

Documenting inherited memories: homage, redemption, and affect in *Entre el dictador y yo*

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ABSTRACT

Although the concept of postmemory emerged from reflections on the representation and transmission of the Holocaust, the term has come to describe a group of works produced in other geographical contexts that invoke equally traumatic pasts. Over the last two decades in Spain, a considerable number of documentaries has been produced by the generation following those who were victims of repression under the Franco regime. These are works of documentarians who approximate a past they do not remember that they nonetheless must interrogate in order to define themselves as political subjects. The following article reviews one of the earliest, the documentary *Entre el dictador y yo* (Between the Dictator and Me) (2005), a collective project undertaken on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of Franco's death. I analyze this film through the lens of memory and postmemory studies of Spain's traumatic past; this approach intends to offer a critical and comparative reading of that make up the documentary, each directed by documentarians born during the transition to democracy. Largely subjective in nature, these documentaries present themselves as exercises of political, social, and family memory about Spain's recent history, while at the same time they evidence the coexistence of multiple memories of the past.

1. Introduction: (post)memories and subjective documentaries

For many years now, Western society has dwelled in a 'present past' (Huyssen 2000, 21), also known as the 'era of the witness' (Wieviorka 1998). The recuperation and resignification of turbulent pasts have become common in many geographical contexts whose recent history is marked by violent conflict, totalitarian regimes, and even genocide (Rothberg 2009). Plaques, museums, monuments, reports, novels, essays, and films that feed off memory continue to circulate in streets and plazas, museums, television programming, editorial catalogues, film festivals. At the same time, in academic disciplines as diverse as sociology (Halbwachs 1994; Connerton 1989), historiography (Nora 1992) or philosophy (Todorov 1995; Ricoeur 2000), studies have been published that reflect on the contemporary explosion of memory. The mediatization of memory and its relation to new digital technologies and social networks have been richly analyzed in recent years (Van Dijck 2007; Hoskins 2011).

In this period of memory fever, many institutions, historians, and artists have particularly privileged the testimonies of those who suffered the horrors of war, genocide, and state violence. For the last half century, the figure of the survivor has become a valuable resource for the conservation and diffusion of collective memory (Baer 2005). Life writing, autobiographies, and personal narratives by common citizens have undermined the more traditional and totalizing approaches to the past, converting subjectivity and the inherent heteroglossia of this conjoining of 'varied and opposing voices' into prized goods (Burke 2001, 6).

That said, if the figure of the survivor is central to works on the memory and history of traumatic pasts, the study of processes of memory transmission and the ways that the latest generations rescue these narratives of violence from oblivion has gained importance in recent decades (Bond, Craps, and Vermeulen 2017). The progressive disappearance of survivors – both of the Holocaust and other barbarities around the world – necessarily entails the gradual replacement of communicative memory by cultural memory, to use Assman's terms (2008). In other words, the memory transmitted by eye witnesses to the historical event in question – a temporally limited memory, whose transmission spans three or four generations at most – loses ground to a memory based on literary, audiovisual, and artistic productions which, based on the recorded narratives of those eye witnesses, guarantee the survival of the memory into the future. These are works of postmemory, a concept that emerged in studies of Holocaust narratives, specifically of reflections on cultural products authored not by survivors of the concentration camps but by those who inherited narratives about those wrenching experiences (Hirsch 1997). 'Memory shot through with holes' (Raczynow and Astro 1994), 'inherited' (Lury 1998), 'vicarious' (Young 2002), 'prosthetic' (Landsberg 2004) memories, postmemory alludes to the processes of narrativization carried out by those who receive these troubled pasts. In this way, and in contrast to the survivor's shared or literal act of remembering, the hypermediated character of postmemory gives rise to cultural artifacts that critically and reflexively question their very means and mechanisms of representation (Young 2002).

On the other hand, postmemory is not only mediated memory but also affective memory, insofar as transmission of the trauma takes place, often, in the intimacy of the familial and personal sphere. For this reason, it is no accident that a majority of these works are structured around subjectivities of a markedly autobiographical character articulated through language but also silence, forgetting and absence. Many postmemory works are coded in terms of emotional experiences and bonds, since, in the first instance, affective necessity and the search for identity propel the elaboration of such works. Due to this subjective turn, postmemory works tend to suspend hegemonic versions of the past. They do so through narratives that privilege citation, intertextuality, irony, metafiction, and the hybridization of genres and formats (Hirsch 2012; Quílez Esteve 2014). Thus, beneath the exercise of creative experimentation we find that in many of these visual, audiovisual, and literary works prevails a political and condemnatory attitude toward the silencing that

often makes official memory suspect (as monopolizing and self-indulgent) (Rueda Laffond and Quílez Esteve 2015).

