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**Reading beyond Cognitive Meaning: Affective Strategies in Novels of the Spanish**

**“Memory Boom”**

The twenty-first century “memory boom” in Spain has resulted in a plethora of writing and fictions in which the civil war and the early years of Franco’s dictatorship feature prominently. Studies of these works have addressed representations of memory and trauma, recognizing how the authors reanimate the past and narrate stories of conflict and loss to a readership, distanced from the historical events. This essay explores four texts, identifying the strategies that have shaped their circulation in the current affective economy. Analysis pays particular attention to text, but also explores the image as formative in the reading experience.

Durante el "boom de la memoria" del siglo XXI en España se han publicado una gran cantidad de libros y ficciones que han utilizado como fondo narrativo la guerra civil o los primeros años de la dictadura franquista. Los análisis de estas obras han abordado sus representaciones de las memorias y el trauma, reconociendo la tarea de los autores en recrear el pasado y en narrar a los lectores, lejanos de los acontecimientos históricos, historias del conflicto y de las pérdidas personales. Este trabajo examina cuatro textos, identificando las estrategias que han influido su circulación en una economía afectiva actual. El análisis presta atención al texto, pero también explora como la imagen informa la lectura de estas historias.

During the recent “memory boom” of writing concerning the Spanish civil war and Francoist dictatorship many books have been sold and critical ink spilt as we examine the nature of the representation of the period, the recovery of memory and the ongoing need to engage with

the trauma and repression of recent Spanish historical events. At the heart of much work related to memory studies, whether grounded in Spain or elsewhere, is representational value: whose memory is it? How is the past re-worked in the present? What are the ethics of writing memory for others? Memory is considered unstable, re-worked into narrative and thus infused with imaginative investment; memory texts are never direct representations of memories. Recent theorisations of memory posit that it can be transferable from one person to another, shared as collective and cultural, even multidirectional or prosthetic, an implantable commodity. These questions inform this essay, but rather than questioning the validity of textual “historical memory”, I wish to consider the values of memory writing through their intervention in an affective economy. To do this I will explore the nature of affect, itself open to debate, and consider four examples which themselves investigate and evoke empathetic sensations. I do not suggest that affective responses engender empathetic identification, specifically as the desired aim or end product of the reading of such texts. Indeed, I agree with Colin Davis (2011: 30) that ‘the responsibility of the witness is not to *become* the victim, to partake of the victim’s pain; rather [...] it is to regard the other’s pain as something alien, unfathomable, and as an outrage which should be stopped’. I submit that affect is a strategic and important quality that influences texts’ popularity and their circulation in post-millennial Spain, a socio-cultural context exemplified legally and politically by the 2007 Ley de Memoria Histórica.

There are many possible examples from the hundreds of novels published in post-millennial Spain, the great majority of which are used by their authors to offer narrative-driven exposition and exploration of the historical setting of a traumatic war and subsequent brutal dictatorship. My choices here are guided by both popularity – texts, stories and authors that

have entered the popular consciousness of the war – and also the range of narrative forms that all provide evidence of affective strategies. The first, Alberto Méndez's *Los girasoles ciegos* (2004), is a bestselling book of four fictional short stories, while the second, likewise an unexpected success with the public, is Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* (2002), a fiction overtly based on the testimonies of female survivors of the war and of the regime's punitive prisons. The third and fourth texts offer the opportunity to explore narratives that place a greater emphasis on historical experiences, with an appeal to the veracity of the photographic image; Carlos Fonseca incorporates captioned images into his re-telling of the poignant and now well-known narrative of the *Trece rosas rojas* (2004), while the most recent text studied is from the hand of Manuel Rivas, celebrated for his Civil War narratives published in the late 1990s, and whose *Las voces bajas* (originally published in Galician as *As voces baixas*, 2012) is an autobiographical text containing uncaptioned images. In the presentation of these four texts I attempt to engage in the paradox of affect studies, that is, approach affective techniques through a cognitive perspective. As Eugenie Brinkema (2014: 40) has observed, critical readers have been overly concerned with the effects of affect, drawing it into the work of "interpretative labour". The challenge inheres in balancing the critical endeavour of reading and evidencing effects against the identification of the affective, which inherently eludes our cognitive grasp.

