Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Hispanic Research Journal
Iberian and Latin American Studies

ISSN: 1468-2737 (Print) 1745-820X (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/yhrj20

Tomasa's Traumatic Memories in *La voz dormida*

Rachel Linville

To cite this article: Rachel Linville (2014) Tomasa's Traumatic Memories in *La voz dormida*, Hispanic Research Journal, 15:2, 167-180, DOI: 10.1179/1468273713Z.00000000082

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1179/1468273713Z.00000000082

HISPANIC RESEARCH JOURNAL, Vol. 15 No. 2, April 2014, 167–80

Tomasa's Traumatic Memories in *La voz dormida*

RACHEL LINVILLE
The College at Brockport, State University of New York, USA

This study aims to give the reader of Dulce Chacón's novel *La voz dormida* a foundational understanding of trauma memory theories developed by Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, Cathy Caruth, and Dominick LaCapra. This knowledge provides the basis for a framework that will allow us to comprehend how Chacón develops Tomasa's struggle to engage with her traumatic recollections as a literary figuration of the very real pain and suffering many republican women experienced during the Francoist regime. The characterization of Tomasa not only gives the novel a great narrative force, but also offers the reader the possibility to share the experience of thousands of victims of Francoism.

KEYWORDS historical memory, collective memory, Francoism, incarceration, Spanish Civil War, reprisals

In contemporary Spain, the issue of justice for victims of Franco's regime continues to be a debate among those that wield the gavel as well as those who exercise the power of the pen. Not only do we see attempts to unearth the forgotten in literature and legislation, but also in the efforts to locate and honour with a proper burial those that continue in mass graves. The recent proliferation of texts dealing with memory, however, has led critics, including José F. Colmeiro, to address the issue of the 'inflación de memorias' and the problem that 'el retorno de lo reprimido se vuelve más visible, pero también menos operativo' (2005: 32).[1] Likewise, María de la Cinta Ramblado Minero (2007) has questioned the extent to which texts dealing with the war and post-war period are a commodity from which not only novelists and filmmakers benefit, but also critics. Even if one does accept that novels and films are commodities that are created, distributed, and sold, one can still question, like Ofelia Ferrán, to what extent they attempt to do justice to the victims of Francoist repression.

[1] Linking the idea of Pierre Nora (1984–92) about the acceleration of history to postmodern society, Colmeiro points out that '[l]a sobrecarga de memoria, sometida a una economía de consumo rápido, ha producido su propia crisis de desgaste y cansancio' (2005: 32).

 DOI 10.1179/1468273713Z.00000000082

For Ferrán, these victims are 'the absent ones with whom contemporary Spanish society must learn to keep faith' and 'whose memory has not been adequately honored in post-Franco Spain' (2007: 17).[2]

One poignant example of a novel that attempts to help Spaniards keep faith with these victims is Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* (2002). The present study aims to give the reader of Chacón's novel a foundational understanding of trauma memory theories developed by Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992), Cathy Caruth (1996), and Dominick LaCapra (2001). This knowledge provides the basis for a framework that will allow us to comprehend how Chacón develops Tomasa's struggle to engage with her traumatic recollections as a literary figuration of the very real pain and suffering many republican women experienced during the Francoist regime. This characterization not only gives the novel a great narrative force, but also offers the reader the possibility to share the experience of thousands of victims of Francoism. The attention that Chacón calls to Tomasa's suffering in chapter 17 of the second part by means of certain literary techniques suggests the author's desire to help the reader acquire a historical memory of Spain's recent past and play an active role in preserving the collective memory voiced in the novel.

La voz dormida captures the struggle women resistors faced. Torture, incarceration, execution, and other limit events, extreme occurrences that produce trauma, left psychological scars in the form of trauma memories. By using the term resistor, I attempt to encompass all the roles men and women played in the resistance movement that began to form as the fascists, in rebellion against the Second Republic, took over Spain.[3] The guerrilla fighting did not die out until a decade after the end of the Spanish Civil War. The novel explores several women's hardships and contributions to the antifascist resistance movement as guerrilla fighters and, more commonly, as liaisons (*enlaces*).[4] Other female characters like Tomasa are fugitives (*huidos*) considered to be republicans, which leads to their persecution and attempted annihilation by the fascists. The lives of these women cross paths in Ventas, the women's prison in Madrid.[5]

Through the portrayal of these events the novel seeks to fill a void that Chacón and the historian Julián Casanova have recognized.[6] Chacón has expressed her desire

[2] Although Ferrán does not analyze *La voz dormida* in her study on 'meta-memory texts' that recover 'historical perspectives marginalized by official versions of the past' (2007: 15), she does consider that the work could have been included in her exploration (2007: 273).

[3] I use the word fascism or fascist as a synonym of Francoism or Francoist, invoking the terms used by the republicans during the civil war and with the exception that Francoism was not fascism in the strict Italian sense, but a repressive and dictatorial regime that was ultraconservative, neocolonialist, militaristic, traditional, and Catholic. For a discussion of Franco's connections to fascism, see Paul Preston (1993): Chapter 7 'The Making of a Caudillo: August-November 1936' (pp. 171–98), and Chapter 10 'The Making of a Dictator: Franco & the Unificación, April 1937' (pp. 248–74).

[4] Precisely because of their gender, women could transport supplies and communications to the guerrillas more easily than men, as the fascists did not tend to suspect women of political activism. Remedios Montero Martínez, a guerrilla and liaison, explores this point in her autobiography (2004).