If we apply the most salient aspects of postmemory to specific cultural fields, such as non fiction film, we find a considerable number of titles that speak to us of identities almost always fractured, whether by a family history marked by trauma or by a present occupied by the need to redress and dignify the memory of the defeated. As the visual language preferred to evoke the past (Sánchez-Biosca 2005, 38), documentary film has become the primary site for creatively and critically resignifying inherited memories among some cohorts of these second and third generations. Accordingly, the family genealogy becomes a fertile field of investigation to which the filmmaker recurs and that he interrogates in order to shape his version of events. Oral testimonies, family photographs, home movies, letters, and personal diaries share space with documents from official archives in the process of audiovisual memory construction that neither hides its complexities nor its contradictions (Lane 2002; Bruzzi 2003; Cuevas 2013). Thus, for example, the descendants of Jews who managed to escape the gas chambers found in the documentary form a vehicle for denouncing Nazism and rediscovering a family tree marked by the trauma of death and flight. This is the case of Abraham Ravett, author of *Half Sister* (1985), *Everything's for you* (1989), *In Memory* (1993) and *The March* (1999), each of them pieces that move 'between the poles of self and history' (Berger 1997, 149); also of Boris Lehman, who in *À la recherche du lieu de ma naissance* (1990) sets off on a journey of self-discovery to Lausanne, the place of his birth and where his parents had settled after fleeing Nazism. Likewise, in post-dictatorship Argentina, films like *Papá Iván* (María Inés Roqué, 2000), *Los Rubios* (Albertina Carri, 2003), *Encontrando a Víctor* (Natalia Bruschtein, 2005), and *M* (Nicolás Prividera 2007) are directed by children of the disappeared who endeavor to delve into a violent past in order to condemn a present guilty of forgetting. And in Chile, films like *La Quemadura* (René Ballesteros 2009), *El eco de las canciones* (Antonia Rossi, 2010), *El edificio de los chilenos* (Macarena Aguiló, 2010), and *En algún lugar del cielo* (Alejandra Carmona 2013) stand out for similar reasons as performative documentaries (Nichols 2003) in which the historical – the Pinochet dictatorship – is evoked from within the individual and intersubjective condition of the filmmakers, victims of orphanancy or exile.

In Spain, since the beginning of the twenty-first century some documentary filmmakers belonging to the generation following those who were victims of repression under the Franco regime, are producing a substantial number of films that evoke this conflictive past. In the pages that follow, I will analyze one of Spanish documentary cinema's most representative postmemory films: *Entre el dictador y yo* (Between the Dictator and Me) (2005), a collective project undertaken on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of Franco's death. For the most part markedly subjective, each of the six documentary shorts that make up the film approach the social and political memory of Francoist Spain by drawing on the documentarian's relationship, almost always personal, to this past. As we will see, this relationship is determined by the account (the memory) of that period as told by the generation that suffered the repression of the dictatorship: grandparents, parents, or

simply elders who, in front of the filmmakers' cameras, try to put words to their feelings, experiences, and memories of a turbulent and complex past.