That narratives of loss, suffering and pain emotionally engage their readers is nothing new. It is widely held that affect differs from emotion since the latter conveys a cognitive state involving judgements and beliefs, for example, fear in a dangerous situation, or love. Affect is instead a fleeting intensity experienced physically for the briefest of moments before incorporated into conscious forms of sensation and emotion. Working to displace subjectivity

and the primacy of the individual consciousness by its experience as inherently pre-cognitive, affect seems a remnant of the pre-modern, before the institutionalisation and rationalisation of the mind. Jo Labanyi (2010: 224-5) notes that affect 'has nothing to do with the Freudian unconscious, which consists of repressed emotions, since affect, not having reached consciousness, cannot be repressed; it is preconscious' and that 'Affect, sensation, and emotion thus occupy different periods on a continuum going from body to mind, each having a different temporality'. These points on the continuum are not distinct, however, but are interdependent and experienced as if simultaneous.

While emotion "fits" with recognisable forms, affect is characterised by its inexpressibility, yet this non-linguistic phenomenon is not experienced by an individual, since affect is seen as the very cause by which individuals can come to identify emotions in others, and indeed be contaminated by them. Displays of affective conditions, primarily through the face and through inter-corporeal exchanges at the molecular level of pheromones and smells, permit a poetics of contagion. In this way the body is opened to the possibility of invasion by indeterminate potentialities, with consciousness and emotion as the end-points, as Patricia T. Clough notes, 'Affect and consciousness are in a virtual-actual circuit, which defines affect as potential and emergent' (2010: 208-9).

Yet, clearly, books, texts and images are not people and do not convey the corporeal connection espoused by theorists such as Silvan Tomkins (2008: 325), the psychologist whose work on affect has been most influential:

Words may symbolize signs, analogs and powers which activate affects. But above all language is the lens of thought through which affects can be brought to a magnifying, searing, white-heat focus. The worlds which have been constructed out of words have promised the wildest excitements, the deepest enjoyments, the most abysmal distress and the ultimate shame and terror. From God, heaven, and the angels, through the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, to hell and the devil, man has been fascinated, dedicated, alienated, humiliated, terrorized by his own linguistic inventions.

Words can accrete different affective tones depending on the context, user and moment of recognition. In this manner Labanyi (2010: 230) notes that affect, in relation to texts of trauma, 'makes us attentive to "what texts do" – and what texts do is communicate all manner of things. So affect takes us back to meaning, but to forms of meaning that are not restricted to the cognitive'. Understandably, in relation to such concerns, affect has a visible presence in discourses of trauma studies, which have been particularly dominated by an engagement with visual culture as a conduit for creative, affective responses. In attempting to represent affective bodily accumulation and recall responses, trauma texts are commonly considered to incorporate aporia, involuntary repetitions and disorder as they attempt, rightly or wrongly, to replicate the unknowingness and disorientation of the traumatic event.

For Derek Attridge (2011: 332. Italics in original) any textuality intertwines the psychic and somatic, since reading is a physical, ocular activity involving a particular positioning of the body, an experience in which 'the artwork is not an *object* but an *event*, and that it comes into existence, again and again, always differently, each time a reader, listener or viewer experiences the arrangement of sounds or images as a work of art'. Indeed, Rita Felski (2011:

216) notes that 'styles of academic reading are affective as well as cognitive, inviting us to adopt attitudes of trust, impatience, reverence, or wariness towards the texts we read'. The enchantment of a text results in affective and emotional responses; despite the reader's awareness that the text is make-believe, the game of imaginary investment results in emotion as vivid as those evoked in "real" circumstances. Importantly, the experience of the text is not independent of the book which is a product, situated within a genre, with a cover image and other paratextual details, as shall be seen in the evaluation of the texts discussed in this essay.

The deliberate emotional engagement of the reader has its own literary history whereby certain genres in particular contexts are read as canonically inferior or, at best, as befitting a certain sensibility where "fine feelings" signify civilisation over animals and intelligence over peasantry. For the sentimental novel, affective contagion was prized in both characters and readers, continuing to this day to play a frequently disavowed role in the literary experience. Joanne Dobson (1997: 265) argues that sentimental writing demonstrates a 'skilled use of language, creating engaging, even compelling fictions and lyrics'. She goes on to argue that

Literary sentimentalism, I suggest, is premised on an emotional and philosophical ethos that celebrates human connection, both personal and communal, and acknowledges the shared devastation of affectional loss. It is not a discrete literary category, as the term genre might imply, but rather an imaginative orientation characterized by certain themes, stylistic features and figurative conventions. (Dobson 1997: 266)

While much recent attention work has focused on literary or filmic sentiment and emotion and its political cultural uses and abuses, Dobson privileges the human connection presented in such works:

An emphasis on accessible language, a clear prose style, and familiar lyric and narrative patterns defines an aesthetic whose primary quality of transparency is generated by a valorization of connection, an impulse toward communication with as wide an audience as possible. (Dobson 1997: 268)

The heightened feeling finds its expression not only in the clarity of language but also the memorialising function of the keepsake, objects that within the narrative are imbued with meaning and affective value for individuals and collectives (Dobson 1997: 273). It would seem that images and texts, as material objects in circulation, can come to attain such values in the cultural imaginary.

