intervention in its literal dimension as a work of Earth Art, I offer a reading of the project as a multimedia community art happening that performs what Blunt and Dowling call a 'critical geography of home' and examines not only the materiality of home, but also its social, political, and imaginary dimensions (Blunt and Dowling 30). In this sense, my analysis concurs with and amplifies Dolores Vilavedra's affirmation that *A intervención* urges us to both 'cuestionar o canon e a función da arte tal e como adoito a concebimos [sic]' and 'repensar conceptos tan solidamente establecidos que nin maximamos [sic] que poidan entenderse de xeito diferente: a amizade, o amor ou a maternidade' (n. pag.).

To briefly summarise the novel, *A intervención* is a polyphonic narrative composed of five sections, each narrated by one of the main characters. These narrations are produced as diaries during the period of several weeks the novel's protagonists spend living in a rented house in eastern Galicia preparing the art project to which I have already alluded. Although the year in which the intervention takes place is not made explicit, one assumes that this narrative frame belongs to the recent past, likely the first decade of the present century. The first narrator, a university student named Leandro Balseiro (hereafter Leandro), tells the story of his own recent past as an artist in search of a project, within which is nested information about his mother's family of origin. This information is gleaned during Leandro's visits to his mother's hometown, during which he seeks out local accounts of the exuberant flower garden – cultivated perhaps forty years earlier by Leandro's grandfather, also named Leandro Balseiro (hereafter Balseiro) – that serves as the inspiration for the intervention. Leandro's mother, Clara Balseiro, a dermatologist, is the second narrator; her diary provides more background

on the Balseiro family, including Clara's abandonment by her mother and her father's manic horticulturalism. Clara relates the story of her life in common with Leandro and their family friend Sampaio, and introduces the idea for the intervention, which she conceives as a homage to her father. Sampaio, the third narrator, is a man of a certain age who, more than fifteen years before the main events of the novel, was hit by a car as he neared completion of the *camión de Santiago*, thereafter developing a form of amnesia in which he was able to form new memories, but had no recollection of his life before the accident. Sampaio's diary narrates the arrival of Ingrid, his estranged daughter, and traces the process by which he recovers his memory. Ingrid, a Viennese psychiatrist (!) is the fourth narrator and is pivotal to the structure of the novel: it is she who asks the other characters to keep diaries during their time working together on the intervention. Her narration moves between her own childhood and her observations of the other characters, which she hopes to turn into a scientific paper on collective insanity. The last narrator is Candela, a doctoral student married to a renowned history professor and romantically involved with Leandro; her diary, which she writes only after reading the others' contributions, serves a metanarrative function in the text, reflecting on the intervention, its effects on the participants, and the process of documenting it through writing and other media.

This article is structured as follows. In the first section, I focus on Leandro's research into his grandfather's garden as the aesthetic model for the intervention, an investigatory process that opens the door to new questions about her mother's childhood home. In the second section, I offer an excursus that explores Clara's relationship with her father's garden in light of the thought of Gaston Bachelard. In the third section, I use Susannah Radstone's notion of *memory work* to analyse Clara's process of placing her childhood home in its sociopolitical context. In the fourth section, I read Clara's adult life through the lens of what Ann-Marie Fortier calls *homing desires*, the drive to create a sense of belonging. Finally, I conclude that Moure's novel is at once a reflection on the transformative power of the creative process and on the multiple geographies of home.

### **In Search of a Lost Garden**

As I mention in the introduction to this article, Moure's novel is a polyphonic narrative, incorporating not only the voices of the five protagonists, but also their renderings of voices from the past, reported dialogue, as well as epistolary exchanges between characters, field notes, and various epigraphs. One of the effects of this multiple voicing is that it allows Moure to present a

complex portrait of Balseiro's garden as an element of local colour, a setting for certain dramatic events, and, for Clara – I shall return to this point – as a Bachelardian site of memory. Eyewitness reports of Balseiro's garden and its role in the popular history of Clara's hometown are overlaid by Clara's oneiric narrative of being a child in the garden, her adult reflections on the garden, and Ingrid's investigations into the events that transpired there. The reports of neighbours and family members still living in Clara's hometown are elicited by Leandro, who seeks to reconstruct the story of his grandparents that Clara has never shared. The light tone of the resulting narrative reflects authorial sympathies toward Balseiro as the novel's oddball-in-chief: Balseiro is a man of dubious employability with a prodigious green thumb and an antisocial streak whom neighbours regard as an eccentric, yet harmless, local character, an interpretation that Moure sets up through a kind of primacy effect, as Leandro's is the first version of events to which the reader is exposed. In this telling, Moure points up the curiosity typical of small town neighbours who make everything their business, hoping to find a fissure through which to spy on those who would dare keep something to themselves. Indeed, one neighbour, Maruxa da Pobra de Brollón, literally makes it her business, allowing the curious to view Balseiro's garden – for a fee – from her house. The garden is described to Leandro as having had strange powers; local lore surrounding the garden is injected with ample doses of magical realism, for example in the case of a nun who enters the garden only to become overcome by a passion that drives her to take off all her vestments.

In the early pages of the novel, then, Moure uses the recounting of fantastical local legends to create an aura around the garden and the figure of Balseiro. Leandro receives these auraticisations with scepticism, and, with the paranoia of the amateur ethnographer, wonders whether his informants are fooling him. His personal desire is to 'poñer orde na memoria colectiva' and to 'convencelos de que non puido ser certo o que contan' (Moure, *A intervención* 21), repeating later 'teño moito que aclarar para saber como foi realmente todo o que xa está confundido na memoria colectiva' (38). With this, Moure establishes one of the main themes of the novel: the nature of memory and the tension between objective and subjective modes of producing meaning. Leandro, although he thinks of himself as an artist, has little confidence in the latter, which perhaps explains why his projects – sketched out in innumerable studies that threaten to overrun the house he shares with Clara – never take wing. Leandro is gripped by a totalising urge, a desire to understand how 'realmente foi todo', echoing positivist historian Leopold von Ranke's famous statement that historians should 'describe the past "as it really was"' (quoted in Rzepke 43). In Moure's novel, however, Leandro and the other narrators who attempt to 'reconstruír a historia' (15)

of Balseiro's garden are repeatedly confronted with the complexity of the meanings of places and the multifaceted investigatory practices necessary to understand them. Leandro comes to find all his sources questionable; in the same way that he is sceptical of local lore regarding the garden, he also doubts his mother's memories. Leandro observes that Clara 'a pesar de só vivir alí os primeiros anos da súa vida, teima en asegurar que lembra todo como se fose onte'; Leandro's scepticism is further registered in his description of Clara's memory as 'esvaradía' (slippery) (16), and he suspects that his mother's description of the garden might not be based on true memories but rather might be derived from, or mediated by, a family photograph. In evaluating the personal and collective memories he is presented with, then, Leandro is frustrated by narratives in which, to borrow Chris Philo's formulation, 'the history of fact, detail and precision is refracted through the lenses of imperfect memory and weakly constrained imagination' (12); ultimately, Leandro's investigations leave unsatisfied his desire to settle to the interrogative 'como foi realmente todo'.

