

Remembering History in Contemporary Spanish Fiction

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Historian Jay Winter claims that historical remembrance “entails not only first-person narratives but scripts which later generations form and disseminate about significant events in the past. That is why any consideration of the contemporary memory boom much [sic] recognize the role” of cultural producers in “this varied set of cultural practices we term historical remembrance” (278). The “scripts” can take the form of documentaries, historiographies, fiction films, novels, plays, etc. Passing knowledge on from generation to generation is vital for keeping the historical memory of a community alive, or at least remembered. The role of the arts in this remembrance can be that of simple remembrance, or more interestingly, that of some type of agency: using their cultural capital to problematize hegemonic historical discourses, subvert commonly held assumptions about the past, and revive formerly silenced memories. In this paper, I focus on two best-selling recent Spanish novels, Eduardo Mendoza’s *Mauricio o las elecciones primarias* (2006) and Almudena Grandes’ *El corazón helado* (2007), in order to show how cultural producers are problematizing historical remembrance in Spain. That is, through their varied narrations of memories from Spain’s complicated past, they are expressly showing how Spain is still coming to terms with the memory of the civil war, Fracoism and the transition.

While *El corazón helado* is set in current-day Spain and incorporates flashbacks ranging from the República to the current day, *Mauricio...* is set entirely during the latter-end of the transition to democracy, in the mid-1980’s. Consequently, the two novels highlight different narrative strategies used to remember the past that we see coming out of this particular ‘memory boom’ in Spanish culture between the years 2000 and 2007: this rich period of remembering and remembrance, of cultural agency and political responses, of the unearthing not only of bodies from mass graves but of previously ignored historical facts. Spain’s historical memory of the transition to democracy is what is fueling today’s politics, just as that of the civil war fueled the transition so as to ‘never again’ have another war.¹ Today Spain is again experiencing a series of associations activating latent memories that are causing a second “never again” scenario. Yet, inversely: instead of pushing aside, burying or ignoring the atrocities committed during and after the Civil War so as to conserve stability, certain societal players are centralizing, uncovering and discerning the memory of these events in order to consolidate the government into an even stronger, healthier democracy that has confronted and reconciled with its past. In addition, these artists have been working in concert with social activists to inform the Spanish public and foster debates about today’s legacies of the transition to democracy. Cultural communication has been saturated with the idea that if Spain does not settle its past sins, or account for them, it can never develop as a healthy democracy.

This memory boom is not unique to Spain, however; it is a part of a contemporary shift in paradigm from a futuristic to a historical focus. That is, in the words of historian John Torpey,

“[w]e [...] find ourselves in a post-socialist and post-national condition that, skeptical of new blueprints for a heaven on earth, instead fixes its gaze firmly on the horrors and injustices of the past” and, therefore “the significance of the past and of people’s recollections of it become magnified; righting past wrongs tends to supplant the search for a vision of a better tomorrow” (251). Since the mid-twentieth century, what used to be plans for a more perfect future have slowly shifted into a realization that the grand narratives are not suitable to describe the ‘post-modern’ condition.² In order to be able to move ahead, we need to look behind us and attempt to recollect and reconstitute our pasts; we no longer have the luxury of staying only in the present looking forward.

These two historical perspectives, either to look ahead or behind, underscore much of the debate around today’s politics in Spain. Likewise, we understand that memory and politics are directly related. As Andreas Huyssen avers “issues of memory no longer simply concern the past but have become part of the very political legitimacy of regimes today” (94). This is, in part, due to the wave of countries transitioning from dictatorships to democracies, in which truth commissions play a large role. However, Huyssen does not discount the role of forgetting either: “the desire to forget always seems to grow in proportion to the desire to remember, especially when problematic aspects of a nation’s past are at stake. Memory and amnesia always exist side by side and remain part of a political struggle” (95). This is precisely what is happening in Spain today, and what has been happening since the transition to democracy: a tacit silencing, or forgetting of past human rights abuses. It is the need to work through the past in order to seek a better future that is particularly acute in Spanish cultural production today.

