

Historical Memory in Post-Transition Narratives: Between the Canon and the Market

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Within current debates in Spain on “historical memory,” there is an important production of narratives and films dealing with the causes and the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War. This is intended to fulfill the unsatisfactory accounts constructed during the period of the Transition and the pact of silence promoted by the political and cultural establishment after Franco’s death. The first issue I want raise here by analyzing a few narrative samples is a reinforcement of the dominant view regarding the Civil War in terms of a perennial division of Spain into two irreconcilable worlds. I argue that some of these works re-articulate in a new fashion a canonical discourse on the “two Spains.” The second issue investigated in this essay is the emphasis on romantic and sexual relations as an emotional and affective dimension of “historical memory.” The articulation of an intense love story together with a depiction of war and repression seems to be a clear and self-conscious pattern of these narratives, one that discovers a displacement of the political issues surrounding the nature of the Spanish Fascist State and its relevancy in the construction of a national imaginary in twentieth-century Spain. Moreover, it also signals the formation of a literary space that attempts to re-actualize a Spanish literary historiography within the context of cultural and economic global processes that necessarily re-signify the national horizon of this literary canon.

The dominant political and cultural discourses of the period of the Transition attempted to construct a new image of Spain, one that was centered on the European projection of Spanish history. This new image of a vibrant and “booming” Spain has served the goals of “integrating” Spanish capitals into a diversity of global processes and has undoubtedly had a profound impact on all aspects of Spanish society. Cristina Moreiras Menor

sees the period from 1975 to 1992 as the period when a new national identity seemed to emerge against the background of a collective project (186).

This conception of a new Spain after Franco's regime and the economic "boom" of the 1980s and 1990s must confront, however, the many shortcomings of this rapid integration into global capitalism and, in particular, the entrance into public discourse of the evidence that many of the measures of the new Spain led to a precarious system of production, an atrocious urbanism and to a short-lived prosperity that seems now to be unreachable for the new generations (Labrador Méndez 274).

The exhaustion of the pattern of growth of the last decades coincides with the crisis of the official culture of the Transition and, in particular, the so-called "pact of silence" regarding the Fascist rebellion and the Civil War, a silence that was promoted as a condition of the democratic stability of the new national identity. The crisis of the cultural imaginary of the Transition has permitted a re-evaluation of the traumatic past of the Fascist rebellion. Furthermore, this re-evaluation has entered public discourse through the so-called "recovery of historical memory," and has influenced many literary and filmic works in recent years. This public discourse has indeed become an ideological struggle as it is being counteracted by apologists of Franco's regime and by the very same political and social agencies that supported the silence during the Transition.

Paradoxically, some of these narrative works make use of a canonical interpretation of the origins of twentieth century Spain, that is, the topic of the "dos Españas" (two Spains), a topic that has attained the status of a naturalized understanding regarding the character of the political and cultural conflicts that led to the Civil War. This is certainly not an exclusive feature of recent production; Teresa Vilarós mentioned in relation to the post-Franco years the gesture of an erasure of the past on "both sides" (243).

A revitalization of the topic of "dos Españas" (two Spains) emerged right at the start of the political and literary climate of the "recovery of the historical memory," as has been named the renewed public debate and the reconstructed representations of Franco's insurgence and the Civil War in a vision that supersedes the implicit censorship of the period of the Transition. The so-called pact of silence orchestrated by the main political and cultural agents after Franco's death in 1975 was supposed to accomplish a "reconciliation" among winners and losers and was, above all, designed to appease the military establishment, whose permanent threat of intervention (real or imaginary) in the new democracy well served the purposes of conducting the transformation of the Francoist State in accord with clearly defined limitations (the so-called opposition of "reform versus rupture" as it was framed at the time).

Indeed, the cultural censorship had a major goal: the displacement of the question of Spanish Fascism and the support it received from the oligarchy, as well as some sectors of the Church and the Military, into the topic of the

“confrontation” between Spaniards. The picture of a Spain divided equally into two opposing bands of people, with an emphasis on a “fratricidal” struggle of members of the “same family,” was meant to preclude or, in the best of purposes, to postpone, an open indictment of the crimes and property confiscations made by the rebellion and the dictatorship. The “recovery” of the events of the Civil War signals then a growing demand to question this official vision in order to revisit a defining moment in the formation of the contemporary imaginary of the *Spanish nation*.

