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Historical Memory in Post-Francoist Spanish Comics: The Public Articulation of Trauma

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Hispanic Languages and Literatures

by

Esther Claudio Moreno

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Historical Memory in Post-Francoist Spanish Comics:

The Public Articulation of Trauma as Transitional Justice

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Professor María Teresa de Zubiaurre, Chair

Historical memory in Spain has received widespread attention and it has become part of international discussions about the role of reparation, historiography, and trauma worldwide. The increasing interest in memory, generated by associations and movements for the recovery of collective memory, the 2007 Law on Historical Memory and cultural production – mainly literature and films – from the turn of the 21st century, culminated in the anti-austerity protests of May 15 2011. The public expressions of dissent made evident that structural inequality was deeply rooted in thirty-six years of political marginalization and that reframing the past was a form of social justice. In this matter, comics and graphic novels have received international attention for their sophisticated combination of drawings and texts around the topics of democracy, justice and truth. I examine the particular mechanisms that Spanish graphic narrative

uses to explore diegetic and extradiegetic rendering of time and space, trauma and memory, identity and nationhood. Comics visualize and narrate previously criminalized experiences and dynamics in the dictatorial regime that call for a public acknowledgement of memory as a form of transitional justice. My overarching argument is that the particular mechanisms of the grammar of comics, such as caricature, breakdown or page layout, establish new ways to conceptualize the presence of the past in democratic Spain. In particular, the arrangement of panels and the imbrication of different media in some comics portray an intergenerational approach to memory that places the particularities of the Spanish dictatorial past within an international discourse of Human Rights and crimes against humanity. In works that operate as symbolic justice and historical reparation, I explore the ways in which the recovery of the past is committed to a diverse and inclusive future and how graphic novels spearhead this change.

The dissertation of Esther Claudio Moreno is approved.

Charles Hatfield

John Thompson

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Barbara Fuchs

María Teresa de Zubiaurre, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2022

To my family:

Thank you for your unwavering belief, support, and encouragement.

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Flores was vital to my academic trajectory. There are no words to describe how much I learned from you as a scholar, as a teacher and as a human being. I still cannot understand how you would find books in the office faster than I could. You inspired me to pursue an academic career and believed in me in a way I had never encountered before. And even before I came to the United States, I had the pleasure to take classes from Maya García de Vinuesa at Universidad de Alcalá. The most committed scholar I have had the pleasure to meet, you always believed in me and continue doing so. Your generosity is beyond words.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to colleagues and friends in the academic and comics scholarship world. To Xavier Dapena, Jorge Catalá, Mikel Bermello, Isabelle Touton, Ana Merino and all the members of the Hispanic Scholars Comics Collective. Special thanks to Xavi for giving me the opportunity to collaborate in so many exciting projects. Infinite thanks to Greice Schneider and Roberto Bartual, whose sophisticated and accurate research on comics motivated me to write this dissertation. It is always inspiring to discuss comics with you but it is even better to count on each other for all the imaginative academic projects we develop and continue developing as I write. To artists Paco Roca, Antonio Altarriba, Ana Penyas, Kike Benlloch, Miguel Gallardo and Carla Berrocal for sharing their time with me in more than one interview. Special thanks to Paco and his friends for making the trip to San Diego Comic Con the best experience any comics scholar could have. To Gary Groth, a true legend that understands comic like nobody else. To José Manuel Trabado, thank you for your patience, your kindness, and for the inspiring research you keep publishing. To Alvaro Pons and Kiko Sáez for always counting on me. To my longtime friends in Spain: Isa, Mari, Juan Carlos. Not only this dissertation but nothing could have been possible without you. To Jacqueline Cruz, my wonderful translator and copyeditor, who helped me even if my work was always “urgent”.

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2017 - M.A. in Hispanic Languages and Literatures. University of California at Los Angeles
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PUBLICATIONS

Books

On the Edge of the Panel: Essays on Comics Criticism, Esther Claudio and Julio Cañero editors. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015 (330 pages.)

Articles

"Leer la ciudad: composiciones laberínticas y gestálticas en el cómic actual" en José Manuel Trabado (ed.). *Lenguajes gráfico-narrativos*, León: Universidad de León, Eolas ediciones, 2022, pp.107-132.

"*Estamos todas bien* as craftivism: sewing, drawing, roaring" in *Hispanic Issues* (Accepted: Forthcoming)

"Your war or my struggle? A Gender approach to historical memory in Spanish graphic narrative." en Isabelle Touton, Jesús Alonso, Anne-Claire Sanz-Gavillon, Claudia Jareño (eds.) *Trazos de memoria, trozos de historia. Cómic y franquismo.* Madrid: Marmotilla, 2021

"Las dinámicas de la memoria en *Retorno al Edén* y *La casa* de Paco Roca", *Cuco: Cuadernos de Cómic*, no. 15, pp. 153-170 (2021).

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

Conference Creator and Coordinator

2011	International Conference on Comics and Graphic Novels. Universidad de Alcalá, November 9-12,

Conference Organizer

2021	"Insurgencias e imaginación política en la narrativa gráfica" Alces XXI, July 13-15
2020	"Comics in Dialogue". Universidad Complutense de Madrid. October 20-23.

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2022	"Graphic Narrative in Spanish: Memory as Transitional Justice", Modern Language Association, Washington DC, January 6.

2020 "Migración e Identidades" – Roundtable session with Quan Zhou, Patsy Iwasaki and Nacha Vollenweider at Comics in Dialogue, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, October 23

2019 "Spotlight Panel: Paco Roca with Gilbert Hernández, Esther Claudio and Gary Groth" San Diego Comic Convention, July 20.

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2021 "Labyrinthine cartography of emotions in experimental graphic narrative" in *Comics Languages: An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Study of Form*, Universidad de Alcalá, Summer course, July 17.

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Universidad de Valencia, Instructor of Record (Fall 2021)

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2020 - Present Editorial Board, *CuCo: Cuadernos de Cómic*

2016 – Present Editorial Board, *Mester*

2010-2012 Founder and editor, *Comics Grid: Online academic journal of comics studies*: http://www.comicsgrid.com/

Introduction

In 2019, the body of Spanish dictator Francisco Franco was relocated to the Mingorrubio cemetery. The significance of this unprecedented operation cannot be overstated. For decades, the dictator had rested in "The Valley of the Fallen" in Madrid, a megalomaniac monument with a gigantic cross and a luxurious basilica built by political prisoners between 1940 and 1958. Although the monument was supposed to honor "the Fallen," its overtly Catholic nature stood in direct opposition to the values espoused by many opponents to Francoism. In fact, the Valley of the Fallen was a pilgrimage site for Franco and fascist supporters. The relocation operation was one of the key elements of the 2007 Historical Memory Law, which aimed for the depoliticization of the Valley, to "honrar y rehabilitar la memoria de todas las personas fallecidas a consecuencia de la Guerra Civil de 1936-1939 y de la represión política que le siguió" [honor and recover the memory of all those who had fallen in the 1936-1939 Civil War and during the subsequent political repression]. The next steps include creating a Center for Historical Memory and exhuming the bodies of the thousands of political prisoners that built the monument as hard labor so that the families can give them proper burial. The relocation of the dictator's remains is a form a social, transitional, spatial and symbolic justice. It decentralizes Francoist memory and it opens a space for the demands of those who were negatively affected by the regime. Present generations have found in international justice a way to address the violations of human rights in the Spanish case. This dissertation studies how comics illustrate the public articulation of mourning as a form of symbolic justice.

My research revolves around Carlos Giménez's *Paracuellos* (1977-2003), Felipe Hernández Cava and Federico del Barrio's *El artefacto perverso* (1996) [*The Perverse Artifact*],

Miguel Gallardo's *Un largo silencio*[1] [*A long silence*] (1997), Antonio Altarriba and Kim's *El arte de volar* [*The Art of Flying*] (2009) as well as *El ala rota* [*The Broken Wing*] (2016), Paco Roca's *Los surcos del azar* [*Twists of Fate*] (2013), Kike Benlloch and Alberto Vázquez's *Freda* (2002), Kim's *Nieve en los bolsillos* [*Snow in My Pockets*] (2018), Jorge García and Fidel Martínez's *Cuerda de Presas* [*Rope of Prisoners*] (2005), and Ana Penyas's *Estamos todas bien* [*We Women are all Fine*] (2017). These were groundbreaking comics in their depiction of autobiographical memory, trauma, postmemory, multidirectional memory and gendered memory. Other works published on post-francoist memory are: Paco Roca's *El Faro* (2005) [*The Lighthouse*], Serguei Dounovetz and Paco Roca's *El ángel de la retirada* (2010) [*The Angel of Retreat*], Carlos Guijarro's *El paseo de los canadienses* (2015) [The Canadians' Road], Carlos Hernández y Ioannes Ensis' *Deportado 4443* (2017) [*Deported 4443*], Miguel Francisco's *Espacios en blanco* (2017) [Blank Spaces], and several trilogies: Alfonso Zapico's trilogy *La balada del norte* (2015-2017) [The Ballad of the North], Jaime Martín's trilogy *Las Guerras Silenciosas* (2014) [*Silent Wars*], *Jamás tendré 20 años* (2018) [*I'll never be 20 years old*] and *Siempre tendremos 20 años* (2020) [*We'll always be 20 years old*]; Sento's trilogy *Un medico novato* (2013) [*A novice doctor*], *Atrapado en Belchite* (2015) [*Trapped in Belchite*] and *Vencedor y Vencido* (2016) [*Victor and loser*]. A book to teach post-Francoist memory through comics has recently been published by David F. Arribas, *Memoria en viñetas* (2019) and it will probably not be the last one given the continuous production on the matter. My dissertation examines the generic mechanisms that graphic narratives use to explore diegetic and

[1] Same title as Angeles Caso's novel, published in 2000, three years after the comic by Francisco and Miguel Gallardo.

extradiegetic renderings of time and space, trauma and memory, identity and nationhood. My work studies post-Francoist Spanish historical memory using theories of memory informed by Michael Rothberg, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Jelin to examine the necessity for a public articulation of repressed memories and suffering as a form of transitional justice.

Some of the questions that will guide my research are: What does graphic narrative do differently and how does Spanish graphic narrative enrich this language? What traumas are culturally articulated and which ones are still unspeakable and hard or impossible to articulate? Which identities are recovered as part of nationhood and which are not? Or, in other words, in works that claim justice and reparation how are inclusion and equity present (or not)? Is drawing a suitable means to achieve authenticity as opposed to, say, photography? While I hope that this dissertation will raise numerous generative questions, I want to begin by addressing the two that loom largest: Why the dictatorial past? And why comics? My work will prove that the thirty-six years of Fascism in Spain provides a particularly clear lens for thinking about memory, justice and reparation. It is not so much representative of Spanish cultural history as it is hyperrepresentative. It blows up violent tendencies that are always there but in inactive or ineffective forms. Therefore, the bombast of dictatorial politics amplifies general tendencies in social dynamics that are often subtle to see. The Fascist period thus provides the key for looking at other historical periods. Fascism is not a parenthesis: it is a magnifying glass. In their turn, comics, "a medium once considered pure junk" (Chute 2008, 452) are slowly acquiring institutional legitimation as a valid form of artistic expression. Unlike other literary forms, the generic form of comics—their distinctive illustrated panels—spatializes time and allows for the juxtaposition of individual and collective memory on the same page. Comics thus facilitate new ways not only of narrating but also of visualizing and mapping traumatic memories. My work

argues that the study of Spanish graphic narrative is crucial to articulate historical memory as symbolic reparation.

Memory studies, virtually nonexistent before the turn of the century, is today a well-established, multidisciplinary field. Foundational concepts like Maurice Halbwachs's "frameworks of memory" and Pierre Nora's "sites of memory" situate individual memory within larger discussions of social identity, historiography, and nationhood. My work is informed by later scholars who have refined the study of mnemonic practices, mainly Marianne Hirsch's postmemory, Michael Rothberg's multidirectional memory, Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman's study of testimony, and trauma theory (Cathy Caruth, Avishai Margalit, Anne Whitehead). This study shares commonalities with works focused on the mechanisms of post-authoritarian transitions in Spanish-speaking countries, particularly those of Paloma Aguilar and Elizabeth Jelin.

Collective memory in Spain has received widespread attention in recent decades, and it has become part of international discussions about the role of memory, reparation, historiography, and trauma worldwide.[2] Paloma Aguilar's *Memoria y olvido de la guerra civil española* (1996) [*Memory and Forgetting of the Spanish Civil War*], a groundbreaking analysis of the process of forgetting as part of the transition to democracy in Spain, has been one of the most influential descriptions of the presence of Francoism today. Not all scholars agree that

[2] Elizabeth Jelin develops her framework for the study of memory *Los trabajos de la memoria* (2001) (Translated into English as *State Repression*: *Labors of Memory* 2003) by comparing several times the Spanish Transition to the Chilean and Argentinian ones among others. Also in a subsequent article about "Memoria y Democracia" (2014) she uses the case of Spanish historical memory to initiate her discussion of the State's institutional processes (227). Paloma Aguilar studies judiciary processes of transitional justice in Argentina, Chile and Spain (2013), as does the critically acclaimed documentary *El silencio de los otros* (2018) The literature that compares transitional justice using Spain as a case study in the wider context of transitional justice is abundant. See Wawrzyński et al (2016) for a comparison with South Africa, Kovras (2013) with Cyprus, or Kressel (2019).

amnesia was foundational to Spain's democratic transition, and some prefer to understand forgetting as a progressive amnesty (Juliá 1996); but it is clear today that the lack of acknowledgement of that collective memory has been the symbolic price for economic and political stability (Balfour 2000). Carme Molinero (2003) argues that the demonization of the Second Republic is one reason for the silence and forgetting that have dominated public discourse. During the Transition, Francoism was seen as a necessary corrective to the chaos of the Republic. History portrayed Francisco Franco's coup d'etat in July 17, 1936, as a consequence of social unrest in the Second Republic. Uprisings are never a cause to overthrow a democracy, and Spanish history is still grappling with this account of its past (Casanova 2007). Nowadays, the recovery of historical memory, like other social movements, has turned to the Second Republic for inspiration, and the recovery of its voices interrogate a democracy founded on the Republic's concealment. Spain had carried out "a transition without transitional justice" (Golob 2008, 127). Reframing the past was a matter of the present for many families who were still trying to locate relatives who had been buried in the mass graves scattered all over the country. Mass killings during the repression were only one of many aspects of the War and the dictatorship that had been banished from public discourse. Schools cautiously avoided teaching the history of the Civil War and its aftermath, and memorialization of the Francoist 'heroes,' 'martyrs,' and key regime figures was still practiced in both rural and urban spaces. The past was very much alive, as much in celebrations of the regime as in the palpable silences of its victims. However, the protests that grew out of the 2008/2009 economic crisis created momentum for a discourse "drawing upon a set of globalized norms equating democratic robustness with what could be called a transitional justice culture that is, a set of beliefs and practices grounded in rejection of impunity, confrontation of the past, prioritizing state accountability and aiming

towards a broader societal inclusion of past regime victims" (Golob 2008, 127). Spain has once more led the way, this time proving that post-Transitional Justice is possible, and that "the institutional arrangements established during a transition do not always exert such a decisive influence on the future scope of transitional justice measures" (Aguilar 2008, 418). In this complex climate of tension between justice and resistance, oblivion and memory, Spanish comics question the basis of Spanish democracy.

Memory is one of the main topics of study in comics. In fact, it was a comic, *Maus,* that prompted Marianne Hirsch to coin the foundational concept of "postmemory," or the transmission of traumatic memories among generations. Hillary Chute has called attention to comics' formal affordances, particularly to how they take the "risk of representation" (2010) in making visible otherwise traumatic realities. Golnar Nabizadeh's *Representation and Memory in Graphic Novels* (2019) conceives of comics as memory contained in panels "in a sea of forgetting" (4) that must be navigated by the reader. Charles Hatfield (2005) describes the medium as an "art of tensions," and in this sense, Nabizadeh explores how comics prompt the reader to connect different temporalities and subjectivities. For Hatfield, learned assumptions about how different codes operate, like word and image, or sequence and layout, introduce a series of dynamics that, in my study of memory, lead to new ways of reading the past in relation to the present. Charles Acheson (2015) conceives of the "gutter," or the space between panels, as a site of multidirectional memory, where the reader projects their own memory to create a "forged memory," combining their efforts to make sense of experiences with the comics' story. Memory in comics is one of the most productive discussions in the field right now, and my dissertation is part of that conversation.

Comics in Spain have followed the pattern of European comics. The contributions of Rodolphe Topffer and William Hogarth in 18th- and 19th-century Europe also influenced the emergence of comics in Spain. Some of the first Spanish graphic authors were Apel·les Mestres, Mecachis, and Mariani (Barrero 2015), at the turn of the 20th century. From then, comics increased in popularity, eventually peaking in the 1940s and 50s, although the increasing separation between infantilized comics for children and the satirical comics for adults in the press relegated the medium to mass entertainment (Antonio Martín 1998), and Francoist censorship further weakened its narrative and artistic potential. After Franco's death, adult comics would "boom" (Lladó 2001), and while the comics industry declined in the 1990s, today it enjoys relative stability, partly as a result of the consolidation of publishing houses like Norma (1977), Astiberri (2001), Dibbuks, (2004), and Apa-Apa (2008). Now defunct, Sins Entido (1999-2013) and DePonent (1998 – 2016) were also key publishers of alternative comics. *Tebeosfera.com* has been essential to the consolidation of criticism and it provides very valuable research information for scholars, including annual reports on the Spanish comics industry. *CuCo: Cuadernos de Cómic* is the first indexed website entirely devoted to peer-reviewed comics criticism. In its turn, criticism has shifted away from a predominantly historical approach and reliance, when theory was invoked, on film studies, to a flourishing multidisciplinarity that draws from architecture, literature, gender and culture studies, and communication studies, among other fields. Antonio Martín, Luis Gasca, Jesús Cuadrado, and Antonio Altarriba laid the foundations for comics scholarship in the 1960s, while today, Manuel Barrero, Ana Merino, Santiago García, Roberto Bartual, Gerardo Vilches, Enrique del Rey, Enrique Bordes, Elisa McCausland, Iván Pintor, Xavier Dapena, and Elena Masarah, among others, have multiplied and expanded comics scholarship.

International criticism has shown increased interest in Spanish comics. In 2018, 2019, and 2022, the Modern Language Association's annual conference included panels devoted to Spanish comics. *European Comic Art*, an indexed journal of comics scholarship, devoted their two issues of 2018 to Spanish comics; they were later published together, thanks to their success, as the collected volume, *Spanish Comics. Historical and Cultural Perspectives*, edited by Anne Magnussen (2021). In 2019, the University of Toronto published *Consequential Art: Comics Culture in Contemporary Spain*, a collection of essays on Spanish comics edited by Samuel Amago and Matthew J. Marr. In 2020, Bryan Cameron & Rhiannon McGlade published a special issue of the *Bulletin of Spanish Visual Studies* entitled "Out of the Gutter: The Politics of Dissent in Visual Print Media from the Spanish Transition to the Present." The same year, David F. Ricther and Collin McKinney edited *Spanish Graphic Narratives: Recent Developments in Sequential Art*. I have published articles in two recent collected volumes: *Trazos de memoria, trozos de historia. Cómic y franquismo* (2021), edited by Isabelle Touton, and *The Political Imagination in Spanish Graphic Narrative* (2022 forthcoming), edited by Xavier Dapena and Joanne Britland for Routledge. I am also part of the "Investigation on Comics and Graphic Novels in the Iberian Cultural Area" European Research COST Project. Fantagraphics, one of the most prestigious publishing houses of comics and graphic novels in the world, publishes the latest works by Spanish artists: Paco Roca, Ana Galváñ, Max, Josep Cornellá, etc., some of which I will analyze in this dissertation. Viviane Alary leads the International Research Group on Spanish Comics at the Université Blaise Pascal in France, and, in general, there is an increasing interest in Spanish comics and graphic novels, exemplified by publications like *Comics and Memory in Latin America* (Jorge Catalá, Paula Drinot and James Scorer eds., 2017).

While historical memory is arguably the key recurrent topic in the study of Spanish comics, no publication has been exclusively devoted to analyzing this particular corpus[3]. As we have seen, most of the available critical studies take the form of articles in edited collections or conference presentations on the general topic of Spanish graphic novels. No full-length study yet analyzes the representation of historical memory in Spanish graphic novels and comics. I aim to fill that gap with this study, the first book project devoted to Spanish graphic narratives of historical memory. This work examines the *boom* in Spanish comics in close relation to the recovery of collective memory[4]. The following chapters examine how the particularities of the language of comics explore and challenge Spanish historical memory.

The first chapter explores the representation of memory in Spanish comics before the 2000s's "boom." Before that moment, comics about the memory of Francoism were exceptional, and although they were critically acclaimed, they reached a relatively small audience. Given that the dictatorship had only recently ended, comics in the 1980s did not explore memory, seeking instead symbolic and historical reparations through humor and sharp criticism of traditional values. Carlos Giménez's *Paracuellos* (1977-2003) stands out as a masterpiece of the medium and as one of the most sophisticated explorations of autobiographical memory. In the 1990s, the comics industry experienced a slow and unstoppable deterioration. However, Felipe Hernández Cava and Federico del Barrio's *El artefacto perverso* (1996) won the prestigious "Best Work of

[3] For instance, out of the eleven articles included in the two special issues of *European Comic Art* on Spanish comics, five of them – that is, almost half – dealt with the dictatorship and three of them specifically with historical memory. In *Consequential Art* the first part (out of three) is specifically devoted to Historical Memory and the second part to the economic crisis, which I claim is strongly related.

[4] Several authors refer to the rise in comics production and in the quality of the works by the end of the 2000s as a boom and I am adopting this expression too. Among them, Collin McKinney and David F. Richter introduce their collected volume speaking of "Graphic Spain: From Aleluyas to the " 'Second Boom' "; the 2016 *Publishers Weekly* announced the US publication of Fantagraphics's anthology of Spanish Comics with the article 'Spanish Graphic Novel *Boom* Reaches America'.

the Year" award at the Barcelona Comics Festival in 1997. This comic, like most cultural production in the 1990s, advocates for the right to forget. I analyze both Giménez's and Cava and Barrio's comics in order to understand how historical memory was portrayed in comics before the "boom".

In chapter two, I analyze the core graphic novels of the memory "boom." In 2009, Antonio Altarriba and Kim published *El arte de volar* (*The Art of Flying*), an unprecedented success which won the Comics National Prize. This influenced subsequent works on memory. In fact, Francisco and Miguel Gallardo's *Un largo silencio* was republished in 2012, after spectacularly failing when initially published in 1997. Later, in 2017, Ana Penyas published *Estamos todas bien*, an account of the memory of the artist's grandmothers, which enjoyed the same commercial and critical success as *El arte de volar*. I argue that the protests over the 2009 economic crisis galvanized repressed memories that helped comics on the matter to receive wider attention. Furthermore, these three comics constitute postmemorial accounts that have found a unique and innovative way to recover the testimonies of previous generations. The conveyance of parents' and grandparents' memories provides, on the one hand, a healing narrative for the traumatic and dislocated memories of the older generation, and, on the other, a voice to articulate the disappointment with the current political situation for the younger generations. One of the particularities of these comics about historical memory is their incorporation of testimony through fiction. Art Spiegelman's groundbreaking comic *Maus* (1980-1991) paved the way for establishing a dialogue between generations by displaying the many interviews that Spiegelman carried out with his father, an Auschwitz survivor. Writers of Spanish comics found in this intergenerational dialogue a way to make public the testimonies of their relatives, a generation that had begun to disappear by the end of the 2000s. Building on

Maus, each of the comics I discuss developed their own unique approach to exploring the transmission of trauma from past to present generations. In so doing, they have generated a unique form for incorporating testimony within fiction.

In chapter three, I study Paco Roca's *Twists of Fate* (2013), Kike Benlloch and Alberto Vázquez's *Freda* (2002), and Kim's *Nieve en los bolsillos* [*Snow in My Pockets*] (2018). I argue that the experiences of Spanish refugees and migrants as described in these comics provide a decentralized narrative that challenges the prevalent nationalistic approach to memory. Building on Michael Rothberg's concept of "multidirectional memory," I study Spanish historical memory in relation to World War Two and to the massive emigration from today's Spain. *Twists of Fate* describes the anti-fascist fight of Spaniards during World War II, thus drawing on a broader map of memory. In its turn, the memory of economic migrants has been recovered since the "no nos vamos, nos echan" [we're not leaving, they're kicking us out] movement during the May 15 protests in Madrid, which denounced the precarious Spanish job market. The protests launched multidirectional memory in a way that linked the economic migration of the 1960s that *Freda* and *Nieve en los bolsillos* describe to the 2000s brain drain. Transnational accounts help imagine memory in a broader context that unties memory form national identity.

Finally, in chapter four, I study comics that revolve around women's historical memory of the Civil War and Francoism in Jorge García and Fidel Martínez's *Cuerda de presas* (2005), Antonio Altarriba and Kim's *El ala rota* (2016) and Ana Penyas's *Estamos todas bien* (2017). As we have seen in all the works previous to this chapter, stories about historical memory have been produced by, about and for men. In Spain's cultural production, women have been relevant to historical memory either as militiawomen or as the carriers of the memories of the fallen, who were mainly men. The memories of women who did not fit in those two roles would not usually

be considered relevant agents of memory. For this reason, bringing women's stories as caregivers to the forefront constitutes a groundbreaking shift that deconstructs male-dominated narratives of memory. This chapter proves that an intersectional feminist perspective is necessary to understand how sexism continues unnoticed over time between the present of the authors and the very past their works try to rescue. These graphic narratives interrogate the universality of men's experiences and pave the way for a plurality of voices and identities.

Reframing the past through a present perspective legitimizes memory as a form of transitional justice. What we see in the comics studied in this dissertation is how third and fourth generations legitimize the memories of their parents and grandparents through the language of human rights, crimes against humanity, diversity and inclusion.

Chapter 1: Memory in comics before the 2000s

This chapter provides a general outline of comics published before the year 2000, specifically before the 2008 crisis. As happened at the international level,[5] comics in Spain witnessed growing productivity and critical attention after 2000. Interest in the subject of memory increased after the success of Antonio Altarriba and Kim's *El arte de volar* [*The Art of Flying*], in 2009. This comic originates from the grief process over the father's death, which indirectly describes a social problem: the disappearance of the generations that could provide first-hand accounts of the war and the harsh postwar conditions. By the time Antonio Altarriba created *El arte de volar*, the Asociación por la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica [Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory] had already started its crucial task of highlighting and raising awareness about the importance of memory. Founded in the year 2000, the Association marked a milestone in the social perception of the past by articulating a collective effort to locate and exhume the bodies of Republican soldiers scattered in mass graves so that families could give them proper burial and end a cycle of grief and trauma[6]. In order to understand this change, I will offer a broad overview of the representation of memory in comics published before 2000, during the 1980s and 1990s. The analysis of Carlos Giménez's *Paracuellos* (1977-2003) and Felipe Hernández Cava and Federico del Barrio's *El artefacto perverso* [*The Perverse Artifact*] (1996) will showcase two texts exceptional in their consideration of memory. In the 1980s, comics presented a sophisticated

[5] Spain and the US did not differ very much in terms of the effects of the graphic novel format on the production of comics. As explained by Charles Hatfield, "In the years after *Maus*, an initial fit of commercial enthusiasm for the graphic novel gave way to at best flickering interest, as it became clear that Spiegelman's project was sui generis and did not necessarily herald an explosion of comparable books. Only recently (especially since 2000) have graphic novels of similar density and ambition begun to reach bookstores more regularly" (2005, 5). In Spain, the impact of the graphic novel, as a format, was also felt on the second half of the 2000s.

[6] However, as Paloma Aguilar and Clara Ramírez-Barat remind, they were not the first ones. Even during the first years of the Transition to democracy, families had found and given proper burial to their relatives on their own in Extremadura, La Rioja, Navarra and Soria (2019, 214).

portrayal of the youth's urban life and a harsh critique of Francoist repression. In the 1990s, they got caught up in the generalized conformity and even vindicated the right to oblivion. The appearance of numerous works in the 2000s and is in stark contrast to the attitudes prevailing in the 1980s and 1990s. Moreover, the consolidation of a new format, the "graphic novel," represented a renewal, endorsed by international prestige, that encouraged the consumption of comics by an adult public.

Paracuellos, *El artefacto perverso* and the other publications I will address in this chapter, exhibit different formal and thematic tactics than those used by comics after 2000, but to the same end – to contest the generalized amnesia that granted impunity to the perpetrators. Young comics authors rebelled against oblivion, but memory would not become an instrument for imagining a true break with the dictatorial past until the subsequent memory boom. What were the political and historical contributions of memory comics published in the 1980s and 1990s? To what extent did they react to specific circumstances? What fears and concerns about the period did this turn to the past reveal? What were the benefits of oblivion? What aesthetic and thematic mechanisms for the recovery of memory did comics published during the Transition offer? These are some of the questions I will attempt to answer here.

Memory in the 1980s

Despite the tight control imposed by the 1966 Press Law, it is not surprising to find sharp criticism of the regime in magazines and comics even before the end of Francoism. The graphic humor of *Hermano Lobo* [*Brother Wolf*] and *La codorniz* [*The Quail*] were referents during late Francoism (1969-1975) and the most popular children's comics, such as *Zipi y Zape* [*Zipi and Zape*] or *Carpanta*, managed to circumvent control through irony and humor. As the dictator's

health deteriorated, the censorship system and all levels of the administration became more flexible (García Garreta 2012; Prieto Santiago and Moreiro Prieto 2011), and the young became increasingly irreverent, influenced by foreign trends and a generalized disgust with Francoist domination. In 1975, the dictator Francisco Franco died after a months-long agony and the Transition to democracy began[7]. Late Francoism, i.e., the last years of the dictatorship, was characterized by economic growth, a relaxation of censorship and an opening to foreign influences (Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla et al. 2016). Youngsters took to the streets to protest – not without risk – and the hippie spirit surfaced in big cities, especially Barcelona. This was the environment in which the first Spanish underground comic, influenced by the US underground, appeared. *El Rrollo enmascarado* [*The Masked Scene*] attacked all traditional values, particularly thanks to young Nazario, whose creativity and genuine approach tackled homosexual experiences and displayed explicit sex scenes in a desecration of religious discourse (Merino 2020). Comics became one of the preferred media for youngsters, who found it to be an inexpensive way to express their yearning for freedom and rebellion. The publication of *El Rrollo enmascarado* in 1973 was the starting point for the collaboration between Nazario, Mariscal, and the brothers Miguel and Josep Farriol, later joined by Guillermo, Francesc Capdevilla (Max), Antonio Pàmies,

[7] I refer to the Transition as the period of widespread political, social, and cultural transformation and renewal that arose following the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975. According to Teresa M. Vilarós in *El mono del desencanto*, this period begins slightly earlier. She defines *La Transición* as "aquellos años… en los que España pasó del régimen militar dictatorial de Francisco Franco a una democracia establecida. El periodo cubierto abarca los veinte años comprendidos entre 1973, año del asesinato del entonces presidente del Gobierno almirante Luis Carrero Blanco, y 1993, que señala con la firma del tratado de Maastricht la definitiva y efectiva inserción de España con la nueva constelación europea" (1). ["Those years … when Spain went from Francisco Franco's military dictatorial regime to an established democracy. The period spans the twenty years between 1973, the year when the then President, admiral Luis Carrero Blanco was assassinated, and 1993, when Spain enters the European constellation after signing the Maastricht treaty."]

Roger and Isa – a constellation of authors whose careers would continue on for decades (Dopico 2011).

During the second half of the 1970s and first half of the 1980s, there was a veritable explosion of publications devoted to comics or which incorporated comics as an essential element for political contestation, criticism and satire, as well as subverting the regime's social values, primarily religion and the heteropatriarchal family. *El Papus* (1973-1986), *Star* (1974-1980), *Butifarra!* (1975-1979), *El Víbora* (1979-2004), *Madriz* (1984-1989) and *El Cairo* (1981-1991), among others, operated as grotesque, irreverent portrayals of the Transition to democracy (Lladó 2001; Vilches 2021). However, towards the mid-1980s, when the democracy became stabilized, the economy was growing and, overall, there was a sense of calmness, comics lost their critical, transgressive role (Pérez del Solar 2013) and, in the 1990s, the genre experienced a significant recession. The only magazine that survived, and still does today, was *El Víbora*, because it adapted to the changing times by offering a wider thematic variety.

Given the temporal proximity to the end of the dictatorship, few works addressed memory. The dictator died in 1975 and, for obvious reasons, the way to approach Francoism was to analyze the present, as most of these comics and magazines did. The Transition from a Fascist regime to a democratic society was, in itself, a historical milestone, with changes taking place at a dizzying speed: the 1977 Amnesty Law, the legalization of left-wing political parties, the first democratic elections, the first civil rights laws[8] shaped a different society. Comics criticized both political

[8] Among other reforms, those related to LGBTQ and women's rights are worth mentioning. On 26 December 1978, the Law on Social Danger (1954), which criminalized LGTBQ persons, defining them as "vagrants," was reformed. Articles 449 and 452 of the Penal Code, which penalized married women (but not men) for adultery, were abrogated on May 26. Law 30/1981, of 7 July, introduced, for the first time since the Second Republic, nullity, separation and divorce proceedings, and Organic Law 9/1985, of July 5, decriminalized abortion under certain conditions.

violence and traditional values, but not without risks. *El Papus*, one of the leading humor magazines, which published comics authors such as Carlos Giménez, Maruja Torres, Fer, Manel Fontdevila and many others, suffered a terrorist attack by a far-right group, the Triple A, on 20 September 1977. And on 23 February 1981 General Antonio Tejero led an attempted *coup d'état* with the purpose of reinstating Fascism. The Transition to democracy was not easy and we cannot but praise the courage exhibited by those humor magazines and comics that dared to present a critical discourse.

The most politicized magazines, such as *Butifarra!*, *El Papus* and *Trocha*, offered women a space for collaboration, reflection and activism, and artists like Maruja Torres, Montse Clavé, Marika (Mari Carmen Vila), Armonía Rodríguez and Mariel Soria took advantage of it to develop all their potential. The Spanish and international industries had pigeonholed women authors in the romance genre, to the point that some were forced to use male pseudonyms to publish works about any other subject. These magazines published stories with a wide thematic variety and denounced not only sexism in society at large, but also that of their male colleagues within the comics industry (Lázaro-Reboll 2020). Some time later, *El Cairo* and *Madriz*, which viewed comics not only as a means of protest, but as a form of artistic expression, would also publish women authors' innovative works, with Ana Juan and her crime comics prominent among them (Pérez del Solar 2013).

These magazines did not last long, but their criticism of the regime and their endorsement of Communist and Socialist politics effectively contested Francoist discourse until the Transition Culture slowly thwarted the initial hope for justice and reparation. The "Transition Culture" (Labrador 2014), i.e., the period of widespread political, social and cultural transformation that followed Franco's death in 1975, presented Francoism as a necessary remedy, one that was not

perfect but was better than the chaos prevailing during the Republic. Memory was not an important theme during that period, because what needed to be "remembered" was the present, not the past. The magazines published during the Transition period (1975-1982) and the 1980s combatted the Francoist criminalization of those who fought for democracy, while denouncing Franco's coup as a breakdown of the social fabric.

Although there were few mnemonic representations in the 1980s, two approaches are worth noting: parodies of children's comics and autobiographies. Parody reinterpreted Francoist comics from a contemporary perspective. Fer, Romeu, Guillén and Cifré rescued the comics they read as kids and rewrote them to comment on the news and other current affairs. This by no means represented a trend, but as Francisca Lladó (2018) has shown, these parodies were an interesting exercise in memory. In regard to autobiographies, Carlos Giménez's *Paracuellos* was probably the first memory comic and is certainly one of the best. Giménez's childhood stories revolve around memory in order to demand symbolic justice, one that exposes the regime's cruelty and the structural exclusion of the defeated.

Parody is an inherently mnemonic instrument that mobilizes archival material and transforms it into a discourse about the present. It operates as a rewriting of the past, where "la fractura de la barrera que separa … los significantes de sus significados manifiesta la transgresión de los modelos tanto en sus aspectos formales como en los contenidos" ["the breakdown of the barrier separating . . . the signifiers from the signified exhibits a transgression of models in both their formal aspects and contents"] (Lladó 140). Iván Pintor has studied the remontage of Francoist gestuality in comics to understand how present-day gestures decolonize the face and the discourse of the dictatorship. For him:

> El conjunto de cómics y praxis secuenciales … revisan el período histórico de la guerra y la dictadura a partir de 1975 donde cristaliza una labor política y antropológica a través del 'remontaje' de las formas estereotipadas del franquismo .... Sólo mediante el remontaje de gestos y formas … es posible rescatar los tiempos perdidos de la historia, no tanto con el ánimo de demostrar como con la voluntad de explicitar los movimientos de la propia materia histórica. (Pintor 269)
>
> [The set of comics and sequential praxes ... revise the historical period of the war and the dictatorship after 1975, where they crystallize a political and anthropological effort through the "remontage" of Francoism's stereotyped forms .... Only through the remontage of gestures and forms ... is it possible to rescue the lost times of history, not so much for the purpose of demonstration, but to make explicit the movements of history itself.]

For example, Fer's parody of *El guerrero del antifaz* [*The Masked Warrior*] reproduces a page of the original comic, changing the dialogues to comment on Henry Kissinger's policies during the 1970s oil crisis. *El guerrero del antifaz* was a comic created by Manuel Gago, in collaboration with Matías Alonso, that was published on a continuous basis between 1944 and 1966. The protagonist is a 15th-century warrior, a loyal servant of the Catholic Monarchs, who fights against the Muslims for personal reasons and to defend the values of the Christian faith. In 1978, with the dictator already dead, Manuel Gago resumed the comic and created a character that was much less religious and even had problems with the Inquisition, but, in the Spanish imaginary, *El guerrero del antifaz* remains, together with *Roberto Alcázar*, a symbol of Francoism's most traditional values. The Catholic Monarchs financed Columbus' trips to America, took the last Muslim kingdom in Spain (Granada) and, as England and France had already done, expelled the Jews. Francoism mythified that historical period to promote a strongly Catholic, antisemitic,

misogynist regime. As a Catholic warrior against Islam, the masked warrior embodied a form of propaganda of Francoist values aimed at children. In Fer's parody, the warrior is Henry Kissinger, thus transforming the "Nobel Peace Prize Winner" into an ultraconservative soldier against the "underdeveloped" countries. This parody criticizes the United States' colonialist policies by establishing a parallel with the Catholic Monarchs' imperialist values. When he starts the fight, he exclaims that "resultará más difícil que Chile" ["it will be more difficult than Chile"], thereby evoking the United States' complicity in, and support of, Pinochet's dictatorship and calling attention to the Fascist and colonial logic underlying the US' expansion. Since he has difficulties in gaining access to oil, the warrior/Kissinger decides to burn all the barrels. His lack of leadership depicts a clumsy, needlessly aggressive politician, and the reference to the Nobel Prize highlights the prevailing hypocrisy within the international order. In this way, memory of the Spanish imperial past and its Francoist manipulation extends to the international order of the moment.

Another example is Guillén's "Julio Rodríguez Alcázar y Pedrín" ["Julio Alcázar and Pedrín"] (*Por Favor*, no. 15, 10/06/1974), where former Minister of Education Julio Rodríguez, transformed into a Francoist comic hero, Pedro Alcázar, punches a hippie, thereby pointing to the conservative, repressive character of university politics. Francisca Lladó rescues some of these reinterpretations from the archives to examine how they created "un espacio de opinión respecto al retraso cultural y político de los cuarenta años del franquismo ... entendiendo la ideología en que nacieron y que urgía desmontar" ["a space of opinion regarding the cultural and political backwardness of the forty years of Francoism ... comprehending the ideology within which they emerged and which needed to be dismantled"] (Lladó 153). Parody serves to keep the past alive in the form of cultural memory (Cornips and van den Hengel 2021; Connell 1999). The rereadings of children's comics by Spanish underground works drew attention to the Fascist values instilled

in the young. These counter-culture comics were the opposite of traditional children's comics and consolidated the medium as a form of artistic and political expression using memory and parody.

The memory works *par excellence* in the 1970s and 1980s are Carlos Giménez's comics. Giménez is among the most admired and respected authors and his *Paracuellos* is one of the most internationally renowned Spanish comics. In his work, Giménez does not only address his childhood in Social Assistance Centers[9], which we will analyze below. In *Los Profesionales* [*The Professionals*], he describes the experiences of a group of cartoonists and denounces their precariousness and Francoist censorship, while depicting endearing human relationships among them and the passion they all shared for comics. In *36-39: Malos tiempos* [*36-39: Bad Times*], he represents the siege of Madrid during the Civil War. These works recount fictional stories that are slightly based on his own and his acquaintances' experiences, but *Paracuellos* and *Barrio* [*Neighborhood*] are autobiographical works that gather Giménez's own memories. *Barrio* is a sequel to *Paracuellos*, where some of the child protagonists are already outside the orphanages described in *Paracuellos*, but the latter addresses Giménez's and his friends' experiences and testimonies in more detail.

[9] The Francoist "Auxilio Social" or Social Assistance was part of the regime's meagre and dysfunctional welfare system, which "emerged as one of the most useful tools for social control" (Cenarro 2009). These Centers depended on the Charity of wealthy Falangist families who would donate large sums that the State would later distribute. The Social Assistance Centers were characterized by their Catholicism. As Angela Cenarro explains,

> Once the war was over, the *hogares infantiles* (children's homes) became Auxilio Social's most important area of operation. War orphans, children of poor families, abandoned children and prisoners' offspring—the main objects of the regime's regenerationist obsession—were institutionalized in these *hogares*. The decree of November 23, 1940 regulating the protection of war orphans allowed the state to separate children from their parents if "there were sound reasons to consider that the child's moral formation was at risk. This decree provided the legal framework to enforce a segregationist project clearly aimed at removing children from their republican parents and exercising strict control over them. (2009, 45)

These orphanages not only hosted poor kids who normally came from Republican families, but they also fed the eugenics politics that would relocate kids into Francoist families through irregular adoptions (Marre and Gaggiotti 2021)

Paracuellos narrates the childhood of the author and his friends, who grew up in Francoist orphanages for children of political prisoners or those suspected of engaging in some type of opposition to the regime. Giménez devoted countless hours to compile all the testimonies he could get, first from direct friends and, later, from friends of friends.[10] His main reason to talk about child abuse was to leave a record of a practically unknown reality; i.e., to communicate a collective memory that could operate as symbolic reparation ("Vivir cada día: Carlos Giménez. Viñetas de una infancia" 1984). Giménez published his works in three main phases. The first was the most combative (1976-77), but the second (1979-1982) granted him international success. For this one, he had more documentation available, because he returned to the orphanage to take pictures of the spaces. He also incorporated dates and places into some of the stories to prove their veracity so that they could serve as a historical source ("Vivir cada día" 1984). This visit reaffirmed the author's commitment to transform memory into an instrument for justice as early as the beginning of the Transition.

[10] In volume 6 of *Paracuellos*, Giménez explains this process: "El procedimiento más habitual de recogida de datos, anécdotas e historias ha consistido en reunirnos en número de tres o cuatro alrededor de una grabadora, con unas cervezas y unas almendras (o unos cubatas), y charlando desenfadadamente, como lo hacen los amigos y las gentes que se conocen bien, ir contando cada uno, yo también, las historias que va recordando tal y como llegan a la mente" ["The most habitual procedure to collect the data, anecdotes and stories was for three or four of us to get together around a tape recorder, with some beers and some almonds (or some rum and cokes), and talk freely, as friends and people who know each other well do, with each one, including myself, telling the stories they remembered as they came to their minds"] (*Paracuellos*, vol. 6, p. 7). It is worth mentioning that the subsequent compilation in the form of a "graphic novel" does not include these documents. When the comic was published in magazines or albums, the author's introduction, together with the readers' comments, offered valuable information about the comic's creation and reception.

During the first stage (1976-77), the comics, which were published in *Muchas gracias* [*Many Thanks*] and *Yes*, had a fixed length of four pages, but, far from being an obstacle, this limitation turned out to be a masterly lesson in short narrative. The 1977 comics focus on the abuse – all the forms of physical, verbal and psychological abuse experienced by the children – in order to mobilize a social response, especially during the crucial Transition period. The cruelty is clearly shown in stories such as "La visita: Paracuellos del Jarama 1950" ["The Visit: Paracuellos del Jarama 1950"] (Fig. 1), where a warden forces Elías, one of the children, to drink bowls and bowls of milk until he throws up. The only reason for the punishment is that she heard Elías and his

Figure 1: The visit. Paracuellos del Jarama 1950. N.p.

classmates counting the bugs they found in the food, but this does not explain why she chose precisely Elías, since all four talked about it. The main reason appears to be to isolate one of them and concentrate the punishment, which is clearly excessive, on him. It becomes perfectly clear,

then, that the cruelty simply represents an abuse of power, because the children cannot defend themselves and do not have parents or a family to protect them. This abuse also operates as a revenge against the defeated through their descendants. Being "children of reds" and poor, they were an undesirable burden for the State, hence the constant humiliation (Cenarro 2009; Armengou and Belis 2015).

These are unimaginable situations under normal conditions, whose cruelty does not seem real because trauma "brings us to the limits of our understanding" (Caruth 4). Carlos Giménez told himself: "me gustaría que un día yo pudiera hacerme mis propias historias y contar todo aquello, porque si no nadie se va a enterar de que existieron aquellos colegios y cuando nos muramos todos los que estuvimos allí será un capítulo de la historia que desaparecerá, alguien tiene que contarlo […] Habrá documentos que contarán qué eran los colegios pero no cómo se vivía allí" ["one day I would like to make my own stories and recount all that, because, otherwise, no one's going to know that those schools existed, and when those of us who were there die, this chapter in history will disappear, someone has to tell it […] There will be documents saying what those schools were, but not how life was there" (Muñoz and Trashorras 1998, 43). The experience, the "how life was there", is *Paracuellos*' most valuable asset, because, through these children's stories, society witnesses the trauma. The need to tell, even decades later, is "a means of passing out of the isolation imposed by the event … in its inherent belatedness, … through the listening of another" (Caruth 11); i.e., it is a need to convey and communicate the trauma, either through oral narrative or through writing, as in *Paracuellos*. According to Shoshana Felman, testimonies "break through the framework" (Felman and Laub 48), and Dori Laub emphasizes that the person who testifies describes "the unimaginable taking place right in front of [one's] own eyes." The humiliation and violence described in *Paracuellos* seems exceptional, an exaggeration, an invention, because it

portrays "the unimaginable" but the children's traumatic memory is hard to ignore. As Giménez states, it is possible to provide a historical, detailed, true description, supported by all the necessary documentation, but the experience, the emotional dimension and the abuse can only be described through testimony. What these children went through speaks from the local towards the general and carries the marks of Francoist repression in their bodies and in their trauma.