One site in which much of this struggle is expressed is the arts. As we know, the manipulation of memory by dictatorial regimes has been commonplace and usually occurs through a control of culture, whether it be direct censorship or manufactured histories. Because, as we know, “All totalitarian regimes, and, to a lesser extent, authoritarian regimes, aspire to meticulously monitor any source of culture (information, art, literature) in order to consolidate their power and legitimise their dominion” (Aguilar *Memory* 30). So, by extension, it is through cultural representations that previously silenced memories can have agency in the political field. As one element of these cultural practices, I examine best-selling novels because their wide reach can have a potentially significant impact on the agency of memory; they are active memory sites, just as monuments, memorials or museums have become today. What I mean by ‘active memory sites’ is that these are no longer stoic, monolithic 19th-Century structures, but interactive, thought-provoking remembrances. In addition, no longer are we solely glorifying past heroes or a proud shared history -- we are remembering past tragic events so as to never forget nor repeat them. For example, when analyzing the extremely interactive Parque de la Memoria project in Buenos Aires, which would commemorate the disappeared in the years of torture and repression during the Argentine Dirty War, Huyssen states that “it is a residue and reminder of a shameful and violent national past” (101).

Novels, as well as other cultural production, belong to the same extended family as these other memory sites. They are ways in which the artist, with whatever means they have at their disposal, work through a complicated past. The novelist did not have to attain any sort of general consensus before creating his or her memory site, but it still serves a similar purpose: an

interaction with the viewer/reader so as to stimulate thought and debate. Ofelia Ferrán in her recent book *Working through Memory: Writing and Remembrance in Contemporary Spanish Narrative*, bestows value on the narrativizing of memory in creating a much-needed culture of memory in Spain:

Such texts may, in fact, embody a practice that guarantees that ‘the wounds of history remain open to thought’ in a manner that goes *beyond* what political legislation or historical investigation may achieve. It is still of vital importance to understand how these literary texts function within the broader practices of political and social legislation, civic activism, and historical investigation, all of which are absolutely essential if a country is to work through a past of war and repression that continues to haunt the present. But perhaps the most radical aspects of that practice of working through memory are inevitably reserved for literary, and other artistic texts. These texts can thus still function as models for what must be achieved within society at large, but models that point to something that is ultimately not fully achievable through other means, despite the fact that all those other means are vitally important. (61)

That these texts are to serve as models as ways to work through the traumatic past not only via the transmission of memories, but of the thematization of its transmission is a productive way to look at the abundance of cultural products about the civil war and the transition. It is also a helpful context through which to read *El corazón helado* and *Mauricio o las elecciones primarias*.

Much of the current interest in memory is interwoven with the concept of history, and the need to distinguish between the two and their unique relationship to the past. For example, when the past event is invoked during, needed in or has an effect on the present, this is when it is ‘historical memory,’ according to political scientist Paloma Aguilar: “ ‘Historical memory’ is not understood to be just any event in the past which, in some way or other, has been stored in the multiple deposits of the memory, but only those events that have immediate relevance to the present and exert some kind of influence on it” (*Memory* 16). There is a societal need to address this memory in the present. Moreover, some postulate a key distinction between memory and history as also being a question of distance – that is, it is memory when the past is still summoned in the present. However, when the past is detached, distant, not just temporally, but emotionally as well, that is ‘history.’ Historian Mark Salber Phillips summarizes this dichotomy, and the apparent bias most historians have for ‘history’ as:

memory is evidently a way of seeing the past that truncates or denies distance. What is more, this flattening is not simply temporal (‘the pastness of its object’) but... is also ideological, affective, and cognitive. [...] History, by contrast, ‘focuses on the historicity of events,’ meaning (one has to presume) not only their pastness but also their complexity. (Salber Phillips 91)

This distance duality, proximity versus remoteness, informs the novels in this study to varying degrees, which will be discussed after a closer look at the Spanish culture of memorialization.

As Winter stated above, historical remembrance depends on certain cultural practices, ranging from parades and memorials, to films and novels. In the case of Spain, due to a previous lack of action in the political field concerning uncovering certain buried memories, there has been an explosion in grass-roots expressions and calls for justice. After years of manipulation of memories by the Franco Regime, by constructing or changing official memory, then the subsequent avoidance of the problem up to only recently, today's efforts to set History 'straight', to unearth, to discern, to uncover, are inextricably linked to memory. The memories of the vanquished during the civil war, during the post-war, and even during the transition, have finally taken center stage to be a vital agent of policy. That is, these memories are an agent of policy precisely because cultural products have been able to remember, harness and advocate them. We have seen a result of this in the recent passage of the Law of Historical Memory.³ Without the grassroots efforts of organizations in civil society, including artists and novelists such as the two studied here, it is doubtful that this law would have been proposed.

