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Catalan Television Documentaries and the Works of Dolors Genovès: The Negotiation of Memory in Democratic Spain
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CATALAN TELEVISION DOCUMENTARIES AND THE WORKS OF DOLORS GENOVÈS: THE NEGOTIATION OF MEMORY IN DEMOCRATIC SPAIN

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the ways in which recent Catalan television documentaries, particularly those directed by Dolors Genovès and the team of Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis for TV3, depict Spain's traumatic past and participate in public debates about memory. I argue that Armengou and Belis's documentaries attempt to construct a totalizing and coherent historical narrative while manipulating the spectators' emotions in order to further political agendas that depict the debate as only two-sided. Genovès's documentaries, on the other hand, effectively eschew Manichean discourse and distinguish themselves by illustrating a process through which history is constructed by the reappearance and recurrence of the traumatic event and the difficulty of comprehending it.

Television is the medium of the immediate, and yet, since the mid-nineties it has played a fundamental role in reviving the memory of the Spanish civil war (1936-1939) and of the Francoist dictatorship that followed (1939-1975). National and regional television stations have produced, broadcast, and subsequently marketed documentaries that examine Spain's recent past from a present-day perspective, thus creating a visual history of twentieth-century Spain. I am thinking of *Casas Viejas: el grito del sur* (Basilio Martín Patino 1995, Canal Sur de Andalucía), *Les fosses del silenci* and *Els nens perduts del franquisme* (Montse Armengou and Ricard Bellis 2003, Televisió de Catalunya), *Memoria de España* (Fernando García de Cortázar 2004, Televisión Española), and *La memoria recobrada: una mirada crítica de nuestro pasado más reciente* (Alfonso Domingo 2006, Televisión Española), to name just a few. What is surprising is not only the quantity of these television productions, but also their scope and impact. For instance, *Les fosses del silenci*, broadcast on March 2 and 16, 2003, garnered unexpectedly high ratings. The first part had a seventeen percent share, representing almost five hundred thousand households, and the second, twenty-five percent, close to seven hundred thousand households. In addition, Armengou's documentary has been distributed in DVD in Catalan as well as Castilian, and is readily available at two of the largest

stores in Spain, El Corte Inglés and Fnac. Dolors Genovès's series of documentaries for Televisió de Catalunya (TV3) also had an average seventeen percent share and three of these works were issued in DVD both in Catalan and Castilian—*Operació Nikolai* (1992), *L'or de Moscou* (1994) and *Cuba sempre fidelíssima* (1998). Television reporters dealing with memory tend to emphasize their rigorous research and incorporate interviews with scholars, thus endowing their work with historical validity. Renowned historians Julián Casanova, Ricard Vinyes, and Santos Juliá provided their expertise both in front of and behind the cameras in *Roig i negre* (Dolors Genovès 2006, TV3), *Els nens perduts del franquisme* and *El laberinto español* (Jorge Martínez Reverte 2006, Televisión Española), respectively. How do we account for the fact that, although the television medium has not traditionally been valued in academic circles, its historical reportages are fully thriving in the present? How can we explain the successful presence of recent Spanish history in our households?

These recent productions reveal a political and historical focus, and in this essay I will examine how they participate in the national discourse conditioned by the traumatic experience of the Spanish Civil War and the Francoist dictatorship. Freud-derived theories of trauma will help us to understand that the recurrence of the Civil War and the dictatorship manifest in later democratic cultural production should be read as part of the cognitive process of the traumatic experience itself. In this vein, I will discuss the contribution of a group of documentaries made for Catalan television between 1992 and 2006 to the current debate about memories of the Francoist repressive regime. Due to Catalonia's decisive role in the war, it is necessary to look into TV3 as a pioneer in the production of historical documentaries. Specifically, I refer to the reportages of Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis for the *30 minuts* program as well as those of Dolors Genovès, who directed seven documentaries about the war and dictatorship for TV3.¹ Such an analysis requires an examination of their contribution to the way in which Catalonia perceives Spain's recent past through a public medium as well as an assessment of the possible limitations of this perception.