[5] Tomasa Cuevas (2005) addresses the hardships republican women endured in Francoist prisons including Ventas; on the same topic, see also Fernanda Romeu Alfaro (2002).

[6] Casanova highlights the fact that during the first two decades of the transition the research publications of professional historians 'no llegaban a un público amplio y rara vez interesaban a los medios de comunicación' (2005: n.p.).

to recover historical memory considering it a responsibility of her generation that will benefit the next.[7] In her interview with Santiago Velázquez Jordán, the author explains that the history that the 'vencedores' tried to conceal is 'la que intentamos recuperar muchos, a través de las novelas, del cine, de los documentales' (2002: n.p.). After quoting Casanova's recognition that the historical texts produced during the first two decades of the transition did not reach a large public and rarely attracted the attention of the media, Ramblado Minero observes that 'para muchos escritores, su obra literaria dedicada a la memoria se concibe como un intento de llenar ese hueco existente entre la historiografía y el público en general' (2007: n.p.).[8] While Ramblado Minero recognizes *La voz dormida*'s role in bringing attention to the Trece Rosas and proposes that Chacón appropriately manages to remain relatively faithful to the memory of these women, several studies criticize the effect the novel's portrayal of the past has on readers.

Sarah Leggott, for example, expresses concern about 'the very "neat and happy" ending that seems to suggest that the civil war can now be relegated to the past, rather than acknowledge what Labanyi terms the "unfinished business" (2007: 113) that inevitably remains, as the survivors and their descendants seek to come to terms with their painful past and engage with its legacy' (2009: 29–30).[9] Although the novel ends with Paulino's (or Jaime's) release from jail and his marriage to Pepita, the final chapter is followed by the 'instrucciones' for Paulino's conditional freedom and a brief paragraph indicating Paulino's death just before the authorities conduct their yearly detention to prevent his participation in 1 May celebrations. Both texts suggest that any happiness enjoyed by the couple is only partial and rather short-lived. After spending nineteen years in prison, Paulino emerges an old man. He must appear monthly before the local authorities with a written statement of his activities as well as endure other limitations to his freedom. In fact, death seems to be the only form of true liberation, but it also separates Paulino permanently from Pepita and cuts short their ability to spend their remaining years together. Leggott's article, however, makes a unique contribution to the study of *La voz dormida* by addressing one aspect of trauma memory. Using Marianne Hirsch's (1997; 2001) ideas to explore how it is the subsequent generations that work through trauma, Leggott points out that Chacón, having been born in 1954, is able to approach the sociopolitical context 'from a somewhat more detached position' (2009: 28). Leggott recognizes the importance of transgenerational transmission in the author's decision to write her novel and analyses this transmission represented in the novel by the passing of Hortensia's notebooks to her daughter Tensi, an aspect also addressed by M. E. Portela (2007). Thus, the question of transmission of historical information to the reader still requires examination.

[7] See Antonio José Domínguez (2003) and Javier Valenzuela (2002).

[8] Raquel Macciuci similarly points out that '[e]l novelista que se ha compenetrado en los últimos años con la corriente de la memoria con frecuencia quiere contribuir al conocimiento del pasado y apelará a diferentes métodos para abonar el relato con datos, imágenes, documentos que llevan al lector a internarse en la ficción pero manteniendo un hilo de Ariadna que lo devuelve a la historia' (2010: 33). Mazal Oaknin also addresses 'la ruptura del silencio [y] la recuperación de la historia no oficial de la Guerra Civil' in her study on how *La voz dormida* defies traditional gender roles (2009–10: 18).

[9] Leggott is referring to Jo Labanyi's article 'Memory and Modernity in Democratic Spain' (2007). See also studies by Ana Corbalán (2010) and Antonio Gómez López-Quiñones (2006).

Before beginning an analysis of the events that lead Tomasa to voice her recollections, it is necessary to define a few concepts related to memory theory. According to LaCapra, the anxiety produced by a limit event is generally not dealt with in its entirety at the time of the event. This avoidance is a protection the mind produces to keep the individual from becoming overwhelmed, but the anxiety that is repressed returns to haunt the victim. It also blocks an individual's reinvestment in life. One way to overcome a trauma, at least to a certain extent, is to work through it. Working through describes an articulatory practice in which

> to the extent one works through trauma [. . .], one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one (or one's people) back then while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to the future. (LaCapra, 2001: 21–22)[10]

A few examples include mourning and modes of critical thought and practice. An individual that engages in mourning is capable of distinguishing between the present and the past. One is able to simultaneously remember and take leave of or actively forget the past, which allows for critical judgment and a reinvestment in life.

Initially, Tomasa does not want to remember the event that turned her into the only surviving member of her family. The anxiety produced at the time of the limit event overwhelms her. She represses this memory, but it returns. After biting the toe of the Christ child statue at a mass she is forced to attend, she is locked in isolation.[11] All alone, Tomasa has nothing but her memories to keep her company. The trauma consumes her and she loses her will to live and refuses the tokens of food her fellow inmates surreptitiously bring her to keep her alive. Tomasa's unwillingness to accept food suggests that she has not worked through the trauma due to the overwhelming anxiety and the inability to mourn the death of her family members. After they died, she was immediately pulled from the river and jailed. The fact that she is not able to work through her traumatic memory explains her melancholic state. She is uninterested in the future and in life. This lack of interest is originally evidenced in her response to Hortensia's comment that their only obligation is to survive: 'Sobrevivir, sobrevivir, ¿para qué carajo queremos sobrevivir?' (Chacón, 2002: 122). Her proposal to go on a hunger strike instead of trying to survive and her initial silence when placed in the isolation cell suggest her acceptance of defeat, which in this case is death in one of the regime's jails.

