

“MUJERES SILENCIOSAS, MUJERES SILENCIADAS”: REALITY AND REPRESENTATION OF THE FEMALE
REPUBLICAN STRUGGLE AGAINST FRANCOIST AND HITLERIAN NATIONALISM WITHIN THE CONTEXT
OF THE “SPANISH REPUBLICAN HOLOCAUST” CULTURAL CORPUS¹

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Mujeres silenciosas
mujeres silenciadas
en pie de guerra permanente
al final del túnel
la libertad robada.

Yo las he visto
levantando barricadas
esquivando el peligro en las fronteras
en la posguerra interminable
donde hicieran falta.

Loquillo, “Mujeres silenciosas, mujeres silenciadas”
Soundtrack to *Mujeres en pie de guerra*, directed by Susana Koska

Desde el advenimiento de la República empezamos a
resquebrajar los moldes arcaicos de nuestra condición.
Aprendimos muchas cosas, a opinar por nosotras mismas, a
buscar los caminos de la justicia social y política. Teníamos que
inventarnos y lo logramos [La] lucha antifascista no [...] pudo
prescindir de nosotras [...] Tuvimos el privilegio de ser iguales.
Neus Catalá, *De la resistencia y la deportación*

The soundtrack to Susana Koska’s 2004 documentary *Mujeres en pie de guerra* features El Loquillo’s musical composition “Mujeres silenciosas, mujeres silenciadas.”² The central message to both the documentary, the soundtrack and the song is that Spanish women who fought against various permutations of Fascism were at times silent because they were silenced; and yet their voices, the echoes of their activism, resound to the present day.

The context of mandated silence and repression within Francoist Spain as well as the cataclysmic 1940s world events throughout Europe and Asia eclipsed the reality of what might have been 25,000 Spaniards deported to Nazi camps.³ The dominant voices, with as ironic as the expression might seem

within the context of repression, of what Eduardo Pons Prades has termed the Spanish Republican Holocaust, have undoubtedly been male voices. Yet, we must recognize that these voices were barely heard, especially on Iberian soil, until the advent of democracy.

The political climate since 1978 (particularly the contemporary milieu) has fomented a historical retrospective which, in turn, makes feasible the corresponding cultural production of current works and dissemination of previously ignored texts. The Law of Historical Memory, signed by King don Juan Carlos and President José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero on December 26, 2007, denounces the grave human rights violations committed in Spain between 1939 and 1975, recognizes “nuestra historia” and fosters democratic memory. It proclaims:

Es la hora, así, de que la democracia española y las generaciones vivas que hoy disfrutan de ella honren y recuperen para siempre a todos los que directamente padecieron las injusticias y agravios producidos, por unos u otros motivos políticos o ideológicos o de creencias religiosas, en aquellos dolorosos períodos de nuestra historia. Desde luego, a quienes perdieron la vida. Con ellos, a sus familias. También a quienes perdieron su libertad, al padecer prisión, deportación, confiscación de sus bienes, trabajos forzados o internamientos en campos de concentración dentro o fuera de nuestras fronteras. También, en fin, a quienes perdieron la patria al ser empujados a un largo, desgarrador y, en tantos casos, irreversible exilio. (Ley de la Memoria Histórica http://leymemoria.mjusticia.es/paginas/es/ley_memoria.html)

Ultimately, the goal of said law is “para evitar que se repitan situaciones de intolerancia y violación de derechos humanos como las entonces vividas” (Ley de la Memoria Histórica http://leymemoria.mjusticia.es/paginas/es/ley_memoria.html).

Key is the concept that the current perception of the past shapes the present and the future. Ramiro Santisteban Castillo, president of the Federación Española de Deportados e Internados Políticos and Mauthausen camp ex-portee, poignantly underlines the significance of Spain’s *Libro Memorial* (2006), a tome that was late coming to fruition when compared to those of other counties whose representative populations were deported to Nazi camps. Santisteban writes,

Que [este libro] venga a ser como colocar un eslabón que faltaba en la cadena de la historia de nuestro país y que sirva para dar fe ante las nuevas generaciones de lo que fueron aquellos hombres y mujeres y de cuál fue su destino. Es cierto que han permanecido olvidados mucho tiempo y que ha sido una larga ausencia, pero ... hoy los españoles comprenderán que ese pasado les pertenece y que también esos que fueron *olvidados* han contribuido a que la España de hoy sea lo que es. (8, emphasis in the original text)

Hence, the phenomenon of Spanish Republican deportees is historically significant—for regaining a voice, breaking silence, combating oblivion, and recovering memory—and the cultural import is astounding.

I will address the small body of growing cultural production regarding the subject of Spaniards deported to Nazi Camps. Furthermore I will speak to the reality and representation of the female Republican fight against Fascism—both Francoist and Hitlerian—and finally will end with the matter of female Spanish Republicans deported to Ravensbrück, specifically two voices of concentrationary survival: that of the well known survivor and public figure Neus Català and that of the less studied Mercè Núñez Targa. Regarding the female Republican fight, various elements must be underscored: the essential dual concept of the gendered struggle as the *defense* of rights for all—including those of women—and the *resistance* against authoritarianism; as well as a curiously *peace-centered* approach to fighting.

One of the first issues I would like you the reader to ponder is when Republicans became the other, when they were stripped of their Spanishness and hence unworthy of rights protection under the laws of New Spain. I would also invite us to consider when women in contemporary Spanish history became resisters, when they were empowered to fight for their rights and the rights of others. If we look for those key moments when these two momentous and diametrically opposed realities began, I encourage you to join me in considering the validity of the following. If looked at from a flatly historical perspective, it could be said that Republicans became the incontrovertible other on August 6, 1940 when the first convoy of Spaniards was deported from Angoulême, France, to the final destination of the Nazi camp in Mauthausen, Austria. Another possible date could be that dastardly day in 1938 when the Patronato de Redención de Penas por el Trabajo forced Republican ex-combatants cum prisoners of war to redeem themselves through hard labor. Yet, I would offer to you that perhaps the stripping of Republicans of their nationality, their citizenry and rights accorded citizens took place with the military uprising that set the Spanish Civil War in motion on July 17, 1936.

Let us briefly contemplate when Twentieth-century women stood up for their rights. I will propose that it was not when they fought on the front lines as *milicianas* in the first months of the Civil War, nor when they were resisters in the French Underground, nor after they were deported to Nazi camps and sabotaged in the munitions factories. I will propose to you, that Spanish women were empowered to fight for their rights and the rights of others when they were accorded rights under the Second Republic. April 14, 1931 marks when Spanish women had a voice and were no longer second class. Yet this governmentally sanctioned empowerment would be short-lived for March 28, 1939 marks the Nationalist so called liberation of Madrid. March 28, 1939 denotes when women were silenced and became non-entities to the New Spanish State. May of 1939 marks a new period in Spanish contemporary history, and decidedly posits Republicans, and particularly Republican women as others.

On May 19, Franco presides over the Nationalist victory parade, and just days later, on May 24, the first bullfight in Madrid, consecrates the national and Nationalist victory at the famed Plaza de Ventas. The bulls artfully slaughtered were symbolic of the supremacy of the supposed true or real Spaniards over the “red beast.” The esthetic carnage must be viewed as a metaphor for dominating the other, for slaying the Republic.

The Context of the “Spanish Republican Holocaust”⁴ Cultural Corpus

In this essay, I will speak to the reality and representation of individuals who made up a collective that went from being empowered to being powerless, who gained a voice with the Republic yet were silenced first by Francoist nationalism and subsequently by Hitlerian national-socialism. The authors, filmmakers and creators participate in what Jacques Derridà (*Spectres of Marx*) has termed *hauntologie*.⁵ If the past is a ghost story that continues to haunt in the present, then Joaquim Amat-Piniella, Jorge Semprún, Mercè Rodoreda, Montserrat Roig, Neus Català, Mercè Núñez Targa, Fernando Trueba, Héctor Faver, Susana Koska,⁶ among others, seek out the ever-present yet elusive “ghost” of Republican deportees to Nazi camps in order to face, understand and exorcise it. In so doing, their works reconcile the present with the nationalist-Fascist past.

