‘Pacto de olvido’, ‘dolor diferido’: Javier Cercas’s Affective Recuperation of the Transition in *Anatomía de un instante*

Abstract

Javier Cercas’s 2009 re-imagination in *Anatomía de un instante* of the attempted **1981 *coup de état*, ‘23-F’**, and **Spain’s democratic transition** more broadly, though characteristically experimental with genre, goes further than in previous novels by purporting to forgo fiction for the authority of history. Yet Cercas’s empathetic retelling, which gives prominence to three of the transition’s key politicians as unlikely – and ambiguous – heroes who defended democracy, exploits the affective charge of a not unfamiliar narrative of **consensus** and **national reconciliation**. This article interrogates his recuperative and re-mythologizing stance in the discursive context of ***memoria histórica*** and recent critical perspectives on the transition, specifically the oft-reiterated and powerfully emotive notion of a ***pacto de olvido*** that has almost come to encapsulate the process.

'Pacto de olvido', 'dolor diferido': Javier Cercas's Affective Recuperation of the Transition in *Anatomía de un instante*

> The angel of history [...] is turned towards the past. Where a chain of events appears before *us*, *he* sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet.[1]

Introduction

In a 2013 interview for *El País*, Alfonso Guerra, the former PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) politician, then in his seventies, was asked whether certain institutions that were pivotal during the transition now required transformation. From the train of the conversation, it is clear that the interviewer has the monarchy – and its decline in popularity – in mind, but his question inevitably prompts his interlocutor to reflect on the reassessment to which the transition has been subjected by the ebullient discursive context widely referred to as *memoria histórica*. As one of the main players in that process of democratization, Guerra's reply is perhaps understandably a somewhat defensive one:

> A los 25 años ha surgido de manera muy fuerte lo que defino como el *dolor diferido* de los nietos. A eso se le ha llamado memoria histórica, algo confuso porque la

[1] Walter Benjamin, 'On the Concept of History', in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4: 1938-1940*, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 389-400 (p. 392, original emphasis).

> memoria es siempre personal, y la que guardan unos no es la misma que la de otros. Eso ha generado *un disparo* contra la Transición que considero erróneo.[2]

Setting aside for the moment Guerra's reductive understanding of memory as wholly personal and its alignment with the privatization of memory that has been a criticism of the 2007 Law of Historical Memory,[3] what I would like to foreground is the negative verdict on the transition that he sees as a corollary of memory and which he evocatively describes as 'un disparo'. Of course, Guerra is not alone in noting such re-evaluations of the transition within and outside Spain over the past decade and a half. Historian Michael Richards, among others, has observed that 'the recent movement to recover memories in Spain has mounted a sustained critique of the social and political "amnesia" after Franco's death and has provoked some profound questioning of the democratic Transition as the founding myth of

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[2] Jesús Ruiz Mantilla, 'Alfonso Guerra: "No siempre fui un aguafiestas, pero muchas veces sí"', *El País*, 23 May 2013, <http://elpais.com/elpais/2013/05/23/eps/1369327356_286262.html> [accessed 3 March 2014]. In fairness to Guerra, he has acknowledged that an adverse effect of the transition's political consensus was to forget Spanish exiles who continued to defend democracy: see Sebastiaan Faber, 'The Price of Peace: Historical Memory in Post-Franco Spain, a Review-Article', *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, 58.1-2 (2005), 205-219 (p. 208).

[3] As opposed to a notion of memory that admits its collective, socially-mediated and contestatory aspects, and longer-term stabilization in cultural memory formations. See e.g. Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique*, 65 (1995), 125-133. On the 2007 Law, see Georgina Blakeley, 'Evaluating Spain's Reparation Law', *Democratization*, 20.2 (2013), 240-259 (p. 251).

contemporary state legitimacy'.[4] Added to this is the economic crisis experienced in Spain since 2008: condemnations of the transition's legacy have been frequent in protests by the 15-M movement, for example. What is striking about Guerra's remarks, though, is their emotive quality, both in invoking the 'belatedness' of trauma and its intergenerational transmission ('dolor diferido'),[5] and in his dramatic distillation of hostile views of the transition ('un disparo'). These ideas, which are also *feelings/emotions*, as I propose to explore below, resonate suggestively in the context of Javier Cercas's difficult-to-classify 2009 book *Anatomía de un instante* (I will return to the matter of genre) whose subject matter is the attempted coup of 23 February 1981 when Lieutenant Colonel Antonio Tejero stormed the Spanish parliament with his Civil Guards and held up the ministers at gunpoint.

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[4] Michael Richards, 'Grand Narratives, Collective Memory, and Social History: Public Uses of the Past in Postwar Spain', in *Unearthing Franco's Legacy. Mass Graves and the Recovery of Historical Memory in Spain*, ed. by Carlos Jerez Ferrán and Samuel Amago (University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), pp. 121-145 (p. 121).

[5] The belatedness of trauma is articulated in Cathy Caruth's work as the subject's repeated 'possession' by a traumatic event to which they have a dislocated relationship because of the inability to assimilate or fully experience it at the time ('Introduction', in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. by Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), pp. 3-12). Marianne Hirsch's concept 'postmemory', which explores the effects of the past on the descendants of traumatized individuals (in her case the children of Holocaust victims), develops a different understanding of the constitutive 'delay' in recognising trauma ('The Generation of Postmemory', *Poetics Today*, 29.1 (2008), 103-128). The 'belatedness' alluded to by Guerra, which is widespread in academic studies and public debate on memory, though not always conceptually clear, is indicative of the explanatory purchase of the idea of a collective trauma in Spanish society in relation to the Civil War and dictatorship.

Cercas's point of departure is the familiar image of Adolfo Suárez (the outgoing Prime Minister) 'solo, estatuario y espectral' in his seat while bullets 'zumban a su alrededor'.[6] On the 25th anniversary of the coup, recollections in the print press combined with media replays of the event, suddenly render this image uncanny, impelling him to investigate the meaning of Suárez's gesture, shared by the only two other politicians who disobeyed the order to get down on the floor: General Manuel Gutiérrez Mellado, deputy Prime Minister, and Santiago Carrillo, Secretary General of the PCE (Partido Comunista de España). It is in a bid to understand this unlikely trio's defiant defence of democracy and, by extension, the nature of 23-F and the transition, that Cercas writes *Anatomía de un instante*. To return to Alfonso Guerra, the 'disparo' that he registers against the transition is scrutinized in Cercas's exploration of the literal and figurative 'disparo' against democracy that 23-F signified with the aim of rehabilitating the memory of the founding process of Spain's democracy.

Accordingly, this article situates Cercas's text within some recent perspectives on the transition, paying particular attention to the much-reiterated and emotive notion of a so-called *pacto de olvido*/*pacto de silencio* that has almost become a shorthand for the political process undertaken primarily between 1976 and 1978, with the effect of figuring this 'politics of forgetting' as the sole or main cause of the struggles associated with the politics of memory that remain a significant feature of public life in Spain today. In so doing, I focus on the affective dimension of Cercas's text to examine the significant role affect plays in shaping his approach to history. This approach is overlaid by a more overt strategy, discussed by Cercas in *Anatomía* and elsewhere. It involves a not unproblematic aspiration to historiographical authority whilst laying claim to a privileged literary-symbolic 'truth', or 'tercera verdad' as

[6] Javier Cercas, *Anatomía de un instante* (Barcelona: Mondadori, 2009), pp. 17-18 (henceforth '*Anatomía*').

the author himself has termed it.[7] Analysis of the emotional composition of Cercas's work, its capacity to affect the reader and the implications of this, can, I think, contribute to current debates about the transition and to the national attachment to it as a 'founding myth'. It would be excessive to state that Cercas merely recycles a hegemonic, celebratory narrative, since he does attempt to demythify aspects of 23-F and the transition. Criticism of the political class (including Alfonso Guerra), of Juan Carlos I, and an emphasis on the flawed nature of the three 'héroes', distinguish *Anatomía* in some respects from the well-worn idea of a *transición modélica*. Nevertheless, Cercas has admitted that he is attracted to the idea of myth-making in his own literary production.[8] Evidence of this is discernible in *Anatomía* and sits somewhat uneasily with his pursuit of history. Beyond Spanish society, Cercas's reconstruction of the recent past (added to those of many Spanish novelists since the late 1990s), can be thought symptomatic of the impact of a 'global culture of memory' and is embedded in what has been termed its 'avalanche of memory discourses' – discourses which are entangled with an array of political uses, as the Spanish case discussed below will illustrate.[9] The first part of the article will thus review key aspects of the debates which refigure the transition chiefly as a

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[7] Javier Cercas, 'La tercera verdad', *El País*, 25 June 2011, <http://elpais.com/diario/2011/06/25/babelia/1308960747_850215.html> [accessed 22 June 2015].

[8] Ramón Rubinat Parellada, *Crítica de la obra literaria de Javier Cercas. Una execración razonada de la figura del intelectual* (Vigo: Editorial Academia del Hispanismo, 2014), p. 55. The sustained attack on Cercas in this study derives partly from his perceived traducing of Aristotle on the respective functions of history and literature, but its unrestrained nature perhaps also speaks to the rawness of memory debates in Spain.

[9] Richards, p. 123. Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 6.

'pact of forgetting' or 'silence' to prepare the ground for the analysis in the second part of the affective and re-mythologizing strategies that Cercas deploys in *Anatomía*'s retelling of the transition.