Although they are produced and read in different socio-political circumstances to those that interest Dobson, many recent Civil War and dictatorship texts employ the operative logic of the sentimental novel, in an affective economy 'where feelings do not reside in subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation' (Ahmed 2004: 8). Within this economy individuals act as 'one nodal point in the economy, rather than its origin and destination' (Ahmed 2004: 46). The re-visiting and re-writing of the Civil War and Francoist dictatorship is part of a collective imaginary, informed by individual experiences but largely formed through a number of vectors including the media, generational identification and ideology. Sebastiaan Faber (2011: 102-3) suggests that many of the authors of the "memory boom" are not filiates

but affiliates to those who fought and died in the war, by which he means that they go through an active conscious association, based on compassion and identification. I contend that an important operative logic of the recent Spanish Civil War novel is the detective-like investigation of the past based on the discovery of material evidence and oral testimony in order to uncover hidden facts, to right injustices and to heal unsutured wounds. This organisational trope is to be found explicitly in the following novels, amongst others: Javier Cercas *Soldados de Salamina* (2001), Ángeles López Martínez *la rosa número trece* (2006), Nativel Preciado *Camino de hierro* (2006), Carlos Fonseca *Tiempo de memoria* (2009), Isaac Rosa *La mala memoria* (1999) and even in earlier novels such as Antonio Muñoz Molina's *Beatus ille* (1986). Novels such as Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* (2002), Andrés Trapiello's *Días y noches* (2000) and Jesús Ferrero's *Las trece rosas* (2003), which deploy historical figures and situations, employ the detective trope implicitly through their privileging of informational sources either real or fabricated. The hermeneutics of suspicion – a cognitive experience – which informs the detective-like investigative function may seem at odds with the affective importance of the trauma and memory text but I suggest that the *jouissance* of the intellectual game typical of this style in fact enhances the excitement and affective response to the text, since investigative evidence is key in conveying truth and immediacy.

Such a combination is important to the second story of Alberto Méndez's *Los girasoles ciegos* (2004), where the recovered text which forms the central narrative voice is a clear echo of previous devices used to suggest authenticity, most famously by Cervantes in *Don Quijote* and Cela in *La familia de Pascual Duarte*. Méndez's book comprises four short stories, set in consecutive years 1939-1942; the stories link explicitly through their titles – all are *derrotas* – and through connections between details of the protagonists' lives. Here, the metafictional



games of the found manuscript and the sentimental confessional mode coalesce. Published by Anagrama, the back blurb tells us that ‘Todo lo que se narra en este libro es verdad, pero nada de lo que se cuenta es cierto, [...] Fueron tantos los horrores que, al final, todos los miedos, todos los sufrimientos, todos los dramas, sólo tienen en común una cosa: Los muertos’. In the book, the dead are accessed through textual or oral testimonies, the former notably in ‘Segunda derrota, o Manuscrito encontrado en el olvido’, which had been published as a standalone piece before its inclusion in *Los girasoles ciegos*. The story begins with a frame narrator, an editor who describes how he came across an archived notebook ascribed simply to DD (‘difunto desconocido’) (Méndez 2004: 39). What follows is a transcription of the notebook which we are told was found in 1940 in a mountain hut near to an adult skeleton, a long-dead child, animal remains, a woman’s dress and other objects. This text turns out to be the account of the newborn’s father, the mother having died in childbirth; it transpires from comments made in the texts and from a postscript by the framing narrator that the journal’s author had fled an Asturian village in 1937 to join the Republican army and that the events in the mountains must have occurred when he was eighteen years old while he and his pregnant wife fled Madrid seeking safe passage to France after the war.

