¿Quién amuralla una voz?: Poetry, Resistance, and Memory within Franco’s Prisons

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¿Quién amuralla una voz?: Poetry, Resistance, and Memory within Franco’s Prisons

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Hispanic Studies from The College of William and Mary

by

Crosby Enright

Accepted for ____________________________
(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)

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Williamsburg, VA
April 29, 2014
For my grandfathers,
Dr. Charles M. Enright (1933-2005)
Richard C. Swain (1931-2012)
For sharing and supporting my intense love of reading.

*Os echo de menos cada día.*
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Introduction. Imprisoned Memory and the Value of Poetry

No escribe, no, porque afanoso siente
la luz esplendorosa y soberana
del genio creador sobre su frente;
escribe, sin cesar, con ansia suma
de volar de la cárcel inhumana
con los frágiles puntos de su pluma.
-Diego San José “El poeta en su celda”

With these verses composed within the prison of Vigo in 1943, relatively unknown Spanish poet Diego San José not only suggested the anguish accompanying imprisonment, but emphasized the act of writing as a method to escape physical confinement. Incarcerated by Nationalist authorities in April of 1939 following the conclusion of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), San José’s fate mirrored that of hundreds of thousands of other Spaniards who during the conflict had supported the subsequently defeated democratic Republican side (Hernández Girbal 19). Although San José was eventually released in 1944 through the obtainment of numerous official pardons, his prison verses remained unknown and unpublished until 1979.

Such lengthy silence and obscurity ultimately reflect the severe repression and attempted erasure of the Republican perspective that occurred throughout Francisco Franco’s almost forty-year dictatorship, lasting from 1939 until his death in 1975. Throughout the regime, Franco’s authorities sought to construct a single narrative of historical events, which privileged the victorious Nationalist perspective at the expense of the losers’ voice and memory. Today, even seventy-five years after the end of the Civil War, the debate over the history and legacy of both the war and the dictatorship has emerged as a crucial issue in Spanish society and politics. This fact is powerfully reflected in the dramatic increase in publications and documentaries, rise of activist groups committed to recovering the memory of the losers, on-going exhumations of mass graves of victims on both sides, and frequent organization of other commemorative acts that
have occurred since the start of the twenty-first century (Ferrándiz, “Return of Civil War Ghosts” 10). Spain’s 2007 law commonly referred to as *Ley de Memoria Histórica* is both a product of this debate and a primary source of its continuation and relevancy.¹ The law deals with the complex legacy of Francoist repression, affirming the right of Spanish citizens to uncover their personal and familial histories, receive moral reparation for the victims, and address previous injustices in order to avoid future violation of human rights. As Rafael Escudero Alday notes, “Lo que inicialmente nació como una reivindicación personal y familiar—la exhumación y homenaje de los restos de las personas víctimas de la represión franquista—se ha convertido en un tema central de la agenda política” (7).

Central to my study is the question of memory underlying the recovery of this repressed Republican history, and more specifically, how this memory manifests itself in the penitentiary writing of imprisoned Republican poets. Utilizing theoretical frames culled from the field of memory studies, I propose to analyze how three Spanish poets, Miguel Hernández, Ángeles García-Madrid, and Marcos Ana, used their writing to preserve and express the defeated Republican perspective in one of, if not the most, directly repressive environments of *franquismo*. Although the field of memory studies can trace its roots back to the end of the First World War and the work of scholars such as Maurice Halbwachs, its contextualization and diversification within Spain is much more recent.² Drawing upon scholars and philosophers writing in the wake of the Second World War and Auschwitz, Spanish philosopher Reyes Mate has championed the fight for the vindication of memory in the twenty-first century. Mate draws

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¹ The law’s full title is “Ley 52/2007, de 26 de diciembre, por la que se reconocen y amplían derechos y se establecen medidas en favor de quienes padecieron persecución o violencia durante la guerra civil y la dictadura” (Escudero Alday 8).

² Following the conclusion of the First World War, Maurice Halbwachs and fellow sociologists challenged the traditional designation of memory as an inferior mode of knowing, only capable of producing recollections of past knowledge. This reconstruction of memory’s role in mankind’s ability to acquire knowledge was continued further in the work of thinkers such as Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, and Primo Levi, after the end of the Second World War (Mate, *Diccionario* 17).
heavily upon Walter Benjamin’s thesis of history to advocate for memory as a critical sub-narrative of past events (*Diccionario* 17). He critiques the idea of history as the only discipline capable of producing true, “scientific” knowledge of past events, and argues that the priority given to historical reality, or “historic facticity,” perilously ignores the other possible outcomes of past events. According to Mate, “Este conocimiento científico solo tiene ojos para los hechos, lo que ha sido. Pero lo que no es, lo que quedó derrotado y abandonado, no forma parte de la realidad o tiene un significado ‘subalterno’” (*Diccionario* 18). For Mate however, the historical “non-facts,” the “what-might-have-beens,” are just as necessary as the actual facts, the “what happened,” in order to achieve a complete understanding of both the past and the present, and memory is the ultimately the tool through which to recognize these alternate historical possibilities (*Diccionario* 19).

Mate’s emphasis on the necessity of memory, is echoed in the work of scholars across a variety of disciplines, such as Spanish anthropologist and ethnographer Francisco Ferrándiz. Appropriating French historian Pierre Nora’s notion of “places of memory” (*lieux de mémoire*), Ferrándiz studies the exhumation of mass graves throughout Spain, proposing that the graves serve as crucial “lugares de memoria” for the Republican community: “las fosas comunes de los derrotados…han pasado de ser vertederos políticos, emocionales y simbólicos, artefactos progresivamente averiados de la maquinaria de terror franquista, a convertirse en lugares de memoria de una gran complejidad y visibilidad…” (31). Although he argues that the graves...
ultimately serve as the primary and most relevant site in the construction of Republican “lugares de memoria,” Ferrándiz is quick to point out the existence of additional spaces including, “parajes de batallas, cárcceles o colectivos de presos, campos de concentración en España o Europa, itinerarios o refugios del maquis, rutas del exilio y otros muchos lugares y experiencias relacionados con los efectos de la guerra y la dictadura” (32).

Translating the study of the localization of the losers’ memory from physical spaces to more figurative ones, scholar Jo Labanyi examines the role of cultural production in preserving and expressing the defeated Republican perspective. In essence, Labanyi proposes that “Memory is the afterlife of the past in the present,” and that cultural products such as film, novels, and testimony help construct and express the collective memory of a group (193). Yet rather than focusing on the construction of this memory as a means to deepen society’s understanding of historical reality, Labanyi emphasizes the emotional element. She proposes that the subjective quality of memory allows for the communication of past emotion within the context of the present, illuminating the psychological legacy of past trauma (196). Furthermore, it is through the expression of this memory that the trauma can finally be addressed and overcome.

My thesis similarly deals with notions of memory, spatial locations associated with memory, and collective trauma. My work offers a unique analysis of these themes within the Republican poetry produced in Francoist prisons during the first two decades of the regime. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the construction of the prison system following the end of the Civil War, with special emphasis on violence, and notions of redemption as both physical and discursive elements. Utilizing the rhetoric of Francoist ideologues, Ernesto Giménez Caballero and Máximo Cuervo Radigales, I examine the construction of the defeated Republican half of society as inferior and degenerate “others,” alongside the establishment of the prison system in
the late 1930s and 1940s. I argue that it is only through an awareness of the process of othering that occurred within the penitentiary context that the subsequent response of imprisoned Republican writers and artists can be properly understood.

From Chapter 2 forward, I move within the space of the prison itself, to analyze the poetic production that took place in response to the severity of the repression. In Chapter 2, I focus on the identity of the soldier-poet Miguel Hernández as the prototypical “loser” of the Civil War, and investigate how his posthumously published *Cancionero y romancero de ausencias* captures the essence of the Republican voice and values in the moment of defeat. Although scholarship on Hernández’s life and early work abounds, I will instead focus on his final prison writings and their relation to the notion of defeated historical perspectives. The work of Reyes Mate is thus central to my analysis, particularly his notion of the losers’ memory as a subjacent counter narrative, which helps to keep alive the democratic legacy of the Second Republic. I argue that Hernández’s prison poetry encapsulates this losers’ memory, and in doing so, combats the imposed silence of the Franco regime. In capturing the voice and hopes of the Republican Everyman, Hernández reclaimed the stories of the victims of *franquismo*, and his work thus serves as a powerful tool in the struggle to achieve historical justice.

In Chapter 3, I examine the female Republican experience within Franco’s prisons through the poetry of the little-studied writer and activist Ángeles García-Madrid. Adopting José Álvarez Fernández’s notion of a “community of memory,” I assert that García-Madrid’s poetry helps to form this community for the defeated half of Spanish society by preserving the collective history of the Republican women who suffered and died within the prisons. I analyze how she creates a discursive space in which the losers’ perspective is both shared and preserved, despite the Franco regime’s intent to erase it. Her verses serve to criticize *franquismo* from a
feminine perspective, illuminating the dualistic-quality of the repression that the female prisoners experienced, both as Republicans and as women.

Finally in Chapter 4, I move from within the space of the prison cell back out into society through the verses of Marcos Ana, who is distinguished as the longest continuously-serving prisoner of the Franco regime, with just over twenty-two years spent behind bars. Despite his contemporary quasi-celebrity status, scholarship on Ana’s poetic production is remarkably limited. Appropriating U.S. Latino poet and scholar Martín Espada’s concept of a “poet of the political imagination” I argue that Ana’s verses not only denounce the injustice and illegitimacy of Francoist repression, but advocate for justice for the victims. Like Hernández and García-Madrid, he resists the attempted silencing by Francoist authorities through the use of verse, and in doing so, gives voice and name to the imprisoned population. In communicating fellow prisoners’ suffering, he seeks to project their anguish through his own outside the confines of the prison, and awaken society to their collective plight. In my analysis, I once more turn to Mate’s philosophy of historical memory and justice to argue that Ana’s poetry ultimately functions as a call to arms for future generations to carry on the fight for liberty and equality begun by the government of Second Republic.

Although Ana and García-Madrid are not as popularly-known or well-studied as Hernández, their poetry deserves to be recognized not only for its beauty and power, but for the significance of the story that it narrates. Their prison verses, along with those of Hernández, serve as dynamic tools in the fight to recover and preserve the history of thousands of Spaniards, who were brutally repressed or fatally silenced under Franco’s dictatorship. Against such forced physical and discursive subjugation, Barbara Harlow emphasizes how “[Prisoner] poets, like the guerilla leaders of the resistance movements, consider it necessary to wrest that expropriated
historicity back, reappropriate it for themselves in order to reconstruct a new world-historical order” (Resistance Literature 33). In the verses of Hernández, García-Madrid, and Ana this battle on behalf of defeated Spanish Republicans thus lucidly comes to the forefront.
Chapter 1. “La disciplina de un cuartel, la seriedad de un banco y la caridad de un convento”: Repression and the Process of Othering in the Francoist Prison System

After Francisco Franco’s infamous *pronunciamiento* and subsequent declaration of war in July of 1936, Nationalist general Emilio Mola declared as one of their central goals, “Sembrar el terror (…) eliminando sin escrúpulos ni vacilación a todos los que no piensen como nosotros” (qtd. in Casanova, “Rebelión y revolución” 60). This potent declaration succinctly expressed the rancor pervading Spanish society in the early twentieth century, as well as illustrated the dichotomy between those on the political Right and their opponents on the Left. The Nationalists, led by unrelenting commanders such as Franco and Mola, represented the conservative and traditionalist sectors of Spanish society; the military, monarchists, large agrarian landowners, and higher echelons of the Catholic Church, in essence, those whose traditional power had been curtailed the most by the liberal reforms of the Second Republic. Their opponents, the “others” that Mola so violently branded, were members of the political Left, known collectively as the democratic Republicans. They included the liberal intelligentsia, socialists, communists, anarchists, union leaders, urban professionals, and the working classes, all of those groups who had supported the ascent of the Second Republican government in April of 1931. The Civil War battlefield thus consisted of an ideological arena as well as a physical one, in which an “us versus them” mentality was exploited by both sides. As Santos Juliá explains,

Frente a las políticas de venganza y exterminio y a los concomitantes discursos de guerra contra el invasor, resultaron vanas las muy escasas voces…que definieron la guerra como una catástrofe nacional o como una guerra entre hermanos…No es
que no se elaborasen planes para negociar la paz, sino que fueron inmediatamente ahogados por la exigencia de la victoria frente al enemigo. (29)

Following the Nationalist victory in the spring of 1939, this sociopolitical dichotomy was further institutionalized through punitive legislation directed towards the vanquished Republicans. Franco sought to consolidate his power and rebuild Spanish society through the removal of all oppositional elements, and the large-scale incarceration of the losers of the war became the chief solution.

Thus in this chapter, I will outline how the Franco regime’s imposition of the inferior status of the “Other” upon the defeated Republicans occurred alongside the development of the Francoist prison system in the late 1930s and 1940s. In particular, I will focus on the physical and discursive manifestations of Francoist repression, and their institutionalization in penitentiary legislation and practice. Through analysis of the rhetoric of prominent ideologues, such as Ernesto Giménez Caballero and Máximo Cuervo Radigales, I will demonstrate how the sociopolitical process of othering was systemized through the construction of a massive prison landscape and an attendant discourse. I argue that it is only through an awareness of how this environment was constructed that the subsequent Republican response can be properly analyzed and fully understood.

In the months following the fall of Madrid and the Nationalists’ conclusive defeat of the Republican side, the brutal violence which had characterized the war both on and off the battlefield was perpetuated in the civilian realm. Franco’s victorious Nationalists continued their use of psychological terror and physical repression, directly targeting anyone with ties to the Republican side. As Francisco Moreno notes, “La violencia fue un elemento estructural del franquismo. La represión y el terror subsiguiente no eran algo episódico, sino pilar central del
nuevo Estado, una especie de *principio fundamental del Movimiento*” (277). Franco’s desire to crush every last vestige of Republican resistance, thus resulted in a rampage of killing and mass imprisonment, in which the regions that had held out the longest against Nationalist control were hit the hardest. Well-known scholarship has placed the number of executions that took place over the course of 1936 to 1950 at around 72,883 (Juliá 410). In the provinces of Cataluña and Valencia alone, the number reached close to five thousand in each region (Casanova, “The Faces of Terror” 90). The gravity of such figures is further enhanced through consideration of the statistics outlining the imprisonment of the Republican side. The Nationalist campaign of detention and imprisonment had begun quickly after the outbreak of war, with the result that by the end of 1937 there were 106,822 prisoners in concentration camps spread throughout Spain (Reig Tapia 119). Gutmaro Gómez Bravo expands upon studies of wartime imprisonment by quoting the number of fatalities that occurred in Francoist jails in the immediate postwar period (1939 to 1944) at about 140,000 (*Exilio interior* 37). As the varying categories of statistics highlight, the attempt to quantify the destruction and loss of life resulting from the war and its aftermath is an extraordinarily complicated one. In his study of Francoist repression during the war and postwar period Alberto Reig Tapia remarks,

> Hay quien ha cifrado en 300.000 los muertos directamente atribuibles a operaciones militares, pero ¿dónde empieza y dónde termina la represión? ¿Cómo diferenciar acciones de guerra de hecho de guerra? ¿Acaso los fusilados sobre el propio terreno, después de conquistada la posición, no son víctimas de la

---

4 In his 1999 study *Victimas de la Guerra Civil*, Santos Juliá illustrates the struggle of modern scholars to recover and interpret the numerical data representing the Francoist repression. He emphasizes the on-going process of reinvestigating and rewriting the figures that detail the number of deaths, executions, and imprisonments that occurred during the war and the postwar period. He ultimately presents the results of completed investigations in 25 of Spain’s provinces and offers conjectures for partial studies in additional ones: “Si en 25 provincias totales y 7 parciales conocemos ya el cómputo fiable de 90,194 fusilados por el franquismo, es lógica la proyección de al menos otras 50.000 víctimas más para casi la mitad de España restante, lo que nos sitúa en unos 140.000 republicanos que el franquismo se llevó por delante desde la aventura de 193 hasta 1950 (411).
La represión, corresponde a los eufemísticamente llamados «hechos de guerra», son una mera «acción de guerra»? No es nada fácil responder con toda precisión...

(127)

The supposed legitimacy of this violence was traced back to the initial pronouncement of war in 1936, and was subsequently reinforced through the pronouncement’s continued application until 1948 (Reig Tapia 129). Nationalist soldiers and Falangists were therefore granted an implicit form of license to eliminate all sources of opposition to the new regime. According to Reig Tapia, “…los rebeldes impusieron desde el principio la aplicación de una represión preventiva que tenía la finalidad de impedir toda posibilidad de organizar la resistencia y de paralizar psicológicamente a los posibles adversarios” (108). Ultimately, victory on the battlefield was not enough for Franco and his generals. They desired the absolute destruction of their opponents and thus continued a program of quasi-elimination in order to remove all possible forms of resistance.

The primary objects of this initial violence were therefore leftist politicians, union leaders, middle class professionals, members of the liberal intelligentsia, and members of various anarchist groups, in other words, the leaders and chief proponents of the Second Republic (Juliá 99). Even prior to Franco’s victory, these individuals were targeted in a systematic manner, and fell victim to one of the nationalists’ most terrifying practices, euphemistically referred to as los paseos. During these nighttime “strolls,” members of the Guardia Civil, Nationalist soldiers, or more often than not, radical Falangists, forcefully removed individuals from their homes, and summarily executed them under the cover of darkness leaving their bodies in road-side ditches or piled in cemeteries (Casanova, “The Faces of Terror” 91). Julián Casanova highlights that these individuals, “No eran asesinados para dar un escarmiento ejemplar, para que se enteraran sus
seguidores, como a veces se dice, sino para arrebatarles el poder, echar abajo el modelo de sociedad y el sistema de libertades que defendían” (“Rebelión y revolución” 86). Through their execution, Franco sought to erase all traces of republicanism in Spanish society. It was not enough to overthrow the institutions and laws put in place by the Second Republic; Franco sought to further solidify his victory by physically removing the human embodiments of any opposing ideology.

The organization and implementation of the Nationalist imprisonment campaign therefore also began during the Civil War itself. As early as September of 1936, the Junta de Defensa Nacional issued a war-time proclamation which renounced Republican legal codes, and imposed a code of military justice in all territories under Nationalist control. Associated with this were the application of “summary justice” and the suspension of all citizen rights, excepting those that regulated detention and imprisonment (Gómez Bravo, Redencion de penas 34). A later decree, referred to as Decree 85, was passed in November of the same year, and it represented the first imposition of Nationalist control over the prison system. This decree reinstated penal codes dating from 1930, referred to collectively as the Reglamento del Servicio de Prisiones. The codes had existed prior to the liberal reforms of the Second Republic and therefore represented a clear retrograding of the prison system. With this decree, the Nationalists thereby postponed any judicial or systematic reformation of Spanish prisons until much later under the Franco dictatorship (Gómez Bravo, Redención de penas 38).

The centrality of imprisonment as a repressive strategy against Republicans was further institutionalized through punitive legislation passed in the later years of the war. Of particular importance was Degree 281 issued in May of 1937, which outlined the rights of prisoners of war in Nationalist occupied territory, and specifically established their right to work (Gómez Bravo,
Redención de penas 72). This was ultimately connected to the creation of the institution Patronato de Redención de Penas, established through a decree passed in November of 1938. Although the Patronato and its associated legislation emerged during the war itself, the greatest repercussions were not felt until after the Nationalist victory in April of 1939.

