

Remembering the Thirteen Roses: Thinking between History and Memory

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this study to Concha Carretero, whose love, kindness, and friendship are an inspiration to me.

## Abstract

### *Remembering the Thirteen Roses: Thinking between History and Memory*

examines the execution of thirteen young, communist women, named the Thirteen Roses, on August 5, 1939, to show how Spaniards in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have assigned meaning to and represented the memories of those who opposed Franco during the Spanish Civil War. Through the analysis of poetry, fiction, journalism, theater, and film, my dissertation documents the ways the Roses' memory has been recycled and transformed over time from the remembrance of a historical event to a polysemic literary and cultural trope. This trope, in the postwar years, embodied communist political ideals but, with the passing of time, was converted into a symbol for democracy and, later, into a depoliticized tale of human suffering.

The development of the Roses trope alerts us to the mechanics of collective memory, a concept coined by Maurice Halbwachs to explain how 'memory' is a socially constructed notion that is experienced within a group. The recollection of the women's execution serves as a case study for how society manipulates and assigns different meanings to collective memories over time, highlighting the manner in which collective memory is both a cultural and discursive construct. Memories, like that of the Roses, intersect and negotiate specific political, historical, social, and cultural objectives in a social context. *Remembering the Thirteen Roses* combines history, memory studies, and literary scholarship to deepen our understanding of Spain's recent social and political movements in favor of the recuperation of historical memory of the Spanish Civil War, as it is reflected in the ever-evolving representations of one tragic event.

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
1. Who were the Thirteen Roses?.....	45
2. The Story of the Thirteen Roses: A Journalistic Approach.....	119
3. Dulce Chacón’s <i>La voz dormida</i> and Jesus Ferrero’s <i>Las trece rosas</i> : Using the Past to Rethink the Present.....	158
4. <i>Martina, la rosa número trece</i> : The Family Experience as a National Tragedy.....	193
5. Julia Bel’s <i>Las trece rosas</i> : The Spanish Civil War as a ‘Place of Memory’ in Contemporary Peninsular Theater.....	220
6. Emilio Martínez Lázaro and Pedro Costa’s <i>Las 13 rosas</i> : Turning the Roses Trope into a Cultural Commodity .....	260
Concluding Thoughts.....	289
Works Cited.....	302
Appendix A: Biographical Information on the Thirteen Roses.....	310

## Introduction

As Walter Benjamin wrote, “An experienced event is finite—at any rate—confined to one sphere of experience; a remembered event is infinite, because it is only a key to everything that happened before and after it” (Benjamin 202). The *experienced event* of my dissertation took place on August 5, 1939. A group of thirteen women—seven under the age of eighteen—were executed near Madrid’s Ventas prison in the Cementerio del Este a few months after the end of the Spanish Civil War. The women had been involved in the communist youth organization, the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas. Many of them had been recruited to serve as communist liaisons in Madrid at the end of the war, when most of the socialist and communist political leaders had gone into exile. At their trial, which took place two days before the execution, they were accused of political rebellion against Franco’s regime. Their execution sent a strong message to those who opposed Franco; no one who went against the dictator, regardless of age or gender, was exempt from extreme punishment or death.

As a *remembered event*, the execution would leave a lasting impression on those who experienced the war and also on generations to come. The news of the women’s death sent a ripple of shock throughout Ventas prison. Witnesses say that fellow women prisoners in Ventas named them the Thirteen Roses immediately after their death as a way to pay homage to them. During the postwar period, the story of the Roses’ unjust death spread through prisons and was immortalized in at least three poems. This oral story-telling allowed their memory to continue as a wartime legend among Republican sympathizers. The Roses’ death was told inside and outside of prison. Knowledge of this brutal event also reached France during the early postwar years. In 1946, a group

of youth organized in Bordeaux, France. Most of them were Spanish, Republican sympathizers who participated in the resistance against the Nazi occupation of France. The youth organization in France, named after Miguel Hernández, kept connected to Spanish culture by creating educational forums about theater, music, famous Spanish writers, and regional dances. In 1947, the Miguel Hernández youth group performed a theater production about the Thirteen Roses to an audience of 1,000 people. The Thirteen Roses became, early on, a symbol for the need to remember the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War.

The memory of the Roses would reappear in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s in women's first-person testimonies and memoirs about the war and dictatorship years. Following Spain's transition to democracy, historians, journalists, fiction writers, and artists took an interest in the Roses' execution. The Roses' tale has been retold in newspaper articles, journal publications, book-length historical accounts, works of fiction, a television documentary, three theatrical productions, a dance, a film, and several contemporary songs and poems. With the passing of time, the historical account about the Roses' execution has been transformed into a valuable account for several collective groups: war survivors, the children and grandchildren of war survivors, as well as younger generations. My dissertation traces and analyzes the development of the Thirteen Roses' story to explain how it has been, and continues to be, retold using a wide variety of genres and discursive strategies in different time periods and for a variety of purposes. Each representation of the Thirteen Roses' execution highlights specific aspects of the event to communicate different messages about the Roses: hope and inspiration, the brutality of Franco's regime, tragedy and loss, a search for personal

and national identity, the current need for commemoration, or the desire to engage with an entertaining story. The versatility of the Thirteen Roses account –and its ability to be seen through different lenses and be represented through diverse art forms--has allowed this event to persist over time. This endless proliferation of texts that tell and retell the tale of the Thirteen Roses has allowed the execution to become a *remembered event*, a memory that continues to be passed on and whose interpretation has seemingly infinite possibilities.

### The Thirteen Roses: Transformation of Memory into Artistic Trope

By tracing the development of the Thirteen Roses' story through a variety of genres, it is possible to see how it has evolved into a trope, which Hayden White defines as a metaphor or figure of speech:

The word *tropic* derives from *tropikos*, *tropos*, which in Classical Greek meant "turn" and in Koiné "way" or "manner." It comes into modern Indo-European languages by way *oitropus*, which in Classical Latin meant "metaphor" or "figure of speech" and in Late Latin, especially as applied to music theory, "mood" or "measure." All of these meanings, sedimented in the early English word *trope*, capture the force of the concept that modern English intends by the word *style*, a concept that is especially apt for the consideration of that form of verbal composition which, in order to distinguish it from logical demonstration on the one side and from pure fiction on the other, we call by the name *discourse*. (H. White 2)

A trope is one way in which individuals manipulate language to create meaning or convey emotions or a "mood." The application of White's definition of trope to this study serves a dual function: 1) the transformation of the Roses' memory is a case study for understanding how social groups draw upon their personal experiences, opinions and beliefs to interpret the significance of these women and their death. The Roses' trope shows how these ideas emerge and are transmitted within a social framework over

time; and 2) the trope also helps to explain the various messages that social groups wish to communicate by transmitting the Roses' story. These memories intersect in a social framework and negotiate specific political, historical, social, and cultural objectives.

### Tropes as a Way to Make Meaning

The Thirteen Roses' anecdote proves White's idea of how a trope—as a figurative component of discourse—“turns away” from a literal understanding and adopts a more symbolic meaning. The various representations about the Roses “turn away” from the literal, or historical, understanding of the event. By looking at the Roses' execution as a trope, it is possible to see how our personal and collective understandings of the past are not static. Instead, they are constantly being revisited, revised, and discussed.

The Roses' memory has been told as a way for individuals to try to make sense of the past. For White, tropes are created and transformed in hopes of “rendering the unfamiliar, familiar” (H. White 5). Tropes can be tied to the process by which people assign meaning to significant events, and convey how these feelings are expressed: “Troping is both a movement from one notion of the way things are related to another notion, and a connection between things so they can be expressed in a language that takes account of the possibility of their being expressed otherwise” (H. White 2). White identifies three main tropes, which can be associated with the progressive development of the Thirteen Roses' narrative throughout the twentieth century: metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche. In the years immediately following the execution, the Roses' story was metaphorically addressed through oral poetry. Each of the three postwar poems

written about the Roses used nature imagery (stars and roses) to describe the women: their beauty, youth, and innocence.

In this study, we will see the image of the rose as a metaphor, defined by *The New Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms* (1994) as a “figurative expression, in which a word or phrase is shifted from its normal uses to a context where it evokes new meanings” (Brogan 184). The metaphor is crucial to understanding the function of the Roses’ trope and how it has been transformed over time. The rose has been used, in all of the genres of this study, as a metaphor to describe the personal qualities of the thirteen, youthful women. The continual use of the rose as a symbolic metaphor points to the social—even universal—appeal of this image. As Joseph Campbell discusses in *The Mythic Image*, the rose has been used in many cultures as a powerful symbol, representing femininity, nature, and religious imagery. The repetition of the metaphor of the rose in writing, along with visual imagery of it, has helped to convert these women into metonymic examples of Franco’s brutality or exemplary political activists who fought to uphold democracy, especially within social groups with similar political ideals or that sympathized with the war’s vanquished. In the twenty-first century, the term “rose,” when referred to in the context of the Spanish Civil War, has been transformed into a synecdoche for “female martyr figure.” “La rosa de Salamanca,” a blog posting, presents information about seven victims who were killed as part of Franco’s repression, including one woman. Similarly, the city of León commemorates its own set of female martyr figures who were executed during the civil war, describing them as “las ‘tres rosas’ leonesas.” (“Las ‘tres rosas’ de La Virgen del Camino”). Today, the image of the rose is connected to a collective initiative, one that is taking place across

the nation, to retrospectively examine and describe women's activism, as well as their victimization, during and after the Spanish Civil War.

### Contesting Memory and Negotiating Meaning through Tropes in a Social Framework

Tropes, as a part of discourse, not only convey meaning but also have a social function. As part of his contributions to discourse theory, Jürgen Habermas perceives discourse in relation to a community and a culture, with language as the basis for communicative interaction (Dillon, "Discourse"). In addition to showing how ideas are conveyed, discourse reveals information about social topics such as power relations, legitimacy, and authority. Discourse is a potent tool that can reinforce dominant social ideas or manipulate them to create a new message. Speech acts raise awareness about the power structures of discourse. Individuals use language and their imagination to speak against these power structures. In Spain, this took place in the public realm after Franco's death, and the Thirteen Roses' memory has entered into an ongoing dialogue among social groups as they negotiate the need to recuperate the historical memory of the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship.

After Franco's death in 1975, the Thirteen Roses trope served as a metonymic example of the brutality of Franco's regime. During the early years of the transition, war survivors, historians and journalists published information about the Roses as a way to communicate one extreme example of the horrors of the war, and as a representation of the entire war and postwar experience. All of these writers employed different discursive strategies to relay the Roses' memory and in doing so, they project their own ideas onto the event.

The war survivors who documented their personal experiences drew upon their memories, and those of other people whom they knew, to provide a convincing account of their past experiences. Memory is also crucial to rhetoric--the act of communicating thoughts and ideas through language, as Janine Rider observes: "Upon memory rests our ability to think, speak, and write" (Rider 4). By drawing on memory, people process a personal understanding of reality. Articulating memory through language is a powerful tool to understand and imagine the past, present, and future. Oral story-telling and writing about past experiences is also a means to generate new knowledge and uncover ideas that were not previously revealed (Rider 3).

Women war survivors used their emotional and subjective memories as a discursive technique to remember the Roses, who served as metonymic examples of injustice and bravery, and to call for the recognition of these horrible acts. In Aristotle's assessment of rhetoric, the study of the effective use of oral and written speech, he claims that writers are persuasive by implementing not only logic but also by expressing conviction, excitement, indignation, and pity (Dillon, "Rhetoric"). The war survivor's testimonies rouse emotional reactions from readers and listeners, assist readers in creating mental images of the war and postwar contexts, and encourage them to sympathize with the account.

For Rider, "[m]emory...sparks the human imagination and kindles inspiration and discovery. From memory comes the muse that inspires us to regenerate ideas and discover new connections and, therefore, write" (Rider 4). Memory, therefore, is a part of individual and cultural expression: "This cultural or social memory can link us to our roots and our future, can cultivate a variety of rhetoric and can work as a defense

against sameness and inequality” (Rider 4). Both memory and rhetoric, or the deliverance of ideas, can be powerful tools to promote social and cultural change (Rider 4).

In the 1990s and onward, fiction and nonfiction writers were inspired by the stories that war survivors told about the Roses. These younger authors used survivors’ memories to publish accounts that elaborated on the nonfiction testimonies about the thirteen women. In some of these accounts, the Roses remained a metonymic symbol of all the “bad things” that happened on account of Franco’s dictatorship. The Roses’ trope was also used to describe the personal trauma that resulted from the women’s execution and to explain the way in which this trauma was silently passed on through generations of women. This perspective about the Roses’ execution serves as an allegory for the way in which the nation—on a collective level—endured the tragedies from the past. In the twenty-first century, other nonfiction writers chose to describe the Roses more as symbols for democracy rather than victims, thus pointing to another way in which the Roses’ trope was transformed through discourse. The Roses represented admirable political agents who wanted to promote positive social change.

While the testimonies from war survivors were only read by a small readership, the late twentieth and early twenty-first century fiction and nonfiction accounts on the Roses reached a wide audience and assisted in making a critique for how the role of women during the civil war had been left out of public discussions after the transition to democracy. They also prompted Spaniards to think about the connections between the present and the past and engage in both individual and collective reflection on topics such as Spanish politics, culture, and national identity.

Theater about the Roses also addresses these topics and relies on discourse and the Roses' trope to invite viewers to connect with an interpretation of the past as it is revealed through bodily movement on stage. Discursive techniques such as monologues directed toward the audience encourage viewers to interact with the Roses' story, thus creating an opportunity for collective witnessing. With the transformation of the Thirteen Roses trope, the Roses' story has also been commodified or depoliticized by some artistic representations. Film directors have capitalized on the appeal of the Roses' story and converted it into a marketable commodity—as shown by the 2007 film, *Las 13 rosas*.

In 2009, there is increased competition in the public sector to participate in the interpretation of the Roses' memory, which has become increasingly detached from its communist origins. At least one artist, Matilde Cabello, has created new poetry about the women. Other musical artists, including Julián Fernández del Pozo and the rock bands Vinos Chueca and Barricada, have written and performed songs. The street outside of Madrid's Cementerio del Este has been named "Avenida Trece Rosas," and a fountain in the town of Getafe was constructed in their honor.

Stakeholders in the public realm have also taken an interest in the Roses' story. The Thirteen Roses Foundation was established in 2004 and boasts of its goals to develop projects and initiatives that promote equality and justice. The Foundation's president since 2005, José Cepeda, is a long-time political activist in the PSOE. Between 2000 and 2007, he was a member of the Regional Executive Commission of Madrid's Socialist Party. The Thirteen Roses Foundation has used the women's name to further some of the Socialist Party's political agenda.

The Foundation announced that for the 69<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Roses' death in 2008, it would launch an exposition that would go through Spring 2009, and also feature a rock concert in Madrid as part of the event. The goal of this celebration would be to remember the war's victims. In the article, Cepeda celebrates the actions of the Socialist Party in making this a reality: "Es muy importante recordar la historia. Después de 40 años de dictadura y bastante de democracia ha tenido que venir un Gobierno socialista para poner en marcha la Ley de Memoria y recuperar la dignidad de la otra parte" ("Una exposición"). It is unknown if this event in Madrid was ever launched. Around the time of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Roses' execution, the Thirteen Roses Foundation's website was taken off the Internet. A few months later, the page reappeared with a new look. The "treceosas.es" web address directs viewers to José Cepeda's political blog, which contains little mention about the Roses or the Foundation. However, the Thirteen Roses Foundation maintained an active interest in the women's legacy, including in the commemoration ceremony that takes place in Madrid every year on August 5.

The Roses' commemoration ceremony officially began in 1988 with a small group of female war survivors, although other war survivors claimed to have started visiting the Roses' tomb in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1988, the Roses' comrades put up a plaque that describes the women's sacrifices for democracy. Since then, it has grown to include people of all ages and from different countries. For the 70<sup>th</sup> commemoration ceremony in 2009, the Thirteen Roses Foundation—still headed by Cepeda—unexpectedly replaced the 1988 commemoration plaque with a new one that advertised the organization:

El pueblo de Madrid y la Fundación Trece Rosas  
 En memoria al sacrificio de las jóvenes llamadas  
 LAS TRECE ROSAS  
 En el 70 aniversario de su fusilamiento  
 En la mañana del 5 de agosto de 1939<sup>1</sup>

By advertising the Thirteen Roses Foundation's name on the new plaque, it simultaneously commemorates the women and projects the socialist's current political objectives with regard to remembering the Spanish Civil War.

This change provoked a media frenzy about the motives for the switch. A few days later, *El País* published in its print edition a short update on the second page: "La Fundación Trece Rosas informó ayer de que la placa colocada en 1988 en la tapia del cementerio de La Almudena para recordar a las 13 jóvenes fusiladas se retiró antes del homenaje del pasado miércoles para limpiarla y será colocada de Nuevo en pocos días. La retirada de esta placa causó malestar entre familiares de fusilados" ("La placa retirada..."). Unlike the reporting of the 70<sup>th</sup> commemoration, which made the headlines of almost every major newspaper on August 5<sup>th</sup>, this short announcement was published in a less prominent spot on the second page of *El País*. This reason for removing the plaque was never mentioned during the ceremony on August 5<sup>th</sup>.

The 70<sup>th</sup> commemoration ceremony of the Roses' death was different in 2009 than past years because there were *two* commemoration ceremonies: one directed by members of the PSOE and the other carried out by members of the PCE. The commemorations that took place prior to 2009 unified members from both parties, and

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<sup>1</sup> The words on the original commemoration plaque, installed by women war survivors, state:  
 Las jóvenes llamadas  
 "Las Trece Rosas"  
 Dieron aquí su vida por la libertad  
 Y la democracia el día 5 de agosto de 1939  
 El pueblo de Madrid recuerda su sacrificio  
 5 de agosto de 1988

were rather informal. In previous years, Javier Ruiz, a representative of the Federal Secretary of Historical Memory of the PCE, gave a speech about the women's participation in the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas and read the names of each one of the Roses. During earlier commemoration ceremonies, participants were invited to sing the official hymn of the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas.

In 2009, the PSOE conducted a separate ceremony at 9 AM and it was directed by members of the PSOE and the Thirteen Roses Foundation. Unlike other years, when the ceremony had been open to the public and rather informal, the PSOE's ceremony did not allow people to come near the Roses' new plaque. The commemoration site was closed off to the general public. The reason for this may have been due to the fact that they had received permission from Madrid's mayor, Agustín Rodríguez Sahagún, for the placement of the new plaque. Three influential politicians spoke at the PSOE's ceremony: José Cepeda, the president of the Thirteen Roses Foundation, Leire Pajín, the Secretary of the PSOE Organization, and Tomas Gómez, the General Secretary of the PSOE of Madrid. All of them spoke, using much of the rhetoric associated with the socialists' agenda for Historical Memory, as one newspaper article indicates:

El homenaje estuvo dirigido por el Presidente de la Fundación Trece Rosas, José Cepeda, que señaló que el acto suponía el final de un largo período de 'sombras y silencio' sobre miles de personas que "dieron su vida por la democracia y la libertad. Leire Pajín, añadió que 'merece la pena' recuperar la memoria y 'recomponer el mosaico de los corazones orientados hacia la libertad, la justicia y la dignidad.' Pajín arremetió contra los que se oponen a la Ley de Memoria Histórica: 'A quién hace daño y a quién le molesta nuestra memoria de lágrimas?' Es 'más cómodo el silencio para aquellos que utilizan la palabra como arma arrojadiza,' argumentó. Por su parte, Tomas Gómez, secretario general del PSOE madrileño, renmarcó (sic) la importancia del acto como 'reivindicación del papel de la mujer en la historia. (E. López)

During the ceremony, one of the poets who wrote about the Roses, Ángeles García-Madrid, also spoke. Many newspaper reports quoted how she recalled the night of the Roses' *saca*, adding a detail that was not written in her testimonial novel about her experiences as a political prisoner, *Requiem por la libertad*. During the PSOE ceremony, García-Madrid recalled how the women remained unaware of their fate, even though the other prisoners were aware of it: "Todos sabían que iban a morir menos ellas" (E. López). This statement, declared during the PSOE's ceremony, can be perceived as a tool to generate sympathy for the PSOE's current agenda. The newspaper articles that described the Roses' commemoration also mentioned how they were remembered along with the forty-three other men that died on that same day. Some of the media reports named these men "los 43 Claveles," a name that has not been used to describe them in other accounts.

The second ceremony in 2009, carried about by the PCE an hour later, had a different approach to remembering the Roses. Many people paid homage not only to the Roses but also to the Second Republic. Like other years, they sang the theme song of the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas, "Joven Guardia," and read the names of the Thirteen Roses. Javier Ruiz, a PCE activist, read a declaration that stated how the Communist Party will continue to work to annul the sentences from illegal tribunals during Franco's regime and to get the current judicial system to investigate the crimes that were committed during this time period ("Homenaje"). Both ceremonies incorporated Julia Conesa's famous phrase, "Que mi nombre no se borre en la historia."

Pajín uses Conesa's words to emphasize the socialist's political agenda in favor of remembering the civil war and the war's vanquished: "Es un derecho de todos y de

todas recuperar y recordar nuestra historia. The article interprets how Pajín “ha mostrado su orgullo por haber aprobado la Ley de Memoria Histórica al declarar su orgullo por ‘poder recuperar esa memoria y, por tanto, poder recuperar la dignidad de hombres y mujeres. Ha sido una Ley que ha hecho florecer toda esta historia, que seguiremos rememorando porque un pueblo no puede mirar hacia delante sin mirar hacia el pasado.”

The PCE’s made a public statement about the installment of the new plaque: “Sin embargo, entre los miembros del PCE reinaba el descontento debido a que la nueva placa en recuerdo de ‘Las Trece Rosas’ ha sustituido a otra ‘que fue colocada después de mucha lucha y mucho esfuerzo. Era de mármol muy bonita, es una pena,’ lamentó uno de los ‘históricos’ militantes del PCE de 87 años” (“Trece Rosas”). The removal of the commemoration plaque raised a serious question. Who are the owners of the original plaque? This shows how both the socialist and communist parties share an interest in the women’s story but have different interpretations for how, and why, the Roses should be remembered in the twenty-first century.

The day after the 2009 commemoration ceremony, media reports criticized the PSOE’s involvement. “El PSOE manipula la memoria de las Trece Rosas en el 70 aniversario de su fusilamiento” (“El PSOE manipula”) points out how the PSOE took over the PCE’s interest in the women, and are now attempting to isolate the Roses’ memory from the women’s original communist affiliation. A controversial commentary by Pío Moa, a Spanish writer and journalist who has published on the Civil War and has been labeled by some as a “Franco apologist,” criticizes how the leftist political parties, including the PCE and the PSOE exploited the Roses’ memory and used it as

propaganda. Some of the statements that appear in Moa's "Trece rosas y muchas jetas" appear to be extremely negative and biased, including how he describes the JSU as the most racial and Stalinist sector of the PCE. Nonetheless, he does point to a gradual change in the use of the Roses' memory yet he also uses the Roses as part of his own political agenda and criticizes the Left.

Típicamente, la izquierda ha cultivado una tremenda sentimentalidad personalista en torno al caso, lo que puede admitirse. Pero con la inadmissible trampa habitual, ha presentado a las víctimas no como estalinistas—es decir, insertas en la ideología y el aparato político que mayores genocidios ha cometido en el siglo XX--, sino como campeonas de la *libertad* y de la *democracia*, etc....La trampa ha sido doble por parte de los (y especialmente las) sinvergüenzas del PSOE que, con su mentalidad, al parecer indarraigable y tan reiteradamente demostrada...han querido apropiarse una bandera que no es suya. (Moa)

In 2009, right after the Roses' commemoration ceremony on August 5, Cepeda participated in a radio interview and discussion with one of the war survivors who knew the Roses, Ángeles García-Madrid. The program was featured on Spain's CadenaSer, and the topic of discussion was related to the need to remember the Roses. García-Madrid's interpretation and comments about the Roses' commemoration reminded the audience of the Roses' affiliation with the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas, while Cepeda's public statements had a different approach. As president of the Thirteen Roses Foundation, he made claims about the Roses memory that are aligned with current political debates. Cepeda reiterates some of the PSOE's political views related to the need for the recuperation of historical memory in the twenty-first century so that atrocities, such as what happened to the Roses, are not repeated in the future.

The Thirteen Roses' memory has not only been a topic for recent newspaper articles and radio shows, but it also has a strong presence on the web. The Asociación

‘Trece Rosas Asturianas’ was created in 2009, and has an active presence on Facebook and MySpace. While there appears to be no connection between the Thirteen Roses and Asturias, the organization is using the women’s memory to advertise their political and ideological goals. On the MySpace site, the association explains its mission: “La asociación “Trece rosas Asturias” se presenta como un colectivo que pretende ayudar con sus propuestas, denuncias y actos informativos y culturales a la lucha por la igualdad entre hombre y mujer, el cumplimiento de la ley por la memoria histórica y el fomento de la cultura tanto en su difusión como en su conservación.” This organization also organized a commemoration for the women in Oviedo in 2009.

Through these examples, it is possible to see how the Roses’ memory has a popular appeal and serves as an opportunity for social groups to impose certain ideals in an effort to subjectively define a vision for the democratic nation in the present and for the future.

#### The Thirteen Roses: An Example of a Collective Memory

The circulation of information about the Roses’ execution within distinct social groups shows how it was a significant event: a “collective memory” that is worthy of being told and remembered. A “collective memory” is a story, value, or belief that is shared, and upheld, by a group of individuals. In the case of the Spanish Civil War, the people with an interest in the Thirteen Roses’ story form various collective groups that have a connection to or an interest in the perspective of the war’s vanquished. The idea of “collective memory” will be used throughout my dissertation as a theoretical framework to understand the Roses’ story. The Roses’ memory, as an example of a collective memory, shows how Spanish citizens are preserving, reevaluating,

processing, and transforming the meaning attached to the war's atrocities. Collective memory includes both the remembrance of the event but also preserves some of the values or lessons that it provides.

The term "collective memory" was first defined by Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945), a French philosopher and sociologist. Halbwachs considered the notion of memory to be a social rather than individual construction; memories are shaped by the social group with which a person identifies. Halbwachs received his schooling in Paris and studied under the philosopher, Henri Bergson. Bergson's 'individualistic philosophy,' one that argued that memory could belong to none other than the individual, had an impact on Halbwachs. Halbwachs rejected this philosophy.

In 1905, Halbwachs befriended Emile Durkheim and thereafter, he developed an interest in sociology and eventually became a professor in the discipline. In one of his most well-known works, *On Collective Memory*, Halbwachs uses Durkheim's writings on collective psychology to support the idea of collective memory and Durkheim's theory of collective representation--which had been popular prior to the outbreak of World War II. For Durkheim, this theory was at the heart of class-consciousness and the way in which people classified themselves (Halbwachs 18-19).

Halbwachs did believe in the individual's capacity to remember, but he also thought that individual memory is largely influenced by the social structure in which a person lived:

While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals *as group members* who remember. Social classes, families, associations, corporations, armies, and trade unions all have distinctive memories that their members have constructed, often over long periods of time. It is, of course, individuals who remember, not groups or

institutions, but these individuals, being located in a specific group context, draw on that context to remember or recreate the past. (Halbwachs 22)

Every collective memory requires the support of a group.

The notion of “collective memory” and the idea that individuals remember in a social group has been contested by other scholars. Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam’s article titled “Collective Memory—What Is It?” discusses how collective memory is a purely metaphorical entity: “[T]o speak of a group as some integral entity with a will and capacity of its own is to commit the fallacy of concrete generalization, namely treating it as though it were some concrete entity. The employment of collective memory can be justified “only on a metaphorical level” (Gedi and Elam 1).

Like Gedi and Elam, Jonathan Frankel upholds the individual’s ability to think and remember independently from a collective group, but group values do explain how individuals perceive themselves and the world. Frankel’s analysis of cultural myths and legends points to how they are tied to group values: “Legends and national myths-- which so enchant the group psyche, the collective subconscious—have become a source of inspiration to the faith and devotion which these imported ideologies (modern nationalism, socialism) could foster only partially and through constant adaptation” (Gedi and Elam 31). Frankel’s analysis shows how group values mold the beliefs of individuals who are living within a social framework but he, like Gedi and Elam, does not completely ascribe to Halbwach’s theory of “collective memory.”

Pierre Nora, another theorist who will be discussed at greater length later in this chapter, views memory as a collective act with ties to the present. For Nora, collective memory is tied to group rituals and tradition, with memory as “the remnant of

experience still lived in the warmth of tradition, in the silence of custom, in the repetition of the ancestral,” with “collectively remembered values,” with “skills passed down by unspoken traditions” (Nora 34). Nora interprets the enactment and reenactment of the same stories and actions to be examples of collective memory and how memory is transmitted. Amos Funkenstein refutes this claim, stating that memory is both a mental and personal act and it can only be “collective” in a metaphorical sense: “...[C]onsciousness and memory can only be realized by an individual who acts, is aware, and remembers. Just as a nation cannot eat or dance, neither can it speak or remember” (Gedi and Elam 34). Through these three examples, it is possible to see the challenges in assigning a concrete explanation of what memory is and how it works.

Despite some of the controversy over “collective memory,” what Halbwachs’s theory *does* reveal is that memories are powerful and influential tools when the values and beliefs they embody are adopted by a social group. Shared memories maintain solidarity, group values, and preserve traditions. They also have the power to promote and inspire social change. Examples such as the Thirteen Roses’ memory prove the social power of Halbwach’s notion of “collective memory.” As shown through the transmission of the Roses’ memory, social groups synthesize individual memories and shared group values and also use creative imagination to not only share information about what happened to the women but also to communicate specific messages about them which vary among collective groups. Halbwachs’s “collective memory” points to the power of the manipulation of discourse. The social framework, where collective memories are formed, is also the realm in which these memories are presented, debated, and negotiated.

### The Formation of a Collective Memory

Halbwachs proposes that people have access to historical memories through reading, listening, or social gatherings. The oral exchange of collective memories in a group setting is one way that memories are passed on and transformed. Alessandro Portelli's *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (1991) is a useful example that shows how the narration of an anecdote, similar to that of the Thirteen Roses, can interpret a historical event but also symbolizes the values of a collective group. In the beginning of the book, Portelli tells how Italian steelworkers of Terni participated in a rally and protest which left one person, Luigi Trastulli, dead. Written accounts in the newspapers reported that the strike was to protest the police "massacre" (Portelli 4). From the police's perspective, workers like Trastulli participated in the street violence. Oral testimonies of the steelworkers tell a different story: there was no march but rather they filled the street because it was the end of the work day. Thus, the workers interpret Trastulli's death as a tragic, and perhaps unjust, result of police violence against workers in the street. Trastulli was an innocent victim who was caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. His death was portrayed as a sacrifice in the fight for workers' rights. The police's account contrasts with that of the workers.

Portelli was able to analyze and compare various individual accounts provided by the workers who were there or from those people who heard about Trastulli and sympathized with the story. He discovered that some workers' oral accounts shift into using the present tense when recalling the event—fusing the past with the present—while others mistake the death of Trastulli with other strikes that took place at different times. The ways Trastulli's death is remembered reveal more about the group values

than about the actual facts of the death. For Portelli, the re-telling of Trastulli's story over time "enhances its imaginative and symbolic quality" (Portelli 11). For the workers, perhaps, the details of the death are small in comparison to the "bigger picture" of the collective ideals. The conscious, or unconscious, manipulation of this event, along with the passing on of the story, reveal how historical figures such as Luigi Trastulli become symbols, or repositories, of certain ideals held by a collective group of people. It is also an example of how memories are shaped and changed over time.

Similar to what happened with the story about Luigi Trastulli, the oral exchange of the Roses' story in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has transformed the literal account of the facts into a more figurative description of them. Some first-person testimonies have factual inaccuracies. However, one could claim that the symbolism of the story, rather than the facts, is more important. What the story tells about the social groups and how the past influences the present is equally as valuable.

Like the death of Luigi Trastulli, the Roses' execution provides an opportunity for social groups to interpret the event. The Roses' execution is a case study that shows how a collective memory of a traumatic event is forged by synthesizing personal memories and collective experiences and values. Certain individuals assign themselves as the spokespeople of a social group. Over time, the factual details of a story (like that of the Roses) are revised and change—often to fit the need of the moment in which the story is being remembered and retold. Collective memory is not only shaped by individuals but also external social influences, as Gedi and Elam explain about Halbwachs's theory:

Halbwachs would more likely put it, that it is only within society that individuals are able to exercise their rationality. Through these means, society “intervenes” in the individual’s memory and molds it according to its rational “needs.” Society is thus capable of reconstructing its past at any given moment. The past becomes, through this process, a reflection of society’s needs rather than a reflection of the real events which once took place. (Gedi and Elam 39-40)

For this reason, it is important to consider the social norms that might influence how their memory is told: the social and political contexts (the institutions, laws, norms, customs) as well as the social participants who have a stake in the Roses’ memory.

Who are the participants in the retelling of the Roses’ story?

Halbwachs relies on sociological analysis to show that humans have a tendency to assimilate to groups and this framework of collectiveness binds together our memories. The family, and other social groups, are ruled by certain customs that shape individual thoughts: “No matter how we enter a family—by birth, marriage, or some other way—we find ourselves to be part of a group where our position is determined not by personal feelings but by rules and customs independent of us that existed before us” (Halbwachs 55). Individual memory is connected to a group, “to the extent that it is connected with the thoughts that come to us from the social milieu” (Halbwachs 53). Often times, the “greatest” memories we have are best remembered when someone we know (parents, for example) tells them to us (Halbwachs 38).

Since the process of forging and maintaining the Roses’ collective memory involves multiple generations, the terms “postmemory” or “second generation memory” will also be part of my analysis to describe the cultural works that were produced about the Roses by people who did not live through the war. Postmemory is a term that was first coined by Marianne Hirsch and has been used in her book *Family Frames* (1997)

and Hirsch's other publications, including her article in Barbie Zelizer's *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, "Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Postmemory" (2001). Hirsch also edited *Teaching the Representation of the Holocaust* (2004), in which she made references to postmemory as well. In her research on the Holocaust, Hirsch mainly uses the term to describe traumatic memories.

Postmemory is the process by which people from second and third generations imagine the traumatic experiences of their parents and grandparents—events that they did not personally witness. In "The Future of the Past: Counter-memory and Postmemory in Contemporary American Post-Holocaust Narratives," Efraim Sicher writes about the way that postmemory functions for children of Holocaust survivors. Many of these children have used the memory of their parents to "promote remembrance and combat revisionist denial of the [Holocaust]" (Sicher 57). Postmemory works to bring recognition to parents' memory and, by doing so, often brings forth untold personal accounts about the past with more critical distance and less trauma. In Spain, younger generations, along with war survivors, form a collective group that is committed to preserving the memories of the victims of the Spanish Civil War, including that of the Thirteen Roses. Scholars such as Sicher describe the transmission of collective ideals from an older generation to a younger one as a process of inheritance, and the memory that is passed on is described as "inherited memory." The concept of inherited memory helps to explain the process by which younger generations adopt the beliefs of their parents or relatives. Postmemory reveals how the experiences of older generations are interpreted and communicated by younger individuals.

Like the term “collective memory,” “inherited memory” has also been contested by scholars. Ernst Van Alpen concludes that “inherited memory” is not defined by a continuity in memory between generations but rather by a dis-continuity. He draws upon the writings of Nadine Fresco, who writes “Remembering the Unknown” (1984), and Helen Epstein, author of “The Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors” (1979), to refute the idea that children can become the heirs of a memory: “The only memory there is that one remembers nothing. This paradox undermines the notion of memory—which is at stake, but only in its absence” (Van Alpen 478). This points to how the transmission of a traumatic memory is different from other kinds of memory. Epstein, the daughter of Holocaust survivors, reveals how she learned more from what her parents did not tell her:

Like most survivors, neither [parent] imagined how, over the years, I had stored their remarks, their glances, their silences inside me, how I had deposited them in my iron box like pennies in a piggy bank. They were unconscious of how much a child gleans from the absence of explanation as much as from words, of how much I learned from the old photographs hanging on our apartment walls or secreted away in the old yellow envelope below my father’s desk. (Ibid.: 297). (Van Alpen 477)

According to Epstein, the failure of transmitting a memory between generations is what provokes the intense desire to learn more about the past. While memories cannot be “inherited” in the same way that a person can pass on a concrete object to another person, people of a second and third generation take ownership of the personal experiences of their elders who did live through a traumatic historical experience.

By drawing upon the concepts of “collective memory” and “inherited memory,” as metaphors to understand the process by which events, beliefs, and values are forged and transmitted, it is possible to see how individual accounts intersect and reaffirm

shared beliefs. Despite the various ways that individuals came to know about the Roses' story, the accounts that mention the thirteen women share the same desire for the recognition of women's sacrifice in the war effort, along with a desire to denounce the repression of their gender.

### Why Memory?: The Explosion of Memory Studies in the Twentieth-Century

Halbwachs's "collective memory" and Hirsh's "postmemory" have become convenient concepts in the twentieth-century for explaining the value of combining memory studies with history. In his article "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse," Kerwin Lee Klein describes the emergence of what he calls the "memory industry" of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Klein explains how memory has become a popular topic of scholarly inquiry: "Indeed one of the salient features of our new memory talk is the tendency to make fairly sweeping philosophical claims for memory, or even to imagine memory discourse as part of what is vaguely hailed as the rise of theory in departments of literature, history, and anthropology" (Klein 128). Klein proposes that "'memory' is the new critical conjunction of history and theory...*memory* has become the leading term in our new cultural history" (Klein 128). What makes memory an appealing approach in talking about the past? Memory studies have the ability to provoke a feeling of immediacy in a way that history cannot (Klein 129). It also helps to bring the past closer to the present through the subjectivity of a narrative. The subjectivity of memory has a definite appeal: "If history is objective in the coldest, hardest sense of the word, memory is subjective in the warmest, most inviting senses of the word. In contrast with history, memory fairly vibrates with the fullness of Being" (Klein 130). Memory makes the past seem more accessible and more personal (Klein 130). While history narrates an

event as a preserved experience in the past, memory describes it as a lived experience. Individuals are able to perceive themselves more as historical participants. Through personal or collective memory, they can see a connection between the past and the present. Susan Crane offers one opinion about this process: “There is no break between awareness of the past and its presence in the present, and nothing can be lost in this continuum” (Crane 1377).

The popularity of memory studies, Klein argues, began with two scholarly publications that drew attention to the union of memory and history: Yosef Yerushalmi’s *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (1982) and Pierre Nora’s *Lieux de mémoire* (1984) (Klein 127). Nora uses the terms *milieux de mémoire* to describe “real environments of memory”—the spaces, gestures, images, objects, rituals, actions, or words that primitive cultures have used as forms of memory transmission (Nora 8). He blames the acceleration of history--the tendency to archive memories and experiences from the past rather than keeping them connected to the present--for the loss of authentic memory: “We speak so much of memory because there is so little of it” (Nora 7). For Nora, “memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present” (Nora 8). Nora explains how there are *lieux de mémoire*—sites of memory that have been created as a replacement for authentic memory practices. These memory sites can take on a variety of forms: archives, anniversaries, celebrations, monuments or other physical places of commemoration, art and literature. Throughout this study about the Thirteen Roses, it is possible to see how the various artistic representations of the women’s lives and death serve as examples of *lieux de mémoire*: efforts to preserve, through reenactment and creative interpretation, an event that had a

significant impact in the nation's history. The various representations also are shaping and changing Spanish cultural production of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The collective memory of the Roses' execution in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries reveals information about Spain's history, culture, and politics: 1) The Roses' story is altering Spain's *historical memory* by unveiling an aspect of the past that has received little public attention. In recent years, there has been an increased public focus on the civil war victims; 2) This increased focus on the war's victims has created an opportunity for artistic elaboration which is transforming cultural production in Spain; 3) At the same time that more cultural representations are produced about the war, Spain's government is initiating a political discussion about the past. The visibility of the Thirteen Roses' story adds to this political debate because it is an example of the horror and injustice of Franco's dictatorship. The emerging approaches for investigating and understanding the past through the implementation of memory studies point to a public demand—and perhaps a need—for such research. Collective groups in Spain are not only discussing the Thirteen Roses but they are using the story to show how events such as the women's execution are a part of the nation's collective identity in the present. Stories like that of the Thirteen Roses have made a mark on the country and its democracy. The re-telling of these personal stories help Spaniards comprehend their nation's history as well as the shortfalls of their current democracy. By understanding past tragedies, citizens assess the type of democracy that they desire in the future. The next section will provide a brief historical overview of Spain's transition to democracy in order to explain the social context in which the Roses' memory is currently being remembered and negotiated.

Understanding the Roses' Function in the Twenty-First Century: Spain's Transition to Democracy and the 'Re-Discovery' of the Victims of Franco's Regime

The implementation of democracy in Spain was a gradual process, and it happened in three stages. The first stage was marked by the end of the Franco dictatorship. The second period involved the reconstruction of democracy, and the last phase consolidated the new political system (Aguilar Fernández 20). The public discussion of the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship, including the memory of the Thirteen Roses, was influenced by these three distinct stages. In the first two stages of the transition, the government, as well as most citizens, avoided publically mentioning past atrocities. Once Spain's democracy became more stable in the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, the government was more willing to discuss previous atrocities. Hence, the topic of "recuperation of Spain's historical memory"—including the Roses' memory—became a popular topic for public discussion.

The first democratic elections took place in June 1977 and shortly thereafter, the Constitution of 1978 was written. This first stage of Spain's transition to democracy required the collaboration between King Juan Carlos and the Minister Secretary-General Adolfo Suárez. During the first years of the transition, King Juan Carlos played a central role in creating national unity. For Aguilar Fernández and Humlebaek, "the image of the king is associated with 'national reconciliation'" (Aguilar Fernández and Humlebaek 146). Juan Carlos served as a symbol of hope for the future of Spanish government. This came at a time when many politicians and citizens alike wanted to put the past behind them.

The political and social changes of Spain's transition were done in a rather quiet fashion. The purpose behind this was to cast as little public attention as possible on the oppression of the previous regime. Following Franco's death, some effort was made toward reconciliation for war victims, as shown by the Amnesty Law of 1977. The Amnesty Law restored some civil rights that had been considered crimes during Franco's regime. The law pardoned those people who were accused of crimes of rebellion or sedition, those who objected to serving military duty for ethical or religious reasons, and free speech acts during Franco's dictatorship.<sup>2</sup> The Amnesty Law also forgave the government authorities for persecuting citizens for the aforementioned activities in the years prior to when the Amnesty Law was put into effect: "Todos los actos de intencionalidad política, cualquiera que fuese su resultado, tipificados como delitos y faltas realizados con anterioridad al día quince de diciembre de mil novecientos setenta y seis." (Ley de Amnistía). In terms of forgiveness, the Amnesty Law was a success. However, it offered no compensation to victims who suffered abuse or execution during Franco's dictatorship nor did it hold government officials accountable for these violent acts.

For the Minister Secretary-General Adolfo Suárez, it was necessary to break away from the past and eradicate any drama from Spanish politics (Aguilar Fernández 232). Spain's democratic government tacitly encouraged the development of a pact—

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<sup>2</sup> "En todo caso están comprendidos en la amnistía: a) Los delitos de rebelión y sedición, así como los delitos y faltas cometidos con ocasión o motivos de ellos, tipificados en el Código de Justicia Militar; b) La objeción de conciencia a la prestación del servicio militar, por motivos éticos o religiosos; c) Los delitos de denegación de auxilio a la Justicia por la negativa a revelar hechos de naturaleza política, conocidos en el ejercicio profesional; d) Los actos de expresión de opinión, realizados a través de prensa, imprenta o cualquier otro medio de comunicación; e) Los delitos y faltas que pudieran haber cometido las autoridades, funcionarios y agentes del orden público, con motivo u ocasión de la investigación y persecución de los actos incluidos en esta Ley; f) Los delitos cometidos por los funcionarios y agentes del orden público contra el ejercicio de los derechos de las personas" (Ley de Amnistía).

the *pacto del olvido*—which discouraged citizens from simultaneously examining the past, the civil war and dictatorship years, and instead encouraged them to focus their attention on current and future goals for the new Spanish democracy. The Spanish government desperately wanted to establish a political “middle ground” that was void of any extremist tendencies. This would also help provide a sense of peace, stability, and security (Aguilar Fernández 236). Adolfo Suárez, who served as Spain’s President after 1976, was a strong advocate of *moderation* and *tolerance*—two defining concepts of the Spanish transition.

Between 1982 and 1996, the Spanish government was led by the Socialist Party (the PSOE). During this time, there was a large effort to “modernize” Spain and strengthen its connection with Europe. The atrocities of the past did not fit in with the socialist campaign, which focused on the future rather than the past (Ferrán 25). The desire for social order took precedence over the need to discuss and come to terms with the atrocities that took place during the civil war and Franco’s regime.

There was fear among politicians, in particular, that a transition to democracy that went against Franco’s old regime would cause a reactivation of dramatic memories from the civil war. In one article, the newspaper *El País* declared that “every Spaniard must, thus, heal the inner wounds of the past and help to build a new and democratic Spain based on freedom and justice, the only way of guaranteeing real social order” (Aguilar Fernández 194). Healing past traumas became the responsibility of the individual, and was a process in which the Spanish government did not want to participate.

The most publically-accepted interpretation of the Spanish Civil War presented only the victors' perspective. These views were communicated by the mainstream media, were also taught in schools, and documented in history books (Aguilar Fernández 10). Efforts to fulfill a duty of remembrance to the oppressed of the past did not gain much public attention for over a decade after the transition to democracy. Some survivors published autobiographies and biographies. Other groups organized small commemorations such as the Roses' commemoration, which was started by a few of their women comrades in 1981. Many survivors who lived through the events remained silent. Nonetheless, these marginalized and tragic aspects of the past deserve recognition because they have an important purpose; they are part of the nation's history and also play a role in shaping Spain's current political and social contexts.

The election of the conservative Partido Popular in 1996 did not help matters because it brought about the emergence of many of the political elites that ruled under Franco. These political leaders did not have an interest in reexamining Franco's dictatorship and there was little media coverage about it. Joan Ramón Resina describes how public knowledge of the unspoken parts of the past only emerged in "visible yet immaterial traces" (Resina 2). This silence during the transition meant that there were holes in public historical knowledge.

While the government continued to refrain from a public discussion about the victims of the Spanish Civil War, citizens in the 1990s questioned this approach. Spaniards became increasingly aware that the avoidance of these topics may not be a healthy way for the nation's democracy to move into the future. Other countries that had suffered under military dictatorships, such as Argentina and Chile, had undergone a

process of retrospective reevaluation (Bermeo 281). In 1983, the President of Argentina, Raúl Alfonsín, created a truth commission called the Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas (CONADEP). The commission's goal was to clarify the events—the kidnappings and torture—that took place during the military dictatorship that was established in Argentina between 1976 and 1983. CONADEP presented these findings to the President in 1984, in a book *Nunca Más*. This written report cited the human rights abuses that took place under the country's previous dictatorship. *Nunca Más* concludes with a set of recommendations to pursue legal action against those responsible.

Unlike Argentina after the transition to democracy, Spain did not initiate an official search into the human rights violations of the past. Instead, civilians compiled this information as part of a collective effort that took place more than sixty years after some of the events took place. New historical studies and historical fiction began to be published about the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship years, thus altering how the past was perceived.<sup>3</sup>

Emilio Silva Faba, a Spanish journalist, was one of the first civilians to research the topic of mass graves from the years of the war and dictatorship. His initial quest was to locate his grandfather's mass grave. Silva Faba's grandfather had been secretly executed and buried on October 16, 1936 (Ferrán 19). Through this work, Silva Faba became increasingly aware of the large numbers of people that had been killed and buried, and their bodies remained uncovered—an estimated 30,000 people (Ferrán 19).

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<sup>3</sup> It is not my intention to compare Spain's post-dictatorship situation with that of Argentina. I mention Argentina as an example of a country that went through an investigative process of the past crimes, followed by a judicial process.

This realization provoked him to establish the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (ARMH), which organized the exhumation of some of these graves (Ferrán 20). Since its creation in 2000, the ARMH has had an active role in transforming the government's approach to examining the past. In 2002, the ARMH presented its findings about Spain's mass graves to the United Nations Work Group of Forced Disappearances (Ferrán 21). For the first time, the Spanish government was under international pressure to address its past and this signaled a change in its policy at the turn of the twenty-first century. Due to public pressure from civil organizations such as the ARMH, the government took measures to bring recognition to the war's vanquished.

The elections of 2004 brought about a socialist victory with the instauration of Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero on April 15. As the new prime minister, Zapatero offered promise for change with regard to remembering and talking about Spain's past. In September 2004, a few months after Zapatero's election to office, the government passed a decree for the creation of a report about how the government can create a law or "judicial and moral rehabilitation to victims of Francoist repression" (Ferrán 29). With this decree, Spain's Law of Historical Memory began to take shape.

In 2006, Congress proposed to name 2006 as "the Year of Historical Memory." One newspaper report from April 27, 2006, explained the significance of this new legislation: "El documento insta al Gobierno a presentar en el plazo de un mes el anunciado informe sobre la situación de las víctimas de la Guerra Civil y del franquismo" ("El Congreso declara"). While the government's efforts demonstrated a stronger effort to recognize victims, this proclamation still did not advocate judicial

punishment of those individuals who committed crimes in the past—such as the executioners of the Thirteen Roses. Nonetheless, the recognition of the violent, unjust acts—and the acknowledgement that these acts require reparations, was one important step for the entire nation.

The discussion of the Law of Historical Memory and its contents continued into 2007, and a version of this legislation was approved on December 26, 2007. The initial proposal, titled “Anteproyecto de ley por la que se reconocen y amplian derechos y se establecen medidas en favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia durante la Guerra civil y la dictadura exposición de motivos,” presents changes to the law to recognize victims of the past (Ley de Memoria). The articles of the law cover a wide range of topics, including both the need for public recognition of victims, the validation of the personal and family memories of victims, and practical compensation. Article 13, for instance, outlines the government support for uncovering the remains of victims.

The law also designates support and assistance for centers for the documentation of historical memory, to conserve documents from the war and dictatorship time periods, and allow public access to them. In some instances, the law allocates funds for victims. Article 8 states that the government will provide social and medical assistance to help those who were directly and permanently disabled by the war (Ley de Memoria). Federal money would also be set aside for those who died trying to preserve democracy near the end of the dictatorship:

En atención a las circunstancias excepcionales que concurrieron en su muerte, se reconoce el derecho a una indemnización, por una cuantía de 135.000 €, a los beneficiarios de quienes fallecieron durante el período comprendido entre el 1 de enero de 1968 y el 6 de octubre de 1977, en defensa y reivindicación de las libertades y derechos democráticos. (Ley de Memoria)

In the earlier years of the transition, the Spanish government had also provided compensation to those who suffered previous hardships. The 2007 legislation, however, represents a renewed attempt to establish a public, transparent process for national healing.

The recent emergence of this new law makes it difficult to know what concrete actions will be taken in the years to come with regard to compensation; and the Spanish government still has gaps in its approach to the past. For instance, the bill seeks monetary compensation but omits any discussion of bringing to justice—or even naming—those people responsible for past crimes. In this sense, Spain’s Law of Historical Memory differs greatly from official investigations of violent dictatorships of Latin America—such as *Nunca Más*. *Nunca Más* recommended prosecution of those who carried out crimes. Some of these prosecutions were carried out in 1985 but one year later, other people who committed past crimes were granted impunity under the Punto Final Law.

The Spanish government’s deliberate avoidance of this information corresponds to the theme of the transition: to establish a peaceful way of living together after the atrocities of Franco’s dictatorship. The lack of placing retrospective blame on individuals responsible for horrific acts for the sake of peace in the present is logical; however, the avoidance of this information makes the recovery of the past just as “incomplete” as Spain’s initial transition to democracy. Citizens and the government, alike, make little mention of those individuals who committed crimes in the past—

perhaps because it is considered a taboo subject by the government, or because the information is not available to the public.

At the end of the twentieth- and beginning of the twenty-first century, significant political and social transformations have influenced, and inspired, Spain's cultural production. Artistic representation serves as a means for citizens to engage in retrospective analysis of the recent past. The Roses' memory has been used to represent the larger themes of women's activism and also their oppression. The numerous representations continue to imagine, celebrate, and discuss the life and death of the women. In the next section, the chapter outline demonstrates how the Roses' memory has evolved, beginning as a communist story, then transformed into a democratic symbol, and lastly altered to create an entertaining and depolitized anecdote. The twenty-first century representations about the Roses reveal a larger trend in Spain's cultural production, which conveys a continuing interest in the political debate over the topic of recuperation of historical memory and an artistic desire to represent tragic aspects of the past.

### Chapter Outline

This study draws upon the theoretical insights from memory studies to show how individuals and groups interpret and express an understanding of Spain's recent history, and the tragedy of the Thirteen Roses, using literary and artistic techniques. These forms of expression are linked to and influenced by specific cultural, political, and historical movements of the twentieth-and twenty-first centuries. Chapter 1 presents a historical summary of women's activism in the war effort in order to understand the Thirteen Roses' historical and literary significance within a prewar and postwar context.

Within this analysis, I present the perspective of the war survivors who passed on this story of their fallen comrades as a way to celebrate their sacrifices and remember the group's communist values; the Roses died in an effort to establish class and gender equality. I assess oral story-telling, poetry, and *testimonio* writing—three methods that survivors used to pass on the Roses' story as a collective memory of hope and inspiration, but also of pain, suffering, and injustice. Poetry is a genre that uses the Roses' memory as a metaphor to reiterate the political ideals of a collective group. The three poems about the Roses use nature imagery to reinforce the idea of regeneration. The Roses, for instance, are described as stars that watch over the earth, or as flowers that bloom every spring. The repetition of this nature imagery in poetry was a way to maintain political solidarity during the postwar years. It also simultaneously perpetuates the Roses' memory.

The testimonies that emerged after Franco's death provide more of a literal, rather than artistic, representation of the Roses and life in Ventas prison. While the Roses' memory maintained hope and solidarity for women during the dictatorship years, the function of this memory changed after Spain's transition to democracy. Women war survivors used this collective memory for the political purpose of publically denouncing the atrocities of the dictatorship years, calling on a need to remember these abuses, remember the sacrifices of women, and make a call for justice.

Chapter 2 discusses the years following Spain's transition to democracy in 1975, when the children and grandchildren of war survivors used the Roses' story to critique the government's refusal to confront the past. During Spain's democracy, a journal article, Jacobo García Blanco-Cicerón's article "Asesinato legal" (1985), opened a

floodgate of interest in the Roses, marked a change in narrative style, and drew attention to the Roses' commemoration. Since 1985, there have been various attempts at completing and revising the story and making this historical account more widely available to the public. Several authors have taken the story of the Thirteen Roses and incorporated it into their research on larger themes such as women's life in prison and the execution of prisoners in Madrid's Cementerio del Este. These authors from the 1980s and 1990s look at the Roses story, the Second Republic, and the Spanish Civil War with a critical distance.

With the passing of time, this critical distance has diminished as new journalistic interpretations of the Roses' lives take on a more subjective point of view. With this shift in narrative strategies, the Thirteen Roses' trope not only highlights the factual details but also the historical methodology of getting this information; some articles such as Hernández Holgado's "Las Trece Rosas. Agosto de 1939: Un diálogo entre el documento y la fuente oral" (2003), discusses the different ways that the Roses' story has been told through oral story-telling and in writing. Carlos Fonseca's book-length account, *Las trece rosas rojas* (2004), also inserts a critique about how even during Spain's transition to democracy, it is difficult, if not impossible, to access certain historical documents stored in archives. Some of the documents from the Thirteen Roses' trial had disappeared from the Military Archive.

In addition to this critique, Fonseca's account differs from previous journalistic writing on the Roses because of the narrative's subjectivity—with a clear bias toward the war's vanquished. Fonseca's account offers a thorough description of the desperate circumstances during the Spanish Civil War, as well as the motives and ideals that

fueled the women's military activism. Many democratic values, including the pursuit of social equality and justice, are similar to those to which a twenty-first century audience can relate; thus, the Roses embody certain ideals that are appealing to this type of audience.

In the early years of the transition, Spaniards wanted to create a divide between the Second Republic and the democracy that was established in the 1970s. In contrast, some citizens today are more eager to connect the democratic values from the Second Republic to current democratic ideals. Fonseca's account about the Roses enables this connection by portraying the women as innocent victims but also heroic figures who died defending democratic values.

