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Censorship, literary commemoration and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-2018

Introduction

The twentieth century was a century of wars and conflicts. The Spanish Civil War was one of them. This conflict, followed by almost four decades of dictatorship, affected Spain's politics, economy and society at the time. And the consequences can still be seen today. The Spanish Civil War is the result of political tensions during the Second Republic (1931-1936). These political tensions are directly linked to the 'deeply transformative' reforms voted in by the Spanish Socialist Party (el PSOE), during the Second Republic. Among the reforms presented by the government of the Second Republic, the following were particularly new to Spain's conservative society: a 'fairer' distribution of land, the extension of the right to vote to women and soldiers, the reorganisation of the army, the redefinition of private property, the questioning of the relationship between church and state. Even on a European scale, some of these reforms appeared too progressive for the 1930s. At that time, these reforms were not unanimously accepted. They were considered too 'communist' by big landowners, the clergy and supporters of right-wing parties. At that time in Europe, communism was seen as a growing threat.

The dissatisfaction expressed by the opponents of the Socialist Party's reforms, along with the conflicts between the Prime Minister Manuel Azaña and the other political parties, could be clearly seen in the elections of November 1933 when the PSOE lost its majority in favour of the CEDA (Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas: The Confederation of the Autonomous Spanish Right-wing Parties). With the appointment of CEDA ministers came the will to reinstate the strong relationship between the Christian religion and the Government in this "fascist-leaning part" (Encarnacion - *Democracy Without Justice in Spain: The Politics of Forgetting* - 31). The CEDA showed a different kind of approach influenced by German politics (Preston - *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution, and Revenge* - 125). After the CEDA, the Frente Popular (the Spanish popular Front, a coalition of left-wing parties) governed. After the Frente Popular's arrival, a strong political tension remained palpable in Spain, especially between the "republicans" and the "nationalists" ("Donquijote").

After the elections of 1936, some military leaders started plotting against the government. They believed the government was too inefficient in removing 'communist' reforms, and they believed they should use strength and propaganda to attain their objectives. Among the leaders were Generals José Sanjurjo, Emilio Mola, Manuel Goded and Francisco Franco. These leaders started plotting actively against the government, but the assassination of the monarchist politician Calvo Sotelo on 13 July 1936, accelerated the outbreak of the Civil War.

This conflict lasted three years. Three years of struggle where the troops directed by aforementioned generals quickly took the advantage thanks to the help of the Italians (in the foreground) and the Germans (in the background) and of their weaponry, while the Republican troops, which were mostly composed of volunteers (before becoming the Popular Army), struggled with understaffing (Beevor, *The Battle for Spain: the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* - 131). The Civil War ended when Franco and his troops invaded the capital, Madrid. There were many victims, but the figures are unclear. Few contemporaneous records of Spanish nationals who perished on the battlefields are available, moreover, records of those who were murdered in mass killings during the war and the dictatorship are largely non-existent (Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* - 9). An exemplar of this was, the battle of the Ebro, July-November 1938 which produced more than 60,000 casualties. During the three years of the Civil War 30,000 people were executed, and 400,000 people were imprisoned (Barton 246).

The research presented here focuses on the process of recovering Spain's historical memory through novels from the Francoist era until today. This paper will start by looking at the timeline of the events that took place between the Francoist era followed with the transition years and today. Then it continues by looking at the general trends in terms of publications in Spain at different point of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, where we can see the impact of the censorship, which controlled many aspects of the population's daily life, and its impact on literature during the Francoist era. It will thereafter talk about the two main 'waves' of publications. Novels will be the main studies genre, although poetry and cinema will be mentioned. Moreover, it will end with a discussion on the situation today, in 2018, in Spain.

1) Timeline of relevant events 1936-2019.

The Civil War crushed Spanish republicanism. It was followed by the Franco dictatorship, which lasted thirty-six years. The war was harsh and traumatic for each side, but the dictatorship imposed by Franco and his government was as traumatic as the war.