These works of poetry, narrative, testimonial, photography and film from the 1940s until the first decade of our century link Spaniards to Nazism and genocide. The fact that a cultural corpus exists proves that the Spanish Republican Holocaust has found its niche in the collective cultural imaginary. The works that I study denounce a totalitarian past and privilege, hence vindicate, the Republic, both its ideals and people—in extraordinary spaces and times: I refer to the Iberian soil of New Spain, the France of the refugees and exile, the German and Austrian camps of concentrationary deportation.⁷

Although in May 2005, President Rodríguez Zapatero presided over one of the events at Mauthausen for the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the camp, commemorating and *officially* recognizing the Spanish presence in the Nazi camp, little has been done to truly raise consciousness. Zapatero has stated that memory is the best means of carrying out justice. Spain is still grappling with recovering the democratic memory, Republican undercurrents and clandestine movements during Franco’s regime, not to mention re-viewing and setting right the persecution and injustice during the Regime on Iberian soil. In spite of being eclipsed by events in Spain such as the unearthing of mass graves, identifying the victims of Franco’s mass executions, and providing remuneration and justice to the victims’ families, as well as revisiting sham trials and clearing the names of Republican so called “criminals,” the Republican *concentrationary* past is also a most pressing matter. This past must be faced in order to reconcile it with the present, in order to exorcise the “hauntological” ghost of thousands of Republican Spaniards deported to Nazi camps, for having been considered stateless—political orphans—by Franco’s Spain, previously the geographical locus they had once called home. This subject

matter is not solely a previously suppressed part of history, but rather it has become a recurring theme that pervades all fields of cultural production and, hence, must become an established area of Spanish Cultural Studies.

We are all familiar with Pablo Picasso's *Guernica* that has, in the abstract, become synonymous with the protest against authoritarian violence, and, in particular, denounced the bloodbath that resulted from Nazi-Nationalist collaboration in April 1937. A lesser known work, also by Picasso, housed at Madrid's Centro de Arte Reina Sofia titled *Les espagnols morts pour la France* (1945) also protests German Fascism as evident in the insignia of the skull and tibias; yet in addition, it memorializes the Republicans who fought in the Resistance.

But how could Spaniards exiled in France following the *Retirada* be deported to Nazi camps when Germany and Spain since the late 30s were allies? The hegemonic forces justified their deportation by labeling the Republicans "un-Spanish." As "non-Spaniards" they had no country—neither in the geographic nor political sense. These "countryless" (*apátridas*) individuals were orphaned: without a space to turn to, without a government to protect them. Feminist, activist and researcher committed to unearthing the truth Montserrat Roig interviewed Ramón Serrano Suñer for her 1977 publication *Catalonians in Nazi Camps*. Serrano Suñer, minister of foreign affairs and Franco's brother-in-law, in his memoirs feigns ignorance regarding Nazi genocide and, when interviewed by Roig, denies having an active role in displacing civilian Spaniards to Nazi Camps. Nonetheless, he affirmed his admiration for the Nazis. *Arriba*, the official publication and voice of the Falange, in the September 26, 1940, issue applauds the meeting with Hitler on its front page with the headline "Serrano Suñer se entrevistó ayer con Hitler" (Bermejo 57). Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis, in *The convoy of 9278* (2007) showcase the irrefutable proof of Serrano Suñer's responsibility and culpability when, on July 9, 1940, through his undersecretary replies to the Spanish ambassador in Paris regarding the Republican refugee situation: "cuando, en plazo breve, tengamos la certeza de que han sido repatriados todos aquellos que convengan, nos desinteresaríamos de los restantes" (Armengou y Belis 255). In *Mauthausen, the Horror of the Danube*, David Wingate Pike distributes the accountability and affirms that Spanish prisoners of war were transported to the Austrian camp because "first, ... no government (Franco's, Pétain's, or Hitler's) cared whether they lived or died; ... second, because the camp where they were sent was designed as the worst of all Nazi Germany" (Pike xii).

The record at Mauthausen of 7,186 Spaniards does not take into account those who arrived dead, were murdered on route, or were immediately transported to the crematorium without being assigned a number (Pike 12-13). Ninety percent of Spanish deportees were deported to Mauthausen, and, at one point, Spaniards constituted 60 percent of its inmates. Hence, this infamous Austrian camp will be eternally linked to the Republican cause (Pike 30).

Below I would like to comment on various documents from the Civil War Archive in Salamanca that elucidate the precarious situation of the refugees who were soon to be deported. The Nationalists openly refused any reconciliation of differences. Franco communicated his vengeful ideas to British correspondent James Miller on Nov. 7, 1938. The general declares, “There will be no mediation [between Nationalists and Republicans], because criminals and their victims cannot live together...I believe in redemption through the penalty of labour...We have more than two million persons indexed with proofs of their crimes, names and witnesses. Those who are granted an amnesty are demoralized” (n.p., Archivo General de la Guerra Civil, English original).

The Nationalist perspective (or perhaps mythification, justification or rationalization), as evidenced in the July 24, 1936, issue of the right-wing periodical *Heraldo de Aragón*, depicts the war as “el movimiento patriótico salvador de España” (1, Archivo General de la Guerra Civil). This unbending posture rules out the possibility of negotiation and an exchange of ideas. It is precisely to this ideological climate that suppressed any glimmer of difference or straying from the mandated norm, that the works by Francesc Boix, Joaquim Amat-Piniella, Jorge Semprún, Montserrat Roig, Neus Català, Mercè Núñez Targa, Mercè Rodoreda, Héctor Faver and Fernando Trueba respond.

My chosen texts can be divided into the products of first-hand concentrationary experience and fictionalized accounts. The works are committed to reconciliation, to the idea of acknowledging the past, vindicating history’s losers, seeking justice, and deterring future genocide. These works explore the historical phenomenon of deportation—that political orphanhood—that made extermination possible, and communicate an experience that is at once singular and plural, unique and universal, individual and collective. The universality is rooted in the orphanhood orchestrated by nefarious hegemonic forces. By highlighting the human connection—be it fraternal or maternal—the condition of orphan is faced and overcome, while denouncing the system that severed and devalued human ties. A symbiotic symbolic order, a worldview that fosters reciprocity and kindness, is offered as an alternative—not antithesis—to a phallic symbolic order that structures experience, desires and fears according to a violent hierarchy.

The first voice that breaks the silence regarding Spaniards in Nazi Camps is that of the photographer Francesc Boix⁹ who confiscated hundreds of images from the Mauthausen photography lab and photographed the liberation. Boix’s images, published in the French communist press in the summer of 1945, as well as his testimony at the Nuremberg trials (as the only Spaniard to testify), bear witness and give voice to those silenced, victimized and repressed by totalitarianism. His photo of the Republicans in the days of liberation before the signs proclaiming the socialist youth’s victory and mission to “crush Franco” attests to Boix and his colleagues’ youthful idealism. Little did they know that Franco would rule nearly 40 years.

Former Mauthausen inmate Joaquim Amat Piniella¹⁰, as a man of letters and ideas, has left behind a treasure trove of poetry, narrative, and correspondence now housed at the Manresa Archive. As

an intellectual of his time and a survivor of a death camp, Amat was certainly affected by existentialism. In a fashion not unlike the greatest exponent of Spanish existentialism, Miguel de Unamuno, Amat also vacillates between reason and faith—or at least between the symbols of Christian metaphysics and the unwavering love in the face of heinous adversity. Amat’s poetry and narrative fuse superficial, cultural Christian elements with Sartrean anguish and abandonment that lead to a sense of personal responsibility and duty to fellow human beings.

Renowned author Jorge Semprún revisits and reconstructs his concentrationary past in *Literature or Life*. In spite of the Buchenwald experience as a discursive foundation, this memorialistic literary work should not be considered either pure narrative or memoirs. The author blurs the boundaries between historical memory and literary re-creation. Semprún underscores that History (capitalized) is more real when humanized, when imparted through a creative artifice. Semprún weaves his tale from the linguistic and literary threads of great writers such as Baudelaire, Malraux, Kant, Aragon, among others in order to question human perception of existence. Like Amat-Piniella, Semprún drives home that the value of living lies in fraternal bonds of solidarity.

The following works are the product of the authors’ and filmmakers’ engagement with moral issues as evident in and can be extrapolated from Nazi genocide: Mercè Rodoreda’s short story “Night and Fog” portrays death as a feminine space, a gendered refuge in the face of cruelty, adversity and aggression inherent in a violent hierarchy, elucidated by feminist psychoanalytic theories on the phallic stage. The first person narrative follows the trajectory of an anonymous concentration camp deportee whose utmost desire is to surrender to the uterine refuge of death that he orchestrates. “Night and Fog” weaves in and out of various pasts, an achronic itinerary that lands the protagonist-narrator in a camp longing for the only humanized solace he can muster. Hence, Death, feminized, provides womb-like shelter in a metaphorical amniotic limbo where suffering fades to oblivion.¹¹

Antonio Muñoz Molina’s *Sefarad*, a novel of novellas, showcases marginality, displacement and the futile search for belonging. Its forty-page narrative tale “Oh you who knew” contextualizes various diasporas of Hispanic Jewry, the most salient of which is the 1492 expulsion of the Sephardics from the Iberian Peninsula. The novella departs from a 20th century phenomenon—the conceding of Spanish citizenship to Hungarian Sephardic Jews, descendants of those expelled four and a half centuries earlier. The plot initiates in Hungary where the mother and sister of the protagonist Isaac Salama are seized and transported to an extermination camp. Isaac’s literal and metaphoric itinerary on cars, boats, trains takes him everywhere and nowhere, finally to reside in Tangiers as a self-marginalized cripple denying his Jewishness while guarding his Spanish (not Hungarian) identity as dearly as the memorabilia cluttering his office at the Cervantes Institute.