2. Legacies of the Civil War and Francoism: Spanish documentary and post memory

The turn of the twenty-first century in Spain coincided with the notable emergence of literary and audiovisual exercises defined as memory and postmemory narratives about the country's recent past. Indeed, the beginning of the Second Republic, the end of the Spanish Civil War, the failed 1981 coup d'état (23-F), and the death of Francisco Franco have become major memory landmarks in the national imaginary. Nonetheless, the ways in which such events are remembered varies depending on the group or generation that resignifies them in the present. For example, in the last two decades of the twentieth century, the transition to democracy enjoyed a positive perception in Spanish collective memory, a fact that helped to legitimize the monarchy, the political system, and the country's territorial organization (Edles 1995; Aguilar 2008). But this image of the transition as consensus, national reconciliation, and the overcoming of trauma has begun to fracture as the generation of grandchildren, less fearful of confronting perpetrators and reopening old conflicts, has come of age (Rueda Laffond 2015). The last economic crisis and the continual corruption cases that beset the political class and the royal family have also contributed to this paradigm shift (Quílez Esteve and Rueda Laffond 2017). The false documentary *Operación Palace* (Jordi Évole, 2014) is perhaps the audiovisual work that best illustrates this criticism of the dominant historical discourse about the transition. In fact, the fictionalized revisiting of the coup d'état in Évole's fake was poorly received on social media by the generation that witnessed the 23-F in comparison with the younger generations born in democracy that applauded the director's incisive critique (Montagut and Araña 2017). *Operación Palace* is not, however, an isolated example of counter-narrative in Spain's contemporary cultural scene. In fact, in recent decades, many filmmakers among the younger generation have made documentary film into a creative space for visualizing indictments of the lack of policies for juridical and symbolic reparation for victims of the war and dictatorship. Thus non-fiction film has become a field for intervention and change, wherein they make audible, often in the first person, the voice of the defeated. Thus, in *Nadar* (Carla Subirana 2008), the director tries to reconstruct the biography of her grandfather, who was shot by the Franco regime, through an investigation that she leads. Similarly departing from a personal and emotional voyage to one's herself origins, the documentaries *Muerte en el valle* (Christina Hardt, 1996), *Bucarest, la memoria perdida* (Albert Solé, 2008), *El muro de los olvidados* (Joseph Gordillo, 2008) and *Cartas a María* (María García Ribot, 2015), propose to redeem the past, reclaiming the necessity to remember and rehabilitate the victims while exposing the long and complex path one still must walk to achieve this goal. From the perspective of gender, *Mujeres en pie de guerra* (Susana Koska, 2004), *La Isla de Chelo* (Odette Martínez Maler, Ismael Cobo and Lateitia Puertas, 2008), *La madre que los parió* (Inma Jiménez, 2008) and *El gran vuelo* (Carolina Astudillo, 2014), place women's traumatic experiences during the war and under fascism at

the center of their narratives. Finally, María Ruido –author of *La memoria interior* (2002), *Plan Rosebud I and II* (2008) and *Lo que no puede ser visto debe ser mostrado* (2010) – gives a more experimental and essayistic treatment of non-fiction cinema and archival material that reflects on the mechanisms by which memory is constructed in relation to the narration of history. These films exemplify the current diversification of memories and of historiographical focuses on the past that exist alongside and often oppose official strategies that monumentalize Spain’s repressive past.

In addition to the aforementioned titles, *Entre el dictador y yo* stands out for its collective character. The film inserts itself into the array of initiatives and activities that took place around the thirtieth anniversary of the death of Franco, celebrated on 20 November 2005. Publishing houses, social and cultural institutions and the media took advantage of the date’s symbolic power to remember, analyze and denounce the figure who headed the almost forty-year dictatorship. Documentaries and reportages such as *Yo tenía 30 años cuando Franco murió* (Gustavo Cortés Bueno, 2005), *Franco y Salazar* (Fernando Bizarro and Joaquim Vieira, 2004), or *Franco: el centinela de Occidente* (Jaume Serra and Iñaki Iriarte, 2005), were broadcast on different television channels the week of the anniversary. Through archival images, photographs, and films of the regime as well as contributions by eyewitnesses and experts (historians, biographers and politicians), these productions approached the late-Franco period and the transition with previously unreleased facts, anecdotes, and images of the dictator.

Produced by Estudi PlayTime and Televisó de Catalunya, *Entre el dictador y yo* was a project sponsored by the Programa per al Memorial Democràtic (Program for Democratic Memory), part of the Departament de Relacions Institucionals i de Participació (Department of Institutional Relations and Participation) of the Generalitat de Catalunya (the Catalan Government). With the enactment of Decree 2/2004 on 7 January 2004, this program has been the organ designated by the Generalitat for enacting public policy for the recuperation, reclamation, and dissemination of historical memory in Catalonia, specifically, of the Second Republic, the Civil War, and Francoism (Bono 2006, 51).

These policies have given rise to a network of Memory Spaces, in which vestiges of the Civil War and post-War period have been recuperated, in the celebration of many acts of homage to the victims of Francoism, and in the financing and organization of exhibitions, workshops, recitals, colloquia, plays, and audiovisual projects that treat these questions. After the passage by the Spanish government of the law 52/2007 on Historical Memory, the Memorial Democràtic was inaugurated on 1 November 2007. Going forward, this new institution centrally coordinated the many measures and initiatives intended to assure the restoration of dignity to the victims of totalitarian repression.