To impose the dictatorship, the Franco regime carried out systematic repression at all levels, beginning with the confiscation of republican family apartments and continuing with the purging, detention and punishment of all those suspected of being against the dictatorship, including of the soldiers who had to do military service in the Francoist army. (“El Primer Franquismo En Manresa En Un Clic (1939-1959)”)¹

The commonality of mass assassinations created a climate of terror. Franco’s objective was to repress any political group that could fight back. Political and social groups such as liberals, left-wing party members, anarchists, protestants, intellectuals, freemasons, and nationalists from Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country were Franco’s main targets. This “white terror” was used to achieve Franco’s objective: to annihilate anyone that would be against his regime (Beavor 94).

The mass assassinations were done privately. The victims, after being reported and caught by Franco’s officers, were brought to an empty plot of land where a big hole in the ground would be dug. The prisoners would be asked to stand around the edge of the hole and one by one they would be shot dead (or at the very least wounded), they would then fall in the hole and the officers fill it in as if nothing had happened. It is believed that more than 150,000 citizens were victims of the political repression either murdered, imprisoned or sent to concentration camps (Obiols). Outside of the mass killings, education and re-education was also Franco’s priority. The education system changed in order for children to be brought up with values approved by the Franco regime.

The school had to inculcate a series of values that can be summed up in an exalted Spanish patriotism, obedience to Franco and the authorities. [...] The second pillar was the defence of Catholic values in its most fundamentalist or national-Catholic version. The Church regained the prominence in education it had lost with the Second Republic: The Catholic religion became a compulsory subject at all levels and the institution returned to exercise its moral inspection of schools. (“La Educación En El Franquismo.”)²

Looking at re-education, centres were open for some members of society prone to deviance such as women in particular.

1 Citation translated from Spanish into English by the author.

2 Ibid.

These centres would re-programme them into becoming a good Christian citizen that would fit the standard expected by Franco and his government, implementing the values of the regime: Christianity, patriotism and conservatism. And in the case of women, they would teach them how to be the perfect housewife (*La Educación Española De Los Siglos XX-XXI*).

The Francoist view of women was based on a highly conservative biological determinism, which saw the nature of male and female as absolute and irreducible. Women were seen as essentially passive, born to suffer and sacrifice and to be activists only as guardians of the moral order. (Richards 52).

When Franco died on 20 November 1975, a long period of political transition led by King Juan Carlos I began. During this time, the government and the Cortes (Spanish Parliament) worked on a new constitution. This period ended after the 1982 elections and the return of the PSOE to government.

When the monarchy was brought back, the events that took place in Spain from 1936 to 1975 remain locked in a closet that no one dared to open. King Juan Carlos I's inauguration speech on 22 November 1975 before the Cortes represented the way in which Franco was seen throughout the country:

The name of Francisco Franco will remain important as part of Spain's history and a name to which it will be impossible to stop referring in order to understand our contemporary political life. ("Discurso De Proclamación De Don Juan Carlos I Como Rey...").³

The King thus mentions General Franco in a neutral way, to appease those who were still in favour of the Franco regime (such as Arias Navarro, the former Speaker of the Cortes and President of the Council of the Kingdom who resigned after Franco's death, knowing he could not protect his convictions anymore) but at the same time to give hope to those who have been oppressed by the dictatorial regime (Casanova, Carlos 295-296).

During the dictatorship, the only type of aspects of the past commemorated by the State were those which honoured the victors of the civil war. Monuments were erected to celebrate Franco and the Nationalist soldiers who died. These figures collectively were eulogised by the Franco regime, and it stayed that way until the end of Franco's dictatorship in 1975 (Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia: The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy* - 71).

3 Citation translated from Spanish into English by the author.

What was going to happen after the end of the transition? Was the silence that prevailed during the dictatorship going to continue? The political transition did not really help. The Ley de Amnistía of 1977 (or the amnesty law) published on 17 October 17 1977, in the *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (the Official State Gazette), gave amnesty to all those who committed intentional crimes against a group of people with a different political opinion, between the beginning of hostilities and the publication of this law. This law ensures that all penalties against those who committed these political offences are removed. In the second article of the law, the offences are better defined: talk of rebellion and sedition, refusal to participate in military service, denial of crimes already committed, expressions of subversive opinions through any means of communication, misconduct and crimes committed by a figure of authority or by members of the state or by law enforcement officials. Thus, the 1977 law forgives everyone regardless of the crime committed, in order to remove the heavy past. For this reason, the 1977 amnesty law, was praised by the majority at first, but then it started to attract criticism. The law on Spanish historical memory (“Ley de Memoria Histórica”, also known as “Ley de Nietos”: the law of the grandchildren) published in 2007 re-opened the debate about Spain’s past.

