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Reassessing history, rediscovering memory: Jorge Semprún's *Veinte años y un día*

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Jorge Semprún is perhaps best known for his testimonial works about the concentration camp of Buchenwald where he was imprisoned during the World War II. These testimonies were written in French but have been widely translated. As a refugee from the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) and former Executive Committee member of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE), Semprún obviously also speaks Spanish and has occasionally written works in his mother tongue. While memory constitutes one of his predominant themes, in his latest novel to date, *Veinte años y un día* (2003), it is presented in an entirely different milieu, namely within the framework of Francoist Spain in the late fifties and not in the aftermath of the *Shoah*, as the Holocaust is more properly called. This article argues that Semprún's interest in memory, specifically in the Spanish context, mirrors and foreshadows the public debates which ultimately led to the passing of the Ley de Memoria Histórica in Spain. This law came into force in December 2007. Whereas it fundamentally acknowledges the success of the Democratic Transition which took place subsequent to the death of Franco in 1975, it, nonetheless, makes a claim for rectifying some of the wrongdoings of the dictatorship. Hence the following reasons are enumerated for the passing of the law:

Es la hora, así, de que la democracia española y las generaciones vivas que hoy disfrutan de ella honren y recuperen para siempre a todos los que directamente padecieron las injusticias y agravios producidos, por unos u otros motivos políticos o ideológicos o de creencias religiosas, en aquellos dolorosos períodos de nuestra historia. Desde luego, a quienes perdieron la vida. Con ellos, a sus familias. También a quienes perdieron su libertad, al padecer prisión, deportación, confiscación de sus bienes, trabajos forzosos o internamientos en campos de

concentración dentro o fuera de nuestras fronteras. También, en fin, a quienes perdieron la patria al ser empujados a un largo, desgarrador y, en tantos casos, irreversible exilio. (18-23)

The lengthy quotation from the Ley de Memoria Histórica is a strong indicator that the predominant view of the transition was changing. Paloma Aguilar notes how “Spaniards have observed with a mixture of pride and surprise how their transition has become the paradigm of a peaceful transition from an authoritarian to a democratic regime” (93). However, as she remarks, the exemplary nature of the transition came under question from as early as the eighties. Public opinion began to assess the transition in terms of “el precio de la transición,” the famous phrase coined by Gregorio Morán (1992). Other scholars, such as Aguilar, saw the transition in a new light:

[...] the initial advantage of the former Francoists and the final pact with the anti-Franco forces avoided a *calling to account* and *acts of revenge* against the old authoritarians. The policy of ‘national reconciliation’ entailed an amnesty for anti-Franco forces and amnesia for pro-Francoists or, in other words, a renunciation of submitting political acts of the past to judicial review. (95)

For Aguilar the ongoing collective traumatization and the aversion to risk caused by the memories of the Civil War and the repression during the Franco regime explain why it took so long for this changing attitude to make itself felt.

In light of the general tendencies mentioned above, the objective of this article is a reading of Jorge Semprún’s *Veinte años y un día* with these public debates as an enriching backdrop. Benedetto Croce’s oft-quoted dictum that “all history is contemporary” plays an implicit role in Semprún’s case given that he decides to write about the fifties in Spain under Franco after more than half a century has passed around the time that the Ley de Memoria was discussed. Semprún revisits Spain in retrospect and resuscitates Federico Sánchez, his most famous alias, in order to get involved in the Spanish memory debate novelistically.

Under this pseudonym, Semprún carried out clandestine party work in Madrid until shortly before his divergences with the party leaders led to his exclusion from the PCE in 1964. At the same time, Federico Sánchez had been the protagonist of *Autobiografía de Federico Sánchez* which engaged particularly with the Communist party's memories of the past. The return to this name associated with his previous writing and his past self makes clear that for Semprún the only meaningful way of connecting with the past is through memories and narrative.