The justification for the intensity of the violence and large-scale incarceration stemmed from the savage rhetoric of the “true” Spain against the “anti-Spain” that Nationalist propagandists had begun to employ during the war. Fascist writer and diplomat Ernesto Giménez Caballero perfectly exemplified this rhetoric in his 1938 publication España y Franco. Giménez Caballero succinctly highlighted what he believed were the defining aspects of “Spanishness,” namely a powerful monarchy and aristocracy, a strong army, and a tradition of deep Catholic faith. For him, the “true” Spain was the Imperial Spain of past centuries. The ascendance of the Republican government of 1931 had thus perverted Spanish society by robbing it of its traditional values, characteristics, and institutions, and replacing them with elements of foreign liberal ideology:


He thus argued that Spain had ultimately been transformed into a mockery of what it once represented, and that the Spanish language, which once went hand in hand with conquest and empire, was now spoken by all classes of “filth”. In Giménez Caballero’s own words, the Republicans, “[n]os habían destrozado la médula misma de nuestra ser. Nuestra propia alma de
españoles y hombres” (8). They could not therefore be considered as true Spaniards. They did not represent or possess the qualities of traditional “Spanishness,” and were instead a pernicious force in society. The use of the possessive “our” drew a strict line between the Nationalists and the Republicans, with the Republicans ultimately being excluded from the Giménez Caballero’s construction of Spanish nationhood.

The just response to the iniquity of the Republic and its supporters was thus the Nationalist uprising and war effort, which sought to restore Spain’s former glory. According to Caballero, “Nuestra revolución no es hacer con nuestro Ejército, a los rojos, su revolución. Sino hacer que los rojos de dentro y de fuera dejen de ser rojos y tornen a ser nacionales y a creer lo que se debe creer y a sentir lo que debe sentir” (21). This potent statement clearly underlined the dichotomous nature of Spanish society. Caballero drew strict lines between what the Republicans represented and what the nationalists represented, and further suggested that there was no neutrality. Following the Nationalist victory, the Republicans would be forced back on to the path of “proper” Spanish behavior with all its attendant nationalistic beliefs and traditions. There would be no mediation between the two sides, only punishment for past transgression:

Y a los rojos vencidos, no derritiéndose ante ellos en lágrimas de falsa y repugnante fraternidad. No prometiéndoles, no ya el perdón que Franco concederá a todos, sino lo que nadie toleraríamos: el borrón y cuanto nuevo. El que “aquí no ha pasado nada”. NO. ¡Aquí ha pasado mucho! Y no estamos dispuestos a que

---

5 The persistence and strength of the divisional language of the propaganda of both the Nationalist and Republican sides frequently overshadowed the fact that many Spaniards fell somewhere along the middle of the ideological spectrum, neither fully in one camp or the other. As Javier Paniagua proposes, “De esto se ha hablado poco: la cantidad de hombres y mujeres que vivieron al margen de las élites enfrentadas. Muchos deseaban sólo seguir viviendo, tener un trabajo, progresar en sus vidas, pero se encontraron de pronto que aquello que habían dicho, publicado o manifestado se podía volver contra ellos, y aprendieron a callarse, a no destapar sus pensamientos…” (13). Thus dividing Spain down the middle into two perfectly opposing sides produces a somewhat artificial representation of twentieth century Spanish society.
vuelva a pasar… [A]rrremeteríamos furiosamente contra todo lo que osara torcer y traicionar nuestra victoria. (27-28)

Caballero’s aggressive language compellingly foreshadowed what followed the Nationalist victory in the spring of 1939. He directly rejected the notion that there would be some sort of reconciliation or bargaining between the victorious and the vanquished, and declared that past events were not easily forgotten or forgiven. He further denounced any notion of compatriotism and “repugnante fraternidad” with the Republicans. The effect of this ideological division and its accompanying propaganda was so great that nationalist General Emilio Mola commented to his secretary, “En este trance de la Guerra yo ya he decidido la guerra sin cuartel […] Yo veo a mi padre en las filas contrarias y lo fusilo” (qtd. in Reig Tapia 107). This discourse of the “true” Spain versus the anti-Spain did not disappear following the Nationalist victory however, and its persistence highlighted the deep-rooted tension and rancor underlying Spanish society. Although the battlefield fighting had ceased, the conflict in the civil sphere had not, and the divisional propaganda of Franco and his Nationalists therefore continued to influence the discourse of the new regime.

While wartime propaganda had traced rigid lines between the opposing sides, Nationalist discourse in the postwar period evolved slightly as the emphasis changed from defining notions of Spanishness to calling for the purification of society. Such rhetoric was potently manifested through profound sociopolitical process of “othering,” which sought to justify the execution and repression of the “losers” of the war (Richards 50). This process, which had begun even prior to the outbreak of war, emphasized Judaism, Marxism, Socialism, and Free Masonry as defining aspects of the political Left (Preston 43). Francoist propaganda thus essentially exploited the chief prejudices and fears that Spanish conservatives had held for decades. The goal was to
delegitimize the preceding Republican government and stabilize the support base of the new regime. Former supporters of the Left were therefore portrayed as the inferior Other, who had tried to vitiate Spanish culture through their adoption of foreign liberalism and its associated evils (Preston 45).

This prejudicial discourse was more than just political in nature however. As Michael Richards notes, “…the derogatory label ‘Red’, in the post-war, implied not simply a previous leftist political affiliation but a ‘dirtiness’ or apartness, to be an outcast” (48). The public juxtaposition of notions of filth and wickedness with the defeated Republican side not only delegitimized their political and social beliefs, but also resulted in their portrayal as debauched sinners who had strayed from the path of Spanish tradition. Richards’ detailed study of the language of Francoist repression highlights how this notion of sickness ultimately motivated the harsh exclusion of the losers from the new postwar society. Utilizing Francoist discourse itself Richards comments:

…Only those ‘capable of loving the Fatherland, of working and struggling for it, of adding their grain of sand to the common effort’ would be tolerated. The others could not be allowed back into ‘social circulation…Wicked, deviant, politically and morally poisoned elements…those without possible redemption with the human order,’ [were to be removed]. (50)

The construction of this dichotomy in Spanish society, the institutionalization of an “us vs. them” mentality, thus sustained and essentially condoned Franco’s merciless repression of the Republican side in the decades following the conclusion of the war. Thousands of men and women were ruthlessly executed or imprisoned for no more reason, if any at all, than their political affiliation. If they managed to avoid imprisonment, their former support for the
Republic became a powerful stigma that haunted them throughout the decades of Franco’s rule. According to Gutmaro Gómez Bravo, “Las características de marginalidad y las conductas antisociales con las que eran descritos los delincuentes pasaron a formar parte de la gran barrera sociológica levantada por la dictadura. La voluntad de no reconciliación, de no integrar a los vencidos, fue favorecida por esta tónica, que se prolongó toda la década” (Exilio interior 91) The regime’s failure to integrate the Republicans into the new state, thus demonstrated a potent social and political rejection of a large portion of Spanish society. Such palpable exclusion was even further systemized through the passage of repressive legislation which legally defined who the excluded were and what was the “crime” precipitating their societal separation.

On February 9, 1939 even before the end of the Civil War, the Law of Political Responsibilities (Ley de Responsabilidades Políticas) went into effect, thereby sanctioning the Nationalists’ use of violence against Republicans. Essentially, it proclaimed that the responsibility for the conflict and turmoil of the Civil War was directly caused by the individuals who had opposed Franco’s uprising:

Se declara la responsabilidad política de las personas, tanto jurídicas como físicas que desde primero de octubre de mil novecientos treinta y cuatro y antes de dieciocho de julio de mil novecientos treinta y seis, contribuyeron a crear o agravar la subversión de todo orden de que se hizo víctima a España, y de aquellas otras que, a partir de la segunda de dichas fechas, se hayan opuesto o se opongan al Movimiento Nacional con actos concretos o con pasividad grave.

(Gómez de la Torre 99)

The law’s retroactive application, from the Asturian miners’ protests in October 1934 to the outbreak of the war in 1936, implied that the Republican government of 1931-1936 was an
illegal break from the natural course of Spanish history and society, and that those who had supported the government were to be condemned for their destructive actions against the “true” Spain. Furthermore, as Moreno emphasizes, “No sólo se castigaba la «acción» en cuanto a promover o agravar la «subversión» desde 1934, sino también la «omisión», o la oposición al triunfo del Movimiento nacional” (346). Thus not only were these individuals punished for their actions against Franco’s uprising, but also for their lack of action to support it. The law explicitly classified who were these individuals with the statement that:

…quedan fuera de la Ley todos los partidos y agrupaciones políticas y sociales que, desde la convocatoria de las elecciones celebradas el dieciséis de febrero de mil novecientos treinta y seis, han integrado el llamado Frente Popular, así como los partidos y agrupaciones aliados y adheridos a éste por el solo hecho de serlo, las organizaciones separatistas y todas aquellas que se hayan opuesto al triunfo del Movimiento Nacional. (Gómez de la Torre 99)

In other words, any and all individuals who had supported or had been associated with the Popular Front, (the various workers groups and political associations that comprised the Spanish Left), were considered outside the law. This resulted in their rights and privileges as citizens being completely revoked under the new regime (Casanova, “The Faces of Terror” 94).

The passage of the Law of Political Responsibility further implicated the rise of a culture of denunciation, in which the citizens of the new regime became complicit in the incarceration, and ultimately the execution of their peers. Immediately following the cessation of war, military officers throughout Spain set up centers where citizens could go to denounce neighbors and acquaintances to the authorities. As Casanova proposes, “To denounce ‘crimes’ of the ‘delinquents’ was something done by ‘good patriots’ who were forging the ‘New Spain.’ The act
of informing on one’s neighbors thus became the foundation for justice under Franco” (“The Faces of Terror” 103). Denouncing or accusing others of republican sympathies became a method through which individuals could protect their own name, as well as reap potential political and economic benefits. According to Moreno, “En realidad [la ley] se dio vía libre a odios personales y de vecindad, al afán de rapiña sobre los bienes de los vencidos, las venganzas y los egoísmos. Nadie estaba seguro de nadie” (309). Those accused under the new law were subsequently monitored by the state, and could be removed from their jobs, incarcerated, or suffer the loss of their property as payment for political fines. Such systemized repression ultimately required an increase in monitorial infrastructure, and the result was the infamous and massive prison system that came to define the Franco’s dictatorship. Highlighting the connection between denouncement and imprisonment, Gómez Bravo argues that, “El rencor, las posibilidades de aprovechamiento económico y el hostigamiento de los nuevos poderes municipales para que se produjeran delaciones y se presentaran denuncias favorecieron un clímax de ajusticiamiento que en las cárcel alcanzó la categoría de auténtico castigo colectivo” (Exilio interior 35). The prisons therefore became a space in which the regime’s propaganda was practically and tangibly employed, and the main channel through which the losers of the war were to be cleansed of their so-called sins, and reeducated in the traditional values of Spanish society.

A New Penitentiary Discourse

Promoted to General Director of Prisons during the middle of the war, Nationalist general Máximo Cuervo Radigales (1893-1982) perfectly united Francoist ideology with practical application within the space of the prison. An ardent member of the Asociación Católica Nacional de Propagandistas (ACNP), Cuervo deftly melded Catholic dogma with a militaristic
emphasis on order, stability, and submission to authority. In his 1940 conference address given at
the opening for the new Penintentiary Studies program at the University of Madrid, Cuervo
proclaimed, “España quiere implantar un sistema penitenciario que, manteniendo la privación de
libertad en mayor o menor grado como reato doloroso del delito, haga trabajar al reo y le enseñe
un oficio, si no lo sabe, ejerciendo al mismo tiempo sobre él imperio misional para la salvación
de sus valores en cuanto cristiano, español y hombre” (23). This statement powerfully
highlighted the Francoist emphasis on Catholicism as one of the foundational elements of the
new state. Cuervo juxtaposed the notion of religious sin alongside a more secular notion of crime
in order to demonstrate the centrality of Catholic morality in civil society. He implied that the
law was not purely secular in nature, and that imprisoned individuals had transgressed
spiritually, as well as socially. While in prison, they were therefore obligated to do penance for
their “sin.” This conflation of religious penance with secular punishment came to be a definitive
aspect of Cuervo’s administration. Gómez Bravo emphasizes how Cuervo’s notion of redención
fused together concepts of punishment and societal pardon, essentially eliminating the traditional
correctional and reformative goals of the prison: “El cuerpo legal y el marco jurídico de prisiones
de postguerra se consolida en torno a la fundamentación teológica del derecho a penar. Todas las
interpretaciones acerca del problema de los presos aceptaban que la redención de penas era la
verdadera solución cristiana, jurídica y política de la ‘era postrevolucionaria’” (Redención de
penas 99). The justification supporting the new system represented both a rejection of the
progressive and liberal philosophy underlying the reforms of the Second Republic, as well as an
attempt to return to the tenets of Catholic theology.
With this notion of absolution through incarceration came an attendant discourse of suffering and purification. The physical element of punishment was thus seen as an essential part of the prison sentence. According to Cuervo,

La nueva España quiere mantener el carácter afligido de la pena frente a las falsas y sensibles teorías de quienes sólo vieron en el delincuente un enfermo o una víctima de la sociedad desordenada. Y esto por tres razones: la primera, porque la autoridad le incumbe, inexcusablemente, el deber de vindicar la justicia ultrajada; la segunda, porque el dolor es inherente esencialmente a la naturaleza moral del castigo; y la tercera, porque sólo un castigo de esta clase engendra escarmiento y ejemplaridad. (18)

This language built upon the violence employed by Franco and his officers during the war through its emphasis on the application of physical pain to the defeated Republicans. Yet Cuervo expanded upon the discourse of violence by weaving in a religious element through the claim that punishment was crucial and justified in order to address moral transgressions. As Cuervo argued, “La pena es así «garantía», «defensa» y «reparación» del orden jurídico; «expiación» en cuanto al culpable; «corrección» en cuanto ella sea posible; «escarmiento» o «intimidación» en cuanto a los demás” (10). Punishment thus served a dual purpose in the postwar society. First, it was the primary channel through which the defeated Republicans could repay society for the “damage” that they had caused with the war. Second, it became a tool through which they could be given moral instruction and forcefully guided back to proper values of Spanish society:

Expiación para, mediante ella, reparar el orden jurídico moral perturbado, parte del orden universal a que antes me refería, y corrección para, en cuanto sea posible, lograr en primer término una más perfecta reparación de ese mismo orden
Cuervo saw the war as a gross disruption of the divine order of society, and the result of the “reds’” depravity and ignorance, rather than the consequence of a military coup led by insurgents. He laid the blame for the conflict solely on the Second Republic, and claimed its rejection of traditional Catholic morals as a further cause. Those who had supported the Republican government—and the constitutional separation of Church and State—were deemed unfit to join the new society of the Franco regime because of their former ideological beliefs. Cuervo implied that without strict re-education in what it meant to be a Spaniard, they continued to be a threat to the order and stability of society. This theory, along with the new state’s provision of moral instruction, was ultimately the inheritance of the Catholic imperial past. As Gómez Bravo highlights, “El discurso de Cuervo fue una auténtica reafirmación de la línea dura. Para ello rememoró el pasado imperial y la reconquista (las Leyes de Indias, el Concilio de Trento…), dando paso a un modelo «genuino y español»…” (Exilio interior 51). Analogous to Francoist discourse as a whole, the penitentiary discourse that developed in the years following the war thus emphasized a return to Spanish tradition and placed immense value on Catholic doctrine.

Cuervo’s structural organization of the prison system further reflected the emphasis on punishment through exclusion and physical suffering, and the need for the supporters of the Republic to repay Spanish society for wartime damage. He instituted a periodic and sequential sentencing structure through which prisoners could work towards their release:

Cuando la pena sea grave, trabajará durante el primer periodo en talleres dentro del establecimiento penal. Durante el segundo, en concentraciones u obras
Enright 25

penitenciarias. Durante el tercero, en convivencia con obreros libres, en régimen parecido a los reclusos que purgan delitos leves. El cuarto periodo sigue siendo el de la libertad condicional. (24)

The structure was based on both the performance of work and a willingness to accept the religious instruction of prison authorities (Cuervo 25). The prison itself thus became a space in which the ideology of *franquismo* manifested itself discursively as well as practically. Nowhere however is the evidence for such melding of the rhetorical and practical application highlighted better than through the actual structuring of the prison system that began during the latter half of the war. The laws passed and physical structures employed in this effort powerfully illustrated Cuervo’s new slogan, which was to be carved into the walls of prisons throughout Spain: “En nuestros establecimientos penitenciarios deberá presidir la disciplina de un cuartel, la seriedad de un Banco y la caridad de un convento” (27).

The initial structuring of the prison system was profoundly influenced by the massive influx of prisoners of war from the battlefields combined with those detained in the civil sector. This resulted in grave overcrowding issues that led to the creation of what were referred to as *prisiones habilitadas*. These “prisons” were in fact nothing more than non-penitentiary spaces and buildings appropriated by Nationalist authorities to contain the excess of prisoners. As Moreno illustrates, “Los establecimientos convencionales quedaron saturados el primer día de la victoria. Hubo que recurrir entonces a conventos, escuelas, caserones particulares, iglesias, cines y otros lugares más inverosímiles aunque no contaban con las mínimas condiciones para el fin a que se destinaban” (289). The appropriation and widespread use of such spaces immediately following the end of the war, not only highlighted the massive scale and constancy of Nationalist incarceration efforts, but also the rejection of the regular, correctional objective of the prison.
The goal was not so much to reform as to remove undesirable elements from society, and thus issues of capacity, sanitation, and general utility were knowingly overlooked by the authorities (Gómez Bravo, *Exilio interior* 24). Furthermore, the ubiquity of penitentiary space revealed the centrality of repression in the Nationalist construction of postwar society. It quite literally, and very publicly, demonstrated a profound societal rejection of the losers of the war, as well as the Nationalist belief that Spain needed to be purged: “La cárcel era la expresión del apartamiento y de la limpieza profunda, no contra delitos de sangre, sino contra la «escoria» izquierdista en general. Una limpieza no tanto penal como profundamente política” (Moreno 289). The losers of the war were therefore not only isolated from participation in society through the prejudice of Francoist propagandistic discourse, but they were also isolated physically. This action was carried out by war tribunals, which had been established throughout Spain to judicially address the issue. As Moreno highlights,

> Para llevar a cabo esta descomunal campaña punitiva se crearon en España 18 tribunales regionales y 61 juzgados específicos, que resultaron enseguida desbordados. Hasta octubre de 1941 se habían abierto 125.286 expedientes, fecha en la que sólo se habían resuelto 38.055 (un 30 por ciento). Según datos de Reig Tapia, más de 300.00 personas fueron sometidas a expediente. (347)

The enormity of such judicial investigation, along with the associated detention and overcrowding issues, illustrated the absolute centrality of the prison system in Francoist society. The campaign to eradicate all forms of Republican resistance had not ended with the conclusion of battlefield fighting, but rather was only further embedded in the judicial and penal apparatuses of the new regime.
The primary organization that directed the actual functioning of the prisons, as well as oversaw the disciplinary treatment of the prisoners was the Dirección General de Prisiones. Headed by Máximo Cuervo from the middle of the war until the early 1940s, the Dirección General was an autonomous body dedicated to structuring and governing the massive Francoist prison system (Gómez Bravo, Redención de penas 39). Its preeminent agency was the infamous Patronato de Redención de Penas, established in November of 1938. The specific goal of the Patronato was to oversee the “rehabilitation” of the regime’s prisoners by meting out punishments appropriate to their various sentences, and to monitor them as they moved through a progressive system of forced work. Under the leadership of Cuervo, the Patronato ultimately took on a further significance, as the institution came to encapsulate the nationalistic and religious rhetoric of the Franco regime. As Gómez Bravo highlights,

Creó un modelo de cárcel terrenal basada en la expiación espiritual de los pecados...La cultura que la inspiró fue apologética y propagandística...pero también fue claramente ‘pedagógica’. Destinada a su misión evangelizadora, la propaganda redentora no ocultaba ninguno de sus objetivos, era clara y ‘positiva’, y, lo que es más importante, iba dirigida a la conquista del individuo [republicano]. (Redención de penas 13)

Cuervo helped to ensure that the fundamental idea underlying the Patronato and the penal system as a whole was that of la redención; in essence, the juxtaposition of religious notions of atonement with secular notions of justice.6 Within this system, prisoners supposedly could atone for their “sins,” and did offset the length of their prison sentences by supplying their labor to

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6 Gómez Bravo terms this new ideology penitenciarismo nacionalcatólico, and argues that this was the essential foundation for the Francoist prison system and its definitive characteristic: “Lo realmente nuevo [de este sistema] era la reutilización del conjunto doctrinario del redentorismo para unos fines políticos tan determinados como los de la ‘obra de pacificación espiritual’ que exigía la andadura de la Nueva España” (Redención de penas 20).
societal projects. This work allowed them to “repay” society for the damage caused by their political crimes, and also served as a channel through which they could be readjusted to Francoist society (Gómez Bravo, *Redención de penas* 92). In essence, this society was constructed around everything that Republicans were not, and thus former loyalty to the Second Republic was construed as the ultimate badge of shame. Whether within prison or outside of it, the repression and social stigma that Republicans faced were intrinsically the same.