Before acquiring this contextual information the reader is swept along by the tale of the harsh winter’s descent and the struggle for survival, focused especially on the baby and the father’s guilt as he quickly recognises their desperate state. In the first journal entry we read that the mother, Elena, has died but the father makes no bond with the child – ‘No me atrevo a tocarlo’ (Méndez 2004: 40) – and in the early sections of the narrative vision takes precedence until the narrator holds the baby for the first time, described as ‘un error’ (Méndez 2004: 44). As the father-child bond develops emotionally and physically, through his attempts to feed them

both, he poses emotive questions: who will pass on knowledge to the child of his mother's hair, smile and grace? Who will tell him of his father's education at the hands of an enlightened *maestro* and his movement to Madrid for the war effort? (Méndez 2004: 52).<sup>1</sup> The recognition that neither parent nor child is likely to survive underscores the sense of futility. As the inevitable demise draws near, the father displays first affection towards the baby through a kiss and, true to his poetic nature, synaesthetically ascribes colour to tenderness: '¿Hay ternuras blancas y ternuras negras? Elena, ¿de qué color era tu ternura? Ya no lo recuerdo, ni siquiera sé si lo que siento es pena' (Méndez 2004: 55). The narrator's numbness and confusion invites the reader to compensate empathetically.

Although we connect emotionally with this tale we are nevertheless conscious of the textual source as the editor interrupts to describe drawings or handwriting; we are also aware of page number headings that indicate the pages turning in the original notebook, breaking the flow of the reading experience, including mid-sentence. We are told of a strange pentagram musical figure which remains undeciphered; the editor observes that a number of pages ripped from the notebook must have been removed simultaneously due to their identical 'perfil rasgado', a deduction that underlines his dispassionate, investigative role (Méndez 2004: 54). Although the transcribing editor retains a doubt about the authorship, he deduces from visiting the village what is unknown at an official level, that is, the impersonally and uncaringly archived "DD" is young Eulalio Ceballos Suárez. The narrator thus has the power to name his protagonist but only posthumously, just like the baby, which the journal's author

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<sup>1</sup> The journal's author is the embodiment of the young workers who had gained a good schooling due to the Republic's ideology of education and culture for all; he recites poetry by Góngora and Lorca and we are told that writes with exquisite handwriting. The story's tragedy is not only one of human suffering and loss, but also the extinction of the political dream.

only names in death as Rafael after his paternal grandfather, completing the delayed paternal bond. The word Rafael, we are told, is then written 284 times across three pages, pages which are increasingly crammed with words in writing that becomes smaller as there is so much more to recount than is possible for the pages to contain. The importance of 'Rafael', both word and child, is paramount since in its excessive repetition the symbol-affect signifies the emotional devastation, whilst it loses meaning through that excessive repetition, becoming little more than a grapheme to be imagined by the reader of *Los girasoles ciegos*. It is only in the final line, as he informs us of Eulalio's name and origins does the editorial voice suggest his own empathetic relationship, 'lo escribí cuando tenía dieciocho años y creo que ésa no es edad para tanto sufrimiento' (Méndez 2004: 57).

While *Los girasoles ciegos* presents its material evidence as an abandoned text to be recuperated as an act of re-voicing of the (fictional) dead, Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* collects testimonies of women in Madrid's Ventas prison, re-embodimenting their memories and stories in fictional characters. The novel's task of conveying testimony is reinforced at the story's end as she thanks all those who gifted to her their tales, before listing individuals to whom she is indebted, prioritising prisoners and loved ones of those who died above historians and archivists.

Chacón's novel, as might be expected, draws its readers into a distant world, temporally and culturally, from their own presumably comfortable twenty-first century existence. The women are depicted in the overcrowded, unsanitary conditions of the gaol, in fear for their lives. Indeed, the novel's opening focuses on Hortensia, a pregnant prisoner who has been given the death sentence, commuted until after the child's birth. This initial segment of the

novel uses short syntactical structures that, while they do the work of conveying the traumatic nature of the narrative through fragmentation and immediacy, I contend are exemplary of the novel's affective qualities. Whilst the semantic fields and their meanings invoke trauma, Chacón uses predominantly short and repetitive structures, as Dobson recognized in relation to "sentimental literature":

El miedo de Elvira. El miedo de Hortensia. El miedo de las mujeres que compartían la costumbre de hablar en voz baja. El miedo en sus voces. Y el miedo en sus ojos huidizos, para no ver la sangre. Para no ver el miedo, huidizo también, en los ojos de sus familiares. (Chacón 2008: 12)

Shortly before this a single word sentence stands alone: 'Reía', whilst the author also makes frequent repetitive use of the inelegant conjunctive 'y', particularly as a sentence opener, suggesting a breathless fascination and a desire to record the immediacy of the moment and the sensations evoked (Chacón 2008: 11).