Veinte años y un día focuses on the Avedaño family who lives on a *finca* near Toledo. Ever since the outbreak of the Civil War, the family engages in an annual commemorative ceremony which re-enacts the assassination of Josemari, the youngest brother, by the uprising farm workers of the estate. The eldest brother, José Manuel, who embodies the role of the *pater familias*, insists on “aquella especie de auto sacramental que se había inventado para perpetuar el recuerdo del asesinato de 1936; para inmortalizar aquella muerte absurda y prolongar, de generación en generación, una mala consciencia de culpabilidad entre los braceros de la finca” (167). The ritualization of the murder clearly has religious overtones since the staging is reminiscent of the passion of Christ. By analogy, it is meant to make the farm workers worship the sacrifice that the Avedaño clan made in losing their brother/son. However, the death of the youngest Avedaño brother does not purge them from all sins; instead the ceremony acts as a reminder of their eternal guilt which they inherit at birth like the original sin. Their poor working conditions and low social status thus seem a just punishment that they cannot abandon without remorse. By forcing the peasants to play themselves every year, i.e. they have to fulfil the same role that they had at the original assassination, their culpability is forever inscribed into their bodily memory and perpetuated: “Así, al perpetuar aquel recuerdo, los campesinos perpetuaban su condición no sólo de vencidos sino también de asesinos. O de hijos, parientes, descendientes de asesinos. Perpetuaban la insufrible razón de su derrota al conmemorar la injusticia de aquella muerte

que justificaba alevosamente su derrota, su reducción a la condición de vencidos” (16). As a result the Avedaños and their farm workers are trapped in a mythical atemporality whose circularity makes progress impossible.

The deceased's own son, Lorenzo, is forced by his uncle to take on the role of his father. Because Lorenzo was only born after his father's death, he possesses no direct memories of him. As a consequence, the obligation to play his own father becomes deeply disturbing and, in fact, the first time he performs the part “se había desvivido” (175). What upsets him more than anything else is that within the logic of the play “en cierto modo se engendraba a sí mismo” (175). Figuratively, Lorenzo is thus thrown into a present which fuses with the past and in which he has to bring about his own coming into being. Since he impersonates the father he never met he feels as if he had planted the seed that led to his own conception. In order to feel any connection with his prehistory he has to rely on his mother's tales and the diary of his father which has been found in the *finca*'s library. As the rightful owner of this document he becomes the warden of his father's memories. The problematic case of Lorenzo, whose father died before he found out about his wife's pregnancy, thus dramatically illustrates the difficulties inherent in transgenerational memory. In opposition to the peasants, the direct link between him and his forbearers is permanently missing. This impression is heightened by the iron grip with which the tyrannical José Manuel governs his brother's family, who are economically dependent on him, as well as the efforts he makes to control collective memory, for example, by coercing everybody to take part in the play.

Another prominent case of transmitted transgenerational memory in the novel is the figure of Michael Leidson, an American historian, who has come to Spain for research purposes. Leidson is driven to the *finca* by his curiosity and wants to witness the spectacle of the enactment. Although he is the descendent of Jews from Riga and Toledo, he has lost all interest in the origin of his family, contrary to his mother. In spite of his mother's family leaving Toledo in the aftermath of the *Reconquista* (1492), immigrating to California via

Tunis, Cairo and Thessalonica, his maternal ancestors never failed to display the key of the original family home in Toledo within their respective abodes. Moreover, Leidson's mother used to speak to him in Spanish and told him stories about *Sefarad* referring to the inherited key as "la llave de mi casa" (28), encouraging his interest in Spanish history. She also notes "lo trivial que es ponerle precio al resurgir de un recuerdo esencial" (30). Despite never having been to Spain, the mother updates her memories of Toledo which have been passed on to her with the help of guidebooks, photographs and all the published material that is available to her, using them as material support for reminiscence (31). Leidson's own interest in the family home is only rekindled by his reading of Théophile Gauthier's *Voyage en Espagne* (27). Mysteriously, he somehow realizes the importance of visiting Toledo, and, when he finally wanders through the Jewish quarter, he feels as if he returned to his life's prehistory, predating his own birth by many centuries. Finally, Leidson asks his mother for directions, and receives a letter in which she explains that the building for which she owns the key was pulled down in the 18th century, adding that "La llave ya sólo abre las puertas de la memoria, del ensueño [...]" (42). The key's value is therefore purely symbolical and detached from any real purpose.