It is the news of the death of Hortensia, who is executed for being a member of the guerrillas, that makes her break out of the melancholic state and seek a reinvestment in life. Due to her isolation, Tomasa is unable to say goodbye to her friend or to participate in other events that would encourage mourning, one form of working through the trauma that this violent death would probably cause. Here again, the impossibility of mourning would normally lead Tomasa to a melancholic state. But

[10] LaCapra considers working through strongly linked to acting out, but points out that the former may never fully transcend the force of acting out and the repetition compulsion. Acting out is the performative regeneration or reliving of the past as if it were fully present rather than represented in memory and inscription. The victim of a limit event does not control his or her recollections and these return hauntingly as the repressed.

[11] The episode about the Christ child comes from a real occurrence in the life of Remedios Montero, who narrates it in Ana Aguado's documentary, *El siglo XX en femenino* (2000).

her friend's execution and the guilt Tomasa probably feels for being a survivor make her fight to stay alive. She remembers Hortensia's final words — 'Nuestra única obligación es sobrevivir' (Chacón, 2002: 213) — and begins to recall and tell the story of her family's death.

At this point, one must ask: what is the relationship between Hortensia's execution and the death of Tomasa's family? Why does the former trigger her memory about the latter? Laub's analysis of holocaust survivors who experience a 'second holocaust' is useful here. He discusses the case of survivors who lost their entire family in the Holocaust, rebuilt their lives, and formed new families only to lose partially or entirely this new family. This second holocaust triggers the memory of the first traumatic loss. In the words of one survivor, Martin Gray, the death of the new family 'has reopened all the graves. In those graves, my people, my parents, my siblings, my friends were coming back to life; my people, my family, died in them a second death' (Felman & Laub, 1992: 66). Tomasa's experience is very similar to Gray's. After losing her original family, she formed a new one inside Ventas. Her fellow republican inmates become her new family. The women become adopted family members who take care of each other.[12] Thus, it is the loss of part of this second family, Hortensia, which leads Tomasa to recall and exteriorize her recollection of the horrific death of her first family. Telling the story of their death forces her to see them 'morir otra vez' (Chacón, 2002: 215).

The act of exteriorizing her memory is the key aspect of the therapeutic process, which consists 'of constructing a narrative, of reconstructing a history and essentially of *re-externalizating the event*' (Felman & Laub, 1992: 69, emphasis original). Tomasa must narrate this event to another; she must transmit her story to re-externalize it. When she begins the narration of her family's death, it is an event that is still unknown to her because massive trauma, according to Laub, prevents the observing and recording mechanisms of the human mind from functioning properly. Until this narration begins, Tomasa's family's death remains an overwhelming shock that has not yet been truly witnessed or known.

> The emergence of the narrative which is being listened to — and heard — is, therefore, the process and the place wherein the cognizance, the "knowing" of the event is given birth to. The listener, therefore, is a party to the creation of the knowledge *de novo*. The testimony to the trauma thus includes its hearer, who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time. (Felman & Laub, 1992: 57)

When her narration begins, the event is unknown not only to Tomasa, but also to the reader because it has not been previously told in the novel. For this reason, the reader shares with Tomasa the construction of this knowledge. The moment when Tomasa begins to narrate represents her awakening, the awakening of a sleeping voice. As Caruth proposes, '[t]o awaken is thus precisely to awaken only to one's repetition of a previous failure to see in time' (1996: 100). Tomasa was unable to see

[12] See Ellen Mayock's exploration of these relationships. For example, even after she is released from prison, Reme 'todavía insiste en nutrir y cuidar a Tomasa, la única de las compañeras originales de la celda que permanece en Ventas. Se resuelve a visitarla, mandarle paquetes y, sobre todo, escribirle cartas en que le cuenta noticias de Tensi, Elvirita y Sole' (2004: 30).

in time Hortensia's death in the same way that she was not fully able to process the death of her family when it occurred. In this way, her awakening evidences the trauma of the necessity and impossibility of responding to these deaths. For Caruth, '[t]o awaken is thus to bear the imperative to survive', to survive and tell the story of another (1996: 105). When Tomasa recalls Hortensia's final words, 'Nuestra única obligación es sobrevivir' (Chacón, 2002: 213), her reception of these words transforms her into a mother and a wife who is able to tell the story of another's death. These words that she recalls, which no longer belong to Hortensia nor to Tomasa, are '*passed on* as an act that does not precisely awaken the self but, rather, *passes the awakening on to others*' (Caruth, 1996: 107, emphasis original). This is because the awakening, as an act, is 'not an understanding but a transmission' (106). Although Tomasa recalls and exteriorizes her memory, she is not fully able to understand, to know that to which she bears witness. As Felman points out, 'the speaking subject constantly bears witness to a truth that nonetheless continues to escape him, a truth that is essentially, *not available* to its speaker' (1992: 15, emphasis original). The process of knowing, of understanding can only be accomplished, as stated above in the quote from Laub, through the participation of a listener who receives the testimony.

