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FULL ARTICLE TITLE: Narratives of memory in commemorative Spanish documentaries about the democratic transition: *Adolfo Suárez, mi historia* and *Bucarest, la memoria perdida*¹

PREFERRED ABBREVIATED RUNNING HEAD: Narratives of memory in commemorative Spanish documentaries

Abstract

This article analyses different narratives of memory used in commemorative Spanish documentaries. It first considers the state of the question of the relationship between documentary, history, and memory and then examines television productions made in a democratic Spain that have advocated either a hegemonic memory of the transition or a counter-memory of this recent past. The second part of the text focuses on two biographical documentaries: *Bucarest, la memoria perdida* (Albert Solé, 2008), about the Communist leader Jordi Solé Tura, and *Adolfo Suárez. Mi historia* (Julio Somoano and Ángel Navarro, 2014), which centres on the figure of the former prime minister. The article interprets these documentaries as narratives of memory that evoke the democratic transition in different ways. The period of the transition has been presented as a legitimising milestone and a foundation of the present but also as an era that should be critically reread and overcome when looking toward the future.

Keywords

Documentary, television, hegemonic memory, counter-memory, commemoration, Spain's democratic transition

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History and Memory in the Contemporary Documentary

Numerous studies of cinematic and television documentaries (Bruzzi, 2006; Winston, 2006; Torreiro, 2010) have reclaimed one of the most characteristic—but also controversial— aspects of this kind of film: its historical dimension, its role as an agent and source of history and memory. In effect, the documentary has attempted to reflect past episodes of world history, practically from the time of its origins up to the present day. It is precisely by revisiting history that documentary becomes a privileged visual language for evoking the past (Sánchez-Biosca, 2005: 38), and documentary influences the processes of construction and mobilization of perceptions about that past, establishing a variety of connections with diverse politics of memory.. In many cases the documentary does this while contending with the suspicion provoked by the introduction of digital technology in the production and postproduction of documentaries, features, and news programs as well as the proliferation of fraudulent information in the media (Fecé, 2001: 60).

In Spain the most classic kind of documentary remains prevalent on public television channels, which find suitable speakers in these narratives for the hegemonic memory they feed with the rest of their programming. This kind of documentary, as we will explain through concrete examples in the following section, resonates most loudly and strongly if its broadcast coincides with dates of public commemoration, even if these dates are not exempt from disputes

and debates. In effect, the anniversaries are levers for the activation of memory, special milestones that act as springboards to articulate new meanings and subjectivities, even as they serve to strengthen the dominant narratives about the past (Jelin, 2001: 92).

It should be noted that the case that concerns us, that of the democratic transition, enjoyed a positive assessment in Spanish social memory in the 1990s and at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This perception helped legitimate the monarchy, the political system, and the Spanish model of territorial organization. Following this perception, the transition has been explained in the dominant discourse as being defined by the production and socialization of inclusive values (Edles, 1995: 370–375; Aguilar, 2002). Ideas of accord and overcoming the traumatic memory of the Civil War through national reconciliation and a ‘new beginning’ have served as binding semantics in these narratives. However, the Catalanian government’s claim to the right of self-determination, the cumulative effects of the socioeconomic crisis, the breakdown of bipartisanship, and the disrepute into which the political class and royal family have fallen through cases of corruption have all recently caused the fundamentals of the transition to enter in crisis. As Vicente Benet points out, the ‘ghosts’ of Spain’s military and dictatorial past have reappeared in the social panorama to throw suspicion on the processes and pacts that were carried out in the years of reestablishment of democracy (2007: 350).

In the first part of the article we will try to map this double movement that has characterized the meandering circulation of the memory of the transition in Spanish television from the time democracy was established. The documentaries we mention—all of which have been broadcast according to the criteria stipulated by the calendar of commemorations—differ in the form in which they lay claim to their particular date. In the face of numerous media accounts that have insisted on a hegemonic reading of the transition, evoking it as a paradigm of

consensus, a lever for modernization, and a fully valid model for the present (Ortiz, 2011), proposals circulating in recent years no longer present themselves as ‘representations of reality’ but rather as spaces of reflection about the ‘reality of the representation,’ and as such, as nonconformist responses to the official versions of certain chapters of recent history. These documentaries do not read History as a complete, unidirectional, and understandable whole—often because of the aesthetic, political, and biographical position of those who did not play a leading role in the transition, because of their age—but rather as an unequal, contradictory, and malleable ensemble of pieces invoked by personal memory, familial memory, collective memory, and ultimately, post-memory.

