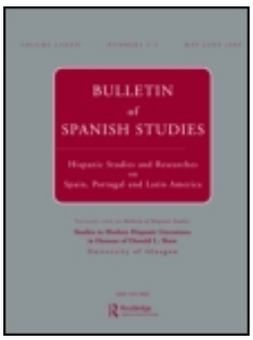

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Winners and Losers in Cinema and Memoirs: Emilio Martínez Lázaro's *Las 13 rosas* and Esther Tusquets' *Habíamos ganado la guerra*

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Affect and Aesthetics

Since the Transition to democracy, Spanish cultural and media producers have compulsively returned to the tragic inheritance of Civil War and Dictatorship. More recently they have turned their attention to the earliest and most brutal years of that legacy. In the anniversary year 2009, in Madrid the Conde Duque Arts Centre presented 'Presas', a major exhibition documenting Francoist women prisoners and drawing on the rich archives of the Communist Party; and the Reina Sofía National Museum re-hung its collection, exhibiting new photographic and documentary material to place in context a revised display of Picasso's *Guernica*. This essay treats two very different texts on the legacy of the Civil War and the early period of Francoist repression, which both appeared in Spain in 2007, the year that the Law of Historical Memory was passed by the Spanish Congress. Emilio Martínez Lázaro's feature film *Las 13 rosas* is a dramatic reconstruction (based in part on Carlos Fonseca's historical study) of a celebrated case of young women executed in Madrid in 1939 (they also featured in the exhibition 'Presas').[1] Well received by audiences, if not critics, it still won four Goya awards. Esther Tusquets' *Habíamos ganado la guerra* is a first volume of personal memoirs from a major writer best known for her pioneering novels with a lesbian theme published some thirty years earlier.[2] This book also begins in 1939, with the Francoist occupation of Barcelona when the author was just three years old.

1 Carlos Fonseca, *Trece rosas rojas* (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 2005).

2 Esther Tusquets, *Habíamos ganado la guerra*, 3rd ed. (Barcelona: Bruguera, 2007). Further references are to this edition and are given in the text.

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Las 13 rosas focuses exclusively on the earliest victims of the Regime, offering an extreme case of terror, repression, and violence. The fact that some of the women left written testimony to their experience (words used in the film itself) heightens the pathos and immediacy of their predicament, personalizing a grand historical narrative in a unique way that connects with modern viewers. Arguably, however, Martínez Lázaro (a director better known for romantic comedies than historical tragedies) aestheticizes the women's plight through insensitive use of the picturesque *mise en scène* typical of the costume drama or heritage picture. As we shall see, his film was also used none the less in an unprecedented way as a pedagogic tool for Spanish schoolchildren, who were encouraged to engage in educational activities such as the reconstruction of their own family history through discussion with grandparents.

Tusquets' narrative is very different and, indeed, overtly polemical. Claiming that the losers' point of view on the early Francoist period has already attracted great attention in memoirs and fiction, Tusquets sets out to document the perspective of the winners, in this case the privileged Barcelona bourgeoisie into which she was born. Far from being triumphalist, however, the book focuses on the subjective, and indeed eccentric, experience of a child and adolescent and on the perils (but also pleasures) of everyday life, necessarily distant from the grand narrative of the new regime.

These texts thus clearly suggest two conflicting ways in which writers and filmmakers of contemporary Spain continue to work through the trauma of the earliest years of the Franco regime. And their evident success belies the impression of 'memory fatigue' that has greeted other recent treatments of the period, such as the 2008 feature film *Los girasoles ciegos* (an impeccably correct account of a Leftist in hiding after the War), which, against all expectations, received no major prize at the Goya awards of February 2009.

In this essay, then, I take it for granted that artistic representations of the past are always also a comment on or an intervention in the present, thus risking the instrumentalization of historical tragedy. And it is worth making three more initial propositions and reservations to frame our readings of the two chosen texts: firstly, history and story are not easily separable (although the truth claims of narrative in documentary and fiction are clearly distinct); secondly, cognition and emotion need not be opposed (although the effects of affect remain unruly and unpredictable); and, thirdly, the objective and the subjective often go hand in hand in film and memoirs (although certain points of view are more generalizable than others).

