**Carmen de Burgos’s *El perseguidor* (1917):**

**strange men and the journey to feminine empowerment**

Carmen de Burgos, known also by her pen-name, Colombine (1867-1932), was both well-known and widely read in pre-Civil War Spain (Núñez Rey 2005: 20-21 and 115).[[1]](#footnote-1) *El perseguidor* is one of many short stories that de Burgos published in large-circulation weeklies or monthlies, contributing to what Kirkpatrick (2011: 239-40) has identified as a ‘new arena of print culture that took off like wildfire in the first decades of the twentieth century – the highly profitable paperback short novel series pitched both in price and style towards a mass audience’. This one appeared in the weekly *La Novela Corta* (año 11, núm. 59) on 17 February 1917 and is a psychological horror story, which rests upon its protagonist, Matilde’s belief that she is being followed by a mysterious man she calls *el hombre de la pelliza*, as she travels unaccompanied in Europe, leaving Daniel, a would-be suitor, behind in Spain. Having been stalked in Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Scandinavia, and finally England, Matilde eventually capitulates and goes back to Spain, where she marries Daniel and appears to be going to live happily ever after. The strange man’s existence and the malevolent intentions that Matilde imputes to him are never objectively verified in the poetic logic of the text, nor explained away conclusively.

The present article investigates how de Burgos utilizes this premise to explore a preoccupation which recurs across her writing career in different guises: an uneasy vacillation, coming to a range of different conclusions, between the allure for a woman of freedom, independence, and adventure, on the one hand, or the security, respectability, and protection of home and a husband, on the other. This appears in her non-fictional travel writing, as Jenkins Wood observes:

In general in her travel books, Colombine created the image of herself as an eager, confident traveller, of an independent woman who savoured the freedom of travel. In this more intimate work [*Cartas sin destinatario: Bélgica, Holanda, Luxemburgo (Impresiones de viaje)* (1910)], however, the reader has the feeling of accompanying the traveller in several moments of self-doubt and homesickness. […] She admitted to experiencing lonely moments […] as the absence of the familial ties that bind most women to the home.

(2014: 343)

As for her fiction, let three examples suffice to illustrate the breadth of responses to the dilemma explored by de Burgos: at one extreme, there is *Puñal de claveles* (1931), based on the same news story as Lorca drew upon subsequently (with very different effect) for *Bodas de sangre* (written in 1932, premiered in 1933).[[2]](#footnote-2) In de Burgos’s text, the runaway bride and her lover are set to live happily ever after together, so the woman’s decision to privilege agency and adventure over security and respectability is presented as positive. *Quiero vivir mi vida*, also published in 1931, is at the opposite pole, for there the woman’s inability to accept and make do with all that is good about her husband and secure married life leads her to commit murder, a tragedy for all concerned, but one which is presented as inexorable.[[3]](#footnote-3) *Confidencias* (1920), offers a more realist take on the question, for it features a young wife who combines the dull but secure social standing provided by her middle-aged husband with a series of extra-marital affairs for excitement. As the protagonist is rather antipathetic, however, the message of the text is not to endorse such a compromise but rather to expose and implicitly critique the cultural norms that have led to it.[[4]](#footnote-4) *El perseguidor* is unusual in de Burgos’s oeuvre for the overall optimism it gives to the question, letting Matilde succeed in squaring the circle of achieving a personally fulfilling yet socially respectable marriage.[[5]](#footnote-5)

This article will argue that Matilde’s stalker plays a triple role: personifying the genuine dangers faced by unaccompanied women travelling in 1917; the limitations on Spanish women’s freedom by virtue of their culture’s gender norms; and a shadow self that threatens Matilde’s psychological equilibrium.[[6]](#footnote-6) This trope can operate thanks to a semantic peculiarity of Spanish: the fact that the verb *perseguir* and its cognate formsseamlessly blend what are three distinct concepts in English and French, pursuit, persecution, and haunting. To serve as a counterpoint, this *hombre de la pelliza* will be contrasted with the equally mysterious character who visits the protagonist in Carmen Martín Gaite’s fantastic text, *El cuarto de atrás* (1978), a man named Alejandro but referred to as the *hombre de negro* (Martín Gaite 1988: 53 *et passim*). The conclusion will reflect upon what these seemingly contrasting presentations of the strange man, now ghostly foe, now friendly muse in the imaginations of two women writers may reveal about gender politics in Spain.[[7]](#footnote-7)