Chapter 3 discusses two novels: Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* (2001) and Jesús Ferrero's *Las trece rosas* (2002). Both novels use the Roses as a way to critique the cruelty of Franco's dictatorship and the way in which the war has been studied and perceived after Spain's transition to democracy. Chacón accomplished this by focusing on women's history. In her novel, the Roses' memory is told in a fragmented fashion, as part of the novel's subplot. Chacón's *La voz dormida* uses the anecdote of the Thirteen Roses for several purposes: 1) the Roses' account allows Chacón to connect her novel with previous texts written about women's historical sacrifices during the war and dictatorship years, many of which I study in Chapter 1, thus inscribing her novel in a tradition of writing about women's courageous acts as well as women's suffering; 2) the anecdote highlights the mental anguish and trauma emerging from the death of the Thirteen Roses; 3) Chacón describes the figurative qualities of the Roses' trope—especially the poetic symbolism of the rose, which represents nature, beauty, youth,

regeneration and rebirth, to show how some prisoners were inspired by the Roses' story and it helped them survive in prison; and finally, 5) the trope also refers to the Christian symbolism of the rose to show the Thirteen Roses as martyr figures, much like the protagonists of Chacón's novel.

While Chacón's text focuses on women's wartime participation and uses the Roses' memory as a secondary part of the storyline, the Thirteen Roses are the main focus of Jesus Ferrero's novel. *Las trece rosas* interprets, through fiction, the developments that lead up to the women's death and also describes in detail the moment of their execution. Ferrero features all thirteen of the women as the main protagonists. He employs certain literary techniques to invite the reader to be a critical observer of the story. The text contains many intertextual references to Shakespeares' *MacBeth* and the Three Fates to give the impression that the Roses' death was an inevitable and irreversible tragic event. The omniscient narrator portrays certain violent moments related to the war and the Roses' execution by describing them as absurd scenes from a movie. In one moment, the narrative tells how one of the male characters is gunned down by police. To emphasize the calamity of this unnecessary violent act, the narrator expresses a wish that this event could be reversed by going backwards in time, much like the way in which a person rewinds a movie. At the end of the text, Ferrero includes a phrase from the poem "To the Reader" ("Au Lecteur") by Charles Bauletaire, which reinforces to the reader of *Las trece rosas* the need for critical reflection of past events—especially those related to violence.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of Ángeles López's novel, *Martina, la rosa número trece* (2004). Martina was one of the Thirteen Roses, and López is the sister-in-

law of Martina's great niece, Paloma Masa Barroso. The novel was a collaborative project between the two women; Masa Barroso conducted historical research in archives and conducted interviews to find out more about her great aunt, Martina, and López wrote the account. Because this novel was written from the perspective of a family member, it personalizes the story of the Thirteen Roses and communicates how the Roses' story is connected to Paloma's search for her personal identity. Within the novel, the Thirteen Roses trope is used to describe Paloma's search for identity. This can be applied to a larger context: the investigation at the national level into the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War, which also is symbolic of Spain's collective history and identity.

*Martina* describes how different family members dealt with their grief after the execution. Often times, the women of the family carried the burden of Martina's execution through silence. In the case of the Barroso family, women process memories and carry the burden of these memories through several generations until finally, someone of a younger generation is able to bring them to the forefront and find closure. Paloma accomplishes this, not only for herself but her family as well. Thus, the Roses' trope also functions in the novel to show how traumatic memories were silently passed on from one generation to the next. Silence serves as a symbol for the different ways in which the nation, as a collective, dealt with loss stemming from the war for many years. In an interview, Ángeles López reinforces this idea by stating that "Todos tienen una Martina en casa."

Chapter 5 addresses the 2006 theater production about the Roses, *Las trece rosas*. *Las trece rosas* was written by Júlia Bel and directed by Bel and Eva Hiberna.

The play was performed between September 30 and October 22, 2006 in Barcelona's Teatre Tantarantana. It was also performed in several other cities across Spain—including Madrid—and attracted a diverse audience of war survivors, survivors' relatives, and young people who wanted to know more about the Thirteen Roses. Like other literary works about the Thirteen Roses, the theater production is considered, using Pierre Nora's term, a *lieu de mémoire*—a place of memory. However unlike written accounts, theater serves as a physical space to remember and depends on bodily movements to act out this memory.

Audience members not only remember the Roses through observing the play but also by participating in the experience. During a live performance, a group of individuals can watch, learn, dialogue, and react together. Drawing upon Karen Malpede's writings on performance, I show how *Las trece rosas* is an example of theater of witness: a theater performance that presents a tragic and violent event that provokes empathy among audience members. By creating empathy, the audience witnesses and connects to the events on stage. This process has a cathartic function, both on the individual and collective levels. Spectators can acknowledge the traumas of the past and reflect upon the impact of these previous events on the present and the future.

Within the production, the playwright selects certain aspects of the Roses' story, such as their occupations as seamstresses, and uses sewing as a trope to show the women's political activism. The play also generates empathy by describing the interconnectedness of humanity through sewing imagery. In addition to sewing soldiers'

uniforms, the play presents how the Roses sewed seeds of democracy and equality, thus connecting Spain's civil war to the present.

Not all cultural productions use the Roses' memory as an opportunity for historical reflection. Chapter 6 illustrates how Emilio Martínez-Lázaro and Pedro Costa's film, *Las trece rosas* (2007) capitalizes on the dramatic potential of the Roses' story and turns the trope into a marketable commodity. The film directors depoliticize the women and use mass marketing strategies to present an entertaining story to a large public. The film glosses over the violence and suffering that women endured in prison. Instead of focusing on the women's political activism, the plot is centered on the romantic love interests of the main protagonists. The film directors use the civil war as a backdrop for entertainment and avoid establishing any connection between their artistic production and the political legislation or group discussions that are taking place in the twentieth-century about the victims of the civil war. Costa and Martínez-Lázaro's film isolates the women from their original communist origins. This is symptomatic of one approach to the past in contemporary Spain, as docudramas have the potential to skew public perception of the past. *Las 13 rosas* provides little insight into who the Roses' were as historical figures. After the conclusion, Appendix A provides a brief biographical sketch of each of the Thirteen Roses.

Through these chapters, it is possible to see how the Roses' memory is transmitted within distinct social frameworks but also how, in these contexts, memories intersect and negotiate specific political, historical, social, and cultural objectives. As each writer or artist interprets the Roses' story, they apply certain cultural and literary tropes to subjectively communicate why they think this story is important and

should be shared with others. Some artists remembered the Roses as a way to maintain communist ideals. At the end of the twentieth century, the Rose memory is used to critique past (and present) injustices, celebrate democratic ideals, or teach audiences about the tragedy stemming from the Spanish Civil War. More recently, the Roses' memory has also been marketed to a larger public as a romantic and entertaining story. Socialist politicians have also used the Roses' memory as a way to further their party's political agenda. In 2010, the interpretation and representation of the Thirteen Roses has become a truly contested site of memory—a memory that is continually being recreated, through the implementation of new artistic tropes, and debated to generate new divergent perspectives about the past and present.

### Chapter 1: Who were the Thirteen Roses?

The account about the Thirteen Roses' death functioned in the postwar and dictatorship years as a way to creatively express and remember the heroic acts of the war's vanquished—particularly women. This first chapter traces the process of this story-telling to show how and why this particular narrative was forged by drawing upon two different sources: the poetry written during the dictatorship years and the testimonies published by war survivors shortly after Spain's transition to democracy. While these two styles of writing were published in different time periods, they each share a common thread: both show how throughout the twentieth century, female voices celebrated women's participation in the war effort and denounced the injustice that they endured under Franco's dictatorship by implementing various literary tropes that portray the Roses as metonymic figures of heroism and sacrifice.

In the early postwar years, women exchanged their thoughts while living in close quarters in prison. In this setting, women also were collectively witnessing the traumatic events of prison life. Some women prisoners searched for ways to express their emotions and perceptions of this daily reality. Story-telling served a cathartic function. The sharing of this information was a way to triumph over these difficulties through repeatedly telling stories of hope and inspiration—turning everyday tragedy into a form of resistance. The repetition of these tales, such as that of the Thirteen Roses, points to how these stories have been considered by some scholars to be collective memories for female prisoners.

The application of the theory of collective memory is appropriate for the analysis of the story-telling about the Roses because this individual account was used as

an example that represented the experiences of many women. Natalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn expand on Halbwachs' theories to argue that memory is a crucial component of identity formation (Zemon Davis and Starn 4). The transmission of the collective memory of the Roses assisted in reestablishing women's identity, especially in the degrading circumstances of prison life. The memory of the Roses reaffirmed the core values, and strengths, of their gender. Collective beliefs are reminders of marginalization, or victimization, and also reinforce the history of a social group that was placed at the margins: "Local memories are sources for writing the local histories ignored by historians of dynastic monarchy and the nation-state; the private sphere and the practices of everyday life define and conserve alternatives to the official memory of public historiography" (Zemon Davis and Starn 5). The circulation of traumatic information through the act of story-telling or writing helps survivors to understand the past and how these experiences have shaped their perceptions and social roles.

The way in which female war survivors narrated their experiences of prison life varied. Within prison, some wrote poetry to symbolically describe the Roses' death. Others, during Spain's transition to democracy, chose to write a first-person memoir or a text using a novelistic form. Postwar poetry relied on figurative examples, or literary tropes such as metaphor, to convey these messages of hope and optimism. Nonfiction testimonies did not use these same metaphors. However like the poetry, these narratives ascribed metonymic qualities to the Roses as icons for political activism and sacrifice. All of the accounts about the Roses—the postwar poetry and testimonies-- repeat a common set of motifs that praise the beauty, innocence, bravery and strength of these

women. These narratives about the Roses celebrate and emphasize, if not exaggerate, these personal qualities.

By tracing the development of the Roses' story over time, it is possible to see how the historical details of the event have been changed and transformed through the act of story-telling. The story of the Thirteen Roses can be considered a literary invention that witnesses used to creatively express grief and pay homage to the women; it is a didactic example of injustice that was preserved—but simultaneously revised—over the years. Elizabeth Tonkin, a social anthropologist, explains how stories can be reworked: “Society from time to time obligates people not just to reproduce in thought previous events of their lives, but also to touch them up, to shorten them, or to complete them so that, however convinced we are that our memories are exact, we give them a prestige that reality did not possess” (Tonkin 51). Tonkin outlines the way certain stories survive over time, and the social functions that such repeated story-telling embodies. For Tonkin, “it may be then that the story’s repetition, and survival, has occurred by placing it in a different genre, whose rhetorical structuring in the larger history allowed listeners to make new connections with other characters there, and new moral interpretations too” (Tonkin 95). Those people who tell the story of the Roses identify the women as representatives of their own sets of beliefs; the use of the aforementioned motifs is tied to social or group values and belief systems.

The social and historical contexts of the postwar years and during the transition to democracy had an impact on how individuals told the Roses' story and also determined what type of literary tropes they used. After the war, for example, the Roses' story could not be openly discussed because of the strict censorship. In addition,

the metaphoric, artistic qualities of the poetry were uplifting to their fellow comrades and gave hope for a better future at a time when some individuals felt that all of their political and social aspirations were lost. These circumstances changed after Spain's transition to democracy, although those who fought against Franco lived with fear. Nonetheless, some individuals publicly denounced the horrors and trauma of the war and its aftermath through nonfiction *testimonio* and *novela testimonio*. The Roses' memory played a role in this process.

### Women's Fight for Equality in Spain

To understand the significance of these texts, it is necessary to examine the role of women in Spanish society of the early twentieth century and the reasons why some women—including the Thirteen Roses—were involved in the changes and struggles of this time period. The beginning of the twentieth century in Spain was a time of change and progress in the country, yet was also marked by apprehension and resistance toward these new ways of living. Prior to the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Spain experienced a growth in population, a focus on urbanization and the emergence of a middle class, and later the improvement of Spain's economic infrastructure under the dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera. Spain's industrialization during this time period created heightened class awareness and caused tensions between traditional and progressive sectors of society. The working class had a strong desire for reforms because many people worked in factories for long hours and for a small wage. These conditions provoked the formation of unions, although some of these changes were met with skepticism by other social groups.

The conflict between tradition and progress was found not only in the public sphere; it also was prevalent in the home as well. At the early part of the twentieth century, marriage and the home were still the main focal points for women. Women were encouraged to keep their traditional identities as daughters, spouses, and mothers: “A woman was taught from childhood that her purpose in life was to fulfill her duties as a wife and mother in the context of the home. Thus any incursion into the public sphere of work was considered unnatural and a discredit to her ‘sublime’ mission as mother and ‘angel of the hearth’” (Nash, *Defying* 23). The “angel of the hearth” was a well-known trope used in Spanish culture. This term was applied to a woman’s social role. One definition from 1877 explains women as serving the interests and needs of men: “an angel of love, consolation to our afflictions, defender of our merits, patient sufferer of our faults, faithful guardian of our secrets, and jealous depository of our honor” (Nash, “Un/Contested” 28).

Values and beliefs about female gender roles continued to call upon the model found in Fray Luis de León’s, *La Perfecta Casada* from the sixteenth-century: the woman as the manager of the home (Nash, “Un/Contested,” 28). In her book chapter, “Un/Contested Identities: Motherhood, Sex Reform and the Modernization of Gender Identity in Early Twentieth-Century Spain,” Mary Nash explains how biological essentialism contributed to the hierarchization of assigned social roles. For Nash, this “conceptualization of sexual difference is also decisive in accounting for the historical development of women in Spanish society in the early twentieth century and is also a critical factor in assessing the difficulties they had in contesting cultural norms and established gender identities” (Nash, “Un/Contested,” 26).

While female identity was centered on the home, male identity was defined through being the only economic provider (Nash, *Defying* 26). The presence of women in the work place was not so common, with the exception of those jobs related to domestic tasks. Women had limited access to work because of society's traditional norms which discriminated against women who had a desire to work. Those who did work during the 1920s and 1930s were discontent because of the sexist treatment they were given (Nash, *Defying* 22). In the early part of the twentieth century, the State also legally discriminated against women to ensure that they remained subordinate to men. However, along with the economic, political and social changes within the country, the image of woman was slowly changing: "By the twenties and thirties, the collective historical experience of women surpassed the boundaries of the home and gave rise to a complex articulation between private and public domains" (Nash, *Defying* 28).

In 1931, there were new elections in Spain—which helped the advancement of women's issues. The declaration of the Second Republic was received with much hope and enthusiasm by leftist supporters who thought that this government could reform and modernize the country. There were other groups that openly opposed it—particularly the militants with ties to the *Falange*—those with anti-bourgeois and fascist sentiments. Other groups, particularly the anarchist and communist parties, viewed the Republic as an opportune moment for them to achieve their own goals of establishing more social equality.

Spain's Second Republic began in 1931 with the socialist victory of Manuel Azaña in June. Azaña implemented social and economic reforms, which resulted in new social and political opportunities for women. The positive changes for Spanish women

began with the Constitution of 1931, which declared that women were equal to men according to law. This equality allowed the chance for women to study and work outside of the home. In 1932, Spanish law legalized divorce and civil marriage and one year later, they received the right to vote. Nash comments on the collective significance of these events for women: “In the course of the Second Republic, women benefited from the passage of substantial reform legislation. Maternity insurance plans, labor legislation, education reform, civil marriage laws, and the establishment of divorce, together with the abolition of regulated prostitution, constituted undoubted advances in the overall situation of women” (Nash, *Defying* 41). The traditional cultural representation of women as the “ángel del hogar” was challenged by a new gender discourse based on the “Nueva Mujer Moderna”, the “New Modern Woman”—an independent woman with career aspirations and personal goals that did not prioritize traditional female goals of marriage and maintaining the family home. This image was already “in vogue” in other European countries. While the image of the “new woman” was not as widely accepted as the “angel of the hearth” in Spain, it also was incorporated into social values about gender norms (Nash, “Un/Contested” 31).

The military coup of 1936 and eminent outbreak of civil war, which followed only a few months after the newly-elected government of the leftist *Frente Popular*, posed a different challenge that would test the established, and changing, roles of women of the 1930s. Helen Graham claims that the military coup unleashed a series of culture wars—among those, the confrontation between the traditional gender role and the image of the “new woman” (Graham 2). The early stages of the war seemed to “promise an immediate change in the treatment of women” (Nash, *Defying* 49). Instead

of staying in the home, women were encouraged to participate in war effort activities in the public sphere (Nash, *Defying* 49). During the war, many progressive women--including the Thirteen Roses--organized within women's groups and youth organizations to fight against Franco to preserve their new rights.

In 1936, the first year of the Spanish Civil War, women organized to take up arms through an organization called *Mujeres Libres*. The gender role of women was politicized during the war, as shown through the heroic leftist figure of the *miliciana*. In the fight against fascism, "[milicianas] exemplified the capacity of the Spanish people to confront the brutal aggression of the fascist rebels. Their heroic deaths were evoked in terms of the glorious fight against fascism. War rhetoric in the early period stressed the courage and bravery of those who formed the popular resistance as exemplified by these young heroines (Nash, *Defying* 50). For Nash, the *miliciana* projected an image of a "purposeful" woman who was also dedicated to the war effort (Nash, *Defying* 50).

Within Republican Spain, however, there were mixed views on the social role of women (Nash, *Defying* 49). Other leftist slogans did not entirely support the image of a woman who had taken up arms. The slogan "Men to the Front. Women to the Homefront" suggests that the war's heroines dedicate themselves to tasks that fall within their traditional roles as wives and mothers (Nash, *Defying* 54). During the war effort, women participated in a variety of ways, both in the public and private sphere. Although women's participation has been placed in the shadow of men's contributions, their behind-the-scenes work created an important sense of solidarity. Women helped to keep the war effort together. These collective experiences created a sense of solidarity

among women as well, and helped to identify and shape the social goals and aspirations toward which they worked.

Female Wartime Organizations: The Thirteen Roses and the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas

Women's participation during the war was carried out through a variety of female organizations with both leftist and conservative concerns and political views. Each organization emphasized certain women's issues: access to education, work, and the war effort, to name a few (Nash, *Defying* 63). While women groups focused on solidarity involving certain social and political matters, men did not organize themselves in the same way. Men, in contrast to women, "were not mobilized through male antifascist organizations but through the usual channels of political affiliation, the work force, and military recruitment" (Nash, *Defying* 64). Since the way of recruiting women was different than men, it was necessary to create "new organizational channels" (Nash, *Defying* 64). Perhaps the most prominent of these channels was women's connection to antifascism. Some of the most important antifascist groups were the Agrupación de Mujeres Antifascistas (AMA) and its corresponding youth organization: the Unión de Muchachas (Nash, *Defying* 65). The AMA was created in 1934 by the PCE and in 1936, it supported the Popular Front (Frente Popular) in the elections. During the war, the organization was present in the regions of republican Spain. The purpose of the AMA was to get Spanish women involved with the antifascist cause, and also to promote the Spanish Communist Party among women (Nash, *Defying* 65). The Party was unified by the desire to eliminate fascism and stated that it was open to women of different political beliefs and also those that were not involved in politics:

“The AMA’s claim to be a multi-partisan organization encompassing both politicized and non-politicized women was valid, to some degree, as many of its members were also affiliated with communist, socialist, and republican parties” (Nash, *Defying* 66). Women who were at the core of the AMA closely identified with the Popular Front (Nash, *Defying* 66).

Those who were in charge of the AMA were guided by the Communist Party. During the war the PCE “paid considerable attention to women” but it did not attract a very large female membership (Nash, *Defying* 67). In 1938, 4,203 women were members of the Communist Party (Nash, *Defying* 67). Nonetheless, historical studies have pointed to how women who were not politically active in the AMA also participated in the organization’s temporary projects (Nash, *Defying* 68).

Although the communist party did not have a large stronghold in recruiting women, it was very prominent in the creation and maintenance of youth organizations that reached out to women. Some of these organizations included the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas, the Unión de Muchachas and the Alianza Nacional de la Dona Jove. These communist-affiliated organizations were instrumental in unifying young people against fascism. These female youth organizations were radical in the sense that women demanded access to work, training, education, jobs, and equal treatment to men (Nash, *Defying* 70). Nash claims that “women of the AMA understood antifascist activism exclusively as a defense of the democratic republic—as the only one that recognizes their rights and their needs (Nash, *Defying* 73).

Youth organizations were also popular for unifying groups of women. These organizations were also present in the years that Azaña was in power. Youth

organizations helped to organize people around certain social and political goals and sentiments. Right before the overthrow of the Popular Front, there was much confusion which spurred the youth groups—both left and right wing ones—to organize themselves within their political parties (Mangini 79). During the war, the Communist Party played a large role in the formation of youth movements and was the most instrumental in organizing antifascist youth organizations for women (Nash, *Defying* 70).

Many youth organizations—such as the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas (JSU)—were formed during the Second Republic, along with other politically-motivated organizations such as the *Falange*, along with other Catholic, Marxist, and anarchist groups. People opted to join these political organizations or youth groups because they represented certain collective ideals that individuals found valuable; they had a social purpose much like unions, factories, neighborhoods, or the university because they represented opportunities for people to unite (Casterás 8). With the outbreak of war, these youth organizations were capable of creating their own policies that represented the needs and desires of young people.

Inspired by worker values and the image of Lenin, the JSU followed the Stalinist propaganda of the 1930s (Casterás 7). Its mission was to create a socialist country where children and the elderly were privileged citizens (Casterás 7). At the start of the Spanish Civil War, the JSU maintained a firm belief that capitalism had reached a moment of crisis, and that it was time to take a stance against what they called “reaccionarismos contrarrevolucionarios” (Casterás 8). For the JSU, fascism embodied these anti-revolutionary sentiments. For the communists, fascism represented a great danger because it was:

[u]n movimiento financiado por el gran capital, con gran capacidad para mover masas y gente joven en crisis y dirigido, no sólo contra el movimiento obrero revolucionario—especialmente el comunista—sino también, contra las opciones moderadas de los partidos socialistas que obstaculizaban la autonomía política relativa que el fascismo necesitaba para cumplir su función histórica: ayudar a reproducir el capital, asegurar el estado burgués y conseguir espacios vitales y mercados exteriores que, a través del nacionalismo y de la violencia, podían forzar guerras coloniales, civiles o mundiales. (Casterás 8)

The JSU lobbied against the political, social, and economic goals of fascism, and the organization had other qualities that attracted young people. During the VI Congreso de la Internacional Juvenil Comunista, which took place on September 25, 1935, the communists vowed to work toward creating organizations of the masses that were attentive to vital interests of the youth, not just through ideologies but also in the realms of culture, sports, and other leisurely activities (Álvarez 11).

Young women, for example, were drawn to the JSU because of the chance for personal growth that the organization offered. These opportunities had been denied to women before the Second Republic, particularly in the realm of education: “Young Spanish women of the working class, who had been kept under strict familial supervision and had been generally discouraged from learning anything but household duties, witnessed a revolutionary change in their possible destinies at the onset of the war” (Mangini 76).

The testimony of Maruja Cuesta, found in Shirley Mangini’s *Memories of Resistance*, is one example that helps explain why some women joined the JSU. Cuesta had been frustrated because her parents could not afford for her to study at a boarding school in Madrid, even after a teacher offered to sponsor her. This experience had a

significant impact on her, and is one reason why she desired to pursue goals that she had been previously denied:

People finished school very young then, at about twelve. This law of impotence that made it impossible for me to study made me rebellious. The war broke out in June, and that's when I saw the sky open up for me. I would have liked to be a teacher or a lawyer, for example. The war limited many of the dreams of our youth, but at the same time all wars have a positive side, of course. I saw my chance, and it was to work for the "cause" on the Republican side.

I never would have dreamed of being a Fascist, even if I went to jail for fifteen years. I joined the Socialist Youth Group (JSU), a young people's organization. I was about sixteen then. I was very active. In the war young people became very committed. They created the farmers' centers; they fought against illiteracy, which was very high then.

I had studied typing. They called me to become part of the staff in the offices of my village. There, because of my activity in the JSU, I became the general secretary. And from there, they put me in a training school, against my parents' wishes, because I knew I could get an education there. They taught everything—not just politics, they also prepared us well culturally. In the JSU, we taught each other what we knew. It was a three-month course. (Mangini 77)

Cuesta's testimony speaks to new social and political opportunities that the Second Republic offered to women. Mangini refers to the brief moment in which the Second Republic ruled in the 1930s as a "flash of freedom" for women, who made up more than half of the Spanish population of that decade (Mangini 76).

The war united leftist-minded youth in the fight against oppression. In the early stages of the war, the communists and the socialists unified under the name of the JSU. By 1935, the organization was a model antifascist organization that included Republican sympathizers, pacifists, and democrats: "La JSU logró con su lucha crear la ALIANZA DE LA JUVENTUD ANTIFASCISTA (AJA) en la que estaban todas las organizaciones juveniles excepto los jóvenes del POUM" (Álvarez 12). The JSU participated in the war effort on many levels. In the first months of the defense of Madrid, the JSU had 35,000 militants and 30,000 of those fought on the front. In 1937,

the JSU sector of Madrid had 40,000 affiliates distributed throughout various organizations (Álvarez 12).

Following the JSU National Conference, which took place in January 1937, the organization further defined its political agenda to defend the Republic, advocate a National Alliance of antifascist youth, and carry out the task of educating and organizing them: “Se estableció como forma de organización los Clubes, las Casas de la Juventud Campesina, los Clubes de Educación del Soldado en las unidades de las fuerzas armadas” (Álvarez 12). Thereafter, the JSU created more than 1,000 libraries in hospitals and more than 800 schools on the front where soldiers learned to read (Álvarez 12). Also in January of 1937, a group of girls—which grew out of the JSU in Spain—organized their own group: “La JSU trató de organizar y unir a la juventud para ello creó Unión de Muchachas para atraer al trabajo y a la lucha a las chicas jóvenes que a causa de prejuicios tradicionales no querían estar junto a los muchachos” (Álvarez 12).

The Unión de Muchachas had 2,000 members in Madrid. These women ranged in age from 14 to 25 (Mangini 85). The main goal was to recruit women in order to employ them in factories and workshops (Mangini 85). The organization, much like the JSU, served as a way to obtain an education: “There was a concerted effort to emphasize the need for knowledge in order to change society and, in this case, the plight of women; indeed education was one of the main goals of the socialist and communist organizations. Many women who participated in the courses, lectures, and classes offered them in the war years feel that it was within these organizations that they received their first authentic education” (Mangini 85). Some of the schools affiliated

with the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas functioned to help better prepare the leaders of the organization. At least one of these schools was named after a JSU heroine: Lina Odena (Álvarez 12).

The Partido Comunista de España (PCE), the political party with ties to the JSU, played a crucial role in the fight against Franco's army and had a strong presence in Madrid. In 1939, as Madrid came closer to defeat, the PCE tried desperately to keep its presence and maintain a web of solidarity throughout the city. The organization depended on its allied youth organization, the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas (JSU) to help with this mission—although the leader of this organization, Eugenio Mesón, was incarcerated in March 1939. This led to a succession of JSU leaders that were desperate to keep the youth branch of the communist party intact. One of these successors, Severino Rodríguez Preciado, played an important role in finding and contacting young people that could help in the JSU's war effort to defend Madrid and ensure the safe escape of some of the PCE's high-ranking officials (Fonseca 67). In the unsafe streets, women were an important part of this process:

Las chicas tenían reservado un papel fundamental, el de enlaces, por una mera cuestión de seguridad. Andar por Madrid podía resultar peligroso si se estaba en edad militar...Las chicas, en cambio, gozaban mayor libertad de movimiento, eran menos sospechosas y, en consecuencia, podían encargarse perfectamente de organizar citas o llevar y traer documentos y mensajes. (Fonsecca 67)

Harmut Heine also verifies the need for female participation toward the end of the war: “También en Madrid fue principalmente tarea de las militantes femeninas del partido y de los jóvenes de la JSU crear los primeros contactos de una red de socorro, que con el tiempo se convertiría en el fundamento sobre el cual se emprendió la reconstrucción del partido” (Heine 63).

On March 29, 1939—the last day of the war—the PCE held a meeting in which they decided that Matilde Landa would be in charge of the Communist Party in Madrid (Heine 63). In the following weeks, the nationalist invasion made it very difficult for women to actively participate in politics: “In 1939, with the Franco takeover, leftist women once again disappeared from public life and, in the best of cases, were sent back to their homes. In the worst case, they were pursued, imprisoned, tortured, or executed for their political activities—or, often, for those of their men” (Mangini 86). Instead of focusing on the politics of the party, PCE women concentrated on reestablishing and maintaining connections among party members in an effort to create a solid support network (Heine 63). The Thirteen Roses were part of this communist network; all had contact with the JSU. Some of the women had joined the organization earlier in the war, including Dionisia Manzanero, who took up arms as a *miliciana*. Others were recruited only a short time before the women’s arrests.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Roses’ Military Activism: A Crime for Being *Roja*

Both the official documentation and testimonial accounts that speak of the Roses point to various crimes of which the thirteen women had been accused. As explained in the previous section, most of the women had a direct, or indirect, connection with communist politics, and the reasons for their activism varied among them. The nationalists became suspicious of the thirteen women in 1939, although they did not arrest them in one large group. Instead, the women were brought in for questioning one

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<sup>4</sup> Appendix A includes a brief biographical summary of each of the Thirteen Roses.

by one, or in smaller groups, at different times during the months prior to the end of the war, mostly in March and April of 1939.<sup>5</sup>

The nationalist interrogators suspected these women's communist affiliations in 1939. The oral testimonies of women prisoners in Ventas also attribute the Roses' arrest to a spy within the JSU, Roberto Conesa. Conesa would later be involved in the persecution of communists, such as the Roses. The oral testimonies found in Tomasa Cueva's *Cárcel de Mujeres* confirm Conesa's involvement, but also imply that the Thirteen Roses had been accused of being involved in a plot to kill Franco:

Su sepultura está en el cementerio de la Almudena. Una lápida dice solo: "Las trece rosas." Ingresaron en la cárcel en mayo; en la comisaría dejaban a los muchachos del expediente. Venían transidas de ver y sufrir las torturas, de oírse acusar por Roberto Conesa—jefe hoy de un grupo de la Política-Social, antiguo miembro de la JSU—de haber organizado el asesinato de Franco el día del Desfile de la Victoria, 18 de mayo del 39. (Cuevas, *Cárceles* I 19)

The accusation that they participated in an assassination plot against Franco was one of two ambiguous theories surrounding their crimes.

Other accounts, such as José Sabín's *Prisión y muerte*, suggest that the women's death sentence was connected to the assassination of Lieutenant Colonel Isaac Gabaldón, his daughter, and their chauffeur which took place on July 27, 1939—when the Roses were already in prison (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 233). Both theories, but especially the latter one, have been remembered, discussed, and incorporated into the

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<sup>5</sup> The secrecy of the Roses' political activism—or rather, that of other people who knew the Roses—was put in jeopardy after piles of communist identification cards fell into the hands of nationalist forces after the "golpe de Casado." This coup d'état was proposed by Segismundo Casado, the chief of the Republican Army in Central Spain, and it took place in March 1939. Casado proposed establishing a military agreement between Negrín's government and Franco with hopes of putting an end to the war. As part of this agreement, the Republicans would hand over Madrid to Franco. In exchange, they would not receive punishments for their military activism during the war. Casado's agreement was rejected by Negrín. During the negotiations, some confidential information about the communist party was compromised—including a list of political activists, which Franco's government used to arrest people who were working against him.

cultural representations of the life and death of the Thirteen Roses in the late twentieth-century and early twenty-first century.

Who was Lieutenant Gabaldón and why was his death, as a high-ranking Francoist official, such a key factor in the executions that took place in August 1939? Fernando Hernández Holgado states: “Como encargado del “Archivo de Masonería y Comunismo,” Gabaldón disponía de miles de documentos incautados a los partidos y organizaciones republicanas, que servían de base textual para la tramitación de denuncias” (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 234). The author adds that the verdicts handed out in August had little connection to Gabaldón. Instead, they are more tied to a “climate of revenge.” The excuse of the death of Gabaldón only helped to justify the death of hundreds of leftist supporters that may not have had anything to do with the plot to kill him—including the Thirteen Roses:

En un sumarísimo que se celebró el 4 de agosto en Madrid contra 67 militantes de la JSU, se pronunciaron 65 penas de muerte y ya en la madrugada del día siguiente se fusilaron a 63 de éstos en la tapia del cementerio del Este. Empero, esto fue sólo el principio. El 7 de agosto se fusiló a un número no precisado de hombres, que habían sido condenados como responsables directos de la muerte de Gabaldón, y pocos días más tarde fueron juzgadas en relación con este caso y condenadas a muerte 24 personas más. De éstas se salvaron tres jóvenes porque el régimen había empezado a temer que el caso pudiera crear un eco desfavorable para la “nueva España” en el extranjero. (Heine 66)

Carlos Fonseca explains that the Roses’ imprisonment at the time of the assassination did not make much of a difference in the eyes of the Regime: “La Justicia de Franco iba a caer sobre los ahora detenidos y sobre aquel grupo de muchachas que purgaban desde hacía meses en la prisión de Ventas su militancia en la JSU. A fin de cuentas todos ellos eran militantes de la misma organización comunista, todos cómplices, todos enemigos de la patria” (Fonseca 222). Clearly, the Roses’ death

sentencing served as a form of retaliation and sent a clear and threatening message to those who opposed Franco. Tabea Alexa Linhard notes, “Given the climate of purges and political retribution that reigned in Spain in the postwar years, the fact that thirteen women were singled out and executed together is no coincidence” (Linhard, “The death story” 187). Franco’s regime wanted to communicate that no one who opposed his government—not even young women—was exempt from punishment and death.

Like other women who were held in Ventas prison, the Thirteen Roses were interrogated. Many were tortured into giving declarations directed by Aurelio Fernández Fontela (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 235). They were left to await sentencing, along with hundreds of other women of all ages. Ten of the Roses stayed in the main prison, while three girls (Victoria, Ana, and Martina) were sent to the Departamento de Menores—a section of Ventas prison which housed a school for minors and was known for its somewhat improved living conditions (Fonseca 18). Like other war victims, they were detained for their affiliation with the communists—although, much to the frustration of most of these detainees, the precise reasons for their detainment were not entirely clear. The Roses did not wait for long, however, to receive their punishment after the sentencing. Following Franco’s triumph, the handing-down of verdicts happened at an alarming pace (Fonseca 116). In the case of the Roses, they were executed just days after receiving their sentence. There should have been another person—Antonia Torres—who evaded execution that day because her name was misspelled on the list of those to be killed (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 241).

The Thirteen Roses went to trial for two days: August 1 and 2, 1939, and the sentence was handed down on August 3, 1939. Of all of the women on trial, only one

did not receive the death sentence: Julia Vellisca del Amo. The nineteen year-old Vellisca, along with the Roses, was sentenced for “auxilio a la rebellion.” She received 12 years in prison (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 231). While it is not entirely clear why Vellisca did not receive a death sentence, those that handed out the ruling must have considered her crimes of rebellion to be less severe than those of the Roses. The other women were accused of being connected to the JSU and some of their partners were also militants (Hernández Holgado, *Mujere* 242).

The verdict, judicial ruling 30.426, can be found in the military archive “la Capitanía General de Madrid” and it sheds some light on the diverse oral testimonies that explain why the Roses were so viciously persecuted. The verdict speaks of a female presence in the formation of the JSU’s clandestine network in Madrid, as part of the work that the JSU did during the war (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 239). The assassination attempt against Franco, which was revealed when a bomb went off before the scheduled time, was described in the Roses’ judicial sentencing as a project that would “dar un golpe de mano el día del Desfile de la Victoria, para lo que dieron orden, de recoger toda clase de armas, que en trincheras, alcantarillas y casas particulares encontraran” (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 231-232). This hypothesis of their involvement was eventually omitted from the final ruling.

The final verdict, therefore, accused the women of reorganizing the JSU and the Communist party in order to commit “actos delictivos contra el “orden social y jurídico de la nueva España” (Hernández Holgado, *Mujere* 233). Most of the people who went to trial in August, including the Thirteen Roses, had been detained right after the end of

the war, and so they did not have much of a chance to be part of any clandestine networks that were being formed (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 234).

In sum, the majority of the Roses had been recruited to maintain clandestine connections within the youth organization that they were reorganizing in Madrid in the Spring of 1939. They had just received the offers to do this work (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 241). In the beginning of the war effort, many of them were employed as dressmakers and seamstresses. Later, they handled some administrative tasks as secretaries of certain communist sectors. Of the Thirteen Roses, Victoria, Elena, and Blanca seemed to have been in charge of domestic tasks because their Ventas prison registration cards stated their profession as “sus labores” (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 241).

Prior to the Roses, never before had so many women been tried and convicted for crimes at the same time, nor had there ever been so many petitions written to protest their death sentence (Fonseca 226-227). Franco’s regime frowned upon women’s political and military participation, especially women who had an active role. For this reason, liberal-minded and independent women were severely degraded, tortured, raped, and punished. The psyche of *una roja* was a topic of analysis—and of much concern—for Franco’s regime. The aforementioned image of the *miliciana* went against the idealized model that the government upheld: that of the pious, passive, and submissive woman. Women such as Queen Isabel or Saint Teresa of Ávila were the idealized image of the new government (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 123-124). In the eyes of the Francoist regime, the leftist woman was considered unpure, a type of prostitute, a “mujer denigrada.” Imprisonment of politically-active women, therefore, was considered “una

purga necesaria, un obligado proceso de *higiene social* y “regeneración de la Patria,” tal y como se ocupó de teorizar el militar-psiquiatra Antonio Vallejo Nágera” (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 307).

The research conducted by Vallejo Nágera played a key role in justifying the negative image of the Republican woman. He studied medicine at the University of Valladolid in the early 1900s. Later, he had a career in medicine with the Spanish military; and in 1917, he traveled to Germany where he learned about the psychiatric clinics there. These two experiences would shape his research of Republican political prisoners during the war. In 1938, Vallejo Nágera conducted psychiatric studies to determine the psychological ‘defects’ caused by Marxism. Ultimately, Vallejo Nágera searched for a gene that could explain the backwardness of Republican supporters’ leftist beliefs. Franco’s regime relied on some of Vallejo Nágera’s theories to show how Republican women—similar to animals or children--at times lacked reason. Republican women’s erratic behavior could therefore be considered a threat to society (See Eduardo Pons Prades, *Los niños republicanos*, 2005).

The Republican women who were a danger to society were kept in Madrid’s Ventas prison, one of the main female prisons in Spain after the war:

[V]entas vino a actuar como un gigantesco corazón receptor y bombeador de reclusas hacia todo el Estado...En Madrid se conjugaron dos circunstancias que explican esta enorme represión: la voluntad de las nuevas autoridades de *sentar ejemplo* en el que había sido bastión de resistencia de la República durante toda la guerra, nimbado de una aureola legendaria—*Madrid heroico*—y la llegada a la capital de unos equipos penitenciarios que habían ido perfeccionando y engrasando su maquinaria represiva en “la zona nacional” en múltiples prisiones, conforme proseguía el avance de sus tropas. (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 303-304)

In its close quarters, female prisoners struggled with unsanitary conditions, shortages of food, illness, and isolation from the outside world. Fear was also a factor of daily life, as many women awaited prison sentences for unexplained crimes—including the thirteen protagonists of this story.

These awful conditions, however, were not always a part of the history of the prison. Ventas was first built under the supervision of Victoria Kent when she was the Second Republic's General Director of Prisons from April 1931-1932 (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 39). Kent was known for her sensibility, compassion, and kindness toward women prisoners and also believed that good treatment of the inmates could assist in their rehabilitation (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 40). The outbreak of war, however, changed how Ventas prison was operated. During the war, the prison was described by Tomasa Cuevas as an 'almacén de reclusas': "Todo vestigio de la primitiva dedicación de las salas había desaparecido: se había transformado en un gigantesco almacén, un almacén de mujeres" (Cuevas, *Cárceles* II 17). Within Venta's walls, there was much hunger, suffering, and misery for leftist women.

The tactics that Franco's regime used in 1939 and onward to punish women targeted their gender roles as mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 122). The female prisoners were viewed not just as a nuisance, but they were considered physically and emotionally defective beings that needed to be either cured or eradicated: "La tarea pasaba necesariamente por la depuración de los tibios y desafectos del cuerpo político, al modo de un virus o tumor maligno a extirpar" (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 183).

Carmen Castro was the first director of Ventas prison under the Francoist regime. While not much information exists about her, her signature appears on some of the earlier “expedientes” of Spring 1939. Several oral testimonies attest to how she was not well-liked by the female prisoners (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 197). One reason for the inmates’ dislike of her was because of how she handled the execution of the Thirteen Roses: “Pero quizá el gesto que más animadversión suscitó entre las presas fue su actitud de indiferencia, o negligencia, cuando el fusilamiento de *Las Trece Rosas*” (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 198).

For female inmates in Ventas prison, the death of the Thirteen Roses served as the “máximo hito de la crueldad de la justicia franquista” and for this reason, the story was converted into a legend that was passed from prisoner to prisoner (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 230). The eminent execution of the Thirteen Roses caused a ripple of shock and horror within prison walls, and inspired protests by family members of the women and within the greater network of Spain’s leftist groups; the verdict only reinforced the idea that the innocent were being unjustly persecuted. The ambiguity behind the death sentence, along with the abruptness with which the execution was carried out, left sympathizers with extreme sorrow and helplessness. Not even the youngest of prisoners was safe from execution. Following the execution, there was another sentencing of other JSU members. This time, the ‘menores’ evaded execution (Antonia Hernández, Antonia García, and Nieves Torres) (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 233). The reason behind this was thought to be because of the commotion that was caused by the execution of the Thirteen Roses (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 233).

Literary Production and Oral Story-Telling: Coping Strategies in Ventas Prison

After the death of the Roses, the testimonies of some prisoners tell how their colleagues continued to be taken away, at all times of day, to await execution: “Aquella situación duró unos cuantos días porque de todas formas después de lo ocurrido con las menores, no había tranquilidad...” (Cuevas, *Cárceles* II 263). The prison environment was tense and stressful. Within this environment, prisoners sought ways to escape from the awful reality--especially the first few years after the war when inmates of Ventas were unable to work. For this reason, literate women helped other illiterate inmates to read and write. Story-telling was another crucial way to pass the time.

The story of the Thirteen Roses' death, along with their last moments, was documented in two ways in prison. Gossip and story-telling about their punishment and abrupt execution circulated in the days before and after these events as their comrades struggled to come to terms with the atrocities. Some women relied on artistic forms of expression to express their feelings. Immediately following the execution, one prison inmate, Rafita González, composed a poem in their honor. González chose the rose as a trope for her poem, perhaps because for her this flower symbolized beauty and sacrifice. Her use of the rose as a symbol for these women was what forged the mythical image of the Thirteen Roses; this symbol of the Thirteen Roses has lasted into the twenty-first century. Prior to González's poem, the thirteen women were called 'las menores' by their comrades in prison.

The purpose of the written poems such as that of González was to spread the message of the Thirteen Roses. Poetry was also a creative way to express the reality of the injustice for those people living in prison. The use of the genre also had a practical

purpose: Because paper was scarce in prison, the poems could be easily memorized and told by word of mouth. Three other poems were written to pay homage to the Roses. Ángeles García-Madrid and Flor Cernuda also used this form of creative expression to voice their personal grief of the tragedy. García-Madrid published her poem approximately four years after the execution took place—after she was released from prison (García-Madrid. Personal interview). Later, she published another poem about her memories of the night the Roses were taken away. Even outside of prison, poetry continued to be a means by which former inmates expressed memories of their time in prison. Poetry also was therapeutic mechanism for women to help them tolerate the dictatorship's repression and the social discrimination against women who had opposed Franco.

The second way in which the Roses' execution was recorded was through written testimonies from women prisoners. These testimonies were not published until several decades after the execution. When female inmates were released from prison, their lives changed in ways that made it difficult—if not impossible—to express their views. Former female inmates who had been released no longer lived in the close-knit quarters of prison amongst other women with the same political ideals. Outside of prison, they were forced to continue with their lives, and submit to the conservative social expectations of Franco's dictatorship. The circulation—or even repetition—of wartime poetry, such as that of the Thirteen Roses, was a dangerous endeavor due to the government's strict censorship. The death of Franco, however, would change this. Upon his death, some women wrote testimonies of their experiences in prison. The passing of time allowed these women to not only record but also retrospectively reflect upon the

concrete details of the traumas of prison life, along with the historical details of what they remembered about the life and death of the Thirteen Roses. The next two sections of this chapter will address these two distinct genres: poetry and women's *testimonio*.

The death story of the Thirteen Roses: The Transformation of Historical Fact into Poetic Symbol

The oral transmission in prison related to the Thirteen Roses' execution was forged in a traumatic context—in conditions of uncertainty, fear, pain, and suffering. As a result, the narrated tale was a way to help cope with this environment. Poetry allowed for the narrator to manipulate the story and improve it through the use of figurative language. This literary language told the positive qualities of the protagonists and expressed optimism for the future.

The images within the poems used to describe the tragedy of the Thirteen Roses simultaneously grieve the loss of life and reassert the political ideals of a collective group through images of regeneration. These poetic elements show how the women served as a form of inspiration. Nash explains that war rhetoric highlighted the courage and bravery of people who took part in popular resistance (Nash, *Defying* 50).

The passing-on of stories in prison served as a form of entertainment, but is also a way to convey meaning. Rafita González's poem circulated among a small group of female prisoners: those that pertained to the Roses' tight-knit prison "family." This poem, "Como mueren las estrellas" can be considered a form of autobiographical memory in that it is a testament to the experiences and feelings of a witness and was written shortly after the Roses' death. According to Halbwachs, autobiographical memory is "of events that we have personally experienced in the past, and may serve to

reinforce bonds of participants” when they gather in a collective group (Halbwachs 23-24). Halbwachs argues that building images and memory through the family unit is an important component to recollection. Alessandro Portelli, a scholar who studied the transmission of a story about a workers’ uprising in Italy, confirms that group identity is created around a “cluster of tales, symbols, legends, and imaginary reconstructions” (Portelli 1). Women who wrote about, told, or listened to the poetry about the Thirteen Roses reiterated the need to continue to resist Franco, and did so through creative expression and through the repetition of these memories.

Drawing on Durkheim, Halbwachs shows how the exchange of memories has a function in group remembering: “The apparent void between periods of effervescence and ordinary life are, in fact, filled and fed by collective memory, [Durkheim] argues, in the form of a variety of ritual and ceremonial acts or heroic actors, and commemorated in bardic and epic poetry that keep alive the memory during otherwise dull routines of everyday life” (Halbwachs 25). The notion of using oral story-telling as a way to capture—and even enhance—daily life and reinforce the ideals of a collective group has been a tradition in Spain extending back to the Middle Ages.

In earlier times, the telling of heroic stories often had a religious focus. Hagiography recounted the lives of saints and martyrs, and the job of the hagiographer was to create inspiring stories about these historic figures—adding and altering details of the narrative for the target audience to help them increase their religious devotion (Delehaye 3). One can see parallels between this religious tradition and the creation of texts about the Thirteen Roses, despite the obvious differences between these two types of literature. Some of these imaginative narratives can be categorized as myths, fables,

tales, romances, and legends. For Delehayé, these different categories of story-telling had specific characteristics. Myths could serve as poetic symbols—ones that personify a power or abstract idea (Delehayé 5). Legends, on the other hand, have ties to a historical event or can apply imaginary events to a real person or fabricate imaginary stories to a real place:

So we see that a legend...presupposes an historical fact which is its subject or occasion: that is the first essential element of this *genre*. The second is that the historical fact is embroidered or distorted by popular imagination. The two elements may be combined in very unequal proportions, and according as fact or fiction preponderates the narrative can be classed as history or as legend. (Delehayé 8)

While it is possible to categorize hagiographic tales into these categories, the authors of these stories often used a mixture of genres. The narrative structure of the legends of martyrs is often times the same—often because the hagiographer has omitted the personal elements associated with a specific martyr and imitates an abstract structure of story-telling (Delehayé 19).

The information that the author uses comes from a mixture of written and oral sources and he also adds details using his imagination to make it a better story. The most important component of a story of martyrdom is the telling of the physical suffering and sacrifice of the victim. The martyr is defined by Baños Vallejo as “el héroe a lo divino por excelencia, pues se presta voluntariamente a morir por la causa de la Cruz, y encara el sacrificio con una serenidad y un valor, frecuentemente también con una ironía, que solo pueden explicarse por el respaldo de una fuerza divina, y por la voluntad irrefrenable de emular a Cristo, incluso también en su Pasión (Baños Vallejo 148).

The characteristics of the hagiographic writing on martyr figures can be applied to the literary production of the Spanish Civil War period. Many wartime *romances* also use the basic structure of a martyr story to pay homage to the courage, bravery, and death of a comrade. The poems about fallen soldiers contain similar poetic motifs that demonstrate heroism. While the wartime *romances* did not aim to increase spiritual devotion, the repetition of such tales reinforced a commitment to a political cause and reiterated the ideals for which people were fighting.

The *romance* was a popular component of Spanish literary production that was used by the Generation of 1898 and in the twentieth century, by writers such as Antonio Machado, Rafael Alberti, and Federico García Lorca (Ramos-Gascón 11). In Antonio Ramos-Gascón's *El romancero del ejército popular*, the author notes the popular circulation of poems and stories of heroes on both sides of the Spanish Civil War. Many of the authors of such texts were uneducated or working-class people who "sintieron ocasionalmente la urgencia de coger la pluma para cantar la hazaña del héroe popular, difundir victoriosos partes de guerra o para expresar a camaradas y alejados familiares las motivaciones y desvelos de la lucha antifascista y del proceso revolucionario (Ramos-Gascón 8). Furthermore, oral story-telling was a useful form of expression for illiterate people.

During the Spanish Civil War, *romances* were used to remember significant acts of heroism, great leaders, or those who lost their lives in battle or through unjust suffering. These figures represent martyrs for a political cause that was highly valued by the collective group to which they were associated. Lina Odena, a communist militant and martyr figure, serves as one example of a popular topic for wartime *romances*.

Odena was from Barcelona but died in Granada when she and her driver took a wrong turn and ran into nationalist troops. Odena knew that there was no escape and instead of surrendering, she committed suicide. Ramos-Gascón includes several of these poems in his text, and they convey information to the listener or reader about the life and death of Odena. One poem, “Romance a Lina Odena,” was written by Eugenio Sastre on November 10, 1938 and it was published in *El Soldado* (edited by the Delegación de Prensa y Protaganda del C.R.I.M.) (Ramos-Gascón 82). This *romance* is dedicated to “los jóvenes componentes del Círculo que lleva su nombre [of Lina Odena].”

“Romance a Lina Odena”

Lina Odena, Lina Odena  
 tu nombre suena en el aire,  
 atraído por el viento,  
 al son del clamor triunfante.  
 Como presa de recuerdo,  
 de una mujer de coraje,  
 que supo morir con honra,  
 antes que vivir cobarde.  
 Ella misma se mató,  
 no consintió que salvajes,  
 mancharon (sic) su honor en vida,  
 y su cuerpo apuñalasen  
 Así son nuestras mujeres,  
 las de España forjante,  
 todas como Lina Odena,  
 defienden las libertades.  
 Lina Odena yace en tumba,  
 Pero no sus ideales,  
 ellos no pueden morir,  
 mientras España se salve.  
 Mientras quede un español,  
 no dejará que avasallen  
 al país donde nació,  
 y muera por libertarle.  
 Lina Odena, prometemos,  
 tu muerte habrá de vengarse,  
 y entonces resurgirán

de nuevo tus ideales.  
 Levantándose la lápida,  
 de tumba en que dormitas,  
 a la que irán los traidores,  
 que desolaron tu vida. (Ramos-Gascón 82)

This text presents to the reader, using a poetic and rhythmic style, a heroic female figure.

The poem conveys a very limited amount of biographical information about Odena. Instead, the poem focuses on the more abstract descriptions connected to Odena, such as how her memory is carried on the wind and her name symbolizes victory. The use of poetic language paints a romantic—if not nostalgic—view of Odena for the listener. The emotional description places emphasis on the tragedy of the event, along with the ideals that Odena embodies. These descriptions are inspiring to the person that recites the *romance*, as well as for the people listening to it. Odena is a model for others to follow: an example “de una mujer de coraje / que supo morir con honra” (Ramos-Gascón 82).

The poetic voice communicates to the reader or listener the important role that some women played in the fight against fascism, highlighting women’s strength: “Así son nuestras mujeres / las de España forjante/ todas como Lina Odena / defienden las libertades” (Ramos-Gascón 82). The poem serves as a reminder of Odena’s sacrifice and of the need to keep fighting for the political cause that she represents, and so that her death not be in vain: “Lina Odena, prometemos / tu muerte habrá de vengarse / y entonces resurgirán de nuevo tus ideales” (Ramos-Gascón 82). Through seeking revenge for her death, the ideals that she embodies are regenerated.

Other *romances* written about Lina Odena highlight other positive characteristics that the author admires. One *romance* recalls Odena's laugh as an example to explain how she is mourned: "Ya no veremos tu risa / tu estrella de comandante" (Ramos-Gascón 80). Other *romances* about Odena, very much like the poetry about the Roses, incorporate imagery of nature, calling her the "flor de mayo." The oral recitation of these ideals served a dual function to mourn a loss but also as a way to be optimistic about the future and the possibility of victory.

Similar to the *romances* written about Lina Odena, the poetry about the Roses' death used specific narrative techniques to reinforce the fact that they, too, died for a worthy cause—a cause that was supported by the people who retell their story. The poems about the Roses do not follow the same octosyllable rhythmic structure as the *romance*, which allows for its easy memorization. Nonetheless, the Thirteen Roses poetry had an identical purpose: the poems were created to tell a story about a horrible calamity, and to evoke inspiration for the author and for those who read or listened to this tale. The Thirteen Roses poetry can be categorized as an oral memory which helped a collective group of sympathizers to promote solidarity, understand past experiences and grow from these earlier events: "Oral memory offers double validity in understanding a past in which, as still today, myth was embedded in real experience: both growing from it, and helping to shape its perception" (Samuel and Thompson 6).

The three poems written by Rafaela González, Ángeles García-Madrid, and Flor Cernuda convey the moral values of their collective group, and are focused on celebrating the actions of women: women's extreme bravery in the clandestine fight for equality and their defiance against conservative oppression. To communicate these

ideas, the poems contain three recurring metaphors: flowers, stars, and roses. The descriptions of nature are also part of these narratives, and the use of this imagery highlights both the youth and the femininity of these young women. The life of the Roses, as described in poetry, emphasizes the life cycle of the women—which ends with their death. The Roses were discovered at the height of their youth—during a time where they were strong and valiant. Each poem also stresses how the lives of the Roses were extinguished too early—at their highest moment of glory. Through the use of metaphor, each author alludes to the Roses’ heroic death.

The poem by González, “Como mueren las estrellas” was written shortly after the Roses’ death in 1939. González wrote her poem from her Ventas cell (Romeu Alfaro 293). Without a doubt, her poem circulated within parts of Ventas prison. After the death of Franco, González’s poem, along with two other poems about the Roses, was made public and published in compilations of wartime poetry and oral testimonies.<sup>6</sup>

González’s text is found in Fernanda Romeu Alfaro’s *El silencio roto*:

“Como mueren las estrellas”

Agua verde verde...  
 Cielo de peces azules  
 ¡Que han muerto las estrellas!  
 Rosas encapulladas entre los blancos tules  
 del alba. (sic) Blancor de alma de doncellas!  
 Ay, agua verde verde...

Al suelo han caído las estrellas  
 trece estrellas rojas  
 azules y amarillas  
 y la tierra se cubre de azucenas por ellas  
 de blancas rosas y de campanillas  
 ¡Que han muerto las estrellas!  
 Ay, agua verde verde...

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<sup>6</sup> I am unaware of any existing publications of these poems prior to the death of Franco.

Trece estrellas han muerto  
 trece vestales  
 del Templo de la libertad  
 Vírgenes  
 que en blanco cortejo, sin lanzar un grito  
 en brazos de la muerte van hacia el infinito  
 Ay, agua verde, verde  
 que corres silenciosa entre líquenes  
 y fecundas los campos y el huerto  
 con esencias eternas...

