

Rhetorical Self-Fashioning in Aramburu: A Contemporary Take on Cervantine Techniques

Alison Posey
University of Virginia

Ruth El Saffar defines *Dulcineism* as the tendency for female characters in literature to become an object of desire whom men pursue and about whom they write. Expanding to El Saffar's original argument, Roberto Gonzalez Echeverría adds that Dulcinea is Don Quijote's and other characters' invention, "a product of their desires, their imaginations, their prevarications, or their creative wills" (36). Looking to El Safar and Echeverría, it becomes clear that Dulcinea does not participate in *Don Quijote's* dialogue, and yet still appears a vivid character as real as the other female characters who do speak in the novel. Dulcinea, a figment of others' imaginations, stands in a sharp contrast to Marcela from Part I of the *Quijote*, who fashions an authoritative self through dialogue with other characters. Her self, like Dulcinea's, is relational to others'; however, her self-fashioning frees her from the objectification of *Dulcineism* and instead Marcela makes herself a character that rejects conventional cultural and literary narratives. Likewise, Miren, a principal female character in Fernando Aramburu's *Patria*, similarly evades *Dulcineism* and instead crafts her life story through her dialectical exchanges with the rest of the characters in the 2016 novel. This enables her to fashion a self that actively contravenes the general perspective of her son's supposed crimes as an *etarra*. In the ensuing analysis, I consider the Cervantine technique of rhetorical self-fashioning in characters such as Marcela and I trace this technique in the development of the character of Miren in Aramburu's contemporary novel, *Patria*. Both female characters use dialogue to reject the common literary tendency towards *Dulcineism* and, through relational rhetoric, disregard conventional narratives in favor of creating their own: a remarkable choice for female characters, both then and now.

With the term rhetorical self-fashioning, I refer to Stephen Greenblatt's eponymous theory, briefly defined as the conscious construction of an identity through speech and action in relation to social and cultural milieu. Cervantes' Marcela is an early example of the self-fashioning character in Western fiction, which is expanded by Aramburu four-hundred years later with his female character, Miren. Like Marcela, Miren must fashion herself against a polyphony of voices, frequently male, that provide a variety of narratives about fundamental events in her life. In this analysis, I argue that Aramburu's character, like Cervantes', is empowered to author her own narrative to contravene an undesired outcome; in doing so, she contributes to the novel's objective to fictionalize and critique contemporary discourses of nationalism, as her self-fashioning directly relates to her participation in these discourses.

CONSIDERING MARCELA: A CASE OF CHARACTERIZATION

I center the first part of my discussion within Stephen Greenblatt's conditions of the self-fashioning subject.¹ The sixteenth-century author, according to Greenblatt, finds him- or herself writing in a time of increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity. For the Golden Age author, it is a manipulable, artful process, encompassing, most significantly, a representation of one's own nature or intention in speech or actions (2-3). Upon Greenblatt's coordinate system of the conditions of a self-fashioning subject—briefly summarized as an encounter between an authority (the fashioner) and an alien (the threat)—we can plot Marcela with clearly defined points. Yet Dulcinea, Don Quijote's *raison d'être*, has no fixed value on this map; instead, she serves as a point of contrast, as the namesake of invention by and for men.

Marcela's episode of self-fashioning, as told by the narrator in Chapters XI-XIV of Part I, is a robust response to the indisputable threat to her autonomy. Under Greenblatt's framework, this threat is Grisóstomo; or rather, the ghostly specter of the deceased character, brought back to life by a chorus of his ardent, if misguided, male supporters. The episode begins in Chapter XI of the Second Sally when Don Quijote and Sancho Panza are invited to dine with a group of goatherds, a comic rewriting of the pastoral genre. Over a campfire dinner, Cervantes articulates a postprandial transition between the previous episode of the balsam of *fierabras* and the pastoral episode

of Grisóstomo and Marcela (Echeverría 58). Don Quijote learns the story of Grisóstomo, the educated poet-turned-shepherd, and Marcela, the beautiful shepherdess. Grisóstomo, in his despair, has committed suicide after Marcela rejected his advances. Before Marcela's actual appearance in the episode in Chapter XIV, Cervantes will construct within the text a chorus of narrative voices which recount this love story gone wrong, beginning in Chapter XI. These retellings and revisions from polyphony, notably all male—which include a goatherd, some well-to-do travelers, and a dear friend of the deceased—foreshadow the ultimate encounter between Marcela and her threatening alien in which, through dialogue, Marcela will fashion herself an independent being *outside* of the traditional pastoral romance narrative propounded by Grisóstomo and the rest.

