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La edición ha estado al cuidado de Pablo Gil Casado y Stacey Dolgin Casado. La revista se publica en parte, con la asistencia de Department of Romance Languages, The University of Georgia. Impresión y encuadernación: UGA, Athens, GA, USA.

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Identity Achievement and Lost Innocence in Carmen Laforet's *La insolación*

Mark P. Del Mastro

*The Citadel
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Forty one years after the initial publication of *La insolación* (March 1963), Carmen Laforet's fourth and last novel, related scholarly studies are still quite sparse. Of this research, scarcer still are efforts to dissect the novel's complex themes of identity development and adolescent growth, and the few studies that have followed this approach lack a clear basis in social science. Unfortunately, however, an analysis of *La insolación* — or any other psychological novel — that neglects social science is at best insufficient. Ignoring Erik Erikson's psychoanalytic theory that has virtually been the core of studying adolescent behavior and development in the West (U.S., Canada, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand) since the 1960s not only belittles the value of social science, but it also impedes greater appreciation of a novel that is arguably the pinnacle of Laforet's depiction of adolescent identity-achievement. Roberta Johnson, however, is the only scholar to date who has examined *La insolación* with reference to contemporary psychology. Her commendable 1986 article “Light and Morality in Carmen Laforet's *La insolación,*” applies the theoretical basis of Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* to explain the moral development of the protagonist Martín and his two teenaged friends, Carlos and Anita. Johnson's critique, however, is just an initial step into un-chartered territory that begs further exploration. With an attempt to continue her direction, the
following study will examine adolescent formation in *La insolación* using Erik Erikson's identity theory as refined by James E. Marcia, another renowned social scientist. In contrast to Johnson's article that focuses on morality development through Laforet's symbols of light and shadow, this analysis will explain adolescent identity formation and achievement within Erikson's framework.

First, a brief synopsis of Erikson's theory will assist an understanding of this study's approach. In the 1950s and 60s, Erikson pioneered the foundation upon which current adolescent-behavior theory and research are still widely based.\(^3\) A term that has become cliché but is both unique and fundamental to his theory is "identity crisis," or the process by which youth attempt to establish their identities. Although Erikson observed that identity formation is not limited to adolescence, he emphasized that identity issues are certainly more frequent during the juvenile period. During this time, the youth explores and experiments with different life options, trying on different identities through interactions with other people and the sampling of different ideologies. Erikson named this exploratory stage a "psychosocial moratorium" (*Identity: Youth and Crisis* 157), a period when society postpones the adult role for its adolescents to allow for apprenticeships and discovery that complement cultural values. The success of identity formation, therefore, depends upon the youth's identifications with certain individuals, his/her selection of ideologies, and society's response to these choices. Thus, the severe result could be Erikson's "negative identity" where the adolescent selects what society deems unacceptable (174).

Supporting this theory is James E. Marcia, Erikson's most influential interpreter today. Through his extensive research spanning almost four decades (1966-present), Marcia has refined Erikson's theory with a validating mechanism he labels the "Identity Status Interview," which classifies adolescents into one of four identity stages: diffusion, moratorium, foreclosure or achievement. Identity diffusion represents the youth's lack of both commitment to and exploration of potential choices. Identity moratorium demonstrates exploration and active experimentation of options, but no commitment. On the other hand, identity
foreclosure exhibits a youth's strong commitment with no experimentation or exploration; the strong influence of parents or guardians frequently dominates this stage. Finally, identity achievement combines the adolescent's exploration and commitment. At this stage, the youth has already made definitive personal, occupational and philosophical choices. By nature, identity moratorium always precedes achievement. The following study of La insolación will discuss the identity stages that the protagonist Martín and other characters engage, for these stages pervade the novel.

The question remains, however, in the relevance of North American-adolescent theory to the analysis of La insolación; in other words, is identity development universal? The son of Danes who separated before his birth, raised in Germany by his mother and Jewish stepfather, and a life-long resident of the U.S., Erikson was acutely sensitive to the role of culture in identity formation, and his theories on adolescent development reflected this understanding. This is especially evident in his book Young Man Luther (1958), where Erikson demonstrates his awareness of the cultural and historical contexts of Martin Luther's identity development during pubescence and early adulthood. Although contemporary researchers of adolescent behavior recognize that numerous factors affect identity formation (e.g., economy, political turmoil, famine, sub-cultures, etc.), they, like Erikson, generally agree that adolescent growth in the industrialized West is related. Many researchers also recognize that some gender differences do exist for identity formation, and that these variations are frequently cross-cultural in the West.

