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## The Reawakening of the Sleeping Voices: Spanish Women's Experiences Under the Franco Regime

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The Reawakening of the Sleeping Voices: Spanish Women's Experiences Under the Franco  
Regime

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of Languages and Literature of Bard College

by  
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	6
Chapter 1: Validation of Trauma Through Testimony in <i>La Voz Dormida</i> .	21
Chapter 2: Reflections of Belonging to “ <i>los vencedores</i> ” in <i>Habíamos ganado la guerra</i> .....	53
Conclusion.....	84
Works Cited.....	86

## Preface

The idea of writing my senior project on Spanish women's testimonies from the period of the Civil War arose during my semester abroad at Universidad Antonio de Nebrija in Madrid, Spain. There, I had the opportunity to take a course called *Women's Roles in Present Spain* with Professor Luisa Sánchez Rivas. One day in class while we were discussing the role of Spanish women under Franco, the professor recommended the novel *La voz dormida* by Dulce Chacón and Esther Tusquets' autobiography *Habíamos ganado la guerra* as suggested reading. I have always been fascinated by the topic of the Spanish Civil War since my Republican great-grandparents fled Madrid as a result of this conflict. My family and I eventually achieved Spanish citizenship through the Historical Memory Law in 2007, part of which granted passports to the children and grandchildren of Republicans. My great-grandparents never spoke of the topic to my father, nor did my grandfather ever speak about it to his children or grandchildren. In present-day Spain, this topic is seldom discussed in the public eye nor is it taught in schools as a result of the 1977 "pacto del olvido". As a woman, I am repulsed by the misogyny normalized by Francoism. The topic of women's experiences under oppression during this time period have seldom been addressed in academia. My reason for choosing this topic is so that I can fully grasp the carnage and human rights abuses directed at Spanish Republicans like my own family who were forced to flee first to France and eventually to Venezuela. I made a conscious choice in my decision of which authors and narratives to use because I wanted to be inclusive of the perspective of both the winners and the defeated.

Both authors depict life women's life in Francoist Spain from two fundamentally different perspectives, as *La voz dormida* takes place in Las Ventas Women's Prison and the protagonists are imprisoned Republican women, while *Habíamos ganado la guerra* is an autobiography in which

Tusquets recounts her youth as a member of the Franco-supporting, bourgeoisie in postwar Barcelona. I am taking an analytical approach to writing this project to establish how testimony is indeed literature. In the introduction, I state the necessary historical context of the issue of historical memory in Spain, my intentions behind writing this project, and declare my thesis. The second chapter covers the essential aspects of *La voz dormida*, such as Las Ventas as a setting and the prevalence of testimonial narratives, which combine reality into the fictional narrative. The third chapter focuses on themes prevalent in *Habíamos ganado la guerra*, such as class & gender in Francoist Spain & autobiography as testimony. The final chapter compares and contrasts the key points of both novels. The main likeness between the two novels is their categorization as examples of testimonial literature, as well as the presence of transgenerational transmission of trauma and historical memory. Both forms of testimonial narratives and autobiographies are capable of depicting life in times of tyranny as they consist of substantial evidence of actual events.

## Introduction

### Historical Background

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) was a pivotal moment in the nation's contemporary history characterized by intense social and political divisions among civilians that remain alive in the twenty-first century. Following the victory of the fascist *Nacionales* over the anti-monarchist Republicans in 1939, the Franco regime lasted nearly forty years, far longer than Hitler or Mussolini, until General Franco's death in 1975. It was not until 2007 when the Spanish Congress of Deputies under the government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) approved the "Ley de la memoria histórica" (Historical Memory Law) signed by King Juan Carlos, that recognized the persecution of Republicans during the Civil War and in the years following (Encarnación 2). The Historical Memory Law does not address a Republican or Nationalist story, but "nuestra historia", a democratic memory on behalf of all Spaniards:

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 forzosos 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](http://leymemoria.mjusticia.es/paginas/es/ley_memoria.html))

During the transition back to democracy Spain's leading political parties on both the right and left negotiated an informal agreement granting amnesty to crimes committed before 1977 known as the "Pact of Forgetting" (2). This pact meant the avoidance of any attempt at seeking justice for the human rights abuses committed under Franco. Francoist authorities referred to the number of total casualties during the war as "un millón de muertos", a vague statistic exaggerated by the regime to suggest "ownership of the victims by the Nationalist side" (Aguilar 75). The reduction of Republican casualties to just a statistic of "one million dead" implies that "the only deaths were those of the winning side; as if no Republicans had died on the fronts and in the rearguard, or had been shot in the subsequent period of repression" (75).

Several different approaches can be taken to understand the plight of Republican Spaniards who survived the Civil War and lived to tell their stories. Marianne Hirsch defines the concept of "post-memory" as "the relationship of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma to the experiences of their parents, experiences that they remember only as the narratives and images with which they grew up, but that are so powerful, so monumental, as to constitute memories in their own right" (9). Transmission of cultural trauma allows for a distance between the individual who experienced the events directly and the second-generation who is the one retelling their story. Hirsch's narrative is centered on Holocaust survivors and their descendants' knowledge of past events. It is also how the next generation can contemplate, validate, reconstruct, and reintegrate the traumatized history.

On the other hand, Jo Labanyi rejects the applicability of trauma theory as developed by Hirsch, mainly used regarding the context of the Holocaust because "this psychoanalytical narrative turns survivors of traumatic events into victims of other kinds of violence" (24). She quotes a conversation with Spanish anthropologist Francisco Exteberria where he recounts the experiences of



his mother and aunt who were nurses with the Republican Army during the Civil War. When he finally asked his aunt about their time serving in the war she was shocked that he knew and explained that her reasoning behind never speaking about their experiences with the family to protect them. Although by the 1960s Francoist Spain had already embraced capitalist development and was overcoming the hardships of the Civil War, the children of Republicans were still branded as “hijos de rojos” and subjected to public ridicule. Therefore, Hirsch’s studies on the lasting effects of trauma may not be pertinent to the cases of Republican survivors such as Exteberria’s mother and aunt, for whom silence is voluntary rather than representing a failure of memory and chosen as a coping strategy. In oral testimonies conducted with those who lived through the Civil War and early years of the dictatorship, many survivors have shown a remarkable ability to recall the details of events that happened over some sixty or seventy years ago (24). Labanyi cites anthropologist Francisco Ferrándiz who has worked with relatives of victims during the exhumations of mass graves, a process that encouraged many of them to open up about their experiences for the first time. Ferrándiz has observed that some survivors have extreme difficulty articulating these experiences into words for the first time, as they have acquired a forced silence for so long as a strategy of survival. The second generation, the children of Civil War survivors, often carry a burden of guilt for having done nothing to alleviate their parents’ suffering, leaving the third generation or *nietos* of survivors to take on the role of “recovering historical memory” (25).

In the 1990s before the implementation of the Historical Memory Law in 2007, cultural discourse on the war and dictatorship emerged, known as the “memory boom” (26). However, newfound tangible evidence in the form of novels, films, and documentaries, was enough to spark public debate about human rights abuses under Franco without a parallel political discourse. Much of the debates on historical memory were triggered by post-dictatorial processes in South America’s

southern cone. The “memory boom” is considered to have officially started in 1998 after Spanish Judge Baltasar Garzón issued an international warrant for former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet’s arrest in London. Thanks to Pinochet’s arrest and the criticism of his crimes against human crimes, a critical reflection of Spain’s shortcomings with regards to their transition to democracy arose, specifically the 1977 Amnesty Law granting amnesty to war criminals, as well as the lack of any official report on the disappeared (27).

In his novel *Un oiseau brûlé vif* which explores the Republican experience in postwar Spain, exiled Spanish writer Agustín Gómez-Arcos states that “during a hunting game, have you ever seen dead prey expose its vision about the events? The speech always belongs to the hunter” (144). This statement can be interpreted as a metaphor for the forced silence of Republican “prey” under Franco. In this project, as my central focus is on Spanish women’s first-person experiences during this turbulent time, it is essential to remember that women in Franco’s Spain faced extreme setbacks after the Nationalist victory, just after gaining basic rights under the government of the Second Republic (1931-1936) such as suffrage, the right to divorce, reproductive rights and representation in parliament. As a result of these restrictions placed by the dictatorship and later on the public stigma associated with telling their stories, these stories of how Spanish women weathered such an intense historical period are still to an extent, largely ignored.

This project explores *La voz dormida* (2002) by Dulce Chacón and *Habíamos ganado la guerra* (2007) Esther Tusquets’ autobiography. *La voz dormida*, which became a best-selling novel in Spain that was later turned into a movie in 2011, captures the intertwining lives of female Republican prisoners and their loved ones and was written using actual testimonies, whereas *Habíamos ganado la guerra* chronologically captures Catalan writer Esther Tusquets’ life from the first three years of her life simultaneously with the Civil War’s timeline as she was born in August

1936, just one month after the start of the war. In both works, the question of collective memory is present through testimonies and memories of the female experience in the highly misogynistic, repressive Franco regime. I also plan to examine the role that testimonial literature plays as a “site of memory”, which French historiographer Pierre Nora defines as “any place, object, or concept vested with historical significance in the popular collective memory” (xvii). In Spain, there are a few memorials to the Republican cause that qualify as sites of memory to the extent of the numerous Holocaust memorials and museums throughout the world. This is one of the reasons supporting my argument that the “memory boom” in Spain is a site of memory in itself since the concept itself has historical significance in post-war Spanish collective memory. This notion complies with memory studies’ recent paradigm shift concerning a “preoccupation with the embodied aftermath of atrocity” or the consequences of these civil conflicts and has a deeper significance as a means of taking political action (Ribeiro de Menezes 1).

### ***La voz dormida (2002) by Dulce Chacón***

*La voz dormida* tells the story of a group of political prisoners in *Las Ventas* women’s prison in Madrid, shortly after the end of the Civil War. Hortensia and her sister Pepita are perhaps the most crucial characters. Hortensia is a pregnant prisoner sentenced to death for her involvement with the Communist Party, along with her husband Felipe. On the first page, she is introduced as “la mujer que iba a morir” (1). Immediately, she is shadowed by her impending death. The repetition of “la mujer que iba a morir” as a label for Hortensia’s identity is deeper than just as the first sentence used to identify her. This description represents all of the women who have died or are sentenced to death in *Las Ventas*. Hortensia is executed shortly after giving birth to her daughter, also named Hortensia (Tensi). Her sister Pepita who goes on to raise the child. Before Hortensia is killed, she makes Pepita

promise her that she will educate Tensi on who her parents were. Pepita preserves momentos such as photographs of Felipe and Hortensia, earrings that Felipe had gifted Hortensia, as well as the notebooks Hortensia wrote in at Las Ventas, for Tensi. At the end of the novel, once Tensi turns eighteen, she chooses to follow in her parents' footsteps and join the Communist Party. Tensi's decision is most likely inspired by her mother's words that she wrote for her right before her execution: "Lucha hija mia, lucha siempre, como lucha tu madre, como lucha tu padre" (355). The concept of post-memory is essential in *La voz dormida*, found in the relationship between Pepita and Tensi:

Las manos de Pepita tiemblan al buscar en el interior de la lata. Saca un pequeño trozo de tela que guarda en el puño mientras vuelca la caja sobre la mesa de la cocina, donde busca algo más. Doblado en cuatro y amarillo de años, encuentra un papel. Una sentencia. Tensi le pregunta qué es lo que guarda en el puño. A espaldas de Tensi, doña Celia mira a Pepita y niega con la cabeza. Suplica con un gesto que no le entregue a la hija el trozo del vestido de su madre. Al ver la expresión de Doña Celia, Pepita reconoce su error. Pepita recoge las cartas y la sentencia, besa el trocito de tela antes de guardarlo todo en la lata, y contesta que es un recuerdo. —Es un recuerdo. Sólo un recuerdo. (357–59)

This moment cited above is perhaps the most relevant example of the prevalence of transgenerational transmission in *La voz dormida* through both memories and tangible items. Here it is revealed that Pepita also saved a piece of the dress that Hortensia wore on the day she was shot. While the earrings she gave Tensi represent happiness and the love between her parents, just the thought of the moment of Hortensia's death is far too painful for Pepita to remember, let alone discuss (Portela 61). The memory of the day that Hortensia was murdered is a memory that Pepita

tries to forget rather than passing it down to the next generation. There are several pauses within their conversation, emphasizing Pepita's desire to forget about the horrors of the War by choosing to avoid discussing it. However, Tensi is capable of processing the tragic details behind her mother's death and continues to honor her memory and ideals rather than dwelling on the painful loss. Her presence in the novel is that of a recreation of her mother since they share the same name although Tensi goes by a shortened version and the same commitment to the Communist Party. She becomes what Dina Wardi refers to as a "memorial candle," a term she uses to describe the children of Holocaust survivors who are burdened with their parents' trauma despite never having experienced it firsthand (Leggott 125). In the case of Spain, the children and grandchildren of the victims or survivors of the Civil War are not encumbered by the past like their parents or grandparents and are now interested in dealing with the consequences of the past.

Dulce Chacón was born in 1954 in the provincial city of Zafra, Extremadura. Her parents or direct relatives were never in a similar situation as the protagonists in *La voz dormida* and she was raised in a household that was "muy de derechas, muy monárquico" (Crespo *Entrevista a Dulce Chacón*). Her upbringing in a right-wing, privileged environment oblivious to the suffering of the defeated became her motivation for acknowledging the plight of Republicans who perished during the War, more specifically that of politically active Spanish women. The narrative in *La voz dormida* is constructed using actual oral testimonies of Civil War survivors, letters and diaries, reaffirming Marianne Hirsch's belief that post-memory "need not be restricted to familial groupings and can also be relevant in the case of other second-generation memories or collective traumatic events and experiences" (22). While Chacón does not have a deep or direct personal connection to the horrors of the Civil War and Republican struggle, she recognizes the importance of transmitting these stories to educate future generations:

Nosotros, la gente que estamos en los cuarenta o los cincuenta años de edad, somos los hijos del silencio de nuestros padres. Pero es hora de romper este silencio en beneficio de nuestros hijos. Tenemos que rescatar la historia silenciada, es una responsabilidad de nuestra generación (“El despertar tras la amnesia”, *El País*).

Chacón’s perusal of various documentary sources makes *La voz dormida* unique, as the novel does not belong into one sole genre, but is a combination of reality and fiction. The research she completed for the writing process was cathartic and necessary for her to understand Spain’s recent past. French historian Pierre Nora defines a site of memory as “any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community...it may refer to any place, object, or concept vested with historical significance in the popular collective memory” (xvii). *La voz dormida* falls into the category of a “site of memory” since the author uses tangible sources like testimonies to support the storyline and repeatedly acknowledges who they belong to, and her intention behind publishing these stories is so that these stories are transmitted. The site of the prison Las Ventas is also a site of memory since it is a place that carries a historical and cultural significance for political prisoners in Spain. One of her acknowledgments at the end of the book is dedicated to “una mujer de Gijón que me rogó que contara la verdad” (387). This woman did not ask her to tell the truth, but begged her to do so, reinforcing the forced silence that so many Spanish women were subjected to for so long.

Chacón includes a letter written by one of the *trece rosas*, a group of thirteen Republican women who were executed by a Francoist firing squad right after the conclusion of the Civil War into the novel’s introduction. In this letter written by Julia Conosa moments before her execution, she makes a plea to her mother: “que mi nombre no se borre de la historia” (Huete Machado *La*

*corte vida de trece rosas*). Their story resonates greatly with that of Hortensia, whose own last words before being executed are “viva la republica”, proving her undying resistance to tyranny. One can deduce that *La voz dormida* was written partially as a response to Conosa’s final letter and to honor the memory of executed and imprisoned Republican women. While there may exist several different “truths” on the topic of the Civil War in Spain, *La voz dormida* is effective in representing the realities faced by Spanish women following the war and giving their voices the validation they were denied until the 21st century. “No, sólo hemos perdido la guerra, ¿verdad? Eso es lo que creéis todas, que hemos perdido la guerra. No habremos perdido hasta que estemos muertas, pero no se lo vamos a poner tan fácil... Resistir es vencer" (123). This dialogue shows Hortensia and the other inmates’ dedication to fight for their cause until even if it means dying for it. During their time in prison, they develop strong friendships and persevere against the abuse they are regularly subjected to. Chacón honors their memory and fighting spirit and educates the reader on women-led militia movements during the Civil War. She rejects the label placed on Republican victims as more than just “un millón de muertos” by giving the prisoners a narrative about their lives and struggles, which she successfully achieves through combining testimony and fiction.

