TRAUMA STORIES: REWRITING THE PAST THROUGH FRAGMENTATION IN SPANISH TESTIMONIAL LITERATURE

by

BETSY BROOKS POOLE

ANA CORBALÁN, COMMITTEE CHAIR

SARAH T. MOODY
M. EDURNE PORTELA
IGNACIO RODEÑO
WILLIAM WORDEN

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ABSTRACT

Of all of the literary genres, that of the testimonial narrative is perhaps one of the most difficult and complex genres to study, analyze, and interpret. Combining elements and theories of memory and trauma, history (both written and oral), psychology, sociology, autobiography, gender, and cultural studies, testimonios have proven to be rich in complexity and bursting to the brim with various interpretations and cultural impacts. Upon reading both individual and collective testimonios produced within Spain and France by men and women in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War and the duration of World War II, I have identified four primary types of fragmentation that serve not only as means of working through the haunting effects of a traumatized past and creating and re-negotiating new identities, but likewise demonstrate intentional resistance to previously established cultural norms (e.g. those solidified under the fascist regimes of Francisco Franco and Adolf Hitler). These forms of fragmentation include: temporal fragmentation, fragmentation of the voice/narrative subject, stylistic/structural fragmentation, and identitary fragmentation. Accordingly, all four forms are not only essential—and obvious—characteristics of the texts I will analyze in this dissertation, but, upon closer analysis, are also vital to the very act of witnessing, working through traumatic memories, recalling experiences, and (re)writing history. In essence, they are the strategic and textual means through which testimonial narrators are able to reclaim their positions as active participants of History and re-assert themselves in public discourse.
DEDICATION

To my husband Bryan: of all the stories in the world, ours is my favorite.
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INTRODUCTION

TESTIMONIES OF SPANISH TRAUMAS

In the opening chapter of his testimonial memoir *La escritura o la vida*, Spanish author and concentration camp survivor Jorge Semprún poses an interesting and important question as he thinks about writing his memories of trauma: “¿Pero se puede contar? ¿Podrá contarse alguna vez? […] No hay más que dejarse llevar. La realidad está ahí, disponible. La palabra también” (25). Hidden between the lines of this quote, another question lingers, crying out for an answer: but can the real story be told? For countless Spanish men and women who found themselves repressed, brutalized, and victimized by the Francoist and Nazi regimes throughout the Spanish Civil War and World War II, this question hauntingly persists. Having experienced indescribable or seemingly unspeakable trauma at the hands of human perpetrators, they are faced with the uphill battle of working through the trauma they have experienced, reclaiming their own personal stories, and correcting the historical records forged by the victors who skewed, manipulated, or even erased their words for political gain and control. Finding the writing process to be cathartic and capable of profoundly subjective expression, many victims have written their stories down, both for themselves and the greater public, demonstrating through their writing that it is possible to narrate subjective traumatic experiences with authority and purpose. Thus the question changes from “can the story be told?” to “how does one tell it?,” a question that this dissertation aims to analyze through the work of four Spanish writers who wrote of their personal experiences within Francoist prisons and Nazi concentration camps. Bridging the gap between
testimonios and testimonial fiction birthed from traumatic experiences, I will examine the literary strategies of fragmentation utilized by Felipe Matarranz González, Neus Català, Juana Doña Jiménez, and Jorge Semprún that reveal their trauma in perceivable ways and enable them to overcome it and (re)write history from alternative perspectives.

Defining Testimonio: An Overview

Before delving into close readings and an analysis of these authors, it will be worthwhile to define key terminology and broadly review how testimonial criticism and trauma theory have been shaped by the conflictive political climate of the twentieth century. Although evidence of the testimonial genre dates back as far as the voyage diaries of the Spanish explorers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the surge of critical study did not come to fruition until the rise of widespread political unrest in Latin America and Europe in the mid-twentieth century (e.g. political and cultural revolutions throughout South and Central America and the Caribbean, World Wars I and II in Europe). A distinct genre first officially highlighted by scholars following the publication of Miguel Barnet’s Biografía de un cimarrón in Cuba in 1967, the testimonio, or memory text, is perhaps one of the most difficult and complex genres to study, analyze, and interpret.¹ Combining elements and theories of memory, trauma, history (both written and oral), psychology, sociology, autobiography, gender, and cultural studies, testimonios have proven to be rich in complexity and bursting to the brim with various interpretations and cultural impacts. To add to the already-existing complexity of this genre, many critics have traditionally studied

¹ The term “memory text” is used by critic Shirley Mangini in her attempt to underscore the wide variety of text types that testimonios can imitate. She writes, “this label permits me to subsume it under both testimonials and written texts, which often converge because some of the written texts are transcribed oral testimonies and because I have turned other fragments of interviews into ‘written text.’” In still others texts [...] the authors use the format of novel, diary, memoir, and more traditional autobiography.” (188).
memory texts produced by male and female authors separately, implying that there are no unifying or key structures connecting the two, or that there is very little merit in comparatively interpreting their narratives. An additional gap in the world of literary criticism is seen in the relative lack of theoretical or critical analyses that focus exclusively on the peninsular Spanish testimonios produced in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War and World War II. Though these texts originated in a different political context (and in many cases, earlier) than their counterparts in Latin America, they nonetheless share much in common with them and as such deserve to be studied through the lens of testimonial criticism.

Problematic in and of itself, the word testimonio is a broad term that is still debated to this day. Breaking the word down to its roots, testimonio exists to satisfy the universal human need or desire to bear witness, often to events of a criminal, violent or oppressive nature. Jo Labanyi affirms this basic definition of the term, emphasizing that testimony exists as a means of denouncing injustice and publically displaying it for all to judge and correct (“Historias” 91). It is not my goal to argue for a new definition or explanation of testimonio; rather, it is to look at how the hybrid form of the testimonio and its variations (such as the novela-testimonio) permits

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2 I do not claim that there are no differences between the texts; on the most obvious front, the presence of feminist ideology is, by nature, more frequently explored in testimonios authored by women. While the existing body of criticism most commonly highlights the goal of women’s testimonios as the desire to free female identity from the oppressive chains of male-authored History, I feel that this is a gross over-simplification of the end result (i.e. women’s testimonios achieve a far greater purpose than simply challenging masculine ideals). Additionally, it supposes that men’s testimonios do not challenge male-authored History—a gross over-simplification.

3 Of these differences, illiteracy and education (especially as they tend to define subaltern groups) are perhaps the most obvious. Whereas many Latin American testimonios were dictated to third-party interlocutors or editors because the witnesses (e.g. Rigoberta Menchú) were illiterate and uneducated, the testimonios produced in Spain were created directly by individuals with access to education. This does not mean, however, that their testimonies to not speak from their margins: on the contrary, they do exactly what their counterparts do: they resist the hegemonic representations of their stories by creating new alternatives.

4 See A Complete English-Latin and Latin-English Dictionary, page 693. The word testimonio is derived from the Latin terms testis, meaning “witness” and testificor, which translates as “to bear witness.”
individuals to express trauma and rewrite histories from alternative perspectives. Even so, in order to lay the groundwork for my analysis, I refer to the studies of several noteworthy scholars to construct a more detailed explanation that will enable us to analyze the aforementioned narratives for their symbolism, their structure, and their historical impacts. First among them is John Beverley, who defines *testimonio* as a “novel or novella-length narrative told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real-life protagonist of the events he or she recounts” (“Second Thoughts” 1-2). Second comes George Yúdice, who, focusing more on the confrontational power of testifying, suggests that testimony is, “an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e.g. war, oppression, revolution, etc.). . . . Truth is summoned in the cause of denouncing a present situation of exploitation and oppression or in exorcising and setting aright official history” (*Postmodernism* 17).

Using the term “authentic” to describe *testimonio* is unsurprisingly problematic though not without justification. For decades critics have debated what “authentic” means within the context of subjective narratives—especially in texts that are greatly influenced by the dynamic nature of memory with its periods of forgetfulness and denial. Historians valuing proven fact over individual perspective have long pointed to the faultiness and unreliability of memory as a reason to negate the veracity of testimonial narratives. To them, the act of forgetting or misremembering signifies the death of any inherent historical value the text may or may not have possessed by reason of its existence. Combating this assumption, psychologist Daniel Schacter explains forgetting and misremembering as adaptive features of our memories, suggesting that,

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5 Though Beverley limits his definition to narratives told in the first person, I am instead using the term ‘testimonial literature’ to include fictional testimonials that are narrated from the third person as well. While these *novela-testimonios* do not conform to Beverley’s belief that *testimonios* are written in the first person, they do reinforce his suggestion of representation/ownership in that the writers are frequently represented by the main protagonists in their texts.
“if we […] were constantly overwhelmed by detailed memories of every page from our pasts, we would be left without a coherent story to tell” (81). Ana María Amar Sánchez breaks this discussion down to a linguistic level, arguing that “lo real no es describible ‘tal como es’ porque el lenguaje es otra realidad e impone sus leyes a lo fáctico; de algún modo lo recorta, organiza y ficcionaliza” (447). In this sense, testimonial narratives become creative spaces in which history and identity are reconstructed and made anew. Jorge Narvaez frames this in terms of divergence and resistance: in his detailed list of the most basic characteristics of the testimonial genre he similarly interjects that the testimonio has the intrinsic power to not only re-organize reality, but to also dismantle and transform hegemonic representations of reality, opening the door to new forms of collective representation (240). Though not specifically focused on testimonios, Hayden White’s work on the practice of writing history further supports these claims and argues that subjective narratives have equal claim to historical merit. According to White, history can never be fully objective. White uses the word “interpretation” to describe how history is created and written, observing that “historians interpret their materials in two ways: by the choice of a plot-structure, which gives to their narratives a recognizable form, and by the choice of a paradigm of explanation, which gives to their arguments a specific shape, thrust, and mode of articulation” (“Interpretation” 304). He further suggests that these choices are products of “a third, more basic, interpretative decision: a moral or ideological decision” (304). Because history is written by individuals with distinct experiences and ideological tendencies, the very act of organizing events into a cohesive narrative is possible only by making subjective decisions as to which pieces of information to highlight and which to downplay.

Along the same line, many studies on testimonial literature emphasize the political nature and cultural activism of testimonios, pinpointing postcolonial struggles and subaltern social
movements as their foundation. For critic René Jara, one of the first to study and interpret Latin American memory texts in the 1980s, “el testimonio, al parecer, es inseparable de la guerra” (3), a notion that attempts to demonstrate the idea that testimonial narratives are not only products of political and cultural conflict but are also active participants in the very conflicts surrounding their creation. By representing subaltern sociocultural groups that are the victims of terrible oppression, genocide, or forced assimilation, testimonios break with politically dominant forms of discourse in which the subaltern is silenced and denied authentic representation. Echoing this thought, Barbara Harlow suggests that testimonios are essentially forms of “resistance literature,” proposing that, “the emphasis in the literature of resistance is on the political as the power to change to the world” (30). In his own study of Latin American testimonios, John Beverley sums up the inherent political core of the memory texts he analyzes by arguing that, “it seems to me that the continuing force of testimonio is linked to this moment—which is a political one—more than to the ethnical-legal problematic of human rights. . . . I continue to see in testimonio, in other words, a model for a new form of politics, which also means a new way of imagining the identity of the nation” (Testimonio xvii). Georg Gugelberger and Michael Kearney similarly propose that the testimonial genre is “part of a global reordering of the social and economic texts of power/difference within which “literature” is produced and consumed,” further suggesting that testimonial discourse in general is typically associated with revolutionary developments and overt social change (6).

In addition to stressing the political nature of testimonios and the cultural activism that they promote, many theorists also underscore the transformation of the actual narrative subject of the text. Differing from the traditional, Westernized view of autobiography in which the writer is an author or academic that serves as the protagonist of his or her own narrative, testimonial
narratives are narrated or authored by individuals belonging to a subaltern or oppressed group who perceive themselves to be representative of a collective voice rather than an individual one. In the words of Beverley, “testimonio constitutes an affirmation of the individual self in collective mode” (*Testimonio* 35). Many critics, such as Lynda Marín and George Yúdice, point to Rigoberta Menchú’s famous opening statement in her *testimonio* as a clear example of this collective intent. Menchú writes, “I’d like to stress that it’s not only my life, it’s also the testimony of my people. . . . The important thing is that what happened to me has happened to many other people too: My story is the story of all poor Guatemalans. My personal experience is the reality of a whole people” (1). Yúdice further connects this testimonial collectivity back to the sociopolitical struggles during which the text originates. Signaling the inherent complexity of the testimonial genre, he writes that though the narrator still writes/narrates through the lens of his or her own personal experience, “[the narrator’s] personal experience, of course, is the collective struggle against oppression from oligarchy, military, and transnational capital” (26).

René Jara goes one step beyond these arguments by additionally underscoring the multiplicity of roles that the narrator of a *testimonio* performs in his or her quest to challenge hegemonic forms of discourse: “La presencia del yo—que puede hallarse más o menos delimitado, colectivizarse en un nosotros, o diluirse con impersonalidad retórica—ha de asumirse, por el repector [sic], en su triple connotación de testigo, actor y juez” (1). Implied in his categorization is the intent of the narrator to not only bear witness and perform a specific sociopolitical role in doing so, but also to act as judge, issuing judgments about societal injustices in order to set them right. Discussions of the duality of the testimonial narrative voice also extend to arguments about memory itself. Emulating the ideas of famed philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, José Colmeiro highlights the social nature of memory, arguing
that, “toda memoria personal ocurre siempre dentro de un cuadro social, de un lenguaje colectivo, de un sistema de convenciones y coordenadas sociales determinadas” (Memoria 16).\(^6\)

Testimonios, then, may be seen to possess a type of double (or even multiple) voice, vacillating between or simultaneously representing unique personal struggles alongside collective ones with the overall intent of challenging hegemonic representations of various social groups (e.g. political parties, religious sects, ethnic groups, etc.) that find themselves oppressed and denied self-representation in society and, ultimately, History.

**The Context: Testimonios from the Spanish Civil War and World War II**

It is this idea of challenging History that perhaps stands out as the biggest difference between the testimonial literature created during the Latin American political revolutions of the mid-twentieth century and that of Spain and France during and after the traumatic wars fought on European soil. Whereas the majority of the testimonios produced in Latin America were written and published in the midst of the political and cultural turmoil they portrayed and rebuked, thus calling for immediate action on the part of the public, the testimonial narratives constructed by the victims of the Spanish Civil War and Holocaust were created and distributed (however meagerly) much later than the traumatic events they narrate due to the extreme censorship of Franco’s dictatorship. Carles Feixa and Carme Agustí note this in their study of Spanish prison testimonios: “Lo distintivo del caso español es que la recuperación de esa memoria no es inmediata, sino que se abre paso de forma muy fragmentaria y tiene que esperar no sólo el final de la dictadura, sino incluso el final de la transición (¡más de medio siglo, toda una vida!) para que empiecen a superarse los tiempos de silencio (y los silencios del tiempo)” (200). Unlike the

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\(^6\) See Maurice Halbwach’s *On Collective Memory* for an excellent explanation about the social constructs and functions of memory.
guerilla testimonios from Cuba and Central America during the 60s and 70s, Spanish testimonios do not so much promote national liberation movements as they do the recuperation of previously silenced memories. They are not exclusively concerned with sparking political movements but further seek to bring historical justice to the countless atrocities committed during the Civil War and Holocaust. To quote the Holocaust researcher Shoshana Felman, “testimony is [traditionally] provided, and is called for, when the facts upon which justice must pronounce its verdict are not clear, when historical accuracy is in doubt, and when both the truth and its supporting elements of evidence are called into question” (17). In the sense that the stories of the Spanish Republicans and resistance fighters that fought Franco in Spain and Hitler in France were silenced by the oppressive regimes and the Spanish pacto de olvido, the very act of bearing witness or creating testimony attempts to correct or (re)write History itself, offering varied interpretations that have the ability to create a more comprehensive view of the past, and in turn, of the present.7

The calculated resistance achieved via the writing and publication of these testimonies is highly significant on several historical levels that beg to be examined. The title of this dissertation largely refers to one of the most central of these: by penning testimonies that speak to unheard of traumatic experiences and blatant oppression, previously persecuted individuals are able to establish histories and herstories that shout from the margins. Jim Sharpe suggests that the past few decades have brought with them an increased interest in reexamining history as seen

7 The pact of forgetting was a decision by the Spanish government following its transition to a democracy upon the death of Francisco Franco to essentially avoid speaking of the painful travesties committed throughout the dictatorship in an effort to facilitate the political transition. José Colmeiro describes it as an effort to, “no tener que recordar la historia más cercana y más problemática: el largo cadáver del franquismo. En realidad se trataba más bien de una voluntaria amnesia colectiva resultado del no querer sacar el esqueleto del armario en que quedó cerrado y bien cerrado” (Memoria 19).
through the lens of its secondary and tertiary players. Though more classical forms of history pay exclusive attention to those with the political and military power, Sharpe intimates that “history from below arguably fulfills two important functions. The first is to serve as a corrective to top person’s history. . . . The second is that, by offering this alternative approach, history from below opens the possibility of a richer synthesis of historical understanding” (32-33). It stands to reason, then, that exploring the testimonial works of previously oppressed individuals who wrote of their experiences on the losing side of the Spanish Civil War and within Hitler’s concentration camps in large part constitutes this “history from below,” offering us profound insights into the lives of thousands of individuals formerly excluded from the historical record.

By extension, these testimonies written from the margins act as forms of history and herstory that stand in opposition to History as portrayed by the hegemonic powers of repression. Herstory is a term that originated during the rise of second-wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. In their book analyzing the gender politics of language, Casey Miller and Kate Swift simply define herstory as an attempt to “emphasize that women’s lives, deeds, and participation in human affairs have been neglected or undervalued in standard histories” (146). Joan Scott further proposes that herstory was born from the desire for “a history that would provide heroines, proof of women’s agency, and explanations of oppression and inspiration for action” (42). Though the study of herstories is incredibly important in society’s ongoing quest to better understand the roles of women throughout history and their interactions with and influence upon the societies in which they lived, it is equally important to recognize that men also write from the margins, creating histories that similarly contradict the historical record. In my analysis of testimonial literature written by both Spanish women and men following their imprisonment during the Spanish Civil War and World War II, I will reveal how similar forms of resistance are
construed through the symbolic language and structure of the testimonies. Not only is history rewritten from alternative perspectives (and the Spanish Civil War and World War II portrayed as one overarching conflict affecting Spanish identity) but individual forms of trauma are exhibited and worked-through in creative ways, both in their representations of key historical events and their descriptions of the mundane, everyday moments that comprised their lives in prison. It is my contention in this dissertation that overlooking this trauma (as do many historians in their studies of testimonial accounts) is detrimental to our interpretation of these histories and herstories: it is only through examining the relationship between trauma, the speaking subject and the writing process that it is possible to fully comprehend the experiences of the individuals and the ways in which testimonial literature creates new spaces of identitary articulation and historical resistance.

**Trauma and its Textual Influence**

The presence of trauma in each of the narratives chosen for this dissertation reveals deep insight into the prison and concentration camp experiences of Spaniards throughout the twentieth century and significantly impacts our reading and interpretation of the texts themselves. Though they attempt to create or write new forms of history that challenge Francoist and Hitlerian propaganda, the underlying influence of trauma greatly affects the texts and the process of both writing and subsequently understanding them. Beginning with Sigmund Freud’s forays into psychoanalysis during World War I and continuing today with further studies on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the study of trauma along with its origins, effects, and remedies, has important implications for the study of testimonial literature birthed from traumatic experiences such as captivity, the violence of war, torture, and social ostracization or rejection. Like the word testimonio, the term trauma is likewise ambiguous and highly debated within the fields of
psychological and literary criticism. Instead of focusing on trauma’s physicality, I will instead be referring back to the pre-established definitions of Freud, Cathy Caruth, and Ernst Van Alphen, among others, each of which suggests that trauma is not located in the original event itself but rather in the difficulty in processing and comprehending the experience after the fact. In his foundational work *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud first defines trauma as a wound inflicted not upon the body, but upon the mind. Applying this idea to literature and the manifestations of individual trauma within, Caruth offers insight into the psychological nature of trauma:

But what seems to be suggested by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is that the wound of the mind—the breach in the mind’s experience of time, self, and the world—is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and hearable event, but rather an event... that is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, it the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor. (*Unclaimed 4*)

This definition of trauma as not knowing or not perceiving/processing is essential to our understanding of testimonial literature that narrates traumatic experiences, but it is important here to also deviate slightly from Caruth’s narrow definition. Whereas Caruth suggests that trauma is domineering and incapable of being wrangled by the victim, I lean more to the interpretations of Edurne Portela in her study of women’s trauma narratives from Argentina following the Dirty War. Emphasizing the idea that trauma can be claimed and eventually subdued by the victim via symbolic expression, she writes, “instead of providing an interpretation of trauma that considers writing a literal embodiment rather than a representation of the traumatic experience, I suggest an analysis of the symbolic uses of language that communicate the traces and/or symptoms of trauma” (40).
Like Caruth, Ernst van Alphen also describes trauma in terms of ‘not knowing,’ but does so from a discursive perspective rather than a psychological one. In his study of Holocaust literature and the trauma that defines it, he makes the important connection between experience (memory) and discourse (the written word and symbolic order of representation), arguing that it is impossible to separate the two. He contends that, “sometimes there are situations and events—and the Holocaust is prototypical for such situations—that there are the occasion of “experiences” that cannot be expressed in the terms that language (or, more broadly, the symbolic order) offers at that moment” (26). This argument results in the conclusion that the delay in representing of traumatic events such as the Holocaust may be explained by the temporarily (un)available forms of discursive representation with/in which the events can be (re)experienced and narrated by its witnesses. For van Alphen, the trauma thus lies not in the original event, but in the crisis of identity experienced by its witnesses when there is no narrative framework available through which to process the pain of the experience. He refers to the tendency of Holocaust survivors to portray themselves as both victims and perpetrators of the crimes they witnessed as evidence of this discursive trauma. The inability to define their specific role in the event, according to van Alphen, leads to both a crisis of identity and the incapacity to remember, re-experience, or narrate the past, until new, sufficient discursive frameworks are created that make it possible to distinguish previously blurred roles and experiences.

Resembling Caruth and van Alphen, Dori Laub points to the difficulties of witnessing a traumatic event as resulting from the inability of the human mind to fully comprehend a traumatic experience using human logic. Studying testimonial narratives solicited from Holocaust survivors, he writes, “The degree to which bearing witness was required, entailed such an outstanding measure of awareness and of comprehension of the event—of its dimensions,
consequences, and above all, of its radical otherness to all known frames of references—that it was beyond the limits of human ability (and willingness) to grasp, to transmit, or to imagine” (“Event” 84). He goes still one step further by postulating that there are three distinct levels of witnessing seen in a singular testimonial narration that may all be equally affected by the trauma of not knowing or perceiving: “the level of being a witness to oneself within the experience; the level of being a witness to the testimonies of others; and the level of being a witness to the process of witnessing itself” (“Event” 75). He logically concludes that the trauma of being unable to re-experience the past personally or coherently on all three levels of witnessing often leads to the painful distortion of memory and cases of personal misperception in which the victims fail to be authentic witnesses even to themselves.8 Upon highlighting the serious and devastating effects of trauma on an individual, Laub switches gears by underscoring the importance of the testimonial process as a means of working through the psychological and emotion trauma via words:

What ultimately matters in all processes of witnessing, spasmodic and continuous, conscious and unconscious, is not simply the information, the establishment of the facts, but the experience itself of living through testimony, of giving testimony. The testimony is, therefore, the process by which the narrator (the survivor) reclaims his position as a witness: reconstitutes the internal “thou” and thus the possibility of a witness or listener inside himself. (“Event” 85)

Susan J. Brison echoes this thought by suggesting that, “Narrative memory is not passively endured; rather, it is an act on the part of the narrator, a speech act that defuses traumatic memory, giving shape and temporal order to the events recalled, establishing more control over

8 As is similarly observed by van Alphen, she cites the case of a Holocaust survivor who could not precisely remember whether or not she was innocent or guilty of the crimes committed within the camp: “the untold events had become so distorted in her unconscious memory as to make her believe that she herself . . . bore the responsibility for [the victims’] pain” (80).
their recalling, and helping the survivor to remake a self” (40). The task of narrating or testifying, then, is not an involuntary process but rather an intentional, elaborative one—a process that, referring back to Freud’s original hypothesis and Portela’s suggestions, allows victims and witnesses to become more conversant with their trauma and their internal resistance to remembering it.9

Though many great scholars have analyzed testimonial narratives in terms of their ability to challenge hegemonic discourse or work through trauma on an individual level, few studies have focused on the testimonial writing process as a unifying method whereby witnesses are able to re(write) history in such a way as to find identitary restoration on both individual and collective planes. Jo Labanyi likewise refers to this gap in the literature, stating that, “ha sido una falta de análisis de las estrategias narrativas adoptadas en estos testimonios y—más importante—de la ideología expresada implícita o explícitamente en el texto por la organización editorial del material” (“Histories” 91). Whereas many Latin American testimonios were orally collected and transcribed by an educated editor, the four narratives chosen for this dissertation were all written by the witnesses themselves, with very little to no editing done by a third party. As such, the writing process and textual characters of Matarranz, Català, Doña and Semprún are inherently important when analyzing the intentions and impacts of their respective texts. Daniel Schacter sees a clear connection between the act of storytelling or narrating and how identities and histories are created in the presence of traumatic experience: “The unfolding drama of life is revealed more by the telling than by the actual events told. Stories are not merely ‘chronicles,’ like a secretary’s minutes of a meeting, written to report exactly what transpired and at what

9 Freud writes that the process of working-through trauma takes time, with the end goal being to, “work through it, overcome it, by continuing, in defiance of it, the analytic work according to the fundamental rule of analysis” (“Remembering” 155).
time. Stories are less about facts and more about meanings. In the subjective and embellished telling of the past, the past is constructed—history is made” (28). While the actual events narrated are unquestionably important, the way in which they are expressed is of equal importance when attempting to understand or interpret the meanings behind them. Dominick LaCapra’s work on trauma reflects similar ideas, suggesting that, “when the past becomes accessible to recall in memory, and when language functions to provide some measure of conscious control, critical distance, and perspective, one has begun the arduous process of working over and through the trauma” (90, emphasis mine). The form of a testimonial narrative, then, is of equal importance with its content—and both are needed in order to fully understand the complex meanings communicated within the text. Neglecting to pay due attention to the textual characteristics of a narrative reduce it to a mere historical chronicle, refusing to see it for what it truly is: a subjective, lived account that is dynamic, genre-bending, and rebellious in its attempt to narrate traumatic events in coherent and tangible ways.

**Textual Fragmentation as Resistance**

With this, I come full-circle back to the central question posed at the beginning of this dissertation: how are real traumatic experiences narrated? Why are testimonial narratives—both fictional and nonfictional—so important to survivors of psychologically and physically destructive experiences? How do these testimonios even get pieced together, and how do they both reflect and overcome trauma on and individual, collective, and historical level? When I first began my venture into testimonial literature produced during the Spanish Civil War and World War II, I immediately noticed a common textual attribute that seemed to jump from the page of each text as a result of the trauma experienced by the narrators: fragmentation of multiple types. LaCapra also acknowledges the general existence of this phenomenon, noting that, “trauma
invites distortion, disrupts genres or bounded areas, and threatens to collapse all distinctions” (96). Temporal fragmentation, fragmentation of the narrative voice, stylistic and structural fragmentation, and identitary fragmentation related to gender and nationality seemed to manifest themselves clearly through the words of the narrators, coloring the texts with multiple levels of meaning and societal implications. One such implication was the effect of trauma on the individual’s perception of identity and their subsequent attempt to reconnect their story with the stories of others that had similarly experienced traumatic events. A second implication was the establishment of new forms of history that portray the Spanish Civil War and World War II as the same conflict, thus challenging the historical records that view them as distinct events and tend to erase Spanish participation in the anti-fascist resistance movements seen more broadly throughout Europe. The four testimonial narratives analyzed in this dissertation represent the overarching struggles of the Spanish Republicans who fought against Franco in Spain and continued the fight—whether symbolically or physically—against Hitler in France and Germany throughout World War II. Whereas they have traditionally been studied as separate accounts, this dissertation aims to unite them for the first time, looking at the similarities and intertextual dialogues established by the writers as they work through their trauma and reclaim their rights to historical representation following long periods of oppression and forced silence. Upon examining Manuscrito de un superviviente by Felipe Matarranz González, De la resistencia y la deportación by Neus Català, Desde la noche y la niebla by Juana Doña Jiménez, and both El largo viaje and La escritura o la vida by Jorge Semprún, I will demonstrate that all four types of the aforementioned textual fragmentation are present in each one, revealing the individual traumas experienced by the narrators while also serving as tools that enable them to overcome
their trauma and more fully relate their struggles, finding identitary restoration in the new histories produced by their words.

Temporal fragmentation (or distortion) is one of the most prevalent forms of fragmentation found in the texts outlined in this dissertation. Both a reflection of the temporal confusion caused by traumatic experience and a strategy used to (re)experience and (re)write the past, temporal fragmentation is simply the direct juxtaposition of the past, present and future seen in the narration, dialogue, and plot. While LaCapra notes that the fragmentation of time (or the interplay between the past and the present) in testimonial narratives is a way to enable witnesses to work through psychological trauma, I would like to go one step further by proposing that temporal fragmentation—or distortion of logical time sequencing—also permits oppressed individuals to reorder and (re)write history based on their own, individual perceptions and narrative preferences. By way of disregarding chronological time and traditional limitations of time sequencing imposed by hegemonic systems of historiography (e.g. by narrating stories in reverse, maintaining present opinions while narrating past events, re-ordering narratives, or dismantling time references all together), witnesses essentially deconstruct and reconstruct their own histories and herstories. As a result, they are able to utilize textual strategies that promote personal healing, identitary (re)negotiation, and resistance to the historical or folkloric discourse propagated by the oppressive regimes established by Francisco Franco and Adolf Hitler.

Fragmentation of the narrative voice and subject incorporates several theoretical components. First, theorists such as van Alphen, Laub and LaCapra contend that fragmentation of the self may occur as the result of a traumatic or not-knowable experience. The yo before the traumatic experience and the yo after the traumatic experience are different subjects often separated in the victim’s mind. This crisis of identity or “splitting of the self” as Lawrence
Langer describes it in his analysis of Holocaust testimonios, may manifest itself in different ways, ranging from testimonial witnesses describing their lives before the traumatic event as if they belonged to a different person, referring to their personal experiences in the third person in order to deny any or all guilt felt, or even using more fictionalized narrative forms to place distance between themselves and their experiences. In addition to demonstrating the effects of trauma on the individual subject, fragmentation of the narrative subject also has the ability to highlight the underlying solidarity created within traumatized communities while also demonstrating the nature of collective memory. Switching frequently between the yo and nosotros perspectives, witnesses unite their struggle with that of a larger—and sometimes universal—community, drawing strength in numbers and returning a long-silenced voice back to it. Strategically and effectively, the plethora of voices that forms each testimonio symbolically represents the collective community but still manages to maintain individual stories and perspectives without sacrificing them to a single, controlling voice.

Like temporal fragmentation and fragmentation of the self/narrative subject, stylistic and structural fragmentation equally demonstrate the ways in which the testimonial narratives analyzed in this dissertation create new spaces within which hybrid identities are negotiated and established. Whereas I use the term ‘stylistic’ fragmentation to refer to the presence of multiple forms of discourse, genre, or narrative used within the same text (e.g. fiction, historiography,}

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10 For a more detailed explanation of Langer’s ideas on “splitting of the self,” see Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory.

11 Edurne Portela has observed this phenomenon in testimonios produced by women in Argentina during and after the Dirty War of 1976-1983. Referring to the multiple voices manifested in Nora Strejilevich’s Una sola muerte numerosa, she writes, “the fragmented structure and the polyphony of voices . . . is a reflection of both the impossibility of total recollection of traumatic memories as well as a strategy to represent the voices of those who either disappeared during the dictatorship, as did the author’s brother, or those who felt compelled to transmit their narrative of trauma” (50-1).
monologue, dialogue, poetry, songs, political speech, journal entries, letters, government documents, photos, etc.), I use the phrase structural fragmentation to refer to the ways in which the text is grammatically and syntactically structured (e.g. sentence length, repetition, juxtaposed antonyms, word choice, etc.). By refusing to adhere to narrowly delimited systems of genre or structure, the testimonial narratives of Matarranz, Català, Doña, and Semprúñ present a direct challenge to hegemonic literary norms and call into question the very nature of history and how it is remembered, interpreted, and (re)written. Reclaiming their agency and powers of self-representation, they find renewal and reconciliation in creative language.

Each of the subsequent chapters in this dissertation will take us through the analysis of fragmentation in each of the four testimonial works mentioned above, beginning with the nonfictional narratives of Felipe Matarranz and Neus Català and culminating in the examination of the fictionalized testimonios produced by Juana Doña and Jorge Semprúñ. This focus on both nonfictional and fictional testimonios addresses yet another gap in the literature; historians and literary critics alike have traditionally studied these narratives separately, implying that the literary strategies employed by nonfictional and fictional testimonial accounts are neither related to one another nor establish any form of historical consistency or conversation among the authors. On the contrary, my analysis of these testimonial narratives demonstrate their remarkable similarity: all four of them use fragmentation in varying degrees to work through their trauma and portray their attempts to renegotiate their identity in light of their experiences in captivity and exile (both literal and figurative). In chapter one I examine Felipe Matarranz’s Manuscrito de un superviviente, an account published in 1987 that portrays his experiences both on the battlefield in Spain and in Francoist prisons after his capture. Written by his own hand years after his conditional release from prison and during his continued clandestine work in the
Partido Comunista Español (PCE) throughout the Franco’s dictatorship, the fragmentation found in his text offers insight into the physical, emotional, and psychological trauma that befell him at the hands of his Francoist captors. Uniting his narrative with those of his fallen comrades and those still living in exile, he introduces the world to a new history of the Second Republic of Spain and the people who died while fighting to preserve it.

In chapter two I turn to Neus Català’s *De la resistencia y la deportación*. Focusing on the plight of the Spanish Republican women who fled into France following the Spanish Civil War’s end, it offers deep and at times painful looks into the world of the concentration camps as experienced through the lens of Spanish, female political prisoners. Published in 2000, it begins with Català’s personal, hand-written testament to her time spent in the French Resistance and subsequent internment in the Ravensbrück concentration camp. Following Català’s herstory are forty-nine testimonies and transcriptions of interviews with fellow Spanish women who were likewise imprisoned in German, Austrian, or French concentration camps throughout World War II. Notable about *De la resistencia y la deportación* is the fact that many of the voices recovered through its pages hail from Cataluña, a region brutally suppressed by Franco’s “One Spain” regime. Presented in Spanish while still maintaining words in Catalan, German, and French, its fragmentation not only depicts the horrors of the camps in tangible ways, but also opens History to divergent thoughts on gender and nationality, reclaiming women’s roles as soldiers, liaisons, saboteurs, nurses, mothers, and leaders. Breaking down the façade of women’s passivity, it offers an active voice to both the women whose testimonies are included within it, and more broadly to those of the current generations who are continuing the fight for democracy and equal rights worldwide.
In chapter three I turn my attention to Juana Doña Jiménez’s *Desde la noche y la niebla*, a *novela-testimonio* published in 1978. Though it is narrated in the third person via a fictional framework, it nonetheless describes her personal experience—and those of her comrades—incarcerated in the famed Ventas prison for women in Madrid following her capture by Francoist forces in December of 1939. Narrated in the third person and fictionalized in order to protect the identities of the protagonists, it challenges the traditional distinction between history and fiction, blurring the boundaries of genre, time, and voice in an effort to tell the stories of women long silenced by Francoist propaganda. Connecting her struggle with that of her female counterparts imprisoned in France, Germany, and Austria, Doña exposes the world to her stories that, through their textual fragmentation, lead us to a greater understanding of the identitary journeys of women who spent their prime years being tortured behind bars, having dedicated their lives attempting to secure freedom for future generations of young women in Spain.

Lastly, chapter four presents my interpretations and analyses of two *novela-testimonios* written by Jorge Semprún detailing his personal experience in Nazi concentration camps and his liberation in 1945 at the end of World War II.\(^\text{12}\) I will begin with an analysis of his first published novel, *El largo viaje* (first published in 1963) and finish with a comparative reading of *La escritura o la vida* (1994), a nonfictional work that corrects, critiques, and comments upon *El largo viaje*. Though Semprún maintains the sole authorial voice over his texts, he creatively weaves the stories of his fallen comrades into his own history, identifying his personal struggle with that of a more collective community. Blending elements of nonfiction and fiction, Semprún

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\(^{12}\) For the purpose of this dissertation, I am classifying Semprún’s works as *novela-testimonios* due to the fact that they comply with the definition already established by Nubya Celina Casas, who suggests that they are novels portraying real-life experiences that are directly experienced by the narrator/author. These *novela-testimonios* also tend to focus on very specific experiences rather than full life stories.
refuses to adhere to traditional boundaries of genre, time, space, or voice, using fragmentation as a key strategy to create, overcome, and at times, (re)write his own individual history and the collective history of his fellow victims.\footnote{The case of rewriting history is seen very clearly in his last published novel, \textit{La escritura o la vida}, in which he not only offers new, previously unpublished memories, but also corrects memories and stories from his previous novels, continuously and philosophically reflecting on the role of writing in the recuperation of memory and rewriting of history.}

In summary, through my analysis of the above-mentioned primary sources I will demonstrate how three primary types of fragmentation—self/narrative subject, temporal, and stylistic/structural—functioning together within the same work in addition to within the collective body of \textit{testimonios}, not only challenge previously held images and representations of History as dictated by the Franco and Hitler regimes during and after the Civil War and Holocaust, but also serve to create dynamic spaces within which the authors and readers—male and female alike—are able to re-define themselves and the world around them.\footnote{These previously held images and representations of History as dictated by the Franco and Hitler regimes will be examined with greater detail throughout the course of my dissertation.} As a result, I will reach the conclusion that these \textit{testimonios} strategically use fragmentation to generate new narratives that recover the voices of the silenced past and allow for the inscription of new accounts that collectively offer a more comprehensive view of past cultural traumas—both on an individual level and a collective one. From histories to herstories, our journey to discovering new historical perspectives and the trauma they overcome awaits.
CHAPTER 1

“HAY MUCHOS CRISTOS”: RESURRECTING THE BURIED PAST IN MANUSCRITO DE UN SUPERVIVIENTE BY FELIPE MATARRANZ GONZÁLEZ

“Entonces, yo, como soy un pedazo de ese gran pueblo, hoy, sin historia ni gloria, quiero escribir unas memorias reales, reales, porque esas memorias son mis momentos pasados” (Felipe Matarranz, Manuscrito de un superviviente)

In comparison with other more widely-known Spanish writers such as Jorge Semprún or Juana Doña, Felipe Matarranz is relatively unknown in academic circles. Nicknamed “El Lobo” during his clandestine work with the Spanish Resistance, Matarranz was a Republican soldier who fought in the Spanish Civil War and a member of the maquis throughout Franco’s dictatorship.\(^1\) Born in La Franca, Asturias in 1915, he was raised by working-class parents in the small town of Torrelavega, Cantabria and as a result witnessed firsthand the declining livelihoods and lack of opportunities available to the lower classes in Spanish society. In an interview published at the end of his self-written testimony Manuscrito de un superviviente, he names his father as the catalyst for his Communist political affiliation, stating that his father, “siempre me contaba las vicisitudes que había pasado por los años 1916, 1917, etc […] miraba a mi padre y le veía el más grande de los héroes y por este motivo empecé a odiar a aquellos que lo

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1 Famous for their dedicated resistance to Franco’s regime, the maquis of Spain were the men who established military strongholds in the mountains surrounding Andalucía, Asturias, Galicia and León, engaging in guerilla warfare against nationalist troops and forming the core of clandestine resistance throughout the dictatorship (Casanova, The Spanish Republic 324). For further study, see Secundino Serrano’s Maquis: Historia de la guerra antifranquista. See also Carmen Moreno Nuño’s excellent book Huellas de la Guerra Civil: Mito y trauma en la narrativa de la España democrática and Daniel Arroyo Rodríguez’s Narrativas guerrilleras: El maquis en la cultura española contemporánea for insights into the public representation of the maquis through the dictatorship and transition to democracy.
Matarranz was also greatly influenced by his participation in the Pioneros, a Communist youth organization that promoted activism within working-class children, in which he arrived at a self-proclaimed greater understanding of, “los problemas tan profundos que la clase obrera tenía, como consecuencia de la explotación a que era sometida” (8). 3 In *Manuscrito* Matarranz clearly recalls the often-sung hymn of the Pioneros that reveals the drive behind the organization: “Somos pioneros,/ la vanguardia del mundo./ Del Nuevo día, los mensajeros./ Hijos de obreros, no tenemos la muerte./ Es la ley del más fuerte,/ el vencer o morir” (8). As a natural extension of his experience with Pioneros, he joined the Juventud Comunista y Socorro Internacional (JC) in 1933 at the age of seventeen, marking the official beginning of his political fight against the enemies of the working class (Matarranz 8). Upon the failed military coup against the Second Republic by Francisco Franco on July 17, 1936, Matarranz, barely twenty years old at the time, picked up a revolver and shotgun and marched to war, forever solidifying his quest to preserve the rights of the poor, disenfranchised and oppressed (Matarranz 10). Captured in battle by Francoist forces and imprisoned two times for a total of eleven years, he was eventually released on conditional freedom, returning to his hometown and forcibly remaining there throughout the duration of his life. 4 Though he admits that he never originally

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2 1916 and 1917 in Spain saw widespread strikes among miners in Bilbao and Asturias. Matarranz’s father was a miner at the time of the strikes and participated in them, afterward sharing his insight and experience with his son. In the words of Matarranz, “él solía decirme que yo no sabía lo que era la lucha en una huelga, que no sabía lo que era pasar hambre, ni frío, ni sufrimiento alguno. Con estas cosas me obsesioné de tal manera, que llegué a hacerme la promesa de luchar como mi padre para romper las cadenas que oprimían la clase obrera” (7). Matarranz witnessed these tensions continue to mount, culminating in 1934 with another miner’s strike in Asturias that was ultimately repressed by Franco’s Moorish army. According to Hugh Thomas, roughly 2,000 people died in the uprisings, with roughly 1,500 being miners (136).

3 Through involvement with the Pioneros, children were shown the great disparities between the cost of living and the average salaries of their working-class parents, leading them to develop strong desires to fight against the exploitation (Matarranz 8).

4 One of the conditions mandated in his release from prison was a weekly check-in with local authorities to ensure that he was not engaging in subversive behavior. Eventually he was granted full freedom and the obligatory
intended to write a book, he nonetheless found that his story and the stories of his fallen comrades were too important to allow them to remain buried in the tombs of the past. Bearing witness to experiences long forgotten or ignored by the writers of History, his testimony is highly subjective and manipulated to arouse the reader’s sympathy for his cause, calling for remembrance and a continued push for justice. Though this type of discursive manipulation is touted by some critics as a tool that invalidates the historical content within the narrative, Hayden White contends that all forms of written or narrated history are inherently subjective, with the historian making decisions about which events to include in the text, which events to highlight or background, and how to relate individual events to others in a coherent and meaningful way (“Artifact” 46-7). Dori Laub further speculates that limiting testimony to mere historical fact limits history itself. He tells the story of listening to a highly subjective testimony during which he realizes the importance of allowing the narrative to unfold naturally:

> I might have had an agenda of my own that might have interfered with my ability to listen, and to hear. I might have felt driven to confirm my knowledge, by asking questions that would have derailed the testimony, and by proceeding to hear everything she had to say in light of what I knew already. And whether my agenda would have been historical or psychoanalytical, it might unwittingly have interfered with the process of the testimony. . . . Knowledge in testimony is, in other words, not simply a factual event that is reproduced and replicated by the testifier, but a genuine advent, an event in its own right. (“Bearing Witness” 62)

Thus, in spite of the discursive manipulation of the text, Matarranz’s *Manuscrito* is an important historical document in its own right, and one that greatly informs our knowledge of and sympathy with the experiences of the Republican men held unjustly in Francoist prisons.

In studying Spanish testimonial narratives produced by the victims of fascism in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War and World War II, two common thematic patterns emerge
among the voices of the witnesses: that of death and resurrection and that of inhabiting the interstitial space between life and death. Written roughly thirty-five years after his initial imprisonment and published in Cuba 1987, *Manuscrito de un superviviente* proves to be no exception. Addressing the absence of a creative title for his testimony in the opening pages of its introduction, Matarranz writes, “si tuviera la intención de ponérselo, le pondría, y es el que mejor se le puede aplicar: Uno de los nuevos Cristos. Este título era el que mejor se le podía poner en honor a los grandes sufrimientos que pasó mi generación” (3). A testament to his time spent on battlefields in northern Spain and imprisoned within Francoist prisons throughout the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, *Manuscrito* is a testimony that seeks to make sense of Matarranz’s individual encounters with inexplicable trauma while simultaneously offering insight into the collective memories of the Spanish working class, essentially rewriting history from perspectives previously silenced by years of oppression. Ironically drawing a parallel with the biblical account of Jesus—who was unjustly crucified by his own people and supernaturally resurrected from the grave—Matarranz underscores two concepts that are fundamental to the understanding of his testimony as a narrative of trauma, remedy and rebellion.5 First, he conceptualizes his experience as tied to the physical oppression of his body, mind and identity. Elaine Scarry likens this type of physical pain to a symbolic death: “physical pain always mimes death and the infliction of physical pain is always a mock execution” (31). Though Matarranz labels himself a survivor, his physical trauma constantly imposes images of pain and death upon his memory, making it difficult to fully assimilate his past history with his present reality.

5 It is ironic that Matarranz would draw this parallel between communism and Christianity when both are diametrically opposed, with communism essentially negating the need for religion or a supreme being in which to find purpose. Mary-Barbara Zeldin notes as much, labeling communism as the complete inversion of Christianity (100).
Second, he characterizes his testimony in terms of both its rebellious nature and redemptive power. Like Christ, a Jew in the Roman Empire, Matarranz perceives himself as belonging to a subaltern group in desperate need of representation: “El ser comunista es ser como dicen que fue Cristo; luchar por los demás y morir por los demás” (167). Simply put, his narrative symbolically raises his story—and those of his comrades—to life, giving words and meanings to memories long repressed by trauma and misrepresented by Francoist historiography.

In spite of its important role in increasing our understanding of prison life in Franco’s Spain, *Manuscrito* has been scarcely analyzed or studied, most likely due to the fact that it was published in Cuba in 1987 following the Cold War and is thus difficult to obtain. One of seven known guerrillero testimonies printed during the 1980s and 1990s, it breaks with the military narratives published under Franco and temporally precedes the more widespread resurgence of testimonial literature seen in Spain at the turn of the century (Marco 87). According to historian Jorge Marco, “Los testimonios guerrilleros como no podría ser de otro modo, presentan un fuerte sesgo partisano, pero, en contra de la literatura militante, muestran el recorrido de la memoria y la identidad resistente, al mismo tiempo que aportan un enfoque narrativo sobre la experiencia guerrillera ‘desde dentro’” (87). He further highlights the conflictive nature of the

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6 Though many critics—such as Mary-Barbara Zeldin—point out that communism is antithetical to religion in general, many others argue that it has many characteristics typically associated with organized religions, such as the concept of communism as a worldview that informs all manner of thinking and acting within the individuals that adhere to its guidelines. Writing about the problematic relationship between communism and the Catholic Church in Ireland, Brenda Duncombe further observes that communism has some similarities with Catholicism, notably that it, “not only evokes intensity of feeling and devotion; it demands the surrender of everything man has. He must give his whole self, body and soul, to work for the cause” (155). This type of extreme devotion to the cause is evident in Matarranz’s testimonio, lending credence to the idea that he is fully surrendered to his ideology.

7 Matarranz himself never went to Cuba; rather, a copy of his manuscript arrived to the island via a family member living in Havana at the time (Matarranz 6). Interestingly, the manuscript became viewed in Cuba as a Communist manifesto, symbolically upheld by its editor José Quintana Lara as a tale of the Cuban support of the Second Republic during the Spanish Civil War (184).
memory reconstructed by these narratives, suggesting that such memories are born when individuals decide to challenge the dominant historical records of the age by offering alternative views of past events that possess the intrinsic power to destabilize or open old wounds (79-80).

David Herzberger similarly refers to the disruptive and dynamic power of narratives such as Manuscrito in postwar Spain:

> History always resists narration, but the very precariousness of all narrative endeavors is both the source of historical vitality and the catalyst for historical explorations. Viewed in this light, the past springs forth as liquefied matter able to flow into one narrative structure or another, changing shape and meaning as it forms and reforms itself in unending patterns of deviance. Writing the past thus becomes a twofold endeavor: it is a way to write and to act against the grain, as well as a means to develop narrations that allow (and even compel) the opening of history to divergence. (2)

Indeed, Manuscrito de un superviviente, along with the handful of other guerrilla testimonies produced during the 1970s and 1980s, paved the way for further voices of resistance and symbolic modes of historical representation into the twenty-first century. Matarranz himself acknowledges the potentially groundbreaking importance of his work, noting the plethora of silenced voices that have yet to be unearthed: “He dicho que he grabado mi lucha, pero no es toda, ni quizás una décima parte, he narrado muchos pasajes de mi vida, pero muchísimos más los he olvidado […] no obstante, para que mis hermanos y sobrinos sepan mi vida de lucha, creo que esto es suficiente; esto es más bien para que sepan algo de las versiones de los vencidos” (2).

Offering a portrayal of life in prison and torture at the hands of Franco’s regime, Manuscrito gives an audible voice and historical legitimacy to the experiences of those imprisoned

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8 Noteworthy are the more contemporary novels Luna de lobos by Julio Llamazaes, La voz dormida by Dulce Chacón, Donde nadie te encuentre by Alicia Giménez-Bartlett and movies such as Silencio roto, all of which tell the stories of the Republican maquis and those who fought for the Second Republic during the Civil War.
throughout the war and dictatorship, not only so that the world may know their stories, but also so that the future generations will take heed to see that they are never repeated.  

Though Marco and Herzberger alike suggest that the testimonial accounts of Matarranz and his comrades possess disruptive power and open history to divergent accounts, their analyses have not gone beyond that of identifying their historical combativeness towards the conservative accounts propagated by Franco’s historiographers. Reducing the texts of these men to mere war testimonies that challenge official propaganda ignores the fact that they are narratives born first and foremost of traumatic situations, many of which have left the individuals with decades-long struggles of identity and social instability. While they do undoubtedly challenge Francoist propaganda and historiography, they also offer important insights into the traumatic lives and memories of those previously oppressed and silenced by Franco’s regime. *Manuscrito de un superviviente* is not merely a tale of grandiose causes and military defeat. Seen through the symbolic lens of the trauma that Matarranz experienced throughout the war, the narrative takes on a much more profound purpose—that of catharsis, psychological recovery, and reconstructing identity. Analyzing his testimony as a historical document without acknowledging the influence that his personal trauma exerts upon it removes much of its depth, negating its complexity and overlooking the textual strategies that infuse it with meaning.

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9 His last hope is that, “si algún día mis hermanos o sobrinos quieren pasar estas memorias a otro libro, cojan los apuntes sin aumentar ni cambiar los hechos” (174).