Thus by the early 1940s, Spain itself had become an immense penitentiary space for the losers of the Civil War. The still fresh wounds and animosity of the fighting continued to exert a pronounced influence on Francoist policy, and the dichotomous mentality of victors and vanquished was codified and perpetuated in the vast prison system. As Gómez Bravo suggests, “Además de una dura realidad, la cárcel fue quizás una de las mejores metáforas del modo de vida dominante en la España de los años cuarenta. Fue la sede del castigo principal, el purgatorio en la tierra. No fue una fuga del mundo, sino una inmersión en él. Una ventana al hambre, la desolación y la muerte” (Gómez Bravo, *Exilio interior* 217).

Given the strength and pervasiveness of such repression, both in its physical manifestations and its discursive forms, what was the vanquished side of society’s response? How did imprisoned Republicans react to the Franco regime’s measures to silence and control them? One compelling response was the development of a culture of solidarity within the prisons themselves. Numerous testimonies highlight the deep feeling of fellowship and compatriotism that existed, in spite of the regime’s attempt to “conquer the individual” (Gómez Bravo, *Redención de penas* 13). Recalling his experience within several Francoist prisons, the Salamanca poet Marcos Ana (b. 1920) remarks, “…me trajo a la memoria la entrañable solidaridad que en la cárcel nos había sostenido en las horas más inciertas de nuestra vida, y el
coraje y la dignidad de mis hermanos que soportaron las torturas más despiadadas antes que delatar a sus camaradas” (*Decidme cómo es un árbol* 37). For Ana, such fellowship not only helped to sustain him through immense suffering, but it was also powerful confirmation of the dignity of the imprisoned. In her own prison memoir, poet Ángeles García-Madrid similarly emphasizes the humanity of her fellow cellmates: “…son absolutamente sencillas y normales. No son destacadas dirigentes ni grandes activistas; son simplemente, unas mujeres que lucharon a ultranza, eso sí, por defender su propia dignidad de seres humanos; unas con más conocimiento de causa y otras—la mayoría, —solamente por natural instinto” (*Réquiem por la libertad* 9).

Thus in García-Madrid’s opinion, the portrayal of the prisoners as wicked and hardened criminals could not be further from the reality. These were normal men and women, who were cruelly imprisoned simply for seeking to combat injustice. Further evidence of resistance and strength of spirit can be found in the voices of much less well-known prisoners, such as Rafael Bedmar:

…Yo sabía lo que esperaba. Me negué rotundamente a todo. Si yo denunciaba a uno solo de mis compañeros, me harían hablar y hablar, para después ser fusilados con ellos. Cuando vieron que nada me sacaban por las buenas, el guardia que me preguntaba me dio un puñetazo en las narices que me tiró al suelo…dos guardias me levantaron…El que me preguntaba me dijo: ‘¿Tienes bastante o quieres más?’ Yo seguía negando todo (…). (qtd. in Moreno 305)

Even in the face of physical violence and the threat of further torture, Bedmar kept his allegiance to his fellow Republicans. The othering language employed by the Franco regime thus worked both ways, as Republican prisoners ultimately defined themselves against their Nationalist oppressors. They drew strength from their shared experience in the prisons, and emphasized the
“us” in Spain’s societal dichotomy as composed of a steadfast community that continued to believe in and fight for the democratic ideals of the Republic.

This desire to preserve a sense of dignity and Republican identity was further manifested in the narrative record and artistic production that emerged within the prisons. Recent scholarship has focused on rescuing this repressed history, and recognizing the voices that were raised against the Franco regime’s attempt to silence them. In her 1974 collection of prison testimonies, *Testimonios de mujeres en las cárceles franquistas*, Tomasa Cuevas, a prisoner herself during *franquismo*, reveals the reality of daily life behind bars. She gathers and documents the experiences of numerous women who suffered physically and psychologically within Francoist jails. In doing so, Cuevas not only illuminates the injustice of the system from the inside, but also honors the memory of those who experienced it. José Ignacio Álvarez Fernández also aims to recover Republican voices from within the confines of the prison. In his compelling study *Memoria y trauma en los testimonios de la represión franquista* (2007), he examines the role of testimony in preserving the memory of the vanquished. He traces the history of penitentiary repression alongside analysis of Republican testimony in order to develop an alternative history of the postwar in Spain. Furthermore, he argues for the power of testimony to preserve historical memory and educate future generations about the Civil War.

The work of Francisco Agramunt Lacruz represents a particularly captivating example of these efforts to recover the interior history of Francoist prisons. In his massive 2005 study *Arte y represión en la Guerra Civil Española*, Agramunt Lacruz reclaims the history of hundreds of artists who were imprisoned, executed, or had fled Spain in exile. One example is the Sevillian artist Helios Gómez. Initially recognized for his artistic talent during the early years of the Second Republic, Gómez quickly gained status as a prominent communist artist, who was active
in various leftist organizations and artistic circles. Later during the Civil War, he served as a commissioner for the Republican Army to the Soviet Union (Agramunt Lacruz 534). In 1939, Gómez was detained at the border of France and Spain, and given his political sympathies, subsequently imprisoned. He passed through several French concentration camps before being transferred to the prison Modelo de Barcelona where he remained until 1954.

Fig. 1. Detenidos, 1940. Helios Gómez. Indian ink on paper.

The artwork that Gómez created while imprisoned highlighted the dignity of the common worker, glorified Republican ideals, and denounced the brutality of fascism. He demonstrated an acute political consciousness and loyal commitment to the defeated Republican community. As Agramunt Lacruz argues, this kind of prison artwork,

… [se hace] una expresión de combate y de resistencia contra la soledad, la corrosión del tiempo, la incomunicación y el hastío, peligros que socavaban el carácter, llevaban a la desesperación y al abatimiento físico y psicológico. Lo
importante para sus creadores era mantenerse firme en sus ideales, no claudicar,
no rendirse y no ceder frente a sus carceleros o verdugos. (17)

Gómez captured the image of the imprisoned Republican “Everyman.” The faces he drew
represented common people, young and old, who were largely indistinguishable, except for small
hints as to social class or profession conveyed through the wearing of a suit and tie or a beret.
Their faces stared out from behind the barbed wire, large eyes open in direct gazes (fig. 1).
Gómez further emphasized their humanity and strength in the face of violence and repression.
Rather than cowering before the firing squads, the individuals in his drawings met their assassins
calmly and nobly (fig. 2). Heads raised proudly in strong firm stances, the Republicans died
with a quiet dignity that powerfully contrasted with the emotionless brutality of the Nationalists.

Fig. 2. *Fusilamiento*, Helios Gómez.
In the ensuing chapters of this thesis, I will analyze how artists helped to create and perpetuate this notion of Republican solidarity from within the confines of the prison. Rather than examining visual art or testimony however, my specific focus will be on the poetic discourse of resistance that emerged in the writings of Miguel Hernández (1910-1942), Ángeles García-Madrid (b.1918), and Marcos Ana (b. 1920). Through a detailed examination of the prison writings of these authors, I will investigate how military and political defeat affects the collective consciousness of the losing side, and how the poets use art to give expression to this often repressed point of view. I will argue that the lyrical work of Hernández, Ana, and García-Madrid allows for the communication of this history between past and present generations, and perhaps more importantly between past and future ones. In essence, their poetry honors the memory of those who suffered and died as a result of injustice and educates society about the attempt to silence their history.
Chapter 2. The Voice of the Second Republic Behind Bars: Notions of Defeat and Memory in the Prison Poetry of Miguel Hernández

In the dark times, will there also be singing?
Yes, there will be singing.
About the dark times.
Bertolt Brecht, “Motto”

The watchword that synthesized the intense feeling of Republican solidarity and in essence represented everything they fought for was el pueblo. As Juan Cano Ballesta has explained, “… [Para los republicanos,] «el término “pueblo” se convierte casi en un concepto metafísico, con toda su carga romántica, mítica y proletaria», es una expresión de la solidaridad y total identificación con la colectividad” (La imagen de Miguel 176). This collectivity was composed of the average men and women living and working in the cities and countryside who had risen up against the Nationalist insurgency. Helping to articulate and illustrate this notion of a strong, collective body, poets such as Antonio Machado, Rafael Alberti, and Miguel Hernández, believed that their work should ultimately speak on behalf of el pueblo, and express their common hopes, thoughts, and emotions. Hernández above all, considered it his duty as a poet to give voice to these sentiments, and he felt a deep commitment to his fellow Republican countrymen. In dedicating his first wartime collection of poetry (Viento del pueblo 1937) to friend and fellow writer Vicente Aleixandre, Hernández famously proclaimed, “Los poetas somos viento del pueblo: nacemos para pasar soplando a través de sus poros y conducir sus ojos y sus sentimientos hacia las cumbres más hermosas. Hoy, este hoy de pasión, de vida, de muerte,

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7 Cano Ballesta has noted how Spanish writers’ belief in the ability of poetry to serve as a tool for social justice began to emerge even prior to the war, at the beginning of the 1930s: “Ya desde 1929 había llegado Rafael Alberti a la convicción de que existían realidades humanas más dignas de nuestra atención y canto que las experienciasstrictamente estéticas cantadas por los poetas desde la paz de su torre de marfil” (La imagen de Miguel 174). Alberti’s work thus helped to create the notion of el poeta en la calle, or the socially-committed artist, a role that fellow Republican writers passionately embraced during the Civil War.
nos empuja de un imponente modo a ti, a mí, a varios, hacia el pueblo” (Obra completa 473).

Hernández thus saw himself as intimately connected with the people, a relationship that unquestionably stemmed from his own humble beginnings as the “shepherd poet of Orihuela” (Genoways 8).

Miguel Hernández Gilabert was born in Orihuela on October 30, 1910 to an impoverished peasant family. His father, Miguel Hernández Sánchez, was a shepherd who raised and tended to a large herd of goats, while his mother, Concepción Gilabert Giner, cared for the house and children. One of four Hernández children to survive to adulthood, Miguel was the youngest son. During his childhood, he helped his father and older brother with the goat herd in addition to attending a small, local school. Scholars debate the exact number of years of schooling that Hernández received, however what is known for certain is that he attended el Colegio de Santo Domingo for a brief period in the mid-1920s, and began to develop an interest in literature (Genoways 7). In 1926, after being forced to leave school by his father, Hernández joined his older brother in the fields herding goats and helping to support the family. From that point on, his education became largely self-directed, with some guidance from the canon of the local cathedral.

Hernández’s intense love of reading inspired him to begin writing his own poetry and stories, and he published pieces in small local publications, and then larger regional journals. In 1931 against the suggestion of friends and family, he traveled to Madrid to try to increase the attention given to his work. Although this first trip in the winter of 1931 was largely unsuccessful, Hernández refused to be defeated, and returned in the spring of 1934 (Genoways 14). This time Hernández obtained introduction to several of the leading literary figures of the
day, including Rafael Alberti, Luis Cernuda, and two writers who would have a profound effect on his later work, Pablo Neruda and Vicente Aleixandre.

In January of 1936 preceding the outbreak of the Civil War, Hernández published a review of Neruda’s latest collection of poetry. This review of Residencia en la tierra, not only signaled Hernández’s break from his classical-inspired early poetry, but also illuminated the effect of Neruda’s writing on him, as well as the evolution of his own political and artistic thought. As Ted Genoways notes, “The poems Hernández was writing during this period, when coupled with his artistic declarations, were his public announcement of his willingness to write on ‘impure’ subjects, to write against Catholic doctrine, and by so doing to imply political opposition to the growing Fascist movement in Spain” (106). After the Nationalist uprising in July, and then Federico García Lorca’s assassination in August, Hernández fully and officially committed himself to the Republican cause by enlisting in the army. He helped to dig trenches, before being transferred to the army’s propaganda unit and given the title “commissar of culture.” By traveling from front to front to motivate the troops and read his work aloud, Hernández ultimately became “…the unmistakable voice of the anti-Fascist cause” (Genoways 110). Beyond merely depicting Republican ideals in his writings however, Hernández worked as an active and integral part of the struggle against the Nationalists (Cano Ballesta, La imagen de Miguel 145). He witnessed firsthand the fighting and suffering resulting from the conflict, and the poetry he wrote during the late 1930s, the last years of his life, began to reflect this traumatic history.

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8 In his review Hernández announced, “Estoy harto de tanto arte menor y puro. Me emociona la confusión desordenada y caótica de la Biblia, donde veo espectáculos grandes, cataclismos, desventuras, mundos revueltos, y oigo alaridos y derrumbamientos de sangre. Me revienta la vocecilla mínima que se extasía ante un chopo, le dispara cuatro versitos y cree que ya está hecho en poesía. Basta de remilgos y empalagos de poetas que parecen confiteras, todo primor, todo punta de dedo azucarado. Pido poetas de las dimensiones de Pablo Neruda para acabar con tanta confitura rimada” (Obra completa 775).
As the Civil War drew to a close in March of 1939, Hernández realized that his reputation and activism would make him a direct target for the new Francoist government. After attempting to achieve asylum from the Chilean embassy for himself, his wife and his son, he decided to flee to Portugal and arrange for his family to follow. Upon arrival in late April, he was turned over to the Portuguese police by a civilian and taken to the border at Rosal de la Frontera. He was subsequently passed into the custody of the Guardia Civil, brutally beaten, and taken to Torrijos Prison in Madrid where he spent the summer (Cerdán Tato 349).

Eventually released thanks to the efforts of Neruda working on his behalf in Paris, Hernández returned home to Orihuela, only to be rearrested two weeks later on September 29, 1939. He was transferred back to Madrid in November and imprisoned at the jail in the plaza of Conde de Toreno. The following spring, he was formally tried and condemned to death, not necessarily for his role within the Republican army however, but rather for his literary activity in support of the cause. The sentence thus reflected Hernández’s eminent role as a Republican writer, and the Nationalists’ concern over the power of his work and reputation. His sentence was later commuted to thirty years imprisonment, and in September of 1940 Hernández was transferred to the prison at Palencia, and from there to Ocaña only two months later (De Luis and Urrutia 21). After surviving a bout of pneumonia, Hernández fell ill with bronchitis in the winter of 1940. The following summer he was transferred to the Reformatorio de adultos de Alicante where he fatally contracted tuberculosis, the cause of his death on March 28, 1942.

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9 The concluding portion of Hernández’s death sentence states, “...Dedicado a actividades literarias, era miembro activo de la Alianza de Intelectuales Antifascistas, habiendo publicado numerosas poesías y crónicas, y folletos, de propaganda revolucionaria y de excitación contra personas de orden y contra el Movimiento Nacional, haciéndose pasar por el poeta de la revolución [...] Fallamos que debemos condenar, y condenamos al procesado Miguel Hernandez Gilabert, como autor de un delito de adhesión a la rebelión, a la pena de muerte” (qtd. in Cano Ballesta, La imagen de Miguel 147).
During his initial imprisonment (May - September 1939), Hernández had with him a small notebook in which he continued to write. The notebook ultimately became the primary foundation of the collection *Cancionero y romancero de ausencias* (De Luis and Urrutia 71). Composed in the months leading to the Republicans’ defeat and then from within the prison itself, the poems of this collection thus reflect the grim end to the Civil War from a remarkably immediate perspective. Along with his final verses written during his second imprisonment (November 1939 - March 1942), Hernández’s poems not only illuminate the psyche of a prisoner under *franquismo*, but also serve as a form of creative resistance. Rather than succumb to the violence and oppression of the Francoist penitentiary system, Hernández maintained his voice and his Republican ideals through his verses, poignantly projecting them from within the cell. As Agramunt Lacruz proposes, imprisoned artists, such as Hernández,

…) [crearon] una importante obra artística documental en la que recrearon no solo sus propias vivencias, sino lo que ocurría en su entorno cotidiano… [Estas imágenes] del sufrimiento y de la tragedia que se convertirían, con el paso del tiempo, en un bello testimonio gráfico de la lucha por la supervivencia, de la exaltación a la vida, de la dignidad, del coraje, de la valentía, de la resistencia indoblegable y del compromiso político. (16)

Such poetic testimony therefore not only recounts the day-to-day penitentiary environment, but preserves the censored identity of the victims and manifests their common experience and suffering.

In this chapter, I will examine how Hernández’s later writing, in particular the posthumously published *Cancionero y romancero de ausencias* (1958), effectively preserves the losers’ voice in spite of the Franco regime’s attempt to repress, silence, and even erase it. As
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history favors the victors, the historical narrative that emerged during this period was overwhelmingly Francoist in nature, especially given the force and control with which the Nationalists established their new state. However, Spanish philosopher Reyes Mate argues that, “…la realidad es más que los hechos. Los hechos son la parte emergente y exitosa de la realidad” (La herencia del olvido 164). Although franquismo is the historic reality that came to pass, it would be a grave mistake to neglect the part of the losers and their paradoxically absent presence. According to Mate,

Si resulta peligrosa esta identificación entre hechos y realidad, es porque se condena lo sin-nombre, lo que no ha llegado a ser, en una palabra, lo fracasado, lo expulsado a la insignificancia. Grave error porque eso está ahí, presente, aunque sea bajo la forma de la ausencia. Error peligroso porque sin esa ausencia no entendemos bien la presencia del ganador… (La herencia del olvido 164)

Thus instead of understanding history as a single narrative of the victor’s progress, Mate argues that there is an invaluable undercurrent that must be recognized:

Hay dos tipos de pasado: uno que está presente en el presente y otro que está ausente del presente. El pasado vencedor sobrevive al tiempo ya que el presente se considera su heredero. El pasado vencido, por el contrario, desaparece de la historia que inaugura ese acontecimiento en el que es vencido… Hay un pasado que fue y sigue siendo y otro que fue y es sido, es decir, ya no es. (“Historia y memoria” 21)

I will therefore further argue that Hernandez’s Cancionero y romancero de ausencias stands against such imposed silence, by preserving the intimate memories of the defeated and powerfully projecting their voice. His poetry helps to reclaim the story of the victims of
Franquismo and thus serves as a compelling tool in the struggle to achieve historical justice. For as Mate proclaims, “No es lo mismo el olvido en el sentido de desconocimiento del pasado, que olvido en el sentido de no dar importancia al pasado. En el primer caso, el olvido es ignorancia y, en el segundo, injusticia” (“Historia y memoria” 19).