Indeed, twenty-five years after the end of the transition period, the 2007 memory law was highly anticipated. The law on Spanish historical memory was voted in to help victims and their families to recover from the wounds left by the Civil War, providing them with justice and closure. After its publication, the law was gradually dividing the country. Some saw it as an unnecessary reminder of the traumatic past. For others, the law did not heal the wounds as the majority of the population had hoped but it temporarily covered it, just like before. The law pleased some and offended others who thought many questions were left unanswered (“La Ley De Memoria Histórica y Su Desarrollo Normativo: Ni Verdad Ni Justicia”).

The Law of Historical Memory pretended - timidly, wrongly and contradictory – to close the chapter of the war and dictatorship. That was at least its explicit goal. [...] On the one hand it fulfills a duty of memory, for some it will constitute a kind of reconciliation, but it also has an irrefutable political component, as evidenced by the fact that one of the two great parties would receive it as a direct aggression (De Antuñano 81-82).⁴

Authors and artists used their work to think, to question, to denounce and to make sense of the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship.

4 Citation translated from Spanish into English by the author.

Moreover, they continued to do so all throughout the latter half of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries with novels and other works still being published to this day such as Javier Cercas' *Monarca de las Sombras* (2017) (Gies, *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature*). Spain's intellectuals continued to reflect on their national past and present through books, articles, movies, documentaries, and organisations. They are all trying to understand what truly happened from 1936 to 1939 and during the dictatorship in Spain.

2) Publications in Spain at different points of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

In this part, we will see the impact of censorship, trauma and of the two memory laws on the Spanish intellectual class, particularly regarding publications from the beginning of the Civil War until c. 2017. The censorship instituted by the Franco government prevented the distribution of stories and testimonies of those who experienced the horrors of the Civil War from either side. The 1938 Press Law governed that all publications (from the press to plays, to movies or even music) must be approved before being published. They should all be in favour of Catholic values and dogma, they should not be in any way appalling to the readership/spectators/audience, and they should all be in favour of the regime and of its principles. Journalists and newspapers were given detailed instructions on the topics that could be mentioned. The government used the media as an instrument of propaganda to maintain the status quo. Consequently, this censorship then not only affected all forms of expression but also affected the public discourse on political, social and economic matters. This degree of censorship had heavy consequences upon Spanish society which are still present today especially in the arts.

The upshot is that Spain's literary censorship problem is alive and well today. [...] We are talking about one of the most long-lasting yet invisible legacies of his regime. The effect on culture in Spain and in other hispanic countries is almost incalculable. Censorship has certainly distorted many people's perception of the civil war and its consequences. Many readers will also be ignorant of writers' real points of view regarding important social issues such as gender roles, birth control and homosexuality (Cornellà-Detrell: <https://theconversation.com/francos-invisible-legacy-books-across-the-hispanic-world-are-still-scarred-by-his-censorship-115488>).

Before, and during the civil war, the main literary medium of expression was poetry (Bou 553). The Generation of '27 ("Generación del 27", in Spanish) were no exception to the trend. They were created in 1927 and

their objective was to create poems more 'pure', more 'human' (Uriarte). They used their art to protest and to express their freedom through writing about themes considered taboo such as homosexuality. On a stylistic point of view, the authors of this generation were known for using traditional and modern writing methods. Among the most important writers of this generation, names such as Luis Cernuda, Pedro Salinas, Jorge Guillén, Vicente Aleixandre, Gerardo Diego, Dámaso Alonso, Miguel Hernández or Federico García Lorca appear. The Generation of '27 lived through important events such as the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, the economic depression of 1929, the Second Republic, The Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. Those events made many of their pieces politically and socially committed. The Generation of '27 wrote during the whole Civil War until Federico Garcia Lorca's assassination in August 1936. After that, many of the other authors of the generation fled Spain out of fear.