Even though television has not traditionally been valued in Peninsular Studies, it is useful to consider its role in a debate that began in the early 1990s and reached its culmination in 2006, "el año de la memoria histórica" ["the year of historical memory"]. Indeed, the

1 Genovès refers to them as "reportajes" instead of documentaries. The term "reportaje" is usually used for news stories broadcasted on television that investigate an immediate reality (Soler 85). The length would be the most obvious difference, but the cinematic and critical language for both "reportajes" and documentaries is identical.

unfairly named “idiot box” has much to say about twentieth century Spain, and its broadcasts demonstrate that the debate about the past is not limited to the political and academic realms. Thanks to its ubiquity, the small screen involves huge audiences in this public debate, while the release of the vast majority of these programs on DVD format springs from the need to further disseminate information about one of the most pressing issues in our recent past. Furthermore, this intensified dissemination ascertains the increased plurality and scope of the television medium in the year 2006, the fiftieth anniversary of Televisión Española (TVE).

TVE was fully controlled by the state during the dictatorship, and since the transition to democracy, all political parties have been involved in a fierce debate in order to end the use of the public medium as a political instrument. Reflecting the ongoing nature of the debate, all of the directing teams of post-dictatorship public television have repeatedly had to defend themselves against accusations of political bias. These debates originated during Spain’s transition to democracy, when the PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) urged that TVE stop functioning in the service of the government, as it had been during the dictatorship. Enrique Bustamante, one of only a handful of television scholars in Spain, in his *Radio y Televisión en España*, documents the PSOE’s demands for the democratization of public television during the years that it was controlled by the UCD (Unión de Centro Democrático), which ruled from 1977-1982. The first legal attempt in the long and arduous process to democratize television came in 1980 with the so-called “Estatuto de la radio y la televisión.” The new law stipulated the creation of an executive board elected by the Congress and the Senate as well as a parliamentary committee that were to oversee the television management, although the President of TVE was still to be appointed by the government (Bustamante 78-79). The socialist party’s demands for independent public television grew faint, however, as their chances of winning the 1982 election increased (Bustamante 102-3). After the Socialist party won by a landslide, all the TVE directors had to defend themselves against what Bustamante calls “flagrantes casos de manipulación informativa a favor del gobierno” [“cases of flagrant manipulation of information in favor of the government”], cases that led the European Partido Popular to lodge a formal complaint against TVE in the European parliament. In 1993, after the Socialist party had lost its majority in Parliament, a commission was formed in the Senate in order to put an end to these irregularities, determine the social role of TVE, and to operate through an executive board comprised of well-respected professionals instead of politicians (113). The president of TVE would no longer be appointed by the party in power, but by a two-thirds majority in parliament. This change took

place for the first time in 2006, during the administration of Rodríguez Zapatero (2004-2008). The road to democratize television was long because of the tremendous political power that is at stake.

In addition to the administrative changes detailed above, Televisión Española has *de facto* lost its monopoly over the Spanish household due to the emergence of private as well as regional stations. The creation of regional television was stipulated by the "Estatutos de Autonomía," a legal process that started in the Basque Country in 1982, immediately followed by Catalonia in 1983, with the formation of the Catalan Corporation of Radio and Television (CCRTV). Other regional stations were not ready for broadcast until 1989 (Canal Sur de Andalucía, Televisión de Madrid and Canal Nou in Valencia). Also in the late '80s some *autonomías* saw the emergence of a second station, ETB-2, in the Basque Country and Canal 33 in Catalonia (Bustamante 120-122). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, what is certain is that the diversity of Spanish television is not only a result of this fundamental legislative change, but also of the number of available stations. In addition to TVE's two channels, there are many private and independent stations, and the state monopoly that existed during the dictatorship and the transition has disappeared. Furthermore, new technical resources permit more complex and expensive productions that merit study. As Paul Julian Smith states in *Television in Spain: From Franco to Almodóvar*, Spanish television deserves to be valued more highly by both critics and the general population (12; 162).

Given the harsh criticism to which TVE has been exposed, it is not surprising that its contribution to the debate on the recuperation of memory has come much later than that of regional television stations. For instance, the first documentary series entirely produced by TVE, *Memoria de España* (2004), met with intense controversy while it was being shot due to the anti-nationalist views of its director, historian Fernando García de Cortázar. Representatives of Basque and Galician nationalist parties expressed concern about the lack of a pluralist view of Spanish history (Gómez 2003). When the series was introduced to the press, its director, as well as the President of TVE Juan Menor responded to accusations of centralism by stressing that more than 200 historians had been involved in the making of the twenty-seven episode series. They also noted that the purpose of the program was to provide a public service and to teach as well as entertain (Gómez 2004).