Within the novel Leidson's family is thus shown to preserve the counter-memory to the official version of Spanish history. His family remembers the *Reconquista* as the painful beginning of exile and life in diaspora and not as the glorious reunification of a nation as the Francoists interpreted it. The visit to Toledo turns into a homecoming for Leidson and, at the same time, he challenges the vision of the past as it would have been celebrated in Francoist terms. In his capacity as a historian, he unifies an aptitude for personal memories as well as the skills of a professional historiographer. Characteristically, the account of the ceremony at the Avedaño *finca* is transcribed by him since he secretly records interviews with Josemari's widow, Mercedes, her children and la Satur, the housekeeper. For what it is worth his interviewees represent subalterns, not only as women but also because they are subjugated by

the will of José Manuel. Yet, their voices are the ones that pass on the account of the ceremony in an attempt to unveil the truth. If Leidson did not transmit what they had to tell him the truth would remain hidden inside the hegemonic discourse, represented here by José Manuel.

Leidson's homecoming is echoed by Federico Sánchez' own return to Madrid which is also integrated into the narrative of *Veinte años y un día*. When Sánchez arranges a meeting with Leidson near Mercedes's house,¹ the familiar surroundings trigger off memories of 1956, when he came back to the borough of his childhood for the first time since the war. Back then, walking around the area at night he was overcome by a terrible anguish:

todo era idéntico a las imágenes de su memoria, y sin embargo fue adueñándose de su espíritu un incomprensible sentimiento de extrañeza, de confuso desasosiego: nunca se había sentido tan extranjero como aquella noche, al regresar al conocido paisaje de la infancia. Desorientado, desanimado, fue recorriendo las calles del barrio, buscando un punto de referencia, de permanencia, de arraigo, de continuidad tranquilizadora. (248)

Sánchez feels like a stranger. While he preserves memories of the area, and finds it unchanged, he himself has changed, and becomes aware of these changes. When he finally understands that life in the Salamanca neighbourhood simply continued in his absence he not only becomes a stranger but an outsider who does not participate in the continuity of the place. There are no traces reminiscent of him while the memory of the place is imprinted in his mind permanently. This reveals itself as particularly disturbing, since he is dealing with the *loci* linked to his childhood. Whereas it is possible to return to the site of his early memories he cannot turn back time, so, all of a sudden, his memories are experienced as alien, as a foreign body that is not attached to his persona. Only when he perceives *La Gloria de las Medias*, a notions store, “el símbolo [...] de un transcurrir del tiempo denso y homogéneo: desde la

¹ She lives in the same building as Semprún's uncle Honorio Maura (250).

infancia hasta el día de hoy, a pesar de tanta mudanza, tanta muerte, tanto éxodo y exilio, un hilo rojo de idéntica sangre viva recorría los vericuetos de su vida” (249) he finally manages to calm down. Via memories connected to this shop he manages to assure himself of the continuity of his existence, putting his fragmented identity back together.

Thus, as Semprún revisits Spain in his writing, he also revisits his old self in the guise of Sánchez. In contrast to the ferocious rejection of Sánchez’ identity in *Autobiografía de Federico Sánchez*, the figure of Sánchez is now viewed in a more positive light.² Since within the novel nobody knows who hides behind that name it has gained an aura of mystery and is referred to as “ese nombre que parece estar de moda entraña un peligro, constituye una amenaza” (215). Later on, the narrator muses: “Yo fui aquel” (228) and “[p]uede ser, incluso, que aquel seudónimo tenga más que ver conmigo que mi propio nombre, tal vez exagere, nunca se sabe de antemano lo que mejor, y más esencialmente, le identifica a uno” (228). Although the hesitation between first and second and third person singular, characteristic of *Autobiografía de Federico Sánchez*, persists, Sánchez is redeemed and presented as a figure of integrity. The traits of his character that are predominant in *Veinte años y un día* are those linked to the experience of exile. The *unhousedness* which overwhelms Sánchez leads to a melancholic relationship with Spain which permeates the book (Steiner 21). The time he has lost in exile cannot be regained and the Spain of his memories is irretrievably lost. However, as Slavoj Žižek remarks: “this deceitful translation of lack into loss enables us to assert our possession of the object: what we never possessed can also never be lost, so the melancholic, in his unconditional fixation on the lost object, in a way possesses it in its very loss” (143). Sánchez is caught up in “melancholic identification, in which the object is overpresent in its very unconditional and irretrievable loss” (Žižek 144). The same feeling has its grip on Leidson’s mother who never lives fully in the here without remembering the unknown there.