A few other aspects that require attention before focusing on the moment when Tomasa tells how her family was killed, include the historical background of this episode, concepts of identity and collective memory, and the role of Tomasa, the reader, and the author with respect to the latter. According to the theories of Maurice Halbwachs (1980) on collective memory, the individual must place him- or herself in a social framework to remember.[13] Collective memory changes as new members join the group and others leave. It disintegrates as the group loses members or these individuals lose contact. The obligation to remember the violent death of her family and other republicans killed in the same manner falls heavily on Tomasa's shoulders. For the memory of her family and their violent death to stay alive, Tomasa must engage her recollections and exteriorize them. By situating Tomasa in the isolation cell, where she has no immediate listener when she voices her recollections, Chacón points to the role of the reader in the reception of this testimony. Since it is almost impossible that a real reader would have lived the same experience as Tomasa, the information acquired during this reception would become part of this person's historical memory. For Halbwachs, historical memory is that which one acquires through texts and testimonies, whereas autobiographical memory is the memory of events one has lived. By receiving this testimony, the reader joins the group that shares this collective memory and plays a role in preserving it.

Tomasa's story recounts a real episode from the post-war repression. Secundino Serrano, a historian on the antifascist resistance movement, explains that Manuel Gómez Cantos, a lieutenant colonel in the Civil Guard, was placed in charge of the pursuit of fugitives in the 2nd Sector (Cáceres, Badajoz, Ciudad Real, and Toledo) in February of 1942. He carried out a harsh policy of elimination against the republicans. One example is the detention of residents of the towns of Las Mesas and

[13] His theory does not negate the idea that memory is personal to the extent that individuals have different recollections of a collectively experienced event. Halbwachs considers that '[w]hile the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember' (1980: 48).

Castañar de Ibor who were taken to the Almaraz Bridge and thrown into the Tajo River. Those that attempted to make it to the river's bank were shot by *falangistas*. No mention is made of survivors, but Serrano does observe that the bridge has a height of 53 metres and this process of eliminating people associated with the political left was called 'el mareo' (2001: 91).

The fact that the description of this cruel form of elimination occupies only a few sentences in a nearly 400-page study shows the probability that this episode of the post-war era could vanish from the collective memory of Spaniards. Chacón's inclusion of Serrano in her acknowledgement page and her decision to incorporate this event in her novel suggest her desire to preserve it in the Spanish collective memory. As Pierre Nora (1984–92) explains, when traditional memory — the bastion of identity — disappears, individuals feel that their identity is threatened and attempt to protect it by collecting all vestiges of the past, including testimonies, documents, and images, and using them to create memory places, which include literary and artistic works, monuments, and commemorations. They are places where memory becomes 'crystallized' and 'takes refuge' and are places in three senses: material, functional, and symbolic.[14] In the past decade, many of the eyewitnesses to the war and post-war era have begun to die. By transforming the history of 'el mareo' into one character's traumatic recollection, *La voz dormida* truly becomes a memory place.[15] The narrative is a crystallized form of memory, laid down in writing, but now destined never to change. Yet the implacable future of this memory also has another side. Released from the historical witnesses and even the author's own memory, the recollections are recaptured in written form and can now be used to foster knowledge of Spain's history. Thus, *La voz dormida* is a memory place in the three senses Nora proposes: material — the reader can hold the real text in his or her hands; symbolic — the novel represents the collective memory shared by many Spaniards; and functional — the text provides a way for those without autobiographical memory of the Spanish Civil War and post-war era to acquire a historical memory of these times. It also encourages those who experienced these events directly to engage their memory and break their silence. Women who have done so at public readings and book presentations viewed *La voz dormida* as a 'cathartic experience' that enabled them to speak and share their own personal recollections (Colmeiro, 2008: 193). In reference to the silenced voices of women, Colmeiro considers that '[n]o other text has probably been more successful in recovering these voices from oblivion' (192). He attributes Spaniards' lack of familiarity with this aspect of their country's history to the limited distribution of novels and testimonies published prior to *La voz dormida* (194).[16]

[14] Most studies that use Nora's concept focus on the symbolic function of memory places. Colmeiro, for example, points out that the novel 'makes of the Ventas prison' a memory place, 'a symbolic space of women's historical memory of the political resistance against Franco' (2008: 192). Several studies, including one by Carmen Moreno-Nuño (2006) and one edited by Ulrich Winter (2006), have recognized how various recent novels on the war and post-war era can be considered as memory places.

[15] Another example of the incorporation of a fragment of history into *La voz dormida* is the previously mentioned episode about Remedios Montero biting the Christ child's foot and subsequently being locked away in isolation.

[16] Regarding these previously published accounts of Franco's prisons, Kathryn Everly points out that due to the limited education and literary experience of these authors their texts 'lack narrative structure and flow. Chacón takes this body of information and the courageous words of the brave women that struggled to tell their stories and writes a [. . .] stylistically accomplished historical novel' (2009: 83).

