
By

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To my parents and sister
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By

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This dissertation examines a number of recent documentary films and documentary novels that deal with the memory of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship: Soldados de Salamina (2001), La voz dormida (2002), Los niños de Rusia (2001), La guerrilla de la memoria (2002), La guerra cotidiana (2002), and Exilio (2002). They came out in the middle of a wide socio-political and cultural movement that demanded the end of the political “pact of forgetting,” and public recognition of those who defended the Republic during the Civil War.

Following the theories of Barbara Foley in literature, and Bill Nichols in film, this study shows how the authors of these films and novels use narrative strategies associated to non-fiction to deconstruct the Francoist representation of Republicans as the “anti-Spain.” Moreover, these documentary films and novels offer readers and viewers new epic narratives in which Republicans are presented as mythical heroes: not only did they fight for Spain as much as those who won the Civil War, but they also played an important role in the fight for democracy and against the Nazis in World War II, as part of the allied forces.

This dissertation also takes a cultural studies approach to go a step further and examine these works of film and literature from a larger perspective, i.e., as tools for an ongoing redefinition of the Spanish identity. It is my contention that they provide the Left with the
symbolic materials necessary to do what was left undone in the transición; that is, to create a modern myth of the Spanish nation as anti-fascist. Furthermore, the Republican memories retrieved in these novels and films forge a new Spanish identity that reflects the principles of constitutional patriotism, i.e., the central government’s nation-building discourse; hence, it is a modern and European Spanish identity, accepting of regional identities and committed to interregional solidarity.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The most notable aspect of the literature produced in Spain at the beginning of the twenty-first century is a tendency toward the documentary, as several literary scholars have indicated in their studies.\(^1\) Since the late 1990s, a similar trend may be observed in film production, although this has received less attention from the critics. The success of novels such as Javier Cercas’s *Soldados de Salamina* (2001) and Dulce Chacón’s *La voz dormida* (2002) along with that of films like Jaime Camino’s *Los niños de Rusia* (2001) and Javier Corcuera’s *La guerrilla de la memoria* (2002), is undoubtedly due to their documentary nature, but also to their subject matter. These documentary texts grow out of a vast number of recent cultural productions that deal with the memory of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco dictatorship: all can be understood as a response to a generalized interest in Spain about its immediate historical past.

The novels and films mentioned above, and several others, are the object of study in this dissertation. Their selection was based on their documentary nature, as well as their salience in the media, in stores and libraries throughout Spain. They came out in the middle of a wide socio-political and cultural movement that demanded the end of the political “pact of forgetting” with respect to the Civil War and its repressive aftermath. Filmmakers, writers, and intellectuals, along with social and political agents demanded public recognition of those who defended the Republic during the Civil War. Thus the documentary novels and films considered here retrieve the memory of Republicans—the “anti-Spain,” as the Franco regime would call them—in an attempt to repair the damage caused by decades of misrepresentation or silence. Republican women prisoners, guerrilla fighters and exiles are some of the groups these novels and films

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\(^1\) I am referring to the work of José V. Saval, Juan Carlos Martín Galván, and Antonio Gómez López-Quíñones, which will be addressed in Chapter 3.
rescue from oblivion, at the same time emphasizing their suffering as victims of consecutive
wars in Europe, as well as their heroic efforts in the fight against fascism.

The flood of cultural productions that address the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship
has drawn the attention of scholars on both sides of the Atlantic, especially in the field of
literature. *Soldados de Salamina* and *La voz dormida* are the subject of study of numerous recent
articles, books and doctoral dissertations. Some address the works’ documentary or nonfictional
approach to the memory of the Civil War, though this is less the case with *La voz dormida*, more
often studied for its content.² The documentary films analyzed here have received very little
attention, especially in the United States. The few articles that consider them center on the type
of memory retrieved and emphasize their testimonial value.

This dissertation takes the approach of cultural studies to go a step further and examine
these works of film and literature from a larger perspective, i.e., as tools for an ongoing
redefinition of the Spanish identity. These films and novels are cultural products manufactured
by a powerful culture industry, and then distributed by equally dominant media with specific
economic and political interests. This has had a crucial influence in defining the way in which
the Civil War has been remembered. In the late 1990s, left-wing political parties and media took
advantage of the social and cultural movement for the recovery of historical memory, to attempt
to undermine the government of José María Aznar (Balfour and Quiroga 87). Once the socialist
party (PSOE) assumed power in 2004, the central government folded this cultural and political
discourse on Republican memory into that of constitutional patriotism. Thus the films and novels

² Again, see Saval, Martín Galván and Gómez López-Quintones for their study of *Soldados*. Regarding *La voz*,
Amanda Matousek and Ellen Mayock have examined the representation of Republican women and motherhood in
Chacón’s novel. Edurne Portela has used Marianne Hirsch’s term “postmemory” to study the type of memory
retrieved in the novel and its relationship to the different paratexts included in *La voz*. Gil Casado prefers the term
“novela criticosocial” [sociocritical novel] and Colmeiro, “novela testimonial” [testimonial novel] for Chacón’s
novel.
studied here, among others, provide the Left with the symbolic materials necessary to do what was left undone in the transición; that is, to “create a modern myth of the Spanish nation as essentially anti-fascist” (87). Moreover, the Republican memories retrieved in these novels and films forge a new Spanish identity that reflects the principles of constitutional patriotism, i.e., modern, European, accepting of regional identities and committed to interregional solidarity (16).

The analysis of this corpus will be conducted in the following manner: Chapter 2 outlines the fundamental theoretical concepts underlying the study; divided into six sections, it offers an overview of the major political, cultural and historical discourses that have shaped the concept of Spanish national identity from the nineteenth century to the present. The first section draws principally from the work of Labanyi, Graham, Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas to explain the relevance of a cultural studies approach for a multidisciplinary study like this one. Sections two and three define the concepts of nation, nationalism and memory, according to Anderson, Gellner, Hobsbawm, Halbwachs, and Nora. For the specific case of Spain, the work of Ángel Castiñeira and José Colmeiro on the relationship between memory and nation became particularly useful. This section also discusses some of the concepts developed by Dominick LaCapra on the relationship between memory and trauma, and on the role of literature in the process of acting out and working through trauma.

The fourth section examines the origins and evolution of Spanish nationalism, focusing on the concept of the “anti-Spain” and its place in the definition of Spanish national identity starting in the late nineteenth century. The fifth section describes the main characteristics and development of “constitutional patriotism,” a concept used since 1982 by central governments in nation-building discourse. This section also deals with the recurrent confrontations between
central and regional governments since the transición over the political definition of Spain (as a nation-state or as a multinational state). Finally, the sixth section examines the role played by memory politics in the nation-building process after the year 2000. The last two sections draw on the studies of José Álvarez Junco, Paloma Aguilar and Xosé-Manoel Núñez.

Chapter 3 defines the documentary novel and analyses Soldados de Salamina and La voz dormida as representative examples. It begins with a brief discussion of Barbara Foley’s theory of the documentary novel and the characteristics of two of its subgenres: the pseudofactual novel and the historical novel. For the purpose of this study, Foley’s most important argument is that the emergence of the documentary novel is related to the contestation of the status quo and its forms of cultural legitimation, as well as to the changing relations of production. A subsequent section in the chapter applies Foley’s theory to the case of Spain, and identifies some of the forerunners of Soldados and La voz in the twentieth-century literature. Among these are the documentary novels of “the other Generation of 27”, i.e., José Díaz Fernández, Julio Álvarez del Vayo and Ramón J. Sender. They constitute a clear earlier example of a documentary literature that emerged to question the social, political and cultural establishment in Spain.

The analysis of Soldados and La voz is preceded by a general overview of the narrative produced in Spain after the transición, with an emphasis on the literature that deals with the memory of the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. This dissertation shares the view of other scholars who have identified the literature of “Generación X”—produced immediately before Soldados and La voz—as symptomatic of the waning of a nation-building project based on collective amnesia and modernization. This was the project that Socialists articulated through the discourse of constitutional patriotism in the 1980s, and that Conservatives (PP) redefined in the late 1990s. Soldados and La voz are examined against this literary background, as some of the
most salient examples of an emerging documentary literature that searches in the past for new symbolic capital to reorient Spain’s nation-building process.

The analysis of Soldados aims at showing its characteristics as a pseudofactual novel, and how Cercas’s use of narrative strategies associated with this literary subgenre to “document” the existence of the novel’s hero, Antoni Miralles. This character has the potential to become a powerful symbolic figure for the historic memory of Republicans, as he was a heroic fighter against fascism during the Civil War, and also during World War II. Equally important is the characterization of this soldier, as one who appears to identify with Catalonia as much as with Spain. The novel points to Miralles’s dual identity by repeatedly associating him with the music of the pasodoble “Suspiros de España,” which results in a highly symbolic audiovisual unit. The character of Miralles is representative of a society where dual cultural identities have become the rule, rather than the exception. With his novel, Cercas carries out the double task of restoring the Spanish identity to those who lost the war—the anti-Spain—, while forging a new lieu de mémoire that addresses the ongoing reconfiguration of Spain’s cultural identit(ies).

The analysis of La voz examines Chacón’s narrative and documentary techniques to increase the credibility of her fictional rewriting of different testimonies from Republicans into a testimonial novel. In particular, this analysis demonstrates the way in which Chacón deconstructs the Franco regime’s concept of the Republican woman—especially the miliciana—as part of “anti-Spain.” In line with Matousek’s work, this study shows that La voz offers a rather accurate representation of most Republican women as essentially mothers, either biological or social, which contradicts the regime’s portrayal of these women as subversive. This analysis also draws attention to the fact that most of La voz’s protagonists come from Andalucía, Extremadura and Murcia, traditionally the poorest regions in Spain, and those with the highest number of
Republican victims in the Civil War. Thus Chacón’s work produces a Republican war heroine of mythical dimensions—Tensi—who draws attention to the memory of women and of Spain’s poorest regions during the conflict. Chacón’s novel is thus a new lieu de mémoire, but also represents an effort on the author’s part to help civil war survivors to work through trauma. In order to demonstrate such interpretation, this study of La voz draws parallels with social realistic Holocaust literature and makes use of the theoretical work of Dominick LaCapra.

The analysis of four documentary films about the Civil War takes up most of Chapter 4: Jaime Camino’s Los niños de Rusia [The Children of Russia] (2001), Javier Corcuera’s La guerrilla de la memoria [The Guerrilla of Memory] (2002), Daniel and Jaume Serra’s La guerra cotidiana (2002), and Pedro Carvajal’s Exilio (2002). The chapter’s first three sections summarize the main theoretical concepts of the documentary film, as developed by scholars Bill Nichols and Michael Renov. It defines the documentary film and presents the principal characteristics of the different documentary modes, according to Nichols. The following four sections examine the origins and evolution of documentary in Spain, with an emphasis on the important role this film subgenre played in maintaining the Franco regime’s version of the Civil War and thus legitimizing the government’s existence. As made clear in Rafael Garzón’s El camino de la paz [The Path to Peace] (1959) and José Luis Sáenz de Heredia’s Franco: ese hombre [Franco: That Man] (1964), the regime’s discourse on the war represented Republicans as “anti-Spanish communists” who set out to destroy the country, whereas the Nacionales are portrayed as “Spanish patriots” and liberators from the tyranny of communism. Even though the tone of the regime’s documentaries on the war became more conciliatory over time, they constituted true lieux de mémoire for its official nation-building discourse and its attempts to define the Spanish national identity.
Most documentaries produced when the regime was waning and right after Franco’s death had the objective of deconstructing such discourse. Basilio Martín Patino’s Canciones para después de una guerra [Songs For After a War] (1971), Jaime Chávarri’s El desencanto [The Disenchantment] (1976) and Jaime Camino’s La vieja memoria [The Old Memory] (1977) are representative examples of those convulsive, yet fruitful years in the history of documentary in Spain. There followed a low period of almost two decades, after which documentary film production reemerged, coinciding with a growing interest in history and documentary in the Western world. In the case of Spain, this resurgence was associated with the simultaneous renaissance of interest in the Civil War and its aftermath. One could say that both processes influenced each other, for the documentaries studied here, along with others broadcast on television only, stimulated public debates about the memory of the Civil War, which in turn generated even more documentaries on the subject.

Jo Labanyi and Gina Herrmann are among the few scholars who have drawn attention to this kind of historical documentaries in a recent issue of the Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies. Apart from their articles, there is little criticism of recent documentaries on the Civil War, including those studied in this dissertation. Perhaps this lack of interest may be explained by the fact that these documentaries do not pose intellectual or aesthetic challenges to viewers, unlike their predecessors from the 1970s. Their association with the medium of television may render them unworthy of study to film critics, but these documentaries deserve attention precisely because of the wide audiences they enjoy,. It is true that the film productions analyzed here tend to emphasize victimhood and suffering, in order to stimulate viewers’ empathy toward Republicans. At the time of the works’ release, there was an increasing social demand to have

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3 It is a monographic issue on the process of memory recovery in Spain.
the victims of the Franco regime’s repression acknowledged and honored, and these documentaries responded to that desire. Still, the majority of Republican survivors interviewed for these films are portrayed as historical agents as well, for they actively defended a democratically-elected government in Spain. Some even went on to fight in other European theaters against the Nazis. Thus their representation in these documentaries effectively inverts the Franco regime’s discourse on the Civil War and restores Spanish identity to Republicans.

As the film analysis of Chapter 4 shows, documentaries such as those studied here lent themselves to use in political discourses on the left, such as constitutional patriotism. They offer a variety of memories of Republican soldiers, guerrilla fighters, exiles, and women political activists. Moreover, they come from many regions, including the “historical nationalities,” but they identify with Spain as well as with their particular region of origin. Thus one should not underestimate the symbolic power of these documentaries for a new narration of the Civil War at the service of a nation-building project.

Chapter 5 reviews the conclusions of this dissertation and briefly considers developments on the memory recovery front in Spain since the Law of Historic Memory was passed in 2007. In particular, this chapter takes a look at the continued presence in the public sphere of the films and novels studied here, and how they contribute to the ongoing redefinition of Spain’s historic memory on the Civil War.
CHAPTER 2
THEORIES AND CONTEXT

Methodology

As a point of departure, this project takes the approach of cultural studies. In a general sense, cultural studies are an interdisciplinary model where the term “culture” does not refer to the arts, or the intellectual side of civilization, but rather to “an all-embracing symbolic system constituted by the life practices of a given society” (Labanyi “Introduction” 3). Since the 1970s, and under the impact of worldwide social and political emancipatory movements, postmodernist theory has become the main framework in cultural studies (5). It is a theory that deconstructs the monolithic concept of “culture,” opening up spaces for hitherto neglected groups and their identities, i.e. feminist and multicultural movements, youth subcultures, etc. (Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas 2; Graham and Labanyi 6).

The last twenty years have witnessed profound changes in the way cultures and identities are defined. Capitalist market economies and media technologies have given rise to a new global culture, which mixes local cultural forms across national boundaries, creating “saleable hybrid alternatives” (Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas 3). In this sense, global culture offers its users access to new worlds and ways of life. Yet such cultural diversification hides a parallel homogenizing process, which has the potential to destabilize and erode forms of national and local identity. As Jordan and Morgan-Tamosunas aver, the media have a decisive role in the production and distribution of this new global culture, determining the type of encounters that occur between different worlds and reproducing images and messages manufactured by the culture industries (3). Most importantly, the media define the way in which historical processes are to be represented to the public, but the influence of such representations varies according to the cultural and historical circumstances in which they operate (Graham and Labanyi 5).
From a cultural studies perspective, culture is seen to be fully enmeshed in and constitutive of our social world, and identities are understood as “culturally formed and (re-) presented to us through various sets of meanings (signifying practices) which are also culturally produced” (Jordan and Tamosunas 4-5). Thus culture becomes a site of power, where different groups struggle to establish certain meanings at the expense of others. In order to understand this battle of cultural forms, it is necessary to determine “the issues of legitimation at stake at any given conjuncture, why they should have acquired urgency at that particular moment, and who are the antagonists… in the struggle” (Graham and Labanyi 6). In other words, the study of cultural forms and processes should always be historically contextualized.

As critics have pointed out, “Spain’s historical development has been a response to the same dynamic processes of capitalist modernization” which define the rest of Europe (Graham and Labanyi vi). Since the 1970s, and especially after Franco’s death (1975), the country has exhibited the essential characteristics of a postmodern society (Labanyi “Postmodernism” 397): desencanto or disenchantment with the limitations of the political process; accelerated integration into European and global market economies; and finally, multinational media with great control over the images of reality presented to the country’s inhabitants. Contemporaneously to the homogenizing process of globalization, local identities and ethnic nationalisms in Spain have regained strength (Jordan and Tamosunas 5). The result is a variety of hybridized identities, which have arisen from the autonomous communities, multiculturalism, immigration and so forth (5). In Spanish cultural studies it is thus no longer acceptable to speak of “Spanish culture,” but of “culture(s) in Spain” (Labanyi “Introduction” 9).¹

¹ By “Spanish cultural studies” critics and scholars refer to a variant of cultural studies defined in relation to other modern languages. Thus the term “Spanish” is not a national qualifier, for one of the concepts that Spanish cultural studies problematizes is precisely that of “Spanish identity” (Jordan and Tamosunas 5).
The study of “Spanish national culture,” understood as the study of “high culture” or “literature,” has shifted toward a valorization of popular and mass culture. The literary text is seen as one form of cultural practice among others, and canons of “national literature” are being broadened to include women writers, ethnic minorities, etc. (Jordan and Tamosunas 6). This shift in the study of cultures in Spain creates spaces for what Labanyi calls “ghosts” or the “return of the repressed of history” (“Introduction” 6). These are the traces of “subaltern groups, whose stories – those of the losers – are excluded from the dominant narrative of the victors” (1-2); that is, from the national discourses of history and culture. Labanyi argues that since the 1970s, these specters return “via references to a variety of pop or mass-cultural forms: cinema, the thriller, family photographs.” They return to demand reparation but also recognition of the mass-cultural forms whose consumption constituted their lifestyle (“Introduction” 8). Labanyi mentions the novels of Juan Marsé, Antonio Muñoz Molina and Julio Llamazares, and the films of Víctor Erice, Basilio Martín Patino and Carlos Saura as examples. As will be shown later, the novels and films studied here could also be considered recent instances of “the return of the repressed of history.” For example, La voz dormida, La guerrilla de la memoria, and Exilio recover the memory of different Republican groups during the Franco dictatorship, such as women prisoners, guerrilla fighters and exiles.

The discipline of cultural studies is popular in North American universities, but it provokes mixed reactions among scholars. One example of this controversy may be observed in the collection of essays Spain beyond Spain. Modernity, Literary History and National Identity (2005), a recent contribution to the debate on national identity and literature in Spain. In “A Landscape of Relations: Peninsular Multiculturalism and the Avatars of Comparative Literature,” Antonio Monegal warns against what he perceives as “the weakness of the
theoretical foundations” (240) of cultural studies. Followers of this approach read novels, films, paintings, etc. as “documents of a place and time,” in a search for “social and political relevance.” Cultural studies often lack a diachronic perspective, emphasizing synchronic context over history, “when in fact the network of differences that we are addressing is projected over time as much as it is over space” (241).

In contrast, Thomas Harrington enthusiastically endorses pluridisciplinary approaches to the study of culture in another essay in *Spain beyond Spain*: “Belief, Institutional Practices, Intra-Iberian Relations.” In his view, the “rigorous archive-based research” that lies at the core of cultural studies has the potential to expose the relationship between “non-dialogical concepts of national identity” that characterize certain nationalist discourses in the Iberian Peninsula as well as “deeply entrenched institutional attitudes and postures” (223-24).² By the latter, Harrington refers to academic programs that still consider canonical literary texts as “the best entry point for understanding a national culture,” when in fact, they should be paying “much greater attention to the role played by mediating institutions in the construction of aesthetic and social systems of belief” (223). Harrington affirms that cultural studies broaden the range of “suitable items of study,” making scholars more critical about their “institutionally-generated forms of professional comportment” (223). He does not claim that cultural studies would dramatically influence the current nationalist debates in Spain, although he believes that pluridisciplinary approaches, like the one proposed by Graham and Labanyi in *Spanish Cultural Studies. An Introduction* (1995), could contribute to undermine the essentialism of such discourses (224).

My project shares Monegal’s concern with certain applications of cultural studies, in which

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² Confrontations between the Spanish nationalist movement on the one hand, and the Catalan and Basque movements on the other, have increased since the 1990s (Tusell 138). A detailed explanation of the origins and development of this conflict is provided later in this chapter.
everything is read as a document for social and political relevance. Thus the analysis of literary texts and films carried out here rests on concepts and theories from several disciplines, as will be shown below. But more importantly, the present study supports Harrington’s view of cultural studies as a discipline with the potential to deconstruct monolithic concepts of culture and national identity. Most documentary films and novels analyzed here have received little attention from scholars, for the documentary subgenre has been traditionally considered unworthy of study, with a few exceptions. Some of these novels and films are also “mass culture” products, a characteristic that appears to disqualify them for aesthetic and intellectual analysis. From a cultural studies approach, however, they prove to be highly valuable in the understanding of two interrelated processes taking place in Spain at the beginning of the twenty-first century: the struggle over the memory of the Civil War and the redefinition of Spanish identity.

In order to support my contention—that these new memories of the Civil War provide the discourse of constitutional patriotism with the symbolic materials necessary to create a new myth of Spanish identity as anti-fascist—Chapter 2 will draw from theories of history and sociology to address the relationship between “memory” and “nation,” and the application of such relationship to the case of Spain. This discussion will provide the historical and political context for the analysis of documentary films and novels in Chapters 3 and 4.

**Nation, Nationalism and National Identity**

The concept of “nation” has produced a very extensive list of academic works, but scholars have not been able to agree on the basic meaning of the term. The theory of the nation used in this project draws mainly from the works of Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm; all have had a dramatic impact on the fields of history and political science in the

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3 *La voz dormida* is starting to get the attention of scholars in the US who study women’s literature. However, many critics and researchers still consider it a “sentimental” novel (Martínez, Catelli and Gómez), aesthetically and intellectually inferior to others, such as *Soldados de Salamina.*
last twenty years. The present section will also refer to the work of Spanish scholar José Álvarez Junco, whose *Mater Dolorosa* (2001) made a significant contribution to the study of Spanish nationalism. Because Álvarez Junco incorporates in his analysis the concepts and theories of Gellner, Anderson and Hobsbawm, his definition of the nation seems adequate to start the discussion. For him, the term “nation” is used to designate

*aquellos grupos humanos que creen compartir unas características culturales comunes—lengua, raza, historia, religión—and que, basándose en ellas, consideran legítimo poseer un poder político propio, sea un Estado plenamente independiente o un gobierno relativamente autónomo dentro de una estructura política más amplia.* (11)

*[those human groups that believe they share common cultural characteristics—language, race, history, religion—and that, based on these commonalities, they should rightly have their own political power, whether as a fully independent state, or as a relatively autonomous government within a larger political structure]*

Until the 1980s, the nation had been conceived as a natural reality, firmly rooted in ethnicity. Scholars such as Anderson started to question this premise, claiming that nations are cultural and political constructions. In his work *Imagined Communities* (1983), Anderson argues that nationality, the nation, and nationalism are “cultural artefacts… capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations” (4). Anderson traces the emergence of national consciousness in Europe to the time of the Reformation, when the interaction between print, capitalism and vernacular languages made new political communities “imaginable” (43).

Gellner relates nationalist movements to modernity and industrialization, postulating that by the end of the eighteenth century, European states realized that they needed culturally homogeneous spaces to favor the development of industrialization and commerce (42, 57). Thus,

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4 The most prominent defenders of this concept were Hans Kohn and Carlton Hayes, the so-called *primordialists*. Their ideas were later challenged by *instrumentalists*, like Gellner, Hobsbawm and Anderson (Álvarez Junco 13).
these states developed a national identity in their populations through educational and communications systems (50-52). As a result, local groups sustained by folk cultures were replaced with an impersonal and standardized society, held together by a high culture imposed from above. Nationalism would soon become a “civic religion,” the new source of identity for the industrial societies that emerged in the wake of the Ancien Régime (57-58). Thus, for Gellner

Nations as a natural God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: *that is a reality.* (48-9)

Hobsbawm also associates the (re)surfacing of national consciousness with major social and political changes; and his theory is mostly based on the 40-year-period preceding World War I (4), when the growth of the middle class and the emergence of mass politics explain to a great extent the rise of official nationalist movements in the French Republic or the German Empire. Like Gellner, Hobsbawm points out that nationalism played an essential role as a “civic religion” in the maintenance of social stability in Europe (268-69). But he takes a more radical stance by emphasizing the “invented” nature of the traditions on which nationalism rests:

Most of the occasions when people become conscious of citizenship as such remain associated with symbols and semi-ritual practices (elections), most of which are historically novel and largely invented: flags, images, ceremonies and music. (12)

On this last point, Álvarez Junco argues—in line with Gellner—that the right term to describe the origin of national identities should be “construction,” rather than “invention.” This is so because groups create national identities with a certain political program in mind, but they create such “imagined communities” with pre-existing materials, which limits the extent of their creation (276). Art, history and literature are some of the elements that ruling elites use to create images and concepts that define ways of thinking, feeling and believing (Fox 25). Such a “transhistoric symbolic system” (Castiñeira 50) is what scholars refer to as “national culture,” a
set of values and ideals from the past with which members of a nation identify, thus constituting their collective or “national identity” (Castiñeira 50). Because national identities are fragile, political and cultural institutions periodically activate the group’s collective memory, an element that both justifies and constitutes the nation (52).

**Memory**

The role played by social institutions in the formation of collective memories was the focus of Maurice Halbwachs’s work. Halbwachs was a French sociologist and philosopher who studied under the guidance of Henri Bergson and is known for his analysis of the process of memory. In his influential *The Collective Memory*, Halbwachs claims that memory is a social construction mainly shaped by the concerns of the present (25). Even individual memories are just fragmentary images that become meaningful only when projected into specific settings associated with the past, settings which Halbwachs calls “social frameworks;” they are a product of the collective memory itself. Specifically, such sites are created when the shared images that mold the collective memory of a particular group become interconnected (Hutton 78). As Halbwachs points out, social frameworks are not to be identified after the fact by the combination of individual recollections; nor are they empty forms where recollections insert themselves. They are the instruments used by social institutions to retrieve memories, according to beliefs, interests, and aspirations of the present (Halbwachs 40).

Pierre Nora, whose work is inspired by Halbwachs’s method, addresses the relationship between nation and memory through a concept similar to the social frameworks of memory: *les lieux de mémoire*. Nora describes the *lieux de mémoire* as sites where memory attaches itself (22). They can be material (archives), symbolic (a minute of silence) or functional (a testament),
even though these three aspects tend to coexist in a single *lieu de mémoire* (19). These “places of memory” are created by the interplay of memory and history, and by the will to remember because without this, anything could be considered worth remembering. At the same time, *lieux de mémoire* acquire different meanings with the passing of time. Thus, their purpose seems to be contradictory, for they are created to stop the process of forgetting, but they are also evolving and hybrid sites, with an ever-changing meaning. Thus, museums, festivals, monuments, etc. make their appearance today as *lieux de mémoire* by the will of a society in permanent renewal, which longs for continuity with the past and seeks legitimation of its present (12).

Nora explains that the symbiotic relationship between memory, nation and history was broken under the pressure of democratization and mass culture. In present-day societies, the coupling of state and nation has been replaced by the coupling of state and society. The nation is no longer a cause, and modern societies have become more interested in self-knowledge and their future. Thus, the memory-nation, where history and memory were unified, has disappeared. Memory turned into a private matter, and history has taken over in collecting all those different and personal memories. As a result, the state no longer has the authority to transmit values, for it has disclaimed its national identity (11). Nora’s concept of memory-nation is problematic in its idealization of tradition over modernization, among other things. Still, his concept of *lieux de mémoire* has become one of the main references in any study of memory.

As Ángel Castiñeira points out, *lieux de mémoire* take on a very important symbolic meaning, since they bring images from the past into the present, integrating them into the current system of values (53). They become part of the nation’s self-narration, which includes a certain

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5 Nora gives the example of a historical generation, which is material by its demographic content and supposedly functional – since memories are crystallized and transmitted from one generation to the next – but also symbolic, since references to events or experiences shared by a small minority may be used to characterize a larger group that did not participate in them (19).
selection, adaptation and manipulation of historic memory, and integrates new cultural traits. Thus, the symbolic world that defines a national identity always includes historical continuity and an imagined component. The latter should not be viewed negatively, however, because it does not result in a falsification of facts. It rather constitutes a reflexive act in the representation of memory, which invests a symbol with a renewed meaning (58). For example, the siege of “El Alcázar” (Toledo), which took place during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), became a lieu de mémoire in the historiography of the Franco regime. For two months nationalist troops had resisted in the fortress of “El Alcázar” bombardments and attacks by Republican militias, until Franco himself came to rescue his supporters. This event was later presented as a renewal of the resilience and courage of “the Spanish people” (Nationalist rebels) against “the enemies of Spain” (the Republic). “El Álcazar” had recovered the spirit of similar episodes in Spanish history, such as the battles of Sagunto, Numancia and the War of Independence (1808-1814). It would later be remembered (and imagined) as both the continuation of a glorious past and the embodiment of the Spanish character. Thus “El Álcazar” became part of the symbolic world that defined the Spanish national identity during the Franco regime. The current meaning of this building has been neutralized to a certain extent. Since 1998, El Alcázar hosts the Castilla-La Mancha Public Library and it will soon be home to the New National Army Museum as well.

As this example shows, the imagined component of national narrations is the key to understanding the nation, since nations are sustained by images of themselves created by their members, not by tangible characteristics (Castiñeira 58; original emphasis). To put it differently, what forms and gives continuity to nations is not rigorous historic discourse, but the subjective perception of events lived or emotionally transmitted (66). All identities, not simply national ones, imply a specific way of imagining through language and of culturally representing the
group. For that reason, one may discern national identities through the analysis of narratives and images produced by those who represent an *imagined community* to others (60). The ultimate objective of such analysis is not to determine the veracity of the components of a collective identity, but to measure the extent of their effectiveness in representing the community itself (67).

At this point, I should clarify my use of two terms. I will apply the concept of “historic memory” as defined by José Colmeiro, which he differentiates from the concept of “collective memory.” For Colmeiro, collective memory includes a range of experiences, traditions, practices, rituals and social myths shared by a group; it does not necessarily imply a historic consciousness. As examples, he mentions the arrival of the miniskirt in the 1960s, or the Spanish film *El ultimo cuplé* (1957), one of the most popular musicals during the Franco regime. Historic memory, while constituting a part of the collective memory, differentiates itself by virtue of the critical reflection it brings to bear on historical events that have been shared collectively and remain alive in the referential horizons of the group (18). Some examples of historic memory from the Franco regime that Colmeiro cites: the repression exercised by the fascist police, the national-catholic indoctrination carried out in schools, the books and concerts banned by the dictatorial government. As part of the collective experience of resistance or interior exile, these events belong to the historic memory because they are remembered critically and as a testimony of their time. Thus, the main characteristic of the historic memory is its self-reflexive nature (18).