Our introduction to Hortensia, 'La mujer que iba a morir', denotes a tragic future unknown to the character, the description strongly dependent on her physicality, moving from her eyes and mouth to her belly, the notebook she holds, her long hair to the bottom of her back and finally informing us of the baby inside (Chacón 2008: 11). The movement from physical exterior to interior is matched by a description of the women's internalized fears, visible only through the eyes, we are told, in fleeting moments:

Ya se había acostumbrado a hablar en voz baja, con esfuerzo, pero se había acostumbrado. Y había aprendido a no hacerse preguntas, a aceptar que la derrota se cuela en lo hondo, en lo más hondo, sin pedir permiso y sin dar explicaciones. Y tenía hambre, y frío, y le rodían las rodillas (Chacón 2008: 11)

The women's experiences are described both as non-cognitive – 'se cuela en lo hondo' – and all too painfully known as we are reminded of their hunger and physical discomfort. Unexpectedly, the discomfort in this opening section is the result of comedy and laughter as another prisoner, Elvira, entertains her *compañeras* with a make-shift puppet show using gloves and chickpeas. A further binary, of silence and voice, is evident through the comedic moment where Hortensia, usually quiet, 'se le escapaba un Ay madre mía de mi vida que aún no había aprendido a controlar, y lo repetía casi a gritos sujetándose el vientre' and Elvira's voice 'aflautada para la ocasión, acompañaba la pantomima para ahuyentar el miedo' (Chacón 2008: 11).

Hortensia, like Méndez's Eulalio, is a writer and her blue notebook, her earrings and a piece of her dress are preserved for her baby. The child, symbolically also named Hortensia although referred to as Tensi, receives these objects and subsequently dedicates her life to the struggle against the dictatorship, enacting a politicised but affective postmemorial recovery of her mother's legacy.<sup>2</sup> The novel's narrative of Tensi's relationship with the remnants of her mother's life and especially her incarceration reveal how affective value inheres not only through an object's material existence but also its contextual origins and

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<sup>2</sup> See M. Edurne Portela (2007) for a close reading of postmemory in this novel.

reception. Chacón's book participates in this affective economy not only through its stories but also because the image that fronts it, a *miliciana* holding a child, was chosen by the author after its recovery from an archive, Chacón declaring immediately that this was her Hortensia (Portela 2007: 56-7). Befitting the novel it suggests both the traditional feminine maternal role and also women's roles in the military struggle.

While this essay thus far has argued for a re-engagement with the linguistic and textual as a mode of affective transmission, Chacón's *miliciana* reminds us of the power of the visual, particularly the historical photograph, as of strategic importance in assessing affect in the literary market of the "memory boom". Not only is the reading experience ocular, as Attridge reminds us, but literary illustration, front covers or textual illustrations, attain importance in the reading experience. Carlos Fonseca's *Trece rosas rojas* presents captioned photographic images, as indexical and testimonial objects, to support the historical narrative, stylistically journalistic and sentimental, of the arrest and execution of the thirteen young women who became known as the thirteen red roses.<sup>3</sup> The book includes eleven images, the first five depicting four of the thirteen women who had been held as political prisoners and summarily executed. Blanca Brisac is seen twice, as a young girl with her smart-looking family, then in a headshot, smiling, shortly before her incarceration. Julia Conesa, aged nineteen when killed, is seen two years previously in a posed side profile shot with her sister. One particularly striking image, in fact the first that we encounter in the book, is that of Dionisia Manzanera, not as a headshot or posed in commemoration of a family event or life ritual, but as an ideologically active body holding a rifle alongside other combatants. Yet the first edition of

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<sup>3</sup> Although other versions of the story exist, in particular Jesús Ferrero's more fictionalised *Las trece rosas* (2003), it was Fonseca's book that was adapted for cinema in 2007. On the mythology of the Trece Rosas see Linhard (2002).

Fonseca's book has on its front cover not an image known to be of any of the Roses but a posed shot of Mariana Ginestà as a *miliciana*. Perhaps Dionisia's more feminine code – a long skirt and striped top – was not deemed masculine enough against the *miliciana's* androgynising shirt and denim. Later editions of *Trece rosas rojas* use the poster image from Martínez Lázaro's film version, with the key actresses clean, their faces made-up, victims with little political or military agency.