In La insolación, the portrayal of these gender distinctions is pronounced. When Laforet published this book in 1963, her depiction of female-identity development had progressively evolved in her previous three novels: Nada (1945), La isla y los demonios (1952) and La mujer nueva (1955). Hence, and as expected, Laforet's representation of identity growth in her fourth novel is her most accomplished. The twist, however, lies in the account of the protagonist Martín, a 14-year-old male. This switch in gender portrayal allows Laforet to explore her own quest for female autonomy and self-realization through the seemingly greater
freedom available to a boy in Franco's Spain. As demonstrated ahead in this study, the male's search for identity, although encountering fewer obstacles than the female's quest from Laforet's first three novels, meets its own unique challenges. Also distinct from the first two accounts of female adolescence (*Nada* and *La isla y los demonios*), the extended time in *La insolación*—three full summers versus approximately one full year in both *Nada* and *La isla*—allows greater psychological development for the male protagonist.

Martín's search in *La insolación* begins at the novel's opening in 1940 when his father Eugenio and stepmother Adela retrieve the protagonist from his maternal grandparent's home in Alicante to spend the summer at their residence in Beniteca. When Martín's grandmother tells her son-in-law that the boy is an artist, the ideological contrast between the protagonist's relatively liberal world in Alicante and Eugenio's military realm surfaces with the father's reaction: "Eso no es cosa de hombres" (18). As is the case in Laforet's first two novels and many of her short stories, art is an essential tool for self-expression and psychological development. That Martín's father discourages this mechanism of self-discovery eventually will only heighten the protagonist's search for identity in Beniteca.

Because, however, the "new" military world of Eugenio provides a very different and intriguing realm of identification, Martín is first enthusiastic to associate with his father as the boy also shows signs of psychosocial moratorium. Upon arriving to Beniteca, the protagonist mistakenly believes that he can become part of Eugenio's conservative identity group, and he begins to accept his father's perception of masculinity. When the protagonist attempts to kiss Eugenio goodnight, for example, his father scolds him: "¡Coño, no eres una niña para besuqueos! Si quieres, bésame la mano como yo hacía con mi padre. Los hombres no dan otros besos, es una porcada" (25). Although Martín had been accustomed to open gestures of affection within the domain of his maternal grandparents, he responds positively to Eugenio's statement because his desire to bond with his father convinces him that such berating empowers his masculinity. However, Eugenio's order for the adolescent to stay home and assist his stepmother, Adela—whom Martín
crushes the protagonist's hopes for identification, and his adoption of a more restrictive, feminine role at home severely hampers his search for identity. The mandatory, weekly after-church socials with his family at the café downtown also deny Martín desirable social outlets for identification. Consequently, he avoids associating with any group, adult or peer, and he exhibits more signs of identity diffusion: little or no commitment or exploration. At this point of the novel, Martín's only gratifying connection and self-expression are through painting or drawing.

Circumstances change dramatically for him when he meets and befriends the adolescent neighbors: siblings Carlos and Anita Corsi. Compatibility of age —Carlos and Martín are 14 and Anita is 15— and guardian supervision —all three are motherless and have few restrictions during their summers together— provides Martín a promising and attractive outlet for identification. Motivated by his own male chauvinism, Eugenio actually assists the protagonist's exploration by granting his son freedom from Adela and the house. Accordingly, the protagonist re-visits the Eriksonian stage of psychosocial moratorium, where identity exploration and experimentation predominate. The contrast between the Corsi's unconventional realm and the ultraconservative domain of Martín's father and post-Civil War Spain also enhance this stage. Carlos and Anita's backgrounds are international and quite enigmatic with a father (Mr. Corsi) whose work in the black market removes him from Beniteca through most of the novel, but which also fosters the unrestricted identity exploration of his children. The only guardian present for Carlos and Anita is Frufrú, the unmarried governess and "ejemplo magnífico de la independencia" (Galdona Pérez 271), whose unorthodox female role and permissive supervision encourage the children's identity search and present a relatively unique and previously unseen ideological model for Martín. Frufrú even participates in the teenagers' mischievous activities when, for example, she joins Carlos and Martín on an evening jaunt of drinking and dancing in downtown Beniteca, an inappropriate activity for a guardian, especially an older, unmarried woman in 1940s Spain.
Numerous other aspects of the Corsi world both gratify and surprise the protagonist as they contrast with the norms of both Eugenio and his maternal grandfather. Seeing Carlos smother Frufrú with kisses, for example, is the first of several experiences with the Corsis that force Martín to reevaluate the “acceptable” code of period Spanish customs. To accommodate his quest for identity, Martín does not view the kissing episode as repulsive, but rather he acknowledges it as normal behavior, “como si hubiese estado acostumbrado a que la gente reaccionase a su alrededor de aquella manera y no de otra” (71). He also accepts other unconventional habits of the Corsis (within the context of post-Civil War Spain): the siblings' refusal to take afternoon naps, Anita's persistent challenges to wrestle Martín, the thespian competitions between Carlos and Anita, their daily tea and cookie breaks instead of the traditional Spanish “merienda,” and the siblings' non-sexual, farewell kiss on Martín's lips at the end of the first summer. With exposure to these behaviors, the protagonist experiments with different attitudes and ideals that will eventually contribute to his more developed identity.

