



Images of Time: Paradigms of Memory and the Collapse of the Novel of Contemporary History in Spain (2000–2010)

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Critics have long considered the Spanish “novel of memory” (Herzberger) of the last thirty years primarily in its political, ideological, ethical, and psychosocial dimensions: as a kind of complementary historical writing that belatedly grants the losers of the Civil War the recognition denied to them by the writings of Francoist history. As justified as this may be, this dimension acts as a kind of magnetic field, diverting attention from other aspects, some of which are quite prominent since they are inherent in the logic of memory. This is the case, for example, with the issue of time, to which the present essay is devoted.¹ Psychosocial approaches to the novel as well as interpretations centered on power relations focus on the political instrumentalization of memory. However, they take as their starting point an unchanging, static, often dichotomous notion of memory (e.g., the memory of the victors versus that of the losers, the remembered events and trauma, etc.). By contrast, the question of the temporality of memory makes it possible to recognize a change in the notion of memory itself that has taken place since the 1930s and 1940s. This change sheds light on the internal logic of the Civil War novel’s development from the neorealism of the postwar period to postmodernism and finally to the cosmopolitanization of memory (and literature) in the 2000s. It then becomes clear that the change undergone by the notion of memory in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—especially between 1980 and 2010—is also connected to the different epistemological premises in which it participates. The question of the political dimension of the novel of memory can then be raised anew from this discursive historical perspective.

In this essay, I focus primarily on the change in the temporal structure of

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novels of the last ten years, considering the causes and consequences of that change, and formulating some of the political questions it raises. My first thesis is that depictions of the Civil War in Spanish novels of the early twenty-first century stand within a fundamentally different horizon of inquiry from novels of memory of the 1980s and 1990s, which are associated with the “recuperación de la memoria histórica” (recuperation of historical memory), and the novels of the 1950s. There is no question that the arrival of a new generation is the determining factor in this change. And yet this sociohistorical explanation neglects important aspects of culture and history. To begin, I will sketch the change in the discourse of memory up to 2000 by showing how embedded it is in other cultural, aesthetic, philosophical, and also political processes. My second argument is that since 2000 the change in the discourse of memory has been associated with the emergence of a new structure of temporality. Until this point, a *narrative* logic had been decisive for the literary staging of memory, which implied a linear concept of history and hence a traditional notion of memory. Now, however, the relationship between the novel (narrativity) and memory appears to break down. The fact that the flood of Civil War novels has continued uninterrupted until today only *seems* to contradict this diagnosis. The new temporal structure of staged memory is increasingly based on a logic of the *image*. I will explore this new logic primarily by looking at a single text: *Les veus del Pamano* (2004) by Jaume Cabré, which I will then, by way of conclusion, compare to *Anatomía de un instante* (2009) by Javier Cercas.

Contexts of the Narrative Discourse of Memory: Postmodernization, Decontextualization, Cosmopolitanization, and Ontologizing

As in other transitional states that made the move to democracy thirty to forty years ago, in Spain the discourse of memory was initially at odds or asynchronous with the now omnipresent paradigm of “cosmopolitan memory” (Levy and Sznajder). The latter emerged in the late 1950s with the Holocaust debate and began to take hold globally in the 1980s. This asynchronicity was the case for literature as well as society. The first Civil War novels to enjoy success in the Spanish market in the mid-1980s and to achieve exemplary status—for example, *El pianista* (1985) by Manuel Vázquez Montalbán or *Beatus Ille* (1986) by Antonio Muñoz Molina—were not yet cosmopolitan in their approach; the “recuperación de la memoria histórica” began by coming to terms with national history. Clear indicators of a cosmopolitan interpretation of twentieth-century Spanish history began to appear at the turn of the millennium.

In this analysis I look first at the political and social arena, since this is where cosmopolitanization takes place, analogous to the literary field. The *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica* (ARMH) (Association for the Recuperation of Historical Memory), for example, operates globally in that it no longer attempts to defend the interests of the victims of Francoist repression (exclusively) within Spanish institutions, but also within supranational ones like the United Nations (Gálvez Biesca). This is also the moment when “memoria histórica” (historical memory) became a broad and encompassing social discourse in Spain. In this respect, the year 2000 was a kind of turning point. It was then, at the very latest, that the creeping cosmopolitan recoding of the Civil War began. That recoding made it possible to continue the discourse of memory beyond the moment when the needs of the immediate victims of historical justice and symbolic or intellectual compensation were satisfied or else partially or completely taken over by other social subsystems (political institutions, the courts). The arrival of a new generation also did its part to ensure that the struggle for recognition would take new forms. Increasingly, what is now at stake is the need for meaning that the third postwar generation projects on the war. All this applies to the literary and cultural field as well.² Cosmopolitanization became visible at about the same time in literature and film. Its hallmark is the decontextualization of the depiction of the Civil War, its detachment from its historical, ideological, and political contexts, which is not infrequently accompanied by a tendency to stage historical conflicts as Manichaean, mythical power constellations and emotional worlds of good and evil, love and violence. Additionally, historical situations are expanded to global dimensions: in Javier Cercas’s novel *Soldados de Salamina* (2001), a nameless militiaman saves “the entire human race” by forgiving his enemy. Above all the Hollywood-style feature film, by highlighting atrocities of the Civil War and Franco’s fascism, made Spanish contributions to the theme park of the “global icons” (Assmann and Conrad 1–16) of post-totalitarian memory. However, this insight is obscured by the fact that historical constellations like “Left” and “Right,” “guerrilla resistance” and “state terrorism,” “now” and “then” remain constant reference points.

