

THE HOLOCAUST AS TROPE IN POST-FRANCO SPAIN: HISTORICAL MEMORY AND THE CASE OF ENRIC MARCO

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Introduction

In May of 2005, Enric Marco, Spain's most famous survivor of a Nazi concentration camp, was denounced as an impostor. Beginning in 1978 with the publication of his testimony—a four-page account of his arrest, deportation to the Flossenbürg and Mauthausen concentration camps, torture by the Gestapo, and his subsequent liberation by the Allied troops—Marco was active in politics and social organizations. He served twice as vice-president to an association for parents of Catalan students, he was awarded the prestigious Creu de Sant Jordi and gave approximately 120 public talks per year, educating the younger generation about the crimes committed by the Nazis. In 2005, at 84-years-old, he was the president of the main organization for the Spanish Republican survivors of the Nazi camps, the Asociación Amical de Mauthausen.

Marco maintained his identity as a victim of the Holocaust until historian Benito Bermejo confronted Marco with evidence that he had invented his past; Marco confessed but said that he did it “por una buena causa” [for a good cause] because “así la gente me escuchaba más” [that way, people would listen to me more] (20 minutos). Marco claimed that his intention was to bring attention to the suffering of other Republican survivors of the Nazi camps. He stated, “Todo lo que cuento lo he vivido, pero en otro sitio; sólo cambié el lugar, para dar a conocer mejor el dolor de las víctimas” [I've lived through everything I tell, only in another place; I only changed the setting to make known the suffering of the victims] (Vargas Llosa).

The immediate responses to Marco's invention ranged from disgust and outrage, to denial, to defense. The overwhelming majority of responses indicated that, despite Marco's possible good intentions, he had betrayed the authentic victims of the Holocaust. Gregorio Morán, writing in *La Vanguardia* on June 18, 2005, refers to Marco as “una basura” [a piece of trash] and condemns his testimony as follows: “Hay cosas con las que no se puede jugar, aquellas en las que cualquier frivolidad es crimen. Los campos de concentración nazis son una de ellas” [There are some things with which you cannot play, where any triviality is a crime. The Nazi concentration camps are one of these things] (Morán). Pilar Rahola writes in *El País* that she can never forgive Marco for his lies: “no puedo perdonar a Enric Marco. Su mentira ha sido un fraude a las emociones colectivas. Su fraude ha sido una estafa a las víctimas. Y defraudar a las víctimas es tan inmoral que no tiene defensa posible” [I cannot forgive Enric Marco. His lie was a fraud to our collective emotions. His fraud has been a swindle of the victims. And defrauding the victims is so immoral that there exists no possible defense] (Rahola). For Rahola, it is best

to move on and forget what she considers to be Marco's amorality: "Pasemos página pronto, porque todo esto es bastante deplorable, bastante sucio y muy doloroso" [Let's turn the page quickly, because all of this is deplorable, ugly, and very painful] (Rahola). Despite the initial virulent frenzy, discussion of his case has all but vanished in the more recent past.

Although Marco is only one example of the many falsified testimonial narratives of the Holocaust, there are several elements that make his case unique on a national and historical level. Through an analysis based on the theoretical literature of testimony and narratives of trauma, which problematize the ultimate veracity of first-person acts of memory, as well as a discussion of our current, somewhat problematic, relationship to the Holocaust, I propose to reread Marco's testimony within the context of current debates surrounding historical memory in contemporary Spain. While keeping in mind the dangers and ethical ramifications of generalizing the Holocaust into an empty universal symbol and an allegory of historical horror, I will argue that Marco and his work can be constructively interpreted as a reflection of a singular moment in Spanish history as the country re-examines its national identity in an attempt to come to terms with its own traumatic past.

Marco's History: Fiction and Reality

Marco's 1978 testimony, entitled "Testimonio de Enrique Marco Batlle", was published in Eduardo Pons Prades and Mariano Constante's anthology of Spanish Republican Holocaust testimonies, *Los cerdos del comandante*, the first book published in Spain to narrate the experiences of the Spanish survivors of the Nazi camps.¹ In this account, Marco describes his arrest in Vichy France as a member of the French Resistance and his imprisonment in the Mauthausen and Flossenbürg concentration camps. As prisoner number 6,448, he claims he was tortured and suffered at the hands of the Gestapo. His brief testimony is scarce on details. He writes, "En Flossenbürg estuve muy poco tiempo, y como me llevaban de un lado a otro en plan de incomunicado, no podía entrar en contacto con nadie" [I was only in Flossenbürg for a short time, and because they took me from one place to another in solitary confinement, I couldn't come into contact with anyone] (Pons Prades 2005, 102). His encounters with the Nazis are brushed over, and the apparent suffering inflicted upon him is only suggested: "Cuando yo creía que no me iban a molestar más, un día vino la Gestapo y me llevaron al presidio de Kiel y allí empezó otra vez el jaleo" [When I thought they wouldn't bother me anymore, one day the Gestapo came and they took me to the Kiel prison, and there the whole mess started all over again] (102). The other anecdotes that Marco recounts are almost cliché.