The first narrator of this love story gone wrong is the goatherd Pedro, one of Don Quijote's dinner companions. Although he highlights her good qualities in his narration, Pedro blames Marcela for creating an untenable situation among the local men with her refusal to marry anyone, even the wealthy and educated Grisóstomo. His version of events emphasizes what he perceives as the inherent irrationality of Marcela's choice: "Que puesto que no ni se esquivaba de la compañía y conversación de los pastores, y los trata cortés y amigablemente, en llegando a descubrirle su intención cualquiera dellos, aunque sea tan justa y santa como la del matrimonio, los arroja de sí como con un trabuco" (206). While Pedro's dramatic version of events is capped by a comical hyperbole, his harsh critique remains untouched by this humor. As the goatherd's narration makes clear, he believes that Marcela is an aberration because she rejects the culturally sanctioned custom of marriage.

Pedro's litany of accusations against Marcela not only stem from her perceived irrationality in the face of custom, but also from the character's apparent disregard for the economic interest of the region and, hence, its inhabitants. Again resorting to hyperbole, the goatherd claims that Marcela's refusal to conform to cultural and societal norms "hace más daño en esta tierra que si por ella entrara la peste" (206). Despite his lack of relationship with either Marcela or Grisóstomo, Pedro stands to benefit from their marriage, and this second hyperbole demonstrates the depth of his disgust with Marcela's rejection of the status quo. As Echeverría explains, by pairing Marcela and Grisóstomo, Cervantes has created a situation for a perfect

marriage in which two rich young people would marry and create a *mayorazgo* (59). By remaining unmarried, Marcela assures that her substantial inheritance remains in the hold of her uncle, the priest, as women at this time could not hold property outright. Otherwise, upon marriage, it would pass to her husband. Thus, Marcela is a truly frustrating convention not only by rejecting an appropriate match but also by refusing to contribute to the prosperity of the town. Pedro's narrative reveals the extent of Marcela's misdeeds as perceived by the men in the novel. This discourse is taken up and amplified in subsequent retellings, all by men, growing the polyphonic chorus that Marcela will soon encounter.

After Don Quijote and Sancho Panza are induced by the goatherds to witness Grisóstomo's burial the next morning, they encounter a second retelling from the traveler Vivaldo and his retinue, who having also heard the love story gone wrong decide to attend. However, in their retelling, the story's dramatic quotient is sensationalized with a headline right out of yellow journalism: "[H]abemos de dar por bien empleada la tardanza que hiciéremos en ver este famoso entierro, que no podrá de dejar de ser famoso, según estos pastores nos han contado extrañezas, así del muerto pastor como de la pastora homicida" (208). "La pastora homicida," which could easily head the next Hollywood horror hit, is a second hyperbolization that by building off the first exemplifies the male chorus' tendency to expand from one version of the story to the next, each further vilifying Marcela's character.

These retellings culminate in that by Grisóstomo himself; Cervantes' character, aptly named *golden-mouthed*, will have his say, even in death. His loyal friend and fellow student, Ambrosio, brings a poem penned by Grisóstomo shortly before his death to the burial. The poem, a Petrarchan *canzone*, holds nothing back in its attack on Marcela's character. Indeed, the poem is so vituperative that Vivaldo, who reads it aloud for the other characters there present, is shocked: "el que la leyó dijo que no le parecía que conformaba con la relación que él había oído del recato y bondad de Marcela, porque en ella se quejaba Grisóstomo de celos, sospechas y de ausencia, todo en perjuicio del buen crédito y buena fama de Marcela" (222). Ambrosio leaps to Grisóstomo's defense, only to be cut off by the arrival of Marcela herself. Marcela's defense rejects her own *Dulcineism*. When she arrives at the burial, Marcela occupies a physical space *above* the men present there: "y fue que por cima de la peña donde se cavaba

la sepultura pareció la pastora Marcela” (223). Her physical occupation of a superior space demonstrates that she rejects being sidelined by male discourse. Even more, she draws from a classical trope well known to Cervantes: the “*teichoskopia* of Helen looking down (as the elders gaze upon her), has much in common with Marcela. Marcela, like Helen, appears to be a goddess of beauty and splendor, and she also gazes down on a man who loves her” (De Armas 167). Yet in Cervantes’ version, a horrifying twist occurs: unlike Helen, who gazes down at her husband Menelaus or her abductor Paris, both very much alive, Marcela gazes upon Grisóstomo’s corpse. It is a moment in which, as Frederick A. De Armas notes, this Helenesque version of Marcela conflicts with others’ versions of her own self: “Who is the real Marcela?” (167). Is she a mythological figure, as Cervantes’ careful detailing of Renaissance imagery depicts, or “¡oh fiero basilisco destas montañas!” as alleged by Ambrosio, leader of the chorus of male voices? (222).