The children's protagonism facilitates the critique of the Francoist system and the readers' almost total empathy. In Spanish cinema, some of the most iconic films about the Civil War and the dictatorship have child protagonists, such as *La lengua de las mariposas* [*The Butterflies' Tongues*], *El laberinto del fauno* [*Pan's Labyrinth*] and *El viaje de Carol* [*Carol's Journey*].[11] Children are perceived to be innocent, defenseless, honest beings who are not influenced by political trends, which fosters the spectators' alignment with their perspective.[12] In *Paracuellos*, none of the children express opinions related to socioeconomic issues and their defenselessness in the face of injustice reinforces that image of innocence. Giménez uses some of the particularities of the comics genre to foster empathy. In the first place, a child's face is much more iconic than an adult's, because it has less differentiating details. In comics, "the more cartoony a face is, the more people it could be said to describe" (Scott McCloud, 31, cf. Fig. 2).[13] That is, the simpler the

[11] Sarah Thomas' *Inhabiting the In-Between: Childhood and Cinema in Spain's Long Transition* and Sarah Wright's *The Child in Spanish Cinema* agree on which aspects favor choosing a child as the protagonist. Among them, they emphasize the construction of the child's gaze upon reality as an innocent, depoliticized one. Children are also placed as observers, not affected by a traumatic past at the time of their development, which conveys a sense of "transition," both political and personal. Children serve as models to imagine a new society, usually by learning about the devastating effects of the dictatorship so as not to repeat them in their future / the country's future.

[12] For example, José Luis Cuerda, the director of *La lengua de las mariposas*, has stated, "Yo sólo tengo confianza ya en la infancia… porque la humanidad está representada por unos valores y por unos señores que mantienen esos valores: las grandes estancias como la iglesia, algunos estados o el capitalismo. No hay una canallada más impune" ["I only have faith in childhood… because humankind is represented by a set of values and a set of people who uphold these values: big estates like the church, some states or capitalism. Theirs is the most unpunished villainy"].

[13] Curiously, El Refaie affirms the opposite: "When comics characters are frequently shown in a way that allows details of their facial expressions to be perceived, this probably encourages reader empathy" (201). However,

face, the more people will be able to project themselves onto the character and thus identify or empathize with him or her. In *Paracuellos*, the children's faces are sometimes indistinguishable, whereas the adults are drawn with such a level of detail that their faces are grotesquely deformed, as can be seen in Fig. 1. But there is a difference not only in the level of detail; the angles also differ – low-angle for the wardens and eye-level or high-angle for the children, which encodes

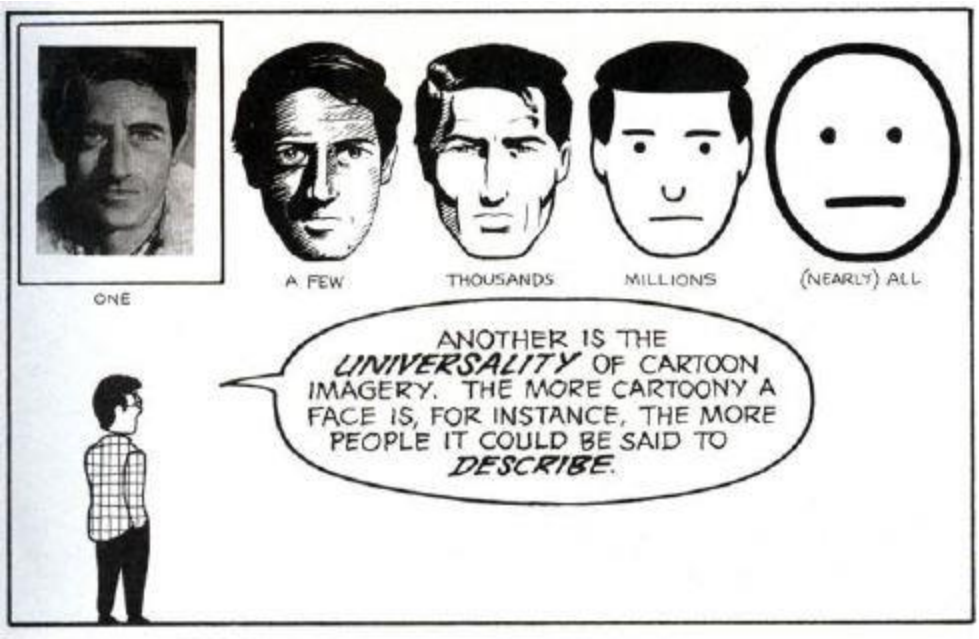

Figure 2: "The more cartoony...the more people is said to describe".

power relationships that place the children closer to the reader and in an inferior position with respect to the adults (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996). In contrast to the adults' oblique gaze, the children's huge, enormously expressive eyes arouse a positive emotional response.[14] Moreover, the wide forehead and the small noses and mouths resemble babies', which inspires affection and

she refers to the importance of gestures, of being able to read what the characters think and feel, not so much to facial details (wrinkles, edges, proportions, particular facial features, etc).

[14] There are countless psychological studies showing the relationship between the gaze and affective connection. In fact, lack of visual attention can lead to autism (for a review, see Senju and Johnson 2009) and social anxiety disorder (Wieser et al. 2009) in children. Jari K. Hietanen's research concludes that "direct gaze increases affective arousal, and more importantly, that eye contact automatically evokes a positively valenced affective reaction" (1).

protective instinct.[15] In sum, *Paracuellos* promotes sympathy towards children's traumatic memory and mobilizes political awareness against Francoism.

In the second part of *Paracuellos* (1979-1982), Giménez has more pages to develop the stories and uses them to portray more complex, long-term relationships. The purpose is not only to denounce the abuse, as during the first phase, but also to recount fun anecdotes in the kids' everyday lives. Moreover, the parents are introduced for the first time, and, with just a few simple strokes, we see the poor families, some of which are directly involved in the anti-Fascist struggle. For example, we learn about the families' reasons for leaving the children there. Like Pablito Giménez and his brother Toñín, who are sent there because their mother is going to spend a long time at the hospital due to a serious illness, or Adolfo Martínez, whose mother and brother are dead, and whose father, who works long hours, has a contagious respiratory illness he is afraid of passing on to his son. The story "Domingo de visita" ["Sunday Visit"] presents a wider variety of families, telling the story of several fathers and mothers who go visit their children. They all arrive exhausted, carrying huge bags of food, many of them having walked for kilometers – "estaba claro que toda aquella gente hacía un gran sacrificio económico a diario para poderles llevar a sus hijos … tal cantidad de comida" ["it was obvious that all those people made a huge daily economic

[15] Specifically, they are "monos" (cute), and there are numerous scientific and "affect theory" studies that point out the strong relationship between "cuteness" and survival; for example, "On Cuteness: Unlocking the Parental Brain and Beyond" (Kringelbach et al. 2016).

sacrifice to be able to take their children ... such quantities of food" (Fig. 3). The dialogues suggest that some of the children have relatives in prison; i.e., that they come from defeated families. In

Figure 3: A great economic sacrifice

this story, we also learn that the author's alter ego did not receive any visits, but it ends with his firm belief that he will someday become a comic artist "y regalar[á] los tebeos a los niños que no pueden comprárselos" ["and will give comic books to all the children who cannot buy them"].

The parents, the children, the wardens and some transient characters depict a seamless environment: the wardens are heartless and cruel, as expected from loyal followers of Francoist ideology, and the rest, particularly those parents with Republican connections, are adorable and supportive. In *Ethics of Memory,* Avishai Margalit maintains that "the trouble with sentimentality in certain situations is that it distorts reality in a particular way that has moral consequences.

Nostalgia distorts the past by idealizing it. People, events, and objects from the past are presented as endowed" (62). The idealized view of the Second Republic and the Republicans raises an ethical dilemma, because it may excessively simplify very complex dynamics. This approach is particularly evident, as we will see, in the comic that inaugurated the memory boom, Antonio Altarriba and Kim's *El arte de volar* (2009). Altarriba and Kim published their work much later, when Spanish society had already gone through several stages in relation to memory, but they were compelled by the same overriding need to leave testimony of a generation that was in the process of disappearing. In its turn, *Paracuellos* is a reaction to a unique historical period, but also a dangerous one – the Transition to democracy. The first part was published in 1977, the same year that the magazine *El Papus* suffered a Fascist terrorist attack. The effort to humanize the defeated – not only to portray the opponents of the regime, but also to decriminalize poverty – must be understood within this context, as a reaction to the also biased discourse of the dictatorship that had dominated the public space for nearly four decades and would in fact continue to do so well into the 2000s. *Paracuellos* offers a detailed, well-documented description of the children's experiences, but a Manichean portrait of society designed to challenge the dehumanization of the enemies imposed by the regime.

Paracuellos does not depict a wide variety of spaces or situations, but the microcosm of the Social Assistance Center, with the dynamics among the children and between them and the wardens, is a small-scale reproduction of the experience of living under a Fascist dictatorship. According to Giménez himself, "las grandes viñetas permiten decorados bonitos, yo aquí no tenía ningún interés en que me quedasen decorados bonitos … porque ese colegio no era bonito, era feo, y la sensación que tienes que dar es que en ese colegio no se pasa bien y no se vive bien" ["large panels allow pretty settings, here I had no interest in creating pretty settings ... because that school

was not pretty, it was ugly, and the sensation you have to convey is that that school was not enjoyable or a good place to live"] (Muñoz and Trashorras 1998, 45). In fact, Anne Magnussen states that, when reading one story after another, space, as the nexus between them, is precisely what the reader remembers more clearly (2012, 33). The layout of the panels "recuerda la disposición de las camas en los dormitorios, de los pupitres en clase, de los cuerpos de los niños … los principios de encadenamiento uniformador … su carácter concentracionario" ["is reminiscent of the layout of the beds in the bedrooms, the desks in the classrooms, the children's bodies … the principles of standardizing concatenation … the concentration camp character" (Altarriba 2001, 342). On numerous occasions we see children asking their mothers or fathers or older siblings to take them with them and there is even a story entirely devoted to an infinite wait, in the style of *Waiting for Godot*, entitled "Waiting for Dad" (Book VI). In it, a boy waits for his father all day long because he said he would come and take him out that day. The father never arrives, but, since we had previously seen him to be a loving, responsible father, we suspect that he did not lie but that something happened to him. The entire story is about the child waiting all day long, without moving, not even to eat or have a snack. His yearning for freedom, his frustrated hope and his infinite wait reflect a life of confinement. *Paracuellos* draws up a "cárcel mental" ["mental prison"] (Reggiani 2014) and the graphic choice of omitting large panels or settings is intended to convey the anguish and claustrophobia caused by the abuse – the abuse of power by a totalitarian dictatorship that imposed total repression, both physical and mental. The schools in *Paracuellos*, their abuse and claustrophobia, reflect the experience of a country that was a prison for all those who opposed the Francoist regime.

In 2007, close to the 2008 economic crisis protests and the appearance of Antonio Altarriba and Kim's *El arte de volar* (2009), *Todo Paracuellos* [*The Complete Paracuellos*] was published.

As already mentioned, the comic was first published in single issues of two magazines, *Muchas gracias* and *Yes*. It was not successful in Spain, but in 1979 the French magazine *Fluide Glacial* [*Glacial Fluid*] gave it access to the international market, where it was widely acclaimed and reaped enormous critical and public success. Once consolidated abroad, Ediciones de la Torre published it in Spain in 1982. The third phase would not begin until 1999, when it underwent another change of format, being adapted as an "album." Changing from magazines to albums means gaining more space, more pages, to develop the stories. During this phase, from 1999 to 2003, political and publishing circumstances had changed. On the one hand, the urgent need for vindication felt by many survivors, within an international memory boom in Western Europe and in Latin America, emerged by the end of the 1990s in Spain. On the other, Spanish comics were immersed in an intense process of change that affected the market, as well as editing, distribution and publication formats (Cenarro and Masarah 2020). Already framed within historical memory, *Paracuellos* thus returned to the public in 2007, published in the most common format, the large volume *Todo Paracuellos*, which compiles all the stories, from the first to the last. In 2016, on the 40th anniversary of the first story, which was published in 1977, Giménez added two of the early stories, although the volume did not undergo any other changes.

Paracuellos' publishing journey constitutes an X-ray and a historiography of Spanish comics. It does not only reflect the major crisis that took place in the 1990s – *Paracuellos* almost disappeared during this decade –, but also what the arrival of the "graphic novel" format entailed. The problem with collectibles is access. If they are not purchased at the time of publication, they can only be acquired through exchanges and second-hand markets, which is something that only those readers most committed to comics are willing to. On the contrary, graphic novels, if only because of their format (hardcover, complete story from start to finish), make comics available to

a much broader public. Practically all the historical memory works published in the 2000s have this format, which has facilitated their circulation among native and non-native comics readers. Roger Sabin warns about the "graphic novel" label being a commercial maneuver. Charles Hatfield reminds us that the format is important, but the connotations may be ambiguous and designating a work as a "comic book" or a "graphic novel" "may encourage expectations, positive or negative, that are not borne out by the material itself" (2005, 5). One thing that *Paracuellos* shows is that the contents of comics published as cartoons, in single issues of magazines with low-quality paper, may be just as good or bad as those of "graphic novels." The difference lies in the circulation and the type of public they reach. Paco Roca explains it as follows:

> With the graphic novel, there's a kind of international reader – you can sell two thousand copies in Germany, two thousand in Japan and two thousand in Spain, so I believe the world market has changed in this respect… Dealing with non-mainstream topics means that you have to find new narrative resources. It also made me look at the panel in a different way, no longer as a window on reality but as a metaphor in itself, and it's the graphic novel that makes authors realise this because they need new narrative tools. That's what the graphic novel is: it's walking off the beaten track. (Claudio 2021, 145)

Graphic novels offer a space where the author has complete control of the narrative, without being limited by the number of pages or the local public. They allow larger circulation and the readers do not have to be comics experts to find a given work: they can go to any bookstore and buy it. Almost all the memory comics published after 2000, and especially after the 2008 crisis, appeared as graphic novels, since "non-mainstream topics," i.e., political and historical topics aimed at an adult public, were more effectively conveyed, in both narrative and commercial terms,

through this format.[16] Thus, the type of public that has gained access to comics, oftentimes because of an interest in memory, is a more general public, which includes the full spectrum from children to academics, and this has partly facilitated the critical attention that has institutionalized and legitimized comics as a form of artistic expression. However, going back to *Paracuellos*, Sabin's and Hatfield's comments, and the analysis of *El artefacto perverso* (1994-97) that I will develop in relation to the 1990s, it is important to understand that the quality of the content is not intrinsic to the format. What's more, a graphic novel would not have made possible the ongoing development of the characters in *Paracuellos*. Although the children do not grow up and never leave the orphanage,[17] the sum of the stories over the decades gives the comic an unparalleled depth and scope. Space and time – as in Gilbert Hernández's *Palomar* [*Pigeon Loft*] (Hatfield 2005, 70) – anchor these kids' myriad adventures and, with each story, new nuances and small variations are added, like when the plot leaves the orphanage in the later stories, or little Giménez adds a new reflection on the beauty of comics. The collectible format allowed an *ad infinitum* extension in order to continue exploring the themes from new standpoints. There are many graphic novels, including some about memory, whose quality does not measure up to collectibles like the original *Paracuellos, El artefacto perverso* or the wonderful short stories in the magazines *Eme Mag 21* and *Femiñetas* currently published in Spain, and vice-versa. The format does not determine the quality or the content – it simply targets different publics.

Paracuellos was a pioneer in relation to collective memory. Moreover, as an autobiographical memory work with adult and social themes, it preceded Art Spiegelman's *?*

[16] According to *Tebeosfera*'s annual analysis of the comics industry by year, the vast majority – nearly 77% - of comics published in Spain in 2019 were in book format ("Informe" 13).

[17] This is the case with the Hernández Brothers' characters, the best example of the malleability allowed by the collectible format, with comics published from the early 1980s until today: their characters get old, move, die, experience different problems and evolve in the most organic and imaginative way possible.

(1980-1991). The comics published in Spain during the memory boom after the 2008 crisis resorted to the intergenerational dialogue format partly influenced by the narrative opportunities offered by the father-son relationship in *Maus*, but the sophistication, authenticity and tenderness exhibited by Giménez and the rest of the children in *Paracuellos* could have also served as a model. Giménez collected his classmates' and acquaintances' testimonies to create a choral portrait, a polyphony of voices that grants credibility to experiences that, because of their cruelty, might seem implausible. This is precisely the value of collective memory – mutual legitimation in the face of structural, official silence. In his collection of anecdotes, Giménez creates what Avishai Margalit calls "common memory," i.e., a compendium of testimonies about an event that each person experienced differently (2002, 51), and the exercise in sharing is what makes it valuable for the symbolic reparation of collective trauma. Thus, instead of producing a complete, coherent image of oral history, *Paracuellos* adds testimonies to the "hoguera de la comunidad" ["community bonfire"] (Pereira Boán 2020, 254). Giménez's work offers a "bottom up" approach to oral history (Cenarro 2008, 41) that brings attention to the victims of the historiography imposed by the official narrative. *Paracuellos*' main contribution to Spanish historical memory lies in this polyphony of voices and the place from which they speak. A joint empowerment exercise that decriminalizes their experiences as portrayed by the official discourse, while showing the impact of Francoist policies in the everyday lives of the defeated.

The 1990s: Fragmented Memory and the Right to Oblivion

There was a decline in the Spanish comics industry during the 1990s. Economically, it survived thanks to the importation of Japanese manga and US superhero comics, but the previous decade's creativity and productivity disappeared. Whereas in the 1980s there were magazines such

as *Madriz*, *El Cairo*, *El Víbora*, *Zona 84*, *Star*, *Totem* and many others, by the 1990s only *El Víbora*[18] had survived. Felipe Hernández Cava, the author I study in this chapter, had the courage to found *Medios Revueltos* [*Scrambled Media*] and *El ojo crítico* [*The Critical Eye*], two magazines that welcomed experimental creations and thus provided comics with a space for dialogue, exploration and artistic legitimation.[19] However, these were an exception within the 1990s industry, which was more interested in large-circulation children's and youth works.

1990s cultural production favored a postmodern, experimental literature whose approach to memory reproduced the "consenso de la Transición" ["Transition consensus"] that David Becerra summarizes "en estas tres ideas: … la teoría de la equidistancia; la descripción de la Guerra Civil Española como una guerra fratricida y fruto de la locura colectiva; y la normalización de una secuencia cronológica encaminada a borrar la sustancialidad histórica de la República Española, presentándola únicamente como mero antecedente o causa de la Guerra Civil" (2018, 81) ["into these three ideas: ... the theory of equidistance; the description of the Spanish Civil War as a fratricidal war and the result of collective madness; and the normalization of a chronological sequence designed to erase the historical substantiality of the Spanish Republic by presenting it as a mere antecedent or cause of the Civil War"].

The "Transition consensus" was founded on the 1977 Amnesty Law, or "Pact of Forgetting," which promoted survival and reconciliation through generalized amnesia. Xabier

[18] See the following comprehensive studies: Francesca Lladó's *Los cómics de la Transición: El boom del cómic adulto 1975-1984* [*The Comics of the Transition: The Boom of Adult Comics 1975-1985*] (2001), Pablo Dopico's *El cómic underground español 1970-1980* [*Spanish Underground Comics 1970-1980*] (2005) and Pedro Pérez del Solar's *Imágenes del desencanto: Nueva historieta española 1980-1986* [*Images of Disenchantment: New Spanish Comics 1980-1986*] (2013).

[19] As of today, one of the most extensive sources of bibliographical information is the online magazine *Tebeosfera*, which has a comprehensive compilation of titles and a detailed biography of Hernández Cava and Del Barrio in https://www.tebeosfera.com/authors/felipe_hernandez_cava.html and https://www.tebeosfera.com/authors/federico_del_barrio.html.

Arzalluz, the Basque Group spokesperson, defended it in Congress by saying that it "es simplemente un olvido como decía el preámbulo de nuestro Proyecto de Ley, una amnistía de todos y para todos, un olvido de todos y para todos" ["is simply a forgetting, as stated in the preamble to the Law Proposal, an amnesty to all and for all, a forgetting of all and for all"].[20] Felipe Hernández Cava and Federico del Barrio address the right to oblivion in *El artefacto perverso* (1996), an experimental comic that reproduces the 1990s prevailing outlook on memory. This comic reflects the postmodern approach to history that also characterizes Spanish literature from that period. In "Spectacle, Trauma and Violence in Contemporary Spain," Cristina Moreiras-Menor describes a boom of "lite" literature that seeks to break with the Francoist past and resorts to fragmentation in order to create a narrative removed from the "exotic" Spain of bulls and *sevillanas* promoted by Francoism.[21] In this regard, history, memory and fiction are complementary, albeit non-hierarchisized, media. In a similar vein, in *Post-Totalitarian Spanish Fiction,* Robert Spires suggests that the historiography arising from the happy marriage between literature and historical facts produces a new record that is "no more or less significant than the other disciplines … of how reality is conceived at a given moment in time" (6). Unlike 21st-century literature, whose approach to memory is much more committed to justice, the 1990s was a period of formal experimentation during which memory could appear as a spectral presence (Labanyi 2002), but was rarely translated into a discourse on the recovery of memory. Ulrich Winter, Paul Julian Smith, Isolina Ballesteros, Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, José-Carlos Mainer and Gonzalo

[20] *Diario de Cortes* [*Journal of the Spanish Parliament*], no. 24, Plenary sitting no. 11, held on Friday, 14 October 1977.

[21] Since 1975, "Spain unreservedly embraces the culture of spectacle, while focusing on a de-historicized present. In an ideological move to eliminate a past that situated Spain in a position of inferiority with respect to the rest of the world, new models of identification – signs of identity – are adopted for the newly established democracy" (Moreiras-Menor 135).

Navajas, among others, have studied the 1990s postmodern novel and the main features they describe – its fragmented, polyphonic, intertextual, and even traumatic structure – also appear in comics from this period.

In this chapter, I study Felipe Hernández Cava and Federico del Barrio's *El artefacto perverso* (1996) as an interesting example of fragmented, intertextual trauma fiction that leaves it up to the reader to elaborate a logical discourse in order to understand the need to forget. The protagonists' inability to offer a coherent account from fragments of memories is typical of trauma fiction. In comics, the disparity in graphic styles, the collage of short stories and the characters' inability to give coherence to their own discourse depict an incipient traumatized collective memory that deposits onto the readers the snippets of memory they are unable to interpret.

Postmodern memory: Polyphonic and hybrid comics

Ulrich Winter considers the Francoist past as a consistent element in most of contemporary Spanish narrative, even if just as a secondary theme or context in most works. In his article "From Post-Francoism to Post-Franco Postmodernism: The 'Powers of the Past' in Contemporary Spanish Narrative Discourse (1977-1991)," he shows, on the one hand, that 1990s Spanish culture was essentially postmodernist and, on the other, that its relationship with the dictatorial past distinguished it from other countries' cultural expressions. In this regard, in "The Novel Beyond Modernity" (2003), Teresa M. Vilarós, explains that:

> In a dazzlingly "lite" mode, the novel showers the reader with a kaleidoscopic spectrum of de-subjectivization, recording what was lived intensely during and after the years of the transitional period. As narrated, this experience evolves within the mechanism of the "double-take" common to cinema: while texts remain partly haunted by the Francoist

> ideology of Spanish difference, they also express the current global ideology of de-subjectivization more appropriate to a post-modern, corporate state than to a modern nation state. (258)

For Vilarós, Francoist Spain was a "modern" society, insofar as it was founded on the grand narrative of imperial Spain. Thus, as the rest of the world witnessed the collapse of grand narratives, the dictatorship rooted itself on them, thereby establishing "the Spanish difference." Postmodern production eschews this "uniqueness" or exoticism (the Spain of bulls and beaches) and locates its plots in a de-historicized Spain, similar to any other European country. This is the case, for example, of Lucía Etxebarria's *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas* [*Love, Curiosity, Prozac and Doubt*] or Ray Loriga's *Días extraños* [*Strange Days*], which are polyphonic works in which the readers must put together the stories' pieces. According to Vilarós, the boom of "lite," fragmented and polyphonic literature, with stories about young urbanites unaware of the country's totalitarian past, characterizes 1990s Spain.

El artefacto perverso, but also *Un largo silencio* [*A Long Silence*] (1997) and *Cuerda de presas* [*String of Women Prisoners*] (2005), published before the memory boom in comics, resort to kaleidoscopic aesthetics, not only because of postmodern influences, but also to express the characters' trauma. According to Gonzalo Navajas in *Teoría y práctica de la novela española postmoderna* [*Theory and Practice of the Spanish Postmodern Novel*], "trauma fiction" is a trend within postmodernist fiction, where the postmodern novel "se opone a un concepto orgánico de la obra y niega la existencia de un orden lineal y una unidad definida del texto" ["opposes an organic concept of the [literary] work and denies the existence of a linear order and a well-defined unity of the text" (15). Recounting trauma is essentially difficult because, as Cathy Caruth states, "it cannot be placed within the schemes of prior knowledge," and "the event cannot become… a

'narrative memory' that is integrated into a completed story of the past" (*Recapturing the Past*, 153). The complete story is torn to pieces and the paradox of fiction trauma lies in the attempt to represent those pieces in their own disorder, since the full picture is not as important as the cracks between the pieces, those gaps that signal a breakage with what is known. This is why, as explained by Anne Whitehead (2004), "novelists have frequently found that the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterized by repetition and indirection"; i.e., it is through stylistic features such as "intertextuality, repetition and a dispersed or fragmented narrative voice" that stories "mirror at a formal level the effects of trauma" (3).

El artefacto perverso, *Un largo silencio* and *Cuerda de presas* resort to fragmentation, hybridity and polyphony in their effort to represent trauma. "Trauma fiction" contributes to the deconstruction not only of Francoist historiography, but also of the triumphant discourse that views the Transition as a community integration process in which the survivors of Francoist repression found their space in the neoliberal democracy. That is, if, in general, 1990s Spanish postmodern production goes against the Francoist grand narrative of the imperial, "great and free" Spain, in comics fragmentation also represents the traumatized mind, halfway between compulsive memory and healing oblivion. The protagonists of *El artefacto perverso*, *Cuerda de presas* and *Un largo silencio* oscillate between acceptance of Francoist discourse, in order to survive the postwar repression, and attempts to oppose the regime. Recovering these experiences during the country's democratic period is not only a reaction to the homogenization imposed by the dictatorship's discourse, but also to the homogenization sought by the Transition Culture. The subjects described in the comics suffer a traumatic misadaptation that arises from the need to remain silent, either during the postwar repression or in democratic Spain. If those memories cannot be told, if a

narrative cannot be generated, those painful experiences remain shattered, and this is how they are represented in the comics. It is up to the reader to put together the pieces of memories that do not fit in with the triumphant Transition discourse.

The marginality of comics, especially during the 1990s, before the historical memory boom, facilitated the reproduction of marginal voices, which anonymously rise as a collective voice. Amador Fernández-Savater uses the notion of "políticas de emancipación" ["emancipation politics"] to describe those fictions that create characters, metaphors and stories that allow to express social dissent through a collective voice. Following this philosopher, Xavier Dapena explains that "Enrique Montero, in *El artefacto perverso*, and Francisco Gallardo, in *Un largo silencio*" – as well as the women in *Cuerda de presas*, whom I will also mention here – "are characters constructed as devices of enunciation possessed of the collective potential of the anonymous" (2019, 117). These comics' fractal structure provides a prism of perspectives and voices from which to configure a collective discourse that calls into question the pillars of the Transition viewed as a period of consensus, reconciliation and progress.

El artefacto perverso

Felipe Hernández Cava and Federico del Barrio's *El artefacto perverso* began to be published in 1994, in the magazine *Totem* and was compiled as an album in 1996. Among other awards, it received the prestigious Prize for the Best Work and the Best Script at the Barcelona Comics Fair in 1997.[22]

[22]https://web.archive.org/web/20170311053146/http://comic-35.ficomic.com/premios-ediciones-anteriores.cfm.

The protagonist of *El artefacto perverso* is Enrique, who survives by drawing graphic humor strips for newspapers in postwar Madrid. During the Republic, he was a high school teacher but, because of his past as an opponent of the newly established Fascist regime, drawing comics is now one of the few jobs available to him. His wife, Josita, is a good housekeeper, committed to the same values, who supports him in spite of their poverty. One day, he is visited by a man called Ayala, who takes him to a safe house to meet some old Communist Party acquaintances he had not seen for a long time. Once there, he is commissioned to find Matías Bozal, a former comrade who has decided to act on his own. Even though he shares their same objectives, loyalty and submission to the Communist hierarchy take precedence over the anti-Fascist struggle. Enrique finds himself in a vulnerable position and a moral dilemma: it is already hard enough for him to survive in the Francoist regime as a victim of reprisals, but he cannot afford to make any enemies in his now clandestine former party. He understands that Bozal and the party have the same objectives and does not agree with the order he has received. Nonetheless, he agrees to meet with Bozal and turn him in to ensure his own physical integrity and avoid additional problems.

Through a common friend, a former comrade who now works as a shoe shiner, he finds Bozal. At the same time, the police have recruited a double agent who passes on information about all Communist Party operations. The agent finds out that the shoe shiner knows where Bozal is and the police have him under surveillance. When the shoe shiner takes Enrique to Bozal, the police attack them, kill the shoe shiner and fatally wound Bozal, but he and Enrique manage to escape. Enrique takes him to his house and tries to cure him but, without adequate medical care, death is only a matter of days. When Bozal gets better and is able to stand up, he asks Enrique to take him to a marble warehouse. Bozal knows he is going to die, either murdered by the police or by his former party comrades, but he is not willing to die alone, so he plans a final attack against

a minister and other members of the regime. Enrique agrees to drop him off at an old factory, where they say goodbye. Waiting at the factory is Fermín, who presumably works for Bozal, but is actually the double agent also working for the police. Fermín sets up a trap and the police kill both of them. The last panel shows Enrique and Josita looking out the window, with Enrique whispering the word "fin" ["the end"] as a conclusion to both his last adventure comic and the story we have just read.

In *El artefacto perverso*, Enrique is forced to turn in a man to a certain death, with the ensuing dilemma. The comic has a black-and-white aesthetics that relishes the ethical shades of gray. Its characters move in the shadows, like the members of the clandestine party and the corrupt police officers. Among all the bad options, Enrique can only choose to forget so as to stay alive, without any hopes for or efforts to change the system. The *noir* subgenre is characterized by moral ambivalence. In Spain, detective literature, which witnessed a revival in postmodern literature in general, underwent a boom after the dictator's death.[23] The investigation that drives the plot imitates the recovery of historical memory, since it has to do with putting together the pieces of a puzzle concealed by the official discourse.

[23] In "On the Waterfront: Realism Meets the Postmodern in Post-Franco Spain's 'Novela Negra'", Claudia Schaefer-Rodríguez shows that *noir* novels were used "as a device for portraying many of the diversities, ambiguities, and uncertainties of postmodern civilization into which Spanish society transits after 1975." Teresa M. Vilarós views detective and *noir* novels as a rejection of globalizing narratives, intimately linked to sociopolitical issues ("Los monos del desencanto español", 219). In her opinion, "they, too, reflect the new processes of de-historicization, de-nationalization, and de-subjectivization at work at the global level. They are truly postmodern texts, part and parcel of a process of symbolic and economic de-territorialization" ("The Novel Beyond Modernity" 256). Unlike this postmodern literature of rejection, *El artefacto perverso* and the comics discussed in this chapter choose to address historiography and memory. Although they represent the complex set of forces that managed to silence the protagonists, their reelaboration of the past from the standpoint of the victors shows their interest in memory even during the 1990s. From the comics' marginal position, especially at a time when the national industry was in decline, they are free to discuss topics that as yet do not appear in public discourse, at least not as strongly as they will in the 21st century. The fragmentation and polyphony of voices also reflect a traumatic approach to history and the past, especially in Jordi's story.

The clarity of the comic created by Enrique, which adds a new diegetic level, stands out in that claustrophobic atmosphere (Fig. 4). Enrique makes two types of drawings: single graphic

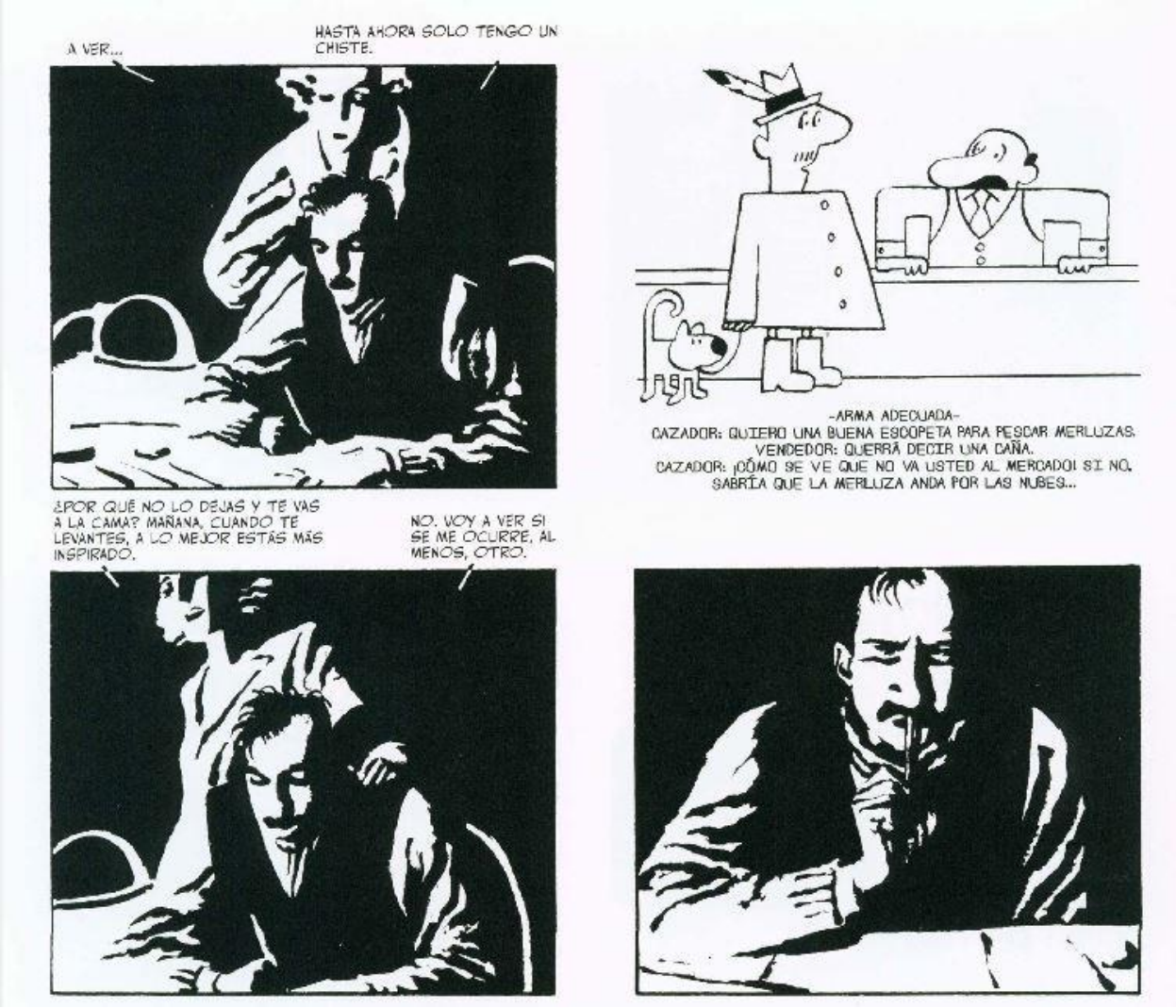

Figure 4: Funnies bring clarity in El artefacto perverso

humor panels and a youth comic. The graphic humor panels contain daily life jokes like those that can still be found in newspapers or weeklies such as *The New Yorker*. The youth comic is longer and operates at various levels, but it basically highlights the role of comics and other mass media as propaganda of the regime. Towards the last pages of the work, Enrique says, “Lo único que quiero es vivir, ¿es eso egoísmo, Josita? Ver pasar los días desde la ventana, trabajando horas y

horas en hacer unos tebeos que luego leerán unos chavales que creen que el mundo se divide en buenos y malos y que el bien siempre alcanza una recompensa" ["All I want is to live, is that selfish, Josita? To watch the days go by from the window, working hours and hours to make comics that will be read by kids who believe the world is divided into good guys and bad guys and that doing what's right is always rewarded"] (Fig. 5). Comics as mass consumption products for the

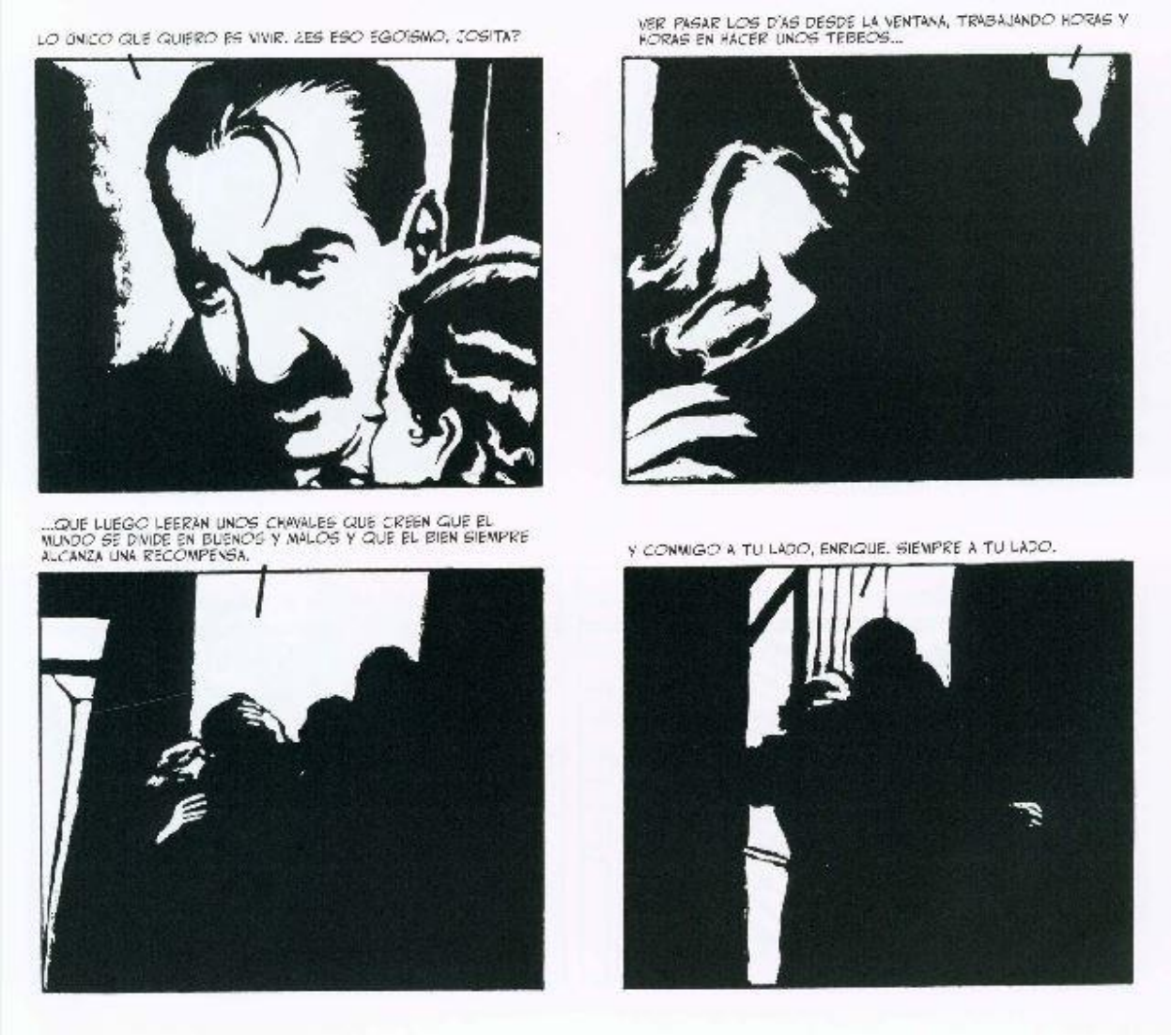

Figure 5: All I want is to live

escapist enjoyment of children and youngsters is in contrast with the comic that contains Enrique's, which depicts the moral contradictions and dilemmas of a victim of repression like him. In

children's comics, there are good guys and bad guys, heroes and villains. In the comic that contains Enrique's, there are no heroes and evil is nothing other than making decisions with conflicting objectives. The contrast between them vindicates the potential of comics as a form of artistic expression, while critiquing the dictatorship's indoctrination of young readers.

Enrique's creation narrates a simple story. The wicked Belial has "the perverse artifact" of the title, a weapon capable of erasing the memory of all those who fall into his hands. Without memory, no one remembers who they are and Belial thus achieves "un mundo de esclavos" ["a world of slaves"] (Fig. 6). Once he has erased the memory of the mayor, the chief inspector and

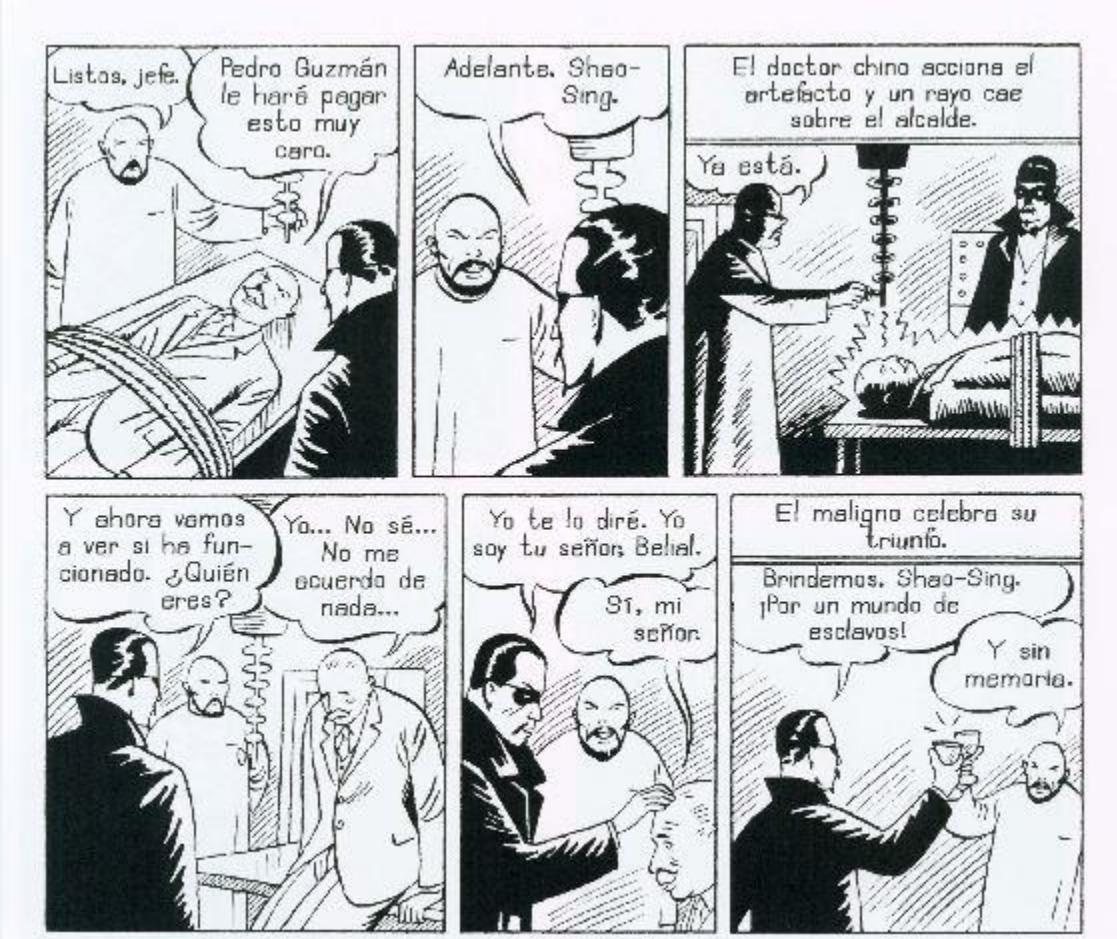

Figure 6: A World of slaves

the judges, he captures the comic's hero, Pedro Guzmán, but the latter manages to escape and destroys everything, including his enemy. In the end, the hero triumphs and the city is saved.

This story operates at various symbolic levels. It can be considered an ironic comment on the triumph of oblivion as a means of survival during the dictatorship for victims like Enrique. The wicked Belial's effort to erase memory and enslave people is also reminiscent of Franco's efforts to erase the memory of the Republic and those who defended it. It can also be interpreted as the Communist Party's wish to eliminate subversive elements like Bozal. In all cases, the children's comic constitutes an ironic reflection on the value of memory.

At a given moment, the adventure comic subverts the diegetic hierarchy and "invades" Enrique's and Bozal's narrative plane (Fig. 7). During the persecution and Bozal's deadly wound,

Figure 7: Graphic Metafiction

the escape transforms into a scene of the adventure comic and we see the characters drawn in the same style as Pedro Guzmán. According to Brian McHale, metafiction is a way to elucidate the nature of the real, a literature of ontology. In this regard, Enrique experiences reality "as one's fictionalized articulation of nonrational sense experience" (McHale, 54). Patricia Waugh maintains that "la metaficción no abandona [el mundo real] para sumergirse en los placeres narcisistas de la

imaginación" ["metafiction does not abandon [the real world] to immerse itself in the narcissistic pleasures of the imagination"] (46), but examines the relationships between textual form and social reality to unmask and demythify the power structures operating in contemporary society. Reducing the escape and the deadly trap to an adventure scene subverts and ridicules the value systems that entrap Enrique.