Despite the apparent compatibility between Martín and the Corsi adolescents, the reader discovers subtle character differences that influence the protagonist's identity quest. Most notable is Carlos and Anita's superficial and sometimes confused knowledge about their own family history and academic subjects. As Martín himself observes, the Corsi teenagers only know “trozos” of school topics (79), and their ignorance obstructs their artistic appreciation: while snubbing the protagonist's artwork and related knowledge, Anita proudly shows the image of an Andalusian dancer on the lid saved from an empty candy box. In spite of the ideological incongruence, the freedom available through the non-cerebral facet of his relationship with the Corsis is what stimulates and attracts Martín. He acknowledges that his friends are shallow and egotistical, but the association affords him time and independence to evaluate his own sense of self as an emerging young adult. Moreover, he enjoys the frivolity of their summer activities since he has “un presentimiento de la muerte” (87), a sense of the approaching end of their childhood innocence at the summer's conclusion.
While the protagonist spends the following winter with his grandparents in Alicante, his grandmother María encourages his artistic talent by paying for art school. She is the only one in the novel who directly supports his creative aptitude, but Martín's continuing search-for-self initially blinds him from recognizing her positive influence on his identity formation, and he therefore treats her poorly to distance himself from her ideological realm. In confessing to María, for example, that he “tampoco cree en nada” (92) as a justification for not attending mass with her on Christmas, he not only takes an important stance against the country's state-endorsed religion, or “nacionalcatolicismo” (Torres 76), but he also increases the potential of his identity formation by avoiding a pre-mature commitment to a social norm.

When he returns to Beniteca for the second summer, he and his friends, Carlos and Anita, have all grown physically (Anita is 17, Carlos has just turned 16, and Martín is 15), but the Corsis' intellectual maturity is more dubious than Martín's, as shown by their recent academic-related dismissal from the “Liceo” (La insolación 112). The siblings also fail to show much emotional development as they continue their superficial approach to relationships, including with Martín. In fact, the Corsis' only significant behavior change is Anita's aggressive pursuit of an “enamorado,” which distances her from Carlos (118). Her flirting with the soldiers in downtown Beniteca and her scandalous visit alone with the teenage son of Don Clemente, the doctor, for example, are not meaningful attempts at pursuing a positive identity—in contrast to the female protagonists' efforts in Nada and La isla—despite revealing an important feminist message against the “rules” of Spain’s Sección Femenina. Carlos, who is still clinging to the pre-adolescent relationship he cherishes with Anita, resents the rift his sister's activities have created between them.

Martín, on the other hand, cares little about Anita's behavior since it presents him an opportunity to connect exclusively with Carlos. Although the protagonist stills perceives male-exclusive relationships as the key to his future identity, Carlos's jealous obsession with his sister's behavior prevents Martín from building a true “amistad de hombres” (124). Continuing through his stage of identity moratorium, Martín physically
follows the directionless lead of Carlos while hoping that his friend will recognize the futility of recovering an immature friendship with Anita; mentally, however, the protagonist cultivates an identity that will ultimately be quite different from that of his friends.