Up until her appearance at the burial, Marcela was unable to engage in a dialogue with her detractors, but Ambrosio’s verbal attack creates the dialectical space in which she can self-fashion. Echeverría writes: “The mutual influence and transformation [between characters] take place by virtue of dialogue, which posits that the self is relational and dependent on others” (170). According to Echeverría, El Saffar, and Greenblatt, then, I locate Marcela’s defense as an episode of dialogue that demonstrates the relational nature of the self and a desire to fashion oneself beyond conventional narratives. In her rejection of her own *Dulcineism*, Marcela creates an alternative space in which she becomes the authority and sets the conditions for her own freedom from expectations. Returning to Greenblatt’s conditions for self-fashioning, we find resonance in the idea that self-fashioning is achieved in a dialectal relationship with something perceived as alien that necessitates destruction (9). In this episode, Grisóstomo’s specter functions as a synecdoche of all of Marcela’s besotted suitors, who in turn represent the cultural expectation for women to marry. It is not that Marcela resists her suitors—indeed, as the goatherd Pedro notes in his original telling, she treats everyone kindly, if not blandly—but rather that she resists *marriage*. Greenblatt specifies that “the alien is perceived by the authority either as that which is unformed or chaotic (the absence of order) or that which is false or negative (the demonic parody of

order)” (9). To Marcela, marriage is a parody of the natural order she seeks: she wishes to free herself from “todos aquellos que de sus penas y de la muerte de Grisóstomo me culpan” and return to the life she has chosen for herself, “para poder vivir libre escogí la soledad de los campos” (223). When Marcela begins to speak at the burial, although she directly addresses Ambrosio, the intended subject of her discourse is the cultural convention of marriage. Ambrosio is simply a necessary conduit for this dialogue. To fashion herself, Marcela must have both a dialectical space, which Ambrosio provides, as well as a threat against which she can define herself: marriage and its resulting confinement in the home, as represented by Grisóstomo.

Marcela’s speech creates, in many ways, the hallmarks for the self-fashioning character in modern fiction. She appeals to an absolute power; in this case, “el natural entendimiento que Dios me ha dado” from which she has made the Erasmian conclusion that “[y]o nací libre” (223-4). The Church, exemplified by Marcela’s uncle, her legal guardian and a priest, echoes this conviction. Her uncle fails to convince his niece to marry because he is unwilling to force her against her will; in effect, he recognizes and respects her freedom to choose:

[a]unque el tío proponía a la sobrina y la decía las calidades de cada uno, en particular, de los muchos que por mujer la pedían, rogándole que se casase y escogiese a su gusto, jamás ella respondió otra con cosa sino que por entonces no quería casarse. . .dejaba el tío de importunarla. . .porque decía él, y decía muy bien, que no habían de dar los padres a sus hijos estad contra su voluntad. (205)

In part, Marcela is able to fashion herself as the author of her own life by appealing to a higher authority, in this case, one that advocates for the Erasmian perspective towards free will and therefore an unalienable innate liberty.

Given the force of Marcela’s rejection of prevailing social customs and with them societal conventions, her active embrace to the natural world could be construed as her acceptance of the epithet of *fiera* given to her by the chorus of male voices. Yet Marcela’s refusal to adhere to social norms does not automatically force upon her the savagery implied by the insult. In fact, in her preference for freedom

over the captivity of men and marriage, Marcela constructs within herself an undeniable parallel to the purity of the animals whose company she seeks, and reappropriates the natural world as a moral symbol that dignifies her choice. As she remarks to the crowd of male onlookers: “Si yo conservo mi limpieza con la compañía de los árboles, ¿por qué ha de querer que la pierda el que quiere que la tenga con los hombres?” (225). With this embrace, rather than rejection, of nature, Marcela’s episode of self-fashioning reappropriates insulting associations and disparaging accusations to further her argument for liberty.

Even more, according to Greenblatt’s conventions, a character perceives the threat as a demonic parody of her desired order. In the case of Marcela, she seeks a pastoral life in the *locus amoenus* of the sierra, not marriage and its ensuing confinement in a home. To defeat this threat, Marcela must reestablish order in her dialectical space. Therefore, her defense rests on her active engagement of Aristotelian modes of persuasion to craft a rhetoric that would place herself as the immediate authority while reconfiguring the undesirable narratives thrust upon her by male voices. Marcela’s defense invokes legal rhetoric that relies on logos while also recurring the Erasmian themes of will and choice:

Y, según yo he oído decir, el verdadero amor no se divide, y ha de ser voluntario, y no forzoso. Siendo esto así, como yo creo que lo es, ¿por qué queréis que rinda mi voluntad por fuerza, obligada no más de que decís que me queréis bien? Si no, decidme: si como el cielo me hizo hermosa me hiciera fea, ¿fuera justo que me quejara de vosotros porque no me amábades? Cuanto más, que habéis de considerar que yo no escogí la hermosura que tengo, que, tal cual es, el cielo me la dio de gracia, sin yo pedilla ni escogella. Y así como la víbora no merece ser culpada por la ponzoña que tiene, puesto que con ella mata, por habérsela dado naturaleza, tampoco yo merezco ser reprehendida por ser hermosa. . . (224)

Through dialogue, Marcela fashions herself not as the victim of a *Dulcineist* masculine fantasy brought about by a polyphony of men who act as narrators of her story, but rather as the author and,

therefore, authority of her own narrative, in which she is free to choose a life outside both cultural and literary conventions. Marcela's sudden exit from the burial emphasizes the success of this episode of self-fashioning, at least where her character is concerned. She demonstrates her personal conviction by evading existing social conventions. Marcela does not bid farewell to anyone, but "sin querer oír respuesta alguna, volvió las espaldas y se entró por lo más cerrado de un monte que allí cerca estaba, dejando admirados, tanto de su discreción como de su hermosura, a todos los que allí estaban" (226). She literally turns her back on this threat.

