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Versión “postprint” del documento publicado en:

Galán Fajardo, Elena; Rueda Laffond, José Carlos. Those wars are also my war: An approach to practices of postmemory in the contemporary Spanish comic . Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies, Vol. 8, N.1 (2016), pp. 63-77

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Those wars are also my war: An approach to practices of postmemory in the contemporary Spanish comic

ABSTRACT

*A notable feature of recent Spanish comics is their use of a viewpoint characterized by the transmission and (re)presentation of original testimonies, remade by authors who belong to later generations that had no direct experience of the Civil War. This article focuses on seven graphic works: *Un largo silencio* (1997), *Nuestra Guerra Civil* (2006), *El arte de volar* (2009), *Los surcos del azar* (2013), *Las guerras silenciosas* (2014), *Un médico novato* (2013) and *Atrapado en Belchite* (2015). The stories in these works recall the recent past from a common perspective, one that emphasizes the individual protagonist's role in traumatic events. However, these narratives also employ characteristics that are specific to each story. This article reflects on the symbiosis between the shared elements of these works, and the more individual or original elements, in order to shed light on the important role of graphic narratives in the creation of spaces where memory and 'postmemory' can be expressed.*

KEYWORDS

Postmemory, historical memory, comic, historical, representation, Spanish Civil War, Francoism.

INTRODUCTION

As Maciej Sulmicki observes (2014: 7–8), the comic can be understood as a cultural artefact that reflects on multiple questions or problems that exist in the present. Its creative, expressive and commercial flexibility has allowed it to occupy different locations within the framework of cultural industries. The comic has been associated with relatively established forms – comic strips, comic books containing short stories, albums with extensive narrations, graphic novels, illustrated texts, and so on. However, any formal identification should be nuanced by the comic's capacity to dispute conventions and to establish new standards. Graphic narratives have reproduced collective imaginaries and have served as an instrument to reinforce official values; however, they have also attempted to be vehicles of criticism, escape, denunciation, and subversive satire through the use of highly varied codes.

The multiplicity of the comic's uses and the discourses it contains becomes evident when this art form is used to depict the past. During the Francoist period, Spanish comics portrayed the past in multiple ways. For example, *El Guerrero del Antifaz/The Masked Warrior* (Manuel Gago, 1943–1966) assimilated heroic archetypes and was later branded as a reactionary model that presented an imperial vision of history. Later comics, like *El Capitán Trueno* (*Captain*

Thunder, written by Víctor Mora and illustrated by the cartoonist Miguel Ambrosio Zaragoza [known as ‘Ambrós’], 1956–1968) and *El Jabato* (*The Young Wild Boar*, by Víctor Mora and Francisco Darnís, 1958–1966), reiterated the dictatorship’s nationalist and historicist discourse, but combined it with more cosmopolitan influences. Franco himself was turned into the leading character in the commemorative album *Soldado Invicto/Undefeated Soldier* (Art Studium, 1969), a comic that can be read as an exemplar of the trivialization that underpinned the various strategies of socialization (televised documentaries, texts for children, serial publications) that fed into the construction of official memory during the late Francoist period. The meaning of *Soldado Invicto* was radically inverted in the counter-memory documentary *Caudillo* (*Leader*, Martín Patino, 1974). After 1976, the desanctification of Francoism – which included the settling of old scores – proliferated, sometimes using the medium of the memoir. This can be seen, for instance, in *Paracuellos* by Carlos Giménez, published in 1976, which recreates the author’s traumatic childhood experience in an *Auxilio Social* (supposedly a humanitarian home set-up to care for poor children, but in reality a repressive institution, this facility was modelled on the Nazi ‘Winterhilfswerk des Deutschen Volkes’, or ‘Winter relief for the German people’). Other works reduce the role of explicit autobiographical invocation in order to reflect the events and characters that are still recognized within social memory, such as Antonio Hernández Palacios’s series about the Civil War, published between 1979 and 1987.

This article examines seven recent graphic works: *Un largo silencio/A Long Silence* (1997), *Nuestra Guerra Civil/Our Civil War* (A. Martín et al., 2006), *El arte de volar/The Art of Flying* (A. Altarriba and Joaquim Aubert, 2009), *Los surcos del azar/The Furrows of Chance* (Paco Roca, 2013), *Las guerras silenciosas/ The Silent Wars* (J. Martín, 2014), *Un médico novato/A Rookie Doctor* (V. Llobell Bisbal, 2013) and *Atrapado en Belchite/Trapped in Belchite* (V. Llobell Bisbal, 2015). All of these comics share a thematic focus – the recent past – and were conceived from the perspective of generational memory. They are based on autobiographical stories recreated as graphic narratives by authors who belong to a post-war generation and who, in almost every case, have a family connection with the stories’ original protagonists. Our intention in this article is to introduce these works through the interpretive lens of postmemory, which has been used very little in the study of memory-related Spanish cultural production (Quílez 2013; Ribeiro 2014: 59–86). For reasons of space, the analysis of each work will be synoptic. This article’s aim is twofold: to outline the distinctive characteristics of this body of work, understanding it as an exercise in shared memory, and to emphasize the variations each story offers in its treatment of that shared memory.

