

Sarah Leggott. *Memory, War, and Dictatorship in Recent Spanish Fiction by Women*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2015. 168 pp. ISBN 9781611486667.

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In *Memory, War, and Dictatorship in Recent Spanish Fiction by Women* (2015), Sarah Leggott analyzes five novels that underscore women's experiences during the Spanish Civil War and the Franco era. While many scholars have responded to the Spanish memory boom, Leggott distinguishes her study by focusing on Dulce Chacón's *La voz dormida* (2002), Rosa Regàs' *Luna lunera* (1999), Josefina Aldecoa's *La fuerza del destino* (1997), Carme Riera's *La mitad del alma* (2005), and Almudena Grandes' *El corazón helado* (2007). Although Chacón's novel has been widely studied, the other texts have not received the same amount of critical attention.

The introductory chapter addresses the historical context of each novel as well as the theoretical framework that combines sources from Holocaust studies, memory, trauma, and postmemory (Dominick LaCapra, Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, and Dori Laub). The author also references Peninsularist scholars who have contributed to memory studies (Joan Ramon Resina, José Colmeiro, Angel Loureiro, and Jo Labanyi). It is important to note that Leggott organizes the chapters according to the historical setting of each novel rather than by publication date; therefore, she begins her study with *La voz dormida*.

Chapter 2 explores *La voz dormida*'s unique narrative style—a combination of fiction with historical artifacts (personal interviews, oral testimonies, diary entries, and letters)—to examine women's experiences during the Spanish Civil War. Leggott references Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith to remind readers that what a country chooses to remember or forget is directly linked to power, hegemony, and gender. Therefore, a focus on the transmission of memories serves as a backlash to the forces aimed at silencing women. In *La voz dormida*, the communication among women is not limited to mothers and daughters, and readers can observe how prisoners clandestinely share information with one another. Such camaraderie resists patriarchal notions of family as women support one another.

Chapter 3 examines children's experiences during early postwar Barcelona as narrated by Rosa Regàs in *Luna lunera*. Following a detailed explanation of Regàs' place in Catalan literature—a complicated position due to her decision to write in Castilian—

Leggott focuses on the absent mother figure (referred to as “ella”), and discusses how the Nationalists undermined Republicans. Despite the authoritarian family patriarch, Pius Vidal Armengol, the children, particularly the narrator Anna, symbolize those that continued to resist fascism during the dictatorship. Both *La voz dormida* and *Luna lunera* underscore the solidarity among marginalized subjects—the female prisoners in the former novel and the children in the latter. Leggott demonstrates that the children of Republicans suffered the “sins” of their parents during the postwar era through the harsh treatment they endured in boarding schools and reformatories.

Chapter 4 examines Josefina Aldecoa’s *La fuerza del destino*—the final installment of a trilogy (preceded by *Historia de una maestra* and *Mujeres de negro*)—that follows a Republican school teacher Gabriela and her daughter Juana. This novel explores Spain’s transition to democracy via the elderly Gabriela who returns to Spain after years of exile in Mexico. Published in 1997, *La fuerza del destino* predates the discussion about historical memory in Spain, but it exemplifies the significance of transgenerational memory and the weight of the maternal voice. In *La fuerza del destino*, Aldecoa challenges both ageism and sexism by focusing on Gabriela’s lack of voice in democratic Spain. Leggott successfully distinguishes her analysis from that of other scholars by focusing on the least-studied text in Aldecoa’s trilogy. This chapter resonates with recent scholarship on aging in Spanish cultural production.

Chapter 5 focuses on the protagonist C.’s journey to reconstruct her mother’s past in Carme Riera’s *La mitad del alma* (originally published in Catalan in 2004). Following a brief description of the author’s background, Leggott focuses on how this text exposes the difficulties associated with uncovering the past and the attendant confusion and contradictions found in personal and political identities. C. begins to investigate her mother Cecilia’s past upon receiving a package containing her letters, and C. discovers that, despite marrying into a Nationalist family, Cecilia did not comply with Francoist ideals. As C. learns more about her mother—including the possibility that her biological father may not be the man that raised her—her discoveries instigate a crisis, one from which she can only recover by narrating her own story. Leggott’s analysis demonstrates the impossibility of uncovering the “true” past. In contrast to *La voz dormida*, where the author constructs a narration based on others’ experiences, *Luna lunera* contains some details that are similar to Regàs’ childhood. However, Leggott is quick to remind her readers that we should not consider this novel an autobiographical text.

In the final chapter, Leggott analyzes Almudena Grandes’ *El corazón helado*, and continues to analyze the transgenerational inheritance of memory. While Grandes’ novel shares common themes with the other texts, it is significant that *El corazón helado* tells the story of the granddaughter (Raquel) of a Spanish family that exiled to France. The reader, like Raquel, learns about her family’s history in a disjointed manner, which emphasizes that the recuperation of history is never a neat undertaking. The chapters that present Raquel are told by an omniscient third-person narrator who presents stories

about the war and postwar years. In contrast, the chapters narrated by another character, Álvaro, in the first person, take place in contemporary Spain and present a chronological order of events. Leggott addresses how Grandes' novel explores a topic few authors have examined: the guilt suffered by the descendants of Nationalists.

The writing of this review (during summer 2018) coincides with the Spanish government's debate over the exhumation of Francisco Franco's remains; therefore, Leggott's study is timely because Spain continues to negotiate its past. This study is a valuable contribution to contemporary Spanish studies, and will interest both students and scholars.