### ***Habíamos ganado la guerra* by Esther Tusquets**

This section captures essential preliminary details about the plot of *Habíamos ganado la guerra*. In the myths imposed by the dictatorship are present throughout Esther Tusquets’ narrative. Tusquets was born in Barcelona in August 1936, exactly one month after the start of the Civil War, into a family that belonged to the right-wing, Catalan bourgeoisie. Like Chacón, Tusquets came from a privileged background and understood well that her family belonged to the victorious side of the Civil War, which that entitled her to great luxuries; “los vencedores iban a celebrar la victoria

aunque fuera sobre las ruinas, aunque fuera sobre un millón de muertos” (24). The expression “un millón de muertos” is often used by Spain’s right-wing to this day as a vague number to avoid accountability regarding the casualties of the Civil War. When writing the story in retrospect, she is critical of the beliefs she grew up with and the normalization of fascism within her community. The novel’s plot spans from her childhood years until early adulthood.

The first few chapters are recollections of Tusquets’ memories of the end of the Civil War and the postwar years which heavily discuss World War II. She recounts her earliest memories primarily revolving around the deprivation of war-stricken Barcelona and how Franco’s victory “saved” her family:

Los míos recibían a Franco como a su salvador, y para ellos lo fue. Mi padre, totalmente desinteresado, como muchos otros españoles, de la política hasta el inicio de la guerra, había desertado del frente republicano. Sin duda, porque no eran los suyos, pero también porque, según me contó en una de sus poco frecuentes confidencias, no soportaba la tarea que como médico le habían asignado acercarse a las víctimas tras los fusilamientos y, si todavía las detectaba con vida, darles el tiro de gracia, y vivía escondido, sin atreverse siquiera a asomarse a una ventana o a levantar la voz, con el miedo constante a que alguien lo denunciara o a que dieran con él en un registro casual, como habíamos sufrido varios. En uno de aquellos registros, y era curiosamente lo que mi madre menos les perdonaba a los” rojos”, se habían llevado todos los botes de leche condensada, con los que a mí, todavía bebé, me alimentaba (10).



This passage gives the reader an insight into the first-hand experiences of Tusquets' family and their suffering during wartime. During her childhood, her political opinions are those of her family rather than her own. While she states that her father was *franquista* until his death, her mother is, paradoxically, quite liberal but right-leaning: “una mujer extremadamente tolerante en muchos aspectos y para colmo atea, pero de derechas. Un producto extraño para la época”. She is the daughter of a mason and enjoys reading books banned by the Catholic Church (11). There is a conundrum within the mother's characteristics that defy traditionalist Francoist norms, but her high social status affords her the choice of remaining apolitical and tolerating the effects of the totalitarian regime without worrying about persecution. She is so fed up with the war, living in hiding from the incessant violence in the streets, and being unable to even buy milk for her baby that she accepts Franco as her leader in order to move on and forget the difficult moments she and her family have lived.

In the first few chapters of *Habíamos ganado la guerra*, Tusquets portrays what Laura Freixas calls “la euforia de muchos catalanes ricos que jamás dudaron que la victoria de Franco era la suya” (Freixas *En sus memorias. Esther Tusquets retrata la euforia de muchos catalanes ricos que jamás dudaron que la victoria de Franco era la suya*). Tusquets later on distinguishes the affirmation “los míos habían ganado la guerra” from the title “Habíamos ganado la guerra”, making it evident that she is reflecting on her past with a different viewpoint. Although Spain was not involved in World War II, the profound effects it left throughout the world are present:

En el mundo en que yo me movía durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial, el mundo de mis padres, de mis tíos, de los amigos de mis padres, todos estaban a favor de los alemanes, en gran medida porque habían apoyado a los nuestros durante la guerra civil y todos eran fervientes franquistas. En el cine no se proyectaba ni una película

que dejara en buen lugar a los aliados, ni una película siquiera en que saliera un soldado japonés de aspecto malvado; la prensa y el reportaje de noticias que se proyectaba en los cines eran absolutamente tendenciosos, e incluso se habían eliminado los negocios llevaban un nombre inglés o francés (a veces en casa tenían un descuido y hablaban de la Tintorería Francesa, que ahora se llamaba Iris, o asignaban a una calle un nombre que había cambiado, y mi tío Víctor, el nazi pertinaz, inasequible al desaliento, montó en cólera cuando abrieron años después, en la Avenida del Generalísimo, que todos seguíamos llamando Diagonal, un cine con el nombre Windsor, que intentó, sin éxito, claro, boicotear. (50).

During World War II, Tusquets is surrounded by Nazi sympathizers in her insular Barcelona elite bubble. The widespread support of Nazi Germany in Spain was mainly due to the alliance between fascist leaders Hitler and Franco. There was extreme censorship and media bias targeted against the Allied Nations, France, and the United Kingdom, even in banal ways such as the changing of French and English place names to Spanish names. She attends a German school which serves as a microcosm of her perception of far-right, elite Barcelona, and confesses her support for the Nazis: “hacía fervientes votos por la victoria de los alemanes” (50), although she was still too young and oblivious to the heinous crimes committed by the Nazis, the most well-known being the Holocaust. One key figure in Tusquets’ extended family is her uncle Juan, a priest who is fervently anti-Semitic and anti-mason. Father Juan Tusquets was best known for writing the bestselling book *Orígenes de la revolución española*, in which he popularized the conspiracy theory that the Second Republic was the fruit of a Jewish-Masonic conspiracy and published the names of those he believed were involved (Preston 35). Her womanizing uncle Victor is also a Nazi sympathizer, or as Tusquets describes “una

caricatura de Nazi”, who installed a shrine in his home dedicated to Nazi paraphernalia and adds new items to the collection despite Germany’s brutal loss.

The final chapters conclude with Tusquets’ coming of age during her university years and her finally distancing herself from fascism. A pivotal point in her narrative occurs following her compulsory participation in the women’s branch of the far-right, Falange group, *Sección Femenina*. She gradually becomes disenchanted with the Catholic Church and the classist, superficial culture of the period. Throughout the narrative, she repeatedly asks herself, “Los nuestros no eran los míos pero ¿quiénes eran los míos entonces? Y ¿dónde demonios estaba mi lugar?” (22, 56, 82, 167). She can no longer relate to the adults from her social class and no longer shares any of their values. The constant clashes between Esther and her mother represent the friction between generations regarding traditional gender roles. Her mother is cold and disinterested in her children. She is neglectful to young Esther and constantly leaves her to be cared for by housemaids and nannies. She vividly remembers the loneliness and abandonment she felt caused by her mother’s lack of attention: “La tragedia era que (mi madre) sí salía fijo, y desde luego sin mí, todas las tardes, y yo le daba un beso de despedida en el recibidor, ya con las lágrimas rodándome por las mejillas, y me quedaba largo rato sentada allí, debajo de la fotografía de Franco, llorando sin ruido” (31). Despite the resentment she feels towards her, Tusquets makes an effort to understand her mother’s frustrations at the beginning of her autobiography. In the first chapter which opens with ecstatic celebrations of Franco’s victory throughout Barcelona, there is a detailed description of the mother devouring a bottle of condensed milk: “Algún papel debió de desempeñar en esa historia la leche condensada, porque, al terminar la guerra y las penurias, mi madre, lejos de brindar con champán, se zampó a cucharadas un bote entero de La Lechera” (19). Her mother’s behavior is shocking, since

Tusquets mentions how she considered eating to be vulgar and tried hard to maintain a slim, ladylike figure. This image of her suggests a gluttonous, savage-like woman who has been starving for ages, although the repressions from the war period were perhaps the closest she ever came to being oppressed and malnourished. During the war, the mother could not even buy milk so her suffering is finally alleviated once she can enjoy the luxuries she was deprived of. She follows the traditional expectations of women rather than having the courage to speak out against fascism as her daughter does in the future, as she appreciates her social standing and the privileges granted to her too much to risk losing everything. Through inquiry into her mother's life, Tusquets also denounces the limitations imposed on Spanish women such as her under Franco regardless of class, while reflecting on how this affected her own life and interpretation of womanhood in a totalitarian regime (Weng 142). Tusquets' observations of those around her and assertions of her own emotions and interpretations of current events can also be classified as testimonies and evidence of the horrors of the Franco regime imposed upon women, similarly to the stories of Republican women in Las Ventas.

### **My Intentions Behind Writing This Project**

After addressing the historical importance of the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath, as well as the most essential details of the plots of both *La voz dormida* and *Habíamos ganado la guerra*, I formulate and justify my argument that both forms of testimonial narratives and autobiographies are capable of depicting life in times of tyranny as they consist of substantial evidence of actual events through analysis and comparison of both narratives. It was important for me to use works in which the protagonists come from radically different socio-political backgrounds to emphasize how women in Spain suffered greatly under Franco regardless of

social status. The first chapter focuses on Chacón's strategies in her realistic depictions of the women in *Las Ventas*. I make note of the historical accuracy that assists her in successfully telling these stories, stressing the significance of Tensi as a character symbolizing the next generation of Spaniards' remembrance.

In the second chapter concerning *Habíamos ganado la guerra*, I analyze themes that were not so prevalent in *La voz dormida*, such as the class and gender, as well as the unique perspective which Tusquets writes from as a former member of the *Franquista* Barcelona elite. She distances herself from them through her critiques, clarifying that she does not agree with their extremist beliefs, such as support for the Nazis, misogyny, and the collaboration between the Catholic Church and the government. The underlying commonalities between both books, which I emphasize, are the concepts of collective historical memory in 21<sup>st</sup> century Spain, which is a form of social memory where a "certain social group constructs a selective representation of its own imagined past (Aróstegui et Lavabre 1). As the "losers" of the Spanish Civil War have been forcefully silenced since 1939, literature is now one way how their stories of imprisonment, repression, and suffering are finally being told through both Chacón's mindful appropriation using real-life testimonies and through Tusquets' accounts of her childhood. While Tusquets' autobiography is written using her own firsthand testimony, Chacón relies on interviews that are incredibly detailed and engaging to aid her writing process. Both novels are authentic in their own right since in Chacón's case she clarifies that the information she uses is not rightfully hers but that she has the approval of those she interviewed. Tusquets' memories and accounts of the perspectives of her loved ones may paint a different side of Spain, the side of the *vencedores*, is also accurate since it contributes to the narratives concerning the experiences of women under the dictatorship.

## Chapter 1: Validation of Trauma Through Testimony in *La Voz*

### *Dormida*

This chapter analyzes *La voz dormida* and provides a critical reading of its crucial moments. Using information provided by Dulce Chacón herself, scholarly work on contemporary Spanish literature and history, and evidence of the historical significance of the environment in which the story takes place, I argue that testimonial literature, such as *La voz dormida*, is a genre in itself and an effective method of story-telling. My argument is partially based on extensive research of significant themes pertinent to the inmates' circumstances, such as women's roles prior to the dictatorship and the conditions of Spanish prisons. I combine this research through the close reading of Chacón's poignant narrative. I also contemplate the relationships between the inmates and their struggles within the prison as a narrative space. Chacón's eloquent appropriation of actual testimonies from hundreds of survivors of the Spanish Civil War compensates for the fact that the author herself was an outsider to the atrocities of the war.

In *Memories of Resistance: Women Activists from the Spanish Civil War*, Shirley Mangini declares that "the writers of prison memoirs, most of whom attempt to describe the fate of scores of women who shared the misery of prison life at the end of the war, were inspired more by their consciousness of collectivity than by a desire to explain their political activities" (182). The influence of the testimonies in the otherwise fictional novel *La voz dormida* gives a voice to the strong and moving individual testimonies of women who come from all different walks of life but are united by their political beliefs which have landed them in prison. Memoirs are factual but also deeply personal. The personalization of these testimonies makes the novel

especially believable since the reader can imagine these women as actual people by imagining where they lived and how they day-to-day lives were.

***Las Ventas Prison: More Than Just a Physical Space***

Chacón challenges the archetype of the compliant, dull female by representing the inmates as socially conscious, fearless, and resilient women who demonstrate strong solidarity amongst themselves despite the hardships and abuse they face at the hands of the authorities in *Las Ventas*. Some of these bonds mimic mother-daughter relationships. Although these friendships develop organically and are a means of survival for the inmates, this closeness can be partially attributed to the confined space of the prison itself (Fox 90). The communal spaces (cells, hallways, toilets, and courtyard) are where the prisoners try to rebuild their lives and socialize. They also connect over their shared political and persistent resistance not only against the government but against the oppressiveness of the prison:

Mientras [Sole] la espera, le cuenta que Victoria Kent ordenó construir la prisión de Ventas, y que estaba diseñada para albergar a quinientas reclusas. Se queja de la falta de espacio. Se queja de que doce petates ocupen el suelo de las celdas donde antes había una cama, un pequeño armario, una mesa y una silla. Se queja de que los pasillos y las escaleras se hayan convertido en dormitorios, y de que haya que saltar por encima de las que están acostadas para llegar a los retretes.

(145-46)

Here, the women are discussing current events and their knowledge of how and why *Las Ventas* was created. Victoria Kent was a lawyer and politician in Spain during the Second Republic who ended up being forced into exile during the war. However, she was opposed to women's

suffrage during and argued that Spanish women were not socially or politically prepared to vote, since they were too heavily influenced by the Church or their husbands, and therefore would vote in favor of the right-wing (171). It was Kent's idea to build Las Ventas prison for women, the space in which *La voz dormida* takes place so that female prisoners would have a separate space away from men. This is extremely ironic since Las Ventas is a space infamous for Francoist repression of women (Leggott 55). Contrary to Kent's justification for her opposition to female suffrage, many Spanish women were indeed very well versed politically and involved in Marxist or Communist movements, as exemplified in the character of Hortensia. In this previous dialogue, the horrific conditions of the prisons, lack of personal space, cleanliness, and adequate resources for the number of prisoners are described. However, what prevails is the solidarity among women due to their shared struggle and how they become each other's support system.

Historian Ricard Vinyes' book *Irredentas: Las presas políticas y sus hijos en las cárceles de Franco*, seeks to understand the complex and interrelated networks of political and social power affecting Republican women within the "universo carcelario":

Esa relación activa y constante de las presas con el poder y sus formas de dominio prueba que la cárcel jamás fue un paréntesis vital para las reclusas, sino una construcción biográfica que muchos años después las convirtió, por decisión propia, en testimonios activos, es decir, testimonios que no sólo dieron fe de la "verdad" de lo sucedido, sino también una interpretación propia de los hechos vividos. (14)

In *La voz dormida*, this relationship of the inmates with power and its form of domination that Vinyes describes is ever-present. Life in the "universo carcelario" is recreated both inside and



outside of the prison walls, through the inclusion of not solely the female prisoners, but also of their families and the male guerrilla fighters. They are all victims of Francoist repression but remain active agents despite this victimhood. The testimonies of former prisoners such as Tomasa Cuevas are crucial to understanding these depictions of subjection and the idea that victims are “the absent ones with whom contemporary Spanish society must learn to keep faith” and “whose memory has not been adequately honored in post-Franco Spain” (Ferrán 177). The fictional character of Tomasa, who shares the same first name as Chacón’s interviewee, is an example of those whose memory has not been acknowledged in post-Franco Spain. One day after biting the toe of a Christ child statue at a mass she was forced to attend, rather than kissing it, she was locked in an isolation cell as a punishment. This incident described by Chacón is extracted from a true story told by Remedios Montero, a guerrilla fighter who was one of the individuals Chacón interviewed (Linville 170). The women in *Las Ventas*’ experiences are brought alive through the present narration. In the same way that the reader already knows that Franco died in 1975, we know that Hortensia is executed at the end and that Pepita goes on to raise Hortensia’s daughter (her niece), but as the story develops we learn about the consequences leading to these events.

Tomasa, whose whole family was killed during the war, is serving a thirty-year sentence. She is from Zafra, Extremadura, the same hometown as the Chacón, and was transferred to Las Ventas from Olivenza women’s prison, where she had a pending death penalty that was later reduced to thirty years of reclusion (Rossi 412).