10 As per the Introduction, I classify *Manuscrito* as a testimonio rather than an autobiography. Though it shares several similarities with autobiography, such as being written in the first person (by Matarranz’s own hand) and offering glimpses into his life from start to finish, there are several characteristics that differentiate it. First, while Matarranz narrates pieces of his childhood and adulthood, he does so to underscore the main “event” to which he is testifying: the Spanish Civil War and Franco’s dictatorship thereafter. All personal anecdotes serve as tools through which he retells the histories not only belong to him as an individual, but also to the maquis and those oppressed by Franco’s regime. And second, *Manuscrito* focuses not on Matarranz’s growth as an individual, but rather on the particular impact of the events of the war on the working class, and by extension, the socialist and
As a subjective testimonial account of trauma simultaneously rooted in lived experience, objective fact and frequent conjecture, Matarranz’s narrative finds itself situated between history and fiction in the sense that memory is dynamic, selective, and at times skewed. Drawing interesting parallels with the bildungsroman and following his journey from childhood to adulthood while foregrounding the Spanish Civil War—rather than himself—as the central theme of his narrative, Manuscrito utilizes various strategies typically found in both literary and historical texts, resulting in a fusion of styles that problematize the analysis and interpretation of the testimony. Traditionally, history and testimony have been viewed as very distinct literary genres that seldom interact and serve vastly different purposes. Many of these discussions are founded on the marked differences between historical memory and individual memory.

Discussing the primary differences between memory and history, Pierre Nora proposes that, “Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic… History, because it is an intellectual and secular production, calls for analysis and criticism” (8-9). Whereas Nora sees memory and history as warring factions, more recent forays into the world of testimonial literature have underscored their mutual interaction. Ana María Amar Sánchez points to the very nature of language itself as the reason for the testimonial genre’s hybridity:

11 The bildungsroman is generally characterized as a novel of development in which the protagonist, beginning as a child, is seen to develop and mature throughout the sequential stages of life (Cuddon 81-82). Matarranz’s testimony follows this pattern perfectly, beginning with an introduction to his childhood and adolescence, then continuing into his middle years in captivity, and finally finishing with his experience as a man past his prime. His text is also characterized by its introspection as he re-examines his attitudes and beliefs that have changed throughout his lifetime as a result of his personal experience, a central characteristic of the bildungsroman.
El texto de no-ficción se juega así en el cruce de dos imposibilidades: la de mostrarse como una ficción puesto que los hechos ocurrieron y el lector lo sabe… y, por otra parte, la imposibilidad de mostrarse como un espejo fiel de esos hechos. Lo real no es describible “tal cual es” porque el lenguaje es otra realidad e impone sus leyes a lo fáctico; de algún modo lo recorta, organiza y ficcionaliza.

Matarranz himself describes the interplay between history and memory throughout his testimony, approaching the problematic relationship directly. In an interview at the end of *Manuscrito*, Matarranz admits that he never originally intended to publish a testimony of his account in the war. For this reason, he kept neither a journal nor notes of his experiences, resulting in a testimony scattered with guesswork with regards to names, concrete facts and dates (Matarranz 202). Attempting to overcome the potential accusation of fabricated facts or evidence, Matarranz makes the point that the realness or authenticity of his narrative is determined not by his use of specific dates or references but rather through his depiction of perceived experience: “Este libro no es una novela. En este libro no hay nada escrito que sea imaginativo; todo es real, *tal y como yo lo he vivido*” (2, emphasis mine). This simple declaration has foundational implications: in writing history from the perspective of his subjectively lived experience, he assumes complete and irrevocable ownership and autonomy over his text and enters into a dialogue with history itself, an idea affirmed by Herzberger, who suggests that, “The novel of memory […] unravels the plot of the past and transforms the potential for historical knowledge into a web of relations and interactions between the self and history” (69).

Though adamant in his assertions that his work is not a literary novel full of imagined accounts, Matarranz nonetheless admits to the potential skewing of his narrative memories and even seems to contradict his initial assertions while still maintaining the historicity of his testimony. Excusing the gaps in memory as the result of both time and trauma, he writes,
Cuando escribí este libro, habían pasado treinta años y al no preocuparme de hacer algún apunte, quizás haya confundido alguna fecha o haya escrito algún pasaje antes que otro. Después de tantos años, no precise bien las fechas o meses; algunas veces me confundían los hechos, pero estos hechos, se hayan desarrollado meses atrás o meses adelante son, verdaderamente, hechos pasados y vividos. (4, emphasis mine)

For Matarranz, there is no distinction to be made between history and a testimony rooted in personal memories, a belief echoed by critic Margaret Randall, who suggests that testimony presents subjective realities in an attempt to “reconstruir la verdad” (29). Evident in Matarranz’s avowals is the constant threat of forgetting (both intentionally and unintentionally), of olvido, a phenomenon that clearly results in tension and causes some critics to see testimonios as antithetical to history. In his study of trauma narratives and testimonies, Dori Laub notes that while historians often negate the historicity of testimonio due to its subjectivity, faulty memory does not constitute an attack on history, but rather testifies to inexplicable emotions and traumatic experience.¹² Though he underscores way in which his text contradicts and challenges History by offering an alternative perspective, Matarranz also stresses that it is a narrative of trauma based in his personal and highly subjective experiences that are difficult to put into words, even thirty years after the original events have ended. Echoing the voices of his fellow published comrades such as Jorge Semprún, he laments, “Lo que más siento es el no haber podido, ni ser capaz de describir, el sentir de muchos de los trágicos momentos pasados y vistos por mí; pero también aseguro que no puede haber inteligencia en el mundo que pueda

¹² He specifically refers to the testimony of a survivor of Auschwitz to demonstrate his point. After the survivor attests to witnessing four of Auschwitz’s chimneys exploding, historians quickly counter that only one of them actually went up in flames, subsequently discrediting her entire testimony and refusing to give credence to any of her memories. Looking beyond the skewed information, Laub emphatically disagrees: She saw four chimneys blowing up in Auschwitz: she saw, in other words, the unimaginable taking place right in front of her own eyes. And she came to testify to the unbelievability, precisely, of what she had eyewitnessed—this bursting open of the very frame of Auschwitz. (“Bearing Witness” 59-62)
This inability to fully or explain traumatic experience is a dirge frequently repeated through *Manuscrito*, further demonstrating the effects of trauma on the memory and narration.

He further articulates this problem in terms of the (internally) denied representation of selective memories: “De mis alegrias, no puedo hablar, no sé lo que es eso, siempre he vivido alguna inquietud. En mi vida de lucha no se podía estar tranquilo un momento, porque a cada minuto le amenazaba a uno la muerte” (4-5). In their study of prison *testimonios* from Franco’s Spain, Carles Feixa and Carme Agustí note that selective memory is highly common and utterly important in our quest to (re)interpret subjective testimonies: “el recuerdo siempre es selectivo, y el silencio forma parte de la memoria . . . El objeto de estudio de una historiografía de la prisión franquista no puede limitarse a los hechos que sucedieron tras las rejas y a objetos que los evoquen, sino que debe rastrear su impacto en los imaginarios, las creencias y los deseos de las personas que los vivieron” (228). The absence of happy memories from Matarranz’s text is, then, just as important as the over-abundance of pain, suffering, and melancholy that is spotlighted, a fact that Hayden White introduces in his critique of historiography. Contending that history is possible only through its subjective narrativization, he postulates that, “historical narratives are not only models of past events and processes, but also metaphorical statements which suggest a relation of similitude between such events and processes and the story types that we conventionally use to endow the events of our lives with culturally sanctioned meanings” (“Artifact” 51). Because Matarranz views the Spanish Civil War through the lens of his personal trauma and the pain experienced in its wake, his *testimonio* and the facts and memories he chooses to relate become grounded in it, separated from happier memories that do not fit within the bounds of a testimony of trauma.
In light of this problematic relationship between trauma and text, several discursive characteristics emerge and offer insight into the process of working through and narrating traumatic memories. Throughout this chapter, I will turn my attention to them as a way of better understanding how Matarranz uses the written word as a means of catharsis and rebellion. *Manuscrito* essentially achieves its role as both a narrative of trauma and challenger of History by means of the aesthetic and symbolic fragmentation of the text. Like the testimonies of Juana Doña, Neus Català and Jorge Semprún, it demonstrates a high degree of temporal fragmentation, the characteristic fracturing of the narrative voice, the brash juxtaposition of various literary elements such as repetition and sentence fragments, and a combination of different literary genres and styles (including photos, timelines, letters and official documents). Together, they combine not only to challenge the official historical record, but to enable Matarranz to work through the trauma and consequent identitary crisis via his narration.

**Temporal Fragmentation**

From the beginning to the end of his testimony, Matarranz presents his narrative via a temporal lens that, while attempting to maintain a semblance of chronological order, introduces memories in fragmented ways, abruptly mixing past and present perspectives and symbols. This temporal fragmentation offers three important insights into the process of writing alternative forms of history saturated with traumatic experiences, insights that are similarly seen in the other testimonies analyzed in this dissertation. First, Matarranz’s testimony further supports the suggestion that trauma disrupts time perception both during and after the original event, causing the witness to experience time itself through a distorted, fragmented lens. Second, the frequent interplay of the past and present modes of narration demonstrates the attempt and at times, failure, of establishing psychological distance between the present and the events of the past in
order to more fully understand and articulate them. Lastly, the way in which Matarranz uses a combination of concrete and ambiguous temporal references underscores the importance of subjective and collective memory as a means of recovering formerly denied points of view pieced together from multiple first and secondhand accounts.¹³ It is ultimately through this construed schema of temporal representation that the deep effects of psychological trauma and the counteracting therapeutic capacities of testimony are more clearly revealed.

Written roughly thirty-five years after his initial imprisonment and published another decade later, Matarranz’s narrative clearly exposes the complex web of temporal negotiation, distortion and confusion that literary critics are quick to point out among trauma narratives. In his studies of Holocaust survivors and their capacity to narrate their past experiences, L.L. Langer suggests that traumatic memory is essentially timeless, transcending temporal boundaries by undoing them. He writes:

> Witnesses are both willing and reluctant to proceed with the chronology; they frequently hesitate because they know that their most complicated recollections are unrelated to time … [Trauma] stops the chronological clock and fixes the moment permanently in memory and imagination, immune to the vicissitudes of time. The unfolding story brings relief, while the unfolding plot induces pain. (174-75)

Accordingly, *Manuscrito de un superviviente* reveals the ways in which psychological and physical trauma have distorted Matarranz’s perception of real time as experienced within the confines of battle and later, prison life. In his descriptions of the holding cells where men were sequestered in the days leading up to their execution, Matarranz recalls time being demonically

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¹³ This is particularly important regarding the narrated memories of the torture Matarranz suffered at the hands of his Francoist captors. Often times pushed to the brink of unconsciousness during the interrogation process, Matarranz states on multiple occasions that many of his memories in fact come not from the events themselves, but rather from the secondhand accounts given to him by his comrades and fellow prisoners. This point will be explored more fully in the following section on the fragmentation of the narrative subject and voice.
slow, accentuating the fear and uncertainty of an unpredictable future. He begins by highlighting the virtual indescribability of those moments, writing, “¡Qué noche! Es imposible poder describir los pensamientos y el sentir de cada uno. ¡Noche de angustia! ¡Noche de dolor! ¡Cuánto nos hacían desear la muerte! Nadie durmió. Éramos catorce desventurados esperando la crueldad de la muerte” (80). Claiming to desire death and yet simultaneously fearing its approach, he underscores the disruptive nature of traumatic experience as he describes being situated in between conflicting polarities: life and death, time standing still and time inevitably passing. He further points to the problematic perception of time as it relates to his emotional, mental and physical condition:

La noche se nos hacía una eternidad. Todos estábamos deseando que amaneciera para terminar cuanto antes el brutal tormento y angustia a que nos tenía sometido el fascismo. Llegó el esperado amanecer y llegó el día, y no sacaron a nadie. Pasó todo el día, y otra noche, y la angustia seguía inundando lo más profundo de nuestros corazones. El fascismo se ensañaba en sus víctimas hasta el máximo. (81)

Though Matarranz attempts to impose a basic chronology on his narration, he nonetheless finds that many experiences are disjointed and unable to be described via temporal logic, a phenomena which also problematizes his perception of the future. 14 Susan J. Brison explains this conflict in terms of experienced trauma, suggesting that, “The undoing of the self in trauma involves a radical disruption of memory, a severing of past from present and, an inability to envision a future” (39). Even as Matarranz is on the brink of being conditionally released from prison, he struggles to predict the future ahead of him or comprehend the thought of freedom:

14 An example of this attempt to impose a chronological framework is found as Matarranz describes a particularly grueling day of battle: “Aquella noche la pasamos tumbados en el campo, pero a las cinco de la mañana (creo que era el día cinco), nos despertaron para pertrecharnos de munición y entrar nuevamente en combate” (30, emphasis mine). Interrupting his narration with his own temporal speculation, he reveals the difficulty of narrating events chronologically—especially those experiences that did seemed to cause the days and nights to bleed into one another.
Y llegó el día que me comunicaron la libertad. Era a mediados de julio. No me ilusionó nada la libertad. En todo mi camino de lucha no conocí jamás un momento de paz y tranquilidad. No concebía la sensación que puede dar la libertad. Había sido un hombre desdichado en todos esos años. Había contemplado la muerte muchas veces cara a cara, mientras cumplía siempre con mi gigantesco deber, y ahora salía en libertad. ¿Cómo sería esa libertad? (127)

For Matarranz, the future and its accompanying freedom are hazy and out of focus. With visions of violence, torture and struggle clouding his vision, he finds himself turning more frequently to the past rather than attempting to envision an uncertain or unknowable future.

As his testimony continues, psychological coping strategies [e.g. the tendency to focus the attention on specific memories or time periods to the detriment of others] are gradually revealed through the temporal fragmentation of his memories. References to the future being scarce throughout his testimony, Matarranz recalls possessing an intense focus on the past while enduring his prison sentence. Much like Semprún, Català and Doña, Matarranz writes of seeking refuge from the present by escaping to visions of the past, an act that in itself reveals a profound sense of loss and bitter absence underlying his pain. He explains this loss or absence in terms of a symbolic break, lamenting that, “Tantos años de lucha y solamente lucha, rompí mi vida, rompí mi juventud, rompí el hogar. No perdí la vida, pero perdí la juventud. La cárcel me arrebató los años más radiantes de mi vida” (167).15 This psychological and temporal rupture does not only emerge as Matarranz retrospectively writes his testimony, but is also seen as affecting his behavior and perspective within the prison itself. Towards the beginning of his first stint behind bars, he finds his dreams and attention grounded in past memories: “En mis sueños, muchas veces surgía el pasado con extraordinaria claridad. Los combates de Villareal. La caída de Irún.

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15 Matarranz was approximately twenty years old when he was first captured in 1937 and roughly thirty-four when he was released for the final time in 1952.
Las grandes batallas de Asturias, donde nos batimos hasta llegar a luchar cuerpo a cuerpo […]
Recordaba con angustia las derrotas que sufrimos desde El Escudo hasta la caída de Santander, y en todo ello, los sufrimientos tan angustiosos de mi familia” (88).¹⁶ The dreams tell of nightmarish violence and destruction, and Matarranz describes them in melancholic terms, highlighting both their finality and yet continued effect upon his mind. In this way, Matarranz’s testimony portrays various types of trauma—not only the trauma experienced behind bars, but also the trauma of having been involved in violent events on the battlefield and experiencing death as both a victim and a perpetrator simultaneously. Though they are painful and grief-inducing, Matarranz paradoxically seeks refuge in these thoughts, finding them to be preferable to his (current) reality behind bars in which he sees his physical agency and freedom stripped from him.¹⁷ He writes:

Yo siempre caminaba abismado en mi silencio dolorido. En algunos momentos me sentía humillado. Surgían en mi mente los hechos pasados, más vivos que en la época en que los viví. Recordaba aquellos tiempos de la lucha clandestina, los sangrientos combates de la guerra. Se apoderaba de mí tal nostalgia que quedaba abismado y volvía a vivir aquellos momentos. Así iban pasando las horas y los días. (105, emphasis mine)

Interestingly, discovering a mental refuge in his past—including those memories of pain and suffering—leads Matarranz to harness the emotional turmoil as a means of rebellious energy to combat prison conditions:

En algunos momentos dentro de aquel pestilente ambiente, donde el silencio de la muerte imperaba constantemente, sentía tal atormentadora angustia que me daba deseos de llorar. Esta angustia no era por temor a la muerte; era como

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¹⁶ Because I am working with texts that are naturally fragmented, I am designating my own omissions and/or edits with brackets. All un-bracketed ellipses are original to the text.

¹⁷ Matarranz offers a metaphorical description of this loss of agency as it relates to his capacity to fight: “Cuando en los campos de batalla las armas crepitaban y el fuego asolaba nuestra invadida patria, yo combatía como una fiera acorralada, escupiendo fuego contra el enemigo, pero ahora ya no luchaba, amarrado como un perro me llevaban al matadero” (79).
consecuencia de un pasado de lucha sin conocer nada más que derrotas. Del enorme sufrimiento de mis padres; aquellos heroicos padres que toda la vida estuvieron sacrificándose y sufriendo por mantener mi vida, ¡pobres padres! Cuando pasaba por esos momentos de dolor, reaccionaba súbitamente y volvía a mi ser normal, sintiendo en mi pecho la rebeldía y el odio al fascismo. (158-159)

Learning to accept the intrusions of the past as both a reminder of his purpose and his moral obligations to protect the working class (not the least among them his parents), Matarranz recognizes in retrospect the power of memory and the importance of maintaining a sense of continuity with his memories, even if the passing of time and the trauma itself make the task difficult to complete.

In addition to a skewed perception of time, Matarranz’s testimony also demonstrates the perpetual effect of trauma on the memory, or more specifically, on the process of writing and working through traumatic memories. To read his testimony and negate its foundation in trauma would do a disservice to its role in our understanding of trauma narratives and their capacities to offer more accurate perspectives of traumatic narration, both individual and collective. Cathy Caruth postulates that one of the central characteristics of a trauma narrative is its “oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival” (Unclaimed 7). Before he even begins the official account of his series of imprisonments, Matarranz preemptively demonstrates difficulty in thwarting the involuntary memories of his traumatic experiences, revealing the way in which trauma ruptures time and space:

Muchas veces pienso en mi vida pasada y no me parece real, me parece un sueño, pero cuando miro en mi muñeca las cicatrices de los cortes que me di para quitarme la vida, se amontonan en mi mente todos los acontecimientos, y máxime aquellos latigazos y latigazos, y canta y canta, y más latigazos. El tirarme agua para que recobrara el conocimiento. El clavarme con la aguja para saber si me hacía el muerto, y otra vez latigazos, corrientes eléctricas; colgado del techo con el cacharro de agua debajo, y aquellas constantes ansias, que tuve muchas veces,
Likening his scars to what Pierre Nora would deem to be a place of memory or symbolic archive, Matarranz carries a burden that survivors of the Spanish Civil War and Holocaust often have to bear: the fact that, for many of them, their trauma is physically carried with them and can neither be forgotten nor ignored. Nora suggests that physical (and public) sites of memory such as archives and monuments are often problematic, revealing, “a turning point where consciousness of a break with the past is bound up with the sense that memory has been torn—but torn in such a way as to pose the problem of the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists” (7). Though his scars are unintentional archives, they similarly embody the same sense of tension and problematic continuity. The haunting nature of Matarranz’s traumatic experience that results from his scars is evident as he continuously slips in and out of the present tense when narrating his memories. As if virtually re-living the past, he describes the early days of the war: “Estamos noche y día alerta. Se van formando algunos frentes fijos, sobre todo en las alturas. En Torrelavega, se forma el Comité de Guerra. Yo soy uno de los enlaces del Comité. La misión es llevar partes verbales o escritos a una parte y a otra. Voy de una parte a otra sin descansar” (12). The rest of his testimony is inundated with similarly fragmented descriptions, revealing the lingering impact of his memories and his ongoing struggle to keep them in the distant past.

In spite of the influence of trauma over Matarranz’s time perception and narration, *Manuscrito de un superviviente* nonetheless reveals the ways in which narrative strategies attempt to counteract the trauma itself and enable him to better integrate his experiences into history. Whereas the inability to assimilate traumatic experience(s) results in fractured time and
memory, Dominick LaCapra postulates that distinguishing the past, present and future post-trauma is the key to successfully working through it and narrating it logically:

In working through, the person tries to gain critical distance on a problem and to distinguish between past, present and future. To put the point in dramatically oversimplified terms: for the victim, this means the ability to say to oneself: “Yes, that happened to me back then. It was distressing, overwhelming, perhaps I can’t entirely disengage myself from it, but I’m existing here and now, and this is different from back then.” There may be other possibilities, but it’s via the working through that one acquires the possibility of being an ethical and political agent. (143-44)

Focusing on the cathartic nature of narrative as a whole, Dori Laub explains this characteristic of testimony in terms of historicizing or externalizing the traumatic experiences via intentional narration: “historical testimonies […] in turn set in motion a testimonial process that is similar in nature to the psychoanalytic process, in that it is yet another medium which provides a listener to trauma, another medium of re-externalization—and thus historicization—of the event” (“Bearing Witness” 70). The time frame during which Matarranz wrote his testimonio interestingly supports the trauma research of psychologists James Pennebaker and Becky Banasik. Observing what they term the “looking-back phenomenon” (13), they note that most historical monuments and movies are created between 20 and 30 years after an event (12). As for the causes of this phenomenon, they provide several that work simultaneously: first, places of memory are erected when the witnesses have the political power to create them and second, time gradually removes the pain associated with the events, thus enabling the witnesses to psychologically tolerate their commemoration (14). Juxtaposing the ongoing present-tense commentary of his experience with the retrospective narration of his memories and historical facts in the past tense, Matarranz claims symbolic ownership over the representation of his past and critiques or revises them as he works through his trauma. Echoing the likes of Semprún, Doña and Català, he writes:
Hoy, después de treinta y cinco años de terminar la guerra, quiero escribir mis memorias, o parte de ellas, pues a los cincuenta y cinco años me es imposible recordar todo detalladamente con fechas, además, sería muy extenso y quiero simplificar. Solamente escribiré aquellos momentos que se han grabado de tal manera en mi imaginación que sólo la muerte sería capaz de apartarlos de mi memoria. (6)

This pattern of ownership continues throughout the rest of his testimony, partially enabling him to separate himself from his past memories and more profoundly analyze his experiences through a contemporary lens.

In these moments of temporal distance, Matarranz is clearly able to critically evaluate his past attitudes, behaviors and actions in meaningful ways that demonstrate his attempt to establish symbolic space between the writing of his testimony and his frequently haunting memories. An example of this comes as he looks back at his time spent on death-filled battlefields and marvels at his past courage, clearly making the distinction between his past and present identities: “En aquellos momentos no lo pensaba, pero hoy, a los cincuenta y cinco años, me pregunto: ‘Si en aquella batalla me pegan un tiro y caigo herido, ¿tendría aquel valor para seguir luchando, desangrándome hasta la muerte?’” (44). His contemporary reflections upon his past also lead to honest admissions of moral or physical weakness brought about by the passage of time and the weight of the trauma experienced at the hands of his captors. Examining yet again the differences between his youthful and seasoned perspectives on the historical events he has experienced, he questions his current capacity for courage and action as it relates to facing death bravely. Perhaps no anecdote demonstrates this more than that of his false death-march through town during his first imprisonment. Walking to what he is sure will be his execution by firing squad, he remembers laughing, making physical gestures to passers-by to indicate his impending death, and shouting at a neighbor to hug everybody for him. His reaction to his own memories reveals a
different attitude as he questions his response to his possible death: “Hoy si tuviera que pasar nuevamente esos momentos, no puedo asegurar que al caminar hacia el paredón, para rendir el último sacrificio por la causa, tendría el valor y la serenidad como ese fatídico trece de enero de 1938. Yo no soy un héroe, pero confieso sinceramente que en aquellos trágicos momentos afronté la muerte como la afrontaban los demás” (79). Standing in stark contrast to the prideful moral declarations of his youth, he underscores the changes that he has undergone while working through his traumatic experience and reconciling his past with his present. It is fitting, then, that he ends his testimony by acknowledging these physical changes while attempting to maintain a sense of moral continuity with his former self. In a poignant display of both humility and pride, he writes:

Hoy tengo cincuenta y cinco años […] Cuando salgo a la puerta de casa con lo primero con que mi vista se estrella es con los escarpados Picos de Europa y sus estribaciones; los miro y añoro aquellos tiempos en que un puñado de guerrilleros estábamos dispuestos a derrocar al régimen fascista. Recuerdo con dolor a los jóvenes que dieron su vida por la causa obrera; los años y años de dura y agotadora lucha. Sólo me queda la añoranza y el recuerdo. No tengo fuerzas físicas para sortear nuevamente el peligro de la lucha en las montañas. Moralmente soy el mismo, no me doblé jamás, ni me doblaré. (174)

Returning full-circle to where he first began his testimony, Matarranz reveals one of the main purposes for writing his testimony: nostalgically looking back in order to bear witness to experiences that have been ignored or forgotten by historians and the public as a whole. In doing so, Matarranz finds his testimonio to be a source of inner strength, a reminder that his battle for representation is just beginning with the publication of his story.

The nostalgia felt by Matarranz is not only important on an individual level, however, but is the result of dozens of voices that helped him recover his memories. As a narrative of trauma, it goes without saying that many of the memories recounted—especially those of torture—are
the product of reconstructed, collective testimony. What stands to reason, then, is that the
temporal framework through which these reconstructed memories are written is characteristically
fragmented. Though Matarranz is able to name specific dates and times that are historically
corroborated in official historical records (e.g. newspapers, letters, government documents, etc.),
the temporal localization of several of his most painful experiences on the battlefield and behind
bars is blurred and disjointed. His first injury in battle demonstrates this as he writes:

Me desmayé y volví en mí unas cuantas veces. Cuando volvía en mí con la voz
cada vez más débil, les decía: ‘Adelante camaradas, ¡Viva la República!’ Me
sentía morir por momentos, hasta que me desmayé y no vi ni supe más, hasta que
me lo contaron dos meses después. Sé que hasta las cuatro de la tarde no llegó
hasta nosotros nuestro batallón, y que me sacaron ya por muerto. Que me dejaron
con los muertos. Que me fueron a buscar para enterrarme en Torrelavega. Que se
dieron cuenta de que estaba vivo. Que me llevaron al hospital de Lanestosa. Que
me curaron, pero que estaba agonizando, y allí no me podían operar, y que me
llevaron al hospital de la Aparecida, y allí, a los tres días, recobré el
conocimiento. (19)

The same phenomenon is illustrated as Matarranz narrates his torture at the hands of his
Francoist prison guards. Describing the way in which his experience essentially lacked temporal
perspective, he openly expresses his inability to fully remember it: “No recuerdo las veces que
perdí el conocimiento. No me encontraba en condiciones físicas para recordar muchas de las
cosas que pasaron durante el suplicio. Tampoco recuerdo las veces que me subieron y bajaron
con la polea” (94). He further relies on the testimony of those around him as he attempts to
establish a chronological account of its duration and aftermath in relation to his story: “No puedo
decir el tiempo que duró aquel horrible martirio, pero los compañeros, por el tiempo que me
tuvieron fuera de la cárcel, le calculaban de ocho a diez horas” (95). With each memory
recovered, Matarranz remembers the voices through which his personal memories emerge. This
play between the individual and collective perspectives is not only manifested temporally
through his attempts to compensate for the brokenness of traumatic memory, but also adds historical validity to his *testimonio* while demonstrating the splintering—and unifying—effects of trauma on his memory and narration.

**Fragmentation of Voice and Narrative Subject**

True to the testimonial genre, *Manuscrito* continues the tradition of juxtaposing the individual and collective voices as a means of piecing together an alternative historical account that reflects multiple subjectivities and yet still highlights the journey of the individual working to reconcile his past with his present. As in the narratives of Català, Doña and Semprún, Matarranz demonstrates the hybrid nature of memory and witnessing, calling attention to the ways in which individual and collective memory mutually influence one another. Approaching the writing of history and memory from a sociocultural perspective, Randolph Pope describes autobiographical and testimonial writing as being simultaneously individual and collective due to their social origins:

> Yet a common experience of autobiographers is that any exploration of the self reveals that it is situated in the context of numerous institutions, among them the family, the city, and the nation. Therefore there is only a tenuous claim to the possessive, and the rift between *my* and *our* or even *their* is traced with a certain anxiety. The text cannot exist in a private enclosure; it is returned to the social field where the arguments and counterarguments that originated the conflict still remain unresolved. (399)

Notably, this idea echoes those of Maurice Halbwachs, who suggests that individual and collective memory are inextricably woven into the thread of society. Though individuals possess unique memories and different perspectives, “Yet it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories” (Halbwachs 38). Paloma Aguilar Fernández likewise describes memory as a collective reconstruction, arguing that, “La memoria cumple una función social muy importante al ayudar a
estructurar la experiencia y asegurar la continuidad y las tradiciones de las colectividades. . .

Recordar es una actividad en que buena parte depende de las memorias del resto del grupo, que nos ayudan a reconstruir la nuestra” (39). With observations such as these, it is hardly surprising that critics have zeroed in on the plurality of the narrative voice as a central component of the testimonial genre or memory text. Attempting to offer a more specific definition of the testimonio, George Yúdice suggests that, “the witness portrays his or her own experience as an agent (rather than a representative) of a collective memory and identity” (17). He further surmises that the testimonialista “does not speak for or represent a community but rather performs an act of identity-formation which is simultaneously personal and collective” (15).

Important in these claims is the idea that the author/witness does not claim to know the histories of every individual in the group, but rather emphasizes the heterogeneous nature of memory, allowing memories to maintain their unique perspectives. Historian Jorge Marco further underscores this characteristic as central to the guerilla testimonies (such as Manuscrito) produced in Spain following Franco’s death, arguing that they are unique from other types of individual testimonies in that they demonstrate a strong will to maintain individual identity while still dialoguing with the sometimes contrasting memories of other testimonial accounts (87).

Indeed, it is clear from the beginning of his testimony that Matarranz is writing not only his story, but also paying homage to the diverse histories of the pueblo obrero or working class that fought and fell against the fascism of Franco’s regime. He introduces his testimony by highlighting its simultaneous individuality and plurality: “Yo no escribo mi vida con el fin de hacer creer que yo he sido el único que más ha sufrido y el que más se ha sacrificado por la causa

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18 John Beverley also highlights the plurality of the narrative voice in testimonial literature as a genre, contending that testimonio is an “affirmation of the individual self in collective mode” (Testimonio 35).
en esta lucha fratricida [sic]; no, yo no soy ése ni mucho menos. Yo soy uno de tantos y tantos que se han sacrificado. La palabra que mejor se me puede aplicar en este aspecto es: «YO SOY DE LOS DEL MONTÓN».» (2-3). He reiterates his position continually, reinforcing both his identification with the group and his unique role within it, stating, “Entonces, yo, como soy un pedazo de ese gran pueblo, hoy, sin historia ni gloria, quiero escribir unas memorias reales, reales, porque esas memorias son mis momentos pasados, aparte de esos momentos. No hay pluma que pueda llegar a describir el sentir y el pensar de este gran pueblo que ha vivido materialmente esos momentos” (6). For Matarranz, he narrates his small piece of history yet still recognizes the greater narrative of which he is a part. Beginning with a glimpse into his childhood and early activism in Torrelavega, he reminds the reader that his memories—“cómo me forjé y cómo empezó mi lucha” (7)—are the basis for his testimony, though they are undoubtedly connected with the grander narrative of the pueblo obrero. Editor José Quintana Lara reaffirms this in the epilogue to the testimony, writing, “Este es, quizás, el más alto valor del manuscrito que acabáis de leer: ser a la vez el testimonio de un hombre y el de todos los hombres fieles a la República Española” (175).

While this juxtaposition of the individual and collective voices and perspectives is important and utilized by Matarranz to symbolically resurrect the voices and stories of his fallen comrades who were not given the chance to write their own histories, a darker duality of voice also exists within his words. Though the above descriptions given by Pope, Halbwachs, Aguilar Fernández, Yúdice and Beverley are undoubtedly helpful in our pursuit of interpreting testimonial literature, they become problematic when studying testimonies birthed from traumatic experiences, notably those involving physical and/or psychological torture such as Manuscrito. According to Elaine Scarry, the act of torture essentially erases the boundaries
between the private sphere of individual emotional responses and the public sphere of being collectively known, bringing with it, “all the solitude of absolute privacy with none of its safety, all the self-exposure of the utterly public with none of its possibility for camaraderie or shared experience” (53). Added to this problematic relationship in Manuscrito is the additional complexity of war and the psychological trauma experienced as a soldier. Herman writes, “The violation of human connection, and consequently the risk of a post-traumatic stress disorder, is highest of all when the survivor has been not merely a passive witness but also an active participant in the violent death or atrocity” (54). Paradoxically, Matarranz thus finds both refuge and inexplicable dissociation from his fellow comrades, leading to the frequent juxtaposition of narrative voices.

Literarily, this ongoing tension frequently manifests itself through the tension that exists between the individual and collective voices used by Matarranz as he writes his testimony. When faced with his own death, he vacillates between seeking refuge in the collective cause for which he fights and spiraling into all-consuming depression that leaves him psychologically isolated from his comrades. Immediately after his initial capture, he describes finding comfort in the form of collective identity: “Lo único que sentí era que no podía morir matando. Tenía tranquilidad, hacía frente a la muerte con el espíritu y la grandeza del sacrificio de los que han consagrado su existencia a resucitar al gran pueblo oprimido. Miles y miles de obreros también habían dado su último tributo a la causa, yo iba a ser uno más que había que poner en la larga e interminable lista” (65). Echoed at various other points throughout his testimony—including his frequent use of the first person plural pronoun nosotros—Matarranz demonstrates the power of collective resistance and strength attained through mutual support. Nonetheless, merely five pages later he
finds himself reliving moments of utter disconnectedness and desolation, all in spite of remaining in close physical proximity with his fellow comrades in prison:

Quedé destrozado, física y moralmente, ante aquel cuadro. Sentí tal angustia y soledad de alma, que en aquel momento sólo deseaba morir. Deseaba que me fusilaran, pero el garrote vil me horrorizaba. Nos fuimos consolando unos a otros. Había que ser firmes, y saber morir con entereza ante el enemigo. Demostrarle que dábamos el último tributo a la causa con conciencia de clase, con el valor y la entereza que no era capaz de tener el enemigo se le tocara atravesar esos momentos. (71)

The dissociation experienced by many trauma survivors likewise becomes evident throughout Matarranz’s sporadic depictions of his mental and physical torture, revealing the ways in which trauma is embodied at an individual level and processed uniquely by each survivor. Whereas he confidently boasts of the collective spirit and conscience when physically present with his comrades, he seems to reverse his position and turn inward in times of physical and/or mental isolation. Described in collective terms often using the nosotros pronoun, he first declares his willingness to sacrifice his life for the advancement of others: “Yo era uno más, y no tenía por qué ser menos que los otros compañeros. Si ellos salían a morir con valor y entereza, yo también sabría morir con valor y entereza” (78). Valuing strength and a collective, combative spirit above all, Matarranz and his comrades frequently declare that broken bodies will not lead to broken spirits, or in the words of Matarranz: “Siempre he preferido morir de pie antes que vivir de rodillas” (174). Though emphatic in his assertions, he nonetheless reaches a breaking point that will forever separate him from his comrades. After a particularly gruesome torture session at the hands of the prison guards, he begins his downward descent into hopelessness. Desiring death

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19 This phrase is said to have been originally used by Emiliano Zapata Salazar during the Mexican Revolution between 1910 and 1920 (Duque Castillo 196). Since then, it has also been attributed to many well-known figures of revolutionary movements, among them Ernesto Che Guevara and Dolores Ibárruri, Pasionaria.
rather than survival, he makes a decision to end his life. Isolated from others, he turns inward toward despair:

A los nueve días, se me cayeron nueve uñas de los dedos a causa de los golpes. Estaba desmoralizado, y quería morir a toda costa. No podía moverme, pero a los pocos días, cuando pude mover los brazos, arranqué un botón de latón de la bragueta, le saqué corte en el cemento desde la cama, con mucha tranquilidad, y por la noche me corté las venas de la muñeca derecha. Aún tengo las cicatrices. (95)

Unsuccessful in death due to the watchful eye of a hospital nurse, word of his attempt gets around to his comrades, which respond by censuring his perceived cowardice. He writes: “Los compañeros se enteraron, y lo censuraron mucho. Dijeron que el morir así era de cobardes. Había que morir frente al enemigo, para demostrarle cómo saben morir los hombres que sienten el honrado ideal de la clase obrera” (96). Though he is eventually welcomed back into the good graces of his cellmates and fellow guerrilleros, the memory of his attempted suicide and symbolic selfishness is forever carried with him, daily reminding him of his failure in the face of fear. While still a member of the collective group with which he identifies, his physical deformity must be lived individually, creating boundaries to identitary reconciliation within society and perpetually serving as a reminder of his weakness.

As seen similarly in Juana Doña’s Desde la noche y la niebla, Matarranz’s first release from prison likewise demonstrates the conflictive relationship between himself, his fellow prisoners, and the free society outside of the prison walls. Having been granted conditional freedom barring good behavior, Matarranz finds himself standing outside the prison walls with nothing but a wooden suitcase and a single comrade at his side. He is at once bombarded with both nostalgic and melancholic thoughts that reveal the inner battle between the self and the other:
Parecía que estábamos clavados en la calle. Ninguno de los dos decíamos una palabra. En aquellos momentos muchos pensamientos se amontonaron en mi mente. Lo que no podía apartar del pensamiento eran aquellos compañeros que quedaban detrás de aquellos tauranos muros. ¡Con qué cariño y alegría me habían despedido! En aquellos momentos hubiera deseado quedarme a su lado sorteando aquel trágico destino que juntos nos deparó la lucha. A su lado viví la lucha y el padecer, viví la victoria y la derrota, y pasé lo anteúltimo que se pasa en la lucha, porque lo último es la muerte. Ahora me encontraba como clavado en la calle, separado por aquellos despiadados muros de aquellos heroicos compañeros con quienes repartí el hambre y todas las vicisitudes que representaban aquellas húmedas y pestilentes mazmorras. Allí dejaba pedazos de mi propia carne. (127-28)

Though receiving his freedom, Matarranz at once experiences both the joy of returning to his family and the pain of leaving the comrades that have been his primary source of survival and identity throughout his imprisonment. He additionally feels at odd with the free society around him, noting, “Fue calmándome mi atribulado espíritu, y empecé a reparar en toda la gente que se cruzaba con nosotros. ¡Con que naturalidad y con qué alegría pasaban! Había un contraste muy grande de aquellos rostros con los que había yo dejado detrás de aquellos muros hacía poco tiempo [...] En una palabra, que llamábamos la atención a la gente que pasaba porque nos veía diferentes que ellos” (128). As he walks down the street, a clear divide comes to light: due to his decrepit physical appearance and weakened manner of walking, he is unable to blend in with those around him. His physical trauma, unable to be left behind the prison walls, is carried with him, creating an automatic barrier to relationship and belonging. Upon arrival to his hometown of La Franca, he is virtually unrecognizable to his neighbors: “me encontró muy viejo y desconocido totalmente” (132).

While the scars of his attempted suicide symbolically separate him from his comrades, the physical marks forced upon him my his torturers separate him from the rest of society; this double sense of isolation permeates the text even further when Matarranz describes the terms of
his conditional release and their detrimental effect on his sense of belonging. Once he arrives back at his hometown and presents himself to the civil authorities, a further barrier to collective identity is revealed as the conditions of his release come to light: if caught fraternizing with ex-prisoners or even citizens sympathetic to the Republican cause, Matarranz will be automatically sent back to prison. He notes, “De esta manera, prácticamente había salido de una cárcel pequeña para estar en otra un poco más grande” (134).

In light of this splintering effect, the need to unite his single voice with those of his comrades becomes even more important. As he looks back on his memories of isolation and separation, the act of testifying becomes an attempt to rectify it: in uniting his story and voice to the greater narrative of the maquis and the Second Republic, he bridges the gap between his torn past and the present. Judith Herman notes this desire for group connection in survivors of various traumatic experiences, pointing to its importance during the recovery process:

Traumatic events destroy the sustaining bonds between individual and community. Those who have survived learn that their sense of self, or worth, of humanity, depends upon a feeling of connection to others. The solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against terror and despair, and the strongest antidote to traumatic experience. Trauma isolates; the group re-recreates a sense of belonging. Trauma shames and stigmatizes; the group bears witness and affirms. Trauma degrades the victim; the groups exalts her. Trauma dehumanizes the victim; the group restores her humanity. (214)

As a means of reconnecting with the group as a whole, Matarranz often describes the continued fight for justice and representation, proclaiming his ongoing participation and eternal loyalty to the cause of those opposed to Francoism. Though the historic events to which he testifies are long over and situated in a distant past, he refers to group identity in the present tense using the nosotros pronoun to emphasize his belonging: “Mi ideal no era una profesión, era algo sublime que se lleva dentro del corazón. El gran deseo de librar de la esclavitud a los obreros. Los
obreros hace siglos que *estamos encadenados*, y estas cadenas hay que romperlas y para romperlas hay que aniquilar al opresor. Luchar con valor y entereza hasta, si es necesario llegar al supremo sacrificio (la muerte)” (99, emphasis mine). Another such declaration occurs just several pages earlier as he contrasts the behavior and spirit of the “proletariat” with that of the prison guards. After being tortured for the first time, succumbing to a suicide attempt, and despairing of his emotional weakness, he attempts to recover his strength via identification with his fellow prisoners:

> Los proletarios no tenemos en el pecho una máquina, sino algo que simboliza la nobleza y honradez, que es lo que nos caracteriza. Nosotros no podemos tener los sentimientos de hiena, criminales y asesinos, como los tienen los sediciosos fascistas. Nosotros tenemos nobleza de alma, humanidad y amor dentro de nuestro corazón, por eso no podemos compararnos, en actos, con los fascistas. Ellos son, prácticamente, unas hienas insaciables de sangre de los obreros honrados. (97)

Combining both the use of the present tense and the use of the plural pronoun, Matarranz situates himself within the group as a means of finding security and self-assurance, working to overcome the psychological distance created due to the trauma he has experienced. Staring into a metaphorical mirror of his past emotional and physical weakness, he finds renewed courage, strength, and self-forgiveness in the collective voice.

Acting as both an expression of his trauma and a tool with which to work through it, the juxtaposition of the individual and collective voices within *Manuscrito* is thus an incredibly important characteristic of Matarranz’s testimony that offers us profound glimpses into the process of (re)writing traumatic memories and historicizing subjective experiences. In much the same way, the fragmentation of the style (genre) and structure of the text are equally important to examine as I continue my analysis of *Manuscrito de un superviviente*. 
Fragmentation of Style and Structure

Like the other testimonies analyzed in this dissertation, *Manuscrito de un superviviente* also reveals the aesthetically fragmentary ways in which traumatic memories and the written form interact, creating a text infused with profound meaning and cathartic capabilities. In his study of the relationship between historical discourse and the narrative form, Hayden White suggests that it is the discursive structure chosen by the historian or author that imbues the text with profound meaning. Whereas a simple timeline merely serves as a chronicle of events, a narrative synchronizes and transforms experiences into a coherent story, enabling readers to more thoroughly understand them. He writes, “Since no given set or sequence of real events is intrinsically “tragic,” “comic,” or “farcical,” but can be constructed as such only by the imposition of the structure of a given story-type on the events, it is the choice of the story-type and its imposition upon the events which endow them with meaning” (“Question” 20). He further claims that, contrary to historians’ assertions that subjective (i.e. narrative) histories are not valid truth-claims, narrative histories have the capacity to present the truth allegorically and symbolically (24). Both agreeing with Herzberger’s stance on the symbolic power of discourse while also challenging his stance on the neutrality of events (i.e. no event is intrinsically tragic, etc.), Ernst van Alphen offers a similar opinion from the perspective of trauma theory, arguing that discourse exerts great influence over the memories and meanings expressed: “Stating that experience and discourse cannot be separated is an important move. It forces us to reconfigure the relationships between them. Discourse is then no longer a subservient medium in which experience can be expressed. Rather, discourse plays a fundamental role in the process that allows experiences to come about and in shaping their form and content” (25). Taking this into consideration, it is important to analyze *Manuscrito* within the symbolic parameters set by the
fragmentary discursive structure chosen by Matarranz—the combination of subjective testimony, historical fact and mythical language, all of which allow Matarranz to work through his individual trauma and rewrite history from his perspective.

Structurally, the original manuscript of Matarranz’s testimony contains no thematic chapter dividers but rather reads as one continuous narrative with oral overtones.²⁰ Hoping to make it easier for the reader to logically follow the story, the editor José Quintana Lara divided the text into twenty-eight chapters and titled each one according to its thematic content, making sure to emphasize Matarranz’s consent in doing so.²¹ This being said, the testimony itself—even with its subheadings—reads as a bit of an anomaly, not only exhibiting various linguistic strategies such as repetition and inconsistent sentence structure but also fusing multiple literary genres into the narration. In his study of Latin American testimonies, John Beverley identifies the hybrid nature of testimony as a frequent characteristic of the testimonial genre, noting that it “appears where the adequacy of existing literary forms and styles—even of the dominant language itself—for the representation of the subaltern has entered into crisis” (“Through All Things Modern” 6). For Beverley, the juxtaposition of various textual styles serves as a visual representation of the marginality and otherness of the witness to whom the testimony belongs.

The terminological debate about the definitions of subaltern aside, Matarranz contends with an additional problematic variable that is similarly expressed through the fragmented aesthetic of

²⁰ The orality of Manuscrito is, according to many theorists, a central characteristic of the testimonial genre. Elżbieta Sklodowska, referring to ideas first proposed by Miguel Barnet, signals the “tono oral” as the key that unifies the aesthetic and the historical elements of testimony (140).

²¹ The editor writes, “Los veintiocho titulares que aparecen a lo largo del libro fueron agregados por el Editor para facilitar la lectura del texto. Todos han sido aprobados por el autor” (2). He further claims that the only editing he did was to correct the spelling of several words at the author’s request: “Felipe Matarranz puede estar satisfecho, la edición cubana de su manuscrito, que brindamos a nuestros lectores, se ajusta absolutamente al original; sólo se ha corregido, a petición del propio autor, la ortografía de algunas palabras” (174).
his testimony, shedding light on the way in which he inhabits the interstitial spaces of time, memory and society: trauma and the crisis of identity that follows it.\textsuperscript{22}

Due to the dynamic nature of memory and the ways in which traumatic experience is highly subjective, multiple aesthetic frameworks are employed in \textit{Manuscrito} in order to more fully articulate Matarranz’s perceived experience. While critics in the past have focused on the historicity of testimony to the detriment of its literariness, analyzing the literary strategies involved in testimonial narratives offers insight into the ways language is used for working through trauma, representing lived experience, and establishing alternative accounts of past events. Of the literary genres or styles utilized in \textit{Manuscrito}, the three most prominent are autobiography, history and mythology. Together, all three enable Matarranz to work through his past, legitimize his subjective testimony, and challenge Francoist representations of the Spanish Civil War.

As a testimony, it goes without saying that \textit{Manuscrito} is autobiographical (told from the first-person perspective) in nature, even when collective memory plays a foundational role in its development. Interestingly, it is within his autobiographical memories that the significance of literary strategy and style is more distinctly revealed. For Linda Marie Brooks, testimony reaches beyond the scope of a simple autobiography in that it is a performance in which the witness acts out or represents information in front of a designated audience (183). Taking J.L. Austin’s theory of performative utterances into account, she suggests that the language used while giving a testimony falls into five categories: “staging, acting, storytelling, performance and dialogue”

\textsuperscript{22} Looking to the works of Antonio Gramsci and his theories on cultural hegemony, subaltern refers to individuals or groups that are denied access to power or representation via the hegemonic structure. An interesting tension thus exists in testimonies such as \textit{Manuscrito}: through civil war, the power and right to representation is passed from one political/ideological government (the Second Republic) to another (Franco’s dictatorship).
Though Brooks zeroes in on testimonies in which an editor is the primary transcriber, these categories are equally applicable to testimonies written by the witnesses themselves, helping us understand linguistic choices and what they represent. Using autobiographical terminology reminiscent of a *Bildungsroman* in which the audience watches the progression of the Spanish Civil War symbolized through the unfolding of his life from childhood to old age, Matarranz clearly sets the stage for his testimony and attempts to make logical sense of his past experience:

> En este libro está grabada, torpemente, mi lucha desde que tenía quince años en contra de la clase explotadora. Digo grabada torpemente, porque yo no soy un escritor, mis estudios son poco más que primarios. La guerra y la constante lucha pararon mi marcha cultural. Lo que más siento es el que no haber podido, no ser capaz de describir, el sentir de muchos de los momentos trágicos pasados y vistos por mí; pero también aseguro que no puede haber inteligencia en el mundo que pueda describirlos. (2)

Making what Philippe Lejeune would refer to as an autobiographical pact with his audience, Matarranz takes the time to establish his identity as witness/author and offer a broad framework within which the audience can interpret his testimony.  

As a result of his staging, the audience deduces several important declarations that in turn influence their perception and analysis of his testimony. First, Matarranz situates himself inside the periphery of society, pointing to the “clase explotadora” as the reason for his lack of education and cultural finesse, a claim that challenges the Francoist depictions of Leftists as

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23 J.L. Austin argues that performative language is essentially an active performance in which the speaker *does* something rather than merely *describe* or report the facts. According to Austin, performative utterances are “perfectly straightforward utterances, with ordinary verbs in the first person singular present indicative active,. . . if a person makes an utterance of this sort we should say that he is *doing* something rather than merely *saying* something” (“Performatives”1290). For a more detailed explanation, see his comprehensive work *How to Do Things with Words*.

24 See Philippe Lejeune’s *On Autobiography* for a more detailed definition of the autobiographical pact.
biologically degenerate and unrefined.25 And second, he reveals the perpetual presence of trauma within his words and memories, proactively explaining and excusing the problematic representations of various traumatic experiences. Matarranz constantly reiterates this point, even down to the last page of his testimony: “Ésta es mi vida contada a grandes rasgos. Me han quedado olvidados infinidad de pasajes, pero como ya he dicho, creo que los más crudos y violentos han quedado escritos” (174). Once again referring to the delicate balance of forgetting and remembering, he assures the audience that his memories and experiences are valid because they are the lingering images in his mind. The best representation of his trauma, the memories penned by his own hand attempt to reach the emotional level that historiography can never reach by pulling the reader into the story as if they are themselves experiencing it. Via his words, his trauma is made visible in spite of faded memories or the lack of quantitative evidence.