Cosmopolitanization goes hand in hand with another recoding of memory, which may be termed the ontologizing of memory. As Pierre Nora already observed many years ago, we live today in “l’ère de la commémoration” (“L’ère” 997) (the era of commemoration). The memory of the human catastrophes of the twentieth century—two world wars, genocide, ethnic and political cleansing—becomes omnipresent at the moment when the last eyewitnesses die and communities of memory (“milieux de mémoire”) become sites of memory (“lieux de mémoire” [Nora “Between” 7]). But the “era of commemoration” also means that remembering is more than an occasional culture of commemoration. The recollection of past events has become a new cultural paradigm. As a mode

of perception and reflection, indeed as an epistemological model, memory might almost be compared to the centrality of consciousness and language in the early twentieth century or that of intertextuality in the 1970s. The paradigm of memory is based on the conviction that the past is the form in which reality and representation—which are regarded as one and the same—become observable. The view that reality itself may only become accessible to observation and representation in the form of the no-longer-present, so that memory becomes the normal case of perception, representation, and mimesis . . . this insight is not new. As an axiom of postmodern philosophy, however, it establishes the power of the paradigm of memory. Memory, conversely, then becomes the discursive space for the all-pervasive experience of inconsistent time or of the simultaneous presence of multiple times or “ghostly presences,” as in Derrida’s notion of the “non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present” (Derrida xviii).

In this sense, it is no accident that the era of memory begins in the 1980s, the age of postmodernism. Precisely in this period, the omnipresence of media representations of the past corresponds to the characteristic postmodern attitude toward the life of an “aestheticized *Lebenswelt*” (Welsch). The disappearance of the real or “hallucination ‘esthétique’ de la réalité” (Baudrillard 114) (‘aesthetic’ hallucination of reality) and that of the past are two facets of the same perception. In this respect, the always merely represented presence of the past in the “era of memory” is the paradigm for the always merely represented presence of the real; both are ontological and epistemological obsessions of postmodernism. For the “novel of memory” of this period, the dominant textual strategy is the so-called “historiographic metafiction” (Hutcheon). The premises of postmodernism—radical constructivism, pluralism of perspectives, the fundamental questioning of reality’s knowability—are here applied to memory and the past. Hence it seems almost inevitable that even typical novels of memory of the 1980s like the above-mentioned *Beatus Ille* or *El Pianista* should develop a special sensitivity to the historical world’s disappearance. Their attitudes toward the politics of memory, however, are variable: while Muñoz Molina uses narrative strategies of historiographic metafiction to promote historical skepticism, a kind of “negative ontology of the past” (Ricœur, *Temps* 264), Vázquez-Montalbán employs nearly identical strategies to champion a reinstatement of memory. Despite their divergent positions—historical skepticism versus reappropriation of history—both novels share the premises of historiographic metafiction; for both, the defining pathos of time is the disappearance of the past. In this respect among others, they differ from the novels of memory of the previous and following decades. Additionally, it need hardly be mentioned that in Spain the issue of the presence and absence of memory has its parallel in the polemic surrounding the “pacto de silencio” (pact of silence) as a prerequisite for the democratic *Transición* (Transition).

At the turn of the millennium, the panorama shifts once again: the recollection of the past assumes a new ontological status in literature and film. If in the 1980s and 1990s historical memory was primarily an act of representation—or of consciousness-raising in the sense of the political “recuperación de la memoria” (recuperation of memory)—in the 2000s it is increasingly seen as an act that creates realities. This performative shift in the discourse of memory may be regarded as part of a larger, more comprehensive process of the ontologizing of memory. It too has a significant parallel in the social and political arena. With the Ley de Memoria Histórica (Law of Historical Memory) of 2004 (as unsatisfying as that law may be [Moreno]), memory acquires a legal status: policy and law grant the past a (however questionable) “right of residence” in present-day reality; they declare it to be reality’s legally enforceable component. In contrast to the 1980s and 1990s, it is no longer merely part of the imaginary or symbolic; it is part of reality itself.³ This process too has parallels in literature and film. Both genres now experiment with techniques of nonfictional novels or “docufiction” (von Tschilschke and Schmelzer). The question is no longer the disappearance of the past; rather, the aim is now to authenticate the narrative, the fiction, by reference to the established historical record and to make the two coincide. According to this paradigm, novels are more authentic the more closely they resemble historical writing. This is why Javier Cercas constructs his 2001 novel *Soldados de Salamina* as a “relato real” (real story) and in 2009 writes *Anatomía de instante* as a virtual history book.

The ontologizing and cosmopolitanization of memory go hand in hand; in a certain sense, they vouch for each other. Because of its origins in the Holocaust, the cosmopolitanization of memory enjoys the prestige of an ethically and politically unassailable discourse. This fits well with the political needs for meaning addressed to the Spanish Civil War novel. On the one hand, the cosmopolitan paradigm continues to guarantee the historical-political reference to the Civil War and Francoism in the national context. On the other hand, there is a kind of “genetic alteration” of Civil War depictions by cosmopolitan codes. The political character of the novel of memory in the sense of the “recuperación de la memoria silenciada” (recuperation of silenced memory) is not abolished; it remains present in latent form. But it is no longer the only or the dominant way of interpreting these novels. *Soldados de Salamina* may be read as a Civil War novel but also as a reflection on the values of humanity, a subject that was introduced above all by concentration camp literature and cosmopolitan discourse.

Recent Novels of Memory: From Narrativity to Image

If this is indeed how things stand, then Civil War novels of the 1980s occupy a completely different discursive context from those of the last ten to fifteen years, the period of ontologizing and cosmopolitanization. This change can be explained by the increasing distance from the Civil War, the arrival of a new generation, and the general globalization of memory, but how is it to be described? The point is that the concept of memory itself has changed and this transformation can be seen in the specific temporal structure of the novel's recollection of the past. The central paradigm shift between the 1980s/1990s and the 2000s, on which I focus in this essay, involves the transition from a narrative logic to a logic of the image. The term "image" is used here to evoke two different memory-related contexts. As an epistemological paradigm, "image" refers to the increasing plausibility in contemporary theory of a knowledge of the past that is visually or imagistically organized.⁴ From a cultural-historical perspective, it no doubt has one of its sources in the phenomenological radicalization of the ancient notion of "la constitution iconique de la mémoire elle-même" (Ricœur, *La mémoire* 339) (the iconic constitution of memory itself) or "le devenir-image du souvenir" (Ricœur, *La mémoire* 7) (the becoming-image of memory). It is no accident that recent years have seen the publication of novels that organize memory iconically and imagistically in this sense. As a narrative paradigm, "image" points to the tendency to eliminate chronology and narrativity in favor of a simultaneity of times, a perception for which, as noted above, the discourse of memory makes a discursive framework available.⁵