### **Excursus: Gaston Bachelard and the Garden as a Psychological Object**

Moure's novel moves beyond Leandro's attempts at an orderly, objective account of Balseiro's garden by embedding it within what Bondi, Davidson, and Smith have called 'emotional geographies': 'attempts to understand emotion [...] in terms of its socio-spatial mediation and articulation rather than as entirely interiorised subjective mental states' (3, emphasis in the original). In order to situate my discussion of how the novel explores the linkages between place and affect, I turn now for a moment to the work of phenomenological philosopher Gaston Bachelard, whose writings on space focus on 'the imaginative resonances of intimate spaces and their material form, as they are created, illuminated and experienced through memories, dreams and emotions' (Blunt and Dowling 12). In his 1958 work *La Poétique de l'Espace* (cited here in Maria Jolas's English translation *The Poetics of Space*), Bachelard calls for 'the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives' (8), a process he calls *topoanalysis* (8). By attending to the subjective and affective experience of space, Bachelard's work transcends the empirical approaches to spatial science – largely concerned with description, mapping, and quantifying – that reigned during his lifetime and led, in the words of Michel Foucault, to the treatment of space as 'the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile' (177).<sup>3</sup> The fact that, for Bachelard, empiricist

3 Chris Philo, following Ley, writes that Bachelard's ideas 'filtered into the thinking

geographies fall short of providing a meaningful understanding of space is reflected in Edmund Bunkše's summary of Bachelard's conception of home: 'a home, even though its physical properties can be described to an extent, is not a physical entity but an orientation to the fundamental values [...] with which a home, as an intimate space in the universe, is linked to human nature' (101–2).

In his foreword to the 1994 edition of *The Poetics of Space*, John R. Stilgoe writes that

[t]his book opens its readers to the titanic importance of setting in so much art from painting to poetry to fiction to autobiography [...] Bachelard reveals time after time that setting is more than scene in works of art, that it is often the armature around which the work revolves. He elevates setting to its rightful place alongside character and plot, and offers readers a new angle of vision that reshapes any understanding of great paintings and novels. (Bachelard x)

Here Stilgoe relies on the traditional term *setting* to make sense of emphasis that Bachelard's project places on space, but, in my opinion, Bachelard's approach is useful in analysing literary representations of spaces at least in part because it moves beyond mere setting. To some extent, this may be a terminological problem. *Setting* is often understood as the background or surroundings, as the following definitions demonstrate: 'the environment or surroundings of anything' (Shaw 340); 'the combination of place, historical time, and social milieu that provides the general background for the characters and plot of a literary work' (Murfin 443); 'the place and time in which the action of a story or play occurs' (Beckson and Ganz 255); 'the general locale, historical time, and social circumstances in which [a work's] action occurs' (Abrams 175); and 'the background against which action takes place' (Holman and Harmon 440). But Bachelard's work is not only about claiming setting as an object of aesthetic analysis; it also makes a deeper argument about the role of space in human psychology: Bachelard's notion of space is closely tied to the mythical and the primordial, to those 'fundamental values' of shelter, protection, and intimacy. In other words, Bachelardian space is less a background for some specific action, and more a manifestation of an abiding human desire to experience and return to what Bunkše calls 'the timeless solitude and the intimacy and warmth of the refuge' (103). For Bachelard, space is more psychologically important than time; while he concedes that it is often expedient to 'localize a memory in time', Bachelard claims that

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of those humanistic geographers who post-1970 countered the empty abstractions of spatial science by turning to the so-called "philosophies of meaning", specifically phenomenology and existentialism, as a window on the fundamental meaningfulness of human being-in-place' (Philo 11).

this is ‘merely a matter for the biographer’, going on to argue that a deep interpretation of the life of a subject must be carried out by ‘ridding history of its conjunctive temporal tissue’ (9), and seeking to understand the ways in which memories are fixed in space. This has implications for the production and consumption of works of art: spaces – especially, for Bachelard, ones in which the subject has experienced solitude and daydreams – persist in the imagination:

And all the spaces of our past moments of solitude [...] remain indelible within us, and precisely because the human being wants them to remain so. He knows instinctively that this space identified with his solitude is creative; that even when it is forever expunged from the present, when, henceforth, it is alien to all the promises of the future, even when we no longer have a garret, when the attic room is lost and gone, there remains the fact that we once loved a garret, once lived in an attic. (10)

Not only are these images of great importance to the subject, but they are the basis of the manifestation of the experience of place through art. Bachelard believes that, as Bunkše has it, ‘good poets, through their “creative acts,” are able to capture essences of daydreams of houses and places in them. In that way they orient and inform the daydreams of readers and lead them to daydream further’ (Bunkše 103). In an important sense, then, Bachelard’s work is not about space as *setting*, as ‘the background against which action takes place’, but rather about space as a psychological object unto itself which, through art, achieves what Bachelard calls ‘transsubjectivity’ (xix), reacting ‘on other minds and in other hearts’ (xviii–xix).