Marcela does not achieve outright success within this episode, for the attendees of the burial attempt to pursue her, perhaps deliberately misunderstanding her message. Regardless, the company in attendance fulfill the necessary role of interlocutors for this episode of self-fashioning. Through their presence, Marcela is simultaneously presented with a dialectal space in which she can self-fashion and a threat against which she can frame herself as an authority. With this technique of rhetorical self-fashioning, Cervantes's female character evades traditional objectification at the hands of men and, instead, locates her own self in the center of her own narrative. Marcela's characterization in the *Quijote* is a triumph of Cervantine genius in which the author's technique of rhetorical self-fashioning embraces the Erasmian ideal of personal freedom and liberates the character from the multitude of outside perspectives that could have defined her. Marcela is able to develop her own self in relation to the world around her as she directly interrupts existing discourses of masculinity in the fictional narratives of this era.

MIREN AND THE FASHIONING OF THE PATRIOTIC SELF IN *PATRIA*

More than four hundred years later, Fernando Aramburu turns to Cervantes' same technique of rhetorical self-fashioning in Miren, one of the two female central characters of *Patria* who form the thematic axis upon which the novel rotates. Aramburu's realist novel, published in 2016, is set in post-1975 Basque Country. It fictionalizes the struggle of two families for understanding and reconciliation after a violent murder by a local member of ETA kills one of their own. Each chapter of this novel is narrated by a distinctive character that synchronizes both first- and third-person perspectives, both of which come from the character responsible for the articulation of the chapter.

Aramburu's synchronicity of omniscient and first-person perspectives in each chapter result in a plurality of narrative voices. Throughout the 125 chapters of novel, there are nine distinct narrative voices: those of Miren and Bittori, the two main female characters; those of their husbands, Joxian and el Txato, respectively; and those of their children, Joxe Mari, Arantxa, and Gorka, the children of Miren and Joxian; and Xabier and Nerea, the children of Bittori and el Txato. All live in an isolated rural village outside of San Sebastian in which the residents, with the exception of Bittori and el Txato, struggle to maintain a middle-class lifestyle.²

Together, the purpose of Aramburu's inclusion of two perspectives, third and first person, and of a chorus of narrators is not unlike that of the *Quijote* given that it attempts to create a multiplicity of alternative narratives against which a character must fashion oneself. In *Patria*, the narrative contested by diverse perspectives and voices is the death of Bittori's husband, el Txato, who was murdered in an *atentado* by unknown members of ETA, of which Joxe Mari, son of Miren and Joxian, is an active member. Throughout, the reader receives different versions of el Txato's murder; yet, the most significant one, that of Joxe Mari, the likely assassin, is concealed by Aramburu until the novel's close. Thus, Miren, mother to Joxe Mari and lifelong friend of Bittori, must continuously confront an excess of conflicting visions of reality offered by those around her, who may or may not have been significantly harmed by her son. If her son is a murderer and an *etarra*, who is she? By association, she is the mother of a terrorist, and it is this narrative which will drive Miren to employ rhetorical self-fashioning in Aramburu's novel.

To demonstrate this technique in the character of Miren, I continue to incorporate the theories of Echeverría, El Saffar, and Greenblatt in order to draw an analogy between Cervantes's inaugural representation of female self-fashioning and Aramburu's take on the female subject's need to confront conflicting views. Although no longer set in the Renaissance, Greenblatt's conventions for self-fashioning apply to *Patria* in Aramburu's recurrence of the Cervantine technique. It is also worth noting that factors other than those defined by Greenblatt contribute to Miren's self-fashioning; particularly, that of the discourse of nationalism in twentieth-century Basque Country. The novel's setting during the height of terroristic violence post-1975 accurately reflects the very real political milieu

of the region in which ETA's late discourse of exclusionary ethno-nationalism spread. Miren's self-fashioning throughout the novel follows her son's participation in an extreme discourse of nationalism as she attempts to formulate and express a national identity in relation to her ever-changing familial, cultural, and political surroundings.