It should be asked whether this setting is characterized by a homogenous *form* of postmemory nourished by individual postmemories. The term postmemory was coined by Marianne Hirsch (1997) as a conceptual tool to permit the exploration of generational dialogues of remembrance, in particular those related to traumatic contexts (such as the Holocaust). It is important to emphasize that the prefix *post* does not refer to a simple diachronic location or an asymmetrical hierarchy between an original memory and another subordinate memory, but rather refers to the processes of encounter, contrast, appropriation, adaptation and recycling that take place between different discursive locations. Postmemory’s essential feature is the integration of different subjectivities and plots characterized by deep personal implications (Sarlo 2006: 130–32). In postmemory, first-degree source memories, which serve as a trigger or as ‘indexical’ raw material, converge with second or third-degree narrative practices that incorporate autobiographical affects or drives. As Hirsch (2012) indicates, this interaction suggests a fragile and unstable relationship, in which an uncomfortable oscillation between continuity and rupture

exists. Paul Ricoeur (2000: 514) explains generational transition as both a wound and a suture. Exercises of postmemory can be situated in that place as strategies of transgenerational transmission and mediation, and also as practices of intergenerational connectivity.

The paradigm of comic and postmemory is *Maus. A Survivor's Tale* (Art Spiegelman, 1977–1991). This graphic novel has been classified as an exemplar of memory discourse with a dual scope: one particular, tied to a strictly familial experience, and the other universal, tied up with the trauma of Auschwitz and its place in social memory (Trabado 2012: 225). The book's subtitle – 'My father bleeds history' – encapsulates both of these dimensions.

The works studied in this article can be located within the coordinates of 'historical memory'. This vague and imprecise term alludes to the boom in memorial work in Spain that has emerged since the end of the 1990s, essentially centred on the recovery of the memory of Francoist repression during the Civil War and the dictatorship. There is insufficient room here to discuss the entire phenomenon, which has generated an important bibliographical balance in terms of the politics of memory, public debate, cultural production and historiographical reflection. Instead, it is sufficient to point out two extremes. One is this phenomenon's connection with what Julio Aróstegui (2006: 90) calls a 'memory of pain' through its recognition of victims at the margins by exhibiting their testimonies, which previously lacked a public presence. The other extreme has been observed by Juan Francisco Colmeiro (2005: 19), who notes a tension between 'quantitative inflation and qualitative devaluation' in this emergence of memorial work through the saturation and superficiality of the many stories that crowd public memory. These issues raise questions about the degrees and mechanisms of reflectivity present in the works discussed below.

PRACTICES OF POSTMEMORY IN THE SPANISH COMIC

Asymmetrical postmemory: *Un largo silencio* (1997, 2011–2012)

Un largo silencio was initially published by Camarasa and MacDiego in 1997 and republished in a somewhat expanded edition by Astiberri in 2011 and 2012. This latter edition is the one examined here. This book is a personal project by the cartoonist Miguel Gallardo, who takes second place in the authorial credits to his father, Francisco Gallardo Sarmiento. *Un largo silencio* is based on the memoirs Gallardo Sarmiento, which were typed up during the mid-1980s. His son first adapted them ten years later for the North American magazine *Drawn and Quarterly*. Soon after, the son decided to publish his father's complete written text 'without retouching it', adding passages 'in my voice as a "counterpoint" through the "comic narrative"' (Mitaine 2012: 164).

The written autobiographical testimony appears in the comic as raw material that sustains the discourse and establishes narrative authority in the illustrated text. The graphic material brings together heterogeneous contributions that branch out from and reinforce the written word. The work includes brief graphic narratives that serve as episodic stories or metaphorical reflections that tie the written storyline together, as well as small sketches that depict details of domestic and daily life. The book also contains an appendix with family photographs that span the temporal arc of the comic (1909–1940) along with documents, such as the *aval*, or endorsement, the protagonist had to buy from a Falangist to regain his liberty after the war. The material in the appendix serves as evidence whose aim is to reinforce the truthful quality of the narrative,

thanks to the realism that tends to be attributed to photographic representation and archival documents.