By the time de Burgos wrote *El perseguidor*, she was a seasoned and intrepid traveller, journalist, and travel writer. In 1909 she had gone to North Africa to report on the war in the Spanish Sahara, being the first Spanish woman to be an on-the-spot war correspondent. In 1913, she had made her first trip to Latin America. In the summer of 1914, at the outbreak of the First World War, she was in Scandinavia and had to cross Germany to get back to Spain. In Rostock she was accused of being a Russian spy and was to face several other difficult and dangerous situations before she eventually got home via London (de Burgos 1998, 259-63).[[8]](#footnote-8) Before the troubled part of the journey, though, when she is singing the praises of Stockholm, she remarks upon how safe women are there, attributing this to Protestant culture: ‘Para señoras solas la religiosidad y la observancia de los evangelios es una garantía’ (cited in Núñez Rey 2005: 359). A decade earlier, she had remarked upon the respectful treatment of unaccompanied women in the streets of Tangiers by night, comparing this favourably with what they faced in Spain (de Burgos 1998: 49). That she should repeatedly mention this issue is perhaps attributable to problems she had faced in Spain when out of doors unescorted by a man as well as her expectations based on Spanish norms. She is known to have hired a male escort to accompany her to the offices of one of the newspapers she worked for and she established her own literary salon at home rather than attending the literary *tertulias* held in public venues (Zubiaurre 2003: 59). These non-fictional comments and facts provide valuable context for an understanding of *El perseguidor*.

De Burgos’s journalism and accounts of her travels generally express the same sort of delight at discovering foreign landscapes, people, and cultures as she gives to her protagonist, Matilde, when she is not feeling *perseguida*.[[9]](#footnote-9) For example, Matilde’s love of Naples is expressed warmly:

No había nada tan deliciosamente variado como aquella ciudad de panoramas múltiples, en la que se mezclaba un pueblo tan distinto, tan abigarrado, en toda la inmensa escala, que iba desde la aristocrática concurrencia de San Carlos, hasta los pescadores de Santa Luisa y de la Margellina (de Burgos 1917: 15).

The author’s own love of the city is on the record too:

Carmen de Burgos redactó para *La Esfera* un montón de documentos e interesantísimos artículos sobre Nápoles. Habló de su geografía y naturaleza, escribió sobre Virgilio y Leopardi, recordó la imprescindible presencia del pintor español Ribera, aireó las extraordinarias obras de arte que acumula la ciudad, visitó las excavaciones arqueológicas de Pompeya y Hercularo y las narró (Molina 2010: 103).

Resemblances between the author’s accounts of her own travels and those she gives to her fictional creation, however, go beyond enthusiasm and destinations in common, though these certainly overlap.[[10]](#footnote-10) As Núñez Rey affirms (2005: 372), in her travel writing de Burgos ‘está explorando el espacio, el tiempo, la conciencia de la sociedad y su propia conciencia individual; porque intenta descubrir el mundo y descubrirse a sí misma’. It is this cross-fertilization of external and internal exploration upon which the fantastic element of *El perseguidor* is predicated: the crucial difference between the journalism or travel writings and a tale like this is that Matilde is deprived of the capacity to be sure where one ends and the other begins. Accordingly, she regards the man who frightens her as both a stranger to her, an external figure, and someone all too familiar, a creation of her own imagination, a man ‘cuyo rostro jamás había visto pero que estaba segura de reconocer’ (de Burgos 1917: 31), fitting snugly with Freud’s notion of the uncanny, but anticipating his famous essay by two years.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Despite there being an omniscient narrator, we are not given privileged information unavailable to Matilde and so we are placed before the same number of possible readings of the situation as she faces. From the most plausible and verisimilitudinous to the most supernatural and far-fetched, these are:

1. Matilde sees several men of similar demeanour in different places she travels to, but they are not the same person and they are not stalking her or ill-intentioned towards her: she projects her insecurities onto them and, because the insecurities are the same, she imagines the men are one person and feels persecuted.
2. As above, except that one or more of them are in fact following her, intending to rob or rape her or both. In this reading, she is being pursued and her fear is justified if intuitive so she is behaving sensibly to take measures to protect herself: quickly joining other groups of people and so on.
3. Any number of Matilde’s sightings of the man are hallucinatory, a figment of her troubled imagination as she struggles to reconcile her contradictory wishes for independence and freedom with a desire for the comfort and security of home and a husband. This is a case, then, of psychological haunting.
4. Matilde is the victim of a supernatural haunting: the man is a ghostly apparition and hence able to follow her wherever she goes. Why she should be haunted and by whom remains undisclosed and unexplored, but it apparently hinges upon Matilde’s solitary wanderlust, for once she capitulates to the fear of the apparition, goes home and marries Daniel, the ghost is laid to rest.

The dénouement encourages a reading that dismisses the supernatural option and privileges the hallucinatory one, but none of the four is eliminated conclusively; the narrator instead tells us about Matilde’s interpretation of her experience, taking us into her rationalization of events with phrases such as ‘comprendió con claridad que’ (de Burgos 1917: 33), meaning that the ending may be attributed to an omniscient voice dispelling doubt once and for all in the tradition of Ann Radcliffe’s explained supernatural, or may be a continuation of the internal character’s hypothesis, be it wishful and self-deceptive or perceptive and correct.[[12]](#footnote-12) These are the closing words of the story:

Era un delirio el deseo de independencia, que lleva hasta el egoísmo. Queriendo estar sola, había creado el fantasma de su miedo, siguiéndola y persiguiéndola al través del mundo, bajo la forma del hombre de la pelliza.

Habiendo matado su soledad [al casarse con Daniel], había alejado para siempre, definitivamente, a ese hombre que persigue siempre a las mujeres solas en las calles nocturnas, en los más deliciosos y apartados parajes del mundo y en todos los momentos más dulces de su soledad (de Burgos 1917: 34).

As with Radcliffe’s endings too, this one may feel disappointing to a reader hitherto exhilarated by the heroine’s agency as she defies cultural norms, first by leaving Seville for Madrid, and then by going travelling alone, followed by her strength of character in the face of adversity - whether real or imagined - while abroad.[[13]](#footnote-13) Hence, certain readers may be somewhat sorry to see her settle for marriage so contentedly to Daniel, a man who may have failed to seduce us even though she clearly loves him. For Cruz-Cámara (2018: 45-46), the solution is to posit a gulf between the character’s attitude and the author’s, such that the latter is critiquing the former for falling into the trap of marriage and letting Daniel become the *perseguidor* who finally catches her. Zubiaurre, who also reads Daniel as the victorious final *perseguidor*, regards the disjunction between the body of the story and the ending as catering to readers with both a conventional and rebellious mindset (2003: 64-65). Be that as it may, also in common with Radcliffe, the resolution does not cancel out the power of the terror the heroine has confronted. Whether we prefer one of the four options listed above or instead find the undecidability more interesting, for Matilde herself, the panic at the time was real and only exacerbated by its uncertainties: after all, being sure one is seeing a ghost, believing a prospective human predator is following one or realizing one is having hallucinations are all extremely frightening but is it not worst of all to have no way of telling the difference between them? De Burgos captures powerfully not only Matilde’s growing panic each time she sees the man again in a new city or country, but also how the anticipatory dread of this takes hold of her increasingly so that even when he is nowhere to be seen, she is crippled by fear. In London, for example, before the final watershed encounter with him:

Cada paso que resonaba detrás de sí le hacía volver la cabeza. Sentía miedo de todos los hombres pobremente vestidos. […]

Por temor de encontrar aquel hombre no se atrevía a salir sola por las tardes. […]

El hotel la asustaba. Tenía siempre miedo de encontrar en él, en cualquiera de los pasillos al hombre de la pelliza gris (de Burgos 1917: 29).