The second part of this article analyses two paradigmatic examples of these two sides of the commemorative documentary: *Bucarest, la memoria perdida* (*Bucarest, the lost memory*, Albert Solé, 2008) and *Adolfo Suárez. Mi historia* (*Adolfo Suárez: my story*, Julio Somoano and Ángel Navarro, 2014). Notable parallels can be established between the two. First, they were broadcast on television on significant dates: *Bucarest* was broadcast to coincide with the death of Solé Tura, and later, with World Alzheimer’s Day, while *Adolfo Suárez* was shown the day the former president died. Second, both projects centre on members of the same generation: the Communist leader Jordi Solé Tura and the former Prime Minister Adolfo Suárez. Despite their opposing ideological origins, both figures embodied the culture of consensus of the end of the 1970s, and both ended up suffering from Alzheimer’s disease. In both documentaries we find strategies of remembrance from their sons, Albert Solé and Adolfo Suárez Illana, that transcend the family sphere and project toward the representation of a collective past and social identity.

However, the bridges that could unite *Adolfo Suárez* and *Bucarest* become walls if we consider, on the one hand, the kind of memory each documentary transmits—the former,

institutional memory, and the latter, militant and familial memory—and on the other, the ways they narrate the past and embed it in the present. While the former intensifies the official version of the past to strengthen the present idea of a Spain of supposed consensus and democratic stability, the latter questions, through reflexivity and autodiegetic speech, a transition whose contradictions seem to continue to mark the present.

Narratives and counter-narratives in the commemorative Spanish documentary

Numerous studies have highlighted the prominence of historical content in contemporary European television (Kansteiner, 2006: 109–181; Hunt, 2006; Ebbrecht, 2007; Buonanno, 2012: 197–219; Gray and Bell, 2010 and 2013). One element that stands out is the hybridization of formats (Veyrat-Masson, 2008). However, this hybridization has not meant the disappearance of traditional genres like that of educational documentaries using archival material, an omniscient narrator, and authorized witnesses. Such documentaries tend to take shape through stories that move in a single direction, do not lead to questions, and summon a passive spectator. As such they can be typified as supposedly objective explanations, based on an illusion of transparent mediation and of the screen as a faithful mirror of reality.

These elements are perceptible in many Spanish documentaries that have evoked the transition from an institutional focus, shaping a hegemonic or *official story* about those years. The official story distinguishes itself by explaining the period of the transition through a dynamic of significant change, resolved thanks to the action of some providential elite. Additionally, it has emphasized the peaceful and consensual nature of the process of the transition, its value as a model for other international experiences, and its validity in the present.

The expression, *official story of the transition*, currently bears a pejorative meaning. It has been employed in political criticism with the aim of denouncing a public use of History in discourses emanating from power that are interested in perpetuating the system and its inequalities (Monedero, 2013). The expression has also been used with regard to historiography, presenting it as a simplifying focus that has devalued—or neutralized—the leading role of popular protest and social movements in the process of change (Juliá, 2006: 60, Ysàs, 2010: 32; Fontana, 2013: 7–11). In any case, neither the political nor the historiographical debates have centred their interest on the transition. Television in particular can be indicted as a medium that projects narrations with an intense socializing potential, aimed at recreating the past selectively and qualifying it according to political criteria (Neiger, Mayers and Zanberg, 2011: 1–5). It is within this understanding one should situate the reiterative presence of projects that seek to establish the symbolic value of the transition, turning the transition into the official space of memory (Connerton, 2009).

This symbolic value would be encapsulated through elements integrated into the so-called ‘ideology of consensus’ (Gallego, 2008: 704): moderation; agreement between reformist sectors originating from the dictatorship and the anti-Francoist opposition; the ‘reconciliation’, valued as a necessary neutralization of vindicating or punitive memories; and the emphasis on representative democracy as a norm and orienting category of social life. One might ask what the principal function of this hegemonic narrative has been. The presentation of the political elite as a decisive factor for historical change demonstrates the narrative’s clear legitimating purpose, and the recourse to didactic documentary, for its part, has permitted the use of standardized resources and the reiteration of recognizable characters for a general audience.

Televised documentaries about the transition have been abundant during the last thirty years. One criterion that characterizes the hegemonic account is its direct relationship with political commemoration. The commemorative status extols the event, valorising it as a relevant milestone (Ricoeur, 2004: 411–414), and its periodic evocation permits the establishment of calendars of remembrance with the express intention of the past enduring in the present. The commemorative status also facilitates the ‘synchronisation’ and shared perception of comprehensive ‘maps’ to organize collective memory (Zerubavel, 2005: 4, Zelizer, 2001: 181–184).

The calendar of official memory of the transition has been structured by four anniversaries that have been understood as successive steps toward democratization: the anniversaries of the death of General Franco and the inauguration of Juan Carlos I (20 and 22 November, 1975, 20/22-N), the first legislative elections (15 June 1977, 15-J), the constitutional referendum of 6 December 1978 (6-D), and the frustrated coup d’état of 23 February 1981 (23-F). It is possible to add secondary dates to these, such as 5 January 1938 (5-E), the birthday of King Juan Carlos I.