Verdor primaveral  
 Verde de pureza  
 gracia y belleza,  
 Trece rosas han tronchado del eterno rosal  
 ¡Ay, agua verde, verde  
 Diosa de la Naturaleza! (Romeu Alfaro 293)

“Como mueren las estrellas” is written in free verse and begins with an abstract, and perhaps contradictory, image: “Agua verde verde... / cielo de peces azules” (Romeu Alfaro 293). The green water and the blue fish in the sky are contradictory images to the normal perception of reality: water is usually associated with the color blue and fish live in the water.

When comparing the interplay of these two images, the poem indirectly describes the illogic of the world—and perhaps conveys the pain and senselessness that González felt when thinking about the death of the Roses. This statement gives the impression of a world turned upside-down, where, as the poem continues, “¡Que han muerto las estrellas!” (Romeu Alfaro 293).

The nature imagery in the opening lines, with the mention of the color green, is similar to a poem by Federico García Lorca, “Romance Sonámbulo,” which begins with the line: “Verde que te quiero verde.” The color green is a theme throughout Lorca’s

poem and has ties to spring imagery, nature, and youth. Lorca's poem also alludes to death and for this reason, it is a useful intertext to understand González's poem.

The poem continues to describe the youth and innocence of the women and the white purity of their souls. Their lives, full of potential, were unjustly cut short--much like the image of flower buds that were prevented from blooming: "Rosas encapulladas entre los blancos tules del alba. Blancor de alma de doncellas!" (Romeu Alfaro 293). González highlights their youth and innocence through the religious imagery of thirteen virgins: "trece vestales / del Templo de la libertad / Vírgenes..." (Romeu Alfaro 293). The mention of Vesta comes from Roman mythology. She is known as the goddess of the hearth—the essence or the heart of the household. According to Roman tradition, the Vestal fire was eternal, and it was originally brought from Troy. The Romans made daily sacrifices in their homes to Vesta, and this strengthened family bonds (Bell 431).

The goddess also had a public temple that was considered "a public sanctuary, which stood in the forum, served to unite all individual citizens into one large family" (Bell 431). The temple was attended to by virgin priestesses. On June 15, the temple was cleaned and on this day, women were allowed to visit the temple (Bell 431). The idea of virginity could pertain to the real life situation of some of the Roses; however, the image is used more to communicate a poetic message rather than the actual reality of the women being virgins. Blanca Brissac, the oldest Rose, was married and had a son at the time of her execution. Similar to the image of the rose, the description of the women as young virgins and servants to the gods provokes the reader to think about the idea of sacrifice (or death) at an early age: these lives were cut short—but not in vain.

They are portrayed as servants to a higher authority, the gods, and their acts represent those that are done for a greater good.

González's poem emphasizes the performance of a sacrificial ceremony where the women, without letting out a cry, surrendered to death: "en blanco cortejo, sin lanzar un grito / en brazos de la muerte van hacia el infinito" (Romeu Alfaro 293). In addition to the image of going towards infinity, González incorporates idealized descriptions of nature that allude to a promise for eternal remembrance: "Trece rosas han tronchado del eterno rosal" (Romeu Alfaro 293). In the last two stanzas, the green water represents fertility and the poem reflects a cyclical pattern of replenishment and regeneration: "Ay, agua verde, verde / que corres silenciosa entre líquenes / y fecundas los campos y el huerto / con esencias eternas" (Romeu Alfaro 293). The poem connects the color green with spring time, purity, and beauty—much like how Lorca uses this color in his poem. In the spring, the rose bush experiences a type of 'rebirth.' The figurative image communicates the idea that while the women are gone, their spirit and memory can continue on—similar to the idea of reincarnation or the Christian belief in an afterlife. This imagery is also found in hagiography.

Nature images are also found in the sonnet by Ángeles García-Madrid, along with the perpetual repetition of the number thirteen. The poem was written a few years after the execution when García-Madrid was released from prison. The text is found in Giuliana di Feibo's *Resistencia y movimiento de mujeres en España 1936-1976*<sup>7</sup>:

A "Trece flores caídas"

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<sup>7</sup> García-Madrid also published another poem about the night that the Thirteen Roses were taken away to be executed. "Galería Primera" can be found in García-Madrid's *A quiebro de mis espinas* (1977). I discovered this poem while completing my research on the Roses, which is why I chose not to include it in the analysis of the postwar poetry.

Trece flores de trece limoneros  
 hacia el valle que seca los trigales.  
 Trece ninfas de trece manantiales  
 que les ceden su canto a los jilgueros.

Trece sueños fragantes de romeros  
 que se crecen ante los peñascales.

Trece voces que liman los riscales  
 para que cedan paso a los veneros.

Trece estrellas que rompen las cadenas  
 que les impiden alcanzar el cielo  
 y se desprenden de sombrías arenas.

Trece ideas con un solo desvelo.  
 Trece arpegios vencidos...(sic) Trece penas!  
 Trece flores truncadas en el suelo. (Feibo 98-99)

Instead of drawing upon the trope of the rose, García-Madrid intentionally chooses a different flower-- the flower of a lemon tree—as a metaphor for the thirteen women: “Trece flores de trece limoneros” (Feibo 98). She uses the image of dry, arid land to symbolize death: “[H]acia el valle que seca los trigales.” Drought, like death, dries up life.

The following lines use another metaphor to describe “las menores.” In the third line of the poem, they are thirteen nymphs from thirteen springs who give away their song. García-Madrid explains that these images were inspired by her memory of watching the thirteen women playing in the shared patio of Ventas prison, and hearing their happy voices (García-Madrid. Personal interview). The latter part of the description, “que les ceden su canto a los jilgueros,” refers to how they gave up their lives for an ideal. This idea is again repeated in the second to last stanza. The women, this time portrayed as thirteen stars, break the bonds that hold them: “Trece estrellas que

rompen las cadenas / que les impiden alcanzar el cielo / y se desprenden de sombrías arenas.” Garcid-Madrid explains how she used this imagery to convey how the women went to great lengths to uphold their beliefs and political ideals (García-Madrid, Personal interview).

Tabea Alexa Linhard adds that this image signifies a hope for transcendence and regeneration: “The memory of the Trece Rosas is to rise beyond the worldly shadows” (Linhard, *Fearless Women* 139). The idea of ascendance provides solace for those who continue to live with the loss of their friends. The star imagery also suggests that the Thirteen Roses are watching over the other women on earth, and they will always be quietly visible. The example of the North Star in the Christian tradition—the star that helped guide the Three Wise Men to baby Jesus—shows how stars can guide the actions of humans on earth. The Roses as stars symbolize guidance, hope, and inspiration for their comrades in prison. When they look to the sky, the stars provide the inspiration to keep on living and believing in a greater good and their ideals. For Linhard, “the women might not have died in vain; they are now part of history and a land that will not forget them” (Linhard, *Fearless Women* 138).

The poem reveals more appealing images tied to nature. In the second stanza, García-Madrid connects the women to the sweet smell of the rosemary bush: “Trece sueños fragantes de romeros / que se crecen ante los peñascales.” Later, the poem describes how the women shaped untouched landscapes and made way for water to run in little streams: “Trece voces que liman los riscales / para que cedan paso a los veneros” (Di Febo 98). The last line of the poem, however, offers a stark contrast to these happy images when thirteen flowers were cut, and fell to the ground. The focus of

the last stanza is on the women's punishment, and how their lives were cut—just like the abrupt end to a musical chord: “Trece ideas con un solo desvelo / Trece arpeggios vencidos... Trece penas!” (Di Febo 99). The use of the word ‘pena’ has a double meaning: ‘pena’ points to the death sentence, or punishment, of the thirteen women. At the same time, the word ‘pena’ also conveys the poetic voice's deep sorrow. The theme of sorrow is also found in other *romances*—especially those written by Lorca such as “Romance de la Pena Negra.”

Lorca's influence can also be seen in the third poem written about the Thirteen Roses by Flor Cernuda:

“Fusilaron ‘Trece rosas’ de la libertad”

Llanto por “Trece rosas” blancas  
 por trece primaveras de lluvia fresca  
 por trece pensamientos rojos  
 por trece mariposas de alas anchas  
 por trece chorros de agua cristalina  
 por trece corazones balaceados  
 al amanecer de un día de esperanza  
 truncado por el odio y la miseria  
 de mentes enfermizas y voraces  
 que ¡nunca jamás! serían capaces  
 de darles cancha en la vida.  
 Y, así, con el rostro al viento  
 con su juventud hermosa  
 calleron (sic) las “Trece rosas”  
 con sus pétalos muriendo  
 delante de los fusiles  
 con un grito: ¡¡¡Libertad!!!  
 que resonó en todo el mundo  
 y alertó a la Humanidad (*Las Republicanas* 51)

Cernuda's poem opens with a “cry for” (“llanto por”) the Roses, which is similar to García Lorca's “Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías.” Like other poems written about war heroes and martyrs—including the Roses--García Lorca's “Llanto” has a cyclical

pattern in the narration of events. The poem is divided into three parts: “La cogida y la muerte,” “La sangre derramada,” and “Cuerpo presente.” Lorca’s poem tells the story of an eyewitness account of the death of Sánchez Mejías and effectively uses *anáfora* with the repetition of the phrase “a las cinco de la tarde”—the hour when Sánchez Mejías was killed.

Similarly, Cernuda’s poem also uses *anáfora* in verses 2-6 with the words “por trece.” The repetition of this idea makes an emotional demand—the first demand being for thirteen springs (“por trece primaveras de lluvia fresca”). Cernuda, like González and García-Madrid, ties these young women with nature: the cyclical pattern in which spring returns for thirteen years and also to the life cycle of a butterfly. The image of “trece mariposas de alas anchas” points to how the insect is at the pinnacle of its beauty. Cernuda describes the butterfly with “wide wings,” providing an image of strength and ambition to fly away.

These cyclical life cycles, found in nature, are brought to a violent end one hopeful morning: “por trece corazones balaceados / al amanecer de un día de esperanza / truncado por el odio y la miseria.” A day of hope turns to a day of misery and hate. Like González’s “Como mueren las estrellas,” Cernuda’s poem uses the color red as a symbol of the women’s communist activism, describing them as “thirteen red thoughts” (“por trece pensamientos rojos”). This description in the poem shows how the Thirteen Roses are used as an example for sympathetic listeners mourning the defeat of the Republic, the loss of the war, and the unjust crimes committed against them. (*Las Republicanas* 51)

Cernuda's poem also includes a direct reference to those people who persecuted the Thirteen Roses: The poetic voice places blame on the "sick and voracious minds" (mentes enfermizas y voraces) for the misery of the Roses' execution day.<sup>8</sup> The voice emphasizes how life was cut short: "que ¡nunca jamás! serían capaces / de darles cancha en la vida." The end of the poem narrates how the women courageously fell. Like Sastre's poem about Lina Odena, the poetic voice refers to how the wind reveals, or enhances, their heroism: "el rostro al viento / con su juventud hermosa." The reference to their death is again expressed through nature imagery, with the metaphor of a dying flower: "sus pétalos muriendo / delante de los fusiles." (*Las Republicanas* 51).

In the closing lines, the poem reaffirms the collective political values of the author—all of which are mourning the repression of Franco's regime. The Roses swear to the ideals that they upheld but were unfairly denied: freedom and liberty. This strong political message had a large impact on those who survived the war. The poetic voice explains how their courage and sacrifice has global, humanitarian implications that go beyond the conflict in Spain: "resonó en todo el mundo / y alertó a la Humanidad" (*Las Republicanas* 51).

The three poems about the Roses are similar in that they highlight the youth of the women and mourn their loss. They also reiterate the political ideals of the left, maintaining hope that these ideals will re-emerge and that these unjust deaths were not in vain. Poetic expressions also assist in the process of communicating grief. The storytelling of the Roses pays homage to the contributions of women and the formation of a shared identity through common values.

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<sup>8</sup> In Linhard's translation she translates the word 'voraces' as 'insatiable.'

Through the analysis of these poems, it is possible to see how individual authors used the historical execution of the Roses and shaped it into a myth-like narrative that circulated among a collective group of sympathizers. The Roses' story was an intimate and personal topic for those who told it to others, and served as a form of inspiration. For Luisa Passerini, the combination of emotions and ideas help to create myths. Her study focuses on the mythification of antifascist texts of resistance in Italy. Passerini states that myth relies on both history and the imaginary; it consists of "a mixture of ideas and images, differentiated according to the particular individual, but characterized by the recurrence of themes such as interpretation of the Resistance to Fascism as overwhelmingly clandestine work and armed struggle" (Passerini 54). Myths can be seen as a collective symbolic text that shows the cultural values of a group. These types of stories help to form a collective group. The circulation of myths about heroic figures shows the admiration and grief felt by women in Ventas prison. Story-telling serves as a way of uniting a collective group of both men and women. The symbol of the Thirteen Roses helps identify some of the contributions and sacrifices that women made during the war effort. The story of the Roses as written in poetry offers a different, more emotional, dimension to the official documentation about prison life. Linhard comments that remembering the lives of the Thirteen Roses allows women to "persist in their, at this point desperate, endeavors" (Linhard, *Fearless Women* 141). For many women, like García-Madrid, the suffering during the dictatorship was much more severe than the time she spent in prison (García-Madrid. Personal interview). For Republican women, the opportunity to reflect on their personal experiences and the collective beliefs that

they shared with comrades was fundamental, and gave them hope and a desire to keep living, remembering, and believing in their cause.

### The Thirteen Roses in *Testimonio* Writing

As shown in the previous section, wartime poetry was one form of expression that women used to document the tragedies that they witnessed. This writing was used inside and outside of prison during the dictatorship years. After Franco's death, another form of documentation started to be used—that of the women's testimony. The Roses also appeared as protagonists in this type of writing because they were such a strong memory for many women—both for women who knew the Roses and for those who sympathized with the story.

One of Spain's most famous communist female leaders, Dolores Ibárruri—'La Pasionaria'—speaks of the Roses in her memoir, *Memorias de Dolores Ibárruri: La Pasionaria, la lucha y la vida*. While she did not personally know the women, Ibárruri felt that this historical example was important in showing women's contributions and struggles. Ibárruri explains how she found out about the Roses through a letter that she received from a female communist activist, Agripina Moreno. Ibárruri neglects to explain her relationship with Moreno, nor does she state in what year she received the letter. However, it appears that Moreno was simply an admirer of Ibárruri—and a woman who shares the same political ideals. In the chapter of Ibárruri's memoir that is dedicated to the Roses, she explains how she received many letters when she came back to Spain from exile, but she kept the one about the Roses apart from the rest.

The letter's contents tell how Moreno was compelled to write the letter to explain how Ibárruri inspired her to become active in the communist party, and also

because she had been saving in her heart a message for La Pasionaria—one that she considered “un mensaje muy triste” (Ibárruri 608). In July of 1939, a group of girls, whom Moreno describes as “casi niñas,” had arrived at Ventas. One of the women, Pilar Bueno, explained that they had suffered and had been tortured.

Moreno briefly explains how the women abruptly went to trial and were convicted of death. Her letter also conveys the reactions that the women felt, as if “cada minuto que transcurría sentíamos deseos de acompañarlas hasta el fin de sus vidas,” along with the difficulty of saying goodbye: “Estábamos muy nerviosos por no poder volver a verlas” (Ibárruri 609). On the night of the *saca* when the women were taken away, Moreno was one of two women who were allowed to visit the thirteen women in the chapel, and the letter includes some of the messages that the Roses relayed. These messages are revealing of what these thirteen women, and their death and memory, had come to symbolize for female supporters: “Camarada Agripina, si tienes la suerte de salvarte, cuídate y vive para que nos hagáis justicia” (Ibárruri 609). Anita also said: “Nos matan, pero nunca podrán destruir nuestras ideas, que transformarán el mundo” (Ibárruri 609). The letter relayed one last message to the political group to which they were affiliated: “Decid a la Juventud y al partido que sigan luchando fuertemente unidos y que no nos olviden” (Ibárruri 609). Moreno explains in the letter how the women prisoners, following the execution, congregated together.

It is impossible to know if the Roses really said these statements or, like the poetry, their words and messages had been shaped and transformed through oral storytelling and with the passing of time. During this historical moment, the debate over what is “fact” and what is “fiction” is not the main focus of the story-telling about the

Roses. Instead, the tellers of the story are concerned with conveying a specific, politically-inspired message. Poetry about this historical act was made into a literary invention and a form of agency: “Pronto se vio en la cárcel una reacción por tanta crueldad...Muy temprano al día siguiente llegó a mi celda una compañera de las Juventudes Libertarias, que era poetisa y traía una cuartilla de papel en la mano. Llorando había escrito sobre nuestras inolvidables ‘trece rosas.’ Así las llamó ella” (Ibárruri 610). Moreno’s letter confirms how literary production—the writing of poetry—immortalized the memory of the ‘Roses’ immediately upon their death.

At the end of the chapter, Ibárruri adds a commentary that speaks to the notion that this is a subjective, eye-witness account of what happened. Some of its details—such as the date that the women are executed are incorrect (Ibárruri states that the women were executed on August 15, 1939). Regardless, it serves as an example of women who were active in the communist cause. In Ibárruri’s memoir, the precise details of the execution are not what are emphasized. Instead, this passage provides an explanation of why and how these women came to be remembered: “El tiempo, los años borran muchas cosas. Pero en los anales de la lucha de nuestro pueblo siempre resplandecerá el valor de las trece muchachas fusiladas en la cárcel de Ventas” (Ibárruri 610).<sup>9</sup>

As demonstrated by Ibárruri’s memoir, the story-telling of the Thirteen Roses became—and still is—part of a living memory. The story has the capacity to change and transform as it is passed from person to person. Compiling and comparing these stories helps to contextualize the circumstances of the war. White explains that

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<sup>9</sup> Excerpts of the letter that Agripina Moreno wrote to Ibárruri are also found in Vázquez-Montalbán’s *Pasionaria y los siete enanitos* (1995).

“historicizing a rumor” connected to a historical event has the power to “reveal an intellectual world of fears and fantasies, ideas and claims that have not been studied before” (L. White 86). In the case of the Spanish Civil War, the story of the Roses provides an opportunity for women to speak about their experience and tell about the stories, gossip, and rumors that they heard in prison—which was a time of great uncertainty and confusion. Few women prisoners were with the women in the last hours of their lives, before they were taken to the cemetery for execution.<sup>10</sup> Because there were no prison inmates who witnessed the execution and very few inmates had the opportunity to visit the Roses in the chapel, the last hours of the Roses’ lives, along with the execution, were left to the imagination of the story-teller.

The Thirteen Roses’ account found in Ibárruri’s memoir demonstrates how their memory circulated among a collective group of women after the war. For many years, little information has been mentioned in official accounts about women’s work in the war effort. In the last three decades, this topic has been more openly discussed, but not nearly as much as the male perspective. The reason for this is tied to the fact that women who fought against Franco remained silent about their participation and later suffering: “The silence of these women made it very difficult to unearth their texts or acquire their testimonials” (Mangini 58). A few autobiographical texts circulated outside of Spain during the Franco years—such as that of Constanca de la Mora and Palencia (Mangini 105). None were published within Spain until after Franco’s death.

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<sup>10</sup> A nun who worked in the Ventas prison was the only person to witness the deaths at the execution site, aside from the executioners. Following the execution, she told prisoners about the last moments, about how the Roses died. This information is also recorded in Agripina Moreno’s letter to Dolores Ibárruri.

The publication of these testimonies represents an important continuation in the theme of collective memory and story-telling about women's participation in the war effort and women's marginalization during Franco's dictatorship. Each individual testimony tells the outlook, opinions, and feelings of women who pertained to the same collective group. Unlike the poetry, however, the testimonies were not used among this collectivity to offer hope and inspiration for the future. Instead, they had different purposes: to promote public awareness of women's marginalization during the years of the dictatorship, to show how this marginalization also continued in the years after Franco's death, and to make a call for justice for these horrific acts of the past. The written testimonies also contribute to the process of intergenerational sharing. The *testimonio* works written by female war survivors are "counter narratives" to official historical accounts because they highlight the female activism that has been left out of these government-supported interpretations of the past.

The notion of counter narratives, or resistance literature, appeared in Spain after Franco's regime. Prior to that time, in the 1970s, this type of writing emerged in Latin America as a result of the oppressive and cruel dictatorships there. Usually, these narratives were published in Latin America close to the time that the abuses took place in an attempt to not only stop the violence, but make a call for justice. This resistance literature was produced usually by people with a humble background—uneducated people or members of the working class—to speak about the human rights abuses that resulted from government oppression.

The case of Spain is different from that of Latin America—mostly because in Spain, the *testimonio* accounts recall events that took place many years prior. Those

who offered their testimony about the Spanish Civil War and dictatorship years could not stop or reverse the damage that had been done to them or their families. However, upon the death of Franco, there was still need and desire to have these stories told. The public wanted to know about this aspect of the past that had been covered up by Franco—the perspective of the war’s vanquished. In both Spain and Latin America, *testimonios* reveal hardships and abuses that had been covered up or denied by the government. In Spain, there was a sense of urgency to make sure to gather these first-hand accounts before the witnesses were no longer living.

*Testimonio* writing in Latin America has been studied by several prominent scholars, including René Jara, Hernán Vidal, and John Beverley. The scholarly inquiry into *testimonio* in Latin America can be useful for understanding the situation in Spain as well, in that it helps to shed light on the motivations and ways in which victims write about the traumas that they endured. In the Introduction to *Testimonio y literatura* (1986), Jara writes that, usually, this type of narrative is created as a direct result of a repressive and emotional circumstance, or stems from an armed struggle (Jara 2). Reading memoirs and novels based on the lives of certain marginalized individuals directly relates to the goals of *testimonio* writing in Latin America: to bring recognition on a larger scale to the lives and trials of the voiceless. The end products, the books that told their stories, were collaborative efforts where the oral account was transcribed by an intellectual writer. This collaborative act meant hearing the experiences of marginalized groups and “listening to the small voice of history” (Gugelberger 2).

Following Jara and Vidals’ assessment, John Beverley provides a description of *testimonio* writing in his article “The Margin at Center” (1996):

By *testimonio* I mean a novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acoustic) form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist or witness of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a “life” or significant life experience. *Testimonio* may include but is not subsumed under, any of the following textual categories, some of which are conventionally considered literature, others not: autobiography, autobiographical novel, oral history, memoir, confession, diary, interview, eyewitness report, life history, novella-testimonio, nonfiction novel, or ‘factographic literature.’ (24-25)

Beverley traces the roots of these non-fiction narratives from the colonial period, and *testimonio* serves as a type of “documentary fiction.” In the Third World, *testimonio* uses the personal witness to “make the cause of these [social] movements known to the outside world, to attract recruits, to reflect on the successes or failures of the struggle” (Beverley 25). As Beverley explains, there is a range of writing styles—fiction and nonfiction—that individuals use to communicate their experiences.

Beverley states that *testimonio* helps explore “the gap between the claims of the organized left to represent the subordinated classes and social groups and their actual needs, desires, strategies, and possibilities” (Beverley 23). The person who offers the account serves as the physical proof that the event, trauma, or human rights abuses did take place.<sup>11</sup> A first-person *testimonio* account is a written form of witnessing. In Spain,

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<sup>11</sup> The emergence of *testimonio* writing in Latin America has stirred controversy among scholars over the truth claims that are made through this type of writing. David Stoll’s *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans* (1999) questions the veracity of Rigoberta Menchú’s first-person testimony about her experiences as a poor indigenous woman in Guatemala and the government violence that Menchú and her people suffered during Guatemala’s civil war. Stoll reveals that Menchú’s *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (1984) has discrepancies in its chronology, as well as with the events that Menchú vowed she had witnessed. Other scholars have defended Menchú’s testimony, claiming that the accuracy of the account’s facts is not as important as the general message about oppression and violence. Menchú claims that she represents the voices of her people, and that her individual experience is closely tied to the collective experience of the community. This debate over the veracity of a first-person testimony, as well as its metonymic quality, are two aspects that are important for studying and understanding the first-person accounts about women’s experiences in prison after the Spanish Civil War and their recollections of the Roses’ execution.

transcribed *testimonios*—or testimonies of a collaborative nature—were written and served as a form of self-reflection.

With regard to women who tell their stories in Spain, each individual communicates different insights and has different motives for doing so. Some female speakers put a large emphasis on the collective component of their experience: “The strength of these female voices and many others is that they speak both as individuals who have lost their dignity, privacy, democracy, freedom, and country and as part of a collective consciousness (Mangini 65). Shirley Mangini considers these female accounts as “women-woven texts, fused together to form a historical quilt” (Mangini 56). When telling their experience, these women draw upon several aspects of their lives: the relations they had with men, their hopes and desires for more civil rights, the installation of a conservative government, and the suffering that they—and others—endured in Franco prisons.

Barbara Harlow supports the collective nature of women’s autobiography in her book, *Resistance Literature*. Memoirs are to be distinguished from conventional autobiography because these narratives actively redefine the self and the individual with relation to a collective struggle. Often times, *testimonio* writing aligns itself with an important type of literary trope: metonymy, where one person represents a collective group. Through *testimonio* writing, the person who provides the account is transformed into the representative of a group, the “voice” who speaks for many, and serves as a type of model for a collective experience. The prison memoirs of political detainees, as one example, are not written for the sake of a ‘book of one’s own;’ rather they are collective documents, testimonies written by individuals who wish to remember their

communal struggle (Mangini 120). As with an autobiographical life account, *testimonio* writing is both subjective and selective.

The first major collections of women's *testimonio* writing in Spain was published by Tomasa Cuevas in 1985 and 1986 in a total of three volumes.<sup>12</sup> Her work, *Cárcel de mujeres (1939-1945)*, tells of the lives of women who spent time in prison after the Spanish Civil War. Cuevas was imprisoned for several years during the early years of the dictatorship for her involvement with Communist Party politics.

Because of this experience, she was inspired to record her story—along with the stories of other women who suffered under Franco. Cuevas traveled throughout Spain to find her former prison cellmates and record their testimonies. Cuevas, a working-class woman with little education, used a large part of her personal savings to publish the three volumes of testimonies (Mangini 112). For Cuevas, the female encounter with Franco's oppression was an important part of Spain's history—and an aspect that had been largely neglected.

To appreciate the value of Cuevas's compilation and the details it conveys about the lives of women and the experience of living under the dictatorship, it is important to understand the techniques that have been used to describe individual experiences and those of other people within the same social context. For Joan Scott, an individual experience is formed in a subjective manner and is connected with not only the person's point of view but also, as she argues, with gender, race, and class. She considers these

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<sup>12</sup> Cuevas's 1985 publication, *Cárcel de mujeres (1939-1945)*, is comprised of two volumes. In 1986, she published another volume of testimonies, *Mujeres de la resistencia*, which tells of the lives of women *maquis*. In the twenty-first century, the testimonies compiled by Cuevas have been republished in newer editions. A selection of these accounts has been published in English as well. Cuevas's *Testimonio de mujeres en las cárceles franquistas* (2004) is a compilation of all of the transcribed testimonies found in the two volumes of *Cárcel de mujeres* (1985) and *Mujeres de la resistencia* (1986).

categories “crucial to the writing of new history” (Scott, “Gender” 1054). To understand experience, it is necessary to look closely at the *process* by which a person obtained an identity and their personal outlook of the past, taking into consideration the person’s relationship with their community and the external social and political pressures that shaped the person’s circumstances. In Spain, these factors, that are described in women’s *testimonio*, provide new insights into the past.

During the years of the Second Republic, there emerged new opportunities for women of all ages to become more incorporated into the public sector. Women were able to work and had a chance to get an education. Women—especially those from more humble backgrounds—felt particularly motivated by these changes because the Second Republic offered them the possibility of social mobility, class and gender equality, and a better quality of life. The opportunities of this government shaped women’s experiences, and so did the abruptness in which these new possibilities were taken away with Franco’s dictatorship. Scott concludes that it is necessary to examine both the emotional factors affecting a person, along with the context that influenced these feelings (the environment where they live), to understand how they remember and tell life experiences (Scott, “Experience” 26). Many progressive women who supported these changes were imprisoned. In this environment, they endured hunger, torture, illness, and death. These experiences in prison shaped women’s outlook—as shown in Cuevas’s *Cárcel de mujeres*.

For Cristina Dupláa, Cuevas’s work forms an important part of a group experience that helps to create a collective memory:

No es sólo su experiencia personal la que acongoja a lectores u oyentes, sino el valor colectivo de esa experiencia. Y para quienes no forman parte de esta colectividad afectada, esos hechos son hechos históricos que se añaden a la memoria histórica de la Europa de la segunda mitad del siglo XX. (Duplúa, “Memoria” 33)

The voices of these women show their contributions and sacrifices during the Spanish Civil War and the postwar years.

In her dedication, Cuevas recognizes the solidarity of women as a social group. Through the exchange of personal experiences, there emerged a better understanding of women as a collective: “Gracias queridas amigas por vuestra aportación, al dar a conocer vuestros testimonios vivos, jamás lo hubiera hecho para sólo dar a conocer el mío, uno de tantos entre miles” (Cuevas, *Cárceles* II 14). Similar to the *testimonios* that emerged in Latin America, Cuevas uses the memories of the collective group as a means to resist the loss of certain aspects of the past—particularly the point of view of marginalized or oppressed people (Mangini 113).

The first volume of *Cárcel* contains twenty-two separate chapters while the second volume has eighteen chapters. Each volume begins with a prologue, which first introduces the reader to Tomasa Cuevas. In the words of Teresa Pàmies, a former communist activist who knew Cuevas and the author of the prologue to the first volume, Cuevas is “una desconocida” with little experience in the art of writing. In the second volume, the reader also learns that Pàmies was a woman who, like Cuevas, “ha vivido directamente e intensamente los años trágicos de nuestra historia” (Cuevas, *Cárceles* II 9). This fact conveys to the reader her subjective interpretation of *Cárcel de mujeres*—as a person who also lived during the years of repression.

Pàmies describes Cuevas's finished work as "la odiosa de unas mujeres" and its testimonies "constituyen un documento sin precedentes, mucho más complejo y veraz que la novela autobiográfica de Juana Doña" (Cuevas *Cárceles*, I 11-12). Unlike Doña's account, Cuevas's compilation presents a variety of individual perspectives and this could be an explanation for why Pàmies considers Cuevas's work a better account. She also may have personal or political motives for saying this as well.

*Cárcel* is a compilation of transcribed oral testimonies which Cuevas—or rather, a group of volunteers (because Cuevas herself had little formal education)—transcribed into written form.<sup>13</sup> In the second volume, Cuevas is clear in her explanation that the chapters of her two volumes are written word for word from the tape recordings of oral testimonies: "Los testimonios que han sido recogidos en cinta magnetofónica y transcritos al libro, son palabras de mis compañeras, de una pequeña parte de sus vidas—sus trágicas vidas—en manos del franquismo, en la clandestinidad, en comisarías y cárceles. No las he alterado. Sus voces quedan en las cintas para cualquier comprobación" (Cuevas, *Cárceles* II 10).

Like the poems, the testimonies celebrate female heroes but the acts of these heroes are narrated in a vivid, nonfictional form. The objective of Cuevas's text differs from that of the poems published during the dictatorship. The style of the testimonies is different as well. Instead of offering hope and inspiration, the testimonies of Cuevas's work tell more about the tragedy of living during the dictatorship—as seen retrospectively. It also is a way for women—both Cuevas and her comrades—to work through their own personal trauma and share it with others.

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<sup>13</sup> In the introduction to the first volume of *Cárcel*, Cuevas does not identify the names of the people who helped her with the transcription of her work.

The prologue to the second volume, written by historian and politician, Josep Benet, talks about the process of creating this type of work, explaining that Tomasa “les da la palabra para que sean ellas mismas que nos cuenten su historia. Ella se limita a transcribir su relato” (Cuevas, *Cárceles* II 9). While the main body of text is indeed only the words from the transcribed testimonies. In both volumes, each chapter contains one individual testimony, along with a small introduction written by Cuevas that explains how she befriended the female witness who offered her personal testimony. In addition to providing basic information, these introductions add a very personal touch to the testimonies, and demonstrate Cuevas’s skills in conducting these interviews and conversations. Her words of introduction are humble in that there is no focus on Cuevas herself. Instead, the introductions point to her comrades and communicate admiration for the courage of each individual.

At times, the names of these women are provided, while other women prefer to be anonymous. The comments written in Cuevas’s brief introductions are reflections on the content of each chapter. Cuevas’s also uses these introductions as opportunities to give a small dedication to each brave woman whom she interviewed. In the introductions, Cuevas also interprets the emotions, pain, and suffering of the woman who told her personal story.

The introduction to the first chapter of the second volume (titled “La cárcel”) presents the testimony of an anonymous friend. Cuevas alludes to how her friend’s insight is valuable, but also adds that the silence (what her friend does not speak about in her testimony) has equal importance in understanding her overall experience: “Yo, como otras muchas compañeras, sabemos lo que ha sufrido, cómo la torturaron en los

calabozos de Gobernación, pero no quiere hablar de ello. En cambio, me da esta serie de datos tan valiosos como ella misma” (Cuevas, *Cárceles* II 15).

In some cases, such as the one just mentioned, the traumatic events cannot be addressed. In other situations, the act of engaging in a dialogue about these topics can assist in healing. In the book *Testimony*, Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman examine how talking about trauma with another person becomes a shared experience. The experience is no longer individual. Often times, a common cultural background allows for such experiences to be shared.

The act of transforming traumatic memory into a coherent narrative helps the narrator to recreate their sense of self (Brison 40). Narration can also help to reintegrate a survivor into a community which re-establishes “connections essential to selfhood” (Brison 40). The empathic listener plays a key role in this process; the telling of a traumatic story to sympathizers or other survivors also helps the survivor connect to his or her core values. The telling of a story allows the narrator to gain more control over an intrusive memory and the act of story-telling generates a sense of agency: “It is therapeutic to bear witness in the presence of others who had heard and believed what they told them” (Brison 46). For women of the Spanish Civil War, narrating trauma helps to remember and affirm the reasons why these women engaged in the fight to save the Republic. Survivors repeat their experiences for others, claiming that they survived to tell the story. On the other hand, however, telling the story also helps them to survive (Brison 49).

In Cuevas’s two texts, the memory of the death of the Thirteen Roses is mentioned in several individual accounts—which reinforces the idea that this execution

was a significant and tragic historical event. Miguel Barnet, a scholar and writer of Latin American *testimonio*, argues that the topics that emerge in *testimonio* writing are what he considers “hitos en la cultura de un país,” ones that marks the turning point in the nation (Barnet 287). Each of these accounts conveys how the story-telling of the Roses reminded women to have strength and courage in the senseless and brutal circumstances of prison life. Each testimony repeats the memory of the pride and defiance of the thirteen young women.

The first mention of the Roses is found in the first chapter of volume one, titled “La cárcel.” The testimony of this anonymous woman describes the ambiance of prison life in Ventas. As the narrative continues, little paragraphs of information are organized under subcategories. One of these subcategories is “Las menores.” The anonymous woman speaks of the Roses’ grave, found in the cementerio de la Almudena and later speaks about when the women were incarcerated and then sentenced to death. The testimony recalls the vivid details about the night that the guards took them away, and how Ana Gallego did not want to go to bed because she did not want the prison guards to find her asleep. Their bravery was also recorded, highlighting how little Victoria cried before being taken away: “Victoria, con sólo dos lágrimas que le caían lentamente por las mejillas, diciendo muy bajo ‘Primero Goyito (su hermano fusilado desde la misma comisaría), ahora yo’” (Cuevas, *Cárceles* II 20).

Another chapter, that presents the testimony of Carmen Machado, explains the night of the *saca* and how the women were optimistic even at the worst of times:

Las chicas iban muy ilusionadas, porque pensaban que iban a verse con los hombres antes de ser ejecutadas; entre ellas, como Virtudes, que tenía en su mismo expediente a su novio, Olleros. Pero, según esta funcionaria, se

encontraron con que los chicos habían sido ya fusilados. (Cuevas, *Cárceles I* 121)

Other inmates who were allowed to say goodbye to the Roses revealed other details about when they were confessing in the chapel. María Lacrampe described the scene using an image that would be familiar to most listeners. To her, entering the chapel was like walking into a school room of children who were writing letters (Blanco-Cicerón 13). Another witness said that the Roses maintained “un gran valor, una enorme dignidad,” and another witness reported how they left with their heads held high (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 249). The individual narratives found within Cueva’s text offer similar accounts of both prison life and the death of the Thirteen Roses, repeating the same motifs using literal, rather than figurative, descriptions to emphasize their bravery, dignity, and optimism.

Chapter 17 of the first volume, titled “Otra de las menores,” is perhaps one of the most passionate and vivid accounts of a young woman who survived living in Ventas prison. María del Carmen Cuesta speaks about her relationship with one of the Roses, her best friend Virtudes, and the interaction she had with her before prison and how she shared a cell with “Virtudes, Joaquinita, and Blanquita” in Ventas (Cuevas, *Cárceles I* 183). The tender way in which she refers to these women, using nicknames, shows the strong affection that she continues to have for them.

In addition to telling the story of the Roses, Carmen Cuesta’s testimony conveys important insight into her hope that these stories will become a part of history: “[P]ensé que éramos cientos, más que cientos, miles de mujeres que...guardábamos también en nuestras mentes unos profundos testimonios; unos testimonios que también

esperábamos confiadamente que pudieran salir en un momento determinado y poder llenar todas las páginas de la historia, de esa historia que fue la época más larga, más negra y más brutal de nuestro país: la historia del fascismo” (Cuevas, *Cárceles* I 178). She also describes the relief that she feels for being able to talk about her life experiences and the events that she witnessed: “Y ahora no sabes lo que me alegro de poder charlar después de tantos años, recordando ratos alegres para olvidar y también para comentar...” (Cuevas, *Cárceles* I 188). The act of retrospective story-telling is an important component that ties together the individual testimonies in Cuevas’s text. In addition, because many years had passed since these events, there is an acute awareness of the passing of time and an urgency to capture and remember these historical moments.

In the second volume, Benet elaborates on the need to publish Cuevas’s work: “Deseo que este volumen sea recibido con el mismo interés con que lo fue el primero. Porque lo merece; porque es necesario. Sí, hoy es necesario que se publiquen libros como los de Tomasa Cuevas. Porque las viejas generaciones no deben olvidar, ni las nuevas ignorar, unos hechos que es imprescindible tener presente para conocer en toda su realidad lo que fue el franquismo” (Cuevas, *Cárceles* II 9). The communication of these memories of the past not only benefits survivors in helping them heal personal wounds, but also has didactic value for young people who did not live through the war.

Because of the publication of these testimonies, Cuevas gained a faithful group of followers who praised her for this contribution about women’s participation. There were many people that contributed to the creation of *Cárcel de mujeres*. Cuevas thanks those women that contributed to her work, along with the young people that assisted her

in the transcription process: “A todas ellas mi gratitud, así como a todas las personas que me han prestado ayuda para la grabación de estos testimonios vivos, y también las jóvenes Noli, Elena, Nuri, Josefa Camarena por transcribir las cintas poniendo toda su atención en ello, gracias con todo cariño” (Cuevas, *Cárceles* II 10). The effort by many people to bring Cuevas’s work to fruition shows a dedicated process of intergenerational collaboration. Those people that participated in the various stages of producing the text share the belief that its contents have a valuable function in the present.

Intergenerational sharing of traumatic past, therefore, is another function of Tomasa’s work—in which the story of the Thirteen Roses also takes part. Cuevas, herself, conveys awareness of this: “Es curioso que los jóvenes de hoy se preocupen por saber que ha pasado años atrás. A veces pensamos que no les interesa, pero no es así. Yo tengo bastante trato con jóvenes de distintas capas sociales y hacen preguntas muy curiosas de nuestros primeros años de lucha. Cuando les hablo de las dificultades que nuestro partido tenía en los años de la República para luchar, es una cosa incomprensible para ellos...” (Cuevas, *Cárceles* I 13). The theme of intergenerational sharing is a leitmotif in *Cárcel de mujeres*. The story of the Thirteen Roses is mentioned several times in these two volumes, and thus serves as a didactic tool for those who are learning about women and this historical time period. An interest also emerged in sharing Cuevas’s texts with an international audience.

Almost ten years after the release of *Cárcel de mujeres*, Cuevas’s work gained the attention of an American scholar, Mary Giles. Giles visited Spain in 1989, where she bought and read a copy of the text. Compelled by its contents, Giles felt that

Cuevas's work deserved an international audience so the two women worked to create a translation of a small selection of Cuevas's work. The end result was the book, *Prison of Women*. The prologue of the English translation explains the process of selecting "an appropriate number of representative testimonies for one book" (Cuevas, *Prison* viii). She spent three days with Cuevas, "selecting and ordering testimonies" (Cuevas, *Prison* ix). Giles's prologue also offers some useful insight into the process of transcription and compilation of oral texts.

Giles explains how Cuevas and the women that she interviewed engaged in intimate dialogues where both the interviewer and interviewee have a common understanding of the events, emotions, and recollections that are described. Their moral judgments are also based on their understanding of their collective experience and the surroundings (prison life, for example) where they were forged. For a reader who does not have first-hand experience, this type of conversation would be confusing: "Such is our response to much of oral literature, which by nature is informed with assumptions about the listener/reader's familiarity with the subject matter either by dint of shared experience or through research" (Cuevas, *Prison* xi). For those people not so intimately involved in these past experiences, the past can be seen as, using David Lowenthal's term, "a foreign country." For this reason, Giles felt compelled to help clarify, and therefore avoid, these potential confusions in her English edition.

The testimonies, carefully edited by Giles to assist in the comprehension of them by an international audience, lack a use of the colloquial language that is found in Cuevas's compilation. The oral component of the transcribed testimony—the conversational tone--of the original, transcribed testimonies, is also absent. This marks

an important shift in the narrative technique of the Roses' story. The story was first told informally through word of mouth, poetry, or testimony. Giles's creation represents a polished and edited version of the events.

Giles explains the editing process that was involved with creating the translation because she noticed much repetition among the testimonies found in Cuevas's original text. She describes her role of editor as follows: "Editing the testimonies by trimming away repetition and reordering events for the sake of chronological clarity and narrative interest" (Cuevas, *Prison* x). For Giles, this was one way of making the past meaningful to a general audience.

In the process of editing the compilation, Giles implies that how she transforms and edits Cuevas's work is very much a positive step—something with which Cuevas, herself, agrees: "Shy on formal education, she nonetheless quickly learned techniques of editing. Soon she was rereading her material with a critical eye, alert to the repetition and obscurity. At one point, when she'd finished working on a long section of her own story, she looked at me proudly: 'See, Mary, I'm doing what you did.'" (Cuevas, *Prison* ix). Giles' description can be perceived as a critique of the inabilities of the subaltern subject. She uses this anecdote in her prologue—the description of her interaction and conversation with Cuevas—to support the need for a more educated person to help perfect the story that the subaltern would like to communicate. Giles gives the impression that she can improve the original testimonies by editing them and 'clarifying' the ambiguities found in the original transcribed testimonies—such as the colloquial language used by the speaker. In her text, Giles adds notes and a glossary of names and events that the original testimonies mention but do not describe in much

detail (such as how the 'JSU' stands for 'Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas'). While Giles did have a positive impact in getting these stories to an English readership, eliminating the repetition and "cleaning up the story" may give the reader a text that is too polished—perhaps, too unrealistic. The "raw" nature of giving an oral testimony—including the repetitions found on Cuevas's text—reinforces with more emotion the difficulties of the lived experience, along with the challenges of recalling it.

The information about Giles's work provides an interesting explanation of her view of the objectives of Cuevas's work: to share the stories of women and the injustices of the dictatorship. Cuevas would agree with this statement, although she also assisted her comrades by providing an emotional outlet for the interviewees, as well as an opportunity to reflect upon these women's collective, political identity. Giles recognizes that each woman has her own, unique voice. In creating her compilation, Giles makes a subjective judgment of what voices she considers most valuable for her edition of women's testimonies. Some of the women—like Rosario Sánchez Mora and María del Carmen Cuesta--had distinct personalities that stood out while "other voices were less identifiable but nonetheless powerful: the very inability to articulate eloquently demonstrates in its own way how disfiguring cruelty is to the human spirit. If some testimonies are writ in small letters, they remind us that everyday existence in prison has, like ours, its own kind of humdrum rhythm. Perhaps that humdrum rhythm is as true a representation, if not a truer one, than the sensibility-shattering din of torture and killing" (Cuevas, *Prison* x). Giles gives recognition to the smaller difficulties as being equally significant as massive trauma. With this statement, she subjectively provides an assessment of what aspects of a testimony are useful to the reader. This also

sheds light on why she may have selected the stories that she did to translate into English—picking testimonial accounts that convey emotions but also paint a vivid picture of prison by focusing on the small details that could help the reader feel or imagine that he or she was living the experience. Within her text, Giles includes the story of the Thirteen Roses in the testimony of María del Carmen Cuesta in the chapter titled “A Minor in Prison: María del Carmen Cuesta at Santander.” The Thirteen Roses story contains the emotional elements, along with minute details that help the reader connect to the brutality of life in prison.

As demonstrated through the structure of Cuevas’s texts, some *testimonio* narratives are written in the first person, in a straight-forward fashion. This narrative style is one way to share and perhaps alleviate traumatic memories. Other witnesses or survivors of a traumatic event who wish to provide a first-person account have opted to record this experience in a different fashion--by using a novelistic or creative style that mixes fact and fiction. The latter type of *testimonio* has come to be known as the “novela-testimonio.” One such testimony was written by Ángeles García-Madrid. *Requiem por la libertad* is an account based on the three years that she spent in Ventas prison.

Following a novelistic style, *Requiem* is written in third person—perhaps so that the author can distance herself from the horrors of her past (Mangini 110). García-Madrid recalls the vicious persecution of the women who were activists: the torture, rape, hunger and insanity. Although Mangini, who has analyzed the work, expresses doubt about the veracity of all of the accounts told in the book, she concludes that such veracity is not that important: “[A]uthenticity must be set aside to grasp the inner

meaning of how a text can present what is somehow indescribable” (Mangini 110). The truthfulness of the account is not what matters. Instead, the emotions that these descriptions evoke are perhaps the most important component; these raw emotions help the reader to understand the trauma.

The protagonist of García-Madrid’s novel, named Ángeles after the author, is a fictional figure; however, her thoughts and actions are inspired by García-Madrid’s experiences in prison. The narrative has a heavy focus on communicating both the desperation and the solidarity of women in the prison setting—as seen through the eyes of Ángeles. The protagonist uses the Roses’ execution in the narrative as an example of an event that caused extreme anxiety for femal inmates. She describes the collective effort to change the Thirteen Roses’ sentencing. The determination was evident in every inmate’s face: “Estaba en juego un gran puñado de vidas” (García-Madrid, *Requiem* 80). She remembers how the prisoners painfully waited for Franco to overturn the death sentence: “Hora tras hora, se esperaba y desesperaba” (García-Madrid, *Requiem* 81). Through this example, it is possible to see Mangini’s observation that in García-Madrid’s text, “the individual self as subject is transformed into the collective self as subject, by virtue of proximity to and solidarity with the author’s cellmates (Mangini 108).

The topic of solidarity among women in Ventas prison is the theme of another *novela-testimonio*: Juana Doña’s *Desde la noche y la niebla*. Her work has also been mentioned in Cuevas’s compilation of testimonies. Doña was a communist militant since 1933. She had spent 18 years in prison and her work narrates these prison experiences. Instead of offering a first-hand account (much like what is found in

Cuevas's text), she narrates her stories of prison life through the third person character, Leonor, who Mangini claims is really Doña. Doña chose the format of a novel and changed the names and some of the events (Mangini 109). In an interview with Mangini, Doña explains that for her, it was easier to express herself that way: "...[S]he found it a personally safer way to break through the silence about women activists and their treatment during the Franco regime... She sees her goal as 'giving testimony to the suffering of thousands of women who were persecuted, tortured, and executed for defending the general rights of our oppressed people, but who never questioned their own oppression'" (Mangini 109). Doña also said she wanted to reach a wide readership but keep the confidentiality of those people whom she knew as activists and friends in prison (Mangini 109).

Her narrative includes a description of the execution of the Roses, and their bravery when faced with this horrible reality: "El fusilamiento de las TRECE MENORES el 5 de agosto del 39, demostró a toda la prisión de qué estaban hechas esas jóvenes. Fue la saca más dolorosa que se recordaba." (Doña 164). Like other testimonies, Doña provides facts about the past based on what she remembers, which allows for exaggeration or inaccuracies with the passing of time: the Roses were sentenced with 55 other young people and were accused of plotting to kill Franco. Much like other communist sympathizers, she also proclaims their innocence: "Los jóvenes no habían hecho otra cosa en aquellos dos meses de mayo y junio hasta que fueron detenidos, que buscar formas de esconderse, de huir del vendaval de represión que se cernía sobre todos los españoles al lado de la República" (Doña 164-165).

Doña recalls that after their sentencing, the women came back and started making their wills and giving away their personal possessions. This exchange of their few possessions paints an emotional and difficult picture for the reader because it reveals the generosity and goodness of the women and at the same time, communicates the finality of the imminent execution: “[P]ara ti, mi cuchara, y para la otra el cinturón; el cepillo de dientes como recuerdo y el peine” (Doña 165). Like María del Carmen Cuesta, Doña also recalls how the women left to go to the chapel with not a tear in their eye, “con cabezas erguidas, rapadas, serenas y valientes, se despidieron de sus hermanas de cautiverio dándoles ellas ánimo... Se las llevaron cantando la ‘Joven Guardia,’ y durante toda la noche en ‘capilla’ cantaron hasta que pasaron los camiones para recogerlas” (Doña 165). She remembers the Roses were singing as a form of resistance—a function much like the repetition of poetry as a form of defiance.

Doña also describes the aftermath of the execution: the silence in the prison after they took the women away, the echoes while the inmates waited for when “las trece menores se extinguieron para siempre” (Doña 166). This comment found in Doña’s book communicates imagery very similar to that found in the Thirteen Roses poems. Her description of the extinguishment of the Roses’ lives seems to point to the possibility that Doña not only knew about the lives of these women, but was familiar with the way in which the story was told orally throughout the prison as well.

The oral-story telling about the Roses is found in other testimonies that use fictional techniques to talk about the past—such as *Las cárceles de Soledad Real. Las cárceles de Soledad Real* by Consuelo García is a mediated testimony that uses a novelistic style to comment on the historical experiences of the protagonist: Soledad

Real, a communist militant. This testimony was published in 1982 by Consuelo García. *Cárceles* was first published in a political theory magazine of the PCE: *Nuestra Bandera*. Real's story came to represent the experiences of "gente de abajo," although some people questioned whether or not Soledad Real really existed: "*Las Cárceles de Soledad Real* publicada a principios de los ochenta en 'Nuestra Bandera,' revista teórica y política del PCE, en la que el autor llegaba a cuestionar incluso la existencia de Sole, como si fuera un personaje literario inventado" (Hernández Holgado, *Soledad* 18). Nonetheless, there is sufficient biographical information about Soledad Real to make this claim obsolete.

García wrote the novel-like testimony based on a series of interviews with Soledad Real. Some parts of the testimony appear as if they were transcribed, with few editorial changes (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 31). Nonetheless, the end product is García's own creation. Using Real's life as an example, the novel speaks to the experiences of those who witnessed the war and its aftermath, and expresses the author's need to become better acquainted with this part of the nation's history—one that intimately shaped the lives of so many people but was rarely publically addressed:

Por qué había querido reconstruir la vida de Soledad, por qué quería hacer con ella un libro. Una respuesta parcial era que había querido revivir una historia que había sido la mía o la de mi generación y la de nuestros padres y que nos había sido silenciada, escamoteada o falseada, y que una vez desaparecido Franco sentimos la necesidad, ya que los héroes vivían, de oírla, palparla y verla. (Hernández Holgado, *Soledad* 9)

In this sense, Real's story offers historical insight by providing the reader with information about the war's vanquished and women's collective experiences. García

dedicates her book “a todas las mujeres que, habiendo vivido una vida como la mía, no han querido, no han sabido o no han podido hablar” (García).

A portion of Consuelo García’s account tells of the miserable conditions of prison life and much of the information overlaps with the testimonies found in Cuevas’s text. Within this section, the narrative mentions the Thirteen Roses. Although Real entered Ventas prison several years after the execution of the women, she nonetheless heard about their story from other cell mates and she told the story to others. The explanation of how the Thirteen Roses became a legend is explained well by Fernando Hernández Holgado:

A Soledad Real el relato le fue transmitido y ella lo transmitió a su vez, probablemente introduciendo pequeñas variaciones que quedarían fijadas en el texto oral, como un palimpsesto constantemente vuelto a elaborar, o un mosaico en el que cada nueva presa añadiera una nueva tesela o cambiara de lugar las preexistentes. En suma, el texto oral de Soledad Real es una obra *colectiva* tejida por múltiples y diversos aportes, por testimonios tanto directos como indirectos, que a modo de capas de aluvión fueron sedimentándose sobre el acontecimiento clave con un fin acaso inconsciente: el de forjar un mito de denuncia y resistencia contra la opresión, necesario para la supervivencia de las presas políticas del franquismo. (Hernández Holgado, *Soledad* 255)

Soledad Real’s testimony helps to paint a picture of prison life and the stories that were told to help women prisoners cope with the daily trauma.

The themes of defiance and eternal memory resonate in Consuelo García’s work. The novel uses the Roses’ tragedy in its plot. García’s mention of the Thirteen Roses denotes an effort to personalize the traumas of prison life. The book presents how one woman recalls the story-telling of the tragedy of the Thirteen Roses and how it was passed on to others in prison.

The focus of the narrative is not on the factual details of the Roses' execution. Instead, the author highlights how the Roses story was transmitted. The description in the novel is useful for giving the reader an idea of how the literary invention of the Thirteen Roses took shape in prison through oral story-telling. The women in prison who knew the Roses—and even those women who did not know them personally—spoke about this tragic event among themselves. They reflected on the details of the story and even the women who did not have contact with the event adopted this story as part of their own personal memories of prison. White calls this a technique of making “hearsay into a narrative of personal experience” (L. White 37). The way in which a story was “performed” through oral story-telling, and the details included in this performance, made it credible for people who witnessed or did not witness a tragedy (L. White 38). García's novel demonstrates how the hearsay of the Roses execution shows “the intricate ways in which people use social truths to talk about the past” (L. White 42).

In one scene, Soledad Real recognizes the importance of their memory and how the story had turned into a legend: “El caso más conocido de Ventas, el que más afectó a las reclusas, y que luego ya fue una leyenda, fue el fusilamiento de trece menores, las trece rosas” (García 122). Soledad received the information about the Thirteen Roses from a friend:

Contaba una compañera, que había estado en la galería contigua a la suya, que como los tabiques de las celdas eran sólo hasta unos dos metros de altura de ladrillo y yeso y el resto, hasta el techo, era de tela metálica de hierro, se oían las conversaciones de una celda a otra. (García 122)

The story from her friend tells of the Roses' last moments.

The positive way in which they are described in this story complements the wartime poetry. Both Soledad's story and the poetry emphasize the fact that these young women gave the ultimate sacrifice for the ideals that they commonly shared with a collective group. The Roses' loyalty to these ideals, even upon execution, explains the reasons why they were so adamantly admired; and their loyalty also explains how they quickly became important symbols for those who continued to live in prison.

The story that Soledad heard in prison tells of the defiance of the thirteen women. The account states that while awaiting execution in the chapel, they did not confess.<sup>14</sup> The tale also shows their solidarity and resistance. Before leaving the chapel in the early morning hours, the women asked to be joined together by handcuffs: "Cuando vieron hacia la mañana que el indulto no llegaba y que iban a por ellas, pidieron como última voluntad que las esposaran de dos en dos, una con la mano de la otra" (García 123). The description of the handcuffs is symbolic of the unbreakable union of the women.

García's work was published after Franco's dictatorship. Like other works that provided a testimony to women's experiences in prison along with their heroic acts, García's book had only a small readership. Nonetheless it had an important function in documenting an aspect of the war and dictatorship that was left at the margin—one that was completely omitted from mainstream historical texts. García tells how these women served as a model for other survivors of the same collective group: the women in Ventas prison must continue to unite together in these difficult times and remember the ideals that they collectively share.

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<sup>14</sup> Several historical accounts contradict this statement. Twelve of the thirteen women did confess so they could write goodbye letters to their families. Martina Barroso, for instance, did not confess.