Even Manuel Rivas’ 1998 novel *El lápiz del carpintero* in what appears to be in passing alludes to the Nazi-*nacional* complicity on various occasions. In fact the catalyst for the plot stems directly from a

Nazi, a minor character whose home is the target of boyish games. When the young son of a painter of Republican posters, while playing with his friends, breaks the window of the German teacher's home, the boy's father honorably has him admit to his action. As a result, the painter, owner of the carpenter's pencil, is imprisoned. The third person omniscient narrative voice that paints images and scenes of bellum and post-bellum Galician prisons is intercalated with that of Herbal, a Nationalist guard and *paseador*.¹² Having executed the painter he respected and having kept his carpenter's pencil as a trophy, Herbal watches over Dr. Daniel Da Barca, prisoner, resistant and Republican leader. Herbal learns about life and dignity while listening to Da Barca's theories on intelligent reality, a concept that our actions, no matter how seemingly insignificant, do in fact resonate deeply on others. Herbal's moral conflicts are personified by two voices: that of the defunct painter, perched on the young guard's ear in the form of his pencil, who underscores that justice and beauty are not necessarily protected or fomented by those in power; and that of the Ironman, the angry, aggressive drive to snuff out all that is meaningful, be it beauty or life or the two as they conflate. Rivas' leit motif of phantasm pain, that ache emanating from an absent, amputated, no longer present limb, metaphorizes Derridian *hauntologie*. An absent, previously throbbing extremity, continues to haunt and to occupy psychic space for the wounded, just as the deceased painter haunts Herbal's conscience. The present is imbued with painful memories that must be reconciled with the moment they were created. In this vein, in the latter chapters, the omniscient narrator references the immediate post-war press toasting to the meetings between high ranking Nationalist and national-socialist officials.

Héctor Faver's 1991 film *Memory of Water*, funded by the Catalan institute of cinematography, interweaves a fictional survivor autobiography with documentary footage of the camps, while it fuses the filmic genre with artistic and poetic elements in order to create a hybrid work whose contradictions force the viewer to intellectualize the tension between the voices and images on the screen. The protagonist Joseph's narrativized recounting overlaps with two feminine voices—a voice over of his deceased wife writing her diary in Yiddish and his daughter's diatribe in French. This personal and subjective orality subverts the mute, historical images of the camps. Although produced 45 years after the Holocaust, the film highlights that anti-Semitism is not obsolete, as Faver intercalated footage of the May 1990 desecration of the Jewish cemetery in the city of Carpentras, home to France's oldest synagogue.¹³

Fernando Trueba's *The Girl of Your Dreams* parodies the cultural and political nationalism evident in *españoladas*, Andalusian-themed musicals of the 30s and 40s that propagate traditional values. With its multi-layered exponential metacinema, the film draws from the real-life 1939 Spanish-German co-production *Carmen la de Triana* (directed by Florián Rey and starring Imperio Argentina), whose plot transforms the figure of Carmen from the exotic Spanish gypsy, creation of the French gaze—evident in Merimée's 1845 novel and Bizet's 1875 opera—, into a national purportedly truly Spanish representation of national identity and values in the 20th Century. Trueba also directs a post-modern nod to two

Hollywood productions that applaud *résistance* against Nazism: to wit, the melodrama *Casablanca* and Ernst Lubisch's comedy *To Be or Not to Be*. The conclusion of *The Girl of Your Dreams*, with the protagonist Macarena fleeing from Nazi persecution with her Jewish concentration camp escapee lover, clearly favors Hollywood's take. Hence, Trueba invites the mass consumers of celluloid to interpret the link between cultural national identity and political nationalism.¹⁴

In spite of the differences of genre and cultural category, the aforementioned works are unified by the flat rejection of all permutations of Fascism that further cements the Republican ideals of symbiotic solidarity and hope for humanity.

“Mujeres silenciosas, mujeres silenciadas”: Reality and Representation of the Female Republican Struggle against Francoist and Hitlerian Nationalism

I would like to begin the second portion of this essay by showcasing the concept of *voice* and by underscoring that having a say is linked to the construct of belonging. Without a voice in one's own governance, one is but chattel. Femaleness—whether it is of an individual or a group—intensifies otherness. If the fight for women's rights is part and parcel of the fight for human rights, then the issue of citizenship must come to the forefront. If citizenship connotes having a voice and a vote, then we must recall that the Republic provided a voice to all (regardless of class, ideology or gender). Therefore, if once Franco came to power, Republicans were nullified and deemed non-Spaniards; we must contemplate the legal and de facto status of *female* Republicans.

Virginia Woolf could never have known that her 1937 epistolary essay *Three Guineas*-- which she began writing precisely because of her outrage regarding the Spanish Civil War--would be considered the foundation for feminist approaches to war. The British author affirms, “As a woman, I have no country. As a woman, I want no country. As a woman, my country is the whole world” (129). Hence, Woolf denounced the phallocentrism and patriarchy inherent in nationalisms and looked to an internationalist approach to feminism. Gender, for Woolf, conflates with Marxism—in that one must organize in her own class—and posits Fascism, national supremacy and war-mongering as distinctly “masculine.” Adolf Hitler, in his August 11, 1935, speech would agree: “I am convinced that nobody in the world can attack our Reich again. We want peace and reconstruction, but just as we want peace so the other nations ought to want peace. He who wishes to disturb our peace will no longer fight against a nation of pacifists but against a nation of men” (in Woolf). The juxtaposition of Woolf's quote with Hitler's clearly underscores the underlying levels of their disparate gendered approaches to political belonging. While Woolf's gynocentric lens magnifies human commonality regardless of imaginary geo-political lines, Hitler's phallocentrism not only negates the meaning of peace, but clearly equates war (as a supreme premise) with male (not simply masculine) superiority over the weak—pseudo-female—feminized pacifists. These two visibly gendered symbolic orders, that are at opposite ends of the continuum, shed light on the fact

that political belonging is rooted in psychic space: for Hitler it is linked to his view of claiming territory; for Woolf it goes beyond borders, for the connection is social, i.e. based on human commonality.

As Jodi York states in her study “The Truth about Women on Peace,”

All wars are fought against the weak, the different and the ‘other’ –all of which are symbolically women. War and militarism must be stopped if women, and those associated with them—the weak, the very young and very old, the poor, those of ‘wrong’ color—are to change their situation. War with its necessary death, misogyny, homophobia, and economic inequities, provides a primary impediment to women’s equality in the world. If women cannot have equality, no one can. (24)

While feminism and republicanism underscore the human connection and, as such, are internationalist approaches that value life; nationalism propagates a false sense of unity by mythifying the concept of the great Nation to which life should be sacrificed.

When Woolf composed the essay as the Spanish Civil War raged, it is fair to say that the latter half of the 30s was rife with competing political agendas and ideologies. On one end of the spectrum stood Nationalism and Fascism as evident in Hitler’s Reich, Mussolini’s Italy and Franco’s soon to be New Spain. On the other end were communism, socialism and anarchism. As the Victoria Abril character Floren states in Vicente Aranda’s 1996 film on the female militia during the Spanish Civil War, *Libertarias*, “I am an anarchist because I believe the individual is everything and the state nothing.” It is precisely because of times that focus on individual rights and freedoms—that include the entirety of the human population, not only half of it—that history has witnessed certain waves of women’s engagement and political commitment. Because the Republic had accorded equal rights to women and had nullified patriarchal underpinnings (divorce was legalized, as was civil marriage, women had the right to vote, education, work opportunities beyond “female” professions), women were active in the Republic and fought (literally took up arms on the battlefield) for their country, their state, their home that was the Republic. Let us keep in mind that Republican women fought because they could feel a sense of patriotism, of duty to a governmental entity housed in a geographic space that considered them as worthy, that counted them as individuals. If we ponder Woolf’s query, “What does ‘our country’ mean to me [a woman] an outsider?” it becomes clear that at very few moments of history has “our country” truly connoted “legal protection which the law has given her [woman/women] in the past and now gives her” (127).

So, when half a million Republican Spaniards went into exile and became refugees in the winter of 1938/39, the Francoist government claimed that they “were not Spaniards” and “had no country.” Therefore, not only were these Spaniards stateless and, hence, disposable and expendable as evident in the French concentration/refugee camps and later deportation of thousands of them to Nazi

extermination camps; but the women were doubly stateless. Had they returned to Spain, had they repatriated, as women their rights had already been nullified by the government of New Spain.