Clearly such considerations are inseparable from gender, when treating texts on or by women; and we should take care not to reconfirm the continuing subordination of the feminine when vindicating imagination, emotion, and subjectivity, albeit in newly defined terms. In general my position coincides with two major scholars of this area: I agree with Jo Labanyi

that the culture of what is still called (and for how much longer?) the post-Franco period results not from a 'pact of forgetting' but rather from a refusal to let the past determine the future;[3] and with Joan Ramon Resina, in *Disremembering the Dictatorship*, that, however postmodern that culture may be, it remains haunted by affect; and by an aesthetic that seeks, however vainly, to reconcile or mediate between the particular and the universal.[4]

Text, Field, Audience

Cultural analysis must also pay close attention to the stylistic forms of distinct media. Indeed it is an irony, but not an entirely unexpected one, that (as Virginia Guarinos has noted in her excellent article on the various versions of the story in many media) Jesús Ferrero's novel *Las 13 rosas*[5] should have been praised by critics for its recourse to lyrical inventiveness, while the feature film of the same name should have been attacked for its appeal to the creative imagination.[6] The film's studied use of *mise en scène*, cinematography and editing (like the memoir's expert exploitation of description, narration and syntax) are an essential part of its meaning. And if we are to consider female subjectivity in these works we must address specific audiovisual and textual constructions of point of view and focalization. (I hope to work towards this kind of close formal analysis later in this essay). But, beyond close reading, one final preliminary remains: the placing of the texts within the current cultural field of producers and institutions within which they take on meaning and without which they could not exist.

Surprisingly, perhaps, the industrial conditions of cinema and of publishing pertinent to *Las 13 rosas* and *Habíamos ganado la guerra*, respectively, have much in common and, I would argue, contribute to the unusual success of both works in the crowded, even exhausted, market for historical memory in contemporary Spain.[7]

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3 Jo Labanyi, 'History and Hauntology; Or, What Does One Do with the Ghosts of the Past?', in *Disremembering the Dictatorship: The Politics of Memory in the Spanish Transition to Democracy*, ed. Joan Ramon Resina (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 65–82.

4 Joan Ramon Resina, 'Short of Memory: The Reclamation of the Past since the Spanish Transition to Democracy', in *Disremembering the Dictatorship*, ed. Resina, 83–126.

5 Jesús Ferrero, *Las trece rosas* (Madrid: Siruela, 2003).

6 Virginia Guarinos, 'Ramos de rosas rojas. *Las trece rosas*: memoria audiovisual y género', *Quaderns de Cine*, 3 (2008), 91–103, <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/13584955445683839644 24/index.htm> (accessed 26 June 2009).

7 According to official figures, *Las 13 rosas* (which failed to achieve commercial distribution in foreign territories) was the third biggest grossing Spanish film in its home market with an audience of 786,000, surpassed only by the expert horror films *El orfanato* and *REC* (Ministerio de Cultura, 'Largometrajes españoles con mayor recaudación [1 January to 31 December 2007]', <http://www.mcu.es/cine/MC/CDC/Anio2007/CinePeliculasEspaniolas.html> (accessed 26 June 2009).

Tusquets' self-created public image as licensed heretic (not dissimilar to that of Juan Goytisolo) seems equally finely balanced: she is a Catalan writer who writes in Castilian and is not a nationalist; a Leftist who, since a youthful dalliance with the Falange, has never been a member of a political party; and a sponsor of women and lesbian writers at her own publishing house who has never made either identification herself. Tusquets' memoirs, excerpted in *El País*,[8] which also ran a positive review,[9] quickly went into a third reprint. An educated best seller, Tusquets, I would argue, occupies a location in the cultural field analogous to that of Emilio Martínez Lázaro, a position which can be identified as 'middlebrow' (as Bourdieu defines it: 'the major works in minor genres or the minor works in major genres').[10]

Critical response to the feature film *Las 13 rosas* was mixed.[11] Seeking to distance himself from the middlebrow, Carlos Boyero, *El País*'s famously truculent new chief critic, was merciless, pronouncing the film 'as correct [cierto] as it is feeble [endeble]'.[12] Beginning with an awareness of memory fatigue (the perceived 'obligatory nature' of not forgetting past horrors), the critic pronounces himself still willing to accept a 'Manichean' vision of barbarous torturers and angelic victims. But he remains unconvinced. The 'perfect makeup' of the actresses, the insistence of the (prize-winning) score, and the hectoring tone of the narration do not produce the 'tears' that they are so clearly intended to. The formal elements of cinematic style are thus held to undermine the film's persuasive and emotive effect. Interestingly Jonathan Holland's review in *Variety* (intended for a US industry audience)

8 Esther Tusquets, 'La falangista Tusquets' [extract of *Habíamos ganado la guerra*], *El País*, 18 November 2007, <http://www.elpais.com/articulo/reportajes/falangista/Tusquets/elpepusocdmg/20071118elpdmgrep_7/Tes> (accessed 26 June 2009).