In keeping with the dominant historical narrative of Franquismo, early scholarship conducted by Spanish scholars on Hernández’s life and work often dismissed his later collections of poetry as overtly propagandistic, and thus inferior from an aesthetic viewpoint and not worthy of much study (Guerrero Zamora 275). The undeniable factor in such disregard however was the profound influence that Francoist censorship exerted over Hernández’s image and memory. As long as the Franco regime was in power, discussion or detailed examination of Hernández was considered taboo, and the Spanish public’s knowledge of the poet was primarily based upon his early sonnets and love poems. One key work that contributed to such a portrayal was Juan Guerrero Zamora’s 1955 study Miguel Hernández, poeta (1910-1942). Although sympathetic to the tragedy of Hernández’s life and death, Zamora’s work largely reflects the Franco regime’s ideology with its depiction of the poet as a misguided young artist, wrongly influenced by Republicanism. He emphasizes Hernández’s earlier amorous poetry, particularly that of El rayo que no cesa, over any of his wartime collections, dismissing the latter as lacking in skill and style (Guerrero Zamora 279). Commenting on the pronounced bias resulting from the Franco regime, leading Hernández scholar Cano Ballesta remembers, “En 1960, en el cincuenta aniversario del nacimiento del poeta, cuando ciertos sectores ajenos al régimen trataban de organizar actos conmemorativos, la censura también hizo ímparos esfuerzos por ocultar al lector español la faceta política del poeta de Orihuela” (Reelaboración 139). Despite such censorship, breakthrough studies on Hernández and his poetry began to emerge in the late 1950s and early 1960s.
Concha Zardoya’s *Miguel Hernández (1910-1942), Vida y obra, bibliografía, antología* (1955) represents the first biographical work on the poet that is truly comprehensive. Zardoya’s exhaustive study draws on interviews with the widowed Josefina Manresa, as well as Hernández’s former friends and acquaintances. A later biographical study that expanded Zardoya’s work was Elvio Romero’s *Miguel Hernández, destino y poesía* (1958). In the 1960s, scholarly interest in recovering Hernández’s work and history began to flourish, especially in the wake of Juan Cano Ballesta’s influential 1962 study *La poesía de Miguel Hernández*. Cano Ballesta’s work is a remarkably detailed analysis and interpretation of the rhythm, language, symbols, imagery, and structure of Hernández’s poetry. He also reveals previously unknown documents and letters related to the poet, as well as the newly discovered titles of the famous octaves from *Perito en lunas*, Hernández’s first published collection of poetry. One final pioneer study on Hernández is Italian scholar Dario Puccini’s *Miguel Hernández, vita e poesia* (1966). Puccini examines the various studies published on Hernández up to that point, and conducts his own analysis of the poet’s work. He focuses in particular on Hernández’s wartime poetry, and his study is one of the first to place a great value on Hernández’s role as a politically-committed soldier poet (Cano Ballesta, *Reelaboración* 144). After these influential studies and the end of the Franco dictatorship, scholarship on Hernández’s life and poetry began to increase and diversify. In 1976, José Carlos Rovira published «*Cancionero y romancero de ausencias* de Miguel Hernández: Aproximación crítica», a comprehensive study of the structure, imagery, and symbolism of Hernández’s final collection of poetry. While Rovira builds upon the work of earlier scholars such as Zardoya and Cano Ballesta, he focuses solely on the *Cancionero*, arguing that its ultimate value lies in its intimate depiction of Hernández’s emotions within the historic context: “… insistiré…que el núcleo unificador de su poesía es, por una parte, el mensaje y, por
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otra, su vivencia directa, y expresiva desde el primer encuentro, de una naturaleza, un hombre y
una historia que son la base fundamental de la poética a lo largo de toda la obra” (39). This study
helped to not only reassess and expand the scholarship of Hernández’s final writings, but also to
emphasize their ability to capture the experience of the defeated half of society.

This facet of Hernández’s later writing thus makes it invaluable as a resource for
examination of the injustice of both the Civil War and Francoist repression. His verses preserve
the memory of the victims, in essence making visible what the Franco regime sought so intensely
to render invisible. If, as Mate argues, “…la memoria es justicia…Justicia y memoria son
indisociables porque sin memoria de la injusticia no hay justicia posible” (La herencia del olvido
168), then Hernández’s poetry thus aids in the struggle for historical justice through its
vindication of the loser’s perspective.

Of the poems contained in Hernández’s Cionero y romancero de ausencias, I have
therefore chosen to focus on five that illustrate the penitentiary experience and project the
defeated Republican voice. These five poems either express the profound sense of absence and
loss resulting from imprisonment or directly comment on the prison environment itself. I have
also chosen to analyze two additional poems, (“Con dos años, dos flores” and “Casida del
sediento”), that are not contained in the original Cionero, but which are nonetheless
commonly placed alongside it as “Últimos poemas.” Scholars argue that these were composed
during Hernández’s second imprisonment, prior to the deterioration of his health, and thus serve
as powerful and compelling representations of his final creative acts within prison.10

10 In the introduction to their 1984 edition of the Cionero, Leopoldo de Luis and Jorge Urrutia emphasize the
great difficulty in tracing the exact chronology of poems contained in the Cionero, as well as Hernández’s final
prison writings. They note with certainty however that “…durante la segunda etapa de encarcelamiento,
[Hernández] escribió algunas otras composiciones, como… el poema 92 («El pez más viejo del río»), el 93 («Rueda
que irás muy lejos»), la canción 94 («Con dos años, dos flores»), el poema 106 («El último rincón») y la «Casida del
sediento», fechada en Ocaña, en mayo de 1941 probablemente lo último que escribió…” (73-74).
Composed within Torrijos Prison, the poem “Acensión de la escoba” conveys Hernández’s resistance against the silencing measures of the Franco regime by asserting the Republican prisoners’ ability to transcend their current state of defeat. He adopts a simple broom as metaphor for himself and his fellow inmates saying: “Coronada la escoba de laurel, mirto, rosa. / Es el héroe entre aquellos que afrontan la basura. / Para librar el polvo sin vuelo cada cosa bajó…” (1-3). The broom metaphor allows Hernández to represent man as a humble yet useful object, capable of sweeping away the filth of the earth. This imagery works on two further levels, by conveying Hernández’s belief that the prisoner can ultimately overcome his current, miserable living conditions, and also affirming man’s ability to liberate his companions from squalor. The broom thus becomes a tool and a weapon:

Su ardor de espada joven y alegre no reposa.

Delgada de ansiedad, pureza, sol, bravura,

azucena que barre sobre la misma fosa,

es cada vez más alta, más cálida, más pura.” (5-8)

Hernández characterizes the broom with positive attributes that transmit a sense of urgency and courage. Through the juxtaposition of the “espada joven” and the “azucena,” he represents it as something both combative and virtuous. He further highlights the misery of the prison by labeling it a grave, and proposes that the broom’s (and thus the prisoner’s) fervent spirit resists such a tainted and grim atmosphere. He passionately declares,

Nunca: la escoba nunca será crucificada,

porque la juventud propaga su esqueleto

que es una sola flauta muda, pero sonora.

11 According to Concha Zardoya, the poema “Ascensión de la escoba” was written in September of 1939 during Hernández’s first imprisonment at Torrijos. The verses were inspired by a scolding that Hernández received for attempting to clean the patio of his ward (39).
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Es una sola lengua sublima y acordada.

Y ante su aliento raudo se ausenta el polvo quieto.

Y asciende una palmera, columna hacia la aurora. (9-14)

Hernández insists that the prisoner will not be crucified, but rather will transcend his current torture. Although his situation in prison underscores the Franco regime’s attempt to mute him, he is not truly silenced. Just as an untouched flute is still capable of producing sound, Hernández maintains that the prisoner cannot lose his voice while his spirit persists. The final lines describe the power of the broom’s breath to raise the motionless dust, and the ultimate image of it rising against the dawn implies a notion of rebirth. Thus with each verse Hernández eloquently resists the repressive weight of the prison environment. He reclaims the perspective and the voice of the imprisoned, illuminating their suffering and insisting upon their ability to fight despite the odds. His voice in essence becomes their voice, for as Rovira notes about the Cancionero in total, “… Es evidente que el poeta había fundido su yo personal con una determinada historia colectiva, de tal manera que su lírica era ya colectiva, era social…” (27). Further connected to the expression of this suppressed voice, is ultimately the preservation of the collective memory of the penitentiary community. In speaking for them, Hernández both defines and represents the losers’ experience. His poetry vindicates the other half of the historical narrative and illuminates the reality of daily life from behind cell walls.

For Hernández, a crucial element of the defeated half of society’s experience is the profound sense of absence that they endured with the rise of the Franco regime. As has been noted in Chapter 1, such absence was both a social sentiment and a physical reality, as Republicans were not only excluded from the construction of the new society, but physically excluded through imprisonment. It is the latter physical aspect that Hernández denounces in the
poem “Ausencia en todo veo.” Hernández juxtaposes absence (*ausencia*) with the figure of his wife, in order to convey the dual heartache and sentiment of loss resulting from imprisonment:

> Ausencia en todo veo:
> tus ojos la reflejan.
> Ausencia en todo escucho:
> tu voz a tiempo suena.
> Ausencia en todo aspiro:
> tu aliento huele a hierba.
> Ausencia en todo toco:
> tu cuerpo se despuebla.
> Ausencia en todo pruebo:
> tu boca me destierra. (1-10)

The heavy repetition of “absence,” as well as its anaphoric position as the first word of every new thought, potently reflects how the feeling consumes Hernández’s being. He proposes that the weight of this sentiment impacts all of his senses to the extent that he can see it, hear it, touch it, and taste it. More than merely a feeling, the absence itself has become tangible, a sorrowful replacement for what he lacks. Furthermore, the alternation in the repetition of absence and “tú” with every new verse reveals that what Hernández misses is his wife. It is the lack of her that he feels so acutely. From within the prison cell he cannot see nor touch her, just as she cannot see nor touch him. Hence, every second verse is a tragic reflection of the preceding, as Hernández proposes that his wife’s senses reflect the same absence that he feels from prison. Rather than belonging to him alone, the absence and heartache is shared between the lovers. He compellingly notes how the suffering stemming from imprisonment does not belong to the prisoner alone, but
affects the family members as well. In this manner, Hernández’s verses thus capture the experience of thousands of Republican couples and families. As Rovira illustrates,

…[S]u reflexión autobiográfica salta el valor de lo individual y se universaliza, llegando a ser en definitiva la plasmación poética de una parte de la conciencia colectiva de la época, la de los hombres que se encuentran, fuera o dentro, en las mismas circunstancias que el poeta; y así, al reafirmar su propio mundo personal, se llena, haciéndolo, de una representación social… (140-141)

Despite the intimacy of his verses and the personalized nature of the absence that he feels, Hernández ultimately expresses the fears and desires that are common among all individuals in such circumstances. In crying out for his own far-away loved one, his voice thus becomes the voice of all separated couples.

In the poem “Casida del sediento,” Hernández poignantly emphasizes the agony of this absence using the semantic field of thirst. Written in the prison of Ocaña in the spring of 1941, Hernández’s verses reflect his intense longing for what he cannot have: “Arena del desierto / soy: desierto de sed. / Oasis en tu boca / donde no he de beber” (1-4). With the opening image of parched desert sand, Hernández immediately invokes a tangible feeling of thirst. He depicts himself using this metaphor, suggesting that in its current state, his body is burning from the lack of water. Yet the added representation of his wife as an oasis suggests that the thirst that Hernández suffers from is in fact desire. Just as water will quench dry sand, Hernández implies that his wife can soothe his burning passion. Nevertheless, such relief is unattainable:

Húmedo punto en medio
de un mundo abrasador,
el de tu cuerpo, el tuyo,
que nunca es de los dos.

Cuerpo: pozo cerrado

a quien la sed y el sol han calcinado. (7-12)

He repeats the image of the mouth as an oasis in the middle of a parched landscape, and emphasizes that his wife’s body can provide relief to his own. He asserts however, that her body will never again be shared between them, and therefore the final image is of his own body burned by thirst. He uses the metaphor of a closed-off well to suggest that he will ultimately waste away in prison without his wife’s sustaining presence. The pessimism of the imagery in the final verses thus transmits Hernández’s loss of hope, trapped as he is between cell walls. Seeing no end to his suffering, he protests his isolation from his spouse and poignantly laments the loss.

Hernández further illustrates the anguish resulting from separation in poem 30 “De qué adoleció…” He uses a metaphor of sickness to emphasize the gravity of such absence and its disastrous impact upon the physical well-being of a divided couple:

¿De qué adoleció

la mujer aquella?

Del mal peor:

del mal de las ausencias.

Y el hombre aquél. (1-5)

Commenting on such complementary imagery, Francis Cerdán illustrates how the two representations result in “…un tercer tema dinámico, el de la llamada a la comunicación, a la comunión, a la fusión…. la amada representa la posibilidad de saciar la pasión amorosa. Pero «por desgracia» esta plenitud de la comunicación amorosa resulta imposible. En esta irremediable «tensión que no cesa» el yo del poeta se consume y se acaba. (Subrayemos que no he de beber anula toda proyección en el futuro y que han calcinado recapitula un pasado que desemboca en el grado zero)” (986).
In these verses, Hernández proposes that to feel absence is akin to falling ill, and the woman and man therefore suffer in a manner similar to that stemming from physical illness. Furthermore, he not only labels absence as a sickness, but refers to it as the worst sickness, “el mal peor”. Once again, Hernández is therefore arguing that the absence resulting from a couple’s separation takes a pronounced physical toll on both individuals, not just the imprisoned individual:

¿De qué murió
la mujer aquélla?
Del mal peor:
del mal de las ausencias.

Y el hombre aquél. (6-10)

In these final verses, Hernández reiterates the bodily impact that absence has by claiming that the weight of it has in fact killed both the woman and the man. The drama of this conclusion thus highlights Hernández’s underlying criticism of the situation. Although unspoken, the alternate reality he suggests with the poem’s end is that if the man and woman were never separated in the first place, they might yet be alive and well. Mate argues that such attention given to “…lo fracasado, a lo desechado por la lógica de la historia es profundamente inquietante y subversiva, tanto desde el punto de vista epistémico como político, porque cuestiona la autoridad de lo fáctico. Lo que viene a decir es que la realidad no es sólo lo fáctico, lo que ha llegado a ser, sino también lo posible…” (“Historia y memoria” 22). In other words, Hernández captures with his verses an alternate historical outcome. He observes the fact that there was another potential end to the conflict between the Nationalists and the Republicans, and proposes that to ignore the possibility of it serves to condone the tragedy that occurred instead.
Hernández’s verses most clearly manifest the alternate possibility of life instead of defeat for the losers in the poems dedicated to the memory of his wife and son. In the famous “Nanas de la cebolla,” Hernández utilizes the image of his son, and specifically his son’s laughter, to communicate his hope for the future, despite the grimness of his imprisonment and his family’s resulting hunger. Inspired by a letter from his wife, in which she complains that they have nothing to eat but onions, Hernández writes,

\[
\text{La cebolla es escarcha} \\
\text{cerrada y pobre:} \\
\text{escarcha de tus días} \\
\text{y de mis noches} \\
\text{Hambre y cebolla:} \\
\text{hielo negro y escarcha,} \\
\text{grande y redonda} \\
\text{En la cuna del hambre} \\
\text{mi niño estaba.} \\
\text{Con sangre de cebolla} \\
\text{se amamantaba. (1-11)}
\]

Hernández begins with the image of the onion, presenting it as something devoid of warmth and nourishment, but rather touched by frost. He juxtaposes it with hunger and emphasizes its inability to sustain his son who lies in “la cuna del hambre.” He further proposes that his wife’s breast milk has been soured by the meager diet of onions, and his son in essence drinks onion

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13 Zardoya illuminates how the inspiration for this poem, written in September of 1939 while Hernández was being held at Torrijos, was derived from an exchange of letters between the poet and his wife. Responding to the misery of his wife’s predicament, Hernández wrote, “El olor de la cebolla que comes me llega hasta aquí y mi niño se sentirá indignado de mamar y sacar zumo de cebolla en vez de leche. Para que lo consueles te mando esas coplillas que le he hecho ya que para mí no hay otro quehacer que escribirlos a vosotros o desesperarme” (qtd. in Zardoya 39).
juice instead. With this bleak picture, Hernández illustrates the suffering and poverty of his family, as well as his own impotence to aid them. Trapped in jail, he can only imagine his wife’s struggles to provide for their son. Despite such adversity, Hernández ultimately depicts his son as a force of hope and goodness, a potent contrast to the initial imagery of darkness and frost:

Alondra de mi casa,
ríete mucho.
Es tu risa en los ojos
la luz del mundo.
Ríete tanto
que en el alma, al oírte,
bata el espacio. (22-28)

He portrays the boy as a lark, asserting that his laughter lights up the world. He further claims that the sound of such laughter is capable of penetrating the cell walls and through hearing it, Hernández’s soul can transcend the prison. In essence, his son’s joy combats Hernández’s lack of freedom and he proclaims:

Tu risa me hace libre,
me pone alas.
Soledades me quita,
cárceles me arranca.

Es tu risa la espada
más victoriosa.
Vencedor de las flores
Through his son, Hernández proclaims himself free. The sound of the boy’s happiness lifts him from the confines of prison and shatters his solitude. He further reveals his hope for the future with the metaphor of laughter as a conquering sword. Declaring his son a victor, Hernández diverges from the initial gloomy imagery of the poem, and illustrates an image of the victor that compellingly contrasts with the Francoist representation. Despite the misery of the current situation, he asserts that his son will ultimately persist as the “porvenir de mis huesos / y de mi amor,” and will not be defeated. The possibility of this future is therefore what helps to sustain Hernández: “…es la vida, sentida a través del amor y de la libertad, la que alumbrá el pozo de energía que hay en su alma. Vida y muerte se atraen y se repelen con impulsos iguales. Pero algo que es vida, y, a la vez, un poco de muerte vence. Es el amor” (Cano Ballesta, *Poesía de Miguel Hernández* 65-66). Hernández’s love for his son thus allows him to maintain his hope and his identity. As a husband and father, he is more than a physical body enclosed within a cell, and he affirms that his son will carry his legacy forward. Even if his body perishes in prison, his memory will ultimately live on through familial love.

The idea of memory’s perpetuation through family, and specifically through children, is further illustrated in the poem “Con dos años, dos flores.” Written in honor of his son’s second birthday, Hernández uses the image of blood to establish a continuum between himself and the
boy, arguing that latter will ultimately have the victorious future that he himself may not.¹⁴

Hernández writes:

Con dos años, dos flores
cumple ahora.
Dos alondras llenando
Toda tu aurora.
Niño radiante:
va mi sangre contigo
siempre adelante.
Sangre mía, adelante,
No retrocedas. (1-9)

Through the opening imagery of flowers and larks, Hernández juxtaposes his remembrance of his son with cheerful symbols of spring and the outside world. The boy comes to represent happiness and the promise of life for Hernández, who confined as he is behind bars, cannot experience the beauty of nature or watch his son’s growth. He further emphasizes the boy as the progeny of his blood, declaring that his blood, his life essence, will thus live on through his son’s body. This implies that Hernández’s memory will endure as well. Rather than be based in a single individual, in a single circumstance, Hernández suggests that memory is thus tied to blood and family. For every prisoner in one of Franco’s cells, there is a child or a loved one on the outside, who keeps hope for the future alive. This fact is what consoles Hernández in spite of his situation, and he passionately proclaims:

¹⁴ Scholars confidently date this poem to January of 1941, when Hernández’s second son reached his second birthday (De Luis and Urrutia 226). As his letters to his wife reveal, the little boy consumed Hernández’s thoughts: “Quiero un porvenir hermoso para nuestro hijo...Me paso las horas pensando en ese hijo y en ese porvenir que hemos de traerle, tú con tus cuidados y yo con mis esfuerzos” (qtd in Zardoya 46).
Once more, Hernández stresses laughter as a means to combat the tragedy of his circumstances. It symbolizes hope for the future in spite of current injustice, and serves as reassurance that there is still good in the world. He further emphasizes this with the allegory of wheat and grass. He announces the superiority of wheat, subtly drawing on wheat’s association with nourishment and fertility. His son’s laughter thus becomes associated with sustenance. In the final verses, Hernández juxtaposes himself with his son in the future tense, and powerfully declares that, in the end, he will be triumphant through the boy. His implication is that through their shared blood, his essence and memory will persist through to a future that his tangible body may never see. With this compelling statement, Hernández not only illuminates the defeated Republicans hope for the future, but explicitly states the power of memory to transcend generations. Thus while Hernández recognizes himself as representing the present state of the losers, he argues that his son represents the future and the promise of change. As Mate proclaims, “Sólo se puede reivindicar la memoria del pasado si tenemos hoy un colectivo, sociológicamente bien definido, que sea el heredero real de ese pasado. A eso lo llama él «memoria colectiva»” (La herencia del olvido 153). In his verses, Hernández recognizes that his son and the children of his fellow Republican prisoners will ultimately become the heirs of this collective memory. He may be the
one recording it through poetry, but they will be the ones who read his verses and carry the
memory of past injustice into the future. Therefore the present state of defeat is neither total nor
definite, as future generations will be capable of continuing the fight for justice.