One of the first narrative interventions in this recovery during the current century was Javier Cercas’s *Soldados de Salamina*, a novel that, playing with the genre of fictitious journalism, was both a double hagiography of a *Falangista* and of a compassionate Republican fighter, as well as an idealized essay on the goodness of mankind among the evils of war. These “two Spains” penetrate the particular recovery of memory alongside the status of a factual order, becoming “legend,” the forgotten past of a period that seems to have a relevancy in the present only because there are still some people alive from those remote times. All political and even ethical issues of this “confrontation” are obviously and sarcastically superseded by an emotional appeal to a legendary past in which a postmodern recourse to indifference and uncritical equivalences seeks to involve a wide range of readers with a melodramatic story of two Spaniards from opposing camps (easily further commercialized in a film). In the process, the narrative disengages Franco (described at some point as a “militarote incompetente” [Cercas 86] [a rude and incompetent military man] without giving any support for this blunt and very problematic statement) from the “ideología revolucionaria del Falangismo” (Cercas 86) (the revolutionary ideology of Falangism) and even Fascism from “la chatura y mediocridad que el régimen le había impuesto a la vida española” (134) (the mediocrity that the regime had imposed on Spanish life).

The characterization of *Falangismo*, the Spanish brand of Fascism, as a revolutionary ideology simply echoes the self-proclaimed rhetoric that *Falangista* writers such Sánchez Mazas (one of the characters memorialized in the novel) had of themselves, but also, and more importantly, the vision of the Civil War as a confrontation of *two* revolutionary ideals and movements. More symptomatic is the simplistic characterization of Spain’s rapid accumulation of wealth by a Spanish capitalist class supported by the heavy arm of Franco’s State as a “narrow and mediocre society.” The characterization of “mediocrity” is supposed to be compared with the accomplishments of a postmodern Spain that has apparently attained the levels of political and cultural development of other Western capitalist nations, thus becoming in some other vaporous way an “excellent” or maybe superior society. In spite of the simplistic and melodramatic use of the idea of “confrontation among Spaniards,” *Soldados de Salamina* exemplifies the emergence of a cultural production, in literature as well as in films and

television shows, that appeals to a public sensibility that demands a reconsideration of Spain's traumatic past to overcome the self-complacency of the period of the Transition. This reconsideration coincides, symptomatically, with the start of the crisis of the model of growth taken by the different Spanish governments since Franco's death and, in turn, further involves Spain in the different global processes. The convergence of both phenomena, the recovery of memory and the crisis of growth, has permitted a further understanding of the Civil War and Fascist repression through a more openly critical attitude toward the dictatorship's legacy and the persistence of attitudes and privileges of Francoism in democratic Spain.

The conventional wisdom of the official discourse of the Transition has received important challenges in public discourses, as well as in some literary and cultural works, which, in turn, has precipitated a reaction from the extreme right that holds an alliance with all kinds of anti-immigrant and racist movements and politicians. This reaction operates with the hope of actualizing a notion of Spanish identity that is closer to the original foundations of Franco's rebellion against the Republic.

On Sex and War

Almudena Grandes's *El corazón helado* portrays the memory of the Civil War as a history of treason, violence, and confiscation of wealth during the aftermath of Franco's destruction of the Spanish Republic. The social and economic consequences of this dispossession are still felt in Spain and are but two among many issues that question the official vision of the Transition as an exemplary dismantling of the economic and cultural privileges of the dictatorship.

The reference in the novel's title to Machado's verses, "una de las dos Españas ha de helarte el corazón" (one of the two Spains will freeze your heart), inscribes the topic of the "two Spains" within the private realm of individual and familial relationship. Fascism is, in this light, part of a state of hate and aggression that runs into the very same fabric of the individual and his/her personal and affective relations. Raquel Fernández (a financial advisor) enters into a sexual relation with Álvaro Carrión (a successful professor) with the purpose of seeking revenge for her grandfather's dispossession by Álvaro's father. The latter was an unscrupulous son of a poor working man, who rose to fortune during Franco's years by stealing the properties of Republican friends in exile. Before doing so, Álvaro's father was a declared supporter of the Republic and for some time he pledged allegiance to both the Communists and the Falangists. The coldness with which Raquel, the granddaughter of a Republican fighter, seduces Álvaro with the idea of getting her family's money back, alongside her final regret

of her actions, together configure a melodramatic impulse to provide the narration of a memory in which the political and social foundations of the Fascist rebellion and Franco's government are articulated within a familial lineage of love and hate. The two families and their economic, political and sexual inter-relations are at a figurative level the expression of the "problem" of Spain.