Entre el dictador y yo premiered on 20 November itself in over a hundred locations across Catalonia, fifteen Spanish and fifteen European cities, including Lisbon, Rome and Paris, joining the rest of the day’s tributes to democracy and freedom. In conjunction with this initiative, the Memorial Democràtic sponsored another activity that encouraged members of the public to recuperate their memories of and feelings about the figure of Franco. The

installation 'Escolta, Franco!' housed at the Museu de Vilafranca del Penedès, allowed visitors to openly express what previously had been impossible due to censorship and fear. A bust of Franco was placed in the museum's patio so that whoever wanted to could draw, paint, or film themselves with the statue or just speak to it. Similarly, in the case of *Entre el dictador y yo*, there was a desire to engage citizens in light of their memories and postmemories of Francoism. Hence, after each of the free, public projections, symposia and debates were organized in various civic centers where the documentary had been shown (Barriales-Bouche 2007, 140). As such, the project was widely accessible and perfectly in keeping with the mission of the sponsoring program: to advance and commemorate traumatic memories in an Autonomous Community, namely Catalonia, whose institutions, language (Catalan), and culture had been harshly repressed by Franco's regime.

Entre el dictador y yo is a collective film. Its patrons commissioned six documentary shorts, each no more than ten-minutes long, by six young filmmakers born during the Spanish Transition. Juan Barrero (Seville, 1980), Guillem López (Barcelona, 1975), Sandra Ruesga (Madrid, 1975), Elia Urquiza (Pamplona, 1979), Raúl Cuevas (L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, 1978) and Mònica Rovira (Les Masies de Voltregà, 1978) accepted the challenge to produce audiovisual works departing from the following premise: 'When was the first time I heard of Franco?' The filmmakers invited to participate in the film were asked to reflect on the impressions and sensations aroused by the figure of the dictator but without using official archival images and without straying into other historical periods such as the Second Republic or the Civil War (Lobo 2009, 814).

The use of the first person, both in the film's title and premise, evidences the patron's desire to use these short works to nurture a necessarily plural, shifting, and subjective memory of the past. Nonetheless, if this multiplicity of viewpoints is accentuated by the filmmakers' different geographical and socioeconomic backgrounds, a common element undergirds this array of visions: the documentarians' will to revise the legacy of a historical figure whose shadow still casts its pall across their respective presents. As a film firmly entrenched in postmemory cultural production, *Entre el dictador y yo* shares its critical power when treating official history and the hegemonic politics of memory. The filmmakers recuperate space for the remembrance of Francoism in order to tilt at the Transition's 'pact,' in which the atrocities of Francoism were to be buried for the sake of assuring the stability of the democracy.

Parallel to this denunciation of the visible remains of Francoism, Ruesga, López, Urquiza, Rovira, Barrero, and Cuevas use their cameras to incite relatives, neighbors and passersby in order to register expressive or involuntary silences, amnesia, blame shirking, even outright sympathy harbored by some sectors of the Spanish citizenry by the cruel but also legendary figure of Franco. Indeed, the six documentarians are more interested in the symbolic image of the dictator and in the emotional facet of his legacy, than in the profiles of him produced by film and television over the years that ranged from Franco 'forever in uniform' and savior of the fatherland to Franco 'the simple-minded grandfather and guardian of the nation' (Guerra 2015, 116).

3. Present pasts in *Entre el dictador y yo*

In *The Generation of Postmemory*, Hirsch points to the family as the privileged site for the transmission of a traumatic past and to familial language as the 'lingua franca' that facilitates identification among different generations while at the same time confirming the distances and differences that mediate them (2012, 39). Thus, in *Nadar*, Carla Subirana recurs to first person narrative to tell the story of women affected by the absence of masculine figures in the family. In this case, the emotional bond between the filmmaker, her mother, and grandmother, who suffers from Alzheimer's, pushes Subirana to the open a wide-ranging investigation into her grandfather Juan Arroniz's life and execution by firing squad. Likewise, in *Cartas a María*, Maite García Ribot makes use of familial language, collected from personal letters sent by her grandfather Pedro to her grandmother María in order to reconstruct Pedro's biography, a life marked by anarchist militancy, forced labor, and exile. Lastly, in *Bucarest, la memoria perdida* Albert Solé turns to his mother's story in order to reconstruct the life and work of his senile father, Jordi Solé Tura, one of the seven drafters of the Spanish Constitution of 1978.

In *Entre el dictador y yo*, Sandra Ruesga also uses the family story to assemble a kind of personal puzzle of the past. In this case, however, the relationship that the director establishes with her elders illustrates the intimate nature of the intergenerational transmission of memory while at the same time making visible a certain rootlessness and her and her parents' mutual incomprehension. After rolling the titles and credits made from cutout letters, as if Ruesga wants to underline the domestic character of the subsequent images, the soundtrack begins with the dialogue between the filmmaker and her parents that constitutes the film. The motivation for her phone call is quite clear: to undertake a voyage of personal discovery through their political memory by means of a searching analysis of family home videos shot when she was but a girl. Thus these images serve the short as 'points of memory,' that is, like the archival photographs and objects of wartime Jewish life that Hirsch analyzes, as tools for and also emblems of the process of memory transmission. In the case of Ruesga's film, however, home videos are at once the sources of arguments and accusations and the screen onto which two opposing perspectives are projected (that of Ruesga and of her parents), perspectives about how one lived or should have lived under Franco.