It is easy to jump to the conclusion that this story is a critique of attitudes to women in general and their vulnerability in consequence;[[14]](#footnote-14) and yet de Burgos is more targeted in her attack. She makes a point of distinguishing between her protagonist’s experience and the seemingly untroubled travels of unaccompanied Englishwomen; indeed Matilde wishes she could be more like these:

Las mujeres inglesas, con su silueta angulosa, desgarbada, cabellos blancos y escasos, y su aspecto de agilidad, de limpieza de fortaleza, como si sus cuerpos estuviesen forjados o tallados en alguna materia dura, constituían su ideal [de Matilde]. Quería ser como ellas. No tenía miedo a que blanquease su cabellera poseyendo aquella energía, aquella fortaleza, aquella recidumbre [*sic*]. Deseaba imitarlas, conservar su línea enjuta, sin la grasa común a casi todas las españolas; su agilidad, su independencia, y para eso emprendía constantes viajes, como si hubiese sorprendido que el secreto estaba en el movimiento, en la renovación continua, en no pararse para esperar el final (de Burgos 1917: 8).

Why, one may ask, are *they* not followed by strange men, real, hallucinatory, or spectral, or, if they are, continue undaunted? Logically, they too should be just as susceptible to becoming the victims of a prospective robber, sexual predator, or vengeful ghost. The only answer to that question seems to reside in the psychological component of the experience and, specifically, Matilde’s Spanishness, her roots in a culture that has predicated honour upon feminine incarceration within the home since the Golden Age at least and continues to do so in de Burgos’s time.[[15]](#footnote-15) Thus, her feelings concerning what message she is conveying about and to herself by wanting to be abroad on her own may be read as a psychologically explosive mixture of guilt and self-doubt as to her own respectability, combined with resentment at having internalized the damaging cultural construction of femininity it presupposes and anger at her inability to emancipate herself from it by an act of will and geographical self-displacement.[[16]](#footnote-16) Thus, her admiration and envy of the Englishwomen who sally forth guiltlessly may consciously reflect the adventurousness she imputes to them but arguably has at least as much to do with her insightful perception that they do not regard their love of travel as calling their respectability into question. This interpretation chimes with the ‘mil recomendaciones’ (de Burgos 1917: 15) and the fears her compatriots express for the danger in which they believe her solo travelling will place her. At that pre-departure stage, the smile with which she responds conveys her conviction that she has risen above such parochial concerns: ‘Sabía el concepto tan triste que se tenía *en España* de una mujer sola; pero se sentía protegida por las costumbres del extranjero’ (de Burgos 1917: 15; my italics). As she and we will discover, however, physical displacement does not free her from the mindset of her culture and in that regard, her stay in London is especially telling, given what she has said earlier about Englishwomen. She finds the lifestyle alien and, unlike the Spanish woman she meets who has married an Englishman, she cannot, she realizes, simply adopt Englishness and integrate painlessly, however much she appreciates many aspects of it. Indeed, it is Matilde’s Spanishness that leads to the climax, for this occurs when she is sitting alone one evening in Torrington Square, alone specifically because the English retire so early and ‘no podía habituarse a meterse temprano en el lecho’ (de Burgos 1917: 30). This is when the sighting of the man loitering between her and the gate she needs to use to leave the square and escape back behind doors brings her round to the decision to return home and accept Daniel’s marriage proposal (de Burgos 1917: 31-32).

If, according to at least one possible reading, the *hombre de la pelliza* represents a part of Matilde which at first she rejects in panic, trying and failing to flee from him/it, he seems to embody her internal conflict over her gender identity as constructed by her home culture and, by extension, that culture itself. Once she decides to accept her own Spanishness, warts and all, to stop running away and go home, she has reached a position of self-knowledge and self-possession which enables her to reconcile her needs and desires. She does so by converting Daniel from a man with no taste for adventure into one with whom she can share her enthusiasm for travelling, now – tellingly - inside Spain though. In this way, she moves gender relations forward in Spain, if only by changing one man: establishing a relationship of equality in which his willingness to accommodate and respect her love of travel demonstrates that she does not have to conform to the traditional notion of ‘la mujer honrada, la pierna quebrada y en casa’ in order to maintain her respectability in his eyes and, even more importantly, her own.