Tomasa sostiene que la guerra no ha terminado, que la paz consentida por Negrín es una ofensa a los que continúan en la lucha. Ella se niega a aceptar que los tres años comienzan a formar parte de la Historia. No. Sus muertos no forman parte

de la Historia. La guerra no ha acabado. Pero acabará y pronto. Y ella no habrá cosido ni una sola puntada para redimir pena colaborando con los que ya quieren escribir la Historia. (31)

The constant use of prolepsis in this statement helps the reader understand her distinctive behavior concerning trauma. In this quote, the deictic “ya,” as the use of “aún” in the initial introduction of Hortensia on the first page, frames the story into a present temporality (Picornell-Belenguer 130). This tactic is useful for introducing Tomasa, since while Hortensia is always in the shadows of the future, Tomasa still lives in the past and cannot accept the present, the Francoist victory of the war. Tomasa’s emotional isolation and refusal to acknowledge it distinguishes her from the other inmates, as she struggles the most to gather the courage to voice her recollections, most likely due to difficulty dealing with trauma. To paraphrase Rachel Linville, this avoidance is a protective strategy that the mind produces to keep the individual from becoming overwhelmed, but the anxiety that is repressed returns to haunt the victim (170). However, as much as Tomasa tries to repress the memory of her experience of becoming the only surviving member of her family, it returns. After being placed in isolation, her only company is her memories. Her trauma fully consumes her, causing her to lose her will to live, partially conveyed through her refusal to accept the tokens of food brought to her by her inmates. Her unwillingness to even eat suggests that she has not or cannot work through this lasting anxiety. She has been deprived of the chance to mourn the loss of her family, as immediately after they were killed, she was pulled from the river and jailed. The quote above maintains that in her mind the war is not over. Her lack of interest in moving forward with her life is directly evidenced in the text through her response to Hortensia’s comment that their only obligation now is to survive: ‘Sobrevivir, sobrevivir ¿para qué carajo queremos sobrevivir?’

(122). Tomasa challenges Hortensia by proposing to go on a hunger strike rather than making an effort to survive and take care of herself. Her initial silence during her time in the isolation cell suggests her acceptance of defeat, which likely means dying in jail (Linville 170):

Es hora de que Tomasa cuente su historia. Como un vómito saldrán sus palabras que ha callado hasta este momento. Como un vómito de dolor y rabia. Tiempo silenciado y sordido que escapa de sus labios desgarrando el aire, y desgarrandola por dentro. Contará a su historia. A gritos la contará para no sucumbir a locura. Para sobrevivir. Para sobrevivir (237).

Hortensia's execution is a critical moment that prompts Tomasa to tell her story. She realizes that this is the only way to preserve her identity, similar to Hortensia's belief that fighting to survive is necessary "para contar la historia, Tomasa" (122). Tomasa's physical isolation prohibited her from saying her final goodbye to her friend, processing her death, or participating in any collective events that would allow her to engage in the mourning process. "Sobrevivir. Y contar la historia para que la locura no acompañe al silencio. Se levanta del suelo. Contar la historia. Se levanta y grita. Sobrevivir. Grita con todas sus fuerzas para ahuyentar el dolor. Resistir es vencer" (213). She has realized that words and memories are what give her a reason to exist and the best way that she can express herself. Although she is not actively writing her testimony, Chacon's depiction of the figure of Tomasa pays homage to the silenced, women who suffered similar fates. The voice of the narrator in *La voz dormida* sums up the newfound purpose of her existence: "Vivirás para contarlo, le habían dicho los falangistas que empujaron el cadáver de su cuerpo al agua. Vivirás para contarlo, le dijeron, ignorando que sería al contrario. Lo contaría para sobrevivir (216). The fact that Tomasa is told by the falangists that she will "live to tell her story" in a sarcastic, condescending manner is

extremely realistic to the historical context of prisons and concentration camps. Going back to the parallels between the violence against Republican Spaniards and the Holocaust that are commonly referenced in academia, in *Testimony: Beyond the Language of Truth*, Nora Strejilevich states that “witnesses of utmost abuse do not need to share their stories, but the rest does not always want to hear. Primo Levi recalls a German guard taunting prisoners by telling them that if they survived the war and lived to tell the tale, nobody would believe them” (702). She suggests that this fear of their experiences being dismissed and belittled again could be a reason why, “upon developing the testimonial, survivors attempt to create essential pathways that translate the language of the concentration camp onto the language of the outside world to which they have been thrown again, and where they want to actually return” (702). Strejilevich’s position is especially insightful to understanding survivors such as Tomasa, since she herself is a survivor of the Argentine Dirty War and found political asylum in Canada (701).

Actual testimonies from the postwar years, especially those of Republican women in jail as utilized by Chacón, provide insight into the shocking reality of Francoist prisons. *Prison of Women* presents oral testimonies of women incarcerated following the Civil War. Its primary voice, Tomasa Cuevas, who Chacón interviewed and acknowledged in *La voz dormida*, was one of many Spanish political prisoners. After Franco’s death in 1975, she began to gather the memoirs of women jailed at the same time as her. During her time at *Las Ventas* from 1943-1944, she met Josefina Amalia Villa, whose experiences in prison were no different than those of the inmates in *La voz dormida*.

Prison life for women was no different than for men. Since the only ones who were confined to the home were elderly women and small children, young women could not expect any help from outside. In the first period of arrests at

the end of the war, civilians could be denounced for absolutely everything and anything, as long as someone would appear at the police station, Guardia Civil, or Falange headquarters to denounce them. If the denouncer persisted and there was evidence that was always sought out from the right, confirming the individual's ideals, then they would most certainly would have to appear before a military tribunal made up of military personnel without any particular legal training (110). The defense attorney has usually just an obscure law clerk that the prisoner saw for the first time when they appeared before the tribunal and then it was back to jail for the wait. Most people returned to jail without any knowledge of what they had been asked or what the sentence was (109-10).

Women typically stayed in prison for four to six years for involvement with the Civil War, while women condemned to thirty years or whose death penalty was commuted spent far longer in prison. Cuevas states that "there is compelling evidence that convictions were arbitrary and excessive" (110). One of the main emotional outcomes of imprisonment for young women meant wasting away their youth behind bars:

Another pain that sharpened with the years was seeing our youth pass by, a youth that in many cases had scarcely been lived at all. How sad it is for a woman to be aging and to know instinctively that she disappears as a woman when she ceases to be desirable. I saw a woman about to go free after ten years in prison weeping with uncontrollable bitterness; she realized that menopause had deprived her of the desire and hope to have children. But it doesn't do a woman much good to think about how she is to realize herself as a human being. For such a plan to

have a real content she must have choice in her life; she must be able to choose her role and not have it imposed on her in some incapable form (111).

This woman Cuevas describes in the passage above is resentful for being deprived of the opportunity to become a mother as a result of being incarcerated. Even if many of these prisoners were demonized for their far-left, revolutionary belief, living in such a traditional culture often trumped their progressive values as many wanted to hold on to normalcy. In this case, motherhood is not just a perceived biological role in a woman's life, but a strong desire. Cuevas sympathizes with this prisoner by understanding that she has had no choices in the course of her life and identity. Both her role as a prisoner and nonexistent role as a mother are roles that have been imposed on her, rather than coming from her own free will. She goes on to state that "it wasn't only the tenacious struggle to live that dehumanized us as women. There were the close quarters, the uninhabitable conditions, the impossibility of having a single minute to yourself, the lack of mental stimulus (111). Pepita's name and story are also derived from the testimony of an indirect victim of *Franquista* repression, Pepita Patiño Páez, born in Córdoba. She fell in love with a communist guerrilla fighter named Jaime Coello whom she met while visiting an uncle in prison. She waited 17 years for him to leave prison and the two married in 1959. Sadly, Jaime never got to experience democracy as he died right after Franco in 1976. Patiño, who died in 2015, still had vivid memories of the mistreatment of Republicans at the hands of Franco's authorities: "Le dieron muchos palos al pobrecito mío. Muchos. La primera vez que fui a verle a comisaría y me enseñaron su camisa me eché a llorar" (Gracias por contarlo todo). The testimonies collected and utilized by Chacón are just heartbreaking and raw as the experiences of the fictional characters.

Reme, the eldest inmate, is in prison for being caught sewing a Republican flag after the Nationalists captured her hometown. She faces a similar emotional predicament to that of Tomasa, as she refuses to speak about the trauma she suffered to avoid the pain and move on with her life: “Bromea Reme. Bromea, para poder seguir hablando. Porque ahora hablará de sus hijas, y a Reme le consuela contar lo que se dispone a contar” (58). Contrary to Tomasa’s symptoms of withdrawal and depression, Reme maintains a positive attitude and uses humor as a coping mechanism, as evidenced in the quote beforehand. She puts on an innocent, naive façade as a way of convincing herself that she never felt any pain or experienced any trauma (Christenson 13). She imposes her denial onto her daughters, to whom she insists that nothing terrible has happened: “cuenta que a sus hijas no les pasó nada”(58). The narrator must tell Reme’s story rather than letting her be exposed through the traditional form of dialogue: “Reme prefiere olvidar que sus hijas reprimían el llanto cuando le llevaban la comida al depósito de cadáveres, y que a veces no conseguían retener sus lágrimas” (59). The fact that Chacón is the one taking responsibility for revealing details about Reme’s past differs tremendously from the other ensemble characters who mainly expose details about their pasts through dialogues with one another.

One way in which the inmates bond and show solidarity is by coming together to sing and entertain themselves. Reme eagerly participates in these activities and is most often the one who feels that she must make everyone around her feel happier. In the quote below, Chacón paints an almost childlike image of Reme:

Porque Reme no sabe cantar. No sabe, aunque se empeñe en endulzar las cosas cantando. No sabe, aunque se empeñe en decir que su madre le enseñó a cantar al mismo tiempo que a coser, y que de ella aprendió que las cosas amargas hay que

tragarlas deprisa, y que pierden sabor si les pone el azúcar de una canción. Así es la Reme. Pura inocencia. Inocente, y tan mayor (52).

Despite possessing a childlike innocence, in various instances, Reme accepts the role of a mother figure to her fellow inmate Elvira, the youngest of the women, who lost her mother Martina during the war.

Bromea Reme. Bromea, para poder seguir hablando. Porque ahora hablará de sus hijas, y a Reme le consuela contar lo que se dispone a contar. Y Elvira y Hortensia lo saben, y escuchan con atención para que Reme tenga su consuelo.

Reme: Ven, sangre mía, ahora te toca a ti.

Elvira: Cuando Reme se acuerda de sus hijas, la llama, a Elvira, sangre mía.

Reme: Ven, sangre mía, pon la cabeza en mis rodillas.

La llama sangre mía y le coloca la cabeza sobre sus rodillas. Y cuenta que a sus hijas no les pasó nada (55).

This relationship is therapeutic for both Reme and Elvira. Whenever Reme becomes melancholic when being reminded of her children and how much she misses them, she reaches out to Elvira. The repetition of “sangre mía” is therapeutic on Reme’s part, since saying this allows her to evacuate her emotional traumas, but also helps envision her daughters as if they physically were there with her (Merlo 310). By calling Elvira “sangre mía” she also implies that she feels a particularly close, familial-like bond between the two of them as if they were related by blood. Since they are far away from their biological families and many are mourning the losses of their parents, siblings, or children, the physical proximity and shared experience of being imprisoned, abused Republican women bind the prisoners together.



Both inside and outside of Las Ventas, an underlying common denominator among most of the characters is the role of motherhood and their interpretations of this traditional women's role. I previously discussed how several of the inmates are either mothers themselves, or are affected by being separated from their families. One instance in which new mother-daughter-like relationships are born in the plot of the novel is between Pepita and Doña Celia, the owner of the pension where Pepita lives and works. Like Elvira, Doña Celia suffered a devastating loss during the war with the death of her daughter Almudena: “Y doña Celia se dirige hacia la casa del médico. Comienza a correr. Corre. Corre, y recuerda a su hija Almudena. Sin poder evitarlo, corre pensando en su hija, acordándose de la última vez que la vio. Iba caminando con paso firme, entre dos hombres” (110). This comparison of Pepita to Almudena allows the reader to understand doña Celia’s private thoughts and her mourning strategy of embracing Pepita like a daughter to recreate the bond she and Almudena shared. We can assume that Pepita is grateful that doña Celia has taken her in and cared for her as if she were her daughter. It is unknown if Pepita and Hortensia’s mother is alive or dead. The only time she is mentioned in the storyline is to describe the qualities which Pepita inherited from her: “Pero Pepa no resistiría ni una sola patada. Ella no. Si ella la cogen, los cogen a todos. Ella es igual que su madre, que no soportó un invierno detrás de un parto prematuro, el suyo. Menuda, indefensa, débil y rubia, como sin hacer, como su madre” (27). This description is one of the initial descriptions of Pepita as a character and suggests that she, like her mother, is another vulnerable, submissive woman contrary to her guerrilla fighter sister Hortensia.

The relationship between Pepita and doña Celia persists for decades, with doña Celia becoming an essential figure in Tensi’s life as well. The same way in which doña Celia becomes a substitute mother figure for Pepita, Pepita becomes Tensi’s mother after her biological mother is

killed. The bond between the two solidifies so much over the years that Tensi considers doña Celia to be her grandmother, and Gerardo, doña Celia's husband, to be her grandfather:

-Tensi busca el mimo de los convalecientes en los brazos de Pepita.

- ¿ El señor Gerardo es mi abuelo?

- Sí.

- Pero si tú no eres mi madre y él no es tu padre, no puede ser mi abuelo.

- Yo soy tu madre de mentirijilla.

- ¿ Y el señor Gerardo es mi abuelo de verdad, o de mentirijilla como tú ?

- De mentirijilla, pero hay mentirijillas que son una verdad más honda que las propias verdades.

- Los niños de la escuela tienen madres de verdad. Yo quiero tener una madre de verdad.

- Tú tienes una madre de verdad que está en el cielo y otra de mentirijilla, tú tienes más madres que los demás niños, anda duérmete que es muy tarde (332-3).

In the dialogue quoted above, young Tensi is shown being aware of the fact that her aunt, who is raising her, is not her birth mother. Pepita insists that although she isn't Tensi's biological mother, and while Gerardo may not be her grandfather by blood, they are indeed as much her family as her aunt Pepita. Tensi has a clear understanding of who her mother and father were and at the end of the novel, as Pepita preserved the notebooks that Hortensia wrote in while detained at Las Ventas. Her choice to join the Spanish Communist Party when she turns eighteen years old is a homage to their memory. When Tensi declares this desire openly, Pepita is outraged and thinks this is an absurd, dangerous idea: "¿Quién te ha metido esa idea en la cabeza? ¿Ha sido usted, señora Celia? ¿Ha sido usted? ¿No ve que es una chiquilla?" (340). She still views Tensi as a child who is incapable of

thinking critically and making her own decisions. From a motherly perspective overprotectiveness is an instinct, but what Pepita fears most is re-living the past and seeing someone she loves putting their life at risk just to be imprisoned, tortured, and killed by the regime. However, Tensi is completely sure of what she wants out of her life and shows no fear whatsoever:

Los dedos de Pepita acarician los cuadernos que ha leído tantas veces en voz alta.

Para Tensi. Ahora Tensi los lee sola. Hace tiempo que los lee sola, y también los ha aprendido de memoria. Pepita sabe que no podrá convencer a Tensi. Sabe que no podrá ir en contra de las palabras que escribió su madre. Lucha, hija mía, lucha siempre, como lucha tu madre, como lucha tu padre, que es nuestro deber, aunque nos cueste la vida (341).

Tensi takes the words written by her mother directed towards her, “Lucha, hija mía, lucha siempre, como lucha tu madre, como lucha tu padre, que es nuestro deber, aunque nos cueste la vida” to heart and shares her parents’ desire to fight against the regime that oppressed, imprisoned and killed them. After stating her intention of following in her parents’ footsteps, Pepita decides to give Tensi more of her mother’s heirlooms such as a pair of earrings that were a gift to Hortensia from Felipe: “Tu madre me pidió que te los guardara hasta que fueses mayor” (341). The exchange of possessions from mother to daughter is a moving and emotional moment for Pepita who has repressed her pain for so long to stay strong for Tensi:

Las manos de Pepita tiemblan al buscar en el interior de la lata. Saca un pequeño trozo de tela que guarda en el puño mientras vuelca la caja sobre la mesa de la cocina, porque busca algo más. La llave de su casa de Córdoba cae al suelo. Bajo su bolsita de terciopelo rojo, sobre las cartas de Jaime, doblado en cuatro y amarillo de años, encuentra un papel. Una sentencia.

-Ya eres mayor, Tensi, ya eres mayor para meterte donde quieras aunque yo no quiera que te metas, pero júrame que tendrás cuidado, júrame por la memoria de tu padre que tendrás mucho cuidado.

-Por las dos madres que tengo te lo juro, tendré muchísimo cuidado, tú no te preocupes por eso.

-¿Cómo no me voy a preocupar?

