

Dissidences

Hispanic Journal of Theory and Criticism

Volume 5 | Issue 9

Article 13

April 2014

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Recommended Citation

Stafford, Katherine O. (2014) "Remembering the Perpetrators: Nationalist Postmemory and Andrés Trapiello's *Ayer no más*," *Dissidences*: Vol. 5 : Iss. 9 , Article 13.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.bowdoin.edu/dissidences/vol5/iss9/13>

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Remembering the Perpetrators: Nationalist Postmemory and Andrés Trapiello's *Ayer no más*

Abstract / Resumen

In the last decade, much scholarly work has been dedicated to “postmemory,” a term coined by Holocaust scholar Marianne Hirsch and defined as “the response of the second generation to the trauma of the first.” This framework, originally applied to the creative work of the second generation of Holocaust victims, has also been used to treat the legacy of pain of Spanish Civil War victims. In literature, the majority of 21st century Spanish Civil War novels center upon the Republican victim (see Bertrand de Muñoz “Tendencias”). Andrés Trapiello’s novel *Ayer no más* counters this trend, as the protagonist is the son of a Falangist who participated in the murder of innocents during the war. The main character’s journey is not one towards greater empathy with Franco’s victims and/or recuperation of the memory of the atrocities committed, but rather towards a more complete understanding of his father. This article analyzes the motifs of nostalgia, *desencanto*, and empathy in Trapiello’s most recent novel within the larger context of late 20th and 21st century Spanish Civil War fiction. It also explores the ethical consequences of using a postmemorial framework for perpetrators.

Keywords / Palabras clave

Postmemory, Spanish Civil War, Perpetrator, Memory

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ABSTRACT: In the last decade, much scholarly work has been dedicated to “postmemory,” a term coined by Holocaust scholar Marianne Hirsch and defined as “the response of the second generation to the trauma of the first.” This framework, originally applied to the creative work of the second generation of Holocaust victims, has also been used to treat the legacy of pain of Spanish Civil War victims; The majority of 21st century Spanish Civil War novels center upon the Republican victim (see Bertrand de Muñoz “Tendencias”). Andrés Trapiello’s novel *Ayer no más* contests these trend, as the protagonist is the son of a Falangist who participated in the murder of innocents during the war. The main character’s journey is not one towards greater empathy with Franco’s victims and/or recuperation of the memory of the atrocities committed, but rather towards a more complete understanding of his father. This article analyzes the motifs of nostalgia, *desencanto*, and empathy in Trapiello’s most recent novel within the larger context of late 20th and 21st century Spanish Civil War fiction. It also explores the ethical consequences of using a postmemorial framework for perpetrators.

“No he querido saber, pero he sabido” (11). These famous words open Javier Marías’ novel *Corazón tan blanco* (1992), a work that explores the unwilling journey of Juan (the protagonist) toward several inconvenient truths about his father. Though Juan intuitively suspects a series of nefarious facts about him, he is reluctant to actually hear the details because he knows this knowledge will change the present. Andrés Trapiello’s novel *Ayer no más* (2012) tells a similar story, but one with much more personal, particular, polemic, and political consequences. In contrast with *Corazón tan blanco*, a novel with almost no historical referents, *Ayer no más* is rooted in specific historical events: the Spanish Civil War and the historical memory debates. It is thus an intensely personal and familial story, but one that reverberates off the memories and ideological obsessions of a nation.

Poet, essayist, and novelist Andrés Trapiello said that *Ayer no más* was the novel he had been waiting 35 years to write (Rodríguez Marcos). A Spanish obsession with writing “the” Spanish Civil War novel is undeniable, and is apparent in the recent publication of several long works about the fratricidal conflict by some of Spain’s most prized and celebrated writers.¹ In many ways Trapiello’s

¹ See Antonio Muñoz Molina’s *La noche de los tiempos* (2009), Javier Marías’s *Tu rostro mañana: Fiebra* (2002), and Almudena Grandes’ *El corazón helado* (2007) for just a few of the recently published ambitious novels that treat

most recent work epitomizes the 21st century Spanish Civil War novel. Like many other such novels, *Ayer no más* questions our knowledge of the past, emphasizing the powerful role that narrators and language hold in constructing historical “truth.” *Ayer no más* is atypical, however, because its protagonist José Pestaña is not a Republican, but rather the son of a Falangist.² The main character’s journey is not one towards greater empathy with Franco’s victims and/or recuperation of the memory of the atrocities committed, but rather towards a more complete understanding of his father, who participated in the murder of innocents during the Spanish Civil War. In *Ayer no más*, Trapiello employs many of the tropes of the 21st century Spanish Civil War novel but ultimately questions and inverts the Spanish Civil War victim archetype, shifting the empathetic gaze from the victim to the perpetrator. This article analyzes the motifs of nostalgia, *desencanto*, and empathy in Trapiellos’ most recent novel within the larger context of late 20th and 21st century Spanish Civil War fiction. It also explores the ethics of using a postmemorial framework for perpetrators.