'Reading' Affect in Literary Texts

It is first important to explain what I mean by engaging with the affective dimension of Cercas's text and to differentiate between 'affect' and 'emotion'. I don't just mean that *Anatomía* contains ideas that are expressed emotively; rather, I want to explore what some of those emotions might do. Such an exploration entails going beyond a more or less straightforward idea of catharsis – although emotional release can be counted among the effects that *Anatomía* produces and it does offer a kind of reconstitution of the emotional climax with which readers of his bestselling *Soldados de Salamina* will be familiar – to consider the politics of the emotions which are salient in the text and how they might function to 'align' readers with particular narratives, as Sara Ahmed has put it.[10]

'Affect', a notoriously elusive and contested concept, is Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth propose, 'found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, and in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves'.[11] One of the key points to draw from the preoccupation with

[10] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Javier Cercas, *Soldados de Salamina* (Barcelona: Tusquets, 2001).

[11] Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, 'An Inventory of Shimmers', in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (London: Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 1-25 (p. 1). My approach does not engage with the somatic-biological domain of affect central to neuroscience and psychology.

'non-verbal, non-conscious dimensions of experience' that affect involves, is an emphasis on thought and knowledge as embodied. [12] Directing attention to a literary text's affective intensities and its cultivation of certain emotions, might not seem at first glance to be the most obvious area to warrant scrutiny. Yet to do so is to recognise that emotions are part of thought and, to cite Ahmed, that 'what is relegated to the margins is often [...] right at the centre of thought itself'.[13]

The relationship of affect to emotion can be conceived as a temporal one in the sense that what the body experiences then surfaces to awareness in feelings/sensation that are 'translated' reflectively and classified as emotion. Some conceptual slippage between the two is likely in the ways affect will be dealt with in this article.[14] Brian Massumi expresses emotion as 'qualified intensity', or 'intensity owned and recognized' whereas affect is unqualified.[15] In her survey of theories of affect, Jo Labanyi articulates this very slight interval (approximately half a second) 'before consciousness kicks in' as 'a kind of "thinking" that is done by the body not the mind'.[16] What occurs in the affective register would seem to yield emotion as a kind of by-product in what is nevertheless a far from straightforward

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[12] Lisa Blackman and Couze Venn, 'Affect', *Body & Society*, 16.1 (2010), 7-28 (p. 8).

[13] Ahmed, p. 4.

[14] There is also, Jo Labanyi points out, a lack of correspondence with the Spanish terms: 'afecto', like its synonym 'sentimiento', signifies emotion, whereas 'emoción' means excitement, which, because of the connotations of bodily arousal, is closer to affect, and hence the mostly unconscious realm of experience ('Doing Things: Emotion, Affect , and Materiality', *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 11.3-4 (2010), 223-233 (p. 224).

[15] Quoted in Constantina Papoulias and Felicity Callard, 'Biology's Gift: Interrogating the Turn to Affect', *Body & Society*, 16.1 (2010), 29-56 (p. 34).

[16] Labanyi, 'Doing Things', p. 224.

process.[17] Lawrence Grossberg problematizes this 'remapping' into emotion, doubting that the latter can be described merely as 'configurations of affect' and preferring to conceptualize emotion from a perspective akin to Ahmed's as 'the articulation of affect and ideology'. Hence for him, 'Emotion is the ideological attempt to make sense of some affective productions'.[18] In the section below, I attempt to understand the presence and role of affect in memory debates regarding the transition.

In the case of reading literary texts, when we become aware of a text moving us, when we are 'put into motion' to use Bruno Latour's evocative phrasing,[19] there is probably a delay in the work of pinpointing the emotions elicited – what is registered in the body that comes to us through feeling/sensation. Our responses to texts are undeniably embodied ones, although we may not dwell on this particularly and privilege the more unambiguously cognitive processes involved in reading. 'Making sense' of the text, in other words, to a degree also involves physical perception, as the word 'sense' itself – and its close relative 'sensation' – implies.

Focussing on the political and ideological dimension of emotions, which is the main issue at stake in this article, Ahmed persuasively argues that emotions can become a national

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[17] Lone Bertelsen and Andrew Murphie helpfully illustrate the finer, overlapping, distinctions in affect in 'An Ethics of Everyday Infinities and Powers', in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 138-157 (p. 140).

[18] Lawrence Grossberg, 'Affect's Future. Rediscovering the Virtual in the Actual', in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 307-338 (p. 316).

[19] Bruno Latour, 'How to Talk About the Body: The Normative Dimension of Science Studies', *Body & Society*, 10.2-3 (2004), 205-229 (p. 205).

trait.[20] In the context of recent debates concerning *memoria histórica* and the transition to democracy, it seems uncontroversial to suggest that the tendency to encapsulate the latter negatively as a *pacto de olvido* or *pacto de silencio* is emotionally (as well as politically and ideologically) charged. Regardless of whether such as pact is judged as having been strategically necessary by commentators, its 'almost ubiquitous reification',[21] especially in the context of the (completely understandable) demands of various 'asociaciones por la memoria' since the late 1990s for, among other issues, the excavation of common graves and annulment of Francoist rulings, carries connotations of a conspiracy by the political class in the late 1970s to conceal repression, and thereby perpetuate the injustices committed by the Franco regime, to the detriment of democracy. This is, in Santos Juliá's words, the transition as 'un mito inventado con el propósito de ocultar la única realidad: que todo cambió para que todo siguiera igual'.[22] Juliá, a prominent Spanish historian who belongs to the generation which was responsible for the transition, has consistently defended the manner in which it was conducted. Significantly, the preceding quote is taken from a laudatory review of Cercas's *Anatomía*, which as will be seen, in places closely resembles Juliá's perspective.

Affect and 'memoria histórica': Amnesia/Amnesty, Forgetting/Remembering, Silence/Reconciliation

[20] Ahmed, pp. 1-2, 13-14.

[21] Mary Vincent, 'Breaking the Silence? Memory and Oblivion Since the Spanish Civil War', in *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Efrat Ben-Ze'ev, Ruth Ginio and Jay Winter (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 47-67. (p. 49).

[22] Santos Juliá, 'Mientras zumbaban las balas', *El País*, 22 April 2009, <http://elpais.com/diario/2009/04/22/opinion/1240351212_850215.html> [accessed 4 March 2014].

To offer one illustrative example of the 'transition as myth', the largest and most well-known of the civil society organizations, the Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, identifies itself by asking '¿Por qué los padres de la Constitución dejaron a mi abuelo en una cuneta?'. It reads as a forceful indictment of the politics of the transition and is consonant with what Carme Molinero – a specialist on the Franco regime who belongs to the generation born in 'plena dictadura' – qualifies as the erroneous notion that the transition is exclusively to blame for the lack of justice for the victims of the Civil War and the dictatorship, and for public policy on memory in the present.[23] Acting as a signifier of enduring injustice and impunity, the phrase *pacto de olvido*, or *silencio*, evokes an acute sense of loss, denied mourning and open wounds; in short, the 'unfinished business' of the past that haunts the present.[24] Juliá, who like Molinero is critical of this characterization of the transition, sums up it up emotively as 'un pacto nefando [que] extendió sobre la sociedad un *silencio sepulcral*'.[25] If the forging of Spain's new democratic, modern and European identity in the post-Franco era was closely tied to the dominant idea of a *transición modélica*, then its disarticulation by the coming to prominence of the *pacto de olvido* potentially transforms what was once a source of national pride into the seeds of a reprehensible national character – one that imposed a 'tiranía del silencio'.[26]

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[23] Carme Molinero, 'La transición y la "renuncia" a la recuperación de la "memoria democrática"', *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 11.1 (2010), 33-52.

[24] Jo Labanyi, 'Memory and Modernity in Democratic Spain: The Difficulty of Coming to Terms with the Spanish Civil War', *Poetics Today*, 28.1 (2007), 89-116.

[25] Santos Juliá, 'El franquismo: historia y memoria', *Claves de la Razón Práctica*, 29 (2006), 4-13 (p. 6 emphasis added).

[26] Santos Juliá, 'Echar al olvido. Memoria y amnistía en la transición', *Claves de la Razón Práctica*, 129 (2003), 14-24 (p. 17).

That this has become a matter of national identity and rouses historical insecurities regarding Spain's position *vis-à-vis* Europe is amply illustrated in Juliá's responses to the issue of memory and attendant reconsiderations of the transition. In these, he tackles the criticisms that he attributes chiefly to academics from outside Spain. In the 'imagen de transición pasiva, amnésica' that he claims they are seeking to impose as the official memory, he detects the resurgence of 'El viejo *topos* de la anomalía española', or 'Spanish exceptionalism', which in its current formulation holds that Spaniards, in contrast with the French, Germans and Italians, have failed to confront their past and build a genuinely democratic system.[27] The displacement of the *transición modélica* paradigm by one that understands its consensual politics as faulty to the extent that they were dominated by the old regime and protected their interests, is underlined by the US-based political scientist Omar Encarnación when he observes that in 'the very expansive literature on Spanish democratization' (he does not provide dates), the 1977 Amnesty Law is recognised as having expedited the transition, yet 'the pejorative terms *Pacto del Olvido* and/or *Pacto del Silencio* appear nowhere in this literature'.[28] He is not critical himself of such a pact here, arguing that the Spanish case demonstrates that democratization is possible without reconciliation. However, he remarks that the pact's 'informal nature' has led some notable historians, namely Juliá, to question its very existence.[29] And more recently, Encarnación has underscored 'the impunity embedded in the 1977 Pact of Forgetting'.[30]

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[27] Juliá, 'El franquismo', p. 11; Juliá, 'Echar al olvido', p. 15 original emphasis.