After those instants, the two styles once again occupy different spaces. In the end, the

Figure 8: The End

children's comic and Enrique's story present two opposite approaches to memory. Enrique has

turned in Bozal to a certain death and has gone home to his wife. He does not know what happened to Bozal and does not want to know. He just wants a quiet life, to forget it all and stay away from politics. Once he is home safe with his wife, Enrique looks out the window and, relieved, says "fin" ["the end"]. That same page intersperses panels from the children's comic where the hero is buried after destroying the oblivion machine and saving his own memory. However, in the last panel, he rises from the debris with his memory intact and in the corner of the panel we read "fin" (Fig. 8). The contrast between both endings makes it clear that the preservation of memory is an illusion, a fairy tale that is not applicable to "reality." In Enrique's story, the characters who have preserved memory and continued the struggle against the dictatorship end up dead. Symbolically, *El artefacto perverso* shows that there is no room for those who personify the memory of a different order and the only way to survive is by forgetting. The rest is just blather.

There is an additional parallel story line, Jordi's story, which offers a reflection on the relationship between history and memory. Jordi is a Republican ex-combatant who is responsible for the transportation of the Prado Museum paintings back to Spain after the war. Bozal and Jordi meet at the Argelès concentration camp and, although everyone ignores Jordi because they think he's crazy, Bozal and Amorós[24] take care of him and accompany him until his death. Jordi speaks in a cryptic manner, personifying the paintings as if the characters represented were alive, but his words reveal his extensive knowledge of the history of Spanish art. For example, Jordi is concerned that Goya's Mamelukes "querían abandonar esa prisión de madera" ["wanted to leave that wooden prison"], i.e., the wagon, "y reunidos con sus caballos, que viajaban en otra unidad, escapar al galope de unos aviones alemanes que podían hacer acto de presencia" ["and, after joining their

[24] Amorós is the protagonist of *Las memorias de Amorós* [*The Memoirs of Amorós*], also created by Felipe Hernández Cava and Federico del Barrio, which precedes *El artefacto perverso*.

horses, which traveled in a different unit, gallop away from the German planes that might show up"], referring to Nazi airplanes (Fig. 9). Jordi goes on to tell Bozal that "así es la historia, Matías:

Figure 9: The Mameluks

Las más de las veces, la trompeta de Clío toca con sordina" ["that's how history is, Matías: Most of the time Clio plays the trumpet with a mute"]. Clio is the Greek muse of History, the daughter of the goddess of memory, Mnemosyne, and Zeus. Clio plays the trumpet to announce her story, but the mute Jordi attributes to her obviously reduces the volume and changes the timbre, i.e.,

Figure 10: The dwarf prevented me from doing it

forces him to tell the story surreptitiously. This is confirmed when, in subsequent meetings, Jordi finishes telling Bozal why he couldn't blow up the train. In his delirium, he says that a painting by Velázquez, that of Don Diego de Acedo, did not allow him to – "el enano me lo impidió" ["the dwarf prevented me from doing it"] (Fig. 10). At this point in the comic, the Prado paintings are represented in a much more realistic manner than Jordi and Bozal, in another example of ontological subversion, like when Pedro Guzmán's comic "draws" Enrique's and Bozal's reality. Jordi, already reduced to black lines scattered over the white panel, contrasts with Don Diego, who

is drawn in more detail and shows Jordi some sheets of paper. “En esas hojas estaba escrita la historia de Argelès … y la tuya Matías… y la mía… lo que iba a sucedernos… hojas y hojas en blanco” [“These sheets had the written story of Argelès... and yours, Matías... and mine... what was going to happen to us... a set of blank sheets”]. As stated by Pedro Pérez del Solar (2014), Don Diego’s text is “una especie de oráculo; memoria del futuro. Ese futuro es un vacío para los que perdieron la guerra. No hay destino para ellos, solo esfumarse, desaparecer; no quedaría nada de ellos… Esas páginas en blanco, también interpelan al lector contemporáneo, lo obligan a constatar que esas páginas siguen vacías” [“a sort of oracle; a memory of the future. That future is a void for those who lost the war. There is no future for them, only to vanish, disappear; nothing would remain of them... Those blank pages also interpellate contemporary readers, they force them to corroborate that those pages are still blank”] (253). Indeed, Clio’s trumpet is played with a mute because the pages of history erase the existence of the Republican combatants, but the memory is alive and is transmitted from Jordi to Bozal, from Bozal to Enrique, and from Enrique to the readers of *El artefacto perverso*. Thus, in an ironic twist, as in the metafictional exercises mentioned above, the readers have access to what Enrique “forgot” and it is up to them to take a stance on memory.

El artefacto perverso is a polyphonic work in which each of the characters establishes a discourse about memory. Bozal refuses to forget and this is why he cannot live inside the story’s logic, but he uses his death as a suicidal attack, thereby transforming it into a heroic act. The memories Bozal cannot erase are not only those related to his political struggle, but also to Jordi’s case. In their deathbeds, both Jordi and Bozal are devastated by their memories and insist on transmitting them so that they do not die with them. Jordi dies crazy, devoured by his memories, regretting not having blown up the train that returned the Prado works to the Fascists. In the face

of Jordi's experience, Bozal decides to transform his death into a final attack against the dictatorship. And, in the face of both of their deaths, Enrique decides to survive. The three characters' perspectives, together with the children's comic's discourse, make up a choral portrait of memory.

Due to its fragmented structure, *El artefacto perverso* requires the readers' involvement – that, working as detectives, they put the pieces of the puzzle together. In carrying out this exercise, the readers actively participate in the reconstruction of memory. Although the ending is defeatist and justifies the fact that a fictional character like Enrique chooses oblivion, and although memory (in comics or any other form of expression) was not a key theme in the 1990s, *El artefacto perverso* represents an approach to collective memory. For Xavier Dapena, following Amador Fernández-Savater, "these characters transcend their own experience through their testimony and take on the potentiality of collective representation" ("Shadows have no voice", 119). Even though they are drawn as marginal characters who move in the shadows of the *noir* genre, they are not exceptions – they all share a common past. Using postmodern, polyphonic and detective genre aesthetics, memory is reconstructed within the context of constitutionally-imposed oblivion.

The widely acclaimed *El artefacto perverso* is coetaneous with *Un largo silencio* [*A Long Silence*] (1997), which I analyze in Chapter Two, and had a direct influence on *Cuerda de presas* (2005), which I analyze in Chapter Four. It is important to note the connections between the three, because they reflect similar attitudes and aesthetics, typical of comics published before the 2000s.

Un largo silencio ([1997] 2012) is a pivotal text, probably the most eclectic among those analyzed in this chapter, and the first to give testimony of the generation that lived through the dictatorship. This is why it is included in this chapter and also in the one devoted to postmemory. *Un largo silencio* combines photographs, illustrations and fragments narrated in the form of a

comic. Miguel Gallardo created this work to offer the testimony of his father, Francisco Gallardo Sarmiento, who talks about his childhood, his youth during the Second Republic (1931-1939), his vicissitudes as a Republican officer during the Spanish Civil War and his struggle for survival after the conflict. It is a first-person account of the war from a very critical standpoint, as Gallardo sides with the Republicans, but describes episodes in which his army bombs its own combatants due to its monumental lack of organization. In fact, he could be considered as a sort of real Enrique from *El artefacto perverso,* because Francisco Gallardo adapts to the Francoist regime as a means of survival. Miguel Gallardo says that his father "se tuvo que convertir en una sombra durante mucho tiempo, y las sombras no tienen voz" ["had to become a shadow, and shadows have no voice"]; i.e., he resorted to the same strategy as Enrique – faking oblivion and remaining silent.

Un largo silencio was published in 1997, just one year after the compilation of *El artefacto perverso,*[25] but, whereas the latter received the Prize for Best Comic at the Barcelona Comics Festival in 1997, *Un largo silencio* went unnoticed until its reedition in 2012, well into the boom of graphic novels about historical memory. "La gente poco menos que lo tiró a la basura" ["People pretty much threw it in the garbage"], the author explained (2013). By then, he had become a consolidated, reputed artist, which confirms the lack of interest in the subject of memory in 1997. The debate around historical memory barely emerged in 2000, three years after the publication of *Un largo silencio*; this, together with the absence of a market for graphic novels in Spain, was a determining factor in its disappointing reception. Its pioneering hybrid format was not understood at the time and the publishing scene was not receptive to a cultural artifact halfway between literature, illustrated book and comic.

[25] The first chapter of *El artefacto perverso* appeared in 1994 in *Top Cómics* and was compiled in a single volume in 1996.

In addition to its hybrid aesthetics, *Un largo silencio* is noteworthy because, thematically, it articulates an approach to memory that highlights individual survival, as Enrique's in *El artefacto perverso*. From the beginning, Francisco Gallardo describes himself as an apolitical man who has no interest in social issues. While in combat, he establishes alliances with Republicans and Fascists, but does not commit ideologically to either side. All he wants is to leave the front and survive "para conocer a mi madre" ["to meet my mother"] (83), as his son, the book's illustrator and editor, says. This "equidistant" attitude, which I will discuss in more depth in Chapter Two, reflects the perspective of a large part of 1990s cultural production. Francisco Gallardo, as many characters of the nineties literature, is indifferent to the country's political dynamics and he describes the Civil War almost as a surprising event which he just wants to flee. There is no doubt that this perspective is very different from the mission of justice and symbolic reparation pursued by *El arte de volar* and the comics published thereafter. What characterizes both *Un largo silencio* and *El artefacto perverso* is detachment and non-belief.

Cuerda de presas (2005) addresses the traumatic experiences of female political prisoners during the Francoist dictatorship. It is a choral account, made up of short stories, that was influenced by Hernández Cava's style in *El artefacto perverso*; in fact, Hernández Cava wrote the preface to *Cuerda de presas*, where he states that "cada trazo y cada frase, cada silencio y cada mancha surgen de los dominios de una visualidad que quiere persistir en nuestra retina" ["every stroke and every sentence, every silence and every spot emerges from the domains of a visuality intent on persisting in our retina"] (7). *Cuerda de presas* describes the ineffable and conveys trauma in both thematic and formal terms. The *chiaroscuro* aesthetics, with graphic references to Picasso, Goya and centuries of Spanish art, is common to both comics. For example, in the last story, "¿Qué escribir?" ["What to write?"], the light bulbs are drawn exactly like those in Picasso's

Guernica. This short story closes the book and illustrates the influence of *El artefacto perverso*. In "¿Qué escribir?", a woman called Mercedes, who is in the Palma de Mallorca prison, receives a pencil and paper that the prisoners have managed to smuggle in. They want Mercedes, the only one who can read and write, to communicate the abuse they suffer. Mercedes confronts the blank page and mentally reviews the numerous facts she can communicate but, in the end, decides to leave it blank; unable to understand her behavior, the woman who had given it to her concludes that she is crazy. In *El artefacto perverso*, Jordi also leaves blank pages and says, "en esas hojas

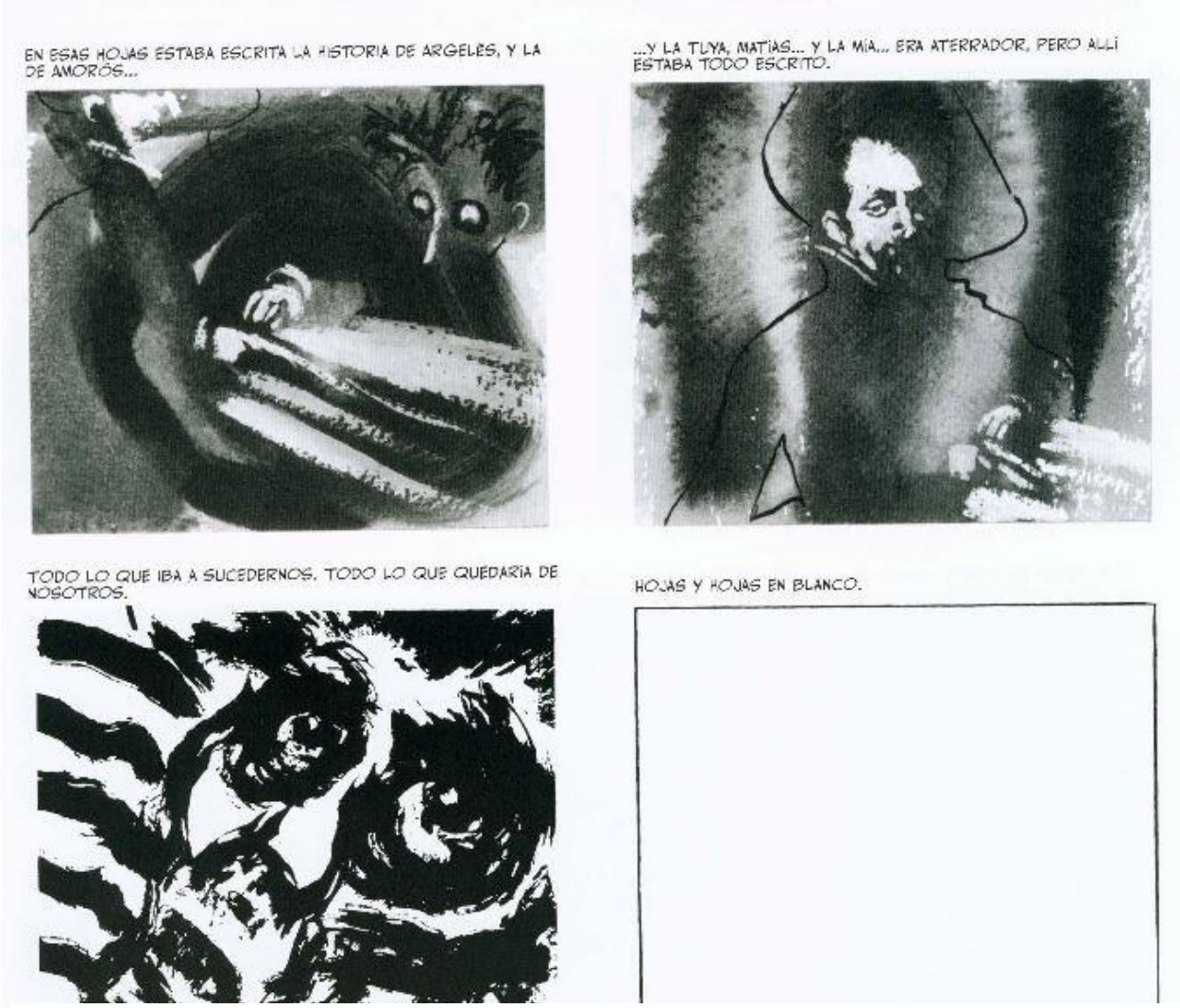

Figure 11: Blank sheets

estaba escrita la historia de… lo que iba a sucedernos… hojas y hojas en blanco" ["those sheets had the written story of... what was going to happen to us... a set of blank sheets"] (Fig. 11). Jordi is the most traumatized character in *El artefacto perverso* – he talks to Velázquez's paintings and is crazy, consumed by his memories and by guilt. In *Cuerda de presas*, Mercedes' prison mate thinks "[e]sta mujer está loca" ["[t]his woman is crazy"], although Mercedes has a self-assured appearance and does not seem to be as distressed as Jordi.

Aesthetically, both comics explore the limits of language to convey traumatic experiences through images and art history. Jordi surrounds himself with the Prado paintings and lets them guide his decisions. Titian's Charles V, Goya's Mamelukes, Velázquez's Don Diego de Acedo, among others, communicate with him better than the persons who take care of him and try to talk while he lies delirious in bed. These icons of universal art, which offer a perspective that is centuries apart, seem to soothe Jordi and make him feel less guilty about having allowed the paintings to fall into the Fascists' hands. If "en las hojas estaba escrita la historia… todo lo que quedaría de nosotros" ["those sheets had the written story... all that would remain of us"], the paintings know that there was no point in stopping the train and that it was best to leave the sheets blank. These works of art seem to know that oblivion is inevitable. In "¿Qué escribir?", the lamps (91) are drawn like the bombs in Picasso's *Guernica* and the *chiaroscuro* style imitates Goya's Black Paintings. In *El artefacto perverso*, the paintings are more vivid, more real than Jordi himself, who is blurred into black lines on a white background, like Mercedes' pencil and paper (Fig. 12). Writing makes no sense to her, because "las palabras pierden su significado y se vuelven abstractas" ["words lose their meaning and become abstract"]. Panel after panel, her drawing disintegrates until it is also reduced to mere black lines on a white background. Drawings and

words are blended into a nonsense text, one made up only of lines, which words cannot reach, where only the blank page remains.

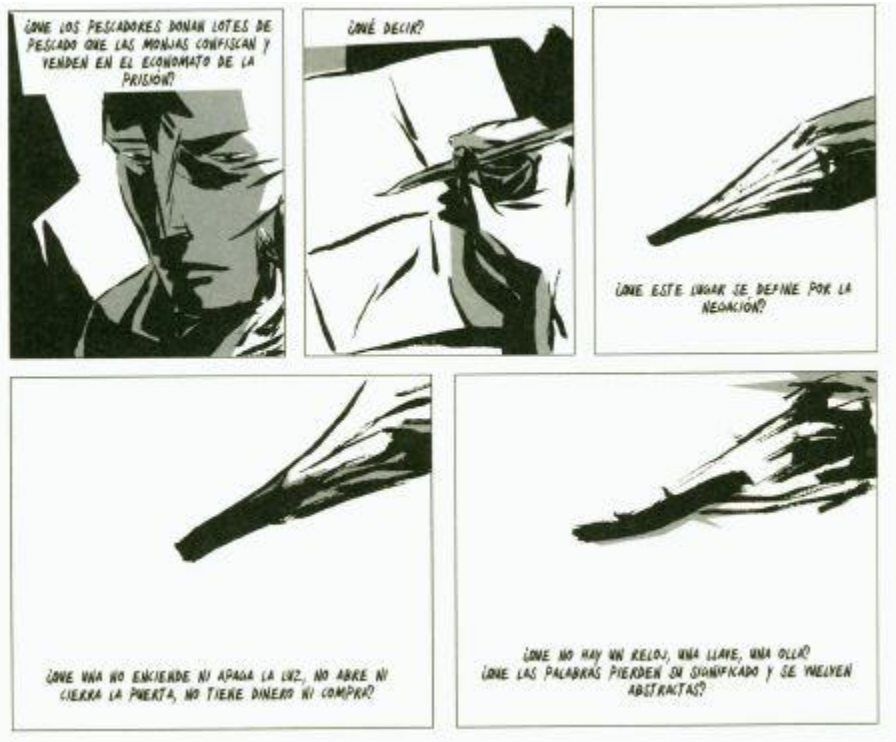

Figure 12: "What to write?" Cuerda de presas

The blank pages also allude to a certain defeatism. For example, the prisoners know that they receive outside help, that the fishermen donate part of their product for them, but the nuns keep it. Asking for help on a piece of paper will not change their situation. People like the fishermen, outside the prison, are aware of the injustice but unable to prevent it. Most comics published before 2009 describe the network of forces created by the censorship system to silence any positive reference to the democracy destroyed by the *coup d'état*. *Cuerda de presas*, *El artefacto perverso* and *Un largo silencio* justify the victims' silence as a means of survival and try to offer a reliable portrait of Francoist repression. The blank sheets foster the readers' participation. *Cuerda de presas* demands a transversal reading, one that puts the pieces together to generate the coherence that the traumatized subjects cannot find. "What to write," Mercedes asks the readers,

who hold everything that Mercedes did "not" write in their hands. Fidel Martínez and Jorge García produced *Cuerda de presas* as a reaction to the testimonies they read about female prisoners during Francoism. Perhaps the real question is not "what to write," but "what to draw."

The elaboration of a discourse about memory from the marginality of 1990s comics required coming up with a form of representation in line with the contradictory, minority nature of the voices of memory. Collage and hybridity are in accordance with the postmodern desire to deconstruct inherited discourses, primarily the grand narrative of Francoism and the grand narrative of the Transition. In regard to memory, the aim is to communicate the paradoxical relationship between memory and oblivion – the tendency to erase memories which only leads to their compulsive return. This repression creates a traumatic relationship that, in comics, is expressed through fragmented narratives, like puzzles that reflect the subjects' inability to elaborate a coherent, healing account. The chaos of voices, experiences and memories configure a collective subject that expresses an account opposed to the triumphalist discourse of the Transition.

Chapter 2. Their trauma is my trauma: Postmemorial accounts in Spanish comics

¡Otra maldita novela sobre la guerra civil! , that is, "Another d*mn novel about the Spanish Civil War!" is the title for Isaac Rosa's 2007 novel. Rosa's publication humorously addresses the saturation point that the cultural production on memory in Spain had reached by the second half of the 2000s. For Jo Labanyi (2008), the memory *boom* had "abated" (119) in literature and even if the protests for the 2008 economic crisis would reopen old wounds, literary production did not equal the *boom* of the end of the nineties and beginning of 2000s. In a general climate of exhaustion, finding new ways to address the traumatic past seemed difficult. This makes even more surprising that comics, "a form once considered pure junk" (Chute 2008, 452) would be the medium that would revitalize the social concerns about justice and reparation. "Nobody expected the Spanish comics" – if I may play with the Monty Python's infamous joke – least of all that they would continue, expand, transform and pioneer some of the most creative approaches to historical memory. In this chapter, I focus on their key contribution, their incorporation of testimony through fiction, and I explore the historical context that has facilitated their critical acclaim.

As chapter one exposed, the commitment to recover the testimonies and experiences of those who were prosecuted for political reasons or who simply survived thirty-six years of fascist dictatorship was already but timidly present in comics. Young artists privileged this medium in the first years of the Transition to express their opposition to the dictatorship and to imagine a more radical rupture from the Fascist past than what the Culture of Transition finally provided. There were comics about memory, which reflected on the need but also on the burden of memory. However, the decay of the industry in the nineties and the general disenchantment of young artists with a democracy that did not manage to cut ties with the regime, slowly relegated

memory in Spanish comics to a very minor topic. In addition, while the boom of memory in literature flourished in the beginning of the 2000s, comics were still recovering from the economic turmoil of the nineties.

However, the publication of Antonio Altarriba and Kim's *El arte de volar* [The Art of Flying] in 2009 experienced an unprecedented success that set the tone for later productions. Neither Altarriba nor Kim expected that reception. They simply thought it would be just another comic on the Civil War that only readership used to comics for adults would purchase[26]. Several socioeconomic circumstances contributed to its recognition. The Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory drew public attention towards the topic of historical memory. Since the year 2000, they had been ceaselessly working on the reburial of thousands of Republicans scattered on mass graves. Although they have not been the first ones, with some relatives doing it under much less favorable conditions in the first years of the Transition (Aguilar and Ramírez-Barat, 2019), they did articulate a collective, growing effort. It started as a private initiative, when Emilio Silva and Santiago Macias rescued the bodies of their own relatives. Soon others asked them for help to find the remains of their own deceased and little by little, interest extended around the country. They struggled with the Administration for almost a decade to receive public funding for a service that the State should have been providing all along. With the passing of the 2007 Law of Historical Memory, they started receiving public funds to continue their work, which drew media's attention to the close relation between the past and the present, justice and reparation. The 2008 economic crisis triggered an unprecedented interest in the historical past. In this moment of global awakening and criticism against savage capitalism, with the Occupy Wall

[26] Personal interview with Antonio Altarriba, July 18, 2021.

Street, the Arab Spring and many other massive protests taking public spaces all over the world, Spain looked back to their historical traumas. The images of old couples evicted from homes where they had lived for decades, the skyrocketing unemployment and the general deterioration of the welfare system ignited a massive response on the streets. On these mobilizations, the present concerns were linked to a faulty Transition that had inherited and perpetuated structural dynamics from Francoism that ultimately resulted into a governing oligarchy completely disconnected from the problems of the working class (Yusta 2014; Quílez and Rueda 2017). For Paloma Aguilar (2008), the Spanish case proves that the legal and administrative structures set during a transitional period do not necessarily determine its progress. Subsequent legal, economic and social reforms like the ones implemented by the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory have helped understand the kind of social project needed in the country to end the cycle of traumatic pain inflicted by decades of silence, marginalization and exclusion.

While some comic artists recorded in their notebooks the protests that started in Madrid, the growing number of comics about the Civil War and the dictatorship developed a profound analysis of the tensions that surfaced in the economic crisis. For Cameron and McGlade (2020), following Sarah Ahmed, the May 15 in Madrid was a historic "snap", that is, a discontinuity with "an accumulated history" (181). Furthermore, "the 'dynamic transfers' between the Transition and the financial crisis, are illustrative of what Michael Rothberg has described as 'multidirectional memory', or as a confrontation between conflicting histories in the public sphere." (180) Using the comics aesthetic particularities, Cameron and McGlade describe it as a historical gutter. In comics, gutters are the blank spaces in between panels. To read a comic is to imagine what is in between those gutters, what is hidden from panel to panel, to make the story progress. The May 15 movement, as a snap in time, projected present and past concerns in a

productive blank space, in a historic gutter in between panels of events. Indeed, this symbolic gutter in time articulates intergenerational demands, concerns that extend beyond the 2008 economic crisis.

By making the past visible, comics operate as a form of political "dissent" against the triumphant discourse of the Transition. Xavier Dapena (2015), following Rancière's concept of "dissent", considers that the May 15 configures a new collective character of political fiction that helps explore modes of representation in graphic novels (84). For Iván Pintor (2020) it is equally important to "attender al enorme volumen de comics sobre el pasado … surgida de la Transición y catalizada por la crisis … a través de nociones como el disenso" (263) [pay attention to the vast number of comics about the past…originated from the Transition and catalyzed by the crisis … through notions like dissent]. May 15 mobilized a society that was heavily traumatized and who had found it almost impossible to express their pain.

The intergenerational dialogue of Antonio Altarriba and Kim's *El arte de volar*, Francisco and Miguel Gallardo's *Un largo silencio* (1997) [A Long Silence] and Ana Penyas's *Estamos todas bien* (2017) [We Women are All Fine] addressed a pressing reality: the disappearance of the testimonies and memories of the generations that survived the Civil War and the dictatorship. This has also contributed to the multiplication of titles around the topic, in a rush to secure and communicate the testimonies passed on to them. I argue here that postmemory has provided the template to incorporate testimony within the comics, both in Spain and abroad. Incorporating the personal accounts of survivors, that is, opening up a space through comics for their own voices, has been key to acknowledge comics' potential in addressing the most traumatic chapters of Spain's history.

One of the reasons that has facilitated critical and public attention to Spanish production on postmemory is the relation to groundbreaking masterpiece *Maus*, by Art Spiegelman. The dialogue between Artie and his father about the Holocaust, and the metafictional approach to comics creation in *Maus*, allowed for one of the most sophisticated explorations of the transmission of trauma through generations. Spanish comics extend in different and innovative ways the approach initiated by Spiegelman, thus connecting different comics traditions and mnemonic traumas over time and space.

The historical significance of the 2008 economic crisis protests and the incorporation of collective memory into public debates, especially since the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory initiated their work, have been key to appreciate the contribution of Altarriba and Kim's *El arte de volar* in 2009. All these circumstances, together with the familiarity that Spiegelman's *Maus* had already created with the topic of testimony and postmemory in the comics industry, paved the way for a successful reception of *El arte de volar* and subsequent testimonial comics. In fact, the only other antecedent, Gallardo and Gallardo's *Un largo silencio* (1997), which had received very little attention, was successfully published again in 2012 and Ana Penyas' *Estamos todas bien* (2017) was celebrated with the National Comics Prize for her groundbreaking approach to women's testimonies.

The need to know felt by the younger generations, together with more than two decades of political and economic stability, opened a space for questions, dialogues, memories and demands that had remained latent since the postwar and could finally come to the surface. In this sense, I believe that testimonies involve a shared recovery, a collective effort that locates individual cases and accounts in two coordinates: one vertical – legacy –, and one horizontal –

social cohesion. Intergenerational communication in comics emphasizes polyphonic accounts and impels readers to actively participate in the recovery of historical memory.

Testimony and postmemory

"The era of the witness," as Annette Wieviorka termed the period after the Eichmann trial in Israel (1961), revealed the significance of first-person accounts as a tool for justice that has been essential in various international trials. From the Latin "testis," which means both to know and to see, "testimony" implies a presence in a space and time, i.e., that the subject has had access to an important event that was intended to remain hidden. The *OED* defines "testimony" as "[p]ersonal or documentary evidence or attestation in support of a fact or statement; hence, any form of evidence or proof," and as "open attestation or acknowledgment; confession, profession" (*OED* 2022). Testimonies back up and legitimize the existence of a set of events, and this capacity to certify certain facts separate them from fiction and literature. The Eichmann trial took place fifteen years after the Holocaust; however, the recovery of historical memory in Spain had to wait until the 2000s, that is, almost eighty years.

The abundant literature on testimonies of the Holocaust has posed a set of vital questions about the role of individual and collective experience, memory, silence, trauma, truth, history and even affects. Testimonies reflect not only the value of what is told, but also of the role of the listener or receiver, a decisive element whose existence and attitude can make a victim decide whether to talk or remain silent. Together with trauma studies, the exploration of testimonies has deepened our understanding of survivors' and victims' memories, as well as of various forms of political violence.

Dori Laub, a pioneering researcher of testimonial accounts, illustrates the priceless value of testimonies for history, psychology and even literature with an anecdote (Felman and Laub, 59). At a conference on education, Laub and a group of historians watched a number of taped testimonies. In one of them, a woman said she had witnessed the explosion of four chimneys in Auschwitz during an attempted riot. The historians quickly identified the event and recommended discarding her testimony as inaccurate, since there was only one chimney at the camp, not four. However, they paid no attention to what her silences, pauses, rhythm and non-verbal communication conveyed, which went well beyond factual evidence. Dori Laub observed that the woman, who had been testifying in whispers, raised her voice to describe that particular event with great excitement. For Laub, that gradual shift expressed the ineffable, a possibility beyond logic. That woman was not speaking about a detail, but about a "discovery"– that it was possible to fight back inside the concentration camp (62).

For Laub and Shoshana Felman, the "bursting open" of the frame is the key element in testimonies. Asserting, telling both what was experienced and what was seen, entails, according to Felman, "break[ing] through the framework" (Felman and Laub 48) of what is expected. Even in the poetry of Holocaust survivors like Paul Celan we find a strong breakage of language and perception. Celan was fluent in four languages, but he chose his mother tongue because using German for his poetry was a way to neutralize horror and destroy Nazism from within. Using the perpetrators' language to put it at the service of the survivors requires a breakage, a total restructuring. "The breakage of the verse" in Celan "enacts the breakage of the world" (Felman 25). Bearing witness is an act of breakage and appropriation.

I have mentioned before that the word testimony comes from the Latin "testis," which means to see and to know. Testifying is describing something that was seen and putting it into

words as an act of truth, certifying that certain events took place. The visual and narrative components of comics operate as a crossroads of iconotextual tensions that have an inexhaustible potential to explore the ethics of testimony. According to Hillary Chute:

> The essential form of comics – its collection of frames – is relevant to its inclination to document. Documentary (as an adjective and a noun) is about the presentation of evidence. In its succession of replete frames, comics calls attention to itself, specifically, as evidence. Comics makes a reader access the unfolding of evidence in the movement of its basic grammar, by aggregating and accumulating frames of information. (2016, 2)

For Chute, the contribution of comics devoted to memory and war lies in their capacity to challenge the invisibility and ineffability of trauma. Comics accept the "risk of representation" to "rethink the dominant tropes of unspeakability, invisibility, and inaudibility that have tended to characterize trauma theory" (2010, 3). The ethics of testimony makes visible what other eyes saw to transgress its own limitations and communicate the unspeakable.

That "risk of representation" also involves a deconstruction of the discourse of domination. As Dori Laub explains in relation to the Nazi genocide, "it was also the very circumstance of being inside the event that made unthinkable the very notion that a witness could exist, that is, someone who could step outside of the coercively totalitarian and dehumanizing frame of reference through which the event could be observed" (Laub and Felman 81). One of the reasons for the almost seventy-year delay in the recovery of memory in Spain has been the difficulty to confront the prevailing discourse in Francoism, which extended to the democratic period. The 1977 Amnesty Law was a *de facto* Pact of Forgetting that operated as a coercive measure against the survivors' and victims' experiences. Speaking was breaking a harmony that

had been very hard to create, which made testimonies undesirable. Testifying entailed breaking a frame of stability, domination and dehumanization all at once.

In this sense, the subsequent generations were essential for the recovery of traumatic memory. Just like it is an innocent child who declares that the Emperor is naked, the generations born without the stigma that led their ancestors to destruction have a very different perspective (Laub 83). They allow themselves to observe life experiences without the guilt, rage, impotence and, above all, shame that the process of dehumanization instilled in the survivors and victims.

Marianne Hirsch coined the term "postmemory," currently one of the most influential concepts in memory studies, to describe the media, diegetic and generational tensions in a comic: Art Spiegelman's *Maus*.[27] Postmemory "is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection" (1992, 22), and represents the process whereby the descendants inherit the trauma from their ancestors. In Spain, the passage of time and the arrival of new generations that had not endured the dictatorship were essential for acknowledging, and attempting to fill in, the historical gap in the social capacity to bear witness. This situation generated a social interlocutor, a witness of the testimony (Laub), in a therapeutic exercise in active listening that provided a framework to understand one's own experience.

The comics studied here describe the personal quest for familial memories in need of rescue and give those memories that trouble their holders a space, much in the same way as relatives search for the bodies buried in mass graves throughout Spain to give them proper burial and allow them to rest in peace. This process helps both the victims and their relatives to close

[27] "For me, it was the three photographs intercalated in Art Spiegelman's *Maus* that first elicited the need for a term that would describe the particular form of belated or inherited memory that I found in Spiegelman's work. Indeed, the phenomenology of photography is a crucial element in my conception of postmemory as it relates to the Holocaust in particular" (Marianne Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory", 107).

the cycle of trauma, and thus extends through several generations. Sebastián Faber (2019) speaks of the descendants' moral obligation and discusses "sus dimensiones éticas desde un punto de vista individual, como un problema que afecta a las relaciones personales entre las generaciones presentes y pasadas" (102) ["its ethical dimensions from an individual standpoint, as a problem that affects the personal relations between present and past generations"]. Nevertheless, as we will see in the testimonial comics, the legacy is part of a communal process that, rather than confronting or creating a division between the different generations, as Faber suggests, integrates them into broader collective structures that include the reader.

The three comics I analyze in this chapter, Francisco Gallardo and Miguel Gallardo's *Un largo silencio*, Antonio Altarriba and Kim's *El arte de volar* and Ana Penyas' *Estamos todas bien*, describe the transmission of a familial testimony. Each one of them delves into different aspects of intergenerational communication but, unlike other platforms that also collect testimonies, such as documentary films, these comics convey experiences through fiction. In this way, the readers access not only the legitimizing first-person discourse, but, most particularly, the transformation that the second generation subjects it to. *Un largo silencio* (1997) is a book-comic that transcribes Miguel Gallardo's father's memories word by word. It was published in 1997, years before the 2008 protests about the global crisis and, therefore, represents a brave, assertive exercise. In this work, there is no dialogue and the son's voice is never heard. Instead, his elaboration of the traumatic past manifests itself through paratextual elements that serve as a loudspeaker to bring the survivor's voice to the foreground. Antonio Altarriba posits a similar movement: the son remains in the background to leave space for the father's experiences, but he presents it as a sort of spiritual possession, a hauntological expression whereby the dead father speaks through the son. Both texts are interesting reflections on the ethics of representation and

transmission that, albeit yielding to the past generation, do not portray the negotiation that both generations must engage in to build a reliable discourse. Both Altarriba and Gallardo received their legacy in written form and, especially in the case of Altarriba, the reconstruction is unidirectional, since the father was already dead. On the contrary, Ana Penyas' *Estamos todas bien* depicts an intergenerational conversation that is an exercise in collective creation, not only between the grandmothers and the granddaughter, but also with the reader. Through dialogue, testimony is negotiated and the creative process becomes a joint exercise to represent the past and the present.

Un largo silencio: Memory's "Frankenstein"

Un largo silencio ([1997] 2012) [*A Long Silence*] is a "book-comic" that contains Francisco Gallardo's (1909-1997) testimony about his childhood immersed in poverty, his youth during the Second Republic (1931-1939), his difficulties as a Republican officer during the Spanish Civil War and his struggle for survival after the conflict. I call it a book-comic (Fig. 13) because it is primarily made up of text, with only some bits narrated in the comics format. It is a first-person narration of the war from a very critical and equidistant stance: the effect of Fascist bombs on the civilian population, the execution of prisoners on both sides, the Republicans' lack of organization, exile and the difficulty of reinstatement within Francoist society for those who lost the war, like Francisco Gallardo. His voice, the voice of an already old generation, reflects this generation's own idiosyncrasy. The book reproduces the literal transcription of Francisco's writings and his son, Miguel, illustrates some passages with sketches and comic strips.

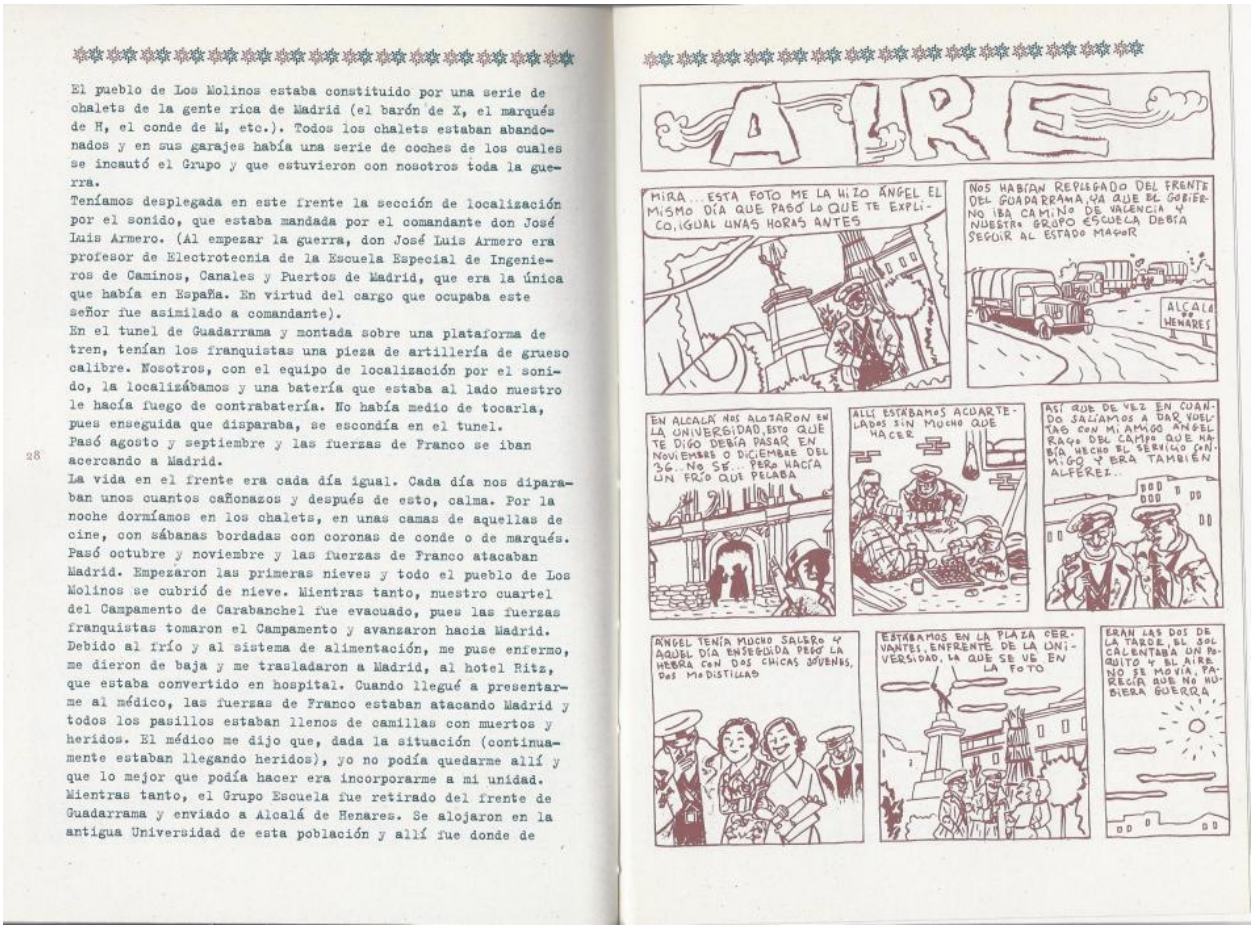

Figure 13: Un largo silencio as "book-comic"

Francisco Gallardo was born in Linares, Jaén, a mining town. He and his siblings attended school until his mother died after three very complicated deliveries. As a result, he had to drop out of school at the age of eleven to help the family business, a small convenience store in Vadollano. When he was 17, his father died and they lost the shop to their creditors, so he moved back to Linares, a bigger city, with his grandmother. There, he worked full-time as a mechanic while studying in the evenings with a scholarship for orphaned children, and he graduated first in his class.

In 1935, just one year before the war broke out, he joins the army for his compulsory military service. He did not want to do it because he preferred to study and work, but at that time

all young men had to serve in the army. After the war started, Gallardo was soon promoted within the ranks, because his training as an engineer was useful. Although he did not support the Fascists, he wasn't particularly committed to Republican ideals either. He actually repeats several times throughout the work that he "no quería pertenecer a ningún Partido politico" ["did not want to belong to any political Party"] (20). From this detached perspective, he denounces the Francoist army's bombing of civilian targets in Valencia (34), but also his own air forces for bombing the Republican troops that were escaping from Fascist attacks (37).

What makes *Un largo silencio* unique among testimonial comics is that the reader has access to first-hand testimony. Yet, it is a postmemorial account because the son conveyed the father's memories and made all the artistic choices, which included reproducing his father's writing in the exact same way he received it: "hubo un momento en que me planteé arreglarlo, pero no… lo que hice fue puntuar algunas cosas y dibujé prácticamente escenas de la guerra con mi visión dramatizada de los hechos" ["at some point I considered fixing it, but no… what I did was to highlight some things and I practically drew war scenes with my dramatized version of the events"] (Gallardo 2013). Within the context of total silence that the Transition Culture promoted, there are few things more groundbreaking than delivering the raw account of a survivor of the war and the Francoist regime. The comic artist considered creating a work similar to *Maus*, but was aware of the value of his father's testimony on its own, and it actually took him years to find a way to tackle it:

> Vi que tenía que inventarme un estilo nuevo para esto, y necesitaba un estado emocional especial para hacerlo. Así que pasaron unos años hasta que me atreví con la primera historia… y me dije "vale, por aquí puedo tirar". Después me encontré en la disyuntiva de que hacer historietas habría sido lo normal, pero el testimonio de mi padre, lo que él había

escrito, era cojonudo. Era alguien que no escribe describiendo unos hechos que son a veces emocionantes. (Gallardo 2013)

[I realized that I had to make up a new style for this, and I needed a special emotional state to do it. So some years passed until I ventured the first story… and I said to myself "ok, I can do it this way." Then I had second thoughts because drawing stories would have been the normal thing to do, but my father's testimony, what he had written, was awesome. He was someone who doesn't write describing events that are sometimes exciting.]

In this regard, Francisco's story is a fluid testimony, without any tensions. If communication is meant to operate as one of the steps that allow the healing of trauma in survivors' testimonies, Francisco's story does not follow the pattern. Instead, he is a survivor who adapts to the context. His son explains that "mi padre se tuvo que convertir en una sombra, y las sombras no tienen voz" ["my father had to become a shadow, and shadows have no voice"] (Gallardo and Gallardo 2012, 6); he blended into the environment and, as we will see, his account bears witness to extreme experiences, but also to the perpetuation of a narrative based on consensus and equidistance, directly inherited from Francoism's official discourse.

It is in postmemory, in the son's account, where we find a fragmented, conflicting narrative due to "una deuda que yo tenía con mi padre, porque siempre le había considerado una especie de cobarde" (Gallardo 2013) ["a debt I had with my father, because I had always considered him kind of a coward"] (Gallardo 2013). In this sense, *Un largo silencio* is the result of processing, assimilating and reframing the father figure and the historical conflict. *Un largo silencio* gives access to the gaps in Miguel's generation, which must come to terms with an inherited past they did not live. While his particular framing reproduces the Francoist narrative inherited by the Transition Culture, it also problematizes epic accounts of the war. As a piece of

collective memory, framing his father's actions involves finding a way to frame Miguel's own role in the transmission process. Gallardo chooses to become a loudspeaker for his father's voice and to reduce his own presence basically to editorial work: "Ahora yo le presto una voz pequeña que es la mía" ["Now I lend him a small voice which is my own"] (Gallardo and Gallardo 2012, 6).

Gallardo's account is an account of personal survival that problematizes simplistic categorizations of class dynamics. His experience of war is very much an exchange of favors in a context where becoming a valuable asset was the only way to stay alive. Class or ideology were not always the determining factors for solving one's personal situation. For example, he saved Lieutenant Galisteo from joining the anti-tank battery in Líster's company, which was almost like receiving a life sentence. However, once the Francoist troops occupied his territory and he visited Galisteo for help, the latter refused to see him (40-41). Betrayal is also portrayed in Antonio Altarriba and Kim's *El arte de volar*, but the type of communal feeling that held Altarriba's troops together around strong ideals of Anarchist solidarity and justice is never present in *Un largo silencio*. In fact, Gallardo managed to leave the army, get a job and enjoy a civilian life thanks to a Fascist leader who acted out of personal sympathy and convenience. Thus, Gallardo's journey through extreme circumstances, difficulties, pain and scant moments of happiness is above all an individual epic based on the exchange of personal favors.