The years between 1985 and 1996 were a period of clear politicization of the discourse of memory. The specifically political element of this period consists of the "recuperación" (recuperation) of suppressed history. Novels like *El Pianista* do not just set out to tell stories; they are above all intent on making those stories heard. This political gesture of "recuperation" is a fundamentally narrative one. Not because the object of memory itself is necessarily narrative in nature, but because literature in particular shoulders the task of recalling even non-narrative realities of totalitarian pasts: moods, atmospheres, and the private and collective unconscious. The internal affinity between history (and myth), the memory which reclaims that history, and narrative genres (novel, film) are rooted in the intrinsic connection between the novel's narrativity and the temporal directionality of the rehabilitating act of memory. Remembering itself as a gesture of recollection is structurally linear and narrative, in the sense that it consists in transplanting past events to their own future and fitting them into that future. This may be precisely one of the reasons why novels and feature films were so successful in the "political" phase of the discourse of memory, from 1985

to 2000. In the 2000s—as I will now attempt to show—the relationship between memory and the novel begins to change: the temporality of linearity collapses; past and present are no longer held together by a narrative logic; the organizational principle of narrativity is increasingly replaced by that of the image. As unlikely as it may seem, memory and the novel drift apart. This raises the question of where the political is situated in the 2000s, of what is its structural foundation, and where is it more than the mere citation of an ideological bias in favor of the losers of the Civil War. In what follows, I will explore this fundamental thesis by examining two complementary and controversial models from the most recent novels of memory: *Les veus del Pamano* by Jaume Cabré and *Anatomía de un instante* by Javier Cercas.

***Les veus del Pamano* (2004)**

In *Les veus del Pamano*, Jaume Cabré tells a story set in a little village in the Vall d'Àssua in the Pyrenees, where the village schoolteacher and painter Oriol Fontelles falls into the hands of the Falangists in the early 1940s and finds himself attracted to the seductive, rich, and powerful Elisenda Vilabré, who falls in love with him. When he stands by and does nothing to prevent the murder of the village boy Joanet, whose parents are Republicans, Oriol's pregnant wife leaves him. He then writes a confessional diary for his unborn daughter and secretly joins the resistance fighters, until his double life leads to his downfall on the very day in 1944 on which the maquis plan to invade Spain through the Vall d'Arán. Elisenda realizes Oriol's betrayal, but she arranges for her lover to enter the history of the village as a Falangist martyr. Half a century after Oriol's execution, the village schoolteacher Tina Bros happens upon the diary while doing research for an exhibition project in the dilapidated school building and discovers Oriol's true identity. At this point, Elisenda, who is now very old and doing everything she can to have him beatified, has Tina murdered.

The interesting temporal and memory-related strategies of this novel are connected with what might be called its cinematic aesthetic. In itself, the fact that Cabré has clearly designed *Les veus del Pamano* to be “a feature film in the guise of a novel” is not surprising.⁶ After all, this is an author with extensive screenwriting experience, and this is a novel that was produced and broadcast in 2009 as a two-part *miniserie* (mini-series) by the Catalan television station TV3.⁷ There is no doubt that it is a telegenic novel; indeed, it would not be surprising if the mental images formed by some of its readers as they read the novel were television-quality. But I will not attempt to document that filmic aesthetic here. To do so would only confirm the obvious and reduce the novel to this transmedial dimension while losing

sight of the key point. Rather, this convertibility is itself a symptom of the paradigm of memory in question and its temporal strategies. Only from this perspective does it then become possible to appreciate Cabré's narrative art, which consists in claiming new territory for literary realism by using specifically novelistic means to produce a cinematic effect. The television production (which is relatively conventional and, avoiding risk, does little beyond expertly converting the material to the miniseries format) departs from the novel in precisely the respects that most embody Cabré's techniques of literary visualization and *at the same time* configure his notion of memory (this alone shows how differently novels and television series operate as media) via the relationship between Oriol and Tina. While the novel takes great pains and employs a wide range of parallelisms and assimilations to establish this relationship as a spiritual kinship between two village schoolteachers that triumphs over time, the television series reduces the present-day plot to an inconsequential framing device.⁸ The crux of our question is how Cabré articulates the connection between past and present in this relationship. What is the resulting image of time and temporality? What does this mean for the notion of memory, and what are its consequences for the politicization of memory?

Narrativity

I begin with the plot, undoubtedly the level on which the novel is least original. The obstacles, figures, settings, and times in the two contrasted temporal stages, the 1940s and the 2000s, create the impression of complex contemporary history. To conclude, however, from the plot-centered character of the novel and the close connection between the historical hero Oriol and his posthumous champion Tina, that the links between the present and history are primarily narrative would be a mistake. In fact—paradoxically—the level of the plot is actually relatively unimportant to the temporality of the novel. For as complex as the image of contemporary history is in the interweaving of the characters in the just under seven hundred pages of the novel, in the end there are virtually no ambiguities or indeterminacies. True, Oriol and Tina stand before the wreckage of their private happiness: he has betrayed his wife morally and ideologically, while she is being betrayed by her husband; he never meets his only child, while her only child is entering a monastery, etc. Yet, they are heroes of private life. Their options are always morally unambiguous, and in the end they always choose the good. Even more unambiguous and hence less dynamic are the elemental goals that the other characters pursue, with more or less success but always single-mindedly, in Cabré's thoroughly melodramatic world, where the ruling forces quest for power, as well as thirst for

vengeance and sex. There is hardly an event that is not determined by one of these force fields. They generate mysteries and tensions but not openness, indeterminacy, or polyvalence of meanings. This is true for both plots, the present as well as the past. In this respect, in Cabré's novel the 1940s are not fundamentally different from the 2000s.