In the context of Moure’s novel, it is important to recognise that Balseiro’s garden, while important as a setting, is also important – especially for Clara – as a Bachelardian psychological object. However imperfect Clara’s memory of her father’s garden may be, its psychological import is undeniable and serves as the affective motor for the intervention. While Leandro, as I mention above, is oriented toward the discovery of objective reality, Clara represents a vindication of the creative productivity of accepting one’s own subjectivity and assuming an artistic stance; as she tells her son, ‘imos decidir dunha vez cal é a intervención e facémola. Déixate de ensaios’ (25). When Clara describes her vision for the project, she bids Leandro and the others to imagine every flower they have ever seen and more, adding ‘de pequena vivín nun Edén así’ (144). For her, the intervention is a chance to ‘volver levantar o xardín de meu pai’ (135), a childhood paradise loaded with a potent Bachelardian charge, a site that is ‘*endlessly revisited and forever gone*’ (Gerrard, quoted in Jones, ‘Endlessly Revisited’ (29), emphasis in the original). In Clara’s memory, the garden is the place where she ‘pasaba o tempo a farfallar cos caraveis’ (127), just the kind of

oneiric activity that Bachelard believes is required to 'inhabit with intensity' (Bachelard xxxviii). Moreover, for Clara, the garden is a space that protects her from harm, where the flowers care for her like a mother (127), a place where, in Bachelard's words, 'protective beings live' (7); in sum, the garden is the place where the young Clara has experienced the 'fundamental value' of home and intimacy. For Bachelard, this kind of childhood experience is essential to artistic expression. And while Bachelard emphasises the trans-subjective potential of the poetic image rendered in language, Clara proposes another kind of poesis, an horto-poetic intervention rooted not only in her desire to reproduce for herself the aesthetic pleasures of her father's garden, but also in the hope that the project will make an impression 'on other minds and in other hearts' and do what she calls '[imprimir] un novo rumbo á existencia colectiva' (144).

### **Memory Work and Critical Geographies of Home**

Clara's artistic vision calls for an isomediatic adaptation of her father's garden: a 'remake' in the same medium. Like many Earth Art and performance art projects, however, the intervention spawns a range of co-products across various media, including Candela's 'inventario detallado de especies coas fotografías necesarias' (275).<sup>4</sup> The novel we hold in our hands, for its part, represents the *making-of*, a narrative record of the artistic process. Although I have suggested that the intervention is aimed at producing a transsubjective aesthetic effect, the narrative registers a range of unintended, emergent *intrasubjective* effects brought on by the creative process. In the second section of *A intervención*, 'A semente dos soños', Clara constructs a new, more problematic narrative of her childhood home, the place that Leandro calls the 'xardín que marcara o pasado da miña nai' (74). To borrow Susannah Radstone's term, Clara's narration reflects a process of *memory work*: 'writing and research [...] that "works over" or takes as its raw materials personal or collective memory' (196–7). As Clara states it, Leandro's investigations into their family's past – investigations into collective memory – oblige her to 'facer o esforzo de lembrar, despois de toda unha vida esquecendo' (91). By allowing Clara to explore the tensions and interactions between her own most intimate Bachelardian memories and the memory work of (auto)biography, Moure transforms Balseiro's garden – and, by extension, Clara's childhood – into a contested space, showing how, in Steve Pile's words, "[s]tories of the self are

4 For examples of the ways in which artists contend with the documentary urge that accompanies performative and site-specific art, see Boetzkes's *The Ethics of Earth Art*, especially pp. 35–44, 58–63, and 76–100.

‘produced’ out of the spatialities that seemingly only provide the backdrop for those stories or selves (quoted in Jones, ‘An Ecology of Emotion’ 214).

In this sense, Moure is performing – through narrative fiction – a critical geography of home. Blunt and Dowling stipulate that such a project must examine “the political, social and economic implications of people’s relationships to place and definitions of home” (14), a perspective that runs counter to the Bachelardian idea that to grasp the poetic import of places, we must “desocialize” (10) our memories of them. Indeed, Blunt and Dowling state that the philosopher of intimate spaces, ‘like many humanistic geographers who have written on the home’, imagines home to be ‘an essential place for the intimacy and creativity of human life’ (12), a perspective that renders difficult more critical constructions of home as a ‘complex place shaped by negative as well as positive emotions and experiences’ (12). In *A intervención*, Clara initially lacks the ability to question or refigure her Bachelardian memory of her father’s garden; her poetic recollections of dwelling in it serve to block her ability to remember the garden as a site of trauma. As her narration advances, however, Clara begins to situate these recollections in their larger social context. As this contextualisation takes place, the representation of Balseiro’s garden becomes more complex, and the local colour and playfulness that characterise Leandro’s section begins to mix with a more sombre tone that reflects Clara’s coming to terms with the darker aspects of her past and the increased objectivity with which she comes to view her early family life.

One of the major themes that emerge through Clara’s memory work is that of the sexual politics that governed her parents’ generation; significantly for my analysis, the division between the sexes is schematised by the division of the Balseiro property between the garden – outdoor, in some sense public, associated with men – and the house – private, indoors, is associated with women.<sup>5</sup> Reconstructed haphazardly in the wake of a fire, the house is described as ‘unha casoupa [...] que se viña abaixo decontino porque fora construída sen amor’ (101). This description of the house’s structural instability brings to mind María do Cebreiro Rábade Villar’s call for readings that show how Galician literature – as the putative word-house of national identity – “amosa todas as súas fendas” (*Fogar* 175) and, in so doing, participates in a poetics that breaks with flat, seamless, and unitary conceptions of collective identity. Moure’s depiction of the Balseiro house effects a similar break with essentialising discourses, this time of home, by eschewing the

5 For a discussion of the public/private division of space in the context of sexual politics, see Armstrong and Squires, ‘Beyond the Public/Private Dichotomy: Relational Space and Sexual Inequalities’. *Contemporary Political Theory* 1 (2002): 261–83 and Manuel Delgado, *Sociedades Movedizas: Pasos hacia una antropología de las calles*. Barcelona: Anagrama, 2007. 224–63.

Bachelardian 'dream shelter' – a 'snug, protected house which is well built on deeply-rooted foundations' (Bachelard 72) – in favour of a ramshackle building that provides a physical index of the *unhomely* affect that the Balseiro women experience there, as the very phrase 'construída sen amor' signals. Just as Rábade Villar points to the strange compatibility of 'o sentido de pertenza e o sentido de desherdanza' (*Fogar* 178), Blunt and Dowling note that the twin concepts of homeliness and unhomeliness allow geographers of home to understand 'the simultaneity of feelings of belonging and alienation associated with home' (121). On this view, the home, while idealised as a locus of love, belonging, and positive, *homely* affect, is equally capable of containing the opposite: hate, alienation, and negative, *unhomely* affect. As Freud demonstrates in his essay 'The Uncanny' (1919), the German word *heimlich* ['homely'] 'is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which are not mutually contradictory, but very different from each other' (section I). He concludes that '[t]he uncanny (*das Unheimliche*, "the unhomely") is in some way a species of the familiar (*das Heimliche*, "the homely")' (section I). To speak in terms of 'unhomely' homes, then, is to engage with the tensions contained within the very idea of home. Homi Bhabha has written, 'You must allow me this awkward word – "unhomely"' (The World' 445); for Bhabha, unhomeliness provides a vantage point from which to contemplate postcolonial subjects' 'failure to create a dwelling place', their 'unsettled lives' (446), and how the 'traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history' relate to 'the wider disjunctions of political existence' (448).

