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THE PRICE OF PEACE: HISTORICAL MEMORY
IN POST-FRANCO SPAIN, A REVIEW-ARTICLE

DE LA "REVISTA HISPÁNICA MODERNA"

AÑO LVIII, JUNIO-DICIEMBRE 2005



HISPANIC INSTITUTE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

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- FRANCIE CATE-ARRIES. *Spanish Culture Behind Barbed Wire: Memory and Representation of the French Concentration Camps, 1939-1945*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2004. 347 pp.
- TOMASA CUEVAS. *Testimonios de mujeres en las cárceles franquistas*. Ed. Jorge J. Montes Salguero. Huesca: Instituto de Estudios Altoaragoneses, 2004. 913 pp.
- SANTOS JULIÁ, ED. *Víctimas de la guerra civil*. 1999. Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 2004. 432 pp.
- EMILIO SILVA, ASUNCIÓN ESTEBAN, JAVIER CASTÁN, AND PANCHO SALVADOR, EDS. *La memoria de los olvidados. Un debate sobre el silencio de la represión franquista*. Valladolid: Ámbito, 2004. 219 pp.
- Exilio*. Dir. PEDRO CARVAJAL AND JULIO MARTÍN CASAS. Planeta D, 2002. 114 min.
- Les fosses del silenci*. Dir. MONTSE ARMENGOU AND RICARD BELIS. 30 Minuts/Televisió de Catalunya, 2003. 62 min.
- La guerrilla de la memoria*. Dir. JAVIER CORCUERA. Planeta D, 2002. 71 min.
- Els nens perduts del franquisme* Dir. MONTSE ARMENGOU AND RICARD BELIS. 30 Minuts/Televisió de Catalunya, 2002. 94 min.

THERE are two ways to interpret Spain's recent obsession with its violent twentieth-century past: as a symptom of collective pathology or as a sign of socio-political health. In the first reading, Spain is finally beginning to pay the price for its almost thirty-year long *pacto del silencio* or *pacto del olvido*, the elites' stubborn refusal to come to terms with the Civil War and Francoism, even after the country's transition to democracy in the late 1970s. Never properly buried, mourned or exorcised, the nation's ghosts have now come back to haunt it. In the second reading, Spain's democracy – increasingly stable and vibrant, having withstood an attempted coup, endemic terrorism, and political corruption – is poised to face its final challenge: working through its past, reconciling remaining differences, and establishing a truly national collective memory. Can one imagine a more convincing sign of the nation's rock-solid health than its vigorous civil society, which over the past five years has bred a host of grassroots collectives demanding that Spain condemn Francoist violence during and after the Civil War, and pay homage to the left-wing victims in the same way that Francoism long ago honored *its* fallen? In this version, the current government's support for these demands is one more indication of Spain's collective well-being.

Whatever reading is favored, it is clear that Spain's relationship with its history since 1936 has been undergoing a dramatic change. A brief list of the milestone events in this development might include the following: the founda-

tion, in 2000, of the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (ARMH) by the journalist Emilio Silva, which spurred the first concerted efforts to locate and open the thousands of unmarked mass graves that are estimated to hold some 30,000 cadavers of civilians killed during the Spanish Civil War;¹ the Spanish Parliament's "reconocimiento moral," in November 2002, of "todos los hombres y mujeres que fueron víctimas de la Guerra Civil, así como de cuantos padecieron más tarde la dictadura franquista"; the homage to the "víctimas del franquismo" organized by all the opposition parties the year following (this time without the then governing Partido Popular); and the apparent willingness of the new Socialist government, elected in March 2004, to begin settling the debts with the victims of the left by appointing a "Comisión Interministerial para el Estudio de la Situación de las Víctimas de la Guerra Civil y el Franquismo" in September of the same year. The Zapatero government also seems committed to cleaning house in a more general sense. Iconic in this last respect was the decision, in March 2005, to remove a prominent statue of Franco from the Plaza de San Juan de la Cruz in Madrid, where it had stood since 1959, surviving the dictator's death by thirty years. For the first time, too, the Spanish government is attempting to reach a form of reconciliation by *working through* the past instead of ignoring it. That this is harder than it sounds was clear from the uproar that followed the controversial decision in 2004 to have a veteran of the fascist, pro-Nazi División Azul march next to a veteran from the French Division Leclerc – which helped liberate Paris from the Germans – in the yearly parade to celebrate 12 October.

Perhaps most remarkable development in this *moda de la memoria*, though, has been the appearance of scores of best-selling novels, memoirs, and studies, as well as widely viewed feature films, television programs, exhibits, and documentaries for the general public about hitherto less broadly publicized aspects of the Civil War and Francoism: the Republican exiles, the guerrilla war of the *maquis*, and Francoist prisons and concentration camps. Although only a limited sampling of this large recent production can be reviewed here,² I will take advantage of the opportunity to formulate some more general reflections on Spain's recent attempts at rethinking and reconfiguring its historical memory.³

¹ Other similar – and rival – organizations include the Asociación de Familiares y Amigos de Represaliados de la II República por el Franquismo (AfarIIREP, <<http://www.afar2rep.org/index00.htm>>), the Foro por la Memoria (<<http://www.nodo50.org/foroporlamemoria>>), and the Archivo Guerra y Exilio (AGE), also known as the Asociación para la Creación del Archivo de la Guerra Civil, las Brigadas Internacionales, los Niños de la Guerra, la Resistencia y el Exilio Español (<<http://www.galeon.com/agenoticias>>).