Within her first appearance in the novel in Chapter 4, Miren immediately begins to self-fashion through a dialogue with a non-human interlocutor, the television: "Las nueve de la noche. En la cocina, la ventana abierta para que saliera a la calle el olor del pescado frito. El telediario empezó con la noticia que Miren había oído de víspera en la radio. Cese definitivo de la lucha armada. No del terrorismo como dicen esos, que mi hijo no es terrorista" (25).³ From the exterior, third-person omniscient narrative voice, we absorb the basic setting of the scene; the date, unstated in the text, is October 20, 2011, when ETA made a televised announcement announcing the cessation of violence.⁴ From the synchronized first-person voice of Miren, marked by "mi hijo", this character, like Cervantes' Marcela, identifies the alien threat against which she will fashion herself. It is not the television to which she responds, nor the ambiguous "esos" who think her son, Joxe Mari, a terrorist (25). She does not fault any specific person or organization for this unfair characterization of Joxe Mari; rather, the threat that imperils Miren is the chorus that characterizes her *as a mother of a terrorist*. And it is this narrative which Miren will employ to fashion herself instead as a true patriot of Euskal Herria. Unlike Marcela, whose function is largely allusive, Miren and the discourse against which she will self-fashion are very much rooted in the immediate reality of her environment. Whereas Marcela's self-fashioning functions as an interruption to a heavily symbolic masculine realm, Miren self-fashioning throughout *Patria* serves instead to confront a tragedy based on a legitimate, although fictionalized, historical account.

In the ensuing paragraph, Miren is responding to the parody of narrative in which she is the mother of a terrorist. To resist what Greenblatt names as the tendency for the "alien to be constructed as a distorted image of the authority"—i.e., that forced upon Miren is a funhouse mirror image of how she truly sees herself—she must create a self that actively contravenes this narrative (9). Miren rejects the opinions offered by the televised news program:

En el televisor se sucedían los comentarios. Bah, políticos. Paso importante para la paz. Exigimos la disolución de la banda de terrorista. Se abre un proceso. Camino a la esperanza. Fin de una pesadilla. Que entreguen las armas. —Dejan la lucha a cambio de qué. ¿Se han olvidado de la liberación de Euskal Herria? Y los presos que se pudran en la cárcel. Cobardes. Hay que acabar lo que se empieza. (26)

To combat this distorted version of herself, Miren fashions her identity around what her son is and is not. That is to say, by negating that her son is a terrorist, she paints him as the victim, rotting in jail, and herself as a true patriot of Euskal Herria, so much so that she can critique with hyperbolic language the actions of an armed terrorist group as *cowardly*. This character's episode of self-fashioning resembles that of Marcela's in terms of its narrative function; nonetheless, it is not exactly like that of Cervantes. Unlike Marcela, who directly addresses her detractors, Miren's monologues are internal, reflecting her nature as a real character based on recent historical events, while Marcela functions as largely as an allusion.

Returning to Echeverría's theory of the self as relational, I propose that Miren's self is entirely dependent on her son. However, it must be noted that in constructing Miren's self-fashioning relative to her maternal relationship to her son, its limitations are revealed. Miren relies on her core, fundamental identity as a mother as the basis for her self-fashioning and in doing so fails to confront the overt patriarchal discourses that organize her culture, particularly those that assign women the role of mother and housewife. Given that Miren's self is so heavily reliant upon her son, an interesting contradiction appears. Paradoxically, in her pursuit of freedom from dominant discourses, Miren wholeheartedly engages them, defining her relationship to her surroundings based on her maternal identity.

Under this framework, I argue that while Miren's self-fashioning rejects unwanted narratives about her son, it does so while operating on the implicit belief that a woman's self-worth is defined by her children and her maternal role. Given that selves are inherently relational, self-fashioning may take place with regard to a variety of interpersonal relationships. In the case of Miren and Joxe Mari, however, the former's self-fashioning is circumscribed by the limitations placed on the character by her adherence to an overarching patriarchal discourse.

Unlike Marcela, Miren's rhetorical self-fashioning will recur to, rather than reject, cultural and societal conventions. Miren appropriates certain culturally familiar narratives, such as maternity being essential to females, for support as she reconfigures a perceived direct threat; namely, her depiction as the mother of a terrorist.

Rather than preclude Miren's self-fashioning, the character's relationship with Joxe Mari encourages her to form an identity that works within, rather than against, an overarching patriarchal framework while taking aim instead at smaller terrorist discourses of discord. This begins years earlier when the character discovers that Joxe Mari has become an *etarra*. As Aramburu's narrative spans the late 1960s to 2011, it is possible to follow Miren's transformational self-characterization from a lower middle-class *ama de casa* uninterested in politics to a beacon of Basque nationalism. For instance, in Chapter 7, Miren recalls her initial response to her son's participation in ETA, twenty years prior to her confrontation with the television earlier in Chapter 4. At that moment, Miren is faced with conflicting narratives, engaging her in different realities, a polyphony of voices not unlike re-tellers of the love story gone wrong in the *Quijote*. The first is from her daughter, Arantxa: "Vamos, vamos. Todos aquellos carteles en las paredes de su cuarto. Y la figura de madera que tenía encima de la mesilla, la de la culebra enroscada al hacha, ¿qué?" (39).⁵ Arantxa has long been aware of her brother's affiliation.