Televisió de Catalunya had been a pioneer in the production of historical documentaries long before TVE entered onto the scene. Although regional television in Spain follows the same structural model as TVE, based on the 1980 "Estatuto," it has not met with as much criticism as TVE. Regional television stations are considered to be primarily concerned with disseminating local history and culture,

and the accusations of political manipulation have not been as pervasive. The current president of TV3, for instance, recently stressed the institution's commitment to history as he introduced Genovès's documentary *Roig i negre*, which examines the role of anarchism during the civil war ("Un trabajo"). In fact, television analysts praised TV3's broadcast of such documentaries as a public service: "TV3 ens obsequia periòdicament amb treballs d'investigació històrica impecables i amb un segell molt propi, que només es podem esperar d'una televisió pública que aspira a l'audiència, però també a la influència i a crear opinió" ["TV3 periodically offers us programs showcasing historical research, as we would expect from a public television station that aspires not only to reach a wide audience but also to influence and stimulate public opinion"] (Relats 55).

The existence of two teams devoted exclusively to the production of historical documentaries attests to TV3's institutional commitment to history. The first one was created for the weekly program *30 minuts* in the mid-eighties, and Armengou and Belis have become the two leading reporters. Subsequently, in 1992, Genovès founded the Department of Historical Documentaries affiliated with the Information Services team of TV3. Genovès herself conceives and organizes a particular project before assigning specific tasks to her collaborators. Although both teams share a focus on history, their programs illustrate divergent ways of conceiving television's role in the current debate on memory, as I hope to show. Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis directed the most popular reportages made for *30 minuts*, comprising the trilogy *Els nens perduts del franquisme* (2002), *Les fosses del silenci* (2003) and *El comboi d'Les 927* (2004). All three brought to light and condemned atrocities committed during the civil war that had not previously been part of our visual history.

The documentaries include testimonies of victims' relatives, archival footage, photographs as well as interviews with respected historians. All three are dominated by the voiceover, a fairly traditional technique employed by the reporters. Traditionally, the voiceover creates a narrative thread and grants coherence to the multiple elements of a documentary, thereby representing authority. In *Les fosses del silenci*, for instance, the voiceover closes the program by demanding justice, reparation, and acknowledgment of the victims of Francoism. Furthermore, the voice criticizes the transition process for encouraging the evasion of the past. While the documentary as a whole assigns agency to the victims of the repression, the authoritative voice at the end makes a political declaration that conveys the directors' intentions, which I would characterize as Manichean. Armengou and Belis attribute the atrocities of the past solely to the Nationalists and do not represent them as a common practice on both sides during the

war.² Their commitment to the Republican victims likens the role of the present-day reporter to that of the foreign correspondents during the civil war who understood their reporting as a moral responsibility (Preston 24). The Armengou-Belis team considers it their responsibility to expose and denounce atrocities that had gone unknown. Despite their political stance, Belis highlights the double aim of historical documentaries: “[H]i ha una tasca de divulgació, però també hi ha una important tasca d’investigació històrica” (100). Dissemination, research and, I might add, political denunciation of Francoism are their aims.

However, as historian Santos Juliá recently stated regarding the book version of Armengou’s and Belis’s *Las fosas del silencio*, to which was added the somewhat sensationalist subtitle *¿Hay un holocausto español?*, the current process of remembering and paying tribute to the Nationalist victims is obliterating the Republican victims by minimizing their relevance or simply distorting the facts (74). For Juliá, Manichean historical discourse does a disservice to a democratic society, as it simply reproduces the discriminatory politics that the current discourse is trying to correct. While I am not arguing that objectivity is possible or that there is no need for reparation, it seems to me that explicit political commentary undermines the validity of the historical evidence.