He writes:

Una de las cosas que me salvó cuando estuve incomunicado en Kiel fue el oír los gritos de las gaviotas y a los niños de los funcionarios del penal, cuando jugaban en un patio vecino. Yo me decía: mientras haya gaviotas sobre el mar y niños que juegan no todo

está perdido. Como era joven las secuelas de la deportación desaparecieron pronto. Pero una cosa que me marcó durante muchos años fue el que, cuando iba por la calle y me fijaba en el ritmo de los pasos de la persona que andaba delante mío, me sentía forzado a marcar el paso.

[One of the things that saved me when I was in solitary confinement in Kiel was hearing the cries of the seagulls and the children of the prison employees, when they played in a nearby patio. I would tell myself: while there are seagulls over the ocean and children at play, all is not lost. Since I was young, the consequences of my deportation disappeared quickly. But one of the things that marked me for many years was, when I would go out in the street, I would notice the rhythm of the steps of the person walking in front of me, and I felt forced to keep in step]. (103)

While these anecdotes can now be interpreted as flimsy and almost formulaic illustrations of concentration camp life, their falsity initially went unnoticed. In fact, the details of his experience were widely praised. Nonetheless, Marco's most significant contribution of Holocaust testimony came in the form of his tireless crusading against the Nazi horrors over the subsequent thirty years.

During his time as a Holocaust activist, he gave hundreds of interviews and public talks, offered declarations of testimony, performed acts of solidarity, and spoke on behalf of the 8,000 Spaniards who died in Nazi camps. He also received tributes and medals. On June 28, 2005, as Mario Vargas Llosa reports in *El País*, Marco was received by the Congreso Nacional de España, and his words profoundly impacted the members of the parliament. Marco stated:

Cuando llegábamos a los campos de concentración en esos trenes infectos, para ganado, nos desnudaban, nos mordían sus perros, nos deslumbraban sus focos. Nosotros éramos personas normales, como ustedes. Nos gritaban en alemán links, recht —izquierda, derecha. No entendíamos, y no entender una orden podía costar la vida.

[When we arrived at the concentration camps on those infected trains, for livestock, they stripped us, we were bitten by their dogs, they blinded us with their spotlights. We were normal people, like you. They shouted at us in German links, recht – left, right. We didn't understand, and not understanding an order could cost your life]. (Vargas Llosa)

Vargas Llosa notes that as the cameras rolled, tears filled the eyes of several members of the Spanish congress.

When historian Benito Bermejo discovered inconsistencies in Marco's story and later that the Mauthausen archive did not contain his name, Marco confessed that his story had been an invention, but only partially so. Although we will most likely never know all of the facts about Marco's true story, we know now that during the war Marco was not in a concentration camp. Instead, Marco went to Germany

in 1941 as part of a convoy of workers sent by Franco to Hitler's Germany, where he spent two years working in an armaments factory. He returned to Spain in 1943, not in 1945, as he claimed, after being released by the Allies. Marco was not tortured, nor was he mistreated. Apparently, he was imprisoned by the Gestapo in the Kiel prison for spreading communist propaganda; however, he was absolved and returned to Spain. He says he only partially lied because the Gestapo did in fact detain him. He states, "Nadie tiene derecho a decir que el dolor en una cárcel de la Gestapo no es igual que el dolor en un campo de concentración. [...] Cambié el escenario, pero yo también soy un superviviente. ¿Cómo se atreve alguien a decirme que yo no era de los suyos sólo porque no estuve en un campo de concentración?" [No one has the right to say that the pain of a Gestapo prison isn't equal to the pain of a concentration camp. I changed the scenario, but I too am a survivor. How do they dare tell me that I'm not one of them just because I wasn't in a concentration camp?] (Vargas Llosa).

Back in Spain, working with the CNT, of which he eventually became secretary general, he had to justify why he did not go into exile after the war like many of his comrades. Marco made the conscious decision to invent his past, to invent a heroic one. In 1979, Marco left the CNT and began to circulate in public, beginning to recount his false experiences in schools and elsewhere while also working as a car mechanic in a Barcelona auto shop to make a living on the side. It was only in the 1990's that Marco became involved with the Amical de Mauthausen.