Later in Fonseca's book we see images of letters which have been transcribed elsewhere in the text itself, underscoring the authenticity of the horrifying tale: a letter of condolence sent to Julia Conesa's mother; a letter to one of the families; letters written by two of the *rosas* in the prison chapel where they had all been taken for last confession the night they died.<sup>4</sup> Fonseca's captions are not only informative of each image's content but also clarify sources; the photos belong to the nephews of Dionisia Manzanero and Julia Conesa, to Blanca Brisac's son. These are private documents, family photos, now placed in the public domain. Marita Sturken (1999: 178) notes:

The photograph of personal value is a talisman, in which the past is often perceived to reside so that it can be reexperienced. It evokes both memory and loss, both a trace of life and the prospect of death. Yet, while the photograph may be perceived as a container of memory, it is not inhabited by memory so much as it produces it; it is a mechanism through which the past can be constructed and situated within the present.

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<sup>4</sup> Chacón also transcribes into her novel Julia Conesa's letter written that night, but does not provide the image of the original.

That three of the thirteen women are represented twice in these pictorial and textual images indicates the reliance on the personal archive since nine of the thirteen roses remain unseen in the book, although their names and stories are told. The last image, after the narrative proper and the extensive appendices, is that of the plaque dedicated to the women at their site of execution, the floor before it decked with flowers, the image providing a publically memorialised recognition, echoing the gesture made by the book itself.

It is language which, as Susan Sontag noted in her seminal essay *Regarding the Pain of Others*, informs our responses to the image, usually with a strong degree of impartiality: 'All photographs wait to be explained or falsified by their captions' (2003: 9). The static photograph is lifted from its original timeframe and recontextualised in the present moment of its being witnessed, open to an interpretation contingent upon the context of its appearance and the viewer him or herself. Although we should always remain attentive to the photograph's limitations, not only as potentially staged realities but also as literally limited by their own frames, the image holds more accessible sentimental and affective values than the verbal (Sontag 2003: 76). Fonseca's seemingly neutral captions constantly remind us of death through the observation of their temporal proximity to the execution, their depictions of youth, loved ones left behind and their poignant source attributions.

Uncaptioned pictures, however, necessitate the intervention of the reader in ascribing its connection to the text, and therefore its function in the text as a whole. My final example of the affective function is the more recent text by Manuel Rivas, *Las voces bajas*. The text, sometimes qualified as an autobiography or even a collection of short stories, which Rivas wrote shortly after his sister's death, comprises twenty-two sections which progress roughly



chronologically from childhood to the present, encapsulating also stories of his grandparents and the Civil War. The impressionistic descriptions begin with Manuel and María's childhood; details are presented from a perspective that chimes with a child-like view. The opening lines see the siblings hiding in the bathroom, the narrative appealing to a range of sensual experiences: sight, as the children hide in the dark and with the door's opening enters light; sound, with the roaring of the sea and the children being called before we hear footsteps and panting; smell evoked, with the 'olfatear excitado de quien encuentra el rastro'; touch as the pair embrace in their hiding position (Rivas 2012: 7). The passage also demonstrates the children's non-cognitive affective understanding as Rivas communicates the anxiety of the calling voice, the fear of the mother seeking her children differentiated from their own fear, which is described as primitive, 'el primer miedo', also the chapter's title. Rivas's deployment of memory as the narrative lens also denies totalising views of the characters, including the narrator; in the first chapter alone we see the father's character defined by his non-disclosure of his vertigo, despite working in the construction industry; the whispering voices, which at the time were unable to explain to a child the disappearance of a radio presenter; the vagaries and strange qualities of language in use by adults.

The initial pages of *Las voces bajas* thus confront readers with an emphasis on emotive, sensory experiences. The overlapping, unclear multiple voices of the text are discussed in interview by Rivas as characteristic of the Galician '*corpo aberto*':

Hay un tipo de una figura de que parece en la cultura tradicional en Galicia le llaman "corpo aberto", el "cuerpo abierto", y tiene que ver, es algo tradicional, pero en el fondo tiene mucho que ver con la literatura, nosotros cuando vimos un libro ese libro nos

atrapa, en el momento de abrirlo, el libro ya es un ser vivo, pero se produce también el efecto inverso, es decir, si tú abres el libro y te quedas con él, el libro también te habla a ti, es un cuerpo que se hable y exista una especie de felicidad clandestina compartida.

(transcribed from *Nunca es tarde* 2012)

In this way Rivas claims not only a corporeal affective relationship between text and reader but, he goes on to state, the novel presents us with a fourth person narrative voice, combining the first, second, third voices, not to mention evoking the silences between. Rather than developing a generic totalising sentimental narrative, the fragmented text's effect is more akin to the affective.