Building upon our previously mentioned theories of the relationship between history and memory, Jo Labanyi examines the role of cultural products in the relationship that Spain has with its past. Besides postulating a theory about the cultural basis of modernity, she classifies two distinct narrative styles dealing with the civil war in Spain. They are, one, the films and novels that "represent the civil war and its repressive aftermath indirectly through the trope of haunting" and, secondly, those "concerned to give a realist account" (103). These two styles have remarkably different results:

This means that, while the first group of texts focuses on the haunting presence of the violent past in the present, forcing us to confront issues of transgenerational transmission and to recognize that the war's unquiet legacy continues to matter, those texts which opt for a realistic or documentary format attempt instead to transport us back to the past. The attention to verisimilitude has the effect of reinforcing the difference of the past from the present, with the result that, at the end of the viewing or reading process, we feel a sense of relief on returning to a present free from such barbarism. The realism thus produces a sense of rupture with the past. (103)

Here Labanyi's theory parallels the above-mentioned dichotomy between the past infiltrating the present (memory) and the past detached and removed from the present (history). It also underscores the importance of 'transgenerational transmission' as seen earlier with Winter. This reasoning is also reminiscent of Brechtian alienation, whereby he shuns realistic representation on stage to prevent the spectators from passively losing themselves in the story. They are confronted with the self-reflexivity of the stage, the artifice of the performance, thereby forcing them to confront the issue or political truth of the play and the world around them. For Labanyi, it is precisely the haunting motif in cultural production that serves this same purpose, both technically (non-realism) and thematically (phantasmagorical unfinished business): "it is only by capturing the resistances to narrativization that representations of the past can convey something of the emotional charge which that past continues to hold today for those whom it remains unfinished business" (Labanyi 107).

In our case, although we do not see a supernatural haunting per se in the realist *El corazón helado*, the effects of the past are insidiously affecting all the present-day characters, and they are all influenced by the metaphorical haunting presence of the patriarch Julio. In the case of *Mauricio...*, it is a realist depiction of a particular time period: the mid-80's. Although the realist works Labanyi analyzes refer specifically to actions of the civil war (films such as “¡Ay Carmela!” and documentaries such as “Los niños de Rusia”), I believe we can extend this duality to our two novels due to how they both treat the past. They can be juxtaposed not only because Mendoza's work stays completely in the past (history) while Grandes does not (memory), but also due to the fact that the transition is inextricably linked to both the memory of the civil war and to Spain's current-day political and social situation. Therefore, the singular historical period represented in *Mauricio...* also weaves its way through Grandes' novel, and sets the stage for the current-day political and social situation in Spain.

The two novels' differing degree of detachment with the past and, in turn, their particular engagement with it, is illustrated in the narrative strategies employed in *El corazón helado* and *Mauricio...*, where the events of the civil war and the transition are used with two different means and ends. *El corazón* uses flashbacks, informing the current-day Madrid narrative with memories of the República, the civil war, exile, the francoist regime, the transition, the return from exile and the ensuing rebuilding, or not, of lives post Franco. These different eras are not always introduced explicitly as flashbacks, they seamlessly flow from one section to the next, leaving it up to the reader to deduce them based on the clues given. In these sections, the memories are not always read through the filter of any one character's recollection. The events unfold predominantly without intervention, omnisciently narrated in the third person; but there are also plenty of explicitly narrated memories through direct between characters. The past is influencing the present precisely because of the two main protagonists' (Raquel and Álvaro) investigations into their families' history and the resulting influence of that history on their present: we are not immersed in a subtle haunting here, it is an explicit depiction of the past infiltrating the present and wrecking havoc. In what has become a common trope in recent novels about the civil war or the transition, it is a narration of a mystery from the past, an enigma that the characters need to disentangle.⁴ Álvaro's father, Julio, is more complicated than he knew: has left unanswered questions about his past, a past that is now Álvaro's responsibility to uncover, whatever the consequences. All throughout the 900+ page novel, while the narrative is interrupted, diverged and expanded via scenes from all the different time periods mentioned above, we see examples of what the 'truth' of someone's memory can do to the various protagonists in the present.

