

## Memories in the Margin

Sol Acín Monrás (Huesca, 1925 – Zaragoza, 1998)

Second daughter of Ramón and Conchita Acín, french philologist, translator and poet who published a single collection of poems, in 1979, but edited by a highly prestigious Spanish publisher: "Ambito Literario". *A single book is not much of a work, true, but it can be quite a work ...*, in the words of the writer and cultural journalist Mercè Ibarz



Acín family. From left to right: Sol, Ramón, Katia et Conchita

As a child living with my parents I felt the need one day to write something, entitled *My Home*. My father quickly jotted something (illegible for me) down in the margin of my notebook, and then handed it on to my mother.

This fragile memory can sum up our childhood.

My house had everything an imaginative child could wish for, and it was continuously buzzing, supported and protected by two adults, distant yet close enough for the instinct of freedom to arise within us; because the stimulation and activity were constant and spontaneous, and were offered so that the response would be adequate.

And this was, indeed, the case.

One entered my house through a "passage", or foyer, after ringing a bell, larger and with a lower sound than those used at mass. Usually in the dark, I remember a beautiful hardwood cabinet with large doors, which, when opened, revealed the wall; a large chest on which shone the copper of an oil lamp, and a huge picture of boats, trains and figures that entered into movement, depicting a vaguely Italian port. And a virgin, who mysteriously directed her gaze at you both from the front and from the side. For a long time — and this must have been when I was very little — Lenin's countenance was printed on a delicate reddish cloth that I remember, presiding over the entrance door. From there you could go to the dining room, with a large balcony at noon, straight-backed chairs, a round, walnut table; and enough space to set up battles on the floor with paper balls and the tin soldiers of my father's childhood.



Both sides led to the Isabella II-era drawing room, with red curtains, remnants of a bygone family fortune, but also the refuge of a musical bird in a golden cage, musical instruments, little Philippine tables, and my mother's piano.

On the left side, we entered the "bullfighting room", whose paintings contained bullfighting scenes from Goya's time, opening into a first alcove with a small closet, with mysterious nooks and crannies for our games.

Finally, spanning the entire width of the house, the studio: the Baroque altar on the left as a bookcase, several drawing boards, mostly filled with books and papers; easels, racks for folders, and, in the center, the meeting point: couches and armchairs and an iron stove in the winter, in front of the huge entrance to my parents' bedroom, over which hung, in the middle, a large spherical mirror.

But my house did not end there. Children need fresh air and distant horizons, all of which were provided by our famous *hortal*<sup>1</sup> an orchard on a rectangular esplanade where acacias and grasses grew freely, with the occasional rose bush and my father's shed to store mud.

Once, we planted onions to watch them grow, and from a nearby plot of land hung the branches of a fig tree.

You could get there via the Calle del Aire, with a freezing wind in the winter; and on summer evenings we could hear the music of Albéniz or Mozart played by my mother through the open balcony.

All of Salgari's adventures crossed the Hortal, but, above all our childhood was filled with the existence of the Fuerte Esperanza (Fort Hope), whose sieges and fights, in any season of the year, became familiarly famous. Our fort was well clad, and it was beautiful to sometimes savor its darkness and silence.

Of the group of children, there was one in particular, who formed an inseparable trio with my sister and me. He was the son of Mariano Añoto, a friend of my father's who died young, and his living testimony, today, helps me to remember luminous moments, such as our miniature theater, with its stage, curtains, stage machinery, lights and cardboard characters acting out *The Merchant of Venice*, *Hamlet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, their dramatic voices emerging from behind the curtains. And the nativity scene, with contemporary wooden figurines that walked through a town celebrating its festivities, and rode on a merry-go-round.

And the reading: stories by Ramón Gómez de la Serna with illustrations by Barradas, the Araluce collection, Jules Verne, and the mythology books, *La Montaña (The Mountain)*, by Eliseo Reclus, *"A través de las misteriosas selvas y desiertos del Continente americano" (Through the mysterious jungles and deserts of the Americas)*, ... seeing them, touching them, leafing through them.

And the walks:

*"You will remember some afternoons, mostly in winter, cold afternoons when your father was away from home. Your mother would say to us: 'Shall we go to the Alameda? We will also go up to the Martyrs."*

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<sup>1</sup> Orchard



*As we started our walk, the sun, which at first was winter yellow, gradually became cloudy and cold.*

*The mist rose along the Isuela River in swirls, enveloping us with its icy vapor, and soon our breath began to condense strongly.*

*“Catch me if you can,” she would suddenly say, and she would take off fast. Often, in order to catch her, we had to surround her. She was incredibly fast. She was young, healthy and strong.”□*

