

## Memory and Modernity in Democratic Spain: The Difficulty of Coming to Terms with the Spanish Civil War

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**Abstract** The essay argues that modernity is best understood not as the cultural expression of capitalist modernization, but as a particular set of relations of present to past. It examines the varying attitudes toward the violent past of the civil war that have characterized Spain since the Franco dictatorship and continuing to the present day. The obsessive memorialization of the Nationalist war dead throughout the Franco dictatorship led, at the time of the transition to democracy, to a desire to break with the past; it was not, as is often argued, a determination to forget, but a decision not to let the past affect the future. Thus attempts toward the end of the Franco dictatorship to deal cinematically with this violent heritage were followed by a ten-year gap, until the appearance in the mid-1980s of a number of novels and films representing the civil war and their escalation since the late 1990s to create a memory boom, which has resulted in the publication of a large number of testimonies. The essay questions whether trauma theory, which has been so important in Holocaust studies, provides an adequate model for understanding the belated appearance of these memories, arguing that the reason is more likely to be a previous lack of willing interlocutors. Nevertheless, it concludes that the present urge to recount every detail of the past is less effective in communicating the horror of the war and its repression than are those accounts—in film at the end of the dictatorship and in fiction in the mid-1980s, with occasional more recent examples—which acknowledge the difficulty of narrativizing the violent past as well as the importance of transgenerational transmission.

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This essay will explore the intersection of two issues: the relationship of memory to modernity and the memorialization of the Spanish civil war in literature, film, and testimonies produced in Spain since the mid-1970s. The connection between these two issues is important, since Spain's history from the Enlightenment on has tended to be evaluated, by historians and literary scholars alike, in terms of a certain model of modernity based on capitalist modernization, which supposedly was realized perfectly in the countries of northern Europe. The result has been an assumption that the modern history of Spain has been marked by a failure to achieve modernity—an assumption explicitly articulated by the title of Eduardo Subirats's classic cultural analysis of the beginnings of Spanish modernity, *La Ilustración insuficiente* [*The Insufficient Enlightenment*] (1981).<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, particularly since 2000, when the academic journal *Daedalus* published a monographic issue titled *Multiple Modernities* (Eisenstadt 2000), the notion that there is only one model of modernity, represented by the nations of northern Europe, has been challenged by cultural historians of those parts of the world relegated to marginality by such a model. In the Hispanic field, a key example is Julio Ramos's study of nineteenth-century Latin America, *Divergent Modernities* (2001). However, the notion of "multiple modernities" does not in itself avoid the problem of supposing that certain models of modernity—those represented by the hegemonic Western nations—are superior to others. So long as modernity continues to be defined in terms of capitalist development, it presupposes a teleological scheme which, although it may evolve at different speeds, in some cases going via fascism or socialism,<sup>2</sup> nevertheless has as its inevitable goal the

1. Subirats's analysis is an eloquent expression of the intellectual position adopted by Spanish liberals who have argued that the remedy to Spain's lack of political and economic stability in the modern period is the adoption of northern European philosophical, political, and economic models. The insistence of such liberal analysts on Spain's failed modernity has tended to encourage two divergent responses: a fatalistic belief that Spain's "belatedness" is irremediable or a desire for fast-track modernization that sees the Spanish past as something to be relegated to oblivion as fast as possible. Paradoxically, the idea of Spain's failed modernity has been perpetuated also by the political Right in Spain—dominated by the church, industrialists, and the landowning oligarchy—which has argued that this failed modernity is the source of Spain's moral superiority to the nations of northern Europe. For an excellent analysis of the historical construction and evolution of the pro- and anti-European positions, see Juliá 2004. Shubert (1990) and Cruz (1996) have argued convincingly that the fact that Spain did not develop a substantial middle class, defined in economic terms as an entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, until well into the twentieth century does not mean that Spain had not, already by the mid-nineteenth century, become a society in which liberal, bourgeois ideals had become the norm. In other words, Cruz and Shubert argue, it is possible for a country to be modern in cultural terms without having achieved capitalist modernization.