In *Mauricio o las elecciones primarias*, however, the narrative strategy is quite different. There are no flashbacks of any concern, very little mention of the war, if at all. None of the main characters has returned from exile, none seem to explicitly recall their family's plights during the postwar period. Mentions of the student and communist opposition to francoism appear, but only minimally and with an air of nostalgia. There is an intentional preoccupation with their present, however. With very few memories of what came before their current situation, what permeates this novel is a sense of disappointment and disillusion at the new democratic regime. Implicit within that dissatisfaction is a comparison between what came before (Franco) and what could have been (democratic utopia). The fact that it was written in 2006, and completely set in

the early 1980's makes it seem upon reflection, one long memoir, one related in third person, from Mauricio's perspective, documenting a generation's sense of disenchantment with the promised utopia of a new democracy. The novel itself, as a cultural artifact, is a memory, a slice of life from 1980's Barcelona, with a cautiously hopeful ending looking toward the future juxtaposed against the lurking specter of AIDS. Nevertheless, this does not serve to relieve the reader; the pervasive sense of disillusion imbues our reading of present-day Spain, and reminds us of the epidemic AIDS has become in the past 20 years. Reading the characters' naïve futurist stance, the perceived need to forget the past and move on, reminds us of the memory work necessary today.

Returning to the trope of the thematization of memory, *El corazón helado* is centered on the relationship between Raquel and Álvaro – two madrileños living in more or less the present day. When Álvaro's father, Julio, passed away, Raquel mysteriously appeared at the funeral. Intrigued, Álvaro does not see her again until a chance encounter while settling his father's estate. Believing her to have been his father's lover, Álvaro is reluctantly drawn into a passionate affair with her (he was contentedly married with a son when they met). Once he discovers the truth behind her involvement in his father's life, Álvaro is never the same. Their mutual history began when Julio and Raquel's grandfather met in France, when Julio was a returning soldier from the blue division and Raquel's family was in Republican exile. Julio returned to Spain and, having gained the trust of Raquel's family, was to act on their behalf and sell some of the real estate they had left behind, then send them the much-needed money. In line with what happened all too frequently during the first years of the postwar, Julio betrayed their trust by keeping their real estate holdings and thereby starting his fortune. After Franco's death, Raquel's grandfather returns from exile, confronts Julio, and realizes there is nothing to be done. Fast-forward 30 years, Raquel confesses to Álvaro that she was plotting revenge against Julio right before his death, and that she was never his lover. Álvaro, in turn, discovers more truth about his family's past. For example, he finds out that his grandmother, Teresa, was actually a well-respected supporter of the Republic, and died in a francoist prison, not of tuberculosis years prior to the end of the war as his father had always claimed. Also, his father had a sister of whom he never spoke. Álvaro discovers this information while visiting the small village of his father's hometown. An elderly former neighbor of his father's who, although in the early stages of dementia, remembers Teresa well also provides Álvaro proof of his aunt, Teresita, through an old school photograph. This past history infects his present as he suffers the consequences both from confronting it and from his affair.

The novel also frequently treats the themes of memory and amnesia. For example, Raquel depicts the perceived need to forget certain events during the transition when she relates to Álvaro what happened that fateful day when her grandfather confronted Julio. Here Raquel describes the scene after she asked her grandfather what had just happened, after the confrontation:

Me dijo que lo lógico sería que yo siempre viviera aquí... Y que para vivir aquí... Para vivir aquí, hay cosas que es mejor no saber, incluso no entender... Eso me dijo mi abuelo, y él sabía por qué me lo decía, lo sabía y es... Es lo más importante.. Nadie me ha dicho nunca nada tan importante, pero pasó el tiempo, mucho tiempo, él murió y yo lo

olvidé.. No le hice caso, tenía razón y no le hice caso, y sin embargo... si le hubiera hecho caso, si no hubiera olvidado sus palabras y lo que significaban, nunca te habría conocido a ti, Álvaro, nunca te habría conocido a ti, Álvaro, nunca te habría conocido... (719-20, my emphasis).

It is not only a question of her grandfather having to forget, but for his granddaughter not to know. That is, that the memory of the event not be passed down to her generation so that all can coexist peacefully in this same country: this was one of the coping mechanisms used by those who returned from exile – ‘mejor no saber ni entender.’ Their exchange reminds us of the protagonism that Labanyi and Winter both give to “transgenerational transmission” of memories. Likewise, the end of the previous quote (“if I hadn’t investigated, I never would have met you”) shows how this new generation no longer needs to invoke that strategy – they no longer need the ignorance and some are only now finding out the truth about what happened and therefore demanding restitution, in whatever form that would take. Moreover, Raquel represents one of the positive results of this new generation ‘forgetting’ the warnings of their grandparents – through finding out the truth, and even calling for restitution, they can lead more meaningful, dignified lives. However, this exploration and remembrance is not without casualties. It has caused irreparable harm to the life Álvaro led before, his relationships with his siblings and with his wife and son.