After 1936 and for the rest of the Civil War, poetry continued to be written and shared from either side of the conflict to motivate troops.

The Civil War of 1936-1939 was a huge collective catastrophe in national life but paradoxically had much less literary consequences than could be attributed to it and, in fact, it can not be considered a milestone in the history of Spanish literature. There was, on both sides at stake, a fighting literature, mobilised by circumstances and whose value, with exceptions, was never very important [...]. (Alvar 621).⁵

After the conflict ended and the establishment of the censorship, the literary scene changed. Novels started gaining in popularity (626). Novels such as *A sangre y fuego* (1936/1937) by Manuel Chaves Nogales, *Les Grands Cimetières sous la lune* (1938) by Georges Bernanos, *L'Espoir* (1937) by André Malraux and *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) by George Orwell.⁶ Many of the authors who wrote novels to condemn the Franco regime published their works abroad to avoid the censorship and because they feared repression due to high involvement in the conflict.

After the war [...], the only rupture was physical and was based on several thousands of exiled people, among whom were the most recognized and most promising of the Spanish intellectual life - university students, writers, artists - who had to resume their work apart from their natural audience (Alvar 622).⁷

Outside of novels, many poems and chronicles were published in illegal newspapers but often individually (and not in books) as most authors were

5 Citation translated from Spanish into English by the author.

involved in the conflict (Dennis 576).

During the thirty-six years of the Francoist era, some novels were written and published by non-Spanish authors as an external response to the shocking events that took place from 1936 to 1939. Some of the most famous ones are Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) and Gustav Regler's *Das große Beispiel* (1940). Most of the novels written by authors of Spanish nationality were published during the authors' exiles abroad because the heavy censorship would not allow any criticism to be made against the Civil War or the dictatorship. For example, the Spanish author Camilo José Cela published his famous work *La Colmena* (1951) in Buenos Aires during his stay there. The literature written in Spanish and published in Spain (which belong to the first "wave" of publications that will be looked at later) have a particularity: they do not explicitly mention or denounce the Civil War and the Francoist regime. Rather, the literature during the dictatorship was "a mirror of the dark, humble, daily struggle of the Spanish people for its lost liberty" (Ugarte, 611). Among them we can mention Carmen Laforet's *Nada* (1944), José María Gironella's trilogy (*Los cipreses creen en Dios* (1953), *Un millón de muertos* (1961), *Los hombres lloran solos* (1986)), Arturo Barea's trilogy called *La Forja de un Rebelde* (1947-1950), Juan Goytisolo's *Señas de identidad* (1966), and Ana María Matute's trilogy *Los mercaderes* (*Primera memoria* (1959), *Los soldados lloran de noche* (1964), and *La trampa* (1969)), *El tragaluz* (1967) by Antonio Buero Vallejo and the author Miguel Delibes who wrote many books during the dictatorship, one of them *Las ratas* (1962) won the Critics Prize (Premio de la Crítica). The censorship, although highly present in the literary life, did not stop more controversial and politically committed pieces to be published through a smuggling network. Novels, poems, plays, pamphlets and others were shared in secret among the population, bringing hope to the victims of the regime.

During the transition period 1975-1982, fewer novels were published and it was certain that the Spanish literature "was in the midst of change" (Mainer 690). This can be explained by the uncertainty that dominated the period. Among the main works published, we can note Jesús Torbado's *En el día de hoy* (1976), Carmen Martín Gaité's *El cuarto de atrás* (1978), and Juana Doña Jiménez's *Desde la noche y la niebla* (1978). In the case of Martín Gaité's novel, the reader enters the memories and the psychology of the character while reality is mixed with fiction providing the reader with an insightful retrospective full of regrets and what-ifs. The same idea of retrospective also in the two other novels mentioned. During that time,

6 All the works mentioned are presented under their title of publication in their own language.

7 It is highly unlikely that a judicial branch controlled by the regime would have recognised any attempts to report crimes, same goes for the police forces.