If the plot structure of *Les veus del Pamano* is schematic, the novel also, paradoxically, does relatively little to give narrative shape to the relationship between past and present. Tina never evinces an existential, much less a truly political interest in the past. Cabré presents his heroine (and he is a master at this) as wholly absorbed in the pragmatic, unspectacular everyday world of our present day, which is a plausible one for his readers. It is the *Lebenswelt* of the private, whose coordinates Anthony Giddens once described as "life politics." As Giddens explains, "life politics . . . are about how we should live in a world where everything that used to be natural (or traditional) now has in some sense to be chosen, or decided about" (*Beyond* 91) and where "globalizing tendencies intrude deeply into the reflexive project of the self" (*Modernity* 214). In this "post-traditional" (*Beyond* 5) world of "manufactured uncertainty" (*Beyond* 7), everyday life becomes a "universe of high reflexivity" (*Beyond* 7). Consequently, the process of coming to terms with the past takes place "beyond Left and Right" (Giddens *Beyond*), beyond collective identities and political antagonisms. These are the coordinates from which Tina's turn to the past comes about. Hence it is no accident that Tina stumbles on Oriol's confession unintentionally and precisely in the context of a project for the village school. There are many subsequent parallels between the two heroes. Their lives are so closely intertwined that, in the end, Tina could be his letter's intended recipient, chosen by fate to be Oriol's adoptive daughter.⁹ But none of this can alter the fact that the motivation for her turn to history is private and remains so to the end—despite half-hearted protestations to the contrary by the narrator or herself. That there might be a deeper meaning to Oriol's destiny or even a political duty to uncover his true story is a possibility that only surfaces occasionally and remains ambiguous, incidental; it is not the dominant attitude toward the past. Can one still speak here of "recuperación de la memoria histórica" (recuperation of historical memory) where there is neither a character who remembers nor one who fully identifies with the role of secondary witness?

This superficially historical—but on closer inspection unhistorical—relationship to the past would have been deemed "unpolitical" during the 1950s to 1980s. Here, the connection of past and present was existential. The protagonists of the novels of the last thirty years increasingly lose that existential connection as the war disappears from the biographical horizon of authors and readers. For the young people in Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio's *El Jarama* (1955), it is painful that the war as a part of their lives has been denied, while novels of the early 1980s (such as José María Guelbenzu's *El*

río de la luna [1981]) show just how existentially and traumatically it is interwoven with those lives. In Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's *El Pianista*, there is still at least, in the figure of Alberto, a communicative connection between the war generation and the group of friends who hear him play in a bar in the 1980s. In Antonio Muñoz Molina's *El jinete polaco* (1991), it is only a chest with photographs that mediates between the generations. In Manuel Rivas's *El lápiz del carpintero* (1998) and Javier Cercas's *Soldados de Salamina*, we see a contemporary of the readers who is historically uninterested at first but then becomes capable of enthusiasm (the reporter Sousa in the first novel and the character of Cercas in the second); both at least still meet the protagonists of the Civil War era. The price that must be paid to make these characters' sudden interest in a history from which they have long since felt removed (because they are wrapped up in "life politics") seem plausible is steep. In Cercas's nonfictional novel, it has to be the authentic historical heroes, the "amigos del bosque," whom the novel's main character meets.

To a large extent, the Civil War novel's poetics of memory may be seen as a reflection of the gradual dissolving of the communicative connection between primary and secondary witnesses. Cabré goes half a step further: overall, he is still more systematic and perhaps even more honest in showing the irreversible rift that the dying out of the eyewitness generation has left behind in communicative memory since the 1990s. True, Cabré does not dissolve the narrative connection between past and present completely; but the many stories, great and small, recounted in *Les veus del Pamano* no longer motivate the present's interest in history. In other words, although it is a plot-heavy novel, the narrative logic is no longer the link between past and present. For Cabré, the loss of this connection is overcompensated in typical fashion, in the novel's melodramatic logic: Tina is murdered by a force that rises up from the past and strikes at her directly—the henchmen of the aged Elisenda.

There is a tear in the fabric of generational continuity that cannot be repaired. For Cabré, the linearity of the temporal sequence of past and present is thinned out to the vanishing point. If it disappears completely in the structure of the novel, the politics of the complementary, compensatory narration of the true story—the "recuperación" (recuperation)—also loses its meaning. What penetrates this vacuous connection between past and present that is no longer existentially motivated by direct experience or direct political commitment, yet, nonetheless, fulfills the continuing need for narrative sense-making? In *Les veus del Pamano*, if we remain at the level of the narrative, the driving force animating the mutual interest of past and present—Oriol and Tina—is a mysterious, mythical, almost animistic force of attraction that proceeds from the reading of the diary, connects the two temporal stages, and turns Tina into Oriol's adoptive daughter. Communicative memory has all but ceased to be a shared space that would

enable the two to meet. If we leave the level of the narrative, however, we see that the gap or blank left behind by the loss of narrativity within the connection between the eras is occupied by a diegetic *gesture*: a spatiotemporal and/or cognitive leap. This gesture isolates the constitutive categories of plot and narrativity—time, space, and subject—and reconfigures them according to another logic, which is not that of narrative but that of the image. In fact, Cabré connects the temporal levels of past and present less through narrative techniques in the strict sense than through (in the broader sense) stylistic ones. Here the novel is especially original, and the strategy of iconization extremely subtle.

Linguistic Gestures

Cabré works with a stylistic technique that one might describe as linguistic gestuality. One example of a linguistic gesture of this kind is the introduction of the provincial governor Prats: “L’Excelentísimo Señor Don Nazario Prats, calb, bigoti, retallat, gotes de suor al front i sota la samarreta, i a més, Gobernador Civil y Jefe Provincial del Movimiento, estava neguitós” (Cabré 37) (His Excellency Don Nazario Prats, Civil Governor and Provincial Head of the Movement, was bald, mustachioed, rather short, sweaty in his forehead and under his undershirt, and nervous). The use of the complete title is a citation of the official discourse, which is then immediately—in a gesture typical of the novel—first ironically undermined (was bald, mustachioed, sweaty, and nervous) and then commented on from the character’s perspective: “Davant de la senyora Elisenda o estàs neguitós o no ets humà?” (Cabré 37) (Who isn’t nervous when facing Senyora Elisenda?). The reason I describe these techniques as linguistic gestuality rather than as dialogical narration (official versus unofficial or private discourse) is to emphasize the interplay of symbolic and performative sense-making strategies. These are central to the novel’s temporal strategies and cinematic realism. In this novel, linguistic gestures work like performative roles: in addition to the denotative meaning of a statement and its connotations (Prats’s title and name stand for the official discourse; set against this official appearance is the divergent perception of his body and his private discourse), there is also another meaning, which the statement produces as a “speech act” (Searle, Austin). This meaning has less to do with the fact that there are two truths about Prats (he is a Falange officer and also a human being); rather, it consists of the *oscillation between* these two truths. Thus, the sentence quoted above (like many sentences in the novel) has two unformulated subtexts, a connotative and a performative one. The connotative one says: the world of the Falange is schizophrenic, hypocritical, or superficial. The narrative gesture, however, lies at the