Linguistically this trauma manifests itself in the fragmented structure of Matarranz’s autobiographical language, a phenomena similarly seen in the testimonies of Semprún, Català and Doña. Ranging from repetition to inconsistent sentence length and abrupt transitions, the surface aesthetics of Manuscrito act as virtual images of experiences that are painful to remember or assimilate into a fluid narrative. Of these features, repetition frequently reflects the haunting nature of traumatic memory and the way in which it produces vivid images of turmoil, sacrifice and loss. The feeling of disorientation commonly associated with traumatic experience first comes to light as Matarranz uses parallel structure combined with choppy sentences to depict the rampant confusion experienced in the days leading up to the end of the war: “No se sabían noticias concretas. No sabíamos a qué atenernos. Todo era confusionismo. Las radios de

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25 For further discussion on this Francoist claim, see Antonio Cazorla Sánchez’s Fear and Progress: Ordinary Lives in Franco’s Spain, 1939-1975.
la República decían una cosa y los facciosos decían otra, así que con esas confusas noticias, no sabíamos a qué atenernos. No se sabían noticias concretas. Todos los hechos ocurrían amontonándose. Todo era confusión” (12). As he continues to describe various battles and skirmishes throughout northern Spain, the image of spilt blood is also emphasized through its repetition: “Íbamos dejando el camino regado de sangre. Sangre obrera. Sangre de nuestros queridos hermanos de clase, jóvenes, niños aún, héroes anónimos que nadie sabrá el esfuerzo y sacrificio que hicieron por redimir a la clase obrera” (42). Though blood in this instance is portrayed as symbolic of sacrifice, it originates as visual reminder: the blood on the ground is an image that haunts, refusing to leave Matarranz’s memory of his journey as a soldier. Further images of blood, hate and violence again impose themselves cyclically on Matarranz’s memories of his time spent in prison, calling attention to the psychological distress experienced behind bars:

Seguía siendo un guiñapo viviendo la despreciable vida de la cárcel. Dentro de mi alma solamente sentía odio y rencor. Sentía sed de venganza y venganza. Sólo deseaba matar y matar. Sólo deseaba escaparme de aquella inmunda mazmorra, y secar con sangre las lágrimas de nuestras familias. Vengar los tormentos y suplicios a que estaba sometido el pueblo obrero. Así quería y deseaba con toda mi alma ahogar el dolor en lágrimas, no sabía llorar, solamente odio y rebeldía sentía mi pecho. (97)

Violent recollections aside, another equally haunting memory is that of hunger, a memory likewise shared by Semprún, Català and Doña in their narratives. Describing the hunger experienced in Tabacalera as “insoportable” (115), Matarranz abruptly repeats the word *hambre* eight times in the span of just a page and a half, unable to describe any aspect of life in that particular prison without reference to the physical and psychological effects of extreme malnutrition imposed upon his body there.
Another emotion exposed via fragmented repetition is that of guilt, or more specifically, the confusion experienced when Matarranz tries to understand his role and responsibility in the very events that left him traumatized. Seen frequently in the narratives of trauma survivors, guilt emerges in multiple forms: guilt for surviving, guilt for weakness, and most problematic of all, guilt for causing emotional or physical pain to others impacted by the witness’s experiences. One of the most commonly repeated exclamations in Manuscrito refers to his parents—especially his mother. At the very beginning of his testimony, Matarranz describes the still-present pain he experiences when thinking about the suffering his parents endured throughout and war and during his imprisonments: “Al escribir estas memorias he derramado muchas lágrimas al recordar los dolorosos episodios que vivía durante mi lucha. Cuando materialmente atravesaba esos adversos momentos, sí derramé algunas lágrimas, pero jamás las derramé por mis sufrimientos físicos, sino pensando en el enorme dolor que, por mí, pasaban mis padres” (3). Though he claims that he finds a great source of pride in their strength, he cannot escape from the creeping thought that he is the cause of their suffering. Historically echoed in the voices of fellow prisoners who felt responsible for their deaths of their comrades because they were unable to put a stop to the guards’ brutality, Matarranz feels an enormous sense of responsibility for the fates of his parents. His entire fight revolves symbolically around their livelihoods, an image solidified as he describes his first day on the battlefield in terms of their via dolorosa: “El día 21, por la mañana, fue nuestro primer bautismo de guerra, primer combate, primer día de dolor y sufrimiento para mis padres. ¡Pobres viejos! ¡Qué largo y escabroso iba a ser ese camino hasta sus muertes!” (10). Repeated time and time again throughout the duration of his testimony, he cries out ¡pobres padres!, mourning their pain and feeling it as his own. This fear and guilt haunts Matarranz even as he reflects upon his dear mother’s death from old age:
La vida tan trágica, agitada y dolorosa que pasó, minó su organismo y pasó mucho tiempo imposibilitada para hacer movimientos forzados, hasta que un día, el día más triste y doloroso para mí, rodeada de sus cinco hijos, murió aquella gran y heroica madre, ejemplo de madres. Aquellos heroicos y mártires padres parece que estuvieron esperando a tener a sus hijos en casa para morirse tranquilos. Aquellos heroicos padres fueron dos víctimas del fascismo. ¡Los asesinó el fascismo! Muchas veces pienso que yo soy el máximo responsable de su muerte, pero sé firmemente que mis heroicos viejos tuvieron siempre conciencia de que mi sacrificio fue el luchar para conquistar el bienestar de ellos y de todos los padres de la clase obrera en general. (173-4)

Although he assures himself that his parents were proud of his activism, he still fights off enormous feelings of guilt, imagining himself to be the physical perpetrator of their pain. Haunting images thus find power in their repetition, drawing the audience—and the witness—further into the web of emotional response and psychological mind games.

Like repetition, the fragmented sentences and abrupt transitions of Matarranz’s autobiographical memories likewise highlight the difficulty of incorporating traumatic memories into a cohesive narrative, frequently creating tension tangibly experienced by the audience. As Matarranz describes his capture by Italian troops his language grows ever more splintered, demonstrating that the gravity of the situation and his inability to narrate fluidly: “Detrás de los tanques vino la infantería. Eran italianos. Estábamos enfilados de fusiles. Hablaban de extranjero. Yo no lo comprendía. Llegó un oficial español y nos ordenaron, lo primero, tirar las armas, y seguidamente que nos pusiéramos en fila india. Estábamos a su disposición. Todos guardábamos silencio” (48). Blunt, disjointed, and lacking detail, the short sentences emphasize the jarring experience of witnessing such confusion and utter defeat firsthand. It is seemingly only through such fragmented language that the subjective experience of not knowing or not understanding is most clearly expressed.
Returning to J.L. Austin’s concept of performative language, *Manuscrito* likewise reveals the power of the linguistic registers used not merely to portray or represent autobiographical information, but to actively work through trauma and affect contemporary ideological change. *Manuscrito* is full of these active, performative statements that demonstrate the intentional nature of Matarranz’s words and his desire to inspire his audience to act upon them, using his history as an ideological rallying cry. Of the performative declarations scattered throughout his testimony, there are four specific verbs that appear most frequently: *ser* (to be), *querer* (to want), *recordar* (to remember) and *seguir* (to continue). Used in the “first person singular present indicative active,” they emphasize the symbolic pillars of Matarranz’s testimony: reestablishing one’s identity, intentionally remembering and working through trauma, and continuing the battle for historical (and contemporary) self-representation. Other performative declarations that frequently appear in *Manuscrito* include *confesar* (to confess), *creer* (to believe), *sentir* (to feel), and *decir* (to say), each of which points to the testimonial nature of his writing. All four provide clear images of active testimony: in confessing past fears, hurts or international conflict, believing the truth claims behind his narrative, projecting emotions that speak sometimes louder than the words on the page and humanize historical events, and above all, telling his story with intentionality and hope for a better, more just future. His testimony is not merely a representation of his life, but the active continuance of it. His words are actions aiding him in his continued fight against oppression and injustice and his autobiographical style is the framework through which it is partially accomplished.

In addition to using an autobiographical framework as a means of staging, self-reflection and catharsis, Matarranz also makes it a point to include historical documents and sections of narration that read like historical texts in order to both contextualize and legitimize his
testimony. These documents include photographs, maps, transcribed copies of governmental documents (e.g. prison releases and political decrees), lyrics from well-known poems and hymns, and personal correspondence in the form of letters. Together, these additions ground his personal, subjective testimony in previously-documented historical events, resulting in alternative perspectives and accounts that open history to new dialogues and put human skin on objective events. Whereas many of his personal letters are transcribed from memory, Matarranz makes it a point to reference documents that also historically corroborate his testimony. Speaking of an article he wrote for a local newspaper, he writes, “Esos días escribí un artículo en el periódico (El Impulsor) haciendo un llamamiento a todos aquellos que tuvieran fuerza para empuñar un fusil. Creo que empezaba así: ‘Era una mañana que estábamos en las trincheras, plenamente animados’” (28). Offering the name of the newspaper and the opening line of the article, he contextualizes his narrative in terms of historically verifiable records, thus adding credibility to his subjective account.

The use of historical documents also offers Matarranz an important title: that of critic. One letter in particular highlights his ongoing commentary and critiques of Francoist ideology. Toward the end of his second prison sentence, Matarranz begrudgingly writes a letter to a well-connected cousin (and Francoist sympathizer) in order to ask for aid in securing his conditional release. Though he does not have the original letter in his possession, he does have the response, which he promptly includes in his testimony. At the end of every line is an added critique of the letter, commenting on the hypocrisy of his Francoist cousin and, by extension, critiquing the

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26 A chronology of the Spanish Civil War is also found at the end of Manuscrito, added in by the editor to further contextualize the testimony.
ideals established by Franco’s regime. With every letter of his personal comments capitalized, his critique resonates loudly from the pages:

Como falangista, sabes que fui molestada por algunos de aquí, cuando mandaban; si los veo ya en sus casas sin odio ni rencor y hasta les concedo mi amistad ¿podría consentir que tú hubieras estado ni cinco minutos en la cárcel?

[FACCIOsa y MENTIROSA]

Bien, el tiempo desengaña de muchas cosas y confío que cuando puedas analizar las cosas por ti mismo, no por lo que te digan los demás, te des cuenta de las injusticias e insultos que mi madre y yo recibimos con la mayor paciencia.

[MENTIROSA, PASó EL CORTO RÉGIMEN DE LA REPÚBLICA COMO UNA REINA, ESTO EN CONSIDERACIÓN A QUE TENÍA UN PRIMO COMUNISTA]

The letter continues even further, offering still more critiques of its contents and fascist ideology. Turning the tables on the false histories propagated by Francoists throughout the dictatorship, Matarranz uses his testimony and the historical documents within to recover his voice and speak out from an alternative perspective.

Lastly, Matarranz symbolically employs language reminiscent of mythology as he describes the Second Republic and the actions of its advocates throughout the war. In doing so, he directly contradicts the mythologies created by Francoist propagandists throughout the course of the dictatorship. According to many historians, Francoist ideology was founded upon nostalgic rhetoric and reconstructed versions of national legends or myths. Miriam Basilio points to religious iconography as the key strategy used by Franco’s regime in their fight against the Republic:

The struggle against the Republican government and its allies was portrayed as a battle between the Spanish “essence”—defined as a unified Catholic nation under absolute rulers—and foreign “infidels” promoting the dissolutions of the country. Parallels between Spain’s period of unification under Queen Isabelle and King Ferdinand, references to the Reconquista, or Christian conquest of Muslim territories in the Iberian Peninsula, the Crusades, and to the Spanish Empire were reiterated in Franco’s speeches, written and visual propaganda. (74)
Contradicting Franco’s mythological language by essentially inverting it, Matarranz uses grandiose terminology to describe the feats of the common people throughout the war and beyond, moreover labeling nationalist movements as acts of foreign invasion or aggression. Yúdice notes a similar tendency in many Latin American testimonies as well: “Rather than aggrandized heroes, we see everyday people—militiamen, jet pilots, soldiers, civilians, among others—expressing their experiences” (18). For Matarranz, the working class is synonymous with the word héroe, being portrayed throughout his testimony in mythical terms. He first introduces this language via descriptions of his father, whom he claims as his first childhood hero: “Yo le escuchaba con entusiasmo enorme, le miraba y le imaginaba un héroe” (7). He then recounts the mining strikes of Asturias in 1917, foreshadowing the impending civil war: “Los heroicos mineros luchaban como leones para conquistar el poder. La lucha en apoyo de la gran Asturias, mi pueblo natal, fue muy pobre. Yo me desesperaba y deseaba, con toda mi alma, ir a mi patria chica a luchar con todo codo al lado de aquellos heroicos mineros que todo lo daban por conquistar el bienestar de la clase obrera” (9). Likening the striking miners to lions on the prowl, Matarranz depicts them in terms of their courage and strength. This language also carries on into his descriptions of the Spanish Civil War, resulting in emotionally-charged declarations of pride. Recalling the battle of Gijón in Asturias he writes, “En los días que duró la batalla, vi las gestas más heroicas que se pueden registrar en la Historia. Por cada uno que luchábamos con un arma, teníamos detrás cuatro o cinco desarmados esperando que cayera alguno para coger ellos el arma y seguir luchando. Aquellos eran héroes anónimos, nadie sabrá quiénes eran, pero eran” (13).
From the parallel structure and repetition that symbolically reveal inner turmoil and trauma, to his use of performative declarations, historical documents, and mythical language, a close reading of the fragmented structure and style of *Manuscrito de un superviviente* gives us remarkable insight into the grueling process of how trauma is written and worked through. Combined with the other forms of fragmentation discussed in the preceding sections, the stylistic and structural fragmentation of Matarranz’s testimony offers a clear picture of how individual and collective identities are reconstructed in the wake of traumatic experiences and social oppression, revealing the text to be both a space of recovery and rebellion.

**Fragmented Identities: Reworking Masculinities and Nationalities**

Thus far, I have argued that the fragmentary nature of Matarranz’s testimony is central to the process of both working through trauma and establishing alternative forms of history from the perspective of those on the losing side of the Spanish Civil War. Upon examining each of the types of fragmentation used in his testimony, it becomes apparent that the fight for self-representation (both individually and collectively) is at the heart of his writing. Through his use of temporal fragmentation, multiple narrative voices, and structural/aesthetic fragmentation, Matarranz is able to renegotiate his identity in light of the experiences that have shaped it. This identitary renegotiation is significant on two levels that I will examine as I close out this chapter. First, on an individual level, the fragmentation of *Manuscrito* gives Matarranz a space in which to examine the various stages of his identity post-trauma, notably focusing on his masculinity and perceptions of gender roles. Second, *Manuscrito* challenges the Francoist depiction of Republicans and the *maquis* as traitors to the Spanish homeland, posing questions of nationality from the perspective of the defeated.
Though more subtle than the questions of gender that I will analyze in the fourth chapter of this dissertation when examining Jorge Semprún’s Buchenwald accounts, the portrayal of masculinity and gendered expectations in *Manuscrito* reveals the effects of trauma upon identity. In order to fully understand these effects, we must look to the context from which Matarranz’s testimony emerged. Already primed for a crisis of masculine identity due to industrialization and militarily advancements, the twentieth century initiated a period of identity crisis for men as they attempted to redefine their roles in a forward-moving society (Capdevila 424). Advances in weaponry and the introduction of brutal trench warfare during World War I also led psychologists to begin identifying psychological disorders such as PTSD that broadly affected masculine behaviors and norms. Speaking of the traumatic neuroses initially observed in the survivors of World War I, Judith Herman highlights the skewed notions of gendered psychological and physiological responses both expected and perceived from veterans of trench warfare. She writes, “Under conditions of unremitting exposure to the horrors of trench warfare, men began to break down in shocking numbers. Confined and rendered helpless, subjected to constant threat of annihilation, and forced to witness the mutilation and death of their comrades without any hope of reprieve, many soldiers began to act like hysterical women” (20). Though an adherence to gender stereotypes is implicit in her explanation, the point that she raises is tantamount: traumatic experiences that exist outside the realm of reason or logic have the ability to cause a crisis of self-identity and, by extension, societal perception. What results is a group of individuals that, torn between well-established norms or expectations and the potentially unrecognizable effects of trauma, struggle to understand their psychological responses to the situations at hand.
Though his text is not as explicit as those of Català, Doña or Semprún in terms of its exploration of gender, it nonetheless opens a dialogue about masculinity as it relates to the experience of soldier, prisoner, and underground refugee whose freedom and agency have been stripped from him. As Matarranz reestablishes his identity in light of the trauma he has experienced, his memories and his commentary portray a sometimes contradictory image of the guerrillero, highlighting moments of both extreme weakness and courage that have a problematic relationship to masculinity as defined by propaganda from both sides of the Spanish Civil War. Whereas the Nationalists (Franco’s supporters) upheld combativeness, aggressiveness, and social control as the hallmarks of a true man, Republicans portrayed men more frequently as protectors, sustainers, and martyrs in the face of suffering (Bunk 95). Matarranz recalls this enormous responsibility as he emotionally recounts being sent off to war by the people for which he was fighting:

Al día siguiente, creo que era el 23 de septiembre, al atardecer, salimos formados del cuartel, y al frente nuestro se puso una banda de música que empezó a tocar La Internacional, Arriba los pobres del mundo. Se me puso un nudo en la garganta. ¡Qué emoción! […] El pueblo obrero no cesaba de gritar y aplaudir. Fueron momentos emocionantes. Las mujeres gritaban: ‘¡Defender a nuestros hijos y vuestros hermanos!’ Llegó el momento que el pueblo obrero no se pudo contener, se lanzó a nosotros, y con armamento y todo nos llevó en hombros hasta los camiones que estaban cerca. ¿Quién resistía aquella emoción? Se nos saltaban las lágrimas. No se puede describir esa emoción. Nunca he vivido otra igual. ¿Quién no prometía a ese pueblo luchar hasta romper las cadenas opresoras? El gran pueblo obrero nos pedía que le defendiéramos de los invasores fascistas, y así lo prometimos. (16).

In spite of his efforts to depict himself as a strong soldier capable of defending his family and homeland, Matarranz finds that he cannot truly narrate his testimony and (re)construct his own identity without addressing his moments of weakness. Creating a fragmented picture of his own

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27 For a more comprehensive view of masculinity as constructed by Franco’s regime, see Mary Vincent’s article “The Martyrs and the Saints: Masculinity and the Construction of the Francoist Crusade.”
(perceived) masculinity, he depicts himself as both a hero in control of his emotions and a fallen man subject to fear and doubt. This tension manifests itself early in his testimony as he recalls his parents arriving at the hospital to visit him after he is gravely injured on the battlefield:

“Quería ser fuerte, pero me era imposible al abrazar a aquellos heroicos padres que me miraban con unos ojos que demostraban no creer lo que veían” (20). Though he attempts to fight off tears and preserve a façade of strength, he finds himself unable to hold back his emotions. Watching his parents carry the burden of the war on their shoulders while he is wounded and incapable of protecting them is too much to bear. Tears continue to haunt his testimony when narrating memories further involving his parents, evidence of his struggle in feeling that he has failed as protector.

His power and autonomy as a man is also called into question as he considers the impact of captivity and, subsequently, conditional freedom upon his identity. Referring to himself and his fellow *maquisards* as animals being hunted, he reveals the wound to his masculine pride and prowess as he realizes that there is no escape from Franco’s control: “Siempre escondidos como las fieras, siempre perseguidos. Para los guerrilleros había muchos cazadores, para los pocos que éramos. Las fieras tenían más suerte que nosotros. Las fieras tenían cazadores determinados, tenían veda ciertos meses del año. Para los guerrilleros todo el año estaba la veda abierta” (150). Captured and returned to prison once again, Matarranz continues to describe this masculine degradation in physical terms, sourly pointing to the ways in which the prison guards prevented any form of masculine pride from emerging among the captives:

Éramos, por los años, niños, pero físicamente parecíamos verdaderos ancianos; éramos verdaderas piltrafas humanas. Yo pasaba la vida con desprecio, me pesaba mucho la cárcel ¿y a quién no le pesa en aquellas condiciones? Sentía mucho el cansancio de los largos años de cárcel. Llevaba cerca de once años rodando por
cárceles y presidios; hambre, miseria, torturas, eso fue la orden del día en mi larga campaña carcelaria. (167)

The crisis extends even further when Matarranz is released from prison and finds himself physically altered and incapable of exerting himself as would a typical man of his age:

Tenía treinta y siete años, tenía canas en la cabeza y arrugas en la cara; físicamente me sentía cansado y torpe al andar. No era extraño que estuviera en esas condiciones. Había asado la aspereza de una cárcel fascista donde atravesé los momentos más despiadados e inhumanos que se puede imaginar. En aquellos once años de cárcel viví todas las infamias e injusticias que es capaz de inventar el alma vil y miserable del tirano y fascista. Cuando atravesé la última puerta, miré la cárcel con desprecio. Allí habían quedado enterrados los mejores años de mi vida, los años de juventud, los años de la ilusión. ¿Qué delito tan enorme había cometido para ser tratado de aquella manera tan cruel y tan monstruosa? No avisé a casa y llegué solo sin que fuera nadie a recibirme a la estación. (170)

Reduced in his own eyes to both a hunted animal on the run and a young man aged beyond recognition, Matarranz cannot even inform his family of his arrival, feeling shame in being a lesser man in his own eyes. This tension comes to a head as Matarranz recalls attempting to overcompensate for his weakness in his dealings with the civil guards responsible for monitoring his behavior after being released from prison. Referring to himself as a cornered animal once again, he writes, “Cuando me presenté, el esbirro, con una ferocidad inhumana, de la que sólo los cobardes son capaces, después de insultarme, me pegó con un libro en la cara. Físicamente no me dolió, pero moralmente me hirió hasta lo más profundo de mi alma. Reaccioné como una fiera acorralada; ya no estaba dispuesto a poner la otra mejilla. Los esbirros que me rodeaban me agarraron. El asesino debió de leer en mis ojos las intenciones que tenía” (171). Pushed to his limits, Matarranz not only inverts the power structure by referring to the guard’s actions as those of a coward, but reveals his inner conflict as he struggles to understand how to be a strong man in spite of his symbolic chains (those of his conditional freedom). Ending his testimony with the acknowledgement of his internal strength in spite of his physical weakness, Matarranz allows his
testimonio to become a space of reconstruction and reconciliation: “Sólo me queda la añoranza y el recuerdo. No tengo fuerzas físicas para sortear nuevamente el peligro de la lucha en las montañas. Moralmente soy el mismo, no me doblé jamás, ni me doblaré […] mis fuerzas físicas me impiden desarrollar una lucha activa como antes, pero sigo luchando y seguiré hasta llegar al fin” (174). No longer chained to the crisis of the past, he is able to see himself for what he is in the present: both a product of his experiences, and yet also able to control his self-representation as a man still fighting for what he believes in.

Unlike his more understated presentation of gender, Matarranz’s commentary on nationality and national identity is far more direct and biased, constituting a legitimate challenge to previously held representations of the *maquis* as *bandoleros*, or criminals.28 From the perspective of Francoist historiographers, Spanish Republicans were long seen not as defenders of Spain but rather as antagonists attempting to destroy the country they had mercilessly overrun with ‘anti-Spanish’ ideals.29 Much of Franco’s strategy for propaganda centered on the idea of national unity and looking back to the glorious days of Spain’s imperial past. In a commemorative pamphlet issued by his staff in 1937, the slogan “¡Una patria! ¡Un estado! ¡Un caudillo!” is prominently featured under a picture of the general poised in front of a map of Spain.30 Using terminology reminiscent of cultural crusades and the *Reconquista*, the pamphlet makes the visual declaration that Spain needs to be rescued from the Second Republic just as it had to be liberated from the Moors in the fifteenth century. Silenced for years, supporters of the

28 See Carmen Moreno-Nuño’s *Huellas de la Guerra Civil: Mito y trauma en la narrativa de la España democrática*.

29 Mary Vincent describes the ideological battle between Franco’s Nationalists and the Republicans as a conflict between “Spain and anti-Spain” in the eyes of Franco (70).

30 For an image of the pamphlet and further analysis of the impact of visual propaganda on the war efforts, see Miriam Basilio’s article “Genealogies for a New State: Painting and Propaganda in Franco’s Spain, 1936-1940.”
Second Republic thus found themselves being torn apart in history books or forgotten altogether, labeled as the ultimate traitor to the ‘true’ Spain.

In an effort to overcome this misrepresentation and offer an alternative perspective to Spain’s national history, Matarranz uses his testimonio as a verbal weapon, firing shots at Francoist ideology via his words. Essentially inverting Franco’s nationalistic claims and labeling Francoist forces as the real invaders, Matarranz repetitively underscores Franco’s collaboration with foreign troops from Germany, Italy, and North Africa. He writes, “El pueblo obrero combatía en los campos de batalla por su independencia nacional, en defensa de la República Democrática. Luchaba para echar de nuestra patria a los bárbaros y criminales invasores alemanes, italianos y moros. Luchaba contra el fascismo, contra la parte más reaccionaria y criminal del capitalismo” (80). Stating his cause—and that of the Second Republic—in terms of defending the legally-elected government from Franco and his fascist invaders, Matarranz epitomizes the working class as the true hero and defender of Spain. Matarranz further turns Franco’s glorious army on its head when he depicts it as a rebel without a cause. Whereas he portrays the Republican troops as having a focused, patriotic spirit, the nationalist troops are described as dispassionate men without moral conviction, bodies without souls. Remembering the frequent interactions between the dueling armies during mandated moments of rest, he writes:

Parlamentábamos con el enemigo y cambiábamos la prensa. Les dábamos muchas veces papel de fumar que no tenían ellos. Siempre nos obsequiábamos con algo. En una ocasión comimos los dos bandos en medio de las dos líneas de fuego. Precisamente los facciosos trajeron mejor comida que nosotros. Yo les pregunté que qué es lo que defendían, pero cuando tocaba ese tema no querían o no sabían contestar. (27)
Claiming the moral high ground by continuously reinforcing his desire to defend and protect Spain from those who would seek to destroy its heterogeneity and progressive movements, Matarranz defines the working class as true defender of Spain, a direct challenge to Francoist-authored history. Unfortunately for Matarranz, this black and white depiction is terribly simplistic, a realization that occurs to him as he continues to work through his memories of the conflict.

Though Matarranz attempts to paint Franco’s forces as exclusively foreign, he finds himself struggling with the very concept of nationality and what it signifies in times of civil war. Recognizing that Spain was a country divided by two distinct and opposing ideologies that paradoxically became blurred at the individual level, Matarranz remembers his confusion when faced with the difficulty of seeing fellow Spaniards—even those of the working class—join Franco in his rebellious fight. Struggling to comprehend this perceived betrayal, Matarranz can only describe his former ‘brothers’ as traitors to their heritage: “Me dio dolor y pena al mirar aquel ejército, hermano mío de clase, todos obreros, que estaban defendiendo unos intereses ajenos a ellos. ¿Cómo aquella juventud empuñaba el fusil para asesinar a sus hermanos? En vez de defender a la clase obrera, defendían el bienestar de los poderosos, de los explotadores. Hacían traición a su propia clase” (51). Throughout the rest of his testimony, Matarranz juxtaposes these ideas, both calling attention to the heroic nature of the working class while also admitting to its flaws. As with his explorations of gender norms and expectations, his testimony hence becomes the vehicle through which he is enabled to (re)negotiate his thoughts, memories, and convictions in light of the trauma he has experienced—trauma that not only creates the need to reconstruct his individual identity, but also forces him to reinterpret his connection to and identification with his fellow supervivientes.
Conclusions

In summary, *Manuscrito de un superviviente* is a prime example of a *testimonio* created through—and in spite of—traumatic experience. While the fragmentary nature of his text symbolically reveals the intrusive and disruptive power of trauma over memory and self-representation, it simultaneously becomes a tool that allows Matarranz to transcend the traditional limits of narrative and capitalize on its various reconstructive abilities. Looking first to the obvious temporal fragmentation of his text, I have demonstrated that Matarranz uses temporal distortion not only as a means of better representing the effect of trauma on his memory and time perception, but also as a way of creating critical distance between his past and present. In doing so, he is able to reclaim his position as witness and, more importantly, survivor, of the traumatic events forced upon him in his youth. Working hand-in-hand with the temporal fragmentation of his text, the juxtaposition of the individual and collective voices further helps Matarranz in his quest to work through his traumatic experiences and find strength at a societal level. He merges his individual *history* with the histories of his fallen comrades, highlighting their diversity and subjectivity. Not to be overlooked, the stylistic and structural forms of fragmentation present in Manuscrito also infuse themselves into both the temporal schema and the narrative voice. Creating a tapestry of repetition, abrupt transitions, performative phrases, and various language types (e.g. mythology, history, etc.), Matarranz demonstrates the dynamic and active nature of a *testimonio*, ultimately accentuating the reconstructive power of testimony in terms of individual and collective memories, histories, and identities. What results is an incredibly profound and privileged look into a process long shrouded in mystery: how a narrative of trauma is produced and leveraged by the witness on a sociocultural and historical level.
CHAPTER 2
FILLING IN THE GAPS: TEXTUAL FRAGMENTATION AND ALTERNATIVE HERSTORIES IN NEUS CATALÀ’S DE LA RESISTENCIA Y LA DEPORTACIÓN

“No reivindicamos la verdad como un privilegio, sino por justicia y reconstitución de una parte histórica que arranca de 1936; por el respeto a nuestras muertas, por desagraviar a tantas mujeres olvidadas” (Català, De la resistencia y la deportación)

Like Felipe Matarranz, whose testimony Manuscrito de un superviviente was analyzed in chapter one, Neus Català is another voice that also merits critical attention. Of the many Spanish men and women who have become known on an international scale for testimonies (both oral and written) of their experiences in Hitler’s concentration camps, Català is one of the lesser studied and critically analyzed. Published in 1984, De la resistencia y la deportación is an important feat for the thousands of Spanish and Catalan women who continued the fight against fascism after the end of the Spanish Civil War by joining forces with the French Resistance. Providing not only a space through which to work through questions of trauma but also an arena to reclaim their silenced voices, Català’s testimony demands recognition of and justice for the sacrifices of countless women in the fight against tyranny. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how Català’s collection of testimonies (re)creates herstories from different perspectives that open History to critique and divergence. Like the narratives of Matarranz, Doña, and Semprún, her testimony cries out from the depths of profound trauma to offer insight into the process of (re)writing history from the margins.

Born in the province of Tarragona in the small agricultural town of Guiamets on October 7, 1915, Català’s childhood was one of political activism, due in large part to the involvement of
her parents in the Communist party. In her biography of Català’s life, Mar Trallero attributes Català’s political conscience to the heated debates overheard as a young child in her father’s barber shop as well as the profound conversations she frequently had with her father about politics, history and philosophy (31). Català herself describes his influence on her political life and her Communist views, stating that, “‘ell va ser el gran mestre. Des de petita, em va inculcar, sense imposar-se, una consciència revolucionària’” (Belenguer Mercadé 26).¹ Strong women were also great influences in Català’s adolescence. In addition to her mother Rosa, whom Català describes as valiant (32), Català’s childhood teacher, Pepita Hugués, inspired her to study and find a career by insisting that her female pupils receive the same level and type of education as their male counterparts (Belenguer Mercadé 28).² Upon leaving school at the young age of fourteen, Neus began to take a more active role in local political life, leading the women in her village to fight for salaries equal to those of their male colleagues in field work (Belenguer Mercadé 25-26). At the end of the Spanish Civil War, Català fled to France where she joined the French Resistance as a courier in 1940.³ On December 29, 1942 she married French anarchist and maquisard Albert, with whom she continued to work for the maquis group in Turnac,⁴

¹ In English: “he was a great teacher. From childhood, he instilled in me, without imposing it, a revolutionary conscience” (translation mine).

² As per Català, this included being educated in the subjects of mathematics and algebra. At the time of her primary education, girls generally received a separate education than boys, and were taught merely the basics such as reading, writing, and saying the rosary prayers of the Catholic Church (Belenguer Mercadé 28).

³ After the fall of Barcelona at the end of the Spanish Civil War, France opened its borders on January 27, 1939 to civilians fleeing from Franco’s approaching forces. According to Nancy Macdonald, “Approximately 60,000 males, 170,000 women and children, and 10,000 wounded fled” (92) in this mass exodus. Sadly, due to economic and political problems with immigration in France throughout the 1930s, many of these Spanish exiles were sent to French concentration camps, and those that were able to escape them and work with the French Resistance were forgotten by both Spanish and French historiographers alike (Dreyfus-Armand 15). The lack of historical testimonies from this period of history underscores the importance of Català’s work.

⁴ Simply defined, the maquis were anti-fascist Resistance fighters of multiple nationalities that refused to submit to German rule, choosing instead to defect from the labor camps and seek refuge in the mountains/woods of
attempting to oust any spies sent by the Gestapo to identify Resistance members in occupied France (Hintz 27). Her work with the *maquis* was interrupted, however, when she was detained by the Gestapo on November 11, 1943. Forming part of a convoy of more than 27,000 French, Spanish, Polish, and Czech women destined for German concentration camps, Català was interrogated in Périgueux and shortly imprisoned in Limoges before entering Ravensbrück in February of 1944 (Dreyfus-Armand 123). Built to hold roughly 3,000 women and opened in 1939, Ravensbrück at its peak likely contained ten times that amount of women and children (Saidel 17-18). It is estimated that 132,000 overall passed through its gates, with an estimated 92,000 of them dying while inside (Saidel 23). Ultimately, Ravensbrück would become the backdrop for her collection of individual testimonies, simply titled *De la resistencia y la deportación* and first published in 1984, almost forty years after her liberation.

The dedication to the collection says it all: “A todas las mujeres españolas y del mundo entero que han luchado y luchan por la Justicia, la Igualdad, la Paz y la Amistad entre todos los pueblos.” Composed of fifty individual testimonies collected personally by Català (including her own), the collection tells the stories of Spanish women that experienced life in the French Resistance and Hitler’s concentration camps and still continued their fight against worldwide

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5 It is difficult for historians to arrive at a precise number of prisoners interred in Ravensbrück due to the destruction of camp records by the Nazi officials before the camps were liberated by the Allied forces (Saidel 23). While official camp estimates based on incomplete records indicate that 55,549 women and children passed through the camp (Saidel 24), other estimates, such as those suggested by Insa Eschebach, are as high as 139,000 (131).

6 I am using the more recent edition of this collection, published by Ediciones Península in 2000.
fascism, even from within the camps themselves. Included in the collection are personal photographs and original drawings juxtaposed with each testimony, signaling the historical value of the testimonies within and adding historical context and legitimacy to the text.

The reasons she gives for producing the compilation are straightforward, revealing her desire to prevent the rise of fascism in contemporary society and recover the voices of those erased by History. She writes:

Las mujeres españolas del exilio, como sombras, tejían también las redes en que el nazismo quedaría atrapado y derrotado. Pero el gran silencio de muerte de nuestras inmoladas lanza su grito de alerta y despierta nuestra conciencia. Son demasiados signos de pervivencia y recrudescencia fascistas, demasiados ‘Holocaustos’ y en demasiados puntos del globo para quedarnos mudos. (23)

Having been silenced through political oppression for decades, Català and the women of *De la resistencia y la deportación* fill an important historical void with their narratives and reclaim the right to insert their herstories into the greater narrative of the Spanish Civil War and Holocaust.

While the stories of French men and women who participated in the Resistance are well-known and widely documented, the Spanish women who were also an integral part in the struggle have largely been absent from the historical record—even from the narratives and testimonies of the often-overlooked Spanish men who also participated in the Resistance movements. In her novelized testimony of Català’s life, Carme Martí affirms this absence, writing that the women of *De la resistencia y la deportación* are essentially, “las olvidadas de los olvidados” (Part 5, Ch. 9). Being stifled not only by their traumatic experiences and ongoing political exile from Spain

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7 It should also be noted that two of the testimonies collected are from men. As former officers in the Resistance, they bear witness to the herstories of women that significantly contributed to the fight for democracy and liberation.

8 Portrayed in dialogue form, this statement comes in response to the revelation that Spanish men who had fought for the French Resistance testified that there were no Spanish women in Nazi concentration camps (Part 5, Ch. 9). Speaking from the perspective of Català, Martí writes, “Mira, los deportados españoles son los grandes olvidados de esta historia, y nosotras somos las olvidadas de los olvidados” (Part 5, Ch. 9).
but also by a male-dominated canon in their own sociocultural circles, the Spanish women of the Resistance faced nearly insurmountable challenges to their testimonial representations. In the words of Català herself, “Esos pocos testimonios de tan sencilla apariencia son fruto de un ingente trabajo no sólo en la investigación, sino en el vencer resistencias. Las viejas memorias deseaban quedar recluidas para siempre” (21). Refusing to let these women remain silently chained to the past forever, Català gives them a platform to work through their trauma, recover their forgotten voices and write herstories that have been missing from the record. Succinctly summarized by M. Fernández Nieto in the prologue to the collection, De la resistencia y la deportación is not a book that speaks about these women, but is rather “hablado o escrito por…ellas mismas” (16), giving them control over their own narratives.9

Although several critics have studied the testimonies of De la resistencia y la deportación as a cohesive whole, none have examined each testimony in-depth to uncover the specific narrative strategies used to (re)write history.10 These strategies are important and should not be overlooked—it is in fact through them that the individual voices and identities of the witnesses are rediscovered and reaffirmed in light of the trauma they have experienced. Like the other testimonial narratives from Matarranz, Doña, and Semprún analyzed in this project, De la resistencia y la deportación is a prime example of the use of fragmentation as a tool to overcome both personal and collective trauma and reinsert previously silenced identities and herstories into contemporary dialogue and historiography. Using temporal fragmentation, fragmentation of the

9 Because I am working with testimonies that are characterized by their fragmentation, I identify my omissions and/or edits with brackets. All un-bracketed ellipses are original to the texts.

10 Due to space constraints, my primary focus of analysis in this project is Català’s individual testimony, with the remaining forty-nine testimonies being utilized as secondary support and textual corroboration. For further insight into the overall, see Christina Duplá’a’s “Testimonio de la ex-deportada de Ravensbruck, Neus Català” or Suzanne Hintz’s “Neus Català’s De la resistencia y la deportación: A Testimonial of the Spanish Woman’s Experience during the Holocaust.”
narrative subject, structural/thematic fragmentation, and identitary fragmentation of both gender and nationality, Català and her comrades assimilate their experiences into the greater narrative of history, effectively challenging the historical accounts forged by the victors in both France and Spain following the Spanish Civil War and World War II.

Temporal Fragmentation

Temporal fragmentation is a key characteristic of Català’s testimony, and is visible in both the direct comments she makes about time and the way in which she portrays it. The temporal distortion of De la resistencia y la deportación not only emphasizes the testimonial nature of the text and the streams of consciousness that the author finds herself following as she attempts to (re)write her haunting memories of Ravensbrück, but also reveals the constant battle between history and memory, between repression and working-through. Writing memory as a cathartic tool is a key element of testimonial narratives produced via traumatic experiences, and Català’s testimony is no exception. In his study of Holocaust testimonies, Lawrence Langer notes that temporal distortion underlies testimonial narratives in part due to the time-disrupting process of remembering, but also acts as a key to unlock more cohesive narratives of those traumatic experiences:

The faculty of memory functions in the present to recall a personal history vexed by traumas that thwart smooth-flowing chronicles. Simultaneously, however, straining against what we might call disruptive memory is an effort to reconstruct a semblance of continuity in life that began as, and now resumes what we consider, a normal existence. ‘Contemporality’ becomes the controlling principle of these testimonies, as witnesses struggle with the impossible task of making their recollections of the camp experience coalesce with the rest of their lives.” (2-3).

This statement manifests itself very clearly in Català’s testimony and overall writing process. In the words of Suzanne Hintz, “Català discovered first-hand that writing or talking about the
deportee experience can be cathartic. She admitted to Montserrat Roig in the mid-1970s that once she told Roig of her experiences at Ravensbrück, the recurring nightmares dating from 1945 left her. Català felt as though the weight of the world had been lifted from her shoulders” (28).11

Like many testimonial narratives from the Holocaust, Català’s clearly reveals the effects of trauma on perceived time, specifically in reference to temporal distortion and the difficulty of narrating events in chronological order. Referring to the seemingly disjointed nature of her narration, she writes that, “Todos los recuerdos me vienen sin cronología. Instantánea, gris y negro, como aquel maldito campo” (45). She reaffirms (and excuses) the lack of chronology once more toward the end of her testimony, stating that “los recuerdos vienen cabalgando alocadamente, sin orden ni cronología” (61). Ernst van Alphen explains this type of temporal fracturing as resulting from the absence of temporally-consistent narrative frameworks available to the victims of the Holocaust. Arguing that events are experienced not as isolated incidences but rather as a continuous chain of happenings that have prehistory and prophetic abilities (i.e. the ability to predict future events), he writes:

It is . . . the form in which we experience and represent events that turns events into a continuous sequence. We experience events from the perspective of narrative frameworks in terms of which these events can be understood as meaningful. . . . From a narrative point of view, it is exactly this impossibility of activating a narrative framework as an anticipation of coming events that characterizes Holocaust experience. (33)

11 Monserrat Roig is an important figure in testimonial literature produced in the wake of the Holocaust. Born in Barcelona, she was a novelist and quasi-historian throughout her lifetime. Christina Dulpláa writes: “The testimonial voice in all her writings (thirty-two published works: testimonial novels, fictional narratives, essays, drama and journalism) represents an ideological commitment to the negated or manipulated past throughout Franco’s dictatorship” (“Monserrat” 235). Of her contributions, her most important is arguably a collection of oral testimonies that she published in 1977, titled *Els catalans als camps nazis*, in which she recounts the stories of Catalan men and women who perished in Nazi concentration camps during World War II.
Whereas normal, day-to-day happenings find their meaning in pre-and-post events, van Alphen argues that concentration camp prisoners essentially lost the ability to anticipate future events within the camps, thus fragmenting the continuous sequence of perceived reality and the resulting memories of it. For van Alphen, this temporal confusion is typified in the testimony of Auschwitz survivor, Edith P: “In Auschwitz it was not possible . . . to know what kind of events could be expected. You never knew either if you were partaking in the middle, the beginning, or the ending of a sequence of events” (33). As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, Susan J. Brison similarly postulates that the disruption of time caused by trauma results in the undoing of self and the difficulty to logically connect past, present, and future (39). Particularly important here is the concept of temporal disruption. Echoing a sentiment expressed in many Holocaust testimonies, Català articulates her experiences through sequences of fragmented blocks of time that cannot be reconciled as a cohesive whole. She further depicts the timeline of her life as fractured into various stages that do not flow together chronologically. Emphasizing the split, she writes, “En Ravensbrück se acabó mi juventud el 3 de febrero de 1944” (26). Imbedded in this revelation is what Lawrence Langer describes as a splitting of the Self, a phenomena in which traumatic experiences fundamentally create temporal and emotional divides in one’s self-perception and identity. This temporal distortion manifests itself not only in the lack of chronological order but also in the way in which Català juxtaposes various verb tenses (past, present, future) in an attempt to both understand and fully describe her experiences.

Though various dates and times are scattered throughout the testimony in order to offer an understandable historical framework, many of the memories Català relates lack concrete temporal references and are simply portrayed as events happening within the mysterious shroud of concentration camp haze. Midway through her testimony, the temporal distortion of her
memories is clearly revealed as she abruptly interrupts the narration of a sequence of particularly difficult memories to recall. Describing the mass killing of a group of Jewish children and the consequent grief of their mothers she writes, “Gritaban tanto, pobres madres, que las encerraban en un barracón sin comer ni beber, ni manta ni aseo, hasta que, locas de verdad, se desgarraban unas a otras y, medio muertas, las llevaban a Mittwerda, un campo ficticio, lugar de exterminio directo” (46-47). Immediately after this heartwrenching tale she brusquely changes subject, declaring, “Y ahora empezaré por el principio, por las diferentes etapas que pasa una mujer con identidad y de condición normal hasta llegar a ser un número menos que un perro o un caballo” (47). What follows is not a chronological record of various acts and experiences that dehumanized Català and her fellow prisoners in Ravensbrück, but rather a commentary of her emotional reactions to the events mixed with historical facts that legitimize her feelings. It is in these portrayals of the body, mind, and soul that Català most frequently reveals temporal breaks in narration, using the present tense as if reliving the experiences as a means of trying to overcome them while simultaneously drawing the audience more closely into the narrative.12

She begins the process of emotional explanation by recounting the discovery of the first louse in her barracks and consequently the beginning of her degradation, writing, “A los ocho días de nuestra llegada, me encuentro con el primer piojo, tan grande y tan feo que me produjo vómitos” (48). Rather than providing protective clothing for the prisoners to eradicate the outbreak of lice, the Nazi guards give them instead the traditional striped jumpsuit and, “un capuchón que servía para esconder el pelo y afearnos, no para protegernos” (48). Moving immediately on to describe the infirmary of Ravensbrück, the use of the present tense continues

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12 Dori Laub explains the creation of an emotional bond between the victim and the audience in terms of ownership, suggesting that, “the listener to the trauma comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself” (“Bearing Witness” 57).
to portray the intensity and continuity of her emotions. Revealing the ongoing psychological influence of these experiences, she writes, “guardo intacto el recuerdo de terror y de vergüenza que sufrimos” (49). The infirmary, far from being a place of healing, is portrayed by Català as a death trap, one in which being declared too sick to work is essentially a death sentence—a memory of fear that she still carries with her to this day. As she continues her description of the infirmary, she remembers the moment in which it is suspected that she has Tuberculosis. When the doctors test find the results of the blood test negative, she remarks, “Yo miraba mi cuerpo desnudo. No, no estoy tuberculosa, tenía esperanza” (49). Though describing the event in the past, her relief of the negative diagnosis still pervades her mind at the point of writing her testimony, manifested in the use of the present tense to describe her emotional reactions.

The present tense as a means of emphasizing the psychological influence of traumatic experiences in retrospect is similarly seen in many of the other testimonies in De la resistencia y la deportación. One example is that of Soledad Alcón, a resistant who crossed the border into France at the end of the Spanish Civil War and then proceeded to join a local resistance group whose purpose was to sabotage factories producing equipment for the Nazis. As she describes the moment in which the pro-Nazi factory overseers are about to discover her involvement in the acts of sabotage she writes, “Empiezo a hacerme la enferma, como si me dolieran las tripas; había parado el torno, me contorsionaba de dolor. El jefe, creyendo que era a causa de los trastornos menstruales, hace que me den un vale de salida” (70). Alcón writes as if re-experiencing her role in the original event, though the juxtaposition of the past and present reveal her attempts to also distance herself from it. Mercedes Bernal’s testimony is another example of this temporal juxtaposition. While writing about the forced march from Ravensbrück that occurred as the Russian troops advanced upon the camp, she notes, “En una sola noche nos
hicieron andar 50 km. A la que no podía andar, le pegaban un tiro Yo soy testigo de varias ejecuciones, mejor dicho, asesinatos. Así durante tres días” (111). Though she narrates the majority of the events themselves in the past tense, she uses the present when describing her personal role as witness. Quite literally, her memories shape her perception of herself; she is no longer able to separate her identity from her past, instead seeing herself in terms of her inerasable experiences and revealing the emotional power that her memories still contain. Rita Pérez’s use of the present tense also signals the power of her psychological responses to her past experiences. Writing about the night she is arrested by the Gestapo, she relates, “Y una noche, tiraron una bomba, no sé dónde, y los alemanes movilizaron para investigar todas las barriadas. Aquí llegó uno […] Entran. Me piden los documentos de identidad. Los enseño” (327). Like those of Alcón and Bernal, Pérez’s testimony reveals the psychological grip that her memories still hold over her and her perceptions of her role in the original events. Past and present become fused together, once again revealing the haunting nature of trauma and the attempts to overcome it via narration.

In addition to using the juxtaposition of various verb tenses as a means of working-through the trauma and emotionally connecting with her readers, Català also offers insight into the problematic nature of writing about traumatic experiences and the critical temporal distance that must be obtained in order to attempt it. In the introduction to De la resistencia y la deportación she explains that, “Los supervivientes de estos campos de exterminio en masa vivieron y sufrieron lo que jamás se podrá describir, pues no se han inventado las palabras para ello” (19). Van Alphen defines this lack of words and the difficulty of creating narratives of trauma as, “the split between the living of an event and the available forms of representation with/in which the event can be experienced” (27). Dori Laub similarly defines trauma narratives
in terms of the absence they portray: “The victim’s narrative—the very process of bearing
witness to massive trauma—does indeed begin with someone who testifies to an absence, to an
event that has not yet come into existence, in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of
the reality of its existence” (“Bearing Witness” 57). Català sheds light on these conjectures
throughout her narration of her Ravensbrück experiences. Upon arriving at the gates of the camp,
she writes:

Ravensbrück (Puente de los cuervos). ¿Quién será capaz de describir un día la
primera impresión? No he encontrado a nadie que haya dado la respuesta, ni por
aproximación, de lo que sentí al traspasar las puertas de un campo de exterminio.
No se han inventado las palabras para describirlo. Nunca podrá salir de los labios
de un deportado la intensidad de nuestro ser moral. (38)

Català further examines the meaning (and truth) of this statement in her own life, and after first
attempting to describe scenes of torture within Ravensbrück she writes, “Todo lo quería grabar
en mi memoria si salía con vida. ¿Por qué he tardado en gritarlo a los cuatro vientos?” (44). In
their study of the memorialization and social acknowledgement of traumatic events, Pennebaker
and Banasik suggest that this critical distance (typically between twenty-five and thirty years) is
a necessary physiological tool, citing that the immediate recall of traumatic events tends to
prolong the pain rather than enabling the victim to work through it (16). Going one step beyond
simply explaining traumatic narration in terms of critical distance, Laub furthermore suggests
that the sudden deluge of retrospective memory is the result of the narrative process: “The
emergence of the narrative which is being listened to—and heard—is, therefore, the process and

13 The constant negotiation of knowable versus unknowable reality is echoed in many of the testimonies of
De la resistencia y la deportación. A clear example is found in the testimony of Carmen Asensi. Referring to the
intentional nature of her written memories as she states, “Y cuando pienso en todo lo ocurrido me pregunto: ¿Es
posible que me hayan ocurrido tantas cosas? Pero no me arrepiento de nada, ¡de nada! Cumplí con mi deber, eso es
todo” (93). Another example is found in the testimony of Alfonsina Bueno Ester, who writes, “sería necesario que
todo se supiera, pero eso es imposible: es que nadie podrá explicar los sufrimientos y la torturas de las que
perecieron en las celdas de la cárcel de Ravensbrück. ¿A qué martirios habrán sucumbido? Ellas no podrán jamás
testimoniar el haber vivido el horror del horror” (144).
the place wherein the cognizance, the “knowing” of the event is given birth to” (“Bearing Witness” 57). As Català remembers the feelings and sights of her liberation from Ravensbrück, she legitimizes this theory: “La poesía de aquel campo verde y amarillo sólo me viene ahora a la memoria, al cabo de tantos años” (66, emphasis mine). Like survivors that are unable to fully understand or express their trauma so soon after their liberation, Català infers that certain memories have only resurfaced through time as the result of the intentional writing of her experience and the resulting working-through of the trauma itself.