In *El feminismo ibérico*, María Aurèlia Capmany cites an article by Teresa Pons from the journal *Emancipación* that conveys the feminist thinking that predated the war:¹⁵

La revolución es nuestro camino, y que solamente en un régimen socialista veremos realizados nuestro anhelo de emancipación con el reconocimiento efectivo de nuestros derechos, con la cultura y la organización del trabajo. Siendo considerada la mujer igual al hombre, desaparecerá la sumisión...La revolución abre ante nosotras un camino lleno de esperanzas. Luchemos pues por la revolución, que es luchar por la liberación total de nuestro sexo. La sociedad no podrá ser perfecta ...hasta que no haya desaparecido de nosotros este espíritu de inferioridad. (Capmany 150)

The spirit of inferiority did seem to disappear during the Republic and women's involvement in the Civil War if considering pronounced female figures such as director (and modernizer) of prisons Victoria Kent, orator Dolores Ibárruri, philosopher María Zambrano, early feminist writer and political figure Margarita Nelken and renowned writer, collaborator of the Guerrillas del Teatro and individual charged with evacuating artistic masterpieces from the Prado María Teresa León.

Within history, when women's voices are not the ventriloquism of war-faring masculine voices, they tend to privilege the human bond, the needs of others and the well-being of a collective, of all. When discussing a feminist approach to war, we must understand that feminism recognizes and deconstructs existing power structures that favor a select group and are rooted in privilege.

Laura Duhan Kaplan observes that throughout history women's wartime roles as caretakers constitute an archetype that in fact upholds patriarchal militarism. Hence, "nurses, prostitutes, primary school teachers who glorify war, and patriotic mothers who raise their sons to be soldiers" all provide support for the war system (Kaplan 130, York 22). This is why the *milicianas* those few months from mid summer to early fall of 1936 were truly revolutionary. They had ceased to be auxiliaries and refused to believe that they were reduced to reproductive vessels that rendered cannon fodder, sons who would gladly lay down their lives. Because the Republic was based on equality—regardless of socio-economic class, gender or ideals—Republican women literally took up arms against Fascism, against a way of thinking that stripped them and others of their rights. They did not fight because their ideology was based on the premise of war (as evident in militaristic political approaches such as fascism). They fought for a collective quality of life that, ironically, included peace.

So Republican women like Neus Català and Mercè Núñez Targa were women who fought against dehumanization and abuses and power. If held under scrutiny, let us consider that socialism, communism and anarchism, in theory, undermine an absolutist approach to government. In theory, they discredit hierarchical power-mongering, and instead attest to the belief that governance is the reflection

of the will of a collective. These same tenets are the foundation for the various permutations of feminism, where abuses of power are denounced for being the result of a hierarchical worldview that deems the select few as superior to the lower strata whom they should dominate. Hence, if we look at the Republic and what it stood for, we see that all mattered, all were deemed worthy of rights, consideration and protection—not privilege—under the law. All had a say as part of a collective. This is clearly the case in feminist thinking, where supremacy falls outside of its ideological parameters and there is a perpetual denunciation of inequality, and imbalance of power that leads to the abuses. Feminism/s purport/s the constant struggle for equanimity.

Therefore, it is not surprising, rather it should have been foreseeable, given the conditions afforded by the Republic, that Republican women were sure in their rights, and had the conviction to participate in and fight for the common good which included their own. The Republic for women meant having a voice. Republicanism which confers rights and protection to all (including women) cannot/could not coexist with Fascism. Fascism, is undeniably androcentric and andronormative (meaning male as the standard, as the center of experience and symbolic order) and patriarchal (meaning structured hierarchically in the masculine). Fascism excluded women from power, relegated them to be auxiliaries or objects. The war, dictatorship within Spain, refugee status in France and Nazi occupation during exile all gagged Republicans; but women, because of their gender, were doubly silenced, doubly marginalized and considered truly powerless and insignificant. Yet those who internalized a sense of worth, those who felt that they continued to have a voice, refused to accept a passive role, a muted existence. It is about these women and representations of such that I write.

Vicente Aranda's 1996 film *Libertarias* (female freedom fighters) features a gallery of female characters that span the gamut of socio-economic strata, ages, interests and female professions only to be unified by, as the title indicates, their fight for freedom. The plot begins at the onset of the War when a group of anarchist *libertarias* liberates a brothel and recruits the prostitutes. A young nun also (initially unwittingly) joins the militiawomen. These newly recruited freedom fighters are no longer subjected to literal and metaphoric phallogentrism as their itinerary takes them from the brothel and convent to the battlefield to fight for their rights and those of others. Yet, the film concludes with the silencing of all as evident in the penultimate sequence described below.

On the front lines, several militiamen bring a lamb to roast, yet all the militiawomen protest. The gallery of female characters, María the ingénue and convent novice (Ariadna Gil), Pilar the leader (Ana Belén), Floren the cripple (Victoria Abril) and Charo the prostitute (Loles León) identify with the young animal. This innocent to be sacrificed, not unlike a Pascal lamb, foreshadows a lugubrious end. María flees and seeks asylum in a nearby stable. Through her naïve eyes the viewer has learned of the Republic, anarchism and fighting for rights—be they human rights or particularly women's rights. The screams María hears are ironic for both the viewer and María who believe it is the lamb squealing as it is

sacrificed. Yet to Maria and the viewer's horror, as becomes evident through the elevated vent grasped by bloody hands, those being sacrificed are María's comrades. A Moorish soldier, assaulting on behalf of the nationalists, slices Charo's wrists before gruesomely slitting her throat as María looks on, paralyzed in fear.

Another Moorish troop erupts into the stable, dragging Floren, bites off her ear and, after a bitter and bloody struggle, pierces her chest with a dagger. The final blow comes when María is raped as a knife is pressed on her mouth preventing her from screaming or moving without further severing the oral cavity. This scene proves most revealing when considering not only the violence perpetrated but also the symbolism of each body part brutalized. Charo's hands, slit at the wrist, are the first onslaught. Hands represent power, usefulness and productivity within society; the violence against them signifies that the owner—and all that she represents—have been rendered powerless and impotent. The slicing of the throat mimics the slaughter of an animal, such as the lamb that would have been the evening's feast. Hence, Charo representative of the group of militiamen and militiawomen, had been reduced to meat, carnage upon which, hopefully, meaning will be conferred. Floren, a spiritist, who throughout the film had channeled the spirits of dead Republicans, represents the spirit and the voice of the vigorous Republic that (appears to) meet/s a violent end as she is pierced through the heart. Of course, the assault on María poignantly communicates the loss of innocence and silencing of a future rife with promise. The final sequence that takes place in a makeshift prison brimming over with wounded drives home the powerlessness of the Republic, Republicans and particularly female Republicans, as Pilar, the wise leader, recruiter of the *libertarias* and María's mother figure lies in a cell with her throat sliced from ear to ear, sacrificed, voiceless. Pilar, thus, represents the silencing of women by the new hegemonic order.

Let us briefly consider the plight of Republican women who remained on Iberian soil following the Nationalist victory. One particular space will forever be associated with the female Republican cause during the immediate Francoist regime: Ventas women's prison in Madrid. This model edifice and institution built under the direction of Victoria Kent worked toward one goal: social integration. Ventas' purpose had never been punishment, but rather rehabilitation. Its interns were not prisoners—at least not until the late spring of 1939 when Madrid's population increased by 200,000 Nationalist troops whose primary goal was to secure the capital, to ferret out dissidence and rebellion—or what today is termed insurgency—before Franco, the General of Generals, could take over.

Regarding Ventas and the role of Republican women, several works reflect and circumscribe the gendered reality of Nationalist oppression and persecution. The first work is Dulce Chacón's 2002 novel *La voz dormida* (the sleeping voice, the dormant voice) whose plot takes place within the walls of Ventas prison, with a view of Madrid's bullring as a constant reminder that the brave, strong and noble creatures to be sacrificed under the guise of pomp and circumstance are Chacon's characters, whose experiences overtly reflect those of the myriad women in that stifling hot summer of 1939—like those of the thirteen

roses—thirteen Republican female minors executed by the Nationalists for the trumped up charge of “rebellion.” What stands out about Chacon’s gallery of characters is their youth, their interconnectedness and their social bonds—for they are sisters, daughters, mothers, wives and friends whose intentions and actions reflect both an ethic of care and the fight for what is just.

Carlos Fonseca’s historical research tome *Trece rosas rojas*, named after the thirteen Republican women executed by the Nationalist victors on August 5, 1939, provides a detailed, factual, in-depth look at the summer following the defeat of the Republic that led to mass trials, executions and incarcerations, not to mention a most shameful superlative, a black spot in twentieth century Spanish history: the sham trial that led to the most prolific execution of women in Spain’s history. The thirteen red roses are now part of the popular imaginary as evident in Jesús Ferrero’s 2003 novel, Emilio Martínez-Lázaro’s 2007 fictional film, a five part documentary, and a plaque honoring them in Madrid’s Almudena cemetery that reads “Las jóvenes llamadas ‘Las Trece Rosas’ dieron aquí su vida por la libertad y la democracia el día 5 de agosto de 1939. El pueblo de Madrid recuerda su sacrificio el día 5 de agosto de 1988.”