The bottom line is that civil war has produced or rather reproduced a "frozen heart" that is still the real force of motivations of individual lives and projects. The reader may wonder, however, about the chosen emphasis on this extraordinary sexual passion (dozens of times Álvaro remarks on how the earth moves around his feet each time that he fornicates with Raquel), given the way such sexual moments would seem to be ridiculously comic, if not for the lack of comic elements throughout the rest of the narrative: the extraordinary relationship outside of marriage, the emphasis on a uniquely sexual passion, and the description of sexual moments, all obviously aimed at a reader already educated in the expectations of sexual explicitness appearing within the confines of a literature still deemed as 'quality.' It is, after all, one of the values that Almudena Grandes has purposely pursued in order to identify a place for herself within the literary field of Spanish narrative, by identifying with the genre of "literary pornography" (Tsuchiya 242–3).

The overinflated recourse to sex and sexual motives during the construction of a post-Franco imaginary was presented as one of the major accomplishments of the Transition and an example of how much the new Spain departed from a political dictatorship that was heavily backed by the Catholic Church. The goal was to show a disengagement from the official positions of an institution that played such a major role in the ideological legitimization of Spanish Fascism and that received in turn extraordinary privileges from the regime. The *destape* (uncovering/stripping) and the proliferation of sexual images was not merely a sign of the sexual openness or liberation of Spanish citizens, but rather a rhetorical displacement from the political struggles taking place during the transformation of Franco's dictatorship. While the *destape* announced a new Spain, the Church continued to reinforce its influence and economic power in the new democratic State, a phenomenon that is not decreasing but actually increasing in post-Transition times.

The sexual openness of the years after Franco's death became, curiously enough, an image of a modern and "European" society. Although narratives published during the first years of the twenty-first century were far removed from the issues of the *destape*, the political and cultural imaginary of contemporary literary and visual production remains largely dependent on, and in many cases subordinated to, the depiction of explicitly sexual imagery. In addition to the obvious editorial and commercial appeal of this link between politics and sex, the symbolic value attached to explicit sex in

cultural production and, in particular, literary works has permitted the construction of an image of Spain as a place of celebration, great tourism, and youthful enjoyment of life. Isaac Rosa has parodied the tendency of highly conventionalized narrative forms in the treatment of the Civil War that, in fact, reinforce a commercial discourse along stories of sexual affairs:

Una escena de sexo que toma elementos de un romanticismo gastado [. . .] Con tanto ruido lírico, la sesión sexual que se pretendía salvaje se ha quedado un poco fría, por exceso de maquillaje y de iluminación literaria, con lo que nos acaba resultando un polvo un tanto artificial, teatrero, simulado, incluso pornográfico en sus contorsiones y sus arqueos a mayor gloria del lucimiento verbal del autor. (Rosa 404–5)

(A sexual scene that takes elements from a spent romanticism [. . .] with much lyrical sound, the sexual session that pretended to be savage has ended up being a bit cold, due to an excess of makeup and literary illumination, with which it ends up resulting to be a bit artificial, theatrical, simulated, even pornographic in its contortions and its arching for the better glory of the verbal brilliance of the author.)

Furthermore, we should read the primacy given to the exceptional sexual relationship as an emphatic and clearly market-oriented feature of a literary imaginary centered on a domestic domain of familial and love affairs. As a consequence of the cultural censorship of the Transition regarding the political responsibilities of the Fascist rebellion there has been an intense production of works intended to reach and engage a wider audience with the past of totalitarian repression through a benign mood of reconciliation within the family (Winter 32–33).

In this regard, Paul J. Smith has argued that an “emotional imperative” operates in the narrative structure of some films that intend to highlight a private sphere of feelings and emotions. He sees this emotional dimension as “an invitation to make national narratives in collaboration with it” (48). Analyzing Spanish film and television works, Smith argues that the representation of a domestic space of inner emotions within the family may serve as an ethical background to the process of coming to terms with broader social and political issues which have become too painful to be analyzed solely at intellectual and ideological levels, particularly such issues as the traumatic events of Spain’s Civil War and the four decades of the Franco regime.

This emotional imperative can still be seen functioning in recent literary production and may explain the emphasis on personal relationships as a gateway to the inscription of memory. The emphatic inscription of a love affair inflates the essentially affective representation of an individual’s life and parallels and compensates for a deflation of the euphoria of the much-

celebrated Transition. In other words, the literary value reached with sexual imagery is transferred to a renovated literary field that reflects and collaborates in devaluing the cheerleading image of the Transition.

