Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

Doctoral thesis on Information and Knowledge

Society

# MEMORY CONSTRUCTION IN THE CONTEMPORARY SPANISH GRAPHIC NOVEL (2005-2015): THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH

Phd. dissertation submitted by:

Carmen Artime Omil

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Teresa Iribarren Donadeu

# Table of contents

# Foreword and acknowledgments

The personal and professional venture of exploring how contemporary Spanish graphic novels embrace the remembrance of the Civil War started with reading Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis* and Art Spiegelman's *Maus*, which explore Iran's Islamic Revolution and the Holocaust, respectively. I was introduced to the comic language in my childhood through my father's whole collection of *The Adventures of Tintin*, the stories of Asterix and his partner Obelix and also the mischievous experiences of Zipi and Zape, that my father would buy for me. Having found adult-like comics after so many years, led me to explore similar works that would target the Spanish war. The motivation is, I reckon, easy to guess. In the present decade of political discussion in which the idea of nation is at the heart of the political debate, and considering that the past and its remembrance in Spain are so closely linked to the symbolic construction of that nation, my curiosity included trying to understand part of that construction. My inquisitiveness, though, went beyond that, as I was mainly interested in exploring the contributions that were coming from one of those languages that would not traditionally be part of the construction of that memory. The idea of comics and the representation of war and memory was compelling to me because it is a democratic art form that is accessible and easy to understand; and as I learnt more about it, the way the language of speech balloons and panels put this narrative together fascinated me. To my surprise, the comic on the war in Spain was a growing cultural phenomenon that was disguising a vast pot of meanings and aesthetic challenges that would only make this undertaking all more pleasurable, as it forces the reader to bring out the creativity inherently required for the exercise of critical reading.

This goal I set for myself did not come as an easy path and it was only possible—forgive me for the cliche—thanks to the help and encouragement I found along the way. First and foremost, my debt goes to my supervisor, Professor Dr. Teresa Iribarren Donadeu, who generously offered her support throughout this study. Her guidance, knowledge, helpful suggestions, and her understanding were central for the completion of this work. Thank you as well to my colleagues at Amsterdam University College, the members of the Memory Studies Association and Tebeosfera, from whom I learnt so much. Finally, warmest thanks to my husband, family and friends, especially Jovi and Lola, to whom Academia owes a few afternoons in the park.

# Introduction

Republican women with shaved heads in the town square, soldiers fighting in the trenches, piled dead bodies, lines of people reaching for food because of scarce supplies, cramped prisons, group executions, and the exodus on roads and on boats are some of images the average person has in mind when thinking about the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Today, despite not having experienced the conflict, we can easily draw on this imagery that has been developed over many years due to the vast interest that this event has aroused in Spanish society and beyond. The world of the arts, specifically, has reflected on this conflict even from the very moment in which the war was taking place. Iconic works such as Picasso's "Guernica", Julio González's "Montserrat" and many of the political posters on the war are just a small representation of a generation of artists who, due to the strong politicization of their context, gave their art a more realistic twist, using it to inform about the conflict and, ultimately, trying to persuade their audience. The artistic contribution has been, consequently, from the beginning, one of the large numbers of elements that have given shape to the memory that today we have of the Civil War and its aftermath.

The cultural gaze over the war has never ceased up till today; but due to the censorship of the dictatorship in the years after the war, the cultural production about the conflict decreased at the end of the war. This lasted many decades, even after the Transition[1], until the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. It is then when a social and cultural interdisciplinary movement brings to the fore the remembrance of this conflict from many angles: the media, the arts, politics, and the scientific world, in its broadest spectrum. The exact temporal

---

[1] During this dissertation I will use 'Transition', in capital letters, to refer to the few years after Francoists dictatorship, which ended in 1975.

limits of the beginning and the end of this movement are difficult to determine. Francisco Espinosa

Maestre and Pedro Ruiz identify 1996 as a turning point in the approximation that Spanish society

takes to the past. The former justifies this based on the approval of governmental policies that

aimed to recover the memory of the defeated (*Contra el olvido* 175), and the latter stresses the

importance of that year because of the publication of one of the most important academic works

on the matter, Paloma Aguilar Fernández's *Memoria y olvido de la Guerra Civil española* ("Los

discursos de la memoria" 42). Regardless of when exactly it started, there is a tacit agreement upon

the fact that around the beginning of the millennium, this trend extends to the public sphere and

becomes one of the main preoccupations of the public media, culture, and academia, to give shape

to what is known as the Spanish memory boom. Today, two decades into the twenty-first century,

the attention that the topic generates seems to have decreased in some of these areas. It is no more

than a mere decrease in attention, but enough to trigger voices that use the past tense to refer to

this boom of memory, some of them placing it in the first decade of the century. The comic

industry, nevertheless, is suggesting the opposite. The representation of the Civil War in the

Spanish comic or *historieta*[2] has been growing in the past few years, and it is today not only active

but healthier than ever.

     The comic is, along with cinema, television, and music, one of the cultural media that

stands out because of the vast dissemination and growth that it has had in the last hundred years[3].

Moreover, the cultural and social phenomenon of the memory boom in Spain has aroused

enormous interest—so much so that in these terms, it can be compared with the Second World

---

[2] *Historieta* is the word in Spanish for comics. The term *historieta* or comic will be used in this dissertation indistintively, as they are synonyms. Both words will be used as a general term that refers to the comic medium. The difference with the other Spanish term *tebeo* will be explained in chapter 1, section 1.1.3.3.

[3] According to the 2017 and 2021 report published by the Spanish Federation of Publishers, the number of comics sold in Spain has been growing every year in the last decade (Comercio 2021 30). In addition, comic fairs and the number of people attending these fairs grows every year (Comercio 2017 106).

War. Already in 2005 Helen Graham stated in her introduction that the Spanish Civil War "has generated over fifteen thousand books—a textual epitaph that puts it on a par with the Second World War" (i). The present work considers these two factors—the growth of the comic medium and the enormous interest in the Spanish Civil War—and, with a narratological and semiotic agenda, focuses on the relationship between the two and studies the contribution of Spanish comics into the memory discussion. More specifically, I will study the Spanish graphic novels[4] in the remembrance of the war and the postwar within the social and cultural framework of the boom of memory.

     As happens with other artistic forms, the connection between the Spanish Civil War and the *historieta* is not a recent one. When looking back at its history, we find that during the three years of the conflict, although the *historieta* had mainly a recreational purpose, there are different examples[5] of comics that depicted the ideas of the Spanish *Falange*[6] and many that depicted the communist ideologies, both with a similar objective: indoctrinating children into heroes of their faction. After the war, it is not hard to imagine that the falangist comics[7] took over the market in a publishing world controlled by the Francoist regime. At that time, during the period known as the golden years of the *historieta* in Spain, the decades of the 1940s and 1950s, the very approachable medium of comics continued to be used to indoctrinate children into political and social ideas. At

---

[4] 'Graphic novel' refers to the book's lengthy format, which is the format of the primary texts analyzed in this work.

[5] Two well-known examples that portrayed the ideologies of the Nationalist faction and the national catholicism were *Flechas y Pelayos* (1938-49) and *Chicos* (1938-55). At the same time, the *historietas* that represented the Republican side are *Soldado Canuto (*1937), *Pionero Rojo: semanario de los niños obreros y campesinos* (1937) and *Pocholo (*1931-38; 1945-49; 1951-52).

[6] Fascist political fascist organization founded in 1933 and dissolved in 1934. In February 1934 it merged with *Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista*.

[7] *El guerrero del antifaz* or *Roberto Alcázar y Pedrín* (1941-73) were two examples of the most popular publications of the golden age of comics in Spain, the 1940s and the 1950s.

the time comics were suggesting a model of a Spanish hero[8], a sort of ideal male that represented the values of the Francoist regime. More than two decades later, the comic world is going through a global transformation with the underground comix phenomenon, which transformed the comic into a medium also suitable for adults. At the same time in Spain, the dictatorship came to an end, triggered by the death of Francisco Franco in 1975. The beginning of the Transition coincides, in the context of comics, with the change of the industry towards being a more critical medium; therefore, the themes related to the recent past also caught the interest of some of these artists and occupied several pages of popular periodicals of *historietas* of that time. Notwithstanding, it was only around the change of the millennium and onwards, with the memory boom, that the Spanish comic industry started paying more attention to the war, the postwar, and the years of the dictatorship. Their participation in the memory conversation that was already taking place in the culture scene becomes more relevant. It is after 2007, as identified by Michel Malty, that the topic of the Civil War starts being published in bigger quantities in graphic novels than in comic periodicals[9] (159). In that same year the comic art received institutional support with the establishment of the National Comic Award. Such public recognition and the increase in the use of the graphic novel format are very significant for the industry of comics. Graphic novels, unlike comic books or periodicals, are published in a book-length edition and they are considered by the general audience as an adult comic book, which as a consequence, legitimizes the medium. We can confidently say that the popularization of the graphic novel format meant a change of direction for the industry of comics. Jorge L. Catalá Carrasco pinpoints in this regard that "En el ámbito del

---

[8] In these comics, the idea of the Spanish hero was based on the idealization of the Spanish reconquest of the territory Al-Andalus, a Muslim territory from 711 to 1492; the values praised by the Catholic Church; and the unity of the Spanish nation.

[9] The difference and the social connotations of the different formats will be explained in chapter 2, section I.

cómic, la revaloración del medio a través de la etiqueta comercial 'novela gráfica' ha prestigiado esta producción cultural y ha terminado por incorporarla al canon del circuito cultural español"[10] (157).

As a cultural movement, the memory boom has socially demanding intentions that in the vast majority of the cases focuses on making justice for the victims of the war[11]—mainly the civilian population that suffered direct violence and repression after the triumph of the national and fascist faction in 1939. The movement had the intention to give voice to those that had been silenced during the years of the dictatorship and during the Transition, due to the politics of reconciliation[12]. In opposition to the dehumanization of Franco's regime, where families could not grieve over the corpses of their *desaparecidos*[13]; the recovery of memory is highly humanized and prioritizes the testimonies of the protagonists through first person accounts. The children and grandchildren, and their counter-generational peers, recover the experiences of those who stayed quiet, either because of the somatization of fear or because of a conscious survival exercise. The memory recovery is done through individual mementos, such as personal interviews, and with the use of memory objects such as personal photos, letters or other family belongings.

---

[10] 'In the field of comics, the revaluation of the medium through the commercial label 'graphic novel' has given prestige to this cultural production and has ended up incorporating it into the canon of the Spanish cultural circuit' (157).

[11] The study *Morir, matar, sobrevivir. La violencia en la dictadura de Franco,* coordinated by Julián Casanova where the violence during the Civil War and its aftermath is discussed, coins the bloody terror of these years as *terror caliente* (hot terror) and explains that although at the beginning it was more evident, in the late years of this terror, it became silent and hidden, but also lethal. As a result, more than 50000 people died in less than a decade, justified under the postwar justice system of Franco's regime.

[12] The Spanish Constitution of 1978 is known as a law of reconciliation of the two sides affected by the Civil War. Besides the ethical component implied in the idea of reconciliation, there is a political interpretation, generally attributed to the present, which as Carme Molinero explains "coinciden en leer la Constitución de 1978 como un pacto, pero le atribuyen la voluntad añadida de saltar página sobre el inmediato pasado franquista" 'they agree to read the 1978 Constitution as a pact, but they also attribute to it the will to want to forget the immediate past of Franco's regime' (202).

[13] Word commonly used to refer to those who disappeared in the postwar, but whose corpses have not been found yet.

In addition, this conversation should take into consideration the aspect of intergenerational transmission of the memories of the war because it is a key element in the comprehension of the memory process. There is a change of generation around the memory boom that is necessary for this phenomenon to happen. Many of the direct descendants of the victims, the second generation, not only were pushed into the social position that situated their parents in the margin, but they also inherited the trauma of their progenitors from the physical violence they suffered and the humiliation to which they were subjected during the dictatorship. Because of the learnt and somatized terror, the second generation is according to Fernández de Mata considered to be less political and less engaged: "Testigos directos de los sufrimientos de sus progenitores, durante toda su vida han recibido la constante prevención de "no meterse en líos", de que cualquier actividad pública puede llevar peligros insospechados, que la política es mala"[14] ("Surgimiento" 198). Meanwhile, the third generation feels the need to look back and seek justice for their grandparents through the reconstruction of the past. This search would have the goal of understanding their present, the goal of finding the story that helps them make sense of their reality. That being the case, the boom of memory must be understood not only in its dimension of a process of remembering; but also considering its intention to retell the narrative of the war that has been constructed up until then, a retelling that will necessarily be influenced by the circumstances of the present as well as the collective memory account that this retell wants to question.

---

[14] 'Direct witnesses of the suffering of their parents, throughout their lives they have received the constant warning to 'stay out of trouble', that any public activity can carry unsuspected dangers, that politics is bad' (Fernández de Mata "Surgimiento" 198).

## Objectives and methodology

There are then, three aspects at stake: the connection of the personal memory and the construction of a collective account; the intergenerational transmission of personal experiences, which is a necessary vehicle to maintain the memory of the conflict alive and convey the subjectivity of the autobiographical narrations of the Civil War; and the legitimacy of the comic medium to represent historical knowledge. The three aforementioned elements set the tone of the investigation made for this dissertation and will shape its structure and approach to analysis. This narrows down to the objective of this dissertation, which is to understand the contribution of contemporary Spanish comics in the cultural conversation it intervenes in: the cultural discussion on memory. Specifically, it will be centered on the phenomenon that relates comics and memory. With a focus on form and meaning, I bear a threefold intention. Firstly, I aim to determine the singularity of contemporary Spanish comic books in their role as memory artifacts. Secondly, I intend to identify a cultural phenomenon happening in the Spanish *historieta* that proves that comics are a suitable medium for the dissemination of historical knowledge. There exist certain tensions between the memory discourse and the traditionally marginalized language of the comic medium. This dissertation aims to prove that in reality the latter is a driving force in the path of comics towards a more generalized cultural legitimization, while the industrial and hybrid language of the medium has the potential of cross-questioning the hegemonic narrative of the war. As the last objective, I aspire to propose a tailor-made model of analysis that can potentially be used to explain comics on the same topic, and as a result collaborate in further discussion on this matter, outside of the boundaries of this dissertation.

The starting point that will allow me to meet the previous objectives is a research question that also implies a working hypothesis. The question is: how do contemporary comics in Spain

operate in their retelling of the war? There are two assumptions inherent to my question. The first assumption would be that there exists a phenomenon happening in the Spanish *historieta* in which three main aesthetic lines converge: the Spanish approach to memory, the tradition of Spanish comics, and the global trend of comics that capture the subjectivity of traumatic experiences. The second assumption would be that there is indeed a retelling of the hegemonic narration in these comics, or at a very minimum, an intention of retelling. The analysis will prove if my assumptions are correct.

To answer the main research question, I interrogate the corpus of analysis with other sub-questions that I classified into three categories and that populate the analysis guideline. It should be noted that the close reading of the corpus of analysis will prove these categories to be interdependent and interconnected, but useful to organize the proposed ideas. The categories are: form, which refers to the textual and visual narratological aspects; meaning, thematic aspects and their connotation; and context, which refers to the social and historical framework of the medium and the topic.

The questions related to formal aspects are always important in any cultural analysis, as the signifier and narratological choices can also convey meaning and give shape to the remembering in any artistic form. When the cultural object is comics, nevertheless, they are especially important due to the hybrid nature of comic language where both, visual and textual elements, are equally employed. Based on the theoretical work on comic language and narrative devices of the medium, I observe what each of those types of elements conveys.

Concerning the thematic aspect, I am interested in knowing what they bring to the fore in their stories, and what are the elements that the present generations want to bring from the past. Is the new narrative aiming to question the hegemonic narration of the war? If so, how? And what

do they dwell on in their retelling? In this sense, it is important to look for instance at the treatment of terror and if it is being discussed or if the war is used as an excuse for another storyline. Therefore, the question goes beyond their intention to recuperate the memory, which in many cases could be assumed, and focuses on whether they are retelling the war or they are reproducing a series of commonplaces already installed in the remembrance of this conflict.

The last category of questions focuses on aspects related to the social and cultural context of the object and the topic, that is, how the comic industry and the memory discussion intertwine. About this, it is necessary to recall that comics are a form of creative invention that is only recently more widely occupied with the representation of real events and historical witnesses. Unlike other cultural forms, such as photography, that are traditionally considered trustworthy, the idea of comic drawings representing something that can be judged as true still creates some uneasiness among the general public. In this sense, it will be interesting to observe the implications this relationship has for both the comic industry and for the intellectual exchange that is happening around the memory issue.

## The corpus of study

The selection of pieces that I examine is four graphic novels by Spanish authors published between 2005 and 2015. The works were selected because they respond to the objectives of this dissertation. Considering that the aim of this thesis is to observe the response of the Spanish *historieta* to the boom of remembrance of the war and the dictatorship, the works needed to be of Spanish authorship; it was also important that they were published during the boom or after the time of memory in Spain, after 2000; and that the main theme of the comic was to discuss the war conflict and its consequences. In addition, in my selection, I took into account that the works

portrayed the past from the personal perspective of an ordinary person—and not a historical personality—independently if they were identified as real or not[15]. And lastly, after several readings and understanding of the importance of the generational factor in memory reconstruction, I selected works from authors of the two different generations involved in the look back of the Spanish Civil War. These authors belong to the generation of the children and the grandchildren of the victims of the war. These works take different approaches when referring to the past experiences of those who lived in the war, including what concerns their approximation to the political commitment and the collective narrative about the conflict. The four works are: *Cuerda de presas*, published in 2005, written by Jorge García and drawn by Fidel Martínez; *El arte de volar*, published in 2009, written by Antonio Altarriba and drawn by the graphic artist Kim; *Los surcos del azar,* Paco Roca's work published in 2013; *Un médico novato,* Vincent Llobel Bisbal's first book of his trilogy about the war, published in 2013[16]. Vicent Llobell is also known as Sento, and that is how I will be referring to him in this work, as that is his artistic name[17].

*Cuerda de presas* is a small collection of short stories that focus on the experiences of eleven women who were political prisoners during the early postwar, and who suffered the repression of the Francoist regime. The subjective perspective is depicted through rough strokes in black and white, and the broken lines of the drawings conceal the feelings of claustrophobia and fear. The collection addresses different issues related to the life of women in jail at that time: mid-

---

[15] By doing this I left behind other very interesting titles such as Carlos Gimenez's *Paracuellos (*1977-1983, 1997-2003)*,* arguably the most important comic book on the dictatorship; or José Pablo García's graphic adaptation of Paul Preston's *La guerra civil española (*2016); the work *Las aventuras de Max Fridman. ¡No pasarán!* (2002, 2002 and 2007) by the Italian artist Vittorio Giardino; *Un largo silencio* (1997), the work of Miguel Gallardo about Francisco Gallardo Sarmiento's life, Carlos Hernández's *La huella de Lorca (*2011); as well as *La voz que no cesa* (2017) the work in which Ramón Boldú and Ramón Pereira explore Miguel Hernandez's life.

[16] After 2015 the publication of works on the topic has only increased. Other titles that give testimony of the war, published since then were *Jamás tendre veinte años (*2016) by Jaime Martín*, El ala rota (*2016) by Antonio Altarriba and Kim*,* and *Esperaré siempre tu regreso (*2017) by Jordi Piedro.

[17] There isn't a female comic production about this period.

night shootings, the inhumane conditions in which they were transferred from one prison to another, the loss of their children, rapings, and in general, the roughness of the daily life of the postwar penal institutions, that often involved political conflicts among the prisoners and abuses of power.

*El arte de volar* is one of the works on which the scriptwriter and academic Antonio Altarriba and the graphic artist Kim work together. The novel tells the story of Antonio Altarriba Sr., the father of the author. In a flashback, the starting point is the day Antonio Altarriba Sr. commits suicide. The story then recalls the ninety-one years of his life: from his childhood years before the Civil War, his experiences during the armed struggle, his subsequent exile, his return to Spain during Franco's regime, and finally his life during democracy. Through the life of the character, the reader travels across the main historical events of the twentieth century in Spanish territory.

*Los surcos del azar*, written and drawn by Paco Roca and awarded the National Comic Prize in 2013, tells the story of Miguel Ruiz, a Republican soldier who fled Spain right after the end of the war and ended up fighting in the Second World War. Through his account, Roca tackles mainly two themes: the story about *La Nueve*, a military company of the Free French 2nd Armoured Division in which many Spaniards fought during the Second World War; and political exile in Morocco and France, which was the destiny for many Republican families and soldiers. It is also relevant to note that Paco Roca is a comic writer who enjoys certain fame in Spain[18].

---

[18] Many of his graphic novels have been successful. It is fairly common to see him on television shows promoting his books or read newspaper articles about him. Also, in 2021 Alejandro Amenabar adapted *El tesoro del cisne negro* as a television series called *La Fortuna*. In this respect, Catalá Carrasco even attributes to Paco Roca's part of the success and normalization of the medium in Spain: "Un factor de especial importancia en esta *normalización* del cómic en España ha sido la contribución del autor valenciano Paco Roca, cuyas obras *Arrugas* (2007), *Los surcos del azar (*2013) o *La casa (*2015)" (157).

*Un médico novato*, written and drawn by Sento, is the first book of a trilogy about the war that Sento published between 2013 and 2016. It tells the story of a newly-graduated doctor whose career is, at the very beginning, interrupted by the war. This dictates a series of life events he went through that are reflected in this trilogy. This first book focuses on the time Uriel spent in Franco's military prison and his survival. The trilogy is based on the real testimony of Pablo Uriel, Sento's father-in-law, and his memoir *No se fusila en domingo*, which Pablo Uriel published in 2005.

In a few words, these stories are personal accounts of the war about soldiers and families of anonymous characters, about the pain of loss and death, about systematized violence, lack of freedom, hunger, and fear. There is in them a clear accent on the affective aspect of the historical account that connects with the current audience. The narrative perspective and devices and the themes chosen for the remembrance in these graphic works establish links with the abundant cultural tradition of memory in Spain, as well as with other works in the international trend of comics concerning personal memories, specifically, with those that aim to bear witness of a historical event[19]. This dissertation is, in consequence, relevant in the global and local academic debate on historical memory, as well as in the growing discussion that studies the relationship between comics (or culture) and memory, and it aims to participate in it by taking into consideration the global macrostructure in which it fits, but also the context and specifics of the Spanish conversation.

## Structure: theoretical framework and contribution

The structure of this thesis is conceived in two parts. The first part provides a conceptual

---

[19] The examples are multiple and come from many different places and discuss varied conflicts. Some of the main publications on this topic are Scott Mccloud *Maus. A survivor's tale (*1980-1991)*, almost any of Joe Sacco's or Guy Delisle's works, Emmanuel Guibert's *Le Photographe*, Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*.

framework used for the analysis of the graphic novels that includes contextual, theoretical, and methodological concepts necessary for the analysis of the corpus. The second part is dedicated to the analysis and interpretation of the results that come after having applied the proposed reading guideline to the four works in the corpus.

The first part is, at the same time, divided into two chapters. The first chapter gives an overview of the theoretical and contextual framework to which this study belongs and with which it converses. The second chapter focuses on the methodology used in the analysis and justifies the analytical guideline proposed.

The first chapter articulates the macrostructural theoretical framework in which this research fits in the academic domain of cultural memory studies, which narrows down to primary texts on comics and specifically on texts on Spanish comics on the war. Cultural memory studies is an interdisciplinary field that focuses on the relationship between culture and memory. This field has been blooming in the last few years and there is currently a focus on trying to define the field and its terms. Considering that memory can be in any cultural artifact and that all cultures have memory, the challenge is to find the coherence and discrimination of approaches between the different perspectives from different places and different disciplines. The object of study of this field comprises, as explained by Astrid Erll, aspects that can be social, material, or mental (*Cultural memory studies* 4). The present work is framed in the dimension of material aspects that bear and make memories, such as media, literary texts, or any other artistic artifact. Contemporary academic work in this field is considered to be in the third phase of the discipline. If we look back, the first phase or origin of the field goes to the beginning of the twentieth century with the theoretical contributions of the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, who provides the very extended and discussed concept of 'collective memory'. Halbwachs' theory puts on the table the idea of

memory not as an individual exercise but as a social one, which will come back repeatedly in the future. Around the 1980s there was a second phase in the field that corresponds with the works of Pierre Nora, Jan Assmann, and Aleida Assmann, who bring back memory analysis, this time putting two disciplines in conversation. Nora would do it with history and culture and introduce one of the central concepts of cultural memory studies: 'memory sites'. The Assmanns would bring together the disciplines of media studies and cultural history and they are the first ones to talk about the idea of 'cultural memory'. The third phase of the evolution of the field is the one that we are experiencing at the moment. Current approaches to the problem are offered by scholars such as Marianne Hirsch, Astrid Erll, Jeffrey K. Olick, and Ann Rigney. This generation continues to discuss the concept of 'cultural memory' and 'collective memory', offering a broader conception of the latter. For instance, the idea of belonging to a society where culture is in motion has been explained by Astrid Erll's metaphor of 'traveling memory'. It is also important in the discussion, and specifically relevant for the present paper, the idea that concerns the transmission of memory between generations, explained by Marianne Hirsch through the concept of 'postmemory'.

The Spanish memory conversation of the years of the memory boom focuses mainly on what happened after the war and on how this was dealt with during the years of Transition, after the death of Franco. The controversy, that goes beyond the academic sphere, puts on the table the existence of a 'pact of silence' concerning the recent past, the result of the aforementioned politics of reconciliation. Francisco Espinosa Maestre, who coins the politics of the Transition as 'politics of forgetting' (*Contra el olvido* 175), claims that in the world of the arts, and governmental politics, there was a sort of tacit agreement that silenced the voices of the victims of the war and their descendants for the sake of a peaceful democracy. The consequence of that was that the democracy after the dictatorship started out by not breaking with the narrative of the past that the dictatorial

regime had constructed, but actually extending it. Paloma Aguilar, who differentiates between the academic and the political approach to the past during the Transition, acknowledges a disregard for the most controversial issues in the politics of the recent past during those years. Despite such disregard, she emphasizes that the past played a crucial function in politics at the time, because it was in the middle of the conversation as the one thing that had to be avoided. Meanwhile, the historian Santos Juliá Díaz rejects the idea of the Transition as a moment of conscious forgetfulness and denies the existence of a 'pact of silence'.

Narrowing down the theoretical framework used, I must now refer to the scholarly works on comics and memory. This relationship has been receiving more academic attention in the past few years, and specialized academic associations, chairs, departments, journals, and conferences on the field have been growing. Comic studies as well as memory studies are also a field in the midst of taking shape, and the representation of memory is at the core of its development. The main lines of study are the following: the element of the autobiography in these works (Chaney, Chute's *Graphic women*); the relationship between history and comic fiction ("Comics as Literature?", Chute's *Disaster Drawn,* Gibson); and the pedagogical value of comics, including those that portray history (Trbic, Williams).

Regarding the Spanish comic tradition and its approach to memory, it has only recently been receiving more attention as a scholarly subject, hence, much work remains to be done in this field. Many of these works have been very valuable in the understanding of the context of the Spanish *historieta*, its tradition, and its market position (Alary; Gómez Salamanca; Porcel; Pons; Altarriba; Díaz de Guereñu; Azpitarte). The latter will be among the natural, and desired, conversational partners of the present work, but especially those works that are concerned about the tradition of comics on the Spanish Civil War (Arroyo Redondo; Fuente Soler; Pérez del Solar;

Malty). Michel Malty's *El cómic sobre la guerra civil,* for instance, offers extensive value for this dissertation because of the gigantic exercise of collecting information and synopsis of the work, which provides a complete overview of the comic on the Spanish Civil War. This allowed me to understand the place that the corpus of this investigation occupies in the course of the relationship between the medium and the theme, the Civil War. While Malty's is more of a descriptive work that gives a historical overview, the present analysis offers a closer look at fewer works and focuses on the narrative they portray within the memory tradition of the boom. The present work then is more in line with Pérez de Solar's approach, but focuses on a different moment of the cultural tradition, as he studies the works on the war published in the 1990s. This essay includes a close conversation with the work of other authors such as Óscar Frean Hernández, Jorge L. Catalá Carrasco, Manuel de la Fuente Soler, Grégory Dubois and Philippe Merlo-Morat take a similar approach, the close reading and analysis of novels, and they partly share the same corpus discussed here. Vivian Allary's work shares with this one the fact that the analytical context goes beyond the nation-state boundaries. This work also converses with the article "Violencia, corporalidad y simbolismo en la novela gráfica memorialista protagonizada por mujeres" that I wrote with Teresa Iribarren and Montse Gatell Pérez.

In light of the just mentioned theoretical research, the second chapter of the thesis deals with the methodological framework and includes an explanation of some terminology and of the methodology of analysis that I used to respond to the main research question. To closely read the texts, I use the support of a model of analysis that connects that converses with the memory discussion and the narratological theory of comics. The purpose of having a model or guideline was to facilitate the examination of the semiotics and narratology of the corpus keeping in mind the main aspects of the memory conversation.

As a base for the creation of the analytical guideline I mainly followed Scott Mccloud's work *Understanding Comics* and Thierry Groensteen's theories gathered in *System of Comics* and *Comics and Narration*. These two works account for the relationship between textual and pictorial representations and provide the language and the main concepts to take into consideration when discussing comics. Another work that has been very useful in the construction of the formal framework was *Critical Approaches to Comics: Theories and Methods, a* collection of articles on the main methods for comics study on comics theory edited by Matthew J. Smith and Randy Duncan. And finally, Luis Gasca and Roman Gubern's contribution to the theory of comics: *El discurso del cómic*, which provides a repertoire of the main semiotic conventions of the medium. The methodological theories on comics help to put the focus on the formal, aesthetic, and semiotic aspects. An example would be how cartoonists balance pictorial and textual elements in their works, how much information each of these elements shows, and how much they hide. I am interested in knowing how they give shape to their narration visually and what impact the images have: the position, the size and the types of the panels, the layout of the pages, the type of discourse, the perspective of the narration, the characterization of the characters, etc. Terms such as 'reciter', 'monstrator', 'fundamental narrator', or 'closure', coined and explained by the already mentioned theorists, become part of the natural language when analyzing comics.

The second part of the thesis includes three chapters and digs into the analysis of the works considering the aspects discussed above: the personal and collective, the role of the transmitter, and the relationship between historical truth and fiction in the works. The legitimization of the medium and its relationship with the hegemonic narrative. Chapter three explores the subjectivity of the accounts and how the medium expresses it through visual and textual language. It aims to understand the importance of the testimonial factor in the context of comics that focus on historical

memory, the role of the body and the political subject. A key aspect of this chapter is how female characters are represented, the political and personal space provided for them, exploring the different examples where that political agency is exposed, and paying special attention to the case of the female characters. In addition, through the study of the different devices that are used to display that subjectivity, I aim to comprehend the mutual influence between the construction of the individual account and the collective historical account. In a contemporary context where there is an active exercise of inquiring memories to recompose different narratives about the war, chapter four studies the act of transmission in the memory exercise and how the generational factor influences the remembering. Due to the active role of the post-generations that remember, the comics in the corpus will prove that there exist interferences between the memories of the protagonists and those doing the remembering. Due to this construct of the second and third generations, we will explore the intentions behind the memory exercise and the political dimension of such recalling. Considering that the transmission often happens within the family framework, this chapter aims as well to understand the presence and role of the family and feelings in the stories. Lastly, chapter five focuses on the historical aspect of these representations and explains the display of historical truth and fiction and the legitimacy that transcends it. Adding to the idea of the truth linked to life-writing, this chapter analyzes the idea of authenticity through the display of historical knowledge and the different techniques used by scriptwriters and visual artists to find historical legitimization. In addition, it proves historical accuracy and literary fictional representation can go hand in hand.

At the heart of the analysis is the evocative ability of a language that is easily accessible because it does not need expertise to be interpreted. This in itself is a clear communicative advantage that could make comic works on historical events a very useful, conversational, and

educational tool. This same accessibility, though, comes with the idea of the medium as easy, simple, and disposable. This burden is perceived in the stories in the corpus and triggers the constant need of the medium to find its legitimacy, which would explain, for instance, the use of graphic novels and not comic magazines to depict a reputable topic such as the war. The same evocative potential of the comic language, also central in this analysis, is the use of personalized and anonymous stories, which underlie marginalized and subversive narratives. Those, together with the comic language, confront the social, political, and cultural context to hopefully interrogate the existing narrative on the war, in some cases with a clear political and denouncing agenda.

Before diving into the core text, I would like to point out that along these pages I am going to use the 9th edition of the MLA formatting and style guide. The MLA formatting in its 9th edition determines that when quoting texts in a different language from the language of the essay, the translation must be included right after the quote and it must indicate the translator. Considering that this work includes a large number of quotes in Spanish and the most likely readers of this text will understand both English and Spanish, I have decided not to include these translations right after each quote, but in the footnotes. This decision was made to allow a more fluent reading of the work so it won't be continuously interrupted by the translations, but it still provides a translation for those potential readers of this work who may not understand Spanish. I would also like to mention that I will be the author of these translations, so I will not indicate this in each of the instances. Any translation from the texts of the corpus that is not done by me will be properly indicated in the reference.

# First part: Comics and memory

## Chapter one: Theoretical and historical framework

The two aspects that come together in this dissertation, historical memory in Spain and the phenomenon of comics on the topic, do not take place as isolated events. The study of memory has become, in the past few decades, an internationally conceived field of study with a developed methodology that is being used globally to explore the past of different times and places. Furthermore, the representation of wars and conflicts in the format of comic books from a testimonial approach got popularized after the publication of *Maus. A survivor's tale.* (Spiegelman, 1977-91), which meant the beginning of an erupting and thriving comic tradition of numerous titles that try to understand the past while exploring personal life experiences. As a consequence, this work is conceived from a transnational perspective and uses the theoretical framework of memory studies and the historical approach of the self to find its theoretical answers; within this framework, it takes into account the influence of the international comic tradition that looks at the past from the perspective of the I and explores how this tradition manifests or in what capacity it enables the contemporary representation of the Spanish Civil War in Spanish graphic novels.

Concerning the theory of memory, I adhere to Wolfgang Welsch and Astrid Erll's approach to memory. A study that goes beyond the nation-state cultures, based on the belief that memories travel beyond the groups or nations. An example of this is how the Holocaust discourse has been transferred to other societies with very different historical and sociocultural circumstances, such as the case of Argentina, as studied by Andreas Huyssen. Nevertheless, I also think that any study

of the past must be attached to the political, sociocultural, and historical circumstances that led to the development of that past and the way we remember it today. As a consequence, looking at the sociocultural context, the historical circumstances of the society, and the specificities of the past and the present of the place and time of this event is vital to the analysis and the understanding of the primary work object of this study. Therefore, this theoretical and contextual framework narrows down into a final focus on the academic works that specifically study the Spanish conflict and the memory issue and the research on comics in Spain, as well as a contextual framework of comics as a cultural medium in Spain that will provide a more complete perspective.

## 1.1. Memory and comics

### 1.1.1. Cultural memory studies

#### 1.1.1.1. What is cultural memory? The three phases of memory studies

Memory is the focus of an international discussion that has been increasingly capturing the interest of societies since the 1980s. A wide variety of specialists from disciplines as varied as cultural studies, philosophy, history, neuroscience, psychology or sociology have expanded the argument to the point that today memory studies have become an international and interdisciplinary field of interest. The relationship between the past and the present is nowadays being examined from a wide variety of academic points of view and has also caught the attention of professionals in other areas of social practice such as the arts, public media, and politics. All of them undertake a dialogue that gives shape to a global phenomenon that examines the political and war conflicts and their representation. This international and transdisciplinary discussion is known as 'memory studies' or 'cultural memory studies' when referring more specifically to the

representation of memory in a cultural artifact. Scholars distinguish three phases in the history of memory studies. The first phase is linked to Maurice Halbwachs' work in the first half of the twentieth century. The second phase is linked to the works of Pierre Nora and Jan and Alleida Assmann. And the third phase is associated with contemporary works and the current professionalization of the discipline which also involves a theorization that accounts for the interdisciplinarity of the field. Scholars such as Jeffrey K. Olick, Astrid Erll, and Marianne Hirsch are linked to this last phase.

Arguably Maurice Halbwachs is the most important figure in the theorization of this field. Halbwachs develops in *The Social Frameworks of Collective Memory (*1925) and *On Collective Memory* (1950) the concept of collective memory, becoming his main contribution. His work on the topic opens a new path of research in this field, offering a sociological perspective on the memory issue that responds to Henri Bergson's theory. Bergson differentiated memory based on habits and the memory of specific events, and he argued that the memory of those past events was fully in our conscience. Halbwachs, on the contrary, overturned this concept and defended that memories do not belong to individuals, but to a social group. He explains that memory is constructed and determined by social frameworks, and since there is a multiplicity of social groups, there is also a multiplicity of collective memories:

> there are as many collective memories as there are groups and institutions in a society. Social classes, families, associations, corporations, armies, and trade unions all have distinctive memories that their members have constructed, often over long periods of time. It is, of course, individuals who remember, not groups or institutions, but these individuals, being located in a specific group context, draw on that context to remember or recreate the past (22).

The idea that memory is not a personal but a social construct is key for the understanding of memory that we have today. As Jan Assmann points out, Halbwachs shifts "the discourse concerning collective knowledge out of a biological framework into a cultural one" (125), and establishes, along with Aby Warburg's work on the memory of images, the base for the current theories on memory studies. Warburg develops his idea of cultural memory, and names it 'social memory'. The focus of his studies was the re-interpretation of cultural symbols in artworks. In contrast to Halbwachs, who focused on the social aspect of culture, Warburg concentrated on cultural objects and symbols as memory artifacts. Halbwachs' and Warburg's works date from the 1920s, and it is not until the 1980s when authors such as Pierre Nora or Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann recuperate the debate on memory from the perspective of History and Cultural Studies, in what is known as the second phase of the discipline.

Pierre Nora, who explained memory in relation to its physical vestiges, introduced another key concept in today's understanding of memory. Nora developed the concept of *lieux de memoire* ('realms of memory' or 'sites of memory') to designate those places that commemorate a historical event. A 'realm of memory', which is not necessarily something tangible, brings together the historical reality and its symbolism. This notion helps to understand one of the basic ideas of memory, its difference from history, which had also been discussed by Halbwachs. The realms of memory refer to a living memory, which differs from history in the sense that the latter alludes to an event whose memory is not progressive, it is not alive. For memory is an ongoing construction, it is also liable to change. In Nora's definition, memory is emotional and volatile and, along the same line as Halbwachs, it is also a collective phenomenon because it is linked to a group that is, at the same time, linked to a site. History, on the contrary, is purely a critical discourse, an intellectual exercise that studies the traces of those memories to make sense of them and

understand the relation and progression of things.

With the rebirth of memory studies in the 1980s, new terminology and nuances arise. Along with 'sites of memory', 'collective and individual memory' or 'social memory', one of the most influential terms that is also relevant to this dissertation is the notion of 'cultural memory', which was first used by Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann. They define 'cultural memory' in opposition to 'communicative memory', a dichotomy that differentiates two aspects based on Halbwachs' notion of collective memory. 'Communicative memory' refers to the communication that happens in daily life events, and it is generally characterized by a lack of organization and a continuous change of roles. 'Cultural memory', on the contrary, refers to memories that are institutionalized and transferred throughout generations. It is important to understand the metaphoric sense of the term, which is something mentioned by Jan Assmann because 'cultural memory' is constructed and not remembered. This explains also why Ann Rigney chooses the term 'cultural memory' over 'collective memory' in her works, as she wants to avoid the false idea of a collective body that remembers, what she explains as the illusion of a "superindividual which does the remembering" (365).

In the context of Spanish academics and mass media, it is common to hear the term *memoria histórica* ('historical memory'). Halbwachs distinguished 'historical memory' and 'collective memory' in the sense that the former would be the reconstruction of the past projecting the social experience and knowledge of the present, and the latter would refer to the social dimension of any construction of memory. More recent approaches use the term in the same sense as social or collective memory, and others stress the influence of the present experiences and history in remembering. Paloma Aguilar Fernández explains *memoria histórica* as:

El conjunto de aquellos acontecimientos del pasado retenidos (lo que conlleva una

selección) y mayoritariamente compartidos por los miembros de un país, o de otras unidades de convivencia casi siempre menores, cuyos miembros gocen del sentido de la unidad común[20] ("Los debates" 64).

Aguilar underscores the social dimension of memories, not only in the construction of that remembrance but also when selecting what is socially and historically worth remembering. This explains, in Aguilar's understanding of 'historical memory', that recollection is something closely linked to a process of learning and development that a specific group does, which also translates into the selection of certain memories. As a consequence, in what concerns the Spanish memory conversation, it could be understood as Aguilar notes that the 'historical memory' movement could be interpreted as a sign of maturity of the Spanish democracy after the dictatorship that followed the Civil War, but it also has clear political connotations because it seeks to compensate the victims of the war and the immediate postwar and those who suffered the consequences of the political repression of the dictatorial regime.

In this thesis I will use both terms 'collective memory' and 'cultural memory' indistinctly, in the sense used by Astrid Erll as an "interplay of present and past in sociocultural contexts" (*Memory in culture* 78). Unlike the Assmanns, who understand 'cultural memory' as high culture, Erll's theories on cultural memory take into account the contemporary anthropological understanding of memory that includes daily life communication and popular culture as contexts where memory is being formed. Erll's definition accounts for the different faces of memory and the interrelation among them: the present and the past, the personal and the collective, and the national and the transnational memories that feed one another in the construction of cultural

---

[20] 'The set of those events of the past that are retained (which entails a selection) and that are shared by the majority of the members of a country, or by other units of coexistence almost always smaller, whose members hold the sense of a common unity' ("Los debates memoria" 64).

memory and collective identity. Only a more inclusive notion of collective memory, such as Erll's, would be applicable in this work in which the medium for remembering is comic books, a type of art that was traditionally considered as low culture and that in many ways resists the cultural conventions that were traditionally used to construct collective or national narratives. Further, the testimonial reconstruction in comics, partly due to the popularity of the testimonial remembrance of the Holocaust in this format, which some of the comics I explore refer to, has become a movement of transnational memory that goes beyond the cultural identities and emerges as a global movement. And last, because the interplay of the personal perspective and the collective construction underlies all the works of the study case of this thesis, not only formally, but also as the real source of information used by the authors. All the graphic novels in the primary corpus, as the peritexts of these comics inform about, even those with more fictional elements, are based on real personal stories that aim to nourish the constructions of the collective narrative.

### 1.1.1.2. Transnationality/ Transculturality/ Traveling memories

Collective memory or cultural memory is then the set of memories that a community shares of the events in the past that help that community make sense of their present identity and give shape to their future, and that can go beyond that culture because of multidirectional influences. In the last few years, as a response to the growth of migration networks, global markets, and global access to different cultures, the concept of transnationality and, with it, transnational memories have gained importance. This new approach diverges from the idea of methodological nationalism for which the nation-state is the natural framework of analysis. The analytic lens that the transnational memory approach proposes is broader for it goes beyond the borders of the nations and builds bridges between the different groups and cultures, as it focuses on the dialogue among

them. Furthermore, it builds bridges between the personal and global levels that can find each other through the emotional path, going beyond the group-bound concept that had been discussed up until now. This concept, discussed by Ann Rigney emphasizes the importance of the circulation of memories beyond territorial boundaries, as it had been conceived by Pierre Nora; and also beyond the group boundaries, as it had been formulated by Halbwachs and the Assmanns. It seems pertinent to note that the concept of transnational memory does not deny the relevance of the cultural framework of the nation-state, in fact, it includes it in its analytical equation but goes beyond its limitations.

National identity must be differentiated from cultural identity, as an individual does not always identify with the collective identity created for a nation, and within a nation there exist different cultural identities as well. Just like the transnationality conception goes beyond the scope of nation-states, the conception of transculturality, a notion associated with the former, goes beyond the idea of a single culture, a concept that was popularized in the 18th century and explained by Johann Gottfried Herder as a homogeneous construction linked to ethnicity or people, and therefore clearly distinguished from other cultures and ethnicities. Transculturality, as Wolfgang Welsch develops in his article "Transculturality - the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today", rejects this traditional notion of culture as a homogeneous and separated unit, but on the contrary, focuses on the interconnections among cultures. The idea of transculturality, as described by Welsch, is a consequence of today's entanglement of cultures, that cannot be conceived as homogeneous, but rather as hybrid structures part of a big network of connections. Welsch points out that other concepts that tried to explain the correlation among cultures such as interculturality and multiculturality, despite trying to make up for the flaws that the traditional conception of culture had, their definitions are based on the idea of cultures as isolated units. Interculturality, for

instance, is meant to look for ways for the different cultures to connect, to not clash; but in its definition assumes the traditional conception of cultures as round and isolated structures. Multiculturality is understood as the coexistence of cultures within one society and seeks ways of tolerance; but again, unlike transculturality, it also presumes that cultures are homogeneous and easily discriminated against one another.

Closely related, or even developing on the notions of transnationality and transculturality, is the concept of 'traveling memories' that has been described by Astrid Erll. This concept accounts for the idea of the circulation and influences of memories in multi directions through time and space via different mediums: people, media, contents, forms, and practices. People, Erll explains, travel around the globe carrying memories. Global media such as the arts, internet, or journalism also carry memory stories that are later on borrowed by other cultures. Both people and media carry content, stories, and images that because of being in motion have sometimes become points of reference for other memories. At the same time, that content is loaded with different forms of remembering, such as the victim-perpetrator dichotomy, that is used across the globe and that I also observe in the contemporary Spanish comics. And lastly, there are also practices of commemoration that travel, for example the 'one minute of silence' commemoration that is practiced across societies. Erll defends that this movement not only happens, but it must persist: "I claim that all cultural memory must 'travel', be kept in motion, in order to 'stay alive', to have an impact both on individual minds and social formations" ("Traveling memory" 22).

The idea of transnational and transcultural memory is important for this study not only because of the theoretical framework the global memory studies have constructed, but also because many of the contemporary comics on the Spanish war and postwar concern the personal accounts of Republican soldiers or families that survived in exile, but whose accounts were never included

in the national memory construct. This is another reason why the memories reflected in these comics do not fit in the analytical framework of national memories, but they do fit in the narrative of a transnational memory. They connect with the memories of the Republicans who stayed in Spain and with the memories of other political refugees from other conflicts around the world. Furthermore, the use of the narration of the self in these stories of remembrance takes history, which has traditionally been defined at the macro level and based on the structure of the nation-states, to the micro level, the level of the individual. Through the use of emotions and personal experiences, it surpasses the cultural and national boundaries that may exist and connects with others at a global level. As a consequence, they create transcultural connections, both within the different cultures inside the Spanish territory and beyond.

Moreover, when talking about collective or cultural memory, it is important to note that it is a synchronically twofold concept because the existence of the collective memory is used by individuals to organize and understand their personal memories, as well as to construct their identity and sense of belonging to a collectivity, both in the more traditional understanding of culture and in the sense of transculturality. At the same time, the singular memories also play a crucial role when giving shape to that cultural or collective identity, which means that individual and collective identities and memories entangle, at the local level and at the transcultural level. The different parties that form a cultural identity are, in any case, very heterogeneous, which brings out the difficulty to determine the limits of individuality and collectivity. A few individualities or certain individual characteristics are intrinsically selected to construct the identitarian idea of a collective self, and the social criteria to make the selection of those personages that create the imagery of such collectivity have changed over history. In the construction of cultural remembering, also closely linked to the idea of forgetfulness, these selected individualities are

given the power of collective memory, while other individualities are disregarded. Friedrich

Nietzsche and later on Tzvetan Todorov theorized about the idea of forgetting. In any recollection,

there is an implicit and necessary exercise of selection, a sort of therapeutic process of forgetting

certain aspects, and an implied liberation, because neither individuals nor societies have the

capacity to remember everything.

### 1.1.1.3. Personal memories: narrations of the self

I have discussed so far the significance of the social factor in the construction of the

individual memory. However, the understanding of the presence of the personal perspective in

today's approach to the Spanish Civil War is just as important and also evident in the graphic

novels. Such presence leads us to reflect on the other side of the same matter, the relevance of

individual accounts in the construction of collective memory. While the preference for the

testimony in the graphic novels in this corpus is remarkable, it can not be surprising considering

that since the 1970s we have seen the flourishing of the production of all forms of life-writing:

biographies, autobiographies, memories, personal diaries, personal chronicles, etc. As part of this

tendency, the market has also certainly seen an increase in the use of personal accounts as a way

to study and remember history—the historical remembrance integrated into the personal narrative.

The relationship between personal memories and history or collective memory has been

widely studied. Susana Tavera points out that the interest of historians in the biographical genre

and the other forms of life-writing is due, as it happens in the study case of this work, to the

inclusion of the main sociological and historical questions integrated in the personal accounts (qtd.

in Burdiel 54). Among the aspects that are part of this academic discussion, one that gets a lot of

attention is defining the scientific value of the biographies, but many scholars also focus on the

historical interest of those life writings and their categorization as historically reliable or unreliable. Among the different issues related to the use of life accounts to document history, I am interested in exploring which personal stories are being considered representative in the arts nowadays, in what capacity these personal experiences can document history from a more collective perspective and what are the limitations and the advantages of life-writing in such an undertaking.

Historians traditionally rejected personal stories as a trustworthy source of history because, unlike the hard facts, they considered the personal perspective to be too subjective. In the last decades, however, there is a more or less consensus to accept the historiographic value of personal accounts. The postmodern attention to individual perspectives that started in the 1970s is a response of the incipient rejection of the structuralist theories and their lack of personalization, and on the grounds of this a need to find particular voices and analyze the role of the individuals in history arises. In the attempt to explain the past, there is a special interest in the consequences that these conflicts had in the life of the victims, especially focusing on the experiences of common people. In this particular case, the narrations in contemporary comics assume the current need to retrieve the personal voices of those who fought on the Republican side, whose stories had been clouded in the hegemonic account. In this sense, Mónica Bolufer, who refers to the use of autobiography in the construction of the history of women, pinpoints the adequacy of the genre for the recovery of female representation, because the personalization allows for the identification of many women to find female experiences representing and questioning the current historical account[21] (88).

---

[21]In Bolufer's words: "el método biográfico resulta particularmente adecuado, puesto que un relato histórico con rostros y nombres responde a la necesidad humana de identificación y de forma especial al deseo de muchas mujeres de verse representadas, interpeladas o cuestionadas por una historia que contemple también sus experiencias." 'the

Nevertheless, the use of biographies as a way to understand society and history is not new. There are examples of biographies that try to explain history as early as in the Greco-Roman tradition; but despite being an old tradition, this relationship has been seen with suspicion ever since it started. The term biography, Pedro Ruiz Torres explains, was coined in the seventeenth century ("Las repercusiones cambios modernidad" 20). At that time the genre underwent some changes. The new biography relegates the overly virtuous lives of saints and nobles which it had focused on in the previous years and starts to deal with the lives of public figures such as painters or poets. The biography would inquire into the private experiences of those figures and the events that had shaped their personality and their artwork. At the end of the eighteenth century, the time of the Enlightenment, historians lost interest in the personal circumstances of the individual and tried to explain society in universal terms, what was called the plural history (*die Geschichten*). At the time, nature was thought to be above human beings behavior, a stronger force that organized and ruled. The acts of the men and women were considered too uneven and random, and therefore their personal lives were ignored when trying to explain the world and understand history. The objective at the time was to standardize and generalize, to find patterns that could be universal because humans were considered only instruments of higher energy. Two of the philosophers of German idealism that developed and defended these theological theories that focused on the uniformity of men were Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Hegel. Their later critics focused on the fact that they were neglecting the value of the nuances present in plurality. Some historians of the nineteenth century, among which we distinguish Alexander Humboldt, oppose the ideas of German idealism and defend the value of the particularities in the course of history. However, also

---

biographical method is particularly appropriate since a historical account with faces and names responds to the human need for identification, and especially to the desire of many women to see themselves represented, interpellated, or questioned by a history that also contemplates their experiences' (88).

in the nineteenth century, many historians adopt the scientific perspective of gaining knowledge and this brings to the fore the personalization of historical studies. The idea of constructing an impersonal history will also dominate the structuralist thinking of the twentieth century. As a consequence, and even though the interest in subjectivity survives camouflaged in some studies, the lack of subjectivism affects the historical studies of modernity, which generally lost interest in individualities and focused on facts. Sabina Loriga in a very enlightening article about biographical narrative and historical representation in the nineteenth and twentieth century explains: "En los últimos doscientos años, nuestros libros de Historia se llenaron de relatos sin sujeto: hablan de potencias, naciones, pueblos, alianzas, grupos de intereses, pero sólo excepcionalmente de seres humanos"[22] (165). The look back at the past had been done with a focus on political and warfare aspects, and so when writing biographies, the only stories that caught the attention of historians were those that referred to the lives linked to those events, the lives of 'the great men'. History would then only focus on the life stories of personalities such as Isabel the Catholic, Carlo Magno or Napoleon Bonaparte, and other men and women, but mostly men, who were, in reality, only one more element that made the causality of history possible.

With the changes that historical remembering went through at the end of the twentieth century, the evocation of the past moves the focus of attention from the warfare details to the personal aspects and the personal repercussions of the conflict in personal lives. Personal stories are emerging in all areas that give voice to hidden testimonials, bringing to the fore, as Michael Pollack says, "*memorias subterráneas* que, como parte integrante de las culturas minoritarias y

---

[22] 'In the last two hundred years, our History books have been filled with subjectless accounts: they talk about powers, nations, peoples, alliances, groups of interest, but only exceptionally human beings' (165).

dominadas, se oponen a la 'memoria oficial' . . . "[23] (2). As a consequence, the focal point is shifted

from just the 'great man' to include the 'common man', to the 'common people'. History then also

takes into consideration those who were never considered heroes, but were still a fundamental but

forgotten part of it up until then. The historical account starts to be told from below and the

personal circumstances of ordinary people start to catch the attention of historians, anthropologists,

and sociologists, who want to explore how the grassroots experienced the historical moment they

are studying. These lives and the voices of the common people are being acknowledged and their

experiences are granted the ability to be representative of a collectivity, resulting in a new

conversation that includes nuances and particularities. An additional consequence would be the

existence of a switch in the type of events that are being studied, from those that were exclusively

referred to the public scope, such as military, or politics, to events that refer to private life. Some

aspects related to feelings and family life gain relevance in the historical account. This new

approach, as it can be seen in the comics I study, explores what happened on the battlefield, but

also what happened to the parents who lost someone in the war, or children who had to migrate to

find protection, family members who stayed at home waiting for letters that arrived from the

political prisons, etc. In short, human experiences regarding both the public and the private sphere

are now the focus of interest, to the point that the boundaries separating the dichotomy of private

and public are being muddled. In this regard, Burdiel explains, that the value of biographies as a

tool to observe the past can only be defended from the awareness that personal stories cannot be

the only instrument to explain history:

---

[23] 'underground memories that, as an integral part of minorities and dominated cultures, are opposed to the 'official memory' . . . (2).

permite distanciarse . . . de la creencia ingenua en que la biografía puede resolver por sí misma las aporías que suscita el carácter circular del conocimiento en su tensión constante entre el todo y las partes, lo individual y lo colectivo[24] (53).

And only from that perspective the biography can become a useful space for observation, Burdiel continues to explain:

la biografía puede demostrar su capacidad para convertirse en un observatorio y un terreno de engarce útil para el cruce estratégico de diversos marcos de análisis que, como ya advirtió Marc Bloch en su momento, constituyen la condición *sine qua non* para entender históricamente[25] (53).

We can agree then on the fact that one of the ways to apprehend history today is by observing the lives of individuals, and that the heterogeneity of personal experiences brings light to the interrogations of the past. As a result of this interest in the personal experiences of common people and the newly acquired importance of the private sphere, there is a notable increase in artworks that explore the domestic component and that look at the past within the framework of family and familial relations. This brings to the fore the significance of the transmission of memories among family members, from older to younger generations. The connection between generations is another of the elements that entangle the construction of cultural and individual memory. This is relevant for this work for two reasons. First, because it is present in many of the

---

[24] 'It allows distancing . . . oneself from the naïve belief that biography can solve by itself the aporias that the circular character of knowledge arouses in its constant tension between the whole and the parts, the individual and the collective' (53).

[25] 'The biography can demonstrate its capacity to become an observatory and a useful linkage terrain for the strategic crossing of diverse analysis frameworks that, as Marc Bloch already warned at the time, constitute the sine qua non condition to understand historically' (53).

graphic novels of the case study of this thesis; and second, because the approach that different generations take towards memory is also a compelling factor in the memory discussion that has been taking place in Spain since the beginning of the new millennium.

### 1.1.1.4. Oral transmission and the generational problem

When we talk about the memory of recent events, that is, events that happened in the last eighty or hundred years, the generational issue and the transmission between generations are two concepts closely linked to the process of remembrance. First, we can assume that the age and the experience of those who go through a traumatic event play an important role in how these individuals remember that event. But not only that, the generational problem goes beyond the participants, as it is linked to the transmission of the remembrance of those events to second and third generations, which often happens orally and in everyday life situations, which the Assmanns coined 'communicative memory'. In such transmission, on many occasions, the focus is displaced from the historical facts to the impression and scars that witnesses—and also later generations— have from those events.

A change of generation was key for the transitional process to happen. Paloma Aguilar explains how essential this was, as only those who were born after the war but who experienced the repression of the dictatorship were able to distance themselves from the pain caused by the conflict, but at the same time had a strong enough desire to break with the past (*Políticas de la memoria* 28). It was also Aguilar who, referring to the collective memory movement, gives an interpretation that rejects the idea of a possible return to the same conflict. Much to the contrary, she interprets it as a sign of democratic maturity, which she explains by the fact that an open debate on the topic has reached the Parliament ("Los debates memoria" 69). Generation is then a

fundamental aspect of historical development and the explanation of historical events, and how we remember and understand those events. The generational problem and its relation to memory have been studied repeatedly. An important academic figure that dealt with this matter is Karl Mannheim, who explains the question of the generation as not only biological but also sociological because the group of individuals who belong to the same generation also share a specific historical space (290)[26]. Ortega y Gasset has also made significant contributions to this discussion. He explained in his theory on generations the importance of age as a factor that determines the way one perceives personal experiences, and at the same time, he puts the accent on the aspect of contemporariness. Humankind, Ortega y Gasset explains, is the same in the course of history, but their perception depends on the circumstances of the time they live in just as much as on their intimacy. Each time has its own characteristics and the problems and changes in each generation make history advance. They create history:

> Esto nos permite formular dos principios fundamentales para la construcción de la historia: 1° El hombre constantemente hace mundo, forja horizonte. 2° Todo cambio del mundo, del horizonte, trae consigo un cambio en la estructura del drama vital. El sujeto psicofisiológico que vive, el alma y el cuerpo del hombre puede no cambiar; no obstante, cambia su vida porque ha cambiado el mundo. Y el hombre no es su alma y su cuerpo, sino su vida, la figura de su problema vital[27] (qtd. in Martín 103).