Thus, the excursions to the Valley of the Fallen, in which we see a cheerful Ruesga walking with her brother around the monumental tomb, are revisited by a headstrong filmmaker who demands to know from her elders the true reason for these trips. 'It was close by, so we took a trip there,' her father tries to explain. In instances like these, memory is shown to be heterogeneous, variable, provisional, and even contentious (Aróstegui 2006, 59). From her position as a child of democracy, Ruesga cannot understand how a site of Francoist memory like the Valley of the Fallen – constructed by the regime and today serving as the dictator's mausoleum – was not perceived as such by her parents. Nor can she comprehend, later in the film, how her mother could dismiss the torture suffered by political prisoners as mere

rumor unworthy of her attention. At one point in the film, her uncomfortable father claims, 'I didn't have any interest in dragging out the story. If you weren't interested either, well then the feeling was mutual.' However, his daughter's desire to know and to question her elders' passivity toward a past marked by totalitarianism is evident: not only in her tense conversation with them, but also in her recontextualization of several images now presented to us as documents of great collective value. So, although the film may seem to show merely an intergenerational disagreement, it ends up becoming 'a mini chronicle of Spanish life in the late-Franco period' (Cuevas 2012, 119), as well as a fierce criticism of the culture of forgetting that prevailed during the first years of freedom and democracy.

If in Ruesga's short, the figure of Franco and what it represents strains the directors' relationship to her parents, Guillem López's film skips a generation to recuperate the testimony of his grandfather, whose story occurs at the end of the film, over the image of a beach that recalls the passage of time and the intangibility of memory. Four important dates in the filmmaker's biography and Spanish history structure the short. The first, 1975, marks López's birth and the dictator's death, a coincidence represented by a corresponding audiovisual overlap. Thus, as we observe photographs and family videos showing the director as a newborn, off-screen we hear the voice of then-president Carlos Arias Navarro announcing on radio and television that Franco had died. As with Ruesga, the conceit of a subjective journey through memory and the filmmaker's infancy contrast with a world whose history is marked by instability, forgetting, and violence (Barriales-Bouche 2007, 143). This becomes clear in the second part of the piece that corresponds to 1981. In this section's soundtrack, López alternates children's songs from his memory with the archival sound of then lieutenant colonel Antonio Tejero attacking the Congress of Deputies during the failed coup of 23 February. Only in the section corresponding to 1990 do we hear for the first time the voice of his grandfather, who describes some of his experiences as a survivor of the Civil War and the French concentration camps. In 2005, López takes responsibility for this legacy, establishing a dialogue with it tinged with the phantasmagorical by the spatio-temporal difference that mediates them. The film closes with a close-up of the director gazing into the camera, while off-screen Franco's voice thanks the Spanish people for their unconditional support. The director's self-portrait concludes a piece that weaves together the personal and the collective in a complex and rich play of subjectivities and memories.

Like López and Ruesga, both Elia Urquiza and Mònica Rovira discover that their journeys through the recent memories of their families and, by extension, of Spain, are beset by silences and confrontations. Both recur to their grandparents, but the testimonies that they collect do not clarify either what happened during Francoism or what Franco truly represented to Spaniards. These failures nonetheless represent a capital element in their films' narrative approaches. As in other works of postmemory, these two shorts consciously make manifest the ambiguities and tensions inherent in any intergenerational memory transmission (Apel 2002, 21). However, the filmmakers differ in how they portray them in their documentaries.