Her mother, meanwhile, has recently witnessed Joxe Mari "metido en un altercado callejero en San Sebastián" (39) giving her pause. However, her husband, Joxian, presents an alternative: "Es joven, tiene la sangre caliente. Ya se le pasará" (39). From this diverse chorus, Miren chooses a narrative which forces the blame onto Joxe Mari's companions. In her dialogue with her family, she fashions herself as the mother of a bystander caught in violence by those around him: "Durante la cena, no paró de monologar ante la rueda de familiares callados, auguradora de disgustos graves, atribuyendo las andanzas de Joxe Mari al influjo de las malas compañías. Echaba la culpa al hijo de la Manoli, al del carnicero, a toda la cuadrilla" (39).⁶ Joxe Mari is not present at this dinner and does not participate in this dialogue, recalling Marcela's suitors' retellings of her story without her participation.

Yet only a few days later, Miren witnesses Joxe Mari participate in a violent pro-independence protest, which destroys her previously

established self as the mother of a bystander. Unable to negate the reality of what she has seen, she engages in dialogue with Joxe Mari: “¿No serás por causalidad de los que han pegado fuego al autobús? Aquí no nos traigas ningún disgusto” (43). Joxe Mari, by justifying his actions as a political cause, reiterates that his mother’s previous self-fashioning has failed:

Disgustos ni hostias, se soltó a gritar. ¿Y Miren? Pues lo primero, se apresuró a cerrar la ventana. Es que le va a oír el pueblo entero. Fuerzas de ocupación. Libertad del Euskal Herria. . .ella allí sola con su hijo enloquecido que hablaba a gritos de liberación, de lucha, de independencia, tan agresivo que Miren no pudo menos de pensar: este va a pegarme. Y era su hijo, su Joxe Mari, y ella lo había parido, le había dado el pecho y ahora qué manera de gritarle a una madre. (43)

Her first act is to run and shut the window. This is undoubtedly an act of self-preservation, but one that simultaneously protects her son from falling into the hands of the Basque police, the *Ertzaintza*, historically an enemy of ETA. Immediately Miren recalculates the manner of her self-fashioning. If her son is no longer a bystander caught up in violence, her former self is invalid. Instead, he is an undeniable threat, and during this episode, Miren arms herself with her frying pan in case that Joxe Mari should strike her. In Miren’s reaction to the milieu that surrounds her—whether social, political, or familial—we see that her maternity is adaptable, as she molds it through self-fashioning to the situation at hand.

As Joxe Mari rises through the ranks of ETA, his mother fashions a deeply pro-Basque, pro-independence self that mirrors her son’s political stance, one that simultaneously embraces him while contravening conventional narratives about ETA and violence. Yet when Joxe Mari ends up in prison in Andalucía serving a lengthy sentence for his pro-independence efforts, feelings of abandonment and bitterness towards the organization effectively end his political fervor. Meanwhile, his mother’s fanaticism grows exponentially. Throughout the novel, Miren’s self-fashioning from uninterested mother to political fanatic becomes so blatant that even the other characters remark upon it, as for example Bittori in Chapter 14:

¿Y Miren?. . .Comprendo su transformación, aunque no la apruebo. Entre la merienda aquella en la cafetería de la Avenida y la siguiente en la churrería de la Parte Vieja, mi amiga Miren cambió. De repente era otra persona. En una palabra, había tomado partido por su hijo. No tengo la menor duda de que se fanatizó por instinto materno. En su lugar, quizá yo me habría comportado igual. ¿Cómo vas a darle la espalda a tu propio hijo aunque sepas que está cometiendo maldades? Hasta entonces, Miren no se había interesado lo más mínimo por la política. . . ¿Nacionalistas esos? Ni por el forro. (69)

Absolving Miren of fanaticism due to political beliefs, Bittori instead identifies the narrative in which Miren's sudden devotion to the nationalist cause was fashioned through her maternal love for her son. Bittori's monologue in this chapter also recognizes the failure of Miren's past self as the mother of a bystander caught up in violence. Joxe Mari, according to Bittori, is committing crimes, and his mother is aware of them; therefore, Bittori cannot absolve her old friend completely of her crimes of complicity.

Indeed, it is within the context of the crimes possibly committed by Joxe Mari where I find the fullest expression of rhetorical self-fashioning by Miren. While Cervantes's Marcela absolves herself of Grisóstomo's death by fashioning herself outside of the conventional narrative, Miren absolves herself of being the mother of a terrorist by fashioning Joxe Mari's actions as justified and ETA as using violence to achieve a righteous cause. By Chapter 64, as the novel moves from the present to a period roughly between 1983–7, Joxe Mari has left his parents' home and gone underground, presumably to join ETA. In an argument with her husband, Miren rejects Joxian's concerns about their son's occupation:

— (Miren) Ya te he informado.

— (Joxian) ¿De qué me has informado? Seguimos sin saber dónde está ni qué hace. Tampoco hay que tener mucha imaginación para saberlo. Nadie entra en ETA para cuidar jardines.