Implicit in Català’s descriptions of the temporal nature of testimonial writing is the idea of memory as an intentional, elaborative process, one which Elizabeth Jelin heralds as a transformative and liberating process that allows victims to reclaim their agency of witnessing and of telling their stories (5). While Català uses various tenses to describe and work-through her experiences, as witness and omnipotent author she also interrupts her own narration by adding present-day commentary upon her memories, reinforcing her ownership and control of the text and the experiences portrayed within it. The first authorial interruption comes at the very beginning of her testimony as she writes, “Era el convoy de las 27.000, así llamadas y así aún conocidas entre las deportadas. Entre esas mil mujeres recuerdo que había checas, polacas que vivían o se habían refugiado en Francia, y un grupo de españolas” (25, emphasis mine). While she refers to statistical evidence to reveal the historical weight and merit of her words, she highlights the subjectivity of her memory in the recalling of the experience, implying that her memories are neither dictated nor bound by previous historiographical accounts. Numerous other

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14 The converse of this notion is that of involuntary memory. Studied by noteworthy psychoanalysts and researchers such as Sigmund Freud, the haunting memories, hallucinations and involuntary repetitions, according to Jelin, result in, “a presence without agency” (5). Intentional writing, then, becomes a tool with which traumatized individuals are able to reclaim their constructive and representative power over their own memories.
authorial interruptions continue to emphasize Català’s ownership of the text and her history, including quotes such as, “me veo obligada a citar a mis padres” (32), and “Quiero terminar con mi Resistencia, pues cada mujer podría escribir un libro” (32). Consequently, the reader is made aware not only of the influence of the present on the narration, but is also reminded of the very nature of the text itself. As a testimonial account, her testimony exists not only to recover the stories of her fallen comrades, but also exists to bring her unique perspective to light and thus create an alternative to the historical record.15

In a final display of the strategic capabilities of temporal fragmentation, Català uses the present and future aspects of her testimony to break with the idea of history as closed to new interpretations and alternatives. While historiography typically portrays historical events as finished and complete, Català chooses to demonstrate its incompleteness and the necessity to fill in the gaps with herstories that were erased from the public record. The introduction to De la resistencia y la deportación immediately signals this intent, summarizing the activities of Spanish guerrilleras in the French Resistance and creating space for the stories of Spanish women that have been historically forgotten or overlooked.16 However, rather than limit herself to simply correcting the record, Català also underscores the continual nature of her ideological battles, writing, “Si hacerlas hablar fue una victoria ganada al muro del silencio, más arduo fue

15 This emphasis on ownership manifests itself similarly in other testimonies within De la resistencia y la deportación as well. Celia Llaneza is a clear example, and her testimony is full of authorial interruptions of intent and assertions of her control over her testimony: “Yo quiero decir, porque creo que es muy importante para la juventud española que no ha conocido la guerra ni la emigración, ni la Resistencia” (285), “Yo tengo que decir, con toda honradez, que siempre he tenido miedo, como todo el mundo” (286), and “Yo voy a decir algo dedicado a la juventud actual de España, porque yo tengo dos hijas” (287). Concha González de Boix uses similar terms to underscore her agency as witness as well: “Quiero explicar una anécdota que refleja claramente el ambiente de terror en que estábamos sumergidos” (244).

16 Hintz similarly notes that, “She contradicts the history of Franco’s Spain when she and her fellow exiles document their post-Civil War experiences in France. Català also contradicts French history by marking a page of it for the Spanish Republican exiles who supported the Free French during the Nazi occupation” (31).
conseguir sus firmas y sus documentos para dejar la huella de su paso por una historia tan reciente que no ha terminado aún” (21, emphais mine). Instead of ending her testimony with a conclusion of finality, she once again stresses the dynamic nature of her narrative by combining the story of her liberation with that of her ongoing fight against fascism and historical oppression:

¿Cómo aliviar el dolor de mis padres, que tenían a su hijo condenado a treinta años y un día de prisión, habiéndosele conmutado la primera sentencia de muerte en España, después de haber hecho la resistencia en Francia y las guerrilleras en España? De inmediato me entregué a nuevas tareas, a nuevas responsabilidades. Era mi tabla de salvación. España no estaba muerta y no morirá jamás. La rueda avanza. ¿Que no? ¡Que sí! (67, emphasis mine)

For Català, the goal of her narrative is thus not simply to recover and validate herstories that have been omitted from public consciousness, but also to advocate for the continued fight against dehumanization. In summary, she claims, “Queremos advertir, hacer camino, que la Rueda avance para que un día nazca resplandeciente y para siempre, la ciudad del Sol” (23). Countless other voices from De la resistencia y la deportación likewise portray their narratives and ideological struggles as ongoing and constantly evolving. For some, the battle has not yet been won, as seen in the testimony of Julia de Paz: “la pena que tengo es que no hicimos todo lo necesario para terminar con los verdugos que oprimen nuestro pueblo, que tanto sufrimientos nos han acarreado a todos, pero pienso que un día no lejano podremos gritar Victoria y Libertad para todos” (326). For others like Lola Casadella, the fight is passed on from generation to generation: “La nueva generación tiene un trabajo difícil que realizar: es el combate por la Libertad, y no dudamos que lo ganará” (156).17 Celia Llaneza echoes this same sentiment, ending her testimony

17 Carmen Rodríguez de Morcillo demonstrates the multi-generational approach to the struggle as well, describing the political and ideological activism of her own children: “Hoy tenemos la satisfacción de verles animados por el mismo ideal y en la misma brecha, porque aún quedan muchas liberaciones por alcanzar” (363).
with a dedication to the Spanish youth: “Yo estoy satisfecha de ver que la juventud de España coge la bandera de otra forma, en otras condiciones, pero la bandera que nosotros plantamos de la forma que pudimos” (288). As a whole, the testimonies of De la resistencia y la deportación thus represent History (and Herstory) as neither closed nor complete, using temporal fragmentation as a way of overcoming the past, correcting the past, and ultimately opening new spaces for negotiation and dialogue with the past.

**Fragmentation of the Narrative Subject and Voice**

Like many testimonies from the Spanish Civil War and Holocaust, De la resistencia y la deportación contains a complex web of narrative subjects to which it gives a voice and a place in history. Theoretically speaking, it comes as no surprise that Català’s assortment of testimonies is both individual and collective in nature. In his fundamental analysis of memory and the way in which it is constructed and meaningfully related, Maurice Halbwachs observes that memory naturally occurs within socially-delimited constructs. Highlighting the constant interplay of individual and collective memory, he suggests that, “One may say that the individual remembers by placing himself in the perspective of the group, but one may also affirm that the memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories” (40). This dichotomy is clearly visible in the juxtaposition of the individual and collective perspectives in De la resistencia y la deportación, and as such has been suggested and studied by several noteworthy critics. In her study of Montserrat Roig’s Els Catalans als camps nazis, Christina Dupláa defines the duality of the testimonial voice in terms of its collective power and intent, observing that, “In the Catholic cultural tradition, testimony is presented fundamentally as a collective denunciation which, after claiming justice, is able to transmit solidarity for the future” (238). Maureen Tobin Stanley likewise comments upon the collective nature of De la resistencia y la deportación by suggesting
that incorporating multiple voices in the form of individual testimonies reinforces, “de modo exponencial la veracidad y credibilidad de un recuento individual” (4). That is to say, the multiplicity of voices lends credibility to each voice by way of verifying stories, connections and historical facts that are commonly shared among them. Though these observations are valid, they tend to focus on the polyphony of the collection as a whole at the exclusion of the complex web of narrative voices found in each individual testimony. Indeed, at the individual level each testimony also demonstrates various degrees of character fragmentation that reveals the interplay of individual memory and the working-through of personal and communal trauma.\(^\text{18}\)

Overall, there are three distinct narrative voices through which the voices of De la resistencia y la deportación narrate their experiences: the individual voice (“yo”), the collective voice (“nosotros”), and the historical voice (“ella/ellas”). Symbolically, these voices perform different roles within the narrative and offer profound insight into the process of writing memory and working-through trauma. The individual voice reveals the resistance to identitary/historical homogenization and the attempt to reestablish the self as a witness capable of confronting her former captors, the collective voice highlights the pluralistic nature of the resistance movements against fascism and the role of symbolic community in working-through traumatic experiences, and the historical voice both attempts to create critical distance between the witness and the events that are difficult to assimilate into reality or consciousness and emphasizes the historical

\(^{18}\) Kai Erikson suggests that collective (or communal) trauma affect social groups in multiple ways, suggesting that, “traumatic experiences work their way so thoroughly into the grain of the affected community that they come to supply its prevailing mood and temper, dominate its energy and its sense of self, govern the way its members relate to one another. The point to be made here is not that calamity serves to strengthen the bonds linking people together—it does not, most of the time—but that the shared experience becomes almost like a common culture, a source of kinship” (190). Jeffrey Alexander uses the term “cultural trauma” to describe this: “Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (1).
character of the testimonies. Combined, all three offer a more comprehensive view of the herstories that are successfully introduced and integrated into the historical record, challenging those representations of female Spanish resistance fighters formerly heralded in Francoist and Hitlerian propaganda.\textsuperscript{19}

From the beginning of her individual testimony, Català makes it clear that her narrative is a reflection not only of the experiences of her comrades, but an equally important depiction of her journey as an individual. In fact, the first line of her testimony reveals this perspective: “Lo que yo he vivido, lo que yo he sufrido, yo me lo he ganado’. Esto me decía en los cinco interminables días y cinco interminables noches que duró nuestro viaje fatal desde Compiègne, campo de concentración al norte de París, hacia Ravensbrück, campo de exterminio internacional para mujeres” (25). While she still uses the plural possessive adjective “nuestro” to describe the trip, her emphasis in the first section of her testimony is on her own memories and by default, her own coping strategies and identitary struggles. As she narrates her entrance into Ravensbrück, she remembers the sudden onset of flashbacks from her childhood, life flashing before her eyes in the face of what she assumes at the time to be an almost-certain death. She writes:

\begin{quote}
Ravensbrück, ¡mil veces maldito campo! Mi primera impresión fue que yo dejaría muy pronto la vida, que amaba apasionadamente […] Mi mente enfebrecida buscaba la evasión y me veía en Guiamets, un pueblecito del Priorat. Recordaba mi infancia rebelde, mi alegre juventud, el haber organizado la JSUC y ser miembro fundador del PSUC. Haber llevado a buen puerto a mis 180 chiquillos de la colonia, ‘Las acacias,’ en Premià de Dalt. De haber cumplido estrictamente mis deberes en la Resistencia, de haber resistido los interrogatorios sin denunciar
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{19} Although Franco viewed women as indispensable in reconquering Spain and establishing a new state, he nonetheless relegated them to the private spaces of domesticity. In a 1945 decree, Franco’s regime plainly stated that women were responsible for “defending traditional family values and preserving the domestic arts” (Morcillo Gómez 55). As such, Franco viewed Republican women—especially the \textit{milicianas}, or women who actively participated on the war fronts—with disdain, characterizing them as butch and/or masculine and suggesting that they were committing heresy against the natural order of gender roles as established by the Catholic Church. Elizabeth Munson points to Franco’s film \textit{Raza} (1942) as a clear example of Franco’s perception of Republican women. In the film, they are depicted as dirty, uncivil, and pants-wearing—an image that is juxtaposed with the portrayal of Nationalist women as clean, polite, and dress-wearing (142).
Taking a step back from the narrative and the inevitability of having to (re)experience Ravensbrück and the crisis of identity there within, she uses several pages to explain the evolution of her participation with the Resistance, focusing on her moral conscience and the individual experiences that have propelled her into sociopolitical activism. Refusing to use superfluous historical details that could be written by countless others in their own accounts of the Resistance, Català chooses one moment that symbolizes her choice to resist the tides of Fascism advancing into France. Waiting to catch a bus, tired and depressed after completing a covert operation for the Turnac maquis core, she recalls seeing a group of five Spanish refugees riding bicycles through the city center in a display of resistance:

Me sentí orgullosa y emocionada. Qué valientes son nuestros guerrilleros. Resistieron 32 meses de guerra en España y ahí los tienes, mal vestidos y peor calzados, sin pan muchas veces y durmiendo al azar de alguna cabaña, y no se sienten vencidos. ‘Tienes que aguantar, Neus, tienes que aguantar, eres un granito de arena en esta colosal guerra, pero necesaria. Tu puesto es la lucha. ¡Guerra sin cuartel a los nazis!’ (32-33)

While she depicts the Resistance in terms of collective action, she also places emphasis on her specific role and her unique emotional responses to the cause for which she fights. Though she sees herself as a mere grain of sand in the midst of a much larger group of comrades, her call to resist is initiated on a personal level, one that stems from her past history and experience.\(^\text{21}\) The

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\(^{20}\) This declaration clearly echoes that of Felipe Matarranz in his discussions of his role within the \textit{maquis}: though they see the importance of their unique roles, they find their value in belonging to a greater narrative.

\(^{21}\) To this effect, she acknowledges the influence of her parents on her sociopolitical conscience, writing that, “Mi padre, Baltasar Català, el campesino que soñó ser montañista […] Mi valiente madre, Rosa Pallejà, se quedaba muchas veces sola en la masía guardando el fuego como una vestal […] Su puerta siempre estuvo abierta para los fugitivos y para algún herido en combate” (32).
end of her testimony once again reinforces the individuality of her calling and the particular importance of her role. Arriving at the train station in Perigueux following her liberation, she is greeted by the sound of women shouting for her. As they press her for information about their husbands, sons and daughters who were captured with Català, she reflects, “Las consolaba como podía; me parecía abrazar de nuevo aquellas camaradas entrañables del campo, para infundirles aliento […] De inmediato me entregué a nuevas tareas, a nuevas responsabilidades. Era mi tabla de salvación” (67). From the beginning of her testimony to its end, Català thus frames her narrative according to her specific roles, experiences and decisions, resisting the homogenization of her story and those of her comrades by including details specific to her individual journey.

The use of the first-person perspective also accentuates the way in which Català reassumes the authority over her own voice and her position as witness, discovering the power to address her oppressors directly with neither fear nor shame. In the most powerful example of the rediscovery of her agency as victim and witness, Català recalls the day that Heinrich Himmler, head overseer of Hitler’s concentration camps, arrives for an inspection of Ravensbrück. Having been reduced to voiceless objects, Català and her companions are unable to testify even to their very existence before him, falling instead into a deathly silence of defeat. Using her written testimony to rectify the silence and challenge Himmler’s authority, she erases the muteness of the thousands of victims he ordered to die, writing:

Tú, uno de los grandes pavos del régimen hitleriano, lleno de condecoraciones, lustrado y lustroso, miope y monstruoso, en aquellas días te creías fuerte, invencible, pero nosotras, quizá no lo veríamos, sabíamos ya que habíamos ganado la gran batalla contra la muerte y nos sentíamos más fuertes que tú . . . tú, que hiciste desaparecer a millones de hombres y mujeres de toda Europa, decenas de compatriotas nuestras sin dejar rastro, serías juzgado por el tribunal de la Historia en Nuremberg y ahorcado. (53, emphasis mine)
Directing her voice squarely at Himmler, Català is finally able to speak more loudly than her oppressor(s), using the first-person narration as a platform (or rather, megaphone) from which to open the vault of repressed voices and reclaim their authority as witnesses with the capacity to change history. For Stanley, it signifies that Català—and not her persecutors—is given the last word, the word that will reverberate around the world (6).

While her testimony is framed in terms of her individual journey and voice, though, her narration takes on a decidedly more collective tone when she turns to descriptions of her capture, torture, and internment in Ravensbrück. Having just been detained in her first prison cell in Limoges, Català recognizes that her story is merely one of hundreds: “Me cubrí con la manta, tendida en la colchoneta manchada de sangre. ¡Cuántos torturados habían dormido en mi cama!” (34). Reading the fingernail-drawn inscriptions on the wall of her cell, her instincts are confirmed as she discovers the (written) voices of those silenced before her: “Camarada, tú que ocuparás mi sitio cuando yo haya dejado de existir, di al mundo, si te sales, que los antifascistas vamos a la muerte con la frente alta, con fe absoluta en la Victoria. ¡Viva la France!” (34-35). This communal identity is a key aspect of many testimonial narratives and finds much of its explanation in terms of trauma theory, as stated by Susan J. Brison:

> Working through, or remastering, traumatic memory (in the case of human-inflicted trauma) involves a shift from being the object or medium of someone else’s (the perpetrator’s) speech to being the subject of one’s own. The act of bearing witness to the trauma facilitates this shift, not only by transforming traumatic memory into a coherent narrative that can then be integrated into the survivor’s sense of self and view of the world, but also by reintegrating the survivor into a community, reestablishing connections essential to selfhood. (39-40, emphasis mine)

Kai Erikson similarly postulates that trauma, “is normally understood as a somewhat lonely and isolated business because the persons who experience it so often drift away from the everyday
moods and understandings that govern social life. But, paradoxically, the drifting away is
accompanied by revised views of the world that, in their turn, become the basis for community”
(198). Català, who has been taken from her family, husband, and *maquis* comrades, identifies the
need to create a sense of community—even if it is merely symbolic—in order to find the
willpower and strength to resist the torture at hand and one day be able to relate her experience to
others. Seeking refuge in the protection of the plural voice, she begins to recount her experience
in Ravensbrück in terms of the collective group of which she is a part, writing:

> De repente se para el tren, y de nuevo esos gritos gutturales como si de gargantas
> salvajes salieran, nos abrieron los vagones precintados. El aire helado nos parecía
> como un cielo, pero caímos al suelo como borrachas y a culetazos y puntapiés nos
> empujaron a unos barracones donde nos distribuyeron un vaso de sopa […] de
> nuevo a latigazos, nos encerraron en los vagones […] Otra vez con aquellos gritos
> salvajes y los golpes, bajamos a la estación de Fürstemberg. (38)

Though the Nazis attempt to isolate the women in Ravensbrück through torture and
objectification, the women nevertheless create collective forms of resistance that Català
dedicates time to describing. Català further depicts this community in terms of family, in which
each individual has a specific role and thus a specific responsibility or duty to perform in order to
meet the needs of the group: “A las ‘ancianas’ de 50 años las llamábamos madre, y las jóvenes
las hacíamos creer que las necesitábamos para resistir y las protegíamos discretamente. La vida
en aquel antro de muerte era amada con pasión y el ansia inmensa en libertad nos mantenía en
pie” (57). This calculated resistance manifests itself in many ways throughout *De la resistencia y
la deportación*, both within the experiences related and within the very text itself.

The first act of rebellion is initiated just a few days after their arrival, instituting the
starting point of the creation of their symbolic community: “Pero veníamos impregnadas de
combates y hazañas y nació espontáneo nuestro primer acto de rebeldía; quinientas gargantas
lanzaron un ‘¡No!’ fenomenal. Las de delante recibieron la primera embestida de las kapos y aufseherinen, pero las hicimos desfilar bajo la segunda fila. Nuestros verdugos pegando y nosotras avanzando, ocupamos el comedor” (40). In a declarative statement that further emphasizes their collectivity and strength in unity, Català describes the prisoners’ decision to refuse to contribute to the torture and/or death of their fellow comrades, solidifying their collective identity: “Mejor era eso que no quedarte como Verfügbarren (disponible), que podías ser utilizada para ahorcar a otras presas. Ésta fue mi obsesión constante. Eso jamás lo haría. Antes la tortura. Eso lo habíamos jurado todas del barracón” (44). Far from being solidarity for solidarity’s sake, she equates their creation of a symbolic community with the ability to survive and resist even in light of their physical and mental weakness after months of being tortured: “¿Cómo se pudo resistir? Fue, de un lado, cuestión de suerte; pero sobre todo, por nuestra moral de lucha, no pensando en una misma y siendo solidaria con las demás” (57). Resistance within the camps is portrayed as being possible only within the bounds of finding strength and identity in the collective. In one of her strongest statements underscoring the importance of collectivity and solidarity, Catalá, when asked by a Catholic prisoner to whom non-Christians in the camps can look to for hope if not God, Català responds by saying, “¿Cómo que no tenemos a nadie? Te tengo a ti, y a ésta y a las otras, millones de seres, ¿y te parece poco?” (60). Due to the collective nature of her resistance and survival, Català ultimately reflects that her personal memories thus occur, “emparejados con alguna otra deportada” (61). For Català, the writing of her memories and resistance thus comes hand-in-hand with the narration of the group she deems responsible for her salvation.22

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22 The importance of solidarity and group identification is likewise reflected in interviews that Català has done. In Elisenda Belenguer Mercadé’s Neus Català: Memòria I lluita, Català is quoted as stating that the most
Lastly, in addition to the first person singular and plural perspectives, Català also intersperses her narration with brief sections narrated in the more formal third-person ("ella/ellas"). Of the various narrative voices used by Català, this particular voice is the most sudden and unexpected. Upon describing their initial entrance into the camp, Català breaks abruptly with the first-person narration and puts symbolic distance between herself and the events about to unfold in Ravensbrück, reflecting: “¿Qué pasaría por la mente de cada una de estas mil combatientes de los Ejércitos de las Sombras, extenuadas por las abrumadoras tareas de la Resistencia, por los largos meses de cárcel, de torturas en los terribles interrogatorios? En unos minutos la boca del Infierno de Ravensbrück cerraría sus puertas y se apoderaría con su engranaje fatal de mujeres heroicas que pronto serían sombras” (25). Though she is one of the women about to enter Ravensbrück’s gates, she describes the weight of the experience as if she is emotionally removed from its influence. She further wonders, “¿De qué muerte morirían aquellas mujeres que con gritos desgarradores de espanto y de dolor, por minutos, por medias horas interminables, rompían el mortal silencio de las calles de Ravensbrück? ¿Qué harían con ellas los perros lobos cuyos ladridos y gruñidos se asemejaban a los de una fiera devorando carne?” (41). Català knows what will happen in this instances because she personally lived it, and yet chooses to speculate as if she is metaphorically separated from the events. For psychologists Nigro and Neisser, the juxtaposition of the first-person and third-person perspectives demonstrates the different functions of both as they relate to how individuals remember events. They observe that remembering (or reliving) memories from the first-person point of view tends to focus the individual on the emotional implications of the memory whereas

important survival strategy in Ravensbrück was to, "mantenir la solidaritat i no perdre la dignitat" (91) ("maintain solidarity and not lose dignity").
the third-person point of view attempts to make the memory more objective. In line with trauma theories, this supports the idea that survivors of traumatic experiences often find it necessary to depict events in more impersonal ways in order to escape the psychological difficulty and confusion that accompanies memories of trauma. In this sense, Català’s narrative reads more like a historical document than a first-person narrative, highlighting the self-proclaimed historical value of the text itself while also allowing her to emotionally escape from the effects of re-living the experience. Combined with her use of the first person singular and plural perspectives, this juxtaposition of voices gives Català a vehicle through which to communicate and better understand her traumatic experiences while still remaining faithful to the collective and historical intentions of her testimony. This is further enhanced by her creative use of the linguistic, symbolic, and structural space of her testimony.

**Fragmentation of Linguistic, Symbolic and Structural Space**

As a whole, the testimonies of *De la resistencia y la deportación* read as fragmented texts from start to finish, linguistically, symbolically and structurally. As such, they do not consist of smooth, cohesive forms of narration but are rather characterized by the rough juxtaposition of literary elements used in various combinations without a consistent pattern: ellipses, repetitive phrases, incomplete sentences and/or thoughts, inverted metaphors that break with traditional symbolism, intertextual references, linguistic code-switching between German, French, Catalan and Spanish, and the inclusion of photographs and drawings at the end of each testimony.\(^{23}\)

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\(^{23}\) As with any narrative collection constructed by an editor, questions arise as to the historicity of the accounts and the influence or control that the editor maintains over the final edition(s). In the prologue to the collection, M. Fernández Nieto assures the readers that no significant editing of the original testimonies has taken place. He states, “con la obsesiva preocupación de no deformar ni falsear el contenido de los testimonios, se han hecho pequeños retoques, los indispensables [...]. No ha habido ninguna clase de censura, pero sí recortes selectivos, en algunos casos extensos, sobre todo cuando los relatos se alargaban en detalles muy personales de la entrevistada anteriores al momento de ser enviada a los campos de exterminio” (15-16).
through this seemingly haphazard narrative space that the complexity and inexpressible nature of traumatic experience and memory is both revealed and strategically addressed.

At work in the testimonies of *De la resistencia y la deportación* are two forces that, though separate, ultimately complement one another. On one hand, the trauma inherent in concentration camp experiences leads to naturally fragmented narrative structures and strategies. Along these lines, Bakhurst suggests that in combination with the influence of social networks (i.e. Halbwachs’ theory of collective memory), language and signs (be they pictures or words) actually guide the process of memory and its access to the symbolic, resulting in the narrativization of memory (211). Because language is the medium through which memory and identity are thus recovered, the sociocultural characteristics of any given linguistic code are also influential in narrative texts and the memories they relate. Due to the disruptive factors of exile, torture and trauma, survivors of the Spanish Civil War and Holocaust typically find themselves with fractured linguistic systems that lack stable foundations and are thus difficult to use consistently, leading to textual fragmentation and incomplete memories. On the other hand, a desire to resist hegemonic forms of (false) representation equally results in the utilization of linguistic and symbolic structures that defy tradition, even if the fragmentation itself is in large part caused by the underlying trauma. To this extent, Barbara Christian points to the highly constructed and hegemonic nature of language, arguing that academic criticism and philosophy have historically controlled literary theory, analysis and representation at a fundamental level: “It is this tendency towards the monolithic, monotheistic, etc., which worries me about the race for

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24 Bakhurst, summarizing the earlier findings of Russian psychologist Vygotsky, states, “it seemed that the sign facilitated remembering” (211). In other words, the presence of a symbol (image, word, etc.) guides the process of narrative memory and, “we remember by constructing narratives which require the recall of past events for their intelligible completion” (211).
theory. Constructs like the *center* and the *periphery* reveal the tendency to want to make the world less complex by organizing it according to one principle, to fix it through an idea which is really an ideal” (2134). Applied to historiography, the same case may be made for representations of the victims of the Holocaust: written from hegemonic perspectives, History looks at testimonies and their symbolic systems of representation through a black-and-white lens, avoiding the reality of narratives that break with more traditional symbolic paradigms or even textually contradict themselves. Interestingly, the linguistic choices in *De la resistencia y la deportación* directly resist this hegemonic control of language and representation, destroying and inverting traditional metaphors, symbols and paradigms and narrating from interstitial grey spaces that embrace complexity and unexplainable experiences while simultaneously enabling the witness/author to remember the past.

Linguistically, the testimonies of *De la resistencia y la deportación* appear fragmented in two foundational ways. First, they juxtapose multiple languages—Spanish, French, German—with seemingly random patterns of translation. And second, they employ metaphors and imagery that depart from their more customary uses and signal the unnatural or unexplainable nature of traumatic experiences and their inherent resistance to oppressive hegemonic paradigms. Such linguistic and symbolic complexity is first visible at the very start of Català’s testimony. While narrating her arrival at Ravensbrück, she writes: “Con 10 SS y sus 10 ametralladoras, 10 *aufsehermen* y 10 *schlage* (látigo para caballos), con 10 perros lobos dispuestos a devorarnos, empujadas bestialmente, hicimos nuestra triunfal entrada en el mundo de los muertos” (25). The first notable aspect of this explanation is the obvious insertions of German (half translated, half untranslated), a pattern that continues throughout her testimony. Translating some of the phrases while leaving others in the original German symbolically depicts the tension created while
existing between borders, enabling the reader to experience the linguistic confusion often experienced by Català and her comrades. Though she intended to learn German in order to insult the camp guards, she was only able to retain several phrases and isolated words. This further added to her experience of living on the margins, unable to fully communicate or reclaim her voice and ability to protest her inhuman treatment. A second notable characteristic of her initial description of Ravensbrück is the way in which Català brashly juxtaposes the metaphors of death and triumph. In doing so, she continues to heighten both the sense of discomfort and confusion within the reader (that cannot, by virtue of logic, understand the events or descriptions at hand), and also uses word combinations that, at their very core, portray reality as unable to be fully known or experienced. Fellow Holocaust survivor Primo Levi expresses this narrative difficulty in terms of the insufficiency of language: “our language lacks words to express this offense, the demolition of a man” (9). Bringing to mind the linguistic theories of critics such as van Alphen, Català’s testimony underscores the gap between linguistic capacity and symbolic representation. Further evidence of this gap is seen in the way Català resorts to inverting the symbols of reality and the dream world, saying “Felices las que habían tenido un sueño alegre; su despertar era atroz, pero habían tenido unos momentos humanos” (48). Because there exists no language in which to describe the state in-between life and death, she must creatively and rebelliously use tradition symbolism in new, paradoxical ways. In her analysis of the relationship between trauma and linguistic output, Juliet Mitchell suggests that, “Traumatic language is a

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25 George Steiner suggests that German may, in fact, be the only language capable of fully expressing the horrors of the Holocaust: “It is in German, at the very source of its modern genius and linguistic conventions […] that the elimination, the Ausrottung of the Jew from Europe, that the burning alive of the Jew, is clearly enunciated” (157).

26 Català includes a hand-drawn picture of the women’s’ sleeping quarters in Ravensbrück that further illustrates this paradox. The drawing is titled “El paraíso de los sueños de Ravensbrück” (241).
verbal version of the visual language of dreams; words are metaphors, similes, and symbolic
equations; they have the status of the inner but not internal objects; they become expressions of
feeling rather than of meaning” (132, emphasis mine). In this sense, Catalá’s destruction of
traditional symbolism and metaphorical language further emphasizes the emotional weight of her
experiences, a phenomenon which is also highly visible in many of the other testimonies in De la
resistencia y la deportación.27

The testimonies of De la resistencia y la deportación also demonstrate structural
fragmentation that symbolically portray the events experienced. This manifests itself
aesthetically in the forms of repetition, sudden interruptions, choppy narration and the use of
scattered ellipses. Due to its longer length, Catalá’s testimony serves as a prime example to this
degree of structural fragmentation. As Catalá is describing her work with the Resistance, she
suddenly exclaims, “Heraus, heraus! Austreten!” (¡Fuera, fuera! ¡Salid! ¡Venga, deprisa!). Una
espesa niebla se había extendido, para mí, por toda la tierra esa mañana del 11 de noviembre de
1943.” (33). From this point onward she begins the downhill narration of her detention in
Ravensbrück. As she begins to describe the journey from her first prison cell in Limoges to
Ravensbrück the fragmentation grows more frequent, leading to series of incomplete thoughts,
thoretical monologues, and a stream of consciousness that further demonstrate the
unexplainable nature of the events.28 Of the nights spent in Ravensbrück she writes, “Ochenta

27 For Mercedes Bernal, recollections of the entrance to Ravensbrück juxtapose and invert the concepts of
normal and abnormal: “Yo debo decir que en aquellos momentos todo lo abnormal nos parecía normal. La visión del
campo casi no nos causaba sorpresa. Estábamos acostumbrados a la muerte, a todo lo inhumano” (110). Alfonsina
Bueno Ester offers a different though still fragmented perspective of her arrival at Ravensbrück: “Nos parecía que
nada era verdad de cuanto no acontecía; era fantasmagórico, no lo puedo describir” (140).

28 Theoretical monologues center primarily on rhetorical questions that Catalá poses throughout her
descriptions of her traumatic experiences within the camp. An example is found on page 41. While attempting to
describe the living conditions in Ravensbrück, she exclaims, “¿De qué morirían aquellas mujeres con gritos
desgarradores de espanto y de dolor, por minutos, por medias horas interminables, rompían el silencio de las calles
centímetros de ancho par cuatro pies contra cabeza… Noches de ensueño, noches sin sueño, noches de espanto. ¡No mires afuera por la ventana, no te levantes!...” (41). As she attempts to describe the crematory ovens of Ravensbrück, she once again resorts to using short, choppy phrases and fragments:

Todo lo que nos envolvía era terror. Aquel olor a carne quemada y a podrido; aquel incesante rumor, ruido inimitable, mezcla de quejidos, susurros, aullidos, lamentos, gritos, chasquidos, jadeos, ladrillos y las mil y una maldiciones de aquella torre de Babel. Y los hornos crematorios, que no cesaban día y noche hasta tragarse por turnos a las encargadas de alimentarlos de carne humana. De muertas o de vivas como Sofía Litman, una joven madre española. Y los cuervos siempre graznando. Música funeraria. (46)

Other testimonies in De la resistencia y la deportación likewise contain equally fractured descriptions. Imprisoned in Ravensbrück along with Català, Sabina González offers a similarly fragmented description of the camp: “No puedo describir la entrada en el campo. Fue terrible, terrible. Los SS chillando y pegando, los perros lobos aullando, un frío de 15°. Serían las tres de la madrugada” (240). Unable to continue on much longer, she finishes her testimony abruptly: “Después de esto ya no puedo hablar más, el llanto me ahoga” (241). By the same token, the testimony of Rita Pérez equally demonstrates a high degree of structural fragmentation. In addition to the consistent and abrupt changes of subject throughout her narration, her testimony also ends with a series of incomplete thoughts: “La primera vez que me entraron ganas de llorar fue en Ravensbrück y, ¡por tanto, ya había de qué llorar en muchas ocasiones!... Pero… Nos habían endurecido de tal forma, que ya no éramos humanas para nada. Yo digo: ‘Hemos perdido toda sensación de humanidad.’ Y es verdad… Que después, cuando sales de todas esas atrocidades…” (331). For Pérez, the inability of describing inhuman experiences presents itself...
directly, resulting in incomplete narration. Julia De Paz, whose testimony takes the form of a letter, directly informs Català of the possible fragmentation of her narration, writing, “Ya no sé ni cómo empezar para hacer el informe del que me has hablado, pues sirvo mejor para trabajar que para explicarme; después de los años transcurridos y, un poco de alejamiento, todo contribuye bastante, pues después de tantos años creo que no seré capaz de acordarme de todo” (322). Not surprisingly, her testimony remains unfinished with Català as editor labeling it as a “testimonio incompleto” (326). Though De Paz gives Català poetic license to fill in or complete the parts of her testimony that remain obscure or unfinished (322), Català instead maintains the narrative as is, refusing to question its historicity or validity simply due to its fractured state. In the eyes of Català, allowing fragmented texts speak for themselves is the best way to represent subjective experiences as they are both lived and remembered.29

As seen in the testimonial narratives of Matarranz, Doña, and Semprún, the fragmentary nature of *De la resistencia y la deportación* clearly lends itself to the task of identitary (re)negotiation, creating a space in which Català and the women represented in the collection of testimonies are able to work through the tension existing between their present identities and their past memories. Through the lens of temporal fragmentation, the distortion of the narrative voice, and a fragmented aesthetic and structure, Català raises questions of identity as they relate to gender and nationality, initiating a dialogue with History and contemporary society. Revealing the heterogeneous characteristics, attitudes, and roles intentionally adopted by the women of the Resistance, Català refuses to simplify the debate raging around gender roles and conflicting nationalities, allowing each woman to portray their realities without censorship. As a result, *De

29 Suzanne Hintz also notes that the act of maintaining fragmented testimonies in their original states further lends authenticity *De la resistencia y la deportación* by demonstrating that Català did not overtly edit the narratives of the other women included in her collection (30).
la resistencia y la deportación demonstrates the dynamic nature of identity and how it is constantly renegotiated on both individual and collective levels. In addition, the collection of testimonies further challenges the demeaning, biased, and incomplete histories authored by Francoist propagandists and ill-informed historians, showing the variety of roles performed by women throughout the war and inserting new, alternative perspectives into the historical record.

Reformulating Gender Roles

The inclusion of gender analysis and development (specifically of the female identity) in De la resistencia y la deportación comes as no surprise, especially considering that the testimonial genre by its very definition creates hybrid spaces in which marginalized sects of society are able to reclaim their active, historical voice. In her analysis of women’s testimonial narratives, Lynda Marín suggests that, “almost all writing of women under patriarchy would have something essentially in common with what constitutes the genre of testimony, that is, a kind of speaking from the margins to and about the systems which oppress that speaking” (52).

One of the hallmarks of De la resistencia y la deportación is that it attempts not only to recover the voices of women that have been silenced throughout history, but also seeks to rectify the historical record that consistently denies the representation of the countercultural identities forged by Spanish women in their fight against European fascism.\(^{30}\) In terms of written memories and their capacities to express gender-centered struggles, Margaret R. Higonnet postulates that, “gender is not an extractable feature of literary texts but an aspect of the relationships among characters and in turn therefore of plot. The fictional network of characterization marks out systematically what one may call ‘sexual territory.’ In turn, just as the

\(^{30}\) Christina Dupláa suggests that instigating feminist dialogue is one of the central themes of the testimonies found in De la resistencia y la deportación (“Testimony” 175).
events of war may shape narrative sequence, so do changes in gender relations” (81). Though Higonnet refers to the textual relationship existing between gender and narrative structure as it relates to the dynamics of fictional works produced during times of civil wars, the same relationship is also evident in the nonfictional testimonial narratives produced by the women analyzed in this dissertation. Instead of homogenous, fluid depictions of women fighting fascism, the testimonies explored in this chapter paint the pictures of women characterized by multiple roles, responsibilities and dreams, many of which were deemed either impossible or unnatural by fascist propaganda and therefore used as justifications for specific forms of discrimination and torture. By portraying the complex and fragmented [gender] identities of female resistance fighters—who oftentimes juggle(d) the role of wife and/or mother along with their military activities—De la resistencia y la deportación explores the “sexual territories” of the Spanish Civil War and World War II in subversive ways that challenge hegemonic (and homogenous) depictions of women, their nature and/or purpose, and their sociopolitical role in society.

In the introduction to De la resistencia y la deportación Català makes it clear that one of her purposes in writing her own testimony and collecting those of other Spanish women involved in the French Resistance is not only to correct the inaccurate historical representations of these women but also to challenge the very definition of femininity or womanhood. Historically, the Spanish women of the Resistance faced discrimination from multiple sides of the conflict—from Francoist ideology, from Hitlerian ideology, and even from within the male-dominated Resistance itself. Mary Nash describes that the relegation of women to peripheral roles was by no means an idea novel to the Franco regime, even while it characterized much of the political policy instituted throughout his dictatorship. She notes, “The predominant discourse on women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was based on the ideology of domesticity,
evoking a female prototype of the *perfecta casada* (perfect married lady), whose primordial gender role was that of caring for home and family” (10). Jill Robbins studies the other side of this dichotomy—the image of the public woman, or woman who worked outside the home and/or participated in political activities. According to Robbins, the politicized split between the perfect mother and the public woman existed along socioeconomic borders, with the middle-to-upper-class women seen as ideal mothers while the lower-class or “public women” were, “rhetorically associated by Francoists with Republicanism, Judaism, and Communism and demonized as an unnatural whore, a filthy Harpy, or a repulsively deformed monster” (91).

Similarly, Hitler’s regime also propagated the view of women as mothers, cultural preservers, and essential building-blocks of the Aryan nation. As stated by Charu Gupta, “Nazi Germany along with this emphasis on motherhood considered the ideal woman to be confined to *Kinder, Kurche, Kirche* (Children, Kitchen, Church). Thus it was firmly believed that the major influence of women in society was exerted through the medium of the family, the basic cell of the state” (Gupta WS-42). Richard Evans likewise emphasizes that, “the Nazi party was undoubtedly a dedicated opponent of female emancipation, the ultimate in male chauvinism, firmly committed to a view of women as inferior beings whose main task in life was to bear children and look after the home” (23). In both the cases of Francoist Spain and Nazi Germany, the unnegotiable, fixed qualities of these definitions of gender left little to no room for either subversion or, by extension, historical representation of alternative gendered identities.

Sadly, these discriminatory modes of thinking also bled into the Resistance as well. As explained by Elizabeth Jelin, a rigid dichotomy was the “dominant interpretative framework among guerrilla groups in the society at large” (79), with women playing only minor or supporting roles in the resistance organizations. This fact is supported by several of the
testimonies of *De la resistencia y la deportación*, as the women recall the ways in which their male counterparts treated them as inferiors due to their gender. In one such instance, Regina Arrieta describes her dealings with the Spanish maquis in terms of gendered interactions: “Allí fui acogida con toda naturalidad y afecto, menos por un oficial de la Marina española Republicana, que no toleraba la presencia de las mujeres en las guerrillas” (86). Another, Carmen Buatell, tells of a French contact who refused to hand over confidential documents to her on the basis of her gender. She writes, “Pero el pobre infeliz del francés se quedó defraudado al no encontrar un hombre en la cita. Esperaba un hombre, y no una mujer. Desconfiaba de las mujeres […] Como se encontró con una mujer, no quiso entregarme los documentos” (122).

Neus Català also describes the negative attitudes toward women even upon their liberation. After being liberated, Català and her fellow comrades are greeted by members of the French Red Cross, who rather than expressing sympathy greet them with reproaches: “¡Si os hubierais quedado en vuestros hogares lavando los pañales de vuestros mocosos, nada os hubiera ocurrido!” (66).

In light of this long history of female repression and discrimination, Català raises an important question that becomes a fundamental insight into the testimonies that compose the collection: “¿Se puede ser más mujer, más madre, más hermana, más novia romántica que cuando se abraza la causa por la pervivencia del género humano, por su digna condición, para su libertad?” (20). Flying in the face of both Francoist and Hitlerian descriptions of the ideal woman in which women are deemed either “perfectas casadas” or “public women” but never both simultaneously, Català suggests that the most accurate definition of womanhood lies in the
intersection between the domestic sphere and the sociopolitical one.\textsuperscript{31} Expanding the depiction of wife, mother and sister to that of collective guardian, she makes the argument that women are responsible for advocating and fighting for universal suffrage and dignity for all—both inside and outside of the home. As the testimonies of De la resistencia y la deportación show, this is achieved through multiple roles and unique stories, often in fragmented combination with one another. Through the juxtaposition of descriptions of women as combatants and mothers, a more accurate and complex historical representation of the women of the Resistance is achieved.

On the surface, Català and the other feminine voices of De la resistencia y la deportación often describe themselves in militaristic terms, directly combatting both the discrimination militia women ("milicianas") felt in Spain and France and the absence of their voices in the historical record. To add historical legitimacy to her claims of female participation in the Resistance, Català first cites General De Gaulle’s declaration that women were the very infrastructure of the Resistance (21). Continuing with another supportive quote from André Malraux, who fought with the Popular Front during the Spanish Civil War and the French Resistance in World War II, she writes, “ese escritor genial, dijo ante la catedral de Chartres en el 30 aniversario de la Liberación, en mayo de 1975: ‘Los que han querido confinar a la mujer al simple papel de auxiliar en la Resistencia, se equivocan de guerra’” (21). Starting with her own testimony, Català begins to solidify this representation by recording her military achievements and specific roles within the Resistance, making it a point to highlight the importance of women’s involvement: “Las mujeres españolas, las muchachas de la JSUC nos incorporamos de

\textsuperscript{31} Nash explains that, “The ideological foundations of the conservative stance and also one of its most important exponents, the Catholic Church, were based on the cult of domesticity and the rigid separation between public and private spheres” (23). By presenting the testimonies of women who inhabit the interstitial space between the two (by being both mothers and militants), Català directly challenges this dichotomy.
una y mil maneras de combate. *No fuimos simples auxiliares, fuimos combatientes.* De nuestro sacrificio, de nuestra sangre fría, de nuestra rapidez en detectar el peligro dependía a veces la vida de decenas de guerrilleros” (28, emphasis mine). The word “combat,” then, is taken not just to signify the act of physical fighting, but also that of actively aiding the resistance organizations with the end goal of fighting the fascism spreading throughout Europe.

In terms of the more specific roles these women played, Català makes mention of several, describing that women were message couriers, clandestine contacts, arms transporters, propaganda distributors, and even combat fighters (28). As for her part, she characterizes her participation in terms of finding and organizing “la lucha guerrillera en las montañas” (29) and serving as a contact in the extensive network of clandestine communication among the Resistance (31).32 Underscoring the multiple responsibilities that characterized her work with the *maquis*, she states, “Teníamos que organizar el suministro, la obtención de la documentación falsa, estafeta postal, recepción y fabricación de artefactos explosivos y obtención de armas” (30). The obtaining of weapons and firearms interestingly becomes Català’s main source of pride and accomplishment: recalling the day she secured a machine gun for the maquis of Tournac, she notes that, “Para mí, la primera victoria diplomática. ¡Una ametralladora! El sueño dorado de aquellos arcángeles harapientos de los bosques” (30).33 While referring to her actions—and the actions of other women—during the Spanish Civil War and French Resistance, Català thus

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32 Challenging the long held notion that serving as a contact was an easy position, she writes that is was, “Trabajo en apariencia fácil, pero sumamente peligroso y que requería una gran resistencia moral y física. Las más expuestas a ser descubiertas y ser torturadas en caso de detención” (31).

33 This fact is corroborated by historian Geneviève Dreyfus-Armand, who writes that, “fue ella quien pudo obtener la primera ametralladora del maquis en Tournac” (123).
emphasizes their masculinity and strength, drawing attention to military victories, strategic decisions, and pride over weaponry and accessories of war.

The complex military roles of the Spanish women of the Resistance are likewise portrayed in the remaining forty-nine testimonies of *De la resistencia y la deportación*, further adding legitimacy and historical value to the claims made and stories related.\(^{34}\) Though they are few in number, several women served as front-line combatants during the struggles in Spain and France. In one of the few testimonies written by a man on behalf of a fallen miliciana, Manuel Huet describes Segunda Montero as an activist moved by, “un espíritu combativo de lucha contra la tiranía y en defensa de la libertad” (308). He further writes that she participated directly in the street fights in Barcelona throughout the Spanish Civil War before being fatally wounded in an armed struggle in the liberation of Paris in 1944. Carmen Rodríguez de Morcillo also identifies herself as a miliciana, writing that as a member of the Juventudes Comunistas she and her comrades, “fuimos al frente y tomamos parte en los combates de El Pardo” (358). Similarly, Josefa Ramos identifies herself as a miliciana, writing, “Yo soy guerrillera del Estado Mayor de los guerrilleros de España” (352). While she relates no stories of direct combat, she nevertheless details the time spent transporting weapons from one maquis group to another and sabotaging trains by unscrewing the tracks.

Aside from those women who directly participated in armed battles or aided in sabotage, there are also women who write of their more covert operations with the Resistance. Soledad Alcón, who served as “agente de Enlace interregional” (70), remarks that although she never

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\(^{34}\) Hintz offers a helpful breakdown of their involvement overall: “Of the forty-seven witnesses, twenty of them were interned in and survived concentration camps such as Ravensbrück, Berguen-Belsen, and Mauthausen; their documentary is vivid and explicit. Twenty-six of the remaining twenty-seven testimonies are from women who were members of the armed or unarmed Resistance movement” (29).
participated in direct combat and spent much of the war loaded down with packages to transport, “no me arrepiento de nada. Fue mi venganza. No, fue la posibilidad de luchar por la Justicia y la Paz de mi Patria, tantos años pisoteada” (73). Like Alcón, Pilar Fidalgo was also a point of contact, “lugar de paso y de reunión de unos y otros” who also guarded stockpiles of weapons and distributed them to the leaders when they visited her home (200). Another resitant, Josefa Bas i Martí, describes that she was recruited by the maquis of Dordogne at the age of sixteen to serve as contact and securer/deliverer of weapons in spite of her seeming fragility and femininity. She writes, “Lo que más recuerdo es el compañerismo y la solidaridad que reinaba en sus relaciones. Y siempre recordaré que, aunque era joven y bonita, me trataron como una compañera más entre ellos, y con el más profundo respeto” (101). Others took more organizational approaches to their participation. Carmen Buatell, for instance, participated by serving as a recruiter, interviewing men interested in joining the ranks of the Resistance (123), and Teresa Gebellí de Serra describes herself as a founder and organizer of the JSU and “la Unió de Dones de Catalunya,” an organization characterized by its solidarity (223). Still others served in even more indirect ways, such as Antonia Frexedes, who writes, “Militaba en la CNT. Yo era tejedora. Me ocupaba de la distribución y cotización sindical en mi fábrica. Las mujeres del textil podíamos pensar de forma diferente, pero éramos todas muy revolucionarias” (191). Though serving the Resistance in a variety of ways, the women all emphasize the importance of their work and symbolic combat, with many of them ending their testimonies with statements revealing their unending devotion to the cause of liberty for all and reiterating their dedication to their various Resistance organizations.

35 Interestingly, this particular testimony contradicts those that portray the Resistance as discriminatory towards women. If anything, this continues to reinforce the idea that women’s experiences of the Resistance cannot be limited to a single narrative but instead are characterized by their differences.
In addition to establishing representations of women as militarily involved in the Resistance, the testimonies also examine another role that further adds to the complexity of their involvement: that of mother. For some, motherhood—while accepted as noble—was determinedly sacrificed or put on hold for the cause of the Resistance. Exemplifying this is Luisa Fragua, a message courier for the Resistance. Upon suffering from a severe hemorrhage (and possible miscarriage) during her first pregnancy, she refused to forego her mission, opting instead to continue on even at the risk of the pregnancy. She writes, “En lugar de quedarme en la casa cuando ellas querían, para poder cuidarme, yo insistí en llegar a la Alta Saboya […] Mi misión era ir allí, y allí fui” (183). Carmen Rodríguez de Morcillo tells a similar story of determination: “En los últimos meses estaba embarazada y tuve un niño a llegar a Cataluña. A los quince días apenas de dar la luz, salíamos hacia la frontera. Me levanté de la cama para marchar con mi niño en brazos y andando” (358). For other women, motherhood proved to be a more problematic role to hold, especially when children had to be left behind or placed in the care of others. Reflecting upon the difficulty of balancing the roles of mother and militia woman, Regina Arrieta describes her dual role as official member and director of the Mano de Obra International and mother in terms of its drama and bearing on her conscience: “Para mí, el drama fue ya constante: el tener que separarme de mi hijo. Hay momentos en que aún pienso: ‘¿Mi hijo no habrá sufrido demasiado por nuestra separación, no estará marcado para toda la vida?’.” Siempre tengo un remordimiento. Me fui al maquis dejándolo a cargo de mi hermana” (85-86). Though she admits to carrying a certain degree of regret about her past decisions, she nonetheless ends her testimony by concluding, “En el fondo estoy satisfecha de mi vida. No he sido valiente, cumplí sencillamente con mi deber de comunista” (88). María Margarita Masmanorios de Zmura similarly describes the anguish of leaving a child behind while still
remaining loyal to her political roles. When detained by the police in July of 1942, her daughter was forcibly taken from her by Public Assistance and placed with a foster family for the duration of her imprisonment. She writes: “¡Cuál no sería mi desesperación! ¿Es que alguna madre ha podido expresar el dolor de separarse de su hijo?” (297). However, like Arrieta, she spends the rest of her testimony narrating her imprisonment and continuous resistance while making no further note of the familial sacrifices involved in her clandestine activities. Just like the role of militia woman, the role of mother as a whole is depicted as being multifaceted and dynamic, adapting to the situations at hand and refusing to be pigeon-holed into the formulaic ideology propagated by Franco and Hitler.

**Renegotiating Nationality: Narrating the In-Between State**

In terms of identity, the testimonies of *De la resistencia y la deportación* introduce profound questions about the status of nationalism, citizenship and political identification of the Spanish exiles following the Spanish Civil War. When read in comparison with writings of fellow exiles and concentration camp survivors such as Jorge Semprún, striking similarities are seen in their representations of problematic nationalities. Above all, three major breaks in national identities are revealed. First, the testimonies portray the negotiations and crises of nationality resulting from the geographical and sociopolitical exile of Spaniards who fought against General Franco during the Spanish Civil War. Within this dialogue, the concept of nationality is called into question and examined, thereby highlighting the competing psychological experiences of both belonging to and being violently separated from one’s homeland. Second, the testimonies reveal the complex international and supra-national interactions that occurred within the Resistance and concentration camps that universalized their political fight, blurred the lines of nationality, and created symbolic communities birthed from
collectively-experienced trauma. Third, Catalá and the other voices represented in her collection describe their Spanish nationality as problematic in terms of historical representation and oppression. As often-forgotten participants of the French Resistance, they are seldom remembered or commemorated—a striking absence that in large part led to the creation of *De la resistencia y la deportación*. Together these divisions combine to portray the struggle and forgotten herstories of the Spanish women who found themselves torn between multiple cultures and exiled from their native homeland, offering a glimpse into the lives and memories of women living in the interstitial spaces between national identities.