I would like all of us to think back what the final months of the war must have been like for Spaniards, Republicans, and women in particular, who remained on Iberian soil as the new military government made its claim on the land it claimed to be saving from the “red beast.” The thirteen red roses could not have been viewed as posing any danger to the winners. Many were organized and, hence, resistant, but given the winners’ sexist, phallogenic, gendered, misogynistic view, women were incapable of posing any real threat. Therefore, the point of imprisonment was simply to exert power and to strike fear in the hearts of the defeated.

Of course, all that took place during the first months and years of Franco’s Spain contradicted the Nationalist motto of *la Nueva España*: “Una, Grande y Libre.” There was no unity, or there would not have been round-ups, sham “sumarísimos procesos de urgencia” (emergency expedited trials) that resulted in immediate incarceration and in many cases no stay of execution. Yet the mockery of justice was based on one of many charges that were reduced to one: rebellion. This travesty of justice was carried daily at the Plaza de Salesas by the “so called” Liberation Army--an Orwellian double-speak if ever there was one.¹⁶

In June of 1939, Carmen Castro, director of the women’s prison of Ventas, had informed the inmates that “whoever spills blood shall die with blood.” Castro’s primitive, eye-for-an-eye approach to law is a ventriloquist echo of the vengeful, perverted Christian doctrine peppered throughout Fascist rhetoric. Clearly, New Spain, and especially in the early months following the defeat, was not humane. The irony of the Ventas warden’s philosophical bent on justice is that the execution of the thirteen red roses was unjust, for not one of them had been involved in any act of violence.

So although these young women were institutionally snuffed out, the memory of them persists. We remember the thirteen red roses: Carmen Barrero Aguado, Martina Barroso García, Blanca Brisac

Vázquez, Pilar Bueno Ibáñez, Julia Conesa Conesa, Adelaida García Casillas, Elena Gil Olaya, Virtudes González García, Ana López Gallego, Joaquina López Laffite, Dionisia Manzanero Salas, Victoria Muñoz García and Luisa Rodríguez de la Fuente. We know that their execution marked a dark day in Spanish contemporary history when the systematic stripping of rights, when the state sanctioned accusation of “unpatriotic” and “traitorous” truly stood for another concept: non-Spanish or un-Spanish. It is precisely this Nationalist concept of the domestic enemy that deemed all Republicans whether on Iberian soil or elsewhere, most especially combatants, as stateless—without rights and without protection under the laws of New Spain. Within Spain itself, this connotes the Patronato de Redención de Penas por el Trabajo inaugurated in 1938 during the war by the Nationalists. These work camps, a much lighter version of Nazi concentration camps, were an environment for political prisoners to cleanse themselves, convert ideologically and redeem themselves through hard labor as if it were a political purgatory.

If we look through the lens of women’s history, what is clear is that in spite of the Nationalist rhetoric that idealized women as saintly mothers modeled after the Virgin Mary herself, innocent virgins in the flower of their youth and angels of the hearth who float about the domestic sphere, the harsh reality boiled down to the fact that “reds,” regardless of gender, could be summarily executed pursuant to a farce of a trial. It is no wonder that refugee Republicans, including women, took part in the French Resistance, viewing it as an extension of the fight for their homeland, a fight that they believed would soon be won.

For her recent documentary project *Mujeres en pie de guerra* Susana Koska interviewed eight Spanish women who fought against Fascism: they are Sara Berenguer, María Salvo, Rosa Díaz, Rosa Laviña, Neus Català, Teresa Buigas and Carme and Merçona Puig-Antich. I will only address the four who were actively involved in post-Civil War exile and resistance.

Sara Berenguer was a member of Solidaridad Internacional Antifascista, propaganda secretary for Mujeres Libres, exiled in 1938 and active in the French Underground. When asked why she was so active, even when in the late stages of pregnancy and carrying a toddler, her response was that “La mujer podía defender su trabajo” and that women were “a la altura del hombre.” Berenguer’s activism and resistance were very human-centered. Her home was safe house. She established a network of safe spaces where refugees and resisters could seek shelter and pass information or documents.

María Salvo was a member of the JSU (Socialist/Communist Youth Organization), exiled in France in 1939. When she was forced to repatriate, Salvo joined the anti-Fascist fight, was arrested and spent 16 years in different Francoist prisons. Salvo’s description of postwar Barcelona is “a Dantesque vision” as the jails were brimming over and executions were a constant daily event. Her account of the Ventas prison in Madrid is heart-wrenching due to the inhumane conditions, the interrogations, the brutal beatings and the gendered humiliations. Yet, her story is also most uplifting for she presents to the

viewer the solidarity, friendship and kindness as well as the collective struggle to organize and fight against Fascism. She states proudly “En Ventas ya había un trabajo político...La lucha no había terminado.” She claims how she and her fellow inmates were proud of being political prisoners: “Teníamos la fuerza de la razón.” While jailed in Segovia, she declares it was “una escuela de capacitación política.” The most patent organization was communism. In fact, as was not uncommon under carceral conditions, the inmates wrote, edited and circulated by hand a communist paper. Hence incarceration fanned the flames of hope. Salvo states that the war had clearly constituted a time of change for women because “social difference had disappeared.”

Rosa Laviña was involved with the International Anti-Fascist Solidarity, is exiled in France in 1939, and interned at the refugee camp at Argelès. Laviña states that she carried out her fight without violence. Like many female resisters, she functioned as a liaison, and passed information, believing her resistance against Fascism in France an extension of the fight in Spain that would soon lead to returning to the home she had known. She states, “Cuando nos marchamos nunca pensamos que estaríamos tantos años fuera.”

Neus Català was a militant in the JSU, exiled in France in 1939, exceptionally active in the Resistance, detained by the Gestapo, interned in Ravensbruck. Català is without a doubt the most pronounced voice of the female Republican Catalonian concentrationary experience and is emphatic about her resistance: “No dejarse morir era un acto de Resistencia”. When asked how she felt after the Nazi defeat was evident, Neus answers that neither then (in 1945) nor at the moment of the interview in 2003 did she feel liberated: “No me sentiré liberada mientras no haya paz en el mundo.”

Català’s approach to peace and its counterpart war is distinctly feminist. In her study of women’s peace camps (in the 1980s), Jodi York has concluded that these camps were designed around what she terms “female” organizational structure that emphasized decision-making by consensus, task sharing, and, fundamentally, a rejection of hierarchy (York 21). We see these same traits in female testimonials and particularly in Català. Feminism is not an inversion of patriarchy, meaning that feminism does *not* replace a phallogocentric hierarchy with another hierarchy. Rather feminism dismantles and subverts thinking that privileges what society deems/labels as male or masculine: such as aggression, winning, beating the other. By dehierarchizing the paradigm, feminist approaches deinferiorize concepts such as caring, tolerating an other or tending to a need.

Feminist approaches to war vary greatly. On one end of the spectrum, some liberal feminists promote women’s right to be on the front lines; on the other end of the spectrum other feminists posit that war is a “masculine endeavor,” that war must be rejected and that peace must be worked toward (Carter 33).

What is certain is that militarism is patriarchal and phallogocentric, as such its underlying structure is that of a violent hierarchy of binary oppositions. The good versus the bad; us vs. the enemy, the

stronger vs. the weaker, the superior vs. the inferior. Of all ideologies, Fascism is particularly gendered and misogynistic. For as April Carter claims, it “exalts [manly] warrior values—relegates women to their homes and their warriors beds” (Carter 35). Spanish Republican women fought Fascism—regardless of its permutation. Evident in all the (fictional and factual) cases looked at to this point is that these women were involved, active, in war but not to conquer, not to nullify the other, not to dehumanize the other side; rather, the underlying dual concept in the female Republican fight is the *defense* of rights for all—including those of women-- and the *resistance* against authoritarianism. Even certain peace-centered feminists such as Jean Bethke Elstain argue that “women should as citizens play a role in just wars” (Carter 36). This is exactly what Neus Català, Mercè Núñez Targa and Republican female resisters have done. By studying them and their role in history we are contributing to gender-sensitive research that, as Spike Peterson argues, “both ‘deconstructs’ andro-centric (male-as-norm) accounts by locating ‘invisible’ women and incorporating women’s experiences and perspectives in the study of humankind and ‘reconstructs’ them—by rethinking relationships of knowledge, power, community and developing feminist epistemologies” (48). When studying Republican women’s anti-Fascist struggle, we must not only acknowledge their contributions to history, but also must understand their approach to war as curiously peace-centered, human and humanitarian.

In her introduction to *Regarding Resistance and Deportation* (1984, reedited in 2000), Neus Català addresses her explicit narratee as “lector amigo,” “friendly reader” or “reader friend” from a first person plural point of view. Català posits, “Why do we address you, friendly reader, after seven decades? Why not sooner? Why now? Because many emulators of Fascism and millions nostalgic for a certain past are presently running loose throughout the world ([in spite of the fact that] civilized peoples thought [them] debilitated for ever)” (Català 20). Català goes on to make explicit her suspicion of the technological advances in armament and the sophisticated instruments of war that can erase who and what had previously existed. “[T]hat danger can surprise us again” (20), she writes. Hence, her collection is a cautionary tale of the past to prevent a dastardly future if the echoes of totalitarianism are understood by some to be the deafening beat of a militaristic drum.