Sixty-one years and two dictatorships later, Carmen Martín Gaite creates her own mystery man in *El cuarto de atrás*. This man, however, appears to be a benign and welcome presence, who unlocks the narrator’s memories and clears her writer’s block. Critics have interpreted him in diverse ways that are consistent with this. For example, Palley (1980: 22) regards him as a positive animus figure in the Jungian sense and he and Alemany Bay (1990: 36-37), Brown and Smith (1987: 66) are among those who characterize him as the ideal interlocutor. Indeed, it is through dialogue between him and the narrator that she resolves her own internal conflict: how to produce a fantastic text as defined by the Todorov she has been reading and, at the same time, to record her memories and experience of growing up before, during, and in the aftermath of the Civil War, capturing and chronicling the interplay of internal and external realities or, as Estrella Cibreiro puts it (1995: 31) ‘aunando así la esfera interior, psicológica y subjetiva con el referente externo del acontecer histórico’. The solution, as we realize at the end of the novel, is the very book we have in our hands.

At first glance, Martín Gaite’s *hombre de negro* seems diametrically opposed to de Burgos’s *perseguidor*: to be friendly and vocal instead of threatening and silent; and to enter the narrator’s home space instead of stalking her when she is on alien territory. In fact, they have much in common. Like de Burgos’s *hombre de la pelliza*, the *hombre de negro* is also an *unheimlich* combination of stranger and self for the narrator: though she believes she has never met him when he arrives on her doorstep, it transpires that she has been writing him letters and she admits that if she closes her eyes – to her rational self? – she can ‘figurar que es un amigo de toda la vida, alguien a quien encuentr[a] después de una larga ausencia’ (Martín Gaite 1988: 38). Both are double-edged characters: the menacing aspect of the *perseguidor* is complemented by a more amiable iteration of the figure, in the shape of a seemingly different stranger, who befriends Matilde in Hamburg and whom she finds attractive, only to discover from a third party that he is untrustworthy (de Burgos 1917: 22-24). Meanwhile, Martín Gaite’s seemingly gentle Alejandro is apparently a perpetrator of domestic violence and a case-book *machista* at home, as the narrator discovers when she has a long telephone conversation with his partner.[[17]](#footnote-17)

The relationship between each protagonist and the strange men, viewed as psychological construct, is even more remarkably analogous, for in both cases, the encounter serves as the catalyst for the central character to transcend what had seemed an insoluble internal conflict inextricably bound up with culturally constructed gender norms and the interplay of outer and inner realities: for Matilde, how to quench her thirst for adventure, freedom, and agency without sacrificing love, companionship, and the comfort of home in the widest sense of the word; for Carmen, how to articulate the rich complexity of her memories, made up of the intertwinings of her outer and inner life and including what she was taught during the Franco years about ideals of femininity in particular.[[18]](#footnote-18)

After all the foreign countries she has visited, Matilde’s honeymoon trip inside Spain with Daniel at the end of *El perseguidor* suggests that she realizes she needs to change her direction of travel, from outwards to inwards. She traverses Castille at the end of the story feeling happy because ‘su matrimonio no mataba su libertad, la agrandaba’ (de Burgos 1917: 33); she feels she has come to understand herself and is now on an inner voyage of further discovery, possible because she has been able to ‘crearse su hogar libre, sereno, sano, en el que no era la sacrificada’ (de Burgos 1917: 34). Martín Gaite could be seen as addressing similar concerns via an analogous trope of a journey inwards also inspired by a masculine presence which both and is not part of herself. González (1994: 86) concurs:

La c del nombre de la protagonista-narradora de *El cuarto de atrás* es el punto de partida para una secuencia de palabras que denotan objetos que han sido tradicionalmente relacionados con la realidad opresivamente cotidiana y enclaustrada de la mujer, como son una casa, un cuarto y una cama. La secuencia sugiere un movimiento centrípeto de círculos concéntricos: un cuarto se encuentra dentro de una casa, una cama se encuentra dentro de un cuarto, un cuerpo se encuentra dentro de una cama y un corazón dentro de un cuerpo.