Another way Almudena Grandes’ novel engages with the politics of her day is through her representation of Álvaro’s siblings and their views of their father: they are a case study of today’s Spanish attitudes towards the past. The eldest, Rafa, is conservative and follows along his father’s path; Julio, the middle son, is neither for nor against what happened and would rather not know (reminding us of Raquel’s grandfather’s warning); his sister Angélica is naïve as she only wants to believe in the goodness of her father; and Álvaro, the youngest, is only now learning what his siblings knew all along, as well as uncovering new information and, worse yet for his family, he refuses to keep quiet about it. When Álvaro confronted his siblings about their father’s business dealings, they all reacted in dissimilarly, all in line with what they represent from the array of Spanish approaches to the ‘recuperando la memoria’ phenomena. Julio, the second brother, embodies the population that knew something was not right, but being a child just accepted it. After Julio found out that his father had ‘stolen’ the properties from the ‘rojos’, this is what ensued:

Al día siguiente era domingo. Fuimos a comer a Torrelodones en el coche, y mientras dábamos un paseo por el pueblo, la gente se paraba a saludarnos, y yo miraba a papá, le veía sonreír a todo el mundo, y pensaba que ellos lo sabían, que tenían que saberlo, que lo sabía mamá, y la señora del estanco, y el dueño del mesón, los que nos saludaban, los que nos besaban y nos tocaban la cabeza, todos tenían que saberlo, pero nadie había dicho nunca nada, no pasaba nada, era como si nadie supiera una palabra de nada... [...] de que mi padre era un ladrón, pero luego me daba cuenta de que los conocidos, los que tenían que saberlo, los amigos de papá, las amigas de mamá, los de Torrelodones, hacían como que no sabían nada. ... Pues bueno, no es que se me olvidara, porque nunca se me ha olvidado, pero.. Me acostumbré a vivir como los demás, a vivir como si no supiera, como si no me importara nada. (767-768, my emphasis)

This reaction is a more sinister variation on Raquel's grandfather's advice: if it is impossible not to know, then it is best to act as if you never knew. Furthermore, Julio never forgot, he just learned to live with it, to perform a role, just as all those around him were doing.

Rafa, the eldest, believes that the past should stay in the past, that what happened was legal and that they are not in a position to judge because they could never imagine what it was like to live and need to survive back then. In contrast to these opinions, Álvaro declares: "Eran tiempos duros, desde luego, pero yo creo que sí podemos valorar, Rafa, creo que podemos opinar, y hasta juzgar, aunque no los hayamos vivido" (847). These words echo the sentiments emanating through Spain when this novel was published and are the underpinnings of the debate surrounding the "Law of Historical Memory." Rafa incarnates the conservative, "Partido Popular" (PP) party line, those children of the businessmen who made an extreme amount of money off the postwar reconstruction; this generation of conservatives, those that predominantly oppose the recent 'stirring up the past' with exhumation of mass graves and other components of the Law. He has profited from his father's dealings during Francoism, sees the past as past, and believes that there is nothing they need to do about it now. He justifies his position by reminding us that it was all legal, that there were laws sanctioning precisely those deals his father made. Likewise, his sister Angélica who "hizo un lío consigo misma, con su memoria y con sus convicciones, con lo que quería y con lo que no podía creer" concurred: "A los republicanos les expropiaron sus bienes, sí, pero eso no era robar porque había leyes, tribunales, había... Era una consecuencia de la guerra, ¿no?, una situación excepcional, y ellos no estaban aquí, ellos... Lo habían abandonado todo, habían renunciado a todo..." (849). To which Álvaro responds: "Ellos no renunciaron a nada, huyeron para salvar la vida, solamente. Y tenían razones para hacerlo. Los dos hombres de su familia que no lograron escapar acabaron fusilados" (849).