How is Armengou-Belis’s style different from Genovès’s? What does Genovès contribute to our visual history? It would be impossible to review thoroughly the literature about the documentary genre in this article, but the words of director Jill Godmilow will shed light on the major difference between the works of the Armengou-Belis team and those of Genovès’s team. Godmilow indicates that the majority of contemporary documentaries continue trying to be authentic historical sources that present an “authoritative” vision of the history of a country or community (85). One of the sources of authority in a documentary is precisely that element which provides the documentary narrative with coherence: the voice of the narrator. Godmilow reminds us that all narrative requires a conclusion; that is, stories tend to lead us to a vantage point from which audiences can see a future that overcomes the upheavals of the traumatic past that it has shown us. Furthermore, for Godmilow, this documentary model has a cathartic effect and concerns ideological orientations. In fact, the appeal to the

² Both reporters had embarked on such a long investigative journey that they deemed it imperative to publish their voluminous findings in book form. The broadcasts were followed by the publications of eponymous texts both in Catalan and Castilian. Historian Ricard Vinyes coauthored *Els nens perduts del franquisme*, and, significantly, a somewhat sensationalist subtitle was added to *Las fosas del silencio: ¿Hay un holocausto español?*

spectator's emotions has much to do with commercial demands. The greater the dramatic element is, the bigger the box office success will be. And here we have touched upon one of the major differences between the documentary projected onto the big screen and the television documentary. The former employs a dramatic style and appeals to the emotions of its spectators much like fictional drama. The made-for-television documentary, on the other hand, does not require as much commercial success.

Interestingly, the main elements that Godmilow identifies in commercial documentaries can be found in Armengou's and Belis's works. I am referring, specifically, to the appeal to emotions and the cathartic effect, two of the elements that can explain their enormous success. The brutality of the children snatched from their mothers during and after the war depicted in *Els nens perduts del franquisme*, the long-time suffering of the relatives of Republicans killed and buried in communal graves explored in *Les fosses del silenci*, and the devastating images of the nine hundred and twenty-seven Republican prisoners transported to concentration camps in *El comboi dels 927*, all had a tremendous emotional impact on audiences. Further evidence of the impact is the fact that later, in 2003, the DVDs were included with the purchase of the popular historical magazine *Sàpiens* as part of their "Col·lecció Les millors documentals històrics," in what is now the common marketing practice in Spain of issuing free gifts (a book or DVD) with magazines to increase sales. Additionally, the DVDs were distributed in Castilian as well as Catalan by Vernal Media in 2005 and marketed as part of the series "Documentales históricos," which is sponsored by TV3 and Enciclopèdia Catalana. The commercial success of the Armengou-Belis team does not end here. The results of the investigation for all three documentaries were published in book form in Catalan as well as Castilian, with the incorporation of historian Ricard Vinyes as coauthor of *Els nens perduts del franquisme*. From 2002 to 2005, Mondadori and Plaza y Janés published editions in hardback and paperback.³

³ Armengou's works made yet one more appearance in the independent documentary series entitled "Imágenes contra el olvido," which has been screened at selected locations in Spain, Argentina, and the United States. The series features a total of 13 documentaries produced by filmmakers from Spain, Austria, France, Switzerland, and the United States. One of them had been made for cinematic release, Javier Corcuera's *La guerrilla de la memoria* (2001); two others, originally produced by TV3 in Catalan, are included in their Castilian translation, Armengou and Belis's *Los niños perdidos del franquismo* (2002) and *El convoy de los 927* (2004); the remaining ten, which had never been screened before, include *Santa Cruz por ejemplo* (Günter Schwaiger and Hermann Peseckas 2005), *La mala muerte* (Jose Manuel Martín and Fidel Cordero 2003/2004), *La columna de los ocho mil* (Ángel Hernández García, Antonio Navarro, Fernando Ramos, Francisco Freire 2005), *Presos del silencio* (Mariano Agudo y Eduardo Montero 2004),

We need to ask whether the aim of these reportages is to revise, illuminate, and modify the official history of twentieth-century Spain or to achieve commercial success—or both. If the atrocities of the civil war needed to be exposed because they were unknown, the question is: who are these badly informed masses? We would have to exclude those who grew up in postwar Spain as well as their offspring who were raised during the dictatorship, although the post-Franco generation does certainly lack the first-hand knowledge of their predecessors. Historian Henri Rousso indicates that the traumatic perception of a nation's past is modified every twenty-five years, something that explains, in part, the need to continuously revisit the past (qtd. in Juliá 71). Those Spaniards who have only known the democratic system do need to learn about their own past, and they constitute a vast market ready for the consumption of images. While I agree with Belis that television reporters' central tasks are investigation and dissemination, it is imperative to consider one more step in the process: consumption. And, going back to Godmilow's theory, the appeal to emotions only stimulates consumption.

