

(Re)collecting the Past

(Re)collecting the Past:

Historical Memory in Spanish Literature and Culture

Edited by

Jacky Collins,
Melissa A. Stewart,
Maureen Tobin Stanley
and Nancy Vosburg

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To all of our loved ones, those who have passed and those with whom we
are fortunate to share our lives

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INTRODUCTION

The consequences of the passing of the *Ley de memoria histórica* (2007, Law of Historical Memory), on-going negotiations around exhuming bodies in mass graves, the Baltasar Garzón trials of 2011, and the anniversaries of key moments in Spain's democratic transition have all contributed to the extensive commentary and reflections on the recent past to be found in the Spanish media and academic publications. This interest has extended into areas of artistic expression, where re-evaluating events, recreating versions of what happened during Spain's civil war and the Franco years, and attempting to fill in the gaps from those periods have become a central focus.

This collection explores the role of *memoria histórica* in its broadest sense, bringing together studies of narrative, theatre, visual expressions, film, television, and radio to provide a comprehensive overview of contemporary cultural production in Spain in this regard. The contributions employ a wide range of critical approaches to works that examine, comment on, and recreate events and epochs from the civil war to the present. They bring together research and intercultural memory to explore half a century of cultural production, ranging from "high culture" to more popular productions such as television series and graphic novels, that reflects back on the trauma of war, dictatorship, and the transition, in addition to the relatively recent trauma of 11-M. Indeed, many of our contributors draw on earlier works to advance knowledge and analyses of the importance of the past in the contemporary Spanish psyche as demands for a side-lined transitional justice continue to arise among a new generation of writers, artists and filmmakers.

Furthermore, in a preponderance of the essays in this cultural studies project, gender emerges as a relevant and undeniable aspect of the silenced past. With a focus on gender, works by women or representations of factual or fictional women, these essays are a testament to the conflation of multiple silencings: be they of the defeated, victims of trauma or women. Ultimately, this project is about hearing the voices of the unheard and recovering their muted past.

"Section One: The Page and the Stage: Examining the Past in Narrative and Theater" comprises six chapters that examine a range of literary and theatrical works. The discussion here provides a distinct sense

of the recuperation not only of the past, but in many cases, of women's stories. Silence is rooted in marginalization. The prevalence of female voices underscores and vindicates the doubly inferiorized otherness of being a woman and one of the defeated.

In the opening chapter, Carmen T. Sotomayor reflects upon the transmission of memory embedded in Josefina Rodríguez Aldecoa's trilogy: *Historia de una maestra*, *Mujeres de negro* and *La fuerza del destino* and Javier Cercas's *Soldados de Salamina*, which explore the testimonies of civil war survivors, the dire consequences for those on the losing side, the social injustices regarding their legacy, and also the possibility of a national reconciliation.

In "Breaking the Silence: Narrative Strategies to Recuperate Historical Memory in *El lector de Julio Verne*," Victoria Ketz demonstrates how Almudena Grandes's use of narrative voice and rhetorical strategies legitimizes the previously unarticulated experiential and emotional reality of the defeated, thus presenting a new vision of the Spanish Civil War.

Nancy Vosburg analyzes how the need to uncover a past, obstructed by the imposed censorship and the rancid, static morality of the Franco regime lies at the heart of Montserrat Rubiales Méndez's *Una copa de tristeza con hielo*. The lure of this "forgotten" past to a new generation of novelists that has had no direct experience of either the Spanish Civil War or the Franco years can be seen as a way of understanding the tensions and political conflicts of the present.

In chapter four, Maureen Tobin Stanley studies the manner in which ocular allusions humanize the victims of both Francoist and Hitlerian nationalism in Susana Fortes's *Waiting for Robert Capa*, Antonio Muñoz Molina's "Silencing Everything" and Mercè Rodoreda's "Night and Fog." Applying theories on postmemory, prosthetic memory and testimony, she argues that these literary portrayals of the eyes of innocent, voiceless victims combat the fascist attempt to erase the marginalized defeated from the annals of history and collective memory.

Turning to theater, Antonio Pasero-O'Malley demonstrates how José Sanchis Sinisterra's *Terror y miseria en el primer franquismo* gives voice to the authentic testimony of real people, through the mouths of the actors. The result is a shared experience between play and spectator that creates its own type of collective memory that can be integrated into national memory, ensuring that the words and lives of émigrés, the defeated, vanquished, and forgotten will be remembered.

In a second essay on drama, Alison Guzmán illustrates how plays written by contemporary female authors Maite Agirre, Itziar Pascual and Laila Ripoll interweave the traumatic past with continual reassessment in

the present through a stylistic device that she has coined “meta-historical memory.” This postmodern neo-realist theater by women employs surrealist images, recollections, metatheater, and “living phantoms”: specters of the dead or youthful doubles that cross spatial and temporal frontiers in order to converse with the living. By stimulating discourse between the present and the past, such dramas question discrepancies in recollections and suggest alternative memories.