Although she acknowledges that Tensi is now an adult she can make her own decisions regarding which path in life she chooses to follow, she breaks down emotionally when being confronted by the past and her painful memories when opening these momentos up again. Each momento represents these individuals who Pepita has loved and lost. The earrings which were a gift from Felipe to Hortensia symbolize their relationship and the love they shared, the piece of cloth from the dress Hortensia wore on the day she was murdered which symbolizes Pepita's grief for her sister and the letters from Jaime symbolize the impossible love between the two of them since Jaime is also in prison for his involvement with the militia movement. While Pepita is crying and holding the piece of cloth in her hand and Tensi is trying to console her, Doña Celia is looking on at the two of them and implying to Pepita that she should not give the piece of cloth over to Tensi because: "No ha olvidado el dolor que desfiguraba los rostros cuando ella entregaba los trocitos de tela. Pepita no lo ha pensado bien. Ella no quiere ver ese dolor en el rostro de Tensi" (342). Doña Celia is also afraid of Tensi suffering either emotionally if she learns more about her mother's gruesome death, or that she will be imprisoned and executed like her daughter Almudena. What joins Doña Celia, Don Gerardo, Pepita, and Tensi together as a new sort of "family" is their shared experience of having loved ones killed by the Francoist authorities for daring to oppose tyranny.

The theme of motherhood is omnipresent not just through these interpersonal relationships between the inmates, but in the figures of speech used in dialogues, even insults: “Maldita sea. Maldita sea la madre que la parió (42)”, “A Tomasa le gustaría contestar que maldice a la putísima madre que la parió (43)”. In Castilian Spanish, the expression “la madre que te parió” is an example of the common practice of insulting the other’s mother, therefore insulting their character as well (Drange 34). This expression is also the only expression in the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* which includes the word “madre” but has negative connotations. This dialogue is just one case in which female-on-female antagonism is present in Las Ventas, especially among the prison authorities. While all Spanish women regardless of political affiliation were subjugated to orthodox gender roles and male-defined moral codes under Franco, the prison nuns and female wardens are perhaps the cruelest oppressors in *La voz dormida* (Delgado-Poust 17). The Nuns and the members of the Sección Femenina, the women’s branch of the far-right Falange movement led by Pilar Primo de Rivera, were direct allies of the regime when it came to the ideological indoctrination of women and “re-purification and moral salvation of the nation in Franco’s crusade against communism, atheism, masonic ideals, and feminist thought” (18). Writer and scholar of historic memory Pura Sánchez describes the sense of duty these nuns and members of the Sección Femenina felt towards the Nationalist cause in *Individuas de dudosa moral* (2009): “Las señoritas de Sección Femenina y monjas tenían en común la asunción más absoluta del ideario de los vencedores respecto a las vencidas y la entrega a su labor reeducadora con un ímpetu tal que la consideraban una especie de sacerdocio” (248). The laywomen of Sección Femenina perfectly embody the Francoist ideal of the pious, docile mother and wife, whereas becoming a nun was the only acceptable form of spinsterhood. While there are no evident members of Sección Femenina in *La voz dormida*, the prison guards are responsible for much of the abuse and oppression in Las Ventas. While the nuns

view the prisoners as their enemies due to their opposing religious and political views and believe that they undeniably are deserving of punishment, the prison guards also play a crucial role in reinforcing toxic masculinity through physical and emotional abuse.

Don Fernando, a leftist physician who comes to the prison to treat the inmates, is appalled by the unsanitary conditions and neglect on behalf of the authorities. When he asks a prison guard nicknamed Las Zapatones, “¿Cuántas enfermas hay aquí?” she replies, “De un día para otro cambian, doctor... Unas se mueren, otras no (182).” Here, the narrator condemns the lack of medical attention that Republican prisoners received as well as Las Zapatones’ lack of compassion and indifference regarding whether prisoners die or survive. To her, they are not individuals but disposable entities. In order to maintain a limited degree of power afforded by the regime as well as agency and selfhood, the nuns and guards become accomplices to fascism and male hegemony while superficially divesting themselves of their devalued identities as women (20). The two other main authorities in Las Ventas are Mercedes, another guard, and the superior, Sister María de los Serafines, who the inmates nickname “La Veneno”, due to her poisonous cruelty. Mercedes is the only one shows compassion towards the inmates: “Mercedes quiere aprender a gritar. Grita, porque después del suceso del dedo del niño Dios recibió una dura amonestación de la hermana María de los Serafines. Le dijo que era muy blanda con las internas, y que debía aprender a ponerse en su sitio si no quería perder su puesto (151)”. Unlike Sister Maria de los Serafines, who strongly believes that the inmates are inferior to her due to their liberalism and lack of religious affiliation, and that it is her duty to evangelize and discipline them, Mercedes appears to be in this position most likely for financial reasons and shows qualities of decency unlike Las Zapatones or Sor Veneno. She volunteers in the infirmary occasionally, where she is emotionally vulnerable with the inmates and shares some bonding-like moments with them:” Ella supo que era incapaz de imponer su autoridad

cuando preguntó de quién era la silla donde Hortensia estaba sentada. Las risas le dolieron como heridas abiertas, y se le saltaron las lágrimas. No tardarían en despedirla si continuaba comportándose así (185).” Elseways, *Las Zapatones* is a fanatic *Franquista* and has chosen this job out of pleasure instead of out of necessity. She preys upon the inmates even in the most intimate and emotional moments when their loved ones are present:

Recorre el pasillo central, camina despacio con los brazos en jarra. Mira a la derecha y a la izquierda con el ceño fruncido. Observa a los familiares. Vigila a las presas. Es La Zapatones, y murmura en voz baja una letanía, –. Algunos creen que reza una oración. Pero no. Repite una y otra vez el último parte de guerra. El parte que su admirado Generalísimo escribió por primera vez de puño y letra. La guerra ha terminado. Y repite su desprecio, una y otra vez: Cautivo y desarmado el ejército rojo (140-1).

*Las Zapatones'* devotion to the *Franquista* cause is cult-like and she views General Franco as a God-like figure rather than just another head of state. She has memorized the story of the ending of the war according to Franco by heart, and recites it to herself piously as if she were praying the rosary: “En el día de hoy, cautivo y desarmado el ejército rojo, han alcanzado las tropas Nacionales sus últimos objetivos militares. La guerra ha terminado (135)”. In her mind, she is imagining herself in General Franco’s shoes, defeating his radical leftist enemies. Although her only responsibility is monitoring the prisoners’ visits with their families, in her mind they are the same “rojos” and the enemy that Franco successfully defeated. Repetition of the final war communique helps her to convince herself that the war is over and there will never again be repercussions for the Nationalists. She chose this position as a guard not solely due to the economic benefits but because she supports the oppression of all leftists, even her fellow women. In *Mujeres encarceladas: la prisión de ventas*,

*de La República Al Franquismo, 1931-1941*, Fernando Hernández Holgado writes that prison guards at Las Ventas had to undergo specialized, mandatory training in the Criminology School during the Second Republic (188). Francoist authorities frequently hand-picked both nuns and lay prison functionaries as many were relatives of those who were “víctimas de la barbarie roja” during the war and were fueled by vengeance and resentment (214). These women played a crucial role in maintaining oppressive misogynistic practices, reinforcing submission to serve men and *la patria*.

The nuns’ purpose in Las Ventas is also to monitor and penalize Republican prisoners. Hernández Holgado maintains that they were in charge of “todo el gobierno interior, del mantenimiento de la disciplina entre las reclusas, de las clases de enseñanza y de la dirección de los talleres” (220). Their mission is also one of evangelization on behalf of the “virtuous spirit of Nationalist Spain” and they take extremely punitive measures upon any sign of defiance (18):

La hermana Maria de los Serafines mostró el Niño Jesús coronado de latón dorado, pasó la mano bajo las rodillas regordetas y cruzadas, y ofreció el pie del infante a la primera reclusa: El culto religioso forma parte de su reeducación. No han querido comulgar y hoy ha nacido Cristo. Van a darles todo un beso, y la que no se dé se queda sin comunicar esta tarde... —¡Bestia comunista! El grito es de Maria de los Serafines (124).

This passage is from the infamous scene in which Tomasa is sent into reclusion as a consequence of biting the infant Jesus idol’s toe when she was supposed to kiss it respectfully at a Christmas Mass all the inmates were forced to attend. Sister Maria de los Serafines insists that forcefully subjecting the inmates to Catholicism is a charitable act ridding them of the error of their ways. However, the nuns exercise their authority over the atheist and agnostic Republican prisoners forcefully and violently. Chacón criticizes the oppressive nature of the Church throughout *La voz dormida*. In his



homily, the priest tells the inmates: “Sois escoria, y por eso estais aqui. Y si no conocéis esa palabra, yo os voy a decir lo que significa escoria. Mierda, significa mierda” (123). They are “escoria” not only for being Republicans, but for refusing to take holy communion and embrace religious salvation. Sor Veneno (an intentionally blasphemous play on her religious title combined with the inmates’ nickname for her) then scolds them for their defiance: “El culto religioso forma parte de su reeducación. No han querido comulgar y hoy ha nacido Cristo”. This is followed by Tomasa acting out and further provoking Sister Maria de los Serafines. From the Clergy’s perspective, this act of reverence functions as a type of punishment, classifying the inmates as sinners. They command that, one by one, each prisoner bend down to kiss the idol while La Veneno holds him at stomach-level to make the act all the more excruciating. After Tomasa bites off the statue’s toe, Sister Maria de los Serafines screams out “Bestia comunista” and knocks the ceramic piece out of her mouth with a swift blow to the face. In the film version of *La voz dormida*, this scene is far more dramatic, as La Veneno beats Tomasa with a truncheon while she is lying down, unconscious. The nun then strikes her, shouting “escoria roja, sacrílega, ni mereces el aire que respiras, puta, comunista, vas a ir al infierno eternamente; quita a este demonio de mi vista!” The references to the incarnation of evil and adaptation of the priest’s words are evidence of the nun’s internalization of Francoist conjectures regarding Marxists. The nun’s usage of dehumanizing terms such as “bestia” and “escoria” reduce her enemy to a mere abstraction that deserves to be completely purged and annihilated. Convincing themselves that the inmates are indeed subhuman helps the nuns and wardens justify their lack of compassion and respect.

The nuns’ cruelty and violence against their morally inferior sisters contradict their piety. Sadly, this is another truth Chacón came to know of when interviewing survivors. In the chapter of *Prison of Women* titled “Childbirth in Prison”, Tomasa Cuevas describes an instance where a

pregnant inmate who had gone into labor was abandoned by the nuns left her to go pray the rosary. She died in childbirth and her death was the nuns' fault, although they failed to show any remorse or sorrow. Cuevas describes the nuns' neglect and contempt towards the prisoners:

You may wonder how the nuns treated us. Well, the treatment varied. There was one nun who was very decent to us. Then there was Sor Gertrudis; she was the worst of the lot-an evil woman. One nun, Mother Visitation, was more or less human, but the other nuns-one day they'd take the women to chapel as if they were off to a party and the next day the same nuns would take women out to be shot.....They held her in the chapel with the nuns all night and tried to make her kiss the crucifix. She refused. "You're the ones who've committed crimes," she told the nuns, "you're worse than we are. You're the ones who should confess (47).

The inmates do not fall for the innocent facade put on by the nuns, as they along with the guards, form part of a dominant female group that refuses to acknowledge their similarities and shared essential interests. Tomasa demonstrate this hyper-awareness of the inmates accused the nuns of committing crimes due to their compliance with abuse and genocide and calling out their hypocrisy by suggesting they confess as they are the ones who have committed crimes. When Tomasa is in solitary confinement, La Veneno and Las Zapatones refuse to bring her sanitary pads while she is menstruating: "La Veneno no le hubiera dejado llevarselos, claro que no. Ni Las Zapatones tampoco, que es mas mala que la quina, o igual"(49). While this statement is brief, the narrator effectively captures the two guards' contempt towards their leftist sisters, who they have no problem allowing to live in filth. Later on, Reme is forced to drink a liter of castor oil, a common act of penance for female prisoners, as a punishment for embroidering a Republican flag, and her hair is cut and her head is shaved by members of the Guardia Civil. According to English historian Paul Preston, castor

oil, a powerful laxative, was used by Franco's soldiers before shaving women's heads and parading them around the streets as they soiled themselves (23). By having her head shaved against her will, Reme is stripped of her femininity and dignity, symbolizing how she has transgressed the moral orders upheld by the regime and acted out of line, representing Republican women who, in the words of Fernando Cobo Romero, dared to "equate themselves to men by entering the public sphere of parties, organizations, and politics", thus stepping outside of their expected roles, upsetting the Patriarchy (64).

In *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain*, Preston states regarding the fate of Republican women during the postwar that, "those who came out of prison alive suffered lifelong physical and psychological problems. Thousands of others were subjected to rape and other sexual abuses, the humiliation of head shaving and public soiling after the forced ingestion of castor oil" (55). Preston also cites General Emilio Mola, one of Franco's senior generals, who declared, 'it's necessary to spread terror. We have to create the impression of mastery, eliminating without scruples or hesitation all those who do not think as we do. There can be no cowardice" (103). The authorities were sure that they were teaching anyone who opposed Francoism a lesson. In the case of *La voz dormida*, their motives appear to be more sadistic and sinister as any pushback is met with vengeance.

In a later scene with parallels to Reme's penance, Elvira is severely reprimanded for crying because she is unsure whether she will ever see her brother Paulino, a Communist militia fighter, again. She is punished for her lack of control over her emotions and La Veneno cuts her red mane and then throws the locks of hair into a box to sell them for profit:

La melena roja de Elvira ha dejado de ser de Elvira. Antes de cortarsela, La Veneno la hizo una trenza. De raíz, se la cortó de raíz en presencia de La Zapatones, que

estaba en pie frente a Elvira, la barbilla adelantada hacia ella y las piernas abiertas, vigilante, con los pulgares colgados en su cinturón, ordenándole que no se moviera.

-No se mueva.

Se la cortó de raíz, La Veneno. Después entregó su trenza roja a Las Zapatones. Y Las Zapatones la metió en la bolsa donde guardan el pelo, para venderlo.

-A ver si ahora aprende.

Ha aprendido Elvira. No debe llorar. Regresa a la galería número dos sin su melena.

No debe llorar. Y no llora. Se sienta en su petate tapándose la cabeza con las manos y se lamenta sin llorar:

-Me han robado el pelo (65).

In this passage the irony is how even though crying and emotional vulnerability are traits that are traditionally associated with femininity, showing emotion in Las Ventas is a punishable act, as the wardens rejoice in seeing their enemies suffer. As was the case with Reme, the cutting or shaving of a woman's hair is symbolic. Elvira's red tresses are perhaps her most valuable physical asset. This represents her individuality rather than just a symbol of femininity and beauty. La Veneno's action of keeping the hair for herself and then selling it creates the impression of domination, as she appropriates what is not hers for her benefit, forcing her victim into a state of submission and impotence (24). The "lesson" that Elvira has learned is that since she is the "other" in the Nationalists' eyes, her emotions and livelihood are not validated nor should she try to make them valid.

Las Ventas prison is much more than just a physical space and the setting of the novel. It is a place steeped with the history of women's rights as well as oppression in Spain. Paradoxical to founder Victoria Kent's intention for Las Ventas to be a result of the penal reforms under the Second

Republic, it became a “storehouse of prisoners” (Las Ventas: the history of a women’s prison 1933-1969) and a site of tyranny, with many of the perpetrators of misogynistic abuse and violence being women themselves. Today no signs of this place of horrors, torture, and oppression remain, but Las Ventas remains a site of memory preserved through literature as it is a realm “that individuals and groups have invested with affective ties of longing and belonging” (Ramblado Minero 32). For those against the recuperation of historical memory, Las Ventas is also a site of oblivion, to paraphrase both in the physical sense since it has been eradicated, as well as according to the phenomenon of social forgetting. The testimonies used by Chacón are sufficient evidence that Las Ventas prison existed years ago as much as those loyal to the Franco regime may try to deny it. *La voz dormida* falls into the unique category of testimonial literature, which is more pertinent in discussion of dictatorships and human rights abuses in Latin America than in Spain, as I discuss in the next section of this chapter.

### ***Testimonial Narrative as Literature***

Testimonial literature has been defined by George Yúdice as:

An authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution, etc.). Emphasizing popular oral discourse, the witness portrays his or her own experience as a representative of a collective memory and identity. Truth is summoned in the cause of denouncing a present situation of exploitation and oppression or exorcising and setting aright official history (Gugelberger et al. 86).