Finally, some of the works studied here, like Chacón’s *La voz dormida* and Corcuera’s *La guerrilla de la memoria*, deal with traumatic war and postwar experiences that left open wounds in many survivors. For that reason, I use some of Dominick LaCapra’s concepts on memory and trauma in my analysis of those works. LaCapra’s *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001)
focuses mainly on the Holocaust, but it could also be applied to other historical events, such as the Spanish Civil War, as will be shown below. In this book, LaCapra explores literary and theoretical attempts to come to terms with trauma, as well as the role that post-traumatic testimonies play in recent thought and writing (ix). He applies psychoanalytic concepts, such as acting out and working through, in his examination of trauma and its aftereffects. The reason for it is that LaCapra considers these concepts “a necessary dimension” to historical analysis, sociocultural and political critique (ix). In his view, certain modes of representation in literature, historiography and theory tend to “overly objectify, smooth over, or obliterate the nature and impact of the events they treat” (103). Thus LaCapra defends “empathic unsettlement” in empirical research and analysis as a “symptom of, and perhaps necessary affective response to, the impact of trauma” (xi). This means that any type of writing that attempts to come to terms with a traumatic past should involve affect and “empathetically expose the self to an unsettlement” that ought to be addressed in a “cognitively and ethically” responsible manner (42).

Acting out and working through are two ways of coming to terms with trauma, according to LaCapra (142). In acting out, the past is performatively regenerated or compulsively relived and it returns as the repressed (70). Working through is intimately linked to acting out, but it represents a “countervailing force” through which the victim tries to gain critical distance from the past (143). It does not mean avoiding, harmonizing or forgetting that past; it means “coming to terms with trauma and critically engaging the tendency to act out the past and even to recognize why it may be necessary and even in certain respects desirable or at least compelling” (144). To LaCapra, certain forms of literature provide a space for exploring modalities of responding to trauma, “including the role of affect and the tendency to repeat traumatic events”
(185). He cites Franz Kafka, Paul Celan, Charlotte Delbo and Tadeusz Borowski as authors whose works elicit an affective—but not kitsch—response in readers. This response would be “influenced by critical judgement and cognition, that is, by one’s appreciation of the quality of the work and by what one knows of the author and the context of writing” (217). The works studied here may not be comparable to those of Kafka and Celan, but they still represent a significant effort to write trauma in LaCapra’s terms.

**Spanish nation and nationalism: from 1808 to 1975**

Like many other European countries, Spain started its nation-building process in the nineteenth century, after the so-called “War of Independence” (1808-1814). The process was long and difficult, for there was no general agreement among ruling elites about the fundamental characteristics of the Spanish nation (Álvarez Junco 534). Progressive members of society aimed for the political, social and economic modernization of the country. The conservative opposed changes that would threaten the tradition of Spain: monarchy and Counter-Reformation Catholicism. As a result of civil wars, military coups, social uprisings, political corruption and a weak monarchy marked the political landscape of nineteenth-century Spain. The state managed to realize its project of political and administrative centralization, in spite of all these obstacles (535). At the same time, cultural elites were carrying out the parallel construction of a Spanish national identity, and history played a fundamental role in this process, just as it did in other parts of Europe.

Modesto Lafuente and Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, among others, took on the task of

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6 The war of 1808-1814 was more of an international war between France and Britain in Spanish territory, and a civil war which divided Spanish elites. Historians renamed it “War of Independence” twenty years later, and thus turned it into a pillar of the Spanish nationalist mythology. From then on, this war would be considered an example of the Spanish nation rising united against invaders, which only confirmed the long existence of a Spanish collective identity (Álvarez “The Nation” 93).
creating a Spanish collective memory during the second half of the nineteenth century.7 Their objective was to show the remote origins and development of a permanent and unified nation: Spain (Álvarez Junco 196). Lafuente and Cánovas considered the following ideas fundamental in the development of the Spanish nation: the religious and independent spirit of the middle ages; the emergence of the Spanish nation-state under the Reyes Católicos (the Catholic Monarchs Fernando and Isabella); and the critical role of Castile in politically and culturally shaping the Spanish nation. For them, the distinguishing characteristics of the Spanish national identity, originally Castilian, were evident in language, literature and art throughout the centuries (Fox 27-31).

Cultural elites in Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia also commenced, in the mid-nineteenth century, to create a collective memory of their respective regions since the middle of the century.8 With the growth of cultural and economic differences between Madrid and these peripheral regions, however, such cultural enterprises were often used as a political tool against the Spanish state. The regions’ mounting discontent with the central government reached its peak in 1898, when Spain lost its last American colonies and the Philippines to the United States. The central government had once more shown its weakness and incompetence, which fueled separatist sentiments in the periphery.9 In response, Spanish nationalism grew increasingly

7 Modesto Lafuente wrote his Historia General de España (General History of Spain) between 1850 and 1867. Cánovas directed the writing of another Historia General de España, authored by members of the Royal Academy of History, during the last decade of the nineteenth century (Álvarez Junco 201).

8 The “Rexurdimento” and the “Renaixença” (both mean “rebirth”) were cultural movements that took place in Galicia and Catalonia respectively. Artists and intellectuals involved in these movements strove to revive Galician and Catalan as cultural and literary languages. There was not such an organized cultural movement in the Basque Country. However, Jon Juaristi presents in his book, El linaje de Aitor: la invención de la tradición vasca (1987), some of the literary works that would later inspire the Basque nationalist movement. Among these are the writings of Sabino Arana, founder of the PNV (Basque Nationalist Party).

9 According to Sebastian Balfour, “this was especially true of Catalonia because the ruling order had failed to retain the colonial markets which had absorbed so many of the region’s exports” (113).
reactive and conservative (601), such that by the end of the century, it had evolved into an authoritarian nationalism that merged with conservative Catholicism.

The intellectual “father” of this new version of conservative Spanish nationalism, “national-catholicism,” was Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, who claimed that the essence of the Spanish nation was Catholicism. In his *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles* (History of the Spanish Heterodox) (1881), he argued that Spaniards who were not Catholic did not belong to the Spanish “race.” They constituted an “unnatural and aberrant species.” Menéndez Pelayo created thus the idea of the “anti-Spain” (457). He was originally referring to the liberal elites from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, who tried to apply the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution in Spain, but by the end of the nineteenth century, the “anti-Spain,” or the “internal enemy” of Spain, came to be identified with separatist and labor movements. Spanish nationalism became increasingly concerned with these groups during the following decades (602).

In 1931, the monarchy fell and the Second Republic was declared. Modernizing the country and strengthening the state were the main goals of Republican leaders, who intended to follow the ideas of liberal-progressive thinkers from the previous century (Álvarez Junco 604), notably Francisco Giner and Joaquín Costa.10 The first was one of the founders of the “Institución Libre de Enseñanza” and the other two belonged to a group of liberal intellectuals engaged in the cultural and social renovation of the country.11 The Republican project would soon meet opposition from conservative groups: church, army and economic oligarchies. The

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10 Among the actions taken by the Republic to distance itself from a failed monarchy was the adoption of a new flag and anthem to define the Spanish national identity.

11 The “Institución Libre de Enseñanza” (Institute of Independent Education) was founded in 1876 to provide a non-official, secular education – free of Catholic dogma – which would nurture the elite needed to modernize Spain (Graham 422).
central government was also under mounting pressure from revolutionary movements in the left, which were gaining popular support.

In this context, conservatives founded a new political party, the CEDA (Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right), and claimed to be the “defenders of Spain,” i.e., order, family, tradition and the right to private property. The “anti-Spain” they were fighting against was represented by revolution, separatism, modernization, secularism and materialism (Álvarez Junco 604). The CEDA won the general election of 1933, but lost in 1936 to the Popular Front, a broad alliance of parties from the left. A civil war broke out shortly afterward as a result of increasing tensions in the country and the inability of the Republican government to control them.

The insurrection of the “nacionales,” or the “defenders of Spain” against the “republicanos,” or the “anti-Spain” was led by Francisco Franco (the “Generalísimo”), who declared victory in 1939. “Spain” had prevailed over the “red hordes.” Such terms were used by the Franco regime (1939-1975) to describe the Civil War—renamed “the Crusade”—in history books and school manuals, well until the late 1950s. This language sustained a massive nationalization project inspired in the ideas of national-catholicism. The process was carried out in a “brutal” manner, based on the repression and ostracization of the losers of the war (Álvarez Junco 606). The ultraconservative nationalism of the Franco regime thus succeeded in “de-nationalizing,” rather than “nationalizing” a large portion of the Spanish population (López 113).

One example of the monolithic character of national-catholicism is the monument in the “Valle de los Caídos” (Valley of the Fallen), described by Ulrich Winter as a “totalitarian lieu de mémoire” (26). It was built during the 1940s in the Guadarrama Valley, near Madrid. The regime

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12 See Aguilar Fernández pgs. 98-108.
used Republican prisoners for its construction, who could through their labor “be redeemed of their sins.” It was said to be a monument to honour all those who died in the war, including Republicans, and some of the prisoners who died while working on its construction are buried there. However, the inscription found at the base of the monument, “Caídos por Dios y por España” (To those who fell for God and for Spain) contradicts such a claim. Only the “nacionales” died for God and for Spain, according to the propaganda of the regime. In 1959, the monument became the burial place of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, founder of “Falange Española,” the Spanish fascist party created in 1933, who died in 1936; and later Franco himself was buried there. It is thus a monument which denies and “disremembers” the Republican Other (28).

The nationalist discourse of the Franco regime changed over time. The celebration of victory was replaced with a celebration of peace (Aguilar 85), but there was no reconciliation between the winners and the losers of the war. The regime never ceased to portray the Civil War as its principal legitimizing event (185), an insistence that led some Spaniards to hope that justice would be done to Republican victims and their families once Franco died. But their memories continued to be silenced by the democratic governments that succeeded the dictatorship.

Memory and Nation in Democratic Spain

The historic memory that sustains the Spanish collective identity today has its most immediate referents in the first post-Franco years. The 1978 Constitution, the figure of King Juan Carlos I and the “transición” (transitional period to democracy) are some of the “places of memory” recently added to the landscape of the Spanish historic memory.13 They represent a

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13 Because of the brevity of their existence as historical symbols, the King and the Constitution could be considered as “premature places of memory.” According to Ulrich Winter “pertenecen al mismo tiempo a la memoria comunicativa y viva, contemporánea y a la memoria cultural y mítica, asegurando la continuidad entre pasado y
new and young society, which was ready to embrace democracy and the modern world in the 1970s. However, these lieux de mémoire are not representative of the cultural and national plurality of Spain (Winter 23); they are rather a fundamental part of a Spanish nationalist discourse that supports the traditional concept of Spain as an indissoluble nation-state. This fact became evident during the second term of the Aznar administration (2000-2004), as it will be shown below, but it is by no means new nor is it limited to Spanish right wing ideology.

Franco had planned that upon his death, Prince Juan Carlos would succeed him as Head of State. But the dictator’s heir had other plans for Spain; once he was proclaimed King in 1975, Juan Carlos started to democratize the political system, appointing Adolfo Suárez as Prime Minister. The King’s actions were not welcomed by the Spanish military and the supporters of the Franco regime. Thus Suárez would have the difficult task of leading the reconciliation of the country after 40 years of dictatorship. If another civil war were to be avoided, it was essential to reach political consensus (Aguilar 287). Social and political elites, the media and the majority of the population shared this opinion. Polls taken at the national level in 1975 and 1976 showed that “peace” was the priority for Spaniards, above “justice,” “freedom” and “democracy.” Even in 1981, citizens remained concerned about economic development and peace, above freedom and democracy (349).

One of the consequences of the need to find consensus was the labeling of the Civil War as a “guerra de locos” (a war of the mad) (Aguilar 284). That way everybody and nobody was to blame for the tragedy, since the whole of the population appeared to have lost their mind for three years (286). Some reparations were made to the victims of the Franco regime in order to facilitate reconciliation. For example, the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) was legalized,
amnesty was granted to all political prisoners,\textsuperscript{14} and the families of those who died in the war received pensions (262-73). However, the Amnesty Law of 1977 also contained articles prohibiting the prosecution of Francoist repressors (Davis 863).\textsuperscript{15} Thus no one was held legally responsible for the crimes committed during the war against supporters of the Republic. Some left-wing politicians perceived these measures as insufficient.\textsuperscript{16} Others claimed that moral reparations to the losers of the war were essential to end divisions in the country, but they also realized that such a wish was unrealistic. The fragility of the transition process, it is repeatedly stated, made a true recognition of the regime’s victims impossible.\textsuperscript{17} Moreover, forgetting the most traumatic episodes of the war and the postwar period seemed to be indispensable for the purpose of national reconciliation (Aguilar 310).

The need to reach political consensus determined the new territorial articulation of the State as well. Part VIII of the Constitution addressed the question of the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia, the historical regions in Spain that had obtained a home-rule statute prior to or during the Spanish Civil War. Through the establishment of a new political framework called “Estado de las Autonomías” (State of Autonomous Communities), the state was decentralized in seventeen autonomous communities. Spain remained a single political nation,

\textsuperscript{14} According to Aguilar, the Basque Country was the region that had the highest number of political prisoners per inhabitant in Spain (265).

\textsuperscript{15} At the present time (April 2010), Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón has been charged with violating this Amnesty Law in 2008, when he decided to investigate the forced disappearance of 114,000 Republicans under the Franco regime.

\textsuperscript{16} Francisco Letamendia Belzunce, a radical member of the party “Minoría Vasca” [Basque Minority] considered that the 1977 Amnesty Law should not be based on “un perdón vergonzante” [an act of shameful forgiveness] for government officials. In his view, amnesty should be “un reconocimiento del derecho de un pueblo a haber utilizado todos los medios que tenia a su alcance para defenderse de la agresión de la dictadura” (Aguilar 267-8) [a recognition of the right of [the Basque] people to defend themselves with all possible means from the violence of the Franco dictatorship].

\textsuperscript{17} That was the position of Donato Fuejo Lago, member of the political party “Grupo Mixto” (Aguilar 268). The “transición” years were marked by constant violence from ETA and ultra right-wing squads, both aimed at aborting any kind of negotiated political change (Davis 865).
while the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia were to be considered as “nacionalidades históricas” (historical nationalities), i.e. “cultural and linguistic communities” (Núñez “What is” 723). Thus sovereignty was held by the Spanish state only.

The reaction from peripheral nationalists to this new constitutional project was mixed. Catalan nationalists took part in the writing of the *Magna Carta* and encouraged their supporters to vote in favor of its approval. Basque nationalists did not join in this process, nor did they see their claim for sovereignty recognized. Therefore, 55.5% of Basque voters did not participate in the Constitutional referendum of 1978 (Núñez 724). Galicia did not pose a problem in this respect, since nationalist movements in the region were rather weak at that time. Finally, in December of 1978 the Constitution was approved by a majority of political parties, and afterwards by 87.8% of eligible voters in Spain (Aguilar 345). The transition to democracy appeared to be a success. It had been carried out rather peacefully under the leadership of both the King and Prime Minister Suárez, and most social and political parties had come to a general agreement about the future of Spain.

Consolidating the newly decentralized state while creating a new and democratic Spanish national sentiment would be the task of later governments. The PSOE or Socialists, lead by Felipe González (1982-1996), tried to defend the territorial integrity of the Spanish nation through the discourse of “constitutional patriotism” (Núñez “What is” 725), which embodies two overlapping tendencies. The first borrows Jürgen Habermas’ own idea of “constitutional patriotism,” a kind of civic patriotism whereby political communities are founded upon universalist principles. In turn, these principles are contained in a constitution for a defined territory (736). The second tendency within Spanish “constitutional patriotism” recovers the ideas of Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset on the national question, as expressed in his
book España invertebrada (1921). His reflections were based on historical determinism (Castile was the forging power of Spanish unity under the Monarchy) and also on the search for a “common project” that would unite all Spanish peoples (Núñez 727). Thus Spain was conceived as an old political nation that contained diverse cultural nations, i.e., as a “nation of nations” which preceded the 1978 Constitution and has been legitimized by History (736-7).\(^\text{18}\)

For the Socialists, the “common project” that would hold the Spanish nation together was modernization, interregional solidarity and international integration. The central state would be the only mediator between Brussels and the citizens of Spain. However, the history of diverse identities within a common Spanish project allowed for cultural pluralism and political sharing with the “Comunidades Autónomas” as well (736). This mixture of historicist and civic nationalism was not particular to the Spanish state during the Socialist government. In order to keep a community united, nations have always appealed to emotions, a common history and culture, as explained above. Nevertheless, the concept of Spain as a “nation of nations” was not accepted by many groups representing the peripheral nationalisms.

Some Catalan and Basque nationalists had accepted the new state of Autonomous Communities, but only as a first step toward complete regional self-government (Núñez “Conservative” 122). Over the years, they continued to demand further decentralization and an explicit declaration of “plurinationality” from the Spanish state (Tusell 135). For its part, ETA unleashed a spiral of violence that reached an especially dramatic point with the abduction and murder of Miguel Ángel Blanco in 1997. He was a city councilman of the PP (Partido Popular), the party in power between 1996 and 2004, led by José María Aznar. This terrorist act provoked

\(^{18}\) The concept of “nation of nations” is founded on Friedrich Meinecke’s distinction between “cultural nations” and “political nations.” According to this German historian, “cultural nations” are “primarily based on some jointly experienced cultural heritage,” while “political nations” are “primarily based on the unifying force of a common political history and constitution” (10).
unprecedented public rejection of ETA’s actions, as well as the radicalization of both central and peripheral nationalist movements.

The Spanish nationalism supported by the PP and by right-wing intellectuals shared many characteristics with the one defended by Socialists in the previous government, especially its supposedly liberal and civic principles. However, the PP’s version of “constitutional patriotism” incorporated history as the main legitimizing element of the Spanish nation since 2000. The 1978 Constitution was no longer regarded as a political act, but rather as a historical achievement of the entire national community that must be preserved in its original form. This way, the PP turned the Constitution into a lieu de mémoire which commemorates the creation of an indivisible democratic state and the preservation of a unified national identity (Song 228). The implied message to substate nationalisms was clear: Spain was to remain the only sovereign state in the country.

Like the Socialist party, the PP found unquestionable the existence of Spain as a political nation before the 1978 Constitution. It was a “plural Spanish nation,” but long unified by the monarchy, by a common project (the “conquest” of America), by language and especially, by history. Therefore, the Aznar government quite literally ordered the rewriting of Spanish history to place emphasis on its “Golden Age” (the Catholic Monarchs and the emperors Charles I and Philip II), and thus to rebuild the Spanish national conscience (Núñez “Conservative” 136). This particular action was intended to have an effect on the teaching of Spanish history at the high school level, which had become a great concern for the PP. In their view, students in Catalonia and the Basque Country were learning a version of history that conflicted with the one taught in the rest of Spain (Tusell 269-70). Thus the contents of the subject, which so far had focused on

19 In 2000, a report made by the Spanish Royal Academy of History exposed some pedagogical methods used in Catalonia and the Basque Country which emphasized the confrontation between central and peripheral nationalist
contemporary Spanish history, would start at the prehistoric period. This way, less time would be devoted to the immediate historical past of Spain, including the Franco regime and the Civil War, which had to be put aside “for the sake of Spain’s unity” (135). Yet most monuments and street names honoring Francoism remained untouched.²⁰

Emphasis had to be put instead on the “transición,” a period that represents the end of decadence and intolerance, and the beginning of a new national project (democracy, modernization, etc.). This reluctance to reexamine Spain’s recent past exposes the limitations of the PP’s constitutional patriotism. To begin with, the model of “constitutional patriotism” proposed by Habermas aims at preventing historical excesses caused by ethnic, national and cultural discrimination (Song 229). Thus it transcends national identities and cultural traditions, in favor of universal values guaranteed by a constitution. In Habermas’s view, societies can create a sense of collectivity and solidarity through their citizens’ political participation only, without resorting to essentialist categories, such as that of nation and culture (229). Moreover, Habermas’s model is founded on the belief that the national state, as a form of political organization, is no longer effective in a globalized world, where the only things that prevail are the democratic principles guaranteed by a constitution (230). For the PP, in contrast, the 1978 Constitution represents a lieu de mémoire that commemorates the creation of a democratic and indivisible state, along with the preservation of a unified national identity (228). Therefore, the

²⁰ Following this effort of “re españa lizaci ón” (re-Hispanization) in the Humanities, Esperanza Aguirre--minister of education at the time--unsuccessfully tried to give priority to the teaching of Castilian in the historical regions, especially in Catalonia (Tusell 269). Since 1993, there had been tension in that region regarding the amount of compulsory teaching in Catalan that should be offered in schools. By increasing the amount of hours of teaching in Catalan, the regional government was trying reach equal status for Catalan, the co-official language in Catalonia. However, some Castilian speakers in Catalonia were feeling increasingly discriminated against by this language normalization program to promote Catalan (Mar-Molinero 85).
PP does not conceive of the Constitution as a symbol of the plurality of the country; it rather uses the text as a foundation of its political ideology (231).

The Emergence of Memory Politics

It was only in November 2002 that the PP officially condemned the coup that led to the Civil War and promised to rehabilitate its victims (Núñez “Conservative” 137). The government’s intention was perhaps less to come to terms with Spain’s recent past, than to stop the increasing number of public debates on the Civil War and the Franco regime. A combination of internal and external factors reactivated such discussions after almost 30 years, and subsequently forced the Aznar government into acknowledging them (Davis 867).

Spanish journalists and historians had started a heated debate in the mid-90s about the factors that militated for or against recovering Spain’s recent historic memory. It reached a high point when controversial information regarding the victims of the war and the Franco regime was brought to light in 1999. Historians Casanova and Juliá published their book *Víctimas de la guerra civil*, while the national Spanish Television Network (TVE 2) broadcast a film documentary about the concentration camps of the Franco regime (Colmeiro 35). According to Casanova, both the book and the film disclosed an historic reality unknown to the majority of the Spanish population; it had a profound effect upon the grandchildren of the victims. They started to wonder what had happened to their grandparents and their killers, and why this information had been kept from them (Casanova “Mentiras”).

21 I am using here Madeleine Davis’s term “memory politics,” which encompasses “both official policies of truth and justice and wider social attempts to interpret and appropriate the past” (862).

22 For instance, Pío Moa tries to end the image of Republicans as war victims in his best-selling work *Los mitos de la guerra civil* (2003). On the other side of the spectrum, Mirta Núñez exposes in *Los años del terror* (2004) the repression carried out by the Franco regime after the Civil War. José María Zavala’s work, *Los horrores de la guerra civil* (2003), could be placed between Moa and Núñez, since it recovers testimonies from victims who suffered violence from both sides of the conflict.
An international event linked to Spain was developing during those same years. Spanish magistrates had indicted former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet in July 1996. He was charged with genocide and terrorism, and the Spanish judges requested his extradition to Spain to face trial in 1998. It was Pinochet’s arrest in London that sparked controversy inside and outside Spain (Davis 868). The opponents of Pinochet’s extradition, including the Chilean government, criticized the Spanish magistrates for what they saw as moral hypocrisy. Spain, a country that had allowed its own dictator to die unpunished, had no right to judge Pinochet’s actions. In the Spanish political arena, both sides tried to take advantage of the situation, which contributed to revive a political and popular debate about Francoism and the “transición.” The majority of the Spanish people were in favor of Pinochet’s indictment and the media coverage of the investigation was intense. As a result, Spanish public opinion seemed to have become aware of the limitations of the “transición,” creating new spaces for the articulation of suppressed memories (870).

The Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (ARMH, Association for the Recovery of Historic Memory) emerged from this context. It is a nongovernmental organization that coordinates exhumations of the remains of Republican victims who “disappeared.” The ARMH was founded in 2000 by Emilio Silva, a Madrid journalist who wished to find the remains of his grandfather, a Republican noncombatant killed by Francoists in 1936 (Davis 871). What began as a personal enterprise soon turned into a collective one, as Silva met other people whose relatives had also died in similar circumstances. A campaign started to recover the memory of these Republican victims (an estimated 30,000) and to give them a dignified burial. In the face of government indifference, the ARMH appealed to the UN for support in 2002. This body only made a recommendation to investigate two of the sixty-four
documented cases presented (Davis 873). In any case, the ARMH’s actions attracted media and public interest in Spain and abroad. Journalists, intellectuals, artists and politicians argued in favor of recovering the historic memory of Spain’s recent past. Finally, the PP government had no choice but to approve a resolution which condemned the coup that led to the Civil War. It was proposed by opposition parties and unanimously passed on the twenty-seventh anniversary of Franco’s death, November 20, 2002 (Davis 874).

The emergence and development of memory politics can also be explained as the result of two things: political change in Spain since the “transición” and an increasing number of books published since the mid-90s that deal with the Civil War, in both fiction and non-fiction genres. The latter will be addressed in Chapter 3. Regarding the former, the passage of time has allowed consolidation of political parties and the Spanish democratic system, while also opening a space for self-examination and reevaluation of past actions (Davis 870-71). As Madeleine Davis—a British specialist in political science—points out, the rupture created by this memory politics undermines the view of the Spanish transition as a model of moderation and consensus. It reveals the deep societal scars left by the experience of the dictatorship and adds weight to the view long held by some analysts of democratization that a society cannot indefinitely avoid coming to face to face with past trauma. (880)

Conclusions

The interdisciplinary approach of cultural studies and its theoretical framework—postmodernism—allow for a deconstruction of the term “culture,” which no longer refers to “high culture” or “the arts” only, but to a wider variety of groups and their identities, some of which had been neglected in the past, like the feminist and gay movements. Others are new

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23 The government in Asturias and the “Generalitat de Catalunya” (the Catalan government) supported exhumations and burials in their respective regions (Davis 874). For some contributions from the media to this debate see “El despertar tras la amnesia.” Babelia. El País. November 2, 2002; and Reyes Mate, “Políticas de la memoria”. El País. November 12, 2002. Among the artists who supported this campaign for the recovery of memory were Javier Cercas and Dulce Chacón, considered in Chapter 3.
hybrid alternatives resulting from a global culture that the media and the culture industries have been producing for the last twenty years. Thus culture has become a site of power where cultural forms struggle amongst themselves to establish certain meanings at the expense of others. To fully understand these power struggles, Graham and Labanyi call for historical contextualization in any study of cultural forms (6), and that is what Chapter 2 aimed to offer.

The ongoing process of memory recovery with regard to the Civil War is understood in this dissertation as a multifaceted movement that emerges at a time of political unrest in Spain. The issue at stake is the definition of Spain and the Spanish identity during the Aznar government (1996-2004). As a response to this government’s attempts to establish a concept of Spain as a unified and indivisible nation—symbolized by the 1978 Constitution and “the pact of forgetting” from the transición—social, political and cultural agents from the Left mobilize to challenge such attempts. They do so by retrieving the memory of Republicans, who were excluded from the transición, and thereby questioning the legitimacy of the Constitution as a lieu de mémoire for Spain’s historic memory.

The documentary films and novels analyzed in this dissertation quickly became an integral part of the memory politics just described. Originally, they represented a movement that aspired to create new spaces for “the return of the repressed of history” (Labanyi, “Introduction” 6), and to this end they deconstruct the myth of “anti-Spain” created by the winners of the Civil War, in reference to Republicans. Chapters 3 and 4 examine the type of memories retrieved in those films and novels, as well as their eventual appropriation by the nation-building discourse of constitutional patriotism. Given the remarkable social impact of some of these films and novels in Spain, they can be considered new lieux de mémoire for the country’s historic memory. They
are cultural products that contribute to the ongoing process of redefinition of the Spanish identity.
CHAPTER 3
THE DOCUMENTARY NOVEL

Some Concepts and History

In her book *Telling the Truth. The Theory and Practice of Documentary Fiction* (1986), literary critic Barbara Foley defines the documentary novel as a type of fiction “distinctly characterized by its adherence to referential strategies associated with nonfictional modes of discourse but also demanding to be read within a fictional Gestalt familiar to contemporaneous readers” (41). Foley’s definition of this literary subgenre is mainly based on two interrelated premises: a qualitative distinction between factual and fictive discourses and the power of mimesis to convey knowledge about the historical world. Foley claims that fictional and nonfictional discourses are not immutable essences, but “historically varying types of writing, signaled by, and embodied in, changing literary conventions and generated by the changing structures of historically specific relations of production and intercourse” (27). In other words, the difference between factual and fictive (or mimetic) discourse lies in a contract “wherein writer and reader share an agreement about the conditions under which texts can be composed and comprehended” (40).

The purpose of mimesis is to interpret and evaluate past or present actuality, and its principal strategy of representation is analogous configuration i.e., the construction of characters and events that, through their relations with one another, suggest to the reader that the reality he or she inhabits is analogous to the one represented in the fictional text. For Foley, the assertive power of mimesis derives from its essence as a social practice, in which “an intending author … invites his or her audience to adopt certain paradigms for understanding reality” (43). To put it differently, Foley rejects “textual fetishism” and calls for a contextualized analysis of fiction, where all the component parts of mimetic communication (including the authorial subject) are
taken into account. This would be the only way to fully appreciate the assertive power of fiction (43).

Foley considers the documentary novel a fictional subgenre that overlaps with the mainstream tradition of the novel. Some examples are Defoe’s pseudofactual novel *Moll Flanders* (1722), Scott’s historical novel *Waverley* (1815), Faulkner’s metahistorical novel *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and John A. Williams’s Afro-American documentary novel *Captain Blackman* (1972). However, she adds that the documentary novel is distinguished from other subgenres by its “insistence that it contains some kind of verifiable link to the historical world” (26). Thus, it is expected from the reader of the documentary novel to accept that certain characters, incidents, or actual documents possess extratextual referents (26). In line with the concept of mimesis described above, the function of these textual elements is not to supersede the assertion of generalized correspondence between text and historical actuality, but to supplement such assertion (70).

Since Foley’s theory is mainly based on English, French and North American literature, its application to the case of Spain should be done with caution, specially regarding the nineteenth-century historical novel. Nonetheless, I would argue that Spain has also produced documentary novels that express historical, social and economic changes. It is in that sense that *Soldados de Salamina* (2001) and Chacón’s *La voz dormida* (2003) are considered here as documentary novels. They respond to processes different from those described by Foley, but they still show an “adherence to referential strategies associated with nonfictional modes of discourse” (41) that is historically specific. Thus, it is my contention that *Soldados* presents characteristics of the pseudofactual novel, and *La voz*, of the historical novel, which are two forms of the documentary novel. Nonetheless, I will summarize the main four modes identified by Foley.
The Pseudofactual Novel

Foley defines the pseudofactual novel as “a genre of prose fiction that invokes an intrinsically ironic, even a parodic contract” that started at the end of the seventeenth century (107). The reader of the pseudofactual novel is asked to approach the text as if it were nonfictional—a memoir, a confession, a group of letters—, but also to accept its characters and situations as invented (107). According to Foley, such parodic relation to nonfictional discourse would enable writers “to invest fiction with new and expanded powers of assertion” (108). Up until the seventeenth century, the realm of fiction was dominated by the romance, which only depicted the aristocracy “at the highest levels of abstraction” (115). With the appearance of journalism, though, the term “novel” referred to both fictional tales and journalistic accounts, and it often became identified with “news.” Thus pseudofactual novelists would simulate familiar modes of nonfictional discourse to explore issues other than courtly love and heroic exploits. Madame d’Aulnoy wrote spurious letters to tell about Spanish customs in *The Lady’s Travels into Spain* (1690-01), and Aphra Behn simulated a traveler’s tale in *Oroonoko* (1688) to address the cruelty of slavery, among other things. As Foley claims, these authors were calling for “the enfranchisement of fiction as a discourse to represent and interpret urgent contemporary realities” (117).