In *A intervención*, Clara's grandmother dona Pilar, her mother Susana, and her aunts – Pamela and the unnamed 'a que se matou' – all find themselves mired in such traumatic ambivalences, trapped in a house that has turned on them and consumes their vital energies while giving little in return. As Leandro recounts, the women

traballaban como burras na casa e cosendo o enxoval das máis ricas, as donas das tendas de ultramarinos ou as fillas do propietario da ferraxaría. E se obtiñan cadanseu xornal, como logo o investían no sustento familiar e no amaño dunha casa vella que lles caía en riba a cachos, os cartos volvían aos ultramarinos ou á ferraxaría de onde acababan de saír e todos contentos. (39)

This passage, drawn from Leandro's section 'Os amores imposíbeis', still shows the jocular tone of the novel's early pages, while also serving to present the structural inequalities – both sexual and economic – of the society in which the narrative takes place, inequalities that frustrate the Balseiro women's attempts to create a homely home. If, as María Xosé Queizán writes, '[a] sociedade masculina ten por finalidade que nengunha muller teña posibilidades de existencia sen relación cos homes' (58), the precarious economic

situation in which the Balseiro women find themselves results both from the fact that the women have no profession and therefore no means of making a living, and from the fact that Balseiro, the man on whom they are economically dependent, is inept in his socially assigned role as a provider, a point to which I shall return.<sup>6</sup> Echoing Queizán's affirmation that the family home is, for women, 'a nosa prisión, onde nos afogamos e frustramos' (64), for the Balseiro women, the house becomes a trap, in the sense that it both binds them economically and physically contains them, stuck as they are inside it, day after day, *borda que borda*, trying to make ends meet with underpaid needlework.

For the female members of the Balseiro household, the physical entrapment they experience is an outgrowth of existential entrapment (Leong n. pag.) brought about not only by their economic circumstances, but also by the pressure to conform to social norms of conduct. Queizán refers to the social pressure exerted on women to be 'abnegadas e amantísimas esposas' and to 'aparentar, polo que dirán, unha felicidade que non senten e un paraíso doméstico que é, de feito, un inferno' (64). This dynamic is commented upon by Clara, who indicates pride and shame as socio-emotional factors that contribute to the claustrophobic experience of entrapment: regarding her mother, Clara notes that '[q]uizais o *orgullo* non a deixaba saír da casa para pedir axuda' (112, emphasis mine); regarding her aunt, Clara narrates that the elder Balseiro sister commits suicide '*avergoñada* pola deshonra que caera na casa co escándalo financeiro en que se vira envolto meu pai' (92, emphasis mine). In this last passage, the polysemy of *casa* – a noun that refers not only to a building, but also to a family, a lineage, and a home – reflects how the social structures in which the characters find themselves embedded are concretised in the house, which is experienced as a stricture. Even if one manages to escape from the physical restriction imposed by the house, such a move often does nothing to facilitate the escape from the patriarchal family structure. In the case of Pamela, who marries and moves to the Americas, her motivation for doing so is described by Clara in terms of a desire to 'fuxir daquela casa do terror' (112). Pamela herself, however, minimises the exceptionality of the Balseiro home, painting the family itself as a structure from which all women seek to flee: 'todas estabamos desexando largar de onde estivésemos: as solteiras, da casa dos pais; as casadas de onda o home!' (40).<sup>7</sup> By taking

6 It should be noted that dona Pilar, Clara's grandmother, was trained as a schoolteacher and returned to that profession after her husband's death. After her retirement, her daughters are hard pressed to replace her income, lacking as they do any professional training.

7 This echoes Judith Halberstam's explanation of the romantic comedy as a genre predicated on the 'misguided belief that in passing from father to husband the woman starts life anew' (76).

Pamela's discourse – once again jocular in tone – together with Clara's darker description of a 'casa do terror', we find evidence that Clara's memory work has radicalised her and made her conscious of the inequalities that lie behind her paradisiacal memories of her childhood.

A discussion of the sexual politics of the Balseiro household must, of course, include a discussion of Balseiro himself. In a certain sense, Balseiro is to blame for the family's financial troubles and for the chain of unfortunate events that mark Clara's childhood. As I mention above, Balseiro is a failure as a breadwinner, described as a 'lume-en-cu que non daba parado' (40). What little professional success Balseiro enjoys as a salesman and bookkeeper for a car dealership is little more than a masquerade, which Joseba Gabilondo defines as 'an activity and position whereby a subject performs a sexual-gender identity that the subject knows is not "natural or biological" but is demanded from him/her in order to occupy a position in the symbolic order of society' (81). But while Balseiro performs the role of breadwinner, the hollowness of this performance is ultimately undone by his compulsive aesthetic tendencies: abandoning the principles of good accounting, and symbolically the capitalist order, Balseiro transforms the regulatory function of his bookkeeping into an exercise in formal aesthetics, producing balance sheets that, while completely fraudulent, 'desprendían as virtudes de que o seu autor carecía: eran equilibradas, lúcidas e fermosas' (56). When Balseiro is, inevitably, fired from his job, the mask falls away as he gives up any attempt at paid employment and dedicates himself full-time to his garden. In this way, the garden becomes symbolic of Balseiro's rejection of – and inability to sustain – the paterfamilias masquerade.