Table 1 presents a representative sample of documentaries or features produced since 1985 that reflect diverse characteristics of the hegemonic narrative about the transition. They have been selected according to the fact that their television broadcast coincided with the date, or the approximate date, of the anniversaries they cite.

Table 1. Hegemonic narratives: commemorative documentaries and features broadcast by national television networks (1985–2014)

	Event	Programs
1985–1990	20/22-N	<i>Operación tránsito</i> (Baltasar Magro and Sol Alameda ,TVE1, 18 and 19 Nov 1985); <i>Juan Carlos I: diez años Rey*</i> (TVE1, 23 Nov 1985)

	23-F	<i>18 horas de tensión*</i> (Rafael M. Durban, TVE1, 28 Feb 1986)
1991–2008	20/22-N	<i>La noche en que murió Franco</i> (María Antonia Iglesias, TVE1, 19 Nov 1995); <i>Adolfo Suárez, memoria de la transición</i> (María Antonia Iglesias, TVE1, 20 Nov 1995); <i>España: de la dictadura a la democracia (Memoria de la transición)</i> (Paz Fernández, TVE2, 21 Nov 1995); <i>Juan Carlos I, crónica de 20 años</i> (María Antonia Iglesias and José Infante, TVE1, 23 Nov 1995); <i>El valor de un rey</i> (Carlos Estevez y Victoria Prego, A3, 24 Nov 1995); <i>Juan Carlos I, 25 años de reinado</i> (Victoria Prego and Elías Andrés, TVE1, 19 Nov 2000); <i>Los días más largos</i> (Roberto Arce, A3, 19 Nov 2000); <i>Así murió Franco</i> (Carlos Estevez and Victoria Prego, A3, 20 Nov 2000); <i>La agonía de un régimen*</i> (Lisardo García and Carlos López, TVE1, 29 Oct 2005); <i>Retrato de un Rey*</i> (María Rosa Artal and Gabriel Mardones, TVE1, 19 Nov 2005); <i>La apuesta del Rey</i> (Fernando Olmeda, T5, 22 Nov 2005); <i>Juan Carlos I, embajador de España</i> (Carmen Enriquez, TVE1, 22 Nov 2005)
	23-F	<i>La noche más larga*</i> (Joaquín Benito and Pedro P. Menéndez, TVE1, 23 Feb 1991); <i>Quince años después*</i> (María José Gil and others, TVE1, 24 Feb 1996); <i>Crónica: regreso a los cuárteles</i> (Reyes Ramos and Arturo Villacorta, TVE2, 17 Feb 2006); <i>Aquel 23-F*</i> (Zulema Larripa and Rosa de Santos, TVE1, 18 Feb 2006)
	6-D	<i>Nació hace veinte años*</i> (Joaquín Benito and Pedro P. Menéndez, TVE1, 5 Dec 1998); <i>25 años de Constitución*</i> (Elena de Román and Gabriel Laborie, TVE1, 6 Dec 2003); <i>El espíritu de la democracia: 30 años de Constitución</i> (María Jesús Cañellas, Mikel Marín and Teresa Mora, TVE1, 6 Dec 2008)
	5-J	<i>Adolfo Suárez. Retrato de un presidente</i> (Roberto Arce, A3, 5 June 2007); <i>Adolfo Suárez, una vida de recuerdos arrebatados</i> (Óscar Cornejo, T5, 5 and 6 Dec 2007); <i>15-J: treinta años de democracia</i> (Alicia Gómez Montano, TVE1, 14 June 2007); <i>La transición española**</i> (Elías Andrés and Victoria Prego, TVE1, beginning 14 June 2007)
2009–2014	6-D	<i>Suárez, las claves de la transición</i> (José Hervas and Carlos López, TVE1, 5 Dec 2013)
	5-E	<i>El legado de la quinta del Rey</i> (Jenaro Castro, TVE1, 5 Jan 2013)
	23-M	<i>Adolfo Suárez. Mi historia</i> (Julio Somoano and Ángel Navarro TVE1, 23 Mar 2014); <i>Adolfo Suárez: señas de identidad</i> (Antonio Amaro, A3, 23 Mar 2014)

*Features broadcast on *Informe Semanal* **Documentary series, TVE1 and TVE2 (the first and second channels of Televisión Española); A3: Antena 3; T5: Telecinco

The table reflects the progressive proliferation of documentaries in three distinct phases. The first is situated between 1985 and 1990, where one can put a date to the first productions about the democratic transition that helped to establish an initial televised memory.