Named “Best Novel of 2012” by the readers of *El País* (14 Dec 2012), *Ayer no más* is more about historical memory than about the Civil War. Set in León in the 21st century, the protagonist, José Pestaña, a Civil War historian, incidentally learns that his Francoist father German was implicated in killing an innocent man in front of the man’s seven-year-old son during the conflict. On a walk through town, the victim’s son, Graciano, recognizes German as his father’s assassin

the Spanish Civil War. Trapiello even references this struggle/goal of so many Spanish writers in *Ayer no más*: (278). Evidence that the twenty-first century boom in Spanish Civil War novels has reached an oversaturation point is observed in the publication of Isaac Rosa’s novel *¡Otra maldita novela de la Guerra Civil!* (2007), a postmodern, metafictional reedition or critique of his previous novel, *La mala memoria* (1999).

² Jo Labanyi noted in 2007 that prior to this date there had been no attempts to gather the testimonies of perpetrators (Nationalist or Republican) and to her knowledge Manuel Rivas’ *El lápiz del carpintero* and Javier Cercas’ *Soldados de Salamina* (2001) are the only two novels that treat the issue of perpetrators (104). While Altamudena Grandes’ saga *El corazón helado* (2007) does treat the issue of a Francoist legacy, it is safe to say that the vast majority of Spanish Civil War Novels published in the 21st century are written from a Republican perspective. In 2012, Bertrand de Muñoz described some of trends in twenty-first century Spanish Civil War novels: Metafiction (214), the direct use of war events in the text (208), Republican protagonists (223), lengthy works (223), and an insistence on the need for “historical memory” and further recognition of the suffering of the defeated (209).

from 70 years ago in La Fonfría. He calls Pestaña's father a murderer. German, taken aback, asks for forgiveness, but later denies everything. Pestaña becomes obsessed with his father's past and hides his own identity while trying to find out what really happened in La Fonfría. In the meantime, two ambitious historians in his academic department embark on a search to reveal the truth of the atrocities committed at La Fonfría and to hold the people involved accountable, ultimately seeking to publish an award-winning book about their discoveries. Pestaña finds himself disoriented, and does not know how he should consider the past or relate to his father. He loves his father deeply, but cannot understand him. As a Civil War scholar, he sees a need for acknowledgement of the atrocities committed during the war and its aftermath. He has dedicated his professional life to this end. Through a series of voices and perspectives, the work explores the complex question of how to judge and remember the past and the perpetrators of violence (especially when they are family members), and reveals that with every "history" there are many narrators who are quick to omit, simplify, exaggerate, or modify for their own purposes. The novel argues that it is impossible to arrive at an absolute narrative of the past.

Holocaust scholar Marianne Hirsch first used the term "postmemory" in 2001 to refer to "the response of the second generation to the trauma of the first" ("Surviving Images" 8). The term has since been widely adopted, expanded, and reworked by a number of scholars to treat other national, racial, and cultural realities.³ Hirsch first defined postmemory as an identification with a victim by adoption ("Surviving Images" 10) and as:

A powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through representation, projection, and creation—often based on silence rather than speech, on the invisible rather than the visible. That is not, of course, to say that survivor memory itself is unmediated, but that it is more directly—chronologically—connected to the past. ("Surviving Images" 9)

³ This term has been used to refer to Spanish Civil War memory in Labanyi (99-100), Portela (54-55) and Renshaw (452), and Tronsgard (260-278).

As Beatriz Sarlo notes, “postmemory” is an ambiguous term; Every narrative (historical and fictional) is a re-representation, and is mediated by many social, political, and circumstantial factors (132). The most defining dimension of “postmemory” is the personal connection between child and parent (or grandchild and grandparent) and the transmission of traumatic knowledge and experience from one generation to the next (Hirsch, “The Generation of Postmemory,” 106). Ultimately, the term “postmemory” was created within the parameters of a recently born academic discipline: memory studies, and as a postmodern framework for Holocaust studies.⁴ I use the framework of “postmemory” to analyze *Ayer no más* because the novel explores a legacy of trauma passed from father to son. The trauma in this novel, however, is of a very different nature because it is not one of suffering, but rather of guilt and responsibility.