The usage of testimony in testimonial literature is derived from the Spanish term *testimonio*, that emerged from human rights tribunals and international human rights instruments following

dictatorships and civil unrest in South and Central America. The presence of testimonial literature in Spain has not been studied in-depth, as there has been little public awareness of the crimes the Franco dictatorship committed against the defeated Republicans and their descendants until recently. Peninsular *testimonio* writers such as Chacón blend fact and fiction into their novels. This hybrid form of *testimonio* permits individuals to express their trauma and rewrite stories from alternative perspectives. It is revealing how Chacón does not write *La voz dormida* in a first-person narrative, showing that she is accountable for the fact that this is not her story, nor are these testimonies hers. One implication is that by writing the narrative in third-person to include each character's individual story, this is deliberately done to honor the experiences of all Spanish Republican women. Due to the limited availability of theory regarding testimony in Spain, my point of reference concerns hybrid testimonies of survivors of the Argentine Dirty War in *La escuelita* by Alicia Partnoy.

The circumstances of the Dirty War are uncannily similar to that of the setting in *La voz dormida*. Following President Juan Perón's death in 1974, leftist university students were persecuted and imprisoned by the United States-backed right-wing military junta in Argentina (Blakeley 96). Writer and Academic Alicia Partnoy was taken from her home on January 12, 1977, by the army, leaving behind her 18-month-old daughter Ruth, and imprisoned at a concentration camp named La Escuelita. For three and a half months, she was blindfolded, brutally beaten, starved, raped, and confined to inhumane conditions (Treacy 131). She was moved from the concentration camp to the prison of Villa Floresta in Bahía Blanca where she stayed for six months only to be transferred to Villa Devoto prison in Buenos Aires. She spent two and a half years as a prisoner of conscience, with no charges. After being reunited with her husband and daughter, Partnoy came to the United States as a political refugee. There, she wrote *The Little School: Tales of Disappearance and Survival in Argentina* (1986). Although *The Little School* was written first in Spanish, it was only

published in Argentina twenty-years after the English version. Partnoy's prison memoir-like *La voz dormida* focuses largely on female political prisoners. Both accounts use prison narratives and adjust them to suit each narrator's purpose and also hint at how sexuality and motherhood, apart from political affiliation, shape women's experiences in prison. Edurne Portela writes that testimonies of this sort:

Tell us how to represent extreme experiences of political repression and violence, even though sometimes words are insufficient to portray such inordinate suffering. They are fragments of life and death, of repression and resistance, of dismay and hope. Despite all the horror ingrained in these representations, the authors provide in their books a space of recognition for those whose voices have disappeared forever, or those who have chosen silence (162).

The narratives of political prisoners are not the same as prison narratives as for the political prisoner, arbitrary incineration, torture, forced pregnancy, rape, and execution are extra-judicial. Victims of these human rights abuses are entitled to reparations. *La escuelita* captures the experiences of other imprisoned Argentine women aside from the narrator. There is an interplay between the introduction, the biographical section and Portnoy's accounts. The introduction is straightforward and places the reader right into the action:

On January 12, 1977, at noon, I was detained by uniformed Army personnel at my home, Canada Street 240, Apt.2, Bahia Blanca; minutes later the same military personnel detained my husband at his place of work. I was taken to the headquarters of the 5th Army Corps and from there to a concentration camp, which the military ironically named the Little School (*La Escuelita*). We had no knowledge of the fate of

Ruth, our daughter. From that moment on, for the next five months, my husband and I became two more names on the endless list of disappeared people (13-14).

The introduction, mainly recounted in the passive voice, is factual rather than emotional, with the exception of the use of the term “endless” to refer to all of the kidnapped Argentines. The descriptive details such as the date, time, her address, and her daughter’s name reinforce factual validity. The reader is immediately imagining the moment in which Alicia is detained and taken to La Escuelita. She then recounts another version of the day she was kidnapped as the first fictionalized tale of the narrative:

That day, at noon, she was wearing her husband’s slippers; it was hot and she had not felt like turning the closet upside down to find her own. There were enough chores to be done in the house. When they knocked at the door, she walked down the ninety-foot corridor, *flip-flop, flip-flop*. For a second she thought that perhaps she should not open the door; they were knocking with unusual violence...but it was noon time. She had always waited for them to come at night. It felt nice to be wearing a loose house dress and his slippers after having slept so many nights with her shoes on, waiting for them. She realized who was at the door and ran towards the backward. She lost the first slipper in the corridor, before reaching the plane where Ruth, her little girl, was standing. She lost the second slipper while leaping over the brick wall. By then the shouts and kicks at the door were brutal. Ruth burst into tears at the doorway. While squatting in the bushes, she heard the shot. She looked up and saw soldiers on every roof. She ran to the street through weeds as tall as she...When the soldiers grabbed her, forcing her into the truck, she glanced down at her feet in the dry street dust;



afterward she looked up: the sky was so blue that it hurt. The neighbors heard her screams (25-6).

In this version, there is still the same factual evidence regarding the scene's setting, but there is also a clear tension leading up to the climax, the moment the protagonist is detained. She describes her arrestor's physical actions, various sounds, such as her slippers' movements, the knocking on the door, shouts, screams, and her daughter's tears. As her daughter's reaction was not mentioned in the initial introduction, the image of a distressed toddler crying out for her mother reinforces the fact that Partnoy's experience, like that of thousands of fellow Argentine detainees, is gendered. While her capturers view her as subhuman due to her political beliefs, she is a mother and wife whose "disappearance" leaves a void in the lives of her loved ones. She is more than just a statistic.

Critic Jean Franco suggests that gender was key to breaking down the prisoners' sense of identity (Treacy 131). Both male and female prison guards in Argentine prisons tortured prisoners for not "conforming" to patriarchal gender norms. This conformity is often determined by the socio-political beliefs of the regime rather than gender alone. Franco writes that male guards emasculated their opponents by forcing them to wear dresses, taunted Jewish inmates for being circumcised, mocked their penis sizes and focused physical torture on their genitals. The latter two are examples of emasculation in the literal sense. They also physically tortured women based on such perverse sadistic sexual fantasies: stripping, beatings, rape, and forced abortion. Women's first-person accounts of torture and rape tend to be "laconic and euphemistic" since women prison survivors are reluctant to dwell on these experiences. They feel obligated to tell the truth about their country's recent history in an act of resistance against the naysayer authorities who denied any wrongdoings and hid evidence.

La Escuelita, like Las Ventas, is another “site of memory”, as the space of the prison represents the collective experiences of “disappeared” Argentines although it has since been demolished. Testimonies are proof that these spaces of oppression existed. Partnoy’s intentions behind writing were to “tell the stories of the others because I was the survivor, and I wanted to stress the collective.” By writing her memoir in the third-person and leaving the protagonist unnamed, Partnoy pays homage to the collective experiences of all detainees, similar to Chacón’s intention of honoring the collective memory of imprisoned Spanish women rather than focusing on an individual story. The use of testimony emphasizes such settings as symbolic spaces, more than just literature. *La voz dormida* features memorial anecdotes which all feature “questioning plays” on memory. Part of this “questioning play” consists of going through a thematization of the trauma brought on by the Civil War, in which one major interdiction is the act of mourning. Sophie Milquet writes that “far from being a simple consequence of the conflict situation, the interdiction to be in mourning incarnates the extremities imposed to the vanquished in order to break the resistance of the families (4)”:

Por Almudena lo hizo, porque no tuvo la suerte de saber a tiempo que iban a fusilar a su hija. Ella no había podido darle sepultura, ni le había cerrado los ojos, ni le había lavado la cara para limpiarla de la sangre antes de entregarla a la tierra. Y por eso va todas las mañanas al Cementario del Este, y se esconde con su sobrina Isabel en un panteón hasta que dejan de oírse las descargas. Por eso corre hacia los muertos, y corta con unas tijeras un trocito de tela de sus ropas y se los muestra a las mujeres que esperan en la puerta, para que algunas de ellas los reconozcan en aquellos detalles pequeños, y entren al cementario. Y puedan cerrarles los ojos. Y les laven la cara. (97)

Doña Celia goes to the cemetery where prisoners are executed every day in hopes of giving visitors the opportunity to carry out final rites for their loved ones. She does this in honor of her daughter Almudena who was also executed by Francoist forces. The complete disappearance of the bodies further hinders the process of mourning:

Los rumores que corrían señalaban la trampa en la que caerían los que reconocieran a sus muertos. Sólo unos pocos confiaban en que les entregarían los cadáveres, y no serían detenidos ni interrogados. Los demás miraban los retratos procurando controlar la emoción para que su rostro no les delatara al conocer la muerte de los suyos. Miraban. Guardaban silencio y se alejaban sin un gesto de dolor, sin una lágrima (303).

This moment highlights the defeated's collective struggle to bury their dead ceremonially and inability to hold their oppressors accountable and is deeply moving on a human level as well as symbolic of Spain's struggle as a whole to come to terms with its civil war and to what their countrymen did to one another. They are afraid to mourn and unable to even shed a tear for their dead loved ones.

*La voz dormida* exhibits traits of the hybrid testimonial novel, since it is a combination of testimony and fiction, as well as proof of oral witnesses and reconstructed memories. As a *testimonio* author, Chacón strives for factual and historical accuracy along with authenticity and aesthetic and literary appeal. Regarding this specific, subgenre José Colmeiro explains that:

As a fundamentally hybrid form, mixing the oral and the literary, the testimonial and the novelistic, the personal and the collective, the memorial and the archival, and the multiple voices of informants, characters, narrator and author, Chacón's novel

transforms the raw materials re-collected into a new creation that effectively produces what I call a “hybridization of memories”. (192–93)

This “hybridization of memories” includes the mutual adaptation of both literary and oral languages, representing a linguistic oppositional practice made accessible to a wider audience. Unlike in a traditional testimony featuring a first-person narrator, the hybrid narrative mainly features a third-person narrator. The melding of oral and literary qualities also possesses a strong emotional force. Colmeiro analyzes Chacón’s use of typical characteristics of oral speech, which include “reliance on additive structures (“and”, “and”), rather than subordinate constructions. . . . rather than analytic formation; and the use of redundancy and repetition” (195-6). In the hybrid context, narration switches from first-person to third-person between characters with the purpose of illustrating the obsessive use of repetition of certain words or phrases to emphasize intense emotional states such as fear, apathy, melancholy, distress, anger, and grief. A clear example of a passage that utilizes the first described oral quality is when Pepita is tossing in turning in bed, and struggling to fall asleep after having been ordered to go to the mountains to receive a message from the militia fighters:

Y dio tantas vueltas en la cama, a derecha y a izquierda, dormida y despierta, que acabó por caerse al suelo. . . . Y ella no se había partido en dos. . . . Y se mete entre las sábanas, aún calientes. . . . Y la sopa, . . . Y Pepita se ovilla al lado izquierdo de la cama, y luego al derecho. Y se abraza a la almohada. . . . Y ella se levantará, claro que se levantará. . . . Y Felipe se echó al monte . . . Y quedarse allí. . . . Y trabajando como un perro. . . . Y va todas las mañanas al cementerio. Y encima le deja quedarse con las migas de los manteles. . . . Y hacer limpieza general los domingos. . . . Y menos mal que encontró una casa donde entrar a servir . . . Y a ella le gustaría ir al parque los domingos (66–69).

Pepita's mind abruptly jumps from one thought to the next, symbolizing the chaos in her life between work, her emotions, everything she has to do in her everyday life, and her selflessness, as she always puts her loved ones first and never stops worrying about them. The repetition of "y" symbolizes her incessant thought pattern and anxiety. This oral quality is derived from elements of the interviews that Chacón conducted into the fictional narrative, but at the same time interwoven with conventional aspects of literary construction such as character development, foreshadowing, and symbolism. Along with respectful appropriation and recognition of the original testimonial authors, orality is necessary for re-enacting pivotal moments of the text in resonance with the audience, evoking emotion while still maintaining factuality.

*La voz dormida* is not by any means a traditional, fictional novel due to the way Chacón incorporates details from the survivors' testimonies into the plot and characters. She both gives life to the fictional protagonists and honors the survivors by giving them the same names and similar details about the circumstances that landed them in prison. Chacón portrays Las Ventas prison, the ultimate site of memory that carries a deep pain in the survivor's minds and hearts years after it has been demolished, by emphasizing the cruelty of the authorities' and nuns' part, the insalubrious conditions of the prison, and psychological trauma left. Chacón's portrayal of transgenerational transmission through the character of Tensi who proudly inherits her mother's material positions and chooses to fight against fascism is deeply moving and shows the next generation as capable of coming to peace with the aftermath of the war and seeking justice for the future.

## **Reflections of Belonging to the Winning Side in *Habíamos ganado la guerra***

In this chapter, the focus shifts to Esther Tusquets' autobiographical narrative, *Habíamos ganado la guerra*. The main difference between the story-telling methods present in *Habíamos ganado la guerra* versus *La voz dormida*, is that Tusquets' experiences are first-hand experiences, that she lived through. Another crucial distinction between both authors is the historical perspective of the winners versus the "losers" in *La voz dormida*. Although Esther belongs to the "victorious" group, her sentiments are not of trauma or pride but remorse. Coincidentally, *Habíamos ganado la guerra* was published in 2007, the same year as the passing of the Law of Historical Memory, forming part of a broader cultural phenomenon.

*Habíamos ganado la guerra* ensures the balance of reflective literature from both the Republican and *franquista* points of view. Tusquets polemically suggests that Republican women's narratives from the postwar years have attracted the most attention during the so-called artistic memory boom in Spain: "sobre esta etapa, la más dura de la postguerra, se ha escrito mucho desde el punto de vista de quienes la perdieron . . . pero me pareció que disponíamos de menos material procedente de los vencedores" (7). Nevertheless, *Habíamos ganado la guerra* allows the reader insight into an insider's view of the regime, which proves most helpful to fully understanding its indifference towards cruelty, inequality, and misogyny since class privileges trump gender solidarity.

The first part of this chapter focuses on the representation of gender and class through everyday scenes from Tusquets' family and social life. I argue that both factors, the latter particularly, shape and distinguish the protagonist's experiences from *La voz dormida*. Tusquets' familial relations as they are represented by the text provide insight into not only the class system but also the political climate of the 1940s, such as their fascist, pro-Hitler

sympathies, as well as the strained relationship with her mother, which introduces inter-generational clashes. The second part questions whether autobiography should be considered as testimony, underscoring another key difference between *La voz dormida* and *Habíamos ganado la guerra*, the fact that the latter is a direct autobiography.

### **Class and Gender in Spain under Franco as present in *Habíamos ganado la guerra***

With the exception of the autobiography's final chapter, Tusquets' tone when recounting the socio-political climate of her childhood is in general relatively neutral, except for certain polarizing moments, such as her admittance to supporting the Third Reich during World War II. This is a redeemable quality on her part, emphasizing how she was just a child exposed to sympathy towards right-wing authoritarianism against her will. Her self-consciousness and reflectiveness is demonstrated by the distance between the first-person narration shifting back and forth from the perspective of "I" as an aging writer and intellectual to "I" as a naive child (Weng 135). As the creator and narrator of her biography, Tusquets reflects on her distant past while now acknowledging the prevalence of gender and class in both her own experience of the Franco regime and as political weapons aiding oppression. In the prologue, she addresses her intentions behind publicizing her memories:

Se ha escrito mucho desde el punto de vista de quienes la perdieron [la guerra], en libros de memorias y en literatura de ficción, pero me pareció que disponíamos de menos material procedente de los vencedores. ¿Cómo era la burguesía franquista en la Barcelona de los años cuarenta y cincuenta, a ojos infantiles y luego adolescentes de uno de sus hijos? Creí que mi experiencia personal podría aportar algo (7).

Several crucial factors to the construction of Tusquets' identity are the changing dynamic from child to adult, her belonging to the Catalan bourgeoisie, and the winning side of the Civil War. Paul Julian Smith takes note of the contradictions of her subjective, fluid identity:

Tusquets' self-created public image as licensed heretic seems equally finely balanced: she is a Catalan writer who writes in Castilian and is not a nationalist; a Leftist who, since a youthful dalliance with the Falange, has never been a member of a political party; and a sponsor of women and lesbian writers at her own publishing house who has never made either identification herself (Smith 258).