[28] Omar Encarnación, 'Reconciliation after Democratization: Coping with the Past in Spain', *Political Science Quarterly*, 123.3 (2008), 435-459 (pp. 456-457).

[29] Ibid., p. 437, n. 8.

[30] Omar Encarnación, *Democracy Without Justice in Spain: the Politics of Forgetting* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), p. 7.

Evidently, the proliferation of the negatively-charged terms *pacto de olvido*/*pacto de silencio* in the last decade and a half attests to attempts to rectify a hegemonic interpretation of the transition, which emphasized the virtues of moving on from the past and avoiding its confrontational potential, in order to turn attention instead to the injustices that were (probably of necessity) largely overlooked. The pioneering work of historian Paloma Aguilar – who belongs to the generation of grandchildren of those who fought in the Civil War – has been key in the debates concerning the politics of memory which have recast the transition as a politics of forgetting. Indeed, generation, as should be becoming apparent, is an important factor for understanding where certain historians and commentators position themselves. Aguilar's generation is less encumbered by the silence that was a dominant feature of the cultural and social life experienced by the generation that fought the War and their children who grew up during the dictatorship. She was also a child at the time of the transition and this more detached relationship to its events perhaps lends itself more easily to critical consideration of how fear of the past conditioned decisions taken during the late 1970s and their repercussions.[31] Juliá does not deny that a kind of strategic 'forgetting' underpinned the transition, but he does continue to valorize that stance by presenting what he sees as a necessary re-contextualization of the attitude toward the past adopted at that time to reject the prevalent, inaccurate metaphor of collective amnesia as an overarching description of the decisions and effects of the transition.

Amnesia, Juliá maintains, implies an absence of memory and the inability to remember (an involuntary 'olvidar') whereas, during the transition, the memory of a conflictive past was very much alive and, in order to prevent it from becoming an

[31] See, for example, her influential 1996 study *Memoria y olvido de la guerra civil española*, translated into English as *Memory and Amnesia: The Role of the Spanish Civil War in the Transition to Democracy* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2002).

insurmountable obstacle to the future that was to be secured by democratization, the political class opted for a deliberate 'forgetting' (in the sense of temporarily bracketing) this past, conveyed in the Spanish expression 'echar al olvido'.[32] Yet this, he insists, did not preclude discussion of the Civil War and the dictatorship outside the realm of political negotiation where silence was manifestly not a salient characteristic.[33] Further, the consensual politics of the transition were already being shaped prior to the dismantling of the regime through the organization of a democratic opposition which integrated those who had fought in the Civil War alongside the children of both victors and defeated who decided, in order to be able to work together, not to 'echar en cara' their respective pasts.[34] According to this view, the opposition was engaged in a process of challenging the official memory imposed by regime and thereby counteracting in some measure its vindictive policy of refusing amnesty and reconciliation. Hence a dissenting memory was able to – and did – emerge during the transition; amnesty did not mean silencing, at least not for historiography and cultural production.[35] In contrast, Aguilar is less sanguine on this matter, viewing the pragmatic 'collective madness' thesis developed by the dissident intelligentsia as congruent with the later Franco regime's narrative rather than being distinct from it, obscuring the economic and political reasons for the War along with the disproportionate losses suffered by the Republican side.[36] It is likely that Juliá, in his evident desire to defend the transition as a

[32] Juliá, 'Echar al olvido', pp. 15-16.

[33] Juliá, 'El franquismo', p. 10. Juliá lists the wealth of publications on the Civil War and dictatorship that appeared during the 1970s and 1980s ('Echar al olvido', p. 18; 'El franquismo', pp. 11-13).

[34] Juliá, 'Echar al olvido', p. 19.

[35] Juliá, 'El franquismo', pp. 6-12.

[36] Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, pp. 132-148.

political project, underestimates the challenge that overturning the regime's memorialization of the Civil War presented. As Carsten Humlebaek points out, conflictive memories certainly existed, but 'their importance was secondary to the superior goal of reconciling the nation and establishing democracy'.[37] In this connection, Richards contends that the ways in which this official, authoritarian memory interacted with individuals meant that 'People in Spain were "forgetting" – rationally – long before the Transition to democracy'.[38]

Nevertheless, the influential idea of the transition as having institutionalized 'collective amnesia', which appears to stem from a perception that 'la amnistía arrastró como consecuencia la amnesia', has not been dislodged.[39] One of the difficulties inherent in debates regarding the transition is the frequent use of emotive metaphors whose power is such that they sometimes appear to be taken literally. Historian Mary Vincent points out the profound ambiguity contained in the term *pacto de olvido* where silence 'is the signifier both of pretending to forget and of actually forgetting'.[40] In the related case of 'collective

[37] Carsten Humlebaek, 'The "Pacto de Olvido"', in *The Politics and Memory of Democratic Transition: The Spanish Model,* ed. by Gregorio Alonso and Diego Muro (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 183-198 (pp. 186-187). Humlebaek offers an instructive, phased examination of the evolution of a tacit *pacto de olvido* from 1977 to 2004.

[38] Richards, p. 128.

[39] Juliá, 'El franquismo', p. 6. For example: 'The proposal was not just amnesty, but also amnesia' and 'Silence was at the heart of Spain's transition to democracy – enshrined in the *pacto del olvido*' (Giles Tremlett, *Ghosts of Spain: Travels Through a Country's Hidden Past* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), pp. 76, 81); 'Spain chose amnesty and a kind of institutionalized amnesia' (Madeleine Davis, 'Is Spain Recovering its Memory? Breaking the Pacto del Olvido, *Human Rights Quarterly*, 27.3 (2005), 858-880 [p. 863]).

[40] Vincent, p. 49.

amnesia', the equating of amnesty with amnesia – animated by the terms' shared etymology[41] – in a negative interpretation is a recurrent theme in recent understandings of the transition and relates to the widespread sense that amnesty discriminatorily foreclosed the possibility of justice for the victims of Francoism. One cannot reasonably disagree with this, especially bearing in mind the balance of power at the time. Yet achieving justice in any real sense would arguably have been almost impossible, not only given the relative weakness of the opposition's negotiating position, but more importantly, the magnitude of the crimes perpetrated and the suffering inflicted. This is not, of course, to say that the whole question of seeking justice should be dismissed. One explanation for the insistence on the idea of an unjust amnesty is the continued desire for adequate public recognition of the Republican victims of the Civil War and dictatorship so as to include them fully in the democratic state, primarily sought by their descendants who were mostly children or unborn during the transition. The intransigence of the Spanish right regarding Republican memory (see below), has only fuelled deep feelings of injustice.

But a corollary of the eliding of contextual detail concerning the promulgation of the amnesty laws – there were three: July 1976, March 1977 and October 1977 – by effectively renaming them as a single 'pact of forgetting', is that the 'hablar de reconciliación'[42] that they then stood for, as well as the pressure exerted by the opposition to make them ever more inclusive – '*amnistía arrancada*'[43] – is obscured in favour of the simplification that liberty

[41] Aguilar, p. 17.

[42] Juliá, 'Echar al olvido', p. 17.

[43] Juliá, 'El franquismo', p. 10, original emphasis.

was granted to one side in exchange for the impunity of the other.[44] Indicative of this dispute over the meaning of the amnesty laws is the fact that the Partido Nacionalista Vasco politician Xabier Arzalluz's oft-quoted summing up of the October 1977 law, that it was 'una amnistía de todos para todos, un olvido de todos para todos', has been interpreted alternately as welcoming reconciliation – as it was at the time – or as an expression of the injustice of oblivion.[45]

Re-interpretation of the amnesty laws thus has a bearing on whether reconciliation is considered to have taken place during the transition. This is not surprising since the October 1977 law, which in effect proscribes investigation into the human rights violations committed by the regime's authorities,[46] is at variance with current international standards regarding transitional justice and now flags the 'exemplary' Spanish transition – particularly from the perspective of the generation who were children or unborn during those years – as falling short, as standing for 'reconciliation without truth, a transition *without* transitional justice'.[47] Contemporary scholarship also addresses this failed reconciliation. Stephanie Golob has

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[44] Juliá ('Echar al olvido', 'El franquismo') and Molinero ('La transición') offer in-depth analyses of the amnesty laws, including, crucially, the role of the opposition. See also Aguilar, *Memory and Amnesia*, pp. 192-199).

[45] E.g. Juliá, 'Echar al olvido', p. 22; Encarnación, 'Reconciliation', pp. 438-439; Tremlett, p. 76. More recently however, Encarnación, has evoked this more positively, highlighting the support of the opposition, as 'one of the purest moments of national reconciliation in the democratic transition' (Encarnación, *Democracy Without Justice*, p. 72).

[46] As witnessed in the Supreme Court's 2010 prosecution for malfeasance of judge Baltasar Garzón (see Blakeley, 'Evaluating Spain's Reparation Law', pp. 252-253).