To this point in the novel, all three adolescents seem to have been engaged in the aforementioned Eriksonian stage of identity moratorium. Certainly this is the case for Martín, but Frufrú's recounting of the Corsi family's history sheds light on the behavior of Carlos and Anita and their corresponding identity stage. Mr. Corsi's past in a circus (where he met, married and fathered twins with a wealthy Texan named Peggy, then met Carlos and Anita's mother, a blonde Andalusian named Mari Pepa, with whom he had an affair and eventually married in Argentina before the birth of their second child, Carlos) presents a chaotic, international and eccentric lifestyle that contrasts sharply with Eugenio Soto's realm and Franco's isolated, ultraconservative Spain where moral instability is publicly intolerable and divorce is illegal. However, the Corsi way of life is standard for their social group, and it therefore encourages Carlos and Anita's freedoms of self-expression and in turn their mischievous activities. The siblings' resulting identity stage — identity foreclosure, or the mere acceptance and practice of norms already established in their family realm — is not the same for Martín who is truly sampling different ideals by associating with Carlos and Anita.

Carlos's inability to accept his sister's rejection and overcome his preadolescent feelings for her is further evidence of his stagnation in identity foreclosure, where his commitment to the Corsi ideals — regardless of how liberal — prevent him from sampling different ideological frameworks. Nevertheless, despite the differences of their identity stages, the friendship between Carlos and Martín continues because of the mutual enjoyment of relatively unrestricted activities. To a degree, Martín recognizes these stage differences, but his advanced maturity allows him partially to understand and accept them and thus continue association with Carlos and his family.

Anita's activities are more characteristic of identity moratorium, but as Erikson observes regarding identity formation, bona-fide psychological
relationships with members of the opposite sex are only possible once identity has been achieved (Identity: Youth and Crisis 135). Although exploring relationships outside of her friendship with Carlos and Martín is important for Anita's own identity quest, her flirtatious exploits with the soldiers and Pepe, the doctor's son, serve only to challenge society's code of acceptable female behavior thereby leading Anita to Erikson's negative identity. In fact, as Erikson also notes, such associations as Anita's are superficial at best and can lead to isolation (135-36).

Further revealing some of the important differences in the psychological development of the teenagers during this second summer are their views toward dogs. In a conversation with Martín, Anita's comment that a dog is better company and more discrete than "dos niños pequeños" (La insolación 124) — an allusion to her relationship with Martín and Carlos — goes beyond just a condescending remark toward the boys or an additional attempt to distance herself. Anita's observation connects to the previous winter's death of the Corsi family's pet, an event that virtually coincides with the murder of Eugenio Soto's hunting dog, Leal. Both murders prompt Anita to share the following thoughts with Martín: "Comprendo mucho más que se mate a una persona que a un perro... Si odiaban a tu padre que mataran a tu padre. Pero si yo consigo un perro puedo aseguraros que nadie lo envenenará. Ya lo cuidaré yo bien" (124). The canines' deaths represent the vulnerability of the youths' childhood innocence as it faces the ugly realities of life, especially of Franco's Spain (reinforced with the later discovery that the Republican refugee Damián killed the canines to avoid apprehension). Anita's perspective shows her desire to protect and nurture this innocence that all three teenagers already perceive as fleeting. The idea of killing a human instead of a dog underscores Anita's mistrust in Spain's adult world, in those who enforce the adults' social code, and in the code's influence on the youths' relatively isolated world of naïve adolescence.

The eventual murder of the third dog, Martín's pet Lobo, leads to a burial scene that reflects a similar perspective while also exposing the contrasts in the teens' development. Crying, dressed in mourning (complete with gauze veil) and with flowers in hand, Anita behaves as if
Lobo's interment were a human's, while Martín's agitation with her conduct and his lack of emotion before his own pet's death reflect his desire to establish his own philosophy: "No siento nada. Se ha muerto Lobo y después de la primera indignación no siento nada. Me da lo mismo. Anita me parece una idiota con ese velo negro por la cabeza y sin embargo me da envidia porque ha llorado por Lobo. Y Carlos está conmovido y furioso y yo no siento nada" (183). Although idle in her own childish attitude, Anita shows ideological commitment that Martín lacks and craves. Clearly indicative of his psychosocial moratorium, the protagonist's feelings are ambiguous since he has not yet completed the process of adopting an ideological framework that would permit a definitive reaction.