The four chapters included in “Section Two: Sound and Light: The Past on Screen” address manifestations of historical memory most readily available to the public: film and television. In her chapter on David Trueba’s film adaptation of Javier Cercas’s novel *Los soldados de Salamina*, Jacky Collins examines the complexities through which the cinematic text can be read both as a site of resistance and one of cultural negotiation, drawing on Alison Landsberg’s concept of “prosthetic memories,” through which it is possible for individuals to experience memories or past events that they did not themselves actually live through. Trueba’s *Soldados* can be seen as an example of representations of this key period in Spain’s history, which assist audiences to conceptualize past events, and to preserve the memory of them and the repercussions they had on Spanish society.

Melissa Culver’s reading of ghosts in *El espinazo del diablo*, *The Others*, and *El orfanato* reveals the intricate fashion in which these films implement Jacques Derrida’s concept of *hauntologie*, ontologizing the remains of the dead, making the defunct present in order to have knowledge of and face the past that continues to haunt in the present. The author proposes that contemporary Spanish ghost films produce narratives aimed at unveiling and unsettling privileged modes of discourse, based on dominant values that had been constructed, depicted, and articulated by the victors of Spain’s fratricidal war. The works question, deconstruct, and subvert these values through the framework of the family narrative in order to appropriate a traumatic past and make it what Walter Benjamin has termed “citable in all its moments.”

In the following chapter, Kathy Korcheck explores postmemory, silence and trauma in C.M. Hardt’s documentary *Death in El Valle*. “Postmemory,” originally formulated in the Holocaust Studies context by Marianne Hirsch, describes how second and subsequent generations process and come to represent a traumatic event experienced by the first. Korcheck analyzes what happens when that trauma is mediated not only by generational distance, but also by the perspective of a geographic and cultural “outsider,” in this case, an American of Spanish descent, whose grandfather was murdered in 1948 postwar Spain. Korcheck undercores

how Hardt's project risks conflating a personal family drama with a larger communal and national narrative, as her desire to validate and defend her grandmother's testimony appears bound up in the promotion of her own agency as a documentarian and the grandchild of a survivor.

Lastly, Melissa A. Stewart considers the appeal and success of two recent television series and a bestseller. The popularity of *Amar en tiempos revueltos* and María Dueñas's *El tiempo entre costuras* demonstrates that the interest in historical memory so evident in the media, political discourse, film, and the academic world has permeated many facets of popular culture as well. Stewart discusses how the representation of Spain's recent past produced for mass consumption has struck a chord with the populace, entertaining and informing them about the past, and thus promoting another facet of the historical memory culture industry.

The four chapters in Section Three: "Photography, a Graphic Novel and the Media: Engaged Popular Culture Viewed through a Critical Lens" provide a treatment of cultural expressions often overlooked in publications of this kind. In "Remembering/Gendering War: Gerda Taro's Spanish Civil War Photographs," Kathryn Everly investigates the gendering of memory, focusing on the ways in which women see and are seen historically in Gerda Taro's photographs of the war and how the viewer's connection to the past is shaded and nuanced by gender. Her analysis demonstrates how Taro's photos prompt us to consider our own notions of gender stereotyping and social hierarchies and, in a broader sense, lead us to question how socialized gender constructions shade the interpretation of war and the past.

Ellen Mayock's chapter, "*Maletas y memoria: Unpacking Historical Memory in Spanish Cultural Production of the 1990s and 2000s*," begins by examining Agustí Centelles's collection of photographs taken at the French internment camp at Bram in 1939, titled *La maleta del fotógrafo*. While Centelles's photographer's suitcase is real and viscerally recalled, Mayock then considers other real and metaphorical suitcases that appear in the films *Belle Époque* and *Land and Freedom* and Dulce Chacón's novel *La voz dormida*. The author analyzes the ways in which the characters who carry the suitcase become the guardians of life's secrets, the pallbearers of memory and nostalgia, and the symbols of generational transferal through the metonymic concepts of movement and exile inherent in the suitcase.

The remaining contributions in this section deal with a twenty-first century graphic novel and seven decades of mass media, providing the basis of an uncommon yet salient body of inquiry with regard to the recuperation of historical memory. In "'Historical Memory' as a Spanish

Paradigm: The Role of Mass Media (1936-2006),” Mary Ann Dellinger draws comparisons between the way mass media was used previously and how these methodologies have served as a model for the electronic dissemination of both information and cultural production today. She proposes that the genesis of public discourse regarding Spain’s recent history is firmly rooted in the Arts and the Internet rather than in politics, specifically, in the cohesive network of websites first launched in 2003 by the Communist Party of Spain. Following analysis of language and other elements, the author concludes that regardless of technological advances and new means of social networking, media templates of Spain’s past continue to shape contemporary versions of historical memory.