² This is the first of two review essays covering this recent production. The second essay will appear in the next issue of *RHM*.

³ My thinking about the dynamics of the Spanish transition is indebted to my friends and colleagues José María Naharro-Calderón, Geoff Pingree, and Lisa Abend, as well as the Oberlin faculty and students who participated in the spring 2005 minicourse on "Memory, Truth and Justice: Transitions to Democracy."

AMNESTY AND AMNESIA

While the ample exposure of these particular aspects of Spain's past has been overwhelming, it is not certain whether the pact of silence or oblivion has truly been broken. For one thing, some believe there never was any pact at all. The prominent historian Santos Juliá has been arguing for years that the whole notion that Spain has somehow failed to come to terms with its past is a myth, and an offensive myth at that: "no faltan entre nosotros quienes a menudo repiten el tópico de que existe en España una gran dificultad para hablar de la guerra civil," he writes in *Víctimas del franquismo* (1999 and 2004), "o lamentan que hasta el día de hoy no hayamos asimilado esa experiencia histórica, que todavía tengamos pendientes no se sabe bien qué cuentas con el pasado." Statements like these, Juliá writes, stand in sharp contrast with "la ingente cantidad de libros publicados sobre la guerra":

De ella se comenzó a hablar así que terminó y pueden contarse por miles las memorias de los protagonistas, los estudios monográficos, los artículos, las películas y los documentales, las obras literarias. ... [E]s sencillamente absurdo seguir hablando de olvido y de silencio cuando resulta imposible moverse entre las montañas de papel crecidas desde el 18 de julio de 1936. (48-49)

The problem, according to Juliá, is that people confuse amnesty with amnesia. Although Franco was notoriously vindictive toward the losers of the Civil War, the opposition understood early on that the only way to overcome the war was to renounce any desire for punishment or revenge. Juliá shows that more than a decade before Franco died almost all anti-Francoists had come to accept the idea of general amnesty as an indispensable first step toward democracy. Juliá argues, however, that this acceptance "jamás tuvo nada que ver con una general amnesia"; on the contrary, "cada vez que se hablaba de amnistía se recordaba necesariamente la guerra." For Juliá, "[d]ecir amnistía equivalía a nombrar la guerra civil. Sólo la guerra daba sentido a la amnistía; sólo el recuerdo podía llenar de contenido político la decisión de olvido" (49). In other words, the *conscious decision* to forget the past implied facing that past, "recordarlo, tenerlo presente y llegar a la conclusión de que no determinará el futuro" (50).

Juliá concedes that Spanish historians have mostly limited their work on the Civil War and its aftermath to the local and specific, leaving the more accessible, sweeping accounts to their English and American colleagues. *Víctimas de la guerra civil* is an attempt to remedy that situation, synthesizing the state of current Civil War scholarship.⁴ The collection, with sections on the first year of violence on both sides, the advance of the Nationalists, and post-war repression, is successful in that respect – although the lack of foot- or endnotes makes it difficult for the reader to corroborate any of the statements made,

⁴ How much knowledge about Francoist repression has advanced since *Víctimas* came out in 1999 – thanks in part to the gradual opening up of Spanish government and military archives – is clear from the second, updated edition that came out in 2004.

and to connect the book's text with the extensive bibliography provided. Also, the decision to limit the definition of "Civil War victims" to "los muertos de forma violenta que no lo hayan sido en acciones de guerra" (53) seems rather arbitrary, as it excludes large numbers of affected groups including exiles, soldiers, and survivors of torture and imprisonment.

Many disagree with Juliá's argument about the transition, and a good part of the books and films that have appeared over the past five years vehemently denounce its terms and dynamics. According to the political scientist and former exile Vicenç Navarro, for instance, "ha habido una enorme resistencia en España, por parte de intereses todavía muy poderosos, a que se conozca nuestra historia" (*Memoria de los olvidados* 116). In his prologue to *Exilio*, the book accompanying a documentary about the Republican exiles, the Socialist politician Alfonso Guerra – once Felipe González's right-hand man – does not necessarily think the political consensus that made the transition possible was a mistake; but he does concede that "aquella visión de futuro supuso olvidar a los exiliados, a los defensores de la democracia" (10). Similarly, toward the end of Javier Corcuera's documentary *La guerrilla de la memoria* former resistance fighters reflect on the silence that followed the transition, and the lack of recognition for their years of struggle: "Con ese muro de silencio parece ser que no hubo historia de este país durante todos esos años. Creo que es grave para España. ... Esos intentos de hacer que no se hable, eso es la traición mayor. ... Es una traición a la historia, no a nosotros." The narrator of *Les fosses del silenci* (2003), a Catalan documentary about the unidentified mass graves, concludes with a much harsher judgment: "The victims of Franco's dictatorship are now surfacing in a spineless democracy that has failed to come to terms with both the recent past and its dead. Nobody has ever been tried for these crimes. The much-vaulted Spanish transition to democracy carried a high price for many people: An evil past, conveniently forgotten through collective amnesia." In *Els nens perduts del franquisme* (2002), a documentary by the same makers on the lives of women and children in Francoist prisons – victims of torture and mass execution, psychological experiments, as well as forced separation and adoption – Teresa Martín, who as a child lived in prison until she was taken from her mother, simply cannot comprehend how, after forty years of dictatorship and twenty-five of democracy, "todavía no se sepa absolutamente nada de lo que pasó." "No," she states in *Els nens perduts*:

no se nos ha dado voz a nadie, ni en canales, ni en radio, ni en prensa, a nadie. ... [M]uchas cosas han desaparecido, pero si alguien quiere que la memoria perdure, la memoria está allí. No tienen más que preguntar, y yo estoy hablando. No, no se nos ha dado voz. Tengo 62 años. Es la primera vez que hablo. Es la primera vez que me preguntan.

At another moment in *Els nens* former inmate Tomasa Cuevas says: "En aquellos años, esto era peor que Argentina. Ha habido mucho interés, después de la Transición, en tapar todo eso: 'Eso ya pasó. ¿Para qué vamos a hablar?' Y de eso la culpa la han tenido los que han gobernado." Cuevas's own case illustrates this well: Before Franco died she began to do groundbreaking work gathering testimonies of dozens of women who survived their time in Francoist

prisons; but when the three volumes collecting their stories were finally published, they were hardly distributed at all. (Not even the National Library owns all three.) In 2004 the books were reedited in one 900-page volume and although this time the publication did make it into the press – the vice prime minister gave a speech at the presentation – the distribution of the 1000-copy print run is again very limited.⁵

So what is it – “un muro de silencio” or “montañas de papel”? Like many of the discussions about Spain’s transition to democracy, the debate about the pact of silence has been marred by conceptual vagueness, vested institutional interests, and an unwillingness to see Spain’s situation in a comparative perspective. To be sure, Juliá is right that there has been a steady flow of cultural and scholarly production about the Civil War and Francoism, but his statements that amnesty is not the same as amnesia and that the decision to forget implies an act of remembrance are too facile. For one, a topic’s interest among professional historians is not the same as social acceptance – that is, the entry of a certain vision of history into the public sphere, popular consciousness, and public-school textbooks.⁶ As South-African Justice Albie Sachs writes, there is a difference between knowledge – “having information at your disposal” – and acknowledgment, “understanding that information, locating it in a moral and emotional universe, giving it meaning, absorbing it into your social psyche” (58). Also, the fact that historians study and identify or quantify certain acts of violence and repression does not give a voice to those who suffered it. In the end, the decision to “forget” the crimes of Francoism – the step from amnesty to amnesia – was made not by the victims of those crimes, and can therefore not imply true forgiveness, let alone reconciliation. The decision was made, pragmatically and paternalistically, by the politicians and intellectuals in power.⁷ It is also important to emphasize that, until relatively recently, the steady stream of publications about the Civil War did not have any measurable public effects or consequences – no one was held accountable, and the legacy of Francoism remained as uncontested in the nation’s institutions and public life as in its street names and monuments. Finally, the negotiations that led to the transition were conducted on fundamentally unequal terms. By the time Franco died in 1975, his followers had had almost forty years to mourn their victims, exalt their heroes, and distort the historical record to their benefit, while the opposition had been largely maimed and muted by censorship and repression. The “clean slate” approach favored by the architects of the transition ignored this basic inequality, in effect perpetuating the former regime’s tremendous advantage.

⁵ In fact the new edition is still harder to find than the translated, condensed version of the book, edited by Mary E. Giles and published by SUNY Press in 1998.

⁶ According to Navarro, Juliá forgets that the thousands of books about the war that belie the pact of silence are mostly scholarly works that “tienen muy escasa difusión” (128).

⁷ Moreover, as Naharro-Calderón points out, Juliá’s argument “no considera que gran parte de la sociedad era incapaz de olvidar lo que ignoraba,” especially with reference to the Republican exiles (“Trenes” 104).

WHY NOW?

Even those who like Juliá do not believe in the pact of silence, agree that Spain's relationship to its past began to change radically five or six years ago. This raises two immediate questions: Why? And why now? The first might best be approached with a kind of coy naïveté. Why should any nation "come to terms" with its past at all?⁸ The answer may seem too obvious for words, but in fact the public discourse on this issue advances at least five different arguments that are not entirely compatible with each other. First, it is argued that Spain has a *moral or ethical* duty to recognize its past victims. While Franco bestowed lavish honors on everyone who died fighting for the Nationalists, many Republican victims were never even properly buried, although they, too, fought for their country and ideals.⁹ Second, it is argued that Spain's past needs to be known for *scholarly* reasons: the truth should be recorded for its own sake. Third, it is suggested that Spain, given its membership of the United Nations and its endorsement of certain international treaties, has a *legal* obligation to investigate and try past human rights abuses and crimes against humanity. A fourth, didactic argument is George Santayana's dictum, echoed by Carmen Parga in the documentary *Exilio* (2002): "Los pueblos que no conocen su historia, están condenados a repetirla." The fifth and perhaps most common argument is psychological: If a nation does not come to terms with its past, it will never enjoy social health. This logic, predicting the inevitable return of the repressed, has a clear Freudian genealogy.¹⁰ Among the Spaniards who accept this latter theory is Vicenç Navarro, who argues in *Memoria de los olvidados* that the "silencio y tergiversación" of Spanish history imposed by the transition have caused "enormes problemas ... que afectan a la calidad de vida de nues-