Due in part to Marco's impressive work as an advocate for the Holocaust victims, some defended Marco, stating that while he lied about his personal story, he was true to the experience of the Spaniards who, after the end of the civil war, escaped into exile in France, joined the Resistance, were caught, and ended up in Nazi concentration camps. Alberto Arce, in his article "¿Es culpable Enric Marco?" [Is Enric Marco Guilty?], states:

Esta sociedad nuestra, que se ha desarrollado sobre el silencio y el olvido, está viendo que con el paso de los años, y tras la muerte en el olvido de los auténticos héroes de nuestra historia, empieza a salir a la luz la verdad sobre la guerra y la dictadura que asolaron España [...] ¿No le ha hecho, pese a todo, un gran favor a la débil memoria de nuestra democracia?

[This society of ours, built on silence and forgetting, is seeing that with the passing of years, with the death through forgetting of the authentic heroes of our history, the truth about the war and the dictatorship which ravaged Spain is beginning to come to light [...] Hasn't he, despite everything, done a great favor to our democracy's flimsy memory?] (Arce)

The poet Luis García Montero defends Marco as the lesser of evils compared to atrocities carried out by the then-Presidents Bush and Putin:

Vanderbilt e-Journal of Luso-Hispanic Studies 6 (2010)
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La simulación de Enric Marco es poca cosa al lado de la sonrisa con la que los presidentes Bush y Putin depositaron ramos de flores en las tumbas de las víctimas del nazismo. Se diría que sus bombas racimo, sus torturas, sus matanzas en Irak o Chechenia, sus negocios, sus demagogias patrióticas, no tienen nada que ver con la tragedia escrita en los campos de concentración de Hitler. Es casi farisaico criticar a un pobre tartufo cuando los grandes líderes de Occidente representan a una democracia cada día más parecida al totalitarismo.

[Enric Marco's simulation is minor next to the smile with which President Bush and President Putin leave a branch of flowers on the tombs of the victims of Nazism. They would say that their racist bombings, their torture, their mass killings in Iraq or Chechnya, their business deals, their patriotic demagoguery have nothing to do with the tragedy written in Hitler's concentration camps. It is almost farisaical to criticize a poor hypocrite when the great leaders of the West represent a democracy that increasingly resembles totalitarianism]. (García Montero)

In this sense, the impact of Marco's dishonesty was two-fold. He both inspired discourse surrounding the Spanish Republicans who lost their lives in concentration camps and made an important contribution to promoting the crucial breaking of the Spanish national silence surrounding the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship.

On the other hand, his false testimonies did lead to dangerous consequences. For example, Marco is cited during a discussion in the revisionist online forum *stormfront.org* that questions the existence of the Holocaust and advertises the motto "White Pride World Wide." One post dealing with Marco reads: "Marco ran the 'Spanish Jews of holocaust association.' He helped himself to the association's funds. Wherever there was a trip to be had, Marco was on it.... Just how many old Jews donated money to keep this fraud going. How many feeble Jews would recount imaginary stories of gas chambers and ovens." While this is the end that is most feared by those who denounce Marco, as it provides ammunition to those who deny the Holocaust, it is also important to look at both sides of the Marco controversy.

Precedents

While the reactions to Marco's invention give the impression that it was a singular event, the false testimony of his Holocaust experience was not entirely unique.² Among the many examples, the well-known case of Binjamin Wilkomirski, which "represented a crisis point in Holocaust studies" (Whitehead 9), shares many similarities with that of Marco. In 1995, Schocken Books, a Jewish publishing house which introduced Kafka to the U.S. and published Primo Levi, Simon Wiesenthal and Elie Wiesel, brought out Wilkomirski's book, *Fragments: Memories of a Wartime Childhood*, which narrated

the author's alleged experiences as a child survivor of the Holocaust. This false testimony, told from a child's perspective in a fragmentary, dream-like narration, recounts Wilkomirski's experiences as a Jewish child in a Latvian family. After witnessing his father's murder as a toddler, he is separated from his family and sent to the camps, where he experiences and witnesses a series of horrors. Unlike Marco in his reticence regarding the horrific details of the camps, Wilkomirski claims to have experienced (among many other extremely graphic anecdotes) seeing rats emerge from the belly of a dead woman, babies having their skulls bashed in by Nazi soldiers, a pair of hungry babies that gnaw their frost-bitten fingers to the bone. Daniel Ganzfried, who perhaps did more than anyone else to expose the Wilkomirski fraud, writes that *Fragments* "dealt with cruelty on an almost pornographic level" (Eskin 112). Wilkomirski's narrative states that after the war he was smuggled to Switzerland from a Polish orphanage. In Wilkomirski's words,