— No sabemos si ha entrado en ETA. Igual está de viaje ahora a México. Pero si ha entrado es para liberar Euskal Herria.

- Para matar.
- Si lo sé no te cuento nada.
- Yo no he educado a mi hijo para que mate.⁷ (309)

Joxian struggles with the violent reality of ETA so much so that he avoids naming it outright at first and instead relies on euphemism. Yet, as his wife characterizes their son's actions as patriotic in origin, Joxian offers a competing version of reality: Joxe Mari has joined ETA to kill. Miren, full of her disgust at her husband, who vows to disown their son should he take up arms, seeks refuge in the local church, where she speaks with the local priest, Don Serapio, who inverts the narrative of Joxe Mari as a killer and instead depicts him as a martyr for a righteous Basque-Christian cause:

- Quítate las dudas y los remordimientos de la cabeza. Esta lucha nuestra, la mía en mi parroquia, la tuya en tu casa, sirviendo a tu familia, y la de Joxe Mari dondequiera que esté, es la lucha justa de un pueblo en su legítima aspiración a decidir su destino. Es la lucha de David contra Goliat, de la que yo os he hablado muchas veces en misa. . .Y a los vascos [Dios] nos hizo como somos, tenaces en nuestros propósitos, trabajadores y firmes en la idea de una nación soberana. Por eso me atrevería a afirmar que sobre nosotros recae la misión cristiana de defender nuestra identidad, por tanto nuestra cultura y, por encima de todo, nuestra lengua. (313)

Miren incorporates this dialogue with Don Serapio into her self-fashioning and uses to reinforce her self-depiction as the mother of a martyr-like figure fighting for the just cause of Euskal Herria. She and her son are like a mythical David combating the brutal Goliath that is the Spanish state. Indeed, she leaves the church relieved and secure: “La próxima vez que Joxian me venga con sus penas y miedos, me va a oír. Ahora sí que tengo las ideas claras” (314). Like Marcela, then, Miren has contravened alternative narratives—most prominently, that of her husband—through fashioning herself as the mother of a martyr.

Her conversation with Don Serapio serving as a point of departure, Miren devotes entirely herself to her son's cause, further becoming fanatical in her self-fashioning. In Chapter 69, she rejects

her lifelong friendship with Bittori due to her husband, el Txato's refusal to be extorted by ETA. Reneging on this relationship in favor of ETA, Miren instead embraces the political as the only cause worth her loyalty:

- (Miren) Ayer fue ayer, hoy es otro día. Ya no hay amistad. . .
- (Joxian) Tantos años. ¿No te da pena?
- A mí me da pena Euskal Herria, que no la dejan ser libre. (333)

Later, even with Joxe Mari's arrest, trial, and incarceration for his activities as member of ETA, Miren is unequivocal in her depiction of herself as devoted to the group's righteous cause. A friend of her daughter Arantxa's husband, a politician, is killed in a bombing that narrowly missed killing the former's own husband, Guillermo, and young son, Endika. Yet Miren defends ETA's actions, invoking Don Serapio's previous dialectics of righteous justice:

- (Miren) Aquí no luchamos contra inocentes.
- (Arantxa) Ah, pero ¿tú luchas? ¿Te tengo que dar la enhorabuena por lo de esta mañana?
- El concejal ese, amigo de tu marido, era del PP.
- ¿Estás chalada? Por encima de todo era una buena persona y un padre de familia y un hombre con derecho a defender sus ideas.
- Era un opresor. Y te recuerdo que tienes un hermano pudriéndose en una cárcel española por culpa de buenas personas como esa.
- A tu hijo, del que estás tan orgullosa, le probaron delitos de sangre. Por eso está en la cárcel, por terrorista. Te lo repito, por terrorista, no por hablar *euskera* como le contaste una vez a Endika. Mentirosa, más que mentirosa.
- ¿Qué tienes tú que decir de mi hijo, de un *gudari* que se ha jugado la vida por Euskal Herria?⁸ (437-8)

In this dialogue, which marks the last time Arantxa will speak with her mother for five years, Miren's fanatical self-fashioning reaches a climax. She recurs to the defense of her son's actions through a vision of him as a martyr, as one who has sacrificed his life for a just cause,

despite her daughter's accusation that Joxe Mari has been jailed with culpability of serious crimes.

Envisioning Joxe Mari in this light, Miren forcefully reshapes the narrative of "mi hijo" and through it further fashions her own self as a righteous patriot and mother. In doing so, Miren neatly inverts El Saffar's theory of *Dulcineism* in which the female character is an object of desire whom men pursue and about whom they write. Miren pursues Joxe Mari, the male object of her feminine maternal desire; he is her character, and she will write a narrative in which his actions are justified. Miren consistently casts him as belonging to her through the continued use of the possessive *mi*; her relationship as his mother evokes from her a self that simultaneously rewrites and validates his actions as righteous. Like Marcela, then, Miren is able to reject narratives through her rhetorical self-fashioning. Despite a temporal separation of 400 years, Cervantes's technique appears throughout *Patria*. It is clear that Miren relies on it to contravene alternative narratives of her beloved son's supposed crimes as a member of ETA and rewrite both her and her son's reality by fashioning a self that is, in the end, more of a political fanatic than even Joxe Mari.