⁸ "Is memory – historic memory – a good thing?" Susie Linfield wonders. "A large body of literature from the last decade argues yes. Looking especially at truth commissions and at efforts by ravaged societies to 'come to terms' with the past, various writers – including human-rights activists, lawyers, political theorists, psychoanalysts, journalists, historians, and philosophers – have argued that forgetfulness equals impunity, and that impunity is both morally outrageous and politically dangerous. They are right. To argue that forgetfulness is bad, however, is different than proving that memory is good. For memory, like everything else in the world, can be clumsily used, or unintelligently used, or used for false purposes or in bad faith" (Linfield).

⁹ In his preface to Emilio Silva and Santiago Macías's *Las fosas de Franco* (2003), Isaías Lafuente asks: "¿Puede un país democrático permitir que miles de ciudadanos asesinados como animales por un régimen dictatorial permanezcan enterrados al borde de las cunetas? ¿Puede soportar que eso suceda mientras quien amparó y propició la matanza descansa bajo el altar mayor de una basílica cristiana?" (13).

¹⁰ As the Israeli philosopher Avishai Margalit has pointed out, however, Freud's "prison metaphor," according to which "disturbing memories are locked up by a censor-jailor," after which they "cause dysfunctional behavior and even bodily symptoms in the individual," rests on shaky grounds – especially when applied to human collectives – and the same is true for the accompanying "belief in the healing power wrought by bringing repressed memories to the light of consciousness": "There is a very good moral reason to seek truth and, even better, to seek reconciliation. But the idea that truth by itself will bring about reconciliation is a doubtful empirical assumption, based on the memory-prison metaphor" (Margalit 4-6).

tros ciudadanos así como a la calidad de nuestras instituciones democráticas” (116). Interestingly, those opposed to revisiting the past also mobilize a health-related metaphor: Now that the wounds of the Civil War have finally healed, they say, we should not tear them open once again.¹¹

Why now? Demographic dynamics are undoubtedly important. Seventy years after its outbreak, the generations that consciously lived the war are dying out; and while their children were conditioned not to talk or ask too many questions about it, their grandchildren, now in their thirties and forties, are generally much less inhibited. They want to know what happened. A second factor is the evolution of Spanish politics. Throughout its fourteen-year rule from 1982 until 1996, Felipe González’s Socialist Party (PSOE) was so bent on presenting Spain as a modern, normal European nation that it turned a blind eye to the country’s not-so-European recent past, including the PSOE’s own institutional history in exile. If anything, the past was felt to be a source of embarrassment not pride, and for a long time it seemed in bad taste even to bring it up. It took eight years of conservative rule by the Partido Popular (PP) – marked by a stubborn refusal to distance itself from Francoism,¹² but also by bold attempts to appropriate the “liberal” cultural heritage of the Second Republic¹³ – and a new generation of political leaders, for the Spanish Socialist Party to re-affiliate itself with its past.

A third important factor is the international context. Since Spain’s transition to democracy, dozens of nations around the world have gone through similar processes, including Argentina, South Africa, and the former Communist nations of Eastern Europe. But it was especially the case of Chile that ended up reversing Spain’s embarrassment factor. The quixotic boldness of the Spanish investigative judge Baltasar Garzón, whose indictment of general Pinochet in 1998 helped revolutionize international law, provided a strange kind of contrast with the complete impunity enjoyed by all former Francoist officials. Was the Spanish pot calling the Chilean kettle black?¹⁴

¹¹ Of course, the surgical metaphor of opening closed wounds and poking around in them (*escarbar*) becomes almost metonymical when used to refer to digging up unmarked graves and exposing human remains.

¹² In 2002 it was discovered that the Aznar government had been giving lavish subsidies to the Fundación Francisco Franco, one of whose main objectives is to “Difundir el conocimiento de Francisco Franco en sus dimensiones humana, política y militar, así como de los logros y realizaciones llevadas a cabo por su Régimen político.” See <<http://www.fnff.org>>.