I wrote these fragments of memory to explore both myself and my earliest childhood; it may also have been an attempt to set myself free. And I wrote them with the hope that perhaps other people in the same situation would find the necessary support and strength to cry out their own traumatic childhood memories, so that they too could learn that there really are people today who will take them seriously, and who want to listen and to understand. (Wilkomirski 155)

Although some historians and critics questioned the book's veracity early on, it was almost immediately celebrated as a classic of Holocaust literature and a literary masterpiece, compared to Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel, and Bruno Bettelheim. In the *Washington Times*, Arnost Lustig, himself a survivor, wrote, "It makes you feel, perceive and understand and, in so doing, makes you spiritually richer. The book is destined to become one of the five or 10 lasting books about the Holocaust" (qtd. in Eskin 33). *Fragments* was translated into a dozen languages, won the Jewish National Book Award, the Prix de Mémoire de la Shoah, and the *Jewish Quarterly* prize. Wilkomirski starred in documentaries, gave keynote addresses at Holocaust conferences, and raised money for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Praise for the book bordered on sacred reverence; Jonathan Kozol wrote in *The Nation*: "This stunning and austere work is so profoundly moving, so morally important, and so free from literary artifice of any kind at all that I wonder if I even have the right to offer praise" (Wilkomirski), a quote that was put on the back cover of the paperback edition by Schocken.

After Swiss author and journalist Daniel Ganzfried and others looked more deeply into Wilkomirski's past, his invention began to crumble. Wilkomirski was born Bruno Grosjean in Biel, Switzerland in 1941. He was not Jewish. He was given up for adoption as an illegitimate child and was adopted by the Doessekkers when he was four years old. His real name was Bruno Doessekker. He spent the war years in Switzerland, completed secondary education at the Zurich Free Gymnasium, and

apparently lived in relative comfort after the death of his adoptive parents. Upon revelation of his fraud, publishers withdrew publication of *Fragments* in 1999, and the awards he had won were revoked.

The motivations for Wilkomirski's invention and the appropriation of an identity that was not his own remain unclear. Although Wilkomirski has withdrawn into silence in his Swiss home, he continues to insist, against logic and evidence, that he is Binjamin Wilkomirski. Norman Finkelstein calls Wilkomirski "Half-fruitcake, half-mountebank" (Finkelstein 60). Unlike Marco, it appears that Wilkomirski did not deliberately set out to create a forgery and that he believes that he lived through the experiences he describes. Although he did not survive the trauma he describes in the book, he did live through the loss of his parents and an adoption at an early age, which in itself may have served as a catalyst for his identification with the victims of the Holocaust.

Trauma Theory: Testimony Always Implies an Invention

The overwhelming response to invented Holocaust testimony is to disregard it based on its problematic consequences; however, theoretical literature about testimony and trauma provides a lens through which it can be critically but constructively examined. Despite the limitations of even authentic testimonial literature, which relies on subjective and possibly fallible impressions of traumatic events, testimony is invaluable in that it can convey the human experience of something that would otherwise remain abstract. Eva Hoffman writes that not only has the literature of testimony given us some of the greatest works of literature of the twentieth century, but it has also given us

indelible glimpses of responses to extremity, of great fear and great courage, of selfishness and sacrifice, of the imprint of dehumanizing circumstances on individual sensibility and the efforts to sustain spiritual as well as physical selfhood. Without such chronicles and testaments, our understanding of the Holocaust, our capacity to imagine what it is like to live through horror of such magnitude, would have been impoverished. (Hoffman 163).

For many theorists of the Holocaust and of trauma in general, however, the lines between fiction and truth are often blurry, and there appears to be a consensus among theorists of trauma that there are certain aspects of trauma and traumatic memory that deny representation altogether. Primo Levi points out in *The Drowned and the Saved* that the memories of survivors of concentration camps are subject to a variety of factors that might make a reader question their legitimacy. Memory, according to Levi, can never be objective. He writes, "Human memory is a marvelous but fallacious instrument [...] The memories which lie within us are not carved in stone; not only do they tend to become erased as the years go by, but often they change, or even grow, by incorporating extraneous features" (Levi 23). For the victims of trauma, the memory of that trauma is re-constructed with each re-telling, with each remembering. Furthermore, Joshua Hirsch writes that trauma itself presents a crisis of representation:

Vanderbilt e-Journal of Luso-Hispanic Studies 6 (2010)
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An extreme event is perceived as radically out of joint with one's mental representation of the world [...] The mind goes into shock, becomes incapable of translating the impressions of the event into a coherent mental representation. The impressions remain in the mind intact and unassimilated. Paradoxically, they neither submit to the normal processes of memory storage and recall, nor, returning unbidden, do they allow the event to be forgotten. (98)

Often it is only a manipulation of a memory that will render the trauma into a form that does not question the identity or stability of the survivor.