When looking at the historical records surrounding the Spanish Civil War and World War II, both events are typically portrayed and analyzed as separate. Even in literary studies of the testimonial narratives produced during these conflicts, few comparisons are drawn. Contradicting this historical tendency, the testimonies of *De la resistencia y la deportación* clearly and intentionally unite both wars as one, describing the overarching conflict as the on-going struggle against fascism. Many of the testimonies begin by situating their herstories at the beginning of their exile: the last days of the Spanish Civil War. Opening the collection and establishing its context, Catalá draws a clear connection between her fight against Franco and her continued fight against Hitler: “Terminó nuestra guerra en marzo del 39 y empezaba la Segunda Guerra Mundial en septiembre del mismo año. Ocupada Francia por los Nazis, un nuevo abismo se abría ante nosotros […] Para los antifascistas de acá y de alá no fue ninguna sorpresa. Lo sabíamos y sabíamos que no sería más que una nueva batalla contra el fascismo internacional” (27). In a telling conversation with a fellow prisoner in Ravensbrück, Catalá continues to unite the work of

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36 She further notes that almost 500,000 Spaniards fled across the border into France beginning on February 8, 1939 as Franco’s troops declared victory over the Second Republic (26).
the Resistance and the greater narrative of World War II with the Spanish Civil War, showing her still-present desire to fight for the homeland that has been destroyed: “Yo he salido de España perdida la guerra, pero no vencida y, aquí encerrada, estoy luchando por su reconquista” (57). As she considers the role of Spaniards in WWII, she notes that a “conciencia nacional” is responsible for the rise of feminine participation in the Resistance, leading Spanish women of all walks of life to break social barriers and taboos threatening to impede their work to vanquish fascism (37). This sentiment is present even to the end of Català’s testimony. Liberated from the Holleischen concentration camp by the French Red Cross, she turns her attention to the plights of Spanish women around her, consoling them and offering information to those looking for hope. In light of her new responsibilities as a uniquely Spanish witness, she declares, “España no estaba muerta y no morirá jamás” (67). For Català, her fight is not only against the powers of fascism, but against the powers of historical representation. Fighting the tide of public amnesia, she recognizes that Spain—or better stated, the Spain of her heart—will live forever via her words. The same patriotic spirit is repeated in many of the other testimonies of De la resistencia y la deportación as well. Among them is that of Josefa Bas i Martí, who writes, “Para mí, como para muchos refugiados procedentes de Cataluña y de toda España, la lucha continuaba, y luchar contra el nazi-fascismo era perseguir al mismo enemigo que había implantado en nuestra casa, sosteniendo un alzamiento contra el estado legal y democrático, la sucursal fascista llamada franquismo” (100).37 Echoed by countless others in the collection, the self-identification in terms

37 Although the women of De la resistencia y la deportación frequently highlight their unity and the importance of identifying as Spaniards fighting to reclaim their homeland, they nonetheless also emphasize the importance of their regional identities. Whereas Franco attempted to erase the cultural differences among the autonomous regions in Spain, going as far as to prohibit the use of languages such as Catalan and Basque, Català and her comrades see their regionalism as a key component of their herstories.
of nationality and political affiliation has patriotic roots in the memory of the Second Republic and its overthrow by those who deemed themselves to be ‘nationalists’ with the mission of returning Spain to the glory of its golden past. In spite of their ongoing patriotism and commitment to the cause of universal democracy, the stability of the national identities of Spaniards in France and Germany was greatly impacted through their status as exiles, forcing them to renegotiate their identities as a means of physical and psychological survival.

Summarizing the tense condition of living in-between borders in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, Català writes, “España, siempre en el corazón, para muchas de ellas no sería nunca la tierra acogedora del eterno reposo” (21). In this one, simple sentence she astutely explains the unfolding crisis of national identity experienced by the women of De la resistencia y la deportación: the experience of longing for a homeland that, in essence, no longer exists for them. Coupled with the fierce sense of patriotism, loyalty, and responsibility to the country of their birth is a constant sense of irreplaceable loss the survivors experience in regard to their nationality. In an emotionally moving description of her transfer from Ravensbrück to Holleischen, Català tells of the way in which thoughts of her homeland resonate deeply in spite of her separation from it. After being unexpectedly transferred to the smaller camp at Meklembourg, Català finds a piece of her homeland in the most surprising of places: a worn blanket given to her with her bunk:

Rápido, arregla tu cama, y descubro que nuestras mantas provienen del Ejército español, Cuerpo de Infantería; me puse a llorar con una emoción incontenible. Algo de mi tierra estaba allí, a más de tres mil kilómetros de Guiamets. ‘Pero esa manta—pensaba—mejor sería para un soldadito español o un preso; a mí, total,

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38 I use the word ‘nationalists’ in quotation marks in an effort to preserve its intended connotation as written by Català and her fellow exiles. Signaling the perceived fallacy of Franco’s regime declaring itself to be the true nationalists of Spain, Català places their self-proclaimed descriptive titles in quotation marks. Writing of the shelling of Barcelona in January of 1939, Català describes, “Cuando los obuses “nacionales” caían sobre el Tibidabo […] salía camino del exilio, dejando a Barcelona sumida en el más total y angustioso silencio” (26).
para el tiempo que me quedaba, lo mismo daba dormir con manta que sin ella.’
Mis amigos me decían que era una tonta sentimental. ‘Mejor—les contesté—, lo
cortés no quita lo valiente.’ Traduce, traduce. Son bonitos y originales los refranes
españoles. ‘Mientes tenga lágrimas seguiré sensible y sueña bollos, que siempre
recibirás tortas.’ (55)

Finding a renewed sense of solidarity with her Spanish comrades (both present and not), Català
creates symbolic archives of memory, tying her to her roots and endowing her with the
motivation to keep fighting. Notably, however, Català also notes the distance between them,
speaking of her recollections in nostalgic terms that highlight the break that has occurred
between her past and present identities. Carmen Buatell, among others, also demonstrates the
nostalgic longing for her homeland. As she describes feeling utterly isolated in her first prison
cell during her interrogation, she remembers the joy of hearing her native tongue spoken by her
fellow prisoners: “Ése fue el momento que aprovecharon las camaradas de la celda vecina para
llamarme… Oigo que me hablan en español. ¡Qué alegría!” (125). Perhaps the most direct
example of this continued tension is seen in the words of María Llenas, who describes being the
problematic status of immigration to France and her resulting crisis of identity:

Salimos de España mis padres y los siete hermanos. Soy, pues, de la llamada
‘vieja emigración’ o ‘emigración económica’ según el gusto. Y digo esto porque
me parece que no se ha hecho resaltar como se merece esa ‘Emigración.’ Fuimos
unos emigrados por fuerza, por miseria y por hambre, pero que llevamos todos
España en lo más profundo de nuestra entrañas. Somos españoles a parte entera.
Así me educaron mis padres y así moriré: ¡Española! (289).

Still living in Paris at the time of the writing of her testimony, Llenas claims Paris as her
hometown while still attempting to maintain her Spanish identity. Because Llenas and her family
left Spain for religious reasons in 1919 and are not considered to belong to the group of
Republican exiles that fled to France in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, she feels the
need to justify her struggles with identity, pointing to the melancholia and constant confusion
that an exiled existence creates. Forced to cling to her heritage while being physically separated from it, Llenas unites her stories with those of her exiled counterparts, finding symbolic community in the telling of her story.

For many of the exiles whose voices are given a platform in *De la resistencia y la deportación*, the disruptive nature of the exiled identity lingered long after World War II ended. Expecting that the democracy reclaimed in France and Germany would spread across the border into Spain, many Spanish refugees were dismayed to discover that Franco’s regime continued uncontested. Antonia Frexedes, in the very last line of her testimony, summarizes her identification with the Spanish Republic in terms of physical suffering above all: “Mira, ¿ves mis manos? Mis uñas se desprenden. No puedo casi andar. Esto es lo que resta de una mujer que sufrió por ser republicana española” (199). Lola Casadella remembers this sense of melancholy as well, but chooses to juxtapose it with her hope for the new generations of youth who will grow up in Spain learning about the injustices of fascism via the reading of *De la resistencia y la deportación*. Unable to return to the Spain of her childhood during Franco’s dictatorship, Casadella describes the process of living in exile as a long, sad one: “Fue muy larga la adaptación. Lo que más nos entristecía era que en España continuaban los fascistas. Durante muchos años pensamos en regresar al país, y ahora tengo la inmensa alegría de ver que en España empieza una nueva era, que se está operando la reconciliación nacional, que dejamos de ser gente aparte” (156). It is in this statement that part of Català’s intent in collecting the testimonies of *De la resistencia y la deportación* is seen: by giving a voice to the voiceless, historical representation is reclaimed.

On a historical level, this constitutes a challenge to both French and Spanish records of World War II in which Spanish men—and particularly women—are overlooked. Català links this
problem to being identified as an exiled (or in some cases, stateless) Spaniard fighting a war in a foreign land.\textsuperscript{39} Though the women of \textit{De la resistencia y la deportación} fought shoulder-to-shoulder with the French Resistance in the fight against the spread of German fascism, their nationality proved to be problematic, isolating them from the Resistance and its historical representation. Geneviève Dreyfus-Armand notes that the large number of Spanish political refugees pouring across the Pyrenees resulted in a culture of widespread mistrust and contradicting opinions regarding their patriation: “En cualquier caso, se perfilaba la sombra de la guerra y los refugiados españoles se encontraron atrapados en una Francia que o bien adoptaba una serie de disposiciones para controlarles y, en función de las circunstancias, enviarles fuera de sus fronteras, o bien trataba de utilizarlos” (58). The competing interests of the French and Spanish fighters also caused further disruption. Aiding the Gestapo, French police attempting to protect their national community often placed Spanish immigrants high on the list of suspected anti-fascist (and thus anti-German) activists (Kedward 6). Further compounding their identities, Suzanne Hintz notes that many Spaniards were identified as both French and Spanish, depending on the day. Català describes this confusion in her depiction of the badges of identification worn by all of the prisoners in Ravensbrück, Català writes, “En el triángulo la inicial del país. Las españolas fuimos discriminadas en ese sentido; veníamos de Francia, y ése fue otro de los caprichos de los SS que no hemos descifrado. De ahí la confusión aún existente. Una tendencia

\textsuperscript{39} Suzanne Hintz affirms this in her study of \textit{De la resistencia y la deportación}, noting that the Spanish Republicans deported to Nazi concentration camps were ignored by the Spanish government. Monserrat Roig also remarks that the Spanish government felt no obligation to its citizens deported to the camps (29). This was clearly the case for the Spaniards interred in Mauthausen, who were made to wear a blue triangle to signify their statelessness (Català 47).
Perhaps in response to the feelings of disruption and confusion caused by their exile, many of the women of *De la resistencia y la deportación* describe the breakdown of nationality within the walls of the concentration camps, revealing the ways in which symbolic communities were created in order to resist and survive. The universality of their fight is demonstrated in the way Català first begins her testimony not with a quote from Clara Zetkin, an infamous German Marxist theorist and suffragette, spoken during the International Socialist Congress in Basel, Switzerland in 1912. In doing so, Català underscores the universal nature of her battle. Instead of focusing narrowly on the plight of her fellow companions from Ravensbrück and portraying it as a closed or limited historical event, she unites their stories with that of a much greater socio-political narrative through which she is able to reclaim her identity and reassert herself in contemporary political debate. Català first introduces this concept in her own testimony, explaining that, “Separadas del mundo, nos sentíamos libres. No nos habían olvidado y seguiríamos combatiendo aunque solo fuera intentando salvar alguna de nuestras camaradas de no importa qué nacionalidad, partido político o confesión” (43). Carmen Buatell similarly describes the way in which nationality became obscure and even erased among the prisoners: “Para nosotras no existía nacionalidad que no distinguiera; cuando una deportada era perseguida, todas le dábamos paso para que se escapara aunque después recibiéramos los golpes que le estaban destinados” (134).

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40 The only concentration camp that differed in its identification of Spanish prisoners was Mauthausen, where the men wore the black triangle designated for the stateless or expatriated.

41 The quote in Spanish reads as follows: “También nosotras podremos afrontar nuestro propio combate y morir, si es preciso, por la causa de libertad” (Català 25).
Attempting to understand the reconfigurations of nationality following civil war and exile, Català and the other women in *De la resistencia y deportación* thus emphasize their ongoing struggle. Celia Llaneza of Asturias describes the relationship established with her Spanish comrades in the Resistance in terms of family, lamenting the loss of her natural family and heritage in Spain while also finding strength in the exiled community: “Los españoles, cuando hemos venido a Francia, la emigración política, fuera quien fuera, éramos como hermanos, nos considerábamos como de una gran familia, era como una ligazón. Yo tengo familia natural, porque me la dio la naturaleza, pero los españoles que estábamos aquí en el mismo combate…” (285). Overcome by emotion in recalling the familial atmosphere of the Spanish Resistance, she breaks down and abruptly changes topic, further highlighting the importance of a reconstructed community. In this way, the testimonios of *De la resistencia y la deportación* become spaces of symbolic identification: by uniting their herstories together, they create a new community that both affirms their Spanishness while also highlighting their diversity, comprising yet another challenge to the historical records authored by Francoist supporters.  

**Conclusions**

Overall, the testimonies of *De la resistencia y la deportación* clearly open history to divergence as they portray the multi-faceted herstories of the Spanish women who fought and died for the French Resistance. Finding profound expressiveness through the hybrid nature of the testimonio, they both allow trauma to manifest itself through textual distortion while also

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This diversity is seen in the way they emphasize their regional heritage in addition to their national one. For many women, this regional identity is declared first in the introduction to their testimonies. From *catalanas* to *madrileñas, valencianas, gallegas*, and *vascas*, all are presented with equal importance, heralding their languages and customs as valuable and necessary parts of their Spanishness.
leveraging it for their benefit as survivors and witnesses responsible for setting the historical record straight. Looking back to the temporal distortion of their texts, we see the ongoing dialectic of trauma and working-through that occurs as the women attempt to create critical distance between their traumatic experiences and present situations. Reclaiming a voice in the present tense, they thus reclaim their position as witnesses, learning to let their trauma speak via temporal fragmentation in an effort to more fully understand it. Alongside this temporal distortion, the interplay between the first person singular and plural narrative voices further offers us insight into the process of rewriting traumatic memories. Using the plural voice to find strength while also allowing their individual memories to flow freely, the women feel compelled to portray the herstories of their fallen comrades, speaking for them in an effort to ensure public remembrance of their unique and important contributions in the fight against fascism. Uniting their voices as one, the women construct a symbolic community that endows their testimonies with meaning and purpose, finding historical validation by the corroboration interconnecting their accounts. By the same token, structural and stylistic fragmentation become tools to more tangibly express traumatic experiences that are difficult to describe within traditional parameters of language and structure. Refusing to adhere to the norms of genre—event to the extent of not composing a complete testimony, but rather leaving it in unconnected pieces that lack cohesion—Català and her comrades make the statement that traumatic reality is not expressed in perfectly tied-up narratives. For them, their memories are best represented by spotlighting their disruptive capacities, giving the public greater insight into their fight for freedom and, ultimately, life itself. It is through these fragmented frameworks that the women of De la resistencia y la deportación are able to both write their trauma, overcome it, and break the chains of History to open it to alternative reconstructions of the Spanish Civil War and World War II from the
perspective of the defeated, initiating a dialogue about gender, nationality, and trauma that society needs as past mistakes and injustices are brought into the light.
CHAPTER 3

SHATTERING THE SILENCE: FRAGMENTATION AND THE (RE)CREATION OF IDENTITY IN JUANA DOÑA’S DESDE LA NOCHE Y LA NIEBLA

“En este proceso de recuperación de identidad de todo un pueblo, las mujeres deben emerger con luz propia” –Juana Doña (15)

Like Felipe Matarranz, Juana Doña Jiménez is an important figure in the reconstruction of Spanish Civil War history as told from the side of the defeated. Whereas Matarranz offers insight into the traumatized past of a man affected by war and captivity, Doña weaves together a self-proclaimed novela-testimonio that represents the oft-neglected and manipulated perspective of the women also incarcerated in Franco’s Spain. Although both authors approach history from a similar angle, their modes of (re)writing their trauma and (re)establishing alternative identities in light of their past experiences are presented in aesthetically different ways. While Matarranz chooses to use a straightforward version of testimonio that maintains a conversational tone like those told to an interlocutor, Doña instead opts for a fictionalized version of her story told in the third person, a decision she first referred to as the attempt to protect the identities of the women depicted in the narrative before surmising that her story became more accessible to readers in a fictionalized form (Mangini 109). In spite of its fictional framework, Desde la noche y la niebla

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1 Doña first wrote the manuscript in 1967, when Franco was in power and the clandestine activities of those who fought against him were still considered highly dangerous and secretive. She justifies her choice of writing a novela-testimonio in the introduction to her narrative. Citing the inclusion of women activists who were still unknown to the police at the time of Desde la noche y la niebla’s writing, Doña states, “Entonces decidí hacerlo en forma de novela con nombres supuestos […] yo por entonces estaba incorporada a la lucha clandestina y tuve que desfigurar algunos hechos para no dar mi propia identidad” (17). The fictionalization of her testimony will be discussed later in the introduction.
displays many of the same characteristics as *Manuscrito de un superviviente* with regards to its fragmentary nature and the trauma it reveals. In this chapter, I will turn my attention to the ways in which textual fragmentation (e.g. temporal, narrative voice and subject, structure, style, etc.) reconstructs a vivid image of the individual and collective traumas portrayed in *Desde la noche y la niebla* while also creating a space for Doña to work through her trauma, (re)establish her identity, and insert alternative herstories into the ongoing dialogue about the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath.

At first glance, one may assume that her testimony *Desde la noche y la niebla* is a Holocaust narrative inasmuch as the title is an interesting throw-back to the German phrase *Nacht und Nebel* (in English, “night and fog”), a directive issued by Adolf Hitler demanding the covert eradication of those who resisted his policies. Alfonso Sastre notes as much in the prologue to the testimony: “hay ahora esta novela-testimonio de Juana Doña, en cuyo título resuenan las siniestras palabras—*Nacht und Nebel*—de una siniestra bandera: la del exterminio nazi de los judíos durante el III Reich. Genocidio y solución final, son el patético halo de esas palabras” (11). Instead, it is a *novela-testimonio* that portrays her almost twenty-year imprisonment in Francoist prisons following Spain’s Civil War. Born in the Madrid *barrio* of Lavapiés in 1918, Doña became a self-proclaimed communist at the age of fifteen, first affiliating with the Juventudes Comunistas (JC), an organization for young people advocating for the advancement of Communist ideals, and later, joining the Agrupación de Mujeres Antifascistas (AMA).² Married to Eugenio Mesón in 1936, Doña continued working with

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² The AMA was an organization created to promote the ideology of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) among women, though it also welcomed members from various political backgrounds, including socialist, republican, and even Catholic republicans from the Basque region. According to Mary Nash, it had over 50,000 affiliates by mid-1936 and boasted more than 255 local associations throughout Spain between 1936 and 1939 (65-6).
resistance organizations throughout the war, being briefly detained and released twice before the
fall of Madrid to Francoist forces in 1939. With her husband detained and imprisoned in Madrid,
Doña and her infant son fled first to Valencia and then Alicante, attempting to leave the country
via the city of Cartagena. Instead, she was captured by Franco’s troops as they advanced on
Alicante, then taken to the Los Almendros concentration camp, where she remained for some
time before being released and sent back to Madrid due to the disorganization of the prison
system and the high numbers of detainees that were unable to be processed by Franco’s new
regime.3 After living clandestinely in Madrid for several months, she was finally arrested in
December of 1939 and sent to the Ventas prison for women in Madrid.4 Though she was
sentenced to death in 1947, her sentence was eventually commuted to thirty years in prison,
during which she was transferred between the prisons of Ventas, Málaga, Segovia, Guadalajara
and Alcalá de Henares. Upon her release in 1961, Doña began to write of her experiences within
the prison system, finishing the draft of Desde la noche y la niebla: mujeres en las cárcel
franquistas in 1967 and publishing it in 1978, three years after the death of Franco and the end of
his oppressive regime. In his biography of important Republican women combatants from the

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3 The Los Almendros concentration camp was constructed by Franco’s forces toward the end of the
Spanish Civil War to detain Republican militants. Historians estimate that between 18,000 to 30,000 men and
women were held there, many coming from Alicante, where they had attempted to catch boats headed for France or
Italy to escape the Franco’s advancing troops. For further information, see Enrique Cerdán Tato’s La lucha por la
democracia en Alicante, or Javier Rodrigo’s Cautivos: campos de concentración en la España franquista, 1936-
1947.

4 The Ventas prison for women was built in Madrid in 1931 and designed to house roughly 500 women. By
1939, it had become a formidable, gruesome display of Franco’s disdain for Republican women, cramming
anywhere from 10,000 to 14,000 women in its cells (Mangini 101). In her collection of prison testimonies from
Ventas, Tomasa Cuevas notes the extreme overcrowding: “In 1939 there were eleven or twelve women in each cell
and no furniture at all. There were mats or straw mattresses for the women and nothing more... The place had been
transformed into a gigantic storehouse, a storehouse of women without food, water, or sanitary assistance. How
could they provide meals twice a day to the many thousands of women heaped in thee when the kitchen had been
designed for a maximum of 500 people?” (111).
Spanish Civil War, Carlos Fernández Rodríguez heralds Doña as an activist ahead of her time, designated by her comrades as “la segunda dama del comunismo español” after Dolores Ibárruri, la Pasionaria (161).5

The similarity of the title Desde la noche y la niebla to the Hitlerian expression is far from coincidental: throughout the novel, Doña not only compares her prison experience and torture with that of the prisoners interred in Nazi concentration camps, but also connects the Spanish Civil War itself—and the causes for which the Republic stood—with World War II’s fight against fascism. In doing so, she introduces profound challenges to the historical records forged not only by Franco’s historians, but by the world community as well. The plight of the Spanish prisoner—more specifically, that of the female Spanish prisoner—held captive by Franco’s regime was largely ignored both within Spain and outside of it. In her study of women’s narratives from the Spanish Civil War, Mary Nash explains that in addition to the intentional destruction of archives, records and writings from supporters of the Second Republic after Franco’s victory, well-meaning historians tended to focus on the public and political aspects of the conflict rather than the everyday lives and trauma of its victims (43-44). Doña herself highlights this as a key reason for the existence of her testimony: “Se contaban las epopeyas de las cárceles masculinas y las heroicidades de sus protagonistas, se rompía el cerco de la censura y en la más negra clandestinidad se divulgaban acciones y sufrimientos protagonizados por los luchadores-hombres. Rara vez se hablaba o escribía sobre las heroicidades de las luchadoras-

5 Dolores Ibárruri was a highly influential leader in the Spanish Communist Party throughout the Second Republic and the Spanish Civil War. Throughout the war, Shirley Mangini notes that “she was everywhere: at the front lines, in the rear guard, with the International Brigades and in Parliament” (40). Mangini further remarks that Ibárruri was a constant source of inspiration for Doña. Quoting Doña, Mangini writes, “Dolores was a symbol even before the war, but during the war she became the archetype because she was a woman. Dolores was exclusively a party woman. Yet she was a role model; to be like her was our goal” (44).
mujeres” (15-16). For Nash, this absence of feminine testimony is a detriment to the analysis of historical change and societal development, and she argues that, “If shifts of mentality, cultural values, or gender relations are to be addressed, historical analysis must go beyond a presentation of political policies and discourses or legislative changes, while together with well-known women, ordinary women’s lives and experience must be explored” (44). Doña further echoes this in the introduction to Desde la noche y la niebla, explaining the importance of her work in terms of reclaiming the power of feminine self-identification: “En este proceso de recuperación de identidad de todo un pueblo, las mujeres deben emerger con luz propia; es preciso que hablemos nosotras desterrando la falsa ‘modestia’ de la moral burguesa” (15, emphasis mine). Through her text, Doña essentially aims to break the silence and culture of fear established by Franco and bring to light the countless stories of heroism and resistance achieved by the women labeled and condemned as rojas—herstories that recount not only the big moments but also the smaller, everyday moments that profoundly influence the creation of identity. Alicia Ramos Mesonero likewise situates Doña’s work in the body of female prison testimonies published in Spain after Franco’s death, highlighting the common aspects that unite their work together. Among them, Mesonero observes that the testimonies fight against historical indifference and forgetting, contrast the “verdad oficial” with their own subjective experiences, reclaim the truth as seen from their perspective, and fight for justice (30).

It is important here to remember, however, that Doña’s testimony is not merely a document with historical validity, but also—and perhaps first and foremost—a narrative of trauma. As a result, the trauma personally experienced by Doña in prison pervades her text, creating multiple levels of symbolism that need to be analyzed if we are to understand the full impact of the herstories narrated within. In order to fully interpret Doña’s text as a testimony of
trauma, there are two crucial points we must consider. First, we must understand that the act of testifying is not only a means of reconstructing history but also of reconstructing identity by working through a pervasive sense of loss and lingering traumatic memories. Second, we must further realize that the act of testifying is inherently collective as much as it is individual. Both functions of testimony in this sense are highly constructive and subjective, being used differently by individuals based on their past experiences and current mental/emotional conditions. Psychologist Judith Herman summarizes the fundamental stages of recovery from trauma in similar terms, suggesting that victims of traumatic experiences work through their past by, “establishing safety, reconstructing the trauma story, and restoring the connection between survivors and their community” (3, emphasis mine). By means of mixing fiction and testimony, Doña symbolically follows these stages throughout her narrative, both reconstructing her individual trauma story and also seeking continuous strength through her identification with the women that suffered alongside her. Though Doña admits to narrating her testimony in a fictional form, she is adamant in assuring the reader of its veracity, declaring that, “quiero dejar constancia, que ni uno solo de los relatos que se cuentan aquí, son producto de la imaginación” (17). Much like Felipe Matarranz’s declarations at the beginning of his testimony, Doña’s statement reaffirms that while dates and names may have been slightly changed (or sometimes misremembered throughout the years), the essence of her lived experience remains the same. Importantly, it is to this lived experience that she testifies, portraying her trauma in words in an effort to understand them, overcome them, and relate them to others in a meaningful, tangible way. As Elizabeth Jelin suggests about testimonial literature in general, Doña’s narrative essentially becomes a creative space through which “se constituye algo nuevo […] una nueva verdad” (84). In this way, her testimony also becomes more accessible—not only to her, but to
her readers as well. In an interview with Shirley Mangini, Doña alludes to this double entendre. When asked why she chose a novelistic format for her testimony, she responds: “I don’t know. Perhaps I haven’t rationalized it. I think I started that way and it was easier, more accessible. It was. Of all the books I’ve written about women in Spain, this one has been the most widely read. And the best-known abroad” (Mangini 109). Portraying her own story through the protagonist Leonor, Doña creates a space that enables her to put distance between herself and her emotional memories while also offering readers a cohesive narrative that more fully articulates traumatic experience.

Like the other testimonial novels studied in this dissertation, this dialectic of trauma is manifested and worked through on multiple textual levels via four basic types of literary fragmentation: temporal fragmentation, fragmentation of the voice and narrative subject, structural and stylistic fragmentation, and fragmentation of identity. In combination, these literary strategies reveal the process of working through traumatic experiences, help to reestablish individual and collective identities, and provide Doña with a lasting form of resistance that enables her to reconstruct history from the diverse perspectives of those that have been denied agency, representation, identity, and subjectivity.

**Temporal Fragmentation**

Though the degree of temporal fragmentation found in her testimony is not as overt as that found in the testimonial novels of Semprún (who foregrounds it as a central theme of his text), its presence nonetheless influences the reading and interpretation of *Desde la noche y la niebla*, revealing the constant interplay of trauma and intentional sociopolitical/historiographical resistance exhibited by the author. On the one hand, Doña’s text divulges the impact that trauma has upon the mind and the memories, revealing ruptures and disjointed temporal schemas that
reflect the inner turmoil of the narrator. On the other hand, Doña’s testimony also reveals the ways in which she attempts to circumnavigate the problematic perception of time via her writing, attempting to impose a chronological timeline in order to historically validate her experiences while also refusing to allow her memories to be subjected to a restrictive temporal format. Analyzing these two aspects in tandem provides us with profound insights into the act of working through trauma as experienced by the women incarcerated in Francoist prisons.

The impact of trauma upon Doña’s (temporal) memories is significantly related to the context in which she was imprisoned and ultimately wrote her testimony. Doña—being both a Communist and a woman—found her life change drastically with Franco’s ascension to power in 1939. Though she, unlike Semprún and Català, remained in Spain after the surrender of Republican forces to Franco (after a failed attempt to leave Spain through the Port of Alicante), she still experienced many of the same traumatic situations that her comrades in France and Germany did, albeit from a different perspective. Imprisoned for nearly twenty years, she faced countless tortures (both physical and psychological) and inhumane conditions that ultimately forced her to reexamine her own morality, ideology and even humanity. As a result, her perspectives of time were undoubtedly affected as they evolved and adapted as best they could to the unpredictable nature of prison life and multilayered oppression. Michael Richards points to the problematic perception of time among survivors of the Civil War, arguing that time passed by more slowly for those forced from their homeland and relegated to the periphery of society. He summarily suggests that, “The temporal boundaries (and the frontiers of memory) that subdivided the Franco years were perceived differently for an exile since the passage of time itself was experienced differently” (104). Though his analysis is limited to Spaniards who lived in geographical exile from Spain following Franco’s victory, similar tendencies of skewed time
perception are also visible in the narratives of Spaniards who lived as exiles within their
country’s own borders. Living in symbolic exile from their homeland, the Republican prisoners
incarcerated throughout the dictatorship were subjugated to seeing the world outside change and
evolve, all the while being trapped inside and unable to participate in society, even in the lives of
their own families—a significant challenge for women in particular, and one that Doña
repeatedly portrays via her fragmented characterization of time.

Relating this system of distorted time perception to societal expectations of women in
Spain at the time of the Civil War and throughout the dictatorship, Shirley Mangini describes the
temporal disconnect that specifically plagued the female prisoners as the incompatibility of
motherhood and imprisonment:

The theme of life passing them by is often mentioned, though sometimes very
subtly. This aspect of prison was obviously very difficult for women. Their
reproductive systems were often damaged from abuse and lack of proper
nutrition, and the aging process was accelerated through mistreatment.
Furthermore, the extreme double standard in Spain at that time meant that women
who came out of prison in their thirties—often after more than ten years—were
considered old and no longer of childbearing age. And, of course, maternity was
considered by the majority of Spanish woman an essential part of their lives, an
attitude that still prevails today. (119)

The abrupt break between her youth and her elder years is a constant theme in Doña’s testimony
much like it is in the writings of Matarranz, Català and Semprún, reflecting her inability to
reconcile the various stages of her life pre- and post- prison. Describing her psychological
condition toward the end of her imprisonment, Doña (via Leonor) laments that her memories of
what she was like when she was first imprisoned have faded from view, leaving her as a
prematurely aged woman whose youth was filled with hunger, cold, and a desperation to survive:

Llevaba doce años en prisión y ya no se acordaba siquiera de cómo era cuando la
detuvieron; hacía mucho tiempo que había perdido el brillo de los ojos a los que
circundaban pequeñas arrugas, su tez pajiza denotaba que el hígado no funcionaba
bien. La juventud pasó; pasó entre rejas de penal en penal, celdas de castigo, hambre, frío y calor intensos en una lucha dura y desesperada por sobrevivir. Era el saldo de doce años de represión directa. (225)

Through the temporal fragmentation of her text, Doña portrays this radical juxtaposition of time inside and outside the prison walls as seen via the lens of a captive, the skewed representation of time simultaneously exposing the trauma she has experienced and continues to work through upon its writing. Here it is important to briefly yet succinctly draw a distinction between traumatic memory and narrative memory before we continue with our analysis. Susan J. Brison suggests that while traumatic memory is rooted in involuntary flashbacks, nightmares and haunting thoughts that are closely tied to the physical body, narrative memory, on the other hand, is an intentional process whereby the victim/witness “begins not only to integrate the traumatic episode into a life with a before and after, but also to gain control over the occurrence of intrusive memories” (42–6). While Doña’s testimony is clearly influenced by the trauma she has experienced, it is not controlled by it. As Brison reiterates: “one can control certain aspects of the narrative and that control, repeatedly exercised, leads to greater control over the memories themselves, making them less intrusive and giving them the kind of meaning that enables them to be integrated into the rest of life” (47). It is through the fragmentation of her testimony that Doña’s trauma is creatively reintegrated into her personal narrative.

The fragmented portrayal of time is first clearly visible in the chapter titles and overall structure of the novel itself. After the prologue and introduction that set the tone and highlight the historicity of the text, the first four chapters refer to specific historical events with well-defined chronological references. Beginning with the fall of Madrid (“Últimos días: febrero 1939), she continues with “La entrega,” “El éxodo” and “El “Puerto de Alicante,” all of which
refer specifically to three of the last stages of the fall of the Republic to Francoist forces. As if to underscore the historical nature of these chapters and her testimony as a whole, an index of chapter titles is included at the end of the novel, thus enabling the readers to search for specific events and view the overall trajectory of Doña’s experience as it lines up with the historical record. Contrary to this seemingly rigid temporal framework, the chapter titles become chronologically vague (and more emotionally descriptive) as soon as Doña begins the narration of her prison experiences, each chapter title referring to various subjective stages of trauma such as “Empieza el terror,” “Acosada,” “La tortura,” “ and “La cárcel,” among others. Symbolically, these titles as a whole demonstrate the different temporal markers Doña uses to move her narration along at the superficial level, revealing the breakdown of chronological (or, at the very least, detailed) representations of time as her testimony begins to focus more on memories rooted in traumatic experience.

On a more profound level, the internal temporal schemas of the chapters also change accordingly. The chapters referring to specific events more consistently contain concrete temporal references (e.g. hours, days, years), highlighting the historical nature of Doña’s memories while also reflecting the frenzy and chaos of the Republic in the last days of the war. In the first chapter, Doña uses a plethora of specific time references that both underscore the sense of urgency felt by the Republicans in Madrid as Franco’s victory became more of a certainty and also symbolize the agonizing nature of war as it relates to one’s sense of loss. Aside from the chapter title (Últimos días: febrero 1939), the first specific reference to time comes as

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6 Nationalist troops entered Madrid on March 28, 1939 (“La entrega”), many Republican supporters consequently fled to the Eastern coast of Spain looking to board ships to escape the country (“El exodo”), and lastly, the Republicans sought one final escape at the Port of Alicante, only to discover that all routes had been closed and that there was no way to leave (“El Puerto de Alicante”) (Ranzato 120-121).
Doña describes her typical morning in war-torn Madrid: “Leonor colgó el abrigo en una percha y rápidamente se puso a trabajar. Miró su reloj: ‘Las siete y cuarto…, tengo que darme prisa… Nunca he visto a Emilio tan preocupado. ¿Irán las cosas tan mal?...’ Cambió la hoja del calendario: 20 de febrero. ‘¡Cómo ninguno de los dos se había dado cuenta! Hoy cumplía su hijo el primer año. Llamaría a Emilio para decírselo…” (26). Here, Doña situates both her narrative and the reader at a crucial time in the history of the Civil War, one month shy of the surrender of Madrid to Franco on March 28. Following this important chronological marker, Doña begins to refer repetitively to the duration of the war up to this point, portraying the time spent defending the Republic’s ideals in melancholic terms that reveal a sense of finality and, ultimately, approaching loss. Narrating a conversation with her mother about the impending end of the war, Doña writes:

De pronto su madre con voz tímida le preguntó:
--Hija mía, por todas partes se habla esta mañana de que se termina la guerra, se dice en voz baja, con miedo, como si la fuésemos a perder, ¿Será posible hija que le perdamos?, ¿es que ya no podemos resistir más?

Leonor cogió las manos de su madre y la miró a la cara, en sus ojos se reflejaba todo el horror de esa posibilidad. Era la primera vez que su madre en tres años le hacía esa pregunta. Nunca antes, ni aún con la caída de Barcelona, se había hecho esa pregunta. (27)

Though Leonor attempts to deny the reality of surrender, the thought nonetheless continues to haunt her. Reflecting on the increasing mentions of Franco’s victory, she notes, “Durante tres años la palabra ‘entrega’ había sido como una anatema que quemaba los labios y ahora se hablaba desde una tribuna, sin rebozo, como de un peligro inminente” (31). Later, she finds herself once again facing the growing fear not only of losing the war, but more specifically of

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7 All ellipses are original to Desde la noche y la niebla. I will be placing brackets around my ellipses in order to distinguish my omissions from those already present in the text.
losing her husband: “Durante los tres años que duraba ya esta guerra, nunca se había hecho estas reflexiones, las calamidades y sufrimientos no afloraban en el luchar diario; ‘¿qué le pasaba hoy?, ¿por qué este temor, por qué esta angustia, este miedo repentino?’ Había visto otros bombardeos; la pérdida de Cataluña creó horas de incertidumbre pero jamás se adueñó de ella la idea de algo irremediable” (35). In her repetition of the time reference “three years” Doña symbolizes both the sense of monotony experienced during the arduous years of war while also depicting a temporal break in the experience: the end of one phase (the war) is highlighted, while the beginning of another (postwar) is introduced abruptly, mimicking the feelings of discomfort felt by the Republicans who knew they were about to be defeated.

As the mounting threat of defeat begins to permeate Doña’s memories, her focus on the duration of the three-year-long fight grows more frequent, as does her use of multiple references to the time of day. Symbolically, the first four chapters of Desde la noche y la niebla in this way read as an account of the Republic’s final moments. With the potential defeat of the Republic growing ever more certain, Doña’s use of chronological references becomes more precise and constant. Upon news of the planned surrender, she writes, “eran las 6 de la mañana del 6 de marzo” (42), then gives a play-by-play description of the futile resistance mounted by the Republic leading up to Madrid’s fall when, “después de cinco trágico días, terminó la resistencia” (44). Subsequently continuing with descriptions of the mass exodus of Republican supporters to Valencia and Alicante, she narrates the last minutes of the Republic at the Port of Alicante, the sight of their last stand: “Cuatro días, las noches eran húmedas y frías. Sucios y hambrientos. Ya no se miraba el mar. Había llegado la hora de contar con uno mismo, de individualizarse. El día 30, un día gris y frío los italianos al mando de Gambara tomaban el puerto” (58). As if wanting to remember each individual moment of her dear Republic’s last
moments, she uses concrete temporal labels, freezing her memories in time and further legitimizing her experience by connecting it with the greater field of history and memory surrounding the event. Her narration of Alicante’s capture culminates with a final, melancholic declaration that seals the Republic’s historic fight: “El primero de abril, fuerzas franquistas, junto a las tropas invasoras italianas, hablaron por las altavoces dando fin a la tregua. En ese momento acababa de perderse la última tierra de lo que fue la España republicana” (59). From this point on, the temporal scheme of Doña’s testimony changes markedly, becoming vaguer and more reflective of the individual trauma she faced during her captivity, due in large part to the fact that trauma frequently distorts time perception and transcends the traditional boundaries of the clock.  

The literal and figurative loss and distortion of time is directly suggested as soon as Doña is captured in Alicante and taken to the concentration camp known as “el Campo de los Almendros.” She writes: “Ya no había mar, ni horizontes, ni armas, ni comida, ni abrigo, ni un reloj que marcase la hora para medir el tiempo, ni nada. Sólo hombres y mujeres desnudos, esperando, sin saber qué; despersonalizados, ausentes de todo lo que había sido antes su vida” (63, emphasis mine). With no clock and no sense of regularity typically marked by daily habits such as waking up, partaking of regular meals, or following a work schedule, Doña finds herself discombobulated by the chaos around her, reflected in her later admissions of uncertainty with regards to her temporal memories. Going beyond the simple loss of the clock, Doña’s ensuing narration focuses more on the traumatic nature of the events at hand and how time is broken
down and distorted, both naturally and intentionally. Echoing the temporal confusion similarly portrayed by Jorge Semprún in *El largo viaje,* Doña writes:

¿Cuántos días llevaba en este campo de concentración? Casi había perdido la cuenta. Habían estado cinco días sentadas en las butacas de un cine, de los muchos que en Alicante habilitaron para este fin; inmóviles, sin levantarse de ese asiento ni para las necesidades más perentorias […] Después…, unos días en la prisión de Alicante, durmiendo en los patios y las escaleras y con una escasa comida cada veinticuatro horas; posteriormente el traslado a un destatado caserón llamado «Casa de Ejercicios Espirituales», convertido en campo de concentración. ¿Cuántos días llevaban allí? Parecía una eternidad desde que se separara de Emilio. (64-65).

Studying the psychological effects of trauma and coping strategies among soldiers, Jonathan Shay draws a connection between the perception of time and experienced trauma, noting that while trauma affects temporal understanding, the victim also discovers that “the destruction of time is an inner survival skill” (176). By means of mixing concrete, fixed temporal references with more vague descriptions of her moments of despair, Doña reflects this concept: as the days in the concentration camp creep by, she begins to “forget” the number of days she has been interred there for fear that the numbers will keep rising and further separate her from her husband and a sense of normality. She further demonstrates this concept when later speaking of her three-month interrogation and torture by the Francoist police. When a fellow prisoner asks her how long she has been in interrogation, she replies: “He perdido la cuenta. Creo que unos tres meses” (124). A more direct and obvious admission of misremembering, Doña again demonstrates both the fracturing influence of trauma on memory and the coping mechanism of forgetting, an effort to overcome the unpredictability of time (and the future) within prison.

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9 Semprún begins the novel by writing, “…Días, noches. Hago un esfuerzo e intento contar los días, contar las noches. Tal vez esto me ayude a ver claro. Cuatro días, cinco noches. Pero habré contado mal, o es que hay días que se han convertido en noches.” (11). Like Doña, Semprún attempts to count the days he has been on the train headed toward the unknown destination of Buchenwald, but finds it difficult to remember the specifics.

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The fragmentation of time in Doña’s text is not just limited to the present, but also permeates her perception of the past and future as well. Studying the lives of those interred within concentration camps, Judith Herman postulates that, “Thinking of the future stirs up such intense yearning and hope that prisoners find it unbearable […] The future is reduced to a matter of hours or days. Alterations in time sense begin with the obliteration of the future but eventually progress to obliteration of the past…. Thus prisoners are eventually reduced to living in an endless present” (89). As the days of initial captivity pass by in a blur, Doña notes that, “Como una película veía trazos de su vida pasada, como algo irreal que hubiese pertenecido a otra persona” (67). Unable to free herself from the constraints of a monotonous existence in prison, Doña finds her past beginning to fade away as it resists being incorporated into a seemingly infinite and unpredictable present. As the years pass by, Doña’s sense of the past also changes. After being imprisoned for fifteen years, she no longer seeks refuge only in the memories of her life before prison, but also in the years of prison life itself: “Recordaba los tres años del penal de Segovia, entonces Segovia fue el «emporio» de las prisiones, sentada en la silla de enea sus ojos se perdieron en la lejanía del recuerdo. Con frecuencia, para evadirse de esta prisión, la peor del Estado, ‘Penal de inadaptadas de Guadalajara,’ recordaba aquellos tres años” (226).

Midway through her imprisonment, the same thoughts of temporal disconnectedness continue to plaguer her as she observes the experiential gap of life in prison and life outside of it. Demonstrating the disjointed nature of the prison experience and the trauma surging within, she writes of the dated photo album that serves as a double-edged sword of comfort and grief:

Un álbum, repleto de fotografías colocadas por fechas y que a Leonor se le antojaban con nervio y sangre, como la existencia que encerraban, hacía que Leo viviese la vida a saltos: Laura del brazo de su marido, 1946…, los primeros pantalones largos de su hijo, 1951…, los niños de Alicia con sus mismos ojos y sólo con un año de diferencia, 1950-1951…, y su madre, en un viaje a Saturarán
con la cesta de la comida en la mano y gesto indefinible. Allí estaban sus hermanos con un grupo de amigos o solos. En la soledad de su celda ella repasaba las hojas de este álbum y se fijaba tanto en cada rasgo de sus caras que parecía que le hablasen. Le gustaban las primeras hojas, donde estaban de niños, como les dejó, los sentía más suyos. (244)

Though life in prison remains static, monotonous and devoid of temporal movement other than that of physical pain or aging, life for the families of the prisoners continues to move at a normal pace, further increasing the symbolic gap between the two. For Doña, this temporal isolation is keenly felt, resulting in her description of family visits as “una felicidad y un tormento […] Ilusión y sufrimiento, miedo y esperanza y un vacío inmenso, cuando les veía marchar para otros seis meses” (245). Almost eight years later upon her release from prison, Doña becomes aware of this as she attempts to remember what she looked like before being arrested and interred:

Quiso recordar cómo era antes de que la encerraran, sin que a pesar de su esfuerzo lograse recordarlo. Hacia sólo una hora, que se había mirado al espejo para recogerse el pelo canoso y su cara familiar de hoy no le dejaba ver la de antaño. Lo que sí recordaba fue que al entrar por una puerta similar a esa, tenía veinticuatro años y ahora al abrirse para la salida, tenía cuarenta y cuatro. (294, emphasis mine)

Past, present and future do not simply become blurred, but essentially disconnected from her lived experience, much like those experiences narrated by the likes of Neus Català, Jorge Semprún and Felipe Matarranz. As she leaves prison, she feels utterly separated from her life before she was arrested, carrying with her the fears that she will be unable to reconcile her “new” identity with the expectations of her family and friends. Telling of the day that two of her closest friends, Adela and Paquita were released from prison, Doña notes the mixed emotions felt by all involved: “La alegría y la congoja les embargaba al mismo tiempo; las que se iban, llevaban casi veinte años de prisión, algunas de las que se quedaban cumpliría más de los veinte. Eran muchos años, toda una vida, por lo que a ninguna le desbordaba la alegría” (289). Having been separated
for so many years from the outside, there is a deep sorrow and fear that pervades any feeling of happiness. As Doña finally narrates her own release from prison, the temporal confusion experienced in the process jumps off the pages of her testimony. Turning around for once last glance of the prison behind her, she writes:

Preguntó el camino de la estación y se encaminó hacia la dirección que le dieron. Pasó por una plaza con bancos y se sentó a mirar como jugaban los niños y también porque una especie de mareo la envolvía. Volví después de veinte años. Los suyos nada sabían, como tampoco ella cuando le llamaron para decirle que ‘pordía [sic] irse a su casa’ que ‘firmase aquellos papeles.’ Aún estaba aturdida, fue todo tan imprevisto y rápido que no les dio tiempo de reaccionar. La despedida de las compañeras había sido tremenda por lo inesperado. ‘Y los míos, ¿qué sentirán cuando me tengan de nuevo a su lado?’ Una emoción que la ahogaba la hizo inclinarse. (293-4)

For Doña and her fellow prisoners, their identity has become synonymous with their prison cells, and any thought of rejoining the outside—with its time moving forward rapidly in comparison with the slow crawl of the clock within the prison—is met with reservation.

In response to this feeling of incoherence and confusion, Doña highlights the retroactive nature of her testimony as she writes, edits, and later publishes it, attempting to establish critical distance between herself and her traumatic memories. Written in 1967, approximately five years after her release from prison on August 5, 1962, Doña reveals that the original transcript of Desde la noche y la niebla was kept hidden throughout the rest of Franco’s dictatorship, to be unearthed almost ten years later and slightly edited before being published. Emphasizing the psychological and temporal distance between her present and her memories, she begins her testimony by confirming the space between the two: “Este relato, es una novela-testimonio que terminó de escribirse en octubre de 1967. Diez largos años han pasado y muchas cosas han cambiado en nuestro país desde entonces. Han sido en estos diez años, mientras la novela se encontraba metida en un cajón, cuando los pueblos de España, a través de su lucha, han
conquistado al menos el derecho y la libertad de decir quiénes somos” (15, emphasis mine). She continues to repeat both the year she first completed the manuscript (1967) and the phase “ten years” in her introduction as she explains her process of editing the testimony. On one hand, she interestingly notes the year 1967 as important because her memories of prison are still fresh in her mind: “aún mantenía muy vivo el recuerdo de mis años de prisión” (16). Nevertheless, her strict focus on the timeline of writing and publishing her testimony reveals her desire to break from the trauma written within. Emphasizing the changes that have taken place throughout the ten years between when she first wrote Desde la noche y la niebla and when it was published, she finds strength in the time that has passed. It is only now, ten years after writing her testimony, that Doña is able to fully articulate her experiences and redefine herself and her comrades in light of Spain’s progressive attitudes and will to remember those silenced during the dictatorship.

As a whole, the temporal schema of Doña’s novela-testimonio thus reveals clear insights into the workings of a mind attempting to overcome trauma and rewrite experiences from new perspectives. Allowing her trauma to become visible via the fragmented portrayal of time in her testimony while also emphasizing the temporal distance achieved in the years leading up to its publication, Doña lets her trauma speak while still wielding the pen of authority over it. In much the same way, her trauma and attempts to subdue it are also visible in the juxtaposition of various narrative voices and subjects that highlight the individuality of her text while affirming its collective purpose as well.

**Fragmentation of Voice and Narrative Subject**

In addition to temporal fragmentation, the fragmentation of the narrative voice and textual subject also illustrates the complex relationship between history, trauma and resistance in
Desde la noche y la niebla. This juxtaposition of the individual and collective perspectives is hardly surprising, as many literary critics have noted the importance of the collective voice in testimonial literature produced under conditions of extreme oppression such as the Holocaust or the social revolutions of twentieth-century Latin America. Specifically, it has been noted that women’s testimonial narratives tend to emphasize the collective nature of their experiences while still remaining true to their individual voices. In her analysis of women’s prison testimonials from Spain, Mangini labels this collective emphasis as a consistent characteristic of the subgenre, suggesting that the depicted solidarity of the women is the most pervasive theme of the texts (116). In his study of autobiographical literature from the Spanish Civil War, Randolph Pope describes this tension in terms of the inability to separate personal experience from social influence (399), and applying this concept even more specifically, Alicia Ramos Mesonero further highlights the significance of this hybrid collective/individual voice in testimonial accounts produced by women in Franco’s prisons, listing it as a defining characteristic of the female prison-memory text (30).

Although Doña uses the third-person perspective to narrate her novel, both for reasons of clandestine security and the evasion of re-experienced trauma, a constant tension between her individual experience and the collective herstories of her fellow comrades permeates her text. The introduction first reveals this anticipated tension as she highlights the way in which her text speaks on behalf of “las mujeres que vi sacar a fusilar, de aquellas otras que murieron a mi lado, de las que sobrevivimos a todas las penalidades y la amargura de pensar en las que aún quedaban en las cárceles sufriendo lo que yo había dejado atrás” (16). While Doña frequently divulges her

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10 Ana Corbalán suggests that Doña, “uses the third person as a distancing mechanism from the traumatic memories of her autobiographical experience” (27).
own thoughts, opinions and fears via the protagonist Leonor, she also consistently connects them with the struggles and stories of the women around her, calling attention to the collective nature of her prison experience. This narrative strategy ultimately achieves several important objectives. First, the juxtaposition of the individual and collective voice itself acts as a means of resistance, creating not only strength in numbers but also directed opposition to the identitary homogenization forced upon Republican prisoners by Francoist historians and propagandists. Second, the tension between the individual and collective voices reveals the profound psychological struggle of the prisoner with regards to her role in the events she has witnessed, enabling her to work through her confusion openly and honestly with the aid of a sympathetic audience. Lastly, the hybrid voice acts as a means of recovery, permitting Doña to establish a symbolic community through which she is able to retrieve her memories and work through her traumatic experiences in meaningful ways.