Kyra A. Kietrys explores how *11-M, la novela gráfica*, a graphic novel that explicitly addresses the terrorist train bombings that occurred in Madrid on March 11, 2004, participates in the larger cultural conversation involving the recovery of historical memory of the Spanish Civil War and Franco years. The graphic novel depicts the enactment of a search for the truth and promises to disallow the silencing of that truth. From its very cover, the work offers its readers a “Pact to Remember”: “Siempre estaréis en nuestra memoria”—a direct promise to the victims and families of the victims of March 11, and implicitly, a recognition of the forgotten victims of the civil war and Franco years whose truth was silenced.

In conclusion, the purpose of this anthology as a whole is to aid in the remembrance of the dismembered past and in the (re)collection of the shards of fragmented personal (hi)stories and cultural memories so that readers, as witnesses and participants in the recovered lived and fictionalized experiences, might become co-owners of the palpable traumatic past that continues to be felt, transgenerationally, in the present.

SECTION I:

**THE PAGE AND THE STAGE:
EXAMINING THE PAST
IN NARRATIVE AND THEATER**

CHAPTER ONE

“SE HACE MEMORIA AL ANDAR:” THE PATHS OF MEMORY TOWARDS SOCIAL VINDICATION IN J. ALDECOA AND J. CERCAS

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This article examines aspects of the memorialistic process in contemporary Spanish narratives, while focusing on Josefina Rodríguez Aldecoa's trilogy of memory: *Historia de una maestra* [*History of a Schoolteacher*] (1990), *Mujeres de negro* [*Women in Black*] (1994) and *La fuerza del destino* [*The Force of Destiny*] (1997); and Javier Cercas's *Soldados de Salamina* [*Soldiers of Salamina*] (2001). It reflects upon the transmission of memory embedded in literary works that explore the testimonies of Civil War survivors, the heavy consequences for those on the losing side, the social injustices regarding their legacy, and also the possibility of a national reconciliation.

Spanish Law 52/2007, issued on December 26th, was the result of slow but steady progress toward the recognition of the hardships experienced by those Spaniards directly affected by the outcome of the Civil War and Franco's dictatorship. The *Ley de la Memoria Histórica* [Law of Historical Memory] is defined as an initiative that

“tiene por objeto reconocer y ampliar derechos a favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia, por razones políticas, ideológicas, o de creencia religiosa, durante la Guerra Civil y la Dictadura.”¹

Its purpose is to grant compensation to its victims, to inform the public about the tragic experiences of the thirties, and to facilitate access to the

¹ “recognizes and extends rights and establishes measures in favor of those who suffered persecution or violence, due to political, ideological or religious reasons, during the Civil War and the Dictatorship.” All translations from Spanish are mine.

archives where documents are kept.² More importantly, the law called for the moral rehabilitation of those Spaniards whose plight had yet to be officially recognized.

Even though the creation of cultural objects that explore the Civil War dates from the time of the actual conflict and has never ceased, there has been, particularly since the nineties, a resurgence of the topic in Spain's cultural production. This resurgence includes an exploration of the Dictatorship Period and its consequences through films, documentaries, narratives and other cultural products that explore the repression imposed on some sectors of Spanish society during the Franco regime. The current interest regarding memorialistic processes has made the transmission of memories and personal testimonies a characteristic trait of a remarkable number of contemporary novels devoted to the Civil War and its aftermath, as in the case of Josefina Aldecoa's trilogy. Through the memories of its protagonists, the reader recalls aspects of the historical and social development of Spain, particularly from the early thirties to the early eighties. Subsequently, narratives such as *Soldados de Salamina* by Javier Cercas, *El lápiz del carpintero* [*Carpenter's Pencil*] by Manuel Rivas (1998), *La sangre ajena* [*The Wrong Blood*] by Manuel de Lope (2000) and *La memoria de cristal* [*Memory Glass*] by Pedro Montoliú (2002), published at the turn of the century, also bring the reader closer to the recent Spanish past using the memories, testimonials and confessions of their characters. All of these novels, while using the Civil War as a tragic trigger in the lives of their characters, explore the moral and social consequences of the war in their lives.³

Julio Aróstegui has studied the topic of memory and its sociocultural dimensions within the Spanish framework, emphasizing the fact that collective and social memory and, consequently, historical memory, are all but monolithic and constant in their interpretation (2006: 77). In an effort to explain the changing nature of the manifestations of memory, Aróstegui utilizes the concept of *memoria generacional* [generational memory],

² The progress made within the democratic framework by various social forces has contributed to access to information, although historians still refer to the limited access to certain archival sources. See Espinosa, Aguilar Fernández and Blanco Rodríguez.