Whereas class and ideology dynamics are problematized as Gallardo travels back to the life he had before the war, the only image that remains stable is that of the *milicianos* as boorish men. They are caricatures of illiterate, uneducated, dogmatic people who hinder the efforts of organized troops. Given that militia men and women were civilians who voluntarily chose to join the fight in defense of their leftist political ideals and to stop Fascism, it is easy to understand the

contrast with a person like Gallardo, who never wanted to join any political party. Since he was soon promoted to a higher rank thanks to his training as an engineer, he mostly mingled with other commands and educated persons who were far removed from the reality of the people during the war.

Un largo silencio combines text, comic, photographs and illustrations. Its dimensions and material, a cardboard cover and back cover and a blue fabric spine, make it look like a vintage 1940s notebook (Fig. 14). The son's illustrations that decorate the text, the photographs and

Figure 14: Un largo silencio as 1940s notebook

personal documents that certify the facts, and the passages narrated by the son using comics create a mosaic of voices, materials and perspectives that transform the book-comic into a sort of artifact (Fig. 15). By "artifact" I do not mean the anthropological definition – an object manipulated by a human being –, nor the condition of an art piece possessing "artifacticity," i.e.,

intentional aesthetic properties,[28] but something closer to the "robotic" definition of "prototype," a model or mockup that helps to imagine what the final object will look like at a different scale. In "Digital Fiction: 'Unruly Object' or Literary Artefact?", Cherie Allan discusses the role of artifacts in design research, and concludes that the purpose of the artifact is to prompt thinking of what will be instead of what is, and this is how I believe *Un largo silencio* operates. It was the first postmemorial comic and, as such, it is an amalgam of media, materials, aesthetics and voices, a sort of prototype that thinks historical memory in what was until then a conceptual void.

While *Un largo silencio* was an artifact with the potential for a conversation about

Figure 15: Artifact - photographs, sketches

memory in the 1990s, the readership regarded it as some sort of "Frankenstein": made up of bits and pieces, it brought to life a haunting past that the audience found troubling, difficult to accept,

[28] See Hospers "Problems in Aesthetics" (1967), Dickie "Defining Art" (1969). For an explanation on the term "artifact" in the artistic paradigm, see Wieand "Defining Art and Artifacts" (1980)

monstruous, which caused their rejection and incomprehension. “La gente poco menos que lo tiró a la basura” [“People pretty much threw it in the garbage”] (Gallardo 2013), as the author himself explains. The sales were not remarkable, even though Miguel was an already established comic artist, and the fact that it went unnoticed the year of its publication is symptomatic of the readership’s general lack of awareness about historical memory[29]. The debate on collective memory barely started in 2000, three years after *Un largo silencio* was published, and the lack of a market for graphic novels in Spain also affected its reception. The publishing market was not ready for this “Frankenstein”, midway between an illustrated book and a comic. By 2012, there already existed graphic novels about memory and its second edition, which included additional documentation, received wide acclaim and sold well. This collage of voices, forms of expression and degrees of proximity, from the first-person experience to its muted reception, is symptomatic of the historical situation in which it was created. *Un largo silencio* brings together different generations as well as two different forms of expression – texts and comics. It also connects the way in which historical memory was understood before and after the boom of cultural production about memory in Spain. Finally, it acts as a bridge between ideological positions, as I will explain below. Its eclectic nature, a bridge between silence and the recovery of memory, goes beyond its nature to show its potential. As Gloria Anzaldúa explains, “[b]ridges are thresholds to other realities, archetypal, primal symbols of shifting consciousness. They are passageways, conduits, and connectors that connote transitioning, crossing borders, and changing perspectives”

[29] Unluckily, there are no sales numbers. The secrecy of Spanish publishing houses is discussed in the previous chapter and it remains today a problem for researchers. See also the Antoni Guiral (2011) for a detailed explanation and criticism of these practices.

(2002, 1), and precisely for this reason they are troubling but no less true. *Un largo silencio* is an effort to utter the first words but also to legitimize them.

The comics parts translate Francisco's monotone rhythm into a very symmetric page layout. The panels are small and the grid is always regular. Exceptionally, a panel may occupy an entire row, as on the first page of the "morts, pauvres morts" story (Fig. 16), but most of the comic excerpts stick to 3x3 or 3x4 grids. They also blend with the narration by using black, white and gray, except for instances like the last panel of "morts, pauvres morts," which introduces a grayish red that simulates the victims' blood. As stated before, Miguel uses the comics format only when he wants to add dramatic tension to some parts of his father's life. "Morts, pauvres morts" portrays how civilians try to escape the continuous, unexpected air bombings, mostly by the Fascists, including Italians and Germans, but also exceptionally by the Republicans. This story in particular can be read as a polyphonic text that reinforces collective fear. Francisco's words are illustrated with other faces, sometimes of relatives, like his grandmother, sometimes of perfect strangers, like a child, but the busts appear in the middle of the small panels and look directly at the readers, as if to demand their undivided attention. Through the pages, the characters deteriorate: they start with a young, healthy-looking woman and end with a group of corpse-like figures. The turning point is the last row on p. 30 (Fig. 17),

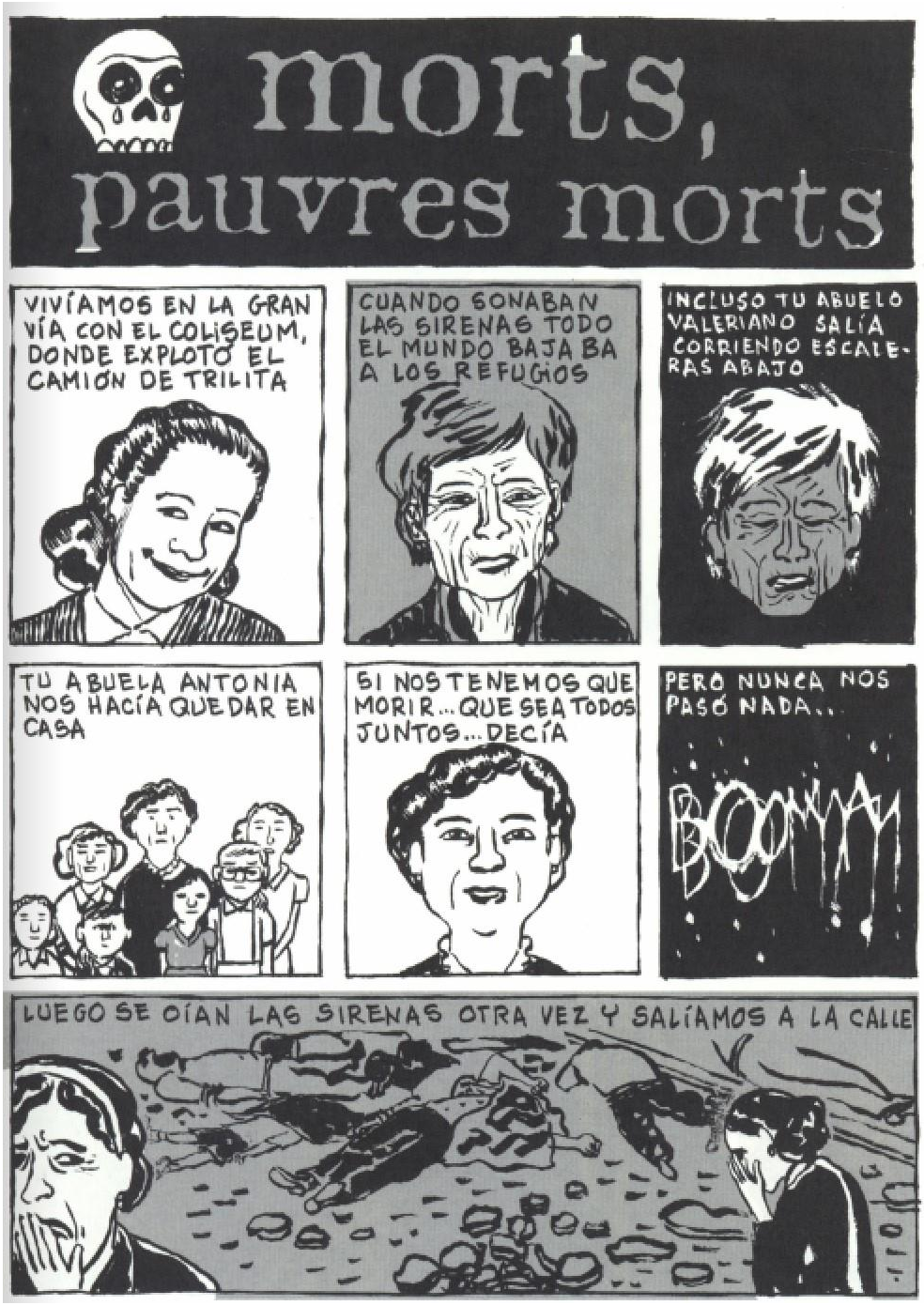

Figure 16: Morts pauvres morts

where a smiling child dies in just three panels. The uncanny symmetry between the living child and its own corpse makes the middle panel operate as a void or extended gutter between the two panels, as the tiny instant that absorbs the time and space dividing life and death. Faces shaking

Figure 17: Turning point

with terror and darkened eye sockets multiply in the next panel (Fig. 18). In this short story, the drawings symbolically convey the multiplication of corpses, the transformation of everyday life into a spectacle of death and, above all, the haunting presence of those gazes from the past in today's history. Pages like these remind the reader that Spain is still looking for corpses scattered

Figure 18: Cadaverous looks

all over the country and that history must look back into those people's eyes.

In fact, these cadaverous beings spread throughout the entire book, even in those parts without comics, as on page 54 (Fig. 19). The illustrator's father himself becomes a sort of specter by the second half of the book, when he is taken to several concentration camps and must endure extremely inhumane conditions. In the camps, officers like him were executed right away and, in

Ingresé en esta prisión a finales del año 1939. Después de unos veinte días en ella (cada día nombraban a unos cuantos y se los llevaba la guardia civil), me nombraron a mí juntamente con unos cuantos más. Vino a recogernos una camioneta de la guardia civil, nos amanilló de dos en dos y nos hicieron subir. No sabíamos adónde nos llevaban; al cabo de un rato de ir por Barcelona, se paró la furgoneta y vimos que estábamos en la estación de Francia. Allí, en el andén, donde todo el mundo nos miraba como si fuéramos grandes criminales, esperamos que pusiesen un tren que, según nos dijeron, nos conduciría a Reus. Llevaba conmigo un aval del cura del Palacio de las Misiones dirigido al sacerdote del campo de concentración de Reus. Me lo había conseguido esta familia de Barcelona que yo conocía (por este aval les habían hecho pagar 300 pts. de las del año 1940).

Detenidos en el Palacio de las Misiones

Figure 19: Living skeletons

some particularly dark panels, the son imagines his father hearing the executioners call him and his name disappearing into the night sky, as if his soul left his body, almost certain that he would be killed. Precisely, Francisco "pas[ó] el peor mal rato [de su] vida" (58) ["had the worst bad

time [in his] life"] (58) during the darkest night, when he saw his own army kill officers like him who had fought for the Republic. Luckily, they did not find out that he had been an officer and, when the Fascists replaced them the next day, he was sent to yet another concentration camp, this time with his enemies. Without altering the tidy quadrangular grid, the son's drawings become more expressionistic and grotesque, distorting people's faces and bodies to convey the prisoners' immeasurable suffering.

Voice is of vital importance when describing the course of the father's life and traumatic memory. Like we will see in the first pages of *El arte de volar*, the coexistence of the voices of father and son poses a challenge from the start, and Miguel Gallardo chooses to take on the role of being just the communicator:

> Mi padre estuvo 40 años callado como una tumba. Cuando al final abrió la boca, fue para repetir una y otra vez la misma historia. Esta es la historia que me contó mi padre una y otra vez, hecha de trozos y retales, de piezas que no encajan, pero que yo sé que es cierta, y así voy a intentar contarla, dándole a mi padre una voz. Una voz que cuenta una parte de la historia cada vez más olvidada, pero que los que la vivieron no la olvidarán jamás. (Gallardo and Gallardo 5)
>
> [My father's lips were sealed for 40 years [. . .]. When he finally spoke, he would repeat the same story time and time again. This is the story that my father told me time and time again, made up of bits and remnants, of pieces that don't fit, but which I know to be true, and this is how I'll try to tell it, by giving my father a voice. A voice that tells a part of history that is increasingly forgotten, but that those who lived it will never forget.]

In this way, a postmemorial story pertaining to the private sphere trespasses its boundaries to participate in the public debate through the publication of a book. This involves a double

transgression, since, first, the father transforms silence into words and, thereafter, the son transforms the individual into the collective. The need to tell, "and thus to come to know one's story … in order to be able to live one's life," as Dori Laub explains (78), together with the absence of emotional and physical security during the dictatorship, prevented the public narration of trauma and, as a result, became "a long silence." The testimonial process lies in the father's silence and the son's struggle, and this comic is particularly relevant because it gives prominence to the survivor's voice.

Both *Un largo silencio* and *El arte de volar* insist on the veracity of the facts and testimonies, although the effort required is more evident in the former, because it was created at a time when there was hardly a space to discuss or represent the trauma inherited from the previous generation. The book includes a variety of documents: photographs of Francisco Gallardo's childhood in Linares, of his education at the School for Industrial Training and of his experience in the war, as well as official certificates, such as the order for his release from the Reus concentration camp and the good conduct certificate he paid a Falangist to issue in order to be able to get a job after the war. These photographs and documents are intended to prove the veracity of what is told, while interweaving Francisco's life events with historical facts. The book's design imitates a ledger because it can be held accountable for the biographical text.

Photography and drawings coexist in *Un largo silencio*, but they have different connotations. In her analysis of *Maus*, Marianne Hirsch (1992) explains that pictures have the capacity to be simultaneously past and present, presence and absence, and a comic like *Maus* gives meaning to all those photographs and thus serves as a "site of memory." Roland Barthes has explained that, within a picture, the details that compete for protagonism constitute a "punctum." The punctum is a totally subjective appreciation of one part of a photograph that

attracts the viewer's attention. According to Marianne Hirsch, *Maus*' photographs operate as a punctum, as details inserted into the story that draw our attention because they stand out as material that does not belong in the comic's sequence. Furthermore, if it is difficult to mourn individual loss in situations of massive losses, as Susan Sontag explores in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (1970), *Maus* mediates between the two extremes, because the comic sets scattered family photographs against the backdrop of the Holocaust. For Hirsch, comics provide a space for mourning the individual and the general, which is particularly difficult for the descendants, since they grow up surrounded by individuals who have undergone a common trauma they have not experienced (1992, 5-7). Both *Maus* and *Un largo silencio* use that personal connection to build bridges to the past, to history, to the individual and to trauma.

Un largo silencio represents, like *Maus*, a "site of memory," where the variety of media work together to provide a collective account of a censored reality through individual experience. However, where we find the punctums is not in the photographs included at the end of the book, but in the scattered sketches that decorate the text and the pieces of comics that interrupt the typed narration. The comics part, however, does provide a space for the second generation to insert its narrative – an area where the dialogue between father and son, between witness and descendant, can be used as a bridge between testimony and history.

Far from holding dogmatic positions of fanatic support for the Republican cause, Gallardo not only denounces the Fascist army – whose commands he accuses of "bombardear sin ton ni son" ["bombing nilly-willy"], even areas "que no eran objetivo militar ni nada" ["that weren't even military targets"] (Gallardo and Gallardo 2012, 30) –, but is also very critical of the lack of organization on his side. When referring to the defense of Madrid, he avoids the romanticized image of the glorious capital that resisted the enemy siege to show the violence

used to put an end to the military uprising at the Cuartel de la Montaña [Mountain Barracks] and, above all, the problems arising from the militia's incompetence and lack of commitment. It thus subverts the romanticized idea of Madrid's defense; it communicates an anti-heroic version that dearticulates the feat by bringing chaos and lack of organization to the foreground.

In addition to offering the losers' censored point of view, the book's interpretation of the war is striking because of its "equidistance," that is, creating an account that makes victims and perpetrators equally responsible for the causes – and to a certain extent also the consequences – of the Spanish Civil War. This type of "apolitical" portrait is celebrated by some critics as a form of symbolic reconciliation that points towards forms of peaceful coexistence (Dapena 2019). However, we should remember that *Un largo silencio* was published in 1997, when Paloma Aguilar (1996) defined the conciliatory character of the hegemonic discourse after the Transition as an extension of Francoist historiography. In the eighties and nineties, the official narrative set the Republic as the preamble and almost the cause of the War, while removing all agency from the participants in the coup. Then and later, research and art have shown the need to reframe this Francoist paradigm. In "La guerra civil en la novela española actual: Entre el consenso de la Transición y el consenso neoliberal" ["The Civil War in Today's Spanish Novel: Between the Transition Consensus and the Neoliberal Consensus"] (2018), Manuel Becerra explains the implications of this equidistant position. For him, "[t]ratar de igualar y de situar en el mismo nivel de responsabilidad a quienes atacaron a un sistema legítimo y democrático y a quienes, por el contrario, sufrieron la agresión de un golpe militar fascista no puede sino tildarse de tergiversación –consciente o inconsciente– de la historia" ["try[ing] to hold equally liable those who attacked a legitimate democratic system and those who, on the contrary, suffered the attack

of a Fascist military coup can only be defined as a – conscious or unconscious – distortion of history"] (Becerra 85).

Equidistance goes hand in hand with the myths of a fratricidal war and justifying the *coup d'état* by the occasional outbreaks of violence that took place during the Second Republic. Several works in different media – film, theater, literature, etc. – have attempted to express the tragic loss of human lives and intrafamilial violence as the cause of many atrocities, treating political violence as a return to the myth of Cain and Abel. War facilitated personal revenge and the outburst of long-lasting tensions, but these did not cause the conflict.[30] The discourse of equidistance is largely based on a not at all innocent falsification of the historical sequence whereby the *coup d'état* is portrayed as a logical response to, or a defense against, the phantom of Communism, the threat of a revolution or a degree of violence comparable to that of the military occupation.[31] In *Un largo silencio*, there are only two references to the coup: the assassinations of Assault Guard Lieutenant Castillo, who was loyal to the Republic and close to the Socialist Party, and of José Calvo Sotelo, the far-right leader known for his total opposition to the democratic system and former minister during Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. Two political figures, one from each side, are equidistantly chosen and the coup is clearly framed as a

[30] The ideal example is found in *El arte de volar*, which starts by describing the neighboring resentment, the aggressions between peasants for just some inches of land, brawls that would escalate to assassinations and people missing during the context of war. However, *El arte de volar* does not portray it as a cause. To use these rancors or the intrafamiliar violence that was common then as causes for the War "aniquila todo componente político y social…El odio, miedo, venganza, etc son síntomas del conflicto pero no elementos determinantes que lo originan. Confundir las causas con las consecuencias, lo determinante y lo determinado, puede provocar un falseamiento total o parcial de los hechos históricos" (Becerra 87). [annihilates all social and political component…The hatred, fear, revenge, etc are symptoms of the conflict but not determinant elements that cause it. To confuse the causes and the consequences, the determinant and the determined, can cause a total or partial falsification of the historical facts]

[31] Novels that portray this sequence are, for instance, Josefina Aldecoa's *Historia de una maestra* (1990) Manuel Maristany's *La enfermera de Brunete* (2006), Antonio Muñoz Molina's *La noche de los tiempos* (2009), Almudena Grandes's *Inés y la alegría* (2010) or Eduardo Mendoza's *Riña de gatos* (2010).

result of these assassinations. The three-panel sequence ends with Gallardo not being able to work if he does not belong to any labor union (Fig. 20). The sequence depicts the politization of

everyday life as an unexpected, unnecessary and somewhat ridiculous consequence, thus erasing any historical or political explanation.

Figure 20: The Civil War breaks out

Up to this point, the comic had described Gallardo's family's difficult life conditions, his determination to complete his education and his bleak unemployment situation despite his degree in Engineering, but these circumstances are presented as totally dissociated from the centuries of economic and political polarization in the country. Both his life path and his war experience highlight individual merit. Through personal favors, he can escape prison and execution, and get a job. Meritocracy and nepotism create an individualistic reality before, during and even more so after the war, during the dictatorship. The last scene, where a Francoist officer saves Francisco from execution and gives him a work permit because they knew each other from school, has been read as "human solidarity that managed to trump a vast ideological divide" (Merino and Tullys 219) and as a move "away from a more dogmatic taking of sides" (Dapena 125). It is even more significant that Gallardo saved some of his comrades but did not receive their help when he needed it most (as in the case of Lieutenant Galisteo, among others). However, these examples also describe the discriminatory socioeconomic infrastructures that were foundational for the dictatorship, such as assets confiscation or dismissals for political reasons (Casanova and Cenarro 2014; Aguilar 2008, 419). While the aforementioned informal practices and Gallardo's educational achievements show both solidarity and an admirable personal effort, it is important to understand that his apolitical stance normalizes the structural poverty – among other factors – that hindered his own educational progress and ultimately led to the war. This is "a survivor's tale," like *Maus*, but a closer look may also show why it was necessary to survive at all.

Part of Francoism's ideological victory was to mystify the coup as a solution within a context of unsustainable violence. Francoist discourse repeated *ad nauseam* that Spaniards were "ungovernable" and democracy had only served to prove it (Aguilar and Humlebaek 2002, 151). However, there were no revolts that could have led to a revolution. "No tenían que frenar el

fantasma comunista porque no lo había" ["they did not have to stop the Communist phantom because there wasn't any"] (Becerra 89), and outbreaks of violence were common to all the young democratic republics in Europe, which were also ultimately destroyed by Fascism[32]. Portraying the coup and its consequences as directly linked to two assassinations, with a final panel that shows the effects in the form of an ill-fitting uniform, means repeating and perpetuating, perhaps unconsciously, the historiographic framework that Francoism consciously set up for the coup.

A distorted representation of the origins of Francoism does not necessarily mean complicity. Gallardo's multiple attempts to survive were his way of confronting a regime he never supported. And, once the war was over, surviving the dictatorship entailed burying himself in silence. For his son, silence was a sign of a cowardice he never understood[33]. Expressing his political ideology was a privilege his son enjoyed, but, because of his need to survive, Francisco could not. As a result, in accounts such as these, the authors create a debt which they pay with their postmemorial works.

[32] "La República no fue la causa de la Guerra Civil española; al contrario, su derrota – que se inicia el verano de 1936 – fue un efecto de la agresión del fascismo nacional e internacional que se estaba empezando a armar y a organizar para derrumbar los sistemas democráticos europeos" ["The Republic was not the cause of the Spanish Civil War; on the contrary, its failure – which started in the summer of 1936 – was a consequence of an attack by national and international Fascism, which was arming and organizing itself to overthrow the European democratic systems"] (Becerra 89).

[33] As Miguel Gallardo explains: "El primer póster que colgué del Che Guevara en casa fue un desastre familiar. Era de los que opinaban que tú tenías que vivir con tu cabeza al mismo nivel que los demás, procurar no sacarla por arriba. Donde trabajaba él luego supieron que muchos habían sido republicanos pero no se dieron cuenta porque era una cosa que ni se mencionaba. Al final, dándole la paliza, le convencimos para que hiciera sus memorias." (Gallardo 2013) [The first Che Guevara poster I hung at home was a family disaster. He was one of those people who thought you should your head at the same level as everyone else, never above them. At his work, they later found out that many had been Republicans, but they didn't realize it because it was something that was never mentioned. In the end, we insisted so much that we managed to convince him to write down his memoirs.]

This comic's hybridity not only conveys the father's testimony, but also an intergenerational collaboration that extends beyond Gallardo's family's particular case to include the struggle to recover the memory of an entire country. It is a fragmented work not because of the father's traumatic memories, but because the son had to make sense of a concealed reality and the way to do so was to insert his own contribution in the form of comics into his father's experiences. This shows that the weight of what is communicated falls as much on the protagonist witness as on the receiver of the testimony. In this sense, it is a "familial postmemory," which Hirsch defines as "the result of contemporaneity and generational connection with the literal second generation combined with structures of mediation" (2008, 115). Miguel speaks as much to his father's generation as to his own, and the work is an amalgam of voices that reveals the complex reception of events that have not been experienced but may be, nonetheless, equally traumatizing.

Testimony means both to bear witness and to know. In the case of Gallardo's father, the reader witnesses and understands the survival techniques of a person who was caught up in the important political events of his time and tried to elude them. We also witness and understand the testimony of a person who was not a coward, as his son initially thought, but a survivor. And we ultimately witness how Francoist official historiography perpetuated itself even within democracy. Gallardo's father's testimony testifies to how silence operated as both survival during the dictatorship and perpetuation of its legacy thereafter. It testifies to how even survivors of the war and the dictatorship witnessed the coup as a logical consequence of a democratic system.

El arte de volar

The Spanish comic that has probably received the most attention due to its complex portrayal of postmemory is *El arte de volar* (2009) [*The Art of Flying*], by Antonio Altarriba (script writer) and Kim (illustrator). Both *El arte de volar* and *Un largo silencio* are based on the authors' fathers' written and oral memories, although, in creating the actual works, they favored the written sources. *El arte de volar* was published at a more felicitous time than *Un largo silencio*, in 2009, when there was already a market for graphic novels and testimonial comics had gained prominence within the medium. More importantly, the Historical Memory Law was passed in 2007, and this rekindled the public debate about Francoist repression that had been fueled by the creation, in 2000, of the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory. *El arte de volar* won the National Comic Award (2010), the most important award for comics in Spain, which is granted by the Ministry of Culture, and it has been published in different languages and countries.

The comic combines testimony, collective memory and self-fiction in a story about the failure of leftist ideals in Spain during the Second Republic. The book recounts the life of Antonio Altarriba Lope (1910-2001), a poor farmer who embraced Anarcho-syndicalist ideals and joined the Republican ranks. After the defeat in the Civil War, exile in France and a humiliating return to Fascist Spain cut his life short. He oscillated between long periods of depression and other less melancholic times, and finally committed suicide in a nursing home, when he was over 90 years old. The work is a family biography in which the son, the comic's scriptwriter, literally takes on his father's voice to tell the intrahistory of two generations.

El arte de volar describes a particular appropriation of the father's testimony, since the son recounts his father's life as his own. The story opens when the father, who is old and sick,

prepares his suicide in a nursing home. In order to succeed, he must hide from several nurses to reach the fourth floor without getting caught. The images show how he carefully moves across the hallways, while the text focuses on legitimizing the veracity of the facts using a different voice:

> Yo sí sé cómo lo hizo… soy el único que puede saber cómo lo hizo… porque, aunque no estaba allí, estaba en él… siempre he estado en él porque un padre está hecho de sus hijos posibles… y yo soy el único hijo que le fue posible a mi padre… desciendo de mi padre, soy su prolongación y, cuando todavía no había nacido, ya participaba, como potencial genético, de todo lo que le ocurría… por eso sé cómo se murió… y también cómo vivió. (13)
>
> [I do know how he did it… I'm the only one that can know how he did it… because, even though I wasn't there, I was in him… I've always been in him because a father is made up of his possible sons… and I was the only one that was possible for my father… I come from my father, I'm an extension of him and, before I was even born, I already participated, as genetic potential, in everything that happened to him… this is why I know how he died… and also how he lived.]

The division between the textual and the graphic narration, which is key to understanding the potential of comics, has been explored by Thierry Groensteen (2010), who coined the terms "recitant," for the textual narrator, and "graphiator," for the iconic narrator. In *El arte de volar*, the recitant communicates the son's thoughts, which appear to be pensive and speculative, as the suspension points suggest. Meanwhile, the graphiator illustrates the father's actions. The last panel shows a window at the end of the hallway that acts as the focal point where recitant and graphiator converge (Fig. 21). As the graphiator approaches the window, the recitant informs the

Figure 21: "In fact, I'm going to tell my father's life with his eyes but from my perspective"

readers about the change in the narrative voice, the merging between father and son: "De hecho, voy a contar la vida de mi padre con sus ojos pero desde mi perspectiva" ["In fact, I'm going to tell my father's life with his eyes but from my perspective"] (15). In the last panel, the father has vanished, leaving his slippers behind by the window from which he has jumped (Fig. 22). Although the entire journey through the nursing home must have taken only minutes, the recitant states that "mi padre tardó noventa años en caer de la cuarta planta" ["it took my father ninety years to fall from the fourth floor"] (15), an ellipsis that refers to individual and collective

memory, to the accumulation of personal and social causes that led to the character's depression and, ultimately, his death.

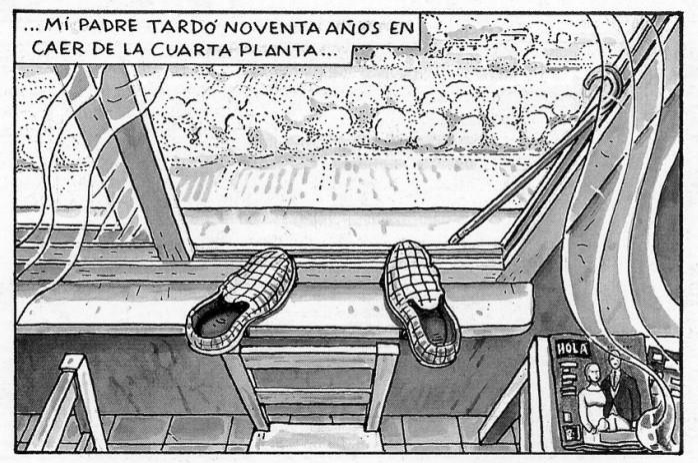

Figure 22: "It took my father ninety years to fall from the fourth floor"

The merging of the two voices entails a significant innovation in testimonial comics' narrative. With "voy a contar la vida de mi padre con sus ojos" ["I'm going to tell my father's life with his eyes"], we learn that the father is the witness while the son adds the "perspective," i.e., the contextual and personal frame. Son and father merge in the same way as words and drawings in comics. In this interweaving process, the son's personal perspective is an exercise in postmemory, in the healing of inherited traumas, as well as a creative translation of the previous generations' experiences.

Postmemory's connection to the past is not factual but fictional, mediated by "imaginative investment, projection, and creation" (Hirsch, "Generation of Postmemory" 106-07). While the first-person testimony certifies facts, the aesthetics produces representations, discourses and perspectives. Placed within the dichotomy between truth and authenticity, aesthetics is said "to introduce agency, control structure, and therefore distance from the real, a distance which could leave space for doubt" (Hirsch, "Family Pictures" 10). All representations

carry within them the suspicious manipulation that "agency" and "control" over "structure" produce. But beyond Adorno's dictum that "to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric," (2003, 281) the aesthetic elaboration of traumatic history constitutes the very essence of memory. Fiction provides access to the unspeakable and the invisible; it fills in the gaps and erasures in official discourse. It is not directly opposed to the legitimization of historical facts, but imbricated in a complementary discourse. Like in the case of the woman who saw four chimneys blowing up instead of one (Laub 62), memory both recalls and represents. It recalls an event but tells the personal experience as it was lived and felt by the individual – it "testif[ies] to the unbelievability" (Laub 62). This is even more evident in the case of postmemory, where there are no original memories but only the testimonies and fragmented narratives of others. Postmemory is essentially fictional and represents the possibility to "break through the framework" in which the survivors had been kept silent.

Some of the key events in the story of *El arte de volar* never took place. Instead, they were included by the son to provide a symbolic perspective that adds significance to his father's experiences, and they materialize into different objects. For Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, "material remnants can serve as testimonial objects enabling us to focus crucial questions both about the past itself and about how the past comes down to us in the present" (2006, 355). The remnants in *El arte de volar* materialize circumstances, aspirations and even entire episodes in the father's life. Thus, the wooden car, Durruti's espadrilles, bitter cookies and the mole serve as titles for the different chapters, and to structure his life as well. The wooden car refers to the first time Antonio dreams of a better future. He has grown up with an abusive father among very poor peasants, and one of the activities that helps him to endure such harsh circumstances is building a wooden car with his friend Basilio to try to "fly" and escape from poverty. When they first test

the car, the precarious breaking system fails and the car ends up crashing against a wall. His dreams clash with reality and his aspirations break into pieces. The object represents a "point of memory," that is, a "[p]oint... of intersection between past and present, memory and postmemory, personal remembrance and cultural recall" (Hirsch and Spitzer 358). The son creates this metaphoric object as a meeting point between his postmemory, his understanding of his father's frustrations and the actual memories of growing up in a small town.

The title of the second chapter, "Durruti's espadrilles," refers to a symbolically charged object, which operates as a leitmotiv in the work. Buenaventura Durruti was a Spanish insurrectionary Anarcho-syndicalist who became a legendary hero during the Civil War. Vicente bought the espadrilles when the leader died (although his friends think they are fake). He treasures them as an amulet and, when he dies, he passes them on to Antonio. Since then, every time Antonio finds himself in deadly danger, he puts them on to give him luck, especially during his exile in France. Once he realizes that he will not be able to make a living in France and must return to Francoist Spain, he burns the espadrilles and his dream of a democratic leftist Spain with them. Thus, the espadrilles operate as a symbol of friendship, of Antonio's increasing political awareness and, when they are destroyed, of the loss of ideals and the "fall" – both into depression and, in the end, from the fourth floor of the nursing home.

The symbol of the ring has a more wide-ranging narrative arc, which extends throughout

Figure 23: Bonding rings

the entire book. Vicente, who works as a blacksmith, forges four rings: one for himself and one each for Antonio, Pablo and their leader Mariano, Antonio's closest friends during the war. The lead rings symbolize fraternity but also loyalty to Anarchist ideals (Fig. 23). In fact, Antonio takes Pablo's ring years later, when he betrays his ideals to become a ruthless businessman who extorts money from people in need. After they part ways, and before he returns to Spain, Antonio visits Mariano for the last time and gives him both his and Pablo's rings as a goodbye present and in memory of their ideals. Decades later, Mariano has the rings melted into a bullet, which he uses to kill himself. Back in Spain, Antonio develops another kind of bond with his newborn son, the writer of the comic. When the baby holds his father's finger (Fig. 24), the father explains that "tras la Guerra y sus alianzas de plomo, había llegado el momento de la alianza de sangre" (149) ["after the War, and its lead pacts, the time came for blood pacts"] (149). This is probably

the only bond and the only ideal he would keep until the end of his life, even at the nursing home (202).

With every object that is destroyed, a new layer of oblivion is added to his memory, thereby hindering transmission and, consequently, healing. “Para acabar con el presente, debían acabar con el pasado… morir para seguir vivos” [“To put an end to the present, they had to put an end to the past… [they had] to die to keep on living”] (*El arte de volar* 141). As we have seen, the rings have a positive mnemonic meaning, but his wedding ring becomes a heavy weight that carries the opposite connotations. Trapped in an unhappy marriage, he feels equally silenced by the dictatorship and by a life he considers to be fake and contrary to his ideals. Thus, the ring acquires a broader symbolism: on the one hand, fraternity with his friends and with his son, and, on the other, a heavy burden that forces both Antonio and his wife to live a life of despair in

Figure 24: "The time came for blood pacts"

which neither one of them can “fly.”

El arte de volar favors empathy towards his father's life over veracity. Whereas comics like *Un largo silencio* or *Maus* resort to photographs as indexical tools of truth, Altarriba's work focuses on healing the son's, and the country's, cycle of trauma through a deep understanding of the protagonist's circumstances and ideals. The iconic nature of drawing is key to promoting this connection between the character and the reader. In Fig. 25, the panel shows a young Antonio with a happy smile. This instant belongs to his time in exile, when he lived with a French family

Figure 25: Icon

as an undocumented migrant. He had just escaped from one of the camps where Spaniards survived amid squalor and disease. This is a time of safety, happiness, good food and some affection, mixed with basic French lessons so that he can communicate with others. This image, like many others in the comic, lacks what Roland Barthes calls the "umbilical cord of light" (110), i.e., an indicator that links the reproduction or referent to the real object, as photographs usually have. Even though there is some similarity between the drawing and the person referred to, his features are reduced to a caricature. "The cartoon is a vacuum into which our identity and awareness are pulled, an empty shell that we inhabit which enables us to travel into another realm. We don't just observe the cartoon, we become it" (McCloud 36). The more detailed an image, the less people it can represent. This portrait – whose realism lies halfway between the

ligne claire of comics like *Tintin* and detailed, photographic representation – blends the writer's identity with his father's. The drawing resembles the father enough to identify him, but the strokes' ambiguity creates a space in which the author could see himself as well. In fact, the drawing can represent almost any white European kid. Therefore, the collaborative nature of this graphic novel plays a significant role. When Antonio, the son, says that he is going to tell his father's story with his eyes but from his own perspective, he creates an intermediate space where father, son and reader can meet through the comic's iconicity.

The son's mission is to acknowledge his father's haunting presence and channel his message. "Ghosts cannot make their voices heard; they rely on an interpreter to speak for them (Labanyi, "Hauntology" 80). Ventriloquism, or possession, is the technique that allows the dead father to put his words into his son's mouth and to locate the past in the present. However, through this exchange, the son also possesses his father, allowing him to recover his own censored memories. In this sense, comics have the potential to illustrate the interconnection between past and present through the panels. Comics differ from other cultural expressions in that the reader can simultaneously encompass multiple moments in the story in one sweeping gaze. For Altarriba:

> Sólo la historieta puede dar cuenta del avance progresivo de una historia y a la vez de la simultaneidad de los momentos que la componen. En una página seguimos el relato, pero a la vez contemplamos la página como todo armónico: la historieta es la narración, pero es también el mapa de la narración. En una película, en una novela, los hechos ya leídos o vistos no están, son un pasado borrado que no podemos recuperar con sólo una mirada; pero en la historieta están ahí, flotando, inmediatos. (13-14)

> [Only comics can describe the progression of a story and the simultaneity of the moments that compose it. On a page, we follow the plot but, at the same time, we see the page as a harmonious whole: the comic is the narration, but also the map of the narration. In a film, in a novel, the facts already read or seen are not there, they are a deleted past that we cannot recover in a single gaze; but in comics they are there, floating, immediate.]

The coexistence of different temporalities mimics the coexistence of memories. The story of a ghost is also the story of how the living are affected by its presence. According to Labanyi, "[m]emory is not a slice of the past waiting hidden to be 'recovered'; it is a process that operates in the present and cannot help but give a version of the past colored by present emotions and affected by all sorts of interferences from subsequent experiences and knowledge" (Labanyi "Testimonies", 197). As we saw in the first pages of *El arte de volar*, the hybrid nature of the comics' narration allows the coexistence of father and son, of testimony and postmemory, of words and images.

However, Altarriba's narrative strategy, whereby father and son merge in one voice, or both ghosts possess each other, can have a more problematic reading. *El arte de volar* is the product of grief, but there is no doubt that elaborating it while his father was still alive, like Gallardo in *Un largo silencio* and Ana Penyas in *Estamos todas bien*, with potential interferences and, consequently, potential dialogue with the main characters, would have required ethical and narrative negotiation. Although *El arte de volar* is a tribute to, and a sophisticated exploration of, the spectral past that Jo Labanyi describes in relation to Spain, it also questions the capacity to "give voice to the voiceless." In this sense, the book constitutes a sort of exorcism, a healing appropriation of the father's memories to find a cure for the son's depression. Through this

spectral operation, the author communicates what he was not able to see and what his father never told him.

The act of narrating can be therapeutic, since it compels the subject to give meaning and structure to what appears to be disconnected. “The basic requirements of narrative – pattern, structure, closure, coherence, balance – all engage a writer in creating a whole out of fragments of experience. In the process of composing an autobiography a writer may move through a variety of modes of writing that signal a progression toward broader perspective and greater control” (Chandler 1990, 6-7). Antonio Altarriba’s father suffered a serious depression during the last years of his life. After his business partner fled with Altarriba’s money and that of the rest of the partners, and after divorcing his wife, he fell into a depression that lasted for decades until his suicide. He moved into a nursing home, where the few friends he made died one by one, making him feel lonelier every day. Knowing that all opportunities for, and communal moments of, friendship were forever gone, he first attempted suicide by jumping off a bridge chained to a heavy suitcase filled with stones he had been collecting for weeks. As a result, he was taken to a mental health institution, which was even more depressing, and the medication caused him to start hallucinating. His son, the writer of the comic, would often visit him at both the nursing home and the mental institution, and they had very long conversations where his father would painfully go over every event in his life, expressing nostalgia for the good times and a deep regret for his failures. Unable to help him, his son suggested that he write everything down and the father left him “250 cuartillas de letra apretada” [“250 pages of closely squeezed handwriting”] that served as the basis for *El arte de volar*. Both the long conversation between father and son and these papers are the product of trauma and a form of therapeutic communication.

Testimony is intended to overcome traumatic memories but, in the case of Altarriba's father, it only relieved the pain momentarily and ultimately led to a second, successful suicide attempt. In fact, sharing traumatic experiences may have the opposite effect and increase the pain, because "[t]he act of telling might itself become severely traumatizing, if the price of speaking is re-living; not relief, but further retraumatization" (Felman and Laub 1992, 67). Considering the results of the communication between father and son, it seems like the father re-lived his regret and his pain in the conversations and in his writings. Those 250 pages reflect unprocessed, fragmented and chaotic trauma that he was not able to give shape to in order to gain control over the haunting memories that troubled him. A collapse of understanding lies at the heart of trauma (Caruth 1996) and, although communication can help to process the events, it can also facilitate transmission without the necessary understanding. In this case, the raw material, the unprocessed pieces of memory, are deposited onto the listener, who has the burdensome mission to find a meaning for them.

El arte de volar is not so much a final tribute to the father as the product of the son's grief after his sudden – although not completely unexpected – suicide. Making sense out of, applying "the basic requirements of narrative" (Chandler 1990, 6-7) to, the messy memories of Altarriba, Sr., is the son's therapeutic process for overcoming his own trauma: "Recupero la vida de mi padre, la vivo con él, casi en él, y, como contrapartida, me devuelve una nueva, como si me volviera a engendrar y me lanzara a un mundo donde él es un poco más digno y yo, en consecuencia, un poco menos culpable" ["I recover my father's life, I live it with him, almost in him, and, in return, he gives me back a new one, as if he engendered me once again and threw me into a world where he's a little more respectable and, consequently, I'm a little less guilty"] (2009, 221). A complete identification between father and son connects both traumas – "yo

estaba en él o, quizá, era con él y ahora, una vez muerto, él está en mí" ["I was in him or, maybe, I was with him, and now that he's dead, he is in me"] (14) – and their healing. By shaping his father's memories into a narrative, he takes control of his own pain as well.

The son's postmemory provides a broader context for the father's memories, which describes the frustration of an entire generation that put their hopes in great narratives only to witness their final failure. When the father commits suicide, each one of the floors illustrate his different failures. When he was young, the father identified with leftist ideals, but the defeat in the war forced him to accept failure. Each chapter describes a new form of disillusionment. Chapter one describes the conflicts between farmers and the lack of solidarity among the most deprived. In Chapter two, "Las alpargatas de Durruti" ["Durruti's espadrilles"], he acquires political and class awareness only to end up renouncing his ideals in return for a job in Spain, where he will have to live under the Fascism he fought against. Chapter three, "Galletas amargas" ["Bitter cookies"], explains how he and his workmates betrayed their boss to snatch his business from him, divide it up among them and finally have it snatched back by one of them, who stole all the company's money and left Altarriba and the others completely broke. This is also the chapter where he falls in love with his wife, but the marriage quickly deteriorates. Chapter four, "The mole's burrow," recounts his final disillusionment with everything. Altarriba repeats "not anymore" so many times that one of the characters, Hipólito, nicknames him the "not anymore guy". He sees his whole life as a complete failure in every respect – work, love, his fight for justice – and develops a severe depression that the comic illustrates as a big mole of sadness coming out of his chest.

The possession of the son's body by the father's spirit reflects the nexus between a generation that needs to speak before their memories die with their bodies, and one that channels

their legacy to the next generations as a form of social justice. The worldwide class confrontation caused by the 2008 crisis manifested itself in Spain as looking back to the most dramatic part of its past. The crisis created a collective identification between those who suffered the consequences of political repression and their descendants in a way that had not been possible before. The recovery of memory as a form of transitional justice and an alternative to institutionalized historiography started barely a decade ago. For this reason, most witnesses are extremely old and their memories are slowly disappearing. These memories sometimes materialize into the corpses in the mass graves scattered throughout Spain. The exhumation and reburial of Francoist victims certify their testimonies just like their words legitimize postmemory in creators like Altarriba. Comics like *El arte de volar* look back to and memorialize the existence of the buried past.

Estamos todas bien

Most of the characteristics that make *Estamos todas bien* an essential, invaluable work for the study of memory in Spain will be discussed in Chapter four of this dissertation, but in this chapter, I will address its testimonial nature. *Estamos todas bien* tells the story of Penyas' two grandmothers, Herminia and Maruja. They both worked as stay-at-home mothers, taking care of their husbands and kids for the better part of their lives. Now that Maruja and Herminia are the ones that need to be taken care of, their everyday lives seem repetitive, empty and boring, constantly waiting for their kids and relatives to visit them. Their families take care of them and keep them company, but they have their own responsibilities, which makes Maruja feel like "un

trasto viejo"[34] ["an old piece of junk"]. This comic is one of the most relevant accounts of historical memory because it provides a sophisticated exploration of structural forms of marginalization that go beyond class and political violence during Francoism. As I will show in Chapter four, portraying the lonely lives of these two old ladies is a groundbreaking approach that decentralizes narratives about war stories and, consequently, about men's resistance to the dictatorship. In this chapter, I focus on this work's equally essential contribution to the study of testimony and postmemory in comics.

Estamos todas bien is the only work that depicts the act of mostly oral transmission, which makes a great difference, because it conveys a negotiation. Both Gallardo and Altarriba built their works on written testimonies and, although conversations were held prior to the comics' production, discussion was not essential for their development. On the other hand, the grandmothers in Penyas' work have a certain degree of agency while the work is in process. In a phone conversation between Ana and Maruja, the artist announces that she is creating a story about them and Maruja asks: "¿Y por qué no escribes mejor una historia de amor?" ["Why don't you write a love story instead?"]. Ana replies that "historias de amor hay muchas pero de abuelas no" ["there are many love stories but not many about grandmothers"], and Maruja concedes that "es verdad, tienes razón" ["true, you're right"]. Announcing her intentions and obtaining the grandmothers' consent is an integral part of the story, but it is also important that they understand the value of their testimony. Furthermore, Penyas makes the reader participate in the process of gaining access to someone's life story while the artist and the informants discuss the uniqueness of their contribution. In this sense, the comic not only makes sure that the reader and

[34] The comic has no page numbers

the artist understand the value of these women's life stories, but also seeks to empower the witnesses themselves. It expresses concern towards the informants' awareness of the relevance of women's stories beyond the romantic paradigm. Unlike the works previously discussed, consent and negotiation are the basis of this testimony.