Smith echoes Tusquets' claim that the perspective of the *vencidos* from the Civil War and early years of the dictatorship is more appealing to the artistic lense in contemporary Spain, which is why she chooses to make this perspective public: "Far from being triumphalist, however, the book focuses on the subjective, and indeed eccentric experience of a child and adolescent and on the perils (but also the pleasures) of everyday life, necessarily distant from the grand narrative of the new regime" (256). The victorious' perspective is out-of-touch from the grim reality of post-war Spain which was "un país desmoronado y pobretón, pero era nuestro" (64). The elite have the impression of the country now being theirs since they have taken it back from the leftists and this is reflected in Tusquets' repetition of collective pronouns such as "nuestro" and "habíamos". Even if the country is backwards and poverty-stricken, the franquista's logic is that it is theirs and rightfully so since their side won the war. Tusquets denies the trope imposed by the pact of silence that everyone lost the war by distinguishing the experiences faced by the two groups. By questioning her social, political and familiar atmosphere, she grants herself "un protagonismo que en este caso es reflejo de una rebeldía y de una disconformidad con la situación establecida por la norma política en torno al papel habitualmente atribuido a la mujer por la sociedad del momento" (Díez de Revenga 132).



The most dominant prototype of womanhood in post-Civil War Spain is the figure of the mother, which she considers to be part of her creative technique in all of her novels since this is so closely derived from her issues with her mother (Servén Díez 117):

En mi obra, la figura de la madre es una de las que yo considero más autobiográficas, y seguro que coincide con lo que he contado verbalmente de ella infinitas veces, pero eso no quita que mi hermano reviente de risa cuando lo lee. Obviamente no he descrito a nuestra madre, sino mi posición respecto a ella, y muchas cosas más, conscientes e inconscientes (*Elementos subjetivos y autobiográficos en el personaje novelesco* 112).

She is aware that her narrative construction is extremely personal for her and warns the reader that this experience is subjective and not definitive of her whole environment. One key term she uses repeatedly to describe bourgeoisie motherhood through her mother in *Habíamos ganado la guerra* is “aburrimento”:

Creo que pocas personas se han aburrido tanto como se aburrió durante largas etapas de su vida, tal vez durante su vida entera, mi pobre madre, tan capacitada para múltiples empeños, tan creativa y llena de talento, y condenada, como las restantes mujeres de su clase social y de su generación, a limitarse a la casa, a cuidar de los hijos, del marido, de su propio aspecto y a participar en actos sociales, a colaborar en obras benéficas, o poner, como mucho, una tienda de objetos de regalo o de ropita de bebé, y, si nada de esto le interesaba, como era el caso de mamá y supongo que de muchas otras, a la pura inanidad (20).

The image she paints of her mother in the above passage is of a superficial, selfish woman who cannot be bothered to put her family first even in times of crisis. The few activities she describes her mother as being interested in, charity events, opening baby clothing stores, and other social outings do not satisfy her. Even summer holidays are tedious for her if they frequent the same destination too often: “una casita deliciosa, en primera línea del mar, que diseñó ella misma y de la que se aburría, como le ocurría con casi todo, cuando la tuvo terminada” (76). She has a talent for design and architecture that she never takes advantage of:

De haber nacido unos años más tarde, mi madre hubiera sido tal vez arquitecto, y nada la divertía tanto como organizar espacios, derribar tabiques, cambiar puertas de lugar, buscar en los anticuarios, inventar soluciones distintas de las habituales, dar rienda suelta a su fantasía (135).

Although one might assume that Tusquets’ mother could have easily had opportunities to become independent and make a life for herself thanks to her social status, the same privileges she enjoys are what impede her to adhere to the expectations of a “decent” upper-class woman, such as not working. Tusquets underscores her mother’s boredom and desperation to get out of her current situation: “Ya he dicho que mi madre se aburría, se cansaba de todo. Como no podía modificar su vida en lo fundamental, introducía cambios en cuanto tenía a su alcance” (141). She finds her mother’s tolerance and support of the Franco regime to be another indicator of her privilege through the ability to condone fascism and misogyny: “Mi madre gritaba el nombre de Franco con un entusiasmo que yo le vería manifestar en muy contadas ocasiones a lo largo de su vida, y siguió un buen trecho a los soldados sin dejar de vitorear y de aplaudir” (9). She was raised in a fairly liberal household, her father was a mason, and she never cared much for politics until the Civil War broke out. The war years were a rude awakening for her and her family in which they were forced to

develop unprecedented habits in order to survive. The women were forced to do odd jobs and work for women who in other circumstances, “no habrían pasado la zona de servicio” (10). Once everything is back to normal, the mother also abandons her small children to the care of the domestic employees while she tends to other duties. The Catalan bourgeoisie had the intention to pretend the war had never happened, and make up for lost time by getting back to their frivolous routines: “Reinaba en algunos grupos de la burguesía una frenética, una obstinada, alegría de vivir. Ellos les ponían pisos a sus queridas y ellas se olvidaban sus misales o mantillas en los *muebles*” (21). As soon as the war ends, everyone is relieved to resume their lives of leisure away from their presumed responsibilities as if the war never happened.

The bourgeoisie is aware that they enjoy tremendous privileges while the rest of Spain is still undergoing extreme poverty and hardship leftover from the war. In Tusquets’ words: “¡Claro que habían ganado la guerra y que lo sabían!” (21). They knew that the majority of their fellow countrymen were relying on rationed goods and barely surviving, they lived on the sidelines, completely oblivious of all of that as their children attend private schools, they receive adequate medical attention, never had to wait in line for hours just to get food, stay in their bubble of the *Rambla* neighborhood, and have servants to tend to their every need:

En aquella Barcelona miserable, sucia, rota, chata, mal alumbrada, de una monotonía terrible, la Barcelona de las restricciones eléctricas, de las libretas de racionamiento, de más de media población aterrorizada y hambrienta, tan distinta de la Barcelona rutilante del pasado que me describían los mayores, los nuestros trataban de enriquecerse y de divertirse a toda costa. (20)

The usage of the adjectives “miserable”, “sucia”, “chata” “mal alumbrada”, “terrible”, “aterrotizada” y “hambrienta” underscores how the one percent lives versus the ordinary Spaniards who “lost” their war. Again, Tusquets includes herself in this minority through the use of “los nuestros”: “los nuestros trataban de enriquecerse y de divertirse a toda costa”, and takes accountability for their ignorance and tone-deafness.

In other works of hers such as *Correspondencia Privada*, Tusquets opens up more about her relationship with her mother and the influence she has had on her life. The mother’s physical appearance distinguishes her, causing everyone to think she is a foreigner: “la tomaban por extranjera” (11) as she is tall, blond and blue-eyed. Her beauty makes her stand out: “se convertía en el centro de cualquier reunión” (13) compared to all the other “señoras enjoyadas, emplumadas, y escotadas, algunas ridículas”. She is “elegante y hermosa” with a “figura esbelta y erguida, la ropa impecable y personal, los zapatos hermosos” (29). A place which she frequents is the *Gran Teatre del Liceu*, a place that is also a “símbolo de clase” (157) for the Barcelona elite. Going to the Liceu Theatre was always a spectacle for the Tusquets and the extravagance of the space contrasts with the stark, impoverished reality faced by most Spaniards and symbolizes the society’s polarization. For the Bourgeoisie, the theatre is a place of leisure but also where they define and unify their social class:

Ese teatro es una parodia con aspectos lamentables [...] es el templo más auténtico de mi raza, de una burguesía mediocre y decadente que acude aquí para sentirse unida, para saberse clan, para inventarnos quizás- ayudados por la hostilidad que se manifiesta en la calle contra nosotros- que somos todavía fuertes e importantes, una burguesía que construyó ese templo (158).

The image of this magnificent theatre as a playground for Barcelona's wealthy and beautiful is the most drastic disparity with the squalor of the post-war Spain which the Republicans lived through as portrayed in *La voz dormida*:

Nos llevaba el chofer de uno de los amigos, y entrábamos en el teatro flanqueados por un nutrido grupo de gente que se apostaba allí para vernos pasar: la llegada de la burguesía a su templo convertida en espectáculo popular. No existía peligro de robo y las señoras iban envueltas en pieles y cubiertas de joyas (162).

Regardless of how conservative or liberal a certain individual may be, the social class they belong to imposes certain limitations, as is the case with Tusquets' mother. For instance, "si ella no puede empeñarse en un trabajo remunerado fuera del hogar, los hijos tampoco pueden jugar y correr por la calle libremente como hacen otros niños; los hijos de la burguesía que viven en el centro de Barcelona han de salir poco y siempre acompañados por adultos" (Servén Díez 129). The interrelation between class and gender is a pivotal theme in Tusquets' work aside from just *Habíamos ganado la guerra*. She explains how "lo habitual en el grupo al que pertenecíamos era que el marido cedía a la mujer y la mujer delegaba en mayor o menor grado en el servicio, el cuidado y la educación de los niños" (10). Tusquets repeatedly mentions instances of friction with her mother where she imposes her frivolous expectations onto her, which she classified as "los huecos y carencias que había dejado mi madre" (200). She views her daughter as "gordita, nada deportiva y muy delicada" (173). The narrative voice when discussing her mother is contradictory, one of both admiration and resentment. She is still clearly deeply hurt by her mother's neglect and disinterest in her as a young child. The few times the two spend together are "cuando salía de compras, o a la modista o al sastre o a la peluquería, por las mañanas" (31), all traditionally female, vain, aesthetic activities. In difficult moments such as when Esther's dog died (30) she has little to no emotional

support. However, her irreligious mother does comfort her whenever she is terrified by the intense emphasis on religion in school and paranoid about going to hell: “dijo que aquello eran paparrachas, puros disparates, y riñó a la persona que me había leído la historia” (45).

Tusquets’ nuclear family possesses contrary positions regarding religion than those enforced onto them by the regime. If they dared to be open about their unorthodox attitudes towards the Catholic Church this would likely have resulted in them being ostracized by their upper-class peers. They seldom attend mass on Sundays. As a child, Esther is petrified by her parents’ disdain towards religion and receives her only religious instruction in school. Most of Tusquets’ paternal relatives, including her infamous uncle, Father Juan Tusquets, are devoutly religious, and never assume that Esther’s parents are atheists. They are horrified when they send her to the German School of Barcelona, rather than the school run by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart:

En mi familia paterna causó cierto escándalo que me llevaran al Colegio alemán. La Abuelita y el tío Juan, el cura, debieron de fruncir el entrecejo y aventurar algún prudente comentario, mientras que la tía Tula, más directa, más espontánea, más inocente, no dejaba de insistir en cómo se podía escoger un colegio adecuado e incluso peligroso, sobre todo para una niña, teniendo además al lado de nuestra casa a las monjitas del Sagrado Corazón. Los tres estaban convencidos de que la idea era de mi madre, a la que sin atreverse a suponer atea, sabían poco piadosa: lo que no podían imaginar era que mi padre, el bueno de Magín, el hijo y el hermano ejemplar, con su racionalismo propio de un científico del siglo XVIII, llevaba años sin creer en dios, o acaso no había creído en él jamás (67).

The Tusquets' have certain expectations of a young lady of their social class to be pious and proper, which is why they believe a secular education is beneath them. Their casual misogyny is also revealed through the idea that they put their son and brother, Tusquets' father, on a pedestal, and always expect the best of him. Yet, she emphasizes her father's lack of piety as well as acknowledging her own, demonstrated by writing "dios" in lowercase when God's name is traditionally written with the first letter being capitalized. After the German school is closed, she transfers several times in search of the best education in Barcelona, although her mother does not force her to do so. Eventually, she is exposed to Francoist gender norms in education through the *Enseñanzas del hogar* program: "Enseñanzas del hogar no respondía a ningún objetivo determinado, ni nos preparaba, en realidad, para nada. Se había limitado a suprimir las enseñanzas más teóricas o difíciles, o "masculinas" (las matemáticas, el griego, el latín) y a sustituirlas caprichosamente por otras" (88). Tusquets' mother does not have a professional background either and one would assume that she devotes herself to domestic tasks such as cooking and cleaning that her daughter is being instructed to do in school, although she relies on the help of domestic workers. She is an exceptional case among the other ladies of her social status, with whom complaining about their servants and the costs of items at the market are common topics of conversation: "porque nunca tuvo ni remota idea de lo que valían unas chuletas o un kilo de tomates, y nunca quiso inmiscuirse en el funcionamiento de la casa" (29). Nor is she anal about the order of the household and "se sentó siempre a la mesa sin saber lo que nos iban a servir, y sin que le importara lo más mínimo" (30). The narrator remembers the only activity her mother seemed passionate about as reading, as she spent "horas y horas leyendo en la sala" (31). She defies the *franquista* prototype of an oblivious mother and housewife and is intellectual and well-read. Despite her constant criticisms of her, she ultimately praises her for

instilling in her a love of reading and the arts: “Todo lo que amo aprendí a amarlo de ella. El mar, los animales, el arte, los libros. Pero también le debo a ella mis frustraciones y mi inseguridad.” (64).

Going back to the issue of indoctrination regarding gender norms, the concept of *Enseñanzas del hogar* was a part of new curriculum prescribed by the Law of Secondary Education of 1953 designed to educate girls from the ages of eleven to twelve years old on cooking, caring for infants and home economics, in order to convince them that mastering domestic matters was an essential part of their patriotic duty to the “fatherland” (Morcillo 81). Regarding preparation for marriage, they were taught to be submissive and placid when dealing with their husbands: “Al que había que contentar a toda costa y utilizando siempre la mano izquierda, porque lo nuestro era reinar desde las sombras, que se hiciera lo que queríamos, aparentando hacer lo que quería él. Evitar las discusiones. Nunca oponémosle de frente” (88). Much of this instruction was religious as well. In *The Seduction of Modern Spain: The Female Body and the Francoist Body Politics*, Lucia Graves recalls having to read a textbook featured in the curriculum titled *The Holy Land of Spain: An Exaltation of our National History*: “The National Crusade saved our Homeland from the wicked enemy” and Generalissimo Franco is Head of the Spanish State and Head of the Falange. He achieved the sacred unification of our Catholic Fatherland” (81). The use of “fatherland” as opposed to “motherland”, emphasizes a patriarchal culture that is led and governed by men with women remaining on the outside. Graves also describes her history teacher Señorita Mercedes, a member of the Sección Femenina who was also in charge of imparting physical education as part of the girls’ curriculum. Twice a week the girls were ordered to wear their gymnastics uniforms and their “movements had to convey a military precision: arms up and open, legs apart, one two, open, close, open, close! But we also had to smile, to protect the inner joy of living in Franco’s peace”. One such aspect that was reinforced was sexual purity, as the regime and Sección Femenina both recognized the Catholic



Church as the agglutinating agent in Spain's transition back to consumerism and greatness. This brainwashing she receives in school is a constant source of anxiety for young Esther since she is made aware that her parents' beliefs are at odds with those of her peers. A comical moment in the narrative occurs when she asks how babies are made:

Mi madre, la más moderna y liberal de las mujeres entre las que vivíamos, me explicó muy pronto, en cuanto se lo pregunté, que los bebés se formaban y crecían en la barriga de mamá, y salían de allí tras nueve meses, pero aplazó la respuesta a la inevitable cadena de preguntas que siguieron (pero, ¿cómo llegaba el bebé al vientre de la madre y qué papel desempeñaba el padre en la historia?) (94)

It is noteworthy here that despite her otherwise modern and progressive attitude to controversial subjects, she does not give the correct, obvious answer that sexual intercourse is what leads to the conception of human life. Throughout the narrative, she questions her parents' oxymoronic beliefs as she herself fails to understand them. They do not fit into either side of the *franquista* political rhetoric, as they are not socially conservative, devout Catholics nor are they far-left Marxists:

Aquellos padres que me habían correspondido en suerte tan raros, tan atípicos, tan incómodos en ocasiones, tan distintos de nuestros tíos, de los padres de nuestros amigos, de los padres que tratábamos y conocíamos —eran burgueses, eran de derechas y franquistas, pero eran ateos (92).

Since the regime is so closely linked to Spain's identity as an ethnoreligious society, it is paradoxical how the author's parents support the regime despite not agreeing with all of its core values.

Occasionally, her parents' peculiarities are a relief for her, such as when they are informed by the her school's principal of something they interpret to be a sexual offense:

Mis padres –¡qué suerte tuve en esto!– no vivían obsesionados por el sexo [...], se resistían a aceptar que el mundo fuera necesariamente un valle de lágrimas, y no los imaginaba yo golpeándose el pecho y lamentándose “por mi culpa, por mi culpa, por mi grandísima culpa (101).