2. See, for example, Ben-Ghiat's (2001) analysis of Mussolini's Italy as an example of what she calls "fascist modernities" (in the plural). In his controversial book *The End of History*

establishment of global capitalism. Against this assumption, I would like to suggest that it might be more useful to think about **modernity**—whether in Spain or elsewhere—in terms not of capitalist modernization but of **attitudes toward the relation of present to past**.<sup>3</sup>

This unhinging of the term *modernity* from that of *modernization* supposes a view of modernity based on cultural rather than economic factors. What interests me in such a model of modernity is that it allows us to move away from the assumption that modernity requires a rupture with the past. The notion of progress, central to the liberal philosophy which has underpinned modernity, was based on the idea of a necessary rupture with a stable order based on birthright, in favor of a new mobility based on merit, incarnated in the “self-made man” who was able, through his own efforts, to break with origins and create new wealth.<sup>4</sup> For liberalism is the philosophy of capitalism. As Walter Benjamin (1983: 172) noted, Baudelaire was a brilliant analyst of modernity because he perceived how it depended on a capitalist order based on fashion: that is, on ever-faster cycles of built-in obsolescence. A problematic by-product of this notion that modernity requires the jettisoning of the past is that it supposes that any desire to preserve the past is by definition reactionary; in other words, that conservation is politically conservative.<sup>5</sup> And yet the cultural history of modernity is full of writers and artists who have expressed an attachment to the past or have protested against the compulsory obsolescence required by modernity, without necessarily being conservative in political terms.

The relevance of this discussion for my argument is that any model of modernity based on the capitalist idea of compulsory obsolescence has no place for memory. **However, if we view modernity not in terms of capitalist development but as a particular set of attitudes toward the relationship of present to past, it becomes possible to elaborate a conception of modernity that, while it accepts the importance of moving on and continues to believe in the possibility of creating a better future, is also respectful of the need to acknowledge the past.** I say “set of attitudes” in the plural because, while the past history of European modernity has mostly been based on the sup-

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*and the Last Man* (1992), Fukuyama argued that, with the fall of the former Communist regimes of the Soviet bloc, history had reached its ultimate goal of the establishment of global capitalism.

3. I thank my former French cultural historian colleague at the University of Southampton, Jackie Clarke, for her insightful thoughts on this issue.

4. For an account of the cultural impact of liberal philosophy in nineteenth-century Spain, see Labanyi 2000: 31–87.

5. For a brilliant philosophical discussion of the binary “reactionary”/“progressive” as a product of modernity, see Moreiras 2004.

position that the past must be left behind, it has also produced a significant body of cultural work based on the celebration and elaboration of memory. It is no coincidence that it has been under late modernity<sup>6</sup>—in the last decades of the twentieth century—that, as the political master narratives of progress were called into question, **memory has reemerged as a major topic of intellectual discussion.**<sup>7</sup>

The relationship of the dictatorship of Generalísimo Francisco Franco (1939–75) to modernity is a vexed question. The regime has generally been seen as rejecting modernity since its nationalist rhetoric attempted to mask the regime’s illicit status, as one born of military rebellion against the democratically elected Second Republic, by claiming to represent a return to mythical origins, which the Republic had supposedly betrayed.<sup>8</sup> In fact, the regime emerged out of an uneasy military alliance (which adopted the label “Nationalist”) between traditional landowners, the church, monarchists, big business, and fascism. While the first three (and particularly the first two) had a vested interest in clinging to the past, the last two were advocates of technological modernization (and, in the case of fascism, of a certain kind of social modernization within totalitarian structures). All of these factions were, however, united by their common dislike of the Republic, instituted in 1931, because of its attempts to better the economic and legal positions of the working classes and women (as well as its concession of autonomy to Catalonia).<sup>9</sup> This Nationalist alliance, which rebelled against the Republic in 1936 and came to power on its military victory in 1939, was driven by a desire to negate the Enlightenment belief in universal human rights precisely in order to implement capitalist modernization to the maximum benefit of the dominant classes through the use of slave labor (political prisoners) and state-controlled unions. For this reason, the historian Michael Richards (1998) has argued, controversially but convincingly, that the Franco dictatorship should be seen as an example of conservative modernity and not as a break with modernity as such.

This conservative modernity translated ideologically into a contradic-

6. I use the term *late modernity* rather than *postmodernity* because I am arguing for a version of modernity that is able to acknowledge the past while continuing to work for a better future. This is very different from the ludic relativism assumed by the term *postmodernity*.

7. For an excellent overview of recent debates on memory, see Radstone 2000; Radstone and Hodgkin 2006; Hodgkin and Radstone 2006.

8. For analysis of the appeal to a myth of origins in Francoist ideology, see Labanyi 1989: 35–41. In her major study of the moral values imposed by the Franco dictatorship, Martin Gaité (1987: 17–37) stresses its cult of the past.