It is lucky to have these works because of the fear that many women had to write or talk about their traumatic pasts. Some lacked the literary capacity while others were fearful of repercussions for them or their family (Mangini 106). Even in 1982, when Consuelo García interviewed Soledad Real, she explains how Real continued to be tormented by her neighbors, whose children had called her a whore for her political activism. Even after the death of Franco, the fear of political repercussions was a reality for female war survivors such as Soledad Real (Mangini 144). The women that put aside these fears—such as Cuevas—tell the need to speak about the traumas of the past.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented a chronological overview of how a historical event—the execution of the Thirteen Roses—turned into a collective memory for women who opposed Franco, and how this memory was shaped and transformed with the passing of time through the employment of various tropes and literary techniques. The memory of the Thirteen Roses was symbolic on multiple levels for this collective group. First, the Roses were a group of young women who were active in the war effort. As a whole, they represented how women were active in a humanitarian effort to uphold social equality and more civil rights for their gender. The Roses also were viewed as icons for tragedy. Their abrupt execution showed how women of all ages were brutally punished for opposing Franco. No one was exempt from the threat of death.

Fellow friends and sympathizers defied this unjust reality by creating poems and offering testimonies that highlighted the positive characteristics of the women: their youth, courage, and solidarity. This tale of tragedy quickly turned into a story of martyrdom for those who sympathized with the women's cause. In the decades that

followed, the repeated story-telling of the tale of the Thirteen Roses promoted the need for camaraderie among women and served as a form of resistance. By recalling the admirable attributes of the women, it helped others who lived through the event relay their grief and loss. It also reminded the collective group why they opposed Franco.

There were variations in the way that the story of the Roses was expressed at distinct historical moments. During the postwar years, the Roses' story was turned into a literary invention that, like the wartime romance, circulated by word of mouth and also in written form. The poetry was a form of inspiration and hope for a brighter future for the collective group in which this tale circulated.

After Franco's death, the Thirteen Roses' story appeared in women's testimonies. These testimonies were composed in different ways. Some of the war survivors chose to relay their memory of the Thirteen Roses through a nonfiction narrative while others created fictional accounts that also incorporated the memory of these historical martyr figures. Over forty years after the event took place, the story still is used as an example that describes women's social and political circumstances of this historical time period. Through individual oral story-telling, each woman contributed to the creation of alternative interpretations of historical events. These narratives reveal many valuable details--many of which were excluded from official historical accounts--about women's participation and sacrifices of the twentieth-century.

## Chapter 2: The Story of the Thirteen Roses: A Journalistic Approach

As shown in the first chapter of this dissertation, women war survivors provided first-person testimonies about the lives and death of the Thirteen Roses. Many of these publications emerged in the 1970s and 1980s and were distributed to a small readership. This second chapter focuses on the journalistic writing about the Thirteen Roses during two distinct phases of Spanish democracy: first, during the immediate years of the transition and second, at the end of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

At the same time that Tomasa Cuevas published her compilation, *Cárcel de mujeres* in 1985, a journalist who did not personally know the Roses, Jacobo García Blanco-Cicerón, conducted interviews and authored an article about their execution. In the years that followed, other younger individuals including Mirta Núñez Díaz-Balart, Fernando Hernández-Holgado, and Carlos Fonseca, published on the Roses. These writers are the grandchildren of those who fought in the war and were responsible for making significant developments in the historical investigation of the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship in the 1980s, 1990s, and in the twenty-first century. Unlike the female war survivors, they had little first-hand experience with the war, which lessened the personal trauma associated with these events.<sup>15</sup> Their work also marks a shift in the way the Roses' memory has been told. The passing of time between the catastrophic events of the civil war and the years after Spain's transition to democracy

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<sup>15</sup> In my dissertation, the literary and cultural production about the Roses was written by war survivors or grandchildren of war survivors. While children of war survivors likely knew about the story, many of them grew up during Franco's dictatorship and could not publically speak about the execution. As I will explain in the next chapter, the Roses' memory was passed on to children, but many of these children chose to remain silent. Spain's democracy provided an open forum to discuss the war but there was a delay in telling stories about the vanquished. When the grandchildren of war survivors reached adult age, enough time had passed since the war and Spanish democracy had changed enough to allow for the Roses' story to reach a larger public.

allowed the traumatic experiences to be told, perhaps in some ways more objectively or quantitatively, by implementing statistics and data into the analysis.

Because of the critical distance that the grandchildren have from the war, it is easier for them to inquire and interrogate, instead of “cover up,” the remnants of the past. In Spain, some speculate that this generation is unique because, unlike most of their parents and grandparents, “no se van a contentar con llevar los restos a un cementerio, sino que acabaran preguntándose por una civilización que ha montado el progreso sobre una tierra con tantos cadáveres” (Ferrán 37). The act of remembering and publically expressing information about the past has helped in creating a more comprehensive perspective of the war and dictatorship years. It has also assisted in the political efforts of the twenty-first century to seek compensation for the victims of the war and dictatorship. The analysis of the civil war and dictatorship has helped citizens see how these victims play a role in the formation of Spain’s historical memory and national identity. Intergenerational sharing has become a crucial component in this process, as shown by the material published in the 1980s and 1990s on the Thirteen Roses. Some individuals who wrote about the Roses were aware of the traumas of the war through their interaction with war survivors or from reading personal accounts of this time period; they are still connected to these stories either because of a family connection or a personal curiosity.

The presentation of the Thirteen Roses’ story through journalistic writing has marked a change in narrative genre. Unlike the poetry of the postwar years and women’s testimonies, which aimed to evoke an emotional effect, the journal articles that were published after the transition aim to provide clarity surrounding the facts of

the events and offer a detailed layout of the women's lives and deaths. The goal of the journal articles was to use the Roses' execution to educate the public and share the details of the tragedy; the Roses' story is a topic that had been left out of a public discussion during the early years of the transition to democracy.<sup>16</sup>

Through this journal writing, it is possible to see a change in how the Thirteen Roses' account was revisited and analyzed. The articles about the Roses' death show how Spaniards have gone through various stages of looking at the nation's past. Journal articles about the women first went through a process of historical investigation and revisionism. Second, the media took an interest in the Roses' commemoration—pointing to how these women fought for democratic ideals and highlighting that they deserved recognition. Twenty-first century journalists have portrayed the Roses as metonymic symbols for democracy; they have used the story to make a public statement in favor of the recuperation of historical memory of the Spanish Civil War. Those people involved in this topic look at the admirable aspects of the civil war, along with the lessons from it, as a basis for improving Spain's current and future democracy.

Using Benedict Anderson's term, Spanish citizens—especially in the twenty-first century—are working toward creating an “imagined community,” one that embraces instead of excludes the perspective of those that lost the war in an effort to improve national coexistence. In his assessment of creating an imagined community, Anderson presents the history surrounding the crucial role of journal publications in the

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<sup>16</sup> As explained in the Introduction, the politicians of Spain's democratic government encouraged citizens to forget about the war, thus creating a pact called the *pacto de olvido*. Because of this pact, the government did not publically address any of the atrocities that took place during the war and dictatorship years. The Amnesty Law of 1977 did not prosecute any crimes that were committed during this time period. Amnesty, by definition, is “the total pardon or non-recollection of the crime” (Aguilar Fernández 192).

process of nation-building. These publications make historical information available to the public, but sometimes also make a political critique or a demand for justice. From the point of view of the war's vanquished—or from the view of sympathizers of this perspective--the historically marginalized groups must also be included in the national or “imagined” community of the future.<sup>17</sup>

In Spain today, writings and publications that focus on the perspective of the war's vanquished make comprehensible to a wider public the individual experiences of those that did not have a voice for many years. They also speak against the way that the Spanish Civil War has been officially recognized and documented. This recognition is the first crucial step to move beyond the unspoken past and forget about it: “A society will not be able to amnesty, or throw into oblivion, a past if it does not remember it clearly, if it lacks a consciousness of what that past was, if it allows for it to fall into oblivion” (Ferrán 39). The re-telling of the story of the Thirteen Roses is changing the way that people view the past and also Spain's democracy, helping to better define the ideals that the Spanish government should carry into the future. For Nancy Bermeo, the advancement of democracy is done through “many subtle changes in attitude” (Bermeo 278). By allowing and encouraging public discussions about the violent acts that took place under Franco's dictatorship, the government and its citizens are making room in the public arena for what Bermeo describes as “forums for political learning” (Bermeo 279).

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<sup>17</sup> In her work, *Foundational Fictions*, Doris Sommer explains how the *costumbrismo* also promote these “communal imaginings” so that “different strata of society [could become] comprehensible to one another” (Sommer 14).

The first account about the Roses not written by someone who knew them, was released in 1983 by Harmut Heine in a book titled *La oposición política al franquismo: De 1939 a 1952*. Two years later, the same year as Tomasa Cueva's *Cárcel de mujeres*, Jacobo García Blanco-Cicerón, a young Spanish journalist with no family connection to the Roses, published an article titled "Asesinato legal (5 de agosto de 1939): Las trece rosas." The article was published in a popular history journal of the time, *Historia 16*. During the time in which Blanco-Cicerón's article was released, citizens had very little public access to historical documents or resources about the civil war or dictatorship years. Because of this, Blanco-Cicerón gathered materials from first-person interviews. His account revealed limited biographical information and the factual details about the execution. In 1985, the journal, *Historia 16*, was a publication dedicated to the investigation of historical topics related to Spain's past—especially those aspects that have not been studied. *Historia 16* edited Blanco-Cicerón's research, assigning a problematic title to the article ("Legal Assassination") along with graphic artwork that showed how the women were victims. Through these means, the journal sent a clear statement for the need to recognize, research, and interrogate past events that have had an impact in shaping Spanish society at the end of the twentieth century. Sharing the Thirteen Roses' account was one way in which individuals searched for meaning, inquired and learned about the nation's dark past. The Roses' tragedy assists them in making connections between the past and present.

The publication of Blanco-Cicerón's article in 1985 went against the government's desire to avoid a public discussion of the past. Furthermore, the subjective presentation of the Roses' execution shows how citizens, including those

who did not directly experience the events, approached the discussion of the war and dictatorship years with enough critical distance from past atrocities to acknowledge how these crimes have shaped the present and condemn the government's official approach which ignored previous unjust acts, such as what happened to the Roses. Nonetheless, the acknowledgement of this historical information leaves unanswered questions about how to handle these previous crimes, as shown by the continuing debate over Spain's Law of Historical Memory.

At the time that it was published, Blanco-Cicerón's article generated increased public interest in the Roses. In the years that followed, the topic of the Roses was revisited by other scholars. Mirta Núñez Díaz-Balart and Antonio Rojas Friend's article "Las Trece Rosas. Nuevas revelaciones sobre su ejecución" (1993) corrected the errors in Blanco-Cicerón's account and expanded on the 1985 article with historical information that had since become available, such as the official documents that the authors accessed from the Judicial Military Archive (the Archivo Militar Judicial). Núñez Díaz-Balart and Rojas Friend incorporated this material about the Roses into a larger study about the executions that took place in Madrid: *Consejo de guerra: Los fusilamientos en el Madrid de la Posguerra (1939-1945)* (1997). The statistics published in *Consejo de guerra* point to the large-scale human rights violations that took place during the dictatorship. In the late 1990s, the public had more access to archives and information about the past but the government continued to refuse investigating or prosecuting past crimes.

In the 1990s, there was also an increased amount of media coverage about the victims of the civil war and dictatorship years. Emma Lira's article, "En memoria de

‘las Trece Rosas,’ published in *Diario 16* (sábado 6 de agosto 1994), reports on the Roses’ commemoration ceremony. In addition to describing how victim’s family members were in attendance, Lira describes the plaque that was placed at the commemoration site: “En [la placa], apenas un par de frases relatan un sacrificio que es aún desconocido para mucha gente: “Las jóvenes llamadas “Las Trece Rosas” dieron aquí su vida por la libertad y la democracia” (Lira 26). Using this article as an example, it is possible to see how the Roses’ memory shifted toward viewing the women as symbols for democracy. The association between the Roses and democracy points to an important moment of Spain’s transition. In the late twentieth-century and beginning of the twenty-first century, the government and its citizens started taking measures to reassess the nation’s current democratic system. This process questioned the government’s *pacto de olvido*.

In the twenty-first century, the Roses’ story demonstrates the process by which scholars have gathered information about the past despite the government’s lack of collaboration. Fernando Hernández Holgado published an article about the death of the Thirteen Roses in 2003, “Las Trece Rosas. Agosto de 139: Un diálogo entre el documento y la fuente oral (2003). Like the previous articles written on the Roses, “Las Trece Rosas” reports on the historical events of the execution but also explains, in greater detail, the way in which this information was collected: “La metodología utilizada combina tanto las fuentes orales, a través de entrevistas recientemente realizadas y diversos textos memorialísticos, como la documentación perteneciente a la causa judicial—30.426—y la conservada en el actual establecimiento penitenciario *Victoria Kent*, de Madrid, perteneciente al antiguo archivo de la prisión de Ventas”

(Hernández Holgado, “Las Trece Rosas” 646). Hernández-Holgado’s research brings together written and oral sources about the Roses. His use of the Roses’ trope “turns away” from the literal meaning of the account to inform readers about the methods of communication used to pass on the Roses’ story. Like Núñez Díaz-Balart and Rojas Friend, Hernández Holgado incorporated this material into a larger study of women’s life in prison; Hernández Holgado’s book, *Mujeres encarceladas. La prisión de Ventas: de la República al franquismo, 1931-1941*, was published in 2003. In the twenty-first century, the Roses trope shows how the Roses, as a collective memory, has been transmitted both orally and in writing; it also continues to serve as a symbol for democracy.

In 2004, the most comprehensive study of the Thirteen Roses was published by Carlos Fonseca. Fonseca’s *Trece rosas rojas: La historia más conmovedora de la Guerra civil* is a book-length account that celebrates the Roses’ participation in the fight against Franco and narrates the tragedy of the unjust crime of their execution. Like Hernández Holgado, Fonseca comments on how he acquired the information about the Roses. He also critiques how some of the official documents about the women have been lost or misplaced. Thus, his account uses the Roses’ trope to explain and critique the challenges of doing historical research about the war in the twenty-first century.

Fonseca’s account portrays the women as heroes for democracy. In the twenty-first century, when Spain is reevaluating its current democratic state, many citizens are admiring the democratic developments that took place during Spain’s Second Republic (1931-1936). In the twenty-first century, people can relate to some of the democratic-inspired ideals that these women embodied. Although the goals of Spain’s Second

Republic are not identical to the democratic ideals that Spain has today, it is possible to see some similarities in the way in which both types of government strive to promote civil rights and equality among citizens.

The Thirteen Roses were engaged in both a political and humanitarian effort to help those in need during the war; some of the Roses volunteered in soup kitchens while others were employed as seamstresses. As a whole, this group of women signifies the historical effort to promote women's equality, participation in the public sphere and the work force—democratic rights that today are often taken for granted. For these reasons, more citizens in the last decade desire to celebrate and remember the positive qualities of the Second Republic and the reasons why people fought to uphold this democratic government.<sup>18</sup>

Fonseca's 2004 account about the Thirteen Roses contributes to the recognition of the victims of the civil war—those people who fought to uphold democracy. The Roses' account also conveys a didactic message that such horrible violations against humanity did occur, and should not be repeated. The tragedy of the Roses' execution is also relevant to a twenty-first century audience because violent and unjust acts continue to take place in Spain and around the world as a result of political and social discrimination.

Two key events occurred in 2004 that may have heightened the public's interest in Fonseca's account of the Roses' death. First, the Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks of March 11, 2004 made a brutal and tragic mark on Spanish society. Several commuter trains near Madrid were bombed and close to 200 people were killed. Second, the election of

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<sup>18</sup> Foro por la memoria, an association affiliated with the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), is one organization that publishes articles that celebrate the Second Republic.

the socialist Primer Minister José Luis Zapatero in March 2004 secured a government platform that was focused on social issues such as discrimination, divorce, and same-sex marriage. In 2004, Zapatero also initiated a process to seek compensation for the victims of the Spanish Civil War. Thus, the topic of the recuperation of historical memory was at the center of Zapatero's agenda. In 2005, the prime minister ordered the removal of statues from the dictatorship years in Madrid. In 2006, the government declared it to be the "Year of Historical memory." In 2007, Zapatero's government approved the Law of Historical Memory.<sup>19</sup>

In the twenty-first century, Spaniards who are active in the social circles that discuss the "recuperation of historical memory" are hoping to restore more of the democratic ideals that the Roses embody. They are accomplishing this in two ways. First by scrutinizing Spain's transition to democracy in the 1970s, they claim that this political change was not so radical--especially with respect to the issue of the recuperation of historical memory. This scrutiny contradicts the widely-accepted public perception of the Spanish transition as a significant political event. Second, some citizens who are involved in the topic of the recuperation of historical memory of the civil war nostalgically remember the Second Republic's democratic goals—particularly class equality and women's rights. They admire the *potential* that the Second Republic offered for establishing democracy prior to the outbreak of the civil war. For this group, the Second Republic was the precursor to the transition that took place in 1975; they hope that in the twenty-first century, Spain's current democracy can evolve to embody more of the democratic goals that were present during the Second Republic.

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<sup>19</sup> A more detailed summary of the contents of the law is presented in the introduction to my dissertation.

Scrutiny over the 1975 transition began to appear within the last five years in Spain. Ferrán Gallego Margalef's *El mito de la transición: La crisis del franquismo y los orígenes de la democracias (1973-1977)* (2008) is an example that shows how scholars' opinions are beginning to change about Spain's initial transition to democracy; and the public is demanding different political approaches. The author examines the development of Spanish politics between 1973 and 1977 to show how Franco supporters and the opposition worked together to get support to confront the economic crisis of the time, while also preserving the privileges that politicians who worked under Franco enjoyed during Franco's regime. These political compromises had negative consequences for Spanish democracy. Gallego Margalef argues that these negotiations legitimized bad democratic practices. In 1977, for instance, leftist parties had little political power. King Juan Carlos—who became the symbol for peace and unity during the transition—had been elected by Franco as his successor. In the 1970s, the crimes from the dictatorship were not prosecuted. These bad practices had long-term negative effects for Spanish democracy, from which the nation is still suffering in the twenty-first century. Even after the approval of Spain's Law of Historical Memory in 2007, there has been no initiative made by the government to hold judicial hearings for past crimes.

Despite this disappointment for those who sympathize with the war's vanquished, some citizens are hoping that Spain is ready to make another shift in democratic policy in the twenty-first century—what some call Spain's "third transition" to democracy. As shown in an increasing number of newspaper articles and blog spots, Spaniards are looking back at the years of the Second Republic as a model for this

change. Antoni Doménech's "Entre la Segunda y la Tercera República" provides an example for how Spaniards are remembering the Second Republic as "el único régimen político que ha consentido a sus pueblos, ya fuera efímeramente, abrigar la esperanza de un pleno ejercicio de su soberanía" (Doménech). Doménech's article assesses the significance of the change of political regime in Spain in 1931 and uses it as an example to hypothetically ask what another shift in democracy would mean in the first quarter of the twenty-first century. He explains that there is a recent demand for change: "Hay un evidente *revival* republicano en los últimos años en España" (Doménech).<sup>20</sup> He reaffirms Gallego Margalef's observation of the recent scrutiny of the transition to democracy, especially with regard to the recuperation of historical memory: "De recuperación de la memoria histórica, vergonzosamente orillada y oprimida por la elite política restauracionista que controló el proceso de transición política. (Doménech). Instead of viewing Spain's transition to democracy as exemplary, Doménech describes other more admirable democratic models from the post-World War I era. The author concludes that the desire for "Third Republic" in twenty-first century Spain must be firmly founded on leftist socialist initiatives: "[Una III República] no puede sino ir de la mano de la lucha por conservar defensivamente lo mejor de las conquistas sociales cristalizadas en el capitalismo reformado europeo del tercer cuarto del siglo XX, pero tiene que organizarse social y políticamente como parte de una lucha por recuperar la iniciativa de la izquierda a escala continental" (Doménech). The Roses, as shown in Fonseca's account, are historical figures that represented a surge in leftist activism—to

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<sup>20</sup> Doménech's use of the term 'republicano' does not exclusively refer to Spain's Second Republic. In addition to Spain, he identifies several European governments that he considers model republics, including Germany and Austria.

protect the Spanish Republic against the perils of fascism. The various ways in which the Roses have been described in different accounts, as innocent victims and also heroines of democracy, reflects the changes and developments of Spanish democracy. Early in the transition, there was a need to get the facts straight about the execution in order to allow for more artistic elaboration by non-war survivors in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By comparing the varying perspectives, one can see how individuals and groups project their own ideas, outlooks, and opinions onto the Roses' memory.

#### The Thirteen Roses in the 1980s: Making a Statement Against Franco's Dictatorship

To trace the development of the Thirteen Roses' trope and its relevance to Spain's changing democracy, it is important to examine the context in which the first journal article about the Roses was published. Blanco-Cicerón's "Asesinato legal (5 de agosto de 1939): Las trece rosas" was included in *Historia 16* in 1985. Thereafter, a larger public interest in the Roses' story began to emerge.

*Historia 16* was first released in May 1976 by the same company that produced another well-known publication, *Cambio 16*. Instead of maintaining a focus on current events like the weekly edition of *Cambio 16*, the new publication (*Historia 16*) was dedicated to search for information about Spanish history because, as the journal explained to its readers in the first volume "es la única manera de darle perspectiva a los cambios vertiginosos de la actualidad" (May 1976, no. 1). The initial letter to the readers conveys how the creators of *Cambio 16* and *Historia 16* not only place value on the reporting of current events as a way to know about Spanish national identity; history plays a significant role in the formation of national identity as well.

The journal's letter to its readers makes an explicit connection between Spain's past and present. The letter also makes a direct commentary about Franco's dictatorship—that it was “not a coincidence”—much like the Civil War was not a result of “bad luck.” Instead, Spaniards allowed these events to take place. Ultimately, the journal's editor points to the need for some sort of accountability in the form of uncovering and understanding these events. He encourages readers to reflect upon the journal's historical material and how it may transform their understanding of the present. This bold statement, written in 1976 right after the transition to democracy, contradicts the government's desire to keep Franco's dictatorship a separate memory from Spain's new democratic regime.

*Historia 16*'s initial letter to readers, in its May 1976 issue, continues to insist upon the need to reflect upon recent history and uses the metaphor of a flood (un diluvio) to explain how historical memory, and even the geography of the country, had been erased: “Recorriendo el país o siguiendo día a día la actualidad, uno llega a pensar que España, o esta cosa donde vivimos, nació ayer y no sabemos muy bien si durará hasta mañana.” Through the contributions of *Historia 16*, the editor believes that Spanish citizens can reconstruct the nation's historical and collective memory; the journal's articles represent the metaphorical “building blocks” on which to establish new perceptions of the past and present.

The goal of *Historia 16* is to present historical topics that help citizens understand the origins and historical developments that led to the creation of Spain's democracy in 1976. Blanco-Cicerón's article contributes to this effort by highlighting thirteen of the war's vanquished and personalizing the victimization of many

anonymous people. “Asesinato legal” unveils a new citizenry for a new democracy by presenting historical figures that fought to uphold democratic values earlier in the twentieth century.

The theme of the recuperation of Spain’s history is the main objective of the journal. Referring to Spain’s history, the journal clarifies its main focus, and ties it to a need to redefine national identity:

Recuperar [la larga historia], buscarla, volver a hacerla nuestra y cargar con ella es tarea fundamental de este pueblo nuestro que ahora levanta la cabeza tras la tragedia que le dejó sin memoria. Y en esa tarea quiere colaborar en lo que pueda esta HISTORIA 16 que ahora nace con enorme ilusión. Historiadores nacionales y extranjeros de una valía indudable han dado un espaldarazo a esta aventura para acompañarnos en la búsqueda de la personalidad perdida. Confiamos en que nuestros lectores encuentren en estas páginas una amena y significativa resurrección de su propia historia. (*Historia 16*, May 1976)

The journal does not provide a specific definition what the authors view as “history;” however, the initial letter to readers describes valuable history as something tangible, much like how Pierre Nora describes *lieux de mémoire* (places of memory). *Historia 16* does not perceive history as a static discipline of study nor does it condone archiving information about the past: “Cuando tanto monumento de la antigüedad hispana y tanta ciudad bellísima de siglos han sido sustituidos por cajones verticales baratísimos, sin cultura, sin gusto y sin pretexto, se diría que la historia española se ha esfumado, que somos un pueblo tercermundista nacido ayer” (*Historia 16*, May 1976). Given this point of view, the story-telling of the Thirteen Roses, as an “active” collective memory that has been sustained through oral transmission, fits perfectly with the journal’s historical vision and focus. The Roses’ memory contributes to this goal of searching for Spain’s “lost personality” by presenting some of the lesser-known individuals of history.

García Blanco-Cicerón's article on the Thirteen Roses fits well with the journal's objective of the recuperation of historical memory. The willingness to publish information on the war's vanquished provides an interesting topic for readers, and one that had not been publicly discussed with much detail in previous years. "Asesinato legal" not only filled a gap in the collective memory of the war's vanquished. It also explains the emotional and tragic experiences of women's history, which up until that time had been limited to a small readership. Examining the Spanish Civil War through a social history approach—with a focus on the individual--provides a view from the ground-up instead of the top-to-bottom approach of traditional historical methods. Individual actors are the participants of large historical events, such as the war. In 1985, the analysis of individual war heroes—and especially war *heroines*—reshaped previous notions of historical memory, defined as the way in which society remembers, teaches, and perceives its own history.

Blanco-Cicerón's interest in the topic is unique because he has no family or personal connection with the Roses. Furthermore, he cannot (as a man) identify completely with the experience of the female war survivor; however, he was able to interview key female witnesses in 1984, and thus engage in the process of intergenerational sharing and learning. Blanco-Cicerón has a journalist background and perhaps for him, the quest to speak of the Roses was inspired by a desire to uncover hidden parts of the past—particularly those parts that would make a good story. He conducted his research independently and then submitted his story to *Historia 16*. The author's intuition that the Roses' story could be a popular topic of interest was met with much success; Blanco-Cicerón's article has been cited by nearly every scholar who has

published on the Roses. Because of the popularity of “Asesinato legal,” the article opened the floodgate of interest—but more importantly—also a floodgate for critical reflection and interrogation of historical facts.

As stated in the initial letter to readers, *Historia 16* intends to present aspects of history that assist in understanding Spain’s culture and society at the end of the twentieth century. The topic of the civil war definitely enters into this discussion; however, the way in which the journal marketed the article on the Thirteen Roses was very subjective. The title of the article, for instance, describes the Roses’ execution as a “legal assassination,” thus giving the reader the impression that not only did a crime take place, but innocent lives were lost.

Like the title, the illustrations that accompanied Blanco-Cicerón’s article, which was decided upon by the journal and not the author himself, was designed to grab the reader’s attention and to evoke both sympathy for the victims and outrage for the execution. The image on the front cover of this edition of *Historia 16* draws attention to Blanco-Cicerón’s article; “El asesinato de las Trece Rosas” is written in large font, with drops of red blood to add a visual effect. The first page of Blanco-Cicerón’s article shows a drawing of a large bouquet of roses, tied with a ribbon, and splatters of blood in the bottom right corner of the drawing. The caption reads “Alegoría del fusilamiento de las trece rosas (por E. Ortega)” (Blanco-Cicerón 11).

The article presents several photographic images of the youth of Madrid who were mobilized through the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas and two newspaper clippings--one from August 2, 1939 published in *El Alcázar* that announces “el recuadro de la derecha, antes de que se iniciara el juicio se dan por probados los cargos y

se presupone la sentencia,” and another from *Ya*, published on August 6, 1939 which, as the caption states: “Ayer fueron ejecutados los inductores de los asesinos de los señores Gabaldón, Díaz y su hija del primero” (Blanco-Cicerón 19). These two brief statements explain the victor’s perspective as to why the Roses were executed.

Toward the end of the article, there are pictures of two of the family’s tombs with the name of two of the Roses (Dionisia Manzanero Salas and Ana López Gallego). The names on the tombs provide a visual reinforcement of the finality of the executions. One page contains copy of a painting by E. Ortega that depicts the execution. Men dressed in military garb have rifles pointed at a line of women who are standing against a wall. Splatters of blood appear on their shirts—reflecting the splatters found on the cover of the magazine and the first page of the article. The face of each woman shows different emotions. The woman closest to the viewer has a clear expression of fear on her face, while others clearly seem to be in the throws of dying. Through these details, *Historia 16* makes a statement to readers that this little-known act of violence is also part of Spain’s historical memory. Blanco-Cicerón also speculates on the origin of the name of the Thirteen Roses: “Entre los fusilados había once mujeres, pero la oposición socialista y comunista las designó como *las trece rosas*, añadiendo al primitivo número de ejecutados aquel día otras dos que lo fueron posteriormente: Palmira Soto y Ana” (Blanco-Cicerón 11).<sup>21</sup> His error in the number of women executed on August 5 (eleven) would be corrected by other historical studies on the Roses.

Written testimonies from several inmates are incorporated into the article and this material tells how the execution affected life in the prison. The article gives a

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<sup>21</sup> Blanco-Cicerón specifies that the thirteenth Rose, Ana, should not be confused with another one of the Roses: Ana López Gallego.

detailed description of what prison life was like in Ventas: the interrogations, the hunger, death, illness, and cramped quarters. Along the margins of the main article, the author has included mini-biographies of eleven of the protagonists along with photos of most of them, including portraits, photos with family, first communion, and pictures of the women with their boyfriends. The family photos that were published in the article were given to Blanco-Cicerón by family members. Some of these biographies contained more details than others. Blanco-Cicerón could not provide biographical information about all of the women because some of the Roses' families could not be located or did not want to collaborate in his research efforts.

While the material presented in the main text may not have been entirely accurate, the importance of Blanco-Cicerón's effort is not found so much in the material, but in the interest that he took in investigating and interrogating a little-known story in an effort to make it more publicly known during a time when Spain's "pact of forgetting" was strongly in effect. For these reasons, Blanco-Cicerón has been highly praised for these efforts by those writers that followed his steps to research and tell the story of the Thirteen Roses. In her book chapter on the Thirteen Roses, Tabea Alexa Linhard describes his article as "the most comprehensive article written on this death story" (Linhard, *Fearless* 117). Likewise, Hernández Holgado adds that the "excelente estudio de García Blanco-Cicerón se nutre de un rico corpus de testimonios orales, compuesto por compañeras de encierro y familiares de *Las Trece Rosas*, y se acompaña de un interesante material fotográfico (Hernández Holgado "Trece Rosas" 653).

In the years following the publication of Blanco-Cicerón's article, new reports have emerged, and are continuing to do so. *Historia 16* published another article on the

Thirteen Roses in 1993, written by Mirta Núñez-Balart and Antonio Rojas Friend, which shows that there was public demand for a continued discussion on the topic. In 1993, Mirta Núñez Díaz-Balart and Antonio Rojas Friends' article titled "Las Trece Rosas. Nuevas revelaciones sobre su ejecución" in *Historia 16*. The article revises and reinterprets the information found in Blanco-Cicerón's text. The introduction to the article gives a short summary of how the authors' study is connected to Blanco-Cicerón's work. Díaz-Balart and Rojas-Friend preface that they agree with his assessment of the execution and his work has contributed to the effort to commemorate the tragedy: "Fue un auténtico asesinato, por motivos meramente políticos, respaldado por un juicio sumarísimo basado en pruebas inconsistentes. El artículo rescató del olvido aquella tragedia y tres años después, en 1988, se colocó una placa recordando a Las Trece Rosas en la tapia del cementerio donde fueron fusiladas" (Díaz-Balart and Rojas Friend, "Las Trece Rosas" 21). They use the information provided in "Asesinato legal," revising it to achieve more historical accuracy about the event.

Díaz-Balart and Rojas Friend's article presents a short summary about the women as a collective group and, immediately following this brief introduction, the article shares the names of the men who handed down the verdict, which they found in the Archivo Militar Judicial: Isidro Cerdeño Gurich, Remigio Siguenza Plata, José Sarte Julia, Fernando Feingenspan Ruiz, and Gabriel (?) García Marco (Díaz-Balart and Rojas Friend, "Las Trece Rosas" 22). Their ability to access these materials nine years after Blanco-Cicerón conducted his research shows how Spain's government was allowing scholars to access archived information that was previously prohibited. In

1993, Díaz-Balart and Rojas Friend could publish more information about the perpetrators than Blanco Cicerón was able to do in 1985.

The authors also correct Blanco-Cicerón's list of how many women were killed that day (eleven), along with their names. Díaz-Balart and Rojas Friend clarify that there were thirteen women killed, along with forty-three men. In the list of women, Blanco-Cicerón includes a name, Palmira Soto, that Díaz-Balart and Rojas could not locate in any of the execution records between 1939 and 1944 for the cemetery where the executions took place, el Cementerio del Este (Díaz-Balart and Rojas Friend, "Las Trece Rosas" 22). Soto was not one of the women who was executed on August 5, 1939. The authors are also eager to clarify that there was no mention of Gabaldón's assassination in the judicial summary, which was an event commonly associated with the execution. The women were put to death two days after the execution of Gabaldón, which led prison inmates in Ventas and other people who learned about the story to assume there was a "cause and effect" relationship between the two events. Another rumor associated with the Roses' story is that the inmates in Ventas wrote a petition to Franco and his pardon was given twenty-four hours after the execution. Díaz-Balart and Rojas Friend state: "Podemos asegurar que no existe el sumario [sic?] tal indulto. Por el contrario, con fecha posterior a su fusilamiento llegó la confirmación, fechada en *Burgos, a trece de agosto de 1939*, con el *enterado* de Franco firmado, como era habitual, por el asesor, con el sello del *Cuartel General de S.E. el Generalísimo*. Por tanto, el *visto bueno* del jefe del Estado llegó *a posteriori* de las ejecuciones" (Díaz-Balart and Rojas Friend, "Las Trece Rosas" 24). Díaz-Balart and Rojas Friends' "Las

Trece Rosas” distinguishes the concrete historical facts from the rumors associated with the Roses’ execution.

The material that was compiled in this article became part of a larger project for the two authors. Later in 1997, Díaz-Balart and Rojas Friend published a book, *Consejo de guerra: Los fusilamientos en el Madrid de la Posguerra (1939-1945)*, which includes the information and story of the Roses. *Consejo* provides a historical review of the executions and burials that took place in el Cementerio del Este in Madrid by interpreting the official cemetery records and reviewing the quantifiable facts to find answers to previously unanswered questions about how many people, and who, died and were buried there.

In the 1990s, as shown by *Consejo*, scholars began connecting the issue of human rights to the crimes that were committed within Spain during Franco’s regime. Díaz-Balart and Rojas Friend’s 1993 article mentioned that the first commemoration ceremony for the Roses began in 1988. They, and other writers, project their interest in human rights and commemoration onto the Roses’ memory.

Emma Lira’s “En memoria de “Las Trece Rosas”,” which appeared in *Diario 16* on August 6, 1994, describes the Roses’ 1994 commemoration ceremony. Lira’s report begins with a statement by Silvia Escobar, a member of the Academia Internacional de los Derechos del Hombre. Escobar led the ceremony and Lira explains her interpretation of the significance of the Thirteen Roses in Spain’s current context, drawing upon the theme of human rights: “De ser hoy jóvenes, “Las Trece Rosas” proclamarían que el Primer Mundo tiene que ocuparse con urgencia del Tercero, y hablarían de libertad y de justicia, ideales vigentes hoy como en 1939” (Lira 26). Lira’s

article shows a gradual shift in the journalistic interpretation of the significance of the Roses' story, showing how writers are projecting more and more democratic values onto the Roses.

Lira concisely summarizes Escobar's speech to explain what the Roses represent to the people that planned the commemoration ceremony: "Las palabras de Silvia Escobar hablan de una reunión de amor, de solidaridad, de justicia y de esperanza" (Lira 26). The ideals that Escobar names: hope, brotherhood and justice, continue to be democratic goals. Lira celebrates the women war survivors in attendance as *living* symbols for the pursuit of these democratic values: "Aguantando estoicamente bajo un sol abrasador, las mujeres que compartieron los últimos días con las jóvenes y sus familiares se sitúan junto al lugar donde se relata que cayeron. 'Hace mucho calor,' se oyó decir a alguien compasivamente. Y una voz se elevó orgullosa desde el grupo de mujeres: 'Hemos aguantado cosas peores'" (Lira 26). Lira explains how female war survivors visit the tomb twice a year: on the day of the execution and also on March 8--the Day of the Woman (Día de la Mujer) (Lira 26).

The custom of paying homage to the Roses on the Day of the Woman explains how the Roses' comrades linked, and continue to link, their memory to social equality and women's rights—two topics that would be part of the socialist agenda when Prime Minister Zapatero was to be elected to office in 2004. The association between the Roses and democratic goals and values continues to be found in twenty-first century nonfiction writing about the women, as shown by Carlos Fonseca's *Las trece rosas rojas*. The projection of democratic ideals onto the Roses explains why their story has repeatedly been analyzed and reinterpreted in the last twenty-five years.

In the twenty-first century, the Roses' trope also was used as an example for how the collective memories from the civil war years were transmitted in written and oral forms. Fernando Hernández Holgado published a conference presentation in 2003 titled "Las trece rosas. Agosto de 1939: Un diálogo entre el documento y la fuente oral." The conference topic was about concentration camps and the penitentiary system in Spain during the war and the dictatorship years. Hernández Holgado compares the written documents that are available to oral or transcribed testimonies from women who spent time in prison. With both types of sources, he assesses the topics of life in prison, women's political activism, the prison system, and the people within it. The Thirteen Roses story is sufficiently documented in enough written and oral sources to serve as a good example for readers to educate them about the postwar prison setting.<sup>22</sup>

Hernández Holgado uses the Roses to illustrate the horrors of prison life. The Roses' trope demonstrates how female prisoners shared information through word of mouth and in some cases, through clandestine publications. Hernández Holgado relies upon written and oral sources to write his own account. The title of his conference paper shows how post-dictatorship research methodologies combine these two forms of data to understand more about the Spanish Civil War. The synthesis of written and oral sources is especially important when some of the official documents from this time period have been lost, destroyed, or misplaced.

In his conference paper, Hernández Holgado explains how the regime kept meticulous records of prison inmates; however some of this information has disappeared. Hernández Holgado speculates that "no fue del todo inocente la

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<sup>22</sup> Hernández Holgado used the materials from his conference paper in a book chapter about life in Ventas prison: *Mujeres encarceladas. La prisión de Ventas: de la República al franquismo, 1931-1941*.

desaparición de la documentación relevante para esclarecer su número de presos...” (Hernández Holgado, “Trece Rosas” 647). This is also the case for documents from Ventas prison: “Desgraciadamente, para la cárcel de Ventas por el momento sólo es posible acceder a los expedientes personales de reclusas y funcionarios, en lo que constituye otra ‘sospechosa’ desaparición semejante a lo ocurrido con la Modelo de Barcelona. El resto de la documentación necesaria para desentrañar el cuantioso número de reclusas que fue alojando durante su dilatada existencia—libros de actas de la Junta de Disciplina y listados—no ha aparecido hasta la fecha” (Hernández Holgado, “Trece Rosas” 647). Hernández Holgado ties the story of the Thirteen Roses to another theme: the difficulty of archival research about postwar repression.

The work of the aforementioned scholars and journalists show how Spanish citizens have written about and interpreted official historical documents and oral testimonies to reveal more information to the public about the fate of the war’s vanquished. Through the example of the Roses, they also create a vision of model citizens: those who paid the ultimate prices to uphold women’s rights and democratic ideals.

Carlos Fonseca’s *Las trece rosas rojas* (2004) celebrates the women by creating a novel-length journalistic account that describes in detail the admirable democratic ideals for which they were fighting for social and economic mobility, fewer class divisions, universal suffrage and gender equality. His work is closely tied with one of the biggest public discussions going on today in Spain: the recuperation of historical memory. Fonseca uses the Roses’ trope to insert himself into the recent debate of this

topic, and he conveys a biased opinion and interpretation of the atrocities committed by Franco and his supporters.

*Las trece rosas* uses the Roses' tragedy as a way to rethink current democratic practices. Fonseca's account does not criticize the transition to democracy, but the Roses are used as symbols for what a democracy *should* represent. The tragic story has a didactic purpose for "how democracy could be done better." He also criticizes the mistakes that the democratic government made with regard to investigating the past. Despite this criticism, the author does not make demands for the Spanish government to seek justice for past crimes, such as what happened to the Roses.

#### Remembering the Roses: A Hope for Renewed Democracy

The publication of Carlos Fonseca's *Las trece rosas rojas* (2004), marked a shift in the way in which the Roses' story was investigated and reported. Fonseca's account is the first that mixes historical fact with imaginative interpretation to show in greater detail what life was like in Madrid in the months before the end of the civil war. Fonseca's book is the first novel-length historical account about the women, and it was written in a story-like format. The author used the information from previous journal articles, along with his own research, to write his account. In researching about the Roses, Fonseca takes on the double role of the journalist reporter and also story-teller. This is important because his appealing account had more success in reaching a wider public and has provided the basis for other fictional interpretations of the Roses' story. This success might be due partly to his narrative style and partly to a change in Spanish society; with the passing of time, there is a demand for stories and information about the

war and post-dictatorship years, particularly those that present the view of the vanquished.

Susan Martín-Márquez's article "Spanish Literature and the Language of New Media: From Film Adaptations to Digitized Cultural Interfaces" addresses this increased public interest in war and post-war stories; many of them are being converted into films—including Fonseca's book.<sup>23</sup> Drawing upon the writing of Isolina Ballesteros, Martín-Márquez identifies two trends in filmic production: "the production of filmic homages to and hagiographies of writers who had been marginalized or even eliminated by the Franco regime (most particularly Lorca), and the adaptation of Social Realist novels...produced during the dictatorship" (Martín-Márquez 744). Twenty-five years after the transition to democracy, the war and postwar years are visually represented either with "Francoist hellfire and brimstone" or "Second Republic prelapsarianism" (Martín-Márquez 745-746). Fonseca's account, which served as the literary basis for a film about the Roses, provides an admirable interpretation of the women and the Second Republic.

Born in 1959, Fonseca is a journalist with previous publications about significant historical events tied to Spain's history and culture. Fonseca has authored five books. The first two works, *Negociar con ETA* (1996) and *Garrote vil para dos inocentes* (1998), discuss terrorism and oppression under Franco's dictatorship, respectively. His third and fourth books, *Las trece rosas rojas* (2004) and *Rosario, la Dinamitera* (2006) focus specifically on women and the Spanish Civil War. In his latest book, *Tiempo de memoria* (2009), Fonseca investigates the attempted assassination of

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<sup>23</sup> Carlos Fonseca's account on the Thirteen Roses was turned into a film, *Las trece rosas* (2007). An analysis of the film will be presented in the last chapter of this dissertation.

Francisco Franco in Ceuta by José Rico. An interview with Fonseca reveals a trend in his journalistic writing style; the journalistic approach to his latest book bears a striking resemblance to the style that he used to write *Las trece rosas rojas*:

El contenido del libro se sustenta en un hecho real y yo he novelado algunas situaciones y he incorporado también elementos de ficción... Me pareció una historia interesante, por lo que comencé a buscar información y documentos. (Armuña)

This strategy has given him much public recognition in the literary world. He, along with others, is benefitting from the public demand and interest for topics related to the recuperation of historical memory of the Spanish Civil War and the war's vanquished.

Fonseca selects a historical event that he believes would appeal to the public, uses and interprets historical documents, and presents a subjective narrative about his findings. This type of journalistic reporting, written with a novelistic style that mixes fact with fictional interpretation, has been coined “new journalism” or “literary journalism”.

Literary journalism emerged in the 1960s in the United States as a method to report on current events and educate the public about them. In the 1960s, American journalists adapted their writing to this literary form as a way to improve upon the traditional methods of journalistic research and writing. Writing with a novelistic style was not only more exciting, but also offered a different way to perceive current events by centering the account on story-telling and taking an inside view to the story. Literary journalism uses scene-by-scene construction or describes dramatic scenes as in storytelling, offers a varying point of view or a third-person point of view, and shares

the “the habits, mannerisms, gestures, and so forth that distinguish people, societies, and subcultures” (Connery 31-33).

Another significant difference between traditional reporting and using a literary style was that the latter allowed the author to write in a personal voice—a trait that John Pauly describes as “personalism”: “Journalists who wrote in a distinctive personal voice wanted to be free to tell stories as they saw them, without being shackled by institutional conventions of objectivity” (Pauly 114).<sup>24</sup> New Journalism demonstrates how culture can be subjectively described and presented and “can still remind us that the truth of all writing is a matter for social negotiation” (Pauly 122). The new literary style fused journalism with other types of writing, such as fiction, memoir, and sociology (Sim xvii). The combination of these disciplines was an alternative strategy for educating the public about interesting current news stories. Tom Connery, one of the primary experts on this type of writing, describes it as a genre that is used to record current events that deal with a topic of public intrigue, interest, social or political urgency.

Because Fonseca’s account was written many years after the events took place, *Las trece rosas rojas* cannot be strictly considered a work of literary journalism and there is no political urgency found in his writing. Nonetheless, Fonseca’s presentation of his historical account shares common traits with this genre, including ‘personalism’ and scene-by-scene construction. He has used this writing style as a way to respond to

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<sup>24</sup> Pauly explains that the emergence of new journalism points to a new generation of writers who came of age in the 1960s in the United States and “affirmed a generational identity” and a new cultural identity as well: “The new nonfiction seemed hip and relevant in ways that the daily newspaper had long since ceased to be” (Pauly 119).

the public's demand to know more about the nation's past and imagine what this moment in history was like.

Fonseca, along with Blanco-Cicerón, Díaz Balart, Rojas Friend, and Hernández Holgado, is part of a second generation of writers who have taken the initiative to report on past events that they did not experience personally. He aligns his account with the point of view of the *nietos de los vencidos* (the grandchildren of the war's vanquished). *Las trece rosas rojas* presents the story of war victims from the perspective of someone who believes that the dictatorship's actions were unjust.

Prior to reading the opening lines of Fonseca's text, the reader is made aware of the bias or subjectivity of the relayed story. The book cover shows the famous photo of a woman, Marina Ginestà, with a rifle on her back, giving the impression that she is a *miliciana*; and the title makes reference to the color red: a color commonly associated with roses, but also with communism. The first few pages of the book present two poems that communicate the author's bias as a *nieto de los vencidos*.

The first quote is from Miguel Hernández's *Cancionero y romancero de ausencias* and the second quote is from Miguel Unamuno.<sup>25</sup>

Hernández's quote conveys the message of about how Spaniards fought for an ideal:

Tristes armas  
si no es amor la empresa.  
Tristes, tristes.

Tristes armas

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<sup>25</sup> Miguel Hernández is best known as a popular 20<sup>th</sup>-century poet and for his involvement in the fight against Franco during the Spanish Civil War. Hernández came from a humble background and campaigned in favor of the Republic. He wrote poetry about the war which Republican troops recited while fighting on the front. He was arrested after the Republicans surrendered. Up until his death in 1942, he continued to write subversive poetry in prison, which circulated both within and outside the prison setting.

si no son las palabras.  
Tristes, tristes.

Tristes hombres  
si no mueren de amores.  
Tristes, tristes.

The quote from Hernández highlights the importance having a personal investment in the war effort. A dedicated person must have the love behind the cause for which he or she fights, along with the willingness to make sacrifices for it. Hernández's description of how a person needs to have passion to fight in the war is fitting in an account about the Thirteen Roses. The biographical information about three of the Roses—Pilar, Carmen, and Virtudes—gives insight into their personal convictions.

Fonseca accomplishes this by interpreting information that was included in the Thirteen Roses' judicial brief ('sumario 30.426'). To explain Pilar's motives in joining the JSU, the narrative first describes her need to find work because, at one point in the war, her salary was "el único ingreso de la familia" (Fonseca 79). The explanation that she wrote as a part of the judicial brief communicates a passion for work: "Empezó a nacer en mí un espíritu de rebeldía por lo que nos explotaban" (Fonseca 79). This attitude, to fight against workers' exploitation, can be meaningful for modern day readers with similar values.

Pilar explains through her writing that her activism began in October 1934. At that time, she had a strong interest in workers' uprisings to fight against oppression. She also expresses a desire to help people in a direct and practical way. The text interprets her words by adding that the Republic and the revolution of 1934 profoundly shaped Pilar—changing her to be "una mujer comprometida en la lucha contra las injusticias

que veía a su alrededor” and she offered her willingness to help defend the government (Fonseca 79).

Fonseca also shows how Carmen was a visionary because she devised a plan for women to participate in the PCE’s resistance efforts: “Días después, Carmen presentaba un proyecto escrito a lápiz en dos cuartillas, en el que proponía que la dirección del partido tuviese una responsable femenina y una adjunta, y describía las funciones reservadas a las mujeres comunistas...Su propuesta más ambiciosa era crear una gran organización femenina” (Fonseca 89). Using Carmen’s actions as an example, the narrative interprets the significance of the actions of young activists such as Carmen: “Había que demostrar al nuevo caudillo que aunque hubieran perdido la guerra, los comunistas no se iban a rendir. Ellos estaban allí para demostrarlo” (Fonseca 90). The text also includes a famous quote from Dolores Ibárruri, one of the most visible female leaders: “Más vale morir de pie que vivir de rodillas” (Fonseca 27). Fonseca uses this quote to describe Virtudes’s personality. Like *la Pasionaria*, Virtudes, serves as a figure of resistance: “Era necesario dar la sensación de estar en condiciones de plantar cara, porque sólo así sería posible alcanzar una paz con garantías” (Fonseca 29). Fonseca’s account celebrates the everyday heroes who stayed in Madrid at the end of the war to continue with the fight: “Quienes...decidieron permanecer en España para continuar la lucha, tenían ante sí una labor hercúlea que les convertiría en héroes anónimos. Virtudes y María del Carmen estaban entre ellos...” (Fonseca 45). The narrative gives recognition to the small, courageous acts of individuals. The *Roses* are portrayed as exceptional citizens for their willingness to help save the JSU: “Casi nadie quería [reorganizar la JSU] porque había mucho miedo” (Fonseca 76). The theme of

maintaining strong convictions, even when faced with resistance, is the topic of the epigraph that Fonseca uses in the book.

The second quote at the beginning of Fonseca's account is from Miguel de Unamuno and has been used as a popular reference to describe both the strength and suffering of the war's vanquished:

Venceréis, pero no convenceréis.  
 Venceréis porque tenéis sobrada fuerza bruta,  
 Pero no convenceréis,  
 Porque convencer significa persuadir.  
 Y para persuadir necesitáis algo que os falta:  
 Razón y derecho en la lucha.

The words of Unamuno can definitely be applied to the situation of the Roses, whose death is one, of many, exemplary executions. Unamuno's words also speak about the importance of maintaining a political ideal. Much like what happened after the war, an adverse group can seek revenge but they cannot convince the vanquished to change their beliefs. After the civil war, Republican supporters clandestinely remembered and communicated their personal political beliefs. In the twenty-first century, these ideals of Republican supporters are resurfacing in public conversations about the meaning of democracy.<sup>26</sup>

Unamuno's quote speaks about the theme of revenge against the war's vanquished, which is the topic discussed in the second part of *Las trece rosas rojas*. This second part of his text expands the analysis beyond the Thirteen Roses to provide the reader with a broader understanding of the situation in Madrid in the last few months of the war. Madrid was the "capital de los delatores" (Fonseca 111). Using the

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<sup>26</sup> The repetition of these political ideals is especially prevalent during commemoration acts. Every year during the Roses commemoration ceremony, the collective group of commemorators sings the official song of the JSU, "Joven Guardia."

perspective of the victims, Fonseca extends the metaphor of incarceration to the entire city: “Madrid era una enorme cárcel en la que se perseguía con inquina al derrotado” (Fonseca 63). The narrative uses this context to explain how the Roses fit into the context of rapid victimization of innocent people which took place in Madrid in 1939. Fonseca cites an execution of eight people that took place on May 17, 1939, a few months before the Roses’ execution, to show how these types of killings were a trend. Through this example (judicial case 13.896), the text reveals how the newspaper was one means of communicating information of executions, although it was done in a generic fashion without revealing any names of the victims. The author speculates that the purpose it served was to inform the public “del cumplimiento de la justicia franquista contra los enemigos del régimen” (Fonseca 117). The inclusion of this information in the narrative helps the reader see a larger perspective about Franco’s repression. It also points to Fonseca’s critique of the limited amount of information that is available to the public about these events, even fifty years after they took place.

Fonseca uses the Roses’ story as a way to critique how Spain’s government handled official historical documents from the postwar years. In his account, Fonseca explains that he was unable to access the judicial case 13.896: “La citada causa no ha podido ser consultada sesenta y cinco años después, en 2004, al estar ‘desaparecida’ en el Archivo del Tribunal Militar Territorial número 1” (Fonseca 116). Only a newspaper clipping from *Abc* on May 18, 1939 can confirm that the executions took place instead of the official document. The reason for the case’s disappearance is unclear, and it is not known who was responsible for the disappearance or when this particular document was lost.

Because the official case could not be found, Fonseca gives his opinion about the negative consequences of not having access to this historical knowledge: “La imposibilidad de consultar la causa por la que fueron fusilados estos ocho jóvenes de la JSU impide conocer la fecha aproximada de su detención...” (Fonseca 118). This comment points to the challenges of conducting precise historical research using concrete data. Despite the official verification of the day of the activists’ detainment, the execution was a calculated and deliberate act—an example for the cruelty and senselessness of Franco’s judicial process.

The text continues with this critique by explaining some of the senseless reasons for prisoner’s detainment. In some cases, women were even pawns to be traded for simply being related to men whom the police wanted to catch:

Mujeres detenidas por haber gritado contra los aviones que bombardeaban Madrid, por ser de izquierdas, por haber votado al Frente Popular o lavado ropa para las milicias. Muchas habían ido a dar con sus huesos en la cárcel sin acusación alguna, como rehenes de los vencedores para facilitar la detención del marido, el hijo o el hermano huidos cuando fueron en su busca. (Fonseca 168)

Fonseca implies that the Roses’ judicial hearing was also senseless and he critiques the scarce information that was used to sentence them to death: “Seis folios que lo mismo habrían servido para justificar esta causa que cualquier otra contra los enemigos de la patria, y que concluían en un terrible ‘fallamos que debemos condenar y condenamos a cada uno de los procesados a la pena de MUERTE y accesorias legales para caso de indulto’” (Fonseca 233). Fonseca describes the courtroom scene, which was presided over by Eduardo Pérez Griffó, adding in a subjective commentary when the verdicts were read: “Punto y final” (Fonseca 231). He calls the sentencing “a farse;” nonetheless, “la efímera vida de las Trece Rosas se consumía” (Fonseca 234).

The last chapter is Fonseca's chance to imagine and recreate the suspense—first by showing how the women asked for the sentence to be changed (Fonseca 237). Fonseca inserts some of the authentic text from the written documents left by the Roses, thus providing a more detailed description, in the first person, of the women's point of view and their perceived roles and participation in the war (Fonseca 238). The letters that the women wrote to Franco explain their own perspective on their situation, their motives and other personal information, along with a plea for why their lives should be spared. The letters show how most of the women were puzzled about why they received such a brutal punishment (Fonseca 239). These personal documents complement the official documents that Fonseca uses to create his account. *Las trece rosas rojas* integrates these letters within the narrative, along with some scanned images of the original copies.<sup>27</sup> The photos of the letters provide tangible, and visible, proof to the reader that the letters exist; the reader can see the handwriting of each woman and associate the letters with a person. The letters written by the Roses are their personal testimonies and the twenty-first century readers are the recipients of these personal messages.

The letters that the Roses wrote to Franco convey the reasons behind their involvement in politics. In her letter to Franco, Dionisia Manzanero describes the difficult economic circumstances that drove her to join the communist party: “En descargo de estas acusaciones que se me hacen tengo que manifestar que ingresé en el Partido Comunista en abril de 1938 para ver si tenía medios de poder trabajar algún sitio y solventar un poco mi situación económica, pues no había encontrado trabajo en mi

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<sup>27</sup> At the end of the book, Fonseca includes an appendix of all of the correspondence that the Roses sent to their families within prison.

oficio de modista” (Fonseca 238). Julia Conesa also worked as a street car fair collector in Madrid to help with her family’s economic circumstances. Prior to her employment, she joined the JSU because of her personal passion for sports but was forced to abandon her involvement because of the need for her to work. She writes to Franco on August 3, 1939 that her only involvement in the JSU was related to sports: “Jamás intervino en ninguna otra actividad que no fuera relacionada con el deporte...” (Fonseca291). Many twenty-first century readers can sympathize with these motives. Today, in a time where people take women’s rights for granted, readers can admire the progressive politics of the JSU by reading the Roses’ first person testimonies. This observation is also interesting because it shows that Conesa was, in fact, not that interested in politics. Nonetheless, artistic representations—especially those created in the twenty-first century—portray her as very politically active. Many recent accounts project onto the women what they want to see in them. Conesa’s famous phrase that she wrote to her mother, “Que mi nombre no se borre en la historia,” has been used to describe her as a strong political activist.