The materiality of *Un largo silencio* (2008) indicates a handcrafted character. It looks like a modest diary, written by hand in a notebook with cardboard covers and sepia pages. However, some details are charged with connotative significance about the surroundings and the historical characters, such as the two-colour printing in blue and copper tones that appear to have faded with the passage of time. Some details evoke symbols, events and figures connected with the 'triumphant' Nationalists in a historical period that goes beyond the Civil War: for example, the emblem of the Falange, the symbol of the 'victorious' faction that was appropriated in 1939 by the Francoist regime, the meeting at Hendaye in October 1940, and the graphic reference to Alfonso XIII. A copper tone, in turn, denotes the 'losing' Republican side, always defined by a clear popular imprint: faces of family members, scenes of labour from the 1920s, anti-fascist and militia iconography, and the emaciated appearance of those detained after the end of the war.

As mentioned above, the autobiographical story of Francisco Gallardo unifies *Un largo silencio*. This story includes his difficult childhood and youth in Linares, his professional aspirations, his military career in a Republican Madrid, and his war experience as a sub-lieutenant and artillery captain. It also includes his exile and his time at the concentration camp at Argèles-sur-Mer, his voluntary return to Spain, and his transfer to a detention centre in Reus, until he was released. All of these incidents are narrated in a dispassionate tone, divested of rhetoric and governed by a kind of cold and distant descriptive tendency. In a sense, this narration is an exercise in objectified subjectivity.

The son's presence in the narrative appears to be minor. This raises the question of whether the book exhibits an asymmetrical postmemory, in which the second-degree participation of the son is limited, overwhelmed by the hegemony of direct personal memory. However, Miguel Gallardo's contribution has a qualitatively strategic role in the conception of the book and in establishing its meaning and purpose: that of framing the figure of the father from a radically subjective position that grants him historicity – that is, an importance as a representative of those who lived through the war and the dictatorship. 'My father was a hero', the son affirms in the first panel, noting in the following panels, however, that he was not the kind of hero 'that you see in movies [...] or in cheap novels [...] his accomplishment has been to survive [...] My father was as quiet as a tomb for forty years [...] Now I lend him a small voice which is my own' (2008: 6–7).

Fragmented postmemory: Nuestra Guerra Civil (2006)

This book differs from the rest of the material in this article insofar as it is a collective project. It adopts the Franco-Belgian format (*bandes dessinées*) to include several short stories, commissioned for the seventieth anniversary of the Spanish Civil War. It was published just a year before the Historical Memory Law of 2007 began to address the need to restore the memory of the victims of the conflict. The first panels of the second comic in this collection, *Valle del Jiloca* ('Jiloca Valley') (Beroy et al. 2006: 19), speak to that need. They depict an old woman looking at old photographs, remembering the tragic events of the past, which brings up a central question with regard to historical memory: is it better to remember or not? This book undoubtedly is on the side of remembrance.

The cover by Andrés G. Leiva depicts a wedding. The bride and groom proceed down the aisle below soldiers' raised weapons. The tones are muted, but the people's red-coloured noses stand out, as do a few raised fists. The prologue by Antonio Martín, *Cuando toda España era una cárcel/When all of Spain was a Prison*, begins with the following quotation: "[It is necessary] kill, kill, kill all the reds to cleanse Spain". General Francisco Franco, 1936' (3). This terrible declaration points to the book's perspective: that of the losers, in particular the artists and intelligentsia – and among them, cartoonists who were imprisoned in concentration camps and improvised jails.

Through different styles and narratives, *Nuestra Guerra Civil* (Beroy, De la Calle, Fritz, Galadí, Gálvez, García, Hernández Cava, Martín, Laura, Leiva, Rubín and Taibo 2006) offers a kaleidoscopic vision of the Civil War. *Días de rejonas/Days behind Bars*, the first of the stories, drawn by Laura, with a script by Felipe Hernández Cava, addresses the jailing and execution by firing squad of the painter and illustrator José Robledano; *Valle del Jiloca*, mentioned above, by Pepe Gálvez and José María Beroy, narrates the killing of peasants and leftists in the summer of 1936; *Mi tío, que estuvo en el infierno/My Uncle, who was in Hell*, by Fritz, portrays, through a family member's experience, the terrible situation experienced by the many Republicans detained in the Mauthausen concentration camp; *Entre líneas/Between the Lines*, by Jorge García and Ángel de la Calle, centres on the repression in Asturias through the figure of Sergio López; *Las cosas pequeñas/The Small Things*, by David Rubín, recounts the story of his grandfather Manuel Miguélez Iglesias.

