

**Memory Battles of the Spanish Civil War: History, Fiction, Photography.** By *Sebastian Faber*.

Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2018. Pp. xii+242. \$34.95 (paper); \$9.95 (e-book).

**The Ghost in the Constitution: Historical Memory and Denial in Spanish Society.**

By *Joan Ramon Resina*. Contemporary Hispanic and Lusophone Cultures. Edited by *Elena Delgado* and *Niamh Thornton*.

Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017. Pp. x+332. £85.00 (cloth or e-book).

These two books are recent additions to the literature on the historical memory of the Spanish Civil War and the Franco regime that has exploded over the last ten years. Sebastian Faber's criticism of Spain's memory policies and its democracy comes from the far left, while Joan Ramon Resina offers a hard-core Catalan separatist interpretation.

Faber opens his book with an introduction entitled "Joining the Battle: Spanish History of Academic Engagement" that sets the tone for most of the following thirteen essays. He points out that Spaniards do not see their history today as they did fifteen years ago (2). This should not be a surprise since it is normal in a free society to reexamine and reinterpret the past continually. But Faber goes further and claims that the current "re-engagement with the violent past has led many Spaniards to question the very foundations of the country's forty-year-old democracy" (3). True, up to a point: this factor pales in comparison to the devastating effects of the economic crisis that began in 2008 and, at its peak, produced an unemployment rate of 27 percent and close to 50 percent among young people.

Faber's main mission seems to be to take down Santos Juliá, the now retired social democratic historian whom he first attacked (as he describes in "Joining the Battle") in a minor journal in 2009. Juliá is no friend of the field of historical memory and is also known for his staunch defenses of the quality of Spain's democracy. Faber accuses him of having an unhealthy closeness to the publishers of *El País*, Spain's leading liberal newspaper, which at one point (138–39) Faber characterizes as a mere offshoot of Francoism. Faber claims that he was safe from Juliá's retribution because he is not part of what he considers a mediocre Spanish university system, thus implying that true academic freedom does not exist in Spain. From this point on, Juliá, *El País*, the Spanish academy, the transition to democracy, and anyone associated with any of the above are repeatedly and systematically disparaged. Juliá alone is cited on almost forty pages. For example, without irony, Faber accuses Juliá of both "discursive machismo" for his bitter response to Faber's own attack (5) and of being outdated (63) because he speaks in terms of truth ("What humanist or social scientist still dares to speak in terms of truth?"). Yet only a few pages later (91) he praises Ángel Viñas, a historian of whom he approves, as "a warrior of truth."

Chapters 1 and 2, which deal with photography, are the best ones in the book. Particularly engaging are Faber's reflections on who owns the so-called Mexican Suitcase, the boxes containing thousands of negatives of photographs taken during the war by Robert Capa, Gerda Taro, and David Seymour that were discovered in Mexico in 1995 (42–43). Yet it is surprising that Faber repeats the old cliché that the United States did not intervene in the Spanish Civil War because it supposedly "carefully observed" the 1936 Non-Intervention Agreement (19). This issue is fundamental for understanding both American politics in the 1930s and the fate of Spain's democracy. In those years the United States had its own neutrality acts, but they did not prevent companies such as Texaco, Standard Oil, Ford, General Motors, and Studebaker from supplying Franco with the gasoline and the thousands of trucks he needed to move his armies. Without those supplies, which neither Germany nor Italy could provide, Franco would have lost the war. In any case, the relatively measured tone and interesting topics of these initial two chapters give way to Faber's

tireless “battle” with, almost exclusively, the sector of the Spanish left that, unlike the author and others who think that Spain is not truly democratic, was actually part of the resistance to the Franco regime and has a generally positive opinion of Spain’s current political system. Revealingly, conservative prime minister Mariano Rajoy—the People’s Party politician who froze the development of the Socialist Party’s progressive, if far from perfect, 2007 Historical Memory Law, which aimed at closing the gaps in government policies toward the country’s Francoist past—is mentioned and criticized only once (135). Also unexpectedly spared from Faber’s militant criticism is the Spanish Catholic Church’s notorious lack of empathy for the Republican victims of the war.