[47] Stephanie R. Golob, 'Volver: The Return of/to Transitional Justice Politics in Spain', *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 9.2 (2008), 127-141 (p. 127, original emphasis).

argued that, in practice, the 'constitutive story' of the new 'us' constructed during the transition was 'exclusionary in its denial of the past' and that amnesty harbours impunity which extends in time and space;[48] reconciliation was only re-launched as a project with Zapatero's 'inclusion agenda' following the PSOE's return to power in 2004.[49] Similarly, Georgina Blakeley emphasizes that there was political conciliation rather than social reconciliation – the latter has only really begun with the movements to recover the disappeared and their memory.[50]

The notion of reconciliation has, furthermore, to an extent been 'tainted' as a consequence of its appropriation by the right in order to justify its hostility towards the re-examination of the past involved in the demands for the memorialization of Republican victims. Specifically, when the PSOE government announced its proposed bill for a law on historical memory, the PP (Partido Popular) claimed that this was tantamount to breaking the *pacto de reconciliación* enshrined in the 1978 Constitution.[51] In a related vein, Encarnación, whose recent analysis of the transition is structured around its qualification as a 'Pact of Forgetting', observes that the left tends to refer to this pact as 'silence' and a necessary evil, whereas the right conceives of it as a 'pact of reconciliation'.[52] It is worth recalling that AP (Alianza Popular), the PP's earlier incarnation under former Francoist minister Manuel Fraga, opposed the October 1977 amnesty law – which, as noted, was widely understood at the time

[48] Golob, Stephanie R. Golob, 'Forced to Be Free': Globalized Justice, Pacted Democracy, and the Pinochet Case', *Democratization*, 9.2 (2002), 21-42 (pp. 32, 33).

[49] Golob, 'Volver', p. 133.

[50] Georgina Blakeley, 'Digging up Spain's past: Consequences of Truth and Reconciliation', *Democratization*, 12.1 (2005), 44-59 (p. 53).

[51] Molinero, p. 35.

[52] Encarnación, *Democracy without Justice*, p. 29.

to symbolize reconciliation – and sought to undermine its legitimacy by refusing to participate in its drafting.[53] AP's abstention from the final vote was defended on the grounds that the Law was a 'dangerous and destabilising' policy that would give rise to 'a climate of impunity that was entirely negative for a peaceful coexistence'.[54] Thus, during the transition, the right did not advocate reconciliation in the unreserved manner that it often alleges today. Along with Molinero, Cercas voices disquiet over the 'revisionismo' of the transition that has the right claiming ownership over it on the one hand, and the left allowing its key role and successes to be overshadowed on the other.[55]

In the light of the stories which have proliferated in the public sphere of relatives piecing together the traumatic final moments of their loved ones, recounting the opposition they continue to face in campaigning for the excavation of common graves so that they may finally lay them to rest, and the descriptions of the torture and suffering shockingly inscribed on many of the bodies that have been exhumed, it seems callous to refute the idea that an inexcusable casting into oblivion of the victims of repression occurred at a decisive point in time (Walter Benjamin's 'angel of history' comes to mind here). Yet, as historians such as Juliá and Molinero carefully document, this impression – cognitive and emotional – does not quite match the reality of the complex and often improvised process of transition. Moreover, the intense, growing interest in the past witnessed in Spain from the turn of the new century contrasts with a comparative lack of willing interlocutors in the late 1970s and 1980s.[56] It

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[53] Molinero, p. 47.

[54] Quoted in Aguilar, p. 194.

[55] Cercas in Jesús Ruiz Mantilla, '23-F. El juicio de los hijos', *El País*, 4 December 2009, <http://elpais.com/diario/2009/04/12/eps/1239517613_850215.html> [accessed 14 April 2014]. Also, *Anatomía*, p. 432.

[56] Labanyi, 'Memory and Modernity'.

does not follow from this that silence was coerced by the political class, although the reasons for avoidance of the past are manifold and complex, including the extent to which a tacit prohibition operated on Spanish citizens to close down discussion in the social – as opposed to the cultural and academic – sphere. Indeed, the wider project of embracing a modern identity after Franco's death can be understood as oriented towards the future and predicated on a rupture with the past.[57]

Alfonso Guerra's evocation of the generation of grandchildren's confrontation with the violence of the Civil War and the dictatorship as 'dolor diferido' eloquently captures the shock and emotion of their experience and, for them, the 'newness' of the past and the potent desire to know, which takes on a special urgency when faced with awareness of the imminent disappearance of biological memory.[58] The impact of this discovery, which has likely compounded the sense that this past has been hidden or silenced, creates a darker affective resonance around the transition that differs sharply from the 'pragmatism and bounded euphoria' that characterized the process itself.[59] It is just such a perception which opens Javier Cercas's 2001 novel, *Soldados de Salamina*, whose epigraph, citing Herodotus, declares 'los dioses han ocultado lo que hace vivir a los hombres'. Other recent novels reinforce this negative emotional impression made by the transition when encountered obliquely via affective re-engagement with the suffering inflicted by the Civil War and the dictatorship. For example, Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* (2002) and Almudena Grandes's *El corazón helado* (2007), signal, through their titles alone, both silence (and silencing), and lack of reconciliation respectively. In her novel, which references Antonio Machado's poem

[57] Ibid.

[58] Helen Graham, 'The Return of Republican Memory', *Science & Society*, 68.3 (2004), 313-328.

[59] Golob, 'Forced to Be Free', p. 32.

'Españolito' on the 'two Spains', Grandes's portrayal of the transition is largely of a period shrouded in fear and disillusionment for the War's defeated. In this novel too, though, the desire for reconciliation and overcoming of ideological divisions is expressed in the romantic relationship between the main characters whose families are locked in an enmity stemming from the War. The female protagonist's exploitation of *memoria histórica*, in the novel's denouement, to exact vengeance through blackmail, alludes to the inadequacies of state's response to civil demands while providing a context for her to take justice in her own hands. Her revenge coupled with the improbable romance, seems to convey an idea that reconciliation and *convivencia* among future generations is contingent upon justice being enacted for the Republican side.

'Epílogo de una novela': History versus Memory

The examples just discussed can be read as suggestive of how authors and cultural products are inevitably enmeshed with the affective intensities of history – intensities which can be understood as present in both the precognitive domain as well as being mapped out discursively as emotion. It is helpful at this point to draw upon Ahmed's idea of 'affective economies' to describe how feelings and emotions are produced as effects of circulation rather than residing in objects. If emotions are construed as creating 'the surfaces and boundaries that allow objects to be delineated' and the way that we 'read' an object – which can include cultural memory – brings it into being even as the emotions experienced in the encounter are attributed to it,[60] then I want to suggest that Cercas's *Anatomía de un instante* seeks to construct an affective bridge to the transition by altering the angle of the reader's approach. Initially, he does so by professing a muted or indifferent attitude to the subject matter, much as his narrator did in *Soldados*.

[60] Ahmed, p. 10.

Bearing in mind this idea of 'affective economies', one observes that around the time that *Soldados* was published, Cercas himself appears to have subscribed to the commonplace of the transition as oblivion. In a 2004 interview, in terms that recall Juliá's 'pacto nefando' enforcing a 'silencio sepulcral', he refers to it as 'este pacto de olvido que ha hecho olvidar todo' – his use of the demonstrative 'este' foregrounding the 'presentness' of its effects – and a settlement that facilitated impunity: 'Aquí no ha pasado nada: vamos para adelante' and 'no se ha hablado [del pasado]. O sea, [se ha] cubierto'.[61] The success of *Soldados* heralded the beginning of the phenomenon of *memoria histórica*.[62] This, together with Cercas's role as an occasional columnist for *El País*, which has championed him as an author, has made him a prominent figure in memory debates. It is plain that he has become aware of having a certain responsibility as far as ethical engagement with the past is concerned, an awareness which has translated into an increasingly critical opinion of *memoria histórica*. In *Anatomía*, Cercas replicates Juliá's argument about conscious forgetting involving remembering, by going so far as to reclassify the transition's handling of the past as a 'pacto de recuerdo'.[63] One explanation for this is Cercas's attention to the generational dimension of the debate, for the desire to understand Adolfo Suárez's gesture is interwoven with a desire to understand his own father whom he identifies with the politician 'que encarnaba lo que yo más detestaba en mi país'.[64] The accompanying focus on General Gutiérrez Mellado and Santiago Carrillo,

[61] Cercas in John Payne, 'Open Forum – An Interview with Javier Cercas: Language, History and Memory in *Soldados de Salamina*', *International Journal of Iberian Studies*, 17.2 (2004), 117-124 (pp. 119, 120, 120).

[62] *Soldados de Salamina* won numerous prizes in Spain, among them the Premio Salambó de Narrativa in 2001.

[63] *Anatomía*, p. 108.

[64] Ibid., p. 18.

both combatants in the Civil War and representatives of the dangerous polarization of ideological positions in the 1930s, also serves to bring into dialogue the different generational perspectives on the transition.