performative level of the subtext, which says: public and private are two unstable discursive states, between which there is a constant oscillation. This gesture is more than irony. The reader constantly has an external as well as an internal perspective. In other cases, this gestuality enables the novel to switch among different speaking subjects or subjects of perception, sometimes multiple times within a single syntagm.¹⁰

The fact that this “flickering” takes so many different forms and occurs so frequently justifies us in regarding it as a systematic textual strategy. It becomes especially interesting where it is not just interdiscursive, intercognitive, and interpersonal (appearance and reality shift among different characters’ perspectives), but interepochal, intertemporal. In fact, transhistorical shifting between past and present is one of the novel’s most heavily used techniques. From it we can derive a specific conception of temporality that defines a view of memory. One example of this gestural production of a montage of temporal stages is the introduction of the character of Oriol and the depiction of his relationship to Tina. The two first come into contact—here still completely traditionally, with no violation of the temporal levels, as in the pre-realistic novel of the eighteenth century—through the diary. Tina salvages it from the school building at the last minute and begins to read it. After a few pages, she suddenly remembers where she has seen the name Oriol before: “José Oriol Fontelles Grau, caído por Dios y por la Patria” (Cabré 33) (José Oriol Fontelles Grau, he died a hero’s death for God and Fatherland)—the epitaph on the gravestone at the cemetery. The first abrupt switch between temporal levels occurs right between the two scenes just cited: Tina’s reading of the diary and her remembering of the epitaph. Here Cabré interpolates, without further commentary, his first extended characterization of Oriol in the form of a scene between he and his wife Rosa. This analepsis resembles a cinematic montage in which the scene from the past immediately follows the present scene that evokes it (diegetically motivated only by the cigar box in which the diary was found): “[Tina] va tocar, amb cura, la capsa de pursos amb la seva mà enguantada. Què has dit?” (Cabré 30) (Tina ran her gloved hand gently over the cigar box. What did you say?) [said Oriol to Rosa].

In and of themselves, these montage-like cuts are not unusual for the modern novel. In *Les veus del Pamano*, they become increasingly bold as the novel progresses and at the same time gradually more plausible. Cabré succeeds in making subjects and eras flicker into view by turns, as if consciousness and eras were electromagnetic states that can be activated and deactivated. The gesture of the cut is not negative, deconstructive; it doesn’t call our habits of perception and sense-making into question. On the contrary, Cabré’s art is to present this to the reader as a further heightening of realistic illusionism, not as something unsettling or avant-garde. How can this effect be explained? There are two possibilities.

The first possibility is that the leaps bring about a desubjectification of the characters and a detemporalization of their life worlds; the two merge into one. This transsubjective and transepochal consolidation is the actual story of the novel, which is narrated in a perspectival manner. In the above-mentioned narrative, parallels between the two characters (life situation, death, etc.) contribute to it as well. Once this door has been opened, the leaps become increasingly bold without ever exceeding the threshold of immediate comprehensibility. Tina is brought into a generational relationship with Oriol that is poorly motivated diegetically and primarily suggested through perspective and becomes his actual addressee. As a result, as she enters the collective rushing of Pamano's history she brings her own era and consciousness with her; the narrator is part of this amalgamation as well.¹¹

The second possibility is that once one has developed a sense for gestural writing, it is hard to find passages in *Les veus del Pamano* that do *not* fall into this category. Behind the narrated story, the entire novel unfolds, as it were, a second time as a pantomime of performative gestures. In a sense, this almost continuous theatricalization of the level of *discours* corresponds to the melodrama on the level of *histoire*, which is unremittingly motivated by power, vengeance, and sex. Both are well-suited to the aesthetic of a television miniseries. Here too, however, the gestural level of *discours* is more interesting, for its plot is effectively the basis for the screenplay of a possible film. The performative subtext of the gesture is the interface of a cinematic adaptation. In gestuality, linguistically and symbolically generated meaning and visually and cinematically generated meaning coincide.

Images of Time

What image of time and the subject is produced by these gestures? Eras and subjects are no longer connected narratively but spatialized and juxtaposed simultaneously; they are effectively parallel worlds. Their contiguity is that of the simultaneity of the objects in an image. Hence contemporary history no longer appears in this novel as the recollection of things past but as the imagining of a reality that differs from our present only in that it happened once before. Cabré's technique of "cross-fading" ultimately eliminates the distinction between remembering and imagining, primary and secondary witnessing, which is essential for the novel of memory—or else makes them coincide as in a stereoscopic image. The linear temporality of past and present collapses. The montage discussed above is a good example of this. The scene between Oriol and his wife is presented after Tina has spent the entire day reading the diary; is it a historical scene internal to the fiction or a

product of Tina's historical imagination? The question remains undecided. While in the 1980s the pathos and obsession of the novel of memory was the disappearance of the present, the distinguishing feature of the contemporary novel of memory is the lack of decisive distinction between imagining and (imagined) remembering, or primary and secondary witnessing. Since there are virtually no primary witnesses left, the category loses its original meaning, so that the secondary witnesses (Tina) identify with the primary ones (Oriol), who always appear as victims. Here too, Cabré goes a step beyond Cercas's *Soldados de Salamina*—or more precisely its film adaptation by David Trueba. Whereas Lola relives Sánchez Mazas's execution by firing squad in her imagination and physically manifests his fear and pain (which is also a leveling of primary and secondary witnessing), in *Les veus del Pamano* Tina is killed.