Between 1991 and 2008 a second phase took place that was defined by the gradual institutionalization of the documentary as a canonical form of memory. This consolidation was the product of various factors. Televised offerings had expanded since 1989 with the introduction of commercial channels (Antena 3 and Telecinco) and different formats (to include investigative and educational programs as well as programs using interviews and archival material), to which was added the influence of particular productions, like *La transición española* (*The Spanish transition*) and *Los años vividos* (*The years we lived*). The former was made between 1989 and 1993, although it was not broadcast until 1995, becoming a paradigm for the commemoration of the political story (Hernández, 2010). *Los años vividos*, for its part, posed a generational reflection that emphasized the leading role in shaping the transition of those born during the Civil War or immediately after.

Since the beginning of the 1990s the televised reminiscence helped stabilize the calendar of memory, at the same time as it set the standard for specialised programming. Such interaction granted visibility to a 'new tradition' (Hobsbawm, 1983: 1-2). In this context, 20–22 November were set up as fundamental dates associated with two events with opposing meanings: the death of Franco, understood as the biologically and symbolically terminal episode of an outmoded historical period, and the proclamation of Juan Carlos I as King, understood as the beginning of a new period of democratic recovery. This focus overrode the continuity between the two events and emphasised their differences, despite their chronological proximity. The rest of the

anniversaries were located in connection with this axis of opposition between dictatorship and monarchy/democracy.

A third phase in the genealogy of the commemorative documentary emerged between 2008 and 2014. It has been characterized by its vicarious position before other products. Since the end of 2008 the dominant mode of representation about the transition has been embodied in numerous fictional formats that generally have attained considerable audiences. Such was the case with *23-F. El día más difícil del Rey* (*23-F. The King's most difficult day*, Silvia Quer, TVE1, 2009), which centred on the monarch's attitude toward the coup, and the biopic *Adolfo Suárez, e Presidente* (*Adolfo Suárez, President*, Sergio Cabrera, A3, 2010). Both fiction films shaped a new realism based on immediacy, evoking domestic spaces and familial environments, and they offered angles of representation that broadened the traditional documentary iconography. As such, they renewed the media imaginary about the transition, reinforcing the leading role previous documentaries granted to political leadership.

But aside from the genre's stylistic nuances (which have shifted with time), the commemorative documentary has shown notable lines of continuity. Taken as a whole, the hegemonic narrative about the transition has formulated a discourse based on a central idea: the presentation of the political elite as agents that institutionalized a democratic identity and drove the collective movement toward modernity. This has been the essential thesis of all of what can be understood as first generation productions, which are dominated by the presence of the direct testimony or contemporary witnesses to the events they contain. In many of them, the figures of Juan Carlos I and Adolfo Suárez have occupied important positions.

For example, and . Finally, the documentary *El legado de la quinta del rey (The legacy of the King's generation, 2013)*, a generational homage, laid out a balance that highlighted the thesis of the transition as the origin of the present.

autobiographical documentary story 1995, when , Zandberg, and Meyers, This same idea formed one of the axes of the storyline of *Adolfo Suárez, mi historia*.

Since approximately 2000, the major television networks have begun to program another type of project that can be defined as non-hegemonic narratives. This is an imprecise category that should be understood more in opposition to the standard topics of the official story than as adhering to a rigid pattern of formal or thematic affinities. These productions are characterized by a clear heterogeneity, even if one can observe in them the presence of a critical conscience toward the past, the denunciation of a deficit of memory, and the recognition of actors marginalized in the hegemonic story of the democratizing process. The official documentary emphasises the leading role of the political class. Other documentaries or features can be of interest because they evoke collective leaderships, thus assuming a relatively non-hegemonic position. Other documentaries discuss the degree to which Francoism has been overcome and qualify ideas of consensus and reconciliation. Others denounce, from a generational (and lived) distance from the remembered events, the pacts of forgetting and silence that sealed Spain's entrance into a democratic system. It is possible to speak, therefore, about proposals that modulated distinct readings of the past (Estrada, 2004: 550–552).

Table 2 presents a selection of documentaries or features according to the same criteria established in Table 1. It also includes materials broadcast to coincide with the commemoration of the legalization of the PCE (Communist Party of Spain, 9 April 1977, 9-A), the anniversary of the execution of ETA and FRAP militants (27 September 1975, 25-S), and the anniversary of the

proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic (14 April 1932, 14-A). This commemorative diffusion indicates that these works do not constitute a compact offering of radical counter-memory. Rather, it suggests a diverse dialogue with the hegemonic narrative about the transition.