Cercas's rejection of a simplified understanding of the transition which censures the work of past generations might also in part account for his decision in *Anatomía* to opt (at least formally) for history over fiction and the fact that his text implicitly testifies to a view of certain memory discourses as excessive and defective. History and memory are highlighted as being at odds in the opening section, 'Epílogo de una novela', ostensibly an account of the 'failure' of this 'escritor de ficciones' to write a novel about 23-F, and his decision instead to produce a text devoid of fiction.[65] Nevertheless, there are strong echoes here of the 'relato real' of *Soldados*, defined by the fictional Cercas-narrator in that novel as 'como una novela. [...] Sólo que, en vez de ser todo mentira, todo es verdad'.[66] Elsewhere, Cercas acknowledges the concept is an oxymoron: 'puesto que es imposible transcribir verbalmente la realidad sin traicionarla'.[67] Still, Cercas goes beyond the 'relato real' in *Anatomía*, which is presented not as a novel but 'un ensayo en forma de crónica o una crónica en forma de ensayo', possibly in order to avoid what he has criticized elsewhere as the 'invasión de la historia por la memoria'.[68]

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[65] Ibid., p. 24; Payne, p. 122.

[66] Cercas, *Soldados*, p. 68.

[67] Javier Cercas and David Trueba, *Diálogos de Salamina: un paseo por el cine y la literatura* (Madrid: Plot Ediciones, 2003), pp. 89-90.

[68] The classification is from the blurb on the back cover. Cercas, 'La tiranía de la memoria', *El País*, 2 January 2008, <http://elpais.com/diario/2008/01/02/eps/1199258808_850215.html> [accessed 22 June 2015].

In *Anatomía*, Cercas first intimates the faulty nature of personal memories, noting that Spaniards' familiarity with the images of 23-F, captured by Televisión Española, has led many to believe that they watched the coup unfold live, despite this being a factual impossibility because the footage was not broadcast until the next day: 'todos', he surmises, 'nos resistimos a que nos extirpen los recuerdos, que son el asidero de la identidad'.[69] Identity, then, is necessarily is bound up with memory; nevertheless, in this case, memory may harbour decisive inaccuracies about the past. Second, Cercas underlines the contradiction between his own memory and the 'official' collective memory of the coup, which celebrated its failure as a triumph of democracy. For him, this version occludes the inexcusable passivity of citizens, civil society institutions and the majority of politicians at the time. Together they represent an irresponsible attitude whose afterlife – one deduces – may well be the 'oblivion' surrounding the transition today. Before revisiting the images of 23-F, Cercas admits that he gave little importance to Suárez's singular stance and had mostly dismissed him as an opportunist and abject former Francoist. It is an astute strategy, since Cercas's adolescent view of the transition as flawed because of its origins in Francoism is probably not as dissonant as he suggests in the current context. It arguably works to foster trust in the author as an impartial investigator of the subject matter, a technique also reminiscent of *Soldados*. (It will allow him without obvious incongruity, for example, to suddenly characterize Suárez in the first chapter of Part One as an 'héroe de la retirada' who is both 'héroe político' and 'héroe moral'[70].)

Here versus in *Soldados*, however, Cercas appears to want to eliminate altogether the distance between author and narrator, given the claim not to be writing fiction which diminishes the relevance of the distinction. What we find here does not quite emulate the

[69] *Anatomía*, p. 15.

[70] Ibid., p. 33.

detached perspective of the historian. Textual markers such as use of the first person, and repeated modifications of theses advanced in relation to 23-F that accentuate the absence of certainty surrounding the events, provide regular reminders of the author's presence.[71] Paradoxically, perhaps, the impression is one of greater intimacy and yet of conscientious objectivity in reconstructing history. The combination is highly persuasive.

Third, the televised replays over the years and on the 25th anniversary of the opening seconds of the coup have 'contaminated' the events and their protagonists with an aura of unreality, a symptom of the detemporalizing effect of a surfeit of memory discourses that Cercas positions himself to correct. It is only in being confronted with the radical otherness of the *full-length* footage of 23-F that Cercas can start to examine it without its farcical dimension, emblemized by the virtual caricature that Tejero, 'con su tricornio y blandiendo su pistola', has become.[72] Cercas affirms that his text is not a contribution to the historiography of 23-F.[73] But the analysis of the disregarded source material, the 35-minute recording, broadcast the day after the coup but never since in its entirety, is presented here and extra-textually as a meticulously-researched historical account with somewhat definitive aspirations: 'intento explicar el golpe y la transición [...]. Que se entienda el golpe, que lo

[71] For example: 'no me resisto a imaginar'; 'no puedo asegurar que todo lo que cuento a continuación sea verdad; pero puedo asegurar que está amasado con la verdad'; 'Lo anterior son sólo conjeturas'; 'Es muy probable que eso fuera lo que ocurrió. Eso es lo que yo creo que ocurrió' (ibid., pp. 205, 277, 303, 309).

[72] Ibid., p. 14.

[73] Ibid., p. 25.

entiendan un chino y un español de 18 años'.[74] The extensive bibliography and footnotes detailing the author's use of sources ably underwrite his command of the topic. His task is articulated as the attempt to transform what seems to have become a simulacrum of reality into something live and tangible by reactivating the link between the decontextualized images and the historical event: 'lo verdadero enigmático no es lo que nadie ha visto, sino lo que todos hemos visto muchas veces y pese a ello se niega a entregar su significado'.[75]

The uncanniness of the images can be read as prompted by what Andreas Huyssen, turning a critical eye to the contemporary obsession with memory and the past, posits as the transformation in late modernity of our experience of the structure of temporality: the increasing encroachment of the past on the present that is both cause and consequence of an explosion of memory discourses. Cercas's alleged distrust of fiction for representing 23-F resembles the now rather jaded and somewhat circular debate on history versus memory and the consternation caused by the term 'historical memory' for its insinuation that individual testimony can be placed on a par with the work of historians. Along these lines, Juliá objects that 'Es la historia, no la memoria, la que se esfuerza por conocer el pasado y la que requiere, por tanto, un ejercicio de aprendizaje: la historia se aprende, no se recuerda'.[76] Memory cannot replace history, Cercas seems to be saying, echoing Juliá, and literature is all too

[74] Jacinto Antón, 'Javier Cercas aborda el 23-F en su nuevo libro', *El País*, 19 March 2009, <http://elpais.com/diario/2009/03/19/cultura/1237417205_850215.html> [accessed 21 March 2014].

[75] *Anatomía*, p. 18.

[76] Juliá, 'El franquismo', p. 4.

susceptible to alliance with unreliable and subjective memory to produce distorted repetitions of the past: 'no responde ante la realidad, sino sólo ante sí mismo'.[77]

These implied binaries: history and memory, on the one hand, and history and literature on the other, do not of course hold. History, criticized for being a 'tool of domination and ideology', has become has become an 'embattled enterprise', and memory discourses, including those generated by literature, have supplemented and challenged historiography in undeniably productive ways.[78] Cercas is thoroughly cognizant of this, for much of his work revels in the slippages and entanglements between these terms. This does not prevent him here from siding mostly with history – aiming to capture the 'pura realidad' of 23-F, [79] rather than supplanting it with fiction. As in *Soldados*, Cercas becomes what Suzanne Keen has labelled the 'researcher hero' who will illuminate, if not resolve, the 'laberinto espejeante de memorias casi siempre irreconciliables' that he encounters in the

[77] *Anatomía*, p. 22. He has a point here: on the eve of 23 February 2014, the Spanish TV channel 'La Sexta' broadcast a spoof documentary by Jordi Evolé, 'Operación Palace', which claimed that 23-F had been a fake coup engineered by Adolfo Suárez's government – and filmed by José Luis Garci – with the collusion of the King and leading politicians to generate a 'shock' in Spanish society that would strengthen the democratic will in Spain and thereby restore stability. It was evident from the reactions in the press and social media that the documentary duped many. Undoubtedly, its authority was enhanced by the 'testimony' of public figures (among them transition politician Joaquín Leguina, and the journalists Iñaki Gabilondo and Luis María Ansón), but the success of the hoax could also be taken to expose a lack of contextualized understanding of the transition in society as well as a general sense that the truth of what happened during 23-F remains engulfed in mystery.

[78] Huyssen, p. 5.

[79] *Anatomía*, pp. 24, 25 and passim.

course of his quest.[80] Cercas's perhaps disingenuous assertion that his book abandons the novel and contains no fiction is expanded on extra-textually by revisiting the Aristotelian ideas regarding history and literature that he had discussed in relation to *Soldados*.[81]

Affective 'Myths': The Re-Founding of Democracy by the 'tres héroes'

Specifically, Cercas is inspired by Aristotle's argument that poetry is superior to history because whereas the latter is limited by its concern for the factual, concrete and particular, literature deals with the moral, abstract and universal. Notwithstanding his acknowledgement of recourse to literary devices in *Anatomía* – and the 'insaciable novelería' of 23-F itself, Cercas does seem to covet the 'truth status' represented by the historical record: '*Anatomía* trata de contar el golpe del 23 de febrero y el triunfo de la democracia en España con la máxima veracidad como los contarían un historiador o un cronista'.[82] Cercas calls this a 'tercera verdad', in which the amalgamation of the 'verdades antagónicas' represented by factual history and moral literature illuminate one another, giving rise to a 'truth' 'que participa de ambas y que de algún modo las abarca'. As with the 'relato real', Cercas admits such an endeavour may well be 'imposible', 'otro oxímoron'.[83]

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[80] Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 156. *Anatomía*, p. 24.

[81] E.g. Cercas and Trueba, *Diálogos*, pp. 18-19, 89-90.

[82] Cercas, 'La tercera verdad'. The author has developed these ideas in a book-length study, *El punto ciego. Las conferencias Weidenfeld 2015*, to be published by Literatura Random House in February 2016.