¹³ Thus José María Aznar’s Partido Popular enthusiastically sponsored the centenary celebrations of prominent writers and artists associated with the Republic, including Federico García Lorca (1998), Luis Cernuda (2002) and Max Aub (2003). At a homage to Aub, Aznar said “Hoy podemos reunirnos, sin exclusiones, en torno a Cernuda, a García Lorca, a Azaña, o a Max Aub, o a quien queramos, sin apropiaciones, tomándolos íntegramente, con profundo respeto a lo que cada uno de ellos representa e integrándoles en una idea de España amplia, tolerante y sinceramente liberal” (Aznar). Asked whether this conservative enthusiasm for her father was not awkward, Aub’s daughter Elena said: “el PSOE no quiso acompañar a Max en su regreso, era demasiado rojo, porque Max es rojo y me permití el lujo de decirlo. Es una realidad que el PP ha aceptado” (Martínez 56). See also Naharro Calderón (“Cuando” 25) and Faber (*Exile* 272).

¹⁴ Later on, Garzón also indicted several Argentine military. When in 2002 a Span-

While Garzón's actions made the Chileans feel embarrassed enough to take the prosecution of Pinochet into their own hands, the thorough work of tribunals and truth commissions in other nations now makes Spain's transition to democracy look strangely unfinished. If during the first twenty years of democratic rule Spain was so ashamed of its totalitarian past that it preferred to ignore it and look to the future, now it is the country's *unwillingness* to deal with that past that makes it look bad in the international arena. Emilio Silva's Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, faced with Aznar's refusal to support the disinterment of mass graves and the identification of Spain's own thousands of "disappeared," even resorted to the United Nations' Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.¹⁵ And if the notion of *desaparecidos* linked Francoism with the worst of Latin American dictatorships, recent books and films have explicitly associated Franco's Spain with Hitler's Germany. Spain, they argue, had concentration camps too, and Francoism, like Nazism, submitted its political prisoners to torture, unethical experiments, and forced labor. Not coincidentally the documentary *Les fosses del silenci* was distributed in the English-speaking world as *The Spanish Holocaust*.

One of the principal effects of recent developments, then, has been the steady erosion of the long-accepted narrative of Spain's transition to democracy as an exemplary success. If Spain was long considered a model to follow, dozens of new transitions across the globe in turn provide examples by which Spain's case can be re-evaluated. So common have those transitions become, in fact, that there are now international organizations specializing in counseling nations that grapple with a totalitarian past. And although these groups of experts realize full well that no transition is the same, and adapt their advice to local circumstances, their work is based on a set of general principles, derived from ethics as much as practical experience.¹⁶

Judging by these principles and by transitions like those of Argentina, Chile, South Africa, Yugoslavia, and Iraq, there are five main issues at stake in the conversion from an authoritarian to a democratic form of government: peace, memory, truth, justice, and reconciliation. These five notions are hard to define and even harder to attain; they operate on many different levels; and they might well be uncombinable. In practice, transitions to democracy have given priority to one or two, many times at the expense of the others. Oversimplifying one could say that in post-junta Argentina it was considered more

ish scholar revealed the possible existence in Spain of extermination camps. Silvia Pisani, the correspondent for the Buenos Aires-based newspaper *La Nación*, wrote: "En casa de herrero, cuchillo de palo. Cuna del proceso judicial más firme abierto en el exterior contra violaciones a los derechos humanos en la Argentina, España aún no confrontó a fondo su memoria reciente ..." (Pisani).

¹⁵ In the end the Working Group did not take the case on because the disappearances occurred before the foundation of the UN in 1945 (Silva, *Fosas* 104-15).

¹⁶ Thus, the New York and Capetown-based International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ), while considering "a variety of transitional justice approaches including both judicial and nonjudicial responses to human rights crimes," emphasizes a number of "key elements," namely "prosecuting perpetrators, documenting and acknowledging violations through nonjudicial means such as truth commissions, reforming abusive institutions, providing reparations to victims, and facilitating reconciliation processes." See <<http://www.ictj.org/aboutus.asp>>.

important to determine the truth about what happened than to mete out judicial punishment to those responsible, while reconciliation was postponed. In post-apartheid South Africa, justice, or at least criminal justice, was also sacrificed to allow for truth and memory – perpetrators' amnesty was conditional on their full and honest confession – although the strongest emphasis was placed on reconciliation and forgiveness. In Spain's transition, as we have seen, peace was an absolute first priority, while memory, truth, justice, and reconciliation were not or barely attended to – until recently, that is. In what follows we will see how some new books and films on Francoist repression have helped modify the situation.

PEACE

Peace, as said, was the single highest priority for the parties that negotiated Spain's transition to democracy in the mid-1970s. The absence of violent conflict since then – excepting ETA – is one of the most-cited characteristics indicating Spain's success. In one sense, peace was indeed achieved and maintained. But peace can mean many things. To be sure, it can signify social stability, calm, and order; but this kind of peace might well be the result of repression of conflict – in a political sense, as in Franco's 1964 publicity campaign celebrating “25 años de paz,” but also in a more Freudian, psychological sense. In the second place, peace can signify the end result of working through, and coming to terms with, past conflict. In this context, to be at peace with something connotes not repression but emancipation, either political or psychological. In a third, more inter- than intrapersonal sense, peace signifies a lasting social attitude of tolerance and understanding allowing for a form of cohabitation that might not be free of conflict, but in which conflicts are resolved in a non-violent manner. The second and third sense can be seen as two phases of the same process: cohabitation requires an attitude that, after a period of violent conflict, might only be reached after having worked through the past. Peace, in the second and third connotations, also implies some form of social and psychological reconciliation. In the case of Spain, the desire for peace in the first sense – stability – was so strong that the political elites attempted to reach the third stage, harmonious non-violent cohabitation, by skipping the second. As a result, a great part of the population was never asked or allowed to come to terms with the past.