While Balseiro is depicted as an unstable, unreliable individual whose abdication of responsibility for his family causes suffering and is therefore indefensible, in another sense, Balseiro, like the women in his family, is harmed by the sexual politics of obligatory domesticity. In other words, Balseiro, although ill-suited to the role of paterfamilias, has chosen marriage as his best option in the context of the society in which he is embedded. And, although Queizán has argued, not without merit, that 'a familia monogámica é estruturalmente un modo de dominación sobre as mulleres e os nenos' and that 'as mulleres, no meio familiar, fan que os homes e os nenos estexan a gusto' (57),<sup>8</sup> it is also the case that both men and women are socially coerced

8 Iris Marion Young concurs with Queizán's view and with 'feminist critics such as Luce Irigaray and Simone de Beauvoir [who argue] that the comforts and supports of house and home historically come at women's expense. Women serve, nurture, and maintain so that the bodies and souls of men and children gain confidence and expansive subjectivity to make their mark on the world' (134). Young goes on to argue, however, that we should not 'reject the values of home, but instead [...] claim those values for everyone' (161).

into perpetuating such a family structure. In *A intervención*, neither Susana nor Balseiro seems to take seriously the notion that marriage entails the production and reproduction of the kind of household in which a stable income and an orderly home are primary desiderata. We have already seen what form Balseiro's performance of the paternal role takes; Susana, for her part, is described as a naive young woman, lacking any notion that '[s]e puidese esperar dela que contribuíse ao sustento, ou que dedicase algún tempo ao ben común, ou sequera que ocupase a súa cabeza coas cuestións, sen dúbida prosaicas, da vida doméstica' (70). Yet, in spite of this, the two do marry. While Moure's novel may, on some level, lay the blame for the fate of Susana and Balseiro's marriage at the feet of these hapless subjects themselves, on another level it suggests that these two should never have attempted to set up housekeeping in the first instance. The fact that they do so and fail constitutes a critique of the patriarchal, heterosexual family as the sole model for the organisation of home life, a point to which I shall return later.

To return to the spatial dynamics of the Balseiro property, while the entrapment of the Balseiro women is associated with the house and its interior spaces, Balseiro exemplifies the trope of mental entrapment, a condition in which 'the insane are trapped in their own mental universe, into which no one else can penetrate' (Leong n. pag.). On this reading, the garden becomes the physical manifestation of Balseiro's *minifundio mental*; it is a deeply autocratic space that responds only to the obscure vision of its gardener. The garden also represents a paradox: although Balseiro himself regards the garden as private, in fact the garden is exposed to the gaze of curious neighbours and seems to project outward, burgeoning forth with greater and greater intensity as Balseiro himself turns inward, moving ever farther away from his assigned role as provider. At its peak, the flourishing of the garden offers an inverse indicator of the effort Balseiro invests in his family; as Clara conveys, her father

mergullárase con frenesí no oficio de xardineiro e non consentía interrupcións, ademais de que castigara as mulleres da súa casa co silencio porque elas, que non sabían estar caladas, tentaran unha ou dúas veces requirir del algún plano para o futuro. O futuro xa non existía. Debían metelo na cabeza. (92)

If, as Marsha Meskimmon writes, home-making is a future-oriented task that 'link[s] us beyond ourselves to others' and 'enables us to imagine our homes, identities and communities as spaces of inter-subjective engagements' (30), Balseiro's focus on his garden to the exclusion of his family constitutes a form of rebellion against family and domesticity, and an expression of his particular frustrations with the masculinity he finds himself unwilling or unable to perform.

This frustration reaches its apogee when Balseiro, reacting to Susana's departure, undertakes a process of home-making in reverse, in which he pulls the house apart piece by piece, ripping out towel bars, taking down mirrors, and throwing the beds, dressers, blankets, and even the refrigerator into the garden (126).<sup>9</sup> The outdoor space, previously described as a paradise, becomes a 'vertedoiro', a dump into which the house, turned inside out, is deposited. Although Balseiro is the agent of this evulsion, it also seems that the house, left without women, becomes subject to the forces of entropy, signalling the degree to which the integrity of the traditional, heterosexual, patriarchal household is actually dependent on female agency, even that of such an unlikely housewife as Susana.<sup>10</sup> The result is an interpenetration of the male and female realms, in which both spheres are broken and disordered; in a final Rodoredan flourish, the garden is definitively rendered abject by a plague of doves that leaves the space 'cuberto de esterco, de plumas, de sangue, e impregnado dun cheiro infernal' (127), and is set ablaze some days later by Balseiro, who, by destroying the property, symbolically sends domesticity up in smoke.<sup>11</sup>

It would be logical to assume that this decidedly unhomey scene would be for Clara the defining spatial representation of a childhood marked by loss, for, having been left behind, apparently forgotten by her mother, Clara is present to witness the destruction of the house and the defilement of the garden. Yet once again we see that local accounts of Clara's last days in the garden take a breezy tone, affirming that Clara survived happily in the garden in the days following Balseiro's rampage. Clara, for her part, ratifies this version of events, claiming that '[s]en ninguén que coidase de min, aletargaríame mirando a forma das nubes en medio dun aroma tan intenso a lilas que aínda lembro' (127), testimony that, significantly, combines the supposition of the conditional verb 'aletargaríame' with the claim to the authority of personal memory that is coded in 'aínda lembro'. Indeed, throughout this scene Moure

9 In the context of my discussion of the sexual politics of home, the circumstances of Susana's departure are worth noting. The novel explains that 'daquela a muller que abandonase o seu home podía ser reclamada e devolta pola Garda Civil'; for this reason, Susana cannot simply leave Balseiro. Instead, she must disappear in such a way that she cannot be found. This 'secuestro consentido' (115) is orchestrated by Susana's father, who enlists one of Susana's former suitors to take her to Buenos Aires to start a new life.

10 Simone de Beauvoir writes that '[f]ew tasks are more like the torture of Sisyphus than housework, with its endless repetition' (451); Young explains that on Beauvoir's view, 'man's subjectivity draws on the material support of women's work, and this work deprives her of a subjectivity of her own' (148).