The collective voice as a means of counteraction is clearly visible in Desde la noche y la niebla from the beginning pages of the introduction all the way through the last lines of the text as Doña emphasizes the collective fight for survival and recovery, not only from within prison but also in the years leading up to her arrest. The dedication of the novel also reveals this: “Comunistas, socialistas, anarquistas, republicanas, mujeres del pueblo, todas sufrieron la desatada represión de ese vendaval, juntas, hacinadas y hambrientas lo perdieron todo menos su valerosa resistencia, para ellas va dedicado este pequeño testimonio, amasado en las penas y la solidaridad” (18, emphasis mine). Incidentally, Doña portrays the Republican resistance primarily in terms of its collective strength and capacity for solidarity, reinforcing the idea that,
“En resistir era nuestra única salvación” (27). As Doña describes the overwhelming fear and sense of impending doom that invades her mind at the thought of losing her husband in the last days of the war, she immediately reproaches herself for her self-focused concerns, instead finding strength in remembering the universal nature of her struggle:

De pronto, se reprochó su egoísmo; pensó en los millares de mujeres que en estos tres años pasarían sus noches frías y solas, con el temor en sus corazones, esperando la fatal noticia. Los millares de enamoradas que cada noche llorarían en sus camas vacías para siempre por la noticia de ‘muerto en combate;’ de aquellas otras que esperarían el regreso en vano y que ya dieron su último beso. De tantas mujeres que, en su sencillez y grandeza, cambiaban sus vestidos claros por ropas de luto y duelo, sin estridencias ni quejas. (35)

For Doña, the most effective way of overcoming the potentially paralyzing fear of defeat is uniting her story with those of her comrades, a coping mechanism that carries over into her prison experiences as well and becomes a central focus of her narrative. In her study of women’s prison literature from post-war Spain, Mangini notes that solidarity forged in prison or captivity was, in fact, one of the primary survival mechanisms available to the women held in Francoist prisons and thus an important focus of their testimonies: “Their solidarity was politically constructive in the face of the brainwashing, torture, substandard conditions, and other dehumanizing tactics of the regime, but it was also directed against the prison authorities—the nuns, the priests, and lay workers who tried to pressure the inmates into participating in religious functions and taking the sacraments” (119). Only moments after arriving to her first prison cell in solitary confinement, Doña introduces the power of this clandestine solidarity in the face of torture and oppression. Overwhelmed by fear and exhaustion, she hears a woman calling out to

11 Solidarity among the prisoners is something that Franco’s regime attempted to destroy by creating an extreme culture of fear and consequence, one that Doña describes as having the power to tear apart even the strongest bonds of familial solidarity: “Las familias que se decidían a guardar a algún perseguido no resistían por mucho tiempo la tensión nerviosa, y el terror de ver su casa marcada como ‘casa franca’ podía a veces más que la solidaridad” (82).
her from a cell nearby, asking her who she is. Heart beating wildly, she responds with her name before exchanging information about her arrest and receiving advice from the friendly voice of a fellow (unknown) prisoner. Telling her to remain encouraged by their bond, the woman reassures her: “Ya sabes que estamos contigo” (101) to which Doña writes, “Este fue el primer contacto que Leonor tuvo con sus compañeros de prisión. Su voz, cálida y solidaria, la reconfortó” (101). Finding the only possible comfort within the confines of her cell, she discovers the power of remaining united to her prison mates. As a text written within an oppressive prison system, Desde la noche y la niebla foregrounds this camaraderie as a key theme. It is through this network of communication and encouragement that Doña maintains her sense of purpose and identity as an anti-fascist activist.

From this point on, Doña consistently portrays group identification as the foundation for survival and resistance within the prison system, even in the face of extreme torture and duress. A particularly astounding demonstration of this transcendental solidarity comes as Doña recounts the death of a fellow prisoner following his interrogation and torture at a police station she was taken to for questioning. As his body is dragged away by the guards, the prisoners begin to sing the “Marcha Fúnebre” in tribute to him, their scattered voices echoing throughout their individual cells. She writes: “Leonor cantó con toda la fuerza en sus pulmones, sin lágrimas, algo maravilloso era aquello; el espíritu invencible de los vencidos” (127). Though the prisoners are brutally beat for singing, it does not stop their desire to meaningfully witness and symbolically mark the passing of one of their own, finding strength in the songs of their comrades as they directly defy their captors. Doña again highlights the importance of this collective spirit as she describes the complex web of inter-prison relationships established as a means of survival:
Desde el primer momento las presas comprendieron que su única salvación era no perder el espíritu militante, que al terror de la cárcel había que hacerle frente con la organización, así cuando llegó Leonor, todos los partidos estaban organizados […] No siempre se llegaba a un acuerdo inmediato, pero el hecho de que existiese se discutiera ponía calor y ardor en la vida de las presas. (141, emphasis mine)

It is clear that group solidarity, then, is a definitive tool of endurance and defiance in situations of oppression and trauma. Edurne Portela similarly argues that we must understand the space of resistance demonstrated through these prison narratives in order to fully interpret them and understand their nuances: “Space, then, is not conceived of as a fixed, immobile entity, a receptacle where objects and/or beings exist or are inserted, but as a strategy within the discourse of power and knowledge” (25). While prison as a space of repression and resistance inundates Doña’s testimony with symbolism and meaning, the novela-testimonio itself also functions as a new space of creation: it is in the writing of her memories and experiences that Doña once again forges bonds of solidarity with the many herstories in her text.

In terms of writing memory and experience the juxtaposition of the individual and collective perspectives offers another type of intentional opposition—that of resisting the forced homogenization of memory and identity. While memory itself is rooted in social experience, the idea of sharing a common culture and ethos does not necessarily signify that all victims or witnesses will share or have shared the same perspective when it comes to their recall of specific historical events or traumatic experiences. Echoing the earlier ideas of Maurice Halbwachs, Elizabeth Jelin suggests that memories, both individual and collective, are produced by active subjects that share a culture and ethos while still maintaining individual perspectives (89). Though the narrator remains fairly consistent throughout the course of Desde la noche y la niebla (albeit with the random nosotras slipped in on the part of the author that demonstrates the
testimonial nature of the text), the narrative subjects vacillate among various women, offering diverse glimpses into the everyday lives and struggles of women from all over Spain.\textsuperscript{12} What results is a complex and descriptive picture of local and regional lifestyles, different ideological perspectives and, at times, competing narratives that reveal several common goals among the women to whom they belong: the desire to recover from experienced trauma, resist oppression, and reclaim their subjectivity and the right to recreate their own identities.

Through each narrative subject, Doña is able to introduce different political ideas and situations that establish alternative views of the Spanish Civil War that have all but been erased by mainstream historians. Cristina, the politically passive mother of Leonor, exposes the sad normalization of domestic abuse: “para ella no era una desgracia que no pudiese salir a la calle sin su permiso, que la pegara si le hablaba fuerte o no obedecía con prontitud a sus mandatos […] le quería y ni siquiera podía concebir que las cosas fueran de otro modo” (79). Josefin, an intellectual and teacher, reveals the dark underworld of sexual abuse that the female prisoners suffered at the hands of the Francoist police force (158). Pura, a former nanny, uses her past experience to shed light upon the plight of the imprisoned mother: “Y ahora Pura pensaba, al ver los niños en la cárcel, que las madres y los hijos presos eran un todo fundido. Que la vida de las madres es un infierno, cuando son pobres y además presas” (169-170). Pilar, a communist peasant from Toledo, describes the discrimination faced by women who attempted to actively participate in the resistance movements leading up to the war (208). Carmen, a guerrillera from Galicia, tells of the ongoing resistance mounted by the maquis fighters in the mountains of

\textsuperscript{12} Literarily speaking, Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of heteroglossia further introduces that idea that one novel—even one containing a single narrator—has the capacity to create and maintain multiple and possibly competing interpretations of the world that exist in relationship to one another: “The polyphonic novel presents a world in which no individual discourse can stand objectively above any other discourse; all discourses are interpretations of the world, responses to and calls to other discourses” (Allen 23).
northern Spain (236). Through each of their tales, additional layers of regional pride, identity and heritage are added to the overall story of the women imprisoned, defying the simplistic and inaccurate representations of Republican Spaniards found in Francoist propaganda, notably that they were all, “evil Communist lackeys” (Folch-Serra 228). 

In addition to acting as a means of resistance, the fragmentation of the narrative subject and voice also gives the reader profound insight into the psychological turmoil of the prisoner—the constant fight between individual preservation and group survival, between the roles of victim and victimizer. Kai Erikson describes this dynamic in terms of equal and opposite forces exerting influence over the victim: “It draws one away from the center of the group space while at the same time drawing one back” (186). Lynda Marín likewise notes that women’s testimonies that portray the oppression of women and subsequently call for historic rectification typically foreground, “the struggle between the first-person, sacrosanct, individual “I” (usually conceived of as the male hero) and the diffuse, polyphonic, amorphous “we” (traditionally conceived of as the seething masses, the other, the force against which the “I” emerges)” (53). Rather than focus solely on the simple fact that resistance was typically achieved best through solidarity and collective identity, Doña portrays collectivity as both a blessing and curse, both as a survival mechanism and a source of trauma, self-blame and guilt. One of the most emotionally telling passages comes as Doña recounts the moment in which her death sentence is reduced to thirty years in prison. At this point, she has been on death row for more than five months and has formed solid bonds with the women there, finding strength in their camaraderie and common purpose. When the judge announces that her sentence has been commuted, she first responds

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13 Cazorla Sánchez describes Francoist propaganda in similar terms, suggesting that Francoism consistently propagates a “one-sided version of events […] which characterized all republicans as degenerate monsters” (28).
with an overwhelming sense of joy, as if her body and soul have symbolically returned from the grave:

El pulso iba al ritmo del corazón y le ahogaba. Como si saliera de un gran letargo, se dio cuenta de sí misma. Se enderezó. Sintió su carne, su sangre correr veloz y alocada por las venas. Aquella amiga inseparable durante siete meses, de rostro descarnado, huyó veloz. Como una torrentera avanzó hacia ella la vida; abrió los ojos y no vio al juez, ni el locutorio pequeño y estrecho, ni las sombras de la celda; sintió el olor tibio de la tierra, los rebrotos de los árboles, ¡la vida! (206)

As she reflects more on the verdict, however, an intense feeling of guilt akin to death invades her mind when she considers that the other women on death row have not had their sentences reduced and will be executed the following morning: “Una pena inmensa le invadió […] como si fuera culpable de dejarlas” (206, emphasis mine). Returning to her cell to collect her few belongings before being transferred to a regular cell, she writes:

Leonor estaba tan emocionada que no sabía qué decirles. Allí de nuevo en la galería de condenadas a muerte, le pareció una monstruosidad la alegría que había sentido cuando se lo comunicó el juez. Diecisési mujeres esperaban morir y seguramente aquella noche sería la última para algunas y ella palpita de un gozo interior que sepultaba la tremenda pena que sentía por dejar a sus compañeras. Oía sus voces de enhorabuena y se reprochaba su deseo incontenible de huir cuanto antes de esa galería de pesadilla. (206)

Although collective identity is a means of resistance and survival, it nonetheless comes at a grave price for Doña as she wrestles with the lack of control she has over the fate of her comrades and the still-recurring guilt she feels for surviving when they did not. Like many survivors of the Holocaust such as Català and Semprún, and survivors of the Spanish Civil War such as Matarranz, she has trouble conceptualizing her role as a victim, thus leading to the clear divide between the individual and collective voices portrayed in her text.

In spite of the difficulty in understanding her individual role, however, Doña lastly utilizes the split narrative subject as a means of creating a symbolic community through which
she is able to work through her trauma and narrate her memories. Among theorists and practitioners of psychotherapy, there is a general consensus that the process of psychological recovery is greatly affected by group dynamics and social interactions. Judith Herman first points to the necessity of collective ties in the process of psychological recovery:

> Traumatic events destroy the sustaining bonds between individual and community. Those who have survived learn that their sense of self, or worth, of humanity, depends upon a feeling of connection to others. The solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against terror and despair, and the strongest antidote to traumatic experience. Trauma isolates; the group re-recreates a sense of belonging. Trauma shames and stigmatizes; the group bears witness and affirms. Trauma degrades the victim; the groups exalts her. Trauma dehumanizes the victim; the group restores her humanity. (214)

Kai Erikson likewise suggests that shared trauma is a potential source of strength: “trauma shared can serve as a source of communality in the same way that common languages and common backgrounds can. There is a spiritual kinship there, a sense of identity, even when feelings of affection are deadened and the ability to care numbed” (186). Though Erikson and Herman are both quick to highlight that these groups are neither easy to create nor maintain, the material point remains: reestablishing a sense of community and/or group identity is a powerful means of working through traumatic experience and reintegrating individual trauma stories into the greater narrative of human advancement. Akin to Benedict Anderson’s concept of an imagined community, Doña juxtaposes her memories with those of her fellow prisoners in such a way that she is able to validate her personal experience. The last few lines of her testimony reinforce the importance of this symbolic community as she admits that the first individuals she desired to visit upon her release from prison were Mariana, Adela and Paquita, her comrades and fellow prisoners (294). Not only do the other (former) inmates fully understand what Doña has
experienced, but their stories also serve to uphold their historicity and authenticate Doña’s subjectivity. Doña finds both refuge and strength in their companionship.

It is ultimately in the creation of this symbolic community that the function of Doña’s fictionalization of her testimony most clearly reveals itself. Simply stated, she rewrites parts of her memories in order to unite them more fully with the community that endows her with the strength to remember her trauma and speak out against it. Describing literature published in Spain during the post-war period and post-dictatorship, Carmen Moreno-Nuño refers to the constant dialogue between autobiography and fiction. Where autobiography is a vehicle to look for truth that had been hidden during the dictatorship, the novels and testimonies of the period question the distinctions between history and fiction as they attempt to narrate traumatic experiences in tangible ways (33-4). In looking at Doña’s use of fiction in her testimony, we can clearly see writing fictionalized memories as an intentional strategy to reclaim agency and find emotional comfort as she relives her most depressing memories. Among these experiences is that of the execution of her husband, Eugenio (named Emilio in Desde la noche y la niebla).

Although Doña (in real life) was released from prison for a brief time just before and while Eugenio was executed, she writes as if she experienced his death within the prison. Describing the moments immediately after being informed of her husband’s death, she writes: “Le acompañaba una funcionaria para abrirle la cancela, detrás de ella esperaban sus compañeros. ‘Le han fusilado esta mañana con doce más.’ Se metieron en la celda y todas callaron. Sin embargo, Leonor sabía que sentían una pena inmensa, pero cualquier palabra en ese momento hubiera sido inútil” (185). Isolated in her grief in real life due to her clandestine existence and inability to publically mourn her loss, she fictionally surrounds herself with her comrades as she writes of Eugenio’s execution. Writing and situating her trauma in the testimonial space of
community, Doña is able to remember her loss without succumbing to the brokenness she felt immediately after his death. She also finds sweet memories of her husband in her relationships with the women written into her testimony. Most noteworthy among them is Paquita, a woman with whom Doña and Emilio (Eugenio) worked during the war. She writes: “Paquita además, representaba para Leonor el recuerdo de días más felices; juntas caminaron muchas veces al lado de Emilio, juntas desempeñaron trabajos de organización y juntas sufrieron los primeros embates de la represión en aquel puerto de Alicante. Junto a ella dio los primeros pasos en la prisión y ahora cuando había perdido a Emilio ella se volcaba en atenciones” (187). Demonstrating the theories of Kai Erikson and Judith Herman about finding strength in collective identification, Desde la noche y la niebla thus reveals the ways in which Doña reclaims the agency of her individual herstory while reinforcing the collective yet heterogeneous identity of the group that continues to give her the will to resist oppression. In much the same way and with similar intentions, Doña also reconstructs her trauma through the aesthetic structure of her testimony, rewriting her trauma and challenging discourses written by Franco’s regime.

**Fragmentation of Structure and Style**

Aside from the obvious narrative fragmentation created vis-à-vis the polyphony of voices and inclusion of multiple flashbacks and origin stories of Doña’s fellow prisoners, several forms of structural and stylistic fragmentation also influence the reading of the text and reveal insight into the process of writing traumatic memories and reclaiming the power of self-identification. At the more superficial structural level, the text contains a rough juxtaposition of long, detailed sentences with short, choppy ones full of repetitious language and incomplete thoughts.\(^\text{14}\)

\(^{14}\) The text also contains multiple errors in spelling and punctuation. This may be explained not only by Doña’s working-class upbringing and education, but more importantly by the urgency with which she transmitted her testimony five years after being released from prison.
Trauma theories aside, Rick Altman classifies this type of structurally fragmented text as a hyperbolic narrative, suggesting that, “hyperbolic figures go out of their way to bring together objects or experiences that seem to have little in common… [they] thrive on the unexpected, the apparently unconnected” (26). Taking the concept of hyperbolic narrative structure one step further, Ana Corbalán points out that it essentially becomes the canvas on which traumatic memory is painted in Desde la noche y la niebla: “For instance, their depictions of horror are narrated with run-on sentences joined by commas, which reinforces the extreme extent to which these women suffered” (34). Short, choppy fragments and ellipses likewise indicate the unexplainable nature of trauma, an event that, according to the American Psychological Association, exists “outside the range of usual human experience” (Shay 166). Many examples of these fragmented or uneven thoughts have already been analyzed in this dissertation, specifically in the section on temporal distortion. In this way, the structural fragmentation as a narrative strategy essentially demonstrates the inner-workings of subjective memory and trauma as Doña attempts to create meaningful linguistic and symbolic frameworks through which to narrate her memories.

More fascinating still is Doña’s combination of various literary styles, ranging from autobiography and historiography to fiction and myth. A self-proclaimed *novela-testimonio*, the text naturally contains multiple narrative styles and strategies from multiple genres. Central to this sub-genre is the idea of stylistic hybridization that defies traditional generic categorization. Hans Paschen, attempting to establish a list of general characteristics of *novela-testimonios*, describes them in terms of the juxtaposition of reality and fiction achieved via a fictional narrator whose voice results from “una enunciación real” and thus acts not only as a historiographer but subjective commentator (53). According to Paschen, “la situación comunicativa característica de
la novela-testimonio apunta hacia una autorreflexión del texto, de manera que la novela-testimonio no se opone a la corriente de la ‘metaficción,’ a pesar de las diferencias de intención en lo específico” (53). Focusing on the use of fiction in the novela-testimonio as a strategy to overcome traumatic memories, Carles Feixa and Carme Agustí suggest that, “La literatura de ficción y los relatos memorísticos, escritos u orales, permiten el acceso a una realidad difícilmente comprensible, pueden exponer unos procesos y reflexiones que otro género obviaría o consideraría evidentes: las más profundas impresiones físicas y el estado de ánimo personal, los ambientes intangibles y las imágenes imborrables” (201). While Doña explains her use of fiction as the result of her clandestine lifestyle and the political and cultural oppression enforced by Franco’s regime (17), there are nonetheless indications that fiction makes her memories—and those of her comrades—more accessible and more easily elaborated. Corbalán highlights the utility of fictional strategies when writing traumatic experience, suggesting that, “Through the fictitious mode, real people and situations can be recreated and reconstructed, which becomes an effective discursive strategy for indirectly coming to terms with the traumas of the past” (27). Shirley Mangini also affirms this idea as she recounts a personal interview with Doña herself: “When asked why she used a novelistic form for Desde la noche y la niebla, she replied: “I don’t know. Perhaps I haven’t rationalized it. I think I started that way and it was easier, more accessible. It was.”” (109, emphasis mine).

While fictional strategies make Doña’s narrative memories more accessible (both for her and her reader), historiography and sociopolitical commentaries scattered haphazardly throughout her text, in contrast, historically legitimate her memories and challenge official records of the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath. Rather than seamlessly integrating them within the narrative, Doña instead foregrounds them abruptly, in direct contrast with the more
fictional narratives of her personal experience. Interestingly, she utilizes an almost journalistic style to write about various collective experiences that are already accessible via historical documentation but need to be retold from an alternative perspective (e.g. that of the defeated). In essence, she uses these historiographical strategies to critique the hypocritical Francoist policies and actions that have never before been represented from the victims they targeted. Like many testimonial novels about prison experience following the Civil War, Doña highlights the story of the Thirteen Roses while offering her own commentary of the account:

El fusilamiento de las TRECE MENORES el 5 de agosto del 39, demostró a toda la prisión de qué estaban hechas esas jóvenes. Fue la «saca» más dolorosa que se recordaba. […] La acusación: «complot contra Franco». Aquello era tan ridículo que se hacía inconcebible que por tal acusación pudiesen ser ejecutados. Los jóvenes no habían hecho otra cosa en aquellos dos meses de mayo y junio hasta que fueron detenidos, que buscar formas de esconderse, de huir del vendaval de represión que se cernía sobre todos los españoles que habían estado al lado de la República. (164)

She continues with a remarkably detailed account of their trial, verdict, and consequent execution that reads more like a historical record than a narrative description, foregrounding the injustice and blatant cruelty of the Franco regime in their treatment of minors. An additional historical representation that she chooses to challenge is the characterization of the “Prisión Modelo de Madres Lactantes,” a prison developed specifically for mothers and their infants. Held up by Francoist authorities as a model prison, “limpia, con niños de menos de dos años en perfecta formación y con madres que tenían que hacer reverencias” (179), Doña describes it instead as “lo más sórdido e inhumano de las prisiones españoles” (179). Rather than raising a new generation of children and rehabilitating their mothers as the authorities claimed, the prison instead acted as a mortuary, one in which, “la madre no podía sacar a sus hijos de aquel recinto nada más que muertos; todas las que volvían a reingresar los habían perdido” (178-179). Other
historical descriptions in *Desde la noche y la niebla* that critique Francoist historiography include, among others, the Nazi-like disciplinary codes of Francoist prisons (175-176), the guerrilla movement that surged from 1944 to 1948 (235) and the defeat of Hitler and Mussolini during World War II (232). Taken together, these descriptions introduce alternative perspectives of history that were ignored and/or repressed until after the death of Franco in 1975.

In contrast with the more journalistic styles used to describe the horrors of prison life and the hypocrisies of Francoist policies, mythical language is frequently employed to describe historical representations and actions of Republican Spaniards. Playing with descriptive and narrative techniques, Juana Doña essentially mythifies the actions of the Resistance fighters in Madrid in the last days of the civil war and the subsequent actions of the Republic prisoners and maquis fighters throughout the dictatorship. Describing the *antitanquistas* that successfully defended the city from Francoist tank attacks in 1936, she writes:

> Cuando el 7 de noviembre del 36 irrumpieron los tanques en los frentes de Madrid, un movimiento de estupor hizo retroceder a las primeras líneas, los tanques-oruga avanzando machacando todo lo que encontraban a su paso; no se conocía cómo detenerlos pero surgió el heroísmo y de aquellos jóvenes combatientes salieron los anti-tanquistas. Uno de ellos dio el primer ejemplo saltando las líneas y oponiéndose solamente con un par de granadas de mano a aquel monstruo de acero que despedía fuego por sus bocas. (38)

As if fighting a mythical beast shooting flames from its mouth, the young fighters are portrayed as gods-among-men defying a monstrous enemy. The Thirteen Roses are similarly depicted in mythical terminology: “Y las trece muchachas se juntaron sin una lágrima en sus ojos juveniles, con las cabezas erguidas, rapadas, serenas y valientes, se despidieron de sus hermanas de cautiverio dándoles ellas ánimo a esas miles de mujeres que se resistían a creer que se pudiera cometer ese crimen monstruoso” (165). On a more personal (and collective) level, Doña likewise
describes the suffering of Republican supporters as a feat of superhuman strength and incomparable heroicness:

Era la época heroica, en la que ganar un día de vida, significaba un esfuerzo sobrehumano. La época del hambre rabiosa, del «piojo verde» y del frío. Y las cartillas de racionamiento. Sus hermanos, llenos de parásitos y pupas de avitaminosis, pusieron tesón en vivir y sobrevivieron, y le gustaba mirar sus ojos decididos en sus caras famélicas, porque aquellos niños tesoneros hoy se habían convertido en hombres y mujeres de carácter recio. (244)

Whereas Franco consistently pointed back to Spain’s Golden Age myths and legends as the basis for his sociopolitical policies and mandates,15 Juana Doña counters the official propaganda with new legends of contemporary grandeur and sacrifice, all flying in the face of fascist ideology and oppression and creating powerful forms of resistance to its one-sided historical record. The same level of resistance also bleeds over into Doña’s depiction of nationality and gender. Harnessing the power of the hybrid and fragmented text, she opens History to divergence by questioning nationality as affected by civil war and gender roles propagated by Franco’s oppressive regime.

**Rewriting Identity: Broken Nationalities and Representations of Gender**

Through her use of temporal distortion, the juxtaposition of the individual and collective voice/subject, and aesthetic fragmentation, Doña communicates with her readers on a deeply personal level, revealing the ways in which identity is affected by trauma and reestablished in its wake. Like Matarranz, Català and Semprún, Doña focuses her questions, criticisms, and revisions on identity as it relates to two of the most central constructs used by individuals to develop their identities and create a sense of belonging: nationality and gender. Following a bloody civil war, questions of nationality were unquestionably to be expected, and in light of the

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15 For a detailed analysis of Franco’s political policies and use of Golden Age ideals, see *Franco: A Biography* by Paul Preston, published in 1994. For a gendered analysis, see also *True Catholic Womanhood: Gender Ideology in Franco’s Spain* by Aurora Morcillo, published in 2000.
vast social differences between Franco’s brand of conservatism and the progressive attitudes of the Second Republic, it is hardly surprising that gender roles also became problematic, stigmatized, and utilized as weapons to brandish against the enemy. In response to these debated social issues, Doña utilizes fragmentation to give visible form to the conflictive representations of nationality and gender, challenging the forced homogenization of identity ushered in by Franco’s regime.

As with any case of civil war, nationality as portrayed from the perspectives of the victors and the defeated following the Spanish Civil War vastly differed, an issue that still haunts Spanish politics today. One only has to look to the propaganda issued by both sides of the conflict to see nationality wielded as a divisive and at times exclusive label. In her examination of propaganda created by Franco’s government and supporters, Basilio highlights the ways in which Franco construed nationality as a key component of his campaign to free Spain from the clutches of communism, materialism, and atheism. For Franco, the struggle against the Second Republic was a battle to define the Spanish “essence,” Basilio writes, “defined as a unified Catholic nation under absolute rulers—and foreign ‘infidels’ promoting the dissolution of the country” (74). Using language symbolic of the Reconquista of Spain from the Moors between the eighth and fifteenth centuries, Franco reconstructed nationality as homogenous, exclusive, and predicated on the nostalgic pride of Spanish imperialism (no doubt fueled by his command and dominance of North African troops during the war). While Franco’s political system named all Republican soldiers and sympathizers as traitors to their country, Doña reconstructs a very different picture in Desde la noche y la niebla. As she describes the prison sentences and the trial process as Republican individuals met their fate, she inverts Franco’s assertions of nationality:
Los acusados eran «los sediciosos, los rebeldes, los que habían vendido a la patria, los que pedían siempre más de lo que se les podía dar, la horda roja, los que no respetaban el poder tradicional del Estado, la Iglesia y el Ejército; los que se opusieron a Franco cuando se levantó contra el comunismo para salvar a España»; por lo tanto eran anti-españoles y debían morir todos condenados por el mismo delito: ‘rebelión militar o masonería y comunismo’. Y Leonor pensaba que era una mofa; se les condenaba por rebeldía y sediciosos. Ellos, los verdaderos sediciosos que levantaron sus armas contra un gobierno legítimamente constituido en elecciones libres. (191)

Pointing out the fact that the Second Republic was democratically elected, Doña paints Franco and his government as the true invaders, the anti-Spaniards who refused to respect the power of the State that they so ardently claimed to serve. Returning to Madrid after being released from the Camp de Almendros due to overcrowding, Doña arrives at the Atocha station and is stunned to find Madrid changed overnight by Franco’s victory. She writes, “Todo había cambiado. La España republicana había sido barrida, sus gentes se escondían y sólo pisaban fuerte los vencedores. Leo se llevó la mano a la boca para contener un sollozo. Nunca, ni en los viejos tiempos de opresión España había sido tan sojuzgada y humillada como ahora” (74). Far from Franco’s cry of reconquista and the revival Spain’s glory days, Doña portrays Spain as broken underneath the weight of the fascists that had taken over her streets. Like Matarranz in Manuscrito de un superviviente, she further highlights the participation of foreign troops—such as those from North Africa, Germany, and Italy—in Franco’s crusade, revealing the irony of his claims that his fight was centered on the definition of Spanish “essence.” Even the description of the Republic’s surrender at Alicante and the subsequent time passed in the Campo de Almendros concentration camp is full of references to the Italian troops sent by Mussolini to aid Franco. Though the soldiers attempt to speak Spanish with the Republican prisoners, Doña remembers
feeling repugnance at hearing her language spoken by them—for her, it is a travesty to see her native language spoken in a display of foreign dominance.

In addition to challenging the definition of Spanish nationalism as constructed by Franco, Doña also connects the Spanish Civil War with the greater narrative of World War II, describing the plight of those interred in concentration camps as connected to the herstories of the women incarcerated within Franco’s Spain. Many of Doña’s prison memories in the later part of her testimony consistently point to the influence of Nazi Germany on Spain’s carceral system, further adding weight to her inferences that Spain had been overrun with foreigners essentially using Franco as a puppet. Depicting the abuses, torture, and overall organization of Spanish prisons under Franco as products of Nazism, Doña tells of a prison guard who was a self-proclaimed volunteer in the División Azul, an outfit of troops that fought in the German army on the Russian front. She writes, “Según ella misma decía, voluntaria en la División Azul, pasó a colaborar y ayudar a sus ‘hermanos nazis’ en los campos de concentración de exterminio. Verdad o no, sus métodos eran totalmente nazistas, no había hornos crematorios ni cámara de gas, pero ‘la Sacristán’ las martirizaba con todo lo que tenía a mano” (216). For Doña and her comrades, it was not a “true” Spaniard that was responsible for their pain and suffering, but rather outside forces that had crept their way into Spanish politics. A fierce wave of melancholy for Spain as it was during the time of the Second Republic washes over Doña as she considers the sacrifices made by countless men and women throughout the war and dictatorship: “Mujeres de dentro y de fuera, humilladas, maltratadas, relegadas a la condición de la nada. Mujeres de presos, madres de presos, hermanas y novias de presos, igualmente hambrientas, vejadas y ofendidas por todos los caminos de España. España…” (213).
Unable to finish the thought, her mind turns to the stories of the brave women surrounding her who have refused to bow to the demands of their prison guards. In many cases, Doña remembers how some of them maintained their regional identities and personas even in the midst of such brutal repression. One case in particular is that of Pilar, a fellow inmate condemned to death. Telling her story calmly, almost as if she was telling the story of another, disconnected from the emotions of fear before such grave horrors. So marvelous is her strength that Doña writes, “sonrió con su aire socarrón, no había perdido su ‘estilo’ de campesino, detrás de ellos escondía una inteligencia nada común y una voluntad de hierro” (213). Contradicting the assumption that the working class is ill-educated while at the same time affirming its unique perspective and identity, Doña finds hope and resistance in the memories of her comrades and shines a spotlight on the regional differences suppressed by Franco’s government. Throughout her testimony, she highlights regional origins and the differing perspectives offered by the women hailing from them.

Like nationality, gender in Spanish political culture was also narrowly defined by a predominately male governing body—not only with Franco’s ascension to power, but in the years leading up to the start of the war. Aurora Morcillo Gómez notes that the masculine nature of political bodies was common across Europe in the years leading up to the twentieth century. As such, women were almost entirely excluded from public discussions of nation-building. This changed, however, when fascist regimes such as those in Franco’s Spain and Hitler’s Germany decided to begin articulating “women’s roles and obligations as part of the national agenda” (51).

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16 During his dictatorship, Franco attempted to unify Spain in terms of its national identity. Prohibiting the use of euskera (Basque), gallego (Galician), and catalán (Catalan), he further homogenized independent-minded regions (such as the Basque country and Cataluña) by negating their cultural heritage, identity, and autonomy. Instead of permitting regional differences to flourish, he suppressed them, instead highlighting the Andalusian traditions of bull fighting and flamenco as “true” to Spanish nationalism.
Placing the emphasis squarely on maternity and submissiveness, Francoism upheld Fray Luis de León’s *La perfecta casada* as the ideal image of a Spanish woman, highlighting wife and mother as the two roles every woman should aspire to. As such, the progressive attitudes of the Second Republic were crucified in Francoist propaganda and subsequent state laws enacted throughout his dictatorship. Women associated with the Republic became public examples of indecency and poor breeding, a stigma that attempted to strip the very humanity from them, relegating them to the margins of a society in which they experienced a sense of double oppression—both for being Republican, and for being women active in political life. One such example is found in Doña’s own *novela-testimonio*: when her landlady discovers that she is a Republican in hiding, she exclaims, “¡En mi casa una roja! ¡Y yo creía que era una señorita!” (98). Seen as less than human for their desires to work and fight for equality, the women imprisoned for fighting against Franco saw their access to self-representation incredibly limited during and after the war.

Unfortunately, the same lack of representation carried over into the years immediately following the end of the dictatorship as well, a situation Doña addresses in the introduction to *Desde la noche y la niebla*: “Se contaban las epopeyas de las cárceles masculinas y las heroicidades de sus protagonistas, se rompía el cerco de la censura y en la más negra clandestinidad se divulgaban acciones y sufrimientos protagonizados por los luchadores-hombres. Rara vez se hablaba o escribía sobre las heroicidades de las luchadoras-mujeres” (15-16). Edurne Portela suggests that writing memories in retrospect is one way that women have counteracted this, noting that women in politically oppressive situations often use the written word to “reconstruct the female subject through a self-representation that fights against this double oppression. Writing becomes not only an act of resistance against political repression, but also a powerful affirmation of the female self that has been physically and psychologically abused” (27). Similar to the laments of
Neus Català in regards to the Spanish women who were denied historical representation in the French Resistance because of their gender, Doña describes her testimony in terms of reclaiming her right to reconstruct her own identity as a woman and pave the way for other women to do the same. This reconstruction happens on several levels: first, Doña reaffirms the active, political participation of women in the war and its aftermath. Second, she reclaims her voice and feminine subjectivity in light of the torture she uniquely received as a woman. Lastly, she depicts femininity and womanhood as varied and subjective, effectively challenging the homogenization of women in the historical records written by Francoist historiographers.

Responding to the lack of recognition for the contributions of women during the Spanish Civil War, Doña intentionally foregrounds their participation, frequently pointing out the affirmation of the men they fought side by side with. This begins early on in her testimony as she narrates scenes from within the last days of the Republic and its resistance to Franco’s advancing army. Remembering the strength and courage found within progressive organizations such as the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas (JSU), Doña writes:

>Hace tres años —pensó— no hubieran soñado siquiera con estar aquí. Las necesidades de la guerra ha incorporado a la inmensa mayoría de estas mujeres, a una vida activa. Este hecho les ha radicalizado, en tres años han aprendido mucho, despertando de su letargo para mirarse a sí mismas como a seres nuevos. Sus manos les han demostrado que eran útiles para algo más que lavar, zurcir o cocinar. Algunas ya eran obreras pero de la más baja categoría, nunca saltaba la valla del peonaje. Ahora eran especialistas en la industria de la guerra, enfermeras, dirigían tallera, guarderías…, etc.” (30).

Throughout the rest of her text, Doña offers more specific examples of the roles that women played in the resistance movements, highlighting their active participation and directly contradicting Franco’s depiction of the ideal woman’s passivity. She even goes as far as to highlight women’s participation in combat, noting that, “También había mujeres guerrilleras que
habían sido capturadas en combate o en emboscadas” (235), and further stating that, “en todas las caídas había un puñado de mujeres, que demostraban, por lo general, ser al menos tan valerosas como los hombres” (238). Rather than perpetuating the stigma of women as passive victims, Doña touts their activism and continued resistance even within the confines of the prison wall, relating stories of organized rebellion and sabotage staged from their cells. Doña also reclaims the power of self-representation by way of legitimizing her identity—and the identities of her fellow comrades—with in-text character references that contradict the historical records overlooking their presence in the resistance movements. Describing the interactions with male prisoners during communal sentencing trials, she uses her pen to describe the admiration and awe felt by the men as they looked on at the women while being separated and led back to their respective prisons: “A aquellos hombres endurecidos en los tres años de lucha armada y, después de los interrogatorios, se les humedecían los ojos al separarse de aquel puñado de mujeres que habían resistido y padecido como ellos” (130). Inverting the traditional depiction of women marveling at their men headed off to war, Doña places women in the role of hero, writing of their heroism and reclaiming their position from the forgotten annals of history. Women, from Doña’s perspective, were equally as brave and enduring as their male counterparts in the resistance—a fact that she has now recorded for all to see.

As Doña challenges the representation of women as passive and the dismissal of herstories following the Spanish Civil War, she simultaneously demonstrates the ways in which writing her testimony becomes the tool that allows her to reclaim her female subjectivity, memory, and symbolic body. Subjugated to horrendous and dehumanizing tortures at the hands of the male and female prison guards, women in Francoist prisons were stripped of their agency, power of self-representation, and physical femininity (i.e. their appearance, their fertility, etc.).
Pointing to misogyny and *machismo* as the primary culprits in their degradation, Doña describes torture—both physical and psychological—in terms of its everyday appearance, calling them “el pan nuestro de cada día” (158). In spite of the frequent physical beatings and violations, Doña focuses instead on the powerful forms of resistance constructed by the women as a whole. She writes, “Las presas todas, habían vivido en su propia carne los efectos de la dura represión, sin embargo las violaciones causaban en todas ellas un sentimiento tal de humillación y rebeldía que se crispaban los puños con sentimientos homicidas” (159). What was meant to divide and humiliate becomes a source of communal resistance and rebellion for the women held in symbolic chains. Through the writing of her testimony and reflection on this sense of rebellion and will, Doña further offers resistance to Franco’s ideals and oppressive propaganda. Breaking with the myth of female passivity, she declares:

> Allí estaban laceradas por los castigos y el hambre, pero habiendo roto con los mitos de su incapacidad creadora, de su falta de inteligencia e iniciativa para dirigirse por sí mismas. En ese mundo de mujeres se rompió con el mito de las ‘lágrimas femeninas’ con el de la indecisión; con su papel pasivo. Se lloraba poco. Todas eran protagonistas de sus decisiones y acciones, dándoles una nueva dimensión de su valía. (235, emphasis mine)

Doña reflects the same perspective in her testimony as a whole; by foregrounding the herstories of women from multiple stages of life, various regional backgrounds, and differing political ideologies, she offers them the role of historical protagonist. Refusing to allow them to remain buried in objectivity through the gaze of the *machistas*, she rewrites their bodies and minds as powerful and autonomous, portraying them as strong and resistant, much like the *guerrilleros* they exemplified in their myths and legends.

Lastly, Doña portrays the profound struggles of women as it relates to their roles as wives and mothers. Refusing to paint a homogenous picture of all Republican women, Doña instead
presents multiple perspectives that come together to emphasize the uniqueness and subjectivity of the women imprisoned for defending the Republic. In doing so, she reveals the problematic relationship of motherhood and imprisonment, a relationship to which Gina Herrmann attributes the fragmented nature of women’s war testimonies. Though Franco’s Spain projected motherhood as the goal to which all women should aspire, imprisoned mothers—while still held to the same social standard—were not provided with the means with which to care for their children. Via her testimony, Doña attempts to both explain the difficulties of this situation and reconcile the multiple pieces of female identity (whether they be combat veterans, mothers, wives, professionals, or housewives). Leonor, on one hand, represents for Doña the importance of motherhood and the guilt experienced when unable to care for her child while imprisoned. Prevented from seeing her infant son both in prison and in her clandestine existence leading up to her arrest, Leonor constantly bemoans her inability to provide for her son and watch him grow. Her thoughts frequently turn to her absence in his life, and he becomes one of her main motivations to endure after her husband is executed.

On the other hand, Doña also incorporates other characters that provide different perspectives on women’s roles and gifts. Notable among them is Pura, a woman from a poor, working-class background who was introduced to the difficulties of raising children in poverty at a young age. Though she is modest and quiet—two characteristics rarely attributed to women with progressive ideals—she perceives motherhood as a form of imposed slavery, a system that perpetuates empty tables and empty pockets for children born into poor families. Being a mother herself, Pura further reflects on the incompatibility of motherhood and imprisonment, describing

Herrmann structures her argument in terms of dichotomies: “antagonistic relationship between politics and domesticity, and between militarism and motherhood” (19)
the situation as “un infierno” (170) from which neither the mothers nor the children can hope for anything. Commenting on the mothers who had children in prison with them and remembering their constant sacrifices of food and sleep made in order to keep their children alive (even if just for a few days), Pura asks a question that by its very admission critiques the patriarchal system to its biological core: “¿por qué siempre tienen que ser las madres, las mujeres, quienes llevan la peor parte? El padre pobre no se funde en un todo con el hijo pobre. Preso o no preso el padre recibirá la noticia de su hijo muerto, pero es un dolor que nada tiene que ver con la agonía de sentir cada minuto que aquello se te va, a que a pesar de tu infinito cansancio y fatiga no puedes cerrar un ojo” (170). Ultimately, Leonor and Pura are two sides to the same coin—both highlighting the emotional responsibility in keeping children alive and well, while also diverging in their responses to the system. Whereas Leonor laments her absence in her son’s life, Pura decides to challenge the system itself, asking questions that—when presented in a testimony—spark discussion, debate, and call for a change of perspective. For Doña, both positions are equally important because they equally represent the mindsets, challenges, and subjective opinions of the women. Stating in the introduction to Desde la noche y la niebla that her testimony is neither feminist in nature nor attempts to prescribe a particular lifestyle or ideology on her readers, Doña emphasizes that her novela-testimonio is not intended to homogenize memories or reduce their variation, but rather meant to highlight the differences of opinion and reclaim their right of self-representation. Unlike the History that limits critique or divergence, Doña’s work speaks to the innate desire to create one’s identity based on past experience and future hopes.
Conclusions: Rewriting the Female Prisoner

As seen in the testimonies of Felipe Matarranz, Neus Català and Jorge Semprún, the fragmentation of Juana Doña’s *Desde la noche y la niebla* is a central pillar of her narration that provides insight into the process of both working through trauma and rewriting memory from subjective, alternative perspectives. Utilizing a distorted temporal framework creates a visible image of the trauma expressed by Doña’s chosen words, while also constructing a canvas on which she is able to reclaim her sense of agency and powers of self-representation. Not limited to a chronologically concise format, *Desde la noche y la niebla* becomes a rich tapestry of experience that reaches the reader in tangible ways, opening the doors to empathy and emotional connection and highlighting the subjective remembering of traumatic experience as more important than the recording of objective facts. Like temporal fragmentation, the juxtaposition of the individual and collective voices/subjects further emphasizes the subjectivity of the memories presented via the text while also demonstrating the strategies of resistance utilized by the women in prison and continued after their release. Uniting her voice with the dozens of voices depicted in her testimony, Doña reclaims the historical legitimacy of the herstories revealed within it, creating more comprehensive perspectives on the experiences of women throughout the Second Republic, Spanish Civil War, and Francoist dictatorship. Tying these forms of fragmentation together, the aesthetic structure of *Desde la noche y la niebla* constructs a visual image of both trauma and resistance, pointing to the ways in which language is creatively used as a tool and a weapon. Fusing together various genres of language (historical, mythical, etc.) and semantic structures (repetition, abrupt transitions, sentence fragments), Doña’s *novela-testimonio* defies the traditional limits of both fiction and historiography, finding its most accurate forms of symbolism and repetition in the interstitial spaces between them. As a result of the various forms
of fragmentation used, Doña offers up to her readers—and the greater public—a narrative of divergence, subjectivity, and resistance that calls us as a forward-moving society to ultimately question the mistakes of the past and rediscover our responsibility in the ongoing search for justice and peace.
CHAPTER 4

THE FRAGMENTED INTERPLAY OF FICTION, HISTORY AND TRAUMA IN THE TESTIMONIAL NOVELS OF JORGE SEMPRÚN

“Sin memoria, sin seudónimos, sin falsas identidades, yo no existiría.” Jorge Semprún

Like Neus Català and the women given a voice in *De la resistencia y la deportación*, Jorge Semprún is an incredibly important, prolific figure in the field of Spanish Holocaust testimonies with lasting literary and social influence and a unique perspective stemming from his privileged, multilingual background. In contrast with Català, Matarranz, and Doña, Semprún is well-known in literary and historical circles, having achieved international fame via his writing and winning multiple awards for his work. The author of multiple testimonial novels about his experience in the Buchenwald concentration camp and his clandestine work with the Spanish Communist Party, Semprún’s fictionalized testimonies—like those of Matarranz, Català, and especially Doña—provide us with great insights into the process of working through trauma and rewriting history from perspectives that were long silenced throughout Franco’s dictatorship. In this chapter, I turn my attention to his works *El largo viaje* and *La escritura o la vida*—two

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1 Quote taken from an interview granted to journalist Juan Cruz of *El País* in December of 2007. Cruz interestingly introduces Semprún as a “militante de memoria” (1). Semprún himself also alludes to this idea, emphasizing that he utilizes his narrated memories in order to conquer not only the traumatic hauntings of his past, but similarly to conquer misrepresentations of the victims that still persist in both historical memory and public ignorance.

2 Although Spanish is his native tongue, Semprún grew up learning to speak both German at French, both at the insistence of his father. Semprún reflects upon this multilingual background in the novel *Adieu, vive clarté*, published by Gallimard in 1998.
works that demonstrate the fragmentary effects of trauma on the memory while also highlighting the catharsis and resistance performed via writing.

Born and raised in Spain to a wealthy yet staunchly Republican family, Semprún fled with his family to France in the early stages of the Spanish Civil War where he proceeded to join the underground French Resistance during World War II and continue his fight against fascism and social injustice, a battle that he saw not as an isolated conflict but rather as an extension of the same fight facing the Spanish Republic. Upon being arrested for his subversive actions in 1943 he was deported to Germany, where he was incarcerated in the Buchenwald concentration camp near Weimar until his liberation in April 1945. Beginning with the painful creation and publication of his first novel *El largo viaje* in 1963 (or *Le grand voyage*, as originally titled in French) Semprún, throughout the rest of his life, published multiple works detailing his first-hand experiences in Spain, France and Germany during the Spanish Civil War and World War II. I have chosen to work with *El largo viaje* and *La escritura o la vida* at the exclusion of his other novels for several reasons. First, *La escritura o la vida* directly comments upon *El largo viaje*, making it important to analyze them both side-by-side in order to understand Semprún’s strategies and goals with each novel. Second, as two novels published over the course of a 40-year time span by Semprún, they offer important insight into the trauma he experienced and allow for the examination of coping strategies present in his texts. By noting the similarities and differences between the two, we are able to witness how time and critical distance play important

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3 The painful and time-consuming creation of *El largo viaje* is explained by Semprún himself in *La escritura o la vida*. In one such reference, Semprún notes that immediately upon liberation from Buchenwald he “ya había iniciado la cura de silencio y de amnesia concertada…abandonando, al mismo tiempo, cualquier proyecto de escritura, por un tiempo indefinido” (197). Attempting to understand his self-proclaimed instinct to flee from any and all memories of Buchenwald he further states that, “la realidad del campo que había producido estas imágenes estaba demasiado próxima” (198). It would take more than fifteen years for Semprún to arrive at the point in life where he felt the memories could no longer be repressed, and even then the process of writing proved to be painstaking and haunting.
roles in the recovery of identity and purpose in the wake of traumatic experience, and how narrative strategies are likewise affected in the process.

At first glance, Semprún’s above declaration on the power of testimonial creation may seem quite perplexing and contradictory, raising a series of important questions in relation to trauma narratives, testimonial literature, and the process of (re)writing history and memory. First, how are pseudonyms and false identities in any way related to memory, both historical and autobiographical? Second, what role do invented forms of memory and identity perform within the scope of testimonial literature that seeks to recover and create alternative forms of history from the perspective of the victim(s)? Third, can fictional strategies such as invented identity, false memory and symbolic representation truly be used to sufficiently portray individual and collective trauma in such a way that the narrative remains true to the factual, historical turn of events being narrated and renegotiated? Lastly, how does this supposed interplay of fiction, history and memory specifically affect Semprún’s works as it relates to the reconstruction of identity through the text?