Almudena Grandes has embarked on an ambitious project to recount some of the crucial moments of the post-Civil War and Franco's repression in "Historias de una guerra interminable." Her style directs the experienced reader's attention to her intended emulation of Benito Pérez Galdós's grand project in his *Episodios nacionales*. Certainly, Grandes's narrative skills prepare her for such an endeavor, as she provides the reader with a series of episodes of love, resistance, and fight. This is the case of her first episode, *Inés y la alegría*, a depiction of the historical attempt to invade Spain by the Communist-backed military forces in 1945 in order to overthrow Franco's government in the context of the imminent defeat of Hitler by the Allies. Along with this depiction, the novel recounts the political intrigues of the Spanish Communist Party and interrelates the historical and fictional characters of these intrigues at the national and international level. Interlacing this historical context with personal stories of love and betrayal, in the same manner as Grandes's *El corazón helado*, the narration of *Inés y la alegría* combines an objective narrative voice with the personal recounting of the characters. In both cases, the primacy of the "cuerpos" (bodies) over the "Historia con mayúscula" (History with a capital H) seeks to provide an interpretation of Spain's past in terms of individualized micro-lives that are the real engines of the events. This fetishization of sexual, love and hate affairs reaches a grandiose finale precisely at the end of the novel *Inés y la alegría*, when the explicit mention to the present moment of the production of the narration—"cuando termina la primera década del siglo XXI" (690) (at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century)—allows the narrator to affirm things, for example that Pasionaria (Dolores Ibárruri, the undisputed leader and president of the Spanish Communist Party for many years) was "la gran enemiga de Francisco Franco Bahamonde, la única personalidad de su época a la que el dictador consiente en alabar alguna vez" (690) (the great enemy of Francisco Franco Bahamonde, the only personality of the time on whom the dictator permitted a bestowal of occasional praise); or that,

Si el amor de Pasionaria no hubiera sido tan grande, tan auténtico que, en lugar de disminuir, creció con la distancia de un mundo en guerra, nunca habría aprovechado la ocupación alemana de Francia para mostrar en público la debilidad que le impulsó a pedirle un favor personal a Stalin. (699)

(If Pasionaria's love [for her lover, a member of the leadership of the Communist Party] had not been so great, so authentic, that instead of diminishing, it grew with the distance of a world at war, she never

would have used the German occupation to display in public the weakness that propelled her to ask a personal favor of Stalin.)

In other words, if Pasionaria had not been in love, then a whole chain of circumstances (such as the attempt to invade Spain by Spanish guerrillas in order to overthrow Franco's government) would not have happened. The narrator complains: "Las barras de carmín no afloran a las páginas de los libros. El amor de la carne mortal se desvanece en esa versión oficial de la historia que termina siendo la propia Historia" (699) (Tubes of lipstick do not erupt out of the pages of books. The love of mortal flesh vanishes in that official version of history that ends up being History itself).

In the end, we are left with a recounting of the memory of love, hate, betrayal, heroism, and a circumstantial interpretation of the Fascist rebellion and the aftermath of the War. This dynamic of love and war also permits Antonio Muñoz Molina's *La noche de los tiempos* to reach into the very same question of the Fascist rebellion. In doing so, this novel proposes a straightforward explanation of the *failure* of the Republic.

The *Disaster* of the Republic and the Failure of 'Us'

La noche de los tiempos recounts the circumstances that preceded the summer of 1936 (the rebellion of the military officers led by General Franco against the government of the Spanish Republic) by a voice in the present that mirrors the memory of the protagonist. The narrative voice speaks of events that took place "hace setenta y tres años" (673) (seventy-three years ago), narrating the story of a reputed architect who works on one of the Republic's major government plans: the re-construction of Madrid's Ciudad Universitaria. This reference is the only one that alludes to the actual time of the production of the narration and is quite important because it establishes a direct connection between the Spain of the first decade of the twenty-first century and the politics and marketing of historical memory. The book is framed by the year 2009, that is, the year following Judge Baltasar Garzón's attempt to indict the Franco regime on crimes against humanity, and to initiate the uncovering of mass graves where people were buried after being murdered by Franco's death squads.

In the novel, the social planning of the city and the education of Spanish youth seem to be an intellectual and personal priority for Ignacio Abel, a college professor committed to the projects of reform and social and economic progress of the Spanish Republic. The crisis of Ignacio's personal life, as well as that of the events that took place in Madrid that summer of 1936 are articulated at crucial junctures of the novel and jointly point to the *failure* of the Republic to sustain a liberal program of modernization.