In the eighteenth century, realistic verisimilitude would supplement the claim to veracity that characterized early documentary novels (119). Authors confidently made assertions about everyday reality through mimetic narrative, while the pseudofactual apparatus receded to a subordinate place (124). In fact, the novels’ claim to veracious discourse would enhance the text’s propositions about reality, rather than suggest its own authenticity (128). These changes may be observed in Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* (1722), Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740), and Choderlos de Laclos’s *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (1782).
Foley’s most important point is that the imitation of nonfictional models does not constitute the defining quality of all fiction. She argues that such imitation constitutes “a marker of fictional intentions that is historically specific” (108). Thus, the pseudofactual novel expressed the emergence of the bourgeoisie, merchant capitalism and empiricist epistemology. It was a type of literature that challenged the aristocracy’s hegemony, medieval idealism and the aprioristic abstractions of the romance (130-32).

**The Historical Novel**

For its part, the historical novel of the nineteenth century expresses the triumph of liberalism, positivist epistemology and industrial capitalism (179). This type of novel presents as inevitable “the epistemological and political hegemony of the industrial capitalist class” (184). The documentary genre adopts the mimetic strategy of analogous configuration and suggests an unmediated equivalence between the represented and the actual world (144). Foley claims that all nineteenth century historical novels follow the same paradigm (160). For example, Dickens’s *David Copperfield* (1849-1850) or Scott’s *Waverley* locate their characters “in a historically specific fictional realm” (143). In turn, these characters make their claim to truthfulness through their function as representative types. The novel’s plot elaborates on a pattern of complication and resolution that interprets and evaluates the social world, and finally, the author introduces empirical data to reinforce the text’s interpretation of its referent (144).

Scott admits that novels such as *Waverley* are based on “historical research and the testimony of participants in the Highland Rebellion” (149). However, he also points out that his narrative is a “romance” and that he has “embodied in imaginary scenes, and ascribed to fictitious characters, a part of the incidents which I then received from those who were actors in them” (149). Foley adds that the documentary materials introduced in the historical novel “establish the verifiability of the text’s generalized portraiture of customs and historical
movements” (150). For instance, one or more historical figures enter the fictive world of the novel, which lends an aura of extratextual validation to the text’s assertive discourse (160). As Foley remarks, the historical novel “bespeaks a qualitative shift in the cognitive capacities attributed to mimesis,” for “romance, imagination, and fiction are now means, rather than barriers, to assertion” (149).

The Modernist Documentary Novel

Given the state of crisis of empiricist and positivist epistemologies at the beginning of the twentieth century, the modernist documentary novel does not aim at presenting totalizing representations of reality. It questions “the necessity of offering determinate judgements of a concretely historical referent” (185). In Foley’s view, the assertion of indeterminacy in the referent or of impotence in the author does not carry less propositional force than before. In contrast to the past, the documentary procedures used in modernist fiction reveal a “profound skepticism about the capacity of analogous configuration to effect a valid reconcretization of the text’s referent” (185). Hence, the reader is expected to participate in a “deconcretization of the text’s historical referent” (186, original emphasis).

According to Foley, the modernist documentary novel splits into two strands: the metahistorical novel and the fictional autobiography. The first one postulates cyclicality and indeterminacy in the referent. Documentation brings to the fore the epistemological problem of historical inquiry or affirms a truth that transcends the realm of the concrete altogether (186). This may be observed in William Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom!, the prototypical modernist historical novel in Foley’s view (199). She argues that “the metahistorical novel sets out to refute the empiricist illusion of neutral subjectivity and the positivist illusion of neutral objectivity, as well as the complacent liberal progressivism that these illusions sustain” (200). This type of novel brings in documentary facts only to question their value as registers to truth (200).
The fictional autobiography represents a new form of the pseudofactual novel. However, it emphasizes its fictional nature and its impossibility to be something other than fiction. As opposed to its eighteenth-century forebear, the fictional autobiography poses a nonironic relation between author and protagonist. This means that the latter’s subjectivity is regarded as “the only possible lens through which to perceive historical actuality” (187). Foley cites James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as a paradigmatic example. In this novel, the protagonist tries to formulate a coherent representation of an evasive historical actuality. Hence, his discovery of the redemptive powers of art gains a specifically referential urgency in the novel (188). Foley argues that the fictional autobiography is founded on a paradox, for it privileges the transcendence of historical actuality, but the reader is required to apprehend the novel’s characters and events as real entities, not as mimetic constructs (188).

**The Afro-American Documentary Novel**

The documentary novels’ authors mentioned above choose modes of documentary corroboration that confirm existing types of economic and conceptual abstraction (233). The Afro-American novel also adopts familiar representational strategies of realistic and modernist documentary fiction, but the way it introduces documentation subverts certain aspects of bourgeois hegemony (234). Such documentation probes assumptions about race, social order, and history that the reader might hold as self-evident. To Foley, the reasons for the proliferation of documentary materials in Afro-American fiction are apparent: “racism denies full subjectivity to the black protagonist and full authority to the black author, so . . . the reader is required to engage in an abolition of disbelief” (235). These documentary works are characterized by their persistent foregrounding of contradiction in the referent. They point to the disjunction between theory and practice in American democracy (235).
Among the novels cited by Foley are Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. This is an example of abolitionist documentary fiction, which invokes the generic contract of the realistic novel for political purposes, and underlines its claims to truthful representation by including corroborative materials that testify to the text’s verifiability (245-46). John A. Williams’ novels *The Man Who Cried I Am* and *Captain Blackman* constitute instances of the Afro-American metahistorical novel, which shows a clear concern with extratextual verification and veracity as well (256). Documentary devices emphasize that the history we have learned is constructed by evil powers, and that modern black history may have been misreported (256-57). Overall, the Afro-American documentary novel highlights the main features of documentary mimesis (266). It is a genre that shows an “anxiety of reference,” which does not mean that the text lacks referential power. Rather, the use of documentation suggests that the world represented in the novel recreates essential features of the reader’s world. As Foley indicates, “documentation thus testifies not only to the reality of a specific cluster of represented materials, but also to the formidable referential power of fiction” (267).

**The Documentary Novel in Holocaust Literature**

In her article “Fact, Fiction, Fascism: Testimony and Mimesis in Holocaust Narratives” (1982), Foley argues that the historical and the pseudofactual novel were also among the novelistic modes used by authors who wished to write about the Holocaust. The experience of those who lost the Spanish Civil War is different from that of Holocaust victims in several ways. However, this study will show that Cercas and Chacón have reasons similar to those of Holocaust writers for adopting the documentary form in their novels.

According to Foley, Holocaust writers know that their audiences have never experienced anything similar to the Holocaust. Therefore, these authors “have employed a variety of rhetorical devices to enforce the factuality or fictiveness” of the reading contracts they establish
with their readers (322). They incorporate “aspects of novelistic technique” in their writings “to endow the represented object with sufficient generality” and ensure communication between writer and reader (342). Nevertheless, the reading contract does not aim at a willing suspension of disbelief (343, original emphasis). The goal of these texts is “to reinforce the reader’s perception that the horrific events portrayed did in very deed occur” (343, original emphasis).

To illustrate her argument, Foley does a brief survey of Holocaust novels she considers part of the documentary subgenre. Leon Uris’s realistic *Mila 18* (1961) and John Hersey’s pseudofactual *The Wall* (1950) are just two examples. To Foley, realistic Holocaust novels cannot “adequately convey the full extremity of Holocaust experience” (347), for they adopt an approach to history similar to that of Scott’s historical novel (345). In Uris’s *Mila 18*, Arnošt Lustig’s *A Prayer for Katerina Horovitzova* (1973) and Jean-François Steiner’s *Treblinka* (1979), “history” does not entail particularity, or “the testimonial authenticity of the eyewitness account,” but instead generality, or “the explanatory power of a wide-ranging replication of historical currents” (345). Nevertheless, these novels show a concern with historical particularity as well (345). For instance, *Mila 18* “depicts the ghettoization of Warsaw upon a socially representative microcosm” (345). To ensure verisimilitude and credibility, Uris relies upon “direct historical underpinnings” and guarantees “documentary accuracy” (345). However, Foley believes that Uris’s novel “is marred by the sentimentality of the intersecting love stories that make up the novel’s fabric of interpersonal relations” (347). In her view, “love interest is an inadequate barometer of social relationships in the ghettos and the camps” (347).

To Foley, the pseudodocumentary form constitutes the best novelistic mode to encompass the reality of the Holocaust (344). As explained above, the pseudofactual novel imitates a mode of non-fictional discourse, such as a memoir, a diary or a letter. In the case of Hersey’s *The Wall*, 
“the object of imitation is a supposed diary of one Noach Levinson,” which apparently has been
discovered in the Warsaw ghetto (351). Reality is thus restricted to the point of view of a single
character/witness, which guarantees that the reader does not incorporate “Holocaust experience
into abstract generalizations, or draw from it the ethical solace that routinely accompanies even
the most concretely immediate fictitious fiction” (351, original emphasis). Moreover, romance in
The Wall does not “overwhelm the novel with sentimentalism,” nor does it take “precedence
over its historical context,” as in the case of Mila 18 (352). In addition to Hersey’s The Wall,
Foley considers Tadeusz Borowski’s This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen (1967) and
Piotr Rawicz’ Blood from the Sky (1964) other variations of the “pseudodocumentary mimetic
mode” in Holocaust narrative (353).

Dominick LaCapra agrees with Foley and cites Borowski’s pseudofactual novel, This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen, as an adequate approach to inscribing the traumatic
experience of the Holocaust. In his view, Borowski’s novel is “an accomplishment as work of
art, as history, and as a hybrid that has the power to unsettle . . . in a desirable way” (208). For
example, this text takes the form of Borowski’s putative journal during his internment in
Auschwitz, where he became a kapo.¹ LaCapra finds the ironic tone of the narrator “utterly
disconcerting,” for it continually produces both “empathy and revulsion” in the reader (208). The
sense of unease also stems from the “excruciating nature of the account,” and the reader’s
inability to distinguish “what was experienced, elaborated from experience, and invented” (209).
In fact, everything in the novel seems “too close to fact for the reader’s comfort” (209), and
leaves one with a “never-again” feeling (211).

¹ In the Nazi concentration camps, the slang term “kapo” was used to refer to the Jews who would oversee other
prisoners’ work, and were thus viewed as Nazi collaborators or traitors to their own people.
The Documentary Novel in Spain (1926-1936)

The presence of this literary subgenre in Spain has received little or no attention from scholars. Spanish researcher Víctor Fuentes is one of the few critics who has written about this type of literature in “Literatura documental: Casas viejas y Octubre del 34,” and “Novela y vanguardia política (1926-1936).” His studies are not as theoretical and comprehensive as Foley’s, but some characteristics of the “documentary literature” he describes are the same as those pointed out by Foley. Fuentes uses the term *literatura de avanzada* to refer to a type of avant-garde literature from the 1920s and 1930s which mixed modes of fictional discourse (mainly, the novel) with modes of nonfictional discourse, such as chronicles, autobiographies or personal testimonies (“Novela” 281). Writers like José Díaz Fernández with *El blocao* (1927), Julio Álvarez del Vayo with *La senda roja* (1926) or Ramón J. Sender with *Imán* (1930) cultivated this kind of literature in an effort to “expose the mechanisms that perpetuated social injustice” (280).

Socio-political conflicts occurred frequently in Spain in the early twentieth century. Economic crises, political corruption, unpopular colonial wars in Northern Africa, and growing labor and nationalist movements provided the background for this literature. Thus the subjects addressed in these documentary novels ranged from the horrors of the Moroccan wars (*El blocao* and *Imán*), to women’s emancipation through bolshevism (*La senda roja*) (“Novela” 278). The writers of *avanzada* questioned the cultural establishment of their time, represented by intellectuals like José Ortega y Gasset, the journal *Revista de Occidente* and most avant-garde poetry from “the Generation of 27.”

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2 The “Generation of 27” was formed by poets such as Rafael Alberti, Federico García Lorca and Dámaso Alonso, among others. The name of this group originates in the literary meeting celebrated in Seville in 1927 to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the death of Spanish poet Luis de Góngora (1561-1627).
“dehumanized” literature that stood apart from the socio-political reality of the time. Thus Victor Fuentes calls the authors of *literatura de avanzada* “the other Generation of 27” (275).

During the years of the Republic (1931-36), which were as turbulent as its predecessors, the documentary literature of *avanzada* enjoyed wide readership (“Novela” 287). Some of the most representative examples from this period come once again from the “the other Generation of 27.” Ramón J. Sender wrote *Viaje a la aldea del crimen: (documental de Casas Viejas)* (1934), Manuel Benavides, *La revolución fue así. Octubre rojo y negro* (1935), and José Díaz Fernández, *Octubre rojo en Asturias. Historia de una revolución* (1935). These three novels aimed at documenting revolutionary uprisings, as well as the ensuing brutal repression of workers and peasants by government authorities (“Literatura” 105). The massacre of Casas Viejas, documented in Sender’s *Viaje a la aldea del crimen: (documental de Casas Viejas)* would cost Prime Minister Manuel Azaña the general elections of 1933 (Fuentes “Literatura” 108). It could be safely said that Sender’s chronicle contributed significantly to discredit the Azaña government (105). Nowadays, Sender is considered a canonical author of Spanish literature, but not for his documentary novels. I would like to take a brief look at *Viaje a la aldea del crimen*, for it has many elements in common with *Soldados de Salamina* and *La voz dormida*, in both form and content.

**Sender’s *Viaje a la Aldea del Crimen***

Sender chronicled the massacre of peasants that occurred in the Andalusian village of Casas Viejas in 1933, which horrified the Spanish public. Members of the Civil Guard and the Assault Guard ended an attempt by anarchist peasants to take over land; they did so with disproportionate force and in a barbaric manner. After bombing and machine-gunning a peasant family, they burned them alive in their own shack. Sixteen other peasants – chosen at random – were executed on the embers of the shack, in order to scare the local population and prevent
further uprisings. Sender first published parts of his chronicle in the newspaper *La Libertad* in 1933; the documentary novel *Viaje a la aldea del crimen* appeared in 1934.

Even though the text adopts the form of a chronicle, it is also a socio-political essay, with poetic overtones, about the semifeudal relationships between landowners and peasants in Andalusia. The narrator is a journalist, like Sender himself, and the novel has him travelling to Casas Viejas four days before the historical events in question take place. He is thus able to describe and comment on the inhuman conditions in which Andalusian peasants lived, as well as to write the chronicle of the massacre, as if he had actually witnessed it. The narrator claims several times to be transcribing testimonies from peasants and from the victims’ families. He also comments ironically on their status as social pariahs. For example, when a Civil Guard officer congratulates his subordinates for their “patriotism” in putting down the uprising, they all cry out “¡Viva España!” “¡Viva la República!” (146) [Long live Spain! Long live the Republic!] Then the narrator points out the condition of the peasants as the Other, as non-representative of Spain, as the “Anti-Spain:”

Los campesinos de la cuerda de presos callaban. No se trataba de ellos. Se trataba de la España y de la República que permite “devengar haberes de campaña,” porque la otra, la que trabaja, y produce, y sufre hambre y miseria para morir al final... ésa no es España. Ni sus sueños de campesinos sin tierra son la República. (146)

[The peasants who had been arrested kept quiet. It was not about them. It was about Spain and the Republic that allows “dues for field work,” because the other Spain, the one that works, produces and suffers from starvation and extreme poverty, only to die in the end… that one is not Spain. The dreams of landless peasants are not the Republic either]

The novel’s paratexts, which play a fundamental role in establishing the mimetic contract between writer and reader, enhance the story’s sense of the real. The first page includes statements from government officials of the time, and the second one calls for the reader to view the events narrated as historical, not fictional: “Estos sucesos ocurrieron en la aldea de Casas
Viejas... siendo jefe del Gobierno Manuel Azaña, ministro de Gobernación Casares Quiroga y director de Orden Público Menéndez.” (31) [These events happened in the village of Casas Viejas... when Manuel Azaña was Prime Minister, Casares Quiroga was the Minister of Interior and Menéndez, Director of Public Order]. Sender also introduced footnotes to authenticate personal testimonies from victims and guards, incorporated in the narrative; such testimonies were given during the hearings conducted by a parliamentary committee, shortly after the massacre. This kind of footnotes appears more frequently in the second part of the novel, when the narrator describes the events in question as if he were witnessing them.

Sender’s Viaje a la aldea del crimen was published after the fact, but it became part of the documentary literature that recorded the increasing socio-political conflicts that would eventually lead to the Spanish Civil War. Thus, during the first decades of the twentieth century, the emergence of documentary literature in Spain is clearly related to the contestation of the status quo and its forms of cultural legitimation, as well as to the changing relations of production. As Foley claims, the meaning and value of a novel is inseparable from the context in which it was written.

Spanish scholar Rafael Bosch has written about the reemergence of the documentary novel in the 1960s in his article “Campos de Níjar. Resurrección de la novela-reportaje.” However, Bosch only addresses one novel, Juan Goytisolo’s Campos de Níjar (1960), rather than a literary movement. Goytisolo’s work is a documentary novel that adopts the form of a travelogue (319). The narrator seems to be merely describing the landscape and peoples of Almería (a province in Andalusia). However, Goytisolo’s novel follows the steps of Viaje a la aldea del crimen, for it is also a criticism of the extreme poverty that still reigned in Almería, twenty years after the Civil
War (323). Above all, *Campos de Nijar* is a documentary novel about those dispossessed and forgotten in Spain’s official history, like the people of Almería.

**From the Background: the Civil War in the Spanish Novel (1975-2000)**

In her article “Narrative in Culture, 1975-1996,” Hispanist Jo Labanyi provides a very useful overview of recent literature produced in Spain. According to Labanyi, since Franco’s death in 1975, market forces have taken the lead on the literary scene, giving rise in Spain to “a massive diversification of literary production” (147). In the new narrative, divisions between elite and mass culture have been blurred, for most novelists turned to write for a wide audience (149). The progressive consolidation of Spain as a postmodern society became the background for literary works that addressed the apocalyptic sense of “the end of history.” For example, Gonzalo Torrente Ballester’s *Fragmentos de apocalipsis* (1977), Camilo José Cela’s *Mazurca para dos muertos* (1983) and Luis Goytisolo’s *Estatua con palomas* (1992) would convert history into “self-reflexive, eternally repeating playfulness” (151). The historical thrillers of Arturo Pérez-Reverte and Manuel Vázquez Montalbán reached a wide readership in the 1990s (152-53), and autobiography became a major genre after the late 1970s, with works by the Goytisolo brothers, Antonio Muñoz Molina and Soledad Puértolas (154). The increase in novels by female authors in the last few decades merits mention: Esther Tusquets, Rosa Montero, Carmen Martín Gaite and Montserrat Roig are some of the names frequently found in bookshop displays (157). These writers tend to depict female protagonists in a more positive way than male authors do with their male protagonists. However, Labanyi criticizes authors like Martín Gaite and Roig, for limiting themselves to “an inner journey, using fairy stories rather than history as a framework” (158), or for using first-person introspective narration, which “dooms them to be history’s victims rather than its agents” (159).
The documentary novel became a popular subgenre during the transición. Alfonso Grosso’s *Los invitados* (1978) and Salvador Maldonado’s *El crimen de Cuenca* (1979) are notable examples. These two novels were written as journalistic chronicles and enjoyed a wide readership (Ferreras 53). They addressed contemporary social and political issues, but not directly, in contrast to the writers of avanzada in the 1930s. *Los invitados* points to the serious problem of drugs in Spain as the motive behind the famous murder of “Los Galindos” in 1975, in which five Andalusian peasants were murdered. Salvador Maldonado’s *El crimen de Cuenca* was actually based on the screenplay—also by Maldonado—for Pilar Miró’s 1979 film about “the crime of Cuenca.” Through the narration of this historical episode, Maldonado denounced the use of torture by law enforcement officials in Spain during the tumultuous period of the transición.3

The pacto del olvido regarding the Civil War slowly took root in Spain after Franco’s death, and the novels that addressed the conflict progressively fell out of favor with the reading public. This fact did not discourage some writers from engaging “with the repressive legacy of the Civil War” (Labanyi “Narrative” 159). To mention just a few examples, Juan Benet wrote *Herrumbrosas lanzas* (1983); Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *El pianista* (1988); Antonio Muñoz Molina, *Beatus Ille* (1986); Juan Eduardo Zúñiga, *La tierra será un paraíso* (1989); and Josefina Aldecoa, *Historia de una maestra* (1990). These novels expose or examine psychological wounds of war through interior monologues, personal memories or autobiographical narratives (159-60).4

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3 “The crime of Cuenca” took place in 1910, in a small village in the province of Cuenca, Spain. It involved two men who were falsely accused and convicted of murdering a missing shepherd. They were tortured by the Civil Guard and spent six years in prison before it was discovered that their alleged victim was living in a neighboring village. See Mabrey.

4 For an insightful analysis of different narrative approaches to the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship in dissident postwar literature, see David Herzberger’s *Narrating the Past. Fiction and Historiography in Postwar Spain* (1995).
In the early 1990s, the narrative of the so-called “Generación X” began to show the symptoms of a society lacking a historic memory. José Ángel Mañas’s Historias del Kronen (1994), Ray Loriga’s Caídos del cielo (1995), Ismael Grasa’s De Madrid al cielo (1994) and Violeta Hernando’s Muertos o algo mejor (1996) depict “an apocalyptic post-industrial world dominated by sex and violence,” where “mass culture is the only thing taken seriously” (Labanyi “Narrative” 154). The main characters are young; all are victims of unemployment, a political establishment that ignores them and the logic of consumer capitalism. They represent a lost and disoriented generation, looking for their own identity. Unlike their parents and grandparents, they have no historic memory to guide them into the future, nor a utopia to fight for (Colmeiro, Memoria 231-32). Their only referent is the present, and their world revolves around sex, violence, drugs and North American pop culture (233).

As some scholars have suggested, the literature of “Generación X” constitutes a space of resistance against the socialist project described in Chapter 2, i.e. the construction of a Spanish nation based on collective amnesia, an appeal to modernity and a strong desire for full integration into the EU. 5 From the mid-1990s on, central and peripheral nationalist movements will try to gain strength by undermining each other, and to resist a process of globalization that erases local and national identities (Colmeiro, Memoria 147). The historic memory of the Civil War becomes a powerful tool in this fight for the redefinition of identities in Spain, as will be shown in Chapters 3 and 4.

On the Front Page: the Memory of the Civil War in Documentary Novels (2000-2002)

As it was mentioned above, the novels Soldados de Salamina and La voz dormida have become a popular object of study in the field of peninsular literature. Most of this recent

5 See Moreiras 189, Colmeiro (Memoria 25), and Núñez (“What is” 736).
scholarly work focuses on the type of memory retrieved in these novels, as well as the narrative styles used by Cercas and Chacón to carry out such task. The studies of José V. Saval, Juan Carlos Martín Galván, and Antonio Gómez López-Quiñones address these two novels’ documentary or nonfictional approach to the memory of the Civil War. To Saval, the most original element in Cercas’s novel—and the reason for its success—is “la vocación documental del texto” (70) [the text’s tendency toward the documentary]. For example, Soldados presents its main topics—the search for the father and the memory of the dead—through “la construcción de un relato real . . . mediante personajes reales salpicados de ficción aunque basándose en la investigación de unos hechos concretos” [the construction of a true tale based on real characters slightly touched by fiction, but also on the research of specific events] (63). Saval considers that a series of leit-motivs play a fundamental role in the construction of the novel’s plot too. Among them are the repeated reference to the book Sánchez Mazas promised to write, but never did - Soldados de Salamina - , and the recurrence of the pasodoble Suspiros de España (68). I share Saval’s assessment of the novel, and especially the importance he attributes to the novel’s musical leit-motiv, which I will address in depth later in this chapter.

In his doctoral dissertation, Martín Galván identifies Soldados and La voz, along with Andrés Trapiello’s La noche de los cuatro caminos: una historia del maquis (2001), and Antonio Muñoz Molina’s Sefarad: una novela de novelas (2001), as the most representative novels of what he calls a “tendencia realista documental” [documentary realist tendency] in the Spanish novel at the beginning of the twenty-first century (3). He considers that Soldados owes much of its narrative style to the mixture of journalism and fiction that was common already in the literature from the transición (10-11). Besides, all the novels he analyzes have at their origin a significant amount of research and documentation, but most importantly, they incorporate
personal testimonies as well. The “espacios subjetivos” [subjective spaces] those testimonies create are what separate these novels from previous ones, and what enable them to carry out “una reconstrucción más comprometida y, quizás más relevante, del pasado histórico” [a more committed, and perhaps more relevant, reconstruction of the past] (20). At the same time, all four authors use a “juego de simulación” [a simulation game] to erase the borders between fiction and non-fiction, and thus be able to represent an unknown or unclear reality (35). According to Martín Galván, such narrative strategy - which is part of these novels’ postmodern aesthetics - exposes the novels’ inherent contradiction between their wish to be historically relevant and their inability to do so (39). As a result, these novels would fail in their effort to “overcome the amnesia of the Spanish imagination and the relativism and indifference of narrative in previous decades” (iii). While I have nothing to object to Martín Galván’s analysis of these novels, I disagree with his assessment of their impact on the Spanish collective imaginary. As I will try to demonstrate below, Cercas and Chacón skillfully erased the border between fiction and non-fiction to enhance their stories’ credibility, and managed to convince many readers in Spain that they were telling the truth about the Civil War.

Antonio Gómez’s literary analysis of Soldados and La voz shares several aspects with Martín Galván’s interpretation, regarding the novels’ aesthetics and their discourse on history. As far as these novels’ tendency toward the documentary is concerned, Gómez speaks of a “retórica de la anti-ficcionalidad” [anti-fictional rhetoric] in Soldados (55) and analyzes the way personal testimonies from war survivors are used in both Soldados and La voz to support a particular representation of the past (215). Gómez’s book, La guerra persistente (2006), is actually a rather comprehensive study that goes beyond the literary analysis and into the field of cultural studies. In his book, Gómez examines a considerable number of recent literary and
cinematic works that deal with the memory of the Civil War. He interprets the recent “boom” of novels and films about the conflict as a reaction from Spanish intellectuals to the lack of political direction in a globalized, postindustrial and postmodern Spain (11). Thus Soldados de Salamina and La voz dormida are two of the novels that make up a larger cultural movement which aims at recovering the legacy of the Second Republic (31). Gómez establishes a connection between this cultural movement and the decentralization of the recuperation process of historic memory in Spain (22). However, he does not seem to attribute this decentralization to the growing influence of nationalist movements in Spain since the mid-1990s. Indeed, he refers to these movements as part of “un extenso pasado de excepcionalidades” [a long past of exceptionalities] that Spain appears to be leaving behind (11).

Gómez also believes that the Spanish culture industry is benefitting from this impulse to recover memory, and that is one of the main reasons why the Civil War has become a popular historical event (14). But he also argues that the Civil War is the new center of attention because certain representations of it, as in Chacón’s La voz dormida, reduce the possibly unsettling effects of the conflict in the present (15). To Gómez, this cultural product, among others, centers its efforts in a “reconstrucción estilizada” [stylized reconstruction] of the past, rather than in the past itself. Thus La voz dormida resurrects a time that never existed in such coherent and harmonious terms (30); it represents a “domesticación” [domestication] of that past’s political potential, which results in a retrospective “utopía sentimental” [sentimental utopia] (31).

As opposed to La voz dormida, Gómez claims that the recovery of the past in Soldados de Salamina is “profundamente política” [profoundly political], as shown by its self-reflexivity

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6 By “decentralization process,” Gómez refers to the actions undertaken by civil institutions (such as the ARMH), regional governments, private initiatives, collectivities and associations, to rearticulate the historical memory of the Civil War (22). The central government no longer exerts absolute control over this historic legacy.
(23). *Soldados de Salamina* is not so much about the Civil War, as about its representation and the need to remember it for the sake of the present (24-25). It might portray a utopian image of the Republic as well, but it is an historicized image that shows internal conflicts and that is situated in relation to the present (281). In spite of his positive assessment of the novel, Gómez criticizes it for offering a more stylized and sentimental image of the Republican side of the war than other novels by male authors, such as Ignacio Martínez de Pisón’s *Enterrar a los muertos* (2005) (282). *Soldados de Salamina* would seem to share these negative characteristics with *La voz dormida*, and yet, only Cercas’s novel qualifies for membership in what Gómez calls a “club de la memoria” [memory club] (94). This “club” is formed by a “select” group of novels that “dignifica el quehacer intelectual y supone, además, un apoyo a una nueva modalidad de *inteligentsia*, comprometida con su tiempo y con las exigencias morales de éste (94)” [dignifies intellectual work and also supports a new kind of *intelligentsia*, committed to its time and its moral demands].

Apart from *Soldados de Salamina*, Gómez refers to Manuel Rivas’s *El lápiz del carpintero* (1999), Manuel de Lope’s *La sangre ajena* (2000) and Ignacio Martínez de Pisón’s *Enterrar a los muertos* (2005), among others. It might just be a coincidence, but all the novels Gómez considers worth entering the “club de la memoria” are written by men and their main characters are also male: university professors, journalists and writers profoundly dissatisfied with their society’s relationship with the past (or lack thereof). Thus these characters set out to recover the memory of the Civil War on their own, without institutional or social support of any kind (93-94). Gómez claims that “recordar, en estas piezas literarias, es un acto valiente y atrevido que singulariza a muchos de sus protagonistas con una cualidad digna de admiración” (93) [in
these literary works, remembering is a bold and courageous act, something that makes their protagonists stand out for such an admirable quality].

I hope to show here that Soldados de Salamina, and especially La voz dormida, while not meeting all the intellectual expectations of many scholars, are as committed as any other novel of their kind to recovering the memory of those who lost the Civil War. As Castiñeira points out, what forms and gives continuity to nations is “the subjective perception of events lived or emotionally transmitted” (66). For that reason, Soldados de Salamina and La voz dormida could, in fact, be considered more effective than other similar novels in the processes of recuperating memory and identity formation, as will be shown in the following pages.

Soldados de Salamina: Re-enfranchising the Assertive Power of Fiction

Javier Cercas’s Soldados de Salamina was published in 2001 and became an immediate success; in 2003, it still ranked number eleven among the most read books in Spain, and number twelve in the list of best sellers (Federación). Unlike other Civil War novels available in 2001, Soldados claimed to tell a famous historic episode of the war; namely, the frustrated execution of Rafael Sánchez Mazas, one of the founders of the Falange (Spain’s Fascist Party). According to the dust cover, Sánchez Mazas survived an execution of Nationalist prisoners in Catalonia, near the French border, toward the end of the war. He managed to run into the forest and hide, only to be found by a Republican soldier who inexplicably spared his life. Sánchez Mazas remained in hiding for the few days until the war was over thanks to the help he received from some Catalan peasants.

However, Soldados is not just about the Civil War itself. As the dust cover further

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7 By 2007, Soldados de Salamina had sold more than a million copies in Spain (Manrique). Also, and according to a 2009 survey made by the organizers of the “premii llibreter” [booksellers’ award] in Catalonia, Cercas’s novel was considered the most valuable book among the winners of this award over the previous ten years. See the Tusquets website for more information.
explains: “El narrador de esta aventura de guerra es un joven periodista que se propone reconstruir el relato real de los hechos y desentrañar el secreto de sus enigmáticos protagonistas” [The narrator of this war adventure is a young journalist that sets out to reconstruct the true tale of these events and to figure out the mystery surrounding their enigmatic protagonists] (original emphasis). Therefore, Soldados is a novel about an episode of the Civil War, as much as it is about the journalist—also called Javier Cercas—who researches and writes it up in the form of a true tale. But what exactly is a “true tale” and why is it written in bold letters on the back cover of the book?