Table 2. Non-hegemonic narratives: commemorative documentaries and features broadcast by national television stations, 2000–2014

Event	Programs
20/22-N	<i>La sombra del Caudillo</i> (Joan Sella, TVE2, 26 Nov 2000); <i>Tal como éramos*</i> (Vicente Romero and Outi Saarnem, TVE1, 29 Oct 2005); <i>Los niños perdidos del franquismo</i> (Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis, 2002**; TVE2, 19 Nov 2005); <i>Las fosas del olvido</i> (Alfonso Domingo, 2004**; TVE2, 19 Nov 2005); <i>Cuando Franco murió, yo tenía treinta años</i> (Gustavo Cortés, TVE2, 20 Nov 2005)
23-F	<i>Diario de una trama golpista</i> (Mercedes Milá, T5, 22 Feb 2006); <i>Operación Palace</i> (Jordi Evole, La Sexta, 23 Feb 2014)
6-D	<i>Los niños que robó Franco*</i> (Maribel Sánchez and others, TVE1, 6 Dec 2008)
15-J	<i>1977: el año que cambió casi todo</i> (Montserrat Fernández, La Sexta, 13 June 2007)
27-S	<i>Los últimos fusilamientos del franquismo*</i> (Isabel M. Reverte and Manuel Guerra, TVE1, 1 Oct 2005); <i>Septiembre del 75</i> (Manuel Sánchez Pereira, TVE2, 25 Sept 2010); <i>Justicia para la memoria*</i> (Cándida Godoy and Teresa Pérez, 27 Sept 2008)
9-A	<i>Clandestinos</i> (Arturo Villacorta and Isabel Malpica, TVE2, 11 Nov 2007)
14-A	<i>Viva la República</i> (Jaume Grau, La Sexta, 14 Apr 2008)
21-S	<i>Bucarest. La memoria perdida</i> (TVE2, 21 Sept 2012)

*Features broadcast on *Informe Semanal* **Original year of production

Thus, *1977: el año que cambió casi todo* (*1977: The year almost everything changed*, 2007) evoked the elections of 1977 as a popular festival and encounter between the citizens and the political class, assuming a focus of negotiated memory compatible with official narratives. However, on other occasions, alternative documentaries have debated the traditional perspective on a certain set of events. *Diario de una trama golpista* (*Diary of a coup d'état plot*, 2006), for

example, investigates the military conspiracy of 1985, a topic that televised memory had not yet dealt with, despite an overabundance of documentaries dedicated to 23-F.

Another approach was parodic demystification. *Operación Palace* (*Operation Palace*, 2014) ironizes the coup d'état of 1981 through the genre of a fake documentary. This film reflects critically on political dramatization and the media and their relationship with power. It plays with veracity and simulation in a way that coincided with a social climate of disapproval of the monarchy and the political class. *Viva la República* (*Long live the Republic*) also uses the recourse of the fake, fabricating a counterfactual hypothesis about the historically accidental quality of Francoism and the monarchy established in 1975.

The televised commemoration of the death of Franco (20-N) sometimes has resulted in documentaries about repression, such the 2004 documentary, *Las fosas del olvido* (*The graves of forgetfulness*). This is an example of a documentary of *historical memory*, a complex term (Richards, 2013: 330–358). The term alludes to an associative movement defined by the objective of achieving full rehabilitation of the victims of the dictatorship (Jérez and Amago, 2010). It has also subsumed a broad ethical, juridical, and historiographical debate about the democratic quality of the transition (Espinosa, 2010) and documentaries' capacity for vindicating memory to reflect about collective Spanish identity at the beginning of the twenty-first century and its deficiencies in democratic terms (Estrada, 2013: 3–4). This thesis underlies *Las fosas del olvido* and other productions on regional channels, like *Les fosses del silenci* (*The graves of silence*, Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis, 2003), a production for the Catalan television station TV3 that has been assessed as an effective interaction between historical investigation, and democratic conscience (Herrmann, 2008) and between critical discourse and the imperative of memory (Castelló, 2014).

The meaning of the counter-story facing the official narrative is more palpable in other documentaries and features, like those dedicated to the last executions under Francoism that recognised a date (27-S) very different from those of the official calendar of the hegemonic story. For its part, state violence during the transition has been represented in coproductions of TVE and the Basque public station ETB or TV3. *San Fermines 78* (*San Fermines 78*, Juan Gautier and José Ángel Jiménez, 2005) recalled police repression in Pamplona on July 8, 1978, and *El Papus, Anatomía de un atentado* (*El Papus, anatomy of an attack*, 2010) revisited the ultra-right attack that the publication *El Papus* suffered in 1977 from the perspective of director David Fernández de Castro's family, exploring the implications of police and judicial plots. Both documentaries were examples of the 'memory of contestation' (Pearson, 1999: 178–199), recreating the beginning of the democratic period as a setting for state violence. This focus contested one of the narrative pillars of the official story, the vision of a peaceful, consensual, and 'immaculate transition' (Baby, 2012: 2–5).