The conversation with Maruja and Herminia documents their transformation into witnesses, that is, into external observers of their own lives with some degree of awareness about the specific ways in which they navigated different levels of oppression. "[T]he very circumstance of being inside the event" might make "unthinkable the very notion that a witness" can exist, since it is necessary "to step outside the coercively totalitarian and dehumanizing frame of reference" (Laub and Felman 81). This is true for the systemic forms of ideological coercion that Francoism imposed primarily on those who did not benefit from the totalitarian regime, but also for structural forms of marginalization like misogyny and sexism, which were already in place before the coup. The mutual collaboration between Ana and her grandmothers in the recovery of their memories is a process that raises awareness and adds value to their specific struggles.

The role of the listener is crucial in creating meaning about the past. "Historical trauma" reveals a "double void in the narrative: the inability or impossibility of constructing a narrative" if there exists a "dialogical void" with "no subject… no audience and no listening." On the contrary, "[w]hen dialogue becomes possible, he or she who speaks and he or she who listens begin the process of naming, of giving meaning and constructing memories. Both are needed, each is indispensable to the other, interacting in a shared space" (Jelin 64). In one of the conversations, Ana asks Herminia about her memories while they look at a photo album together (Fig. 26). Their conversation operates as a thread that stitches the loose pictures together. Ana

inquires about taboos and names realities that have long been undervalued. They talk about the great-grandmother's escape, who abandoned her daughter Herminia. Ana also asks questions that address her own generation's concerns, like "¿y lo del sexo qué, abuela?" ["and what about sex, grandma?"], which also points to a long struggle to decolonize women's pleasure and reproductive rights. In the conversations between Ana and her grandmothers, the reader witnesses the process whereby meaning is assigned to what previously appeared to be irrelevant pieces of the speakers' lives. Just by paying attention to their reality, the witnesses learn that their struggles, their forms of survival, their understanding and their accounts are relevant

Figure 26: Ana and her grandmother check the photo album together

contributions.

In *School Photos and Liquid Time*, Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer discuss the potential of photography not so much to capture the past or the present, but to elicit future readings. The metafictional recreation involved in showing the process of documentation for the comic provides a new reading of the photographs through Ana Penyas' feminist gaze. Photographs find further significance in Walter Benjamin's exploration of the historian as a "collector or bricoleur, in the sense that he or she rummages around in the debris or litter left by the past, and reassembles the fragments in a new 'constellation' that permits the articulation of that which has been left unvoiced" (69). Here, Ana plays the role of family historian, looking through photo albums just like a researcher might collect culturally significant items to reconstruct a collective history. While letting the conversation flow naturally, her inquiries help the reader to witness not only a society frozen in bits and pieces in the family album but, more particularly, the collaborative rereading between grandmother and granddaughter. Three witnesses, the reader, Ana and the grandmother, access interconnected stories that are open to personal interpretation.

The comic's visual style merges photography and drawing. Using "transfer," a technique whereby printed photographs are adhered to paper, Penyas incorporates pictures of fabrics, patterns, objects or faces, creating a disruptive visual aesthetics that is influenced by Russian constructivism and collage. Although photography constitutes documentary evidence, in *Estamos todas bien*, the main characters are never represented in photographs, but only in drawings, because this way their facial expressions or movements can include variations. Photography is mainly used as an attrezzo. Exceptionally, pictures may be a form of visual storytelling, like the fabrics that subtly highlight the work that women have performed for centuries – sewing and making clothes and everything else needed in the home. In *Regarding the Pain of Others,* Susan Sontag stated that, "up to a point, the weight and seriousness of …

photographs survive better in a book, where one can look privately, linger over the pictures, without talking" (121), as opposed to the contemplative exercise conducted at a photography exhibition. In fact, the language of comics can operate as a documentary on its own, since the "succession of replete frames" gives the reader access to "the unfolding of evidence" (Chute 2016, 2). It is the narrative quality of comics that unfolds the documentary nature of photography, adding layers of indexical references to Penyas' grandmothers' stories. However, the photo album is the exception to this rule. Here, the photographs function as such, and legitimize the existence of certain characters, situations and stories. It is here where the narrative subtly subverts the story and, as in the case of the pictures in *Maus*, operates as a breakage from the frame, as a reminder of the story's artificial nature.

Unlike *Un largo silencio* and *El arte de volar*, *Estamos todas bien* lays bare the process of collecting, transmitting and elaborating a discourse of memory. In the conversation with her father, Penyas makes visible not only the ideological framework she is applying to each of her grandmothers, but also the discrepancies, and how Herminia's own son sees her in a different light. For Penyas, the granny is "como una niña" ["like a little girl"], but her father complains that "tú eres su nieta, conmigo no hace más que quejarse" ["you're her granddaughter; with me, all she does is complain"]. In this sense, the reader witnesses Penyas' vantage point. Her father's generation operates as a buffer between her and her grandmothers that allows her to create a much more understanding and informed framework than her father's. He also refuses to justify, as the comic does, Maruja's grumpy, demanding personality. Penyas' framework for each of the grannies is thus challenged, which suggests a possible misinterpretation of their particular circumstances.

The conversations with Maruja and Herminia apparently run smoothly, but Penyas' gaze points to areas of conflict. In one of the scenes, while having lunch with Herminia, she exclaims "¡Abuela, por lo menos déjame fregar!" ["But grandma! At least let me do the dishes!"] over a closeup of the dirty pots and pans in her hands; the following panel shows a pile of things to be washed in the kitchen sink (Fig. 27). She says no more, but the graphiator, who adopts her

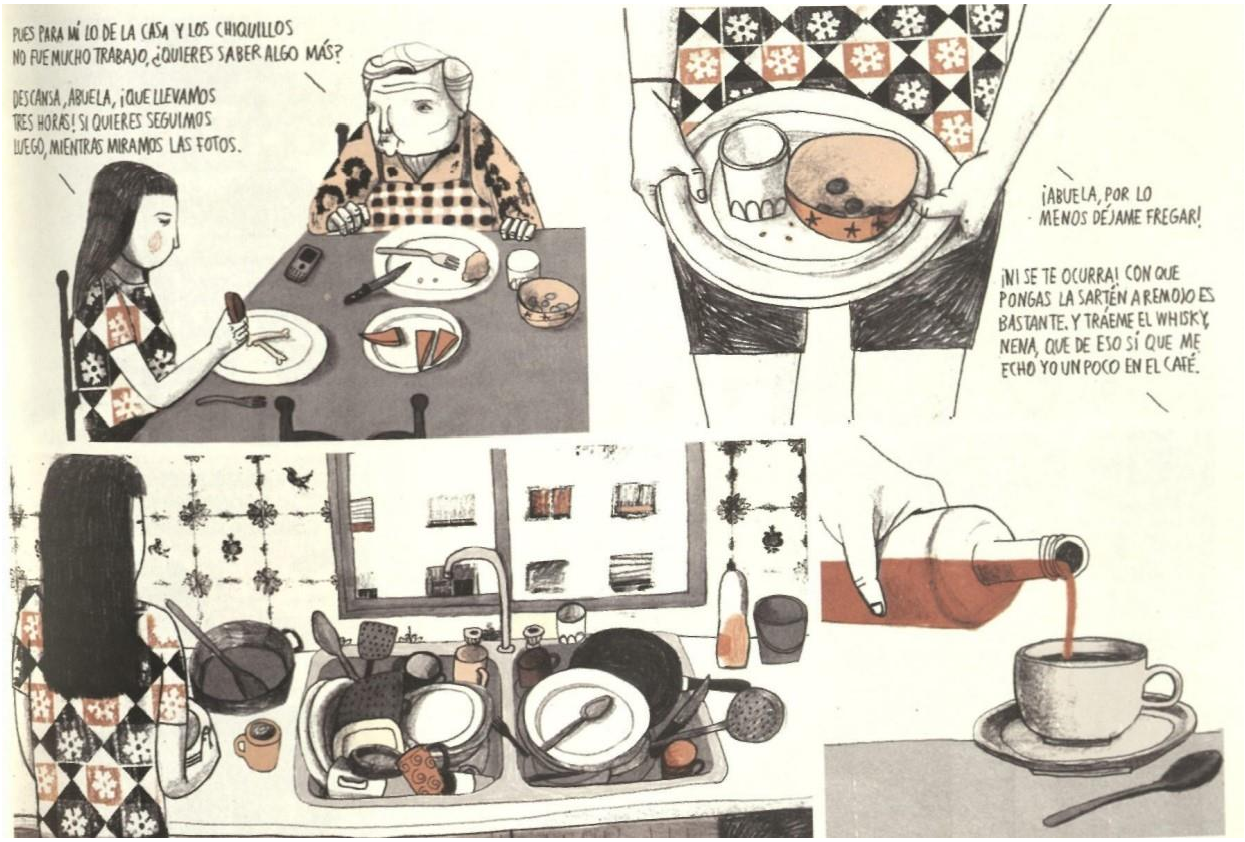

Figure 27: "But grandma! At least let me do the dishes!"

perspective, shows everything, and Penyas looking to the kitchen insinuates that she is aware that it is unfair to let her granny do it all. Almost without words, *Estamos todas bien* recreates a very familiar scene for most readers, promoting their identification with domestic rituals that have for centuries perpetuated women's marginalization from the public and economic spheres.

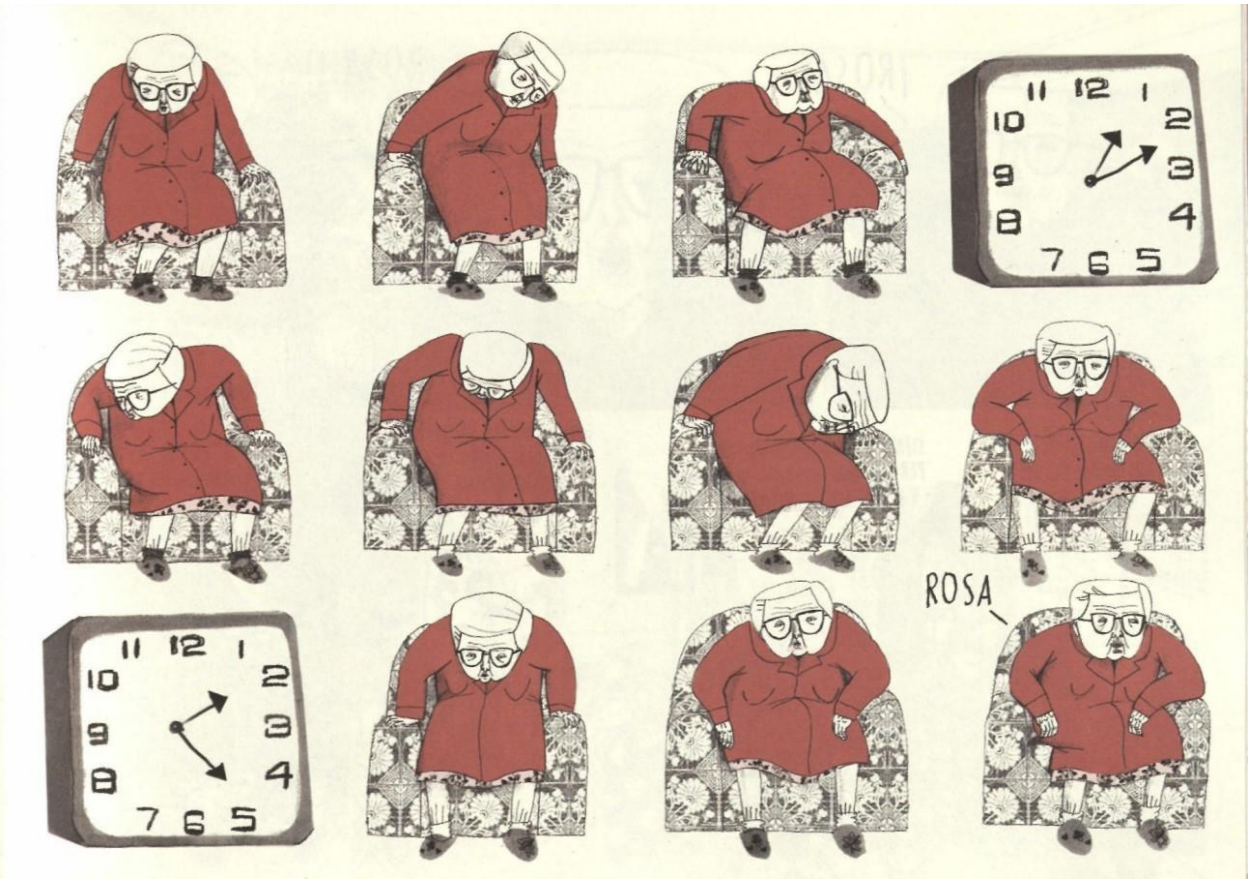

Figure 28: Iteration, boredom and loneliness

Penyas' style places greater weight on the visual than on the textual component. Through small details and insignificant objects, the comic creates a tale that defamiliarizes the ordinary and urges the reader to pay attention. Upon a closer look, the comic describes the subversive potential in the repetitive, boring actions of everyday life (Fig. 28). Whereas transmission in the previous two comics was based on written texts, Penyas' feminist gaze focuses on the silences and voids. In *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Diana Taylor argues that Western epistemologies have favored texts over embodiment and physical performances. In Maruja's and Herminia's lives, the everyday is an iterative performance of chores that underscore their loneliness. Watching TV is a temporary escape that

allows them to join trivial debates about the lives of celebrities and media stars. This is just an alternative to the social interaction with their own families that they long for, endlessly waiting for their kids and grandkids to visit them. The comic focuses on these performances and favors observation and dialogue over memories written on paper. Oral testimony, dialogue and collaboration become a part of Ana's visits, in a ritualistic unburying of memory. Visit after visit, the archive, i.e., the settled past that goes unnoticed, is mobilized and transformed into a repertoire, into an "embodied expression [that] participate[s] in the transmission of social knowledge, memory, and identity pre- and postwriting" (Taylor 16). The readers, who may relate to these ritualistic visits, thus observe the dynamics that subvert or perpetuate memory and identity. What is more, the intergenerational conversation operates as a model for the reader, encouraging repetition and imitation in young women, so that they may learn from and praise those women's experiences that have traditionally been rendered invisible and written out of the recovery of historical memory.

As I will develop further in Chapter four, the gentleness of Ana Penyas' feminist gaze helps to explain the impact of apparently unimportant details in everyday life. What at first seemed to be only the boring rituals of two old ladies contains cues that explain how the sexual division of labor shaped their lives and frustrations. Postmemory in Ana Penyas' *Estamos todas bien* frames the grandmothers' struggles within a feminist logic that constitutes a therapeutic exercise in active listening, which ultimately helps them to become witnesses of their own stories.

The comics studied in this chapter describe the personal quest to rescue those family memories that constantly haunt the descendants. By publishing their stories and sharing them with the audience, postmemory becomes a collective initiative that memorializes the absences

and the biographies censored in official narratives. These three comics are particularly groundbreaking in their use of real referents and sources. Unlike other comics devoted to historical memory, they bear witness, they "see" and they "know," they legitimize and convey experiences that contest decades of silence and oppression. The next generations have provided the safe space and the context to welcome and understand the value of their ancestors' contribution. These comics also describe the creation of a social interlocutor capable of integrating these narratives into the present for future generations.

Chapter 3. Transnational memory: Exile and migration.

Collective memory is revitalized in transmission and circulation flows, either traveling through time or vast territorial expanses, from generation to generation, or crossing geopolitical borders. In recent years, postcolonial, transnational, multicultural and diasporic perspectives have broadened the study of "sites of memory" to acknowledge the value of memory beyond geographical constrictions.[35] Comics have become a privileged medium to explore memories of displacement, especially in relation to spatial justice (Smith, Fiddian-Quasmiyeh, Friedman, Davies, García Navarro, Hong, Rifkind, Mickwitz). Closely linked to human rights literature, graphic novels about the experiences of refugees, displaced persons, migrants and exiles have become firmly consolidated, in works such as Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* (2000), Shaun Tan's *The Arrival* (2006), Carlos Spottorno and Guillermo Abril's *La grieta* [*The Crack*] (2016), Thi Bui's *The Best We Could Do* (2017) and Lindsay Pollack and Benjamin Dix's *A Perilous Journey* (2015). The narration of forced displacement radically subverts the idea of the nation-state, offering a subversive concept of memory "that cuts across and around the political borders of discrete nation-states" (Davies 133) and the political limits of space.

Comics allow an exploration of the represented space and the space of the page that provides an interesting epistemology of displacement and liminality. The strategic arrangement of panels, the composition and distribution of sequences and the performativity of reading offer parallel, against-the-grain itineraries that challenge the logic of reading as well as spatial logic (Fresnault-Deruelle, Hatfield). Whether moving from panel to panel or scanning the page as a

[35] James Clifford (1992) and Paul Gilroy (1993), among others, propose an approach to culture from a transnational perspective. Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider introduce the concept of "cosmopolitan memory" in *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (2001). Andreas Huyssen discusses "memory sites in an expanded field" (2003, 95), Michael Rothberg extends transcultural studies of memory in *Multidirectional Memory* (2009) and Alison Landsberg (2004) studies the circulation of memory through the mass media.

complete image, looking at the panel grid can provide new ways of reading symbolic territories (Groensteen, Frestnault-Deruelle). Comics offer a spatialization of time that allows to explore memory simply by physically glancing at the page.

For exiles without the possibility of return, space, and more specifically home, is transformed into past time. Exile entails an expulsion from the center that places the person in a vulnerable situation. At the center, one enjoys a certain amount of control and may even take part in a collective effort to reach a consensus on the key sites of collective memory. Outside the center or away from home, individual memory maps "imaginary homelands" (Rushdie 2006) that are reconstructed, not in relation to a concrete space, but as a mental projection onto an unknown space. If we are all migrants from the past (Lowenthal 1985), the paradox for displaced people lies in being citizens of the past and experiencing the present as a foreign land (Rushdie 428). Under these conditions, the abandoned space and the past become petrified in a fossil, since as a memory it has lost all possible equivalents in the present reality. Loss appears as irreparable and "the episodes in an exile's life . . . are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever" (Said 173).

Displacement may involve a loss, but also the reconstruction of a collective memory abroad. Furthermore, when there is a possibility of return, the loss is not irreversible. In this chapter, I will study three graphic novels, one about the Republican exile, Paco Roca's *Twists of Fate* (2018; originally published in Spanish as *Los surcos del azar* in 2013), and two about the 1963 migration, Kike Benlloch and Alberto Vázquez's *Freda* (2002) and Kim's *Nieve en los bolsillos* [*Snow in My Pockets*] (2018). *Freda* and *Twists* address lack in an inaccessible space that is transformed into a point in the past. *Nieve en los bolsillos*, on the other hand, describes

identity and communal reconstruction in the foreign country. In other words, *Twists* and *Freda* talk about nostalgia and pain for the homeland, whereas *Nieve* talks about the creation of a new community in the host country.

Nostalgia transforms places into moments in the past and the language of comics is based on the reverse operation: the transformation of time into space. The most basic operation in graphic narrative involves breaking down the different moments of an action into sequential panels, such that the panel on the left represents something that happens before what happens on the panel on the right. This simple mechanism transforms moments into space of the page, which allows to organize and reorganize relationships between time, space and causality (Hillary Chute [*Disaster Drawn*], Scott McCloud, Charles Hatfield). For these reasons, in this chapter I will be exploring how the temporalization of space in the exiles' experience is translated into the spatialization of time in the comic's panels. In the case of comics about exile, which refer to a displaced memory whose center is located outside the pages, the space of the page and the represented space enter into a significant relationship. In this regard, my analysis starts from the following questions: How is historical memory detached from the national territory aesthetically expressed? How is the idea of the nation-state defined or subverted? How are different memories transnationally imbricated? What do these displaced voices contribute to Spain's democratic memory? And, finally, what are the distinctive features of the language of comics that allow explore displaced memory?

Exile and Migration in Context

In recent years, there has been an exponential increase in comics' interest in human rights narratives and, more specifically, stories of migration and exile (Rifkind 2017), as part of a new

post-Cold-War global hegemony (Hong 2016, 195). From *comics journalism*, initiated by Joe Sacco,[36] to *Maus*' personal testimonial approach, the narrative potential of genres such as biography and autobiography (El Refaie 2012), documentaries (Mickwitz 2016) and war literature (Chute 2016) to address issues of political violence, justice and memory within an international context has expanded. In this regard, NGOs have favored comics as a medium to make their projects known.[37] However, the vast majority of stories establish, from the start, an unequal relationship between the observer and narrator, usually a white person from an industrialized country, and the locals who give their testimony.[38] Collaborations with NGOs usually resort to empathy to mobilize First World consumers and provide only limited reflection on the positionality of the creators, in addition to superficial knowledge of structural problems and inequalities (Smith, Davies, Rifkind).

In contrast to these commissioned works, some of the most widely acclaimed graphic novels, which have contributed to consolidate the genre as artistic expression, are actually stories

[36] Comics journalism "is an emerging field that combines the journalistic approach with comics to produce news stories. It is often defined by Joe Sacco and his two books on Palestine in the mid-1990s (Sacco 1996, 1993), which are considered the pioneering work that created the genre, differentiating it from other non-fictional graphic novels such as historical non-fiction, biographies and memoirs" (Weber and Rall 2017, 1).

[37] We could cite Doctors Without Borders, for the publication of *Como si nunca hubieran sido* (2018) [*As if They Had Never Been*], a comics-poem about migrants who died in the Strait of Gibraltar; OXFAM, for *Viñetas de Vida* (2015) [*Life Vignettes*], with the collaboration of the most consolidated authors in Spain; OXFAM in collaboration with Ojopúblico.com, for *La guerra por el agua* [*The War for Water*] (2016); CESAL, for *Puro Perú* [*Pure Peru*] (2019); and the foundation *I live here* (2008), for the eponymous commission, among many others.

[38] In general, those who tell the story are white persons from industrialized countries who spend a few weeks in the country of destination to collect material for their work. These narratives are not created with the local public in mind, but for the consumers that the NGOs need to appeal to in order to obtain their altruistic financial contribution. As explained by Sidonie Smith in "Human Rights," "[t]hese readers are addressed as privileged, safe subjects to be enlightened about conditions elsewhere, and their reading rehearses a form of rescue of the other through the invitation to empathetic identification and outrage" (64). Empathy leads to a commodification of trauma that reproduces colonial logic and a revictimization of the subjects represented. "I raise these issues about the way comics in human rights campaigns manage subjectivities," Smith continues, "not to deny the power of crisis comics . . . [but] to provide a cautionary note about the impact of the . . . personal narration and their commodification in global flows that do the work of rearranging histories, identities, and the politics of empathy" (66).

of migration and exile, such as *Maus*, Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*, Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Power Paola's *Virus tropical* [*Tropical Virus*] and Joe Sacco's *Palestine*. Except for Joe Sacco's, these already canonic comics speak with insider's knowledge, from a first-person experience that entails a less problematic positionality than that of foreign authors commissioned to depict unknown realities. Joe Sacco is an exception, since he is a white Western man residing in the United States who visits conflict zones, but his stories are acclaimed precisely because he problematizes his privileged positionality in order to draw attention to structural inequalities.

Nieve en los bolsillos, *Freda* and *Twists of Fate* are among the works that have expanded the comic genre's capacity to narrate beyond its expressive and geopolitical borders. As we will see, each of them offers a reflection on forced mass displacement from the standpoint of the local and the personal, while also addressing structural inequalities. They each pertain to a different genre, which defines their approach to the subject: *Nieve en los bolsillos* is a *memoir*, *Twists of Fate* is a historical novel and *Freda* is fiction.

The concepts of emigration, migration, immigration, political asylum, refugees, exiles, expatriates, statelessness or diaspora are usually mentioned as part of the same semantic family, even though each has specific characteristics. During the Francoist regime, the main displacements were exile and migration, what Aristide R. Zolberg calls "chemins de la faim, chemins de la peur" ["roads of hunger, roads of fear"] (36 and ff.).[39] Franco never deprived exiles of their nationality – as happened, for example, to Jews in Third Reich Germany –, but their flight was a political one. Eduardo Santos, President of Colombia (1938-1942), stated that the Republican exile was the exile of an entire people, "desde el analfabeto hasta los hombres de

[39] Except as otherwise noted, all English translations are the author's.

mayor ciencia y cultura" ["from illiterate people to men with greater knowledge and culture"] (Eduardo Santos in Alted, 21). From their extraordinarily privileged position, intellectuals even renamed their new condition. Thus, José Gaos defined himself as "transterrado" and Juan Ramón Jiménez as "conterrado,"[40] "como si, rico en títulos y calidades, muchas oportunidades diferentes se le ofrecieran" ["as if, being rich in degrees and qualities, different opportunities were offered to him"] (Solanes 65). Intellectuals were the first to leave when the war started in 1936, most of them to Mexico (Dreyfus-Armand, Rubio, Abellán). But the vast majority of the displaced were women, children and men of a humbler condition who fled to save their lives. Half a million went to France, which reluctantly acted as a host country, building concentration camps along the Pyrenees – Le Vernet, Argelès, Saint-Cyprien, etc. – and in its African colonies (Rubio 1977). Many children were sent to the USSR and several thousand refugees went to Argentina, the United States and Puerto Rico.

The next great mass displacement was emigration from Spain during the 1960s and 1970s. It is estimated that about 600,000 Spaniards emigrated between 1960 and 1974, most of them through the "Acuerdo entre el Gobierno del Estado Español y el Gobierno de la República Federal de Alemania sobre migración, contratación y colocación de trabajadores españoles en la República Federal de Alemania, 1963" ["Agreement between the Spanish Government and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany on the migration, hiring and placement of Spanish workers in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1963"], although some were undocumented (Muñoz-Sánchez 2012)[41]. Unlike exile, migration takes place primarily for

[40] Neither "transterrado" nor "conterrado" have an exact translation. They are both derived from "desterrado" ("banished"), which literally means "without a land", with the prefix "trans-" indicating "across," and "con-" indicating "with." "Transterrado" has since become frequently used; "conterrado" has not.

[41] But Germany was not the only host country. In fact, Spanish migration took place within a much broader context, where other Mediterranean countries, such as Italy, Yugoslavia or Algeria, among others, provided low-

economic reasons. Those Spaniards who left acted as an economic driving force for two countries: the country of origin, because their remittances helped to finance an economy that had been ravaged by the war and international isolation, and the country of destination, because they provided cheap labor.

The demographics of the 1960s migratory phenomenon is varied, although not as heterogeneous as that of exile. Migrants were mostly men and women from the poorest regions in Spain; specifically, Murcia, Andalusia and all the provinces bordering Portugal (Muñoz Sánchez 28). Thus, whereas exile included waves of displaced persons from all social classes and a broad demographic spectrum, with different left-wing ideologies and whose experiences varied from host country to host country,[42] the migrant group was ideologically more diverse, but more homogeneous in terms of destination and educational and socioeconomic levels.

As we will see in the three works analyzed, each group was subject to different pressures. *Twists of Fate* addresses loss and nostalgia with a clear political component. *Nieve en los bolsillos* and *Freda* emphasize living, working and economic conditions, everyday challenges,

skilled workers to more industrialized countries in the rest of Europe, including France, Germany and Switzerland (Babiano and Farré 2002, 81). According to Ana Fernández Asperilla, Germany would have received 377,415 Spaniards; Switzerland, 376,551; and France, 222,239 (1998). France was a unique case, since hundreds of thousands of Spanish exiles were already working there and had taken their families. Since the creation of the Office National d'Immigration [National Immigration Office] in 1945, France acted in coordination with Spain, in an attempt to curb the arrival of Algerian migrants, especially after independence in 1962. Both France and Switzerland favored Central and North European workers, but, due to their socioeconomic circumstances, there were more Mediterranean workers. For reasons of proximity, Italians made up the majority of migrants in Switzerland, and both this country and France promoted regularization after the fact, i.e., they had the workers arrive undocumented and, once they found employment, apply for residence and work permits. Germany had the opposite model, which is why German data and figures are much more accurate than French or Swiss ones (Babiano and Farré 2002).

[42] Alicia Alted suggests talking about memories, rather than memory, in relation to the Republican exile, because there was a great variety: "el colectivo de los anarquistas en Francia, los niños de la guerra evacuados a la URSS, el de los hijos de los refugiados en México educados en colegios creados ex profeso para ellos, o el de los guerrilleros españoles que participaron en la Resistencia francesa" ["the anarchists in France, the war children evacuated to the USSR, the children of refugees in Mexico who were educated in schools expressly created for them, or the Spanish guerrilla fighters who participated in the French Resistance"] (Alted 398).

adaptation and the difficulties it entails. Stories of exiles and migrants share a sense of estrangement, the bicultural configuration of identity and a prominent discourse on physical and symbolic territory. Whether the characters wish to return to Spain or not, the country and their past in it morphs into an instant in the past rather than a geographical, physical space. Spain is thus shaped as a sort of chronotope of loss and lack.

In *Nieve en los bolsillos*, self-representation and, especially, metafiction and remediation offer a productive reflection on individual and collective memory. *Nieve* recreates the author's migratory journey to Germany as a young artist's portrait. Kim, who has just completed two years at the Fine Arts School, makes frequent portraits and pictorial compositions of his life abroad, the originals of which are incorporated at the end of the story as annexes. Inside the work, these paintings are remediated in the form of comics and summarize his and his friends' personal experiences, thus setting up a dialogue between the condensation characteristic of painting and the use of sequential images in comics. Both expressions are the product of Kim's personal gaze – he produces both the paintings and the comic – as a reflection of a community, of friends and people who search for themselves in them. The paintings, remediated by the comic, transcend the represented group to offer a panoramic view in which the collective memory of migration is reflected.

In contrast to Kim's personal memory, *Freda* and *Twists of Fate* present fiction stories about migration and exile. In *Twists of Fate*, Paco Roca invents an interview with Miguel, whom he never met, as he was a Republican ex-combatant that really existed but whose trace was lost upon his return to Spain as a *maquis* fighter after contributing to the liberation of Paris. The author had access to Miguel's story because historian Robert Coale documented his experiences and interviewed other ex-combatants and Miguel's descendants in France. The memory boom

has favored the return of historical novels (Amago 243; Dorca 14; Lopez-Quiñones 112) and, within the comic book genre, the combination of historiography, *memoir* and fiction makes *Twists of Fate* one of the most enriching publications. Finally, *Freda* is a fictional story, but contains testimonies of Spanish migrants collected by Kike Benlloch. It tells the story of Manu, a ten-year-old Spanish boy who migrates to Germany with his parents. There, he meets Freda, his first love, but is forced to forget her when the family has to return to Spain six years later. This work is a story of both heartbreak and rootlessness that reflects on "the most important and least recognized need of the human soul"– "to be rooted" (Simone Weil 1995, 41).

The three comics, *Freda*, *Twists of Fate* and *Nieve en los bolsillos*, interpellate the so-called "we're not leaving, we're being kicked out" generation, the wave of young, highly skilled Spaniards who emigrated in the early 2000s because of the scarcity of job opportunities (cf. Hristova, González-Ferrer et al.). As of today, the number of Spaniards abroad is far greater than that of foreign residents in Spain.[43] Migration, whether of low-skilled or highly specialized labor, is an experience of rootlessness that produces a constant, hard-to-accept estrangement. Nostalgia and personal experiences connect generations that are decades apart. Whereas, as we saw in chapter 2, the 2008 economic crisis expressed the population's tensions through testimonial comics about the war and the dictatorship, comics like *Nieve*, *Freda* and *Twists* express social concern for contemporary emigration. Likewise, these stories remind younger generations that Spain was a country of emigrants precisely when it has become a host country for migrants and that those Spanish refugees could be today's refugees from other countries. Comics' visual appearance not only proposes new itineraries to communicate displaced memory, but also

[43] See *Anuario de migraciones 2000*, Dirección General de Ordenación de las Migraciones [General Directorate for Migrations]. Madrid, 2000.

mobilizes a graphic archive, as is particularly evident in *Nieve en los bolsillos*, where the mediation and remediation of images constructs a multidirectional discourse of memory.

Twists of Fate

In *Twists of Fate* (originally published in 2013), Paco Roca provides a fictionalized account of the life of Miguel Campos, a Republican exile and combatant in "La Nueve" or "La Nueve" company of the French Allied army during World War II. Even in French, they were referred to as "La Nueve" because the vast majority of soldiers were from Spain (Dronne 1984). After the victory of the Francoist army in Spain, Miguel and many other opponents of the regime had to go into exile to save their lives. Thousands of people crowded the port of Alicante waiting for a British coal ship, the Stanbrook, one of the few instances of international aid that defied the non-intervention agreement signed by the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy and non-European other countries, including the United States. Once on board, few foreign ports were willing to take in the Spanish exiles. In the end, only France accepted them, primarily to feed the labor camps in its African colonies. Miguel and other young men with combat experience found a way out of the grueling forced labor conditions by enlisting in the French army against Hitler. In addition to their desire to leave the camps, they were motivated by the conviction that defeating German Fascism would be the first step to liberate Spain from the dictator. After an adjustment period, they adapted to the French fighting style, joined the ninth company or la Nueve, under the command of Captain Raymond Dronne, and arrived in occupied France as part of the army. La Nueve was one of the battalions usually chosen to act as an advance party because its members knew how to fight and had three years' experience in a real war. This is why it was the first company to show up on the streets of Paris and reach City Hall, where a

handful of French soldiers were resisting the small German army. This was probably the easiest "victory," after battles with numerous casualties on both sides, ambushes and various other difficulties, because by then the German army had already withdrawn in order to join the offensive in Eastern Europe and Russia. The day after the arrival of La Nueve in Paris, the rest of the French army expelled the few German soldiers who remained barricaded at the Telephone Office. Once the danger had been dispelled, President De Gaulle announced the victory and the liberation was celebrated with a parade.

According to historical sources, this is where Miguel Campos' trace was lost (Mesquida, 2008). Like most Spaniards, he was hopeful that fighting Fascism in Europe would bring about the liberation of Spain. It is believed that disappointed, like so many others, he returned to Spain on his own to fight with the guerrilla as a *maqui*, but nothing else is known. His exact journey has been recreated thanks to the detailed documentation in Evelyn Mesquida's *La nueve: Los españoles que liberaron París* [*The Ninth: The Spaniards Who Liberated Paris*] (2008), a thorough compilation of testimonies from the ex-combatants who were still alive. Roca happened to attend the book's presentation in Paris, where survivors Rafael Gómez, Manuel Fernández and Luis Royo participated. That experience was very moving and inspiring:

> Me impactó ver a ancianos relatando su experiencia de guerra. Me impactó y me pareció enternecedor. Y sobre todo me pareció increíble que unos españoles hubieran hecho eso. Me sonaba haber visto en alguna foto que había blindados semiorugas con nombres de ciudades españolas, pero nada más. Nunca me había planteado cómo llegaron allí o si había españoles entre ellos. Luego me di cuenta de que esta historia me daba pie a hablar de historia contemporánea y de algo de lo que muy pocas veces se habla, que es el exilio

español y, en particular, el del norte de África, que es desde donde parte mi relato sobre La Nueve. (Corazón Rural, 2014)

[It was shocking to hear elderly men recounting their war experience. I found it shocking and poignant. And, above all, I found it hard to believe that Spaniards had done that. I recalled seeing some photos with armored half-tracks named after Spanish cities, but that was it. I never wondered how they got there or whether there were Spaniards among them. Later, I realized that this story opened the door for talking about contemporary history and something that is hardly ever discussed, Spanish exile and, specifically, exile in Northern Africa, which is where my story about La Nueve begins.]

In addition to the testimonies collected by Mesquida, Roca had access to historian Robert S. Coale's research and Captain Raymond Dronne's memoirs (Claudio 2018). Rafael Gómez, "un tipo muy hermético que nunca quiso hablar de su vida"[44] ["a very hermetic guy who never wanted to talk about his life"] (Roca), served as an inspiration for Ruiz's sullen character and Dronne's *Carnets de route d'un croisé de la France Libre* (1984)[*Logbooks of a Free France Crusader*] provided information about Campos in combat. Where Mesquida and Dronne "no llegaban, estaban los estudios de Coale a partir de los archivos militares y testimonios"[45] ["did not offer information, [I had] Coale's studies based on military archives and testimonies"] (Roca). Among all the combatants, Roca chose to narrate Campos' life because his disappearance in mid-December after the liberation (Mesquida 2008, 75) facilitated recreating an anonymous, collective hero (Jiménez 2013).

[44] Paco Roca. Personal interview. December 11, 2021.
[45] Ibid.

As a frame for the story, Roca invents an interview that never took place with an already elderly Miguel Campos, who, in the comic, has changed his name to Miguel Ruiz to go unnoticed. Interviews have been widely used as a resource in comics since Art Spiegelman's *Maus* popularized the trend by transcribing conflictive conversations between father and son.[46] Roca makes up this interview to mediate with the present-day public on two levels. Firstly, to discuss and explore the most controversial aspects of war actions and, secondly, to appeal to a public unaccustomed to reading comics by providing a touch of realism. As expressed by Paco Roca: "I used the interview to surprise readers, so that they would read the story in a different way. I mean, it's nothing new: *Fargo* [Joel and Ethan Coen, 1996] uses the 'based on a true story' device, and that helps to appeal to what could otherwise be a reluctant audience" (Claudio 2018, 129). That is, if comics are a medium associated with adventure stories such as Miguel's war experiences, the interview places these adventures within a more realistic frame.

The fictitious conversation allows to explain various controversial decisions and actions, as shown in the slight disagreement between Roca and Miguel when the former reprimands the latter for executing his enemies and Miguel answers: "¿Quién te crees tú que eres para venir aquí a juzgarme?" ["Who the heck do you think you are to come and judge me?"] (221). The author created the interview because he was "interested in learning how anyone copes with whatever they did in the war. Many ex-combatants were proud to say that they never executed enemies, but Miguel Campos did, so how would somebody like him see that years later?" (Claudio 129).

[46] In this regard, the conflicts are different from the difficult relationship between Artie and Vladek, since the father is much more contradictory and unpleasant than Miguel. There is more problematization in Spiegelman's personal conflict, especially in relation to the use of comics as a medium to explore the memory of the Holocaust, than in *Twists*, where Paco Roca's alter ego rarely asks himself whether he is portraying Miguel in an appropriate, truthful manner.

These explanations help to address issues that preoccupy, not Miguel's generation, but Roca's and the contemporary readers'.

Moreover, the success of *Twists of Fate* catalyzed various forms of memorialization of "La Nueve" in Spain. In France, the company has been acknowledged in streets and small events because it was the first to arrive and liberate Paris from the German army. It was composed of one hundred and sixty men, of which one hundred and forty-six were Spaniards – which is why it was known by its Spanish name in the French army. However, the actions of these Spanish exiles were practically unknown in their own country. The comic's success triggered great interest in "La Nueve," which translated into various events and monuments (Conde 2015, Constantini 2017). This allowed the Spanish public to pay tribute to the memory of its own combatants, as had already been done in France since 2004, although in Spain their memorialization had to wait until 2017.[47]

The comic has transcended its pages and reactivated the combatants' memory, but new documents have also made it necessary to introduce some changes to conform to the truth. Since the 2019 edition, a new text entitled "Borrando el punto final" ["Erasing the End"] is included, where the author, historian Robert Coale and Miguel Campos' granddaughter talk about, among other things, the mistakes in the work. After its initial publication in 2013, new research leads were discovered which refuted some of the graphic novel's episodes. In addition to this final

[47] In France, the first commemoration took place in 2004, with the plaque "*Aux républicains espagnols, composante principale de la colonne Dronne*" ["To the Spanish Republicans, main components of the Dronne column"] on Quai Henri IV and at Place Pinel, both of which they crossed during the "liberation" (Lefebvre 2011). In 2010, the few veterans that were still alive received the Médaille Grand Vermeil (Úbeda 2010). In 2014, the liberation was commemorated with a march along the route that they followed, which was attended by the only participant still alive, Rafael Gómez, and, subsequently, a park was inaugurated in Paris. It was only in 2017 when Manuela Carmena, Mayor of Madrid, inaugurated the first monument, a park called "Jardín de los Combatientes" ["Combatants' Garden"] (Constantini 2017).

conversation, Roca includes new panels that show his concern for the story's veracity. One of them shows Miguel Campos' life before his arrival at the CFA (*Corps Francs d'Afrique*) on the basis of the information that the ex-combatant's daughter and granddaughter shared with the author.

Most studies about this comic use their analysis to celebrate the recovery of the exiles' memory (Pérez, Del Rey). *Twists* may be considered a form of docufiction (Martínez Rubio) that serves to underpin the project of Spain's democratic memory and some approaches consider the interview as a form of hauntology, i.e., of expressing mnemonic tensions through spectral figures, such as a dead Miguel Ruiz (Harris). Without a doubt, Roca offers a reflection on historiography. In fact, he disguises history as memory to stress the importance of legitimizing and documenting testimonies. For Roca, "this is the anti-story of historical memory. For years, testimonies weren't checked: you could have a relative who was involved in a war, you wrote down [their] experience and that became true" (Claudio 130). But the relationship between memory and history is also present in the rest of the texts I discuss in this work. I return to the questions that guide my inquiry: What do these displaced voices contribute to Spanish democratic memory? How is historical memory detached from the national territory aesthetically expressed? How does it subvert or define the idea of the nation-state? Jorge Catalá (2018) focuses on transnational memory, one of the features that distinguishes *Twists* from the rest of the testimonial comics described in chapter 2. Catalá approaches this work from Jacques Rancière's concept of political art, as "un distanciamiento con respecto a las emociones (*pathos*) para favorecer un acercamiento intelectual (*logos*) ante el acto creativo" ["a distance from emotion (*pathos*) to favor an intellectual approach (*logos*) to the creative act"] (Catalá 160), such that "el artista (como también el escritor) mantiene una posición similar al exiliado o desterrado"

["the artist (and also the writer) maintains a position similar to the exiled or banished person"] (161). It is interesting to consider *Twists* a creative distancing exercise, but the construction of transnational memory provides it with greater significance.

One of the issues that have not been studied in sufficient depth, and which I address here, is the relationship between memory of World War II and of the Spanish Civil War through multidirectional memory. In *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (2009), Michael Rothberg coins the term "multidirectional" memory to describe how different historical phenomena can mutually mobilize their memories. Furthermore, Rothberg refuses to establish a directly proportional relationship between memory and identity or to consider identity from the standpoint of alterity, from what distinguishes it from the "other." Instead, he problematizes this approach and recognizes the heterogeneity of social memory, the inclusive, assertive belonging to more than one group. In the case of *Twists,* memory of World War II is multidirectionally related to Spanish historical memory by means of a common enemy of the Spaniards and the French, and even of the German, British, American and gypsy anti-Fascists. Moreover, the popularity of World War II in the media amplifies the importance of Spanish historical memory. The fight against Nazism is probably the war conflict that has been most often portrayed in audiovisual media (Kaes 1989). Hitler, and consequently his army, is a "symbol of evil" (Hirt 2013); thus, in *Twists of Fate,* Spanish Republican memory is multidirectionally associated with the fight against the symbol of evil. Likewise, the ending with Miguel settled in France emphasizes a hybrid exiled memory, one that goes beyond links to a territory or nation. Miguel is as much Spanish as French, a hybridity that calls into question the borders of the recovery of historical memory and shows that the memory of Francoism is closely linked to that of Nazism.

Apart from the mobilization of popular memory, the comic does not focus on the exiles' heroism, but on the solidity of their anti-Fascist values. La Nueve did not "liberate" Paris – since most of the German troops had already left to support Nazi expansion in Eastern Europe – and this "liberation" was not as significant as certain battles (Stalingrad, for example). "The real value of La Nueve is symbolic: it's about these people who kept fighting for many years for what they believed in Africa and in Europe. The tragedy is that they did it all with one goal in mind – to free Spain from fascism – and that was the only thing they could not achieve, no matter how hard they tried" (Claudio 2018). The comic is a story of nostalgia in the etymological sense of the word, pain for the homeland – of the homeland that would have existed if the Fascist army had not won the war or of a Spain that would have defeated Franco. Miguel's and the rest of La Nueve's combatants' heroism is highlighted by their constant search for an ideal. It is not about returning to a geographical point, but to a point in time, in the past cherished by nostalgia. Moreover, Miguel returns to his country decades later, after Franco's death, but "no soportaba ya vivir allí. Aquella España era muy diferente a la de antes de la guerra. La dictadura había convertido a todo el mundo en sonámbulos, en gente gris y triste" ["he couldn't stand living there. That Spain was very different from the one before the war. The dictatorship had made everyone somnambulists, gray, sad people"] (313). These words suggest that "that Spain" is not a geographical area, but a space linked to a moment in the past. Spain is an absence in Miguel's present, just as exiles are an absence in contemporary Spain.

The departure into exile introduces the comic and is represented as an eternal moment in which space and time significantly converge (Fig. 29).

Figure 29. Departure in Twists of Fate*, p. 15*

A large number of men, women and children crowd at the port of Alicante waiting for the Stanbrook, a British coal ship, the only one that the Francoist authorities allowed to reach the coast despite the non-intervention agreement signed by the rest of European countries. The first page presents close-ups of several people and moves on slowly, which creates a very tense wait.

On the next page, the layout sets up a “wall” between two rows of panels, which allows both a horizontal and a vertical reading. On the left column, we see boarding through the fence door and, on the right, people who jump the fence. The latter convey the anxiety, uncontrolled fear, injustice and conflicting emotions that, in a life-and-death situation, cannot be contained by a fence. If we read it horizontally, the “official” entry is juxtaposed with that of those who jump the fence. The border operates both as a dramatic element and a starting point. It separates the anonymous lives of those who stayed behind and the lives that will be subsequently narrated. Within the chronotope of the journey that frames this story, a “threshold” moment such as this usually describes a time that seems to have no duration. These are usually decisive moments, permeated by a high emotional-evaluative intensity, because they represent a “crisis and break in life” (Bakhtin 148). The “departure” establishes a symbolic division on a spatial and temporal level, a dividing line between those who leave and those who stay, those who survive and those who don’t, the lives that will be narrated and anonymous lives, Miguel’s idealized Spain and Franco’s Spain.