Faber’s desire to prove that Spain is not a truly normal European country because it is still imbued by Francoism—which infects not just Rajoy’s Popular Party but the whole political system as well—leads him into rough waters. For example, he claims (67–68) that due to its lack of reckoning with the violence of both the Civil War and the Franco dictatorship, Spain would not be accepted in the European Union today. For this curious self-attributed role as the European Union’s doorman, Faber uses Tony Judt’s idea that reckoning with the Holocaust is the only accepted ticket to such membership. There is a lot to be said about the view that the Civil War and the Franco regime are equivalents to the Holocaust, but why should the Holocaust be the only yardstick of memory and democracy? Why not add reckoning with empire and slavery? By that standard, for example, the Netherlands, Faber’s own country, would certainly fail the test, as would many other European countries. Historical memory is a fascinating subject, but reckoning with the past, sadly, is no warranty against dreadful present realities.

Writing from a different perspective and with different intentions, Stanford University Professor Joan Ramon Resina declares that Spanish society lives in a “false consciousness” (33) and that this dreadful situation is the product of having preserved in the political system the “essence of Francoism” (16). As often happens, once Aristotle’s metaphysics enters the room no evidence will be good enough to rebut a beautifully constructed theory. And Resina is good at theory—his book is very erudite and it shows a deep knowledge of many disciplines—but he certainly has a problem of applying it to evidence, as least as historians understand the word. We normally do not have much use for “essences,” preferring forces, factors, and processes. This is why I have difficulty understanding what Resina means when he writes that the transition occurred when the “Francoists reoriented their power monopoly toward the goal of surviving. . . . The opposition parties accepted the offer in order to participate in the new political game that everybody agreed to call democracy” (15–16). Having described a democratizing process, Resina declares the result not to be a democracy. A bit later, he adds another interesting piece of information: that the Francoist forces supported this obviously fake democracy to gain access to the European Economic Community (55). It is so easy to fool Europe (and those poor Spaniards)! Before that, Resina has told us twice (34, 49) that the Francoists gave themselves the 1977 Amnesty Law. He, the memory expert, forgets that this Amnesty Law was a long-standing demand of the Left as a prerequisite for participating in the new democratic system.

Alienated Spaniards may have not noticed, but Resina knows that “Spain is trapped in the past” (70), which explains why its fake democracy has not apologized to and compensated the victims of Francoism as, he asserts, the United States has done for Native Americans (36–37). This is a highly problematic claim. The Tribal Law and Order Act of 2010 is not a government-issued apology to Native Americans: it was passed on “behalf of the people of the United States.” Moreover, it does not support any native peoples’ legal claims against the government. For its part, on November 20, 2002, the Spanish Parliament unanimously approved a “moral recognition” of the victims of Francoism. This declaration is clearly less than sufficient, but it must be said that long before that declaration many laws were adopted

to compensate the victims of the dictatorship financially, as did the 2007 Historical Memory Law. These are crucial facts that Resina neglects to mention.

It is only in chapter 7, “*Delenda Est Catalonia*,” that Resina explains the real thesis of his book, and why he places so much emphasis on the “essence” of Francoism in present-day Spain and on the “false consciousness” among Spaniards. They do not understand, he believes, that the Civil War and Francoism represented a “genocidal intent” against Catalans “that transcended class antagonisms” (119); that an objective of the rebels from the beginning was the “annihilation of the Catalans as a people” (119); that only the lack of scientific culture among the Spanish elites and their ignorance of biological doctrines prevented “anti-Catalanism from developing genocidal solutions” (120); that the attack on Catalan culture has been the “most persistent” in Europe in modern times (131); and that while the condemnation of Catalans “to die as people . . . was not fulfilled during Franco’s lifetime [the goal] remains programmatic” (132). Based on this analysis, Resina seems to think that at any moment the Spanish state could trigger an open genocide against its Catalan citizens. It is hard to be indifferent to such claims. And it is at least worth noting that in the 2018 Democracy Index published by the *Economist*, Spain’s democracy ranked 19, ahead of very venerable democracies such as the United States (25) or France (29).

ANTONIO CAZORLA-SÁNCHEZ

*Trent University*