---

[26] "Generational location is based on the existence of biological rhythm in human existence—the facts of life and death, a limited span of life, and aging. Individuals who share the same generation, the same year of birth, are endowed, to that extent, with a common location in the historical dimension of social progress" (Mannheim 290).

[27] 'This allows us to formulate two fundamental principles for the construction of history. Firstly, men constantly make the world, forging a horizon; secondly, every change of world, of the horizon, brings with it a change in the structure of the vital drama. The psychophysiological subject that lives, the soul and the body of a man, may not change; nevertheless, the man changes his life because the world has changed. And the man is not his soul and his body, but his life, the figure of his life problem' (qtd. in Martín 103).

More recently, Marianne Hirsch introduces the notion of 'postmemory' in an article where she studied Art Spiegelman's comic *Maus.* The concept of postmemory refers to the transmission from the first to the following generations of feelings, anecdotes, and distress that are related to a traumatic event of historical relevance. In the initial definition the term alluded to the memories of the Holocaust that the children of survivors had taken on; but after some time and taking into account that the term had been used to refer to the evocation of other conflicts, the concept was expanded and refined. In her work, *The Generation of Postmemory* Hirsch describes postmemory as "the relationship that the 'generation after' bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before—the experiences they 'remember' only by means of the stories, images, and behavior among which they grew up" (106).

The analysis of the knowledge or the feelings that the generations after have towards the experiences and memories of their parents and grandparents is often addressed from a psychological perspective. The attention often lies on the traumatic consequences that these episodes had not only on those who experienced them but also on the post-generations. Furthermore, there are two other elements that Hirsch draws attention to in her studies. First, the new legitimacy that oral transmission has acquired in the study of the past because often these memories are transmitted through personal conversations; and second, the importance of material family objects that help the second and third generations give shape to the past. Family photos, personal letters, paintings, etc., have a key role in the transmission of the stories, the loss, and the trauma, because the second and third generations, as Hirsch explains, use those material objects to connect with those remembered events and sufferings, through their imagined projections of what those objects evoke. They give their own shape to their parents' and grandparents' trauma and make it their own. Interestingly, these items—photographs, for instance—are not always familial,

because the postmemory is not limited to the private space. In the re-creation of those memories, some of the private images have been made public; as is the case of photographs that were taken by the perpetrators themselves, and that today are included in the collective and individual representation of the war of the victims. Postmemory, in fact, goes beyond family transmission in other ways as well. It is not only understood as something that goes from those who experienced the war to their children but it must also be understood horizontally, from the post-generations that belong to the family with a traumatic history to others in their same generation outside those families. This concept has been coined as 'affiliative postmemory' by Hirsch. However, this connection is not new. Paul Ricoeur understands memory and its transmission between generations as two lines that cross: one that connects the individual with their contemporaries, and one that connects the individual with the predecessors and successors. In his idea of memory transmission, he emphasizes the contribution of imagination in the narrative of that memory as he recognizes that imagination is used, just like memory itself, to bring back an event that is no longer present (Ricoeur 25). Marianne Hirsch, nevertheless, foregrounds a clear differentiation between the memory processes that take place for those who have a direct familial relationship with the protagonists and those of the same generation that know and remember the conflict without a direct affective connection:

> Still, their relationship to the past is certainly not the same. Eva Hoosman draws a line, however tenuous and permeable, between "the post-generation as a whole and the literal second generation in particular." To delineate the border between these respective structures of transmission—between what I would like to refer to as familial and 'affiliative' postmemory—we would have to account for the difference between an intergenerational vertical identification of child and parent occurring within the family, and

the intragenerational horizontal identification that makes that child's position more broadly available to their contemporaries (35, 36).

The horizontal relationship between the trauma and the memorialist objects allows for the use of this material as an efficient source of information about the past. This is the case because the affective distance that those contemporaries have to that material, in comparison to the direct relatives of the victims, permits a more critical and less subjective observation. In this sense, some of these objects also prove their symbolic power. Personal devices can become a reference for the construction of a collective identity, as is the case of the baby rattle found in 2011 next to the remains of Catalina Muñoz Arranz[28]. The other way around is also possible. Public objects can also be integrated into someone's personal or family memento. An example of the latter could be how Spiegelman adopts Margaret Bourke-White's image of the Holocaust published in *Life Magazine* in 1945 to give shape to his reconstruction of the past. In the photo, drawn by Spiegelman in *Maus*, there is a group of male Jews standing in front of a fence of a concentration camp[29] where he locates his father, about which Hirsch notes that "he sees the anonymous image through the lens of his familial drama" ("Surviving images" 10). Comic books often use photos as a mnemonic device, sometimes integrated into the story and sometimes as supporting material in the peritext. Private and public photos are crucial in the reconstruction that these stories discuss, both in their dimension that gives shape to a family remembrance and as objects assimilated in the collective construction of memory. The framework in which these memories are transferred is then, not only private, and it goes beyond the second generation.

---

[28] A group of archeologists found this object in the grave of Catalina Muñoz Arranz, a 37 year old woman who was executed in 1936 and buried in Palencia. Other personal objects such as rings, papers, or glasses found in graves hold an important symbolic value for the remembrance of the war and bring the present society closer to the personal.

[29] Margaret Burke-White's photo was taken after the liberation of Buchenwald and it depicts a group of privileged Communist political inmates.

In the case of the Spanish memory boom, the third generation has a necessary role in the way the past was remembered, as they take an active approach to find out what happened to their grandparents. In their different works, the theorist Paloma Aguilar and the historian Santos Juliá both call attention to the part that this change of generation plays in the enormous interest that the war and its aftermath aroused in the last decade of the twentieth century. This generation of grandchildren grew up during the years of Transition when the Spanish democratic state was taking shape after almost three decades of dictatorship. In most cases, and taking into consideration the many exceptions that might exist, their relationship to their grandparents' trauma of the conflict and its consequences was not as close as the connection that their parents had to that trauma. Perhaps because of the newly acquired democracy, most of the people in this generation were not raised under the influence of the myths and the narrative of the Francoist regime. In addition, the third generation did not generally have as strong sentimental ties to the process of political transition and to the narrative of reconciliation that was created after the dictatorship as their parents did. In this sense, Javier Muñoz Soro distinguishes three ways of remembering when we refer to the Spanish Civil War, which corresponds to those of the three generations already mentioned: the 'identification' with one of the sides fighting in the war, that corresponds to the first generation; the 'memory of reconciliation' of the second generation; and the 'memory of reparation or restitution' of the third generation (118).

In summary, the individual is the one recalling, but the connections of those memories are built through private and public spheres: family memories, history books, public images, artworks, newspapers, and as Hirsch highlights, through the imagination that helps the post-generations connect with the memory object, the memories and the trauma of the victims. In addition, memory is also dynamic, it is alive, and connects cultures and different generations through multidirectional

movement. To make this clear, the spatial and time frameworks of the past and the present, and correspondingly of the different generations, find each other to work as lenses of analysis and understanding those memories, that often travel to be entangled and sometimes reproduced in other cultures, moving both transculturally and transnationally. It is the presence of the second and third generations, their interests, and their social conventional norms that determine how memories are constructed and the selection of those memories that today are considered to be worth being remembered.

This study includes works written by authors from both generations, the children and the grandchildren of those who participated in the war. The generational problem explained so far is pertinent for this study because it gives theoretical guidance to understanding the way these generations remember and the possible footprints left by the war on the next generations and the nature of those footprints.

### 1.1.2. Comics as a memory artifact

#### 1.1.2.1. More than *Maus:* historical contingencies of comics

What are comics? When we think of comics we think of a story; we think of a hybrid language of words and images, although words are not strictly necessary; we think of panels and speech balloons; and we think of a sequentiality that helps the reader to make sense of it. The discussion about the definition of comics is an ongoing one. Different definitions focus on different aspects: the form, the origin, the content, and the market. A well-known definition is the one given by Scott McCloud in *Understanding Comics. The Invisible Art* who defines comics as a "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence" (9). In this definition, McCloud accounts for the order of the images and the intrinsic hybridity of the comic language as one that

involves drawings and words. It also accounts for the narratology of the language; but it does not include any aspects related to its content and its function or its dissemination forms, which has actually been an important aspect in the development of this medium. Today it could be argued that as a definition, McCloud's contribution is too wide in its scope, as we find several counterexamples, such as cave paintings, tapestries, some Mayan art, or much of contemporary internet content, such as Instagram stories, that cannot be considered comics but would still fit in Mccloud's definition of the medium. An earlier definition is given by David Kunzle who formulates four essential conditions in a comic:

> I would propose a definition in which a 'comic strip' of any period, in any country, fulfills the following conditions: 1/ There must be a sequence of separate images; 2/ There must be a preponderance of image over text; 3/ The medium in which the strip appears and for which it was originally intended must be reproductive, that is, in printed form, a mass medium; 4/ The sequence must tell a story which is both topical and moral (*The early comic* 2).

McCloud and Kunzle share the idea that a basic feature of comics is the sequentiality of images. The rest of the conditions given by Kunzle seem inaccurate or out of date. To start with, today comics don't necessarily prioritize images over words, and can even be mixed with prose. Also, graphic novels are not disseminated as a mass medium, nor were the underground comics of the 1960s. And of course, the content is not necessarily either topical or moral, as today, the themes are of all sorts, and of a wide variety of genres.

The comic industry has evolved greatly in the last few decades, and today the term comics, as a general term, includes comic strips and funnies from the press, classic comic books as the ones of superheroes, comic albums, and the more current graphic novels or many other forms that

experiment with the medium without perhaps abiding by the limits of the definitions. Today comics cannot be defined based on their themes, since there are no limitations in that regard, and neither can they be defined based on their dissemination, as this can be as different as a mass medium comic with a solid structure of merchandising, an online comic or self-published comics of small print.

The examination of the historical contingencies of comics as a form of representation takes us to the Egyptian culture that already used sequences of drawings and hieroglyphs to tell a story. McCloud considers the pre-Columbian manuscripts, the French Bayeux tapestry, and William Hogarth's *Modern Moral Subjects* as some of the predecessors of modern comics. This connection to the fine arts, Randy Duncan and Matthew Smith suggest, is not unintentional, as linking comics with a well-regarded form of art affects positively the reputability of the medium; or as they put it "This and other forms of art lend respectability to an otherwise denigrated form of expression. It is a strategic ploy for respectability by association" (3). Today's comics, nevertheless, present big differences compared to the tapestries and the hieroglyphs, mainly when it comes to the function they have in society, their ways of dissemination, and even their graphic form. There are, however, other predecessors of today's comics that are closer to the current medium in their function and form. The European broadsheets were, for instance, a very popular form of entertainment in some parts of Europe, mainly during the early modern period (1500-1800).

A commonly agreed idea among comic scholars, such as McCloud, Kunzle or Groenteen, and Benoit, is to consider Rodolphe Töpffer (1799-1846), a francophone Swiss, as the father of modern comics. Töpffer introduced in his works captioned cartoon panels and showed "the first interdependent combination of words and pictures seen in Europe" (McCloud, 17). His works were targeted at adults and offered a satirical view of the Swiss society of the time. Notwithstanding, at

the beginning, he started drawing only for the entertainment of his students and did not want to be known as a caricaturist or cartoonist, in fact, he even published anonymously his acclaimed *Les Amours de Monsieur Vieux Bois (*1827). With time, things took a turn, and at the end of his life Töpffer not only admitted the authorship of his work, but he even theorized about the new narrative he had developed in his works *Essais d'Autographie* (1842) and *Essais de physiognomonie* (1845), where he also defended the value of it. Initially, Töpffer's work was mainly disseminated in France; and some of his successors, Cham, Doré, and Petit, are also considered to be among the pioneers of comics.

Cham—pseudonym of Charles Amédée de Noé—was the only real disciple of Töpffer. His initial work followed the artistic line that Töpffer had started embedded in absurdity, as Kunzle refers (*Pioneros* 11), but around 1840 he started exploring social satire. Gustave Doré (1832-1883) combines Töpffer's language with a parody of mythology and old stories, and later on the parodic travel tales, which also Cham had deeply explored. Léonce Petit (1839-1884) was called the French Töpffer, as the similarities with his predecessor were notable. When referring to Petit is work *Mésaventures de Monsieur Bêton*, Kunzle states that "La obra es topfferiana en todos sus aspectos, desde su técnica litográfica, grafismo, composición y ritmo, hasta los últimos detalles del formato, los recuadros y las leyendas manuscritas"[30] (*Pioneros* 18). Additionally, Petit is known for reflecting in his works the conflict between rural peasants and bourgeois in Normandy and Brittany, the place where he comes from.

Not long after this, in the United States, in an atmosphere of much competition in the press, the genre that Töpffer had developed became very popular. Richard Felton Outcault, one of the illustrators of the newspaper *World*, created *Hogan's Alley,* a comic strip published between 1895-

---

[30] 'The work is Topfferian all around, from its lithographic technique, graphics, composition and rhythm, to the last details of the format, the boxes, and the handwritten legends' (*Pioneros* 18).

1898, whose main character was the yellow kid, a little boy that represented life in the working class neighborhoods of New York. In Töpffer's work, the wording of his narrative was included below the drawings, but Outcault already integrates the dialogue inside the drawing, in speech balloons, and most of the time in the yellow pajamas of the main character. The Yellow Kid in McFadden's Flats, then, establishes some of today's most characteristic features of comics: a cheap and disposable medium, with speech balloons, gutters[31], sequentiality, and one main character that is the common denominator of the different installments. The yellow kid also sets the starting point of another feature that is commonly related to the comic industry, which is that the characters and their stories do not always belong to their creators, and they are, therefore, often drawn by different artists along their trajectory. This often happens with superheroes, but not exclusively. The first time this happens is because the newspaper *Morning Journal* hires Outcault to continue the stories of the famous character in their publication, but *World* does not stop using the infamous character that had been created for them, and it starts being drawn by George Benjamin Luks in *World* at the same time as Outcault draws it in *Morning Journal*. The yellow kid gets duplicated and the two papers that published its stories became the 'yellow kids papers', later on only 'yellow papers', making it impossible to dissociate the character from the commercial battle within which it became successful (Booker 435).

This character is, for many, a turning point in the history of comics because it is due to its commercial success that comics became a very popular form of entertainment both in the US and Europe (Booker 437). With the widespread use of the printing press, comics became a massively disseminated art. It was common to see them in the form of comic strips in newspapers and magazines, and soon they were published as serial publications, in comic books. The visual

---

[31] Gutter: space in between panels.

element of comics made them a very accessible medium of communication for all types of readership, including children and new immigrants who were still learning English. Duncan, Smith, and Levitz's essay *The Power of Comics: History, Form and Culture* dates to the so-called Golden Age of comics back in the 1930s, with the introduction of funnies and superheroes. It is during what they call the era of proliferation (after 1934-1939) and the era of diversification (the 1940s) of American comics, when what we today consider classics of the genre, such as Superman, Batman, and Robin, Wonder Woman, Aquaman or Captain America join the comic scene. Ever since then superheroes became strongly associated with the comic medium.

In the chronology offered by Duncan, Smith, and Levitz, they identify the decade of the 1950s as a new era in the history of comics, what they coin as the era of retrenchment, which is a moment in which the comic industry had to face some relapse because of the arrival of television to many American homes and because of a public battle against comics. Some voices, that soon became public, wanted the medium to be censored because they considered it a harmful influence on children. Around that time, but before this public and legal battle, is when the comic industry starts targeting a more adult audience. Entertaining Comics (EC) changes the editorial line and becomes "intelligently written, wonderfully drawn, and as gory as hell" (Duncan, Smith, Levitz 24). The new violent and horror content is what provokes a critical reaction from a certain sector of society which found comics dangerous for the proper development of American youth. The major representative of this group was Dr. Fredric Wertham, who in his book *Seduction of the Innocent: The Influence of Comic Books on Today's Youth (*1954), asserts that comics were encouraging potential criminality among young readers. The social and public influence of this book was of great magnitude and even caused the reaction of the Senate, which initiated an official investigation to determine if comics could be a threat to society. As a response to this, the comic

industry of that time in the United States, represented by *The Comic Magazine Association of America,* created a self-regulatory code of conduct and morality. The comic magazines participating committed to complying with the standards of good taste specified in the Code of conduct. Comic books that complied with these standards included a seal of approval that confirmed these comics did not contain, among other things, any violent and horror scenes, lust, or sadism.

In the meantime in Europe, the appearance of American comics in the market triggers a similar reaction to the one that happened in the United States from a sector of French society. The catholic group *L'Union des oeuvres catholiques de France* and the French communist party, two groups ideologically opposed and that ironically in the past had both used comics as a medium for propaganda, reacted to the arrival of American comics with criticism, intending to protect children's development and education. This sector of French society had three main concerns. Firstly, they were afraid of the potential ideological messages those comics could bring, especially in the case of the Communists, who feared the introduction of capitalism. Secondly, and in the same line as the discourse of Fredric Wertham, they feared other comic contents that could be harmful for children's education, such as violence and sex. And thirdly, Ignacio Fernández Sarasola calls attention to the fact that there was as an ulterior motive, a certain protectionism for the local market (100). The European comic had developed what is known as the clear line or the *ligne claire* of comics, which was linked to the

Figure 1. Seal of approval by the Comics Code Authority

Marcinelle school. The clear line started in 1929 with the very popular *Adventures of Tintin*, a work of the Belgian craftsman Georges Prosper Remi, also known as Hergé, and that grew exponentially after the Second World War when *Tintin* and *Le Journal de Spirou* became market competitors. It was important for its success that he used an accessible and realistic setting, that later on was criticized for not being accurate, and also for being politically and culturally involved, often anti-communist, reflecting the society of the time. Booker points out that Hergé "can be seen as a cultural and political mirror of his employers, the time period, and himself" (176).

The formal characteristics of the clear line, a term that was assigned to the Dutch illustrator, Joost Swarte, refers to comics with clean, defined lines, and with full or plain colors, without shadows, volume, or color gradients. Other names associated with this style are Edgar Pierre Jacobs (1904-1987), Jacques Martin (1921-2010), Bob the Moor (1925-1992) (Mckinney xiv), and authors of later generations who were influenced by this style, such as Jacques Tardi (1946-), and even Joost Swarte (1947-) himself. Tardi is known for his interest in political and war stories, and Swarte dominated Dutch underground comix in the 1970s (Booker 840). For those who integrated the clear line the priority was that comics or I should say albums of *bande dessinée (*BB), as they prefer to name them (Mckinney xiii), are easily readable and descriptive and that the reading experience is fluid and undisturbed; as a consequence, the panels are commonly organized in a simple left to the right direction, in a conservative configuration, without elements moving from one panel to another that breaks the gutter and without big changes of perspective in the same strip.

In the late sixties in the United States, a comic style that differs greatly from the described European *ligne claire* emerged as part of the countercultural movement that had developed in this country and the United Kingdom. These new comics are comix or underground comics. The anti-establishment movement of the 1960s was an aggregate social and cultural reaction that manifested

itself in many ways: feminism, freedom of speech, political and social revolution, drug and sexual liberation, an anti-war movement in reference to the Vietnam War, etc. In the arts, the reaction included discussing all these themes and social claims and creating art forms that rejected the canon and the status quo, one of them being the anti-art, and developing alternative ways of dissemination and distribution avoiding the mainstream publishers. Comix artists actively participated in this social movement publishing in some underground magazines and discussing those demands; but in addition, comic artists had their very own causes to fight against, as Duncan, Smith, and Levitz point out "the content and even the style of the artwork were a conscious rebellion against the Comics Code restrictions, editorial policies and genre formulas of traditional comic books" (52).

Knowing that sex and violence were the focus of the Comics Code Authority bans, and knowing as well that the main purpose of the underground movement was to be provocative, it is not surprising that these themes were a big part of the focus of the comix pages. The underground comic is distinguished by its rebellious aesthetics and its provocative content and language about sexuality, race, religion, brutality, sadism, drug use, and other topics that are aimed to defy the moralizing narrative of the American society of the time (Brook 837). As a distinguishing mark, these new cartoons were called comix, representing the 'x' the prohibited content that they included. In an America where sex was strictly confined to the realm of the intimate, the drawings of Robert Crumb, the most important figure of the comix, aroused great rejection from a sector of society, but also great admiration from part of society that was critical of that puritanism. In the comix, sexuality was expressed in terms of pleasure, violence was presented as impulsive, and their work was the product of trying to respond to what had been banned (Duncan, Smith, and Levitz 47). Crumb manages to trigger a big social scandal with the publication of his underground

fanzine Zap which with sexual images and incest perverts the idea of the American middle-class

family, which at the time was the highest representative of the American dream. Even though this

was not the first underground comic, it soon became a reference for other underground

publications. Spain Rodríguez (1940-2012) was the other main figure of comix. He was acclaimed

because of his political and social commitment to the grassroots[32]. He and Crumb founded the

United Cartoon Workers of America which had the objective to protect the rights of the workers

of the industry (Brook 838). His most famous work was Trashman, a superhero that used his

superpowers to defend proletariats against capitalism and the oppression of fascism. The changes

that came with the underground comic with regards to content and dissemination, and also newly

acquired rights of comic artists became an important turning point that marked what the industry

is nowadays.

After a few years, in the early 1970s, the underground comics moved slowly towards

mainstream comics and started publishing in regular distribution systems, and some of the artists

started working with publishing houses such as Marvel. Underground artists made the move from

provocatively reacting to the authorities, with the gore and sexual content implicit to this purpose,

to reacting to the status quo in a more denouncing and socially critical tone. One of the

consequences of this new turn of the comic industry was the first black superheroes, Black Panther,

who appeared for the first time as a guest character in *The Fantastic Four* #52, in 1966; and Falcon,

who in 1969 joined the team of the *Avengers*. As Jeffrey A. Brown explains, on the subject of the

Black Panther "at the very least the character's name was a hip reference to the struggles of black

American culture" (19), and concerning the unequal relationship between Falcon and Captain

---

[32] Grassroots movements are the ones that are constructed from bottom to top, starting at the local level.

America, Brown continues "was seen by some as an unintended metaphor for the black experience in white America" (20).

Comix were very popular in Europe as well, mainly in England where part of the movement had originated, but also in the Netherlands and other places in Europe. The already mentioned Joost Swarte is the best-known reference in the Netherlands, but the British comix was more prolific and some magazines practiced this genre. Some of the British references are the tabloid *Cyclops*, the underground paper *IT,* or *Cosmic Comics* (Brook 840).

The use of comics in the printing press in both America and Europe; its accessibility; its sometimes moralizing or, to the contrary, its sometimes sexualized and violent tone; its generally simple and reachable storylines; and an extremely popular welcoming made comics gain the reputation of a mass medium, a low cultural form that took on a simplistic purpose. Their legitimacy both in Europe and in the US has always been contested, and for many years, comics were perceived as a funny and childish medium, a disposable non-lasting product of low culture that did not deserve respect.

### 1.1.2.2. Legitimacy of the medium

In the last few years, after a long time of continuous struggle, comics have gained more recognition from a global perspective. However, academically the medium is still struggling to find its own space in the structure of cultural studies, as right now it falls in between the disciplines of literature, fine arts, and cultural analysis. It is important to consider the sociocultural placement of comics, as this will affect the production of the text, its dissemination, and the consequent interaction with it. Their cultural prominence is growing in a wider sense due to several interrelated factors: they attract the interest of scholars and other cultural gatekeepers, such as journalists,

cultural reviewers, and prize committees; the book industry is more favorable to them than in previous years, as they gain space in distribution points; they are being used as a medium of social and cultural analysis; they added a book-length format, what we know as a graphic novel; and lastly, they added more complex storylines and themes usually seen in high culture, such as biographies of canonical writers (Joyce, Kafka, García Lorca, Christie[33]), social issues such as LGBTIQ+ comics, historical comics, comic journalism, etc.; which implied their participation in cultural and social discussions.

Not so long ago comic books and academic research were two entities that were not considered compatible because this form of graphic art only aimed to entertain or was used as a medium for political propaganda, while the goal of academic research is to understand, explain, categorize, and discipline. Nowadays the boundaries between the two are fading out. Today there are numerous conferences on comics and other forms of what was traditionally considered as low culture, comics are objects of study in many university-level courses and the scholarly interest in the topic is gaining adepts to the point that the field is taking shape and an important community of scholars of the field has been building in the past few years. A milestone in this sense is the publishing of the work *Unflattening* (2015), Nick Sousanis's Phd dissertation in the form of comic, which Álvaro Pons sees as "uno de los pasos más importantes que ha dado el cómic para su normalización en el ámbito académico, pero también la demostración palpable y argumentada de sus posibilidades en la comunicación científica"[34] (Pons), demonstrating that the comic language is slowly breaking out the often rigid boundaries of the academic world. As a consequence of these

---

[33]A few examples that illustrate what was said above are David Zane Mairowitz and Robert Crumb's *Introducing Kafka* that they published in 1996, Alfonso Zapico's biography of *James Joyce James Joyce: Portrait of a Dubliner. A Graphic Biography*, from 2011; Anne Martinetti, Guillaume Lebeau, Alexandre Franc' s story of Agatha Christie Agatha: The Real Life of Agatha Christie, published in 2014 and Enrique Bonet's *La araña del olvido* from 2016.

[34] "one of the most important steps that the comic has taken for its normalization in the academic field, but also the palpable and argued demonstration of its possibilities in scientific communication" (Pons).

changes, and also because of them, comics have a more prominent space in the cultural arenas meant to distribute and promote cultural products, not only in bookstores and libraries but also in fairs and literary and fine arts contests and exhibitions in museums and art galleries. In this regard, a milestone in the history of comics was when in 1967 the Louvre museum hosted the first important exhibition on comics entitled "Bande dissinée et figuration narrative" because it was the first time comics were being observed as artistic representations.

A very important aspect that influenced this evolution towards a more prominent space in the cultural market was the tradition of collection of the serial comics and the strong fan movement that thrived in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. With the underground comix, the medium extended its audience to adults and started the fan tradition that was not only readers but also collectors. These fandom phenomena around comics led to specialty stores and fan conventions. The new readership that had been created is at the genesis of the later popularization of the graphic novel format, the term was coined by the very influential cartoonist Will Eisner in his graphic novel *A Contract with God (*1978*).* To respond to the newly acquired comic audience, in 1986 DC Comics released Alan Moore's *Watchmen* and Frank Miller's *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, two comics targeting an adult readership that were created to be read as a whole. At the same time, Spiegelman's work *Maus*, which was published from 1977 to 1991, was already being published by Pantheon Books. These works were, according to Stephen Weiner, pivotal in the evolution of comic books, as they encouraged other cartoonists to aim for better quality and an adult readership (*Faster than a speeding bullet* 10). With time, the graphic novel format consolidated its newly acquired recognition that came along with the respectability of the themes that these graphic novels are addressing. Therefore, this medium that had been struggling, and in a way still is, to change its

categorization as disposable art, has become a more permanent product that deserves more qualitative attention.

Even though comics often do not abide by what is traditionally considered serious culture, the approach that graphic novels take when they participate in social and cultural questioning is at the roots of the movement that the medium is taking to step out of the framework of low culture. The new topics, among which we count the representation of history, and approaches challenge the perception of comics as only ephemeral and juvenile art and also make them a medium for reflection and critique.

About comics as a means to remember the past, I would like to bring to light the importance of the medium as a symbolic form for hindsight recalling. Erll explains that the different symbolic forms of memory, such as photography, religion, literature, and historical research "display distinctive characteristics" (*Memory in culture* 149), which at the same time influence the approach and the message conveyed. The three main distinctive characteristics that are going to define the type of representation of memory displayed in comics are: the special hybrid language formed of visual and textual elements, the idea associated with the medium as a format for children and mostly fictional, and the slow and staged way of documenting the past that the drawing process implies. Unlike some other forms of accounting for the past, such as photography, which documents in an immediate way and we think of as accurate, comics require more time and include the interpretation of the event that the artist gives. This connects with the social conception they carry as non-accurate, non-truthful, and with that in mind not suitable for complex matters such as this one. But contrary to this idea, comic scholars and artists defend the value of the medium for this purpose. Hillary Chute, for example, argues that contemporary comics that give testimony of

the past are nonfiction and she suggests that "accuracy is not the opposite of creative invention" (*Disaster* 2).

A clear proof of Chute's statement can be Art Spiegelman's work *Maus*. In addition to being one of the first graphic novels of history, it was also a landmark in the contemporary history of comics as a form of documenting the past that catapulted the medium to the field of high culture thanks to the Pulitzer Prize[35]. *Maus* tells the story of Vladek, Art Spiegelman's father, during the Holocaust. It is a personal account of the event, in which the Jews are depicted as mice, the Nazis as cats, and non-Jewish Poles as pigs, and in which emotions and feelings are at the core of the story. This account of the Holocaust is of course about the past, but it is just as much about the consequences of that historical episode in the later life of the survivors and their descendants. Spiegelman discusses how he, as the son of two survivors, connects with the past of his parents and has to deal with the trauma of their experiences.

*Maus* had an enormous impact in the comic field and carried a 'traveling memory', using Erll's term, because due to its public repercussions, it also became a model for many other comics that represented the past. Its technique, approach, and form have been used as a reference for other subsequent works; but most importantly, it was the first work that managed to challenge the editorial taxonomy and cross the boundaries that had been set for comic works and the traditional boundaries of fiction and non-fiction. The Pulitzer Prize committee gave *Maus* a 'Special Award' in 1992 because the committee had difficulties categorizing Spiegelman's work due to the, for them, strange combination of the medium and the topic. For the first time, a work of this 'childish' medium had slipped through into a canonical and canonizing categorization and this opened the path for the rest. In addition, there is also a well-known anecdote about the inclusion of *Maus* in

---

[35] *Maus. A Survivor's tale* was the only graphic novel to be awarded a Pulitzer Prize.

the fiction list of *The New York Times Books Review*. Once Spiegelman found out about this classification, he sent a letter to the editor to request his work to be changed to the non-fiction category. In his letter, which Thomas Doherty partly reproduces, Spiegelman complains about the categorization, claiming that he wished his father's story was fictitious: "If your list were divided into literature and non-literature, I could gracefully accept the compliment as intended, but to the extent that 'fiction' means a work is not factual, I feel a bit queasy" (69). As a consequence of this letter, the editors of *The Times* moved the book from fiction to non-fiction, which was another achievement in the history of this medium, as *Maus* challenged the idea of comics as fictitious and inaccurate, as less real than other forms of representation as photography or literature; and also suggested that imagination, in this case, in the form of animals, is not at odds with historical knowledge.

The comic book has come a long way since then, and the number of comics that approach the past from a personal perspective has multiplied exponentially in the global market. There are several well-known examples of comics that represent reality, especially warfare conflicts. They represent explicit violence, which if looking back at the history of comics, contrasts with one of the principles of the old Code of Conduct that prohibited the representation of bloody and violent scenes. Some of the works that are worth mentioning are Joe Sacco´s graphic novels, *Palestine (*1993 and 1996) and *Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-1995 (*2000). These two works are two of the most popular graphic novels on the topic. In them, Sacco shows the Palestinian and Bosnian conflict from his point of view, relating his experiences and denouncing the situation of those who live in these two places. Sacco does what was categorized as graphic journalism or slow journalism[36], referring to the time it takes to draw each panel.

---

[36] Jorge Carrión and Sagar Fornier created *Barcelona. Los vagabundos de la chatarra* (2015), an example of slow journalism in the national market.

Other examples that explore the same line as Sacco's are Guy Delisle's works *Pyongyang (*2005)*, Shenzhen (*2006)*, Burma Chronicles (*2008)*, and *Jerusalem (*2012). In them, Delisle provides the perspective of an outsider on his trips to North Korea, China, Burma, and Israel. Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis (*2007) portrays the remembrance of her childhood, evoking the Islamic revolution, and presenting a very personal depiction of daily life during this political conflict. Another remarkable work is Kate Evans's work published in 2017 *Threads: From the Refugee Crisis*, where she reflects on the migration and refugee crisis in Europe. To name a few.

Yet, comics as a form of representing warfare and political conflicts go beyond *Maus, Persepolis,* and *Jerusalem*. Contemporary comics on war belong to a long tradition of visual depiction of history. Jacques Callot's *Les Misères et les Malheurs de la Guerre* and Francisco Goya's *Los desastres de la guerra* are two referential works from the past recognized as representative for the portraying and condemnation of bellicose acts. *Les Misères de la Guerre,* as it is commonly known, was published in 1633 and it is composed of eighteen etchings where the author makes a statement against the atrocities that took place during the Thirty years' war. Callot was one of the main artistic influences of Francisco Goya in his work *Los desastres de la guerra.* In this series of eighty-two etchings, Goya represents scenes of the Spanish War of Independence against the French forces of Napoleon. In his depiction Goya pays special attention to the details and the consequences of the conflict, focusing on the aftermath of the war. Hillary Chute discusses that Callot's and Goya's testimonies of the wars resemble the personal accounts present today in comic books. The elements that connect these works to comics as the general audience understands them today are "defining features as its seriality, its creation, and circulation as a printed object, its word-and-image form, and its combination of spectacle and intimacy" (43).

### 1.1.2.3. Format and terminology: Comic, *historieta*, *tebeos*, graphic novels, comic strips, comic books

To say that the format of any artistic work determines many decisions the author makes is probably an obvious statement, but relevant to this discourse. To start with, making a film, painting graffiti, or writing a book, for instance, implies a financial investment of very different scope in each of those cases, more or fewer people involved, more or less time needed, etc; and therefore, the revenue expected from the different formats will also differ greatly. The financial investment, then, affects the creation of the artistic work because what is produced must be sold, and as a consequence, it will also affect the content of that work. Profitability is not, nevertheless, the only external agent that affects artistic creation. Artists also take into consideration other factors, such as how the work they are creating will be disseminated, who their readership is going to be, how much space they have for relaying their message, etc., and all this will also affect some of their narratological decisions.

When referring solely to comics, there is a big difference between publishing a comic in a standard European album of forty-eight pages, a pocket format, a Japanese manga periodical, or a graphic novel. This difference concerns the readership and the already discussed legitimization, but it is also related to material aspects, namely the number of pages, the size and shape of the page, the type of paper, and to other particulars such as the liberty of the author in its creation, the reception of the work, etc. Pascal Lefèvre notes in this regard that this determines stylistic decision as well as the content of the work (92). Unlike in other formats, the authors of graphic novels have more creative room to make decisions in terms of typology, the shape of the page, number of panels, color, size of the lines, etc, and in addition, they know they are creating a work that is meant to remain, and not to be tossed away once it has been read. All this gives authors more room

to create a self-contained work that can focus more on the story they want to tell, which explains the relevance of the format chosen to be explored in a research such as this one that focuses on the narrative of the war and the contribution of the medium to the memory discussion.

In the study of the graphic novel as a format, we can differentiate two perspectives: the culturalist and the engraver, in the terminology offered by Daniel Gómez and Josep Rom. The first perspective would think of the graphic novel as a cultural manifestation because a format aims to find legitimation of the medium, distancing itself from the traditional comic. It associates the graphic novel format with the idea of an adult cultural artifact. On the contrary, the second perspective conceives the graphic novel as a format that is integrated with the comic tradition, and not only does not want to move away from it but conversely, embraces the tradition it belongs to and highlights the liberty that the format provides in contrast to traditional novels (36, 37). I abide by the second tradition, that is why in my analysis I look at graphic novels framed within the comic tradition. Graphic novels then, are comics that contain a storyline with a length and complexity that allows us to compare them with traditional novels.

As for the other formats, the 'comic strip' refers to a short sequence of panels that tell a story, typically with a humorous intention, and are published in a magazine, newspaper, or online. Comic books or comic magazines are periodicals that contain the same story or related stories, and that the general audience generally relates to superheroes. A single-panel cartoon is a one-frame story, which is also often published in magazines and newspapers, or disseminated online. And lastly, the term *'historieta',* which I have been using, is the Spanish term for comics, and it is a general term that contains all the formats. *'Historieta'* must be differentiated from the term *'tebeo'* which is generally used to refer to comics that are published targeting a young audience.

### 1.1.2.4. Comics, memory, and the personal perspective

The tradition of life-writing is ancient; it refers to the narration of personal stories, both of one's own or someone else's. Biographical stories were widely used in religion, for instance, as a didactic tool. Also during the 19th century, in the Victorian era, it was a very popular genre for the encumbering of great men. In the last decades of the 20th century, with postmodernism, the tradition of life stories takes a turn and receives great attention from theorists and artists. The range of possible forms in which life-writing can be presented is wide and inclusive of different genres and mediums. Under this umbrella we include autobiographical fiction, auto-fiction, testimony, the use of an alter ego character, personal letters, memoirs, a diary, or an autobiographical novel that recalls the life of the narrating I. Among these forms of life-writing, the limits are not always easy to determine, sometimes the boundaries are even blurred intentionally and imagination intertwines with the real story in different ways, and at different levels.

Regardless of how close to reality the stories are, life-writing narrations evoke, in the mind of the reader, a trustful narration. The theorist Philippe Lejeune, in his essay *The Autobiographical Pact* explains that the basic feature of the writing of one's own life is that the narrator and the main character are assumed to be the same entity and that is why it uses an autodiegetic voice, using Gerard Genette's terms (5). According to the idea of the autobiographical pact described by Lejeune, there is a tacit agreement between the reader and the author that says that the text refers to a true external experience so that it can be verified. Through the identification of some elements (pronouns, the shared identity between the narrator, author and character, temporary linearity, etc.) the reader makes connections between the textual and the extra-textual. Since the autobiographical pact described by Lejeune referred only to texts that were told in retrospective and prose, and that would therefore not take into account other textual forms such as diaries or poetry, Lejeune

extended this idea in later works with the concepts of 'referential pact' and 'truthful pact'. These also refer to the common understanding that the textual elements allude to the real life of the author and encompassed those other forms of life-writing that he didn't consider in the beginning. This is to say that the reader approaches an autobiography with a trustful attitude, but not in a naive way. In this sense Max Saunders in his essay *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern,* extensively explains that the postmodern way of reading and creating life-writing already accounts for certain doses of imagination within the reality that is portrayed.

In light of the fact that representation of the past in comics has been questioned, the 'truthful pact' is especially important in the study of comics, and in this particular study. The relationship between comics and the representation of reality deals with the personal perspective, the subjectivity; and with the tension that exists between comics as an industrial product and other art forms that are traditionally considered as high culture. The effort to diminish that tension underlies many aspects of how comics depict memory, for instance, how they link the subjective approach to reconstructing the past. The use of an autodiegetic and reliable voice telling the story and the use of emotions as a language that naturally connects with the readership is also one of the elements that legitimates the historical events represented and, as a consequence, the testimonial approach also favors the increasing recognition of comics as a medium for critical thinking.

Michael Chaney identifies life-writing as the "signature genre of contemporary comics: the confessional autobiography" (227). The predecessors of today's self-reflecting comics are found in the underground comix, which meant an inflection point in this sense as well. One of the first cartoonists who used comics as a medium for self-reflection was Greg Irons, who created Gregor the purple-assed baboon, an alter ego character that allowed him to examine his life with the distance that the animal representation provides. Robert Crumb also created numerous

autobiographical and confessional comic strips, but, as Chaney points out, the artist that many authors of that time identify as the real turning point or the ground zero of autobiographical comics was Justin Green with his work *Binky Brown Meets the Holy Virgin Mary (*1972) (227). These works portray and reflect on the struggles of the authors with their thoughts, their childhood, their adult worries, their relationship with religion, their families, drugs, their sexuality, etc.; once again, breaking the boundaries of what comics were supposed to be.

The personal approach in comics initiated by the underground comix evolved towards works of great analytical depth such as Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic (*2006); Juliet Doucet's *Dirty Plotte (*1988-1998), *My New York Diary* (1999) or *365 Days: A Diary by Julie Doucet* (2007); Chester Brown's account of his youth in *I never liked you (*1994), or Will Eisner's collection of autobiographical stories *Life, in Pictures: Autobiographical Stories* (2007). The graphic memoir has been widely explored by artists and it has had a very good reception from readers. It was very well received in France in the decade of 1990s, where the already established strong comic tradition was the perfect scenario for the development of the *Nouvelle Bande Desinée*, which focused on comics for an adult audience (Arroyo 109, 110). Because of its popularity, it is not surprising that the testimonial approach was also very widely used in the remembrance of the past, as it happens in the already mentioned works of Art Spiegelman, Joe Sacco, Guy Delisle, or Marjane Satrapi.

The phenomenon of the representation of personal experiences in contemporary comics, including the testimony of historical events, was studied extensively. Elisabeth El Refaie mentions that comic scholars experimented with labels when talking about life-writing in comics, using terms such as 'autobiographic' and 'graphic memoir'. She also refers to Gillian Whitlock's term 'autographics' and David Herman's 'graphic life writing' (5). There is recent and exhaustive

literature on the topic dedicated to this sub-genre (Baetens, Chaney, De la Fuente Soler, El Rafaie, Redondo, Gibson, Chute, or the special issue of *Studies in Comics*). The three main aspects this literature generally focuses on are:

1. The connection between the textual and the extra-textual, which is related to the implied promise that the text refers to someone's real experiences. When this alludes to comics that represent the past, it also brings to the fore the truthfulness of the historical representations.

2. The focus on unheroic or common experiences—the humanization of the protagonists—and the consequent attention to family relations and personal feelings.

3. The special representative possibilities and challenges that the comic language offers in the portrayal of the identity of the self, as well as the representation of a collective identity through the personal account.

As happens with 'autobiography', the term 'graphic memories' or 'graphic life writing' raises the problem of determining the limits between fiction and reality as well as the problem of what can be included under this categorical term. But again, the space of the comic medium in the cultural scene complicates the conversation. The social conception of a medium that hovers between the margin and cultural legitimation also influences the approach that comics take toward the representation of personal experiences. The influence is double and contradictory. On the one hand, it creates the space for the authors to deliberately play with the confusion between reality and imagination, it invites the use of subversive humor and the inclusion of controversial matters; on the other hand, many contemporary graphic memories also tend to fight against that preconception creating a sense of authenticity. The lack of clarity about the boundaries between the real and the non-real allows artists to disguise behind that confusion and openly discuss

personal feelings and taboo-breaking matters, and from that space, they aim to get some emotional or intellectual response from the readership.

Nowadays we accept that reality is subjective and relative, and hence we accept the role of imagination in the representation of personal experiences, past or present. When referring to memories we account, even more so, for the role of imagination is to complete the information of what we do not remember. Marianne Hirsch, for example, stresses the importance of imagination when the memories are being narrated by post-generations, as a necessary element that helps to fill the gaps that second and third generations naturally have, as they have not experienced the events they narrate. Since one of the main sources for the construction of collective imagery of a certain event is personal accounts, the imagined elements that are part of that account, are then also fundamental in the shaping of that common story. Hillary Chute, Jan Baetens, and Mel Gibson discussed the fictional and non-fictional elements and the levels of abstraction in the historical representation in comics. Pertaining on this issue, Chute defends in her work that historical comics aim to represent reality and have become a legitimate framework for historical representation and a valid medium for discussion.

## 1.2. Memory and comics in the Spanish context

The exploration of the past through comics or through any other artistic form responds to the need to find information that can help us make sense of the present as well. The events that happened during the Civil War and its aftermath captivate many individuals from different sectors of today's society. Politicians, scholars, the mass media and artists of different disciplines reflect on the past and intervene in this social colloquy of enormous complexity. The Spanish memory

occipies, in fact, thousands of scholarly articles and books, artworks and hours of debates in public media[37].

It is not the focus of this work to explain comprehensively the intricacies of this very extensive deliberation. However, in order to be able to examine the narration of the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath in contemporary comic books it is imperative to contextualize the phenomenon domestically, and take into account the academic work on the Spanish conflict and the local comic tradition and local comic studies. Even though this research work falls under the umbrella of the interdisciplinary and global movement of memory studies, only knowing the local nuances and studies would allow us to comprehend the narrative they display.

## 1.2.1. Memory in Spain: three narratives.

As mentioned before, it is agreed that memory is a social construct through which one group builds an image of an event (or events) from the past; and as a consequence, memory connects past moments with the present reality of that social group which is remembrance. When constructing the contemporary narrative of the Spanish Civil War, we can look back at the end of the nineteenth century as its historical backdrop: the first Republic (February 1873-December 1874), the end of the Spanish colonial era with the Spanish-US war in 1898, as well as to the Second Republic (1931-1939). However, in this essay, I am going to focus on three key historical moments to explain the war and its consequences and the current narrative about it. The three historical moments are: the Civil War and its aftermath, the Transition, and the years of the boom of memory that started around the change of the millennium.

---

[37] In 2007 Juan Andrés Blanco Rodríguez states that at the time it was estimated that the historiography on the Spanish Civil War counted an estimated figure of 40000, more recently in a google search made on August 2018 with the entry "memoria historia España" for instance, bounces back more than 1.6 million results, the same search in google scholar around 600.000 results, and "memoria histórica España noticias" more than 18 million.

Bearing this in mind, I will provide here some brief information about these three moments, that I reckon will be useful for the comprehension of the contemporary memory conversation in Spain and also for the interpretation of the graphic novels to be analyzed. First, I will focus on the Spanish Civil War and the subsequent years, what triggered the warfare and what the immediate consequences were for those who lost the contingency. Secondly, I will expose some basic information about the years of the Transition and a brief note on the scholarly discussion about that time. And lastly, I will explore the most recent moment, the contemporary politics of memory, and the role of the arts and the culture in this process of remembrance, what was coined as the 'boom of memory'.

### 1.2.1.1. The Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975)

Stanley Weintraub titles his book on the conflict we are studying *The last great cause. The intellectuals and the Spanish Civil War*. Such romanticized epithet used by Weintraub is somehow representative of the aura that this conflict carried because of the very strong ideological component and the great international attention that it received. The two opposing sides of the Spanish Civil War were the Republican faction[38]—composed of trade unions, rural workers, Socialists, Communists, and Anarchists—; and the Nationalist faction—composed of landowners, middle and high classes, the Catholic Church, and part of the army (Graham 2). The complexity of the fight laid in the fact that it involved many aspects: the defense of the mass political democracy by the Republican faction, heir of the social current set by World War I and the Russian Revolution, against the former totalitarianism; their fight for social welfare and a secularization

---

[38] Also known as the Loyalist faction.

reform; it was also a class dispute; a conflict between cosmopolitanism and rural tradition; center versus periphery; new versus old; youth versus age, and it was as well a conflict between those who defended fascism and a monarchic state against those with more liberal ideologies that defended the Republican state. The ideological component was very strong, and despite the mentioned complexity, the confrontation was built on the idea of a clear separation between the two fronts based on a stereotypical image of one another (Núñez Seixas 11). Among the international community, there was a non-intervention agreement signed by many countries, except for a few that got involved in different ways. On the one hand, Germany and Italy provided financial and military support—with soldiers and armament—to the Nationalist faction; on the other hand, the USSR similarly assisted the Republican faction, and Mexico gave shelter to many refugees after the military contention. In addition, and even though the conflict was mainly domestic, it did have some international resonance that resulted in the formation of the International Brigades, a Communist paramilitary unit with soldiers from different origins that fought on the side of the Republicans.

The conflict starts on the 17th of July 1936 and ends on the 1st of April 1939. When the war broke out, the governmental regime in place was a democratic Republic led by a coalition of the left parties called *Frente Popular* that had won the elections of 1936. After a few months of violent actions throughout Spain, including a series of murders, a military coup d'état set off the beginning of the war. Early in the year, soon after the elections, Andrés Saenz de Heredia, an important member of the Falangist party, was assassinated. In response to that, on July 12th, four gunmen from the same party shot José del Castillo, a socialist police lieutenant. In retaliation, José Calvo Sotelo, the leader of the monarchist party, was killed. This last event triggered the military uprising that started the war. Francisco Franco Bahamonde, who later on became the dictator who

ruled Spain until he died in 1975, was one of the generals leading this military seizure of power. After almost three years of war, the Nationalist faction proclaimed their triumph, which marked the beginning of Francoism under a dictatorial government (1939-1975).

The new regime was set to construct a state, a new narrative, in which Republicans did not have a space. The state of war that had been decreed in 1936 was not lifted until 1948, which resulted in hundreds of thousands of people prosecuted and taken to prisons, reformatories, and concentration camps during the decade of 1940s. Of those, "tens of thousands were executed—judicially murdered after summary military trials" (Graham, 129). As part of the new narrative, the state's objective was to eliminate any vestige of the culture and modernization that had been building in Spain before the Civil War. The new state wanted to create a rebellious image for those who defended the legally established government of the Second Republic; and abolish secularism, anarchism, communism, freemasonry, socialism, separatism, and republicanism from that Spain they wanted to build. As a consequence, any activity linked to those ideologies, theories, or organizations was prosecuted during and after the war. In this regard, Santos Juliá says when explaining the nature of the Franco's new state: "Franco afirmó su voluntad de borrar de la historia de España todo el siglo XIX y la invasión del liberalismo extranjero que había conducido a la degeneración del ser español"[39] (155), and continues "su léxico es revelador: erradicar, depurar, purgar, expurgar, liquidar, borrar, quemar, arrancar, destruir, abominar, arrumbar, suprimir[40]" (156). A big part of today's fictional narrative about the war focuses on retrieving the stories and the voices of the Republican side that Franco's regime tried to eradicate, purify, purge, etc. with

---

[39] 'Franco declared his desire to erase from the history of Spain the whole nineteenth century and the invasion of foreign liberalism that had led to the degeneration of the Spanish individual' (155).

[40] 'its lexicon is revealing: eradicate, purify, purge, expurgate, liquidate, erase, burn, tear, destroy, abominate, tear down, suppress' (156).

the main objective of trying to understand what happened in the years after the war. In fact, the murders, the imprisonment, the prosecutions, and the experiences in exile are recurrent themes in the contemporary narrative of the conflict. In addition, when studying the historiography of the war today, the exile gained importance because the narrative of the Republican faction was for many years confined to those who had been expatriated. Their voices and history were kept alive by this community from abroad. Blanco Rodríguez explains that their narrative was not homogeneous, in fact, it responded to the ideological differences that already existed in the Republican faction during the warfare conflict, and it often aimed to set responsibilities in a recriminatory tone that aimed to explain the defeat (747).

In the immediate years after the war, Spain saw masses of people linked to the Republican faction fleeing the Spanish territory trying to find humanitarian and political protection in mainly the USSR, Northern Africa, Mexico, and France. The *Comité Internacional de Coordinación e Información para la ayuda de la España Republicana* (CICIAER[41]) was the organization that during the postwar period worked on improving the life conditions of all of those Republicans in exile, but their fate would be very different depending on their circumstances and the social conditions of the different destinations. Most of those who crossed the border to France, or went from North Africa to France, were interned in refugee camps in different points of the country. The big number of refugees became a problem for the French government which at the time was immersed at the beginning of the Second World War. The sanitary and humanitarian conditions of the overcrowded refugee camps were very precarious and the fate of the refugees was of different nature. The figures reported by Graham say that 70,000 refugees chose voluntary repatriation,

---

[41] CICIAER was the organization that was created by the Republican government at the beginning of the armed conflict to coordinate from abroad the international aid to the Republican faction during the war.

approximately 60,000 preferred to enroll in the French army to fight in the Second World War, many ended up in German concentration camps, many worked for local farmers or industry, and some escaped from the camps, in some cases to end up joining the clandestine resistance (117). Other destinations where many were transferred to were Chile, Dominican Republic and Mexico, where these communities received international aid through the organizations SERE (Service of Emigration of Spanish Republicans) and JARE (Junta de Auxilio a los Republicanos Españoles[42]). Jorge de Hoyos Puente reports that around twenty-thousand Republicans were transferred to Mexico in the years of the postwar period. In the imagery of exile, the migration to these American countries was linked to the idea of hope, as it was the way out of a Europe immersed in warfare. The Republican exiles in Mexico managed to build an image of themselves as a cohesive group of intellectuals who were committed to the Second Republic, which De Hoyos Puente points out was far from reflecting reality as they dealt with many internal conflicts. They shared, nevertheless, the loss of their families, and their land, and many carried on with the fight overseas, the war becoming a big part of the narrative of the exile and their identity. For those who stayed in Europe, both in France and in Russia, and also for those in Northern Africa, the connection with the Second World War was crucial, as many soldiers ended up fighting for the Allied bloc and they felt that it was a continuation of their local fight. In their minds, the goal of removing fascism from Europe would only be achieved when fascism—Franco's forces—were also removed from Spanish territory.

Due to the weak state in which Spain was at the time after the Civil war, the newly formed regime did not play a part in the Second World War. The new Spanish government accepted, nevertheless, to send a military division of volunteers called the Blue Division to support the Axis power. Once World War II ended, the Spanish dictatorial government was internationally

---

[42] Board of Aid to the Spanish Republicans.

ostracized, and therefore Spain was culturally, financially, and politically isolated under the regime of Franco. In 1945, for instance, during the Potsdam conference, the Francoist regime was publicly rejected by the participants of the conference—the heads of government of the United States, the United Kingdom, and the USSR. Two decades after the war, in the 1960s and 1970s, the Francoist regime started to open up economically and socially. On the 15th of December 1955 Spain was accepted as a member of the United Nations, and in 1959 the government put in place the Stabilization plan that included some political and financial measures that aimed to liberalize the economy and the Spanish market. This had positive consequences as it greatly improved the economy of the country, and the society resumed the modernization that had started before 1936. In the 1960s, the opposition, an anti-system movement, gets activated, mainly among common laborers and university students, with clandestine workers' organizations and political parties, but according to Santos Juliá their approach was focused on what had to be done after Franco and not so much against him ( 213).

In 1969 Franco officially designated Prince Juan Carlos as the heir to the throne. Politically, Franco named Luis Carrero Blanco as Prime Minister in 1973. Carrero Blanco was assassinated in the same year, and Carlos Arias Navarro was then designated as Prime Minister. On the 20th of November 1975, Franco died, and two days later, Juan Carlos de Borbón was crowned king and successor of Franco as the Head of State.

### 1.2.1.2. The Transition and the politics of memory

After Franco's death, the new times that the Spanish society had been preparing for began. The Head of State introduced some reforms that meant the influx of many changes in the political and social status of Spain. This is the onset of the political transition into democracy. In 1978, via

referendum, the Spanish Constitution was approved and with it, the parliamentary monarchy was established. A year earlier, an important milestone of the Transition had been reached: the approval of the Amnesty Law of 1977 (LRJSP 46/1977, October 15th). With this law, political prisoners were granted amnesty for their crimes, including rebellion and sedition committed before that date. At the time this was a big step in the consolidation of democracy, as thanks to it, all political prisoners of the dictatorship were released, which was one of the main demands of the left-wing bloc. Nevertheless, that pact of amnesty also brought forgiveness for the members of the Tribunal de Orden Público, the TOP, and the security forces that were involved in the execution of such court procedures. The TOP was the entity responsible for dealing with political crimes under Francoist rule and it condemned many people for being involved with the Republicans in any form, both during the war and subsequently during the dictatorship, for reasons such as being members of illegal political parties or possession of illicit propaganda. Today the Amnesty law has many critics, as it impedes the judgment of the crimes committed by the Francoist authorities in the postwar and during their years in power against those who suffered the repressive measures of the dictatorship.

When talking about memories of the war during the Spanish Transition and up until today, the concept of forgetfulness is especially relevant because it is the main focus of the social and political debate on the matter. This issue generates two opposing views. On the one hand, there is a sector of society and politics that argues that during the Transition the memories of the defeated were condemned to oblivion. This sector contends that during the first years of democracy there was a 'pact of silence' concerning the war and the dictatorship. They demand more measures that aim to remember and compensate the victims, as there has not even been, for instance, an act of public contrition by the state. On the other hand, there is another sector that argues that the

proceedings for reconciliation during the Transition and in the years after were enough. They both believe that the demands of the other group are only painful and harmful for a peaceful democracy and that this discussion would awaken the old phantom of the two Spains (Núñez Seixas 17).

The segment that defends the existence of a 'pact of silence' or a 'pact of forgetfulness'—terms that have been widely echoed in the public media—argues that during the Transition the political elites had a sort of tacit agreement to not discuss the war and the dictatorship publicly. According to this theory, in order to benefit from a calm and successful transitional process, politicians would not use the injustices of the dictatorship for political means. Francisco Espinosa Maestre is one of the main proponents that defend the existence of such a pact, but he was not the first one to use the term. Espinosa explains that the first time the phrase 'pact of silence' was used to refer to how society dealt with the war and the dictatorship was during the Transition itself, in 1980, in the newspaper *El País*[43] (339). In it, the journalist José Vidal-Beneyto establishes a connection between the 'pact of silence' and the political left-wing in Spain. Years later, though, Espinosa looks at it from a broader perspective. According to Espinosa, after a long period of denying memory—the dictatorship—there was another period, from 1977 to 1982, in the height of the Transition, in which the 'politics of forgetting' prevailed. The common objective was to

---

[43] "Todos sabemos que la democracia que nos gobierna ha sido edificada sobre la losa que sepulta nuestra memoria colectiva. Esta realidad fundante tiene dos lecturas. La primera, a mi juicio la más endeble, apunta a la discontinuidad de los partidos de la izquierda en relación con su pasado inmediato, . . . La segunda lectura se refiere al pacto de silencio histórico suscrito por las fuerzas de la izquierda con los protagonistas del 15 de junio de 1977, como precio de su entrada en el club de la reforma, de su legalización política y de su legitimación social en la nueva democracia" (Espinosa Maestre "De saturaciones y olvidos" 339).
'We all know that the democracy that governs us has been built on the slab that buries our collective memory. This founding reality has two readings. The first, in my opinion, the weakest one, points to the discontinuity of the parties of the left about their immediate past, . . . The second reading refers to the pact of silence regarding history signed by the forces of the left with the protagonists of June 15th, 1977, as the price to pay for their entry into the club for reformation, their political legalization, and their social legitimacy in the new democracy (Espinosa Maestre "De saturaciones y olvidos" 339).

move forward. During this period, on the 23rd of February 1981, there was a coup d'état attempt
that lasted only 18 hours and that was not supported by the Head of the State, the king. The officers
participating surrendered after the sovereign denounced the coup and called for the democratic
government to continue. Moreover, Espinosa also distinguishes a later period of 'suspension of
memory', from 1982 to 1996, in which he sees an institutionalized version of memory denial. The
period of memory recovery only started after 1996, with more politics that aimed to remember and
compensate the victims of the dictatorship, and with a consequent reflection in the cultural arena
called the 'boom of memory' (*Contra el olvido* 175).