11 It seems that Balseiro is killed in the fire, although this, like many events in the novel, is a subject of debate among the protagonists; as Leandro says, 'O que xa non tolero é que me digan – e é mamá quen o asegura – que o vello non morreu cando ardeu a casa' (22).

effects a complex blending of Clara's shiny childhood memories, her adult perspective, and the results of the memory work she has undertaken, juxtaposing various narrative positions to reflect Clara's roles as chronicler and as protagonist. Owain Jones has written that '[o]ur imagination needs to work with our memory and we need to recall the feelings and emotions themselves, as far as is possible, as well as narrative accounts of events. We need our memories to work in the first person and not the third person' (34). Clara's narrative, however, shifts from first- to third-person narration, sometimes even mixing them in the same sentence through apposition, for example, 'eu, a nena que sobreviviu a tolemia' (128). In a statement such as 'meu pai tomou a xustiza pola man e prendeu lume á casa' (128–9), Moure employs Clara's adult first-person narrative voice and thus implies Clara's ownership of that analysis of Balseiro's intention; by contrast, a passage like the one below is narrated in the third person and suggests Clara's desire to distance herself from any claims as to the veracity of the narration, a desire signalled also by the adverb 'disque':

Os veciños lanzáronse dentro para atoparen a nena que, disque, cercada polas lapas, tomaba impasíbel a súa ración de pétalos de hibisco desa mañá. Tiña a cara tan suxa, toda cuberta de pole e seiva, do sangue pegañento dos vexetais, que o seu rostro puido salvarse das queimaduras que afectaron o resto do corpo. (129, emphasis mine)

In this passage, while Clara uses the third person to describe events that supposedly happened to a certain *nena* – a possible version of herself – her inclusion of those events in her own narrative is significant. For Clara as an adult, a doctor, and as a modern subject, narrative distance is helpful in allowing her to assimilate popular, even fantastical, beliefs into her narrative. At the same time, these elements are required for the narrative to be true for Clara in a comprehensive sense: Although Clara has left the small-town culture that her parents occupied, she retains some of its ludic, oneiric, confabulatory spirit.

In my view, the formal complexity of the narrative that Clara constructs in order to understand her father's garden suggests the impossibility of any definitive representation of that space. Moreover, as testament to her own loss and *desarraigo*, Clara's narrative is bound to discursive complexity; as Rábade Villar has argued, the nature of dispossession and loss forecloses any 'posición discursiva simple' lest the 'tentación de facer pronunciado o impronunciado [reduza] un labor de fidelidade a un traballo de representación' (Fogar 178). As a gesture toward a critical geography of home, Clara's narrative begins to make an accounting of both the homely and unhomely dimensions of her childhood home and garden. By reading this narrative against – or

perhaps in parallel with – Bachelard's proposal that the poetics of space is accessed by desocialising memories, we can see that Clara's memory work is a particular kind of political intervention in which she 'resocialises' her childhood memories by submitting them to the scrutiny of her adult self, a process that in turn makes her childhood experiences legible within their broader social context, thus positioning the microgeography of childhood within the larger-scale social structures relevant to the adult subject. In this way, the patriarchal family comes into focus as a 'casa [...] atravesada dende dentro, e dende antigo polo sentido da desherdanza' (Rábade Villar, *Fogar* 173).

### **Homing Desires**

In the previous section, I argued that *A intervención* performs a critical geography of home that emphasises memory work and the process of coming to terms with the past. In this section, I will dilate the gap between Clara's childhood (the object of her memory work) and the novel's present (the time during which that work is undertaken) to demonstrate the ways in which Clara, in the decades following the destruction of her childhood home, creates a new home *ex nihilo*. Although Clara does not consciously conceive of her life as a reaction against her home of origin, through her attempts to satisfy what Ann-Marie Fortier, following Avtar Brah, calls 'homing desires' – the subjective need to 'feel at home in the context of migration [...] symbolically (re) constituting spaces which provide some kind of ontological security' (129) – Clara issues an intuitive, pre-theoretical response to her childhood home and the ideological apparatus that undergirds it. In what follows, I examine some of the creative processes in which Clara engages as she constructs a new home that is, in many regards, more conducive to happiness than her home of origin.

In Moure's fiction, homing desires are manifested as a desire to do what Fortier calls 'leaving the originary home behind, fixing it in the distant past, and seeking hominess elsewhere' (130).<sup>12</sup> In *A intervención*, Moure examines, largely through the character of Ingrid, a psychiatrist, the role of strategic forgetting in Clara's process of navigating life as an orphan. For Ingrid, one of the paradoxes of Clara's character is that, in spite of having been raised in an orphanage, one of those unhomey homes that Ingrid describes as 'centros de reclusión insalubres, mal ventilados de aires novos' (220), Clara is a person who '[p]arece na súa forma de falar, de abordar os afectos, de se cantar

12 For example, Moure's novel *A xeira das árbores* (2004) features a female protagonist – also named Clara – who conceives of single motherhood as a means of breaking with the past and with the patriarchal family model (Rodríguez Rodríguez 68).

perante o mundo, a derradeira irmá dunha familia calquera, cuberta de mecos e coidados' (221). From the psychiatrist's perspective, Clara's success in self-fashioning and the impression she gives of being at home in the world and in social relationships – encoded in the botanical image of *chantarse perante o mundo* – is a falsification predicated on the elision of the past, as exemplified by Clara's long-time habit of refusing to speak about her early life. Informed by a psychoanalytic disciplinary tradition that deals in 'the continuity of psychic materials from childhood through into adult life' (Philo 15), Ingrid's analysis of Clara's persona is negative in the sense that, in seeking continuity, it emphasises the lacunae in Clara's autobiography. Only by reflecting on Clara's childhood habit of 'contarse historias a si propia' (223) does Ingrid begin to value the 'imaginings, the fantasies [that] shape children's worlds (and geographies) *from within*' (Philo 15, emphasis in the original), thus reconceptualising Clara's persona as a daughter of a good home as a positive act of creation and imagination – driven by homing desires – through which she carves out a place in the world, elaborating a kind of *true lie* through which she constitutes herself. With this observation, Ingrid discovers that Clara, by constructing stories and making them real through performance, has found an antidote to the suffering of orphanhood.

Clara also pursues the satisfaction of her homing desires by *re-membering* her home, a process that Fortier describes as 'attaching [home...] to bodies and relationships that touch us, or have touched us, in a meaningful way' (131). One of the principal ways in which Clara effects this process of re-membering is through her relationship with Sampaio. By embracing the amnesiac pilgrim, Clara adds a new *member* to her 'chosen family' (Weston 106, see also Weeks et al.), one who, like Clara, is engaged in the process of 'inventarse unha biografía para diante' (36). For Clara, Sampaio's amnesia is a representation of a break with the past, and, conversely, his presence is an affirmation of creative potential inherent in living one's life as an emergent narrative, unfettered by what has come before. Sampaio becomes part of the home Clara has made for herself and a frequent *comensal* at the pinewood table that Leandro describes, in a lovely distillation of the materiality of home, as 'fregada e refregada para o uso íntimo e para os convites en máis de mil comidas' (65). If home is the confluence of people, places, and practices, Clara and Sampaio's shared meals serve to illustrate that intersection: 'Coa seguranza das unións de longo tempo, os membros deste matrimonio pouco convencional que eramos puñamos a mesa, servíamos a sopa, aliñabamos a ensalada, todo sabendo o punto que lle gustaba ao outro, o que é esencial, na miña opinión, para un bo convivio' (107). Setting the table, serving the soup, dressing the salad with someone else's tastes in mind: for Clara, who as a small child 'chuchaba o mel das flores' (219) and later, in the orphanage,

survived on a diet of a 'puré que amalgamaba nin se sabe que substancias acompañado dunha salchicha escuálida' (220), these practices are a way of 'doing home' and rectifying past deficiencies in the domestic experience.<sup>13</sup>