Franco and the dictatorship started to be mentioned in the works published. Although, authors were not explicitly criticising what happened during the thirty-six years of political oppression. Starting during the transition, the Civil War and the dictatorship started to be shown through a new perspective. Indeed, the authors who started writing at that time were children when they witnessed the Civil War and the dictatorship. In their works, the focus is more on the social impact of the past rather than on the physical violence. Authors experimented with neorealism; a “revival of realism in fiction” where the observation of society plays an important role (“neo-realism”).

After 1982 and the return of the PSOE, authors spoke more openly about Spain's past. The amount of literature published rose on either the topic of the Spanish Civil War or the dictatorship or both. Among the major works written, we can highlight the following Julio Llamazares' *Luna de lobos* (1985), Miguel Delibes's *Madera de héroe* (1987), Antonio Muñoz Molina's *El jinete polaco* (1991), Manuel Rivas' *O lapis do carpinteiro* (1998), Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* (2002), Jesús Ferrero's *Las Trece Rosas* (2003), and Javier Cercas' *Soldados de Salamina* (2001). Many of the works study the time of the Civil War and the beginning of the Franco regime. Ferrero's *Las Trece Rosas* looks at the life of thirteen women in a women's prison, it looks at their arrests, their stories, and their conditions in prison and their executions. The novel was based on the real story of those thirteen women executed on 5 of August 1939.

Following the publication of the memory law, even more was published on Spain's recent past, and more and more works are still being published. This second literary ‘wave’ can be explained by the general discontentment against the 2007 memory law. Famous works include Jordi Sierra i Fabra's *Lágrimas de sangre* (2008), Carlos Fonseca's *Tiempo de memoria* (2009), Javier Cercas' *Anatomía de un instante* (2009) and *El monarca de las sombras* (2017), and many more.

All the literary trends we listed regarding novels show that the Spanish Civil and the Francoist era are subjects that were silenced, because of the censorship installed since 1938. Opinions that would not be in favour of Franco and his government were repressed. Authors kept writing, but their freedom to talk about the past was limited. After Franco's death, authors and artists found their lost freedom, gradually being more explicit about the past. And the important ‘wave’ following the publication of the 2007 memory law shows that many people are now willing to voice their own opinion without any censorship. This fact is both linked to the time factor and to a curious new generation which wants to understand what happens to their family members between 1936 and 1975. Literature and art have become common ways to talk about the past, on a national or an individual scale. Writing is also a process used to provide information for the posterity, to prevent history from repeating itself.

It also shows that authors, and artists in general, have more to say on the subject of the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship, even though it all ended 43 years ago.

3) The 'waves' of publication

The first 'wave' of publications appeared at the end of the civil war. The traumatic events that took place between 1936 and 1939 are not explicitly mentioned to avoid censorship. These works have one thing in common: they speak about Spanish society, its values, the concepts of family honour and religious virtue; concepts that are highly important for Franco and his ideal image of the Spanish family. These works are historically located during the Franco dictatorship and sometimes during the Spanish Civil War, but this aspect is not at the centre of the narrative. Among these works, *Nada* (1945) by Carmen Laforet is a significant example of this trend. The novel tells the story of Andrea (the narrator) and her arrival in Barcelona. She is an orphan (the reader does not exactly know why, but we assume her parents were killed during the Civil War). She is moving in with her grandmother where her uncles and aunts also live. Throughout the novel, Carmen Laforet uses the description of the landscape to talk about the oppressive atmosphere set by Franco's government. For this reason, the work passed the censorship and the novel's manuscript won the very first Nadal prize in Spain in 1944. This novel is about witnessing the socio-economic situation post-civil war. By using this descriptive narrative, many authors managed to express their feelings regarding the oppressive political situation while being approved by the censorship board. They used "ambiguities and imprecisions of memory" to omit the obvious (Ugarte 615).