In his previous book Relatos reales [True Tales] (2000), Javier Cercas explains that the true tale, along with the poem and the essay, are what shape journalistic chronicles, which he considers “literatura mestiza” [hybrid literature] (16). Cercas claims that his own chronicles should be read only as “true tales,” which stick to the truth and are to be distinguished from “fictitious tales,” which stick to fiction (17). However, he clarifies that “un relato real es apenas conceivable, porque todo relato . . . comporta un grado variable de invención . . . es imposible transcribir verbalmente la realidad sin traicionarla” (16) [a true tale is almost inconceivable, because every tale . . . implies a certain degree of invention . . . it is impossible to transcribe reality in words without betraying it].

The emphasis on the phrase “true tale,” then, induces readers to associate Soldados with nonfictional forms of discourse. But this ambiguous term is not just part of an advertising strategy by Tusquets, the novel’s publisher. The readers of Soldados find out at the end of the novel that the “true tale” is to be identified with the whole of the text, not just with part of it. In interviews and press conferences, Cercas himself has contributed to the ambiguity surrounding his novel. As he has said about Soldados: “me gustaría que se leyera como una novela de
aventuras . . . porque Soldados de Salamina no tiene nada de ‘relato real,’ como insiste el Cercas narrador” [I would like it to be read as an adventure novel . . . because Soldados is far from being a “true tale,” as Cercas, the narrator, claims] (Méndez). On the other hand, Cercas has also said of his novel and its relation to the pacto del olvido: “este pacto del olvido que ha hecho olvidar todo . . . Éste es el libro que hace rescatar en gran medida muchas de estas cosas” (119, original emphasis) [this pact to forget which made everybody forget everything . . . This is the book that, to a large extent, makes it possible to rescue many of those things].

As I will show in this chapter, Soldados could be considered a pseudofactual novel, for it claims to be a non-fictional text about an episode of the Civil War and the process of its writing. However, Soldados is a tale - no matter how true - and, therefore, fiction. This fact does not prevent Cercas from calling for an end to the pacto del olvido and for recovering the memory of those who lost the Civil War in his novel. Indeed, it is the pseudofactual form of Soldados that enables Javier Cercas to rewrite the failed execution of Sánchez Mazas into a new lieu de mémoire for the historic memory of a plural Spain. Specifically, Soldados makes of Sánchez Mazas’s anonymous savior a Republican hero who rehabilitates the memory of the “anti-Spain,” or those who lost the Civil War, as a group characterized by its social, political and cultural diversity. To authenticate the assertive discourse of the novel that identifies this Republican hero with the savior of Sánchez Mazas, Cercas creates an elaborate documentary apparatus, which includes historical documents and oral testimonies from war survivors, among other items. Ultimately, Soldados may be interpreted as a challenge to nationalist movements in Spain that use the memory of the Civil War, or lack thereof, for the purpose of constructing particularistic histories of their own nations.
A Pseudofactual Novel

Soldados’s pseudofactual apparatus, which is based on the claim to veracity as much as it is on verisimilitude, reinforces the credibility of the true tale that this novel represents. This framework becomes obvious as soon as the reader picks up the book. Under the title Soldados de Salamina, the front cover shows one of Robert Capa’s famous photographs of the Civil War. It shows a volunteer from the International Brigades, with his right fist raised high, during the farewell ceremony held for these soldiers in 1938. As scholar Marianne Hirsch points out, citing Barthes: “photography holds a unique relation to the real, defined not through the discourse of artistic representation, but that of magic, alchemy, indexicality, fetishism” (4). This is especially true in the case of Capa’s war pictures, which have almost become a fetish. For those who are not familiar with the battle of “Salamina” [Salamis] referred to in the title, or are unclear about the relationship between title and photograph, the back cover of the book summarizes the novel’s plot. As we have mentioned before, this paratext emphasizes in bold the words “relato real,” but also the name “Sánchez Mazas,” all of which is combined with Capa’s picture to mobilize responses in the reader associated with nonfictional modes of discourse.

The first chapter of the novel is likewise preceded by a prefatory note from the author that establishes a verifiable link between the historical world and its analogous configuration in

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8 The importance of a reader’s first impression of a book is shown by the results of a survey taken in 2007 by Alfaguara, a major publisher in Spain, accessible on its website (www.alfaguara.santillana.es). The survey’s question was: “¿Qué es lo primero que miras en un libro?” [What is the first thing you look at in a book?], and these were the results: the title (30%); the front cover (27%); the author (25%); the back cover (14%); the publisher (3%).

9 Javier Cercas explained in an interview in ELPAIS.es that there were several reasons for the novel’s title. It obviously refers to the naval battle of Salamis, which took place in 480 b.C. between Greeks and Persians. It was fought off the coast of the island of Salamis, where the population of Athens had been evacuated and had to be protected at all costs. Eventually, the Greek ships, led by Themistocles, prevailed over the Persian fleet (Petit 113).

In addition to this historic reference, Cercas added that “para mucha gente de mi edad la Guerra Civil era algo tan remoto como la batalla de Salamina” [for many people of my age, the Civil War was something as remote as the battle of Salamis] (“Javier Cercas”).

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Soldados. In addition to mentioning the names of intellectuals and scholars interviewed by Cercas as part of his research for the novel, he adds: “Este libro es fruto de numerosas lecturas y de largas conversaciones. Muchas de las personas con las que estoy en deuda aparecen en el texto con sus nombres y apellidos” (13) [This book is the result of numerous readings and long conversations. Many of the people I am indebted to appear in the text under their first and last names].

Writers Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio and Andrés Trapiello, and the Catalan politician and historian Miquel Aguirre are some of the people Cercas refers to in his prefatory note. They figure in this true tale as characters, which increases the verisimilitude of the novel’s assertive discourse. They either confirm the unofficial story about Sánchez Mazas, or provide the main character with more data to pursue his research. María Ferré, Daniel Angelats and Joaquim Figueras—survivors of the Civil War—appear in the novel as characters too, and their testimonies represent a fundamental piece in this true tale. Ferré belonged to the family of peasants who gave food and shelter to Sánchez Mazas; Angelats and Figueras were two of Sánchez Mazas’s “friends from the forest,” the Republican deserters who protected him until the arrival of Franco’s troops. The Figueras family also provides the journalist with Sánchez Mazas’s diary from his days in the forest, and the novel includes the facsimile of a page from the diary, to further corroborate their version of the story (59).

As in previous and later works, Cercas uses autobiographical elements to characterize the narrator/protagonist of Soldados. Both author and narrator work as writers and journalists, and both published their first novel in 1989. Cercas also names his narrator/protagonist after himself, all of which gives the text an effect of direct reference to reality. At the same time, however, the

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10 See El vientre de la ballena (1997) and La velocidad de la luz (2005), for instance.
author distances himself from the narrator and signals his fictional nature through Conchi, a most picturesque fortune-teller who happens to be the protagonist’s girlfriend. In Foley’s words, this constitutes “an ideological stratagem” which will enable Cercas “simultaneously to make an assertion and to deny responsibility for it” (*Telling* 125). Thus, the narrator will become the most important instrument in the authentication of Miralles as Sánchez Mazas’s savior, i.e., he represents Cercas’s main strategy to present the fictional as veracious. To avoid confusion between author and narrator/protagonist in the rest of my analysis, I will use the name “Cercas” only in reference to the author of *Soldados*.

**Spengler’s Soldier Was a Communist**

Chapter Two of the novel tells the true tale of Sánchez Mazas’s “friends from the forest,” and it deconstructs the heroic image of this prominent fascist that had been created by the Franco regime’s propaganda. According to the narrator, Rafael Sánchez Mazas came from a wealthy and aristocratic Basque family, he studied Law, but always considered himself a writer. In the 1920s he lived in Italy, where he absorbed the main ideas of fascism. To him, it was the best ideological instrument to protect “the safe hierarchies of the Ancien Régime” from democracy and rising bolshevism (82). He thus became “the first fascist of Spain” and the main ideologue of the Falange (82). His political and literary activities in Spain during the 1930s had one objective: to make the Falange into the image of the group of soldiers famously described by Oswald Spengler as those who “always save Western civilization in the last minute” (86). However, the narrator views Sánchez Mazas’s activities very differently. To him: “poca gente empeñó tanta inteligencia, tanto esfuerzo y tanto talento como él en conseguir que en España estallara una guerra” (83) [few people invested as much intelligence, as many efforts and as much talent as he to provoke war in Spain].

When the Civil War finally started, however, Sánchez Mazas did not fight. The narrator
claims that his actions during the conflict remain a mystery, but according to testimonies from Sánchez Mazas’s friends and family (89), he tried and failed several times to flee from Spain. Thus he ended up spending the entire war as a refugee in foreign embassies, as a prisoner in Republican jails, or hiding in the forest from the Republican army; not exactly the story of a war hero. From the end of the Civil War until he died, Sánchez Mazas—according to the narrator—spent his time like “un millonario sin muchos millones, lánguido y un poco decadente” (138) [a millionaire without many millions, listless and a little decadent]. Eventually, Sánchez Mazas withdrew from politics and public life, and spent much time away from his family, devoted to literature, astrology and botany, among other things. As the narrator says, maybe his fall into oblivion was a way to pay for his “brutal responsabilidad en una una matanza brutal” (140) [brutal responsibility in a brutal massacre]; a responsibility which, apparently, Sánchez Mazas never acknowledged in public (135).

A realistic narration and a remarkable amount of historical data support the credibility of this unfavorable portrait of Sánchez Mazas. Cercas also uses his narrator to “help” the reader distinguish facts from mere hypotheses. Thus, the latter indicates which parts of the text incorporate the testimonies of war survivors, and therefore, supposedly reliable information: “María Ferré no iba a olvidar nunca…” (105) [María Ferré would never forget…]. At the same time, the narrator introduces Sánchez Mazas’s actions during the Civil War—something which remains unclear—with the following statement: “lo que a continuación consigno no es lo que realmente sucedió, sino lo que parece verosimil que sucediera” (89) [what comes next is not what actually happened, but rather what seems likely to have happened]. This type of narrative raises important epistemological questions about the writing of history and the relationship
between history and memory, as Gómez and other scholars have pointed out. In a pseudofactual novel like *Soldados*, this action of telling the reader what is true and what is not, can also become a narrative strategy to disguise the fictional as veracious. In fact, Cercas uses Daniel Angelats’s testimony to authenticate his creation of the Republican hero from the start.

According to the narrator, Daniel Angelats overheard a conversation between Sánchez Mazas and Pere Figueras, one of his “friends from the forest,” about the anonymous militiaman (119). Sánchez Mazas claimed to have recognized him as one of the soldiers who guarded the prisoners at El Collell. The soldier’s name escaped him, but Sánchez Mazas did remember him singing and dancing “Suspiros de España” [Sighing for Spain], a famous *pasodoble* he had danced himself many times and thought to be “very sad” (120-22). Cercas reassures the reader of the veracity of Angelats’s account through his narrator, who claims this: “Ignoro si el tiempo ha puesto en la escena un barniz novelesco; aunque no puedo estar seguro de ello, tiendo a creer que no, porque sé que Angelats es un hombre sin imaginación” (119) [I do not know if time has given the scene a novelistic varnish; even though I can’t be sure, I tend to believe it did not, because I know that Angelats is a man without imagination]. However, this episode is fictional. The journalist had heard this *pasodoble* in the first chapter, before meeting Angelats, and he too thought that it was “the saddest song in the world” (49). The narrator even admitted that “the very sad melody” of “Suspiros de España” was still in his mind while examining Sánchez Mazas’s diary (57). Obviously, there is a reason for the recurrence of this *pasodoble* in the novel, which I will address later. For now, the narrator “tells” the reader to believe Angelats’s testimony, and therefore, that Sánchez Mazas remembered his savior dancing a *pasodoble*.

Chapter Three elaborates on the characterization of the novel’s Republican hero through

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the story of Miralles. The narrator of this story is Chilean writer Roberto Bolaño, another figure from the real world who, apparently, became friends with Miralles. Bolaño’s role is to confer credibility to the central character of Soldados as a lieu de mémoire that repairs the memory of those who lost the Civil War. The journalist cannot explain why or how Bolaño told him about Miralles, so he reassures readers that the story “no sólo era verosímil, sino también, en la mayoría de sus pormenores, fiel a los hechos” [was not only credible, but also, in most of its details, true to the facts] (153). Just like other narrators in previous pseudofactual novels, this one claims that he has only corrected a few erroneous dates and other small pieces of information; the rest is supposed to be a transcription of Bolaño’s own narration. But this is false, as will be soon perceived.

According to the Chilean writer, Miralles came from a working class family in Catalonia. He was drafted to fight in the Civil War at the age of 18 and became a communist at the front, influenced by the fact that his fellow soldiers and General Líster were also communists. In Miralles’s view, they seemed to be the only ones ready to fight and win the war (155). Thus Miralles fought in the long and difficult battles of Teruel and the Ebro, which were decisive for the victory of Franco’s Nationalists in 1939. That same year, Miralles retreated with his troops through Catalonia and into France, only to be put in the concentration camp of Argelès, along with thousands of exiles (156). To escape certain death there, Miralles enlisted in the French Foreign Legion with other Republican soldiers. World War II broke out and he participated in the first military campaigns of the allies in Africa, under the command of general Leclerc. Miralles walked thousands of kilometers in the desert, fought the Nazis and Mussolini’s fascists,

12 By joining the communists, Miralles had become a symbol of the “anti-Spain.” As writer Vázquez Montalbán put it, the PCE (Spanish Communist Party) was “el gran enemigo construido por el franquismo, nada más y nada menos que el objetivo final de una Cruzada que sobre todo trató de ajustar las cuentas al comunismo ateo y apátrida.” (Crónica 107) [the great enemy created by the Franco regime, nothing more and nothing less than the ultimate objective of a Crusade that tried, above all, to settle accounts with an aetheist and stateless communism].
and entered Paris with the first allied contingents in 1944 (157-60). When the war was almost over, he stepped on a mine that torn him to pieces, but miraculously, he survived (161). The Chilean writer met Miralles many years later, at a camping ground in Catalonia where the old veteran spent his summers. Bolaño worked there and they became good friends.

Almost at the end of his narration, Bolaño claims to remember that one night he saw Miralles dancing with a prostitute named Luz. The music was “un pasodoble muy triste y muy antiguo . . . que muchas veces le había oído tararear entre dientes a Miralles” [a very sad and very old pasodoble . . . he had heard Miralles humming many times] (162-3). According to Bolaño, the old war veteran looked deeply moved by the music, almost in tears (163).

In another clever move, Cercas anticipates the reader’s assessment of this tale by having the journalist call it “an exaggerated story” (164). Indeed, Bolaño’s narration almost acquires mythical overtones in its depiction of Miralles as one of the soldiers described by Spengler, and thus, a savior of Western civilization. Moreover, the last scene of this story reproduces an image already described in Angelats’s testimony: a Republican soldier singing and dancing a very sad pasodoble. The reader is thus lead to identify the old war veteran with the savior of Sánchez Mazas.

The journalist, after a long and frustrating search, finds Miralles and is able to meet with him and to verify Bolaño’s story. The old war veteran confirms that he was in El Collell, with Sánchez Mazas and the other Nationalist prisoners. The journalist feels confident enough to ask him the decisive question: “Sánchez Mazas conocía al soldado que le salvó. Una vez le vio bailando un pasodoble en el jardín del Collell. Solo. El pasodoble era ‘Suspiros de España’ . . . Era usted, ¿no?” (204) [Sánchez Mazas knew the soldier who saved him. Once he saw the soldier dancing a pasodoble in the backyard of El Collell. Alone. The pasodoble was ‘Suspiros de
España’ . . . That soldier was you, wasn’t it?]. Miralles had previously admitted to liking pasodobles, especially “Suspiros de España,” but his answer is “no.”

Miralles believes that the journalist is hoping to find his true tale’s hero, so the war veteran tells him about his fellow Republican soldiers from both wars, who died so young. Miralles complains, with a mixture of anger and pain, that nobody remembers them now, “y menos que nadie, la gente por la que pelearon” (201) [and, least of all, the people they fought for]. The journalist realizes that the old soldier’s negative answer is consistent with his self-effacing character. Miralles does not want to gain protagonism at the cost of his comrades-in-arms and be the only one remembered. However, the journalist still believes that Miralles is the man who spared the life of Sánchez Mazas. The question that remains unanswered is “why,” and Miralles suggests, talking about himself in the third person, that the militiaman “just followed his instincts” (203). The journalist ends his narration celebrating Miralles as a hero because “tuvo el coraje y el instinto de la virtud y por eso no se equivocó nunca o no se equivocó en el único momento en que de veras importaba no equivocarse” (209) [he had the courage and the instinct born of virtue and that is why he was never wrong or was not wrong at the precise moment when it was most important not to be]. Nevertheless, the closing image of the novel is not exactly that of Miralles, but of a soldier who holds “la bandera de un país que no es su país, de un país que es todos los países . . . en aquel mar llameante de arena infinita” (209) [the flag of a country that is not his, a country that is all countries . . . in that blazing sea of endless sand]. Thus the journalist wraps up the story of a character larger than life, one that seems to dissolve into the atemporal and the ahistorical. But the character of Miralles is highly influenced by the present of the novel, as I will show next.
A Catalan Republican Hero Sighs for Spain

Soldados was published in 2001, right after two symbolic years for Spanish history: 1999, the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Civil War, and 2000, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the transición to democracy in Spain. While the central government of José María Aznar celebrated these lieux de mémoire as constitutive of the Spanish national identity, intellectuals, artists and politicians questioned the validity of the pacto del silencio for a plural and democratic Spain, and called for a recuperation of memory related to the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. These events must also be framed within the 1999-2000 period, during which the politics of memory became important and there were sharp confrontations between central and peripheral nationalist movements, as it was explained in Chapter 2.13

In Catalonia, which is the specific context of Soldados, the main political debates since the mid-1990s revolved around the place of this autonomous community within Spain (Tusell 140). Intellectuals and politicians, such as Joan-Lluís Marfany, Ernest Lluch and the “Foro Babel” supported the concept of a multicultural and multilingual Catalonia, while politicians Xavier Rubert de Ventós and Josep Miró Ardèvol, were calling for the independence of Catalonia (140-1).14 Soldados refers to these debates in a conversation between Miquel Aguirre and the journalist about the Civil War in Catalonia. According to Aguirre, some Catalan nationalist historians suggest that “los que quemaban iglesias y mataban curas eran gente de fuera,

13 See pages 20-22 of chapter two.
14 “Foro Babel” is “un ámbito de reflexión y debate” [a place for reflection and debate] created in Barcelona in 1996. The objective of its members is to discuss aspects of Catalan life, related to language and culture, and by extension, to democracy and people’s rights (Foro 281). Foro Babel wrote two manifestos in 1997 and 1998 expressing their position on these matters. Among them are “el respeto al pluralismo cultural. . . . el bilingüismo como valor positivo. . . . y el federalismo como forma de organizar territorialmente el poder político. . . .” (7) [respect for cultural pluralism. . . . bilingualism as a positive value. . . . and federalism as a way to organize political power along territorial lines]. The members of “Foro Babel” represent different ideologies, professions and social strata in Catalonia, from receptionists and students, to designers, politicians and artists. Among them are renowned figures, like writers Juan Marsè, Ana María Moix and Esther Tusquets, playwright Albert Boadella, filmmakers Jaime Camino and Isabel Coixet, linguist Carlos Subirats, El País journalist Maruja Torres, hispanist Iris M. Zavala, etc. Some Catalan nationalists have criticized “Foro Babel” for their supposed “españolismo” (283).
inmigrantes . . . que esto fue una guerra entre castellanos y catalanes, una película de buenos y malos” (Soldados 30) [those who burned down churches and killed priests were not from here, but immigrants . . . that this was a war between Castilians and Catalans, like a movie with good and bad guys].  

It is my contention that the character of Miralles, the novel’s Republican hero, represents a challenge to these debates in Spain and Catalonia. Specifically, the image of Miralles singing and dancing the *pasodoble* “Suspiros de España” constitutes an audiovisual unit which emphasizes his Spanish identity. This unit, reinforced through repetition, obviates the interpretation of Sánchez Mazas’s adventure in terms of Castilians (the bad guys) and Catalans (the good guys). The association of Miralles with this *pasodoble* throughout the novel effectively reappropriates the *canción española* as part of historic memory and an important component of the identity of those who lost the war. A short review of the history of the *pasodoble* will support my hypothesis regarding the role of this musical style in *Soldados*.

**Pasodobles, Folklóricas and Españoladas**

The music of *pasodoble* is originally from XVIII century France, where it was used in military marches (Castelló 75). It was introduced in Spain at the beginning of the XX century for that same military purpose (Vázquez de las Heras 20), but by the mid-1920s, it also became very popular as a dance, and it was usually heard at fairs or parties, as well as bullfights (Castelló 75). Today, the *pasodoble* is considered one of the most representative elements of the so-called *canción española* (Spanish popular music); it is also the ballroom dance that foreigners consider most characteristic of the Spanish people (Vázquez de las Heras 6).

15 In his work *L’intent franquista de genocidi cultural de Catalunya* (1995), historian Josep Benet considers the Civil War and the postwar period as an attempted genocide of the Catalan people (Risques 281).
As part of the canción española, the pasodoble shares traits of other Spanish popular songs, such as coplas, bulerías, sevillanas, etc. It incorporates many tunes and verses from the traditional Spanish lyric, and its form is determined in many cases by the andalucismo of renowned Andalusian poets, like Federico García Lorca and Rafael Alberti. Other contemporary poets, like Antonio Quintero, Valerio and Rafael de León, who were especially influenced by Lorca, made possible the full development of the canción española in the late 1920s, 1930s and most of the Franco dictatorship (Vázquez Montalbán, Cancionero xvi). For example, Rafael de León wrote many famous pasodobles with Antonio Quintero, like “La Lirio” (1944) and “Francisco Alegre” (1948), which became the highest grossing songs of those years (xxiii).

Antonio Quintero also wrote the lyrics of “Suspiros de España,” the music of which was composed by Antonio Álvarez Alonso in 1902 (Murcianos). It is still considered one of the most famous pasodobles, and like all the others, it exalts the official image of Spain, while hiding the country’s anachronism and isolation from the rest of the world (Vázquez de las Heras 21). These characteristics of the pasodoble became especially obvious during the autarkic period of the Franco regime (1939-1954), when the canción española was turned into what writer Manuel Vázquez Montalbán calls canción nacional, i.e., popular songs that were to be consumed by the masses and expressed the Franco regime’s idea of “the Spanish particularity,” i.e., that which kept Spain from being like other democratic nations, or like Marxist-totalitarian ones (Cancionero xix). The canción nacional is thus “una canción andalucista en imaginería, la melodía y la pronunciación, vinculada a una España agrícola y provinciana” (xv) [a typically

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16 Andalucismo means love or affection for all things typical of Andalusia. In the particular case of these poets, their work was highly influenced by their study of Andalusian popular culture. They were members of the aforementioned “Generation of 27.” See page 8 for more information on this group of writers and intellectuals.
Andalusian song in its imagery, music and pronunciation, bound to an agricultural and backward Spain). Vázquez Montalbán points out another important aspect of a song as an audiovisual medium. A song is rarely separated from its singer, who in turn may become an image-symbol (Cancionero xii), and this is also true in the case of the canción española or canción nacional.

As scholar José Colmeiro has indicated, this musical subgenre has always been associated with its performers as in “a musical-textual-visual unity,” both on the stage and on the big screen (59). Thus the pasodoble became part of the musical repertoire of famous folklóricas, such as Concha Piquer, Estrellita Castro, and Imperio Argentina, among others. These singers were associated with the canción española, and they would figure prominently in films known as españoladas, a hybrid genre of romantic comedy and/or melodrama which incorporated primarily Andalusian song and dance (Vernon 249).

The españoladas were extremely popular in Spain during the Republican period, to the point of being considered a major “national genre” (Triana-Toribio 62). Contrary to common wisdom, the españolada was not the genre favored by film critics of the early Franco regime, because they perceived it as “an element of cultural continuity between the Republic and the Francoist period” (Vernon 251); it did not “celebrate the right masses” (Triana-Toribio 40, original emphasis). If these films continued to be made during and after the war, it was because they were profitable (62), and eventually they “became part of the commercial popular culture that the regime deemed pacificatory” (36, original emphasis). One of the españoladas produced

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17 Thanks to the economic plan de estabilización, the autarkic period of the Franco regime came to an end in the mid-1950s, and with it, the high popularity of the canción nacional. The younger generations were more interested in Anglo-Saxon music, and the new educated bourgeoisie was growing increasingly tired of the form and content of the canción nacional (Vázquez Montalbán, Cancionero xx-xxi). In spite of everything, the canción española continued to enjoy a significant amount of success, thanks to famous singers of this subgenre, such as Carmen Sevilla, Manolo Escobar, Lola Flores, Rocío Jurado, Isabel Pantoja, etc.

18 The protagonists of the españoladas were usually comic characters from the popular classes. Hence, the film critics of Falange considered that their representation of poverty “could be construed as a threat to national unity in the shape of class awareness” (Triana-Toribio 40).
by the Franco regime was precisely *Suspiros de España* (1938), which featured Estrellita Castro singing the famous *pasodoble*. The song may have inspired feelings of pride about “all things Spanish” among Nationalist audiences (Triana-Toribio 36). Nonetheless, its lyrics were also subject to be read as an “evocation of the motherland from the distance” by the Republicans who were forced into exile in 1939 (37). This double interpretation of “Suspiros de España” confirms Vázquez Montalbán’s evaluation of a song as testimony of its time and its culture. The final value of a song rests in the audience, independently of the song’s manipulation by power structures and the media (*Cancionero* xx). To Vázquez Montalbán, the audience expresses his/her own feelings, moral values and conventional wisdom every time they sing or use a song (x). This may be perceived in *Soldados*, where the meaning and value of “Suspiros de España” changes throughout the novel.

**Redefining the Meaning of “Suspiros de España”**

The famous *pasodoble* appears for the first time in an illustrative scene in Chapter 1 of *Soldados*. The journalist is waiting for Jaume Figueras - nephew of Joaquim Figueras - at a bar terrace, when he notices that a gypsy couple is singing *pasodobles* on the street. The narrator claims to remember this scene vividly because his girlfriend had unsuccessfully tried to get him to learn how to dance *pasodobles*. Also, that was the first time he heard the lyrics of “Suspiros de España,” a “very famous *pasodoble*” which struck him as “the saddest song in the world” (49). While listening to it, the journalist admitted to himself, “almost secretly,” that he would not mind dancing “Suspiros de España” some day (49).

The image of gypsies singing “Suspiros de España” is a loaded one for many nationalists of the Spanish periphery and the left wing in Spain nowadays. To them, it recalls the *canción nacional* of Franco’s regime, and the related concept of “Spanishness” based on Andalusian
imagery, flamenco dance and bullfighting, among other elements. One may speculate that this was the journalist’s perception of the gypsy couple, and the reason why he had refused to learn how to dance *pasodobles* with his girlfriend. However, the lyrics of “Suspiros” evoke a profound feeling of sadness in him. He seems to read them as an evocation of Spain from the distance, as if Spain were some entity removed from Catalonia and forever lost to him. This feeling of loss in the journalist points to a society cut off from its immediate past, and therefore, confused and divided about its collective identity. The narrator’s wish to dance this *pasodoble* reveals “almost secretly,” a wish to express a Spanish identity that had been forgotten or repressed until then.

As the journalist learns more about Sánchez Mazas and his frustrated execution, “Suspiros de España” acquires an additional meaning. In Chapter Two of the novel, “Suspiros de España” appears in Sánchez Mazas’s description of the Republican soldier who spared his life: “él siempre estaba . . . tarareando algo, canciones de moda y cosas así, . . . y una tarde se puso a cantar *Suspiros de España*” [he was always humming something, popular songs and things like that, . . . and one afternoon he started singing *Suspiros de España*” (121). Sánchez Mazas confirms thus the popularity of “Suspiros de España” at the time, and adds that the soldier was also dancing to the music with a smile on his face, his eyes closed and “holding his rifle as if it were a woman” (122).

The image of a contemporaneous gypsy couple singing an old song that the journalist may have associated with Franco’s Spain, is thus replaced with that of a young Republican soldier who likes “Suspiros de España” because this *pasodoble* was part of the popular culture of his time. This audiovisual unit, formed by the Republican militiaman and “Suspiros de España,”

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19 The long association by the leftist intelligentsia of “Suspiros de España” with the Franco regime’s concept of “Spanishness” may be observed in the documentary film *Caudillo* (1974), directed by Basilio Martín Patino. The sequence that shows Franco’s troops entering Andalusia is accompanied by the music of the famous *pasodoble*. 
becomes the symbol of Soldados de Salamina as a lieu de mémoire for those who lost the war. However, the meaning of this symbol is still incomplete at this point, for the identity of the anonymous soldier is still unknown.

Chapter 3 provides the reader with the missing piece of this puzzle. Thanks to Bolaño’s story, the reader is now able to identify the anonymous militiaman with Miralles, the old war veteran. Nevertheless, the image of a young Republican soldier has now become one of an old exile who is dancing “Suspiros de España” in a very different way: with a real woman, “very straight, very serious,” and without singing along. Miralles has been weeping or is holding back his tears (162-63) because the meaning of the pasodoble has changed for him. “Suspiros de España” now evokes for Miralles the Spain he, along with thousands of Republicans, had to leave in 1939.

In other words, at the beginning of Soldados, “Suspiros de España” was for the journalist an old song from a forgotten and forgettable time. By the end of the novel, this song turns out to be an integral part of the identity of Miralles, a Republican war hero and a savior of Western civilization. But this pasodoble also gives testimony of a people whose Spanish identity was taken from them by the Franco regime, which labelled them the “anti-Spain,” and in 1939 forced them into exile. Those who remained in Spain after the war and were not executed, suffered “inner exile,” for they were systematically marginalized by the Franco regime.

What makes Miralles an effective symbol for the historic memory of a plural and inclusive Spain are the heroic stories and emotional images that shape his character, especially the

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20 This image of the Republican militiaman singing and dancing “Suspiros de España” in the rain appears also on the poster of David Trueba’s film adaptation of the novel, released in 2003. Trueba’s Soldados de Salamina has contributed to consolidate the documentary nature of Cercas’s novel too and thus authenticate it as a “true tale.” Daniel Angelats, Joaquim Figueras and Jaume Figueras made a short appearance in the film as themselves. Also, some scenes were filmed at the sanctuary of El Collell and its surroundings, where the frustrated execution of Sánchez Mazas took place. Trueba’s film ranked number ten among the most popular Spanish films of 2003 (These figures are provided yearly by the Spanish Ministry of Culture at www.mcu.es).
audiovisual unit he forms with “Suspiros de España.” Miralles thus restores the dignity stolen from the defeated in the war, and reappropriates their identity in its diversity. Moreover, he becomes a moral reference for the journalist, who has come to realize that the pacto del olvido from the transición must be ended. As Soldados shows, recovering the memory of the Civil War is a moral obligation for the defeated, but it may also serve to end monolithic and exclusionary nationalist discourses in Spain. Only a memory that acknowledges both sides of the Civil War in its cultural diversity can provide the necessary foundation for a plurinational Spain.