The year 1996 is not only identified by Espinosa as the moment of the turning point in the
memorialization process in Spain. Pedro Ruiz also considers it a moment of change in politics, but
he conveys that this change does not reach the public sphere yet. Ruiz discusses the importance of
this year because of the publication of the first major research work on the memory of the Civil
War, Paloma Aguilar Fernandez's *Memoria y olvido de la Guerra Civil española* ("Los discursos
de la memoria" 42). Aguilar talks about the tacit agreement among the political and cultural elites
to suppress the past, which she explains was because the trauma of the war was very latent in the
process of Transition.

> A lo largo de la transición española tuvo lugar un pacto tácito entre las élites más visibles
> para silenciar las voces amargas del pasado que tanta inquietud suscitaban entre la
> población. Parte de ésta parecía temer la inminente resurrección de los viejos rencores de
> la guerra que, tal vez, no estuvieran tan apagados como pretendían hacer creer tanto los
> dirigentes políticos como algunos medios de comunicación. Muy probablemente esto fue
> debido a que la sociedad española no había sido formal y explícitamente *reconciliada*. El

vencido había ido incorporándose a la vida del país lentamente, casi siempre en silencio[44] ("Memoria y olvido" 21, 22).

Aguilar explains that there is not 'pact of silence' *per se,* but instead the fear to repeat the war and open old wounds would prevail in the communication about the past during the Transition; and as a consequence, talking about forgetfulness would not be accurate, because the memories of the war and the aftermath were precisely what triggered the relative quietness and the way they looked at and talked about the past—the discourse of reconciliation. The historian Santos Juliá is one of the main voices that deny a 'pact of silence', and he explains the abundant preoccupation and interest in the war and in the dictatorship that happened in the years after 1996 as a renovation of the hegemonic narrative on the war, but not as a rupture of a forgetfulness, that in his view, did not really exist. Santos Juliá argues that the past was not absent in the course of the Transition; but like the others, he acknowledges an unspoken agreement to not use the past politically, an agreement that is only possible because there is a change of generation, as it takes place among the children of those who fought in the war and not the protagonists themselves.

The politics of memory during the Transition delayed the political and social compensation to the defeated in the war and the victims of the Francoist regime. Therefore, for those who support this second theory, the historical memory movement in Spain that started at the end of the 20th century responds to a social need to compensate and acknowledge the rights of the defeated in the war and who suffered under the dictatorship, and that the Transition failed to

---

[44] Throughout the Spanish Transition there was a tacit agreement between the most visible elites to silence the bitter voices of the past that caused so much concern among the population. Part of it seemed to fear the imminent resurrection of the old grudges of war that, perhaps, were not as muted as both political leaders and some media would have us believe. This was probably due to the fact that Spanish society had not been formally and explicitly reconciled. The defeat had been incorporated into the life of the country slowly, almost always in silence ("Memoria y olvido" 21, 22).

indemnify. In addition, this movement is connected to a bigger international movement of moral and juridical reparation of the victims of recent historical events, such as the Holocaust; and in Spain it also responds to a second change of generation. The grandchildren of the war aim for the reparation of their grandparents, which is an indicator of a society that does not need to blindly look forward anymore. On the contrary, Aguilar points out that society wants to look back at the past, and that way, try to understand the repercussions of the trauma of the defeated in the war, whose voices had not been heard up until then ("Los debates memoria" 69).

The common objective of political and social stability also affected the cultural scene that, for many, adopted the same discourse of reconciliation of Spanish politics, but also broke from it with the memory movement of the change of millennium. The end of the century comes with a change of generation in what concerns the Spanish memory issue and with a need to look back to assess what the last hundred years had left behind. As a consequence, in the years that followed, society tried to find in the past the answers about the present and an incipient questioning of the transitional narrative of the war and the dictatorship started. One of these critical voices is Guillem Martínez, who discusses the concept of 'Culture of Transition'[45], maintaining that during that time, the Spanish left-wing cultural voices gave up on culture as a critical tool to favor the *status quo* and political stability. Consequently, he argues, the Spanish cultural scene was only virtually free and inclusive of all opinions, because two simplified main visions (the right-leaning ideologies and the left-leaning ideologies) dominated that space. Both of these visions, in his view, functioned, in reality, as a support to the established government. In *CP o La cultura de la transición. Crítica a 35 años de Cultura Española* (2012)*,* edited by Martínez, many of the

---

[45] Also discussed by other authors such as Daniel Martínez Lamas.

participant authors see the 15-M movement[46] as the end of that culture of Transition that opens the doors to other voices that up till then had been left aside.

The social movement of memory that came more or less with the change of century was politically and socially committed and non-neutral; and among its ambitions was revising the facts, images, and narratives of the war and the dictatorship, as well as amending the injustices that were perpetrated against the defeated. Asides from more public recognition of the victims, a milestone of this movement is the passage of law 52/2007 on October 31st of 2007 by the congress of deputies of the central government, at the time chaired by Jose Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. This law, popularly known as the Historical Memory Law, states in its first article that its objective is to recognize and broaden the rights of those who suffered violence and were imprisoned during the Civil War and the dictatorship for ideological reasons, as well as to facilitate the knowledge of what happened during that time, gathering, classifying and archiving the information and documentation on it[47].

---

[46] Spanish social and collective movement of emancipation that became evident on May 15th 2011. This movement, also called the *Indignados* (Outraged) movement, included several protests about the austerity measures of the government and defended a more inclusive political scenario.

[47] The law reads as follows: Artículo 1. *Objeto de la Ley.* 1. La presente Ley tiene por objeto reconocer y ampliar derechos a favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia, por razones políticas, ideológicas, o de creencia religiosa, durante la Guerra Civil y la Dictadura, promover su reparación moral y la recuperación de su memoria personal y familiar, y adoptar medidas complementarias destinadas a suprimir elementos de división entre los ciudadanos, todo ello con el fin de fomentar la cohesión y solidaridad entre las diversas generaciones de españoles en torno a los principios, valores y libertades constitucionales.

2. Mediante la presente Ley, como política pública, se pretende el fomento de los valores y principios democráticos, facilitando el conocimiento de los hechos y circunstancias acaecidos durante la Guerra civil y la Dictadura, y asegurando la preservación de los documentos relacionados con ese período histórico y depositados en archivos públicos.

Article 1. *Object of the Law.* 1. This Law is intended to recognize and extend rights in favor of those who suffered persecution or violence, for political, ideological, or religious reasons, during the Civil War and the Dictatorship, to promote their moral reparation and the recovery of their personal and family memory, and adopt complementary measures aimed at suppressing elements of division among citizens, all to promote cohesion and solidarity among the various generations of Spaniards around the principles, values and constitutional liberty. 2. Through this Law, as a public policy, the promotion of democratic values and principles is sought, facilitating knowledge of the facts and circumstances that occurred during the Civil War and the Dictatorship, and ensuring the preservation of documents related to that historical period and deposited in public archives (art.1. LRJSP 52/2007, October 31st).

Even though in consequent articles the law states specific amounts and compensation for the victims of the war and the dictatorship and their families, and it also establishes the intention of finding the corpses of those who disappeared; consequent governments have mainly put the law aside and the efforts to implement its objectives have been insufficient. Consequently, Spain being the country with the most mass graves after Cambodia, the exhumation of these communal tombs has been done by private entities such as the *Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica* or the *Foro de la Memoria* with almost no public funding. The law is still active and its objectives have not been met yet; hence the ongoing political, social, and cultural exchange.

### 1.2.1.3. The boom of memory: a cultural phenomenon

The arts and the media during the memorialist movement echoed the historical memory issue. On the grounds that the object of study of this work is a cultural product and it falls under the umbrella of the cultural memory movement, I would like to go deeper into the analysis of this phenomenon.

During the war, on both sides of the conflict, there existed—and still exist—myths about the war. Many times these myths served to idealize the cause of each side, and they served as well, along with the passion aroused by the war, as raw material for the narrative of the conflict that has been made in all the different art forms. In the midst of the war, photos of refugees and other images of the conflict transcended broadly to the public[48]; because the international press covering the conflict was very extensive. Graham explains in this regard that it was "the new photo-

---

[48]Herbert S. Southworth says in this sense "The Spanish Civil War involved directly but a small part of the globe, but it drew toward Spain the attention of the whole world; thus the press that covered the Spanish war was more diversified in its actors and in its interpretations than the press that reported the Second World War" (1).

journalism that made Spain the first 'photogenic' war in history also transmitted searing images of the vast numbers of political refugees produced by the conflict" (ix). At the time, the strong sentimental and ideological factors, and the consequent propaganda, worked together with the myths and the visual support of the conflict, and resulted in an uncountable amount of cultural responses from within and outside Spain alike. Some international artistic views were, for instance, Robert Capa's, Ernest Hemingway's, Pablo Picasso's—who had left Spain years ago—George Orwell's or André Malraux's. All these artists collaborated with their representations of the conflict in the collective imagery of the war that endures up until today. Their representations of the conflict, such as Robert Capa's *Death of a Loyalist Soldier*, or Picasso's *Guernica* are today representational icons of that time. Some of these artists even became—themselves—part of the current imagery of the Civil War, as witnesses and sometimes protagonists of it. Picasso, Capa or Heminway, for example, have often become participant characters of the contemporary stories that relate the conflict. On account of this, they convey myths and a cultural heritage that has been of great importance for the process of remembrance of the war and the years after that we still have in the present.

After the war, during the years of the dictatorship, the warfare and its aftermath continued being the focus of interest for many artists. The representations that were coming from abroad, from the exile, often had an ideological turn that contrasted the representations coming from within Spain. The cultural creation from abroad about the conflict was extremely productive, mainly in Mexico, where the communities of Republicans were very political and very culturally active. Their representations show the point of view of the Republican faction, the difficulties they faced in exile and their attempt to understand the defeat of the war. On the contrary, the cultural production from within Spain was conditioned by the censorship of the Francoist regime and its

politics of fear that would try to deter, among other things, any manifestation of any ideology that did not agree with the regime, in all of its branches[49]. The censorship worked in two stages, there was a previous scan of content on the project of a film, book, press release, etc., and a later control once the project was finished. The intent was to protect the morality of society and it had a focus on political, ideological, religious and sexual aspects. From today's perspective, it is striking that in what refers to comics, and even though they are a product for children, the violence content was not a target of this censorship—mainly before the *Estatuto de Publicaciones Infantiles y Juveniles* from the 19th of January 1967. In fact, given the bellicose content of many of the comics of the time, the violence was shown both in a visual and a verbal way, and on many occasions it was even perpetrated by children or young protagonists[50]. When referring to the cultural production of the years of the dictatorship, we often think of it as a moment of cultural lethargy. It is fair to say, however, that the censorship actually conditioned the cultural production in two different and opposing ways. On the one hand, it did reduce the dissemination of certain ideologies that were undesired by the regime, mainly in the first decade of the dictatorship; yet, it also had the contrary effect of pressing artists to find alternative and creative ways to convey their messages and show a way of thinking that was not compliant to the one of the regime. In the second half of the 60s there was a political openness that came along with a social modernisation, a change that was also reflected in the partial relaxation of the censorship and the emergence of new left-wing cultural groups, publishing houses, and other forms of art that were exploring the genre of protest and developmental art. Therefore, despite the prohibitions, there were voices that found a way to

---

[49] During the dictatorship, and even two years after, until 1977, there were two press laws that defined what was suitable to be published. The first law dates from 22 de abril de 1938. The bottom line was to suppress Republican ideologies. The second press law of the dictatorship dates from March 18th 1966 and it is complemented by, for instance, *Estatuto de Publicaciones Infantiles y Juveniles* (1967).

[50] *El Cachorro* published by Bruguera in 1951 or *La Pandilla de los Siete* published by Valenciana in 1945 are only two examples of comics in which we can read abundant violent scenes.

express a dissident and critical point of view towards the war and the dictatorship and the consequences of both in society, especially for those who were defeated in the conflict. These voices created a richer cultural production recognizable today.

Years later, during the Transition there are also many artistic works that focused on the armed conflict and its immediate consequences. The comic artist Carlos Giménez, for instance, publishes the first period of his celebrated work *Paracuellos (*1977-1983), a comic in which he relates the conditions of children in Francoist orphanages through his own personal story. This work and others were published during the Transition, but there is a clear increase of artistic works on the topic that starts more or less at the beginning of the new century. Parallel to the academic and political movement of historical afterthought, there is a cultural movement arising that responds to the social need commemorating and understanding the past. Hundreds of films, novels, paintings, poems, and comics that use the war as a protagonist or as the background of other stories are published. These works generally show the point of view of the defeated, with Francoist repression and the consequences on those who suffered it being one of the main subjects. Some of these works put the focus on the stories about *maquis*[51], others talk about the children of the war that had to exile, the executions by firing squads, the hunger of the postwar, the fear, etc., to mention a few.

Among scholars, a widely held opinion is that the cultural scene after the dictatorship and the Transition has taken on the responsibility of remembering the Civil War. For many, this cultural phenomenon is understood as a way of questioning the politics and narrative of

---

[51] The *maquis* were groups of guerrillas that were created before the end of the war and continued until the 1960s. Many joined the French Resistance in the Second World War in exile, also many after the war, encouraged by the victory against Fascism in Europe, went back to Spain to keep fighting the Spanish government in place clandestinely.

reconciliation that existed during the Transition and that worked, until not long ago, as the 'big account' that served to integrate democratic values in a society that had just come out of a dictatorship. María Corredera González, for instance, argues that novels about the Civil War want to "dar rostro, voz, y nombre a los olvidados, a las víctimas de la guerra . . . para que se tenga en cuenta el pasado de la guerra, y se conozcan los sufrimientos que hombres y mujeres vivieron en nombre de la libertad"[52] (19). There are, nevertheless, also opposing opinions to this, such as David Becerra Mayor, who offers a more critical perspective to the vast literary production about the conflict. In his work *La Guerra Civil como moda literaria*[53], Becerra Mayor argues that, in general terms, the novels of the boom of memory are in reality only adopting the politics of reconciliation from the transitional years and afterwards, as they do not really aim to reconstruct the current imagery on the conflict.

> La otra parte del conflicto está representada por novelas que . . . reproducen la lógica ahistórica y despolitizada que, en el ámbito político, se puso en marcha con la popularmente conocida como Ley de la Memoria Histórica de 2007 durante la primera legislatura de José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. La ley 52-2007, a todas luces insuficiente, no pretendía establecer una ruptura con el pasado, que pusiera fin a los privilegios de los que gozan, todavía hoy, los vencedores de la Guerra Civil, sino que perseguía, más bien, el reforzamiento del modelo de convivencia constitucional de la Transición[54] (15, 16).

---

[52] 'put a face and give voice and name to the forgotten, to the victims of the war . . . so that the warfare past is taken into account, and the sufferings that men and women lived in the name of freedom are known' (19).

[53] The title of this work translates as Civil war as a literary trend.

[54] The other part of the conflict is represented by novels that . . . reproduce the ahistorical and depoliticised logic that, in the political sphere, was set in motion with the popularly known as the Law of Historical Memory of 2007 during the first legislature of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero. The law 52-2007, clearly insufficient, did not intend to establish a break with the past, which put an end to the privileges of those who enjoy, even today, the victors of the Civil War, but rather pursued the reinforcement of the model of constitutional coexistence of the transition (15, 16).

The attention that the war receives from the media and the cultural world goes hand in hand with the more formal studies that focus on remembrance and commemoration of the past. The memory issue is addressed from many different angles, to the point that some claim that it is even excessive; whereas others think that there are not yet enough stories about the Civil War, and that it is still, despite the boom, "the great unknown".

In my view, the memory wave of the war that recovers the point of view of the victims of the Francoist regime has the potential of questioning, or at least interrogating, the collective memory of reconciliation, and it reveals the lack of symmetry of the narrative of the conflict that was constructed during the Transition. Culture, as the analysis of the comics will show, has an important function in the retrospect of the war because it creates a public sphere of discussion about the past that can lead to new narratives of collective identity.

When talking about the representation of historical events, besides the obvious connections between the fact and its mimesis, it is important to be privy to the distance between the two. One of the meanings of 'to represent' is to make something present, to embody it and symbolize it. Art, for instance, represents its object through a depiction that uses images, texts, movements, etc.; but 'to represent' also means to speak on behalf of somebody. These two connotations of the word become relevant when talking about the representation of any historical event, and of course, also of the Spanish Civil War during the boom of memory. The cultural works that represent the conflict create a symbolic figure of the past, and in doing so, they make it somehow present. When retrieving the events from the past to the present, they remind us that these events actually happened, and they bring to light the voices of their protagonists. In this sense, considering that any representation of the conflict is going to convey one particular view of it, the historical

representation is intrinsically political. When talking about the Spanish Civil War this means that the remembrance also affects the contemporary conversation and current political positioning.

When the war was being depicted in the midst of the conflict, Capa, Picasso, Orwell or Malraux portrayed a non-neutral vision of the contest. The same happened during the dictatorship with the remembering of the conflict that came from within Spain and also from the exile, where both perspectives were represented separately in each of those places with a similar—but ideologically opposed—purpose of self-justification and political propaganda. This strong political value of the narratives about the war and its aftermath continued during the boom of memory and up till today, when the war, the dictatorship and now also the complexity of the transitional process have become political symbols for the contemporary political views, that in some ways still represent the two Spains that fought in the conflict.

### 1.2.2. The *historieta*: the Spanish comic tradition in its approach to memory

The Spanish comics or *historieta* is not an exception to the trend of culture production that focuses on the Spanish Civil War, and it has also become a medium for thought and discussion, including the one about historical narration. As a consequence, academia has increasingly become more interested in the contribution of comics in the construction of the Spanish historical or collective memory. The movement of comics as a medium for representing the past has its own history. In the last decades, the domestic production on the topic has sometimes used the representation of the Holocaust—a more consolidated tradition—as a reference for its evocation of the past. The scholarly examination on the topic uses similar lines of research as the ones set in literary and cultural studies; but in order to understand the local perspective on the topic, it is important to contextualize the discussion within the heritage of the *historieta*, which is closely

connected with the French and the Belgian comic art. The exchanges and mutual influences between the Spanish comic and other comic traditions has been constant in its history.

Historically, and even today for many people, the Spanish word for comic, the *historieta*, conveys in the popular imagination a fantastic, in the sense of remote from reality, narration. In the dictionary of the Royal Academy of Spanish Language, the word *historieta* is defined as "Serie de dibujos que constituye un relato cómico, fantástico, de aventuras, etc., con texto o sin él, y que puede ser una simple tira en la prensa, una o varias páginas, o un libro"[55] (*Diccionario Lengua Española*). The weight on the qualifying terms used to define *historieta* suggests its relation to the imagined, to the untrue, and it perpetuates its idea of a medium for children that is inaccurate and a low culture art form. This assumed association of ideas in the word *historieta* is even more striking when one looks up the definition of the loanword *cómic* in the same dictionary. *Cómic*, unlike its Spanish synonym, does not bear the weight of the fictitious and humorous connotation and it is defined based only in its form as a "serie o secuencia de viñetas que cuenta una historia"[56] (*Diccionario de la Lengua Española*).

The idea of comics as non-true and fantastic is partly due to the history of the genre. If we look back at the comic tradition in Spain, we find a clear antecedent of the comic that emanated in France and was later on very popular in Catalonia, the *aucas* or alleluias. The aucas were religious broadsheets of etchings that had the same structure as comics have today, but more rigid, with usually forty-eight panels. At the beginning they did not include any wording, but in the nineteenth century they included captions, which make that format resonate more with the current comics. This narrative form, despite emerging in the sixteenth century, was only popularized in the

---

[55] 'A cartoon series that makes a comical, fantastic, adventure, etc. story, with or without text and that can be a simple comic strip in the press, one or more pages, or a book' (*Diccionario Lengua Española*).
[56] 'series of panels that tell a story' (*Diccionario Lengua Española*).

eighteenth century; and often with a strong moralizing tone, served as useful and accessible tools of instruction to a society that was, for the most part, illiterate.

In the first third of the 20th century, before the beginning of the Civil War there were a good number of cartoon artists who were in contact with other comic traditions thanks to their travels around Europe and America and their collaboration with foreign magazines. Some examples are Regino Bernard who developed most of his career in France, in magazines such as *France Soir*; Ricard Opisso, one of the pioneers of the *historieta* who collaborated with the Catalan magazines *Dominguín* and *TBO*, also worked in his youth with the French magazine *Le Rire;* as well as Salvador Bartolozzi, who lived and worked in France and Mexico for a big part of his life.

During the war itself, the *historieta* played an important role in the so-called 'War of Paper', a term that refers to the enormous propaganda rollout that was taking place in the rearguard, and that continued during the dictatorship. At the time the main objective of this strategy was to demoralize the enemy. In the bloc of the nationalists, and afterwards, the *historieta* would replicate the social values and the political ideology of the Spanish *Falange* and the *Comunión Tradicionalista*, and it focused mainly on the indoctrination of children. In the bloc of the Republicans, the comics were also used for political propaganda, but the propaganda was more focused on the adults while their magazines for kids, according to Antonio Martín "mantuvieron su función recreativa, sin contenidos políticos y sin desempeñar ninguna función de propaganda"[57] (Martín).

After the war, there were also comic artists who fled the country due to the war and the dictatorship. In the case of comics, though, Viviane Alary explains, it is difficult to determine if this was due to political, financial or because of professional reasons, seeing that many looked for

---

[57] 'maintained their recreational function, with no political content and without playing any propagandistic role' (Martín).

protected hubs were they could develop their craft and career, mostly in daily press and publishing houses in France, Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Venezuela, United States or United Kingdom (240). Meanwhile in Spain, the stories in drawings and panels were one of the most popular cultural forms, probably also due to the popularity they had acquired during the conflict. They played, for both children and adults, a cathartic role: medieval knights and dames, pirates, and funnies would help them evade from the sufferings of the previous years, because despite of being used as a propagandistic medium, they also kept a recreational tone that made them very attractive. Part of the reason for its enormous popularity was the fact that it contributed to two opposing causes. While indeed it became a prolific medium to disseminate the government's ideology; towards the end of the dictatorship it also became a medium to mask, in its characteristic humorous tone, messages that otherwise would have had to be repressed and silenced due to institutionalized censorship and fear—this would be an example of those creative ways that artists found to criticize the regime. *Flechas y Pelayos* and *El guerrero del antifaz* are two examples of comics that followed the ideological line of Franco's regime, and served to indoctrinate children to be national heroes of the homeland. In them, there is an idealization of the times of colonization in the Americas and the times of the *Reconquista*, which refers to the 780 years in which the Islamic state was settled in Hispania, today's Iberian Peninsula, and the battles with the Christian kingdoms that wanted to recover that land. Another very popular comic of the dictatorship was *Roberto Alcázar y Pedrín*, a couple of modern detectives that remind us of other famous international comic pairings, namely, Tintin and Captain Haddock or Batman and Robin.

The *historieta* was a very prosperous industry in the mid years of the dictatorship, the most prolific time for the medium being from 1951 to 1963 (Porcel 129), to the point that the popularity of the medium triggered a sort of migration from other cultural forms to the *historieta* (Alary 240).

The productivity of comics unleashed a market hostility between the two main publishing houses at the time, TBO and Bruguera. The common practice was to create comics in bulk, and re-publish them as many times as possible; meanwhile, the graphic artist, the creators of the characters and stories were not being acknowledged for the authorship of their work, and therefore they were also not being financially compensated for the re-publishing of the magazines. For many years, cartoonists engaged in a legal and social dispute to see their authorship rights recognised, and this marked the following years of the Spanish cartoonists tradition; in fact, this event was later on depicted by Carlos Giménez in *Los profesionales* (1983) and by Paco Roca in his graphic novel *El invierno del dibujante* (2010). Notwithstanding, the struggle of the artists did not prevent the public recognition of some names, as is in the case of Emilio Freixas, who in 1947 was awarded with the prize of best graphic artist of the National Cartoonist Society of New York.

Both with headquarters in Barcelona, the magazine and imprint TBO and publishing house Bruguera dominated the market of the *historieta* for a long time[58]. TBO was the longest lasting comic magazine in Spain—active from 1917 to 1998—with some its titles being *Los tebeitos (The Smurfs)*, *Altamiro en la Cueva* or *Los grandes inventos del TBO*. It followed a naive editorial line that would not conflict with the censorship. Bruguera—active from 1910 to 1986, and with some of its most popular titles being *El Cachorro*, *El Capitan Trueno*, *Pulgarcito*, *Zipi y Zape*, *13 Rue del Percebe* or *Mortadelo y Filemón*— grew later on into a more socially critical line. Overall, comics had a funny and moralizing tone, always with simple storylines that would replicate over and over the same structure, which facilitated its reading and would make them very accessible for its major audience, the children, making it a cultural product suitable for the whole family.

---

[58] According to the annual report of the *Asociación Cultural Tebeosfera* 80% of the comics published in Spain in 2018 were published in Catalonia.

As a deviation to this, in the last years of the dictatorship, and as part of the modernisation process, comics also showed dissident voices that were critical to the regime. Among the dissident culture that managed to find a critical voice avoiding censorship, we could mention Enric Sió's comics, a member of the Catalan group of intellectuals *gauche divine*, who, as Alberto Villamandos points out, created the first anti-Franco comic *Lavinia 2016*, published between 1967 and 1968 (90). One of Sió's most important works is the series *Mara*, a story published between 1970 and 1975 that reflects, hidden in symbolic language, the political tension of the last years of the regime. This came along with a re-evaluation of the medium as it was starting to be considered as a new poetic language worth the attention of artists and critics. The theoretical approach grew with important works such as *Los "comics": arte para el consumo y formas "pop"* (Terenci Moix, 1968) or *El lenguaje de los comics (*Román Gubern, 1972), as well as the release of the magazine *Bang* in 1968, a publication about comics with an academic and analytic approach that evidenced that the limits that had been set between high and low culture were at stake. During the last years of the dictatorship and after Franco's death, in 1975, when the demand for comics with adult content grew, the *historietas* started addressing political and social issues, including the Civil War and the consequences of the dictatorship. Those children who had consumed comic magazines in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, who had been educated in the culture of the *tebeo* (in reference to TBO) were now using its language to convey adult topics. The new content, though, needed new ways of dissemination and, besides the classic adventurous and funny comics that never ceased, comic authors began to publish outside the publishing houses that had hoarded the market up until then. Hence, the underground comic appears in Spain in the 1970s, influenced by the cultural and political effervescence of the birth of the new democratic state and the countercultural movement that came from the United States. As it happened in the other comic traditions already explained,

a different cartoon proliferated. It was satirical and socially critical, it showed sex, violence and brought to the fore parallel cultures that existed in the society of the time, through rugged drawings with more diffuse lines. Over time, some of the authors of these comics branded themselves as the *línea chunga* (crappy or dodgy line), in opposition to the very clear and defined line of the Franco-Belgian comics that had had great influence in the Spanish comic tradition. In any case, what had started as a counterculture movement with self-published fanzines, partly because of the need to publish clandestinely to avoid censorship, soon changed to the use of massively disseminated publishers. The *historieta* got professionalized and the themes again became more trivial, something that perhaps could be explained because of the general de-politicisation and trivialisation in the Spain of the early democracy. In relation to this, Francesca Lladó in her work *El cómic de la transición (el boom del cómic adulto 1975-1984)* (2001) talks about the overuse of common places in the comic of the time. The countercultural movement fades away and the comics, that for a moment seemed to vindicate its space next to the artistic forms understood as high culture, ended up recovering its allotted position as an entertaining product and continued to carry the weight of the low culture tag.

In the last few years a lot of effort has been made in the world of Spanish *historieta* to gain a different spot in the cultural scene. Ana Merino indicates that comics in Spain have been searching for their own hub—one that responds to their special nature and the weight they carry as a low culture art form—and discusses the tension that comics, as a medium, have to deal with. In her words, comics "pertenece[n] a la cultura industrial, y como tal, construye[n] relatos modernos, aunque su capacidad legitimadora está en tensión con el discurso letrado"[59] (qtd. in Dapena 82).

---

[59] '[they] belong to the industrial culture, and as such, it builds modern stories, although its legitimizing capacity is in tension with the academic discourse' (qtd. in Dapena 82).

The influence of the global movement that started with *Maus* also reaches the *historieta*. As in the global market, the comic in Spain includes more complex storylines with adult content than in the past, and they participate in different social debates—one of them being the discussion about memory. After *Cuerda de presas,* published in 2005, other comics on the topic were published that challenged the stereotypes that had been set for the *historieta*. As a matter of fact, today we are living in a sort of heyday of self-reflexive comics about past and current social and personal issues, including comics on the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath, but it would be a mistake to consider these publications at the genesis of the recovery of memory in comics in Spain.

Michel Malty (2018) explains that as of 2013, 70% of the comics about the Civil War printed in Spain after the dictatorship had been published in only the last eight years, from 2005 to 2013. Since early in the Transition, there are examples of *historietas* that evoke the Civil War in both underground publications such as *A la calle*, *Butifarra* or *Trocha*, and in other more popular periodicals such as *Totem*, *Bésame mucho*, *Super Bumerang*, *El Víbora* or *El Papus* (Malty). Carlos Giménez, a landmark author in the Spanish *historieta* because of his work on the dictatorship, is one of the authors that collaborate in *El Papus* with a story whose main character is the anarchist Durruti. In addition, the aforementioned *Paracuellos* (1977-1983, 1997-2003), Carlos Giménez's most famous publication, is one of the most important works on historical memory in Spain, and not only in what refers to comics. Other remarkable titles are: *Setenta días en el infierno. La gesta del Alcázar de Toledo,* a work that Fresno Ruiz published in 1978; and the three albums of Antonio Hernández Palacios *Eloy*, *uno entre muchos (*1979), *Río Manzanares (*1979) and *Euskadi en llamas (*1979)*,* and his later work *Gorka Gudari (*1987)*. El artefacto perverso*, from Felipe Hernández Cava and Federico del Barrio, published in 1996. This work, Pedro Pérez del Solar indicates, defies graphically and thematically the Spanish comics tendencies

of the 1990s, because it disengages from "la ultraviolencia, el manga más superficial, los superheroes norteamericanos, y el porno"[60] (229) which were the styles and genres that dominated the market at the time. These titles evidence that the relationship between comic books and memory is not only a current one in Spain; but on the contrary, it has a strong foundation.

The same would apply to the relationship between comics and academic research. Even though it is only recently that they have been receiving more academic attention in Spain[61], hence, much work remains to be done in this field, the analysis of comics and its language started in the late sixties, with the works already referred to above of Terenci Moix, Gubern or the magazine *Bang*. Some academic works that offer historical overviews about the comic in Spain are Pedro Porcel, Álvaro Pons and Vicente Sorni's work *Viñetas a la luna de Valencia: la historia del tebeo valenciano* (2007), which offers a historical overview of the *historieta* in Valencia, one of the most important comic traditions in Spain. Ignacio Fernández Sarasola, who uses his background in law, writes *La legislación sobre historieta en España* (2014), an overview of the legislation applied to the medium during the whole of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st and focuses on aspects such as the effects and particularities of the censorship applied to comics and the evolution towards free speech in children's literature in Spain. In his essay *El pueblo contra los cómics* (2019), Sarasola explains how the regime exercised indirect censorship through the control of paper, which was at that time, after the Second World War, a scarce commodity. There were three types of paper, Sarasola explains, each of them of different quality; one of them, what was known as *papel prensa* (press paper) or *papel protegido* (protected paper) was the most profitable for the publishing houses because it was subsidized by the state. The protected paper was reserved to those

---

[60] 'the ultraviolence, the most superficial manga, the American superheroes, and porn' (229)
[61] It is only in 2018 and 2022 that the University of Valencia and the University of Alcala, respectively, created the chairs of comic studies.

publications that the *Dirección General de Prensa*[62] classified as 'periódicas', which in practice where those that communed with the regime: "el Estado sólo admitió como periódicas aquellas revistas infantiles más afines al régimen[63]" (244). Another example of an overview is the one offered by Pablo Vergara Díaz, who focuses on the evolution of the comics from 1977 until 2007, and explains its journey from being an underground product for minorities to the fashionable product that it is today.

From a comparative perspective, Viviane Alary, in her article "La historieta española en Europa y en el mundo", explores the presence of the Spanish comic outside of Spain and brings some light about the possible influences from—and to—the European and the American comic production. It is important to mention other works as well that offer a specialized study of a certain movement, as it is the case of Pablo Dopico's *El cómic underground español 1970-1980* (2005). The same applies to the work of Antonio Altarriba, one of the authors whose work this dissertation studies, and who combines his work as a scriptwriter of *historietas,* such as *El arte de volar,* with his academic work on the field, mainly participating in the discussion of the contemporary role and status of the medium in the cultural scene. Among those authors who study the language of the autobiography in comics, we find the works of Manuel de la Fuente Soler who uses *El arte de volar* and *Paracuellos* as part of their study case. Fuente Soler makes, for instance, a link between *Maus* and *El arte de volar* as two works where the voice of the second generation makes sense of the conflict they represent by exploring the autobiographical language through someone else's experiences. Susana Arroyo Redondo, who also studies autobiographical comics, argues that testimonial comics have played a positive role in the newly acquired status of comics as a

---

[62] Dirección General de Prensa.

[63] "*Flechas y Pelayos, Maravillas, Biblioteca Maravillas, Clarín, Chicos Mis Chicas, Chiquitito, El Gran Chicos, Pepe y Maria, Bazar, Zas, Trampolín, Ltendas Infantiles* y *Junior Films*" (466).

legitimate medium for the representation of reality, both in aspects related to the one's intimacy or to historical events.

Among the studies that focus on the problem of the representation of the war in comic books, I referred before to the analysis that Pedro Pérez del Solar makes of *El artefacto perfecto*, demonstrating the value of the work of Felipe Hernández Caba and Federico del Barrio in the comic scene. Óscar Gual Boronat's *Viñetas de posguerra. Los cómics como fuente para estudio de la historia* does not analyze the representation of historical events in those comics, but looks at them as the source for studying history. In the same line, Tomás Ortega offers a chronological reconstruction of the conflict focusing on the characters of comics in his work *Las caras de la guerra* (2018).

This study amid a close reading analysis of the comic books converses with the previously mentioned academic literature and with other works that look at the *historieta* on the Spanish Civil War from an analytical point of view (Merino, Aguado, Pepo Perez, Blanco Cordón, Galán Fajardo, Suárez Vega, Claudio, De la Fuente Soler, etc.). Such conversations add enormous value and guidance to my research work, and function as the theoretical framework of this work that aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how historical narrative transcends in the pages of these graphic novels, as a cultural memory artifact. In summary, this research mainly, but not exclusively, connects the fields of life-writing, comic studies, and memory studies. Focusing on the Spanish tradition, but within a wider scope of works that represent traumatic historical events beyond the Spanish Civil War.

# Chapter two: Analytical framework: reading visual texts

> For the last hundred years, the subject of reading has been connected quite directly to the concept of literacy; . . . learning to read . . . has meant learning to read words. But reading has gradually come under closer scrutiny . . . reading—in the most general sense—can be thought of as a form of perceptual activity. The reading of words is one manifestation of this activity; but there are many others—the reading of pictures, maps, circuit diagrams, musical notes…  (Tom Wolf qtd. in Eisner 8).

In order to be able to shed some light towards the contribution of contemporary comics in the intellectual and social discussion of the boom of memory, I have chosen to focus on the texts and their narrative and analyze them in light of the sociocultural context in which they are produced. Under the narratological and semiotic agenda, the methodology that best fits this purpose is the close reading approach, as we focus mainly on the message of the texts and its meaning in the academic and social context in which these comics are released. In order to be able to carry out a detailed and coherent exploration of the texts, I have designed an analytical grid. This developed model not only aims to respond to the research question of this thesis, but also wants to be useful as a precept or as an inspiration for the examination of other comic works that represent the past through personal stories. The guide, however, is not designed to turn the text into a pretext. Using this guide as a supporting device, I will analyze the four selected works being those at the center of the analysis, and not the other way around. Only a careful observation of the works will show the relevant aspects of their memory representation, their influences and dialogue with other works and possible fissures. The selected graphic novels were published in a period of ten years during the years of the 'boom of memory', after 2000, and represent authors of the second

and third generation after the war. In addition, the works I explore were published in a graphic novel format for its dissemination, which as explained in the first chapter, has undoubtedly affected its creation process and, accordingly, the narrative they convey.

## 2.1. Comic semiotics and narratology: theoretical approaches

For the design of an analytical guideline that is able to apprehend the complexities of this discussion, the methodology used for this research takes into consideration four main cornerstones: the contribution of the memory theories; the theoretical conversation regarding comics as a cultural artifact; the discussion regarding the use of personal accounts to convey historical knowledge; and lastly, the theories that discuss the narratology and analysis of the comic language. Together, these theoretical approaches allow for a narratological and semiotic interpretation through the lens of their historical and cultural context. Being that the first three aspects have already been presented in the first chapter of this dissertation, I would now like to focus on the last aspect. An adequate and literate reading of the comic language demands some attention to the studies that concern its narratology and semiotics; and in what concerns the semiotic aspects, I will be looking at them in terms of how they are used to give narratological meaning.

The semiotic studies on comics find their origin in the contributions made from linguistics, mainly in the communicative paradigm described by the structuralists Jakobson or Saussure's description of the language system and the language sign that revolutionized the foundations of linguistics. These studies are parallel to the narratological theories of Genette and Barthes, also structuralist authors who will influence the comic theories. In the heart of comic studies we also find poststructuralist works, such as Jacques Derrida's. In a nutshell, Derrida redefines the concept of the sign based on Saussure's description of the linguistic sign. To the binary structure of

signified/signifier, Derrida adds the notion of *différance*, which accounts for two ideas that challenge the concept of a univocal meaning. The first idea is the difference between the sign and the other signs in the system it belongs to, already described by Saussure, because this difference gives the sign a meaning in opposition to the rest of the elements. Derrida, nevertheless, explains that we can only know the system once we know the context in which the sign is used. This takes us to the second idea, which is the difference in time and space, the potential displacement of the sign, or even its potential evolution. The decodification of a sign can happen in the future and only then we will be able to know the cultural, social and spatial context of that decodification and the receiver's; which proves that signs exist beyond the transmitter (63-65). Derrida's studies will resonate strongly in the analytical theories of comics.

On several occasions along this essay, I have made reference to the hybrid nature of comic language. The system of comics includes two types of signs: iconic and verbal. The hybridity of this language adds complexity to the decodification of comics. This is because not only the readership has to interpret two types of signs at the same time, but they also have to interpret the different narratological devices that are linked to those signs that blend in comics. The different types of narratological approaches that Jan Christoph Meister disguises are: contextualist narratology, cognitive narratology and transgeneric and intermedial approaches. The contextualist narratology "relates the phenomena encountered in narrative to specific cultural, historical, thematic and ideological context" (qtd. in Thon 1,2). The cognitive narratology "focuses on the human intellectual and emotional processing of narrative" (qtd. in Thon 2). In the third category, Jan-Nol Thon explains, "the transgeneric and intermedial approaches include not only research on the transmedial dimensions of narrative, but also a variety of intermedial and intramedial studies" (Thon 2). Daniel Stein and Thon himself situate comic narrative in the third category of Meister's

classification (1), in reference to the different artistic expressions that connect with comic narrative. The skills used when decoding films, photographs, paintings, written narrative, etc. are at the heart of the common ground where the creation and the interpretation of comics meet. This transfer of elements among different semiotic systems is not exclusive to comics, as we live in a time when storytelling often uses transmedia narratology; notwithstanding, comics stand out as one of the media that most needs these networks of connections with other artistic languages. Besides the narrative devices inherited from literature with regards to rhythm, text organization, time, etc., comics inherit other expressive devices from the visual arts, such as photography, paintings, or films, that are related to the standpoint, the framing, color, drawing style, etc; and the theories of film narrative, for instance, which in turn are also greatly based on language studies, have been very helpful in the venture of understanding the way comic panels are organized and the significance of that order. As a consequence to all of the above, the special comic language that combines different artistic expressions demands specialized theories on comic narratology and semiotics, which are the frame of the analytic grid of this dissertation. Going back to Meister's classification, the reading guide also has a strong component of the contextualized narratology. The grounds for this lies in the nature of the conversation it wants to be part of, that can only be understood within the academic, social and cultural context.

As I already said, the academic literature on the analysis of comic language is much smaller than that of other artistic languages, but again this is also a growing field that has developed greatly in the last few decades. Many of the main scholars who study the semiotics and narratology of comics are also cartoonists themselves that want to reflect on the tools they are using in their creations, often with a big influence of the creator's gaze. One of these theorists is the aforementioned Rodolphe Töpffer, the author of *Essais d'Autographie* (1842), the pioneering essay

on the theory of comics. But it is only after more than a century, starting around the decades of the 1970s and 1980s in France where we find a generation of comic scholars that made a noteworthy intervention in the field. Pierre Fresnault-Deleure, Pierre Sterckx, Benoit Peeters, Pierre Masson, Thierry Smolderen or Thierry Groensteen are some of these academics of the Franco-Belgian school. Among those, the author who had the most influence in further developments in the scholarship of the semiotics and narratology of comics was Thierry Groensteen, and his works are also one of the main sources that I used in the creation of the present analytical guideline. Miller and Beaty accentuate, nonetheless, that in order to understand Groensteen's work, he should be conceived not as independent, but as part of a generation of scholars, because the discussion that took place among the members of this group was essential for the development of the theories of all of them (13).

Groensteen's explanation of the language of comics takes into consideration the different elements in the comic language, its syntagmatic framework and how this affects the narratology of the medium. In *System of Comics*, he describes the different units that relate in the comic syntax in which he explains the relations among panels, which he identifies as the smallest meaningful unit in comics (24), establishing a parallelism with the linguistic sign. The panel is perceived as a complex unit that includes three major elements that are also complex in themselves: the image, the story, and the frame. The way in which panels relate to each other, the area they occupy, their shape, how and where they are placed in the page, how many there are, the hyperframe[64], the use of the margin of the page, etc., are some of the parameters that Groensteen identifies as determinant in the study of the graphic works. These parameters that are not related to the content, but to the

---

[64] When referring to the page, Greonsteen explains that "the exterior outline of this form, its perimeter, can be given the name hyperframe . . . The hyperframe is to the page what the page is to the panel" (Groensteen, *The system* 30).

form, greatly affect the spatio-temporal meaning, for instance, which is one of the main aspects of narratology.

Within the Anglo-Saxon scholarship, there are many authors whose contributions have been essential in the development of comic theory, but I would like to foreground Will Eisner and Scott Mccloud. Will Eisner's work *Comics and Sequential Art* established an equivalence between the visual or graphic communication and the linguistic communication. In this same line, we find the more recent work of Neil Cohn, where he discusses the analogy between the visual language used by comics and the traditional verbal linguistic system. The visual language of comics, Cohn argues, is structured by the modality, the meaning and its grammar (6). The grammatical units of comics are, as in verbal languages, open-class and closed-class[65] of which "most iconic drawings are open-class items. The visual lexicon also includes signs like thought balloons, motion lines, or stars above people's head to show pain. These types are often more symbolic, and belong to a relatively closed-class of visual lexical items" (24). These elements are organized and linked to one another in different levels of the structure of the comic language, acquiring meaning in the discourse. The other author I mentioned, Scott McCloud, published a very influential work *Understanding comics: The invisible art* in which he proposes a theory on narratological interpretation of comics. McCloud introduces the concept of 'closure', which goes back to the problem of interpretation of space and time in comics, and from which transpires Derrida's concept of *différance.* Closure is the active role of the comic reader in interpreting the invisible space in between panels. In this process of the closure of the gutter, the reader gives meaning to the narration. In this sense, Iván Pintor points out that it is precisely the characteristic sequentiality of

---

[65] Cohn explains "Linguistics have identified that the lexicon of languages consists of two broad classes: open class and closed-class items. An open class of items can be added to easily and these signs can often be manipulated. Nouns and verbs contain open-class lexical items . . . In contrast, closed-class lexical items include things like articles (the, a) or prepositions (under, in). . . " (24).

comics what facilitates the reader's task in this sense: "la propia disposición en secuencia de las imágenes estáticas es el dispositivo que facilita la recomposición de la doble ausencia y la hace evidente"[66] (53). One of those absences Pintor refers to is time within the storyline, as that space between panels usually makes the story advance. Nonetheless, the gutter may also have different meanings, and these meanings will be determined by the context and different characteristics of the graphic work and the reader: the format, the cultural status of the medium at the time of being read, the socio-political and cultural background of the reader, and many more. If we take as an example one of the fragments of Paco Roca's *Los surcos del azar,* from our corpus of study, we can observe how essential the active role of the reader is when providing meaning and connecting the elements of the narration.

---

[66] 'the very arrangement in sequence of the static images is the device that facilitates the recomposition of the double absence and makes it evident' (53)
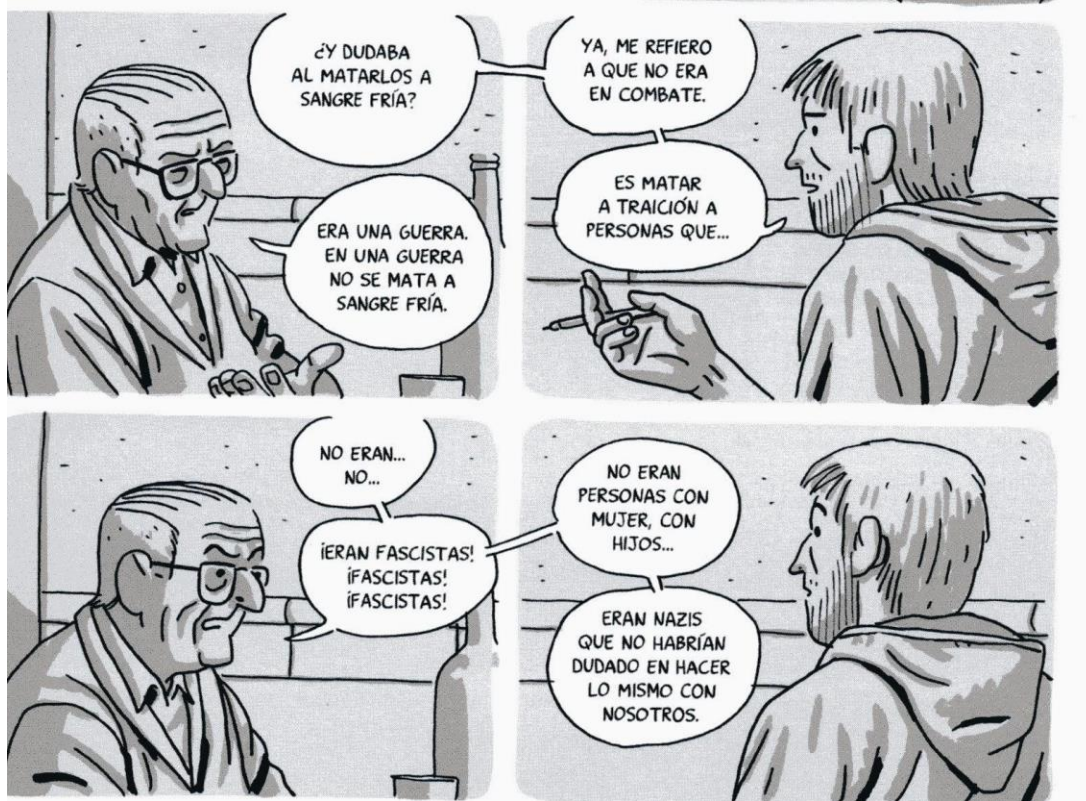
Figure 2. Roca 221

In the example above, the gutter between the two panels of the top tier represents space, and between the panels on top and the tier below represents time. But upon closer look, we see that there is a lot more than that. If we take into consideration that the two characters are sitting next to one another, it is obvious that the author had the intention of emphasizing the separation of the physical space between the two using the gutter, to delineate the personal space of them both. In addition, we can also interpret that the gutter is bringing into the conversation the symbolic distance, the gap of two characters who are incapable, in this specific instant, of understanding one another. Therefore, the gutter here is polysemic, it is separating their own personal space, and their mental distance in relation to the conversation they are having. I will study this passage more in-depth when discussing the generational factor, but here I would just like to point out that the

character that represents Paco Roca is asking a very intrusive question: "Didn't you hesitate to kill them in cold blood?". This question is literally, as it is graphically represented, invading the personal space of Miguel Ruiz; and this happens because Mr. Ruiz is an old man who has survived two wars, while the interviewer only knows about these conflicts intellectually. In this example, the closure requires an active reader to make these interpretations and find the different meanings of the gutters between the panels.

In what concerns the graphic narratology studies in Spain, there is also a growing tradition. One of the most essential works in this field of study is Roman Gubern and Luis Gasca's *El discurso del cómic.* Gasca and Gubern establish a parallelism between the cinematic language and the comic language, focusing mainly on the narrative aspect of it, distinguishing between the diegetic and iconographic codes and their semiotics in relation to the narrative issue. Like Groensteen or Mccloud's works, *El discurso del cómic* describes, systematizes and classifies some of the most common expressive and narrative devices or archetypal situations that we see in the vignettes. The wide repertoire of examples that illustrate the descriptions provided of the different types of balloons and their relationship, the assembly of the panels, the points of view, etc., are useful to better apprehend the expressive possibilities of the comic.

Before going more deeply into the guideline and the following analysis, I would like to dedicate some brief attention to the comic lexicon. Up until now I have been using words such as panel, closure, gutter, etc., which is some of the special vocabulary used in the comic medium. Even though it goes beyond the scope of this essay to describe all the narrative devices or the different elements possible in the structure of comic language, I would like to include a summarizing tool box of terminology that covers some of the basic vocabulary, which I reckon is

indispensable when talking about comics. These are terms that I hope will be clarifying and useful in the reading:

- panel or vignettes: each of the framed drawings that form the sequence of the comic.

- frame: the outside line that delineates the space of the panel.

- hyperframe: the line that delineates the limits of the page.

- tier: a line of panels.

- gutter: the space in between panels.

- caption: the space that contains the narrative voice.

- speech balloon: space that contains the dialogue. There are many different types that are used depending on what they represent: thinking, screaming, dreaming, whispering, etc.

- closure: the action of giving meaning to the gutter.

- grid: the layout of the panels in the page.

- a splash page: big panel that occupies the space of several panels, sometimes a full page, and that is generally used to introduce or underline an idea or event.

- reciter: term coined by Groensteen that refers to the narrative verbal voice in comics.

- monstrator: Groensteen's term to refer to the narrative visual voice in comics.

## 2.2. The analytical guideline

The working tool for the analysis of graphic comics has a double objective. Firstly, the guideline was originally designed with the aim of organizing the information that would allow me to respond to the main research question, which is to understand how the problem of memory materializes in the Spanish comic books. By doing this, it aims to see how the analyzed works converse with the other parties involved in the historical memory debate. Is there really a retell of

the war? Are they breaking with the silence of the Transition? Is there a political commitment? And also, is the comic a legitimate medium to study history? As a second goal, this analytical suggestion aims to help us clarify if the graphic novels that form the corpus of analysis, and potentially other comics on the same topic, have enough aspects in common as to allow us to talk about a tendency in Spanish comic books that, at the same time, could let us treat these works as a whole.

It is pivotal to note that the methodology used in this analysis and the guideline itself accounts for uniqueness of the works. The close reading wants to be coherent and focused on the research questions, but it takes into consideration and respects that each text has its own features and its own way of approaching the discussion, therefore the guideline included a last section in which the reader can take note of those aspects that do not refer to the sections specified in the reading model, but are considered relevant for the discussion.

| Guideline for analysis of the graphic novels | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Title and summary: | | | |
| Analysis criteria | Notes | Reference | Theoretical references, links, etc |
| **Thematic aspects: the "what"** | | | |
| -   What are the main elements that give shape to the story?<br>-   War and Postwar: is there more emphasis on one of them? | | | |
| Characters:<br>-   Who are the main figures?<br>-   How are they defined?<br>-   Is there a clear difference between victims and perpetrators?<br>-   Do they represent collectivity? | | | |
| Violence:<br>-   Explicit, symbolic, psychological?<br>-   Terror against direct wars enemies or also in the rear (families, the private space)? | | | |
| Lack of liberty:<br>-   Exile?<br>-   Confinement?<br>-   Only focused on the protagonists or also on the families? | | | |
| Feelings and affection:<br>-   What feelings: anguish, pain, grief (death, disappearance ...)?<br>-   And with what purpose: do they aim for an identification of the reader with the characters?<br>-   Are they a tool to represent truth?<br>-   Does the story focus on the feelings of the witnesses? On the feelings of the second or third generations?<br>-   Are there secondary plots, such as love stories? What would be the purpose? | | | |
| Family:<br>-   Is it a family story?<br>-   Is it defined in terms of absence and loss?<br>-   How important are the family scenes?<br>-   Are familial aspects used to diminish distance between generations? To make the conflict feel closer to our reality?<br>-   Are male experiences overlapping female experiences?<br>-   Are these works perpetuating gender stereotypes in their memory? | | | |
| **Narratological devices: the "way"** | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Fundamental narration:<br>- Narratological framework? Transmission? Biography? Other?<br>- And how is the narratological framework related to the meaning?<br>- Rhythm of the narration?<br>- Space and time in the comic? The role of the gutter?<br>- Paratext? Which and with what information?<br>- Is there a balance between monstrator and reciter? | | | |
| Monstrator:<br>- What type?<br>- Focalization?<br>- Is there color? If so, how is it used?<br>- Are they using real, or real-like images or more abstract depictions?<br>- What is the graphic self-characterisation like?<br>- And of the other characters?<br>- How is intergenerational transmission depicted graphically?<br>- How is the personal approach represented visually? | | | |
| Reciter:<br>- What type: Extradiegetic? Intradiegetic? Does it take over the whole narration? Interventionist? Neutral or involved? Reliable?<br>- How many?<br>- Autobiography?<br>- If not, does it center in a personal story? What importance does it have? | | | |
| Characters:<br>- Protagonist?<br>- Psychology?<br>- Victims, heroes, political ideology, social class, aggressors?<br>- Reference to real people?<br>- Representation? Voice? | | | |
| **Memory and comics: the context** | | | |
| Memory discussion:<br>- Are there specific references to the Spanish memory debate?<br>- Is there an obvious political inclination? - Do they want to be neutral or not?<br>- References to the relation between past and present? | | | |
| Fiction and Truth:<br>- Are there specific dates and events?<br>- Specific and real places?<br>- Are those places already *lieux de memoire* in the collective imagery?<br>- Paratextual elements? At the beginning or end?<br>- Photos? Of what? And how many? | | | - |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| - Real photos or drawn?<br>- What is the purpose of all this: aesthetics, legitimization of the genre? Legitimation of their particular account as historical truth?<br>- Inserted in the story or included as paratextual elements? At the beginning or at the end? | | | |
| **Special features of the text** | | | |

## 2.2.1. Guideline: justification

The three different categories included in this guideline are: narratological forms; thematic aspects; and contextual aspects, the last one referring to the social and academic context that frames the medium in its representation of memory. This division will be useful when extracting the content and meaning that will help us understand the account portrayed in these comics. Notwithstanding, the categories are not mutually exclusive nor clearly separable. On the contrary, the different aspects that compose them overlap and complement one another. Behind the first two categories is the dichotomy story-discourse, which was already delineated by Aristotle in his *Poetics*, and followed by the structuralists theorists such as Genette or Roland Barthes. Seymour Chatman goes along this line and distinguishes between a "what" and a "way" in any narratological structure, which corresponds to the story and the discourse respectively. Both the "what" and the "way" are important to answer the question of this dissertation. I will mainly take a communicative approach, and focus on the "what" when trying to understand the position and the role of comics in the conversation about the war. The "way", nevertheless, will be relevant for that purpose as well for it is also expressive—it communicates.

### 2.2.1.1. Thematic aspects: the "what"

First, I would like to look at what is communicated, the intended message to the intended

recipient. Specifically, the guideline focuses on the memory account that they bring to the fore. The intention is to determine if the works aspire to re-evaluate the existing accounts of the conflict; or if on the contrary, they are perpetuating the already existing narratives. Thereupon, the guideline interrogates the work referring to important aspects of memory: the war conflict and the postwar, the presence of the family and the feelings in the stories, the transmission of the account, and if there is a presence of the present times in the stories and if so, how it is represented.

The first subsection aims to set an overview of how the military conflict is depicted. Is the war and the postwar the main theme or on the contrary, it is being used as the convenient background of another tale? Closely related, the second subsection focuses on the violence, as this would help understanding if there is an intended political or social agenda of denouncing such violence. Putting the violence on the table of the discussion sets the terms in which the authors establish their position. Violence during the dictatorship, but mainly during the postwar was a punishment and also a deterrent agent. How is this reflected? Is the terror part of the account? And do we see terror only in the front or also in the rear? Which takes me to another of the repressive consequences of the dictatorship, and the third subsection.: the restriction encountered in the postwar, which is one of the main aspects of the memory account. But is the lack of liberty a theme in these comics? And if so, how does it manifest: imprisonment, exile, fear, social liberties? In relation to this, the fourth subsection refers to feelings, what are the feelings that protrude in these accounts? And why are they important? Feelings are often, mainly when referring to first person narrations, a narrative device that helps to connect with the reader. Would that be the purpose of using these feelings here? The fifth and final subsection is related as well to the testimonial and personal approach of these stories, but also with the importance of family in the transmission of the account. The oral transmission from parents to their children of war stories framed as intimate

experiences can be a big part of the story line of the narration. Often family experiences have a significant presence in the lives of those who remember, and of consequent generations. Therefore, the guideline explores if the war stories are part of a family history and if so, how the historical event has influenced the family structure[67]. Within the family structure, are these graphic works reproducing the gender stereotypes? What role are women playing, and how are they characterized? Whose are the voices of our collective remembrance?

### 2.2.1.2. Narratological forms: the "way"

Secondly, I would like to look at how the message is communicated. In this regard, the guideline suggests to look at the object in a progressively narrowing perspective, from outside in. It will look first at the narratological framework—what concerns rhythm, sequentiality, etc.—followed by other narratological aspects such as narrative voices or characters.

The first subsection under this headline would then focus on the structural aspects of the comic to understand what the language grammar used relays. The concept of a fundamental narrator defined by Thierry Groensteen is essential in this part of the analysis. A fundamental narrator is the highest enunciating instance of a comic, which in Groensteen's words "can, in fact, be regarded as simultaneously responsible for breakdown, page layout, and where relevant, braiding; or, more generally, held accountable for the distribution and organization of information throughout the narrative" (*Comics and Narration* 96). Elements such as the rhythm, the hyperframe, the connections between panels, etc., in short, the syntax of the comic, also carry artistic meaning, which makes their interpretation essential in the understanding of the narrative of the war these comics portray. Groensteen explains "the page layout does not operate on empty

---

[67] Family is a strong institution in Spain. It is the point of social reference par excellence and consequently it is also key to understanding today's and postwar Spanish society.

panels . . . and is frequently subordinated to a narrative aim, or at least, gives overall coherence to

the narrative discourse" (*The system of Comics* 92). As a consequence, I suggest asking the text

what the page layout tells us, the structure that gives shape to the story. The rhythm, the spatial

and temporal organization should be part of this —taking into consideration Mccloud's

explanation of the closure —. In this particular discussion of memory, though, I suggest we ask

the text if two important elements of remembering, the transmission and the personal account, are

the ones giving shape to that memory. Are the biography or the transmission of the memories in

themselves the superstructure within which the cultural artifact remembers?