As the summer continues, Martín's views evolve not only from his time spent with the Corsi family, but also from his exposure to his father who represents an undermined philosophy that subtly reflects the author's own criticism of the current regime and helps lead the direction of the protagonist's identity quest. From the beginning of Martín's stay in Beniteca, Eugenio serves as the boy's ideal model of masculinity. However, this embodiment of Franco's oppressive, conservative ideology emerges during the second summer as what the protagonist describes as "una especie de maniquí de hombre fuerte y sano dominado por su mujer —otro maniquí— a los que Martín veía como a través de una niebla" (196). The "mannequins" that Martín encounters are the many individuals who either falsely represent or mindlessly accept a generic ideology; i.e., in James E. Marcia's terms, they are grounded in identity foreclosure since their characters do not reflect either progressive psychological development or a deviation from the repressive social code. However, they do complement their social group's expectations —in this case Franco's. On the surface, Lieutenant Soto appears to exemplify the overbearing values of Spain's dictatorship, but several factors undercut his power and reinforce his image as a mannequin, consequently making Eugenio an inappropriate identity-outlet for Martín. First, Eugenio's military rank as Lieutenant (1st or 2nd is unclear) places him in a position of minimal military influence among the other commissioned officers, and with
apparent command only over the entry-level soldiers. This limited authoritative role transfers to the home where Eugenio attempts to impose his male-chauvinist perspective on his family—Adela and Martín—despite the protagonist's exposure to his father only during the summers. As mentioned previously, while intending to build Martín's masculinity by encouraging his son's identity exploration, Eugenio ironically weakens his own influence by inadvertently promoting the boy's eventual, liberal principles. Despite Adela's urging that they restrict the teen, Eugenio insists: “Martín es un hombre, no es como si fuera una chica que entonces, pobre de él si saliera a la puerta de la calle sin permiso” (58). The multiple failed attempts to bear a son with Adela also weaken Eugenio's ideological authority: in the context of Franco's society, he is unable to perpetuate his influence optimally because a female does not have the same social importance or options as a male (Martín himself observes this social injustice: “¿Por qué valen los varones más que las mujeres?” [257]). As a child from Eugenio's late wife, Martín only partially serves the role of son since Adela does not consider him her own, and he only lives seasonally in Beniteca. The stepmother's rejection of Martín, of course, creates added tension in the home that further weakens Eugenio's influence.

By the conclusion of the second summer, Martín has successfully filtered both the conservative views of his father and the liberal ideals of the Corsi clan, and, as a result, he is closer to identity achievement. In effect, Martín has reconciled many of the conflicting perspectives he has encountered—even recognizing and accepting the superficiality of the Corsi clan, including Mr. Corsi—while adopting those ideas that best accommodate his self-development. After his return to Alicante, the teen's kind treatment of his grandmother and his interest in and appreciation of her beliefs, which just the prior winter he rejected openly, reflect the cultivation of his newly emerging self. Moreover, Martín espouses views that counter the regime's stance, such as his support of women's education (his own mother, before her death, had acquired “los diplomas” [257]). He also continues his artistic pursuits, which provide Martín a
critical outlet of self-expression and identity exploration in this oppressive post-civil-war society.

The third summer marks the conclusion of Martín’s psychosocial moratorium: his shedding of the last vestiges of adolescent innocence and his achievement of a definitive identity. Although now the novel also presents the protagonist’s awakening interest in the opposite sex—a potentially significant aspect of identity development depicted with Martín’s interest in Frufurú’s new housekeeper, Benigna—it is not a decisive factor for his psychosocial growth. At the forefront of this identity process are the ideological contrasts between Martín and everyone else in Beniteca. The divergent developmental paths of the three adolescents—the protagonist, Carlos and Anita—are immediately revealed first with the physical absence of Anita (now 18) who for three weeks at the summer’s commencement is away traveling with her father and his married associate, Oswaldo. As another example of the family’s nonconformist code in Franco’s Spain, Mr. Corsi himself permits Oswaldo’s questionable relationship with Anita as payment for clandestine business affairs (obviously a form of prostituting his own daughter). Anita’s interests in the opposite sex are actually just a continuation from the prior summer; her absence in Beniteca, however, accentuates her commitment to these desires that reinforce her stagnation, or identity foreclosure, in the Corsi’s frivolous ideological realm, which her father leads. Although Carlos demonstrates similar interests in young women, as he did during the second summer, he still longs for the lost childhood relationship with his sister that all three adolescents enjoyed during the first summer in Beniteca. Martín, on the other hand, does not miss Anita, but his frustration rests in the difficulty of bonding ideologically with Carlos who, in contrast to the protagonist, is more concerned with “la caza” of girls (295). For Martín, Carlos and Anita have not advanced beyond the capriciousness of the Corsi realm—reflecting the previously discussed stage of identity foreclosure—and their misunderstanding of his ideological convictions thwart the protagonist’s efforts to relate, though they, from an immature perspective, recognize that Martín is different. This recognition is evident when, in response to the protagonist’s
confessed decision to become a painter, Carlos refers to the novel's title (the first such mention in the book): “—¡Eh, tú! Has tomado una insolación” (310). Carlos's diagnosis of Martín's sunstroke reflects a negative view that the protagonist's overexposure to the sun—or influences outside of the Corsi realm—has resulted in Martín's current outlook, a “delirious” state to Carlos and Anita. From the developmental perspective, the teen's sunstroke marks the end of his childhood innocence, the surfacing of a newly established identity, and the birth of a seasoned outlook on life that breaks away from society's restrictive expectations: “Hay que romper con una tradición que le oprime a uno. Hay que romper con todo” (311). Martín still associates with Carlos and Anita because he maturely acceptance that all he now shares with them is the enjoyment of numerous unbridled activities that recall their past adolescent diversions and cherished innocence.