Past and present are differentiated by means of lines and color (Fig 30). The present is

Figure 30 – Past vs present through color.

pale by comparison to the past, which appears to be sharp and full of life. The description is solid, with thick, but also dynamic, light lines, in a typical clear-line style. In contrast, what happens in the present is drawn in grayish hues, almost black and white. The lines are much thinner, they sometimes overlap or run into one another, like sketches, thus leading to almost transparent figures. The panels' frames also create a strong contrast. The panels pertaining to the past have a border; those pertaining to the present do not. The latter is a *continuum*, the time of the ordinary that slips through the fingers. It is subject to constant transformation and ethereal, whereas, since it cannot be changed, the past is packed between well-defined lines. This was the time when Miguel was happiest, his moments of glory, love and solidarity, full of color and life.

In addition to the chronotopic separation that initiates the hero's journey and the separation between past and present that the images convey, there is a separation between heaven and earth, between ideals and reality, expressed through Antonio Machado's poetry. The work's title in Spanish, *Los surcos del azar*, is a verse from a poem that explores the division between heaven and earth: "¿Para qué llamar caminos / a los surcos del azar? / Todo el que camina anda, /

como Jesús, sobre el mar" ["Why should we call / these accidental furrows roads? / Everyone who moves on walks, / like Jesus, on the sea"].[48] The original poem belongs to the section "Proverbios y cantares" ["Proverbs and Songs"] in *Nuevos Poemas* [*New Poems*] (1924), a book published when the poet was already middle-aged, and which includes reflections on the human and the divine, political confrontation in Spain and an exploration of the Castilian countryside. This poem sets an interesting contrast between the depth of the furrows and the lightness of the sea. The human and the divine are opposed in terms of the permanence of their actions and the balance of their steps: walking on land is plowing the fields, it is effort and depth. Walking on water is the miracle, the perfect balance that the human condition cannot attain. Figure 31 insists on this separation: Miguel drags through the desert, fleeing the French labor camps, while looking for stars in the shape of Spain (115). Thus, the country is represented as an unattainable ideal, as a constellation of stars.

Figure 31 Constellation of Spain – Twists, *p. 115*

In order to reinforce the symbolism, Roca invents a beloved woman for Miguel called Estrella (star). They meet aboard the Stanbrook and see each other again, by chance, during the liberation of Paris. Estrella is there because she has become a spy for French intelligence. Since

[48] The English translation was taken from http://lilliputreview.blogspot.com/2010/04/antonio-machado-i-never-wanted-fame.html. The word *surcos* literally means furrows.

the trace of the real Miguel Campos was lost, Roca imagines that Miguel Ruiz flees with Estrella to continue the struggle in Spain, but they have a car accident and she dies. Miguel buries her in the French village and decides to stay there with her until the end of his life. With Estrella's death, the Miguel invented by Roca buries his ideals six feet underground. The "furrows" sink deep down while ideals vanish.

In addition to mediating with the present-day public, Roca's fictitious interview serves to offer a panoramic view of the war. As explained by the author: "[w]e're used to war films where the protagonist is just a private but still seems to have a whole picture of the war, but the reality is that they wouldn't know what was going on in most cases. Consequently, if I'd stuck to the story of La Nueve, without the section concerning the present, that soldier wouldn't have been able to give me a complex perspective" (Claudio 130). The comic juxtaposes, on a single page, maps of the operations and the protagonists' actions (pp. 63, 87, 88, 99), thus combining the global and the individual perspective on the same plane. In this sense, maps serve to place memory on another plane, the international one, and the fictitious interview helps to understand the significance of concrete actions.

The comic's climax takes place during the so-called "liberation of Paris," the last battle in which French and Spanish soldiers fought with a common objective. This decisive moment breaks the reading sequence in two ways. On the one hand, it is narrated in the form of maps and, on the other, these maps take up the space of the page, which has significant spatio-temporal implications (pp. 265, 270-71).

In comics, full-page images are a formal tool used to stop time. Actually, a full-page

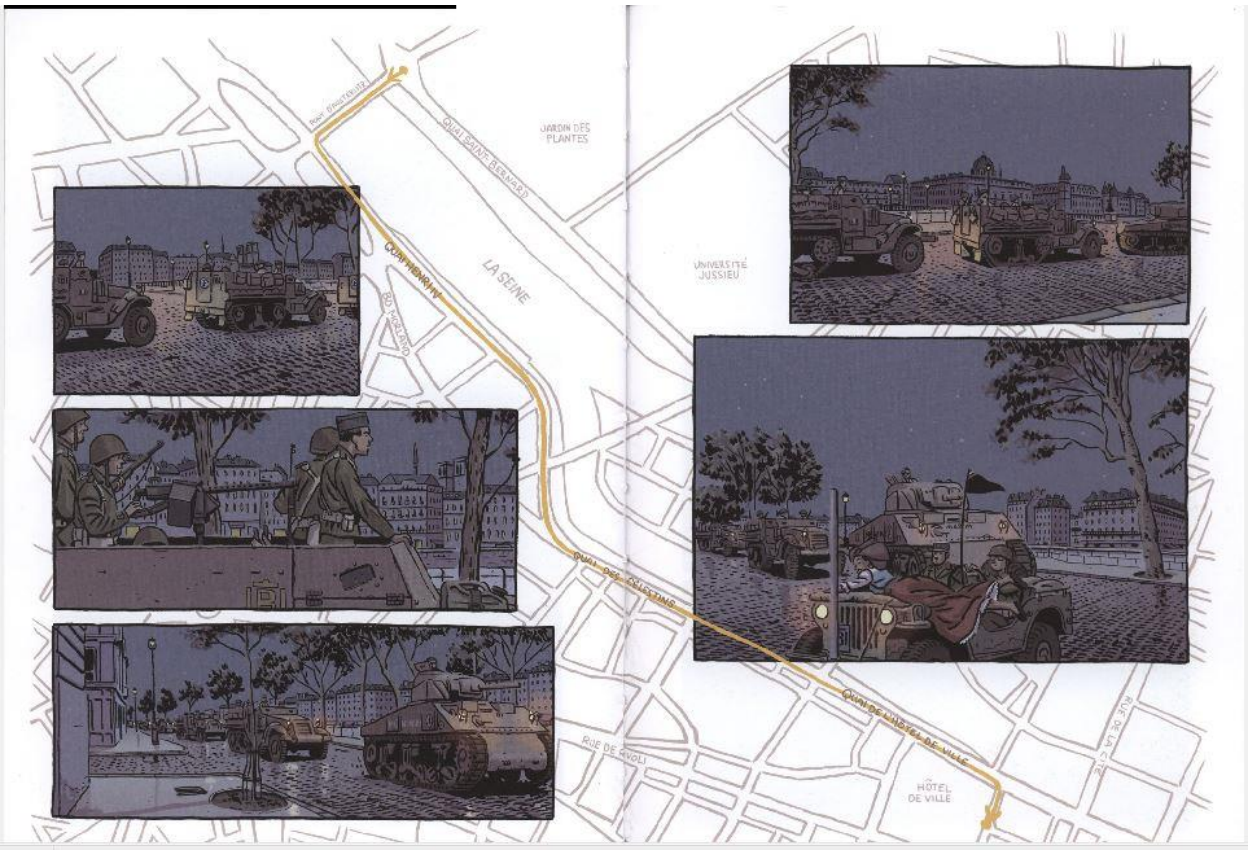

Figure 32: Unfolded map, pp. 270-71

image is a panel that is isolated from its sequence. Reading of the panels is based on what Thierry Groensteen calls "iconic solidarity" (2007, 18), i.e., a formal interconnection created by juxtaposition on the page. In the usual, sequential reading of panels, Benoit Peeters and Pierre Fresnault-Deruelle describe a panel as an unbalanced image, trapped between what came before and what will come next (Peeters 1998, 22). On a temporal level, the panel delimits a double quality – the present moment in itself and the present that is defined by the past and future. When this sequence is broken, there is an interruption or, at least, a readjustment in the reading process. The page then "functions both as sequence and as object, to be seen and read in both linear and

nonlinear, holistic fashion" (Hatfield 2005, 48). While each of the previous panels contained a moment, this page condenses the sum of those moments.

The reading process is not only altered by the double-page illustration, but, most importantly, by the cartographic rearrangement of the sequence. There is no longer a grid of panels to be read from left to right and from top to bottom. In fact, the panels' content is not especially relevant and only describes the tense quiet of the moment. In this way, the reader's gaze ceases, at least for a while, to mechanically follow the rows of panels and move the narration forward, to walk the streets of Paris with the characters. The multiplication of itineraries offers a variety of possibilities and choices, and the reader may decide how to continue, which path to follow, which story to narrate (to themselves). This is what Espen J. Aarseth, in *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (1997), calls ergodic reading, which labyrinthine page distributions develop to map the characters' affects and memories through the page and the represented surroundings. Therefore, this combines the Daedalic experience, which allows to see the entire labyrinth, and the Theseian experience, which moves step by step, wandering along the paths.

Twists thus proposes new ways of traveling through historical memory by recovering the memory of exiles, i.e., subjects that have not only been marginalized by historiography, but literally expelled from their territory to become reinscribed on European soil and within the space of an international conflict. The multidirectionality of this memory builds bridges between World War II and the Spanish Civil War, thus drawing up a broader map of memory. Multidirectional memory considers identity as a sum of alterities, as belonging to different, non-mutually exclusive groups, and, for this reason, memory is subject "to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative" (Rothberg 3). I find that,

rather than establishing direct parallels between memory and identity, particularly in relation to national identity, a work like *Twists of Fate* "has the potential to create new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice" (Rothberg 5). The pages about the taking of Paris map new avenues, roads and itineraries within the context of post-Cold-War human rights. Miguel complains that "los españoles éramos los únicos que no tenían un hogar al que regresar tras la victoria" ["Spaniards were the only ones who had no home to return to after the victory"] (312) and is "decepcionado con Francia, Inglaterra" ["disappointed with France, England"] (308) and all the other countries that did not help to overthrow the dictatorship. In this sense, the comic aligns different transitional justice processes through multidirectional memory.

Miguel can express this pain through the fictitious interview, which allows direct communication with the reader. This interview underpins the work's positionality and sets up a symbolic map for future generations, a cartography of "affiliative postmemory." In the previous chapter, I analyzed postmemory as a transmission phenomenon that usually takes place within the family. *Twists of Fate* – and *Freda*, as we will see below – proposes a different type of postmemory, one that is transmitted by cultural, not familial, affinity, and where the group's traumatic experience is adopted as personal. Marianne Hirsch calls this phenomenon "affiliative postmemory" (2008), an approach to the lives of strangers that raises a number of ethical issues:

> If we … *adopt* the traumatic experiences of others as experiences that we might ourselves have lived through . . . can we do so without imitating or unduly appropriating them? And is this process of identification, imagination, and projection radically different for those who grew up in survivor families and for those less proximate members of their generation . . . who share a legacy of trauma and thus the curiosity, the urgency, the frustrated *need* to know about a traumatic past? . . . To delineate the border between these respective

> structures of transmission – between what I would like to refer to as '*familial*' and as '*affiliative*' postmemory – we would have to account for the difference between an intergenerational vertical identification of child and parent . . . And the intra-generational horizontal identification that makes that child's position more broadly available to other contemporaries. (114-15)

That is, in affiliative postmemory, the challenge is to tell the other's trauma without "appropriating" it or falling into "imitation." Affiliative memories, like familial ones, involve a transformation by subsequent generations. As shown by Elizabeth Jelin in *State Repression and the Labors of Memory* (2003), transmission is effective when there is "a possibility that those who 'receive' give it a sense of their own, reinterpret, resignify – and not repeat or memorize", so that "the new generations may approach subjects and experiences of the past as 'others'" (126). In the case of Paco and Miguel, their conversation "ayuda a imprimir unos significados (o sobreinterpretar) que tienen más que ver con la posición del autor . . . la voluntad o intencionalidad con que se ha escrito la novela" ["helps to imprint meanings (or overinterpret) that have more to do with the author's position . . . the aim and intentionality with which the novel was written"] (Martínez Rubio 2018, 148). The invented conversation between Roca and Miguel always leaves room for reconciliation and understanding – unlike real conversations such as Art Spiegelman's with his father in *Maus* – because it is a rhetorical mechanism used to move the narration forward and promote the recovery of historical memory. By equating the Fascist struggle in Germany and Spain, processes of grief and transitional justice are also equated. Through multidirectional memory, *Twists of Fate* charts a path towards the recognition of those Spaniards who fought Fascism inside and outside Spain, like their counterparts with French, British and other nationalities.

Freda

Freda (2002) is a comic created by Kike Benlloch and Alberto Vázquez in 2002, before the early days of the boom of novels of memory in Spain.[49] It is a fictional story based on the testimonies of different Galician migrants which highlights the sense of estrangement of a character that feels out of place between two cultures, while also denouncing the exploitation underlying the migratory agreement between Spain and Germany since 1963. Using a misleadingly naïf style, as if it were a parody of children's stories, it strongly criticizes the macropolitics that seek economic profit through migratory flows without a social perspective. In graphic terms, the migrants travel across panels, spaces and times, but their rootlessness is expressed in circular and labyrinthine shapes from which it is very difficult to escape.

Freda tells the story of Manu, a ten-year-old boy who is forced to emigrate to Germany with his parents. In the beginning, Manu tries to be "fuerte para mamá y papá" ["strong for Mommy and Daddy"] (4), but, as he reaches adolescence and assimilates to the host culture, he becomes increasingly estranged from his parents. His first friend in school, Freda, a German girl, will become his first great love during puberty. Together, they start to smoke behind their

[49] A significant number of 21st-century narrative and film works revolve around the recovery of memory. Samuel Amago, in "Speaking for the Dead: History, Narrative, and the Ghostly in Javier Cercas's War Novels," explores this interest, "a generation after the death of Franco" (244), in titles such as Almudena Grandes' *El corazón helado* [*The Frozen Heart*] (2007), Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* [*The Sleeping Voice*] (2002) and Javier Marías' *Tu rostro mañana: Fiebre y lanza* [*Your Face Tomorrow: Fever and Spear*] (2002), among many others. Also worth mentioning are Isaac Rosa's *El vano ayer* [*The Vain Yesterday*] (2005) and Andrés Trapiello's *Ayer no más* [*Just Yesterday*] (2012). In film, the documentary genre has provided some of the most productive descriptions of repressed memory and the families' need to unbury memories, for example in Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis' *Las fosas del silencio* [*The Graves of Silence*] (2003) and *Los internados del miedo* [*Fear's Boarding Schools*] (2015), but fiction films like Vicente Aranda's *Libertarias* [*Libertarians*] (1996), just to mention one of the first among many, have also contributed. Even outside Spain, it has merited the attention of scholars like Jo Labanyi, whose work shows that compulsively repressed memory has found an outlet through the spectral in film and literature. However, I agree with David Becerra's opinion that some of the approaches, such as Javier Cercas' production, have fostered "el consenso de la transición" ["the transition's consensus"] and "el consenso neoliberal" ["the neoliberal consensus"], both of which are at the service of silence and against a genuine transitional justice. For more on this concept, see my analysis of Gallardo and Gallardo's *Un largo silencio* [*A Long Silence*] (1996) in chapter 2.

parents' backs and go to concerts. With her, he discovers immature jealousy, the first kiss and, ultimately, the happiness of an innocent first love. As the relationship between the two children develops, the Spanish emigrants' working conditions and everyday life are described. Manu has to drop out of school at the age of thirteen to work in a tobacco factory because his father's work causes him severe back problems that force him to reduce his full-time job to part-time. Finally, the father suffers from a herniated disc and becomes disabled; for this reason, the family must return to Spain. This a traumatic return for Manu, because he has assimilated to German culture and is very much in love with Freda. After their return, the family quickly adapts, but Manu cannot forget his girlfriend. He opens a tobacco shop to contribute to the family economy, but, after an indefinite number of years, decides to return to Germany to look for Freda, with whom he never spoke after he left. The comic ends when he sees her leaving her mother's bakery with her husband and her baby, but she doesn't recognize him and he doesn't dare to say a word.

Freda describes the experiences of writer Kike Benlloch's acquaintances and relatives:

> Mis familiares me contaron cómo era la vida en Londres, en Berna (el personaje de Nico representa a los compañeros italianos de mis tíos en una fábrica de Suiza), y hubo de todo: Algunos emigrados salían adelante, otros vivían en barracones inmundos (como los de la escena de la obra). La anécdota del trabajador del este de Europa que hablaba en gallego porque se pasaba las 24 horas del día con emigrantes gallegos es real. También la lesión del padre de Manu, porque le pregunté a una amiga que es fisioterapeuta qué daños físicos eran comunes entre emigrantes retornados. Así que con *Freda* escribí algo personal pero también quise incorporar muchas otras voces. (FeR 2007)
>
> [My relatives told me about life in London, in Bern (Nico's character represents my uncles' Italian workmates in a Swiss factory), and there were all types of experiences:

> Some emigrants got by, others lived in filthy barracks (like the ones in the scene in the work). The anecdote about the Eastern European worker who spoke Galician because he spent 24 hours a day with Galician workers is real. So is Manu's father's injury, because I asked a physical therapist friend what physical damages were most common among returned emigrants. Thus, with *Freda* I wrote something personal, but I also wanted to incorporate many other voices.]

Above all, it is a story of rootlessness and estrangement, and Alberto Vázquez's drawings contribute to universalizing a local story. Vázquez is a multi-awarded, acclaimed illustrator who considers fantasy "su mejor herramienta para poder contar problemas muy reales" ["his best tool to talk about very real problems"] (Calabuig 2018). In *Freda*, migration is depicted as raining men reminiscent of Magritte's *Golconda* or as a wake of walkers who arrive in Germany mounted on the trains' smoke. This oneiric malleability is the key to symbolically representing estrangement and, especially, migrant memory, a memory in motion that circulates between time and space.

Both *Freda* and Kim's *Nieve en los bolsillos* address the issue of Spanish emigration during Francoism, but the protagonists start from very different socioeconomic situations. Manu and his family are low-income migrants and leave Spain legally under the "Acuerdo entre el Gobierno del Estado Español y el Gobierno de la República Federal de Alemania sobre migración, contratación y colocación de trabajadores españoles en la República Federal de Alemania" ["Agreement between the Spanish Government and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany on the migration, hiring and placement of Spanish workers in the Federal Republic of Germany"]. Kim is a young single man who simply seeks a better life after finishing his Fine Arts career, but he is not pushed by an unquestionable need like the workers portrayed

in *Freda*. For this reason, *Freda* acts as a platform to amplify the voices of Benlloch's migrant acquaintances and describe the conditions under which they survived. For Nico, Manu's supervisor in the tobacco factory, migration is a form of exploitation whereby "les estamos fabricando el país por cuatro duros… Aserraderos, minas, construcción, ferrocarril, metal… ¡Explotados y sin seguridad social!" ["we're building their country for a few pennies... Sawmills, mines, construction, railways, metal... Exploited and with no social security!"] (31). The legal status of Spanish migrants in Germany was "guest workers" or "Gastarbeiter," a form of exploitation that ensured labor without social benefits and maintained a work hierarchy between the migrants and the locals: "No nos consideran sus iguales, vivimos en casuchas en las que no meterían ni a sus perros. Nos llaman 'Gastarbeiter', 'trabajadores invitados'. ¡Ni que fuésemos turistas de vacaciones!!" ["We aren't considered their equals, we live in shacks where they wouldn't even keep their dogs. We're called 'Gastarbeiter,' 'guest workers.' Yeah, right, like if we were tourists on vacation!!"] (31).

Humiliation, poverty and vulnerability trigger the estrangement between Manu and his parents. When Manu visits Tomás, one of his father's workmates, Tomás tells him how happy he is to have a hot shower. Tomás lives in a barrack-like dwelling built near the site where he works, so he doesn't have his own place to live. Manu, who by then is thirteen, is shocked by Tomás's living conditions and goes home thinking: "¡¡Con qué poco nos conformamos, y yo que

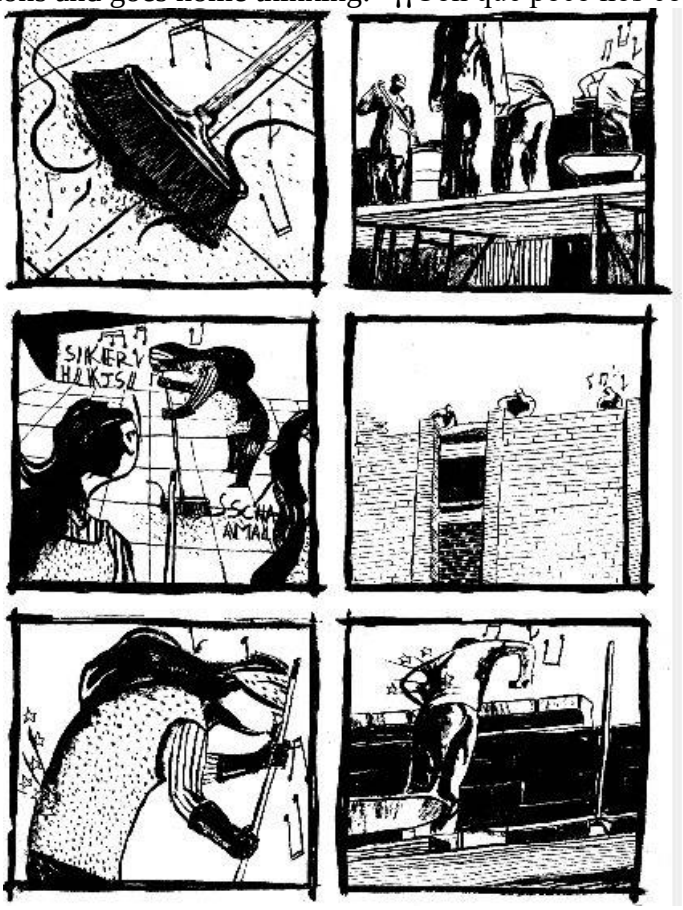

Figure 33: Music and stars, p. 7

me quejaba!! . . . Ya podían coronar a Tomás con ese nombre de Rey: Sputnik I. ¡Vaya mierda de vida!!" ["We settle for so little, and I still complained! . . . They should crown Tomás with that King's name: Sputnik I. What a shitty life!!"] (26). The comic also narrates his parents' slow decline. Figure 33 shows each of them at their jobs. The connecting thread is the music in the form of notes that accompanies both, but in the last row of panels they also share small stars

coming out of their backs to signal the pain. Little by little, the father's decline will play a determining role, since physical overexertion forces him to reduce his work to part-time and forces Manu to work in the tobacco factory with Nico at the age of thirteen. After three years, lack of medical care will cause his father a herniated disc that incapacitates him for work and the family has to return to Spain.

The contrast between the family's poverty and Freda's relative bourgeois comfort broadens the gap between the culture of origin and the host culture for a migrants' son like Manu. Freda's family has a TV set, something that Manu has only seen in public places like the bar; when Manu's hands get chapped from the cold, she heals him and teaches him the German name of all the pastries her mother makes at the bakery, a genuine paradise for any child. They go to school together for three years, until Manu has to start working and his reality becomes more barren. At sixteen, they start going out as boyfriend and girlfriend and he goes to concerts with her, something that neither his parents nor their workmates could even envisage. Upon his return to Spain, Manu feels disoriented. He opens a tobacco shop and helps his family, but does not socialize in a country where "seguían anclados a la prehistoria" ["[they] were still anchored in prehistory"] (42) and where he cannot forget his beloved Freda. In Spain, Manu feels "como un apátrida, como si Freda fuese mi única nacionalidad verdadera" ["stateless, as if Freda were my only true nationality"] (51). Freda is framed within a context of comfort, a place to rest and feel at home, quite the opposite of his parents' life of continuous sacrifice, exertion and decline.

Manu does not identify with either his family or his origins, and he projects his sense of belonging onto his friend, so the homeland is once again personified as a woman, like Estrella's character in *Twists of Fate.* This is a patriarchal division of roles: the homeland, or home, is described as a female, domestic concept, a tailor-made Eden where the protagonist may finally

rest after his travels and battles. The protagonists' beloveds are thus shown to be a projection of their desires and ideals, so that, when they cut off their roots with the culture of origin, they search for the homeland in another moving entity, a person who will accompany them, at least in their memories. Their stories of heartbreak symbolically express the protagonists' disenchantment with a situation that overwhelms them. In Miguel's case, the death of Estrella takes his ideals to the grave and, in Manu's case, the separation from Freda symbolizes the distance between a Spain "anchored in prehistory" and a Germany that moves towards the future.

Manu's migratory rootlessness challenges received notions of culture as a unifying force for historical identity. For Homi K. Bhabha, migrant identity unfolds in *thirdspace*, a concept that describes an ambivalent positionality in which the original cultural representation gives rise to an open signification code through new references. In *Freda*, means of transportation play an essential role in the exploration of the third space because they become the center of a nomadic, rootless, hybrid life. The first chapter in the book is actually titled "Transportmittel," or "means of transportation," and describes the journeys of Manu as an adult, of Manu as a child and of the thousands of Spanish emigrants. Here we see an adult Manu traveling to Germany while smoking a cigarette; the smoke moves from one panel to the next (cf. Fig 6), turned into clouds

over a big ship. This was the ship that carried Manu to Germany as a child and, through the

Figure 34: Connection between past and present in Freda, *p. 3*

smoke, the past becomes present and the account of memory begins.

The expressionist and surrealist graphic style allows to describe migrant adaptation processes as little men raining or in endless rows that cross all sorts of spaces without borders. The port area is presented as overwhelming and horrible, on an inhuman scale by comparison to Manu's family. On page 5 (cf. Fig 35), while the characters are still little tiny people as compared to the machines and boats, the last panel shows Manu and his parents walking on the sky, on the factories' smoke, to reach home. On the following page, this smoke serves as a conveyor belt for a line of Spanish emigrants, "verdaderas mareas humanas" ["genuine human tides"], and they multiply in such a way that, in the following panel, they no longer arrive in order along the line of smoke, but simply rain on Manu's own umbrella. That last panel takes up

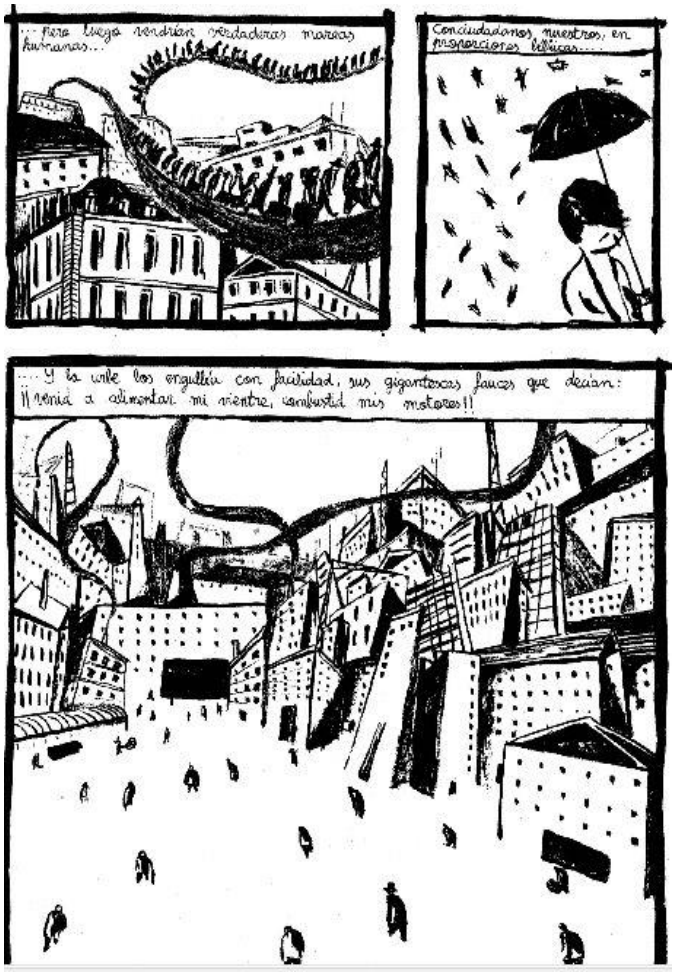

Figure 35: Human tides in Freda, *p. 6*

half a page, using a German expressionist style – the buildings are represented as sinister giants that swallow up the tiny Spanish emigrants.

The reference to Magritte's *Golconda* is repeated throughout the comic to show Manu's refusal to identify with the tide of Spanish migrants. In *Golconda*, we see numerous tiny men suspended in the air above a gray city. They are all identical, with different postures but the same face, which blurs the line separating the individual from the collective, anonymity from recognition. *Freda* begins with the Magritte-style "rain" of Spanish workers to portray both countries' indifference towards the rootlessness and estrangement caused by economic displacement policies. Furthermore, it reflects those moments when Manu feels dispensable, just

Figure 36: Tiny Spaniards, p. 19

one more Spanish worker in the eyes of the German country. For example, on page 19, when Manu is sent to a school for Spanish migrant children, tiny Spaniards rain on him, like annoying raindrops that get him wet. When he is forced to leave school to swell the ranks of the cheap labor force at the age of thirteen, Manu and his mother get lost in a tide of tiny people (p. 29). The traumatic moment when his mother announces that they are going back to Spain is framed by two panels with tiny persons floating like the men in *Golconda*. And it is repeated when Manu returns to Germany as an adult in search of Freda.

Inside the railway station, Manu gets lost among the crowd, just one of many walkers going in different directions. Finally, the last page in the comic is a full-page illustration of Manu as an adult, with an umbrella rained on by tiny people. Manu is just one more, one more emigrant, one more landless person, one more who has had his heart broken. The tiny raining men and women motif thus becomes what Thierry Groensteen calls "braiding," a panel that is articulated in connection to others but which, instead of creating meanings within the same sequence, i.e., with the surrounding panels, does so with panels distributed throughout the work. In this sense, the raining people signal those moments when, whether he wants to or not, Manu loses his singularity inside the mass and is forced to remember that he belongs to the group of Spanish migrants he does not recognize as his own.

Thus, migrants "rain" or cross panels and pages mounted on clouds. It would seem there are no borders for the labor force that makes both countries rich. However, the rootlessness personified in Manu is expressed in the circular movement of the train that travels between Spain and Germany but cannot travel to the past so that he may return home. The comic opens with the train, where, looking out the window, an adult Manu answers that "llevo toda mi vida entre dos países. A veces . . . a veces tengo la sensación de haberme quedado a medio camino entre ambos sin acabar de pertenecer ni al uno ni al otro" ["I've spent all my life between countries. Sometimes . . . sometimes I have the feeling that I've stayed halfway between the two, without ever belonging to either"] (3). The train's centrality is made evident by the fact that it is the only figure that takes up an entire page in the story at a key moment: when the protagonist must return to Spain with his parents and bids farewell to his beloved at the station. At this point of no return, the train illustrates, not only the separation between the lovers, but also the "human drain" caused by migration. When he returns to his homeland, Manu asks himself: "¿dónde estaba el

beneficio de las riadas de dinero que los miles de emigrantes habíamos enviado de vuelta a casa? Allí seguían anclados en la prehistoria . . . La emigración se había probado como un gran engaño . . . un fraude colectivo a nuestra gente" ["where was the benefit of the floods of money that thousands of emigrants had sent back home? There they were still anchored in prehistory . . . Emigration had proven to be a great hoax, a collective fraud for our people"] (42). Manu's individual story articulates a critique of the labor exploitation system agreed upon by both countries.

The station is a chronotope where the protagonist's homeland, personified as Freda, remains frozen at a moment in time – the separation between the boy and the girl. There, Freda says "adiós" ["good-bye"], a word that haunts the protagonist's dreams and signals a point of no return. The train can move and return to a geographical point, but it can never return to a moment in time. The problem is that Manu's memory is reluctant to migrate with him towards the present: stalled in the past, he moves across the geography of Europe seeking to return, not to a place, but to a moment.

In Spain, Manu constantly dreams of Freda and his memories of her inhabit the present in the form of traumatic memory. The collision of memories of different periods in a person's life

Figure 37: The past made present, p. 45

can be explicitly represented in comics, by juxtaposing panels pertaining to the past and the present on the same page. Since memory and reality alternate, an "impossible and provocative at-onceness" (Hatfield 2005, 51) is created, which visually expresses the constant intrusion of the past into the present of traumatic memory. This technique moves the reader in time, conveying the impression that the present cannot be understood without the past. Manu's stagnation is also expressed through a circular movement around Freda, without whom he cannot move on. When he is in Spain, he turns to her memory over and over again. He writes letters he never sends. Sitting on a small boat by the shore, he tells Alciano: "Le he dado tantas vueltas . . . intento seguir adelante, pero los recuerdos…" ["I've given it so much thought . . . I try to move on, but memories..."] (50) and the circle is completed when he takes the train back to Germany only to discover that what he kept thinking about did not exist – Freda moved on and rebuilt her life leaving no room for him. In "On the Literature of Exile and Counter-Exile" (1976), Claudio Guillén describes two types of response to this situation: Poles A and B, or exile and counter-exile. Pole A refers to the first impact, that of alienation, sorrow and lack, and Pole B refers to a subject that overcomes the loss and recomposes him or herself, usually through politics. In Pole A, *Freda* describes alienation and lack without offering any alternative. For Claudio Guillén, the circle is the symbol of the literature of exile because it represents expulsion from a center, which means "being hurled into the void or doomed to non-being" (275). For Paul Ilie (1981), the circle in the literature of exile takes the form of a labyrinth (105) and the represented space contains numerous centripetal figures "alimentadas por el nacionalismo" ["fed by nationalism"] (105), as well as centrifugal ones, "que permite[n] acabar con el vacío exílico a ambos lados de la línea divisoria" ["that allow to put an end to the exilic vacuum on both sides of the dividing line"] (105).

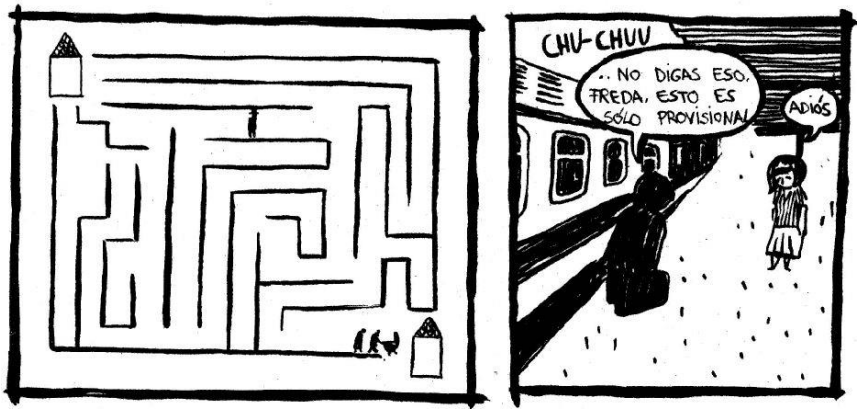

Figure 38 – Labyrinth panel in Freda*, p. 57*

As a matter of fact, the moment of disillusion is visualized in the comic by means of a labyrinth. Once Manu returns to Germany to close his circle, i.e., returns to his "homeland", which is Freda, and discovers that she is happily married and has a son, it is all summarized in a labyrinth panel (p. 57, Fig. 38). Thus, the paths taken and the decisions made by Manu get all tangled up, which reflects the protagonist's inability to abandon the self-pitying solipsism that keeps him removed from reality and from others. Manu is "lento" ["slow"] like trains in Spain, with which "nadie podría hacer negocios" ["no one could do business"] (2): an old-fashioned character and an old-fashioned country that have not been able to join the ranks of European industrialization. *Freda* uses an oneiric narrative to reflect the precariousness of migrants in Germany during the Francoist era. Nostalgia once again personifies the homeland as a woman and stresses the mutilation of the rootless, who are forced to experience a nomadic life without a past to return to.

Nieve en los bolsillos

Nieve en los bolsillos ["Snow in my pockets"] is a *memoir* that describes young Kim's life experiences as a Spanish migrant in Germany. Through the chronotope of the road (Bakhtin 1981), it narrates a journey that oscillates between displacement and encounter, where the protagonist acts as an amplifier of emigrants' voices in a predominantly masculine world. Thus, the hero and the reader learn about Spanish migrant reality by making a joint inner and outer journey through the geography of Europe and the protagonist's formative years. Unlike *Twists of Fate* and *Freda*, this story does not emphasize nostalgia, the pain for the homeland that disappeared at some point in the past but, instead, reconstructs a displaced collective memory outside its borders. Whereas in the comics analyzed thus far the homeland was personified by a woman and a tragic love story, *Nieve* highlights the presence of, and solidarity between, exiled men. The sum of their individual life stories offers a complex panorama in which economic precariousness intersects with Francoist repression to provide a choral portrait of migrant memory.

In the two previous comics, we analyzed the reconfiguration of nostalgic space through page layout and other narrative strategies used in comics. In *Nieve en los bolsillos*, the homeland is not lost but reconstructed in the present, and in a foreign space, through the lives of the Spaniards that Kim meets. The page design is a classic grid that does not incorporate full-page panels or complex layouts, so the sequence proceeds in a rhythmic, constant manner. However, the migrants' faces gain prominence and serve to depict a diversity that was staunchly repressed by the regime. In this artist's narrative style, it is common for characters to look directly at the reader in order to express certain key concepts, but in *Nieve en los bolsillos* they acquire special relevance because they operate as a catalogue of migration and Francoist repression.

Furthermore, their portraits are assimilated by the author's self-portrait as a young artist. At the same time, Kim "pays" for his stay at the "Haim" by making paintings to decorate the hostel. Both the panels that show the characters' faces looking at the reader and Kim's paintings act as individual and collective memory, providing a mediation and remediation of memory that sets up a dialogue between two forms of visual expression.

Unlike the migrants depicted in *Freda*, Kim does not leave Spain out of an overriding economic necessity but to "volver rico" ["come back rich"] (9) from the land where "había trabajo para todos" ["there was work for everyone"] (9). In 1963, at the age of sixteen, he drops out of a Fine Arts school that very few people could afford at the time "por aburrimiento" ["out of boredom"] and leaves just to see "qué [le] esperaba en aquella incierta aventura" ["what that dubious adventure held in store [for him]"] (10). He does not plan his trip carefully, but quite the contrary: he hitchhikes through France and enters Germany with a tourist visa. The legal channel to get a job was highly bureaucratic, but basically involved registering at the local offices of the Oficina Provincial de Encuadramiento y Colocación de la Organización Sindical Española [the Spanish Trade Union Organization's Provincial Office for Classification and Placement] and, if jobs were offered in Germany, the workers were allowed to leave, using transportation especially chartered for them, after passing two medical examinations (one Spanish and one German) and having their criminal records checked (Muñoz Sánchez). Consequently, Kim's employment opportunities are inevitably affected by this and he can only get very sporadic illegal jobs. At the beginning of his adventure, he befriends Emilio, another young student who has run away from a very authoritarian father who wanted him to pursue a military career. A couple of jobs and lodgings later, Emilio and Kim settle at the Heimstatt, a very welcoming place, with hundreds of Spanish migrants they soon befriend. Kim is limited in terms of work, but, luckily, the

Heimstatt's owner is an art lover and pays him a monthly salary to create works to decorate the hostel. The "Haim," as the Spaniards call it, was a shelter for World War II orphans[50], which is why it has a workshop equipped with numerous tools and utensils: canvases, wood and sculpting material, tables, boards, etc. This is where the children had class and where, years later, Kim can freely create. From this point, the comic leaves the travels and adventures behind and enters a second phase, during which Kim simply becomes the receiver of the migrants' stories at the "Haim." In this sense, the comic offers a complete panorama of migration in 1963 based on the personal stories of ordinary men. Kim's adventure comes to an end a year later, when he is summoned for military service and must return to Spain.

The value of *Nieve en los bolsillos* lies in the social portrait of characters that have been doubly marginalized in Spanish historiography. Economic oppression intersects with Francoist repression, since most of those who left the country were also against the regime. Even before the end of the war, harsh legislation was enacted against the opponents of the "Glorioso Alzamiento Nacional" ["Glorious National Uprising"]. Among the numerous laws, two are particularly relevant: the Labor Charter promulgated in March 1938 and, most importantly, the Law on Political Responsabilities, of 13 February 1939, which, retroactively from 1 October 1934, imposed sanctions on the War losers, including total disqualification from exercising professional activities, an all-encompassing labor purge tool[51]. On the other hand, the Labor Charter laid the foundations for what would become the Spanish Trade Union Organization, which, far from acting as a trade union, served to penalize or fire workers who might start protest

[50] Actually, this would be one of the *Winterhilfe* or German orphanages created by the nazis that served as inspiration for the Spanish "Centros de Auxilio Social" as described in Carlos Giménez's *Paracuellos*.

[51] This is precisely the situation in which Enrique, the main character of *El artefacto perverso*, finds himself.

and vindication movements (Molinero and Ysás 1993, 34). Finally, the Law on the Suppression of Freemasonry and Communism, of 1 March 1940, persecuted "más de medio millón de familias relacionadas con el bando perdedor que no contaban con nadie que las avalara [y] quedaron desamparadas sin protección alguna y apartadas del mercado de trabajo" ["over half a million families related to the losing side who had no one to vouch for them [and] were left defenseless, without any protection, and excluded from the labor market"] (Vilar Rodríguez 2006, 124). As a result, economic precariousness affected opponents of the regime to a greater extent, and they became a majority among the migrants, as observed in *Nieve en los bolsillos*. Therefore, the comic is a snapshot of the historical memory of those displaced by the convergence of, at least, two factors, one political and one economic, although we also find examples associated with gender and sexual orientation.

The catalogue of Spanish migrants offers a great variety: Emilio, the fellow Spaniard who finds the first job for the protagonist (26), thus reflecting migrant support networks, and who will be his adventure mate during most of his journey (39); Spanish swindlers, close to the figure of the folkloric trickster (51); Flo, another fellow Spaniard, who acts as a psychopomp or guide around the Heimstatt, informing Kim and Emilio of the rules and operation of their new lodging (67); Manuel, a humble villager who was forced to migrate due to a confrontation with the landowners (84); Andrés, a military deserter (115); the members of Falange who go to the Heimstatt (129); Paco, an transvestite man who fled to save his life (135); and Puri, a woman who permanently migrates to Germany to escape from an incestuous father who sexually assaulted her older sister. The story of some non-Spanish characters is also shared: Hubert, the Heimstatt manager; Jarek, a Hungarian gypsy who works as a fakir (29); all the French and German drivers who pick up Kim and share information about their lives during their few hours

together in the car; and, finally, the German girls Kim or other characters engage in relationships with.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that only one woman tells her life story, Puri. The rest of the characters clearly make up a masculine universe where women mostly appear as providers of romantic-sexual components. Thus, the comic tells us about the migratory experience of a man, the support networks between men and the paths traveled by men. It remains to be seen whether a woman could move as freely as Kim, hitchhiking in three countries thanks to generous men who act as the hero's allies. In fact, the few life stories shared by women involve some form of gender violence they are fleeing. Purificación must leave Spain and chooses not to return so that her father, who sexually abused her older sister for three years, does not find her. Her sister, Jacinta, finds refuge by entering a convent as a cloistered nun for life. There are two other women whose life we know about indirectly: Manuel's wife and daughter. Manuel contacts Kim because he needs someone to read his family's letters for him. Manuel left Spain when the landowner's son raped his daughter and got her pregnant. Manuel almost killed him, but his wife stopped him and, to prevent a tragedy from happening in the future, made her husband go to Germany while she and her daughter went to the city to work as maids. The rest of the female characters that appear have no voice and their personal story is not known. They are mostly Germans who do not speak Spanish and engage in some type of emotional and/or sexual relationship with one of the protagonists. Kim's journey takes place in a patriarchal universe where men migrate for a variety of socioeconomic and political reasons, but, except for Paco, a gay man, none of them suffer gender violence. In the case of women, on the contrary, this is their main reason for leaving, jointly with socioeconomic factors that significantly contribute to their social precarization and vulnerability.

The catalogue of lives is accompanied by several portraits that directly interpellate the reader. Regardless of their social identity, their life story is introduced, or included at some point, in a panel where the character breaks the fourth wall. They are classic figurative, head-and-

Figure 39: Portraits of Paco (p. 135), Andrés (115) and Emilio (39)

shoulder portraits, with the face at the center and no distractions in the background (cf. some examples in Fig. 39).

In *A Face to the World: On Self-Portrait*, Laura Cumming argues that a frontal portrait that looks expectantly at the reader is equivalent to a direct appeal in textual writing, which invites "the purest form of reciprocity" (26). For Dori Laub, testimonies go beyond historical accuracy to account for "breakage of the frame" (226), those experiences that no type of documentation can ever contain and the way traumatized persons relive them years later. In "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening" (1992), Laub explains that the receiver of testimonies has the moral obligation to make sure that certain experiences – such as surviving the Holocaust – do not fall into oblivion. Oftentimes, testimonies are incongruous and do not conform to historical truth, but this does not mean they are worthless. They offer subjective experiences, the emotional component, and help to understand the nature of memory, which is

often conveyed through silence. Referring to one of his patients, Laub explains that "[i]t is not merely her speech, but the very boundaries of silence which surround it, which attest, today as well as in the past, to this assertion of resistance." (62) Non-verbal communication is essential to understanding the scope of testimonies. As an ellipsis of trauma and "breakage of the frame," silence communicates as much as words. Although the experiences of the characters in *Nieve* are not as extreme, the frontal portraits convey non-verbal information and turn the readers into receptacles for their testimonies, making them responsible for preserving and communicating their memory.

Without a doubt, these testimonies are mediated by the narrator, Kim. As a *memoir*, the comic's content is based on the autobiographical pact (Lejeune 1989), whereby the reader accepts that there is a direct relationship between what is represented and its representation. The author makes certain choices, such as which stories to include and which ones to silence, and when and how to share them. The narrator mediates between them and the rest of the story, lending his voice and linking his own personal experiences, thoughts, opinions and circumstances to those of the rest of the characters. Therefore, these stories are doubly mediated and that is how they reach the reader.