After presenting the emotional appeals that the thirteen women wrote to Franco in hopes of overturning their verdict, Fonseca inserts an attack on Franco’s regime by telling how their letters were never given to anyone: “olvidada en el cajón de la directora de Ventas, a la que habían llegado de la mano del capellán de la prisión, más interesado en la salvación espiritual de aquellas muchachas que en su perdón terrenal” (Fonseca 240). The execution took place two days after the letters were written. This was not only unjust but broke the procedures that the judicial system normally used: “[E]l régimen se permitió saltarse incluso sus propias normas formales, que establecían

que las penas de muerte quedaban en suspenso hasta que se recibiera el ‘enterado’ del Caudillo” (Fonseca 240). Fonseca’s assessment provides a historical critique of the regime’s actions, but Fonseca does not make any call for the current prosecution of these past crimes. In fact, *Las trece rosas rojas* makes absolutely no mention of the names of the men that pulled the trigger--the ones that actually conducted the execution. This might be disappointing for those citizens—especially those involved in the recuperation of historical memory—who want to seek justice for brutal crimes. Fonseca does not attempt to insert any opinion about what should be done with regard to this topic.

The narrative adds that the deaths of the Roses, for “la España victoriosa” meant very little: “Fueron otras de tantas, todas iguales, todas singulares en la identidad de cada víctima” (Fonseca 256). For Franco, the Roses were just thirteen individuals who went against the regime’s goal of creating a “unified”, homogenous society based upon traditional gender roles and strong Catholic values. *Las trece rosas rojas* disproves this by providing a detailed and personal account of each of the women and how they fit into the larger social framework of the historical era. Fonseca’s account ends with a statement written by Julia Conesa: “Que mi nombre no se borre en la historia.” The author adds “Que así sea.” The ending leaves the reader to ponder about the account that was just presented to him or her. Fonseca’s account provides biographical information about all of the Thirteen Roses as well as other communist activists. However, *Las trece rosa rojas* makes no mention of the secondary sources—Cuevas’s compilation of testimonios or Blanco-Cicerón’s article—that informed Fonseca’s work. The last statement in the narrative points to how this biographic

account fits into the process by which victims of the Spanish Civil War are being remembered in the twenty-first century.

For Fonseca, these individuals or anonymous figures shape History. Fonseca ascribes to the beliefs of a social historiographer, in viewing how a person or group of people has the ability to shape the nation state or a larger historical framework. The Roses serve as a metonymic trope for a collective phenomenon—the punishment and death of hundreds of innocent people during the aftermath of civil war.

Chapter 3: Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* and Jesus Ferrero's *Las trece rosas*: Using  
the Past to Rethink the Present

The journalistic practices of the 1980s, 90s, and in the twenty-first century demonstrate one approach for how younger generations are investigating the Spanish Civil War, in particular, the story of the Thirteen Roses. Fiction writing also served as a medium for interrogating, describing, and imagining this historical execution. This chapter presents an analysis of Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* (2002) and Jesus Ferrero's *Las trece rosas* (2003) to show how these two authors use the Roses' trope, and different narrative techniques, to make a political critique about how the war has been publically discussed in the twenty-first century. Both Chacón and Ferrero develop the fictional aspect of the Roses' execution to create full-length novels.

Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* is a novel about women's participation in the fight against Franco and how women suffered in Ventas prison as a result of their political activism. The readers learn about the Thirteen Roses' tragic execution through the thoughts of the four main protagonists, as they remember the horrific events that took place on August 5, 1939. Chacón's novel is based upon first-hand testimonies from women who lived through the Spanish Civil War and dictatorship years. Like women's nonfiction testimonies, Chacón's fiction writing contains a political message about how women's historical acts have not been publically recognized.

*La voz dormida* includes the Roses' memory as a subplot to the novel. In contrast, *Las trece rosas* features the Thirteen Roses as its main protagonists. Through fiction, Ferrero uses the Roses' trope to present a philosophical conversation about the topics of violence, tragedy, power relations, and the relationship between history and

memory. Ferrero's *Las trece rosas* does not have the same political motivation as Chacón's novel to bring more recognition to women's historical activism. However<sup>28</sup> like *La voz dormida*, Ferrero invites the reader to critically reflect upon why past atrocities, such as the Spanish Civil War, have taken place. The last sentence of the novel borrows a phrase from Charles Baudelaire's poem "Au Lecteur" to highlight this point: "*hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frere* [Hypocrite reader! — You! — My twin! — My brother!]" (Ferrero 232). The text also includes references to theater and film to portray the Roses' execution as a type of spectacle and the reader observes how it unfolds in a detached and critical manner. The novel compares the Roses' story to another classic tragedy, Shakespeare's *MacBeth*. The play shows how Lady MacBeth is a strong woman, yet the plot contains a prophecy that could not be averted. Ferrero draws upon this latter component of the play to highlight the fact that the Roses have no control over their destiny.

The omniscient narrator reveals the thoughts and feelings of multiple characters that are involved in the Roses' death or are observing the Roses in prison, including a detached observer who watches the Roses in the prison patio, the Roses' interrogators, and the Roses themselves. These numerous perspectives help Ferrero critique the historical violence of the Spanish Civil. The narrator reveals the absurdity of the war along with the evil thoughts of the men and women who carried out such crimes. Ferrero uses the story of the Thirteen Roses to philosophically present themes such as the dark side of human nature, the human tendency toward cruelty and violence, the questions surrounding mortality (what does it mean to die?), and how trauma shapes a

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<sup>28</sup> The English translation of this line of the poem is from Roy Campbell's *Poems of Baudelaire* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1952).

person's memory. Through his fictional description of the Roses' execution and the senseless death of Julián, a male protagonist, Ferrero critiques the Spanish Civil War by portraying these events as absurd and senseless. He also shows how the execution had a lasting impression on those who knew the Roses—a tragic memory that has lingered several decades after the event.

Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida*: Uncovering Women's Courage and Suffering

In her essay titled “La mujer y la construcción del olvido: Un debate sobre el silencio de la represión franquista,” Dulce Chacón writes about some of the fundamental ideas behind her novel, *La voz dormida* (2002). For Chacón, women who participated in the fight against Franco were double victims of forgetting. Women first suffered repression under Franco's conservative dictatorship and later, after Spain's Transition to democracy, women's wartime activism and the consequences of living under political oppression did not receive much public recognition. Instead, women's contributions during the war and dictatorship years went largely unrecognized and unappreciated with the passing of time (D. Chacón, “La mujer” 77). Chacón uses her fiction to critique this politically-endorsed process of forgetting the traumatic events of Spain's recent past. She considers the government's pact of forgetting, the *pacto del olvido*, a ‘perverse’ strategy. Through *La voz dormida*, Chacón breaks the silence about women's activism and suffering during the Spanish Civil War and postwar years. Chacón incorporates authentic testimonies into her novel and uses them, along with the Thirteen Roses trope, to remember women's suffering and confront the fact that even after Spain's transition to democracy, women have continued to be left at the margins of official accounts.

The Roses trope has several functions within Chacón's narrative; 1) the Roses' account allows Chacón to connect her novel with previous texts written about women's historical sacrifices during the war and dictatorship years, thus inscribing her novel in a tradition of writing about women's courageous acts as well as women's suffering; 2) the anecdote highlights the mental anguish and trauma emerging from the death of the Thirteen Roses; 3) Chacón describes the figurative qualities of the Roses' trope—especially the poetic symbolism of the rose, which represents nature, beauty, youth, regeneration and rebirth, to show how some prisoners were inspired by the Roses' story and it helped them survive in prison; and finally, 5) the trope also refers to the Christian symbolism of the rose to show the Thirteen Roses as martyr figures, much like the protagonists of Chacón's novel.

Although *La voz dormida* is not a testimonial account, Chacón's novel and women's testimonial writing use similar techniques to make a statement about the need to recognize women. Like the women's testimonies shown in the first chapter of this dissertation, Chacón's novel captures the strong emotions that female inmates felt about prison life and the effect of Franco's repression on women. The historical references to the Roses in the plot also create a realistic portrayal of the circumstances of life in Ventas prison for readers who are unfamiliar with this aspect of Spanish history. Through fiction, Chacón unites women's fragmented memories to see new aspects of national history, collective memory, and cultural identity. By reading these accounts, people gain a better understanding of women's history and how gender politics influenced women's wartime participation and shaped women's collective identity. The Thirteen Roses' memory explains several different aspects about the collective

experiences of women in the war and postwar years: the brutal effects of Franco's repression, women's solidarity, values, goals and aspirations, and their means of survival in prison.

Both *La voz dormida* and women's nonfiction testimonies use the memory of the Thirteen Roses to demonstrate the dictatorship's violence against progressive women, along with the fear that it caused. These texts also use the Roses' trope to make a political statement about the injustice done to these young women and proclaim the women's innocence. In the four and a half years that Chacón spent preparing to write *La voz dormida*, she was able to retrace some of Tomasa Cuevas's steps and learn from these first-hand accounts.<sup>29</sup> For Chacón, the most important source for her book was the testimonies that she collected from women in towns and cities: "Estos testimonios son la base fundamental de la estructura narrativa, diría que la carnalidad de la novela y, por lo tanto, la que le presta más emoción, aunque los personajes son ficticios en un entramado de acontecimientos reales" (José Domínguez). The line of argumentation in Chacón's novel is fiction but the narrated events reflect the historical context of the postwar years in Spain (Velázquez Jordán). With the help of nonfiction texts and interviews, Chacón was able to create a fictional account of prison life that imitates the subjective descriptions found in nonfiction accounts.

In interviews about *La voz dormida*, Chacón insists that her work "es ficción, no un documento" and she tells how fiction is a "tamiz para suavizar la Historia," ("Dulce Chacón"). Inma Chacón, Chacón's identical twin sister, adds "la novela es un género

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<sup>29</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1, the first major collection of women's *testimonio* writing in Spain—and one that cites the death of the Thirteen Roses-- was published by Tomasa Cuevas in 1985 and 1986 in a total of three volumes.

mucho más asequible para el público general” (I. Chacón). By including the internal thoughts of the characters along with an explanation of the historical events, Chacón personalizes the past for younger generations with no contact with this time period. The author relies on first person memories to accomplish this.

Chacón’s literary account draws the reader into its plot in a much more emotional way than an impartial presentation of historical information. Chacón’s narrative interprets the internal thoughts of the protagonists, which is similar to nonfiction testimonial writing. Women’s nonfiction testimonies subjectively describe historical events and individuals’ memories in such a way that readers get to know not only the actions but also the emotions of the protagonists. In his discussion of memory studies, Kerwin Klein explains that “we sometimes use *memory* as a synonym for *history* to soften our prose, to humanize it, and to make it more accessible” (Klein 129). Chacón’s inspiration to draw upon first-person testimonies, and these women’s individual memories, in *La voz dormida* signifies a continuation of women’s efforts to circulate these true accounts to a wider public and keep these memories active in the present.

*La voz dormida* presents the difficult living conditions and the trauma for female political prisoners who opposed Franco during the Spanish Civil War. The four female protagonists in the novel form a tight-knit group in Ventas prison: Reme—the older woman of the group, Elvira—a young teenager, Tomasa—a spirited and rebellious character, and Hortensia—a soon-to-be mother who is destined to be executed after the birth of her child. Often Hortensia is referred to by the omniscient narrator as “la mujer que iba a morir,” communicating to the reader the message of an unchangeable, tragic

fate. The narrator's use of this impersonal phrase takes away Hortensia's personal identity and evokes a feeling of isolation. Chacón's word choice emphasizes the idea of the inevitability of tragedy, much like that of the Thirteen Roses, and allows the reader to know more than the protagonists within the story about her fate. The constant mention of Hortensia's looming death also evokes suspense and feelings of pity, as the reader does not have immediate access to the details of her death nor does the reader know when it will happen.

The prison ambiance of Chacón's novel reflects the historical reality for many women who were incarcerated at the end of the Spanish Civil War; Madrid's Ventas prison was one of the main female prisons in Spain after the war. The four imprisoned protagonists in *La voz dormida* represent a realistic demographic of Venta's prison in the years following the war. Reme, "la mayor del grupo", has an intimate relationship with the youngest member of the group, Elvira: "Cuando Reme se acuerda de sus hijas, la llama a Elvira, sangre mía" (D. Chacón, *Voz dormida* 18). The close ties between these two women, along with the way in which Reme takes care of the young Elvira, is similar to historical descriptions. Inmates divided themselves in small groups, or "families," to make sure that everyone in the prison had their basic needs met, especially the youth that were incarcerated:

Lo que nos sugieren los testimonios es un escenario en el que la desesperada situación de la cárcel exigía la improvisación de una red de colaboración y apoyo mutuo que trascendía las diferencias entre partidos, aun cuando la relación orgánica entre los mismos fuera inexistente o estuviera incluso presidida por el enfrentamiento. (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 286)

The relationship among these women shows their solidarity amidst the difficult conditions of prison life. In Ventas's close quarters, inmates struggled with unsanitary conditions, shortages of food, illness, and isolation from the outside world.

Similar to the information that the first-person testimonies provide, the protagonists of Chacón's novel have very little opportunity to engage in activities that could help take their minds off of the prison setting. The narrative shows how time passes very slowly, as they anxiously wait to go to trial. Hortensia, along with her comrades in prison, knows that she will be sentenced soon. The women prisoners spend time reflecting upon this inevitable event and associate it with the shocking execution of the Thirteen Roses. The information about the Roses is filtered through the thoughts of the characters and through the narrator's observations. These narrative techniques reinforce the mystery, the silence, confusion, fear, and uncertainty that constitute life in prison for these women.

Because the story of the Roses is presented to the reader in short fragments, this technique also keeps the reader interested in knowing more details about the Roses' story, along with the crimes that they committed that led to such a tragedy. In one scene, Chacón includes one of the historical events that may have been a factor in the Roses' execution: the assassination of Lieutenant Coronel Gabaldón, Gabaldón's daughter, and his chauffeur. While Tomasa awaits Hortensia's verdict, she thinks of the Thirteen Roses. Through these thoughts, the reader learns about the fate of Gabaldón and how this act may have provoked the girls' execution:

Ni dos días en fusilarlas. Un escarmiento, eso dijeron que buscaban. Y les cargaron en las costillas el atentado del comandante Isaac Gabaldón, que era también inspector de la policía militar de la Primera Región, y el encargado del

Archivo de Masonería y Comunismo. En coche iba con la hija, una niña de diecisiete años. La niña, el padre y el conductor murieron a balazos en la carretera de Extremadura, a la altura de Talavera, cuando se dirigían a Madrid. Tres muertos y quisieron veinte por uno. (D. Chacón, *Voz dormida* 194-195)

These details allow the reader to not only become acquainted with the Thirteen Roses, but also to see the connection between the Roses and Hortensia's tragic fate. In addition to summarizing the historical events leading up to the execution, Chacón communicates a subjective critique about the brutal and vindictive nature of Franco's regime; for every nationalist supporter that was killed, Franco vowed to kill twenty Republican sympathizers. Since three people were killed during Gabaldón's assassination, approximately sixty political prisoners were sentenced to death as retaliation.

Tomasa recalls the uncertainty of the fate of Hortensia and compares her friend's circumstances to the fate of the Thirteen Roses. Tomasa's thoughts convey not only the unpredictability surrounding the executions in prison, but also how many innocent people died: "[Q]uizá a Hortensia le pase lo mismo, o no, eso nunca se sabe. Nada se sabe. Tampoco sabe por qué juzgaron a Joaquina, porque Joaquina estaba en Ventas cuando pasó lo de Gabaldón" (D. Chacón, *Voz dormida* 194). Joaquina López Laffite was one of the Roses and she was twenty-three years old when she died. Before entering Ventas, Joaquina was appointed secretary of a communist youth organization, las Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas (JSU). Her siblings were also leftist activists and her father, who died in 1931, was a Republican commander. Joaquina joined the clandestine fight in 1936 when she became an affiliate of the JSU, along with her sister. She quickly was promoted to higher positions within the organization (Fonseca 105-107). When Joaquina was detained along with her siblings, the Auditoría de Guerra del

Ejército de Ocupación made this claim against her: “Joaquina López Laffite pertenecía a la JSU ‘donde era una gran propagandista, habiendo estado por Ciudad Real de propaganda y ha hecho manifestaciones contrarias al Ejército nacional.’” (Fonseca 110). Joaquina was punished for her connection with the JSU and she entered Ventas prison on April 18, 1939—only a few days after she was named secretary of the socialist youth organization (Fonseca 105).

Through Tomasa’s thoughts, Chacón defends Joaquina against the allegation that she was involved in the assassination plot:

Estaba en Ventas con dos hermanas tuyas, juzgadas y condenadas las tres por ser de las Juventudes...Dos veces fue juzgada Joaquina. Dos veces condenada a muerte. De la primera condena se salvó, se la conmutaron por veinte años. Y en dos días, cumplieron la segunda. Dos días. (D. Chacón, *Voz dormida* 194)

The historical investigation written by Carlos Fonseca, a journalist who published a contemporary historical account about the Roses in 2004, affirms the fact that Joaquina was in prison when Gabaldón was assassinated in July, 1939. Joaquina had nothing to do with the assassination; however, it was clear that Franco’s regime was determined to find and punish political activists for this crime.

The narrative’s emphasis on Joaquina’s innocence, along with the poetic style in which this message is conveyed, points to one example for how the Roses’ memory functions as a literary trope in the text. The repetition in this part of the narrative informs the reader of the anxious process that Joaquina went through before she died by being sentenced twice. The two days between the sentencing and the execution of these thirteen women was not even enough time to appeal the death sentence; the narrative

reveals the unjust manner of the execution. Using Joaquina as an example, Chacón reminds the reader that these women died for crimes that they did not commit.

Joaquina is portrayed as an almost Christ-like martyr figure who died wanting to help others. Like Christ, she was sentenced twice to death and her innocent blood—along with that of the other Roses--was needlessly spilled. Also like Christ, the Roses continue to be remembered; their spirit and values have continued to be passed through oral story-telling and other forms of representation. Tabea Alexa Linhard connects the image of the rose to Christianity: “The rose is a multifaceted symbol, that, in addition to denoting beauty or love, stands for blood. In Christian iconography it represents the ‘chalice into which Christ’s blood flowed,’ or the transfiguration of those drops of blood or again, the symbol of Christ’s wounds” (Linhard, *Fearless* 190). The rose is not only a Christian symbol, but also one that is often used in creative writing to represent youth, beauty, perfection, and nature.<sup>30</sup> The metaphor of the rose has been a common literary trope, as shown in the postwar poetry in Chapter 1.

For the women of Ventas prison, the rose was also a symbol of vitality and youthfulness and this image helped them continue to resist Franco. *La voz dormida* replicates the historical use of the Roses’ trope in the prison setting. In the narrative, Tomasa recalls the physical characteristics and the personalities of the Thirteen Roses, thus showing how the Roses’ memory represents youth, happiness, and courage: “Y Tomasa recuerda a Julita Conesa, alegre como un cascabel, a Blanquita Brissac tocando el armonio en la capilla de Ventas y las pecas de Martina Barroso. Y acaricia en su

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<sup>30</sup> The image of the Rose can be found in Dante’s Canto XXX and Umberto Eco’s *In the Name of the Rose*. In Chapter 3 of *The Mythic Image*, Joseph Campbell includes a detailed analysis of the rose as a powerful symbol that appears in a variety of art.

bolsillo la cabecita negra que guarda desde la noche del cuatro de agosto de mil novecientos treinta y nueve” (D. Chacón, *Voz dormida* 192). The black bead that Tomasa keeps in her pocket was a gift from Joaquina on the night before the execution. For Tomasa, this bead is connected to her memory of the Roses. The memory of the Roses helps to maintain hope, and also unifies the collective group of women prisoners.

The text reveals how Tomasa received the bead: “Repártelas entre las mejores, hasta donde llegue, le dijo Joaquina a una compañera al deshacer los eslabones de su cinturón. Y la compañera repartió las cabecitas negras...y a ella le dieron una cabecita de su cinturón. A ella” (D. Chacón, *Voz dormida* 193). Joaquina’s belt is part of documented history, as explained by a first-person testimony from María del Carmen Cuesta. Carmen Cuesta was a friend of Joaquina. In her testimony, she explains how she was given the belt and that it was brought to Joaquina from Africa. Two survivors who knew the Roses in prison still had in their possession the black beads from Joaquina’s belt in 1985—over forty years after the execution.<sup>31</sup> Both in reality and in fiction, Joaquina’s black bead serves as an object of memory of a tragic event of the past. The Roses were not able to leave written testimonies to their friends in prison. The bead serves as a powerful symbol for members of their collective group to keep resisting Franco. Both first-person testimonies and Chacón’s fictional account explain the methods by which the Roses’ memory continued in prison. By describing these details, these texts simultaneously participate in the process of preservation of the Roses’ memory as well.

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<sup>31</sup> This information about Joaquina’s belt was published in Jacobo García Blanco-Cicerón’s “Asesinato Legal (5 de agosto de 1939): Las ‘Trece Rosas.’”

While in prison, Tomasa uses the bead as a reminder for her to remain strongly defiant against Franco, and the memory of Joaquina and the Roses helps inspire her to keep fighting for the collective beliefs that she and the Roses share. The narrative explains to the reader Tomasa's unwillingness to surrender to the dictatorship: "Tomasa sostiene que la guerra no ha terminado... Ella se niega a aceptar que los tres años de guerra comienzan a formar parte de la Historia. Ella no va a dar treinta años de su vida para la Historia. La guerra no ha acabado" (D. Chacón, *Voz dormida* 31). Tomasa's thoughts communicate the vital importance of women's rights, along with her commitment to uphold them. She refuses to believe that the war will become part of the past—an event that will be forgotten in history books. Tomasa's fight to keep the memory of the war from being forgotten can be compared to female war survivor's desire to remember and record their personal experiences and those of other women. This struggle for the recognition of women's historical participation has continued after Spain's transition to democracy with the *pacto de olvido*. *La voz dormida* uses the Roses' trope to enter into this public discussion about the need to acknowledge the vital historical role of women.

Tomasa's black bead and the memory of the Thirteen Roses provoke positive memories about the Roses. Throughout the novel, there is constant repetition of these personal details about the Roses—in particular the memory of the cheerful voice of Julia Conesa and how she was always singing. Nonetheless, the novel also turns the Roses' trope away from being an empowering memory to one that embodies thoughts of bad luck and trauma. In a moment when Elvira was delirious from an illness, she dreams of the Roses. Her dream gives the reader a good description of the Thirteen

Roses' last actions, yet it also shows how Elvira mixes her memory of the Roses with the fate of Hortensia:

Un camión se lleva a Las Trece Rosas y Julita Conesa no deja de cantar. Joaquina deshace un cinturón. Joaquina tiene el pelo liso y negro, y los ojos grandes. Se castigan con la muerte. Hortensia lleva trece rosas muertas en la mano. Reme sigue cantando. Hortensia lleva trece rosas muertas en la mano. Y ella acaricia una cabecita negra. (D. Chacón, *Voz dormida* 272)

Elvira's thoughts reveal the emotional anguish that the prisoners felt while waiting to hear about Hortensia's punishment. The women of Ventas prison—both historically and within the novel—reflect upon the death of the Roses and fear that they would suffer the same fate. Fear was a factor of daily life, as many women awaited prison sentences for unexplained crimes. The fate of the Thirteen Roses sent a clear message that no one was safe from execution.

The memory of the death of the Thirteen Roses has a central role in the fictional account of Hortensia's pending execution. The reader knows from the omniscient narrator that Hortensia is going to die. Therefore the Roses' trope serves as a foreshadowing technique for Hortensia's execution. The novel describes the physical pain and mental distress of the group as they await sentencing of their friend, Hortensia, as well as their own sentencing.

The female prisoners remember the Roses and associate the unlucky number thirteen with an image of death. Hortensia writes in a notebook about the anguish and terror that she associates with the number thirteen because she was going to be sentenced with twelve other inmates. The emphasis on the number thirteen adds a chilling superstitious effect to the narrative, along with a feeling of doom—especially

for the reader who knows that Hortensia will die. Hortensia describes her fears of having the same fate as the Thirteen Roses:

La mujer que iba a morir escribe en su cuaderno azul. Escribe que han ingresado doce mujeres de las Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas y que a ella la van a meter en ese expediente, y que las van a juzgar muy pronto, a las trece. Trece como las menores que fusilaron el cinco de agosto de mil novecientos treinta y nueve, como Las Trece Rosas. (D. Chacón, *Voz dormida* 53)

In another moment, Hortensia thinks about what a bad omen it was for her to be associated with the number thirteen: “Mal fario, que seamos trece en el expediente, mal fario. Trece, el número de la mala sombra, y el de las menores” (D. Chacón, *Voz dormida* 195).<sup>32</sup> As the narrative describes from the very beginning of the novel, Hortensia returns from her court hearing with a death sentence—just like the Thirteen Roses. The delivery of the death sentence reconfirmed the suspicion of the number thirteen as an unlucky number. It also reaffirms the lack of control that inmates have over their lives, or their deaths.

With this news, Chacón’s fictional characters make an immediate connection between Hortensia and the execution of the Roses. They also realize that they cannot control Hortensia’s fate:

Todas las compañeras saben que Hortensia va a morir:  
 – Las han condenado a todas.  
 – ¿A Hortensia también?  
 – También. Vienen las trece con ‘La Pepa’, que estaba hoy baratita.  
 – Trece, como las ‘rosas; del treinta y nueve.  
 Como las ‘rosas’, sí. (D. Chacón, *Voz dormida* 192)

The memory of the Thirteen Roses resurfaces in the minds of each of the protagonists.

The prison inmates recall the panic that ensued on the night that the Roses were taken away for execution. Tomasa’s friend, Reme, remembers the last night of the

<sup>32</sup> In Ventas prison, the Thirteen Roses were referred to as “Las Menores.”

Roses' lives. The narrative tells about the mental anguish that some of the Roses—particularly Victoria—felt when the women were taken away for the execution: “Anita no se durmió, pero a Victoria y a Martina las tuvieron que despertar para llevárselas...Recuerda que Victoria comenzó a llorar cuando la despertaron” (D. Chacón, *Voz dormida* 195). The descriptions that Chacón provides could be based on the testimony that Tomasa Cuevas received from an anonymous woman who spent time in Ventas and witnessed their last night—or at least, there are parallels between what Chacón presents in the text and the testimony of the war survivor:

Anita, una de las condenadas, siguió cosiendo con algunas compañeras a su lado. Dijo que quería esperar porque no deseaba que la encontrasen dormida...La funcionaria...envuelta en su capa azul marino apareció en el umbral...Victoria, con solo dos lágrimas que le caían lentamente por las mejillas, diciendo ‘Primero Goyito’—su hermano fusilado... ‘ahora yo.’ (Cuevas, *Testimonios* 278)

By incorporating these facts into the novel, Chacón provides an interpretation that is faithful to the nonfiction historical accounts of the night before the execution. Chacón's novel, like nonfiction testimonies, narrates the Roses' memory in a subjective way by conveying the emotions of the novel's protagonists, thus giving the reader a more personal glimpse into this historical event. *La voz dormida* also makes the Roses' story more personal by including details about the actions that the women's family members took to save them from death.

The Roses' memory is used in the novel to express pessimism regarding any attempt to save Hortensia from death: “Reme y Elvira temen que no sirva de nada. Como de nada sirvieron las firmas que recogieron las madres de las Trece Rosas ni los suplicatorios que escribieron solicitando clemencia” (D. Chacón, *Voz dormida* 197). The novel also describes the useless attempts of the Roses' mothers to save their lives.

This event in the novel is an accurate historical description of what happened in real life; the mothers of the Roses sent a petition to the government, but the pardon arrived only after the women's execution had taken place. The inclusion of this fact only highlights the helplessness that Reme and Elvira feel in the novel.

When Elvira finds out about Hortensia's death sentence, her emotional trauma is evident. Elvira could not look at Hortensia in the eye because she, too, is reminded of the Thirteen Roses. Elvira organizes her suitcase with a downward glance so that Hortensia does not see her crying. Elvira remembers her friends, Victoria González and Julia Conesa, two of the Thirteen Roses. In the novel, Hortensia's short hair reminds Elvira of Victoria; both Victoria and Hortensia had their heads shaved when they entered prison. Nonfiction testimonial accounts in Cuevas's text confirm how women inmates had their heads shaved as a form of humiliation and punishment.

The testimony of María del Carmen Cuesta, found in Tomasa Cuevas's *Cárcel de mujeres*, explains how the prison guards cut her hair when she entered Ventas. Carmen Cuesta's testimony also tells, in great detail, about her relationship with Virtudes González García—one of the Thirteen Roses.<sup>33</sup> Carmen Cuesta recalls the last words of her friend before she was taken to be executed: “[Tú] te quedarás porque tú tienes que ser testimonio de esto que vas a vivir...No lo olvides lo que he hablado contigo esta tarde, no lo olvides nunca” (Cuevas, *Testimonios* 201). Virtudes's real life message emphasizes the need to remember the horrific execution of the Thirteen Roses. The inclusion of these details inspires the reader to reflect upon the major theme of *La*

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<sup>33</sup> Historical accounts also confirm that Virtudes had her head shaved in prison.

*voz dormida*: the importance of continuing to remember this tragedy and the suffering that other women also endured in prison.

Chacón emphasizes in her text the importance of remembering these events so that they are not repeated, and so that the nation can eventually move past them. The novel's main plot, which outlines Hortensia's sentencing and execution, communicates the importance of leaving written testimony. The Roses' memory serves as a complementary subplot to further strengthen this argument. The Roses left their own written letters to family members and the message that one of them, Julia Conesa, wrote is especially pertinent to Chacón's arguments for the need to remember.

*La voz dormida* communicates the value of leaving personal testimonies as a way to preserve victims' voices. Even though Hortensia lacks any control over her life or death, she combats her oppressive situation by writing down her thoughts—leaving a personal testimonial. While she waits, Hortensia documents the daily events of the women in a blue notebook. The notebook's contents communicate the need for social change and serve as a reminder that these social injustices—such as women's persecution due to their political activism--must not be repeated. In Hortensia's last moments, she writes a letter, which will serve as a testimony for her infant daughter when no other written record would be left behind. At the end of the novel, the messages that Hortensia wrote in her notebook are passed on to her daughter. Upon her eighteenth birthday when she reads the letters, Hortensia's daughter is inspired by her deceased mother's words and decides to take up arms and fight against the dictatorship.

Hortensia's testimonial writing is fictive; however *La voz dormida* transcribes a letter from one of the Thirteen Roses to reiterate the utility of women's testimonies and

the crucial need for remembering. Right before her death, Julia Conesa wrote a note to her mother:

Madrid, 5 de agosto de 1939

Madre, hermanos, con todo el cariño y entusiasmo os pido que no lloréis ni un día. Salgo sin llorar, cuidado a mi madre, me matan inocente pero muero como debe de morir una inocente.

Madre, madrecita, me voy a reunir con mi hermana y papá al otro mundo pero ten presente que muero por persona honrada.

Adiós, madre querida, adiós para siempre.

Tu hija que ya jamás te podrá besar ni abrazar.

Julia Conesa

Besos a todos, que ni tú ni mis compañeras lloréis.

Que mi nombre no se borre en la historia. (D. Chacón, *Voz dormida* 199)

The last statement at the end of the letter has become a popular phrase used in the contemporary re-telling of the Roses' story: "Que mi nombre no se borre en la historia" (D. Chacón, *Voz dormida* 199). Julia's last words reinforce the notion that silenced voices also have a place in official history. Chacón's novel highlights the importance of documenting the personal thoughts and feelings of victims so that future generations can know about them; Julia's message reinforces this request.

*La voz dormida* emphasizes the importance of leaving personal testaments because official accounts from the dictatorship years neglected to record some executions. In the novel, this happened to Hortensia. On the day that Hortensia was executed, the narrator explains that the executioners did not document her death: "Dieciséis hombres y una mujer. Una sola: Isabel Gómez Sánchez. Hortensia Rodríguez García no consta en el registro de fusilados...Pero cuentan que aquella madrugada, Hortensia miró de frente al

piquete, como todos.” (D. Chacón, *Voz dormida* 220). This lack of documentation has resonance with the fact that many anonymous women died in the fight against Franco.<sup>34</sup>

In the novel, Hortensia expresses a desire for her story to be told. Some female war survivors also express this same sentiment. As was seen in Chapter 1 of this study, María Carmen Cuesta’s testimony conveys important insight into her hopes that these stories, including the memory of the Roses, may become a documented part of history:

[P]ensé que éramos cientos, más que cientos, miles de mujeres que...guardábamos también en nuestras mentes unos profundos testimonios; unos testimonios que también esperábamos confiadamente que pudieran salir en un momento determinado y poder llenar todas las páginas de la historia, de esa historia que fue la época más larga, más negra y más brutal de nuestro país: la historia del fascismo. (Cuevas, *Cárceles* I 78)

Carmen Cuesta’s testimony declares that other women have a story to tell about this time period in the past. Chacón’s novel attempts to generate public awareness of some of these issues and through the narrative, offers a political critique of Franco’s oppression and the silence surrounding it.

Chacón’s novel is having a positive impact on how the civil war has been studied. *La voz dormida* has been referenced by other authors for some of the information it contains about prison life for women. In her article titled “El protagonismo de la mujer en la novela sobre la memoria histórica,” Inma Chacón, the twin sister of Dulce Chacón, provides references to some nonfiction accounts that have cited Dulce’s novel as a historical reference: “Curiosamente, ahora, el libro de Dulce se cita en algunos textos científicos, como fuente historiográfica para el mismo tema” (I. Chacón, “El

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<sup>34</sup> For information on the executions that took place in Madrid’s Cementerio del Este following the Spanish Civil War, see Díaz-Balart and Rojas Friend’s *Consejo de guerra: Los fusilamientos en el Madrid de la Posguerra (1939-1945)* (Madrid: Compañía Literaria, 1997).

protagonismo” par. 12).<sup>35</sup> Through *La voz dormida*, it is possible to see how literature can be intertwined with historical documentation to educate readers about a component of the past that is not accessible to them.

Chacón’s novel is about the war’s losers and narrates the inspirational personal qualities of women. The author is more successful at showing these stories to readers by incorporating historical figures in her novel that had an emotional impact on her: the Thirteen Roses. Inma Chacón recalls how the Roses’ story influenced her sister: “Recuerdo especialmente, la historia de las Trece Rosas, y la emoción en sus ojos, el día en que fuimos a visitar la tapia donde las fusilaron” (I. Chacón par. 23). The Roses’ tragedy has an emotional appeal. They serve as icons for politically active, independent women who defied the social expectations for their gender. Their untimely death has the power to stir emotions.

Writers like Dulce Chacón “están elaborando modelos femeninos – mujeres con autonomía propia, con comportamientos independientes...divergentes de los patrones hegemónicos, bien como reflejo de la sociedad española circundante o bien como ejemplo a seguir por las lectoras” (Urioste 207). According to Mary Nash, the visibility of women as protagonists constitutes a stimulating lesson for “la consolidación de una nueva sociedad democrática de transición” (Nash, *Rojas* 30). *La voz dormida* creates a space in the public realm to reflect upon and question the way in which the war has been remembered. The female protagonists teach the reader about the historical circumstances of women who suffered the consequences of Franco’s repression. They also show how women’s experiences in the past contribute to the democratic Spain in

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<sup>35</sup> For a list of these scientific studies and historical works, see Inma Chacón’s “El protagonismo de la mujer en la novela sobre memoria histórica,” footnote 2.

which citizens are living today, and make the public aware of these marginalized accounts.

Chacón's novel maintains a non-neutral political stance, in favor of showing Republican women's suffering. *La voz dormida* is not a postmodern text, but the novel's goal aligns itself with what Linda Hutcheon identifies as one primary function of postmodernist writing: "to de-doxify our cultural representations and their undeniable political import" (Hutcheon 6). The goal to alter the 'doxa' is a notion used by Roland Barthes to mean 'public opinion,' or aspects of culture that are commonly taken for granted.

The alternative view about the Spanish Civil War presented in *La voz dormida* opens up a dialogue to discuss multiple perspectives of a past event. Women's testimonies and Chacón's novel both evaluate historical acts, calling attention to "the other half" of the war story where the war's victims are also recognized. By revealing this information, Chacón contributes to the general knowledge about the war and dictatorship years, but she also sends a message that these atrocities must be discussed in order for the nation to move beyond these memories.

Alan Cairns explains that in order to heal, a nation must move beyond social divides related to unjust acts that were committed in the past: "The legacy of the twentieth century with which we all must come to terms is that while it may have been some 'they' who did 'it,' 'they' are part of 'us'" (Cairns 82). Cairns talks of the need to recognize the victims of past atrocities in a process which he calls *democratizing the past*. Individual testimonies from men and women have taken a lead role in this process. John Torpey explains in *Politics and the Past: On Repairing Social Injustices*, "despite

the prosecutorial tone of much of the relevant historiography, the drift in recent years has been toward a much greater attentiveness to the voices of the previously voiceless” (Torpey 25). The progression of democratization points to favoring social equality—creating a narrative that appeals to the broad masses. This also means recognizing the voiceless and forgotten of history; while it is not possible to restore actual democracy to particular past events, it is possible to give both sides equal recognition.

Chacón acknowledges that there were many women who continued fighting and their protagonism during the war and postwar has not been appreciated or adequately recognized (D. Chacón, “La mujer” 77). For Chacón, “es necesario que la Historia contemple la presencia de la mujer en la batalla contra el fascismo. La memoria colectiva debe construirse también con el dolor de las mujeres, que sufrieron penas de muerte, tortura, exilio, destierro, cárcel, y combatieron en primera línea del frente como milicianas, en la clandestinidad del maquis como guerrilleras y en la resistencia activa” (D. Chacón, “La mujer” 77). Chacón highlights the importance of remembering the difficulties of this time period because “un país sin memoria es un país enfermo” (D. Chacón, “La mujer” 77). Women’s collective memories—such as the memory of the Thirteen Roses--have a place in the nation’s history.

With the use of testimonies, authentic historical figures, and her own creativity, Chacón offers the reader an emotional interpretation of the historical reality for women who spent time in prison after the civil war. Chacón’s writing pays homage to brave women and strives to alter the public’s perception of the Spanish Civil War, Franco’s dictatorship, and the process by which Spain forged its democratic government. The creative incorporation of the testimonial documentation about the Thirteen Roses in *La*

*voz dormida* eliminates the image of women as “double victims” of forgetting. Chacón brings women’s heroism and suffering into public view and preserves the legacy of courageous women through a wide readership.

Jesus Ferrero’s *Las trece rosas*: Presenting Absurd and Theatrical Moments from Spain’s Dark Past

The incorporation of the Roses within *La voz dormida* conveys how collective memory of the war empowered female inmates but also had traumatic effects. Chacón’s novel uses the Roses trope to enhance the main storyline about Hortensia’s inevitable execution. The Roses’ memory in the text retrospectively critiques the unjust treatment of women prisoners; the Roses’ memory also serves as a symbol for the value of first-person testimonies and the need to remember past atrocities. Chacón uses fiction to imagine the emotions and internal thoughts of women who were incarcerated in Ventas prison. These emotions help to personalize these historical circumstances, allowing readers to connect with this part of the nation’s history.

Jesus Ferrero’s *Las trece rosas* interprets the Roses’ tragedy but uses the women’s memory in a different way. Ferrero interprets the Roses’ tragedy as a theatrical moment and describes the circumstances of the war using an absurd viewpoint. By critically distancing the reader from the historical events with these narrative approaches, *Las trece rosas* provides an opportunity for the reader to look at the war through a different lens and thus critique the events that unfold within the narrative.

Ferrero’s *Las trece rosas* is divided into four parts: “La ronda nocturna,” “La casa del sol naciente,” “El cofre de las alucinaciones,” and “La noche de las dos

lunas.” There is also a prelude, “Preludio con saxofón,” and a concluding chapter, “En una estación del metro.” The prelude—the first scene of the novel—describes Ventas prison as seen through the eyes of a secondary character, Damián. He can see the Ventas patio from the small window of his room in the adjacent building, a mental institution. The reader learns that Damián was admitted to the institution for attempting to kill his father. Certain parts of the narrative describe Damián’s point of view, as he watches the daily events of the prison as if they were part of a bizarre movie:

Se hallaba ante su ventana preferida, desde la que podía ver la gran película del mundo...hacía tiempo que no observaba fenómenos atmosféricos tan sorprendentes y se preguntó si no sería efectos especiales...si aquello era una película, y para Damián no podía ser otra cosa, ¿qué sentido tenía repetir todos los días la misma escena? (Ferrero 15)

The narrative highlights the monotony of this prison scene. Damián ponders three thoughts to try to explain why the actors in the “movie” repeated the same thing every day: Did they have a desire to perfect the scene? Were the actors or the director inept so that the actors had to repeat their actions? Why does it never turn out right? For Damián, this repetition does not make sense. Instead it seems absurd to him, and very different from his perception of the situation before the war—which he also compares to a movie: “Sin duda el cine ya no era como en las películas de antes de la guerra, pensaba Damián. Ahora el cine se proyectaba sobre una inmensa pantalla tan grande como la tierra y el cielo, y casi todas las películas eran absurdas” (Ferrero 15). Damián’s thoughts reveal how strange situations, which were only shown through film before the war, have permeated reality in its aftermath.

The Roses are featured in this strange movie; the Roses’ trope is used as literary device through which Damián tries to make meaning of the bizarre “film” that he is

watching through his window. Damián thinks that the women who occupied the Ventas patio were “the strangest and most exciting part” of the movie; the director overlooked them amid the “constante y multitudinaria presencia femenina, y donde había perdidas, entre la masa, algunas bellezas que se le antojaban memorables, de las que el director no estaba sacando partido, y que parecían centellas deslizándose entre árboles andantes como las que veía *MacBeth*” (Ferrero 16). The reference to the “sparks of light” that flicker through the trees, like in *MacBeth*, emphasizes how the women stand out from the rest. Ferrero repeats this theme in the novel’s dedication: “A trece caras surgidas de la multitud.”<sup>36</sup>

Shakespeare’s *MacBeth* is a dark, grim tragedy and therefore, this reference fits well within Ferrero’s fictional account about the Thirteen Roses. Like Chacón, Ferrero uses the notion of inevitable fate as a literary trope within the narrative to describe the Roses’ death. *MacBeth*, a well-known tragedy, reveals how Ferrero interprets the Roses’ story. The Roses, like MacBeth, had no control over their fate. In Shakespeare’s play, MacBeth’s death is determined by the supernatural powers of three witches—the Three Fates. The witches in *MacBeth* have the power to control and manipulate the actions in the play. They also choose when to end MacBeth’s life.

In Ferrero’s novel, the characters that control the Roses’ fate are the police interrogators. During a meeting at the Ritz Hotel in Madrid, the policemen Roux (the ring leader of the group), Cardinal (who used to be a spy within the communist youth organization, and knew some of the Roses), and “El Pálido” (a police interrogator known for his pale eyes and his reputation as a power-hungry womanizer) were in

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<sup>36</sup> This idea is also communicated in the postwar poetry about the Thirteen Roses, using nature imagery of stars and flowers.

charge of selecting, from a list of prison inmates, the thirteen women (the Roses) who would be put on trial and executed. Thus, the narrative invents a type of ‘naming ceremony’ to explain how the women—the Thirteen Roses—were selected as victims.

El Pálido brings a bunch of roses to the meeting and the dialogue among the interrogators provides an explanation for why a specific woman was picked. El Pálido is the first to speak and explains how he picked Luisa because of her unwillingness to talk during the interrogations:

—Señores, ha llegado el momento de decidir quiénes van a ser las quince de la mala hora. Bastará con ponerle un nombre a cada una de las rosas. Hagan memoria y decidan, según sus preferencias. Empezaré yo — dijo tomando una flor —. Y bien, esta rosa de pasión se va a llamar Luisa. No conseguí que esa bastarda pronunciara una sola palabra en los interrogatorios. Por poco me vuelve loco. (Ferrero 129)

Following El Pálido’s lead, Cardinal picks Pilar and El Pálido selects Virtudes. Carmen is the next woman to be chosen because Cardinal did not have a good impression of her, along with Martina—who Roux thinks is not very attentive and somewhat ditzy:

—Y ésta Carmen – dijo Cardinal—. Lo merece más que nadie. Nunca me miró bien esa condenada.  
—Y ésta Martina – anunció Roux—. Está siempre ausente. Seguro que ni siquiera se va a dar cuenta de lo que pasa (Ferrero 129).

Cardinal agrees with this assessment of Martina, and thinks that Elena has similar personal characteristics. Roux adds Victoria to the list for the same reason, as “otra dama ausente” (Ferrero 130). El Pálido chooses Joaquina, adding a reference to her belt with the black beads: “Veamos si ahora la protegen sus veintiocho negros” (Ferrero 129). Dionisia is selected, without a specific reason, and later Julia is added as well. Toward the end of the list, El Pálido adds Avelina, Ana, and Blanca—although in his opinion, he believes that they should be first on the list because all three are visible

figures in the prison community: “Avelina es la más conocida en la cárcel, la que todas esperan todas las mañanas. Si queremos que el castigo no pase desapercibido, la Mulata es la pieza clave. Con Ana ocurre algo parecido: dice que es la reina del departamento de menores” (Ferrero 130). After the names of the thirteen women are revealed, Cardinal writes the list of women’s names on a piece of paper to be sent to the prison.

The naming ceremony within the narrative turns the reader’s attention to see a subjective interpretation of the Roses’ individual personalities, as seen through the eyes of the police. This perspective differs from other accounts about the Roses, including that of Chacón, which describe the women from the point of view of fellow comrades or sympathizers. Ferrero’s account, unlike that by Chacón, projects his ideas about how the women could have been perceived from the victors’ viewpoint.

*Las trece rosas* also manipulates the Roses’ trope to turn to the reader’s attention to a philosophical discussion about life and death. The text reveals that Carmen, one of the Roses, suffers from a heart condition that makes her particularly vulnerable. Carmen’s vulnerability gives her a different perspective on death: “Los que tienen el corazón frágil aprenden a esperar de otra manera, sabiendo que la muerte interpreta siempre una partitura diferente a la que creemos, que está sin embargo contenida íntegramente en la cavidad de nuestro corazón como las notas de *Para Eliza* pueden estar contenidas en la mecánica de una pequeña caja de música. Un día la melodía cesa, la caja cierra. Adiós, fatigado corazón...” (Ferrero 111). Carmen’s words point to the death’s biological component, and its unpredictability. The comparison between the Roses’ fate and a music box that ceases to work demonstrates yet another narrative technique that the text employs to show how the Roses have no control over

their situation. After Carmen and the other women were sentenced to death, they discussed their mortality in what the narrative describes as “una noche llena de revelaciones” (Ferrero 138). During this discussion, the women assess the relationship between remembering, forgetting, history, and knowledge. Their looming death presents a perfect backdrop for this theoretical debate.

Through dialogue, Julia, Virtudes, and Joaquina reflect upon how their death will be written in history. This is another use for the Roses’ trope within the narrative. The importance of remembrance and the worry of being forgotten is a key element of this dialogue. Virtudes associates the act of remembering to the creation of historical accounts. She explains how she does not care about becoming “part of history,” because it will not save her life:

—Para mí no es ningún consuelo figurar en la historia. ¿Qué diablos quiere decir figurar en la historia?

—Pues a mí me importa que me recuerden — protestó Julia.

—¡A mí, no! insistió Joaquina—. El hecho de que los demás me recuerden no me va a devolver la vida” (Ferrero 162).

Joaquina conveys that Elena thinks that their memory will be erased. Julia stresses the importance of maintaining a memory of her after her death. Joaquina’s observation disagrees with Julia’s desire. The fact that people will remember her provides little solace when faced with inevitable death. The diverse opinions presented in the text could symbolize the divergent opinions about the utility of remembering the past and the war’s victims in the twenty-first century. At the time that *Las trece rosas* was published, the public debate over the Law of Historical Memory was just taking shape. Spaniards are continuing to negotiate and discuss the relationship between memory and forgetting and how these two topics inform politics, culture, and society.

As shown by other artistic representations, the Thirteen Roses have become symbols for the importance of remembering. Julia Conesa's famous phrase reinforces this idea: "Que mi nombre no se borre en la historia." Through the fictional dialogue, Ferrero adds another layer to the Roses as a trope for "remembering." He manipulates this trope to highlight a different message: *Life* is more important than historical preservation or the act of remembering. At the same time that *Las trece rosas* conveys this message, the narrative draws upon previous literary tropes, such as those found in the postwar poetry, to describe how the women come to terms with their irreversible fate. Ferrero's account alludes to nature imagery that is similar to Ángeles García-Madrid's poem from 1943, "A trece flores caídas." Several verses from García-Madrid's poem state: "Trece estrellas que rompen las cadenas / que les impiden alcanzar el cielo / y se desprenden de sombrías arenas." Like the poem, Ferrero's narrative describes how the women think that they will be presented as a gift to the sky: "No voy a negarlo—dijo Joaquina—Siento como si estuviera alcanzando una cima que no me esperaba, y que se me presenta como un regalo del cielo. Nunca antes había sido tan gafe, y eso que ya he pasado por dos consejos de guerra. Pero aquello era sólo el preludio de este maravilloso momento" (Ferrero 157). Like the postwar poetry, the text communicates the belief that the Roses are going to heaven after death; Elena affirms her faith that she is starting to see "something better" when she contemplates her own death (Ferrero 161).

Later in the text, Ferrero refocuses the Roses' trope on its tragic element and describes it using references to theater. The women describe their pending execution as

a “hopeful story” but one that will likely end up being a disgusting and surreal act, like the events that are shown in grotesque theater productions:

—Una historia muy esperanzadora...—dijo Victoria—, pero ¿creéis que nos va a pasar lo mismo y que todo esto es puro teatro? La *saca*, la capilla, las despedidas, ¿todo teatro?  
—Sí—dijo Blanca—, todo teatro, un teatro grotesco, y eso es lo peor... Aunque nos fusilen, esto no dejará de ser una comedia (Ferrero 166).

Pilar agrees in saying that they are living a “comedia siniestra;” and she also questions the purpose of the war: “Esta guerra no te ha servido para comprobar que entre lo que queremos y lo que tenemos hay un abismo?” (Ferrero 163). Joaquina feels rage against such a dirty death: “La rabia de perderlo todo de morir de una forma tan sucia. La rabia de perderlo todo de pronto” (Ferrero 196). Carmen comments that the only lesson the execution serves is about the value of life: “Es lo único que estoy sacando en claro de esta pesadilla: el valor inmenso de la vida” (Ferrero 164). Carmen’s words reflect the most important function of the Roses trope in Ferrero’s narrative: to remind readers of the preciousness of life, along with the permanence of death.

The Roses are not the only protagonists who face death in Ferrero’s account. Shortly after the Roses’ execution, the narrative describes how Damián’s brother, Julián, is shot and killed by El Pálido. The narrative highlights how death is an irreversible act and describes Julián’s internal thoughts by comparing them to a film. A film has the power to rewind time—and save lives:

Para Julián todo empezó a precipitarse hacia atrás...Era como ver una película hacia atrás, siempre hacia atrás...La bala que había recibido invertía su trayectoria y regresaba al arma de la que había surgido. Él se incorporaba y corría hacia atrás, las hojas amarillas de los chopos regresaban desde el suelo a las ramas, y las cascadas de la fuente del Berro ascendían en lugar de descender. Lo mismo ocurría con el fusilamiento de las muchachas. El plomo de sus entrañas regresaba a las armas y las chicas se levantaban del suelo y se dirigían

al camión, que las volvía a llevar a la cárcel hacia atrás y con igual pericia que cuando avanzaban” (Ferrero 205).

The description communicates a desire to change history by restoring life to the novel’s main protagonists.

Julián’s death shocks Damián into questioning how he perceives reality:

“Damian envidia una vez más el papel de Julián y se pregunta si su muerte es cierta y si aquello, además de ser una película, es la realidad (Ferrero 209). Even Damián, who is the least lucid character of the entire text, is “awoken” to the idea that death is irreversible. This “awakening” can be compared to how the war’s trauma affected victims’ friends and family members, as demonstrated in López’s *Martina, la rosa número trece*. Those people who lived through Martina’s execution were deeply traumatized.

Death makes a permanent mark on a person’s memory. The last chapter of the fourth section shows Avelina’s boyfriend, Benjamín, visiting a place—a rock garden—where he and Avelina used to spend a lot of time. The place has changed in the aftermath of the war: there are no longer soldiers nearby and the abandoned house in which he used to spend time with Avelina is now occupied by its previous owner. The ambiance of the postwar is cold and unhappy (Ferrero 225). In these circumstances, Benjamín resorts to writing poetry. His feelings parallel the title of chapter—the notion of two moons: a moon on the outside and a melancholic moon of the soul (Ferrero 224). Ferrero uses a poem by Jorge Manrique to describe Benjamin’s despair: “Ya no se que fue de mí” (Ferrero 226). Benjamin’s feelings of loss continue even after Franco’s death in 1975. The memory of the Roses continues to haunt him: “Sentía la ciudad llena de

Avelina (Ferrero 225). Madrid reminds him of “un laberinto de memorias rotas” (Ferrero 230). Years after Avelina’s death, he spots a group of young women. One of them looks like Avelina. The stranger is a visible reminder of the Thirteen Roses.

Benjamin’s experience points to how memories of traumatic events can be stored in a memory bank, as Freud describes in his work, *The Mythical Writing Pad*. Freud argues that each human being is capable of having a “permanent memory trace”—a place in the brain where memories are stored. Through the analogy of the “mystic writing pad,” Freud describes the different layers of memory to explain that humans are able to record and rewrite memories, but memories also can be permanently recorded in a person’s mind—even if they do not show on the surface. Freud describes the permanent layer of memory as a wax slab:

The surface of the Mystic Pad is clear of writing and once more capable of receiving impressions. But it is easy to discover that the permanent trace of what was written was retained upon the wax slab itself and legible in suitable lights. Thus the Pad provides not only a receptive surface that can be used over and over again, like a slate, but also permanent traces of what has been written, like an ordinary paper pad...” (Freud 53)

Freud argues that the human mind works in the same way. While the memory of the Roses can be “erased” from Benjamin’s mind, the “residue” of the memory still remains. When he observes a person or an object that triggers this memory trace, it is brought, once again, to the surface. For Benjamin, it is impossible to forget such an emotional atrocity.

From the beginning chapters, *Las trece rosas* compares the historical events from the Spanish Civil War to an absurd movie. The novel also describes the theatricality of the events. These two narrative tactics allow the reader to be a spectator

of these events. Like some of the secondary characters, the reader observes how the war “goes by” and the characters in the scenes—particularly the vanquished—have no control over their destiny.

The last sentence of Ferrero’s novel encourages the reader to reflect upon how the war has been remembered with the passing of time: “Una vez más, la vida se obstinaba en ser vivida. Las ventanas se iluminaban, las calles se llenaban de voces, de ecos, de pasos, y la gente hablaba y bebía en el excitante anochecer, *hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frere*” [hypocritical reader, similar to me, my brother] (Ferrero 232). The last sentence is taken from a poem, “Au Lecteur” by Charles Bauletaire.

Bauletaire’s poem explains that dark side of human nature:

Nos péchés sont têtus, nos repentirs sont lâches;  
 Nous nous faisons payer grassement nos aveux,  
 Et nous rentrons gaiement dans le chemin bourbeux,  
 Croyant par de vils pleurs laver toutes nos taches.  
 [Our sins are obstinate, our repentance is faint;  
 We exact a high price for our confessions,  
 And we gaily return to the miry path,  
 Believing that base tears wash away all our stains.] (“Charles Baudelaire”)

Bauletaire’s poem describes, and was written as a response to, a sociopolitical crisis that was taking place in France during Napoleon III’s regime. The moral is closely tied to the social, as seen in stanzas 1-5: “[M]ankind enjoys what it should detest and complacently entertains its guilt” (Lawler 29). In stanzas 6-10, the poem also speaks about man’s vices, such as enjoying “vulgar festivity” and fantasizing executions (Lawler 30). Man agrees to be lulled by Satan and open to sin (Lawler 32). The meaning behind the poem points to the dark side of human nature. The inclusion of the poem in the Roses’ story could serve, perhaps, to condemn the horrible crimes that were

committed by people in power during Franco's dictatorship. However, this is left up to the individual reader's interpretation.