Esther's parents are considerably liberal and modern enough that they have not ingrained sanctimonious sentiments of shame or the Christian concept of voluntary sacrifice into their children (138). This religious image of the *Mater dolorosa*, the weeping virgin was re-appropriated in the 20th century as the selfless, long-suffering mother and housewife used as a prototype for Spanish womanhood. Esther's mother rejects the idea of the *Mater dolorosa* and is in favor of individual liberties and the idea that everyone may do as they please. This causes her daughter to have mixed feelings towards her sentiments: “Yo hubiera deseado seguramente una madre más cariñosa, pero en absoluto una madre sacrificada” (110). Even though her mother never pressured her to be anything she didn't want to be, she recognizes that as a child she needed an affectionate, attentive mother figure in accordance with the far-right, Catholic norms, to provide her with security.

Esther is appreciative that her parents never forced her to believe that marriage and motherhood was her life's only purpose. They are supportive of her decision to stop taking the *Enseñanzas del hogar* courses and pursue the normal high school curriculum: “es otro punto a su favor que debo agradecerles” (104). Throughout the narrative she is completely aware of her identity as the product of two unusual, bourgeoisie, *franquista* parents:

Una genuina bruja mi señora madre. Porque después de tanta rebeldía y de tanto denostarla, hay que reconocer que Oscar y yo hemos terminado encarnando con precisión el papel que nos había asignado: él es arquitecto y pintor, y ella escritora. “¡bien por las madres brujas, sarcásticas y malignas, que no solo adivinan lo que haces y leen lo que piensas (adelantándose en ocasiones a que lo hayas hecho o pensado), sino que te diseñan el futuro! (105).

While she calls her mother a witch, very openly acknowledging the indignation she still feels because of her mother’s coldness and egocentric attitude towards her family, she is grateful that she and her brother Oscar were able to pursue the careers they desired rather than succumb to any societal or familial pressures. A witch is capable of seeing the future accurately, which Esther’s mother indeed accomplishes, showing that she has a far deeper understanding of her children’s needs and passions than they ever gave her credit for. Witches are also evil, pagan creatures as opposed to the long-suffering, martyred *Mater dolorosa*, the ideal model of motherhood which society has taught Esther to strive for. The same contradictory figure, a liberal *franquista*, an atheist whose children receive religious education in school, who is extremely cold but also encouraging towards her children is praiseworthy: “¡bien por las madres brujas, sarcásticas y malignas, que no solo adivinan lo que haces y leen lo que piensas (adelantándose en ocasiones a que lo hayas hecho o pensado), sino que te diseñan el futuro!”, for encouraging her children to follow their passions.

Tusquets' extended family and their colorful views have chapters dedicated to them, particularly her anti-Semitic, conspiracy theorist uncle Father Juan Tusquets and Nazi supporter uncle Víctor. Their views are infinitely far more extreme than the image of her liberal, areligious yet *franquista* mother. Tío Víctor is her mother's spoiled younger brother who is fond of drinking and women, and has a chapter dedicated to him titled "El museo nazi de Tío Víctor". He is an individual who people either love or hate who does not get along with his sister, who resents him for having been treated superiorly by their parents to her and granted special privileges for some reason: "A mi tío Víctor había que adorarlo o detestarlo. Y me parece que mama, opuesta a él en casi todo, estaba más cerca de quienes le detestaban, indignada desde pequeña por el trato tan distinto y tan privilegiado que se le daba" (57). He is also Esther's beloved godfather and they share a special bond despite his own shortcomings as a husband and father:

El matrimonio fue desde el principio un desastre, pero, en una de las múltiples y tumultuosas y brevísimas reconciliaciones, Elia quedó embarazada, y ya volvía a estar sola cuando parió un hijo tan frágil, tan guapo y tan predestinado a la desdicha como ella. Tío Víctor les daba dinero, mucho dinero, recogía un día a la semana a Bubi en el colegio, le compraba montañas de regalos en la mejor tienda de juguetes de la ciudad, la reñía por sus malas notas, por su nula afición a los deportes, pretendía enseñarle matemáticas, criticaba a su madre y a su abuela, le aterrorizaba y daba así por cumplida su función de padre (59).

Tío Víctor believes that money can fix any problems. His approach to fatherhood is no exception. Since his son Bubi is being raised primarily by his mother he is only a part-time parental figure who does not spend quality time with him. Víctor believes that his attempts to help his son with Math, scold him for bad grades, give him money and discipline him are all that is expected of him as a

father. He is a grown man who still lives with his parents and spends most of his time “paseando con mujeres de bandera en coches descapotables y corriéndose las grandes juergas nocturnas de siempre” (58). Some of the fondest memories of Esther’s childhood are when he came to their house for lunch weekly:

Mi tío llegaba a casa: siempre con retraso (mamá era fanática de la puntualidad), siempre con algún regalo insólito (que a mamá le parecía excesivo o sencillamente disparatado), siempre con una historia rocambolesca y divertida que contar (a la que a mamá, pese a su fino sentido del humor, o tal vez por su fino sentido del humor, no veía la gracia).

It is also during these lunches that he vocally expresses his support of the German Third Reich:

La mitad de nuestro almuerzo semanal discurría contándonos proezas de la guerra, allí oí hablar por primera vez mal de los judíos. ¡Mira por donde mi tío materno, parrandero, borracho y jugador coincidía con el hermano mayor de mi padre, docto sacerdote, amigo de los militares rebeldes y futuro monseñor!

Father Juan Tusquets was arguably more pious and conservative than the fun-loving, nihilistic Víctor, and held an obsessive hatred towards the freemasons and other secret societies. The Guilléns, Esther’s mother’s side of the family, are infinitely more liberal and less influenced by the Catholic church than the Tusquets side, a wealthy family with a long line of bankers and entrepreneurs. The “nazi de opereta” Víctor is the exception to a long line of intellectual, progressive thinkers, who are also serial philanderers just like him: “Mi abuelo, por otra parte de una seriedad extrema, había sido masón, escribía críticas teatrales en la prensa liberal y era un mujeriego de mucho cuidado” (161). Despite her maternal grandfather’s intellectual knowledge and progressive ideals, his promiscuity is

proof of internalized misogyny in both the men and women in her family. Tío Juan, like the rest of the Tusquets family, is concerned about maintaining a respectable reputation which he earns “por ser el mayor, por ser sacerdote, y por su prestigio intelectual y moral” (160). These stark differences between the two men make it nearly impossible for Esther to comprehend why Victor was such a fervent Nazi supporter. She is astonished by the fact that what her two uncles have in common despite initially appearing to be like oil and water, is a fondness for conspiracy theories against Jews, leftists, and masons:

Tío Juan había empezado ya antes de la guerra, y luego en Burgos, sus alegatos antisemitas, en que prevenía al mundo contra la amenaza del contubernio marxista judaico masónico, que iba a destruir nuestra civilización cristiana, y tío Víctor iba repartiendo ejemplares y dándole a leer a mi madre *Los protocolos de los sabios de Sión*, que venía a confirmar las mismas teorías y se discutía ampliamente en nuestros almuerzos semanales. Creo que para Víctor, el holocausto, ni siquiera cuando mucho tiempo después hubo pruebas fidedignas de él, [no] existió nunca en realidad. Quizá sí, en un mal momento, Hitler mató a un puñado de judíos, que eran, de todos modos, perniciosos para el país (63).

Tío Víctor’s negationist logic behind his some of his absurd conspiracy theories regarding World War II and the subsequent Holocaust is quite similar to the denial of Francoist crimes committed against Republicans during and after the Civil War. However, in the case of the Holocaust versus in Spain, there is “official” evidence that these events took place, such as photos and books, which leads Víctor to conclude that this is indeed true and what Hitler accomplished was effective and necessary since he strongly believes that the Jews were a threat to German and European society. It is easy for the reader to deduce that his vitriol towards Republicans is as vehement as is his vitriol

towards Jews. In the author's words, tío Victor is a "nazi histriónico" whose love for Nazism is unfounded beyond her comprehension: "no se trataba de que fuera germanófilo y de que deseara que Alemania ganara la guerra" (62). He demonstrates his fanatical passion for Nazism through theatrical public antics:

Lo suyo era ir a cenar a un restaurante alemán, ponerse morados de *choucroute* y de codillo de cerdo y, sobre todo, de cerveza, cortar a tiras las corbatas con los colores de la bandera alemana que, previsores, se habían puesto aquella mañana (me pregunto si fabricantes y tenderos habrían reparado en que ese modelo se vendía ahora mejor y si sabrían a qué atribuirlo), prenderse las tiras en la solapa, y salir de madrugada dando tumbos, cogidos del brazo y aullando un destemplado y atronador *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*, en el que intercalaban- parándose entonces un instante, intentando mantenerse firmes y con el brazo en alto- *Heil, Hitler!* estentóreo que hacía temblar los cristales de las ventanas y despertaba a los vecinos (64).

Victor and his peers are not reprimanded for their disruptiveness thanks to their privileged status: "En los años cuarenta, mi tío, y la gente como mi tío, como nosotros, la gente que había ganado la guerra, se podía permitir esto y más. La calle era nuestra, el país era nuestro". They do not just feel a sense of entitlement, but they are fully allowed to express their views freely while the defeated Republican sympathizers are forced to keep quiet as a result of strict censorship laws. Tusquets uses a biblical analogy to explain the privileges that the "vencedores" enjoyed in the otherwise bleak, poverty-stricken Spain of the 1940's and 1950's: "De algún modo se nos había dicho, como el rey Asuero a la reina Esther, "No temas. Las leyes de mi reino no rigen para ti" (64). She and her family are oblivious to the struggles of everyday life as they enjoy luxuries such as being able to pick up their car while others had to wait in line. They also had immediate access to the telephone, and to

food, while the majority of the population relied on rationing cards. Tío Victor created a “museum” in his family’s apartment, where he lived his whole life even as an adult. That museum was the product of a growing collection of new pieces of Nazi propaganda, before and after their defeat in World War II:

Muchos años después de que los alemanes hubieran perdido la guerra (en eso si coincidían mi tío y mamá: mantenían sus ideas contra viento y marea, sin veleidades oportunistas ni asomos de cambios de chaqueta), seguía añadiendo nuevas piezas a la colección, y casi siempre que ibas a su casa, sobre todo si alguno de los presentes no lo conocía, organizaba una “visita guiada”, en la que iba comentando- medio en serio, medio en broma, y era todo un espectáculo, porque ya he dicho que mi tío era simpático y ocurrente y divertido- las fotografías de Hitler, de sus colaboradores, de Eva Braun, de desfiles y momentos históricos, los recortes de prensa, cada vez más amarillos y borrosos, los mugrientos banderines y medallas y condecoraciones, los soldaditos de plomo con uniformes del Tercer Reich (65).

Adult Esther still struggles to understand why her uncle held such extreme views. She now recognizes as an adult that he represented a sort of toxic masculinity, not only judging by his fanatic, far-right views, but also by his treatment of women, philandering nature, and man-child like behavior:

Para tío Víctor, mítico personaje de mi infancia, tan viril, tan seductor, tan simpático, tan imaginativo, tan querido por todos (o casi todos), tan mimado, para tío Víctor, que hincaba las espuelas en las barrigas de los caballos hasta hacerlos sangrar, que consideraba un deporte disparar contra palomas que volaban desde una caja hacia la



improbable libertad, que encontraba divertido que sus amantes dijeran que no era un caballero ni un hombre, Hitler siguió siendo hasta el fin de sus días un héroe, los alemanes un pueblo superior, el holocausto no existió jamás- y el caso de existir fue una bagatela- y la guerra se perdió por una infame conjura de las fuerzas del mal, los marxistas y los judíos, apoyados por esos niños absurdos que son los norteamericanos, que, encabezados por un presidente comunista, se habían metido donde nadie les llamaba (65).

Grown Esther cannot fully understand her uncle and his bigoted views as she is still coming to terms with certain definitive moments of her childhood such as World War II. While Spain was isolated from the turmoil faced by the rest of Europe, she is hyper-aware of what is going on in the rest of the world due to her family environment and the German school she attends, neither of which are apolitical. In the school, there is a direct connection between the over-inflated sense of patriotism towards Germany as a nation and “German values” and Nazism, with Adolf Hitler being considered a savior in addition to Franco:

Había en todas las dependencias del edificio fotografías de Hitler (hasta el día en que, perdida la guerra, desaparecieron en el curso de la noche, y sólo encontramos, al empezar las clases, las huellas pálidas en el lugar de las paredes que habían ocupado), saludábamos brazo en alto y cantábamos con entusiasmo *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*. Y una buena mañana nos tuvieron formados en el patio horas y horas- algún alumno se mareó y hubo que llevarlo a la enfermería-, esperando la visita de un alto dignatario del gobierno alemán, que no acababa de llegar. Creo que se trataba nada menos que de Goebbels (72-3).

The school is closely linked to the Third Reich due to the alliance between the Spanish *franquista* Elite and Nazi Germany. Spanish schools indoctrinated students in accordance with the ruling regime and the German school was no exception. Judging by the passage above which depicts Nazism in an educational context, the main factor appears to be Germanophile sentiment rather than anti-Semitism. While preparing for her First Communion, as religious classes in preparation for this sacrament were also offered as part of the curriculum, she remembers praying that the Germans would win the war. At the same time, Esteban, the love of her life and future father of her children, who is fourteen years her senior, is fighting in a clandestine movement with the allies:

Es curioso que el mismo año en que me preparaba para hacer la primera comunión en el Colegio Alemán- que no era confesional pero organizaba un cursillo de religión y montaba la ceremonia religiosa para los católicos- mientras yo hacía fervientes votos por la victoria de los alemanes, que por otro lado daba por segura, y consideraba a Hitler como un personaje de leyenda, Esteban, el hombre que sería un día padre de mis hijos, estuviera haciendo el servicio militar- me llevaba catorce años- e, integrado en un movimiento clandestino de apoyo a los aliados, cruzara varias veces, de noche y a pie, la frontera para suministrarles información secreta conseguida en España. Él era un muchacho de clase media, pero en el grupo de conspiradores estaban involucrados altos miembros de la Iglesia, de la burguesía, y de la intelectualidad, convencidos de que, si Hitler era derrotado, nuestro invicto Caudillo, centinela de Occidente, caería con él (50).

As she was born just a month after the beginning of the Civil War which ended when she was a toddler, her accounts of everyday life during World War II are vivid and emotionally-charged. The way she describes praying that the Germans win the war, “hacia fervientes votos por la victoria de

los alemanes”, infers a cultish devotion to Hitler and fascism. The parallels between her past and Esteban’s past represent the tension between the past and the future, as he is much older and comes from a much different socio-political background, as he is middle-class and sympathizes with the allies rather than the Nazis unlike everyone else in her circle. She also becomes aware that there are more individuals from the upper-class who opposed to Francoism and fascism: “en el grupo de conspiradores estaban involucrados altos miembros de la Iglesia, de la burguesía, y de la intelectualidad, convencidos de que, si Hitler era derrotado, nuestro invicto Caudillo, centinela de Occidente, caería con él”. These individuals must stay silent in fear of persecution or consequences as well as ostracization from the rest of their social class. Part of the motivation behind their involvement in the fight against Nazism is the hope that if Hitler is defeated, his close ally Franco will soon cease power. Finally, the Nazis are defeated but Franco stays in power for another thirty years. In a later autobiography published posthumously after Tusquets’ death in 2012, titled *Tiempos que fueron* (2014), she repents for her own complicity with Nazism and that of her loved ones in conversation with her brother Oscar:

Decías tú, Oscar, al comienzo de este libro, que no tuviste ocasión de amar a Hitler porque la cronología la impidió, pero que cierto escalofrío te recorre el espinazo cuando contemplas algunas filmaciones de Leni Riefenstahl. Yo vivía en un ambiente pro-alemán a tope (la única excepción era tía Sara), tío Víctor almorzaba en casa una vez por semana y no paraba de contar heroicidades de Führer y sus compinches, en el cine se transmitían noticias manipuladas: yo adoraba a Hitler. Lo adoré durante muchos, muchos años, porque me llevó enterarme de lo que fue el nazismo y de lo que había sucedido en realidad (*Tiempos que fueron* 107).

Esther compares her understanding of Hitler and fascist ideologies to Oscar's, who was too young during World War II and clearly does not remember the enthusiasm for Hitler which she previously described. For her back then, Hitler and the Nazis were just a group of patriots fighting for their people's best interests the same way that the *franquistas* defeated the radical leftists in the civil war.

Although the figure of her mother serves as a prototype for traditional, high-society womanhood in the Franco era, as a young adult Esther struggles to figure out where she fits in society as a woman living under such a repressive regime. The turning point in her narrative occurs when she is a young woman and a university student. She studies theatre and literature and has her first serious love affair with a man named José. Esther and José's relationship eventually comes to an end and she takes the breakup hard:

Harta de verme sollozar a todas horas con el rostro hundido en la almohada o vuelto hacia la pared, mamá decidió que la única solución era ocuparme en algo tan estresante y absorbente que no me dejara tiempo para pensar durante el día y me tuviera tan agotada al llegar la noche que me derrumbara ya medio dormida en la cama (237-8).