9 Iury Lech, 'La Cataluña frenéticamente franquista' [review of *Habíamos ganado la guerra*], *El País*, 29 December 2007, <http://www.elpais.com/articulo/Babelia/Cataluna/freneticamente/franquista/elppor/20071229elpbab_2/Tes> (accessed 26 June 2009).

10 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. P., 1984).

11 Best known for his massively popular sex comedy *El otro lado de la cama* (2002; sequel 2005), Martínez Lázaro has had a lengthy and consistent, if not wholly distinguished, career in Spanish film. It was telling that the four Goyas his film received were in technical or minor categories (cinematography, costume design, original score and supporting actor), thus lending only qualified distinction to the work. He was perhaps perceived by writer-producer Pedro Costa (who is indeed known for historical projects) as a safe and skilled pair of hands for a cultural property that was already widely known. Guarinos lists no fewer than eight previous versions: two novels, two documentary films, a non-fiction book, a poem, a play and a flamenco dance piece ('Ramos de rosas rojas', 92). Her valuable table, charting the differences between the same characters in text and film ('Ramos de rosas rojas', 98–99), also reveals how malleable and virtual these female figures are, however anchored they may originally be in historical documents and oral testimony.

12 Carlos Boyero, 'Tan cierto como endeble' [review of *Las 13 rosas*]. *El País*, 19 October 2007, <http://www.elpais.com/articulo/cine/cierto/endeble/elpepuculcin/20071019elpepicin_4/Tes> (accessed 26 June 2009).

coincides with many of Boyero's points, finding the film historically and dramatically 'unconvincing', even, or especially, where it is factually accurate, as in a tap-dancing scene that takes place in prison. While praising *Las 13 rosas*' 'superb' visuals, *Variety* also decries the 'neatly made up' and 'uniformly angelic protags', accurately prophesying that 'business beyond the Spanish-speaking territories looks thin'.[13]

Yet this critical consensus could not be further from the response of the film's target female audience. For example a forum at the aptly named gossip magazine *Cuore*, attests to deeply felt emotion experienced by viewers, who confess to tears and gooseflesh even as they praise the visuals and exclaim '¡Viva la República'.[14] Here expert *mise en scène* (the prize-winning wardrobe) actively furthered the transmission of both affect and political message. In the 'making of' documentary included with the Spanish DVD, Martínez Lázaro himself claims to have indulged in 'small betrayals of history' in order to focus not on action but on character and psychology (e.g. the girls' mostly invented romantic back stories which make up the first half of the picture).

I would suggest, then, that the disagreement over *Las 13 rosas* is thus not simply a case of a failure of historicity (the implausibility of perfect lipstick in prison) but rather a more fundamental conflict over affect and aesthetics. As Resina suggested, emotion still haunts the postmodern work, however enfeebled that work may seem to critics; and art (or at least, art design) can still claim to mediate between a particular perspective (here young and female) and the universal sphere (here grand national narrative). The true question is not whether the film is historically convincing or documentarily accurate, but whether it uses affect and aesthetics for the purposes of coercion (telling us what to think about a terrible time) or of cognition (leading us to reflect for ourselves on that time).

Las 13 rosas: Close Reading

Let us look more closely at the film itself, focusing on three moments which I shall also treat in Tusquets: the entrance of the Francoist army into the city; the depiction of the horrors perpetrated by the new regime; and the evocation of a female community that to some extent resists or transcends those horrors, that regime. After credits (pseudo-period still sepia photos starting into movement) set to a stirring symphonic score, the first scene has fiery militants Virtudes and Carmen (the sole survivor) haranguing a sceptical audience of townspeople from an improvised platform: surely peace is worth nothing without freedom and dignity? Next we meet radiant Julia and

13 Jonathan Holland, Review of *13 Roses*. *Variety*, 30 October 2007, <http://www.variety.com/review/VE1117935265.html?categoryid=31&cs=1&p=0> (accessed 26 June 2009).