9. Autonomy was granted to Catalonia in 1932 and to the Basque Country in 1936, two months after the Nationalist uprising. Discussions on Galician autonomy were aborted when the region fell to the Nationalists in the first few days of the civil war.

tory attitude to the past. On the one hand, in order to satisfy the antimodern factions that supported it, particularly the church, the regime's ideology was based on an exaltation of the premodern values of the fifteenth-century Catholic kings who united the nation by driving out religious heterodoxy (Jews and Muslims) as well as sponsoring Spain's early modern empire in the Americas. On the other hand, the regime adopted a typically fascist rhetoric, justifying its violence as a break with the past necessary to a national "rebirth," proclaiming itself the "New State" and restarting the calendar from Triumphal Year One (1939). As the regime's foundational moment—the instrument for wiping the historical slate clean—the civil war was obsessively memorialized, exclusively from the victors' point of view, throughout the thirty-six years of dictatorship (see Aguilar Fernández 1996: 61–208). The Franco regime's obsession with memorializing the "Nationalist crusade" (as the civil war was renamed) ensured that the transition to democracy<sup>10</sup> which took place after Franco's death in 1975 was, by way of reaction, characterized by a desire to break with this violent past. It has become a commonplace that Spain's transition to democracy was successfully implemented thanks to the "pacto del olvido" (pact of oblivion) whereby all political parties agreed to forget the civil war in order to reach consensus.<sup>11</sup> Santos Juliá (1999: 11–54) has argued that the "pacto del olvido" was not a decision to forget the past, but a decision not to let it shape the future. As he notes, there was no forgetting, for since 1975 historians have produced a vast output documenting the wartime reprisals (those which took place in the Republican zone as well as the much more extensive and systematized extermination campaign organized by the Nationalists) and its follow-up during the Franco dictatorship, particularly in the period 1939–51.<sup>12</sup>

10. The period known in Spanish as "la transición" is generally seen as lasting from Franco's death in 1975 to the election of the Socialist government in 1982. The negotiation of the political transition was effected by politicians from within the Franco regime, notably Gonzalo Suárez, who, as head of the newly founded center right party, Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD, or, Union of the Democratic Center), became prime minister after the first democratic elections in 1977, successfully negotiating through parliament the 1978 democratic constitution.

11. The historian responsible for institutionalizing this notion is Aguilar Fernández (1996). The alleged "pact of oblivion" of the transition, enshrined in the 1977 amnesty law which pardoned all political crimes (including those of the Nationalist forces in the war and those of the ensuing dictatorship), has become a major target of criticism in the recent campaigns to exhume the victims of the Francoist repression buried in unmarked mass graves (see Armengou and Belis 2004: 243–51). The existence of a "pact of oblivion" during the transition is taken for granted in recent studies of collective memory and cultural representation in contemporary Spain (for example, Colmeiro 2005: 18–22).

12. The most thorough investigation of the wartime and postwar repression estimates the

I suggest that the “pact of oblivion” has become such a commonplace because it allows the transition to be seen as a break with the past, masking—conveniently for both political Right and Left—the fact that it was effected by politicians from within the former Francoist state apparatus. It was crucial for the interested parties to see the transition as a break with the past, not only in order to claim that Spain was freeing itself from nearly forty years of dictatorship, but also in order to claim that the country was making a “leap” into modernity—something which, as noted above, is conventionally seen as requiring a rupture with the past. This “leap” into modernity was understood primarily in cultural terms, for accelerated economic modernization had already been implemented under the dictatorship; particularly so after the rise to power in 1959 of the Opus Dei technocrats, who opened the Spanish economy up to Western markets.<sup>13</sup> The economic boom of the transition period, lasting to the mid-1980s, was thus a continuation of that previously experienced in the later decades of the dictatorship. The break marked by the transition was cultural in the sense that Spaniards engaged in a frantic process of catching up with lifestyles seen as the hallmark of Western modernity (Graham and Labanyi 1995: 315–20, 326–30, 408–10). Such lifestyles were conceived as requiring the excision of all reference to the past. Thus the Socialist government of 1982–96 launched a public relations campaign to market abroad Spanish cultural products—for example, the films of Pedro Almodóvar—that promoted a view of Spain as a young, brash, ultramodern nation that outdid its European neighbors in its iconoclasm.

Some outstanding films made in the last years of the dictatorship—Victor Erice’s *El espíritu de la colmena* (*The Spirit of the Beehive*) (1973), Carlos Saura’s *Cría cuervos* (*Raise Ravens*)<sup>14</sup> (1975)—did tackle the repressive past, and historical studies of the civil war were written throughout the post-

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number of those executed during the war in the Republican zone at around 50,000 and in the Nationalist zone at around 100,000; postwar executions by the dictatorship are estimated at a further 40,000, the last being a few months before Franco’s death in 1975 (Juliá 1999: 407–13). The figures for victims of Republican repression are likely to be accurate, since deaths were registered; those for victims of Nationalist repression are likely to be an underestimate, since they either went unrecorded (in the early months of the war) or (from late 1936) were attributed to causes—e.g., “hemorrhage”—that masked the violence.