The book contains other sections that act as didactic tools to help the reader comprehend this historical period. They delve into the circumstances that surrounded their protagonists, providing true material through testimonial texts and photographs. These contributions include the prologue, *Cuando toda España era una cárcel*, by Antonio Martín, mentioned above; *Robledano*, by Felipe Hernández Cava and José Vicente Galadí; *Valle del Jiloca*, by Emilio Benedicto Gimeno; *Historias rotas/Broken Stories*, by Pepe Gálvez; *Republicanos en los campos nazis de Mauthausen/Republicans in the Nazi Camps at Mauthausen*, by Ángel del Río; *El tío Pepe/Uncle Pepe* by José Vicente Galadí; *Asturias*, by Paco I. Taibo II; *Entre líneas/Between the Lines* by Jorge García and Ángel de la Calle; *Absorbidos por el conflicto/Absorbed by the Conflict*, by Fernando López Mora; and *Una persona pacífica/A Peaceful Person*, by José Vicente Galadí.

A masculine point of view predominates in these stories, as it does in all of the works analysed here. However, some of the panels of 'Días de rejonas' contain references to the anonymous women who waited in long lines for food, as well as to female figures like Rosario 'The Dynamiter', a cartoonist who lost her hand while handling explosives. Another panel portrays Jesús Robledano's wife, Magdalena Piqueras, who undertook the heroic task of collecting signatures to save his life. She also smuggled his drawings (which now serve as testimony) out of jail, rolled up in his dirty clothes (4–16).

The final panel in this comic is representative of the whole volume because of the symbolism it contains, locating itself before the beginning of the war. It depicts, alongside the Republican flag, an allegorical figure that appears at the beginning of the comic, Marianne, the symbol of the French Revolution, who holds a few colourless sheets of paper printed with the word Politics and who now, in the final frame, has been toppled and broken into pieces.

Cathartic postmemory: *El arte de volar* (2009)

The psychological dimension of testimony constitutes a nodal point in studies of memory and trauma. Some classic works about the Holocaust have emphasized the inability of autobiography to heal the deepest dimension of suffering, referring to mere 'echoes' of rhetorical consolation (Langer 2000: X–XI). Other reflections, however, have emphasized the therapeutic and cathartic value of the performative act of narrating painful experiences. Telling a story supposes mobilizing a fragmentary and selective imaginary, structuring it through cultural norms, discursive patterns, and symbolic elements that transcend speculative realism and blur the boundaries between past and present (Crownshaw 2010: 4–6).

On 4 June 2001, Antonio Altarriba Lope committed suicide, jumping out of a window. Eight years later his son, Antonio Altarriba Ordóñez, published *El arte de volar/The Art of Flying* (2009), a graphic novel more than 200 pages long, illustrated by Joaquim Aubert (Kim). Altarriba Ordóñez began working on the project in 2006. This story's sources go beyond the literal quality of manuscript materials. *El arte de volar* (2009) is based on some of Altarriba Lope's autobiographical notes and his son's memories; however, it is primarily a practice of postmemory that portrays two subjectivities that seek to meld, and two traumatic presences that tend to converge.

As Antonio Martín notes in his prologue (2), *El arte de volar* narrates an experience of pain that, shared between father and son, seeks to comprehend and overcome the trauma. The comic proposes a journey in which different voices and points of view fuse through what Toni Morrison has called 'rememory' or transposition. In another brief prologue written in the third person, which evokes the minutes prior to his father's death, Altarriba Ordóñez transforms himself, affirming that 'my father, who is now me, does not have good memories of his childhood' (2009: 19). With this he initiates a flashback that reconstructs the introspection that ends in the act of suicide.

The father's death governs the narrative trajectory through four chapters symbolically divided by the four floors of the building he must pass before reaching the ground. The first two chapters tie his childhood and youth to clear historical periods. The first portrays his childhood in a town in Zaragoza at a time that coincides with the crisis of the Restoration and Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. The second chapter narrates his time in the Aragonese capital during the Second Republic, his experience in the anarchist militia, his exile in France and his participation in the Resistance. This coincidence between biographical periods and clearly referenced historical periods diminishes in the last two chapters. The chapter titled 'Bitter biscuits' narrates Altarriba's return to Spain, and although it at first evokes the post-war setting, allusions to the historical context fade little by little. The last chapter, set between 1985 and 2001, eliminates any explicit temporal specificity.

El arte de volar (2009) combines extreme realism with dream-like episodes. The oppressive sense of Francoism is portrayed, for example, through a nightmare in which the protagonist is chased by the vicious official iconography that has colonized the public space – an impossible flight that culminates with an attack by the Eagle of St. John the Evangelist, which pulls out the protagonist's eyes as a trophy. Such dreams are combined with an extraordinary attention to daily life and Altarriba's most intimate feelings. Kim's graphics represent a world in black and white through their dramatic, detailed and satirical style.