Paloma Aguilar, in her ground-breaking 1996 study of the role of collective memory of the Civil War in Spain's transition, now available in English translation, shows how it was the fear of violent conflict and the overwhelming, haunting *presence* of a certain memory of the Republic and the Civil War that quickly discouraged any further exploration of the past. True, the elites imposed this attitude from above; but they did so with the approval of most of the population, thanks in large part to changes in the war's representation since 1939. If during the first decade of his rule Franco derived his legitimacy from a reading of the Civil War as a crusade against a Communist, godless anti-Spain, later the regime's steady stabilization and economic success allowed for the emergence of a collective memory of the war as a tragic conflict among

brothers. By the time of Franco's death, this tragic reading, in which both sides were considered "equally to blame," prevailed. It might have been the military uprising that unleashed the war, but it was generally felt that Franco and Mola would not have rebelled if it had not been for the "weaknesses and excesses" of the Second Republic. This explains why, after Franco's death, "Spanish society made every effort to avoid repeating the errors" leading to the Republic's downfall (Aguilar 269) – and why, for instance, there was such strong support for a return of the monarchy. More important, the notion that neither side was any guiltier than the other made a general amnesty look like a fair deal. Thus,

Society was able to come to terms with past brutality through the general sense of blame that was apportioned by interpreting the war as a form of "collective insanity." The principal lesson that emerged during the Transition was based on the idea of "never again." Never again must such events be allowed to occur, and all political, social and economic movements must contribute to ensuring that they do not. Only in this context can we understand the deep and complex underpinnings of the general consensus that existed during the Transition right up until the passing of the Constitution in December 1978, as well as the national reconciliation policy that was pursued from the very beginning of the Transition. (268)

Although Spain's transition was in one sense haunted by historical memory, then, it immediately proceeded to repress that memory for stability's sake.

MEMORY

Most theories of collective memory (*memoria*) see its formation as a function of individuals' memories (*recuerdos*) of shared experiences, which are in turn transformed through exposure and contact with each other.¹⁷ Such shared memories can then become recorded, disseminated and institutionalized in different ways. Especially when state-sponsored, they can be solidified in – and ultimately replaced by – monuments, commemorations, and other *lieux de mémoire*, to use Pierre Nora's celebrated phrase.¹⁸ The question of collective historical memory is theoretically complex enough, but in the case of Spain further complications arise due to the precarious nature of the Spanish nation, which is after all one of the most politically and regionally divided in

¹⁷ Margalit distinguishes between a "shared memory" and a "common memory." A common memory simply "aggregates the memories of all the people who remember a certain episode which each of them experienced individually." A shared memory, by contrast, "requires communication," as it "integrates and calibrates the different perspectives of those who remember the episode ... into one version" (50-51). Shared memories are the foundations of communities of memory; they are based on what Margalit calls a "mnemonic division of labor," which means that while the community as a whole has a responsibility to remember, not every single person has to remember everything (50-58).

¹⁸ "A *lieu de mémoire* is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community" (Nora xvii).

Europe. While in Nora's work the existence of France as an entity is a given, in Spain's case it is doubtful not only if there *is* something like a national collective memory, but if there *should* be one. What collective ground for memory making could a Catalan Republican woman who spent ten years in prison possibly have with an Andalusian functionary from the Falange? Or a Communist writer who spent forty years exiled in Mexico with a Catholic intellectual who grew up under Franco? Both the Francoist and the democratic governments worked hard to establish and institutionalize a national memory; but the exclusions and gaps were such that their versions never quite achieved sufficient legitimacy. This does not mean that no collective memories have existed, just that many of them have been at odds with the official version promoted by the powers that be.

The past couple of decades have seen a marked increase in scholarship on collective historical memory, most of it inspired by Maurice Halbwachs (*Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* and *La mémoire collective*) and Pierre Nora (*Les lieux de mémoire*), and the Spanish case has produced some insightful theorizations of its own. José María Naharro-Calderón, one of the most lucidly critical voices among the students of Spanish Civil War exile, distinguishes between three different kinds of memory, which he calls *inframemoria*, *intramemoria*, and *supramemoria*. The *inframemoria*, memories based on direct personal experience, can be found in the actors and witnesses, the victims and perpetrators. The *intramemoria* emerges when these individual experiences are assumed by a community that endows them with a particular meaning – for example, as an ethical example or an embodiment of collective identity. *Intramemorias* can fulfill a mythifying function but also a critical one. *Supramemorias*, finally, are collective memories that are institutionalized by power structures and mobilized to power's advantage, especially when it seeks to avoid “que el archivo se convierta en fuente de legitimidad, reivindicación o conflicto, esgrimiendo objetivos que éticamente expresan valores esencialmente asumibles por la colectividad.” As *supramemoria*, memory is in effect emptied of its historical content: “el enunciado equivale al olvido” (“Trenes” 103).