The question of the narrative voice in comics, because of its polisemiotic language, leads

to differentiate between the visual and the textual. Philipe Marion uses the term 'elusive

enunciators' to refer to the textual and graphic voices in a comic. Groensteen, on the other hand,

distinguishes between the monstrator and the reciter as the two enunciating instances in comics.

The monstrator is the narrative voice that shows, and the reciter the one that tells —keeping in

mind that by showing we also tell. Both narrator and monstrator can be equally dominant, but

some works prioritize one over the other in different occasions while others keep balance between

the two. The guideline tackles these two instances in the next two subsections. In this sense, I am

inclined to examine the balance between the two in the text, their focalization, the types of

monstrator and reciter and what message these two agents relay. The term focalization explained

by Gerard Genette deals with the perspective of the narrative voice. Genette differentiates three

types which will be applied: 'non focalization' or 'zero focalization' when the narrative voice is

omniscient, 'internal focalization' with the perspective of a character, and that can be fixed —

always the same character—, or variable —the point of view of different characters—, and

'external focalization' in which the narrative voice does not have access to the character's internal

thoughts (189-199). Both the verbal and the iconic enunciators can have different attitudes towards the story and the characters, what Groensteen calls the 'stance'. The three aspects that Groensteen takes into consideration when talking about the stance are: interventionism, neutrality and reliability. The reciter can stay in the background if it does not intervene in the narration; or it can be interventionist when it takes over the narration, being an extreme case when the images are there but are not necessary for the understanding of the narrative (*Comics* 91). The reciter can be neutral or it can be involved, being the latter when it shows feelings and opinions. And lastly, we can also encounter a reliable or a deceptive reciter. The deception of a reciter, Groensteen explains, can be noted when, for instance, the reciter shows surprise, and a surprised reciter is always going to be pretending (*Comics* 92). These nuances can be relevant depending on who the reciter voice is and the relationship this voice has with the memory account. The reader sets different levels of trust if the reciter voice coincides with the leading figure from which we hear the story or if it is a third person voice that would have less direct information.

The figure of the monstrator can also be crucial for the reader of a story that aims to discuss historical memory. Applying to the monstrator the same criteria applied to the reciter is not so straightforward, but it is possible to read the iconic voice in these terms as well. With regards to the first criteria, the participation, it is uncommon to have a monstrator that does not participate whatsoever in comics, but it can happen that we see an only black or only white panel, which could mean the refrain of these narrative voices. It is also undeniable that the participation of a monstrator, as the one of the reciter, is a gradative feature, so in the analysis the reader can scrutinize the nuances in this regard. Secondly, in what concerns the aspect of neutrality of the narrative voice, Groensteen explains that in the case of the monstrator its neutrality or the lack of it can be examined if we pay attention to the homogeneity in the graphic style, where the

consistency would mean neutrality (*Comics and Narration* 93). As for the last aspect, the reliability, Groensteen explains that "it remains ascertain whether the monstrator can be lacking in reliability and dupe us in some way" (*Comics* 94), to immediately give an example in which he reckons the monstrator loses reliability[68]. In my opinion, the reader can discern if a monstrator is reliable or not by, for instance, observing if the message relayed is coherent in all parts. In an event of incoherence, the reader can start wondering if the monstrator is trustworthy. In relation to this and in the case of the memory discussion these comics dialogue with, I reckon it is also noteworthy to understand if the monstrator intends to establish links with reality, or to realistic images, favoring the connections with truth.

The fourth and last subsection of this epigraph that deals with the form, the "way", studies the characters, with a focus on the protagonists. The issue of the characters is always an important aspect to look into when studying narratology. In the context that concerns this study, historical memory, exploring the characters—more specifically the key players—will throw some light on what collectivity these comics want to give voice to. I will pay attention to the function of some of the main characters within the narrative structure, their discourse, ideology and attitude towards the historical events that are accounted for, if passive or active. In order to do that, I will also question the works with regards to the psychology of the central participants, as sometimes that aspect will be relevant in their historical account. Another aspect I will focus on will be the relationship that both the reciter and the monstrator establish with these characters, because this also shows the position that the narrative voice takes towards them, and consequently, its position towards their account. In what concerns the visual aspect, we can observe their characterisation.

---

[68] "A typical case of deception immediately comes to mind—the failure to signal a transition from images supposed to represent 'reality' to dream images" (*Comics* 94).

The depiction in comics can fall within a gradative line from more complex to more simplified, from more realistic to more abstract and from more specific to more universal. Conforming to Scott Mccloud, the more simplified the representation of the character, the easier the self-identification with it (36). When applying Mccloud's theory, it is significant to examine what happens in the comics of our corpus in relation to the hindsight of the war. Are these comics aiming for an identification with the characters? If so, why? Shall we feel the war as ours? As present?

In a medium such as comics, that connects with the classic humorous strips but also with children's stories, it would be meaningful if the examined comic would show a clear connection with either one of those genres. In this sense, Propp's classification of the characters comes in handy as a starting point, as his description is based on traditional children tales, which is a structure often implemented in traditional comics. Propp describes the characters based on their function in the tale, distinguishing: hero, helper, villain, anti-hero, donor, dispatcher, princess and princess father. Using this classification as an inspiration in the analysis will allow us to see if the graphic novels use the more infantilized structure of children stories or the comics of superheroes, or if on the contrary they aim to draw away from them, and why. For instance, are the protagonists the heroes? If so, do they have an ideology? In sum, I would like to explore in what capacity the narration of the war is used to explain the consequences that these events had in the characters of the graphic works in the corpus, in what capacity those events shaped the identity of those who experienced it, and the collectivity they represent, if any.
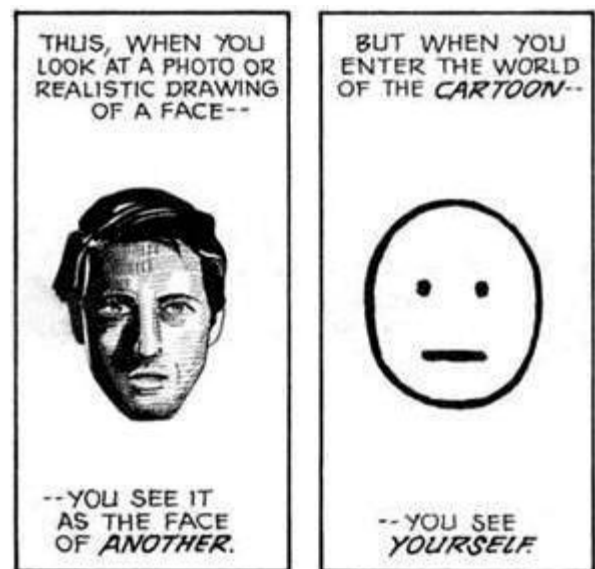
Figure 3. Mccloud 36

### 2.2.1.3. Memory and comics: the context

This section puts the last two aspects into dialogue, and explores how the themes and forms interact with its conversational partners about the reconstruction of the war with the social and political context in which they are published. The head-to-head between the comic medium and the historical retrospect puts on the table two sides of one conversation. On the one hand, we can wonder how the theme of memory affects the medium; but at the same time, it is also relevant to look into how the form, the medium, affects the remembrance. To answer these questions, I have divided this segment into two.

The first subsection refers to the memory discussion, and focuses on the potential direct references that the graphic novels make to aspects related to the current memory debate, such as a reference to the present and our remembrance. Considering that comics are creations of social individuals, the reality of the oeuvre can not aspire to be neutral politically or socially. However, and taking into consideration the political and social burden of the discussion on memory, I reckon essential to pay attention to the intention of the representation and if there is a clear political positioning of the work; and if that exists, I would like to explore in what way this becomes evident. Some examples would be to explore if they break with the already settled narratives of the war, the ones that are more institutionalized; if there is a new narrative, how would the newly acquired prestige of graphic novels affect the account? Moreover, I am interested in knowing if it can be gathered, after the analysis of the comic selection, that the use of this medium for the historical representation could be considered a challenge to the hegemonic tales.

The second subsection about the context refers to the relationship between fiction and truth. Because of its previously mentioned reputation as a medium, although there has been a clear evolution in this regard, comic authors still today often need to justify their legitimacy when the

issues they discuss are not the ones traditionally linked to the medium. In this sense it is important to analyze how fiction and truth intertwine in the comics books and if in this process of expressing historical truth, there is also a veiled need of legitimation for comics as a serious cultural form. If they claim historical legitimacy, how do they do it? We can pay attention to the real references in the texts, such as dates, places, photos, etc. and where we find them, if in peritext or inserted in the main text. For instance, the use of family images are especially important when there is an autobiographical representation because they reinforce the referential pact to the reader, giving more veracity to the story, and they are also a space to transmit memory. Is the testimonial approach aiming to give veracity as well?

## 2.3. Potential application to other works and limitations

The third objective of this dissertation was to be able to identify a tendency in the Spanish comic industry to portray the past in a certain way. In consideration of this, I have prioritized a deeper analysis over a bigger number of sample works, which could have given us a wider overview. Selecting these works was decisive to be able to make the present work approachable, but the risk could be that if the guideline was applied to other works outside the scope of this study, this limited number of samples may prove not to be representative enough. For this reason, it would be important to continue the investigation by using the guideline to analyze other works on the topic published not only during the time selected, but before and after. Moreover, a good complementary research that would lead to a real understanding of the repercussions of the memory discourse in comics would be a thorough study of the dissemination of these comics and their publishing numbers. I focus here on the message, but I have not explored in what capacity these messages reach their audience, nor what audience they reach.

When selecting the corpus of study I decided to focus on the graphic novel format. This decision establishes some restrictions to the present work that I would like to point out. The first limitation is that it will not allow us to compare their narrative to other comic formats that also look at the war in their panels. One of the reasons to prioritize the graphic novel format had to do with the wider presence of this format in the general cultural conversation, as it was considered as more prestigious. In addition, the length and more liberty of the author in terms of editorial decisions, would allow for an independent vision of the experiences of the war that these authors wanted to explore. Since the objective is to understand their contribution in the ongoing conversation of memory, both of these aspects were relevant for this analysis. All things considered, a comparative analysis between the war narrative in different comic formats that would put in conversation graphic novels, serial magazines or comic strips, for example, could provide a broader overview of such contributions. The analytical guideline could be applied to those works in a potential extension of this study, which would help to further understand where the Spanish comic as a medium stands in what concerns the public and scholarly exchange on memory.

Moreover, the primary works that I found in the time frame selected only represent the point of view of the defeated, which sets another limitation to this research, as it lacks examples that allow us to understand the processes of transmission of the post-generations of the perpetrators. Constructing the processes of transmission by familial terms, by the post-generation itself, can be as engaging as it can be troubling by both sides of the story and for different reasons. Memory studies have recently been interested in also looking at this point of view, which is a perspective that is not widely represented in the corpus. There are, of course, representations of the perpetrators in all the novels in the corpus, but not as protagonists, and that is where the limitation lies.

In a few words, while wondering why the portrayal of the war in the form of comic books is in so much expansion, this dissertation is mainly occupied on the how the visual-verbal witness operates in Spanish comic books and on the what, as it looks at the content of the retell of the war that these stories bring to the Spanish memory discussion. It is key to analyze the form because the unique spatial grammar of gutters, grids and panels challenges traditional notions of chronology and casualty, and perhaps it also challenges the idea of "history" as closed or merely progressive. During the analysis I will observe how in these works form and meaning work together, and it is the special form that makes the reader unfold the narrative proposed of the Civil War where historical knowledge and fiction entangle.

# Second Part: Claiming truth in comics

## Chapter three: Life writing—graphic memoirs

Among the four novels in the corpus of this dissertation, two of them tell the story of people that we can identify as real: *El arte de volar* (2009) and *Un médico novato* (2014) tell stories inspired by the testimonies and anecdotes of, respectively, the father and the father-in-law of the authors. As for *Cuerda de presas* (2005) and *Los surcos del azar* (2011), their accounts are the ones of invented characters; nevertheless, inspired by real testimonials, as we learn from the paratext of these works. Regardless of the level of fictionality, all these stories preserve the self reflexive point of view and the testimonial perspective; and place emphasis on a subjective historical account—but historical nonetheless. These works have been published in a context in which the generation who experienced the war first hand is slowly disappearing and when the endeavor to find and identify the corpses of the victims of Francoism hasn't been achieved yet[69]. The concrete and physical need to keep those voices alive and find the bodies of the witnesses— literally and figuratively speaking—underlies these narrations, as they show an inflection on finding new voices and new bodies, the ones of the new generations, that will be used to transmit those same memories.

There are then, two identitarian layers in this transmission, the identities of the witnesses, with their voices, their subjectivity, and their bodies; and the identities of the post-generations that carry on an acquired account. I don't aim to clearly distinguish between the two voices and the

---

[69]The following map from the Ministry of Justice shows the mass graves from the War and Francoism: https://mapadefosas.mjusticia.es/exovi_externo/CargarMapaFosas.htm.

two views in this chapter, because considering that in the corpus the voice of the testimonium is always subject to the point of view of the transmitter, these two layers would be impossible to discern. The aim of this chapter is, however, to understand the project of these contemporary graphic works in what concerns the documentation of the lives of those who witnessed the war; understand the importance of the subjectivity in their portrayal of the past—analyze the personal voices, views and bodies; and understand how the network of subjectivities connects with today's imagery of the war.

When exploring the construction of that subjectivity we take into consideration three elements that forge it: experience, emotions and consciousness or agency of the self, all of them within the context of the historical event they represent. This study looks at the reciprocal influence among these three elements, which can only be understood as interrelated. The first part of the chapter focuses on how the historical event that concerns us plays a role in the personal trajectories and the construction of the self-consciousness of the character, hence how it is represented through their voices and their bodies. There are different formal features that will signal such subjectivity, and some of them will encode meaning related to the historical situations represented in the works I study. The most obvious one is the direct voice of the protagonists, which is present in all cases, sometimes through their thoughts and sometimes through their narratives or conversations as one of the textual signals of the internal or subjective focalization from which the story is presented. Due to the multimodal narratology of comics, the visual focalization will also be instrumental in the construction of the intimate face of the historical event of these comics, and this will be made obvious in different ways, namely, a human-like perspective often present in these works. But if the war plays a role in the construction of those individualities, so do those subjectivities in the construction of the current imagery of the war. The second part of this chapter, on account of this,

will explore the confluences between the individual and the collective of the historical event. Separating collective and personal accounts is presented as a very difficult task—or even impossible—as the common imagery seeks for individual voices to feed its construction of the past, and at the same time, the personal memories also use that collective idea to fill the gaps of the personal memories. That interconnection is discussed in these comics, which through text and graphics show proof and awareness of it, such as how the individual voices and bodies and their personal belongings become small capsules of that memory and therefore determine today's remembrance of the war.

## 3.1. The past from the testimonial approach: the construction of the self

### 3.1.1. Personal experience: testimony and focalization

#### 3.1.1.1. Textual: their voice

"Para mí, las rejas no eran sinónimo de encierro. Cuando era niña, la reja del arado permitía a mi padre arrancarle el pan a la tierra"[70] (García y Martínez 9).

"Estábamos cansados. Lo habíamos perdido todo… Claro que era duro. Era el final. Teníamos hambre, frío… Estabamos desmoralizados"[71] (Roca 34).

"Yo, que ahora soy solo uno, nunca me encontré a gusto en esa casa. Y, de no ser por mi madre, no habría conocido los afectos familiares"[72] (Altarriba 19).

"Me voy mañana . . . Aún tengo todo por hacer" [73] (Sento 4).

---

[70] 'For me, the bars were not always synonymous with confinement. When I was a child, the plow grate allowed my father to tear the bread out of the soil' (García y Martínez 9).

[71] 'We were tired. We had lost everything ... of course it was hard. It was the end. We were hungry, cold ... we were demoralized' (Roca 34).

[72] 'I—now we will leave it as I—never found any peace in that house. Had it not been for my mother, I would have known nothing whatsoever of the feeling of family' (Altarriba 19).

[73] 'I am leaving tomorrow . . . I still have to arrange it all' (Sento 4).

The previous extracts of the comics in our corpus feature the voices of the protagonists in the first pages of the graphic works. Through dialogue or through their narration, readers gain direct access to the account of the witnesses, who are often the ones retracing their live accounts. In what concerns the verbal enunciation, I encounter different approaches in the different works I study, but they all share the accent on the subjectivity. The narratological filtering that expresses the self-reflection on their life experience and the war, and thus limelight the subjectivity of the accounts is textually expressed through the narrating voices—often first person—and the focalization—often internal.

"Balada de ventas", "El cuarto de la escalera", "La ciudad más lejana", "Montañas, nubes, cielo" and "El traslado" are the stories in *Cuerda de presas* that include female reciters that tell their own story. The voice in "Balada de ventas", which opens up the collection, starts with an image that recalls the past of the character. The adult voice remembers her childhood saying "Para mí, las rejas no era sinónimo de encierro. Cuando era niña, la reja del arado permitía a mi padre arrancarle el pan a la tierra"[74] (9). The narrating voice is sharing what her life was like before the war, when she was growing up in a farm. This remembrance comes along with the image of this woman as a young girl, running around her father, who was working on the land. Such remembrance strategically gathers all the other protagonist voices included in this work, by evoking in the image represented the deep feeling of loss of liberty present all across the volume. The repression is alluded to with the semantic antithesis included in the term 'rejas', that refers to two homonymous words. The first one, in the example above, derives from the italian word 'reggae'[75] and, as the reciter says, it is a synonym of confinement because it refers to the 'prison

---

[74] 'For me, the bars were not always synonymous with enclosure; When I was a child, the plow grate allowed my father to tear the bread out of the soil' (9).

[75] Del it. *reggae* 'puerta de la iglesia', 'verja que separa a los fieles del altar', y este del lat. mediev. *[porta] regia* '[puerta] regia' (de la RAE).

bars'. The second 'reja' used comes from the latin word 'regŭla'[76] and it refers to the part of the plow that creates the ridges on the ground and that allows the planting. With the semantic antithesis that this homonymy brings to the fore, Jorge García starts his contribution to the conversation about the Spanish Civil War putting on the table the contrast between the before and the after of the armed conflict, and with it, the feeling of longing. Moreover, the childhood of the character illustrates the fertility of the land, the happiness, the protection of the family, the connection with nature, and the freedom. In opposition, her post-war voice illustrates the deathly reality of post-war prisons, sadness and fear and the repression and lack of liberty that the character feels. This contrast is emphasized and better understood when at the end of the story, we graphically see the opposition of the two 'rejas'. The two splash pages that open and close this story show the contrast between the before and the after, where the feelings of the characters are illustrated by the lines of the 'rejas'. The opening page shows the free-will lines and movement among which the characters are in charge, they cross them at their will and they create them and manipulate them; unlike in the closing page, where the shadow of the prison bars, stiff lines that the character is subjected to, goes over her body and metaphorically traps her, even as she is walking out of the penitentiary. Despite leaving the confinement that she had experienced for so many years, her liberty is still to come.

---

[76] Del lat. *regŭla* 'regla', 'barra de metal o de madera'.

Fig. 4. García and Martínez 9
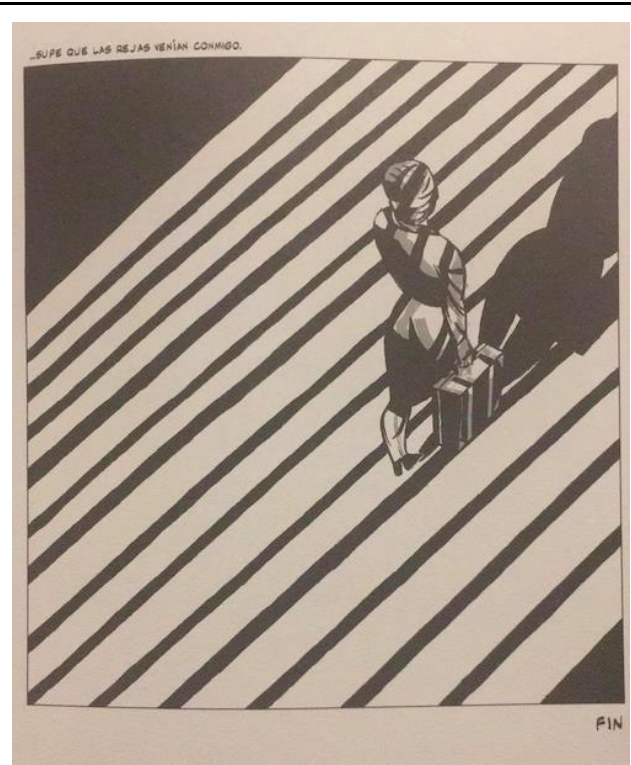


Fig. 5. García and Martínez 15

The first person voice and its intimate and personal focalization becomes the necessary introduction to a volume of stories that discusses the sufferings of women in Francoist prisons, which even within a polyphonic set of narrative voices that show different perspectives, they all preserve the same reliability that is set here. In a work, such as *Cuerda de presas*, that aims to denounce the injustices to which prisoners—more specifically female prisoners—were inflicted in the post-war jails, reliability of the narrative voice is a necessary ally for the author. A later excerpt of this first story is a good example of this. The narrative voice that remembered her past as a child, relates the story that took her into prison and explains their fear and their reality. The reciter says "En la cárcel de Ventas, las reclusas contábamos los tiros de gracia para saber el número exacto

de fusilados"[77] (García and Martínez 18). The "I" that relates this story presents a fragment of reality that the reader understands as credible because it is a trustworthy narrative voice, and that happens because not only have we already connected with this voice through her feelings, but we already know a bit of her personal story. The narration is well organized in a chronological way, which brings some order; and in addition, it also refers to a reality that connects with what we already know about the post-war—political prisoners, coup de grace and countless executions at dawn. In consequence, we feel comfortable including her view in our personal imagery of the war. Furthermore, as the story goes on, this extended reliable and denouncing voice that sets the terms of the relationship between the reader and the whole collection of stories is also going to show humanity, sensitivity and a strong sense of collectivity, which convinces us that not only we have encountered a voice we can give credit to, but also one which we can empathize with and thereby apprehend her personal fragment of history. Later in the story, the reciter recalls how she and the other inmates had to deal with the impending death of her friend and inmate Elisa Vázquez, as an illustration of the mourning in post-war jails. Her words "El último día tratamos de mostrarnos alegres como si no pasará nada"[78] (26) show that the inmates, as a collective whole, tried to relieve Elisa's sufferings and fears, while dealing with their own mourning and distress, as they know that they could easily be in Elisa's position. This compassion and the ease with which they share their feelings makes the narrative voice of this story trustworthy for the reader, and resultantly also more reliable. The 'truthful pact' has been activated. Even more so, taking into consideration that these are stories in which the voice, perspective and experiences of the characters are put forward, as

---

[77] 'In the prison of Las Ventas, the inmates counted the coup de grace to know the exact number of executed people' ("Balada de ventas" 18).
[78] 'On the last day we try to be happy as if nothing was happening' (26).

readers we assume that their memories, feelings, and reactions to the reality they encountered is the only perspective that matters.

The necessity, but also the will, to give the witnesses of the event the opportunity to speak for themselves is almost spelled out in *El arte de volar*, which also includes a first person reciter that is introduced in a very unique way. The novel starts with a third person homodiegetic reciter, the voice of Antonio Altarriba Jr., son of the protagonist and alter ego of the author of the work, which transforms into a first person autodiegetic reciter, voice of his father, who is going to relate the story of his life along with the 20th century Spanish history. This is, as noticed by Francesca Crippa, a narrating structure organized in three overlapping levels:

> El primero es representado por la voz del guionista mismo que, bajo forma de narrador externo . . . va fundiendo su voz con la del narrador interno y le cede la palabra, dejando que, a partir de este momento, pase a ser el narrador principal . . . El segundo nivel narrativo incluye los numerosos textos de apoyo a las viñetas, que reproducen el pensamiento del protagonista y explican sus reacciones psicológicas. El tercer nivel lo constituyen los textos de los bocadillos, que reproducen directamente los diálogos entre los personajes, sin filtros o intervenciones externas[79] (149).

Altarriba introduces through this game of narrating voices the social need and responsibility that post-generations have to recover the voices of the generation that is slowly disappearing, transforming into a reliable and trustworthy narrating voice; which Diego Espiña reports as: "the first person becomes omnipresent and captures the reader" (231). The reliability

---

[79] 'The first is represented by the voice of the scriptwriter himself, in the form of an external narrator . . . he fuses his voice with that of the internal narrator and gives him the floor, letting him, from this moment on, become the main narrator . . . The second narrative level includes the numerous supporting texts for the vignettes, which reproduce the protagonist's thoughts and explain his psychological reactions. The third level is constituted by the texts of the balloons, which directly reproduce the dialogues between the characters, without filters or external interventions' (149).

starts even before this transformation. In the preamble of this account, the third person reciter enacts its authority as a narrator and justifies the upcoming metamorphosis by making a direct reference to its sources. The first source mentioned is an assortment of manuscripts where his father reflected about his life. This source is ironically, despite being a very trustworthy proof of someone's life, diminished by the narrating voice in comparison to the personal relationship with his father. The relationship that the narrative voice had with his parent is the ultimate reason of the transformation towards the identification of himself and his father as the same person:

> Mi padre se suicidó el 4 de mayo del 2001/ nadie sabe cómo un hombre de su edad y en su estado pudo burlar los controles de vigilancia, subir hasta la cuarta planta, encaramarse a una ventana y arrojarse al vacío/ yo sí sé cómo lo hizo/ soy el único que puede saber cómo lo hizo/ porque aunque no estaba allí, estaba en él . . . Dejó doscientas cincuenta cuartillas de letra apretada y rebosante de recuerdos./ Pero lo que sé de él no es por haberlo oído o leído/ Lo que sé de su vida es porque, como he dicho, yo estaba en él o, quizá, era con él...[80] (13).

After the authority of the reciting voice has been established, and in so doing its reliability as well, the reader can witness the transformation of the reciters, because this happens gradually and slowly; while the voice of the past takes over the one of the present to bring both voices together.

> Mi padre, que ahora soy yo, no conserva buenos recuerdos de su infancia. A los ocho años dejó de ir a la escuela para trabajar en el campo/ Mi abuelo, que ahora es mi padre, solo

---

[80] 'My father committed suicide on May 4th 2001/ nobody knows how a man his age and in his state could evade the security controls, go up to the top floor, climb a window and jump./ but I do know it/ I am the only one who can know it/ because even though I wasn't there, I was in him . . . He left behind two hundred and fifty manuscript pages, written in a narrow hand and brimming with memories/ But what I know about him comes not from what I've read or heard/ What I know of his life comes, as I've already said, from being inside him, or with him, perhaps…' (13).

pensaba en incrementar sus propiedades/ Yo, porque ya soy uno solo, nunca me encontré

a gusto en esa casa[81] (19).

There is here, then, a very clear declaration of the autobiographical pact, using Philipe

Lejeune's term[82], between author and reader that determines how one reads the text, which helps

us create meaning. In connection with this, Guereñu formulates that this is "obviamente una ficción

novelesca, que simula el mecanismo de la autobiografía al tiempo que declara dicha simulación.

Con ella, Altarriba confirma su intención de contar la vida de su padre acudiendo a los recursos

propios de la ficción"[83] (196). I agree with this, as the transformation happens in front of our eyes;

and I would like to add that, despite the fictional element, by doing this, Altarriba is adding to the

terms of this contract that this is a reliable narrator. The reader can rely on the truthfulness of the

two parallel stories that are starting in these frames, the one of Antonio Altarriba, and the historical

account of the Civil War, at least as Altarriba senior experienced it. This work, just as we have

seen in *Cuerda de presas*, puts the stress on the perception of the participants and the feelings that

came along with the historical episodes that the character experienced. By individualizing the

historical account, *El arte de volar,* and the rest of the works I study, prove to be efficient in their

attempt to represent reality, even if it is partially, as the individual story is just presented as one

more piece in the complex puzzle of the collective memory in Spain.

It is precisely the objective to represent reality and their agenda to make amends to the

victims of the dictatorship and the invisibilization of certain individuals that makes reliability such

---

[81] 'My father, who is now me, doesn't have good memories from his childhood. When he was eight he stopped going to school and became a field worker/ my grandfather, who is my father now, would only think of increasing his properties/ I, because there is only one of me, was never comfortable at home' (19).

[82] Lejeune identifies the "signature" of the contract between the author and the reader in the proper name, which in this case we identify as one (207, Smith and Watson).

[83] 'obviously a fictional novel, which simulates the mechanism of autobiography while declaring this simulation. With it, Altarriba confirms his intention to tell the life of his father, using the resources that are common in fiction' (196).

an important feature of these accounts, and what explains why we only encounter reliable narrative

voices remembering the past. In addition to this special conversation of voices used by Altarriba,

there is a more common device used in narratives of the past that we also encounter in these graphic

works: the reciting voices embedded within the story, generally in the frame of an interview. *Los

surcos del azar* and "El cuarto bajo la escalera", the third story in *Cuerda de presas*, feature

characters that remember their past, and in their remembering they make the other voices in the

story practically vanish.

     *Los surcos del azar* uses this as its narratological framework, as the whole story is built on

the basis of an interview that moves the reader back and forth from the present to the past, and that

on account of this, it creates a multiperspective account. The story features a character that

represents Paco Roca's alter ego, who is working on a project about a company of the French

Army that fought in World War II—popularly known as *La Nueve*, due to the number of Spanish

soldiers that belonged to it. To educate himself for the project, the character wants to find one of

the last survivors of *La Nueve* because that would give him first hand information about what

happened to this company during that time of history. In his search, he finds Miguel Ruiz, one of

those soldiers who fought in that company and that ever since he left the country after the war lives

in France in exile. Through a series of interviews, the reader has access to Miguel Ruiz's memories,

making him a first person reciter of the embedded narration about the past. This character, at first

reluctant to talk about this part of his life, pays special attention to warlike details in his account

and to other aspects that can help his interlocutor understand the sequence of historical events

"Esperábamos que los barcos vinieran a rescatarnos./ La noche anterior a la llegada del Stanbrook,

un barco logró atravesar el bloqueo…"[84] (34). Through his account, the readers can educate

themselves on historical aspects of the war while learning about intimate feelings and thoughts of

the character. This personal approach is important for the reader because, since it allows them to

enter the emotional arena of a witness of a warlike conflict, they can also feel closer to experiences

that, in most cases, are very alien to them. In the following extract, the character/reciter who didn't

want to deal with his past up, ends up using this interview as an opportunity to reconcile with his

life, and the conversation comes sometimes closer to a confession: "En la vida civil, si un amigo

muere de una forma inesperada, es un drama. En combate, que una amigo le ametrallen la cara tu

lado entra dentro de lo normal. Incluso llegas a pensar 'mejor él que yo'"[85] (Roca 103). This way,

through such a bothersome acknowledgment, his listener—and consequently the reader—has the

opportunity to understand a bit of what it feels to be in an armed combat. Furthermore, the

interview also creates the authoritative narratological space for the character-reciter to talk about

his life experiences, bringing his own perspective to the current imagery of the war developed by

new generations from the distant space in which they stand. The use of the narratological

framework that provides the conversation between both characters explains the apparent need of

the reciter to heal and the need of the listener to fill gaps about the past.

The device of the interview as a narratological framework for the memory narration is also

used in "El cuarto bajo la escalera", from *Cuerda de presas.* As in the previous example, the

conversation also happens between older and younger generations. Mrs. Carmen, who experienced

the post-war prisons, is interviewed by a younger journalist. In her story, she relates how she met

Julia, a prisoner that was repudiated by the other prisoners because of her betrayal to their cause—

---

[84] 'We hoped that the ships would come to rescue us./ The night before the arrival of the Stanbrook, a ship managed to pass through the blockade …' (34).

[85] 'In civil life, if a friend dies unexpectedly, it is a drama. In combat, that a friend gets shot in his face by a machine-gun is normal. You may even think "better him than me"' (Roca 103).

their fight to Fascism: ". . . la odiábamos por haber delatado. Los interrogatorios solían ser brutales. Nunca supe muy bien qué es lo que dijo, pero la noticia se difundió rápidamente entre las reclusas"[86] (32). In her story, Mrs. Carmen remembers Julia with sympathy and understanding about her sufferings in prison, but even after so many years and despite Julia's hardship, Ms. Carmen still doesn't justify her betrayal. Her political views up to that date are still stronger than her feelings and compassion towards her friend. The mental distance that Mrs. Carmen is able to perform between her personal emotions and her ideals are a good reminder to the contemporary reader of a repressive reality that the inmates were subjected to and that, at the same time, brought them together. The values and priorities of the political prisoners are explained by the character: "Verá, las presas sosteníamos dos luchas a la vez… una, con los torturadores. No podíamos ganar, solo hacer tablas resistiendo . . . La otra era una lucha íntima: hablar o no, sin tablas posibles"[87] (33). Thanks to her testimony, the contemporary reader can feel closer to the intimate struggles that political prisoners had to go through during the post-war. Mrs. Carmen's motive doesn't seem to be, nevertheless, similar to Miguel's, who needed to deal with his past. Mrs. Carmen's tone acquires an educational tint that contrasts with the indifference of her interlocutor; and we learn from her that even considering her friendship and love for Julia, the collective fight seems to overpower the personal one; from which we can infer that in Carmen's mind, Julia did not succeed in that internal battle. The conversations between these two pairs of characters, from both graphic works, are useful to signal some of the connections and the many distances between new generations to which I will come back in the next chapter.

---

[86] '. . . we hated her for having informed the authorities. The interrogations used to be brutal. I never knew very well what exactly she said, but the news spread quickly among the inmates' (32).

[87] 'You see, we (referring to the prisoners) were holding two struggles at once... one, with the torturers. We couldn't win it, we could only tie by resisting . . . The other was an intimate struggle: talk or not, without a possible tie' (33)

In addition to the first person reciter, the corpus also shows examples of external heterodiegetic reciters that tell the story in third person. *Un médico novato* exemplifies this. Despite differing from the rest of the works in that sense, *Un médico novato* still offers direct access to the voices of the protagonist of the story and we read the whole story through his lenses not through an external view. While the characters lead the story, the external reciter is almost invisible, completely neutral and does not interfere or manipulate, in fact, it is not involved in the story and hardly intervenes. When the external reciter participates, it only gives brief information related to time and space in a dispassionate way: "Facultad de Medicina"[88] (4), "No lejos de allí"[89] (7), "A media mañana"[90] (58), "Esa misma tarde"[91] (77), leaving verbal and visual space for the dialogues and the graphics to relate the story.

Pablo Uriel is undoubtedly the protagonist of this account, as it is the story of his life, but there is, nevertheless, a great emphasis on the family context, making his whole family participate in this leading role. This is evident from the beginning of the story, as Pablo Uriel's account starts with him saying goodbye to his coworkers, friends and family bound to start his professional career as a general practitioner in a small town of La Rioja. Before it enters deeply in the story, the graphic novel includes a graphic preamble that introduces the characters, setting terms with regards to which are the important voices of the account and the significance of that grouped figure. In the first page, the main character is introduced, and with him we already know about other members of the family: "—¿Aún está usted en Zaragoza? —Me voy mañana/ —¿Ya tiene la maleta preparada? —Ni mucho menos, aún tengo todo por hacer./ —Y cinco hermanas mayores que

---

[88] 'Faculty of Medicine' (4).
[89] 'Not far from there' (7).
[90] 'Midmorning' (58).
[91] 'That same afternoon' (77).

seguro que lo ayudan, ¿no?"[92] (Sento 4). As early in the story as the third panel we know about Pablo Uriel's sisters and their protective relationship towards him, even before we have seen the main figure of the story or know his name. Only at the end of this first page, the reader is going to find out the name of this figure, who, significantly, is introduced with his family name: "—¿Da usted su permiso, Don Eduardo? —Pase usted, Uriel"[93] (4). His last name will be the ending point of the page, as a wrap up that introduces the protagonist and his family. It will only be in the following pages, when Pablo Uriel says goodbye to his friends, that we know his first name. And a few other pages ahead, in the last page of this preamble, the reader can confirm that indeed the whole Uriel family is going to be a cornerstone in this story. Pablo's sisters have been packing his clothes and belongings to help Pablo get ready, when his brother Antonio walks in and gives him a medical briefcase as a gift, showing an image that symbolizes the importance of the family structure in this story. A family photo that includes all the members of the Uriel family is offered while Antonio says, referring to the present: "As you may have imagined. It is a conspiracy of the whole family" (10)

---

[92] 'You are still in Zaragoza? —I'm leaving tomorrow —Have you packed already? —By no means. I still have to do it all. —And five older sisters who surely will be your hand, right?' (Sento, 4).

[93] —May I, Don Eduaro? —Come in, Uriel' (4).
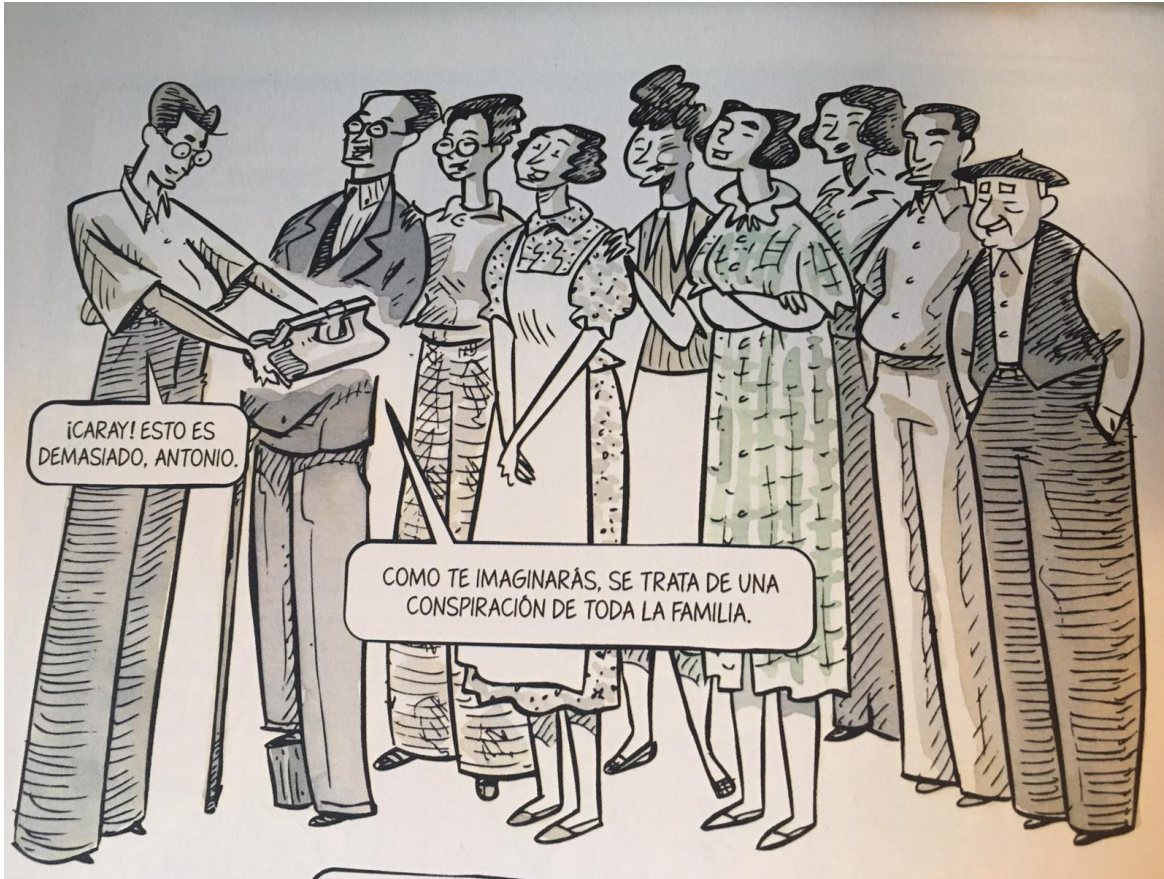
Figure 6. Sento 10

Antonio's words signal the importance in this story of the group over individuality. And the visuality of the frameless family portrait exposes as well the strength of the family union, as in the absence of external physical limits, the accent is placed on the circumscription set by the family members themselves, by the collective figure they draw together. Their group profile, in which each figure connects with one another, serves as the comic panel here and shows a glimpse of the beginning of a personal story that can be read as a family account, where the collective voice and

sufferings of the whole family will be central for the the story of Pablo Uriel, central character and the only figure that faces the rest of group[94].

As a conclusion, the voices of the witnesses are then central in these works, in which the non-existence of an omniscient voice signals the intention of rescuing the subjective memories of those who lived through the war and post-war. In light of the historical accounts that were put aside or ignored during the dictatorship and the transition, these works claim the need to go to the source and hear personal stories to complement or contrast the inherited narrative of this part of history. It is not surprising then that due to their intention to educate the current readership about the Civil War and the consequent years and their intention to get compensation for the victims, authors have chosen reliable narrative voices, as their goal is that their account will be added to the construction of the narrative of the conflict of the reader. The reliability that we perceive as readers goes along with the awareness that we are looking at a very particular life experience, and therefore we know it is biased, and that it doesn't aim to be taken as history with capital letters, but more as one of the many strands of it. This puts on the table the importance of the subjectivity of their stories in the historical account they are constructing—a subjective, but still legitimate, historical representation that will also be defined graphically.

### 3.1.1.2. Visual: their eyes

The internal and subjective voice and focalization perceived textually goes hand in hand with the visual focalization in comics. In what concerns the visual perspective, the works I study

---

[94] A relevant feature of the personal perspective is the intimacy that the family context provides for remembrance. Chapter four explores the family as a space for the transmission of these stories and the importance of this in the remembering that moves across generations.

use a combination of perspectives, in which the monstrator and reciter take turns to become the main narrator.

Literature, cinema and music are formed of words or sounds and silences, and it is widely accepted that silences can provide as much meaning as sounds do. In music, for instance, silence can be considered as a note that is not played, but that it is still a fundamental part of the composition. In comics, this is also an indispensable part of the language, and it is introduced in two places: the space of the gutter, in between the frames, that invites the reader to fill in the omissions; and the verbal silences in the story, when the reciter and the characters quite down and leave space for the monstrator to take over the narration and prioritize the visuality in different parts of the story. This second one is not a real muteness, as there is content, but the change of the narrating entity also changes the reading rhythm and mode. An example from *Un médico novato* will serve to illustrate this. While the reciter in this work was almost invisible and was there only to provide spatial and time references, the monstrator is a lot more active and takes the responsibility of narrating the story and serves as guidance in the comprehension process on several occasions.

The war had just started and surprised the people of Rincón del Soto, the town in La Rioja where Pablo Uriel was starting his career as a doctor. The scene we are going to see shows the unexpected violence that the conflict creates. Since the war had only just started, in the minds of many of the inhabitants of Rincón del Soto the political disagreements had led to some more unrest and some men had been arrested and put in jail, they couldn't imagine the violent events that were awaiting them. In a conversation prior to the panels we are going to see, some characters say:

—Pero ¡hombre, Anselmo! ¿Tú tampoco sabes por qué estás detenido?

—No.

—Pues yo te lo explico… porque eres socialista… y este, por Republicano, y yo, por ser

de la UGT[95].

—Yo creo que es una detención preventiva, para evitar que nos organicemos. En cuanto

tengan controlada la situación, nos soltarán.

—Anselmo, eres un ingenuo.

—Si no hemos hecho nada malo… ¡nada malo nos pueden hacer!

—Eso es verdad[96] (Sento 28,29).

In the page that follows this conversation, in which the characters show their lack of

understanding of the situation, why they are in jail and what is going to happen to them; the

monstrator takes over the narration to bluntly show the dead bodies of Anselmo and his jail mates

that have just been killed in a firing squad.

---

[95] UGT stands for Union General de Trabajadores, a workers union traditionally associated with the socialist party (PSOE).

[96] '—Come on, Anselmo! Do you not know why you were arrested either?
—No.
—Well, I'll explain it to you ... because you are a socialist... and this one, for being a Republican, and I, for being from the UGT.
—I believe that it is a preventive detention, to prevent us from organizing ourselves. As soon as they have the situation under control, they will release us.
—Anselmo, you are so naive.
—But, if we have not done anything wrong ... they cannot do anything wrong to us!
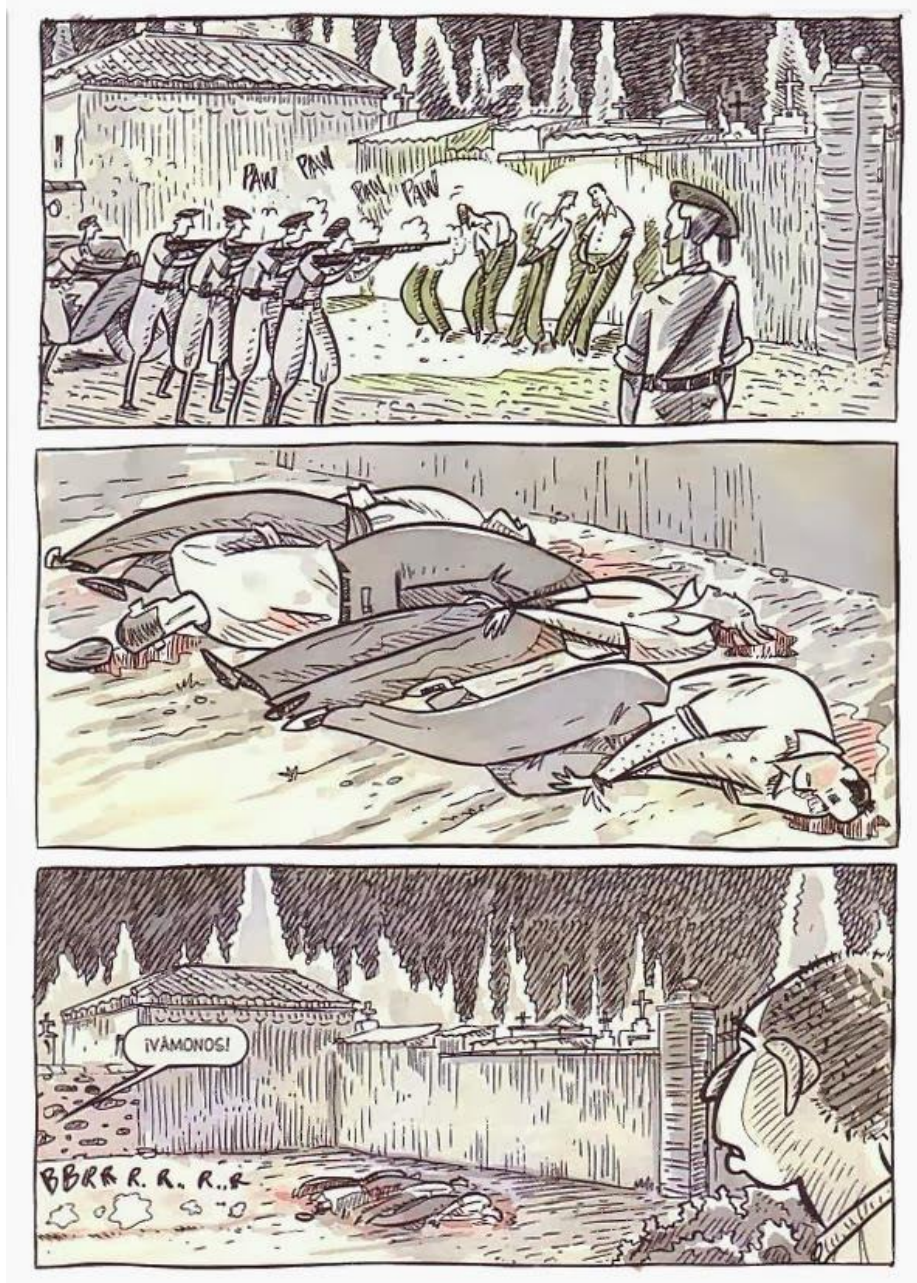— That's true' (Sento 28,29).

Figure 7. Sento 30

The reader experiences the scene as a simple spectator, almost as the participants themselves who are discovering their fate as it is happening; and the explicit violence works as a wake-up call for both the protagonists and the readers. Felipe, the young boy that helps Pablo Uriel

in his work as a doctor, closes the scene from the right corner of the last panel to underscore the identification and the unconscious state of even the characters, who will have to adjust to their new reality, a war state. Even though the young boy had been escorting Pablo Uriel during his medical visits for days and had seen people who had been shot or whose family members had been arrested; only the raw cruel violence of the fusillade makes him understand. In the same way, the reader seizes the gravity and violence of the Spanish Civil War through the young eyes of Felipe, whose naiveness, as well as ours, is shaken in these panels in which he realizes that violence was there to stay. As readers, it is easy to feel for Felipe, as we know that he has to see death very closely at a very young age and that a war is what is awaiting him; and by bluntly representing death and blood, the monstrator is seeking for an emotional and intellectual reaction from the readership. We can then observe how the role of the monstrator is vital in showing the perspective of those who experienced the war, which will be useful in bringing today's reader closer to the experiences of those who suffered it. The subjectivity of the characters, their fear, their sadness, pain and frustration that provokes the new situation becomes more reachable to the reader thanks to the monstrator, who undertakes the task of visually representing those feelings and bringing the character's psyche closer. I will go over a few examples of how this is done in the different comics.

The monstrator uses different strategies to express the characters' intimacy. It is, for instance, striking in *Cuerda de presas* that the backgrounds in the panels are practically nonexistent or very abstract, putting then the focus on the character and the personal story we are learning about. The reader is not distracted by the surroundings; and if so, those backdrops will mostly provide political or historical information that will support the importance of personal experiences in historical accounts and the denouncing purpose of the comic book—as I will demonstrate below. When depicting the character, the monstrator uses numerous close-ups and extreme close-ups that

help the reader decode the facial expressions and the eyes of these characters, which gives them more texture, more entity. In the story "En pie", from *Cuerda de presas* we read the letter that Martina San José writes to her daughter, Inés, to tell her about the circumstances around her birth and how she chose her name. It is a story about friendship and comrandy and about a political confrontation that is summarized in the panels below. Martina gave birth to Inés in the prison nursery in Madrid where she met her friend Inés, after whom her daughter was named and who is depicted visiting Martina's grave in 2005, as proof of their mutual loyalty. María Topete Fernández, the manager of the nursery section where they were prisoners, was well-known by the inmates for being very strict and for not letting the mothers spend much time with their children. "La Topete", as the prisoners called her, suggests to Martina to give her baby a patriotic name, namely María del Pilar[97], but the inmate in an act of defiance gives her daughter a different name. In the panels below we see the eyes of the characters in an extreme close-up, with their eyes wide open and staring at each other and the reader. They look at each other as equals, with defiance, despite being in prison and having a clear hierarchical relationship. We are then, not only looking at the eyes of the protagonists but also looking closely at the personal clash between María Topete and Martina and Inés during a short deadlock before deciding the name of the baby they are baptizing. The baptism of her daughter creates a window in the war narrative for the Republican faction to win a small battle within the big picture of the armed warfare, which, despite being small, is symbolically significant to protect the character's political agency and pride. From her position of privilege and power, la Topete expects the prisoner to take her recommendation offhand, and she also knows that this would mean more than only giving in on a name, it would mean the recognition of her individual power and, as a consequence, one more stone in the

---

[97] María del Pilar was Antonio Primo de Rivera's sister, the man who founded the Spanish falangist party in 1933.

construction and blindage of the power relations that were being violently created during the first years of the dictatorship. These three panels recap the whole story, and work as a metaphor for resistance: in a more abstract level, from the subdued to institutional authority and in the context of the Spanish conflict, it represents the spaces of resistance of Republicans in the hardest moment of the dictatorship, right after the war. Martina wins this small battle against La Topete, and even though she is punished afterward; the rebellious gesture has been worth it for her, as she, later on, confesses in the letter she writes to her daughter Inés, that will work as the narrative framework of "En pie"[98].

An act as mundane, but at the same time with such symbolic load, as a mother choosing the name of her child would not generally come across as raw material for a printed story. It is precisely, the apparent lack of epic of Martina's struggle, together with the visual closeness with which we can access the character's eyes that reminds us that this is a story of common people, the grassroots history that gives Martina authority and power and puts her and the other Inés at the core of the issue. Both in Christianity and in old Egypt, the eye symbolizes the power and the indestructibility of superior beings[99]. Using this idea of the eye and the look as a symbol of power, in these three consecutive panels *Cuerda de presas* dwells on the power of these three women, and the implicit link with those superior beings serves to heighten those characters. In addition, we should bear in mind that women have traditionally been educated not to hold the gaze of equals, but always look with a downcast gaze, which is a sign of submission, humility and discretion,

---

[98] "En pie" translated as "standing", refers to the act of resistance represented in the story.

[99] The eye has different symbology depending on the culture. In old Egypt and in current Muslim culture the wadjet or eye of Horus represents the protection of the god Horus. The wadjet was the good eye that counteracted a potential evil eye. In Christianity, the eye of providence is represented inside a triangle and it looks down. The eye of providence is vigilant, and omnipresent and sees everything, and it also represents the power of a God that is watching.

which makes this clash of gazes even more meaningful. The eyes of La Topete are looking down, vigilant and controlling like the eye of God, while the eyes of Inés and Martina are looking forward, defiant and, even if it is only for that very instant, indestructible. They all stare with power, with both eyes open, holding the gaze at one another and with the shadow on their faces signaling the two sides of the confrontation. While still keeping their individualities, the two characters merge visually symbolizing the teamwork and the strength of their union while they maintain the psychological tension against La Topete. The lines that define the facial features and the hair of the two inmates almost suggest a continuity between their faces, the shadow that covers their faces shows complete symmetry, and they even share the spot in which they developed wrinkles. The monstrator takes over the narrative and endows it with an epic contend that could be perceived as insignificant in the course of history, but that proves to be very meaningful in the small universe of a post-war prison. The focus on the eyes, a part of the body that is not linked to the idea of physical violence, but is more psychological, symbolizes the strength of that union. Considering that Martina writes about this in her letter, the reader can assume that this personal story of success has great significance in the personal trajectory of the characters, and hereby we can gather it is significant enough for the historical account in the eyes of the authors when at the

Figure 8. García and Martínez 67

end of the story the woman mumbles: "Valió la pena, Inés, tengo que creer que valió la pena, era mi deber"[100] (69), as an end of life reflection that fills her with pride.

While *Cuerda de presas* uses a perspective that brings the reader close to the characters on many occurrences, as in the example above, the readership of *Los surcos del azar* takes a more distant outlook from them, with common use of medium shots that often show the whole body or the upper body of the protagonists. This distance, nevertheless, doesn't prevent *Los surcos del azar* from showing a human perspective, as its monstrator will show the warlike scenes from the level of an individual, and therefore will provide a human-like perspective of the war which is added to the personal portrayal of the conflict. In a conference in which Pablo Roca discusses *Los Surcos*

---

[100] 'It was worth it, Inés, I have to think that it was worth it, it was my duty' (69).

*del azar* (*Paco Roca. Dibujante Ambulante*), he talks about his intention to mimic a war documentary but from the perspective of the witnesses of the event. In order to achieve this goal, the monstrator plays a key role as it will be the responsible entity to reflect the human-like perspective. The panels below are a good example of how *Los surcos del azar* goes about resembling the graphics of a war documentary, as if the images were being filmed by a camera person who is carrying the camera on his shoulders. While the reader sees a war documentary, the story is narrated by its participants, which creates a perceptual contradiction. The monstrator doesn't match the focalization of the reciter of the war story, the voice of Miguel. Instead, the monstrator is external and when it narrates the war scenes, it aims to represent truth as factual data, but the decision to create the impression of a Second World War documentary made with one camera person also brings the idea of proximity and adds humanity to the story represented. In the images below we can easily imagine that the person filming is there with the soldiers at the same height and position; correspondingly, the monstrator can be seen as reliable and objective, but also as personal.

In these panels, Miguel is narrating what happened to the forces under General Philippe Leclerc after the taking of the castle of Ecouche, a milestone in their venture of getting the power over France's territory back from the Germans. Building up to this scene, in the very middle of the battle, the tension and emotions that the characters are feeling are represented both visually and textually: the protagonists can see how other soldiers are dying right next to them. Part of the tension comes from the fact that the perspective gives the impression of coming from the very middle of the battle. We receive the impression that the camera person is kneeling next to the soldiers and while they film, they also need to protect themselves from the bullets. In the last panel of the page, the picture turns to capture a more personal side of the story, a conversation between

 Figure 9. Roca 239

Miguel and his friend, who has just seen other members of *La Nueve* die in the battle. The subjectivity and the personal perspective are then brought to the conversation by allowing the reader to only see as much as what any other characters would see, creating the space for the reader to feel along with the characters the fear of being shot and the sadness of seeing others deceased in the battle.

In many occasions the monstrators of the comics in the corpus don't show the personal or human point of view, at least not visually speaking. Much on the contrary, sometimes the monstrator chooses perspectives that would be impossible for the human eye—high-angle and low-angle views, bird's eye view, etc. This can come along with a not personal focalization, as it happens in some occasions in *Los surcos del azar* to show a documentary representation of the

war or to simply linger in the scenery often to give historical information; but it can also go along with the focalization of the character.

The following example in *Cuerda de presas* illustrates this clearly. The first person reciter of "Entre rejas", a story that I already discussed earlier, briefly retrieves the years before and after the conflict. The main character of this story and reciter flashes back to the years previous to the war and how she experienced the empowerment of her political identity. She recalls being part of a labor union, actively participating in political life, in demonstrations, and even joining the armed fight with other female comrades. This acquired and active empowerment made her feel in control, and so it is indicated through her words "aquel verano todo parecía posible"[101] (11). The monstrator also shows this visually, as in the example below. The first panel reproduces the visual angle of the character, looking at the burning church from below, and the immensity of the flames burning the image of the cross. In the following panels, the characters are represented with medium and close-shots showing their features, which display the happiness she was feeling at the time and the sense of community she was immersed in. Furthermore, the characters are placed at the same level of the monstrator, a position that indicates deference towards the characters, and in doing so, the monstrator is conferring them entity.