Tomasa's story is one example of fascist reprisals that were particularly severe in Extremadura. Acts of political and social activism by progressives, like the occupation of wealthy and sometimes noble landowners' property shortly before the war, made conservatives feel like the fundamentals of society were being questioned and that their identity within society's hierarchy was placed in flux. The cruel manner chosen to eliminate those who opposed the military uprising and Franco's dictatorship was the fascists' response to the perceived attack on their identity. According to Paul Ricoeur (2000), one direct cause of the fragility of identity is the confrontation with others, who are considered a threat to one's own identity. In the first part of the twentieth century, the course of the nation was influenced by revolutions, military uprisings, the passing of progressive laws, and social movements involving anarchists, communists, socialists, and republicans. Changes brought about, including the separation of church and state, and land, military, and labour reforms, were perceived by conservatives to erode one of the fundamental pillars of their identity — national unity — causing anxiety. Although the political left was plural, the enemy was simplified into one entity. The loathed other was the communist, whose ideology was viewed as a sickness that corrupted Spanish unity. The hatred fascists felt was further distilled and the enemy reduced to a colour: the reds. To explain how the 'rojos' were turned into scapegoats, I will rely fundamentally on LaCapra (2001).

Anxiety related to absence — LaCapra states — may never be completely eliminated or overcome. By converting an absence into a loss, anxiety becomes linked to an identifiable object, the lost object, in this case national unity, generating hope that this feeling can be eliminated or overcome. Avoidance of anxiety is one reason for the projection of blame for a perceived loss onto identifiable others, thus generating scapegoating or sacrificial scenarios. The conversion of an absence into a loss requires the assumptions that 'there was (or at least could be) some original unity, wholeness, security, or identity that others have ruined, polluted, or contaminated and thus made "us" lose. Therefore, to regain it one must somehow get rid of or eliminate those others' (LaCapra, 2001: 58). By converting the absence of national unity into a loss, it becomes possible for fascists to think that the anxiety felt could be overcome by eliminating the other considered to be the culprit of the loss. In this way, republicans become a scapegoat and their annihilation a way to recover the lost object. The saying 'Una, grande, libre' popularized during the dictatorship suggests that the victors considered their attempt to recover the lost national unity successful.

The harsh elimination tactics used during and after the Spanish Civil War have played a part in the collective memory shared by the victors of the war. In many novels, including *La familia de Pascual Duarte* (Cela, 1942) and *La paz empieza nunca* (Romero, 1957), the supposed need to eliminate the communist threat and save the nation from chaos was used to justify the severe reprisals on the republicans.[17] The violent reprisals are also part of the republican collective memory. The story Tomasa tells is part of her identity. Instead of allowing herself to deny or forget the past and die of hunger, Tomasa recalls the memory of the violent death of her family and works through it. Thus, literature has played a strong role in establishing and sustaining the collective memory of both the republican and fascist sides.

[17] For an analysis of *La familia de Pascual Duarte*, see Francisco Espinosa (2006).

Having addressed the historical background to Tomasa's story, the relationship between literature and collective memory, and how Hortensia's execution leads Tomasa to voice her memory, it is now possible to focus on the moment when Tomasa exteriorizes her recollection and give particular attention to how Chacón constructs her text to facilitate the reader's acquisition of a historical memory. Tomasa's engagement with her past is an example of working through. She chooses to fight, to survive. She chooses to remember. One major aspect that separates working through from acting out is the individual's ability to control his or her memory. Tomasa is not trapped in a repetition compulsion. She recalls and gives voice to the tragic death of her family this one time.

To highlight the importance of memory and its narration's role in survival, a strong emphasis is placed on Tomasa's act of voicing her remembrances. The verbs 'contar' and 'gritar' are repeated several times. The mere process of exteriorizing her recollections becomes an act of resistance (against the dictatorship's power over her body and mind) and is equated to victory: 'Resistir es vencer' (Chacón, 2002: 213).[18] It is a fight against silence, a silence imposed by Franco's regime. Even when Mercedes, one of the prison guards, tells her '[c]állese usted, que se la está buscando y la va a encontrar' (2002: 216), Tomasa continues to shout. The power and omnipresence of this silence is magnified in the novel by the personification of this concept. Silence becomes an animate figure that makes its rounds through the prison Ventas just as the prison guards do: 'Ronda el silencio. El silencio hace su ronda y ronda la locura' (2002: 213). By recalling her family's violent death and shouting it out into the silence that envelops her, Tomasa is able to survive and reengage in life: 'Y cuenta a gritos su historia, para no morir' (213).

To recollect this terrible event, Tomasa must situate herself in the collective framework of her family. She must remember her husband, four children, and daughter-in-law.[19] Tomasa is able to recall the past, but distance herself from it psychologically allowing her critically to judge the violent death of her family and achieve a reinvestment in life. The ability critically to engage the past is another aspect that distinguishes working through from acting out. Alone in her cell, Tomasa recounts how she and her family were detained while hiding in the mountains. An example of reason is evident when she affirms that of course they were 'reds' and they occupied lands. She justifies their actions explaining that they were tired of living in abject poverty and misery. Tomasa must also remember the members of the Civil Guard (*Guardia Civil*) responsible for her loved ones' deaths. She watched as they threw her children and daughter-in-law from the Almaraz Bridge into the Tajo River. As they tried to reach the river banks, they were shot and killed. Then the Civil Guards did the same with Tomasa and her husband. He shielded her with his body and she was able to reach land. But the Civil Guards rearrested her and she was sent to prison.

Tomasa must also recollect memory places to evoke her traumatic experience: the Almaraz Bridge and the Tajo River. She recalls that the bridge is 53 metres high, a

[18] These words echo those of Juan Negrín, who became Prime Minister of the Republic in 1937 after Largo Caballero's resignation. With respect to the Civil War, Negrín defended resistance as the only policy possible.