In a paradigmatic moment, Ignacio has a conversation with Negrín, a name easily identified with the war and the fight against Franco's Fascist rebellion given that Negrín was the last prime minister of the Republic. Negrín states that the Spain so dramatically described by the writers and intellectuals of the Generation of '98—"esos señores cenicientos, Unamuno y Baroja" (680) (those ashen gentlemen, Unamuno and Baroja)—is about to be transformed. The Republican politician is convinced that agrarian reform and a healthy diet will transform Spain and improve the Spanish "raza" (race). Moreover, he distances himself from Hitler's "eugenics" and Stalin's five-year plans, pointing to the totalitarian regimes that are taking over Europe. According to Álvaro and the narrator, the Republic's goals for the transformation of Spanish society are grounded on reason and common sense, rather than on the ideological doctrines that are dividing Europe.

These commentaries reveal the intervention of the narration into the historical question of the Fascist rebellion. Specifically, Negrín says that he is afraid that "those who support us and those who are against us" (860) constitute a sort of diabolical alliance that may result in the failure of the Republic because they "would not give *us* enough time" (860). The important question here is the delimitation of the "us," that is, of the subject of the reforms, and the "we" who may not, and will not, have time to succeed.

Immediately following Negrín's words, the narrator confirms that there was no time for "us," and, even more, that this "we" had a fantasy of rationality and expectation of progress that were completely absurd. Inexorably, the "disaster" came. All expectations of reform generated in 1931 (the year of the proclamation of the Spanish Republic) were an illusion. Álvaro says:

Pero no nos lo han dejado. Nunca hubo tiempo, tal vez; nunca existió la posibilidad verdadera de eludir el desastre; el porvenir que parecía abrirse por delante de nosotros el año 1931 era un espejismo tan insensato como nuestra ilusión de racionalidad. (680)

(But they did not leave it [time] for us. Perhaps there was not enough time; there never existed a real possibility of avoiding the disaster; the future that seemed to open ahead of us in 1931 was as mindless an illusion as that of rationality.)

In other words, both the supporters and the enemies of the Republic prevented "us" from carrying on the projects of reform. The collective "us" differed from both supporters and enemies of the Republic. The agents of the reforms included intellectuals and politicians that embraced the illusion of rationality and modernization of Spain that was the imprint of liberal forces across Europe. These agents were unable to understand that the essence of

twentieth-century Spain was discovered by the “noventayochistas” (writers and intellectuals of the Generation of 1898), an essence that reformist, and by extension leftist, thinking has tried unsuccessfully to overcome.

La noche de los tiempos succinctly glosses the conception of the crisis of the liberal Spanish State at the threshold of the twentieth century as it has been transmitted by canonical historiography. We are presented with a clear connection between the so-called *failure* of the Republic and the *problem of Spain* in the writers of the Generation of ‘98: the common notion of irrational expectations as a feature of Spanish culture. The inscriptions of this conception neither mention directly nor indirectly any alternative understanding of the evolution of the ideas of conservative and ultra-catholic political groups after the so-called Disaster of ‘98 (the end of the Spanish Empire), who were in search of a renovated imperialist and anti-liberal Spain.

Furthermore, the inscription of this conception seems to be the Spanish version of the notion of the *barbaric*, used to designate a pre-modern society as an uncivilized, pre-urban people. An explicit inscription of the idea of the barbaric occurs in a passage where the narrator/Ignacio recounts the “invasion” of Madrid by masses of underprivileged and uneducated people, “hordes” of rural people coming into the city attracted by the ancient “call of the fire” (630). This movement of archaic masses taking over the streets of Madrid is depicted at the same time that the narrator recounts the memory of a popular uprising to organize resistance against the Fascist rebellion. The narrator/protagonist describes the scene:

Las aceras de la calle de Carretas estaban llenándose de gente que iba hacia la Puerta del Sol, como recién llegada a Madrid desde regiones mucho más pobres y tórridas, habitantes de los últimos suburbios, de chozas y cuevas junto a muladares y ríos de aguas fétidas, de pozos de una miseria primitiva, avanzando en grandes grupos tribales hacia el centro de una ciudad en la que nunca hasta entonces fueron admitidos, boinas sucias, cabezas tiñosas, bocas desdentadas, ojos estrábicos, pies descalzos o envueltos en trapos, una bronca humanidad anterior a la política, tan deslumbrada por las luces de la ciudad y los pos incendios como si acabara de llegar desde el centro de África. (630)

(The sidewalks of Carretas street were swelling with people directed toward la Puerta del Sol, recently having arrived in Madrid from much poorer and torrid regions, dwellers of the last suburbs, of shacks and caves next to dung heaps and rivers of fetid waters, of wells of a primitive wretchedness, moving forward in large tribal groups toward the center of a city which had denied them entrance until then, dirty berets, scabby heads, toothless mouths, eyes of strabismus, feet bare or wrapped in rags, a coarse humanity anterior to politics, as disoriented by

the lights of the city and by the aftermath of fires, as if it had just arrived from the center of Africa.)