[83] Cercas, 'La tercera verdad'.

Cercas's approach is actually more akin to memory, in Juliá's definition as that which 'aspira a mantener viva la relación afectiva con tal o cual acontecimiento'.[84] In *Anatomía*, seeking the 'verdad moral' about the men who 'el libro denomina héroes de la traición' comprises a strong affective dimension which arguably takes precedence over adherence to the facts. Without scrutinizing the accuracy of Cercas's borrowings from Aristotle,[85] it is reasonable to assert that his main strategy is the cultivation of a 'relación afectiva' with the transition via one of the special tools that literature provides: empathy. Empathy, Keen elucidates, is a 'vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect', which can be 'provoked by witnessing another's emotional state, by hearing about another's condition, or even by reading' and does not necessarily produce a cognitive response.[86] Thus empathy can be understood as both a matter of cognitive perspective taking, and bodily sensations and emotions.[87]

Use of empathy is a constant of Cercas's novels, along with the theme of male heroism, including anti, unlikely, or ambiguous heroes. In *Anatomía*, these aesthetic features lead him to construct a framework of incongruous and consequently moving heroism. Cercas's ironic self-construction as the 'researcher hero' is likewise presented in somewhat unheroic, humorous terms: as part of the generation which fails to appreciate how fragile and at risk the fledgling Spanish democracy was during 23-F; and as an individual who was more concerned with impressing a potential girlfriend when news of the coup broke out than defending democracy. It is largely through empathy that Cercas moves us towards his 'verdad

[84] Juliá, 'El franquismo, p. 4.

[85] The subject of a recent critical study by Rubinat Parellada: see n. 8 above.

[86] Keen, *Empathy*, p. 4.

[87] Ibid., p. 27.

moral', which embodies memory in the noble actions of the three heroes, or 'tres traidores', who ironically spent most of their lives opposing democracy.[88]

Reflecting on the culture of memory and its varied political uses, Huyssen has observed that 'the fault line between mythic past and real past is not always easy to draw [...]. The real can be mythologized, just as the mythic may engender strong reality effects'.[89] Cercas's approach is symptomatic of, or rather, it exploits this fault line in a narrative that indulges in frequently emotive mythologizing. In another rhetorical sleight of hand, having discarded his draft novel – based on journalist Jesús Palacios's intriguing conspiracy theory of 23-F having been plotted by the CESID – because it is too 'coherente, simétrico, geométrico, igual que en las novelas', he proceeds to create his own myth which exhibits very similar qualities.[90] 23-F as a foundational myth for Spanish democracy is already insinuated via the biological analogy regarding the gestation of the coup. 'Anatomía', a term which can denote historical analysis,[91] and here is also evocative of the body politic, or nascent Spanish democracy, is signalled by the chapter 'La placenta del golpe' and repeated references thereafter to the 'placenta' of conspiratorial forces. What is delivered in this metaphor of maternity is actually the failed coup, which re-births democracy, since 23-F and the actions of its 'héroes' marked the end of the transition and indeed the Civil War.[92]

The structure of narrative repetition also imbues Cercas's account with mythological undertones. Each chapter is prefaced with a description of the images of the Cortes in which

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[88] *Anatomía*, p. 273.

[89] Huyssen, pp. 15-16.

[90] *Anatomía*, p. 21.

[91] E.g. Carmen Molinero's *Anatomía del franquismo* (2008) and Julio Busquets *et al.*'s *El golpe. Anatomía y claves del asalto al Congreso* (1981).

[92] *Anatomía*, p. 428.

only three politicians – Suárez, Carrillo and Gutiérrez Mellado – are visible amid a 'desierto de escaños vacíos'.[93] Cercas pauses and plays the footage time and again, harnessing the power of the images as both historical evidence and affective intensity that impresses upon the reader the tension of the moment along with the significance of the politicians' actions. Cercas will even suggest that the entire meaning of 23-F (and the transition?) is encoded in Suárez's gesture.[94] Deceptively, this appears to be a 'gesto diáfano',[95] but is ultimately an 'imagen huidiza'[96] belonging to a series of images that only seem to promise direct access to the event. Towards the end of *Anatomía*, he attempts to fix the constitutive instability of their meaning in the collective imaginary by offering the captivating reflection that the parallel gestures performed by Carrillo and Gutiérrez Mellado, mirroring Suárez's, contain a logic 'que *sentimos* en seguida, antes con el instinto que con la inteligencia, como si fueran dos gestos necesarios para los que hubieran sido programados por la historia y por sus dos contrapuestas biografías de antiguos enemigos de guerra'.[97] The description here neatly formulates the movement from affect to feeling and emotion that draws the reader into Cercas's argument where factual history is surpassed by the *emoción* of the moment. The relentless return to the images is also suggestive of a return to origins and institutes a tension between a teleological sense of history that this closing observation encapsulates and history as radically discontinuous in that the transition heroically breaks with a mythical notion of the Spanish nation as essentially and irredeemably violent. The latter idea is recalled in a history

[93] Ibid., p. 31.

[94] Ibid., p. 20.

[95] Ibid., p. 33.

[96] Ibid., p. 428.

[97] Ibid., p. 428 emphasis added.

punctuated by coups,[98] and in particular, the parallelism between General Pavía's 1874 'golpe' and 23-F – the latter bleakly anticipated by the transition's politicians in precisely the form of that historical precedent.[99]

Cercas's creative reconstruction, which posits the ending of one myth only to replace it with another, is characterized too by a preoccupation with symmetry and symbolism that re-presents the transition as a great national achievement and constitutes a defence of its consensual politics recently deemed excessive.[100] Carrillo is envisaged on the left of the chamber as the mirror image of Suárez on the right to convey visually the historical irony that the two men who were political adversaries at the start of the transition unexpectedly discovered a personal affinity that enabled them to build democracy together. Significantly, their first meeting is described as 'como un flechazo': Carrillo and Suárez 'se portaron como dos ciegos que recobran de golpe la visión para reconocer a un gemelo'.[101] Similarly, Cercas dwells on the irony Carrillo and Gutiérrez Mellado should find themselves sharing the same destiny in Madrid in 1981: in 1936, Carrillo, then the Public Order Councillor, had probably been responsible for ordering the execution of Gutiérrez Mellado who was in a Madrid prison.[102] It is noteworthy that on the controversial matter of Carrillo's role in the Paracuellos massacres, Cercas all but absolves him of any responsibility – not before stressing that he has scrupulously researched the historical debate.[103] Cercas prefers to shun the disruptive potential of this dark history in favour of an affective link that has the two men, no longer

[98] Ibid., p. 41.

[99] Ibid., pp. 207-208.

[100] Blakeley, 'Digging up Spain's Past'; Davis, 'Is Spain Recovering its Memory?'.

[101] *Anatomía*, p. 195.

[102] Ibid., pp. 214, 218.

[103] Ibid., p. 217.

mindful of their past conflicts, exchanging complicitous glances and cigarettes, aware of the irony that they are in all likelihood facing impending execution together.[104]

The idea of history manifesting itself as symmetry figures in the vision of the 'tres héroes' as an exact counterpart of the three main coup plotters: 'tres hombres dispares'.[105] Suárez's antagonist is General Armada, the ambitious, scheming former secretary to the King sidelined by Suárez's rise; Gutiérrez Mellado's enemy is the 'ultra' General Jaime Milans del Bosch ('alérgico a la palabra reconciliación'[106]), who detests the former for his conversion to democracy, seen as a betrayal of the Armed Forces and of the memory of the Civil War; finally, Carrillo's ideological other is Tejero, a megalomaniac and fanatical Francoist for whom the Communist leader personifies 'el retorno a España de la Antiespaña'.[107] Implicitly, the lack of unanimity between the plotters, whose different versions of the coup failed to cohere, is defeated by the tacit solidarity between Suárez, Gutiérrez Mellado and Carrillo, whose shared gesture of defiance symbolically engenders democracy and embodies consensus – a consensus that has been noticeably lacking in more recent Spanish politics and particularly around the issue of memory. It was this absence of consensus that was lamented

[104] Ibid., p. 218. However, the case for Carrillo's involvement in Paracuellos has also been made: see e.g. Anthony Beevor, (2006), *The Battle for Spain. The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939* (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 173; and Paul Preston (2012), *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* (New York: HarperPress, 2012), pp. 341-380.

[105] *Anatomía*, p. 258.

[106] Ibid., p. 264.

[107] Ibid., p. 268.

in the wake of Adolfo Suárez's death in March 2014.[108] In the recurrent attention to the symmetries and symbolism of history other aspects are necessarily obscured. The sustained contrast between the 'héroes' of 23-F, by extension the heroes of the transition, with the insistence on the cowardly passivity of the electorate ('Ésa fue la respuesta popular al golpe: ninguna'[109]), is marked and effaces the role of the opposition and broader civil society in the construction of democracy. *Anatomía* is above all a story about male heroes upholding traditional values of honour, self-sacrifice, loyalty and bravery: Cercas admits that his text can be read as a novel, including 'una rarísima versión experimental de *Los tres mosqueteros*'.[110] In this connection, Francisca López insists on the partial and partisan nature of *Anatomía* to argue that 'El impulso poético exige dejar fuera de la narración todo lo que no cuadre'. In relation to Carrillo and Gutiérrez Mellado she asks '¿Por qué no interpretarlos, por ejemplo, como hombres «modernos», personas cuyo pensamiento había evolucionado en consonancia con las ideas políticas dominantes a lo largo de su tiempo histórico […]?'.[111]

Yet if the memory of the transition is to be 'rehabilitated', it is logical for Cercas to focus on its key politicians since this strikes at the heart of the notion of transitional injustice. In *Anatomía*, as in *Soldados*, it is plainly a narrative of reconciliation that subtends the

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[108] E.g. the editorial, 'Un político de consensos', *El País*, 24 March 2014 <http://elpais.com/elpais/2014/03/23/opinion/1395606544_837524.html> [accessed 22 June 2014]).