In his analyses of Spain's recent obsession with historical memory, Naharro has sharply criticized the opportunistic machinations underlying Spanish *supramemorias*, but also the naïve assumptions that inform some of the newly emerging *intramemorias*. On the one hand, he echoes Gustavo Bueno's point that grassroots movements, in their proclaimed desire to “recuperate memory,” forget that collective memories are always partial and partisan and that there is no such thing as a recuperable, universally shared memory acceptable to everyone. On the other hand, Naharro points out that the obsession with historical memory in today's media-saturated society can easily turn *infra*- and *intramemorias* into a sensationalist or sentimentalist “*memoria business*” or “*memoria kitsch*,” an “espectáculo-obsesión sobre los aspectos más truculentos de estas *inframemorias* (fusilamientos, terror, fosas comunes, campos de concentración, cárceles, desarraigo de los exilios)” (Naharro, “Trenes” 102).¹⁹ For Naharro,

¹⁹ In a recent article unmasking a fraudulent Spanish witness from Mauthausen, Benito Bermejo and Sandra Checa expressed their surprise and dismay at the fact that this person's story, evidently contradictory and inaccurate, had been reported uncritically.

one of the few ways in which the memory of Francoist repression and the tragedy of exile can be salvaged from this distortive fossilization is by endowing it with an explicit contemporary relevance, connecting it, for instance, to the fate of Latin American and North African immigrants in Europe.

If the possibility or desirability of a truly Spanish collective memory is doubtful, it is in part because of the strength and persistence of other, competing collective memories informed by more specific regional or political affiliations. The community of Republican exiles, in particular, spent much of its intellectual energy constructing precisely such a memory; and one of the failures of the Spanish transition was its inability to incorporate this collective memory, as it had evolved abroad, into that of post-Franco Spain. As Francie Cate-Arries shows in her illuminating and thorough study of the role of the French concentration camps in the exiles' collective memory, the defeated Republicans got down to memory-building from the very moment they set foot on foreign soil, and continued throughout their long exile. The camps, Cate-Arries writes, were a "place of suffering, sacrifice, and commemoration" that functioned "as a generative matrix for the cultural codes and values of the nation in exile"; it is in the camps that "the survivors of civil war begin to inscribe a new national history as well as reassemble their political identity" (16). Cate-Arries's book traces, in chronological order, the early formation of this history in texts produced in, and about, the camps. One of the merits of *Spanish Culture behind Barbed Wire* is the author's intelligent use of the rich but largely unexplored trove of exilic cultural production – fiction, memoir, essay, poetry, and art – and the inclusion of relatively well-known authors like Manuel Andújar and Max Aub alongside virtually forgotten books by Celso Amieva, Luis Suárez, and Manuel García Gerpe.

Spanish Culture is a scholarly book, but clearly supported and informed by the author's solidarity with the exiles, whose courage and persistence she admires. In her epilogue, she briefly reflects on the fate of exilic memory in post-Franco Spain. The exiles, she argues, have become a haunting presence, a ghost that should not be exorcised but, in Derrida's words, be granted "the right ... to ... a hospitable memory." For Cate-Arries, however, this hospitable reincorporation of the exiles' ghosts seems already to have happened. For the author, the publication of exiles' memoirs in the late 1970s signified a "relocating, returning home" (286), and the "recovery of the legacy" of the exiles' political generation "reveals threads of continuity that link the phantoms of history with the destiny of the living" (288). This happy ending to the exiles' story seems a bit premature; many would argue that their ghosts are ignored rather than welcomed.

Does Spain as a nation have an obligation to remember and honor the Republican exiles? In his recent reflection on *The Ethics of Memory*, Avishai Mar-

cally, without even the slightest fact-checking, by historians, journalists, and documentary makers, for whom the witness's words "se convierten de forma inmediata en conocimiento histórico, prescindiéndose de cualquier verificación" (74), and in whose work "[l]a ausencia de rigor parece suplirse con elementos sensacionalistas y en ocasiones morbosos." For Bermejo and Checa, this example shows how "los medios tratan de suplir la carencia de un discurso sólido o de una investigación propia con el sensacionalismo y el sentimentalismo" (76-77).

galit argues that we are only obliged to remember those with whom we have what he calls “thick relations”: our family, lovers, and friends, as well as the members of the group, tribe, or nation to which we belong (32-33).²⁰ From this perspective, the exiles’ almost complete exclusion from Spanish collective memory, through repression and censorship under Franco and later by neglect, might indicate one of two things: either that they have ceased to be part of the Spanish national community, or that Spain has failed to fulfill its ethical obligation towards them. Within Margalit’s framework, the failure of the Spanish left – particularly the Socialist Party – to honor the exiles’ legacy is perhaps even graver, given its “thicker” relations to “their” displaced. When proponents of “recuperating historical memory” speak of Spain’s unsettled debt with the victims of Francoism, they are reasoning within similar ethical terms.