---

[101] 'that summer everything seemed possible' (11).
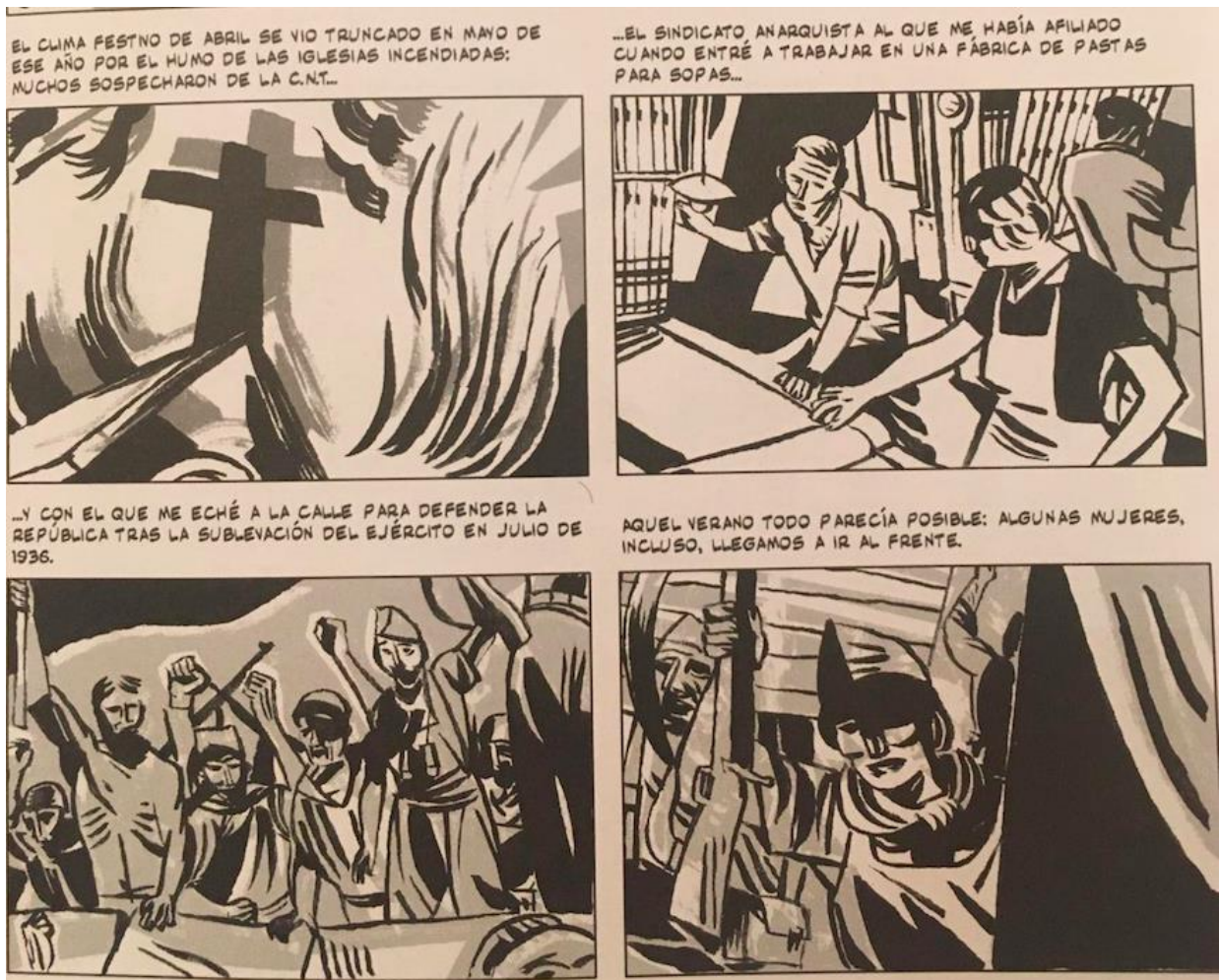
Figure 10. García and Martínez 11

As the story advances, the situation changes and the character loses control—women are relegated to kitchens and sewing workshops. When disclosing this distancing, the monstrator also moves away from the characters, depicts them from a further point of view, and even from above, making them smaller, distant, and almost insignificant. The story describes how those women were arrested for political reasons and judged in summary trials and the whole perspective swifts. The monstrator loses its entity to become an instrument used to represent the protagonist's feelings.

She is being judged, the happiness and power she used to feel is slowly giving way to a feeling of submission, and so is represented in the following tier, that serves as a good summary of the evolution this character experiences.
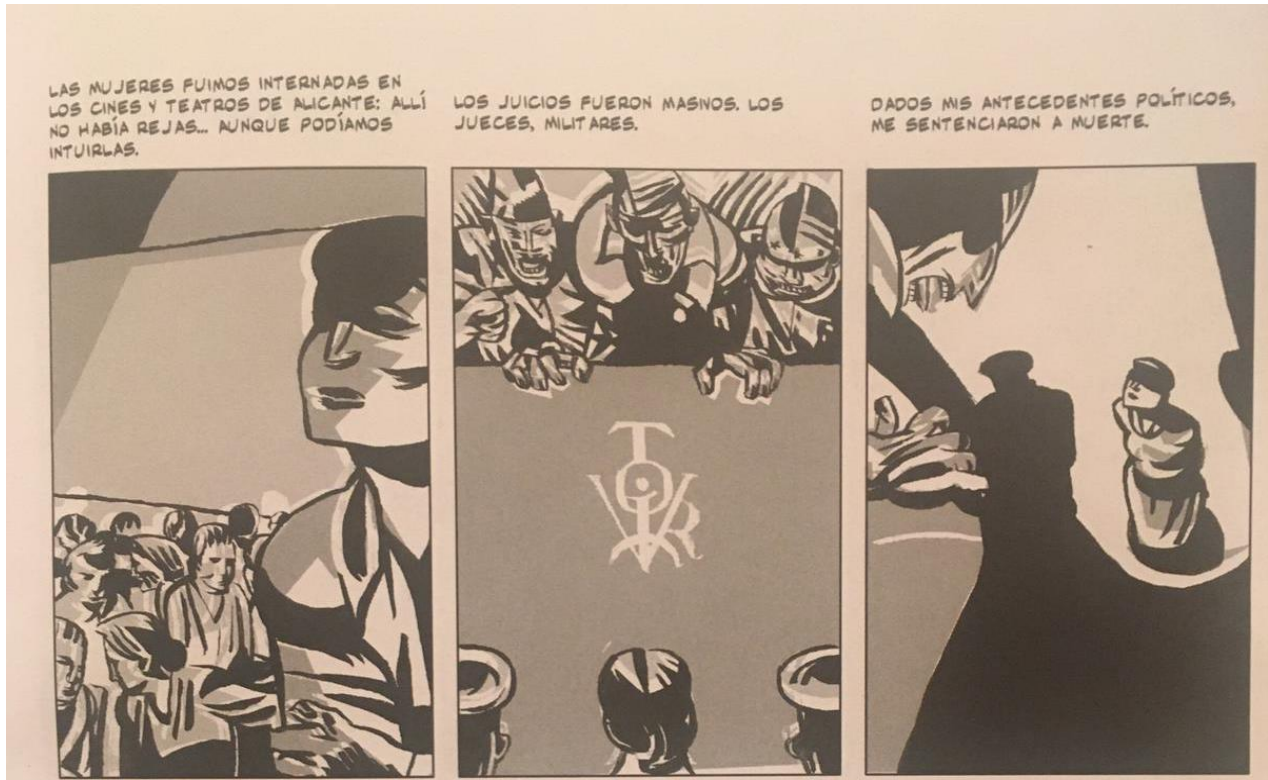


In the first panel the monstrator shows a leading figure that still preserves her dignity: she is shown at the same level of the monstrator; her expression displays concern, but also solemnity; and she's represented with a backdrop of human support formed by all the other female prisoners that are being judged as well. The second panel exhibits all the characters involved in the scene from above. This perspective equalizes them in their rivalry, as they are presented on the same

Figure 11. García and Martínez 13

level, with the same size, and in an equal three to three encounter. Finally, the third panel, that

wraps up the scene, displays the characters using an overhead shot in which the monstrator and the other characters are positioned above the character-reciter, making the main character physically smaller, transferring to the comic the cinematographic technique of the chopped plane of the camera. She's no longer an equal, she has been condemned to death and has lost her integrity and power. Interestingly, then, what in a first impression could look like a monstrator moving away from the character because it takes distance; it is, in reality, a monstrator moving along with the character with a visual focalisation that expresses the mental state of the character-reciter and how she loses control. Not only the small figure of the prisoner has a symbolic and metaphoric meaning that evokes the violence and the oppression that female (and male) bodies suffered, but in addition, the focalization expressed visually in this scene, becoming an eloquent device at the service of the character to articulate the meaning of her subjectivity. The character goes from feeling dignified, and accompanied by her comrades in the summary trial; to feeling smaller, but still looking at the military judges face to face; to finally, feeling small, humiliated, terrified and alone, upon hearing of her death sentence.

In summary, in the comics in the corpus we find that there are many ways in which both the monstrator and the reciter are used to highlight the personal perspective in different ways, even in instances where it could seem that they are moving away from it. The feelings of the participants, the importance of the family and the psychology of the characters intersect in the stories with aspects that traditionally belong to the sphere of the public and that were traditionally given historical relevance. Their public and political life, such as their military achievements, play a similar role in these stories as their subjectivity, and so we don't only know that they fought in a specific battle, but also how they experienced it and what emotional consequences that had on them. The combination of subjective and public factors in the stories of the characters indicates as

well its relevance in the recreation of the memory of the past that these comics want to portray: a personal memory with historical repercussions that brings the political component closer to everyday life, and vice versa.

### 3.1.2. Human subjects: bodies, emotions and social interaction

In the study of the formal devices that the comics use to voice the subjectivity of the protagonists of the historical events, reciter and monstrator, the emotions and the human relationships these character's develop are at the center of these stories. During the reading of the comics, we are continuously reminded of the prevalence that the personal perspective has in the historical accounts. We are reading the accounts of common people which leads us to think about microhistory[102]. Microhistorians believe that we can find historical value in personal accounts— memoirs, biographies, autobiographies, testimonies. The importance of the personal experience of the characters is expressed in different ways in our corpus. The construction of the characters themselves being one of them. *El arte de volar*, *Los surcos de azar* and *Un médico novato* forge their central characters as complex personalities that evolve within the story. They experience a change in their lives triggered by the historical circumstance they are immersed in, *Cuerda de presas* included, although this work follows a different pattern. Even though the use of a short format doesn't allow for much lingering in personal circumstances, the authors manage to accentuate the significance of the war as a life changing experience. With the aim of understanding this evolution and the importance of the subjectivity of these personalities, I would like to focus first on two of the main human and social features: personal relationships and emotions.

---

[102] The historical epistemological current of microhistory, whose pioneer was Giovani Levi, arises as a response to the epistemological crisis of 1970, specifically against the proposal of the School of the Annales. This school ignored the accidental and repeated events that create systems or patterns, and that consequently could be quantified and studied.

### 3.1.2.1. Construction of a compounded persona: relationships and emotions

The relationships of the characters are going to be crucial in their development as complex entities. They exist in both the sphere of the private and the public; but the ones that remain in the story are mostly the ones that belong to the intimate space: family, love relationships, best friends, etc. Not surprisingly, this is especially true for the comics that relate the story of a family member. When speaking about *Un médico novato*, we have already mentioned the nuclear role of Pablo Uriel's family in the narration of his war experience. The story is spawned from within the family, and thereupon it becomes a collective account that has marked the life of all of them, but with a focus on Pablo's personal view and his experiences. Some of these unfolded family stories are the loss of one of the brothers, Antonio, that was traumatic for them all; the efforts and adversities the sisters faced in order to get their brothers out of prison; and the perseverance and suffering of the father, who would wait outside of the prison under the rain only to be able to see his son Pablo for a few seconds, fearing he could have the same fate as Antonio. In sum, small snippets of different lives that have also been affected by the same historical event suggest, once again, that Pablo's story is just a stem of a much bigger collective story. The display of the different family stories creates the idea that each of these characters could be a thread to pull from that would give you access to the different faces of the large picture. In addition, the family narrative behind these relationships is also one of the elements that create a sense of reality and an aura of trustworthy story because what is laid out through the graphic story is also supported through the paratexts, that includes personal archives of the whole family, such as some of the letters that Pablo sent to the family from the prison in which he was interned.

Antonio Altarriba's story, *El arte de volar*, has a strong focus on family as well. The approach to represent family, nevertheless, differs from *Un médico novato*. It is indisputable that

the story we read about Antonio Altarriba can only be understood within the family environment, precisely because it arises from Antonio trying to understand the passing of his father. Specifically because of the origin of this work, *El arte de volar* focuses solely on his life story, and starts retracing Antonio Altarriba's life from his childhood to his elderhood. The rest of the characters, including Antonio Altarriba Jr. and Petra, his wife, are only elements that complement the main account and that help us understand it[103]; but these are, at the same, indispensable elements in the narrative. Antonio Altarriba's life story is constructed around his alliances and his disagreements with others, as two opposing poles that counterbalance his life until the end of his life. The first chapter "El coche de madera" focuses on the difficult relationship that Antonio has with his father and his brothers, which makes his home an unpleasant place for him; but also on the very close alliance he develops with his best friend, Basilio, who suddenly dies in a car accident. Basilio's death rocks Antonio's existence and triggers, together with the discomfort he feels at home, his flee to Zaragoza. In the second chapter, "Las alpargatas de Durruti" Antonio moves to the city and starts being politically active. Politics will be one of the cornerstones in Antonio's life and will give him the home that he had never had: "El ambiente me resultó acogedor y comprendí enseguida que ese era mi sitio... el único desde el que quería luchar"[104] (Altarriba 60). He and his fellow soldiers of the company, who shared political ideas and the same enemy with, create an alliance that they themselves called "the brotherhood of the reborn" and that they symbolically sealed with rings made out of bullets. This political alliance becomes a family for him and within its bounds he will find reciprocal respect and protection, loyalty and a sense of belonging that he couldn't find within his blood family. The third chapter, "Galletas amargas", focuses on what happens after

---

[103] Although Petra, the mother of Altarriba, has a subsidiary role in this story, Altarriba and Kim published *El ala rota* in 2015, which accounts for her life story.

[104] 'The atmosphere was welcoming and I immediately understood that this was my place… the only one from which I wanted to fight' (*El arte* 60).

the war, once Antonio has already returned from exile to a country governed under a dictatorship in which he has to hide his former life. The relationship this chapter focuses on is the one that Antonio develops with the new family he creates, from which arises the most important relationship of his life, the one with his son. This relationship will keep Antonio on his feet while everything else in his life—his political ideas, his marriage and his business—falls apart. All things considered, the balance between his alliances and disagreements will provide structure to Antonio's story who experiences all the relationships with equal passion: on the one hand, his friend Basilio, his fellow soldiers and friends, and his son; and on the other hand, his father and brothers, his political enemies, his business partner, and his wife. The difficulties to keep this balance and the consequent failure of it leads to an ending in which Antonio has to deal with the relationship he barely paid attention to, the one with himself, that also presents a struggle he has to work on. His suicide is, then, the end to that struggle and with it, he finally finds peace by taking a decision that, after all, gives him power. On this subject, Guereñu points out that "Altarriba convirtió la muerte de su padre en un último vuelo que lo salvó del fracaso completo"[105] (211), as if the power was given by the epic of the literary context and not by the act of the father; whereas Crippa interprets the passage more as an act of rebellion of the character itself, giving the character more agency: "La rebelión del personaje, por lo tanto, llega solamente al final de la novela y de su vida, cuando, la opresión de los recuerdos se hace insoportable y la muerte se configura como la única salida posible para liberarse de la obsesión de un pasado incómodo"[106] (151).

---

[105] 'Altarriba turned the death of his father into a last flight that saved him from complete failure' (211).

[106] 'The character's rebellion, therefore, only comes at the end of the novel and of his life, when the oppression of memories becomes unbearable and death is configured as the only possible way out to free himself from the obsession of an uncomfortable past' (151).

On the other side of the spectrum from Altarriba and Uriel, we find Miguel, the protagonist of *Los surcos del azar*. Miguel's story doesn't revolve around his relationships as in Antonio's case. This doesn't mean he hasn't had any relationship along the way. He had friends, comrades, a girlfriend, a neighbor, which is like his family, and we know at the end of the story, he was also married before his exile; but Miguel's character is presented as a grumpy old man who enjoys loneliness and that doesn't nurture personal relationships. Only at the end of the story we understand his chosen isolation and solitude. He had deserted from the army, and henceforth chose to start a new life and to never reconnect with the fellow soldiers next to whom he had fought on the front lines. One of the two important relationships he maintained until his elderly years was the one he established with his neighbor, a young man who grew up with him and who referred to him as "abuelo" (grandpa). His withdrawn and cracky personality is actually unveiled by his neighbor, the person that knows him best:

> —¿Y crees que el pobre Miguel luchó contra los nazis? A mala hostia les gana, pero no lo
>
> veo combatiendo . . . ¿El abuelo Miguel hizo la guerra junto a Leclerc? La verdad es que
>
> no sé mucho de esa parte de su vida.
>
> —¿Lo conoces hace mucho tiempo?
>
> —Desde siempre. Ya vivía aquí cuando mis padres se mudaron al edificio"[107] (Roca, 65).

This short extract shows that the introverted and grouchy temper of Miguel is one of his most remarkable characteristics and that his past is something he doesn't talk about. Despite being the closest person to him, knowing him since he was born and taking care of him as if he was his own *abuelo*, the neighbor didn't know that Miguel had participated in one of the most important

---

[107] '—And do you think poor Miguel fought against the Nazis? He beat them badly, but I don't see him fighting . . .Grandpa Miguel made war with Leclerc? The truth is that I don't know much about that part of his life.
—Have you known him for a long time?
—Forever. He was already living here when my parents moved into the building' (Roca, 65).

events in 20th century world history. Such an hermetic and self-protective personality suggests that he is trying to forget what those experiences made him feel, both the historical events in which he took part and his more intimate experiences. This takes me to the other relevant relationship that Miguel nurtured in his life, his love story with Estrella. Miguel meets Estrella[108] on board the Stanbrook, when they were docked at the port of the Algerian city of Oran. This story doesn't take much space in the comic, only a few panels when Estrella and Miguel meet, and at the end of the graphic novel when his love story resumes. It is then when we understand the importance of this character in Miguel's current life. Miguel and Estrella meet again after the war and they fight clandestinely against Franco's government. They fall in love. Estrella finds out that Miguel has kept all these years a can opener that she gave him the day they met and that he was carrying as a talisman. After a short and passionate romance, Estrella dies the day that she and Miguel try to start their journey back to Spain. What was going to be the beginning of a new life with Estrella in Spain, becomes the beginning of Miguel's new path in France alone but near Estrella's remains. To that date Miguel visits the cemetery everyday at nine. Despite the brief intervention of Estrella in Miguel's war account, the reader discovers that Miguel's life has actually been determined by her loss, which again puts the accent on the emotions and the personal relationships in this account.

The space that these emotions take in these narratives is immense. Not only have they shaped Miguel's current personality, they also determine Antonio Altarriba's life and death or they explain the sufferings female prisoners went through in post-war penitentiaries. Following Oatley & Johnson-Laird theory on emotions whose central assumption is that "emotions serve a communicative function both within the brain and within the social group" (84), I would like to

---

[108] Estrella was a young lady who was running away from Spain with her mother on the Stanbrook. We don't know much about this character at the beginning, other than the fact that there seems to be sexual attraction between Miguel and Estrella on the boat. As the story advances, we learn that Estrella was a very brave and politically committed person who ended up losing her life when she was about to try to start a new life back in Spain with Miguel.

highlight the use of feelings as devices for self-knowledge and the comprehension of the other. This allows us to explore the instrumental role that emotions have in the processing of their life circumstances and in the readership's understanding of personal experiences of those who participated in the war as well as better understanding the sociopolitical context they were immersed in and that connect closely with today's socio-political reality.

When analyzing their social interactions and the formal devices used to express the subjectivity, I have already observed in different instances how emotions are often related to their social relationships and the political situation they live in. Characters have trouble dealing with some feelings that at the same time are going to be the trigger of personal and political learnings and that are going to be determinant in their life experience. Considering these are war stories, and more specifically stories of the defeated, many of the feelings discussed in these works are related to the process of dealing with loss and probably with the trauma of suffering violence. The characters have to face a wide variety of perditions, sometimes related to their personal bonding—friends, partners, comrades or family members—and sometimes to politics, as some of them must give up their political identity and political agency. Many of the feelings that emanate in these stories are related to the process of grieving: shock, anger, sadness, anxiety, frustration, etc. In their life trajectory, they also go, nevertheless, through emotions and experiences of joy, such as love, sexual enjoyment or pride. The sadness and anxiety Antonio Altarriba goes through, for instance, helps him manage his many losses—Basilio, some of the members of the "brotherhood of the reborn", his marriage—, and Miguel learns to live with the pain caused by the loss of Estrella, which paradoxically also gives structure to his existence.

In this approach to history through the private life of their characters, the graphic novels reach the most intimate feelings of those characters that have the ability to talk to the reader in first

person, who, at the same time, will be able to identify with that character through those feelings. The readership learns about the feelings of the characters from both their textual enunciation and the monstrator. The visual narrator uses mainly two techniques to bring those feelings to the reader: through a focalization of the character, as in the examples already studied above, and looking at their eyes where we can read those feelings, as it happens in the example of Martina and Inés. Thanks to its hybrid language, comics are especially efficient in communicating the emotions and therefore they are also efficient in the depiction of a denouncing account, because the input is double and the visual part often aims to trigger a reaction from the reader. The positive emotions that linger in the remembering of the personal stories are efficient in establishing a connection with the readership because they are easily recognizable. That being so, the portrayal of emotions make comics a good teaching/learning tool, because they construct a more rounded character that can communicate knowledge and feelings and can make the reader deliberate about whatever topic because the characters are entities with whom they can empathize. Emotions, furthermore, contribute to the process of transmission of the memories at stake—mainly the one that happens in the context of a family, but not only. For this reason, I will come back to them in chapter four to look at how they affect the acts of transfer.

Closely related to the emotions, the characters of the comics also experience bodily sensations connected to the feelings that arise due to the warlike circumstance. The difference between the body sensations and feelings would be, according to Oatley & Johnson-Laird, threefold: the cause, the termination and the consequences:

> Bodily sensations are another form of mode, but they are distinct from emotions in their
> causation, termination, and communicative consequences. Bodily sensations have physical
> causes, e.g. deprived of food one feels hungry. They can be terminated by other physical

causes, which in turn produce further bodily states. They have bodily and behavioral

consequences that have a direct purpose. Emotions, however, have psychological causes.

They are created by cognitive evaluations" (85).

Emotions, then, can linger even after the threat has disappeared, and they affect the body,

which can also hold memories that also help in the reconstruction of the past. The corpus shows

the importance of that body and how connected bodily and psychological sensations can be.

### 3.1.2.2. Testimony and the body: the punishments on the female body

> ADELA
>
> Me sigue a todos lados. A veces se asoma a mi cuarto para ver si
> duermo. No me deja respirar. Y siempre: "¡Qué lástima de cara!
> ¡Qué lástima de cuerpo, que no va a ser para nadie!" Y eso no,
> ¡mi cuerpo será de quien yo quiera![109]
>
> (García Lorca 202)

In the previous extract of Federico García Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, Adela refers

to her body on different occasions. The first instance would be when Adela says "No me deja

respirar"[110] (202), adducing the oppression physically felt from the relationship she bears with her

mother. Even though the expression is used in a figurative sense, she introduces the idea of the

effect that traumatic experiences can have on one's body, that is, the organic reactions to physical

and emotional agony. A little later, Adela puts on the table the idea of ownership over her body,

which in her case is manifested in her claim to the power that she wishes to have over it, but also

over her own life: "¡mi cuerpo será de quien yo quiera!"[111], while expressing her rejection towards

the maternal figure that oppresses her.

---

[109] ADELA: She follows me everywhere. Sometimes she peeks into my room to see if I am asleep. She doesn't let
me breathe. And she's always repeating: "What a shame of a face! What a pity of a body, that it will not be for anyone!
And that's not right, my body will be for whomever I want! (García Lorca 202)
[110] 'She doesn't let me breathe.'
[111] 'my body will be for whomever I want.'

I bring back this extract of the legendary work of García Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba* because it distinguishes two aspects that are also present in the remembering of the past that contemporary comics show, and that are an important part of the narrative they present. These two elements are: the body as a container of emotions that can consequently serve as an instrument for the remembering of the contemporary memory discourse and the self-empowerment and control over one's life and body, which connects with the idea of self-recognition.

In what concerns the first of the two aspects, there are several examples in the comics of the corpus of characters whose bodies suffer psychical and emotional abuse, and how those leave emotional scars. These bodies then become a site where the sufferings of the past have been engraved, where those experiences linger in some occasions until the end of their lives and can be used for remembering. A good example of a body that carries the sufferings of traumatic events is the case of Antonio Altarriba who endured hallucinations and night sweats in the last years of his life and who also decides to take his own life to stop those sufferings. In the notes Altarriba wrote for Kim when he gave him the manuscript of the book for him to start the drawing process, he explains how he presents his father's suicide as the consequence of a whole life trajectory: "Voy a plantear su suicidio como la consecuencia de una serie de vuelos imposibles. En su caso el vuelo ideológico, el vuelo económico y hasta el vuelo afectivo resultaron un fracaso"[112] (Guereñu 212). Antonio Altarriba's body suffers then, the ultimate consequence, the last drop of pain that also serves to liberate him from the psychological and physical pain he has been carrying.

The case of female bodies during Franco's regime deserves special attention, as the female body was in the center of many of the regime's ideologies. For instance, the image that the

---

[112] 'I am going to present his suicide as the consequence of a series of impossible flights. In his case, the ideological, the economic and even the affective flight were a failure' (Guereñu, 212).

Francoist regime portrayed of their female enemy was of someone who was sexually deviated, promiscuous, dirty and masculine. These adjectives that defined them pointed directly at their bodies, as a core element that helped to identify them as undesired elements of the society they were constructing. The bodies of Republican women were then something foul and despicable, and as such, they were bound to be straightened and punished. In light of the construction that Francoism made of their female enemy, the brutality over their bodies was completely justified in their minds; and that violence was in fact, part of the development of the image of the enemy that, as Maud Joly states was never meant to be rehabilitated, but only punished (95). The violence denounced by these comics covers different aspects that are both physical, as well as symbolic. A clear example of the former appears in "El cuarto de la escalera", in *Cuerda de presas,* where the old woman who is being interviewed about the war recalls the physical and psychological abuse to which the inmates were subjected during the interrogations in Francoist prisons.

Figure 12. García and Martínez 31

The older woman interviewed was narrating Luisa's story, who suffered the sexual violence from one of the prison guards. The rapes to women during the Civil War were perpetrated by both sides of the conflict. It was a violation of human rights that was somehow allowed. Joly explains that in the case of the Nationalist faction it also endorsed the narrative of virility of a war soldier and it went beyond the physical punishment in itself: "En el bando de los sublevados, en el contexto de la 'limpieza' y del 'didactismo por el terror', las tropas usaron de la violación como medida punitiva de la población civil y las autoridades, y explotaron esta amenaza hacia las mujeres Republicanas como un arma psicológica"[113] (100). Rape was used as a threat during the interrogations to women where, as we can see in the panels above, they were also physically punished on sensitive parts of their female bodies. As the character is disclosing details about Luisa's rapes in jails, she also remembers the rough interrogations she, as a prisoner, had endured after being arrested by the authorities. When she remembers the scene, she cannot help but to interrupt her account because of the anguish those memories bring back. In that instant, her countenance darkens and she even takes her hand to her temple in a gesture of affliction. The memory that stuns her is the image of herself being harmed with her naked body bearing the pain caused by the electricity that was being applied on her bosom, in a clear symbolic reference to her sexuality. The pain is so intense that even after many years she still seems to clearly remember it, and the monstrator takes the time to portray that pain. In an article about the portrayal of violence towards female bodies in graphic novels on the Spanish Civil War, Montse Gatell, Teresa Iribarren and I refer to this same scene:

---

[113] 'On the side of the rebels, in the context of "cleansing" and "didacticism for terror", the troops used rape as a punitive measure against the civilian population and the authorities, and exploited this threat towards Republican women as a psychological weapon' (100).

Un primer plano enfrenta al lector a ese dolor. Los ojos deformados, la boca torcida y los huesos de la cara marcados recuerdan a una calavera de la que, paradójicamente, emana la vida que hay en la angustia y el sufrimiento físico. Como en el Guernica, la deformación de filiación cubista y expresionista persigue generar una experiencia nada fácil para el que observa, y de la que se espera una reflexión ética y política[114] (62).

Three silent panels outline the image of agony dwelling on the detailed features of her punished face. Using the language of the body and the facial expressions, the monstrator speaks up to denounce not only the actual violence, but also the repression female bodies underwent under Francoist regime. Discussing rapes and physical violence over women's bosoms points directly to the sexuality of the protagonists, becoming effective weapons of repression aimed to teach a lesson not only to those who suffered them directly, but also the rest of the society, no matter what ideology. Esther Claudio notes that in *Cuerda de presas* sexuality is "un aspecto esencial en la construcción de género que problematiza un acercamiento maniqueo a las dinámicas entre subjetividades oprimidas y opresoras"[115] (360). Violence and rumors went hand in hand to achieve the objective of indoctrination the oppressors had in mind. The reason why women's repression was so directly connected to their bodies has to do with the fact that the goal was to disconnect them from their own sexuality and their own pleasure, making them aliens in their own skin.

Besides the aforementioned physical punishment, "El cuarto bajo la escalera" also refers to another sexualized punishment that Republican women had to endure. During the years of the war and the dictatorship, the heads of thousands of women were shaved with the intention of

---

[114] 'A close-up confronts the reader with that pain. The deformed eyes, the crooked mouth and the marked bones of the face are reminiscent of a skull from which, paradoxically, emanates the life that exists in anguish and physical suffering. As in Guernica, the deformation of cubist and expressionist affiliation seeks to generate an experience that is not easy for the observer, and from which an ethical and political reflection is expected.' (62)

[115] "an essential aspect in the gender construction that problematizes a maniqueum approach towards the dynamics between oppressed and oppressive subjectivity" (Artime and al. 360).

humiliating and stigmatizing them. This punishment, which had a very strong symbolic load, was meant to destabilize Republican women's identities and their sense of femininity. Being the female hair an attribute that has historically been understood as greatly sexualised, removing it altogether served to discipline and penalize that modern woman that did not fit the idea of gender that Francoism wanted to promote. On the grounds of this, women were symbolically mutilated, deformed and forced to give up different parts of their identity, one of them being the femininity that the hair represents[116], but also many other features, as the lack of hair functioned as an equalizer, making them all look the same, as it is highlighted in this panel:



Figure 13. García and Martínez 30

The idea of a body that is abused so much that is deformed and dehumanized connects with the important role of the body in the process of finding self-ownership and self-identity. El Rafaie refers to this when she says that "Much contemporary autobiographical writing engages explicitly

---

[116] Another comic that discusses this punishment is the story "Y tú, ¿qué has hecho por la victoria?" drew by Alfonso Fonts and included in the collection of stories about the Civil War *1936-1939 Tormenta sobre España* (2008)

with the relationship between bodily identity and subjectivity . . . corporeality tends to feature centrally in their life stories (Egan 1999; Smith 1993)" (51). Both Antonio Altarriba Sr. and the character-reciter of *El cuarto bajo la escalera,* seem to have difficulties dealing with the grotesque deformation of their bodies that resulted from their war experience. The physical strain that both characters exhibit—he wakes up sweating in the middle of the night and she is feeling a headache—evidence as well the acknowledgement of those feelings and the perception of those body changes as their own. Through the body, the reader can see two layers of that ownership: vulnerability and agency.

While the body is an element that helps to give shape to all sorts of characters, it is remarkable that in the case of women, the body is more of a differentiating element of the female experiences of those times. The comics in the war that I study and many others outside the scope of this research show women sexually violated, sexually humiliated, physically abused using their sexual attributes, and persuaded to use their sexuality to overcome difficult situations. The female body is, then, represented as a war front space, that was used by Franco's regime to represent and create the space of alterity, which was also assimilated by the women themselves. Comics document bloody and punished—and in the case of women also highly sexualized—bodies that suffered the consequences of the war in a body where these characters find hints of their consciousness.

## 3.1.3. Consciousness: personal and political agency

> "Your silence will not protect you"
>
> Audre Lorde

When talking about the formal features to express subjectivity, I alluded to the silence as a formal element used in the arts that brings meaning and enriches the piece of work created. In this

epigraph, I bring the idea back, but not as a formal element which would mean "pause" or even as an element that adds meaning, but more in the sense of omission or abstention to speak. Poet and activist Audre Lorde refers to that silence in the quote above when she calls minorities to action to face injustice and defend their rights. She talks about the injustices towards the black community in the United States, urging them to develop their political agency; but this could be extended to any community that feels battered. In politics, voiceless as omission has been used to protect one's life, as it was the case for many Republican families that had to keep quiet afraid of the potential consequences. It was also used to find or keep temporary peace, which could potentially mean indulging in an act of injustice, being you the one suffering it or not, and consequently becoming an accomplice of such an act. Lorde rejects this political quietude, and so do the authors of the comic books I study, which choose to discuss the memory issue and find in the voices and the bodies of the characters, and inevitably in their identity, the path to do so. The characters in the comic books, nevertheless, sometimes chose to stay quiet and sometimes they don't; and in both instances, it is one of the main elements that helps define these characters not only as the human subjects we have already proven they are, but also as political agents.

The case of Miguel, from *Los surcos del azar*, is remarkable in this sense, as silence proves to be compelling in his story. Roca uses this element as key in the trajectory and construction of the character, opening and closing his story with a reference to the muteness Miguel had chosen for his life. This is significant in the story because the character represents the many men and women who lived in exile after the war and who, at some point, chose silence to sanely survive, perhaps in order to forget a traumatic past or as the path to rebuild his identity in exile, as Miguel does. The reader learns about this decision right from the beginning: "—Ya estoy cansado/ ¿Qué es lo que quiere?/ ¿Y eso que tiene que ver conmigo?/ Malditos anarquistas, ¿por qué no me

olvidan de una vez? Dejadme en paz unos y otros/ No tengo mucho que contar"[117] (33), because recalling that episode of his life and revisiting it seems painful. Miguel, then, chooses silence as a conscious decision that marks his new existence, and paradoxically, as a way to keep the past intact.

The war brought a big deal of loss for many of the characters in the stories: Pablo Uriel loses his brother and his liberty for many years; Miguel loses the political fight and his home and a family when he has to leave the country when the war ends, the characters in *Cuerda de presas* all lose their freedom, among other things, and Altarriba feels forced to leave the country and at his return gives up his political identity so he can peacefully live a regular life. These losses came along for many of these characters when the political situation changed and this brought as well a loss of identity and even political agency, in some cases. Miguel is just one of the characters that feel in the position to give up their past life and identity and that, as Phoenix, has to rebuild from his asses, construct a new life and find a new identity.

Mercedes, one of the characters of "Qué escribir" in *Cuerda de presas* dealing with difficulty to describe how they live in the jail of Palma de Mallorca, she paradoxically finds the words to describe that feeling of loss of identity where the world they knew has to now be reformulated. Her cellmate urges Mercedes to write about the conditions in which they live in that Francoist prison in order to disseminate that information outside the prison:

¿Qué contar? ¿Que sopla un viento alcalino? ¿Que por su culpa todas llevamos el pelo blanco? ¿Que el único aseo posible consiste en ducharnos con agua de un pozo…? ¿…y que el agua trae tanta cal que estamos sucias apenas hemos terminado? ¿Que vivimos bajo

---

[117] 'I'm already tired / What do you want? / And what does that have to do with me? / Damn anarchists, why don't you just forget me? Leave me you all alone / I don't have much to tell you' (33).

constante vigilancia? ¿Que el hambre nos devora? ¿Que el rancho incluye hierbas llenas de hormigas? ¿Que los pescadores donan lotes llenos de pescado que las monjas confiscan y venden en el economato de la prisión? ¿Qué decir? ¿Que este lugar se define por la negación? ¿Que una no enciende ni apaga la luz, no abre ni cierra la puerta, no tiene dinero ni compra? ¿Que no hay un reloj, una llave, una olla, que las palabras pierden su significado y se vuelven abstractas?[118] (94).

Not only does she denunciate the living conditions they were suffering, but she also addresses the consequences from the confinement: they are hungry, they suffer an unsanitary situation, they don't have money, they can't even make the routinary decision of turning the lights on and off, because their position in that place is defined by negation, emptiness and words that lose their meaning, and henceforth, their existence becomes abstract. The issue of the loss of entity is also addressed in the story of Vicente, the main character of "Montañas, nubes y cielo" in *Cuerda de presas*. It runs 1944 and Vicente is separated from his mother and his sister with whom he lives in the prison of Saturrarán. The Ministry of Justice had decreed the transfer of all children older than three to hospices and aid institutions. One of the main fears of mothers is that the kids forget who they are: "!y una mierda! !Lo que queréis es que se les olvide su sangre y hasta su propio nombre!"[119] (39). Vicente's name and the world as we knew it was changed at his arrival in the aid center, where the pain and the loss take over: "mi universo, en cambio, quedó reducido al dolor y a la sed"[120] (42). At an older age, we see that Vicente has adopted that new identity, but still

---

[118] 'What to tell? That an alkaline wind blows? That because of it we all have white hair? That the only possible washroom is the water from a well...? ...and that the water brings so much lime that we are dirty as soon as we have finished? That we live under constant surveillance? That hunger devours us? That the ranch includes herbs full of ants? That the fishermen donate lots full of fish that the nuns confiscate and sell at the prison commissary? What to say? That this place is defined by negation? That one does not turn the light on or off, does not open or close the door, does not have money or purchases? That there is no clock, a key, a pot, that words lose their meaning and become abstract?' (94).

[119] 'Bullshit! You want them to forget their blood and even their names!' (39).

[120] 'my universe, nevertheless, was reduced to pain and thirst' (42).

remembers the name his mother gave him and he thinks everyday about the life he had before he was taken away. Vicente, at his young age, models the consciousness over one's identity and the changes that the political circumstances provoke in it. The ending reminds us about the strong political agency of these characters, who despite forcefully losing their identity and past—by actual force or by the circumstances, as it is the case of Miguel—, manage to hold on to their past story and their identity stays latent. One of the protagonists of "El duelo" is another example of this. The character tried to erase her past in order to be able to live under the political circumstances of the dictatorship. In his remembering, her son makes a reference to that deletion: "Después de que la indultaran en 1948, trato de borrar sus pasos. Se casó, nací yo y ella mantuvo el pasado en silencio.../ Cuando Franco murió rompió ese silencio. Así empecé a conocer mejor a mi madre: la militancia, la guerra, la cárcel…"[121] (60). It is striking for today's reader that the character thinks that the silence disappears with Franco, which could be interpreted as a denial of the pact of silence during the Transition. Nonetheless, a further reading and analysis will demonstrate that the demands for justice that transcends the whole collection, and the overall denunciation tone can be actually interpreted as a challenge of the politics of reconciliation.

Women and men that participated in the war, then, are characterized as regular people who had to give up their past, but that make an effort to preserve their political identity. Through their lives, after all, we are talking politics and discussing part of the history of the Spanish state, but their denunciation works to illustrate and invites to be read as beyond their own subjectivity. Esther Claudio notes that "La discriminación estructural de género se manifiesta vívidamente en sus circunstancias individuales" (360). What we read as individual stories, we can read as structural

---

[121] 'After she was pardoned in 1948, she tried to erase her steps. She got married, I was born and she kept the past silent... / When Franco died she broke that silence. That is how I began to get to know my mother better: militancy, war, prison …' (60).

issues. These characters represent a community who experienced the war and the post-war in this territory, and even more globally, they are depicting human reactions to traumatic events. In this respect, Antonio Martín in the foreword of *El arte de volar* says "su vida, espléndidamente narrada, forma parte de la gran crónica del s. XX y nos ofrece un despiadado retrato de la condición humana"[122] (7).

## 3.2. Beyond the subjectivity: testimony and collectivity

As I pointed out in the last chapter, the comic theorist Scott Mccloud explains that the comic form can favor generalization because the drawing can be as abstract as the authors choose it to be. This idea is picked up by Susana Arroyo who compares photography and comics: "la iconización del cómic incita a asumir la tragedia privada de los personajes como un asunto universal. Como demuestran los dibujos casi infantiles de *Persépolis*, un estilo sencillo puede albergar un significado extremadamente complejo"[123] (114). The graphic style of *Un médico novato* and *Cuerda de presas* are also good examples of how the abstraction of the drawings can be used to represent the universal. The uncomplicated graphic strategy of Sento, for instance, equalizes the characters on many occasions making it sometimes difficult to differentiate the two brothers, Antonio and Pablo. Sento chooses to make this equalization even more evident in the scenes of violence. By doing this, the author is prioritizing the denunciation of the pain caused to a full community rather than to an individual. In the following strip we find a conversation between Pablo and his professor in which this is voiced. Antonio and many other men have been arrested

---

[122] 'His life, splendidly narrated, is part of the great chronicle of the s. XX and offers us a ruthless portrait of the human condition' (7).

[123] 'The iconization of the comic encourages us to assume the private tragedy of the characters as a universal matter. As the almost childish drawings of *Persepolis* demonstrate, a simple style can harbor an extremely complex meaning' (114).

by the authorities and Pablo and their families don't know what their future is going to be like.



Figure 14. Sento 49

Immediately after this conversation, the reader observes the unfolding of the shooting in which Antonio and other prisoners die. The prisoners are transported in a truck that stops in a forest where they are going to get killed. Their body language seems to indicate that they are very much aware of what is coming for them. One of the prisoners is smoking his last cigarette. Next to him, there is a prisoner who is sitting at the back of the truck and his body is leaning towards one side in a defeating way. Another of these characters is hiding his head between his legs while resting it on his arms, as if he wanted to shield himself from reality. In front, another prisoner is resting his body on the truck with his eyes closed. Three of them are already standing and walking while being forced down the truck. They are hanging their heads low and rolling their shoulders forward, also letting their bodies give in. As a visual contrast, the soldiers that accompany them, show gestures and body positions that express confidence and comfort, and where we cannot see

a hint of the tension or nerves that could be expected from those who are going to carry out a shooting.



Figure 15. Sento 51

The splash page shows the blurred faces of the characters that take part of this scene. Both

prisoners and the guards lose their facial features behind the shades and the distance, but the reader can still recognize Antonio, who is distinguished from the rest of the characters by his darker clothes. Through the abstraction of the rest of the faces, Sento introduces some distance from the personal narrative connecting the story to the collective narrative and establishing two central figures in the scene: Antonio and the collectivity he belongs to. There is then a movement from the personal story to the story shared with a bigger community, which forces the reader to move in and out of the autobiographical pact.

The same abstraction is also used in *Cuerda de presas* where the depiction using dark lines and cubist lines is very effective for the representation of the pain that the women featured in the eleven stories suffer. Francesca Crippa mentions this aspect as a sign that the work wants to represent a community rather than individual accounts "Martínez dibuja en blanco, gris y negro, dando vida a figuras muy estilizadas, de clara reminiscencia cubista, que casi no se distinguen las unas de las otras, con el intento de construir, más que muchas historias indi- viduales, la historia de toda una comunidad de mujeres"[124] (21). The perception of these women as a collectivity is already introduced in the prologue where we read: "Jorge García y Fidel Martínez . . .  se habían embarcado en sacar adelante una reflexión moral sobre nuestros ayeres . . . para expresar con el lenguaje de la historieta ese mundo que parecía no poder ser dicho"[125] (7) and also shown in the core text by, for example, the omission of the names of many of the leading characters of the stories. "Balada de ventas", the story that opens up the collection and whose protagonist represents the reality of many of these women through her experience, is the first character whose name is

---

[124] 'Martínez draws in white, gray, and black, giving life to highly stylized figures, clearly Cubist reminiscence, which is almost indistinguishable from one another, with the attempt to construct, more than many individual stories, the history of the entire community of women' (21).
[125] "Jorge García y Fidel Martínez . . . had embarked themselves on getting a moral reflection about our past off the ground, . . . to express with the language of the *historieta* that world that seemed to not be told" (7).

not disclosed. And when they have a name, we often only know their first name: Carmen ("El cuarto bajo la escalera"), Jesusa and Vicente ("Montañas, nubes, cielo"), Doña Elena ("El traslado"), etc.

The paratext of *El arte de volar* also spells out the intention to represent a collective rather than just simply an individual account. Antonio Martín includes this statement in the prologue of *El arte de volar* where he says: "La vida del protagonista es la de los humillados, la de los muchos españoles que sin tierra, sin trabajo, sin pan y sin techo, la de los perdedores, la de los derrotados"[126] (5). This idea exposed by Antonio Altarriba that emphasizes that individuals, in this case "el protagonista", are a result of a certain time in history and consequently just one more element that belongs to a collectivity, in this case "los humillados", is also mentioned by him in the notes he wrote for Kim to guide him in his drawing of the graphic work. This clearly shows that when writing this work, his intention is to represent the story of a collectivity and not only the story of his father:

Fue víctima de los espejismos más significativos del siglo XX y se estrelló contra todos. De alguna manera su trayectoria refleja la de una generación que se apuntó a los grandes ideales, vivió las posibilidades de cambio con gran ilusión y, al final, tuvo que amoldarse a las rutinas uniformadoras del consumismo. En ese sentido el álbum intenta trascender la peripecia personal para reflejar mentalidades, ideologías y tendencias generales[127] (Guereñu 212).

---

[126] 'The protagonist's life is that of the humiliated, that of the many Spaniards without land, work, bread or a roof, that of the losers, that of the defeated . . . he is just one more among the millions of Spaniards who lived as history brought them' (7).

[127] 'He was the victim of the most significant mirages of the 20th century and crashed against everyone. In some way, her trajectory reflects that of a generation that aimed for the great ideals, lived the possibilities of change with great enthusiasm and, in the end, had to conform to the uniforming routines of consumerism. In this sense, the album tries to transcend personal adventures to reflect mentalities, ideologies and general tendencies' (Guereñu 212).

In sum, the comics in the corpus are based on real biographies or inspired by them aiming to connect with the collective account of a generation, and demanding an interpretation that goes beyond the first person-autobiographical account suggested by the formal aspects. In her analysis of Carlos Gimenez's work, Alicia Fuentes Vega concludes that in his biographical depiction his intention is to transcend the boundaries of the biographical pact and remind us that the act of remembering implies in itself an act of fictionalization "en lugar de proponer la confesión autobiográfica de un individuo-yo, Carlos Giménez se dedica al retrato de una colectividad-nosotros, que en este caso sería el común de los españoles durante la postguerra"[128] (320).

## 3.3. Conclusions

*Los últimos* is a work of the photographer Luis Areñas composed of 31 photos and a video of 45 minutes. In this work Areñas collects the image and the voice of the last survivors of the Spanish Civil war. His interest in recovering personal stories and listening and looking at the eyes of the witnesses is obvious and not uncommon. Today the narratives of the self are favored in the memory discourse as the small chronicles that take the space of the great stories of modernity. Reaching out to personal contributions and doing it through the subjectivity—feelings, experience and consciousness—creates a network of knowledge and data that connects subjectivities of the past among themselves as well as with the subjectivities of the present, what Edmond Husserld would call 'intersubjectivity', with the objective of bringing out the invisibilities and as a repairing process for the victims.

---

[128] 'Instead of proposing the autobiographical confession of an individual-I, Carlos Giménez works on the portrayal of collectivity-us, which in this case would be shared by those who experienced the Spanish post-war period' (320).

Unlike in Areñas' work, none of the graphic works in the corpus retrieve the real voices of the participants, because they are not real autobiographies, as the authors and the reciters are two different entities; but they all create the illusion that we are looking at the eyes and hearing the voice of the protagonists, which as a consequence, creates the illusion of receiving subjective and personal knowledge. Through the narrative of the self and the consequent narrative of family, feelings and the negative effects of trauma, contemporary graphic narrative adds these personal stories to the collective imagery of the war that Spanish society holds nowadays, stressing the importance of oral accounts as legitimate sources for historical knowledge, and favoring, as Crumb did, the grassroots accounts. Considering that autobiography is a genre for self-knowledge, we can infer that these want-to-be autobiographies that represent a collectivity also work as a means for collective self-understanding, a way to grasp our history from the perspective of the self, and from the bottom up. Such a perspective, in which individual accounts are considered sources of knowledge, encompasses the complexity of the collective account, as we encounter thousands of stories whose diversity and inter-connections give shape to a collective narrative.

It is clear then that Spanish *historieta* identifies the importance of human documents for historical remembering. It finds the language and creates the discursive space dedicated to the personal voice, the look and the bodies as essential elements of the memorialist narrative. The emotions that have been experienced are also a fundamental part of history and they are not incorporated in the expository academic texts, but they are thoroughly explored in the cultural scene, including comics. However, Leonor Arfuch points out that "el testimonio requiere, además de un lenguaje, un marco apropiado para su efectuación—jurídico, institucional—, un otro dispuesto a la escucha y a la contención y está sujeto no solo a una fuerte exigencia de veracidad

y fiabilidad sino también de legalidad, por cuanto se puede ser acusado por falso testimonio"[129] (50). In relation to this, it is important to note that the language that comics use to portray the testimonies and the trauma of the war seeks veracity in many ways. They want to sound sincere and that is why they include reliable monstrators and reciters and they also, consequently, include fictional elements that frame and give coherence to their accounts. Through the connections that the aforementioned elements establish between the textual and the extra-textual, the receptor decodes the fictional framework in which these stories are placed, as well as the reality behind them; and consequently, about the urgency to react and reflect on events of the past for which the defeated haven't been compensated: the many deaths of political prisoners, separation of children from their parents, raping of women, public humillation, stories of family trauma, stories of exile, etc. After all, the corpus presents a subject that is complete and complex and not incomplete or imperfect, and the presentation of such an integral entity allows for that social vindication.

Considering that the voices and the bodies that have experienced the war are rapidly disappearing due to their older age; scholars, journalists, artists, etc. feel the urge to find new voices and new bodies to whom those experiences can be transferred. The need to keep discussing the past and recovering those voices in order to help the collective process of self-understanding is still latent and demands continuation. I am going to explore how this transmission of knowledge and emotions happens, the intersubjective connections among the different entities involved in the transfer and the distances that new generations have towards the personal experiences of the past.

---

[129] 'But the testimony requires, in addition to a language, an appropriate framework for its implementation—legal, institutional—, an others willing to listen and containment and is subject not only to a strong requirement of truthfulness and reliability but also of legality, for how much can be accused for false testimony' (50).

# Chapter four: In search of a tale: post-generations and the transmission of memory

Once again, I would like to bring back the idea of silence, because as a central element of the Spanish memory discussion, it also concerns the memory transmission, and so is signaled in the graphic novels I examine. The previous chapter explores different occasions in which the voices and the bodies of the protagonists become unpresent, either through exile, prison, death, or as a survival mechanism. Due to the politics of reconciliation of the Transition, the voices of the defeated were not being recovered nor amended, and this mutenesses, imposed or not, created in the collective and family memories a number of omissions that will later on become a challenge for all of those who work on the memory issue. Gaps are inevitable in any process that involves human memory, but even more so when the voices of those who experienced the event don't participate in that remembrance. In order to put remedy to this, the recovery of the testimonies is vital. With their memories, we can fill the gaps and offer social, cultural and political compensation to those who suffered the injustice, and at the same time they can be used as learning experiences that current generations can convey to coming societies who can also use them to facilitate their development. There is, then, a contemporary active exercise of inquiring memories to recompose different narratives about the war. In this chapter, I will explore how the comics depict the process of transmission and will prove that the generation of the intermediaries and the framework in which that transmission happens will be determinant factors in the construction of that narrative. The portrayal of the leading characters and their experiences, the depiction of *le passeur de memoir* or

the intentions behind the memory exercise are some of the aspects that are shown in the comics of our corpus.

## 4.1.   The problem of the transmission—*le passeur de memoir*

Jorge García, Paco Roca, Antonio Altarriba and Sento belong to generations of the children and the grand-children of those who participated in the conflict, what Marianne Hirsch calls the 'hinge generation'. Through their work, the experiences of the war and the post-war stay present nowadays. While the past of time is eroding the experiences of the participants in the war, the hinge generation explores this past in order to understand their own reality. The graphic novels in the corpus were written in a period when society sees that the survivors are extinguishing, which puts the focus on the work of the descendants, who become responsible for preserving the past. In addition, and as it is represented by the authors of these works, among which only two are members of the family of the protagonists, this is a discussion that goes beyond the personal and familial issue. It is, in Hirsch's words, "an evolving ethical and theoretical discussion about the working of trauma, memory and intergenerational acts of transfer" (*The Generation* 2). There are then two categorizations that need to be distinguished to make sense of the relationship that takes part in the acts of transfer. The first distinction takes the generational factor into consideration, differentiating between memories that come from the second and from the third generations after the war. The second distinction is based on the framework where the transmission takes place; differentiating memories that are transferred within a family, understanding family as a society cell—familial postmemory—, from those that are transferred outside of that cell—affiliative postmemory.

In the case of the authors of the studied comic books, both categorizations narrow down to the following: Jorge García, Fidel Martínez (*Cuerda de presas*), and Paco Roca (*Los surcos del*

*azar*) are authors that belong to the third generation after the war, the grandchildren, and at the same time they fit into the categorization of 'affiliative postmemory' as they are not representing the life of someone in their family. Antonio Altarriba (*El arte de volar*) and Sento (*Un médico novato*), on the other hand, belong to the second generation and they learn about the war through the experiences of a family member. Altarriba, unlike Sento, also embodies the memory transfer of those whose upbringing is influenced by the personal experience of their parents. Let's see how these categorizations influence their works.

### 4.1.1. Past and present: generational interferences

The dynamic nature of memory, as an entity in constant transformation, reminds us that memory connects past events to the present, with an eye on the future. Paul Ricoeur explains how the three temporalities are interconnected: our present is mediated by the expectations we have of the future and those are always linked to the representations of the past (*La memoria, la historia, el olvido*). In this sense, we can appreciate the importance of certain episodes of the past for contemporary society, and vice versa, the influence that the different contemporary gazes at the memory issue has had in the collective narrative of the past. This interference has been explained by George Tyras and Juan Vila:

> Los aspectos afectados por este complejo mecanismo de recuperación y transmisión de la memoria incluye la problemática de los contactos, de las influencias y contaminaciones, que han podido darse entre varios puntos de vista, varios niveles de conocimiento, para que la morfología y la semántica de una experiencia histórica, así como el peso axiológico que va cobrando, evolucione desde una aprehensión en principio individual—la del superviviente, la del testigo—hasta un conocimiento compartido—el del heredero, el del hijo, el nieto—y que esto afecte a su significado, y su uso simbólico compartido de manera

colectiva por las instituciones y las diferentes comunidades sociales o culturales[130] (19).

On several occasions in this work I have referred to the idea that at the core of these comics we find the need to compensate for the sufferings and make the story of the defeated visible. In light of Tyra and Vila's words, that compensation of the injustices of the past is not only an act of solidarity but also a consequence of the contemporary ways of understanding society and our need as a community to grasp the past events so we can make sense of our current interests and issues. The consequence of the different times in history interconnecting around the narrative of a past event creates a tension that poses certain challenges for the narrator of the story. The axiology of each time will alter the recovery of memory giving shape to an account that will fluctuate between facts, public memories, and the interests of those who are putting the account together. For this reason, the relation between generations plays a role in the way the past is remembered, and to that end the interferences with the present will differ depending if the past is memorialized by the children or the grandchildren of the protagonists.

Second-generation authors were born and raised during the dictatorship. This means that their relationship with the political past of their parents is in part their relationship with their own past because even when they didn't experience the war itself, they did experience the dictatorship and the direct consequences of the conflict. They received their formal education from a dictatorial regime with the inherent learnings—and fears—that this implies. In addition, those who belonged to Republican families received from their family members the weight of the trauma suffered by their parents or even the possible death of family members, and they grew up sometimes

---

[130] 'The aspects affected by this complex memory retrieval and transmission mechanism include the problem of contacts, influences and contaminations, which may have occurred between various points of view, various levels of knowledge, so that morphology and semantics of a historical experience, as well as the axiological weight that it takes on, evolves from an apprehension in individual principle—that of the survivor, that of the witness—to a shared knowledge—that of the heir, that of the son, the grandson—and that this affects its meaning, and its symbolic use collectively shared by institutions and different social or cultural communities' (19).

surrounded by the silence these families endured. A clear example of this is Elena Uriel, daughter

of Pablo Uriel. Elena Uriel, the colorist of *Un médico novato,* is interviewed as a result of the

publication of the graphic novel and mentions the muteness around the war that she experienced

in her house during her upbringing. Elena relates how she only learnt that her father had been in

the war once she read the manuscript where her father told the whole story.

> Yo no sabía que había habido una guerra... aquí no se contaba... eso era todo... Entonces
>
> mi padre, sí, eso sí que me acuerdo yo: todos los años se iba dos o tres días a un parador.
>
> Se llevaba la máquina de escribir y pasaba a limpio esos apuntes que hay en el libro[131]
>
> (Rodrigues 455).

The only text in our corpus whose author was raised by the protagonist of the comic is *El*

*arte de volar*, and it works as a good example of the interference of interests that happens in the

remembering of the war. The peritext are again a fruitful source of information, as the reader learns

in the very first paragraph of the prologue that the comic we read today is a result of the strong

impact that his father's suicide had on Antonio Altarriba, and how this work serves the author as

a sort of healing: "En las horas siguientes me explicó el impacto que para él había supuesto la

muerte de su padre, fragmentos de su vida y cómo su editor le propuso que llevase esos

sentimientos al papel" (3). Thanks to the representation that Altarriba creates of his father's story

in *El arte de volar,* he apprehends his own story, and deals with his present need to put himself

back together after his father's suicide. Through the remembering of his father's trajectory he

meets a self-centered need to manage his feelings about the passing while serving as a tribute to

his father's story and the story of the many men and women who had a parallel life experience: "él

---

[131] 'I did not know that there had been a war … they didn't talk about it ... that was it ... then my father did, I do
remember that: every year he went to a hotel for two or three days. He would take the typewriter and fair-copy the
notes included in the book' (455).

solo es uno más entre los millones de españoles que vivieron cuanto la Historia les trajo"[132] (5).

What history had brought to that generation was a series of political changes that demanded that they adapted from a democratic regime to a war, and then to a dictatorship, and then to a democratic regime again; the same historical phases experienced by Altarriba who represents the collectivity he is part of.