Adolfo Suárez. Mi historia and Bucarest: La memoria perdida

Many of the documentaries that have added new voices to the official discourse about the recent Spanish past have been authored by a generation that neither lived through Francoism nor retain an adult memory about the democratic transition. Titles like *Tierra encima* (*Land above*, Sergio Morcillo, 2005), *Nadar* (*Swimming*, Carla Subirana, 2008), *El muro de los olvidados* (*The wall of the forgotten*, Joseph Gordillo, 2008), *Cosas raras que pasaban entonces* (*Strange things that happened then*, Francina Verdés, 2012), and the documentaries mentioned above, *Bucarest: La memoria perdida* and *El Papus: Anatomía de un atentado*, recover the past from a generational distance and a critical and personal gaze.

These works can be included in the category of 'postmemory', being narratives formulated by second and third generations that rescue and renew the past through by means of others' memories as well as through their authors' creativity and imagination (Hirsch, 1997: 22). These documentaries pay homage to those who led the struggle against Francoism, but they also stage a personal journey and odyssey to the roots of their family genealogies. This journey requires that they ask uncomfortable questions and interrogate the uniformity of the memory inherited from the previous generation and the media to avoid other forms of forgetting, or in Huyssen's words, 'the virus of amnesia' of high technology (1995: 7).

However, the son or grandson's voice does not always act as a counternarrative in documentaries about the recent past. One example is *Adolfo Suárez. Mi historia*, a documentary produced by TVE1 shortly before the former Prime Minister died on March 23, 2014 in Madrid after struggling with Alzheimer's for eleven years. The network modified its programming that afternoon and dedicated more than ten hours to paying tribute to Suárez. The network showed this documentary – directed by Ángel Navarro and written and presented by Julio Somoano, the director of Informational Services – on prime time within a battery of news programs, talk shows, and special programming. As such, the network acted as a 'commemorator', following Todorov's understanding of the term (2000: 158–159): that an agent that, while nourished by the witness's story and the historian's work, wove an impersonal and supposedly objective discourse to pay tribute to a particular politician and historical era.

Beginning with the title, *Adolfo Suárez. Mi historia* incorporates the objective of recording, eulogizing, and explaining Suárez's political career. This career is understood as a sum of achievements and feats, and the transition is understood as an ensemble of pacts, resignations, and consensuses. In the documentary the articulation of the living past (Suárez) and

the collective past (Spain) occur through a recourse to the biographical genre of 'autobiophony' (Lejeune, 1994: 315), an autobiography created by the person who explains his life (in this case, Suárez) and the one who structures it, gives it meaning, and communicates it to the public (in this case, TVE, in the person of Somoano). To make this documentary, Somoano and Navarro revisited TVE1's 1995 interview with Suárez. In this interview, Suárez details the vicissitudes, good decisions, support, and attacks that marked his political career in strict chronological order. Almost twenty years later, TVE rebroadcast this material, omitting and highlighting certain parts. This second time the most controversial chapters of Suárez's biography are barely mentioned, such as his political career under Francoism. However, the documentary does provide a detailed commentary on his career from the time between his appointment as Prime Minister in July 1976 and the reactionary episode of 23 February 1981. As such, *Adolfo Suárez. Mi historia* joins the anniversaries commemorated since the 1980s.

Although Suárez's memories serve as the backbone of *Adolfo Suárez. Mi historia*, they lose their original continuity in the documentary and are braided with other material and stories like a palimpsest. Rather than functioning as critical or interrogating discourses regarding Suárez's personal testimony, this material stresses and corroborates it. Among this material, conforming to the apparently intimate character that the film seeks, is the testimony of Adolfo Suárez Illana, the former Prime Minister's eldest son who was himself a politician active in the PP from 2002 to 2003.

The story of Suárez Illana, who serves as a sort of prompter or official spokesperson for his father, always advances in the shadows beneath his father's authoritative voice. Suárez Illana consistently praises his father, including for the only thing for which he could have been reproached: depriving him of an ordinary childhood by leading a country in upheaval. At one

point in the documentary Suárez Illana states: 'I have never lacked a father. He usually wasn't close, but he was always there when I needed him'. Suárez Illana expresses this sentiment with the same composure with which he refers to the great chapters of Suárez's political biography. As such, unlike most stories developed within the framework of postmemory, here the son's narrative constructed from his father's testimonial memory neither pierces that memory nor contextualizes it in his generational present, which in addition in his case is ideologically related to those who led the transition. Suárez Illana does not cast doubt on anything, because for him, no unanswered questions remain, nor does he feel the need to ask new ones. He simply reproduces and reinforces the leitmotifs of the paternal vision, the official story.