These questions are by no means new or un-debated. Since the appearance of the “first” testimonial novel Biografía de un cimarrón in Cuba in 1967, theorists and critics alike have debated the role of fiction and artistic creation in relation to memory and history. In his four-volume collection Time and Narrative, Paul Ricoeur first suggests that history and fiction, rather than being unrelated and autonomous entities, are interconnected and in some degree dependent

4 I use “first” in italics due to the fact that Jorge Semprún’s first novel, El largo viaje was published four years before Miguel Barnet’s. While many theorists and critics herald that Barnet’s novel is the first true testimonio, I maintain that testimonios existed in Europe independent of the “movement” created in Latin America. While both currents exhibit some similarities (as discussed in the introduction to this dissertation), the cultural contexts and political and social frameworks in which these testimonios were constructed were very unique, thus leading to stylistic and the artistic differences seen in texts themselves.
upon one another, stating that, “the gap between the time of the world and lived time is bridged only by constructing some specific connectors that serve to make historical time conceivable and manipulable” (182). For Ricoeur, historical events can only be understood and internalized via the use of constructed, “fictional” frameworks of time and space that do not naturally exist apart from human logic and invention. As a result, all historical account is subject to both temporal and structural manipulation by individuals, further adding to the subjectivity of the narration itself. In a similar fashion, Hayden White proposes that all historical writing likewise relies on narrative structure for meaning, emphasizing that, “the absence of narrative capacity or a refusal of narrative indicates an absence or refusal of meaning itself” (“Narrativity” 6). Taking the debate one step further by considering and analyzing texts that contain both historical and fictional intents, David Herzberger, whose work on historiography and propaganda during the Franco regime has been foundational in understanding literature produced in Postwar Spain, suggests that fiction can actually serve to challenge hegemonic representations of history and subvert stereotypical paradigms established by the victors of social conflicts. By employing various artistic narrative strategies and using history and memory (both collective and individual) as co-referents, these works of fiction in a sense challenge the very nature of writing history itself, offering alternative accounts of historical records and presenting themselves as both fictional novels and historical accounts simultaneously.5

Combining the elements of the theories explored above, Jorge Semprún upholds similar ideals which form the bedrock for his literary works and allow for the further exploration not

5 Critic José Rodríguez Richart supports this concept of literature being both historical record and fictional account at the same time, suggesting that the concentration camp novels written by Spanish authors such as Max Aub and Jorge Semprún are not only important for their use of fictional strategies, but are also “una contribución de indudable valor histórico para reconstruir las inimaginables experiencias de los republicanos españoles en los campos de concentración de Alemania y Francia” (268).
only of the narration of memory and history through artistic means, but also the narration of trauma and its effects on said narration and identity. In his self-reflexive narrative *La escritura o la vida*, published in 1994, Semprún makes an important statement regarding the (im)possibility and difficulty of narrating a story rooted in traumatic experiences and the importance of seeking out new, creative forms of narration that better lend themselves to the task of transmitting personal testimony and examining history:

La realidad está ahí, disponible. La palabra también. No obstante, una duda me asalta sobre la posibilidad de contar. No porque la experiencia vivida sea indecible. Ha sido invivible, algo todo diferente, como se comprende sin dificultad. Algo que no atañe a la forma de un relato posible, sino a su sustancia. No a su articulación, sino a su densidad. Sólo alcanzarán esta sustancia, esta densidad transparente, aquellos que sepan convertir su testimonio en un objeto artístico, en un espacio de creación, O recreación. Únicamente el artificio de un relato dominado conseguirá transmitir parcialmente la verdad del testimonio. (25, emphasis mine)

He goes on to offer a series of detailed reflections and corrections of his previous testimonial novels detailing his personal experiences in Nazi concentration camps, most notably *El largo viaje* (first published in French in 1963) and *Aquel domingo* (first published in French in 1980), through which he effectively deconstructs and recreates the very narratives that he previously related. In her study of Semprún’s testimonial strategies, Susan Rubin Suleiman refers to these novels and (re)writings in terms of revision, or “a process whereby the memory of a traumatic past event is not merely repeated but *continually reinterpreted* in light of the subject’s evolving preoccupation and self-understandings” (6, emphasis mine). When viewed together, *El largo viaje* and *La escritura o la vida* provide deep insight into the process of healing and survival in the wake of devastating and inexplicable trauma, demonstrating how memory and history are not static entities but rather continue to evolve and adapt (sometimes even cyclically) through time. By juxtaposing my analyses of *El largo viaje* and *La escritura o la vida*, I will highlight the
fragmented interplay of fiction, history and trauma seen in both texts, investigate their intertextuality, and explore the ways in which Semprún uses fragmentation as a means to work through trauma and (re)write history from the perspective of a victim and survivor of one of the most atrocious, dehumanizing events in contemporary history.

*El largo viaje* and *La escritura o la vida*

Though *La escritura o la vida* is the first novel in which he consistently and explicitly examines the process of (re)writing memory, it is by no means the first work which demonstrates Semprún’s masterful use of artistic fragmentation as a strategy to remember and reconstruct past. Equally, it is neither his first novel to defy hegemonic representations of history and communicate profoundly overwhelming and traumatic experiences to contemporary readers while also allowing Semprún himself to negotiate identity and rediscover his own autonomous role in the greater collective history he is relating. It is rather within the pages of his first novel *El largo viaje* that Semprún first begins to develop and utilize various forms of fragmentation in the production of his testimonial narrative. The novel, which is set primarily inside a crowded and chaotic boxcar carrying prisoners to the concentration camp at Buchenwald, relates the five-day journey ride to the concentration camp as personally experienced by Semprún, who himself serves as the autodiegetic narrator known in the novel as *Gérard*, one of Semprún’s own *nom de guerres*. Fluctuating between the narration of experiences within the boxcar, childhood reminiscences, tales of bravery in the French Resistance during WWII, and glimpses into the

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6 In the early pages of *El largo viaje*, Semprún uses an anecdote to explain the possible influence and power a semi-fictionalized (or even fully-fictionalized) text may have over an audience, describing a paper that he wrote during his schooling year in France. When his professor remarked that his research paper drew too much from personal memory, Semprún responds: “le advertí que no tenía ningún recuerdo personal de Europa central. No conozco la Europa central. Simplemente, lo saqué del diario de viaje de Barnabooth” (13). It is interesting to note that Barnabooth himself is also not a real individual but rather a main character in one of Valéry Larbaud’s novels.
narrator’s own future, *El largo viaje* examines the questions of life, death, captivity and freedom from the perspective of a victim whose very humanity is challenged and denied by his captors and, by extension, the historical records produced in the war’s aftermath. From the moment he puts his pen to paper, Semprún powerfully demonstrates calculated resistance as he attempts to place distance between himself and his experience as a victim, his memories submitted to his elaborative process as a writer.

Published in 1994, *La escritura o la vida* is not only an artistically creative work of literature by its own merit, but also acts as unofficial epilogue of and commentary upon *El largo viaje*. Stylistically departing from the more novel-esque *El largo viaje, La escritura o la vida* is written in memoir-form with Semprún’s voice resonating loud and clear as its homodiegetic narrator. José Rodríguez Richart succinctly summarizes that, “En esta obra—*La escritura o la vida*—Semprún habla directamente al lector, sin máscaras, sin seudónimos ni personajes intermedios” (272). Without warning or introduction he begins by writing about his first encounter with Allied troops during Buchenwald’s liberation, describing, “Están delante de mí, abriendo los ojos enormemente, y yo me veo de golpe en esa mirada de espanto: en su pavor” (15). Semprún’s memoir proceeds to explain (or rather, attempt to explain) his journey “back” from the camp, his uphill battle to work through the resulting traumatic memories via his writing, and his quest to both recover and redefine his identity in light of his experiences. Switching back and forth between Buchenwald memories and his time spent recovering in France and Spain throughout the next several decades of his life, *La escritura o la vida* symbolically culminates

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7 It should also be noted that his memoir is inherently connected to other previously published works including *The Disappearance* (*L’évanouissement*) and *Aquel Domingo*. Susan Rubin Suleiman notes that this continuity within Semprún’s work reflects the failures of memory while also highlighting the dynamic relationship between testimony and history.
with Semprún’s return to Buchenwald as he participates in a historical documentary being
created about the camp and its role during the Holocaust. The book—like many others written
during his lifetime, including *El largo viaje*—ends ambiguously and vaguely, leaving yet more
symbolic space for re-interpretation and still-evasive conclusions. His writing is a space of
creation, recreation, and rediscovery: from one novel to the next we are able to see the constant
evolution of his reconstructed identity. Semprún himself admits that each novel is, in his eyes,
both a rewriting of his past and the continuance of his journey, noting that his later work *Adiós,
luz de verano* is, “el mismo libro, pero diferente. Es una escritura interminable” (Alonso and
Gordon 64).

After a comparative reading of *El largo viaje* and *La escritura o la vida* I have identified
four distinct forms of fragmentation that function together to both aid in Semprún’s (re)creation
of his past experiences and conscientiously represent the long, arduous process of working
through trauma: temporal fragmentation, fragmentation of the narrative voice and subject,
stylistic and structural fragmentation, and identitary fragmentation as it relates specifically to
gender and nationality. Working together, these literary strategies serve to highlight the constant
battle between fiction and nonfiction as it pertains to the recording of history and the recovery of
memories past, therefore serving not only as strategies through which to recover memory and
identity, but also as weapons with which to fight against the oppressive historical records forged
by both the Franco and Hitler regimes.

**Fragmentation of Time**

Of the various forms of fragmentation strategically used in *El largo viaje* and *La
escritura o la vida*, Semprún makes the most obvious use of temporal fragmentation, calling to
attention the skewed nature of traumatic memory and using abrupt temporal jumps vacillating
between the present, past and future to highlight specific moments and themes that bear significant weight within the bounds of his narrative. In her study of Holocaust literature, Patricia Gartland postulates that temporal fragmentation is central to the representation of the Holocaust in the works of Semprún, suggesting that he expresses “the persistence of the experience in memory in part through special adaptations of narrative voice, through a persona who arranges images that seem to have lost none of the immediacy they had at first perception, a persona who plays these images out of a memory that appears to find difficult distinction between past and present, sequence and simultaneity” (48).8 It is, in fact, by demonstrating the splintering effect of trauma on temporal perspective that he begins El largo viaje, writing, “Días, noches. Hago un esfuerzo e intento contar los días, contar las noches. Tal vez esto me ayude a ver claro. Cuatro días, cinco noches. Pero habré contado mal, o es que hay días que se han convertido en noches. Me sobran noches; noches de saldo. Una mañana, claro está, fue una mañana cuando comenzó este viaje. Aquel día entero. Después, una noche” (11). In effect, Semprún uses fragmentation to relay his own unique perception of the events that he experienced, employing temporal structures and paradigms to express the psychological chaos imbedded within each written memory and, by extension, challenge the dominant historical representations of his experiences as victim that deny subjective perspectives. Each particular usage of a verb tense (present, past and future) consequentially reveals profound insight into his identity recovery and socio-political intent, and his concept of time itself likewise contributes to the portrayal of emotional trauma and the embodied resistance developed in its wake.

8 Gartland also points to the similar uses of temporal fragmentation in the works of other well-known Holocaust writers such as Charlotte Delbo and David Rousset.
In her book of critical studies titled *Working through Memory*, Ofelia Ferrán succinctly summarizes the current research on the use of the present tense in trauma narratives, stating that, “when an individual finally comes to speak about a traumatic event of the past, he/she is, in a way, not referring back to something that occurred before, but is reliving the experience in the present. It is not a constative, referential speech act but, in a sense, a performative one” (271).

While narrating the five-day train ride to Buchenwald in *El largo viaje*, Semprún overwhelmingly uses narration in the present tense as if he is virtually re-living and reconstructing the experience of the journey through his words. From the very first phrases of the novel to the last ones, the present tense marks the novel as not a “dead” or static historical record, but a living one open to constant reinterpretation and negotiation. Statements such as “Ya estoy en este tren” (23), “Miro el reloj de la estación y son las nueve” (36), “Es la cuarta noche […] Vuelve la sensación de que tal vez estamos quietos” (70), and “Contemplo el paisaje, con Mirada lúgubre. No, ya no me interesa, de momento” (124) highlight the way in which Semprún re-lives his memories with both a sense of entrapment and a desire to overcome them by essentially rewriting them, choosing which thoughts to continue and which memories to relegate to the periphery of his narrative. In a sense, these declarative and performative statements also echo those found in Felipe Matarranz’s *Manuscrito de un superviviente* as well. Like J.L. Austin’s performative utterances, Semprún’s declarations reveal trauma’s continued effect on his memories but also symbolize intentionality as he actively relives and works through them, choosing verb tenses that collectively create a mosaic depicting his subjective experiences.

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9 For the sake of clarity and a desire to maintain the integrity of the original text with its fragmentation, I identify my textual omissions with brackets. All un-bracketed ellipses are original to the text.
Additionally, the use of the present tense and the sense of urgency that accompanies it in *El largo viaje* reinforce the emotional depth of each memory, enabling the audience to experience the mental anguish portrayed through Semprún’s words. The emotional connection that Semprún forges through this use of temporal language creates what Laub refers to as an “addressable other, an other who can hear the anguish of one’s memories and thus affirm and recognize their realness” (“Bearing Witness” 68), or what Elizabeth Jelin defines as, “others” with the ability to ask, to express curiosity for a painful past, as well as to have compassion and empathy” (65). For Laub and Jelin this sense of connection with the reader is essential to the witness-author as he/she works through the trauma in the safety of an established dialogue. As Semprún remembers the intense emotions of isolation, exclusion, and rejection, he calls out to the readers, drawing us into his experience: “Me invade una profunda tristeza física […] Ya estoy en este tren” (23). By way of portraying emotional chaos through the use of the present tense, Semprún invites his readers to feel along with him and thus more profoundly experience his journey in tangible ways and enter into the philosophical debate surrounding the Holocaust.¹⁰ Semprún likewise establishes a dialogue with us, his readers, posing questions and speaking directly to us throughout his novel. Accompanying this dialogue are also adages, sage advice and pieces of wisdom that he has learned throughout his experiences. In telling his story, he reminds us of the importance of certain aspects of our lives, begging us to remember them as we journey through life. One such example he refers to constantly is, not coincidentally, about the importance of the people we come in contact with. He writes, “Lo que más pesa en tu vida son los seres que has conocido” (31). Asking us to stop and consider the adage’s meaning in our own

¹⁰ This “direct” experience is seen to be an important element in later writings of Semprún’s, and provoked several conversations among survivors in Buchenwald after its liberation. These conversations will be highlighted in my subsequent analysis of *La escritura o la vida.*
stories, Semprún’s testimony connects with us on an intrinsically personal level, bringing us deeper into his memories.

Adding to the complexity of this already temporally-confusing narration, the narrator of *El largo viaje* does not exclusively narrate from within the train car, but in fact also narrates from the very future about which he paradoxically speculates and describes. Semprún alludes to this idea explicitly as he wrestles with the writing of his memories:

De todas formas, cuando describo esta sensación de estar dentro, que me atrapó en el valle del Mosela, ante la gente que paseaba por la carretera, ya no estoy en el valle del Mosela. Han pasado dieciséis años. Ya no puedo detenerme en aquel instante. Otros instantes vinieron a añadirse a él, formando un todo con esta sensación violenta de tristeza física que me acometió en el valle del Mosela. (24-5)

The narrator is consciously aware of the future and at times (as evidenced in the quote above) both narrates from the future and directly allows it to influence and alter his narrative of the past, reminding the audience of his omniscience and (de/re)constructive power over his memories. By using additional phrases such as, “Más adelante, recuerdo—es decir, no lo recuerdo todavía…pues todavía no ha ocurrido” (36) and “Pero todo esto pasó mucho más tarde. Después de este viaje” (37), Semprún continuously reinforces the idea that he is reconstructing his past experiences through the lens of the future, an idea that José Colmeiro describes as an essential characteristic of memory: “el pasado es reconstruido por la memoria básicamente de acuerdo a los intereses, creencias y problemas del presente” (*Memoria* 16). Brett Ashley Kaplan similarly phrases the juxtaposition in terms of an elaborative work, suggesting that, “memory becomes the work of retrieving a past and of previewing a future” (324). Such preview is also visible in *El largo viaje* as written from the perspective of the narrator. As he attempts to understand the meaning of his liberation from Buchenwald with the arrival of the Allied soldiers, he speculates,
“Tal vez más adelante, dentro de un mes, de quince años, pueda explicar todo esto a cualquiera. Pero hoy, en este día, bajo el sol abrileno y entre las hayas susurrantes, estos muertos terribles y fraternales no necesitan explicación” (77). Semprún as narrator is constantly aware of the future and its impact on his future memories. Resulting from this elaborative process are the concepts of ownership and autonomy, both of which Semprún claims for himself when he writes, “Quizá no debiera hablar más que de esta gente que pasea y de esta sensación, tal como ha sido en este momento, en el valle del Mosela, para no trastornar el orden del relato. Pero esta historia la escribo yo, y hago lo que quiero” (24, emphasis mine).11 His writing—however influenced by trauma—is intentional and deliberate, creating a space in which he is able to control its outcome. In doing so, he joins his testimonies with those of countless other Spaniards (like Matarranz, Català, and Doña), reclaiming agency and the powers of self-representation and displaying his novel as an autonomous creation. The fluctuation of time, as suggested by Paloma Aguilar Fernández, allows him to ultimately evaluate his experience through the lens of its results and lessons, giving him the power to critique history through his narrative (27).

By choice, time as personally portrayed by the narrator in El largo viaje is constantly fractured and re-negotiated, neither concretized nor consistently established throughout the entirety of the novel. Rather than adhering to a linear chronology, Semprún chooses to maintain an air of transcendence as he places himself outside the realm of linear time and narrates events without a solid temporal reference, using both the past and the future to destroy any and all sense of present tense continuity. While Ferrán suggests that the constant shifting of temporal

11 Autonomy is a characteristic deemed important by Semprún. In an interview in Letras Libres he explains: “A mi nadie me ha obligado a ser resistente… Así que la primera experiencia de la libertad de Buchenwald es que yo he estado ahí libremente. Claro que no he decidido libremente sufrir los porrazos de las SS, no soy masoquista, pero he elegido la actividad que sabía que podía conducir al campo” (33).
paradigms and memories (and lack of temporal stability) coincidentally “gives his narration a quality of boundlessness which subverts any closure and becomes one way to resist his remembered enclosure in the boxcar” (75), the resistance found in *El largo viaje* goes far beyond simply that of battling his memories from within the train. Instead, resisting multiple traumatic memories spanning throughout his lifetime is accordingly made possible by way of a profoundly manipulated temporal structure. At times, Semprún himself even admits his own opposition to the narrated memories at hand, stating, “En verdad, no lo sé. Durante dieciséis años he intentado olvidar este viaje, he olvidado este viaje. Nadie piensa ya, a mi alrededor, que yo hice este viaje. Pero, en realidad he olvidado este viaje sabiendo perfectamente que un día tendría que rehacerlo. Al cabo de cinco años, al cabo de diez, de quince, necesitaría rehacer este viaje” (25-26). For Semprún, his literary journey to the gates of Buchenwald becomes a metaphor for the mental expedition of remembering, reconstructing, and writing his experiences. He neither desires to relive his painful memories nor feels like reopening the wounds by elaborating upon them, yet recognizes that the journey is necessary. Without it, he realizes that his identity is incomplete and still torn, existing in a past that continually cries out for reconstruction. In the words of Sally Silk, “the novel confronts its reader with a trip that does not want to be taken in the form of a narrative that wants desperately to be written” (55).

Fundamentally, the seemingly abrupt jumps between temporal spheres (past and future, specifically) in *El largo viaje* function as a strategy to limit the emotional trauma experienced when rewriting or reliving memories. When particular memories or scenes begin to assume increasingly dark themes—specifically those of death or the looming threat of the concentration camp toward which the train is ever-so-slowly approaching—Semprún either interjects his opinions or commentary (as “future” narrator) or reaches further into his past to recall childhood
memories. In doing so, he not only acknowledges his power of representation over the memories that he is relating (both literarily and historically), but also prevents himself from fully re-descending into the trauma that he has been working through via writing. An early example is seen as Semprún first surveys the death that is slowly occurring within the boxcar. As he begins to describe the “silencio pesado” and “gritos enloquecidos de quienes creen que van a morir” (30), he steps back from the scene, switches to narration in the past tense, and begins to comment:

Lo que más pesa en tu vida son los seres que has conocido. Lo comprendí esa noche, de una vez para siempre. Dejé escapar cosas ligeras, agradables recuerdos, pero que sólo se referían a mí. Un pinar azul en el Guadarrama. Un rayo de sol en la calle de Ulm. (31)

He immediately follows this thought with more flashbacks from his time at a French school before joining the Resistance, refusing for the moment to continue his narration from within the boxcar as if to escape from the memory while writing it. A more chilling example comes as the narrator describes the death of a small group of Jewish children after their arrival at Buchenwald late one afternoon. He begins with a simple introduction in the past tense, “Por aquí vi también llegar la lenta columna vacilante de los judíos de Polonia, en medio de este invierno que acaba de terminar, aquel día en el que fui a hablar con el testigo de Jehová, cuando me pidieron que preparase la evasión de Pierrot y otros dos compañeros. Fue aquel día cuando vi morir a los niños judíos” (165). However, before continuing the story, Semprún inserts a short commentary from the perspective of the future, creating temporal distance from the event and enabling himself to talk about it for the first time:

Han pasado los años, dieciséis años, y aquella muerte es ya adolescente, ha alcanzado esa edad grave que tienen los niños de la posguerra, los niños después de aquellos viajes […] La historia de los niños judíos, de su muerte en la avenida del campo, en el corazón del último invierno de aquella guerra, esta historia jamás
contada, hundida como un tesoro mortal en el fondo de mi memoria, royéndola con un sufrimiento estéril, tal vez ha llegado ya el momento de contarla, con esa esperanza de la que estoy hablando. (165)

As soon as he finishes telling the story Semprún once again temporally flees from it, finding a sort of reassurance from the distance he has placed between himself as narrator and the original event. He writes, “Pero hoy está desierta la avenida, bajo el sol de abril” (170). This temporal strategy is visible throughout the entirety of the novel, including within the scenes describing life after the liberation of Buchenwald. As the narrator contemplates the abrupt and unexplainable break between his childhood before his imprisonment and his life after regaining his freedom, he interrupts his train of thought by admitting, “Daba más vueltas en la cama, en este cuarto de hotel alemán de Eisenach, y buscaba un consuelo en mi memoria. Y entonces recordé a aquella mujer israelí de la calle Vaugirard” (89). When he faces ideas or memories that are difficult to understand or explain, temporally distancing himself by fleeing to future thoughts or past memories effectively enables him to continue working through his trauma without continually losing himself within it.

Although time in La escritura o la vida is still portrayed as disjointed, Semprún’s use of fractured time in the memoir ironically clarifies and justifies the temporal confusion previously found in El largo viaje and further illustrates the process of psychological and identitary recovery undertaken by Semprún via the writing of his texts. While the temporal fragmentation of La escritura o la vida still reflects the nature of traumatic memory and the difficulty of chronologically narrating dehumanizing experiences, it more profoundly offers a direct commentary upon the process of writing memory itself. This is accomplished through highlighting the validity and, at times, necessity of fictional strategies in the writing of trauma narratives by juxtaposing the past and present via streams of metafictional hypotheses that reveal
the mind of Semprún as he both re-lives and rewrites his text. The main testimonial debate in *La escritura o la vida* is best summarized by a single question introduced in one of the many remembered conversations between Semprún and his fellow Buchenwald survivors, narrated in the present tense. While contemplating how best to fully represent the Holocaust to the outside world, the question is raised and a potential solution suggested: “¿Cómo contar una historia poco creíble, cómo suscitar la imaginación de lo inimaginable si no es elaborando, trabajando la realidad, poniéndola en perspectiva? ¡Pues, con un poco de artificio!” (141).

As Hayden White argues in his studies of written history and Paul Ricoeur suggests in his discussions on the constructed nature of time, Semprún adamantly believes that writing history based on true experience necessarily requires the use of human constructs and creative (subjective) decisions. After suggesting that the world outside the camp will never fully understand the experiences of the surviving victims, Semprún additionally states, “Jamás realmente… Quedan los libros. Las novelas, preferentemente. Los relatos literarios, al menos los que superen el mero testimonio, que permitan imaginar, aunque no hagan ver… Tal vez haya una literatura de los campos… Y digo bien: una literatura, no sólo reportajes…” (143-44). In studying literary works produced in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, David Herzberger notes that this tendency to write history in fictional formats was not only a method of writing subjective experiences, but also became a means of measured resistance. Unlike Francoist historiographers that “seek to squeeze history into a tightly constructed and monologically defined set of narrative strategies, writers of

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12 Semprún is by no means the only author of Holocaust literature that explores the use of fictional strategies to narrate memory. In her novel *None of Us Will Return* (1968), Charlotte Delbo writes, “‘I am no longer sure what I have written is true, but I am sure that it happened’ (128).”

13 In her study of *La escritura o la vida* Connie Anderson suggests that the distinction between pure fiction and artifice is an important one to note. Whereas fiction implies complete invention and manipulation of historical content, artifice, in the words of Anderson, “may refer only to the manipulation of form and perspective, rather than content” (556).
fictions are able to controvert these strategies and assert dissonance through a normative set of principles of their own” (2). Flying in the face of traditional historiography, Semprún chooses to highlight these remembered conversations and thoughts in order to validate the use of artifice in trauma narratives. In her study of Semprún’s work, Connie Anderson makes an important observation of his use of fictional strategies (such as metafiction and temporal fragmentation) in La escritura o la vida, suggesting that, “it is clear that Semprun [sic] (or the narrator) does not seek to make fiction out of the lived experience, but to treat the experience as if it were fiction, with the techniques used for a fictional representation: freezing the image in order to focus our attention on certain details, using slow-motion, as well as speeding up the film” (558).

Consequently, the abilities of literature to subjectively portray time and memory make it the perfect medium through which to explain traumatic experiences, shedding light on the intentional fictionalization of Semprún’s earlier novels.¹⁴

Ursula Tidd similarly comments upon the successful way in which a manipulated temporal scheme allows Semprún to effectively (re)write his experience in La escritura o la vida, proposing that it, “acts as a means of representing traumatic experience whereby historical time is suspended in favour of a subjective temporality anchored in the lived experience of ‘l’instant’” (704). It is through the juxtaposition of various, and at times contradicting, temporal perspectives that Semprún’s text most clearly underscores the dynamic relationship between history and his own subjective narration. Semprún acknowledges this fact himself as he remembers the day of his liberation: “Puedo estar seguro de la fecha del 14 de abril, puedo afirmarla con total seguridad. Sin embargo, el periodo de mi vida que va de la liberación de

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¹⁴ The use of fiction is much more prevalent in Semprún’s earlier novels than his later ones; Semprún alludes to the reasons for this in his monologues and musings found later on in La escritura o la vida.
Buchenwald a mi retorno a París es confuso, está invadido por brumas de olvido. De imprecisión, en cualquier caso” (39-40). He continues in a similarly contradictory pattern, emphasizing that his memory is fine, all the while admitting that “en el recuerdo, sin embargo, perduran contadísimas imágenes. Brillantes, qué duda cabe, iluminadas por una luz crudo pero envueltas en un halo espeso de sombra nebulosa. Suficientes para llenar unas pocas y breves horas una vida pero no más” (40). Interestingly, he then turns to other historical resources (notably, books) to calculate his arrival to Paris following his liberation, finding it necessary to clarify to the readers that, “Doy todos esos detalles, probablemente superfluos, estrafluos incluso para dejar bien claro que tengo buena memoria, que si prácticamente he olvidado las dos largas semanas de existencia que precedieron a mi regreso a la vida, a lo que llaman la vida, no se debe a un fallo de la memoria” (40). As if to offer one final nod of reassurance to the audience, he ends this particular monologue with a declarative statement, reaffirming the veracity of his text and thus continuing his narration of liberation day: “Estábamos a 14 de abril de 1945” (40). Repeating the specific date four times within the same passage, he furthermore connects the date with that of the establishment of Spain’s Second Republic in 1931, writing that, “Por la mañana se me había ocurrido que era una fecha destacada de mi infancia: la República se proclamó ese día en España, en 1931” (40). Immediately following his confession, he switches time frames and reverts back to retelling his experiences on liberation day in the first person/present tense. In this way, he once again attempts to downplay the gaps in his memory by proving the adeptness of his ability to recall very specific moments from the day in question.

15 There are numerous other examples in which Semprún similarly reassures his readers of the veracity of his narration. In one such moment, he writes, “Desde que he trado conocimiento con el teniente Rosenfeld, el 19 de abril—tengo razones y referencias indiscutibles para afirmarlo con seguridad, igual que puedo estar seguro de la fecha del paseo con él por el valle del Ilm, en las inmediaciones de Weimar” (111).
In addition to enabling Semprún to examine the processes of remembering and writing memory, a manipulated temporal structure in *La escritura o la vida* also allows Semprún to reiterate, correct and historically validate passages from his previous novels. As a way to authenticate the realness of his harrowing journey by train to Buchenwald (the basis for *El largo viaje*), Semprún discusses the day in which he falls off a commuter train in France after his liberation. Using the past tense he states, “El 5 de Agosto de 1945, la víspera del día en que Hiroshima desapareció bajo el fuego atómico, me caí de un tren de cercanías” (230). As he reawakens in the hospital following the accident he begins to have visions in which the details of the accident are mixed with images from the boxcar of his past:

> La memoria me volvió de golpe. Supe brutalmente quién era, dónde estaba y por qué. Estaba en un tren que acaba de detenerse. Se había producido una sacudida, en medio del chirrido de los frenos bloqueados. Se habían producido gritos, unos de espanto, otros de enojo. Yo estaba atrapado en el amasijo de cuerpos amontonados, que basculaban, apretujados unos contra ojos, veía una cara girada hacia mí, con la boca abierta, tratando de respirar. El joven de rostro doliente, vuelto hacia mí me imploraba: “¡No me dejes, Gérard, no me dejes!” (236).

Directly referencing *El largo viaje* and thus reassuring the readers of its historical accuracy, he proceeds to describe disembarking the train and landing on the platform at Buchenwald to the harsh sounds of German and barking SS dogs before returning to realization that he has been liberated and repatriated in France. Offering no correction to the story, he affirms the reality of his experience and his memory, further underscoring the fictional strategies of *El largo viaje* as merely the vehicles through which truth is expressed and memory recovered.16

In contrast, an interesting example of using temporal fragmentation in *La escritura o la vida* to correct previous works comes as Semprún is already re-living a camp experience, one in

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16 Carlos Fernández refers to Semprún’s use of fiction as strategy of memory, a means of going “más allá de la Historia académica” (85) to enter into the world of “memoria literaria” (85) in order to recreate and rethink reality in terms of communicable experience.
which he and a fellow survivor discover the body of a dying man who is faintly singing in Yiddish as he passes from this world to the next. While speculating about what to do to ease the suffering of the emaciated man lying in front of him, Semprún wonders, “¿Le doy conversación? ¿Le canto una canción, yo también? ¿La paloma, quizá?” (44). As if struck by a sudden jolt, the narration abruptly switches as Semprún notes the following:

Ese cuento de La paloma se me ha ocurrido así, de improviso. Pero me recuerda algo de lo que no me acuerdo. Me recuerda que debería acordarme de algo, por lo menos. Que podría recordar, buscando un poco. ¿La paloma? El principio de la canción me vuelve la memoria en alemán […] Murmullo el principio de La paloma en alemán. Ahora ya sé de qué historia podría acordarme. Puestos a ello, me acuerdo de verdad, deliberadamente (44-45).

From this point in the chapter onward, he begins to describe in detail (and using the past tense) the events of the day he stumbled across a young German soldier who happened to be singing La paloma, one of the songs from Semprún’s childhood in Spain. Throughout his description, he sporadically jumps in with commentary reminding the audience that he wields representative power over his text, at one point stating, “Cuidado: estoy fabulando. No pude ver el color de sus ojos en aquel momento. Sólo más tarde, cuando ya estaba muerto. Pero tenía todo el aspecto de tener los ojos azules” (45). He continues by clarifying that this story is, indeed, one that has already been told before in his short novel El desvanecimiento (L'evanouissement, as published in French), although with some errors that need correcting:

Es decir, todo es verdad en esa historia, incluso su primera versión, la de El desvanecimiento. El río es verdad, Semur-en-Auxois no es una ciudad que me haya inventado yo, el alemán cantó en efecto La paloma, y en efecto le liquidamos. Pero yo estaba con Julien, durante el episodio del soldado alemán, y no con Hans. En El desvanecimiento habló de Hans, puse a ese personaje de ficción en el lugar de un personaje real… Hans Freiberg… es un personaje de ficción. Había inventado a Hans Freiberg—al que Michel y yo llamábamos Hans

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17 He later, once again, reaffirms the representative power he wields over his text: “Pues quien escribe soy yo, soy el Dios todopoderoso de la narración” (287).
von Freiberg zu Freiberg en *El largo viaje*, en recuerdo de *Ondine*—para tener un amigo judío” (48-49).

According to Semprún, the only part of the story that needs rectifying is the fact that his companion in the first version of his story was a figment of his imagination, meant to be a reflection of his own ideals and likewise a way to include Jews in his collective story. Ultimately, this fictitious creation does not detract from the truth of his experience, and he adamantly concludes his rewriting by declaring that, “Esa es la verdad restablecida: la verdad total de este relato que ya era verídico” (50, emphasis mine).

In an attempt to further validate his use of fictional elements and strategies in his testimonial works, Semprún switches temporal frames in *La escritura o la vida* yet again and recalls a conversation with Claude-Edmonde Magny, a woman who befriends him after his liberation and, in large part, assists him in his recovery by encouraging him to write about his experiences. As he tells her about typical Sundays in Buchenwald (a conversation that indirectly describe the process by which he will write his [then-future] novel *Aquel domingo*), he notes, “me siento incapaz, hoy, de imaginar una estructura novelesca, en tercera persona […] Necesito pues un ‘yo’ de la narración que se haya alimentado de mi vivencia pero que la supere, capaz de insertar en ella lo imaginario, la ficción… Una ficción que sería tan ilustrativa como la verdad, por supuesto. Que contribuiría a que la verdad pareciera real a que la verdad fuera verosímil” (181-182). He further postulates that, “Mi problema, que no es técnico sino moral, es que no consigo, por medio de la escritura, penetrar en el presente del campo, narrarlo en presente… Como si existiera una prohibición de la figuración en presente… De este modo, en todos mis

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18 These reasons are explained by Semprún both in *El desvanecimiento* and *La escritura o la vida*. Quoting a passage from *El desvanecimiento* in *La escritura o la vida* he states: “Habríamos inventado a Hans, está escrito, como la imagen de nosotros mismos, la más pura, la más cercana a nuestros sueños” (49).
bordadores la cosa empieza antes, o después, o alrededor, pero nunca empieza dentro del campo” (182). Citing blocked memories and the extreme difficulty of reliving experiences from within the camp, Semprún thus metafictionally explains part of the rationale behind the disjointed temporal schemas found in his novels. Interestingly, La escritura o la vida stands in stark contrast to his musings during this conversation by beginning with a present-tense narration of Semprún on the last day of his time in Buchenwald, reflecting the ways in which the rewriting of his experiences have significantly contributed to his recovery and the discovery of effective literary strategies to communicate his past. In large part, the temporal fragmentation of his narratives have indeed helped Semprún along the way, much like the intentional juxtaposition of various narrative voices and subjects as a means of working through individual and collective trauma.

**Fragmentation of Voice and Narrative Subject**

Like the temporal fragmentation employed by Semprún, the splintering of the narrative voice is also clearly visible throughout his testimonial narratives. Overall, this fracturing tends to manifest itself in several distinct forms: the juxtaposition of the individual yo versus the collective nosotros, the identitary confusion between the roles of victim and perpetrator, and the split between narration from the first and third person perspectives—both in the dominant narrative voice, and in the numerous dialogues that run sporadically throughout the novels. As per prominent trauma theories, several theorists such as Dori Laub, Ernst Van Alphen, and Dominick LaCapra contend that fragmentation of the self may occur as the result of a “traumatic” (or “not knowable”) experience. For LaCapra specifically, “trauma invites distortion, disrupts genres or bounded areas, and threatens to collapse distinctions” (96). This crisis of identity or “splitting of the self” as Lawrence Langer describes it in his analysis of
Holocaust testimonios, may manifest itself in different ways, ranging from testimonial witnesses describing their lives before the traumatic event as if they belonged to a different person, referring to their personal experiences in third-person form in order to deny any or all guilt felt, or even using more fictionalized narrative forms to place distance between themselves and their experiences (48). Rather than attempt to avoid the confusion that can stem from this “splitting of the self,” Semprún embraces it head-on, using the break in narrative voice to not only portray his struggle as simultaneously individual and collective and thus give a voice to those who did not survive, but also to work through the identity crisis resulting from his traumatic experiences.

Although Semprún’s personal, individual memories are the plot markers that move the story along, he consistently claims to represent and portray a collective voice. This is evident from the very beginning of his narration in El largo viaje as he first introduces the journey being undertaken: “Avanzamos hacia la cuarta noche, el quinto día. Hacia la quinta noche, el sexto día. Pero ¿avanzamos nosotros? Estamos inmóviles, hacinados unos encima de otros, la noche es quien avanza, la cuarte noche, hacia nuestros inmóviles cadáveres futuros” (11). From the start, the narrator defines his situation in terms of the collective group with which he is suffering. Rather than speaking only of his fate and possible death, he chooses to give voice to those around him who may or may not survive to tell their own stories. This concept of collective

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19 Although not approached from the perspective of trauma theory, Ana María Amar Sánchez similarly highlights the distinct nature of the fictionalized narrator in Semprún’s testimonial works. According to Amar Sánchez, the very “subjectivización” of the narrator or main protagonist is key in understanding what she deems the fictionalization of testimonial literature. Whereas testimonial documents and narratives typically aim to present objective narration devoid of ambiguous or contradictory, emotional expressions, Semprún’s testimonial novels embrace the subjective subject, even to the extent that the narrator is allowed to contradict himself from time to time.

20 This polyphony of voice, as described by Laia Quílez Esteve and Rosa-Àuria Munté Ramos, not only serves to create a disoriented chronology and audience, but also, to some degree, erases the autobiographical “I” that exists in the typical testimonial novel.
voice continues as Semprún further analyzes the theoretical causes of his situation. In a revealing conversation with a German prison guard who asks why he (the narrator) was arrested, the narrator postulates, “Responder a esta pregunta no sólo es decir quién soy, sino también quiénes son todos aquellos a quienes detienen en este momento […] ¿Por qué estoy detenido, es decir, por qué estamos todos nosotros detenidos, por qué se detiene, en general?” (44). According to the narrator, his story is not simply his own, but rather the history of the collective group of Spanish (and French) men captured by Nazi forces. Interestingly, this collectivity portrayed by the narrator also greatly influences his individual identity as well, seen as he describes his new role as forever united with those of his fellow camp survivors. In this way, the frequent use of “nosotros” and “nuestro(s)” throughout his narration continues to emphasize the collective nature of the traumatic experiences being re-experienced and recounted by the narrator—he finds not only identitary legitimization in connecting his story with those of his comrades, but also finds the renewed strength with which to tell his story.

Through the juxtaposition of “yo” and “nosotros” in El largo viaje Semprún also explores another dichotomy familiar to survivors of the Holocaust: that of victim-perpetrator, in which victims experience both guilt and shame at the idea of being somehow complicit in the tragic fates that met their fellow companions within the concentration camps. In a scene in which the narrator is contemplating the plight of prisoners whose only life-sustaining bread was stolen by their fellow prisoners, he remarks:

Robar este trozo de pan es decretar la muerte de otro hombre para asegurar su propia vida, o al menos para hacerla más probable. Y sin embargo, había robos de pan. He visto a tipos que palidecían y se derrumbaban al ver que les habían robado su trozo de pan. Y no era solamente un daño que les infligía directamente a ellos. Era un daño irreparable que se nos causaba a todos. Porque se instalaba la suspicacia, la desconfianza, el odio. No importaba quién hubiera podido robar aquel pedazo de pan, todos éramos culpables (62, emphasis mine).
Much like the conversation with the prison guard, this solitary contemplation reflects two important ideas: first, that the narrator once again sees the struggle for life as a collective one rather than an individual one, and second, that the narrator is also blurring the distinction between victim and perpetrator (as van Alphen suggests was a normal practice of victims during and after the Holocaust). According to this idea, a victim who refuses to step in and prevent injustice from happening before their very eyes—even when they are physically incapable of doing so—involuntarily adopts the label of perpetrator as well. Complicating this problematic self-perception of the victim is the competing desire to survive at all costs—a concept that Semprún ties closely to food and physical survival. Telling the story of a prison comrade who refuses to share his food packages with his fellow prisoners, Semprún notes that the animalistic instinct to survive existed naturally in each one of them. As seen from his perspective, claiming food for yourself is the equivalent of condemning another man to death, a weight that each survivor of the camps has to come to grips with as they work through their trauma. Seeing himself as both a victim and a victimizer, Semprún chalks his conflictive physiological responses to human nature, remarking that, “En realidad, no eran precisos estos campos para saber que el hombre es el ser capaz de lo mejor y de lo peor. Esta constatación llega a ser desoladora por lo banal” (62).

In addition to the combined use of “yo” and “nosotros,” Semprún also plays with impersonal, third-person narration and narration through secondary characters in El largo viaje. In an interesting turn of events, Semprún chooses to end his novel with a semi-epilogue (simply titled “II”) narrated exclusively in the third-person preterit in which the protagonist, “Gérard,” is finally shown to be the previous narrator. It is crucial to note that this abrupt jump from a
personal voice to an entirely impersonal, removed narrator occurs as the protagonist and his compatriots are on the verge of disembarking from the train and entering the looming concentration camp where their stories will most likely end. In line with theories of trauma and memory posed by Ernst van Alphen and Dori Laub, this sudden change of narrative voice supports the idea that the actual experience of arriving at the concentration camp is psychologically unable to be remembered or re-experienced due to the fact that it is so far removed from human logic and linguistic representation. Semprún’s word choices and descriptions of their arrival at Buchenwald confirm this suspicion. Paradoxically juxtaposing the serenity and quietness of the newly-fallen snow with the imposing status of Hitlerian eagles and walls that were built to last, he writes:

le parece que de este modo llegan al final de este viaje, y que así, en efecto, entre las oleadas sonoras de esta música noble, bajo la helada luz que estalla en chisporroteos movedizos, que así es como hay que abandonar el mundo de los vivos, esta frase hecha empieza a dar vueltas vertiginosamente en los repliegues de su cerebro, empañado como un cristal por las ráfagas de una lluviosa rabiosa, abandonar el mundo de los vivos, abandonar el mundo de los vivos. (240)

It is with these haunting words that Semprún ends *El largo viaje*, highlighting the extreme disruption Buchenwald has on his identity, memory, and history. Neither living nor dead, his testimony oscillates between both extremes, resurfacing in memory as if reoccurring again and yet remaining buried in the dark abscesses of his mind, waiting to be called out and worked through. Seeking refuge in the impersonal voice, Semprún as narrator visibly disappears from the text and thus increases the distance between himself and his audience, communicating the reality that the audience will never be able to fully understand his experience of confronting his own death and (in)humanity. No longer serving as just his own story, *El largo viaje* becomes that of many—of Semprún’s comrades in the Resistance and within the camps, of his first contacts
established upon liberation, of the Allied troops that liberated the camp in 1945, and even of the bystanders that witnessed the atrocities of the camps firsthand.

Much like El largo viaje, La escritura o la vida continues portraying the split subject (“yo”) resulting from traumatic experience but does so more decidedly, more intentionally. Whereas El largo viaje makes frequent and at times confusing transitions between the individual and collective voices represented in the text, it is evident that Semprún uses La escritura o la vida as a mirror into his own identity first, taking the opportunity to rediscover and explain his role(s) in the experiences that life has thrust upon him while still calling attention, once again, to the collective nature of his memory. What follows is a novel that attempts to reconcile, or at least better understand, the two distinct voices that Semprún relates through his written words: his voice before being interred in Buchenwald, and his voice after being liberated.

The emphasis on his own identity as traumatically fractured is clearly visible from the beginning of La escritura o la vida as Semprún’s first moment of self-recognition comes not from within himself, but through the eyes of the others around him. As Buchenwald is liberated by Allied soldiers, Semprún sees himself from their perspective, noting that while he had lived without a face for years, he is confronted at once with an anomaly: his grotesqueness and his survival (15). A haunting introduction, it sets the stage for Semprún to undertake the recovery and redevelopment of his identity by way of his words throughout the rest of the novel. Clearly establishing the moment in which his past self becomes separated from his Buchenwald identity, Semprún writes of Buchenwald that, “Ahí es donde había empezado todo. Donde todo siempre empezaba de nuevo” (237). Critic Michael S. Koppisch points to the destruction of Semprún’s former (pre-Holocaust) identity as he suggests that, “His new identity is grounded in Buchenwald, which is at the root of everything that follows” (396). Quite symbolically, Semprún
chooses the metaphor of death to best describe the break in his voice, the “yo” before and after
his stay in Buchenwald: “He tenido una idea, de golpe […] la sensación, en cualquier caso
repentina muy fuerte, no de haberme librado de la muerte, sino de haberla atravesado. De haber
sido, mejor dicho, atravesado por ella. De haberla vivido, en cierto modo. De haber regresado de
la muerte como quien regresa de un viaje que le ha transformado: transfigurado tal vez” (27). Attempting to express the un-expressable depth of suffering and loss, he wonders if he has even come “back” from the camp at all, questioning, “¿He regresado realmente?” (213) and,
“¿Volvería a mí, algún día? ¿A la inocencia, cualquiera que fuera el afán de vivir, de la presencia transparente a uno mismo?” (121). He does not stop at simply stating that he has experienced a fracture of identity equated with that of passing through death, but also visually underscores the very fragmenting of his own body and soul as he describes various traumatic experiences within Buchenwald. Witnessing the death of respected academic Maurice Halbwachs (whose work on memory is fundamental in our understanding of collective memory), Semprún recalls: “Una especie de tristeza física se había apoderado de mí. Me hundí en esa tristeza de mi cuerpo. En ese desasosiego carnal, que me volvía inhabitable para mí mismo. El tiempo pasó, Halbwachs estaba muerto. Yo había vivido la muerte de Halbwachs” (57, emphasis mine).

21 It is interesting to note that although Semprún does not use religious rhetoric, his ideas about passing through death are similar to those of Felipe Matarranz González, who explains that the resistance fighters who fought against Franco and/or fascism in general are like Christ, sacrificing themselves for the cause and passing through a figurative death at the hands of their enemies before resurrecting their voices via their writing and testimonies.

22 It should be noted that Semprún also uses the metaphor of passing through death in a collective sense, as well, maintaining the collective nature of his memories (though they do not constitute the sole focus of his memoir). He writes: “Era ésta la sustancia de nuestra fraternidad, la clave de nuestro destino, el signo de pertenencia a la comunidad de los vivos. Vivíamos juntos esta experiencia de la muerte, esta compasión. Nuestro ser estaba definido por eso: esto junto al otro en la muerte que avanzaba” (37).
Another significant display of his fragmented voice in *La escritura o la vida* comes as he describes a series of conversations with Lieutenant Rosenfeld, one of the American officers from Patton’s Third Army in charge of liberating Buchenwald. Among the topics of conversation explored include philosophy and literature, topics that Semprún finds of particular interest. As they discuss the likes of Martin Heidegger and Bertolt Brecht, Semprún flashes back to a conversation with Julia, a young French woman working with the Resistance in Paris. Taking place before his capture and deportation to Germany, Semprún reminisces: “Respecto a Bertolt Brecht, no lo descubrí en la Rue Blaise-Desgoffe, sino en la Rue Visconti […] En la Rue Visconti, en 1943, Julia me había recitado versos de Brecht. Me había hablado extensamente del escritor” (114-115). When Rosenfeld begins to quote segments from Brecht’s work, Semprún writes,

> Han transcurrido dos años desde que Julia me hizo descubrir la poesía de Bertolt Brecht. Sólo dos años. Tengo la impresión, sin embargo, de que *una eternidad nos separa de aquella primavera*, de aquella noche de primavera en la Rue Visconti. Una certidumbre se me pasa por la cabeza, sonrío. Una certidumbre incongruente pero serena. Una eternidad, sin duda: la de la muerte. Dos años de *eternidad mortal me separan de aquel yo era en la Rue Visconti*. Aquel, aquel otro, que escuchaba a Julia recitar poemas de Bertolt Brecht (121, emphasis mine).

This motif is continued throughout the rest of his memoir as he slowly begins to reveal writing to be the cure to his identity as survivor. Upon his arrival in Paris after the liberation from Buchenwald, he visits the tomb of César Vallejo and reflects: “No poseo nada salvo mi muerte, mi experiencia de la muerte, para decir mi vida, para expresarla, para sacarla adelante. Tengo que fabricar vida con tanta muerte. Y la mejor forma de conseguirlo es la escritura” (180). Later suggested by one of his muses, Claude-Edmonde Magny, Semprún’s best tool to reconcile his life (lives) before and after Buchenwald is that of writing, reconciling and reinventing his very
personality through the words that he chooses. This calculated form of resistance and recovery is evident in the aesthetic fragmentation of his texts, reflecting the cathartic capacities of art and artifice in narratives of trauma.

**Fragmentation of Structure and Thematic Space**

As well as temporal fragmentation and a fractured narrative voice, *El largo viaje* and *La escritura o la vida* also demonstrate several forms of spatial fragmentation, both structural and thematic in nature. It is through these artistic elements that we see visual representations of Semprún’s trauma as it is worked through via creative language. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, the artistic capacities of narrative are visibly important to Semprún as he reconstructs his memories and those of his fallen comrades. In fact, David Carroll notes that the aesthetic manipulation of Semprún’s work is completely necessary in his attempt to more fully express his (traumatic) experiences: “narrative that has been transformed and recreated as an aesthetic object, is thus for him not the enemy of memory and history but a necessary support for memory and a means of conveying the substance and paradoxical “transparent density” of experience” (74). On an aesthetic level, I refer to structural fragmentation as the way in which the text is both grammatically and syntactically organized. Rather than selecting one cohesive narrative structure, Semprún instead uses a plethora of aesthetic devices to reconstruct his memories: long and fluid sentences juxtaposed with fragments or short, choppy phrases, repetition of words and/or thoughts, various forms of dialogue and monologue, and abrupt changes of subject.  

23 For Ursula Tidd, this literary cacophony suggests a “creative, yet highly

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23 In his analysis of Dulce Chacón’s *La voz dormida*, José Colmeiro describes that the same aesthetic devices mentioned in this dissertation are literary strategies by which the author is able to more closely mimic the process of oral *testimonio*, copying the ebb and flow of speech and using familiar communicative strategies in order to pull the audience into his fictive world. In much the same way, these strategies are also visible in *El largo viaje*. 

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traumatized, engagement with writing” (703). Many examples of these aesthetic manifestations of trauma have been analyzed in the previous sections on time and voice, yet many more further inundate Semprún’s text with word images of the problematic relationship between trauma, memory, and history. In this section, I will explore several of them: the use of radically juxtaposed sentence formations, the presence of multiple forms of dialogue (both intertextual and extratextual), the use of various literary inserts such as songs, poems, and direct quotes or paraphrases, and thematic fragmentation.

Structurally speaking, *El largo viaje* is a messy combination of semantic devices and literary strategies related to sentence formation and linguistic choice. From abrupt fragments to long, uninterrupted sentences, Semprún’s novelized testimony erratically flows from one thought to another with little transition. Patricia Gartland notes that many fictional Holocaust narratives in this way rely on form to communicate meaning and “tend toward a kind of aesthetic ‘disintegration’” (48). In his analysis of Gottfried Benn’s poetry, Erich Kahler similarly points out that aesthetic fragmentation is “intended to convey a feeling of the disruption of organic being, of the shambles of our individual experience” (16). Through his disjointed novel, Semprún visibly reflects his inner turmoil via his language, giving us clearer insight into the traumatized psyche and experience of constant uncertainty. In an interview with the University of México, Semprún further explains the use of artistic form in his work as a means of expressing the inexpressible: “¿Cómo vamos a hacer para comprender esa vida en un sitio rodeado de árboles, un bosque de hayas […] donde han desaparecido los pájaros porque el humo del crematorio los ha hecho salir de ese bosque? ¿Cómo se puede contar, cómo se hace

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24 Gottfried Benn is a German poet best known for his work inspired by his experience as a medical doctor during World War I.
comprender lo que es vivir en un bosque donde no se oye el rumor de los pájaros? Hace falta un poco de arte, de artificio” (Alonso and Gordon, 62). Using his novel as a canvas and his words as the paint, Semprún paints a tapestry of trauma, allowing the emotions of doubt and confusion to take center stage in his testimony. As we read his fragmented and repetitive sentences, interrupted or discontinued thoughts (ellipses), and abrupt transitions, we more fully understand how difficult it is to write of traumatic experiences.