The framework of postmemory, originally created to analyze the legacy of the Holocaust, can easily be adopted to treat the Spanish Civil War. In Spain, it is the grandchildren of victims and survivors (rather than the children) who have expressed the most interest in the “memory” of war, and this is reflected in literature. Since 1996, more than 400 Spanish Civil War novels have been published (Bertrand de Muñoz 207). In the beginning of the twenty-first century, the need to recover the past became an important mandate for many people, most especially for the new generation who had not lived the war or much of the dictatorship, but was curious about the past of its grandparents, and aware that the surviving population of the war was rapidly disappearing. One of the most significant initiatives was the first exhumation of a mass Civil War grave led by Emilio Silva in 2000 (a man who wanted to know more about the death of his grandfather), and his newly

⁴ I say that this framework is “postmodern” because late modernism (or postmodernism) and the collapse of grand future narratives have undoubtedly changed the way the past is considered in Western thought. In late modernity “memory” became one of the protagonists of intellectual discussion (Labanyi 92). Similarly, the past has gained a strong presence in the postmodern narrative. This postmodern return to the past, however, is not a nostalgic one, however, but rather a critical revisiting (Hutcheon 4): it is the problematization of history.

founded Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica. Since then, Spain has seen the founding of several other similar organizations as well as a massive polemic regarding the “historical memory” of the war.⁵

This third generation is not as tormented by fear and guilt, nor quite as obsessed with peace and order, and this has enabled and permitted new conversations and assertions about the past which were previously taboo (Aguilar 317). Additionally, the fact that the population who actually lived the war diminishes every day has produced an urgency to recuperate and document particular stories before it is too late. The twenty-first century has seen an explosion of art exhibits, novels, and films that re-imagine and reconsider the Spanish Civil War with a new perspective. Most cultural products of the Spanish Civil War today (including novels) seek to honor and recognize the sufferings of the Republican victims, who were oppressed, forgotten, silenced, and alienated for so long. Many authors see their work as breaking a silence. Dulce Chacón dedicated her novel *La voz dormida* (2011): “*A los que se vieron obligados a guardar silencio.*” Carlos Fonseca’s *Tiempo de memoria* (2009) was written “para pagar la deuda de la memoria que tenemos con quienes perdieron la Guerra” (283). Bertrand de Muñoz cites other authors such as Ángeles Caso, Rafael Chirbes, José Manuel

⁵ The boom in Spanish Civil War memory novels converged with a momentous political debate about the war. In 2002, the Spanish Congress presented a declaration that officially condemned 1936 coup, but the conservative Partido Popular (PP) refused to support a proposal presented in 2003 to formally honor the victims of the regime in Parliament. When the left-leaning Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) came to power once again in 2004, after the tragic train bombing at Atocha station, the issue of “historical memory” came to the forefront of public and political debate. In the last decade, both the PSOE and the PP have extensively debated the issue of historical memory. Fierce political debate about the treatment of Spain’s past is seen everywhere and most specifically in the protests against the uncovering of mass graves, the reactive obituary wars between relatives of victims from both the right and left, and finally most dramatically in the lawsuits against and final disbarment of Spanish judge Baltasar Garzón in 2010. Garzón tried to prosecute the Chilean dictator Pinochet in Spain in 1998, and then attempted to inquire into the crimes against humanity committed by the Franco regime after the Spanish Civil War in 2008. In 2007, after much uproar and debate, the Spanish Parliament ratified the “Ley por la que se reconocen y amplían derechos y se establecen medidas en favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia durante la Guerra Civil y la dictadura” (“Law that recognizes and extends the rights and establishes measures in favor of those who suffered persecution and violence during the Civil War and the dictatorship”) otherwise known as the “Ley de Memoria Histórica” (“The Law of Historic Memory”), a law that established several measures to recognize the victims of the Spanish Civil War and the dictatorship, and to further condemn the Franco regime.