Català states her second purpose for compiling her text is to underscore the role of Spanish women in the French Resistance who, as she states, “with their hearts burning with humanity and patriotism and with their minds lucid as they might risk their lives and those of their people (los suyos) as a complete offering to humanity” (20). Here we must carry out a textual analysis of various elements of Català’s explicitly stated purpose. The repetition of the term humanity is polyvalent. The first employment of it “hearts burning with humanity” connotes kindness, the condition of being humane, compassion, what has been termed an ethic of care. The second use of the term humanity refers explicitly to what in English has previously been mankind and what today is humankind or humanity, meaning the human population, in other words, everyone. This inclusive biophile approach that stems

from a connection of kindness is the foundation for the various permutations of feminist approaches to war. In spite of the purported hatred she felt during her imprisonment, Català affirms: “Today I feel no hatred” (43) and, thus, drives home the reconciliatory and peaceful approach to justice.

Neus Català’s name is synonymous with the voice of Spanish female Republican deportees. Català and her story, as indicative of that of a greater collective, are being heard as is evident in popular articles, interviews and filmic reports, as well as in a handful of scholarly publications.¹⁷

I would like to turn to a less “heard” voice whose identity is clearly gendered but whose identity markers regarding space, geography and national origins must be understood as both Catalonian and *catalanista*. Mercè Núñez Targa published her testimonial *The Dog Catcher’s Wagon: A Catalonian Woman in Ravensbrück* in Catalan, not Castilian. Núñez Targa should be considered the first uniquely female voice to break the official silence. Her 1980 testimonial (republished in 2005) is the genesis, if you will, of the recovery of the voice of female Republican ex-deportees.¹⁸

The trajectory of the Spanish female Republicans from the Republic to the immediate post war period reveals, on the one hand, the sense of social and political empowerment felt by those brave young women and, on the other hand, the slippery slope of not “social drift” but what I will term political, carcenary drift. If we simply look at the case of Mercè Núñez Targa who went from being Nobel Laureate Pablo Neruda’s secretary and administrator within the communist party, to being incarcerated at the Ventas women’s prison, to crossing the Pyrenees only to be interned in a refugee camp, to then land at the Nazi concentration camp at Ravensbrück, we see that within less than a decade, Mercè’s situation went from bad to worse, from political prisoner in what had been her homeland, to an undesired countriless woman in a land riddled with its own anti-Hispanic sentiments soon to be occupied by an unparalleled Fascist force, to a human being that Nazism tried to reduce to nothing but a number, an insignificant speck among a morass of what has often been termed the dead among the living.¹⁹

Because of her part in the Resistance within the Agrupación de Guerrilleros Españoles under the pseudonym Paquita Colomer, she and eleven comrades were apprehended by the Gestapo in May of 1944, and hence resulted in her deportation to Ravensbrück. Following liberation, Núñez Targa testified in the trial against Gestapo collaborators, especially against an officer Bach who tortured and interrogated her after her detention in Carcassone (Iglesias Núñez 7). She was awarded the Legion d’Honneur and the Médaille Militaire by the French government for her active participation in the Resistance. In her final years of life, she returned to Galicia, as the delegate of the Amical of Mauthausen and other camps (Iglesias Núñez 7). After Franco’s death, she visited high schools in Vigo and Barcelona to show Alain Resnais’s film *Night and Fog* and to speak to her experiences, as her son Pablo Iglesias Núñez claims, so that events like those she lived and witnessed as a deportee not be repeated (8).

Key to understanding Núñez Targa's work is the paradox of the inseparable link between the particular and the universal, of one's own experience as the reflection of others'. Because, for Núñez Targa, the pain of others is her own, she underscores the human bond and evinces empathy with an other, and solidarity with a collective.

Núñez takes her title in Catalan from an emotional memory, a psychological trauma of her childhood, a time when she was helpless and hopeless to stop the victimization of those rendered powerless and deemed extinguishable. At the camp, due to exhaustion, this horrific childhood memory haunted her.²⁰ Núñez Targa describes how as a child the dog catcher's wagon would often pass through her neighborhood and provoke "A chorus of barking, growling and wailing." Núñez particularly recalls a trembling, small, white dog who, when collared by the dog catcher, "let out a small, piercing scream, like that of a child" (49). The author relives how she was moved to tears especially as masses of strays, rounded up, would be euthanized with gas. This memory was resurrected in Ravensbrück each time she felt helpless and forced to witness the snuffing out of those in need: "The memory of those Jewish children is like a permanent wound, never healed, for us deportees. That is why when anyone tries to justify other genocides'; in their name it hurts me as if I were seeing them murdered for a second time" (54-55).²¹

In the final months of war, Núñez tells, prisoners were selected for extermination. Núñez was ill with tuberculosis at the time, perhaps delirious, when witnessing the cruel selection of prisoners condemned to the gas chamber. Almost as in a film montage, a voice over echo of her childhood infiltrates the camp scene memory. The author narrates²² "The commandant lifted his index finger [and pointed] to Madame Nou.... 'They gas them,' said the woman standing before the dog catcher's wagon" (100). Hence, two haunting pasts overlap and become fused by emotional memory, a memory Núñez and her readers face in order to reconcile it with the present.

On the one hand, Núñez's account reflects the universal feeling of sorrow melded with helplessness and empathy for an innocent and all innocents victimized. On the other, she identifies with a particular group and makes manifest her *catalanismo* by celebrating her right to compose and disseminate her testimony to fellow Catalonians in her native language. Her conclusion, as well, underscores Catalonian nationalism as she draws on the poetry of Joan Maragall, emblem of Catalonian heritage.

Testimony is not incontrovertible fact, nor is it creative fiction. But the resurgence and resurrection of memory (concentrationary memory) should be considered truth. The personal, essential truth to which I refer is not dissimilar to that contained in great works of literature. The longing, suffering and joy recounted in both the fictionalized and fact-based representations of concentration camp experiences are a way of coming to terms with the unimaginable past. By narrating the preterit, by

weaving in and out of the interstices of memory, by revisiting various pasts, both a personal and collective, singular and plural, unique and universal story is told.

Núñez's 125 page memoir written in colloquial Catalan, establishes a tone of intimacy, almost as if the text were destined for an in-group or perhaps it is the memorialistic expression of having belonged to a select group before being exiled. Memory is linked to feeling and is severed from linear time. Núñez interweaves the remembrance of her concentrationary preterit with a narrative present that connects the reader in the actual moment with layers of the past.

Núñez's text is not linear. This survivor of Ravensbrück evinces what has been termed *l'écriture féminine*, a gendered mode of writing that is not structured according to hierarchized binaries, a written verbalization that stresses the value of the quotidian, not the monumental, that values intimacy and universalisms, rather than the saliency of one. Hence, Núñez Targa's tale, her memoirs, should be considered a collective memoir, a recovery and remembrance of intersecting lives that worked toward the betterment of all.

There are no chapters, no formal divisions other than paragraphs and triple spacing to demarcate another radius within the layered concentric circles of memory. Núñez, again, reminds the reader of the present day and of the passage of time. Núñez's narrating self weaves in and out of the preterit when she lived her late twenties and early thirties, when she defied the Nazis and planned escapes. Yet, Núñez's memories are a clear testament to the time in which they were written: the final quarter of the 20th century when Franco was dead, the 1978 constitution was in place and Spain was soon to be in the European Union. The narrative frame established a climate of safety, security and freedom of speech within which the fight against oppression, persecution and dehumanization could be recounted.

This work is very intimately imparted, in the first person plural, establishing an "us," a "we all." As writer and Buchenwald survivor Jorge Semprún has remarked,²³ only when told as a story with literary artifice does history become more real, only then does it come alive. The human link prevails, not only in Núñez's recounting of friendship and solidarity, but in her rapport with the reader, whom she engages by claiming her own skepticism when in the early 30s she read a book by Hans Beimler on the murders at Dachau. Little did she know at the time that years later she would find herself embroiled in machinations of the Reich. Her narratee, a "vosaltres," an informal "you all," is hence incorporated and pulled into the memoir.

Núñez intercalates her tale with personal, intimate stories about her comrades, what was special about them, how one had a beautiful smile or laugh, or how another treated all with dignity, grace and culture. If this work were narrative, Núñez's point of view would be considered unreliable for at times the author narrates what she did not witness, such as when her fellow deportee Amantegui²⁴ escaped, was assisted by French peasants and was given a bicycle, to search for and join the maquis (underground guerrilla fighters), and years later went to Cuba to fight in the Revolution. After each digression, Núñez

takes up where she left off with “Proseguim” (Let us continue). The overriding sentiment throughout the work is the author’s solidarity and connection with others—be they her collective narratee or her comrades. She states, “No hi ha res al món tan fort com la fraternitat dels qui lluiten junts” (Núñez Targa 15) (There is nothing in the world as powerful as the fraternity of those who fight together).