*La voz dormida: Affect and Memory as a Response to Trauma*

Dulce Chacón’s *La voz dormida* was published in 2002, a year after *Soldados de Salamina*. Unlike Cercas, Chacón declared her novel’s commitment to the memory of those who lost the Civil War from the start. She believed that the “conflict” over this historic event was not yet over, and giving a voice to the Republican side was the only way to achieve a genuine national reconciliation in Spain (Velázquez). Specifically, Chacón wanted to write about Republican women, their important contribution to the antifascist resistance in postwar Spain and the brutal repression many of them suffered in the Franco regime’s jails (“Tertulias”).

*La voz’s* protagonists come from all over the country and five of them are at the Ventas women’s prison, in Madrid: Hortensia, Reme, Tomasa, Sole and Elvira. Hortensia, or Tensi, is from Córdoba (Andalusia) and one of the novel’s leading figures. She is eight months pregnant and will be executed as soon as the baby is born. Tensi participated in the war as a miliciana and then became part of her husband’s guerrilla group. She had joined Felipe in the mountains to protect their baby, but was caught by civil guards when she was trying to get supplies at a nearby village. She was tortured and imprisoned, but would not reveal Felipe’s hiding place to the Franco authorities. Reme is from Murcia and has three children. She was sentenced to twelve years in prison for sewing a Republican flag and providing support to Republican soldiers as a
war godmother. Tomasa is from Extremadura and lost her four children and husband during the war. They were a family of poor peasants who seized land and were later thrown into the river and shot in retribution; only Tomasa survived. Elvira is an orphan from Valencia. She is still an adolescent and her only crime was to come from a Republican family, but she is treated in Ventas like any other prisoner. She will eventually flee from jail and join the guerrilla. Sole is one of the leaders of the communist party in Salamanca, but she is in jail under the accusation of aiding “bandits” (126).

*La voz* also recovers stories of Republican women outside the regime’s prisons, like Pepita and Doña Celia, “street prisoners.” Pepita is Hortensia’s sister; she becomes engaged to a prominent guerrilla leader, who turns out to be Elvira’s brother. Pepita works as a maid, but these are the “years of hunger,” and she also has to gather for resale bread crumbs and bits of coal to raise a little money to help Hortensia. She lives with Doña Celia, a political activist who owns a boardinghouse and becomes her surrogate mother. They are just two of the many women who provided Republican prisoners and the anti-Franco resistance with invaluable material and moral support.

It is important to note that most of these characters come from Spain’s “poor” and/or “forgotten” southern periphery: Andalusia, Murcia and Extremadura. These regions have historically remained in the shadow of political fights between Madrid and the wealthy peripheral regions of Catalonia and the Basque Country. In fact, few people remember that some of the most violent episodes of the Spanish Civil War took place in Extremadura and Andalusia, where Nationalist troops massacred thousands during the first weeks of the conflict (Mangini 86). Thus the origin of the novel’s characters puts *La voz* in line with Sender’s *Viaje a la aldea*.

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21 In her book, *Réquiem por la libertad* [A Requiem For Freedom] (2003), ex-prisoner Ángeles García Madrid uses the term *prisioneras de la calle* [street prisoners] to refer to those women who were not in jail, but had a loved one in prison (Mangini 136).
del crimen and Goytisolo’s *Campos de Nijar*. It also reaffirms the commitment of Chacón, herself an Extremaduran, to the memory of those excluded from the official discourse of History.

Sales of *La voz* have been remarkably steady since it was first published. However, Chacón’s novel did not enjoy the immediate success of *Soldados*. Unlike Cercas’s work, *La voz* received a significant number of negative reviews from both national and regional newspapers in Spain. Most critics agreed with Antonio Gómez in pointing out *La voz*’s “sentimentality” as its major flaw (31), a common complaint when a novel’s author is a woman. For instance, Nora Catelli, who writes for “Babelia,” the culture section of *El País*, stated that “esta novela deja que los lectores sean únicamente espejos conmovidos, porque no se obliga a sí misma a ser otra cosa que el eco de su propia emoción” (“La triste,” my emphasis) [This novel only allows the reader to be a deeply touched mirror, because it does not force itself to be anything else but the echo of its own emotion]. In a similar way, Pablo Martínez Zarracina, from the Bilbao newspaper *El Correo*, pointed out in his review that “la combinación de este firme compromiso con la realidad con un estilo lírico y cierta propensión al sentimentalismo hace que el libro no termine de funcionar” (“Contra,” my emphasis) [the book does not really work, given its combination of a gritty realism and lyricism and a certain tendency towards sentimentalism].

Indeed, *La voz* is a *lieu de mémoire* impregnated with emotion, but its aim is more than that of moving the reader. Chacón believed that “los sentimientos constituyen . . . un documento fidedigno” [affect is . . . a reliable document] of historical events as well (*Madrina* 19). She further argued that personal testimonies about historical events are

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22 Alfaguara released the novel’s seventeenth edition only a year and a half after its first publication. Also, Punto de lectura, a pocket edition by Alfaguara-Santillana, has placed *La voz* among its best-selling novels in 2010.

23 See Laura Freixas’s *Literatura y mujeres* (2000).
historias . . . que forman parte de la microhistoria, de la intrahistoria, necesaria para entender que detrás de los hechos laten las emociones, que detrás de la Historia, con mayúscula, vibran los sentimientos de los protagonistas de la historia con minúscula, aquella que nos muestra el lado más humano del horror. (18)

[stories . . . that constitute a part of microhistory, of intrahistory, which, in turn, is necessary to understand that behind events there are emotions, that behind History (with a capital ‘h’) vibrate the feelings of little-h history’s (with small letters) protagonists, the one that shows us the human side of horror]

Chacón seems to share Dominick LaCapra’s view that truth claims are “necessary but not sufficient conditions” in texts that attempt to come to terms with trauma (xii). As LaCapra argues, “opening oneself to empathic unsettlement is . . . a desirable affective dimension of inquiry which complements and supplements empirical research and analysis” (78). I thus interpret Chacón’s work as an “affective response” to the defeated of the Civil War (xi), who became victims of both the Franco regime’s repression and democratic Spain’s “pact of forgetting.” Specifically, La voz could be considered a “hyperbolic” historical novel which “enacts . . . the fact that one is affected by excess and trauma” (LaCapra 35).

This novel’s discourse fluctuates between fact and fiction, prose and poetry, but always emphasizing the emotions that lie behind its protagonists’ actions. Thus La voz acts out Republican women’s experiences in an attempt to work through a trauma silenced for over sixty years. In the process, Chacón’s novel exposes the Franco regime’s propaganda, which labelled these women as the “anti-Spain,” due to their supposed demand for political rights and their rejection of “motherhood as a woman’s natural biological mission” (Nash, Rojas 256). Much to the contrary, La voz shows that most Republican women did not participate in the war to demand political rights for themselves. They mainly got involved in the conflict to support “their men” (husbands, brothers or sons), and they defined their collective identity as Republican women still
in a very traditional way, i.e., through biological and/or social motherhood. Ultimately, Chacón’s novel calls for the remembrance of Republican women and Republicans from Spain’s poorest regions; they too deserve to be acknowledged in the ongoing process of reconstructing Spain’s collective memory, and by extension, its multicultural identity.

To adequately assess the effectiveness of Chacón’s *La voz* in the process of recovering memory and working through trauma in Spain, I will begin my study with a brief summary of the actual role Republican women played during the Civil War; since, as historian Nash and literary critic Mangini have shown, the propaganda images about Republican women created during and after the conflict were quite removed from reality. Then, I will provide a more specific definition of the documentary subgenre that Chacón adopts in her work. The ensuing analysis of the novel will take all this information as a point of departure and will focus on the two main female characters in the novel: Tensi and Pepita.

**Traditional Fighting Mothers, Rather Than Feminist Women Soldiers**

At first sight, the photograph on the cover of *La voz* seems illustrative of the iconography of women in Republican war propaganda. However, it is not. This picture shows a miliciana [Republican militia woman] holding a baby in her arms; they are both smiling at the camera. This photograph merges what could be considered the two most prominent female models among Republican women during the Civil War: the miliciana and the “fighting mother.” According to Mary Nash, the miliciana was the most visible image of Republican women at the beginning of the conflict, and it immediately became a symbol of the Spanish people’s

24 Chacón cited Mary Nash’s *Rojas* (1999) as one of her main sources for the writing of *La voz* (“Tertulias”). Literary critic Shirley Mangini has gathered valuable information about Republican women prisoners in *Recuerdos de la resistencia* (1997).
movilization against fascism (Rojas 93).\textsuperscript{25} However, there were few milicianas (96), and their role was hardly revolutionary. Few milicianas actually held a rifle during the war. Both at the front and in the rearguard, Republican women - including milicianas - carried out the same tasks they did at home: washing clothes, cooking or taking care of the sick and injured (164). Still, Republican war propaganda presented a “belligerent image” of milicianas, dressed in blue overalls, with an “aggressive, revolutionary and militarist look” (94) because it effectively promoted men’s identification with the antifascist movement. These subversive images of women adopting a masculine, even “virile” role, represented a break with tradition and thus “seduced, attracted or shook men to encourage them to do their duty as soldiers” (98).

Nevertheless, most Republican women activists preferred a more “traditional, feminine and respectable” way of dressing, and the majority of female organizations rejected the milicana’s new revolutionary attire (96).

In truth, the figure of the milicana was quickly discredited as a symbol of heroism and courage. As soon as October of 1936, Republican newspapers, such as the anarchist Solidaridad Obrera [Worker Solidarity], began to criticize women in overalls, for they were perceived as frivolous and not seriously committed to the antifascist and revolutionary movement (Nash, Rojas 96). By December of 1936, Republican war propaganda showing images of milicianas was rare (97). In 1937, the spread of venereal diseases at the front served as a pretext to further

\textsuperscript{25} Rosario Sánchez, known as “the dynamiter,” and Lina Odena were some of the milicianas who became popular legends for their courage and sacrifice in the war. Rosario the dynamiter lost a hand while manipulating a bomb. She was immortalized by poet Miguel Hernández in his poem “Rosario, dinamitera,” from his poetry collection Viento del pueblo (1936-37). Lina Odena, a leader of the communist youth organization, JSU (Unified Socialist Youth), fought and died in Granada in 1936, and was constantly evoked as an archetype of “female heroism” (Nash, Rojas 93).
diminish the figure of the *miliciana*, reduced to the level of a prostitute (170). 26 In sum, the number of voices raised against women’s presence in the trenches kept growing (171). Military and governmental officials, with the tacit complicity of women’s organizations, argued that armed combat was not appropriate for a woman, that was a man’s job (167). Testimonies from *milicianas* who were at the front also show that the majority of men still perceived women as sexual objects, not as equals (173); even female leaders continued to believe in a traditional division of gender roles (167). Dolores Ibárruri, the famous communist leader popularly known as “Pasionaria,” ordered the return of all women to the rearguard at the end of 1936 (Mangini, *Recuerdos* 92). Finally, the disappearance of anarchist militias in 1937 made the withdrawal of women from the armed resistance inevitable (Nash, *Rojas* 174); there was no room for *milicianas* in the new Republican army, which followed a traditional military model based on rigorous discipline and hierarchy (173).

The prevailing female model for most Republican women activists during the war was that of the *madre combativa* [fighting mother], a rearguard heroine who looked after the well-being of her family and community (Nash, *Rojas* 99). Motherhood was a powerful image with which Spanish women identified; political organizations, such as AMA (Anti-fascist Women’s Association), were well aware of this fact. 27 Thus their war propaganda addressed women as mothers and urged them to contribute as such to the war effort. In contrast to the untraditional images of *milicianas* shown at the beginning of the war, later Republican posters would

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26 According to journalist Manuel De Ramón and historian Carmen Ortiz, some prostitutes actually joined antifascist militias at the beginning of the war, especially at the fronts of Somosierra and Guadarrama, in Madrid (59). Vicente Aranda’s film *Libertarias* (1996) depicts this reality.

27 The AMA was the largest and most influential female organization on the Republican side, with around 60,000 to 65,000 members during the war (Nash, *Rojas* 115). In theory, it was a transpolitical association, integrated by communist, socialist, Republican and even Basque Catholic women. However, Mary Nash describes it as a “Frente Popular femenino bajo control comunista” (112) [a female Popular Front controlled by the Communist Party].
represent “a more traditional feminine iconography”: mature mothers and wives working in the rearguard in support of the war effort, or grieving for their children’s death or brutal injuries (99). According to this propaganda, Republican women were to encourage their sons to fight fascism, and should even be willing to sacrifice them for the sake of a universal cause (100-1). Defending the Republic would not only ensure the safety of their descendants, but also that of all the world’s mothers and their descendants (101).

The social projection of motherhood included women who were not biological mothers, but had maternal feelings; any woman could potentially become a mother (Nash, Rojas 102). In many respects, the figure of the madre combativa represented a renewal of the ángel del hogar [the angel of the hearth], the conventional feminine archetype. However, women’s traditional tasks as mothers and housewives gained political meaning—antifascist resistance—when projected onto the collective well-being of the rearguard (104). Women’s skills and knowledge acquired thus higher prestige. This is the female model that symbolized Republican women’s new social value and the image that prevailed in cultural representations until the end of the conflict, not that of fighting milicianas (104).

After the war, the Franco regime denigrated or eliminated the memory of Republican women activists. The state’s propaganda was especially eager to destroy the image of milicianas, due to their visibility during the conflict (Mangini, Recuerdos 84), but all Republican women’s political activities were compared to “frivolous or lascivious sexual promiscuity” (118). To Franco and his supporters, Republican women represented the “anti-Spain,” for they had played a significant role in the public arena, and Spanish women were to define their gender and identity in the private sphere. Nothing was done after the dictator’s death to restore Republican women’s
dignity and actual collective identity (Mangini 144), a task undertaken in Chacón’s work, a novel with elements of the documentary subgenre.

A Testimonial Novel

*La voz*’s narrative resembles that of realistic social novels of the Holocaust, for it mainly relies on the representative strategy of analogous configuration. The characters and events in *La voz* illustrate the defeated in postwar Spain, especially that of Republican women prisoners. Love stories, as well as other strong interpersonal relationships—among sisters, mothers and daughters, brothers and sisters, cell mates—play a fundamental role in the novel. Regarding the realistic Holocaust novel, Foley considers “love stories” and their “sentimentality” to constitute an “inadequate barometer of social relationships in the ghettos and the camps” (“Fact” 347). That might be the case in Holocaust literature, but not in *La voz*. Without telling these stories, and all the emotions that sustain them, it would be impossible to understand what led Republican women to get involved in the war and the anti-Franco resistance.

To ensure the novel’s verisimilitude and credibility, Chacón based her text on historical research and other supporting documentary materials. She spent four years interviewing Civil War survivors and doing historical research on this topic (Laguna). In contrast to Holocaust novels, however, which lack “the testimonial authenticity of the eyewitness account” (Foley “Fact” 345), oral testimonies are fundamental in *La voz*, even if they have been transformed into a fictional story. Hence, *La voz* could be described as a “testimonial novel,” a literary subgenre encompassing, according to literary critic John Beverley, “narrative texts in which an author in the conventional sense has either invented a testimonio*like* story or . . . extensively reworked, with explicitly literary goals . . . a testimonial account that is no longer present except in its simulacrum” (105, original emphasis). Chacón did rework testimonies from Civil War survivors into the stories that make up *La voz*. She always maintained that her book was “fiction, not a
document” (“Dulce”). Nonetheless, her aim with this novel goes beyond the merely literary, as mentioned above. Chacón’s explicit wish to break with the pacto del silencio in Spain must be added to Beverley’s definition in this case.\(^{28}\)

The commitment of Chacón to the memory of those who lost the Civil War becomes immediately evident to the reader. The novel opens with a dedication “A los que se vieron obligados a guardar silencio” (7) [To those who were forced to remain in silence], followed by some of Paul Celan’s verses from his third poem in “Der Sand aus der Urnen” [The Sand from the Urns] (1948). In this book of poems, the Jewish-Rumanian author tried to convey the trauma of the Holocaust, which he experienced personally. In turn, La voz focuses on the women prisoners at the Ventas jail and their miserable living conditions, which were similar to those of inmates in Nazi concentration camps. Celan’s verses also include a noteworthy reference to the “caudillo del silencio” [the duke of silence], which establishes a link between “Der Sand aus der Urnen” and La voz.\(^{29}\) Indeed, both Celan and Chacón denounce in their respective works a nation’s “collective amnesia” about its recent history and both try to work through the traumatic and silenced memories of that past.\(^{30}\)

Other short poetry excerpts inserted in between the novel’s sections invite the reader to reflect upon those forgotten by the official discourse of History. For instance, Martín Romero’s

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\(^{28}\) According to Chacón, “el silencio debía haber acabado cuando murió Franco y no acabó. Se hicieron los Pactos de la Transición, que obligaban a cambiar armonía por silencio. Cuando ya han pasado 25 años de la transición, . . . contar esta historia. . . . no es ira ni revancha, sino un deseo legítimo de recuperar una memoria olvidada y secuestrada” [silence over the Civil War should have ended when Franco died, but it did not. The ‘Moncloa pacts’ were signed, and they required silence in exchange for harmony. 25 years have passed since then, [and] telling this story. . . . does not represent rage or revenge, but a legitimate wish to recover a forgotten and stolen memory] (Velázquez).

\(^{29}\) In German, “der Herzog der Stille.” The Sand from the Urns also includes his famous poem “Todesfuge” [Death Fugue]. Both were later published in the poetry collection Mohn und Gedächtnis [Poppy and Memory] (1952).

\(^{30}\) The German “collective amnesia” on the Holocaust came to an end in the 1960s and 1970s, “when the first postwar generation came of voting age, began to ask questions about what had happened during the Hitlerzeit and the war, and became curious about the long neglected question of the Holocaust” (Peitsch xxviii).
short poem, “Tus ojos” [Your eyes], from his book De la ira [About Rage], precedes the novel’s second part: “Quieres llorar. / Y es tiempo de sequía. / Quieres llorar. / Pero ya son tus ojos/ girasoles marchitos.” (La voz 146) [You want to cry. / And it is time of drought. / You want to cry. / But your eyes by now are / withered sunflowers.] I believe there are several reasons why Chacón chose to quote this little-known author. First of all, the poem “Tus ojos” works as a metaphor of the situation of those who lost the Civil War: they want to tell their story (“you want to cry”), but Spain’s collective amnesia (or “drought”) continues, and many of them have already died (“withered sunflowers”). Second, Romero is from Extremadura—where sunflowers cover as many hectares as olive trees—and it is in the novel’s second part where Tomasa—also from that region—finally tells her own story, in solitary confinement, out of pain and rage for Hortensia’s execution.

The miliciana’s picture on the book jacket plays an essential role in the novel’s discourse; on the one hand, it personalizes History, and on the other, it evokes the feelings that led Republican women to actively participate in the Civil War. This particular miliciana is wearing her uniform, has a rifle slung crossways over her right shoulder and a smiling baby in her arms. It is the picture of miliciana Rosita Sánchez, which appeared in an August 1936 issue of the magazine Ahora (“Imágenes”). The combination of family and war imagery in this picture brings together the seemingly irreconciliable concepts that defined Republican women’s complex identity: tradition / revolution, male / female, private / public, life / death, etc. However, this miliciana’s rifle is in the background because she is posing as a proud and confident “fighting mother,” rather than as a soldier. Thus this picture challenges the miliciana’s infamous reputation as a prostitute; it effectively widens the lens of memory, associating Republican women’s participation in the war with motherhood, rather than with sexual liberation.
This photograph also becomes an invaluable piece in the advertising apparatus of *La voz* as a testimonial novel. According to literary critic James Young, the factual authority of photographs becomes greater in documentary novels such as *La voz*, for it operates rhetorically on precisely the same assumption at work in documentary narrative. That is, as a seeming trace or fragment of its referent that appeals to the eye for its proof, the photograph is able to invoke the authority of its empirical link to events, which in turn seems to reinforce the sense of its own unmediated factuality. (57)

Thus, the back cover of the book describes *La voz* as a “novel.” However, this miliciana’s photograph undermines the effect of such claim on the reader, for it emphasizes the relation of Chacón’s work to the discourse of the real. In fact, the back cover further reads, *La voz* is “la historia silenciada de las mujeres que perdieron la guerra” [the silenced story of the women who lost the war].

**Tensi: Symbol of the Other Mother Spain**

As the reader later finds out, the woman on the photograph of the book cover is supposed to be Tensi, a leading female character in the novel. Chacón joins character and photograph through a “visual narrative” or “prose picture,” which Marianne Hirsch defines as a “meta-photographic text which place[s] family photographs into narrative contexts, either by reproducing them or by describing them” (8):

“Tensi, con su uniforme de miliciana, con su fusil en bandolera. . . ., sonríe para él, con un niño que no es suyo en los brazos. . . . ella se había puesto los pendientes que él le había comprado. . . . y se había recogido el pelo ocultando sus trenzas.” (*La voz* 75)

[Tensi, with her militia uniform on, with her rifle slung crossways over her shoulder. . . ., smiles for him, with a baby in her arms that is not hers. . . . she was wearing the earrings he had bought for her. . . . and she had put her hair up, hiding her braids].

The effect of such visual narrative is double. First, it reinforces Tensi’s credibility, quite necessary since her character is not real, but based on several testimonies (“Dulce”). Second, this “prose picture” affects the interpreter of the photograph as well: to the reader, the unknown
miliciana on the photograph has become Tensi. The relevance of this second interplay between
text and image is even greater, in the context of the processes of acting out and working through
trauma carried out in the novel. As mentioned above, Tensi joins the guerrilla to be with her
husband and protect their child from the regime’s repression. However, she does not fight along
with other men; she remains in the rearguard. During her imprisonment in Ventas, she takes care
of her cellmates and encourages them not to despair. As she tells Tomasa, “resisting means
winning” (La voz 123). They have the obligation to survive to tell their story; only when they die
will they have lost the war.

Chacón’s narrative “acts out” or “performs” Tensi’s and her cellmates’ traumatic
experiences through the use of short sentences, dialogues, free indirect speech and the repetition
of certain words. For example, the narrator describes Tensi’s and Elvira’s emotional state after
receiving a ten-minute visit from their families on Christmas day in a rather lyric style:

Diez minutos. Y son las manos grandes de Felipe las que acarician las mejillas de
A su lado, Elvira se desata con furia la coleta. No debe llorar. Pero llora. (147)

[Ten minutes. And it is Felipe’s hands that caress Hortensia’s cheeks with Hortensia’s
hands. Ten minutes. She must not cry. She sits down. And does not cry. Next to her, Elvira
lets her hair down furiously. She must not cry. But she cries].

Chacón also believed poetry to have “una capacidad de sugerencia . . . superior a todo lo
demás” (“Dulce”) [a higher suggestive power than anything else], borne out by her own use of
the poetry excerpts mentioned above. She will turn to the poetic once again in the narration of
this episode’s end, which is arranged in visually separate and short sentences, as if it were a
poem. Thus, a paragraph adopts the form of a stanza, which emphasizes the dramatic character of
the episode:

La hermana María de los Serafines se vuelve hacia ellas. . . . Sin mediar palabra, tira del
brazo de Elvira y la empuja hacia el pasillo.
Se la lleva.
Si, se la lleva.
Y Elvira no para de llorar. (149)

[Sister María de los Serafines turns around and looks at them. . . . Without saying a word, she grabs Elvira by the arm and pulls her into the hallway.
She takes her away.
Yes, she takes her away.
And Elvira cannot stop crying].

Hortensia’s execution is the most tragic and unsettling event in La voz, even though the reader knows, from the novel’s very first line, that she is going to die. Tensi faces the firing squad with her political beliefs intact. She refuses Catholic confession and communion, the chance “to repent and save her soul,” and she proudly cries “¡Viva la República!” [Long live the Republic!] right before being shot dead (220). Chacón further increases the credibility of Tensi’s story by incorporating a transcription of the last letter of Julia Conesa (199) and the putatively official death sentence of Hortensia (221-22). Conesa was a historical figure, one of Las trece rosas [the thirteen roses], who were also imprisoned in the Ventas jail and later executed. Thus, the insertion of this document puts Hortensia Rodríguez and Julia Conesa at the same level, and it also accentuates the feeling of empathic unsettlement in the reader toward these women’s tragic end. 31

An excerpt from a poem by César Vallejo follows Tensi’s death in the novel, including the following verses: “Si la madre España cae—digo, es un decir— / salid, niños del mundo, id a buscarla!” (225). [If mother Spain falls—I mean, I am just saying— / go, children of the world, go and get her!]. The poem cited, “España, aparta de mí este cálice” [Spain, take this

31 “The Thirteen Roses” was the name given to a group of thirteen girls - seven of them under age – who were executed by a Francoist firing squad on August 5, 1939. They were all defenders of the Republic and many of them belonged to the JSU, but had not committed any violent crimes during the war. Franco had them executed as a way of general punishment for the death of commander Isaac Gabaldón, his driver José Luis Díaz Madrigal, and his daughter Pilar, who was barely 18 years old. It was later discovered that this crime was committed by Franco’s own secret service (Ruiz 1).
chalice from me], belongs to a 1937 poetry collection by the same title, in which the Peruvian poet called for the defense of the Republic during the Spanish Civil War. Given the location of these verses in the novel, it is not difficult to associate Vallejo’s “madre España” [mother Spain] with Tensi, both a miliciana and fighting mother who has “fallen” dead with complete faith in the Republican cause.

Chacón thus invests her character with an additional symbolic meaning, making Tensi a figure comparable to Soldados’s Miralles. Her putative picture on the cover of La voz could actually be interpreted as a reaffirmation of such symbolism. Tensi’s image seems to represent the “the Other Mother Spain,” a revolutionary and optimistic Republic that highly contrasts with that of the Mater Dolorosa, or the grieving Mother Spain of national-catholicism at the beginning of the war (Álvarez Junco 601).

**Pepita: A Real Fighting Mother**

The leading female character in the rearguard of the anti-Franco resistance in La voz is Pepita. In contrast to the almost mythical figure of her sister Tensi, Pepita is a round character who shows contradictions and a capacity for self-criticism. In fact, she gives voice to La voz’s ruminations on the meaning of fighting and dying for the Republican cause, and their consequences for the families of soldiers and activists. Social motherhood defines Pepita’s identity as a Republican woman, but she is not affiliated with any political organization, nor did she fight in the war. Pepita gets involved in the postwar antifascist resistance only for personal reasons. She helps save Felipe’s life, raises Tensi’s daughter and takes care of her fiancé Jaime during his 17 years in prison. Pepita’s relationship with Jaime will put her at serious risk. She is arrested by the state police for protecting him, but her boss’s contacts in Franco’s government save her. She would not have resisted torture like Tensi because she is afraid. Unlike most characters in the novel, Pepita is not unyieldingly committed to the Republican cause. In fact, she
blames the communist party, “esos que se figuran que aprietan la verdad en el puño levantado” [those who think they hold the truth in their raised fist], for the loss of Hortensia and their father (235).

Pepita is also a traditional woman with strong religious beliefs. She thus insists on getting married to Jaime, a convinced communist, by a Catholic priest. Her faith does not prevent her from questioning God’s existence after Tensi’s execution, though: “Si arriba hubiera alguien, no le saldría del alma consentir que aquí abajo pase lo que está pasando. . . . ¿Cómo puede ser esto? ¿Cómo puedes consentir que se lleven a la juventud a golpe de redoble?” (230). [if there was somebody up there, his heart would not bear what is happening down here. . . . How can this be possible? How can you allow them to take away young people to the beat of a drum?]. Her interior monologues become a vehicle to exteriorize or act out and work through a long-repressed pain for the loss of loved ones.

Pepita’s conversations with other characters in the novel create a space for reflection about the meaning of antifascist resistance after the war. She has no delusions about life in 1940s Spain. As she angrily tells Doña Celia: “Aquí nadie tiene ganas de más guerra. Estamos más muertos que vivos. Estamos todos muertos. Y solos. Estamos solos. Se acabó. Y punto final. Nadie va a venir a rescatarlos. Nadie.” (234) [nobody here wants any more war. We are more dead than alive. We are all dead. And alone. We are alone. It is over and done with. Nobody will come to rescue us. Nobody]. 32 In spite of her skepticism, Pepita gives Tensi’s diaries to her niece and does not prevent her from joining the communist party when the young girl turns eighteen.

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32 Pepita’s reply to Doña Celia that “Estamos más muertos que vivos. Estamos todos muertos” recalls Dámaso Alonso’s famous poem Insomnio, from his collection of existential poetry Hijos de la ira [Children of Wrath] (1944). Specifically, the poem’s first line refers to the inhabitants of postwar Madrid as “cadáveres” [dead bodies].
Pepita and her surrogate daughter preserve thus the memory of Republican victims and continue their fight, albeit in a different manner.

Pepita’s character has a real referent in the historical world, but there is no picture of her in *La voz* to establish a verifiable link between the two. Thus, the publishing industry in Spain gave readers the chance to see Pepita herself during the 2003 Madrid Book Fair. She attended an event in which *La voz* was awarded “Book of the Year” by the Madrid booksellers. According to *El País*, which gave the news on this event, “Pepita estaba tan conmovida que no pudo hablar, pero Dulce Chacón contó su historia: por amor esperó 17 años a su novio encarcelado, por amor se hizo comunista y por amor sigue votando en su nombre [...]” (“El premio”). [Pepita was so moved that she could not speak, but Dulce Chacón told her story: out of love she waited for her fiancé, who was in prison for 17 years; out of love she became a communist and continues to vote in his name].

According to *La voz*, Jaime is eventually released from jail on parole and marries Pepita:

Jaime sonríe.
Sonríen los dos.
[...]
Pepita mira a Jaime.
Y Jaime no deja de mirarla. (374)

[Jaime smiles.
They both smile.
[...]
Pepita looks at Jaime.
And Jaime cannot stop looking at her].

It sounds like a happy, redemptive end for a tragic story of extreme suffering and pain. However, Chacón immediately breaks any possible spell those words might have cast on the reader by inserting another reproduction of an official document. It supposedly describes Jaime’s parole restrictions, though the name of the prisoner to whom it is addressed has been omitted.
The reader is thus reminded that Jaime, and other prisoners in his situation, remained under control of the regime until his/her death. A page with only three words, “Y era miércoles.” (377) [And it was Wednesday], follows the aforementioned facsimile and marks the end of the stories narrated in La voz.

Chacón concludes her novel the same way she started it, but in reverse: with the citation of a poem and a dedication. This time the poetry is by Spanish writer Luis Álvarez Piñer, who was awarded the 1991 National Prize of Poetry in Spain for his book of poems En resumen (1990). 33 This surrealist poet from the northern region of Asturias also lost the Civil War and remained largely forgotten until his death in 1999. He did not fight in the conflict, but spent four years in prison after the war for his Republican ideas. Some of his poetry expresses the pain of such an experience, but Chacón chose a poem from his early and most avant-guard work, tellingly called “Especie de Esperanza” (1927-1936) [A Kind of Hope]. Chacón’s dedication is rather a note of gratitude “a todas las personas que me han regalado su historia.” (379) [to all those who gave me their story]. In other words, La voz starts out with references to the victims of silence and repression, and it ends with a note of hope for what seems the beginning of that silence’s end. Indeed, the reader finds a narrative in La voz that performs the breaking of Spain’s pacto del silencio.