The authenticity of memories is of vital importance in the autobiographical subgenre and comics have developed their own mechanisms to achieve a reliable relationship between the extraliterary referent and the work's content. Drawings are probably the main element in this regard, since their figurative character makes them resemble extradiegetical reality. In general, the more detailed the drawing, i.e., the more "realistic" it is, the truer it will appear (Kress and

van Leeuwen 1996).[52] However, numerous comics use an extremely simple, naïf, almost symbolic drawing style that achieves great veracity. The paradigmatic case is Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, a comic narrated by cats and mice that has been acclaimed as one of the best *memoirs* in literature and comics.

There is no one element that can convey authenticity; instead, there are a number of aspects that, together, show a direct relationship to a personal experience. Thus, Charles Hatfield speaks "not of verifiability but of trustworthiness" (150), and Elisabeth El Refaie suggests speaking of "performing authenticity" (2012). In *Autobiographical Comics: Life Writing in Pictures* (2012), this scholar explores the strategies used by autobiographical comics to achieve veracity. A central element that appears in *Nieve en los bolsillos* is the paratext, the documentation that physically frames the story: the book cover, the jacket, the introduction, the epilogue, etc. In several of the works discussed here, these elements provide material to corroborate the biographical journey. The back cover of *Nieve en los bolsillos* reproduces a photograph of Kim with his friend Emilio that contains all the details described in the comic – the black bag where Kim carried his clothes, the type of clothing he treated with such special care, the brown suede jacket he ordered from a seamstress to resemble Jean-Paul Belmondo and, in general, hitchhiking, which is how he arrived in Germany. To open the comic, Kim chooses a photo in line with the title, where he appears in a snow-covered landscape, with "snow" even "in his pockets," young, happy, with warm clothes that are clearly not his size and which, as we later discover, he borrowed from some suitcases he found at the hostel. In addition to the paratextual

[52] In fact, according to Peirce's semiotics (1960), caricatures lack the indexical quality of photographs and, therefore, are less "iconic" – they do not propose as direct a relationship with the represented object as does photography.

elements, one feature that distinguishes comics from other media is the author's evident imprint on the drawings. Unlike literature or film, comics are one of few media that preserve their handmade character, and the drawing style exhibits a distinctive, unique line that highlights authorial presence and reinforces the autobiographical element. The handmade component, the multiple strategies for achieving veracity and the iconotextual representation allow readers to empathize with autobiographical stories, even if they do not resort to "realistic" drawing.

In addition to creating a collective representation of migrant memory as the work's narrator and author, Kim creates several figurative portraits and paintings about his experiences that are inscribed within the narrative. Metafiction allows a remediation of content while calling attention to the story's artificiousness. David Bolter and Richard Grusin came up with the concept of "remediation" to explain the process whereby one medium adapts content from another. One example are historical films that incorporate archival footage that is re-mediated, i.e., adapted to cinema and the specific film's aesthetics. Whereas intertextuality involves literary cross-referencing, remediation is cross-referencing with any medium, particularly visual media. Remediation is a basic process "of cultural memory . . . [it] play[s] a decisive role in stabilizing certain mnemonic contents into powerful sites of memory" (Erll 2011, 143). In *Nieve en los bolsillos*, an interesting relationship is established with Kim the narrator, who occasionally tells us that his perspective on the life experiences he describes is biased, despite his effort to "perform authenticity," since all fiction involves a reconfiguration of reality, which is "configured poetically" (Ricoeur 1984, xi), and, in the case of literature, adapted to a narrative time. The creation of portraits and paintings within a comic that is itself a portrait of the author as a young artist and of the catalogue of Spanish migrants, is an exercise in symbolic remediation. Likewise, remediation is closely linked to what Olick calls "collected" and

"collective memory." In "Collective Memory: The Two Cultures" (1999), Olick describes "collected memory" as the process of individual memory formation, parallel to what Halbwachs called frameworks of memory, i.e., the compilation of elements from the sociocultural environment through social frameworks. "Collective" memory, on the other hand, is the production of memory through individual compilation, such as, for example, Kim's paintings. That is, collected memory in *Nieve* is the compilation of memories, whereas collective memory would be their translation into both the paintings and the comic. Kim makes several paintings: a migrant with a suitcase, a dead nun, some elderly women chatting in a bar, the portrait of a friend, and others that are not shown but can be seen decorating the walls (cf. Fig. 39). The most significant, the first one he paints, is the migrant man with a suitcase, a sort of icon in which all the migrants at the hostel may see themselves represented. The painting of the nun, "que no gustaba a nadie" ["which no one liked"], is key to the development of the work, since its sale will help him to pay for the "Haim" and obtain what he wanted, i.e., to return to Spain with more money than he took with him. Furthermore, the fact that his works are displayed in the "Haim's" entrance hall after he leaves, not only serves as symbolic recognition, but condenses the personal stories in one place, as a metonymy of the hostel itself – a meeting place that catalyzes the synergies and relationships between all the residents. The paintings remediate migrant experience among the displaced, who recognize their anecdotes or their friends' portraits in Kim's paintings. This creates a collective memory, a production that serves not only as a screen on which to project their individual experiences, but also as a visual frame for them.

The visual appearance of comics allows the mobilization of the mnemonic and iconic archive for the circulation of memory. "[C]ollective memory is constantly 'in the works' and, like a swimmer, has to keep moving even just to stay afloat," states Anne Rigney in "The Dynamics of Remembrance" (2008, 346). *Nieve en los bolsillos* allows a mobilization of the author's visual archive to resignify those paintings and thus communicate a type of testimony

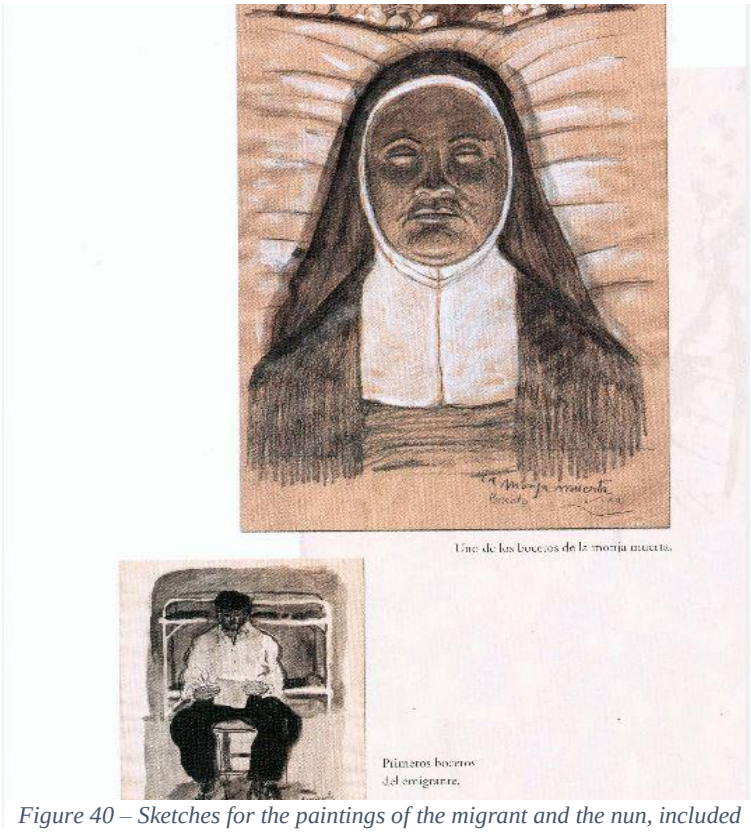

Figure 40 – Sketches for the paintings of the migrant and the nun, included as an annex to the comic

that is simultaneously individual and collective. In fact, these paintings contain two different tensions: on the one hand, they are the visual reproduction of others' experiences. On the other, they are a subjective production, what Kim chooses from the others' experiences, a part of the whole, metonymy, and how to represent it. As a product of his personal expression, these experiences are incorporated into Kim's world, which is visually represented in the remediation of the paintings in the form of the comic. That is, the paintings created with other techniques are

adapted to the comic's drawing, they are re-drawn and, therefore, subject to the medium's aesthetic logic. By including one type of visual expression in another, two types of visual art enter into dialogue. On the one hand, painting, which is completely dependent on "the pregnant moment" (Lessing in Cortsen 2012), on capturing the most communicative, significant instant, and, on the other, comics, which, in their narrative form – not so, for example, in their poetic form, which is closer to visual poetry –, are based on sequence. A painting is self-conclusive, isolated, it contains all the information within itself. The panels in a comic are "en desequilibrio" ["unbalanced"] (Peeters 1998, 22). As a pillar of narrative language, this imbalance propels a transformation of memory "sites" into memory "dynamics," thus facilitating communication. Finally, the pictures and testimonies configure the portrait of the young artist, an individual *memoir* based on the collective. Kim's formative years speak of a transnational identity, an inner and outer journey through the reality of Spanish migrants.

From the standpoint of transnational memory, the center and the periphery draw up alternative mnemonic maps. Comics provide a spatial and visual exploration of rootlessness, nostalgia and displacement. The multidirectional cartography of *Twists of Fate* shows a different way of traveling across the map of Spanish historical memory, a vindication of opposition to dictatorships through a foreign war conflict. Both *Twists* and *Freda* address nostalgia as a sense of loss or mutilation, and resort to a truncated love story to aesthetically convey the pain of rootlessness. Since they lack a personal Ithaca, the characters' erratic, circular, unfinished movement is highlighted, which raises ethical issues for the reader. The fictitious interview between Roca and Miguel, and the remediation of the characters Kim meets in *Nieve en los bolsillos*, allow a mobilization of testimonies and visual archives, setting up a dialogue between the documentation of archival memory and the difficulties of present-day Spanish migration. In

this way, the itineraries of the page, the past and the present establish converging paths towards the affiliative memory of today's generations.

Chapter 4: Your war and our struggle. Gender and Memory in Spanish Comics

In 2018, Ana Penyas became the first woman to win the National Comic Award in Spain for *Estamos todas bien* [We Women Are All Fine] (2017), a beautifully crafted work that rescues her two grandmothers' memories of struggle during General Francisco Franco's dictatorship (1939-75). The recovery of the voices of Francoism's victims has been central to Spain's transitional justice but it reveals itself limited when works like Penyas's are the exception. The vast majority of comics that portray the retrieval of collective memory revolve around the men who participated in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)[53]. War, as an undeniable turning point in the history of the country, has served as a legitimizing factor that validated what memories received attention and visibility but war has traditionally been a male-dominated activity. While the first graphic narrative about women's memory tried to conform to the war canon (*Cuerda de presas*), subsequent works have shifted towards the realities of women who did not participate in the conflict (*El ala rota*, *Estamos todas bien*). This shift happened after several feminist protests that helped to expose both patriarchal structures of exclusion and paths towards equity not only in Spain, but very importantly in the field of comics worldwide, like the protests at the Angoulême International Comics Festival which drew attention to the bias against women's creations and concerns in the comics field. The sociopolitical context contributed to shift the focus from the class struggles that led to the military conflict in Spain towards an exploration of

[53] The award-winning comics *El arte de volar* (2009) by Antonio Altarriba and Kim, *Los surcos del azar* (2013) by Paco Roca, *El artefacto perverso* (1996) by Felipe Hernández Cava and Federico del Barrio or *Paracuellos* (1975-2017) by Carlos Giménez are just the canonical samples. Hernández Cava and Bartolomé Seguí´s *Las serpientes ciegas* (2008), Sento Llobell's *Doctor Uriel* (2017), Jaime Martín's trilogy of *Las guerras silenciosas* (2013), *Jamás tendré veinte años* (2016) and *Siempre tendremos veinte años* (2020), Miguel and Francisco Gallardo's *Un largo silencio* (1996), Carlos Guijarro's *El paseo de los canadienses* (2015), and Paco Roca and Serguei Dounovetz's *El ángel de la retirada* (2010) retrieve the memory of Francoism departing from the Civil War and revolving around men's experiences of the dictatorship.

socioeconomic and gender inequalities. Your war or our struggle? – this is the question regarding women's memory.

In this chapter, I explore Jorge García and Fidel Martínez's *Cuerda de presas* [Rope of prisoners] (2005), Antonio Altarriba and Kim's *El ala rota* [The broken wing] (2016) and Ana Penyas's *Estamos todas bien* [We Women Are All Fine] (2017) and how, particularly Penyas's work, calls for a multiplicity of identities. Given that all these comics tell the accounts of white heterosexual cisgender women, my reading focuses on their particular experiences in relation to gender, war, domesticity, visibility and historical memory. Studying their experiences reveals memory as a mosaic of differing voices intersected by various social tensions and forms of marginalization.

Crisis and protests: The revolution will be feminist or it will not happen

The shift of focus in graphic narrative is the result of an increasing visibility of Spanish feminism and its role in a generalized critique of neoliberalism.[54] The economic crisis of 2008 fueled protests all over the country against budgetary cuts targeted towards public and basic services for the population that left banks and the financial system – the real cause of the crisis – untouched.

[54] For details about the Spanish feminist critiques of late capitalism, see Plataforma Feminismo ante la crisis (2009), Agenjo-Calderón (2011) or Gálvez et al. (2015) among others.

Several sectors of society were affected and on May 15 2011, after a massive general strike that included each and every sector, tensions manifested in a spontaneous but widely supported takeover of one of the main squares in Madrid, Plaza del Sol, from the city council.[55] In reality, this was the climax of a decade of protests on different issues. The "Nunca mais" or mobilizations around the drowning of the "Prestige" oil tanker and the resulting environmental catastrophe, the "no to war" or protests against the war in Iraq, and the public opinion against the media coverage of the 11M terrorist attack in Madrid all contributed to slowly increase the

Figure 41: The revolution will be feminist or it will not happen.

population's awareness of the chasm between their welfare and the interests of the political elites.

Likewise, since the creation of the "Asociación para la recuperación de la memoria histórica" [Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory] in 2000, collective memory had become an increasing concern among the population[56]. As Paloma Aguilar evidenced already in 1996, the Transition had not cut ties with the dictatorship and democracy in many aspects was an

[55] For a detailed explanation of the movement, see Tejerina et al. (eds.) (2018)

[56] There had been critical voices during the 1980s and 1990s, but it was not until the 2000s that they became, not dominant, but very loud (Herrera, 2011). Also Michael Richards (2006) discusses a series of reasons behind the fact that it took approximately twenty years before the question of memory gained strength in public debate.

extension of Francoism. Thus, memory became an alternative to institutionalized historiography and served as a site of contestation of official narratives. By the time the global economic crisis hit Spain in 2008, the population already had experienced articulating their opposition to a disappointing administration that was increasingly deaf to its citizens' needs.[57] The eventful 15M constituted a crossroads of past and present protests that called for essential reforms. Among them, the feminist groups successfully guaranteed that gender equality would not only be an objective but the path towards social and economic justice. "La revolución será feminista o no será" ["The revolution will be feminist or will not happen"] (Fig. 41) aptly summarized the tenor of the 15M protests and achievements.

Among feminist claims, debates around the ethics of care and its relation to neoliberalism were key, demonstrating how a precarious economy deepened women's marginalization (Bjornholt et al. 2014). In a big poster hanging for weeks at one of the exits of the subway in Plaza del Sol (Madrid), feminists listed 11 points that described feminism. Among them, three were dedicated to the relation between caregiving and women's emancipation (Fig. 42): point # 6 "lucha por los modelos patriarcales de relaciones afectivo-sexuales entre las personas" ["fight against patriarchal models of romantic relationships between people"], # 10 "lucha por la igualdad laboral (remuneración oportunidades)" ["fight against work inequity" (salary and opportunities)] and very specifically #11 "lucha por el derecho a cuidar y a no cuidar" ["fight for the right to provide care or not"].

[57] See the numbers and explanation in Democracia Real Ya: https://web.archive.org/web/20160322052015/http://economia.democraciarealya.es/2012/04/05/la-crisis-sigue-pasando-factura-al-ppsoe/

The sexual division of labor has traditionally placed women in a disadvantageous position where caregiving and housekeeping is neither publicly nor economically acknowledged.[58] Thus, the gap between paid work (employment) and unpaid work erases women's productivity even though it consists of feeding capitalism with the workers of tomorrow and of maintaining them after they are discarded by the system: all this at no cost to employers or the State while socially stigmatizing to women. Furthermore, as María Ángeles

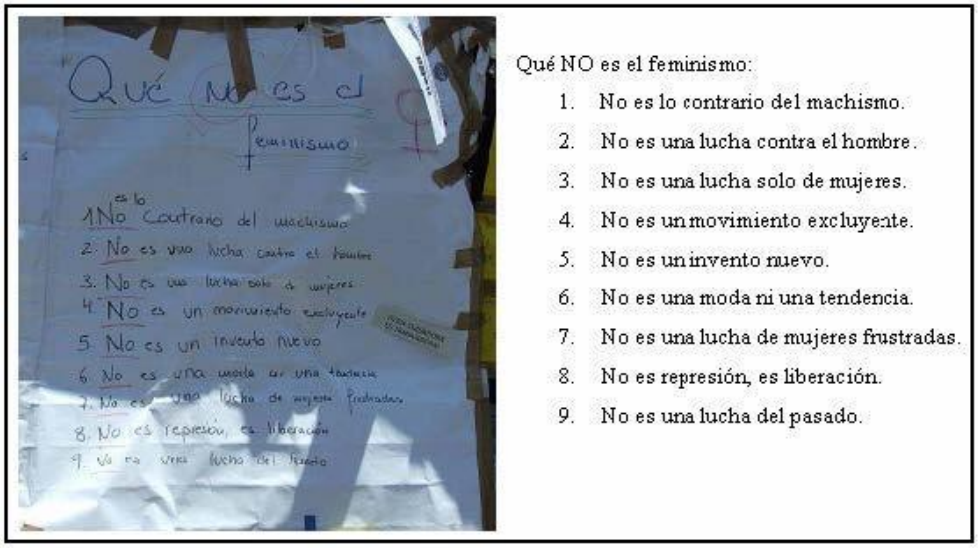

Figure 42: What feminism is not - ethics of care (Martín Martín 2015)

Durán shows in *La riqueza invisible del cuidado* (2018), the time devoted to caregiving has traditionally hindered women's participation in public life, from access to the labor market to opportunities in the political arena,[59] and these concerns are evident among feminist protesters in the 15M (Fig. 43).

[58] Among many others, see Silvia Federici (1995), Marilyn Waring (1988) for foundational feminist economics. For the way the 2008-9 economic crisis impacted women worldwide see Bjornholt et al. (2014). For the Spanish case, Galdón (2012), Gálvez et al. (2013, 2016), Bravo (2012), Durán (2012) and Plataforma Feminismo ante la crisis (2009)

[59] In *La riqueza invisible del cuidado* (2018), Durán takes her research of time, care, gender and global economics to calculate the time cost of caregiving. As she shows, the "cuidatoriado" or caregivers as a social class – an overwhelming majority of women – have seen their participation in political life hindered by the time devoted to others.

When referring to care, even further marginalization processes intersect with racial and ethnic identities. The burden doubles if women are migrants and/or people of color, especially when in a political and administratively disadvantageous position. A poster in the protest said "Migrant women: neither slaves nor lovers" (Fig. 44) referring not only to patriarchal

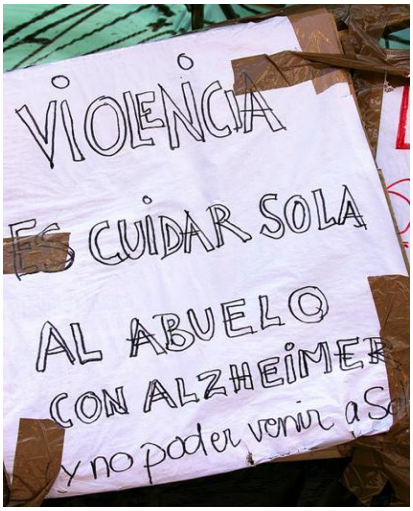

Figure 43: "Violence is to take care of the grandpa with alzheimer on my own and be unable to come to Sol"

Figure 44: Migrant women - neither slaves nor lovers

oppression, deeply tied to neoliberalism, but also to the marginalization exercised by other women. The "kellys" or association of hotel cleaning ladies, epitomized the protests that comprised class, gender and ethnicity and denounced their precariousness as part of a global feminist movement. All in all, 15M was a space for the expression of a multiplicity of voices and experiences and for the exploration of intersecting forms of exploitation. Furthermore, feminist groups successfully guaranteed that gender equality would not be merely an objective but the path towards social and economic justice.

Feminism grew larger on its own influenced by the international #metoo movement but also, in the case of Spain, as a successful response to the horrific case of "the wolfpack" ("la

manada").[60] In 2016, during the San Fermín *fiestas* or regional celebrations of Pamplona (Navarra, north of Spain), five young men repeatedly gang raped a young woman and they recorded the rape with their phones as a trophy. When the survivor pressed charges, all the evidence supported her argument but even so they were not condemned for rape but for sexual abuse, a much less serious offense. The uproar and indignation was enormous and the numerous protests at different stages of the process, as well as the overwhelming support of public opinion for the survivor were unprecedented. On June 21 2019, the Supreme Court of Spain reviewed the case and declared that it was not sexual abuse but sexual aggression, condemning the accused to fifteen years and other cautionary measures. Without the social movement, the necessary steps to bring about justice would have been much more strenuous. The strength of feminist protests have not only achieved changes but have, above all, shown that "women's rights are universal rights".

In the comics field, protests against the Angoulême comics festival and award ceremony – the most prestigious in Europe by all standards – marked its 2016 edition.[61] Women creators all over the world felt outraged when the all-male award shortlist completely erased their presence and work. The French advocacy group Égalité BD stated that "We are discouraged from having ambition, from continuing our efforts. How could we take it otherwise? It all comes down to the disastrous glass ceiling; we're tolerated, but never allowed top billing. Will we require women in

[60] For a detailed summary, see Rincón (2019).

[61] Several media echoed the protests, among them the Smithsonian https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/prestigious-comics-festival-comes-under-fire-for-excluding-then-denying-existence-of-women-creators-180957739/ and the Guardian: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/06/comic-book-artists-pull-out-award-protest-all-male-shortlist

comics to perpetually remain in second place?" (Lewis 2016). As a result, women artists boycotted the Festival, which forced it to acknowledge the possible bias of an all-male jury.[62]

Gender disparity does not only affect the demographics of the industry but also the reception and distribution. In *Last Girl Standing* (2017), Trina Robbins describes the socioeconomic panorama with a personal anecdote. In the 1980s, Robbins created *Meet Misty*, a girls' superheroine. Apparently, sales did not seem to go right although she received countless letters from teenage fans. Robbins tried to find out the reason for this contradiction so she asked at several comics shops and all of them gave the same answer – the product was sold out and there were no issues left. Nothing made sense but one day she learnt that the owners of the stores believed that a comic for girls would not make profits so they ordered an unusually low number of copies. Indeed, most fans had complained in the letters how difficult it was to find it but it was already too late and *Meet Misty* had to end. The gender bias actively thwarted the sales, which resulted in its final discontinuance after issue number six.

The production, distribution and reading bias affects the approach to gender and historical memory as much as the demographics of the industry. In Spanish comics about collective memory, only one graphic novel about women has been created by a woman. Ana Penyas and her *Estamos todas bien* is the exception to the all-male constellation of creators. Even if stories revolve around women, like *Cuerda de Presas* and *El ala rota*, they are created by men, which demonstrates the overwhelming gender disparity in the comics infrastructure that reflects decades of institutional and personal, official and unofficial, overt and covert sexism.[63].

[62] Three years later, they awarded Emil Ferris with the Grand Prix (Fauve d'Or), the third woman to win since its inception in 1974.

[63] Probably the most complete description might be Trina Robbins's *From Girls to Grrlz: A History of Women Comics From Teens to Zines* (1999) but also her autobiography, *Last Girl Standing* (2018).

The implied reader has an impact on what and how stories are crafted, and in the case of Spain's recent past it translates into the prevalence of war stories over the plurality of experiences of Francoism. The works studied here speak of repression but also of underlying and intersectional forms of marginalization that were already in place before the dictatorship and did not only depend on class struggles.

Gender and Memory in Spanish comics – War Stories

In the realm of historical memory, accounts have generally focused on those who participated in the Civil War but given that the vast majority were men, their particular perspectives have generally been taken as standard.[64] Conflicts, repression or wars have different effects on men than on women, which results from their different roles in the gender system and the hierarchical nature of their relations. Spain is no exception and, as in any other conflict, the number of direct victims of war and repression was higher among men than among women. Thus, the overwhelming majority of graphic novels about it revolve around men's deeds and defeats, their fraternity and the almost all-male universe that modern warfare constitutes.

In Spain's cultural production, women have been relevant to historical memory either as militiawomen or as the carriers of the memories of the fallen, who were mainly men. Depending on their role, the background noise of women's voices occasionally makes it to the foreground. As the "sufferers" who kept their relatives' memories alive, they erase themselves from the story

[64] Although the Spanish Civil War was one of the first conflicts in the 20th c. to involve women in active service, they were an exception. As Mary Nash explains, gender roles fluctuated more in the exceptional circumstance of war, with two options for women: the militiawoman, which was a very exceptional case, and the housekeepers fighting on the "Home front", a role chosen by or imposed on the majority of women. (see chapter "Madres combativas, las heroínas de la retaguardia" in *Rojas: Las mujeres republicanas en la guerra civil*, 1989)

and "narrat[e] their memories in women's most traditional way – 'to live for others'" (Jelin 108). On the contrary, militiawomen's lives come to the forefront of history only because they participated in an overwhelmingly masculine activity—war.

However, *El ala rota* and *Estamos todas bien* bring women's stories as caregivers to the forefront in a groundbreaking shift that has not taken place in any other form of cultural production. In Petra, Maruja and Herminia, the protagonists of *El ala rota* and *Estamos todas bien* respectively, the demands of contemporary feminism come to life, specifically the struggles of what María Ángeles Durán terms the "cuidatoriat" (*La riqueza invisible del cuidado,* 2018) or social class of caregivers, overwhelmingly female. Structural gender discrimination vividly manifests in their individual circumstances.

In this sense, women's accounts of Spanish historical memory question the supremacy of the armed conflict vis-à-vis a longer struggle for equity. For Elizabeth Jelin, women's memories show that "la crítica de las visiones dominantes implícita en las nuevas voces puede llevar eventualmente a una transformación del contenido y marco de la memoria social … en la medida en que puede significar una redefinición de la esfera pública misma, antes que la incorporación (siempre subordinada) de voces no escuchadas en una esfera pública definida de antemano" ["the critique of predominant views might eventually lead to a transformation in the content and framework of social memory…in the sense that it might mean a redefinition of the public sphere instead of the simple incorporation (always subordinated) of unheard voices in a public sphere that is already determined"] (113). The comics studied here subvert the framework established to discuss historical memory.

In addition, the three works included in this paper, but especially *Cuerda de presas* and *Estamos todas bien*, reflect upon sexual orientation as an essential aspect of gender construction

that problematizes dynamics between oppressed and oppressing subjectivities. By exploring the characters' forms of hate towards queer subjects, these graphic narratives problematize women's struggle for visibility, equity and justice. By providing accounts of historical memory focusing on identities detached from the heteropatriarchal canon, they pave the way to a greater plurality. By shifting the focus to the everyday struggles of women who did not take part in the conflict, they are also questioning how nationhood is defined. Are the experiences of those who did not participate in the war not relevant in the shaping of a nation? If nationhood is not only the past but a project for the future, what is the contribution of the various identities and experiences?

In this paper, I will try to answer these and other questions by analyzing Jorge García and Fidel Martínez's *Cuerda de presas* (2005), Antonio Altarriba and Kim's *El ala rota* (2016) and Ana Penyas's *Estamos todas bien* (2017). Their depiction of gender and memory further problematizes previous accounts of post-war Spain while they call for a transformation in the epistemological frameworks used to understand it. With their contribution, not only class but also gender and sexuality become key factors to explore layered forms of marginalization.

Cuerda de presas

Jorge García and Fidel Martínez's *Cuerda de presas* or "Rope of Prisoners" tackles the traumatic experiences of women political prisoners during the Francoist dictatorship. Based upon the testimonies of hundreds of women in different prisons of Spain, it conveys their collective memory through a set of fictional short stories. As previous comics on historical memory, it portrays characters who had directly participated in the Civil War. However, the accounts of these women contrast with the dynamism of men's stories studied in previous chapters. If Paco Roca's *Los surcos del azar*, Altarriba and Kim's *El arte de volar* or Miguel and Francisco

Gallardo's *Un largo silencio* explored the series of events that led the characters towards hopelessness and alienation in the aftermath of the war, *Cuerda de presas* delves into the psychological pain of traumatized memory. In the gaps and silences, the ellipsis and the gutters, *Cuerda de presas* draws readers in the physical but more especially in the mental prisons of the characters.

At the time of its publication, in 2005, stories about militiawomen were also popular in Spanish cinema with titles like *Libertarias* (1996), *Trece Rosas* (2007) and *La voz dormida* (2011), the latter an adaptation of the eponymous novel by Dulce Chacón (2002). These films rescued the social imaginary of the Republican propaganda, whose romanticized portrayal of heroic women at the front was used in political opposition to the Fascist ideal of women as "Angels of the House"[65]. However, *Cuerda de presas* further problematizes the image of the militiawoman and provides instances of internal and intersectional violence. I explore how gender construction and homophobia interact and problematize the reception of their memories.

Cuerda de presas constitutes a collection of eleven short stories. Each one features different characters but trauma ties the stories together as a "cuerda de presas" or "rope of prioners". The impressionistic drawing style of *Cuerda de presas* imitates the traumatized memory, creating a kaleidoscope of experiences that together compose a cubist panoramic of the

[65] The semantics of Republican propaganda are complex and fluctuate over time. They certainly encouraged women to join the front but "la figura de la miliciana estaba dirigida a un auditorio masculino… Seducía, atraía o sacudía a los hombres para animarles a cumplir con sus deberes militares. Más que elaborar una imagen innovadora de la mujer conforme a una nueva realidad, parece haber sido producida para instrumentalizar a las mujeres con fines bélicos" (Nash 1999, 98) [the image of the militiawoman addressed a male audience… it seduced, attracted or shook men to encourage them to fulfill their military duties. More than elaborating an innovative image of women in a new reality, it seems as if they used women with military goals] sometimes encouraging women to join the army but also as propaganda of the revolutionary spirit of the Republic and as a claim for the male gaze.

incongruence of human cruelty[66]. Survivors struggle to acquire a whole picture with the pieces of the puzzle, but the truth is sometimes revealed only to the reader, who possesses the key to end the character's pain while simultaneously unable to help. The unique possibilities of comics to (not) show and (not) tell creates a layered narrative that focuses on the gray areas, on the interstices that place the individual outside common ideological frameworks.

The women in *Cuerda de presas* are haunted by their traumatic past, which suddenly irrupts in their present everyday life. In "El traslado" ["The transfer"] there is an old woman that shouts "el traslado" at night in bed, as if from a nightmare. Her memories are triggered by the darkness of the room and the door closing, which reminds her of the darkness inside the wagons that transported female prisoners in inhumane conditions. This story is followed by "El duelo", that opens with the vigil of another old lady who shouted "empatadas de nuevo" ["tied again"] when she was about to die. These words referred to the traumatic death of her basketball rival in prison. Both teams were tied so they were waiting for the moment to see who would win the next game but her friend died as a result of the lack of health assistance in prison. The protagonist had to witness her slow deterioration without being able to help. When she died, her corpse was put in the cage for hares and hens and when the friend complained, she was sent to spend the whole night at the cage with the corpse and the animals. In both stories, the women are possessed by a haunting past and the expressions they repeat in their present as old ladies reveal their inability to let go of traumatic events, even in their own deathbed.

[66] Anne Whitehead discusses the paradox inherent to any exploration of "trauma fiction" because of the impossibility of representing the overwhelming experience in question. In this concern, she draws not only on the Freudian idea of the breach in a system of defense, but also on the ideas of Cathy Caruth, whose seminal works *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History and Trauma: Explorations in Memory* develop the theory that a collapse in understanding lies at the heart of trauma. Caruth explains that traumatic events are akin to "non-experience [...] causing conventional epistemologies to falter" (Whitehead 5). Caruth's interpretation, as Whitehead notes, "problematises the relation between experience and event" (5).

In *Cuerda de presas* or "rope of prisoners", trauma operates as a sort of rope that strongly and suddenly pulls the individuals out of their everyday life towards an extremely painful incident in the past. All stories describe circumstances that hurt the psyche of their protagonists so time and trauma are, in a way, a sort of "rope of prisoners" that binds the stories together, one after another, in line, while at the same time keeping their individuality. For instance, "El traslado" [The transfer] and "El duelo" [The grief] are placed one after the other and given that they both revolve around the – apparently –nonsensical words of two old ladies, they make a seamless, even confusing transition. Such transition emphasizes the painful memories that bind their separate lives together by the same horrific experience as political prisoners. At the same time, the specificities of each story underscore the individuality of their protagonists because the approach of *Cuerda de presas* is to avoid a pornography of violence by focusing on the lives and the individuality of each and every woman.

Most stories insist on women's solidarity and support but "El cuarto bajo la escalera" focuses on internal and intersectional violence among the prisoners. In this story Carmen, an old woman, tells a journalist her experience at the women's prison of Albacete. Abuses and torture were common and one of the "softest" forms of denigration was to shave women's heads. Arguably, it was a way to prevent infections but the insanitary conditions belied his reasoning. In Albacete, all women were shaved but one, Luisa. Nobody knew exactly why they let her keep her hair and why she was taken to "the room under the staircase" instead of to the normal interrogation rooms, so the prisoners supposed she was a snitch, and they either insulted her or just marginalized her in every possible way. One day, Carmen sees her alone in a corner and, instead of ignoring her as she would have normally done, she suddenly feels extremely sorry and approaches her (Fig 45). She sits down by her side and Luisa bursts into tears, explaining that the

prison guards let her keep her hair because they use her as a sex slave, systematically raping and beating her. When fellow prisoners see Carmen approach Luisa, they call them “invertidas” or “deviated” and from this moment, the two women bond strongly. In Carmen’s mental images, lighting and framing graphically places Luisa in the spotlight. In “El cuarto bajo la escalera”, the general tone of the monstrator is dark and it covers in shadows both the events of the present and of the past, but Luisa stands out because the panels that frame her are very light, and she contrasts against a rather white background. Making Luisa hypervisible graphically singles her out as the object of gazes and speculations of both the prisoners and the torturers. The moment Carmen decides to leave the line for the toilet, where all the people are represented in a grayish tone, she joins Luisa in the spotlight, together in the same panel. Back to the present, the story ends when Carmen finishes talking to the journalist. Before he leaves, he asks what happened to Luisa. Carmen does not know because she was moved to another prison but she tells the journalist that she is sure that “Luisa nunca salió de aquel cuarto” (36) [Luisa never left that room], alluding to the longlasting effects of her traumatic experience.

Figure 45: Carmen joins Luisa. Notice how graphically Carmen instantly shares the spotlight with Luisa's marginal status

Luisa's secret, the truth, the revelation… all seem to make sense but the past is framed by Carmen, who mediates what is seen and what is told, so the truth depends only on what she says that she saw. In fact, there is evidence that Carmen is an unreliable narrator. While she is telling her story to the journalist, some flashbacks of her personal torture come to her mind but she decides to keep them to herself, actively hiding information (Fig. 5). They unfold in three panels and in the third one she receives electroshocks on the nipples and the sparks coming out of them bleed into the next panel, which also shows the bust of Carmen but in darkness. The cubist style underscores her breaking down in pain, as if her body was made of painful pieces. The text for this last panel says "¿Doña Carmen? Se ha quedado usted muy callada, ¿se encuentra bien?" (31) ["Mrs. Carmen? You're very quiet, are you alright?"] and the transition to the old Carmen in the present continues the story. Thus, these images are shown but not told, only known by Carmen,

her torturer and now, the reader, but not the journalist. Carmen is an unreliable narrator and the story makes clear that finding the truth is an exercise in being attentive to what is not shown and not told.

Three panels are shown together on the same page but the torture continues on a fourth panel in the next page and this connection reveals the responsibility of the fellow prisoners for Luisa's sex slavery (Fig 46 and 47). At first, it seems that it is yet another rendering of Carmen's torture, not only because Carmen is speaking and framing them together but also because of their similar style – same size panels containing a female bust, showing just her head and shoulders. However, the face is being pulled by the hair and Carmen's head is shaved, which points to the possibility of it being Luisa. Both images being similar refer to each other in what Thierry Groensteen calls *tressage* (2007). That is, while comics images follow the logic of reading –

Figure 46: Carmen hides her torture, p.31

what is placed on the left is previous and/or the cause of what is portrayed on the right – sometimes panels separated by pages also deploy a sort of continuity, referring to each other.

The *tressage* in this case indicates a connection across pages and a confusion between Carmen's and Luisa's torture.

This blurring of identities is also possible because they are the most expressionistic panels where the cubist style erases differences and individualities between the two women, thus

Figure 47: Luisa "I'll say it all" p.32

underscoring, in general terms, the bonding that torture and repression created among prisoners against the Francoist regime. Also, the text in the fourth panel reads "¡Lo diré todo…!" (32) ["I'll say it all…!"] (Fig. 47) but is this what Luisa did? This is how Carmen imagined Luisa after the rest of prisoners said she was a snitch. And after the images of Carmen's torture and their similarity with Luisa's panel, the *tressage* implies a connection that goes beyond the merely iconic, the possibility of sharing a confession not only between the two of them but among the rest of prisoners. In the harsh circumstances of these women, the comic suggests, confessing was more common than it looked and therefore there was no link to Luisa's "punishment". Maybe many other prisoners confessed too but the jail managers chose Luisa for her physical appearance or because she was the weakest among the women.

This opens up the scariest underlying issue: that the prisoners made Luisa's sex slavery possible through their continuous marginalization of her. The snitch story operates as an excuse for what the prisoners unconsciously know that they allowed to happen. Luisa becomes thus their sacrifice for their own welfare, and the common accepted lie – even if just to themselves, even if unconsciously – binds them all together against her. So not only were fascist men abusive but also leftist women, all collaborating to maintain the cruel dynamics of survival in jail. And when Carmen left the toilet line and joined Luisa in the spotlight, she realized not only what was hidden in "the room under the staircase" but the lies that kept the prisoners together. Luisa's confession thus responds not only to the wardens but more importantly to the female prisoners. *Cuerda de presas*, revels in the interstices, in the contradictions, in the gray areas that give a vantage point from which to observe ideological frameworks of normativity, including gender structures. These panels of torture that seem to be chained across pages as well as that panel in which one woman joins the other in the spotlight of marginalization, are graphic renderings of escape, union and above all dissent beyond borders or framings.

Carmen mediates the past and the journalist mediates how her story will be told in the newspapers. During the interview, Carmen is aware of the journalist's indifference and this might arguably be the reason why she prefers to keep the details of her torture to herself. While Carmen is disclosing the truth about Luisa, he can only think about his need to use the bathroom and while he is at the toilet, he thinks "Violaciones… la encontraban más atractiva con cabello…esto hay que contarlo con frialdad" (35) [Rapes…they found her prettier with hair…

this must be told with coldness]. While the journalist's attitude might be a way to avoid sensationalism, it also expresses a detachment that makes Carmen keep key memories to herself.

The clear lack of connection between the two reveals broader gender dynamics. For Elizabeth Jelin, a deeper understanding of gender memory is essential to interrogate the dichotomy of masculine rationality and feminine affect whereby "los símbolos del dolor y el

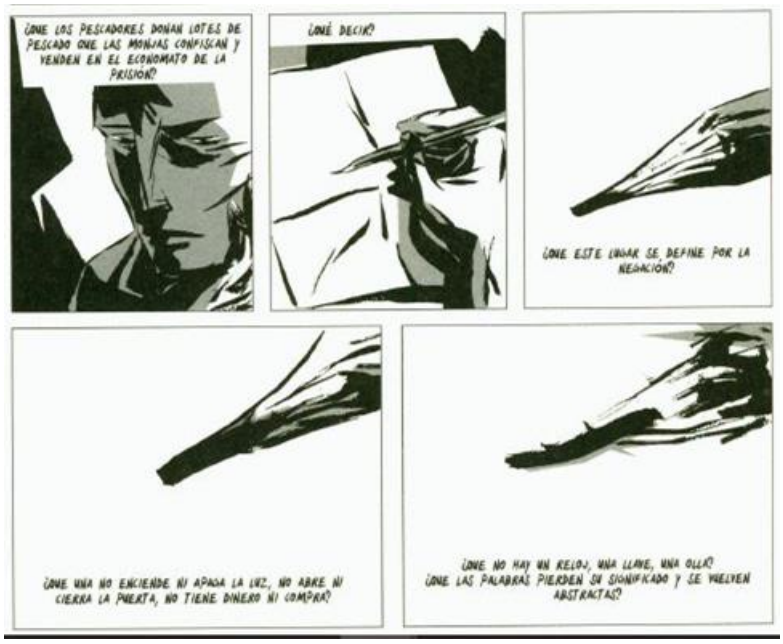

Figure 48: "What to write"

sufrimiento personalizados tienden a corporizarse en mujeres, mientras que los mecanismos institucionales parecen 'pertenecer' a los hombres." (Jelin 2002, 99) ["the symbols of personal pain and suffering tend to be embodied by women while the institutional mechanisms seem to 'belong' to men."]. Jelin refers here to the public display and press coverage of justice-seeking after Argentina's dictatorial period. As she demonstrates in the example she comments, differentiation through gender entails a hierarchy – the power of institutional mechanisms embodied by men that overrule the public expression of feelings or demands for justice embodied by women, just as the power of the journalist in the story overrules Carmen's account of deeply traumatizing experiences. His decision on "how" to tell the story dehumanizes the

suffering of the prisoners. In this sense, “El cuarto bajo la escalera” makes evident the inability of the journalist to perceive the importance of Carmen’s contribution.

Silence concludes the book with a short story about the impossibility of narrating trauma. In “¿Qué escribir?” [What to write?] (Fig 48) women smuggle in a piece of paper and a pencil to make Mercedes, the only literate prisoner among them, write about the harsh conditions that they were enduring, hoping they would find some help. When she is about to do it, she asks herself “¿Qué escribir? ¿Que este lugar se define por la negación? ¿Qué escribir? ¿Que los pescadores donan lotes de pescado que las monjas confiscan y venden en el economato de la prisión?” (93) [What to write? That this place is defined by negation? What to write? That fishermen donate crates of fish that the nuns confiscate and sell in the prison’s market?] In the end, Mercedes does not write a word and her fellow prisoner is shocked, thinking she has gone crazy. For her, writing makes no sense because “the words lose their meaning and they become abstract”. Panel after panel, the drawing on the paper disintegrates until it becomes just black lines on a white background. Drawing and word merge in a senseless text, just lines, and where words do not communicate one must search for the image that cannot be reduced to the reason’s syllogisms.

“What to write” also alludes to the lack of a shared set of cultural values for the circulation of gender memory. As Michelle Balaev argues, “the ‘speakability’ of traumatic experience is influenced by cultural models … which identify the most important aspects to remember. This perspective reminds us that the ‘unspeakability’ of trauma … can be understood less as an epistemological conundrum or neurobiological fact, but more as an outcome of cultural values and ideologies.” (19) Memory is culturally mediated by other intersecting factors like gender, race, sexual orientation or ableness, which shape the conveyance of the traumatic experience. If the receiver does not share the codification system - in this case the cultural *milieu*

in which it is uttered - and cannot decode the message, communication is unsuccessful (Gilroy 1993). Sometimes trauma's unspeakability, as Balaev suggests, is not a matter of how shattered or chaotic the memory of the experience is but about how the cultural context is ready to accommodate it, which influences the choices made to articulate the message. Gender affects the social reception of memories, making it more difficult for women to disclose their traumas as they entailed a two-tier emancipation, directed both against the political system and against their own fellows on the frontline.

El ala rota: Not "invisible" but "unseen".

Antonio Altarriba created *El ala rota* [The broken wing] (2016) as a second part to another comic, *El arte de volar* [The art of flying] (2009). *El arte de volar,* tells the life path of Antonio Altarriba's father, who fought in the Civil War against the Franco troops and who had to endure and survive dictatorship, which consumed him to the point of committing suicide in his twilight years, jumping from the window of his nursing home. In turn, *El ala rota* is the story of Altarriba's mother, Petra, published seven years later, when the author realized that he had been unfair to her, almost deleting her from the story and portraying her as an unbearable character for his father. Altarriba explains it saying that, in *El arte de volar*, his mother "se diría que estaba para realzarlo a él … me di cuenta de que había sido injusto con ella. La figura de mi madre no merecía el tratamiento que le daba en el cómic, contrapunto beato y frígido de la trayectoria épico-rebelde-trágica de mi padre" (*El ala rota*, 257) ["was there to make him stand out…I realized that I had been unfair to her. The figure of my mother did not deserve how I treated her in the comic, a sanctimonious and frigid counterpoint of the epic-rebellious-tragic life path of my father"]. In fact, he had not even thought about how his mother remembered those times, her

own life story and whatever she had to endure, until another woman, a lady in the audience, asked him "¿Y su madre?" (257) [And your mum?] while he was presenting his previous book, *El arte de volar*.

El ala rota opens with an anecdote where the author reflects on his own ignorance and indolence. Some days before his mother's death, the nurse informs Altarriba that his mother had never been able to straighten it in her whole life. She always hid it and she performed her duties with apparent ease but was it that difficult to hide, given that her own son had almost erased her from his previous work? And was her existence, her concerns and feelings, "invisible" or "unseen"?