While the remembrance of his son helps Hernández overcome the overwhelming despair
of the prison cell and maintain his hope for the future, his wife’s image helps him resist his
current physical captivity. In the poem “Antes del odio,” Hernández emphasizes love as a means
to transcend physical repression by juxtaposing it with images of the penitentiary environment:

Beso soy, sombra con sombra.

Beso, dolor con dolor,

por haberme enamorado,

corazón sin corazón,

de las cosas, del aliento

sin sombra de la creación.

Sed con agua en la distancia,

pero sed alrededor. (1-8)

With the opening image of himself as a kiss, Hernández compellingly situates images of love
within the darkness of the prison. In spite of its association with passion, the kiss in this situation
is accompanied by shadows and pain. The shadows suggest a presence that it not quiet tangible,
just as Hernández’s wife, the object of his love, is only present mentally not physically. Confined
within the prison cell, all Hernández has to hold are memories, and the result is heightened desire
and anguish. He stresses this longing with the metaphor of thirst, and represents his wife as the
far-away water that can fulfill his need. Reiterating the inability to be with her he writes,

No es posible acariciarte
con las manos que me dio
el fuego de más deseo,
el ansia de más ardor.

Varias alas, varios vuelos
abaten en ellas hoy
hierros que cercan las venas
y las muerden con renor.

Por amor, vida, abatido,
pájaro sin remisión. (15-24)

Hernández explicitly calls attention to his separation from his wife, and further references the constraints of penitentiary environment. He uses a metaphor of birds shot down in flight to describe himself and his fellow prisoners. The image of chains surrounding and biting the birds’ veins connotes the bars of the prison cell, as well as the iron shackles that are so characteristic of penitentiary imagery. Hernández also claims that the prisoners are condemned to such a state of defeat without hope of reprieve, and to highlight this point further, commands:

Mírame aquí encadenado,
escupido, sin calor,
a los pies de la tiniebla
más súbita, más feroz,
comiendo pan y cuchillo
como buen trabajador
y a veces cuchillo sólo,
sólo por amor. (31-38)
As the pessimism of Hernández’s verses builds, he directly identifies his prison environment. He calls upon the interlocutor to observe his chains and the misery of his situation. Cold, hungry, and in pain, he juxtaposes love alongside his torment, emphasizing it above all other sensations. It is this emphasis and repetition of love however, that changes with the poem’s progression. Initially placing it alongside the other torments of the prison, Hernández switches from describing love as yet another one of his pains to viewing it as a vehicle to overcome the reality of his circumstance:

Espesura, mar, desierto,
sangre, monte rodador:
libertades de mi alma
clamorosas de pasión,
desfilando por mi cuerpo,
donde no se quedan, no,
pero donde se despliegan,
sólo por amor.

Porque dentro de la triste
guirnalda del eslabón,
del sabor a carcelero
constante y a paredón,
y a precipicio en acecho,
alto, alegre, libre soy.
Alto, alegre, libre, libre,
sólo por amor. (45-60)
Hernández laments how his recollections of the beauty and spaciousness of the natural world are leaving him the longer he remains in prison. They are drawn out of his body by love and thus spread out beyond his physical confines. Here, however Hernández initiates a switch. He repeats the image of iron shackles, and describes his surroundings through the smell of the prison warden, the presence of the execution wall, and the constant feeling of being watched and trapped. Yet in spite of all of this, Hernández passionately declares himself free. He uses the repetition of “alto, alegre, libre” to emphasize this liberty and claims that it is only through love:

No, no hay cárcel para el hombre.

No podrán atarme, no.

Este mundo de cadenas
me es pequeño y exterior.

¿Quién encierra una sonrisa?

¿Quién amuralla una voz?

A lo lejos tú, más sola
que la muerte, la una y yo.

A lo lejos tú, sintiendo
en tus brazos mi prisión,

en tus brazos donde late
la libertad de los dos.

Libre soy. Siénteme libre.

Sólo por amor. (61-74)

With the repetition of “no” at the beginning of the final stanza, Hernández powerfully rejects both his condition as a prisoner and the penitentiary environment in general. He challenges the
physical repression of the Franco regime, claiming that the authorities are incapable of truly chaining him. He defiantly asks, “¿Quién encierra una sonrisa? / ¿Quién amuralla una voz?” in essence proposing that man is much more than a physical body. To illustrate this point further, he argues that his wife also feels the oppressive weight of the prison through his absence, and it is this shared experience and shared longing that connects them spiritually across the distance. Thus although Hernández’s physical body remains confined, his spirit ultimately transcends the prison through love: “Libre soy. Siénteme libre / Sólo por amor.” As Leopoldo de Luis and Jorge Urrutia note, “El amor triunfa: el amor ha liberado—bien que sea no más que espiritualmente—al poeta. La amada está lejos, y en sus brazos está sintiendo el peso de la prisión del amado, más también en sus brazos está, precisamente, la libertad de los dos” (91). This faith in the transformative power of love compellingly demonstrates Hernández’s resistance against Francoist repression. He argues that although they may lock up his body, inflict pain upon him, and separate him from his family, such measures do not change who he is as an individual. Through his assertion of his identity as a lover, a father, and a man, he emphasizes the natural human dignity of the imprisoned. He passionately contests the notion of the prisoners as debased criminals who must be broken and subjugated, and instead underscores their shared humanity and strength of spirit. As Carlos Bousoño articulates,

Para lograr tal sensación de rico y tornasolado contenido fueron necesarias las anteriores estrofas de pesadumbre. El alma del lector sale de ellas cargada de melancolía. Y cuando ahora entra en estas otras de relativa victoria, el significado

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15 In his analysis of the poem, Ismael Gavilán proposes, “Esta virtual solidaridad en el amor conlleva una progresión desde lo individual a lo colectivo: no es tan sólo el amor del hablante en la queja individual lo que trasuntan estos versos, también y sin abandonar el tono subjetivo e íntimo de su enunciación, se hace presente una reflexividad social que adquiere un valor de alto simbolismo: desde el yo, éste se transfigura en un nosotros (el hablante, la amada, el que sufre, el encarcelado, el que lee) que permite colegir el ejercicio del poema como un acto comunitario desde la lectura” (“Cancionero y romancero de ausencias de Miguel Hernández”).
que obtiene es la mezcla de ambas impresiones sin reciproca destrucción, como triunfo moral de un noble espíritu. (34)

It is this spirit that Hernández illuminates and ultimately reclaims in his verses. He expounds an alternative narrative of the postwar period, challenging the notion of the Republicans as perpetual losers and affirming instead the strength of the human spirit.

Hernández’s epitomization of the imprisoned individual under *franquismo* ultimately helped to cement his reputation as the standard-bearer of Republican resistance. Not only did he give voice to the democratic ideals and goals of *el pueblo republicano* during the conflict itself, but he continued to preserve their spirit and denounce the injustice committed against them from behind the prison bars. Even though a rapid and tragic decline in health during the early months of 1942 forced him to cease writing, Hernández’s image as the mouthpiece of the Republican cause was a reality already acknowledged by those around him. After he succumbed to tuberculosis on March 28, 1942, Hernández’s fellow inmates held a funeral ceremony for him within the prison itself. Wrapped in a shroud and placed in a plain coffin, Hernández’s body was carried by several prisoners to the courtyard, where the prison population in total was gathered in mourning. The authorities permitted Chopin’s funeral march to be performed, and after all the prisoners had filed by the coffin to pay their last respects, Hernández’s body was passed outside the walls to his waiting family (Argramunt Lacruz 496). Such ceremony demonstrated the profound respect and admiration that the prison community had for the poet. He moved and lived among them, sharing their struggles and championing their hopes. As Dario Puccini proposes, Hernández was the exemplar “civic poet”:

…[un] poeta que quiere vivir y representar la voz general de la mayoría o de la supuesta mayoría popular de su país…El poeta civil incluye naturalmente al poeta
social, pero quizás lo supera, al menos en el sentido de querer expresar varias

capas sociales y varios ambientes humanos: algo que configure de alguna forma

un pueblo, un conjunto de poblaciones, y, en resumen, una nación en su sustancia

histórica, presente y aun en su paisaje. (116)

Through his poetry, Hernández spoke for those whose voices were not only ignored, but actively
repressed. In opposition to the dominance of the Francoist narrative, Hernández espoused an
alternative. He became the prototypical “loser” in Spain’s civil conflict, yet rather than
submissively accept his fate, he reclaimed the defeated perspective from the ashes of history.

Through his verses, he emphasized the transcendent power of love, and illuminated the inherent
dignity of man in spite of severe oppression. He ultimately demonstrated a compelling faith in
man’s humanity, even amidst the bleakest and most tragic circumstances.
Chapter 3. Ángeles García-Madrid and the “Community of Memory”: Resistance, Strength, and Solidarity in Franco’s Women’s Prisons

In recalling the years she spent imprisoned within Francoist jails, Maria Salvo “Cionin” underscores the remarkable sense of solidarity that developed among her fellow female prisoners: “Es un sentimiento noble en que el sacrificio personal no cuenta; lo esencial era superar entre todas todo lo desagradable, lo más duro, de forma colectiva; así florece ese lazo de camaradería, que solo puede darse en las más terribles situaciones” (Cuevas 163).16 Her words highlight the sustaining power of such sentiment, and suggest that it was only through this sense of community that the prisoners were able to confront the brutality and agony of their surroundings. In fact, upon examining the testimonial writing of imprisoned Republican women, Shirley Mangini notes that, “The most pervasive theme…is the indomitable solidarity of the prison women, the single phenomenon that kept many women alive emotionally, psychologically, even physically” (116). For former prisoners, such as Tomasa Cuevas, Mercedes Núñez, and Ángeles García-Madrid, it was the continuation of this feeling of

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16 Tomasa Cuevas’ remarkable three-volume collection of testimonies, Testimonios de mujeres en las cárceles franquistas (1974), represents one of the most expansive and detailed compilations of testimony from the postwar period. A former political prisoner herself, Cuevas spent several years recording and transcribing the oral testimony of her fellow female prisoners. Her work compellingly demonstrates the belief in the importance of remembering and communicating this history: “Yo pediría a las mujeres que han sufrido represión, que han pasado por las cárcel, que han luchado, que escriben o que hablen ante un magnetofón, pues sería de una gran aportación, una gran riqueza para los historiadores de nuestra España, saber lo que muchos desconocen (Cuevas 14).
commitment and fellowship that inspired them to write memoirs and collect testimony. In doing so, they give voice to the thousands of women who passed through the prisons, many of whom did not survive or were incapable of sharing their trauma.  

Although she shares the motive of recovering the female prisoner’s perspective and denouncing the brutality of Francoist repression, it is through her use of verse that García-Madrid ultimately stands apart from her fellows. In her poetry, García-Madrid uses the penitentiary environment as a metaphor for Francoist society, in order to emphasize the severe lack of physical and psychological liberty that the losers of the Civil War experienced. Her verses serve the double mission of criticizing *franquismo* and preserving the collective history of the Republican women who suffered and died within the prisons. As José Álvarez Fernández argues, the power of such writing lies in its ability to form:

…una «comunidad de memoria» cuyo objetivo sería recordar con el fin de, por un lado, rehabilitar la memoria de todos aquellos que lucharon y murieron en la larga batalla contra el franquismo, en un perpetuo homenaje a su sufrida memoria; y por otro evitar que caigan en el olvido las lecciones del pasado para, en un futuro, poder evitar la repetición de la tragedia. (36)

I will argue in this chapter that García-Madrid’s poetry fits perfectly within this community, as it illustrates the reality of the penitentiary experience and denounces the constant prejudice

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17 Beyond the psychological inability or lack of desire to speak of their prison experiences, Shirley Mangini notes the impact that illiteracy has had on the publication of women’s testimonies: “Since the late 1970s, a number of memory texts and testimonial works have appeared that shed new light on the topic of women in prison. Their limited number results from the fact that few of the women had sufficient skills to write about their memories of incarceration” (105). The majority of women who were imprisoned for connection to the Republican war effort were peasant or working-class women, who had had very little formal school. Furthermore, they did not receive the same educational instruction that their male counterparts did within the prison: “A diferencia de las prisiones de hombres, donde el papel de la instrucción cultural y religiosa era el principal vehículo de redención, en las cárcel de mujeres ni la alfabetización ni el esfuerzo intelectual aparecieron destacados como elementos centrales” (Gómez Bravo, *Exilio interior* 170).
exercised against the prisoners, especially the female prisoners. I will analyze how she creates a discursive space in which the losers’ perspective is both shared and preserved despite the Franco regime’s intent to erase it. I thus propose that her poetry not only creates a space in which to honor the memory of those that fell victim to the violence, but furthermore communicates this injustice to future generations.

Ángeles Ortega García-Madrid, who at the age of 96 currently resides in Madrid, was born in 1918 to a working-class family in Torrejón de Ardoz. Shortly after her birth, her family moved to Madrid, where her father worked as a railway man and her mother became a housekeeper. She attended school until her early teens, when she was forced to start working as a seamstress in order to help support her family (Mujeres republicanas). In 1934 in the wake of the famous Asturian miners’ rebellion, García-Madrid developed an interest in politics, and at the age of sixteen, joined the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE). Being inspired by the leftist political ideals of equality and liberty, she became a fervent activist and supporter of the Republican cause, following the Nationalist coup in the summer of 1936. As she was not old enough to formally enlist in the war effort, García-Madrid volunteered instead for war-related jobs on the home front. In particular, she volunteered for the Socialist youth group the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas (JSU), working as a ticket collector for the streetcar system in Madrid.

After the Nationalist victory in April 1939, García-Madrid was detained for her affiliation with the JSU along with thousands of other young Republicans. She was condemned to 30 years imprisonment for “auxilio a la rebellion militar,” and specifically, her work as a streetcar employee (Associació per la Cultura i la Memòria de Catalunya). She was transferred from a local detention center in Almagro to the prison of Ventas, where she was placed in the infamous
galería primera derecha, the ward in which those who had been condemned to death were held. After spending a year in Ventas, she was transferred in May of 1940 with dozens of other prisoners to the jail in Tarragona. The women were crammed in filthy cattle cars and transferred by train. From there she was subsequently moved to Les Corts prison in Barcelona and then finally to Gerona. In February of 1942, García-Madrid was released in conditional liberty, a status in which she remained for the next thirteen years (Mujeres republicanas).

While many women like García-Madrid were imprisoned for their political activity in support of the democratic Republic, the vast majority were imprisoned for no more reason than association with family or friends. They were detained and subsequently jailed, as historian Fernando Hernández-Holgado notes, “Por el simple hecho de ser madres, hermanas o compañeras de hombres buscados por el régimen, esto es, en calidad de rehenes, como medida de presión para conseguir encontrar a los varones perseguidos” (60). Thus the repression exercised against the female portion of the defeated half of society took on a dualistic character that was not only political, but sexist as well. Rather than being targeted for active involvement in the Republican war effort, they were targeted as women, who happened to be associated with the “wrong side.” According to Ana Aguado, “…en la inmediata posguerra abundaron las detenciones masivas de republicanas, que en muchas ocasiones no tenían ninguna implicación política directa, pero que habían cometido el «delito» de votar al Frente Popular” (40).

Similar to the discourse used for their male counterparts, the Franco regime’s justification for these women’s imprisonment and execution was couched in severe religious and moralistic terms. In the public discourse, they were depicted as wayward sinners whose crime was not only political, but also moral (Richards 50). For the female prisoners however, this prejudice carried a further punitive dimension given the regime’s emphasis on traditional values and Catholic
doctrine. Along with a complete rejection of the liberal reforms of the Second Republic, Franciscoist authorities further revoked the new rights and social mobility afforded to women. Thus women who had taken advantage of these new civil freedoms were punished as much for transgressing patriarchal tradition, as for any form of leftist political participation (Mangini 57). They were publically disparaged as morally loose, a rhetorical characterization that culminated in their denomination as prostitutes. According to Mangini, “If being a leftist meant that you were a disgraced ‘Red,’ being a female leftist meant that you were a ‘Red whore’” (Mangini 106). García-Madrid herself illustrates such language in her memoir Réquiem por la libertad, when she describes her initial interrogation session upon being detained. In response to her statement that she refuses to accuse her neighbors of being communists, the police captain responds:

— ¡Esta se cree muy lista, pero no es más que una puta roja!

A esa siguieron una sarta de barbaridades e insultos como Ángeles no había oído en su vida y que no merecen ser repetidos. El solo se fue encendiendo de tal forma al no querer aceptar la ignorancia de la muchacha sobre lo que ellos decían que, en media de sus voces, tal vez pensó que debía pasar a la acción por lo que, salvando de una zancada el espacio que le separaba y antes de que ella pudiera retroceder, la abofeteó con tal fuerza que al momento comenzó a brotar sangre de la boca de su víctima. (43)

This scene not only reveals the intensity and misogynistic nature of the verbal abuse leveled against the women prisoners, but it also powerfully highlights the associated physical abuse.

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18 Following Franco’s victory, Nationalist authorities asserted that the reforms of the Second Republic had resulted in a perversion of societal order and its morals. They believed that any individual participating in this liberal culture had thus been tainted by association: “En los informes se afirmaba que estas mujeres habían llegado a tal condición debido a la «descristianización» y la «marxistización» del país durante el periodo de la Republica, identificando la condena a sus valores políticos y personales con la condena a los valores de la cultura republicana” (Aguado 43)
Memories such as this are commonplace in the testimonies of García-Madrid’s fellow prisoners, and in many instances the violence is even more savage. As Mercedes Núñez, a former prisoner held in Ventas, illustrates,

It is not difficult to find an inmate in Ventas who has been mistreated and tortured; the difficult thing—if not the impossible—thing is to find one who has been able to escape without receiving even the ritual slaps. Sticks and electric currents are the two most common variants of torture. In general, the torture has as its objective ‘to make the victims sing,’ trying with these methods to oblige them to denounce other anti-Francoites. But often the torture is simply gratuitous, the expression of a ferocious hatred and a sadism that borders on insanity. (qtd. in Mangini 128)

Núñez underscores the fact that, in many cases, the underlying rationale for the use of violence against the women was nothing more than pure prejudice. It was an active manifestation of the bitterness of the ideological divide between the victors and the vanquished, as well as a ruthless expression of misogyny.