Published within one year of each other, *La voz dormida* and *Las trece rosas* provide retrospective assessments of the impact of the Spanish Civil War by using the Roses' memory as a literary trope. While Chacon draws upon the Roses' memory as a way to proclaim their innocence and to get women's voices to a wider readership, Ferrero uses it to demonstrate the war's absurdity. He also highlights the fragility of human life and hints at the human tendency to be corrupt or harmful. Chacón's and Ferrero's approaches differ from each other. Chacón includes a list of acknowledgements of people who provided her with primary documents and also those who inspired the characters in the novel. This information helps the reader connect her fictional account with historical figures and events from the civil war. The acknowledgement page gives the reader an impression that the material that Chacón used to shape her novel is factual and authentic, and her novel aims to teach readers about women's role in the war. Ferrero's text does not include a list of acknowledgements. Given the invented scenes in his novel, one can see that Ferrero is less concerned using concrete facts to teach readers about the Roses' execution; he is more interested in the fictional elaboration of the historical event. Despite Chacón and Ferrero's differing approaches, it is possible to see how the Roses' memory, as a literary trope, is shaping twentieth-century Spanish cultural production and how literature is a powerful tool that provides political or social commentaries.

Chapter 4: *Martina, la rosa número trece*: The Family Experience as a National

Tragedy

As shown in the previous chapter, two contemporary fiction writers took an interest in researching the Roses' execution. Ángeles López's novel, *Martina, la rosa número trece*, is another fictional account that can be tied to the national effort to engage in a public dialogue about the atrocities stemming from this traumatic event. *Martina* tells a very personal story about López's husband's family during the war and dictatorship periods and conveys the trauma that they endured as a result of the war and the oppressive dictatorship. The narrative has a particular focus, which explores the life of one prominent family member: Martina Barroso—one of the Thirteen Roses. López's novel explains the traumatic effects of the Roses' execution on Martina's family and also shows how Martina's great niece, Paloma, researches her family history in order to understand her own personal identity.

Martina's memory is a metonymic trope for what happened to many other people during the war and also for how her tragic execution shaped and impacted her loved ones. This novel uses Martina's story to convey how memory of the war was transmitted in the Barroso family. Martina's memory was passed from one generation to the next through silence. This process is much like how the nation, on a larger scale, held on to the horrific memories of the Spanish Civil War through voluntary forgetting during Spain's transition to democracy.

As shown by the Barroso's family story, traumatic memories have the power to linger, haunt, and burden younger generations. *Martina, la rosa número trece* uses the image of Martina's ghost in the narrative to convey this idea. Martina's ghostly memory

shapes the family's history and identity. Martina's suffering created a rift in the family. Some members wanted to openly speak of Martina while others did not. This personal story about the need to understand how a tragic event shaped the Barroso family's identity can be used as an example for how the civil war shaped Spain's collective identity on a national level, and also how individuals dealt with these calamities.

The text tells Martina's story through the eyes of her great niece, Paloma Masa Barroso. Paloma feels a strong connection to Martina and, like the other women in the Barroso family, she "inherited" Martina's memory and her traumatic story. For Paloma, Martina represents a tale about family trauma, but her death also marks a personal need to recognize this dark aspect of the family's past. This can be tied to a larger process that is taking place in Spain in the twenty-first century with the recuperation of historical memory. Martina's memory, turned into a literary trope, exemplifies Spaniards' increased efforts to reevaluate the present by looking at the past and promote national healing by telling personal stories.

By sharing Martina's story with a larger public, López is also sharing the family's tragedy and demanding recognition of the injustice of this personal tragedy. The collaborative work between two family members, López and Masa Barroso, has a deeply personal significance: one that is therapeutic in helping the family recognize how these deaths have torn them apart, offering at least one of the family members—Paloma—a chance to understand the profound significance of this loss. In doing so, López transforms literary tropes that have been used in other contemporary interpretations about the Roses to form her own interpretation of Martina's story. López relies on nature imagery, like the postwar poetry, and domestic tasks related to women

such as sewing, which is also a theme in Julia Bel's play about the Thirteen Roses.

Through her fiction, López also creates new ones.

*Martina, la rosa número trece* oscillates between the present (2004) and 1939—the year that Martina was executed. Some of the parts of the novel that are set in 2004 are narrated using the voice of Paloma Masa Barroso. These sections explain how Paloma came to know about Martina's death. The historical parts of the novel, set in the year of Martina's death, are based on the information that Paloma acquired from family members, through her independent archival research, and by conducting interviews with war survivors. For her, the archive was an eye-opening experience: "The Diario Oficial de Guerra me desconcierta tanto como la luz rubia y fría pueda atenazar a un murciélago acostumbrado a la oscuridad: miles de nombres..." (A. López 72). Paloma's realization serves as an example of how Martina is a metonymic figure: one of many victims of Franco's repression. Throughout the account, López mentions the various sources that were consulted to narrate the historical circumstances of Madrid in 1939. The text includes scanned images of the documents that Paloma found related to her family. *Martina* is a work of fiction yet, like Chacón's *La voz dormida*, *Martina* could serve as a bibliographic reference for topics such as the Thirteen Roses and women's wartime involvement.

While López is recognized as the author of the novel, she takes little credit for her role in bringing Martina's story into public view. For López, Paloma is the mastermind behind the contents of the novel. López explains in the novel: "Yo solo he sido una escribiente. Simplemente sus manos; sus teclas, sólo" (A. López 19). Martina's story was in the back of Paloma's mind for many years because she inherited this

memory: “Sobrina-nieta de Martina, heredera indiscutible de su legado y su memoria” (A. López 19). The process by which the story came about, during a conversation between López and Paloma, is similar to the way that mediated *testimonios* emerged in both Spain and Latin America—through a conversation between an interviewer and another person.<sup>37</sup>

As explained in the text, López provides the mechanics to document the story, much like other transcribers of mediated testimonies. Referring to Elena Poniatowska’s mediated testimony about a poor Mexican woman, *Here’s to You Jesusa*, Doris Sommer explains that “Poniatowska has been tracking testimonial nuances and becoming their vehicle, or—less generously—their ventriloquist” (Sommer 160). In a similar sense, López is Paloma’s ‘ventriloquist’ because she compiles the information about Martina into a cohesive narrative. López communicates the thoughts, ideas, and investigative findings of Paloma. Through continual conversation, López and her sister-in-law imagine the life of Martina in 1939.

López’s text itself cannot be considered a work of testimony because it does not narrate the personal experiences of the person being interviewed. López also rejects the classification of her work as a *novela-testimonio* (Ángeles López. Personal interview). Nonetheless, the exchange between the two women has the power to change both of their outlooks. Their story-telling shares the same objective of a mediated *testimonio*: to promote oral history through the telling of personal experiences and bring recognition

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<sup>37</sup> Two prominent examples of mediated testimonies of Latin America are *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, a collaborative work between Elizabeth Burgos-Debray and Rigoberta Menchú, and *Here’s to You Jesusa*, an account written by Elena Poniatowska after she interviewed Jesusa Palancares (Josefina Bórquez). Both texts were based upon oral conversations between women of different generations. In the case of *Martina, la rosa número trece*, López and Masa Barroso are near the same age.

on a larger scale to the lives and trials of the voiceless, or marginalized people, of society. The ongoing dialogue, along with the interviews that Paloma conducted with women from the time period, shape their outlook and opinions of both the past and present.

For both Paloma and López, Martina's story represents an intriguing topic of discussion. The novel starts in the present, with López reflecting upon how Martina's story surfaced in a conversation she had one evening over a glass of wine with Paloma in a bar. López describes Paloma's comments, highlighting how oral story-telling and a dialogue about the past are what brought this story out into the open: "¿Te he contado la historia de mi tía, Martina?...[L]os labios que hablaban de un pasado, de atrás hacia adelante. Como todas las buenas historias. La vida es un cuento, al fin" (A. López 24). The narrative's commentary alludes to the idea that the life and death of Martina has the elements—the human tragedy, mystery, and intrigue that make it appealing to an audience. However, at the same time, this story is also characterized as "cuento mil veces contado. Nunca escuchado..." (A. López 24). Martina's memory was marginalized by family members who experienced it. Other families went through a similar process and for this reason, those who died fighting in the war did not receive proper recognition. In the twenty-first century, more of these stories, including Martina's account, are surfacing as part of the national movement to recuperate the historical memory of the Spanish Civil War.

López's novel talks about this twenty-first century phenomenon and now more citizens are wanting to hear these accounts. The opening line of the book makes reference to the theme of "good timing," as a key component to capturing and recording

Martina's story: "¿Por qué la vida se reduce al momento justo y al lugar exacto? Lo comprendo pero no lo entiendo. La manera más sencilla de decirlo es que nunca antes había prestado oídos. Cuantas veces escuché la historia, vi que todo estaba en orden y que no precisaba reparación alguna. Descifré mal las señales o, sencillamente, decliné interpretarlas. Hasta aquel preciso instante" (A. López 23). This question conveys the general message that "now is the time" to tell Martina's story, and the idea did not occur to López any earlier. Timing played a major role in the "discovery" of Martina's story. The curiosity surrounding Martina surfaced in many past conversations, but it only came to be researched in depth when a third generation family member took an interest in it.

The timely publication of Martina's story is an example that shows the larger context of Spain's twenty-first century cultural production. In the 1980s, during Spain's transition to democracy, testimonies, such as those compiled by Tomasa Cuevas, told the view of the vanquished. However, the public receptiveness to this information was relatively minimal until the late twentieth-century. At that time, Spanish citizens became increasingly aware that these perspectives could not remain publicly neglected. In short, the theme that "now is the time" can be applied both to the personal story of Martina as well as to the nation's need to recuperate the memory of the civil war.<sup>38</sup>

Timing played a role in the unraveling of Martina's secret when Paloma breaks the tradition of silence and trauma that plagued her family since 1939. Martina's death

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<sup>38</sup> The Law of Historical Memory reflects the idea that now is the appropriate time to remember the recent past. The Law, approved on December 26, 2007, states: "Es la hora, así, de que la democracia española y las generaciones vivas que hoy disfrutan de ella honren y recuperen para siempre a todos los que directamente padecieron las injusticias y agravios producidos, por unos u otros motivos políticos o ideológicos o de creencias religiosas, en aquellos dolorosos períodos de nuestra historia" ("Ley de Memoria Histórica").

rendered them incapable of speaking much about her. The text points to the women who had close contact with her--Martina's mother, María Antonia, Martina's sister, Oliva, and two of Martina's sister-in-laws, Manola and Encarna—as the keepers of her memory: “Ellas han preservado a través de la oralidad, como en las antiguas tradiciones orientales, esta historia de dolor, furia y memoria (A. López 19). While the women preserved Martina's memory, she was not talked about in public. Each family member dealt with his or her personal grief in silence.

When Martina was taken away, López's narrative interprets the raw emotions that the family must have felt—especially Martina's sister, Oliva: “Es fácil que Oliva llorara; es posible que no. Pero seguro que llovió por dentro sabiendo que se avecinaban tiempos peores. Los peores de todos” (A. López 137). Each family member tried to maintain the illusion that the circumstances were not so horrific.

To describe this, the narrative focuses on the white shirt that Martina was wearing when she was taken to prison. When the shirt came back with blood stains on it, Manola and Oliva took charge of cleaning it to keep the rest of the family from knowing. Manola orders Oliva to keep Martina's physical abuse a secret; thus she perpetuates the cycle of denial: “Tu madre verá la ropa blanca tendida de la cuerda, porque no ha ocurrido nada. No hemos visto nada” (A. López 161-162). Day after day, Oliva would bring the shirt back from the prison and Manola would wash it, but the stress of the situation was evident: “Las dos lo vieron: el lamparón, macula, mancha, boron. Un mapamundi de vino tinto. Rojo tanino. Granate pimentón líquido. Sangre. Hecho a la medida del dolor encallado con imaginación ulcerada. Oliva necesitó irse de paseo por la vida; por el mundo. Por las estrellas. Lejos de aquellas manchas y el olor

de Martina en el epicentro de ellas” (A. López 161-162). In another moment, Manola engages in heated discussions with Martina’s father, Marcos, about the rumors that Martina is being raped. Marcos expresses his anger that Manola is not doing anything about it. In response, Manola defends herself by saying that she has enough to deal with in washing Martina’s clothing: “[Y]o ya tengo suficiente con lavar la ropa” (A. López 184). Manola chose to focus on cleaning rather than ponder the significance behind these tasks. Manola’s cleaning symbolizes a desire to clear away her family’s trauma. This process not only happened within the Barroros family but also on a national level as well. During the postwar years and after the transition to democracy, the Spanish government covered up these horrific events by not publically speaking about them.

After Martina’s execution, the family became accustomed to keeping a vow of silence, especially because the restrictions of the dictatorship and the fear of punishment prevented the Barroso women from speaking about their subversive relative:

Mi abuela Manola se llevó demasiadas certezas a la tumba y la tía Oliva, tu hermana, guardó silencio hasta su muerte. Tu cuñada, Encarna, también silenció aspectos importantes de lo que ocurrió en comisaría, poniéndose demasiado nerviosa cada vez que le preguntaban si era verdad que Martina sufrió abusos por parte de quien fuera. Ella podría haber contado mucho, pero prefirió callar... Sólo mi madre habla. Lloro mucho cuando recuerda las conversaciones de ataño. Pero habla y no miente cuando dice que en casa de los abuelos, tus padres, querida Martina, hablaban de ti sin nombrarte (“Lolita tiene las mismas pecas que “la otra”, se parece a la “otra”...”). Como si pronunciar tu nombre invocara desastres, cataclismos y demás inclemencias impensables. (A. López 188)

The unwillingness to utter Martina’s first name is telling of the family’s desire not to evoke the traumatic memories associated with her. Maurice Halbwachs sheds light on this phenomenon—how first names play a role in the family dynamics: “[B]y pronouncing their names we experience a sense of familiarity as in the presence of an

individual whose place in the wider context is well known, as is his relative position in regard to proximate individuals and objects” (Halbwachs 71). By pronouncing Martina’s name, it is a reminder of her tragic fate—which is a highly emotional topic for all of the members.

Halbwachs theorizes that first names carry an unspoken symbolism or significance that all members of the collective group can understand: “Nothing serves us better than first names to indicate this kind of recollection, which is based neither on general notions nor on individual images, but which nevertheless refers to a kinship link and to a specific person simultaneously” (Halbwachs 71). Martina’s first name became associated with trauma: “When it comes to first names, we must think of something that they symbolize beyond the material sign, something to which they are moreover inseparably attached” (Halbwachs 72). To avoid this trauma, the family kept from uttering these memories: “Lo horrible, lo llevamos dentro. Los hombres y las mujeres somos así” (A. López 83). The narrative uses the example of how the Barroso women dealt with trauma to question the consequences of suppressing personal pain and suffering: “Oliva era una superviviente, pero ¿a qué precio?” (A. López 185). These traumatic experiences shaped and transformed Oliva’s personality, but also altered the family dynamic for younger generations. Martina’s execution was a secret and burdensome collective memory. In the Barroso family, silence became a family custom. Halbwachs explains the function of customs within the family: “No matter how we enter a family—by birth, marriage, or some other way—we find ourselves to be part of a group where our position is determined not by personal feelings but by rules and customs independent of us that existed before us” (Halbwachs 55).

The institution of the family plays a major role in this transmission. Within family units, individuals choose to selectively share information; often times, the information that they pass on demonstrates aspects of which they approve (Bertaux and Thompson 2). In some instances, parents hand down to their children their own unfinished projects, hopes, and desires (Bertaux and Thompson 2). In addition to this, they also have the ability of handing down “unresolved tensions, frustrations, and hostilities” (Bertaux and Thompson 8). Much like memories, feelings and emotions can be spread among members of a group, “from one person to another if they were not to find resistance (Halbwachs 56). These shared feelings help to create the emotional atmosphere of a family (Halbwachs 58).

Martina’s memory was not preserved in words but rather by a pair of slippers that Martina knit for Paloma’s mother, Lola, as a gift for her first birthday. Lola came to know of the tale through the baby slippers that she received as a gift from Martina. Lola not only inherited the slippers but also the silence and trauma associated with Martina’s memory. Like the other Barroso women, Lola learned how to remain silent about Martina’s story to Paloma. Martina’s story reached Paloma by accident, when she discovered the slippers when she was approximately fifteen years old. This life-changing discovery marked a new beginning for Paloma and the Barroso women’s legacy: “Y entonces, todo acabó empezando. Todo empezó a comenzar” (A. López 45). Paloma’s revelation is symbolic of the slow process of recuperation of memory which took place after Spain’s transition to democracy. Much of this process was initiated by members of the third generation of war survivors, like Paloma.

When Paloma discovered the slippers, she and her mother were cleaning the house--part of a daily ritual for many women in Spain. The narrative describes Paloma's unconscious attraction that leads her to her parents' bedroom, as if she was drawn there for a specific purpose: "Aquel tictac interno me condujo, sin yo pretenderlo, a transgredir las leyes de la razón y encaminar mis pasos a la habitación de mis padres, como guiada por una llamada imán que tirase lentamente de mis piernas. De todo mi ser" (A. López 45-46). Upon opening the closet door, a box fell from the top shelf that caught Paloma's eye. In the box were the slippers that Martina knit. The narrative describes the box by drawing on biblical images to highlight how the contents are a precious treasure: "[U]n pequeño cofre de cartón... Una misteriosa caja hermosa y grave que necesitaba de oro, incienso y mirra para ser observada desde el exterior" (A. López 46). This description draws the reader's attention to Martina's slippers as an important literary trope in the narrative. The box in which the slippers are stored is another symbol, along with the rose, that points to a connection between Christian iconography and the Thirteen Roses. The connection between the rose and Christian iconography can also be noted in Dulce Chacón's novel, *La voz dormida*.

The discovery of the box is followed by Paloma's confusion: "Sabía lo que estaba viendo, aunque no supiera qué era" (A. López 48). Upon examining the object, she went to her mother in the kitchen to ask about her findings. Her questions were received with silence: "Me miró extraviada como primera estación para terminar hincando sus ojos en el suelo. Como si estuviera haciendo un examen de conciencia. Tras unos segundos su única elección pasó por relatar con voz monocorde, igual que una beata secunda *avesmarías* en misa, la verdad compartida y silenciada, a través de

las mujeres de la familia Barroso” (A. López 49). Lola’s silence could signify her inability to know how to explain the family legacy.<sup>39</sup> Martina’s execution marked a significant gap in Barroso family history. The transmission of family stories was not quite the same after Martina’s death.<sup>40</sup>

In this tense and seemingly awkward situation, where the moment of silence is filled with an untold story, the narrative highlights Paloma’s innocent curiosity. This shows how she is unaffected by the traumatic past. She describes her desire to know as a biological need: “Silencio. Mi objetivo no era llamar la atención sino obtener respuestas a una evidencia muda que ya anidaba en mi interior” (A. López 49). With this statement, the narrative stresses the importance of the intergenerational transmission of family histories and stories. López’s text describes the discovery of the slippers as the crucial moment to pass on Martina’s story to the next generation: “Hay un momento en la familia Barroso en que toda madre debe enfrentarse a ese momento crucial” (A. López 51). This transmission between mother and daughter has an educational purpose. According to Thompson, often times the woman of the family serves as the story-teller and transmitter of culture as well: “Women, instead of being largely ignored, gained a central role as child-rearers and as transmitters of family influence and also of their own independent occupational culture (as in the cases of women teachers) “ (Thompson 19-20).

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<sup>39</sup> These feelings of hesitance and confusion about the transmission of traumatic family histories has also been a large part of transmitting Holocaust survivors’ legacies, as Natasha Burchardt explains: “Children continue to reflect on and re-evaluate a legacy, not least in pondering how to pass down the memory to their own children (Burchardt 135).

<sup>40</sup> Speaking about experiences of children of Holocaust survivors, Helen Epstein explains that this continuity between generations can be inconsistent: “And to the degree [continuity] exists, it is more the result of the interpretative urge of the daughter than of any active role of the parents” (Van Alphen 477).

Following Paloma's inquiry about the slippers, Lola explains to Paloma what the slippers mean to her and why Martina chose to knit them. This represents a key educational exchange between Lola and Paloma, and also reveals how the slippers are used in the text as a trope for the recuperation of memory: "Estas zapatillas significan 'no me olvidéis'...Las cosió para mí. Para ti. Para la hija que tendrás y para la hija de tu hija. Significan lo que tú quieras que signifiquen" (A. López 50-51). The small, colorful slippers are a visible reminder of an intriguing and mysterious story—a symbol of the way in which the Roses' death, as a collective memory, has become a case study for how different social groups, over time, have told and transformed the story, inserting artistic tropes and using specific narrative techniques to convey specific messages. In the Barroso family, each individual had an opinion about the slippers. They kept these ideas to themselves. Thus the slippers were a family heirloom with a mysterious quality.

For Thompson, "mystery is a catalyst of myth"—and even more so when these mysterious elements are repeated in several generations. These elements can "become a particularly powerful family script" (Thompson 35). The way in which the story about the slippers is presented shapes how the recipient—in this case Paloma—feels about them:

[Family stories] may haunt, or inspire, or be taken as commonplace. But the way in which they are told, the stories and images which are chosen and put together, and the matters on which silence is kept provides part of the mental map of family members...Family myths, models, and denials, transmitted within a family system, provide for most people part of the context in which their crucial life choices must be made, propelling them into their own individual life paths..." (Thompson 36)

Unlike the other Barroso women, Paloma does not feel the trauma and silence associated with the slippers. Instead, Paloma feels a strong connection to the story.

Having never met Martina, she possesses a curiosity to know more about her relative. She directs her thoughts to Martina: “¿Por qué soy la depositaria de esta herencia familiar?... Tú y yo, unidas por un lazo invisible” (A. López 187). The description of Paloma as the “depository” of Martina’s memory is descriptive in telling the process in which a memory is handed down, almost as if Martina’s story is a physical object that could be stored in a box like a family heirloom. Paloma feels the biological connection between her and Martina, which fuels her inevitable attraction to the story, along with her desire to know more about it. Nonetheless, she also has doubts about the utility of researching this family story: “No sé si sirve para algo el recuerdo, como tampoco sé si la justicia del no olvido redime una vida de la tragedia. Sólo confieso que hago lo que hago porque necesito hacerlo. No por ti, sino por mí” (A. López 191). *Martina, la rosa número trece* traces the development of Paloma’s identity and how Paloma’s self-perception has been shaped by her relation to Martina and the experience of investigating her family’s past. Paloma’s attitude adds a different element to the transmission of Martina’s story within the Barroso family. She adds a new, refreshing perspective to Martina’s memory—one that is not based on sadness, trauma, and silence.

The narrative describes how oral transmission of Martina’s story is a therapeutic way for Paloma to understand the unspoken past: “También creo que la manera más sencilla de entender las cosas—aun las tempestades emocionales—es contándolas. Mucho mejor si es desde el principio” (A. López 44). The final part of this statement alludes to the public awareness, and continuing public discussion, surrounding the fact that the information about the Spanish Civil War has not been openly talked about since

its beginning. Instead, it has remained in silence for so many years and has lingered in the back of peoples' memories.

The narrative uses Martina's ghost as a trope to show how traumatic memories have the potential to 'haunt' families. In the novel, Martina's ghost appeared to Lola as a child. Lola's clairvoyance is a family trait that Manola also possesses. One night, when Lola was a young girl, a woman whom she had never seen before appeared in her living room: "Su sola presencia era como un depredador que mordiera oscuridad para generar luz" (A. López 28-29). When Manola came looking for Lola, her daughter pointed out the stranger to her. Lola was perplexed that her mother could not see the woman. Lola described the woman, who was wearing a pink petticoat. Manola came to realize that this ghostly woman was Martina and she had come to greet Manola: "La chica del quicio, con su brazo y abrazo invisible, su enagua antigua y prestada, sus pecas diseminadas por todo el cuerpo...volvía del ayer. Del siempre. Para darle el último aviso-mensaje-recuerdo-despedida. Manola lo sabía" (A. López 31). This ghostly appearance to a young—and unassuming—Lola—points to how Martina's memory could not be completely erased. On the contrary, traces of her memory surface at different moments. The experiences of the Barroso family, with regard to ghosts, is emblematic of how Jo Labanyi perceives the study and practice of modern Spanish culture: one, big ghost story (Labanyi, "Engaging with Ghosts" 2). The appearance of Martina's ghost is significant because it serves as a symbol to fight against the family's desire to forget and move past her traumatic death. Furthermore, the appearance of her ghostly figure is emblematic of the family's hidden secret.

Drawing on Derrida, Jo Labanyi explains that “ghosts are the traces of those who were not allowed to leave a trace; that is, the victims of history and in particular subaltern groups, whose stories—those of the losers—are excluded from the dominant narratives of the victors” (Labanyi, “Engaging with Ghosts” 2). Ghosts linger within the collective memory of a nation in traces because they represent a repressed part of history. López believes that many families—and some with untold stories—can relate to this, as she explains in an interview: *Todos tenemos una Martina en la familia... Un ser anónimo que estuvo en el sitio inadecuado en un momento inoportuno* (Ángeles López, Personal interview).

Like the other women in her family, Paloma is affected by Martina’s ghostly figure—which she sees in a photograph. Within the novel, the act of commemoration for Martina is shown through the use of a photograph that the family received from an exboyfriend of Martina. Paloma repeatedly examines this photo to help her maintain a connection with Martina. She sees similarities: “Tan Barroso García como ella” (A. López 69). The function of the photo of past times captures a moment, or a person, that no longer exists. For Susan Sontag, photographs can make statements only about pieces of the world, and photographs furnish evidence of this reality (Sontag 5-6). In the family realm, photographs can memorialize the achievements of individuals and family photographs create what Sontag calls “a portrait chronicle” (Sontag 8). The photograph gives a person “an imaginary possession of the past that is unreal” (Sontag 9). Photographs can also create nostalgia because “those ghostly traces, photographs, supply the token presence of the dispersed relatives” (Sontag 9). The narrative describes how the ghostly figure of Martina has infiltrated her thoughts: “Porque has llegado y te

has instalado sin pedir permiso. Aunque yo lo he permitido. Los fantasmas sois así.

Pero los que no somos fantasmas, también tenemos frío” (A. López 89). The ‘coldness’ that Paloma feels when thinking of the tragedy of Martina’s death is difficult.

Nonetheless, acknowledging the Barroso family history—including its secrets—is part of her identity.

While some family members chose to not embrace the presence of Martina’s ghost, Paloma accepts this component of the past as part of her own life and personal story. The incorporation of elements of the past is important in conducting a self analysis: “Telling one’s own life story requires not only recounting directly remembered experience, but also drawing on information and stories transmitted across the generations, both about the years too early in childhood to remember, and also further back in time beyond one’s own birth” (Thompson 13). Paloma engages in a process of searching to learn not only more about the past, but also about herself. For Labanyi, acknowledging *how* the traces of the past have an influence on the present allows an individual or collective group to live with the ghostly traces (Labanyi, “History and Hauntology” 65-66). In the twenty-first century, this is happening throughout Spain as artists like López are sharing their family stories, and government and private organizations are investigating abuses that took place during Franco’s dictatorship and exhuming bodies of those who died during the war and postwar years.

In *Ghostly Matters*, Avery Gordon explains the ghostly figure’s relevance to the present: “... [I] have suggested that the ghost is alive, so to speak. We are in relation to it and it has designs on us such that we must reckon with it graciously, attempting to offer it a hospitable memory *out of a concern for justice*” (Gordon 64). The

documentation of Martina's story is important at both the personal (family) and collective levels. Family history is one way to discover more about political and social history, as Raphael Samuel describes: "Family history was one of the most striking discoveries of the 1960s. Toward the end of the decade, when the family history societies began their growth, it was giving rise to quite the most remarkable do-it-yourself archive-based scholarship of our time—a movement which started literally on the doorstep and owed nothing to outside influence" (Samuel 148). Paloma's efforts as an adult to understand her family history coincide with a collective effort to uncover the ghostly traces of the past. Martina's memory also is a metonymic example to speak again the unjust loss of life.

Four years after discovering the slippers, Paloma read Blanco-Cicerón's article when it was on newsstands in the journal, *Historia 16*. The narrative views Blanco-Cicerón's "Asesinato legal" as a significant contribution to the study of the Roses: "...[E]l artículo-llave que abriría un sinfín de puertas que, en aquel momento, todavía ignoraba" (A. López 53). The narrative also highlights how at the time the article was published, there was not a widespread interest in these topics.

The reference to Blanco-Cicerón's article is used to describe Paloma's heightened curiosity, which provoked her to look deeper into her family past. The photograph of Martina in the article helped her put a face to this distant relative. Photographs are "a way of modernizing the subject, of bringing the outside in and bridging (or vaulting) the gap between past and present. It promised to turn subjects, metaphorically speaking, into contemporaries, physiognomically recognizable as likeness of ourselves, whatever the contrasts in comportment and dress" (Samuel 322).

Paloma is aware that Martina died at a young age. Through her thoughts, Paloma unites the past with the present; she thinks about how Martina would be in the twenty-first century and compares Martina to herself: “¿Cómo te veo yo, tía abuela? ¿la Martina del 39? ¿la del 2004, que me acompaña en mi búsqueda? La que nunca tuvo la edad que hoy yo tengo” (A. López 187). The photograph helps her tie the past to the present. As Samuel argues, old photographs can convey the idea that “then can also be now” (Samuel 322).

Paloma’s search into her family’s past is described as one big puzzle with many pieces missing: “Porque hay demasiados silencios que rompen todos los puentes y sólo me queda recomponer partes de este doloroso puzzle al que le faltan demasiadas piezas” (A. López 186). The process of reconstructing that past is different for Paloma than for someone who lived through the events, like her grandmother: “For while the adult world asks first “what happened,” and from there follows its uncertain and sometimes resistant route towards the inward meaning of the facts, those who are born after calamity sense its most inward meanings first and have to work their way outwards toward the facts and the worldly shape of events (Van Alphen 485). The only remnants that Paloma has to work with are written words: “[L]eo y releo los restos mortales de una vida resumida en puntos” (A. López 118-119). Yet she wants to fill in the gaps of the puzzle where she has no memory or information about this time.

Paloma’s findings reveal Martina’s social and political activism, and she serves as one example of some women’s actions during this time period. In several parts of the novel, Martina is described as a compassionate person with humanitarian goals to help those in need. The text repeatedly states that she was not a martyr. Instead, López

describes Martina in the following way: “Tan sólo una mujer. Comprometida” (A. López 66). Thus, *Martina* presents to the reader how she was more of a political activist rather than a victim.

Like Julia Bel’s play, which will be described in the next chapter, the text uses sewing as a trope to describe Martina’s political activism: “Con aguja por fusil,” and Martina as a “[r]adiante, joven y huésped temeraria con hilos como balas. Con una aguja por fusil” (A. López 216). Sewing is also used to describe the connection that Paloma feels with Martina. The family connection makes Paloma feel more confident in her ability to interpret Martina’s life: “(No tengo certezas. Sólo imagino lo que debió ocurrir, ¿qué otra cosa podía hacer mi tía después de una sesión de anémonas y calaveras?: ¿lamentarse?, ¿decirles a las demás lo que les esperaba...? Si hablaban, y si no hablaban también. No tengo evidencias, pero el invisible hilo de seda tejido entre mi Martina y yo me conduce a imaginar lo que pudo ser y posiblemente fue” (A. López 181).

*Martina* mixes historical research and literary interpretation to communicate to the reader the human suffering of life in prison—much like Chacón’s *La voz dormida*. In this part of the narrative, López uses certain literary techniques and tropes to describe this oppressive setting. The use of color is one tactic that creates a vivid picture of prison life for women and create an emotional effect in the reader. The contrasting colors of the red blood stains on Martina’s white shirt provokes images of violence. The whiteness of the shirt also could signify virginity and innocence. The color white is also used to describe the sterility of Ventas prison, “aquella cárcel blanca y lechosa” (A. López 39). Inside the prison, the ambiance is described using gray, dreary images:

“Color ceniza. Todo era color ceniciento, ocre, pardo, sin vida; así lo veían sus ojos”

(A. López 105). The faded color of the prison walls also reflects the wear and tear of human life and the abuse that took place within them: “Manzana asada, sería su actual color. Un día habría sido amarillo limón. Eso, antes de los desconchones y las salapicaduras de mugre y sangre como el vino de los novicios...” (A. López 145). The brilliant red color permeates the prison setting to describe Martina’s torture and serves as a reminder for human mortality: “Su blusa tiritando carmine de venas y arterias” (A. López 181). The description of human mortality through the reference to veins and arteries is also a technique that Julia Bel employs in her theater production.

López, like Dulce Chacón and Julia Bel, also mentions how women lost their reproductive abilities in prison. The novel applies this knowledge to talk about the abuse that Martina endured in prison, after being repeatedly hit: “Linaje de su cintura que ya había emprendido la marcha hacia la esterilidad, y bien lo sabía. Única hija posible nacida del vientre contiguo de su cuñada. La heredera de los pájaros vieneses y caminante de un porvenir que pensaba mejor que aquél” (A. López 207). Martina was not only denied motherhood through abuse, but of course through her execution. As a result, the narrative connects Martina’s lineage with Manola’s daughter, Lola. This is a way to subvert the idea that her bloodline ends with her execution. Although Martina did not have children, her physical and emotional traits have still been passed on to the other women of her family.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Julia Bel also connects Martina’s lineage with her niece, Lola. Bel accomplishes this by describing the slippers that Martina knit for Lola. Lola will carry on Martina’s memory by walking in the slippers that she made.

In the prison setting, López subverts the topic of silence, which was connected to trauma and suffering in other parts of the novel that show the Barroso family's grief, to symbolize Martina's resilience and resistance during prison interrogations. Her curly hair also represents her rebelliousness: "Silencio por parte de Martina. Un periódico convenientemente enrollado puede ser un arma brutal sobre el rostro de una chica con hambre y miedo. Fue en la cabeza, sobre su todavía rebelde mechón rizado; altivo" (A. López 170). The trope of memory and forgetting is also transformed in the prison setting. While family members refused to recall what happened to Martina, memory was a vital coping mechanism for Martina.

Martina's torture scene emphasizes the need for remembering. While being tortured, Martina vows to remember the important people of her life: "Y su oficio sería sólo el de recordar. Recordar para no olvidar. Recordar para mantenerse viva. Recordar para sentir como propio un cuerpo que había dejado de pertenecerle. Recordar. Incluso a Luis. Porque cada punzada de dolor le devolvía una porción de realidad. Recordar... Para cerciorarse que no estaba del todo equivocada" (A. López 140). The narrative emphasizes the slow passing of time to create a vivid picture for the reader of the emotional and physical trauma of these torture sessions: "Como quien contempla un reloj de arena para ver cómo descienden los tordos granos, así se vaciaba la ira de su agresor después de cada golpe" (A. López 171). In the torture rooms, the text describes "aquí no hay horas" (A. López 144). During an excruciatingly painful moment that seems to never end, the act of remembering is an important coping mechanism for the victim. Similar to the testimonies from female survivors, the text describes how Martina

is repeatedly hit by her interrogator, and she is also punished with electric shock. By thinking about life outside of prison, victims fight through the physical pain.

During her torture sessions, Martina dreams of images of nature. Her thoughts about flowers symbolize a sharp contrast to what she is experiencing in that moment.

While torture represents pain and even death, flowers represent life and beauty:

“Martina pensó que si algún día recordaba este momento lo rellenaría, igual que se hace con los pimientos, de flores silvestres y rugidos del mar. Mejor, de magnolias. Lo

pensaba mientras sintió la primera descarga sobre la mano anillada” (A. López 174). In

addition to flowers, the narrative introduces two other tropes that are commonly

associated with the roses: virginity and innocence. López uses these tropes not to

describe the Roses but rather to describe the abuses carried out by the police

interrogators, thus making subjective judgments of the perpetrators. The text describes

the main police interrogator, Aurelio Fernández Fontela, as a “[v]endimiador de

virginidades” and a “violador de palomas” (A. López 182). Fontela’s actions were

calculated and cruel. Using this idea, the novel introduces a new metaphor to describe

Martina’s arrest and interrogation. Like a bull in a bullfight, she was “tan estudiada

como la de los toreros: suerte de tanteo, suerte de amenazas, suerte de detención.

Tentar, capear y matar” (A. López 135). The comparison between women’s treatment in

prison and the inevitably sad fate of a bull is a metaphoric technique to describe

victimization.

When it is close to the moment of Martina’s execution, the narrative uses nature

motifs to describe how time is running out: “Como reza el haiku, *de la flor del ciruelo a*

*la flor del cerezo*, mediaban pocas horas” (A. López 38). When saying goodbye in the

chapel, Martina cries while her friends are writing goodbye letters. The text describes the act of crying with references to nature and rain: “Hay quien dice que llueve por nosotros y hay quien bebe con sed anciana del agua de los chacos. Martina llovía y bebía, hermética en su cuerpo. Se estaba yendo y, en su marcha, vio colegialas hacienda sus últimos deberes escolares; el resto de sus compañeras redactando cartas de carne a sus familias. Escribiendo a padres, madres y hermanos—con lluvia y sed en los ojos—sus legados de cariño y últimas voluntades” (A. López 41). The word “lluvia” is used often in the text to refer to the tears that people have shed as a result of the human tragedy of the war years: “Nadie sabe cuánto tala una mejilla la salada lluvia de los ojos” (A. López 143). Shortly before the execution, the narrative highlights the silence, almost as if the world stopped, using images of nature: “Y los grillos cesaron su canto” (A. López 43).

The slippers are another object in the narrative that shows how Martina keeps her mind off of the reality of prison. This is accomplished through the trope of sewing and weaving: “Aunque la puerta del sufrimiento no se cierra nunca, Martina encontró el modo de escapar al dolor. Fue que comenzó a tejer sin descanso, a afanarse sin tregua con el cuello saurio hincado sobre unas miniaturas de esparto, a las que daría forma definitiva con el paso de los días y la huidas” (A. López 206). When Martina puts the finishing touches on the slippers and the decorative butterfly, the slippers turn into a symbol that time is running out.

The text describes how Martina cannot see the color of the slippers—which is literary technique to talk about the hopeless situation: “Martina ya no distingue los colores porque se han terminado todos los hilos de bordar. Toda su ciencia colorista la

abandonó en el momento en que terminó las zapatillas. Puede que sea gris, ocre, rojizo o negro. En realidad, mira sin poder ver” (A. López 221). The slippers are also symbolic for passing on Martina’s memory. The narrative associates the slippers with the notion of rebirth because of the butterfly that they have sewn on the front of them. The butterfly is symbolic of change and transformation, and serves as a reminder of the cyclical nature of eternal life: “Harán que renazca la vida en un entorno más adecuado que éste” (A. López 42). The text interprets the moment when Martina passes on the slippers to Encarna, and communicates a strong message for her motives to do so: “Procure que Lolita pise el umbral de todos los lugares con estas zapatillas. Mi sobrina tendrá una hija que llevará un precioso nombre que tendrá alas... Como las mariposas que he intentado dejar escritas para las mujeres de esta familia” (A. López 42). Martina leaves a message particularly for the women of her family. She serves as a model of strength and courage.

*Martina, la rosa número trece* demonstrates how investigating and uncovering hidden stories from the past can have serious consequences. By looking deeper into Martina’s history, Paloma also searched for documents about the fate of Martina’s brother, Luis. The family did not know if Luis died on the war front or not and his body had never been recovered. As a consequence, the family, like many others in Spain, had to cope without closure: “Se quedaron sin cuerpo al que dar tierra. Se llama miedo y es una punzada que repliega cada cosa a su lugar. Casi diez años de proceso contra un muerto que estaba bien muerto. Por eso nadie podía prestar atención a la nueva muerte que vendría...” (A. López 121). The search for the Barroso family history led Paloma to question the greater implications of her findings: “¿Para quién había concluido esa

maldita guerra? ¿Para quién el próximo horizonte? ¿Para Luis, que no yacía en una lápida bajo un ramo de rosas, ni doce, ni trece, ni ninguna?” (A. López 115). The unjust tragedy led to bitterness and unhappiness for those who lived through these events.

Paloma reflects on some of these consequences: “Cómo odiar a los muertos por el mero hecho de haber muerto. De habernos dejado a la intemperie de sus recuerdos” (A. López 114). López’s novel also comments on the dire effects of the war and the time that was lost because of it: “Años irrecuperables... Para la abundancia, el cine, los paseos y las tardes del sol. Para Martina, Luis, Marcos, Salustiano, María Antonia, Encarna, Manola, Marcos, la pequeña Lolita...” (A. López 158). Like her female ancestors that knew Martina, Paloma also feels unsettled by not knowing some of the details of what happened to her beloved great-aunt after she was taken away for questioning: “Me queda una duda. Miro al retrato y te pregunto por última vez. No temas que esta pregunta no duele, tía: ¿dónde estuviste entre el 2 y el 6 de junio?” (A. López 194). In the last part of the book, Paloma observes Martina’s photo and reflects on how she cannot forget her. She, too, feels emotionally affected by Martina’s tragedy: “Me observas de nuevo desde la foto. Y se me empaña el futuro... ¿Qué haré, ahora que estás dentro de mi vida sin remedio? Llueve... Siento que mi vida se ha convertido en un país de lluvia... Que me impide olvidarte” (A. López 237). Even without a physical place to commemorate these two deceased family members, López’s fictional account brings closure by retracing the life and death of both of these loved ones.

López’s account communicates how much Paloma loves and admires Martina: “[S]u amor anciano por una mujer nunca conocida, tan presente como ausente, que en tiempos de paz y después de una guerra inútil, perdió la vida ganándola para siempre”

(López 24). Paloma takes ownership of Martina's story: "Es sólo una historia. Una de muchas, Una de tantas. Pero es la mía" (A. López 233). In this sense, *Martina, la rosas número trece* differs greatly from other publications about the Thirteen Roses. The story is narrated with much raw emotion: "Aquello era muy distinto a un cuento familiar para ser narrado en días de tormenta. Era la constatación de un hecho histórico. Una herencia íntima e intransferible que me apelaba desde un silencio tenaz y atronador" (A. López 54). This emotion is driven by the personal and familial connection that the protagonists of the text have to the historical event.

While tracing this research process, the narrative describes the emotional component of Paloma's search, along with her determination to not allow the trauma of the past to affect her like it did the other older women of her family: "No deseaba, a pesar de tanto frío predador como acumulaba mi búsqueda, que el pasado me atormentara también a mí tanto como a ellos" (A. López 79). Paloma opts to include both healing and mourning in her search and accept the ghostly traces that Martina left. At the same time, she wants to put the past to rest and leave the past in the past. She feels compelled to do so by her bonds of kinship.

*Martina, la rosa número trece* reveals knowledge about one the Thirteen Roses that may never have been discovered by anyone outside of Martina's family. Like Chacón's novel, *Martina* contributes to the historical investigation of the Spanish Civil War. By sharing this personal story, López's narrative serves as an inspiration for others to openly discuss the significance of past trauma so that individuals, and the nation, can move beyond it.

Chapter 5: Julia Bel's *Las trece rosas*: The Spanish Civil War as a 'Place of Memory'  
in Contemporary Peninsular Theater

In recent years, scholarly publications such as José F. Colmeiro's *Memoria histórica e identidad cultural: De la postguerra a la postmodernidad* (2005) and Carmen Moreno-Nuño's *Las huellas de la Guerra Civil: Mito, trauma en la narrativa de la España democrática* (2006) examine artistic works, including novels, films, and music, that represent the individual and collective experiences of Spain's past—including those from the Spanish Civil War. In their analysis, both Colmeiro and Moreno-Nuño apply Pierre Nora's term '*le lieu de mémoire*,' defined as a "place of memory," to characterize works that preserve the memory of the civil war's victims. The poetry, nonfiction accounts, journal articles, and novels that present the Thirteen Roses' account show how literature written about them before and after Spain's transition to democracy created a space to describe traumatic, repressed memories related to the historical execution. For this reason, the various oral and written representations about the Roses can also be considered "places of memory" that, for the most part, pay homage to the thirteen women. These works, however, are not the only examples of *lieux de mémoire* for the Roses' memory. Theater is another crucial art form that accomplishes Nora's understanding of the act of memory preservation. Theater not only provides a physical and symbolic place to remember the past, but also allows the audience to witness and react to a live performance. Because theater is not an account but rather an interactive experience, it is an effective *lieu de memoire* that unites memory with collective identity formation. Theater, like other artistic and written representations, creates a space in the public realm to reflect upon and question the way

in which the Spanish Civil War has been remembered, as well as how memories of this event are transmitted in the present.

Julia Bel's theater production, *Las trece rosas*, offers yet another subjective interpretation of the Roses' tragedy by presenting the story of four of the thirteen women, portraying them both as victims and political agents in the production. Bel's work can be classified with three other artistic productions, created in the twenty-first century, that use bodily movement to reenact the Roses' execution. In 2008, the Arrietos dance company performed a dance representation of the Roses' story in various cities in Spain. Another play, Maxi de Diego's *Abuela Sol y las Trece Rosas* (2008), was performed for the first time on Feb. 18, 2009 in the Julián Besterio School and another performance was planned by another small theater group to be premiered on March 8, 2009, the Day of the Woman in Spain. Another play, "Es solo una storia," written by a young Italian playwright, Lorenzo Conti, was scheduled to be performed in Madrid in November 2009 after its debut at the end of May in Italy. The continuing success of these artistic productions points to a public interest, and demand, for live performance of the Roses' story. The collective witnessing of the Roses' execution through theater is symbolic of a cathartic process by which citizens in the twenty-first century are working through and understanding the effects of the civil war in the present. Live performance allows the audience to actively engage with and react to the events as they unfold on stage.

In Bel's play, the tragic quality of the Roses' story is effective for creating empathy among audience members, as they collectively watch one of the protagonists lament the Roses' absence. The incorporation of certain gestural emblems that represent

trauma, along with discursive tropes from Spain's long-standing cultural tradition, highlight how both story-telling and bodily performance are used to transmit memory. They also serve a cathartic function. Bel interprets the Roses' execution to successfully demonstrate the continuities, rather than ruptures, between Spain's past and present—including how the memory of the war's atrocities has been passed on over time. Bel also participates in this act of transmission by preserving and disseminating the Thirteen Roses' story through performance.

Bel's play uses the Roses' memory to show how marginalized and tragic aspects of the past are part of the nation's history and these events play a role in shaping Spain's current political and social contexts. The performance of the Thirteen Roses' story helps citizens who attend to connect with the nation's past. *Las trece rosas* personalizes the experiences of many anonymous victims of the civil war, and serves as an allegory for the nation's collective search to come to terms with the past and learn from it.

Pierre Nora's *lieu de mémoire* and the Explosion of Memory Studies in the Twentieth- and Twenty-First Centuries

In his article, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," Pierre Nora explains that *les lieux de mémoire*, or places of memory, are created when memory is no longer lived or acted out in daily life and there is no direct continuity between the past and the present. Nora uses the term *milieux de mémoire* to describe "real environments of memory"—the spaces, gestures, images, objects, rituals, actions, or words that primitive cultures have used as forms of memory transmission (Nora 8). For Nora, authentic memory rituals unite the past with the present (Nora 8). When these

customs are no longer practiced, *les lieux de mémoire*—sites of memory—serve as replacements for authentic memory practices.

Nora blames modernization for the shift from *les lieux de mémoire* to *les lieux de mémoire*: “We have seen the end of societies that had long assured the transmission and conservation of collectively remembered values, whether through churches or schools, the family or the state; the end too of ideologies that prepared a smooth passage from the past to the future...” (Nora 7). Modern society’s tendency to archive the past points to the need to create *lieux de mémoire*, places where collective national identity, and cultural traditions can be formed and crystallized. In addition to the physical places of memory, ceremonies and stories that are shared among individuals are also places of memory that convey the hopes and desires for building what Benedict Anderson describes as “imagined communities.”

Spain’s national history has been marked by fragmented ideological divides for many centuries, which is implied by the idea of “las dos Españas.” These divisions grew throughout the nineteenth century and this culminated in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). In the twenty-first century, citizens reflect on how these divides have shaped their collective identity. Today, Spaniards are seeking to establish unity and consensus with regard to these previous divides. This is accomplished by creating places of memory--spaces in which to discuss and reflect upon the nation’s fragmented past.

*Las trece rosas: Theater as a Place for Collective Witnessing and Catharsis*

*Las trece rosas* was written by Julia Bel and Eva Hibernia was the scene director for the production. In 2000, Bel and Hibernia co-founded “Delirio,” an association dedicated to creating productions that integrate poetry with stage performance. Bel and

Hibernia worked together on several poetry projects before they collaborated in 2006 for Bel's first theater production: *Las trece rosas*. Bel has a degree in communications, but she has taken several courses on theater production and is also a poet. Bel's previous projects fuse poetry with art and music. Hibernia studied studio arts with a specialty in theater direction at the Real Escuela de Arte Dramático de Madrid and has directed several plays. Currently she is the author in residence for the T6 program at the National Theater of Catalunya.

*Las trece rosas* was performed between September 30 and October 22, 2006 in Barcelona's Teatre Tantarantana—a small theater with seating for roughly sixty to eighty people. The play also was performed in several other cities across Spain—including Madrid—and attracted a diverse audience of war survivors, survivors' relatives, and young people. All of the audience members had different backgrounds and personal experiences, but they share the common interest in wanting to know about the Thirteen Roses.

Bel selected certain aspects for her interpretation of the Roses' account. For instance, *Las trece rosas* features only five female characters. Four of these characters are part of the Thirteen Roses group: Dionisia, Martina, Blanca, and Julia Conesa. The fifth woman is a friend of the Roses who was not executed. Through the women, Bel tells about the traumas of the war and key moments in the Roses' lives. In addition to providing historical details about the women, Bel interprets the women's thoughts, desires, and social roles. The women's words and actions provide a short synopsis for the viewer of the different personal characteristics of each of the Roses.

Although these women come from a different historical time period, the audience can relate to some of their life situations, hopes, and struggles. Members of the audience can identify with what they see on stage, thus bringing the era in which the Roses lived closer to the present. Dionisia's words and actions highlight how she is entirely devoted to the fight to uphold Spain's Second Republic and the democratic ideals of this government. She is dedicated to her family and the war cause—working as a seamstress to help others and earn money. Martina is shown knitting slippers in prison. She, too, talks about the close relationship she has with her family and how the slippers are a gift for her niece. Julia Conesa is tirelessly optimistic despite the dreary conditions of prison life —although she is disappointed when she receives word that her boyfriend has been seeing another woman. Blanca speaks and acts from the perspective of a devout mother and a woman of Catholic faith. Some of these biographic details may sound familiar to a contemporary audience. Nonetheless, the four protagonists represent a collective group of women who lived through the civil war and opposed Franco. The fifth protagonist of the play is Julia Vellisca. Historically, Vellisca was tried and sentenced with the Thirteen Roses but she was the only woman who did not receive a death sentence. Not much was known about Vellisca's fate. Often times, she is a historical figure that is left at the margins of the Thirteen Roses' story. Both historically and in the play, Vellisca is the survivor and witness of the trauma of the Roses' execution.

The opening and closing scenes of the play show Vellisca recalling in a monologue what she remembers about the events leading up to the execution and how the event has affected her. The other scenes of the play offer a glimpse into the Roses'

lives in the months leading up to their death, the historical developments that resulted in the civil war, how the Roses became victims, and how Vellisca escaped this tragic fate. The audience members, along with Vellisca, serve as witnesses to the Thirteen Roses' execution. Vellisca is the survivor of the account and the audience members are the bystanders.<sup>42</sup> In certain scenes Vellisca, the survivor who testifies, tells the audience what has happened and conveys not only the information, but also her deep feelings of grief and sadness. These emotions are transmitted to the audience who is listening. This approach to learning about a historical event may make a lasting impression on audience members because they are participating, thinking, and feeling as they watch actresses perform and speak on stage.

Witnessing is a theme that is prevalent both within Bel's play and within the theater setting. *Las trece rosas* asks people to bear witness to the narratives of war survivors, sympathize with the tragedy, and take away a lesson from this production. The benefit of bearing witness to tragedy in theater is discussed in Aristotle's *Poetics*. The representation of tragedy on stage can educate an audience and teach them how to experience pity and fear by evoking these emotions as they watch them unfold on stage:

Tragedy arouses in us the emotions of pity and fear but only to ally them and purge us of their evil influence...It also has a sort of enlarging effect on our affections and sympathies. It drives away the selfish and baser components of our emotions and makes us more humane, more tolerant and more cosmopolitan. It is education and training of our sensibilities. (Singal 54)

In *Poetics*, Aristotle writes about how watching tragedy results in catharsis. The word catharsis is Greek and is derived from the root 'kathairo,' which means 'to cleanse'

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<sup>42</sup> In Latin, there are two words for witness: *testis*, whose primary meaning is spectator or bystander, and *superstes*, which also means spectator, bystander, or survivor. Usually it is the survivor that offers a testimony of a traumatic event. (Rubin Suleiman 133).

(Singal 50). For Aristotle, viewing tragedy on stage leads to the purification of the mind. Catharsis allows audience members to feel pity and “sympathetic admiration for the sufferer” (Singal 57). By watching tragedy, we take on the role of the reflective spectator. The tragic lives of the protagonists can teach the audience how to sympathize and reach out to others.

In her article “Theatre of Witness: Passage into a New Millennium,” Karen Malpede presents similar ideas to those of Aristotle to discuss contemporary theater productions that she categorizes as “theater of witness.” For Malpede, people today have become indifferent to cruelty and suffering. They lack empathy because they are inundated with violent images on television and in the media. “Theater of witness” combats this lack by showing how trauma and violence unfold in a live setting on stage with live bodies. This process generates empathy, which is a powerful, motivational force (Malpede, “Theatre of Witness,” 266).

Some of these ideas about the functions of tragedy and theater of witness can be applied to *Las trece rosas*. As Malpede describes, it is easy for an audience in the twenty-first century to remain detached and alienated from the events of the Spanish Civil War. However, reenacting these scenes on stage perpetuates the Roses’ memory and invites people to think about the relationship between Spain’s collective past and its present, as well as the effects of past violence in a different light. The traumas of war and violence, which marked the nation’s civil war, continue in the present as shown by Spain’s involvement in the Iraq war or the fight against the internal Basque separatist, terrorist group ETA. Presenting the circumstances surrounding the Roses’ death onstage makes it difficult, if not impossible, for audience members to remain indifferent to the

tragedy of violence. Furthermore, the representation of the Roses' story encourages the audience to reflect on how the traumatic memories of the Spanish Civil War linger in the twenty-first century. The marginalized and tragic aspects of the past deserve recognition because they have an important purpose; they are part of the nation's history and also play a role in shaping Spain's current political and social contexts.

*Las trece rosas* brings this idea to the forefront, using a collaborative approach. Before each performance of *Las trece rosas*, Bel organized a round-table discussion that complemented the play's theme of reflection and self-reflection (Bel. Personal interview). The purpose of these meetings was not to point fingers or to perpetuate ideological divides. Instead, the meetings focused on sharing thoughts, ideas, and experiences. Usually Bel began each discussion with a brief presentation to explain the purpose of these meetings. Then, she encouraged audience members to speak. Many individuals shared their family stories, and told of their personal experiences with repression or that of family members or friends. These discussions allowed the audience to make connections between what they were about to view and how they were feeling—which is an important component to theater of witness.

In theater of witness, people become aware of the impact of historical events and at the same time, they feel the impact of these events through the play (Malpede, "Thoughts" 267). Theater, like other forms of creative production, is a way for people to envision an alternative to violence and marginalization by acknowledging, witnessing, and learning from it. Those who attended the performance about the Thirteen Roses had to be open to the idea of being a witness to painful and difficult experiences—opening their eyes and senses to experiences that they did not have in

their daily lives, but that are part of their nation's collective history. Malpede says that, in theater of witness, an audience must be swayed by the collectiveness of the experience and transformed by what they see: "Letting the self be changed by communion with the other's situation and tale, taking into the body the sensation of another's struggle, simply being present to hear and so allowing words to form and be spoken, enlarges and revitalizes each individual involved in the witnessing experience and reaffirms the social contract" (Malpede, "Theatre of Witness" 278). By collectively witnessing the events leading up to the Roses' execution, a group of audience members are presented an example of a marginalized aspect of the Spanish Civil War and made to see how this event, along with many other tragic examples, has made a mark on the formation of the nation's collective identity. The Roses' contributions to the war effort helped to establish Spanish democracy in the twenty-first century.