The shared experiences of the dictatorship of first and second generations made them protective of the democracy they finally acquired, which not only they had to adapt to but also give shape to and protect. The two differentiating elements that will leave an imprint in the narrative of the past created by the second generation are the Transition—with the politics of reconciliation—and the direct and emotional relationship they had with the protagonists of the war. The Transition is rarely represented in the comics of the corpus. Only in Altarriba's life account we recognize this period because Antonio and his wife can get a divorce[133]. In Altarriba's story, the union with Petra goes hand in hand with his union with Franco's regime. Antonio comes back from exile and meets Petra and marries her. He gives up his political identity and has a life away from his ideas, which he expresses like this: "Pasado el tiempo de 'todo por la patria' había llegado el tiempo de 'todo por la familia'"[134] (150). Metaphorically, the union with his wife also represents the union with many of the values of the regime that she embodies: the pious attitude, the political silence that she had adopted, the sex as a sin; consequently, from a symbolic perspective, divorcing Petra meant as well "divorcing" that regime. When they separate, still plunged into desperation, Antonio gets rid of those ties and says "Sabía que por mucho tiempo de vida que me quedara, ya nunca sería feliz…—pero al menos procuraría ser libre…—sin alianzas

---

[132] 'He is just one more among the millions of Spaniards who lived when History brought them' (5).
[133] On June 22nd 1981 the Spanish Congress passed the divorce law, Law 30/198.
[134] 'After the time of "all for my country" came the time 'all for my family' time' (150).

ni compromisos…—como al principio…"[135] (172). This new beginning in his life caught him too

old, too tired, and disillusioned, and the love story that Petra and Antonio founded at a Ferris wheel

has stale hinges that after suffering for some time end up stopping, as the visual metaphor below

indicates.

The third generation's recollection of the past, those who were born or at least primarily

raised during democracy, will be determined by the bigger distance from the generation whose

life is revealed in the comics I study. The sufferings of the war are part of their imagery, but they

were not raised in fear; on the contrary, they were born in a moment of construction that

becomes obvious in the distance that they feel from those traumatic experiences; to the point that

the communication between the two generations is sometimes unworkable. In order to appreciate

Figure 16. Altarriba 173

this clearly, I would like to go back to a fragment that in chapter two already helped us

understand the potential meaning of a gutter. Here, the same series of panels of *Los surcos del*



---
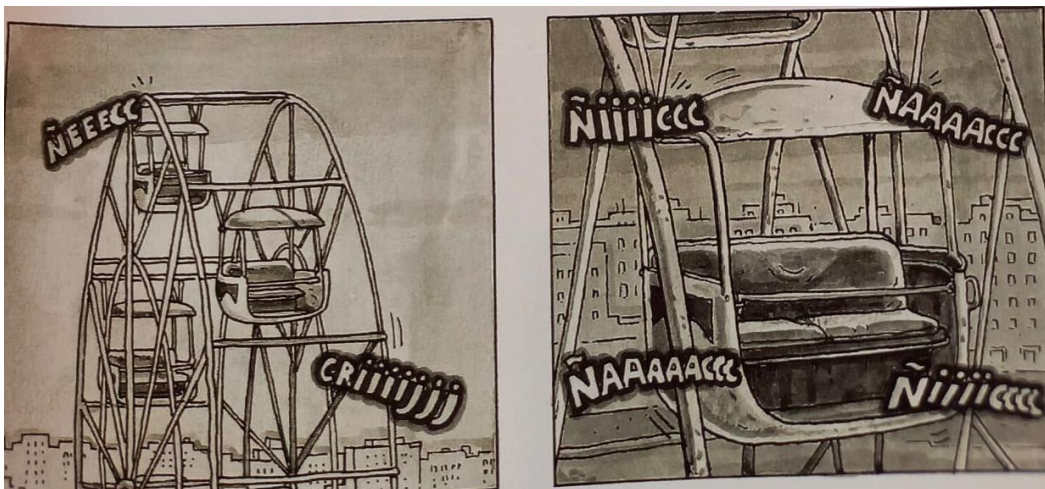
[135] 'I knew that, no matter how long I lived, I would never be happy, but at least I would try to be free, without alliances, without commitments' (172).

*azar* works as a good example that illustrates the different perspectives of the protagonists and

grandchildren of the war and the generational gap that also affects their recall.

Figure 17. Roca 221

The previous sequence occurs half way through Miguel's story and is presented here as one of the scenes that draft the complexity of the character whose story we are learning about. The quiet life the 94-year-old had chosen was the only way he had found to survive his own demons. One day Paco, Paco Roca's alter ego, arrives in his life and, eager to know about Miguel's story so he can finalize his project on *La Nueve*, asks Miguel repeatedly to tell him his story. Miguel ends up giving in. The third generation, represented by Paco in this case, shows determination to find out the story of Spain's grand-parents despite any prevailing circumstance. While thinking that they are doing something heroic, as they are retrieving the unheard voices of the war, he prioritizes his thirst for knowledge over the feelings of the protagonist, who had purposely decided to keep quiet about his life story. Through the use of the gutter Roca reflects in this passage about the lack of empathy and understanding towards Miguel's reality, even by a character who is genuinely interested in his life. There is an immense distance that separates these two characters that is, at moments, insurmountable. Paco is listening to the story of Miguel and cannot help but judge with the glasses of someone who has been raised in a democracy and cannot imagine the experiences of a war soldier who has lost friends along the way. In a display of personal space invasion and lack of empathy, Paco's character occupies Miguel's panel with his words: ¿Y por qué lo hacía? . . . ¿Y dudaba al matarlos a sangre fría? . . . Es matar a traición a personas que…"[136] (221). Faced with Paco's judgments, Miguel reacts defensively and puts a step down to stop the barrage of questions from the young man who obviously doesn't sympathize with him. He then turns the roles around and becomes the one who invades the individual space of Paco trying to make himself clear about his feelings towards a war enemy: "No eran personas con mujer, con

---

[136] 'And why did you do it? . . . And did he hesitate to kill them in cold blood? . . . It is treacherously killing people who …' (221).

hijos. Eran nazis que no habrían dudado en hacer lo mismo con nosotros"[137] (221); to immediately

after, leave the premises and go back to his chosen silence: "¿Quién te crees tú para venir aquí a

juzgarme? Vienes aquí a revolver la mierda para escribir tu libro o lo que sea que vayas a hacer"[138]

(221). Unlike Pablo Uriel who takes the time to write his story in the Parador of Baiona[139], Miguel

doesn't care to pass on his experience. He had chosen silence. Not only doesn't he think of the

potential positives of learning about his past, but he even despises the exercise when he says

"whatever that is that you are doing", referring to Paco's project. As we mentioned before, the

gutter here is loaded with meaning and clearly separates both characters, while representing the

metaphorical distance between the two generations, and the imposition of contemporary

conventions into the personal memories of the experiences of the characters. One of those

impositions is how this story is presented, as the solution for healing his fears and traumas and for

his reconciliation with the past. In this sense, the character of Paco Roca, whose interest in this

part of history is more intellectual than emotional, differs in its treatment of the narrating voice of

*El arte de Volar*, which surrenders to his father's experiences and speech. Considering that at the

core of Altarriba's story is the purpose of the author to come to terms with the fact that his father

had committed suicide, to try to understand what happened; the attitude of the narrating voice is

the one that is observing and celebrating his father. We don't appreciate judgment in this voice's

approach to his father's account.

As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, most graphic novels in the corpus feature

main characters that are full of nuance, that is, rounded complex characters. This complexity—

---

[137] 'They were not people with a wife, with children. They were Nazis who would not have hesitated to do the same to us' (221).

[138] 'Who do you think you are to come here to judge me? You come here to stir the shit to write your book or whatever you are going to do' (221).

[139] Parador is a hotel operated by Paradores de Turismo de España, S.A., which is a state-owned company founded in 1928.

their thoughts, sentiments and, in general, their bodily and mental reactions—intersected by historical, cultural, personal, and political concerns, fill the graphic narratives of the Spanish Civil War with a representation of the defeated that moves away from the simplistic differentiation between victims and perpetrators. Their representation poses, for example, an interwoven persona with positive and negative feelings, sometimes morally rejected by society—such as Miguel expressing that he preferred others to die over him or Antonio Altarriba feeling rejection and pity for his wife. *Cuerda de presas,* notwithstanding, presents simpler characters through which I can observe another example of the imposition of the post-generation axiology into the memory of past events. As a consequence of the political agenda of the authors and very likely also the expectations of the contemporary reader who expects an impactful and visually attractive account, the work presents a certain distortion of historical veracity to benefit the dramatic effect. I will explain.

*Cuerda de presas* is a remarkable work in many ways, one of them being the fact that it puts the focus on the political agency of women who in one way or another participated in the warfare. Most of the time, as seen in all the other works studied in this thesis, in the remembrance of the war women are usually the protagonists of the stories of the rear and will be relegated to the space of the family and private life, while men are the protagonists of the war stories. *Cuerda de presas*, however, underlines the active role of many women in the warfare and the sufferings they endured with the objective of denouncing their invisibility and claiming back their space. In order to benefit this agenda, the collective character formed by the different leading figures of the stories of *Cuerda de presas* enjoy a heroization that highlights their political activities. The dispute of Inés and Martina against La Topete, comprehensively analyzed in the previous chapter, is an example of this. Martina and Inés stand firm and emerge victorious in a symbolic dispute against

the authoritative figure of the context they live in. Their portrayal comes together as abused women who had the courage and resilience to stand up, a heroization that works well for an emotional effect of enunciating the value of these women and the tremendous suffering they went through.

This is also the case of the women in the story "El traslado", included in this same collection, in which Jorge García denounces the unsanitary and inhumane conditions in which the detainees were transferred from one prison to another during the early years of the dictatorship. The idea of relocation discussed in "El traslado" is central to the collection of characters and stories put together in *Cuerda de presas*. The very title of the collection refers to this transfer, as a *cuerda de presas* is a string of prisoners, which is a group of inmates who are tied to each other forming a row with the aim of transferring them. This idea evokes the collectivity that those prisoners form and it also brings to the fore one of the many situations in which the prisoners were humiliated and animalized. Throughout the collection, Jorge García and Fidel Martínez denounced the idea of the animalized representation of Republican women that Francoism had developed. The animalization of the enemy is based on the discourse of the antagonism between civilization and barbarians, rooted in Spanish history by the narrative of colonization and widely used during Francoism to establish moral and behavioral principles. In its stories, *Cuerda de presas* shows and denounces how Franco's regime created a place for those women and their bodies in the category of the otherness—the barbarians. This division or idea would automatically legitimize the authorities to punish those "barbarians" and these punishments would be understood as justified and deserved. Physically and symbolically punished, Republican women were then depicted by Franco's regime as dehumanized beings that needed to be penalized and disciplined. Shaving their heads, raping them, or compelling them into unwholesome situations was the necessary corrective for them to

be straightened. Historically the animal metaphor has been used for educational purposes[140], about which Laurike in 't Veld explains that it "is often, if not always, used as a tool to reflect on humans and human behavior" (42). Considering this, the categorization as barbarians or animals and the physical tortures imposed on the prisoners did not work as simple penalties, but as exemplary punishments that were useful in their venture to educate and civilize the entire society.

*Cuerda de presas* presents this grotesque image created by the regime and confronts it with the image of Francoism which creates the idea that the grotesque and dehumanized beings are actually the oppressors and not the victims. This is manifested on different occasions in the collection. The most obvious example appears in Luisa's story who, as a reminder, is the woman who was raped by her jailor. The perpetrator is characterized through the words of the prisoners themselves "parece una fábula: el cerdo y la zorra" (30) which immediately creates the parallelism between the characters and the animals. The transfer represented in "El traslado" is another example of this, where the reader can learn that women and children were transported in cattle



---

[140] A manifestation of this could be contemporary children cartoons or the earlier Aesop's fables where animal figures behave as humans and "endowed with the capacity for a (rudimentary) type of ethical reasoning and psychology" (Zafiropoulus qtd. in L. in 't Veld 43).

wagons, cramped in there for days, without water, and having to evacuate inside the wagon itself, just like we would do to animals. The extreme situation in which these women and children are forced is a clear example of this dehumanization. In the strip below, we can see images of how Doña Elena, who is now an older woman, remembers the way in which she and her fellow prisoners were transported to Tarragona inside a closed dark dirty hot cuttle wagon. The darkness of her bedroom, observed in previous panels, reactivated the memories of Doña Elena, who thinks about a younger self locked in the dark wagon for several days. With a strong accent on the black color that highlights the focus on the characters and the vulnerability and threat that this color evokes; the prisoner is represented with the characteristics that, by convention, are attributed to a war hero: honesty, generosity, bravery and strength.



Figure 18. García and Martínez 48

The officers that are accompanying the prisoners in their transfer to Tarragona defecate inside the wagon to have some fun. They are depicted as two heads without a body, with deformed facial features, and not even speaking, but screaming. In response, the Republican prisoner looks at them with a hieratic gesture, dignified and serious. And once more, the prisoner looks into the eyes of her oppressors without avoiding their gaze while communicating to them that she is stronger than her fears and that they are the only ones undignified by their prank. When exerting the animalization of the perpetrators in contrast with the strength of the protagonists, *Cuerda de presas* allows future and contemporary generations to visualize the vestiges of stories that haven't been told; and in doing so, it also presents a social denunciation that matches with the narrative of the generation of the grandchildren—a generation that looks back at the Civil War with the intention of finding the justice that the politics during the dictatorship and the Transition denied them. Their small revenge would be in this case putting the authorities in front of their own mirror identifying it as the idea of "animal" they had attributed to the defeated. This comic collaborates in this way, in an arguably idealized collective image of the Republican woman, as a modern woman, a fighter and resilient, that despite the murderers, the humiliations and mistreatments manages to stay upright unlike their antagonist in these stories, the grotesque and animalized characters that embody the dictatorship. This dichotomy contributes to their denunciation of the injustices Republican women underwent and illustrates a manipulation of the characters' experience to respond to the current needs and imagery. Idealizing them and trying to make them fit in the contemporary code of values adds to the narrative of Republican women the imposition of contemporary axiology and socio-political needs.

All these examples prove that the distance that separates the survivors and the post-generations is vital in their approach to them. While the second generation shows the need to meet

individual and personal understanding and to connect with their emotions, the third generation

seeks social justice and historical knowledge. The greater the gap the greater the poetic license, as

the understanding of the personal lives of the individuals is no longer the focus, but more what

those lives represent for the community. As a consequence, *Un médico novato* and *El arte de volar*

approach this endeavor as observers, sometimes even observing their own life as it is the case of

Altarriba, who is trying to understand what brought them to where they are; while the heroization

of the characters in *Cuerda de presas* and the judgment of the past behavior that Paco Roca

discusses in *Los surcos del azar* transpire a freer approach to the story to fit their needs.

Regardless of this difference in their approach, that is not to say that the second generation

is not interested in politics or historical facts, much on the contrary. Both generations of authors

in the corpus show that their remembrance swings from the story of the survivors, historical facts,

and an interest to reflect on the past that is going to respond to the cultural and socio-political

demands of their context: politics, historical perspective, personal feelings, sense of justice and

creative approach that can be appealing to the comic reader of the XXI century. The lines that

differentiate individual and historical truth and the post-generational axiology are not always easy

to discern—perhaps even impossible.

### 4.1.2. Frameworks of transmission

> Some things you forget. Other things you never do… Places, places are still
> there. If a house brings down, it is gone, but the place—the picture of it—
> stays, and not just in my rememory but out there, in the world." . . . "Can
> other people see it?" asked Denver. "Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes. Some
> day you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something
> going on. So clear. And you think it is you thinking it up. A thought picture.

> But no, it is when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else
> (*Morrison*, 36).

The passage above belongs to Toni Morrison's novel, *Beloved*. Sethe, the main character, reflects on the process of transfer of memories, the 'rememories', and the spaces in which those transfers take place. Behind the idea of supernatural entities that linger in this passage, Morrison discusses the memories present in physical spaces or in interpersonal relationships. When remembering life narratives, the framework in which the memory transmission happens is going to determine the nature of that 'act of transfer', using Paul Connerton's term. It is for this reason that Hirsch distinguishes between family and affiliative postmemory. Following Hirsch's categories, I am going to explore how these spaces of transfer are going to determine the narrative of the different memories and how sentimental ties play a role in their account.

The categorization that discerns family and affiliative relationships, as it is distinguished by Hirsh, has been explained in the theoretical framework of this thesis. The articulation of the memory account within the family framework has a strong emotional component that is part of that narrative, and it generates ties that relate traumas and the identity of individuals between generations. Both positively and negatively perceived experiences are going to give shape to this narrative; and not surprisingly, these are going to have a stronger subjective component than those that happen outside this framework. The transmission of memories within the family context is carried out through tangible and intangible communicative and social devices: family breeding, inherited fears, secretness in relation to certain topics, writings from the protagonists relating their experiences, inherited goods, the loss of personal and real estate property after the war[141], family

---

[141] When the war ended, Franco's regime, under the Law of political responsibilities, confiscated capital and assets that belonged to the then outlawed political parties and organizations and to the individuals affiliated to them.

photos and oral stories recalled within the family setting. All these elements together form a family archive that is transferred through generations. Family archives and consequently the family narrative are inevitably influenced by a public narrative of the war, which is pointed out by Hirsch, who says: "Even the most intimate familial transmission of the past is, it seems, mediated by public images and narratives" (*The Generation* 30). As for the 'affiliative postmemory', it refers to the memories that are transmitted among contemporaries. We can visualize this memory transmission in a horizontal line versus the vertical line that represents the intergenerational transmission. The affiliative postmemory can be presumed not to have a strong influence on the personal memories of the individual who is doing the remembering, simply because the traumas of those who experienced the war are not part of their upbringing. For this reason, these memories are based for the most part on cultural and social artifacts: public photos, laws, news articles, interviews, artistic works, etc. Public elements, then, are going to be part of the complex process of giving shape to an idea of the past that post-generations develop, and family archives can turn into public archives when they come to light and become part of a memory object, as is the case of Altarriba's and Sento's works on the war. Just like Hirsch, Sebastian Faber explains these relationships to the past as "*afiliativas,* esto es, sujetas a un acto de asociación consciente, basadas menos en la genética que en la solidaridad, la compasión y la identificación"[142] ("La literatura" 103).

### 4.1.2.1. Familial postmemory: the role of emotions in the memory transfer

When we think of transferring memories among family members, the impromptu visualization will probably be the image of active and conscious actions to relay those memories. For instance, we would think of a parent or grandparent recalling past experiences at the dinner

---

[142] 'affiliative, that is, subject to an act of conscious association, based not on genetics but on solidarity, compassion, and identification' ("La literatura" 103).

table, children and parents looking at old photos together or giving each other objects to have as a keepsake, or even visiting together places that are meaningful in the family history. However, memories within a family are more often transferred through unconscious mechanisms that rule the upbringing: fears, gestures or silences that post-generations assume as theirs because they learn them without the awareness of a learning act. Emotions will be crucial in the reception of these messages, both consciously and unconsciously.

### 4.1.2.1.1. Bidirectional force

Hirsch explains how even though we don't have the actual memories of other people's experiences, post-memories allow second and third generations to connect with the past of others through the "affective force and its psychic effect" (31). Postmemory within the family scheme will be based on natural affective ties due to the propinquity in the relationship that the subject receiving the transfer of those memories has with their parents or grandparents. When looking closer at the words chosen by Hirsch in this statement, there are two terms that draw my attention: "force" and "effect". In physics, a force can change the state of an object and it only occurs when there is an interaction between two elements. The result of that interaction is a force upon each of those elements and not only upon one of them, whose effects can be moving the object, speeding it up, stopping it, changing its shape, etc. It is not my intention to apply the laws of physics to the acts of transfer, but there is here a symbolic parallelism between both disciplines that I would like to hold on to. I aim to expand on Hirsch's statement and prove that, just as it happens with the physical force, the graphic novels in our corpus also indicate that the effect of the affective force is not unidirectional; but that actually, both of the elements that take part in the interaction are affected by it.

When talking about emotional ties we cannot but focus on *El arte de volar*, as feelings are at the core of its existence[143], and consequently are a fundamental part of the story. The appropriation of his father's voice based on the relationship that unites father and son is the most apparent expression of the strong emotional connection between the two. This connection—that force—does not only result in Altarriba taking from his father; instead, there is a mutual influence that shows at two levels: the narrating voice and the character.

The preamble of the novel expresses the bidirectional forces that affect the narrating voice "de hecho voy a contar la vida de mi padre con sus ojos pero desde mi perspectiva"[144] (15). It is a given that the historical past affects the present, but Altarriba puts on the table the idea of the impossibility of not bringing the present into the account of the past—exemplifying once more the aforementioned interferences between the two. One of the reasons that justified the merging of the voices of Antonio and his son was their blood, which is used symbolically, as family inheritance, but also more literally, as a body element that he shares with his father: "puedo contar su vida con la verdad de sus testimonios y la emoción de una sangre que aun corre por mis venas"[145] (14), says the same narrating voice. The use of this image of the blood running through the veins brings to the fore the embodiment in the most physical aspect of it, the son and the father sharing the blood, and the same story. While searching for his past, he comprehends he has been carrying it inside all along. In addition, Antonio Martín points out in the prologue that the work is the result of "del dolor compartido de los Altarriba . . . y en sus páginas se funden los sentimientos de ambos"[146] (6), and this is going to be translated into the merged narrating voices and the characters. It is easy

---

[143] As it has been mentioned before, Antonio Altarriba starts writing this story because of the personal need to process his father's death.
[144] 'in fact I will tell the life of my father with his eyes but from my perspective' (15).
[145] 'I can tell his life with the truth of his testimonies and the emotion of a blood that still runs through my veins' (14).
[146] 'The shared pain of the Altarriba […] and in its pages the feelings of both merge' (6).

to imagine how a son can take his parents' emotions as his own, after all, it can be part of their unconscious upbringing, but the following example illustrates how in this story the connection and influence between the two characters is actually mutual. We are well into the story of Antonio Altarriba when his son is born.

The alliance that the son referred to in the proem is now confirmed by the father in these panels when the character says: 'As soon as I had him in my arms, all fears disappeared . . . a jolt of affection ran through me from top to bottom . . . I can only explain it as the connection between two bodies of the same blood . . . I felt that I was in him and that, from now on, I would be with him' (149). The use of the verb "ser" emphasizes the identification of the two individuals as one, as it is used in the same way the character of Antonio Altarriba junior used it at the beginning of the story. Furthermore, in this case the identification makes a direct connection with the body, as
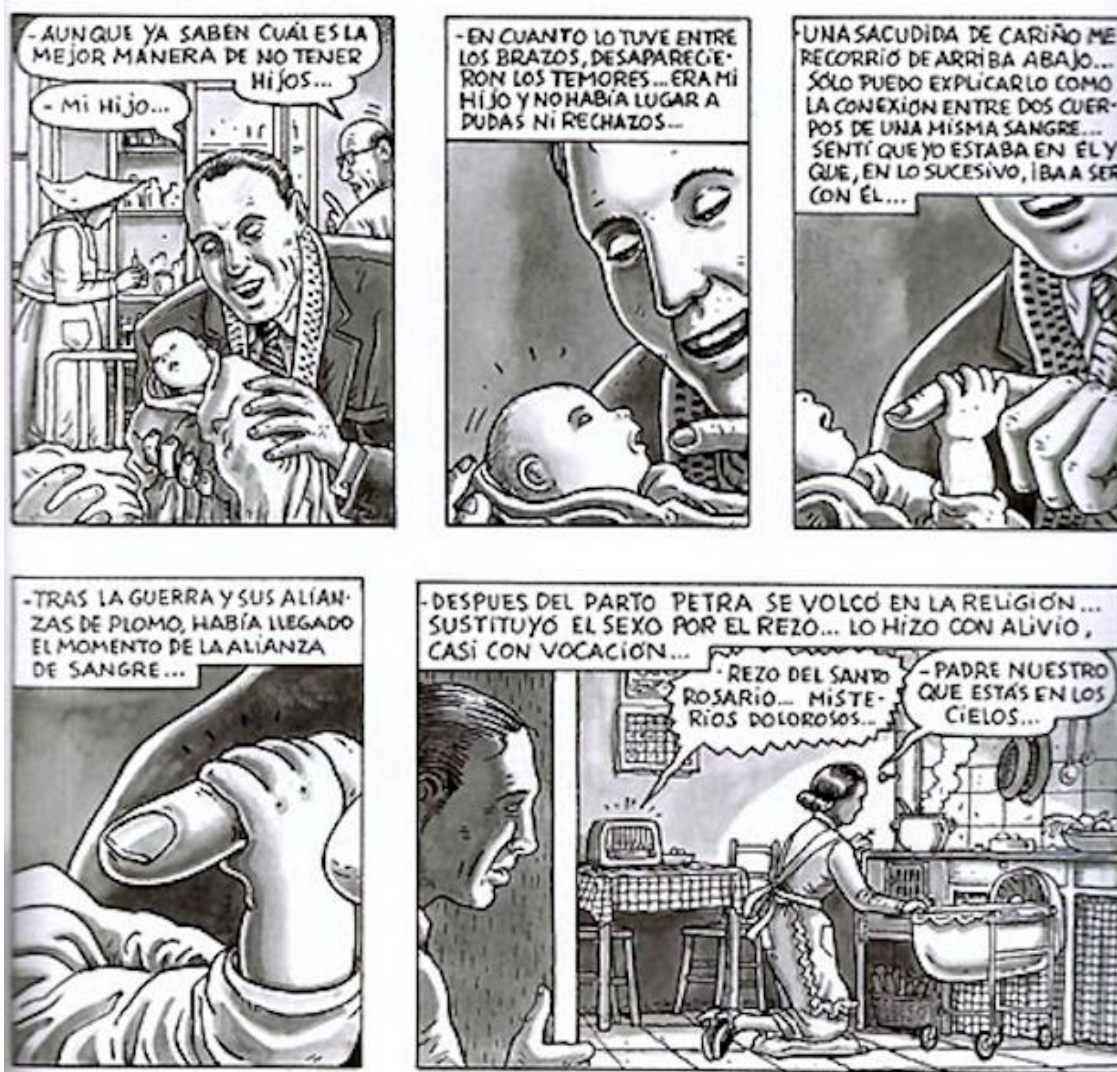
Figura 19. Altarriba 149

the character presents it in contrast with the symbolic union of lead that he had with his fellow

soldiers: 'After the war and its lead alliances, the time has come for blood alliances' (149).

Bearing in mind that we are still reading a merged voice, the appearance of Altarriba Jr. as

a character could potentially create a sense of estrangement as there is technically an unfolding of

the voice. The possible oddness doesn't occur, though, because as readers we no longer think of

two different voices in here. We have internalized the merging as a natural rhetorical device. The

character of Altarriba Jr. as a separate entity doesn't have much presence in the story, but at the end of the account, the character comes back as the adult that started telling us the story of his father, and there it gains bodily presence. The monstrator shows a tier with close-ups of the son with a focus on his emotions which has a double and contradictory effect. On the one hand, the close-up brings the reader closer to Altarriba where the reader can observe the physical similarities between father and son as a display of the physical inheritance—one of the forms of memory embodiment; these strong similarities bring the two characters together. On the other hand, the emotions shown make us visualize their detachment. Altarriba is appalled and put off by what he just heard from his father.



Figure 20. Altarriba 202

Antonio poses to his son the dilemma of helping him die, but he immediately realizes that doing that had exceeded the terms of the alliance between the two: "enseguida comprendí que le había pedido demasiado a mi hijo… y por ello me odié aún más de lo que ya me odiaba. Como un cobarde, le había encargado lo que yo era incapaz de hacer… le había chantajeado con nuestra

alianza para obligarle a cometer un acto que pesará por siempre sobre su conciencia…"[147] (202).

The narrating voice reinforces the message of the monstrator by making a point at differentiating both characters with an hyperbaton and creating a syntactic parallelism that puts the emphasis on the two separate subjects: "por liberarme yo, le condenaba a él"[148] (202).

### 4.1.2.1.2. Embodiment of the past

At the beginning of this epigraph, I mentioned that remembrance in the family setting can be both conscious and unconscious. *Un médico novato* is an example of a more conscious inheritance within the familial framework. Considering that the relationship between the author and Pablo Uriel is not of father and son, and that there are no unconscious memories learnt in the upbringing of the author; can we then consider this a memory that belongs to the family setting? I think we can. The personal and familial relationship exists, and therefore there is an emotional factor that plays a role in the remembering portrayed in *Un médico novato* and in the other two works that form the trilogy. In addition, the acts of transfer of Pablo Uriel's memories happen through family stories, family pictures, and mementos.

When discussing *Fun Home*, Alison Bechdel's famous work, Chute declares that the use of the family memory archive speaks about the appropriation of those objects by the author as Bechdel takes her time to detailly draw many of these objects: family letters, photos, etc., in an exercise of embodiment, taking ownership of those objects in her remembrance.

By embodiment, I mean not only making concrete but, further, that everything Bechdel represents in the text is drawn and in some cases re-drawn by her own hand: letters, diaries,

---

[147] 'I immediately understood that I had asked my son too much… and for that I hated myself even more than I already hated myself. Like a coward, I had charged him with what I was incapable of doing... I had blackmailed him with our alliance to force him to commit an act that will forever weigh on his conscience…' (202).
[148] 'by freeing me, I condemned him' (202).

photographics, course records . . . Her redrawn archive, then, says more about the comics

as a procedure of embodiment than it does about the archival as a register of truth ("Comics

form" 113).

The most important mementos that feed the stories in *Un médico novato* are the family

photos, the memories that Pablo Uriel wrote for his children of his experience during the war[149]

and the mail correspondence between Pablo and his family. The letters Pablo sent to the family

are the most recurrent memorial device in the graphic novel. They start exchanging letters from

the beginning of the story, during his stay in Soto del Real[150], and they continue during the whole

story when Pablo is put in prison for political reasons. This is so much the case, that these letters

become a rhetorical element that works in favor of the cohesion of the text, as it comes back

repeatedly in the story and much of the communication within the family is reflected in those

letters. Writing and reading the epistles are some of the most intimate moments in the story. They

become a space for the characters to connect with each other and a space for relief and hope.

Taking into consideration the political and social context in which many of those families are

missing the actual corpses of their relatives, these objects are a tangible opportunity to bring them

back. As an act of transfer, those letters represent for post-generations and for the readers of the

comic, an opportunity to delve into the intimacy that belongs to that individual, in this case, to the

family history.

---

[149] His memoirs were published with the title *No se fusila en domingo*. Last edition published in 2021.
[150] Town in La Rioja where Pablo Uriel started his professional life and where he was when the war broke out.

The panel above represents the moment in which Pablo writes one of those letters. He revises it in his mind, finding solitude and calm even while surrounded by others. Just like writing and reading a letter, the moment of drawing is in itself a moment of inwardness, a slow exercise of reflection that favors internal communication. In the case of family transmission and developing from Chute's idea, the action of reproducing family documents of the past, and as it is in this case the reproduction of personal and real messages, is an exercise of embodiment of that past. Hillary Chute points out, concerning Bechdel and her work, that serving as an intermediary who physically reproduces those documents "enacts an embodied repetition" and thereby "she inhabits the past not only . . . by giving it visual form, but further by the embodied process of reinscribing archival document" (*Graphic women* 183). Sento is in this case the intermediary who by scribbling the old letter with his own hands, connects with the past thoughts and emotions that his father-in-law had written in those missives; turning this comic into an act of intimacy and embodiment of the past

while sharing with the reader the intimacy and history of the family.

### 4.1.2.1.3. Affectivity to transcend the personal.

The missives sent to family members and the personal photos are part of the family archives that Altarriba and Sento use to put together the stories, and although they focus on the personal
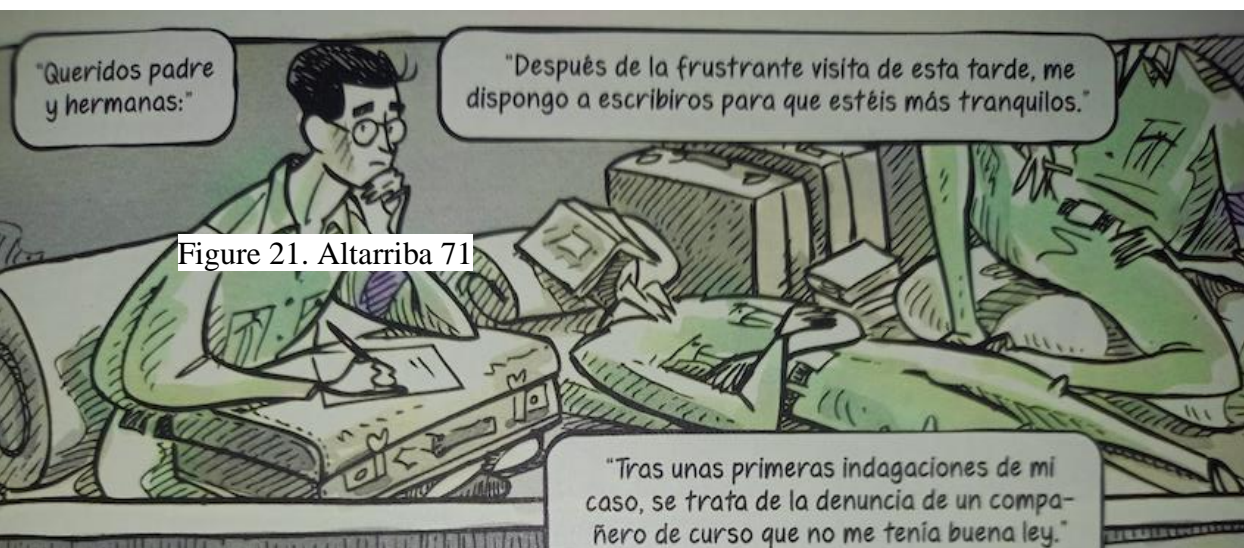


Figure 21. Altarriba 71

story of one of the family members, they reveal feelings and emotions that emphasize the human perspective of these stories and prove that they transcend the personal to influence the lives of the rest of the family, both their contemporaries and the post-generations.

The fact that Altarriba's account exists is in itself proof that personal emotionally traumatic stories go beyond the individual. In fact, the feelings of Antonio Altarriba senior constitute an affective heritage that speaks not only to his son but also directly to the contemporary audience, as Antonio Martín reveals in the prologue of *El arte de volar*: "debo confesar que solo he podido sentir el dolor que emana de la historia de Altarriba y Kim"[151] (9). As mentioned before, in *Un médico novato* the feelings of the rest of the family are even part of the story—the fear of the

---

[151] 'I must confess that I have only been able to feel the pain that emanates from the story of Altarriba and Kim' (9).

sisters and the father is a constant element to which the reader connects to—and, as noted by José María Izquierdo, in the paratext the importance of the sufferings of the family is reinforced: "El texto dialoga constantemente con el anexo paratextual en esa especie de legitimidad documental, pero además hay todo un conjunto de paratextos ajenos a la línea temporal de la narración que le confieren una perspectiva humana"[152] (72). The photo below is one of these paratextual elements that Izquierdo refers to through which the author reveals the emotional impact of the war on the contemporaries.

---

[152] 'The text constantly dialogues with the paratextual annex in that kind of documentary legitimacy, but there is also a whole set of paratext outside the timeline of the narration that give it a human perspective' (72).

Pablo y su hermana
Emilia, en el balcón
de su casa en la calle
Hernán Cortés.

Sobre de una de las cartas
de la familia a Pablo.

Pablo Uriel
Regimiento Carros de Combate
Prisiones Militares, celda nº 14
Zaragoza.

El padre y las hermanas Marina, Cándida
y Manola escuchando la lectura de una
de las cartas de Pablo desde la prisión.

Figure 22. Sento 145

These photos, the letters and the simple exercise of remembering are the paths to connect different generations through the intersection made by affect and affectivity and memory studies. The affectivity that *Un médico novato* uses of the family goes beyond their contemporaries and wants to connect with post-generations because post-memory "approximates memory in its affective force" (Hirsch *The Generation* 109). Having direct access to the letters of the family members is one of the ways in which *Un médico novato* achieves that connection and gives feelings and family an important place in the memory tale.

*Cuerda de presas* reflects on this idea as well in its story "El duelo". The first page opens with a panel that represents a dead body in a coffin and a group of women holding a wake. The same page closes with a close-up of the son of the deceased remembering his mother's story, highlighting the importance of the post-generation. This character appropriates his mother's story in a similar way we've seen in *El arte de volar*. There is a kind of unfolding that makes it difficult to distinguish the two voices. In his remembrance, even though the son wasn't there, he starts the tale by referring to the weather of the day his mum's story started, a piece of information that usually only the people who experienced it would know. "Pasó hace tanto tiempo… es curioso. El día en que todo empezó también hacía viento"[153] (53).  Similarly to the voices in *El arte de volar*, the synergy between the two characters braids their voices, although in this example there is not a perfect blending, instead the two identities show in the discourse. Sometimes we hear the mother: "Formación, fatiga y hambre: los días tendían a repetirse"[154] (59), and sometimes we hear the voice of the son resurfacing back: "No sé lo que mi madre pensó entonces: solo puedo suponerlo. Creo

---

[153] 'It happened so long ago... it is curious the day that everything started, it was also windy…' (53).
[154] 'Formation, fatigue and hunger: the days tended to repeat themselves' (55).

que velarla no solo fue un acto de piedad. Mi madre intentaba empatar una partida íntima"[155] (59) where he clearly shows that he is missing some information.

I would like to note that the word duel is polysemic. On the one hand it means "mourning, grief, it comes from the term dolus, which in Latin means pain". The pain that his mother experienced mourning her friend and in the Francoist prisons is extended to her son, whose pain connects with his mother's pain through the affections that his mother's traumatic memories triggered. In addition, it also means fight, often used to fight for your honor, but in Spanish also used when referring to sports. The story of Encarna's duel brings all these meanings together: Encarna's life sufferings, her son's inherited pain, the suffering over the loss of Encarna; the basketball game that the protagonist had pending with her cellmate which was symbolically a reason to stay alive and win the other duel, and most importantly, the political fight that took her to prison and that she had to hide for many years. Fighting for her honor and the honor of her cellmate whose corpse was taken to a cage full of rabbits inside which Encarna held an overnight wake—note again the heroic response from the Republican woman to her animalization, this time portrayed by Encarna.

## 4.1.2.2. Affiliative postmemory. Public archive and performative strategy: the interview

Collective memory occurrences, including family memories, are not constructed in isolation. In fact, memories are formed by the individual in connection with the rest of the community they belong to. Public testimonies mix with the private ones to the point that they feed one another to create a collective account, and they create memories that sometimes are family

---

[155] 'I don't know what my mother thought then: she could only guess. I think holding a wake over her wasn't just an act of mercy. My mother was trying to tie an intimate match' (59).

related and sometimes are not but somehow affect family and personal experiences, even though we don't always recognize this. These connections are described by Sosa as 'beyond' and 'after blood', about which she discusses "affect wider audiences, particularly through the use of media" (qtd. in M To and Trivelli 307).

Altarriba and Kim play with this idea when they recount in a tone of denunciation the events that took place in the French internment camps at the end and after the Spanish Civil War[156]. Antonio is one of the many Spanish exiles who traveled to France running away from the sanctions that Republicans were going to undergo from the Francoist government. Under a very heated political climate, just before and at the beginning of the Second World War, the international press was very interested in knowing what was happening to all those people who had stood up to fascism: "Durante más de dos años las páginas de los periódicos y revistas ilustradas francesas habían estado publicando imágenes impactantes de obreros convertidos primero en milicianos y después en soldados"[157] (Gasca 72). This is represented in *El arte de volar*, where the prisoners themselves want to get the attention of the public sphere:

---

[156] In the last trimester of the war many Republican families ran away to France. The French government at the time dealt with this wave of people by putting them up in what was called internment camps, many of them on the beaches of the French coast.

[157] 'For more than two years the pages of French illustrated newspapers and magazines had been publishing shocking images of workers turned first into militiamen and then into soldiers' (Gasca 72).
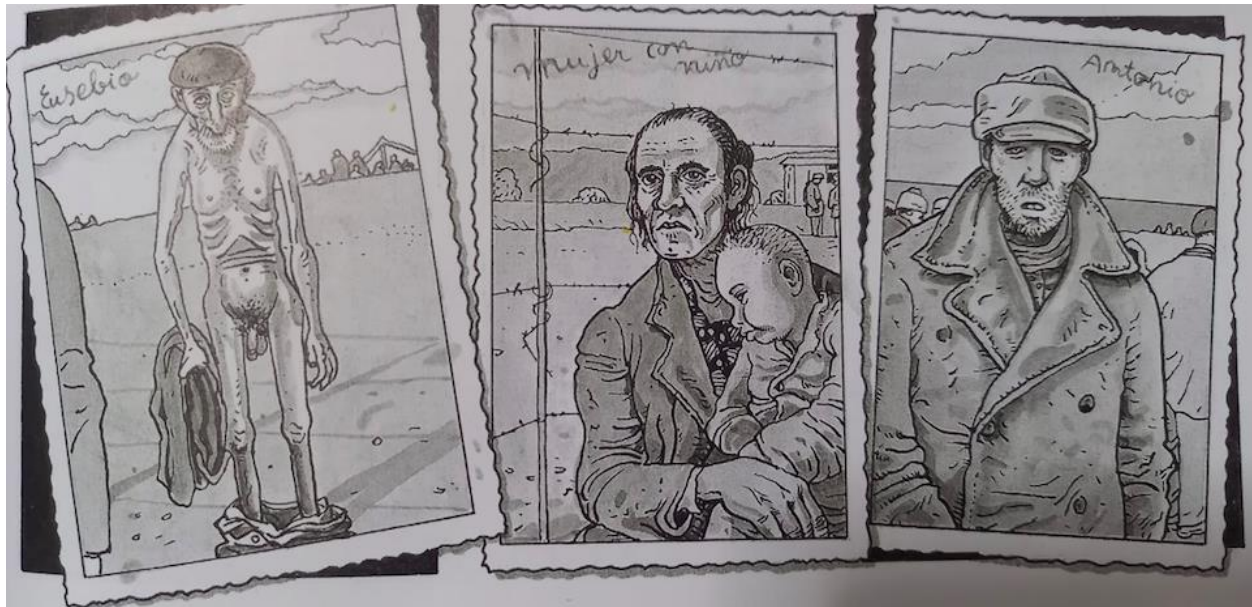
Figure 23. Altarriba 83

These pictures taken by a group of journalists in the story of Altarriba are using the personal experiences of the refugees with the intention of making an impact in the public sphere. The characters themselves are aware of that possible impact: "La prensa venía a fotografiarnos… posábamos exhibiendo sin pudor nuestras miserias… queríamos que el mundo supiera cómo trataban las democracias burguesas a los luchadores antifascistas"[158] (83). Altarriba and Kim use the public memory archive as one of Antonio's private mementos, including in the photos name tags to help him remember as one would do in a family album. By doing this, they represent the importance of the public images in Antonio Altarriba's memory account. His remembrance is not limited to his family upbringing but also mediated by the public images of the conflict. The forces of postmemory, even the emotional ones, connect public and private diminishing the boundaries

---

[158] 'The press came to photograph us… we posed shamelessly displaying our miseries… we wanted the world to know how the bourgeois democracies treated anti-fascist fighters' (83).

that distinguish the two, as in the photos above, that illustrate the common space that the public

and the private share in the exercise of memory transfer.

Examples of private war archives that become public are perhaps easier to come up with. We only have to think of the omnipresent *Anne Frank's diary.* In the previous extract from *El arte de volar*, the journalists are very incontestably focusing on the individual stories of those refugees. They portray their bodies, their faces, and miseries, even featuring their most private parts, to get the mass circulation of their papers and attention from the public. Private stories connect with the audience and they are efficient in denunciation and also in sales. The private archives of the Altarriba and Uriel's families become public through their representation in the comics I study, and so do the many private documents that served to give shape to *Los surcos del azar* and *Cuerda de presas*. In the case of affiliative acts of memory such as these two graphic novels, the intellectual exercise of putting them together requires gathering information from many sources. Erll notes that "the selected items must be formed in a particular manner to become an object of memory" (145). To put together a narrative about the past, and create meaning, the authors have to educate themselves about history, gathering and organizing a selection of personal and public accounts and objects about the war.

This formative process that is necessary to create an object of memory is represented in both *Los surcos del azar* and *Cuerda de presas*. In Roca's work, Paco's *alter ego* arrives in Miguel's house seeking for information: "Verás, estoy haciendo una historia sobre españoles que combatieron al fascismo en la Segunda Guerra Mundial"[159] (25). He wants to interview Miguel, but he has previously informed himself about the war. In an intellectual exercise, post-generations that belong to what Hirsch calls affiliative postmemory to seek first hand information through

---

[159] 'Well, I'm creating a story about Spaniards who fought fascism in World War II' (25).

interviews, as well as specialized literature and knowledge on the topic[160]. Paco Roca mentions in

many interviews the amount of research he did to educate himself about historical details of the

time and so it is also represented here, and his alter *alter ego* in the story also reflects about how

he is going to organize the information he is gathering: "Bueno… aún no sé cómo enfocarlo . . .

Quizás simplemente le tome a usted como protagonista y cuente sus años en la guerra" (116, 117).

There is, then, an explicit reference to the writing process that Jacqueline Sabbah also points out

in her analysis:

> Queda pues visible y sumamente acusada la dimensión autorreferencial y metaficcional del
>
> relato. El lector asiste, a la par que a las vivencias de *La Nueve*, al proceso de escritura de
>
> tales episodios, a sabiendas de que ese relato es una ficción, es decir un «artefacto», del
>
> que se nos muestra cómo se está esbozando y dibujando, y que, en un encabalgamiento
>
> temporal algo vertiginoso, ya estamos leyendo[161] (Sabbah).

*Cuerda de presas* also recreates the writing process in her pages, including the gathering

of information. This is represented in "El cuarto bajo la escalera" in the interview to Ms. Carmen

about her experience in Francoist jails, and as noted by Jose Luis Castro Lombilla the depiction of

the journalist is of "un insensible periodista cuya máxima preocupación mientras graba su

espeluznante historia es orinar"[162] (Castro Lombilla "Lamentémonos"). While Ms. Carmen is

telling the horrendous story of how Julia had been raped and about the many other humiliations

and abuse she and the other inmates had to deal with, the journalist keeps thinking that he needs

---

[160] The idea of the testimonial that is interviewed by someone in the third generation is used in many other works about the Spanish CIvil War. Some examples are *Soldados de Salamina (*2001*), El corazón helado (*2007) y *Tu rostro mañana (*2009*).*

[161] 'Thus, the self-referential and metafictional dimension of the story remains visible and highly pronounced. The reader sees, at the same time the depiction of the stories of *La Nueve* and the story of the writing process of such episodes; knowing that this story is a fiction, that is to say an «artifact», of which we are shown how it is being outlined and drawing, and that, in a somewhat vertiginous temporal enjambment, we are already reading' (Sabbah).

[162] 'a cold-hearted journalist whose main concern while filming her hair-raising story is urinating' (Lombilla).

to urinate. At some point, he interrupts her story to take care of his physical needs and goes on to think about the approach of his story: "This needs to be told coldly" says the journalist. The self-referential nature of this narration puts on the table the intentions of the storyteller and the objective of such narration. The fact that he wants to tell the story coldly and that he even reflects on it is because he is seeking a reaction from his readership, just like the monstrator of the story, which, as mentioned before, aims to raise awareness among its readership about the violence that female bodies underwent in Francoist prisons.



Figure 24. García and Martínez 35

In addition to that, what Lombilla perceives as an insensitive attitude by the journalist is yet again another example of the disconnection of the third generation from the events of the war. The disunion, at the same time, brings with it a dependency, a necessity to know more about the war and puts on the table the idea of historical continuity. Their curiosity leaves behind those years in which talking about the war was less common and wants to overcome that muteness that continued during the Transition. The monstrator shows the older and the younger characters, one in front of each other, making it impossible for the readers not to make that connection between

past and present. At the same time, from the diegetic point of view, both of these stories go back and forth in time and therefore force the reader to understand the links between the past and the present of those characters, and being this a memory issue, past and present of the society they represent.

As I said before, in comics, the space of the gutter very often means time. One frame shows an event and the following shows how that event continues. *Un médico novato* and *El arte de volar*, for instance, use this narrative model for the most part. *Los surcos del azar*, however, in his narrative of the interview represents the past face to face to the present as it is the case in the following extract, allowing the readership to see at a glance both the disconnection and the historical continuity.

Figure 25. Roca 114

The framework of the interview creates two diegetic axes that alternate in the story and that can be perceived visually in the example above. First, the story of the creation of the narrative is represented in black and white on the left side of the page. This part of the story, as noted by Catalá Carrasco "tienen un formato más regular y utiliza las técnicas del plano y contraplano propias de una entrevista"[163] (163). Inside that diegesis, the reader can see to the right of the page and represent in color the story about the war that has Miguel as a narrator, which is told chronologically. The attention to the search for information that I referred to and the continuous journey between the present and the past are signs of the interest that the third generation has in the echo of the Civil War in our days.

In conclusion, the instruments to retrieve the past of both affiliative and familial postmemory represented in the comics are interconnected. How do we know what happened? Although it is clear that familial postmemory depends on a stronger emotional relationship and personal upbringing, and that affiliative postmemory depends on an intellectual and proactive exercise; the lines that separate them both are not always clear. Public and private sources play a role when constructing either of those memories, feeding off each other. From our position of post-generations that haven't experienced the war, it would be very difficult to discern exactly the sources of all the remembering in the formation of the memory object that finally ends up in our hands. *Cuerda de presas*, *Los surcos del azar*, *Un médico novato,* and *El arte de volar* become, as a result of that remembering, memory spaces that linger and that contribute to shaping the Spanish collective memory, what in Shete's words would be: "Places, places are still there."

---

[163] 'they have a more regular format and use the shot and reverse shot technique typical of an interview' (163).

## 4.2. Looking back: a political act

The political conscience of the lead characters of the graphic novels verified above denotes an intention to use the memory exercise as a symbolic agent with transformative potential. In relation to this, the studied comics signal a generational difference, suggesting that second and third generations focus on different aspects of the memory exercise when it comes to the political factor. The active learning about our past and the effect of the Civil War on our days is of special interest for those in the third generation; whereas finding personal answers and celebrating the life of a dear one seems to be more at the core of second generations' narratives. But this again is not a clear cut.

Any historical memory exercise is intrinsically political. The Spanish remembrance as well, and as it responds to the nuances of the politics and historical factors around the war, it shows the political impact that the contest has nowadays—still present in the daily press and the political conversation at any level of society. As already mentioned, Sebastian Faber in his discussion about the memory issue foregrounds that in Spain, the memory exercise is highly political. Precisely because of this, he indicates that the affiliative act with the victims of Franco's regime implies:

> una serie de rechazos y condenas: del golpe de Estado que desató la guerra en 1936; de la represión de las tropas y paramilitares del bando nacional; de la dictadura franquista; de la negligencia del legado político y judicial de la represión en los años de la Transición; y de las políticas de la memoria de los sucesivos gobiernos democráticos[164] (148).

The previous observation made by Faber and the reparative demands of the associations of

---

[164] 'a series of rejections and convictions: to the state that unleashed the war in 1936, to the repression from troops and paramilitary of the Nationalist side; to the Franco dictatorship, to the political and judicial legacy of repression in the years of the transition , and to the memory policies of successive democratic governments' (148).

victims of Francoism[165]—which had to be accepted by the Zapatero Government of 2004— are in the background of the extremely bitter political debate happening in the recent past about this topic, that even includes obituaries in the newspapers of victims of each of the sides in the Civil War (Tesón). At the center of this public debate are the actions of the democratic governments towards repairing the memory of the victims of Francoism, triggering a strong critical movement focused on what was done and what remains to be done by the official administrations in this regard. This denunciation cannot be understood if it is not attending to a generational change.

Julio Aróstegui[166] makes a differentiation, which has been replicated many times by other authors[167], that focuses on how different generations approach their remembrance, distinguishing: identification or confrontation, reconciliation, and reparation. According to Arostegui the generation of the grandparents, witnesses of the war, created a narrative of 'identification or confrontation', which served to justify the violence against the adversary; the children, who lived through the Transition, built an account of 'reconciliation', which distributed the blame and turned the page on those tragic episodes; finally, the grandchildren want to recover the past while promoting 'reparation' measures for the victims. The silence that the Transition entailed prevented the victims of Franco's regime from receiving public recognition for the crimes they suffered, and even from being able to properly mourn. The reparation demanded today for the faction of the defeated has an essentially symbolic character,[168] but clashes with the policy of amnesty and amnesia dictated at the end of the 1970s. Unlike their parents, who were an active part of the Transition and have stronger emotional ties with the protagonists, sometimes even inhering many

---

[165] First submitted in the year 2000.
[166] Noteworthy historian and promoter of the memorialist movement.
[167] Such as by Javier Muñoz Soro who has been referenced in chapter 2.
[168] Focusing on the recovering of the corpses and knowledge of crimes.

of the traumas; the generation of the grandchildren feel more emotionally distant and look back exerting an intellectual and critical exercise rather than an emotional one. The Transition has become for that critical sector like the *original sin*, to which all the evils detected today in Spanish democracy are attributed, in contrast to the narrative of the second generation who took pride in having built a model democracy, exemplary, without authoritarian vestiges, or any continuity with the dictatorship. The memory claims of anti-Francoism came to show that this was a narrative that was at least selective or incomplete (Paloma Aguilar, Ruíz Torres, Espinosa), and the works of the third generation in our corpus show these political demands as the spigot of a social and cultural emergency of much greater scope.

Looking at the texts I study from authors from second generations, I don't observe a lack of commitment to the political endeavor and the personal restitution of the victims, but it is safe to say that I perceive a different approach from those of the third generation with regards to how they represent their political denunciation. In the former, the political dimension is at the mercy of the personal story; whereas in the latter the dependency is built the other way around.

Antonio Altarriba's life, for example, is closely linked to the political events that happened while he was alive, and the historical facts are related in the story from his perspective: his political awakening when he arrived in Zaragoza, his participation as a soldier in the war, his life in exile and how his political views marked him in his return to Spain, he giving up those political views under a dictatorial regime, etc. As for *Un médico novato,* the political position is not as paramount as in Altarriba's work. This is not to say politics aren't present, but they are blurred in what is important for his story, which is how Pablo's and his family's life were affected by the war: seeing death up close, the loss of a brother, experiencing the life in jail and the fear of being one of those who end up shot in Francoist prisons. Unlike in the works in the corpus, Uriel's story—in the

*Atrapado en Belchite,* second part of the trilogy—-exposes some of the miseries of the Republican faction, which connects with the narrative of the memory of reconciliation based on the idea that since both sides committed atrocities, forgiveness should go both ways.

The use of color in *Un médico novato* does talk about politics. Black and white prevail in the whole work, following a pattern of using some faded colors that duly adorn the background. As a contrasting element, the colorist[169] of the trilogy about Pablo Uriel's life chooses to focus on the flags and to lay stress on the blood. Those elements are the only ones whose bright and warm colors stand out from the background just described. By doing this, the colorist maintains, throughout the reading of the whole trilogy as exemplified below, the idea that this is an account where a violent, deathly and bloody political confrontation between two clashing positions is at stake.

---

[169] Elena Uriel, Pablo Uriel's daughter.

Figure 26. Sento *Un médico* 27



Figure 27. Sento *Atrapado* 102

The works of the third generation in the corpus are in line with the categorization used by Arostegui, as they clearly exercise a remembering that aims to offer repair or compensation to the victims. *Cuerda de presas* expresses their social demands through the striking drawing style that aims to shooking its readership conscience with images "a prueba de olvido e incredulidad"[170] (7), as the prologue describes. Bringing back the stories of women imprisoned in Francoist jails and finding repair for that collectivity is the political agenda of this book. The tough drawing style is combined with the structure of the work in terms of semantics where the eleven stories focus on different topics, but through which transversal themes transcend. The abuse of authority, both by the Church and by legislative, judicial and executive powers; the lack of freedom and the search

---

[170] 'resistant to forgetfulness and disbelief' (7).

for justice are some of these themes. The work as a whole can be read as a classical argument that finishes the rationalization with an appeal to action.

"Entre rejas" works as an introduction that sets up the theme of the collection—exordium: women imprisoned for political reasons during the postwar period. Through a collective character introduces the historical context and the idea of confinement, which in its broadest sense, collects much of the meaning of this work—narratio. Not by chance, García and Martínez also present women as political: the introductory character joins the unions and takes up arms once the war starts. In this regard, Aguado exposes that "La opción de luchar por la República contra el fascismo significó así para muchas mujeres la defensa de un estatus político recién conquistado, pero a la vez, una ocasión para redefinir su identidad"[171] (Aguado). This is why the political identity of these characters is exhibited right at the beginning. Considering that women had recently acquired their political agency and that their liberty to display it is about to go through a parenthesis, this political status is an essential part of the character's development.

The denunciation of the injustices that these women were subjected to—propositio—is laid out in the following stories: "Balada de ventas" discusses the death penalty; "El cuarto bajo la escalera" the humiliation and abuses that their female bodies endured[172]; "La ciudad más lejana" the isolation of prisoners from society, expressed in a metonymy—included in the panel below— rightly identified by Gregory Dubois who says: "aunque no se escuche ni voz ni onomatopeyas, condensa los trinos del pájaro, metonimia de la libertad anhelada, mediante un plano general sobre el exterior de Segovia desde el interior de la celda"[173] (17); "Montañas, nubes, cielo" denounces

---

[171] 'The option of fighting for the Republic against fascism, thus meant for many women the defense of a newly won political status, but at the same time, an opportunity to redefine their identity' (Aguado "Memoria de la Guerra").

[172] This includes sexual and gender violence.

[173] 'Although no voice or onomatopoeia is heard, it condenses the trills of the bird, a metonymy of the longed-for freedom, through a general shot of the exterior of Segovia from inside the cell'

the attempt to erase their identities and the history of Republican families; "El traslado" informs

about the insalubrious situation in which prisoners were transported from jail to jail; and lastly,

"El duelo" exposes the pain suffered by families and friends of the deceased.



TRAS LAS REJAS, SEGOVIA PARECÍA LA CIUDAD MÁS LEJANA DEL MUNDO.