One would imagine that the population's voices and opinions were liberated from censorship after the death of Franco. However, the fear of what could happen next froze the engagement with memory for a little longer and the Spanish people, even after recovering their freedom of speech, stayed voiceless. During the transition, very little was said about the Civil War and the dictatorship out of fear and to respect "el pacto del silencio", described by Sebastiaan Faber as "the elites' stubborn refusal to come to terms with the Civil War and the Francoism, even after the country's transition to democracy in the late 1970s" (Faber, 205). Therefore, authors continued publishing using metaphors and other literary methods to talk about the conflict and the dictatorship. The transition was a period of uncertainty, the Spanish nation was unsure of the King's position on some major societal matters that used to be heavily controlled by the catholic church during Franco's regime (the question of divorce and of females' role in society being important ones). This uncertainty appeared also in the literary world. Many characters in the works published at that time were

questioning their existence and questioning the world surrounding them. Characters in the works of Carmen Martín Gaité are perfect examples of this trend. Also, little by little, authors started gathering testimonies regarding the Civil War to publish them. We can speak of literary works like those of Juana Doña Jiménez's *Desde la noche y la niebla* (1978), Juan Eduardo Zúñiga's trilogy (1980-2003), Miguel Delibes' *Madera de hero* (1987).

However, the authors narratives showed that they were not at ease with the past. These works brought more questions than answers to the readers as the Civil War and the dictatorship are subjects which were difficult to talk about without some time to reflect on them. This behaviour is linked to Sigmund Freud's study of historical memory. By historical memory, we refer to:

In its most common use, collective memory refers to the shared memory of a past event shared by a community, large or narrow, nation, village or family for example. But it also defines the history or what is still called "historical memory" as it would ensure the permanence of the great collective mythologies (Lavabre, 49).⁸

In *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), Freud presents the concept of 'latence'. By latence, it is meant that, to recover from a traumatic past, a certain amount of time needs to separate the traumatic event from the understanding of it and the final stage of recovery in order for the recovery to be as effective as possible. This concept can be applied on the individual or on a group of individuals, such as a nation.

This Freudian theory applied to Spain presents the country like an individual suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Indeed,

The brutal repression imposed upon the losers of the Civil War not only impeded the possibility of overcoming the traumas of the war, it also added an abusive burden of suffering. The politics of terror and silence imposed by the dictatorship created an environment that engendered a veritable epidemic of post-traumatic stress (Encarnacion 18-19).

Stephanie R. Golob presents in her article "Volver: The Return of/to Transitional Justice Politics in Spain" the four "normative prescriptions" that seems necessary to achieve a successful transitional justice, explaining what should be done during the transition process to avoid the country suffering from PTSD.

These four prescriptions are: “Rejection of Impunity” (not letting a group of citizen act above the law), “Confronting the Past” (with a free access to information showing any side of the nation’s past), “Prioritising State Accountability” (let the people decide how to deal with the past), and “Broader Societal Inclusion of Past Regime Victims” (Golob 5-6). However, in Spain, none of these four prescriptions were fully applied to the country. This could explain why Spain is still dealing with the consequences of its political transition whereas Portugal and other countries such as Argentina, Chile and South Africa (who attempted to be successful with their transitional justice system with the help of “Truth and Reconciliation Commissions”) have attempted to deal with their violent pasts already (Cazorla Sánchez 245).

We must wait for a new generation of authors and artists to arrive in order to hear the stories of the past without any filter of fear or uncertainty. The second literary ‘wave’ exploded around the year 2000 which appears a few years before the publication of the Ley de Memoria Histórica (Historical Memory Law) in 2007.

The Zapatero government’s draft “Law of Historical Memory”, publicized with great fanfare in late July 2006, was met with muted applause on the left, and by indignant disbelief on the right [...]. On the left, it was a case of “too little, too late”, as it had taken nearly two years for the Interministerial Commission charged with drafting the law to produce the text. [...] On the right, the response was particularly volcanic regarding the provision for a panel of notables who would review and possibly vacate judicial sentences passed down by Franco’s military tribunals against regime opponents and Republican veterans. The PP loudly accused the government of “re-opening the transition” and practicing the politics of revenge through these panels, even though they would not prosecute former regime officials (Golob 11).