The ubiquity of the scenes of suffering and abuse contained in women’s testimonies reveals the dark reality of daily life within the prisons throughout Spain. Their accounts powerfully depict the miserable conditions to which thousands of women were subjected following Franco’s victory. According to the Vital Statistics Office in Madrid, there were about 23,232 women residing in jail in 1939 alone (Mangini 101). Prisons such as Ventas and Les Corts in Barcelona were saturated with women, the vast majority of who had been imprisoned

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19 In his study of the prison of Ventas, Hernández-Holgado’s stresses the difficulty inherent in obtaining exact statistics for female imprisonment during the Franco dictatorship. He notes how some prisons, for example the prison of Les Corts in Barcelona, were much more efficient than others at documenting and maintaining records of the inmates’ entrance, exit, and execution. The lack of proper documentation is a particularly noteworthy issue for studies of Ventas, as the vast majority of its registers and prison records have completely disappeared (57).
for presumed affiliation with the Republican cause. Similar to male political prisoners they were given the death penalty upon entrance to the prison, a sentence that was then frequently commuted to 30 years imprisonment. Yet as Mangini emphasizes, the possibility of execution remained constant:

…death by firing squad became a daily threat, because in the case of Ventas and other prisons, the cemeteries where the inmates were executed were in earshot of the prison… Many nights were spent waiting for the sound of shots—always at dawn—and many inmates therefore became obsessed with the death sentence.

(139)

Physical violence and psychological terror thus pervaded an environment that was already a veritable purgatory due to the physical conditions of the cells, and lack of adequate hygiene and nutrition. Yet despite the official censorship, as well as the self-censorship of women who were terrified of further punitive consequence, there were those like García-Madrid, who did speak out against the injustice. It is through their voices that the brutality and horrendous conditions of prison life are revealed.

Even today seventy-five years after the end of the Spanish Civil War, García-Madrid remains active in the fight against social inequality, and is a frequent participant in commemorative events dedicated to recovering and honoring the memory of the victims of Francoist repression (El País). She has spoken and performed recitations of her poetry at a variety of public gatherings and ceremonies, and has published several collections of poetry, as well as a memoir, narrating her experiences within the Francoist prison system. Despite this continued activism and involvement in the fight to recover the defeated Republican perspective,

García-Madrid and her work have been little studied both within and outside of Spain. One pre-twenty-first century study notable for its treatment of memory and feminine testimony from the Spanish Civil War is the work of American scholar Shirley Mangini, *Memories of Resistance: Women’s Voices from the Spanish Civil War* (1995). Within her study, Mangini examines García-Madrid’s prison memoir, *Réquiem por la libertad* (1982), as crucial example of feminine testimony from the postwar period in Spain. She juxtaposes García-Madrid’s voice alongside those of fellow female authors and former prisoners, Tomasa Cuevas, Mercedes Núñez, and Juana Doña, in order to uncover and analyze the themes and images common to their testimonial writing. Yet Mangini only examines the García-Madrid’s memoir, and makes no direct reference to the latter’s poetic production. A more recent study of García-Madrid and her work can be found in the documentary film *Mujeres republicanas* (2010), and the accompanying art exhibition created produced by Spanish artist Javi Larrauri. Commenting on the lack of recognition given to the female victims of franquismo, Larrauri states,

> Cuando empecé a documentarme para realizar este proyecto me llamó la atención la ausencia de la mujer al hablar de la guerra civil o la resistencia antifranquista durante la dictadura. Salvo alguna rara excepción, sólo se hablaba de hombres. También es verdad que la mayoría de los documentos sobre el tema estaban escritos por hombres. Hombres que escribían libros hablando de lo que otros hombres habían hecho. (*Mujeres republicanas*)

To counteract this lack of recognition, Larrauri not only capture the image of several former female political prisoners, including García-Madrid, in compelling, portrait-style paintings, but also films them sharing oral testimony of their penitentiary experience. In the section of the
A documentary dedicated to García-Madrid, Larrauri captures her reading one of her prison poems aloud (*Mujeres republicanas*).

My work is unique from Mangini and Larrauri’s in that, rather than analyzing García-Madrid’s testimonial writing, I will instead focus on the poetry she produced while imprisoned. I will examine five poems from the collection *Al quiebro de mis espinas* (1977), which not only depict the inhumane physical conditions of the prisons, but passionately attack the Franco regime’s notion of “justice.” In essence, I will analyze how García-Madrid uses verse to present an alternative historical discourse that seeks to recognize and honor the female voices were silenced by the Franco regime.

In the poem “Tarragona,” García-Madrid uses Tarragona jail as the exemplar of the Francoist women’s prison, in order to illustrate the oppressive physical reality of the penitentiary environment and its subsequent persistence in the memory of the inmates. Speaking to a personified Tarragona, she proclaims,

¡Qué dolidos recuerdos en tu nombre!
De todas tus grandezas sólo he visto
—y me late en el alma y las pupilas—
la entrada de un convento, su escalera,
y un penoso desván. (5-9)

Through the initial use of apostrophe, García-Madrid imbues the space of Tarragona with a sense of life and personality. It is not a mere physical location, but rather a space with which she has an intimate connection, and furthermore, which stays in her mind even after she has left it. She claims that of the entire city itself, all she can remember, all that remains ingrained in her mind’s eye is the image of the entrance to the convent in which she was imprisoned:
Cárcel de paso, gracias a los cielos,
establecida en Casa Religiosa.
la más dura de cuantas he vivido.
Maldad innecesaria.
Era un disparatado calabozo
Con dos ciegas ventanas bien trancadas.
El aire, compasivo arremetía
Sin lograrlas cruzar. (10-17)

Noting the make-shift nature of the prison, García-Madrid directly calls attention to the absurd juxtaposition of penitentiary space with a holy house. She describes the oppressive confines of the space itself, commenting that even the air is unable to slip through the well-locked windows. She transmits the notion of stagnation and severe enclosure, suggesting that after passing within, there is no possibility for contact with the outside world. Listing one restricting and life-choking quality after the next she states,

Agregada, sin agua y obstruida
un[a] sucia letrina, arrinconada,
esparcía sus fétidos hedores
sofocando el ambiente.
Allí, en el suelo,
dos cientos de mujeres apiñadas

21 Although the Catholic religion was crucial in the reformation of both male and female prisoners during the Franco dictatorship, it was a particularly constant factor within the women’s prisons, where it was utilized as the dominant means of social “conversion” (Gómez Bravo, Exilio interior 169). Furthermore, Ana Aguado has noted the particular role that nuns played within organization of the prisons: “…su gestión y dirección estaban en manos tanto de funcionarias—especialmente seleccionadas para la tarea—como de monjas pertenecientes a determinadas órdenes religiosas, que fueron encargadas de nuevo de la administración y custodia de prisiones” (44).
bajo vetustas vigas corroídas
no por el tiempo, sí por roedores
en veces de anfitrión. (18-26)

In these verses, García-Madrid explicitly depicts the miserable conditions within the convent prison. She emphasizes the acute lack of space and clean, breathable air, illustrating how the women are almost heaped on top of each other. The oppression and feeling of suffocation to which the prisoners are subjected are thus as much physical as they are psychological. There is no space for the prisoners to move about, and the environment is characterized by extreme deprivation. García-Madrid further highlights how this contributes to a static notion of time:

Por alimento, aquel caldo increíble
metido en sal, con algo allí flotando,
y agravando el ardor desesperado
de las bocas resecas.

Ido el día, la noche interminable.

.................................

¡Doce días que fueron doce años!

Y suerte fue, porque en desván contiguo

Otras almas contaban varios meses

En un vivir muriendo. (36-40, 46-49)

She juxtaposes hunger with the slow pace of time, placing emphasis on the desperation of the prisoners. With the long hours of night stretched out before them, the prisoners have nothing to distract them from their suffering. There is nothing to wait or hope for in the morning that will change their present circumstances. García-Madrid illustrates how they wait, cramped within the
attic of the convent, for the passage of time or death itself, which for some women may in fact be one and the same. She argues that such torment inevitably remains fixed in the minds of those who experienced it, and that, “…al oír tu nombre, Tarragona, / no sienta repentino escalofrío” (54-55). With her description of the misery of the conditions at Tarragona, García-Madrid thus reveals the daily suffering experienced by female prisoners and underscores how this memory continues to affect them even after their release. In capturing this shared history, her verses create an alternate historical discourse in which the perspective of the loser is front and center. As Álvarez Fernández proposes, this kind of testimonial literature, “…dan voz a los sin voz para que den cuenta de la represión ejercitada por el franquismo…reivindican la memoria de la lucha antifranquista, que es una forma de reivindicar la identidad pues no hay identidad si memoria” (9). Through the conservation and perpetuation of this memory, García-Madrid poignantly captures not only her own experience, but the experience of thousands of Republican women. In sharing her own story, she ultimately tells theirs.

In challenging the Franco regime’s official history as the only narrative of the past, García-Madrid helps to reclaim the defeated Republican perspective from the shadows. In the poem “Galería primera,” García-Madrid juxtaposes the youthful, innocent identities of her fellow prisoners with the space of the prison’s death ward, in order to denounce the gross injustice behind Republican persecution. Describing the physical atmosphere and its persistence in her memory, García-Madrid writes,

Galería primera, a la derecha.

Era la galería de la muerte.

Entre tantas revueltas de los anos,

como el amigo fiel, torna a mi mente.
Recuerdo de sus noches, esas horas
en que la vida sale de sus rejas,
apenas vida, yendo hacia la nada
para, antes de morir, estar ya muerta. (1-8)

She describes the prison as a frightening transitional space in which, under the cover of night, life fades and begins to merge with death. For those held within, the onset of night thus heralds a heightened imminence of death, and they dread the sound of the warden: “…en la noche, tiemblan azogadas, / escuchando la voz de centinela…” (13-14). Francisco Moreno has noted that the execution of prisoners condemned to death most frequently took place during the night, and so for those individuals held within the associated wards, the nighttime hours became synonymous with imminent death:

…en las galerías de los condenados a muerte existía toda una semiótica trágica.

En este caso, el cerrar el ventanuco de la celda por la noche era un terrible presagio, o el ruido de un camión en la puerta, o el hecho de que se comunicase la conmutación de la pena a varios compañeros suponía la certeza de la desgracia para los del mismo expediente que no habían recibido tal notificación. (329)

García-Madrid exemplifies this semiotic within her verses, and compellingly juxtaposes the youth of the prisoners alongside such representations of death. Highlighting the age and identity of the victims she writes,

Y aquella triste noche, aquella niña
de solo dieciséis primaveras…
(No sé por qué la vida ha de dejarnos cicatrices que al alma tambalean.)
La contemplaba yo la anterior tarde
departiendo con otras compañeras…
Su risa me tráía a la memoria
el manantial que baja por la sierra. (41-48)

She equates the prisoner’s young age with springtime and comments that the girl’s laughter reminds her of the sounds of a far-away spring. It is clear and pure, and therefore contrasts powerfully with the darkness of their present environment. The verses in parentheses illuminate that this memory continues to haunt García-Madrid, implying that the wound caused by such injustice has never fully healed. The opening dedication for the poem suggests that this is in fact her motive for writing as she says “En tu memoria, Virtudes, y en la de tus 59 compañeros fusilados la misma madrugada” (Al quiebro de mis espinas 20). Thus through her verses, García-Madrid not only depicts the terror and tragedy of imprisonment, but illuminates and defends the true identity of those that suffered. She argues that they were not wicked dissidents as the Franco regime attempted to characterize them, but rather innocent victims of brutality, whose only crime had been to support a cause they believed in. Underscoring such injustice, García-Madrid accentuates the fate of Virtudes in particular,

Saliste de la celda y te pusiste
entre dos compañeras de tinieblas.
¡Tú no eras la heroína, eres la niña
que querría abrazarse a su muñeca!

……………………………………

Por fin sonó tu voz, tan quebrantada,
quiendo, con esfuerzo, ser entera
Para decir muy tenue: «¡Qué mi madre no dude, por favor, mi inocencia!» (93-96, 101-104)

Instead of portraying the girl as the brave protagonist in a heroic tale, García-Madrid emphasizes the reality of her youth. She asserts that the girl is barely beyond the age of dolls, and yet she is still being taken from the cell to her death. Recalling the girl’s petition that her mother know of and remember her innocence, García-Madrid captures not only that final plea, but the voice of the girl herself. Her poetry thus becomes a form of testimony, which preserves Virtudes’ memory along with that of other executed Republican prisoners. Her writing challenges the imposed silence of the Franco regime and calls attention to the need to acknowledge this alternative perspective. As Mangini notes, “[García-Madrid’s] desire to tell the tragic stories of her cellmates is coupled with her own need to denounce those responsible for their misfortune… [Thus] the importance of [her work]…lies in its capacity to portray events that would otherwise remain unknown” (183). Hence with her verses, García-Madrid not only communicates the history of the defeated, but also constructs a communal space that serves as a place of commemoration for the victims.

In addition to shedding light on the repressed history of female Republican prisoners, García-Madrid actively criticizes their persecution and treatment under franquismo. In the poem “¡Señor Juez!” she employs irony to forcefully challenge Francoist authorities’ notion of justice. After witnessing the infamous execution of thirteen minors referred to as “las trece rosas,” she raises her voice in outrage, directly addressing the presiding judge whose decision resulted in the tragic death of the young women.22

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22 Las trece rosas, similar to García-Madrid, were all members of the leftist youth group the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas (JSU) and had been actively involved in volunteering for the Republican cause during the war. After being imprisoned at Ventas in the summer of 1939, they were tried and condemned to death for supposed
¡Quién eres tú, Señor Juez!

¿Quién eres tú que llegaste
a ese dignísimo estrado
tal vez sólo por tu suerte;
o por andar tus zapatos
sobre el caudal familiar? (1-6)

Rather than serving as questions that require answers, the initial verses are declamatory statements that seek to illuminate the hypocrisy of the judge. In essence, García-Madrid is decrying his privilege by asking, “Who do you think you are? What right do you have to such power?” The repeated emphasis on “¿Quién eres tú?” demonstrates an obvious lack of credence for his authority, and the use of the familiar “tú” address reveals her perception of him as an equal, rather than a superior. Furthermore she leaves him nameless, referring to him only as “Señor Juez.” Such a reduction of his identity not only allows García-Madrid to use him as a representation of any and all Francoist judges, but also dehumanizes both him and his position. She suggests that wealth or influence, rather than merit, led to his appointment, and in continuing her challenge of his credentials, she asks,

¿Quién te dijo que a los seres
que no piensan como tú,
los que trabajan y sufren,
los que no cepilló nadie,
los que tan sólo pretenden
que un día el sabio y el bracero

Involvement in a plot to murder Franco. Although documentation ultimately revealed their innocence, they were executed by firing squad on August 5, 1939 (Mangini 138).
se sientan hijos de Dios;

quién te ordenó—te repito—

que los hicieras matar?

¡Quién eres tú, Señor Juez! (19-28)

Juxtaposing the power of the judge alongside those individuals whose fate he determines, she emphasizes the hardworking humility of the defendants. She switches the focus to them by listing off qualities that place them in opposition to the judge both socially and economically. García-Madrid suggests that the defendants’ only wish is to enjoy a sense of fraternity with the other half of society, and given the harmless nature of such desire, she disputes the right of the judge to order their death. She stresses this injustice by directly addressing the judge, saying “…quién te ordenó—te repito— / que los hicieras matar?” Her question conveys a sense of outrage at such hypocrisy, and further implies the arbitrariness of the Francoist court system. The judge has made a mockery of justice, and to illuminate the tragedy more clearly, García-Madrid uses the image of children:

Tal vez besaste a tus hijos,

sin desgarrarse tus labios,

y reposaste tranquilo.

Si no moriste este noche,

si tu vida ha sido vida…,

confiéstate tú quién eres.

Y eso es lo que eres… Juez. (37-43)

In these final verses, the judge’s children are placed in subtle contrast to the boys and girls mentioned in the poem’s dedication; “Al Juez que condenó a 47 muchachos y 13 niñas” (Al
García-Madrid thus passionately criticizes the judge with the unspoken question of how he is capable of such inhumanity given his condition as a father. She calls upon him to examine his own life and recognize its lack of warmth and humanity. Such censure leads to the question of who the true criminals are, and García-Madrid’s final denouncement of the judge as such thus powerfully captures the corruption of justice.

In her poetry, García-Madrid further illustrates how even prisoners who were spared the death penalty experienced profoundly twisted notions of justice that had been institutionalized within the fabric of the judicial system. To deal with the overwhelming number of individuals imprisoned following the war’s conclusion, Francoist authorities began to develop the idea of conditional liberty during the early 1940s. This was essentially a perverted form of “freedom,” which was granted to prisoners who had served out their sentences or who were deemed worthy of release after participating in forced labor projects. After rejoining society, these individuals were still required to report routinely to local authorities, who were part of the organization known as El Servicio de la Libertad Vigilada, and they were further monitored by political informers, local police, and oftentimes parish priests (Gómez Bravo, *Exilio interior* 84). García-Madrid herself was released into conditional liberty in February of 1942, an experience which she reproduces in the poem “Ya tengo libertad.” Adopting the voice of Francoist authorities as the speaker of the poem, she utilizes the official discourse of the regime to illuminate the irony inherent in freedom for Republicans:

> Me dijeron «Puedes irte

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23 The ultimate result of such monitoring was thus a systematic and profound prejudice towards former prisoners, who even after their release retained a quasi-prisoner status. This societal hostility applied to the defeated portion of society in general, and as Gutmaro Gómez Bravo emphasizes, “[n]o sólo quedaron excluidos de todo espacio público tras el conflicto, sino que en buena medida éste sería construido en su contra, dado el elevado perfil de peligrosidad con el que siguieron marcados” (*Exilio interior* 179).
ya pagaste tu condena
pues te rebajan la pena
de total que mereciste.
Por largo tiempo viniste
y, ya ves, te han indultado.
Procura no andar de lado,
ií mirar, ni hablar quejosa;
que la justicia es piadosa
pero tiene el brazo alzado. (1-10)

García-Madrid demonstrates how notions of punishment and justice are intimately connected. The authorities suggest that they have been generous in reducing her sentence and forgiving her transgressions, and now she is able to rejoin society. Yet in listing all of the activities that are prohibited as they release her, they paint a bleak picture of the new Francoist society. It is not permitted to think independently or do anything that would be in opposition to the regime, and García-Madrid thus implies that the “freedom” is essentially empty of meaning. She illustrates how the authorities insist that she must align herself with the official discourse, as there is no other option. Justice is essentially defined as Franco sees fit, and the image of the fascist raised-arm salute serves as a powerful reference to the regime’s ideology. Gómez Bravo has stressed how the repressive penitentiary environment was thus perpetuated in Francoist society itself, even beyond the limits of the prison walls: “…la función de la cárcel no terminó con [la década de los cuarenta] sino que se prolongó durante toda la dictadura. Arrancó con mucha fuerza a través de la guerra, pero fue evolucionando hacia una forma de control y de condena social a la que tendría que hacer frente de por vida todo aquel que hubiera pasado por la cárcel” (Exilio
Enright 80

interior 20). García-Madrid lucidly expresses this perpetual control in her verses, and criticizes the repressive reality:

No hables de ideas jamás
y acepta lo establecido
y piensa que es merecido
lo que ordenen los demás.
Tú trabaja más y más
y acata la autoridad
sin pensar. Con lealtad.
Ahora ya bien advertida,
puedes marchar por la vida
a gozar tu libertad. (11-20)

Illuminating the conditional aspect of her release, she notes how the concession of liberty is dependent upon her acceptance of Francoist dogma. Freedom of speech and thought do not exist, and the authorities suggest that she should be willing and happy to submit to the regime’s authority. The irony saturating the final declaration of “gozar la libertad” thus serves as a compelling form of criticism that reveals the harsh reality of life under the regime for Republican prisoners. In essence, García-Madrid argues that there is no difference between life within the prison cell and that outside of it. Her status as a prisoner is inescapable, as the new Francoist society is a de facto jail for the defeated Republican community in total.