Urquiza chooses to interweave the voice of her grandmother recorded over the telephone with images of tourists and passersby strolling on the town hall square that was dominated by an equestrian statue of Franco until December 2008. Urquiza needs no words to denounce the continued existence of Francoist monuments and symbols in twenty-first-century Spain, which evidences the ongoing clash of memories and the survival of – or at least a nostalgia for (De Andrés 2004) – the ideas and values of the national-catholic regime in the democratic present. Instead, close-ups of the horse's testicles or of the dictator's head covered in seagull excrement serve to deride a figure that must have once exuded magnificence and authority. Conscious of the fact that the past survives not only in photographs and objects but also in streets, buildings, and monuments (Hirsch 2012, 41), Urquiza chooses to invoke this past with her camera, which she wields like a pointing, somewhat accusatory finger. Her criticism extends to those who live with ease and some joy alongside such a perverse statue. In this way, Urquiza's short immortalizes those who pose before the statue for a photograph, the parents who play with their children beneath it, the man napping beside it, and finally her grandmother who reads a newspaper on one of the benches circling the bronze figure. As Barriales-Bouche is right to point out, these images perfectly illustrate Spaniards' relationship to their country's traumatic past: 'Between the indifference of those who lived under his regime and the disinterest of those who were born after his death, Franco remains unquestioned in an emotional limbo' (2007, 114).

The soundtrack to Urquiza's piece is similarly subject to an interesting play of contrasts. Urquiza refuses the first person, instead assigning the narration to three clear and conflicting instances. First, we hear the voice of the guide on Santander's tourist train that serves as the vehicle for the institutional narrative of the city's past, stopping at emblematic sites, such as Magdalena Palace or Bikini Beach. Tellingly, though, the guide does not spend one moment to explain the presence of the statue in the city center. Second, this narrative is interspersed with fragments from speeches by Franco, who, as in López's short, gratefully addresses those who collaborated with 'enthusiasm, commitment, and self-sacrifice' in the construction of a 'unified, great, and free Spain.' Finally, this polyphonic structure closes with the telephone testimony of Urquiza's grandmother, who choppily, confusedly and almost inaudibly demonstrates the impossibility of bequeathing a full and coherent narration of her memories. 'I don't know how to explain, I don't, I'm making a mess of it ...' she stammers in one of her responses. The legacy that she leaves her granddaughter is precisely what Urquiza's audiovisual piece struggles against: the absolute conviction that 'we have to look forward,' and that, just as Ruesga's parents maintained, if the horrors of the dictatorship were so tremendous, it is better to forget them. Hence, the image of Franco that Urquiza would have provided us in her short is reduced to an equestrian statue, whose presence is as grotesque and alarming as the will to forget and to ignore of a woman – and a society – who witnessed Francoism from beginning to end.

If Urquiza resorts to the play of recorded sounds in order to approximate the dictatorship's long shadow on everyday life in present-day Spain, Rovira returns to the place of her birth – a town in the Catalan county of Osona – from where she sets out on her personal journey to the past. As in other postmemory documentaries – *Los Rubios* or *Nadar*, for example – the

young documentarian realizes a metareflexive and performative exercise in which, playing herself, she demonstrates the inherent artifice of any process of making meaning of past or present reality. In fact, the first part of the documentary is devoted to a dialogue between the filmmaker and her brother shot in the countryside that extends beyond the town. While contemplating the landscape, the youths strike up a conversation about what they can and cannot ask in the documentary that Rovira is supposed to film about the first time she heard of Franco. The scene, which could have been part of the short's 'making of,' nonetheless, subjects the film's conceit to a game of mirrors that reveals the fine line separating the real from the fictional, memory from imagination. 'What do you want me to tell you? That Franco is dead?' she asks her brother. 'But you want to say something, don't you?' he responds to his sister, who concludes that everything she can say about the past is little more than truisms.

After this sort of declaration of intent, Rovira chooses to approach the generation that suffered the war only to rediscover that grasping this knowledge is just as slippery and piecemeal. From her grandmother's testimony she only learns that her grandfather became mayor of Sant Hipòlit during the dictatorship. 'They forced him to do it, and since he didn't have two dimes to rub together, well, he couldn't refuse,' the woman justifies herself to her granddaughter. Likewise, her grandfather, in his nineties, neither can nor wants to offer many details. 'That's enough, I'm tired,' he begs in the thinnest of voices. At this point, Rovira abandons her already meager questioning to deploy her 'apparatus for the production of affects': close-ups show us how she kisses her grandfather, caresses his wrinkled hands, and then falls silent (Aguilar 2015, 148). As in many postmemory productions, in this documentary too the emotional aspect of the search permeates the political and social reflections of the filmmaker, who, in this case, chooses to end the film with her own testimony. 'It's difficult to talk about or try to make a film about something that you haven't experienced,' Rovira concludes. In its symbolically charged imagery – rusted chains, sunsets, slow-moving snails, or tolling bells that recall darkness and death – the film represents the failure to find concrete answers. In this way, Rovira's piece takes on a ghostly tone recalling a past that never passes: that of Francoism.