The arm of Petra, Altarriba's mother, is the mark of mental and physical trauma that operates as bodily archive of memory, as a form of coded language that her son cannot decipher until the very end. According to her, it happened "[c]uando nací [porque mi] madre murió en el parto. Y mi padre, que estaba muy enamorado de ella, me quiso matar" (258) ["when I was born" because her "mother died giving birth to her. And my father, who was very much in love with her, wanted to kill me"]. So Petra justifies her father wanting to kill her as a newborn baby because he "was very much in love with her" mother. With this romanticized justification, Petra accommodates patriarchal violence through a narrative of redeeming love that blurs the roles of victim and perpetrator and reveals internalized mysoginy.[67] Sexism and misogyny constitutes the environment where the author grows up and ultimately preventa him from valuing the relevance

[67] There is extensive literature in psychology that explains how beliefs not only contribute but can even forecast future violence in dating among subjects. General beliefs about societal dynamics and structures (Muñoz-Rivas, Gámez-Guadix, Grana & Fernández, 2010; Smith-Slep, Cascardi, Avery-Leaf & O'Leary, 2001) and more specifically on distorted ideas of love and sex (Barnett, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 1997; Garrido & Casas, 2009) show their strong influence.

of his mother's life story. It is other women, like the nurse or even the anonymous woman in the audience, who give him the key to read the story inscribed in his mother's arm: a story of sacrifice, invisibility and silence that spoke louder than words.

This is not to say that Petra's difficulty straightening her arm translates disability as a problem. On the contrary, it barely hinders any of her activities, from self-care to employment. If anything, it proves how disability "is not fundamentally a question of medicine or health, nor is it just an issue of sensitivity and compassion; rather, it is a question of politics and power(lessness), power over, and power to." (quoted in Gillies 2014) She is aware that she must adapt to an "ableist" world where invisibility – both for her gender and for her physical condition – becomes a means to navigate the social conundrum.

Internalized misogyny further complicates Petra's trauma. It is a way to navigate a world where women – especially disabled ones – do not fit. Both Petra and her neighbor resort to entertaining notions of romantic love to explain physical violence against women.[68] Petra on the one hand does not even see, read or register her injury as abuse but as a proof of love. Her neighbor visits Petra for solace and nursing after her husband's beatings. At no point does this woman judge him or complain. She takes it as just another difficulty of her marriage. Striking instances of internalized misogyny like these ones problematize the victim/perpetrator relation because, on the one hand, they blur the lines between one another to the point of erasing the perpetrator's role, blended into a societal, normative dynamic. On the other, both the systemic violence of the State and the network of oppression with which it intersects make some peoples'

[68] Following Connell (1996) and Hooks (2004), Saczkowski argues that "physical violence both within and outside of the home are extreme moments where oppressive gender roles come into existence and that this is accomplished through peoples' actions and the organization of social institutions." (47)

experiences visible and others invisible (Bannerji, 1993). As a result, women like Petra and her neighbor acquire invisibility as a survival tactic.

Anonimity is structurally present in domestic work. Largely obliterated in the calculations of a country's economic productivity, in reality it is an essential producer of wealth. As María Ángeles Durán explains in *El trabajo no remunerado en la economía global* (2012) [*Unpaid labour in global economy*], "[l]os hogares son talleres de servicios y ningún otro sector productivo les iguala en volumen e importancia económica." (91) "Ya en el año 1995, estimaciones de Naciones Unidas fijaban en "16 *trillions* de dólares", según la terminología anglosajona, la producción global excluida de las cuentas nacionales, de los que once correspondían al trabajo no monetarizado e invisible de las mujeres (132-3)" [Homes are producers of services and no other sector equals their volume and economic importance. (91) Already in 1995, the United Nations estimated $16 trillion – according to the anglosaxon terminology – to be the value of global production excluded from national accounts, out of which eleven corresponded to women's non-monetized and invisible labor]. Indeed, for international indicators of productivity at all levels (regional, national, continental or international), only paid work – mostly men's– counts, which creates a rhetoric that actively makes caregiving, housekeeping and many other traditionally gendered female work economically worthless.

The particular case of the Altarriba family reflects wider gender dynamics in memory recording. The very process of recording one's thoughts, deeds, experiences, etc. for the public presumes an audience, a reception and above all an interest in those memories. While Petra's arm was her non-verbal archive of trauma, Altarriba's father had left "250 cuartillas" ["250 sheets"] (259) of written memories. Altarriba inquired about his father's life but never even asked about his mother's memories. Father and son would also have long conversations for the

15 years before the father's death, where the father would constantly repeat and recall his struggles in the war and the dictatorship. His mother, on the contrary, was an enigma: "No poseía gran información sobre ella. Porque mi madre, al igual que la mayor parte de las mujeres de su generación, no era muy dada a hablar de sí misma. … Sus hechos, a menudo asombrosos, siempre esforzados, ni contaban ni merecían ser contados" (*El ala rota*, 258) [I did not possess much information about her. Because my mother, just like the majority of women from her generation, was not very keen on talking about herself… her deeds, often striking, always earnest neither counted nor were they communicated]. Elizabeth Jelin explains how gender affects the recording and reporting of memory: "Las memorias de los hombres, sus maneras de narrar, apuntan en otra dirección. Los testimonios masculinos se encuentran a menudo en documentos públicos, en testimonies judiciales y en informes periodísticos. Los testimonios orales, realizados en ámbitos públicos, transcritos para 'materializar la prueba', se enmarcan en una expectativa de justicia y cambio político… un número muy significativo de textos autobiograficos y de construcciones narrativas basadas en diálogos con algun/a mediador/a… encontramos un predominio de testimonios de mujeres" (2009, 109) [Men's memories, narratives, follow a different direction. Men's testimonies are often found in public documents, judiciary testimonies and news reports. The oral testimonies, carried out in public spheres, transcribed to 'materialize the evidence', are framed within an expectation of justice and political change" whereas in "a vast number of autobiographical texts and narrative constructions based in dialogues with some mediator…we find a majority of testimonies by women"]. That is, men's testimonies are framed in the public sphere and aspire to social change, to justice, while women limit their contributions to the domestic space and they do not operate as agents of change in a society that was never made for them. The system privileges, as Altarriba himself did, those "250 sheets" that his father

left and, of course, their content, the deeds in war and the experience at work, in the public sphere, which was – is? – strongly gendered.

In this erasure there was also a distortion that – as the author himself states – "descuidaba (¿falseaba?) el papel que mi madre ocupaba" (258) ["neglected (manipulated?) the role my mother played"]. By comparing concrete instances from the book about his father with the story of his mother, the misconception is evident. In *El arte de volar* (the story about his father), Petra is a frigid, ill-tempered, extremely religious character that the father never fully understands. Regarding sex, he misses the French girls he met while in exile because he found them much more liberated. For him, the dictatorship had turned Spanish women into inhibited, prudish lovers and his wife was no exception. However, *El ala rota*, (Petra's story) shows that sexual intercourse triggers memories of her being raped when young. The lack of communication

Figure 49: Fanaticism hinders sexual life in El arte de volar *p. 142*

Figure 50: Petra's account - religiosity framed in everyday life in El ala rota *p.149*

between them made Altarriba reduce Petra to a stereotypical housewife, a mere product of national Catholicism. By contrast, her personal account escapes the limiting gender constructions that her husband is applying and reveal that unprotected sex was life threatening for her.

Sexual problems escalate after Petra's first pregnancy. The doctor recommends her to avoid giving birth again because she would not be able to survive another delivery. In *El arte de volar*, in just five panels, she goes from giving birth to praying the rosary, which gives her husband the perception of a cold, distant, religious woman and states that "era una excusa perfecta para que Petra rechazara algo que con toda evidencia no apreciaba". (121) ["it was a perfect excuse for Petra to reject something she evidently did not enjoy."] *El ala rota* tries to fix this and it draws almost the same panel but framed differently. In the first case, Petra is in the background and Altarriba's concerned perspective frames the scene. In the second, Petra is the central figure and her religiosity is just an extension of house chores and domestic life, not fanaticism. (cfr. Figs 49 and 50) The visual contrast illustrates how Petra had been pushed into the background to make her husband the protagonist in *El arte de volar*, an operation that resembles centuries of women's memories and experiences pushed outside of history and memory. Altarriba's work is valuable in highlighting not only women's erasure but also the distortion of their life experiences through a patriarchal approach.

In fact, the archive of *El ala rota* raises even more questions given that it had to be reconstructed through what others – that is, men – said: "Así que, a falta de datos precisos, la vida de mi madre, en una buena medida, la he tenido que deducir. … Mi tío Lorenzo fue la fuente principal, transmitiendo situaciones y anécdotas de forma abundante, siempre divertida" (*El ala rota* 259). ["So, in the absence of accurate data, I had to deduce my mother's life, for the most part… My uncle Lorenzo was the main source, communicating situations and anecdotes

abundantly and in a funny way."] It had to be another man who would speak for her given that Altarriba's mother was used to going unheard. In this sense, like in Art Spiegelman's *Maus,* the two men produce what Marianne Hirsch called an "orphic work". For Hirsch, *Maus* is "a masculine process facilitated by the encounter with the beautiful dead woman who cannot herself come out and sing her own song" (1992, 21) and while Hirsch refers to the dead mother in *Maus,* Anja, this could be perfectly applied to the reconstruction of Petra's life, once passed, by other men without her first-hand testimony. In this sense, although Altarriba tries to do justice to his mother and he brilliantly portrays the subtleties and details that explain her "invisibility" *for him,*[69] there is very little reflection on his own positionality or even on how historical memory is being shaped in graphic narrative.

The contribution of *El ala rota* evidences that the standards that shape what experiences deserve attention in the recovery of historical memory in Spanish comics have long been filtered by the direct participation in war and the public sphere, as Altarriba himself did regarding his father's life story. The author explains that he never enquired into his mother's life because "ella no se implicó en los desafíos politicos de la época" (257) [she did not partake of the political challenges of the time], that is, she did not participate in public life, a male-dominated sphere especially in those years. This was enough explanation to rule out her life – although once he investigated, he discovered she was at the epicenter of a failed coup against Franco –. The political implications of gender discrimination, the economic transcendence of unpaid work, the inability to see that 51% of the population are women and potential readers – buyers – of this comic all fail to judge historical memory in its complexity.

[69] My italics.

***Estamos todas bien:* Your war and our struggles?**

Estamos todas bien (2017) or "We women are all fine" is an autobiographical graphic novel where Ana Penyas rescues the memories of her grandmothers during Francoism. This work cuts ties with the war canon and revolves around stay-at-home mothers. Penyas's grandmothers, like most of their generation, devoted their lives to taking care of others – sons, relatives, friends, husbands – investing their time and energy in labor that has traditionally been rendered invisible and marginalized from economic production. In order to articulate their invisibility, Penyas lays bare the manifestations of misogynistic superstructures in the small details of everyday life. This imbrication of the macro and the micro is informed by Penyas' feminist and critical gaze, which intertwines not only the transmutation of Francoism into contemporary consumerist society, but also the value of memory as a tool to transform the present. Unlike *El ala rota*, which overvictimizes domesticity and women, Penyas contrasts the internalized misogyny of her grandmothers with their introspection and awareness of oppression. With her, three generations of women who never accepted silence and submission come full circle to express that "we women were *not* all fine" [70].

I describe craftivism as the main narrative strategy used to denounce gender inequalities. I focus my analysis on one of the grandmothers, Maruja, who is more critical of the asymmetries that the ethics of care imposed on women socially. Unlike Petra from *El ala rota*, she does not submissively accept her role and she is painfully aware of women's invisibility and lack of opportunities in society. This, I argue, is not only a product of her own personality but also of the listener's availability. While Altarriba realizes too late that her mother had a story to tell, Penyas'

[70] My italics.

feminism enables her to recognize Maruja's valuable life experiences. With *Estamos todas bien*, I explore the ways in which the graphic novel articulates the intersection of dictatorial repression and the structural disparities that perpetuated gender inequality.

As Betty Greer explains, craftivism started "in the 1970s [when] women began to look again at domesticity as something to be valued instead of ignored. Wanting to conquer both a drill and a knitting needle, there was a return to home economics." [71] Crafting "is often seen as a benign, passive and (predominantly female) domestic pastime." However in craftivism, "by taking these stereotypes and subverting them, craftivists are making craft a useful tool of peaceful, proactive and political protest."[72] Ana Penyas's *Estamos todas bien* constitutes a meticulously knitted narration that intends to subvert the "passive" and "domestic" role of older generations of women through visual metaphors and narrative strategies related to sewing. The graphic novel opens with a quote that contains some of the main concerns of the work. It is taken from Carmen Martín Gaite's book *Usos amorosos de la postguerra Española* (1987) [*Love customs of the Spanish Post-war*], a feminist approach to the social dynamics that governed gender in post-war Spain, and the quote denounces the romanticization of women's oppression by the Francoist regime:

> Aquellas ejemplares Penélopes condenadas a coser, a callar y a esperar. Coser esperando que apareciera un novio llovido del cielo. Coser luego, si había aparecido, para entretener la espera de la boda […]. Coser, por último, cuando ya había pasado de novio a marido, esperando con la más dulce sonrisa de disculpa para su tardanza, la vuelta de él a casa.

[71] http://craftivism.com/definition/
[72] Craftivism Manifesto in http://craftivism.com/

> [Those exemplary Penelopes condemned to sew, shut up and wait. To sew while waiting for the heaven-sent boyfriend. To sew then, if he had appeared, to entertain themselves until the wedding […]. To sew, ultimately, when he went from boyfriend to husband, waiting for him to come home late at night with the sweetest forgiving smile. (n.p.)][73]

In this passage, sewing[74] operates as the connecting thread of women's life stages. By the end of Ana Penyas's *Estamos todas bien*, the drawing of a red thread and a needle takes up the whole page[75] in combination with a text that says "La vida es aburrida, ¿eh?" ["Life is boring, uh?"].

The drawing directly refers to the opening quote and to Martín Gaite's book, inserting itself in the legacy of feminist critiques of the dictatorship. Both the opening quote and this page emphasize women's feelings of *ennui* and deep frustration in a life devoted to others with little or no acknowledgment. Thus, the beginning and the end are linked in their criticism of forms of gender inequality, but *Estamos todas bien* transforms sewing from a form of oppression into one of activism.

Penyas's graphic style is characterized by incorporating fabric patterns into the design.[76] Instead of just drawing the characters and seamlessly creating a homogeneous visual narrative, the author mixes different techniques, materials and surfaces in a way that reminds of collage

[73]This book has no page numbers so I will include images in this paper whenever possible.

[74] For a connection between sewing and feminism see Lisa Vinebaum's "The sewing rebellion" in Garber, Hochtritt and Sharma, eds. (2019).

[75] In comics, the whole page or the great panel are intended to alter the reading pace and elicit special attention towards its content. The thread and needle taking the whole space stops narration, slows down the reading rhythm and it indicates that the elements drawn there are of special relevance. See Platz (2014), and Groensteen (2007).

[76] She uses the technique of the "transference" - She photographs whatever she needs to transfer on the page. Once the picture is printed in highly saturated colors, she turns over the page, scratches the reverse with a pencil, and the scratched surface "transfers" onto the page. (Personal interview)

and DIY formats.[77] The composition of each panel is layered. First the fabric or the textile patterns are "transferred," and then drawings are added on top in compositions that oftentimes privilege the fabrics over the drawings. The omnipresence of textile patterns subtly points to the overshadowed significance of women's work as stay-at-home mothers. In this way, the texture and the beauty of the patterns literally constitute the basis for the graphic novel's narration, while

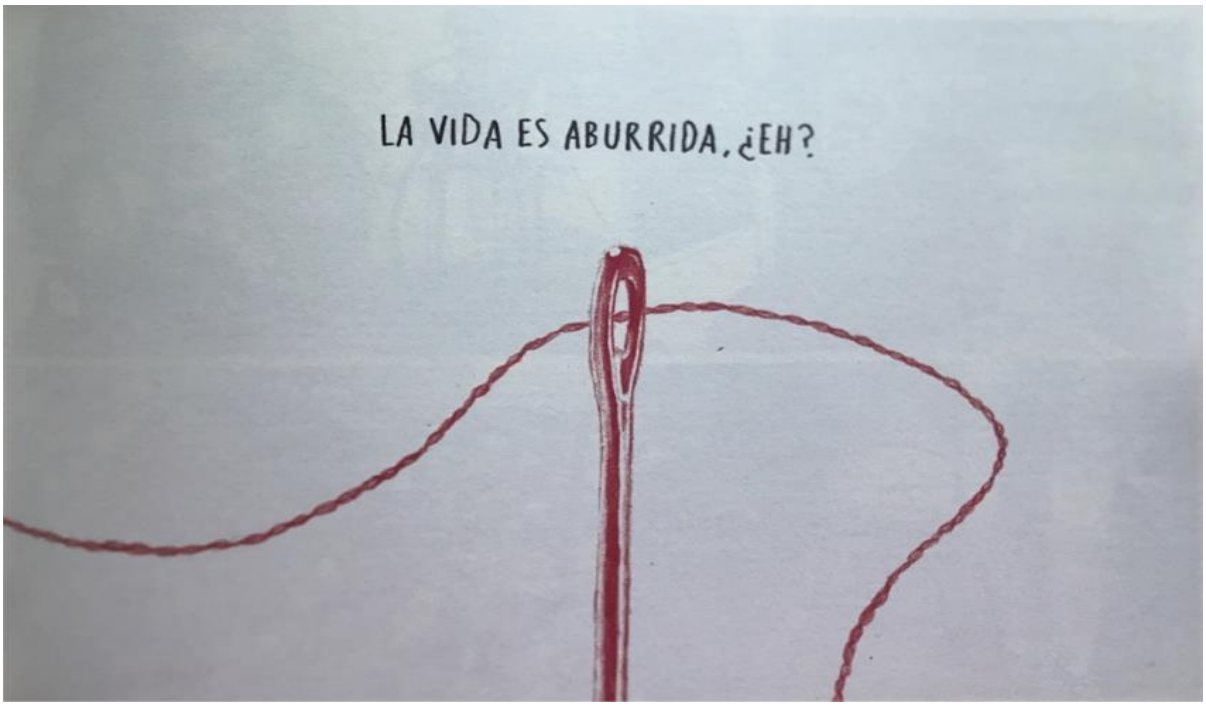

Figure 51: "Life is boring, uh?" - Penyas takes up the torch from Martín Gaite through crafitivism

they operate as a metaphor for the invisible support and care that women provide for others to thrive.

[77] Trina Robbins has extensively published about the underground use of comics for feminism and the ways in which women have been perpetually marginalized both in mainstream and in alternative comics publications. Among the works that stand out are *Girls to grrrlz : a history of [women's] comics from teens to zines* (1999), and more recently *Pretty In Ink: North American Women Cartoonists 1896–2013* (Fantagraphics Books, 2013) with the aim to rescue the brilliant work of so many women authors. Both contain samples of zines and DIY publications because women would self-publish their works as an alternative to main publishing houses, which generally showed little interest in their production.

The image of the red thread and needle that I have already mentioned weaves past and present together in the lives of Penyas's grannies. Focusing on Maruja, the first grandmother that appears on the comic, she describes her present as boring because, like many old women in her situation, she feels abandoned by friends and relatives. Her mobility is very reduced, so her friends, whom she used to drive places, have forgotten about her. For the same reason, she must wait for her sons and daughters to visit her and, although the comic shows that they do keep her company and cook for her, their time is also limited by their jobs, which means that Maruja's every day goes by in loneliness. This is in sharp contrast with her youth, when she was busy taking care of others. In response to the Francoist ideal of the peaceful but industrious wife, the comic shows Maruja's bustling and frustrating life as a housewife. Keeping her complaints to herself, putting up with the total disregard of women's work, her life passed at the service of everybody else: "me parece que me he pasado toda la vida haciéndole puntilla a las sábanas." (Fig. 52) ["I feel like I've spent my life sewing laces to the bedsheets."] states Maruja because she "bien que [ha] cuidado de ellos" and "ahora [es] un trasto" ["ha[s] taken good care of them" and "now [she's] a piece of junk"]. Both her youth, busy and without a break, and her old age,

with difficulty moving and almost always alone, are weaved together through a sense of alienation caused by the lack of opportunities for women of Maruja's generation.

The elaboration process of the comic parallels women's activities as stay-at-home

Figure 52: "I've spent my life sewing laces to the bedsheets"

mothers and caregivers to show their worth. Penyas's autobiographical *persona* – that is, the author as a character in the book[78] – appears briefly at instances where she travels from the house of one grandmother to the other and in conversation with them learning about the details that appear incorporated into the graphic novel. By showing her own mechanisms and struggles to create the comic, the work focuses on the process as opposed to the final product, thus subverting the capitalist fetishization of commodities and concealment of their means of production. In this sense, *Estamos todas bien* is the journey that transforms the thread with which Maruja seems to have "spent [her] life sewing laces to the bedsheets" (Fig. 52) into a tool for activism.

[78] See Smith and Watson (2001) and especially Olshen (1995) for an exploration of the autobiographical subject, self, identity and persona.

Estamos todas bien avoids a homogeneous perspective on caregiving by presenting two very different characters, with Maruja more critical and lonely and Herminia more submissive but cheerful. Maruja is painfully aware of her invisibility from the very start. She marries the town's doctor only to avoid a life of harassment at her aunt's bar. The lack of love in the couple helps Maruja to perceive her daily duties and tasks as a housewife as what they are – unpaid and unacknowledged work. Alienated, she spends the days alone, swamped in housekeeping duties that also prevent her from cultivating any form of social life.

Herminia, according to Penyas's father, "tiene otro carácter, se toma la vida de otra manera" ["has a different personality, looks at life differently"] to which Penyas's *persona* replies "ya, pero es que la abuela Maruja vivió en un ambiente mucho más represivo. La abuela Herminia tuvo otra visión de las cosas: su familia tenía el teatro del pueblo y ella siempre recuerda la cantidad de gente que pasaba por allí" ["I know, but grandma Maruja lived in a much more repressive environment. Grandma Herminia had a different take on things: her family owned the town's theater and she always remembers the number of people that went there"]. Indeed, Herminia is happy to take care of her family but her work is as unpaid and invisible as Maruja's. In Figure 53 she appears confined to one room of the house while the rest of the members of the family, in the foreground, come and go and live their lives. Big life changes take place in just this six panel grid: First comes the son (panel 1) who is soon joined by a sister (panel 2). They play house, reproducing the fixed, traditional gender roles that they see at home (panel 3). Both grow up and when the mother asks for help, the daughter excuses herself. Herminia genders the question for she asks the daughter, not the son, thus reproducing the sexual division of labor. The whole page underscores the spatial but also personal stagnation that domesticity entails.

The generation of Herminia and Maruja shaped what María Ángeles Durán calls the "cuidatoriado" ("cuidatoriat" or caregiving class), the social class deprived of a salary for their everyday work as caregivers and stay-at-home mothers. Not only did they depend on the economic generosity of others but their work actively limited their opportunities, as Figure 54

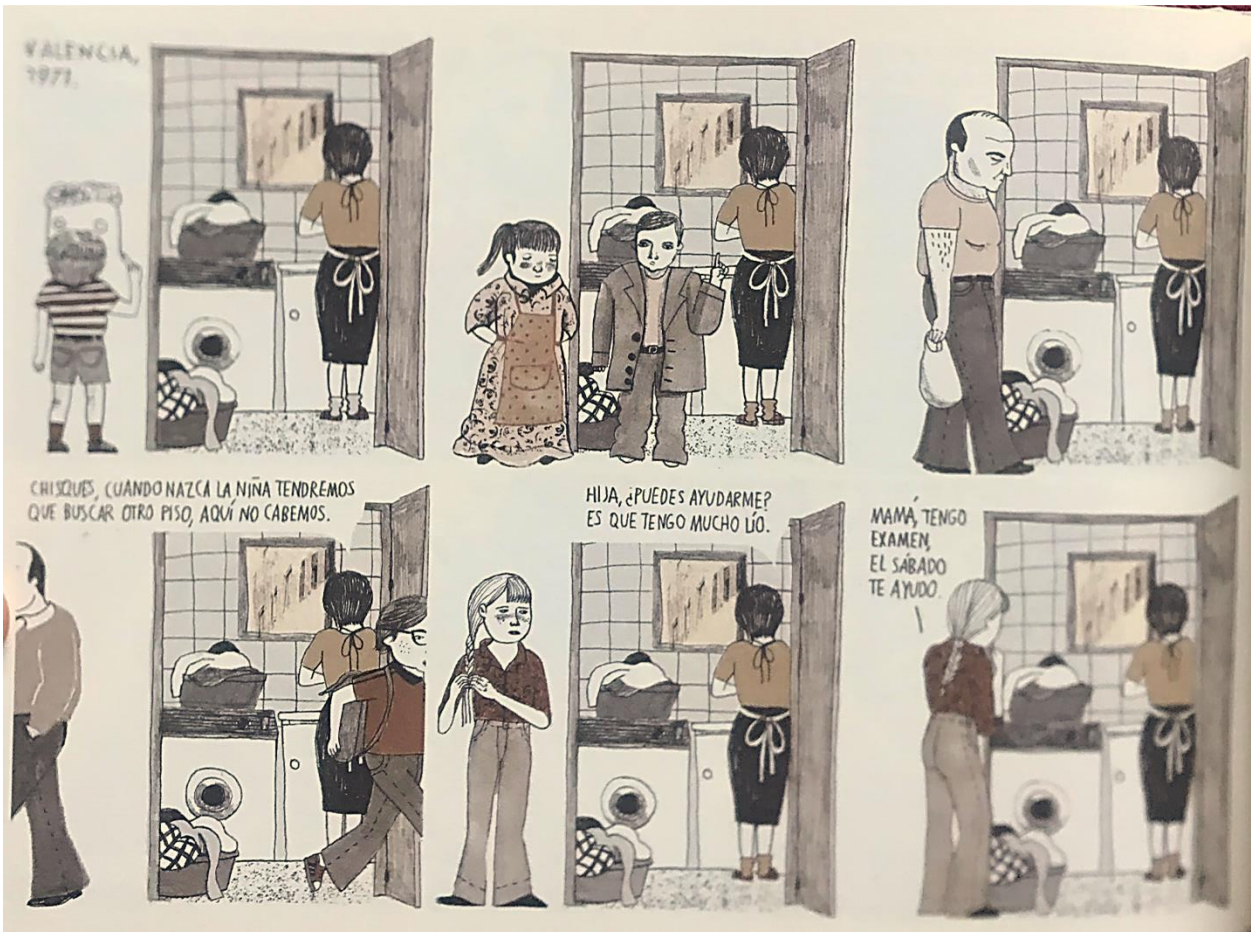

Figure 53: Herminia working while life goes on

illustrates. In these panels, the parents see a suspicious car parked outside that might be monitoring the daughter's activism against the dictatorship, so Herminia takes her "dangerous" books and hides them. Some titles are *Gramsci: cuadernos desde la cárcel* [*Gramsci: Prison Notebooks*] or *La función del orgasmo* [*The Function of Orgasm*] revealing the educational

capital that her daughter handles but that the mother cannot have access to. At the same time, her hiding of the daughter's books is an act of care.

Herminia and Maruja embody two very different perspectives on the ethics of care. In the case of Herminia, house chores belong to the logic of love. Just as Petra and other characters used romantic love to justify physical violence for the women of *El ala rota*, *Estamos todas bien* illustrates the logic behind unpaid housekeeping work through the character of Herminia. Her

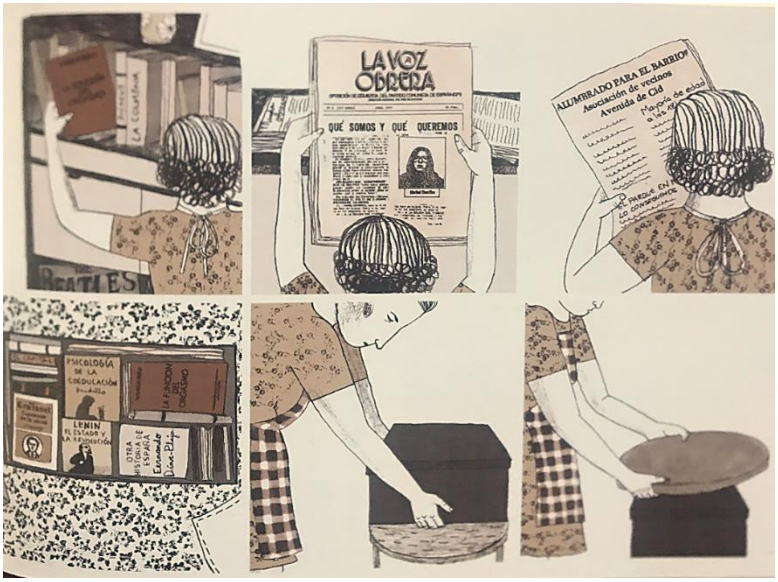

Figure 54: housekeeping and access to education

reward is to see the members of her family growing and thriving. She never questions how society distributes capital differently between her and her husband, rewarding him with a salary and an economic independence that she cannot enjoy in equal terms. On the contrary, Maruja, sees her tasks as unpaid and unacknowledged work. In *Estamos todas bien*, the case of Maruja interrogates essentialized notions of gender that underlay how the logics of capitalism operate.

The graphic novel continuously jumps from the present and their reality as old women, to their youth, living under the dictatorship, as a way to link subtle forms of gender oppression between the past and the present. Let us see one example from the very first page of the graphic novel (Fig. 55). It juxtaposes the text saying "dadme lo mejor de vosotras" ["give it all to me"] with the eyes of an old woman– we still don't know it is Ana Penyas's granny – and a young woman striking sexy poses on TV. The words allude to the target audience for which those sexy moves are made, arguably what Mulvey called "the male gaze", but when that audience is replaced by the gaze from an old lady, all the sexiness and glamour vanish. Instead, it is simply out of place. It could be read as ridiculous, funny, sharply critical, puzzling, and in many other ways but what interests me here is that the book is already stating a criticism of women's reification and sexualization in the present – unlike Altarriba's *El ala rota* – through the gaze of an older generation. From the very beginning, thus, this work makes clear that this is not just

Figure 55: Parody of the sexualized female body

another testimonial story of historical memory and that the topics of political oppression and gender discrimination are not a matter of the past but rather they extend to today through structures that are considered normative, universal, and invisible.

In this sense, whereas Altarriba's denouncements of gender oppression situated the examples in the past, as if they belonged to the exceptionality of the dictatorship, *Estamos todas bien* extends them beyond the regime in a "long memory", that is, in a depiction of structural oppression that was in place before and after the regime. As Jelin explains: "Hay un tiempo 'corto' de las dictaduras y la violencia y la transición posterior… Y hay un tiempo 'largo' de conformación de estructuras sociales e históricas, donde las desigualdades de poder, las discriminaciones y exclusiones ocupan otros lugares." (2014, 234) ["There is a 'short' time of dictatorships and the violence and ulterior transition … And a 'long' time when historical structures are shaped, where power inequality, discrimination and exclusion occupy other places."] Thus, "la dictadura, la represión y la violencia del pasado reciente se superponen con discriminaciones y violencias estructurales de muy larga data, lo cual hace que el pasado reciente sea interpretado en claves de más larga duración." (235). ["dictatorship, repression and violence from the past overlap long-term structural discrimination and violence, which makes the recent past be understood as a long standing situation."]

This is precisely the approach that *Estamos todas bien* provides, highlighting the structural inequity perpetuated in present-day Spain. Crosby, Brinto Lykes and Caxaj (2016) point out that focusing on gender specific violence during conflicts or dictatorial regimes might narrow down its consequences to the duration of the conflict instead of paying attention to the structural disadvantages that facilitated them in the first place and perpetuate them afterwards. The shift of paradigms, from the militiawoman to the majority, the stay-at-home mothers, not

only makes gender and memory stand out but also discusses the "long-term discrimination" of the *cuidatoriat*, as the protests by "las kellys"[79] or "las obreras del cariño"[80] ("care workers") highlighted during the 15M protests. Their precariousness directly results from the sexual division of labor that gave access to capital to half of the population and excluded the other half from economic freedom.

The oppressed becomes the oppressor

The graphic novel adds some nuances that question power and gender dynamics. In Figure 56 we see an interesting exchange of gazes between Maruja and some queer non-binary people walking

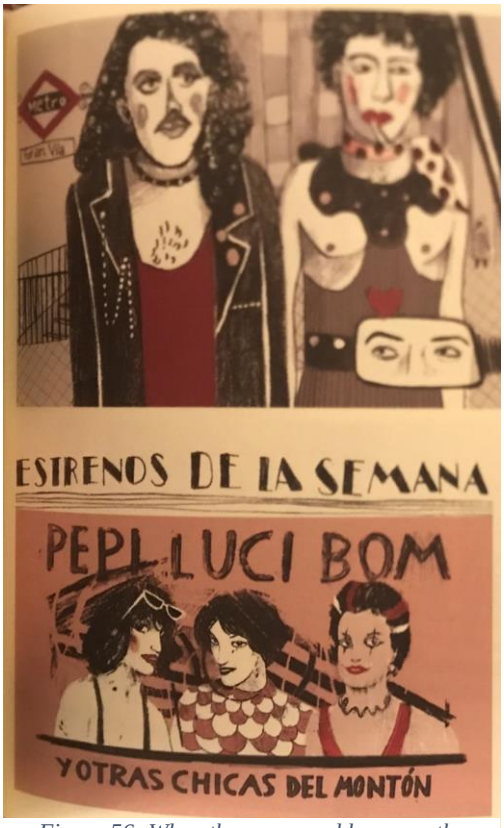

Figure 56: When the oppressed becomes the oppressor

[79] https://laskellys.wordpress.com/quienes-somos/

[80] https://www.pikaramagazine.com/2017/05/obreras-del-carino-las-kellys-los-cuidados/?fbclid=IwAR0jfSv8VtX3bThwWwxkmlnW2I3X-5E-Ub3uxrh9242h-490ZkkOtSbJQPI

in the streets of Madrid during the times of "La movida". This way, women who suffered discrimination reproduce the same mechanism towards non-heteronormative people. The exchange of gazes is a crossroads of intersecting social categorizations of sexuality and gender where each one presents a threat to the other's stability. The hierarchy cannot be denied, for Maruja belongs to the hegemonic group, the heteronormative cis-woman, but facing – metaphorically and literally in this encounter – otherness defamiliarizes normativity.

By problematizing the discourse on women's oppression, *Estamos todas bien* also interrogates the plurality of memory narratives. Francoist repression, the war, even the social role assigned to different identities today in relation to the past are remembered differently according to the interconnected nature of social categorizations as they apply to a given individual or group. To retrieve the past implies to activate different areas of collective experience that inevitably destabilize the existing standards. By incorporating the queer characters within the disapproval parameters of the homophobic/transphobic lens of heteronormative cis-women, *Estamos todas bien* interrogates the invisibility or vacuum in the discourse of memory about the experiences of non-heteronormative bodies.[81]

Historical memory in the Spanish graphic narrative is overwhelmingly masculine. *Los surcos del azar*, *El arte de volar*, *Un largo silencio* or even *Ardalén* are stories about men told by men for men. While they rescue the memories of the fallen, the accounts studied here call for a wider representation: not only of women but as Ana Penyas points out, of any identity that did not conform to the heteropatriarchal system, more evident during the dictatorship, but

[81] This is never seen in *El ala rota*, which stops at the denouncement of women's invisibility and cannot question the intrinsic structures that are implemented within these premises. *Estamos todas bien*, on the contrary, opens up the discourse and questions what struggles are being told, by whom, from what perspective and, above all, what identities are worthy of attention.

nonetheless present before and after. It has been the strength of the feminist movement that has made it possible for a work like *Estamos todas bien* to be heard, seen, read, and distributed. The epistemology of gender memory, consequently, reveals how specific dictatorial oppression intersects with other forms of marginalization already in place, and it ultimately questions what struggles are worth remembering.

Sewing and narration are presented as parallel activities and sometimes metaphorically exchangeable where Ana Penyas's generation takes the "laces of the bedsheets" and transforms them into craftivism. Betty Greer defines craftivism as "a way of looking at life where voicing opinions through creativity makes your voice stronger, your compassion deeper & your quest for justice more infinite."[82] Ana Penyas's *Estamos todas bien* looks back to domesticity "as something to be valued instead of ignored" (Greer) to strengthen the link across generations of women that refused to believe that they "were all fine."

The exchange of gazes between Penyas's grannies and the queer subjects at the end of the book brings up the question of positionality and plurality again. Memory offers an alternative to institutionalized historiography and serves as a site of contestation for official narratives (Gómez López-Quiñones 209). It sides with victims and the "voiceless" but all too often, this attempt to "give voice to the voiceless" or "make visible the invisible" results in a patronizing approach that mutes more than it amplifies. The three works analyzed here demonstrate that subaltern and underrepresented identities already have a presence and a voice. It is the willingness to acknowledge said presence or hear their demands what defines their success.

[82] http://craftivism.com/definition/

Visibility connects most concerns throughout this chapter because it is the result of social uprisings that have shifted the country's trajectory, especially feminist demands. The 15M constituted a turning point where critiques of neoliberalism, democracy and identity politics converged. In this climate of social unrest, cases like "the wolfpack" or protests against the misogynist practices in the comics industry helped public opinion to acknowledge their critiques and demands. The "cuidatoriado" as María Ángeles Durán called it, became less invisible and stories like the ones analyzed here reached the general audience.

The shift towards stories of women and their unacknowledged productivity as stay-at-home mothers and caregivers represents an extremely meaningful form of emancipation. Whereas the first attempts to recover women's historical memory would be legitimized through their participation in war, the demands of the feminist movement to recognize centuries of women's unpaid labor, essential for the functioning of capitalist systems, contributed to recognizing women's historical memory as a constant struggle that traversed centuries of oppression. In a sense, women stopped gravitating around previous – masculine – accounts to make memory gravitate around their centuries-long fight for emancipation.

Each work analyzed here contributes differently to this shift. *Cuerda de presas* departs from the accepted war canon to subvert the epistemological frameworks that confine women to a masculine pattern. Its Goyesque tones and Picassian deconstructions convey a claustrophobic atmosphere that stand not only for the prison conditions but also for the limitations outside them. What to write, the comic asks, if nobody is going to read it? If journalists distort their reality when they choose to leave gender and sexuality out of the picture, as in Carmen's story? While the romanticized militiawoman has served to recognize the Republican opposition to Franco, the depiction of structural homophobia in *Cuerda de presas* among fellow combatants serves to

place gender at the center. Thus, although the comic uses the war canon, it manages to explore intersecting discourses and forms of marginalization that were absent from previous film and literary depictions of the militiawomen.

El ala rota provides a romanticized, overvictimizing depiction of housekeeping. I have analyzed the body of Petra as an archive impossible to decode by a narrator whose internalized misogyny made him unable to see it. In this sense, I consider that the exploration of the narrator's positionality in the attempt to retrieve Petra's experience of Francoism provides an interesting study of the practices that have kept centuries of women's memories and experiences outside of history.

Finally, the feminist gaze of Ana Penyas towards the unacknowledged productivity of women in *Estamos todas bien* successfully imbricates the economic and sociopolitical discourse with everyday life manifestations of gender oppression. The memory of the generation of women who survived the Civil War does not need to revolve around deceased relatives nor combat because women had been surviving a centuries-long battle for economic and social emancipation. Unlike *El ala rota*, *Estamos todas bien* discusses "long memory" dynamics, that is, how blatant forms of oppression mutated into more subtle ones to extend beyond the dictatorial regime. However, Penyas's grannies, like the prisoners in *Cuerda de presas*, use their hegemonic power to marginalize other subaltern identities. In this sense, I read *Estamos todas bien* as an acknowledgment and a call for plurality in historical memory's testimonies.

Where are the memories of LGBTQ subjects? How did Francoist repression affect them? And how does race intersect any or all of these matters? Nowadays, most care work is still carried out by women but the Spanish demographics have changed and it is mostly performed by women of color. During the 15M, as I have mentioned in the introduction to this work, migrant

women of color protested against the double marginalization they endured. As I hope this work has shown, the language of comics is a suitable medium to communicate the complex realities of a diverse, contradictory and conflictual society. New stories and new perspectives will only further enrich its production to show that “we are (not) all fine”.

Conclusion

In my dissertation, I have reflected on memory as a form of transitional justice in Spanish comics. I have used critical theories of memory studies, trauma studies, and comics studies to argue for public testimony as a form of justice. I have argued that the 2008 economic crisis promoted a global political awareness that, in Spain, translated into a reframing of the traumatic past to make the stories of those who fought for democracy visible. In this sense, comics about historical memory in Spain have received increasing critical attention for their ability to provide symbolic and historical reparations, using both graphics and text. My examination of how graphic novels have inspired a recovery of the past committed to a diverse and inclusive future has been at the center of this project. .

Memory is one of the main topics in contemporary comics partly because it empowers individuals and collectivities traditionally dismissed by historiography. Their testimonies and experiences allow a "bottom up" approach that interrogates the foundations of the democratic project in Spain. As a result, biographical accounts have gained prestige, and Spanish comics that range from *Paracuellos* to *Estamos todas bien* have rescued personal histories from obscurity while advancing comics' expressive potential. For example, in *Paracuellos,* caricature, one of comics' most distinctive formal features, plays a prominent role in communicating trauma. In that comic, the children's big eyes and the grotesque portrayal of caregivers, along with the claustrophobic panel distribution and the polyphonic portrayal of life in orphanages together convey a set of indelible sensations, codified through the grammar of comics. Pictorial description and page layout graphically ground the spatial and the temporal. Comics' pages place framed memories in a void of forgetting, putting the reader in charge of making the necessary

connections. This exercise provides new ways to read memory and justice in an increasingly visual world.

The imbrication of testimony and fiction has been uniquely developed in the medium of comics. Testimony legitimizes previously censored experiences, saving them from disappearance, and it breaks through coercive framework that had long criminalized the life experiences of the politically persecuted. Third- and fourth-generation artists have contributed to the creation of a symbolic space where the articulation of the memories of those who suffered political violence is possible. Post-memorial accounts like *Un largo silencio, El arte de volar*, *Twists of Fate,* and *Estamos todas bien* articulate the descendants' narratives, leveraging the perspectives of a generation comfortable using the language of human rights strategically to pursue their demands. The intergenerational dialogue in comics provides, on the one hand, a healing narrative for the traumatic and dislocated memories of the older generation, and, on the other, a voice to articulate the younger generation's disappointment with the current political situation.

This dissertation has argued that the accounts and testimonies of Spanish refugees, migrants, and women after the Civil War (1936-1939) provide a decentralized narrative that challenges the prevalent nationalistic and male-dominant approach to memory. We have seen how comics, in their page layouts and panel organization , visually map a system of memory that extends beyond geographical borders. Comics propose new ways of navigating historical memory by recovering the memory of exiles, that is, those who have not only been marginalized by historiography, but also literally expelled from their territory. *Twists of Fate, Nieve en los bolsillos,* and *Freda* reinscribe life stories on European soil and within the space of international conflicts and displacements. In graphic terms, migrants travel across panels, spaces, and times,

but their rootlessness is expressed in circular and labyrinthine shapes from which it is very difficult to escape. Comics' visual appearance not only proposes new itineraries to portray displaced memory, but also mobilizes a graphic archive, as in the case of *Nieve en los bolsillos*, This comic offers a social portrait of characters, a constellation of those who had been doubly marginalized. The frontal portraits convey non-verbal information and appeal directly to the reader, who becomes responsible for memorializing the existence of the oppressed and for remembering their migration from the authoritarian regime.

Even in works that aim for historical reparations and symbolic justice, women and other subaltern subjects remain either absent or misrepresented. My work shows that the irruption of women's memory challenges received notions of Spanish historical memory, proving that gender shapes the articulation, even the very existence, of testimony. As my reading of *Cuerda de presas* demonstrates, trauma's unspeakability is not only a matter of shattered or chaotic memories , but also of the receptivity of cultural context . This is even clearer in Antonio Altarriba's total neglect of his mother's life experiences in *El ala rota*. A feminist approach reveals the value of everywoman's struggle and shows how her memories illustrate the intersection of different forms of marginalization. *Estamos todas bien* frames women's role in historical memory within a larger struggle for civil rights. Penyas lays bare the manifestations of misogynistic superstructures in the small details of everyday life. This imbrication of the macro and the micro not only exposes the transmutation of Francoism into contemporary consumerist society, but also elucidates the value of memory as a tool to transform the present.

In this sense, my analysis of gender memory invites new inquiries and opens up new paths for research by bringing to the fore questions of visibility and inclusion in comics. I have already begun to reflect upon the representation and dynamics of LGTBQ memory in my

analysis of *Cuerda de Presas* and *Estamos todas bien* but my analysis can also be extended to structural homophobia in Kim's *Nieve en los bolsillos*. There are other sources where sexual orientation plays an even more relevant role and deserves further scrutiny, such as Marina Cochet, Juan Sepúlveda and Antonio Santos's *El Violeta* (2018). It is important to note, however, that not many works explore the intersection of ethnic or racial constructions with memory. Some comics, like Quan Zhou's *Gazpacho agridulce,* are starting to tackle these matters,–but they do so without addressing the historical past. As descendants of migrants, most artists feel disconnected from Spain's past. A simple question guided my research: If memory is tied to a national identity, what identities are recovered as part of nationhood? Having posed that question, I now need to ask another: If memory is particularly concerned with the past that shapes the present, how does the diverse reality of the present interrogate memory?

An increasing number of publications are devoted to comics as pedagogical tools in history classes. One of the most widely used is David F. de Arriba's *Memoria y Viñetas*, which contains short analyses of some of the comics studied here as well as questions, exercises, and tasks that explore the grammar of comics and their application to memory as a form of transitional justice. Other examples are *El paseo de los canadienses* (2015) [*The Canadians' Road*] and illustrated works like Arturo Pérez Reverte's *La guerra civil contada a los jóvenes* (2015) [*The Civil War for Young People*]. These publications have a clear pedagogical approach, which privileges explanation of historical events over artistic or personal endeavors. They ascribe to the consensus that the visual aspect of comics is immediately accessible, communicative, and appealing. Research can help determine the validity of this assumption, and it can also supply pedagogical tasks to prompt school discussions of memory with comics.

An important next step for this research involves situating Spanish comics' recovery of memory in a transnational context. The search for and exhumation of bodies, experiences, and truths hidden by dictatorships in Chile, Nicaragua, and Argentina is currently underway alongside the Spanish effort. Several Latin American nations have undertaken historical memory initiatives, and fostering a transatlantic dialogue would help create a support structure for relatives searching for the missing while also showing the parallels and differences among mnemonic accounts. Initiatives focused on historical memory have also begun developing outside of Spain, as seen in the Mexican comic *Vivos se los llevaron* (2020), about the Ayotzinapa massacre, and in Andre Diniz's *Morro da Favela* (2011), about growing up in favelas during a time of political repression.

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