The “pressing problem” had been ignored since the beginning of the transition (Mainer et al. 689). Nevertheless, international pressure may have accelerated the birth of the 2007 law. Surely, the Eugeni Gurnés Bou case, brought to the European Court of Human Rights, and whose outcome was the successful revision of the case sixty-four years after he was executed. The first draft of the law opened a memory debate that had not been considered before. It brought inspiration to authors and artists who used their writing and art to try and fill in the blank parts of Spain’s history; parts ignored by the Historical Memory Law. They began to talk about exiled children and families, the underlying fear of betrayal during the dictator-

-ship, and the role women played, among other aspects. They gathered testimonies and went to great lengths to understand their national and individual past. Javier Cercas' *El Monarca de las Sombras* (2017) is a great example as the author investigates his maternal great uncle's death. He enlisted in the Nationalist army when he was just eighteen years of age to protect his country from communism. Javier Cercas, throughout the novel, tries to unveil his family's past through his investigation. Other key works we can put the emphasis on are Javier Cercas's *Soldados de Salamina* (2001), and *La voz dormida* (2002) by Dulce Chacón.

Filmmaking also played an important role in this 'wave'. Although the Spanish cinema had already started addressing the matter of the Spanish Civil War and the transition, the movies were censored or they were only released during the transition. Spanish cinema on the subject were internationally recognised and popularised around the 2000s. José Luis Cerda's *Lengua de las mariposas* (1999), *El espinazo del diablo* (2006) and *El laberinto del fauno* (2006) by Guillermo del Toro, and *Pa Negre* (2010) by director Agustí Villaronga are emblematic films. These four in question focus more on the problem of education and children during the Civil War and the Franco era. Children that suffered because of the political and social position of their parents at that time. In addition to these, some of the novels published were turned into movies around that same time, such as *Las trece rosas* (2007) and *La voz dormida* (2011). They used modern technics and a wide variety of genres such as horror and fantasy, especially in Del Toro's movies to show the past under a new light. On top of fictional movies, documentaries started to appear with the flow of testimonies that came along the publication of the 2007 law. Together, these works speak explicitly about conflict, the battles, the mass executions, conditions in prison, torture, missing persons. These works are, in some way, literary and cinematographic testimonies.

In addition to authors and artists, associations, such as the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (ARMH), were created to help people deal with their past on a more individual level. In the case of the ARMH, they exhume mass graves to find those who disappeared and were executed during the dictatorship. Their objective is to bring peace to the families and friends of the executed, and to help them understand what happened because "in order to be able to recognize oneself and to feel fully included within society, one's private individual memories must find some resonance with the collective narratives of the public sphere". (Blakeley 251)

4) The current situation

Today in Spain, the Civil War and Franco's dictatorship are faced with different types of opinions and feelings about it.

Some think that those topics have been exhausted since the beginning of the transition and now there is a feeling of ‘memory fatigue’.

This feeling is a direct consequence of the “excessive memorialising” of the past events (Encarnacion 206). Others, on the opposite, think it is just a start and that the investigation to bring out the truths of the past continues with organisations such as ARMH and the publications and release of documentaries and books about Spain’s past. They are trying to turn the past events into an “education tool for the future”; something the Historical Memory Laws did not manage to do (Blakeley 13).

As it was mentioned previously, works are still being published regarding the subject, whether they are documentaries, movies, articles, paintings, caricatures, novels, poems or others which means Spain has not reached the stage of complete liberation from the past. Meanwhile, the new generation of adults in Spain are divided between two opinions regarding their nation’s past: some want to let go and forget about the past because they cannot fix what happened then and because of the phenomenon of “memory fatigue”, others are disappointed with what has been done and expect more from the government to help with the recovery of the nation’s historical memory.