One of my main theses was that the contemporary discourse of memory is structured by the paradigm of the image. In *Les veus del Pamano*, that paradigm operates on a number of different levels: in the proximity to a television series, its gestural language, its visualizations, and finally as a semantic structure that combines past and present and brings narrativity and linearity to the point of collapse. To develop my thesis further and to highlight the political implications of this development, I turn now to an alternative model of the Spanish literature of memory which dissolves the link between memory and the novel in a different way but one still based on the paradigm of the image: Javier Cercas's *Anatomía de un instante*. Since this text works less with descriptive than with argumentative techniques, I will limit myself to an analysis of its argument.

Javier Cercas: *Anatomía de un instante* (2009)

In a text that seems to vacillate between novel and history book, Javier Cercas reconstructs the causes, course, and consequences of the military putsch of February 23, 1981. His starting point is a specific moment of that putsch—the moment when the army has occupied Parliament and is firing warning shots into the air, and the deputies are taking cover under their seats; only Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez remains sitting upright in his seat on the left side of the front row, “como el capitán que permanece inmóvil en el puente de mando mientras su barco se hunde” (Cercas *Anatomía* 429) (like the captain who remains motionless on the bridge while his ship is sinking):

La cámara propone un plano fijo y frontal [. . .] con la figura de Adolfo Suárez en el centro casi exacto de la imagen, monopolizando la atención del espectador como si en la sala [el hemiciclo del Congreso] se

estuviera desarrollando un drama histórico y el presidente del gobierno interpretara el papel principal. (Cercas *Anatomía* 331)

(The camera shows a fixed and frontal shot [. . .] with Adolfo Suárez's figure nearly exactly in the middle of the image, monopolizing the attention of the spectator as if a historical drama were taking place in the hemicycle of parliament and the president played the lead.)

Unlike Cabré, Cercas starts with a real image, a television image showing Suárez at a decisive moment of the putsch. From a naturalistic perspective, one could easily justify this selection of an image-like moment by pointing out that for those not directly involved, the entire series of events was at any rate only accessible in the form of the subsequent television broadcast. For the secondary witnesses, the media depiction was the final authority on its truth. A film adaptation of Cercas's text—as absurd as it would be—would not yield a television series as with Cabré but the television recording of “23-F” itself. For Cercas, however, history also crystallizes in images in a very different sense: in his view, Suárez's unflappable composure as he stands up to the violence of the military is the expression, the “cifra exacta” (Cercas *Anatomía* 430) (exact key) of a political iconography within which the entire history of the coup is symbolically condensed.

In terms of his narrative approach, then, Cercas seems to pursue precisely the opposite strategy of Cabré. Instead of detemporalizing the historical worlds and arranging them side by side within the metonymic logic of the image, Cercas recounts or renarrativizes something that apparently *is* already an image: history. And history has become an image in a twofold sense: in reality and in the media as a television still (which we see on the book cover); and symbolically, because—as Cercas sees it—in the actual existing image the historical constellation of the putsch is articulated, together with its causes, its course, and its consequences: the “anatomy of a moment.” What is actually a temporal process—the attempted putsch—seems, in this image, to have congealed into a state of emblematic simultaneity, a *Gestalt*. The book is the attempt to explain this true image, the *vera icon*, to translate or dissolve it back into a narrative: “explorar el significado de un gesto” (Cercas *Anatomía* 18) (to explore the meaning of a gesture).

This, at least, is how Cercas presents it. But this image is not as true as it seems or as Cercas would have us believe. And not just because it is a television image (as Cercas himself concedes) but rather (a point he glosses over) because—as I will show in a moment—its symbolic concision is ultimately rooted in a literary interpretation of history that Cercas has undertaken of the putsch. Thus, Cercas does not (just) renarrativize an image that miraculously coincides with reality. Rather, he repeats

historiographically the foregoing literary interpretation of a historical event. Cercas argues that *Anatomía de un instante* is a history book about a novelistic reality. In fact, it is the opposite: a literary text about a historical reality.

Cercas conceals this fact by thematizing the novel-reality dichotomy himself, skillfully and quite elaborately. In various ways, he allows *Anatomía de un instante* to hang suspended in the limbo between literature and history. While Cabré gives us a “genuine” novel, this work, through a series of calculated ambiguities, situates itself in the gray zone of “docuficción” or nonfictional novel (it is telling that the Spanish publishing industry uses the single term “narrativa” for both). Javier Cercas is well known as a novelist but not necessarily as a historian, and the publisher of his text (Literatura Mondadori) is generally a venue for novels. Cercas’s style in this text, however, is that of the omniscient historiographer.

In the text itself, very much as in Miguel de Unamuno’s *Niebla* (1914), Cercas addresses the question of genre in a “Prólogo: Epílogo de una novela” (*Anatomía* 13–26) (Prologue: The Epilogue of a Novel) and an “Epílogo: Prólogo de una novela” (415–437) (Epilogue: The Prologue of a Novel). It is important to note that by “novela” (novel), Cercas does not mean a genre but a specific historical narrative, indeed a possible type of historical reality, and (at the same time) its native historiographic form. He develops this notion of the “novela” in his fore- and afterwords, where he seeks to eliminate the opposition between literature and history, novel and historiography, by alternately adducing dialectical, ironic, and enthymematic arguments. In a complex, sometimes sly and sometimes coquettish line of reasoning, he unveils before the reader’s eyes a series of apparent contradictions between the two genres (there are others he leaves veiled). He performs a dizzying juggling act with the categories of fiction, novel, and reality, in an effort to show that in the rare and special case of the putsch of February 23, reality—in the perfect “symmetry” (Cercas) of all its elements—is *really* like a “novela,” indeed *is* a “novela.”