Juan Barrero's contribution to *Entre el dictador y yo* introduces itself in the terrain of reflexive subjective documentary insofar as it turns on the challenges and contradictions of carrying out the task rather than depict the images of Franco he has inherited. 'When I got the commission, I thought it would be easy, but there are so many gaps ...' he recognizes in a voice-over in the film's first seconds as the screen reproduces a home video shot in 1993. In an off-screen conversation with his father, we discover that those images were shot on Barrero's thirteenth birthday. That day, his father had taken him to Burgos to hunt. On the way back, he stopped for coffee at the Azor Motel as his son slept in the car. The motel shares its name with the yacht that Franco would use in summer to fish off the coast of Cantabria. The proprietor of the motel bought the boat in 1992, transporting it to the site to form part of his hotel complex. In 1993, Barrero could not go inside, so twelve years later he returns to the site to explore the bowels of this relic of Francoism.

As in Ruesga's and López's pieces, this journey through Spain's collective memory departs from recollecting in the present childhood experiences recorded less in the documentarian's memory than in family archives, now reread and resignified by the adult filmmaker. Barrero's piece uses these images as a kind of preamble, since the rest of the film is dedicated to his 2005 journey. When he returns to the Azor Motel he finds the ship in a state of ruin and he meets its owner, Lázaro González, who explains how he failed in his attempt to capitalize on the dictator's yacht. The images Barrero captures during his visit contrast with the broken dreams González details to the camera: Franco's berth, which should have attracted Spaniards who would be delighted to sleep in the dictator's bed, is falling to pieces. At this point, Barrero wonders about the potency of Francoism in the present and about the difficulty of healing the wounds opened by the dictatorship, symbolized by the ruins that still occupy a determined time and space: 'How long does it take to permanently dismantle a dictator's bedroom? How hard is it to unscrew the bed, dismount the mirror, empty the drains?' he asks in an intersubjective voice-over.

The last part of Barrero's short bears many similarities to Urquiza's piece. As the equestrian statue of the dictator is invisible for some and an object of curiosity for others, so does Franco's yacht lose its historicity when encountered by younger generations. In the film's last scenes, a group of children occupy the Azor, playing in its rooms as if it were a playground. Like the statue, the boat's presence in this space is somehow illogical and absurd, and not only because it is surrounded by land and not by sea, but primarily because it symbolizes a past that should have fully healed under democracy but that nonetheless persists.

Among the shorts in *Entre el dictador y yo*, Raúl Cuevas's is furthest from the director's personal and family history. In contrast to the other pieces, his short accords with what Hirsch has called 'filial postmemory,' insofar as Cueva's position is more of a generational rather than a genealogical cast – what Hirsch would call 'familial postmemory' (2012, 22). Also born during Spain's transition, Cuevas feels himself just as much the heir of a traumatic memory that he resignifies over the course of his film, although the way he does so takes distance from the strictly subjective and affective. Even so, his short begins with a voiceover narrated by a voice that corresponds to the director and his personal situation. 'I've decided to go to different cities and talk to people like me who live in peripheral neighborhoods, bedroom communities built during the Franco years,' states the director, who was born in Bellvitge, on the outskirts of Barcelona. His journey to the past departs from the memories of dictatorship of those living in social housing blocks, an architectural and urban-planning model implemented on a massive scale in the sixties and seventies under the Franco regime's 'Plan Nacional de Vivienda' (National Housing Plan). In those years, many social housing complexes were constructed in suburban areas, typified by the geometric layout of numerous towers up to thirteen-stories tall and capable of housing up to 2000 inhabitants per hectare (García Vázquez 2015). In Cuevas's documentary, the plazas and streets of these working-class neighborhoods become the ideal setting for eliciting, in a visually uniform space, diverse and opposing memories of Franco and his regime. Among the many neighbors who talk about the to them, one almost ninety-year-old neighborhood and what

woman stands out, a woman who suffered the brunt of the war and postwar period and who today prefers to keep quiet: 'I don't even want to recall, because the day I do, my hair stands up in horror.' Another woman defends the dictator, to whom she owes the economic stability that she and her children enjoy. A third woman, much younger, complains about the cramped apartments: 'They packed them in like sardines, and grateful ones at that!' It is in just these diverse and contrasting spaces that Cuevas recognizes himself as a social and political subject, because in neighborhoods like these he can metonymically identify with his parents, friends, neighbors, and himself.