Núñez views herself as one who did her part, just as did others. She refers to her comrades and fellow resisters in a truly egalitarian, asexual fashion. She does not underline the Spanish Republican female experience as a gendered fight, but the simply as a transnational, transgender Republican phenomenon. The Resistance was a unified, cohesive fight against Fascism: “Parlo d’unes [guerrillers] d’aquells que fan la Història, amb majúscula. Ells mateixos, poc més tard, foren els principals artífexs de l’alliberament del sud de França” (17) (I speak of warriors, of those who made History, capitalized. Those who a short while later would be the main agents in liberating southern France).

I would like to address certain archetypes that reveal themselves in concentrationary literature and touch on a few of these as evident in Núñez’s testimonial work. The concentrationary archetypes include arrest and interrogation; transport; arrival; acts of cruelty; acts of kindness; perception of the so-called “enemy” or captors; cultural, ethnic, national, linguistic, ideological and socio-economic diversity in the camp; solidarity and resistance; sabotage; a welcoming depiction of death; assisting the dying; hunger; a gallery of “characters;”²⁵ liberation; joy and finally, in women’s testimonials, the biological and psychological reality of femaleness. I will speak to Núñez’s treatment of the arrival, solidarity and resistance, and lastly reintegration.

Arrival: Many Spanish concentrationary works provide a description upon arrival at the camp of fellow campmates—of eyes, faces and bodies who foreshadow what awaits them. What tends to ensue is that let down, the realization that to look into the eyes of a seasoned fellow campmate was to look in a mirror in the not too distant future. Astoundingly, Núñez does not describe despair upon arrival, but rather hope for she considered the seasoned prisoners “a miracle of the deep conviction of having fought for a just cause—in their eyes was ... a light that could be interpreted as ‘in spite of everything, a human being can still be a human being’” (35).²⁶

Solidarity and resistance: Núñez recounts myriad examples of solidarity and resistance. One particular incident stands out. Prisoners of various nationalities were sent to work at a factory with free German laborers. The Nazis put on the show of attempting to remunerate the prisoners in the presence of the free workers. Payment for services rendered would imply that the prisoners had chosen to work. The political prisoners united, refusing to partake in the farce that would serve as Nazi humane treatment propaganda. They firmly believed their captivity spoke to their quixotic convictions. Their vociferous refusal to accept the funds dispersed, naturally, led to brutal reprisals, yet Núñez proclaims, “We had just shown that we were antifascist fighters. We proudly held our heads high. We were beyond fear. It is the most powerful feeling there is” (84) (“Acabàrem de demostrar que erem lluitadores

antifeixistes. Nosaltres aixecàvem el cap amb orgull. Ens trobàvem ja més enllà de la por. És la sensació més exaltant que pugui existir” (84). Free German factory workers commended the efforts and stated that Hitler was not Germany (84). Núñez writes “That day I understood the meaning of International proletariat... that was one of the happiest days of my life” (85) (“Aquell dia vaig comprendre per sempre què vol dir ‘internacionalisme proletari’... aquell fou un dels dies més feliços de la meua vida”).

Reintegration: Reintegration for Núñez hinges on two key elements: on the one hand, facing the injustice of the past as personified in the individual responsible for her interrogation and deportation, and on the other, the conscious choice to move forward by adhering to her peace-centered convictions. After testifying against the Nazi officer whose disdain relegated Núñez to what she terms the “hell of Ravensbrück,” the author requested to confront him. She expected to feel hatred, anger and rancor for this agent of the Gestapo that she had previously deemed a “monster” (19). And yet, when she did in fact face him, she could not. As Núñez Targa claims, the sentiment of her own dignity dissipated any hatred (125).

Núñez’s final paragraph poeticizes the return to life, the reintegration, just as Amat does in his conclusion to *K.L. Reich*, just as Semprún’s *Literature or Life* reconciles memory with living. Núñez Targa concludes her tome with a quote from “Excelsior”²⁷ by Joan Maragall, emblematic poet of Catalan language, heritage and clearly resilience. Núñez Targa states, that one must “give oneself fully to life, to walk beside those who go forward, without allowing themselves, as Maragall states, ‘to be led to the tranquil, meek waters of any harbor’” (125). The poem celebrates an indomitable spirit, and toasts to not yielding in the face of expected conformity. The Maragall quote utilizes the metaphor of not stagnating, but rather progressing, of being true to one’s own convictions. Núñez reintegration, then, proclaims her own authenticity—as a Catalan, Republican woman—and invites her reader, through the use of the impersonal subject (“one must”) to choose the path of individualistic progress “beside those who go forward.”

It is truly curious that this ontological point in Spanish female concentrationary testimonial has not been studied as it should. Perhaps Núñez’s language of publication (Catalan) had made it less accessible. Perhaps the simplicity of language, the circularity of the elocutions, the intimate address to a vosaltres (a “you all”) have been instrumental in the text’s neglect on the part of critics and scholars. Perhaps Neus Català’s persona, unknowingly, has eclipsed Núñez Targa’s text.

If we look at what could be termed Spanish or Republican deportation or Holocaust studies, a handful of works are milestones, and *must* be considered ontological markers denoting a genesis, if you will, of this historical and cultural reality. These markers are related to several individuals: Francesc Boix (for his photos and testimony at Nuremberg), Joaquim Amat and Jorge Semprún (novelists who wrote their memorialistic novels in the wake of liberation that did not see the light of publication until 1963). In 1969, Mariano Constanze publishes a collective testimonial work. In 1977, (31 year old) non-camp

survivor Montserrat Roig publishes her compendium regarding Catalonians, both those who perished and those who lived. And finally in 1980, five years after Franco's death and six years before her own, Mercè Núñez Targa commits pen to paper and gives body to her memoirs. It is Mercè Núñez Targa who, in my estimation, broke the silence regarding the Republican female concentrationary reality and deserves her place in history and Spanish cultural studies.

Núñez Targa's text is not simply an indictment of Nazism; it is a severe recrimination of abuse of power that dehumanizes, of authoritarianism that robs individuals and collectives of their lives, their ideas and their identity. Furthermore, as Núñez's conclusion alludes to an emblematic figure of Catalanian spirit of the people, Joan Maragall, her testimonial tome must be understood as a cultural call to arms, a manifesto of progress and authenticity in the face of institutionalized repression. By publishing her testimonial and doing so in Catalan she is reclaiming her voice and that of others like her. As a woman, as a Republican, as a Catalanian, by speaking and being heard, she is claiming her place in contemporary Spanish history. Although Mercè Núñez Targa had been one of the "mujeres silenciosas, mujeres silenciadas," by participating in gender-sensitive historical and cultural research, we hear her resounding voice.

So, I would like to conclude this essay with an invitation to inquiry. For those of you whose intellectual curiosity has been sparked, I invite you to pick up the thread and see where it takes you. I encourage you to delve into Spain's concentrationary history and contemporary cultural reflections in order to exorcise the hauntological ghost of thousands who lost their dreams, their ideals and their lives in Nazi camps.

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Notes

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²Lyrics: "Mujeres silenciosas, mujeres silenciadas, en pie de guerra permanente al final del túnel, la libertad robada. Yo las he visto levantando barricadas, esquivando el peligro en las fronteras en la posguerra interminable donde hicieran falta. Os he visto compañeras, en la ciudad desmantelada. La guerra que perdimos los hombres vosotras supisteis ganarla, vosotras supisteis ganarla. Mujeres silenciosas, mujeres silenciadas, en pie de guerra permanente al final del túnel, la libertad robada. Yo las he visto en las cárceles condenadas, en vanguardia de las huelgas, luchadoras y valientes, la dignidad muy alta. Os he visto compañeras, en la ciudad desmantelada. La guerra que perdimos los hombres vosotras supisteis ganarla, vosotras supisteis ganarla. Mujeres silenciosas, mujeres silenciadas, ahora y siempre solidarias el futuro es vuestro, al final del túnel la libertad ganada. Os he visto compañeras, en la ciudad desmantelada. La guerra que perdimos los hombres vosotras supisteis ganarla, vosotras supisteis ganarla."

³ Both David Wingeate Pike and Eduardo Pons Prades reference this number which would include individuals deported, yet not recorded upon arrival to a camp because of having perished on route or having been exterminated before being recorded. Yet the two most accurate sources to date, in my estimation, should be the *Libro Memorial: Españoles deportados a los campos Nazis (1940-1945)* (compiled by Benito Bermejo and Sandra Checa,

published by the Ministerio de Cultura) and the *Livre memorial des déportés de France arrêtés par mesure de répression et dans certain cas par mesure de persécution 1939-1945* (published by the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Déportation, Editions Tirésias in several volumes and available on disc).