13. In 1959 members of Opus Dei secured key ministerial positions. From this date, they issued a series of five-year plans designed to implement fast-track capitalist modernization on an unprecedented scale (in the 1960s Spain’s economic growth rate was greater than that of any other country except Japan). Opus Dei, founded by the Spaniard Escrivá de Balaguer in 1928, is a lay Catholic organization devoted to furthering a mix of fundamentalist Catholicism and neoliberalism by placing its members in key positions of state power (Graham and Labanyi 1995: 262, 423).

14. The title refers to a Spanish proverb: “Raise ravens and they will peck your eyes out.”

dictatorship period. But few films<sup>15</sup> and almost no fiction writing<sup>16</sup> dealt with the subject in the first ten years after Franco's death, when the promotion of an outrageous hypermodernity prevailed. The mid-1980s, however, saw the appearance of two major novels on the civil war: these were first novels by young writers born in the mid-1950s (Julio Llamazares, Antonio Muñoz Molina), able to adopt a more detached stance toward the topic, and—as we shall see—driven by a genealogical imperative to transmit to future generations tragic events experienced by their elders. Films on the war also began to appear regularly from the mid-1980s; key examples are Jaime Chávarri's *Las bicicletas son para el verano* (*Bicycles Are for Summer*) (1984), Carlos Saura's *¡Ay Carmela!*<sup>17</sup> (1990), and Vicente Aranda's *Libertarias* (*Anarchist Women*) (1995). Contrary to the situation with the novel, these films were the work of established directors (Aranda was born in 1921, Saura in 1932, Chávarri in 1943) seemingly driven by a nostalgic desire to romanticize the Republic. Since the late 1990s, escalating after 2001, there has been a flood of novels and collections of testimonies on the wartime and postwar repression as well as a significant number of fiction films and documentaries. Among these, this essay will discuss the novels *O lapis do carpinteiro* (*The Carpenter's Pencil*) by Manuel Rivas (1998a; written in Galician), *Soldados de Salamina* (*Soldiers of Salamis*) by Javier Cercas (2001), and *La voz dormida* (*The Sleeping Voice*) by Dulce Chacón (2002). It will also discuss the fiction films *Silencio roto* (*Broken Silence*) (Armendáriz 2000) and *El espinazo del diablo* (*The Devil's Backbone*) (del Toro 2001) as well as the film version, by David Trueba (2003), of Cercas's novel *Soldiers of Salamis*. Brief mention will be made of a small number of edited volumes of testimonies and documentary films.

This recent memory boom needs to be set in the context of the wider debates on “historical memory” (the term used in Spain to refer to the memory of the Republic and Francoist repression) that have occupied the Spanish public sphere at the start of the twenty-first century. The process of “digging up the past” has been literalized since 2000 by the excavation of mass graves containing the bodies of victims of the Francoist repression during and after the war, undertaken by the *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica* (ARMH; Association for the

15. After Jaime Camino's *Las largas vacaciones del 36* (1976), another film on the war did not appear until Jaime Chávarri's *Las bicicletas son para el verano* (1984) and Luis García Berlanga's *La vaquilla* (1985).

16. One collection of short stories set in the war—Juan Eduardo Zúñiga's *Largo noviembre de Madrid* (1980)—appeared during this period.

17. The film takes its title from a famous Republican civil war song—a recycled version of an earlier song from the 1808–13 war of independence against Napoleonic occupation.

Recovery of Historical Memory).<sup>18</sup> The ARMH was refused state financial support by the conservative Popular Party government (1996–2004), whose leader, José María Aznar, is the grandson of a leading Spanish fascist. The present Socialist government, which was returned to power in 2004 under the leadership of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, whose Republican grandfather was shot in the civil war by the Nationalists, has taken a more sympathetic stance. It set up a commission to address the rights of victims of the wartime and postwar repression. The commission's proposed law—published on July 28, 2006—does not provide state financial aid for the exhumations, but it requires local authorities to facilitate them, and also encourages local authorities to remove monuments and street names dedicated to perpetrators.<sup>19</sup>

Also relevant to an understanding of the current memory boom is the emergence of a new wave of right-wing historical revisionism. This phenomenon dates back to 2003, when the conservative Popular Party government was expressing its hostility to the work of the ARMH. These revisionist works are authored by popular historical writers and not by academic historians.<sup>20</sup> Their common argument is twofold. First, they argue that the civil war was provoked by the Republic (this argument, pre-

18. See the ARMH's Web site, [www.memoriahistorica.org](http://www.memoriahistorica.org). The ARMH was founded in 2000 by Emilio Silva in the process of exhuming and identifying (via a DNA test) the body of his own grandfather, murdered by the Nationalists in 1936 and buried in an unmarked grave.