#### Representing the Ghosts of the Past: Absence and Rectification

The opening scene of the play shows Vellisca, who is alone on stage, in front of the play's main prop: a screen at the back of the stage that represents a stone wall. On a symbolic level, the wall represents a leitmotiv in the play: the presence of divisions. In the play, there are divisions between light and dark (seeing and not seeing), the divide between life and death, winners and losers, and the ideological divisions within Spanish society during the civil war and dictatorship years. Even in the present, there are social divides related to the need to publically discuss past traumas. In her play, Bel provides an opportunity to reflect upon these social and political rifts.

While the placement of the wall does not appear to change throughout the performance, its function does. In the beginning scenes, the wall is a meeting place for

the Thirteen Roses before they were imprisoned; the wall is a place where they come together as a group. In the second act, the wall has a window with bars on it and it represents the physical space of the prison cell where the women were incarcerated. At the end of the play, the wall is where the Roses were executed, although the execution scene is not visually presented in Bel's performance. Vellisca—the survivor of the event—visits the wall as a place to remember her fallen comrades. Therefore, the wall can be considered a *lieu de mémoire*.

Not only does the wall come to symbolize a place of memory, but it is also a protagonist of the play; Vellisca speaks to the wall and cries there as well. Throughout the play, the wall is a silent witness to the women's struggles—and to the Roses' deaths. After the execution, the wall is transformed into a place of commemoration for Vellisca.<sup>43</sup> Karen Till describes how commemoration places are often “infused with moral meaning” (Till 290). In the play, the audience watches Vellisca come to terms with the loss of her friends. The wall is the place where she feels closest to their memories, and it is also symbolic of the unjust circumstances of their death. Till explains that places of commemoration—like Nora's *lieux de mémoire*—provide a concrete place to unite the past with the present:

Because stories about the past are always in flux, groups often create “topographies” of memory to make the connection between the past and present seem permanent and tangible. Halbwachs argued that group remembrances endure when they have a double focus—a physical object, a material reality such as a statue, a monument, a place in space, and also a symbol, or something of spiritual significance, something shared by the group that adheres to, and is superimposed upon, this physical reality. (Till 290-291)

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<sup>43</sup> Bel designed the wall based upon a special place that has historical significance to her: the site of an old church building and courtyard in Barcelona, which was the first place to be bombed during the war. The wall was also used for executions.

At the beginning and the end of the play, the wall is a commemoration place. Vellisca goes to visit the site where her friends were executed, and the first words that she speaks to the audience provide a crucial introduction to the tale that is about to unfold on stage.

While Julia is alone on stage, the first line of the play tells the audience that she is clearly talking to someone—a person who is not physically there: “No tengo una tumba donde llorarte” (*Las trece rosas* 1.1). The audience learns that this person is one of the Roses, Julia Conesa. Julia Vellisca’s monologue gives hints of what happened to her friend, describing how she was put “contra el paredón. Frente al fusil” (*Las trece rosas* 1.1). Vellisca also expresses the trauma that she endured since her friend’s execution: “Y desde entonces he muerto tantas veces. He aprendido a morir aquí en la vida” (*Las trece rosas* 1.1). She also presents to the audience the importance of remembering: “Hago un esfuerzo por recordar” (*Las trece rosas* 1.1). Her words reinforce the theme of collective witnessing as well as the idea that through theater as a *lieu de mémoire*, memory can be reenacted, performed and remembered: “*Lieux de mémoire* originate with the sense that there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies...because such activities no longer occur naturally” (Nora 12). For Nora, the union of memory and history in a *lieux de mémoire* keeps important events from being forgotten

Vellisca’s monologue—as well as the many other monologues in the performance—is a way to share information with the audience. In the first scene, Vellisca does this by remembering her deceased friend. Vellisca’s recollection of the

events—as a witness to a tragedy—helps the audience imagine the past. Malpede uses the term “witnessing imagination” to explain the process by which a witness can see into violence: “The witnessing imagination *sees into violence* because it focuses upon *the inner life* of the individual who has been inside the violence as its subject. By so doing, the witnessing imagination tries to revive the integrity of the inner life which the violence sought to annihilate” (Malpede, “Theatre” 272). The act of telling or showing a traumatic experience is both cathartic and didactic for a survivor.

Vellisca addresses her memories to her deceased friend, and she laments her friend’s “goneness.” In her analysis of theater representations of the Holocaust, Vivan Patraka explains the effects of goneness, or the acute awareness that what is missing cannot be brought back. This provokes individuals to try to identify and work through this feeling of lack: “Goneness is inconceivable but its effects are palpable, particularly the inevitable desire to articulate, negotiate, mark, and define (Patraka 4). Vellisca’s description of her friend’s points to the emotions tied to ‘goneness’: the need to represent past atrocities and reflect upon the theme of accountability.

Vellisca, the survivor and witness within the play, serves as the memory and the voice that speaks for the Roses after their death—and for the need for justice and recognition. This is especially prevalent at the end of the play when she declares “Asi nos tratan a los vencidos” (*Las trece rosas* 3.5). Like Vellisca, the audience members have a role as witnesses by listening to her share these thoughts. Vellisca’s discussion of ‘goneness’ prompts the audience to think about how the play’s presentation of the Roses’ story provokes questions in their minds about the details of the execution: how the event transpired and how the tragic tale relates to the world in which they live today.

In Spain, the existence of past injustices—and the continued memory of these injustices—raises questions about their rectification. While it is impossible to undo the unjust events of the past, it is possible to give recognition to them in the present.

Cultural production is one method of rectification because artistic works, such as *Las trece rosas*, pay homage to individuals who made noble sacrifices to protect democratic values. By sharing these stories publically, citizens can become aware of these past mistakes and be inspired to make an active choice to uphold democracy, and protest violence and political extremism so that these same errors are never again repeated.

In the play, Vellisca expresses her guilt for being a survivor, along with her utter confusion as to why she survived and her friend did not. Two people—both named Julia (Julia Vellisca and Julia Conesa)—had two distinct destinies: “Teníamos el mismo nombre, pero no tuvimos el mismo destino.” (*Las trece rosas* 1.1). The differing fates of the two Julias highlight the contrast between how Conesa is a ‘victim’ and Vellisca is a ‘survivor.’ The audience sympathizes with Vellisca and how she deeply mourns the loss of a beloved friend. This feeling of loss is something that, probably, every audience member has felt. Watching Vellisca’s sorrow creates empathy and strengthens solidarity. The act of observing trauma creates a “community of witnesses” and teaches the community not to look away (Taylor 211). The audience listens to Vellisca as she cathartically processes her memories. In the opening scenes, she expresses a desire to work through her trauma and for her thoughts to be heard and understood by others.

Vellisca’s monologue is interrupted when another woman appears on stage. She is wearing simple clothing. She grabs the dazed-looking Vellisca by the shoulders, helps her take off her coat, and hugs her. Her words tell the audience that she is the ghost of a

person who is no longer living, and she was Vellisca's close friend: "¿Recuerdas lo que te dije en mi última hora?" The appearance of Julia Conesa's ghost shortly after Vellisca's monologue is symbolic because it gives the impression that Vellisca summoned Conesa's ghost through her thoughts. Conesa's "ghostly traces" in the play represent the larger issue of how atrocities from Spain's past have lingered for thirty years after Spain's transition to democracy and eventually reappeared into public view.

The recollection of these ghostly traces from the past "awakens" old ghosts—much like what the audience witnesses on stage when Vellisca talks about her memories of the past. Paying attention to a ghost from the past—even if the ghosts is a fictive one—can change how a person or a society knows the past (A. Gordon 27). Ghosts can provide insights into how "societies understood themselves, and how they articulated and negotiated religious, social and cultural developments and conflicts" (Gordon and Marshall 3). Tragic and unjust acts that result in the death of innocent individuals—such as what happened to the Thirteen Roses—carry a moral message about the dead and prompt the creation of commemorative acts. These acts of commemoration show the bonds between people who are living and those who are dead, like the bond between Vellisca and Conesa: "Moreover, even beyond an initial period of grief and bereavement, the emotional bonds which link the survivors to the deceased have usually demanded some form of symbolic commemoration, as well as a belief in the continued existence of the dead in some afterlife place or state" (Gordon and Marshall 1). Julia Vellisca commemorates her fallen comrades by visiting the wall. She remembers Conesa and the other women in a positive light and this gives Vellisca hope and inspiration.

When Conesa appears on stage and speaks to Vellisca, she also reminds her—and the audience—that Vellisca is a survivor. Vellisca’s memory and testimony not only tells about her personal experience, but the experiences of many others: “Eres la voz de los que se quedaron sin voz. La voz viva...Eres una voz propia para tanta muerte anónima” (*Las trece rosas* 1.1). Vellisca is part of the same collective group; she is the witness that continues to transmit the group’s experiences and memories. She recalls the events out of a concern for justice and a desire for rectification. Rectification can be achieved by paying attention to the voices of the voiceless, such as hearing the story of Vellisca’s deceased friend.

Ghost stories demonstrate a connection between the past, present, and future because they “not only repair representational mistakes, but also strive to understand the conditions under which a memory was produced in the first place, toward a counter-memory, for the future” (A. Gordon 22). In twenty-first century Spain, the emergence of stories of the war’s vanquished represents the “counter-memory” of the official accounts that had been told during the early years of the transition and, previously, those stories told during Franco’s regime. From 1939 until the last decade of the twentieth century, the voices of the war’s vanquished had been left out of official accounts about the war. Franco’s regime perceived the war as a crusade to restore conservative traditions and Catholic values and publically celebrated only those people who fought and sacrificed their lives for this cause. The transition to democracy brushed over these details in an effort to overlook the human rights abuses that took place during Franco’s dictatorship.

The appearance of Conesa's ghost is an artistic technique to transition the time frame of the play from the present (after the Roses' execution) to the past (before their execution). The scenes that follow Vellisca's "reunion" with her friend's ghost take the audience back to the months before the women were imprisoned. The first act presents Vellisca and the Roses as adolescents, showing how they played games and recited poetry. Other scenes within the first act mark key events during the war and tie these events to the fate of the women. The fall of Madrid, to Franco's forces during the war, prompted the Roses to become involved in the war effort. Because of their participation, they were detained. The second act shows the women in prison and the routines of their daily life: eating, sewing, reading letters from family members, playing games, and singing songs as a way to pass the time. This part of the play also shows the women going to trial, receiving the death penalty, and writing a petition letter. The last scenes of the second act show the women being taken away as Vellisca is left alone on stage. The third act presents the women's last night. The four women offer oral confessions before they are taken to the cemetery. The last scene presents a monologue by Julia Vellisca and then the set darkens and the audience hears the gun shots of the execution.

Remembering the Roses: Educating Audiences about Spain's Cultural Tradition and Oral Acts of Transfer

Bel's play is centered on two main objectives: the preservation and diffusion of the memory of the Thirteen Roses and the act of collective witnessing--learning about violence through live performance. While Spaniards learn about one story from their nation's history, that of the Thirteen Roses, they are also hearing and seeing the performance of other songs and poetry works. Bel's production includes works from

Spain's tradition of oral story-telling to narrate the Roses' story. The use of songs, *romances* and other oral poems shows the audience how stories, such as that of the Roses, have been passed on over time. Vellisca's monologue in the opening scenes includes two songs—"Joven Guardia," the official song for the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas and "No pasarán," a song inspired by the famous phrase by Dolores Ibárruri to describe the need to keep Franco's troops from achieving victory. Vellisca sings the first song with passion. Her eyes are closed and her hand on her chest. These bodily gestures are another component that facilitates the goal of witnessing by allowing the audience to see the physical reactions to trauma and remembering.

The act of singing "Joven Guardia" reminds Vellisca of the collective ideals of the youth organization to which she and the Roses ascribed. Vellisca then sings "No pasarán" after a long silent pause, and with pain displayed on her face. Instead of evoking positive feelings, the song reminds Vellisca of the fact that Franco's troops did triumph, thus resulting in her friends' deaths. As shown in several scenes of the play, music sung by the actresses can create different moods, and these feelings can be transmitted to the audience members who are receptors of these songs. In addition to intensifying the mood—whether joyful or sorrowful--of different scenes, the incorporation of these songs shows the audience some of the oral story-telling traditions of the war and postwar years. The oral recitation of songs helped marginalized victims remember the heroic contributions of those who resisted oppression.

The songs in the first act heighten the audience's awareness of Vellisca's passion for her political ideals, as well as the somber emotions she feels when remembering the loss of the war and the Roses' death. In the second act when the

women are in prison, another song from the time period teaches the audience how music helped prison inmates cope with the harsh conditions. Viewers who know about Ventas prison would be familiar with the comical song, “Cárcel de Ventas,” which was sung as a way to pass the time in prison. The performance of these songs visually represents how stories were transmitted and how beliefs were forged into collective memories in the social framework of the war’s vanquished. The use of these historical songs teaches the audience about the acts of transfer of social memories, along with the traditions of the war’s vanquished. Collective memory of the war’s vanquished during Franco’s totalitarian dictatorship demonstrates the struggle of some citizens against the state’s ideology and against forced forgetting (Connerton 15). Today, the repetition of these songs within the play sustains public knowledge about them and helps their memory to continue in the present. For these reasons, the songs further the goals of collective memory and collective witnessing.

Songs within the play are one technique to convey emotions. Poetry is another form of creative expression to subjectively and creatively describe the world. While poetry can share facts and information, its main goal is emotive: to create feelings and to transmit those feelings to readers and listeners. Theater shares this same purpose; theater of witness, for example, strives to evoke empathy in those who watch a production.

Both poetry and theater of witness inspire emotional reactions in the audience in order to deliver a political message or critique. Oral story-telling was a way to subvert Franco’s conservative politics and maintain hope for a better future. Even though Bel has no direct experience with the atrocities related to the Thirteen Roses, she shows

empathy with their story. She uses her imagination to create and communicate the emotions and bodily sensations of what the women may have experienced—much like a poet.

*Las trece rosas* borrows poetic tropes and symbols from earlier works of poetry, and incorporates other poems in the script to narrate the Thirteen Roses' account. Thus the audience learns not only about the Roses, but also about important components of Spain's cultural tradition. *Las trece rosas* includes oral traditions from the civil war period as well as other historical moments. In the first act, the protagonists recite a children's song that contains a reference to the image of the rose: "Rosa con rosa, clavel con clavel, dime niña, tú ¿a quién salvas? / A la rosa más hermosa del jardín" (*Las trece rosas* 1.2).<sup>44</sup> The song, like the wartime poems about the Thirteen Roses, describes the youthfulness of the women through nature imagery. It is also a symbolic, or perhaps ironic, element in the representation of the Roses' tragedy because the song talks about the need to save the most beautiful rose. The bitter reality is that none of the Roses, even the most beautiful one, could be saved from execution.

In the second act when the women are in prison, Blanca tells the story about what happens when a person dies a violent death in battle, which is another detail that alludes to the Roses' ultimate fate. She refers to the image of the rose and nature: "Su sangre necesita seguir latiendo y rosales silvestres van creciendo allí donde su muerte halla" (*Las trece rosas* 2.6) While her words communicate despair for the people who died in war, they also convey images of hope and replenishment. Blanca's performance on stage mimics the story-telling that took place in Ventas prison after the civil war

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<sup>44</sup> The lyrics of this song share common traits with the well-known children's song in Spain called "Jardinera."

among women war survivors. In *Ventas*, fellow comrades combined the Roses' memory with nature imagery in poetry and recited these poems aloud as a way to maintain solidarity and remember their collective political ideals.

Bel includes *romances* in her play to explain the events that took place in the civil war and to tell about the protagonists' activism. The scene, "Lamentaciones: Coplas por la caída de Madrid," informs the audience about the fall of Madrid. The title refers to a poetic form (*coplas*), which was a common way to deliver information during medieval times. The *romance* was also a popular form of poetry during the civil war. Those who fought on both sides of the war used it to narrate the war's progress: the victories, losses, and sacrifices, in order to motivate soldiers in the fight.<sup>45</sup> The only prop in this scene is a radio, which during the war was a popular form of communication. The radio is symbolic of the oral transmission of news and information during the war—much like how *coplas* and *romances* transmitted information in earlier times.

In the play, the radio is a tool to inform the audience of the events that are unfolding onstage. By listening to the radio, the audience is actively engaged in the production. Blanca and Dionisia stand next to the radio while the voice of an unseen woman speaks about the fall of Madrid as if the words are emanating from the radio. The two women are listening and repeating some of the fragmented statements that come from the radio. They face the audience and listen with distant looks of concentration on their faces. The spectators listen with them, thus turning into participants in the performance. In this moment, the actresses and the spectators are

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<sup>45</sup> A collection of *romances* from the Spanish Civil War can be found in Antonio Ramos-Gascón's *El romancero del ejército popular* (Madrid: Editorial Nuestra Cultura, 1978).

engaged in the same activity of responding and reacting to the historical events as they are announced on the radio. The audience's participation facilitates the goal of collective witnessing. Active participation helps them to better understand and feel the emotions related to the events that are unfolding on stage.

Later in the scene, all of the women on stage participate in the narration of the fall of Madrid. The women help to narrate the death and destruction of this historic event. The women's statements are directed toward the audience. Like the radio, the actresses on stage are the news announcers and the audience members are the listeners. The women repeat descriptions about the death, pain, destruction, and fear that the citizens experienced during this event. In some parts, they phrase their observations in the form of questions that are directed toward the audience: "Dime tú, que pasas por la vida si viste mayor dolor nunca. Si viste una ciudad tan herida" (*Las trece rosas* 1.4). These questions tie the audience to the events on stage and encourage each individual to sympathize, or think more deeply about what they are hearing regarding the fall of Madrid: the images of fear, pain, violence, and death.

The following scene, "Hijas de Madrid: Escena del coro de republicanas," shows the women's political activism after the fall of Madrid. Bel uses the "daughters of Madrid" as a catch phrase to describe the young Roses. The women are united as a collective group--a "family" joined together by their political activism and ideals as "republicanas." Dionisia opens this scene by addressing the other women, calling them daughters of Madrid, and tells them that there is a chance of saving Madrid from Franco: "Hijas de Madrid, ¿habéis oído? Nuestro camarada no está cautivo...la JSU no se ha rendido" (*Las trece rosas* 1.5). Even after the fall of Madrid, the women still have

hope for preserving their communist youth organization, las Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas.

The women line up with their backs to the audience. Each woman turns toward the audience—one at a time--to provide a brief monologue about how they prepared to continue the clandestine fight. Julia's words, for example, provide concrete and useful information to the audience about the life of the Thirteen Roses and how they participated in las Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas: "Hijas de Madrid, ¿habéis oído? que nadie sepa que sois los enlaces del partido." Blanca, Martina, and Dionisia shout their commitment to the cause: "¡Contad conmigo!" (*Las trece rosas* 1.5). Julia Vellisca turns to face the audience, reminding her comrades that their involvement must remain a secret. Martina then faces the audience, and vows her preparedness. Lastly, Dionisia turns to the audience and gives a small hint to the spectator about the tragic actions that will unfold during the rest of the play. Dionisia's words foreshadow the women's tragic fate: "...[P]ero, atended, vosotras, todas, perderéis la libertad" (*Las trece rosas* 1.5). The testimony of each woman is different; however, taken together, they help explain the collective ideals of the group.

The repetition of the women's beliefs strengthens their unity and solidarity, although Bel projects this message through the voice of the Rose who was, historically, the least politically active of the group: Blanca. Blanca was a devout Catholic mother who was sentenced for her husband's connections to a communist supporter. In the play, Blanca describes how "la revolución sólo será codo con codo" (*Las trece rosas* 1.6). By including Blanca in this dialogue about the Roses' political participation, *Las trece rosas* leads the audience to believe that the women had a unanimous commitment

to subversive, political activism. Historically, this was not the case. Nonetheless, Bel projects her subjective understanding of the objectives for which the Roses' fought, as Blanca professes: "Por la democracia, por la justicia, por el pueblo, que sea, de nuevo, el verdadero soberano, yo os convoco, hijas de Madrid, tended las manos" (*Las trece rosas* 1.6). The mention of these values—particularly the images of justice and the sovereign nation—are the same ideals that the contemporary audience can identify and to which they can aspire to improve the future of their country: democracy, freedom, and justice.

In the first act, songs and poetry are used to express uncertainty, optimism, and the Roses' solidarity while living in a time of war and participating in the political events. The second act of the play shows how oral traditions communicated hope and despair in the prison setting. In prison, Dionisia sings a song called "La doncella guerrera."<sup>46</sup> The song is symbolic within the play because the lyrics complement the image of the Thirteen Roses: strong, fearless women who wanted to fight for their political ideals. The use of the *romance* points to the importance of oral tradition within prison life, but also how oral tradition has been responsible for carrying the story of the Thirteen Roses into modern times. Through oral story-telling, the Roses' memory was preserved and transmitted in prisons. The *romance* also functioned as a way for people to deal with the trauma and alienation of prison life and had a prominent place in Spain's cultural tradition. Prison inmates sang familiar songs as a form of comfort while living in the unfamiliar context of the prison setting.

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<sup>46</sup> This is a medieval *romance* written by an anonymous author. It narrates the story of a man who was born in Sevilla who had seven daughters. The youngest wanted to serve in the war and dressed as a man. She named herself don Marcos. The king suspected that don Marcos was a woman, and all of the soldiers were asked to undress—except don Marcos.

Before bedtime, Conesa sings a song that sounds like a bedtime lullaby using a voice filled with emotion. The audience can connect to this familiar nighttime ritual. “El hijo del cerrajero” communicates the themes of hope, love, and loss. The storyline of the song ties in with the theme of how Julia Conesa lost the love of her boyfriend, although surely she continues to miss him: “Enamorada estoy, madre, del hijo del cerrajero...Ojalá viniera el hijo del cerrajero. Ojalá. No me quiere, yo le quiero” (*Las trece rosas* 2.8). The loss of a love interest is another theme to which the audience can relate; many spectators have experienced this type of disappointment and loss. While repetition of the word “ojalá” in the song communicates to the audience a message of hope, the words that come after “ojalá” speak of the disappointment of knowing that the female protagonist in the song is not loved in return.

Hope and despair are running themes in the second act when the women are in prison. One of the scenes shows them looking at the moon in the prison patio at night. Julia Conesa looks at the moon’s crescent shape as a symbol of hope. For Conesa ‘c’ reminds her of the word ‘conmutado’: “La ‘c’ que yo busco para salvarme” (*Las trece rosas* 2.12). She says a prayer to the moon, asking for a “c” next to her name. Blanca, the most religious of all of the women, also speaks to the moon, saying a prayer by tying nature with their fate: “¡Oh, luna, influye en su gesto así que influyes en las mareas!” (*Las trece rosas* 2.12). Dionisia has a less optimistic outlook on the moon: “No es buen presagio que la luna está menguante” (*Las trece rosas* 2.12). Some members of the audience may connect the moon with its symbolic function in poetry, such as that of Federico García Lorca. In García Lorca’s *romances*, the moon often foreshadows death.

The personification of the moon, and how the women talk to it, builds upon the idea of collective witnessing. The moon—an inanimate object—is a silent witness to the women’s struggles. The women talk about their feelings to the moon. Their individual testimonies about their political activism gives the audience insight into their inner thoughts and feelings, not only as victims but also as political agents who fought for democratic freedoms that a contemporary audience can appreciate. These inner thoughts create empathy for them. The communication of these deep feelings continues into the third act of the play. Here, the audience sees and hears the women’s confessions. The four women’s monologues of the third act are all directed toward the audience and summarize some of the common ideals that have been repeated throughout the performance: innocence, victimhood, defiance, and (lastly) surrender. Each woman reflects upon her beliefs and actions that led up to the moment in which she is confessing. All of the women also talk about their family and loved ones—the people that they will be leaving behind. The women’s confessions to the audience invite each spectator to serve as a witness to some of their most intimate thoughts. The audience members participate in the performance as the receivers of each woman’s testimony.

The third act, titled “Última noche,” opens with a spotlight on the stage where the four women draw a circle with a bag of sand. They use the outline of the spotlight on the stage to trace the circle. The audience observes Dionisia pouring the sand very slowly—almost as if she is enacting the idea that time is running out before the execution. The circle of sand serves as a place for the women to offer their confessions.

Dionisia is the first to stand in the middle of the circle. She describes her “alma limpia,” “corazón reluciente,” and her love for life (*Las trece rosas* 3.1). She speaks of

the need for unity to end fascism: “La fraternidad ha de ser el principal apoyo.

Cualquier acto que yo hice, sentí que era un acto para todos” (*Las trece rosas* 3.1) Her words also highlight the selflessness of her actions, along with how she values solidarity as a way to fight Franco. As shown by Dionisia’s confession, Bel’s play promotes solidarity on stage.<sup>47</sup> The sharing of these experiences strengthens the bond of the collective group. Dionisia’s last words remind the audience of her different social roles as a sister, lover, and daughter. These social roles are familiar to the audience. The audience might feel greater empathy by reflecting upon how they might feel as one of Dionisia’s close relatives. Before she finishes her testimony, Dionisia places her scarf on the sand of the circle. The scarf represents an object of memory and testimony. It is also a visual reference that the audience can look at to remember Dionisia.

Martina enters the circle and places her slippers next to the scarf. By the third act, the slippers are a familiar object to the audience. Throughout the play, they have observed Martina sewing these slippers and they represent a cherished object that helped Martina cope with prison life. Martina’s first declaration is that she is not going to confess because she gave all of her words in the name of freedom. Instead, she comments on the loss of her life. Even though she will be gone, other people will continue to live: “Perder [la vida] sin embargo no es detener nada. Que si mi vida se detiene hay muchas otras que avanzan” (*Las trece rosas* 3.2). Her testimonial statement explains the importance of witnessing and collective memory to carry on with the ideals for which she fought. The common message from Dionisia and Martina highlights the

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<sup>47</sup> The audience participates in the creation of solidarity off stage by joining together in the collective experience of watching the play. They also have the opportunity to elaborate on their feelings in the roundtable discussions.

idea that losing their life does not stop their memory or their ideals from being passed on to others. They ask that other people take the responsibility of carrying on the fight for justice. The audience, as witnesses, can reflect upon this request. The need to uphold democracy continues to be a political topic in the twenty-first century. The audience can apply the actresses' thoughts to their understanding of the wars that are taking place today, the political values and motives behind the collective groups that are engaged in these fights, and the loss of life that result from these bloody conflicts. The messages from the Roses' testimonies convey the importance of remembering and being active citizens to maintain democracy and justice, which shows how Bel's play emphasizes the Roses' agency as well as their victimization.

Blanca is the next to enter the circle. She is the most religious of the women and the scene of her confession emphasizes this fact. Her confession is directed toward God; and the religious aspect of her testimony is aligned with the Catholic tradition. She describes her emotions: "Mi corazón está rendido" (*Las trece rosas* 3.3). Blanca conveys her defeat with a play on words involving her name: "Blanca me pusieron de nombre y blanca de mi bandera" (*Las trece rosas* 3.3). The whiteness of her name could also be tied to an image of purity and innocence. The theme of surrender and the image of a white flag are commonly associated with war. Blanca's message to the audience is that innocence can eradicate revenge: "Que todo el mundo sea inocente para que no haya más venganza" (*Las trece rosas* 3.3). Her hope is that everyone will be saved and peace will reign. The social harmony that she describes is another democratic goal.

After Blanca finishes her prayer to God, she removes her cross necklace, kisses it, and places it in a small bag. She leaves the necklace next to the objects that the other

two women left. After Blanca's confession, the audience sees a clear pattern, with each woman leaves an object of memory. The objects that are left on stage are visual replacements for the women who are going to their death. They reinforce the idea of a person's "goneness" after they die.<sup>48</sup> When the audience views these objects, most people can tie these images to their own personal experiences—to objects that have been passed on to them from a relative or friend who is also gone. The Roses' personal possessions serve as a reminder to the audience for how the past is connected to the present, which is a main point that Nora discusses in his analysis of *lieux de mémoire*, *milieux de mémoire*, and acts of memory transmission. The Roses convey how they want their memory—and the memory of the ideals for which they fought—to be passed on to others. The audience members, as the witnesses, share this responsibility.

The last confession, by Julia Conesa, reinforces the need for witnessing and remembering, as the audience observes how she offers her testimony to Julia Vellisca. Both of the women enter the circle and the two women embrace. With a smile and a tone of optimism mixed with seriousness in her voice, Conesa encourages her friend to keep living and to keep singing. While Julia Vellisca expresses guilt for being a survivor, Julia Conesa explains to her the importance of having a witness to the atrocious event: "Porque tienes que dar testimonio de lo que ha pasado. Tú has de ser la guardiana de la memoria...Haz que mi nombre no se borre en la historia" (*Las trece rosas* 3.4). The last phrase of her testimony is the memory that she leaves behind to her

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<sup>48</sup> The protagonists who have finished confessing sit on a bench in the dark, at the far right corner of the stage. They observe the confessions of their other comrades along with the audience. The audience is unable to see their faces, but they are able to observe their presence—despite the fact that they are in the dark. This could be symbolic of the idea that they are present—both observers and victims of injustice.

friend: a request that her name be remembered. The audience, along with Vellisca, is receiving this request and they are remembering Conesa by watching the play.

### The Body as Means to Witness

*Las trece rosas* uses different forms of oral transfer—poetry, songs, and testimonies—as a way to teach the audience about Spain’s social, cultural, and political history, along with the importance of collective witnessing. Bel’s performance also uses the body and the repetition of bodily gestures and movements as another tool to communicate the main themes of the play: the tragedy of the Thirteen Roses, the traumas of war, and the need to remember, preserve, and witness the effects of past violence. In a theater production, the dialogue varies very little between performances. The actresses memorize and deliver the same script. However, communication through gestures gives the actresses the flexibility to perform according to how they feel, and the connection that they are experiencing with an audience. While each gesture has been practiced, the way in which an actress moves—or the intonation she uses in her voice—is never exactly the same between performances. The variations in the delivery of a performance is another reason why theater is more closely connected to Nora’s definition of “authentic memory” as an interactive activity—much like forms of oral story-telling, which also have this same fluidity. The body in Bel’s production has both a practical and symbolic purpose. Through performance, Bel allows for the spirit of the Thirteen Roses to be simultaneously re-remembered and remembered through bodily movement. The notion of ‘body’ can be applied to the audience as well—the audience as a unified “body” of witnesses.

The observation of the live body on stage is not a passive activity. The body in performance is a key component to collective witnessing and for creating empathetic viewers. Patrick Campbell argues that showing pain or discomfort on stage is “authentically experienced (and survived) in live art” (Campbell 13). The spectator experiences these feelings as well. In the theater setting, the feelings that are generated from the production strengthen solidarity among the group of actresses and observers and help form bonds between the two. Theater helps to establish a new community based on a shared experience.

The repeated representation of tragedies such as that of the Thirteen Roses helps to maintain the memory of these events and also serves as an act of commemoration. Paul Connerton writes about the importance of the body—and bodily gestures—to preserve memory and cultural knowledge. For Connerton, knowledge is sustained by ritual, repetition, and performance (Connerton 82). Repetition of communal memories allows for social groups to rediscover new meanings for them. Connerton describes how the repetition of bodily movements, such as gestures, is also a commemorative technique. He names two types of gestures as popular modes to preserve memory: “gestural onomatopoeia (depicting the form of an object, a spatial relationship, or a bodily action) and gestural emblems (representing a visual or logical object by a pictorial or non-pictorial movement which is not morphologically related to the referent)” (Connerton 82). Both of these techniques appear in Bel’s play.

One example of gestural onomatopoeia is the repeated performance of a child's game called "pica-pared."<sup>49</sup> This child game is common in Spain and is a recreational activity that the audience is not only familiar with, but also one with which they can identify. The first presentation of the game "pica-pared"—which takes place in the first act—shows the audience how this is a carefree game played by the young women before the war. Blanca is the first one to count, followed by Dionisia. When Vellisca is tagged and initiates a third game of pica pared, the scene suddenly changes. The lights go dark and "pica-pared" is acted out again, but in slow motion. Vellisca's facial expression conveys fear, uncertainty, and confusion. This transition in the dynamics of the game communicates to the audience how pica-pared initially was a symbol of youthfulness and happiness but by the end of the first act, which shows the onset of the civil war, the game shows the worry, anxiousness, and trauma that stems from living under these conditions. The shift in the game "pica-pared" coincides with the change in the wall—the main prop of the play.

The women play pica-pared again in the second act to show how they pass the time in prison. At the end of the second act, the game is used to show the audience Vellisca's emotional trauma after the Roses are taken away for execution. Vellisca, the witness and survivor, is left alone on stage. She speaks in rhyme to the audience to explain what just happened, and her memory reverts back to the familiar game of pica-pared: "No se las lleven. Sólo somos unas chiquillas. Dejadlas. Venid. Volved. Vamos a

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<sup>49</sup> The game involves one person who faces a wall or a tree while the other participants stand several feet away. The person at the wall counts to three and then says 'pica-pared'. While this person is counting, the other players try to move toward the wall as fast as they can. When the word 'pica-pared' is announced, the players moving toward the wall must stop their movement and stand still. The game continues until one of the players touches the wall. The players have to run back to the starting point and the person who was counting chases them. The first person to get tagged by the counter is the next person who must count.

jugar pica pared” (*Las trece rosas* 3.13). In a moment of desperation, Vellisca hopes that initiating the game will bring the women back.

Pica-pared is one example of how Bel uses the repetition of bodily movements to deliver her own interpretation of the lives and deaths of the Thirteen Roses. The game first embodies the women’s youthfulness and later, when Vellisca is by herself, pica-pared highlights the Roses’ absence, Vellisca’s feelings of abandonment and trauma, and the tragedy of the women’s deaths. Pica-pared is a vector in the play; vectors help spectators create visual links between the different scenes and are the elements that hold a theater production together, “preventing it from total fragmentation” (Pavis 17). Vectors assist in the process of collective witnessing because the spectator becomes familiar with the repeated actions. Furthermore, pica-pared is a popular game in Spain—and audience members may have played this type of game themselves. The game may help tie the audience to the performance by showing an activity that is also part of their own experiences. This familiarity might also assist in creating empathy for Vellisca—the lone survivor—at the end of the play.

Bodily movement and repetitive gestures are also used in other scenes of the play to represent the trauma of the war’s victims. One of the scenes in the first act, “Poema de la guerra / Escena Guernika” shows the five protagonists performing different actions and the audience hears them utter the words of a brief poem. Each line of the poem is one word and three of the words are repeated several times through the poem: sangre, hambre, and roto. The repetition of these words communicates some of the difficulties associated with a civil war: violence, hardship, and social and political divides.

Gestural emblems are part of the performance of the poem. While talking, each of the five protagonists uses bodily movement and repetitive gestures to convey certain actions that are related in the poem. Each woman acts out a different movement; the gestures symbolize the physical and emotional responses to victimization and trauma. The idea of “acting out” these gestures on stage is symbolic of a collective desire in Spain to represent, understand, and come to terms with not only the perspective but also the feelings and emotions of the war’s vanquished. The women’s bodies and movement serve as another tool of representation to show the bodily reactions associated with fear, uncertainty, and pain.

All of the women’s gestures convey signs of physical and emotional distress. Julia Conesa rocks back and forth while Martina is on her knees facing the audience. She is pulling her hair. In the background, Julia Vellisca is spinning in circles. Dionisia is on the ground trembling and Blanca has her hand to her forehead and looks shocked. Martina’s movements in one moment of the scene show that she is holding a baby; the baby is a gestural emblem in the play. The incorporation of the baby in this scene is symbolic of how innocent people—of all ages—suffered during the war. The image of a mother and baby is especially important for collective witnessing. The baby represents the ultimate example of a helpless and innocent victim, and this creates empathy. Many babies were affected by the war. Ventas prison had a section for mothers and their children. Many of the children died in prison due to illness or malnutrition. Mothers were also forced to give up their babies for adoption. The babies of war prisoners were often given to nationalist families. Thus, the image of the baby can represent several of the tragic effects that the war, and the social divides related to it, had on families and

the youngest, most innocent and impressionable citizens who ultimately represented the future of Spanish society.

While the scenes of the first act use bodily gestures to communicate the effects of war and violence on the body, the scenes found in the first part of the second act use the repetition of bodily gestures to communicate to the audience the daily monotony of prison life in Ventas. The thirteen “routines” of the second act represent the basic activities that took place in the prison setting. The women use bodily gestures to act out how they go to bed, get up and dress for the day, eat putrid lentil soup, sing songs and play games, sew clothing as a way to pass the time, study and write letters to family members, and spend time in the prison patio.

The series of prison routines are activities that many individuals do on a daily basis. The appearance of familiar objects or gestures in a play is part of a process that Marvin Carlson calls ‘recycling,’ which is another important element in the creation and solidification of a collective memory and acts of memory transmission. For Carlson, ‘recycling’ takes place in the theater setting when audience members are able to connect what they are seeing with “other structures of experience” (Carlson 4). The audience can note the familiarity of some of these routines; however, the stage set—the dark wall with a window with bars—shows that these routines take place in a setting that is probably unfamiliar to most of the spectators. The play brings together components that are ‘familiar’ to the audience and some that are unfamiliar. The familiar aspects of the performance—the gestures that are being performed on stage—help to connect the representation of the past with some of the daily routines that people do in the present. The audience can use some of these familiar gestures and connect them to their own

lives to better understand the situation and the feelings of the women prisoners, who represent courageous political agents and victims that they see on stage.

At the beginning of the second act, eight separate routines are acted out in silence. Each one lasts a few seconds. The silent routines provide a quick overview of the women's daily actions in prison. Following the silent routines, Blanca sings a very emotional song with a melancholic tone. Her voice communicates her sorrow, and she uses the same pitch and style as flamenco music to deliver her message. The words of the song explain to the viewer that the women are in prison: "Ay, en el patio de la cárcel ha vuerto el sol a lo arto..." (*Las trece rosas* 2.1). Much like the function of music in film, the song helps to create a certain feeling or atmosphere—one of isolation and sadness. In Spain, flamenco music has been associated with the hardships of prison life.<sup>50</sup> For the audience, it is a familiar and long-standing regional tradition mostly in southern Spain; Blanca's performance of a flamenco song seems out of place, coming from a woman who lives in Madrid. Nonetheless, flamenco performances are used to express feelings of pain and sorrow, which assists in communicating a specific message to the audience. While singing, Blanca describes her desire for sunlight—which is a stark contrast to the appearance of the darkness of the prison setting on stage.

After Blanca's song, the routines of prison life are repeated again—but they also include dialogue. The act of sewing is one of the themes that is highlighted in the dialogue and gestures of the play. Sewing in the play has both a practical and poetic function. In the second act, two of the routines show the women sewing and through the dialogue in these two moments, the audience learns about the women's earlier

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<sup>50</sup> In his book, *Ghosts of Spain: Travels through Spain and Its Silent Past* (2007), Giles Tremlett includes a chapter on flamenco music's influence in Spanish prison culture.

involvement in sewing uniforms for the troops. In prison, the women continued to sew as well—although not for the troops. In prison, sewing was a means for women to pass the time in prison, but it also served as a way for prisoners to support their families.

During this time period of the civil war, sewing was a traditional task for women, and a way for them to contribute to the war effort. The routine, “Rutina – costura / Escena Dedales,” is a monologue where Martina speaks about her political participation through sewing. She explains that before her incarceration, she made suits for Republican soldiers. She proudly fought against fascism through sewing, even though her actions caused injury: “A cada puntada, yo le insuflaba una buena puntería. Y yo ya hería a más de un sublevado, a más de un traidor con mi labor” (*Las trece rosas* 2.3). Martina associates the act of sewing with the consequences of violence—including injury to herself and her surroundings: “Hería la nieve y herían las balas. Y creo que herían también las lágrimas que no lloraban. Pero sobre todo a mí me hería sentir en ese traje que yo cosía ya casi el latido de quien se lo pondría ¿y viviría?” (*Las trece rosas* 2.3). The repetition of the verb ‘herir,’ which means ‘to wound,’ reinforces the message about the damaging effects of the war’s violence. At the same time, Martina explains that this violence was necessary to eradicate fascism, and she proudly contributes to this effort through sewing: “¡Cuántos dedales debí clavar en el pecho de los nacionales” (*Las trece rosas* 2.3). Martina’s pride in her political activism, and for opposing fascism, shows the perspective of a person who is aware that her actions perpetuate violence, and yet they are necessary. She feels empowered by subverting a traditionally female domestic chore and converting it into an act that promotes political agency.

The act of sewing is used to describe the Roses' thoughts, actions, and feelings about their participation in the war. When the women confess prior to the execution, they use images related to sewing to describe their fear and mortality. Dionisia tells the audience how she feels unraveled: "Siento que tengo las venas descocidas y que ya no es posible remendarlas, tan sólo amarlas hasta el momento de la descarga." In a different confession, Martina uses a sewing reference to describe how people are interconnected—joined together by a string: "Estamos cosidos, unos a otros, por el hilo de la vida. Por la costura de la sangre. Por el cordón en la madre. Por el nudo en la hija...Estamos todos cosidos hasta que alguien corta el hilo" (*Las trece rosas* 3.2). When the chord of life is cut, this connection is gone. Martina's description alludes to the interconnectedness of humanity. People are connected or "sewn" together through different social groups. The violence and pain inflicted upon a person affects many others.

*Las trece rosas* presents the story of the Thirteen Roses—an account about thirteen individual women—and how it is woven into the larger tapestry of Spanish Civil War and Spanish history. Sewing can also be used to describe the strong social, political, and ideological divides of the nation's civil war, as Dionisia explains in "Escena del hilo rojo": "La tierra entonces es una tela atravesada por los hilos del odio. Y las balas cosen. Cosen como agujas mortíferas" (*Las trece rosas* 2.6). At the end of the same scene, Blanca makes a reference to sewing to describe the war as one awful cross stitch: "Terrible bordado es la guerra. Todo queda desbordado de sangre y madeja" (*Las trece rosas* 2.6). Through sewing imagery, *Las trece rosas* encourages the audience to make connections between violent wars of the past and how they may relate

to the present, and the particular role of women as both victims and agents in their collective trauma.

Through sewing, Bel also communicates the message of how women's historical participation and Spain's oral traditions are "sewn"—or tied—to Spain's current democracy. By featuring five female protagonists in the play, she also celebrates the historical contributions of women. Sewing has been a term used by feminists, such as Hélène Cixous, to describe how women's literary creations weave together writing and the woman's voice: "Femininity in writing can be discerned in a privileging of the *voice*: *writing and voice...are woven together*" (Moi 112). Cixous explains that when a woman speaks, she communicates her voice: "She physically materializes what she's thinking; she signifies it with her body" (Moi 112). Bel's theater production provides this opportunity to represent—through the body and words—the heroic acts of women. Julia Kristeva comments on how weaving and sewing of different symbols allows for history to be rewritten: "Everything written today unveils either the possibility or impossibility of reading and rewriting history. This possibility is evident in the literature heralded by the writings of a new generation, where the text is elaborated as *theater* and as *reading* (Kristeva 86). Just like the women in the play, Bel weaves together historical fact with different genres to create a new artistic creation. By putting together pieces of information from the past, Bel creates a *lieu de mémoire* that helps to preserve this information and allows the audience to better understand the collective trauma of Spanish contemporary history and how it relates to the present.

The act of collectively witnessing a live performance about war, violence, and tragedy changes the way people view all three of these topics. The audience members

are encouraged to interact and react to what they see on stage, thus turning them from passive spectators to active ones. Through watching and reflecting upon theater, Bel not only pays homage to the Thirteen Roses but also reclaims their memory. She promotes a sense of community and a commitment to social change through a renewed effort to understand these past tragedies and learn from them. The story of the Thirteen Roses contains a political message that teaches the audience about the perils of extreme politics. *Las trece rosas* can be used to undermine oppression. Bel accomplishes this by using the voices of strong women—those that have been left out of official history.

Cultural productions, including Bel's play, serve as symbolic weapons against historical amnesia. By performing stories about the war's victims, *Las trece rosas* is expanding and altering Spain's historical memory and changing the way that citizens view Spain's current democracy by showing how women fought to uphold some of the democratic values that Spanish citizens today take for granted. The play fulfills the public interest in learning more about marginalized aspects of the past and rectifies, through representation and witnessing, the tragedy of some of the war's heroines and victims.

Trope into a Cultural Commodity

The numerous representations of the life and death of the Thirteen Roses in the last three decades show an increased interest among artists and the general public to tell stories about the marginalized, and sometimes tragic, aspects of the Spanish Civil War. During and after Spain's transition to democracy, Spanish cinema played a role in this trend as well, with some films representing the Republican perspective.<sup>51</sup> Citing Barry Jordan and Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas, David Archibald noted that more than half of the three-hundred historical films produced in Spain between 1970 and 2000 present themes related to the Second Republic, the Civil War, or Franco's dictatorship (Archibald 76). In his analysis, Archibald suggests that "the country's recent past has become a rich historical seam for Spanish film-makers" (Archibald 76). These film-makers have used both documentary and fiction film to analyze and interpret the past.

Some of the films about the civil war are adaptations of literary works, including José Sanchís Sinisterra's play *Ay, Carmela!* (adapted by Carlos Saura in 1990), Manuel Riva's *La lengua de las mariposas* (adapted by José Luis Cuerda in 1999), and Javier Cercas' *Soldados de Salamina* (adapted by David Truba in 2003). This tendency has continued in the twenty-first century with the film adaptation of Carlos Fonseca's historical account *Las trece rosas rojas*, which was adapted by directors Emilio Martínez-Lázaro and Pedro Costa in 2007. Like other contemporary artistic works, these film productions contribute to the formation of the nation's historical memory by reconstructing aspects of the past using a retrospective point of view. These visual

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<sup>51</sup> David Archibald states that Carlos Saura's *La prima angélica* (1974) was one of the first films to show the perspective of the war's vanquished.

representations provide the opportunity to impart values and educate present and future generations.

Not all films, however, share this same goal. The film directors of *Las 13 rosas*, for instance, use the Roses' story as an artistic trope to capitalize on Spain's recent past and manipulate it to create a marketable commodity. *Las 13 rosas* turns the Roses' trope away from a valuable collective memory, which had circulated among those who sympathized with the story or the communist political ideals tied to it, and transforms it into a product that scarcely values the importance of preserving the Roses collective memory and the values that the women embodied. *Las 13 rosas* uses the story for its exchange-value—its ability to earn a profit. The story possesses dramatic potential that allows filmmakers to alter the Roses' story to make it appealing, and desirable, to a wide range of viewers.

Commodification within the cultural industry was addressed by Theodor Adorno in his writings on mass culture. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which Adorno co-authored with Max Horkheimer in 1947, analyzes the products of cultural industry. For Adorno, the topic of commodity went beyond capitalism's economic framework and affected cultural life as well. Adorno believed that “products of the cultural industry were enmeshed inextricably in capitalist modes of production, distribution, and exchange” (Cook 27).<sup>52</sup> Cultural goods are valued for their “profit motive” (Cook 29). The usefulness of commodities is determined by their exchange-value, defined as a social need or demand for a certain product: “In cultural commodities, exchange-value has

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<sup>52</sup> Adorno cites several examples of cultural works that have been commodified: pocket novels, films off the rack, television shows; all of these products serve to publish information and are also stress-reducing outlets for consumers.

become a substitute for use-value, serving as a kind of ersatz or counterfeit use-value, the object of enjoyment” (Cook 29). The exchange-value of a product is not connected so much to the product’s *utility*, but rather to its *desirability*. In the case of the Thirteen Roses film, the public must want to pay money to watch it. This public demand is what determines the film’s exchange-value.

The cultural industry of the twentieth century is tailored for mass consumption by consumers with the end goal of making a profit. Films that are produced and marketed for a broad demographic, and with the hope of making lucrative profit, invoke the past in specific ways in order to meet specific ends—especially economic ones. In the process of commodifying the Roses’ memory, the women and the historical events that took place in 1939 are depolitized in the film. The components of the movie that seem foreign or unusual to a contemporary audience, such as a strong dedication to communism, are downplayed and replaced by a more general interpretation of the fight against fascism. This differs greatly from the application of the Roses’ trope in other genres; postwar oral story-telling and poetry used the Roses’ memory to encourage women war survivors who shared the same political ideals to continue with the fight; the trope functioned to create a mood of communist solidarity and unity.

The depolitization and commodification of the Roses’ memory creates a completely different “mood”—one in which collective memory and political solidarity are replaced by the desire for escapism and entertainment.<sup>53</sup> Adorno’s perception of commodification is based upon Marx’s definition of a commodity, “an external object, a thing which through its qualities satisfies human needs of whatever kind” (Cook 28).

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<sup>53</sup> In *Tropics of Discourse*, Hayden White explains that a trope can be considered a figure of speech or in music theory, it can serve as a “mood” or “measure.”

Escapism as a “human need” is an important component in making a story appealing for the consumer. Best-selling novels, songs, and blockbuster films follow a specific formula for standardization, where consumers can connect with familiar clichés, patterns in the plot, and social stereotypes.

In *Las 13 rosas*, the Roses’ trope is turned into a “good, entertaining story,” equipped with suspense, romance, and tragedy. The film’s plot nostalgically shows how the women put up “a good fight” against fascism, but omits concrete details about their political beliefs. Instead, the plot focuses on showing the “hard times” of the war and Spanish society’s yearning to recuperate the nation’s economic vitality. Like other commodified cultural products, the film’s end goal is to make the audience comfortable and offer entertainment that is appealing and enjoyable, rather than shocking and radical. To gain the interest of a wide public, *Las 13 rosas* is only very loosely based on historical fact—which is similar to Ferrero’s fictional account about the thirteen women. The film’s plot relies on fantasy and fabrication to present the Roses’ story. The producers selected sexy actresses and created action-packed scenes with exaggerated suspense and drama. In the film, the memory of the Thirteen Roses is both selective and strategic, eliminating the undesirable aspects of the memory in order to focus on ones that are more favorable, useful, and entertaining in the present.

This chapter presents the various techniques that film directors Emilio Martínez-Lázaro and Pedro Costa use to commodify the Roses’ story: 1) the film’s narrative techniques manipulate black and white photographic images to create a feeling of authenticity and later impose color and movement onto these images to make the visual representation of the past seem closer to the present and the film’s twenty-first century

audience; 2) The marketing materials for the film show how the directors incorporate twenty-first century trends and styles in the film to make it more appealing to a general public; 3) the film “softens” the historical reality and generates nostalgia for the past through the use of two fictional narrators, action, and drama; 4) music is manipulated in the film to create a pleasant, rather than stressful, mood for the audience; 5) lastly, graphic violence is omitted from the film because it does not fit into the goals of creating a marketable commodity. The *Roses*’ commodification fits into a tendency in Spanish film after Spain’s transition to democracy—a trend that teaches audiences very little about the Spanish Civil War and instead distorts this historical period to show a more nostalgic view of the past. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, representations about the Spanish Civil War that target a wide audience contribute to Spain’s “nostalgia industry” (Martin-Márquez 746). Many of these representations avoid in-depth explanations of the political ideologies or conflicts that provoked the Spanish Civil War. Instead, they present a more generalized interpretation of the war, showing it as a polarized fight between two sides.

In *Las 13 rosas*, the depoliticization of the Thirteen Roses plays a role in creating nostalgia about their story. Marvin D’Lugo explains that depoliticization is often part of the Spanish nostalgia genre, which “regularly transforms the politically-charged periods of the Civil War and immediate post-war periods into the *mise-en-scene* of narratives that have little to do with politics or history in the conventional sense” (Archibald 77).<sup>54</sup> One consequence that Susan Martin-Márquez notes in nostalgic

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<sup>54</sup> *Libertarias* (Vicente Aranda, 1996); *Tierra y libertad* (Ken Loach, 1995), and *Lengua de las mariposas* (José Luis Cuerda, 1999) are three examples of historical docudramas about the Spanish Civil War that downplay the complex political circumstances in their filmic representation of this time period.

representations of the past is that they “may function to avoid an intellectually and ethically rigorous engagement with the Francoist past” (Martin-Márquez 747).

This nostalgic vision of history goes hand in hand with some Spanish fiction writing that was produced in the 1980s and thereafter. In her article “La mitificación de la guerra civil como proceso semiótico,” Maryse Bertrand de Muñoz writes about how the Spanish Civil War functions as a backdrop for entertainment for several contemporary novels: “La guerra civil ya no sirve más que de pretexto, si bien es absolutamente necesaria al desarrollo de la trama” (Muñoz 40).<sup>55</sup> Unlike the literary production that was published during Franco’s regime, these novels do not use the war to justify a particular ideology (Muñoz 40). Instead, the war is portrayed with “una vision sin odio ni partidismo de la lucha fratricida del 1936-1939...” (Muñoz 44). Muñoz points out how the war has been depoliticized in these novels and represents more of a myth than a historical event: “Un mito implica la carencia, el detenimiento total del tiempo, simple relata acontecimientos que han tenido lugar en un pasado lejano y fabuloso” (Muñoz 42).<sup>56</sup> Muñoz’s analysis concludes that some novels about the war have very few direct references to the conflict. Instead, the action about the war in contemporary Spanish novels could be applied to any fight: “El resto de la historia podría desarrollarse en cualquier conflicto bélico. Así la contienda civil se convierte en un acontecimiento que ha quedado en el imaginario colectivo, en un mundo mítico del cual se recuerda sólo un ambiente de odio, de maldad, de revancha” (Muñoz 42). Muñoz’s ideas can be applied to contemporary historical ‘docudramas’ about the past, including *Las 13 rosas*.

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<sup>55</sup> Muñoz refers to *Mazurca para dos muertos* by Cela, *Luna de lobos* by Llamazares, and *Beatus Ille* by Muñoz Molina.

<sup>56</sup> In her analysis of *Mazurca para dos muertos*, she states “el partidismo, la pasión política han desaparecido en este libro...” (Muñoz 41).

To add to this, Susan Martin-Márquez notes that many recent film adaptations of novels about the civil war conflict provide “filmic representations of Francoist hellfire and brimstone” and sometimes “Second Republic prelapsarianism” (Martin-Márquez 745). David Archibald describes these interpretations as “sugar coated history” because they provide a wistful view of the Second Republic and the civil war—a fight to uphold the Republic’s social and political goals. For Archibald, Franco’s right-wing myths of the past are being dismantled. They are also being replaced by different kinds of myths about the past—ones that brush over the political details of the conflict to create more appealing story lines. There is a demand for these types of stories, as Martin-Márquez observes: “[S]oft history, however, particularly when coupled with soft porn, sells” (Martin-Márquez 746).

*Las 13 rosas* uses both “soft history” and “soft porn” in the commodified presentation of the Roses’ life and death. These two techniques explain the success of the film to attract a broad audience. The manipulation of the Roses’ trope, which omits the political ideology and adds romantic undertones, softens the public perception of the war. The film takes away the seriousness of the catastrophic event, making what happened seem almost trivial for people who have very little knowledge or contact with this aspect of the nation’s past.

#### Creating a Sexy Image: Photography, Music, and Make-up in *Las 13 rosas*

The opening credits of *Las 13 rosas* uses black and white photographic images to set the premise for the presentation of the Roses’ account, and also as a technique to connect the twenty-first audience to the Spanish Civil War. The photographs show a variety of scenes from 1939, all related to the war, and of people of all ages: soldiers

marching, women at work, children playing outside. The presentation of these images reminds the audience of the diverse number of individuals that lived during this time period—all of whom were affected by the war. It is unclear whether or not the photographs used in the opening credits of the film are authentic. Nonetheless, the implementation of black and white photography in *Las 13 rosas*, with classical music playing, creates a feeling of authenticity. It also sets the nostalgic tone for remembering a past that is gone, even for a young audience member who knows little about this earlier time period.