As the title of the novel indicates, the territory that Martín Gaite’s protagonist is seeking to understand is interior space in the widest sense of the term, the sense in which she recognizes that the ‘cuarto de atrás’ is also a ‘desván del cerebro’ (Martín Gaite 1988: 91). For Martín Gaite’s protagonist, the route to and metaphor for freedom is the eponymous room (Gould Levine 1983: 169) rather than the outside world; and not just any room, but one which is located ‘atrás’ both temporally and spatially, which is to say as far as possible from the prosaic here and now of exterior reality. Her text emancipates itself from literary norms through its deployment of the fantastic in conjunction with its documentary dimension, but the seepage from there to gender politics is equally crucial as part of that literary transgression is a critique of the values espoused by the *novela rosa*.

Just as Matilde’s decision to go home and marry Daniel may feel disappointing to certain readers, if not the character, there is a potentially equally disheartening moment at the end of *El cuarto de atrás*, when the narrator takes fright as a gust of wind blows the balcony doors open and she seeks refuge in the arms of the *hombre de negro*.

Ahogo un grito y de un salto salvo la distancia que nos separa y me abrazo a su cuello. […]

Siento su pecho latiendo contra el mío, sus manos sobre mi pelo que el viento alborota. Cierro los ojos, estoy temblando. […]

Me ayuda a subir las piernas al sofá, me pone un almohadón debajo de la cabeza. Me dejo hacer dócil y voluptuosamente (Martín Gaite 1988: 198-200).

The scene and even the diction recall just the kind of romantic fiction whose values the novel seems to have been indicting, as Gamallo (2006: 79) observes: ‘de hecho, *El cuarto de atrás* no sólo lleva a cabo una reflexión explícita sobre el género de la novela rosa, sino que, con su propia estructura y contenido, a la vez lo emula, lo reescribe y lo parodia.’

However, if the *hombre de negro* is conceptualized as a part of the narrator’s inner life, which, on one level at least, he certainly appears to be, then turning to him for reassurance and receiving the needed help can be read as finding inner strength, as transcending the fearfulness associated with normative femininity (Sweetman 2018: 17) rather than conforming to it à la *novela rosa*. Indeed, this seems to be borne out by the ending of the text: just after the scene quoted above, the narrator’s daughter arrives to find her mother sleeping peacefully and alone in her own bed, her manuscript complete and her cockroach fear overcome.

In conclusion, both of these texts utilize their mystery men as catalysts for female empowerment. For both protagonists, success emerges from an engagement with their culture’s gender norms, an engagement triggered and resolved through an acknowledgement of the men, who seem to personify both the limits and the transgressive potential of the protagonists’ femininity, a paradox that can only be articulated in a fantastic mode. Perhaps every mother’s warning to daughters to stay away from strange men should come with the proviso ‘unless they are the ones inside us’, for they seem to hold the key – for these two women writers at least – to emancipation from the stranglehold of gender stereotypes.