Let us now examine Genovès's works and assess how her style diverges from Armengou and Belis's. With the exception of the second-to-the-last program in her series, *Abecedari.Porcioles*, to which I will refer later, I would venture that her reportages attempt to "correct," to use Godmilow's term; they try to illuminate, expose, and modify the official history of Spanish Democracy. In very general terms, her aims do not greatly differ from those of her fellow reporters. For her, the documentary is yet another narrative that comes to challenge the history of the victors of recent Spanish history by means of meticulous research in a series of archives that had been previously inaccessible, like the personal archives of Josep Tarradellas, head of the Catalan government-in-exile (1939–77) and interim president (1977–80), as well as those from the former Soviet Union, available after the fall of the communist regime in 1989. In fact, the director herself emphasizes her research. That is, she presents herself more as a historian than as a journalist whose work depends on dissemination (Genovès, September 2005).

At the beginning of her career, Dolors Genovès encountered great difficulties because of her insistence upon recovering the past. She

Los héroes nunca mueren (Jan Arnold 2004), *Muerte en El Valle* (Christina Hardt 1996), *España-Última esperanza. Apuntes de una odisea* (Karin Helml and Hermann Peseckas 2006), *Una inmensa prisión* (Carlos Ceacero and Guillermo Carnero Rosell 2006), *Los alzados de Palma* (David Baute and Cirilo Leal 2006), and *La memoria es vaga* (Katie Halper 2004). These ten documentaries are for sale in a DVD pack, as advertised in the series website (<http://imagenescontraelolvido.com/>), which also contains information about the documentaries, the filmmakers, and past and future screenings.

began to make historical documentaries in 1986. The first of these is called *In memoriam* and features the story of Joan Rocabert, an active member of POUM, and his large family during the Civil War. It took Genovès a great deal of time to get the topic approved; 1986 was the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the war, and the tendency in public television was to avoid stirring up the past. In 1992, she finally received approval by TV3 to create a department for the production of historical documentaries. Since then, Genovès has produced a total of thirteen documentaries, seven of which deal with the war and the dictatorship: *Roig i Negre* (2006), *Abecedari Porcioles* (2004), *Joan March*, *Les negocis de la guerra* (2003), *4 dies de novembre* (1995), *Sumaríssim 477* (1994), *L'or de Moscou* (1994), and *Operació Nikolai* (1992). The majority of Genovès's documentaries are political biographies about figures such as Manuel Carrasco i Formiguera, the disputed Catalan nationalist (*Sumaríssim 477*); Andreu Nin, leader of the POUM who was murdered in 1937 for his opposition to Stalinist politics (*Operació Nikolai*); and the millionaire Joan March (*Joan March, Les negocis de la guerra*). The director uses archival images and interviews linked by the traditional voiceover. Still, from a formal point of view, it is clear that the stylistic intentions are not emphasized. Instead, these documentaries are more invested in the results of the meticulous and extensive research, as well as in their implications for democratic Spain. Unlike the documentaries examined above, Genovès's work attempts no emotional manipulation of the spectators in order to produce a catharsis. That is, the vision of the traumatic past is recalled not in order to overcome it, but instead to know it and examine it as thoroughly as possible. Furthermore, knowledge of the dictatorship past comes tied to the knowledge of the democratic present, as is implied in, for example, *Joan March: Les negocis de la guerra*. March, born in 1880 and deceased in 1962, was the Majorcan millionaire known in his own time as "the banker of Franco" who became the seventh-richest man in the world in the 1950s. His has always been an elusive figure, and for that reason the documentary shows that his fortune was made through the smuggling of arms and tobacco during World War I. But among newer generations of Spaniards, March is best known for founding "La Fundación Juan March" in 1955. In fact, as the documentary emphasizes, the foundation possesses the second-largest fortune in Spain today. The goal of denouncing the origin of the fortune is clear, as the documentary tries to establish the relationship between the corruption of the tycoon and the fortune that is still maintained in Spain today.