The short ends much as Barrero's piece did, by bringing to the screen the generation following that of Cuevas. The filmmaker asks them about Franco, too. Their responses betray the superficiality of ignorance and lack of understanding. 'Franco did some good things and some bad things. I don't know the good things he did. My dad told me,' one excuses himself. 'He built this neighborhood for people to live,' another, who seems to be a friend, chimes in. This conclusion reaffirms three uncontestable facts: first, that there is widespread disinterest in Spain's recent history; second, that memory is made up of stories that are transmitted, resignified, and molded from one generation to the next; and third, that Franco is a ghost that still haunts beaches, fields, roadside motels, neighborhoods, and families.

4. Conclusions

For the task of rewriting the past, the choice of a self-referential even confessional style of non-fiction film seems to corroborate the power of this medium not only for invoking the historical but also for constructing genealogical trees and familial memories punctuated by silences, disappearances, and fear. In fact, documentary films that explore the personal and intimate need not limit themselves to the figure of the documentarian and the present he inhabits. Until *Entre el dictador y yo*, it was uncommon in Spain to reflect on national history from the personal perspective of the filmmakers and their family histories. This may be due to the fact that, until then, members of this second generation were not yet old enough to critically and creatively approach a traumatic past of war and dictatorship. Since then, Spain has produced a notable array of documentary films that, like the one analyzed here, draw on affect, emotion, and empathy for the testimonies of survivors of this traumatic past to articulate their reading of history and (post)memory. The films *Nadar*, *Cartas a María* and *Bucarest, la memoria perdida*, mentioned above, are probably the most significant in this regard.

In the foregoing pages, we have seen how in *Entre el dictador y yo*, Ruesga, López, Urquiza, Rovira, Barrero, and Cuevas approach the figure of Franco by exhibiting all of the gaps, silences, contradictions, and flaws involved in this task of understanding. As in other postmodern documentaries, History here is not read as a complete and apprehensible totality, but rather as an uneven collection of fragments invoked by fluid and changing memories. Each of the filmmakers employs various strategies to audiovisually depict this

assemblage. Ruesga and Urquiza choose to oppose their need to know with the passivity of a generation – that of the parent and grandparents, respectively – that wants to turn the page and go on living tranquilly in a comfortable present. López stages the emotional and biographical distance that separates the tumultuous years of the postwar period and dictatorship by conjugating family photographs from his childhood with the testimonial narrative of his grandfather, a republican who survived totalitarian repression. Rovira returns to the town of her birth only to discover more questions than answers about her grandfather's Francoist past in a performative exercise that attends to the inevitably constructed nature of every narrative. Barrero, for his part, undertakes a journey through a landscape, like so many places in Spain, dotted with the ruins of a past that has not come to a close, politically or socially. And finally, Cuevas advances a polyphonic short that, from a class perspective, gathers voices and opinions that differ as to what Franco signified and signifies in everyday life today.

Entre el dictador y yo stands out in the corpus of postmemory documentary films made in Spain in recent years for its collective approach that, with relatively short pieces, manages to shape a provocative generational view of Spaniards' political, social, and emotional management of their recent past. Even though the six shorts are decidedly personal, each is motivated by a search that differs from that of the historian or the archaeologist by immersing itself in the world of affective relations. From the site of the family, this new generation of filmmakers makes its claims against a society too passive toward the reparation of the wounds of war and Francoism. The film gives an account of this inaction with the final goal of spurring the work of collective memory and its transmission. After viewing it, the portrait of Franco we are left with is blurry, intransigent, even ghostly; but so too are the legacies of the past that must be continually rethought and resignified by academics and artists. Only in this way, these filmmakers seem to say, can we critically intervene, with more or less success, in an anaesthetised present that suffers, in different ways in different places, from an objectionable disposition to forget.

Notes on contributor

Laia Quílez Esteve earned a PhD in Communication Studies from the Universitat Rovira I Virgili (Spain), where she works as researcher and professor. Her research focuses on the study of documentary representations of memory and postmemory of contemporary mass traumas (in particular Latin American dictatorships and the Spanish Civil War). She has published several articles on these topics in high-profile journals (*Memory Studies*, *Spanish Journal of Cultural Studies*, *Hispanic Review*, *Catalan Journal of Communication and Cultural Studies*, *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, *Historia y Comunicación Social*). She led the project 'Second Degree Memories: Postmemory of the Civil War, the Franco Dictatorship and the Transition in Contemporary Spanish Society' (Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, Ref. CSO2013-41594-P), and she co-edited the book *Posmemoria de la Guerra Civil y el Franquismo: Narrativas audiovisuales y producciones culturales en el siglo XXI* (Comares, 2017). She currently directs the project 'Gender Articulations in

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