³ “De hecho, en los últimos años estamos asistiendo a un auténtico boom de la literatura y otras expresiones artísticas y sociales que tienen como eje común el recuerdo de la Guerra Civil española” (Sánchez León, 2006: 131). “In fact, in the last years we are witnessing a genuine boom in literature and other artistic and social expressions that have as a common axle the memories of the Spanish Civil War.”

which develops in three stages. First, he mentions the *memoria vivida* of the events, which is spontaneous and direct. This *lived memory* is associated with the protagonists of the Civil War, the generation that lived the construction and consolidation of Franco's regime or suffered its repression. Next, there is a *memoria adquirida* [acquired memory], the memory transmitted to ensuing generations who did not witness the events directly and whose memories have been therefore conveyed from a previous generation (2006: 78). This *acquired memory* corresponds with two succeeding generations, first the so-called generation of the *hijos de la guerra* [the children of war], the generation of Spaniards who lived during the sixties, the crucial years of the Franco regime, and were the cohort that was involved with the Spanish Transition, with the construction of a new administration and the disappearance of Franco's. There is a subsequent generation, related to those Spaniards who made their entrance in public life during the nineties. The latter displays a revisionist spirit regarding the years of the Transition, the treatment of the Civil War by the previous generation and the memorialistic process. They are called the *generación de los nietos* [generation of the grandchildren].

According to Aróstegui, we can refer to the appearance of three dominant forms of memory within the general context of the Civil War and its historical subjects (2006: 79). There is a *memory of identification* with one of the two sides under struggle or a *memory of the confrontation* between them as the core of the fabric of memory, which corresponds with the generation that lived through the traumatic events. A second type of memory, the *memory of reconciliation*, relates to the need to overcome the collective trauma, and corresponds with the generation of the children of war. Finally, the *memory of restitution* or repair, coinciding with the generation of the grandchildren, seeks to confront the *deber de memoria* [duty to memory] to an event distant in time but not morally substantiated.

A primary difference between Aldecoa and Cercas is their generational standpoint. As Elina Liikanen explains,

“el relevo generacional significa, *grosso modo*, la transición de una literatura inspirada en la memoria personal a una novelística que se basa principalmente en una memoria indirecta, transmitida.”⁴ (2006: 2)

Aldecoa, born in 1926, was ten years old when the war started, while Cercas, born in 1962, belongs to a younger generation whose relationship

⁴ “the generational change means, roughly, the transition from a literature inspired by personal memory to a narrative corpus that is based primarily on an indirectly transmitted memory.”

with the Civil War is more distant, since he lived the end of the Franco dictatorship as a young person. A second difference concerns the temporal distance in terms of the publication of their narratives. Aldecoa's trilogy is published in the nineties, the professed decade of *la recuperación de la memoria* [the recuperation of memory], while *Soldados de Salamina* appeared in the publishing market in 2001, that is, a decade after *Historia de una maestra*. Cercas's narrative therefore relates to a later stage in the process to recover the nation's historical memory.

The choice of narrators provides a mark of distinction related to the generational origin of the writers. Aldecoa selects narrators that provide the perspective of two generations of Spaniards with an experiential knowledge of the Civil War, and presents their memories as *their* true testimony. On the other hand, early in the novel Cercas indicates that his narrator's approach to the Civil War is not experiential. Throughout the narrative he reflects on the processes that allow him to acquire knowledge about the war related events and questions the reliability of his oral and written sources. Aldecoa's account from the perspective of her female protagonists is extremely personal and enhances the interest, not of the historical facts themselves, but of the impact they have exercised and continue to exert on ordinary citizens. Meanwhile Cercas, while devoting two thirds of his novel to the narrator's research regarding Rafael Sánchez Mazas and his shooting, focuses its last part on the search for an *intrahistorical* hero, an unknown soldier. This fictional character opens the door to an interpretation of the historical events that goes beyond the names of battles and generals, departing from the official history, and allowing for the human side of the Civil War to emerge. The moral dynamics of the urge to tell, and the interest in the "other" are ethical aspects of Cercas's and Aldecoa's approaches to the Civil War, that Ulrich Winter defines as

“un tipo de reflexión historiográfica comprometida y ética, que reconoce a la vez la imposibilidad de la recuperación del pasado y la necesidad de hacerlo.”⁵ (2006: 10)

This essay will confirm that while there is an undeniable generational and experiential distance between Aldecoa and Cercas, they agree on fundamental aspects regarding their narratives. *El deber de hacer memoria* [the duty to remember] is precisely the cornerstone of their narratives,

⁵“a kind of historiography committed to an ethical reflection, while recognizing the impossibility of recovering the past and the need to do so.”

along with a desire to ethically repair the void suffered by the victims of Spain's recent past.