19. The text of this proposed Law Recognizing and Extending the Rights of Victims of Violence and Repression during the Civil War and the Dictatorship can be accessed on the ARMH's Web site, [www.memoriahistorica.org](http://www.memoriahistorica.org). Its publication was preceded and followed by massive indignation in the right-wing press (see the daily *ABC* for the two weeks starting July 24, 2006). In fact, while Deputy Prime Minister María Teresa Fernández de la Vega, who headed the commission, stated in parliament that the proposed law was aimed at removing the numerous monuments and street names that still publicly commemorate Nationalist perpetrators, the text—in an attempt to placate the Right—asks for the removal of monuments and street names that commemorate “one side in the war.” This wording instantly proved problematic, with a report in *ABC* on the following working day (July 31, 2006) that the mayor of Ávila had responded to the proposed law by ordering the removal of a statue recently erected to “Republican womanhood.” This proposed law was debated in the Spanish parliament in February 2007.

20. This wave of historical revisionism started to attract public attention when Pío Moa's *Los mitos de la guerra civil* (*The Myths of the Spanish Civil War*) became a best seller in 2003. In fact, Moa had been publishing attacks on pro-Republican accounts of the civil war since 1999. Moa admits to being a repentant former member of the Spanish Communist Party and of the Marxist-Leninist terrorist organization GRAPO (Grupos de Resistencia Antifascista Primero de Octubre) (founded in the last months of the dictatorship and responsible for kidnappings and bombings until 2002). Other popular historical writers who have contributed to this right-wing historical revisionism are César Vidal, Francisco Olaya Morales, José María Zavala, and Daniel Arasa. The works of all these writers are widely promoted in bookstores.



sented as new, was in fact the standard version of the war promoted by the Franco dictatorship). Second, they argue that there has been a cover-up of Republican crimes by the left-wing historians who, since 1975, have set out to document the previously silenced Francoist repression. The result has been a “memory war,” with professional historians (and journalists) responding by unearthing further dimensions of the Francoist repression.<sup>21</sup> The vituperative rhetoric of the historical revisionists threatens to turn this “memory war” into a competition to establish which political side has the greater claim to victimhood.

(...)

21. See, for example, Rodrigo 2003; González Duro 2003; Torres 2003; Hernández Holgado 2003; Armengou and Belis 2004; Espinosa Maestre 2005; Cenarro 2006. Paul Preston’s book on the Francoist repression, likely to be a definitive study, is expected in spring 2008.

(...)

It should be clear from the comparative survey above that—with the exception of certain recent texts such as *The Carpenter's Pencil* and *The Devil's Backbone*—there has been an overall move from the use of the trope of haunting, which characterized the films made at the end of the dictatorship and the novels written in the mid-1980s, to a preference for realist and documentary formats. This overall move has coincided with the change from a lack of interest in the memorialization of the civil war to the present memory boom. Curiously, this memory boom has not translated into an increased interest in the workings of memory but into an assumption that the past can be unproblematically recovered. This sentiment is expressed in the phrase “recuperación de la memoria histórica” (recovery of historical memory) that has, since the creation of the ARMH in 2000, become obligatory when referring to the need for present-day Spaniards to engage with the unresolved legacy of the civil war and the ensuing repression.<sup>26</sup> In other words, what is tending to become lost with the current memory boom is a sense of the difficulty of articulating the traumatic impact of past violence.

Discussion of trauma has, of course, dominated the extensive scholarship on the Holocaust.<sup>27</sup> Trauma entails a blocking of memory and thus an inability to construct a coherent narrative. Unable to master the past through conscious recall, the trauma victim becomes the prisoner of involuntary reenactments of the traumatic event, which start to manifest themselves, in fissured form, at a later date. The cure for trauma is the successful narrativization of the violent event, such that the person who suffered it is able to situate himself or herself in relation to it as an agent and not as a thing stripped of personhood (van Alphen 1999). The psychiatric treat-

26. I do not mean here to hold the ARMH responsible for the unthinking use of this phrase but, rather, the public figures who use it as a slogan without considering its implications. Indeed, the ARMH's excavation of mass graves from the Francoist repression has started to trigger an interest, on the part of anthropologists, in the blocking of grief which the relatives of the victims have endured (see Ferrándiz 2006).

27. See, for example, Caruth 1995, 1996 and LaCapra 1996, 2001.

ment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), however, has been criticised for offering war veterans a medically sanctioned narrative that too easily explains away the horror of the violence that has been suffered (or indeed perpetrated) by them.<sup>28</sup> The implication of this criticism is that an adequate cure for trauma is one that does not, in the process of making the traumatic event manageable, sanitize its horror. For this reason, films like *The Spirit of the Beehive* and *The Devil's Backbone*, which draw on the horror genre, are—in my view—more successful in dealing with a traumatic past than those films, novels, and testimonies that adopt a realist or documentary mode, precisely because they acknowledge the horror—that is, the “unspeakable.”