Demonstrating its mystification regarding poverty and the dispossessed groups of people surrounding the city, the inscription compares and defines these people as belonging to another time, another world and even to a different humanity. They are, the narrator says, “tribes . . . before the existence of politics,” implying that they are not the results of the political and economic structures of the first half of twentieth-century Spain, but that they have existed in this condition since ancient times. They are, in other words, a good example of the “problem” of Spain. While young people take to the streets in support of the Republic and show their willingness to repel the rebellion, the mass of the dispossessed wander without purposes and without meaning:

Los jóvenes colgados en racimos de los camiones que pasaban con gran chirrido de frenos y oscilando en las curvas saludaban agitando banderas y levantando los puños cerrados pero esa gente miraba atónita y no contestaba, ajena a cualquier adoctrinamiento, observando con recelo sarcástico las costumbres pueriles de los civilizados. (630)

(Young people, hanging bunched up from the trucks that passed with great shrieking of breaks and oscillating on curves, greeted [everyone] waving flags and raising their clenched fists, but those people looked on with astonishment and did not answer, oblivious to any type of indoctrination, observing with sarcastic distrust the puerile customs of civilized people.)

These dispossessed people live in a different time and they come from a different world; they are not part of the political chaos and doctrines that are actually confirming the “disaster” of the Republic. The civilized and the barbaric meet in the streets of Madrid, according to the narrator, and show the absolute disconnection between the projects of reform and the eternal reality of Spain. This encounter proves that Negrín, and by extension the whole Republican project, was wrong, because he and they failed to understand the profound irrationality of pre-modern Spain.

The consequences of this recovery of memory are clear. The causes of the failure and the disaster were embedded in the very nature of Spain: a nation divided by civilized and uncivilized people who did not participate in the same political, social, and cultural contexts. It is a literary and ironic variation of *Spain is different*, the slogan that served to integrate the Spanish economy into the Western world given the economic advantages of tourism, which received a new impetus from the latest marketing of cultural goods,

particularly at the peak of the international projection of this new image of Spain in the 1980s and 1990s.

As it is the case in Grandes's *El corazón helado* and Inés y la alegría, Muñoz Molina's *La noche de los tiempos* recounts the events of the Spanish Republic and the Fascist rebellion within a highly sexualized depiction of the perception of time.

El tiempo exquisito que Judith apura corriéndose cuando él ha sabido acariciarla . . . la boca entreabierta de Judith, los ojos entornados . . . el largo cuerpo desnudo . . . El tiempo que siempre se acaba . . . el crudo olor de las secreciones sexuales . . . tiempo todo lo cura. Ha llegado el tiempo de salvar a España de sus enemigos ancestrales. Volverán los tiempos de gloria. Si el gobierno se lo propusiera de verdad todavía estaría a tiempo de atajar la conspiración militar. Volverán banderas victoriosas . . . El Tiempo de Nuestra Paciencia se ha Agotado. Ya no es Tiempo de Compromisos ni de Medias Tintas con los Enemigos de España. El tiempo que he perdido no haciendo nada . . . con la impaciencia que al fin llegue el desastre, la revolución social, el apocalipsis, lo que sea. (410–11)

(The exquisite time that Judith takes to come slowly when he has managed to touch her well . . . her half-open mouth, her half-closed eyes . . . her long naked body . . . The time that always ends . . . the strong smell of the sexual secretions . . . time cures everything. The time has come to save Spain from her ancestral enemies. The time of glory will come. If the government just really wanted to, there would still be time to block the military conspiracy. Flags of victory will return . . . The Time of Our Patience is Gone. There is no longer Time for Compromises or for Wishy-Washyness with the Enemies of Spain. The time that I have wasted doing nothing . . . impatient to finally see the arrival of the disaster, the social revolution, the apocalypses, anything.)

The combination and flow of these sentences provides a sample of the political propaganda of “both sides,” of the imminent conflict of the war. The narrator inscribes voices from the political Right and Left to give a sense of a forceful occupation of the public space of Madrid in July of 1936. The simultaneity in the flow of slogans intends to give an urgent sense of equivalences between differences which, in turn, point to the ultimate explanation of the disaster: two “sides” were already formed before the Fascist rebellion. In other words, the confrontation was embedded in the Republic with the intention to destroy it, exemplifying the inability to create a rational space of political discussion.