This linguistic affective dimension is enhanced visually in *Las voces bajas* by the inclusion of fourteen photographs which, since they are uncaptioned, the reader assumes are representative of the time and period of the accompanying text. For a few the connection is clear, for example the image of a classroom of boys as part of a memory connected to school, yet most remain distant from the words that surround them. Their placement is also at times ironic; an image of a group of youths sitting on the grass enjoying the fresh air, a ball mid-flight just behind them, appears two pages after a similar scene is first mentioned where the narrator recalls an inspiring literature class taken outside where the pupils hear works that were at the time banned from public performance. We learn of the undercover dissemination of other banned texts until a visit by the secret police puts an end to these practices for "their own good"; the photograph of the carefree sunny day appears at that narrative moment, where Rivas reflects that 'habíamos probado ya la libertad, el mayor pecado de España' (Rivas 2012: 164). Rivas, in interview, commented that the images 'forma[n] parte del lenguaje

también, de cómo contar la historia', likened to pulling a photo from one's wallet to illustrate an anecdote (Gómez Barcena 2012). Yet rather than simply enhancing the narrative the images' lack of captions indicate that they hold a position beyond the text, acquiring their own status within and alongside the words.

One of the shortest chapters of *Las voces bajas* is titled 'La foto de familia', although ironically no image appears within it. The narrator begins by telling us that in the family album there is only one photograph of them as a sole unit, parents and four children (Rivas 2012: 137). This one image, perhaps crucially unseen by the reader, encapsulates the family's existence through official eyes, since this is a Familia Numerosa photograph and a necessity for the children to obtain university grants. Rivas tells us how the camera caught the family's 'expresión de desconfianza. La cámara registró ese recelo sin disimulo', still perceptible to the later viewer; the description then prompts the memory of the shoot, the inclement weather, his father's hasty need to return to work, the family as simultaneously 'Solos y juntos' (Rivas 2012: 137). The experience of the *familia numerosa* photo, which evokes unpleasant memories, is swiftly followed and contrasted in the novel by the description of an earlier photograph taken on a festival day in the park, next to a sculpture dedicated to feminist writer Concepción Arenal. In this description Rivas uses short phrases to evoke the sensation of presence at the time: 'Sí, vamos a hacernos una fotografía. Por fin. Mi madre nos convoca. Nos urge a posar. Es una vergüenza no tener un retrato de toda la familia. Así que no sólo es un acto de felicidad, sino de responsabilidad. Una cuenta pendiente con el destino. Nos coloca. Mira de refilón. El último toque. Ahora, sí. Atención.' (Rivas 2012: 138). The description of the photographer "for hire", as wide as he is tall, mopping his brow and

adjusting his tie as they prepare for the big moment, is as comical as the father's haughty distance from the mother during the shameful semi-secret monetary transaction.

Rivas's textual strategies present the photographic moment as an amusing, life-confirming moment as a family unit, yet this happy memory has no physical result for when the mother and children go to collect the image a couple of days later they discover the photographer has provided a false address; their money taken, the family image never appears. The mother remains constantly on the lookout for the rogue photographer whenever they venture again to the gardens for their Sunday walk, one time possibly spotting him before he disappears when called. For Rivas the impressions created upon him as a child continue into the present:

A veces, todavía pienso que es él quien pasa, cuando algún hombre, de traje o con abrigo, me adelanta de repente. Grandón, a zancadas, hasta desaparecer borroso. Imagino que llega a su verdadera casa. Posa la cámara tullida. Abre un cuarto de revelado donde están los recuerdos áureos de todas las fotos que no hizo. Allí estamos nosotros, sonrientes, unidos como nunca. (Rivas 2012: 139)

Like the reality of the family, the narrator imagines that this moment of happiness and unity remains locked away within an image which attests to a past place and moment. Yet it is forever absent, never liberated from the control of the photographer, its creator. Although the narrator's memory exists and attests to the moment, without the physical object central to the narrative its authority remains under question. *Las voces bajas* simultaneously presents the reality of the past, in the indexicality of the photographs and the autobiographical nature of the text, alongside imaginary investment, both explicit, as in this episode, and implicit in

any narrative memorialisation of a past life. As a textual body – and a *corpo aberto* – Rivas's publication invites the reader to respond with similar affective and imaginary investment.