Also worth mentioning is the generational similarity between Altarriba Lope and the protagonist of *Un largo silencio/A Long Silence*, Francisco Gallardo. Both were born around the same time, had similar origins, were on the losing side in the war, and lived in exile. However, *Un largo silencio* does not allude to the domestic life of its protagonist after 1940, while in *El arte de volar* (2009) the protagonist is also shown to be defeated in his marriage and her professional life. Both characters are prototypes of marginalized and silenced victims, even if Gallardo distances himself from politics and Altarriba is not an orthodox militant. 'I prefer mending to tearing apart', Altarriba's character states on 18 July 1936, after attending an anarcho-syndicalist rally (48). Despite this, he embodies an anthropologically anarchistic sentiment, which he expresses during his militia experience. The context of the militia is evoked in *El arte de volar* (2009) as a 'supportive cultural space' and a 'utopia in retrospect', a vision that corresponds with that found in other cultural products from the most recent generation, which has perceived the war as a 'moment charged with possibilities' aborted by the defeat and internal conflicts on the Republican side (Gómez López-Quñones 2006: 197–99).

Restorative postmemory: Los surcos del azar (2013)

Aróstegui (2006: 57–92) has characterized generational memory as a particular kind of remembrance, defined by the memory's temporal distance from the remembered events. This distance undoubtedly influences the new generation's reading and understanding. For the generation that is now at the same age as the youths who fought in the Civil War, it is difficult to interiorize the idea of risking one's life for an ideal, or to understand the use of violence during the conflict (an issue which *Los surcos del azar* [2013] raises and which generates complex relationships between past and present).

In *Los surcos del azar* (2013) the two characters who look to the past have no familial relationship. As in *Un largo silencio*, the protagonist's direct and lived memory has the more dominant presence, as he delves into and contradicts the official version of memory, which is sometimes offered by the cartoonist himself, who acts as a unifying presence in the narrative. As Ronald Fraser (2001) asks, in the end, to whom does history belong? To those who lived through it, or to those who have written it? Fraser responds to this question by arguing that it belongs to neither one nor the other; but rather, that the question provokes a continuous debate of indefinite duration. This debate can be clearly appreciated in *Los surcos del azar* (2013).

This work's recognition of the contributions of 'La Nueve' during World War II can be considered a kind of memory of restitution or reparation, following Aróstegui's classification of three dominant forms of memory about the Civil War (2006: 79). La Nueve was the name given to the ninth company of the French Second Armoured Division, primarily made up of Spanish Republicans and commanded by Capitaine Raymond Dronne. Paco Roca appears self-referentially in *Los surcos del azar* (2013) to narrate his encounter with Miguel Ruíz, exiled in France (under this false name, which he began to use after the war).

As the epilogue explains, the comic was inspired by an odd colour photograph from 1944 found by Robert S. Coale, an American historian and Hispanist who investigated the role of the International Brigades and who served as a historical consultant for this comic. In this photograph, a group of soldiers advances down the Champs-Élysées. These soldiers were first identified as Americans, but a closer analysis of the photograph revealed that their tank bore the

name of a Spanish city, Santander, that one of soldiers on-board was making the Popular Front salute with a closed fist, and that the driver was carrying the Republican flag. Coale writes,

[T]his photo convinced me that information about Spanish participation in the liberation of Paris and France existed, even if one part lay dormant in archives and the other had been poorly interpreted. I then set out to research this group of committed Spanish antifascists and rescue them from oblivion.

(2013: 323)

The cover of this comic is in colour, in a vertical format. It depicts soldiers from La Nueve, among whom Miguel stands out, splashed with an orange tint that spreads over a map of interconnected places (Paris, Écouché, Spanish Sahara, Oran, Alicante, Baccarat, among others) where he went during the war and where the ‘furrows of chance’ were drawn. The term *surcos*, or furrows, appears in various comics, such as *El arte de volar* (2009), making reference to the land and the peasants’ hard work. The title’s citation of lines from a poem by Antonio Machado – ‘para qué llamar caminos a los surcos del azar’/‘why call paths the furrows of chance’ – captures the role arbitrariness played in these soldiers’ decisions, which often influenced whether the soldiers would survive.