Ruiz Marcos, Javier Marías, Alberto Méndez and André Sorel as representative of this insistence on remembering and empathizing with the suffering of the defeated as a moral debt owed to society (209).⁶

While many children and grandchildren of Franco's victims have participated in postmemorial work in recent years, it has not been a high priority for the offspring of Spanish Civil War perpetrators of both right and left persuasions. This is understandable, of course: the iniquitous past of one's parents or grandparents is not often the subject of quest. An ethical mandate to recuperate the memory of the crimes of ones' grandparents is not very strong in most of the Spanish population, or the entire human race for that matter. The postmemory of the Francoist perpetrators of violence also represents a much more convoluted ethical problem; Firstly, by shifting the gaze away from the Republican victim to the perpetrator, it risks leaving the victim once again in the shadows.⁷ Secondly, empathizing with the perpetrator and his/her legacy and using affective filters of familial connection and love can complicate judgment. *Ayer no más* offers a new and audacious kind of conversation about the generational legacy of Spain's perpetrators of violence. Andrés Trapiello writes with personal and creative perspective, as his own father was a Falangist.

The author has had a prolific and successful career as a novelist, poet, literary critic, and historian, and *Ayer no más* is not his first piece about the Spanish Civil War. Like the protagonist José Pestaña, Trapiello was born in León into a Falangist family. It is probable, judging from Trapiello's

⁶ Many of these works critique and respond to the so-called "pacto del olvido," a tacit agreement made during the transition to leave the past behind and move forward into the future.

⁷ Joan Ramon Resina criticized Javier Cercas' *Soldados de Salamina* (2001) for focusing on "seeing" the falangist over the previously unseen victim. He says of Cercas' novel: "And although much in the novel turns around the issue of visibility, of seeing and being (or not being) seen, the author appears insensitive to the localization of sight. The genuine tension packed in the eye-to-eye confrontation between the fascist ideologue and the anonymous militiaman unravels in a narrative that spotlights the former while leaving the latter in the shadow. That is to say, it leaves matters as they stood under Franco" (344).

literary career, that José Pestaña's journey toward his father's past reflects aspects of his own life, just as many of Trapiello's other works are hybrid genres inspired by his own life experiences. *Salón de los pasos perdidos* (2001) is a collection of Trapiello's diaries transformed into a "novela en marcha." Similarly, *El buque fantasma* (1992) is based on Trapiello's experiences with a faction of the PCE (Partido Comunista Español) in Valladolid. In his youth, Trapiello rebelled against his conservative family and was actively involved in a Stalinist/Maoist antifrancoist group, which eventually inspired this parodic and critical novel. Trapiello's work consistently deconstructs the iconic heroes of the Spanish Civil War of both the left and right political leanings. *Las armas y las letras: Literatura y Guerra Civil* (1994), a literary history of Spain's intellectuals during the Spanish Civil War, critically reviews the behavior of several celebrated and mythologized Republican intellectuals (as well as Falangist ones) who took advantage of the war for personal gain. Similarly, *Las armas y las letras* questions the current hegemonic position of leftist literature by highlighting figures such as Miguel de Unamuno, Juan Ramón Jiménez, and Rosa Chacel who were caught in the middle of the Civil War, and fled or abstained from joining either side out of ethical conviction. Similarly, *Días y noches* (2000) narrates the last days of the war through the diary of UGT militant Justo García, and ultimately reveals the complexity of human nature. *Ayer no más*, however, is Trapiello's first "postmemorial" piece because it is his first novel that explores a father/son relationship and a familial legacy of a painful past.

Often postmemorial works use both familial and iconic photographs to reactivate and reembody memorial structures (Hirsch, "The Generation of Postmemory," 111). Hirsch argues that despite some scholars' fear that the abundance and repetition of images of historic traumas would lead to exhaustion and oversaturation, the postmemorial generation has managed to make photographs a mostly helpful vehicle for working through traumatic pasts by way of creative displacement and recontextualization ("Surviving Images" 9). While Hirsch's work tends to examine the use of family and/or iconic photographs of the Holocaust, a similar version of this creative

displacement and recontextualization is observed in the cover photographs of many recently published Spanish Civil War novels: Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* (2011) Jordi Soler's *La fiesta del oso* (2009) and André Trapiello's *Ayer no más* (2012). All three novels use an anonymous historic photograph (displayed on the cover) as the inspiration for a fictional story, and also refer to the photograph explicitly in the text. Edurne Portela writes (of Chacón):

Reubica una foto anónima de archivo en un nuevo marco, convierte una imagen pública, comunitaria, sin nombre en una imagen privada con historia propia que al mismo tiempo vuelve a hacerse pública a través de la ficción. Lo que la historia no recogió en sus anales, Chacón lo reinventa en la novela....cambia por completo el significado de la misma, puesto que la narrativiza, llenando así los silencios de la historia. (58)



Like the authors of *La fiesta del oso* and *La voz dormida*, Trapiello chose a photograph to inspire a particular story that had not been told. The cover of *Ayer no más* displays a small boy of about eight years old sitting next to his father. It encapsulates the central problem of *Ayer no más* because it represents a moment in this boy's life when he adored his father unequivocally. Very soon, the reader learns that this has changed radically with time and experience, but the protagonist constantly refers to the photograph because it represents the central problem of the novel.