14 'Foros: Las trece rosas', *Cuore*, 24 October to 15 November 2007, <http://www.revistacuore.com/foros/tema.asp?id=139404> (accessed 26 June 2009).

Adelina, serving food to orphans at the Republican soup kitchen. Sympathetic comrade Teo (Fran Perea), also seen here, will later turn informer on the women. A Nationalist air raid drops bread not bombs. A third (unspecified) location is shown in the next scene, a rather handsome café where the immaculate Blanca (Pilar López de Ayala) watches her husband's band perform a French song popular in the period. Here the air raid is for real, and Blanca, sheltering with her son under a table, meets Julia and Adelina for the first time.

What is striking here is that, breaking with a Spanish tradition of historical cinema such as the *Juana la Loca* (2001) which also starred Pilar López de Ayala, Martínez Lázaro provides us with no titles or voice-over to establish time, place or historical context (indeed we will not see a title until the final shot of the film and that simply serves to establish the authenticity of the moving letters read at its end). This lack of specificity continues in the next sequence, which depicts the troops' arrival in the capital. Martínez Lázaro pans right, following anonymous but enthusiastic Falangist women and offering a brief glimpse of the huge (but relatively little known) basilica of San Francisco el Grande down the Carrera named for the same saint (anachronistic modern buildings are digitally replaced). In the (unidentified) little square of Puerta de los Moros (wooden scaffolding conceals the colourful mural and graffiti that currently decorate the square), Julia and Adelina have arrived (from where?) on the back of a mule. They watch (we watch) in horror as a single Nationalist soldier forces all to give a fascist salute and brutalizes an (unknown) old man and his wife, culpably unfamiliar with the *Cara al sol*.

Although later sequences will show such celebrated monuments as the Cibeles (buried up to her neck in sandbags) and the Ventas bullring, Martínez Lázaro here chooses a location that is likely to go unrecognized and sets in motion a small scale, even intimate, version of a grand historical event. And this is not for budgetary reasons: in the prison scenes real life extras were digitally duplicated to produce a massive crowd, an effect that could easily have been used to multiply troop numbers here. Subjective shots also focalize the entire scene from the young women's point of view, thus ensuring sympathy and empathy from the audience.

This preference for an intimate affective charge rather than the wide screen spectacle more typical of historical film as a genre, in Spain as elsewhere, continues with the depiction of torture, which remains discreet (the mass execution itself will not be shown at all). Only one woman (Julia) is shown to be stripped, beaten and brutalized by the suave torturer, played by Adriano Giannini, one of the three Italian actors in this co-production who are unconvincingly dubbed. It is striking, however, that true horror is projected on to the supporting male characters, one of whom slashes his own throat with a shattered light bulb. While Martínez Lázaro himself admits to 'sweetening' his source material, this aestheticization could

perhaps be read not as culpable mendacity but rather as an attempt to engage the sensibility of a target audience less desensitized to graphic violence than young male *habitués* of the multiplex.

This rare spectator is clearly encouraged to identify with the on-screen female community of the prison through both shooting style (group and point of view shots once more) and narrative focalization (we see nothing from the Nationalists' perspective). Strikingly, Martínez Lázaro shows no conflict whatsoever amongst the uniformly angelic women captives, despite the diverse social backgrounds he has sketched for them in the first half of the film. Indeed the only character gifted with a traditional 'arc' of self-realization is devout Catholic Blanca, arrested for aiding a Communist friend of her husband, who moves from at first protesting her innocence to finally identifying with the radicals whose fate she has come to share. Even Goya Toledo's frigid and smirking lesbian guard sheds a silent tear as the young women are taken from her care to the place of execution. Once more, it is not so much a question of the documentary basis of such female solidarity (as mentioned earlier, even the improvised tap dance is historically attested), but of its effect within the context of the film itself. Intimate relations between women, which (unlike in Jesús Ferrero's novel) dare not include sexual acts, are presented as a haven, however fragile and provisional, from masculinist terror, a moral clearly not lost on contemporary women spectators, however opportunistic it might appear to other, more sceptical viewers.