⁴ The term Holocaust must not be used lightly. This term should and does refer to the Nazi targeting of European Jewry for extermination. The appropriate term for the Republican reality should be deportation. Nonetheless, because this term has been accepted, I utilize it in this heading.

⁵ Jo Labanyi (*Constructing Identity in Contemporary Spain*) applies Derrida's concept to theorize culture in contemporary Spain.

⁶ This essay is part of a book project on which I have been working entitled *Voces e imágenes del Holocausto en la cultura española*, which I hope to have completed by the summer of 2009.

⁷ Both David Wingeate Pike and Eduardo Pons Prades reference this number which would include individuals deported, yet not recorded upon arrival to a camp because of having perished on route or having been exterminated before being recorded. Yet the two most accurate sources to date, in my estimation, should be the *Libro Memorial: Españoles deportados a los campos Nazis (1940-1945)* (compiled by Benito Bermejo and Sandra Checa, published by the Ministerio de Cultura) and the *Livre memorial des déportés de France arrêtés par mesure de répression et dans certain cas par mesure de persécution 1939-1945* (published by the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Déportation, Editions Tirésias in several volumes and available on disc).

⁸ Note must be made that Armengou and Belis produced a homonym documentary for the series *30 Minuts*.

⁹ For more on Boix, see Benito Bermejo's *Francisco Boix: el fotógrafo de Mauthausen*, Llorenç Soler and Oriol Porta's film *Francisco Boix, un fotógrafo en el infierno*. Barcelona Planeta d historia, 2000; M. Tobin Stanley's forthcoming article in *Hispanic Issues On-line*, or select photos on the Museum of History of Catalonia website.

¹⁰ For more on Amat, see David Serrano i Blanquer's *L'hora blanca*, or M. Tobin Stanley's "Parlo...?: A Catalan Voice from the Holocaust" in *Catalan Review XXI* (2007): 69-86.

¹¹ For more on the maternal-mortal connection in "Night and Fog" see M. Tobin Stanley's article "El vientre materno de la Muerte en 'Nit i boira' de Mercè Rodoreda" in *Letras Peninsulares* (Spring 2005): 157-78.

¹² A *paseador* is prison guard who took prisoners for a walk, yet returned alone. Hence, the significance of this euphemism is truly an executioner, one who takes a life under orders.

¹³ For more on *Memoria*, see Mary Vásquez's article in *Rendezvous*.

¹⁴ For more on *La niña*, please see Anne Hardcastle's article in *Film Criticism*.

¹⁵ The article is not dated. Capmany studied many proto-feminist articles and documents from the 20s and 30s.

¹⁶ Let us not forget that these trials took place after interrogations. This latter term should be viewed as a euphemism, for to interrogate means to question, to inquire, but what it came to mean was to ascertain desired answers utilizing force. The Nationalist learned their torture techniques (Fonseca 161) from the Gestapo. A not uncommon interrogation technique for women detainees was rape. Additional humiliation for women was to shave their heads and eyebrows, to strip them of their femininity.

The vast majority of these women incarcerated in Ventas (who were in youth organizations such as JSU) were in their late teens to their mid 20s. Women were detained for many reasons: for screaming at planes bombing Madrid, for being left-wing, for having voted for the Frente Popular or have done laundry for the Republican militia (Fonseca 168).

¹⁷ For more on Català as part of a female concentrationary resistant collective, please see Laurence Thibault's *Les femmes et la Résistance* (Paris: Documentation Française, 2006), David Serrano i Blanquer's *Les dones als camps nazis*

(Barcelona: Portic, 2003), M. Tobin Stanley's chapter in *Female Exiles in 20th and 21st Century Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis's *Ravensbrück, l'infern de les dones* (Barcelona: Angle Editorial, 2006)—as well as their homonym documentary for Televisió de Catalunya's program *30 minuts*. For more on Català only, please consult Elisenda Belenguier Mercadé's *Neus Catala: Memoria i lluita* (Barcelona: Pere Ardiaca, 2006).

¹⁸ Not only did she publish the work on Ravensbrück, but she also prepared a tome on the immediate post-war female Republican political prisoner experience in Madrid's Ventas prison.

¹⁹ Núñez Targa, whose nom de guerre was Paquita Colomer came from a family that lacked for nothing. In spite of her comfortable existence she began to work. During the Second Republic she was the secretary to the exile consul to Barcelona (Iglesias Núñez 6), Chilean poet and Nobel Laureate (1971) Pablo Neruda. In 1936 MNT joined the PSUC Communist Party; during the war she carried out tasks for the party's central committee. In la Coruña in November 1939, NT was arrested and incarcerated at the Ventas prison in Madrid. In 1940, she was convicted of "accessory to rebellion" and sentenced to twelve years and one day. In January 1942, due to an administrative error, Mercè was placed on provisional release (probation by contemporary US standards), at which time she fled to France where she came to the refugee/concentration camp at Argelès.

²⁰ "Quan, esgotada, els ulls se m'aclucaven, una imatge insistent, com un malson, em perseguia: 'Quan jo era petita, passava sovint pel barri el carretó dels gossos. Un cor de lladrucs, de gruyits, de gemecs. I les dones i la quitxalla mirant am animositat els homes del carretó [...] Una vegada, a la Plaça de Pi els del carretó van agafar un gos jove, tot blanc. Quan li van passar el llaç va fer un grit petit, agut, com el d'un nen. Tremolava. Em féu llàstima i vaig tenir ganes de plorar" (49).

²¹ "El record d'aquells nens jueus és com una ferida permanent, mai no guarida, per a nosaltres, les deportades. Per això quan algú, en nome seu, té la barra de justificar altres genocidis, em fa mal com si els veiés assassinar per segona vegada" (54-55).

²² "El commandant aixecà l'indix. Madame L. Nou. ...—Els afeguen amb el gas—deia aquella dona a la Plaça del Pi davant el carretó dels gossos" (100).

²³ This concept is repeated throughout *Literature or Life* as well as in interviews.

²⁴ She and Amantegui were detained and questioned because of a failed guerrilla/resistance assault on a German train that exploited gold from a mine at Saligne (15). One of the guignols (resistants) had incriminating documentation that linked him to a training school (a boot camp, if you will) for Spanish guerrillas in Roullens.

²⁵ The gallery of characters in Núñez attests to the fact that each story is paradoxically unique and universal, singular and plural, referring to one and all. The microcosm of the concentrationary experience of one individual reflects the macrocosm of the concentrationary universe. In Romaineville (during transport), Núñez meets two Spanish women: (28-29): María and Constanza (who also give their testimony to Català) who are two key figures in Núñez Targa's testimony. Her Spanish friends in Ravensbrück include Constanza Martínez Prieto*, Carme Boatell*, Mercè Bernal*, Marita, Elisa Ruiz*, María Conchita Ferrer*, María Benítez Luque*, six of whom give their testimony to Neus Català in *De la Resistencia y la deportación* (signified by the asterisks). The manner in which Núñez weaves and interweaves the tales of her fellow resistants and deportees evinces elements of literary artifice and license. When describing Constanza and María, Núñez juxtaposes antithetical concepts. Constanza was serious and quiet, while María audacious and intrepid. Constanza was marked by emotion and sentiment, while María was a person of action.

²⁶ "miracle de la convicció profunda d'haver lluitat per una causa justa—als seus ulls hi havia una lluisor que els feia infinitament superiors als seus botxins, una petita llum que podia traduir-se per 'Fins i tot aquí un home pot continuar sent un home'" (35).

²⁷ Vigila, esperit, vigila,
 no perdis mai el teu nord,
 no et deixis ***dur a la tranquil.la***
aigua mansa de cap port.
 Gira, gira els ulls enlaire,
 no miris les platges roïns,
 dóna el front en el gran aire,
 sempre, sempre mar endins.
 Sempre amb les veles suspeses,
 del cel al mar transparent,
 sempre entorn aigües esteses
 que es moguin eternament.
 Fuig-ne de la terra immoble,
 fuig dels horitzons mesquins:
 sempre al mar, al gran mar noble;
 sempre, sempre mar endins.
 Fora terres, fora platja,
 oblida't de ton regrés:
 no s'acaba el teu viatge,
 no s'acabarà mai més.

Be watchful, spirit, be watchful,
 Do not ever lose sight of your north,
 Do not allow yourself ***to be led to the tranquil,***
Meek waters of any harbor.
 Turn, turn with your gaze lifted,
 Do not look at the corrupted beaches,
 Face the grand air,
 Always, always sea inward.
 Always with your sails hoisted,
 From the heavens to the transparent sea,
 Always toward extended waters
 That eternally move.
 Flee from motionless land,
 Flee from vile horizons:
 Always seaward, to the great noble sea;
 Always, always sea inward.
 Away lands, away beach,
 Forget about your return;
 Your voyage does not end,
 Your voyage will never end.
 (my translation)