In light of my discussion in the last section of the sexual politics of the Balseiro home, it is interesting to consider the ways in which the home that Clara constructs as an adult pushes against the hegemony of the heterosexual nuclear family and articulates a dissident discourse of home. In her literary production, as in her critical and theoretical writings, Moure often returns to themes related to family and affective relationships, for example in *Benquerida catástrofe* (2007), a novel that interrogates the relationship between gender, identity and attraction, and *Unha primavera para Aldara* (2009), a play that explores relations of equality embedded within patriarchal structures and spaces. Viewed in comparison with these earlier works that participate in an explicitly queer discourse, *A intervención* is markedly unqueer; heterosexuality is everywhere you look in the novel and, as we have just seen, even Clara and Sampaio's relationship, which is not sexual, is described as a marriage, albeit an unconventional one. Seen from another angle, however, perhaps the unconventionality of Clara and Sampaio's relationship – and their happiness with each other – is precisely the point. In spite of the mutual affection that unites them, they live independently and need not rely on one another economically or for the execution of their daily affairs.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, the conventional marriages represented in the novel are disastrous, a point underscored by the physical destruction of the shared dwelling – as we have already seen in the case of Clara's childhood home – and by other metaphors that link marriage to physical structures. For example, as the novel progresses and Sampaio's life story emerges, his marriage to Ingrid's mother, Bettina, is described as a building that 'se viñera abaixo' and in which 'a felicidade non cabía' (110). In both cases, the compromised materiality of dwellings is called upon to signal the decay of the immaterial structures of home, family, and marriage; regardless of whether one finds these metaphors evocative or aesthetically effective, they point to the impermanence and vulnerability – perhaps even the underlying unsoundness – of marriage as an institution.

In this context, the circumstances of Clara's maternity are significant.

13 I take this phrase from "'Doing Home": Patriarchy, Caring, and Space' by Bowlby et al., in which the authors point to the performativity of home.

14 It is worth noting that Clara and Sampaio both seem to enjoy freedom from economic concerns. Sampaio is retired and lives off his savings, while Clara, as a doctor, seems more than able to provide for herself and, what is more, can afford an extended leave to participate in the intervention. I leave for future research the question of to what degree Moure's characters are bourgeois bohemians (Brooks) whose embodiment of counter-culture values is predicated on a comfortable upper-middle-class socioeconomic position.

Clara's relationship with Omar, Leandro's father, is described as natural, not mediated by the conventions of matrimony or courtship, and the unconventional nature of their relationship is encoded in their refusal of the social regulations that govern the use of domestic space.<sup>15</sup> Clara's apartment, unlike the spaces associated with matrimony, is not sanctioned as a site for intimate acts; in this context, Clara's bedroom becomes a site of resistance in which the 'naturalidade' (239) of her relationship with Omar is juxtaposed with and defeats 'norma' (239), which casts the mundane fact of sex outside of marriage as a dissident act that questions the hegemony of marriage as a structure that organises and controls sexuality and procreation. This extra-normative sexual practice ultimately leads to Clara's becoming pregnant, at which point Moure kills off Omar in a motorcycle accident. Although Omar's death is a great loss for Clara and forecloses any hopes the two lovers may have had of forming a new home together, on a more symbolic level, Omar's death signals the caducity of the *paterfamilias* and clears the way for Clara to form a woman-headed home not inscribed within the dominant model of the nuclear family.<sup>16</sup>

Ultimately, single motherhood is an opportunity for Clara to do with her family history what Manuel Rivas bids us to do with cultural tradition: 'anovala, ensanchala, transgredila' (24). While Clara recognises in herself a certain artistic temperament that she sees as an inheritance from her father, she chooses to turn that temperament to her 'exercício da maternidade' (98), signalling that motherhood, as performance art, is a medium with great transformative potential. Through this choice of medium, Clara performs a bit of familial alchemy, honouring a bad father by becoming a good mother. Significantly, this honouring of the father – also manifested in Clara's choice to name her son Leandro Balseiro in order to redeem her progenitor and, of course, in Clara's desire to recreate his garden – is accompanied by an erasure of Clara's mother. This symbolic matricide, I submit, is also a kind of creative forgetting driven by Clara's homing desires. Judith Halberstam writes:

15 Moure has commented on the spatial regulation of sexuality, noting that '[n]unha sociedade como a actual, que presume de permisiva con respecto a épocas previas – o cal é probabelmente falso – existen numerosos indicios de excesiva regulamentación da vida sexual. No deseño das nosas vivendas, sen irmos máis lonxe, suponse que hai un cuarto da casa onde cabe unha cama grande, desas que nas tendas de móbeis seguen a chamar 'de matrimonio'; nos demais cuartos simplemente non caben as condutas sexuais: son cuartos para fillos e fillas, ou para pais e nais vellos, e de aí o sexo eliminase de forma tan sibilina como rotunda: roubándolles o espazo onde poñer unha cama grande' (Moure, *Queer-emos* 36).

16 This motif is repeated at the end of the novel when Candela reveals that she is pregnant, presumably not with her husband's child, but with Leandro's, signalling both the continuation of the Balseiro line and its resistance to the model of the nuclear family.