[19] Although the word 'children' can give the impression of youth, I choose this term because the Spanish word *hijos* leaves the reader unclear as to whether Tomasa's offspring are only male or male and female. The ages of her children are not given, but at least one is married.

detail that underscores the tremendous fall from the bridge to the river. This fact highlights her family's suffering and the cruelty of their aggressors. These places dredge up buried emotions that are tied to them to the extent that they function as memory places for Tomasa and those who share her collective memory. Her story comes out like 'un vómito de dolor y rabia' (214). The Almaraz Bridge evokes anger and is described as 'ese rejodido puente' (214). The river, the final resting place of her loved ones, evokes sadness. The Civil Guards pushed her husband's lifeless body from her hands before rearresting her: 'A mis hijos también se los llevó el río' (215). The recollection is slow and painful, and the story comes out in pieces. Felman explains that '[a]s a relation to events, testimony seems to be composed of *bits and pieces of a memory* that has been overwhelmed by occurrences that have not settled into understanding or remembrances, acts that cannot be constructed as knowledge nor assimilated into full cognition, events in excess of our frames of reference' (1992: 5, emphasis mine). The fragmented nature of Tomasa's memory highlights the fact that this information has yet to be processed and only now is becoming partially known to Tomasa. Between outbursts, Tomasa paces in her cell and continues to recall: 'Porque contar la historia es recordar la muerte de los suyos. Es verlos morir otra vez' (Chacón, 2002: 215). Even if the process of working through is controlled, it is still painful and makes Tomasa feel like she is reliving the experience. Thus, her testimony bears witness not only to the atrocities committed, but also to the trauma that they caused.

Chacón uses many literary techniques in this episode that could facilitate the reader's acquisition of a historical memory of the time portrayed. They slow down the pace of the reader and draw attention to the agony Tomasa experiences while voicing her traumatic memory. Quite notable are the single word paragraphs and commas:

> Volver.
> Llora.
> Y cuenta a gritos su historia, para no morir.
> Camina y cuenta:
> — Yo tenía cuatro hijos, y una nieta. (213)

Chacón also uses short sentences, which at times are only one word. One pertinent example is the following passage in which Tomasa's desire to survive awakens: 'Sobrevivir. Tomasa no permitirá que el dolor la aplaste contra el suelo. Sobrevivir. Locuras, las precisas, había dicho Hortensia. Locura. Ronda el silencio. El silencio hace su ronda y ronda la locura. Sobrevivir' (213). The full stop, a reader's cue to pause, slows the pace and allows more time to absorb each word and its impact.

Also visible in this quote is the use of repetition. In his analysis of the constructed orality and literariness in the novel, Colmeiro explores the use of additive structures (polysyndetons) and repetitions (anaphoras and epistrophes). These structures 'mirror the reiterative nature of memory' and allow Chacón to intensify the meaning of a passage and place more emphasis on it (2008: 196). Several words are repeated in this quote. 'Sobrevivir' appears three times and clearly shows Chacón's attempt to emphasize the importance of memory for survival since Tomasa's process of recollecting and voicing of her memory is what allows her to survive. 'Locura(s)' is also repeated three times and appears to be a counterpoint that is inseparable from

'sobrevivir' in the sense that one has to allow a certain amount of madness to survive. Tomasa has to go almost to the point of losing herself to save herself. To work through her trauma, she must engage this memory and risk losing herself in her traumatic recollection.[20] In a similar sense, the repetition of 'silencio' and 'ronda' creates the feeling of constantly being hounded and persecuted by silence. These allusions to madness and persecution are not surprising considering the fact that Chacón also uses repetition 'to suggest obsessive patterns of thought' frequent in trauma victims (Colmeiro, 2008: 196).

By slowing down the reader's pace and using repetition to draw attention to the importance of this passage, Chacón uses Tomasa's trauma memories to facilitate her reader's acquisition of a historical memory of Francoist reprisals and women's experience in post-war prisons. By helping her reader to acquire a historical memory, Chacón strengthens the collective memory. When the few remaining survivors, like Tomasa, are disappearing, the only possibility to keep the collective memory alive is for more individuals to join the group and share the remembrances it preserves. Precisely the fact that Chacón situates Tomasa in an isolation cell where no one is listening to her when she recounts her recollection suggests the reader's role in the conservation of memory. It is the reader who receives Tomasa's testimony and without whom knowledge of this event would not be possible.

Several elements of the text suggest an effort to communicate knowledge and encourage the reader to take an active role with regard to memory. Innumerable times the author incorporates into her fiction historically factual information. The novel is clearly based, as is fairly evident even to readers without much knowledge of the post-war period, on the historical reality of women imprisoned during the dictatorship. However, it is particularly the minor details that could easily slip into oblivion that take refuge — in Nora's terms — in the novel. I have already mentioned two examples. Another one is incorporated into Tomasa's recollection. Remembering José González Barrero, the mayor of Zafra, also forms part of her ability to survive: 'Contar la historia. Sobrevivir a la locura. Recordar a don José' (Chacón, 2002: 217). Tomasa explains that González Barrero was executed and buried 'boca abajo, para que no saliera' (217). Thus, Chacón's text not only crystallizes the physical eliminations of republicans, but also their humiliation. Another factor is the acknowledgement page, which reveals the author's sources, reminds the reader of the historical basis of the novel, and as Ramblado Minero points out 'dota al texto de un valor testimonial' (2004–05: 372). The emotional engagement of her reader by stressing Tomasa's difficulty in working through her traumatic memory and slowing down the pace of the narration is also an aspect of the work that pushes the reader to take an active role with respect to recuperating the past and preserving the collective memory voiced in the novel. Finally, in some instances it is the didactic language and tone used to explain 'el mareo' and the historical accuracy of details (the exact height of the bridge and the use of the term given to this cruel form of execution) that point