² Much of *Autobiografía de Federico Sánchez* consists of an ongoing dialogue between the narrator and his former self during which the narrator concludes, for example: “Tú ya no eras Federico Sánchez. Había desaparecido ese fantasma. Tú eras de nuevo tú mismo: ya eras yo” (60).

This inability to accommodate oneself with the present moment is, evidently, not only a feature of nostalgia, which Malcolm Chase and Donald Shaw define as “the attempt to cling to the alleged certainties of the past” (8), but bears overtones of Jorge Guillén’s concept of a *destiempo del exilio* (Fernández Romero 66).³ Indirectly, memory is seen as one of the conditions of exile. Exile becomes a form of being that cannot simply be abandoned. Surprisingly, this achronic existence is embodied and acted out most convincingly by Mercedes. Although she has not suffered exile, she is traumatized by the tragic death of her husband and, later on, that of her children. The furniture in her Madrid flat is covered with white sheets and she is determined never to remove them again so that they create a ghostly look “como si un sudario recubriera la memoria de la familia Avedaño” (255). The white covers have gradually transformed their meaning. Initially, they protected the furniture when Mercedes and her husband went on their honeymoon. Upon their return they were stained by the virginal blood of the maid Raquel who partakes in the last amorous triangle between Mercedes and her husband Josemari, shortly before the latter’s death (282). Despite their association with desire, the spilt blood already foreshadows the violent deaths which are to follow. The amalgamation of sexual encounters and violence mirror the feelings provoked by Artimesia Gentileschi’s painting of Judith decapitating Holofernes which Sánchez studies in the Prado in 1985.⁴ Symbolically, the sheets are never lifted again representing a veil that screens painful memories, thus, illustrating the meaning of screen memories on the literal level.⁵

The visual representation of memory finds its counterpart in a specific auditive trigger which initiates Mercedes’ evocation of the past. In *Veinte años y un día*, the tango “Caminito” fulfils the role that “Some of these days” holds in Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Nausée* and the “Sonate

³ Etymologically nostalgia designates the pain provoked by the inability to return home.

⁴ The very same painting is seen by Mercedes on her honeymoon in Naples.

⁵ “Screen memory is a compromise between repressed elements and defences against them. Recollections of this kind are characterized by their clarity and by the apparent insignificance of their content. Important facts are not retained; instead, their psychic significance is displaced onto closely associated but less important details”(Whitehead 161).

de Vinteuil” in Marcel Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*. The musical tune of this tango accompanied Mercedes and Josemari’s courtship in Santander (60), and is played in Naples during their honeymoon. Many years later, when Mercedes relates the details of her engagement days to Leidson, he dances the tango with her and feels as if he were dancing with death itself (256). He relates this episode to Sánchez who expresses his incredulousness at Leidson’s ignorance of this precise tune stating that these tangos “forman parte del repertorio mundial de nostalgia!” (256). As in the Proustian model involuntary memory surfaces with the help of the senses. The rememorative power of the song as such can thus be deemed strong enough to incite a repetition of feelings associated with the very first instant the melody was perceived. The emotional reaction to it has been inscribed in memory, and has partly been loosened from the original event whereby it gained its significance. It is by no means arbitrary that the most significant musical theme should be the tango “Caminito”.

In “Caminito” the themes of transitoriness and unrequited love are combined.⁶ The poetic voice recalls happier memories linked to moments spent on that precise path, which like the speaker’s relationship, has not survived the passing of time, and currently only symbolizes loss. Faced with a nostalgia that cannot be redeemed the poetic voice’s final desire is to fall prey to the works of time. The nostalgia provoked by this tango is doubly persuasive for the characters of *Veinte años y un día* who relate it to their own moments of irretrievable past joys.