The main conflict in *Ayer no más* is not the Civil War or Historical Memory, but rather a father-son relationship, which serves as an affective filter for the entire work. What does one do when compromising knowledge threatens an ideal *and* a relationship? Many Spanish Civil War

novels and films published after the dictatorship employ a trope of a grand flashback to the events of the war from the present, in an attempt to understand the present through the past. There often is a family connection involved.⁸ *Ayer no más* also begins in the present with an old man in his 80s, his son, José (now in his 60s), and a nebulous past. The book opens with the biblical epigram:

“Quien maldiga a su padre o su madre, morirá” (Exódo 21:15).

José Pestaña vacillates between wanting to believe that his father is a good man, and hating this incomprehensible person who has participated in crimes he will not account for. Ultimately, this battle brings José a great deal of existential suffering, loneliness, and agony. He constantly refers to this childhood photograph, however, because it represents his deepest desire for some kind of heroic truth or ideal in the past.

En estos años, con la foto extraviada, llegué a temer que el amor que sentí por él y que él sintió sin duda por mí lo olvidaría. Acaso ese amor no sea importante para la Historia, pero sí lo es para mí, y en cierto modo lo es para comprender por qué la humanidad prosternada y destruida logra una y otra vez levantarse y proclamar su fé el el Bien, pese a la fragilidad de este. (156-157)

Antonio Gómez López-Quñones notes that many 21st century Spanish Civil War novels are nostalgic and sentimental about the past to compensate for the *desencanto* of the present:

Si el presente es representado como una realidad posutópica y posrevolucionaria en la que las principales meta-narrativas transformadoras de la izquierda han entrado en una fase de *impasse*, el pasado emerge como un escenario casi mítico de grandes esperanzas, ambiciones y virtudes político-biográficas. (115)

Antonio Muñoz Molina anticipated this 21st century boom in nostalgic longing for redemption in the past when he wrote his first novel *Beatús Ille* (1986), which recounts a metafictional search for Republican heroes of the past through the story of Minaya, who embarks on a quest to discover existential meaning in a past mystery. The T.S. Eliot quote that opens the book applies to him:

⁸ Bertrand de Muñoz (208); See also Muñoz Molina's *Beatús Ille* (1986), *El jinete polaco* (1996) Manuel Rivas *El lápiz del carpintero* (1992) José María Merino's *El heredero* (2003), Javier Marías' *Tu rostro mañana: Fiebra y lanza* (2002) and Isaac Rosa's *El vano ayer*.

“Mixing memory with desire.” Minaya desires the past to be meaningful. He desires to reinvent himself through reading, discovering, and later writing about the life of another. He wants this other life (Jacinto Solana, the Republican poet he is writing about) to be heroic and desirable. Similarly, the reader expects and desires a meaningful past and narrative as he/she reads *Beatus Ille*. Of *Beatus Ille*, Muñoz Molina said:

Se trataba, entre otras cosas, de la búsqueda de una tradición, de un heroísmo literario y político sepultados bajo varias décadas de tiranía, bajo el silencio del olvido, pero no de una búsqueda con intereses arqueológicos, sino puramente prácticos, de supervivencia moral, de afirmación de la vida en el deseo. (“La invención de un pasado” 210)

Similarly, the cover photograph of *Ayer no más* represents a nostalgic longing for ideals in the past from a disillusioned present. The middle-aged protagonist, Pestaña, embodies this disenchanting today. He has returned to León after a failed marriage in search of some kind of connection.