Despite insertions of the past (as clarification, comprehension and recovery) the structure of this comic is chronological, with temporal ellipses, and is divided into nine chapters. These chapters, in turn, are divided into two temporal planes: one, the present, in which the conversations between the cartoonist and the protagonist take place, and the other, through flashbacks inserted into that conversation that occur between the ending of the two wars – that is, between 1939, when the Spanish Civil War ended and the defeated had to flee from the Port of Alicante, and 1944, during the final stages of World War II, with the liberation of Paris. The stylistic depiction of these temporal levels inverts convention: the present is depicted in black and white, and the past in monochromatic colour.

A strong sense of national identity stands out in these representations of the past. The Spanish are portrayed as courageous but disorganized and conflictual. They pay no attention to foreign authority and fight fascism because it is their way of fighting for Spain – an idea symbolized by the Republican flag that they carry throughout the whole conflict. However, the comic also depicts disagreements and ideological differences among the Spanish. It criticizes the French treatment of the Spanish, their lack of recognition of their struggle, and their failure to supply assistance. At the same time, it highlights the good treatment the Spanish received from the British (e.g., they were able to leave the Port of Alicante with the help of a British boat), and remembers the important support of other foreign soldiers.

The comic encompasses a didactic function by including maps, clarifying concepts and reconstructing forgotten episodes (e.g., when the cartoonist gives Miguel a copy of Capitaine Dronne’s memoirs, in which Dronne recognizes Miguel’s brave role in La Nueve). The story closes with a setting that is present throughout the whole story: the cemetery. A cemetery that becomes a place of rest and memory, once memory has been transmitted and, in a sense, restored.

Ambivalent postmemory: Las guerras silenciosas (2014)

In an analysis of the Spanish television series *Cuéntame cómo pasó/Tell Me How it Happened* (2001–), Vicente Sánchez-Biosca (2006: 65–84) draws attention to the complacent gaze associated with late Francoism, that can be found in this and other cinematographic comedies made by artists born in the 1950s and 1960s. The dictatorship is presented in these works as a soft authoritarianism, the friendly side of a post-war framed by hunger, repressive violence and fear. In this context, and as a counterpoint to the idea of a ‘memory of pain’ and its corresponding physical and psychological wounds, it is possible to discuss another structure of transmission of postmemory whereby the trauma is tempered or diluted, and other images that signal a new historical period emerge.

Las guerras silenciosas/The Silent Wars (2014), with a script and illustrations by Jaime Martín, problematizes this location of memory, demonstrating the fine line between trauma and nostalgia and the ambiguity produced by generational dialogue. This comic was originally published in French by Dupuis in 2013 and was published in Spanish by Norma a year later. Formally, it belongs to the Franco-Belgian format of a comic strip album. It adapts the notebook memoirs of the author’s father, José Martín, whose military service in the African enclave of Ifni in 1962 came five years after an obscure military conflict with Morocco caused around 200 Spanish deaths. Juan Martín presents *Las guerras silenciosas* (2014) as the product of ‘subjectivity and idealization’ whose aim is to evoke his parents’ youth and provide a tribute to his mother, Encarna, who died before the book was published. This comic, with its cheery graphics, exemplifies a familial practice of memory carried out through the representation of a group of characters linked by strong affective ties.

Las guerras silenciosas (2014) is structured temporally through three alternating independent settings: José Martín’s military service in Ifni; his childhood and his and Encarna’s youth in Barcelona in the 1950s and the early 1960s; and the present, in which, self-referentially, the main character is the book’s author, Jaime Martín. These three temporal settings are signaled through different dramatic and chromatic treatments. The portions set in the present narrate the process of making the comic and Jaime Martín’s doubts about whether an objective reader would be interested in a story he had heard many times at family gatherings. The present, the period that belongs to the children of the war generation, is marked by the socio-economic troubles that have affected Spain since 2008. The story attributes to this second generation, a sense of indignation, political scepticism, and solidarity, all of which relate to attitudes generally associated with the 2011 anti-austerity movement.

In contrast, *Las guerras silenciosas* (2014) evokes the time of his parents’ youth from a bittersweet perspective, in which tenderness, costumbrism (the interpretation of everyday life), and the dictatorship’s presence coexist in daily life in muted colours, almost black and white. This perspective portrays Francoism as an interiorized culture that is expressed and reproduced through conventions and moral restrictions that do not seek to inspire enthusiastic support for the regime, but rather apathy and acquiescence. José Martín’s military service in Ifni comprises the third dramatic setting, indicated visually through predominantly ochre and yellow tones. This period completes the memory of the dictatorship, characterized by physical repression, irrational discipline, religious violence, crude propagandistic indoctrination, abuse of power and corruption within the military.