Giorgio Agamben describes a gap between the facts and the establishment of the narrative, the testimony, and its comprehension. Agamben writes that testimony “[contains] at its core an essential lacuna; in other words, the survivors bore witness to something it is impossible to bear witness to. As a consequence, commenting on survivors’ testimony necessarily meant interrogating this lacuna or, more precisely, attempting to listen to it” (13). Agamben quotes Primo Levi and Elie Weisel, who claim that those who have not themselves lived through the trauma will not and can never comprehend the experience, but neither can those who lived through it and survived it; only the “true witness,” the *muselman*, the dead, the ones who “touched bottom [...] who saw the Gorgon” (Levi, quoted in Agamben 32) can fully comprehend the Holocaust. How can Agamben’s idea that “the value of testimony lies essentially in what it lacks” (34), that at the very center of testimony lies the something that ultimately defies representation, help us read Marco’s falsified testimony?

One of the most polemic critical works on testimonial narratives to come out of Latin America in recent years has been Beatriz Sarlo’s *Tiempo pasado: Cultura de la memoria y giro subjetivo: una discusión* [*Time Past: Culture of Memory and the Subjective Turn: a Discussion*] in which the author analyzes memory and first-person testimonial narratives, predominantly surrounding the Argentinean dictatorship and dirty war. Sarlo critically analyzes what she sees to be the transformation of testimonial narratives into what she calls “un ícono de la Verdad” [an icon of truth] (23), in which testimonial narratives claim a higher truth, where they become the principal source of knowing the traumas and the crimes of the past. John Beverley, commenting on the apparent responsibility of hearing testimony, writes that when the reader of testimony is addressed through the intimacy of first-person narrative, “directly as it were, even by someone whom we would normally disregard, we are placed under an obligation to respond; we may act or not on that obligation, we may resent or welcome it, but we cannot ignore it” (1). Although Sarlo recognizes the important role of testimony in the recovery of memory in post-dictatorship Latin American countries, she ultimately rejects first-person narratives as sites privileged over other types of discourse in which the first person is absent or displaced. She criticizes testimony because she sees much of it as a methodologically unregulated assault on the past in function of the necessities of the present (16). For Sarlo, testimonial narratives can offer a Manichean perspective of the past that presents a

simplified, transformed version of that past without its contradictions and which is always an act in the service of the agendas of the present. From this perspective, even the most violent past should not be subject to a simplified counter-position of complete memory versus complete forgetting. She writes that her analysis is motivated by Susan Sontag's idea that perhaps we place too much importance on memory and not enough on thought (26).

Memory, then, is always a subjective process, always a reconstruction of the past; it is a projection onto the past that gives it an imaginary coherence, a structure, an organization, and a content, all of which are influenced to varying degrees by the present. One can never have full access to the past. Rather, the past is always mediated by subjective, transformative elements surrounding the act of remembering. Moreover, when the memories deal with trauma, there is always a struggle involved in the process of remembering. To a certain degree, all testimonial narratives involve an invention, a reconstruction, and it is this element of testimony that might give us more leeway to read Marco's testimony as creative invention. As fiction, Marco's text is subject to a more critical reading than a complacent and full acceptance as alleged truth. After all, the controversy surrounding this text has, in and of itself, created a new discourse regarding this "testimonial" narrative.

Sarlo ultimately concludes that it is only literature that is able to narrate *from outside* of experience. She states, "la ficción puede representar aquello sobre lo que no existe ningún testimonio en primera persona. [...] Lo que no se ha dicho" [fiction can represent that which no first-person testimony can narrate [...] That which is not said] (164). While I do not agree entirely with Sarlo's condemnation of testimony, fiction is also a necessary companion to veridical testimony and history in the ongoing process of confronting the past. Reflecting on Enric Marco, Vargas Llosa writes the following:

Todo esto lleva a reflexionar sobre lo delgada que es la frontera entre la ficción y la vida y los préstamos e intercambios que llevan a cabo desde tiempos inmemoriales la literatura y la historia. Enric Marco tiene los pies firmemente asentados en ambas disciplinas y será muy difícil que alguien consiga separar lo que en su biografía corresponde a cada uno de esos ámbitos. Como en las mejores novelas, él se las arregló para fundirlos en su propia vida de manera inextricable. El mismo es una ficción, pero no de papel, de carne y hueso.