Furthermore, the flow of sentences presents the continuity between the public arena of political discourses and the intimacy with which Ignacio

enjoys his lover. This continuity between the sexual and the political does not intend to sexualize politics or politicize sexuality. There is no intention to depict a deeper interrelation between ideological and sexual politics in general or in the particular case of the fight against Fascism in Spain. Instead, the obsession with this abundant and unique sexual experience in the narrator's memory is a sublimated counterpart to his individual political dispossession and to the realization of his intellectual impotence, which, in turn, explicitly extends to the collective "us," the agents of the reforms.

Toward a Post-National Imaginary

These texts were published after the start of the crisis of a culture of consumerism and individual governmental debt, which was promoted by the economic boom of the 1980s and the rapid internationalization of the Spanish economy. They respond to the growing questioning of the glories and official fanfare of the exemplarity of the "integration" of Spain into Europe. The Spanish Transition was, after all, the process by which Spain had to respond to the demands of global capitalism to open new markets after the crisis of profitability in late 1970s. As Joan Ramon Resina points out:

Spain's insertion into the market economy goes a long way toward explaining the Transition's temporal imprecision and the confusion of those who insist on anchoring it in politically significant events [. . .] Rather than an actual event, the Transition was the special effect (in the cinematographic sense, too) of a collective installation in a present that wished itself absolute: the present of the market [. . .] This present produces itself by constantly severing its moorings. (93)

Certainly, the visual dynamics of the peak moments of the Transition, with the quincennial celebrations of 1992, the Barcelona Olympic Games, the naming of Madrid as a cultural capital, and Seville's World Fair, were the symptoms of both the commercialization of local (that is, national) cultural products and the re-articulation of the Spanish imaginary by the logic of a cultural market. Twenty-first-century narratives confront this legacy of a postmodern Spanish culture, which constructed an image of Spain that was supposedly disengaged from the political identities of the past (particularly that of the Republic and the fight against Francoism), but which has nevertheless shown very important continuities with the social and economic privileges made possible during the dictatorship.

The Post-Transition narratives that intervene in the politically charged recovery of historical memory must do so within current conditions of

growing commodification. Cultural artifacts, including literary texts, films, and television shows, are shaped by the general commercialization of patterns, styles, programming, and all kinds of public discourses which tend to be produced within standardized models than run across borders and are exchanged from country to country. In this context, the logic of cultural commodities affects narratives by the displacement of the cultural imaginary centered on the *political* nation. This displacement signals the integration of nationally anchored cultural entities into market territories without a clearly structured political order. The transformations suffered by the political order of classical liberalism due to the impact of global processes of cultural production do not imply, however, the erasure of the cultural relevancy of the nation State. Rather, they point to a re-articulation of the national imaginary within a cultural space that does not fully correspond to the politically organized form of the nation.

Readers and, in general, consumers of cultural goods may be detached and de-territorialized from the location of production of works that otherwise express national contents, and thus participate in what Appadurai called *imagined worlds*, that is, imaginary constructions that differ substantially from the affective dimension and from ideas centered on national communities. Even more importantly, many readers and consumers may be internally detached from the time references of creative works due to a multiplicity of cultural stimuli and goods transferring ideas and contents across continents which, in turn, supersede the influences and concepts acquired through a national education, the family, and other local connections.

This dislocation of the traditional symmetries of national identities further discloses what Terry Eagleton sees as the conflict at stake in the contemporary production of cultural value:

In a three-way interaction, culture as spirituality is eroded by culture as commodity, to give birth to culture as identity. On a global scale, the relevant conflict here is between culture as commodity and culture as identity. (72)

A rearticulated national imaginary mediated by the patterns and standardizations of a global culture redefines the identities of these values. Antonio Monegal is on the right path when he points out that “categories such as ‘Spanish,’ ‘Hispanic,’ ‘Iberian,’ and ‘Latin American,’ denominate a complex network of relations rather than cultural singularities” (232). Assessing the transformations we witness in the academic field of Hispanic Studies, Monegal argues that we need

Models that are no longer based on the nation, but on the more complex concept of culture. Such a model is not determined by national boundaries and does not draw a map that separates the domestic from the alien, the inside from the outside, but acknowledges the fluctuation of such positions, their character as cultural constructs, simultaneously inside and outside. (246)

The revitalization of the literary canon that focuses on the “problem” of Spain and the idea of the *disaster* of the Civil War allows for the construction of a narrative in which the political projections of this problem are replaced by a literary space of experiences of individual fragmentation, affective and familial motifs, and extraordinary sex; a space that, in turn, puts forward both a reconsideration of this tradition, and a negotiation of Spanish cultural identities through the designs of a literary market that includes readers with life experiences, expectations, ideas, and beliefs that are closer to a global imaginary.