Agents of Spain's norms—rules that Martín's new persona now openly rejects—do not, however, overlook the protagonist's views and the relatively unrestrained behavior that he enjoys with his friends. Of these agents, Eugenio Soto, whose male chauvinism first encouraged his son's identity exploration, now seeks to punish the boy for news that Martín and Carlos were seen walking hand-in-hand, an act that, if true, defies “acceptable” behavior between young men. Society's, specifically Eugenio's, misunderstanding of this episode typifies the contrast between the teens' perception of their non-sexually motivated holding-of-hands and Spain's oppressive communal code. The climax of such misinterpretation corresponds to Eugenio's discovery of Carlos sleeping naked with a clothed Martín. Through the prism of Franco's ideology, Eugenio's analysis is definitive and unmistakable: the ultimate verification of town rumors about the boys' homosexuality. The father's severe beating of Martín is the only logical, acceptable response in light of the overwhelming shame that Eugenio suffers while believing that his only son has adopted one of the most unacceptable roles in 1940s Spain: a homosexual. As a faithful agent of Spain's views who now believes his mentoring efforts were a total failure, Martín's father consequently dies two years later. In Eriksonian terms, the protagonist seems to have fallen
fatefully —by the mistaken yet unavoidable perceptions of the adult world— into a negative identity despite apparent, significant gains in his identity quest.

Adela, however, also fulfills a role as social agent in this episode, but in a slightly different capacity than her husband. Motivated by a jealous desire to remove Eugenio's only son from her home, but not concerned entirely with correcting a behavior that the social rules prohibit, she notifies her husband when she finds the boys sleeping together. Nevertheless, clouding Adela's vindictive role are her conscious decisions both to hide Eugenio's gun prior to waking her husband and to assist Martín's eventual escape so he avoids further punishment, namely placement in a correctional facility. If her dislike for Martín, as exhibited throughout the novel, were as profound as the reader comes to believe, she would indeed do all she could to maximize retribution for her stepson. This is not the case, however, since she preserves some compassion while recognizing that a definitive negative identity for Martín would perpetually condemn him in society, a phenomenon that Adela attempts to avoid by aiding the boy's return to his grandparents' home in Beniteca.

With the apparent setback that the sleeping incident poses for his successful identity search, Martín first wishes to convince his father of the event's true innocence. Nevertheless, with Adela's help, he realizes the futility of changing Eugenio's interpretation, and he subsequently accepts that his father's steadfast views will never succumb to a perspective, though genuine, as different as his own. However, despite this episode's negative implications, including the protagonist's own brief contemplation of suicide, Martín's persistent belief that "No he hecho nada malo. No tengo por qué huir" reflects the retention of his emerging self (364). Instead of acquiring Erikson's negative identity, which the reader tends to assume, Martín flees Beniteca with innocence definitively lost from the ideological clash with his father, but also with an achieved individuality intact that his grandmother, whose positive influence has greatly shaped the protagonist's self, welcomes. At the novel's conclusion, Laforet once again leaves her mark of optimism (a personal trait that she herself admits in an interview with Marie-Lise Gazarian [163]). As his
grandmother opens the door to find her physically beaten grandson, she extends her arms in an unconditional reception not of a child, but of a young man who has fought and succeeded in preserving his newfound identity and beliefs despite the overwhelming pressure of a disapproving society. The concluding gain is not only Martín's, but also Laforet's who demonstrates that despite gender, achieving identity with unorthodox values in 1940s Spain is daunting, but possible.