Nostalgia also accompanies the evocations of José María Semprún Gurrea, Semprún’s own father, which provide a fleeting image of this figure. These true instances of postmemory are usually passed off as reminiscences of some of the fictive characters. Thus, Josemari remembers meeting Semprún Gurrea at *Cruz y Raya* (268) and Lorenzo makes his acquaintance at María Zambrano’s in Rome (104) whereas Mercedes remembers a dinner

⁶ Caminito cubierto de cardos,
la mano del tiempo tu huella borró...
Yo a tu lado quisiera caer
y que el tiempo nos mate a los dos.

party in honour of Federico García Lorca which they both attended (280). Sánchez tells Leidson: “[Lorenzo] explicaba a mí, en suma, quién era mi padre, fíjate qué situación más novelesca” (246). Indeed, Semprún Gurrea never addresses the reader directly but appears like a spectre at decisive moments of the novel, and some of the passages pick up on episodes which could have figured in Semprún’s father’s memory. Semprún, therefore, hints at an *as if*, that is a hypothesis of an alternative version of events which cannot be contested, of his father’s memories while eliding them at the same time. Thereby, he integrates his own postmemories into the fictive account of the Avedaños. This creative treatment of inherited memory can be seen as characteristic of postmemory as will become obvious from the following definition by Marianne Hirsch:

Postmemory is a powerful form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. That is not to say that memory itself is unmediated, but that it is more directly connected to the past. Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are displaced by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither fully understood nor recreated. (662)

As we have seen Semprún employs the postmemories, which are the memories of his father, creatively in order to instil them with meaning and make them comprehensible not least to himself.

In the case of Semprún these postmemories are combined with the own traumatic memories of the concentration camp of Buchenwald which cast a shadow over most of his texts. However, the inherited memories from the Civil War and the years of the Republic may be no less significant than the own experience of trauma. As Hirsch notes, “[the] condition of exile from the space of identity, this diasporic experience, is characteristic of postmemory”

(662). This is clearly a feeling shared by Semprún and transferred onto the Sánchez character. Thus, the narrator is not only torn between his identity of Sánchez and his other identities, such as that of Juan Larrea, he is also depicted as a bilingual individual who sometimes thinks “en francés, que es a menudo la lengua de sus adentros” (237-38). Sánchez also muses “...había sido tantos personajes acaso olvidados o borrados de la historia, incluso de la memoria” (140-41) and, indeed, Leidson asks himself about Sánchez “¿cómo sabrá quién es, de verdad, entre tanto seudónimo?” (245). This confusion of identities reflects the existential anguish felt by the exile on a deeper level. Thus, Michael Ugarte defines the exile as a person “whose identity has been stripped, whose very existence is, for one reason or another, no longer verifiable by name” (3). This absence of a label which would appropriately describe Sánchez’s identity is turned into a positive moral value by him as he embraces the different past selves that make up his personality. This stance is echoed by Lorenzo who explains to Leidson that he has read Faulkner in Italian and *Don Quixote* in German and that he is of the opinion that “La patria del escritor no creo que sea la lengua, sino el lenguaje [...]” (287).

In order to appropriate this linguistic home which could replace the homeland which has been forever lost, since it only exists in memory, the exile has to become a writer like Sánchez or Semprún. The path to becoming a writer is a winded one “porque a cada paso, a cada página, me topo con la realidad de mi propia vida, de mi experiencia personal, de mi memoria: ¿para qué inventar cuando has tenido una vida tan novelesca, en la cual hay materia narrativa infinita?” (250). Sánchez states that, if he could, he would like to write like Boris Vian: “Yo también quisiera inventármelo todo [...]” (251). To give in to his imagination would be liberating. However, this is impossible because of the personal experiences undergone in the past, at the same time, these very experiences provide the writer with his primary inspirations. The relationship between life and art is thus ambivalent. This ambiguity is expressed in Leidson’s question “¿cómo pretendes evitar que tu memoria o tu imaginación novelesca no desemboquen tan a menudo en la memoria histórica, si ambas están, en lo que se

refiere al menos a este siglo XX, totalmente entrecruzadas, entreveradas?” (253). Because the writer has fallen prey to memory, his narrative can never be free of it. Yet, imagination and memory are granted the same function: they make it possible to live and to tell. The distinction between memory and imagination which both rely on visual and auditive images for the representation of the past is more than blurry; they appear almost interchangeable (Ricoeur 5). Like the novelist’s imagination, memory obeys only the laws of truthfulness and does not enter the realm of truth. On the other hand, the interplay of autobiography and fiction represents another means of reflecting upon the way in which history is written and integrated into personal memory and myth.