Álvaro's investigation, discovery, confrontation and attempts at restitution did not come without casualties. The information about his father, and by extension, his affair with Raquel, disrupted the foundation of his life. However, although Álvaro is painted in a somewhat heroic light due to his ability to confront the difficulties in his family's past, Grandes wants the reader to know that Alvaro reluctantly took this upon himself and that he, too, doubted himself:

de repente me pregunté si aquello valía la pena, si de verdad servía para algo, por qué, para qué hablaba. Estaba cansado, y asqueado de mí mismo, de mi padre, de su historia, de mis hermanos, de todo. Había pasado el tiempo, mucho tiempo, y yo ni siquiera los había conocido, no había conocido a mis abuelas, ni al abuelo de Raquel... Y estuve a punto de arrepentirme, a punto de levantarme y de decir en voz alta que ya todo daba igual... (848)

Nevertheless, he could not just abandon it all. As an allegory for Spain, Grandes depicts both Raquel and Álvaro as unwilling champions of the truth, of memory, and, by extension, of justice. It is implied that through engaging with a difficult past and working through these uncomfortable memories, the two lovers, and by extension Spain, will lead more authentic lives.

Although the civil war sowed the roots of Julio's betrayal, it was during the return from exile after Franco's death that the abundance of enforced ignorance or silence began, when people had to learn how to live together. During this transition to democracy, there was a tendency to intentionally 'forget' the past, keep silent about it, or better yet, to supposedly not let the past affect the present; to not need the historical memory. But it did affect the present, in the negative sense according to Aguilar: "We could say that the historical memory of a nation is that part of the past which, as a result of a certain situation or context, has the ability to influence the present, either in a positive sense (an example to be followed) or in a negative sense (a counter-example, a disagreeable situation that must be avoided)" (*Memory* 9). It could then be said that at the time of the transition, a reliance on historical memory in the positive sense was not needed – there was no example Spain wanted to follow. How it did affect the present was in the negative sense, in more of what she calls the evaluative sense. That is, there were lessons learned from the 'failure' of the Republic and the outbreak of the Civil War – they did not want the same result from what seemed like a similar situation. The same factors that led to the civil war were perceived, rightly or not, to be in place again in the 70's at the time of the transition. Again, the notion of generational transmission is important here, according to Aguilar: "[a]lthough over 70 percent of the Spanish population had not experienced the civil war directly, the memory of the event was transmitted from generation to generation, kept alive and resonant as part of a bitter collective memory" ("Institutional" 134-35). Therefore, in order to quell any potential instability, the political elite made many concessions while attempting to wipe the slate clean with mutual culpability and amnesty, which, in turn fostered the silence.

Eduardo Mendoza's *Mauricio o las elecciones primarias* is, as mentioned, set at the end of the transition. Even though he claims his choice of setting was not premeditated, Mendoza himself noted that "lo que nos ocurre ahora tiene sus raíces en aquel periodo" (Moix). That is, the current debate surrounding memory politics in Spain can be traced to the lack of justice given to Franco's victims and their families at a time when one could have hoped that it would have been possible: a new democracy. The novel relates the story of Mauricio's return to Barcelona after having studied in Germany and Madrid, and his foray into local politics in the early 1980's as a candidate for the socialist party that eventually lost to Jordi Pujol's more conservative CiU party. Through his involvement in the elections, Mauricio meets two women: one, Clotilde, a young lawyer, with whom he starts a relationship; and Adela, or la Porritos, a working-class recovering drug addict and aspiring musician who accompanied the party rallies with her guitar playing, with whom he later has an affair. After months of dating both women, Mauricio eventually distances himself from la Porritos, only to find out that she has fallen ill with 'el virus.' At the end of the novel, Adela dies from "el virus," Clotilde and Mauricio agree to marry, and the Olympics are awarded to Barcelona.

Although there is little discussion of the past in this novel, there are many observations about its present political reality. As in this one exchange that takes place at a wedding banquet table between Mauricio and the other Socialist candidates to the lost elections of the title:

—...En este país hay muchas fuerzas opuestas. En todos los países ocurre igual, pero en éste quizá más. La transición aún está reciente y muchas cosas quedaron sin resolver. La batalla todavía está por ganar. No la batalla decisiva, sino la batalla de la normalidad.

Cada día que pasa sin golpe de Estado o sin una amenaza de golpe es un triunfo, como lo es cada periódico que expresa libremente una opinión sin ser cerrado por orden gubernativa; cada detenido que ejerce sus garantías legales...en fin, cosas que hoy damos por hecho, cosas que nos permiten ir olvidando el pasado...