Recognizing Laforet's progressive mastery in depicting the search-for-self throughout her work deepens an appreciation for her portrayal of identity development in her last novel, La insolación. The author's fixation on the identity search process, particularly during adolescence, is exemplary of what Galdona Pérez calls the “conflicto de identidad que afectó a multitud de mujeres en aquel tiempo” (201). Moreover, that Laforet and several others of the post-1939 Spanish writers were children during their country's civil war only reinforced their feelings of lost innocence as reflected in their pervasive literary themes of childhood and adolescence. Nevertheless, Nada initiated this literary trend in Spain, and like several of her female contemporaries, Laforet explored her own female identity through her writings. Although Laforet masks this exploration in La insolación with the adolescent growth of a male character, her protagonist's successful pursuit of liberal ideals and his ultimate identity achievement provide the author and others—women and the ideologically isolated—hope for self-empowerment and emancipation from the oppressive norms of Spain's dictatorship.

NOTES

1 In the 2003 edition of Laforet's La mujer nueva, Rolón Barada alludes to the future publication of Laforet's fifth novel, Al volver la esquina, the second book of the trilogy Tres pasos fuera del tiempo (the first book is La insolación). According to Rolón Barada, Al volver la esquina is “pendiente, en galeradas y con las correcciones ya hechas por la autora” (23).

2 Ilana Adaro's La novelística de Carmen Laforet, one of the most widely cited studies of Laforet's work, dedicates an entire chapter (IX) to “Lo psicológico” that overlooks La insolación and ignores social science. Chapter 12
(La insolación) refers to the protagonist's "estadios de evolución" (164) and to "todas las características que señalan para tal etapa los psicólogos de la adolescencia" (168), but it omits a description of these adolescent evolutionary stages while also failing to identify and explain the "características" or the "psicólogos de la adolescencia." Quintana Tejera recognizes La insolación as a novel of adolescent development and a search for independence, but his study overlooks psychoanalytic theory. Of the available literature, Roberta Johnson's book, Carmen Laforet, presents the most thorough examination of the novel's adolescent stages, but it also lacks a basis in social science.

3 Recent books by Arnett, Lerner, Moshman and Shaffer, among others, acknowledge Erikson's impact on modern research on adolescents and the value of Erikson's theory in interpreting identity formation. Josselson's Finding Herself (1987) goes further by justifying Erikson's theory as the basis of examining not only adolescent development of both sexes, but also female identity formation.

4 Studies by Arnett and Moshman, for example, observe that identity formation does not differ greatly among cultures in the West. H.C. Triandis is among scholars who have consistently found distinct ideological similarities among Western cultures, while Schlegel and Barry conclude in their study of 186 non-Western cultures that the life stage of adolescence is effectively universal.

5 Erikson, Gilligan, Giovacchini, Marcia and Waterman, among others, have all observed gender differences in identity formation.

6 Although the immediate action of La mujer nueva also takes place within the approximate period of one year (1949-50), the narrative depends greatly upon a series of flashbacks spanning nearly 14 years (1936-50) that provide information necessary to explain the complex identity crisis of the adult protagonist, Paulina.

7 Galdona Pérez's analysis of Frufrú provides valuable insight into the important feminist role of this secondary character (270-77). Validating Frufrú's unorthodox part is Martín Gaite's description of views toward the spinster in 1940s Spain: "La que «iba para solterona» solía ser detectada por cierta intemperancia de carácter, por su intransigencia o por su inconformismo" (38).

8 See Carmen Martín Gaite's Usos amorosos de la postguerra española for a thorough explanation of the social code in 1940s Spain governing "appropriate" female behavior.

9 The brevity of this portrayal found in several of Laforet's novelettes and short stories prohibits the same level of development established in the author's longer narratives.
Throughout the 20th century, Josefina Aldecoa, Ana María Matute, Dolores Medio, Carmen Martín Gaite, Juan Marsé and Elena Quiroga, for example, have all addressed themes of childhood and adolescence.

WORKS CITED