The last pages of the book are two paratexts that appear to be external to La voz’s novelistic discourse. One of them is another note of gratitude from Chacón to Pepita, the referent in the real world of the character by the same name. The second paratext lists some of the sources Chacón used in writing La voz, such as books by historians, writers and Civil War

33 Álvarez Piñer was a contemporary of poets Leopoldo Panero and Blas de Otero, members of the so-called “Generation of ’36.” Álvarez’s work was very much influenced by the poetry of his mentor, Gerardo Diego, member of the “Generation of 27.” See the introduction to En resumen and to Poesía (1995).
survivors. As Gómez rightly points out, both paratexts represent an attempt to invest the stories in *La voz* with “un determinado tipo de legitimidad” [a certain kind of legitimacy] (215). In fact, he adds that Chacón thus tries to convince readers that *La voz* “*es la historia* (y no una libre reinvención) de estas personas” [*is the story of these people* (and not a free recreation of it)] (216, original emphasis). Authors frequently use this type of paratexts in documentary novels to enhance their credibility, and its use in *La voz* may be perceived as a manipulative act on Chacón’s part. However, the cover of the book explicitly says that *La voz* is a novel, and Chacón always maintained that her text was fiction. In my view, these two paratexts constitute a particular extension of the novelistic discourse, especially the first one, which continues the narration of Pepita’s story.

The second paratext is a very personal—even intimate—list, where Chacón tells readers about her own experience in the process of gathering oral testimonies. Several lines in these pages suggest the existence of an affective bond between author and interviewee. For example, Chacón thanks one survivor with these words: “Y a Felipe, el amor de Hortensia, que salió de casa con 21 años y regresó con 47” (385) [And to Felipe, Hortensia’s love, who left home at the age of 21 and came back when he was 47]. In other cases, Chacón’s acknowledgements show explicit empathy toward certain survivors, who are still afraid to talk about the past: “Y a una mujer que no quiere que mencione su nombre ni el de su pueblo, y que me pidió que cerrara la ventana antes de comenzar a hablar en voz baja” (385) [And to a certain woman who does not want her name or her village’s name to be mentioned, and who asked me to close the window before she began to speak very quietly]; or toward others like “una mujer de Gijón que me rogó que contara la verdad” (387) [a woman from Gijón who begged me to tell the truth]. These paratexts increase the reader’s feeling of empathic unsettlement toward the defeated of the war.
Chacón’s acknowledgements also make the reader aware of several things: for example, that some of these survivors are still traumatized by events that happened sixty years ago; or that the Franco regime carried out a systematic repression of those who lost the war, a fact that was and remains largely hidden from public knowledge. Therefore, it could safely be said that the reading of *La voz* leaves one “in a state of necessary unease and with the perhaps equally necessary ‘never-again’ feeling” (LaCapra 211).

**Conclusions**

*Soldados de Salamina* and *La voz dormida* show the main characteristics of the documentary novel. In Foley’s words, both “adhere to referential strategies associated to nonfictional modes of discourse, but also demand to be read within a fictional Gestalt familiar to contemporaneous readers” (*Telling* 41). Thus *Soldados* and *La voz* attempt to re-enfranchise “the assertive power of fiction,” in order to make statements about urgent contemporary realities” (43). In this sense, these two novels represent the resurgence of a documentary literature that questions the *status quo* in Spain, like Sender’s and Díaz Fernández’s did in the 1920s and 1930s. In the case of Cercas and Chacón, these writers integrate a cultural, social and political movement in Spain that rejects the *pacto del olvido* from the *transición* with respect to the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship. Both authors deconstruct the concept of “anti-Spain” in their novels by recovering and repairing the memory of those who lost the Civil War. They also challenge, more or less explicitly, either the abuse or the neglect of Spain’s historic memory as a political weapon in the increasing fights between central and peripheral nationalist movements.

In *Soldados*, Cercas calls for the reconstruction of a plural historic memory; one that reappropriates the Spanish identity for those who lost the Civil War, including Republicans from Catalonia, and leaves no space for exclusionary national identities. In *La voz*, Chacón puts the
emphasis on the historically forgotten and marginalized, i.e., women, the working class, and the southern periphery of Spain (Andalusia and Extremadura).

Through the adoption of the pseudofactual form in Soldados, Cercas rewrites an episode of the Civil War which honors the memory of anonymous Republican soldiers. His “true tale” is indeed true, but to its nature as a tale or fiction, rather than to historical events. Nevertheless, Cercas’s convincing use of referential strategies associated with nonfictional discourse in his novel persuade readers about the veracity of his tale and the existence of Miralles. This Republican war hero from Catalonia, who feels such a strong identification with a dance as unmistakably Spanish as the *pasodoble*, represents a revision of the past from the present of a Catalonia, and also of a Spain, struggling to redefine their identity.

As opposed to Soldados, La voz completely centers on those who lost the Civil War. Chacón does not include herself, nor does she create a female protagonist from the present searching for her past in this novel. Scholars like Gómez consider that this characteristic of La voz diminishes its literary and intellectual value. I rather interpret it as Chacón’s commitment to the memory of Republican women. In La voz, the hero is a collectivity of women who mobilized to support the male-led war effort, not to achieve political and social emancipation for themselves. Chacón mainly relies on the testimonial and the lyrical to produce a documentary narrative that acts out and works through these women’s traumatic experiences: imprisonment, torture, death of loved ones, etc. La voz thus aims at becoming a vehicle for the expression of a suffering long repressed, and produces in the reader empathic unsettlement toward Republican women. Feelings also constitute a certain kind of “document” of what moved these women to get involved in the conflict, and therefore, a most important component of the novel’s discourse. Finally, Chacón’s novel provides Spain’s historic memory with symbolic images for its self-
narration as well, like Tensi in her miliciana uniform, smiling and holding a baby in her arms. La voz could thus be considered effective in repairing Republican women’s memory and dignity, and a clear proof that Chacón is “comprometida con su tiempo y con las exigencias morales de éste” [committed to her time and its moral demands] (Gómez 94).
CHAPTER 4
THE DOCUMENTARY FILM

Introduction

Cinema’s origins lie in documentary. Yet it has traditionally received far less attention from critics and researchers than fiction films. According to film scholar Bill Nichols, the reasons behind such lack of interest in documentary are the development of film studies within the humanities, rather than within the social sciences, and the association of art and entertainment with feature fictions (Representing x). Nichols himself was one of the first North American specialists to address documentary film theory in the early 1990s. He has authored several books on the subject which are now considered seminal in the field of documentary film, like Representing Reality (1991), Blurred Boundaries (1994), and Introduction to Documentary (2001). It could be safely said that Nichols’s work, along with that of other film scholars such as Michael Renov, have contributed in great measure to end “the marginalization of the documentary film as a subject of serious inquiry” in film, media, cultural studies, anthropology and journalism (Renov 1). The analysis of documentary films carried out here is largely based on concepts developed by Nichols and Renov, but it will also draw from the work produced by scholars in Spain. I will thus begin with a summary of the concepts most pertinent to this study.

Nichols’s theory of documentary film shares a fundamental aspect with Barbara Foley’s definition of the documentary novel. Both authors base their arguments on a qualitative distinction between factual and fictive discourse, a premise which necessarily calls for a contextualized analysis of the text. As Foley demonstrates, the difference between these two types of discourse does not lie in the text, but in a contract “wherein writer and reader share an agreement about the conditions under which texts can be composed and comprehended” (Telling 40). Likewise, Nichols claims that “there is nothing that absolutely or infallibly distinguishes
documentary from fiction” (*Representing* 24). Practices and conventions characteristic of documentary, like reliance on evidence, evidentiary editing, the construction of an argument, and the primacy of testimony can be simulated within a fiction film (24). By the same token, an increasingly high number of documentaries make use of practices associated with fiction films, such as scripting, staging, re-enactment, rehearsal, and performance (*Introduction* ix).

Michael Renov goes even further and relies on Hayden White’s theories on discourse to claim that “all discursive forms – documentary included – are, if not fictional, at least *fictive*, this by virtue of their recourse to tropes of rhetorical figures” (7). Thus documentary creates a particular truth about reality through “the defiles of the audio-visual signifier,” and therefore, through a process “qualitatively akin to that of fiction” (7). As concrete examples, Renov mentions “the construction of character through recourse to ideal and imagined categories of hero or genius [...] and the use of musical accompaniment and close-ups to heighten emotional impact,” which are characteristic of fiction as well (2). Renov even warns about the use of the term “nonfiction” in reference to documentary, for it may hide the “fictive” elements in its discourse (3). Therefore, documentary and fictional forms are enmeshed in one another in film, just as in literary discourse. As Nichols argues, the distinguishing characteristics of documentary ultimately lie in the filmmaker and the viewer, as much as in the film itself (*Introduction* 35). Thus he proposes to define documentary from four different angles: institutions, filmmakers, audience, and texts (22).

**Defining Documentary**

Television networks and corporations, film institutes, foundations and associations are the first ones to label a specific film or program as a documentary. These institutions constitute a framework that provides financial and professional support for the production, distribution and exhibition of documentary film. They also set the conventions according to which documentaries
should be produced and watched (*Introduction* 22-3). Documentary filmmakers hold assumptions and expectations that might coincide or not with those of the institutions that support them. They share “a common, self-chosen mandate to represent the historical world rather than to imaginatively invent alternative ones” (25). They also gather at film festivals and write articles for specialized journals, in order to debate social issues or discuss technical concerns (25). Filmmakers shape or transform documentary traditions, which only confirms the historical variability of its form (26).

The voice of documentary, embedded in all the means of representation available, conveys a sense of the filmmaker’s social point of view (*Introduction* 43-5). This position addresses aspects of the world that are subject to debate, issues of understanding and interpretation, value and judgment about social practices and institutionally mediated relations: family life, sexual orientation, social conflict, war, nationality, ethnicity, history, etc. (67, 80). Documentary activates the viewer’s aesthetic awareness, but also his/her social consciousness (69). The rhetorical tradition provides a foundation for this way of speaking. Rhetoric can embrace reason and narrative, evocation and poetry, but its ultimate purpose is to convince or persuade about a particular position (49).

Documentary can also be defined in relation to its viewers. As Nichols remarks, “the sense that a film is a documentary lies in the mind of the beholder as much as it lies in the film’s context or structure” (*Introduction* 35). The audience brings to the viewing experience of documentary the assumption that its sounds and images originate in the historical world. Such premise relies on the capacity of the photographic image, and of sound recording, to reproduce with great fidelity what they have recorded. They are documents of what stood before the camera
as well as of how the camera represented it (35). Thus sound and image also constitute a
document of the filmmaker’s style. Nichols sums up these concepts in the following way:

Documentary re-presents the historical world by making an indexical record of it; it
represents the historical world by shaping this record from a distinct perspective or
point of view. The evidence of the re-presentation supports the argument or
perspective of the representation. (36-7, original emphasis)

It is thus assumed that documentaries are not documents, but creative representations of
actuality “based on the document-like quality of elements within them” (Introduction 38). The
viewer expects both to be able to trust the indexical linkage between what he sees and what
happened before the camera, and to assess the poetic or rhetorical transformation of this linkage
into a commentary or perspective of the world (39, original emphasis). This second expectation
characterizes the viewer’s involvement with documentary, as well as with the so-called
“discourses of sobriety” (science, economics, medicine, etc.). It is assumed that this type of
discourse has an instrumental power or the capacity to affect the historical world. In general,
documentary filmmaking is not considered a discourse of sobriety like the ones just mentioned.
Still, it is a genre that maintains a tradition of sobriety in its determination to influence our
understanding of the world and our actions within it. Therefore, the viewer of documentary
expects something of a “history lesson,” i.e., to learn, be moved or persuaded about a specific
issue (39).

From the point of view of the text, documentary can be considered a film genre with its
own subgenres or modes of representation (Introduction 31). Nichols identifies six modes of
production or representation, which he introduces in chronological order: poetic (1920s),
expository (1920s), observational (1960s), participatory (1960s), reflexive (1980s), and
performative (1980s) (138). He points out that modes prevail beyond national and periodic
variations and do not represent an evolutionary chain. Each one arises in response to a sense of
dissatisfaction with a previous mode. However, once established through a number of paradigmatic films and a set of conventions, a particular mode remains available to all (Introduction 100). The films analyzed in Chapter 4 mainly exhibit qualities from the expository and participatory modes, but I will briefly review all the modes.

The Poetic Mode

In contrast to other modes, the poetic mode stresses “mood, tone, and affect,” which opens up the possibility of alternative forms of knowledge to the straightforward transfer of information or the prosecution of a specific argument (Nichols, Introduction 103). Poetic documentaries originated with modernism “as a way of representing reality in terms of a series of fragments, subjective impressions, incoherent acts, and loose associations” (103). Poetic documentaries draw on the historical world for their raw material, but they transform this material in distinctive ways. For instance, Francis Thompson’s N.Y., N.Y. (1957), which shows New York City in the 1950s, plays with shots of the city to produce “a poetic impression” of New York as “a mass of volume, color, and movement” (103). Nichols mentions several other examples of what he considers poetic documentaries, like Luis Buñuel’s Un Chien Andalou (1928), and more recently, Péter Forgács’s Free Fall [Az örveny] (1998), which chronicles the fate of European Jews in the 1930s and 40s through home movies. The latter uses historical footage, voices that recite diary entries, and haunting music, among other resources, to build a certain tone and mood (104-05).

The Expository Mode

Most people identify documentary in general with the expository mode (Introduction 105). Indeed, it is the mode closest to the classic expository essay and continues to be the primary means of conveying information and persuasively making a case since the 1920s (Representing 34). John Grierson, Pare Lorentz and Robert Flaherty are some of the filmmakers historically
associated with the origins of the expository mode. In particular, Grierson established an institutional base for documentary film production in Great Britain and Canada, as Lorentz did in the United States (Introduction 84). These filmmakers saw great value in using film “to promote a sense of participatory citizenship and to support the role of government in confronting the most difficult issues of the day, such as inflation, poverty and the Depression (98). Flaherty’s Industrial Britain (1933) and Pare Lorentz’s The Plow that Broke the Plains (1936) are some representative examples.

According to Nichols, expository documentaries assemble “fragments of the historical world into a more rhetorical or argumentative frame than an aesthetic or poetic one” (Introduction 105). These films rely on an informing logic carried by the spoken word (107). Thus they usually address the viewer directly, through a voice-of-God commentary (the speaker is heard but not seen), or a voice-of-authority commentary (the speaker is both heard and seen) (105). World War II documentary films and series, like John Huston’s San Pietro (1945), Frank Capra’s Why We Fight (1942-5) and M. Clay Adams’s Victory at Sea (1952-3) constitute examples of the first type. Network news, on the other hand, uses voice-of-authority commentary.

In expository documentaries the role of images is secondary. They illustrate, evoke or act in counterpoint to the film’s commentary (Introduction 107). Nonsynchronous sound prevails and the commentator’s argument moves the text forward in service of its persuasive needs. Evidentiary editing maintains rhetorical continuity, rather than a spatial and temporal one (Representing 35). Above all, expository documentaries emphasize the impression of objectivity and strive “to build a sense of credibility from qualities such as distance, neutrality, disinterestedness, or omniscience” (Introduction 107). Some filmmakers purposefully avoid the
“professionally trained, richly toned male voice” characteristic of this mode, so as to increase the credibility of the film’s argument (105-6). Joris Ivens, who urged support for the republican front during the Spanish Civil War in *The Spanish Earth* (1937), did not use a professional commentator. Instead, he chose the written commentary and voice of writer Ernest Hemingway, who brought a “matter-of-fact but clearly committed tone” to the film and conferred a tough sense of “visceral engagement” on it (106).

In general, though, the expository mode “facilitates generalization and large-scale argumentation” (*Introduction* 107). It adds to our knowledge, rather than challenging or subverting the categories by which it gets organized (109). By “knowledge,” Nichols refers to epistemic knowledge in Foucault’s sense, i.e.:

> those forms of transpersonal certainty that are in compliance with the categories and concepts accepted as given or true in a specific time and place, or with a dominant ideology of common sense such as the one our own discourses of sobriety support. (*Representing* 35)

Thus the expository mode tends to address issues within a frame of reference that is not questioned, but rather taken for granted (Representing 35). For example, Frank Capra’s Why We Fight series appealed to “common sense” - patriotism, the ideals of American democracy, and the evil of Hitler, Mussolini and Hirohito -, in order to encourage young Americans to willingly enlist for battle during World War II (Introduction 109). Frank Capra’s exaltation of American patriotism and democracy in these films would appear disproportionate to many viewers nowadays, which shows that common sense is a historically determined set of values and perspectives (109).

**The Observational Mode**

The introduction of lightweight, hand-held cameras in Europe, the US and Canada, allowed filmmakers to follow and observe social actors in their daily routines during the 1960s.
The advocates of this type of documentary, called Free Cinema, sought to film independently from government pressure, sponsors’ interests and film conventions alike (Nichols, *Introduction* 32). The result were films without voice-over commentary, sound effects, historical reenactments or interviews (110). As representative examples, Nichols cites Robert Drew’s *The Chair* (1962)—about the last days of a man condemned to death—, and Robert & David Maysles’s *Gimme Shelter* (1970), about a murder partially caught on camera during a Rolling Stones’ concert (111). In this type of films, it seems as though “we look in on life as it is lived” (111). Therefore, it is required of viewers to take a more active role in determining the meaning of what it is being shown on the screen.

The observational mode also poses a number of ethical considerations regarding the act of observing others, the filmmaker’s intrusion on the social actors’ behavior, and his/her relationship with them (Nichols, *Introduction* 111-12). For instance, the presence of the camera “on the scene” gives viewers a sense of witnessing events as they happened. However, some of those events may have been constructed to give that impression. Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will* (1935)—where parades, mass assemblies and speeches were carefully planned and rehearsed—constitutes a notorious example (113). The act of filming as if absent raises questions about how much of what viewers see would be different if the filmmaker’s presence were acknowledged in observational documentaries (114-15).

**The Reflexive Mode**

As opposed to participatory documentaries, which represent the encounter between filmmaker and subject, reflexive documentaries focus on the processes of negotiation between filmmaker and viewer (Nichols, *Introduction* 125). The reflexive mode attends to the different ways in which filmmakers represent the world, as well as to what parts of it get represented. This type of documentaries asks viewers to apprehend documentary “for what it is: a construct or
representation” (125). Reflexive documentaries still set out to convince viewers of the authenticity of representation itself, but they also aim to heighten our awareness of the problems involved in the representation of others (126). For instance, they challenge techniques and conventions associated with realism—continuity editing, character development, and narrative structure—which seem to provide an unproblematic access to the world (126). To illustrate his argument, Nichols provides a compelling example: Trinh T. Minh-ha’s *Surname Viet Given Name Nam* (1989). This film, which relies on interviews with Vietnamese women to show the oppressive conditions they had to face since the end of the war, is an elaborate construction. Halfway through the film, viewers find out that the women interviewed in it live in the United States, and that they are reciting other women’s accounts on a stage set (126). As Nichols puts it, the film “deconstructs the impression of unimpeded access to reality” and invites reflection on “the process by which this impression is itself constructed [...]” (127).

Documentaries can be reflexive from both a formal and political point of view. From a formal perspective, reflexivity invites viewers to question their assumptions about documentary itself. From a political perspective, reflexivity points to the historical world (Nichols, *Introduction* 128). Both perspectives rely on techniques that have an “alienation effect” on viewers, that is, they provoke awareness of social organization and the assumptions that support it (128-30). A representative example of political reflexivity are feminist documentaries from the 1970s like Jim Klein and Julia Reichert’s *Growing Up Female* (1970), that sought to raise awareness about discrimination against women in our contemporary world (128). Moreover, political reflexivity in documentaries invoke as well the way things might become. They point to viewers as social actors, as the agents who can bridge the gap between what exists and what might exist (130).
The Participatory Mode

In the 1970s, participatory documentaries illustrated a new and broad tendency to tell history “from below,” as experienced by ordinary but articulate people (Introduction 33). In contrast to the generalizing arguments of expository documentaries, these films introduced “a sense of partialness, of situated presence and local knowledge” (Representing, 44 original emphasis). Participatory documentaries thus represent the encounter between filmmaker and subject. The film director actively engages with the historical world and almost becomes a social actor himself (Introduction 116). Emile de Antonio’s *In the Year of the Pig* (1969), on the war in Vietnam, Connie Field’s *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter* (1980), on women at work during World War II, and Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* (1985), on the aftermath of the Holocaust for those who experienced it, have become classical examples of this mode (Introduction 122).

In participatory documentaries the encounter between filmmaker and subject usually revolves around the interview, an overdetermined structure that “testifies to a power relation in which institutional hierarchy and regulation pertain to speech itself” (Representing 50). The interview figures into most of the discourses of sobriety mentioned above. In each one of them, “hierarchy is maintained and served while information passes from one social agent to another” (51). Thus in documentary filmmaking, the interview format privileges the filmmaker as arbiter of legitimacy and frames the interviewee as the primary source of new knowledge. There is no equity between the two (52).

Some participatory documentaries stress the moment of encounter between filmmaker and subject. This may be observed in Marcel Ophüls’s *The Sorrow and the Pity* (1970), on the French collaboration with Nazi Germany during World War II or in Michael Rubbo’s *Sad Song of Yellow Skin* (1970), which explores the impact of the Vietnam War on the civil population of that country (Introduction 118). In this type of films, the director is seen and heard and his
interaction with the subject gives the impression of “dialogue.” However, it is more of a “pseudo-dialogue,” given the hierarchy of control that guides the exchange between them (Representing 52). The filmmaker’s voice functions as a perspective on the subject matter of the film (Introduction 118).

In other participatory documentaries, like In the Year of the Pig and Shoah, the interview takes place across the frameline. The filmmaker and his voice remain mostly off screen, allowing witnesses “to speak for themselves (54).” This gives the interview the appearance of a “pseudomonologue.” As a result, the viewer seems to become the direct subject of cinematic address, without the mediation filmmaker-subject-viewer (Representing 54). Regarding the disembodied voice of inquiry in this type of film, Nichols joins Michael Renov’s argument on the fictive elements of documentary, for he claims that “the absence of the interviewer from the arena of the historical present, the placement of the voice in a transcendental, ahistorical field [...] can only be a fiction of the text” (55).

Films like In the Year of the Pig contributed to the establishment of the subgenre of historical reconstruction based on witness testimony and archival footage rather than on voice-over commentary (48). The voice of the filmmaker does emerge, but “from the weave of contributing voices and the material brought in to support what they say,” and it is also implied in the interview format itself (Introduction 122). This kind of documentaries focus on the interviewees, as well as on images that demonstrate or question their statements. Thus textual authority shifts to the social actors and their comments, which provide a central part of the film’s argument (Representing 44). In sum, the participatory mode demonstrates how the personal and the historical intertwine to yield specific and committed representations of the historical world. It is the articulateness and emotional directness of the film’s subjects that provide this type of
documentary with a compelling quality (Introduction 123).

The Performative Mode

In a way similar to that of the poetic mode, the performative mode poses questions about what is knowledge (Nichols, Introduction 130). Performative documentaries set out to demonstrate that embodied knowledge based on personal experience, and not abstract generalizations, is what provides entry into an understanding of the general processes at work in society. This particular mode underscores the complexity of our knowledge by emphasizing its subjective and affective dimensions (131). Rea Tajiri’s History and Memory (1991), on Tajiri’s efforts to learn the story of her family’s interment in detention camps during WW II; and Péter Forgács’s The Danube Exodus (1999), about the forced migrations of Jews down the Danube en route to Palestine, show the main characteristics of the performative mode (131, 136). They mix expressive techniques that give texture and density to fiction (renderings of subjective states of mind, flashbacks and musical scores) with oratorical techniques to address issues that neither science, nor reason can resolve.

According to Nichols, performative documentaries do not counter error with fact. Rather, they suggest that knowledge and understanding require a different form of engagement (134). In these films, the historical world is still represented through familiar places, the testimony of others, etc. However, their representation of the world is “suffused by evocative tones and expressive shadings” that call for emotional responsiveness from viewers (134-35). For example, Forgács goal in his documentaries is to postpone evaluation and judgement while viewers experience “a more directly subjective encounter with historical events” (136). His films, like other performative documentaries, “restore a sense of magnitude to the local, specific, and embodied” (136). They animate the personal so that it may become the viewers’ port of entry to the political.
The Beginnings of Documentary Filmmaking in Spain

Film production began in Spain at the end of the nineteenth century, with documentary shorts that followed the Lumière brothers’ observationalist and realist style (Jordan and Allinson 3). Gelabert’s *Salida de los trabajadores de la España industrial* (1897) and Jimeno’s *Salida de la misa de doce de la Iglesia del Pilar de Zaragoza* (1897) are just two examples. In general, early filmmaking in Spain responded to the dominant idea of what was newsworthy and deserved to be recorded for History: inaugurations and ceremonies with the Spanish Royal family, bullfights, parades, reports about the African wars, etc. (Monterde 22). Documentaries like Gaspar’s *Los sucesos de Barcelona* (1909), which recorded the protests and revolts that took place in Barcelona during the so-called “Tragic Week” (Triana-Toribio 18), were not welcomed in early twentieth-century Spain. Successive governments, the Catholic Church and the bourgeoisie regarded cinema negatively and thus curtailed its development through systematic censorship and taxation (Triana-Toribio 16). Only with the arrival of the Republic and sound cinema in the 1930s could documentary grow and establish itself as a film genre (Monterde 22). Indeed, “the true founding father” of this genre in Spain, Luis Buñuel, made *Land Without Bread* [*Las Hurdes. Terre sans pain*] in 1932 (Villamediana 42).

*Land Without Bread* has become one of the most studied Spanish films (Ibáñez 155), and an obligatory reference in the history of documentary. As a matter of fact, Bill Nichols frequently cites Buñuel’s documentary as an example of expository, but “politically reflexive” films (*Representing* 65), i.e., one which thoroughly subverts the qualities of conventional exposition and “implicitly attacks the very notion of objectivity” (*Introduction* 107). What interests me here, though, is not so much the film itself, as the reasons that moved Buñuel to make the only documentary in his entire career as filmmaker.
Land Without Bread appears to record everyday life for the people of Las Hurdes (Extremadura), one of the poorest rural regions in Spain at the time. However, it is a highly manipulated documentary, closer to fiction than to non-fiction, for it included castings, rehearsals and simulations (Sánchez Vidal “Las Hurdes” 90). Land Without Bread showed the Hurdanos in such a miserable, even subhuman condition, that the government considered the film “offensive to the Spanish nation” and thus had it censored (Triana-Toribio 27). As Buñuel himself would later admit, he had only filmed the worst of Las Hurdes; that was his initial objective (Sánchez Luis Buñuel 67).

The Spanish filmmaker shared with the writers mentioned in Chapter 3—Sender, Díaz Fernández or Álvarez del Vayo (“the other Generation of 27”)—a rejection of the political and cultural establishment in Spain. Buñuel would express his criticism of bourgeois liberalism through surrealist films, such as An Andalusian Dog [Un chien andalou] (1929) and The Golden Age [L’age d’or] (1930). By the end of the 1920s, however, Buñuel realized that surrealism had failed to work as instrument of revolutionary change (Sánchez Vidal Luis Buñuel 67). He thus began to collaborate in cultural circles associated with communism, both in Spain and abroad.¹ Class struggle and socialist revolutionary action became Buñuel’s new referents. It was at this point of his career when the Spanish filmmaker turned to documentary and the project of Las Hurdes (Ibáñez 164-65). Like his fellow writers, Buñuel resorted to the documentary form with specific political objectives in mind: on the one hand, recording the dramatic situation of Spanish peasants, and on the other, convincing intellectuals and workers about the urgent need to embark upon the conquest of the state (Ibáñez 165-66). That was the message of the film’s commentary,

¹ Juan Carlos Ibáñez’s article “Elementos para la contextualización histórica de Tierra sin pan: el documentalismo au service de la Révolution” establishes a link between Buñuel’s project about Las Hurdes and the Communist International’s secret propaganda services, lead by the German Willi Münzenberg.
and hence its ban by Lerroux’s conservative government in 1934. However, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 forced Buñuel to write a new commentary in favour of the more moderate and democratic Popular Front (Ibáñez 166). *Las Hurdes*, as the film was originally entitled, became then *Land Without Bread* [*Terre sans pain*] (Sánchez “Las Hurdes” 90).

Apart from Buñuel’s remarkable production, documentaries in the 1930s—especially during the Civil War—turned into instruments of political propaganda. The desire to gain active support for one or the other side in the conflict rendered aesthetics and political analysis dispensable in documentary filmmaking (Monterde 23). After the war, the Franco regime established its own film company called NO-DO, or Cinematographic Newsreel and Documentaries [Noticiarios y Documentales Cinematográficos]. NO-DO would be the only film company to produce newsreel and documentary films in Spain from 1942 until 1975. Furthermore, the exhibition of NO-DO’s newsreel was mandatory in all movie theatres nationwide (Tranche 103). This meant that the regime exercised total control over the public’s perceptions of national and international reality. In fact, NO-DO represented one of the main vehicles used by the Franco regime to institutionalize its own version of the Civil War and thus legitimize itself (Aguilar 89). I will now go briefly over two documentaries produced during the Franco dictatorship, which were intended to become lieux de mémoire about the Civil War and the role Franco himself played in the history of Spain. They are Rafael Garzón’s *El camino de la paz* [*The Path to Peace*] (1959) and José Luis Sáenz de Heredia’s *Franco: ese hombre* [*Franco: That Man*] (1964).

**Documenting the Franco Regime’s “Spanish Liberation War”**

Coinciding with the twentieth anniversary of the Civil War’s end, NO-DO produced Rafael Garzón’s *El camino de la paz*, the first Spanish documentary about the conflict. As the title suggests, this compilation film presented the war as necessary to restore the peace and order
destroyed by the Second Republic (Ellwood 202). Moreover, its subtitle reads *Síntesis cinematográfica de la guerra de liberación española [Film Synthesis of the Spanish War of Liberation]*, which means that in 1959 the regime still narrated the conflict as a “war of liberation” from communism. Garzón’s film opens with images of the Victory Parade, a yearly military event that commemorated the end of the Civil War every April first, from 1939 until 1977. Then, by means of a voice-of-God commentary, *El camino de la paz* begins to narrate the regime’s version of Spain’s recent history. Thus the narrator identifies XIX century liberalism as the root of all the country’s problems during the preceding one hundred years. These include the 1934 revolutionary uprising in the region of Asturias, as well as the generalized and uncontrolled violence that characterized the last thirty days of the Second Republic. The Civil War would simply be the ultimate consequence of liberal politicians’ demonstrated ineptitude for government.

Regarding the film’s representation of the Civil War itself, *El camino de la paz* continues to tell the conflict in terms of “Spanish patriots,” the Nacionales, against “anti-Spanish communist invaders,” the Republicans. Nonetheless, Paloma Aguilar has interpreted the use of the term “civil war” instead of “crusade” in the commentary as a sign of change toward national reconciliation on part of the Franco regime (96). This contradiction in discourse can also be perceived in the lack of distinction between the communist invaders and their “poor victims,” many of whom were Republicans themselves. Thus the narrator helps viewers to distinguish between the two by explicitly referring to Republicans as “the reds,” and by equating them with death and destruction. For example, he insists that “Madrid was taken by the communists,” while the viewer sees images of buildings in ruins, dead bodies and large pictures of Lenin and Stalin hanging from the Puerta de Alcalá, a historic city gate. In contrast, the “poor Spanish people,”
victim of the communists, are shown cheering at Franco’s liberating troops, or crossing the border into France with the reds, “who dragged them in their flight.” In sum, *El camino de la paz* perpetuates the memory of Republicans as the communist enemy or as helpless victims of themselves.