[All of this leads one to reflect on how thin is the border between fiction and reality and the loans and exchanges that have created, since time immemorial, literature and history. Enric Marco has his feet firmly situated in both disciplines, and it would be very difficult for someone to separate which elements of his biography belong to each one of those fields. As in the best novels, he managed to merge both with his own life in an inextricable way. He is a fiction, not of paper, but of flesh and blood]. (Vargas Llosa)

If it is true that traumatic memories are unreliable, distorted versions of the past, then fiction might arguably play a more important role in the representation of trauma than a testimonial narrative that claims objectivity. While Enric Marco's initial assertion that his writings on the Holocaust were autobiographical, repercussions of traumatic memory and its representation complicate our reading of his testimony; reclassifying the text as literature, which is in effect what it is, enhances its relevance beyond what was possible when it was considered truth. When considered as an equivocal literary text which approaches its object of critique in a non-linear fashion, Marco's text might be rehabilitated. Vargas Llosa writes that although he feels a political and moral repugnance towards Marco, he says that it is precisely the literary qualities of Marco's testimony which he admires: "confieso mi admiración de novelista por su prodigiosa destreza fabuladora y su poder de persuasión, a la altura de los más grandes fantaseadores de la historia de la literatura" [I confess my admiration as a novelist for his prodigious skill as a story-teller and his power of persuasion, at the level of the greatest crafters of fantasy in literary history] (Vargas Llosa).

Conclusion: Spanish Historical Memory and the Ethics of Troping the Holocaust

Although Marco's invention could also be likened to any number of other works from Spain's long tradition of pseudo-autobiographies, from the Spanish Golden Age to the present, the particularly Spanish characteristics of his case are most evident when contextualized within current debates surrounding Spanish historical memory.³ Post-Franco Spain, the period in which Marco is writing and crusading, could be characterized by what Kirby Farrell calls "post-traumatic culture," which he describes as "belated, epiphenomenal, the outcome of cumulative stress. It reflects a disturbance in the ground of collective experience: a shock to people's values, trust, and sense of purpose" (Farrell 3). Spain offers a singular example of a recent transition from dictatorship to democracy in that the transition occurred without bloodshed and without a violent revolution; however, the all-but-complete silence which ensued surrounding Spain's traumatic past undoubtedly played a role in this "easy" transition. Victoria Burnett writes in the *New York Times* that:

Spain's remarkably smooth transition to democracy is often attributed to the fact that — amid the dread of fresh civil conflict — people on both sides of the political spectrum were prepared to close the door on the horrors of the civil war and the dictatorship that followed. There were no truth and reconciliation commissions or war-crimes trials, and many of Franco's military and political allies remained in positions of power. (Burnett)

When Spain transitioned to democracy in 1978, an informal pact of silence was made—reminiscent of Todorov's invocation of the Edict of Nantes, which stated "that the memory of all things that have taken place [...] be extinguished and put to rest, as a thing null and void," (Todorov 169)— in which there would be complete silence surrounding the repression and violence that had existed under Franco.

Franco was signing death warrants for political prisoners even on his deathbed in 1975 (Navarro), and the Amnesty Law, passed in 1977, protected those who had committed or participated in any of the repressive, politically motivated crimes. The pact of silence has continued until recently as the grandchildren of the disappeared, who do not feel a commitment to this rule of silence, seek to find out where their ancestors are buried. Contemporary Spain is an environment that is alive with struggles between memory and forgetting. With the passing of the Law of Historical Memory, debates surrounding national reconciliation, the amnesty law, legal attempts to prosecute those responsible and their subsequent withdrawal, this chapter of Spain's history is very much still open. Navarro writes, "Spain remains the only country where genocide and crimes against humanity remain without sanction. The pact of silence continues" (Navarro).

Marco never outwardly implies that his crusading against totalitarianism is linked to an attempt to come to terms with Spain's own recent history of repression and violence, but, rather, claiming to commemorate the Republican victims of the Nazi horror. However, historically contextualized within post-Franco Spain, it seems impossible not to read Marco's words and actions as commentary, at least in part, on the crimes of the Franco regime and the ensuing silence. The Holocaust, which itself is not necessarily an ideologically charged event, provided a clear metaphor in a country not yet overly saturated with information about the Nazi crimes. Marco's decisión, however, was hardly original. Norman G. Finkelstein points out that while "In and of itself, the Nazi holocaust does not serve a particular political agenda, it can just as easily motivate dissent from as support for Israeli policy" (Finkelstein 41), and that "one is hard-pressed to name a single political cause [...] that hasn't conscripted The Holocaust" (144). Eva Hoffman writes that, "the Holocaust has become the sometimes abstract paradigm of all atrocity, it has also served as a template for the study of analogous events" (164), as in Latin America and Spain, Rwanda, Cambodia, the Armenian genocide, and elsewhere. Hoffman comments that, while the historical events of the Holocaust continue to recede into the past and become an increasingly abstract point of reference for us, our preoccupation with it as a cultural phenomenon continues to increase. Hoffman continues, "In a way, it has become too easy rather than too difficult to feel right, righteous, correct, and compassionate about the Holocaust. It is easy to mistake keening for ourselves for keening for the Shoah" (158). Because of the scope and the singular nature of the event, an ideological association with the victims of the Holocaust is for many an easy claim to a moral high ground. The motivations of an impostor then become, perhaps, more conceivable. Blake Eskin writes:

For better or worse, the mass murder of the Jews of Europe during World War II [...] has become a symbol for all sorts of irreversible losses, individual and collective, big and small. Viewing your own bleak situation as a personal concentration camp or identifying with Anne Frank may sound strange or grandiose to some, but for many individuals the impulse to make such a connection is irresistible. (241)

However, responsibility for the success of someone like Marco should also be shared by the public that identified with him, making his story its own, supporting and nurturing him and giving him substance. What Marco's story makes clear is how dangerously simple it is to identify with the victims of the Holocaust and in turn to convert their pain and their deaths into exploitation. With the degeneration of the Holocaust as a historical event into a cultural phenomenon, it is made inherently more susceptible to trivialization, to an aestheticization of suffering that provides an easy opportunity for empathy with the victims. I agree with Eva Hoffman when she states that the Holocaust,

above all, involved profound suffering; and it seems to me a violation of that suffering to recruit that past to our own purposes. If we are to 'remember' the Holocaust, surely we should do so not through the lens of ideological positioning, but through somber and sober reflection; surely, what is at stake are not our necessarily evanescent political 'issues,' but a regard for the human realities of an awful event, and for the past itself. (Hoffman 170)

Ultimately, we should not pardon Marco for the disservice he has done to the victims of the Holocaust. However, an easy disregard of his invented testimony is also problematic. Rahola, who condemns Marco as an intolerable moral fraud, maintains that he could have fought for memory without having to convert himself into the victim, the personification of the tragedy, but that his false testimony did serve a purpose.

Como fuere, Enric Marco ha formado parte de nuestra conciencia colectiva, forjándonos una memoria que no teníamos, trabajando duro en la recuperación de las víctimas sin nombre. Ha sido durante años la metáfora del horror. Y ha sido también el compromiso de lucha contra el olvido. Por ello ha concentrado nuestros parques homenajes y a través de él hemos intentado un simulacro de justicia con el pasado. (Rahola)

[However we look at it, Enric Marco has formed a part of our collective conscience, forging a memory that we did not have, working diligently for the recovery of the nameless victims. For years, he has been a metaphor of the horror. He has also been the commitment to the struggle against forgetting. For this reason, he has centered our sparse tributes and, through him, we have attempted a simulacrum of justice with the past]. (Rahola)

Although Marco's narrative was invented, he did provide a dissenting voice that served to counteract the official history of silence. Marco states: "Todas las cosas que dije son verdades en boca de un mentiroso. Las he leído y escuchado a otros compañeros. Soy un falsario, un impostor, sí, pero digo grandes verdades" [Everything I have told is truth from the mouth of a liar. They are things I have read or heard from other comrades. I am a falsifier, an impostor, yes, but I tell great truths] (qtd. in Cué 29).

If we agree with Eduardo Pons Prades, who until his death in 2007 was the country's scholarly authority on the subject of Spaniards in the concentration camps, who states:

Remorar el holocausto de los españoles en los campos de exterminio alemanes tiene una doble vertiente: la de informar a las jóvenes generaciones de unos hechos que se desarrollaron en el corazón de Europa, y la de ponerlas en guardia contra una posible reproducción de las circunstancias históricas que generaron unos planes de exterminación.

[There are two aspects to remembering the Holocaust of Spaniards in the German concentration camps: informing the younger generations of certain facts that developed in the heart of Europe, and putting them on guard against a possible reproduction of the historical circumstances that generated the plans of extermination]. (2005, 19)

then Marco's testimony achieved his goals to a certain extent. If indeed the impression that his Holocaust memoir was veridical, Marco succeeded in any case in bringing the Holocaust, an event of such enormity that it by definition requires abstraction and speculation, to an individual level. His narration personalized the Holocaust, especially for the younger generation, further removed from the historical events. Although some authentic survivors ultimately praised Marco for bringing attention to the crimes committed by the Nazis (Biggsby 373), Marco's fraudulent testimony is not above judgment and condemnation, and it should be remembered also as a falsification.