Meanwhile, the Civil War memory wars of the early 21st century serve as the backdrop for the novel, and Pestaña's personal struggle is reflected in the headlines of the nation. Many important figures and news headlines make appearances such as Ian Gibson's campaign to excavate Federico García Lorca's grave and Baltasar Garzón's decision to open a lawsuit against the Francoist dictatorship (126). The novel refers to the work of Spanish Civil War historians like Stanley Payne, Santos Juliá, Fernando Savater and Ian Gibson. Even Trapiello's book *Las armas y las letras* and Trapiello himself are explicitly referred to in a chapter narrated by a leftist historian (ironically named José Antonio), who says:

No he leído *Las armas y las letras*, pero tampoco pienso: dicen que es el libro de un pendante, sin una sola nota al pie y a vueltas con “la tercera España.” Ya me conozco a esos paniaguados como Madariaga. Los que hablan de la tercera España es porque no quieren hablar de la suya, o sea, la franquista. Habrá sido del Pce, pero de ese crédito no le queda nada. (127-128)

Trapiello, self-conscious of his own political slant, fictionally penetrates the head of a critic and imagines what that person would say about his ideas, all the while subtly criticizing those who are quick to judge.

Historical figures also enter the novel as characters. Mendinagoitia, a progressive leftist philosopher, based on the philosopher Javier Muguerza, recounts his horrifying family history in Coín Málaga. Mendinagoitia's four uncles were murdered indiscriminately by the "reds" in front of their father. The philosopher's father managed to escape the shootings but was later turned in and killed the same year his son was born (for Muguerza's account see Muguerza 109-110). None of his father's assassins survived the war, because they were all murdered in the Nationalist retaliation. Similarly, Clemente Lillo, based on the poet, prose writer, and journalist Victoriano Crémer, also makes a notable appearance. Lillo (like Crémer) is from León and wrote a memoir *El libro de San Marcos* (1980), which recounts his time during the war and his imprisonment in the San Marcos jail for his liberal ideas. In the novel, Pestaña's father took pity on him and brought him necessary items when he was incarcerated: messages, and gifts from his mother. The protagonist wonders why Lillo never mentioned this detail in his history, highlighting how every storyteller omits details to make an argument:

¿Por qué Lillo ni siquiera le menciona en su libro, ni esta historia? No estaba obligado ni es importante, pero acaso habría ilustrado con ella la complejidad del mundo y del ser humano....Salí de su casa sin atajar la vieja sospecha de que mi padre, Lillo, todos ellos, nos han contado solo una parte. (233)

The novel suggests that Lillo, who was consecrated by Francoist Spain during the postwar period, wrote this history at the end of the dictatorship so to realign himself once again with the "good" Republican side, and for this reason never mentioned Pestaña's father, a staunch Falangist.

Pestaña's journey to the past is fatally complicated by the inherent problems of retrieving and narrating the past. Both José Pestaña's family and his academic department reflect the complexities of his country during the polemic historical memory debates. Everyone has a voice in this polyphonic work, and the novel switches narrators with every chapter. Labanyi criticizes the trend in the last fifteen years toward documentary and realist modes in Spanish Civil War representation, which has coincided with the memory boom. She argues that realist and

documentary modes often inherently assume that the past can be unproblematically recovered (105-106). Labanyi prefers the haunting trope found in many films released during the transition over realist and documentary modes because haunting inherently acknowledges the horror, or the “unspeakable” of this particular past (107).⁹

Though there are no actual ghosts in *Ayer no más*, the title embodies the tensions of the haunting of the past in the present, and the fierce desire that the past will relent its torment. The novel presents the narrativization of the past as almost impossible. The actual past of La Fonfría and León is never narrated or documented succinctly, as the novel takes upon ten perspectives from the present: José’s father, mother, sister, colleagues, girlfriend, the son of the victim Graciano, and the historian/poet Clemente Lillo. Parallely, any kind of justice or judgment of the past is problematic. While Pestaña’s family makes the familiar arguments of: “you didn’t live during those times, how could you even know. Your father is in his 80s, how can he be brought to trial for something that happened 70 years ago. He’s a good man, etc” (184), many historians in Pestaña’s academic department, motivated by ambition, envy, rivalries, and personal vendettas are unwilling to listen to anyone who disagrees with them, and seek to take advantage of the historical memory polemic for personal and professional gain. The novel highlights how some will exaggerate atrocities or crimes, or leave details out to make a more compelling story and/or victimhood. The victim’s son, Graciano, the most innocent character in the novel, just wants to locate the remains of his father, rebury them, and die in peace. José Pestaña is caught somewhere in the middle. Though he recognizes the need to recognize past crimes, and he empathizes with the victims, he also strongly

⁹ Labanyi writes of *Soldados de Salamina*:

Although both novel and film focus on the present-day investigation of the past, they represent the difficulties of reconstructing the past as purely practical (a matter of tracking down the evidence) rather than inherent in the narrativization of a difficult past. (105)

believes that during those days, few were truly innocent. At times, some characters in the novel speculate that the revolutionary side would have committed the same scale of atrocities as the Nationalists, had they won the war. It is undeniable that some revolutionary leaders, like most of Franco's generals, were bloodthirsty for revenge during the war, or at least expressed such sentiments in passionate oratories, but speculation does not exculpate wrongdoing.¹⁰ Trapiello seems intent on proving that during the war, few were truly innocent or authentically heroic, and that guilt and justice are far more complex than we sometimes imagine them to be. This argument, an unpopular perspective (or at least counter cultural) in many leftist Spanish circles today, is consistent with his other works.¹¹

José Pestaña pursues the past not simply in order to learn the "truth": he ultimately desires reconciliation between his father and Graciano, and fantasizes about a meeting between the two where German confesses and helps Graciano find the body of his loved one. The protagonist never reaches a more intimate understanding of his dad, however, now an elderly man who spends most of his days painting miniature lead soldiers and playing a solitary card game he used to play during the war. German has no nostalgic past to search: he lives haunted by the past as his older brother was murdered by the revolutionaries at 17 years of age, and many of his friends were killed in battle. German was only 16 years old when Graciano's father was killed in La Fonfría. The reader finds out

¹⁰ Though leaders such as Prime Minister Indalecio Prieto and moderate liberal politician Marcelino Domingo urged the revolutionaries to temper their anger, cruelty, and revenge, and not to imitate the behavior of the rebels during the first months of the war, other leaders such as communist orator Dolores Ibárruri and socialist editor Carlos Baraibar explicitly encouraged the extermination of the fascist enemy at all costs (Preston 259-299).

¹¹ At the end of *El buque fantasma*, Trapiello says of his years working with a communist antifascist group in Valladolid: "Muchos creen que la lucha antifascista fue una lucha por la democracia. Por creerlo, pueden creerlo, si eso les hace ilusión. Todos los que yo conocí en esas escaramuzas estaban encuadrados en partidos cuyos programas soñaban con la dictadura del proletariado" (216).

that Pestaña's father is also writing his own book and recording his own version of the past, but never gains access to the full version of German's story. The novel also suggests that German is far more implicated in war crimes than the novel reveals. Pestaña knows, however, that despite the frustration and contempt he feels for his father, it would be difficult for him to condemn him:

No sé si seré capaz de llevar a mi propio padre ante un juez, si fuese preciso y si así se hiciera justicia y se reparase a una de sus víctimas.... Creo que yo diría como Vallejo, *España, aparta de mí este cáliz*. Pero también sé que en ese caso, tendrían que sentar junto a mi padre a mis abuelos, principales instigadores de su odio, a don Sóstenes, a la Ceda, a Falange, a Franco, a los asesinos de su hermano, a los partidos y sindicatos y personas que indujeron a estos a asesinarlo....y a mí mismo, por no saber qué hacer ni conocer lo que es más justo para todos, convencido de que en estos asuntos callar es también mentir y que a menudo todos hemos de mentir para sobrevivir. (157)

Ayer no más, like other postmemorial pieces, employs both rational and affective arguments, but ultimately the emotional arguments triumph. The novel illuminates how, in historical memory narratives, despite the protests of historians, philosophers and academics, pathetic arguments often conquer.¹² Even alongside the many pages dedicated to rational discussion from Mendiogotia, Pestaña, Raquel, and references to philosophers like Nietzsche and Hannah Arendt, the most convincing aspect of the novel is the father/son relationship and Pestaña's nostalgic longing for love and heroism in the past to eclipse the *desencanto* of the present.

The *desencanto* of the present, however, ultimately reflects and mirrors a horrifying and disenchanted past. There is no ultimate reaffirmation of life in Pestaña's search for a meaningful past, because the past, like the present, is destructive and disappointing. The ideal encapsulated in the photograph of Pestaña and his father is shattered and distorted in both the present and the past, and in the end there is no future hope for redemption, healing or overcoming in the past, present, or future. This absolute *desencanto* provides a radically different perspective from many Spanish Civil War novels that seek a kind of healing or ethical redemption in the return to the past, in

¹² For scholarly arguments against the sentimentalization of the past in Historical Memory efforts, see Loureiro and Santos Juliá.