[20] Ofelia Ferrán discusses the 'overwhelming need that Holocaust survivors often have to talk, write, [and] express what they went through, and at the same time, the real *danger* that such an enterprise entails, for it means reliving what was almost impossible to live through the first time. Many, like Paul Celan or Primo Levi, did not manage to survive such reliving of traumatic memories that their work involved' (2007: 72, emphasis original).

to a desire to communicate knowledge. Parts of the text use a didactic language and tone as if the voicing of her recollections were meant to teach others. After pointing out that 'todos los "mareados" se hundieron', the terminology used by the fascists is explained (Chacón, 2002: 214). 'Así llamaban, "el mareo", al procedimiento de limpieza que usaban las fuerzas de la Benemérita encargadas de la persecución de huidos rojos en el 2º Sector, el de Cáceres y Badajoz' (214–15).[21] But there is no one in her immediate presence to teach. Although Mercedes tells her that 'arriba se le está oyendo' (216), Tomasa, locked in an isolation cell, is essentially alone.

Despite the fact that she has no immediate listener, Tomasa works through and exteriorizes her traumatic recollections as a way of rupturing the silence that surrounds her. Perhaps her action is a metaphor for the memory of the 'vencidos' attempting to break free from the repressive silence that has held them captive since the limit events occurred. Chacón's novel was published at a time when many Spaniards still struggled to find their voice after decades of silence imposed by the dictatorship followed by the culturally, or at least politically respected muteness during the 'pact of silence'. By speaking out and attempting to come to terms with her recollections, Tomasa's action serves as an awakening to the sleeping memory of the republicans. This chapter alludes to the title of the novel and transcribes in a literary work a fragment of Spanish history that may otherwise slip into oblivion.

The chapter in which Tomasa voices her recollections contributes to a deeper understanding of the harsh elimination tactics used during and after the Spanish Civil War and attempts to preserve them in the Spanish collective memory. The limit events these tactics produced led many Spaniards to develop traumatic recollections. For many years, these victims remained silent fearing reprisals, but in recent decades the stabilization of democracy and the breaking of the 'pact of silence' have created an environment more conducive to publishing works that give voice to the republican collective memory. *La voz dormida* is a poignant example. Even though silence surrounds her, Tomasa voices her traumatic recollection of her family's death. By engaging in the process of working through, she is able to reinvest in life and survive, which is the only victory possible over the repressive regime that continues to control her body by confining her to an isolation cell. Her story signifies the awakening of the sleeping republican memory and exemplifies the rush to capture and inscribe testimonies and other fragments from the past before they slip into oblivion. Chacón's construction of Tomasa's recollections, which reproduces the way a traumatic memory functions, creates a powerful narrative and facilitates the reader's acquisition of a historical memory of Francoist repressions.

Bibliography

Caruth, C. 1996. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Casanova, J. 2005. Mentiras convincentes. *El País* [online] 14 June [accessed 8 May 2012]. Available at: http://elpais.com/diario/2005/06/14/opinion/1118700008_850215.html

Cela, C. J. 1942 [1999]. *La familia de Pascual Duarte*. Barcelona: Random House Mondadori.

[21] Franco's regime viewed communism as a sickness that corrupted Spain and needed to be eliminated or cleansed.

Chacón, Dulce. 2002. *La voz dormida*. Madrid: Alfaguara.

Colmeiro, J. F. 2005. *Memoria histórica e identidad cultural: de la posguerra a la postmodernidad*. Barcelona: Anthropos.

Colmeiro, J. F. 2008. Re-Collecting Women's Voices from Prison: The Hybridization of Memories in Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida*. *Foro Hispánico: Revista Hispánica de los Países Bajos*, 31: 191–209.

Corbalán, A. 2010. Homenaje a la mujer republicana: reescritura de la Guerra Civil en *La voz dormida*, de Dulce Chacón y *Libertarias*, de Vicente Aranda. *Crítica Hispánica*, 32(1): 41–64.

Cuevas, T. 2005. *Presas: mujeres en las cárceles franquistas*. Barcelona: Icaria.

Domínguez, A. J. 2003. Entrevista con Dulce Chacón. *Rebelión* [online] 23 March [accessed 8 May 2012]. Available at: http://www.rebelion.org/hemeroteca/cultura/dulce230303.htm

Espinosa, F. 2006. *Contra el olvido: historia y memoria de la Guerra Civil*. Barcelona: Crítica.

Everly, K. 2009. Women, War, and Words in *La voz dormida* by Dulce Chacón. In: K. A. Kietrys and M. Linares, eds. *Women in the Spanish Novel Today: Essays on the Reflection of Self in the Works of Three Generations*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, pp. 77–91.

Felman, S. & Laub, D. 1992. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge.

Ferrán, O. 2007. *Working Through Memory: Writing and Remembrance in Contemporary Spanish Narrative*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press.

Gómez López-Quiñones, A. 2006. *La guerra persistente. Memoria, violencia y utopía: representaciones contemporáneas de la Guerra Civil Española*. Madrid: Iberoamericana.