Soon after, Esther's parents decide that it is for the best that she get involved with the Sección Femenina, as part of the mandatory social service for female university students, so that she is far away from José and her heartbreak. She does not view her involvement with the Sección Femenina as a chore or as something problematic and her initial experiences there are quite positive:

Era estimulante la convivencia con otras muchachas de mi edad, todas universitarias pero de distintas facultades. Me sumé, pues, con entusiasmo, no sólo a las lecturas teatrales y a las recitales poéticos y a los debates políticos, sino incluso a los madrugones y a las clases de gimnasia y de canto, actividades para las que me sabía congénitamente negada, y pasé noches

enteras discutiendo y conversando- en una celda atestada, a oscuras y en voz baja, para que no nos descubrieras- con mis compañeras hasta el amanecer, ¡era tan espectacular la salida del sol en el horizonte marino! Y entablé amistades que iban prolongarse mucho tiempo, y conocí a Mercedes, a la que iba a amar hasta la muerte y más allá de la muerte, las primera de las dos personas (iban a ser dos, ella y años más tarde, Esteban) que me llevarían a aceptarme plenamente tal cual era, y a reconciliarme conmigo misma y con el mundo, supliendo los huecos y carencias que había mi dejado (250).

At the time, the experience of being surrounded by like-minded, young women her age helps her overcome her first big heartbreak and the anger she feels towards her mother. She holds a special admiration for her friend Mercedes who teaches her politics class. Mercedes is a charismatic, articulate speaker who is unafraid to speak her mind: “El día que el cura nos negó la comunión porque íbamos sin medias o con pantalones, regresó al albergue hecha una furia, nos reunió e improvisó una arenga antología...poco faltó para que regresáramos al pueblo y prendiéramos fuego a la iglesia” (251). Mercedes and Esther also share the same rebellious spirit. Esther’s involvement with the Sección Femenina is not without qualms for her, as this is still a sensitive period of her life where she struggles to find herself away from the reigns of her family’s expectations:

Desde niña, yo había tenido la sensación de que algo no funcionaba bien en el mundo, de que no era justo era unos tuvieran tanto y otros tan poco, me escandalizaba el trato que algunos señores daban al servicio (“cuando sea mayor no tendré criadas”), afirmaba, y todos se reían de tan loca ocurrencia, porque vivir sin, al menos, una cocinera y una camarera era tan impensable como vivir sin aire que respirar).....Nunca me había integrado, y mis padres me lo reprochaban, en la clase social que me correspondía. Pero había compartido el franquismo de mis padres y de casi totalidad de la gente a la que trataba (251).

Esther reflects on the socio-political aspects of her childhood and how she was always felt conflicted about her privileged upbringing. She confesses that the fact that a small minority of the population have so much while the rest have so little has made her feel guilty since she was a child. She is also shamed of the pretentious, patronizing attitudes of many of her family's peers had towards the less fortunate, such as their domestic servants. Whenever she states her intention of not hiring servants as an adult, this is met with ridicule from everyone around her who is used to being waited on hand and foot: "vivir sin, al menos, una cocinera y una camarera era tan impensable como vivir sin aire que respirar". She still struggles with feeling rejected by her society and her parents for not parroting the same *franquista* propaganda and elitist attitudes as everyone else: "nunca me había integrado, y mis padres me lo reprochaban, en la clase social que me correspondía". She is also beginning to question her own political beliefs and whether she really believes in right-wing principles or if she is just going along with the rest of her family, friends and acquaintances: "pero había compartido el franquismo de mis padres y de casi totalidad de la gente a la que trataba."

Esther also begins to question her own involvement in Sección Femenina and whether she agrees with the Falange's core values of traditional femininity and staunchly orthodox Catholicism:

Lo dije en casa. No les sorprendió demasiado, porque nada de lo que se me ocurriera hacer podía sorprenderles mucho, pero en realidad resultaba bastante extraño. A finales de los años cincuenta, los hijos de la burguesía catalana ya no se apuntaban en Falange, y los padres, que quizá lo habían hecho llevados al terminar la guerra por la euforia del momento, o para lograr algún beneficio, se habían borrado hacía mucho (255).

Esther's family is indifferent to her decision to join the Falange since in their eyes this is just another stunt of hers to attract attention. Involvement in the Falange and Sección Femenina was most common in the early postwar years when enthusiasm for Franco was still high. In the 1950s as the

significance of the Sección Femenina is more closely related to social welfare rather than having a political connotation. The young ladies who Esther meets are extremely well-versed in the Falangist cause:

Las chicas reunidas en La Granja estaban ya muy inmersas en Falange, pertenecían en muchos casos a sus organizaciones juveniles, conocían sus directrices, y asistían al curso para acabar su formación e ingresar formalmente en ella, el día de la clausura, a través de una ceremonia en que prestarían, prestaríamos, juramento (259).

The majority of the activities in which the members of Sección Femenina partake in are cultural, related to Spanish national identity. On one long weekend, Esther travels from the Sección Femenina's headquarters in Madrid to Valladolid to attend a theatre performance dedicated to the fallen Falangist politician Onésimo Redondo: "La sala estaba llena a rebosar de campesinos, hombres recios, de manos encallecidas, rostros graves, que cantaban con voces roncas el *Cara de sol* y llevaban con orgullo- eso me parecía a mí- la camisa" (265-6). *Cara al sol* is the Falangist anthem written by the leader of the Falange, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, whose sister Pilar Primo de Rivera founded the Sección Femenina, and the "camisa azul" represents the blue shirts worn as the Falangist's uniform (Vidal ¿*Quién redactó el "Cara al sol"?*). Esther is surprised to see mostly peasant men in the audience since she is accustomed to seeing people from the upper classes like herself at these sort of events. At the end of the school year, Esther and Mercedes meet up again in at the site where Federico García Lorca was murdered by *franquista* forces. She remains an avid Falangist for the time being but cannot clearly articulate why she supports the Falangist movement.

The final point of reckoning for Esther occurs upon her return to Barcelona when she is informed by the Sección Femenina office in Madrid that she is missing two mandatory subjects for her matriculation into the program in Barcelona and must repeat the course. When her father asks

her about her plans for the future, she cannot reply as she has no idea what she wants to do with her life:

Mis padres no se habían metido nunca en mis estudios, casi ni sabían qué era exactamente lo que estudiaba y no daban importancia a que fueran las notas mejores o peores. Pero entendí de pronto que un suspenso, y no digamos la pérdida un curso, no entraba en sus previsiones. Oscar cursaría la Carrera de Arquitectura sin un solo tropiezo y trabajaría con uno de nuestros mejores arquitectos, Federico Correa, desde Segundo curso. Mi padre miraba ahora sin entender que su hija pudiera no aprobar, como no había entendido años atrás que su hija pudiera llegar cinco minutos tarde a un autocar y tener esperando a cien compañeros de viaje. Me alegré de que mis debilidades, mis adicciones absurdas, mi escasa fuerza de voluntad, me hicieran capaz de entenderlo casi todo. Cuando más lejos me sentía de la perfección, mayores eran mi tolerancia y mi capacidad de comprender a los demás (269-70).

Despite her father's negative reaction and shock upon learning that she must repeat the course, Esther is surprisingly comfortable in her own skin when she states that "mis debilidades, mis adicciones absurdas, mi escasa fuerza de voluntad, me hicieran capaz de entenderlo casi todo." She admits to being a flawed individual and believes that her shortcomings are what make her a more compassionate and tolerant person. She is also indifferent to the comparison to her brother Oscar who has had a smooth academic and professional career in architecture. She no longer shows any anger, resentment, or frustration to her family's reactions to her choices in life. She is sure that she wants to remain in Sección Femenina and reassures her father that the subjects she must take to matriculate are easy enough that she will inevitably pass:

Aseguré a mi padre que aquello no se iba a repetir, y, como las asignaturas que me quedabde primero de Historia eran sólo tres y fáciles, me matriculé en Pedagogía. Lo cual significa



que, aunque seguía pensando que mis únicas vocaciones eran el teatro o la literatura, no desechaba la posibilidad de recurrir a la enseñanza como medio de ganarme la vida (270).

Esther's point of view as a young adult is far more practical than in the past, as now she has realized that she must choose a practical career such as becoming a teacher even if she is not passionate about what she does for a living. She has grown more critical of the Catholic Church and whether she believes in God or not:

No sólo mi actitud ante la Iglesia Católica se había vuelto todavía más crítica que en el pasado- consideraba siniestra su actuación a lo largo de la historia, no estaba dispuesta a asumir una posición neutral: estaba abiertamente en contra-, sino que se me fue haciendo más y más difícil creer en lo que constituía el núcleo de la religión: la existencia de un dios personal y de una vida posterior a la muerte. Los creyentes dirían que perdí la fe, y, a pesar de que la vida sin fe era más dura, no lo lamentaba (271).

Esther becomes skeptical of the Catholic Church because of their compliance with misogyny and oppression throughout history and refusal to take neutral stances to dictatorships and heinous crimes. On a personal and philosophical level, she questions whether God is real since the world is such a difficult, chaotic place and struggles to contemplate whether a personal God and an afterlife exist. Much of Esther's experiences with organized religion have been negative and associated with bigotry, such as the figure of her far-right, anti-Semitic, conspiracy theorist tío Juan. She admits that her life was easier when she had faith since she always knew that God had a plan and was in control but does not regret leaving the Church: "a pesar de que la vida sin fe era más dura, no lo lamentaba", but she is still torn as to whether she should remain in the Falange or not. In the 1950's in Spain there is more dissent from students and many of Esther's close friends who are left-leaning do not understand why she would want to associate with the fascists and many of the women in Sección

Femenina whom she admired the most have now left: “Lo cierto era que muchas de las mujeres de más valía se habían salido; otras, como Mercedes, Celia o yo misma, seguíamos por sentimentalismo” (272). The only reason why Esther hasn’t left the Sección Femenina for good is because the organization provides her with a sense of community and belonging that she never felt from her family growing up.

Esther’s last time associating with the Sección Femenina is a mixed-gender retreat to Huesca for university students that she helps organize. Although she was invited to come and help plan the event she is extremely reluctant to participate:

Y fui. Al borde del desencanto, pero fui... El tercer día organizaron una excursión y decidí no ir. Estaba leyendo en la sala, cuando, a punto ya de marcharse los demás, pasó el jefe por allí. Era un chico como los demás, no mucho mayor que yo. “¿Qué haces aquí?”, preguntó, ya enfadado. Le expliqué que no me encontraba muy bien y que iba a quedarme en el albergue. Se puso bravo. “Claro que vas a ir. Es obligatorio. Levántate ahora mismo.” Y yo me levanté, pero dije “No.” “¿Qué?” “Que no vo.” Perdió los estribos: “Pues si no vas, lárgate hoy mismo del albergue.” “Ya sabes que no pasa por aquí ningún autocar hasta mañana por la mañana, me ire mañana.” “No, tú decidirás qué haces, pero si no vienes a la excursión te largas hoy.” (273)

This is the first time that she has been scolded in such an aggressive tone. The leader’s belligerent reaction represents the rigid rules of the Falange which Esther has now broken by choosing to follow her own path. She is not agitated or emotional over basically being kicked out of Sección Femenina since she is now sure that she wants nothing to do the Falange or the far-right and trusts her instincts. That night, she lays awake harking back on everything she has lived during her time in Sección Femenina and how her life has now changed drastically:

Estuve despierta toda la noche, por miedo en parte a que se olvidaran de llamarme y perder el autocar. Y allí, en el silencio total de un pueblecito perdido en las montañas de Huesca, terminó una etapa de mi vida. Creo que había alcanzado una pizca de madurez, quizá la única cantidad de madurez de la que soy capaz. Me había aceptado a mí misma. No iba a seguir lamentándome por no ser la mujer que mi madre hubiera deseado como hija, ni tal vez la que yo misma hubiera querido ser. Eso no me importaba demasiado, porque sabía que, siendo como era, había sido muy amada y sería muy amada en el futuro, y era la aceptación de otros la que hacía que yo me aceptara también. La vida me había dado unas cartas determinadas, y habría que jugarlas lo mejor posible. Me sabía capaz de bajezas, mezquindades, cobardías, adicciones, de pecar de pensamiento, palabra y obra, no sólo contra la ética, sino, y era peor, contra la estética, y esto me obligaba a ser tolerante y comprensiva con los demás. Sabía que el catolicismo no era el camino, sabía que Falange no era el camino. Sabía que, al menos para mí, no había un camino. Y era mejor así. (274-5)

Esther reminisces on how much she has grown emotionally during this endeavor with the Falange. She is still unsure of what the future will bring but is at peace since she no longer cares about how others perceive her and forgives herself for not being the ideal woman and daughter that her mother desired. Although she does not know who she is at this moment in her life, she realizes that part of what makes life so precious is its uncertainty: “La vida me había dado unas cartas determinadas, y habría que jugarlas lo mejor posible” and recognizes that embracing self-acceptance is the only way that she will find people who love her unconditionally: “sabía que, siendo como era, había sido muy amada y sería muy amada en el futuro, y era la aceptación de otros la que hacía que yo me aceptara también.” She admits that joining the Falange because she wanted acceptance from a larger community was a mistake: “Y yo hubiera debido saberlo, o al menos descubrirlo antes” (275). In the final passage

of the novel, Esther recognizes the privileges she enjoyed during her childhood as the daughter of the *vencedores*, but concurs that she now identifies with the *vencidos* after realizing how hypocritical and despotic her own people are:

Supe definitivamente, aquella noche, que, si bien no era cierto que la guerra civil la habían perdido todos, porque a la vista estaba que unos la habían ganado (y lo sabían bien) y otros la habían perdido (y nadie iba a permitirles ignorarlo ni olvidarlo), yo, hija de los vencedores, a pesar de haber gozado de todos sus privilegios y todas sus ventajas, pertenecía al bando de los vencidos. (276).

Tusquets shows a great deal of humility and introspection when taking accountability for her beliefs in the past while many of her fellow *franquistas* would choose to stay quiet and downplay the severity of crimes committed during the Civil War or deny that the Franco regime was ever a dictatorship. By distancing herself from her family and the Barcelona bourgeoisie, she constructs a new identity by choosing a political path distinct from that of the previous generation and her victorious upper-class family. She may now know who she is or what she wants to do, but she knows she does not want to be superficial, heartless, and complicit with misogyny like her mother, nor does she want to live her life trying to please her family. Tusquets' distancing herself from the past and the conservative, materialistic bourgeoisie principles she grew up around through writing is cathartic and allows her to expose their corrupt principles and challenge the trope that Francoist writers "habían ganado la guerra y perdido los manuales de literatura" (Trapiello, 475; Cercas 22), while also highlighting that the *franquista* world is not black and white through the figures of her socially liberal yet right-wing mother and father, whose ideals she rejects at the end.

## Conclusion

In this project, I hope to have contributed to the limited amount of literature on Spanish women's experiences of repression under the Franco dictatorship. I concur that both Esther Tusquets' autobiography and Dulce Chacón's novel can be considered testimonial literature, since both utilize first-person experiences and factual evidence. In the case of *La voz dormida*, even though the novel is technically fictional, Chacón honors Las Ventas' significance as a site of memory that hosted violence and torture even after it has since been demolished. The traumatic experiences of the inmates in Las Ventas represent the collective experiences of all imprisoned Spanish women including those who made it possible for Chacón to write *La voz dormida* by telling her their stories. The hybrid of first-person testimonies brings a certain sentimentalism and melancholy to the novel, as the reader is forced to replay moments of abuse and violence in their mind. Tusquets' first-person narrative, that consists of her first-hand experiences that showcase her development from a *franquista*, nazi-sympathizer little girl to a liberal, atheist adult, can also be considered a testimony since she speaks from a direct perspective. Both writers share the same mission of exposing the cruelty of the regime and denounce fascism, which Tusquets' experiences as a former Falangist prove to especially useful for. Both writers also underscore the issue of transgenerational trauma regarding the Civil War through the figures of Tensi, the late Hortensia's daughter and namesake, who joins the Communist Party in honor of her parents while young Esther who has grown up in the shadows of the war totally rejects her society's ideologies. Ultimately, both Tusquets and Chacón succeed in giving voices to those who have been silenced for too long, both by the dictatorship and the collective decision in Spain to ignore and erase any signs of Francoist repression.

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