Suárez Illana's idealized vision of his father – of someone bold, sensible, devoted to the people, an indispensable guarantor of constitutional order – advances in harmony with the archival material inserted throughout the film as a didactic illustration. This narrative technique is accompanied by Somoano's appearances as interviewer, the use of infographics that detail the exact date of each event, and the use of extradiegetic music in the most emotional scenes. All of these factors draw this documentary close to the genre of television reportage, which is always linked to the diffusion of information and the informative present (Winston, 2006: 11). This generic code contributes to the consolidation of the politician's majestic image and ultimately to the value of the even more imposing and decisive protagonist of the process narrated in the film: King Juan Carlos I. Consistent with that end, the documentary revisits images repeatedly broadcast of the coup d'état in 1981: Tejero's entrance into the Congress of Deputies, Suárez's imperturbable expression as the Guardia Civil fired its shots, the monarch's televised intercession in the early hours of the morning . . . The documentary's emphasis on this event not only updates the King's historical value but also pushes for Suárez's symbolic revitalization. The film stresses

his heroism, overshadowing the historical reality of a politician who, in 1980 and 1981, was equally rejected by the right and left (Cercas, 2009: 33).

The memory that operates in *Adolfo Suárez. Mi historia*, as such, is an institutionalized memory, a *lieux de memoire* (Nora, 1984). Like monuments and commemorations, the documentary appeals to a passive spectator, and its story is postulated as unidirectional and closed. There are no cracks in which an interrogation or dialogue might fit, nor do other voices break the unvaried speech to represent what had been put in crisis in 2014: the effectiveness and relevancy of the monarchy, the unquestionable validity of the Constitution, and ultimately, the effectiveness and legitimacy of the democratic institutions formed under Suárez's mandate.

A different approach to the transition and its protagonists is that offered by Albert Solé in *Bucarest. La memoria perdida*. This production was made with the support of TVE and TV3, and it broadcast on a thematic TVE channel on April 24, 2009. Solé constructed his story – a performative documentary, following Nichols's categorization (1991) – out of an urgent need: to ascertain a memory – of a family but also a country – in danger of extinction. On one hand, his father (Jordi Solé Tura) was suffering from Alzheimer's and had lost his memory as well as the contours of his personal identity and the identities of those who surrounded him. On the other hand, the society in which the filmmaker lived was dominated by a memory that had mythologised and monumentalised figures (like that of Adolfo Suárez) as well as a period (the transition from Francoism to democracy) loaded with contradictions.

However, Albert Solé, the leading narrator of the film, was not overly interested in the role his father played during the transition. Although the documentary was broadcast in 2008, to coincide with the thirtieth anniversary of the Constitution (an anniversary that was reflected in numerous televised documentaries), and although Solé Tura was a Father of the Constitution

from 1977 to 1978, his son made that role practically invisible in the film. The filmmaker was not as interested in the clear memories of his adolescence as of his childhood, the time most closely linked to the forging of his identity (García, 2014: 25). His childhood coincided with the period on which *Bucarest* focuses most of its attention, that of Solé Tura's anti-Francoist militancy and the ultimately utopian project of a democratic rupture that would overthrow the dictatorship. The subordination of the political-public to the familial-private, and the passing presentation of the period of 1975–1982 in *Bucarest* allows one to locate this production in the flexible coordinates of an alternative story that emphasizes and vindicates a project of political change different from that which has effectively been articulated since 1976. The documentary is a place in which 'lost memories' take shape, be they the personal, familial, or collective memories that Albert Solé recovers in his documentary, inspired in part by his father's autobiography. In the film, Solé Tura assesses the transition, justifying the voluntary renunciation as a collective vindicating memory in the face of Francoism, the inevitable solution among a population anxious for change, but which 'lived with the fear and caution of the immediate past' (Solé Tura, 1999: 351).

Albert Solé's childhood imagination was nourished by the experience of exile and hiding that he and his parents suffered, one inhabited by communist flags and posters of revolutionary heroes. But Albert Solé's first memories were also sown with fear, secrecy, and unexpected turns. He was born in 1962 in Bucharest under a false name, and he then emigrated to Paris with his parents, who were incapable of adapting to the difficult Romania of Nicolae Ceausescu. In 1965, Jordi Solé Tura left the PCE, although not his active militancy, which led to his arrest and imprisonment after he returned to Barcelona. In the mid-1970s, Solé Tura finally re-entered the ranks of the PCE.

Albert Solé's documentary traces a synoptic story of the transition. He only fleetingly commemorates the ETA's assassination of Luis Carrero Blanco in 1973, General Franco's death, the approval of the Spanish Constitution, and the attempted coup d'état of 1981 through archival images. These are points the filmmaker refers to but also reflects on in detail. He is interested in highlighting the ambiguity that hindered the political left in this period. The joy at Franco's death is countered by the fact that the dictatorship was not overthrown-but rather died out of its own accord, and that the approval of the Constitution was marked by resignations and the need to compromise with Francoist figures, such as the former minister Manuel Fraga Iribarne. In any case, it is symptomatic that the figures of Juan Carlos I and Adolfo Suárez remain radically invisible throughout this account, which thus diminishes the importance of the most characteristic points of the official story.