—¿Olvidando? ¿Cómo lo vamos a olvidar si nos estáis refregando cada dos por tres? A la mínima contrariedad sacáis al Caudillo del armario. Así, cualquiera”

—Vivimos en una tregua. De un lado, la derecha recalcitrante, a la espera de una oportunidad; de otro, el nacionalismo reaccionario y victimista disfrazado de progresismo y rebeldía. Mira el país vasco, o aquí mismo, en los sectores más radicales del catalanismo: *skinheads* bendecidos por la iglesia. (293-94)

This is perhaps one of the most telling exchanges of the novel: to be able to forget the past here suggests being able to live without fear of the repression prevalent during Francoism, to acquire a sense of normalcy. To not have to diligently remember or to be aware of what could possibly happen at any moment is something they still want to be able to accomplish. These fleeting references to the repression, if examined closely, are not investigations into the past, but indications of what they want to leave behind, a point of departure of sorts. The luxuries of a democracy are also expressed in the following passage, in which the one openly gay character of the novel responds to the above exchange:

—No será tanto, dijo Toni.

Por su voz y su actitud se veía que no trataba de llevar la contraria, sino de apaciguar los ánimos. Sin embargo las miradas convergieron y él hubo de dar explicaciones.

—No digo ni sí ni que no. Sólo pretendía reivindicar el derecho de pasar de todo... (294)

He lists everything he cares about politically, then adds:

Pero no vivo pendiente de estos temas todo el día. Vivo pensando en mis cosas, en las cosas que me conciernen directamente. Quizás no soy un ciudadano ejemplar. Me da lo mismo. Me conformo con no ser un ciudadano aburrido. Me preocupa el aburrimeinto. Este país ha perdido el sentido de humor y la alegría de vivir. (294-95)

The ability to just focus on your daily life, your present daily minutiae, is another luxury not afforded to those embroiled in a struggle with totalitarianism, but it is with a democracy. In this dialogue, Mendoza portrays those ready to focus on their daily life; those ready to discuss politics and those ready to be completely bored by them; and those who are still struggling with how to tactfully forget the past. Little by little, with the normalization of the freedom associated with a democracy, they hope that this will permit them to start forgetting the past. However, as we have seen with all the interest in memory in current-day Spain, this was a false prophecy; even without bringing up the ‘Caudillo’ all the time, despite the ‘silence’ surrounding the transition, or precisely because of it, today we are still actively remembering it. This is more confirmation that the futurist perspective cannot be separated from the memorialist, as Torpey, Huyssen and Labanyi have all mentioned.

In an interview published in *La Vanguardia* at the novel's release, Mendoza claimed that in the novel he speaks "del pasado, pero de un pasado que todavía no es historia, que permanece algo desdibujado en nuestra memoria" (Moix). The distinction here between the past and history, the fact that he speaks of a past that is not yet history because it remains in our memory, echoes those claims made by historians about the differences between memory and history. He recognizes the difficulty inherent in representing a time that is still "algo desdibujado en nuestra memoria."

Another mention of 'memoria' in his novel also speaks to the presentist or futurist focus of the period of the transition. At this same wedding banquet Raurell, one of the Socialist candidates who was now working in Madrid with the Barcelona Olympic committee, starts discussing the project to reform Barcelona in hopes of being given the 1992 Olympics. One of the components of the project was to open the city to the sea, and to clean up the 'barrio chino' or red-light district of the city. Raurell continues:

—Si todo sale como es de esperar, nos quedará una ciudad de puta madre. Ya sé que algunos hablan del peligro de perder la personalidad[...] Una traición a la memoria histórica. Dan la voz de alarma ante la posibilidad de que en el barrio chino no queden putas ni burdeles [...] En Cataluña la tradición hoy por hoy es un peso muerto. Vivimos anclados en el textil y en una industria de pequeño calibre totalmente obsoleta [...] Si queremos sobrevivir hemos de transformarnos. Todo ha cambiado, para bien o para mal [...] El capital no tiene nacionalidad. (296-97)

The need to modernize, to rejuvenate and to look to the future imbues the entire discussion. Mauricio's disaffection, his complete lack of enthusiasm is markedly contrasted with the sanguine attitude of Raurell. In fact, Mauricio's disenchantment is explicitly revealed through his observation of a young adolescent at the wedding table, who somewhat mocks their grand idea of 'liberty.'