In addition to the surface-level structural fragmentation, Semprún also juxtaposes various forms of dialogue and monologue in El largo viaje that create multiple levels of intertextual and extratextual conversation that attempts to bridge the gap between Semprún’s past memories and his present audience. On the one hand, he inundates his novel with recorded conversations between himself and his fellow prisoners, often neglecting to properly introduce them or maintain them separately from his own narration. As such, his dialogues become muddled, the voices interweaving and creating a sense of confusion that is difficult to overcome. Rhetorical questions lacking responses are also scattered throughout the narrator’s monologues, creating extratextual interaction between the text and the reader, constantly causing the audience to reflect upon and at times challenge the narrative itself. Often times, these rhetorical questions also demand the response of the audience (who is addressed with the “tú” pronoun), further enhancing the testimonial nature of the text. In tune with the concept of testimony and what it signifies to “give testimony,” the novel in this way interestingly presents itself as more of a spoken conversation or dialogue between the narrator, his secondary and tertiary characters, and the audience to which he is speaking.

Other stylistic fragmentation found throughout El largo viaje includes songs, poems, and short quotes or excerpts from well-known literary and philosophical masterpieces through which
the narrator is able to explain and better communicate his traumatic experiences and recast his identity in light of them. This inclusion of multiple textual structures plays two important roles in his first novel. First, the pastiche of genres allows Semprún to express his trauma via literary references and philosophical debates, further permitting him to define himself more broadly according to his own ideologies.\(^{25}\) Rather than highlighting mythology and religious discourse and referring to mythical legends and tales of former Spanish glory in order to establish his identity or even to define his philosophical struggle, Semprún instead references philosophies and sociopolitical theories intimately debated both in Spain’s Second Republic and within circles of the French Resistance. In this way, he defines himself not by referring to Spanish history or legacy, but rather by inundating his memories with scattered literary preferences reasserting his identity and past academic accomplishments. During one such moment of introspectiveness, the narrator characterizes his past in terms of literature and philosophy, “Leímos a Masaryk, a Adler, a Korsch, a Labriola. Geschicht und Klassenbewusste nos llevó más tiempo, a causa de Michel, que se aferraba a sus opiniones, pese a las advertencias de Hans, poniendo de relieve toda la metafísica subyacente a la tesis de Lukács” (33). Throughout the rest of the novel, he continues building his impressively grand repertoire of philosophers, adding discussions of Kantian theory, sweeping analyses of Hegel’s thoughts on German idealism, and recitations of literary masterpieces such as Valéry’s Le Cimetièr marin or Proust’s Swann’s Way. Upon his liberation from Buchenwald, he even goes as far as to define himself not in terms of nationality or profession but rather according to his literary preferences. When a young French woman asks him “¿Qué hace usted en la vida?” he remarks not with a specific job or title, but by saying,

\(^{25}\) In his study of Le grand voyage, Brett Ashley Kaplan specifically analyzes Semprún’s specific use of Proust as both a way to “come to terms with his painful memories” and “rewrite his experiences of the Holocaust as a literary reflection on the brutality of history” (320).
“Detesto a Charles Morgan, aborezco a Valéry y nunca he leído *Lo que el viento se llevó*” (82). Scattered literary fragments and allusions allow Semprún to essentially create an impromptu identity that masks the identitary confusion initiated during his stay in Buchenwald, thus giving him a shadow of consistency during an otherwise inconsistent and tumultuous period of his life.

In addition to using exterior literary works as a means of better understanding his trauma and restating his identity afterward, Semprún also incorporates secondary texts in *El largo viaje* as a means of resistance and survival, establishing connections with his fellow prisoners, the broader community of intellectuals, and ultimately his readers. Focusing on the experience within the camp rather than Semprún’s (re)writing of it, Michael S. Koppisch similarly observes that, “through poetry, prisoners find a common ground on which to share an experience, even though it might, as in the case of Semprún’s reading of Baudelaire to Halbwachs, be one of death” (404). Semprún admits as much himself, suggesting that poetry is his substitution for prayer because it connects you with humanity and history (Alonso and Gordon, 61). For Semprún, literary art is not only a way to forge solidarity with his fellow comrades, but also a tool of individual resistance: in repetitively referencing well-known works of literature, poetry, and philosophy, he transcends the physical space of the concentration camp and enters the symbolic world of intellectual theory, finding reprieve from his suffering (both current and past). One example among many is seen as he remembers his first night on the train ride to Buchenwald: “Pasé mi primera noche de este viaje reconstruyendo en mi memoria *Por el camino de Swann* y era un excelente ejercicio de abstracción” (74). Throughout *El largo viaje*, we see Semprún’s continued emphasis on literature and poetry as resistance in this way: songs like the beloved Spanish *La paloma* or the French national anthem *La Marseillaise*, poems such as Valéry’s *Le Cimetière marin*, novels such as Faulkner’s *Sartoris* and *Absalom, Absalom* become
ballads of resistance for Semprún as he uses them to connect with others momentarily escape the
bonds of the train or concentration camp.

On a more symbolic level, the thematic fragmentation of space is also visible in El largo
viaje. A common motif utilized by Semprún throughout his narrative is the contrast between
“inside” and “outside,” which, like the temporal fragmentation previously discussed, is
constantly questioned and renegotiated within the bounds of the text, resulting in a testimony
characterized by its fractured space. One of the first mentions of this dichotomy is seen when the
narrator (from the train) observes villagers walking alongside the train tracks, carrying on with
their daily tasks and routines. He notes, “Por lo pronto, y al verles caminar por esta carretera,
advier, como si fuera algo muy sencillo, que estoy dentro y ellos están fuera [...] Existe un
afuera y un adentro, y yo estoy dentro. Es una sensación de tristeza física que le invade a uno,
nada más” (23-4). Though Semprún attempts to describe this sadness as a physical ailment, it is
clear that the juxtaposition of inside and outside is not only physically perceived, but permeates
his very core, disregarding his corporeal boundaries and invading his sense of self. The motif
continues with the image of a glimpse into life after liberation from the concentration camp—a
picture of yet again a broken existence. He writes: “El pueblo nos expulsa, expulsa el ruido de
nuestras botas, nuestra presencia insultante para su tranquilidad [...] Y he aquí que tampoco era
la vida de afuera, no era más que otra manera de estar dentro, de estar en el interior de este
mismo mundo de opresión sistemática” (124). Through the constant juxtaposition of “inside” and
“outside” Semprún intentionally blends the paradigm of what it means to be “inside” or
“outside.” The margin (that is, those oppressed and relegated to the periphery of society)
becomes the center or the “inside” of the narrative whereas the hegemonic power and space
becomes relegated to the “outside” of the text. At the same time, however, Semprún notes the

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anomaly of his situation: though he is privileged to the historical events to which he is testifying, he still feels as if he is outside of himself, beyond human comprehension. Sally Silk refers to this situation as “discursive homelessness […], a state in which the textual subject is barred from settling into a voice that it can call its own” (58). As if to respond to this problematic dilemma or discover its remedy, Semprún continues his aesthetic strategies of fragmentation in *La escritura o la vida*.

The fragmentation of structure, style and thematic space in *La escritura o la vida* can be described very accurately with one simple word: interruption. Throughout the testimony, Semprún (as omnipotent writer rather than subject) frequently interrupts his narration with several different literary mechanisms: parenthetical commentaries (previously discussed in terms of temporal fragmentation), incomplete thoughts signaled with ellipses, abrupt changes of subject, and, more importantly, intertextuality. Similar to the other types of fragmentation already discussed in this analysis of *La escritura o la vida*, these literary devices function together to portray the redemptive (and resistant) nature of writing and rewriting one’s trauma. While Ursula Tidd suggests that these strategies both allow Semprún to creatively rework autobiographical writing while also “speaking for the absent other and evoking the alterity of the self” (714), I see them as strategies meant not only to evoke the alterity of Semprún’s fractured identities but also to reconcile them through the written word. Through his use of structural and thematic fragmentary devices, Semprún not only raises deeply philosophical questions pertaining to the nature of humanity and its struggle between good and evil, human and inhuman, victim and perpetrator, but also demonstrates the reconciliatory power of writing one’s trauma.

26 Intertextuality in *La escritura o la vida* unites the memoir both with Semprún’s other novels as well as with philosophical, fictional, historical, and political writings by many well-known academics.
During a conversation with Lieutenant Rosenfeld in La escritura o la vida following the liberation of Buchenwald in April 1945, Semprún attempts to define and explain the “evil” character of the concentration camp and the atrocities committed there. Using Kantian references, Semprún begins by describing the terrors personally experienced within the camp through the lens of a philosopher, only to discover the near-impossibility of such a task. In stating that the essential nature of witnessing “el Mal” is experiencing death itself, the narrator explains:

Pues no es algo creíble, no es compartible, apenas comprensible, puesto que la muerte es, en el pensamiento racional, el único acontecimiento del cual jamás podremos tener una experiencia individual… Que sólo puede ser aprendido bajo la forma de la angustia, del presentimiento o del deseo funesto… En el modo del futuro anterior, por lo tanto… Y no obstante, habremos vivido la experiencia de la muerte como una experiencia colectiva, fraterna además, fundiendo nuestro estar-juntos… Como un Mit-sein-zum-Tode…. (104-105)

As evidenced by the fractured nature of the narrator’s discourse on the subject, the various ellipses that indicate partiality, incompleteness or unfinished nature of thoughts reveal that Semprún is essentially unable to fully grasp or express the depth of his experience with the evil and consequent inhumanity forced upon him and his fellow comrades at the hands of the Nazis in Buchenwald. Echoing the critical thoughts of Ernst van Alphen, the narrative and philosophical frameworks for both experiencing and interpreting traumatic events seem to be absent from Semprún’s dialogue while he remains so temporally close to the events themselves.27

In addition to the Semprún’s inability to fully define his experience, there is also and abrupt break between the narrator and his audience within the text. Immediately following his attempt to explain the concept of Evil to his interlocutor, Lieutenant Rosenfeld, Semprún writes,

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27 Van Alphen explains that, “When the survivors of the Holocaust are unable or hardly able to express their experiences, the difficulty can be explained as followed: the nature of their experiences is in no way covered by the terms and positions the symbolic order offers to them” (27).
“El teniente Rosenfeld me interrumpe. —¿Heidegger? -exclama- ¡Ha leído a Martin Heidegger!” (105). Throughout the narrator’s three-page monologue on the evilness and inhumanity found in concentration camps and war, the only sliver of information comprehended by his audience (Rosenfeld) is a concrete literary reference. There is no commentary by the lieutenant upon the meat of the discourse to which he has just listened, lending credit to the idea, as stated by theorists and critics such as Dori Laub and van Alphen, that trauma does not only signify the inability for the victim to comprehend their own experience but also implies that the experience is unable to be communicated to an audience that could, in turn, legitimize the experience and restore the victim’s sense of humanity or victimization.

In lieu of the absence of an effective listener within the text, Semprún therefore chooses to interrupt and fragment La escritura o la vida with numerous quotes and intertextual references, attempting to find solidarity and stability within the literary dialogue. Among the critical studies of Semprún’s work, his reliance on literature has frequently been treated as pertaining more to the camp experience itself, rather than to the writing of memory and experience. For Laila Quílez Esteve and Rosa-Àuria Munté Ramos, Semprún’s use of intertextuality is used, “to give comfort to the dying and in some way comfort himself” (paragraph 2). Michael Kopisch explains Semprún’s reliance on books in terms of his lifelong identity as an academic an intellectual, proposing that, “The literary culture of books connects the intellectuals among Buchenwald’s inmates to a civilized, humane past otherwise denied them” (404). Unlike El largo viaje, which uses scattered references to historical facts and figures in order to authenticate its contents, La escritura o la vida contains two additional sources of reference—the use of Semprún’s own literary creations to historically validate his previous novels, and a wide variety of outside texts (including fiction, poetry, philosophy and political
manifestos) that attempt to explain his experiences and create a literature of the camps. The first external reference used to reinforce Semprún’s own thoughts and experiences is seen within the first few pages of the memoir as he finds himself unable to fully describe the smell of the crematory ovens to Allied soldiers. Distancing himself from their horrified reactions and seeking understanding in the literary, he quotes Léon Blum’s assessment of the crematory smoke as being, “Extraño olor” (17) before trying to imagine Blum’s experience in Buchenwald: “Cabe imaginar a Léon Blum en aquellas tardes. Tardes de primavera, probablemente […] Y de repente, traído por el viento, el extraño olor. Dulzón, insinuante, con tufos acres, propiamente nauseabundos. El olor insólito, que era el del horno crematorio” (18).

In a later conversation with Rosenfeld about the merits of Goethe, Semprún once again uses Blum as his tool to understand and explain his thoughts and experiences. When Rosenfeld seems perplexed by the proposed connection between Blum and Goethe, Semprún pridefully writes, “No me disgusta cogerle por una vez en flagrante delito de ignorancia, puesto que no parece captar el vínculo evidente que existe entre Blum y Goethe” (111). By this point, it is evident that he has figuratively established a sense of solidarity with Blum as a comrade, an intimate and emotional bond which allows him to better understand his role within the greater narrative of the war against fascism.

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28 Later in the chapter he also realizes that, “no pueden comprender de verdad. Habrán captado el sentido de las palabras probablemente. Humo: todo el mundo sabe lo que es, cree saberlo… Pero de este humo de aquí, no obstante, nada saben. Y nunca sabrán nada de verdad. Ni supieron estos, aquel día. Ni todos los demás desde entonces. Nunca sabrán, no pueden imaginarlo, por muy buenas intenciones que tengan” (22-23).

29 Léon Blum is a French politician who, in April 1943, was deported to Buchenwald, where he lived for two years before being transferred to Dachau.

30 Ironically, this reference to Blum comes once again as Semprún attempts to explain the crematory ovens of Buchenwald and the desired return of the local birds that the smoke chased away.
In addition using Blum’s text as a way to establish a sense of community, Semprún also heavily relies on texts written by fellow concentration camp survivor Primo Levi, and focuses a full chapter on Levi’s words and experiences with writing. In it, he claims that Levi’s work is “tan familiar […] tan fraternal—como la mirada de Maurice Halbwachs, agonizando en el camastro del bloque 56 de Buchenwald” (260-261). Rather than using Levi as a means of understanding the experience of the camp itself, however, Semprún instead creates a literary camaraderie with Levi as a way to depict the difficulty of living with oneself in its aftermath, in moments where the sole experience of surviving is unable to be understood by those around them. After years of suffering in silence, Semprún finally writes that the experience of the camp has torn the fabric of his reality into two unreconcilable pieces: “Estuvo dividida entre una dicha aparente—cenaba aquella noche con unos amigos queridos—ya la angustia profunda en la que estaba encerrado. Fue un espacio dividido en dos territorios, brutalmente. Dos universos, dos vidas. Y habría sido incapaz de decir, en el momento, cuál de ellas era la verdadera, cuál de ellas un sueño” (252-253). Noting that not even family is capable of understanding the emotional trauma of Holocaust survivors, Semprún quotes a section from Levi’s novel La tregua about this sense of extreme isolation, concluding that, “Imposible expresarlo mejor que Primo Levi” (254). Though he concedes that their concentration camp experiences and subsequent repatriations are different from one another, he still seeks solidarity in Levi’s identity as writer and survivor, observing that, “El tiempo histórico, en efecto, entre el primer libro de Levi—éxito magistral en el plano de la escritura; total fracaso en el plano de la lectura, de la recepción del público—y su segundo relato La tregua, es el mismo que separa mi incapacidad de escribir in 1945 y El largo viaje. Estos últimos dos libros han sido escritos en la misma época, y publicados casi simultáneamente” (269). Levi, like Blum before him, connects Semprún to an imagined literary
community, one in which Semprún is ultimately able to effectively tackle the difficult process of (re)writing his experience in Buchenwald and understanding his place in contemporary society.\textsuperscript{31}

Lastly, as well as using intertextual references to create a community in which he can work through his past and present misgivings, Semprún likewise makes use of intertextuality in La escritura o la vida in order to explore (once again metafictionally) the process of writing memory and life. Referencing French writer and Resistance comrade André Malraux, Semprún explains:

Al final de su vida, en Le miroir des limbes, Malraux recupera algunos fragmentos de la novela inacabada para integrarlos en sus escritos autobiográficos. Siempre me ha parecido una empresa fascinante y fastuosa la de Malraux trabajando una y otra vez la materia de su obra y de su vida, ilustrando la realidad mediante la ficción y ésta mediante la densidad de destino de aquélla, con el fin de destacar sus constantes, sus contradicciones, su sentido fundamental, a menudo oculto, enigmático o fugaz (66).

Filling the rest of the chapter with short quotes from Malraux and summaries of his work, Semprún uses the material as a means to explore the use of recycled material within his own work, a strategy visible throughout his text as his rewrites scenes from his previous novels and unpublished manuscripts. For Semprún, the literary world is one of constant stability, community and endless identitary support, leading him to suggest that, “Ponía de manifiesto una vez más que el ritmo de las maduraciones y de las rupturas no es el mismo en la historia política que en la historia de las artes y de las letras” (91). Literary reference and intertextuality essentially become his refuge and continual means of rediscovering and reasserting his identity through writing in the face of years of oppression and silence.

\textsuperscript{31} This kind of imagined community, similar to that proposed by Benedict Anderson, is one that is rooted not only in similar experience, but in the written nature of said experience. According to Anderson, “nothing connects us affectively to the dead more than language…there is a special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests” (145).
Lastly, in examining works of testimonial literature in which identity is constantly explored, evaluated, and renegotiated, it comes as no surprise that *El largo viaje* and *La escritura o la vida* likewise emphasize the fragmentation of identity (more specifically, that of gender and nationality). Unlike the more obvious and overt forms of fragmentation such as stylistic/structural, temporal, and narrative voice, the strategic use of thematic fragmentation highlighting the renegotiation of nationality and gender in the text is much more subtle, requiring us to look beyond the aesthetic presentation of Semprún’s memories in order to better understand Semprún’s conflictive perspectives on nationality and masculinity.

When Semprún’s portrayal of masculinity and gender roles in *El largo viaje* is examined, it becomes clear that he struggles with not only his own definition, but equally finds himself torn between two opposing worlds. Ursula Tidd suggests that this complex relationship between Semprún and gender exists in many of his novels, proposing that it is predicated “on maternal loss and the confrontation with his own alterity, first as an exile in France and second as a prisoner in Buchenwald” (698). In *El largo viaje*, this complicated construction of gender and sexuality highlights two opposing perspectives. On the one hand, Semprún maintains a patriarchal stance, frequently objectifying the women he describes in his testimony and utilizing sexually suggestive terminology to define them in opposition to himself. On the other hand, Semprún also has to face the implications of war, violence, and captivity—implications that threaten to break his patriarchal stance and cause him to reconsider them. Very early on in *El largo viaje*, Semprún first introduces the idea of gendered memories, making a semi-clear distinction between those recollections that are historically classified as “manly memories” and those which are not. He writes:

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Él quisiera que evocásemos recuerdos comunes. Son recuerdos serios, como los viñedos y el trabajo en las viñas. Recuerdos sólidos…Es mi soledad, sin duda, lo que le da miedo. Ha creído que yo flaqueaba, de repente, ante este paisaje dorado sobre fondo blanco. Ha creído que este paisaje me había afectado en algún punto flaco, y que yo cedía, que me enternecía de repente […] quiere que bebamos juntos el vino nuevo de los recuerdos comunes…Las salidas nocturnas en Citroën con los cristales rotos, con las metralletas apuntando a la sombra. Recuerdos de hombre, vamos. (15-6, emphasis mine)

According to the narrator, there is a perceived distinction between masculine and feminine memory. Whereas “manly memories” manifest themselves through direct, military-esque descriptions of war and struggles for justice and liberation, “feminine memories” are seen to manifest themselves through silence and emotion. In her study of testimonial literature and trauma, Elizabeth Jelin similarly explains that, “For men, imprisonment and torture were acts of ‘feminization,’” in which they were transformed into passive, impotent, and dependent beings […] Men were forced to “live like women,” becoming keenly aware of their bodily necessities” (79). Though many testimonial narratives written and/or narrated by men tend to avoid intense self-reflection or emotional analysis, Semprún cannot narrate his story without it, continuously narrating passages of emotional turmoil in juxtaposition with vivid descriptions of war and violence. For Semprún, it appears that a testimonial narrative only achieves its full meaning by means of artistic creation which accordingly includes both “masculine” and “feminine” memories and narrative styles in direct contact with one another, and perhaps even attempts to erase the boundary altogether.

In addition to the gender-categorized memories that Semprún scatters throughout the El largo viaje, he also uses the distinction to reveal the depth of his own crisis as a man in an environment in which his captors actively attempt to strip him of his “manliness.” The effects of this process are seen as Gérard speaks of his time spent in captivity in Buchenwald, his liberation
and even his subsequent encounters with women outside of Buchenwald. From the start, it is apparent that Semprún is fixated on the deterioration of his physical appearance and strength; in fact, a depiction of this crisis of masculinity is seen within the first days of his journey to Buchenwald. Describing the torturous nights spent on the train in terms of its physicality, he writes, “Cae la noche, la cuarta; la noche despierta los fantasmas. En la negra turbamulta del vagón, los hombres se vuelven a encontrar a solas con su sed, con su angustia y su cansancio” (30). From further portrayals of his weakness to grotesque images of the numerous diseases like dysentery that spread around the camp, we see that Semprún is unable to separate his experiences from his body and physical memories. As if to challenge this sense of overwhelming weakness, Semprún tends to maintain a patriarchal and objectifying perspective on the women that he includes in *El largo viaje*. Serving as an antithesis to the feebleness and symbolic sterilization encountered in Buchenwald, Semprún colors descriptions of his liberation from the camp in terms of the women in which he sought physical comfort and affirmation of his manliness. For Ursula Tidd, Semprún’s patriarchal gaze is fragile and at times, disembodied in other works of his, such as *Adieu, vive clarté* (699). The fragility of his objectifying perspective of women is seen clearly as he describes the arrival of several women belonging to the French Mission to Buchenwald. Removing the spotlight from his own physical deficiencies, he portrays them as objects out of place in his current reality:

Se les veía la cabellera, el carmín en los labios, las medias de seda. Y piernas dentro de las medias de seda, labios vivos bajo el carmín de labios, rostros vivientes bajo las cabelleras, bajo sus verdaderas caballeras [...] Ellas hacían melindres, cotorreaban, estaban maduras para un buen par de tortazos [...] aquellas muchachas con las medias de seda bien estiradas, con las faldas azules bien ajustadas a las caderas apetitosas. Ya no tenía ninguna gana. (71-3)
Though he claims to have no sexual desire for the women in front of him, he ironically portrays them as purely physical beings, reduced to their curves and lipstick—creatures meant to be physically handled rather than intellectually engaged. Further examples of this are seen in Gérard’s descriptions of his first few days of liberation. Upon meeting a young French woman named Martine at a hotel, Gérard notes her physical form and finds himself fixated on “la muchacha morena de ojos azules” (85). As he dances with her, he realizes that he wants her and begins to be more aggressive, slowly returning to his “former” self. However, he is interrupted by a French military officer in “un uniforme de combate” (87) who promptly notes Gérard’s status as a concentration camp survivor before whisking Martine away for the rest of the evening. When Gérard’s comrades ask him why he allowed the officer to commandeer his desired conquest, he responds, “No lo sé. Vino un imbécil de oficial, con una boina con cintas, y se la llevó. Parecía que la chica le perteneciera” (88). Unable to overcome the stigma of his concentration camp trauma, he situates himself outside the realm of aggressive masculinity, desiring to reclaim it yet struggling to do so.

As in El largo viaje, the culmination of La escritura o la vida is, ultimately, his attempt to reconstruct his own identity as a man in light of his experiences before, during and after his imprisonment in Buchenwald. In the few attempts to analyze and explain the dialectics of gender in his memoir, critics such as Tidd have turned to the universal themes of exile and loss of national identity as explanations for his gendered crisis. Though it is an acceptable theory, the traumatic roots of Semprún’s memory also influence the reconstruction of his identity. These experiences and recollections reveal profound insights into the urgency with which he writes of recovering his identity as male while still challenging long-held and static definitions of
male/female relations as established by oppressive regimes. His gender becomes yet another form of resistance.

Semprún’s depictions of sexual desire (or lack thereof) portrayed from within the camp in *La escritura o la vida* are sparse and often monochromatic. The first (rather apathetic) mention of a woman is seen in the third chapter of the memoir while Semprún describes a conversation with a young Russian prisoner in Buchenwald named Nicolai. Semprún has recently secured a German submachine gun from the arms and ammunitions stockpiles left behind by the German guards before the camp’s liberation. Nicolai, being envious of Semprún’s newly acquired weapon, offers him money, clothes, liquor and women in exchange for the gun. At the mention of women, Semprún laughs and then writes, “Me basta con su palabra, pero le digo que no me interesa. Mejor dicho, que me interesa, pero no a ese precio. No al precio de mi metralleta reluciente” (82). In the midst of war and imprisonment, “Sexuality appears dematerialized and reduced to a disembodied gaze” (Tidd 699). The same disembodied gaze is seen vividly in Semprún’s recollections about a dance partner from a nightclub following his liberation—an account highly similar to one previously detailed in *El largo viaje*. Without introducing her name or offering any descriptive details of her appearance or personality, he writes, “Me pareció de buen augurio que tuviera esos ojos azules que tanto me emocionaban en las fiestas de mi adolescencia, dos años antes. Un siglo, más bien: me daba risa” (122). Though Semprún describes his gaze in terms of its naturalness and youthfulness, claiming that he looks at her, “Como se mira a una mujer al cabo de tantos meses. Con sorpresa, desde luego. Con curiosidad, también” (122), his partner senses something haunting in his gaze that prompts her to ask him to refrain from looking at her like that. Attempting to find an answer to the riddle of his perplexing stare, she declares that she would like to be the first woman of his life, no doubt expecting him to
offer information about his past relationships. Quite abruptly, Semprún answers back by saying, “De mi vida, ¡has llegado tarde! ¡La primera después de mi muerte, no puedes aspirar a más” (123). Though not the answer she was expecting, it causes his partner to melt into a flood of sympathetic emotions about which Semprún reflects, “La muchacha se estremecía de la cabeza a los pies, ya no bailaba. Como si tuviera de repente un deseo pánico del insólito pasado de donde yo procedía, del desierto que a mi pesar se anunciaba en mis ojos. Como si la atrajera este pánico mismo” (123). The typical objective (and aggressive) gaze of the patriarch has been subdued, inverted and replaced with the stare of a young man who suddenly seems out of his depth and horribly out of place in a world full of relative peace, a fact that is noted once again as Semprún describes the effect of his gaze on other women throughout the coming weeks of his recovery: “Clavaba la mirada en unos ojos desconocidos que se turbaban, se oscurecían. Una violencia repentina, inquieta, tal vez incluso angustiada, pero imperiosa, podía leerse en ellos: diamante de la atracción en estado bruto” (124).

Following the depiction in La escritura o la vida of his conflicted gaze that remains trapped in Buchenwald’s horrors, Semprún begins an interesting and introspective assessment of his identity as sexual being and the disembodiment of his sexual desire, tracing his current difficulties of reconciling his gaze with his body back to his first experience being tortured by the Gestapo at the age of nineteen, an experience which would affect his sexual identity long after ending. He writes of the moment in which he first finds his body being stripped of its identity:

De repente mi cuerpo se volvía problemático, se despegaba de mí, vivía de esta separación, para sí, contra mí, en la agonía del dolor […] Mi cuerpo se ahogaba, se volvía loco, pedía piedad, innoblemente. Mi cuerpo se afirmaba a través de una insurrección visceral que pretendía negarme en tanto que ser moral. Me pedía que capitulara ante la tortura, lo exigía. Para salir vencedor de este enfrentamiento con mi cuerpo, tenía que someterlo, dominarlo, abandonándolo al sufrimiento del dolor y de la humillación […] haciéndome odiar una parte esencial de mí, una
parte que hasta entonces había vivido en la despreocupación y el goce físico (126).

Separating his body from soul, Semprún makes an important statement about the painful resistance he has achieved against all odds. In her study of torture and the human body, Elaine Scarry notes, “The prisoner’s body—in its physical strengths, in its sensory powers, in its needs and wants, in its ways of self-delight… is like the prisoner’s voice, made a weapon against him, made to betray him on behalf of the enemy, made to be the enemy” (48). Instead of allowing his body to be converted into that of the enemy, betraying him with its sensations and surrender, Semprún views it as an object to be suppressed, turned off and subjugated. Although this leads to the his successful resistance to the enemy’s practices and ultimately to his survival within Buchenwald, it also leads to repercussions, noted by Semprún as he recognizes that, “Sabía que necesario y justo revivir, volver a la vida, que nada iba a impedírmelo. Pero este conocimiento impaciente, ávido, esta sabiduría del cuerpo, no me ocultaba la certidumbre fundamental de mi experiencia. De mis vínculos con la memoria de la muerte, para siempre jamás” (136-137).

As if to make up for the loss of his basic sexual desires in Buchenwald and for the destruction of his masculine body, Semprún barrages the rest of La escritura o la vida with tales of his relationships—however fleeting—with various women in France during his repatriation. Rather than reaffirming his patriarchal right as man, however, his recollections do just the opposite: they invert the patriarchal hierarchy by placing the control and redemptive (identitary) power in the hands of the women themselves. While speaking of his sexual relationship with a young French woman named Odile, he remarks, “Pasaron los días, las semanas: era mía. Pero sin duda hay que invertir esta relación de pertenencia. Mejor dicho, era yo quien le pertenecía,

32 Several of the most significant are Martine, Odile, Laurent and Claude-Edmonde Magny.
puesto que ella era la vida y yo quería pertenecer plenamente a la vida. Reinventó para mí, conmigo, los gestos de la vida. Reinventó mi cuerpo, una utilización de mi cuerpo” (169). In his declaration, traditional gender roles are symbolically reversed; rather than the male dominating the relationship, it is instead the woman who does so, claiming the role of the (re)creator and authority over the physical body. It is not just Semprún’s body that is reconstructed at the hands of women, moreover, but also his identity as a writer. Seen in the development of a strong working relationship with Claude-Edmonde Magny, a friend and publisher living in Paris, Semprún’s gradual ability to write comes as the result of a series of letters and conversations with Magny herself. Ultimately, it is Magny that becomes the catalyst for Semprún’s writing, suggesting to him that “la literatura sólo es posible tras una primera ascesis y como resultado de este ejercicio mediante el cual el individuo transforma y asimila sus recuerdos dolorosos, al mismo tiempo que construye su personalidad” (178). She continues by saying, “Ese es sin duda su camino de escritor […] Su ascesis: escribir hasta acabar con toda esta muerte” (183), to which Semprún admits she is right. Her voice becomes a guiding force in his writing and identity recovery, a recovery in which Semprún uses his gender as a brandished weapon against the oppressive norms heralded by the fascist regimes that he continues to fight.

**Multiple/Broken Identities: Nationality**

Like questions about masculinity, Semprún lastly raises a number of questions about nationality and patriotism in *El largo viaje* and *La escritura o la vida* that, at times, seem to contradict one another and further demonstrate the complex process of recovering memory and renegotiating one’s identity in the aftermath of traumatic experiences. Born in Spain, Semprún fled to France with his family in 1937, where he began to work with the anti-German resistance during World War II. Although he published primarily in French and adamantly emphasized that
he persisted in maintaining his identity as a Spaniard, his use of multiple languages more
effectively reveals the deeply profound sense of confusion he experienced when attempting to
identify his national identity and alliances post-Holocaust. In an interview with Ricardo Cayuela
Gally, Semprún explains why he chose to write *El largo viaje* in French rather than Spanish.
First, he alludes to the power of language over experience, stating that, “Creo que la razón es que
la experiencia la viví en francés, como resistente, y que el libro me salió en el idioma vital de la
peripecia” (34). Then, as if to assuage the Spaniard inside of him, he references the power of
Francoist censorship of the press in Spain following the civil war, claiming that, “cuando escribo
mi primer libro lo hago en francés, y sigo escribiendo en ese idioma, entre otras razones, porque
la censura franquista prohíbe mis libros” (37). Even though Semprún fiercely defends his
Spanish heritage, he does not deny the influence of other cultures or languages and the symbolic
loss of his nationality that he experienced in exile, choosing instead to vacillate between them in
sporadic fashion.

Interestingly, this question of nationality is not restricted to the real world of interviews, but also manifests itself in the fragmented dialogue found in *El largo viaje*. Whereas Gérard
identifies himself explicitly as a Spaniard, even going so far as to state that by defending France
from fascism he is, in turn, defending his native country, he also demonstrates a high degree of
identitary confusion as a result of his traumatic experiences. Enric Bou describes this dilemma
in terms of its disruptive effect on one’s identity, suggesting that the identities of exiled
individuals are intricately tied to their native nationalities: “Así es el caso de las memorias de los

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33 While reflecting upon his role in the French Resistance, the narrator remarks, “El fin de los campos es el
fin del nazismo, y será por lo tanto el final del franquismo, está claro, vamos, no hay ni la menor sombra de duda”
(79). Fighting for France, from his perspective, is akin to also fighting for the Spanish Republic. In this way, his
writing echoes that of Felipe Matarranz, Neus Català, Juana Doña, and numerous other Spanish writers who have
personified the Spanish Civil War and Spanish participation in the French Resistance.
exiliados, ya que intentan reconstruir el recuerdo a partir de la ausencia de una realidad común, la que han dejado atrás en el país de origen” (22). Though Semprún attempts to recover or reconstruct this identity via his text, a more grim reality is revealed: the effects of traumatic exile and imprisonment that ultimately lead to the lack or loss of national identity. A telling conversation is seen when the Gérard attempts to define his status as a refugee: “Dicen que Francia es mi patria de adopción, pero yo no soy verdaderamente francés […] soy refugiado español” (111). Gérard recognizes that he is situated between two identities and not fully settled into either one. The crisis of identity further extends to his perception of his native country and his role within it. He recalls the day he discovered that he was no longer considered a Spaniard but rather a Spanish Red. Echoing the likes of Felipe Matarranz, Neus Català, and Juana Doña in their critiques of Francoist propaganda, Semprún writes, “Fue en Bayona […] donde supe que yo era un rojo español. Al día siguiente, me llevé una segunda sorpresa, cuando leíamos en un diario que había, por un lado, rojos y, por otro, nacionales. No era fácil de entender por qué eran nacionales, cuando hacían la guerra con las tropas marroquíes, la legión extranjera, los aviones alemanes y las divisiones Littorio” (105-6). He further highlights the irony of his observations as he chalks the misunderstanding up to the “misterios de la lengua francesa” (106). Overall, Gérard keenly feels his otherness as he attempts to understand his position in life: neither fully Spanish nor fully French, he is metaphorically and physically torn between two worlds. What results is even more problematic: the perceived lack of nationality altogether.

In a scene in which he describes the stereotypical actions of soldiers and women of various nationalities (including American, British, and German) after the camps have been liberated, the narrator remarks that, “Los maîtres alemanes cumplían con su oficio de maîtres alemanes. Las chicas de procedencias diversas cumplían con su oficio de chicas de diversas
procedencias. Y nosotros, con el de supervivientes de los campos de la muerte” (19). It is quite telling that after his liberation from Buchenwald, the narrator seems to have lost his national identity altogether (even if only momentarily), describing his nationality in terms of being a survivor of the concentration camp rather than a patriot of Spain. Taken as a whole, such contradicting depictions of nationality and individual identity furthermore support the idea that the fragmentation used by Semprún in his testimonial texts serves a plethora of purposes, not the least of which is to create an artistic space in which he can negotiate and reconstruct his identity, history, and memory in ways that also allow him to work through the trauma he has experienced. Over thirty years later, the same types of literary fragmentation would be seen again in his testimonial memoir La escritura o la vida—a work in which Semprún further elaborates upon the process of psychological recovery from his unspeakable trauma forced upon him in Buchenwald.

Much like his approach to nationality in El largo viaje, Semprún continues the renegotiation of his nationality in his 1994 memoir. While a detailed analysis of all references to nationality or crisis of national identity would be far too exhaustive for even a thorough dissertation, there are several highly illustrative examples that clearly demonstrate Semprún’s use of nationality as a means of both identitary stability and, most importantly, resistance. Taken as a whole, these excerpts and scenes both comment upon the ideas of nationality (or loss thereof) first presented in El largo viaje while simultaneously pushing the definition of ‘nationality’ even further, treating nationality not as a clean-cut, black-and-white issue but as a complex and sometimes dynamic entity too often exploited by repressive regimes.

From the first chapter of La escritura o la vida, Semprún plays with the idea of nationality both as a personal choice and an involuntary identity forced upon him by his captors.
Throughout the novel, the red triangle embroidered with the letter S (standing for “Spanier” or Spanish) that he forcibly wears on his jacket catches the attention of those around him, whether they are his fellow prisoners or the Allied soldiers liberating the camp. It becomes clear from the beginning that many are quite confused by Semprún’s prominence and power within the camp, a reputation that he has earned through being intellectually clever and multilingual—an ability that helps him establish a solid rapport with the prisoners and guards alike. Though Semprún, at first, does not comment upon his identification as Spaniard, he later writes that the designation of Spanier is not sufficient as is. When Lieutenant Rosenfeld gazes at Semprún’s red triangle and says, “Español” (95), Semprún immediately replies by countering, “Rotspanier” (95), the equivalent of “Red Spanish.” It is significant to note that Semprún has essentially created a new national identity separate from that of Franco’s Spain, one which, in Semprún’s own words, has no homeland at all: “Pensé en todo lo que cabría decir respecto a esas dos palabras: regreso, repatriación. La segunda, por supuesto, carecía de sentido para mí. En primer lugar, regresando a Francia, no había regresado a mi patria. Y luego, puestos a ir hasta el fondo de las cosas, estaba claro que ya nunca podría regresar a ninguna patria. Ya no había patria para mí” (130). He further echoes this sentiment while writing about his return to Madrid in 1953, stating that, “Jamás, en todos esos años vividos en el extranjero, había tenido una sensación tan desgarradora de exilio, de extrañamiento, como en aquel momento privilegiado del regreso al paisaje original” (166-167). For Semprún, nationality has become a forced identity, one which he is not willing to

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34. Semprún makes this clear as he writes, “Como la de Nicolai en otras circunstancias, pero por motivos comparables, la mirada de Schwartz se había quedado prendada (typo) en la «S» de mi identificación nacional. El también debía de andar preguntándose cómo se las había arreglado un rojo español para alcanzar las cumbres de la jerarquía de la administración interna de Buchenwald” (36).
submit to any longer. While discussing the choice to publish *El largo viaje* in French rather than Spanish, Semprún notes the following:

Tanto como el español, en efecto, el francés era mi lengua materna. Se había vuelto mi lengua materna, por lo menos. No había escogido mi lugar de nacimiento, el terruño de mi lengua originaria. Esta cosa—idea, realidad—por la que tanto se ha combatido, por la que tanta sangre se habrá derramado, los orígenes, es la que menos le pertenece a uno, es donde la parte de uno mismo es más aleatoria, más aventurada: más burra, también. Burra por lo necia y por lo animal. Por lo tanto no había escogido mis orígenes, ni mi lengua materna (293).

From this point onward in his memoir, the concept of nationality spirals downward into a series of philosophical debates in which Semprún gradually rejects the notion altogether in favor of seeking refuge in an imagined (and exiled) community of his own making.\(^{35}\) While Semprún relates many fond memories of his Spanish childhood and similarly paints the Spanish language as a nostalgic and intimate connection with his homeland, he gradually begins to integrate himself into the imagined community of exiled survivors and former Resistance fighters liberated from concentration camps, hauntingly admitting that, “Tengo ganas de volver a Buchenwald, entre los míos, entre mis compañeros, los aparecidos que regresan de una larga ausencia mortal” (121). When he returns to Buchenwald for a documentary being filmed about its role during the Holocaust, Semprún speaks of the ironic beauty of the woods surrounding the camp, choosing to end his memoir by dreaming of Buchenwald in a nostalgic light, writing, “El mundo se ofrecía a mí en el misterio radiante de una oscura claridad lunar. Tuve que detenerme para recuperar el aliento. El corazón me latía muy fuerte. Me acordaré toda mi vida de esta felicidad insensata, me dije para mis adentros. De esta belleza nocturna” (329-330).

\(^{35}\) For Txetxu Aguado, Semprún uses his text and descriptions of nationalism and patriotism in order to “enable new political projects based on notions of fraternity and solidarity to emerge, projects that will ground identity and citizenship in the post-national context” (238).
In addition to Semprún’s rejection of forced nationality and his subsequent creation of a new symbolic community in which to find solidarity, Semprún’s treatment of the nationalities of those around him—especially those of his enemies—also demonstrates direct resistance to the fascist ideology propagated in Spain and Germany during the civil war and World War II. Seen briefly in his treatment of several German guards and children in *El largo viaje* and continued in *La escritura o la vida*, Semprún distances himself from the xenophobic ideals of Franco and Hitler through the remarkable humanization of his enemies. In his discussion of universal fascism, Umberto Eco suggests that fascist ideology typically demonstrates the following characteristics: xenophobia, nationalism, fear of the enemy or “other,” a desire to return to glorified and embellished past traditions. Maureen Tobin Stanley further defines this type of ideology as irrationalism that rejects all critical thought (3). Whereas Fascist regimes and advocates justify genocide, imprisonment and oppression by way of signaling the danger of “otherness” to a unified society, Semprún chooses to view his enemies not through the lens of fear, but of speculation, exploration and critical thought. When in *La escritura o la vida* he stumbles across a young German soldier singing “La paloma,” Semprún is reminded not only of his childhood in Spain, but also of the humanity and life experience of the soldier as well. The recognition of such, in fact, leads to Semprún finding it difficult to kill the soldier or even see him as an enemy. As in *El largo viaje*, Semprún refuses to become that which he has given all but his life fighting against, instead choosing to remain dedicated to the ideas of democracy, freedom, and progressivism.

**Conclusions: Hybridity and Fragmentation as Tools of Resistance**

In summary, by blending elements of nonfiction and fiction, Semprún refuses to adhere to traditional boundaries of genre, time, space, or voice, using fragmentation as a key strategy to
create, overcome, and at times, re-write his own individual history and the collective history of his fellow comrades through the narration of *El largo viaje* and *La escritura o la vida*. As a result, he is able to deconstruct and reconstruct his own history, connecting past with present (and sometimes future) in a way that promotes personal healing, identity re-negotiation, and resistance to the historical discourse propagated by the Franco and Hitler regimes, much like the works of Felipe Matarranz, Neus Català, and Juana Doña. Beginning with temporal fragmentation, Semprún is able to both comment upon and correct his previously published narratives of memory while also demonstrating the dynamic relationship between trauma, testimony, and time. In much the same way, his constant vacillation between different narrative subjects and voices creates a testimonial and historical space within which he reflects on his individual trauma while situating himself within the memories of his companions in Buchenwald and the Resistance. Interchanging narrative voices furthermore permits Semprún to write his own multiple identities into the text, resulting in an ongoing dialogue that attempts to reconcile the various stages of Semprún’s life, both pre-Buchenwald and post-Buchenwald. Along with this interplay of voices, the aesthetic fragmentation of his texts—including intertextuality, sentence inconsistency, ellipses, and abrupt transitions—constructs a visible representation of Semprún’s trauma and provides the means to work through it. Establishing a creative space in which he rediscovers his identity in light of the trauma he has experienced, art and artifice present Semprún with the tools to reconstruct himself via his words and thus resist the hegemonic (and homogenous) historical records that refused to recognize the importance and validity of his unique history. In utilizing these multiple forms of literary fragmentation, Semprún does what Matarranz, Català, and Doña also achieve in their testimonies of trauma: he opens History to new, alternative perspectives of his experience as a Republican during and after the Spanish
Civil War and World War II, reclaims his agency as a witness, and forevermore holds in his hands (quite literally) the power of self-representation.
CONCLUSION

WRITING TRAUMA, REWRITING HISTORY

Of the many symbols that the texts analyzed in this dissertation share, those of resurrection, recovery, and redemption via writing are some of the strongest, giving us deeper insight into the process of working through individual and collective trauma and inserting alternative perspectives into public light. By utilizing creative language and the hybrid testimonial form that transcends the narrow boundaries of time, voice, and space, Felipe Matarranz, Neus Català, Juana Doña, and Jorge Semprún first resurrect their histories, herstories, and identities from the darkness cast over Spain by Franco and the subsequent *pacto de olvido* following the Transition. In speaking (or writing) out, they reclaim their agency and powers of self-representation, highlighting the subjectivity that was once denied to them. They further use their testimonies as tools of recovery in which they recuperate repressed memories and heal from the traumatic experiences via their reconstruction and elaboration. They lastly seek redemption through their words, redeeming their stories by telling them anew and opening History to divergence—both men and women, united together in their common goal of righting the injustices they suffered at the hands of their enemies. This process, however, is not achieved easily without a great deal of internal struggle on the part of the witnesses. In my analysis of their narratives I have demonstrated how trauma, memory, and history all mutually influence one another, ultimately being expressed as both hindrances to recovery, and as a means of resistance within the bounds of fragmented texts. Through a fragmented temporal structure, the
juxtaposition of the individual and collective voices, aesthetic fragmentation, and the constant interaction between fictional and nonfictional frameworks, the authors studied in this dissertation fight with the trauma face-to-face, both allowing it to resurface through their words and submitting it to the power of their pens, wielded with newfound subjectivity and reclaimed agency.

Of the forms of fragmentation analyzed in these testimonios, temporal distortion is undoubtedly the most obvious among the four, both in the fictionalized and non-fictionalized texts. Used consistently and intentionally by Matarranz, Català, Doña, and Semprún in their testimonies, the temporal fragmentation of their narratives acts not only as visible portrayal of the effects of trauma on the memory and perception of time (especially as seen in the throes of traumatic memories), but also as a way to establish Pennebaker and Banasik’s concept of critical distance between their past and present. In doing so, they reclaim their positions as witnesses, survivors, and messengers of the traumatic events forced upon them throughout the Spanish Civil War, Franco’s dictatorship, and World War II. Whereas Matarranz and Català approach the temporal schemas of their narratives more naturally (though not less urgently) due to the non-fictional nature of their texts, Doña and Semprún harness the power of artifice to offer additional commentaries upon the process of remembering traumatic experience as it relates to symbolic time. In spite of this difference, all four authors achieve the same end result in their narratives: they deconstruct and reconstruct their histories and herstories in light of the trauma they have experienced, connecting the past with the present (and sometimes future) in a way that stimulates personal healing, identity re-negotiation, and resistance to the historical discourses propagated by the Franco and Hitler regimes.
Like temporal fragmentation, the juxtaposition of the individual and collective voices revealed in the testimonial literature of this dissertation creates a space in which the authors are able to work through their individual (and thus unique) traumatic experiences and yet still find strength at a societal level. Consequently, the juxtaposition of the first person singular and plural narrative voices provides insight into the process of rewriting traumatic memories from the margins and creates a symbolic community in which, as Judith Herman proposes, psychological healing can take place. On the one hand, the testimonies portray the individual struggles of Matarranz, Català, Doña, and Semprún, and thus demonstrate the importance of subjectivity and the dynamic nature of memory itself. On the other hand, the narratives also find power in their capacity to express multiple voices and perspectives in such a way as to directly oppose homogenization and misrepresentation. By choosing to spotlight varied points of view and alternative perspectives, they open History to variance and unabashedly depict the multi-faceted histories and herstories of the Spanish men and women who fought and died for the progressive ideals of democracy in Spain and Europe. Not only do they discover strength through the plural voice while also allowing their individual memories to flow freely, but they also use their testimonios to give a voice to their fallen comrades, thereby ensuring that their memories will never be forgotten as they were in the past.

On a visual level, the stylistic and structural forms of fragmentation present in Manuscrito de un superviviente, De la resistencia y la deportación, Desde la noche y la niebla, El largo viaje, and La escritura o la vida also weave themselves into the distorted schemas of time and voice. As a result, the essential power of the hybrid testimonio comes to light: through its refusal to conform to hegemonic formulations or outlines of history, memory, and literature, the testimony confirms its reconstructive power in terms of subjective representation. Not only
does the creative space of the *testimonio* thus serve as a way to tangibly express traumatic experiences that are difficult to describe within traditional parameters of language and structure, but it also helps Matarranz, Català, Doña, and Semprún reclaim the power of self-representation previously denied them by their captors. Free from restrictions, they selectively and intentionally choose the ways in which their memories are written and published and thereby work through the trauma that constantly threatens their survival. Because they reject the norms of genre and/or structure, the countless histories and herstories depicted within their pages are allowed to remain incomplete, incohesive, or even contradictory, an occurrence that makes the statement that traumatic reality is not expressed in perfectly constructed narratives. As suggested by Hayden White, all forms of history are fashioned subjectively; the aesthetic and artistic creativity of these testimonies serves as a visible reminder of this and reaffirms their historical significance as narratives of resistance.

When these forms of fragmentation (temporal, narrative voice, and aesthetic) are combined in testimonial literature, what results is a blank canvas on which the likes of Matarranz, Català, Doña, and Semprún make incredibly important contributions to history and the advancement of our understanding of the past from multiple perspectives. Refusing to remain silent any longer, they speak loudly from the margins and reintroduce longstanding issues about identity that in many cases are still unresolved and debated. Through the narration of their subjective memories, they not only question the broader terminologies of gender and nationality (particularly in cases of civil war and exile), but they furthermore attempt to correct historical records that have reduced heterogeneous lives and memories to politically biased propaganda. First, they attack the problematic portrayal of masculinities and femininities as experienced throughout the Spanish Civil War and World War II. Rather than support the idea that there is
one prescriptive ideal, Matarranz, Català, Doña, and Semprún imply that history is best understood when men and women are portrayed as complex beings that serve different roles in their families and communities depending on the context in which they live. Seen from this perspective, they also remind us to consider the influence of trauma on individual and collective identities: in order to understand narratives of trauma, we must accept the highly subjective nature of their memories. Second, they question the historical representations of Republicans (or anti-Francoists) previously established by Franco and Hitler and wrestle with the implications of exile (both literal and symbolic) from their homeland. In both cases, a symbolic community akin to Benedict Anderson’s is constructed, allowing not only the authors but also their families, comrades, and acquaintances to renegotiate their identities in light of the recovered past.

Seen as a whole, the narratives written and published by Felipe Matarranz, Neus Català, Juana Doña, and Jorge Semprún are undoubtedly important as our global society continues to rethink the significance of subjective testimonial literature in terms of its historical importance. By demonstrating the ways in which the testimonio can be altered, changed, and adapted via fragmentary strategies to suit the needs of the individual, the texts in this dissertation have once again acted as a clear response to historian’s doubts about the veracity and representation of real experiences that have been marred by trauma. Addressing the question posed by Jorge Semprún at the start of this dissertation about the narratability of subjective and traumatic memories, Matarranz, Català, Doña, and even Semprún himself respond with a resounding “yes,” and effectively demonstrate the power of words and creative language on the road to identity recovery, reconciliation, and resistance. The testimonio in its many forms is a space of creation, recreation, and confrontation, and allows both men and women the equal opportunity to construct their own histories, herstories, and identities as they attempt to reconcile past, present,
and future in meaningful ways and work through the trauma they have experienced. Opening History to divergence and breaking the chains of silence imposed for decades, these authors have paved the way for further conversation on the impacts of trauma as they relate to the Spanish identities (both individual and collective) of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Because of the obvious interconnectedness of the testimonies in this dissertation, future studies of Spanish trauma narratives can further examine the intertextual dialogues established between the memory texts of men and women—both those published within Spain and in exile. In doing so, we may begin to peel back the complex layers of contemporary Spain’s identity and the urgency with which they are recovering the histories and herstories of those silenced voices that have gone before them.
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