An analysis of Genovès's *Abecedari Porcioles* will further illustrate her trademark style. Like many of her previous documentaries, this is a political biography, in this case of Josep M. de Porcioles, who was mayor of Barcelona between 1957 and 1973. It represents, however, a

significant break from Genovès's previous trajectory because of its innovations of form, as well as being an important contribution to the political debate over the recent past. The director herself defines this work as a reflection on memory, as evinced by the first images on the screen that depict Porcioles's youth. The journey through this "abecedari" ["alphabet"] begins, logically, with the letter "a" in Amer, the birthplace of Porcioles, where NO-DO images show the mayor dancing a traditional "sardana" during one of the village festivals.⁴ After a few moments, a fast-forwarded traveling shot transports us to the present in which Joan de Porcioles Santgenís, one of the mayor's sons, recalls the scene that we have just seen. The sped-up traveling shot demonstrates that we are witnessing a journey not only through space, but also through time. Joan de Porcioles, accompanied by Genovès, goes on to point out a plaque in the plaza of the village commemorating the eightieth anniversary of the birth of his father. The plaque highlights the undeniable presence of the enduring memory and legacy of Porcioles, as does the house in which he grew up, which serves as the background for the second part of the interview with his son Joan. Therefore, from the beginning, the documentary showcases movements back and forth through the present and the past in order to emphasize the inevitable connections in the historical flux.

According to Genovès herself, she chose to follow the structure of the alphabet because it allowed her to explore spaces and subjects without needing to establish transitions between them. Consequently, within the strict alphabetic organization, Porcioles' Barcelona of the past (1957-1973) and Maragall's Barcelona of the present (1982-1997) fuse together so as to become almost indistinguishable, and this fusion is accomplished indirectly, through purely technical means. For example, one of the sequences about the advisability of constructing underground parking lots in the '70s begins with NO-DO images and the original NO-DO voiceover. The NO-DO footage of a garage leads to a dissolve to a color shot of a contemporary garage. However, the NO-DO voiceover continues throughout the footage of the modern parking lot, thus linking the urban planning debate that originated in the '70s to the continuing inability of the government to find solutions to the parking problem thirty years afterwards. As a matter of fact, these projects were envisioned and planned during Porcioles's tenure but were executed by Maragall's Socialist town hall in the late 1990s.

Unlike in the previous documentaries in the series, in *Abecedari Porcioles* the director has a markedly visible presence, since she is seen as she interviews her subjects. Nonetheless, she lacks a voice, since she

⁴ "NO-DO" stands for "Noticiarios y Documentales Cinematográficos," producer of the propagandistic Spanish cinematic newsreels shown from 1942 to 1976.

gives the stage over to the interviewed subjects, the real protagonists of the report. Also, unlike the other documentaries made for TV₃, this production lacks the off-camera narrative voice that gives cohesion to the narrative and establishes its authority. Instead, it is the visible presence of Genovès that grants the documentary its cohesion. At the same time, this cohesion is not a source of authority; on the contrary, the majority of the interviews are conducted in open spaces to indicate that the evaluation of the figure of Porcioles remains open also. The challenge to the notion of any authority is reinforced by the constant visual presence of another camera. The second camera itself, or its shadow, appears in the majority of the shots, calling our attention to the artifice of the cultural product. Another recurring means of calling attention to the documentary as artifice is the appearance of a series of different takes in front of the same dark background. As the images appear, we hear the click of the photographic camera, which serves as a reminder of the artificiality of the image. Unlike the traditional documentary, in which the image is proof of the "reality" of its argument, *Abecedari* constantly reminds us that that the image is manipulation, repetition, and simulation.

The psychoanalytic conception of trauma serves as a framework within which to differentiate the formulation of official History and the perceptions of the past in the collective memory. Hayden White's classic study establishes that the function of the historian is to charge certain traumatic moments in the past with significance in the present (57); that is, the historian "de-traumatizes" historical events in order to grant them meaning in a coherent narration. According to White, historians "re-familiarize" traumatic historical events by making them conform to the same narrative modes that we use to make sense of our own life stories (87). In the official Historical narrative of democratic Spain, the traumatic episode of the Civil War seems to be relegated to a secondary position because emphasis is placed on the teleological future during which the country will be incorporated into modern Europe. The assumption behind this move appears to be that it is convenient and soothing to configure an official historical discourse that promotes a vision of the future distanced from the destructive forces of the war and the stagnation of the dictatorship. Furthermore, the official narrative thereby avoids the past repeating itself and taking power over the future.