In capturing the persistent injustice that the defeated Republicans faced under franquismo, García-Madrid not only defends the memory of this community, but transmits what they lost societally. She personifies the city of Madrid itself in the poem “Tú saludo, Madrid” in
order to emphasize that Franco, with his victory, destroyed the liberal environment cherished by
the Second Republic and constructed a cold, foreign society in its place:

¡Te saludo, Madrid! Ya estoy contigo.
Con pasos torpes, con andar enfermo
y acusada conciencia de robot.
Tal como corresponde a derrotados
de la guerra y la vida.
Llevo días errando por tus calles
con ansia de encontrarte, y no te hallo.
Este Madrid que piso no eres tú.
Camino sobre ti con pies atado
diciendo que estoy libre. (1-10)

Addressing Madrid as a fellow loser of the war, García-Madrid begins the poem with a
declaration of solidarity. She asserts that in spite of their conquered status, she will stand with the
city. She observes that the landscape of the city that she once knew has vanished, and thus the
new society brought about by the war is not the “true” Madrid. Feeling the weight of oppression,
she emphasizes the disillusionment accompanying defeat, and calls attention to the figurative
chains imposed upon her and the city by the Franco regime. After highlighting the irony of
“freedom” in Francoist society, she goes on to exclaim,

¡Ay, mi Madrid ¡Mi pueblo casi muerto!
Cruzan tus gentes con andares mudos
y miradas hundidas,
arrastrando los pies en un asfalto
The shouted verses convey the pain that García-Madrid feels and emphasize her profound connection with the city and the defeated community. She declares that, broken by Francoist repression, the people that walk the streets are only quiet shadows of what they once were. García-Madrid compellingly denounces the cause of such suffering, labeling it a cold sickness:

En tus venas también se intuye el frío.
Ese es tu mal; te está matando el frío.

Yo también llevo dentro esas heladas.

Pero escucha: Tú y yo no estamos solos.
Con nosotros esta la inmensa parva del que sufre… (40-41, 45-48)

For García-Madrid, the Franco regime is ultimately the sickness that is killing the city and its people. In a potent declaration of resistance, she underscores the solidarity of all those that suffer and asserts, “no estamos solos, no necesitamos sufrir solos.” She calls upon the defeated community to recognize their shared hardship and instead of internalizing it, she suggests that they stand together against such repression. For García-Madrid, their defeated state is not permanent and thus hope continues to exist:

Reverdece al herirla.

Hay un amanecer tras cada noche

por larga y tormentosa que esta sea.

Es fuerza que llegue la amanecida. (51-54)
She claims that the wounds of the war will eventually heal, and that despite the current darkness, every day holds the potential for a brighter future. This hope ultimately depends on the need to recognize and fight back against injustice however. As scholars of trauma have noted, “The enduring effects of a trauma in the memories of an individual resemble the enduring effects of a national trauma in collective consciousness. Dismissing or ignoring the traumatic experience is not a reasonable option” (Smelser 41-42). In her verses, García-Madrid passionately addresses such trauma. She exhorts the Republican community to maintain hope for the future and to feel the strength of their solidarity. Beyond preserving the memory of their suffering, she seeks to inspire them to fight back.

In recognizing this collective trauma and recovering the repressed history of the Republican side, García-Madrid honors all those who suffered within Francoist jails. Through writing, she seeks to educate society about the past injustice, and in doing so, treat the collective wounds of the conquered Republican half of society. As José Colmeiro proposes, the writing that draws upon the personal memories of the losers is essentially “…simbólica de catarsis del trauma histórico personal y colectivo de la guerra civil y la posguerra, como proceso de cura y superación de los fantasmas del pasado a través del ejercicio de la palabra, la memoria, y la escritura” (69). Writing becomes a curative process that allows for the expression of repressed or ignored injury. Thus through her poetry, García-Madrid not only articulates and shares her own memories of imprisonment, but more importantly gives voice to the thousands of individuals who were silenced by the Franco regime. Her poetry in essence, creates and participates in a community of memory that sheds light on the reality of life for the conquered. Hoping to educated subsequent generations about the legacy of such atrocities she states, “…si conocer algo más del pasado contribuye a entender mejor el presente y configurar más sensatamente el
porvenir…” (Réquiem 9). For García-Madrid, poetry thus serves an effective tool in the fight for justice, and in preserving the memories and identities of the female victims of franquismo, it further assures that their voices will continue to live on as a compelling testament to the power of the written word.
Chapter 4. “Poetry of the Political Imagination” and the Fight for Historical Justice in the Writings of Marcos Ana

“The poem itself is a standard, the poet a standard bearer of the struggle for liberation”
Barbara Harlow, Resistance Literature

In his examination of the relationship between social activism and poetic verse, U.S. Latino poet and scholar Martín Espada observes,

Poetry of the political imagination is a matter of both vision and language. Any progressive social change must be imagined first, and that vision must find its most eloquent possible expression to move from vision to reality. Any oppressive social condition, before it can change, must be named and condemned in words that persuade by stirring the emotions, awakening the senses. (100)

Although Espada is addressing the work of contemporary authors in the context of North and South America, his insistence upon the relevance of poetry to societal problems remarkably echoes the rhetoric promulgated by Republican poets during the Franco regime. In connection with expressing the shared struggles and hopes of the people, Miguel Hernández firmly believed that poetry served as a weapon in the fight against oppression: “Entiendo que todo teatro, todo poesía, todo arte, han de ser, hoy más que nunca, un arma de guerra. De guerra a todos los enemigos del cuerpo y del espíritu que nos acosan…” (“Teatro en la guerra” 807). Similarly the Argentinian poet Luis Alberto Quesada, interned in a French refugee camp after his participation in the Republican war effort, articulated a notion of “…una poesía abiertamente disconforme, de protesta de grito, de acusación. Por último una poesía de lucha, de camino seguro, de esperanza” (España a tres voces 21). These poets ardently believed that the act of composing poetry had an inherent power attached to it. The written word was a means of resistance, and furthermore, a tool capable of ameliorating a myriad of social ills through awakening the consciousness of
society. As Espada eloquently states, “A social horror is focused through the prism of the poet’s understanding, and the reader unfamiliar with the experience finds his or her own imagination engaged and politicized” (101).

Coinciding with fellow poet Hernández during his imprisonment at Conde de Toreno, former political prisoner Marcos Ana (b. 1920) embraced literature and writing as a means to resist the violence and oppression he experienced within Francoist prisons. In his words, “La guerra, que tan desastrosas consecuencias tuvo para todos nosotros, fue una guerra de trincheras, pero también de poetas. Entonces la poesía era un arma. En los versos y en la creación encontramos una salida para contar la situación de España” (Vale la pena 107). Renowned by his status as the longest serving political prisoner of the Franco regime, serving just over twenty-two years in prison, Ana first distinguished himself through the poetic work he composed behind bars. In the decades following the Second Republic’s defeat, he used poetry to project his voice beyond the cell walls, forcefully calling attention to the tragic injustice under which thousands of Republicans suffered and perished. In this chapter, I will thus adopt Espada’s terminology to argue that Ana, as a “poet of the political imagination,” not only uses verse to denounce the Franco regime’s iniquitous treatment of the losers of the Civil War, but also to fight for historical justice in their name. Through his poetry he resists the attempted silencing of Francoist authorities, and in doing so, he gives a voice and name to the victims of repression. In communicating their suffering, he strives to educate society about this repressed history, and even today continues the fight for liberty and equality begun by the supporters of the Second Republic.

Fernando Macarro Castillo (Marcos Ana) was born January 20, 1920 in the village of San Vicente de Alconada, just outside of Salamanca. His parents were humble tenant laborers with
little schooling. When Ana was eight, the family moved to the city of Alcalá de Henares where his older sister Margarita worked as a maid. Ana began to attend a local school run by parish priests, but was expelled at the age of twelve as a result of his “rebellious nature” (*Vale la pena* 24). He began working as an assistant in a shoemaker’s shop, a position he held until the Civil War broke out in 1936. Just prior to the start of the war however, Ana became involved in the activities of the Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas (JSU). Captivated by the workers’ cause, Ana saw his own family’s situation as perfectly exemplifying the social and economic inequality that the Socialist movement in Spain sought to address and correct. Remembering the sentiments that inspired his participation in the JSU Ana remarks, “…comenzó a crecer algo en mí; sentía que mi vida anterior había sido pequeña, pero ahora era un hombre nuevo y completo, un Hombre con mayúsculas. Ahora tenía algo grande en mi interior, que era mi voluntad de contribuir a acabar con las injusticias” (*Vale la pena* 27).

When the war broke out in the summer of 1936, sixteen-year old Ana enlisted in the Batallón Libertad, a militia group that was formed in response to the Nationalist uprising. Due to his youth, he was forced to return home however, where he continued to work as an enthusiastic volunteer for the JSU. In 1938 the JSU organized two divisions of voluntary soldiers who were not old enough to formally enlist in the Republican army. Ana took part in this initiative and was placed in a brigade in the outskirts of Madrid, where he began to work as a political instructor for the young men of the Eighth Division (Ana, *Vale la pena* 29). After the Nationalists’ victory, Ana tried to flee Spain alongside thousands of other Republicans, but was captured at the port of Alicante and transferred to a nearby concentration camp. Although he was able to escape the camp by lying about his age and identity, he was subsequently denounced by a political informer to the Guardia Civil upon his return to Madrid (Ana, *Decidme cómo es un arbol* 66). At just
nineteen years old, he was imprisoned for his political activism in support of the Republican army and taken to the infamous detention center of Almargo in Madrid.

Ana ultimately remained imprisoned from late May of 1939 until November 17, 1961. He passed through the prisons of Porlier, Conde de Toreno, Yeserías, Ocaña, Alcalá de Henares, and then finally in 1945, the prison of Burgos where he stayed for the last fifteen years of his captivity (Aznar Soler 522). It was in Burgos that Ana began his literary career in earnest, composing poems under the cover of night. After visiting, his friends and family smuggled these compositions out of the prison or hid them in letters that were sent to places as far away as Latin America. It was primarily through his correspondence with other exiled Republican authors and artists, most notably the poet Rafael Alberti, that Ana’s plight became internationally known (Aznar Soler 531). When in 1961 he was released through the efforts of Amnesty International, Ana was thus already well-recognized as a poet. He left Spain for France where he increased his political activism on behalf of political prisoners, and began a long speaking tour that took him across Europe and South America (Ana, Decidme cómo es un arbol 216). In the 1970s, he aligned himself with the Partido Comunista de España (PCE) and has remained a fervent advocate for social equality up to the present day.

Despite being rightly regarded as the face of the political prisoners of **franquismo**, scholarship on Ana has been limited. In 2003, Spanish scholar Manuel Aznar Soler published an article examining the role of Ana’s clandestine literary production in the fight for amnesty for political prisoners. He refers to Ana as “el decano de los presos politicos” and pays homage to the poet’s work both within and outside of the prison. The media however, both within Spain and internationally, has in general been more focused on Ana’s activism post-liberation with the result that he has become more of a public persona than a studied poet and author. The
publication of his best-selling memoir *Decidme cómo es un arbol* in 2007 helped augment this public image, as well as record and share his memories of the twenty-two years he spent imprisoned. The memoir’s publication also coincided with the increase in interest about the legacy of the Franco dictatorship that surrounded the heavily-debated passage in 2007 of Spain’s *Ley de memoria histórica*. The following year, famed Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar purchased the rights to make a movie based on Ana’s memoir that sought to narrate the poet’s compelling transition from prison cell to freedom (Elola). In 2012, Spanish artist Javi Larrauri completed in a project encompassing drawing, painting, photography, and video documentary that honored Ana’s life and work (fig. 3). The project, *Marcos con eme de memoria*, was inspired in part by Ana’s 2007 memoir, but also sought to highlight that Ana has never lost his fighting spirit, and his social advocacy work has remained constant up to the present day (Larrauri). As a product of this continued passion, Ana has most recently published a second memoir, *Vale la pena luchar* (2013), which addresses the values that have inspired and driven him throughout his life.

![Fig. 3 Sueño de libertad, Javi Larrauri. Watercolor and ink on paper.](image)
Rather than examining Ana’s contemporary prose or political activism, in this chapter I will instead focus on the poetry that Ana composed from within the prison cell. The first edition of Ana’s work, *Te llamo desde un muro: Poemas de la prisión* (1959), was published in Mexico while he was still imprisoned, and contained just fourteen poems. This was immediately followed by the publication of further editions in other South American countries during the early 1960s, as part of an international movement lead by Amnesty International that advocated for amnesty for Francoist political prisoners (Aznar Soler 525). These early publications are remarkable not only for the role they played in communicating the plight of the prisoners to the international community, but also for the manner through which they came to exist. From within the prison, Ana transmitted his poems outside the walls in a variety of methods, but primarily through utilizing his fellow prisoner companions. Upon hearing that one of them was to be released, Ana would pull them aside and help them to memorize a poem, so that they could commit the verses to paper once free: “Me ha sucedido que, ya fuera de la cárcel, encontraba mis poemas con algún verso cambiado…Imagino que los compañeros, con la emoción de los reencuentros y el aire libre, olvidaban algunos versos y ellos mismos los remendaban. Así, el valor colectivo de mi palabra fue llegando a muchos lugares” (*Vale la pena* 116). What started as Ana’s personal mission to preserve the stifled voice of the prisoners and broadcast it in protest, thus took on a collective dimension, in which the very people for whom Ana sought to speak ultimately shared in the process of literary production.

Instead of expanding upon this penitentiary production with new compositions after his release, Ana has devoted himself to editing and recovering these far-flung poems, emphasizing the context in which they were initially produced and the collective experience which they

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24 Similar editions of Ana’s poetry were published in Brazil and Uruguay in 1960, in Argentina during 1961 (with a second edition appearing as quickly as 1963), and in Venezuela in 1963. In a notable contrast, the first edition of Ana’s poetry published within Spain did not appear until 1977, two years after Franco’s death (Aznar Soler 525).
sought to communicate. This objective is best exemplified through the anthology that I will focus on in the remainder of this chapter, *Poemas de la prisión y la vida* (2011), which not only represents Ana’s most recent collection, but also the most complete. The collection consists of about eighty poems, some of which appear to be more draft-like in form than others, as they are composed of only a few verses and often lack a title. Yet, the vast majority of the poems are compelling for their juxtaposition of images of the violent physical repression under which the prisoners constantly suffered, with the act of speaking as a means to resist such subjugation. This is further reflected in the organization and sequencing of the individual poems in collection itself, as the poems alternate thematically between emphasizing the power of voice and the need for societal recognition of this voice. I will analyze five poems which demonstrate Ana’s transition from emphasizing the physical oppression of the penitentiary space, to capturing the voice of the prisoners, to transcending the cell walls with this voice as the crucial vehicle. I ultimately propose that Ana’s verses serve as a call to arms for younger generations to recognized and remember the history of the defeated, as well as continue the fight against past and present injustice.

Indicating the physical space of the prison cell as the essential starting point for his poetic production, Ana begins his anthology underscoring the constant corporeal repression under which the Republicans prisoners suffer. In the poem “Pequeña carta al mundo,” he juxtaposes his incarcerated condition with his mind’s longing for freedom to suggest that although his mind may move freely, his body cannot:

Tengo el alma desgarrada
de tirar, pero no puedo
arrancarme estos cerrojos
que me atraviesan el pecho.
Ocho mil doscientas veces
la luna cruzó mi cielo
y otras tantas, la dorada
libertad cruzó mi sueño. (3-10)

Ana illuminates how the feeling of confinement is so painfully acute, that it is almost as if the bolts of the cell door have impaled his chest. He claims that his soul is torn from struggling to free itself, but the effort continues to be futile. Illustrating the prolonged duration of his captivity, he numbers the nights that he has spent imprisoned watching the moon pass overhead, and affirms that the number of times freedom has crossed his mind matches it. Ana thus compellingly emphasizes that, although he can conceive of liberty and a world outside the cell walls, he is ultimately trapped and cannot directly experience it. Speaking to the outside community he states, “No sabéis lo que es un hombre, / sangrando y roto, en un cepo” (15-16). Yet, as reflected in the poem’s title, Ana designation of the poem as a letter reveals his desire for his verses to correct this ignorance. In communicating the reality of his circumstance to those not imprisoned, he proclaims:

Si lo supieseis vendrías
En las olas y en el viento,
desde todos los confines,
con el corazón deshecho,
enarbolando los puños (17-21)

Ana not only implies, but confidently states that if the daily injustice suffered by the prisoners was understood by those out in free society, they would come rushing the prisoners’ aid. They
could not help but moved by the tragedy of their fellow men and women. With his verses Ana thus seeks to illuminate the prisoners’ physical reality and denounce the miserable conditions of their environment. He indirectly calls upon outside society to help him in resisting the oppression pressing down upon his body, and asserts that if he perishes before they come to his aid;

…en la soledad del muro
hallareis mi testamento:
al mundo le dejo todo
lo que tengo y lo que siento,
lo que he sido entre los míos,
lo que soy, lo que sostengo:
una bandera sin llanto,
un amor, algunos versos…
y en las piedras lacerantes
de este patio gris, desierto,
mi grito, como una estatua

crucificada y rota, en el centro. (31-42)

Ana thus powerfully contextualizes his body and his voice within the space of the prison. He physically inscribes his verses on the wall of his cell as a testament to his life (and hypothetical death) behind bars. He appropriates the very walls confining him, marking them with his voice in a profound act of resistance. His action suggests that although his tangible body may succumb to the prison environment, his voice cannot be so easily silenced. In this “will,” Ana passes on his identity onto mankind, commending his memory to society as a whole, and urging them to carry on his self-given role as the mouth piece for the victims of franquismo; “lo que he sido entre los
míos / lo que soy, lo que sostengo.” The final image is not of his physical body broken by the prison environment, but rather his voice serving as a statue that testifies to his life and suffering. He ultimately argues that within the space of the prison, his voice not only serves as a means for him to transcend his physical body, but highlights the undefeatable strength of the human spirit despite captivity.

Ana further illuminates the power voice as a means for transcendence within the penitentiary context in the poem “Reiteración.” Building upon the illustration he creates of the prison’s repressive environment in “Pequeña carta al mundo,” he denounces the associated bodily suffering by equating his frustrated shouts from behind bars with images of wounds and blood:

Te llamo desde aquel, el mismo muro
otra vez. Atrozmente sepultado
sigue mi corazón, mi sueño, todo
lo que es vida o soñar.

Encadenado
sigo. No me dejan gritar. (1-6)

Emphasizing the feeling of being totally trapped by his environment, Ana illustrates his endeavors to resist such captivity. He uses the image of shouting over and over again against the same four walls to reflect the poem’s title of “Reiteración,” and demonstrate his repeated attempts to be heard. He further stresses this notion of reiteration in the verses “Encadenado / sigo.” By isolating “encadenado,” Ana calls attention to the continuous nature of his imprisonment and the constancy of the repression under which he suffers. He illuminates the conflict between his existence as an individual with hopes and dreams, and the perpetual
enchainment that threatens his life. Characterizing the cell as a tomb, he notes how the authorities seek to silence his shouts. In spite of their efforts however, Ana insists on the persistence and power of his voice:

Mi boca está sangrando
de tascar insumisa los cerrojos,
como un caballo el freno.

Voy clamando.