Al fin y al cabo hay razones para entender el golpe del 23 de febrero como el fruto de una neurosis colectiva. O de una paranoia colectiva. O, más precisamente, de una novela colectiva. [. . .] ¿Cómo se me ocurrió escribir una novela [. . .] sobre una novela colectiva? [. . .] De repente, todo era coherente, simétrico, geométrico, igual que en las novelas [. . .] Si una novela debe iluminar la realidad mediante la ficción, imponiendo geometría y simetría allí donde sólo hay desorden y azar, ¿no debía partir de la realidad, y no de la ficción? ¿No era superfluo añadir geometría a la geometría y simetría a la simetría? [. . .] comprendí que los hechos del 23 de febrero poseían por sí mismos toda la fuerza dramática y el potencial simbólico que exigimos de la literatura. (Cercas *Anatomía* 15–24)

(After all, there are reasons to interpret the 23 February coup as the fruit of a collective neurosis. Or of collective paranoia. Or, more precisely, of a collective novel. [. . .] How did I come up with the idea of writing a novel about a collective novel? [. . .] Suddenly, everything was coherent, symmetrical, geometric, just like in a novel [. . .] If a novel should illuminate reality through fiction, imposing geometry and symmetry where there is only disorder and chance, should it not start from reality, and not from fiction? Was it not superfluous to add geometry to geometry and symmetry to symmetry? [. . .] I understood that the incidents of 23 February possessed of their own all the dramatic force and the symbolic potential we expect from literature.) (Cercas *Anatomy* 5–12)

Hence *Anatomía de un instante* is a form of historiography that is and must be novelistic because the reality itself is novelistic. In the image of Suárez defying the army's machine guns—so Cercas claims—all of this is condensed:

Aunque no sea un libro de historia [. . .] no renuncie del todo a ser leído como un libro de historia [. . .] aunque no sea una novela, no renuncie del todo a ser leído como una novela; [. . .] este libro no renuncia del todo a entender por medio de la realidad aquello que renunció a entender por medio de la ficción, y de ahí que no verse en el fondo sobre el 23 de febrero, sino sólo sobre una imagen o un gesto de Adolfo Suárez el 23 de febrero y, colateralmente. (Cercas *Anatomía* 25–26)

(Although it's not a history book [. . .] it will not entirely renounce being read as a history book [. . .] although it's not a novel, it won't entirely renounce being read as a novel [. . .] this book will not entirely renounce understanding by means of reality that which it renounced understanding by means of fiction and from there seeing itself deep down as not being about 23 February but only about an image of or a gesture from Adolfo Suárez on 23 February, and, collaterally.) (Cercas *Anatomy* 15)

The image and the fact that this image exists are proof of the novelistic reality of the historical event, which here, as it were, has produced its own metaphor, its own symbol.

Como si misteriosamente, en este instante eterno no sólo Suárez sino todo el país hubiera sabido para siempre quién era [. . .] el gesto de Suárez [. . .] no contiene nada, pero a través del cual, como a través de

un vidrio sentimos que podríamos verlo todo—podríamos ver a Adolfo Suárez, el 23 de febrero, la historia reciente de España, tal vez un rostro que es acaso nuestro rostro verdadero. (Cercas *Anatomía* 430)

(As if mysteriously in this eternal moment not only Suárez but the whole country had always known who it was [. . .] Suárez's gesture [. . .] is meaningless, but we feel we could see all through it, as if through a window—we could see Adolfo Suárez on the 23rd of February, the recent history of Spain, perhaps a face which is possibly our true face.)

This syllogism that Cercas rehearses for us is of course an example of circular reasoning. More interesting, however, is the question of its purpose, its implications, the politics of its view of history. Both texts, *Les veus del Pamano* and *Anatomía de un instante*, are undoubtedly what one might call politically accurate. There are nevertheless political differences between them, which reside in their implicit conceptions of memory or history. In terms of the politics of memory, Cabré's message is that history leaves its traces behind even in the world of everyday life, where it continues to be active as a real, effective presence, more in the sense of *actualitas* than of *realitas*. Cabré's novel is in this sense a melodramatic variant of the above-mentioned "performative turn" in the discourse of memory. When past events are recollected as they are by Tina, the past itself becomes an actor in the present and hence an active part of its ontology. Because a narrative imbrication between history and the present is lacking, this relationship, as suggested above, is articulated according to the paradigm of the image, in which the two temporal stages are presented as simultaneous. For Cercas, the paradigm of the image is less aesthetic and strategic than historico-philosophical. It formalizes and guarantees the metaphor of history as the "novela de España." "Novela," for him, does not mean a play with possible worlds. It is a historico-philosophical metaphor for the belief in Spain's teleology, its entelechy. Here, what that means concretely is the democratic *transición* (Transition), toward which the failed military putsch—for Cercas: teleologically—converges. The temporality of history is abolished here. The image of time that this metaphor encompasses is similarly one that is ultimately non-narrative.

Conclusion

My main thesis is that in the contemporary Spanish historical novel of the last ten years, the relationship of past and present is increasingly structured by the paradigm of the image, which thus replaces narrativity and linearity

and even brings them to the point of collapse. I took as my premise the hypothesis that the notion of memory itself is caught up in a process of change. The development of the novel of memory can be seen against the backdrop of this change, which in turn is expressed in different forms of temporality. Within these forms of temporality, that is, in different images of time, the novel of memory shapes the relationship of past and present, which is central to it. I began by sketching in broad outline the paradigm shift undergone by the novel of memory over the last thirty years and listed the contexts that define it: postmodernism, cosmopolitanization, and the ontologizing of memory. Finally, I took an in-depth look at two very different, indeed almost antithetical texts. In *Les veus del Pamano*, the paradigm of the image operates on various levels: in the novel's proximity to a television series, in its gestural language, its visualizations, and finally as a semantic structure combining past and present. In *Anatomía de un instante*, the image is the symbolic concretization of a historico-philosophical interpretation of contemporary Spanish history. Both novels de-narrativize the relationship of past and present, one by dissolving the narrative bond between them, the other through the simultaneous presence of past, present, and future states within an image.

In the first years of democracy, the analogy between novel and memory based on narrativity and linearity made the novel of memory the appointed model for the "recuperación de la memoria histórica" (recuperation of historical memory). With the paradigm of the image, this alliance begins to crack; the notion of memory itself starts to lose its meaning. The paradigm of the image is well equipped to compensate for the real dissolving of the communicative relationship between primary and secondary witnessing in literature by assimilating the two instances, between imagining and remembering. We have seen from two models the directions in which the novel then tends to evolve. In both cases, remembering is replaced by image-like simultaneity. In *Les veus del Pamano*, the novel generates picture-like scenarios; it converges, as it were, toward the genre of film. Conversely, in *Anatomía de un instante*, a narrative that has congealed into an image is re-narrativized, and the novel converges toward the genre of history writing. Film and history writing are two reference points of the novel that negate it and at the same time mark new poles: the vanishing points or zero points of literary realism.