Two further contexts point to the film's unique reception. *Las 13 rosas* was exploited for unusually explicit educational purposes by the Association of Psychopedagogy of the Open University of Catalonia.[15] Based on its belief that mainstream media are actively harmful to children, the Association recommended exercises in solidarity and empathy associated with the viewing of the film (this material was included in slightly different forms in a full colour printed press book and on a website shared by University and production company). For example, children were encouraged to ask questions of their grandparents to discover their experience in the War (a potentially conflictive activity); or to explore the film's use of contemporary song. Beyond interview and popular culture, however, other activities were physical or embodied: a blindfolded child is instructed to run at full speed towards a wall, trusting his or her fellows to save him from harm; another is confined for five minutes within a restricted space that simulates the experience of prison. In spite of its avowedly empathetic aims, such 'education in values through film', informed as it is by a systemic and

15 Asociación de psicopedagogía de la UOC, 'Los psicopedagogos y la educación en valores a través del cine', <http://www.apuoc.org/node/106> (accessed 26 June 2009); '*Las 13 rosas*: proyecto cine y educación', <http://www.altafilms.com/las13rosas/descargas/Press_LasTreceRosas.pdf>; 'Actividades', <http://www.altafilms.com/las13rosas/descargas/Actividades.pdf> (accessed 26 June 2009).

constructivist approach to family therapy, seems somewhat coercive in its methods.

Habíamos ganado la guerra: Close Reading

If I have suggested that *Habíamos ganado la guerra* can also be called 'middlebrow' it is not because I am sceptical about the quality of the text in itself. An instant 'educated classic', the memoir engages the long-standing memories of faithful readers of Tusquets' fiction (frequently quoting the early novels at length) and tends to reconfirm those aspects of writing disparaged as 'femenino' by the male critics of literary supplements: it is moderately feminist (openly lamenting, say, the stunted lives of women in the generation of Tusquets' unfulfilled mother); it is intimate and emotional (focusing above all on the fearful daughter's failed relationship with that fearsome mother); and it stresses the particularity of the child's position, consistently placed as it is against the tide of history. Thus the teenage Tusquets contrives to be unaware of the tram strikes that marked the momentous first organized resistance to Franco in her beloved Barcelona; and she chooses to join the Falange as late as the 1950s when her Leftist student colleagues were already organizing against the regime. Even the woman at the Sección Femenina with whom she attempts to enlist is puzzled as to why she should do so 'a estas alturas' (257).

This eccentric position is stressed from the start. With her very title Tusquets polemically reverses the 'pact of forgetting' topos, arguing that it is not the losers but the winners who have been silent. And in the preface she states explicitly that her recollections are fallible, failing even to coincide with those of her brother and faithful only to 'her' own truth, which need not be 'the truth of all' (7). And Tusquets at times marshals her formidable command of literary style and syntax to call attention to the particularity of her perspective. The first of the book's twenty eight short sections evokes in one immensely long and modulated sentence the horrors of wartime Barcelona: where all (except her) were dying of hunger; where all (except her) were terrified; where her father, a deserter from the Republican front, dared not raise his voice or look out of the window; and where her mother suffered interminable tedium (17). Then comes the *coup de grâce*: 'Yo fui extraordinariamente feliz' (18).

This accomplished aesthetic serves intermittently at least (as in *Las 13 rosas*) to reconcile or mediate between the particular and the universal. Certainly, by focusing so intently on the author's limited point of view the memoir renders identification with other perspectives difficult indeed. And Tusquets' disconcerting fusion of memoir, fiction, and history (she also incorporates a lengthy citation from Paul Preston's essay on her anti-Semitic uncle priest) lays claim in its defiant heterogeneity to being postmodern.

Tusquets thus incorporates into her already hybrid testimony strategies of description, narration and syntax that are distinctively novelistic. Reality effects are produced by well-chosen details: the precious tin of condensed milk, saved for the daughter, that her mother devoured herself when the Civil War was safely concluded; the discoloured mark on the wall of the child's school when a portrait of Hitler was, finally, taken down; her uncle's mini-Nazi museum, with its yellowing news clippings and toy soldiers. And Tusquets, faithful to her own truth once more, risks reaffirming her status as licensed heretic. The fascist uncles are presented as more sympathetic than a lone anti-Francoist aunt, determined to destroy all chance of happiness for herself and those around her. The Communist maids with whom heedless parents left their small children stuff them with emblematic ensaladilla rusa and recklessly shout slogans in the street. Vindicating imagination, emotion, and subjectivity, even as she stresses the tragic limitations placed on the lives of women of all classes, Tusquets risks reconfirming here the subordination of the feminine. The epic and the domestic are wilfully and bathetically juxtaposed as in the typical chapter title: 'the Second World War and various other fears' (49).