Por fin hay alguien que no nos toma en serio, pensaba Mauricio. Una nueva generación que juzga nuestros errores y se burla de nuestros sueños. Pronto se harán con el poder, impondrán sus ideas y sus fantasías y nos enviarán al asilo. Ellos, a su vez, fracasarán como hemos fracasado nosotros, pero al menos podremos descansar. (293)

Here is a reiteration of the need to rest, or the appeal of being able to stop worrying about politics all the time. Additionally, this adolescent represents today's generation of politicians, those that are also, according to Mendoza, destined to fail. Here, again, we see how his novel subtly imbues comparisons of present-day Spain. The defeatist tone of Mauricio is contrasted at the end of the novel by the joyous celebration in the street, at first thought to be another 'mani', or protest, which is actually celebrating the awarding of the Olympics to Barcelona. Even through the disillusion, and the cloak of the impending tragedy of AIDS, the focus of this novel is on the present and the future, on the imminent marriage and prosperity that was coming to Barcelona. As there is no mention of the years of the Franco Regime and very little said about its effect on politics, the novel itself could be a document to the silence surrounding the transition.

I want to close the discussion of this novel by underscoring Mendoza's use of a prologue and an epilogue in his novel. According to Mendoza, in the same *La Vanguardia* interview, these paratexts "sugieren mi vocación trascendente: son como esos triangulitos fosforescentes que colocan los camioneros en la autopista para advertirnos de que pasa algo" (Moix). Just what is this transcendent vocation? The prologue speaks of fallen angels; emphasizing that even though they are immortal, they are not eternal because God can choose to end their lives. The epilogue then mentions mythologies of remote civilizations, such as Mesopotamia and Central America, in which appear the "presencia fugaz" of "una raza de gigantes o titanes engendrados en el pecado" for whom "se veían inclinados al mal y a la violencia" (365). And it is with "las armas de que ellos mismos se habían dotado, lucharon entre sí hasta acabar los unos con los otros sin excepción" (365). He closes the paragraph reminding us that there are still today angels and human beings who cry for their memory "inútilmente" (365). I read these as a statement to the fact that in the end even omnipotence (seen here in angels and giants) can be thwarted; grand plans subverted, utopias destroyed. Mendoza wanted to be sure that his readers were aware that 'algo pasa' in his narrative, that it was not just as it appeared to be: a simple love story surrounded by minor political disappointment. I argue that the appearance of silence about Francoism and the explicit portrayal of disillusion are a testament to the fact that a future where we could eventually forget the past did not happen. It is therefore impossible to just look toward the future until you have reconciled with your past.

Therefore, following Aguilar, those involved in the transition used historical memory in a negative sense, and I argue that today it also used in a negative sense: righting a wrong by avoiding the disagreeable situation that was the period of silence and thereby bringing justice to those ignored. The novels in this study are two examples of the varying strategies employed by novelists to work through this past, to foster debate and to problematize the issue of memory today. These are two different relationships with the past: historical memory as a narrative trope in Grandes' work, and the false prophecy of the presentist standpoint of the transition in Mendoza's novel. The various memories in *El corazón helado* are the metaphorical ghosts returning not only to Raquel and Álvaro's present, but also to ours, the readers', as well. Grandes' novel is a testament to the breaking of silences and to the use of memory for justice. Likewise, *Mauricio o las elecciones primarias* is a confirmation of the need to remember the past, even though it is set entirely in the past and does not include explicit haunting memories. In their own way, these two novelists are working against the active forgetting that has plagued Spain since the transition.

Notes

¹ "When society perceived, consciously or unconsciously, and more or less correctly, certain similarities between the situation that existed in the 1970s and that of the 1930s, the historical memory of the war emerged" (Aguilar *Memory* 268).

² Andreas Huyssen notes: "If, in the earlier twentieth century, modern societies tried to defend their modernity and to secure their cohesiveness by way of imagining the future, it now seems that the major required task of any society today is to take responsibility for its past" (94).

³ On Wednesday, October 31, 2007, Spain's parliament passed a bill aimed at honoring the victims of the Spanish Civil War and Franco's repression during his almost 40-year dictatorship. This bill will make mostly symbolic gestures toward unearthing previously silenced memories. Some highlights include: (1) the government will now help to finance mass-grave exhumations; (2) all monuments that honor Franco and his followers are to be removed; and (3) the names of hundreds of streets that still refer to the military uprising of Franco and to his years in power, are to be changed.

⁴ Including, just to name two, *Soldados de Salamina* by Javier Cercas (2001) and *Mala gente que camina* by Benjamin Prado (2006).

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