In the latter part of her memoirs, collected under the title *En la distancia* [*In the Distance*] (2005), Aldecoa qualifies as an error the historical oblivion⁶ of the Transition Years and decides to join the effort to recover memory, to gather the personal stories of ordinary people (*En la distancia*, 2005: 222).⁷ One of the main motivations for Gabriela and her daughter Juana to tell their story is so that their testimony remains. In the case of *Soldados de Salamina*, we find Javier Cercas (eponymous name of the narrator), a journalist/writer in his forties whose initial inertia towards the Civil War develops into a gradual involvement with a forgotten aspect of it. The point of departure for the narrators differs but, in the end, they are absorbed by a prevalent desire to tell their story.

The selective practice of memory is part of the narrative framework of the trilogy, which begins with a reflection on the nature of memory:

“Contar mi vida...No sé por dónde empezar. Una vida la recuerdas a saltos, a golpes. De repente te viene a la memoria un pasaje y se te ilumina la escena del recuerdo.”⁸ (*Historia de una maestra*, 2005: 13)

The trilogy's narrators admit that their memory is contaminated by sequences of different experiences while their story is not strictly chronological (*Mujeres de negro*, 2004: 19). In *Historia de una maestra*, Gabriela tells Juana about some of the most relevant moments of her life, while focusing on the period between 1923 and 1936. In *Mujeres de negro*, Juana records in a journal her memories of childhood and youth, revealing to the reader some additional information about Gabriela's life from her perspective. The presence of this second narrator allows the trilogy to include personal testimonies from two generations directly affected by the Civil War. Through Gabriela's monologues, *La fuerza del destino* centers on the period between 1975 and 1982, although the narrator returns to previous situations of her existence.

The protagonist of *Historia de una maestra* is a rural teacher who depicts the miserable situation of deprived mountain communities,

⁶ I am using “oblivion” to convey “olvido” in Spanish. “Olvido” with its many nuances, does not have a direct translation in English.

⁷ There is still a lot of controversy among Spanish historians regarding the *pact of forgetting* or *pacto del olvido*. See Espinosa, Ruiz Torres and Juliá.

⁸ “Telling my life story...I don't even know where to start. You remember life through skips and jumps. All of a sudden, you're reminded of a passage and it illuminates that scene in your memory.”

substantiating the important social and educational mission of Republican teachers. She further emphasizes the efforts of the *Misiones Pedagógicas*, including among Gabriela's memories a visit from a group of missionaries and the activities carried out by this organization. The narrative incorporates the actual discourse used to present the work of the missions in the communities they visited, referencing the origin of the text to Manuel B. Cossío in a footnote. This fact, as David Herzberger explains, serves to reinforce the testimonial aspect and authenticity of the narrative: "To diminish the imputation of unreliability in their treatments of the historical (and, conversely, to enhance the authenticity of their perspectives), the narrators of memory often insert a wide variety of texts into their discourses: news items, reports, photograph albums, maps, portraits, and the like" (1991: 41). *Mujeres de negro* is a very appropriate title to refer to the bleak first postwar period. At the start of her story, Juana announces its purpose: "Escribe para recordar", dice mi madre cuando le hablo de estas cosas, 'y para conjurar los fantasmas.'"⁹ (2004: 20). Juana emphasizes her family's fears and the absolute lack of professional horizon for her mother, ostracized for being a former Republican teacher. When the opportunity presents itself, Gabriela decides to go into exile in Mexico because, in words that have echoes of Larra, she admits to living in fear: "...miedo de no poder vivir en una cárcel, porque ya todo es una cárcel..."¹⁰ (2004: 58). Juana recalls their life in Mexico and presents the reader with the experience of the exiled, another painful consequence of the war that has claimed its place in memory. She ends her account with her return to Franco's Spain when the first outbreaks of rebellion by blue-collar workers and college students begin to take place. Like other writers of her generation, Aldecoa recalls this politically combative period, presenting the various historical moments through the experiences of her characters. In the case of *La fuerza del destino*, the novel opens with the death of Franco and the return of many exiles, which signaled the process to recognize the political, social and professional status of many Spaniards *ninguneados* (undermined, diminished, literally turned into nobodies) by Franco's regime. Gabriela's monologue adds missing pieces to the puzzle of memories that both narrators have presented to the reader thus far. Although *La fuerza del destino* is the most intimate of the novels, the author intertwines with Gabriela's confessions aspects of the historical memory of Spain, such as the legalization of political parties, the 1977 elections, the drafting and adoption of the

⁹ "Write to remember,' my mother says when I talk about these things, 'and to exorcise ghosts.'"