The technique of using and manipulating old photographs in film was popularized by Ken Burns, an American director and producer of documentary films including *The Civil War* (1990) and *The National Parks: America's Best Idea* (2009). Burns uses a technique to show black and white photographs “as if they were moving pictures, panning and zooming within the frame, shifting back and forth between long shots, medium shots, and close-ups while correspondingly handling live shots as if they were photographs” (Edgerton 53). Often, the presentation of old photographs in Burns’s documentaries is set to music—usually compositions from the time period. The collage of Burns’s narrative techniques functions to “create the illusion that the viewer is being transported back in time, literally finding an emotional connection with the people and events of America’s past” (Edgerton 54). They also target viewers’ emotions and provide a romantic vision of the past.

The opening credits of *Las 13 rosas* do not use black and white images to take the audience back in time in the same way as Burns does; however, the film directors alter black and white images to create a similar emotional connection to the past. Once

the photographs appear on screen in *Las 13 rosas*, they are infused with color and then they show the subjects in motion. This gives the audience the impression that the people in them “come to life” with color and movement. Thus, the film uses digital techniques to rejuvenate the past and the legacy of the Spanish Civil War, bringing them closer to the present through the application of color.<sup>57</sup>

In his assessment of film, Roland Barthes describes the use of color as “an artifice, a cosmetic, like the kind used to paint corpses” (Barthes 81). The application of color and movement onto black and white photos of an earlier time period in *Las 13 rosas* is symbolic of how film directors manipulate the view of the past and adjust it to fit modern tastes. Paul Grainger notes this pattern in the film *Pleasantville* (1998), a movie produced and directed by Gary Ross and is considered a black-and-white 50s sitcom. In *Pleasantville*, the past is represented through black and white images, whereas scenes that take place at the end of the twentieth-century, or integrate present-day values, are depicted with color images. Commenting on *Pleasantville*, Grainger observes: “[W]hen present values intrude on the past, colour begins to appear” (Grainger 205).<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Roland Barthes discusses the transformation of the photograph into cinema—with the latter based upon the former. When a photograph becomes animated, it becomes cinema: “[I]n the Photograph, something *has posed* in front of the tiny hole and has remained there forever (that is my feeling); but in cinema, something *has passed* in front of this same tiny hole: the pose is swept away and denied by the continuous series of images: it is a different phenomenology, and therefore a different art which begins here, though derived from the first one” (Barthes 78).

<sup>58</sup> In his article “Colouring the Past: *Pleasantville* and the textuality of media memory,” Paul Grainger writes about the use of color in the film *Pleasantville*, which uses “digital techniques of colour conversion to affect a political allegory about the legacy and significance of the 1960s” (Grainger 203). Grainger concludes that the mixing of black and white and color images affects cultural memory. *Pleasantville* serves as a means for “reflective engagement, intervention and re-constellation of history’s semiotised traces” (Grainger 209).

The application of color and movement to black and white images in *Las 13 rosas* is not the only technique that the film director uses as a way to connect the past with the present. The make-up and hair-dos of the actresses remain faithful to the time period of the film, but Martínez-Lázaro explains that he also wanted the visual representation of the time period to conform to contemporary interests: “[E]l maquillaje y la peluquería en general no deben traicionar la época pero deben hacerlo mínimamente para que los gustos de entonces no interfieran con la imprescindible identificación del espectador con nuestras heroínas” (Meseguer 94). Martínez-Lázaro’s concerns about the contemporary audience shows a clear intentionality to create a marketable product with the Roses’ story; the director’s goal is not to produce a film that would isolate the twenty-first audience from what they are viewing on screen. He wants them to be able to connect to what they are viewing and enjoy what they are seeing. Instead of unifying the audience around a set of common ideals or shared values, he reaches out to the audience using aesthetic techniques such as hair-dos.

The marketing of the film further demonstrates the producers’ desire to incorporate modern tastes into the Thirteen Roses film in order to market the film to a mass public. Shortly after the film came out, the front page of the cultural section of *El País* featured a color foldout photo of the actresses featured in the film posing on different steps of a ladder. To reinforce this marketing tactic, the *El País* article makes a bold declaration that praises the film’s contribution to preserving the Roses’ memory, stating that “esa historia de futuros truncados... ha sido...elevada a la senda de la memoria gracias al cine” (Ruíz Mantilla 46). The analysis of other factors of the film points to how this representation contributes very little to the process of preserving the

factual details about the Roses' lives, especially their political beliefs and social convictions.

In the foldout photo, the focus is clearly aimed at the fashionable, sexy clothing that the young actresses are wearing and how they are seductively posed on the ladder. All of the women are smiling, yet the caption reads: "Escalera hacia el cielo: Trece jóvenes actrices dan vida a uno de los episodios más crueles de la represión franquista." The light-hearted image of the actresses contradicts the seriousness of their story, with the women paying the ultimate price for their political ideals. The photo caption neglects to explain with any detail why the Roses' story is considered "one of the most cruel moments of Franco's repression," nor does the photo provide any explanation. In fact, the women's smiling faces appear to communicate the opposite message. The producers capitalize on the youthfulness of the women to transform the Roses' memory into a sexy commodity—an appealing consumer product. Both the visual image and the photo caption turn the audience's attention away from the politics of the event and Franco's repression, the unjustness and the tragedy of the execution in order to focus on the aesthetic components of the film's representation. For younger generations, the civil war is not a familiar setting, and the way in which the actresses are clothed—in contemporary outfits—helps generate a modern appeal for this war story but simultaneously weakens the connection between the film's representation and the historical significance behind the actual event.

In an interview, Martínez-Lázaro explains that the actresses had little knowledge about the politics of the civil war (or the Roses), but yet their collaboration in the production changed the way that they viewed politics: "Los actores jóvenes están muy

despolitizados. Pero después de este trabajo han cambiado en eso mucho. Les estremeció” (“Las 13 rosas: Escrito en la historia” 3). This points to yet another contradiction within the film: the goal of the producers was to leave out the politics of the past event, yet somehow the process of acting out the tragedy made the actresses more self aware about it. What was presented on screen, however, did not provoke the audience to engage in this same reflective process by watching the film.

The film includes scenes that show two narrators—two young boys. These boys reappear throughout the film as the *picaros* of the story. Their function is to add comic relief to the plot and soften the gravity of the political divisions of the time period.<sup>59</sup> The boys first appear in a scene on the outskirts of Madrid, throwing rocks at a bomb that they discovered near an abandoned shed. The presence of these naive children in the plot gives the viewer the impression that they know nothing about the seriousness of a war; thus guiding the audience to turn away from learning much about the difficult circumstances of this time period. In other scenes, the same boys are shooed away by a construction worker who is helping to build a large marble statue in the streets of Madrid. Because the dialogue does not clearly explain the significance of this scene, audience members could easily be distracted by the two boys and overlook how the statue symbolizes the city’s physical transformation with the arrival of Franco’s troops and the dictator’s ascent to power.

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<sup>59</sup>José Luis Cuerda’s *La lengua de las mariposas* is a film adaptation that uses the perspective of a young boy to nostalgically show the outbreak of the civil war in 1936. Scholars such as David Archibald point to how this narrative approach, portraying the war through the naïve view of a child, has been successful with the public: “This heavily formulaic film also attests to the remarkable on-going box office success of a particular packaging of events surrounding the Spanish Civil War, in which political allegiances are clearly and predictably drawn (the film was picked for US distribution by Miramax, and played on screens in New York City for a remarkable seven months) (Martín-Márquez 746).

In addition to these distracting subplots, the film's producers rely on music to manipulate the audience's emotional connection to what they are viewing. *Las trece rosas* features three songs from the time period. However, the political and social purposes of each song is downplayed and never mentioned. Instead, the songs serve only as tropes to create certain moods at different moments in the film. In several scenes, "Cara al Sol" is used to demonstrate Franco's authoritarianism. The film shows how Spanish society was forced to celebrate Franco at public gatherings and also in Ventas prison—much like how Germans paid their respect to Hitler.<sup>60</sup>

At the end of the movie when the Roses are being taken to the cemetery for execution, they sing a song familiar to many Republican sympathizers, "Joven Guardia." The song is used to create a mood that shows the Roses' defiance as they are being transported to the execution site; however, the film makes no mention of the fact that "Joven Guardia" was the official theme song of the JSU—the youth organization to which the Roses belonged. The film only includes the first part and the chorus of the song: "Somos la joven guardia que va forjando el porvenir. Nos templó la miseria, sabremos vencer o morir. Noble es la causa de libertad al hombre de su esclavitud. Quizá el camino hay que regar con sangre de la juventud. Qué esté en guardia, que esté en guardia. El burgués insaciable y cruel. Joven guardia, joven guardia, no le des ni cuartel..." The script leaves out the last verse that describes the organization's political beliefs: "Mañana por las calles, masas en triunfo marcharán. Ante la guardia roja los

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<sup>60</sup> The song "Cara al Sol" is one of three historical songs that appear in the film—adding minimal historical depth to the narrative. When the Roses are in Ventas prison, the women sing "Cárcel de Ventas" and on the way to the execution—similar to the historical reality, as told through first-person testimonies—the women sing the JSU's theme song, "Jóven Guardia." While these songs are incorporated into the visual representation, their political significance is diluted and tempered with more entertaining scenes.

poderosos temblarán. Somos los hijos de Lenin, y a vuestro régimen feroz el comunismo ha de abatir con el martillo y con la hoz.” The political references are vital communist symbols and for this reason, the film omits them.

The third song—and the most important example for how music was used in the film to manipulate and depoliticize the mood—is the French song, “J’attendrai,” which was used in a scene early in the movie when the Roses are listening to an orchestra play in a bar. Enrique, the husband of Blanca, one of the Roses, is the lead singer.<sup>61</sup> Blanca was 29 years old at the time of her death. She was the oldest of the Roses and had an eleven year-old son, also named Enrique. Composed by Dino Olivieri, “J’attendrai” was one of the greatest hits of the 1930s and 40s. The violin part of the song and jazzy melody create a nostalgic and wistful mood; this type of music often plays in period films, especially those from the 1920s. The lyrics tell a story of love and loss: the tragedy of a lover who is gone and the hope of seeing this person again. The film uses the song to generate a nostalgic mood of Madrid in 1939, yet it offers no mention of the other historical uses tied to this particular song—especially the song’s connection to the victims of fascism.<sup>62</sup> Many viewers, especially war survivors, were offended by the use of this song in the film.

### Remebering Five Depoliticized Heroines

*Las 13 rosas* focuses on the lives of five female protagonists (five of the Thirteen Roses): Carmen, Virtudes, Adelina, Julia, and Blanca. The film is divided into

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<sup>61</sup> “J’attendrai” also plays on the official website for the Thirteen Roses film, <http://www.las13rosas.com/>.

<sup>62</sup> In his book *El ahorcamiento*, Jean Laffitte explains that this song was played in the Nazi concentration camp, Mauthassen. The Nazi prison guards organized an orchestra—likely comprised of Jewish prisoners. When a prisoner was caught after trying to escape, they were executed. Around the time of the execution, the orchestra was forced to play this song. More than 7,000 Republican soldiers were sent to Mauthausen as prisoners of war; this song is familiar to Spanish war survivors.

three parts: the presentation of the main characters, the prison scenes, and the execution scene. The beginning scenes show two women (Carmen and Virtudes) speaking to a small crowd on soapboxes. The conversation is centered on the women's antifascist ideals and the need to stay and fight in Madrid. Through the commotion in city streets—and a short reference to the Moors—an audience member familiar with the general history of the Spanish Civil War would know that the women's speech and the panic in the streets are driven by a fear of Franco and fascism; however, the details of the politics are not highlighted. The JSU's mission to promote education for working class people is also neglected.<sup>63</sup> Instead, the first scenes of the film convey how two women are pitted against the seemingly dangerous social and political circumstances of the time period: two women are fighting for an ambiguous and nebulous “greater good.”

A comparison between *Las 13 rosas* and Fonseca's *Las trece rosas rojas*, the account that inspired the film, demonstrates how the film eradicated the historical significance of the women's political agency. In his account, Fonseca explains that “las chicas tenían reservado un papel fundamental, el de enlaces, por una mera cuestión de seguridad” (Fonseca 67). Instead of highlighting the importance of women's contributions, the film only shows scarce details about the Roses' political involvement. In the film, the women wear a ribbon on their cardigans as an antifascist symbol, but the movie does not go into greater detail about the JSU's political mission. The avoidance of these details demonstrates the film's approach to the politics of the Roses' story.

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<sup>63</sup> Fonseca explains that the JSU's mission was to defend Madrid and help educate the people in nearby towns who could not read or write. One of the main challenges for the party was finding young people who were willing to work toward this goal during a climate of fear: “Se trataba de ir captando a jóvenes de reorganizar la JSU, ni más ni menos. Casi nadie quería porque había mucho miedo” (76).

The film subverts the women's political activism by showing how the Roses compromised their beliefs for their own comfort. This type of representation is typical of a commodified production. Adorno writes about the use of clichés, or predictable patterns in a story, that alert the viewer to expect certain events to unfold during the program or movie (Cook 45-46). This predictability enhances the product's appeal because the audience can comfortably recognize, and enjoy, these patterns instead of feeling traumatized by abrupt or violent images.

One scene, for example, shows an air raid of Madrid where planes fly overhead and drop packages of bread from nationalist forces. Adelina, one of the Roses, encourages others to not eat the bread. Yet when she realizes that no one is paying attention, she takes a bite of bread. Although her action adds comedy to the plot, this scene also shows how one of the Roses compromises her political beliefs because of her hunger. Another scene shows the women spreading anti-Franco propaganda to a line of people waiting for food in front of the *Auxilio Social*. The flyers, which read "Menos Franco, más pan blanco," provide little description of any political beliefs and serve as poor historical examples of leftist propaganda from the war. The women's subversive behavior in this scene is replaced, as the camera switches to show the suspenseful police chase where four of the women who committed the defiant act are rushing to get away from police. The police chase represents a thrilling form of escapism for the audience. This adds an entertainment, comfort, and predictability to the film's plot.

The film represents five of the Thirteen Roses (Carmen, Virtudes, Adelina, Julia, and Blanca ) and leaves out three of the Roses who were most politically involved: Pilar Bueno Ibáñez, Dionisia Manzanero, and Joaquina Laffite. Carlos

Fonseca's interpretation of the Roses' judicial brief ('sumario 30.426') explains Pilar's political motives and a passion for her work. The film omits any mention of the concrete details that Fonseca writes in his account.<sup>64</sup> Dionisia Manzanero is another one of the Roses that was omitted from the short list of main characters in *Las 13 rosas*, as well as Joaquina Laffite.<sup>65</sup> Dionisia was the only *miliciana* of the group; she took up arms prior to joining the JSU. According to Fonseca, Joaquina had a leadership position in the JSU; she was in charge of the JSU's youth clubs. The film leaves out the details that the JSU was more than a political organization. It also served as a center for artistic, cultural, and sport activities. Carmen was another leader in the JSU and a strong advocate for women. Fonseca explains how she was recruited to come up with a plan for women to participate in the PCE's resistance efforts. The details that Fonseca provides about Carmen, as a leader, are left out of the film as well.

The goal of the film is not to highlight politics or feminism, which could be the reason behind these omissions. Martínez-Lázaro explains his desire to provide entertainment and create empathy, as he explains in an interview: "Pero el cine es espectáculo, y esta obvia realidad ha comportado algunas concesiones para evitar que la fidelidad histórica impida la empatía del público con las protagonistas" (Meseguer 94). Through this statement, it is possible to see how the vision of at least one of the film producers is influenced by a belief that "historical accuracy"—specifically details related to trauma, violence, or politics—is not what encourages people to feel

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<sup>64</sup> The judicial summary about Pilar's political interests is outlined in Chapter 2, with the analysis of Fonseca's book. Fonseca reveals that Pilar's activism began in October 1934, and she sympathized with workers who participated in the October Revolution.

<sup>65</sup> In the film, Dionisia briefly appears in one of the prison scenes, although there is no mention that she was actually one of the Roses.

empathetic. Instead, the film generates the audience's sympathy by focusing on the strong bonds that the characters share with their loved one, such as Blanca's relationship with her son, Enrique.

In *Las 13 rosas*, Blanca Brissac is the main heroine. She also represents the Rose who was the least politically active; and her personal story has the most potential to pull at the heartstrings of viewers. For the director, the emotions of the spectators is what matters most, as one review explains: "Pero sobre todo, hay que tener en cuenta que el campo de acción del cine es el de los sentimientos del espectador, mucho más que el de su ilustración" (Meseguer 94). Because Blanca is a caring mother, devout Catholic, and obedient wife, many audience members can relate to the different aspects of her character.

The relationship between Blanca and her young son, Enrique, is one that stirs the emotions of viewers--especially when Blanca is imprisoned. In prison, Blanca joins a group of other prisoners who are protesting the mistreatment of young children in prison after an infant dies. The audience is reminded of the theme of motherhood and Blanca's love for her son. When Blanca goes to trial, Enrique waits for her at the courthouse doors. The two embrace in an emotional moment, with the background music to appeal to this momentous reunion. At the end of the movie, Enrique is shown reading Blanca's farewell letter, which she wrote to him in the chapel prior to her execution. As the viewer watches Enrique read the letter and then walk away with his bicycle, Blanca's voice reads the contents of the letter, which is historically accurate. The act of watching the son read the letter from his recently executed mother is another reminder of the close bond that the two of them shared.

*Las 13 rosas* shows other intimate relationships, including three romantic storylines involving Virtudes, Julia, and Adelina. The latter two subplots demonstrate how the movie plays upon gender roles and stereotypes to create predictable, racey entertainment for the audience. Adorno argues that the stereotypes in cultural productions, such as film, “have been turned into rigid and reified clichés” (Cook 46). The romantic component of the storyline takes precedence over the Roses’ personal convictions that women had a right, and an economic need, to work. The right for women to work was one of the primary goals of the JSU. However, any philosophical reflection about *why* these rights or communist beliefs were important to the women was omitted from any conversations between the characters in the film. A young viewer who sees the movie—and is only familiar with the freedoms of democracy and gender equality—takes these privileges for granted; he or she might not think about how the historical reality was different in the 1940s, nor appreciate the significance of how these historical figures fought to abolish class divisions and create equal opportunities for men and women of the middle and lower classes.

The theme of women and work is playfully introduced in the film as the viewer observes how Julia Conesa is laid off from her job as a streetcar ticket vendor. After this hardship, the audience watches how she surrenders her desire to work and allows a nationalist sympathizer, Perico, to bring much-needed food to her family. Julia’s familial circumstances and Perico’s lustful interest in her are the two reasons why she compromises her political ideals. This gives the viewer the impression that Julia prefers to succumb to a comfortable lifestyle with a nationalist boyfriend instead of pursuing

her political goals. This is not the behavior of what most would consider a heroic leftist female figure.

The love affair between Julia and Perico is an amusing cliché with Julia falling in love with one of the “bad guys” in the film. The couple’s political differences are grossly downplayed and replaced with several passionate love scenes. When Carmen confronts Julia about her changing behavior, Julia condescendingly critiques Carmen’s political idealism by bluntly telling her: “Give it up too, kid.” Julia’s behavior is an example of how the Roses’ story is commodified in order to make the film appealing to a diverse audience—including those viewers with little historical knowledge about the civil war.

The standardization of cultural products includes the “conformity to prevailing behavioral standards” which are used and reused over again in different productions (Cook 29). Julia’s behavior can be applied to almost any war story—regardless of the time or the place: a person becomes disillusioned with the cause for which they are fighting, turns away, and succumbs to the essential needs during a time of social hardship. Julia’s romantic relationship, which shows a relationship between political activists from opposing sides, is an example of commodification; it would be unlikely that Republican sympathizers—especially those with such strong political ideals as the Thirteen Roses—would be romantically involved with a nationalist soldier. This added element is misleading for a viewer.

In the film, Adelina also dates a nationalist sympathizer whom she meets in a small town outside of Madrid. As explained in Fonseca’s account, Adelina’s father had sent her there as a safe haven from Madrid. When the police sought out Adelina, her

father encouraged her to go to the capital to speak with them. In the film, Adelina's boyfriend has a strong desire to protect her, which directly conflicts with her father's wishes to also "protect" her by turning her in to the police. Adelina's dilemma demonstrates a stereotypical conflict, where a woman is torn between obeying the wishes of her father and pleasing her boyfriend. Adelina sides with her father. Her actions do not show that she is a defiant, independent woman. Instead, she acts as a submissive daughter. Her refusal to stay with her boyfriend results in her tragic death. The insertion of Adelina's nationalist beau in the film's plot allows for heightened drama and entertainment. The dramatic farewell scene between Adelina and her boyfriend shows her looking longingly out the window at him as the van she is in drives away.

When the women are detained, the second part of the film depicts the events that take place in the prison setting. The producers worked together to stylize the representation of the Roses' victimization, which points to another example of the Roses' commodification. The film's representation of the brutal prison interrogations is toned down because the producers believed that this brutality would be difficult for the audience to watch ("Las 13 rosas: Escrito en la historia" 3). The film's goal was to "smooth over the reality"—especially Franco's repression. In an interview, Martínez-Lázaro affirms that he intentionally left out graphic details while making the film:

Sí. Creo que era necesario, que era algo que tenía que hacer. La auténtica represión, de la crueldad de los franquistas aquellos primeros meses, sólo hay una centésima parte de lo que pasó. No contamos que a una de las chicas la violaron ocho veces en comisaría antes de llevarla a la cárcel, ni cómo las pegaron... Lo que se cuenta es ridículo respecto de lo que pasó. Sólo hay apuntes, porque tampoco quiero echar leña al fuego." ("Las 13 rosas: Escrito en la historia" 3)

This explanation is important for understanding how the film is a marketable product; the producers chose to avoid representing shocking and traumatic events in the film, not because these events were unrelated to the Roses story but because they are not enjoyable for the general public. Martínez-Lázaro's desire to not "throw fuel on the fire" could be a reference to the ongoing political debate that is taking place in Spain today over whether or not to discuss and recognize the dark parts of Spain's recent past.

*Las 13 rosas* shows a few violent interrogation scenes. Julia's interrogation is the most graphic of all. The camera shows a view of her back as she is forced to undress, caressed by the chief of police, and punched by one of the interrogator's assistants. The other women's interrogation scenes are much briefer. Adelina remains fully clothed. The viewer only sees Virtudes's bloody back after she returns to prison after a meeting with the police. Blanca and Carmen appear to be left untouched by the physical abuse. The film presents very little detail of the shared physical and emotional torture of women through rape, castor oil, or by having their heads shaved.<sup>66</sup> *Las 13 rosas* poorly educates the audience about the historical atrocities—at least compared to the information provided in written testimonies such as Tomasa Cuevas's *Cárcel de mujeres*.<sup>67</sup> The goal of the film is not to educate the public about these difficult historic details.

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<sup>66</sup> In one of the patio scenes in Ventas prison, one of the female prisoners in the background has a shaved head, but there is no recognition of this in the dialogue, nor is there a visual indicator as to why she may look this way.

<sup>67</sup> In Geoffrey Hartman's book, *The Longest Shadow*, the author makes a similar comparison between the educational information provided in a testimonial documentary, *Shoah*, and the material presented in *Schindler's List*. The latter of these productions functions more as a form of entertainment and as a result, it misrepresents some aspects of the historical reality.

The debate over the visual representation of trauma is not just pertinent to Martínez-Lázaro's film. Scholars such as Hayden White and Geoffrey Hartman have written about the ethics of visual representations of historical events, drawing upon examples from the Holocaust. Hartman points to the responsibility of historians and film-makers alike to represent the past; the representation of Nazi genocide, for instance, is considered "an act with an entailed responsibility" (Hartman 3). In producing *Las 13 rosas*, the creators made scenes that would avoid any controversy. At the same time, the downplaying of traumatic events also has consequences. Fiction can create images of the past that can also be "open to popular misuse, especially in the form of televised simplification" (Hartman 30). The producers of *Las 13 rosas* selected this approach by, using David Archibald's term, "sugar-coating" the victimization and horrific living conditions in Ventas prison.

Instead of showing the harsh details of prison life, Martínez-Lázaro explains that he decided to alter the prison scenes, showing the audience aspects about them that he believes to be difficult to believe: "Lo que hemos sacado de la realidad es lo más increíble de creer" ("*Las 13 rosas: Escrito en la historia*" 3). One example of this is when the Roses sing and dance in the prison patio. Although the women would not have had music while in prison, the film inserts festive music in the background of the scene to show how they were enjoying themselves. Despite the misery, Martínez-Lázaro insists that they also had fun in prison. In another inventive scene, several of the Roses (excluding Blanca) collect mice in the Ventas patio and hide them in bags. During mass, they let the mice run onto the floor and cause a disturbance. The "fun" that inmates had

in Ventas is grossly exaggerated, thus giving the viewer a false impression of the historical reality.

The portrayal of one of the prison guards in the film is also problematic. After the women's sentencing, the movie shows one of the female prison guards sitting by the Roses' sides as they write petition letters to Franco. The compassionate image in the film contradicts the historical accounts that describe the cruelty of the Ventas's *funcionarias*. Martínez-Lázaro insists that the favorable character of the prison guard was in order to avoid portraying the victors' perspective as too evil: "Cargar la tinta en algunos de los personajes hubiera acentuado un lado accesorio de la maldad" ("Las 13 rosas: Escrito en la historia" 3). Although the film's producers show the benevolent side of a female prison guard, *Las 13 rosas* does include the Roses' execution at the end of the film. This scene shows the firing squad that carried out the sentence.

As a truck arrives at the cemetery with the women, the camera reveals a firing squad huddled around a campfire in the darkness.<sup>68</sup> The camera focuses on Blanca, as she is lined up against the wall and then moves to focus on the firing squad as they are preparing to shoot. Julia defiantly yells to them: "You have no hearts, no souls," thus inserting a critique of those who are carrying out the execution orders. Without showing the violent act, the audience hears a gunshot and knows that the women have been executed. The execution scene does not shock the audience, but instead maintains the glamour and heroism of a Hollywood ending; the women put up a good fight.

In *Las 13 rosas*, Carmen avoids execution, although historically she was executed along with the other women. In the moments before the execution, the film

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<sup>68</sup> The women were executed around 8 AM. At this time of day in the summer, they would not have been executed in the dark.

shows the Roses saying goodbye to Carmen and make her promise not to forget them.

In this moment of the film, the commodification of the Roses' memory is especially apparent; the film could have used the character such as Carmen—the only 'survivor' of this tragedy—as a way to communicate more effectively to the audience the lessons of collective witnessing, the importance of memory, and the value of historical inquiry--perhaps with a fictional flashback of Carmen as an adult. Instead, the film downplays the role of Carmen as “the carrier of the Roses' memory” and focuses more attention on Blanca and her final goodbye to her son.

The end scene of the film is split, with an image of Blanca reading her note and Enrique riding away on his bicycle. As the image fades, the camera focuses on Blanca as she says goodbye to Enrique: “Hijo...hasta la eternidad.” The last image of the movie shows Blanca blowing her son a kiss. Martínez-Lázaro wants the public to be able to identify with the protagonists on screen: their families, problems, and love stories.

At the end of the film, Enrique walks by a group of young boys that are his age. They are acting out an execution, with some of the boys playing the role of the firing squad and the others as the victims. This scene reminds the audience of the tragic event that they just witnessed moments before: the Roses' execution. At the same time, the boys' game trivializes the seriousness of the execution. It also communicates how the images, actions, and brutal violence of war are passed along to a younger generation. It appears that the boys are unaware of the seriousness of the game that they are acting. Nonetheless, this background scene—which Enrique ignores as he walks by—evokes

the question of justice and injustice, and how the war had been understood and remembered by young, innocent, and unassuming citizens.<sup>69</sup>

### A Twenty-First Century Vision for the Thirteen Roses' Story

*Las 13 rosas* was released in October 2007, only a few months before the Spanish government approved the Law of Historical Memory. At this time, there was increased media coverage on the topic of memory of the Spanish Civil War and the perspective of the war's vanquished. This created an opportune time to capitalize on public interest in the topic. The film about the Roses provided an artistic commentary about a past event—a commentary that glosses over many of the story's traumatic details. The film was shown and marketed throughout Spain. For this reason, both the media and the general public speculated and scrutinized how (and why) stories like that of the Roses are discussed in the twenty-first century. Because *Las 13 rosas* was released right around the time that the government passed the Law of Historical Memory, the media questioned if there was a connection between the two events, much to the dismay of the film makers.<sup>70</sup>

The article “Las Trece Rosas ya no son Rojas” connects the motives of the film with the government's attempt to rally support for the Law of Historical Memory: “Despojar de su dignidad, sus principios y su ideología a esas trece mujeres asesinadas por los franquistas en aras de llenar las salas de cine o de ayudar a Zapatero a ‘vender’

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<sup>69</sup> This last scene is similar to the technique that film director, José Luis Cuerda, uses in the film, *La lengua de las mariposas*.

<sup>70</sup> The film was initially scheduled to be released earlier in 2007 but for an unexplained reason, the film premier was delayed until October 2007. The close proximity between the film's release date and the approval of the Law of Historical memory drew public attention.

una floja Ley de Memoria Histórica es lo que se ha hecho con esta película.”<sup>71</sup>

Published on the leftist news website [www.laRepublica.es](http://www.laRepublica.es), the article describes the women in the film as “[t]rece jóvenes desideologizadas, enamorándose de fascistas... Trece luchadoras comunistas transformadas en trece niñas e inocentonas chiquillas, renegando del Partido Comunista y rodeadas de fascistas convertidos en buena gente a la que le ha tocado vivir una época cruel” (“Las 13 Rosas ya no son”). *Las 13 rosas* eliminates the ‘red’ aspect of the women’s military activism, while the prison scenes omit the hunger and torture. For the author of the article, the execution scene at the end of the film is not the sad moment. Instead, “la lágrima contenida viene después, con la rabia de descubrir cómo han reescrito sus vidas.” (“Las 13 Rosas ya no son”).

Amid this criticism, Martínez-Lázaro denies any connection between the film and the Law of Historical Memory. In fact, he blames the law for heightened criticism of the production: “Seguro alguien se molesta. Pero no tanto si no hubiera habido un momento político tan crispado como el que vivimos con ocasión de la aprobación de la Ley de la Memoria Histórica” (Estrada 15). Despite the historical undertones of the film, the director is clear in omitting any bias toward the war’s vanquished: “Yo no soy nada partidario del cine de denuncia; es más, me horroriza, creo que para eso están los periódicos y los libros de historia” (Ruiz Mantilla 50-51). Martínez Lázaro does not claim to be a historian, nor does he want his film used for political purposes: “Me disgusta que mi película sea utilizada por el partido popular y por la izquierda” (Estrada 15). While he makes this claim, Martínez-Lázaro has also commented in other

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<sup>71</sup> The article questions why the release date of the film was delayed one month, stating: “La razón parece estar clara: había que esperar a las fechas en las que se llegara a un acuerdo sobre la Ley”.

interviews about the importance of remembering the civil war and expresses a biased outlook in favor of the recuperation of memory: “Hay que contar estas cosas para, de verdad, poder olvidarlas” (“Las 13 rosas: Escrito en la historia” 4). In a different publication, Martínez-Lázaro repeats this same idea again, pointing to the nation’s obligation to collectively remember the war’s victims: “Tenemos que hablar de esto, sacarnos los demonios. Además no es lícito, no vale el revisionismo sólo para un bando, no es justo que algunos arzobispos consigan sus mártires y los eleven a los altares en el Vaticano y no se puedan desenterrar los muertos de la represión” (Ruíz Mantilla 52). These two comments draw upon similar ideas that the Socialist Party proposed to justify the need for its Law of Historical Memory. While the film and the law may have no direct connection, both make a public statement for the need for recognition of the Spanish Civil War in the twenty-first century.

The analysis of *Las 13 rosas* reveals how the Roses’ story is being manipulated and negotiated within Spain’s social framework. Several interviews with one of the film directors point to contradictions in the producers’ goals and visions for the film. Martínez-Lázaro denies any a connection between his product and the Law of Historical Memory. At the same time that he refuses to engage in the twenty-first century political debate, he describes a need to describe past atrocities. This is highly problematic.

*Las 13 rosas* uses visual images and other techniques to bring the audience back to the past, and present the Roses, their ideals and sacrifices in a nostalgic way. The film does have similarities to Jesus Ferrero’s novel, *Las trece rosas*. The narrative shows how the Roses would be a good topic for an absurd movie. Similar to the film, the novel describes the lustful intentions of the police officers who conduct a naming

ceremony for the women. The film is not the only representation that commodifies the women, but it is the only one that presents the past with a nostalgic quality that is most certainly problematic.

The nostalgic view of the past, as shown through film and literature, is questionable to many scholars. Some agree that the media today is not positively contributing to the investigation of Spain's modern history. Many of these current representations, as proven by *Las 13 rosas*, are driven by an interest to make a profit. Sánchez Biosca states: "Antes bien, guiados por una lógica implacable de mercado, están, consciente o inconscientemente, sosteniendo una visión que contradice, implícitamente, la producción del discurso histórico" (Sánchez-Biosca 80). For many people, the fictional elements of the film mislead the audience and give a false impression about the Roses as historical participants in the fight against Franco. The commodification of the Roses trope in *Las 13 rosas* fails to provide an educational opportunity for viewers so that they can learn about the complex history of the Spanish Civil War.

### Concluding Thoughts

Through this study, it is possible to see how a collective memory is not only forged, but also how it has been transmitted and transformed, by individuals and groups, over time. I learned first-hand how history, particularly that of the Roses, is not static but instead is a living, breathing entity. The Thirteen Roses' execution not only provides insights into the past, but also Spain's present and future situation.

While investigating this topic, I have had the opportunity to not only witness but also participate in the process of transmitting and describing the Roses' memory. A grant from the Program of Cultural Cooperation between United States Universities and Spain's Ministry of Culture, among others, allowed me to travel to Madrid for two summers. There, I had the privilege of meeting all of the living authors related to my study. During my interviews with war survivors and younger artists, I learned about the different opinions that they had about the significance of the Roses' execution, as well as their diverse motivations for publically discussing the Thirteen Roses. From these conversations, I noticed contradictions between individual accounts and, at times, tension among artists who have researched the Thirteen Roses. These personal conversations about the Roses revealed valuable information about how this is a contested memory.

I believe that this points to an important idea about Spain's cultural production in the twenty-first century: there is a strong public interest, and a market for, accounts that present the stories of the war's vanquished. The media, including Carlos Fonseca, has mentioned this trend—and some believe it to be quickly waning. The different

representations about the Roses have an active role in this type of “market place” where artists are competing for recognition and sometimes, personal fame. I believe that the artistic representation of the Roses has reached its peak. Many of the representations about the Roses were released in the 1980s, 90s, and during the first five years of the twenty-first century. Nonetheless, the women’s memory still has a strong presence in the public realm—as shown in the flurry of media coverage of the Roses’ 70<sup>th</sup> commemoration in 2009.

War survivors have had mixed reactions to the various representations about the Roses. Some war survivors have expressed appreciation for works such as that of Chacón. Others have been offended by the fictional elaborations about the story, including Ferrero’s account and the movie about the Roses. The works that most survivors who lived through the period find valuable are those that are most historically accurate, or those that promote a spirit of collaboration and commemoration.

The initial question of my study was: What does an anecdote, such as that of the Thirteen Roses, tell us about Spain’s cultural production in the twenty-first century? Also, what does it tell us about Spanish society and politics? My conclusion is that there is no unified consensus about how to study and talk about the Spanish Civil War—or heal from these past atrocities. The representations of the Roses’ account that I analyze in this study have different ideological, and sometimes political, purposes. I have noticed a shift in the way in which the story has been represented.

Much like other wartime *romances*, the postwar poetry about the Roses was used to not only celebrate fallen heroines but also to reiterate the political ideals that they embody. At least one of the poems, Flor Cernuda’s “Fusilaron ‘Trece rosas’ de la

libertad,” contains a subtle political critique. Using nature imagery, the poem describes how the Roses were killed by people with “mentes enfermizas y voraces” (*Las Republicanas* 51). “Fusilaron ‘Trece rosas” has the same style as Federico García Lorca’s “Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías,” with the use of *anáfora* to express grief over an execution. With the passing of time, the Roses and Lorca have both become important symbols to represent the victims of the Spanish Civil War.

In the immediate postwar, the Roses were communist activists and for this reason, I associate their memory with communist ideals during this time period. With the passing of time, the Socialist Party in the twenty-first century took an interest in the Roses’ memory, as outlined in the introduction of my study. I would like to further investigate the relationship between the Socialists and Communists during the postwar period.

While war survivors, including Ángeles García-Madrid, insist that the image of the rose was used only as a symbol to represent beauty, I would like to explore the relationship between the image of the rose and the Socialist Party—especially since the rose is a PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero de España) symbol, and has been used by other socialist-minded groups throughout Europe. This information would help me understand the relationship, and the tensions, between socialists and communists during the postwar years. Furthermore, it could help explain the tensions between the two parties today, as they each claim “ownership” of the Thirteen Roses.

#### The Roses and Commemoration: Different Approaches

My study also reveals insights into the topic of commemoration and the Spanish Civil War and the tensions (or differences) in how the past should be remembered. In

the twenty-first century, much, but not all, artistic production about the Roses aims to engage in acts of commemoration.<sup>72</sup> Through the analysis of some of the works in my study, I have found that there are two general approaches to commemorating the Roses: 1) In remembering the Roses, some artists do not make an explicit critique of the crime that was committed, nor do they comment on how the Spanish government has handled the transition to democracy. Their commemoration goals are to avoid making any strong accusations and instead, to celebrate the young women. 2) Other artists commemorate the Roses in order to make an explicit political critique and demand justice for past crimes, including the execution of the thirteen women. Both of these approaches raise important questions about how a nation—both individual citizens and collective groups—can heal after a military dictatorship. Some argue that the only way for healing to begin is by making an explicit political critique. Others, including me, believe that healing can begin without making this judgement. Whether a commemorative act includes a political critique or not, it is crucial that these efforts inspire individuals to reexamine and reflect upon past events.

In this study, I believe that there are three examples that show how the Roses' memory has been commemorated with the purpose of educating the public and not to explicitly place blame on anyone for what happened. First, the journal articles about the Roses that were written in the 1980s, outlined in Chapter 2 of this study, aim toward healing past divides because they relay information about the women, but do not make accusations against those who carried out the crime. Many of these articles focus on the historical facts about the women and the circumstances of the execution. The

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<sup>72</sup> Of the works in my study, I do not feel that Jesús Ferrero's novel, *Las trece rosas*, or the film, *Las 13 rosas*, commemorate the women.

motivation of many of the authors was to accurately publish information about this execution and understand some of the lesser-known events related to the Spanish Civil War.

Second, in a similar way, Ángeles López's *Martina, la rosa número trece* shares with readers the family's trauma related to Martina's execution. While it is a fictional account, it helps readers understand how the difficult memories of the war have been passed on over time through silence. The novel does critique the lack of public access to archived information related to the Spanish Civil War, but it does not demand that those who executed Martina be punished for their crimes. Instead, it aims to educate the general public about one family's experience with this dark moment in the past. Third, Julia Bel's play, *Las trece rosas*, includes a critique of Franco's dictatorship; the script is subjective, with one of the last lines stating "Así nos tratan a los vencidos." At the same time, the play allows for an open dialogue about the past by giving the audience the opportunity to discuss their ideas and learn from each other during round table discussions.

Some of the other works in this study show how the Roses' memory is used to make a more explicit demand for justice. The first person testimonies, as shown in Chapter 1, are much more politically motivated. These accounts reveal the brutality of women's repression by highlighting what happened to the Thirteen Roses as well as other women. Tomasa Cuevas, the communist woman who compiled two volumes of women's testimonies, was motivated to publish these accounts so that younger generations could read about these atrocities and so that they would not be repeated. Most of these first person testimonies were published in the early 1980s, during a time

when Spanish citizens were encouraged to look toward the future and forget these past traumas. Similarly, Dulce Chacón uses the memory of the Roses in *La voz dormida* to denounce the way in which Spain's democratic government has handled the public discussion of Franco's dictatorship. Like Cuevas's text, her novel gives recognition to women, whose memory and personal sacrifices had been placed at the margins at the end of the twentieth century.

These tendencies to use the Roses' memory, as a way to heal from the past by implying or avoiding a political critique or making a call for justice, have continued in the artistic production about the women in the twenty-first century. In Córdoba, Rafa Montes and Matilde Cabello—two independent artists— created an exposition of photographs and a poem that is similar to Flor Cernuda's postwar poem "Fusilaron 'Trece rosas.'" Montes's photograph titled "Trece Rosas Rojas" is a scanned and color-enhanced image of flowers. It was featured in an exhibit in May 2007.

On the website with their work, Cabello describes herself as a "poeta comprometida y concienciada." Like Cernuda, her poetry makes allusions of a political critique using nature imagery in lines 1 and 4:

*¿En nombre de qué patria disecaron las hojas?  
 ¿Qué metralla ha truncado tan virginales tallos?  
 Trece rosas, apenas nacidas a la lluvia.  
 Trece sueños desnudos frente a un terror de insomnio.  
 Era un tiempo de sables. Fue en Las Ventas.  
 Era la madrugada y era agosto.*

At the same time that the poem condemns the Roses' death, the photograph that accompanies the poem is a neutral image of a beautiful flower—perhaps an orchid. I

believe that the combination of the poem and the image could represent a conscious effort toward reconciliation of past atrocities.

The Roses' memory has been used as inspiration to create other art—including some that makes no political statement at all. In May 2006, the city of Getafe created a public monument, a fountain, to remember the Thirteen Roses. An article published in the magazine, *Getafe*, reveals that the purpose of the fountain was to bring together the concepts of beauty and memory. The new fountain was part of a city project to add beauty to public places: “La Fuente se enmarca dentro del Plan de Embellecimiento de Getafe, que está llevando a cabo el Ayuntamiento de Getafe, mediante el que está cambiando las glorietas, las rotondas, las calles y las medianas de nuestra ciudad” (“La fuente” 9). The fountain features thirteen spigots and thirteen sculptures, with the names of the Roses. The sculptures symbolize “trece vidas troncadas.” The Roses do not appear to have any connection to the city, Getafe. The placement of this sculpture in a place with no historical ties to the Roses reinforces the fact that there is a strong public interest in remembering and commemorating the women and their sacrifices.

In the twenty-first century, some individuals have been inspired by the Roses' story to create new art with a subjective and critical view, such as Julián Fernández del Pozo's song, “Trece Rosas”:

Madrid se viste de luto,  
por trece rosas castizas  
trece vidas se cortaron,  
siendo jóvenes, casi niñas.

Malditas sean las almas,  
de sus verdugos fascistas,  
que con guadañas de odio,  
segaron sus cortas vidas.

España es vuestra madre,  
 su cielo vuestra sonrisa.  
 sus campos tienen la sangre,  
 de unas rosas, casi niñas.

El pueblo de Madrid os quiere,  
 ese pueblo que abomina,  
 de salvadores de patrias,  
 de rojos y de fascistas.

Madrid es patria de todos,  
 su nombre solo mancillan,  
 el odio de los caciques,  
 cuya razón es la envidia.

Las rosaledas de parques,  
 de esta, nuestra España chica,  
 reflejarán vuestras caras,  
 vuestras sonrisas de niñas.

Benditas seáis mil veces,  
 benditas vuestras familias,  
 malditos los asesinos,  
 que nuestras rosas marchitan. (Pozo)

In the last stanza, Pozo draws attention to the ideological divides that marked Spanish society by praising the victims and condemning the executors: “Benditas seáis mil veces, benditas vuestras familias / malditos los asesinos / que nuestras rosas marchitan.” Pozo’s word choice, using ‘benditas’ to describe the victims and ‘malditos’ to describe the assassins, shows that his song does not brush over these past divisions. Instead, Pozo’s song reminds his twenty-first century audience of the past polarized political and ideological divides, and perhaps that these divisions should be addressed and discussed. For Pozo, the Roses represent a part of Spain’s past but also its future: “Las rosaledas de parques / de esta, nuestra España chica / reflejarán vuestras caras / vuestras sonrisas de niñas.”

Other songs, such as one found on Vinos Chueca's 2007 album *Gente que no sabe nada de la vida*, "Las trece rosas," tells the story about what happened to the women. The lyrics also convey the strong, subjective emotions about the brutality of the execution:

Trece rosas  
Eran casi adolescentes  
Acusadas de indecentes  
Fueron sin más detenidas  
Por ser rojas de familia  
Por andar con milicianos  
O por hacer contrabando  
De esperanza.

Ni siquiera las juzgaron  
A todas las condenaron  
Al brutal fusilamiento  
Para dar un escarmiento  
Con su danza.

Las llevaron a capilla  
Antes de la luz del día  
Algunas se confesaron  
Otras solo blasfemaron  
Las pusieron en la tapia  
Llenas de miedo y de rabia  
Y de impotencia.

Se agarraron de las manos  
Y sonaron los disparos  
Hay quien dice que lloraban  
Los mismos que las mataban  
De vergüenza.

Que hoy quisiera con mis dedos  
Que hoy quisiera con mis labios  
Arrancarles todo el plomo  
Besarles las calaveras  
Y decirles que fue un sueño  
Y decirles venga vamos  
Pero no me sale como  
Pero no encuentro manera.

Trece fosas  
 Trece besos  
 Trece rosas

Que hoy quisiera con mis dientes  
 Que hoy quisiera con mis canas  
 Escarbar el cementerio  
 Hacer trucos con el tiempo  
 Y decirles que despierten  
 Y decirles hola guapas  
 Pero también estoy muerto  
 Pero dicen que no puedo.

Trece fosas  
 Trece besos  
 Trece rosas.

Hubo hasta tiros de gracia  
 Rematando la matanza  
 Después algunos parientes  
 Entre los cuerpos inertes  
 Dieron gritos y desmayos  
 Sangre mezclada con llanto  
 Y con enojo  
 Entró un hombre por la puerta  
 Se acercó a la carne muerta  
 Y fingiendo que rezaba  
 A una de ellas susurraba  
 Viva Socorro Rojo (Vinos Chueca)

The refrain of the song expresses a desire to change the past, and bring the women back to life—even though this is not possible: “Que hoy quisiera con mis dientes / Que hoy quisiera con mis canas / Escarbar el cementerio / Hacer trucos con el tiempo / Y decirles que despierten / Y decirles hola guapas / Pero también estoy muerto / Pero dicen que no puedo.” The lyrics at the end of the song use the story of how one of the Roses did not die immediately after being shot and transforms it into an artistic trope to express hope, or perhaps to communicate a political message: “A una de ellas susurraba / Viva

Socorro Rojo.” The mention of the Socorro Rojo, the International Red Aid led by the Communist Party, could convey the band’s support of the communists.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to Vinos Chueca, other bands have shared the Roses’ story—even educating audiences in other countries. To me, this artistic production shows how individuals today are finding valuable lessons by learning more about the Spanish Civil War and the Roses’ story. They wish to communicate these messages—the importance of human rights, justice, and solidarity—and inspire others to learn these lessons so they are not repeated. Barricada, a rock band from Pamplona, traveled to Helsinki to finish recording their album. The objective for this trip was to give their music a Nordic flare, but it also spreads awareness about the Spanish Civil War. Their CD is titled *La tierra está sorda*, which comes from the last line of Luis Cernuda’s poem, “Remordimiento en traje de noche”: “¿No sentís a los muertos? Mas la tierra está sorda.” The 18 songs on the album present different themes related to the war. One song is dedicated to another female heroine, Matilde Landa, a Republican activist who was in charge of organizing the International Red Aid (Socorro Rojo) during the Spanish Civil War, and another tells the story of the Thirteen Roses, “Hasta siempre, Tensi.” *La tierra está sorda* aims to educate audiences not only through lyrics but also with a 140-page pamphlet that comes with the music. The pamphlet provides background historical information that explains each of the songs’ themes. These songs denounce Franco’s dictatorship, fascism, and political extremism, but the lessons have relevance in the present and future as well.

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<sup>73</sup> The POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unification) also had its own Socorro Rojo organization, which was active during the Spanish Civil War.

The Roses' story has also been shared in other countries through theater, beginning in 1947 when a Spanish youth group created and performed a play about the women. In the twenty-first century, a young Italian helped to found a similar youth organization, "Casa Cultura," that organizes music concerts, film forums, jam sessions, and workshops with authors and writers. The organization also created a small theater company, comprised of seventeen people between the ages of 16 and 25. This group produced and performed a play about the Roses, and has future plans to continue with this production in hopes of promoting peace and freedom through the Roses' story. Lorenzo Conti, one of the founders, wants to generate a public interest in learning more about the past—both in Italy and other countries that have suffered under oppressive dictatorships.<sup>74</sup>

#### "Las Rosas": An Emerging, Widely-Accepted Term

This study reveals some of the political and ideological motives tied to the Thirteen Roses' memory, and also points to tragedy's popular appeal as well as the elements that make an entertaining story. The numerous artistic and literary representations, newspaper articles, blog sites, associations, and monuments that were inspired by the Roses' memory point to how individuals and groups use historical events, such as the Roses' execution, for their own purposes. When examined together, it is possible to see not only how these interpretations dialogue with each other, but also how they compete to achieve specific objectives. The continued media coverage of the Roses' story has allowed it to become widely known.

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<sup>74</sup> I know very little about this Italian play, as I have not been in direct contact with the playwright.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the Roses' name has become a fairly recognizable icon in Spanish society. In Spain, the image of the rose not only has an artistic function but also a political one, as it has been loosely used as a way to describe other women martyr figures across from the Spanish Civil War era in Spain.<sup>75</sup> The Roses' memory has expanded beyond Spain to emphasize the dangers of fascism and reiterate specific democratic ideals, related to human rights, gender and class equality, as people from all over the world reflect upon their social and political values and how these goals should shape the global community now and in the years to come.

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<sup>75</sup> A newspaper article, "La rosa de Salamanca," presents information about seven victims who were killed on July 19, 1936, including one woman. The article uses the image of the rose to describe the woman: "Celestina Sierra Polo fue otra rosa trinchada sin culpa, cuya muerte aún más joven es también más alevosa de la de las muchachas menores de edad fusiladas en Madrid hacer ahora 17 años" ("La rosa de Salamanca"). Similarly, the city of León commemorates its own set of female martyr figures from the civil war: "Las 'tres rosas' leonesas... asesinadas en septiembre de 1936 por su activa militancia en partidos de izquierdas, cuentan desde este sábado con un monumento en su recuerdo ubicado en La Virgen del Camino" ("Las 'tres rosas' de la Virgen del Camino").

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Appendix A: Biographical Information on the Thirteen Roses

**Carmen Barrero Aguado**—20 years old. Her father died during the war's outbreak and for this reason, Carmen had to go to work at an early age. She joined the PCE in December 1936 and was a militant of the PCE, continuing with the clandestine fight in Madrid at the end of the war. The Communist National Committee put her in charge of a plan of political work that was directed at women, one that would recommend that women have a role in the Provincial Committee of the PCE and in each of its sections. The plan would therefore increase the presence of women: "Las mujeres como tarea urgente deberán ser las de solidaridad, y para ello tendrán que organizar grupos que semanalmente cooperen en la ayuda de los represaliados del fascismo" (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 240). The program that was being developed by Carmen showed how the party wanted to create a space for women not only in female organizations but also so that women could have roles as militants (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 241).

**Martina Barroso García**—24 years old. She was a dressmaker and joined the JSU in January 1937. Until 1938, she was a seamstress in a workshop, sewing clothes for the Unión de Muchachas. After that, she worked in a soup kitchen until the end of the war. At the end of the war, she was captured for her involvement with the Chamartín sector of the JSU (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 242).

**Blanca Brisac Vázquez**—29 years old. She was married to a musician, Enrique García Mazas, whom she met because he played the violin and she played the piano for silent films in the Alcalá theater. She had an eleven year-old son when she died. She was not involved in any political organization (Fonseca 259). Hernández Holgado claims that she was denounced by Manuela de la Hera Maceda, 19 years old. Manuela claimed that Blanca held clandestine meetings in her home: "[...] reuniones clandestinas a las que acuden individuos afiliados al Partido Comunista, en las que tratan de preparar un complot para atentar contra el Generalísimo en el día que se verifique el desfile en Madrid" (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 232). Manuela also added that during these meetings, members "se saludan con el puño en alto, dando vivas a Rusia" (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 232). This claim discredits her testimony because given the dangerous climate in Madrid at the time, it is unlikely that leftist supporters would have acted in such a manner in public or private.

**Pilar Bueno Ibáñez**—27 years old. She was a dressmaker and joined the PCE at the beginning of the war, as a volunteer, to help orphaned children and children of PCE militants. She was the director of the Escuela de Cuadros for the party and was also named female secretary of Radio Norte (Fonseca 260). Pilar had a significant amount of responsibility in the clandestine structure of the PCE. She was in charge of the Organización del Comité Provincial de Madrid. Her work was interrupted when she was detained, but before that time she appointed leaders and messengers for the different sectors of the Communist Party that were being reorganized in Madrid (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 239).

**Julia Conesa Conesa**—19 years old. She was a dressmaker and joined the JSU in 1936 or 1937 with the goal of playing sports (Fonseca 260). She came to be the Sports Secretary of the Western Section (Hernández Holgado 242). During the war, she worked as a fare collector in the streetcars of Madrid. The court summary, dated July 7, 1939, accused her of working as a fare collector on Madrid's streetcars: "Curiosamente, el auto-resumen de fecha 7 de julio se menciona, como cargo en su contra, el de "haber sido cobradora de tranvías durante la dominación marxista" (Hernández Holgado 242).

**Adelina García Casillas**—19 years old. She was known as *La Mulata* for her dark skin. She was a friend of Julia Conesa joined the JSU in 1937. In Ventas prison, she delivered the mail to other inmates (Fonseca 260).

**Elena Gil Olaya**—20 years old. She joined the JSU in 1937. In April 1939, she was recruited to work for the JSU party in Madrid. Along with Victoria Muñoz, she joined the JSU sector of Chamartín de la Rosa (Fonseca 260).

**Virtudes González García**—18 years old. She was a dressmaker and joined the JSU in August 1936 (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 242). She was the female secretary of the Club "Pablo Vargas" before moving on to la Comisión de Organización del Comité Provincial (Hernández Holgado 242). For a time, she was the secretary of the Organización del Comité Provincial de la JSU. There were at least three women that were in charge of the Provincial Committee of the JSU (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 242). She served as a link of communication for the JSU in the Radio Oeste de las Juventudes in Madrid (Fonseca 261).

**Ana López Gallego**—21 years old. She was a dressmaker and joined the JSU as a militant in January 1937 (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 242). Later Ana became the female secretary of the Radio de Chamartín de la Rosa. She was also an "enlace," along with Martina, Victoria, and Elena, that kept open the clandestine lines of communication among key JSU leaders in Madrid. Blanco-Cicerón considers her one of the most politically significant of the executed women (Blanco Cicerón 13)

**Joaquina López Laffite**—23 years old. She joined the JSU in 1936 and, after the war, was named female secretary of the Clandestine Provincial Committee (Fonseca 261). She was in charge of finding messengers, called *enlaces*, for the Communist Party (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 241).

**Dionisia Manzanero Salas**—20 years old. Her father was a militant in the UGT (Fonseca). She joined the PCE in 1938 where she became a "mecnógrafa" for la Comisión de Organización of the Communist party in the Sector de Chamartín de la Rosa (Hernández Holgado 242). She was friends with Pilar Bueno and, after the war, she was chosen as an informant, an *enlace*, between the leaders of the party who remained in the capital (Fonseca 261-262).

**Victoria Muñoz García**—18 years old. She joined the JSU in 1936. At the end of the war she joined the JSU sector from Chamartín de la Rosa, a neighborhood of Madrid (Fonseca 262)

**Luisa Rodríguez de la Fuente**—18 years old. She was a dressmaker and joined the JSU in 1936 or 1937 but never held a political position until the war ended (Fonseca). She was accused of maintaining clandestine communication on the street through a prison's package service. She was also a leader of the JSU group in Chamartín de la Rosa (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 241).

**Antonia Lleres**—She was sentenced to death along with the Roses but was not executed with them on August 5, 1939 because of a typo in the list of condemned inmates. Her name was listed as “Antonio Lleres.” Some accounts consider Lleres the “fourteenth” Rose (Hernández Holgado, *Mujeres* 241). She was executed a few months after the Roses.

**Julia Vellisca**—A friend and comrade of the Thirteen Roses who was the only woman to be sentenced with them and not receive a death sentence. Vellisca completed her prison sentence and not much was known about her after that time. In 2006, Vellisca's son, Manuel, attended Julia Bel's theater performance and provided photographs of his mother.