Faber, Sebastiaan. *Memory Battles of the Spanish Civil War: History, Fiction, Photography*. Vanderbilt UP, 2018. 241 pp.

Sebastiaan Faber has moved steadily beyond writing for an academic audience and onto the pages of the popular print media in Spain. With pieces in *FronteraD*, *CTXT: Contexto y Acción*, *Viento Sur*, *Público*, and *The Nation*, Faber has transformed himself into the public voice of contemporary US Hispanism. He playfully reveals in the opening pages of *Memory Battles of the Spanish Civil War: History, Fiction, Photography* that he "didn't set out to become a polemicist" (5), but after unintentionally picking fights with Santos Juliá and Andrés Trapiello in the Spanish press midway through his career, Faber was surprised that anyone in Spain was paying any attention to him. He has since embraced these new media outlets as well as the accompanying notoriety wholeheartedly. With this book, Faber explicitly encourages Hispanists to step out of our self-imposed scholarly cages, challenging us to "question the very institutional foundations of our practice as scholars of the humanities" (3) by, essentially, asking ourselves what it means to be public intellectuals and why our work is important to an audience outside our narrow circle of

sub-field specialists. It is a persuasive *cri de coeur*, one that Faber exemplifies in this book.

Faber's epiphany about his own scholarship came as he watched discussions about historical memory move out of the ivory tower and into the public sphere in Spain over the last two decades. The groundswell of interest in how the Spanish Civil War and Francisco Franco's dictatorship have been remembered, by whom, and in what venues, Faber observes, has invigorated the study of Spain, bringing new on-the-ground relevance to the field. According to Faber, Hispanists should formulate our own opinions and ideas about the memory transformation that has occurred in Spain since the early 2000s, no matter our nationality. Indeed, if our field is to survive, Faber writes, we must confront our own existential crises and dive into the fray. This is, perhaps, easier said than done, particularly for scholars who lack Faber's clout and standing in the field.

Nevertheless, *Memory Battles* aims to disrupt the typical academic monograph, just as Faber aims to disrupt the field of Iberian Studies. By taking a cultural studies approach to the revelations, disputes, and investigations of the Spanish Civil War—without pigeonholing himself into a stodgy format and style—Faber positions this book as twenty-first-century boundary-pushing scholarship. He largely succeeds in bringing some much-needed fresh air to the field of Hispanic Studies.

Keeping up with the controversies in the Spanish public sphere over how the country's divided past is remembered, adjudicated, and/or silenced is a full-time job. Faber picks out the juiciest nuggets and summarizes the ugliest fights in an effort to provide an overview, illustrated with captivating details and up-to-date examples, of what has been going on in what he calls Spain's "memory battles" over the past two decades. Faber covers a lot of ground: photography, intellectual debates, Spanish historiography, progressive activists and artists, and fictional interpretations. He introduces the reader to a who's-who of figures who have variously shaped how we understand Spain: Robert Capa, Gerda Taro, Paul Preston, Emilio Silva, Montse Armengou, Antonio Muñoz Molina, Ángel Viñas, Javier Cercas, and Javier Marías, to name only a few. Through profiles, analysis, and interviews, *Memory Battles* moves among time periods and genres to tell a story about the way Spain reckons with its own self-image and how it is seen from afar. This approach can at times feel disjointed, as the author reaches back and forth between the analog media of the Spanish Civil War period and the digital proliferation of the contemporary era to construct a notion of what it means to study history and memory in Spain today. Yet, by not lingering for too long on any one figure or topic, Faber also provides a wealth of starting points, a density of information and opinion that is poised to stir the interests of anyone curious about virtually any aspect of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Spain.

Faber's opening chapters on the visual archive of the Spanish Civil War are particularly strong. He traces the origins of iconic Civil War photos, demonstrating how they were appropriated both by defenders of the Spanish Republic and the Nationalists in photo montages and propaganda posters that communicated a particular narrative about the war.

The second section entails a discussion of a theoretical "memory battle" among public intellectuals and historians inside and outside of Spain, in particular Santos Juliá, Manuel Reyes Mate, and Beatriz Sarlo. Here, Faber synthesizes the near-constant push and pull over history and memory in Spain and how these tug-of-wars are echoed internationally. In dismantling the notion (and terminology) of a "pact of silence" during the Spanish transition, while also detailing important moments such as the foundation of the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (ARHM), the backlash against Judge Baltasar Garzón, and the judgement handed down by the United Nations' Committee on Enforced Disappearances regarding Spain's human rights abuses, Faber gives the reader a long-lens view of historical memory in Spain and its legal implications over the last two decades.

For the book's third section, Faber interviews nine historians and artist-activists about their roles in reframing Spain's past. Although the author has selected a dynamic assortment of intellectuals for these interviews, it is unfortunate that of the nine, only two (Helen Graham and Montse Armengou) are women. Given the relevance of historical and ongoing gender-based violence, debates over the role of women in the public sphere (including the government), and gendered notions of intellectual engagement in Spain—Faber employs Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca's term "discursive machismo" as the guiding tenet of the debates in the Spanish press (5), which speaks volumes to the critical view Faber offers of contemporary Spanish culture—gender is an unfortunate blind spot in these discussions. Nevertheless, these critical voices from the front lines of Spain's debates about its past provide for an engaging and elucidating dialogue.

The fourth section, "Intellectuals at War," covers the infighting among a trio of Spanish men of letters (sadly, there is no female counterbalance here, either) as they have opined on Spain's literary, social, and intellectual landscape. Faber dismisses Andrés Trapiello as an overly-confident literary critic who wears his subjectivity proudly but, in the author's estimation, deploys it inaccurately when resurrecting Nationalist authors and dismissing Republican ones. Journalist Gregorio Morán's analysis of Spain's "culture of mediocracy," as Faber puts it, alights on some of the same themes as Trapiello—Morán relies on Max Aub's brilliance; Trapiello calls Aub a hack—in a subjective style common to both authors. As for Antonio Muñoz Molina, Faber rejects the novelist's presumed naiveté and moral grandstanding as overly simplistic, though he appreciates Muñoz Molina's attempt to give a critical reading of crisis-era Spain.

In the final section, Faber moves the book closer to a more traditional literary study of the vast body of novels on the Spanish Civil War. However, the author's lively critiques of Javier Marías and Javier Cercas rest not on literary analysis so much as on how each novelist engages—or is disengaged—with the political and social context of modern-day Spain.

This context is, at the core, Faber's guiding impulse. As the author enjoins us in closing, history and politics "are fields that should be of interest to everyone because they are everyone's concern" (209). *Memory Battles* reminds us that our scholarly preoccupations can be, in fact, relevant to an audience outside the academy: it falls to each of us to make them accessible.

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