Las guerras silenciosas (2014) debunks the idealized or kitsch vision of the 1960s found in other cultural productions. It also demonstrates a kind of reflectivity when José’s character

announces his desire to return to Ifni. This desire suggests the attitude of 'return' that Hirsch (2012) identifies in the literature of the Holocaust, even if from the perspective of an ambivalent autobiographical remembrance. To his children's astonishment, José concludes his story by stating, 'I would say that yes, I enjoyed [the military service], because you learn to hold on to the good part [...] and transform it and stretch it out like a piece of gum!' He thus turns his military service into an adventure 'so as not to feel outraged' (151–52).

Everyday postmemory: *Un médico novato* (2013) and *Atrapado en Belchite* (2015)

In the first two volumes of an anticipated trilogy (the third volume is in progress), Sento Llobell, a member of the New Valencian School of the 1980s whose drawing style stands out for its use of three dimensions, rescues the experiences of his father-in-law, Dr Pablo Uriel, during the Civil War. Elena Uriel, one of the doctor's daughters and the cartoonist's wife, has also collaborated on the work, collecting and organizing her father's legacy. These books revisit some of the memories published in *No se fusila en domingo/They don't Shoot on Sundays* (P. Uriel, 2005), a title they reference. The end of each volume reproduces official family documents (letters, photography, news clippings).

The first volume, *Un médico novato/A Rookie Doctor* (2013), contains almost no military scenes. Unlike *Los surcos del azar* (2013), it does not represent a collective protagonist (such as 'La Nueve'), but rather is a first-person portrait of one of the many anonymous Spaniards whose lives were changed by the coup of 18 July 1936. It is divided into two parts: the first, 'The canoe', narrates the arrival of the young Pablo Uriel, recently licensed in medicine, to a small town in La Rioja, Rincón del Soto, to replace its primary doctor. Ten days after he arrives, the town is occupied by a unit of Carlist militiamen, who, under orders from a higher command, proceed to assassinate those who are identified as members of the opposition or the left.

In the second part, 'Radio Cell 14' – a reference to how a sergeant who shares a cell with Pablo livens up evenings in prison with his guitar portrays the difficulties of captivity for the Republican prisoners, in this case, in a military prison in Zaragoza. These soldiers do not know whether they will live until the next day (the comic depicts army boots heading to the cells at six in the evening to 'take the prisoners for a walk'). This uncertainty, combined with Uriel's reflections, comprise a highly accurate portrait of the rearguard during the war.

In *Atrapado en Belchite/Trapped in Belchite* (2015), Pablo, now free, is mobilized as an official doctor in the Nationalist army, participating in the Battle of Belchite, one of the bloodiest on the Ebro front. At the last minute he is able to save his own life. This book is structured in three parts. The first, Tula, is named after the dog he helps to deliver at its birth, which accompanies him on his travels: this is a narrative recourse which shows the passage of time. In the second part, Fleeting Friendships, a chessboard and a military helmet symbolize the two conflicting sides. The third, Palaeolithic Surgery, is represented by the ruins of the church and portrays the desperate situation people lived through in Belchite because of the siege and the high number of injuries.

The book presents two clearly different sides; however, the author eschews a dualistic perspective, portraying the horror of soldiers obliged to participate in firing squads, of priests shot for opposing the regime of terror, and of highranking officials, like the head of the military prison in San Gregorio, who treated the prisoners humanely. The comic thus portrays the war as

a complex phenomenon, consisting of multiple factors as well as personal and anodyne stories that cannot fit into generalized frameworks.

Atrapado en Belchite (2015) portrays daily life on the front through Pablo's arrival at his new location. A symbolic line separates the two sides formed by residents of the same town, in which fathers, sons and brothers must fight each other. In one sequence, the captain sends Pablo out to bury the dead that lie in no man's land and that have begun to rot. The soldiers on the opposing sides take advantage of the ceasefire to exchange cigarettes. The everyday aspects of the war, which touch on the absurd, recall Luis García Berlanga's film *La vaquilla/The Heifer* (1985), for the proximity of the combatants and the difficulty of waiting. As Miguel Ruíz says in *Los surcos del azar*, 'In war you spend almost all your time waiting [...] but you always wait in the rain, without sleeping, without eating' (182).

Graphically, both volumes work in similar ways: panels drawn with contoured black lines accentuate the realism of the scenery, which contrasts with the characters' cartoonish aspect. Colour becomes one of the main expressive elements in this comic; through its selective use, it lends an important connotative charge to different scenes. Colour allows the flags, the Falangists' blue shirts and the red berets to stand out from the crowd, as well as blood, all of which lends a greater drama to the story.