José Luis Sáenz de Heredia’s *Franco: ese hombre* represents a significant contrast in its treatment of the Civil War. Indeed, this documentary attests to the changes that the regime’s official discourse was undergoing at the time. As its title indicates, the figure of Franco takes now center stage as legitimatizing tool of his own regime, while the Civil War moves to the background. Sáenz de Heredia’s documentary does not present a Manichean version of the conflict, but it does not repudiate it either. Those defeated in the war are hardly mentioned. As Paloma Aguilar has suggested, such change in discourse may have been motivated by what the regime referred to as the *Contubernio de Munich* [The Munich Collusion] (162).

A few years earlier, in 1962, moderate regime dissidents and Republican exiles had met in Munich, Germany, in order to find common points toward national reconciliation and the reestablishment of democracy in Spain (Aguilar 151-55). The meeting was such a success that the exiles’ leader, Salvador de Madariaga, considered it “the end of the Civil War” (155). The Franco government reacted in a very negative way to this meeting, and those who attended the meeting were accused of “treason” (155). Indeed, Madariaga’s words undermined Francoism’s origin-based legitimacy; keeping a Manichean memory of the war was essential for the regime to stay in power (156). At the same time, the Franco government wished Spain admitted into the European Community. However, the regime’s reaction to the meeting in Munich reduced Spain’s possibilities even further, for it only reaffirmed the image of Francoism as an intolerant and
repressive dictatorship (156). It thus became urgent for the regime to modernize itself and find additional sources of legitimacy.

The year 1964, twenty-fifth anniversary of the Civil War’s end, provided the Franco government with the perfect opportunity to reshape some of its lieux de mémoire regarding the conflict. In order to commemorate the so-called “25 years of peace,” the regime launched the largest propaganda campaign ever in order to project an image of openness and reconciliation (Aguilar 164). A commemorative stamp series, official essays on the occasion, literature, radio, film and television contests, and local festivities all over the country attest to the campaign’s breadth (168-69). The film contest in particular involved a screenplay competition about the Civil War. The first prize was not awarded, but the second prize went to Jorge Feliu’s and José María Fontespina’s drama Diálogos de la paz [Peace Dialogues] (1965). José Luis García Escudero, head of the Film and Theater department at the time, revealed that Feliu’s film was chosen for its conciliatory message, even if such a decision might have caused him and the jury to be labeled as “reds” (171). As Aguilar points out, this particular event shows the limitation of the regime’s willingness to reach national reconciliation (171). Sáenz de Heredia’s Franco: ese hombre only confirms Aguilar’s assessment. It is a film that successfully reconciles the regime’s need to celebrate peace at that time, without renouncing its victory in the Civil War.

Franco: ese hombre was produced at the request of Franco himself, to commemorate Spain’s “25 years of peace.” As representative of the regime’s official discourse, this documentary organizes its rhetoric in an expository manner. It opens with colour images of Madrid on April first. It is early in the morning and the city is preparing for “the Peace Parade,” as the Victory Parade was called for the “25 years of peace” commemorations. As in El camino de la paz, a voice-of-God commentary addresses viewers directly and reminds them, once again,
how difficult it has been to achieve and maintain peace in Spain. Archival footage, still images and dialog reenactments support the commentator’s argument. In Franco: ese hombre the nation’s history is divided into two intertwining sub-histories: the progressive and shameful decline of Spain from the nineteenth century onwards is juxtaposed with an epic narration of Franco’s feats as military hero and Spanish patriot. The film suggests that both histories converge in 1936, as if Franco had been destined to save Spain from “the invasion of communism.”

Suddenly, the narration of the war stops and the film’s narrator appears on screen. He claims that no more footage of the conflict will be shown because it is the producers’ intention to remember “our war” with “serenity.” He also adds that a total of “one million Spaniards from both sides” gave their lives for the peace Spain enjoys in 1964. In contrast to previous documentaries, this one refers to Republicans as “Spaniards” and acknowledges them as victims of the war as well. All Spaniards, without exception, are invited to celebrate the figure of Franco as their savior, or rather, as the only man capable of bringing them long-lasting peace.

The second part of Franco: ese hombre is a clear message to the Western nations that “propose a revolution in our country and offer help to those who look to achieve a change of regime,” as the narrator says. He adds that the allies from WWII—who supported the 1962 meeting in Munich—seem to have forgotten Spain’s contribution to “their cause and to the free world.” He also reminds Spanish viewers that Franco saved Spain for a second time during World War II, when he “stopped” Hitler in Hendaye, and then, Mussolini. The film ends with an interview to Franco himself, who recommends to younger generations of Spaniards that they “analyze the motivations of our crusade” and compare “the Spain we received with the Spain we bequeath to them.” Thus Sáenz de Heredia skilfully creates a new political discourse in his film
for a regime that sought to legitimize itself through its performance (25 years of peace), without forgetting its origin (the Civil War). However, it was a short-lived new discourse. As Paloma Aguilar points out, the “Peace Parade” would be called again the “Victory Parade” from 1965 onwards, which makes the regime’s commemorative rhetoric of 1964 look like a mere marketing operation (172). Forgetting the war and reaching national reconciliation were impossible under the Franco regime, for it would have represented its own end (358). Thus the memory of those who lost the Civil War would remain silenced and unrepaid until the mid-1970s.

**Documentaries from the 1970s: Self-Reflexive Reconstructions of the Past**

The *transición* remains the golden age of documentary filmmaking in Spain (Hernández and Pérez 117; Riambau 126). This should come as no surprise, considering the highly convulsive nature of those years and the documentary’s capability to record reality with great verisimilitude (118). A few representative examples are Cecilia and Juan José Bartolomé’s *Después de...* (1979-1981), a “privileged witness” of the most relevant socio-political changes that were taking place in Spain at the time (Hernández and Pérez 121; Selva i Masoliver 271); Pere Portabella’s *Informe General...* (1977), a well-crafted look into the clandestine political parties and their position regarding the ongoing reform of Spain’s political system (Hernández and Pérez 123); and Ventura Pons’s *Ocaña. Retrat Intermitent* (1978) creates a space for the gay community—a socially marginalized group under Francoism—through one of its members (132).

Other documentaries aimed at recovering a historical past that many felt “had been stolen” from them (Riambau 128). Along with several fiction films produced in the 1970s, the documentary film genre played a key role in the process of memory recovery (128). Critics in Spain and the US have paid special attention to those documentaries that show formal reflexivity, i.e., an absolute awareness of the documentary’s nature and, therefore, of its
discourse on history, as a construction. For instance, Basilio Martín Patino used NO-DO’s newsreel footage, photographs, newspaper clips, popular and war songs in his compilation films *Canciones para después de una guerra* [Songs For After a War] (1971) and *Caudillo* (1974) to deconstruct the regime’s official discourse on the war and the first postwar period. Jaime Chávarri’s approach to Spain’s immediate past in *El desencanto* [The Disenchantment] (1976) differs significantly from that of Patino’s. Chávarri portrays the Franco regime’s contradictions and decadence through the family of Leopoldo Panero, one of the regime’s official poets (128-29). Jaime Camino’s *La vieja memoria* [The Old Memory] (1977) and Gonzalo Herralde’s *Raza, el espíritu de Franco* [Race, the Spirit of Franco] (1977) mainly use personal testimonies to enquire about the Civil War and the figure of Franco. Camino interviewed participants from all the groups that participated in the conflict to offer a new and complex view of the war. Herralde deconstructed Franco’s idealized portrait of himself and his family—as shown in Sáenz de Heredia’s film *Raza* (1941)—through interviews with the dictator’s sister and *Raza*’s protagonist, the actor Alfredo Mayo.

Documentary filmmakers from the left thus managed to have their voices heard beyond clandestine circles (Hernández and Pérez 129). However, their documentaries had to overcome all kinds of obstacles to distribution and exhibition. The economic and administrative powers could no longer stop the production of this type of films, but they still retained the capability to obstruct their way to the public (120). On the other hand, documentary has always been and continues to be a genre not easily digestible by the average viewer, and Spain was not an exception. Audiences were long since accustomed to Hollywood and domestic commercial productions. Hence only Martín Patino’s *Canciones* enjoyed box-office success in 1976
(Riambau 126), and this was partly due to its widely known status as “victim” of the Franco regime’s censorship since 1971.

Jaime Camino’s La vieja memoria represents another illustrious victim of distributors and administrators’ blockage, right-wing extremists’ violence and even left-wing political parties’ opposition to its release during the transición (Riambau “La vieja”). As a result, Camino’s documentary was a commercial flop, but critics in Spain still regard it as one of the most thorough explorations of the Civil War in documentary (Riambau 132; Gubern 112), and the most eloquent testimonial film from the transición (Montiel 267). Given that La vieja memoria is closely related to Camino’s recent film on the war, Los niños de Rusia, I will briefly go over some of its main characteristics.

The original idea behind La vieja memoria dates back to 1970, when Jaime Camino and Román Gubern—members of the so-called “Barcelona School of Film” [Escuela de Barcelona]—decided to compile testimonies from the Civil War’s protagonists before they died (Montiel 261). However, the project could only be carried out in 1976, after Franco’s death, and it was completed by 1977. With 25 hours of film footage from personal interviews (Freixas 48), archival images and an occasional voice-of-God commentary, Camino put together a three-hour-long film, or, using Nichols’s terminology, a participatory documentary.

Other participatory documentaries from the transición, like Santillán and Galindo’s ¿Por qué perdimos la guerra? [Why Did We Lose the War?] (1977), reflect the eagerness characteristic of the late 1970s to let long-repressed voices speak. This film in particular only includes testimonies from the Republican side and favours anarchist views (Riambau 130). In the

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2 The Escuela de Barcelona was formed by a group of Catalan filmmakers from the 1960s like Jacinto Esteva, Vicente Aranda, Joaquín Jordá, etc. They claimed to make auteur cinema, as an alternative to the films made in Madrid at the time, i.e., commercial productions and the social realist films of the Nuevo Cine Español (Delgado 221).
case of *La vieja memoria*, some critics do perceive a subtext on Catalan identity, as evidenced by the film’s emphasis on interviews, periods of the war and repressed film footage that relate directly to Catalonia and its capital (Kinder 73). However, Camino and Gubern’s intention was not to tell “the other side of the story” regarding the Civil War. On the contrary, *La vieja memoria* emphasizes a “sense of partialness [...] and local knowledge” in its representation of history by contrasting views from both sides of the conflict, and even from within the Republican side (Nichols, *Representing* 44). In this sense, Camino’s film—like Martín Patino’s *Caudillo*—shows “two paradoxical desires: the desire to record history and the equally strong desire to expose the unreliability of such representations” (Kinder 66).

*La vieja memoria*’s elaborate editing and carefully planned mise-en-scène play a fundamental part in the construction of its reflexive discourse on memory and history. Critics have praised the film’s strategic use of lighting and of shots from different angles, which vary depending on the person interviewed (Montiel 265). For example, Gil Robles, leader of the conservative political party CEDA, appears in half-light and wears darkened glasses, which stresses the mystery surrounding the events that he recounts, i.e., the assassination of conservative Calvo Sotelo and the ensuing military uprising that led to the civil war. At another moment in the film, a low-angle shot underscores communist commander Enrique Lister’s grandiloquence, while trying to explain the communist repression of the anarchist revolution in Aragon during the war.

Thanks to a calculated editing process, Camino succeeds in creating imaginary dialogs among some of the interviewees as well (Riambau 132): the kind of dialog that should have taken place seventy years earlier, and many were hoping for during the transición. For instance, while the viewer hears the voice of Enrique Lister, falangist Raimundo Fernández Cuesta
appears on the screen by means of a reaction shot, which shows him as if he were listening to Lister with attention (Montiel 266). Such technique is used to simulate another conversation between two famous Republican opponents: anarchist Federica Montseny and communist Dolores Ibárruri (Pasiónaria). In this manner, Camino occasionally introduces a cautionary or sceptical look and reminds viewers that the interviewees’ statements are subjective and questionable (266).

To conclude, it is worth mentioning the discrete but significant use of music in La vieja memoria’s audiovisual rhetoric. The narration of specific war events, like the military uprising in Barcelona on July 18th, 1936, is juxtaposed at certain moments with music that conveys a sense of mystery. Thus the viewer feels as if she/he were watching a war fiction film, rather than an historical documentary. At other times, music is used as critical commentary or counterpoint to some of the testimonies in the film. This may be observed in the case of José Luis de Vilallonga, who recounts his experience in a Nationalist firing squad. He condemns the violence of war executions, but his gestures and confident pose contradict his own words, which is highlighted by an accompanying parodic music (Kinder 72-3). Hence, music in La vieja memoria does not become an instrument to evoke feelings of empathy or pity in the viewer toward those who lost the war. It contributes to their presentation in the film as historical agents, rather than as victims of the Franco regime’s repression. La vieja memoria thus dramatizes the assemblage of “a new community unified through its rereading of public and private memories,” as performed by Camino and Gubern, the films’ protagonists and its viewers (Kinder 66). For that reason it could be considered the most emblematic documentary of the transición.
The Recent Boom of Documentaries and Memories of the Civil War: No Longer a Love Story

Documentary production reached its lowest point in Spain during the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s (Cerdán and Torreiro “Entre” 141). Lack of funding and support from government agencies made it impossible for documentaries to compete with fictional productions at the box office (142-43). Still, a few documentaries stand out from that difficult period. Critics have described José Luis Guerín’s *Innisfree* (1990) and Víctor Erice’s *The Dream of Light* [El sol del membrillo] (1992) as “remarkable documentaries” for their “reflexive meditations on artistic representation and cultural transformation” (Kinder 83, 96). Erice’s film even attracted 39,000 viewers in commercial theatres, a significant figure for a documentary at that time (148). However, documentary films in general did not succeed in getting the public’s attention—the attention of a film-educated minority, that is—until the release of Rioyo and López Linare’s *Asaltar los cielos* [Storm the Skies] (1996), Javier Corcuera’s *La espalda del mundo* [The Back of the World] (2000) and Guerín’s *En construcción* (2001). Only the latter beat Erice’s record at the box-office, with 74,000 viewers upon release and over 68,000 the following year. Yet the mere production of these and other documentary films, as well as their moderate success in theatres, point to the re-emergence of this genre at the end of the 1990s.

In addition to a greater production of documentary films, there has been a proliferation of documentary film festivals in Spain during the last decade (Cerdán and Torreiro “Entre” 140). Some representative examples are Docúpolis (in Barcelona since 2001); Documenta Madrid (since 2003); Cadiz.doc (in Cádiz since 2002); Punto de vista (in Pamplona since 2005); and MiradasDoc (in Santa Cruz de Tenerife since 2006). Film schools and universities in Catalonia,

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Madrid, Galicia and the Basque Country have also started to offer postgraduate programs on documentary production (150-51); José Luis Guerín’s successful *En construcción*, was edited by his own students at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, in Barcelona. Public television networks have increased the amount of time allotted to documentary as well, especially when it comes to films produced in Spain. Finally, digital television networks have introduced documentary channels in Spain, such as Documanía, Canal Historia, Canal Odisea, etc. (149).

The recent blooming of documentary described above is not unique to Spain, but part of a wider trend in Western countries in general. There are more documentary producers, filmmakers and viewers now than ever before, and the public’s interest in this film genre keeps growing (Cerdán and Torreiro “Entre” 141). In the United States, there was a significant increase in the production of historical documentaries for television during the 1990s, which coincided with a sharp rise of interest in history among the general population (Edgerton, “Introduction” 1). The unprecedented popular success of series like Ken Burns’s *The Civil War* (1990), constitutes an illustrative example.

A similar phenomenon could be observed in Spain ten years later. Within a short period of time, a number of historical documentaries that addressed the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath were produced for the big screen: Javier Rioyo and José Luis López Linera’s *Extranjeros de sí mismos* [*Aliens to Themselves*] (2000), Jaime Camino’s *Los niños de Rusia* [*The Children of Russia*] (2001), Javier Corcuera’s *La guerrilla de la memoria* [*The Guerrilla of Memory*] (2002), and Daniel and Jaume Serra’s *La guerra cotidiana* (2002). The first two were nominated in 2002 for the “best documentary” award at the Goya Awards Festival (Spanish equivalent of the Oscars), and *La guerra cotidiana* was awarded the “Premio de la Asociación Nacional de Festivales de Cine” at the Valladolid Film Festival in 2002. Camino’s film had the
highest box-office record of all four, with over 11,000 viewers upon its release and around 9,000 the following year. Nonetheless, compared to Guerín’s *En construcción*, these historical films did not seem to interest half as many documentary fans.

In contrast, some historical documentaries produced for regional television channels during the same period were reaching larger audiences. I am referring to Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis’s *Els nens perduts del franquisme* [*The Lost Children of Francoism*] (2002) and *Les fosses del silenci* [*The Grave’s Silence*] (2002), which dealt with Francoist repression after the Civil War. These films were produced by TV3—Catalonia’s first public television channel—and broadcast during prime time, with an estimated audience of 800,000 viewers. Their social impact in Catalonia was such, that soon afterwards other regional television channels in Spain acquired broadcasting rights (“Los niños”). At the same time, Armengou and Belis started to receive letters and e-mails from people who wished to know about family members who disappeared during or after the war. Others felt encouraged to speak up about their own experiences under Francoism after watching their films (Herrmann 216). Thus these television documentaries and others produced afterwards contributed significantly to push forward the ongoing national debates about the victims of the war and of Francoist repression. It was precisely in the year 2002 that the Aznar government officially condemned the coup that led to the Civil War and promised to rehabilitate its victims.5

Film critics in Spain have not welcomed all of these historical documentaries as enthusiastically as viewers. Rioyo and López Linares’s *Extranjeros de sí mismos* – about

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5 See Chapter 2, pg. 23.
volunteers from different countries who fought in the Civil War - is the only one that has been praised and studied in depth.⁶ Due to its one-sided approach to the subject of the *maquis*, Javier Corcuera’s *La guerrilla de la memoria* has been considered to “suffer from evident partiality” (Cerdán and Torreiro *Al otro* 91). Some scholars have gone even further and argued that *La guerrilla* is part of a “propaganda mechanism” launched by prestigious left-wing intellectuals against the Aznar government (Lombardo 75). Armengou and Belis’s productions have also received negative reviews for their “pathetic or sentimental rhetoric of unmediated affects” (Loureiro 233), while Camino’s *Los niños de Rusia* has not generated much critical attention either way. This is surprising, to say the least, considering the established reputation of Camino as filmmaker from the School of Barcelona, and especially, as director of *La vieja memoria*. His approach to history in *Los niños* is not much different to that of Corcuera’s or Armengou’s, as I will show below. Yet, Camino’s film has not been branded as “ideological propaganda” or criticized for its “sentimental rhetoric.” The few existing reviews on *Los niños* remain silent about this fact and emphasize its “informative” value (Alcalá 212), or its role as “rescuer” of children of the war (Matías “Camino”). The evident partiality of the critics’ comments reveal a long-entrenched prejudice against the medium of television, and it also exposes a persistent rivalry between film schools from Madrid and Barcelona.⁷ The following analysis will not address the latter issue, which would merit longer discussion in another study.

At the time of their production, *Los niños de Rusia* and *La guerrilla de la memoria* constituted civil acts from filmmakers who responded to the increasing demand for “transitional justice” that was denied to Republican victims during the *transición* (Labanyi 122). Like Chacón in *La voz dormida*, Camino and Corcuera engaged with victims of the conflict and of Francoist

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⁷ Paul Julian Smith’s *Television in Spain* (2006) convincingly shows the aesthetic value and social the relevance of this medium in Spain.
repression in an attempt to help them work through their traumatic experiences. Since their release on the big screen, Los niños de Rusia and La guerrilla de la memoria have been broadcast several times on TVE, Spain’s National Television Network, which is partially funded by the central government. They can also be found in public libraries, and the Publishing Group Planeta has been distributing them along with Jaume and Daniel Serra’s La guerra cotidiana, and Pedro Carvajal’s Exilio under the title “Pack memorias de la guerra civil” [Memories of the Civil War Pack]. These two documentaries establish a different relationship with war survivors because they are not the film’s primary objective; the Serra brothers’ and Carvajal’s films have a more didactic end that becomes overtly political in the case of Exilio, as I will show below. Nonetheless, these four historical documentaries, especially as a whole, provide the political left’s discourse of constitutional patriotism with an important element it lacks: a new mythological narration of the Civil War on which to base a renewed collective feeling of belonging to the Spanish nation.

As I hope to demonstrate here, the overall narration offered in this pack emphasizes the anti-fascist character of the Republican cause and the international dimension of the Civil War. Specifically, these four documentaries present Republicans as victims of the Franco regime’s repression, but especially as active participants in the fight against the Nazis during World War II. Most importantly, the majority of Republicans in these films identify themselves as Spaniards, but not in opposition to a regional identity. Many appear to have a dual identity, which reflects an ever-increasing reality in contemporary Spain (Balfour and Quiroga 153). Ultimately, this

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8 Most recently, Los niños de Rusia was broadcast on December 28, 2008 at 9:45 p.m., and La guerrilla de la memoria on December 7, 2009, at 10:00 a.m.

9 See pages 18-20 of chapter two for a definition of constitutional patriotism.
group of films recovers memories of the Civil War that contribute to the ongoing reconfiguration of Spanish identity as democratic, secular, modern, and decentralized.

*Los niños de Rusia*

After *La vieja memoria*, Jaime Camino did not direct any other documentaries, but he did return to the subject of the civil war in fiction films like *Dragon Rapide* (1986) and *El largo invierno* [*The Long Winter*] (1992). His return to non-fiction in *Los niños* appears to have been motivated by personal reasons; Camino wished to tell the story of the 3,000 Republican children—three of whom were his cousins—who were evacuated to the USSR in 1937 (Matías “Camino”). What many thought would be a temporary stay until the war ended, eventually became permanent exile for the majority of those children. Thus *Los niños* rescues from oblivion an episode of the Spanish Republican exile, which has remained largely forgotten or unknown in Spain.

Camino interviewed around twenty of those “children of Russia,” who epitomized the Franco regime’s concept of “anti-Spain.” Most of them came from working-class families that openly supported the Republic in Asturias and the Basque Country. The parents of some had participated in the 1934 revolutionary uprising in the region of Asturias. Others were members of the communist party. Thus the USSR represented “paradise on earth” for some of these families, and they trusted their children would return after a few months to a Republican Spain. Interviewees appear to have mainly fond memories of their trip to the USSR and their prolonged stay in that country. A number of them describe their departure from Spain as an “adventure,” an opportunity “to escape from bombs and daily hunger.” Others recall that farewell moment with sadness, but they all agree that the USSR government gave them an excellent treatment, including an education in Spanish with instructors from Spain. These testimonies are memories from seventy-year-old war survivors and they contradict the Franco regime’s propaganda against
the USSR and “the Reds.” Because of this discrepancy, newsreel footage from Russian archives is used to support their veracity and contribute to the film’s deconstruction of the Franco regime’s official discourse.

Differences in testimony start arising with regards to World War II and the figure of Stalin. The “children” volunteered for the war effort and worked in factories, built railroad tracks or fought at the front. They recall the hardships of yet another war (hunger, extreme cold, illnesses), and some, like Alberto Fernández, condemn Stalin’s repressive actions against his opponents. The Vega siblings continue to feel grateful to him and to the Soviet people for the treatment they received as refugees. Adelina Álvarez claims that they had fun, in spite of all adversities, because they were children and experienced things differently than adults. Criticism of the Spanish Communist Party is not lacking. Francisco Mansilla and Alberto Fernández accuse its leaders of retaining them in the USSR against their will. Finally, they were allowed to leave the country in 1957, thanks to UN intervention. Many returned to Spain, but found it impossible to live in a country where poverty, ignorance and religious bigotry reigned. According to Pilar Macrina, the regime’s propaganda succeeded in making some people believe that communists actually had horns and a tail, like the devil. Josefina Iturrarán and the Vega siblings had distanced themselves too much from their families; they had become strangers to their own. Still others managed to integrate themselves in Francoist Spain, but not without difficulties. It was the cold war era and the regime had them under watch. Araceli Sánchez and Ernesto Vega were even interrogated for information on Soviet armament, which they refused to reveal.

The film ends with hopes for the future and regrets about the past. The Vega siblings claim they would do everything all over again. The sense of uprootedness is so deep in others, like Pilar Macrina, that they wished they had never been separated from their parents. Of those
who still live abroad, some would like to return to Spain, but have no financial means to do so; especially, the ones who reside in present-day Russia, like Josefina Iturrarán. *Los niños* thus represents a call for help from government officials and Spanish society in general.

As in the case of *La vieja memoria*, a sense of urgency moved Camino to gather these testimonies from civil war witnesses—especially from the Republican side—before they disappeared. However, *Los niños* revolves around the victims of the conflict, not its leaders. This fact made Camino’s film one of the first documentaries to reflect “the rise of the victim” in Spain at the end of the 1990s (Vos 135). The director himself emphasized that his film fulfills “a civic, rather than an aesthetic function,” and added that his intention was to tell the story of these civil war survivors “in a pleasant and moving way.”\(^\text{10}\) It is also important to remember that *Los niños de Rusia* was co-financed by three major television networks in Spain (TVC, TVE and Via Digital), which is evident in the way this film represents history.

History on television tends to stress narrative and biography, showing the medium’s tendency to personalize all social, cultural and historical matters “within the highly-controlled and viewer-involving confines of a well-constructed plot structure” (Edgerton 2). Scholars have identified intimacy and immediacy as inherent aesthetics of the medium (3). The first results in a preference for intimate shot types (close-ups and medium shots), fashioning historical portrayals in the style of personal dramas. Immediacy, or the illusion of “being there,” is the consequence of film and television’s inability to render temporal dimensions with much precision. Thus they tend to amplify the present sense of immediacy out of proportion (3). These characteristics may be observed in *Los niños*.

The film’s narrative discourse is entirely made up of personal testimonies that are

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\(^{10}\) The DVD version of the film includes some comments by Camino on *Los niños* as part of the extra features section.
connected to one another, in order to produce a chronological and dynamic relation of events. The interviewer remains off-screen and there is no use of voice-of-God commentary, which reduces the film’s didactism. The majority of interviewees also relate their experiences with excitement, and some even include humorous anecdotes in their narrations. History thus becomes memory, but Los niños does not purport to present memory as history. Even more so than La vieja memoria, Los niños foregrounds the act of remembering as source of its content. For instance, some of the film’s protagonists are interviewed in pairs or even in larger groups, while they share memories around the table. One particular sequence shows the Vega twin brothers in profile and facing each other, while recalling the last time they saw their father, who was executed in 1939. This partially-staged act of recollection was filmed inside an empty room and against a dark background, which draws attention to the dramatization of remembrance over its content. Camino’s film shows awareness about the unreliable nature of memory too, for he does not edit out statements such as Pilar Macrina’s “I don’t remember much about those days...” He also uses editing to contrast differing testimonies and simulates dialogs among interviewees through reaction shots, as he did in La vieja memoria. Hence, Los niños shows the same paradox that characterized Camino’s previous documentary, i.e., the wish to recover a forgotten episode of Spain’s historical memory, while exposing the subjectivity of memory and the manipulative nature of film.

In contrast to La vieja memoria, Los niños shows a higher degree of dramatization. This is shown by the prominence given to the act of remembering, as well as by certain sequences that seek to intensify emotions through the use of music, archive images and editing. Even though dramatization is a characteristic of history on television, in Los niños it also becomes a means of acting out and working through trauma for interviewees. Some engage in a remarkably
expressive recounting of events, as if they were reliving every moment of it. Araceli Sánchez, whose voice opens the film’s narration, appears to have very vivid memories of that time. Her testimony is accompanied by facial and hand gestures, open smiles or tears, depending on the episode remembered. Araceli is also the one who starts relating the evacuation of Republican children during the war, which probably is the most touching sequence in the film. She has to hold back her tears while describing the day her siblings left for England.

Esperanza Rodríguez, one of the tutors who went to the USSR with the “children” of this film, confirms Araceli’s description and explains how difficult it was for many parents to separate from their children. She claims that educators literally had to pull the children away from their parents’ arms. Thus to increase the viewer’s empathy toward the protagonists of Los niños, narration stops and Camino inserts a two-minute dramatic sequence of archive images from the day these children departed. The sequence shows images of parents and children kissing each other goodbye at the port of Santurce, in the Basque Country. Some are in tears; others look at the camera with fear and sadness in their faces. There is no voice-over to describe these images. The viewer only hears the rather sad music of the Basque lullaby “Haurtxo polita seaskan dago” [A cute baby is in the cradle], sung by a child. This is probably the most touching moment of the film because that separation was definite for many children, as the film later shows.

The case of the Vega siblings—Camino’s cousins—illustrates the irreversible damage caused by distance and the passing of time. They speak of their return to Spain and to their mother’s home in the 1950s. They recognized their mother, but had a deep sense of estrangement from her. Ernesto Vega says that he did not feel anything toward her, and that feeling seemed to be mutual. Their mother had survived the war, and yet they felt they had lost her back in 1937.
Their father had been executed in 1939, after spending seven months at the Albatera concentration camp, in Alicante. Piedad Vega reads his last letter in front of the camera, which zooms in to show a yellowish and fragile piece of paper where his handwriting is still visible. The camera tilts upwards to offer a close-up of Piedad’s face; she is making visible efforts to hold back her tears. Then the camera zooms out and pans to the right to show Francisco Vega, who is sitting next to his sister. He does not appear as moved as she, but he is looking at the letter and listening carefully as she reads. Through a reaction shot, the film cuts to an image of Francisco Vega, who seems to be listening, although he is actually in a different location. The drama of this letter lies in the fact that it was written by a Republican who committed no crime, but also in his last wishes. Oblivious to the long exile his children had just started, he asked them to live with their “blessed mother,” who was a “good woman” and “loved them very much.” The reading of this letter, right after the Vega siblings describe their estrangement from their mother, only foregrounds the tragic consequences of war and exile. Thus the film’s high dramatization of this moment becomes a means to act out and work through trauma for the Vega siblings.

The sequences just described are the only dramatic moments in a film that manages to narrate the experience of these “children” in the Soviet Union as an adventure. They survived the Spanish Civil War, World War II, and actively contributed to the war effort in the Soviet Union under very harsh conditions. As opposed to the majority of Spaniards of their age, these children played a role in the European fight against fascism, and thus constitute an example of courage and resilience. They are no longer the “reds” that the Franco regime consistently demonized, but heroic defenders of democracy in Europe.

Another crucial element of this film’s narration is the identity claimed by these children. In Camino’s own words, they continue to be “absolutely Spanish” (De España), in spite of their
long exile in the USSR. Unlike other children of the war, who were evacuated to France and Belgium, these children were not integrated in Russian society and thus could retain their Spanish identity. Indeed, a majority of interviewees in the film come from the Basque Country. Yet they identify themselves as Spaniards and refer to Spain as their homeland. Some interviewees, like Araceli Sánchez, appear to have a dual identity, for their testimonies reveal a specific identification with the Basque Country as well. Thus Los niños offers memories of the civil war and Republican war heroes that well suit the nation-building discourse of constitutional patriotism.