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1. Other biographical facts given in the present article are taken from or confirmed in this authoritative biography. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For a comparative discussion of de Burgos’s and Lorca’s treatment of the so-called ‘Crimen de Níjar’, see Ortiz-Loyola 2007, Larson 2009, Núñez Reyes 2010, and the introduction to de Burgos 2016: 17-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For more on *Quiero vivir mi vida*, see Mangini 2008: 19-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For more on *Confidencias*, see introduction and footnotes in de Burgos 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Zubiaurre (2003) posits that the seemingly contradictory message of the conventional happy-ever-after ending for a story about feminine agency and independence caters to some of de Burgos’s readers’ own ambivalence as well as to two further types of woman reader, those with no internal contradictions: the conformists to cultural norms for women and those looking to break free. She argues that this safeguards de Burgos’s respectability as a writer while offering a subversive sub-text for those who care to look for it. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For more on the dangers faced by women travellers around this time, see for example, Mitsi 2002: 139 (Greece); Koo 2006 (woman travellers dressing as men to avoid problems in Persia/Iran; Morin 1998: 322 (American West). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Whilst much critical attention has been paid to Martín Gaite’s *hombre de negro*, a sample of which will be cited below, he has not to my knowledge ever been compared with de Burgos’s *hombre de la pelliza*. Zubiaurre cites Rosa Montero, Lucía Etxebarría, and Soledad Puértolas as picking up where de Burgos left off (2003: 69), but does not mention Martín Gaite. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For more on the author’s travels and non-fictional writing about them, see Daganzo-Cantens 2010 and Jenkins Wood 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. I use the Spanish word to retain the semantic fluidity unavailable in English. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Establier Pérez (2000: 150) concurs as to there being significant autobiographical overlap. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. There are so many features of *El perseguidor* that match Freud’s characterization of the *unheimlich*, in fact, that had he read it, he could have used it for illustrative purposes in his essay in place of E.T.A. Hoffmann’s ‘Der Sandmann’. This is borne out by the detailed comparison made by Nuria Cruz-Cámara (2018: 40 *et seq*.). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. For a discussion of the explained supernatural device, see Kilgour 1995: 121-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For unsatisfactory endings of Gothic novels, see Kilgour 1995: 8. It is not known whether de Burgos was familiar with Radcliffe’s fiction, but she may have been, as *A Sicilian Romance* had been published in Spanish as early as 1819, with the title *Julia o los suterráneos del castillo Manzini* and *The Mysteries of Udolph*o was published as *Los misterios de Udolfo* in 1832 (Hale 2002: 31). See also Carnero 1983: 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. This is the conclusion reached by Cruz-Cámara, for example: ‘Matilde representa a un individuo y a las mujeres en general’ (2018: 46). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. For a comparison between English and Spanish traditions concerning female enclosure in the interests of honour, see Lee Six 2012: 25-54 (esp. 33-36). Strangely perhaps, the tighter link between respectability and staying indoors in Spain versus England, is not acknowledged but placed on a par by critics such as Zubiaurre when, for example, she refers to ‘the situation in Spain’ in this regard being ‘no less restrictive towards women than in Great Britain’ (2003: 59), even though she cites examples that illustrate the more extreme nature of the phenomenon in Spain. For evidence of the currency of the link in de Burgos’s era, see for example, her contemporary, Federico García Lorca’s rural trilogy and, in particular, the repeated exchanges in *Yerma* (1934) between the eponymous protagonist and her husband, who accuses her of damaging his honour by being seen out of doors unchaperoned (II, 2; 1989: 79). Jenkins Wood confirms the more restrictive environment for women in Spain than in England generally and in particular with reference to travelling (2014: 13). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Perhaps worth noting is that the distinction being out of doors and out of one’s country is blurred with words like *fuera* and *exterior* in Spanish. In English too, *home* is used to refer to domestic space, but also one’s country in a prefix such as *homeland* and the archaic meaning of *abroad* elided being out of doors with being in a foreign country. In other words, going to another country can be understood as going ‘out’ writ large, rather than being a completely distinct activity. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Adding to the dark facet of his characterization, some critics note his symbolic links with the Devil (for example, Cibreiro 1995: 36 and Rodríguez 1983: 82). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Estrada notes that Martín Gaite reads the eponymous character of Rosalía de Castro’s *El caballero de las botas azules* as ‘la transposición del concepto de musa, simbolizada por una joven […] al del hombre desconocido e inquietante como motor que espolea la imaginación femenina’, a reading she critiques, but which nevertheless sheds light on Martín Gaite’s own creation in *El cuarto de atrás* (Carmen Martín Gaite, 1987. *Desde la ventana (enfoque femenino de la literatura española)* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe), p. 83, cited in Estrada 1998: 87-88). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)