In any case, it is undeniable that most political tensions currently present in Spain (especially regarding Catalonia) are highly linked to the fact that Spain is not at ease with its past. Indeed, all the main movements regarding regional autonomy started during the Civil War, with the exception of the Basque movement which pre-dated the Civil War and intensified from 1959 with the creation of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) (“Basque Homeland and Liberty”). Through the time of the Second Republic, more autonomy was granted to two regions (Catalonia and the Basque Country) and Galicia was in the process of getting more autonomy. This first limited regional autonomy was cancelled by the Franco regime and the regional languages and symbols were banned. After the political transition, tensions started to rise again, especially with ETA. ETA is a separatist paramilitary that used terrorism to campaign for Basque independence. When the transition started, they started questioning the new political regime accusing it to be a continuity of the Franco dictatorship. They then created a political branch in 1978 inside the group, rejecting the proposed transition to democracy which they considered ‘pure continuity with Francoism’ (González, Brito and Aguilar 101-102). When the Amnesty law was passed in 1977, they continued with the terrorist attacks to show their discontentment. ETA only disbanded in 2018 after a four decade-long fight for the Basque Country’s independence which they did not succeed.

Other questions were left unanswered during the transition but regarding the case of Catalonia the issues were brought back in a less-violent matter (compared to ETA). The tensions peaked in 2017 with the Catalanian independence referendum. Indeed, although the 17 regions

of Spain were given a certain degree of self-governing, “Catalans have been trying to upgrade since 2006 by gaining greater control over their financial affairs” (Encarnacion - “The Ghost of Franco Still Haunts Catalonia”). Unfortunately today – almost two years after the referendum was called and that the central government revoked it - “the problem has turned chronic because there is no real will for dialogue on either side” (Fotheringham).

The consequences of the Civil War and the dictatorship can still be felt in Spain’s present. On a literary side, Javier Cercas said during his stay in Dublin, that authors and artists will continue to talk about Spain’s past “as long as there is more to say about it and new ways to say it”.⁹

5) Conclusion

Before concluding this study, it is important to highlight that Spain is not the only country in Europe that went through a difficult past. Other countries such as France, Germany and Ireland had to go through the struggle to talk about historical memory. Regarding France, we can mention the recent literary craze around the decolonisation period in the French literary scene with books like Alain Vircondelet’s *La Traversée, Les pieds-noirs quittent l’Algérie* (2012) where the War in Algeria is a main protagonist. We can also talk about the movement in Ireland to reinvestigate what happened during the Easter Rising of 1916 and the Irish Civil War that followed as the country is going through the commemoration of centenaries coordinated by the Irish government in conjunction with civil society and various stakeholders (“Decade of Centenaries”). Alongside the official commemorative activity, there has been numerous publications, films and other media on the topic of Ireland’s revolutionary period. It is in this context of observation and interpretation of the past that the TV show *Derry Girls* is gaining in popularity, showing the tension in Derry in the 1990s through a different lense. Finally, in Germany the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* also known as the process of “denazification” which began right after the end of World War Two and continued throughout the unification of Germany after the fall of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall (Deutsche Welle). The German nation started the process early (in comparison to other nations) which became an advantage as the part of the past they were looking back on was not too far from their present. They accepted their past and learnt to live with it. In all those cases, the past has affected how these nations understand their past and how they see their present, the same way it is happening to Spain.

9 Notes taken by Julie Trobitsch (the author) during a book conference that took place in Dublin on the 23rd May 2018.

We have seen through our study that the Spanish Civil War and Franco's dictatorship, although they happened decades ago, still have an impact upon the Spanish political attitude and society. The past censorship forced the population to move their thoughts, their feelings and emotions from the public to the private realm. And this retreat into silence deeply impacted several generations of people. This explains at least to some extent why it took so long for authors and artists to lead the way towards a complete freedom of speech regarding what happened between 1936 and 1975.

By using their art and their audience, they brought a lot to the Historical Memory debate and their importance can not be denied when talking about recovering and understanding Spain in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However, a lot of more unique narratives have not yet been observed. Authors, artists, directors and others are currently exploring these narratives and unique voices in order to give an uncensored view of the events.

Overall, although the Historical Memory Law did not seem to pay much attention to the nation's troubled past, focusing rather on the future by eradicating any troubled memories, "the Law has itself generated an atmosphere of debate, ferment and inquietud over the past. It is the heat and light generated and the subsequent "defrosting" of Spain's past that may be the Law's lasting legacy." (Golob 13).

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