Nevertheless, for many intellectuals, artists, and civic organizations, the traumatic experience has not been overcome and continues to form an essential part of the democratic identity.⁵ In this respect, I find useful

⁵ Examples of such organizations are Asociación Para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, Asociación Catalana de Presos Políticos, and Dones del 36.

Cathy Caruth's study *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* for its lucid reading of the Freudian theory of trauma outlined in *Moses and Monotheism*. For Freud, trauma consists of the unconscious, recurring experience of a past catastrophe (Caruth 11). Through this repetition, we can eventually reach an understanding of the situation that, when it took place, was incomprehensible (Caruth 11). That is, the notion of trauma appears intimately tied to the cognitive experience, since it allows us to shed light upon the unintelligible moment of the catastrophe. After reassigning the mechanisms of trauma to historical discourse, Caruth can affirm that the meaning of a history of trauma can be accessed only through its initial inaccessibility (18). This conception of historic discourse emphasizes the epistemological process as well as its construction in recurrence. In fact, I understand the validity of the historical documentaries I discussed earlier in terms of this tendency: they try to arrive at a deeper understanding of the war and the ensuing dictatorship. While those produced by the Armengou-Belis team represent attempts to construct the totalizing and coherent narrative that White proposes, Genovès's documentaries illustrate a process in which history is constructed according to the reappearance and recurrence of the traumatic event and the difficulty of comprehending it.

Both models of historic discourse, the comprehensive and totalizing and the incomprehensible and fragmentary, are illustrated in *Abecedari Porcioles*. The political biography of Porcioles highlights the major urban modifications that were carried out during his rule: the construction of the tunnels of Tibidabo to facilitate access to the coast; the construction of housing projects—*polygons* in Catalan—to resolve the problems of the slums; and the creation of the outer bounds—*rondes*—to alleviate city traffic in the 1960s. But throughout this retrospective, Genovès does not glorify the modernization of Barcelona. On the contrary, a careful analysis of the author's techniques shows that the documentary depicts Porcioles's Barcelona as a large city of depressing, marginalized neighborhoods, suffering from horrific urban design and concludes with Porcioles's failure of vision. It is a city that has nothing to do with the beauty of the modernist designs of Gaudí, the modernity of the Olympic Games held in 1992, or the globalizing project of the Fórum 2004. That is to say, the teleological institutional vision that made Barcelona the grand European metropolis is disarmed by the subtly critical view of the past. The final irony of the documentary appears in the words of praise directed towards Porcioles offered by Pasqual Maragall and Joan Anton Samaranch during his funeral, words that illustrate the official discourse of History that the documentary has just deconstructed. While Maragall highlights the unequivocally Catalan vision of Por-

cioles, Samaranch defines him as a “dreamer of realities.” That is, both extol the modernizing labor of Porcioles that Genovès has demonstrated to be a failure. In the same documentary space, the irreparable divisions between two ways of understanding memory coexist.

Genovès’s open and innovative proposition has a double value. On the one hand, it promotes the debate surrounding the memory of Francoism. On the other hand, it does so in a non-authoritative way that instead invites the type of dialogue appropriate to a consolidated democratic society. The invitation to dialogue challenges those who, since the process of the transition to democracy, have tried to silence demands for reparations and the restitution of the defeated in the past. The work of Genovès manages to express and promote, from inside the institutional space of public television, the urgent need to reflect on the memories of the recent past, which she understands in terms of plurality. No one would agree that an authoritative and one-sided narrative style provides a public service to the new generations of Spaniards. With *Abecedari Porcioles* Genovès vindicates the pluralistic approach to history and politics that has been much desired in public television. While it is true that TV3 broadcasts in Catalonia only, a new generation of Spaniards is buying its programs in DVD format and reading historical texts authored by its reporters. A public medium is, in fact, educating millions of viewers, consumers, and readers. Whether older generations pass on democratic values and encourage the critique of authoritarian views on history will affect television’s ability to impact the public memory debate. If a traumatic past can only be partially accessed, its discourse must reflect this very same quandary.⁶

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