Mi lengua ruge de pasión, levanta
su voz como un náufrago, golpea
hasta que cruje el verso y la palabra
se hace un chorro de sangre al pie del muro. (7-14)

With these verses Ana suggests that even the violence and painful repression of the prison environment are incapable of stifling his voice. Utilizing the metaphor of a horse chomping at its bit, he depicts himself as biting at the bolts of his cell door, seeking to escape what binds him. He once more emphasizes the act of shouting, offsetting it from the rest of the poem. He juxtaposes these shouts with the image of blood, conveying the sense that shouting has become a physical as well as verbal form of resistance. Despite his pain and captivity, he asserts that his voice will eventually transcend the confines of the prison: “Pero esta sangre sube—oh voz herida / hecha torre de fuego para el mundo” (15-16). Through his poetry, Ana captures his shouts from within prison and communicates them to the outside world. Although his physical body is held within the space of the prison, Ana argues that his voice cannot be trapped, and his verses become the ultimate expression of resistance. As Espada proposes, “While some poets speak openly of political insurgency, others focus on the personal revolution of thought and language, which in
turn become liberating forces…the poets rightly regard their verbs as subversive, each poem as a political act in itself” (103). Thus the mere act of writing, of giving expression to his suffering, allows Ana to combat his subjugation. His voice breaks through the dominant narrative of *franquismo* to articulate and reveal the constant injustice under which the political prisoners suffered.

Immediately following “Reiteración,” Ana explicitly calls upon society to hear his imprisoned cries in “Carta urgente a la juventud del mundo.” His pairing of the two poems not only highlights his belief in the ability of his verses to communicate with the outside community, but also illuminates the role that the younger generations play in the fight to achieve justice:

Si la juventud quisiera,  
mi pena se acabaría,  
y mis cadenas.  
(Decid ¡basta!  
haced la prueba)  
……………………………  
¿Qué tiranos, qué cerrojos,  
qué murallones, qué puertas  
novencieran vuestras voces  
En un alud de protesta? (1-5, 10-13)

Ana thus transitions from focusing on the poetic voice within the context of the prison cell, to emphasizing the power of voice more collectively. With these verses, he calls beyond the prison walls in order to awaken society to the plight of Franco’s prisoners. He suggests that by raising their voices in union with his, the younger generations can help in the struggle for justice. He
impels them to actively engage in the fight with a shout of “enough,” and as reflected in the poem’s title, his verses thus become a call to arms as well as a written plea for assistance. He underscores that the power a single voice can possess is only strengthened when it is expressed collectively. He rhetorically questions what forms of oppression can resist the onslaught of a unified shout of protest, and draws upon the images of locks, walls, and doors to evoke the prison environment. Ana places emphasis on the strength of “vuestras voces,” and further compels them,

Pronunciad una palabra
con la indignación que os quema,
moved tan sólo los labios
a la vez, y la marea
juvenil atronaría
como un mar cuando se encrespa. (18-23)

Ana thus reiterates that, in the battle to address injustice, the efficacy of human voice is ultimately strengthened when it is employed collectively. By raising their voices in a shared upsurge of indignation, he suggests that the younger generations can combat the malignant forces in society and work towards a brighter future. Elaborating upon this belief, Ana states his hope that his verses “…abran a la vez, un camino de lumbre y rebeldía en el corazón y el pensamiento de las nuevas generaciones, en cuyos surcos hemos sembrado nuestra historia” (Poemas de la prisión 6). Thus despite Republican imprisonment and repression following their loss in the Civil War, Ana argues that this state of defeat need not be permanent. The world’s youth can work to combat its perpetuation by recognizing and denouncing the present injustice:

Levad vuestros pechos.
¡Echad abajo mi celda!

Abrid mi ataúd, que el mundo
en pie de asombro nos vea,
indomables, pero heridos,
sepultados bajo la tierra. (61-66)

Expanding upon the initial battle cry of “¡basta!” Ana calls upon the youth to throw open the door of his cell. Utilizing a coffin as a metaphor, he evokes the constant threat of death facing the prisoners and implores them to join him in calling attention to this tragedy. Rather than let Francoist authorities suppress and bury the prisoners’ bodies and histories, Ana aims to communicate their suffering to society, so that it might be acknowledged and stopped. His insistence on the crucial role of youth as the primary interlocutors further reveals the communal nature of this struggle. As Reyes Mate articulates,

… ¿qué justicia puede impartir un lector? Lo siguiente: sin memoria de las injusticias no hay justicia posible. Es lo que han tratado de hacer ellos, los supervivientes convertidos en testigos, por eso piden que alguien les releve, coja el testigo. Quieren que los lectores se conviertan en testigos porque entonces mantendrán viva la conciencia de la injusticia pasada y exigirán que se haga justicia. (La herencia del olvido 169)

With “Carta a la juventud del mundo,” Ana perfectly exemplifies this desire to bridge the gap between generations and unify them in the effort to achieve justice. Rather than let the last vestiges of the defeated Second Republic perish with their human embodiments in the prisons, Ana exhorts the youth to recover this history by liberating those still imprisoned, or at the very
least, by honoring the victims’ memory and carrying on the struggle for freedom and equality in their name. As Ana ultimately urges them, “Que no queden en silencio / mis cadenas” (67-68).

Ana’s poetic work thus lucidly exemplifies the equivalence that Mate gives to memory and justice. According to Mate, “...se dice que memoria y justicia son sinónimos, como también lo son olvido e injusticia. Si hubiera que resumir en cuatro palabras la memoria serían éstas benjaminianas: «que nada se pierda» (“Historia y memoria” 26). Recognizing the need to combat the erasure of the perspective of the defeated, Ana utilizes his verses not only to capture and communicate his own experience, but more importantly, the experience of imprisoned Republicans as a group. He claims, “…mi historia, [es] solamente una más dentro de la Historia. Muchas han quedado en la oscuridad….los que yo llamo los «héroes oscuros», una legión de luchadoras y luchadores anónimos, sin los cuales no hubiera funcionado el engranaje de nuestra lucha. No debemos olvidarlos” (Vale la pena 14-15). The intent to reclaim those anonymous voices explicitly manifests itself in the poem “Hablaré por vosotros.” Ana employs declarative repetition to underscore his goal of preserving the memory of all his comrades who perished behind bars, and in doing so, highlight the dignity of their struggle:

Hablaré por vosotros.

Excavaré con mi palabra hasta encontraros
en las sangrantes raíces sumergidas
de vuestros corazones enterrados.

Hablaré por vosotros.

Reconstruiré la voz de vuestros labios,
su semilla final, la de aquel grito
constelado de estrellas y balazos. (1-8)
With the opening verse, Ana explicitly and succinctly proclaims his goal; to speak for his comrades. The verse is repeated at the start of every subsequent stanza, pointedly stressing Ana’s intention throughout the poem. He declares that through his words, he will recover the submerged identities of those who died, and asserts that their stories will not be forgotten. He will reclaim their voice through the use of his own, communicating their last moments, their last shouts, before being taken from the cell to be shot. The power of voice once again comes to the forefront in the final stanza, as Ana stresses the need to acknowledge this tragic history:

Hablaré por vosotros.
Jamás olvidaré aquellas madrugadas,
los últimos abrazos, las gargantas
de vuestra dignidad amordazadas. (13-16)

In a final compelling assertion, he repeats his intention to speak for his fallen companions and refuses to allow their memory to be forgotten. His continuous use of the future tense further reiterates his purpose to carry this history beyond the present penitentiary environment, and assure that the prisoners’ voices and lives are remembered. In essence, Ana suggests that the conveyance of this history counteracts the Francoist authorities’ attempts to silence the prisoners, and also illuminates the dignity with which they suffered. He implies that despite the misery of their circumstances, the prisoners died with an integrity that must be recognized if justice is to be granted to the victims, and a true understanding of franquismo realized.

25 In the prison literature of franquismo, the ubiquity of references to the “sacas” and their associated trauma highlights the intense psychological power that it exerted over the minds of the prisoners. Hernández, García-Madrid, and Ana all make reference to it in at least one of the poems they composed while imprisoned, and other fellow prisoners, such as Tomasa Cuevas and Mercedes Núñez, likewise stress the brutality and injustice of the practice in their own testimonies (Álvarez Fernández 206). The pervasiveness of the sacas as a theme also reveals the Franco regime’s heavy use of the practice: “Los «paseos» o fusilamientos arbitrarios, con mayor o menor intensidad, se mantuvieron a lo largo de la década de los cuarenta, sobre todo durante 1939 y en el trienio 1947-1949” (Moreno 316). They were not therefore merely a feature of a particular region or city, but rather a quasi-institutionalized method of repression utilized in prisons throughout Spain.
Reflecting on his poetic work composed from within prison and its ability to transcend not only the cell walls, but the borders of Spain more generally, Ana remarks: “Durante todo aquellos años crecía en mí el convencimiento de que…mi creación poética en particular [tenía] un fin. Yo no debía aislarme, tenía que escribir por la amnistía de los presos…Mi poesía debía nutrirse de ejemplos, del dolor y la esperanza de los demás, para tratar así de inquietar el alma de los lejanos lectores que recibían mis poemas” (Vale la pena 118). Thus rather than merely capturing and communicating the imprisoned Republican voice, Ana notes how his verses serve as poignant call to arms. In the poem “Romance de la amnistía,” Ana transitions from focusing on the power of voice, both individual and collective, as a means of resistance, to the need to direct and employ this power towards the realization of an explicit goal. He juxtaposes images of the spaciousness and beauty of the natural world alongside the prisoners’ constant wish for liberty:

Que salga el preso, que beba la luz y el aire su herida,
que sus pies pisen el campo
donde los pinos respiran,
…………………………
que al salir lea en las torres
la palabra siempre viva
de su libertad grabada
y en los arboles escrita (9-12, 19-22)

As fitting Ana’s designation of the poem as a *romance* (ballad), the verses flow from one to the next in a rhythmic, song-like manner. Each one reiterates the ardent wish for freedom,
illustrating the prisoner’s desire to walk freely in the spaciousness of nature and breathe the fresh air. Ana’s continuous use of the subjunctive conveys the uncertainty underlying these desires, and illustrates that these thoughts represent a reality that has yet to be realized. Emphasizing the natural world as the very representation of what the prisoners long for Ana proclaims,

…que toda esta geografía
de tierra indomable sea
una pancarta extendida,
una sola voz gritando sobre la mar: ¡amnistía!
¡Las puertas de par en par!
¡Los presos fuera: a la vida! (24-30)

The space of nature itself thus becomes a figurative banner for freedom. According to Ana, the battle cry associated with this banner is simply “amnesty,” and he calls attention to the power derived from a unified shout of protest. With the declaration, “¡Las puertas de par en par! ¡Los presos fuera: a la vida!” he aims to incite his interlocutors to join in this fight and raise their voices alongside his own. He call for the cell doors to be thrown open so that the prisoners may reclaim their lives:

¡Que les devuelvan sus alas
que las sombras asesinan!
¡Basta de cadenas, basta!
¡Qué España entera lo diga!
¡Contra los muros los «vientos
del pueblo» por la amnistía! (31-36)
Ana thus ends the poem with passionate shouts that suggest the injustice of the prisoners’ captivity, and highlight the collective power of the people. He emphasizes the dark, violent environment that surrounds the prisoners and holds them captive, metaphorically robbing them of their wings, and therefore the ability to go free. He denounces the prisoners’ chains, the ever-present symbol of subjugation, and expresses his desire that the community outside the space of the prison might hear his voice. In a final compelling cry, which pays homage to fellow prisoner poet Miguel Hernández, Ana stresses the ability of the people, el pueblo, to tear down the walls confining the prisoners. He juxtaposes el pueblo with the notion of amnesty, suggesting that this is ultimately a collective struggle. He argues that, although his voice may transcend the space of the prison, it is only through the aid of the larger community that the prisoners’ physical bodies can be released from their imprisonment and justice be achieved. He intends to arouse and awaken the sentiments of his interlocutors, and his verses ultimately serve as the rallying cry for such unified effort.

Reflecting on the stirring and combative nature of Ana’s poetry, Aznar Soler states, “La poesía del preso político comunista Marcos Ana no era precisamente «celestial», sino una poesía de grito y denuncia, poemas arrancados del alma, versos no sólo de pena y dolor, de angustia y sufrimiento, sino también y ante todo de ansia de luz y vida, de paz y libertad, de lucha y esperanza” (529). He underscores the dualistic nature of Ana’s verses, labeling them not only as anguished cries, but more importantly as hope-filled public protests. Under Ana’s composition, written verse thus became a forceful battle cry, and a compelling testament to the strength of the human spirit. Rather than passively submit or succumb to the violent repression surrounding him for twenty-two years, Ana actively fought to educate the outside world about the plight of the political prisoners of franquismo, and he used poetry to broadcast his voice through the imposed
silence: “En las prisiones he conocido a hombres que renunciaron, que dejaron caer sus banderas al suelo. Creían que no valía la pena continuar. Pensaban que habían sacrificado su vida inútilmente. Pero yo jamás consideré mi vida perdida. Yo he vivido la vida que he preferido vivir: la vida dura pero noble de un revolucionario” (España a tres voces 212). In his commitment to living the life of a revolutionary, writing ultimately became Ana’s primary weapon. In essence, it became a means to incite societal change, and a potent tool with which to guide society towards a brighter, more equitable future.
Conclusion: Acts of Memory both Past and Present

In October of 1960 in Burgos prison, early one morning just before dawn, the poet Marcos Ana and his prison cell companions clandestinely performed a three-act theatrical homage dedicated to the life and work of fellow prisoner-poet Miguel Hernández. The play Sino sangriento. Homenaje a voz ahogada para Miguel Hernández, was written by Ana in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Hernández’s birth (Vale la pena 106). Such a commemorative act of memory compellingly illustrated the power of Hernández’s soldier-poet image for the incarcerated members of the Republican community, still behind bars even more than twenty years after the Civil War’s conclusion. His fellow prisoners saw him as representing and typifying Republican victimhood and dignified suffering. According to Ana, even after death, “Miguel sigue vivo para todos…Siempre fue una referencia de dignidad. Los presos políticos que dejamos nuestra vida en aquellos patios nos sentíamos cerca de su figura; él fue preso, como nosotros” (Vale la pena 120).

This covert production by Ana and his cellmates powerfully suggests the significance of memory, as well as acts of memory, in recovering the defeateds’ perspective of history. As Reyes Mate asserts, in relation to the dominant historical narrative, the memory of history’s “losers” functions as a crucial sub-narrative of the past: “Frente a todas esta estrategias de invisibilización, está la reivindicación de la mirada de las víctimas” (La herencia del olvido 167). Mate proposes that the perspective of the losers is often ignored, leading to a falsely construed understanding of the past, and as a result the present. This ignorance is in essence a form of injustice, as the losers are excluded from fully participating not only in the dominant historical discourse, but also society more generally. Mate therefore argues that it is only through the preservation and recuperation of such memory that such injustice can be addressed and
eradicated: “…la memoria del sufrimiento no es un fin en sí mismo sino el inicio de un proceso que debe llevar a la convivencia en paz, esto es, una convivencia basada en la justicia…Es pensar la justicia teniendo en cuenta la memoria, es decir, la significación de las victimas sobre las que se ha construido nuestro boyante presente” (La herencia del olvido 173).

The poetic work of Miguel Hernández, Ángeles García-Madrid, and Marcos Ana, thus lucidly exemplifies the equivalence that Mate gives to memory and justice. Against the imposition of the one-sided sociopolitical discourse of the Franco regime, their verses protect the defeated Republican perspective from the active attempts to delegitimize and eliminate it. Furthermore, their poetic composition, just like Ana’s theatrical homage, functions as an act of memory, which remembers and honors the imprisoned community with whom they suffered.

Yet, this desire to recover and honor the memory of the victims of franquismo is by no means limited to penitentiary context or even the postwar era itself. After the surge in interest over historical memory in the early twenty-first century, the movement to reexamine and reevaluate the legacy of the dictatorship remains center stage in Spanish society even today. Since the start of 2014, a wide range of Spanish representatives to the European Parliament have formed a coalition to advocate for the creation of a truth commission to investigate the human rights violations of the Franco dictatorship (Junquera “Víctimas”). Backed by numerous leftist political organizations, social advocacy groups, and historical memory associations, the coalition seeks to actively address the legacy of Spain’s 1977 Amnesty Law, which in essence pardoned the violence and human rights violations committed during the Franco regime, in the hope of orchestrating a relatively tranquil transition to back to democracy (Rucinski).  

In early March of
2014, the coalition sent a delegation of political representatives along with ancestors of the victims of *franquismo* to Brussels to present their petition to the European Parliament. In a compelling juxtaposition of past injustices with current political events, Jordi Gordon, explains that the delegation went, “A pedirle a Europa que asuma su responsabilidad, que no mire para otro lado. Que no podemos conmovernos por la guerra de Siria o el drama de la inmigración y mientras dejar en el olvido a los familiares de 150.000 desaparecidos del franquismo” (Junquera “Víctimas”). Debate as to the status of the petition, known as the *Plataforma por la Comisión por la Verdad*, currently remains on-going.

Associated with such current political activism on behalf of the victims of the Franco dictatorship are the myriad commemorative events and local acts of memory that routinely occur in cities and regions throughout Spain. In March of 2014, around five hundred people gathered in the port of Alicante to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of the Civil War, and more specifically, the departure date of the last ship carrying fleeing Republicans into exile. In a public ceremony, during which speeches were given, poems recited, and the anthem of the Second Republic was performed, individuals tossed flowers into the ocean to honor the memory of those who were successful in their escape, and more importantly, those who were not so fortunate. The scores of people who were not able to obtain passage on the ship were subsequently interned in a nearby Nationalist concentration camp before being distributed to prisons throughout Spain (Esquitino). Commenting on those individuals who suffered internment, Javier Moreno Díez, president of the Foro de la Memoria de Madrid, stated “Aquí quedaron los mejores, quedaron los que defendieron la democracia” (Esquitino).

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Spanish State to take greater responsibility for investigating and addressing the human rights violations that occurred throughout the dictatorship. The suggested first step was the revocation of the infamous Amnesty Law, still in effect since its enactment in 1977 (Rucinski).
Another recent and remarkably compelling commemorative project is the on-going work of Spanish journalist, Rosario Fontova, related to the investigation of “La Pirenaica,” a clandestine Russian radio station dedicated to broadcasting the voices and stories of anti-Francoists during the dictatorship. Working on behalf of the Communist Party of Spain, Fontova initially visited the party’s archives in the search of documents related to the Franco-era *Modelo* prison of Barcelona. She instead found a cache of over 15,000 letters that had been written to La Pirenaica by Francoist political prisoners, war orphans and widows, exiled Republicans, and other anti-Francoists (Junquera “La Pirenaica”). In the desire to preserve and share this meaningful history, Fontova has been compiling photographic reproductions of the letters in the recently published *Las cartas de la Pirenaica. Memoria del antifranquismo* (2014). Commenting on the significance of both the letters and La Pirenaica itself, Fontova states, “Escribir a La Pirenaica fue durante muchos años la única forma de militancia antifranquista para dos generaciones de españoles que tuvieron todo prohibido (el acceso a la educación, al trabajo...) por ser rojos” (Junquera “La Pirenaica”).

The letters are thus remarkable representations of the defeated Republican voice under *franquismo*. They tangibly preserve the identities and experience of thousands of individuals who were marginalized and prohibited from truly participating in Francoist society. Their publication, along with the myriad of other acts of memory being organized and carried out in Spain today, demonstrates the continued relevance of the past in the present, and the futility of the argument of those who believe that we need only look to the future. In the words of Mate, “La propuesta política de la memoria es interrumpir esa lógica de la historia, la lógica del progreso, que si causó víctimas en el pasado, hoy exige con toda normalidad que se acepte el costo del progreso actual” (“Historia y memoria” 24). Ultimately, for the dreams of a brighter,
more equitable future to come to pass, we must first recognize the injustice that came before and vigorously work to counteract it.
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