**La guerrilla de la memoria**

Javier Corcuera, director of this film on the Spanish *maquis*, is a Peruvian-Spanish filmmaker whose documentaries show a firm commitment to marginalized groups and communities around the world (Cerdán and Torreiro, *Al otro 79*). As a result, self-reflexivity is completely absent from his documentaries, which subordinate the creative process to his interviewees’ narrations. Corcuera does not hide his left-wing political ideas or his ethical and affective involvement with the object of his work. Thus his films should be judged taking into account the points just mentioned (83). Corcuera filmed several short documentaries during the 1990s, but his first full-length documentary, *La espalda del mundo* [*The Back of the World*], was released in 2000. This film is made up of three stories that deal with child labour in Peru, Kurdish political refugees, and the death penalty in the United States. *La guerrilla de la memoria* was filmed in 2002, upon the request of another filmmaker from Spain: Montxo Armendáriz. Armendáriz had directed *Broken Silence* [*Silencio roto*] (2001), a fiction film about the *maquis*, and wanted to have both his production and Corcuera’s released at the same time. Their objective was to let the real protagonists of anti-Francoist armed resistance—who later suffered the Franco regime’s repression—speak for themselves (89). *La guerrilla* is also closely related to Dulce
Chacón’s *La voz dormida*, published in 2002 as well. As I will show below, some of this novel’s characters are partially inspired by certain participants in Corcuera’s documentary.

The number of interviewees in *La guerrilla* is reduced to six men and four women. Nine of them belonged to guerrilla groups that operated in different parts of Spain. Esperanza Martínez, alias “Sole,” Remedios Montero, alias “Celia” and Florián García, alias “Grande,” belonged to AGLA (Agrupación Guerrillera de Levante y Aragón) [Guerrilla Group from Levante and Aragon]. These three people inspired the characters of Sole, Elvira/Celia and “el Peque” in Chacón’s *La voz*. Francisco Martínez (Quico), Manuel Zapico (Asturiano), Ángela Losadas, Benjamín Rubio and Emilia Girón were members of, or collaborated with, the “Federación Guerrillera León-Galicia” [León-Galicia Guerrilla Federation]. José Murillo (Comandante Ríos) was a leader in the “Agrupación Guerrillera de Sierra Morena” [Sierra Moreña’s Guerrilla Group], which operated in the regions of Andalucía, Extremadura and Castilla-La Mancha. Finally, Eduardo Pons Prades, a well-known Catalan historian who collaborated with the French maquis, talks about guerrilla groups in Spain. He focuses on the urban guerrilla from Barcelona and its leader, the anarchist Quico Sabaté, who believed in culture and education as the solution to all the problems of the working class.

As Francisco Martínez explains, guerrilla groups emerged in mountainous areas as soon as the civil war broke out, formed by Republicans trying to escape certain death or imprisonment. Pons Prades claims that in the Huelva region entire families would flee with their husbands, fathers or brothers, which amounted to around 3,000 people. The number rose to 5,000 after the war, according to Murillo. Florián García speaks of 3,000 people in his region as well. The

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11 Dulce Chacón attended the 2001 Gijón Film Festival where *La guerrilla* was presented, and its protagonists, honored. The film’s DVD version includes images of the audience giving a standing ovation to *La guerrilla*’s protagonists. A close look at the audience reveals Dulce Chacón among viewers.
guerrillas provided their members not only with shelter and protection, but also with a basic education. Many learned how to write and read, and had access to clandestine political books, which they would discuss in groups. Remedios Montero claims that she learned everything she knows in the guerrilla, and later in jail. A large number of those who joined the guerrillas, like Murillo himself, did it for personal, not political reasons. However, these groups eventually became “colectivos organizados política y militarmente” [politically and militarily organized groups], especially after the war. They fought for the restoration of the Republic, which they felt had been stolen from them. Thus they sabotaged trains and electric lines and occupied villages. The Franco regime would refer to guerrilla groups as “bandoleros” [bandits] to discredit their actions, but they were not held as such in villages. Francisco Martínez says that guerrilla groups gave hope to many peasants, and some leaders – like Manuel Girón – became heroes of mythical dimensions in northwest Spain. Guerrilla groups kept landowners and local politicians in check. In turn, peasants provided guerrilleros with all the things they needed to survive in the mountains, and even protected them from the civil guard and the police.

Some of the guerrillas’ actions had an international dimension. For example, the groups that operated in Galicia occupied the Casaio mines, which provided the Nazis with wolfram during WWII. According to Zapico, the civil guard was aware of the occupation, but they did not intervene. There seemed to be a tacit non-aggression pact between them and the guerrillas after 1942, when the Axis powers started to lose WWII. Murillo claims that Churchill himself sent a circular to the British Embassy in which he encouraged the guerrillas in Spain to resist and continue the fight against the Franco regime, for they would soon get help from the allied forces. That never happened, but a large group of guerrilleros who were in France – around 4,000 - entered Spain through the Catalan Pyrenees anyway. They hoped the Spanish people would join
them and rise against the regime. Instead, they only met strong resistance from a heavily armed and organized civil guard. As a result, 2,000 guerrilleros died, and the other 2,000 either fled back to France or were arrested.

In 1947, the contrapartidas—groups of falangists and civil guards that infiltrated the guerrillas to undermine them from within—emerged. They spread panic and terrorized the villagers who supported the guerrillas. From that moment on, guerrilla groups started to break up. Many of their members, like Esperanza, Remedios, and Murillo fell into the hands of the civil guard and were sent to prison. Others, like Florián García, Zapico and Francisco Martínez, had to go into exile. In hindsight, Florián and Esperanza argue that their guerrilla should have withdrawn by 1948, but they only changed strategies, and that brought about unnecessary deaths. Especially the women in this film speak of the torture and repression they and their families suffered in jail, but they do not regret their actions as guerrilla members. The film ends with a criticism of the transición and the silence to which these guerrilleros were implicitly condemned. Esperanza asks for some kind of acknowledgement of their actions in defense of the Republic. Francisco calls on the central government to include the story of guerrillas in history textbooks, even if it is from a critical point of view. That way, at least, the existence within Spain of a long and well-organized resistance to the Franco regime would finally be acknowledged.

Corcuera’s film fits the model of historical documentaries for television as well. Like Los niños, it shows a high degree of personalization of history. Yet his approach to this film’s subject and interviewees is more intimate than that of Camino in Los niños. La guerrilla begins its narration with the words of José Murillo, while the film viewer sees him riding a bus and then walking on the street. He walks by a street musician who is playing a very melancholic song in the trumpet: “ya no estás más a mi lado, corazón” [love, you are no longer by my side]. The
camera lingers on this musician and focuses on his dark, old hands. Whether he is a gypsy or an immigrant, his music conveys a sense of abandonment that binds him to Murillo. Society has turned its back on these two men, even if it is for different reasons. The music can still be heard while the camera follows Murillo into a building and on to his office. There is a sign on the door that reads UNEX (Unión de ex-combatientes) [ex-combatants union], which indicates the place where Murillo spends long hours assisting civil war veterans from both sides, as well as former guerrilla members. As if the camera had entered a time tunnel in Murillo’s office, the narration of memories that make up the film begins to flow from that moment on, from one guerrilla fighter to the next, and from a village in ruins in the north, to the mountains in the east.

Indeed, La guerrilla’s discourse leans heavily on personal interviews, but also on other types of lieux de mémoire, like pictures, songs and images of natural locations (Deveny 7). Corcuera takes some interviewees to the places they inhabited for years as guerrilla members, and the camera follows them into the woods, as they recall detailed memories of that past, or sing the guerrilla song of their particular group. Long shots of mountains and valleys are frequently juxtaposed to the interviewees’ voice-over, as if testifying with their silent presence to the veracity of testimonies. Thus nature appears in the film almost as another historical witness, or as the guardian of silenced memories. The serenity that accompanies these natural images underscores the overall tone of La guerrilla, which underplays dramatization. The film shows a deep sense of empathy toward these war survivors in the representation of their memories and of themselves, like Chacón’s La voz dormida. However, La guerrilla is more emotionally restrained. Some testimonies are moving and others, horrific, but the film transmits the interviewees’ pain and suffering the same way they express it, i.e., with containment and stoicism. They do not conclude their testimonies with a call for reparations as victims of the
Franco regime’s repression. These guerrilla fighters only wish to be remembered and acknowledged for their actions in defense of democracy in Spain.

La guerrilla’s last images of interviewees show Ángela Losadas from the back, going down the same steep street she walked up at the beginning of the film, which signals the end of her interview. José Murillo is shown from the back as well, walking on the street again while the viewer starts to hear the trumpet music of the guerrilla song composed by the “Federación Guerrillera León-Galicia,” and then Manuel Zapico singing it until the very end of the film.¹²

La guerrilla’s circular structure evokes the limitations—silence, ignorance and neglect—that keep these memories “imprisoned” as a private matter, and not as part of Spain’s historical memory. Murillo’s and Losadas’ shots from the back also bind La guerrilla with Corcuera’s previous film, The Back of the World, for in a certain way, these guerrilla fighters are the back of Spain’s contemporary society. They bear the heavy load of history on their backs, and yet they remain largely unacknowledged, as if they did not exist or had never existed. Before the final credits roll, all interviewees are identified by name, the guerrilla group they belonged to, and the type of repression they suffered under the Franco regime (torture, imprisonment or exile). Then the film’s credits are accompanied by pictures of what appears to be anonymous guerrilla fighters or people who collaborated with guerrilla groups.

¹² Guerrilleros de Galicia, de El Bierzo y de la Cabrera, / de Santander y de Asturias, de Ancares y de Laciana, / ¡todos juntos al combate por la libertad de España! / Guerrilleros, guerrilleros, si queréis ver Ponferrada, / guerrilleros, guerrilleros, subid al alto La Guiana, / y allí podréis admirar toda la región berciana. / Guerrilleros, guerrilleros, todos al alto La Guiana, / y con Girón en cabeza / liberaremos España. / Guerrilleros andaluces, extremeños y manchegos, / catalanes y del AGLA, / de Gredos y de Navarra, / ¡todos juntos al combate por la libertad de España. / Guerrilleros, guerrilleros, concentración en La Guiana, / allí emprenderemos despliegue por la libertad [Guerrilla fighters from Galicia, El Bierzo and the Cabrera, / from Santander and Asturias, from Ancares and Laciana, / Let us all fight together for Spain’s freedom! / Guerrilla fighters, guerrilla fighters, if you want to see Ponferrada, / guerrilla fighters, guerrilla fighters, go up La Guiana mountain, / and from the top you will be able to admire the entire region of El Bierzo. / Guerrilla fighters, guerrilla fighters, let us all go up La Guiana mountain, / and with Girón as our leader / we will free Spain. / Guerrilla fighters from Andalusia, Extremadura and La Mancha, / from Catalonia and from AGLA, / from Gredos and Navarra, / let us all fight together for Spain’s freedom! / Guerrilla fighters, guerrilla fighters, let us meet at La Guiana, / there we will deploy our forces for the sake of freedom].
As this documentary shows, there actually was an organized and long-lasting anti-Francoist resistance all over Spain. Zapico’s song mentions almost all regions in Spain and calls on all guerrilla groups to join forces and fight to free Spain. In addition, particular actions by some of these guerrilla groups can be framed within a larger antifascist movement in Europe during WWII. Like true romantic heroes, these guerrilla fighters dedicated their lives to defending their ideal of democracy and freedom in Spain. Their personal stories include the elements of an epic narration, such as a long and difficult enterprise, adventure, love, death, suffering and sacrifice. Thus La guerrilla interacts with Chacón’s La voz dormida and Armendáriz’s Silencio roto to provide Spain’s historical memory with symbolic images of the very real anti-Francoist resistance.

La guerra cotidiana

Jaume and Daniel Serra’s first documentary, La guerra cotidiana, offers a narration of the Civil War from an unusual, but very specific point of view: that of Catalan women. From anarchist and socialist activists, to daughters of army officers or members of the high bourgeoisie, these women tell their war experiences in either Spanish or Catalan. It is the only documentary in the “Pack Memorias” that presents testimonies about the Civil War from supporters of the Nacionales as well. The Serra brothers’ documentary was awarded the “Premio de la Asociación Nacional de Festivales de Cine” [The National Association of Film Festivals Award] at the Valladolid Film Festival in 2002, but it has gone almost unnoticed among critics and viewers alike. It does not seem to be available on the internet either, unlike numerous documentaries about the Civil War recently produced. One possible explanation for such lack of attention could be precisely the Serra brothers’ inclusion of testimonies from Catalan women who represent all ideologies. Critical opinions toward Republicans are not welcomed nowadays, especially in Catalonia, where the portrait of the Spanish civil war as “a war against Catalonia”
remains one of “the most popular myths informing the lieux de mémoire of many Catalans today” (Balfour and Quiroga 138).

La guerra shows characteristics of the expository and participatory modes of documentary. It revolves around the interview, but a voice-of-God commentary is present as well to introduce and identify certain interviewees, and to narrate specific episodes of the war. Thus this documentary favours a rhetorical or argumentative discourse on history, rather than a poetic or aesthetic one. The use of archive footage to illustrate testimonies, and of music to enhance the film’s dramatic impact makes La guerra a representative example of history on television. From the Republican side, La guerra presents anarchist Contxa Pérez, socialist María Salvo and ERC militant Enriqueta Gallinat, among others. Leticia de Miquel, daughter of an army officer; Mercedes Loverdos, member of the Catalan high bourgeoisie; and Laura Rodés, a nurse, represent the other side of the war. Usually, those who speak in Catalan are Republican supporters, but the film breaks with the myth that identifies Nacionales with “Spanishness” by including the testimony of Isabel Fàbregas, for instance. She claims in Catalan that Republicans could not win because “they had attacked God and denied his existence.” Likewise, a large number of Republican women in La guerra express themselves in Spanish, which confirms the plurality of identities that characterized Catalonia already in 1936.

La guerra strategically juxtaposes contradicting testimonies from both sides that illustrate how divided Catalan society actually was when the Republic was established in 1931. For its supporters, it represented the end of “social parasites,” while its detractors only remember turmoil in the streets. Regarding the proclamation of the Catalan Republic in 1931, Enriqueta Gallinat claims that it brought “freedom for women.” Leticia de Miquel remarks that “there had always been this separatist issue,” and when the war broke out, her brothers—also soldiers—
were executed in front of their father for refusing loyalty to the Republic. As Leticia says, “they
felt Spanish, of course.” Contxa Pérez was part of the anarchist militias who put down the
military uprising in Barcelona, while Laura Rodés had to leave the country with her family, to
avoid reprisals from Republican militias.

This type of systematic violence against detractors of the Republic is openly criticized in
the film. Some women accuse the CNT-FAI of executing 200 people daily. Contxa Pérez admits
that violence reigned in the streets of Barcelona, but she argues that CNT members “were not
criminals” and blames “uncontrolled militia groups” for the massive executions just mentioned.
The voice-of-God commentator picks up the film’s narration at this point to denounce the
assassination of businessmen and priests by “uncontrolled forces” on L’Arrabassada road, on the
outskirts of Barcelona. His commentary is accompanied by dramatic music; the same that will
accompany the narration of Barcelona’s bombing by the German air force. The commentator
intervenes here as well to provide viewers with specific figures: 5,000 victims between 1937 and
1939. Archival footage and personal testimonies are also used to emphasize the drama of the first
systematic air raids against a civilian population, and later, of exiles crossing the border into
France. In any case, the film is rather emotionally restrained. It stresses the active participation of
women in the civil war, reducing dramatic sequences to a minimum.

Republican political activists describe their actions in the rearguard. They made clothes for
soldiers, wrote them letters as war godmothers, cleaned up after air raids, and did pedagogical
work in the refuges to counteract demoralization. According to Contxa Pérez, the rearguard was
completely functional; factories were collectivized and they supplied the war front with
everything the soldiers needed. However, “they” did not want to admit it was functional. Pérez
does not clarify who she is referring to, but it can be assumed that she means everybody else,
from the communists to the Nacionales. Nobody supported an anarchist revolution, and much less if it was lead by women.

La guerra cotidiana appears to be an average historical documentary, but it touches upon sensitive issues regarding the memory of the Civil War in Catalonia. As opposed to most recent documentaries, this one aims to offer a valid narration of the conflict for both sides. It also deconstructs some popular myths about the war in Barcelona, and it stresses the important role women played in the rearguard, and highlights the reality of dual identities in Catalonia. Thus La guerra constitutes a valuable asset for the “Pack Memorias.”

Exilio

Pedro Carvajal, director of this documentary, is a little known filmmaker in Spain compared to Jaime Camino or Javier Corcuera. He has extensive experience in the production of television documentaries like Exilio, which was nominated for an award at the 2003 Biarritz Film Festival, and for another at the Montecarlo Television Festival later that year. Carvajal has produced several documentaries that aim to recover the memory of outstanding socialist figures in Spain with partial funding from socialist institutions, such as “Fundación Pablo Iglesias” and “Fundación Francisco Largo Caballero.” Exilio is a documentary co-funded by the “Fundación Pablo Iglesias” too and its original script was written by Alfonso Guerra. Guerra was vice-president of the Spanish socialist government from 1982 to 1991, and a strong defender of the political pacts made during the transición.

The main purpose of Exilio is not so much to let the victims of war and repression speak, as it is to convey the Spanish socialists’ interpretation of the Republican exile, in the light of their present interests and concerns. With dramatic images of refugees and the music of a Gregorian chant choir in the background, Exilio’s commentator begins his narration. He defines exile briefly and then he adds: “present-day Spain, the Spain of the 1978 Constitution, has an
unpayable debt to its exiles. This documentary is dedicated to them, as an act of recognition and homage, and with love.” Indeed, present-day Spain is still a country immersed in a nation-building process that looks at the past in search of its identity. It is also a modern, European country that faces the same challenges as other Western societies, like globalization, immigration and the reemergence of strong nationalist sentiments. In this context, Exilio represents an attempt to correct mistakes from the past—the pact of forgetting—and thus renders tribute to the memory of Republicans, with a special emphasis on political figures like Republican president Manuel Azaña. The film also seeks to inform viewers of the major role Republican exiles played during WWII in the fight against fascism, and to increase awareness about the historical debt Spain has to Latin America for its hospitality toward Republican exiles.

As a documentary film, Exilio represents a classic example of history on television. It relies on interviews, archival footage and especially on a voice-of-God commentary, to articulate a clearly rhetorical discourse of epic dimensions. The number of interviewees in this film is larger than in the other documentaries studied previously, and it includes the participation of historians as well. Some war survivors appear only once or twice in the film, which prevents the viewer from closely identifying with anyone in particular, and most interviewees deliver their testimonies undramatically; their role is mainly to illustrate the film’s argument. In general, Exilio avoids excessive personalization and dramatization, for it aims to recover the memory of Republican exiles as a heroic collectivity, rather than as victims of a war they lost.

Exilio’s narration of the civil war and the ensuing Republican exile underscores the moderation, generosity and self-sacrifice of socialist leaders, compared to the Nacionales, but also to communists and anarchists. The film blames both the Nacionales and the Republicans for the conflict’s brutal violence, but in line with La guerra cotidiana, Carvajal’s documentary
dissociates the Republican government from the actions of “uncontrolled militias.” According to the narrator, socialist leader Julián Zugazagoitia denounced executions without trial and called on anarchist militia groups to respect the Law. In contrast, on the Nacionales side, General Mola called for the execution of “anyone who was an open or secret defender of the Popular Front.” Regarding international involvement in the conflict, the film points out that Hitler and Mussolini actively supported the Nacionales, while the future “allied countries” decided not to help the Republic. The narrator says that “Stalin would soon change his mind,” while images of boxes full of gold do the rest of the explaining. As opposed to the communist leader, Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas—a socialist—immediately supported the Republican cause and sent guns and ammunition.

The film’s narration of the Spanish exile per se, contains an implicit—and sometimes, explicit—criticism of France and Great Britain for the poor treatment they gave Spanish Republicans. The story of the children of the war, who were sent to Great Britain, Belgium and other European countries, constitute an exception in this sense. As some of those sent to Belgium—around 5,000—claim, they were very well received by their host families and many never went back home. Nonetheless, they maintain an emotional attachment to Spain, and some still appear to be traumatized by their separation from their families and their country. Like a number of children in Camino’s film, these ones wish they had never been evacuated in the first place. They have difficulty speaking Spanish and holding back their tears in front of the camera, but the film does not elaborate on their pain. The movie quickly moves on to the estimated 500,000 exiles who had to cross the border into France on foot, many of them to be consigned to five internment camps on the French coast. According to survivors’ testimonies, they were treated “like animals,” and many died as a result. Not even the French Red Cross intervened on
their behalf. It was thanks to the Swiss Red Cross and the Quakers that Republican exiles received food and medicines, and had other basic needs covered. Most of these testimonies come from survivors who live in Mexico. As the narrator says, Mexico became “the true homeland of exiles,” for it was the only country that took in all Spanish refugees who wished to emigrate there, regardless of their social class. Moreover, president Cárdenas signed an agreement with the Vichy government in 1940 that guaranteed the subsistence of all refugees who had no financial means, until the moment of their departure from France. The Cárdenas government also met the expenses of the refugees’ transportation to Mexico. All of this is confirmed by survivors, who express sincere gratitude to Cárdenas for saving their lives. Other Latin American countries, like Argentina and Chile, welcomed Spanish exiles as well, but mostly intellectuals, politicians and liberal professionals.

*Exilio* does not omit the fact that it was president Juan Negrín who controlled the SERE (Servicio de Emigración de Republicanos Españoles) [Emigration Service of Spanish Republicans] and provided for the exiles’ needs in Mexico.¹³ To emphasize Negrín’s efforts in helping Republicans, the film compares him to communist political and military leaders, who fled to the USSR leaving behind most of their party members. No names are mentioned, but images of Dolores Ibárruri and other communist figures are juxtaposed to the narrator’s comments. In the meantime, the Franco regime was doing everything possible to prevent Spanish refugees from leaving the French camps. According to the film’s narrator, Franco’s minister of foreign affairs, Serrano Súñer, requested help from Germany for the “persecution and extermination of exiled Spaniards.” Francoist and French authorities had already managed to deceive 250,000 exiles into going back to Spain before World War II broke out.

¹³ Juan Negrín was president of the Second Republic’s government between 1937 and 1939, and continued to act as such in exile until 1945.
Those who stayed in the French camps and survived were to face yet another war, and it is at this point that the victims of repression and rejection become war heroes. As the narrator and some interviewees claim, the French government mobilized 60,000 men from the camps to work in factories, mines and levees for a very low salary. 600 had already joined the Foreign Legion to escape from the camps’ miserable conditions, and later 30,000 enlisted in the French army as volunteers. Some of them died in Norway in 1940, when the Nazis invaded the country. The narrator adds that they “fought and heroically died on the front line of battle.” However, only the Norwegians remembered and honored them at the end of the war.

The Nazis took another 10,000 Spanish Republicans by surprise at the French-Belgian border. These men too “did not doubt a moment and confronted the German panzers,” but became “cannon fodder due to their French superiors’ inexperience.” At the port of Dunkerque, 20,000 Spanish soldiers covered the retreat of the allies in 1940. They were the last to leave. Most of them died in the bombings or fell prisoner to the Nazis, who sent them to concentration and extermination camps. Of those 20,000, only 5,000 managed to get to England, but they were put in camps and were not allowed to leave until the war was over. According to the narrator, “that was the treatment they received in exchange for their heroic behavior.” Once the Nazis occupied France, they demanded workers and thus 3,000 Spaniards were sent to Northern Africa to work in the construction of the Trans-Saharan railway. They were considered “the most undesirable” Spaniards, and thus they were subjected to systematic abuse and humiliation from their overseers.

The film ends with a detailed and dramatic account of president Azaña’s last days in France, which includes a testimony from his widow. She claims that the situation of Republican exiles in the French camps was his major concern until he died. According to the narrator, the
Francoist police, aided by their French and German counterparts, tried to prevent Azaña from leaving the country. He was very ill, but managed to escape. However, other political figures were arrested, deported to Spain and executed, like the socialist Zugazagoitia and the Generalitat’s president, Lluis Companys, among others. When the police forces finally found Azaña, it was too late. In a very dramatic tone, and very slowly, the narrator states that Azaña had died “en el más completo desvalimiento” [in absolute helplessness].

**Conclusions**

*Los niños de Rusia*, *La guerrilla de la memoria*, *La guerra cotidiana* and *Exilio* were some of the first documentaries to integrate the ongoing public debate about the transition’s “pact of forgetting” related to the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath. They also represent the growing presence of documentary in Spain and an increasing interest in history, as remembered by victims of war and repression. Thus these four films differ significantly from documentaries produced during the transición on the same subject. Now formal complexity has given way to content, since filmmakers seem to be mainly concerned with gathering testimonies from the remaining living eye witnesses. This is especially the case of Javier Corcuera and Jaime Camino, who establish a close relationship with their interviewees and get personally involved in the victims’ process of working through trauma.

*Exilio* was the only documentary expressly made for television, but the other three films present the main characteristics of television documentaries as well. All four personalize history by stressing narrative and biography, and they also show a tendency toward dramatization in order to heighten emotional impact. These films offer the victims of Francoist repression a space to articulate their pain and have it acknowledged in the public sphere, so that they can somehow get the justice they were denied during the transición. The television format of these documentaries makes them questionable as objects of study in the eyes of many critics.
However, they provide political discourses from the left, like constitutional patriotism, with necessary symbolic capital. Specifically, the pack “Memorias de la guerra civil” offers an epic narrative of the civil war and its aftermath that is partly based on victimhood, but it also depicts Republicans as historical agents. Most importantly, this type of documentaries reach wide audiences through television broadcasting and DVD format. They are available at public libraries all over the country and they can also be purchased separately or in a pack. Thus documentaries made for television have played a very significant role in the re-writing of Spain’s immediate historical memory and continue to do so.

The documentaries studied here in particular invert the Franco regime’s discourse on the civil war in films like El camino de la paz and Franco: ese hombre. Now the “anti-Spanish communist invaders” are presented as anti-fascist heroes and the true defenders of Spain, while the Nacionales represent the invasion of the country by fascism. Republican men and women from all regions in Spain - without exception - actively participated in the defense of the Spanish Republic and heroically resisted Francoist repression. Later on, many of them got involved in the fight against the Nazis during World War II, which reaffirms their role as defenders of democracy in Europe. Thus the Republican memories retrieved in the pack “Memorias de la guerra civil” make up a mythological narrative of the civil war and its aftermath that contribute to an ongoing reconfiguration of Spanish identity as democratic, European, and accepting of dual identities.
CHAPTER 5
FINAL CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation has examined a number of films and novels that point to the reemergence of the documentary in both literature and film. As Foley and Nichols have argued, this subgenre gains prominence at times of social and political change, for it questions the status quo, along with its forms of cultural legitimation. In the case of Spain, the films and novels studied here played and continue to play an important role in the reconfiguration of Spain’s historic memory and, thereby, of its national identities. By openly breaking the “pact of forgetting” set in the transición, and thus questioning one of the foundations of the Spanish Constitution, these cinematic and literary works meet what many view as Spain’s moral obligation to those who lost the Civil War and to the victims of the Franco dictatorship’s repression. Their authors honored the memory of Republicans, and several engaged with war survivors in a process of working through trauma. All of them effectively deconstruct the Francoist discourse on the Spanish Civil War and its representation of Republicans as the “anti-Spain.” Moreover, they offer readers and viewers new epic narratives in which Republicans are presented as mythical heroes: not only did they fight for Spain as much as those who won the Civil War, but they also played an important role in the fight for democracy and against the Nazis in World War II, as part of the allied forces.

While these films and novels are not intellectually challenging to some critics, they gave an impulse to the public debates that would lead the socialist government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero to propose a law of historic memory in 2004. In this regard, Labanyi points out how delicate the issue of memory still is in Spain, for while the Right accepted reparations to Republican victims, it strongly opposed the removal of Francoist symbols from public spaces, they (125). Thus in an effort to appease fierce critics from the PP and find consensus to pass the law, the government explained that it was not their job “to interfere with citizens’ memories”
The law was implemented in 2007, but its final form was cause for dismay to war survivors, families of victims and civil associations, which had hoped for a specific project to uncover mass graves from the war and the postwar period. This controversial task was left to regional governments and civil associations, while the central government took responsibility for acknowledging and financially compensating war victims and their relatives for their suffering. The central government’s intervention may be perceived in actions that facilitate a deeper knowledge of the facts about the Civil War and the Dictatorship, as provided for in the law (“Proyecto” 4). Thus researchers and scholars have now easier access to the Salamanca historical archives, which hold a large amount of documents from the Civil War period. By the same token, cultural productions that contribute to retrieving and repairing the memory of Republicans receive direct support from the central government, or from different groups and media that defend this law. The broadcasting on TVE of the documentary films studied here, as well as the sustained backing that the Prisa Group has given to the novels of Cercas and Chacón, are a good case in point. The government is, in fact, “interfering with citizens’ memories,” but in a more subtle way.

The number of cultural productions that address the Civil War has decreased in the last few years. Nonetheless, the novels and films examined here continue to be discussed, sold, read and watched. Their impact on the public has been so great in some cases that they could already be considered new lieux de mémoire of the Civil War. The most obvious examples are Dulce Chacón’s *La voz dormida* and Javier Cercas’s *Soldados de Salamina*. Their influence has surpassed the limits of the literary into other arts, such as music, theater and film. As mentioned above, shortly after Cercas’s novel was published, filmmaker David Trueba took the symbolic image of Miralles, singing and dancing *Suspiros de España*, to the big screen. In 2007, Joan Ollé
and Julie Sermon made a theatre adaptation of Soldados called “Soldados de Salamina (Javier Cercas). Viaje a la memoria.” [Soldados de Salamina (Javier Cercas). A Journey into Memory]. Besides, Javier Cercas continues to give talks about his novel, and his subsequent publications have received wide media coverage in Spain as well.

Regarding La voz, just last October (2009) a well-known rock band in Spain called “Barricada” released an album devoted to the memory of Republicans. It is entitled La tierra está sorda [The Ground is Deaf] and it includes two songs called “Hasta siempre, Tensi” [Farewell, Tensi] and “Por la libertad” [For Freedom], which are based on La voz dormida. The lyrics of the first, dedicated to the character of Tensi, were literally taken from Chacón’s novel, and the second is dedicated to the character of Pepita, Tensi’s sister.¹ Spanish filmmaker Benito Zambrano has reportedly started a film adaptation of Chacón’s novel this year (2010).² Thus it could be safely said that La voz dormida is contributing significantly to integrate the memory of Republican women in Spain’s collective imaginary. In particular, the larger-than-life character of Tensi brings back to life a group of women who cleared the way for female emancipation in Spain and died for their ideals, while still defining their identity mainly through motherhood.

The four documentary films studied here went practically unnoticed for the majority of the population upon release. However, Los niños de Rusia and La guerrilla de la memoria have become part of the documentaries on the Civil War broadcast periodically on national public television. Even more significant is the fact that the powerful publishing group Planeta has acquired the distribution rights for these four films, to be sold in a pack under the rubric of “History.” As educational material, these documentaries are present in libraries, stores and

different media, and thus have a very high potential to become *lieux de mémoire* for this episode in Spain’s recent history.

Overall, the documentary films and novels studied here provide new symbolic capital to the discourse of constitutional patriotism. What makes them especially suitable for the socialist government’s nation-building project is their reconfiguration of Spanish identity into a new one that distances itself from the legacy of Francoism, and that acknowledges the plurality of interacting identities in Spain. This new Spanish identity appeals to a society that sees itself as modern, European, and democratic, with an ever-increasing presence of women in the public sphere, and where dual identities (identification with both Spain and one of its regions) are becoming the rule.
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María Guerrero received her Bachelor of Arts degree in translation and interpreting from the Universidad Pontificia Comillas in Madrid in 1997; her Master of Arts degree in Hispanic Linguistics from Louisiana State University (LSU) in 2000, and her MA in Hispanic Literature from UF in 2003. In 2006, she was awarded the CLAS Dissertation Fellowship, and in both 2006 and 2010 she received the SPS Outstanding PhD Student Award in Literature.