While Virginia Woolf's famous line about women from *A Room of One's Own*, 'We think back through our mothers if we are women,' has been widely interpreted as the founding statement of a new aesthetic lineage that passes through the mother and not the father, the crucial point of the formulation is the conditional phrase [...] In fact, 'if we are women' implies that if we do not think back through our mothers, then we are not women, and this broken line of thinking and unbeing of the woman unexpectedly offers a way out of the reproduction of woman as the other to man from one generation to the next. (125)

In light of Halberstam's reading, it becomes clear that *A intervención* offers a conception of maternity that differs from Moure's earlier novel *A xeira das árbores*, which is described by Helena Miguélez Carballeira as offering a

visión altamente esencializada da muller que na novela se constrúe como a muller-natureza, a muller-mai, a muller-sentimento, a muller-reduto da linguaxe e coñecemento primixenios, as máis delas tropas feministas esgotados noutras literaturas e cuestionados pola crítica. (78)

By contrast, *A intervención* offers a repudiation of traditional maternity and reflects Clara's desire to occupy the role of mother in a novel way.<sup>17</sup> This ideological shift is reflected on a formal level by the fact that the character of Clara's mother all but vanishes from the narrative. Although as readers our sense of fairness may be offended by Clara's adoration of her father and the suppression of her mother, it seems that Clara's homing desires do not and cannot embrace a mother who remains inscribed in the paradigm of the nuclear family and who, in dozens of letters to her own father, never asks after the daughter she left behind (226). In some sense, then, if the novel celebrates anything about Susana, it is her creative failure and her omissions, which are ultimately decisive in breaking the cycle of transmission of hegemonic maternity, thus creating the conditions for the renovation of the family.

Through the processes of creative forgetting, family re-membling, and artistic maternity, Clara performs a political intervention by inventing a home that is less hierarchical, less rigid in its roles, and more conducive to happiness than the lost 'paradise' of her infancy; in this sense, Moure's novel illustrates the twin home-making processes of restitution and healing referred to in the epigraph to this article: 'Son os remendos quen nos restituén/ as cicatrices as que fan fogar' (Dávila 32). This is illustrated in a scene in which

17 Given this, Clara is greatly irritated to hear her son imitating her complaining about household clutter: 'Ponme todo perdido este rapaz. Ten o cuarto feito unha leoneira, non sei como facer.' (97), a comment through which Leandro portrays Clara as the very kind of mother she never intended to become. Clara laments 'tantos anos de educación comprensiva e case libertaria para agora decatarse no momento decisivo de que a mamá tamén podía ser un axente represivo!' (97).

Clara, learning to ride a bicycle for the first time, is recast as the daughter, both in relation to Sampaio and to Leandro. It is Sampaio who performs the iconic parental function of holding up the bicycle as Clara begins to pedal: ‘Esa tarde eu, que non era unha pluma, sentía por vez primeira na vida a maxia do equilibrio no propio corpo sostida durante uns metros por Sampaio, que tampouco non era un rapaz’ (111). Sampaio thus becomes the parents that Clara never had and, at the same time, the father he never managed to be for his own daughter, Ingrid. A further shifting or inversion of roles comes when, as Clara reports, Leandro ‘me viu en bicicleta polo camiño vello [...] dando berros de felicidade como unha nena e dicíndolle nada máis albiscalo: “mira, Leandro, mírame, e agora... sen mans!”’ (106). Here, Clara is the child living the classic ‘Look! No hands!’ moment with her son as the parent looking on. Clara observes, significantly, that such experiences prove that ‘nada está escrito’ (111), that family and home are not definitively inscribed, but rather are stories that are iteratively told and retold. In this way, *A intervención* manifests Moure’s affection for mixing the modes of being and becoming, as illustrated by Clara’s affirmation that she and Leandro are ‘dúas criaturas igualmente a medio facer, cunha biografía que enleaba os seus pasados e que devecían por se construíren xuntos nos futuros respectivos’ (122). By putting herself on the same level as Leandro Clara reimagines her relationship with her adult son, abdicating the hierarchical advantage that comes with parenthood and thus creating a new family based on equality and the shared desire to keep building their identities, both individual and collective.

## Conclusion

Olga Novo has written that Moure combines ‘[os] discursos do ecofeminismo, dos movementos anticapitalistas, antiglobalización’ in order to construct ‘un edificio ideolóxico con vocación radical e libertaria, á vez contendor de múltiples contribucións e emanador de mensaxes liberadoras’ (208).<sup>18</sup> Indeed, an abiding feature of her work is its contestatory and revolutionary tone: Moure’s denunciation of dominant paradigms – particularly as concerns the politics of gender, sexuality, ecology, and language – carries with it a call to

18 For a particularly insightful reading of the reception of Moure’s work in the context of Galician feminism, see Miguélez Carballeira’s 2007 essay ‘A escrita de Teresa Moure no contexto da narrativa feminista contemporánea’, in which the author argues that although Moure has been lauded for introducing new feminist ideas into the Galician cultural and literary scene, Moure in fact echoes many of the ideas expressed by feminist theorists of decades past, including Galician author and scholar María Xosé Queizán whose contributions have largely been ignored.

*intervene*, an urging that readers, their consciousness newly raised, go forth and make the world a better place. On Moure's view, the world is ever being made and remade, requiring constant reevaluation and action on the part of informed and engaged subjects if it is to become more just and equitable.

In a certain way, Moure's is a utopian project. As we know, a utopia is literally a *not-place*, a place that does not exist. But how are we to understand the experience of such non-existent places? Moure's novel takes up this question explicitly; Ingrid, concerned that Clara suffers from delusions of grandeur, observes that 'o proxecto de Clara é algo... como se di *utopisch?* Utópico?' (146). This affirmation not only draws into question the feasibility of the project, but also its ability to produce the aesthetic and social effects that Clara imagines. Sampaio, for his part, suggests that the label 'utopian', imposed by power in order to negate the possibility of alternative models and ideas, can and should be reclaimed:

Todo pode acontecer [...] coido que o termo [utópico] non alude tanto á posibilidade lóxica de realización dun determinado proxecto, senón a ese sentimento que anega a quen realiza unha aposta que sae das lindes do que estaba marcado. Nese caso, *utópico* significaría fóra do rego, do imposto, do marcado. (147)

While in the end Ingrid is in some sense proved right – the atmosphere of bonhomie that accompanies the completion of the intervention is soon replaced by the sensation that '[a] realidade tendía o seu manto sobre nós e agora había que quitar as maletas do faiado e volver á vida de sempre' (250) – in another sense, Moure's novel points to the subject-internal and collective transformations brought about by the creative process, transformations that make a return to '[a] vida de sempre' impossible. In this way, Moure suggests that the creative process is itself a kind of 'intervención política', one that can, at least potentially, contribute to a world that is 'ecoloxicamente sustentábel, pacífico, non competitivo, libre, xusto, creativo' ('Só coa vosa teimosía' 5), a world of homely homes.

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