Bucarest shares many traits with the works of postmemory. It is a markedly subjective documentary that moves from the personal to the collective. Diversity and even confrontation prevail between the testimonies in the film. In *Bucarest* – a reflection about the familial, social, and political dimensions of memory (or memories) – those who recover (and judge) the past are predominantly well-known figures of Spanish political life: Manuel Fraga Iribarne, Jorge Semprún, the former secretary general of the PCE, Santiago Carrillo, and the former President of the autonomous Catalan government, Jordi Pujol.

Their testimonies enrich the film with versions of and contradicting opinions about the Cold War, tensions within the PCE, and the writing of the Constitution. These figures also relate the public side of Jordi Solé Tura, a politician who, despite having different origins than Suárez, struggled, like Suárez, to find his place in the world. Solé Tura was misunderstood by the apparatus of a party in which echoes of Stalinist bureaucratic methods lingered, even at the

beginning of the 1960s. He was relegated to second place in the law department of the University of Barcelona for his support of the anti-Francoist struggle and later questioned by Catalan nationalism for his defence of a federal Spain. He turned out to be defined as someone who, in his son's words, 'never believed too deeply in communism' and who always fought without regard for the price of a 'utopia of change'.

This is the sacrifice Albert Solé recovers in his 'postmemories' – that is, he recovers the struggle of an entire generation whose suffering and names were forgotten by History. In *Bucarest*, there is not only a place for the political statements known to all; rather, its narration is also supported with reflections, impressions, and anecdotes from close friends and family members, including the filmmaker's first wife and mother, the embodiment of intimate, but also fragile memory: during the course of filming the documentary she suffered a stroke that nearly put an end to her mnemonic speech.

Bucarest is a therapeutic documentary that allows its director to reconcile himself with his childhood, his family, and Alzheimer's disease. At the same time, it is also a testament to the need to work and project memory, understood as something collective, multiple, and changing (Halbwachs, 2004: 81). Unlike *Adolfo Suárez. Mi historia*, *Bucarest* uses homage (paid by the son to his father and all his companions in the struggle) only to immortalize the most elegiac versions of the story. While the documentary contains a will to defend the importance of the clandestine struggles and life in exile (Hatzmann, 2013: 159), it also seeks to discover keys in that past to think about the present and construct the future. This aim is demonstrated through the play of narrative tenses that operate in the film: the (past) tense that refers to Solé Tura's biography and the history of anti-Francoist militancy that continually dialogues with the (present) tense of the narration.

Bucarest ends with a highly symbolic scene: Jordi Solé Tura wanders, lost, through the Labyrinth Park of Horta in Barcelona with his granddaughter Noa, who happily helps him find some of the possible exits. Albert Solé stays out of the scene, although his gaze can still be found in that tangled space. This epilogue connects three different generations (past, present, and future), which, despite amnesia, illness, and confusion, seem disposed to keeping the complex work of writing history(ies) alive.

Conclusions

The article provides an overview of the kinds of television documentary that the Spanish democratic transition has evoked over the last three decades. A noteworthy strategy of memory present in this body of work has centred on emphasizing the leading role of the political elite and their capacity for understanding to overcome Francoism. This perspective has been summarized as a representation of the transition as an exercise in consensus *from above*. This focus is clearly reductionist, although it has provided a comprehensive and legitimizing vision of that period. These coordinates explain the eulogistic documentary *Adolfo Suárez. Mi historia*. This production proposes an exercise in memory situated within the standards of official or hegemonic memory. As a practice of audio-visual mediation, it presents an image of the former Prime Minister and the era he led as an immaculate and airtight space. This story does not even contain a place for the illness that irremediably altered the reliability of Suárez's memories, since in this story, memory is conceived as an assertive reaffirmation facing the risks of forgetting and the critical revisionism of later generations.

However, almost forty years after the death of Franco, the Spanish televised body of work about the transition has also been characterized by fissures and a progressive

diversification of readings. For example, the paradigm of the transition as an idyllic environment of consensus has been debated, and voices have multiplied about deficiencies in the collective memory. This has been a characteristic field for non-hegemonic or critical documentaries, which in a way have also functioned as symptoms of the growing discomfort that is currently pushing public opinion to seek new ways to speak the past and understand the present from the perspectives of personal subjectivity. It is within this focus that one should situate *Bucarest, la memoria perdida*, a documentary that pursues the biographical and political construction of Jordi Solé Tura. However, the work of memory that this film develops becomes complicated through a representation that fuses the private (domestic) and the public (political) spheres, the biopic and autobiography, an homage to the paternal generation and critical questions about the inherited past as well as the present that derives from it. This double play of representations, as well as the inclusion of the filmmaker's homodiegetic speech, gives rise to a narrative that formally and discursively distances itself from the official canon, proposing a thoughtful gaze on the value of history from the ethics of the reconstruction of memory.

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