¹⁰ "fear of not being able to live in a prison, because everything is a jail..."

Constitution of 1978, the attempted coup d'état in February 1981, and the coming to power of the Socialist Party in 1982. Gabriela's lonely death can be interpreted on a symbolic level as the expression of the generational disconnect. Nevertheless, even if she is missing an interlocutor at the end, her recollections have acquired a sense of truthfulness that exemplifies the process of communicative memory.

The generational indifference is, indeed, reflected in Cercas's narrative, whose protagonist declares that, because of his interest in the figure of Sánchez Mazas, he began to be curious about the Civil War

“de la que hasta aquel momento no sabía mucho más que de la batalla de Salamina...y por las historias tremendas que engendró, que siempre me habían parecido excusas para la nostalgia de los viejos...”¹¹ (2001: 21)

The novel is divided into three distinct but closely related parts. In the first part, entitled *Los amigos del bosque* [*The Forest Friends*], the narrator Javier Cercas, a mature journalist who considers himself a failed novelist tells us about his knowledge in 1994 of the story of the attempted shooting of Sánchez Mazas. The disorganized mass shooting takes place during the last days of the Civil War at the Santuario del Collell, in Girona. During the event, the writer and founding member of the Spanish Falange Party escapes certain death and hides in a nearby forest. One of the militiamen who go in search of potential runaways finds him but decides not to shoot him or report his presence. Later, Sánchez Mazas hides in the rural area until the Nationalist troops arrive a few days later, surviving with the help of several farmers of the region, as well as three Republican army deserters, whom he calls the forest friends. This first part of the novel focuses on presenting this event as well as the increasing interest of the narrator regarding the story. The second part of the novel, entitled *Soldados de Salamina*, focuses on a recreation and interpretation of Sánchez Mazas's biography, as a result of the investigative process that Cercas—the narrator describes in the first part of the novel. The third part—*Cita en Stockton* [*Appointment in Stockton*—begins when the narrator ends his narration about Sánchez Mazas and, after deciding that something is missing, embarks on the search for an old Republican soldier (Antoni Miralles). The novel culminates after the meeting between Cercas and Miralles, whom the narrator suspects might be the militiaman who saved

¹¹ “about which I did not know much more than about the Battle of Salamis ... and because of the awful stories it engendered, I always thought of them as excuses for the nostalgia of the old...”

Sánchez Mazas's life. In the last lines of the narrative, the narrator decides that he should write the book about Sánchez Mazas and Miralles.

Soldados de Salamina is above all a story about the creation of a narrative, a narrative that revises the life of an important Falange figure (Sánchez Mazas) and the life of a Republican soldier (Miralles). Miralles may not be a real person but he is the ideal soldier, as shall be discussed later. The meta-fictional underlying quality of the novel connects to the insistence of the narrator on writing *un relato real* [a true story] and showing the reader the reconstruction process of his story about Sánchez Mazas and Antoni Miralles. The narrative's core is based on the memories of a number of people somehow connected to the two characters. The narrator's methods exemplify the problematic nature of historical discourse. He travels to archives and libraries, and interviews writers, historians and witnesses of the events, as well as their descendants, while questioning the veracity of those sources. The desire to be transparent imbues the narrative with a degree of veracity supported by its meta-fictional characteristics.

As part of a desire to remember, Aldecoa and Cercas's narratives seek to repair the memory of the characters (Gabriela and Miralles). They approach the readers with narrators that exemplify the complexities of memory, while ultimately gaining their trust. In telling the story of the *other* through the perspective of two women, Aldecoa offers, as indicated by María Elena Soliño, the possibility of knowing the personal struggle and the lives of many mothers and grandmothers that should not be forgotten in the democratic Spain that they helped to cement (1995: 37). The mother-daughter transmission of memories that characterizes the trilogy reaffirms the need (felt strongly in the nineties) to transmit this memory on the eve of the disappearance of the war generation. This communicative memory reaches a level of intimacy in *Soldados de Salamina* when the narrator meets Antoni Miralles. The narrator's interview with the Republican veteran can be interpreted as a symbolic meeting between a father and a son. In fact, the memory of the narrator's father returns several times during his ordeal. Cercas-the narrator reflects on the redemptive capacity of memory for those who die and those who have a moral obligation to continue their memory, either on a personal level, as in the case of his father, or at a larger level, as in the case of the transmission of memory between Miralles and Cercas. As Valdés indicates, the novel is a tribute to the anonymous soldiers and pays homage to those who at death have no one to remember them, and therefore would be completely dead (2007: 7). In the third part of the book, Cercas's narrative moves closer to Aldecoa's due to the more

intimate tone of the speech, reflecting the emotions of a narrator now fully involved in the process of memory retrieval. If in the case of Gabriela a vital cycle closes with her death, in the case of Cercas-the narrator another cycle opens with the recognition of the ethical value of those who lived through the war. In his final reflections, he encourages a new vision of a world governed by an ethic of courage and an instinct of virtue that projects “*hacia delante, hacia delante, siempre hacia delante*”¹² (2001: 209).