Figure 28. García and Martínez 38

And finally, the last four stories reiterate with more examples the atrocities denounced

previously—refutatio—, and add a conclusion and a call for action. Staging the value of these

women, they highlight their bravery and celebrate their rebellion. The four stories focus on the

ways these women fought back and identify their spaces for dissidence. In addition to the

extensively studied example of "En pie", the inmates depicted in "Los límites de nuestra celda"

practice insubordination by teaching each other how to write, read and sew, and it is that

knowledge what gives them the tools for resistance, consisting of earning money in the black

market and communicating with other inmates in writing. "Fuegos" tells the love story of two

women whose romance was repressed and punished. Simply pursuing that love is how these

characters practice insurgency, and here again they win a small battle when against all the chances,

they manage to spend some time together: "Pasamos tres días comiendo frío junto a las ruinas de

un Dios muerto"[174] (89). And lastly, the already mentioned denunciation that is put together by the lead character of "Qué escribir" wraps up the collection with an allegation and an appeal for the visualization and compensation of these women who have been denied everything, including their identity: "¿Qué decir? . . . ¿Que vivimos bajo constante negación?"[175] (94). The character, who finally decides to leave a blank page, denounces through this statement that that is precisely what their life has been reduced to: nothing. The disobedience of these characters inside Francoist prisons through what apparently are everyday gestures—holding a paper and a pencil, loving each other, making money and making personal decisions—restores the agency of these characters and is political.

Los surcos del azar presents in its account a clear concern about truthfulness and a palpable intention to honor the exiled Republicans who participated in both the Civil War and the Second World War. The recovery of these forgotten lives that, like the other stories of the exile, were not included in the existing narrative of the war. By representing their experiences from up close, Roca puts his bit on making justice for *La Nueve* giving them a little of what they were never given: historical recognition. This indicates that this graphic novel fits the differentiation made by Arostegui as it also aims to amend . One of the ways in which *Los Surcos del azar* expresses the political denunciation is through the lead character.

---

[174] 'We spent three days bearing the cold next to the ruins of a dead God' (89).

[175] 'What to say? That we live under constant surveillance? That hunger devours us? That we live in constant denial? That one does not turn the light on or off, she has no money or purchases?' (94).

ADEMÁS ESPAÑA NO ERA SEGURA PARA MÍ. MUCHOS AMIGOS HABÍAN SIDO FUSILADOS DESPUÉS DE LA GUERRA. EL HAMBRE DE VENGANZA DEL RÉGIMEN FRANQUISTA ERA INSACIABLE. DESPUÉS DE TODO LO QUE HABÍA LUCHADO CONTRA EL FASCISMO, NO IBA A QUEDARME EN ESPAÑA Y VIVIR CON EL MIEDO A SER ARRESTADO Y FUSILADO.

Figure 29. Roca 316

This short statement of an old man is a cry for justice and a positioning with the victims: insecurity, executed friends, insatiable revenge, and fear. The very exercise of the interview is presented as an opportunity for Miguel to express himself, reflect on the past and in doing so repair his relationship with his own memory. His need for reflection and his coming to terms with his own past works as a metaphor for society. From Paco Roca's tribute to the men of *La Nueve* and the space created for Miguel to heal about his past we can infer a condemnation of the social and political repression suffered by the defeated who couldn't tell their story for whatever reason: exile, shame of being *rojos* or the fear of reprisals. In addition, this story conceals a second political recrimination, the already discussed poor information that third generations received about the war and that creates a big gap between generations, result of the politics of reconciliation of the Transition. The troubled contemporary debate about this issue responds to a lack of knowledge and a determination to gather information with the intention not only to repair the damage, but also

to make sense of today's society. Memorialism, explains the philosopher Jürgen Habermas, attends to reasons of public or collective need, not only particular or private (73), because the memory of episodes of violence forms the moral legacy of a society. Habermas makes the following reading of H. Arendt's lectures on the experience of Nazism. The best way to prevent a repeat is to reinforce our public values with the experience of the outrage that injustice provokes. *Los Surcos del azar* points out the need to learn about the past and the work puts its bit to fill the gap of forgetfulness from the Dictatorship and the Transition and educate its readership.

The political crisis that the Spanish society has derived from in recent years is part of the political contextualization of this new emergence of the graphic novels in contemporary Spain. From very early on, the emphatically political nature of the Spanish memorialist debate (Faber, Corredera, Becerra), the bitterness of the different positions, and the absence of a consensus about the public gaze towards the past became landmarks of the memory issue. Over time, this conflict, which I have presented as generational, has been extended to other areas, and it has also become a cultural crisis. The dissatisfaction of the new generations towards the Transition is no longer a question of victims of Francoism, as I advanced in the theoretical framework, it is now also a rejection of the culture inherited—the 'Culture of Transition', as it is referred to by Guillem Martínez, Amador Fernández Savater or Germán Labrador. The comics in the corpus show participation in this debate that goes beyond specific demands, showing their attempt to amend the narrative of democracy, to reconstruct it, and connecting with other works of other graphic authors, such as Fuentes y Clarey, Dapena or Sagar Fornies, that also express their political discomfort, capturing new social demands and mobilizations such as precarization and the 15-M movement.

## 4.3. Conclusions

In summary, there is in Spanish society a general dissatisfaction towards the democratic state and their politics of remembrance that has only increased in the last years. As a response, the community has found in the arts new ways of recreating historical events and reflecting on the construction of the collective identity that took place during the Transition. This remembering, whatever the intentions, responds to the needs of the present which interfere in the memory exercise.

In their narrative they propose a reflection on the politics for remembrance, including storylines that retrieve the voices of the victims of the dictatorship, focusing on what happened after the war. Although the works of the second generation have a more striking personal charge, they all want to discuss the political crimes that cannot be judged because of the Amnesty law of 1977. The focal point of the works in our corpus differs depending on the generation of the authors and the framework of the remembrance: transmission in the family set focuses more on emotions, while the third generation focuses more on intellectual and political aims, although using emotions as a form of communication. In their stories, regardless of the spotlight, they bring together the public and the private spheres, connecting politics to everyday life. These life stories reactivate for the contemporary audience historical events and politics that are already distant from them, and by doing this, the "less directly affected participants can become engaged in the generation of postmemory that can persist even after all participants and even their familial descendants are gone" (Hirsch *The Generation* 33). In the transmission process that is shown in graphic novels, the gaps are filled not only through listening and the voice of the protagonists, the family past, for example, but also in a double exercise of interference and formation of memory, the experiences and expectations of the second and third generations fill these gaps where fiction plays a vital role

as well. The interactions between the narratives of the different generations that we find in the text and the impossibility to differentiate them are a signal that they together form the contemporary narrative, what Magdalena González explains as "lo sustancial para la historia del presente no es la sucesión de las generaciones, sino la coexistencia intergeneracional . . . que determina la creación y percepción de un "nosotros" añadido y de naturaleza histórica" (130).

The link with the past through affections that these comics use connects as well with the idea of legitimization of the story at stake and, as a consequence, the legitimation of the format itself. Considering that the familial feelings and scenes bring the story closer to the contemporary readership, these can connect and believe the historical content and the truth in it, which will be the focus of the next chapter. Truth is expressed through documentation, affection, and familiarity.

# Chapter five: Depicting the war: where fiction meets historical accuracy



Figure 30. Giménez 24

Carlos Giménez starts his work *36-39 Malos tiempos* with the splash page above. The page confronts the reader with corpses, dead children in the very front, the pain, suffering, blood, tears, and desperation. In his depiction of the conflict, he focuses on the agony and affliction, placing historical facts in the background. The very title of his work denotes an intention to talk about history, using the dates of the war, which is one of the quintessential indications of historical accuracy; but at the same time the title exposes his point of view: "malos tiempos" (bad times). Gimenez's intention to engage with historical knowledge is undeniable, but he wants to do it on his own terms, and so he states in the introduction of this work:

> Y por fin llego a lo que quería decir, y lo digo con énfasis: Yo, servidor de ustedes, el autor de estos sencillos y humildes dibujos, Carlos Giménez Giménez, no soy neutral. Repito: no soy neutral. Y esto es tan cierto como el sol que nos alumbra, que decía mi madre. Yo no soy neutral, no lo he sido en mi vida[176] (16,17).

The subjectivity of the comic books on the war that I study has been widely explored above. The use of the first person, the interviews, the emotional load of personal and family accounts, and the interferences in the transmission are all examples of their subjective approach. In addition, the subjectivity conferred to the *historieta* and personal stories is part of the reason why comics are regarded as inaccurate or untrue, but despite all this, these comics put on the table the idea of truth and I would like to explore how. While subjective, their appeal to the feelings and the fact that the memories are received from the witnesses firsthand in their remembering of their past experiences is effective in terms of identification and empathy and therefore it contributes to the credibility of the narrative and its authority as historical knowledge. Veracity and history matter for the authors

---

[176] 'And I finally get to what I wanted to say, and I say it with emphasis: I, yours truly, the author of these simple and humble drawings, Carlos Giménez Giménez, I am not neutral. I repeat: I am not neutral. And that is as sure as the shining sun, as my mother used to say. I am not neutral, I have never been' (16,17).

of these comic books; which explains the urgency in my corpus and the memory discussion in fiction to engage with the topic of historical accuracy. This chapter proves such an urgency in the corpus of this study and explores comics strategies to engage with historical facts to seek veracity, provide an atmosphere of truth and earnest communication and that way find legitimation to contribute to the collective narrative of historical knowledge. These authors belong to the movement of the "recuperacionistas" that work towards memory recovery through testimonials, under the belief that "no por subjetiva menos legítima o auténtica" (Faber *La literatura* 109).

## 5.1. Devices to connect with historical rigor

As to create the connection between the fictional story told and the historical accuracy, the authors of the comics use different narrative devices that intensify the idea of truth. Some of these devices have already been mentioned above: the connection with personal stories, the introduction of public archives, or the use of feelings as a language of communication. In this section, I would like to focus on those devices that bring to the table the idea of historical accuracy.

### 5.1.1. Paratext of comics: holding on to history

One of those devices is how these comics use the paratext. The graphic novels I study are not presented raw. The authors and editors choose to surround the text with a series of explanations, photos, prologues, epilogues, and other elements that guide the reader in their interpretation. I've been referring to these elements all along this dissertation, but here I would like to dedicate a special focus to them because they are vital for the authors to place their work as a non-fiction comic. In them, the reader can verify that they are documented works, ergo we can read them as truth.

Paratexts, which include peritexts and epitexts[177], are there "in the service . . . of a better reception of the text and a more pertinent reading—more pertinent, naturally, in the eyes of the author and his allies" (Genette 2). The peritext that are found before reading the core text, that is, prologue, introduction, title, inscription, etc., and also the epitext that the reader encounters before starting to read, such as promotions, interviews, etc., influence the reading experience beforehand; and in doing so, determine our understanding and also our choice to continue reading. Genette defines these peritexts as a threshold that allows the reader to choose, as they constitute the presentation of the work (1). *Cuerda de presas* and *El arte de volar* include a prologue written by third parties that interpellate readers directly[178]. After reading those prologues, the reader becomes aware of the presence of those works and where those texts are placed, their context. The peritext after the core text, on the other hand, even though it doesn't introduce the work, also gives meaning to the text that was just read. The epilogue clarifies aspects that the author deems important and helps give shape to a conclusion. For instance, *Los surcos del azar* and *Un médico novato* use the epilogue to establish connections between their construct, the cultural work in our hands, and reality. In it, they expose the evidence of that connection through the display of real family documentation, such as photos and letters or, as is the case of *Los surcos del azar,* a text is written by Dr. Robert S. Coale, the main expert voice that advised Paco Roca with regards to historical data[179].

Overall, the paratexts of the four graphic works I study, both peritext and epitext, provide information that emphasizes the historical dimension of the core texts they complement and often

---

[177] Peritext includes those elements that are published in the volume with the core text: title, name of the author, preface, epilogue, etc. Epitext includes those elements that are connected to the text, but are outside the volume, such as interviews, promotion, the website of the author, etc.

[178] Felipe Hernández Cava and Antonio Martín are the authors of those prologues respectively.

[179] There are many other voices whose knowledge was very important for the creation of the comic. Their names are in the acknowledgments, which is also part of the paratext.

the political dimension of the works. As an example, the prologue of *Cuerda de presas* reads the following:

> Y esa "profiláctica" vejación continuada de miles de mujeres entra en el olvido: primero, por la censura franquista; después, por el pacto de silencio aceptado durante la transición; . . . por el miedo del gobierno socialista a abrir la caja de truenos de la memoria; y, finalmente, por los años de Plomo del Partido Popular, en que el revisionismo empieza a campar a sus anchas a través de algunos supuestos historiadores[180] (6).

This prologue presents the book as part of the response to the knowledge gap around the history of the Republican faction after the war, giving it then a political and historical context. In the prologues of these graphic novels the reader can find mentions to dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, the coup d'état in 1936, the Civil war, the Transition, the pact of silence, political parties, and laws, and they establish connections between the Spanish exile and the German concentration camps, such as the one in Auschwitz; ultimately, historical events that, as in the example, contextualize the story, make it present, and they direct its readership to that pertinent interpretation Genette was referring to.

### 5.1.1.1. Self-referential work: research and documentation

Earlier in this dissertation I mentioned the need of the third generation to learn about history as part of their memory exercise and how both of the comics of that generation in this corpus refer to the formative process of creating the work in their stories. Sabbah sees this as evidence of the fictitious nature of the story.

---

[180] 'The "prophylactic" harassment to many women fell by the wayside: first, because of Franco's censorship; then, because of the pact of silence accepted during the transition; and later on, because of the fear of the socialist government to open up the can of worms of memory; and, finally, by the years of Lead of the Popular Party, in which revisionism began to roam freely via some historians' (6).

La naturaleza ficticia del relato de *La Nueve*—en el sentido de que se trata de una construcción, una representación, mediatizada por el dibujo—se expone en repetidas ocasiones, especialmente en las secuencias donde vemos a Paco tomar apuntes o dibujar lo que son las propias viñetas en color[181] (Sabbah).

I see, nevertheless, two sides of the same coin. Indeed, the inclusion of the writing process in the diegesis of *Los surcos del azar* brings to the discussion the idea of construct and artifice. It is known, for example, that those interviews with Miguel Campos and Paco Roca never happened: "Si es cierta la existencia del combatiente Miguel Campos, integrante de *La Nueve*, también hay constancia de que se perdió su rastro después de la liberación de París, en diciembre de 1944"[182] (Sabbah). It is also true, however, that this same diegesis highlights the research needed to create that construct, and that way it shows commitment with historical rigor. The importance of this aspect in the reading process of *Los surcos del azar* becomes apparent on many occasions through the use of the peritextual and epitextual elements that accompany the core text.

When promoting *Los surcos del azar* in mainstream television shows[183] Paco Roca draws attention to the vast research work he had to do to write and draw a comic that aims to be respectful to historical truth, in a way that is also balanced with what he was creating, a comic book. In addition, in those interviews, he would often refer to, and sometimes was even joined by the historian Dr. Robert S. Coale. Coale's role is so important for the creation and understanding of the story of *Los surcos del azar,* that he is mentioned in the core text: "Un amigo historiador, que

---

[181] 'The fictitious nature of the story of *La Nueve*–in the sense that it is a construction, a representation, mediated by the drawing–is repeatedly exposed, especially in the sequences where Paco is taking notes or drawing what are the own vignettes in color' (Sabbah).

[182] 'The existence of the combatant Miguel Campos, a member of the Nine, is true, but there is also evidence that his trail was lost after the liberation of Paris, in December 1944' (Sabbah).

[183] Some examples of these interviews referenced in the 'works cited' section are: (Espacio Fundación Telefónica *Los Surcos del azar*), (Espacio Fundación Telefónica *Paco Roca. Dibujante ambulante*) and (Atención Obras).

ha investigado el tema, está casi seguro de ello"[184] (25) and the publication includes an epilogue written by him. In that text, the historian refers to his interest towards the topic of the Republicans who fought in the Second World War and how Roca used his knowledge in the process of giving shape to *Los surcos del azar:* "que me perdone los dolores de cabeza que, seguramente, le he provocado al ser tan intransigente con ciertos detalles históricos . . . para el historiador apasionado, los detalles son el corazón de la historia"[185] (323).

Self-referencing the documentation needed to create the work is also done in *El arte de volar*. Considering that this is a book where there is an explicit connection with the familial past, the need to be explicit about the documentation process is striking, as one would think that the family connection would have been enough to justify and legitimize the work. Antonio Martín states in the prologue: "Altarriba se plantea los hechos y el reflujo de sentimientos que provocan en él y lo hace con plena coherencia, explorando y documentándose. Extrae de su memoria los recuerdos fragmentarios de la vida de su padre, recoge hechos, mome ntos, palabras, investiga datos, y con ello elabora la historia."[186] (6)

Referring to the documentation process in both of these examples expresses a preoccupation with truthful communication and a need to be taken seriously that emanates from many of the historical graphic novels in Spain. Along with this reference, paratexts present proof of such research through the capture of real documentation connecting historical events with the lives of the characters in these stories.

---

[184] 'A historian friend of mine, who has studied the subject, is almost sure about it' (25).

[185] 'I hope he forgives me for the headaches that I have surely caused him by being so intransigent with certain historical details. . . for the passionate historian, the details are the heart of history' (323).

[186] 'Altarriba considers the facts and the reflux of feelings that they provoke in him and he does so with full coherence, exploring and documenting himself. He extracts from his memory the fragmentary memories of his father's life, collects facts, moments, words, investigates data, and with it he elaborates the story' (6).

### 5.1.1.2. Personal archives

I discussed above the use of the language of feelings in comics and personal photos as very effective devices to give a personal focus to any story, and therefore connecting with the audience, speaking directly to it. When it comes to comics about the postwar, Tatiana Blanco-Cordón observes referring to her working corpus[187] that: "En un corpus centrado en la recuperación de la memoria histórica, la intermedialidad cómic-fotografía se erige como un mecanismo narrativo privilegiado para añadir densidad humana al relato histórico y anclar el episodio dibujado en la realidad de la experiencia vivida"[188] (333). The photos and personal documentation are brought out of the drawers of their houses and shared with the big audience. Through them, the authors root their stories in reality and historical knowledge, and by doing so, they transform a personal anecdote into a public one. Personal objects, such as the one below, become historical media.

Figure 31. Roca 344

---

[187] French and Spanish graphic novels published between 2011 and 2015, some of them being *Paseo de los canadienses*, *Exil*, *El barco de Neruda* and *Exilio*.

[188] 'In a corpus focused on the recovery of historical memory, the comic-photography intermediality stands as a privileged narrative mechanism to add human density to the historical story and anchor the drawn episode in the reality of the lived experience' (333).

Carta de Amado Granell al capitán Dronne. 28 de noviembre de 1944. Cedida por Colette Dronne.
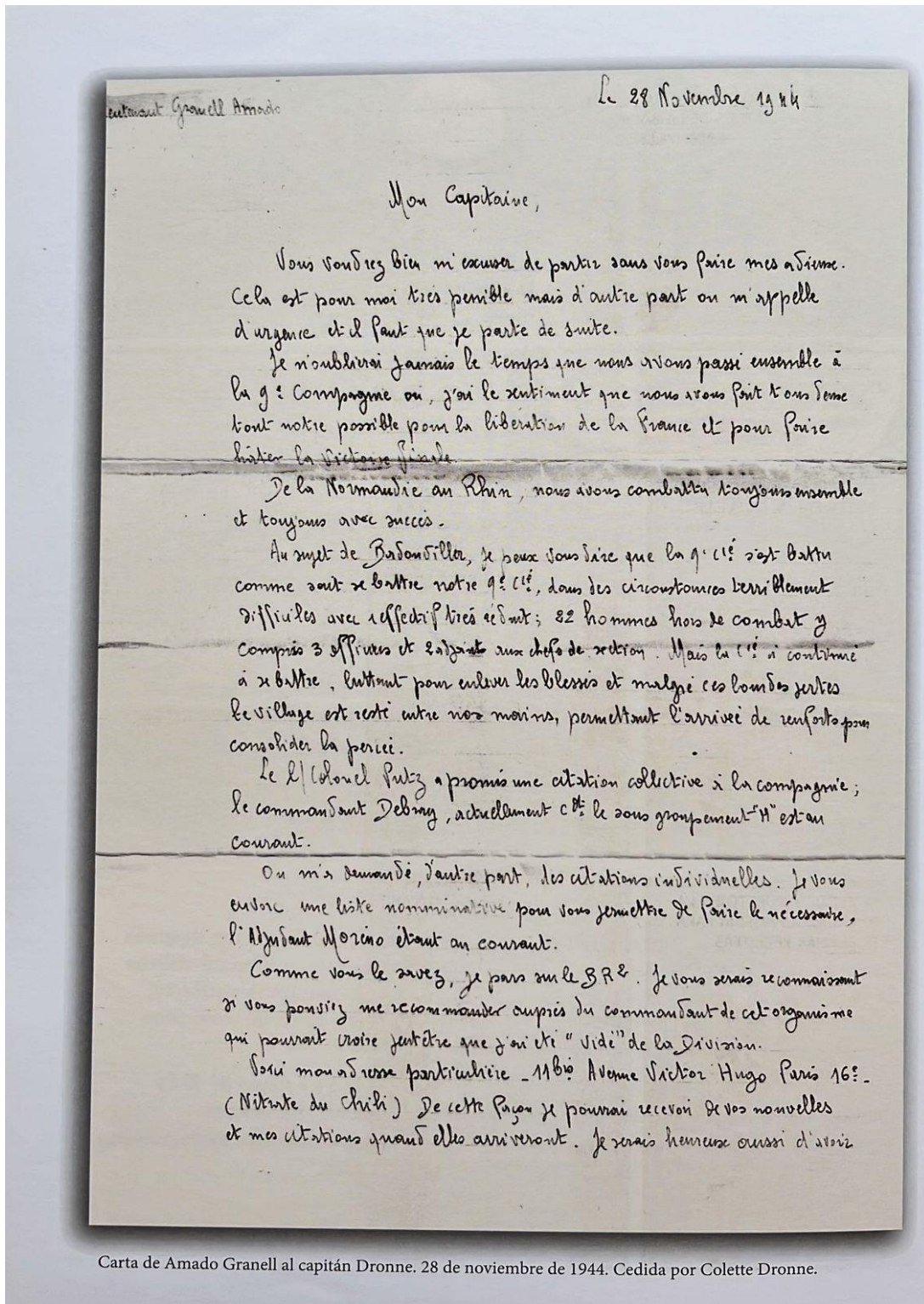
Figure 31. Roca 344

The image above is included in the expanded edition of *Los Surcos del azar* published in 2019 and it displays the personal letter that Amado Grannell sends to Captain Dronne, when this one was on leave visiting his family. According to Coele[189], this letter, which dates from November 28th, is written only a few days after a deadly battle that occurred on November 17th in the east of France, where *La Nueve* suffered many losses (Espacio Fundación Telefónica minute 59). In this letter, Granell explains what happened in the battle and why they cannot continue fighting. The letter is not only included as we see it. Roca recreates the scene with the language of words and images as a parallel continuation of the story of Miguel that we read. In this exercise of embodiment, Roca re-writes in the epilogue and through comic characters the letter through the voice of Granell, who apologizes to captain Dronne because he cannot continue with the fight due to the many losses in the company, over which he assessed they were not in a position to fight any more.

Another example of personal documentation that shows the evidence of the connection between the stories in the graphic novel and the historical facts is included in the epilogue of *Un médico novato*. The document below is the official missive that Pablo Uriel received from the town clerk of Zaragoza where he is called to join the ranks. Through this typewritten document, the reader is offered a series of elements that nourish the pact of truth between author and reader: a date and a place of issue (Zaragoza, August 12th, 1936), real signatures of Pablo Uriel and the city clerk, a real address where he needs to appear, wrinkles and marks of a paper that has been folded for a long time and the official stamp of the city of Zaragoza.

---

[189] Coale explains that Captain Dronne's memories are the main source of insight of what today we know about *La Nueve.*

Documento de citación para
incorporarse a filas. Zaragoza,
12 de agosto de 1936.

AYUNTAMIENTO
---- DE ----
- ZARAGOZA -
------------

QUINTAS.= DISTRITO:

Estando Vd. comprendido en el llamamiento reciente-
mente publicado por la Superioridad, se servirá Vd. presentar
se inmediatamente en la Caja de Recluta nº 31, sita en el Cuar
tel de San Lázaro, advirtiéndole que de no verificarlo se le
irrogará el consiguiente perjuicio.
Zaragoza 12 de Agosto de 1.936
El Secretario
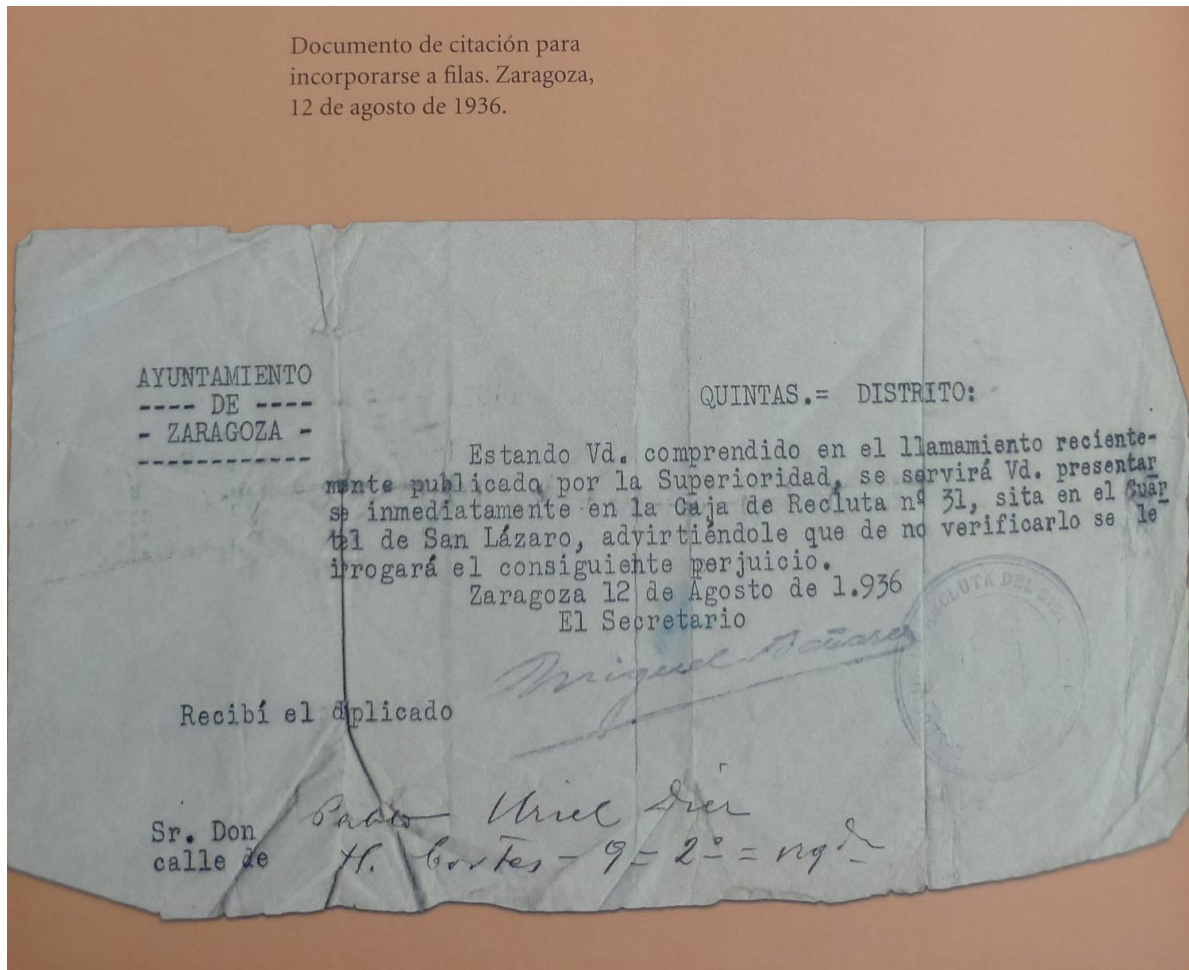
Recibí el duplicado

Sr. Don
calle de

Figure 32. Sento 144

Moreover, the epilogue of *Un médico novato* also includes several photos of the family and photos of the watch that Antonio was stolen after he was executed. Such display of personal letters and personal objects is once more an example of the interest that contemporary narrative has towards subjective and personal stories, which at the same time they work as an anchor that connects the personal life of the protagonists with the historical events represented.

## 5.1.2. To the detail: the importance of visual accuracy

The photo included in the paratext of the watch that Antonio owned and that is displayed as a proof of reality connects directly with the story where this watch is also displayed—this time as a drawing (53). Presented in a close-up image, Antonio is looking at this precious possession for him a few seconds before he is assassinated. His time is up.

When representing historical knowledge the graphic artist needs to pay special attention to small details such as knobs, hands and straps of a watch, as this needs to be faithful to those times. Landscapes, architecture, cars, clothing, weapons, or any other particular that could seem unimportant such as hairstyle, tobacco brands, etc. need to be contrasted by the graphic artists so they are represented accurately based on the models of that period. The panels below that belong to *El arte de volar* also illustrate the importance of documentation for the visual representation of this craft.

After a time of hiding and fleeing from the French authorities, Antonio Altarriba is found and arrested: "I spent the night at Gueret's police station" and the next day he was handed over by the gendarmes to the Germans. In representing this scene, Kim is careful to capture the uniforms of the Feldgendarmerie-SS[190] and the clothing of the Germans soldiers. A truthful representation of wartime requires a well-informed graphic artist in what has to do with official military clothing and accessories: helmets, badges, medals, belts, pistols, etc. need to look like the real ones.

---

[190] Military police units that worked for the German authorities during the Second World War.

In 2018 Joe Sacco spoke at a comics conference[191] where he explained his working practice. He mentioned that as part of the process, he would take many pictures of the places and people he talked with so he could use them to draw the panels of the comics he was working on. Joe Sacco's slow journalism tries to be truthful to the witnesses and the stories they relate. In Sacco's work, the drawings substitute the role that photos take in regular journalism—they illustrate the news. In the representation of memory, the role of pictures is also remarkable— sometimes with the actual inclusion of real photos, as in *Le Photographe* (2005) and sometimes through a reproduction of the photos in drawing, as we can observe in *Los surcos de azar*. Roca obtains data from old photos and thanks to them obtains a detailed representation. The examples that follow are only a small sample of how Paco Roca used old photos as an inspiration and a source of information. It is outstanding how, again, Roca embraces reality, as in an old

---

[191] 'Drawing yourself in and out of it' The Second International Comic Conference, 2018.

Figure 33. Altarriba 102

documentary, copying almost exactly the photos that are real, and demonstrating thereof his commitment to historical truth.

Figure 34. Archive from the National Archives and Records Administration, College Park. Maryland. The USA.



Figure 35. Roca 285

These images portray the Victory parade led by General Charles de Gaulle of the troops of the allies after the liberation of Paris on its way through the Champs Elysées. On the left box we see the real picture of Miguel Campos in the half-track of the section he led, called Tunisia 43[192]; and on the right one, we see Roca's representation of that moment where he carefully respects the details: the flags, the crowd, the tracks of the cars on the road, etc. and adds the banner that reads "Vive De Gaulle", that he retrieves from a different picture of that same moment. His comprehensive reproduction of the military cars is also noteworthy, the American half-track led by Miguel Campos. The half-tracks of *La Nueve* were identified easily by their names, besides "Tunisia 43", other names that were given to these military vehicles were: "Santander", "Don

---

[192] In reference to the Battles of Tunisia or the Campaign of Tunisia, which is a series of battles that happened in the north of Africa between November of 1942 and May 1943.

Quichotte", "Madrid", "Teruel", "Guadalajara", and so is represented in the comic. Miguel Campos explains that many of those cities "eran las ciudades donde los Republicanos habíamos combatido a Franco"[193] (151).

Robert Coale explains that during the process of creating the comic, Paco Roca was very eager to know details that helped him design the graphics of his work: "El afán del historietista de representar a los personajes de su novela gráfica con los rasgos de los verdaderos hombres de la novena compañía"[194] (350), which we can confirm in the following comparison. In the group photo below we can verify the author's concern to be truthful to the physical appearance of the soldiers, as there is an obvious effort to reflect the particular traits of each soldier; and in it, we can also observe aspects of the uniform that the ninth company would wear at the time. Coale explains that the photo on the right was the official portrait of the company taken in England in July 1944. The uniform of the company is the American uniform because *La Nueve* was fighting as part of the corps of American troops. Most of the soldiers of *La Nueve* were Republicans who had left Spain after the war. As a curiosity, Coale explains that many of those soldiers are not in the picture because they were afraid of the possible retaliation that their families could suffer if the Spanish authorities at the time saw them in that portrait.

---

[193] 'they were the cities where Republicans had fought against Franco' (151).
[194] 'The desire of the cartoonist to represent the characters of his graphic novel with the features of the true men of the ninth company' (350).

Figure 36. Photo of some of the members of *La Nueve* in England



Figure 37. Roca 160 and book cover

Meticulous representation in *Los surcos del azar* applies then to the physical representation of the protagonists, the names of the armored cars, accuracy in what concerns the armament, official military uniforms of the different moments of the story, etc. If the details are the heart of history, as Coale says in his text, Paco Roca manages to get to the core of it. Thanks to those nuts and bolts, Roca achieves the impression of offering a war documentary with real footage, which connects with the perspective offered by the monstrator studied above and the need of the third generation to learn about and from history. Sometimes minutiae, aspects that could seem almost invisible, are the ones that bring the cartoon close to reality.

### 5.1.3. Landmark historical references

¿Para qué llamar caminos
a los surcos del azar?...
Todo el que camina anda,

<div align="right">como Jesús, sobre el mar.[195]

Antonio Machado, *Campos de Castilla*.</div>

The verses above come from Antonio Machado's work *Campos de Castilla* and they are used by Paco Roca to name his work and as the epigraph of it. The metaphor that this quote presents brings to the fore the idea of the doom of life and history and it is as well the first of the historical references that Paco Roca introduces in the story. Antonio Machado was one of the most iconic personalities of the Republican faction as well as the history of the Republican exile[196]. The third device used in the works of our corpus to mark the historical research done by the authors and their will to be transparent is to include in the plot of their stories a clear connection with historical facts. The texts link memorable historical references with the lives of the protagonists, some of them included as important elements of the plot of the characters.

A clear example of this would be the maps that Roca includes in *Los Surcos del azar* simulating those that we could see in any history book, explaining the events from 1939 to 1942 that explain the intricacies of the Second World War while also understanding the historical events that marked the lives of Miguel and the other Spanish soldiers who participated in the dispute. With the use of these maps, Roca reinforces the didactic intention that we already perceived in Miguel, and that becomes even more clear here.

Another instrument that can achieve this effect is the mention of real complete dates—"Diciembre, 1942", "Martina San José, 6 de enero de 1990" (*Cuerda*)—; of real places—Alceda (*Cuerda*), Limoges, Marsella (*El arte*)—; of real events—the army uprising in July of 1936 (*Cuerdas* and *Un médico*) De Gaulle's victory parade (*Los Surcos*)— or real and well-known

---

[195] 'Why call paths/ the furrows of chance?.../Everyone who walks advances,/like Jesus, on water'.
[196] Some of his early texts outline a Third Republic and after the war starts he writes *La guerra (1936-1937),* where he openly reaffirms his intellectual compromise with the Republic. He and his family fled the country in January of 1939 and he finally died in exile a few weeks later.

Figure 38. Roca 90

personalities—Antonio Machado, Leclerc, Captain Dronne, Ernest Hemingway (*Los Surcos*). All

these are some of the exact historical references that link the characters' lives of the corpus to the

real events during the Civil War and its aftermath. But as I said, sometimes, these references go

beyond a simple mention and are included in the storyline and integrated with the life of the

characters we read about. This happens in the shape of celebrated and sometimes even

mythologized personalities of the Republican imagery or in the shape of well-known events that

the characters experience. I will give some examples.

Durruti[197] is one of the distinguished personalities that are included in the story of Altarriba.

The second chapter of *El arte de volar* is called "Las alpargatas de Durruti"[198]. In it, Antonio

Altarriba Sr. develops his political opinions and joins the war to fight against the Nationalist

---

[197] José Buenaventura Durruti (1896-1936) was a legendary figure of Spanish anarchism. He was a revolutionary that
belonged to the trade union organization CNT and he died during the war, where he was a military leader.
[198] 'Durruti's spadriles'.

faction. During the war, a fellow soldier gives Antonio a pair of espadrilles that belonged to Durruti. The pair of shoes became a symbol of the political commitment that the soldiers would worship: "ni Dios, ni patria, ni amo"[199] (64) was their battle cry. Antonio kept those espadrilles during the whole war, during his time in exile, and only got rid of them when he decided to give up his political ideologies and go back to Spain, as he says below: 'It might be best to accept the defeat, submit to the victors' law and go back to Spain' (129). When that happens, Antonio decides to burn the spadriles as a allegory of what he is sacrificing and to express the intensity of the pain that this experience causes him: 'It would perhaps be better to burn in my heart the example of so many brave and generous men whose steps I followed and whose espadrilles I wore' (129).

Altarriba brings the image of Durruti as a symbol of political commitment and as a metaphor of resilience and strength. When that resilience is gone, the espadrilles are burnt: "Con él quiero simbolizar el impulso idealista que alentó en mi padre y en tantos hombres y mujeres que lo dieron todo por un mundo más justo. Volaban llevados por las alas de un calzado hecho de

---

[199] 'Neither God, nor country, nor master' (64).

solidaridad y esparto. Cuando mi padre quema las alpargatas, es porque entiende que su odisea revolucionaria ha terminado"[200] (ARGH[201]).

Ernest Hemingway and Antonio Machado are two important personalities for the Republican imagery that appears in *Los Surcos del azar*. We can see Ernest Hemingway at a party



Figure 39. Altarriba 129
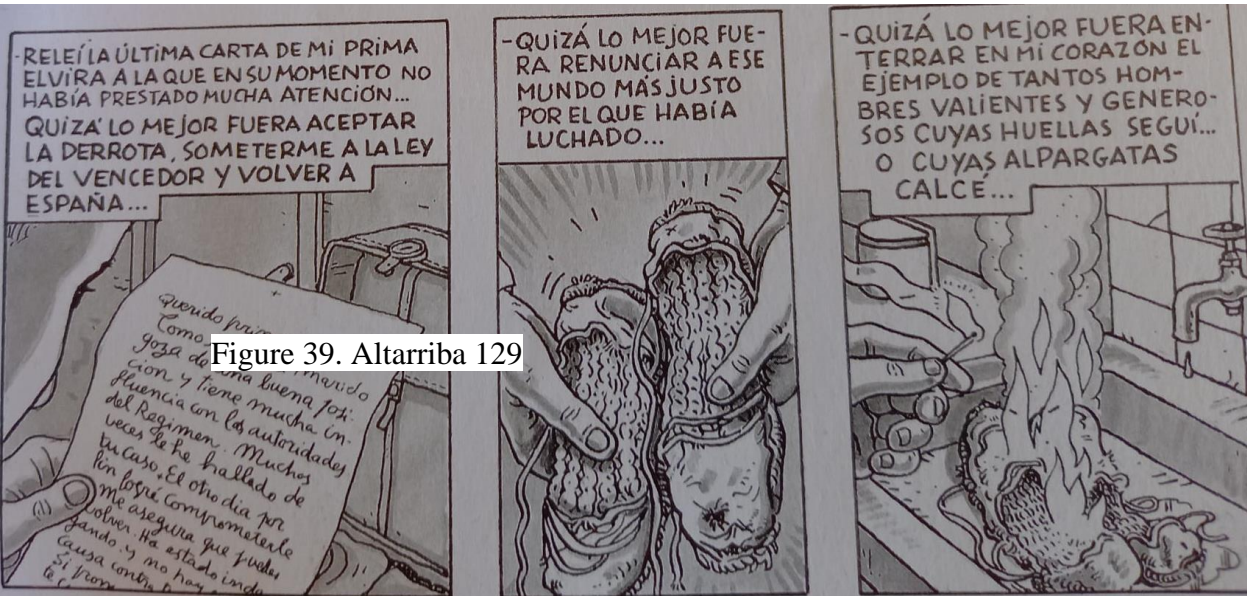
after the victory of Paris. The appearance of this character is brief and evocatory of that Republican imagery. After being a correspondent in the Spanish Civil War, Hemingway became one of the most outspoken international figures against the spread of fascism in Europe. In the fictional conversation included in the story that the writer has with the Spanish soldiers, he states that he will not go back to Spain until the Republic is reinstated. His participation in the plot then fulfills the function of accentuating the idea that this was an international war and that the logical following step would be to go back to Spain to defeat fascism in that territory as well.

---

[200] 'With it I want to symbolize the idealistic impulse in my father and in so many men and women who gave everything for a fair world. They flew wearing the wings of a shoe made of solidarity and esparto grass. When my father burns the espadrilles, it is because he understands that his revolutionary odyssey has come to an end' (ARGH).

[201] Professional Association of Comic Writers founded by Altarriba in 2019.

Figure 40. Roca 63

The other important character that finds a spot in the fiction of *Los surcos del azar* is the already mentioned Antonio Machado. His words are not only introduced as the presentation of the work but he is also introduced as a character a few pages later. In the story, Machado is one of the many Republican refugees in France and it is in this state of transition and escape that he dies. The dates and exact details of the real event do not match with the story of Miguel, because while the fiction created by Roca places this episode in April; in real life, Machado dies in February of that same year, also in exile. In spite of this factual discrepancy, the scene below has an aesthetic and semantic purpose. Machado represents a double role: the Republican *hero* who used his writings to fight for the Republic, the person they all admired; and the ordinary man who feels fear, uneasiness and pain, just like any of the people who had to run away—the man that ends up giving in at the furrows of chance.

In what concerns milestone historical events introduced in the storyline of these books, an easy example is the one with which *Los surcos del azar* starts the story: the beginning of the exile that, as for Antonio Machado, was the destiny of many. The story starts in "Puerto de Alicante. 28 de Marzo de 1939"[202] (12). This exact date and place not only can be identified as real but is also one of the landmark moments in the history of the Spanish Civil War. The getaway of Republican soldiers and their families on the boat Stanbrook towards Oman. This flee symbolizes the end of the war and a symbol of the Republican displacement after it. Roca again uses real pictures of the time to recreate the atmosphere at the port in this crucial moment for the comic readers to have access to the real scenarios.

---

[202] 'Port of Alicante. March 28th 1938' (12).

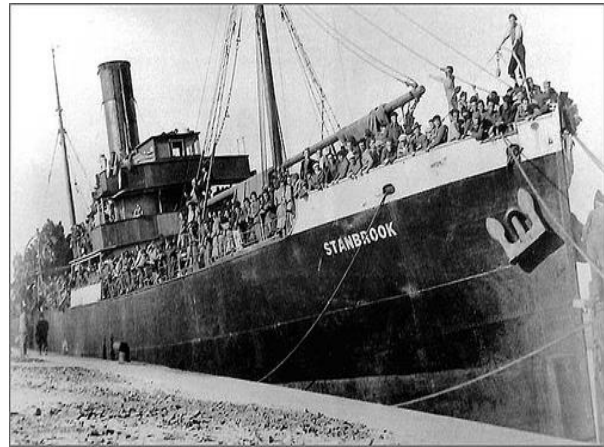Figure 41. Photo of the port of Alicante in April 1939.



Figure 42. Photo of the Stanbrook at the port of Alicante

It is not surprising that the military coup d'etat is another key event of this part of history that is introduced in the life story of the protagonists. Three of the books in the corpus include this event, but they take different approaches to its depiction. While the getaway from the port of Alicante is the kickoff of the story in *Los Surcos del azar*, *Un médico novato* uses the military revolt as its starting point. Due to the more personal approach of *Un médico novato*, the coup d'etat of July 1936 is depicted as an interruption to their lives, more so than in the other two examples where this event is depicted. Pablo Uriel was starting his career as a doctor when the war broke out. The pages below represent this interruption. Almost as a double-page spread that needs to be read as a whole, the reader observes in the left side a depiction of a young Pablo enjoying his free

time in nature: "casi como un veraneante que ha venido a disfrutar del río"[203] (23), who is suddenly surprised by the sounds of the shots. The war had arrived, and it is represented on the right side, displaying a series of icons that scream at the reader, and the protagonist, that this is now a martial context: weapons, shots to the air, a group of men dressed in military clothes that are celebrating that there has been a military coup, shouting "Viva Cristo Rey"[204], and finally, the conspicuous Spanish national flag and the cross of Burgundy that, as I mentioned above, are used throughout the whole trilogy to put the accent on the warlike conflict.

---

[203] 'almost like a vacationer who has come to enjoy the river' (23).

[204] 'Long live Christ the King' is a political and religious cry used as a celebration by the Catholic Spain.

Figure 43. Sento 24



Figure 44. Sento 25

In *Cuerda de presas* and *El arte de volar,* nonetheless, the coup is not represented as a sudden parenthesis in the life of the characters, instead they grow into it, along with the readers who receive explanatory historical context. *Cuerda de presas* includes it in the first of the stories, 'Entre rejas' which, as I said before, provides context for the rest of the stories. The lead character is in Barcelona and she sums up the series of events that built up towards the coup:

> los diarios proclamaban la derrota de la monarquía en las elecciones que trajeron consigo
> la república, el clima festivo de abril se vio truncado en mayo de ese año por el humo de
> las iglesias incendiadas: muchos sospecharon de la C.N.T., el sindicato anarquista al que

me había afiliado cuando entre a trabajar en una fábrica de pastas para sopas y con el que

eche a la calle para defender la república tras la sublevación del ejército en julio de 1936[205]

(11).

The monstrator and reciter show a character that is politically aware, that understands the ideological and historical context she lives in and reacts to it actively, honoring the heroized representation of Republican women conferred in this work. As for Antonio, *El arte de volar* offers the political development of the character as well as the course of events before the uprising: "la política se apoderaba de todo y la vida se nos hacía historia… y la historia hace más difícil la vida… había una gran ebullición ideológica y todos hervíamos en la salsa agridulce de la penuria y la ilusión" (48). Antonio and his friends were engrossed in the political blurb and the historical events happening were part of an intellectual exercise for them until the coup broke out. Even though the military uprising is contextualized, when it happens it seems to come as a surprise for Antonio and his friends. Similarly to what we saw in *Un médico novato,* in the following tier the semantic contrast between the two panels offers an emphasis on the historical moment they are introduced.

---

[205] 'the newspapers proclaimed the defeat of the monarchy in the elections that brought about the republic, the festive atmosphere of April was truncated in May of that year by the smoke from the burned churches: many suspected the C.N.T., the anarchist union which he joined when he started working in a pasta factory for soups and with which he took to the streets to defend the republic after the army uprising in July 1936' (11).

Figure 45. Altarriba 49

While the panel on the left renders a group of friends who just saw a cabaret show: "¡qué barbaridad, qué buenas estaban!"[206] (49), the panel on the right presents a conflictive environment. Antonio and his friends seem to be caught by surprise and seem confused while looking at the flood of people going down the streets and shouting for a military response: 'We must request arms for the people! We must defend the Republic! Everyone to the Civil Government!". Antonio and his friends are, only temporarily, observers.

Through the inclusion of these events and personalities in the story of the characters, the authors not only create a sense of reality but also transform public historical events into personal ones. A very important aspect of this part of history, bypassed by the official narrative and that the new narrative wants to bring back is what refers to the displacement of many Republicans whose personal lifeline was closely related to the narrative of exile.

---

[206] 'My goodness. They were smoking hot!' (49).

## 5. 3. A narrative of exile

In addition to the preoccupation to denounce the atrocities suffered by the individuals who experienced the postwar in Spain, it is not uncommon to encounter comics about the Civil War that engage with the topic of exile[207]. The exile is presented as one of the many consequences of the Spanish Civil War and also as a consequence of the atrocities happening to those who stayed. Through the narrative of exile, the graphic novels situate the national memory tale in a transnational context, connecting it, mainly with the Second World War.

After the war, Antonio Altarriba had to leave the country fleeing from possible punishments, as did many other Republicans. The panel above from *El arte de volar*—notably one of the few silent panels in this work—shows a very iconic image of the displacement of the many Republicans who fled across the Pyrenees towards an also very iconic location of that exile: the beach of Saint Cyprien. This strand is located in the eastern part of the Pyrenees, in the Rosellón

---

[207] Some examples being *Dolores* (2020) by Bruno Roth, *Paseo de los canadienses* (2015) by Carlos Guijarro, *El ángel de la retirada* (2010) by Paco Roca and Serguei Boundvezt, *El Convoy* (2015) by Eduard Torrent and Denis Lapiere; or the animation movie *Josep* (2020), where Aurel tells the story of the graphic artist Josep Bartolí.
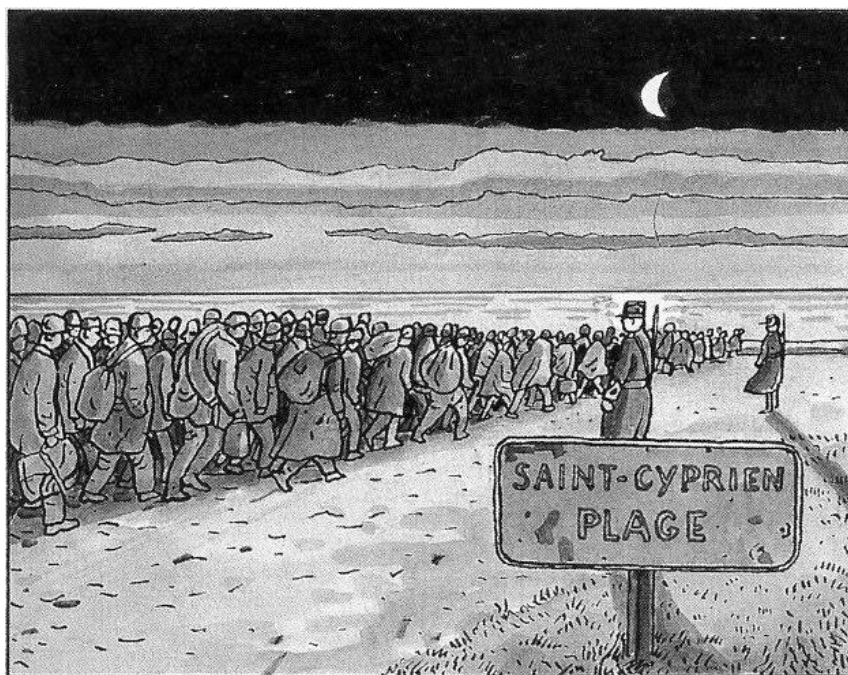
Figure 46. Altarriba 81

coastal strip, where the French authorities placed most of the internment camps[208] that accommodated the many Republicans that were part of what was named *La Retirada*[209].

By placing Antonio within the group of people marching away from possible retaliation in what Da Silva and Carlos interpret as "a marcha em linha reta indica um caminho sem chegada", but with a clear origin, Antonio's story becomes a collective story and an opportunity for Altarriba and Kim to represent the role of the French authorities with a critical eye: "Era todo lo que nos ofrecían los franceses... arena, mar y cielo"[210] (79). Presented more as concentration camps than

---

[208] "Edouard Daladier's Government passed some decrees by which the 'undesirable foreigners' could be confined by the administration in permanent surveillance centers from the end of 1938. These acts provided the necessary legal cover to imprison around 350,000 Republican and Spanish refugees throughout the different concentration camps built against the clock by the French Government." (https://europeanmemories.net/memorial-heritage/camp-dinternement-de-saint-cyprien/).

[209] *La Retirada* is the name given to the massive exile towards France that occurs mainly after the fall of Barcelona to the Francoist troops in January of 1939.

[210] 'It was everything that the French offered us... sand, sea and sky' (79).

refugee camps, in Antonio's story we read about the unsanitary and inhumane situation in which those refugees were living. In addition, as noted by David Fernández de Arriba "el relato también incluye diversas anécdotas—la presencia de una barbería o el uso que daban al dinero Republicano— que reflejan la vitalidad de muchos de los exiliados"[211] (22). These anecdotes or stories that Fernández de Arriba notices typify the daily life of the exiles, who soon start noticing how this foreign environment and circumstances start to settle in, becoming part of their routine. A new ecosystem is now incorporated in their lives, and that is soon going to include the incipient Second World War. The sufferings and unsanitary circumstances led to many of them wanting to leave those camps. Some of them ran away, as is the case of Antonio, others joined the French troops to fight in the II World War, others found foster homes[212], and others committed suicide. *El arte de volar* presents exile and internment camps as yet again another form of violence suffered by the defeated in the war.

Both the story of Miguel Ruiz and of Antonio Altarriba are narratives of exile, but the development of their testimony takes very different paths; the former joined the fight against nazism, and the latter found in the black market a way to survive. They share, however, the representation of the trauma due to the territorial displacement that affected their identity triggered by the violence they were running away from and the violence that was awaiting them in their new destinations. According to Giorgio Agamben, exile and concentration camps, as the refugee camps in France, are closely related. They fall under the same array because they arise from a "state of exception" (47). In the concentration camps, the individuals are unprotected because the power of the law is suspended, hence the exception. The individual is excluded from the legal system; but

---

[211] 'the story also includes various anecdotes—the presence of a barbershop or the use they gave to Republican money— that reflect the vitality of many of the exiles' (22).
[212] This circumstance is depicted in *El Convoy* (2015).

it is at the same time, as it is also noted by Agamben, that, paradoxically, while the validity of the law is suspended, the state of exception is not outlawed. It is still linked to it through the form of suspension. The same way, the state of exception of the displaced also defines its relationship with the sovereign power, which he explains as follows:

> Por eso no es ni derecho ni pena, no está ni dentro ni fuera del ordenamiento jurídico y constituye un umbral de indiferencia entre lo externo y lo interno, entre exclusión e inclusión. Esta zona de indiferencia, en la que el exiliado y el soberano comunican mediante la relación de bando, constituye la relación jurídico–política originaria[213] (Trad. Dante Bernardi 48).

Both in the concentration camps and the exile the individuals lose their rights and they are denaturalized, Agamben exposes that "*ius exilii*, era, en el derecho romano, el término técnico que designaba el derecho de una *civitas foederata*, de conceder la ciudadanía a un ciudadano romano que, de esta manera, perdía la propia, 'se exiliaba'" (41). Such denaturalization implies that there is no control over what is done to those bodies. The individuals lose their identity, they lose their names, and sometimes become a number and sometimes need to find a new identity. In this sense, the camps and the exile represented in these novels connect with the imprisonment represented in *Cuerda de presas*, where the prisoners are under an abusive sovereign power and where children lose their names and their previous identities. Paula Simon Porolli explains that "Tanto el exilio como el campo implican la ruptura del sujeto con el espacio y, por tanto, ingresan en los procesos de construcción de esas memorias sociales como distorsiones, traumas o suspensiones en la vida

---

[213] That is why it is neither a right nor a penalty, it is neither inside nor outside the legal system and constitutes a threshold of indifference between the external and the internal, between exclusion and inclusion. This zone of indifference, in which the exiled and the sovereign communicate through the side relationship, constitutes the original legal-political relationship (48).

habitual del sujeto"[214] (230). The recovery of those memories through cultural artifacts partly responds to those traumas.

In this space of exclusion created by the uprooting of the Republicans who left the country, their testimonials and how they are presented in the graphic novels transcend the personal account and the national narrative and make their life stories transnational. After all, the Republican exile was not, for obvious reasons, part of the history remembered by the government during the dictatorship. It was also not part of the memory in those places to which the Republicans migrated: "Despite accompanying De Gaulle in the military parade after the capture of the city, the Spanish Republicans were immediately erased from history to reinforce the role of French in the liberation of its capital" (Catalá Carrasco 162), and as a consequence, it stayed in the limbo of the untold. The inclusion of these stories in the research and fictional creation that form the recovery of the memories of the war, including the contribution of the comic medium, work as therapeutic and as a 'repair', in reference to Arostegui's theories. Through their work, these authors celebrate the lives of those who lived in exile and demand a recovery of the history of the exile; which in the case of comics, much of it comes from France, from the descendants of those real participants of this displacement.

## 5.4. Where fiction and non-fiction come together: a literary construct

Much of the XXI century literature is occupied with the ontological distinction between fiction and non-fiction. Considering that the graphic works in my corpus discuss historical content and personal experiences, this is a crucial issue that emanates from the stories they tell. When

---

[214] 'Both exile and the countryside imply the rupture of the subject with space and, therefore, enter the processes of construction of these social memories as distortions, traumas or suspensions in the subject's habitual life' (230).

reading the war story experienced by *La Nueve*, the reader also witnesses the fictitious research

work of the creation of the comic, and even Paco Roca's hands sketching Miguel Campos's portrait

evidence of the artifice which, as mentioned above, Sabbah sees as exposed through the display of
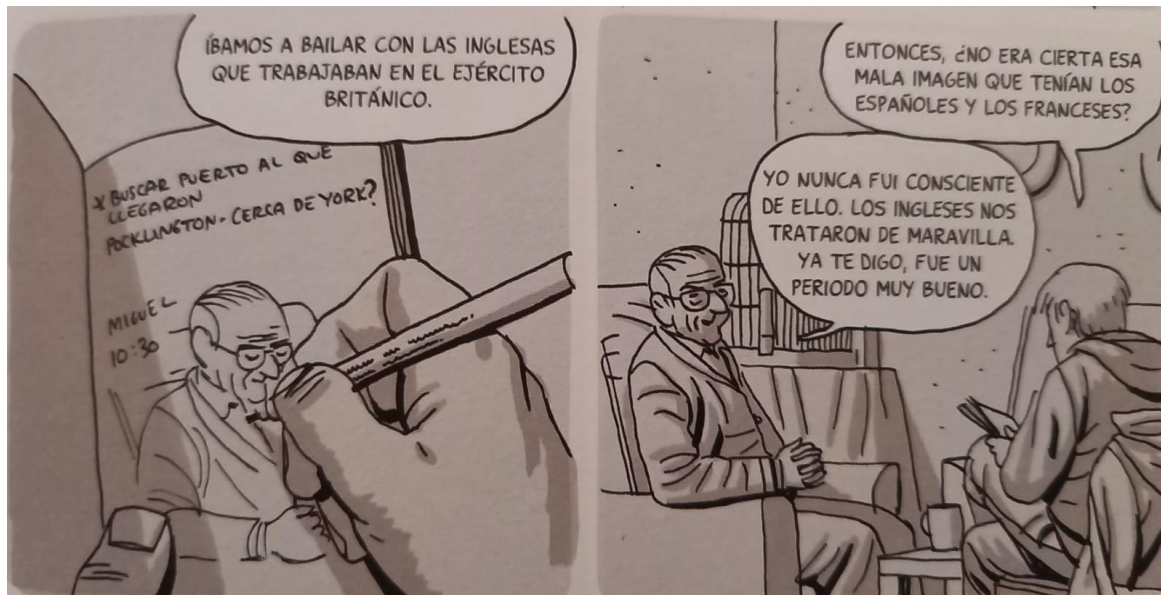
that creation.