[109] *Anatomía*, p. 209.

[110] Ibid., p. 26.

[111] Francisca López, 'De travestis, coleópteros y héroes: El 23-F en la novela', in *Cartografías del 23-F: Representaciones en la prensa, la television, la novela, el cine y la cultura popular*, ed. by Francisca López and Enric Castelló (Barcelona: Laertes, 2014), pp. 145-173 (p. 171).

primary narrative (of the coup). This is illustrated in the bonds of solidarity and even friendship which unite Suárez, Gutiérrez Mellado and Carrillo. Their association with Armada, Milans del Bosch and Tejero brings into relief the ideological battles that underlie the belatedness of their espousal of democracy; that is, they are not free of guilt themselves. In Cercas's narrative they redeem themselves by being 'traidores' to their past political trajectories. Betrayal is, in fact, the condition for reconciliation to the extent that, during the transition, 'la palabra reconciliación era un eufemismo de la palabra traición, porque no había reconciliación sin traición'.[112] Thus Gutiérrez Mellado who 'jamás se arrepintió en público de haberse sublevado en 1936',[113] according to Cercas, 'no hizo otra cosa que renegar de Francisco Franco y de la sublevación del 18 de julio'.[114] Moreover he *feels* responsible, acting like someone who knew he was 'a su modo responsable de la catástrofe de la guerra'.[115] The reader, too, is compelled to feel his remorse. Gutiérrez Mellado's challenging of the Civil Guards is an expression of this regret, and is even 'una forma de ganarse un indulto definitivo para sus culpas de juventud'.[116] On more shaky territory, Carrillo's lack of public contrition – belied by his defence of democracy – is not related to Paracuellos, but to his role in fomenting rebellion against 'la legalidad democrática' in 1934.[117] Stressing the personal cost to these former Civil War combatants of their support for democratization deeply humanizes them and their labelling as 'traidores' eschews any note of triumphalism. Their characterization as traitors thus enables rearticulation of the idea of betraying the past

[112] *Anatomía*, p. 274.

[113] Ibid., p. 106.

[114] Ibid., p. 108.

[115] Ibid., p. 110.

[116] Ibid., p. 111.

[117] Ibid., p. 181.

intrinsic to the *pacto de olvido* as noble safeguarding of the future: 'traicionaron el pasado para no traicionar el presente. A veces sólo se puede ser leal al presente traicionando el pasado'.[118]

The Transition as Atonement

It could argued, then, that Cercas's narrative follows a structure of atonement. The idea that atonement was an intrinsic element in the foundation of Spanish democracy works obliquely to mitigate the problem of an absence of transitional justice from the perspective of the present. The middle-English 'atone' and the Latinate 'reconcile' share the same meaning. Reconciliation is intrinsic to the concept of atonement in that it figures the idea of to 'make as one': it is the condition of being at one with others, usually after a period of discord or strife.[119] In Spanish, its equivalent, 'expiación', carries the idea of erasing blame – one of the accusations levelled at the transition – but the process necessitates sacrifice (Cercas's uses the idea of 'traición' rather than 'expiación'). It is as if it were not a cogent enough argument that the transition's politicians were securing the future by not raking over the past; evidence is also required that they retracted their former ideological stances and relinquished their allegiances, atoning for these through political and personal self-sacrifice

Structurally, the narrative moves in turn through the biographies of Gutiérrez Mellado, Carrillo and Suárez in an emotional escalation that invites the reader to empathize with each of them and renders their complicity with one another as a foundation (and model) for the reconciliation of society. There is an especially poignant moment when Cercas recounts interviewing an elderly Carrillo in his office at home and notices that he has displayed in

[118] Ibid., p. 274.

[119] The definitions are from the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the dictionary of the *Real Academia Española* respectively.

pride of place a photo of the *New York Times* cover 'en que Adolfo Suárez, joven valeroso y desencajado, sale de su escaño en busca de los guardias civiles que zarandean al general Gutiérrez Mellado'.[120]

Indeed, the most charged affective response results from the portrait of Suárez himself, which prompts the reader to identify with him by following Cercas's own journey from disdain/hostility to ambivalence, acceptance and admiration. Even when the narrative is ostensibly occupied with another of the key figures, it invariably drifts back to Suárez. At one point in his concluding chapter, Cercas remarks that he has failed so far to be clear that

> Suárez era cualquier cosa menos un chisgarabís, que era un tipo serio [...] que en la tarde del 23 de febrero entendió que la democracia estaba a su cargo y no se escondió y permaneció inmóvil en su escaño mientras zumbaban las balas a su alrededor en el hemiciclo como el capitán que permanece inmóvil en el puente de mando mientras su barco se hunde.[121]

In practice, this is the message being transmitted throughout the text and specifically in the pages directly preceding these comments in which the reader is exposed to an account of Suárez's political downfall and the ingratitude of both the Spanish public and the King after he has installed democracy. Cercas gives Suárez most of the credit for this and casts the King in a rather unfavourable light: he delivers the final blow to Suárez, having used and discarded him, and Cercas underlines that his actions prior to and during 23-F were not above reproach.[122] This interpretation reflects the decline in popularity of the monarchy – as the aforementioned *El País* interview with Alfonso Guerra, also intimates. Here, the King's apparently callous treatment of Suárez almost presses the reader into a sense of guilt for the

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[120] *Anatomía*, p. 226.

[121] Ibid., p. 429.

[122] E.g. ibid., pp.140-147; 160-161, 400.

injustice of it. There is further poignancy in remembering the sad irony that it was at the start of the new millennium, when Suárez is broken by the loss of his wife and daughter and his own mind is becoming clouded by the 'olvido' said to characterize the transition' (the onset of Alzheimers which marked the final years of his life), that he is suddenly overwhelmed by tributes he cannot appreciate for his role in democratizing Spain.[123] The stage is already set for a positive identification with Suárez when nearly every chapter in Part 1 opens with a comment on the conspiratorial forces against him, including the King and politicians such as Alfonso Guerra. The latter was an architect of the 'operación socialista',[124] and delivered a crushing blow to Suárez during the motion of censure, in May 1980,[125] that had been proposed by the socialists whom Cercas faults for 'maniobrando sin saberlo en favor de los enemigos de la democracia'.[126]

Probably the most important factor in this turning towards Suárez, though, is the emphasis on his shame in relation to his past and his desire to reinvent himself; shame being, according to Ahmed, 'an intense feeling of the subject "being against itself"'.[127] Cercas explores this most compellingly in the parallel – first introduced by *El País* in 1981[128] – between Suárez and Emmanuele Bardone, the fictional protagonist of Roberto Rossellini's 1959 film *El general De la Rovere*. Bardone is a thief and a fascist collaborator who is imprisoned during the Second World War and, under duress, agrees to assume the identity of the eponymous De la Rovere, a revered leader of the Italian Resistance, in order to act as

[123] *Anatomía*, pp. 397-398.

[124] Ibid., p. 81.

[125] Ibid., pp. 69-70.

[126] Ibid., p. 66.

[127] Ahmed, p. 103.

[128] *Anatomía*, p. 357.

informant to the Nazis. Suárez's leftward evolution is portrayed as analogous to Bardone's transformation. Like Bardone, Suárez too is finally destroyed by his conversion, albeit in a political not literal sense (Bardone chooses to face the firing squad as General De la Rovere rather than betray a comrade and renounce his new identity).

In this version of the transition, not only does Suárez atone for his Francoist past by repudiating and destroying Francoism, he also becomes a kind of atonement-maker in the sense that his shame crystallizes and incorporates a national shame: 'Suárez no sólo se redimía a él, sino que de algún modo redimía a todo su país de haber colaborado masivamente con el franquismo'.[129] This redemptive act of reconciliation coalesces in the closing identification of Suárez with Cercas's own father, a staunch Suarista and one of the book's dedicatees. Asked why he placed such trust in Suárez, Cercas's father replies: 'Porque era como nosotros […]. Era de pueblo, había sido de Falange, había sido de Acción Católica, no iba a hacer nada malo, lo entiendes ¿no?'.[130] At this point, Cercas reflects that he probably wrote *Anatomía* in order to understand, and to keep alive, the dialogue with his father of whom 'me avergonzase un poco de ser su hijo' during the transition and who passes away before Cercas completes his book.[131] It is a fantasy resembling the moment in *Soldados* when Cercas-narrator imagines the Republican soldier Miralles as a surrogate father. National shame, Ahmed argues in another context 'offers the promise of reconciliation, a future of "living together", in which the rifts of the past have been healed'.[132] In *Anatomia*, the admission of shame and the movement from the political to the personal and back again performs this suturing, which works also because Suárez, notwithstanding his heroism, is

[129] Ibid., p. 385.

[130] Ibid., pp. 436-437.