remembering the victims, and in breaking the silence. The novel ends with a kind of pathetic ambiguity, illuminating the inherent problems with memory and justice. Breaking the silence does not always heal wounds as some are quick to believe, and justice is complex and often unsatisfying. No one, perpetrator or victim, finds any peace and reconciliation after their quest for truth. The novel ultimately promotes a different kind of empathy for the other side, who cannot find meaning, ideals, or heroes in history.¹³ In the end, the protagonist doesn't know how to relate to the past, and his only solution is to write a novel about his struggle, entitled *Ayer no más*, with the familiar picture of father and son on the cover. This kind of metafictional autoreference is nothing new, and is seen in other Spanish Civil War novels like *Soldados Salamina*, where the fictional protagonist also becomes the author of the novel he is in. It appears that literature is the only viable response for José Pestaña to his confusion and pain, but even this is questioned as the protagonist disappears at the end of the novel, alienated from everyone he loves after writing the truth, his truth, in *Ayer no más*.

Trapiello's novel proposes no solutions to the problems of the legacy and memory of the Spanish Civil War, besides the passing of time. Though a vague ethical mandate remains to make the horrors and crimes of the past known, the novel makes no promises of peace or resolution as a result. It does, however, humanize the perpetrator and revise the current archetypes of victim and perpetrator in the Spanish Civil War novel by presenting Pestaña's father as a victim to Francoism, to human nature, and to a horrible and violent era. Tzvetan Todorov notes how narratives of great

¹³ Manuel Riva's *El lápiz del carpintero*, like *Ayer no más*, tells a nuanced polyphonic story about the past in the present from the perspective of a Falangist. While the protagonist of the novel is the heroic Republican doctor Da Barca, the narrator of the novel is the miserable Falangist prison guard, Herbal. Herbal is not a demon, but struggles between the forces of good and evil. As in Sender's *Requiem por un campesino español* (1960), the complex and tormented Nationalist plays counterpart to the idealized and heroic Republican hero. In this sense, *El lápiz del carpintero* differs from *Ayer no más* because though both novels give a nuanced and semi-sympathetic evaluation of the falangist perpetrator, there is no heroic Republican counterpart in *Ayer no más*. In the end of *El lápiz del carpintero*, Herbal is ultimately redeemed by the carpenter who he assassinated, who from time to time inhabits him and impulses him to act humanely. In contrast, there is no reconciliation, conversion or redemption in Trapiello's novel, which ultimately promotes a different kind of empathy.

tragedies tend to make hard and fast divisions between “us” and “the forces of evil.” He says: “We would rather raise a high barrier between the ‘monsters’ and ourselves, holding them up to opprobrium in the belief that we are fundamentally different, and wondering how such beings could ever have existed!” (37). We see this line of thinking in the last century in many Spanish Civil War novels by both Francoist and Republican writers. Later Todorov says: “The memory of the past will serve no purpose if it is used to build an impassable wall between evil and us, identifying exclusively with irreproachable heroes and innocent victims and driving the agents outside the confines of humankind” (80). Despite his refusal to confess, the past still haunts German, and it is precisely his faults, fears, silences, and crimes that make him a human being. Evil is as much a human attribute as good, and the trauma of crime and guilt of the perpetrators is passed on to the next generation, though in a more subtle way. *Ayer no más* explores the postmemorial reality of the other half of the two Spains, and discovers a haunting legacy that should not be forgotten or disregarded because, ultimately, it is a most human one. Shifting the empathetic gaze from the victim to the perpetrator in a Spanish Civil War memory novel, however, holds serious ethical and philosophical consequences. *Ayer no más* runs the risk of subtly pardoning crimes of the past that should be recognized and condemned, and casting the past into a fog of emotional moral obscurity. The novel, however, does provide a fresh voice and perspective that counters the current hegemonic one.

In the end of Marías’ *Corazón tan blanco*, the protagonist adopts a position of vague and passive acceptance of his father’s crimes, and ultimately embraces the present. While his *desencanto* with the past is as fierce as José Pestaña’s, he decides to leave it behind: in the end, no one is alienated or estranged. Thus, Javier Marías subtly reflects upon the ethics of his patria, which since the transition has often sought to un-problematically leave the crimes of past behind without estranging, hurting, or alienating anyone. While many Spanish novels have focused on the silencing of the past and its repercussions for the victims, few contemporary novels explore the pain of

remembering and narrating the crimes of loved ones. *Ayer no más* reveals a different kind of haunting of the past that is often overlooked. This article makes a case for more perpetrator postmemory as an ethical and important way to face both the past and our own humanity.

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