I do not want to imply that the current proliferation in Spain of literary, cinematic, and testimonial memorializations of the civil war is in itself a bad thing, for the silencing of Republican memories under the Franco dictatorship and the subsequent desire of democratic Spain to break with its violent past have indeed prevented the public acknowledgment of countless stories of injustice. The problem is, rather, the assumption that it is enough to recover what happened and that the recovery process is unproblematic. It is perhaps understandable that, in a country that has seen nearly forty years of dictatorship, there should have been a tendency to suppose that, once censorship was removed, the stories of a terrible past could be articulated without difficulty. But it is only by capturing the resistances to narrativization that representations of the past can convey something of the emotional charge which that past continues to hold today for those for whom it remains unfinished business.

I should, however, like to note some dangers inherent in this argument. There is a risk that, in foregrounding the resistances to narrativization, we mimic—and perpetuate—the trauma victim's inability to assimilate the past rather than facilitating the process of working through it. The influential Chilean cultural critic Nelly Richard (2004: 27–29) has argued for the need to avoid suture—the overcoming of traumatic narrative rupture through the production of a seamless account—in representations of the legacy of the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Significantly, Richard argues this in the context of her critique of the Chilean transition to democracy, which, unlike the Spanish democratic transition, did institute official mourning rituals for those who disappeared under the previous dictatorship. However, in Richard's view, this was done in Chile in order to lay the past to rest as quickly as possible, so that it could be conveniently

28. See, for example, Quintais's (2001) discussion of the medical treatment of veterans of the Portuguese colonial wars in Africa.

forgotten. At the same time, there is an important similarity between the Chilean transition to democracy, as analyzed by Richard, and that which occurred in Spain: in both cases, the democratic regimes continued the neoliberal policies of the free-market economy that had previously been instituted under dictatorship. As noted at the start of this essay, the capitalist market economy is predicated on the production of the ever-new and the compulsory obsolescence of the old. Richard makes this point, but she also advocates avant-garde cultural forms that deal with the legacy of the Pinochet dictatorship by breaking with testimonial realism and instead opting for an aesthetics of rupture that mimics the workings of trauma. This aesthetics of rupture represents the psychic aftereffects of the dictatorship, leaving the past events beyond narrative. While in many ways this indirect representation of the past through its aftereffects echoes the use of the trope of haunting discussed above in relation to Spanish cultural production, it differs from it in its stress on rupture, as against the emphasis in haunting on affiliation with an unspeakable past: ghosts summon us to take responsibility for the past by intervening to correct its injustices. In proposing an aesthetics of rupture, Richard explicitly argues for cultural forms that keep open the wounds left by the dictatorship, restaging the trauma rather than resolving the narrative fractures through the production of a coherent narrative. Her argument is understandable, given the haste with which the Chilean democratic transition attempted to close those wounds. Still, one cannot help wondering whether her aesthetics of rupture, which mimics the involuntary blocking out of the past that results from trauma, does not in fact echo the rupture with the past encouraged by the capitalist economy, which she also denounces.

We might take further this similarity between the rupture which characterizes traumatic narrative (the involuntary blocking out of the past) and that which results from the market economy (based on the requirement to discard the old for the ever-new) and ask whether trauma—beyond its production by specific acts of violence, of which the Holocaust is the extreme example—is endemic to models of modernity that are based on capitalist modernization. To phrase this question differently: does capitalist modernity's stress on the new and on the obsolescence of the past produce a traumatic relationship to the past, which prevents us from establishing an affiliative relationship with it? If this is the case, there would appear to be a need to redefine modernity in such a way as to produce a nontraumatic relationship to the past, in which we acknowledge that we are its heirs. In the context of contemporary Spain, such a proposition would mean elaborating a form of democracy that is able to acknowledge the legacy of the violent past (while reflecting critically on its lessons) rather than repudi-

ating it. In terms of artistic expression, we may note that the democratic period in Spain did see an aesthetics of rupture, which Cristina Moreiras-Menor (2002) has taken as the expression of unresolved traumas left by the dictatorship: but this occurred precisely in the literature of the transition period that turned its back on the past and in many cases celebrated the neoliberal market. By contrast, those novels and films analyzed here that resort to the trope of haunting seem to me to have achieved a productive balance between acknowledgment of the past and a desire for change through their understanding that what matters about the past is its unfinished business, which requires critical reflection and action in the present. Such a mode of representation accords with Richard's advocacy of cultural forms that represent the traumatic aftereffects of dictatorship—rather than documenting the past events that caused them—but without opting for an aesthetics of rupture that perpetuates the severance of connection with the past.