Halbwachs, M. 1980. *The Collective Memory*, trans. by F. J. Ditter, Jr & V. Yazdi Ditter. New York: Harper.

Hirsch, M. 1997. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

Hirsch, M. 2001. Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and the Work of Post Memory. *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 14: 5–37.

Labanyi, J. 2007. Memory and Modernity in Democratic Spain: The Difficulty of Coming to Terms with the Spanish Civil War. *Poetics Today*, 28(1): 89–116.

LaCapra, D. 2001. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Leggott, S. 2009. Memory, Postmemory, Trauma: The Spanish Civil War in Recent Novels by Women. *FULGOR* [online] 4(1): 28–33 [accessed 8 May 2012]. Available at: http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/deptlang/fulgor/volume4i1/papers/LeggottFULGORv4_iss1_2009.pdf

Macciuci, R. 2010. La memoria traumática en la novela del siglo XXI. In: R. Macciuci & M. T. Pochat, eds. *Entre la memoria propia y la ajena: tendencias y debates en la narrativa española actual*. La Plata, Argentina: Ediciones de Acá, pp. 17–49.

Mayock, E. 2004. La maternidad transgresora en *La voz dormida* de Dulce Chacón. *Ixquic*, 5: 22–36.

Montero Martínez, R. 'Celia'. 2004. *Historia de Celia: recuerdos de una guerrillera antifascista*. Valencia: Rialla.

Moreno-Nuño, C. 2006. *Las huellas de la Guerra Civil: mito y trauma en la narrativa de la España democrática*. Madrid: Libertarias.

Nora, P. 1984–92. *Les lieux de mémoire*, 3 vols. Paris: Gallimard.

Oaknin, M. 2009–10. La reinscripción del rol de la mujer en la Guerra Civil española: *La voz dormida*. *Espéculo: Revista de Estudios Literarios* [online] 43 [accessed 8 May 2012]. Available at: http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero43/vozdorm.html

Portela, M. E. 2007. Hijos del silencio: intertexualidad, paratextualidad y postmemoria en *La voz dormida* de Dulce Chacón. *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, 41: 51–71.

Preston, P. 1993. *Franco*. London: Harper.

Ramblado Minero, M. de la Cinta. 2004–05. Novelas para la recuperación de la memoria histórica: Josefina Aldecoa, Ángeles Caso y Dulce Chacón. *Letras Peninsulares*, 17: 361–79.

Ramblado Minero, M. de la Cinta. 2007. ¿Compromiso, oportunismo o manipulación? El mundo de la cultura y los movimientos por la memoria. *Hispania Nova: Revista de Historia Contemporánea* [online] 7 [accessed 8 May 2012]. Available at: http://hispanianova.rediris.es/7/dossier/07d004.pdf

Ricoeur, P. 2000. *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*. Paris: Seuil.

Romero, E. 1957. *La paz empieza nunca*. Barcelona: Planeta.

Romeu Alfaro, F. 2002. *El silencio roto: mujeres contra el franquismo*. Barcelona: El viejo topo.

Serrano, S. 2001. *Maquis: historia de la guerrilla antifranquista*. Madrid: Temas de Hoy.

Valenzuela, J. 2002. El despertar tras la amnesia. *El País* [online] 2 November [accessed 8 May 2012]. Available at: http://elpais.com/diario/2002/11/02/babelia/1036197558_850215.html

Velázquez Jordán, S. 2002. Dulce Chacón: 'La reconciliación real de la guerra civil aún no ha llegado'. *Espéculo: Revista de Estudios Literarios* [online] 22 [accessed 8 May 2012]. Available at: http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero22/dchacon.html

Winter, U. ed. 2006. *Lugares de memoria de la guerra civil y el franquismo: representaciones literarias y visuales*. Madrid: Iberoamericana.

Filmography

El siglo XX en femenino. Ellas piden la voz y la palabra. 2000. Directed by Ana Aguado. Valencia: Institut Universitari d'Estudis de la Dona de la Universitat de Valencia, D.L.

Este estudio busca poner al alcance del lector de la novela de Dulce Chacón un conocimiento fundamental de las teorías sobre la memoria traumática desarrolladas por Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, Cathy Caruth y Dominick LaCapra. Este marco teórico servirá como base de una clave de lectura que permitirá comprender cómo Chacón desarrolla el personaje de Tomasa en su lucha para enfrentarse a sus recuerdos traumáticos, figuración literaria del dolor y del sufrimiento real que muchas mujeres republicanas experimentaron durante el régimen franquista. La caracterización de Tomasa no sólo da a la novela una gran fuerza narrativa sino que también ofrece al lector la posibilidad de compartir la experiencia de miles de víctimas del franquismo.

PALABRAS CLAVE memoria histórica, recuerdos traumáticos, franquismo, encarcelación, represalias, guerra civil española

Note on contributor

Rachel Linville is an Assistant Professor of Spanish at The College at Brockport (SUNY). Her area of research is twentieth- and twenty-first-century Spanish novel and film. She is particularly interested in the representations of collective and traumatic memory in works on the Spanish Civil War and the antifascist resistance movement. Her book *La memoria de los maquis: miradas sobre la guerrilla antifranquista* (Anthropos, 2014) explores the evolution of novels and films on the resistance movement and proposes five major periods.

Correspondence to: Dr Rachel Linville, 350 New Campus Drive, Brockport, NY 14420, USA. Email: rlinvill@brockport.edu