CONCLUSION

In returning to *Don Quijote* and Cervantes' characterization of Marcela to analyze the contemporary novel *Patria*, I find that the former functions as an exemplary case of how rhetorical self-fashioning can be used to evade unwanted narratives faced by female characters. In a remarkable departure from convention that scandalizes many male characters in the *Quijote*, Marcela seeks the choice to live freely, unencumbered by a husband, tending to her flocks in the wilderness. With this decision, she directly challenges *Dulcineism*, a term developed by El Saffar in relation to Don Quijote's imaginary beloved in order to refer to the propensity in Western literature by which a female character "stands off to the side of male discourse" (208). Marcela evades this widespread tendency through dialogue with the shepherds that accuse her of Grisóstomo's death. By virtue of her verbal defense of female autonomy, she fashions a self who rejects the narratives imposed upon her by a chorus of male detractors. Through this act of self-fashioning, Marcela gains authority over her own narrative, thus challenging prevailing cultural and literary discourses of gender and personal freedom.

Through this retrospective analysis of Cervantine narrative techniques, it is possible to frame Miren's characterization in Aramburu's contemporary novel as one that recurs Marcela's, four hundred years prior. Like Marcela, Miren must struggle against multiple, conflicting narratives in order to serve her identity as a mother not of a violent terrorist but of a political martyr. Miren's self depends upon a rejection of her *Dulcineism* by other characters. She pursues freedom for her son and validation of his crimes as justly committed, working within the limitations of an overarching patriarchal discourse that she embraces. While Miren's discourse is circumscribed by her internalization of these beliefs, it is not inferior to that of Marcela, as both are a reaction to the threat of the discourses that surround them, whether it be the traditional discourse of marriage or one of contemporary politics. In contravening unwanted narratives that other, principally masculine, characters force upon them, Marcela and Miren reject the tendency of Western literature to impose *Dulcineism* upon female characters. Therefore, the study of Cervantes' characterization of Marcela—in which she establishes the basis for modern novelistic self-fashioning of female characters—encourages a deeper understanding of how female characters contravene undesirable narratives in contemporary novels such as *Patria*.

Notes

1. Whether that subject is author (in this case, Cervantes or Aramburu) or literary creation (Marcela, Dulcinea, or Miren) is topic for a different analysis—but in Greenblatt's allusion to a certain amount of homogeneity between authors and characters, we find an uncanny similarity within the self-fashioning natures of two disparate authors: one a Castilian writing in the Golden Age, the other a Basque writing within and about a period of contemporary political instability.

2. My use of Castilian and Basque names in this analysis corresponds with Aramburu's synchronization of both Basque and Castilian languages in his text.

3. Reflecting the contemporary nature of this novel, characters in *Patria* frequently self-fashion through non-human interlocutors like televisions, radios, etc.; however, this is not to say that characters in *Quijote* only self-fashion through verbal communication in the direct presence of others. There is a remarkable amount of non-human interlocutors that provoke

self-fashioning. in the *Quijote*, too; among others, Don Quijote's letter to Dulcinea from the Sierra, or the crowds' reaction to the discovery and reading of *El Curioso Impertinente*.

4. Since October 10, 2011, there have been other public statements by ETA in which the group has made similar promises; the most recent was in April 2017 when ETA revealed its weapons caches and vowed that it had been completely disarmed.

5. The wooden figure Arantxa mentions is the *bietan jarrai*, a symbol of the Basque independence movement. It frequently appeared on flags as well as in street art to express support of the movement.

6. According to the timeline of the text, Joxe Mari would have become active after 1981, witnessing the height of a paramilitary push by ETA in the late 70s and early 80s.

7. The parenthetical character names at the beginning of each citation are not original to the text but instead have been added for clarity.

8. *Gudari*: according to Aramburu's bilingual glossary included at the end of the novel, "combatiente, soldado, específicamente por la causa vasca" (644; Italics belong to the author).

Works Cited

- Aramburu, Fernando. *Patria*. Tusquets Editores, 2016.
- Cervantes, Miguel. *Don Quijote de la Mancha I*. Edited by John Jay Allen, 33rd ed., vol. 100, Cátedra, 2013.
- De Armas, Frederick A. *Quixotic Frescoes: Cervantes and Italian Renaissance Art*. University of Toronto Press, 2006.
- Echeverría, Roberto González. *Cervantes' "Don Quixote" (The Open Yale Courses Series)*. Yale University Press, 2015.
- El Saffar, Ruth. "In Praise of What Is Left Unsaid: Thoughts on Women and Lack in Don Quijote." *MLN*, vol. 103, no. 2, 1988, pp. 205–222.
- Greenblatt, Stephen. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*. University of Chicago Press, 1980.