Notes

1. On the shift of focus from the representation of memory to the representation of time, see, for example, the works of Andreas Huyssen: "The most interesting aspect of the debate [about history versus memory] is what it may portend for the emergence of a new paradigm of thinking about time and space, history and

geography in the twenty-first century” (4). In Spain, this is the case especially, albeit not exclusively, with periods of political change. To what extent the democratic Transition involved suspending memory through “a collective installation in a present that wished itself absolute” (93) is shown in an essay by Joan Ramon Resina. See also Subirats on the evolution of temporal structures during this period. Moreiras-Menor raises the question, “[cómo] el pasado se desmitifica como *el tiempo de la historia . . . para dar paso . . . a una historia del presente*” (12) (how the past is de-mythified as *the time of history . . . to give way. . . to a history of the present*). Unlike Moreiras-Menor, however, I do not look for traces of an emphatic deconstruction of temporal linearity. Rather, I find—specifically in the novel—transformations, distortions, and reconfigurations of this temporal structure. These relativize the narrative logic, but also have very different implications as far as the politics of memory are concerned.

2. Two important precursors of the cosmopolitan interpretation of national history are the novels *Corazón tan blanco* by Javier Marías and *El jinete polaco* (both from 1991) by Antonio Muñoz Molina. It is no accident that both were published on the eve of the *annus mirabilis* in 1992, when Spain presented itself to the world as a country that had finally arrived in the present. Both reflect the significance of national history and identity in a transnational world.
3. This privileging of the legal can also be seen in the opposite case, where legal means are used to prevent historical enlightenment, as shown by the legal proceedings against the investigative judge Baltasar Garzón in January 2012.
4. See, for example, “visual history” (Paul) and the so-called “pictorial” or “iconic turn” (Mitchell).
5. Interestingly, both semantic dimensions of “image”—the philosophical and the narrative—received the formulations that make them capable of adoption by, or compatible with, contemporary cultural theory at almost the same time—the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. As Safranski points out, the attempt to discover “historical truth not in the temporal continuum but in fissures and fractures” (200) in plurality and latency and other forms of nonsynchronism (Bloch), goes back to a type of diagnosis of time that held sway in the final years of the Weimar Republic. It had earlier received its initial formulations from Nietzsche, Benjamin, and Heidegger, and as mentioned above was later continued by Derrida.
6. From the cover blurb of the German translation.
7. URL: www.tv3.cat/videos/1623399 (Part 1) and www.tv3.cat/videos/1623409 (Part 2). On the cinematic adaptation see Jiménez.
8. An overlapping of Oriol’s and Tina’s perceptual perspectives takes place only briefly and metaphorically at the end of Part 1 (1:16:38–1:17:38) and again at the beginning of Part 2 (0:03:37–0:04:13), when Tina stands in front of the school building and photographs the road into the village, on which Oriol has been led away shortly before. By reducing the present-day plot to a mere occasion for recounting the historical one, the series effectively becomes a film adaptation of a virtual classically historical novel.
9. Both face very similar family situations; Oriol’s ideological and moral unfaithfulness “makes” Rosa “sick,” just as Tina is “made sick” by Jordi’s marital unfaithfulness (Cabré 398, 401). Ultimately, Tina comes to see herself as the diary’s intended recipient: “L’Oriol Fontelles parlava a la Tina Bros directament” (328) (Oriol Fontelles was speaking directly to Tina Bros).
10. Note, for example, how here and there the text is sprinkled with technical medical terms in parentheses, e.g., “Diafragmodinia o diafragmàlgia” (Cabré 98) (diaphragmalgia). Here, the subject’s consciousness enters the narrator’s discourse.

The subtext is the uncontrollable nature of Tina's fear of contracting a terminal illness. On the shift of subject between Oriol and the narrator: "Llavors, la Rosa va tossir i ell [i.e., Oriol] es va aixecar, disposat a travessar la plaça i anar cap a ella. Aleshores va veure que a l'home xop se n'hi havia ajuntat un altre, i que tots dos miraven cap a ell i no sé què deien, i vaig [i.e., Oriol] comprendre que era millor no embolicar-vos-hi, ni a tu ni a la teva mare, perquè eren gent sense entranyes" (Cabré 353) (Just then Rosa coughed, and he jumped up and wanted to run to her. Then he saw that the man who was soaking wet had been joined by a second man. The two of them looked over at him and said something, and I realized that it would be better not to drag you into this story). In this sentence, Tina, the narrator, and the stonemason Jaume Serrallac alternate: "Es van posar a riure ben fort [Tina and Jaume Serrallac], jo [i.e., Tina] desmaiada de por per la brometa i l'amo Rendé, des del taulell, va pensar [. . .]" (Cabré 620) (Both of them laughed out loud; I was half dead with fear because of that joke, and behind the bar Rendé thought . . .).

11. Note the shift of subject and time within a single paragraph as well as the shift of focus: "La Tina va sentir badallar un altre cop el doctor Zhivago [. . .] i també pensava en què deu estar fent ara mateix l'Arnau. Déu meu, que no estigui posant els ulls en blanc i que no faci aquella veu impostada, litúrgica, falsa i ritual i que continuï essent un bon noi, amén. Després de veure com desapareixia l'últim alumne, la pissarra meticulosament esborrada, les cendres de l'estufa remogudes, l'Oriol se n'anà al lavabo a rentar-se les mans del guix acumulat durant tot el dia" (Cabré 245) (Tina heard Doctor Zhivago yawn again . . . And she also wondered what Arnau was doing just then. My God, hopefully he's not rolling his eyes and talking in that artificial, unctuous voice, and hopefully he's still a nice guy, amen. Once the last pupil had left, once he had wiped the blackboard clean and emptied the ashes out of the oven, Oriol walked to the bathroom).

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