CONCLUSIONS: POSTMEMORIES AND POSTMEMORY IN THE CONTEMPORARY SPANISH COMIC

'The story of my father [...] was what made me curious about what happened just after the most devastating war in human history'. This statement is taken from a book by Ian Buruma (2013: 9), where he explores the devastating year of 1945, plagued by the settling of scores, forced exoduses, and the difficulty of survival. His study expresses a historiographic interest based not on the criteria of academic objectivity, but rather on a professed subjectivity rooted in family memories. In 1943 the Nazis moved Buruma's father from Utrecht to Berlin, where he laboured in a parts factory. In Berlin, he lived through the Allied bombing, the Soviet siege, and the calamitous months after the conflict. Upon returning to the Netherlands, he resumed his university studies. There, he found that 'no one was interested in personal stories [...] they all had personal stories, often unpleasant' (Buruma 2013: 6–7).

The seven comics analysed in this article were published in a brief span of time (1997–2015). Each work employs a unique strategy to deal with memory through particular expressive and aesthetic characteristics, as well as specific settings and points of view. Each work also employs different narrative frameworks: focusing attention on certain events (*Un largo silencio, Las guerras silenciosas* [2014]); bringing them into the present through the use of a possessive pronoun (*Nuestra Guerra Civil* [2006]); participating in tragic events (*El arte de volar* [2009], *Atrapado en Belchite* [2015]); emphasizing the role of chance (*Los surcos del azar* [2013]); or emphasizing the war's impact on the population (*Un médico novato* [2013]). In addition, each story uses time differently, which provokes different forms of reading: in a premonitory way; through the proposal of a hypothesis; with open or closed endings; or through different levels of interpretive intensity.

However, these works also share common traits. All demonstrate a reflective quality that contradicts Buruma's observations regarding 1945: they show an interest in and need to tell

each individual's story through an intervening voice. This need is not resolved through a mere transcription of the other's external and remote autobiographical memory. Rather, these narratives comprise a multifaceted exercise that combines emotion and reason in order to revitalize the past and bring it into the present. In short, these narratives transfer and remake first- and second-degree memories through processes of negotiation and generational assemblage.

In addition, these comics discuss ordinary people and commemorate their roles. Vindication and ethical affirmation occupy an important place in their evocation of traumatic contexts. They use this perspective to critique recent Spanish history with different levels of severity, even if indirectly (*Los surcos del azar* [2013]). Finally, they express a kind of national Spanish memory that tends to diminish regional particularities.

In recent decades, scholars like Mary Nash and Susanna Tavera (2003) have interpreted historical events through the inclusion of testimonies from women who suffered the repercussions of the conflict and who frequently have been forgotten. These women ensured survival among the rearguard, kept the war economy going and participated actively in society (*Nuestra Guerra Civil* [2006]), enlisting in militias and unions, working in different professional spheres (as nurses, seamstresses, cooks, and so on), and even fighting on the front.

The comics analysed here centre on masculine testimonies. This absence of female narrators helps perpetuate conventions adopted by traditional historiography regarding military events, in which women are displaced from the position of subjects who create discourses, towards the position of the enunciated (or omitted) object. This displacement of women implies an ideological position that prioritizes a perspective oriented towards the public or the struggle on the front over another, equally important perspective focused on the rearguard and everyday survival (with the exception of some works like *Nuestra Guerra Civil* [2006]).

The choice of point of view causes some events to be portrayed in great detail, while others of similar weight are reduced to a single phrase. This occurs in *Los surcos del azar* (2013), which briefly mentions the situation of French women who had relationships (both sexual and other kinds) with German soldiers in order to survive. These women, accused of collaborating with the enemy, suffered terrible punishments and were humiliated publicly, as were their children. Such events provoke reflection on the concept of violence from the perspective of gender.

At the margin of the issues discussed above, generational difficulties in understanding certain topics articulated by these discourses (the use of violence or trust in ideologies) should also be emphasized, especially considering the framework through which they emerge (western, capitalist, individualist and consumerist societies, where faith in institutions and political parties has begun erode). However, through its audio-visual culture this same setting influences ways of narrating and representing historical events, as can be seen in the recreation of scenes of sex or violence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article is part of the research project entitled 'Second-degree memories: Postmemory of the Civil War, Francoism and Democratic Transition in contemporary Spain' (CSO2013-41594-P),

supported by the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness and directed by Laia Quílez.

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SUGGESTED CITATION

Galán-Fajardo, E. and Rueda-Laffond, J. C. (2016), 'Those wars are also my war: An approach to practices of postmemory in the contemporary Spanish comic', *Catalan Journal of Communication & Cultural Studies*, 8: 1, pp. 63–77, doi: 10.1386/cjcs.8.1.63_1

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