In arguing for an aesthetics of haunting, instead of rupture, as a way of dealing with a traumatic past, I would like to ask what trauma might mean in the case of survivors of the repression of the Spanish civil war and its aftermath. There were no doubt genuine trauma victims in the sense (outlined above) that the term has acquired in relation to Holocaust survivors. But in the testimonies that have appeared in Spain since the late 1990s, there is no evidence of any traumatic blocking of memory; on the contrary, the eyewitnesses appear to have perfect recall. What we do find is hesitation about whether or not to talk about the repression and of course a delay of around sixty years in bringing these memories into the public domain. There are ready political explanations for this hesitation and delay, given the vilification which the losers in the war—and their descendants—had to endure during the dictatorship followed by the lack of interest in their stories during the transition to democracy. One of the dangers of trauma theory is that it can encourage an emphasis on the internal psychic mechanisms that are responsible for blocking recall of the traumatic event, deflecting attention from political explanations. In the case of the Francoist repression, the resistances to narrativization have clear political causes. The testimonies of repression that have appeared in Spain in recent years do not suggest a biological inability to register the event at the time but habits of silence induced by decades of repression and a lack of willing interlocutors, which become hard to break. For this reason also, an aesthetics of haunting, which listens to the voices from the past that have not previously been allowed a hearing, seems more appropriate in the Spanish case than an aesthetics of rupture, which is predicated on the classic notion of trauma as the blocking of recall.

This point was brought home to me as a result of an incident which occurred the first time I taught a course on the memorialization of the Spanish civil war to final-year undergraduates at the University of Southampton in 1999. After the second class, in which we had discussed theories of mourning, melancholia, and trauma, a student (Natalia)<sup>29</sup> came up to me to say that she could now understand why her Spanish grandmother, whose father had been shot by the Republicans in the civil war, had never talked about it in the family. Natalia knew the bare facts from her Spanish mother but otherwise had only two indications of her grandmother's pain. First, she had been brought up never to mention the word *snow* in her grandmother's presence, because it had been snowing when her great-grandfather was taken to his execution. In other words, her grandmother appeared to suffer from a classic traumatic reaction to this memory trigger. Second, when Natalia was nine years old, her grandmother came to her room and gave her a photograph of the bishop of Teruel (beatified by Pope John Paul II), saying she wanted Natalia to have it since he had died with her great-grandfather. Natalia could now understand that, with this gesture, her grandmother was offering her as a gift the past that she could not tell. Natalia conducted a series of oral history interviews with her grandmother as her project for the course over a week in which her grandmother, now eighty-six, told in full for the first time the story of her father's imprisonment and execution. The transcription of the interview shows that Natalia's grandmother had perfect recall of all the details: despite what appeared to be traumatic symptoms (triggered by the mention of snow), this was not a case of a traumatic blocking of narrative, but of no one in her family having before expressed an interest in hearing her story. This suggests that the existence of a strong reaction to a memory trigger, even in a person who has not talked about an experience of violence, should not necessarily be taken as an indication of the presence of a traumatic blocking of memory.

As the story of Natalia's grandmother unravelled, it became clear that it was an especially complicated one: her father had been the Nationalist colonel who surrendered Teruel to the Republicans, as a result of which he was branded a traitor by the Nationalists. Only in 1972 had Natalia's grandmother been authorized by Franco to claim her father's body from its unmarked grave in order to give it a proper burial, on condition that the media not be informed. This meant that Natalia's grandmother had no willing interlocutors on either side in the war, for she was an enemy of the

29. I recount this with Natalia's permission.

Republicans and, for the Nationalists, the daughter of a traitor. This case brought home to me powerfully that we should not assume too quickly that those who do not articulate their stories are suffering from a traumatic blockage of narrative but that the problem may lie with the failure of others to listen.

This incident, turning on the readiness to listen, also made me reflect on the fact that we need to consider the question of what should be done with Nationalist memories of suffering. I am not sympathetic to the claims made by revisionist historians that, under democracy, there has been a left-wing conspiracy that has denied Franco supporters the right to express their memories of the civil war, for not only did the Right have a monopoly over the memorialization of the civil war for the dictatorship's nearly forty years, but there has been no censorship since the Spanish Constitution of 1978, which reestablished democratic freedoms. However, it is true that, as historians have unearthed increasing information about the extent of the Francoist repression, it is difficult to feel sympathy for those who gave this repression their explicit or tacit consent, even though it is clear that in some cases they too have stories of suffering to tell. However, we should perhaps ask whether we should only be interested in the stories of those for whom we feel sympathy. Conversely, we might ask whether expressing an interest in listening to someone's story necessarily supposes that we should—or can—share their suffering. I should like to end by considering what might be an adequate response to stories of suffering on the part of the listener.