The affective turn in writing of the Civil War and dictatorship is founded upon the appeal to a reader's affective and emotional disposition through a number of strategies, some of which are intentional in their attempts to convey the traumatic experiences of previous generations, some of which are implicit in the works and the act of recuperating the past in the present, as I hope to have shown with these examples. As Nigel Thrift (2010: 293) notes in connection to the affective values of objects as they overlap with the human condition 'objects can signal in all kinds of ways that we may only partially perceive, or perceive as 'magical' in that they provide associations and conjunctions, dissociations and echoes, that stimulate perception and imagination, and, indeed, enjoyment'. Found diaries, notebooks, photographs – physical and absent – participate in creating meaning and connection for readers. Important also to the relationship between these narratives and their readers are the intimate connections inherent to the emotional strength of the stories told, the objects documenting familial memory, passing through the hands of different generations. At an extra-diegetic level is the published book itself, a material object with which, as Rivas suggests, the reader establishes an affective relationship. A novel may come to be, in Ann Rigney's terms, a "portable monument", with its own production, reception, and afterlife which involves movement between individuals and within communities (Rigney, 2004: 383). Unlike a physical monument texts and images can be reprinted, digitally disseminated, kept alive, even incorporating historical texts and images within them.

The merging of the imaginary and the historical through the reproduction of texts and images, verifiable or not, seeks to blur the usual divisions where the reader is acutely aware of the separation of fictional and real, but regardless responds affectively and emotionally to what they see. I use “see” here deliberately not only in relation to the photographic image, but also to the reading process itself. The investigative attempt to recover “historical memory”, to discover a past reality, appeals to the cognitive functions, yet the reproduction of evidence by the present day protagonist involves necessarily a removal of the object from its origins, placing it into a new interpretation, a new event. As a response to a memory, whether primary or acquired, the affective text has an important role in connecting the present to the past. In circulation, these books, and many others like them, partake in and respond to ongoing debates and attitudinal changes; the novel reaches a wide audience, captures non-official voices, immortalises and engages that present audience with its past. And we return again and again to the scene of the crime. In psychoanalytic terms the compulsion to repeat is driven by a desire to gain mastery, to turn from trauma to pleasure. Yet I do not mean here to suggest that through acting out and working through that the cultural phenomenon of the post-millennial civil war novel completes a process of mourning through their recovery of the past, their consoling narratives, or even status as sentimental keepsakes.

Although not as simplistic as encouraging a solution in the “working through” model, the affective economy has made, and continues to make, an important contribution to the re-evaluation of the Spanish Civil War and its legacies, still relevant a decade after the passing of the Law of Historical Memory. Within this economy, the relationship of text with reader depends on the affective connections identified in this essay. Brian Massumi (2002) likens the corporeal affective moment to Zeno’s paradox of movement, whereby the arrow’s flight

through the air can be viewed as a continual movement between points, but in which the arrow is never at any single point since it is always moving to the next along an infinite number of points. Massumi (2002: 6. Italics in original) confirms the pathway of flight as a dynamic unity which is only recognisable when the arrow comes to a stop, allowing a retrospective reconstruction:

That *continuity* of movement is of an order of reality other than the measurable, divisible space it can be confirmed as having crossed. It doesn't stop until it stops: when it hits the target. Then, and only then, is the arrow in position. It is only after the arrow hits the mark that its real trajectory may be plotted.

I contend that the affective moment in reading is equally impossible to reconstruct until the cognitive, emotional assessment has been experienced; rather like our protagonists and authors, undertaking their own connection to the past, we can only attempt retrospectively to identify the trigger for the affective response and memory or previous affective experience. Rather like Massumi's arrow in flight the completion of mourning – personal, collective – can only be recognised as such retrospectively; the affective connection maintains the experience of the wound, rather than cutting the past adrift. To continue the physical metaphor so inherent in trauma studies, Sara Ahmed (2004: 201-2) notes that we praise surgeons for their work in restoring the skin to its previous state, for minimising the scar, yet “A good scar is one that sticks out, a lumpy sign on the skin. It's not that the wound is exposed or that the skin is bleeding. But the scar is a sign of injury: a good scar allows healing, it even covers over, but the covering always exposes the injury, reminding us of how it shapes the body.” Recognising and embracing the affective has the potential to open up new connections as we respond to

the spectres of the past; rather than opposing traditional cognitive forms of reading and their hermeneutics of suspicion, affective strategies – the appeal to empathy and the sentimental, the pull of the authentic, the visual work – exist within and alongside these, thus ensuring that the novel continues to be an event, a site of engagement for all. In this way the lumpy scar remains; as Colin Davis suggested, other people’s pains are and should remain alien, the past is irrecoverable and remains the past. However our affective responses, individual and collective, enable us to believe in the connection.

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