Yet, where *Las 13 rosas* is glossily non-specific in its Madrid locations, *Habíamos ganado la guerra* is conscientiously precise in placing its action in the urban geography and distinctive domestic spaces of the Catalan capital. Thus the war sees the family exiled in distant Pedralbes before they return to the strictly limited, but treasured, confines of the Ensanche. A move beyond the Diagonal is a great adventure. While the child's world is bound by a few city blocks, the adult, with wider perspectives, ironizes on urban and class location: the family's avowedly 'terrible situation' in 1939 included a 200 square metre flat in the Rambla de Barcelona, two live-in maids plus a laundress, a car, a subscription to the opera, a holiday home on the beach, skiing trips, a fee-paying school, a Fräulein for German classes, and a Sunday señorita so the parents were spared the burden of child care on the one day of the week that the rest of the help took off (26). It is also striking that descriptions of people and places tend to alternate in the text: Nazi uncle Víctor and the German School in Moià street; the beloved and despised Liceo (whose Hall of Mirrors graces the memoir's cover) and the teenager's first love, her Andalusian teacher señor Jiménez. However eccentric Tusquets' own subjectivity may be, it is always precisely located in time and space.

Let us look now at the equivalents of the three moments we saw in *Las 13 rosas*: the entrance of the Francoist army into the city; the depiction of the horrors perpetrated by the new regime; and the evocation of a female community that to some extent resists or transcends those horrors.

As mentioned earlier, Tusquets' first chapter begins with what she claims as one of her 'first memories': a 'multitude' of soldiers marching along a 'road' or 'avenue', as crowds cheer them on (9). This wide shot is, however,

immediately particularized, as the narrator cuts in for close-ups. The child herself is held up by her father, who, we are told, had not walked in the street for two years; and her mother is shouting out Franco's name with an 'enthusiasm' the daughter will see on very few occasions in the rest of their lives. A typically lengthy and tangled sentence then fleshes out the family's predicament, calling attention to class conflict: Tusqets' maiden aunts supported the semi-clandestine household by sewing jobs commissioned by Leftist women who would in 'normal circumstances' have been their servants (10). And this primal scene (whether reality, imagination, or memory worked over by fantasy) is concretized in a single, resonant detail: the red-and-yellow paper flag that a smiling soldier gave her (perhaps gave her) to wave with the rest of the crowd. Historical event, political conflict, and personal circumstance fuse into a rich, but disturbing and inconsistent, narration.

As befits once more the specificity of her own placing (as a wealthy and privileged, but timid and neurotic, female infant), the memoir offers little testimony to the horrors of the new regime. But repression is felt with a special force within this privileged domestic context. For example, Tusquets tells us of a child victim of the war, taken in by a more comfortable family, who has forgotten the everyday use of a bed; surely, she asks, the sheets are intended to cover the face of the dead? Another chilling anecdote repeats the precise placing of perspective we saw in the flag episode. Following the rest of their class in drifting away from the sea towards the hills, Tusquets' family move to an ample flat opposite the extravagant Casa de les Punxes, a modernist monument despised by the Barcelona bourgeoisie. To the child's surprise it still boasts a mosaic with lettering in Catalan asking San Jordi to give back Catalonia its freedom (136). But the building is also opposite a police station. As the ten-year-old looks from her bedroom window, a man is dragged into a police car, 'howling' and 'begging' for help: 'They're going to kill me!' (137). Passers-by look the other way. Tusquets asks herself: what could they have done? What could she have done? And was the man, just perhaps, a dangerous criminal? Still the scene becomes part of her 'nightmares'.

A more typical, and extended, scene takes place at Tusquets' German school, where a relatively progressive and coeducational regime was supplemented for the Spanish children by Catholic observance. Tusquets cites one of her own novels at some length on May, the month of Mary, the month of flowers. White lilies and roses fill the chapel, the warm sensuality of their cloying scent provoking fainting fits in precocious adolescents (116). The yellow 'penises' of stamens combine with the white 'semen' of tiny flowers that Tusquets has seen only on altars decked for the Virgin. This hushed, sickly space is rent by a 'terrible howl' once more. One of the cloistered nuns has died and has been placed in a white coffin, framed by

thick, smoking candles (117). This is the child's 'first contact with death', with a body that was (unlike her) surely never truly alive in the first place.