[131] Ibid., p. 435.

[132] Ahmed, p. 102.

envisioned as the 'better self' most Spaniards aspired to: he was fundamentally 'igual que ellos'.[133]

Underlying this desirable narrative, perhaps, is the psychological burden of moral guilt regarding the Civil War and the dictatorship still remaining in Spanish society. Whereas the silence surrounding the past during the dictatorship was unquestionably not in the interests of securing reconciliation – indeed the regime actively pursued opportunities to remind Spaniards of the horrors of the Civil War since its legitimacy rested on having 'saved' the country from them – the policy of 'conscious forgetting' of the transition did have reconciliation as its object.[134] One meaning that can be deduced from Cercas's text is precisely that of re-instating it as 'the founding myth of contemporary state legitimacy' by narrating it as a process of atonement and reconciliation.[135] When Suárez stoically refuses to take cover from the bullets raining around him and is imagined by Cercas as 'emocionado hasta el llanto, bañado en lágrimas por dentro, muerto de miedo', the self-sacrificial nature of his actions is likened to Bardone's cry of '"Viva Italia!" ante el pelotón de fusilamiento en un amanecer nevado'.[136] The clean slate, the pure origins, evoked in this 'amanecer nevado', symbolically wipe clean what Francisco Umbral intimated was the 'original sin' of Spanish democracy: that it rested on the rather shameful fact that 'a Franco le matamos de muerte natural'.[137] In other words, if the fathers of democracy really did atone for their ideological and moral sins, then Spaniards can conceive of their democracy as possessing untainted origins and feel absolved of residual guilt: thus Suárez's gesture 'parece encarnar la

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[133] *Anatomía*, p. 384.

[134] Vincent, 'Breaking the Silence?'.

[135] Richards, p. 122.

[136] *Anatomía*, pp. 429, 385.

[137] Francisco Umbral, *La década roja* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1993), pp. 124, 236.

democracia con plenitud, un gesto de autoridad y un gesto de redención individual y tal vez colectiva'.[138]

Conclusion

It is impossible to be dispassionate about Spain's recent history and this image of Suárez constructs him as a figure of deep affective investment in relation to the transition. It is an image of Suárez as a hero of Spanish democracy that was officially enshrined following his death in 2014 when Madrid's Barajas airport was renamed after him. Cercas's *Anatomía* is acutely attuned to the collective 'dolor diferido' manifested by the generations who have been investigating the traumatic past of the Civil War and dictatorship lived through by their grandparents and their parents. *Anatomía*'s response is a re-encounter with the transition that displays a similarly intense emotional and imaginative engagement with the past to that demonstrated by contemporary fiction about Republican memory and Francoist repression. Ultimately, the images of 23-F are unfathomable: in part, Cercas's narrates them driven by a desire to restore affective links to a historical moment for which his father's generation was responsible. Cercas's account stands as an appreciation of the difficulties faced by the generation who led the transition and is distilled in his emotive realization about his father that 'yo no soy mejor que él, y [...] ya no voy a serlo'.[139]

One cannot fail to be touched by this. Even so, there is something rather suspect about what reads as a final submission to authority, to the father, which has a symbolic and

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[138] *Anatomía*, pp. 428-429.

[139] Ibid., p. 437. It is a point of view he has since also defended in 'La Transición, papa y mamá', *El País*, 14 April 2013, <http://elpais.com/elpais/2013/04/12/eps/1365788020_481362.html> [accessed 22 June 2015].

emotional charge, and suggests a desire to close down debate, a little like Juliá's insistence that there was no *pacto de olvido*. Cercas offers a rather attractively packaged version of history, of a Spain which relied upon deliverance by heroes and is contemptuously depicted as 'un país poblado de hombres vulgares, incultos, trapaceros, jugadores, mujeriegos y sin muchos escrúpulos, provincianos con moral de supervivientes educados entre Acción Católica y Falange que habían vivido con comodidad bajo el franquismo'.[140] Little wonder they failed to lift a finger to defend democracy on 23rd February 1981. The problem is that this description leaves no space to recognise the impact on Spanish citizens of the fear and imposed conformity wrought by decades of repressive dictatorship and its legacy – not least the fact that this issue remains painfully alive for the relatives of those who were killed and whose bodies have not yet been recovered. In Cercas's most recent novel *El impostor*, he is even more critical of *memoria histórica* and similarly characterizes ordinary people as 'la inmensa y silenciosa y cobarde y grisácea y deprimente mayoría que siempre dice Sí'.[141] His attack on memory and selective use of historiography, reveals, argues Sebastiaan Faber, certain lacunae in his interpretation of Spanish social-political history since 1978.[142]

'What moves us, what makes us feel, is also what holds us in place, or gives us a dwelling place' observes Ahmed. This can be retrograde, for emotions can 'attach us to the very conditions of our subordination'.[143] Cercas's affective re-mythologization of one of the critical moments of the transition, a turning point for Spanish democracy, can be thought to provide just such an anchoring function and a desired version of national identity as stable

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[140] *Anatomía*, p. 384.

[141] Cercas, *El impostor* (Barcelona: Literatura Random House, 2014), p. 156.

[142] Sebastiaan Faber, *Fronterad*, 12 February 2015, <http://www.fronterad.com/?q=javier-cercas-y-%E2%80%98-impostor%E2%80%99-o-triunfo-kitsch> [accessed 1 July 2015].

[143] Ahmed, pp. 11, 12.

and inclusive at a point when both stability and inclusivity are both in question. Back in 1940, Benjamin sounded a note of caution about using 'the procedure of empathy' in the writing of history since it carried the risk of acquiescence with the status quo.[144] And unlike Theodor Adorno's injunction against seeking resolution or a final position in relation to the past, Cercas's narrative does seek to provide a kind of closure; it is already there in the vision of Suárez's heroic gesture as encircling the meaning of 23-F and the transition.[145] It could not be a more eloquent example of knowledge and thought as embodied in an expression of emotional intensity.

One might object that this is historical fiction not historiography. Despite Cercas's decision not to characterize *Anatomía* as a novel, he reminds the reader of its ambiguous status in the epilogue, provocatively titled 'Prólogo de una novela', when he wonders if the only possible response to the mystery of Suárez's gesture and everything it signifies is not, after all, a novel.[146] But this genre is not really the point. The critical response to *Anatomía* bears out the resonance of Cercas's retelling. It was awarded both the Premio Nacional de Narrativa and the Premio Internacional Terenci Moix in 2010. In addition to Juliá's approbation cited earlier, celebrated critic Jordi Gracia's review heralds it as not only 'una lección magistral sobre lo que es y puede ser la novela en las letras internacionales del siglo XXI', but also as 'la versión que el siglo XXI va a *interiorizar* y *normalizar* del golpe de

[144] Benjamin, pp. 391-392.

[145] Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Meaning of Working Through the Past', in *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 89-103.

[146] *Anatomía*, p. 431.

Estado del 23-F en España'.[147] *Anatomía* is in this sense a timely and affectively-driven reconstruction of the transition which aims to cultivate a sense of pride and attachment to it as project, despite its shortcomings. Cercas's narrative, with its emotionally persuasive structure of atonement, reconciliation and heroic overcoming of history, albeit by the most unlikely of heroes, also communicates the wish to verify that Spain no longer bears the vestiges of an authoritarian past – that 'la ruptura con el franquismo fue una ruptura genuina' – and that its democracy is not congenitally defective.[148] In Spain that question is still unresolved and probably accounts for much of the hostility with Cercas's work has met.[149] Outside Spain, the reputation of the transition arguably remains strong and Cercas's version of the transition has played without controversy.[150] Indeed, he has achieved an international standing few contemporary Spanish authors enjoy: in 2004, he won the *Independent* Foreign Fiction Prize for the English translation of *Soldados de Salamina* and he was Weidenfeld Visiting Professor in European Comparative Literature at St. Anne's College, University of Oxford in

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[147] Jordia Gracia, 'Tres héroes de un instante', *El País*, 11 April 2009, <http://elpais.com/diario/2009/04/11/babelia/1239406756_850215.html> [accessed 4 March 2014], emphasis added.

[148] *Anatomía*, p. 432.

[149] For example, in a much-discussed collection of essays by well-known journalists and writers who use the pejorative concept 'CT', to examine what they see as the complaisant culture produced by the transition, Cercas is cited as an example: see Guillem Martínez, 'El concepto CT', in *CT o la cultura de la transición: Crítica a 35 años de cultura española*, ed. by Carlos Acevedo et. al. (Barcelona: Random House Mondadori, 2012), pp. 13-23 (p. 18).

[150] As I write this, *Al Jazeera* is broadcasting an Arabic-language documentary series on the Spanish transition, which, perhaps not coincidentally given the monarchical nature of ruling regimes in many Arab countries, focuses on the exemplary role of the King.

2015. In a curious parallel, Suárez, too, continued to enjoy international esteem even when his popularity at home was falling amid the various plots to oust him from power. Cercas's evident attraction to this well-loved figure is an element that enables him to strive to transcend dichotomous understandings of the transition as success/failure in *Anatomía*. Yet it is also important to remain wary of narratives that offer such a comforting and tractable view of history as sometimes emerges in his text, which is framed as fulfilling a caretaking role of collective memorialization, perhaps also revealing as Huyssen speculates, a fixation with the past that is partly a form of displaced anxiety about an uncertain future.

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