The refusal of realist narrative in those films and novels discussed above which use the trope of haunting can be seen as a recognition of the fact that no narrative of atrocities can do justice to the pain of those who experienced such atrocities at firsthand. This seems to me a more ethical position than the assumption, in those texts that opt for documentary realism, that it is possible to re-create for the reader or spectator a direct experience of the wartime and postwar repression as they were lived at the time. We have seen how the delay in producing cultural texts about the war was not only due to the Francoist censorship and the political transition's desire to leave the past behind, but also to the need for younger generations to come on the scene who could tackle the subject with greater detachment. Discussing representations of the suffering of others, Susan Sontag (2004) has argued for the need for a degree of detachment also in the audience. Writing specifically about photographs of victims, she insists that we should, above all, avoid the bad faith of empathy, for it is a delusion for spectators to imagine that they can share the suffering of the victims represented in

the image: “No ‘we’ should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people’s pain” (ibid.: 7). Instead, Sontag argues in favor of a response in which emotion is tempered by a reflective distance, thus permitting political analysis. There is a danger, in the texts that are opting for documentary realism, of producing a “feel-good factor” that makes readers or spectators feel morally improved by having momentarily “shared” the suffering represented in the text, without going on to make any connection with the present.<sup>30</sup> The texts that avoid realism and focus on the past as a haunting, rather than as a reality immediately accessible to us, retain a sense of the difficulty of understanding what it was like to live that past, as well as making us reflect on how the past interpellates the present. Such an approach is not only helpful in dealing with the suffering of victims of injustice but also, I suggest, opens up a way to deal with the suffering of those whose politics we cannot condone.

The fight to defend the Spanish Republic in the civil war still produces strong emotions among the international political Left, because it is seen as the last European political struggle fought in the name of a passionate belief that it is possible to break with the past in order to create a new future. Ironically, it was this same modern desire to break with the past—albeit one shorn of utopian ideology—that, at the time of the transition to democracy in Spain, produced a desire to relegate the civil war to the past rather than engage with its legacy. It is the late modern loss of belief in the master narratives of progress that, in producing a revival of interest in memory, has triggered the increased cultural memorialization of the civil war in recent years. This same loss of belief in the master narratives of progress has generated, in the Western world at large, a scepticism about all forms of representation and about narrative in particular, which translates into a self-reflexive critical foregrounding of the mode of telling. The films and novels analyzed in this essay which resort to the trope of haunting can be included in this self-reflexive trend, which calls into question the ability of narrative to capture the real.

30. There is also the much worse danger of graphic representations of violence appealing to a morbid prurience on the part of readers or viewers. Such a response is encouraged by the savagery of the deaths of the anarchist militiawomen at the end of Aranda’s *Libertarias*. The jacket blurbs for some recent collections of testimonies also appeal to sensationalist urges that may partly explain the success of such texts. See, for example, the back cover of Zavala 2004, which promises “fusilamientos, violaciones, mutilaciones y decapitaciones, infanticidios, enterramientos de vivos, cadáveres devorados por fieras” (executions, rapes, mutilations and decapitations, infanticides, people buried alive, corpses devoured by wild animals). This book forms part of the current wave of historical revisionism arguing that the crimes of the Republic exceeded those of the Nationalists; its tactic is to produce such strong emotions in its readers that critical reflection is blocked.



This self-reflexive trend is generally referred to as “postmodern” rather than “late modern,” since it is assumed that it represents a break with the modern instead of a particular version of it. But the coincidence of this trend with the turn to memory suggests that it is not effecting a break with the past, but is redefining our relationship to it. The recent interest in memory goes together with the questioning of the ability of narrative to give us the real, since memory is a form of narrative that is notoriously unreliable. What memory can do is communicate the importance of the past in the present—that is, reestablish the affiliative link with the past that capitalist modernization set out to break. Memory does so by representing not the past directly, as realist narrative promises to do, but the effects of the past on the present—its unfinished business. I have tried to argue in this essay that realist narrative, by plunging us into the past, paradoxically makes us experience the past as separate from the present. The trope of haunting, which elides direct representation of the past in favor of the representation of its aftereffects, stresses the legacy of the past to the present: a legacy which—as in most ghost stories—is one of injustice requiring reparation. Haunting requires the present to correct the past at the same time that it establishes an affiliative link with it. It thus provides a figurative analogue for a mode of relationship to the past which retains the modern belief in the possibility—indeed the need—for a better future while also demanding that the memory of the past be honored.

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