While it is tempting to read such a scene as a displacement of the horrors of the regime with which the Church was complicit, it is Tusquets' typical attention to the senses (especially, in this case, smell) that stands out. Judgement (the dawning awareness of religious repression) is thus inseparable from emotion (that harrowing howl), and sensation (budding sexuality and the visceral fear of mortality). In such complex and disturbing passages Tusquets uses affect and aesthetics for cognitive and non-coercive purposes, refusing to tell us what to think, but provoking us to reflect. One striking difference with *Las 13 rosas* is Tusquets' hostility to visuality: while the film was, as we have seen, attacked by critics if not audiences for its too glossy *mise en scène*, Tusquets refuses to include any photographs in her memoir (even the cover shot of the Liceo was taken at least a decade after her own coming out there); and in the texture of her writing she focuses, as in her fiction, on touch, taste, and smell as much as sight.

It remains unclear, however, to what extent Tusquets has succeeded in rendering her wilfully eccentric position generalizable and in 'taking on board her contradictions'.[16] The memoir ends with a definitive resolution: the twenty-year-old now knows that, although she was born amongst the winners, in spite of all her privileges, she truly belongs to the 'band of the losers' (276). But this psychological arc is less convincing even than that of bourgeois Blanca in *Las 13 rosas*: Tusquets left the Falange after a trivial row over an obligatory hike in the sierra that, typically, she refused to attend. History and story (nation and narration) fail to coincide.

Such inconsistencies are not necessarily a criticism of Tusquets' text. As she convincingly shows through her marshalling of point of view and focalization, female subjectivity was necessarily marginal to the regime. And if women's vain attempts at agency are not as harshly punished in *Habíamos ganado la guerra* as they are in *Las 13 rosas*, Tusquets shows herself to be sympathetic even to the well-meaning members of the Sección Femenina and the quixotic female activists who sought, much too late, a Falange of the Left. This sympathy and empathy with a female perspective is not to be dismissed.

However, the placing of these two texts set in the past within the current cultural field of producers and institutions also teases out their meaning for the present. *Las 13 rosas* is to be read within a tradition of historical or heritage film that has been continuously built up since the Transition, although it has perhaps only recently become more vulnerable to political instrumentalization. Tusquets' memoir falls within not only the substantial body of work in that genre but also the current novelistic trend baptized as

16 See Alicia Ramos, 'El mundo de los vencedores en *Habíamos ganado la guerra* de Esther Tusquets', *Nueva Revista del Pacífico*, 53 (2008), 313–21 (p. 313).

the 'literatura del yo' or 'autoficción'.[17] Her blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction is thus highly typical of the present, even as it seeks to represent the past. Moreover, we might hypothesize that the audience for the two texts coincides to some extent: the substantial, but minority, demographic segments of filmgoers (women, older people, and the educated) who claim to prefer Spanish film may well overlap with the reading public for educated best sellers. But still we should take care not to overrate the privileged position of women writers and the power of female readers or cinema spectators. After all, if *Las 13 rosas* was a success it was because it was atypical of the offer at the Spanish multiplex.

To conclude: I have argued that my continuing unease with the film derives not simply from the supposed failure of its historicity (that perfect lipstick in prison) but from a more fundamental conflict over affect and aesthetics. Unlike the consistently glossy visuals of *Las 13 rosas* (the stars even posed as part of a fashion spread in *El País*),[18] the equally expert literary execution of *Habíamos ganado la guerra*, some of it directly taken from Tusquets' fiction, is intermittent, often interrupted by more prosaic passages or, indeed, text borrowed from other writers. Likewise Tusquets' autobiographical self is only infrequently generalizable and never seeks to embody the nation, whether that nation is taken to be Catalonia or Spain. It thus follows that *Habíamos ganado la guerra*, unlike *Las 13 rosas*, employs affect and aesthetics not for the purposes of coercion (telling us what to think about a terrible time) but for cognition (leading us to reflect for ourselves on that time). While this may not appear to be an adequate response to the tragic past (what could be?), it is clearly an important and telling contribution to the response to that past in the present.

17 Juana Vázquez, '¿Literatura del yo? ¿Qué yo?', *El País*, 17 January 2009, <http://www.elpais.com/articulo/cine/cierto/endeble/elpepuculcin/20071019elpepicin_4/Tes> (accessed 26 June 2009).

18 *El País*, 30 September 2007, Sunday Supplement, <http://elpais.com/diario/2007/09/30/eps/> (accessed 26 June 2009).