Figure 47. Roca 169

An indicator of a creative work is the language used. Julia Kristeva distinguishes,

developing from the work of Ferdinand Saussure, two types of semiotics. On the one hand, she

identifies the scientific semiology, "which seeks to study language as a structured system of

signs—a static, closed, and autonomous system dissociated from any notion of the speaking

subject." On the other hand, she distinguishes "the *paragrammatic semiotics* . . . emphasizes that

language is an infinite, free play without closure, which accommodates multiple intra- and

intertextual relations and functions therefore as an open web of connections (qtd. in Beata

Stawarska 129, 130).

The use of what Kristeva identifies as paragrammatic semiotics is remarkable in Altarriba

and Kim's story, which is filled with textual and visual metaphors and other literary devices. Paulo Celso Silva and Miriam Cristina find that "O texto de Altarriba é curto, construído em linguagem assertiva, carregada de metáforas e metonimias, que somadas às ilustrações de Kim se traduzem em poesia: vale o que está exposto, e mais ainda, o que está escondido, apenas sugerido pelo texto"[215] (34). An example in the storyline would be how Antonio burns Durruti's espadrilles as a symbol of letting go, which connects with him leaving his slippers behind in the window before jumping out, letting go again at the end of his life—the objects as a metaphor. The visual metaphors are even more abundant: the aforementioned cracking ferris wheel that symbolizes the decadence and ending of his love story and marriage with Petra, and by extension the end of the dictatorship, or a mole that eats his entrails symbolizing his medical depression are only some examples of those metaphors.

In addition, the use of color is one of the elements offered by the language of comics for the authors to support their *poiesis* and intensify a certain sentiment or message. We saw this when referring to the politics expressed through the flags displayed in *Un médico novato*. *Los Surcos del azar* offers several examples as well. In the war scenes, for instance, where Roca has to represent the deaths of the soldiers, he loads the red ink so he can get across the intensity and drama of the moment; and if the prevailing mood of the scene is fear, sadness, and disappointment, as in the scene where Republicans flee in the Stanbrook, the predominant colors are gray and blue or other cold tones:

---

[215] 'Altarriba's text is short, constructed in assertive language, loaded with metaphors and metonyms, which together with Kim's illustrations are translated into poetry: there is value in what is shown, and in what is veiled or barely suggested by the text' (34).
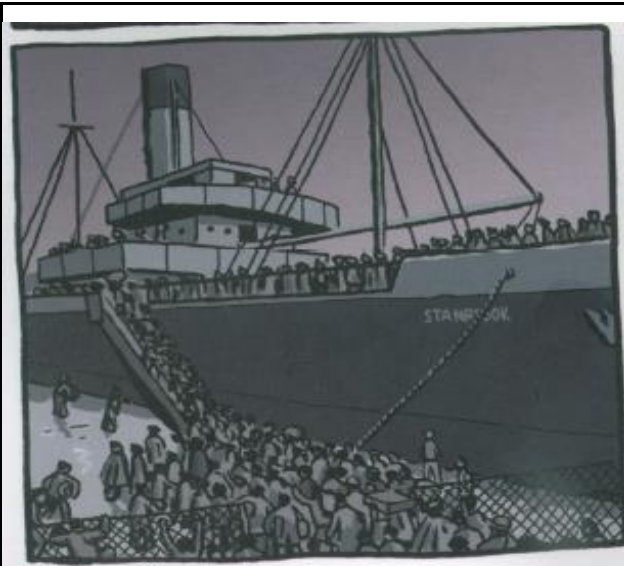
Figure 48. Roca 103



Figure 49. Roca 16

Another example was discussed in an event celebrated in Espacio Fundación Telefónica (2016) by Paco Roca and Robert S. Coale who talked about how some decisions are made in favor of the dramatic twist the comic genre demands. After years of fighting and the military forces of the Allies finally managed to free Paris from the occupation by the nazis. The members of *La Nueve* are the first ones to arrive in the city hall thanks as well to the work of the French resistance. As a comic author, Paco Roca needs to depict the noteworthy spirit of such an achievement, and he decides to turn the lights on to represent the City Hall (272). This, which works as an efficient visual marker of a moment of happiness, is highlighted by Robert Coale as one of the aspects that lack historical truth. He clarifies that such a display of light would have never been possible during a war, as there was no power and you simply couldn't just turn the lights on. In this case, fiction prevails over reality for the reader can already feel the incipient celebration.

The landmark historical events that the authors refer to in order to make connections with historical truth are many times fictionalized as a poetic license used by the authors to, for instance, add excitement to the story. The scene of the Stanbrook represented above is only a sample of the many included in *Los surcos del azar*. Roca decides to illustrate this moment as the lead character of this story is placed on the port of Alicante while waiting for the Stanbrook to come to their rescue: 'It has not arrived', 'it has not arrived yet'. In this scene, and most of the first chapter of *Los surcos del azar*, Roca relies strongly on the monstrator to tell the story. The constant movement from medium to close shots bring us closer to the character and their fears, while putting the emphasis as well in the atmosphere—depicted in a realistic style that is obtained through the transformation of real photos into drawings. This aura of verisimilitude and the identification with the characters speaks effectively to the drama of the war, but the scene did not happen as *Los Surcos del azar* recounts. History says that the boat arrived four days before the end of the war and that the course of action planned by the captain was never to take on people, but food. On account of this, we can infer that there was not a multitude waiting for it, as we see depicted in Roca's work. The boat was anchored at the harbor where they were going to load oranges and saffron, and faced with the emergency situation that he witnessed, captain Dickson made the decision to load people instead. The cargo ship finally set sail with 2.638 passengers instead of edibles because "el capitán de la nave, un galés de 47 años llamado Archibald Dickson, cambió el plan inicial de embarcar provisiones por el de evacuar a civiles"[216] (Suleng).

The love story of *Los Surcos del azar* is another example where fiction is used as a literary device for the construction of drama. As we said before, there is no evidence that Miguel Campos survived the war, so this love story is not real; nevertheless, a love story works well to entangle a

---

[216] 'The ship's captain, a 47-year-old Welshman named Archibald Dickson, changed from the initial plan of shipping supplies to evacuating civilians' (Suleng).

historical narrative and it offers a lighter storyline for the audience that also allows for potential

emotional connection between the reader and the witnesses. Miguel meets Estrella in the

Stanbrook, and sees her again after the liberation of Paris. Following the liberation of Paris, Miguel

deserts the army after seeing his friends die when they were ambushed by the Germans. Miguel

and Estrella had met up again and they decided to make it back to Spain to start a new life. Estrella

dies in the car on the onset of that journey. The hypothesis that Miguel Campos was a deserter and

not dead in the war was the chosen one by Roca because it invites a more dramatic twist and it

allows the introduction of a love partner for Miguel, which also adds solidity to the personal

perspective these historical narratives use.



Figure 50. Roca 294

In sum, real events and fiction and literary devices get mixed up in the story. When

speaking about *Un médico novato*, José María Izquierdo thinks that the result of that mix is "un

realismo aceptable para el lector en su pacto de lectura del artefacto híbrido formado por el texto

escrito y el gráfico" (76) then, and as Coale says "le corresponde al lector decidir por sí mismo

cuáles son"[217] (Roca 323) those aspects that are in fact real. The question would be if those fictitious stories interfere with the historical message.

## 5.4. Conclusions

This chapter started with a splash page of Carlos Giménez that was a strong statement of the author's intention: he wanted to talk about the war and the miseries that came with it, and he did it. I would like to finish it with a series of panels from the comics of my corpus where the same statement can be inferred. These comics also want to discuss the war and they don't avoid showing the horror of it: battlefields, bombs, friends and fellow soldiers who died, executions, imprisonment, exile, and hunger are some of the many issues these comics put on the table:



Figure 51. Roca 113



Figure 52. Sento 30

---

[217] 'In addition, several of the anecdotes, perhaps the most unlikely, represent real events. It is up to the reader to decide for himself which ones those are' (Roca 323).

Figure 53. Altarriba 83



Figure 54. García and Martínez 58

Their intention is clear, then, in the corpus of comics, a performative vocation for transforming the Spanish narrative can be recognized. A possibility of intervention opens up around the change of the century, before which no form of artistic expression can remain impassive, and as I advanced, neither does the comic, which will once again have to escape attempts to be reduced to the genre of entertainment.

Such escape is achieved through two aspects: the inclusion of literary devices, a poetic imagery that shows the intention of a complex literary creation; and the explicit historical research and historical sources—personal archives in the paratext, the use of landmark historical events and personalities in the core text, and detailed oriented historical representation. This last aspect gives Spanish *historieta* today a historical authority it still seems to need as a medium. It is the testimonial approach of the war that allows the authors to represent the complexity of the historical event. As the sentence attributed to Oscar Wilde says: "the truth is rarely pure and never simple",

and the contemporary Spanish comic wants to participate in a new, and still complex narrative about the war. In its retelling, the Spanish comic does not conceal. It draws attention to the deaths and the violence suffered by the protagonists and it discusses it in its current political and cultural dimension, pinpointing the forgetfulness and exposing the wide approach of a conflict that started in 1936 and whose consequences still linger. Laurike in 't Veld's in her study of genocides in comic books observes in this regard that "these works balance explicit truth claims with more immersive strategies that aim to connect with a wider audience: a tension between 'didacticism and sensationalism'" (1). This observation made by in 't Veld could also apply to the comics about the Spanish Civil War where the violence is not avoided and the perspective we see is somehow biased, as it focuses on the narrative of the defeated and sometimes is used to create an image that depicts an impossible heroization of the characters, an idealization of them with certain exaggeration of their abilities and virtues.

In short, these comics show that historical rigor and fictional elements are not incompatible, not even tensional. These comic books prove that the entanglement of the two can be harmonious. Their narration, despite portraying historical knowledge, does not aim for objectivity, this is not their goal. Having chosen the personal narrative is already proof of that, since the narration of the self is political, as it provides a partial point of view. The fictional elements are another proof of it. Their goal is to contribute to the construction of the narration about the past—contribute to the Spanish cultural memory—make it richer, adding new perspectives and images while connecting with their political dimension that, as evidenced in the comics, underlies in all the stories. They limelight stories that were kept on the sideline for a long time, different to the fabricated version of the victors, which prevailed for many years and from the stories formulated from History and Academia, where personal accounts, bodies, emotions, and female stories were left out.

# Chapter six: Conclusions

> Cuando el pájaro abandona la rama en que ha cantado deja en ella un estremecimiento. . .
>
> Del mismo modo, un libro, al ser cerrado, produce ante nosotros un instantáneo vacío espiritual dentro del cual se precipitan, en torbellino, ideas, recuerdos, alusiones, gérmenes de ensueños, apellidos que dormitaban y, en vaga nube de oro, polvo de teorías. Son nuestras resonancias de lector. El libro leído repercute en nosotros según el timbre de nuestras íntimas voces. Dura unos momentos el fenómeno. Si los dejamos pasar podremos hacer sobre el libro un estudio crítico más o menos sabio y reflexivo, pero no conseguiremos fijar aquellas espontáneas resonancias que, rápidas y en vuelo apasionado, dejan escapar nuestra intimidad[218] .

> *El Espectador* (Ortega y Gasset 13)

Being almost at the end of this essay and about to wrap up ideas and put an end to its pages, I recall the image that Ortega y Gasset beautifully includes at the beginning of the third volume of *El Espectador.* The tremor that the bird leaves on the branch when it takes flight is the metaphor he uses to describe the resonance of the reading experience once the reader closes its pages. As I land on the conclusions of quite an opposite exercise from those resonances—the close reading analysis of those pages—I recall the sensations of my first readings of the corpus, and try to hold on to them, almost in a desperate attempt to not forget the raw impression that a first-time reading confers and that a critical reading moves you away from. It is after this analysis that I understand

---

[218] 'When the bird leaves the branch in which it has sung it leaves a shiver in it . . . In the same way, a book, when we close it, produces before us an instantaneous spiritual emptiness within which, in whirlwinds, ideas, memories, allusions, germs of ensuence, appetites that dozed and, in vague cloud of gold, dust of Theories. They are our reader resonances. The book read affects us according to the timbre of our intimate voices. The phenomenon lasts a few moments. If we let them pass we can make a critical study more or less wise and reflexive about the book, but we will not be able to fix those spontaneous responses that, quickly and in a paused flight, let our intimacy escape' (Ortega y Gasset 13).

that those sensations are at the core of the intention behind those texts and the memory construction they provide: a feeling of distress, an appeal to the reader's empathy, the idea of injustice, the blurred boundaries between truth and fiction, and a strong sense of politics and social responsibility come together in the memory exercise offered by the Spanish contemporary *historieta*. Through these ideas and the special characteristics of its language, comics become an instrument for reflection and social change, which means, in response to the question I posed at the beginning of this dissertation, that comics are indeed a suitable and efficient medium for historical dissemination.

## 6.1. Singularity of the contemporary Spanish comic books as memory artifacts

The corpus of analysis proved that the approach of Spanish comics to the topic of memory clearly connects with the global discussion about this issue—it prioritizes the personal perspective and discusses trauma, postmemory and family remembrance—very much in line with the global memory discussion. It is important to notice, though, that the personal trauma of first and post-generations in Spain is based on a political intention. As an artistic, social and political exercise, the graphic narrative integrates the idea of collectivity while representing subordinate individual memories.

This political dimension is sometimes clearly stated either through the paratexts or through the characters, as it is proved in the many examples included in the core of this dissertation. Moreover, the politicization is raised, placing the body as one of the focal points of the discussion. First, the embodiment of the past experiences; and second, the importance of the denunciation of the use of the female body as a war weapon.

In the context of a society where there exist public demands and efforts to recover the corpses of individuals who, during the war and the dictatorship, disappeared or were buried in mass graves, the arts seek the materialization of those individuals through other means. In the comics of my corpus of study, such materialization manifests in two different ways. The most obvious one is the assimilation of the experiences of the participants, as it is the case of the reciter of *El arte de volar*, who takes in the personality of his father and blends both voices into one. In addition, comics also disclose the embodiment through the use and reproduction of personal objects such as letters, photographs, private notes and diaries, etc., that are often re-written and re-drawn by the artists, and by doing so they are being appropriated by them. Through the process of embodiment that happens in the artistic exercise, those objects transform from personal to historical and from archives to experiences.

Furthermore, in *Cuerda de presas*[219] it is clearly appreciated a sexual approach of the punishments that Republican women were subjected to during the war and the post-war period, articulating that the body was a differentiating matter of the female experience. The female body represents as a space of fight and punishment to the women directly affected, but also to the whole community of Republicans; and as a pedagogic object for the society of the time—especially the female section—because those women and their bodies constituted everything that, in their eyes, a lady should not be. *Cuerda de presas* condemns the categorization of those women and their bodies made by the Francoist regime. The civil denunciation lies then behind this work which brings to the fore a social denunciation that fits into the narrative that the generation of the grandchildren is making of the Civil War, trying to repair and find the justice that the politics during the dictatorship and Transition denied them. These comics collaborate in this way, in an

---

[219] Also evident in other works such as *El Convoy*.

arguably idealized collective image of the Republican woman, as a modern combative and resilient figure that despite the murders and mistreatments received manages to stay upright, in contrast with the perpetrators of these stories, the grotesque characters embodying the repressing dictatorship. By claiming a new space for Republican women—the antagonist of Francoism—*Cuerda de presas* re-allocates the quality of 'reason' to the female political subject and highlights the importance of their bodies as also political.

The works in the corpus use the personalization, the intimacy and the humanization of history and memory to make a strong link between politics and daily life—bringing daily life communication and cultural artifacts together in their cultural memory construction. This is done in the cartoons through personal accounts where third-person reciters are inexistent or reduced to the bare minimum, as it is the case of *Un médico novato.* The personal perspective is expressed through the narrative voice in the first person and presenting complex characters that, in addition to serving as examples that help us understand what happened to a certain collectivity in that period of history, also focuses on the humanization of those characters who exhibit complex relationships and feelings. These two aspects connect the characters with their inner self, their past, and with other characters; and in addition, they are also used to connect the present and the past, allowing to establish a direct relationship between the story of the protagonists and the post-generations and, as a result, create the memory account. In connection to this, the graphic novels I study prove the importance of family relationships in a context of memory transfer. The inherited trauma and the relationships between the different generations mirror the interconnection between the present and the past, establishing an emotional bond between the two. Such link is represented in the graphic novels of the corpus through the memory transmission and it manifests showing the interferences between those two narratives and the bidirectional force that it entails, reinforcing

the impossibility of making clear separations and the idea the coexistence of those generations is what makes up the current memorial story.

The vindictive approach to memory construction and the heightening of sentiments that speak directly to the reader's conscience deem to raise awareness and practice memory through active listening and solidarity. Approaching the past in an affiliative way and through the language of feelings induces a transformation, which is what I observe in the samples. Santos Juliá explains:

> Los crímenes fueron tan monstruosos que pretender una neutralidad valorativa, quedarse sólo en la comprensión y en la explicación, mantener lo que Bloch consideraba como máxima perversión del oficio de historiador, esto es, convertirse en juez, se criticó como una abdicación del oficio. Tarea del historiador [...] tendría que ser, por tanto, recuperar la memoria, o sea, no exactamente conocer esos pasados, sino exigir justicia[220] (*Bajo el imperio* 17).

In his studies about politics in art, Jacques Rancière explains that the arts, the poiesis, is political in itself, not because of the message it entails or the social or political system it represents, but because of the redistribution of time and space that it creates. When read with the comic books in mind, Rancière's explanation of politics fits the interpretation that I just presented. Politics, Rancière's says, is "the configuration of a specific space" (24)—the graphic works themselves, "the framing of a particular sphere of experience" (24)—the experience of the participants in the war, "of objects posited as common and as pertaining to a common decision"—the collective account they represent, "of subjects recognized as capable of designating these objects and putting

---

[220] 'The crimes were so monstrous that claiming evaluative neutrality, remaining only in understanding and explanation, maintaining what Bloch considered the greatest perversion of the historian's profession, that is, becoming a judge, was criticized as an abdication of the profession. The task of the historian [...] would have to be, therefore, to recover the memory, that is, not exactly to know those pasts, but to demand justice' (*Bajo el imperio* 17).

forward arguments about them"—the emphasis on the transformation of victims into political subjects. And he continues:

> Politics consists in reconfiguring the distribution of the sensible which defines the common of a community, to introduce into it new subject and objects, to render visible what had not been, and to make heard as speakers those who had been perceived as mere noisy animals (25).

The 'truthful pact' activated in the accounts, the distance taken by the medium from its initial function and the creation of a space for these subjects to be heard—with the consequent social denunciation—are at the core of the memory exercise these comics show, challenging like this, the politics of reconciliation of the Transition. Such displacement of perception takes me to the second objective or question of this dissertation: has the corpus of analysis proven that comic books, traditionally considered as low culture, are a suitable device for historical dissemination?

## 6.2. Comics as a suitable medium for historical dissemination

Paul Douglas, who discusses the changes in the medium extensively, explains that the phenomenon of how comics in the US moved their limiting boundaries from being perceived with contempt in the 1950s to gaining respectability in the 1980s is due to different factors. Some of these factors are a more formal complexity of the medium, the market interests, or the more long-lasting format of graphic novels. The Spanish *historieta* is not different in this regard, the historical narrative confers the genre with an emerging new legitimacy that dissociates the medium from its traditional tag. To start with, the subjectivity conferred to the *historieta* in comparison to other arts and sciences that look at history with a focus on evidence[221], and the idea that comics take a

---

[221] Photography, journalism or history are examples of this.

personal and subjective approach are part of the reason why the medium is regarded as inaccurate or untrue. Notwithstanding, the comic has earned a space in the construction of the account about the war, finding legitimacy for it and proving the historical account is a venture for which the medium is well suited for.

Concerning the testimonial approach of these graphic memories, Arroyo explains that the boom in the autobiographical genre coincides with the post-structuralist debate on whether or not language can represent the world. In general terms, the debate served mainly to show that all art, even the most realistic or confessional, offers a version of reality mediated by a personal opinion, a desire for style, a certain selection and arrangement of materials, and above all, by the very symbolic meaning of artistic languages (111). This observation would bring the realms of fiction and nonfiction closer. Faced with biographical models based on notions such as coherence or linearity, these comics are full of silences, contradictions, resistances, resignations or rebellions to the different conditions and context. The testimonial approach of the history presented here and the fact that the comics of the war are mostly based on particular personal experiences and not on stereotypes, and therefore cannot be replicated by anyone, makes their stories unique. Such independent stories invite participation in a "process of re-semantization of the past" (Colmeiro 17), which I infer in the sample works. The re-semantization puts the focus on the post-generations and their relationship with their ancestors, which illustrates the relation between the present and the past. Only with this association in mind can we understand the Spanish historical memory issue in the comics; which at the same time explains, for instance, the political component discussed above. In relation to this, the examples studied have proved that the visual language of comics favors the head-to-head between past and present, favoring the memory conversation, because its

particular spatial grammar allows for an easy representation of the past and the present simultaneously, as a simple gutter can divide the two.

The idea of truth is at the heart of the discussion about the representation of the past, which is why the evidence is so important for most of the domains that look into historical events. The way those disciplines approach historical grounds is looking at documentation and finding direct sources and fidelity to the facts. Conversely, the comic medium is traditionally linked to the idea of lack of accuracy—the funnies, science fiction, superheroes—which is often interpreted as a lack of truth. In response to this, my observation about the sample studied is double-fold: firstly, comic books that represent history seek for legitimation through documentation and historical archives; secondly, the historical representation in comics does not avoid creativity, in fact, it embraces it as an asset for its historical account.

Truth is expressed in these graphic works through the documentation and the inclusion of real historical and personal data that provides a connection of the story to reality. Paratext have a special relevance in this sense, as in many occasions they reproduce the real documentation, and articulate the historical research behind the works and furnish the story with specific historical context. The photographic archives have a special importance in this sense because personal snapshots, journalistic photos and even archives gathered in museums provide visual information that feed the detailed historical graphics included in the comics. Sometimes those images are used to represent in hyper-realistic scenes the landmark historical events included in the comics that establish direct connections with the past as they are recorded in the history books. The once private scribbles and photos feed into a new archive now public about the Spanish war, postwar and Francoism. Through the documentation, historical research and the proof of it, the authors create a relationship of trust with the readership, which is essential for political and social matters.

That trust and the presence of historical truth in these works brings legitimacy to a medium that still seeks to be taken seriously.

In her work *Disaster drawn,* Hillary Chute points out that in Goya's *Desastres de la guerra* and Callot's work, the connection of words and images together within the physical frame of the narratology makes the narration more powerful. Both Goya's and Callot's images or narrations of the war are of great intensity and often seek to horrify the viewers. In fact, Goya's etchings of the *Disasters* are known for being a great influence for contemporary comic artists, as he is openly showing the violence of the conflict with the intention of denouncing it and documenting it, and therefore raising awareness; which resonates with Joe Sacco's and Kate Evans' slow journalism and with the display of violence in the study case of this thesis. The use of intense imagery in contemporary graphic novels to represent the suffering of the war—death, imprisonment, torture, etc.—signals the intentions to document the past and to participate in that re-semantization of it. The violence expressed in those images, in addition to the estrangement caused by the medium dealing with this topic, devotes that power that Chute was referring to and that other media, mostly in writing, cannot convey as easily. The direct capture of violent scenes can be very efficient for triggering a reaction from the audience, but it can also be read as biased and even as gratuitous, kitschy. The desire to capture the brutality exists in the comics at hand, as well as the over-heroization of the victims, as it is the case of the female leading figures of *Cuerda de presas*, and as in Goya's *Disasters,* they are efficient devices to engage and appeal the audience.

Together with the historical facts included, the comics on the war use creativity in their depiction of the conflict. The added fictional elements are part of the re-semantization mentioned heretofore. Fiction or creativity is a perk in the reconstruction of the historical narrative: "A la vez que expresa una realidad, la obra de ficción la corrige, la modifica, la sustituye por una nueva

realidad"[222] (Cano Gaviria 52). And even if fictional or creative elements included in the comics stretch the limits of historical representation and also of the autobiographical pact, the intention remains the same. Through their account, these graphic works effectively address the testimony of the voices that they want to retrieve, they remember the past and call upon a reflection and re-semantization of it.

## 6.3. Model of analysis and future research lines

The third objective of this dissertation is to establish conversation and collaborate with the further discussion on the topic in other comic books and even other artistic expressions. In order to do this, I provided a model of analysis that I used to help interpret the graphic works. The model of analysis was a guide, but by no means a restrictive framework. The approach to that reading was to trigger conversation with the works in relation to the topic of study and the specificities of the comic medium. The aspects and questions included in the guide were sometimes relevant for one of the comics and not to others, and that is why depending on the matter at hand, the analysis focuses on one of the comics more than the rest. For instance, when discussing the testimonial approach and the technical aspects of it, *El arte de volar* was the text with most information; when studying the importance of the research and documentation in comics, *Los surcos del azar* was the most insightful; and apropos of the representation of female characters and the violence around the body, *Cuerda de presas* was undoubtedly the most relevant. The guide of analysis has been proved, then, useful to start a conversation with the core texts, but that conversation was led by the works themselves and not inversely.

---

[222] 'While expressing a reality, the work of fiction corrects it, modifies it, replaces it with a new reality' (Cano Gaviria 52).

Thanks to the use of the model of analysis provided in the second chapter, I inferred aspects that the graphic novels show in common and that helped me apprehend how they talk to one another, within the corpus of study, but also in association with other graphic works. The connection among the different pieces is important to the analysis because it adds meaning to them and it encompasses the idea that none of them are fixed. In light of this, the common political meaning in the comics studied, for instance, as well as their willingness to reflect and re-semantize the past suggests an idea of co-resistance, a network that is stronger when read together.

The reading guideline could be used or re-adapted for future lines of study that I believe could complement this study. A few focuses of analysis, but not exclusively, are the following. Firstly, a reading from the perspective of gender could deepen into the idea of female sexuality, the use of violence for the representation and a study of the roles of the women in the background. In addition to *Cuerda de presas*, there are other works—*El ala rota* (2016), *Jamás tendré 20 años* (2016), *Estamos todas bien* (2017) or *Verdad* (2020)—that feature complex female characters that would be representative for an in-depth study of female representation in comics about the war, post-war and Francoism. Secondly, a study of the representation of childhood during the year of the war until the Transition. Works such as *El Convoy* (2016), *Paracuellos* (1977-2003), *Dolores* (2016) or *Sola* (2018) can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the how children experienced the consequences of a war, both for those who stayed in Francoist Spain as for those who experienced their lives in exile. A comprehensive study of the representation of childhood would give insight on the apprehension of the construction of identity and how childhood trauma manifests in that sense. Thirdly, postmemory of the Civil War from the perspective of the descendants of the exiles could be studied using *El convoy* (2016) and *Sola* (2018), as two examples of comics that remember the memories of the author's grandparents. In connection with

the previous point, I believe it would be insightful to explore how, if at all, the national memory transcended and how this new perspective engages with the re-semantization of the memories about the war and postwar that I observe in the sample studied in this thesis. I believe it would be worthwhile to look at this from the theoretical framework of 'traveling memories' described by Erll. Fourthly, another compelling aspect to the study of comics about the war is the representation of the perpetrator (next to other categories such as bystanders, accomplices, etc.) in comics about the war. This is a booming field of study in the area of memory studies, which has also been inducing some interest in comic studies, but it still hasn't got much attention in the comic studies in Spain. The representation of the perpetrators appears in all the comics mentioned so far. Any of them could enlighten in a more in-depth grasp of how the comic medium pictures these figures: if we look at them with empathy, if it is humanized or animalized, etc. Through a comparative analysis of these comics with other comics that represent other human disasters and wars, we could also understand the conditions and the nature that facilitate these sorts of events, and perhaps the differences and similarities on how the cultural aspect influences our gaze to the perpetrator. Finally, I mentioned in my analysis that the comics have a didactic intention, and I also mentioned that one of the assets of the comic medium is how accessible the medium is. If in addition, we take into consideration that the comics on the war provide historical knowledge, as this dissertation proves, it would be instrumental to further explore the value of comics as a learning and teaching tool about history. Developing on, for example, the works of Óscar Gual Boronat, David Fernández de Arriba or by the work done by the research group Innova 90, linked to the Universidad Complutense in Madrid.

To recap, there is in Spanish society a demand for more and new politics of remembrance and a revisit to the historical memory. The community has found in the arts new ways of recreating

the historical events and reflecting on the construction of the collective identity that took place during Transition, and comics are a good example of it. The bulk of published comics about the war starts later than in other areas, but their contribution to the memory discussion was rich and fruitful, as the corpus of this thesis proved.

These comics take a denouncing approach in their remembrance—include storylines that retrieve the voices of the victims of the dictatorship, focusing on what happened after the war, and they denounce the unlawfulness and the silence, and they do so amid personal life stories. Kay Schaeffer and Sidonie Smith point out that life narratives, which include autobiography, testimony, memoirs, confessions and statements have been one of the most powerful vehicles in the fight for the defense of human rights in the international context. Testimonial narratives manage to reach the most intimate and, for that reason, they trespass the limits of the community. They tell a transnational story where local circumstances lose their relevance. In this sense, the stories told in the comic books about the war transcend the national memory and connect with the other stories about trauma war and genocide and their representation in comics.

Amid the embroilment of truth and imagination these works also question traditional categories of fiction and nonfiction, and they prove that historical knowledge and creative invention can complement each other in what concerns historical remembrance. Simultaneously, graphic novels on the war also manage to question the stereotypes carried by the comics as a minor art form according to the conventional cultural categories; and thereby legitimize it as a space for historical representation. Contemporary *historieta* demonstrates that the arts, and of course that includes comics, are a transformative element of culture and society.

# Chapter seven: Works cited

## 7.1. Corpus of study

### 7.1.1. Core texts

Altarriba, Antonio, and Kim. *El Arte De Volar*. Edicions De Ponent, 2009.

García, Jorge and Martínez, Fidel. *Cuerda de presas*. Astiberri Ediciones, 2005.

Llobell Bisbal, Vicent. *Un médico novato*. Sento, 2013.

Roca, Paco. *Los surcos del azar.* Astiberri Ediciones, 2013.

### 7.1.2. Secondary texts of reference

Giménez, Carlos. *36-39. Malos tiempos*. Debolsillo, 2011.

Lapierre, Dénis; Torrens, Eduard. *El convoy.* Norma editorial, 2015.

Llobell Bisbal, Vicent. *Atrapado En Belchite*. Sento, 2015.

Spiegelman, Art. *Maus*. Penguin, 1992.

## 7.2. Sources

Acevedo, Carlos, et al. *Ct, O, La cultura de la transición: crítica a 35 años de cultura española*. Edited by Guillem Martínez, Debolsillo, 2016.

Agamben, Girogio. "Política del exilio"*Archipiélago. Cuadernos de crítica de la cultura*, no. 26, 27, 1996, pp. 41–52.

Aguado, Ana. "Memoria en la Guerra Civil e identidades femeninas antifranquistas." *Amnis*, no. 2, 24 Feb. 2011, https://doi.org/10.4000/amnis.1508. Accessed 2019.

Aguilar Fernández Paloma. *Memoria y olvido de la Guerra Civil española*. Alianza Editorial, 1996.

- - -. *Políticas de la memoria y memorias de la política: el caso español en perspectiva comparada*. Alianza Editorial, 2008.

- - -. "Los debates de la memoria." *Clavos de razón práctica*, no. 172, 2007, pp. 64–69.

Alary, Viviane. "La historieta española en Europa y en el mundo." *Arbor*, vol. 187, no. Extra 2, 2011, pp. 239–253., https://doi.org/10.3989/arbor.2011.2extran2121.

Altarriba, Antonio. "Introducción sobre el origen, evolución, límites y otros debates teóricos en torno a la historieta." *Arbor*, vol. 187, no. Extra 2, 2011, pp. 9–14., https://doi.org/10.3989/arbor.2011.2extran2111.

Antón, Gasca Gil. "Francia ante el exilio Republicano (1939). Los campos de refugiados." *Letra Internacional* , no. 125, 2017, pp. 71–88.

Arfuch, Leonor. "Narrativas del yo y memorias traumáticas." *Revista Tempo e Argumento*, vol. 04, no. 01, 2012, pp. 45–60., https://doi.org/10.5965/2175180304012012045.

Arroyo Redondo, Susana. "Formas híbridas de narrativa: reflexiones sobre el cómic autobiográfico." *Escritura e Imagen*, vol. 8, 2012, pp. 103–124., https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_esim.2012.v8.40525.

Artime, Carmela, et al. "Violencia, corporalidad y simbolismo en la novela gráfica memorialista protagonizada por mujeres." *Cuadernos del Centro de estudios de diseño y comunicación*, no. 123, 2020, pp. 55–72., https://doi.org/10.18682/cdc.vi123.4405.

Asociación cultural Tebeosfera. "Informe Tebeosfera 2018: la industria del cómic en España en 2018. El año del asentamiento del mercado." *Tebeosfera. Revista y catálogo sobre cómic, novela y cultura popular*, 2019, https://tebeosfera.com/.

Assmann, Jan, and John Czaplicka. "Collective memory and cultural identity." *New German critique. Cultural history/cultural studies*, no. 65, 1995, pp. 125–133.

Atención Obras. *Entrevista a Paco Roca, Maestro Del Cómic y La Ilustración*. *RTVE.es*, 12 Apr. 2018, https://www.rtve.es/play/videos/atencion-obras/entrevista-a-paco-roca-maestro-del-comic-y-la-ilustracion/4562718/. Accessed 15 Nov. 2019.

Baetens, Jan. "Of graphic novels and minor cultures: The Fréon collective." *Yale French studies*, vol. 114, 2008, pp. 95–115.

Blanco Cordon, Tatiana. "La posmemoria del exilio Republicano español en el cómic: itinerarios y voces de la huida." *Trazos de memoria, trozos de historia: cómic y Franquismo*, edited by Isabelle Touton et al., Ediciones Marmotilla, Madrid, 2021, pp. 123–134.

Blanco Rodriguez, Juan Andres. " La historiografía de la Guerra Civil española." *Hispania Nova. Revista de historia contemporánea*, no. 7, 2007.

Booker, Marvin Keith. *Comics through time: a history of icons, idols, and ideas*. Greenwood, 2014.

Brown, Jeffrey A. *Black superheroes, milestone comics, and their fans*. University Press of Mississippi, 2005.

Burdiel, Isabel. "Historia política y biografía: más allá de las fronteras." *Ayer. Los retos de la biografía*, 2014, pp. 47–83.

Casanova, Julián, et al. *Morir, matar, sobrevivir: la violencia en la dictadura de Franco*. Crítica,

2002.

Castro Lombilla, Jose Luis. "*Cuerda de presas*, de García y Martínez." *Tebeosfera. Cultura gráfica*,     2006,     [https://tebeosfera.blogspot.com/2005/06/cuerda-de-presas-de-garca-y-martnez.html](https://tebeosfera.blogspot.com/2005/06/cuerda-de-presas-de-garca-y-martnez.html).

- - -. "Cuerda De Presas. Lamentémonos, Que Humea Ilión." *Tebeosfera*. *Cultura gráfica*, 2010, https://revista.tebeosfera.com/documentos/cuerda_de_presas._lamentemonos_que_humea_ilion.html.

Catalá Carrasco, Jorge L. "Exilio y memoria en la nueva novela gráfica española: *Los surcos del azar* (2013)." *Españoles en Europa. Identidad y exilio desde la Edad Moderna hasta nuestros días*, Edited by Rodríguez Pérez Yolanda and Pablo Valdivia, 2018, pp. 155–170., https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004366763_014.

Cesari, De Chiara, and Ann Rigney, editors. *Transnational memory circulation, articulation, scales*. De Gruyter, 2016.

Chaney, Michael A. *Graphic subjects. Critical essays on autobiography and graphic novels*. The University of Wisconsin Press, 2011.

Chute, Hillary L. *Comics as literature: reading graphic narrative*. The Modern Language Association of America, 2008.

- - -. *Disaster Drawn: visual witness, comics, and documentary form*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016.

- - -. *Graphic Women: life narrative and contemporary comics*. Columbia University Press, 2010.

- - -. "Comics form and narrating lives." *Profession*, vol. 2011, no. 1, 2011, pp. 107–117., https://doi.org/10.1632/prof.2011.2011.1.107.

- - -. "The space of graphic narrative: mapping bodies, feminism, and form." *Narrative theory unbound: queer and feminist interventions*, edited by Robyn R. Warhol, Ohio State Univ Press, Ohio, 2016, pp. 194–209.

Claudio, Esther, et al. "The (re)construction of memory in *El arte de volar*." *On the edge of the panel: essays on comics criticism*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle Upon Tyne, 2015, pp. 230–241.

- - -. "¿Tu guerra o mi lucha?: una aproximación de género a la memoria histórica en la narrativa gráfica." *Trazos de memoria, trozos de historia: cómic y Franquismo*, edited by Isabelle Touton et al., Ediciones Marmotilla, Madrid, ES, 2021, pp. 359–374.

Cohn, Neil. *The visual language of comics: introduction to the structure and cognition of sequential images*. Bloomsbury, 2014.

Colmeiro José F. *Memoria histórica e identidad cultural: de la postguerra a la postmodernidad*. Antrophos, 2005.

Costa Mendia, Irene. "Los discursos del cómic autobiográfico." *Universidad del País Vasco*, 2017. http://hdl.handle.net/10810/25767

Crippa, Francesca. "La representación del trauma de la memoria en dos novelas gráficas contemporáneas." *Siglo XXI, literatura y cultura españolas* , no. 12, 2014, pp. 143–156.

De Hoyos Puente, Jorge. "La Guerra Civil en los imaginarios del exilio Republicano en México, 1939-19601." *Amnis*, no. 2, 2011, https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4000/amnis.1499.

De la Fuente Soler, Manuel. "Memory in frames: the history and trend of autobiographical comic." *Revista de la Asociación Española de Semiótica*, no. 20, 2011, pp. 259–276.

Doherty, Thomas. "Art Spiegelman's *Maus*: graphic art and the Holocaust." *American literature*, vol. 68, no. 1, Mar. 1996, pp. 69–84.

Douglas, Paul. *Demanding respect: the evolution of the American comic book*. Temple Univ. Press, 2009.

Dubois, Grégory. "Reivindicación intermedial de una identidad nacional silenciada: el caso de *Cuerda de Presas*." *L'Entre-Deux*, vol. 8, no. 2, https://www.lentre-deux.com/?b=139. Accessed 9 July 2022.

Duncan, Randy, et al. *The power of comics: history, form, and culture*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.

Díaz de Guereñu Manuel Juan. *Hacia un cómic de autor: a propósito de "Arrugas" y otras novelas gráficas*. Universidad De Deusto, 2014.

Erll, Astrid. *Memory in culture*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

- - -. "Traveling memory." *Transcultural memory*, vol. 17, no. 4, 11 Oct. 2011, pp. 4–18.

Espacio Fundación Telefónica. *Paco Roca. Dibujante Ambulante: La Guerra En Viñetas y Fotogramas*. Youtube, 5 Feb. 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rxif2aXQRlo&t=1177s. Accessed 15 Nov. 2019.

- - -.. *Los surcos del azar. 75 Años de la liberación de París*. YouTube, 4 June 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOTFgW3HQqg&t=350s. Accessed 2 Nov. 2022.

Espinosa Maestre, Francisco. "De saturaciones y olvidos. Reflexiones en torno a un pasado que no puede pasar." *Generaciones y memoria de la represión franquista: un balance de los movimientos por la memoria* , 2010, pp. 323–354.

Faber, Sebastiaan. "Actos afiliativos y posmemoria: asuntos pendientes." *Pasavento. Revista de estudios hispánicos*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2014, pp. 137–156.

- - -. "La literatura como acto afiliativo: la nueva novela de la Guerra Civil (2000-2007)." *Contornos de la narrativa española actual (2000-2010)*, 2011, pp. 101–110., https://doi.org/10.31819/9783954870424-010.

- - -. *Memory battles of the Spanish Civil War: history, fiction, photography*. Vanderbilt University Press, 2018.

Federación de Gremios de Editores de España. "Comercio interior del libro en España 2017." *Federación de Gremios de Editores de España*, 2018, https://www.federacioneditores.org.

- - -. "Comercio interior del libro en España 2021." *Federación de Gremios de Editores de España*, 2022, https://www.federacioneditores.org.

Fernández de Arriba, David. "La memoria del exilio a través del cómic. *Un largo silencio*, *El arte de volar* y *Los surcos del azar*." *CuCo, cuadernos de cómic*, no. 4, 2015, pp. 7–33.

Fernández de Mata, Ignacio. "La memoria y la escucha, la ruptura del mundo y el conflicto de memorias." *Hispania Nova. Revista de historia contemporánea*, no. 6, 2006, pp. 689–711.

- - -. "El surgimiento de la memoria histórica. Sentidos, malentendidos y disputas." *La tradición como reclamo: antropología en Castilla y León*, edited by Luis Díaz Viana and Tomé Martín Pedro, Consejería de Cultura y Turismo, Valladolid, 2007, pp. 195–208.

Fernández Sarasola, Ignacio. *El Pueblo Contra Los Cómics*. ACT Ediciones, 2019.

García Lorca, Federico. *La Casa De Bernarda Alba*. Cátedra, 2021.

García Navarro, Carmen. "Viñetas de memoria *Los surcos del azar* de Paco Roca." *Las batallas del cómic: perspectivas sobre la narrativa gráfica contemporánea*, 2016, pp. 118–132.

Genette, Gerard. *Paratexts: thresholds of interpretation*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

González, Magdalena. "La Teorización De Julio Aróstegui Sobre La Historia Del Tiempo Presente Como Historia Vivida." *Hispania Nova. Revista De Historia Contemporánea*, no. 13, 2015, pp. 126–133.

Graham, Helen. *The Spanish Civil War: a very short introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

Gómez Salamanca, Daniel, and Josep Rom Rodríguez. "La novella gràfica: un canvi d'horitzó en la indústria del còmic." *Ítaca. Revista De Filologia*, no. 3, 2012, pp. 35–65.

Habermas Jürgen. *Más allá del estado nacional*. Trotta, 2008.

Hafter, Lea. "Representaciones de la infancia en 'Cuerda De Presas': trazos de identidad." *Kamchatka. Revista De Análisis Cultural.*, no. 3, 2014, https://doi.org/10.7203/kam.3.3581.

Halbwachs, Maurice. *On collective memory*. Edited by Lewis A. Coser, University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Hirsch, Marianne. "Surviving images: Holocaust photographs and the work of postmemory." *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2001, pp. 5–37.

- - -. *The generation of postmemory. Writing and visual culture after the Holocaust*. Columbia Univ. Press, 2012.

Imanol. "Anecdotario de 'La Nueve.'" *Diagonal*, 14 May 2017, https://www.diagonalperiodico.net/blogs/imanol/anecdotario-la-nueve.html.

Izquierdo, José María. "Un médico en la Guerra Civil española: el doctor Pablo Uriel Díez." *Memoria y narración. Revista de estudios sobre el pasado conflictivo de sociedades y culturas contemporáneas*, no. 2, 2021, pp. 69–84., https://doi.org/10.5617/myn.8663.

Johnson-Laird, P. N., and Keith Oatley. *The language of emotions: an analysis of a semantic field*. Princeton University, Cognitive Science Laboratory, 1988.

Joly, Maud. "Las violencias sexuadas de la Guerra Civil española: paradigma para una lectura cultural de conflicto." *Historia Social*, no. 61, 2008, pp. 89–107.

Juliá Díaz, Santos. *La España del siglo XX*. Marcial Pons Ediciones De Historia, 2007.

Kunzle, David. *The early comic strip: narrative strips and picture stories in the European broadsheet from c. 1450 to 1825*. University of California Press, 1973.

Laurike, In 't Veld. *The representation of genocide in graphic novels: considering the role of kitsch*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Lejeune, Philippe, and Paul John Eakin. "The autobiographical pact." *On Autobiography*, U. Of Minnesota P., Minneapolis, MI, 1990, pp. 3–30.

Lladó, Francesca. *Los cómics de la Transición: el boom del cómic adulto 1975-1984*. Glénat, 2001.

Loriga, Sabina. "La escritura biográfica y la escritura histórica en los siglos XIX y XX." *Anuario IEHS* , no. 27, 2012, pp. 121–143.

Maestre, Espinosa Francisco. *Contra el olvido: historia y memoria de la Guerra Civil*. Crítica,

2006.

Malty, Michel. "El cómic español y la Guerra Civil: Transición y primera década de democracia - 1976-1992." *Tebeoesfera. Cultura gráfica.*, 15 Nov. 2014, https://www.tebeosfera.com/obras/documentos/el_comic_espanol_y_la_guerra_civil_transicion_y_primera_decada_de_democracia_-_1976-1992.html.

- - -. *El cómic sobre la Guerra Civil*. Cátedra, 2018.

Mannheim, Karl. *Essays on the sociology of knowledge*. Translated by Paul Kecskemeti, Forgotten Books, 2017.

Marion, Philippe. *Traces en cases: travail graphique, figuration narrative et participation du lecteur*. Academia, 1993.

Martín, Ivan Rodrigues. "Este mestizaje que hay entre literatura y narración gráfica: entrevista a Sento Llobel y a Elena Uriel." *Caracol*, no. 15, 2018, p. 450., https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2317-9651.v0i15p450-467.

Martín, Marco. "La teoría de las generaciones de Ortega y Gasset: Una lectura del S.XIX." *Tiempo y Espacio*, vol. 20, no. 17, 2008, pp. 98–110.

Martín, Antonio. "Los tebeos de la Guerra Civil española. Niños y propaganda." *Tebeosfera. Cultura Gráfica.*, 18 Dec. 2008, https://www.tebeosfera.com/documentos/los_tebeos_de_la_guerra_civil_espanola._ninos_y_propaganda.html.

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding comics: the invisible art*. Harper Perennial, 2010.

McKinney, Mark. *History and politics in French-language comics and graphic novels*. University Press of Mississippi, 2008.

Miller, Rachel R. "Keep out, or else: diary as body in the diary of a teenage girl and cruddy." *Comics Memory*, 2018, pp. 101–119., https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91746-7_6.

Mora, Javier. "Entrevista con Antonio Altarriba (II)." *ARGH!*, 6 Apr. 2020, https://www.argh.es/entrevista-antonio-altarriba-2/.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. Vintage Classics, 2022.

Muñoz Soro, Javier. "La reconciliación como política: memoria de la violencia y la guerra en el antifranquismo." *DOSSIER: Guerra Civil: las representaciones de la violencia*, Edited by Jerónimo Zurita, vol. 84, 2009, pp. 113–134.

Mónica, Bolufer. "Multitudes del yo: biografía e historia de las mujeres." *Ayer. Los Retos De La Biografía*, 2014, pp. 85–116.

Núñez Seixas, Xosé. *¡Fuera el invasor!: nacionalismos y movilización bélica durante la Guerra Civil española (1936-1939)*. Marcial Pons Ediciones De Historia, 2006.

Ortega y Gasset José. *El espectador*. Espasa Calpe, 1966.

Óscar, Frean Hernández, and Merlo-Morat Philippe. *La memoria de la represión franquista*. Grimh, 2021.

Parra, René, et al. *Los pioneros del cómic: monsieur Cryptogame y otras historias*. El Nadir Ediciones, 2022.

Pintor Iranzo, Iván. *Figuras del cómic: forma, tiempo y narración secuencial*. Aldea Global 37, 2017.

Porcel, Pedro. "La historieta española de 1951 a 1970." *Arbor*, vol. 187, no. Extra 2, 2011, pp. 129–158., https://doi.org/10.3989/arbor.2011.2extran2115.

Preston, Paul. "Amenazados, ametrallados e inspirados. Los corresponsales extranjeros de la Guerra Civil española." *CVC. Centro virtual Cervantes.*, 2006, https://cvc.cervantes.es/actcult/corresponsales/preston.htm.

Pérez del Solar, Pedro. "La perversa máquina del olvido: cómics y memoria de la posguerra en la España de los 90." *Espacio, tiempo y forma. Serie V, historia contemporánea*, no. 26, 2015, pp. 227–257.

Pons, Álvaro. "Un hito para la normalización de la historieta en el ámbito académico," *Tebeosfera, tercera época*, 10. 4 April 2019. https://www.tebeosfera.com/documentos/un_hito_para_la_normalizacion_de_la_historieta_en_el_ambito_academico.html.

Rancière Jacques. *Aesthetics and its discontents*. Polity, 2014.

Real Academia Española. "Cómic." *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, 23rd ed., https://dle.rae.es. Accessed 2017.

- - -. "Historieta." *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*, 23rd ed., https://dle.rae.es. Accessed 2017.

Refaie, El Elisabeth. *Autobiographical comics: life writing in pictures*. University Press of Mississippi, 2016.

Ricœur, Paul. *La lectura del tiempo pasado: memoria y olvido*. Edited by Ángel Gabilondo and Gabriel Aranzueque, Arrecife Producciones, 1999.

- - -. *La memoria, la historia, el olvido*. Trotta, 2003.

Ruiz Torres, Pedro. "De perplejidades y confusiones. A propósito de nuestras memorias." *Hispania Nova: revista de historia contemporánea*, vol. 7, 2007, pp. 799–843.

- - -. "Las repercusiones de los cambios culturales de la modernidad en el modo de pensar la biografía." *Los retos de la biografía*, edited by Isabel Burdiel, Asociación de historia contemporánea, Madrid, 2014, pp. 19–46.

- - -. "Los discursos de la memoria histórica en España." *Hispania Nova*, vol. 7, 2007, pp. 305–334.

Sabbah, Jacqueline. "Historia e historización, ficción y metaficción en *Los surcos del azar*, de Paco Roca." *Cahiers De Civilisation Espagnole Contemporaine*, no. 24, 2020, https://doi.org/10.4000/ccec.9477. Accessed 19 July 2022.

Saunders, Max. *Self impression: life-writing, autobiografiction, and the forms of modern*

*literature*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Schaffer, Kay, and Sidonie Smith. *Human rights and narrated lives: the ethics of recognition*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Silva, Míriam Cristina, and Paulo Celso Silva. "Quadrinhos como mídia: a narrativa histórica e poética de *El arte de volar* e *El ala rota*." *Esferas*, no. 9, 2017, https://doi.org/10.31501/esf.v0i9.7991.

Simón Porolli, Paula. "Narraciones dislocadas: el exilio y el campo de concentración, dos formas de la violencia en la literatura testimonial Argentina y Española / Dislocated narratives." *Kamchatka. Revista de Análisis cultural*, no. 8, 2016, pp. 223–237, https://doi.org/10.7203/kam.8.9444.

Smith, Sidonie, and Julia Watson. *Reading autobiography: a guide for interpreting life narratives*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

Southworth, Herbert R. *Conspiracy and the Spanish Civil War: the brainwashing of Francisco Franco*. Routledge, 2015.

Suleng, Kristin. "Último barco al exilio." *El País*, 21 Mar. 2014, https://elpais.com/politica/2014/03/21/actualidad/1395425929_742501.html. Accessed 20 Sept. 2022.

Sánchez Zapatero, Javier. "La memoria de la Guerra Civil en viñetas: 'El arte de volar' y 'Un largo silencio.'" *Signa: revista de la Asociación española de semiótica*, vol. 25, 2016, pp. 1081–1095., https://doi.org/10.5944/signa.vol25.2016.16910.

Tesón, Nuria. "Esquelas de las dos Españas." *El Pais.com*, 10 Sept. 2006, https://elpais.com/diario/2006/09/10/espana/1157839217_850215.html. Accessed 3 Sept. 2018.

To, Nathan M. L., and Elena Trivelli. "Affect, memory and the transmission of trauma." *Subjectivity*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2015, pp. 305–314., https://doi.org/10.1057/sub.2015.12.

Touton, Isabelle, et al., editors. *Trazos de memoria, trozos de historia: cómic y franquismo*. Ediciones Marmotilla, 2021.

Tyras, Georges, and Juan Vila. *Memoria y testimonio: representaciones memorísticas en la España contemporánea*. Verbum, 2012.

Van Gansen, Kristof. "Mel Gibson. Remembered reading: memory, comics and Post-War constructions of British Girlhood. Leuven: Leuven up, 2015." *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2017, https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.1959.

Villamandos, Alberto. "El sueño de la modernidad produce monstruos: el cómic disidente de Enric Sió en el tardofranquismo." *Hispanic Review*, vol. 81, no. 1, 2013, pp. 83–106, https://doi.org/10.1353/hir.2013.0004.

Weiner, Stephen. *The rise of the graphic novel: faster than a speeding bullet*. NBM, 2004.

# Chapter eight: List of images and their reference

Figure 1. Kiste Nyberg, Dr. Amy. "Comics code history: the seal of approval." *Comic Book Legal Defense Fund*, 29 Sept. 2011, https://cbldf.org/comics-code-history-the-seal-of-approval/.

Figure 2. Paco Roca. *Los surcos del azar.* Astiberri ediciones: Bilbao. 2013. Page 221.

Figure 3. Scott Mccloud. *Understanding comics: the invisible art.* New York: HarperPerennial, 1994. Page 36.

Figure 4. García, Jorge and Martínez, Fidel. *Cuerda de presas*. Astiberri Ediciones, 2005. Page 9.

Figure 5. García, Jorge and Martínez, Fidel. *Cuerda de presas*. Astiberri Ediciones, 2005. Page 15.

Figure 6. Llobell Bisbal, Vicent. *Un médico novato*. Sento, 2013. Page 6.

Figure 7. Llobell Bisbal, Vicent. *Un médico novato*. Sento, 2013. Page 30.

Figure 8. García, Jorge and Martínez, Fidel. *Cuerda de presas*. Astiberri Ediciones, 2005. Page 67.

Figure 9. Paco Roca. *Los surcos del azar.* Astiberri Ediciones: Bilbao. 2013. Page 239.

Figure 10. García, Jorge and Martínez, Fidel. *Cuerda de presas*. Astiberri Ediciones, 2005. Page 11.

Figure 11. García, Jorge and Martínez, Fidel. *Cuerda de presas*. Astiberri Ediciones, 2005. Page 13.

Figure 12. García, Jorge and Martínez, Fidel. *Cuerda de presas*. Astiberri Ediciones, 2005. Page 31.

Figure 13. García, Jorge and Martínez, Fidel. *Cuerda de presas*. Astiberri Ediciones, 2005. Page 30.

Figure 14. Llobell Bisbal, Vicent. *Un médico novato*. Sento, 2013. Page 49.

Figure 15. Llobell Bisbal, Vicent. *Un médico novato*. Sento, 2013. Page 51.

Figure 16. Altarriba, Antonio, and Kim. *El arte de volar*. Edicions De Ponent, 2009. Page 173.

Figure 17. Paco Roca. *Los surcos del azar.* Astiberri Ediciones: Bilbao. 2013. Page 221.

Figure 18. García, Jorge and Martínez, Fidel. *Cuerda de presas*. Astiberri Ediciones, 2005. Page 49.

Figure 19. Altarriba, Antonio, and Kim. *El arte de volar*. Edicions De Ponent, 2009. Page 149.

Figure 20. Altarriba, Antonio, and Kim. *El arte de volar*. Edicions De Ponent, 2009. Page 202.

Figure 21. Llobell Bisbal, Vicent. *Un médico novato*. Sento, 2013. Page 71.

Figure 22. Llobell Bisbal, Vicent. *Un médico novato*. Sento, 2013. Page 145.

Figure 23. Altarriba, Antonio, and Kim. *El arte de volar*. Edicions De Ponent, 2009. Page 83.

Figure 24. García, Jorge and Martínez, Fidel. *Cuerda de presas*. Astiberri Ediciones, 2005. Page 35.

Figure 25. Paco Roca. *Los surcos del azar.* Astiberri Ediciones: Bilbao. 2013. Page 114.

Figure 26. Llobell Bisbal, Vicent. *Un médico novato*. Sento, 2013. Page 26.

Figure 27. Llobell Bisbal, Vicent. *Atrapado en Belchite*. Sento, 2015. Page 102.

Figure 28. García, Jorge and Martínez, Fidel. *Cuerda de presas*. Astiberri Ediciones, 2005. Page 38.

Figure 29. Paco Roca. *Los surcos del azar.* Astiberri Ediciones: Bilbao. 2013. Page 316.

Figure 30. Giménez, Carlos. *36-39. Malos tiempos*. Debolsillo, 2011. Page 24.

Figure 31. Paco Roca. *Los surcos del azar.* Astiberri Ediciones: Bilbao. 2019. Page 344.

Figure 32. Llobell Bisbal, Vicent. *Atrapado en Belchite*. Sento, 2015. Page 144.

Figure 33. Altarriba, Antonio, and Kim. *El arte de volar*. Edicions De Ponent, 2009. Page 102.

Figure 34. Touton, Isabelle, et al., editors. *Trazos de memoria, Trozos De Historia: Cómic y Franquismo*. Ediciones Marmotilla, 2021. Page 351.

Figure 35. Paco Roca. *Los surcos del azar.* Astiberri Ediciones: Bilbao. 2019. Page 285.

Figure 36. Photo of some of the members of *La Nueve* in England:

Imanol. "Anecdotario De 'La Nueve'" *Diagonal*, 14 May 2017, https://www.diagonalperiodico.net/blogs/imanol/anecdotario-la-nueve.html.

Figure 37. Paco Roca. *Los surcos del azar.* Astiberri Ediciones: Bilbao. 2019. Page 285.

Figure 38. Paco Roca. *Los surcos del azar.* Astiberri Ediciones: Bilbao. 2019. Page 90.

Figure 39. Altarriba, Antonio, and Kim. *El arte de volar*. Edicions De Ponent, 2009. Page 129.

Figure 40. Paco Roca. *Los surcos del azar.* Astiberri Ediciones: Bilbao. 2019. Page 63.

Figure 41. Aliaga Martínez, Manuel José. "Día 1 De Abril De 1939: Puerto de Alicante. (Fotografía)." *Restos De La Guerra Civil En La Provincia De Alicante*, 31 Mar. 2012, http://restosguerracivilenalicante.blogspot.com/2012/02/dia1-de-abril-de-1939-puerto-de.html.

Figure 42. Photo of the Stanbrook:

Imanol. "Anecdotario De 'La Nueve'" *Diagonal*, 14 May 2017, https://www.diagonalperiodico.net/blogs/imanol/anecdotario-la-nueve.html.

Figure 43. Llobell Bisbal, Vicent. *Atrapado En Belchite*. Sento, 2015. Page 24.

Figure 44. Llobell Bisbal, Vicent. *Atrapado En Belchite*. Sento, 2015. Page 25.

Figure 45. Altarriba, Antonio, and Kim. *El arte de volar*. Edicions De Ponent, 2009. Page 49.

Figure 46. Altarriba, Antonio, and Kim. *El arte de volar*. Edicions De Ponent, 2009. Page 81.

Figure 47. Paco Roca. *Los surcos del azar.* Astiberri Ediciones: Bilbao. 2019. Page 169.