Even though Juana is the protagonist of *Mujeres de negro*, the figure of Gabriela (the central character of the trilogy) is undoubtedly more relevant in this study. Both Gabriela and Miralles are war survivors who feel neglected in the New Spain. Both have experienced exile and both feel solitude towards the end of their lives. In *La fuerza del destino* Gabriela is actually retelling her own story to herself, revealing her more inner secrets, but lacking an interlocutor, as her daughter and grandchild are caught up in their lives and new horizons have opened up in a democratic space. Miralles, while physically embracing Cercas-the narrator and confessing to him his despair about the discontinuity of memory (who will remember his young friends who fought and died for a cause?) still refuses to provide Cercas a confirmation validating his identity: “*nada*” [“*nothing*”] and “*no*” will ultimately be his replies when Cercas tries to retrieve a direct answer from him. While Miralles’s impending death will mark the irreversible transition from *lived memory* to an *acquired memory*, his denial may symbolize his generation’s disappointment with the next generations of Spaniards or the fact that the recognition comes too late. Gabriela, who learns from her father to respect others and to devote herself to the service of the poor, is the ideal prototype of the Spanish Republican teacher. It is her courage and dignity, so consistent with her innermost convictions, which raises her as an extraordinary character.

Meanwhile, Cercas-the narrator praises Miralles above the likes of Sánchez Mazas and José Antonio Primo de Rivera (2001: 196) and recalls that during his visit to Dijon in search of the old militiaman

“Desde donde me hallaba se veía un letrado con el nombre de la plaza: Place de la Libération. Inevitablemente pensé en Miralles entrando en París por la Porte-de-Gentilly la noche del 24 de agosto del 44, con las

¹² “forward, forward, always forward.”

primeras tropas aliadas, a bordo de su tanque que se llamaría Guadalajara o Zaragoza o Belchite.”¹³ (2001: 195)

The novelist echoes the words of French historian Pierre Vilar in *The Spanish Civil War* (first published in 1947 and reissued in 1986), in which he reminds his readers of the WWII contributions made by Republican soldiers:

“entre las primeras avanzadillas armadas que alcanzaron el *Hôtel de Ville* de París, el 24 de agosto de 1944, aparecieron tanquetas denominadas ‘Madrid’, ‘Teruel’, ‘Guadalajara’, ‘Ebro’, ‘Gernika’ (y una de ellas, también, ¡‘Don Quijote!’).¹⁴ (1996: 176)

Both Aldecoa and Cercas chose characters without well-known relevance in the public life of their time. More importantly, the Second Spanish Republic bolstered its ideals of regeneration and change through the good work of regular people like Gabriela and Miralles. The teachers of the Second Republic had a significant civic mission as they were in charge of setting a foundation for the changes that they hoped would bring about the social transformation of Spain. For Edward Friedman, *Historia de una maestra* and *Mujeres de negro* commemorate and memorialize the lost dream of the educational program of the Second Republic, while recovering the noble educational aspirations of the teachers of this tragic period in history (1999: 236).

Miralles is a simple militiaman who supports with his effort the war aims of the Republican government. He is the prototype of a person without political ambitions that is dedicated to the success of his people, out of conviction and without any personal gain. *Soldados de Salamina*, as well as Aldecoa’s trilogy, focuses not on renowned historical figures, but on characters that are modeled by a heroic aura, as incarnations of the Republican ideals. Aldecoa and Cercas contribute with their narratives to a *memory of restitution* (Aróstegui, 2006: 59).¹⁵ For Cercas-the narrator,

¹³ “from where I was a sign could be read with the name of the square, Place de la Libération. Inevitably, I thought of Miralles entering Paris by the Porte de Gentilly on the night of August 24, 1944, with the first allied troops, aboard his tank, possibly named Guadalajara or Zaragoza or Belchite.”

¹⁴ “...among the first armed outposts that reached the Paris *Hôtel de Ville* on August 24, 1944, there were tanks named ‘Madrid,’ ‘Teruel,’ ‘Guadalajara,’ ‘Ebro,’ ‘Gernika’ (and one of them, too, ‘Don Quijote!’).”