The process at work illuminates that, for Semprún, the only meaningful way of connecting with the past is through memories and their elaboration into fiction or myth. In *Veinte años y un día* myth is not opposed to history along the lines of the division that David Herzberger makes in his study of the historical novel but is rescued from its Francoist use and comes to represent itself “the liberating admixture of fact and imagination” which Herzberger reserves for history. As Jo Labanyi has pointed out: “There are, however, two ways in which the use of myth can give a novel a relevance that goes beyond the bounds of the society depicted in it: by denying history, or by critically exposing the universal human tendency to mythification” (53). Semprún falls in the latter category and connects this tendency to mythification with the human appropriation of postmemories. As Hirsch indicates: “Full or empty, postmemory seeks connection. It creates where it cannot recover. It imagines where it cannot recall. It mourns a loss that cannot be repaired. And, because even the act of mourning is secondary, the lost object can never be incorporated and mourning can never be overcome” (664). What Semprún develops through fiction is a way of creating something out of postmemory and memory in order to find a link which can help integrate these (post-) memories into a meaningful story. The mythical denouement is brought about by the incestuous relationship between Lorenzo and his sister who prefer to die together rather than

to live separate from each other. Incest can be seen as the reverse image of fratricidal killings that make up a civil war.⁷ Both ultimately lead to death and the parties are intrinsically bound to each other, like the Avedaños and their peasants. Perhaps their only hope of reconciliation lies in the true memories of the original event in which Josemari, the progressive left-wing brother, was killed by mistake. The static view of history has to be interrupted in order to return to the flexible mechanisms of memory which allow for a new interpretation of past events.

This return to memory is, of course, embodied by the novel itself. Sánchez claims that he has to write the book in Spanish because of the *Autobiografía de Federico Sánchez* (253). *Veinte años y un día* thus also represents Semprún's homecoming and his coming to terms with his former self in the guise of Federico Sánchez. In fact, Wilfried Schoeller maintains that the title refers to the standard Franquist sentence for resistance fighters (214), this condemnation has been metaphorically lifted off the Avedaños through the violent denouement. Simultaneously, Sánchez expresses the feelings of nostalgia and out-of-placeness which overcame him upon his arrival in Spain for the first time. In his attempt to pass the story of the Avedaños on to future generations, Semprún also makes efforts to keep his own postmemories alive. However, overall, memory is presented as ambivalent. If it is static and instrumentalized by those in power, it leads to inertia and apathy as well as a prolonging of the trauma. On the other hand, a dynamic, creative use of memory assists in overcoming a collective trauma and reconciling oneself with the present in order to remember the past for the future. The figure of Leidson, together with Sánchez, illustrates this. Instead of writing a history of the victors, Leidson sets out to record the voices of those that might go

⁷ Within the novel sex is generally associated with violence. Thus, José Manuel lives out his "derecho de la pernada" with Mercedes and her maid Raquel (150); of whom both Josemari (135) and Lorenzo (169) make use as they see fit, and Nieves, the daughter of a Communist, awakens thoughts of violent possession in the police officer Sabuesa (125). This violent view is explained by the narrator's inspiration in Gentileschi's painting of Judith. The biblical Judith sees sex as a means of saving her people and might represent a revenge fantasy against male sexual aggression by the painter who was raped herself (229, 241). Moreover, the metaphor of rape has traditionally often been applied to the mistreatment of the land by its people. Spain is completely exposed to the arbitrary will of Franco to the same extent that Mercedes is helpless vis-à-vis José Manuel's taking possession of her.

unheard otherwise and wants to write history from different point of views. As a Jew he is associated with the role of the memory of God's law which was preserved by the Jews even in diaspora, and he is granted the role of the keeper of memories not only for his own family and people but also for those who are unable to carry out this task themselves.

The taboo with which the incest that took place at the centre of the Avedaño family is invested reflects the treatment of silence and wilful amnesia with which the Spanish public was encouraged to embrace the Transition to Democracy. For as long as the memories from the Civil War and the decades of dictatorship cannot be accessed freely because this is condemned by public opinion, the wounds will never heal. Within the novel, Mercedes embodies how one can be imprisoned in memories given that she cannot communicate her experiences until she meets Leidson, the outsider. In the end, the purpose of the Ley de Memoria Histórica is precisely to prevent this stagnation in trauma, and not the opening up of endless possibilities of revenge or renewed strife, as its opponents have sometimes argued, in order to enable a natural and democratic process of collective memory which includes its integration into fiction and myth.

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