The current narrative production that intervenes in the so-called recovery of historical memory does so by capitalizing upon one of the major features of Spanish canonical historiography. The “two Spains” is for all purposes the dominant view regarding the Civil War. What I mean to say is that this view holds a particular structure of beliefs, feelings, and ideas that by virtue of having been constructed by a diversity of political and cultural forces for a considerable length of time, has become the matter-of-fact condition in the collective imagination of Spain. The growing commercialization of this issue in all kinds of cultural products and discourses has also permitted the articulation of this topic via an intensified emphasis on the role of the depiction of sex in the figuration of memory. This pattern, as it appears in the imagination of these narratives, seems to be reaching a point where one could say that they are made for each other.

What are made for each other are the logic of commodity culture and the need (through the parameters of the literary market) for the intervention of Spanish cultural agents and writers in debates regarding particular public goods. The national character of these goods is recognized by the motif of the “two Spains,” as these works reinforce each other in order to participate in what cultural marketing denominates *Spain’s brand* (“la marca España”). The problem of the “dos Españas” and the thematic of sex are feeding each other in this emerging post-Transition imaginary that no longer celebrates a new Spain ready to embrace the economic boom of the 1980s. This boom proved to be somewhat illusory, contradictory, and much more dependent on the political, economic, and social legacy of Franco’s dictatorship than the establishment of the Transition would have liked to admit.

The boom has been substituted by a crisis of the model of production that has dominated Spain in the decades of its rapid integration into global processes. The location of culture, to paraphrase Bhabha, is now more

clearly than ever within a process of constructing a place in order to contribute to an imaginary whose identity receives the impact of influences and forces that go beyond the reign of the political order of the nation. Some of these forces derive from a market that reaches into the workings of the literary sphere. Other forces are embedded in the very same indeterminacy of the location from which to speak and to inscribe a memory that is already mediated by similar cultural goods circulating in print and in media.

La noche de los tiempos does not specify the location of the narrative voice. This voice simply inscribes a recollection that has already been made, one that is radically other to the present of the production of this literary work: “Lo veo alto, extranjero, enflaquecido . . . verano sanguinario de Madrid [. . .] Lo he visto afeitándose” (14–18) (I see him tall, foreign, weakened . . . a sanguinary Madrid summer [. . .] I have seen him shaving). The subject that produces the narration inscribes himself in the past as the other that is actually the recollecting subject. This dynamic of sameness and otherness results in a text in which the national/political issue becomes a truly literary space that explicitly intervenes in the marketing of the recovery of historical memory by reproducing a topic of Spanish historiography that is supposed to unify the present of Spain with a constant past, and that supposedly *explains* both the Civil War and its memory.

While the inscription of topic in these literary works actually reinforces a canonical interpretation of Spain’s traumatic past, the love and sexual affairs that articulate these narrations make possible the displacement of the political and cultural issue into the larger workings of the commercialization of the past. The actual product is a narrative that portrays the imagination and the feelings given in an individual memory. This memory is constructed in an imaginary realm that we can call, following David Harvey, a “relational world” in which experiences and images of time and space are compressed and given a simultaneity that conveys the texture of the political subjectivity:

Everything is clear enough in absolute space and time, but things get a bit more awkward when it comes to relative space-time and downright difficult in a relational world. But it is only in this last frame that we can start to grapple with many aspects of contemporary politics since that is the world of political subjectivity and political consciousness. (Harvey 128)

It is a political subjectivity, Harvey continues, influenced by the mechanisms of the global media and a cultural production that “gets *internalized* within the particular political subject” (128). Some of the narratives that intervene in the “recovery of historical memory” allow us to see the convergence of a re-inscription of the canonical topic of the Civil War in a renovated literary field, and a literary imaginary that absorbs the

features and images that are ready to capture a larger section of readers, many of whom remain detached from the political issues surrounding the *national* question of Spanish Fascism. These readers are, on the contrary, closer to the regular offerings of a global market of cultural goods (in media, film and literature) that appeal to emotions, to melodramatic love affairs, to sexual images, and to a domestic and familial closure.

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