¹⁵ In the words of Saval: “el periodista-escritor concluye que la absurda masacre de la Guerra Civil produjo unos años de terrible oscurantismo y represión que el proceso democrático no llegó nunca a paliar del todo, sumiendo a toda una serie de

those soldiers of Salamina that he is looking for are the carriers of a missing voice (Lemus, n.d.: 122). The search for that narrative voice will have an important role in the text, elevating it ideologically through a process of vindication of those who have fallen into oblivion and have been denied the right to speak:

“‘Pero cuando Miralles muera’, pensé, ‘sus amigos también morirán del todo, porque no habrá nadie que se acuerde de ellos para que no mueran’.”¹⁶ (2001: 201)

Significantly, Gabriela, detached from the political and social events of the day, lives her internal uprooting in the suburbs of Madrid, while Miralles lives forgotten in the nursing home of a French town. Both experience a form of exile, of non-integration into contemporary Spain. The rehabilitation of Republican teachers started slowly in 1977, culminating in 1979. As Juan Carlos Hernández Beltrán indicates, the administration finally issued an order under which the acquired rights of the Republican teachers were recognized (2007: 166). In 2011, Carlos Navajas examined the dual role of Republican soldiers, who were loyal to the state but considered rebels in the eyes of the Nationalists and paid a high price for their loyalty to a democratic system. Navajas emphasized that the defense of democratic values by these military men has not been acknowledged in history, or that it has been done in the form of studies about their role but not through formal recognitions. Vicenç Navarro qualifies this silence not only as a great injustice, but also as a great political mistake with a very high cost, including Spanish youth's ignorance of its country's history. Navarro believes that oblivion interferes with a genuine reconciliation, which requires, in the words of Archbishop Tutu, the recognition of the errors made and an expression of apology to its victims. In this sense, the *Ley de la Memoria Histórica* has provided in recent years an impulse to the slow procedures towards the recognition and the reparation of damage caused by the Civil War.

Soldados de Salamina can be seen as a metaphor for the process of national reconciliation, as the novel examines “no el móvil de un crimen,

héroes desconocidos, como es el caso de Miralles, en un total y oscuro anonimato” (2007: 67). “The journalist-writer concludes that the absurd slaughter of the Civil War produced years of terrible darkness and repression that the democratic process never did completely alleviate, plunging a number of unsung heroes, as in the case of Miralles, into total and dark anonymity.”

¹⁶ “‘But when Miralles dies,’ I thought, ‘his friends will also die forever, as they will not have anyone to remember them and keep them alive’.”

sino el secreto de un perdón”¹⁷ in the words of J.A. González Sáinz (Liikanen, 2006: 16). The novel embodies the search for transgenerational reconciliation, exploring pathways to the knowledge and investigation of the facts while emphasizing the desire to balance memory and forgiveness. For Marie Guiribitey, the Cercas-narrator opts for forgiveness and with his gesture puts an end to the endless conflict between the two Spains. While Aldecoa’s trilogy is an excellent testimony of communicative memory, Cercas’s narrative is a meeting point that fictionalizes the change from communicative memory to what Claudia Junke calls the dissolution of the inhabited memory of the Civil War (2006: 117). *Soldados de Salamina* shares with Aldecoa’s trilogy the desire to vindicate the individual memory and the communicative memory of a disappearing generation that has lived with varying degrees of intensity the curtailing of their civil liberties and a precarious social situation, exemplified by the teachers and soldiers of the Second Republic.¹⁸ Both works offer the reader the ability to connect with the testimony of a generation at the brink of disappearance and promote a recognition process for the contributions of these Spaniards silenced and marginalized for a long time.

Jacques Le Goff reminds us that each person interprets his/her personal history, as well as that of the group around him/her, in a unique and subjective way in a search for his/her “own voice.” The encounter with these personal voices maintains an important symbiotic relationship with the conquest of individual freedoms, as we must act in such a way that collective memory serves to promote the cause of freedom and not the bondage of men (Le Goff, 1991: 183). In their narratives, Josefina Aldecoa and Javier Cercas, authors from two different generations of Spanish writers, contribute to the legacy of the Civil War memories. Aldecoa focuses on the testimony of exile, loss and hope through the memories of Gabriela and Juana, identifying with the Republican victims of the Civil War and particularly the teachers, whose legacy is recovered in the figure of Gabriela. *Soldados de Salamina* is a symbolic restitution of the figure of the Republican soldier.

¹⁷ “Not the reason for a crime, but the secret of its forgiveness.”

¹⁸ For Gómez López-Quñones “la labor de Cercas consiste en identificar al ‘otro’ de la tradicional narración historiográfica de la Guerra Civil, ese otro que ha quedado silenciado, cuyo punto de vista es arrinconado y cuya propia versión no aparece en ningún lugar” (2006: 54). “The purpose of Cercas’s work is to identify the ‘other’ of the traditional narrative historiography of the Civil War, the one that has been muted, whose point of view is cornered and whose own version does not appear anywhere.”

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