Nevertheless, Marco's testimony does provide a step towards what Ofelia Ferrán calls "working through memory," which, like the literary texts Ferrán studies, rejects a comforting, false sense of closure. It supplied not only a dissenting voice, but also a dissenting memory; because the real Republican survivors of the Nazi camps could not speak out about their experiences during the Franco regime, Marco allowed previously repressed narratives and memories to surface. Even as an invention, Marco's testimony can serve as a reminder of some of the requisite elements Reyes Mate calls for as Spain attempts to come to terms with its painful past and to create a "culture of memory." Marco's narrative provides a step towards the "working through" of a past which rejects closure. It reminds us that the victims of the past are still very much part of the present, that the importance of the witnesses is fundamental. It also gives us an invitation to rethink our own role in the responsibility. Although Marco provides a reminder of the extreme dangers of trivializing the Holocaust through its use as metaphor, his fraudulent testimony can be constructively interpreted as a reflection of a unique moment in contemporary Spanish history as the country deals with its past of trauma. Marco shows us that the past is not past and that history needs to be honest if it is to lead to reconciliation.

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Notes

¹ A note on the bibliography to date by and about Marco: Marco's 1978 testimony was edited by Pons Prades and Constante (1978) and reprinted in Pons Prades (2005). A revised, more recent account of Marco's testimony appeared in Bassa and Ribó (2002), a collaborative project between photographer Jordi Ribó and journalist David Bassa, which brings together testimonies of Catalan survivors of Nazi camps and images of Ribó's portraits of the survivors. Marco is briefly mentioned in Bigsby (2006). Although not much has been published in recent years on Marco, in the aftermath of the 2005 scandal, many journalistic articles were published in Spanish and Catalan about Marco. See particularly Vargas Llosa (2005), Cué (2005) and Rahola (2005).

² For an overview of other cases of Holocaust inventions, see Bigsby (2006) and Finkelstein (2003), chapter two "Hoaxers, Hucksters, and History."

³ We might compare Marco's testimony to *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes*, which, while widely considered a novel, could also be read as a fictional testimonial narrative in which Lázaro tells the story of himself as a child, Lazarillo, his hardships, physical abuse and near death at the hands of his various masters; perhaps also for the recent connection that has been made between *Lazarillo* and Holocaust testimonial literature. Joseph H. Silverman in his essay "The Meaning of Hunger in *Lazarillo de Tormes*," points out: "it is finally appropriate, in these post-Holocaust times, to speak about the meaning of hunger, not so much as a literary motif, but as a tragic and enduringly destructive aspect of human life, portrayed by the anonymous creator with genial, soul searching accuracy" (284). Silverman states that it is other narratives of trauma that have opened his eyes to a new understanding of *Lazarillo*: "Nothing has done more, perhaps, to sensitize me to the profound meaning of hunger in *Lazarillo de Tormes* than [...] the fictional and non-fictional literature of the Holocaust [...] Over and over again, I would find in these books passages that evoked memories of *Lazarillo de Tormes* and the anguished existence he knew in his formative years. And they served to point up, in example after example, the astonishing skill and empathy with which the anonymous author had captured the essence of hunger and its effects on human life" (286). Américo Castro makes the following comments about Lázaro with which we might also read Marco's text: "Ultimately the reality of a literary work lies in its own words, in the way we feel and understand them. Through them we see and interpret the silent and meaningless realm of things" (viii). Castro argues that the real-life picares of sixteenth-century Spain, the vagrants, errand-boys, pick-pockets cannot and should not be equated with Lázaro de Tormes or any other hero of the genre. He writes: "The latter are artistically important not for the fact of being picares but for their unique manner of expressing their consciousness and of envisaging life—their own lives and the world about them. Such data of actual reality as are present only serve as ingredients to build up an artistic, independent, and autonomous

reality” (viii-ix). From this interpretation, Marco’s narrative is no less real due to the fact that it does not represent the actual lived reality of the author; rather it would represent an artistic, independent and autonomous reality. Castro states that if we recognize this distinction in *Lazarillo*, we will be able to penetrate and enjoy the work more deeply. He states, “It cannot be overstressed that the problem of literary reality should be approached from a literary and human point of view, not from that of any quasi-scientific naturalism. Literary reality is, by no means, a tangible thing” (ix). If we simply dismiss Marco’s narrative as a failure of “quasi-scientific naturalism,” we miss its potential and what seems to be the author’s intent; but if we read it as an intangible literary reality, it could be potentially rehabilitated.