While Margalit emphasizes the importance of collective memory for the fabric of any human community, he also recognizes that this memory can enter into tension with a more critical sense of history, since intra-tribal memory (like Naharro’s *intramemoria*) is likely to fuel nostalgia, sentimentality, and idealized distortions of the past (Margalit 58-69). Cate-Arries shows very clearly how communities of memory are formed even, or especially, in situations of extreme hardship, and how their formation is fed by, and in turn encourages, processes of mythification. Several of the texts she analyzes, for instance, “share a language in which the literary allusions to the concentration camp internees serve to encode in idealistic terms the *pueblo* of the Spanish Republic now in exile as the harbinger of passionate ideals, spiritual and moral fortitude, and indomitable resistance,” in sharp contrast to the rest of Spain and Europe, morally corrupted by fascism (102). These kinds of sharp divisions between a suffering, victimized, superior *us* and an evil *them* are what lends strength and persistence to repressed communities of memory and the collective identities they undergird.

In a number of the recent books and films about the victims of Francoism the awareness of shared pain, suffering, and imposed silence fosters a similar sentimentality, suspension of critical stance, and appeals to a proud sense of *us* versus *them*. In *La memoria de los olvidados*, the proceedings of a conference organized in 2003 by the ARMH, the *them* are not only the Francoists but also the post-Francoist governments who have helped silence the victims, especially the then governing Partido Popular: “Hemos hecho una transición, es cierto,” novelist Rosa Regàs writes for instance; “pero es la transición del franquismo ..., no una vuelta real a la democracia ... recuperando el camino que nos abrió la República. Tenemos el Rey que nos puso Franco. ... [N]os encontramos con que ahora tenemos un gobierno franquista” (73). Similar forceful denunciations of the governments of post-Franco Spain are formulated in *Les Fosses del Silenci* and *Els nens perduts del franquisme*, both produced by Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis for Televisió Catalunya.

An interesting contrast in this respect is provided by the documentary *Exilio*, televised in September 2002. Born as an initiative from the then-opposi-

²⁰ See my “Entre el respeto y la crítica” for a more detailed analysis of the way in which Margalit’s *Ethics of Memory* helps illuminate recent developments in Spain.

tional Socialist Party but co-produced by Spanish national television, it was accompanied by a hugely popular exhibit in Madrid. Formally, *Exilio*, *Els nens* and *Les fosses* are quite similar; both alternate interviews with aging survivors with archival photos and footage, tied together by an authoritative, didactic, male voice-over narrator and accompanied by a dramatic musical score. But while *Els nens* and *Les fosses* seek to inspire outrage, *Exilio* only seems to appeal to the spectators' compassion and admiration. More important, *Exilio*, unlike the Catalan documentaries, does not emphasize divisions within Spain. Rather, it attempts to reconnect the collective memory and identity of the exiles to a non-partisan sense of nationalist Spanish pride – arguing in effect that the nation as a whole *does* have the ethical duty to honor the exiles' memory.

It does this in three ways. First, the fate of exile is presented as a universal human tragedy. "El exiliado," the narrator states by way of preface, "el que en penosas condiciones se ve obligado a abandonar su país, el que es acogido en otro lugar, debe hacer perdonar su presencia a fuerza de humildad y servidumbre. Come el amargo pan del trasterrado. Y lleva una azarosa vida llena de nostalgias y recuerdos, siempre con los impulsos frustrados de regresar a su patria." Second, while the documentary emphasizes the exiles' suffering, most of that suffering is attributed to either circumstances or to other nations, especially France and England. Third, the film highlights the exiles' disinterested heroism. The French treated them like criminals; and yet, they did not hesitate to enroll in the French army to help fight fascism. We are also informed that the Spanish exiles in fact played a key role in the birth of the French resistance. Similarly, it was the Spaniards who in 1940 helped the Allied forces escape through Dunkirk: "fueron los últimos en abandonar el puerto. La mayoría murió en los bombardeos, o fueron hechos prisioneros. Los cinco mil que consiguieron llegar a Inglaterra fueron internados en campos de concentración. Ese fue el pago que dieron a su heroico comportamiento. Hasta el final de la guerra, no fueron liberados."

While sharply critical of the ungrateful and ungracious Western forces, then, within the Spanish context the documentary is surprisingly un confrontational. Francoism is denounced, to be sure, but almost in passing.²¹ The film seems to encourage the acceptance of the exiles by the *whole* of Spain, appealing to sentiments of empathy and awe. Apart from their affiliation with the Republic, it provides no real reason for a conservative Spaniard *not* to welcome the exiles back into the fold. "Muchos murieron soñando una nueva España en la que todos pudieran volver a vivir en paz," the narrator states. "Con ellos, con los exiliados, tiene la España actual, la de la Constitución de 1978, una deuda impagable." This sounds portentous, but it is unclear in what that debt consists, if certain sectors of Spanish society are more indebted than others, and how the debt could be repaid. In a sense stating that it is unpayable releases the Spaniards from even trying to settle it.

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²¹ As Naharro points out, the documentary also manages to gloss over the sharp political divisions within the exile community (Naharro, "Trenes" 113).

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